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# Frontier Figures: American Music And The Mythology Of The American West



## Synopsis

Frontier Figures is a tour-de-force exploration of how the American West, both as physical space and inspiration, animated American music. Examining the work of such composers as Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, Virgil Thomson, Charles Wakefield Cadman, and Arthur Farwell, Beth E. Levy addresses questions of regionalism, race, and representation as well as changing relationships to the natural world to highlight the intersections between classical music and the diverse worlds of Indians, pioneers, and cowboys. Levy draws from an array of genres to show how different brands of western Americana were absorbed into American culture by way of sheet music, radio, lecture recitals, the concert hall, and film. Frontier Figures is a comprehensive illumination of what the West meant and still means to composers living and writing long after the close of the frontier.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Music professor Levy looks at how Western Americana has been woven into American culture via music.” (Sacramento Bee 2012-07-09)  
“Levy offers an amazing amount of scholarship. She has researched nearly every person and event of this period. . . . Highly recommended.” (W.K. Kearns, Emeritus, University of Colorado at Boulder Choice 2012-09-26)

"Beth Levy has written an elegant work of depth and breadth that gives generous space to the idea of the American West. Her discussions of more than a dozen composers and their

works; some usual suspects, others rather unexpected; reveal the 'varied musical ecosystems of the west.' Levy takes us with her on the trail in prose that is by turns pithy and poetic, but always spot on." Denise Von Glahn, author of *The Sounds of Place: Music and the American Cultural Landscape*; Big and bold as the terrain it covers, Beth Levy's *Frontier Figures* takes us on a gratifying road trip, traversing American classical compositions that conjure up landscapes from the Middle West to the shores of the Pacific. En route, we encounter many now-famous composers, such as Aaron Copland, Roy Harris, and Virgil Thomson, along with others who have faded from view. Throughout, Levy treats the West as both geographic location and mythologized ideal, demonstrating its power on the American musical imagination.

Carol Oja, author of *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s*.

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