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American Orchestras in the Nineteenth Century

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Studies of concert life in nineteenth-century America have generally been limited to large orchestras and the programs we are familiar with today. But as this book reveals, audiences of that era enjoyed far more diverse musical experiences than this focus would suggest. To hear an orchestra, people were more likely to head to a beer garden, restaurant, or summer resort than to a concert hall. And what they heard weren't just symphonic works—programs also included opera excerpts and arrangements, instrumental showpieces, comic numbers, and medleys of patriotic tunes.

This book brings together musicologists and historians to investigate the many orchestras and programs that developed in nineteenth-century America. In addition to reflecting on the music that orchestras played and the socioeconomic aspects of building and maintaining orchestras, the book considers a wide range of topics, including audiences, entrepreneurs, concert arrangements, tours, and musicians' unions. The authors also show that the period saw a massive influx of immigrant performers, the increasing ability of orchestras to travel across the nation, and the rising influence of women as listeners, patrons, and players. Painting a rich and detailed picture of nineteenth-century concert life, this collection will greatly broaden our understanding of America's musical history.

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