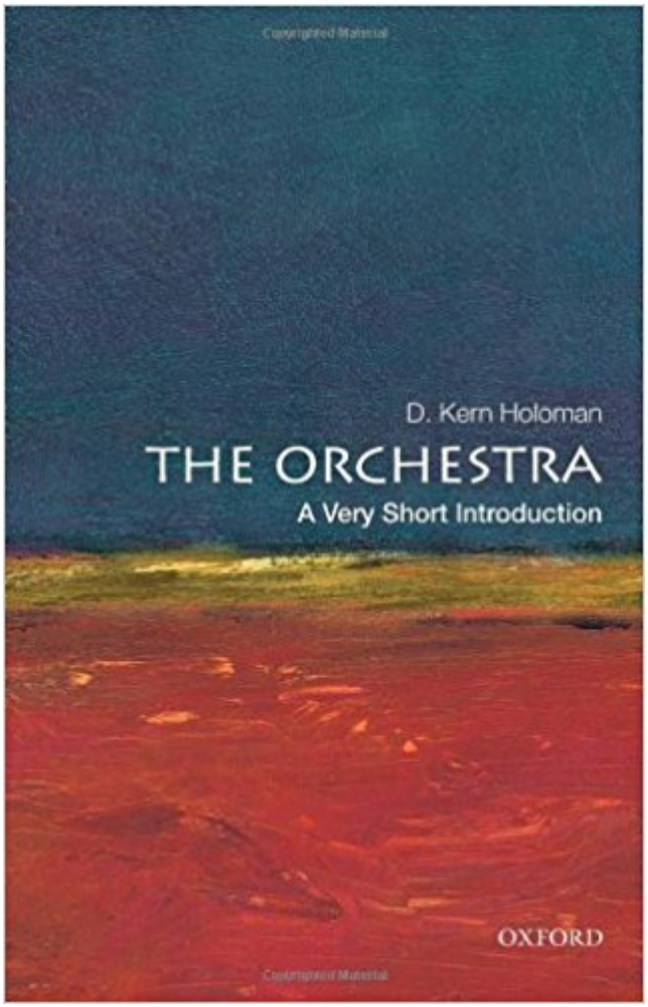
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The Orchestra: A Very Short Introduction



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Synopsis

In this Very Short Introduction, D. Kern Holoman considers the structure, roots, and day-to-day functioning of the modern philharmonic society. He explores topics ranging from the life of a musician in a modern orchestra, the recent wave of new hall construction from Berlin to Birmingham, threats of bankruptcies and strikes, and the eyebrow-raising salaries of conductors and general managers. At the heart of the book lies a troubling pair of questions: Can such a seemingly anachronistic organization long survive? Does the symphony matter in contemporary culture? Holoman responds to both with a resounding yes. He shows that the orchestra remains a potent political and social force, a cultural diplomat par excellence. It has adapted well to the digital revolution, and it continues to be seen as an essential element of civic pride. In a time of upheaval in how classical music is created, heard, distributed, and evaluated, the orchestra has managed to retain its historic role as a meeting place of intellectual currents, an ongoing forum for public enlightenment.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The Orchestra: A Very Short Introduction is a savvy, modern, and entertaining introduction to the 21st-century world of orchestras. It combines an insider’s perspective with a general overview of the subject-definitely a must for all music lovers." --Alan Gilbert, music director, New York Philharmonic
"The Orchestra: A Very Short Introduction should be required reading for everyone who cares about classical music in today’s world. Presented in a refreshingly nontraditional format, Holoman’s book

is absolutely comprehensive, brimming with surprising insight, wit and vibrancy. Perhaps inspired by the words of the philosopher Seneca whom he quotes-'True pleasure is serious business'-the author succeeds in making a serious and important subject a complete pleasure to explore in this superb book."--JoAnn Falletta, Music Director, Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and Virginia Symphony; Principal Conductor, Ulster Orchestra "Holoman's series of witty quips, anecdotes, and one-liners will keep one reading to the book's much too rapid conclusion." -- Music Media Monthly

D. Kern Holoman is Distinguished Professor of Music at the University of California, Davis, and conductor emeritus of the UC Davis Symphony Orchestra. He is author of Berlioz, Evenings with the Orchestra, the popular textbook Masterworks, the best-selling Writing About Music, and Charles Munch.

Having worked in orchestra management for 11 years I found the book enjoyable.

The content is very good, but the book is small and font is hard to read.

If you are looking for short overview of the symphony orchestra as it has evolved over the centuries, this one is for you. While I learned some new things, the book mostly connected the dots and gave a better snapshot of the orchestra, it venues, and its important conductors over time.

Very good!

You have to admire the glass-half-full perspective that D. Kern Holoman, a music professor and conductor of a California student orchestra, brings to this book about the history and continuing relevance, such as it is, of the professional symphony orchestra. It couldn't have been an easy perspective to maintain, this view of the orchestra as a functional civic enterprise, a locus of musical diversity with universal access via the internet, and a cultural ambassador and agent of peace.If this sounds a little too good to be true, Holoman is also, by necessity, a realist. He writes about the fundamental problems of keeping a 90- to 100-piece American orchestra gainfully employed: namely, a star system in which celebrity conductors and soloists (and their managers) eat half of an orchestra's annual budget, while those ensembles continue to run up deficits; the declining participation of foundations and wealthy patrons in keeping orchestras afloat; the 2008 recession that took a big chunk out of orchestral endowments (the New York Philharmonic alone took a $40

million dollar hit in the financial crisis); and an ongoing wave of bankruptcies, pay cuts, and layoffs beginning in the late 1980s.He knows that there are more music majors than available jobs, that some ensembles, most notoriously the Vienna Philharmonic, have been publicly and unapologetically misogynist and racist in their hiring practices, and that the classical recording industry is, for all practical purposes, dead. Yet there's always a silver lining, somehow, as orchestras are forced to be more involved with their communities, more fiscally responsible, more in touch with popular taste and listening habits, more dynamic. (Even the collapse of the classical record industry was more of a "correction" than a catastrophe.) It's not so difficult to see how sensible it is to take such a position. And if listeners and players haven't quite arrived at a place where Bruckner and Schubert can comfortably share the same program with symphonic themes from "The Legend of Zelda"...Well, that isn't really the point.

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