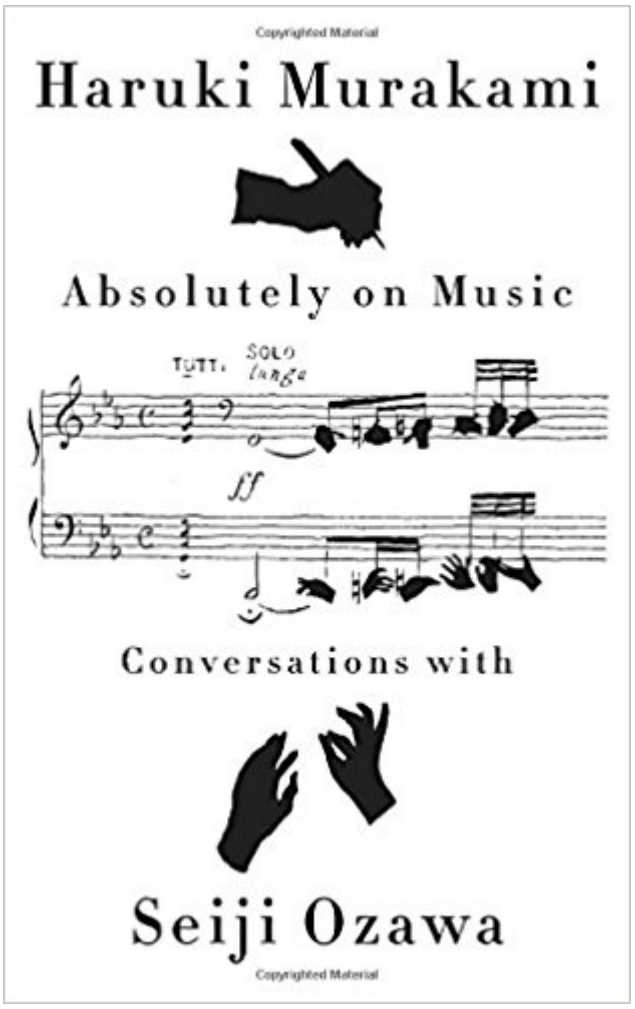
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# Absolutely On Music: Conversations




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## Synopsis

A deeply personal, intimate conversation about music and writing between the internationally acclaimed, best-selling author and the former conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. In Absolutely on Music, internationally Haruki Murakami sits down with his friend Seiji Ozawa, the revered former conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, for a series of conversations on their shared passion: music. Over the course of two years, Murakami and Ozawa discuss everything from Brahms to Beethoven, from Leonard Bernstein to Glenn Gould, from BartÃƒÂ k to Mahler, and from pop-up orchestras to opera. They listen to and dissect recordings of some of their favorite performances, and Murakami questions Ozawa about his career conducting orchestras around the world. Culminating in MurakamiÃ¢â ¬â„¢s ten-day visit to the banks of Lake Geneva to observe OzawaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s retreat for young musicians, the book is interspersed with ruminations on record collecting, jazz clubs, orchestra halls, film scores, and much more. A deep reflection on the essential nature of both music and writing, Absolutely on Music is an unprecedented glimpse into the minds of two maestros.A selection of the music discussed by Murakami and Ozawa is available at harukimurakami.com.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“What most fascinates about Absolutely on Music is how it unlocks the challenging question of what makes for genius in the performance of music. . . . [It is] a book that opens a new side of [MurakamiÃ¢â ¬â„¢s] authorial persona and that will open doors for people who want to love classical music. It is a quirky, oddly compelling book carried along by the smooth, laid-back rhythms

of its relaxing conversations. Reading it, I found myself digging out pieces I hadnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t listened to in ages, engaged with a newfound appreciation. . . . Readable, accessible, highly entertaining, educational.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Scott Esposito, San Francisco ChronicleÃ¢â ¬Å“Fascinating. . . . Ozawa is a beloved figure, known more for his modesty, preparation and smiling-hippie looks than for breaking batons. In Absolutely on Music, he appears in conversation with his countryman, the renowned Japanese novelist Haruki Murakami. Their discussions are prompted by listening to recordings together and range from musical personalities to the nuts and bolts of running an orchestra. Mr. Murakami is a non-musician who is nevertheless quite well-listened. . . . Murakami stays in the background of these conversations, but his preparation and curiosity draw out Mr. Ozawa wonderfully.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Wall Street JournalÃ¢â ¬Å“Absolutely on Music is an unprecedented treasure, valuable if for no other reason than that these conversations mark the first time that Ozawa has reflected at length on his 50-plus years of conducting. . . . Talking about music is like dancing about architecture, itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s often said, but what joy to watch these two friends dance. . . . One of this bookÃ¢â ¬â„¢s central pleasures is that of watching a kind of translation at work. With an enthusiastÃ¢â ¬â„¢s brio, Murakami sallies forth with his idiosyncratic, often fanciful ideas about OzawaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s music.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The GuardianÃ¢â ¬Å“Refreshingly honest and enthusiastic, a mental sampler from both the writer and the musician. . . . The subject matter veers and twirls, from the philosophy of education to the phrasing of a specific passage, to the bringing out of an inner voice. And perhaps therein lies the charm of this bookÃ¢â ¬â •material that only a music wonk could love, some spicy Ã¢â ¬ËœReal Housewives of ViennaÃ¢â ¬â„¢ type dish, intellectual probing of the most arcane musical subjects, and personal expressions of amazement and sheer joy.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Buffalo News Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Fascinating. . . . Enthralling. . . . What comes through in these conversations is the devotion both men feel for music; the degree to which every detail of a work matters to them; and the strength of their yearning to connect to great symphonies and concertos (and the composers who penned them).Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The Seattle Times Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Irresistibly seductive.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Evening Standard Ã Â "A useful guide [that] is also about the way the concert hall's values of composition and rhythm can apply to any kind of creative life." Ã¢â ¬â •A.V. ClubÃ¢â ¬Å“Intriguing insights about the nature of music. . . . Deliberate and contemplative. In some ways, these conversations areÃ Â High FidelityÃ Â for classical music fans.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Publishers WeeklyÃ¢â ¬Å“A strange and delightful book. Murakami and Ozawa sit sipping hot hojicha tea, snacking on persimmons, and discussing in riveting detail works by Mahler, Bartok, Beethoven, Brahms, and many other central figures in the history of Western music. . . . While he

defers to Ozawa on technical matters, [Murakami] describes music with rich and suggestive metaphors and images that capture something essential about the spirit of the music.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Christian Science MonitorÃ¢â ¬Å“Transcribed from conversations between the phenomenal Japanese author Murakami (who ran a jazz club in his youth) and magician-with-a-baton Seiji Ozawa, whom I remember fondly as conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in my student days long, long ago? IÃ Â cannotÃ Â resist. For all your smart readers.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Barbara Hoffert,Ã Â Library JournalÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Engaging. . . . [MurakamiÃ¢â ¬â„¢s] knowledge of music is beyond impressive, as anyone who has read his novels already knows. He loves jazz, and one of the most interesting passages involves exchanges about blues in Chicago in the 1960s. Ozawa also declares a deep admiration for Louis Armstrong. . . . A work that general readers will enjoy and the musical cognoscenti will devour.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Kirkus ReviewsÃ¢â ¬Å“The book shines as a deep exploration into how a conductor does his job and how performer personalities, logistical factors, and mundane bureaucracies can change an orchestraÃ¢â ¬â„¢s sound. . . . The book also dishes insider gossip on the greats: Leonard Bernstein is a anti-hierarchical mensch, while Glenn Gould is a fascinating Ã¢â ¬Ëœeccentric.Ã¢â ¬â„¢Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã Â Ã¢â ¬â •New RepublicÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“A special book. . . . Look to this for insights into the broader world of music.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Worcester TelegramÃ¢â ¬Å“Soaring conversations that are at times erudite, funny and deeply personal. . . . An important and engaging reflection on the career of a great conductor.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •The Providence JournalÃ¢â ¬Å“Haruki Murakami loves music, from naming one of his most beloved novels Norwegian Wood (recalling the hit from The Beatles) to being the former owner of a jazz club in Tokyo. In these brilliantly illuminating conversations with his friend, the former conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Seiji Ozawa, these two creatives discuss the power of music. From pop-up orchestras to Brahms, these two insightful artists trace the way music has impacting them and society in general.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •BookRiotÃ¢â ¬Å“[A] glimpse into the minds of . . . two maestros and their creative process. Never a stormy debate, the talks make sweet melodies that may linger on for many readersÃ¢â ¬â •especially book and music lovers. . . . This book is easy reading and music is Ã¢â ¬Ëœabsolutelyà¢â ¬â„¢ the winner.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â •Otago Daily Times (New Zealand)

HARUKI MURAKAMI was born in Kyoto in 1949 and now lives near Tokyo. His work has been translated into more than fifty languages, and the most recent of his many international honors is the Jerusalem Prize, whose previous recipients include J. M. Coetzee, Milan Kundera, and V. S.

Naipaul.Translated from the Japanese by Jay Rubin.

I enjoyed Ozawa confirming my suspicions about the styles of other conductorsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •particularly Bernstein. Murakami and I share a bewilderment on Mahler. I was happy to find this out.

Murakami and Ozawa together over tea, talking passionately about music, comparing different performances, reminiscing the conductor's life, youth and his journey and the people he has met, and Murakami with his admiration and wonder... When I read this book and listened to the music, I felt like I was with them, listening to their gentle beautiful conversation, in beautiful, classic Japanese proprieties. How musical their conversations must have sounded, I wonder, and how refreshing it must be to have someone, in mature age, to talk about something as pure as music when the world we live in is surrounded with so much evil, and lives filled with regrets. For someone like myself, who loves music but has about average or perhaps, just slightly above average knowledge, this was a huge inspiration and delight. It was fascinating to learn about how musicians, composers and conductors approach to music differently, and how each individual's history and experiences--such as Mr. Ozawa seeing Klimt and Egon Schiele--can deepen his relationship with music.

Classical music has scores with composers' notes and instructions; yet each performance, each conductor, each orchestra creates a different result. Soloists especially make a career out of their unique approach to the music. Novelist Haruki Murakami and conductor Seiji Ozawa, battling cancer, had a series of conversations on such subjects, as well as on Ozawa's life as a music director. This book, in translation, presents the interviews conducted over several years. Murakami happens also to be an avid collector of classical albums, CD and LP, and besides an extensive gathering of Ozawa's own recordings, he has multiple renditions of particular Beethoven, Brahms, Mahler, and Berlioz pieces, which he played to further the discussion. Good familiarity of these core classical composers is necessary to appreciate the topics. No scores are presented but a website is given with samples of the compositions. For the classical music enthusiast, the easily and quickly read book provides insights into the art and also the duties of the conductor. Ozawa had training with Leonard Bernstein and Herbert von Karajan and subsequently has led numerous orchestras. I personally remember his youthful years as conductor of the San Francisco Symphony after Josef Krips. The entertaining and informative talks explain the ways of conducting and the interactions

with musicians, and the extensive presentation on Mahler adds a new dimension to listening to his symphonies. Murakmai proved to be a deep listener, who while not a musician himself, has an ear for subtle differences in performances of soloists and the orchestra at large. Thus, the two men could delve into specifics. The magic of a brilliant performance remains a mystery, but the reader will have gained greater understanding of its components.

Fascinating. never read anything like it. Murakami is such a fan, and such a good asker of questions; Ozawa is such a regular guy (considering he is a great conductor) and very good at reflecting on what he has played and what others have played. It is great that in this era we can listen to many of the performances mentioned without requiring an enormous record library. The book is entertaining and absorbing even for some one without extensive knowledge of classical music.

Nice insight if you are classical music lover. Conversation is between two great maestros in two different art world which makes it even more intriguing.

Murakami is also a writer that rarely fails; he has written the conversations he had with Seji Ozawa, definitely the most important figure on Western music from Japan. But the conversations also are full of love (for Ozawa), and understanding and sympathy. Ozawa comes out bigger...and so does Murakami. Both come out of the book well,very well.

I am a Murakami addict. I knew Seiji Ozawa back in the 1960s when he was an assistant to Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic. It was fascinating and lovely to read about the conversations between these two giants. I highly recommend it to anyone who wants to spend some special time with these two men. You will be glad you did.

What a remarkable lyrical open easy read. I have encouraged anyone who cares about classical music to read it. It’s a gem!

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