
Pro Rege

Volume 37
Number 2 *Fine Arts Issue 2008*

Article 30

December 2008

Hearing Things

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Recommended Citation

De Smith, Bob (2008) "Hearing Things," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 37: No. 2, 44 - 45.
Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol37/iss2/30

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Hearing Things

Robert J. De Smith

Downstairs
My daughter is practicing her violin,
And I'm distracted.

I'm hearing things.

I blame the instrument:
You've heard it—
Its rings and echoes,
Overtones,
Its faint human squeaks
Of finger-printed oils
On wire.
Echoes that bounce
Out of square corners
And up the stairs.

Once, I pick up the phone:
No one there.
Once, I'm halfway down the staircase,
On the landing,
Before retreating:
Thought someone was calling me.

Human, wordless
Voices buzz my ears.

"Thus angels affect us oft,"
Says Donne.

Once I stand to peer
Out the window,
Expecting any moment
The sired ambulance:
False alarm.

Don't get me wrong,
She plays well—
I just hear things.

It's Bach,
Arresting when I
Tune in,
Order, movement, even passion.

But it's what I don't hear that keeps me on my toes.