

Shrine of Good Memories: Music for Seniors on the West Coast*

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The article examines the diverse musical environments for older adults on the West Coast of North America, ranging from descriptions of regional variations in senior community living presented in a variety of sources, including fiction, and the place of music in institutional settings to various musical activities designed for older adults. Given that people living on the West Coast have diverse ethno-religious backgrounds, may or may not be sensitive to the music that surrounded them in their formative years at the local and national levels, and have different habits regarding listening to the radio or attending various musical events, additional aspects were taken into account, such as 1980s and 1990s music styles; ethnic musical heritage relevant to the West Coast population; classical, popular, and religious music on the radio; and affordable symphony orchestra programs. The article provides an overview that opens avenues for further exploration of its sub-topics.

Keywords: West Coast, seniors, music therapy, musical events, classical music, worship music, rock music

Introduction

How This Project Came About

The project that forms the basis of this study arose and developed during several of my trips to cities on the West Coast of the United States and Canada in recent years. Although the first of these trips followed quite a different research track, chance events sparked the initial idea, which subsequently led to the incorporation of certain aspects of it into a rational that had not yet been formally outlined. Only the last trip was fully planned to complete the ethnographic fieldwork for this study. The sequence of events was as follows:

- 2022, Portland: Walking past a nursing home, I heard music playing from inside and wondered what style(s) of music would be appropriate for seniors of *diverse backgrounds*. Later on the same trip, San Francisco: a Conservative synagogue with a female rabbi and a cantor, with “traditional music” (as claimed), perceived as more Reform. I wondered what style of religious music would be appropriate for the older people who made up the majority of worshippers at this synagogue. This happened just after the final phase of my ethnographic study of music in Catholic and Protestant churches in the Pacific Northwest, which I had been conducting for about 10 years.
- 2024, Los Angeles: I began studying books (fiction) and other academic and legal sources, exploring various aspects of community life for people aged 55+ and music in nursing homes, and found several sources about

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Mexican music in Los Angeles. A preliminary examination of the range and approach to the topic of classical and Christian music radio stations in Los Angeles. Attending a highly indicative (and also affordable) LA Philharmonic concert dedicated to music from Hollywood films. Later that year, Paris: My wife and I attended a Paul McCartney concert, where he performed his early songs, songs we remembered from adolescence. The half-generation gap between the singer and us, his “younger” audience, brought back even more childhood memories—vocal styles linked to the music of my parents’ formative years...

- 2025, Seattle and Victoria: Library search for books on grunge rock and other local musical styles from the 1980s and 1990s; attending free and paid concerts for seniors, all ages, and fans of a particular style (such as klezmer, jazz-rock, or 1930s film scores). An on-site study of how people in their mature years attach to the underground music of their youth compared to earlier mainstream styles (domestic and international), such as country, rock ‘n’ roll, and jazz. And finally, broadcast statistics from a classical music radio station in Seattle that completed the ethnographic data collection I deemed necessary and sufficient for processing and writing this essay.

Sources and Research Method

Following the principle of open-ended search for any sources that provide sufficient and reliable data on various sides of the study, the different sections of this essay rely on different kinds of information. In general, the source mapping looks like this:

- Research on the role of music in the lives of older adults is limited to a small number of publications (cf. Ing, 2016; Brancatisano, Baird, & Thompson, 2019; Gulwani, 2022; Tung & Jia, 2023), focusing on analyzing the benefits of music therapy for people with dementia in nursing homes and an arts program integrating color and music for older adults. Two of these projects were implemented on the West Coast, namely in Los Angeles.
- Musical styles that correspond to a particular decade or a particular ethnic group characteristic of the West Coast population are presented in a variety of published sources, ranging from theses to books (Macias, 2008; Ortlieb, 2009; Tow, 2011; Thompson, 2021; Henderson, 2021). The authors discuss punk and grunge rock styles in Seattle and Victoria, as well as Mexican-American music in Los Angeles. Specker (2014) and Concord (2016) explore community-oriented collective singing practices in Victoria in recent decades, as well as those that shaped British identity in this Canadian city in the late 19th century.
- Stories related to life in condominiums and manufactured home parks (most of which are defined as “55+ communities”) have become the subject and plot of several fiction novels that highlight the various cohabitation issues and conflicts typical of living in semi-shared living spaces (Watkins, 2018; Ross, 2020; Dorsey, 2019; 2022; Dev, 2022). Other materials referenced in the article, such as legal documents or editorials in local magazines, are still listed in the References section, while citations of opinions from web resources such as Quora will be noted with a link in the footnotes.
- The analysis of the style and programming of radio stations broadcasting classical, church, and jazz-rock music, as well as observations of various musical events, are based on photographic, audio, and video materials, as well as personal field notes taken during field trips in 2024 and 2025. While the former represent direct documentation, the latter rather reflect the listener/viewer’s, or more accurately, the ethnographer’s immediate impression of the content and style of an event or program, which is then further analyzed using available online information and printed brochures (where available). All ethnography complies with general and institutional rules of research ethics, which have become noticeably stricter in recent years (see Rosenblatt, 2021, p. 218).

Most of the illustrations in the article are photographs taken by the author; others fully comply with fair use guidelines.

The research method in this study combined library work with printed sources and fieldwork, i.e. personal observation of events, with a sense of being part of the target audience. This method, called immersion, is common in ethnomusicology, as well as in other fields of cultural studies that incorporate ethnography into their research methods. Because the sources for this study represent a rather diverse palette of academic knowledge, publications in periodicals, fiction, and documented artistic practices—all strung together with the ethnographer's experience—field notes are woven throughout the presentation, linking it into a sequence of sketches that will gradually reveal the full picture, like a positive on photographic paper placed in developer under red light in a 1970s darkroom.

Background and Substantive Context

Living in a Senior Community

I'll begin with a general overview of regional housing options for people approaching or reaching retirement age. This includes living in one of the existing forms of senior housing, namely, an apartment in a condominium (aka a "condo") or a manufactured home in a mobile home park. The latter option has become quite widespread in California and the coastal cities of Washington and Oregon due to the mild climate and virtually snowless winters that manufactured homes can withstand, providing quite comfortable living conditions with reasonable energy costs for heating.

Despite the difference in wall thickness between a condominium apartment and a mobile home (or perhaps precisely because of it), the price typically asked for a manufactured home seems significantly more affordable. On the other hand, the cost of renting the lot on which a mobile home is located (paid to the park owner and listed in the ad as "lease amount") is twice the typical homeowners' association (HOA) dues for a condominium. Thus, the balance between savings, retirement income, and life expectancy dictates a tailored approach for each individual case.

To ease this choice and to balance gaps in one-time or ongoing expenses (including mortgages, if applicable), several state governments have held hearings on the conversion of mobile home parks into condominiums. For example, the California Legislature held such hearings in 2007 (see California Legislature, 2007). However, most mobile home parks remained as such, not converted into condominiums.

Each of the two forms of independent senior living—the park-based prefab home and the condominium apartment—has its own distinctive features of shared living, some of which, however, are common, as life in such communities is also, to some extent, communal. This topic, previously unexplored in accessible academic sources, has recently attracted the attention of fiction writers. I examined how issues of shared living in senior communities are represented in fiction, based on the catalogs of two public libraries in Pasadena, California. Five such books reveal the following thematic outline:

- Post-retirement employment and cliques' warfare (Ross, 2020);
- Moving to a separate (from her daughter-in-law) living in a condo, upon inheriting a significant amount of money (Dev, 2022);
- A war with investors who are buying up units and leasing them to young vacationers who party at all hours (Dorsey, 2022);
- A sex scandal between a retiree and her young boyfriend that shakes the community (Dorsey, 2019); and

- An attempt to protect a colony of cats on the property of a senior condominium (Watkins, 2018).

The very fact that writers are addressing the challenges of living together after retirement highlights the cohabitation issues that contemporary American society faces, and this is becoming worthy of public discussion.

The other end of the spectrum is residential care for elderly people unable to live independently. In these nursing homes, various forms of treatment may include music therapy, which may be uniform for all residents of a particular home or be tailored to the individual needs of the patient (or, sometimes, the therapist's preferences).

Music in the Institutional Settings

In recent years, academic research has expanded into areas that have not previously been studied in depth or based on conclusions drawn from long-term experience, such as music therapy, which as a conscious branch of medical (or paramedical) treatment has also emerged relatively recently, but some of its results, however, can already be relied upon.

To date, there are several relevant sources that summarize the experience of the last decade. Thus, two doctoral projects conducted at the University of California, Los Angeles, are studying the positive effects of music therapy on patients with moderate dementia: a "group music nursing intervention" and its effect on anxiety levels in two groups of (eight and five) white, college-educated female patients (Ing, 2016, pp. ii-iii) and "individualized passive music therapy" in 10 nursing home residents "experiencing dementia with associated agitation and aggressive behaviors", with residents and their families contacted to determine the musical choices (Gulwani, 2022, p. iv). These two sources present two different approaches: (1) a group approach based on a preliminary hypothesis about the musical preferences of group members, determined by their background, educational level, and the task of conveying the same musical material to the entire group, and (2) an individual approach based on a questionnaire about the patient's musical preferences. The final objective was similar: to reduce anxiety levels or dependence on psychotropic medications in patients with dementia-related aggressive behavior.

Two other noteworthy sources present a more holistic approach to treatment that includes a music component. One such approach was presented in the "Music, Mind, and Movement" program for patients with dementia, which included evaluation "whether it had therapeutic benefit for people with dementia (various types) in the areas of cognition, mood, identity, and motor fluency". Comparisons were made between 12 program participants and 10 other nursing home residents receiving standard care (Brancatisano et al., 2019, p. 1). Another program, aimed at a senior community and combining color and music at its core, was offered to 61 participants aged 50 to 90 years. The program aimed to improve quality of life in four areas: "enriching daily life, developing positive attitudes toward life, improving self-worth, and promoting social interaction" (Tung & Jia, 2023, p. 758).

The four aforementioned projects, each of which focused either on a pre-formed image of a suitable musical style, or on an image based on an individual questionnaire, or on the combination of music and movement, as well as the combination of music and color as a factor positively influencing various aspects of life, prove that, being at a relatively early stage, research on the influence of music on behavior and quality of life, especially in old age, needs to be continued to identify more aspects and results.

Now, before we move on to radio programs and musical events, and to better understand the findings below, let's try to outline the palette of musical preferences of older Americans, as far as this can be understood, based mainly on private opinions on the Internet.

Music That Older Americans Love to Listen to

Social media groups and online resources like Yahoo Answers, Quora, and Reddit are useful when reliable information, including scholarly works, on certain topics is scarce. The musical preferences of older Americans as of the mid-2020s are one such topic for which there is unlikely to be a worthy academic source other than Levitin's (2006) book, which, broadly speaking, argues that music is even more fundamental to human beings than language. The author cites experiments conducted at the beginning of the century by Alexandra Lamont of Keele University in the UK, who "found that, a year after they are born, children recognize and prefer music they were exposed to in the womb" (p. 217). The book also suggests that we tend to be attached to the music we listened to as teenagers, a point convincingly confirmed by many respondents on Quora.

One of the respondents states that, in general, "people listen to the music they came to love in their teens and twenties, and by their thirties, they begin to lose interest in looking for new popular music".¹ Among other posts, an attempt was made to categorize preferences by older and middle-aged Americans, taking into account age ranges, music styles, and names of singers/songwriters and bands. The top lines firmly hold classic rock and rock 'n' roll figures: The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Fleetwood Mac, and Bruce Springsteen. Bob Dylan appeals to listeners who prefer good lyrics and acoustic instruments. Gospel and religious music appear to be important to older religious Americans, while only people aged 45 to 54 are listed among fans of Seattle-based Nirvana, a band that enjoyed cult status in the early 1990s when its listeners were 17-20 years old and are now 55+ and have already passed the age limit of the audience associated with the band's fans.

Classical music, as well as jazz and blues standards, are rarely included in the lists that people mention in social groups. Similarly, ethnic genres such as Mexican-American music do not appear on English social platforms. Songs related to American films from the 1930s and other instrumental pieces from them are also not mentioned there. However, the field presents other results that cover, at least partially, these genres. We will see this later, in the ethnographic part of this study.

Regardless of what does or does not appear on social networks, let us move on to describe the musical styles presented on the West Coast that are relevant to the title and nature of the current study: music offered to older people in this region.

Relevant Music Styles

I intend to discuss here musical styles of two registers typical of the West Coast in general and the Pacific Northwest in particular: the regional rock music of the late 1980s and early 1990s and the ethnic musical heritage. Furthermore, there will be a discussion of styles that extend across the coastal region of British Columbia, and even more so, to Vancouver Island, on which the capital of British Columbia, the city of Victoria, is located.

Coastal Washington State, especially the cities of Greater Seattle, became the cradle of the style that received a name "grunge". While not currently in great demand among musicians and the public, and moreover having died with the death of one of its central figures, Kurt Cobain of Nirvana, this style has nevertheless become the subject of several academic books and articles (Tow, 2011; Stafford, 2018; Thompson, 2021; Henderson, 2021), which explore various aspects of the style over the course of several years of its existence, following the chronological order of events and based on Kurt Cobain's diaries ("journals"), which soon

¹ <https://www.quora.com/What-kind-of-music-and-songs-do-most-older-and-middle-aged-Americans-like-to-listen-to>. (Response from user "Rik Elswit" in 2023. Accessed on October 18, 2025).

became somewhat of a public domain. The cover of one such book is shown in Figure 1. The tragic figure of Cobain, who committed suicide in 1994, is given special attention in another scholarly book (Saint-Aubin, 2020), in which the author, a psychologist who has written extensively on masculinity, delves deeply into topics such as “Masochism and Invisibility of the Penis in Journals”—six pages of reflections on the size of the late musician’s penis, based on the recollections of Cobain’s widow and other statements on social media from people familiar with the matter (pp. 196-201), and then five pages observing and questioning his “heteromascularity” (pp. 201-206). Underground culture seems to carry its nature even into the research about it, as we can note in parentheses.

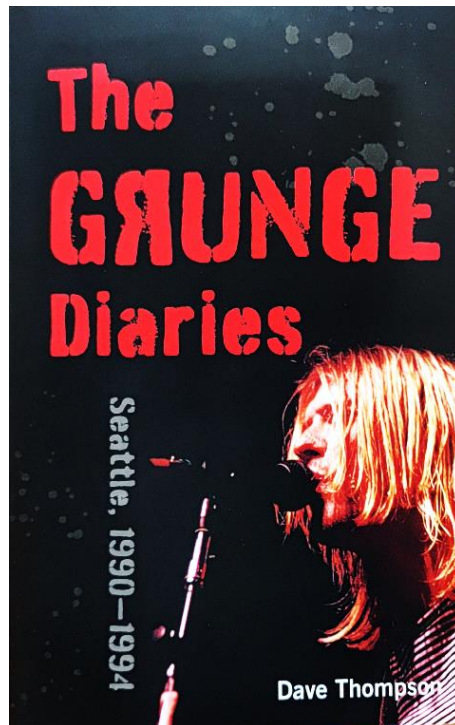


Figure 1. Cover of Thompson’s book (2021) with a photograph of Kurt Cobain.

Another regional style, also somewhat underground but more in the counter-culture category, was punk rock, most prominently represented in Portland, Oregon, as well as Victoria, British Columbia, and Los Angeles. The diversity of Southern California punk culture has been the subject of a separate study, the details of which are published in a book (MacLeod, 2010), a photograph from which, depicting a couple who promoted punk culture in Los Angeles, is shown in Figure 2. A graduate thesis, reflecting research conducted at the University of Victoria (Ortlieb, 2009), explores the significance of counter-culture and the researcher’s own observations of punk in Victoria.

Ethnic musical styles associated with the coastal cities of the American West are primarily Mexican-American genres (like *mojo*) and various forms of indie rock, the diversity of which is determined by the origins of the musicians in a given band. Mexican-American music has been the subject of quite a few studies, with most considering it an integral part of the Los Angeles music scene (Loza, 1993; Macias, 2008). Music that falls under the category of “indie” can be heard primarily in the Pacific Northwest, with Portland leading the way, followed by Victoria and Seattle.



Figure 2. Los Angeles punk promoters Greg and Suzy Shaw in front of a Beatles poster, as shown in MacLeod, 2010, p. 54.

In recent decades, interest and respect for Indigenous culture, music, and lifestyle have become commonplace in both mainland and island British Columbia, as well as in the coastal states of Washington and Oregon, where some of the best Indigenous art galleries are located. The 1998 Anglican Church of Canada hymnal, *Common Praise*, pays “special attention to the languages of the Indigenous people of the country—12 of the 18 languages other than English represented throughout the book” (Rosenblatt, 2018, p. 29). In Indigenous spiritual practices, music is usually quiet, like the music of the local church composers it influenced (Rosenblatt, 2024, p. 104). Yet, when it comes to worship in autochthonous Christian communities (such as Indian Shaker churches), the music can be very loud, accompanied by the ringing of hand bells (Rosenblatt, 2024, p. 68). The same applies to rock music produced by Indigenous bands. A report from the mid-1990s, for example, describes a conflict between the town of Delta, British Columbia, and a group of Indigenous people whose loud music was causing a nuisance to residents of a local condominium (“A Native Right”, 1996).

Now that we have presented the basic background and essential related issues, as described in academic and other sources, we can move on to a discussion of the field observations and ethnographic data collected by the author during his last two trips to the West Coast.

Field Observations and Discussion

Classical and Worship Music on the Radio

Driving between cities, libraries, and events, I, as usual, listened to a classical music radio station, first in Los Angeles, then in Seattle, more automatically than with a research focus. Nevertheless, I found some interesting trends, and a comparison of programming from similar radio stations in these two cities led to some conclusions. Additionally, in Los Angeles, I came across several radio stations that broadcast exclusively church content and worship music in English and Spanish.

Here, I would like to make room for some of my observations from the field, which in themselves may contribute to building a picture, prefacing them with the notice that while KUSC in Los Angeles, which focuses on popular classics, may not have coverage in every area of the city. KING Classical in Seattle is much more consistent in broadcasting entire works, including Christian music and even entire church services, and is received well beyond a 20-mile radius around the city.

Los Angeles

Classical music:

KUSC: 91.5 FM

By the mid-2020s, the styles aired include more Baroque music than in previous years, directly following the request of the listeners who financially support this station operated from the USC and not associated with Thornton School of Music. According to A. Justice, USC Music Library director and himself early music musician, in the most heard hours, they are still airing “generic” Baroque music, like single movements, while the new trend to expand the repertoire falls on less listened-to midday hours.

Latino/Mexican music:

KLAX: 97.9 FM (La Raza)

The most popular and stable (can be heard in LA). “As a leading Regional Mexican radio station, they offer a wide range of music, from *banda* to *mariachi*, *cumbia* to *norteño*” (radio.net/s/klaxfm).

KFWB: 980 AM

Classic regional Mexican music [from decades past] that sounds very authentic, rendered in analogue mono amplitude modulation format.

KWIZ: 96.7 FM

A “Spanish Christian radio format” branded “Vision Latina 96.7 FM,” currently owned by the Universal Church. The station, which broadcasts from Santa Ana, is outside the coverage area of the city of Los Angeles and cannot be heard there on home or car radio. In the Long Beach area you can hear this station in pretty good quality—tested! (On-site notes, August 26-September 7, 2024)

Seattle

KING: 98.1 FM (Classical)

31.08.25—Bach Concerto D-minor played on organ with orchestra; Complete Sunday service (said, recited, and sung) at St. Mark Church from the 1960s.

1.09.25—Music of the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods (featuring Bach and Mozart), with lots of clarinet. Gershwin (“An American in Paris”). All movements are broadcast.

6.09.25—Rachmaninov. Vespers, complete work (choir in Slavonic). (On-site notes, August 31-September 6, 2025)

Affordable Symphony Orchestra Programs

Since the vast majority of Western classical music listeners—both on the radio and in concert halls and venues—are elderly, my research looked at those orchestral programs that combine meaningful content with a reasonable price. Another factor that could attract not only older listeners but also younger audiences was the appeal of a particular program. I was fortunate to attend one such program, the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s “Infinity Saga” concert at the Hollywood Bowl, Los Angeles, on August 30, 2024.

The concert, whose full title was “Marvel Studios’ Infinity Saga Concert Experience”, an original project directed by Gustavo Dudamel, artistic director of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, was a kind of Hollywood show (see Figure 3), combining a symphony orchestra, a choir, a soloist in shamanic style, dancers, screens with films and stage props, and pyrotechnics.

I wrote in my notes:

Scriabin’s *Mysterium* of the 21st century. Mixed sequence of the fight between good and evil, plotless but with familiar characters from some 32 films like *The Matrix*, *Star Wars*, *Spider-Man*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. If the first part of the show featured music/musicians, and the passages from different movies, as a reference to music performed, were evident, then the second part was the fight of good and bad guys taken from different movies in a smooth sequence that built one plotless motion. Music, though live, played fairly accompanying function, while listener might have even forgotten that there was music at all. It was a postmodern show of a superb quality in a place of the historic encounter between classical music and films. (On-site notes, August 30, 2024)

The Hollywood Bowl Museum contains numerous historical references and documents that indicate that already in the 1930s, when the venue was just beginning to function and famous conductors, including Otto Klemperer, showed interest in the interaction of the arts, film was given a leading role in programs built on such a symbiosis.



Figure 3. The Los Angeles Philharmonic’s “Infinity Saga” program at the Hollywood Bowl. Los Angeles, August 30, 2024. Photo by the author.

Other Musical Events for Seniors

The 2025 trip (to Seattle and Victoria) was originally planned to include a variety of indoor and outdoor activities for seniors, families, and people of all ages as the target audience. The two cities’ close proximity did not contradict that they would display differences in cultural approaches, shaped by their continental and island environments, as well as their inherently American and British (after all, Victoria is the capital of British Columbia, Canada!) cultures, at least historically. The reality confirmed the hypothesis, at least in part, providing ample material for findings and judgments.

The five concerts I attended represented this palette: two free outdoor concerts—one in Seattle, one in Victoria—and three paid indoor concerts—two in Seattle and one in Victoria. To be honest, the concerts in Victoria impressed me more because of their uniqueness. Suffice it to say that among them was an open-air program performed by the Yiddish Columbia State Orchestra, featuring a whole range of klezmer genres, performed at a state-of-the-art level, and a program called “American Beauties”—songs by Springsteen and Dylan performed by a singer-guitarist (Lonnie Glass) with a small jazz band and an incredibly responsive pianist (Ashley Wey), who played her improvisations spontaneously and to perfection, and, as she later admitted, she had only one rehearsal before the concert (Figure 4). “Bravo, Ashley!” I wrote in my notes.

The Seattle concerts were also unique in their own way, representing a variety of eras and styles that are still loved by audiences over 55. For example, an outdoor rock concert in a park near Chittenden Locks in Seattle attracted a crowd of seniors who danced freely while listening to their peers (Figure 5). A candle light concert featuring a string quartet, performing scores and instrumental versions of songs from 1930s films (such as “Over the Rainbow”), was the most classical program of the five I attended.



Figure 4. At the “American Beauties” program at The Coda, Victoria, September 5, 2025. Photo by the author.



Figure 5. Seniors dancing at an outdoor rock concert. Chittenden Locks, Seattle, September 1, 2025. Photo by the author.

The interesting combination of true country style performers The Brudi Brothers with young Wyatt Flores, who also positions himself as a *country* musician, led to the following: The older audience was genuinely pleased with the start of the program, when the Brothers performed songs familiar to them (from childhood since their parents loved and listened to them). However, as I wrote down in my notes,

when the young singer took the stage, and the young audience, somewhat bored with the Brothers, enthusiastically received the first two songs, when the volume of the speakers increased sharply, the author, having delicately left the hall, could not help but notice that he was joined by quite a few elderly people, as if they had gone out to smoke or get some fresh air and quietly disappeared into the evening twilight. (On-site notes, September 3, 2025)

Similarities and Differences Across the West Coast

Now that we have gone over the various aspects, avenues, and dead ends of our subject, let us consider the similarities and differences revealed by practice in the cities we have focused on. This rather generalized summary, somewhat beyond the scope of the topic but potentially useful for any other related research, will draw

on the following points of reference: (a) cities—history and music in the city, choirs and collective singing; (b) American and Canadian observations—a West Coast perspective, Pacific Northwest style, attitudes toward Indigenous culture, and finally, British/American identity through music.

Let's start with the cities. The history of West Coast cities, captured in books that straddle fiction, nonfiction, and historical research, is a topic in itself. One striking example is Morgan's (2018), which explores Seattle from its earliest days through the lives of its most illustrious residents. The first edition dates back to 1951, when the city lacked the downtown core that defines its current appearance, first and foremost the Space Needle, built in about 400 days and opened in 1962.

Many books address cities through a focused look at their artistic environments, particularly musical landmarks and activities. While some such sources delve into the history of musical styles and their development over time in a particular city, such as Los Angeles with its fusion of jazz, Mexican-American, and Hollywood music (Smith, 2007; Kuhn, 2013), other sources focus either on counter-culture and underground music, particularly in Seattle and Victoria (Flower, Long, & Smith, 2007; Ortlieb, 2009; Humphrey, 2016), or on choral singing and other collective musical activities in the history of a city, particularly in Victoria (Specker, 2014; Concord, 2016).

Another facet of this summary will emphasize some notable similarities and differences between the cities on the West Coast, depending on their geographic location and belonging to the US or Canada, including significant cultural commonality in border areas.

Overall, the West Coast's vistas are expressed in picturesque Pacific landscapes overlooking Asian countries direction and a serene coastal atmosphere imbued with the romance of the first travelers from Europe and the British Isles. One of the historical characteristics of this place, which has not lost its relevance, is its attitude toward Indigenous culture. Even today, though less noticeable in recent decades, the historical differences in attitudes toward Indigenous peoples between (then) future and present-day Americans and Canadians merit questions and discussions in social forums.²

The coastal states of Washington and Oregon, as well as the coastal part of British Columbia and, especially, Vancouver Island with its beautiful jewel, Victoria, share much in common when it comes to totems—Indigenous sculptures, which evoke the ancestral culture and worldview of those who have lived here since time immemorial. In this regard, Vancouver, Victoria, and Seattle share a respect to this unique culture. Galleries representing Native artists are scattered throughout the Pacific Northwest, with perhaps the most impressive being the Quintana Galleries in Portland, Oregon.

One more distinctive feature of Pacific Northwest style is its homage to what became known as the underground or counter-culture. Few examples of popular memory of this phenomenon are more vivid than the unofficial memorial bench dedicated to one of the leaders of grunge rock, the late Kurt Cobain of Seattle. The bench is located in a small park near the house where the Nirvana founder spent his final days (Figure 6).

The final reference point here will be the formation and maintenance of British or American identity in this border region through music. Thus, Concord (2016) examines the formation of British identity in Victoria between 1871 and 1886, when the city, as the capital of British Columbia, played a key role in the province's accession to Canadian Confederation. Selected musical events for seniors held in 2024 and 2025 in Los Angeles,

² See, for example, <https://www.quora.com/Why-does-there-appear-to-be-a-difference-in-attitude-towards-the-First-Nation-people-in-the-USA-and-Canada-I-noticed-that-in-seminars-on-notice-boards-etc-Canadians-acknowledge-First-Nation-peoples-whereas-Americans>.

Victoria, and Seattle demonstrate that the American identity that endures on American soil is not alien to jazz cafe regulars in Victoria, Canada. The “American Beauties” program, featuring songs by American stars Springsteen and Dylan, was enthusiastically performed and enjoyed by the audience, all of whom were Canadian.



Figure 6. The unofficial Kurt Cobain memorial bench in Viretta Park, Seattle. Photo by the author, 2025.

Conclusions

In summing up the results of the study, we would like to highlight several points that seem central to the disclosure of the topic. The frameworks and settings for older people on the West Coast, of which music is an integral part, are diverse and intended for people belonging to different age subgroups and ethno-cultural backgrounds, who, however, may have shared stylistic preferences regarding the musical styles they heard in their youth.

A map of the musical styles relevant to this study and associated with West Coast cities (from south to north) might look like this: Los Angeles with its famous Philharmonic and a windfall of musicians arriving from Europe during the 1930s—Western classical music, film scores, and Mexican-American music; San Francisco—counter-culture, being even considered its capital during the 1960s; Portland—punk and indie rock; Seattle—grunge, indie rock, and alternative rock; and Victoria—all styles, including jazz, jazz-rock, and klezmer.

Music, as part of national/ethno-national identity and belonging to a certain generation, plays an important role both in the context of music therapy in nursing homes, where it can be adapted on the basis of preliminary assumptions or questionnaires for patients and their families, and in the framework of various cultural events, as well as free and accessible paid events with music at their core.

Underground music as the most vivid form of counter-culture of the 1980s and 1990s, which was so generously nourished in its time in the cities of the West Coast (and in literature, it is still fostered), in practice is rather neglected by the older people who in their young years might be fans of this music, giving way to more traditional/established styles of American music—country, rock ‘n’ roll, and jazz.

Regardless of what underlies a particular choice of musical styles—an established opinion based on socio-ethnic foresight or, rather, a preliminary individual/family questionnaire, as well as the determination of the place of music in a particular activity, program, or event—when it comes to organizing any musical activity for older people, it is important to remember that for many, music is a kind of *shrine* or, at least, a sacred zone of pleasant memories, which, if chosen incorrectly, can be perceived by sensitive people as a burden, whereas, if chosen correctly, it can improve and prolong the quality of life.

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