

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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Listening for America: Inside the Great American Songbook from Gershwin to Sondheim.

By Rob Kapilow

Nov. 2019. 480p. Norton/Liveright, \$39.95 (9781631490293); e-book, \$27.99 (9781631490309).
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The Great American Songbook is a national treasure, and in this engaging and instructive guide, composer, conductor, and music commentator Kapilow unlocks its riches. Sixteen gems by eight American masters of song—the two in the title as well as Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, Harold Arlen, Irving Berlin, Richard Rodgers, and Leonard Bernstein—are analyzed and set into historical and cultural context, resulting in a greater appreciation of these American musical masterpieces. Songs reflect the world in which they are created, and their back stories reveal much about the songwriters and the milieu in which they plied their craft. The songs selected for examination make for a musical theater fan's ultimate playlist; on it are such show-stoppers as "Summertime," "If I Loved You," "Tonight," and "Send in the Clowns." Readers who don't read music will be glad to hear that there is a companion website on which you can see and listen to the musical examples printed in the book. A treat for music fans and a great addition to any performing arts or popular culture collection.

— *Carolyn Mulac*