Fandom

Harrington, C.
Gray, Jonathan
Sandvoss, Cornel

Published by NYU Press

17

Loving Music

Listeners, Entertainments, and the Origins of Music Fandom in Nineteenth-Century America

Daniel Cavicchi

After having attended the opera four nights in a row in 1884, 24-year-old Lucy Lowell chastised herself by writing in her diary, "I suppose it can't be good for a person to go to things that excite her so that she can't fix her mind on anything for days afterwards" (Lowell 1884: April 19).[1] Lowell was the daughter of Judge John Lowell and a member of one of the first families of Boston. While many young women of her social standing spent their time attracting appropriate male suitors by acquiring rudimentary skills in singing and piano playing or self-consciously showing themselves off in the boxes of the city's growing number of concert halls and theaters, Lucy eschewed such social intrigue and instead became truly obsessed with onstage sound and spectacle. She attended performances by almost every touring opera and symphonic star that passed through Boston, every rehearsal and concert of the new Boston Symphony Orchestra, and many local festivals, band concerts, and musical theater productions. In the seven volumes of her diary, which she wrote between 1880 and 1888, she wrote page after page of description about her experiences of hearing music. She only mechanically mentioned attending singing lessons on Mondays and Thursdays; she sometimes referred to expectations about her own socially mandated performances with disdain. "Had a dinner party for Miss Tweedy. Mabel + Hattie were the other girls, John Howard Messers, G. D. Chapin, L. Pierce + R. Loug, gentlemen," she wrote in 1880. "I had to sing in eve'g. Bah!" (Lowell 1880: January 28).

Lowell was not alone; since the mid–nineteenth century, increasing numbers of young people in America's rapidly growing cities had formed a unique and sustained attachment to the world of public concerts. People had listened to music before the 1850s, of course; indeed, concert going was an activity that a member of the elite in the United States had had the leisure to indulge at least since the American Revolution. But before mid-century, attending a concert more often than not meant attending a special event that was as much social as musical, an opportunity for people in a community to come together in a ritual space. During the 1850s, increasing numbers of national tours by professional virtuosos, supported by new systems of concert management, enabled people to develop new ways of acting musically that were centered less on amateur performance among friends in the privacy of one's home than on regularly witnessing professional performers in public halls. Young "music lovers," like Lowell, constituted a group that, for the first time in American history, was able to shape its musical experiences entirely around commercial entertainments like concerts, theater, and public exhibitions.

In this chapter, I will outline the ways in which the practices of music lovers not only transformed America's musical life, setting the ground for a late-nineteenth-century music business based on listening technologies like the phonograph, but also provided models for cultural consumption that would be adopted and extended in twentieth-century mass culture, particularly by those we today call "fans." For several years, I have studied the diaries, scrapbooks, and letters of people living in the nineteenth-century urban United States in order to learn more about how they understood music. Scattered widely in state and private archives, many of the materials have not been studied as evidence of musical life. Together, however, they offer powerful evidence that, while fandom is often characterized in media studies as a product of mass consumer culture in the twentieth century, the basic practices associated with fandom—idealized connection with a star, strong feelings of memory and nostalgia, use of collecting to develop a sense of self, for example—precede the development of electronic "mass communication" technologies. Music loving suggests that fandom's origins may have less to do with diffuse and private consumption through modern electronic media than with shared modes of participation in older systems of commodified leisure.

Reframing Musical Experience

Cities in the United States had slightly different trajectories for developing new entertainment markets and commodifying musical experience, based on the idiosyncrasies of geographical location, demographics, and religious influences. Boston, for instance, first created markets around making music, including sheet music publishing and instruments sales, thanks to a Puritan prohibition on theater that was not repealed until 1797 and whose effects lingered long after. Overall, however, markets focused on hearing music developed in most eastern cities by the 1850s. Pleasure gardens, theaters and concert halls, taverns, museum stages, and minstrel shows—all increased in number between 1840 and 1870 in cities like New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Charleston, and New Orleans. Concert programs, once one-sided announcements of song titles, became, after the Civil War, multipage, stapled documents with advertisements for soap, shoes, corsets, and pianos, alongside the usual list of songs to be performed. Performers themselves became commodities for sale, advertised in circulars and managed by entrepreneurs who carefully manipulated artists' repertoires, schedules, and appearances (Gottschalk 1881: 122).

Along with musical entertainment came a shift in understanding about what music was. Before 1800, music had primarily existed either as a private amateur pastime, made among friends and family, or as an elaborate public ritual, either in street parades or at church services. One could love it, but its embeddedness in social functions made more likely that one loved that which the music enabled. But commodification encouraged an attachment to music's own singular effects. Concerts and public performances, especially, segmented musical experience into distinct phases of production (composition), distribution (performance), and consumption (listening). Understanding musical experience as a thing that one could anonymously purchase and consume must have been an extraordinary idea for people used to having to painstakingly make sounds, through singing or playing, in order to have "music" in the first place. The purchase of instruments and music, the lessons, the rehearsals, the mistakes, the labor—all that was separated out, given to others, and made invisible, so that one could, if he or she so chose, simply engage in the act of hearing, of audiencing. Not only could people indulge in regular, timed, and relatively reliable music performances but also, by "just listening" to those performances, they were able to encounter music anew.

One part of the appeal of the seemingly endless stream of virtuosos at midcentury, for example, was the extent to which each performer surpassed expectations about what was possible in musical performance. As a critic wrote about Edward Seguin's first appearance in the opera "Andie; or, The Love Test," at Boston's Tremont Theater in 1838, "The moment Seguin opened his mouth, one universal gape of astonishment infected all, such was the wonder produced by his magnificent organ" (quoted in Clapp 1968: 376). William Cullen Bryant noted that concerts could even surprise the most jaded of audience members, as happened during a concert by pianist Leopold De Meyer in 1846:

> A veteran teacher of music in Buffalo, famous for being hard to be pleased by any public musical entertainment, found himself unable to sit still during the first piece played by DeMeyer, but rose, in the fullness of his delight, and continued standing. When the music ceased, he ran to him and shook both of his hands, again and again, with most uncomfortable energy. At the end of the next performance he sprang again on the platform and hugged the artist so rapturously that the room rang with laughter. (Bryant & Voss 1975: 438)

An important consequence of such encounters, for listeners, was a new and heightened awareness of the personal qualities of performers. In a time when romantic ideas of a core individual self were taking hold and, in romantic relationships, people were striving to achieve an intense "sharing of selfhood" (McMahon 1998: 66), the act of loving music often idealized identification with performers, similar to the communion nineteenth-century romance readers often felt with characters and with authors. Especially after repeated encounters with the same performer, music lovers often began to feel a strong and uniquely charged connection to that performer's unchanging, "inner" self. In fact, the word "star" signified this attitude. First used as theater slang in the 1820s (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2005) and often applied after 1850 to designate the new "system" of theater production that focused on traveling virtuosos rather than local stock troupes, a star was not just an actor or a singer but a unique person whose presence transcended any one role, burning brightly through the artificial masks of the stage.

Many stars of the nineteenth century—Ole Bull, Anna Thillon, Anna Seguin, Marta Alboni—inspired music lovers to understand their listening experiences as part of a continuing and reciprocal relationship with a

specific performer. However, the first music star to be widely associated with such feelings of personal connection was Jenny Lind, the Swedish opera singer who contracted with impresario P. T. Barnum in 1850 to tour the United States. Lind had been an opera star in Europe in the late 1840s, famous for her roles, but in her concert tour she was promoted by Barnum as "simply Jenny." In fact, Barnum shrewdly hyped her simplicity, innocence, and humility as a contrast to both the alleged immorality of the theater and her own otherworldly singing talent. As historian John Dizikes put it, "People searched her appearance and especially her face for clues to that inner person [. . .] she would begin hesitantly, nervously, and then: her talent would come to the rescue, her voice, almost as though it existed independently of the body which contained it, would gush out in crystalline splendor and convert a precarious moment into an ecstatic one" (1993: 133).

In diaries and letters, Lind's audience members emphasize Lind's personal character. William Hoffman, a clerk who was in the crowd awaiting Lind's arrival in New York in 1850 and who showed up several times with the crowds outside Castle Garden, hoping to get inside but stymied by the high ticket prices, nevertheless repeatedly copied newspaper reports about her personal qualities in his diary, concluding that "her great powers of benevolence speak for her the most enviable qualities of soul that any being ever could possess" (1850: September 21). Henry Southworth, a twenty-year-old New York City store clerk who, like Hoffman, participated in the welcoming crowds and sought to get a glimpse of her at her hotel, described his experience of hearing her sing in terms of her character: "I cannot express my delight and wonder in words, she is indeed a wonderful woman, she sings with perfect ear and is at home, in everything she does" (1850: September 13). Lind even seemed to heighten auditors' awareness of their own selves. Caroline B. White, in response to hearing Jenny Lind in Boston, wrote, "I have heard her! The wonderful Jenny! And though language itself has been exhausted in her praise—it seems to me too much cannot be said, *such* a volume of *such sounds*—singing, clear melodious—can any one listen to them and not feel one's aspirations glow warmer, loftier, holier, than ever before?" (1851: November 22).

Aside from being "star-struck," music lovers were also attracted by the sheer novelty and power of auditory experience. Part of the excitement of attending concert halls was experiencing music with a mass of people; diarists often commented on the fullness (or emptiness) of the house at a performance and of the roar of the crowd at the finish of pieces or in

demand of an encore. Likewise, music lovers were enamored of hearing someone confidently project his or her voice or the sound of his or her instrument into a large auditorium, a unique and memorable acoustic situation. Even business directories for cities like Boston and New York touted the magnificence of their halls for audiences. For example, one Boston directory for 1860–1861 glowingly described the city's Music Hall, built just six years earlier, in terms of its structural characteristics, including its ceiling "45 feet above the upper balcony," the seventeen unique, semicircular windows "that light the hall by day," the hall's capacity of one thousand five hundred people on the floor, and the fact that "the whole has been constructed with special reference to the science of acoustics—a consideration of the utmost importance in a building intended as a music hall" (*Sketches and Business Directory of Boston* 1861: 109).

Concertgoers themselves were careful to note in their diaries the qualities of the halls they had attended, from Lucy Buckminster Emerson Lowell (1845: October 29) noting the "intense perfume" of the straw-filled seats in Boston's new Howard Athenaeum to William Hoffman (1850: November 19), who, after finally attending a Jenny Lind concert, wrote in his diary mostly about the "size and finish" of New York's Tripler Hall. Indeed, music lovers learned the acoustic properties of various halls so as to position themselves to best hear the music coming from the stage. Joseph Sill was thrilled when he was able to obtain a box for a John Braham performance where, as he commented, "we were so close to him that his softest tones were heard" (1840: December 2). In contrast, Lucy Lowell was none too pleased when she was forced to sit in the balcony of Boston's Apollo Theater where "the orchestra + chorus sounded all blurred" (Lowell 1884: April 30). Henry Van Dyke, writing in 1909, described the ways in which an imagined music lover thought of his seat as a secret treasure, chosen explicitly for its acoustic properties:

> The Lover of Music had come to his favorite seat. It was in the front row of the balcony, just where the curve reaches its outermost point, and, like a rounded headland, meets the unbroken flow of the long-rolling, invisible waves of rhythmical sound. The value of that chosen place did not seem to be known to the world, else there would have been a higher price demanded for the privilege of occupying it. (1909: 5–6)

Again and again, listeners talked about hearing a performance as an astonishingly physical experience. Music lovers' profound emotional

attachment to stars in part came from attending fully to the physical presence of the virtuosos who performed onstage—to the power and quality of their voices projected from the stage to the dexterity of their bodies as they manipulated instruments. In response to opera, especially, music lovers often expressed overwhelming visceral ecstasy, imagining music "filling their souls" to the point of losing composure, something that was experienced as excitingly dangerous and quite cathartic within the behavioral strictures of middle-class Victorian culture (Rabinowitz 1993). Walt Whitman, in *Leaves of Grass,* drawing on his own fascination with New York opera in the 1840s, described music listening as a kind of sexual communion: "A tenor large and fresh as the creation fills me / The orbic flex of his mouth is pouring and filling me full." Music "convulses" him, "whirls" him, "throbs" him, "sails" him, and "wrenches unnamable ardors" from him. He is "licked," "exposed," "cut," and "squeezed" by waves of orchestral sound (1982: 54–55).

Reorganizing Music and Daily Life

Having such an intense attachment to concert performances was sometimes difficult for music lovers, since the desire for musical sound could only be satisfied periodically. Even then, concerts were finite events, and the memories of musical experiences often seemed to recede and disappear, especially after only one hearing. How could one keep heard music—and the feelings created by it—alive over time?

The longing for music was satisfied, in part, by music lovers seeking out as many musical performances as possible. The number of musical experiences one could have in any given week depended on many factors, including the number of theaters and halls in the vicinity, the length of the concert season (typically October to May), and, of course, the availability of cash needed to purchase tickets or subscriptions. But many music lovers, even without money, found ways to experience music. Walt Whitman, when not at the opera, lingered outside churches and halls, listening to the music from the street. Others, like clerk Nathaniel Beekley (1849), sought out music four or more nights a week during Philadelphia's concert season and, in addition, attended both Catholic and Protestant church services on Sundays in order to hear music.

Repeated hearings of the same piece could help to fix the music in one's mind. In the 1850s, it was customary for touring performers to complete a

"run" of shows in the places they visited as long as audiences kept coming, so as to accommodate all who wished to see them and to increase profits. And it was common in the antebellum era for audiences to attend multiple (and often all) performances in the same run, especially if the music was complex enough to merit such attention (Preston 1993: 59–61). George Templeton Strong, for example, regularly attended every performance of pieces that he liked, commenting that "I never can satisfy myself about music till I have heard it more than once and have ruminated on it, marked, learned, and inwardly digested it" (Lawrence 1988: 318). Music lovers engaged in these practices enthusiastically and often lamented in their diaries that they could not hear a piece *more* often than a run of performances allowed. As Lucy Lowell pined about Wagner's "Ring Trilogy," "O dear how I should like to hear it all over again + again + go to Beyreuth! I wish I could spend next winter in Vienna + go every night anything of Wagner's is given" (Lowell 1884: April 16).

Another way to keep the music alive between performances was to literally reproduce the music through amateur performance. While concert going cultivated behaviors and values that were different than those held by amateur performers, the two expressions of musicality tended to reinforce one another: concertgoers often turned to the piano to reproduce the pieces they had heard and amateur performers found themselves drawn, as audience members, to the virtuosity of the professional stage. This was a phenomenon that instrument and sheet music entrepreneurs knew well. Ads for sheet music began appearing in concert programs as early as the 1850s, touting "full translations" of pieces heard that night in concert. In 1849, the ever-popular Germania Society even distributed the sheet music to one of their original pieces, arranged for piano, to the women in their audiences, with the implication that they would use the music to remember the performance. It was appropriately called "Ladies Souvenir Polka" (Newman 2002: 163).

When not reliving musical experiences in some way, many music lovers worked to extend their audience experiences beyond the concert hall. Those caught up in "Lindmania," for example, vied to capture glimpses of Lind not simply in performance but also outside of performance, arriving in a steamship at the wharf, standing on the balcony of her hotel room, traveling through the streets in her carriage. If they had the resources, music lovers would also travel to sites associated with various performers and composers. The "grand tour" of Europe, a requisite coming-of-age event for wealthy Americans in the 1800s, often turned into a much-saved-

for pilgrimage for music lovers. Alice Drake, a young piano student from Colorado, made a voyage to Weimar, Germany, in the 1890s and promptly sought out the house of the recently deceased Franz Liszt, quizzing the house's caretaker, and playing on Liszt's pianos, a thrill she recounted by writing in her diary, "I never tho't I would ever do that!!" (1897: October 26).

In addition to such pilgrimages, music lovers used their personal diaries and journals to extend their musical experiences. Music lovers had, fairly early on, created a new descriptive vocabulary to articulate the feelings they had while concert going. Older generations of American audiences had typically experienced music with a mild pleasure. "It was very satisfactory" or "we had a pleasant time" were common phrases for describing concert experiences. In fact, before 1850, people tended to describe their musical experiences with the phrase "we had some music," blandly lumping any sort of musical activity into a descriptive category not worthy of further comment, like the weather. But concertgoers after the 1850s often described their musical experiences with far more personal specificity.

Diaries in the nineteenth century were often used as memory devices, helping writers to remember who they had met at parties or from whom they had received gifts, for instance, so that they might reciprocate in the future. In terms of music, however, the function was not so much social as psychological, satisfying a longing for more. Some music lovers attempted to fix on paper every moment, every feeling, during a concert to the extent that their diaries were not so much mnemonic tools as stand-ins, indices, for the performances themselves. Thus Lowell could write in her diary after the last concert of the Boston Symphony in 1886, "I feel so desolate at thinking that this is the last, that I shall dwell on each detail, to lengthen out the enjoyment" (1886: May 29).

In all, such recording encouraged self-conscious knowledge and comparison of how it felt to hear and see various performances and performers over time. One could, in effect, "collect" and arrange concerts just as one would collect and arrange phonograph records. Sheet music binders, personal collections of sheet music arranged and bound in leather, were a corollary to this sort of activity; binders—often with the collector's name embossed on the front cover and handwritten marginalia that evaluate or describe the feelings evoked by the pieces—clearly served as a summary of an individual's taste and experience in music. With the growth of the music press at midcentury, including regular reviews and the use of litho-

graphy and photography for circulating images of musical stars, scrapbooks supplanted diaries and sheet music binders as music lovers' most useful tool, able to contain descriptive writing, clippings of reviews, and images.

Redefining Normal Participation

What were the consequences of this activity? Music lovers were well aware that their engagement with music was different from that of other audience members. Simply by becoming regular attendees of musical performances of specific forms, or by particular groups, or in particular concert halls and churches, music lovers began to distinguish themselves from others in the audience through their uniquely focused and comparative engagement with the music. Indeed, criticism of early music loving emphasizes the strangeness and potential pathology involved in a singular focus on a performer or performance. William Clapp, for instance, described the mania created by ballerina Fanny Elssler's visit to Boston in 1840 as a disease that trumped every other event in the city:

> It was "Elssler" on every side. She was dreamed of, talked of, and idolized; and some wag having circulated a report that "Fanny" would take an airing in her barouche, quite a gathering took place on Tremont Street. Boston was not alone in this ovation, for the ladies from Boston to Philadelphia, all wore Elssler cuffs, made of velvet with bright buttons. In every store window articles were displayed flavoring of the mania. Elssler boot-jacks, Elssler bread, etc. etc., were to be seen, showing how violent was the attack of *Fannyelsslermaniaphobia*. (1968: 368–89)

A Boston satirist calling himself "Asmodeus" wrote a pamphlet that thoroughly lambasted the citizens of Boston for their extraordinary enthusiasm about Lind's 1850 concerts:

> For two long weeks, did I hear nought in my rambles, by night or day, in barber shops and work shops, in beer shops and stables, in hotels and private domicils, from Beacon Street to the Black Sea, all the cry was, Jenny Lind and Barnum, Barnum and Jenny Lind! Soon I met my ancient and respected friend Pearce, so full of madness and music that he rushed through the streets with the fearful velocity of an escaped locomotive.

> Hold worthy friend, quoth I, whither so fast?
>
> He gazed wildly at me for a moment, then shouted as he run—Jenny Lind and Barnum! Barnum and Jenny Lind! (Asmodeus 1850: 12)

Clapp's use of the fake medical term "Fannyelsslermaniaphobia" was not unfounded; the activities of music lovers had earlier been recognized by the medical establishment as a pathology called "musicomania." Though it had been known for centuries that music could produce powerful psychological and physical effects, a phenomenon that was used for treatment by medieval physicians (Gouk 2004), in the nineteenth century the effects of music acquired potentially negative connotations. The association of music with "mania" first appeared in the United States in 1833 in the *New Dictionary of Medical Science and Literature*, which described the condition as "a variety of monomania in which the passion for music is carried to such an extent as to derange the intellectual faculties" (Dunglison 1833: 64). Musicomania fell out of use by 1900, and it is not clear that anyone was actually treated for the disease, but during the nineteenth century, the term found its way into everyday discourse as an alternative name for music loving, and references to the condition were sprinkled throughout novels and essays between 1850 and 1870. It was even employed by music lovers themselves to jokingly refer to their own concert hopping.

If joking was one response to music loving, a more ominous response was an increasing association of the excessive behaviors of music loving with the divisive caricatures of class politics at midcentury. Depictions of music lovers in the press often featured disorder, with an emphasis on crowd violence, lack of control, and metaphors of savagery or animalism, characterizations that fit with growing middle-class disdain for the social chaos created by immigration and urbanization. As early as 1843, William Cullen Bryant described an audience in such terms, saying, "The concert room was crowded with people clinging to each other like bees when they swarm, and the whole affair seemed an outbreak of popular enthusiasm" (Bryant & Voss 1975: 438). Boston Brahmin Caroline Healey Dall described her experience of a Jenny Lind concert as if she had just visited the cramped quarters of an inner-city tenement:

> No one could conceive a more horrible crowd. Dark windows looked into the offices, and in no way could fresh air be obtained[. . . .] When I heard the cry for water, air, open the windows &c.—who come as from desperate

> dying men—in choked voices—I felt what must come. I made several calm attempts to get out, but there was no possible means of egress, and a disappointed crowd were storming without[. . . .] We saw bonnets torn off—women trampled on, men falling in tiers of five or six. I have seen crowds before, but I never imagined what a suffocating crowd would be. (1850: October 30)

In response—and borrowing from ascendant ideologies of romanticism, as well as "refinement"—idealist middle-class reformers introduced a new way to "love" music in the 1860s. Instead of passionate attachment to a performance, they proposed what might be called a "classical" appreciation: ritualized, reverent, intellectual attention to the unfolding of a composition or work. If antebellum music loving proposed focusing audience attention on performance as a way to challenge the informal socializing of theater culture, this new form of engagement proposed to refine music loving even further by removing the spontaneity and showmanship of live performance that might lead to obsession or spontaneous emotional display. Those promoting this reform found it necessary in a culture that seemingly had been taken over by the excessive spectacles of mass commercialism. True appreciation of art was not about purchasing tickets to experience virtuosic curiosities but rather about encountering the timeless beauty of a composer's work.

Social historians have noted that such a "disciplining of spectatorship," as John Kasson put it, is emblematic of postbellum ideologies of genteel refinement and taste and of the emergence of powerful class divisions in the United States after 1850 (Butsch 2000; Kasson 1990; Levine 1988; McConachie 1992). That this reorientation was based on new class associations is apparent in the changing nature of audience criticism. If the initial criticism of music loving was simply about being *too invested* in music, by the close of the century, accounts of audiences were more often about being *too invested in the wrong ways and for the wrong reasons.* William Althorp, a classical music reformer and critic, in a long essay in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1879, specifically compared the approaches of "refined" musicians and "ordinary" music lovers:

> A musician, after listening to a great work, does not, as a rule, care to have it immediately repeated[. . . .] But when the ordinary music-lover hears a piece of music that particularly pleases him, he generally wishes to hear it over again; he will listen to it day in and day out, until he gets thoroughly

> sick of it, and never wishes to hear it more. He sucks and sucks at his musical orange until there is nothing left but the dry peel, and then throws it away. (1879: 150)

Antebellum criticisms of Elssler or Lind "mania" identified temporarily excessive musical behavior as wildly inexplicable and in a way that left "normal" musical behavior unstated; it was simply understood how one should behave. But in the late 1870s, Althorp was careful to associate excessive musical behavior with lack of discipline and education and to provide his readers with an alternative position, all through metaphorical language that provide cues of social class. He associated the musician with connoisseurship, deference, and judgment, and the music lover with sensualism, immediate gratification, and boorishness. Such distinctions would shape discourses of musical audiences for the next century.

Music Lovers as Fans

"Fan" is a term that only came into widespread use in the early twentieth century, when mass consumerism, based on new systems of marketing and communications, was transforming the industrial West. Not only did media technology create a temporal and spatial separation between performers and audiences in the market; it also gave audiences the ability to create affective engagement with performers or products by enabling people to experience, repeat, and study such "texts" in the intimacy of their home, and incorporate them into the fabric of their daily life. That fan studies has become a growing field in media studies is not surprising; the rise of fandom as a self-aware consumer movement (exemplified by fan "clubs" in the 1920s and 30s) seems to coincide with the hegemony of media entertainment, especially film and music.

However, given the murky etymology and meaning of the term "fan" (Cavicchi 1998: 38–39; Hills 2002: ix-xv), it may be more useful, in thinking about the history of fandom, to start not with the emergence of the descriptive term "fan" but rather with the existing patterns of behavior that the historically contingent term was meant to describe. As I have argued elsewhere (Cavicchi 1998: 4–6; 2004), there is evidence of fan-like practices among people participating in the commodification of urban leisure in the industrial West before 1900, including the readers of mass-produced books, opera lovers, urban theater goers, and the members of

fraternal baseball clubs. Music culture, in particular, is useful for beginning to open up the history of fandom because it was at the forefront of both twentieth-century media technology (in the form of both recording and broadcasting) and nineteenth-century urban entertainment (in the form of commodified performance and mass-published texts) and thus provides linkages between what typically have been perceived as different eras of audience behavior.

Just as fans of the twentieth century were faced with new relationships—with performers, with musical texts, and with each other—created by the advent of recording and broadcasting, music lovers of the nineteenth century wrestled with the shift of such relationships in the development of commercialized music culture. In urban America during the 1840s and 1850s, musical experience became no longer only something shared by a congregation or community in the local rituals of a church service, dance ball, or military muster; it had become also a tangible product, made by those who were musically gifted, and easily exhibited and purchased by anyone with cash. The commodification of music in concerts particularly highlighted the process of exchange between performer and audience and the ways in which hearing could become a form of consumption.

Like mass communication technologies, nineteenth-century commercial concerts brought extraordinary access to music for many Americans. However, structurally, such access in both eras was based on an audience anonymity and ephemerality that limited music's ability to signify deeply shared values and experiences. Fans and music lovers represent those who have refused to accept the anonymity and limited involvement of audiences necessitated by the large-scale commercialization of musical experience; they both instead seek to creatively imbue their participation in musical life with a lasting personal connection and depth of feeling. The ways in which modern fans create significant affective involvement in popular culture—including close listening, Internet discussion, pilgrimages, and collecting, among other activities—have numerous parallels in the culture of nineteenth-century music lovers. When the star system unmoored performers from localities and exaggerated their professional skills in the 1840s, music lovers sought to understand stars as authentic people with whom they had an intimate bond. While most people returned to their daily lives after concerts ended, music lovers actively extended their audience role beyond the purchased frame of performance by seeking out music in churches and homes, by attempting to see stars in

the street, by making pilgrimages to significant sites, by performing their favorite pieces on home instruments, by collecting sheet music, and by meticulously recording descriptions of their listening experiences.

Not only are individual behaviors parallel, but the functions of those behaviors in their respective contexts are also similar. Scholars have argued that modern fandom is always in some ways an "improper identity" (Hills 2002: xii), often interpreted as a "pathology" (Jensen 1992). According to the frameworks of exchange in the new market economy, music-loving behaviors were likewise abnormal; music lovers did not abide by the equation of a ticket for a performance but sought rather to go beyond and around it, much like the alternative "shunpikes" that had turned up in the 1830s, snaking illegally around toll gates on many states' newly built roadways. Not surprisingly, critiques of music loving were based on lovers' thwarting of the norms of the market: music lovers' rejections of the frameworks of capitalism meant that they had to be either sick, suffering from a mania, or unaware of correct social behavior—that is, without "taste."

I don't wish to discount the significant transformations wrought by the mass media in the twentieth century. But as Jonathan Sterne (2003) has shown, even revolutionary inventions like the phonograph only became possible in the first place thanks to previous shifts in the ideological frameworks of science, social class, and the self. In the same way, twentieth-century music fandom became possible with previous changes in the norms and practices of participants in the world of commodified music. Music lovers, as witnesses to the beginnings of the commercialization of popular culture in the nineteenth century, were among the first to assume the role of the audience-consumer and to create the strategies many use today for understanding the world of stars, merchandizing, and spectacle.

Note

1. Use of unpublished archival materials in this essay courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the New York Historical Society, and the Library of the School of Music, Yale University.