

Fall 1987

Singing the B Minor Mass

Ingrid Wendt

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Recommended Citation

Wendt, Ingrid (1987) "Singing the B Minor Mass," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 29 , Article 38.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss29/38>

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Singing the B Minor Mass

Next to the last performance and Nancy,
crying, can't help it: how can anything
ever be this big again. Trish too,
who until this morning has never
forgotten to fix breakfast, her husband
saying this singing must fill her right up.

Stranger than fiction, my mother would say.
Last week a soprano whose name I still don't know
looked right through me at Sears
Auto Parts store and tonight you'd think we were old
friends, kept from each other by seating
arrangements no one thought about changing any

more than notes in a score: faces closed
tight as zero, such concentration, no one
knew anyone's name, where in the world
we'd later show up: Observer Graphics, rummage
sales, the meter maid wagon, outside of your own
kid's school a father whose kid goes there too.

Last night Nathan surprised me, went on about Noah,
newborn, named because in one look he saw a son
strong enough to live up to a name and Noah is
a name to live up to: opening
strangers up to each other—on sidewalks,
in stores—stopping because of a baby who knows

nothing except love, *love*, a word so total
to question it is absurd. Turning our heads,
this music tonight against all we ever have learned
of decorum (*Sanctus! Gloria!*), Bach's postulation
of such absolute form tonight again releasing us,
binding us, this magnificent counterpoint of control.

Ingrid Wendt