



Reader Discussion Guide

ANTIPHONY

By Chris Katsaropoulos

1. What does the title of the novel, “ANTIPHONY,” mean? Why do you think the author chose this as the title of the book?

2. The central question of ANTIPHONY is: “What if the universe, instead of being a giant machine, is really a giant thought?” Why do you think this question haunts Theodore through the course of the novel? What do you think is the significance of this question? And what do you think is the answer to this question?

3. A defining theme of ANTIPHONY is the contrast between the physical/rational/scientific world and the world of spirit and consciousness. How do you think Theodore reacts to the shift between these two worlds? How do these shifts affect his way of looking at the world around him? What do you think is happening to Theodore during the dream or vision sequences in ANTIPHONY? Do you think Theodore is losing his sanity, or having visions of a higher reality?

4. There is a strong link throughout ANTIPHONY between String Theory and music, from the opening scene in which Theodore contemplates a Schubert symphony as he nervously walks towards his presentation, to the final scene in which Theodore falls to his knees in song. Describe some of the other links between music and physics that appear in ANTIPHONY. What are the other ways in which music plays a defining role in Theodore’s life and his view of the universe and the world around him?

5. Like the form of a wave in physics, the structure of ANTIPHONY modulates between physical and spiritual realities. Discuss the irony behind the fact that Theodore is 'excommunicated' from the scientific community for using the word "God" in his speech.

6. In the opening scene of ANTIPHONY, Theodore's wife Ilene is described as being several inches taller than him, "and that has always been in his mind an indicator of the underlying basis of their relationship: He is always looking up at the sky towards her, and she is always looking down at the ground towards him." What do you think is the significance of this description of their relationship? How would you feel if you were married to Theodore as he goes through the transformations that happen over the course of ANTIPHONY? What do you think will happen to Theodore's and Ilene's relationship next?

7. Theodore contemplates the importance and meaning of singularities and infinities in String Theory equations several times throughout the book. What do the terms "singularity" and "infinity" mean in the context of a scientific or mathematical equation? What do you think is the importance or meaning of the equation $0 \times \infty = 1$?

8. The opening quote of ANTIPHONY is: "The courage of the poet is to keep ajar the door that leads into madness." Why do you think the author chose this quote as a prelude to the story? How do you think this quote relates to Theodore, the choral work *Rejoice in the Lamb* by Benjamin Britten, and the poetry of Christopher Smart?

9. Theodore's quest as a String Theory physicist is to find the final Theory of Everything, which explains the secrets of the origins of the Universe and how it works. Do you think Theodore ultimately achieves this by the end of the book?