

Art as Contemplation

The greatest artistic masters of the past saw themselves as participating in something much larger than themselves. Individual self-expression is largely a 20th-century construct, divorcing art from its true and highest function: contemplation - artistic, philosophical, and, at its essence, always religious. We have lost touch with this foundational aspect of art in our entertainment-saturated culture - how are we ever to learn to look at/listen to/read art in a meaningful way, much less ascertain its best and rightful place in Christian worship and evangelism?

Delta David Gier has been called a dynamic voice on the music scene, recognized widely for his penetrating interpretations of the standard symphonic repertoire, passionate commitment to new music, and significant community engagement. Orchestras Mr. Gier has conducted include the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony, the St. Louis Symphony, and the Minnesota Orchestra. In Europe, his engagements include the Bergen Philharmonic, the Polish National Radio Symphony, and the Bucharest Philharmonic, along with many other orchestras in Italy, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Turkey. He studied at the University of Michigan under the renowned conducting teacher Gustav Meier, along with studies at the Tanglewood Music Center and Aspen Music Festival. He was a Fulbright scholar in eastern Europe from 1988-90. He has chaired the music jury of the Pulitzer Prize and is a frequent panelist for the League of American orchestras. The Lakota Music Project was developed under Gier's direction to address racial tensions between Native Americans and whites in the region the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra serves. Other engagement projects with the SDSO have included Arab, Chinese and Sudanese/Somali refugees.

I. Prayer

A. How do we pray?

B. What is your most meaningful moment in prayer?

C. Why contemplate? (or, Is there something beyond the laundry list?)

II. Josef Pieper's "Only the Lover Sings"

A. Three types of contemplation

B. Two aspects of artistic contemplation

III. The 20th Century and art

A. World War I

B. Art and truth-telling

C. Art divorced from contemplation

IV. Christian considerations

A. Buying in to 20th-Century artistic ideals

B. Rediscovering contemplation

C. Worship