



No Vivaldi in the Garage: A Requiem for Classical Music in North America

Sheldon Morgenstern

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For nearly 40 years, Sheldon Morgenstern has devoted his life's work to classical music in a highly successful career as a musician, symphony orchestra conductor, teacher and director of a major music festival. In this memoir, he weaves together the engaging story of his own experiences with forthright and harsh commentary on the people and institutions responsible for the rapidly deteriorating state of the performing arts in the United States and Canada. In a work rich with colourful anecdotes about family, friends and colleagues, Morgenstern reflects on his childhood in Cleveland, Ohio, summers at the Brevard Music Festival, studies under Ernst von Dohnanyi at Florida State University, and years at Northwestern University. He recounts playing French horn in the Atlanta Symphony, studying conducting at the New England Conservatory, his long tenures as Artistic Director of the Eastern Music Festival at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina, and performances as guest conductor with hundreds of orchestras around the world. Morgenstern also laments his disappointing tenure as Consultant for Programme Planning and Content during the planning stages of the Wolf Trap Farm Park for the Performing Arts, detailing his battles with patron Catherine Shouse. Morgenstern scrutinizes the reasons behind the increasing mediocrity of classical music and the precarious financial state of professional symphony orchestras, some of which have already declared bankruptcy. He sharply criticizes the National Endowment for the Arts, the Canada Council, the American Symphony Orchestra League, orchestra boards, politicians at all levels of government, arts councils, agents and the elimination of music education in nearly all public schools. He is also highly critical of Yo-Yo Ma, Shlomo Mintz, Daniel Barenboim, and other superstars who command extraordinary fees for sometimes second-rate performances but do little to teach young artists or to support struggling companies and festivals. Morgenstern concludes by calling for strong actions that will ensure the economic survival of the arts without sacrificing excellence in performance or repertoire. Filled with vivid behind-the-scenes descriptions and highlighting such figures as Leonard Bernstein, Josef Gingold, Glenn Gould, Robert Joffrey, Eric Leinsdorf, Wynton Marsalis, Michael Rabin, Leonard Rose, Gunther Schuller and William Schuman, "No Vivaldi in the Garage" offers a refreshingly candid insider's perspective on the classical music scene.

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