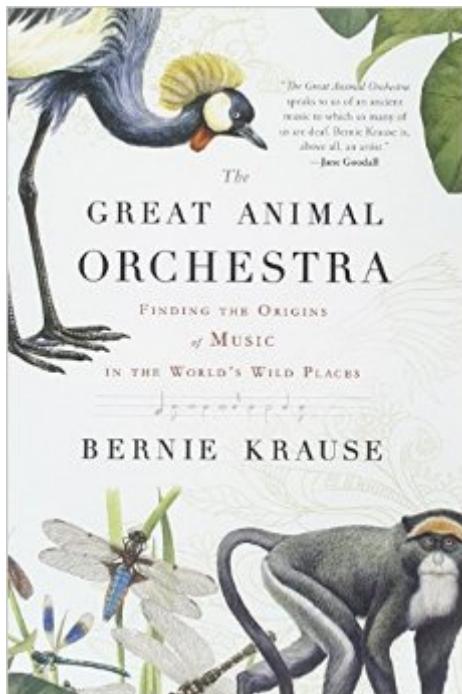


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# The Great Animal Orchestra: Finding The Origins Of Music In The World's Wild Places



## Synopsis

Musician and naturalist Bernie Krause is one of the world's leading experts in natural sound, and he's spent his life discovering and recording nature's rich chorus. Searching far beyond our modern world's honking horns and buzzing machinery, he has sought out the truly wild places that remain, where natural soundscapes exist virtually unchanged from when the earliest humans first inhabited the earth. Krause shares fascinating insight into how deeply animals rely on their aural habitat to survive and the damaging effects of extraneous noise on the delicate balance between predator and prey. But natural soundscapes aren't vital only to the animal kingdom; Krause explores how the myriad voices and rhythms of the natural world formed a basis from which our own musical expression emerged. From snapping shrimp, popping viruses, and the songs of humpback whales—whose voices, if unimpeded, could circle the earth in hours—to cracking glaciers, bubbling streams, and the roar of intense storms; from melody-singing birds to the organlike drone of wind blowing over reeds, the sounds Krause has experienced and describes are like no others. And from recording jaguars at night in the rain forest to encountering mountain gorillas in Africa's Virunga Mountains, Krause offers an intense and intensely personal narrative of the planet's deep and connected natural sounds and rhythm. *The Great Animal Orchestra* is the story of one man's pursuit of natural music in its purest form, and an impassioned case for the conservation of one of our most overlooked natural resources—the music of the wild.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In addition to playing with the Weavers, Bernie and his partner Paul Beaver introduced the synthesizer to rock, and they worked with the biggest names in music in the 1960s and 1970s. Bernie's previous book, *In A Wild Sanctuary*, explored how animals partition their environments to get their calls across without interfering with each other. This selective use of the soundscape, which must be seen as a vital part of ecology and evolution, is now called biophony (life-sound), and along with geophony (earth-sound, like water and wind), makes us more sensitive to what's going on around us. He has recorded thousands of animals, plants, and environments around the world, including many environments that have now disappeared. His work has been pioneering in giving us a whole different qualitative and quantitative approach to what we are losing ... and sounds often record what visual evidence alone cannot. Here, Bernie asks whether the sounds and rhythms of human music could have been adopted wholesale from the animals in our environments -- in short, whether animals taught us to sing and dance. The rhythms and songs of these animals will astound you, and give you a different perspective on the inspiration for our music.

All too rarely a book comes along that changes one's life and worldview by opening up new vistas of knowledge, thought and feeling. This is such a book. Bernie Krause built upon a musical education and grounding to create a new dimension of sound. After building a career in the music business--itself a rare achievement--he turned to the sounds of nature. He deals with sound as his mentor, considering sounds from the land and ocean, evaluating the organized sound of life itself, covering what he calls 'biophony' as a proto-orchestra, revealing the interior of the magnificent reality represented by the sounds of life that surround us every waking moment. The book has many dimensions: it is a scientific treatise of exceptional scholarly quality and clarity; it is a book of global scope, since the author has worked worldwide, on land, at sea and undersea in pursuing the soundscapes of animal life; the book studies and documents the influence of human activity on ecosystems that predate humanity by hundreds of thousands of years, explaining the destructive aspects of human-derived sound, which he calls 'noise'; and it is a richly anecdotal book of profound human insights, since it enables the reader to appreciate, in ways that were hitherto unavailable, the influence of sound in essentially every aspect of our lives, in places rich with mystery that most of us will never visit. Krause believes, and who are we to argue with him, that human communication over the millennia may be based on the natural sounds that preceded speech and singing--after all, animals, birds and marine life were here long before Man. If one had to level a criticism at the work, it would be the missed opportunity of not including a CD of natural sounds, or at least offering one to readers, but this does not happen. There is precedent: Nick

Mason, of Pink Floyd, is a committed automobile enthusiast who included a CD of some of his great collector cars in his book. That minor criticism aside, *Animal Orchestra* is beautifully written, in lucid prose that pleases the mind. It is not a casual or easy read, because it is a voyage of discovery, replete with arcane detail that calls for close, attentive scrutiny and thought, but the time spent will be well rewarded. A spiritual tone pervades the work, compelling one to believe that knowing the author would be a profoundly uplifting experience. His clarion call for greater respect for nature resounds from every page. This book is a great achievement. One will never hear or listen to the world the same way, ever again.

The Great Animal Orchestra By: Bernie Kraus  
Reviewed by: Mike Cumberland  
This book will change the way you listen. Krause awakens the spirit of the reader from the ennui of the everyday to the acoustic susurrations that surround us each day. As he notes, as a species, we now tend to block out our surrounding sounds with our own digital technology, but we also do this as a limbic brain protective / survival mechanism. Krause skillfully relates the progression of his early personal experiences to his journey of amassing a collection of soundscapes worthy for generations to come. This book brings his salient technical journal and professional writings into a consummate assemblage of easily understood ideas. His explanation and use of terms such as: spectrograms, geophonies, biophonies, and anthrophonies are easy to grasp through diagrams and his easy writing style. I was happily pleased that Mr. Krause made the reader aware of "The Sixth Extinction" concept through soundscape recordings -- but as much pleased that the point was not belaboured upon as Farley Mowat's *Sea of Slaughter*; which is down-right depressing. One particular *Ã©clat* phrase is particularly poignant, "... while a picture is worth a thousand words, a natural soundscape is worth a thousand pictures." (Krause, p. 71) This particular phrase alludes to the multi-dimensionality of life that Krause has captured in his extensive research studies. He not only clearly explains the three-dimensionality of vision, but on goes to concisely explain the fourth dimensionality of the inclusion of space and time through his spectrographs. To a curious reader one can extrapolate that Krause is verging on translating the fourth-dimensionality of time and space: to quantum mechanics, general relativity, and string theory -- that explains all fundamental forces of nature. This is a book that can be enjoyed as an introduction to soundscapes for the neophyte explorer, as well as the technically well acquainted in this burgeoning field. As a person who has worked with R. Murray Schafer for over thirty years learning about this field I can say it evokes more questions to be answered for future generations than it answers questions. This is as a great book should be -- it demands a response from the reader to act. Lastly, I think of The Great Animal

Orchestra's relevance for today. I need look no further than while I was in my early twenties when I was tree-planting massive clear-cuts in British Columbia. For four years I was in the areas of Terrace, Smithers, Hazelton, and Kitimat -- I reverently pause -- thinking of the existing fight to save this pristine land of paramount cultural / ecological significance and the current debacle with the Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipelines Project which will destroy this area. It is time for us to wake up from our soporific stupor of uncaring, greed-based, urban-life, and hear the thousands of voices. If you listen -- they are there.

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