

# Composition and Cornel West: Exploring the Intersection of Music and Social Justice

When we think about the power of music, we often think of how it can inspire emotions, bring people together, or transport us to another time and place. But music also has the ability to convey deeper messages and provoke thought about social justice issues. One musician who has dedicated his career to using music as a tool for social change is the renowned composer and philosopher, Cornel West.

## Meeting the Maestro: Who is Cornel West?

Cornel West is not your average philosopher. With his signature dreadlocks and distinctive fashion sense, West has become a cultural icon in his own right. Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1953, West's upbringing was deeply rooted in both music and social justice. His mother was a teacher and his father was a civilian defense worker, but West's true passion lied in his musical talent. At a young age, he became an accomplished pianist and even won a scholarship to the New England Conservatory of Music.

While studying music, West's interest in philosophy grew, and he eventually pursued a Ph.D. in philosophy from Princeton University. This decision shaped the trajectory of his career, as he merged his love for music with his dedication to social justice.

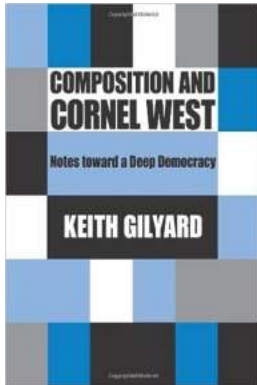
## Composition and Cornel West: Notes toward a Deep Democracy by Keith Gilyard (1st Edition, Kindle Edition)

★★★★☆ 4.2 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 1353 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled



Screen Reader : Supported  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 176 pages



## **The Harmonious Composition: Music as a Vehicle for Activism**

One of the defining features of West's work is his ability to combine his philosophical ideas with musical composition. Through his music, West aims to initiate conversations about social justice and inspire individuals to take action.

For West, music has the unique ability to transcend language barriers and reach people on a deeply emotional level. He believes that music can serve as a bridge, connecting individuals from different backgrounds and encouraging them to work together for a more just society.

West's compositions often incorporate elements of jazz, gospel, and classical music. This eclectic blend of genres serves as a metaphor for the diversity of voices and perspectives needed to address social justice issues effectively. By combining musical styles, West hopes to demonstrate the power of unity and collaboration.

## **Tuning into Social Justice: The Message Behind the Music**

Each of West's compositions tells a unique story about social justice. From his symphonic masterpiece "Justice and Jazz" to his soulful ballad "Resilient

Resistance," each piece captures a different aspect of the struggle for equality and liberation.

"Justice and Jazz" is perhaps one of West's most famous compositions. Combining the improvisational nature of jazz with the precision of a symphony orchestra, the piece embodies the idea that progress requires both structure and creative thinking. It celebrates the boldness and individuality of jazz while acknowledging the importance of collective action.

Another notable composition by West is "Resilient Resistance." This powerful and emotional piece draws inspiration from the Black Lives Matter movement and serves as a rallying cry for justice. Through its haunting melody and thought-provoking lyrics, the composition urges listeners to confront the issues of systemic racism and oppression.

## **Resonating with the Masses: The Impact of West's Music**

West's compositions have not only touched the hearts of individuals but have also made a significant impact on social justice movements worldwide. His music has been featured at protests, rallies, and even political campaigns, becoming an anthem for those fighting for change.

Through his music, West aims to bring together activists, musicians, and artists to create a cohesive and powerful force for social change. He firmly believes that the arts have the ability to shape public discourse and influence policy decisions.

## **The Ongoing Symphony: West's Legacy and Future Projects**

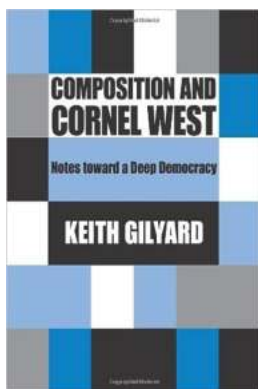
As Cornel West continues to compose music and engage in philosophical discourse, his impact on the world of music and social justice only grows

stronger. In addition to his accomplishments as a composer and philosopher, West is also an esteemed professor and public intellectual.

West's passion for social justice and music continues to be his driving force. He remains an influential figure in contemporary philosophy, constantly challenging societal norms and encouraging critical thinking. Through his music, he hopes to inspire future generations to use their talents for the greater good.

**In**

Cornel West's unique blend of music and philosophy has created a harmonious symphony of social justice activism. Through his compositions, he challenges and inspires listeners to confront the most pressing issues of our time. As we tune in to West's music, we are reminded of the power of art to evoke change and build bridges across divides. Let us embrace this melody of activism and make our world a more just and equitable place.



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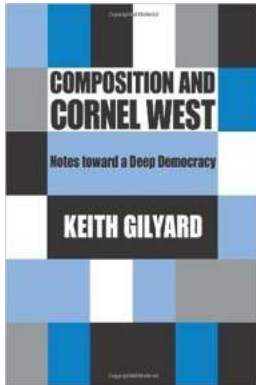
Composition and Cornel West: Notes toward a Deep Democracy identifies and explains key aspects of the work of Cornel West—the highly regarded scholar of religion, philosophy, and African American studies—as they relate to composition

studies, focusing especially on three rhetorical strategies that West suggests we use in our questioning lives as scholars, teachers, students, and citizens.

In this study, author Keith Gilyard examines the strategies of Socratic Commitment (a relentless examination of received wisdom), Prophetic Witness (an abiding concern with justice and the plight of the oppressed), and Tragicomic Hope (a keep-on-pushing sensibility reflective of the African American freedom struggle). Together, these rhetorical strategies comprise an updated form of cultural criticism that West calls prophetic pragmatism.

This volume, which contains the only interview in which Cornel West directly addresses the field of composition, sketches the development of Cornel West's theories of philosophy, political science, religion, and cultural studies and restates the link between Deweyan notions of critical intelligence and the notion of critical literacy developed by Ann Berthoff, Ira Shor, and Henry Giroux. Gilyard provides examples from the classroom to illustrate the possibilities of Socratic Commitment as part of composition pedagogy, shows the alignment of Prophetic Witness with traditional aims of critical composition, and in his chapter on Tragicomic Hope, addresses African American expressive culture with an emphasis on music and artists such as Curtis Mayfield, Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, and Kanye West.

The first book to comprehensively connect the ideas of one of America's premier scholars of religion, philosophy and African American studies with composition theory and pedagogy, *Composition and Cornel West* will be valuable to scholars, teachers, and students interested in race, class, critical literacy, and the teaching of writing.



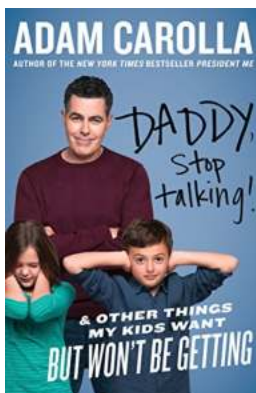
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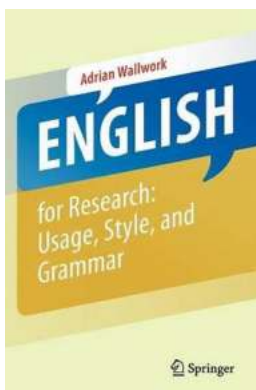
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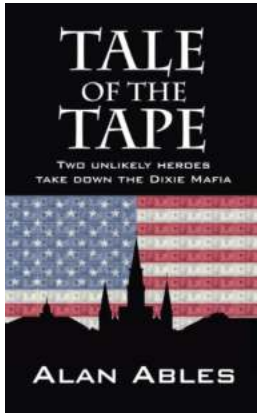
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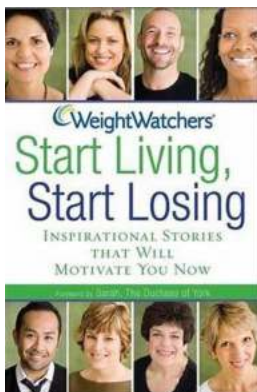
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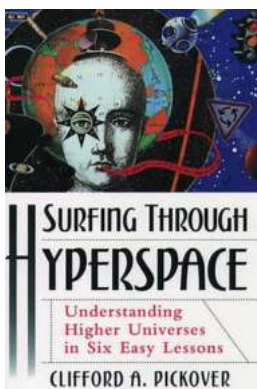
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