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# *Amor Musica* — Celebrating Music, Edition 1

Tuesday, May 16, 2006

1. Conductor [Daniel Barenboim](#) presented this year's Reith Lectures for the British Broadcasting Corporation [BBC]. The lectures were presented in Jerusalem — a context which added drama and a sense of both history and tragedy to Barenboim's lectures.

The celebrated conductor defines music as “sound with thought,” and he believes that music can change the world by bringing rationality to human life. I think his definition of music as “sound with thought” is most helpful, but his hope that music can be the “saving grace of the human being” is just another form of humanistic utopianism. Culture, music included, brings many joys and gifts — but the culture cannot save us.

An excerpt from Barenboim's concluding lecture:

*In my view this is a model for society. Leadership throughout history, and it is probably inherent in the human nature, has been based on the effect it can produce because of the weakness of the people, not because of their strength. How wonderful the world would be if it were ruled by people who understood this lesson from music, and understood the importance of combining transparency, power and strength. But if music is so human, if music is so all inclusive and so positive, we have to ask ourselves how is it possible that monsters such as Adolf Hitler and others had such love for music? How do we explain that? How to explain the fact that Hitler was able to send millions of people to the gas chamber and would be moved to tears listening to music? How? How was Wagner able to write music of such nobility and also write his monstrous anti-Semitic pamphlet? I believe people don't think about music, they just let it wash over them, and operate on them in an almost animal way. Music to me is sound with thought, and as Spinoza believed that rationality was the saving grace of the human being, then we must learn to look at music like this too.*

Barenboim's [Reith Lectures](#) are available for download in various audio and video formats and in transcript form [here](#).

2. Some see the pipe organ as a disappearing instrument, but lovers of organ music will celebrate the recent unveiling of the largest pipe organ ever installed in a concert hall in America. Verizon Hall, concert home to the [Philadelphia Orchestra](#), is now home to a magnificent 125-rank Dobson organ. The organ features a stunning array of exposed pipes and a huge sound — employing 6,938 pipes. [See this [photograph and press release](#) from the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts in Philadelphia.]

Clearly, organ music isn't dead yet. Just before Easter, the [Louisville Courier-Journal](#) featured the magnificent Aeolian-Skinner organ in Alumni Chapel of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in a [video slideshow](#). The great organ is played by Professor [Sandra Chucalo Turner](#) of our [School of Church Music and Worship](#), a very gifted organist and church musician. You will enjoy the slideshow.

3. *Music That Has Withstood the Test of Time*: Let me pass along a recommendation of one of my favorite Baroque composers, and one often overlooked or unknown — [Heinrich Biber](#). Born in Bohemia in 1644, he eventually became Kapellmeister in Salzburg. Biber's works include the *Missa Christi Resurgenstis* and the *Mystery Sonatas*, but my favorite recording is *Harmonia Artificioso-Ariosa* [Deutsche Grammophon, 474 965-2]. Biber's music is often playing as I read and write, and I gladly pass the recommendation along to all who share an appreciation for music that has withstood the test of time. [Discography](#), [Resources](#), [Wikipedia entry](#).

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