



The Noise of Time (Thorndike Press Large Print Basic Series)

Julian Barnes

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A masterful novel dedicated to the Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich, from the bestselling, Booker Prize-winning author of "The Sense of an Ending."

The book begins in 1936, with Dmitri Shostakovich petrified at the age of thirty and fearing for his livelihood and even his life. His opera "Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District" has just been denounced in Pravda in an article that certainly reflects the opinion of Joseph Stalin himself. Every night he waits on the landing outside his apartment, expecting NKVD agents to come and whisk him away. Shostakovich reflects on not only his predicament but also his own personal history, his parents and his various women and wives and his children, and all who are still alive themselves hang in the balance of his fate.

When the interrogation he fears does eventually arrive, a stroke of luck prevents him from becoming a casualty of the Great Terror that claims so many of his friends and contemporaries--"chips that had flown while the wood was being chopped." Still, the spectre of the government hovers over him for several further decades, forcing him to constantly weigh the merits of appeasing those in power against the integrity of his music. Barnes elegantly guides us through subsequent stages of Shostakovich's life, from being ground into the dirt under the thumb of despotism to being made to serve as a figurehead of Soviet values at a cultural conference in New York, and finally being forced into joining the Party. The trajectory of his career illuminates the evolution of the Soviet Union, with Nikita Khrushchev assuming its leadership, this providing no great joy to Shostakovich.

"The Noise of Time" is both a heartbreaking account of a relentlessly fascinating man's experience and a brilliant meditation on the meaning of art and its place in society."

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