



# Learning in a Musical Key: Insight for Theology in Performative Mode (Princeton Theological Monograph)

*Lisa M. Hess*

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Description: Learning in a Musical Key examines the multidimensional problem of the relationship between music and theological education. Lisa Hess argues that, in a delightful and baffling way, musical learning has the potential to significantly alter and inform our conception of the nature and process of theological learning. In exploring this exciting intersection of musical learning and theological training, Hess asks two probing questions. First, What does learning from music in a performative mode require? Classical modes of theological education often founder on a dichotomy between theologically musical and educational discourses. It is extremely difficult for many to see how the perceivedly nonmusical learn from music. Is musicality a universally human potential? In exploring this question Hess turns to the music-learning theory of Edwin Gordon, which explores music's unique mode of teaching/learning, its primarily aural-oral mode. This challenge leads to the study's second question: How does a theologian, in the disciplinary sense, integrate a performative mode into critical discourse? Tracking the critical movements of this problem, Hess provides an inherited, transformational logic as a feasible path for integrating a performative mode into multidimensional learning. This approach emerges as a distinctly relational, embodied, multidimensional, and non-correlational performative-mode theology that breaks new ground in the contemporary theological landscape. As an implicitly trinitarian method, rooted in the relationality of God, this non-correlational method offers a practical theological contribution to the discipline of Christian spirituality, newly claimed here as a discipline of transformative teaching/learning through the highly contextualized and self-implicated scholar into relationally formed communities, and ultimately into the world. Endorsements: ""This book tackles a vitally important field-the relation between music and theological education. Hess pushes us to think hard about what theology in a 'performative' mode might look like. An adventurous and bold book."" -- Jeremy Begbie Duke University ""Lisa Hess challenges us to ponder how music and learning actually work to transform our lives. This provocative study draws on diverse sources from history, philosophy, education, and music theory to construct a promising new approach to doing theology in a performative mode. What Hess offers us in this symphonic masterpiece is nothing less than insight, which she identifies as 'music's primary gift.'"" --Arthur Holder Graduate Theological Union ""Lisa Hess introduces her book with three significant questions: how do we learn, do theology, and build a unified community of diverse peoples through music? These questions are intriguing and urgent in a world where the process of knowing and the work of theology both demand full participation of all our human senses. Hess dives deeply into these questions, and she surfaces with a vibrant picture of music as a living, embodied, relational set of practices that simultaneously express, question, and illumine theology. Her presentation is richly textured and integrative, drawing deeply on the fields of history, ethnomusicology, education, music, spirituality, and aesthetics. What lingers after reading Hess's book is a bounty of knowledge composed into the performative mode of music, beckoning readers back into the pages to sing and play with the harmonies until we truly understand the new possibilities that she presents."" --Mary Elizabeth Moore Boston University ""Christian theology, like musicology, uses words to describe realities and experiences that resist explanation. Lisa Hess explores how theologians could better attend to the performative, embodied nature of spirituality in all its various forms. This book is a helpful reminder of how elusive the subject of theology is, and points readers to a variety of voices and questions that are often neglected in th

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