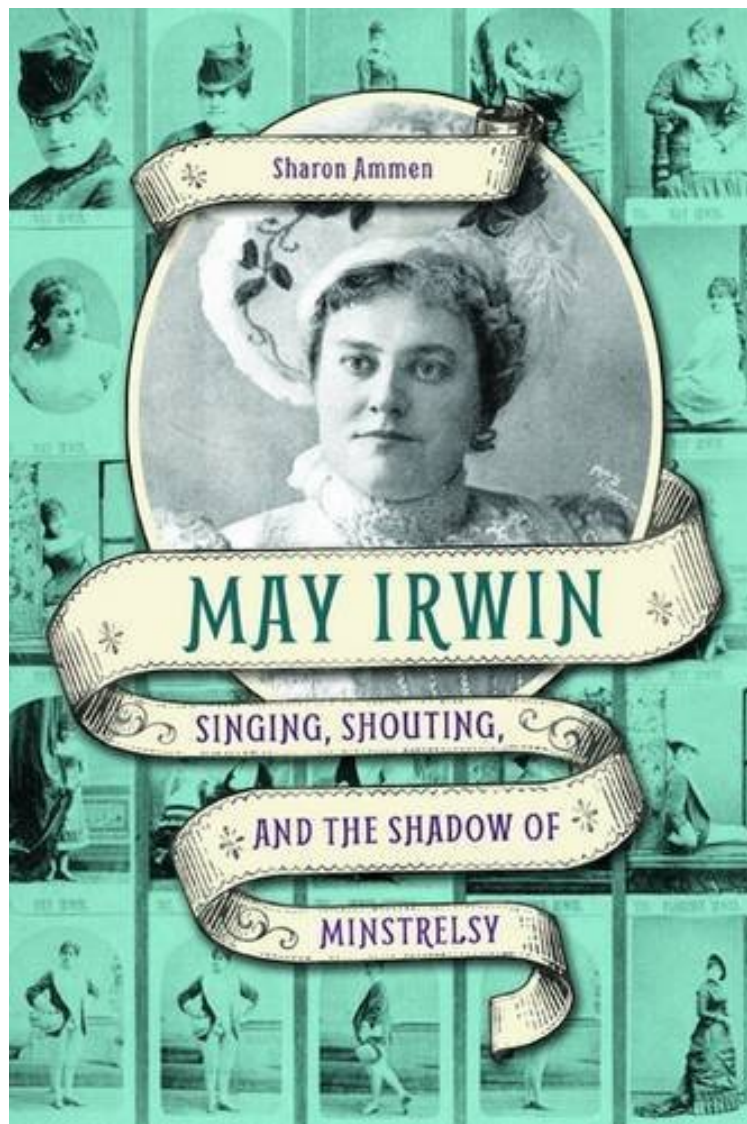


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## May Irwin: Singing, Shouting, and the Shadow of Minstrelsy (Music in American Life)

Sharon Ammen

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#2403364 in Books Sharon Ammen 2016-12-07Original language:English 9.00 x 1.20 x 6.00l, .0 #File Name: 025208215X296 pagesMay Irwin Singing Shouting and the Shadow of Minstrelsy Music in American Life Paperback | File size: 43.Mb

Sharon Ammen : May Irwin: Singing, Shouting, and the Shadow of Minstrelsy (Music in American Life) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised May Irwin: Singing, Shouting,

and the Shadow of Minstrelsy (Music in American Life):

May Irwin reigned as America's queen of comedy and song from the 1880s through the 1920s. A genuine pop culture phenomenon, Irwin conquered the legitimate stage, composed song lyrics, and parlayed her celebrity into success as a cookbook author, suffragette, and real estate mogul. Sharon Ammen's in-depth study traces Irwin's hurly-burly life. Irwin gained fame when, layering aspects of minstrelsy over ragtime, she popularized a racist "Negro song" genre. Ammen examines this forgotten music, the society it both reflected and entertained, and the ways white and black audiences received Irwin's performances. She also delves into Irwin's hands-on management of her image and career, revealing how Irwin carefully built a public persona as a nurturing housewife whose maternal skills and performing acumen reinforced one another. Irwin's act, soaked in racist song and humor, built a fortune she never relinquished. Yet her career's legacy led to a posthumous obscurity as the nation that once adored her evolved and changed.

This is a valuable biographical study that assesses May Irwin's contributions to comedy while also forging a path that avoided some of the grotesque and low comic traditions associated with female characters. Ammen reassesses Irwin's work in vaudeville and musical comedy, discussing her in relation to both race and gender, and this is a welcome and much needed work on a remarkable comedienne.--Gillian M. Rodger, author of *Champagne Charlie and Pretty Jemima: Variety Theater in the Nineteenth Century*