

Alex Ross Delivers 2018 Elson Lecture April 19, 5:15pm in Paine Hall

“For at least a century, [classical] music has been captive to a cult of mediocre elitism that tries to manufacture self-esteem by clutching at empty formulas of intellectual superiority...I abandoned the notion of classical superiority, which led to a crisis of faith: if the music wasn’t great and serious and high and mighty, what was it?”
—Alex Ross, interview in *The New York Observer*

CAMBRIDGE, MA: Music critic and MacArthur Fellow Alex Ross will give the Harvard University Department of Music’s 2018 Louis C. Elson Lecture in John Knowles Paine Concert Hall on Thursday April 19 at 5:15 pm. The lecture, titled “Wagner, Hitler, and the Cult of Art” is free and open to the public; no tickets are required. Paine Hall is wheelchair accessible. The Hall is located at 3 Oxford Street, Cambridge, a five-minute walk from the Harvard Square Red Line stop.

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ALEX ROSS has been contributing to *The New Yorker* since 1993, and he became the magazine’s music critic in 1996. He writes about classical music, covering the field from the Metropolitan Opera to the downtown avant-garde, and has also contributed essays on pop music, literature, twentieth-century history, and gay life. His first book, *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century*, a cultural history of music since 1900, won a National Book Critics Circle award and the *Guardian* First Book Award, and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. In 2013, the Southbank Centre, in London, mounted a yearlong festival inspired by *The Rest Is Noise*, involving more than a hundred concerts. His second book is the essay collection *Listen to This*. He is now at work on a third book, called “Wagnerism,” describing the composer’s vast cultural impact. In 2008, he was named a MacArthur Fellow; he has also received an Arts and Letters Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Belmont Prize in Germany. Ross writes the blog, “[The Rest is Noise](#).”

A 1990 graduate of **Harvard University**, Ross studied under composer Peter Lieberson and was a DJ on the classical and underground rock departments of WHRB. He earned an A.B. in English *summa cum laude* for a thesis on James Joyce, but began his career reviewing classical music CDs for the magazine *Fanfare*. He then wrote for *The New Republic*, worked as a stringer for *The New York Times* and eventually *The New Yorker*, where he wrote the obituary for Kurt Cobain because the magazine lack a staff writer for popular music.