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Just Vibrations: The Purpose of Sounding Good

William Cheng

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JUST VIBRATIONS

the PURPOSE of SOUNDING GOOD



WILLIAM CHENG

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William Cheng : Just Vibrations: The Purpose of Sounding Good before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Just Vibrations: The Purpose of Sounding Good:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Must-readBy CustomerIf you are in musicology, read this book. If you are in academia, read this book. If you often equate anxiety and stress with the production of good work, read. this. book.A thorough, critical, thoughtful look at the paranoia atmosphere that has become too normal within the fields of musicology and academia in general. As a musicology student, to see that a prominent musicologist is aware of this problem and suggesting ways to fix it and acknowledging that there is not a need to sacrifice your health and

joy to create good scholarship is encouraging and long overdue. Eager to see how this discussion grows and dedicating myself to applying self-care to myself and my research processes, and practicing self-care and compassion towards my colleagues and friends. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. the Academy seems like a place full of comfy chairs

By Matt Jones Just Vibrations is a revelation. As a professional musicologist and academic in a contingent position, I found Cheng's book an absolute revelation. From the outside, the Academy seems like a place full of comfy chairs, coffee breaks, and camaraderie, but when you're on the inside, you find plenty of pins poking through those cushions and plenty of coffee table corners against which to crack your shins. Fragile egos, competitiveness, false senses of ownership over a particular scholar's domain. The pressures exerted on academics in the 21st century are enormous--and it seems like it's only going to get worse. So, I find it Just Vibrations an even-handed critique of musicology from one of my generation's true brilliant minds, and the book's insights apply to other disciplines. This tiny little book has caused an enormous ruckus because William Cheng dared to ask a question: what if musicians and music scholars use their prodigious listening skills--something we spend literally decades of our lives cultivating and perfecting--in a new way. What happens if we listen, truly listen, to one another, to our fellow academics, to our students, and to ourselves?

Just Vibrations is a must-read for anyone in academia: grad students, faculty, and administrators. 10 of 12 people found the following review helpful. whatever word fits best, I think most will agree that this book ...

By Abigail Fine I was compelled to read this book after Cheng's thoughtful response to the conversations on Musicology Now (for folks outside the musicology community: tensions over a blog post that exposed rifts in opinion, see links below) and his article in the Washington Post, which resonated in a very personal and heartfelt way with some of my own research on idealizing artists disability as sacred suffering. Because this book has been made available as paperback and e-book, I was able to read it immediately, which is a rare opportunity and hugely appreciated. I was truly struck by this book. I've been eager for others to read it and talk about it (maybe some of us attending AMS this November might consider organizing an informal gathering). My enthusiasm led me to write a review here on that, I realize in retrospect, was a bit starry-eyed and glib. Overwriting is just one of many symptoms of paranoia maybe it takes a while for this important book to change habits. The next review that rolled in points out (I think rightly and constructively) that the word brave is too laden with political baggage, one of many words that have been broken beyond repair. I used this word, while holding it at arms length for its damaging potential in hero-narratives, to express how impressed I felt with Cheng's vulnerability and openness in this book. But I also misjudged the baggage of this word, imagining it to be empty and devoid of meaning from its overuse, when it's actually too laden to repurpose in this way. For me, this book made a trite concept genuine: whatever word fits best, I think most will agree that this book makes its author vulnerable for the benefit of his readers and takes huge personal and professional risks (of backlash, of clamor both productive and excessive, or even the risk of silence from readers, which I imagine might be hurtful in the wake of such an open and personal book). Especially on the heels of the Musicology Now issue, Cheng's book helped me realize that scholarship is unusually prone to escalating tensions because we run the risk of misjudging the baggage of words. It's our job as scholars to understand baggage, weight and nuance, but when we come together as experts in different areas, we miscalculate the nuances that lie outside our expertise. I think this book shows us ways to strengthen each other's understanding of nuance, but to do so with compassion which requires two-way trust, both correcting with compassion and accepting correction without shame or paranoia. There's no natural limit to how much we can talk about this book, which is very rich -- I'm looking forward to the conversations that follow. For those who just want a summary, some snippets from my original review: Cheng exposes, in a manner that is compassionate rather than accusatory, how life in the ivory tower can be a game riddled with hidden enemies, fostering a climate of critical paranoia that turns prose into an impenetrable armor. I think this book will resonate both within and beyond the ivory tower. Not only academic readers outside musicology, but also a general readership, can appreciate this bid for scholarly compassion, the careful look at reparative projects that can alienate or queer the populations they intend to uplift, and the urgent call to recognize the weaponization of music and sound. By repairing fissures in academic communities, the impact of this book may extend indirectly even to those who won't have the opportunity to read it. Links (if allows): [...][...]

Just Vibrations bends our collective ears toward the vitality and precarity of optimism, dependence, and reparative agendas in academia and in daily life. William Cheng calls for a radical embrace of interpersonal care as a core--as opposed to extracurricular--component of intellectual labor. In the event we break, who will rush to criticize and who will stop to offer aid? Should our voices crack, who may take pains to listen all the more closely? Traversing the resonant archives of reindeer games, personal impairment, scholarly strife, queer hope, and accessible soundscapes, this book advocates for care work as a barometer of better worlds. An interview with the author can be found here: junctionmagazine.com/renovating-the-ivory-tower

From the Back Cover "Just Vibrations is an extremely interesting book written by an exceptionally talented musician. The reflections are far-reaching and a source of much illumination about the function and value of work, hope, determination, realism, and interpersonal care. It is hard to write such a book, but it is very rewarding to read."--

AMARTYA SEN (Harvard University), Nobel Laureate in Economics and author of *The Idea of Justice*