

The Orchestra
A Very Short Introduction

By D. Kern Holoman

Questions for Thought and Discussion

- What has occurred in the world of orchestras since this book was written (2010-11) and published (2012)? What was the outcome in Detroit and Philadelphia?
- How does the traditional philharmonic society (musicians, patrons, place, and venue) function in your community? Identify promises as well as challenges.
- What viable alternatives are there to doomsday scenarios when describing today's "classical" music in general and the orchestra in specific?
- How did the Ford Foundation's "Music for Millions – Millions for Music" (see pp. 53ff.) program of 1966 make things better? Worse?
- Consider the basic differences in the funding of art music in the UK and the US. How do these affect the artistry of British and American orchestras? Extend the exercise to include Europe as a whole.
- Give some cases in which "cultural diplomacy" has succeeded and others where it has failed. In what ways is it reasonable to conclude that the orchestra has a useful role in international affairs?
- Compare the approaches to cultural diplomacy of Toscanini, Bernstein, and Barenboim.
- The San Francisco critic Robert Commanday has asserted that the paucity of African American players in orchestras reflects the problem of the cost of the kind of education necessary to produce qualified players as much as any exclusionary practice. Do you agree?
- Where do you and members of your group seek good written critique of orchestral music now that newspapers and magazines have mostly abandoned their commitment to it? Who reads a blog daily or frequently? Which one? Why?
- How do you acquire, and more especially pay for, recorded orchestral music today? Do you listen more or less than in the days of records and CDs?
- What *should* the economic and social status of orchestral players be? Is theirs an art or a craft? Conductors? General Managers?
- What do you remember about orchestras and their role in the London Olympics? The Diamond Jubilee? In what ways were these part of a historical thread?
- Did you watch a New Year's Day broadcast from Vienna? How many women are there now? Ethnic minorities? Does this matter?
- What orchestral composers and music since Stravinsky (d. 1971) have caught your attention or, better yet, earned your admiration. Why?
- How has your own perception of, say, Beethoven's Fifth or *Messiah* mutated over the years you have been interested in the orchestra?

Other books by this author

Charles Munch (Oxford University Press, 2011)

Writing About Music: A Style Sheet 2nd Ed. (University of California Press, 2008)

The Société des Concerts du Conservatoire, 1828-1967 (University of California Press, 2004)

Masterworks: A Musical Discovery 2nd ed. (Prentice Hall, 1998)

The Nineteenth-Century Symphony (Ed.) (Schirmer Books, 1997)

Evenings with the Orchestra: A Norton Companion for Concertgoers (W. W. Norton, 1992)

Berlioz (Harvard University Press, 1989)