



Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity

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"Queer Episodes in Music and Modern Identity" approaches modern sexuality by way of music. Through the hidden or lost stories of composers, scholars, patrons, performers, audiences, repertoires, venues, and specific works, this intriguing volume explores points of intersection between music and queerness in Europe and the United States in the years 1870 to 1950 - a period when dramatic changes in musical expression and in the expression of individual sexual identity played similar roles in washing away the certainties of the past. Pursuing the shadowy, obscured tracks of queerness, contributors unravel connections among dissident identities and concrete aspects of musical style, gestures, and personae. On one end of the spectrum are intense, private connections and tantalizing details of musical expression: romantic correspondence between Eugenie Schumann (a daughter of Clara and Robert) and the singer Marie Fillunger; John Ireland's confessional letters to a close friend of an illicit passion for young choristers; 'closet formations' in the music of composers such as Maurice Ravel, Edward Elgar, and Camille Saint-Sens. At the other extreme are public, often flamboyant intimations of deviance and their repercussions: the craze for male impersonators in American vaudeville between 1870 and 1930; the politics of appropriation implicit in showy transcriptions by pianists such as Liberace; the increasingly homophobic reception accorded Tchaikovsky's music in the early twentieth century. The authors also explore how traces of queerness can mark communities, such as groups of German men who fashioned homosexual identities by way of the cult of Wagner or women musicians who were assigned suspect or deviant status by virtue of being jazz instrumentalists. Throughout these discussions, music provides the accompaniment for confrontations between disparate conventions of social propriety and diverse forms of sexual identity. These provocative essays open the consideration of music and sexuality to an exciting new sense of inbetweenness, passage, and diversion.

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