Alex Ross has been contributing to The New Yorker since 1993, and he became the magazine’s music critic in 1996. He writes about classical music, covering the field from the Metropolitan Opera to the downtown avant-garde, and has also contributed essays on pop music, literature, twentieth-century history, and gay life. His first book, “The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century,” a cultural history of music since 1900, won a National Book Critics Circle award and the Guardian First Book Award, and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. In 2013, the Southbank Centre, in London, mounted a yearlong festival inspired by “The Rest Is Noise,” involving more than a hundred concerts. His second book is the essay collection “Listen to This.” He is now at work on a third book, called “Wagnerism,” describing the composer’s vast cultural impact. In 2008, he was named a MacArthur Fellow; he has also received an Arts and Letters Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Belmont Prize in Germany.