

\* **New York Times** music contributor **William Robin**: “What a fantastic manuscript! I loved how you brought Beach’s life, music, and era to life with detail but also accessibility for a young audience. **Really hope this gets published, as it would be an important addition to children’s literature about music.**” — **William Robin**, music columnist for the *New York Times*

\* **Composer Augusta Read Thomas**: “Amy Beach’s music may not be well known today, but the impact of the 1896 premiere of her ‘Gaelic Symphony’ still reverberates. It ended the misperception that women were incapable of creating major musical works and set the stage for the rich and varied new music that women composers have been creating ever since. Learning about her persistence can help spark a similar determination in young readers.” — **Augusta Read Thomas**, Composer, University of Chicago

\* **Music educator John McCarthy**: “Refreshingly written and deeply researched, ‘Amy’s Musical Surprises’ illuminates an important musical personality in our history. While the personal story of Amy Beach is one of courage and conviction, we should also be grateful for her beautiful music as well. Both her story and her music deserve attention. I anticipate that young readers will be drawn to the daring complexity of Amy Beach, a musician whose time has still not fully arrived. Compelling and timely, this is an incredible book, written with skill and knowledge. Hooray!” — **John McCarthy**, Director Emeritus, Preparatory, San Francisco Conservatory

\* **Music educator Amy Dennison**: “I like it a lot. As I read it, pictures kept popping in my head so it should be attractive to kids. I see this as a really good resource for integrated studies in the classroom. You weave history, culture, and science effortlessly into the story. Have you thought about having the book include a section at the end that would encourage readers to try their hand at composing? Simple compositional structures could be added that would get kids writing music. It would be a motivator for some of our young female musicians. Composing has gotten quite popular in our program and they’re all male, even though we have a fantastic female theory teacher. I bet she would read it to her students and it would encourage them to start writing some pieces. I would love to host a composition competition for girls—inspired by this book.” — **Amy Dennison**, College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati

\* **Music educator Rebecca Henry**: “This is such a timely book for young people. Even with all the work that has been done on women’s rights, it is still hard for us to imagine what things were like for young women a century ago. I found the references to these barriers to be naturally blended into the story in a way that will educate young readers about women’s journey — and hopefully to be astounded by them! (ie. no women in orchestras, and the expectations of a doctor’s wife). As musicians we are trying to program music by composers of more diverse backgrounds, and I find that our middle and high school students are quite unaware of women composers and those representing minorities. Having books like this for young students will help educate young musicians earlier. The story kept my attention. I enjoyed her travels, connection to nature, details of her musical gift from the beginning.” — **Rebecca Henry**, Music Teacher, Peabody Preparatory, Baltimore

\* **Musicologist Sarah Gerk**: “There is no woman composer quite like Amy Beach. Born when conventional wisdom suggested that women were unfit to compose or perform, Beach succeeded as a professional pianist and a composer. She was unique in that she wrote large-scale compositions that required many performers in a concert hall. She was also a significant role model for girls during her lifetime. She took the charge seriously, committing to mentorship via participation in music clubs and publishing encouraging words in music journals. Beach’s story is important because it is so exceptional; before the twentieth century, hardly any women composers navigated the complicated, fraught political and social barriers to composing and premiering a symphony. Today, her story also remains unfortunately relevant. During the 2014-2015 concert season, only 1.8% of works performed by the top 22 American orchestras were written by women. When the pool was limited to works by living composers, still only 14.3% were by women. **Beach’s life and work offer the younger generation a rare example of a successful woman composer. Kids very much still need her.** I took some time to read through your manuscript, and I must say that I’m so impressed with the incredible biographical detail, enriched with impressive familiarity of up-to-date research on Amy Beach. It’s also delivered in such an accessible way for children. Wow, it’s just an incredible piece you’ve created. I really hope to see it in print soon.” — **Sarah Gerk**, PhD, Musicologist and expert on Amy Beach, Assistant Professor, Binghamton University

\* **Music educator Simon Cummings**: “The book would be useful for a child to read, especially girls, as it is important for them to have female role models as inspiration. Kids of all genders should also read this, as her achievements weren’t simply impressive because she was a girl; they were impressive regardless of gender. It is vitally important for children to learn about women in the arts, as historically women are overlooked or included as tokenism. Globally, female artists have been shaping cultural arts for hundreds of years and deserve to be equally included in the discussion of historically relevant and significant paragons. It is written in a very comprehensible style, and makes complicated topics like women’s suffrage and cultural appropriation easily relatable and accessible. Amy Beach is presented as a unique and passionate artist from such an early age, and the author describes numerous incredible facts from Beach’s youth, that a child would say,

‘Look what Amy Beach did at my age!’ Her achievements in youth will serve as inspiration for children of the same age who are reading the book.” — **Simon Cummings**, Music Teacher, The Ellis School, Pittsburgh, PA.

\* **Music school director Dorothy Roffman:** “I love it. It is inspiring. I would love to have a concert on music of women composers with an emphasis on Amy Beach and we could sell the book at the concert!”  
— **Dorothy Roffman**, Director, Thurnauer School of Music, Tenafly, NJ

\* **Professor of Historical and Cultural Studies in Music Wayne Heisler:** I believe that it is historically informed; I especially like the way in which you evoke sound as Amy Beach’s conduit to becoming a musician. I think that will resonate with young readers. Given the subtitle, I wonder if you could work in a paragraph of larger historical context in terms of women’s rights that would highlight even more the gendered worldview of her time. I like the way in which you circle back to birdsong at the end.” — **Wayne Heisler**, Music Department Chairperson, The College of New Jersey

\* **Professional pianist Joanne Polk:** “It is delightful. Best of luck with your very worthwhile project.”  
— **Joanne Polk**, pianist, Manhattan School of Music faculty member, who has recorded all of Amy Beach’s piano works

\* **Music Critic for Major Eastcoast News Publication (*who requested anonymity*):** “Thanks for sending on this manuscript! I can’t be quoted ‘on the record,’ but I concur with the ‘experts’ that it’s a great, readable book, and I have to shake my head at the publishers. My seven-year-old has a published book about Eugene Sandow, a famous strong man in the early 20th century, and if he’s worth a book, Amy Beach is CERTAINLY worth a book. She is more interesting, and so is your text. As far as concrete tips, my publishing connections are slim, but I can ask around a bit. I wonder if you could team up with some orchestra as an arm of their education/outreach program since this is just the kind of thing many of them are looking for. I wish I could be more immediately helpful. But I do hope you get some traction with this - I think it’s great.”