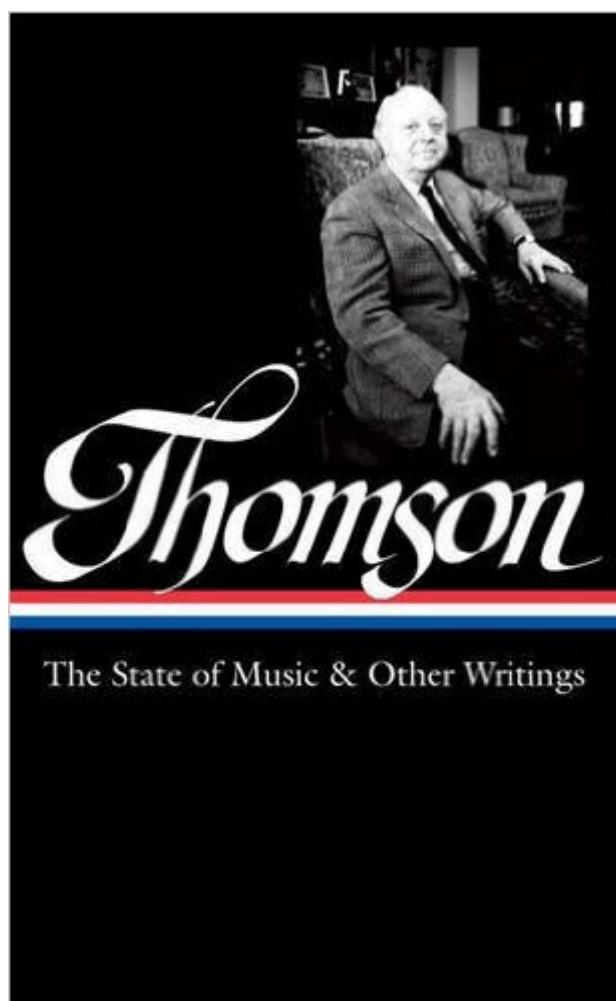


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Virgil Thomson: The State Of Music & Other Writings: Library Of America #277 (The Library Of America)



Synopsis

An unprecedented collection of polemical and autobiographical writings by America's greatest composer-critic. Following on the critically acclaimed 2014 edition of Virgil Thomson's collected newspaper music criticism, The Library of America and Pulitzer Prize-winning music critic Tim Page now present Thomson's other literary and critical works, a body of writing that constitutes America's musical declaration of independence from the European past. This volume opens with *The State of Music* (1939), the book that made Thomson's name as a critic and won him his 14-year stint at the New York Herald Tribune. This no-holds-barred polemic, here presented in its revised edition of 1962, discusses the commissions, jobs, and other opportunities available to the American composer, a worker in a world of performance and broadcast institutions that, today as much as in Thomson's time, are dominated by tin-eared, non-musical patrons of the arts who are shocked by the new and suspicious of native talent. Thomson's autobiography, *Virgil Thomson* (1966), is more than just the story of the struggle of one such American composer, it is an intellectual, aesthetic, and personal chronicle of the twentieth century, from World War I era Kansas City to Harvard in the age of straw boaters, from Paris in the Twenties and Thirties to Manhattan in the Forties and after. A classic American memoir, it is marked by a buoyant wit, a true gift for verbal portrait-making, and a cast of characters including Aaron Copland, Gertrude Stein, James Joyce, Paul Bowles, John Houseman, and Orson Welles. *American Music Since 1910* (1971) is a series of incisive essays on the lives and works of Ives, Ruggles, Varèse, Copland, Cage, and others who helped define a national musical idiom. *Music with Words* (1989), Thomson's final book, is a distillation of a subject he knew better than perhaps any other American composer: how to set English—especially American English—to music, in opera and art song. The volume is rounded out by a judicious selection of Thomson's magazine journalism from 1957 to 1984—thirty-seven pieces, most of them previously uncollected, including many long-form review-essays written for *The New York Review of Books*.

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Customer Reviews

I found this autobiography by Virgil Thomson thoroughly enjoyable. I was led to read it after seeing his name consistently referenced by some leading historiographers of the 20th century such as Joseph Horowitz and Harvey Sachs. Reading this work has encouraged me to do a little more research into his life since he is extremely shy about sharing his private life, especially any events that demonstrated his homosexuality. If he was so concerned about hiding this rather important part of his personality, I could not help but to wonder how much else he portrayed in veiled sequences. Nonetheless, his obvious brilliance and the delectable way that he uses the English language makes his story telling absolutely riveting. I just don't know how much of it is true.

The autobiography is one of the best ever written by an American. The editing of this edition "American Music Since 1900" unfortunately deletes the original brief biographies that so enrich the back matter of the book---they are delightful, trenchant and enormous fun---why did the editor decide to omit them? But still, Thomson at his best, and in one volume!

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