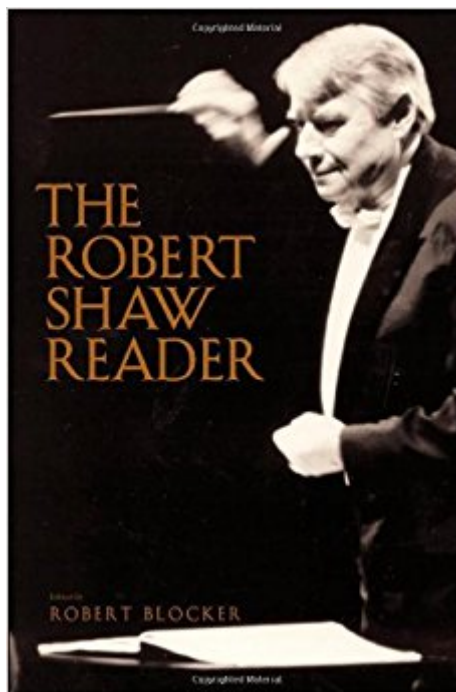


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The Robert Shaw Reader



Synopsis

Robert Shaw is considered to be the most influential choral conductor in American history. This is the first collection of his letters and notes about music ever published; at another time, it is the book Shaw would have written himself. The letters are an invigorating mix of music history and analysis, philosophy, inspiration, and practical advice. Shaw examines technique, but only as a means to an end; he moves beyond that, delving into the essence of what music is and what it has to say to us. The heart of the book is composed of Shaw's previously unpublished notes on fifteen major choral works, ranging from Bach's B Minor Mass to Stravinsky's Symphony of Psalms. Often inspiring and sometime hilarious, these writings reveal the full breadth of Shaw's knowledge, intensity, and humor.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"I can't remember a time when I didn't know and revere Robert Shaw. The best of 20th century choral musicianship was to be found in him, and I am delighted that he now lives again in these pages for a new generation to discover and enjoy."
—Peter J. Gomes, Harvard University
"A significant book making available in print the musical insights of arguably the preeminent choral conductor America has produced."
—Milburn Price, former president of the American Choral Directors Association

"The Robert Shaw Reader is a wonderful collection of the beliefs, the frustrations, the celebrations,

the analyses and philosophies of this great figure of American choral music. His profound thoughts provide a unique exploration into a brilliant yet complex musical mind. In circumstances where most choral conductors will try to convey so much through non-verbal communication, Robert Shaw was a master of the written word."--Paul Salamunovich, Music Director Emeritus of the Los Angeles Master Chorale "I can't remember a time when I didn't know and revere Robert Shaw. The best of 20th century choral musicianship was to be found in him, and I am delighted that he now lives again in these pages for a new generation to discover and enjoy."--Peter J. Gomes, Harvard University "A significant book--making available in print the musical insights of arguably the preeminent choral conductor America has produced."--Milburn Price, former president of the American Choral Directors Association

What a pleasure to read this book! Mr. Shaw's passion for the music is consistently a theme; the adherence to the values of time, rhythm, intonation, and the composer's intent. His writings are primarily to inform his choruses, but are applicable to anyone leading or singing in an "amateur" volunteer chorus. While in Cleveland, it was my pleasure to sing with him in the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus and the Shaker Unitarian Church while in medical school and specialty training. Following him to Atlanta to join the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus was a bonus. While his philosophical writings are well known, so also were his rants when we did not measure up. My kudos to Robert Blocker for his skills in collating Mr. Shaw's life-time opus.

The best way to get to know the master.

This book is a must read and very inspirational for professional musicians and chorus directors alike. I keep coming back to it. Thanks Mr. Shaw!

this was a gift, not sure how it was received

What an inspiring book. This man did it all and was successful at it. I recommend this to all future and current teachers looking at teaching music of any kind. Rehearsal techniques, great stories, letters, etc.

I got this for my husband, and though he's a fast reader, he still hasn't finished it. There's a lot to learn from in here, and I believe this is an invaluable resource to choral directors.

Sitting glued to radios-later to TV's, we loved the distinctive sounds of early Fred Waring Glee Club; Before we heard any name of their Creator, Robert Shaw. Lots of us sang Waring versions of Christmas Carols; Battle Hymn of the Republic; Onward Christian Soldiers; Dry Bones; surely, Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor, not-knowing who created crazy-looking phonetic syllables! We waited until mid-1950's to become aware of Robert Shaw's Collegiate Chorale and its successor the Robert Shaw Chorale. Most of us first heard early RCA records of JOY To The WORLD; A Treasury of EASTER SONGS (with young! picture of RS)++Christmas Hymns & Carols; followed by DEEP RIVER and Spirituals in 1957. Professors Blocker & Page paint vivid pictures of early years of Robert Shaw! Moving on to Chapter 2- THOUGHTS ON MUSIC, SINGING, REHEARSAL, PERFORMANCE...we're introduced to his fascinating Choral Notes from 1970 to 1996. My favorite section is titled QUIET SINGING and COUNT-SINGING. Anyone lucky enough to sing in his rehearsals was exposed to quiet-singing (above a whisper)-- My good fortune began in Westminster Choral Workshops of 1973, 75, 77, again in 1986 Saratoga Springs, Carmina Burana & Brahms' German Requiem. When Blocker named Shaw's absolute minimum essentials include, (as Caroline spoke to me, He has perfect rhythm; He knows the Time night or day to the minute with no clocks!) "Music is Order in Sound and Time!" Only God knows how many unique singing souls he introduced to permanent essentials ingrained in their music! I must delve into his longest, most valued Chapter of CONDUCTING THE MASTERPIECES! Naturally he starts with Bach's B-Minor Mass and Bach's Passions of St. John and St. Matthew... Added to the longer Masterpieces we find Rachmaninoff's "The Bells" followed by "Liebeslied, Schicksalslied, Nanie" by Brahms! It seems as if anyone writing about Shaw, "Blocker could not escape temptation to include Gustav Mahler, Mozart's Mass in C Minor, Hymns and Christmas Carols, Verdi's Requiem or Poulenc's Stabat Mater! In PREACHING THE GOSPEL (OF THE ARTS) we are graciously gifted by complete texts of 7 speeches given to Memorial Church of Harvard, Choral Societies, Atlanta Emory Lectures. I was deeply shocked to see exact text of his NPR Celebration of Bach's 200th anniversary in 1984, "Worship and the Fine Arts!" In Chap V-CELEBRATIONS OF THE RITUALS OF LIFE we see an intimate 7 page Eulogy for Peter Harrower's Memorial Service. He was one of the great Bass-Baritones of Shaw's Atlanta Symphony Choral Performances and Premier vocal coach of GA State Music Students including my wife, Barbara in the mid-1960s! After first perusing this lengthy biography in B/N one fine day, it took several readings for it to compare favorably with early-"Dear People." I am genuinely impressed to discover this closely intimate account, including Sir Robert's love for sung, written, and even, The Divinely Spoken Word from St. John, Chapter 1... Retired Chaplain Fred W Hood

The book is an invaluable collection of Mr. Shaw's excellent rehearsal techniques, including his "building block" approach to learning new music. It's pedagogically sound. Another interesting section recounts his letters to his choirs about poor rehearsal attendance, tardiness, unexcused absences, etc. It was so gratifying to find out that the greatest choir director of the 20th century had many unfaithful attenders. Several of his Atlanta Symphony Chorus members failed to attend a full concert with the orchestra, in order to hear Pavarotti sing the same night!!! Shaw was furious. Every choir director should read this book.

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