

Spring 2018

# Music in unconventional spaces: The changing music scene of Great Depression America, 1929-1938

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Music in Unconventional Spaces: The Changing Music Scene of Great Depression  
America, 1929-1938

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of History

May 2018

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## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Stephen and Theresa Carey, and my sister, Monica Carey, for all of their support and encouragement throughout my life. Words cannot begin to express my gratitude to them.

## Table of Contents

Dedication.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
List of Figures.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
A Musical Prelude.....	1
Introduction.....	4
I. Parks and Recreation .....	12
II. Escaping the Concert Hall.....	35
III. Federally Funded .....	65
Beyond the Depression .....	88
Appendix.....	97
Bibliography.....	98

## List of Figures

Figure 1 Bandstand at the South Kensington Gardens.....	24
Figure 2 Bandstand in Central Park.....	25
Figure 3 Bandshell at Daytona Beach.....	28
Figure 4 Bandshell in Stanton.....	28
Figure 5 The Paul E. Beck Memorial Bandshell.....	30
Figure 6 Internal view of Tanglewood.....	31
Figure 7 External view of Tanglewood.....	32
Figure 8 The former bandshell at Michigan State University.....	33

## Abstract

The world of the Great Depression was in massive transition as the economy crumbled and people sought an escape from their ordinary and troublesome lives. The expanding and remodeling cultural forms of this time worked to provide this diversion for all people. One of these forms in particular adapted to fulfill the need of the American people: music. While music was a popular form of culture throughout the American past, it went through a large transition beginning in the Gilded Age through the Great Depression in order to survive. With the beginning of the Great Depression, professional and amateur groups began outreach for larger audiences, both as a way of maintaining their musical organization and as a means of reaching people who desired to escape from their everyday lives by losing themselves in the sound of music. Through this, cultural forms that previously belonged to certain classes no longer remained under their sole control. Cultural forms quickly became the property of the masses. One form this change took was the movement of music out of the concert hall and into the public sphere.

This thesis will provide the first in-depth examination of the rise of music outside the concert hall in these unconventional spaces, which allowed for larger audiences and the presence of people who may have felt unwelcome in the formidable face of the concert hall. The first part of this thesis will establish context for the rise of music outside the concert hall during the Great Depression, beginning with the changing music scene of the Gilded Age. The first chapter will discuss the rise of public parks and the building of physical spaces made specifically for outdoor concerts. The second chapter features an overview of the concerts held outdoors during the Great Depression, as well as the groups that formed to perform at these concerts. Finally, the last chapter will examine the

Federal Music Project, the first federally funded music program in America, which led to the creation of new music groups and further groups performing in unconventional venues.

## A Musical Prelude

The Great Depression was a time uniquely primed for changes in the musical scene. As people grew more unsettled in their lives and sought to escape their economic woes, the culture of America changed to accommodate this escapism. Musicians, in need of work and hoping to boost morale across the country, came together to perform in new territory. This thesis argues that musicians, recognizing the economic troubles of their field and the problems of the world around them, took steps away from the formidable presence of the concert hall and moved performances outdoors. These unconventional spaces for music rose to prominence during the Great Depression, as they gave access to music for all people and provided a means for performers to continue playing.

This thesis employs many secondary sources that revolve around the topics of cultural and music history from the Gilded Age to the Great Depression. Some of the most influential works consulted here include Lawrence Levine's *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, Witold Rybczynski's *City Life*, Roy Rozenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar's *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park*, Paul Rabbitts's *Bandstands*, and Robert S. McElvaine's *The Great Depression: America, 1929-1941*. The majority of sources used in this thesis come from newspapers across the United States during the Great Depression. The selection of editorials and announcements about concerts held outdoors during this time appear due both to their widespread geographic locations and their accessibility. Through these newspapers, the prominence of the movement of concerts outdoors becomes prevalent.

In order to support the central argument of this thesis, this work begins by establishing context extending back to the Gilded Age. Chapter one describes the rise of



parks in America and discusses this movement alongside the rising importance of concerts held outside the concert hall in such public spaces. The following chapter moves into the outdoor concerts during the Great Depression and the local bands created during this time. These groups, largely consisting of amateur musicians performing free to large audiences, aided in supporting musicians, audiences, and the musical environment during the Great Depression. Finally, chapter three describes the continuation of outdoor and other public concerts designed for wide audiences, funded through the federal government as part of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. Through the discussions of these chapters, it becomes apparent that musicians worked tirelessly during the Great Depression years to change the outlook for their field and for the people of America.

My interest in this topic developed from many different paths. The first of these is my love for music, which brought an interest in music history that I have followed throughout my time studying the past. A second path was my interest in the Great Depression, borne out of an interest in the culture of the time and the ways in which people attempted to overcome the difficulties they faced. Finally, two classes in particular led to this research topic. In a class on the Gilded Age, I read Lawrence Levine's *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, which proved massively influential to my understanding of and interest in the development of culture in American history. Additionally, in a seminar class on researching and writing history, I delved into the New Deal legislation that promoted the arts, particularly Federal Project Number One. After expanding my research, I found a recurring theme of the Great Depression: the movement of music from the concert hall to public spaces easily accessible by all people.

Many people assisted throughout the process of writing this thesis, and my

gratitude to them goes beyond anything I could express in this prelude. First and foremost, to Dr. Raymond Hyser, who directed me during this process, taught me about the past, and gave me the confidence to believe in my abilities, your guidance over the past two years can never be overstated. Thank you for keeping me sane during this process and coming to my assistance when I was in need. Dr. Gabrielle Lanier served as a committee member on this thesis and provided invaluable feedback and advice. Thank you for your patience and generosity over the past two years and for all you have taught me. Dr. Philip Herrington also served as a committee member and gave thoughtful comments on the thesis as well as many ideas for future paths for this research. The time and energy you spent helping me with this thesis and all other elements of my graduate studies has been integral to my success. Dr. Steven Guerrier provided feedback and direction early in the thesis-writing process, and I appreciate all of the time he dedicated to this work. To my friends and colleagues in the James Madison University History Graduate Program, especially Trevor Cooper, Daniel Dawson, Joshua Goodall, and Scott Merrifield, thank you for your generosity and encouragement over the past two years. I would be lost without you all. Finally, thank you to my family and friends who have supported me throughout my life and especially while working on this thesis.

## Introduction

From the Gilded Age (1876-1900) through the Progressive Era (1901-1920) and the Roaring Twenties (1920-1929) and into the Great Depression (1929-1942), American cultural history developed largely along the same trajectory for media. In this time period popular cultural forms lost their accessibility and audiences. This was particularly true for music, which from the beginnings of the Gilded Age struggled to meet the public and gain popularity. Much of this had to do with the changes to the music itself, as it transitioned from familiar tonalities and beautiful melodies into the more complex and harder to understand music of the twentieth century. Beyond this, music lost its popularity when American culture split during the Gilded Age.

Many historians note the division of culture that occurred at this time, although an explanation for this evades scholars. During the Gilded Age, the upper class and lower classes split and claimed elements of culture that eventually became associated with that class. Some prominent examples in music include the symphony and opera, which became associated with the upper class alone. Through this trajectory, these once-universally popular cultural forms lost a large portion of their audience and suffered in response. Opera once was popular among all Americans to the point that music from Verdi's *Rigoletto* accompanied Abraham Lincoln's inauguration. Much of this popularity was maintained throughout the nineteenth century, although by the end of this time, it began to lose its audiences. This was largely due to the rising number of wealthy elites in America, who became opera's prominent supporters and dictated the programming for performances. Through this, performed works began to occur in foreign languages, and as only wealthy Americans could afford an education in these languages, this made this

music even less accessible to wide audiences. Much like opera, symphonies lost their popularity at the end of this century. At the height of their esteem before the Civil War, the number of orchestras and bands reached 3,000 containing 60,000 musicians. This large number of groups as well as the popularity they maintained for the majority of the nineteenth century created a clear musical culture, which also developed and changed with the times.<sup>1</sup>

With the nineteenth century came a change in musical culture, as composers transitioned from performers and employees for royalty to gaining popularity across all classes of citizens. The large growth in production and consumption of music provided composers and performers with success throughout this century. In addition to the popularity and success of professionals, the nineteenth century saw a rise in the number of amateur musicians, a role that previously did not exist. Geographic areas that did not have professional performing groups now had an amateur band or society that served as a space for players to discuss and produce music together. In response to the rising universal interest in music and performance, many nations in Europe adopted the responsibility of music education for their people, and created national institutions for such edification. While other nations recognized the power inherent in music as a means of uniting people and creating a sense of nationalism, the United States never joined this movement to create a state-sponsored music school. In addition to this lack of musical centrality in the United States, many forms of music began to lose their audiences toward

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988); Ralph P. Locke, "Music Lovers, Patrons, and the "Sacralization" of Culture in America," *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 17, no. 2 (Autumn 1993): 149-173; and Catherine Collomp, "The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890s," in *Hanging Together: Unity and Diversity in American Culture*, ed. Carl J. Guarneri (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2001); Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 97, 102, 104; Mark Evan Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture* (Boston, Massachusetts: Pearson, 2013), 463.

the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup>

This height of popularity for the once-popular music genres disappeared with a growing notion of “sacralization.” With this concept, audiences began to believe concerts were not worth attending if those in attendance did not have a spiritual experience during the course of the event. In accordance, only the most talented professionals performed the music, those capable of providing a sacred experience. This then meant the number of amateur performers declined drastically, as the music performed by bands and orchestras changed and turned away from popular works toward complex recent compositions. In addition to this change in repertoire, the growing disparity in wealth between people perpetuated the division of culture and the “sacralization” of the arts. With the growth of industry following the American Civil War, many people profited greatly. This newfound wealth and prosperity allowed these people to gain some level of control over the arts, as well as continuing the expectation for a religious experience associated with attending such events. Where the wealthy elites issued demands, members of the other classes responded accordingly.<sup>3</sup>

As society changed, due both to the industrialization of America and the Civil War, people worked to fit in to the places the upper class dictated. This in turn enabled and encouraged the control elites held over other elements of life: the arts. Through their demands for concerts and other forms of art, the elites insisted on changing the structure of such events in order that others felt excluded and unwelcome. In addition to the forced sentiment of unwelcome that elites pushed on members of other classes, the growing “sacralization” of music turned the concert hall into a sacred space, much like a museum.

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<sup>2</sup> Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture*, 365-366.

<sup>3</sup> Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 139; Locke, “Music Lovers,” 151-152.

As music historian Richard Taruskin stated in his work *Oxford History of Western Music*, “Great works of music, like great paintings, were displayed in specially designed public spaces. The concert hall, like the museum, became a ‘temple of art’ where people went not to be entertained, but to be uplifted.”<sup>4</sup>

As music transitioned and became more popular universally, a physical space for performances became integral to the success of the genre. In this atmosphere, concert halls grew in importance and physical size in order to accommodate larger audiences. From the beginnings of public performances of music in seventeenth-century England, musicians made use of any large public venue to hold such events, including spaces from music rooms to taverns. Other European countries followed suit in the next century, and with them came the advent of music-specific halls. Concert halls built in the eighteenth century seated approximately two to four hundred people, while those created in the nineteenth century fit one thousand or more audience members. In turn, orchestras grew in size with the space in order to maximize the sound capability of the venue, and instruments changed to increase their volume capacities. With the creation of concert halls came a change in attitude toward music listening, namely that if the space in which audiences heard music was a large, formidable structure, listeners needed to have a certain amount of respect toward both the space and the music.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Collomp, “The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890s,” 177; Locke, “Music Lovers,” 154; Quoted in Darryl Cressman, *Building Musical Culture in Nineteenth-Century America: The Concertgebouw* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016), 17.

<sup>5</sup> Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture*, 383; The first recorded public concert occurred in London in 1672 and featured violinist John Banister. Christopher R. Herr and Gary W. Sieben, “An Acoustical History of Theaters and Concert Halls: An Investigation of Parallel Developments in Music, Performance Spaces, and the Orchestra,” in *Constructing Identity, “Souped-Up” and “Unplugged”*: Proceedings of the 86<sup>th</sup> ACSA Annual Meeting and Technology Conference (Washington, D.C.: Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture, 1998), 148; Germany began hosting public concerts in 1722 and France in 1725. Herr and Sieben, “An Acoustical History of Theaters and Concert Halls,” 148; Michael Forsyth, “Buildings

In America, music performance took the same trajectory as in Europe. Initially, professional musicians played before small audiences in parlors and other home venues. Public music performance then rose to popularity in the eighteenth century and became central to life, particularly in New England. Despite this cultural force, no concert hall appeared until 1824, with the creation of the Musical Fund Hall in Philadelphia. The growth in popularity that music experienced in America in the first half of the nineteenth century suffered from later struggles involving the changing musical culture and changes to the music itself.<sup>6</sup>

Certain genres maintained popularity for much of the nineteenth century, specifically operas and symphonies, although they, along with other musical forms, lost favor at the end of the century. During this century, music itself changed gradually, and with the turn of the century, the changes became much more drastic. The nineteenth century brought about dramatic music that embraced large orchestras and more complex melodies and rhythms than previous music, with its use of chromaticism and new instruments.<sup>7</sup> New forms for music appeared, including lengthier pieces such as symphonies and other multi-movement works. Despite these changes, much of the music of this time, the Romantic Era, remained similar to the Classical Era before it. The music did not abandon its roots, and maintained similar forms, melodies, and rhythms. This attitude towards embracing the past altered completely with the coming of the twentieth century, and continued the trend of change leading to a loss of audiences, which had

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for Music,” *American Music Teacher* 37, no. 6 (June/July 1988): 15; Cressman, *Building Musical Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, 16.

<sup>6</sup> Dale A. Olsen, “Public Concerts in Early America,” *Music Educators Journal* 65, no. 9 (May 1979): 49, 59.

<sup>7</sup> The term chromaticism references notes that are near each other in pitch played simultaneously. This creates a somewhat unpleasant sound that can be grating to the listener.

become prevalent in music during this time.<sup>8</sup>

The rise of modernism in the twentieth century brought about drastic changes to music, as composers and musicians rejected the past and sought to become original at all costs, even at the risk of losing their audiences. Music became less accessible and understandable to audiences as it embraced new tonalities or no tonalities that made it hard to listen to and appreciate. New forms and strange instruments only compounded the issue. The majority of this music was experimental, with composers seeking to push boundaries and try for anything new. These changes came through an embrace of modernism, a desire in all forms of culture to dissociate from the past and its style. Through this, a need to break from the mold and be as different as possible emerged. In music, this meant that sounds familiar to audiences during the Romantic Era largely disappeared. Eventually, this turned into another facet of American culture that became harder for many to understand. Unfortunately for many in the music industry, this was bad timing for music to perpetuate its struggle, as America entered the Great Depression and music and other expressions of culture quickly lost popularity when Americans began to view them as excess.<sup>9</sup>

As the economy toppled in 1929, Americans shied away from spending money, which forced the beginning of struggles for many cultural forms and an end to others. Movie studios, record companies, touring bands, radio broadcasters, and publishers suffered from severe losses to their industries during this time. Eventually, as the federal government sought to change the state of the economy and the outlook for many Americans, some programs supported artists and other purveyors of culture. Each of

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<sup>8</sup> Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture*, 513.

<sup>9</sup> Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture*, 513, 495.



these programs aimed at both supplying jobs to the unemployed and creating a sense of community among struggling Americans, a way to provide a morale boost across the nation. During this time, the arts emerged as a uniting and strengthening cultural force for the country.<sup>10</sup>

As cultural historian Morris Dickstein states, “One lesson of the Depression is that, in times of stagnation, rampant fears, and blighted hopes, the arts become a force in bolstering morale and getting people moving again.” In this spirit, the federal government continued to sponsor the arts and allowed for their further growth. Despite the hardships music and other forms of art experienced prior to the Great Depression and during this time, their ability to improve the lives of Americans ensured some level of success. Music and musicians created an environment in which music was once again accessible to the public. As historian Kenneth J. Bindas states in his work, *Modernity and the Great Depression: The Transformation of American Society*, “In the difficult times of the Depression era, music played this crucial role, using both sound and lyric to release people from their day-to-day worries and provide some hope and cheer in the unity that came with their participation.”<sup>11</sup>

With the attitude that change was necessary for survival during the Great Depression, music adapted in order to provide for the needs of the people as well as to endure. As the lives of Americans grew more unstable during this time, they sought diversions, which in turn forced changes on the culture of America to accommodate this escapism. Through this, cultural forms that previously belonged to certain classes no

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<sup>10</sup> Morris Dickstein, “Facing the Music: What 1930s Pop Culture Can Teach Us About Our Own Hard Times,” *The American Scholar* 78, no. 4 (Autumn 2009): 91-92.

<sup>11</sup> Dickstein, “Facing the Music,” 92-93; Kenneth J. Bindas, *Modernity and the Great Depression: The Transformation of American Society, 1930-1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017), 154.

longer remained under their sole control. These artistic outlets once again became the property of the masses. Two specific changes occurred during the Great Depression that made this possible. The first was that composers altered their music in order to make it accessible to audiences. The second, which is the focus of this thesis, was the movement of music out of the concert hall and into the public sphere. While this movement had many goals within the music industry, by shifting music into public venues, musicians hoped to gain back audiences lost over the past eras. In creating more concerts and moving them into the public sphere, musicians worked to improve their situation while also providing entertainment and encouragement for Americans during this time.

## Chapter One: Parks and Recreation

Parks are an important part of American and European culture, but they were not always so. These spaces have a lengthy and complicated history in this country and abroad, but understanding this history is integral to appreciating the public parks that now exist. Beyond that, it is necessary to comprehend the complex history of this movement in order to grasp fully the importance of the music in the park movement that this thesis will examine. This chapter will discuss the history of parks through tracing their evolution from the time following the Renaissance to the growth of the park-building movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Finally, the chapter will evaluate the addition of bandshells and bandstands to many parks during the Great Depression.<sup>1</sup> All of this information comes together to reveal the people's growing desire for spaces, such as parks, in which they can spend their leisure time. More importantly, it shows both the growth of the music in the parks movement and the public desire for such a movement, as people sought an escape from their daily lives and the bustle of cities through voyages to the park and listening to public music performances. This chapter argues that the changes in parks and the rise of bandstands and bandshells reveal both the growth of music in the parks and the desire among the populace for such growth.

Many scholars have studied and written on the history of parks, both public and private. The topic is complex and challenging to trace, but more recent parks have easier histories to tell, particularly New York City's Central Park, for which the plans and

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<sup>1</sup> This paper will make use of both terms "bandstand" and "bandshell" when referring to outdoor performing venues. The difference between these spaces is that bandstands are open structures while bandshells have a back arch that closes the space and reverberates the sound. Soon after they became popular in America, bandstands fell out of favor due to the creation of the bandshell, as the bandshell allows for the production of sound to be easier and louder for the performing groups competing against the sounds of nature and their audiences.

written details remain. These parks receive considerable attention from historians, cultural geographers, and landscape historians. Some notable examples of such park historians and histories include Roy Rozenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar's *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park*, Norman T. Newton's *Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture*, and Linda Flint McClelland's *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction*. Many historians have also written on the designers and architects of parks, particularly Andrew Jackson Downing and Frederick Law Olmsted. Some of these works include David Schuyler's *Apostle of Taste: Andrew Jackson Downing, 1815-1852* and Witold Rybczynski's *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century*. While these topics are well discussed, the other topics considered in this chapter, such as the rise of specific buildings created for the growth of the music in the parks movement, have received little to no attention. Research into these topics requires almost sole reliance on primary sources, particularly newspaper coverage of the construction and completion of projects. Despite this lack of available secondary sources, this work will tell the story of many of these buildings and the growth of public parks.<sup>2</sup>

Parks have a lengthy and complex history spread over many centuries and different countries. It is important to establish a definition of a public park, which in the past took on many meanings. Originally conceived as tracts of land dedicated to hunting for kings and other nobility, later, they transitioned into land granted by royalty for the

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<sup>2</sup> Roy Rozenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1992); Norman T. Newton, *Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1971); Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction* (Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); David Schuyler, *Apostle of Taste: Andrew Jackson Downing, 1815-1852* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015); and Witold Rybczynski, *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Scribner, 1999).

creation of picturesque landscapes. Eventually, parks became associated with urban centers, as a way of escaping the hustle and bustle of city life and promoting health inside these cities. Frederick Law Olmsted, the master of American parks, noted the complexity of the word park, stating, “I have lately known the word ‘park’ applied to the protecting belt of a reservoir, to a fish-pond, a sea beach and a jail yard; to scores of things which have the least possible of interest in common.” Although the concept itself is complicated and challenging to define, for the purposes of this paper, a park is a recreational space open to all people with enough area for large groups and events. This definition varies from that of National Parks, as the United States federal government maintains and keeps hold of these places through the National Parks Service, to local governments that are generally the owners and caretakers of public parks.<sup>3</sup>

There are many problems inherent in attempting to tell the history of parks. The first and foremost is that parks are a part of the land and thus change with the land, meaning the main primary source for telling the history of these spaces has altered over time. However, several cultural geographers and landscape historians have attempted to reconstruct some portion of this history. The earliest park history is difficult to trace and does not bear weight on the content of this thesis, and as such, it will begin with the concept of a public park that emerged after the Renaissance. During this time, the function and style of parks began to emphasize the landscape, and the woods in particular, with the addition of walkways, whose placement was to best highlight the beauty of the park. The sixteenth century brought about the first designed parks, which were elaborate and formal spaces of land, mostly gardens and small copses of trees the

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<sup>3</sup> Rozenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 3; Thomas R. Cox, “From Hot Springs to Gateway: The Evolving Concept of Public Parks, 1832-1976,” *Environmental Review* 5, no. 1 (1981): 14.

creators intended for use of members of the court and were, on occasion, open for public use. The new form of landscape design prompted by this change in emphasis sought to improve nature in order to highlight it, but also to hide the work done by humans to make it look completely natural. These parks are notable for the ways in which they embrace the idea of a landscape used to flaunt nature. In this design aesthetic, the members of the court using this space and the public, when allowed admittance, were to interact with nature and appreciate its beauty. It, therefore, required the proper attitude and manners for enjoyment.<sup>4</sup>

During the eighteenth century, the number of parks was on the rise. In Germany, towns created public gardens out of former fortifications, while in England, public admittance to royal grounds, such as Hyde Park, began. Through the work of Sir Joseph Paxton, the creator of the first urban public park, the “People’s Garden” in 1840s Liverpool, the changing notion of a public park became closely entwined with urban centers. While the idea of a park was familiar, the near-revolutionary concept at this time was the park made for people to use. Until this time, the nobility generally owned parks, and they occasionally allowed the public to make use of the space, but now parks allowed entrance to everyone, with park designs specifically created for them for this reason. A large part of the history of parks revolved around the idea of the split nature of these spaces, between the “designed parks” and the “unstructured playgrounds.” Landscape architects and gardeners created and cultivated “designed parks” with a specific design and intent for the land. In contrast, “unstructured playgrounds” denoted a park in which architects or gardeners had little to no influence, but people used the space for exercise,

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<sup>4</sup> Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, 127; Rozenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 4.

play, enjoyment, and as a means of establishing and building community. Examples of these two types of parks emerged in the United States, in New York and New England, respectively. New York's Vauxhall Gardens were a privately-owned park that allowed public access, created through design and planning, and based on the pleasure gardens of London. The Boston Common, on the other hand, was an open public space available for use by all people for a variety of reasons, from exercise to public assembly to militia drills. This split between park styles merged in the nineteenth century and changed the path of parks.<sup>5</sup>

In America, park designers, such as Olmsted and Downing, adapted the styles they learned about and saw in Europe for new landscapes. Parks in America began during the colonial period, with the earliest recorded park, the Boston Common, created in 1634. The householders of Boston each paid six shillings minimum for the purchase of the fifty acres of this park, bought from a European settler. They then designated the land as a public space, primarily used as a pasture for the grazing of animals. The Common gradually changed and shifted into a public park in the nineteenth century. By 1830, the city banned grazing animals from the space, and added trees and ponds, which allowed it to become a park for the people.<sup>6</sup>

It was during the 1830s that the idea of public parks emerged in America. Many scholars attribute the desire for such space to the growing industrialization of America, particularly in the North, which resulted in a need for an area in which people could get

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<sup>5</sup> Rozenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 4-5; Rybczynski, *City Life*, 124; Newton, *Design on the Land*, 267. This idea comes from cultural geographer John Brinckenhoff Jackson.

<sup>6</sup> Cox, "From Hot Springs to Gateway," 14. In its early days, the Boston Common also served as a site for hangings and executions, particularly of murderers, thieves, religious dissenters, and witches. "History," *Friends of the Public Garden*, accessed September 22, 2017, <http://friendsofthepublicgarden.org/our-parks/boston-common/history/>; "History," *Friends of the Public Garden*.

exercise and escape the overcrowded and chaotic urban centers. Olmsted, in his book, *Civilizing American Cities: Writings on City Landscapes*, described the drive for parks in urban centers:

We want a ground to which people may easily go after the hard day's work is done, and where they may stroll for an hour, seeing, hearing, and feeling nothing of the bustle and jar of the streets, where they shall, in effect, find the city put far away from them.... Practically, what we want most is a simple, broad, open space of clean greensward, with sufficient play of surface and sufficient number of trees about it to supply a variety of light and shade.<sup>7</sup>

As Olmsted observed, the desire for open spaces located in urban centers becomes clear. Before delving more deeply into the history of American landscape design, it is important to understand the ideologies behind landscape design.<sup>8</sup>

The history of landscaping in America shows a change in ideologies. Parks, like houses, are a reflection of the time in which they were created, and as such, present an interesting source on their own, as many remain intact and can reveal much about society at their time of creation. Landscapes also are a fascinating source because they exist both as a physical and mental space, in that they occupy land, but also have memories and individual perceptions attached to them. Much like parks, landscapes have changed in definition and meaning over time. Initially, they were a space intended to feature and highlight beautiful views. Then, they became a piece of land that artists and landscape designers changed in order to recreate pastoral scenes. This artistic perspective on land was integral to the changing scene of these designs, particularly as American landscape

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<sup>7</sup> Frederick Law Olmsted, *Civilizing American Cities: Writings on City Landscapes* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1971), 80.

<sup>8</sup> Jordan, "Public Parks," 85; Rybczynski, *City Life*; Von Hoffman, "'Of Greater Lasting Consequence,'" 342.



designers relied heavily on their art backgrounds for their park planning. These parks became, in and of themselves, works of art through the execution of these designers.<sup>9</sup>

Before the creation of the modern public park in America, towns worked to create green spaces within cities. During the settlement period in American history, town builders and designers sought to incorporate natural elements into these new man-made spaces, which led to the creation of tree-lined streets and gardens. During the eighteenth century, this desire for green spaces in towns grew as people sought elegance in their daily lives and surroundings. This led to the creation of town squares and some of the first parks in America. Despite this earlier start for parks, the large-scale park building movement rose to prominence in the nineteenth century. The ideas for these parks came from English gardens, which spread across the United States through the writing and implementation of such designs by American landscape designers, particularly Downing and Olmsted. These two serve as the prime examples of landscape designers during America's park-building period, and were the most influential of their time. Downing and Olmsted applied the ideals of natural gardening to designing parks, and those who studied their work incorporated these concepts into further efforts, including cemeteries, scenic parks, reservations, and private estates. Downing, and particularly the writings he left behind, influenced much of the movement of American park building. He was the leading gardener of his day and through his books and articles, he used his authority to encourage new landscape styles. Though Downing's reign was not long, his influence spread, particularly as the next generation of landscape designers, Olmsted at the forefront, used

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<sup>9</sup> Cox, "From Hot Springs to Gateway," 17; Meinig, "The Beholding Eye," 34; Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, 3, 127.

Downing's example in their designing of public parks.<sup>10</sup>

During the second half of the nineteenth century, through the leadership of Olmsted and his partner Calvert Vaux, urban parks in America rose to prominence and completed the transition from pleasure grounds to public parks. Olmsted's ideas for designing parks largely centered on the idea of protecting and making the most of open natural spaces. These ideas came from both the teachings of Downing and Olmsted's time traveling in England. He worked throughout his career to promote public parks and encourage Americans to understand why these spaces were so important to improving American society. Olmsted firmly believed parks were necessary to any city because they encouraged physical health and mental well-being by providing a space away from the commotion of city life. In this space, too, people had the opportunity to spend time with nature, exercise, learn, and become better people. Additionally, he hoped these public spaces would encourage the cooperation and interaction of members of different social classes. He firmly believed this notion would help in protecting American democracy.<sup>11</sup>

Most importantly, Olmsted believed in the power of nature, particularly its healing ability for the people living in industrial towns in America during the nineteenth century. With the growth of industrialization, towns, packed with workers, houses, and factories, had no space for people to escape from this life. While the middle class lived in tightly packed housing, the lower classes lived in tenements from which they were in desperate need of escape. Olmsted recognized these challenges to modern life and sought to help combat them through park building. In a speech before the Prospect Park

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<sup>10</sup> Rybczynski, *City Life*, 81, 102; McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 3; Schuyler, *Apostle of Taste*, xi.

<sup>11</sup> Cohen and Cohen, "The Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site," 59-60; Von Hoffman, "'Of Greater Lasting Consequence,'" 342.

Scientific Association in 1868, Olmsted described this drive for parks, stating, “Thus it must be that parks are beyond anything else recreative, recreative of that which is most apt to be lost or to become diseased or debilitated among the dwellers in towns.” The other main driving force behind Olmsted’s ideologies was the belief in nature as a force for civilizing the people. In parks, Olmsted believed people could come together, enjoy conversation with one another, no matter their class or socioeconomic status. This communication between the classes was integral to both the success of the park and the happiness of the people, for, as Olmsted stated, “each individual adding by his mere presence to the pleasure of all others, all helping to the greater happiness of each.” Olmsted put his ideas regarding parks to the test with his numerous creations, the most famous of which is Central Park in New York City.<sup>12</sup>

The planning for Central Park began in 1851 when the state legislature of New York passed the First Park Act. This act allowed for the allocation of land to be dedicated to creating a park for the people, their enjoyment, and their recreation. With the decision to build a park in the middle of New York City came an announcement of a landscape design contest, which brought Olmsted onto the scene. Olmsted and Calvert Vaux entered their design, “Greensward,” into the contest. This plan stuck to the ideologies of Olmsted, particularly the notion that park space should allow for recreation and the mingling of the classes. With Greensward, the inspiration from Downing becomes prevalent, as Olmsted and Vaux embraced his ideas for landscapes. They included his notion that landscapes should be “broad reaches of park and pleasure-grounds, with a real feeling of the breadth and beauty of green fields, the perfume and freshness of nature...lovely lakes of limpid

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<sup>12</sup> Valuinias, “The Genius of Place,” 51, 53; Nicholson, “Elegance and Grass Roots,” 337, 339.

water, covering many acres, and heightening the charm of the sylvan accessories by the finest natural contrast.” Having used these ideas in their design for Greensward, Olmsted and Vaux won the contest and began the real work on Central Park, one of the earliest and most important public parks in American history. Olmsted’s career and influence continued long after Central Park, and he began moving around the country and designing parks for cities, as well as having his influence spread to other cities that took the initiative to create their own parks. Some of these included Chicago, Buffalo, Louisville, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Boston, and San Francisco.<sup>13</sup>

Throughout the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, parks rose to prominence as people recognized their need for open spaces where they could interact with nature. Urban parks became a source of civic pride, which also encouraged the spread and growth of the park building movement. In an idea similar to that of Olmsted, city leaders hoped parks would serve as a civilizing force for the lower classes, as they had to meet certain behavioral expectations in these parks and interact with the upper classes. Park builders also worked to draw in large groups of people, so they sought to add attractions, such as horticultural displays and music. In the early twentieth century, this growth persisted and led to the creation of the Park Service and state and local park commissions. This revealed the continued desire of Americans to spend time in parks, escaping cities and the lives they led there, particularly the corrupting aspects that many felt present in city life. The spread of parks across the United States shows the importance they had to the lives of the people, particularly in

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<sup>13</sup> Newton, *Design on the Land*, 267; Rozenzweig and Blackmar, *The Park and the People*, 130; Cantor, “The Museum in the Park,” 336; Quoted in Rybczynski, *A Clearing in the Distance*, 165; Rybczynski, *City Life*, 124.

allowing for escape.<sup>14</sup>

As the twentieth century continued, additional changes came to the landscape of parks. During the 1920s, park supporters sought to increase recreational possibilities, including many things from adding to the number of national parks to creating local playgrounds for children. This hope for more parks and encouragement for spaces with activities shows the desire of the people to spend more time in the park, as well as seeking recreation for their children in these spaces. Many changes appeared to parks in the 1930s, and one of these was the federal funding of park building, brought about by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of the New Deal. Through this federal agency, the government created works projects, which largely consisted of construction projects that hired those unemployed during the Great Depression. As part of this, the WPA saw to maintaining and creating parks across the country during the years of its existence, among other projects. By the end of the WPA, its employees created 75,152 acres of new parks, added 7,214 acres to park lands, and reconstructed and improved 459,995 acres of existing parks. The 1930s brought about other changes as well, particularly regarding park maintenance. It was during this time park builders and planners worked to create structures within the park. These buildings could serve as spaces for administration, bathrooms, community buildings, and occasionally, museums. Eventually, other buildings rose to prominence, and soon gained importance in their own right. Two such buildings were the bandstand and the bandshell, which became an important element of American park life during the twentieth century, particularly during

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<sup>14</sup> Jordan, "Public Parks," 85; Carr, *Wilderness by Design*, 259.

the Great Depression.<sup>15</sup>

Although bandshells and bandstands were not a frequent addition to most parks, during the Great Depression these structures began to appear in more and more parks around the nation. In a fashion similar to that of parks, the history of bandstands in America finds its roots in Europe. Before the creation of bandstands, music frequently found a performance home in the pleasure gardens of England, particularly Vauxhall Gardens, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This garden, in particular, hosted concerts in addition to the other attractions seen throughout the park, such as hot air balloons, firework displays, tightrope walkers, and illuminated fountains. People, especially those with wealth, traveled across the country to experience this park and its sights, particularly the concerts in the music pavilions. This space allowed people to listen to music while strolling through the gardens and appreciate the natural beauty to the sounds of music. The popularity of these concerts in this space helped generate the idea of musical performances outside the concert hall and the desire for a physical space designated for this purpose.<sup>16</sup>

Historians recognize the band house in the South Kensington gardens of the Royal Horticultural Society in England as the original domed bandstand, built in 1861 (Figure 1).<sup>17</sup> The idea for this bandstand and its shape came from a specific hope to have a space

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<sup>15</sup> Carr, *Wilderness by Design*, 259; *Final Report on the WPA Program: 1935-43* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1943), 131; McClelland, *Building the National Parks*, 5.

<sup>16</sup> The history of bandstands proves complicated to trace, and one historian has attempted this. Using postcards, local archives, and interviews with restorers, Paul Rabbitts effectively describes this history in his *Bandstands*. Paul A. Rabbitts, *Bandstands* (Oxford, England: Shire Publications, 2011), 5; Paul A. Rabbitts, "The History of the Bandstand," *Paul A. Rabbitts*, accessed September 15, 2017, <http://www.paulrabbitts.co.uk/the-history-of-the-bandstand>.

<sup>17</sup> Figure 1 image taken from "Kensington Gardens Bandstand," *The Royal Parks*, accessed February 1, 2018, [https://www.royalpark.org.uk/parks/kensington-gardens/things-to-see-and-do/memorials,-fountains-and-statues/kensington-gardens-bandstand/\\_gallery/The-Royal-Parks\\_Kensington-Gardens\\_\\_Bandstand.jpg/w\\_1200.jpg](https://www.royalpark.org.uk/parks/kensington-gardens/things-to-see-and-do/memorials,-fountains-and-statues/kensington-gardens-bandstand/_gallery/The-Royal-Parks_Kensington-Gardens__Bandstand.jpg/w_1200.jpg).

designated for music and its performance in parks. With such an area, the structure of the bandshell and bandstand came to fruition as a dome-shaped building in order to project the sound of music throughout any given space without the need for artificial amplification. The shape and decoration of bandshells and bandstands also came from inspiration abroad, specifically from India, which had recently become a part of the British Empire. Particularly, the shape comes from the *chatri*, which has a similar form, featuring a dome and pillared pavilion, to Indian and Islamic buildings. The popularity of this building and its potential for changing the interaction between people and parks was



Figure 1. Bandstand at the South Kensington Gardens of the Royal Horticultural Society in England

soon disseminated. The desire for bandstands spread throughout England, and soon, each park hoped for a bandstand that could serve as the decorative piece in the space. The bandstand was a beautiful element for parks, but it also served a practical purpose and allowed park-goers to listen to music, for, as bandstand historian Paul Rabbitts asserts, “It was our Victorian forefathers who thought that ‘good music would free the mind of urban griminess and humanise the industrial landscape.’” With the advent of bandstands in British parks, large audiences came to hear musicians perform, and attendees for such concerts numbered around 10,000. Despite such records, there is no clear information on

what type of groups performed in this space, although a personal account makes it clear that popular music of the day could be heard here. The account comes from Jack Donaldson, a writer for the *Daily Express*, who noted he went to one of these concerts: “I arrived on time but there was no room on the seats or the railings, so I leant against a tree and enjoyed the music. The children danced to it, played ball to it, sang to it and ignored it. The grown-ups, all listening, sat round on their wooden seats or leant against the green railings and were happy.” Though the creation of bandstands was popular in Europe, it did not truly take off in America until the twentieth century.<sup>18</sup>

These spaces in America provided a designated area to which musicians came to perform for large public audiences at different times. The buildings were modeled after those in Britain, with the initial growth of and desire for bandstands stemming from a wish to connect humans to nature. In making bandstands, then, park designers hoped to

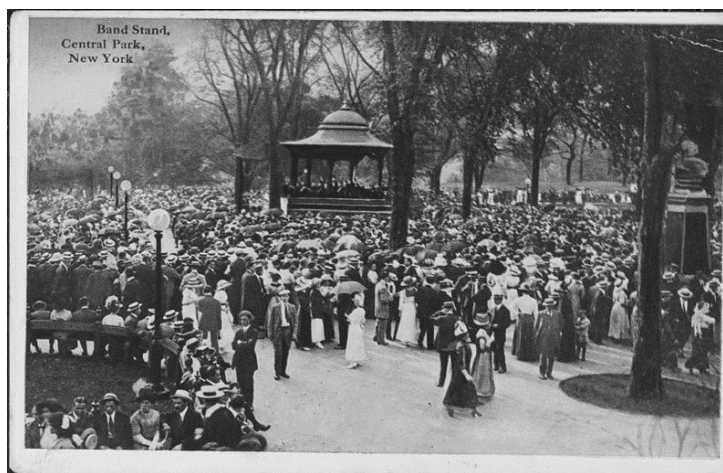


Figure 2. Bandstand in Central Park, New York City

create an attraction that would bring people to parks, but not detract from the essence of nature. Additionally, park designers, like Olmsted, hoped to use music as a further means of escaping city life: “The effect of good music on the Park is to aid the mind in freeing

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<sup>18</sup> Rabbitts, “The History of the Bandstand”; Rabbitts, *Bandstands*, 12-13.



itself from the irritating effect of the urban conditions.” As such, Olmsted and Calvert Vaux authorized the creation of a bandstand for Central Park (Figure 2), for which they paid \$5,000 out of their \$1.5 million budget.<sup>19</sup> Beyond Central Park, bandstands and bandshells tended to be built either through commission from the town itself or by the WPA of the New Deal. Although it is challenging to trace all of the shells built through private commission, those made by the WPA are easier to uncover. The final report of the WPA noted, “WPA workers built or improved nearly 3,300 stadiums, grandstands, and bleachers” and “provided...bandshells and outdoor theaters.” Later in the report, it states the exact number of bandshells the WPA built was 228 in addition to 74 that workers reconstructed or improved. This number, in addition to the many created through private means, reveals the large growth of bandshells and bandstands during the Great Depression.<sup>20</sup>

A broad overview of this small movement reveals the creation of bandstands and bandshells in America. In 1936, the town of Algona, Iowa, was in the process of building a bandstand and sought public input on the location of this structure through a newspaper poll. This poll noted this bandstand, in particular, was undergoing construction in order to replace the former structure, so band concerts could be held throughout the year on Thursday evenings. The article stated the Municipal Band for Algona received new uniforms and was excited about upcoming concerts, which shows the importance this town placed on the community band. The poll itself reveals the desire of the town leaders to draw the most number of people to the concert, through their desire for community

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<sup>19</sup> Figure 2 image taken from “MCNY Collections Portal,” *Museum of the City of New York*, accessed February 1, 2018, <http://collections.mcny.org/Doc/MNY/Media/TR3/1/c/b/7/M3Y43396.jpg>; *Final Report on the WPA Program*, 50, 131.

<sup>20</sup> Rabbitts, *Bandstands*, 11, 5.

input on the location of the concert venue.<sup>21</sup>

In other places, bandstands were also a large topic of discussion. *The Belleville Telescope* of Belleville, Kansas, published an article at the beginning of the Great Depression discussing the start of work on building a new bandstand. The article mentioned the details of the future structure, including brick walls, pilasters, and a bungalow style roof, with the bandstand itself located in the courthouse park, a common location for these buildings. The plan for this bandstand included its completion in time for the last concerts of the summer season for the local band. Elsewhere, similar plans began for building these structures. In Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, musicians, music lovers, and city leaders came together to organize the effort to create a new bandshell for Reservoir Park, which would provide a location for concerts and other musical happenings. Similarly, Hutchinson, Kansas's *The Hutchinson News* announced the start of work on building a bandshell in the local park, which it estimated would cost over \$11,000 to build. In Columbia, Wisconsin, work began on a new bandstand in 1931. The town leaders and planners of this structure hoped for its completion in time for the start of the summer band season. This year also brought about the initiation of work on the Palm Beach, Florida, bandstand. The new structure here provided additional seating to allow larger numbers of audience members.<sup>22</sup>

After its creation in 1935, the WPA began building some bandshells across the

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<sup>21</sup> "Council Asks Vote on Location of New Bandstand by Thursday," *The Algona Upper Des Moines* (Algona, Iowa), May 5, 1936.

<sup>22</sup> "New Bandstand is Started," *The Belleville Telescope* (Belleville, Kansas), July 18, 1929; "New Bandshell for Reservoir Park Planned," *The Evening News* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania), April 16, 1937; "Build Bandshell," *The Hutchinson News* (Hutchinson, Kansas), January 4, 1937; "City Will Erect New Bandstand," *Marshfield News-Herald* (Marshfield, Wisconsin), February 4, 1931; "City Manager Announced New Bandstand Will be Constructed," *The Palm Beach Post* (West Palm Beach, Florida), September 26, 1931.

nation. In 1937, work finished on the bandshell in Daytona Beach, Florida (Figure 3), a two-year, \$300,000 effort on the part of WPA workers.<sup>23</sup> This structure also featured an amphitheater with seating for 5,000 people for the numerous concerts planned for the summer and winter. The WPA completed many of these projects, another of which they built in Stanton, Nebraska, where the local concert band completed their 1936 summer



Figure 3. Bandshell at Daytona Beach, Florida



Figure 4. Bandshell in Stanton, Nebraska

season in what *The Lincoln Star* referred to as one of the best bandshells in the state (Figure 4).<sup>24</sup> Although these spaces brought about the ability for growth of music in many places during the Great Depression, not everyone was pleased with the work, particularly that accomplished by the WPA.<sup>25</sup>

In a letter to the editor of the *Democrat and Chronicle*, a Rochester, New York local wrote about the new bandshell in the midst of the building process, stating that the new structure was a “monstrosity,” and the author was unable to find a need for such an expenditure. They wrote the building seems unnecessary in light of the Park Band’s use of “modern amplifying devices,” and that “it certainly doesn’t add to the attractiveness of

<sup>23</sup> Figure 3 image taken from “Picture of The Bandshell on Daytona Beach,” *Inside Florida*, accessed February 1, 2018, <http://www.insideflorida.com/photo/762/>.

<sup>24</sup> Figure 4 image taken from “New Deal Magnificence in Nebraska,” *New Deal of the Day*, accessed February 1, 2018, <http://nndaily.blogspot.com/2017/06/new-deal-magnificence-in-nebraska.html>.

<sup>25</sup> “New Bandshell at Daytona Beach,” *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (Cincinnati, Ohio), November 28, 1937; Image taken from “Beach icons raised hopes in hard times,” *Orlando Sentinel*, accessed February 13, 2018, <http://www.orlandosentinel.com/features/os-joy-wallace-dickinson-0604-story.html>.; “Stanton Band Closes Season at New Bandshell; Is WPA Project,” *The Lincoln Star* (Lincoln, Nebraska), September 6, 1936.

the lakefront,” which makes the author believe it to be useless and expensive. The author then calls for an end to the WPA, noting, “It would seem that the WPA, realizing that it is on its last legs, is making a supreme effort to leave us something to remember it by.” Despite this negativity surrounding the WPA and its work, many bandshells appeared during this time. Four case studies of this movement highlight the growth of public spaces designed for the performance of music. The first two examples present the initiative of towns and individuals to build bandshells, while the last two examples show the WPA-constructed bandshells.<sup>26</sup>

The Paul E. Beck Memorial Bandshell in Lititz, Pennsylvania is an example of this movement to create performance venues in public spaces (Figure 5).<sup>27</sup> Erected and dedicated on September 2, 1937 through the Lititz Chamber of Commerce, this stage is home to numerous musical groups that perform throughout the year. Since its creation, the space hosted concerts, performances, and, most notably, the festivities of the annual Fourth of July celebration held in Lititz Springs Park. Dedicated to Paul E. Beck, a musician from Lititz who organized and directed the local Concert Band, the space is now the summer home of the Lititz Community Band. Formed during the Great Depression as the Lititz Cadet Band, the group first performed during the 1930 Fourth of July celebration and has since remained a staple of this event. As such, this group exemplifies another musical movement of this time that will receive discussion in Chapter Two: the growth of community bands and orchestras.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> “Would Make Bandshell Mausoleum for WPA,” *Democrat and Chronicle* (Rochester, New York), August 11, 1937.

<sup>27</sup> Figure 5 image taken from “Events,” *Lititz Springs Park*, accessed February 1, 2018, <https://www.lititzspringspark.org/events.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Dedicated to the Memory of Paul E. Beck (Lititz, Pennsylvania: Lititz Springs Park, n.d.), Beck Memorial Bandshell Plaque; Beck Memorial Bandshell (Lititz, Pennsylvania: Lititz Springs Park, n.d.),



Figure 5. The Paul E. Beck Memorial Bandshell in Lititz, Pennsylvania

A larger example of this movement appears in the creation of Tanglewood, the current summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (Figures 6 and 7).<sup>29</sup> Before a permanent structure became a topic of discussion, the people of Massachusetts began hosting summer concerts and festivals in 1934, which they held in a tent in the Berkshires, a rural region in the western part of the state. These festivals served as both a concert experience for local music lovers and as an opportunity for music education, as they featured both concerts and lectures by musicians. By 1936, the Boston Symphony Orchestra began to perform as part of this concert series and performed before an audience of 15,000. Later that year, a local family offered for their estate to become the new home of these concerts, a plot of land called Tanglewood. The next summer saw concerts again performed under a tent on this new plot of land, but the festival's organizers began making plans and raising money for a new permanent home for these concerts. On August 4, 1938, the newly completed outdoor concert venue opened for its

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Beck Memorial Bandshell Marker; R. Ronald Reedy, "Vignette History of the Lititz Community Band" (unpublished paper, n.d.).

<sup>29</sup> Figure 6 image taken from "Tanglewood Mon 8/19," *Grace Potter*, accessed February 1, 2018, <http://www.gracepotter.com/forums/showthread.php/2095-Tanglewood-MON-8-19>. Figure 7 image taken from "#74: Go to a Performance at Tanglewood," *Relishments: Savoring Life in the Berkshires*, accessed February 1, 2018, <https://www.relishments.com/blog/74-go-to-a-performance-at-tanglewood-2/>.



Figure 6. Internal view of Tanglewood, located in Lenox, Massachusetts

inaugural concert. For that first summer season alone, the Orchestra anticipated audiences of more than 30,000 for the festival, with the new concert structure seating 5,700. The festival planners also anticipated a diverse audience, as the *Hartford Courant* reported, “The six audiences will be...among the most cosmopolitan ever assembled for a similar event in America. Ticket holders already represent most of the states, and a number of foreign countries, and the advance interest had been so great that on some days since the shed was opened...as many as 1500 people have visited it.” A later report that summer reveals the concerts received even larger audiences than anticipated, with crowds reaching maximum capacity for the space. This shows the appeal these concerts and this space had for both the local music-lovers and those from across the country, as people traveled great distances to hear the Boston Symphony Orchestra perform at Tanglewood.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> “Festival Opens in Berkshires Today,” *Democrat and Chronicle* (Rochester, New York), August 4, 1938; Tanglewood previously belonged to Mrs. Gorham Brooks and Miss Mary Aspinwall Tappan, and served as the Tappan family estate. The 210-acre plot consisted of lawns, meadows, and many buildings. Prior to the Tappan Family, it served as the summer home of Nathaniel Hawthorne, who wrote several of his works on its land. “History of Tanglewood,” *Boston Symphony Orchestra*, accessed May 26, 2017, <https://www.bso.org/brands/tanglewood/general-info/history-and-archives/the-history-of-tanglewood.aspx>; “Festival Opens in Berkshires Today,” *Democrat and Chronicle* (Rochester, New York), August 4, 1938; “Tanglewood’s Concerts May Draw 30,000,” *Hartford Courant* (Hartford, Connecticut), July 31, 1938;



Figure 7. External view of Tanglewood in Lenox, Massachusetts

In Daytona Beach, the WPA created another bandshell, which they completed in 1937. Though the mayor of Daytona Beach initiated the project, the federal government paid for the majority of the structure's building costs and the workers for the project, with the city paying \$84,000 and the federal government \$184,000. While work was still in progress at the bandshell in 1937, the WPA completed enough of the project for the space to open officially on July 4, 1937. Made out of natural coquina rock, the designer, Alan MacDonough planned for the space to look like a natural element of the beach, while also standing out in order to bring attention to it. Featuring all of the latest technology available, the bandshell had a sound system installed by the Radio Corporation of America, which provided amplification throughout the venue and along the beach, as well as broadcasting concerts on the radio, all of which drew in large crowds. While the Daytona Beach bandshell no longer plays host to concerts, it still stands as a physical reminder of this movement and the work of the WPA.<sup>31</sup>

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"Another Capacity Crowd Expected." *The North Adams Transcript* (North Adams, Massachusetts), August 13, 1938.

<sup>31</sup> "Daytona Beach Bandshell Oceanfront Park Complex – Daytona Beach Florida," *The Living New Deal*, accessed October 3, 2017, <https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/bandshell-oceanfront-park-complex-daytona->

A final example of the growth of bandshells during the Great Depression is the Michigan State University Bandshell, designed by O.J. Munson and completed in 1938 (Figure 8).<sup>32</sup> Together the federal government and the class of 1937 paid for this project, which cost \$25,000 to complete, although again the federal government paid for the majority of this cost, with the donation from the class of 1937 totaling roughly \$2,500. This bandshell, like many others at this time focused on drawing in large crowds of both the college community and beyond with many concerts. It hosted concerts of the Michigan State College Band on the open-air stage along with college events such as graduation and pep rallies. Eventually, the University demolished this bandshell in 1960 to make space for a new hall, though they commemorate the space on their online archives and through a plaque outside the new building.<sup>33</sup>



Figure 8. The former bandshell at Michigan State University in East Lansing, Michigan

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beach-fl/; "Mission/History – The Friends of the Bandshell," *Daytona Beach Bandshell*, accessed October 3, 2017, [http://www.friendsofthebandshell.org/subsection.cfm?subsections\\_name=history](http://www.friendsofthebandshell.org/subsection.cfm?subsections_name=history).

<sup>32</sup> Figure 8 image taken from "Feature: The Band Shell," *MSU Facts*, accessed February 1, 2018, <http://msufacts.tumblr.com/post/7512945671/bandshell>.

<sup>33</sup> "Michigan State University: Band Shell (Demolished) – East Lansing Michigan," *The Living New Deal*, accessed October 3, 2017, <https://livingnewdeal.org/projects/msu-band-shell-east-lansing-mi/>; "Band shell, 1938: O.J. Munson," *New Deal Art and Architecture: A Virtual Walking Tour*, accessed October 3, 2017, <http://artmuseum.msu.edu/wpa/WPA/pages/music.htm>; "Gone But Not Forgotten: Campus Buildings That No Longer Exist," *University Archives & Historical Collections*, accessed October 3, 2017, <http://archives.msu.edu/collections/buildings.php>.



Though these bandshells and bandstands did not appear in every city across the country, they were on the rise during this time, and whether financed by the towns themselves or built by the WPA, they became an important aspect of the communities in which they emerged. The WPA alone built and refurbished over 300 bandshells and bandstands during the Great Depression; add to this number the many built through private contractors or by local governments, and this movement reveals its strength. The desire for music in public spaces was growing during this time, and the government, both local and federal, responded to this through funding the building of spaces intended for music performance away from the concert hall. As historian Paul Rabbitts eloquently states, “The bandstand and its surrounding area, where people stand and listen, watch, gaze and admire, is the focal point of a park. But a bandstand is, however, merely an empty shell unless music is played on it.”<sup>34</sup>

The changes in parks and the rise of bandshells and bandstands reveal the growth of music in parks and the desire among people for such growth. The park movement in America, through its European roots and the adaptations made for the United States, found a way to create an open space intended for use of the public. People across the country found themselves spending leisure time in these public parks, getting exercise, being among nature, and escaping the hustle and bustle of city life. Eventually, between the public and musicians, desire was strong enough for outdoor music performance venues that they began to appear across the country. Once the space existed, concerts followed soon after in order to make use of this venue. The next chapter will discuss the rise of concerts out of the concert hall throughout America during the Great Depression.

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<sup>34</sup> Rabbitts, *Bandstands*, 57.

## Chapter Two: Escaping the Concert Hall

Music in the parks was not a new phenomenon in the twentieth century, but the number of these outdoor concerts rose drastically during the Great Depression. This chapter will examine this change in concert venues and the growing number of free public concerts, and will attempt an explanation for this shift. It will argue the reasons for altering concert locations were twofold on the part of performing groups. First, these groups believed performances in locations that would bring in the largest possible crowds would help combat the monetary issues they faced during this time of economic struggle. Second, the performing groups recognized a desire among the public for concerts they could attend in order to escape their everyday troubles. As there are no credible sources as to the exact number of concerts held outdoors during any of the times under discussion here, this chapter will make its claims based on different evidence. In attempting to support these claims, this chapter will use the supply of concerts as the main means of corroboration, thereby asserting demand for these events was high, particularly as attendance at them typically was high, as commonly noted in newspaper reports on the events. Additionally, the number of advertisements for concerts grew from the Gilded Age to the Great Depression, and as such, this provides some level of support for the argument of this chapter.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The number of “outdoor concert” and “park concert” advertisements found is as follows: Gilded Age (1876-1900), 876,831; Progressive Era (1900-1920), 1,526,295; Roaring Twenties (1920-1928), 778,777; Great Depression (1929-1941), 1,217,466. Although the number of advertisements is smaller for the Great Depression than the Progressive Era, the fewer number of years included in the date range make it a large number, regardless. “Historical Newspapers,” *Ancestry*, accessed October 24, 2017, <https://www.newspapers.com/>. This part of the support for this chapter’s argument is much less crucial, particularly as there could be numerous explanations for such numbers, including musical groups recognizing the need to advertise their concerts, newspapers making advertisements easier, the changing length and content of newspapers, and many other explanations. While further research in this area could show that the rise in numbers had to do with the growing prominence of outdoor concerts during the Great

Historians have overlooked the rise of music in the parks, and as such, this chapter makes use of few secondary sources. The majority of sources employed in this discussion come from newspaper articles of the day, both those promoting future concerts and those written after the event. Beyond this, in order to claim that the rising number of outdoor concerts was a phenomenon of this time, a discussion of the outdoor concerts of the periods before the Great Depression—the Gilded Age, Progressive Era, and Roaring Twenties—will be used to support this chapter’s thesis. In addition to the focus on events, this chapter will also discuss the increasing number of local and regional bands and will highlight some specific groups founded at this time. Finally, the chapter will focus on some of the additional miscellaneous outdoor music adventures that took place during the Great Depression, including music camps, music festivals, and the growing number of high school marching bands.<sup>2</sup>

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Depression, for the purposes of this thesis, these numbers serve as a means of establishing the importance and commonness of outdoor concerts.

<sup>2</sup> Few sources appear on the history of music in the Great Depression, though there are some that talk about Great Depression culture and music as a by-product. For more on music in the Great Depression, see Kyle Gann, *American Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Shirmer Books, 1997); Morris Dickstein, “Depression: Facing the Music: What 1930s Pop Culture Can Teach us about our Own Hard Times,” *The American Scholar* 78, no. 4 (2009): 91-95; Morris Dickstein, *Dancing in the Dark: A Cultural History of the Great Depression* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2009); Leon Botstein, “Music of a Century: Museum Culture and the Politics of Subsidy,” in *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Music* (New York: Cambridge, University Press, 2004); and Kenneth J. Bindas, *Modernity and the Great Depression: The Transformation of American Culture, 1930-1941* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017). For more on the music of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, see Theodore Caskey Russell, *Theodore Thomas: His Role in the Development of Musical Culture in the United States, 1835-1905* (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1969); John Spitzer “Orchestras: American and European,” in *American Orchestras in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012); Joseph A. Mussulman, *Music in the Cultured Generation: A Social History of Music in America, 1870-1900* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1971); Ralph P. Locke, “Music Lovers, Patrons, and the ‘Sacrilization’ of Culture in America,” *19<sup>th</sup>-Century Music* 17, no. 2 (Autumn 1993): 149-173; John Erskine, *The Philharmonic-Symphony Society: Its First Hundred Years* (New York: Macmillan, 1943); Ronald S. Davis, *A History of Music in American Life*, 3 vols. (Huntington, New York: Robert Krieger Publishing Company, 1980); and Leroy Ashby, *With Amusement for All: A History of American Popular Culture Since 1830* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006). For more on music history in America, see Richard Taruskin, *The Oxford History of Western Music*, 6 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990); Charles Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1979); Richard Franko Goldman, *The Concert Band* (New York:

The idea of music performed out of the concert hall and in public spaces did not suddenly emerge in America as a new concept. For many years, groups played in gardens and parks, though there is no real understanding of when this first occurred. Despite this, it is clear that in America having concerts in public spaces and making it possible for large audiences to attend was a popular concept. Throughout the Gilded Age (1876-1900), outdoor concerts gained popularity among the American people. Military bands and college summer bands performed the majority of these concerts, although during the period, a movement arose for orchestras to perform in these outdoor venues as well.

In a sampling of the concerts held in those days, the common locations for these events were parks, town squares, and college campuses. While bands planned some of these events to take place outdoors, others had to relocate due to weather conditions. In an article in *The Tennessean*, the author notes the Innes Concert Band planned an indoor concert but had to move outside because of the extreme heat. Despite the large crowd present at this concert, numbering roughly 5,000, the author of the article did not support the relocation and clearly had a distaste for outdoor concerts: “Outdoor concerts are unsatisfactory to lovers of fine music at best, and that such people are numbered by thousands in Nashville is evidenced by the crowds that sat through the concerts the hottest nights of last week.” Although this evidence points to crowds enjoying the concert, the author continued: “It is safe to say that not a quarter of either number paid attention to last night’s outdoor concert.” Though the popularity of this outdoor concert movement rose throughout the next periods of American history, it is interesting to note

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Rinehart and Company, Inc., 1946); Gilbert Chase, *America’s Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); William Brooks, “Music in America: an Overview (part 1),” in *The Cambridge History of American Music* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Mark Evan Bonds, *A History of Music in Western Culture* (Boston: Pearson, 2013).

that not everyone supported this development, particularly those who considered the movement of music out of the near-spiritual space of the concert hall offensive to music.<sup>3</sup>

In spite of some negative attitudes toward outdoor concerts during the Gilded Age, they did receive some popularity among other music lovers. Many military bands performed outside, including the Sixth Infantry Band housed in Fort Douglas, Utah, which played short concerts that largely consisted of marches, classical excerpts, and dance music. Another military band, housed in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, frequently performed outdoors, and in a similar manner played marches and dance music as the majority of their repertoire. In addition to outdoor military band performances, college orchestras and bands played outside during this time. An announcement in *The Laredo Times* noted the upcoming performance of the Indiana University of Pennsylvania Summer Band held in a public park close to the school's campus. This concert, in a slight variation from the military groups, had music from marches to the popular tunes of the day. Other concerts held outdoors during the Gilded Age boasted much larger repertoire, including one held in New York's Prospect Park, which featured three different military bands and the performance of over thirty works. Overall, this sampling of outdoor concerts shows they had not yet received the popularity achieved during the Great Depression, nor were they particularly common events. These notions appear through the small number of events held during this era and the limited number of pieces performed at such events. Despite this, one man worked to create more of these concerts and sought to engage as wide an audience as possible through his orchestra.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> "Played Out of Doors," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, Tennessee), June 15, 1897.

<sup>4</sup> The pieces performed included Zikoff's "Red Ribbon" march, The "Remembrance" from Wagner's *Tannhauser* opera, Strauss's "1001 Night" waltz, Weber's "Preciosa" fantasie, Wiegand's song "Thou Art So Near and Yet So Far," and Conradi's "Musical Tour thro Europe." "Out-Door Concert," *The Salt Lake*

During the nineteenth century, a shift occurred that forced a greater divide between the classes and, as a result, classes began claiming certain cultural elements, such as music. Orchestral music quickly became the domain of the upper class, and musicians at the time saw this as a problem. It was not until later in the century, as concert attendance dwindled, and audiences no longer wanted to hear the works of major orchestral composers, that anyone recognized a problem. One who did was Theodore Thomas, a rising musician and conductor, and an immigrant to the United States from Germany. Recognizing the troubles in the American music scene, Thomas made efforts to educate and engage audiences and bring back an appreciation for music.<sup>5</sup>

During his forty years as a conductor, Thomas recognized the inability of recent music to draw in and relate to audiences. In an effort to combat this, Thomas created programs to engage and educate his audiences, such as Symphony Soirees and concerts in public parks, including New York's newly-finished Central Park. The goals of these

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*Herald* (Salt Lake City, Utah), April 18, 1886; Pieces on the concert program are Gung'l's "Favorite" march, a selection from *Huguenots* by Meyerbeer, Strauss's "Blue Danube" waltz, a selection from Wagner's *Tannhauser*, Marshall's "College Songs," and Godfrey's gallop "Mabel." "Out-Door Concert," *The Leavenworth Times* (Leavenworth, Kansas), August 11, 1876; The full listing of the repertoire performed at this concert does not appear, but the newspaper article notes that marches and popular tunes from Glenn Miller were performed, including "Moonlight Serenade," "Little Brown Jug," and "Chattanooga Choo-Choo." "Outdoor Concert Monday at Mack by IUP Band," *The Laredo Times* (Laredo, Texas), March 14, 1899; Some of the repertoire from this extensive concert includes Straubel's "Brooklyn Bridge" march, Gung'l's mazurka "In a Dream," selections from Wagner's *Tanhauser*, Faust's "Chain of Flowers" quadrille, and Reichardt's medley "National." "The Outdoor Concerts," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, New York), May 23, 1883.

<sup>5</sup> Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 85; For more on Theodore Thomas, see Ezra Schabas, *Theodore Thomas: America's Conductor and Builder of Orchestras, 1835-1905* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989) and Russell, *Theodore Thomas*. For more on nineteenth-century American culture, see Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*; and Lawrence Levine and Robert Middlekauff, eds., *The National Temper: Readings in American Culture and Society* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971). To research music during the nineteenth century, see Nicholas E. Tawa, *High-Minded and Low-Down: Music in the Lives of Americans, 1800-1861* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2000) and Joseph Horowitz, *Wagner Nights: An American History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). For more on American music history, see Richard Crawford, *An Introduction to America's Music* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001); Daniel Kingman, *American Music: A Panorama* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1998); and Henry Cowell, ed., *American Composers on American Music, a Symposium* (New York: F. Ungar, 1962).

events were equally to draw in audiences and to educate them on the music of the day. Thomas saw the need to improve the relations between music and people during the late nineteenth century, and he focused his career on this work.<sup>6</sup>

Thomas's second initiative serves as the most interesting for the purposes of this research. These outdoor summer concerts gave Thomas a way to draw in large audiences and have them listen to many different types of music popular in that day. For their first season in 1865, Thomas and a thirty-person orchestra performed these concerts at Belvedere Lion Park three nights a week. By 1866, these concerts occurred for one hundred nights at the more favorable location of Terrace Garden, and achieved success enough to ensure their future. Eventually, the concerts found a home in the newly constructed Central Park Garden, in a space specifically designed for outdoor concerts. The idea behind the location of these concerts was to remove the events from the seemingly harsh environment of the concert hall into a space intended for all people. In turn, this allowed all people to feel welcome at concerts hosted by Thomas. These concerts continued the trend begun with the Symphony Soirees, both of which focused on symphonic music and audience education in this music. While concerts of this type were popular in Europe, particularly in London and Vienna, until 1865, American conductors had not attempted these in their own country. Through the success of Thomas' pioneering effort, other outdoor programs emerged across the country in cities such as Chicago, Cincinnati, and Saint Louis. The frequency of these concerts as well as the launching of other like efforts across the nation show the success they achieved.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Russell, *Theodore Thomas*, 39, 51; Theodore Thomas, *A Musical Autobiography* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1964), I, 50.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas, *A Musical Autobiography*, II, 82-92; I, 52.

The type of works performed and their concert order at these events became a standard for the era and many after it. While the Symphony Soirees focused solely on educating audiences in serious music, the summer concerts had this same goal, but added music more for the audience's entertainment than solely their edification. Generally, the concerts took place in three parts, the first of which featured a march, an overture, a waltz, and a selection from an opera. The second part began with an overture before moving to two symphonic movements, and ending with a solo or fantasia. Finally, the third part included an overture followed by a waltz or landler, a polka or solo, and ended with a gallop, quadrille, or operatic selection. Thomas ordered these works specifically, using the first part as a means of engaging his audience, the second to educate, and the third to ensure a large amount of applause for the performance. These concerts, in addition to the Symphony Soirees, achieved the goals established by Thomas as they educated audiences through performing major orchestral works.<sup>8</sup>

Other concerts held during the Gilded Age present similar repertoire and structure. Several concerts held in New York's Prospect Park performed by military bands featured programs divided into two parts. The first parts all included marches, overtures, and operatic selections, while the second parts included dance music, such as polkas and waltzes, fantasies, popular songs, and medleys. A concert of the North Carolina State Band also held true to these musical selections, with a concert featuring an overture, waltz, operatic selections, polka, and ending with a patriotic medley. The program for the concert band of Leavenworth, Kansas, reveals a similar structure, beginning with a march, followed by an operatic selection, a waltz, another selection, a

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas, *A Musical Autobiography*, II.



medley, and ending with a gallop. A concert in Salt Lake City, Utah, by the Sixth Infantry Band of Fort Douglas, has another similar concert order. This concert featured a march, an operatic selection, a waltz, a fantasia, a popular song, and ended with a medley. Finally, the Innes Band of Tennessee performed a concert like those listed above. Theirs included overtures, marches, a gallop, a polka, and a suite. All of these concert programs come together to show the influence Theodore Thomas had during this era, and how pervasive his ideas were, particularly that large public audiences should hear classical works with which they were unfamiliar in addition to the popular tunes of the day that would help in engaging them. Despite the success Thomas achieved during his lifetime, a small amount of time passed before outdoor concerts fully became a part of American culture.<sup>9</sup>

Outdoor concerts remained popular and successful throughout the Progressive Era (1900-1920) and Roaring Twenties (1920-1928). A sampling of outdoor concerts held during the Progressive Era shows the high regard and attendance for such events. *The Evening Kansan-Republican* detailed an upcoming concert held by the Newton Municipal Band. This concert in particular highlights one of the major goals of outdoor concerts throughout their existence: to draw in large audiences. This becomes clear through the statement that, weather permitting, the concert will take place outside, but if conditions

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<sup>9</sup> "The Outdoor Concerts," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (Brooklyn, New York), May 23, 1883; Pieces performed at this concert include Strauss's "Blue Danube," selections from Rossini's *Barber of Seville* opera, W.H. Neave's "Fire of Youth" march, the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's *Messiah*, and assorted marches by Gaston, "God Save Our President," "Washington's Grand March," and "Old North State." "The North Carolina State Band at Yorktown," *The Charlotte Observer* (Charlotte, North Carolina), October 1, 1881; "Out-Door Concert," *The Leavenworth Times* (Leavenworth, Kansas), August 11, 1876; "Out-Door Concert," *The Salt Lake Herald* (Salt Lake City, Utah), April 18, 1886; This concert had performances of Mesmer's "The Flag" march, Grieg's "Sunrise" and "The Demons of the Mountain" from *Peer Gynt Suite*, selections from Gounod's *Faust* opera, and scenes from Arthur Sullivan's *Ivanhoe* opera. "Played Out of Doors," *The Tennessean* (Nashville, Tennessee), June 15, 1897.

are poor, the concert will happen in the City Auditorium, a municipal building, which, as opposed to the foreboding concert hall, would encourage a large audience. Another newspaper, *The Colfax Gazette*, noted the recent restructuring of the local community band, which received a new manager and band director, and was now prepared to play frequent outdoor concerts. With this resurgence of concerts, the people of Colfax also began demanding the building of a bandstand, as the band did not have a specific location in which to perform.<sup>10</sup>

The newspaper announcements for outdoor concerts during the Progressive Era also reveal the repertoire performed at these events. Largely, the concerts had few pieces performed, and they maintained the format begun in the Gilded Age. One concert featured a march, an overture, gavotte, a mazurka, and a concluding march. Here again, the ideas of Theodore Thomas remain prominent, particularly with the tactful mixing of popular tunes and classical music. Other concerts featured similar selections. In 1906, the U.S. Soldiers' Home Band performed in Washington, D.C., and their concert featured a march, an overture, an operatic selection, a waltz suite, and a final ragtime selection. The First Regiment band of Lawrence, Kansas, performed a 1916 concert featuring a march, an overture, a cornet duet, a serenade, and a concluding march. All of these concert repertoires come together to show the goals of these concerts, which largely remained the same from the previous period: to draw in large audiences and educate them through the performed works.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> "Outdoor Concert Sunday Afternoon," *The Evening Kansan-Republican* (Newton, Kansas), May 3, 1919; "Colfax Band Reorganized," *The Colfax Gazette* (Colfax, Washington), June 19, 1908.

<sup>11</sup> Performed works include Hall's "Exalted Ruler" march, Harris's "A High Ball" medley, Beyer's "Battlement de Coeur" gavotte, Kiefer's "The Rose Queen" mazurka, and Merryman's "Wake Up" march. "Colfax Band Reorganized," *The Colfax Gazette* (Colfax, Washington), June 19, 1908; The concert repertoire featured Lincoln's "The Palm Limited" march, Thomas's "Le Caid" overture, Tobani's "Heart and Flowers" idyl, Milloecker's "The Army Chaplain," "Invocation to Battle" from Wagner's *Rienzi*, and

In a very telling article, written in 1911, published in *Arts & Decoration*, the author noted the rising popularity and appreciation of outdoor concerts among Americans. The article stated, “Recently every musician who has returned to New York after concert tours in the middle and far West has brought with him remarkable stories of the increase in the public appreciation for good music in those regions.... And yet, while this all has been going on in the West, right here in New York a development in the taste for good music...has slowly taken place.” The author continued on the popularity of such events, writing, “Though it was late in the season and the day was not one that made sitting in the park particularly attractive, there were a great many persons in the audience.” It continued, “The people were of all nationalities...there were people of all sorts...well-dressed people, poorly dressed people and people from tenements.” Through this article, it becomes clear these outdoor concerts achieved at least one of their goals by bringing in large and diverse audiences.<sup>12</sup>

The Roaring Twenties brought further expansion of the outdoor music movement. A sampling of concerts during this time reveals the repertoire performed, as well as the type of concerts held. A 1928 performance of the Elizabeth Symphony Orchestra of Bridgewater, New Jersey, located at Warinanco Park, provided audiences with numerous pieces, both fitting with the trend of previous eras and standing out from the crowd. The music heard included a march, an overture, ballet selections, and a concluding march, in addition to numerous trombone solos. In Decatur, Illinois, the Millikin University band

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Webster’s “Coontown Chimes.” “Outdoor Concerts Resumed,” *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), April 22, 1906; The band performed works including Grafulla’s “Washington Grays” march, Auber’s “Masaniello” overture, Eilenberg’s “May Bells Herald the Approach of Spring” serenade,” and Sousa’s “Rifle Regiment” march. “First Outdoor Concert,” *Lawrence Daily Journal-World* (Lawrence, Kansas), May 24, 1916.

<sup>12</sup> Karl Schmidt, “Music in the Parks: Development of Popular Taste for Classical Music,” *Arts & Decoration* 1, no. 9 (July 1911): 386.

performed an outdoor concert on the school's campus. The repertoire for this concert included a march, a waltz, a few popular songs, an overture, and the "Star Spangled Banner" to conclude. A performance of the Seventeenth Infantry Band for the citizens of Laredo, Texas, saw the band playing a march, an overture, an operatic selection, a popular song, and dance music, outdoors at Fort McIntosh. Finally, the Cecilian Band performed at Kimberly Park in Appleton, Wisconsin, in 1928, and played selections including a march, multiple fox trots, an overture, and several further marches. It becomes clear through these selections that the formula initiated by Theodore Thomas in the Gilded Age maintained popularity and produced results, particularly as these concerts were well attended by audiences.<sup>13</sup>

An article in the *Harrisburg Telegraph* reveals the growing popularity of some of these concerts. This piece focused on the concert scene in New York City, which it described as flourishing: "Each year for the past three this summer season of standard and classical music has been a musical event in this city which has stimulated the movement for the popularization of music throughout the United States." The author also noted the large number of people in attendance at these concerts, which they claimed were the largest crowds to attend such events thus far. They stated, "As many as 25,000 music lovers attend these outdoor concerts, and this, the fourth week, shows every sign of

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<sup>13</sup> Works performed at this concert include Gounod's "Queen of Sheba" march, Rossini's "William Tell" overture, selections from Gounod's *Faust*, Luigini's "Ballet Egyptian," and Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" march. "Symphony to Give Outdoor Concert," *The Courier-News* (Bridgewater, New Jersey), June 8, 1928; Selections from this concert are Taylor's "Honor and Arms" march, Brooks's "Garden of Roses" waltz, Barnard's "King Rose" overture, and Keys's "Star Spangled Banner." "JMU Band to Play Thursday," *The Decatur Herald* (Decatur, Illinois), May 21, 1924; This band performed Parker's "American Legion" march, selections from Herbert's operetta "The Red Mill," Ball's song "Let the Rest of the World Go By," "Farewell Public Concert Ft. McIntosh This Evening," and Layton's "Strut Miss Lizzie" fox trot. *Laredo Weekly Times* (Laredo, Texas), October 16, 1921; This performance included Green and Stept's "That's My Weakness Now" fox trot and Key's "Star Spangled Banner." "Kimberly Band in Outdoor Concert," *The Post-Crescent* (Appleton, Wisconsin), September 26, 1928.

increasing rather than abatement of interest.” It is clear the popularity of outdoor concerts was on the rise and reaching wider audiences.<sup>14</sup>

One editorial written in *The Evening Review* noted this rise, stating that bandstands, once abandoned and forgotten, were on their way to primary use again. It continued, “Big cities are taking the lead now in giving outdoor concerts. In New York, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, Cleveland and many other large communities, there are regular series of summer concerts given by local symphony orchestras, providing as good music as the country or world affords.” The author concluded this movement and the rising number of outdoor public concerts signaled the beginning of a new musical era in America. They stated, “There is genuine love for music, widely diffused, and there is more knowledge of music and more musical taste than ever before.... Music is good, and outdoors is good, and the two belong together in the good old summer time. We may yet have more people attending outdoor concerts than baseball games.” These concerts and newspaper reports make the popularity of outdoor concerts apparent throughout the Gilded Age, Progressive Era, and Roaring Twenties. Additionally, the number of concerts performed shows the desire for such events. The outdoor concerts performed between 1876 and 1928 constituted a prelude to the period when the movement fully flourished in the Great Depression. Musicians then needed to continue performing in order to escape the realities of everyday life and earn a living, while hoping that music would reach large audiences who could use the morale boost.<sup>15</sup>

Concerts flourished across the country and numerous people came to hear the

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<sup>14</sup> “Outdoor Concerts in New York Well Attended,” *Harrisburg Telegraph* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania), July 13, 1922.

<sup>15</sup> “Outdoor Concerts,” *The Evening Review* (East Liverpool, Ohio), April 25, 1927.

music. An editorial in *Life* discussed this rise in popularity for performing groups and their outdoor ventures. The article lists several locations of these concerts and notes that people are coming to take advantage of these events that did not exist in large scale before the 1920s. The author noted, "Before the War, music in America was purely a winter matter. When spring came, concert halls closed, artists went off to South America or Australia and no music filled the air except that which music lovers played for themselves. But since the War, the delights of outdoor music have been attracting larger and larger crowds." The article also stated that the audiences for these outdoor concerts largely demanded the performance of classical music, not the popular tunes of the day. Finally, it detailed the benefits of the location choice for these events: "The delight of summer music lies as much in being outdoors as in hearing the music. The audience, which would sit tense indoors and listen hard, relaxes and lets the music come to its ears." A similar article in *Time* noted other positive attributes of outdoor concerts: the people in attendance. It stated, "Summer concertgoers, a more informal, comfortable, carefree throng than the wintertime concert public, last week began strolling of an evening to cool parks beneath the July moon to hear fine music in the open air." Through all of these benefits and demands, outdoor concerts became a popular event for many Americans.<sup>16</sup>

As outdoor concerts rose in popularity during the Great Depression, many different forms of these performances came into being in order to meet the growing demand for such events. Churches began hosting such concerts, free and open to the public, although the obvious focus was on religious music. In Tucson, Arizona, the Ajo

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<sup>16</sup> "Record-Breaking Crowds are Listening to Music under the Summer Stars," *Life* 5, no. 7 (August 1938): 9-11; "Summer Concerts," *Time* 16, no. 2 (July 1930): 46.

Church held a concert in the park bandstand at the Community Plaza, which featured music played from the church's electric organ moved to the park for this occasion.

Another church concert held in Detroit, Michigan, featured a male quartet and organ music. These groups performed a free outdoor concert in the Michigan Memorial Park and featured old songs of the church. Such church concerts became popular during the Great Depression, probably because they brought a different level of comfort to these struggling Americans.<sup>17</sup>

Public schools, particularly high schools, also hosted outdoor concerts during the Great Depression. University concerts occurred outdoors during the previous eras, and they continued into this era, joined by high school bands. In East Liverpool, Ohio, the Lisbon Senior and Junior High School bands held a combined outdoor summer concert in the public square at the court house. The article in *The Evening Review* noted that the bands had played this concert for a few years and it was very popular among the local populace. It also stated that part of the draw of these concerts was their programs, which were specifically designed to bring in crowds. Elsewhere, the joint bands of Ironwood, Wakefield, and Bessemer High Schools of Michigan performed an outdoor concert to start the summer season in the newly-created bandshell. In North Adams, Massachusetts, the annual outdoor Drury High School concert featured a performance of over 750 singers in addition to the school's band and orchestra. The band played on a terrace overlooking the local park. An article in *The North Adams Transcript* noted this event, which started in 1929, achieved success every year: "The annual outdoor concert has been one of the outstanding and most pleasing musical events of past seasons in this

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<sup>17</sup> "Ajo Church Gives Outdoor Concert," *Arizona Daily Star* (Tucson, Arizona), July 17, 1938; "Old Songs Will Be Heard at Memorial Park Sunday," *Detroit Free Press* (Detroit, Michigan), July 18, 1936.

city.” New London, Wisconsin, was another location of outdoor high school band concerts. An article in *The Post-Crescent* noted an upcoming concert performed by the New London Band as a celebration of their purchase of cathedral chimes. Held in the local bandshell, this concert featured selections to highlight these new chimes and draw in large crowds to see them. High school concerts held outside achieved popularity during the Great Depression, but were not as common as those performed by university bands.<sup>18</sup>

Universities across the United States played concerts during the Great Depression for large audiences. In Tucson, Arizona, the University of Arizona held one such event annually. An article in the *Arizona Daily Star* noted that this outdoor concert, held on the library steps at the school, became a tradition for the school for students and Tucson residents. The Johns Hopkins Orchestra performed another outdoor concert to honor the graduating class of 1931, held in front of one of the school’s halls. This public concert featured works meant to encourage public attendance, as an article in *The Baltimore Times* observed; the conductor selected each of the pieces with this audience in mind. In Carbondale, Illinois, the Southern Illinois State Teachers’ College symphony orchestra performed before a large audience outside their campus library. Like the other college orchestras and bands concerts, this performance featured works intended to bring in and captivate audiences, and, as the article from *The Daily Free Press* stated, it achieved this

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<sup>18</sup> “Lisbon School Band in Outdoor Concert,” *The Evening Review* (East Liverpool, Ohio), July 25, 1935; Selections from this concert included Huff’s “Show Boy” march, King’s overture to *Princess of India*, Panella’s “On the Square” march, Meacham’s “American Patrol” march, Bagley’s “National Emblem” march, and Key’s “Star Spangled Banner.” “Band Shell to be Used First Time,” *Ironwood Daily Globe* (Ironwood, Michigan), July 27, 1937; “Drury Will Give Outdoor Concert,” *The North Adams Transcript* (North Adams, Massachusetts), June 2, 1934; Works performed included Goldman’s “Shenandoah” march, a selection from Christiansen’s “Second Norwegian Rhapsody,” Holmes’ “Serenade at Dusk,” King’s “Fidelity” march, Sousa’s “El Capitan” march, and Holmes’ “Colorado” march. “Chimes to Feature Band Performance,” *The Post-Crescent* (Appleton, Wisconsin), June 14, 1938.



goal. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's concert band performed outdoors frequently during the school year in the Great Depression. These concerts were popular events among the student and local population, and many featured well-known works and soloists from the school and beyond. While the University of North Carolina's band frequently provided the community with outdoor concerts, other universities only performed outside occasionally. One such band was the Millikin University Band of Decatur, Illinois. This concert, unlike the others mentioned here, featured the typical repertoire of marches in addition to special musical comedy numbers. This band played in front of the campus's main building, and the group encouraged attendance from both students and community members. Across all of these university concerts, the common theme of public outreach became prevalent, as these bands and orchestras sought to bring in large audiences to hear their performances. Other concerts held during the Great Depression had this similar goal.<sup>19</sup>

Beyond school-age concerts, other varieties or performances continued or began during this time. Though military band concerts were the focal point of outdoor concerts during the previous eras, in the Great Depression, military band concerts became one of many options available to the public. In 1936, the Valley Forge Military band held a

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<sup>19</sup> "Outdoor concerts to be Given by U. Band," *Arizona Daily Star* (Tucson, Arizona), April 22, 1937; Selections included the overture to Verdi's opera *Nabucodonosor*, the prelude to the fourth act of Hamerik's opera *Tovelille*, Strauss' "Blue Danube" waltz, and Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever." Helen S. Taylor, "Dull Season for Much Under Way," *The Baltimore Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland), June 7, 1931; Works heard at this concert included Clarke's "Carnival of Venice" solo for trumpet, Mendelssohn's "Athalia" overture, Ketelbey's "In a Persian Market" intermezzo, and Romberg's "The Student Prince" operetta. "College Orchestra Gives Outdoor Concert," *The Daily Free Press* (Carbondale, Illinois), July 10, 1936. The featured soloist for this concert was Charles Miller, a student of this university. Featured works included Hartman's "Grand Fantasia," Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata," Fauchet's "Symphony in B Flat," and Tchaikovsky's "March Slave." "Band Will Give Outdoor Concert," *The Daily Tar Heel* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina), May 13, 1936; Pieces performed included Brown's "Iron Clad" march, Barnard's "Royal Pageant Overture," Porter's song "Rosalie," Nevin's suite "A Day in Venice," Bartlett's "El Conquistador" march, and selections from Friml's "The Firefly." "Millikin Band in Outdoor Concert Wednesday at 7:15," *The Decatur Daily Review* (Decatur, Illinois), May 22, 1938.

concert sponsored by the Northeast Junior high school of Reading, Pennsylvania. This concert intended to reach out to the local community, as well as to provide entertainment for the students as the band followed up the outdoor performance with an indoor school concert. Despite the continuation of military band concerts and their near-constant popularity among the American people, other groups performed the majority of concerts held during the Great Depression, from municipal, regional, and community bands and orchestras to symphony orchestras.<sup>20</sup>

Beyond military bands, symphony orchestras took to the parks in order to regain audiences they lost due to both the people's inability to afford regular concerts and the daunting nature of the concert hall, which kept others away. Certain symphonies in particular embraced these outdoor performances. One was the Illinois Symphony Orchestra, which hosted weekly summer concerts in the Wilmette Bowl. An article in the *Chicago Tribune* commented on the rising popularity of these events: "Attendance at the weekly Wednesday evening free outdoor concerts by the Illinois Symphony Orchestra at the Wilmette amphitheater is constantly increasing. Officials announce that new bleachers will be added this week to seat a larger number of listeners." In Pennsylvania, the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra also began performing outdoors regularly for public audiences. These events occurred at the Sky Club Lodge, initially starting in 1935. They received large attendance and such popular acclaim that the series continued for many following years. An article in *The Pittsburgh Press* claimed the success of this initial endeavor: "Firstly, the orchestra played to the largest audience since the inception of the

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<sup>20</sup> Pieces performed at this concert included the overture to Franz von Suppe's *Light Cavalry* operetta, Colonna's "America Forever" march, and Goldman's "On the Mall" march. "Northeast High Sponsors Concert," *Reading Times* (Reading, Pennsylvania), May 7, 1936.

presentations—over 2,500 to be exact; secondly, enthusiastic and encouraging applause greeted each number, bringing both orchestral and solo encores.” Here again, the popularity and success of these events becomes obvious, which helped in encouraging the demand for such events. Further concerts occurred throughout this era among local groups of musicians.<sup>21</sup>

In the summer of 1929, the Peshtigo City Band of Wisconsin held weekly outdoor concerts throughout the season. An article in the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* stated that these concerts took place at the town’s bandshell and a large crowd attended the performance despite less than ideal weather. The following summer, in Belleville, Kansas, the people of this city heard the forces of ten Kansas City bands who performed both individually and combined from three bandstands near the courthouse. This special event occurred due to a convention of the Kansas League of Municipal Bands. These early Great Depression concerts demonstrated the popularity of such events and serve as examples of the common concerts and special events that these became.<sup>22</sup>

Later in the Great Depression years, concerts achieved further popularity and shifted from special occasions to regular events. The summer of 1935 found the Chicago Heights Concert band, one of the oldest of such groups, performing a series of three outdoor concerts on the lawn near City Hall. In Eau Claire, Wisconsin, their city’s municipal band performed several concerts during the 1937 summer season in Owen Park. In an article found in the *Eau Claire Leader*, the band addressed several issues

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<sup>21</sup> “Notes of Music and Musicians,” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, Illinois), July 11, 1937; “Record Crowd Hears Final Outdoor Symphony Concert,” *The Pittsburgh Press* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), August 15, 1935.

<sup>22</sup> “Peshtigo City band Gives Outdoor Concert,” *Green Bay Press-Gazette* (Green Bay, Wisconsin), June 10, 1929; “Full Afternoon of Band Music from 3 Stands,” *The Belleville Telescope* (Belleville, Kansas), June 26, 1930.

regarding outdoor concerts, including insufficient seating and noisy patrons. In regards to the first issue, the article stated, “It is hoped that the public will act on the experience of the past and be as quiet as possible for the first as well as for all other concerts this year.... The concert management solicits the aid of parents in keeping the children quiet by instructing them at home in regard to their conduct at the park.” The article also addressed seating issues, specifically that there was enough seating for all audience members. Here, the popularity of these concerts becomes clear, as well as the wide array of audience members, not limited to those in the upper classes, who would not have needed the disclaimers about behavior at these events.<sup>23</sup>

A series of concert announcements from Pennsylvania during the Great Depression shows the commonness and popularity of such events. In Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, the Bethlehem Municipal band performed a concert in the local Rose Garden. *The Morning Call* stated, “A large crowd of music lovers from Bethlehem and vicinity enjoyed the program.” Elsewhere in Pennsylvania, outdoor concerts received large audiences due to relocating concerts. *The News-Chronicle* of Shippensburg reported on a band concert recently given in the new bandstand at the public playground, which the audience greatly enjoyed. In addition to the change in venue, the concert was well received because the band selected music specifically designed to engage their audience. One such piece, entitled “Comic Tattoo,” involves the band going on strike and refusing to play for the conductor, which, the article noted, the crowd found highly entertaining.

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<sup>23</sup> Selections from this concert included Bagley’s “National Emblem” march and selections from Verdi’s opera *Rigoletto*. “Oldest City Band to Present Three Outdoor Concerts,” *The Chicago Heights Star* (Chicago Heights, Illinois), June 21, 1935; “Summer Band Concerts to Begin Tonight,” *Eau Claire Leader* (Eau Claire, Wisconsin), June 10, 1937; Pieces performed at this event include the Prelude to the Third Act from Wagner’s opera *Lohengrin*, Zehle’s “Army and Marine” march, Suppe’s overture “Poet and Peasant,” Buchtel’s “Blue Bells” march, and Bagley’s “National Emblem” march. “Summer Band Concerts to Begin Tonight,” *Eau Claire Leader* (Eau Claire, Wisconsin), June 10, 1937.

The Civic Symphony Orchestra of Philadelphia provided audiences with a summer series in the Grand Court of the Philadelphia Art Museum in 1938. This concert, like those before it, worked to draw in large crowds through a location that people would find attractive and in performing music the public would enjoy.<sup>24</sup>

These outdoor public concerts became pervasive throughout America during the Great Depression, though they tended to focus in certain regional pockets of America. In Little Chute, Wisconsin, the Community Band performed regular outdoor concerts in the public school park during the summer season. Salem, Oregon, was another host of these concerts, through their Civic Band's performances in Marion Square. The Sheboygan, Wisconsin, City Band performed regular concerts in the local park, and *The Sheboygan Press* noted around 1,500 people attended per event. In Rhinelander, Wisconsin, the band performed an outdoor concert at Pioneer Park, which attracted a large audience. The director of this band stated, "Outdoor concerts are beginning to regain their old popularity.... For some years the public didn't seem to appreciate concerts held in public parks, but this season has indicated a growing interest in band music and regular outdoor concerts." This quote indicated the growing popularity of outdoor concerts during the Great Depression, as even those living during the time recognized their popularity and potential.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Works performed at this concert included Bach's "Joy of Man's Desiring" and Sibelius' "Finlandia" tone poem. "Municipal Band in 17<sup>th</sup> Concert," *The Morning Call* (Allentown, Pennsylvania), August 8, 1938; Other pieces played at the event included two fox trots, Adams and Carmichael's "Little Old Lady" and Hudson's "Organ Grinder's Swing," in addition to other unnamed marches. "Band Plays in Changed Stand," *The News-Chronicle* (Shippensburg, Pennsylvania), June 1, 1937; Selections from this concert included Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" march, two movements from Dvorak's "New World Symphony," Strauss' "Emperor" waltz, and Tchaikovsky's "Capriccio Italien." "Civic Symphony Begins Art Museum Series," *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), July 10, 1938.

<sup>25</sup> Pieces performed largely featured marches, and included Purdy's "On Wisconsin" march, Fillmore's "Golden Friendships" march, Keler-Bela's "Lustspiel" comedy overture, Sousa's "Washington Post" march, King's "Barnum and Bailey" march, and Bigelow's "Our Director" march. "Third Outdoor Band

Some editorials and letters to the editor written about these outdoor concerts of the Great Depression help demonstrate their popularity and pervasiveness in the lives of Americans. *The Baltimore Sun* reported “good-natured” riots that broke out in New York at the Lewisohn Stadium concerts. The cause of these riots was the lack of seating available at the concert, as the audience filled all 13,000 chairs in the stadium and the overflowing crowd searched for spaces elsewhere. This article, in addition to telling a good story about these concerts, showed how clearly popular they were, as thousands of people turned out to hear music played outside. A letter to the editor of the *Chicago Tribune* recalled another troubling situation that emerged at an outdoor concert performed by the Illinois Symphony Orchestra in the Wilmette Bowl: “Why must people spoil a lovely outdoor concert by smoking while the music is in progress?” The author added a primary function of outdoor concerts was they provide audiences with the ability to hear music while breathing in fresh air. Here again, the popularity of concerts comes into play, as audience members sought to resolve issues that prevented them from fully enjoying outdoor concerts.<sup>26</sup>

Other editorials made note of the perseverance of audiences and bands in the midst of additional troubles. In one such editorial published in the *Chicago Tribune*, the author observed that during a downpour at a concert played at Grant Park, the violin soloist continued playing despite any damage that may have occurred to his instrument.

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Concert Thursday at Little Chute,” *The Post-Crescent* (Appleton, Wisconsin), August 3, 1938; Works included Moret’s “Brides and Butterflies” waltz, Gershwin’s song “They Can’t Take That Away From Me,” Herbert’s comic opera selection “It Happened in Nordland,” and Alford’s “Panama Pacific” march. “Outdoor Concert By Band Tonight,” *Statesman Journal* (Salem, Oregon), July 19, 1938; “Xylophone Duet Is Feature Of End Park Band Concert,” *The Sheboygan Press* (Sheboygan, Wisconsin), August 20, 1937; Quoted in “Band to Play Last Concert Wednesday,” *The Rhinelander Daily News* (Rhinelander, Wisconsin), August 23, 1938.

<sup>26</sup> “Outdoor Concert Causes Good-Natured Riots,” *The Baltimore Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland), June 24, 1937; V.L., “Enveloped in Smoke,” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, Illinois), July 14, 1938.

The author wrote, “No doubt all manner of distressing things happened to Mr. Sorantin’s instrument, but he kept them all secret from the loyal group of a couple of hundred listeners who braved the downpour to hear him.” So popular were such events that hundreds of people would attend and remain at this concert while it was raining. Another instance of audiences making do with what they have appears in an editorial written for *The Decatur Daily Review*. This editorial stated several hundred people came out to hear the outdoor performance of the Millikin Conservatory of Music band. At this event, the author observed, “The crowd sat on everything from newspapers and its own heels to folding chairs.... They came early and stayed late.” While these crowds were making do with what they had available to them, elsewhere in the United States during the Great Depression, outdoor concerts were also on the rise.<sup>27</sup>

The concert band of Hartford, Connecticut began outdoor performances in 1933, as the *Hartford Courant* stated. This editorial noted the band “has joined a growing list of progressive American cities in which the public is to have an opportunity to hear good music effectively played in municipal parks.” The author continued: “In initiating its series of outdoor civic concerts Hartford not only has expressed its communal belief that this cultural project should become a permanent feature, but has definitely taken its place in a nationwide movement to make good music available to the public.” In these statements, the author expressed at the very least, a positive sentiment toward outdoor concerts and the community’s attendance during this era. A similar article in the *Marshfield News-Herald* discussed the creation of a bandstand in Marshfield, Wisconsin. The author stated that the town had the fortunate situation of being home to an excellent

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<sup>27</sup> Cecil Smith, “Downpour Just Heavy Fog to Park Concerts,” *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, Illinois), August 20, 1937; “Crowd Enjoys Outdoor Concert,” *The Decatur Daily Review* (Decatur, Illinois), July 15, 1938.

band, the 135<sup>th</sup> Medical Regiment band, which had largely been unable to perform as the town lacked a suitable venue. The article stated: “The hundreds of people who listen to the series of outdoor concerts each summer is evidence enough of the community’s appreciation for this type of entertainment. That this expression of appreciation will increase when a new bandstand makes better concerts possible goes without saying.” The clear importance and popularity of these concerts shows the pervasiveness of the ideology that concerts were important to American life during the Great Depression, both in providing musicians with a performance outlet and in bringing music to the suffering populace.<sup>28</sup>

Although community and regional band concerts were common at the time and many such performing groups held like concerts during the Great Depression, they were not the only bands performing in this period. Other, less conventional groups provided music for the public during the 1930s, particularly those performing folk music and jazz. Folk music was a popular form in rural areas of the United States. This was particularly due to the nature of this music, as at its core it is amateur musicians creating and performing, the numbers of which were rising during this time. Through numerous concerts during the Great Depression and beyond, it spread and achieved common regard. In Medford, Oregon, the Normal School held a public folk concert featuring their glee clubs and folk dancing class in their school’s auditorium. In Ithaca, New York, a chorus of seventy-five combined community members and students at Cornell University gave a public folk song concert at a local church. The music performed at this event revolved

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<sup>28</sup> “Band Concerts in Parks to Amuse Citizens During Long Summer Evenings,” *Hartford Courant* (Hartford, Connecticut), June 17, 1934; “A New Bandstand,” *Marshfield News-Herald* (Marshfield, Wisconsin), February 5, 1931.



around spirituals sung in the Deep South during the Civil War era. The Phoenix, Arizona, Girls' League gave a public folk song concert in 1929 at the Phoenix Union High School auditorium. Some of the works featured during this concert included Italian, Russian, Spanish, and American Indian folk songs. This annual event brought in large crowds that packed the auditorium. Though the majority of folk concerts held at this time were vocal, a concert in Maryville, Missouri, had music performed by the Stanberry Folk Band. This band played multiple concerts in Maryville, located in the courthouse yard bandstand and the local church grounds. Despite their growing popularity, the number of folk concerts during the Great Depression was small in comparison to that of jazz concerts.<sup>29</sup>

Jazz achieved popularity among the masses during the 1920s, although it had been flourishing in the South and in foreign countries, especially France, for many years. During the Great Depression, many jazz concerts occurred, as musicians recognized that this music would draw in large audiences. Schools became a common host of these jazz concerts. *The Daily Tar Heel* noted an upcoming event at the University of North Carolina, which included amateur shows and jazz concerts as entertainment for the winter season. The music department hosted two jazz concerts during a week of festivities. At the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, jazz concerts were a weekly event, which an article in *The Edinburg Daily Courier* recalled were a popular event among students. The Teacher's College in Saint Cloud, Minnesota, also had a jazz concert, although this

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<sup>29</sup> The pieces at this concert featured works such as spirituals, cowboy songs, Russian and Swedish folk songs, Polish songs, Mexican, Hungarian, Spanish, and Irish dances, Irish songs, and concluded with a Czechoslovakian song sung in its original language. Some of the works performed at this concert included Allen's "Pilot, Lan' de Boat" and Geun-Riegger, "All Day on the Prairie." "Folk Concert at Ashland Normal School Tonight," *Medford Mail Tribune* (Medford, Oregon), April 12, 1935; "Negro Folk Concert with Chorus of 75 in Church Tonight," *The Ithaca Journal* (Ithaca, New York), May 22, 1934; "Girls' League to Give Folk Song Concert," *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix, Arizona), March 9, 1929; "Stanberry Folk Band Will Play Concert Here Next Thursday," *The Maryville Daily Forum* (Maryville, Missouri), August 3, 1933.

event was less common than those previously mentioned. The *St. Cloud Times* noted the band placed special attention on the selection of works to be performed so they would appeal to the largest possible audience. The college came to hold a jazz concert for the public, although the last half of the program was set to feature classical numbers instead of solely jazz.<sup>30</sup>

Beyond the college campus, jazz concerts appeared across the United States. In Newport News, Virginia, a concert on Buckroe Beach featured the Jolly Jazz Orchestra. An article in the *Daily Press* stated these summer beach concerts had unusually large crowds and this event in particular should have had the largest audience yet. This was due in large part to the popularity of the Jolly Jazz Orchestra and the music they performed. In addition to concerts held for public audiences, some jazz groups broadcast their concerts over the radio in order to reach the largest possible audiences. In Oakland, California, musical radio broadcasts were a popular feature of the Great Depression, and an article in the *Oakland Tribune* makes note of several 1929 jazz programs found on the local station, The Tribune. Some of these featured performances included the Alabama Club Dance Orchestra and the Delaney Group, both of which played trendy jazz pieces. In Los Angeles, California, a local radio station played a concert of symphonic jazz performed by the Columbians, a jazz orchestra, in 1933. This group performed jazz standards and premiered new compositions, which further attracted audiences. Beyond the numerous concerts held during the Great Depression, the number of bands was on the

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<sup>30</sup> "Ivey Plans for Student Union Winter Program," *The Daily Tar Heel* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina), January 7, 1938; "Midday Jazz Concerts are Scored by Students," *The Edinburg Daily Courier* (Edinburg, Indiana), November 16, 1934; Some of the jazz pieces performed at this concert included Bloom's "Song of the Bayou," and Savino's "Interlude," while the classical portion of the concert featured Mendelssohn's "Ruy Blas Overture," Williams' "Seventeen Come Sunday," and Tchaikovsky's "Trepak" from *The Nutcracker*. "College Music Program Public," *St. Cloud Times* (Saint Cloud, Minnesota), February 20, 1937.

rise, as demand for concerts and the number of individuals interested in performing as part of a group rose.<sup>31</sup>

The rising number of concerts held during the Great Depression was not alone in changing the musical scene of America at the time. Many community and regional bands and orchestras appeared during the Great Depression, as well as other less conventional music groups. Several newspapers remarked that different communities hoped to create a band or orchestra to perform for the people. An example of this appears in the *Battle Creek Enquirer*. This article discussed a proposed ballot measure to create a municipally-controlled band through the Battle Creek Federation of Musicians. It then made special note of the band's civic duty. It stated, "Composed of local musicians the band would be available for free public concerts each week during the year, for parades, civic functions, conventions and all other civic enterprises." The ballot measure did pass, and the Battle Creek Civic Orchestra formed in 1938. This group was not the only one hoping to fulfill a civic duty, as many other bands formed during this time with similar foundational goals.<sup>32</sup>

Elsewhere in the United States, music groups formed. In Hamilton, Ohio, *The Journal News* reported the creation of a 35-member community band, which performed weekly concerts in numerous nearby towns where it found its members. The *Lincoln Evening Journal* noted the new municipal band, created in 1930. This band, comprised of theater musicians and music instructors of the area, performed twelve concerts in the

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<sup>31</sup> "Jolly Jazz Concert at Buckroe Today," *Daily Press* (Newport News, Virginia), August 11, 1929; "Delaney Club Orchestra to Proffer Jazz," *Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, California), February 4, 1929; Some of the pieces performed by this group included the premiere of Rube Bloom's "Plantation Recollections," and Ferde Grofe's "Knut Rockne Suite." "Symphonic Jazz Listed," *The Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles, California), September 1, 1938.

<sup>32</sup> "A Statement," *Battle Creek Enquirer* (Battle Creek, Michigan), April 4, 1937; "Civic Orchestra Elects Officers," *Battle Creek Enquirer* (Battle Creek, Michigan), December 15, 1938.

local park over the summer season. This group, unlike many others of its time, received payment for their performances, totaling \$2,100 for their summer concerts. Lincoln also brought in another community band to perform during that summer, the Burlington Band, who received \$700 to play eight concerts. During this time, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania created a community band as well. After the instructor announced its creation, over thirty applicants came forward to join this rising group. The *Times Herald* of Olean, New York, also announced the creation of a civic orchestra. The director of this group announced his intention to hold frequent concerts during the upcoming fall and winter seasons.<sup>33</sup>

One music group created during this time was the Lititz Cadet Band, based in Lititz, Pennsylvania. This band developed from multiple smaller bands that existed in the Lititz community prior to the Great Depression. In 1930, the groups merged along with a large number of recent graduates from Lititz High School. After organizing, this new group performed for the first time at that year's Fourth of July celebration. The *Reading Times* noted the preparation for this concert, which included a statement that four local bands would perform at this event, including the Ringgold Concert Band of Reading, the Lititz Concert Band, the Lititz High School Band, and the Lititz Cadet Band. The band held numerous other concerts throughout the Great Depression. An early performance occurred at the 1930 Farmer's Day festivities, which featured an exhibition and parade. Among other celebratory events, the Lititz Cadet Band performed frequently for the public, particularly over the summer months. Starting with its completion in 1937, the band played in the Paul E. Beck Memorial Bandshell, which received discussion in

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<sup>33</sup> "Plans Community Band for Weekly Concerts," *The Journal News* (Hamilton, Ohio), June 25, 1936; "Lincoln will have a Municipal Band," *Lincoln Evening Journal* (Lincoln, Nebraska), May 1, 1930; "Pittsburgh City Band Boasts 30," *Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, California), February 1, 1929; "Civic Orchestra Formation Starts," *Times Herald* (Olean, New York), August 21, 1931.

Chapter One. One such concert arranged by this band included children's concerts, such as one held in 1938 to dedicate the new community playground. This event featured many performances and activities to engage children, but the focus was the Cadet Band. An article in the *Reading Times* mentioned the band would play the "Star Spangled Banner" and lead the singing of "America" during the course of their concert. While all of these concerts achieved popularity and brought music to groups of people who may otherwise not have been able to hear such, other movements at this time took music to the forefront in different ways.<sup>34</sup>

One of the first of these was the formation of many different music camps across the United States. An article from 1934 published in the *Music Educators Journal* observed the massive success of that year's music camps, particularly the National Music Camp and the Eastern Music Camp. It stated the National Music Camp, located in Interlochen, Michigan, existed to further music education for youth, as well as to provide the ability for these young people to express themselves through music. Along with its focus on music, the camp promoted "recreation, work, health, fun, all sanely balanced and contributing very definitely to the development of character." This movement of music camps helped promote the idea of music performed outdoors. The National Music Camp had an outdoor concert venue, the Interlochen Bowl, which was used frequently for summer concerts open to the public. The author noticed, "Taking the great art of music out of doors into that environment of beauty and glory, music becomes a more

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<sup>34</sup> R. Ronald Reedy, "Vignette History of the Lititz Community Band," Unpublished paper, n.d.; "Lititz Prepares for July 4 Fete," *Reading Times* (Reading, Pennsylvania), June 27, 1930; "10,000 Spectators at Farmer's Day," *Reading Times* (Reading, Pennsylvania), October 18, 1930; The Lititz Cadet Band changed names in 1941 and became the Lititz Community Band, which remains an important part of the Lititz community today; "Children Set for Folk Dance Events Tonight," *Reading Times* (Reading, Pennsylvania), August 2, 1938.

lovely thing to those who listen.” The other camp detailed in the article was the Eastern Music Camp, located in Maine. This camp existed for much the same purposes as the National Music Camp, though its location allowed different students to attend. Like the National Music Camp, this space also had an outdoor music venue, which aided in further promoting outdoor concerts. The author stated large numbers of people attended the Sunday concerts hosted by this camp, and some brought in record-breaking crowds. In another article written about these camps, entitled “Why Music Camps?,” the author addresses the reasoning behind the success of these camps in two ways. The first of these is that of the music itself, as the camps focused on instrumental music and allowing students the opportunity to try many different instruments. The second was the success of moving outdoors. Here again the idea of music performed outside reveals its popularity through many different movements.<sup>35</sup>

It was also during the Great Depression that school marching bands rose in popularity and the public began to recognize them for their value to American society. A 1930 article published in the *Music Supervisors' Journal* noted this appreciation for these outdoor performing groups. The author observed that cultural tastes were changing in America, and people could not resist watching a marching band play. He stated, “The value of a good marching band to the school or institution to which it belongs and to the community can hardly be overestimated.” The author then listed the reasons for his previous statement, which included the musicality of these groups, the educational opportunities they provided, and the pride they brought to the community. Beyond these

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<sup>35</sup> Ada Bicking, “Music Camps Have Successful Season,” *Music Educators Journal* 21, no. 1 (September 1934): 26, 32; Karl W. Gehrkins, “Why Music Camps?,” *Music Educators Journal* 21, no. 1 (September 1934): 23.

reasons, marching bands, through their outdoor and public performances brought in large crowds and provided entertainment and visibility for music. The article continued, “A popular organization of this kind inevitably draws part of its following to its concerts, and thus performs a direct service to the cause of music education.” With all of these benefits provided by an outdoor music performance group, it is clear that performing outside the concert hall had numerous benefits.<sup>36</sup>

The Great Depression brought many changes to the American musical scene. One among these was the rise in number and popularity of concerts performed out of the concert hall. There were numerous reasons for this alteration. The first and most notable was that bands needed to find a new audience in order to survive. The easiest and most effective means of accomplishing this goal was through taking the band out of the concert hall and meeting the people where they were. A secondary reason for the change was to bring music to the largest numbers of people possible both in order to give people the opportunity to hear music they might otherwise not hear and to provide a morale boost to the American population. To meet this goal, bands increased their number of performances, cities created specific spaces for these outdoor concerts, new bands formed to fill the need for music, and other groups took advantage of the rising popularity of this movement. In 1935, a further change came to American music as the federal government became involved in funding the arts.

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<sup>36</sup> Mark H. Hindsley, “The Marching Band,” *Music Supervisors’ Journal* 17, no. 2 (December 1930): 15.

### Chapter Three: Federally Funded

Beyond local music organizations performing concerts, the Great Depression led to the creation of a federally funded arts program for the first time in American history. During the Great Depression, Americans hoped music would give them the strength they needed to endure. Recognizing the need to hire unemployed musicians, but also to support the American people suffering during this time, the federal government began a program the likes of which its citizens had never before seen. This chapter will discuss a final endeavor within America to improve the musical situation in the country, both as a means of combatting the unemployment crisis of the Great Depression and in improving American morale during this time of struggle. This movement continued the trend discussed in the previous chapters of making music approachable to audiences, both in the works performed and the locations of concerts. Through this, musical performances continued outside the concert hall in locations that encouraged audience attendance, particularly parks and other outdoor venues.

Begun in 1935 under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration, a New Deal reform measure, Federal Project Number One began to hire artists of all varieties. As one of the projects under Federal Project Number One, the Federal Music Project (FMP) worked throughout its tenure to create jobs for unemployed musicians during the Great Depression. While President Franklin Roosevelt dictated its mission to employ musicians, it served purposes beyond this, and sought to improve the cultural environment of the country. Additionally, it hoped to improve morale among Americans experiencing the hardships of the time. The FMP instituted numerous projects, which included composers' forums, music education initiatives, and concerts. All of these



worked together to bring music to the American people and to give them an opportunity to interact with and produce music. The FMP projects had the objective of hiring unemployed musicians, but they far surpassed this goal and brought music and enjoyment to the people during this time of suffering. Further, the FMP and its projects created an environment in which all people could create and appreciate music.<sup>1</sup>

In many ways, the FMP continued the trends already begun by musicians during the Great Depression: it provided free concerts available to wide public audiences and moved those concerts to a central location that would encourage large numbers to attend. The FMP also embraced historic trends, such as those started by Theodore Thomas in the Gilded Age, and early initiatives of the New Deal, which included smaller music

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the Federal Music Project, see Peter Gough, *Sounds of the New Deal: The Federal Music Project in the West* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015) and Kenneth Bindas, *All of this Music Belongs to the Nation: The WPA's Federal Music Project and American Society* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003). To research the New York Composers' Forum, see Melissa de Graaf, "Records of the New York Composers' Forum: The Documentary Motive and Music in the 1930s," *Notes* 64, no. 4 (2008): 668-701; and Melissa de Graaf, "Documenting Music in the New Deal: The New York Composers' Forum Concerts, 1935-1940" (Ph.D. diss, Brandeis University, 2006). For more on the composers who rose to fame through the FMP, see Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Andrea Olmstead, *Roger Sessions: A Biography* (London: Routledge, 2007); Adrienne Fried Block, *Amy Beach, Passionate Victorian: The Life and Work of an American Composer, 1867-1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Michael Dustin Hicks, *Henry Cowell, Bohemian* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002); and Judith Tick, *Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer's Search for American Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). To learn more about federal funding for the arts, see William F. McDonald, *Federal Relief Administration and the Arts* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1969) and Stephen Benedict, *Public Money and the Muse: Essays on Government Funding for the Arts* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991). For more on nineteenth and twentieth century American culture, see Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990); David E. Kyvig, *Daily Life in the United States, 1920-1940: How Americans Lived Through the Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression* (New York: Ivan R. Dee, 2004); and Christopher Brookeman, *American Culture and Society Since the 1930s* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984). For more on music as a cultural institution, see Derek B. Scott, ed., *Music, Culture, and Society: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Prince Dorough, *Popular-Music Culture in America* (New York: Ardsley House Publishers, 1992); and Adelaida Reyes, *Music in America: Experiencing Music, Expressing Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). To learn more about American music history, see George Kent Bellows and John Tasker Howard, *A Short History of Music in America* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co, 1967); Henry Cowell, ed., *American Composers on American Music: A Symposium* (New York: F. Unger, 1962); Irving Sablosky, *American Music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969); Daniel Kingman, *American Music: A Panorama* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1998); and Ronald L. Davis, *A History of Music in American Life* (Huntington, New York: R.R. Krieger, 1982).

programs of the Civil Works Administration. The FMP also went beyond these prior enterprises. It provided music education to all Americans who were previously unable to afford it or did not have access to it. Another project worked to encourage conversation between composers and their audiences, which gave people an opportunity to hear new compositions and learn more about the music. As the final report of WPA activities notes, certain parts of the music project “were designed to give people throughout the country an opportunity to enjoy these arts through attendance at classes and at exhibitions or educational performances.” Through all of these means, the Project worked to bring employment to out-of-work musicians and to provide Americans with easy access to music, which not only continued the trends of many arts movements before this, but also perpetuated the drive for music performed outdoors that achieved prominence at this time.<sup>2</sup>

Despite all of the similarities between the FMP projects and the outdoor music movement, there were some differences. The most essential of these was that not all FMP concerts and classes occurred outdoors. Although this difference is seemingly massive, the FMP retained the core of the idea behind keeping concerts outdoors, namely, that it held events in locations far from the concert hall that would welcome audiences. All of these projects expanded the influence of music during the Great Depression by bringing it to the people in numerous ways.

To date, there has been no comprehensive research done on the influence of the FMP as a cultural force within America. The FMP and its subsidiary projects reached millions of Americans during the Great Depression through one, if not many, of these

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<sup>2</sup> *Final Report on the WPA Program: 1935-43* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1943), 63.

projects. The FMP began several programs in this goal of outreach. These included radio broadcasts, the Composers' Forum, music education, and the FMP bands and concerts series, among many others which this chapter will not discuss, such as the Index of American Compositions, the teacher education programs, and the folk music recordings. These efforts, while influential in their own right, did nothing to further the outdoor music movement. All of these projects worked in different ways to gain audiences and improve those that already existed for music in order to engage and educate these people and create a better musical world for the future. This chapter discusses the cultural impact of the FMP as well as its attempts and ability to reach and engage the public.

Some historians, such as Robert S. McElvaine, have attempted to show that the FMP director, Nikolai Sokoloff, and other project leaders, had the sole intention of making the program economically sustainable and proving its worth through that means. The true reasoning does include this, but goes much further. Aaron Copland, a leading American composer of this time and strong advocate for the work of the FMP, best articulated the need for an expansive music project. Copland stated, "It becomes increasingly difficult for instance to have that sense that there is any public for our music—in any case, the public that can afford to pay for concerts is quite simply not interested.... In a period of such economic and general social tension music itself seems unimportant." Copland's statement makes clear the need for a music project in America if only so that composers can feel some level of connection to their audience and find those listeners again. Sokoloff was sensitive to these feelings from composers, as well as very aware of the music scene of the time, which drove his FMP plans. Evidently then, there was a different understanding at the time about the reasoning behind FMP approaches

and ideologies than the modern interpretation of these events.<sup>3</sup>

When WPA director Harry Hopkins created the FMP in 1935, he appointed Nikolai Sokoloff as national director of this smaller project. Sokoloff took on the project with fervor, determined to create jobs and reinvigorate the American public with music. While the project's dictated goal was to hire musicians currently on relief rolls, Sokoloff went beyond this and made sure each musician hired was trained and talented enough to receive continued employment following the Great Depression. Theodore Hahn, director of the Cincinnati FMP, offered a glimpse into this hiring process: "The moment my appointment was confirmed, arrangements were made for auditions of all eligible musicians. Judges, selected from the city's most competent musicians, held these auditions, and those who were enrolled were carefully graded and classified into symphonic, choral, dance, and band units." After hiring these musicians, Sokoloff and his appointed regional directors he appointed, created projects suited for the talents of their employees. In forming projects, Sokoloff made sure they would not compete with musicians already working as teachers and performers outside the FMP. He also made sure to create programs that followed his established goals for the FMP: providing employment, exciting community interest, and educating audiences. Composers frequently articulated the need to educate audiences, including Roger Sessions who noted, "It is not only more frequent performance, however, which American music needs, but a more intelligent and informed interest on the part of those capable of understanding it." In this time of great change for music and the musical environment of America,

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<sup>3</sup> Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America 1929-1941* (New York: Times Books, 1984), 270; Aaron Copland, *The Selected Correspondence of Aaron Copland* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2006), 111.

especially growing simultaneously with the need to attract audiences to music, composers and FMP officials had hopes to educate audiences so that they would appreciate this new trajectory for music and attend concerts, particularly those by the FMP.<sup>4</sup>

In its first year alone, the FMP hired 15,700 musicians and created over 500 projects across 43 states, including 163 orchestras, 51 bands, 22 choruses, 15 chamber ensembles, and more than 100 teaching projects. Between December 1, 1935 and March 15, 1936, FMP concerts and teaching projects reached more than three million people who attended concerts and took classes. As noted in a quote from the Ohio FMP director in *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, these bands were in extremely high demand, so much so that the Cleveland, Toledo, and Cincinnati orchestras were all booked for six months within the first year of their creation. FMP musical groups performed throughout the country to all audiences, from children to the elderly, and audiences traveled to hear these groups and enjoy music during this time of trial for the country. The groups achieved massive success, seen through an article in the *Oakland Tribune*, which stated: “The Federal Music Project which started as a relief measure is developing quite unexpectedly into a cultural force to be reckoned with.” The article continued, “Not only has it given millions of people in the country the opportunity to hear classical music at little or no cost but it also is providing our native composers with a vehicle for original expression and the opportunity to hear their works performed.” The FMP reached out to massive audiences

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<sup>4</sup> Howard Bennett, “The Federal Music Project,” *Volume of the Proceedings of the Music Teachers National Association*, Karl W. Gehrken, ed. (Oberlin, Ohio: Music Teachers National Association, 1936), 235; Quoted in “Music Project,” *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (Cincinnati, Ohio), May 17, 1936. Many musicologists have claimed that the last of these was the most important to Sokoloff, particularly as evidenced by the creation of the Composers’ Forums. Kenneth J. Bindas, *All of this Music Belongs to the Nation: The WPA’s Federal Music Project and American Society* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1995), 1; Roger Sessions, “America Moves to the Avant-Scene (1937),” *Roger Sessions on Music: Collected Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 133.

and achieved great success during its tenure, largely through the projects it created.<sup>5</sup>

The FMP instituted several subsidiary projects that worked to create and spread music and entertainment across the United States. One successful project was in direct correlation to Sokoloff's desire to educate audiences—the Composers' Forum. Beginning in 1935, the Composers' Forum was a meeting place for composers and audiences. It allowed audiences to hear new music, ask questions, and interact with the composers. Starting in New York City, the Composers' Forums achieved popularity among many different groups of people who came to these performances. Some of the people noted for their attendance included the famed choreographer Martha Graham, writer e. e. cummings, and publisher W. W. Norton, in addition to amateur musicians, regular concert-goers, and the poor and homeless, who were able to find shelter and amusement for a few hours. This was particularly true for many concerts, as the Forums usually did not charge for admittance, which allowed for the attendance of anyone who desired to hear music or to escape the streets. Although these concerts did not occur in outdoor spaces, they maintained the pattern of Great Depression concerts, in that they did not take place in the concert hall. They were in public spaces, accessible to all. These concerts allowed anyone to interact with the music produced through the FMP, and gave audiences the opportunity to discuss music with composers.<sup>6</sup>

Composers of all styles of music received invitations to perform their compositions at the Composers' Forums, and following their performance, a question and answer time between the composer and audience began. While hearing the music,

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<sup>5</sup> "Music Project," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (Cincinnati, Ohio), May 17, 1936; "Musical Miscellany," *Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, California), September 13, 1936.

<sup>6</sup> de Graaf, "Documenting Music in the New Deal," 40.

audience members wrote down questions they had pertaining to the work, the inspiration for it, the process of writing music, and any thoughts and criticisms they had of the pieces. These were then read to the composer, usually by a third party, who removed some of the more controversial or overly-critical comments. At their absolute worst, these conversations led to arguments or fights, occasionally physical, but usually produced helpful conversations between the audience and composer, and gave the latter room to discuss their compositions and style. In addition to the audience members learning about composition and modern music, through which they received the education many musicians sought for the public, composers gained much from these interactions.

Music was changing rapidly during this time, which forced a steep learning curve on composers, musicians, and audiences alike. Composers, who heard from their listeners and took these conversations seriously, gained new directions or positive reception of the current directions for their music. The director of the Composers' Forums, Ashley Pettis, noticed an improvement in the quality of questions asked by audience members over the course of these sessions: "For a time, since all the questions are in writing and the interrogator is able to hide behind the cloak of anonymity, there were many questions that were more impertinent than pertinent. But now the questions are increasingly intelligent and show a real desire to understand the composer's creative processes and underlying principles." Clearly, Pettis was satisfied with the education audiences were receiving, which was one of his primary goals for these Forums, along with the success inherent in allowing composers and audiences to interact with one another.<sup>7</sup>

Many popular composers of the day had their music performed in this venue, and

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<sup>7</sup> de Graaf, "Documenting Music in the New Deal," 32, 112; Quoted in de Graaf, "Documenting Music in the New Deal," 231-232.

many others rose to fame through the popularity of the Composers' Forums. Some of the more recognizable of these composers include Amy Beach, Henry Cowell, Ruth Crawford, and Roger Sessions, while the most famous and influential was Aaron Copland. During this time, Copland led the movement to create music average people would want to listen to, something that had been abandoned by most other composers of the day. His attempts at making music approachable for the public proved helpful for the causes of the FMP, leading to the success in particular of the Composers' Forums, which quickly accumulated large audiences and outgrew their venues, forcing a relocation into bigger auditoriums. Due to the success of the New York Composers' Forum, several other cities across the country began their own Forums, including Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and Philadelphia, all beginning in 1936; eventually Forums were added in Detroit, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Oklahoma City, Minneapolis, and San Francisco, all of which achieved success, though slightly less than that of New York City's. The compositions performed at these events went on to achieve popularity beyond these Forums as well. Some of the more popular of the works performed and premiered included Virgil Thompson's *Serenade for Flute and Violin* and Schumann's *Symphony No. 1* and *String Quartet No. 1*.<sup>8</sup>

The FMP also provided numerous classes on topics from music theory to instrumental lessons that hoped to educate adults and children unable to pay for this type of education. The goal here, as with other FMP projects and outreach efforts, was to provide employment to instructors and give music education to broad audiences. This would encourage the public to continue their instruction and enjoyment of music past the

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<sup>8</sup> de Graaf, "Records of the New York Composers' Forum," 688; de Graaf, "Documenting Music in the New Deal," 33, 39.



Great Depression. These classes reached and influenced a large number of people. The majority of the students were children who, the project hoped, would eventually become musicians, supporters of the arts, or at the very least, educated audiences for the future musical world.

The education program operated in 26 states with about 617,000 total students attending these classes per month. The numbers in New York alone show the popularity of these events, where, from 1935 to 1937, a total number of 7,689,406 students attended classes of some variety among those available to them. One of the music centers that taught these and like classes formed in Asheville, North Carolina in 1938, one of the later additions to the program. The *Asheville Citizen-Times* published the following about this new center: “the purpose of the music center, it was explained, is to provide music instruction for persons who otherwise would be unable to afford it. It is planned to teach small instruments, voice, piano and theoretical subjects in classes.” The FMP then hoped for these centers to grow in conjunction with the number of students in attendance, which would eventually give cause for more centers with classrooms, studios, and even concert halls.<sup>9</sup>

Elsewhere in the country, similar music centers provided education for students. The *Clarion-Ledger* of Jackson, Mississippi described the breadth of this project in their state, noting that it spanned 44 counties, and provided lessons in band and orchestral instruments, as well as on piano, pipe organ, and voice. This newspaper provided insight

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Seeger, “WPA Activities in Free Music Education: Bill Affecting Music and Music Education to be Presented at Forthcoming Session of Congress,” *Volume of the Proceedings of the Music Teachers’ National Association* (Oberlin, Ohio: Music Teachers’ National Association, 1939), 310; Nikolai Sokoloff, “Opera and the Federal Music Project,” *Book of Proceedings of the National Federation of Music Clubs* (Ithaca, New York: National Federation of Music Clubs, 1937), 20; “Asheville is Selected for WPA Music Center,” *Asheville Citizen-Times* (Asheville, North Carolina), November 15, 1938.

into the student selection process: “These students are carefully chosen from those families that are financially unable to provide private instruction for their children.” This statement reiterated that of music education director, Charles Seeger, and clearly noted this project sought to reach out to children and adults unable to provide for music education on their own. This kept the project from competition with individual music teachers, but still allowed for the education and enjoyment of music across America.<sup>10</sup>

The largest and most impressive undertaking of the FMP was the creation of music ensembles across the country that performed frequently to wide audiences. Nikolai Sokoloff created many different musical groups as a part of the FMP. By 1937, the project had 40 symphony orchestras, 69 bands, 52 dance orchestras, 11 opera units, and 19 choral groups across 42 states in 273 cities, playing to approximately 92 million people between October 1935 and December 1937. The groups continued to emerge across the country and this outreach to audiences met the goals established early in the planning of the FMP. James Davies, in an article for the *Star Tribune* of Minneapolis, wrote, “Under the auspices of the WPA a really necessary and valuable work has been done for the rehabilitation of musicians.... The main objective has been achieved and that is in providing work for thousands of trained musicians who previously were out of employment.” These musicians performed numerous concerts and engaged with the American public. As FMP Director Nikolai Sokoloff stated, “Music can serve no useful purpose unless it is heard, but these totals on the listeners’ side are more eloquent than statistics as they show that in this country there is a great hunger and eagerness for music.” This project and the massive number of concerts held by FMP bands show this

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<sup>10</sup> “Federal Music Project Strong Cultural Factor,” *Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, Mississippi), December 4, 1938.

eagerness for music.<sup>11</sup>

When the project began in 1935, audition boards formed to judge the talent of musicians on relief rolls. These musicians received placement in an FMP band based on their ability. The state or regional director then created music groups around these musicians and their talents, forming a wide variety of groups that performed numerous concerts. Concerts spanned the country and the groups performing these concerts varied in and of themselves. Groups ranged from standard orchestras and concert bands to dance orchestras and folk groups. The Vicksburg dance orchestra was one particularly interesting group formed through the FMP. Composed of blind musicians, this group was “perhaps the happiest group in the entire organization. They all received their training at the state school for the blind in Jackson, and they are deeply grateful to be able to earn their living in the profession for which they were trained.” These musicians and all others working for the FMP found employment in their own field, and more than that, they created music for the enjoyment of others during this time of national hopelessness.<sup>12</sup>

Although not directly a project under the FMP, the organization also took advantage of the growing popularity of the radio as a means of reaching broader audiences, specifically to gain listeners among people who did not have the means, or perhaps the desire, to attend a concert in person. Many FMP bands had weekly broadcasts, as noted in numerous advertisements in newspapers, such as the *Arizona Republic*, which discussed the events for National Music Week in 1938, including an FMP band concert over KOY radio station, and a similar concert following every day that

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<sup>11</sup> Larson, “The Cultural Projects of the WPA,” 495; James Davies, “The WPA in Music,” *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, Minnesota), June 20, 1937.

<sup>12</sup> “Federal Music Project Strong Cultural Factor,” *Clarion-Ledger*.

week. Elsewhere, concerts became a regularity as well. In Jackson, Mississippi, newspapers advertised for weekly radio broadcasts, and noted these concerts were an ongoing endeavor for the orchestra; they occurred regularly for more than two years. In 1936, Columbia Broadcasting System established a composition competition that aired on their stations nationwide. Six composers received commissions for this endeavor, including Aaron Copland, who composed his *Radio Serenade* for the occasion. Copland later wrote he composed this piece “in a style designed to bridge the gap between modern composition and the need for a wider public. It was written expressly for a large audience of inexperienced listeners, rather than for the more limited number of sophisticated devotees of the concert hall.” Through this approach and the overall use of the radio as a means of reaching audiences, the FMP employees and leaders worked to disseminate music to all Americans.<sup>13</sup>

The most common location for concerts held by FMP bands and orchestras were local parks. As these were public spaces open to all people of the area, they were welcoming and inviting places for such events, and encouraged large audience attendance, particularly for those who may have been disinclined to attend concerts at other, more daunting locations, like the concert hall. The FMP reached out to people through the locations of concerts, namely, the continuation of concerts in parks and other open, public spaces. The *Postville Herald* of Iowa announced an outdoor concert at Vilas Park “for the entertainment of the hundreds of people there to escape the heat while picnicking in the park, which has a zoological garden, swimming beach, a canoeing

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<sup>13</sup> “Music Week to be Featured by Outstanding Program Series,” *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix, Arizona), April 24, 1938; “Federal Music Project Strong Cultural Factor,” *Clarion-Ledger*; Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, *Copland: 1900 Through 1942* (New York: St Martin’s/Marek, 1984), 254-255.

lagoon, shady picnic grounds and plenty of parking space.” These bands hoped to reach any public through this location choice and others like it.<sup>14</sup>

These outdoor concerts also created opportunities for struggling music forms to find some level of prominence again. One form of music that lost its audience was opera. Opera has a deep and rich history, which included several centuries of massive popular success and large audiences. People of all classes, occupations, and socioeconomic statuses enjoyed opera, but during the nineteenth century, it became a part of the culture of the elite. The FMP sought to end this exclusivity and to return it to the people. Several performances of staged productions of famous operas as well as newly commissioned operas occurred through FMP units. One performance in particular brought together several ideas and standards for the FMP. In Cincinnati in 1936, the opera unit there performed Gilbert and Sullivan’s *HMS Pinafore* on a boat constructed at the lake in Burnett Woods Park. Other operas performed across the nation included classics, such as Jacques Offenbach’s *The Tales of Hoffman* in Long Beach and Los Angeles, Giuseppe Verdi’s *Il Trovatore* in Cleveland, Pietro Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and Verdi’s *Aida*, also at an outdoor venue in Miami. Several operas premiered or received re-imaginings during the tenure of the FMP, such as the premiere of Frederic Hart’s *Romance of Robot* and the new adaptation of Giovanni Pergolesi’s *La Serva Padrona*. These few mentioned operas are a small representation of the hundreds performed by FMP opera units. FMP directors hoped to continue this project for the duration of the organization and beyond. The desire here went beyond those previously established through the project, and sought to improve the support behind opera, a declining genre of

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<sup>14</sup> “The WPA in Music,” *Postville Herald* (Postville, Iowa), July 15, 1937.

music.<sup>15</sup>

Further concerts reveal the desire among bands and orchestras within the FMP to continue the trend of outdoor concerts. One such concert performed by the FMP concert band of Phoenix, Arizona, was the start of a series of outdoor concerts held weekly throughout the year in Library Park. Also in Phoenix, frequent concerts occurred at Phoenix Mountain Park and Townsend Park, which also aids in revealing the desire for such concerts that the FMP concert band performed in numerous locations throughout Phoenix. In Chicago, Illinois, concerts became frequent events as well, with outdoor performances at Foster Park performed by FMP orchestras. Although these examples stress the prominence of outdoor concerts in large cities in the United States, they also took place in smaller cities and towns, where they achieved similar popularity.<sup>16</sup>

In surveying the smaller, less well-known cities and towns that featured concerts by FMP bands and orchestras, it becomes apparent how pervasive the FMP was, as well as the centrality of outdoor concerts in America during the Great Depression. One

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<sup>15</sup> For more on the history of opera, see Burton D. Fisher, *A History of Opera: Milestones and Metamorphoses* (Coral Gables, Florida: Opera Journeys, 2003); Herbert Lindenberger, *Opera in History: From Monteverdi to Cage* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1998); Roger Parker, ed., *The Oxford History of Opera* (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1996); Terry Barfoot, Christopher Headington, and Roy Westbrook, *Opera: A History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987); Wallace Brockway and Herbert Weinstock, *The World of Opera: The Story of its Development and the Lore of its Performance* (New York: Modern Library, 1966); and John Dizikes, *Opera in America: A Cultural History* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1993); Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*, 85; Sokoloff, "Opera and the Federal Music Project," 20-21.

<sup>16</sup> Some of the works performed at this event included Teike's march "The Conqueror," Wagner's overture "Rienzi," and Strauss's waltz "Artist Life." "Band Concert is Set Today," *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix, Arizona), October 11, 1936; Works at the concert in Phoenix Mountain Park included Sousa's "Manhattan Beach" march, Sanford's "Lincoln Centennial" march, and King's "Persian Moonlight" waltz. "Public Concert Program Listed," *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix, Arizona), February 13, 1938. Pieces played at the Townsend Park concert included Doring's "Distant Greeting" march, Herold's "Zampa" overture, Strauss's "Treasure" waltz, and Meyerbeer's "Coronation" march. "Federal Band Plans Concerts," *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix, Arizona), May 26, 1936; "Orchestra Gives Program in Foster Park on Friday," *Chicago Tribune* (Chicago, Illinois), September 25, 1938. In these instances, the size determination for cities is solely based in population. Those above one million are classified as large cities and those below this number as small cities.

example of these concerts is in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, where the FMP orchestra performed in Irvine Park frequently during its tenure, particularly during the summer months. Salt Lake City, Utah, hosted outdoor concerts during the Great Depression played by their FMP unit in Memory Park. In Fitchburg, Massachusetts, weekly concerts also occurred, held in Coggshall Park and performed by the Fitchburg FMP Concert Orchestra. Ogden, Utah, played host to these FMP concerts given by their FMP unit in City Hall Park. In San Bernardino, California, concerts frequently took place in their Meadowbrook Park by the FMP concert band. Finally, in Santa Ana, California, the local FMP concert band performed summer concerts in Birch Park for residents of the area. Though this section only covers a limited number of these outdoor concerts hosted by FMP bands during the Great Depression, they serve as representative of the nationwide movement occurring in the United States.<sup>17</sup>

A secondary, but note-worthy location of FMP concerts was bandshells within local parks. As mentioned in Chapter One, bandshells rose to prominence during the Great Depression and the parent project of the FMP, the WPA, built many of these. As such, FMP bands utilized these spaces where they existed. Several examples of these concerts appear throughout the time under study. One of these took place in Asbury Park,

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<sup>17</sup> This particular concert advertised selections including Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever" march, Strauss's "Tales from the Vienna Woods" waltz, and dance selections from Smetana's opera *The Bartered Bride*. "Eau Claire WPA Orchestra Will Play at Irvine," *Eau Claire Leader* (Eau Claire, Wisconsin), August 27, 1937; Selections include Schubert's "March Militaire," Mascagni's "Ave Maria," and Zamecnik's "Venetian Carnival" waltz. "Tenor Soloist to be Heard in Park Concert," *The Salt Lake Tribune* (Salt Lake City, Utah), September 4, 1938; Selections from this event include Masterman's "Indicator" march, Auber's "Masaniello" overture, and Pallma's "The Blackstone" march. "Concert," *Fitchburg Sentinel* (Fitchburg, Massachusetts), July 9, 1938; "WPA Orchestra Will Play Here," *The Ogden Standard-Examiner* (Ogden, Utah), April 24, 1937; Works heard at this event included Schubert's "March Militaire," Rosas's "Impassioned Dream" waltz, and a ragtime selection, Alford's "Lucy's Sextette." "Federal Band to Present Concert in Park Today," *The San Bernardino County Sun* (San Bernardino, California), March 22, 1936. The program for this concert featured selections from Luigini's *Ballet Russe*. "Federal Project Concert Tonight," *Santa Ana Register* (Santa Ana, California), August 12, 1936.

New Jersey, at the bandstand near Lake Carasaljo in 1938. Another occurred at Mt. Pulaski, Illinois, in their temporary bandstand created for their summer concert series performed by the FMP's Illinois Prairie Concert Band in 1937. One other concert featured a performance by the Hartford Symphony Orchestra of the FMP played in the music shell at Bushnell Park, Connecticut, in 1937. The Hollywood Bowl played host to special concerts performed by FMP bands and choral groups, such as the Los Angeles FMP production of *Gettysburg* in 1938, an opera composed by Arthur Robinson and Morris Hutchins Ruger for this occasion. A final example of these bandshell concerts featured a performance by the San Bernardino FMP symphony orchestra in the Perris Hill Park bowl in 1936. All of these concerts held in bandshells and bandstands allowed for public performances of music to wide audiences in a space designated for such an event.<sup>18</sup>

Concerts hosted by the FMP did not always occur in parks and at bandstands, but nearly all took place in locations accessible to the public and that were not as foreboding as the concert hall appeared to Americans at the time. One of the more common locations of these concerts was in churches. An example was a concert held in the Chula Vista First Congregational Church for the community, which featured music of California composers. Another frequent host of concerts was local schools, particularly because they

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<sup>18</sup> Pieces performed at this concert included Thomas's "Polish Dance," DeKoven's "Wedding March," and selections from Kern's musical comedy "Sally." "Federal Concert Given," *Asbury Park Press* (Asbury Park, New Jersey), August 17, 1938; "Summer Band Concerts Planned in Mt. Pulaski," *The Decatur Herald* (Decatur, Illinois), May 8, 1937. Some works played at this event included Berlioz's overture "A Roman Carnival," selections from Tchaikovsky's ballet *Romeo and Juliet*, and Dvorak's Symphony No. 3. "Two Concerts Offered Here This Week," *Hartford Courant* (Hartford, Connecticut), September 12, 1937. As the title of the opera suggests, the subject matter focused on the Battle of Gettysburg of the American Civil War. "American Opera to be Bowl Step," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* (Honolulu, Hawaii), September 10, 1938; "Symphony Orchestra Will Play Sunday," *The San Bernardino County Sun* (San Bernardino, California), May 2, 1936.



tended to have auditoriums inside that made for the perfect performance venue. An example of one of these concerts was in 1936 in Cincinnati, Ohio, at Harriet Beecher Stowe School, which hosted a performance of the local FMP symphony. Another similar concert occurred at Frame School in Marion Heights, Pennsylvania, in 1937, which featured the Shamokin FMP orchestra. A final relatively common alternate location for FMP concerts was municipal or civic centers that had auditoriums capable of hosting such events. One concert of this type featured a performance by the San Bernardino-Riverside FMP band held at the local municipal auditorium. Despite taking place in varying locations across the United States, all of the concerts performed by FMP bands and orchestras had the common goal of bringing in large audiences, and they utilized other locations in order to do this. Another means of drawing in audiences was hosting concerts with interesting performances.<sup>19</sup>

Some concerts performed by FMP bands deserve their own note, as interesting concerts designed to reach out to more diverse audiences. The first of these was a concert played by the Mexican unit of the FMP housed in Phoenix, Arizona. This concert, performed at Grant Park, reached out to different audiences than most other FMP concerts, as it brought in people of different ethnicities and attempted to educate others on the music of Mexico. Other concerts featured performances by similar groups, as both a way to draw in wide audiences and to educate these audiences on different types of music in America. A similar concert, held as part of a housing show in San Bernardino,

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<sup>19</sup> “Closing Community Concert Set Sunday,” *The Chula Vista Star* (Chula Vista, California), August 28, 1936; “Concerts are Scheduled,” *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (Cincinnati, Ohio), April 6, 1936; “Orchestra to Give Concert at Heights,” *Mount Carmel Item* (Mount Carmel, Pennsylvania), March 11, 1937; “Organization of WPA Music Units Starts,” *The San Bernardino County Sun* (San Bernardino, California), December 1, 1935.

California, featured music played by an FMP troubadour group. This unit of the Project performed in the city's Civic auditorium, and played Mexican folk music and dances for their audience, again seeking to fulfill an educational element at these concerts.<sup>20</sup>

Another interesting facet of FMP concerts were those with a specific audience in mind. One example was a 1937 concert to which the FMP invited leaders of the Catholic Church in America. An FMP symphony orchestra invited five hundred of these dignitaries, as well as city and county workers of Cincinnati, Ohio, to attend their music appreciation concert, held at the Fenwick Club, a Catholic men's club. An additional example of these audience-specific concerts was one held in San Bernardino, California, for the WPA employees working there as part of the recreation project. This concert, held at Sylvan Park, served as an employee luncheon, with an outdoor picnic and games for these workers, in addition to the music provided by an FMP band. Besides these concerts that targeted specific audiences, others featured interesting artists and takes on musical compositions. A notable one of this type was the performance of FMP pianists, who played Beethoven's First Symphony arranged for sixteen pianos. This piece served as the finale at this concert, held in the local high school auditorium, which also featured an orchestra playing other works as part of National Music Week celebrations in Jackson, Mississippi.<sup>21</sup>

Beyond the selection of concert locations, bands chose some other methods for reaching this goal. One of the most important means of accomplishing this was the price

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<sup>20</sup> "Little Stores of Phoenix Daily Life," *Arizona Republic* (Phoenix, Arizona), December 4, 1938; "Orchestras to Play for Housing Show," *The San Bernardino County Sun* (San Bernardino, California), October 11, 1936.

<sup>21</sup> "Invite 500 Churchmen, Officials to Concert," *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (Cincinnati, Ohio), November 22, 1937; "Recreation Workers in Redlands Picnic," *The San Bernardino County Sun* (San Bernardino, California), June 7, 1938; "Piano Ensemble Plays Symphony," *Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, Mississippi), April 28, 1937.

of concerts, all of which were either free or low cost. An article in the *Star Tribune* noted the hope behind this, stating, “Free concerts for the masses, encouragement to the man on the street, who has not been interested in good music—being convinced it was devised only for the highbrows—and a chance for ambitious composers to have their works performed and published.” These concerts offered average people the opportunity to hear new and old compositions and to interact with the work of the FMP. The free admission and works performed came together to encourage the attendance of every person in the country. These FMP bands could afford to pay their musicians while charging little or nothing for attendance through the sponsorship of the federal government and donors. Nikolai Sokoloff in a speech before the National Federation of Music Clubs noted some of these sponsors, including this organization itself, and major universities, such as Harvard, Temple, the University of North Carolina, Ohio State University, and New York University among many others. On the local level, individual city councils, township boards, school districts, recreational groups and the like sponsored FMP groups. These sponsors allowed FMP bands to perform at little to no cost to the audience, letting the groups gain large audiences for concerts, which also allowed them to complete their subsidiary mission of bringing music to the people.<sup>22</sup>

Some FMP concerts featured prominent themes that performing groups hoped would capture the audiences they needed. The *Asbury Park Press* of New Jersey announced a 1938 concert with a focus on patriotic music played by the combined FMP orchestras of Monmouth and Ocean counties. The concert also included a speech by the local district court judge to celebrate George Washington’s birthday. America and

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<sup>22</sup> James Davies, “The WPA in Music,” *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, Minnesota), June 20, 1937; Sokoloff, “Opera and the Federal Music Project,” 19.

celebrations of patriotism were common themes for these FMP concerts. In 1938, the Chicago FMP band held a similar concert, focused on American music, particularly the works of American composers on the rise at the time. The Jackson FMP bands created an American music festival that lasted three days in 1938. This concert created a platform for playing America's music history for wide audiences, displaying the importance of American music. This focus on America and American music was an attempt made by FMP directors to draw in audiences, particularly those who were averse to the music of foreigners—music they could neither relate to nor understand. This performance of American music to American audiences attempted to reach out to these audiences and create a welcoming environment for them to come and hear music.<sup>23</sup>

A much smaller, but interesting element of the work of FMP bands was the performances played to military personnel. During the relatively short time in which the FMP existed, bands played at military camps and before war industry workers before American entry into World War II. This minor aspect of FMP work is worth noting because, despite the ending of the Project with the beginning of American entrance into World War II, the ideas behind these performances continued into the war effort through the efforts of the United Service Organizations and will receive further discussion in the conclusion to this thesis.<sup>24</sup>

The many elements of the FMP created opportunities for musicians and citizens of the country, as it gave them the opportunity to hear, produce, and interact with music and musicians. The Composers' Forum proved to be a place that brought people together.

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<sup>23</sup> "Proctor to Give Patriotic Talk," *Asbury Park Press* (Asbury, New Jersey), February 19, 1938; "Notes of Music and Musicians," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (Chicago, Illinois), February 20, 1938; "American Music Festival Being Sponsored Here," *Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, Mississippi), February 22, 1938.

<sup>24</sup> *Final Report on the WPA Program*, 87.

People of all walks of life and all levels of success in the Great Depression found a venue for listening to and gaining an education in music, while also providing feedback that had an impact on the compositions of the time as well as the trajectory of music composition. This proved an educational opportunity for all involved, while also exceeding Ashley Pettis's hopes for the program: creating an educated musical public and allowing for the interaction of musicians and the public, truly bringing music to the people. The Forums continued to extend the reach of the FMP across the country to all people who desired to interact with the Project.

The musical groups and concerts created through the work of the FMP came together to help improve the lives of many people throughout America. The FMP hired musicians, conductors, and composers to produce the music performed at these concerts, improving their former lives of struggle during the Great Depression. The concerts that FMP bands performed then sought to gain wide audiences across the country and hoped to improve and enrich the lives of these audiences. This aspect of the overall FMP plan was the largest, and employed and reached the most people during its tenure. For these reasons, it is the most important element of the FMP, and it used this influence well, promoting the necessity of music and gaining favor for music across the nation. Additionally, through the themed concerts, the project brought prominence and popularity back to American compositions and composers, who were thought of as lesser than the European composers and simultaneously more approachable than these. The other attempts at engagement with American audiences proved successful, as concerts and operas in public forums, such as parks, received large crowds.

Through the work of the Federal Music Project, the movement to make concerts

accessible to public audiences became federal mandate, though indirectly. Overall, this Project continued the national movement to move concerts outdoors and away from the concert hall in order to gain these large audiences. The concerts performed by FMP bands and the educational initiatives of the Project advanced other works of the time. Beyond continuing these initiatives, the FMP made music a priority for improving the economic situation for the industry and musicians, as well as providing a morale boost to the people trying to survive the Great Depression.

## Beyond the Depression

The Great Depression was a time uniquely primed for changes in music. As Americans became unsettled in their lives and sought diversions from their desparate situations, the culture of the country changed to accommodate this escapism. Through this, the cultural hierarchy altered completely from what had been established during the Gilded Age. Artistic forms that previously belonged to certain classes no longer remained under their sole control. Culture became the property of the masses. Some musical forms shifted out of the concert hall and into the public sphere.

The growth of parks in the United States and the new physical spaces that became home to music blossomed in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Through this, the changes in parks and the rise of bandstands and bandshells reveal both the expansion of music in the parks and the desire among the populace for such growth. The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century also brought about a prominence for parks, as people embraced their desire for open spaces where they could interact with nature. Park builders worked to draw in large groups of people to their spaces, and this brought about additional park attractions, such as horticultural displays and music. The continued growth and spread of parks across the US shows the importance they had to the lives of the people, particularly in allowing for escape and entertainment. During this time, specific spaces for music emerged through bandstands and bandshells.

The building of these bandstands and bandshells increased as the twentieth century continued, and a large number were constructed during the Great Depression by both private contractors and the Works Progress Administration. The changes in parks

and the rise of bandshells and bandstands reveal the growth of music in parks and the desire among people for such growth. The park movement in America, through its European roots and the adaptations made for the United States, found a way to create an open space intended for use of the public. People across the country found themselves spending leisure time in these public parks, getting exercise, being among nature, and escaping the hustle and bustle of city life. Eventually, between the public and musicians, desire was strong enough for outdoor music performance venues that they began to appear across the country. Once the space existed, concerts followed soon after in order to make use of this space.

During the Gilded Age, outdoor concerts received some popularity among music lovers, and leaders in the musical field recognized this and worked to educate and engage audiences and bring back an appreciation for music among all people. In both the Progressive Era and the Roaring Twenties, outdoor concerts remained popular and successful. It was, however, during the Great Depression that a growing number of concerts were held away from the concert hall. The reason for this change was threefold. First, some groups believed performances should be located in venues that would bring in the largest possible crowds in order to combat monetary issues they faced during this time of economic struggle. In short, bands needed to find a new audience in order to survive. The easiest and most effective means of accomplishing this goal was to take the band out of the concert hall to meet the people where they were. Second, a number of performing groups recognized a desire among the public for concerts they could attend in order to escape their everyday troubles, or to listen to music they might otherwise not hear. To meet this goal, bands increased their number of performances, cities created



specific spaces for these outdoor concerts, new bands formed to fill the need for music, and other groups took advantage of the rising popularity of this movement. Performing groups came from churches, high schools, colleges, military groups, symphony orchestras, and local, regional, and municipal bands and orchestras. Other music ventures began or rose to prominence during this time as well, including outdoor music camps. Third, the increasing support of moving music into public spaces from the federal government created an environment in which this movement thrived. Through the funding of the initiatives of the Federal Music Project and the creation of bandstands and bandshells through the work of the Works Progress Administration and other New Deal initiatives, the government put a stamp of approval on outdoor concerts.

The creation of the federal arts program played a significant role in altering the musical scene in the Great Depression. Recognizing the need to hire musicians, but also to support the American people suffering during this time, the federal government began to fund the arts for the first time through the formation of Federal Project Number One. As one of the branches of this federal program, the Federal Music Project worked throughout its tenure to create jobs for unemployed musicians. Additionally, it sought to improve morale among Americans experiencing the hardships of the time. These projects had the objective of hiring musicians on relief rolls, but they far surpassed this goal and brought music and enjoyment to people during this time of suffering, and created an environment in which all people could create and appreciate music.

Throughout its years of operation, the Federal Music Project instituted several subsidiary programs that worked to create and spread music and entertainment across the United States. The largest and most impressive of these was the creation of music

ensembles that performed frequently to wide audiences. Musicians hired by the project found both employment in their field and an ability to create music for the enjoyment of others during this time of national hopelessness. Their performances reached wide audiences and drew in new crowds who previously had not attended concerts or did not think music was something made for their enjoyment. The musical groups and concerts created through the work of the FMP helped improve the spirits of many people throughout America. As many of the FMP concerts were held outdoors, they too found massive success and large audiences through their venues. The many FMP endeavors worked to improve life in America during the Great Depression. They achieved this goal by hiring trained musicians who had been living on relief rolls, but also through the interactions between the works of this project and Americans. In this never before seen or imagined concept, the federal government became the sponsor for an arts program that hired thousands and performed before millions. While Federal Project Number One found success during the Great Depression, it ceased to exist in the 1940s, as the government transitioned away from its own financial difficulties and focused on the war in Europe.

With the outbreak of war in Europe in 1939, the United States government took several steps to prepare for assistance to the cause or eventual American entrance into this conflict. In that same year, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Federal Works Agency, whose function was to run many of the New Deal programs, particularly those that granted money to state and local governments, which included the Works Progress Administration and its subsidiary projects, such as the Federal Music Project. One of the initial changes to the WPA was in name, as it transitioned from the Works

Progress Administration to the Work Projects Administration. While this change appears superficial, it did mean a change in structure and goals soon came for the organization. Following this shift in power, the number of WPA programs steadily declined, so that by the end of the 1942 fiscal year, only 5,000 projects remained. Any new projects proposed by states or local governments only received approval if a private sponsor agreed to supplement the necessary money. Additionally, the remaining projects transitioned to a focus on the war effort, as training programs that previously taught employees construction techniques now educated men and women to weld, rivet, and build defense-related materials.<sup>1</sup>

In 1942, with the United States engaged in war in Europe, Roosevelt wrote to the Federal Works Administrator on December 4 about liquidating the WPA as soon as possible, in order to move the money and energy used for this organization to the war effort. In this letter, Roosevelt noted his pleasure with the work of this project: “By almost immeasurable kinds and quantities of service the Work Projects Administration has reached a creative hand into every county in this Nation. It has added to the national wealth, has repaired the wastage of depression, and has strengthened the country to bear the burden of war.” Roosevelt continued that those employed through this organization would find work in the war effort. He later wrote, “I am proud of the Work Projects Administration organization. It has displayed courage and determination in the face of uninformed criticism. The knowledge and experience of this organization will be of great

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<sup>1</sup> *Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-43* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1946), 15, 58; Eleanor Mahoney, “The Federal Art Project in Washington State,” *The Great Depression in Washington State*, accessed November 14, 2017, <http://depts.washington.edu/depress/FAP.shtml>; Jason E. Taylor, “The New Deal Goes to War: The Role of the Alphabet Agencies in World War II Mobilization,” *Essays in Economic and Business History* 22 (2004): 251-252.

assistance in the consideration of a well-rounded public works program for the postwar period.” Roosevelt’s decision to end the WPA came on the heels of years of downsizing within the organization and the end of many efforts within it, particularly those established through Federal Project Number One.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to Roosevelt’s letter, the Federal Theatre Project was the first Federal Project Number One effort to dissolve, ending in June 1939. The other three arts projects received major budget cuts in that year. By the end of 1942, as with many other WPA projects, the operations of these programs largely ceased, and officially ended with the WPA. By March 1943, WPA training and building projects ceased, followed in the next month by all other operations. The WPA itself dissolved on June 30, 1943. Following the end of Federal One, many states began or continued arts projects of their own volition in order to support the former federal employees that worked for this project. Beyond these initiatives, much of the arts programs morphed and became part of the war effort.<sup>3</sup>

With the involvement of the United States in World War II, many of the operations of the WPA transitioned to their wartime equivalents, the War Public Works and the War Public Services. Other WPA initiatives found other means to continue, particularly those focused on the arts. Despite the presumed decline of the arts in wartime America, music and other cultural forms continued to prosper. Live performances, more than any other musical form, became the means of surviving as a musician during the early war years. Many performers began to dedicate themselves to raising funds for the

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<sup>2</sup> Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “Letter to the Federal Works Administrator Discontinuing the WPA,” *The American Presidency Project*, accessed November 14, 2017, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16210&st=&st1=>.

<sup>3</sup> “Federal Project Number One,” *The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project*, accessed November 14, 2017, <https://www2.gwu.edu/~erpapers/teaching/glossary/federal-project-number1.cfm>; *Final Report on the WPA Program*, 63.

war effort or playing to boost morale for their audiences during this trying time. One such means through which musicians generated money and brought an improved spirit to the war effort was through the initiatives of the United Service Organizations.<sup>4</sup>

Prior to the American entrance into World War II, Roosevelt instituted a peacetime draft. In light of this draft and the fear entering the nation, the president asked charitable organizations to assist in providing recreational activities and morale boosts to these new soldiers, particularly keeping in mind: “Entertainment is always a national asset. Invaluable in time of peace, it is indispensable in wartime.” Six organizations did just what Roosevelt asked and joined forces to aid soldiers: the Salvation Army, the Young Men’s Christian Association, the Young Women’s Christian Association, the National Catholic Community Service, the National Travelers Air Association, and the National Jewish Welfare Board. Through their efforts, the United Service Organizations (USO) formed in New York on February 4, 1941. Soon after, the USO created a constitution and by-laws, which put forth its goals: “To aid in the war and defense program of the United States and its Allies by serving the religious, spiritual, welfare and educational needs of the men and women in the armed forces...and in general, to contribute to the maintenance of morale in American communities and elsewhere.” In an effort to meet the expectations stated in these by-laws, the USO created clubs and tours that provided entertainment and escape for the soldiers.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Taylor, “The New Deal Goes to War,” 244-245; Peter Townsend, *Pearl Harbor Jazz: Change in Popular Music in the Early 1940s* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 25, 26-27.

<sup>5</sup> Jim Garamone, “From World War II to Afghanistan: USO Marks 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary,” *Department of Defense*, accessed November 13, 2017, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/651462/from-world-war-ii-to-afghanistan-uso-marks-75th-anniversary/>; quoted in Lowell Matson, “Theatre for the Armed Forces in World War II,” *Educational Theatre Journal* 6, no. 1 (March 1954): 1; “The Organization,” *USO*, accessed November 13, 2017, <https://www.uso.org/about>; quoted in Julia M. H. Carson, *Home Away from Home: The Story of the USO* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1946), xi.

By September 1941, eighty-nine USO clubs existed and this number rapidly grew, with 3,035 clubs by 1944. These spaces, paid for by contributions from American citizens, operated under supervision from the Army and Navy with the help of many volunteers. Clubs hosted concerts and dances, where bands performed swing and jazz music to the servicemen. Almost every military base and USO center had a local band that performed the popular tunes of the day, with hits such as “In the Mood” and “Moonlight Serenade” featured. Beyond the essential musical element, clubs provided soldiers on leave with other forms of entertainment or distraction, including materials for writing, dark rooms for film development, magazines, pool tables, classes in dancing, acting, languages, writing, singing, and crafting, and symphonic recordings. Through this list, the prominence of music again becomes apparent for these soldiers, though the fullest expansion of Great Depression music initiatives reappeared with the USO tours.<sup>6</sup>

In 1941, the USO began providing camp shows to soldiers stationed across the globe. These shows brought numerous forms of entertainment to the military abroad, including comedy shows from famous American performers, such as Danny Kaye and Bob Hope, to musical acts. In the first six months of the USO, the organization had twenty-four camp show units featuring numerous performers, who provided entertainment to over two million soldiers. By 1942, over 200 bands volunteered to perform through the USO and entertain the armed forces stationed in America and abroad. By the end of 1945 and World War II, performers for camp shows played in every location where the military had soldiers stationed, from Europe to the Arctic Circle.

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<sup>6</sup> Garamone, “From World War II to Afghanistan”; Meghan K. Winchell, *Good Girls, Good Food, Good Fun: The Story of USO Hostesses during World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 2, 135, 141-142; Carson, *Home Away from Home*, xi, 21

The large numbers of performances held in the first year seem minimal in comparison to those during the last year of the war, which featured over 151,000 performances by the 199 camp show units with roughly 1,500 artists playing close to 72 million servicemen. During the course of the war, USO tours reached over 171 million people through 273,000 shows. Beyond these numbers, which reveal the massive amount of performers and performances given to troops during the course of World War II, the free cost of these performances also help show the continuation of Great Depression musical ideologies.<sup>7</sup>

In a country shifting from depression to war, music remained a focal point in the plan for success. During the Great Depression, America saw a large number of changes to the music industry, as composition changed and the number of performances outside the concert hall rose. These concerts in unconventional spaces, mostly parks with their new venues specifically designed for outdoor music, grew in accordance with the wish to reach the largest number of people possible for such events. This was due both to the need to grow audiences for music and the desire to improve morale for citizens across the nation so that both could survive the economic pressures of the day. The ideas promoted through this movement continued into American entrance into World War II. With the creation of the USO and its clubs and shows, music in unconventional spaces remained essential to the survival of the music industry and provided a morale boost in the United States and beyond.

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<sup>7</sup> Matson, "Theatre for the Armed Forces in World War II," 2; "The Organization"; Townsend, *Pearl Harbor Jazz*, 28; Carson, *Home Away from Home*, 130, 133.

## Appendix

## List of Musical Terms

Cantata: a composition meant to be sung

Fantasia, or fantasia: a piece based loosely on melodic imitation, written in free form, and based on an instrumental solo

Gavotte: a lively French dance, originally played among peasants in both England and France

Idyl: a pastoral poem set to music, initially polyphonic or madrigals, later in cantatas and serenades

Intermezzo: a musical interlude meant to connect two things together, from scenes of a play to other musical pieces

Madrigal: a vernacular and secular piece of vocal music

Mazurka: a Polish dance

Operetta: a short opera

Polyphonic: more than one melody sung simultaneously

Quadrille, or quadrillo: a popular dance in France and England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

Serenade: a piece composed and performed in someone's honor, usually a calm and light work



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