

How to Kill a Dead Writer

by **Richard Kostelanetz** (September 2015)

Some years ago I judged that no American composer ever wrote as well about serious/classic music, whether measuring sentences, paragraphs, reviews, or extended essays, than Virgil Thomson (1896-1989). From 1924 to just before his death, in addition to composing music that is, alas, less memorable than his best prose, Thomson produced reviews and, especially, essays that are worth rereading and thus reprinting decades after their initial appearance. Because he was for fourteen years a newspaper journalist, Thomson became a model for later newspaper reviewers—among them, John Rockwell, Tim Page, and Anthony Tommasini. Nonetheless, few major writers have been so badly served, especially posthumously. [more>>>](#)