Nolan Gasser

Topics

Culture and Society, Historians, Lifestyle, Pop Culture and Entertainment

Travels From

California

Bio

Since his teens, Nolan Gasser has been combining his skills as a professional pianist and composer with his love of educating audiences on the “backstory” of music history, musicology, and aesthetics. To date he has delivered over a thousand programs that in various ways, and to varying degrees, dive “under the hood” of the music being performed, to the delight and edification of the listener. Over the past two decades, since receiving his Ph.D. in Musicology from Stanford University, Dr. Gasser has expanded beyond annotated concerts to dedicated speaking engagements—though generally enlivened with some live and/or recorded music. While his talks are at times aimed at academic or music-expert audiences (Stanford, Dartmouth, and Northwestern), they are more commonly aimed at general audiences—capitalizing on our universal love of music. These general audience music talks range from esteemed ideas festivals (Aspen, Skoll, Carmel, Lincoln Center, NEA, and CES), to corporate conferences (Hallmark, BlackRock, USB Bank, and American Insurance College), to scientific institutions (Mt. Sinai Beth Israel Hospital, Gladstone Institute, and NASA)—to music festivals and
public forums like TEDx and the Linda Hall Library.

**SPEECHES**

**Why You Like the Music You Do** Dr. Gasser gives an overview of his book *Why You Like It: The Science and Culture of Musical Taste*, on the sources, nature, and implications of our individual taste in music.

**Music & Technology: Pandora Radio and the Music Genome Project** Dr. Gasser, the Chief Musicologist of Pandora and architect of its Music Genome Project, gives an insider’s view of music technology, the ever-changing music, and the power of the Music Genome Project.

**Empowering Your Musical Taste** Dr. Gasser captures his audience, specifically addressing how to enhance and activate your musical taste, on behalf of a richer, healthier, and happier life.

**A History of Music and Culture** The history of music is widespread and detailed. Through discussion, recording, lecture, or performance, Dr. Gasser explores dozens of aspects of music including the origins, achievements, and influence of a given era, style, or individual figure and how music and our musical taste intersects with various aspects of our cultural and sub-cultural identity.

**Unlocking Productivity Through the Science of Music** Music relates to a wide range of scientific fields such as physics, neuroscience, cell biology, etc. Dr. Gasser uses his extensive knowledge of music to critically consider the science behind music and music’s profound interactions with your brain, body, and psychology that increase your creativity, mindfulness, and productivity.

**BOOKS**

**Why You Like It** The Science and Culture of Musical Taste

Flatiron Books

In this sweeping and authoritative book, Dr. Nolan Gasser—a composer, pianist, and musicologist, and the chief architect of the Music Genome Project, which powers Pandora Radio—breaks down what musical taste is, where it comes from, and what our favorite songs say about us.
REVIEWs: “Nolan’s presentation was entertaining, compelling, and insightful. Out of a list of 30 speakers that included Tom Friedman, David Brooks, Dave Barry, and Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, only Condoleezza Rice got more votes than Nolan for 'best speaker'! He always has an opening invitation to present at the Carmel Authors and Ideas Festival.”
– Carmel Authors and Ideas Festival

“Nolan’s lecture was a home run! We had a packed house and everyone was both educated and entertained. I’ve never had more attendees come up to me afterward and say how much they enjoyed a lecture. He delivered a complicated subject matter—the science of our musical tastes—in an accessible and entertaining style. His mix of visual graphics, humor, and his exceptional skills as a pianist left the audience enthralled.”
– Linda Hall Library (Kansas City), Modern Inventions Lecture Series

“I enthusiastically recommend Nolan Gasser without hesitation as an extremely engaging and entertaining speaker. Remarks I heard from attendees after his performance included: 'Fascinating that the parallels to our world are so strong!' 'Gasser’s approach is so akin to our way of analyzing problems.' 'Loved his live examples of similar themes across very different musicians. Although obvious when he pointed them out, I never recognized them before on my own!' The audience was so stimulated by Nolan’s presentation precisely because his stories and descriptions seemed so eerily familiar – although placed in an entirely new context. Long after Nolan’s presentation, many conversations continued to gravitate back to his points. Attendees were fascinated that they had found a kindred soul in an apparently unrelated field.”
– CQA Conference, Wynn Las Vegas

Praise for Why You Like It "[Why You Like It is] one of those rare books that both geeks and casual
listeners can enjoy, combining science, art and sheer enthusiasm to explain why you might love bluegrass while your significant other prefers the blues."

— *The Washington Post*

"Why You Like It is a beautifully written, fresh, and articulate explanation of the science and art of music that will greatly expand your understanding, knowledge, and love of all music. It doesn't get any better than this."

— Steve Miller, famed rock musician and Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee

"A sprawling, packed-to-the-brim study of the art and science of music, as monumental and as busy as a Bach fugue."

- *Kirkus Reviews*, a starred review