

Live Recollections: Uses of the Past in U.S. Concert Life

Steve Waksman

swaksman@smith.edu

Smith College

Abstract

As an institution, the concert has long been one of the central mechanisms through which a sense of musical history is constructed and conveyed to a contemporary listening audience. Examining concert programs and critical reviews, this paper will briefly survey U.S. concert life at three distinct moments: in the 1840s, when a conflict arose between virtuoso performance and an emerging classical canon; in the 1910s through 1930s, when early jazz concerts referenced the past to highlight the music's progress over time; and in the late twentieth century, when rock festivals sought to reclaim a sense of liveness in an increasingly mediatized cultural landscape.

keywords: concerts, canons, jazz, rock, virtuosity, history.

1

During the nineteenth century, a conflict arose regarding whether concert repertoires should dwell more on the presentation of works from the past, or should concentrate on works of a more contemporary character. The notion that works of the past rather than the present should be the focus of concert life gained hold only gradually over the course of the nineteenth century; as it did, concerts in Europe and the U.S. assumed a more curatorial function, acting almost as a living museum of musical artifacts. While this emphasis on the musical past took hold most sharply in the sphere of "high" or classical music, it has become increasingly common in the popular sphere as well, although whether it fulfills the same function in each realm of musical life remains an open question.

In this paper, I will provide analytical snapshots of three moments in the history of American concert life during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to examine some of the ways in which concerts have mobilized the musical past.

My examples come not only from different times but from distinct genres of music – classical, jazz, and rock – to demonstrate that certain features of concert life remain relatively consistent regardless of the music being performed; or more pointedly, to argue that changes that initially served to mark the classical sphere as something separate from other musical spheres have over time come to inform those other spheres as well.

Table 1: Three Moments in U.S. Concert Life

1840s	Virtuosity vs. canonicity
1910s-1930s	Representing the jazz past
1990s	Reviving the rock festival

At the same time, I hope to show how depending on context, the musical past and the values attributed to that past might serve some rather distinct cultural functions. It is not just that different musical pasts are invoked at different moments, but that a different sense of what cultural work the past might do comes into play.

2

In the nineteenth century, the problem of the past and its place in contemporary musical performance significantly intersected with another issue over which there was growing concern: the relationship between “high” and “low”, or classical and popular spheres of music and culture. In *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America*, cultural historian Lawrence Levine (1988) argued that the late nineteenth century gave rise to increasing efforts to elevate certain forms of culture to a level of almost sacred esteem. According to Levine, this growth of cultural hierarchy contrasted with the cultural landscape in the first half of the nineteenth century, when the popular and the elevated did not exist in such clearly separate spheres. In his most famous case study, Levine showed that the work of William Shakespeare, now hallowed as the linchpin of the Western literary canon, was for much of the nineteenth century performed for mixed audiences who often relished the sensational aspects of the playwright’s work far more than his florid language or his perceptions about the human condition. Opera is another medium that Levine argues changed from being a democratic form to something more elite and exclusive in character. Music historians have taken issue with some of Levine’s chronology but have used his work to frame the path that American music followed in the nineteenth century. The tendencies toward elevation that Levine mainly ascribes to the latter nineteenth century can be found much earlier, in some cases as early as the 1820s and 1830s; but while the rhetoric of

elevation began to be formed in this earlier period, in practice efforts to promote the existence of a classical musical sphere that represented the highest level of musical expression and was reserved for the most informed and sensitive listeners, met with mixed success at best in the years prior to the Civil War.

One key figure who was on the leading edge of these developments was the music critic John S. Dwight, who vociferously advocated for the elevation of classical music to a position of artistic and cultural supremacy for several decades in the middle and later years of the nineteenth century. Best known as the editor of the influential American journal of music opinion, *Dwight's Journal of Music* (published from 1852-1881), in the 1840s Dwight was part of a coterie of Boston-based music critics who led the way towards positing classical music as a music apart that only a cultivated minority of listeners could properly appreciate. According to music historian Michael Broyles (1992), Dwight and another Boston critic, H. Theodore Hach, did much to import German musical romanticism into American musical discourse. The Harvard Musical Association, with which Dwight was associated, furthered the promotion of such values through a combination of lectures and concerts held throughout the early 1840s. It was Dwight, though, who was most assertive in arguing that popular music culture – represented by religious psalmody on the one hand, and minstrel songs on the other – was unworthy of appreciation, and that the highest and only true form of music was that which strove for a sort of absolute, pure expression as was found in the instrumental music of European composers such as Beethoven and Haydn (pp. 254-257).

By the middle of the 1840s, it seemed as though the appeals toward European musical supremacy made by Dwight and his Bostonian counterparts were gaining ground. A host of highly regarded European performers began to turn their attention toward the U.S. as the decade proceeded, embarking on extensive tours that would have a significant impact on both the economic and aesthetic dimensions of American music. 1843 was something of a landmark year, seeing the U.S. debuts of violinists Ole Bull from Norway and Henri Vieuxtemps from France (Lawrence, 1988, p. 189). Two years later, the pianist Leopold de Meyer made his first U.S. appearances, setting the stage for a procession of piano virtuosos that included Henri Herz, Sigismund Thalberg, and in later years, Anton Rubinstein and Hans von Bulow.¹ The trend reached a sort of culmination with the 1850 arrival of Swedish soprano Jenny Lind, who under the sponsorship of P.T. Barnum ushered in a new era of musical celebrity.

Public reception of the performances of these figures was on the whole, overwhelmingly enthusiastic. However, Dwight's response to this new preponderance of European musical talent was markedly ambivalent; and the terms of Dwight's ambivalence would echo throughout the years and decades that followed as classical music became a more securely established phenomenon in the U.S. Dwight (1845a, 1845b) set those terms forth in a two-part essay, "The Virtuoso Age in Music", that appeared in the Transcendentalist magazine, *The Harbinger*, for which he served as music editor. The essays appeared in the midst of de Meyer's successful first run of concerts in New York

City, which provided the stimulus for Dwight to weigh the pros and cons of the pianist's spectacular performance style and the larger trend to which he was linked.²

Dwight criticized the “virtuoso age” on several fronts, but his argument essentially boiled down to two basic propositions. First, virtuoso performance was deficient to the degree that it showcased the skill and dexterity of the performer above the beauty and integrity of the composition. Elevating the composer above the performer, Dwight further elevated specific composers – particularly, the Austro-German grouping of Bach, Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven – whose work represented the height of musical excellence in its realized form. The second major principle underlying Dwight's critique was that virtuoso performers unduly ignored the work of these great masters, and in their place substituted compositions of their own creation that were designed for purposes of musical display rather than musical uplift. The dominant figure of the virtuoso age was the composer-performer, but according to Dwight the work composed by the likes of de Meyer was trifling compared to that of the great masters. The concert program reproduced in Table 2 was characteristic of the virtuoso programs of the era, featuring four pieces composed or arranged for piano by de Meyer, alternating with four operatic vocal selections included to provide variety for the audience. Notably, the program includes no instrumental works that do not have de Meyer's stamp upon them.

Table 2: Leopold de Meyer concert program, Feb. 5, 1846³

Part 1	Part 2
1. “My Heart's on the Rhine,” Speyer	1. Aria Tyrolian, Blum
2. Fantasia on Airs from <i>I Puritani</i> , de Meyer	2. Introduction and Brilliant Variations, from <i>Lucrezia Borgia</i> , de Meyer
3. “Come dolce Cavatina,” Rossini	3. Scene from <i>The Gypsy's Warning</i> , Benedict
4. Variation on airs from <i>Semiramide</i> , de Meyer	4. Grand Duett, <i>Le Desert</i> , David, arranged by de Meyer

Why perform a program of deficient contemporary works when one could bask in the wonder of great works from the past? This was in many ways the crux of the matter for Dwight. Although we might see this as a simple rearguard action laying the groundwork for the future conservatism of the classical music world, historian William Weber (2008) reminds us that in its time, the tendency to elevate past masterworks was not so straightforward in its implications. “The concept of classical music”, asserts Weber, “should be seen as pioneering rather than conservative during the first half of the nineteenth century. Endowing older works with canonic authority... made a fundamental break with musical tradition”

(p. 122). Concerts had previously tended toward programs characterized by a high degree of miscellany, out of recognition that any given audience would wish to hear a certain variety of works. Through the efforts of Dwight and other like-minded critics, concert programs would be increasingly evaluated according to a set of idealistic values that placed homogeneity and purity over miscellany and eclecticism; and these values would lay the groundwork for the growing rift between classical and popular musical spheres in the later 19th century.

3

I now jump forward seventy years in time, to the decades from the 1910s to the 1930s and into the sphere of jazz. As Scott DeVeaux (1989, p. 7) observes in his valuable overview of the rise of the jazz concert, jazz took to the concert hall gradually and somewhat fitfully. One can point to a few early notable events, among which James Reese Europe's concerts with the Clef Club Orchestra at Carnegie Hall during the years 1912-1914 particularly stand out. On the cusp of jazz's emergence as a fully recognized popular form, Europe presented a diverse stylistic mix of the sort purveyed by white bandleaders such as John Philip Sousa, but strove to give his programs a distinctly African American cast. He increasingly featured the work of black composers in these concerts as well as adaptations of black spirituals, and announced his intention to create a form of orchestral music that was "different and distinctive, and that lends itself to the playing of the peculiar compositions of our race" (Badger, 1989, p. 51). In 1915 J. Rosamond Johnson continued these concerts as supervisor of the Music School Settlement for Colored People. A program from that year's concert shows a mix of historical and contemporary material, juxtaposing spirituals and Stephen Foster's "plantation melodies" with contemporary pieces by Johnson and W.C. Handy, as well as Liszt's "Hungarian Rhapsody", performed by Miss Ethel Richardson, a "promising" young pianist from Newark.⁴

A very different sort of milestone happened a decade hence: Paul Whiteman's 1924 "Experiment in Modern Music", held at New York's Aeolian Hall. One of the most contested figures in jazz history, Whiteman was also the most popular bandleader of the 1920s. His efforts to create a style of symphonic jazz could be seen in some regards as an extension of the impulses governing the earlier ventures by Europe and Johnson, who sought to blend the cultivated and the vernacular in their presentation of African American musical talent. For Whiteman, though, the vernacular was something that had to be transcended, not only adapted. As his manager, Hugh Ernst, explained in the program notes for Whiteman's "Experiment": "Mr. Whiteman intends to point out ... the tremendous strides which have been made in popular music from the day of the discordant jazz, which sprang into existence about ten years ago from nowhere in particular, to the really melodious music of today, which – for no good reason – is still called Jazz."⁵

Table 3: The Program at Aeolian Hall, Feb. 12, 1924 (outline)⁶

FIRST HALF:	SECOND HALF:
1. True Form of Jazz a. Ten Years Ago – “Livery Stable Blues” LaRocca b. With Modern Embellishment – “Mama Loves Papa” Baer	8. A Suite of Serenades
2. Comedy Selections	9. Adaptation of Standard Selections to Dance Rhythm
3. Contrast – Legitimate Scoring vs. Jazz	10. George Gershwin (Piano) <i>Rhapsody in Blue</i> – Gershwin (Accompanied by Orchestra)
4. Recent Compositions with Modern Score	11. In the Field of Classics
5. Zez Confrey (Piano)	
6. Flavoring a Selection with Borrowed Tunes	
7. Semi-Symphonic Arrangement of Popular Melodies	

The concert at Aeolian Hall used a particular, strategic construction of the jazz past to frame its portrayal of the modern present, best represented by George Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue”, which was debuted at Whiteman’s “Experiment”. While Gershwin’s piece occupied the climactic next-to-last position on the evening’s program, the concert began with what the program notes called the “True Form of Jazz”, Whiteman’s interpretation of “Livery Stable Blues”, a tune made popular the preceding decade by the white New Orleans group the Original Dixieland Jazz Band. Moving from the barnyard sounds of “Livery” to the ornate jazz-classical fusion of “Rhapsody”, the Experiment in Modern Music staged its own narrative of progress from the primitivism of jazz’s earlier form to the refined sound of contemporary jazz orchestration. Notably, the whole program omitted any acknowledgment of black jazz performers and their contributions; even the “primitive” side of jazz was portrayed through reference to a group of white musicians (who apparently came from “nowhere in particular”). For music historian Elijah Wald (2009, p. 74), though, what was important about the concert was that Whiteman embraced jazz even as he mocked it and misrepresented its history. As a popular entertainer he realized the appeal of jazz as a term and a style, and by seeking to elevate it rather than to reject it outright he made it palatable – in however altered a form – to listeners who would otherwise have found it objectionable.⁷ In the long term, Whiteman’s “Experiment in Modern Music” may have failed in classicizing jazz, but it succeeded wildly in popularizing it.

Table 4: From Spirituals to Swing concert program, Dec. 23, 1938 (outline)⁸

<p><i>Introduction</i> (featuring recordings of African tribal music)</p> <p>1. <i>Spirituals and Holy Roller Hymns</i> Mitchell's Christian Singers Sister [Rosetta] Tharpe</p> <p>2. <i>Soft Swing</i> The Kansas City Six</p> <p>3. <i>Harmonica Playing</i> Sanford [Sonny] Terry</p> <p>4. <i>Blues</i> Ruby Smith w. James P. Johnson Joe Turner w. Pete Johnson Big Bill [Broonzy] James Rushing w. the Kansas City Five Helen Humes w. the Kansas City Five</p> <p>5. <i>Boogie-Woogie Piano Playing</i> Albert Ammons, Meade Lux Lewis, and Pete Johnson</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Intermission</p> <p>6. <i>Early New Orleans Jazz</i> Sidney Bechet and his New Orleans Feet Warmers</p> <p>7. <i>Swing</i> Count Basie and His Orchestra Basie's Blue Five The Kansas City Six</p>

Whiteman's "Experiment" is important background for understanding the significance of another landmark concert event in jazz history: the *From Spirituals to Swing* program organized by John Hammond and held at Carnegie Hall in December 1938. In many ways the "Experiment in Modern Music" and *From Spirituals to Swing* could hardly seem more different. For one thing, the latter was almost exclusively devoted to highlighting the contributions of African American musicians to jazz and American music more broadly conceived. *From Spirituals to Swing* was furthermore one of the most publicized manifestations of the convergence between jazz and leftist politics during the era of the Popular Front. Hammond's own left-leaning sympathies were widely known through his

writings in *Down Beat* magazine, and the concert was sponsored by the leftist periodical *New Masses*. While the Carnegie Hall concerts of Europe and Johnson in the 1910s were tied to projects of racial uplift, *From Spirituals to Swing* used jazz to promote an integrationist agenda that was tied in turn to a wider vision of cultural democratization.⁹

Yet for all its distinctiveness, *From Spirituals to Swing* – like Whiteman’s “Experiment” – had its own narrative of progress built into its program. The concert began with recorded selections of African tribal music before proceeding to showcase spirituals, soft swing, blues, boogie woogie, and New Orleans Jazz, and climaxing with the full-fledged big band swing of Count Basie’s orchestra. Like Whiteman’s concert too, *Spirituals to Swing* was designed as a major act of legitimation, countering jazz’s critics by showing that the music was steeped in a range of cultural traditions and that it had progressed from those traditions into a music of “profound feeling” and even a certain measure of sophistication. Hammond could well have been speaking of the likes of Whiteman when he wrote in the program notes that, “Good jazz has outlived its highbrow detractors of the twenties and will continue to refute their petty charges. Look to it for the same qualities you expect in the classics: expert instrumentation, a musical structure (even in *ad lib* jazz), and a quality that we must call sincerity”. Yet he employed his own taste hierarchy by criticizing the “jitterbug millions” and “commercial gentlemen” who distracted the public from the “real thing”, jazz as played by “some of its best Negro practitioners” (Dugan and Hammond, 1974, pp. 194-195).

Taken together, then, the Carnegie Hall concerts of Europe and Johnson, Whiteman’s “Experiment in Modern Music”, and Hammond’s *Spirituals to Swing* program show that some explicit appeal to the musical past was integral to the process through which jazz was turned into a sort of “concert music”. The Whiteman and Hammond concerts are especially notable for the way they use musical material from the past to give the concert a kind of narrative form unto itself. While Whiteman may have held the jazz past up for ridicule, its representation was nonetheless crucial to his larger goal of positioning himself as the figure who could make the music into a modern sophisticated form. For Hammond, on the other hand, jazz was to gain legitimacy not by highlighting its potential or actual parallels to European concert music but by portraying it as the natural outgrowth of “authentic” African and African American musical traditions. Interestingly, in neither case is the past invested with canonic authority in the sense that it was by John S. Dwight. It is not represented through a set of canonic works but especially in the *Spirituals to Swing* concert is portrayed more broadly through a set of older styles and performance traditions that have laid the groundwork for the modern music of the present day.

4

For my final set of examples I move forward several more decades to the 1990s and into the world of rock. An important trend in the era's presentation of live rock was the rebirth of the American rock festival, which had largely lain dormant since its late 1960s/early 1970s heyday. 1969 was the year that by most accounts, saw the grandest fulfillment of rock's communitarian impulses at the Woodstock festival – held in August of that year in upstate New York – followed quickly by the exposure of the false ideals underlying the rock community at the Altamont festival, held at a race track in Northern California in December. The widely reported death of black audience member Meredith Hunter at the hand of a Hell's Angels member at Altamont became a sign for many observers that the positive idealism of the counterculture had mutated into something far more dark and destructive.¹⁰ Reflecting upon these events thirty years later, rock critic Ellen Willis (1999, p. 153) put forth the notion that “the power of rock ‘n’ roll as a musical and social force has always been intimately connected with the paradoxical possibilities of mass freedom or collective individuality”. Woodstock, by Willis's estimation, dramatized the possibilities of mass freedom as well as the fragility dwelling within that term; and Altamont was “the countermyth that could no longer be denied”, after which the idea that the crowd could be a source of freedom largely receded from the ideological edifice of rock and roll (pp. 157-158).

In the post-Altamont era, rock festivals in the United States did not disappear completely. Over the course of the 1970s, however, festivals were largely supplanted by a new sort of large-scale concert form: arena rock (or stadium rock, in its larger incarnation). Although the difference between festivals and arena or stadium rock events can be overstated, in general festivals occurred in less strictly bounded environments, while arena and stadium events occurred in built structures that had a more fixed seating capacity. More to the point, festivals tended to be unique, one-time events, while arena and stadium shows tended to happen as part of extensive tours, such that the shows were reproduced night after night in roughly the same manner. The reproducibility of arena shows, combined with their large attendance, made them highly profitable for bands that could continually draw near capacity crowds.¹¹ These various factors made arena rock appear to many observers to be indicative of a larger shift away from the countercultural idealism and communitarian ethos that had infused rock in the 1960s towards a more capital-intensive, bottom line approach to concert production that took hold in the 1970s. As former *Creem* critic Robert Duncan (1984, p. 37) put it in a discussion of heavy metal, these developments marked “the paradigm of the counterculture into the mainstream”.

Interviewed in 1996, Soundgarden guitarist Kim Thayil asserted, “If I was 17 back in 1969, I wouldn't have gone to Woodstock. I would have gone to Detroit” (Rubin, 1996, p. 46), the latter having been the location of aggressive, proto-punk bands such as the MC5 and the Stooges. Rock musicians, audiences, critics and concert promoters in the 1990s were still trying to sort through what the end of the 1960s had meant: had it truly been the end of the

vision of mass freedom in rock, as Ellen Willis has suggested; and if so, was that vision worth trying to preserve or restore?¹² The revival of the rock festival in the 1990s was perhaps the most intriguing sign of this historical preoccupation. Woodstock 94, held in the summer of 1994 upon the twenty-fifth anniversary of that most lauded of festivals, was especially symptomatic in this regard, and directly posed a question that ran through the era: can one reproduce the experience and the values of an earlier era without succumbing to a stifling nostalgia? More tangibly, such endeavors raised the question of whether rock festivals could be made once again into a viable concert format after two decades during which audiences and performers had become accustomed to a very different sort of live music event.

A similar gaze towards the past was at work in the more influential and consequential Lollapalooza festival, which started in summer of 1991 and endured with greater and lesser degrees of success for seven summers, not counting the recent revival of the festival that began in the early 2000s. Lollapalooza's mouthpiece and one of its founding planners, Perry Farrell, was vocalist for Jane's Addiction, a Los Angeles band that was built on a fusion of 1970s metal and 1980s post-punk characteristic of the era's "alternative" rock. Farrell's vision for the festival was avowedly idealistic: he wanted to stage an event that would revive the oppositional spirit of youth culture. His strategy – developed in combination with Jane's Addiction manager Ted Gardner, drummer Stephen Perkins, and booking agents Marc Geiger and Don Muller – was to merge various strains of challenging rock-based music with political and artistic exhibits that could motivate those in attendance to take a more active stance towards the world around them. Compared to the most well known festivals of the past, from Monterey Pop to Woodstock to the US Festival, Lollapalooza was most distinguished by the fact that it was a *touring* rock festival, bringing its cavalcade of musical acts and other attractions to twenty-one tour stops over the course of that first summer. Looking back upon Woodstock, Farrell showed a cunning mix of cynicism and nostalgia: "You want to hear some bullshit about Woodstock? Jimi Hendrix played, and everybody split on him. People smashed fences down, ruined this guy's farm and parked all over the place. It wasn't exactly Eden". But, Farrell continued, "The memory of it, the *myth*, is something else... I'm lucky because I have that, times twenty-one. I have twenty-one chances to get it right" (Fricke, 1991, p. 14).

Year one of Lollapalooza was a surprise success in an otherwise-moribund summer touring season. The festival's lineup had the right mix of eclecticism and consistency, with Jane's Addiction joined by post-punk icons and goth progenitors Siouxsie and the Banshees, black heavy rock band Living Colour, industrial group Nine Inch Nails, gangster rapper Ice-T, and two leading lights of the more creative end of 1980s punk and hardcore, the Butthole Surfers and Henry Rollins. What perhaps most connected these bands was that, with the possible exception of Jane's Addiction, none had the sort of following that would fill a 25,000-seat venue on their own, but all had well-defined constituencies. The risk behind Lollapalooza lay in the assumption amongst the festival's organizers that the relative diversity of the lineup would be a blessing rather than a curse.

That their assumption proved true held out the promise that youth culture was not so defined by generic and subcultural divisions that new alliances could not take shape.

Over the next several years, though, the festival lost some of its commercial and critical luster, and Lollapalooza-watching became something of an annual sport in the music press. It was almost as though the 1960s/1970s era shift from festival rock to arena rock was being replayed all over again in the context of a single annual event. Lollapalooza '91 became the era's new yardstick of rock and roll community, compared to which even Woodstock 94 could only pale in comparison. Each subsequent installment of the tour became an occasion to consider the state of Lollapalooza and of alternative rock more generally. 1993 seemed to lack a true headliner, with the decidedly offbeat Primus slotted as the year's main attraction. 1994 was the year that Nirvana got away; in a fabled stroke, one of Kurt Cobain's last decisive career moves was to refuse the offer to headline that year's tour. 1995 was the year that Lollapalooza got "too alternative", with Sonic Youth as the lead attraction, a move that may have restored some of the festival's integrity in certain quarters but that did not consistently generate the crowds of years past.

Which brings us to 1996. After the relatively disappointing results of the 1995 installment, the Lollapalooza brain trust set its sights on restoring the festival's drawing power. The results were as follows: Metallica was picked to headline that year's tour, a move that prompted Perry Farrell to resign his position as creative coordinator; and for the first time Lollapalooza failed to feature any rap acts, making it a totally "rock", and totally white, affair. With a key element in the festival's stylistic mix excluded, Lollapalooza 1996 became, in effect, the metal/punk Lollapalooza – and as such, revealed what had arguably been the true generic underpinnings of "alternative" rock from the start.

Table 5: Lollapalooza lineups

<u>1991</u>	<u>1996</u>
Janes Addiction	Metallica
Siouxsie and the Banshees	Soundgarden
Living Colour	Ramones
Nine Inch Nails	Rancid
Ice T and Body Count	Screaming Trees
Butthole Surfers	Psychotica
Henry Rollins Bands	

Joining Metallica on the tour were punk founders the Ramones, latter-day East Bay punks Rancid, and two bands connected to the high-profile Seattle "grunge" scene, Soundgarden and the Screaming Trees. The lineup raised many eyebrows, not least because Metallica had itself undergone a recent

transformation, its members shaving their characteristic long hair and restyling their sound and appearance in a way that led many to claim they had gone “alternative”, and led many fans to raise the typical accusation of “sell-out”. However much Metallica may have changed, though, in the context of Lollapalooza they were metal, and according to Perry Farrell and others did not fit the original vision of what the festival was meant to promote.

For contrarian rock critic Chuck Eddy (1996), on the other hand, Lollapalooza 1996 marked no break with the festival’s past; rather it was a return to normalcy, since by his account the event had “pretty much always been a heavy-metal fest”. Citing the legions of “heavy” bands that had populated the festival through the years – from Jane’s Addiction to Soundgarden to Pearl Jam to L7 to Primus and onward – Eddy also suggested, with no small degree of validity, that Metallica’s audience had not been exclusively metal for years, and that the band’s most recent music resembled 1970s-style “boogie” rock of the Foghat variety more than metal proper. “So if anything”, said Eddy, evoking the early 1970s moment that had shadowed the festival since its beginnings, “Metalpalooza is really ‘70s-palooza: Out there in the mud and sunburn scorch, Metallica/Soundgarden/Screaming Trees come off dangerously close to Grand Funk/Uriah Heep/Mountain” (p. 68). While many held the belief that in Lollapalooza’s evolution, what had begun as an emblem of a rejuvenated rock and roll community had become just another commercial rock spectacle, Eddy suggested that the festival had been little more than repackaged arena rock from the outset. Either way, the terms of the debate show the extent to which the staging of live rock in the 1990s was measured against the perceived values and the ideological tensions associated with an earlier era.

With Lollapalooza and the wider revival of the American rock festival of which it was a part, the past assumed another kind of significance. Not home to canonic repertory nor to vital, living traditions, the past entered Lollapalooza as a certain mythology about what rock once had been as symbolized by the live musical forms of an earlier time. And yet, one could well say that in the 1990s, the arena rock concert was to the rock festival what the virtuoso concert had been in relation to the concert of canonic works 150 years earlier: in each instance something popular and lucrative was counterpoised against something judged to transcend the baser concerns of entertainment and profit. In this connection, what is perhaps most intriguing about Lollapalooza is that both the positive and negative versions of what the festival might represent – Woodstock, on the one hand, and heavy metal arena rock, on the other – were drawn from the past, almost as though in the 1990s, live music as such could only be conceptualized in relation to a past when “liveness” was a more prevalent part of the cultural landscape and was not so overshadowed by other, differently mediated forms of musical experience.

5

In his pivotal work of postmodernist cultural criticism, *After the Great Divide*, Andreas Huyssen (1986, pp. 196-197) posited: “the great divide that separated high modernism from mass culture and that was codified in the various classical accounts of modernism no longer seems relevant to postmodern artistic or critical sensibilities”. The clarity that critics such as John S. Dwight once sought regarding the distinction between high and low spheres of culture, has been displaced in more recent decades by a perspective in which the boundaries between high and low are more fluid, and there is less concern with the hierarchical ranking of cultural works. Yet as Bernard Gendron (2002) observed in his valuable recent study of popular music and the avant-garde, this does not mean that categories of high and low or the tendency to invest certain works or performances with greater or lesser artistic value has withered away entirely. Jazz, rock and other popular genres have been infused with aesthetic discourses and values that have been imported from the realm of high culture; they are subject to forms of critical evaluation and cultural elevation that would once have been unthinkable regarding such styles. Gendron explains, in an especially provocative assertion: “In the cultural competition between popular music and high art, popular music has won, not by rising ‘higher’ than high-cultural music – it is still ranked ‘lower’ – but by making the latter less culturally relevant where it matters” (p. 6).

When the past has been invoked in American concert life, whether in the nineteenth century concert hall or the late twentieth century rock arena, it has typically been used to confer authority upon a particular musical event, genre or concert format. Yet the nature of this authority has proven to be variable over time and across genres. Classical music – or more accurately, the classicization of music that took hold in the middle and later years of the nineteenth century – provided one powerful model according to which works from the past were held up as a sort of transcendent ideal against which all other music might be measured, such that the brilliance of contemporary performers might be seen as a distraction from the sovereignty of great musical compositions. Influential as it has been, this model has also been something with which musicians and concert organizers have struggled. Paul Whiteman may have used a symphonic form in his efforts to elevate jazz, but he also stressed his music’s eminently modern character. John Hammond presented jazz as a music whose present could not be properly appreciated without knowledge of its past, but in so doing he explicitly criticized the “highbrow” tendency to dismiss jazz as artless noise. With the revival of the rock festival that took hold in the last decade of the twentieth century, a particular idealized concert form from rock’s past was reclaimed, but the authority of that form had little to do with questions of “high” or “low”. Per Gendron, rock had achieved its own form of relative autonomy by this time; its value was measured against its own past, which served as the repository for a sort of authentic collective experience that could be reinvested with meaning in the present.

Notes

1. See Lott (2003) for extensive discussion of the specific significance of European piano virtuosos and their impact upon American musical life.
2. Ever attentive to musical trends and opinion overseas, Dwight's critical position on virtuoso performance closely reflected views that had circulated widely in Europe during the preceding decade around many of the same figures who visited the U.S., but especially around the pianist Franz Liszt, whose flamboyant performance style and great success with Parisian audiences gave rise to considerable anxiety and suspicion regarding his effect upon music audiences and standards of taste. See Gooley (2004), Leppert (1999).
3. Taken from a program reproduced in Lott (2003), p. 24.
4. "Black Music Concerts" (1978): 85-87. This article reprints a collection of contemporary reviews of Europe's Clef Club concerts and the Carnegie Hall concert organized by Johnson.
5. Reproduced in Walser (1999), p. 40.
- 6 The full program is reproduced in Rayno (2003), pp. 390-391.
7. Wald proceeds to dub "Rhapsody in Blue" the "Sgt. Pepper of the 1920s, the work that forced a dramatic rethinking of what popular music could be" (p. 78).
8. The complete program is reproduced in Dugan and Hammond (1974), pp. 191-207.
9. See Stowe (1994), pp. 50-93, and Erenberg (1998), pp. 120-149, for more extensive discussion of the place of jazz in the cultural politics of the Popular Front. Both authors discuss Hammond in some detail and address the *From Spirituals to Swing* concert.
10. Coates (2006, p. 59) puts forth a strong critique of the terms according to which the Altamont festival was reported, especially in the pages of *Rolling Stone* magazine, arguing that "the vision of rock music" promoted in these accounts "was willfully blind to the practical realities of rock music, rock performers and stars, rock audiences, rock festivals – indeed, the whole apparatus of 'rock culture'".
11. See Chapple and Garofalo (1977), pp. 137-154, for what remains the best overview of these developments.
12. Much of what follows is adapted from Waksman (2009), pp. 299-306.

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