



Hearing History: A Reader

By Mark Smith

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Hearing History: A Reader By Mark Smith

Hearing History is a long-needed introduction to the basic tenets of what is variously termed historical acoustemology, auditory culture, or aural history. Gathering twenty-one of the field's most important writings, this volume will deepen and broaden our understanding of changing perceptions of sound and hearing and the ongoing education of our senses. The essays stimulate thinking on key questions: What is aural history? Why has vision tended to triumph over hearing in historical accounts? How might we begin to reclaim the sounds of the past?

With theoretical and practical essays on the history of sound and hearing in Europe and the United States, the book draws on historical approaches ranging from empiricism to postmodernism. Some essays show the historian of technology at work, others highlight how military, social, intellectual, and cultural historians have tackled historical acoustemologies. Investigating soundscapes that include a Puritan meetinghouse in colonial New England, the belfries of a French village at the close of the Old Regime, the court hall of Elizabeth I, and a Civil War battlefield, the essays vary just as widely in their topics, which include noise as a marker of social and cultural differences, the privileging of music as the sound of art, the persistence of Aristotelian ideas of sound into the seventeenth century, developments in sound related to medical practice, the advent of sound-recording technology, and noise pollution.

This important new anthology will help us to contextualize the past within the larger rubric of all of the senses and thus free mainstream historical writing from the powerful but blinding focus on vision alone.

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Editorial Review

Review

The history of sound is an emerging field of great importance to cultural and social analysis. *Hearing History* offers a broad introduction to the subject that will be of enduring value.

(Michael O'Malley *George Mason University*)

This bold and edgy collection will serve as an excellent entrée into the exciting new field of aural history. Mark Smith's introduction is at once lucid and comprehensive. *Hearing History* is absolutely first rate.

(Peter A. Coclanis *University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*)

Hearing History is a revelation. Although the authors of these groundbreaking essays are concerned specifically with the history of sound, their methods are so sophisticated and their reach is so formidable that they lead the reader on a veritable discovery tour of the past.

(George Huppert *University of Illinois, Chicago*)

The sum of the parts is worth more than the whole. The selections are so valuable in themselves that one need not join the editor in combat over the relative merits of hearing over seeing.

(*Journal of Interdisciplinary History*)

An excellent introduction to aural history showing not only a broad range of scholarly interests but also how research into sound and hearing can inform our understanding of the past . . . this densely packed volume provides an excellent introduction to the research in the history and meaning of sound.

(*Journal of Southern History*)

About the Author

Mark M. Smith is a professor of history at the University of South Carolina in Columbia. His books include "Listening to Nineteenth-Century America."

Users Review

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Aaron Tyler:

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Carolyn Berndt:

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