

Music History and Cosmopolitanism / abstract & bio

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Musicians as Cosmopolitan Entrepreneurs: Orchestras in Finnish Cities before the City Orchestra Institution

City orchestras in Finland are without exception symphony orchestras funded by the cities. Their primary duty is to play symphony concerts. In the field of music historiography this has been considered the main task of the city orchestras already in the 19th century. This certainly was the case for the “serious music audience” (music professionals, critics, lovers of “serious art music”), from which vantage point music history has mainly been written. However, this angle gives a rather one-sided view of the function of the orchestras. In the 19th century many orchestras were founded in Finnish cities, yet playing symphony concerts was just a minor part of their activity. In addition, some of the city-funded orchestras were not symphony orchestras at all. They were brass bands.

The main reason for funding an orchestra was to contribute entertainment in the theatre and public festivities in the cities. They also had an important role in presenting new music culture (mainly transferred from Central Europe) among common people. In order to earn more money, orchestras gave popular concerts with entrance fee. If time permitted, the orchestra also gave symphony concerts. The leaders of the orchestras were without exception itinerant musicians from Germany, Denmark and Sweden.

In this paper we will present two short case studies: the founding of city-sponsored orchestras in Finnish coast towns Pori and Vaasa in the 1870's and 1880's. More than treating the orchestras as predecessors of modern-day symphony orchestras, we consider them, especially the role of the leaders, as a continuation of the city musician (*stadtmusikanten*) system in the Baltic Sea area.

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