



November 30, 2021

Peter C. Bouteneff, Jeffers Engelhardt, and Robert Saler, eds., *Arvo Pärt: Sounding the Sacred*, reviewed by Jennifer Newsome Martin

Eastern Orthodox composer Arvo Pärt (b. 1935) is well-known and much beloved for his classical and religious, often transcendent, music which has transported his listeners for decades. *Arvo Pärt: Sounding the Sacred* represents a marvelously interdisciplinary and impressively consistent collection of substantive contributions which draw from sound studies, musicology, theology, history, performance studies, phenomenology, and ethnomusicology to further contextualize Pärt's contributions. The energy, dynamism, and collegial tone of these essays bear witness to their emergence from a conference of the same name which was held at St. Vladimir's Seminary in May 2017.

The collection's fourteen essays are organized into five distinct parts. These include (1) a two-essay introduction which situates the book's distinctive approach to Pärt; (2) history and context, including detailed and suggestive treatments of Pärt's interface with children's puppet theatre, Flemish polyphony, verbal and silent texts, Soviet (and American and British) cinematic scores, as well as the student culture of 1970s USSR; (3) performance, a section comprised of an interview between editor Peter Bouteneff and conductor Paul Hillier and a piece on the dialectical relationship between sound and silence in Pärt's compositions; (4) materiality and phenomenology, with intriguing essays on the interplay of the material acoustics of Pärt's inventive compositional technique of tintinnabulation and a kind of silence construed not as cessation of music but rather "nonrepresentational, nonfigurative sound" (134); on temporality and Pärt's "medievalism"; and the phenomenality of touch, especially the touch of a human body poised at an instrument. The final set of

essays is (5) on Pärt and theology from both Christian and Sufi perspectives, the latter of which connects Part's music to the phenomenon of longing for ultimate union with the divine through Qur'anic and philosophical Sufi texts in addition to 13th and 14th century Sufi poetry and music.

Read Jennifer Newsome Martin's full review [here](#).

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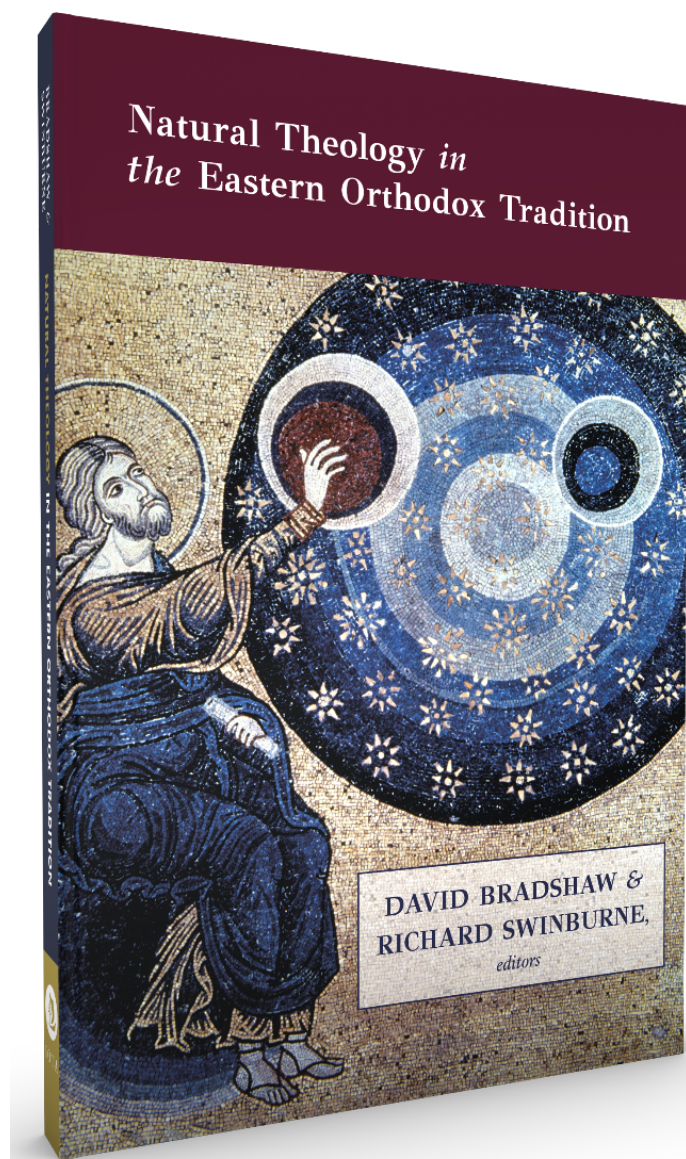
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