

**ENTERTAINING A NEW REPUBLIC:
MUSIC AND THE WOMEN OF WASHINGTON, 1800-1825**

by

Leah R. Giles

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in American Material Culture

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MUSIC AND THE WOMEN OF WASHINGTON, 1800-1825**

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PREFACE

Before the advent of recorded music (with the exceptions of musical clocks, music boxes, and barrel organs), people had to create sound themselves if they wanted to add a musical component to their entertainment. They could sing and play instruments on their own, or they could bring in outside musicians. This thesis investigates the various ways women in Washington, DC used and played music and musical instruments from 1800 to 1825. As such, it is not intended to be a comprehensive history of music in Washington, DC in the federal era.

By focusing on members of elite society, I have been able to take advantage of the rich documentation and objects associated with early Washington's middle- and upper-class women. Many of them left behind diaries, letters, and other documents that provide enticing glimpses into their music making. Although the majority of their music books and instruments no longer survive, extant examples are invaluable texts which can be read in different ways as we seek to understand their form, function, style, and decoration, as well as the historical context of their use and the women who played them two centuries ago.

The period 1800 to 1825 offers the opportunity to look at Washington society in its formative years, when the District was beginning to blossom as a city and as the nation's capital. During the presidential administrations of Thomas Jefferson through John Quincy Adams, the number of well-to-do citizens, government officials, and legislators in Washington was small enough to accommodate intense levels of personal interaction. Women were intimately involved in creating and manipulating these

social spaces and networks. Local elites entertained and were entertained by the nation's rulers and diplomatic corps. Musical performances added cultural gravitas and provided the opportunity for dancing at formal events sponsored by these privileged groups, whose interactions are crucial to understanding the role of music in the new capital.

This study ends in the 1820s for two main reasons. First, Andrew Jackson's ascension to the presidency and the Eaton affair marked a profound change in the nature of Washington society, and second, the project had to remain feasible in its chronological and geographical scope. While I focus on the District itself, I have included relevant material from northern Virginia and southern Maryland because some individuals from these outlying areas were key participants in the Washington social scene.

Finally, a note on terminology: Although "fortepiano" is the most specific term designating early pianos, at the beginning of the nineteenth century "fortepiano" and "pianoforte," and sometimes simply "piano," were used interchangeably. For the purposes of this study, I use the general term "piano."

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As with all projects worth doing, this thesis could not have been completed without the assistance of numerous individuals. My adviser, Ritchie Garrison, challenged me to think about critical questions while keeping me focused on the big picture. His insightful comments have made this thesis a stronger, more complex, and more coherent piece of scholarship. Wendy Bellion also encouraged me to contemplate broad themes while underscoring the music itself.

I was fortunate to work with a number of curators and other museum staff members who opened up their incredible collections to me. Megan Budinger at the James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library in Fredericksburg, VA went above and beyond to help me analyze the Monroes' Astor pianoforte, harp, and music book. In Washington, DC, Patrick Sheary at the Daughters of the American Revolution Museum was kind enough to show me the museum's extensive collection of early pianofortes. Fay Winkle and Wendy Kail at Tudor Place provided invaluable assistance in preparing images and guiding me through the Custis-Peter family's archives and music books. At Dumbarton House, Scott Scholz led me to the discovery of the Monroe daughters' music book in addition to providing useful photographs.

Thanks also to David Voelkel and Barbara Carson for offering thoughtful suggestions to guide my initial research. David Hildebrand graciously shared with me his expertise of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century American music and introduced me to a host of unexplored resources. At the Winterthur Library, Helena Richardson cheerfully filled my constant Interlibrary Loan requests.

My wonderful mentors at Winterthur, Rosemary Krill and Brock Jobe, have provided encouragement and suggestions along the way, for this thesis and so much more. My fellow classmates in the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture have filled me with endless laughs, hugs, and intellectual wisdom over the past two years. I could not have asked for a better group of peers as both friends and scholars. My roommate Erin Kuykendall in particular has patiently listened to my ideas and kept our spirits high in the apartment.

My parents have always encouraged my academic endeavors and provided their unwavering love and support, for which I am deeply grateful. My dad especially taught me to love history from an early age. Finally, I express my endless gratitude and love to my fiancé John, to whom I dedicate this thesis. From visiting museums with me to offering constructive edits to preparing meals so I could focus on writing, he has been my mentor, travel companion, cheerleader, editor, and devoted partner. John, thanks for making me get to work.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the role of women and music in the elite entertaining circles of Washington, DC, from 1800 to 1825. During this period, women used entertaining, and especially music, as a means of advancing a variety of personal, social, and political objectives. Campaigns, courtships, and even statecraft were conducted in parlor settings, and the success of these endeavors depended in large measure on women's ability to create a convivial environment through music. Wealthy Washington families spent exorbitant sums on instruments and music education for their daughters, recognizing that a woman's talents as a genteel entertainer would contribute to the success and happiness of her future family.

Combining social history, material culture, and musicology, this study considers its topic from multiple scholarly vantage points. Special attention is given to the creation and maintenance of domestic musical spaces; the entertaining styles of the era's first ladies; the role of music in the private and public lives of elite women; contemporary popular music and musical print culture; and the preferred instruments for women in the period, pianofortes and harps.

Section 1

INTRODUCTION

At half past seven everything was ready and the guests began to arrive in one continued stream....Mr. Adams and I took our stations near the door that we might be seen by our guests and be at the same time ready to receive the General to whom the fete was given. He arrived at nine o'clock and I took him round the rooms and introduced him to the Ladies and Gentlemen whom we passed....Our company appeared to enjoy themselves, very much more especially in there was no pretence of etiquette as I was afraid of giving offense by making distinction. While sitting in the dancing room one of the lamps fell up on my head and ran all down my back and shoulders. This gave use to a good joke and it was said that I was already anointed with the sacred oil and that it was certainly ominous. I observed the only certain thing I knew was that my gown was spoilt...my Company dispersed at about half past one all in good humour and more contented than common with their entertainment. To have got so well through this business was a matter of congratulations to us all.
— *Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 8 January 1824*

January 8, 1824 marked the ninth anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans. To commemorate the hero of the occasion, Louisa Catherine and John Quincy Adams “gave an evening party or ball to General [Andrew] Jackson at which about one thousand persons attended.”¹ Given its extraordinary number of attendees and the known political rivalry between the host and honored guest, the ball received unprecedented media attention—just as the Adamses intended. John Quincy was campaigning for the presidency in 1824. Through engagements like the Jackson ball,

¹ John Quincy Adams, diary entry, 8 January 1824, in *The Diary of John Quincy Adams, 1794-1845*, ed. Allan Nevins (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 313-314. The Battle of New Orleans, considered the final major battle and the greatest American land victory of the War of 1812, took place on January 8, 1815. Major General Andrew Jackson commanded the American forces.

he and Louisa increased their social reputation, and consequently John Quincy's political standing, by giving what became Washington's most celebrated social event of the era. Initially Louisa had not even wanted to host the ball for her husband's bitter political foe. But once a date had been set, she dedicated herself to planning and arranging a party that would both entertain and impress guests.²

Louisa selected the musicians for the ball herself, recognizing that music and dancing were crucial to the success of the evening's entertainment.³ In addition to hiring eight musicians from the Marine Band, Louisa purposefully chose the dances for the evening: cotillions and reels, which required group participation, rather than more fashionable waltzes or Spanish dances. Whether heartfelt or not, Louisa demonstrated a superb equalizing spirit through such democratic, non-hierarchical dances, encouraging interaction between the large percentage of official government and unofficial local elites in attendance. As John Quincy recollected in his diary, "The dancing continued till near one in the morning."⁴ Even a lamp falling on Louisa's head could not spoil the Adamses' triumphant evening.

Louisa appreciated music's power not only to entertain but also to curry political favor and influence. If professional musicians were unavailable for one of the Adamses' soirees, she did not hesitate to play herself. Like many well-to-do women of the time, she grew up playing the harp and pianoforte. Her musical talents

² Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 20 December 1823, Adams Family Papers Manuscripts (on microfilm), Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston [hereinafter cited as APM], reel 265.

³ Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 2000), 179.

⁴ John Quincy Adams, diary entry, 8 January 1824, in *The Diary of John Quincy Adams, 1794-1845*, 313-314.

demonstrated her education, refinement, and sensibility—qualities considered desirable in a marriageable young woman.

Louisa subsequently established herself and her husband as members of the ruling elite. Her success reflects the importance of sociability and entertaining in early Washington, DC and demonstrates that musical displays, both amateur and professional, constituted an integral part of the social scene. As cultural theorists, anthropologists, and psychologists have made clear, leisure occupies a vital space in any society.⁵ More than mere entertainment or amusement, music reflected social customs and political circumstances. Federal-era Washington was unique both as a new city and as the nation's capital, where entertaining often carried political implications, and people used social settings, both private and public, to achieve political gain.

Musical instruments are part of a constellation of objects associated with this social sphere.⁶ Of all musical instruments played by amateurs in early Washington,

⁵ For a discussion of the importance of leisure, see Kenneth Cohen, "Billiards and American Culture, 1660-1860" (M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 2002), 7.

⁶ For the concept of the public sphere, see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989). More recently, scholars have extended the limited Habermasian public sphere to a broader "social sphere" or "civil society" that includes a range of activities and blurs the distinction between public and private, household and marketplace, feminine and masculine, political and nonpolitical. For women's involvement in the social sphere, see Allgor, *Parlor Politics*; Paula Baker, "The Domestication of Politics: Women and American Political Society, 1780-1920," *The American Historical Review* 89 (June 1984), 620-647; Susan Branson, *These Fiery Frenchified Dames: Women and Political Culture in Early National Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001); Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); and Rosemarie Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

the piano was the most significant symbol of social status, respectability, and education; every family with cultural pretensions found it useful to own one. This thesis explores pianofortes and, to a lesser extent, harps: as objects of decorative art; as instruments for music and singing; as symbols of gender and class; and as integral elements of entertaining. By focusing on domestic performance, especially piano playing and piano pedagogy, I examine how Washington women learned, played, and used one of the most popular, respectable, and explicitly feminine instruments of the nineteenth century.

I employ Washington as my setting for several reasons. In many ways, Washington was similar to other urban centers in America. Women in Boston, Philadelphia, or Georgetown played the same kinds of music and the same instruments, in rooms that were set up in similar fashions. They had similar motivations for playing music, which were rooted in family and personal relationships. But there was a certain confluence of people and place in Washington, DC that did not exist elsewhere. As the seat of the federal government, the population of the new city of Washington was highly transient and included members of the diplomatic corps as well as a substantial number of Americans with foreign experience. In other cities in the US, pianos and amateur music making were primarily associated with domesticity and the home; in Washington, the dynamic of court politics expanded the social sphere, and musical performances took on heightened significance.

This thesis builds upon the considerable body of scholarship on the history of the nation's capital during the early republic. Although historians have tackled early Washington society in earnest, they have tended to focus on politics, on architecture, or on the lives of prominent individuals or families. No study to date has concentrated on music and musical instruments in federal-era Washington; I aim to fill that gap by

offering a material culture and primary source-based interpretation of music, specifically involving amateur female players in a domestic setting. This project affords the opportunity to examine musical instruments and archival material which have not yet been the focus of scholarly research, such as the music books of presidential daughters Eliza and Maria Hester Monroe and George Washington's great-granddaughter America Peter. Through the connective framework of music, this thesis advances scholarship on social relations in early Washington and broadens our understanding of the role of women in this period.

Although most scholars writing about early Washington have not applied material culture to their studies, a notable exception is Barbara Carson's *Ambitious Appetites: Dining, Behavior, and Patterns of Consumption in Federal Washington*, which analyzes activities related to food as evidence for the domestic life of Washingtonians in the early republic.⁷ Focusing her study on the prominent Tayloe family of the Octagon, Carson uses dining objects and rituals, from large dinner parties to intimate family meals, to examine the organization of early Washington society. Underscoring the importance of dining to establish one's social status, Carson classifies people as simple, old-fashioned, decent, aspiring, or elite based on the amount and kind of dining equipment listed in probate inventories. Because dining, like music, is only one part of a larger, interconnected world of sociability, Carson offers a thoughtful analysis of private and public entertaining, the culture of gentility, and the organization of domestic space—all important themes in my work as well.

⁷ Barbara G. Carson, *Ambitious Appetites: Dining, Behavior, and Patterns of Consumption in Federal Washington* (Washington, DC: American Institute of Architects Press, 1990). In its methodology and use of objects, *Ambitious Appetites* has provided a useful framework for my thesis, although I depart from its structure in several key ways—my study is not based on one family, and I incorporate more recent women's history to demonstrate that women exercised more political power and had more agency than Carson allows.

Scholars, primarily cultural historians, are paying increased attention to the women of early Washington. In several recent books and articles, Catherine Allgor has highlighted the importance of etiquette and the social sphere and convincingly shown that women participated in the social and political life of the new capital more than scholars had previously thought.⁸ Cynthia Earman has also written about women in federal Washington, especially in the context of public and private social activities.⁹ This study expands on the work of these and other scholars by engaging material culture to illuminate social practices and analyze how music in particular empowered elite women to pursue their interests.

Two recent Winterthur theses examine music in the early republic. Kristen Wetzel argues that harps allowed young women to assert themselves as fashionable, educated members of a new social elite, “apt symbols of American prosperity and idealism.” Tova Brandt employs the sheet music of a wealthy Maryland woman to reveal a complex network of social and commercial relationships surrounding the domestic production of music. Although not a musical study, Nicholas Vincent’s thesis asks the sorts of questions about pier tables—their ownership, their placement in the home, and their function—that I am asking of pianos. Finally, many resources on music in early America explain what kinds of music were popular in the United States,

⁸ See Allgor, *Parlor Politics*; Allgor, *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006); Allgor, “‘Queen Dolley’ Saves Washington City,” in *Coming into the City: Essays on Early Washington, DC*, ed. Kenneth R. Bowling (Washington, DC: The Historical Society of Washington, DC, 2000), 54-69.

⁹ See Cynthia D. Earman, “Messing Around: Entertaining and Accommodating Congress, 1800-1830,” in *Establishing Congress: The Removal to Washington, D.C. and the Election of 1800*, ed. Kenneth R. Bowling and Donald R. Kennon (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005), 128-147; Earman, “Remembering the Ladies: Women, Etiquette, and Diversions in Washington City, 1800-1814,” in *Coming into the City*, 102-117.

and books on the piano clarify its history, construction, and sound-producing mechanisms.¹⁰

As an interdisciplinary study, my thesis connects social history, material culture, and musicology. I also attempt to bridge the gap between decorative arts scholars, who tend to focus on the aesthetic design quality of pianos, and musicologists, who study music culture and instrumentation. This project incorporates both approaches to more fully understand pianos and the music played on them by examining their social context. Whether they were in use or simply acting as a piece of furniture, pianos conveyed powerful messages about an owner's wealth, family, and education. However, pianos were more than mere status symbols and must be considered in the context of their use and sound.

This thesis is organized into five sections. The remainder of the introduction addresses the concept of gentility, which is crucial to understanding the social practices of the upper classes, including playing and listening to music. This section also provides an analysis of the social landscape of Washington, DC during the first quarter of the nineteenth century to situate the reader in this unique historical environment. The capital was characterized by a high degree of social and economic stratification, with the elite population consisting of several distinct groups. This study focuses on individuals, mainly women, at or near the top of the hierarchy who were key players in Washington society.

¹⁰ Kristen Lynn Wetzel, "Susan Jane Gaston Donaldson and the Pedal Harp in the Early Republic" (M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 2003), viii; Tova Karissa Brandt, "Penned and Printed: The Sheet Music Collection of Eliza Ridgely, 1803-1867" (M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 2001); Nicholas Vincent, "Tables of Sociability: Philadelphia Pier Tables, 1810-1850" (M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 2007).

The second section examines the creation and maintenance of the domestic spaces in which women played music and danced. It also explains how women enacted performances on the piano. The next section analyzes musical entertainment used primarily for political gain, both in the President's Mansion and in private houses, with Dolley Madison and Louisa Catherine Adams as case studies. The fourth section turns to women playing music and dancing at a variety of private formal and informal social events in order to entertain, deepen social and family bonds, or simply relax. This section also addresses how and why parents invested in their daughters' musical education, including the important role music played in courtship.

Early nineteenth-century popular music and musical print culture is the focus of the fifth section, which seeks to recreate what kinds of music women in Washington played, in part through an analysis of several extant music books. The final section explores pianos and harps—the preferred instruments for women in the period. The physical properties of musical instruments determined how they could be played and exhibited in the home.

For a brief but important time after the Revolution through the first few decades of the nineteenth century, Americans increasingly accepted women's presence and involvement in the public arena. In part, this expansion of roles had grown out of the colonial culture of gentility, in which women's participation in sociability and its rituals contributed to the development of a genteel consciousness, strengthening the status of elites. Benefiting from the dominance of the ruling class, elite women wielded significant cultural influence and were actively involved in the public sphere.¹¹

¹¹ Cynthia A. Kierner, *Beyond the Household: Women's Place in the Early South, 1700-1835* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 67.

Genteel culture in America had its roots in Europe, specifically aristocratic England. When young ladies in Washington played the piano for a gathering of friends or family, they were emulating the heroines of Jane Austen novels, modeling their behavior on the practices of the English gentry. But Americans were also developing their own national culture in the parlors and theaters, galleries and ballrooms of Washington, DC. As Richard Bushman makes clear, the refinement of upper-class Americans grew increasingly aristocratic and sophisticated after 1800, a process demonstrated nowhere more intensely than in the nation's new capital.¹²

Members of the elite carefully conducted themselves so that others would regard them favorably. This self-presentation meant demonstrating the right manners, wearing the right clothing, even cultivating the right lifestyle, which, for women especially, included musical training and other social accomplishments to demonstrate an easy air of gentility.¹³ The author of *A Description of the Etiquette at Washington City* described gentility as the “ease and freedom of manners which distinguish persons in the higher walks of fashionable life.” As Bernard Herman has suggested, “Wealth did not determine status; it purchased opportunity.” A key component of gentility was using the leisure which wealth afforded in a productive manner. In her 1828 novel *What is Gentility?*, subtitled *A Moral Tale*, Washington socialite Margaret Bayard Smith suggested that a “passionate taste for music gave a refinement to the

¹² Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 241.

¹³ For theories of performance and the formation of elite identity, see Bushman, *Refinement of America*; Bernard L. Herman, *Town House: Architecture and Material Life in the Early American City, 1780-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); and Joanne Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), xx.

pleasures,” which was at the heart of gentility. Music had the power to enhance leisure, making it pleasurable and productive.¹⁴

Music, directed towards an audience and guided by etiquette and social expectations, occurred in the social sphere. The social sphere obscures rigid distinctions between the public and private spheres. Although scholars have debated the definition and boundaries of the social sphere, like those of the public and private, the term has not become so overextended as to render it meaningless. For the purposes of this study, I use Karen V. Hansen’s suggestion that the social sphere encompasses “the range of behaviors that mediates public and private activities, linking households to neighbors and individuals to institutions,” operating “via informal rules and emotional and economic interdependence.”¹⁵

Slightly different from the “social sphere” is “society.” Less intimate than the family circle, but ostensibly separate from politics and commerce, “society” was both private and public. Rather than leisure and entertainment, sensibility and refinement constituted the main purposes of the gay, fashionable world of society. The social elite believed their character and ideals could be heightened in a beautiful, luxurious setting where they could interact with a select group of refined, polished people, relying on the sumptuous food, music, lighting, and décor to inspire the conversation.¹⁶ Maryland plantation mistress Rosalie Calvert disagreed with her brother in Belgium that “one is less merry in luxurious apartments.” Instead, she wrote, “A beautifully

¹⁴ E. Cooley, *A Description of the Etiquette at Washington City* (Philadelphia: L.B. Clarke, 1829), 70; Herman, *Town House*, 38; Margaret Bayard Smith, *What is Gentility?: A Moral Tale* (Washington, DC: Pishey Thompson, 1828), 27.

¹⁵ Karen V. Hansen, *A Very Social Time: Crafting Community in Antebellum New England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 8.

¹⁶ Allgor, *A Perfect Union*, 67.

decorated salon, filled with well-dressed people and musicians performing enlivens me and makes me happier.”¹⁷ She desired the refinement and elevation of the senses that a salon’s elegant furnishings, cultured guests, and uplifting music could provide.

European and American ideas of genteel or fashionable society went as far back as John Locke, who argued that pleasure was derived from persons engaged in harmonious and easy discourse. Ease did not mean uninhibited informality but required the discipline of members of the company, their regard for others’ feelings, and their observance of proprieties. Guests did not attend formal social events to relax but to exhibit their most courteous, genial, and pleasant selves.¹⁸

This model of genteel, enlightened society assumed a distinctly American flavor at the parties, balls, and calling circles of elite hostesses in the early capitals of Philadelphia and New York. Conscious in their endeavor to form a national culture and style of manners, these women laid the foundations for a social and political matrix which confounded a simple separation of spheres. Washington residents in the Jeffersonian era developed these social customs with a more cosmopolitan, European manner even as they rejected the stiff, formal etiquette of the Federalists.¹⁹

Women of high status extended their influence by recognizing the importance of manners and their own power to shape etiquette. Many newcomers to Washington

¹⁷ Rosalie Stier Calvert to Charles J. Stier, [n.d.] January 1807, in *Mistress of Riversdale: The Plantation Letters of Rosalie Stier Calvert, 1795-1821*, ed. and trans. Margaret Law Calcott (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 159 [hereinafter cited as *MOR*].

¹⁸ Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 45-57.

¹⁹ Allgor, *A Perfect Union*, 36; Fredrika J. Teute, “Roman Matron on the Banks of Tiber Creek: Margaret Bayard Smith and the Politicization of Spheres in the Nation’s Capital,” in ed. Donald R. Kennon, *A Republic for the Ages: The United States Capitol and the Political Culture of the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 99.

were forced to quickly adapt to city manners, which were constantly evolving to meet new circumstances and signs of rank.²⁰ One long-term visitor observed that no place in the United States exhibited as much ceremony as the capital, “where all the *etiquette* of the various courts of Europe is introduced by the foreign ministers, and where they are met every winter by the most fashionable and distinguished citizens from every part of the United States, during the session of Congress.”²¹ A unique set of social conventions emerged to guide both the public and private conduct of participants in Washington’s genteel society.²²

The active participation of women in society and the social sphere was nowhere more apparent than in Washington, where women benefited from the ability to move and talk with men much more freely than elsewhere in the US.²³ British

²⁰ Teute, “Roman Matron on the Banks of Tiber Creek,” 91; Carson, *Ambitious Appetites*, 110.

²¹ Cooley, *A Description of the Etiquette at Washington City*, 3.

²² Earman, “Remembering the Ladies,” 104-105. A lack of national manners worried Americans who thought that people bringing their own standards to Washington from different parts of the country and from Europe would prevent the United States from becoming culturally unified. British traveler Basil Hall recounted one Congressman saying, “We are collected here from all parts of the country; we come from every stage of civilisation, fresh from the people, and bring with us the manners and tastes of those different regions.” Lacking was “a uniform system of artificial deportment.” Basil Hall, *Travels in North America, in the Years 1827 and 1828*, vol. III, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Cadell and Co., 1830), 29. See also Allgor, *A Perfect Union*, 177.

²³ Scholars have only recently begun to discover the relative openness and opportunities for women in Washington City. Catherine Allgor has built the strongest case for disproving Barbara Carson’s hypothesis that “conversational openings for ladies may have been more limited in Washington because it was preeminently a political city” (*Ambitious Appetites*, 134). Allgor argues that rather than checking women’s power, the political nature of Washington actually opened doors for women to become more involved in politics and society. See also Susan L. Klaus, “‘Some of the Smartest Folks Here’: The Van Nesses and Community Building in Early Washington,” *Washington History* 3, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 1991/1992), 35.

emissary David Baillie Warden thought Washington women were ambitious and independent. Margaret Bayard Smith went so far as to claim that women in the capital assumed “a station in society which is not known elsewhere. On every public occasion...they are treated with mark’d distinction.”²⁴ Perhaps women had more autonomy because there were relatively few of them in Washington; yet women were important to both the development of society and to the unofficial political process.

Music and dancing, whether a couple waltzing or sitting together at a piano, created an opportunity for women to advance their interests through close personal interactions. This personal proximity was especially important to women, who were denied access to official governmental channels. The socially and politically engaged ladies of Washington, partly emulating European aristocracy, partly republican motherhood, refused to subscribe to the “cult of domesticity” which designated home and family entirely separate from business and politics. For many Washington women, the family business *was* politics.²⁵

²⁴ David Baillie Warden, *A Chorographical and Statistical Description of the District of Columbia* (Paris: Smith, 1816), 181; Fredrika J. Teute, “‘A Wild, Desolate Place’: Life on the Margins in Early Washington,” in *Southern City, National Ambition: The Growth of Early Washington, D.C., 1800-1860*, ed. Howard Gillette, Jr. (Washington, DC: American Architectural Foundation and George Washington University Center for Washington Area Studies, 1995), 51; Margaret Bayard Smith, *The First Forty Years of Washington Society*, ed. Gaillard Hunt (New York: Scribner, 1906), 97.

²⁵ Allgor, “Federal Patronage in the Early Republic,” in *Establishing Congress*, 108-109. Allgor, Branson, and Zagari have continued the process of amending the “republican motherhood” first delineated by Kerber and Norton. They claim that “republican womanhood” fails to encapsulate the range of women’s political activities or explain how female activism both reflected and initiated debates on women’s status and the meaning of the American Revolution in the early republic. See Allgor, *Parlor Politics*; Branson, *These Fiery Frenchified Dames*; Zagari, *Revolutionary Backlash*; Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); and Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty’s Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980).

The “City of Washington” in the “Territory of Columbia” was established as the capital of the United States in 1791, and the seat of government moved to the District in 1800. A fashionable, exclusive civil society quickly grew up alongside the new city, composed of a diverse mixture of landed gentry whose estates were located near Washington, wealthy urban families from Alexandria and Georgetown, a new resident class of civil servants, and legislators inhabiting the capital only when Congress was in session.²⁶ Social interactions, including music and dancing, provided a congenial, neutral arena that proved necessary for the nation’s rulers to effectively practice the art of politics. Through discussions in the unofficial social sphere, where music, wine, or dancing deflected attention from politicking and overt displays of power, policy-makers learned to negotiate and compromise, turning a Constitution on paper into a government that was practical and functional on the ground. In a world where politics was profoundly personal, entertaining facilitated the building of social relationships so essential for government and for the building of a new city.

Although Washington was located in a rural area of small farms, marshes, and woodlands along the Maryland/Virginia border, this farming region was not devoid of refinement and culture, boasting multiple large, slave-holding plantations owned by wealthy Southern gentlemen who contributed to the growth of the new city.

Georgetown, home to many shopkeepers and well-to-do citizens, and the port of Alexandria were well-established towns by 1801, when they were integrated into the

²⁶ Members of the diplomatic corps were other transient, but important, members of the Washington social scene. Rosalie Calvert wrote her sister in Belgium, “There are always a good many foreigners in Washington during the session of Congress, which makes society here very pleasant and diversified.” Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle Van Havre, 25 March 1819, in *MOR*, 346.

District of Columbia, along with Washington City (fig. 1).²⁷ Well-known balls and other forms of entertainment took place in Georgetown and Alexandria before the government relocated to Washington, offering young men and women from nearby Maryland and Virginia the opportunity to participate in “courtly society” and enjoy one another’s company.²⁸

As designed, Washington City itself was impractical and anomalous—many doomed it to failure—but it also offered great potential for real estate and economic development as the nation’s capital. Wealthy, entrepreneurial men encouraged by the city’s prospects moved to the area to create a local elite in addition to the government elite and well-established planters. Families like the Tayloes, Custises, and Laws provided the city with a “ready-made select society” who openly mingled with the upper-class members of the official elite and diplomatic corps, in the process creating a select society from the ground up. Their wealth, education, manners, position, and/or social bearing entitled them to participate in fashionable, genteel society.²⁹ The diverse mixture of foreigners who came to Washington when Congress was in session over the winter also added a certain panache and sophistication to society. Members of the diplomatic corps were often invited to the capital’s most exclusive parties and balls to increase the dignity and elegance of an affair.³⁰

²⁷ Alexandria was part of the District of Columbia from 1789 to 1846, when it was retroceded to the state of Virginia.

²⁸ Samuel C. Busey, *Pictures of the City of Washington in the Past* (Washington, DC: William Ballantyne and Sons, 1898), 328-331.

²⁹ Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 8; Carson, 8.

³⁰ Busey, 342.

By Madison's presidency, Washington City had replaced Georgetown as the scene of the most lavish and fashionable entertaining. However, Washington City also suffered from wild inequality. The small group of elite families which dominated the city's social scene was far removed from the mass of white and black, free and slave workers and artisans who labored at the bottom of society. With only a small middle class and an unnatural reliance on the federal government, Washington initially lacked a well-developed sense of community.³¹

The population of the District grew substantially during its first three decades as the seat of the nation's government, from 11,174 people in 1800 to 35,508 in 1830. The majority of growth occurred in Washington City itself, as the government expanded and the city established itself.³² During this early period, about five hundred Virginia and Maryland families with yearly incomes of one thousand pounds or more lived within a day's ride of the capital. According to one society watcher, in 1802 Washington City had 150 socially eligible ladies and gentlemen, a number that only grew over time.³³

³¹ Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 65.

³² Originally the US Census counted the populations of Washington City, Georgetown, and Alexandria separately. Washington City and Georgetown were combined when the District of Columbia was formed into a single municipality in 1871. See Campbell Gibson, "Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790-1990," Population Division, Bureau of the Census, Working Paper No. 27, June 1998, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab03.txt>.

³³ Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 8.

Table 1. Population of the District of Columbia (including slaves), 1800 – 1830

| | <u>1800</u> | <u>1810</u> | <u>1820</u> | <u>1830</u> |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Washington City | 3,210 | 8,208 | 13,247 | 18,826 |
| Georgetown | 2,993 | 4,948 | 7,360 | 8,441 |
| Alexandria | 4,971 | 7,227 | 8,218 | 8,241 |
| Total | 11,174 | 20,383 | 28,825 | 35,508 |

Where members of the various elites chose to live was not a random decision, and distinct residential groups emerged. One contemporary observer noted that the District of Columbia was “not like one village but like several little villages thrown together with a small space between: Georgetown, the area around the President’s house, the area around the Capitol, the Navy Yard, and Alexandria (fig. 2).³⁴ In this town whose nicknames included “The City of Wilderness” and the “Mudhole on the Potomac,” cramped quarters, geographic diversity, and political differences all contributed to friction among government employees. Washington needed women and society to mitigate tensions in a town that was still raw and incomplete and preoccupied with politics.³⁵

Patterns of entertaining established social networks that could continue even with a revolving cast of characters. In the first four decades of the Constitutional

³⁴ Margaret Hunter Hall to Jane Hunter, 7 January 1828, in *The Aristocratic Journey: Being the Outspoken Letters of Mrs. Basil Hall Written during a Fourteen Months’ Sojourn in America 1827-1828*, ed. Una Pope-Hennessy (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1931), 175. Another common adage pronounced early Washington was a city of streets without houses and Georgetown a city of houses without streets. See Joseph West Moore, *Picturesque Washington* (Providence: J.A. & R.A. Reid, 1884), 37.

³⁵ Frances Carpenter Huntington, “The Heiress of Washington City: Marcia Burnes Van Ness, 1782-1832,” in *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* 69-70 (1969/1970), 84; Allgor, *A Perfect Union*, 43.

government, at least one third of the congressional community left every two years not to return.³⁶ One legislator complained that “we [Congressmen] never remain long enough together to become personally acquainted,” but that sense of isolation lessened with increasing numbers of female family members coming to Washington.³⁷

Although many male legislators and government employees did not relocate their families to the capital, there were still many eligible, beautiful, intelligent, and cultured young ladies in Washington society, especially during the winter social season which corresponded roughly with the congressional session.³⁸ In the “softening” presence of women, male politicians were more likely to see each other as family men and forge social relationships and a sense of mutual trust and obligation.³⁹

However, in a town that existed for government, entertaining took on unprecedented political dimensions, and social life became an extension of politics. As James Young has noted, “Who was and who was not invited to a tea, a dinner, or a reception, who accepted and who declined, who was and who was not calling upon

³⁶ James Sterling Young, *The Washington Community, 1800-1828* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 89. By Madison’s administration, however, the average congressman served two and a half terms. See Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 177.

³⁷ Hall, *Travels in North America*, 29. By the 1830s, according to Thomas Hamilton, “A considerable number of the members [of Congress] bring their families, with the view of obtaining introduction to better society than they can hope to meet elsewhere.” Thomas Hamilton, *Men and Manners in America*, vol. II (London: T. Cadell, 1833. Reprint. New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1968), 36.

³⁸ The winter social season was short, lasting less than five months from roughly November to March. Thus women’s presence in Washington was regular but cyclical. Busey, 328.

³⁹ Allgor, *A Perfect Union*, 188.

whom, became matters pregnant with political significance.”⁴⁰ In many ways, party-going and throwing became mandatory for keeping one’s political position. For many weary politicians and their wives, entertaining was a chore rather than a pleasure.

At the same time, especially during the first decade of the nineteenth century, some observers regarded Washington society “as very poor, without theatre, without concerts, very few balls, dances, or dinners, but lots of insipid tea parties where people perform,” according to Rosalie Calvert.⁴¹ Although she was exaggerating (traveling theatre troupes performed concerts and plays in Washington theaters as early as 1801), Calvert’s frank assessment reveals that the capital was still culturally underdeveloped. The popularity of fishing and duck hunting belied the city’s urbanity; Washington was still a “frontier with a European veneer,” surrounded by swamps and woodland.⁴² Men gambled excessively at horse races, which attracted “a grand concourse of society.” The unrefined nature of the town’s primary activities led David Warden and other travelers to portray Washington society as crude and ostentatious.⁴³

However, Washington’s entertainment offerings increased over time, both in quantity and quality. After the devastation of the War of 1812, the town rebuilt quickly and urban growth accelerated. For the first half of the nineteenth century,

⁴⁰ Young, 47. The importance of these social decisions was nowhere more evident than during the Peggy Eaton Affair. For a discussion of the Eaton scandal, see Carson, 13-14 and Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 190-238.

⁴¹ Calvert, originally from Belgium, married into the prominent Calvert family of Maryland. She and her husband George resided at Riversdale Plantation near Bladensburg, a short distance from Washington. Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle van Havre, 5 November 1806, in *MOR*, 151.

⁴² Young, 72; Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 113.

⁴³ Rosalie Stier Calvert to Henri J. Stier, 1 November 1807, in *MOR*, 172; Warden, *A Chorographical and Statistical Description of the District of Columbia*, 182; Teute, “A Wild, Desolate Place,” 51.

Washington in many ways remained a permanent construction zone surrounded by field and forest. A view of the city from the early 1830s depicts its rural environs as well as its bustling river traffic, the Navy Yard, and a concentration of buildings between the President's House and Capitol—symbols of the federal government and growth (fig. 3).

As the District grew and eight states were added to the union between 1800 and 1825, increasing numbers of Congressmen, federal employees, local businessmen, and domestic and foreign visitors expanded the capital's social scene. In 1800, there were 107 members of the House of Representatives; by 1820, that number had grown to 186, and by 1825, to 213 members. With more people, there were more balls, dances and dinners. In the mid-1820s, one observer who spent four winters in the capital wrote that “evening parties are so much the fashion at Washington, that every one aims at them, as the principal amusement of all classes and conditions, from the president down to the constable.”⁴⁴

By 1819, Calvert had revised her earlier opinion: “There is a theatre with a tolerably good troupe, but it is seldom frequented by the best people—we have never been. There is also a circus where the performance is extremely good and with beautiful horses. [This season] there were about a dozen concerts, recitations, etc., in short, not a day without something going on.” Margaret Bayard Smith, one of Washington's staunchest advocates, ventured so far as to say that the capital “has more attractions than any other place in America.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Cooley, *A Description of the Etiquette at Washington City*, 60.

⁴⁵ Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle van Havre, 25 March 1819, in *MOR*, 346; Margaret Bayard Smith to J.B. Kirkpatrick, 13 March 1814, in *First Forty Years*, 94.

As Catherine Allgor has observed, “Women came to Washington to be civilized, to learn taste, fashion, and etiquette, and to avail themselves of aristocratic permissions of speech and movement.” Catharine Akerly Mitchill, wife of Republican representative Samuel Latham Mitchill of New York, was candid in her desire to accompany her husband to the capital: “You know, sister, I came here for the express purpose of seeing and being seen.”⁴⁶ In the parlors and drawing rooms of Washington, she would have her chance.

⁴⁶ Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 113; Catharine Akerly Mitchill to Margaretta Akerly Miller, 8 April 1806, Catharine Akerly Mitchill Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC [hereinafter cited as CAM Papers].

Section 2

CREATING SPACES FOR MUSIC AND ENTERTAINING

*Acoustic spaces and the quality of sounds made therein are remarkably durable even though the particular sounds are ephemeral.*⁴⁷ — Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded*, 98.

Unlike middle-class households later in the nineteenth century, in the early republic the houses of the wealthy and well-connected were public spaces where elite individuals asserted their right to rule. Mansions embodied society's growing self-awareness and made a clear statement about their occupants' wealth and high social status. Building a mansion offered a way for families to both display their wealth and gain admission to the exclusive class of society. Opening their home for a variety of business and recreational events was expected if they wanted to maintain their social position. Privacy was a secondary concern to sociability.⁴⁸ Social events in Washington houses were often designed for more than just entertaining; they provided a valuable space for the exchange of ideas, business deals, and political compromises in an unofficial social sphere. Indeed, assemblies and balls served a similar role as government receptions and embassy cocktail parties fulfill today, bringing together political leaders, diplomats, financiers, and military officials under "favorable and

⁴⁷ Rath argues that in addition to simply echoing vocal and instrumental sounds, "Acoustical spaces reflected the beliefs underlying social order." Although he is mainly discussing public spaces, such as churches, meetinghouses, and town halls, the premise can be applied to any built environment, including houses. See Richard Cullen Rath, *How Early America Sounded* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 97.

⁴⁸ Allgor, *A Perfect Union*, 156.

visible conditions.” Pleasurable activities, like listening to or playing music, could act as a cover for conducting politics and diplomacy. Indeed, the social sphere proved even more important in a republic than in a monarchy by providing a neutral space where men and women could build relationships and discuss politics while avoiding the appearance of power.⁴⁹

Elites saw manipulating space as an important expression of their power, status, and authority to rule. They increasingly conveyed their self-assurance, sophistication, and individuality as Americans through their homes and possessions. This display was particularly significant in Washington, where for decades residents faced constant criticism and ridicule for the still unfinished state of their city. As Susan Klaus has noted, because the “transient federal community showed little inclination to invest either government funds or personal effort in developing” the capital, “permanent residents formed the social matrix that held early Washington together.” Their homes physically represented their commitment to the city and their awareness of the new social forces at work in it, and provided the platform for much of the musical entertainment in the capital.⁵⁰

At least initially, housing in Washington was expensive and scarce, causing many government employees and Congressmen and their families, if they accompanied them, to live in boardinghouses or hotels before seeking permanent houses or rooms to rent. Not surprisingly, as the town grew and private dwellings

⁴⁹ Kate Van Winkle Keller and Charles Cyril Hendrickson, *George Washington: A Biography in Social Dance* (Sandy Hook, CT: The Hendrickson Group, 1998), 13; Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 21.

⁵⁰ Klaus, “‘Some of the Smartest Folks Here’: The Van Nesses and Community Building in Early Washington,” 37, 23.

became more available and affordable, members of official and fashionable Washington increasingly chose to live in their own houses.⁵¹

The wealthy erected grand mansions and acquired elegant furnishings to impress others and to build social or political capital. In a world where reputation mattered greatly, the construction of a positive self-image was vital to a person's self-interest, demonstrating to outsiders that one was worthy of social and economic investment. Underscoring the relationship between elegant furnishings and social reputation, Rosalie Calvert claimed that she initially "avoided becoming acquainted with Washington society" in part because her newly completed home, Riversdale, lacked the necessary equipment for genteel entertaining. "As soon as all our furnishing is complete and in good order," she told her father, "we will make our selection of society and give some proper dinner parties from time to time."⁵²

Architectural elements and household furnishings determine the kinds of social activities which can occur in a space. In early Washington, as in other cities during the period on both sides of the Atlantic, homeowners increasingly delineated rooms for express purposes in order to accommodate the greater diversity of furnishings and activities taking place in the home. New room organization and specificity also demonstrated a "sophisticated use of space to control circulation and access to different areas of the house," reflecting a growing concern with keeping family life, servant life, and public entertaining separate.⁵³ A genteel household, "where affluence

⁵¹ Elaine C. Everly and Howard H. Wehmann, "'Then Let Us to the Woods Repair': Moving the Federal Government and Its Records to Washington in 1800" in *Establishing Congress*, 66; Earman, "Messing Around," 129; Busey, *Pictures of the City of Washington in the Past*, 301.

⁵² Rosalie Stier Calvert to Henri J. Stier, 12 May [1808], in *MOR*, 190.

⁵³ Klaus, 39.

abounds,” required two rooms easily identified as public spaces by the absence of beds and washstands. One etiquette book advised women to entertain company in a drawing room, but “if that cannot be afforded, then let the receiving room be the parlour.” *Etiquette for Ladies* also admonished its readers that receiving company in “a dining-room, is not allowed, except among those who cannot bear the expense of furnishing a parlour or drawing-room.”⁵⁴ Ideally, one room would be furnished with a set of dining tables, and the other with tea tables, pairs of card tables, and musical instruments, preferably a harp or pianoforte. Inventories of the finest and most well-furnished Washington homes during the early nineteenth century often reveal such an arrangement.⁵⁵

As Bernard Herman has eloquently argued, household possessions were a form of social as well as economic capital, marking an owner’s investment in the “acquisition and display of reputation.” A competitive culture of consumption and display characterized the genteel world of exchange and informed design choices from

⁵⁴ Most middle- to upper-class houses had two rooms to use primarily for entertaining; what the rooms were called and how they were used varied. Differences between a drawing room, dining room, and parlor were somewhat fluid; a house with two rooms for entertaining might have a dining room and a parlor, a dining room and a drawing room, or a parlor and a drawing room, depending on the owner’s preferences and the time period. *Etiquette for Ladies: With Hints on the Preservation, Amusement, and Display of Female Beauty* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea & Blanchard, 1838), 22-23.

⁵⁵ In addition to a piano and pair of card tables, the parlor or drawing room frequently contained a sofa, paintings and/or prints, looking glasses, mantle ornaments, and a carpet and/or rug. See, for example, Walter Heller, Esq. inventory (November 16, 1815), HCN 1 (April 14, 1807-December 8, 1815), 8; Robert Pitt inventory (March 16, 1821), HCN 1 (July 11, 1818-April 20, 1821), 2; James M. Normans inventory (January 4, 1822), HCN 1 (July 27, 1805-November 2, 1823), 232; Thomas Daugherty inventory (October 18, 1822), HCN 1 (July 27, 1805-November 2, 1823), 423; Constant Freeman inventory (March 24, 1824), HCN 1 (August, 12, 1823-May 26, 1826), 203; William Williamson inventory (October 25, 1837), HCN 1 (November 12, 1834-August 10, 1839), 278.

the selection of a tea service to a pianoforte. Owning a piano sent a clear signal that one had sufficient economic capital to afford one, but it was the owner's ability to display and use the piano properly that tested and reflected his or her status and raised or lowered his or her reputation. As luxury items, pianos were part of the material culture of gentility, which demanded that participants demonstrate their understanding of the complex rules of sociability.⁵⁶

Owners strategically placed pianos in rooms designated for public display and entertaining. Although there were instances of pianos in dining rooms in Washington, most were located in a parlor or drawing room.⁵⁷ Probate inventories and primary

⁵⁶ Herman makes clear that ownership alone did not communicate social rank. Instead, the degree to which a person could display and enact his or her gentility through "the material representation of social knowledge varied according to the situation and the presence of other actors." Pianos required a certain understanding on the part of the owner and audience for their effective use. Thus only through the enacted reality of personal communication could a piano serve as a social signifier; the "interaction between possessor and audience sets objects in motion." To own a piano "assumes social knowledge; to display it presumes an owner and an audience able to access that knowledge;" and to use the piano "demonstrates the means to act on that knowledge." Herman, *Town House*, 201-202. See also Herman, "Washington's Early Town Houses," 23, and Vincent, "Tables of Sociability: Philadelphia Pier Tables, 1810-1850," 49.

⁵⁷ Anna Maria Thornton recorded at least one instance of her piano in the dining room. The inventory of another Washington resident lists the piano in the best room of the house, the parlor, which doubled as a dining room, as it contained dining tables and chairs. The inventory of Commodore Stephen Decatur lists his wife Susan's pedal harp and piano in the dining room, along with a wilton carpet, fourteen mahogany chairs, four card tables, four chimney candlestands with lustres, a large looking glass, six lamps, two large window curtains with draperies, and a mahogany wash stand. Based on this setup, it appears the Decatur's kept their heavy entertaining equipment (musical instruments and gaming tables) in the dining room when not in use. The dining room was part of a second-floor entertaining suite that connected to a drawing room. Objects could be moved between or out of the rooms depending on the nature of the occasion. See *Diary of Anna Maria Thornton*, Anna Maria Thornton Papers (on microfilm), Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC [hereinafter cited as AMT Papers]; James M. Normans inventory (January 4, 1822), HCN 1 (July

sources indicate that pianos were never located in a service area, like a kitchen or any other ell or outbuilding. A piano in a small, intimate parlor suggests that it entertained family and close friends, while a piano in a grander, more formal drawing room implies that it was played for guests during large social gatherings, such as the fashionable party sketched by Robert Gilmor, Jr. about 1817. His drawing shows a handsomely furnished drawing room with objects representing wealth and gentility: elegant window draperies; tall ceilings; paintings on the wall; a mirror, clock, and lamps on the fireplace mantle; a table with a punch bowl; and a piano and a harp (fig. 4). He depicts guests engaged in a variety of activities, including a woman reading music as she plays the piano and another woman sitting at the harp, perhaps waiting for her turn to play.

An interconnected web of elite families in early Washington hosted social events in mansions equipped with these public entertaining spaces. Popular amateur historian Samuel Busey extolled several ground houses which were the “scene of frequent and lavish entertainments.”⁵⁸ His musings reflect a late nineteenth-century romanticization of fashionable life in the early republic, which Busey and others deemed a golden age of Washington society. Nevertheless, his colorful portrayals reveal a closely connected network of leading families. He described Sidney, the house of Samuel Harrison and Margaret Bayard Smith on the outskirts of Washington City, as “one of the most lavishly established country residences in the vicinity, and was the customary rendezvous for statesmen and politicians to discuss the grave

27, 1805-November 2, 1823), 232; Stephen Decatur inventory (April 27, 1820), HCN 1 (July 11, 1818-April 20, 1821), 94.

⁵⁸ Busey, 332.

matters of state and policies of legislation.”⁵⁹ Busey also displayed nothing but praise for Riversdale, the home of Rosalie Stier and George Calvert (fig. 5): “Wealth, taste, education, high social position, and extensive acquaintance all combined to add *éclat* to the lavish and sumptuous entertainments at the manor mansion, where so many assembled to enjoy the dignified hospitality of a rich Maryland planter.”⁶⁰

Busey offered similar approval of the Van Ness mansion, the home of the capital’s leading local family “at which the resident elite, high officials, and distinguished statesmen came together in the enjoyment of the Van Nesses’ elegant and graceful hospitality.”⁶¹ Congressman John Peter Van Ness moved from New York in hopes of profiting from the development of the nation’s new capital. He married a local heiress, Marcia Burnes, in 1802. Initially residing in modest townhouses characteristic of the developing cityscape, they commissioned Benjamin Henry Latrobe to build them an urban villa in 1813. Celebrated as the finest private residence in America, the house was an “oasis of luxury” in what Washingtonians were soon calling Mansion Square, a six-acre property bounded by B (now Constitution Avenue), C, 17th, and 18th streets NW.

Local citizens were impressed by the house’s refined architecture and opulent interiors, including a flexible suite of entertaining rooms which ran the full width of the house. Sliding doors between the parlor (library), drawing room (salon), and dining room facilitated social flow and could be left open for large gatherings or

⁵⁹ Samuel Harrison and Margaret Bayard Smith moved to Washington as newlyweds in 1800. Samuel founded the city’s first newspaper, the *National Intelligencer*, that same year. Sidney is now a part of Catholic University’s St. Thomas Hall. Busey, 163.

⁶⁰ Busey, 179.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 332.

closed for more intimate events.⁶² Latrobe also designed an entertaining suite of a drawing and dining room divided by sliding doors for the residence of popular naval hero Stephen Decatur, Jr. and his wife Susan (fig. 6). The Decaturs purposely built their house on Lafayette Square, which is situated across from the finest residence in Washington, the President's House.

Other members of the local elite included Colonel John Tayloe III and his wife Ann Ogle, who moved to the newly created capital at George Washington's urging. The architect of the US Capitol, William Thornton, designed their home, the Octagon, which was ready to be lived in 1801 (fig. 7). Thornton also designed Tudor Place, the neoclassical Georgetown villa of George and Martha Washington's granddaughter Martha Custis Peter and her husband Thomas (fig. 8). Both the Octagon and Tudor Place had large central salons for entertaining.

Lacking the architectural sophistication of these grand mansions, most hosts had to rearrange spaces in their houses in order to accommodate large numbers of people. Skillful event management and well-organized spaces could elevate a party above the countless others in the capital to leave a lasting impression on guests. At a ball at a Mr. Vaughan's, English aristocrat Margaret Hunter Hall noted that the host transformed his drawing and dining rooms into areas for receiving company and card-playing, and the large dining room, "at least fifty feet long," into the dancing room. The corner of the dancing room contained an elevated platform for the orchestra, which Hall thought was "much better than it usually is." Finally, in addition to chalking the floor for dancing, Vaughan also placed a harp encircled by a "wreath of roses, thistles, and shamrocks" in the center of the room. Such an arrangement would not only have provided color and decoration but also added a sense of refinement and

⁶² The Van Ness mansion was torn down in 1908. See Klaus, 27-40.

elegance to the party. Hall was unusually impressed by Mr. Vaughan's "delightful" ball, which she called "a very different sort of thing indeed from any that we have seen in this city of Washington." She particularly enjoyed the "charming valse space" for dancing two quadrilles and a German country dance.⁶³

For her ball in honor of the Marquis de Lafayette in 1824, Sarah Gales Seaton, wife of the publisher of the *National Intelligencer*, William Seaton, found it necessary to devote extensive resources to repurposing the rooms in her home to entertain 360 guests. She "*deranged and arranged*" her chamber and the large nursery into a card and supper room, respectively. The Marine Band provided music for dancing, which took place in the dining and drawing rooms, "the latter opened for the first time, and thus pleasantly inaugurated."⁶⁴ Margaret Bayard Smith similarly rearranged the rooms of Sidney for a large party, opening two rooms downstairs for dancing and turning two rooms upstairs (presumably bedchambers) into a parlor and supper room. Smith also hired four musicians from the Marine Band, who "greatly increased the pleasures of the evening" for the soiree's 120 guests. However, Smith's remark that "such a party could give *me* no pleasure" reflects the intensive planning and supervising that produced a successful party, leaving the hosts little time or energy to actually enjoy their own celebration.⁶⁵

Not all parties took place in private homes. Taverns, boardinghouses, and hotels also provided spaces for social gatherings, including balls and celebratory

⁶³ Margaret Hunter Hall to Jane Hunter, 29 January 1828, in *The Aristocratic Journey*, 193-194.

⁶⁴ Josephine Seaton, *William Winston Seaton of the "National Intelligencer": A Biographical Sketch* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1871), 170.

⁶⁵ Margaret Bayard Smith to Jane Bayard Kirkpatrick, 19 January 1817, in *First Forty Years*, 136-137 [emphasis added].

dinners. Local dancing assemblies held balls in various locations, especially Stelle's Hotel and the Union Tavern in Georgetown. Self-consciously and purposefully exclusive, assemblies admitted ticketholders only, ensuring that they would be composed of an elite social circle.⁶⁶ Passes were usually issued for the year; for example, Josepha Nourse received an invitation to the Washington Dancing Assembly for the 1801 winter season (fig. 9). Nelly Custis, granddaughter of George and Martha Washington and an energetic socialite before her marriage in 1799, attended another assembly's "charming Ball at the Union Tavern." Departing from the usual custom to "dance all the evening at the *Assemblies* with the same partner," Nelly danced a total of eight dances with two different partners into the early hours of the morning.⁶⁷

Facing space and privacy limitations, most boardinghouse residents could not host parties as easily as homeowners. Mary Boardman Crowninshield, who accompanied her husband to Washington during his tenure as Secretary of the Navy, exemplified the dilemma faced by sociable boarders. She complained that she wished she could have a party, but it was "impossible" given her circumstances. She occupied a private bedchamber and parlor, which included a piano, but the rooms were not large enough to entertain many guests; nor did she have the necessary equipage. If she

⁶⁶ The Washington Dancing Assembly was founded by Thomas Law (husband of Eliza Parke Custis), Captain Thomas Tingey (first commandant of the Navy Yard), and others. The Assembly's fortnightly balls were well-attended by the capital's fashionable set. Although she did not dance, Dolley Madison presided over the Assembly, which surely elevated its reputation. Margaret Bayard Smith observed that "Capt. T[ingey] sings a good song, his wife and daughters accompany him." Margaret Bayard Smith to Susan B. Smith, 1 January 1801, in *First Forty Years*, 18. See also Allgor, "'Queen Dolley' Saves Washington City," 62.

⁶⁷ Eleanor Parke Custis to Elizabeth Bordley, 24 April 1797 and 30 May 1797, in *George Washington's Beautiful Nelly: The Letters of Eleanor Parke Custis Lewis to Elizabeth Bordley Gibson, 1794-1851*, ed. Patricia Brady (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 34-36.

wanted to host a fete in the public eating and entertaining space, she would have to invite all the boarders and, “what would be worse,” the boardinghouse keeper and her daughter, which Crowninshield said she “would not do.”⁶⁸

The lack of space for parties and dancing in Washington also concerned English traveler Margaret Hall, who chronicled her candid, often condescending impressions of America. She and her husband, Captain Basil Hall, spent January 1828 attending numerous social events in Washington. Accustomed to the grand manor houses of the English gentry, Hall was disappointed in the comparatively small residences of Washington’s elite. She complained to her sister that although dancing occurred even in the most cramped spaces, she always danced, “for there is no other way of amusing oneself.” An evening party at a Mrs. Pleasanton’s house was “rather less shabby than the night before but still very poor; dancing and valseing carried on in the smallest possible space....There is no room to walk about for the purpose of seeing people, and if there were there is no one worth seeing. You may say, perhaps, that dancing in a space no bigger than a cheese plate must be poor amusement for anyone out of their teens, but it is not quite so wearisome as standing crushed up to a wall.”⁶⁹

Observers like Hall, especially those familiar with entertaining in the aristocratic courts of Europe or the finer American cities of New York or Philadelphia, decried the provinciality, repetition, and inadequate arrangement of social events in the

⁶⁸ Benjamin Williams Crowninshield served as Secretary of the Navy from 1815 to 1818. Mary Boardman Crowninshield to Mary Hodges Boardman, 19 January 1816, in *Letters of Mary Boardman Crowninshield, 1815-1816*, ed. Francis Boardman Crowninshield (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1935), 45.

⁶⁹ Margaret Hunter Hall to Jane Hunter, 3 January 1828, in *The Aristocratic Journey*, 169. Although Hall attempted to dance no matter the size of the room, it was possible for company to be so tightly packed into a ball that dancing could not physically take place, and guests had to be content simply listening to the music. See, for example, Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 2 March 1819, APM, reel 264.

capital. Thomas Hamilton mocked, “It is really marvellous, at the Washington parties, to see how many people are contrived to be stowed away in a drawing-room somewhat smaller than an ordinary-sized pigeon-house. On such occasions one does not suffer so much from heat as from suffocation.”⁷⁰ The uncomfortably small size of so many entertaining spaces would have made grand houses with purpose-built entertainment rooms, such as the Van Ness mansion and Decatur House, all the more impressive and welcome. In 1821 John Quincy and Louisa Catherine Adams added a twenty-eight by twenty-nine foot ballroom off their drawing room to increase the number of guests they could comfortably accommodate at their residence on F Street, the most fashionable avenue in the capital (fig. 10). The ballroom was large enough that they could “dance six Cotillions with ease,” or, have six squares of four people dancing at the same time.⁷¹

The diplomatic corps was also favorably positioned to reside in houses that were well-suited for hosting social events, as ambassadors were expected to entertain frequently and lavishly. After attending an “elegant” and “brilliant” ball at the residence of the Spanish minister, Luis de Onís, Louisa Catherine Adams said that the house, which contained a “large and handsome room for dancing,” was “perfectly convenient for receiving visitors...and the only [house] in Washington suited to the purpose.”⁷² At one of the many “brilliant and well conducted” balls hosted by British

⁷⁰ Hamilton, *Men and Manners in America*, vol. II, 37.

⁷¹ Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 27 February 1821, APM, reel 265. Considering that most early nineteenth-century townhouses had only one or two rooms for entertaining, which together may have measured no more than twenty by twenty-five feet, the Adamses’ ballroom was immense in comparison. See Michel Chevalier, *Society, Manners, and Politics in the United States* (Boston: Weeks, Jordan and Co., 1839), 303.

⁷² The ball occurred the week before Onís and John Quincy Adams signed the Adams-Onís treaty. Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 14 February 1819, APM, reel 264.

ambassador Charles Bagot and his wife Mary, Harrison Gray Otis noted that they set aside not one but two first-floor rooms for dancing: “The floor of one...was handsomely ornamented by a circle chalkd with white crayons, in the centre whereof was the armorial shield of Great Britain.” But, Otis reported, most of the design had been “scuffled over before my entrance. The floor of the other dancing room was chalked with a corresponding circle, containing the arms of the United States, and similar decorations.”⁷³ Through something as ephemeral as a chalked floor for dancing, the Bagots symbolically linked the two countries in an effort to repair relations after the War of 1812.

In addition to spatial concerns, hosts also had to consider lighting for their event. Lighting was improving rapidly in the early nineteenth century, as new technologies, such as Argand and astral lamps, allowed for stronger and more efficient ways to light a room, making it easier and cheaper to host large evening parties. A lack of illumination could impede guests’ enjoyment of an evening party and make it difficult or impossible to play a musical instrument. When Louisa Catherine Adams attended a ball at the Tayloes’ residence, the Octagon, in 1821, she was appalled by the lack of lighting: “The party would have been pleasant had not the dearth of light been nearly as great within as out of doors.”⁷⁴

Sound was another important factor in creating spaces for music and dance. Musicians in assembly halls and taverns, such as Gadsby’s Tavern in Alexandria, might be elevated in a balcony to set them apart and project sound, much like a minister used a sounding board to amplify his voice from the pulpit. Private homes

⁷³ Harrison Gray Otis to Sally Foster Otis, 28 November 1818, Otis Papers, quoted in Carson, *Ambitious Appetites*, 149.

⁷⁴ Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 25 February 1821, APM, reel 265.

lacked these purpose-built spaces for musicians, so hosts had to carefully consider where to position the players or a piano for amateur performances. Some mansions boasted entertainment rooms with exceptional acoustics, which the architects, carpenters, and owners would have had in mind when they conceptualized and built the house. Rosalie Calvert was impressed with the acoustic quality of another party hosted by the Tayloes, at which “the two bands of musicians...played in the round salon.” The room’s high ceilings and round walls would have amplified the music to create “a delightful effect.”⁷⁵

This investigation of domestic musical spaces is best accompanied by an explanation of how a woman actually enacted an amateur performance at the piano. She displayed her refinement by the way she performed, accessorized, and contextualized the ritual of playing music.⁷⁶ When she readied herself to play, she had to consider her audience, time of day, lighting, and physical space as well as what she was going to perform. She had to decide if anyone seemed prepared to accompany her on another instrument or voice. Square pianos were usually kept against the wall (much like any piece of case furniture with an unfinished back, such as a chest of drawers or secretary), but they could be lifted or rolled on their casters to a different spot in anticipation of a performance. During the day, it is likely a player would wish to take advantage of natural light, positioning the piano near a window where the light would hit the keyboard.

⁷⁵ Rosalie Stier Calvert to Mme. H.J. Stier, 2 March 1804, in *MOR*, 77.

⁷⁶ For more on rituals of performance, specifically in the context of wine-drinking and toasting, see David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 355.

If she wanted to practice quietly by herself or play for just a few people, she might only open the piano's lid enough to expose the keys and part of the soundboard, which muffled the sound of the instrument. Furthermore, many amateur piano players, especially in the initial stages of their instruction, were incapable of creating consistently pleasant-sounding music. Families, weary of hearing the disjointed melodies and dissonant sounds of a young lady practicing, would have wanted to dampen the noise as much as possible.

The piano emits a sound with the lid partially closed, but it is noticeably softer. Given the overall quietness of square pianos compared to modern pianos, this positioning would not have facilitated play in a group setting. Thus to produce the loudest sound possible for a performance, a female player would seek the assistance of a male, if one was present, to lift the lid all the way open. Opening the lid would have seemed ungainly for a woman and required her to awkwardly position her body. Once the lid was open and the soundboard uncovered, the player could position her sheet music (if she needed it) on the ledge built into most pianos.

If the performer was playing at night, she might make sure someone placed candles or lamps directly on the open piano, and/or on nearby stands. If a woman was playing the harp, or a man the flute or violin in accompaniment, his or her music stand might have an attachment for candles as well. Depending on the nature of the performance, the audience might be seated in chairs arranged for the occasion, or they might stand or lounge on whatever furniture was available. If a man rose to accompany a woman on the piano, he would likely stand next to her and sing, perhaps resting his hand on her shoulder or on the instrument. Although the player could be seated in any chair, stool, or bench that allowed her to reach the keys, the most fashionable music stools were upholstered and had a small back to lean against and a

swivel seat and casters to allow a full range of motion.⁷⁷ A woman who executed a respectable performance displayed her familiarity and comfort with the piano, the ultimate prop of genteel superiority.

As the most powerful and public residence in Washington, the President's Mansion was the setting for the most important social gatherings in the country (fig. 11). Decorating the mansion presented a unique challenge because the house reflected more than the personal taste of the current occupant. Its décor also represented the aesthetics of the nation to the countless domestic and foreign visitors who passed through the doors of the "Republican Palace." When James Madison entered the Executive Mansion in 1809, his wife Dolley embarked on an extensive redecorating campaign in recognition of the home's public role (fig. 12).

By directing both the content and placement of the house's furnishings, a task usually reserved for male heads of household, Dolley exercised significant power in controlling the visual appearance and physical space of the home of the most powerful man in the country. She set the stage for the kinds of activities which could take place at her weekly drawing rooms, known as "squeezes" because of the hundreds of people who often attended. Although Dolley did not play herself, she encouraged amateur musical performances at "Mrs. Madison's Wednesday nights," ensuring the piano was a focal point of White House events. Margaret Bayard Smith proudly recalled Dolley "expressing a wish" that Smith's niece "would play and sing, as she had heard that she played *most elegantly*." At other drawing rooms, Anna Maria Thornton played and

⁷⁷ Stools were usually made with a central pedestal and four paw feet supporting a trapezoidal seat, or four turned legs supporting a circular seat. See Wendy A. Cooper, *Classical Taste in America, 1800-1840* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1993), 264.

sang with a female acquaintance, and Mary Boardman Crowninshield observed her male cousin singing and ladies playing on the piano.⁷⁸

During her levees, Dolley opened up several rooms to allow guests to flow freely through the mansion as they occupied themselves with food, drink, conversation, card-playing, music, and dancing. Unlike parties in northern towns, where women usually sat and waited for men to approach them, at Dolley's drawing rooms members of both sexes could "stand and walk about the room in mingled groups," according to Margaret Bayard Smith. Smith appreciated the "ease, freedom, and equality" this arrangement afforded women.⁷⁹ It also permitted the flexibility needed for men and women to successfully conduct politics, or courtships, outside the official sphere.⁸⁰

Orchestrating the performances and movements of others, Dolley used her levees to bring together the ruling class, whatever their political differences, and develop a shared set of assumptions, values, and manners in the creation of an American identity. The piano was an important part of the setting Dolley fashioned for entertainment, politics, courtship, and the unification of Washington's various

⁷⁸ Margaret Bayard Smith to Jane Bayard Kirkpatrick, 5 December 1816, in *First Forty Years*, 132; Diary of Anna Maria Thornton, 12 February 1812, AMT Papers; Mary Boardman Crowninshield to Mary Hodges Boardman, 7 December 1815, in *Letters of Mary Boardman Crowninshield*, 25.

⁷⁹ Margaret Bayard Smith to Jane Bayard Kirkpatrick, 13 March 1814, in *First Forty Years*, 97. In contrast to Smith, Mary Bagot observed that women usually sat around the room close to the wall at Dolley's levees. The differing opinions suggest that either sitting or standing were suitable options for women in the capital. Mary Bagot, diary entry, 3 April 1816, in David Hosford, "Exile in Yankeeland: The Journal of Mary Bagot, 1816-1819," *Records of the Columbia Historical Society* 51 (1984), 35.

⁸⁰ Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 87.

communities into a cohesive whole.⁸¹ Her drawing room was so well-attended that Margaret Bayard Smith called it “that centre of attraction,” which “affords opportunity of seeing all these whom fashion, fame, beauty, wealth or talents, have render’d celebrated.”⁸² Of course, the main attraction was always the gregarious hostess herself.

Dolley purchased the first piano and collection of music for the President’s Mansion during her extensive redecorating campaign. Her agent Benjamin Henry Latrobe bought the imported piano in Philadelphia for \$450, a tremendous amount of money for even a new piano at the time. Latrobe urged Dolley to look past the cost, arguing that the “piano is of such superior tone in strength and sweetness that I would by all means recommend its being taken at that price.” According to Elise Kirk, the piano was likely a Clementi, Broadwood, or Astor—all highly regarded London manufacturers.⁸³ Dolley’s purchase of an expensive, first-class piano suggests that she regarded music as important to the social process and also symbolic of education and refinement. She recognized that the Executive Mansion’s piano must look and sound exceptional, fitting for the residence of the nation’s leader. A fine piano would have complemented the exceptional quality of her redecoration of the White House. Dolley placed the piano, as well as a guitar, in a small sitting room known as “Mrs. Madison’s Parlor” (the Red Room in the modern White House), which was brightly decorated in

⁸¹ Allgor, *A Perfect Union*, 194; Allgor, “‘Queen Dolley’ Saves Washington City,” 63.

⁸² Margaret Bayard Smith to Jane Bayard Kirkpatrick, 13 March 1814, in *First Forty Years*, 95.

⁸³ Benjamin Henry Latrobe to Dolley Madison, 17 March 1809, quoted in Elise K. Kirk, *Music at the White House: A History of the American Spirit* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 36.

the French style and also contained pier tables, card tables, sofas, large mirrors, and new carpet to evoke a feeling of leisure, wealth, and sociability.⁸⁴

Dolley further demonstrated her French taste by purchasing Madame Le Pelletier's *Journal of Musick*, printed in Philadelphia in 1810, to accompany the piano. In addition to familiar songs by Italian and English composers, the collection contains French arias from operas that were new to America, as well as pieces composed by Madame Pelletier herself (fig. 13).⁸⁵ Unfortunately, both the London piano and the *Journal of Musick* were destroyed when the British set fire to the President's Mansion in 1814. Although Dolley mourned the loss of her beloved piano, she wasted no time securing a new model for the Madisons' temporary residence while the President's House was being rebuilt. Turning to the burgeoning local market for musical instruments, she spent \$310 on a piano sold by professor of music, composer, and dealer Frederick A. Wagler.⁸⁶ Dolley eagerly anticipated music once again filling her drawing rooms. The instrumental sounds of music, the voices of men and women singing, and the movement of dancing created musical and physical networks that fostered elite identity, strengthened relationships, and, as we shall see, could also be used for political advantage.

⁸⁴ Margaret Bayard Smith called this small room the "music room" in a letter to Jane Bayard Kirkpatrick, 13 March 1814, 95. Pianos were placed in this room throughout the nineteenth century, which continued to be used as a music room for entertainers and musicians visiting Washington to perform for the president and guests. See Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 61; Betty C. Monkman, *The White House: Its Historic Furnishings and First Families* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2000), 38.

⁸⁵ Elise K. Kirk, *Musical Highlights from the White House* (Malabar, FL: Krieger Publishing Company, 1992), 17-18.

⁸⁶ Kirk, *Music at the White House*, 37.

Section 3

ENTERTAINERS-IN-CHIEF AND CHIEFLY POLITICAL ENTERTAINING

As the example of Dolley Madison begins to illustrate, entertaining functioned as a social adhesive in official settings as well as in private homes. A variety of White House events featured music, demonstrating its importance as part of the official social world. The frequency and uses of music were not static but changed in tone and significance after the Washington and Adams administrations, after Jefferson's presidency, and again after the Monroe administration, with Dolley Madison and Louisa Catherine Adams as key players in this developing musical landscape.

In the first national capitals of New York and Philadelphia, Mrs. Washington and Adams gave drawing rooms that featured conversation and music, but no card-playing or dancing. In Washington, presidential levees became less stiff and formal and offered an increased variety of entertainment. The United States Marine Band played at the New Year's Day celebration in 1801, the Adamses' first reception in the new capital. The band's repertoire would have included favorite military marches such as "The President's March," fife and drum tunes from the Revolutionary War era, and other popular songs.⁸⁷ Six months after the Adamses' New Year's party, the Marine Band played "a succession of fine patriotic airs" at the President's Mansion for Thomas Jefferson's Fourth of July celebration.⁸⁸ Just as he opened his administration with a musical holiday reception, he closed his eight years as president with a New Year's levee featuring professional musicians.

⁸⁷ Carson, *Ambitious Appetites*, 157; Kirk, *Music at the White House*, 22.

⁸⁸ Samuel Harrison Smith to Mary Ann Smith, 5 July 1801, *First Forty Years*, 30.

An amateur violinist, Jefferson loved music, was fascinated by the technical aspects of musical instruments, and ensured his daughters learned to play the harpsichord and guitar. To him, music was “invaluable,” furnishing “a delightful recreation for the hours of respite from the cares of the day.” He viewed music as a healthy pastime for improving one’s mind, guarding against ennui, and providing relaxation. But as president, he rarely hosted evening balls or drawing rooms, leaving few opportunities for amateur musical performance.⁸⁹

Jefferson despised any official gatherings that reeked of Old World corruption and the concentration of power. This included aristocratic pretensions, “courtly society,” and the presence of “unofficial characters,” primarily women.⁹⁰ He believed that the social sphere, and by extension women and amateur musical performances, should not intermingle with politics but should be restricted to the domestic sphere. Averse to strong-willed females who attempted to influence public policy, Jefferson rarely entertained women in the “President’s Palace.” Because he was reluctant to view the mansion as a setting for women and men, for courtship and entertainment, and for music and frivolity, he did not engage the White House as a public space to bring together various sets of Washington society and strengthen community relations.

Jefferson hosted several large, official events, such as the aforementioned holiday celebrations, and many private dinners, which he carefully controlled and to which he invited almost exclusively men. When he felt that a female co-host should be present for social events, Jefferson, a widower, relied on Dolley Madison, whose husband was then Secretary of State. In this unofficial role, Dolley gained access to

⁸⁹ Thomas Jefferson to Nathaniel Burwell, 14 March 1818, quoted in Helen Cripe, *Thomas Jefferson and Music* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 9; Allgor, *A Perfect Union*, 64.

⁹⁰ Allgor, “‘Queen Dolley’ Saves Washington City,” 57.

notable persons and learned firsthand how entertaining, including music, was closely tied to power.

Dolley possessed an acute social intelligence and practical knowledge of the way things were carried out in Washington. More so than many of her contemporaries, she understood the value of socializing and its role in establishing a ruling class. When she became first lady in 1809, Dolley's zeal for public life and gregarious personality led her to open the President's House more frequently and to a wider variety of people than had her predecessors, as she held weekly drawing rooms throughout her husband's eight years as president.⁹¹ She promoted amateur musical performances and occasionally hired musicians at her "squeezes."⁹² When the War of 1812 cast a depressing shadow on the city, Dolley decided to include more music at her drawing rooms, perhaps in an effort to take people's minds off the war by focusing less on talking and more on listening to the transformative qualities of music.⁹³

The Madisons' more formal entertainments included dinners, balls, and holiday receptions. Depending on the occasion, female guests or a male band provided music. Sarah Gales Seaton reported that after one "very fine dinner" at the President's Mansion, the ladies left the table and amused themselves with the piano while the gentlemen drank a "social glass." Dolley tended to hire professional musicians for larger, more formal events. Guests at one New Year's reception commented that the

⁹¹ "Mrs. Madison's Wednesday nights" occurred every week during the winter social season, which Dolley lengthened from six to ten weeks to run from the beginning of December to mid-February. See Allgor, *A Perfect Union*, 73, 188-189.

⁹² Dolley's sister Lucy Payne Washington felt the "magic influence" of the band at a drawing room in 1811, where "all was pleased and pleasing." Lucy Payne Washington to Phoebe Morris, 14 December 1811, Morris Papers, Transcriptions & Letters, Box 1 (1757-1812), Folder 30, Dumbarton House.

⁹³ Allgor, *A Perfect Union*, 290.

“sound of sweet music struck our ears” from the “enlivening airs” of musicians playing in the Oval Room.⁹⁴

The Dancing Assembly sponsored Washington City’s first presidential inaugural ball in 1809 for James Madison. Dolley ceremoniously entered to the band playing “Madison’s March,” but she refused to open the ball with the first dance, citing her Quaker background as an excuse.⁹⁵ Eighteenth-century members of the Society of Friends generally did not permit their children to play musical instruments or to dance in public, fearing such activities would promote indulgent behavior and excessive displays of personal vanity. Although she did not dance in public herself, Dolley reveled in teaching others the latest dance steps, indicating that she both knew how to dance and eagerly learned new dances at home.⁹⁶ At the first lady’s insistence at one dinner party, for example, Mrs. Seaton played on the “elegant grand piano a waltz for Miss S[mith] and Miss M[agruder] to dance, the figure of which she instructed them in.”⁹⁷ Dolley had been distancing herself from the Society of Friends

⁹⁴ Seaton, *William Winston Seaton*, 84-85; Catharine Akerly Mitchill to Margarettta Akerly Miller, 2 January 1811, CAM Papers.

⁹⁵ Gaillard Hunt, “The First Inauguration Ball,” *The Century Magazine* 69, no. 5 (March 1905), 757. For more on Quaker beliefs and material practices, see Emma Jones Lapansky and Anne A. Verplanck, ed., *Quaker Aesthetics: Reflections on a Quaker Ethic in American Design and Consumption* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

⁹⁶ Dolley enjoyed the waltz well before Carusi’s Dancing Assemblies popularized the dance in Washington in the 1820s (even though waltzes had been published in America since the 1790s). Indeed, the first piece of music dedicated to a president’s wife was “Mrs. Madison’s Waltz,” published by Willig in Philadelphia between 1810 and 1812. See Kirk, *Music at the White House*, 36.

⁹⁷ “Social Life in Washington During Mr. Madison’s Presidency,” *Every Saturday: A Journal of Choice Reading*, March 11, 1871, 227, <http://www.proquest.com/> (accessed January 14, 2011).

since her marriage to the Episcopalian James Madison; nevertheless, she never repudiated her heritage enough to allow her to feel comfortable dancing in public.

Official visits of Native American delegations provided a final occasion for music at the President's Mansion. Dolley wrote a young acquaintance about the entertainment at one dinner: "The Band was playing, & dancing succeeded—We sent off our red children however, before we began and had a frolick that would have delighted you."⁹⁸ Besides displaying Dolley's patronizing attitude towards Native Americans, this statement also makes clear that they were not invited to participate in the music and dancing at the "frolick," which was for white guests only. On other occasions, Native Americans performed their own dances at the White House, but white audiences viewed this dancing primarily as exotic entertainment. In such situations, music and dancing actually reinforced divisions between white and native culture rather than unifying them.

Dolley excelled at bringing together various groups of *white* people over wine, food, music, and dancing at her dinner parties, balls, and levees. Under "Queen Dolley's" reign, Washington society gradually came into its own and began to reflect and guide the American character.⁹⁹ Having grown fond of the effervescent sociability of the Madison era, many Washingtonians were disappointed that the Monroes did not continue entertaining to the same degree. On the many occasions when Elizabeth Monroe was too ill to perform her social duties as first lady, her elder daughter Eliza stepped in as official hostess. Unlike Dolley, whose charisma and charm united people, Eliza was a divisive figure whom many viewed as haughty and aloof.

⁹⁸ Dolley Madison to Phoebe Morris, 6 August 1813, quoted in Kym Rice and Laura Haines Belman, *Dolley at Dumbarton: The First Lady Took Shelter from the British in a House with Many Family Ties* (Washington, DC: National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, 1996), 7.

⁹⁹ Busey, *Pictures of the City of Washington in the Past*, 338.

Having spent the better part of a decade in Europe while James Monroe carried out diplomatic assignments, the Monroe women grew to appreciate aristocratic European standards of entertaining and were reluctant to embrace the more democratic style Dolley Madison had introduced to the President's House. Nevertheless, for a time the Monroes held an assembly every fortnight. Guests arrived at eight and left at ten o'clock, "entertaining themselves by promenading from one room to another and conversing with their acquaintances."¹⁰⁰ An English travel writer recorded that music also "afforded employment for the evening."¹⁰¹ However, Rosalie Calvert's comment that Mrs. Monroe's assemblies were "neither pleasant nor rewarding for young people" implies that the routine, stuffy levees offered little music or dancing, the main activities which allowed young men and women to interact closely.¹⁰² It is unlikely that Elizabeth Monroe encouraged guests to play on the piano as frequently as Dolley Madison did, although both she and her daughters played musical instruments and recognized the social value of a woman's musical performances.¹⁰³ However, the scarcity of references to Elizabeth or her daughters playing at public functions suggests that they viewed their own music making primarily as a private activity to entertain family and close friends.

The role of music in entertaining and its political connotations intensified during the Monroe administration. This shift was not instigated by the White House,

¹⁰⁰ Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle van Havre, 25 March 1819, in *MOR*, 346.

¹⁰¹ Henry Bradshaw Fearon, *Sketches of America* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818), 294.

¹⁰² Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle van Havre, 26 April 1818, in *MOR*, 334.

¹⁰³ Elizabeth Monroe played the piano. Eliza played the harp and the younger daughter Maria Hester played the piano and possibly the harp as well.

however, but by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams and his wife Louisa Catherine. Both were musical devotees who had spent long periods of time in Europe, where they grew accustomed to European entertaining and took great pleasure in attending concerts, plays and operas. John Quincy played the flute, and Louisa played the harp and piano as well as composed music and poetry. Acting as John Quincy's de facto campaign manager during his quest for the presidency, Louisa translated her musical talents, sociability, and entertaining savvy into political advantage for her husband. She established Tuesday night "sociables" at the Adamses' house to increase the social popularity of her household and consequently the political reputation of her husband. Asserting the couple's status as dominant members of the ruling elite, Louisa's "sociables" were by subscription only and existed solely to court political favor.

While Dolley's drawing rooms had focused on conversation, Louisa's Tuesday soirees were more dramatic and performance-oriented.¹⁰⁴ She recognized that as entertaining grew more competitive, superior music and dancing could elevate a party above the monotony of social events which occurred daily during the winter season. By offering organized card playing, music, and dancing, Louisa, as if the director of a play, not only controlled the party's atmosphere but also ensured her guests were always occupied. The elaborate entertainment, stage setting, and props were designed to impress guests and ensure that they would never want for activities. Occasionally hiring musicians to play in small ensembles, Louisa also played for guests herself.¹⁰⁵ Temporarily "at a loss" as to how to entertain her small party at one

¹⁰⁴ Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 171.

¹⁰⁵ Louisa had quickly realized that she could not afford to hire musicians every week, writing in her diary, "As my parties are very frequent I have been obliged to decline having music as the expense would be insupportable." *Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams*, 20 February 1823, APM, reel 265.

drawing room, she decided to sing and cajoled her teenage son George into performing as well. Although the number of guests was again small at the next week's soiree, "on account of the severe cold," Louisa made sure they "made out tolerably with singing and dancing on the Carpet."¹⁰⁶

Although advancing in age, both Louisa and John Quincy danced and encouraged others to follow their lead. At least in part as a result of her upbringing in London society, Louisa developed a keen understanding of the theatrical and performative nature of entertaining, which she used to her advantage. This awareness was made explicit in her diary of 1819-1820, which she began with her version of the oft-quoted saying from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*: "All the world's a stage and all the men and women in it players."¹⁰⁷

Louisa set the frenetic pace of entertaining during election seasons in the early 1820s, which reached its zenith with the Jackson ball. Catherine Allgor argues that the intense, overt politicking behind these parties "stripped away any graceful pretense of pleasure," as parties became too regular and methodical to be real expressions of sociability.¹⁰⁸ Like the Adamses, William Crawford, another presidential candidate, held social events for his supporters. Crawford's wife Susanna had an "elegant pianoforte" for entertaining, and surely she put it to good use at her parties.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 25 January 1820 and 1 February 1820, APM, reel 265.

¹⁰⁷ Shakespeare's actual passage is: "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players." Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 6 December 1819, APM, reel 265.

¹⁰⁸ Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 157.

¹⁰⁹ Mary Boardman Crowninshield to Mary Hodges Boardman, 1 February 1816, in *Letters of Mary Boardman Crowninshield*, 51-52.

When John Quincy Adams eventually triumphed in the bitterly contested election of 1824, he owed his victory in no small part to his wife's social efforts. The Adams administration continued to launch Washington "into the extreme of lavish and fashionable entertainment." Louisa Catherine reestablished Dolley's weekly presidential levees, alternating each Wednesday with Lucretia Clay, wife of Secretary of State Henry Clay. Louisa's levees were popular and well-attended. For example, in a span of three hours, two to three thousand people passed through the Executive Mansion for the New Year's Day celebration in 1826.¹¹⁰

Louisa felt that presidential drawing rooms needed less organized entertainment than her earlier sociables, and consequently visitors tended to find "no other amusement but conversation" at her levees. Considering how much of their own fortune they spent entertaining and hiring musicians during the campaign season, the Adamses did not usually employ musicians at their official entertainments (except at New Year's, when the Marine Band played "a number of patriotic airs, most suitable for the place and season.")¹¹¹ Furthermore, other than her biweekly drawing rooms, Louisa rarely entertained in the Executive Mansion.¹¹² She may have decided to leave most of the intensive and expensive entertaining to Secretary of State Clay, who aspired to eventually succeed Adams as president and also used parties to build his political capital. He and Lucretia did offer dancing at their soirees.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ Busey, 349; John Quincy Adams, diary entry, 2 January 1826, in *The Diary of John Quincy Adams, 1794-1845*, 355.

¹¹¹ Cooley, *A Description of the Etiquette at Washington City*, 5, 83.

¹¹² Suffering from severe depression, migraine headaches, and poor health, Louisa often isolated herself in the White House. Carl Anthony, *First Ladies: The Saga of the President's Wives and Their Power, 1789-1961* (New York: W. Morrow, 1990), 109.

¹¹³ Cooley, 19.

Just as Adams had become president in part because of his wife's skills as a performer and hostess, the couple's failure to entertain on as large a scale once they were in the President's House may have contributed to Adams's loss to Andrew Jackson in 1828. Upon their impending exit from the President's Mansion, however, the Adamses actually increased their level of entertaining, attempting to make the most of John Quincy's last months as president. In December 1828, Margaret Bayard Smith wrote that the couple offered organized dancing at a rout, a "thing unheard of before at a drawing-room!" Smith's statement is corroborated by Cooley's observation that "music and dancing in the east room, was added to the usual entertainments" at the Adamses' final levees.¹¹⁴ One of the dances known to have taken place was the cotillion, a popular pattern dance in 2/4 or 6/8 meter performed by four couples.

Although the airy, expansive rooms of the White House already provided unsurpassed areas for entertaining, the East Room increased the entertaining space for New Year's Day receptions and large gatherings. Apparently the Adamses were so eager to use the East Room that they opened the "great audience chamber" for dancing at a ball before the room had even been finished, prompting Margaret Bayard Smith to remark that the "band of musick increased the hilarity of the scene." However, not everyone found Louisa Catherine's levees so humorous. Margaret Hall grumbled that "the same bad music drummed the same everlasting tunes in one's ears" at one of the Adamses' balls she attended in 1828, criticism which surely would have offended Louisa Catherine's pride in her musical offerings.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Kirk, *Music at the White House*, 43; Margaret Bayard Smith to Maria Bayard Boyd, 20 December 1828, in *First Forty Years*, 248; Cooley, 83.

¹¹⁵ Margaret Bayard Smith to Maria Bayard Boyd, 20 December 1828, in *First Forty Years*, 248; Margaret Hunter Hall to Jane Hunter, 19 January 1828, in *Aristocratic Journey*, 184-185.

From Jefferson's distrust of public, self-assured women to Dolley Madison and Louisa Catherine Adams' embrace of women's extra-official entertaining roles, the political uses of music and entertaining in Washington grew more intense over the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Jefferson, wary of courtly practices involving women, played host to few events that permitted female musical performances. Dolley was a gifted hostess who orchestrated the amateur performances of others but did not dance or play herself. As a foil to Dolley, Louisa Catherine had a deep understanding of musicality and conducted musical performances herself as a full-fledged entertainer. Although she directed much of her musical talent and energy into achieving political advantages for her husband, Louisa Catherine, and other women in early Washington, played music for far more than political reasons.

Section 4

WHERE AND WHY WOMEN PLAYED: PLAYING MUSIC AND LEARNING TO PERFORM

What a musical age we live in, Mr. Editor! Every individual is now a performer, and every family a band; and the proprietors of the music shops, as if duty bound, omit no opportunity to increase the prevailing rage. — “Amusement. From the London times. Musical Conveniences,” Washington Federalist, February 24, 1804, p. 3.

Washington’s elite women played music at a variety of private parties and gatherings, including dinners, teas, routs, dances, and balls. The nature of the event usually determined whether there would be music, and whether the music would be provided by amateurs or by professional musicians. This section will delineate the various types of entertainments that early nineteenth-century Washington socialites hosted and attended in their efforts both to amuse themselves and to display and consolidate their social power. It will also demonstrate how and why women played and learned to play music.

In the early nineteenth century, members of the elite identified ornamental pastimes such as music, especially the piano and harp, with feminine virtue and sensibility.¹¹⁶ A genteel woman was expected to sing and play her instrument naturally, effortlessly, and gracefully. Her ability to play music showcased the wealth of her family and her status as a beautiful, virtuous woman. Listeners interpreted how well she played as evidence of both her family’s position and her own character.

¹¹⁶ As Cynthia Kierner points out, over the course of the eighteenth century, elite men increasingly associated ornamental arts and feminine virtue with white womanhood and its privileges. Cynthia A. Kierner, *Beyond the Household: Women’s Place in the Early South, 1700-1835* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 17.

A constant stream of etiquette and advice books promised readers the opportunity to master various elements of genteel behavior, including the correct way to play a musical instrument. Many of these books concerned the body and how to properly position and conduct oneself. One etiquette book on “female beauty” featured a chapter on the “Management of the Person, In Singing, Playing on the Piano Forte, Harp, & c.” Another advice manual, *The Mirror of Graces* (1811), showed young ladies how to cultivate a proper, graceful, and winning deportment while dancing, singing, or playing. Thus how a woman *looked* and acted while playing the harp or piano was as important as how well she played.¹¹⁷

As respectable amateurs who did not need to sell their talents, women were expected to play for pleasure rather than for profit. Nevertheless, amateur playing contained risks, because the audience could always compare a woman’s performance to that of a professional, who set the standard for how a piece of music should sound. Furthermore, while they were often motivated by pure amusement and fun, a woman’s musical performances fulfilled more than a need for entertainment. A woman’s public displays could reinforce personal ties, grease the wheels of politics and society, and provide a vehicle for courtship. Private performances for family members could strengthen familial bonds and make domestic life more agreeable. By choosing what kinds of songs to play, where to play, and how to play, women had the opportunity to influence the mood, sentiment, and behavior of their audience.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ *Etiquette for Ladies: With Hints on the Preservation, Amusement, and Display of Female Beauty*, 166; *A Lady of Distinction, The Mirror of Graces; Or, The English Lady’s Costume* (London: B. Crosby and Co., 1811. Reprint. Mendocino, CA: R.L. Shep, 1997), 153.

¹¹⁸ Wetzel, “Susan Jane Gaston Donaldson and the Pedal Harp in the Early Republic,” 7, 29-35.

Anna Maria Thornton, wife of the architect of the US Capitol William Thornton, was one of Washington's most musically talented and politically savvy socialites. An accomplished amateur artist, Thornton drew, painted, and played the piano. Gilbert Stuart even painted her with a pipe organ in the background, although she never owned one (fig. 14). Thornton kept a detailed diary recording her daily expenses and activities, including her busy social schedule, in a blunt, matter-of-fact style. Between January and June 1803, for example, she either attended or hosted sixty-one teas, nineteen dinners, four parties, and one ball.¹¹⁹ Her diary offers an invaluable glimpse into the everyday life of one of Washington's most accomplished and socially connected women, reading like a veritable who's who of early Washington. Thornton maintained lists of who had called on her (in a "visited by" column), who she called on (in a "visiting" column), who came for tea or dinner, and so on. The Thorntons' company included the Washingtons, Laws, Peters, Madisons, Monroes, Nurses, and Tayloes. Firmly in the "first circle of society," the Thorntons were "ubiquitous at events of importance, friendly with the key diplomats, and on even footing with both Republicans and Federalists."¹²⁰

Anna Maria frequently recorded playing the piano for various forms of company (all men, all women, or mixed company), both at formal and informal gatherings. When the Thorntons hosted formal dinners, Anna Maria might play for their guests, who were often all men.¹²¹ On February 25, 1804, for example, she

¹¹⁹ Carson, *Ambitious Appetites*, 78.

¹²⁰ Gordon S. Brown, *Incidental Architect: William Thornton and the Cultural Life of Early Washington, D.C., 1794-1828* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2009), 67.

¹²¹ The hostess might be the only woman at otherwise all-male dinners. Although less pronounced in Washington than in other places, American society discouraged mixed

wrote, “After dinner at Dr T’s request I played two or three songs the piano forte being in the dining room, and then withdrew.” Although on the surface this statement implies that Thornton served as little more than what Carson calls a “performer displaying musical skill,” an obedient wife ready to play and retire at her husband’s command, her playing increased her visibility as a well-educated, talented musician and enhanced her family’s social status.¹²² She and other domestic female performers achieved indirect power through their music, which they could use to express social or political sentiments. What Thornton chose to play could have set the tone for the rest of the evening before she withdrew, as was customary for all women to do after dinner while the men remained in the dining room, perhaps to enjoy a smoke and a glass of port or brandy.

Thornton played the piano both by herself and with others, both in her own home and when she was out visiting. Her diary is sprinkled with observances such as “I played for them some time,” or “I played a little,” usually when people called on her in the morning (anytime from noon to three o’clock), at tea, or after dinner.¹²³ Calling on neighbors and acquaintances was necessary to extend or receive invitations. Visiting in homes also offered the main form of entertainment in a city that still lacked many urban comforts. When Congress was in session, it was not uncommon for legislators to eat their evening meals at their boardinghouses and then have tea and discuss politics at homes like the Thorntons’, where the sounds of Anna Maria’s piano

company at a range of events. See Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, ed. John Lauritz Larson (St. James, NY: Brandywine Press, 1993), 35, 86.

¹²² Diary of Anna Maria Thornton, 25 February 1804, AMT Papers; Carson, 121.

¹²³ Diary of Anna Maria Thornton, 13 May 1804, 23 May 1804, 9 July 1804, 14 August 1804, 26 August 1804, 28 August 1804, 9 September 1804, and 10 September 1804, AMT Papers.

might entertain them.¹²⁴ In addition to music, informal visits such as these light teas may have included someone reading aloud while ladies worked at needlework and gentlemen wrote letters. Hosts served coffee, tea, and crackers or bread.

More formal tea parties were held later in the evening than dinners or informal visits, around nine. Guests may have enjoyed coffee, tea, macaroons, and sweetcakes between readings, musical performances, and games of whist, loo, and backgammon.¹²⁵ At a tea party at the Calhouns, Margaret Bayard Smith conversed with Secretary of War John Calhoun while his wife Floride and Smith's daughter Julia played piano and chess. After attending one of the Thorntons' routs, or evening teas, Catharine Mitchill expressed her delight that Anna Maria "as usual had a full house. She plays on the piano, and gave us some musick in the course of the evening." Thornton did not monopolize the music at her evening teas, however, inviting guests to play as well. Louisa Catherine Adams recalled a male visitor singing "two songs which he accompanied with his Guitar with great sweetness and uprightness" at one of Thornton's routs in 1823. In addition to playing for intimate gatherings in her own home, Thornton also played at large evening parties to enliven the entertainment and create an opportunity for dancing. Disappointed in a neighbor's "miserable piano made by an old German in George Town," she nevertheless played the instrument for a small party at his house.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Catherine Allgor has shown that calling in Washington City involved both men and women more than in other cities, opening and then reaffirming relations between families. Visiting in the capital maintained the planter tradition of extending gracious hospitality to one's neighbors. See Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 9.

¹²⁵ Earman, "Remembering the Ladies: Women, Etiquette, and Diversions in Washington City, 1800-1814," 111.

¹²⁶ Margaret Bayard Smith to Anna Maria Smith, [n.d.] January 1819, in *First Forty Years*, 147; Catharine Mitchill to Margaretta Akerly Miller, 8 April 1806, CAM

Like the Thorntons, the Van Nesses entertained frequently, even hosting Lafayette's farewell dinner in 1824. Regular guests included the Smiths, Tayloes, Custises, and Nourses. Much like Dolley Madison, Marcia Van Ness excelled at bringing together disparate elements of the Washington community, as she "possessed the social skills and grace needed to facilitate the interchange of public officials, foreign dignitaries, and permanent residents." At a typical party, the Van Nesses would serve a fancy dinner and then gather guests in the drawing room, where Marcia might sing and play piano, or sing while a guest played, demonstrating her musical talents as an engaging hostess.¹²⁷ Accomplished in the feminine arts, Marcia was not shy about singing in company, while John was "ever full of song and story."¹²⁸

According to Rosalie Calvert, the Tayloes also did "a great deal of entertaining." They even lent their home to the Madisons after the burning of the Executive Mansion during the War of 1812, and Dolley opened the 1814 social season at the Octagon. During the winter of 1818-1819, the Tayloes hosted a ball and several tea parties in addition to a weekly dinner.¹²⁹

Dinner was served at four or five o'clock in the afternoon, which allowed enough time for people to get ready for evening parties or balls at eight o'clock. These nighttime gatherings, ranging from casual to very organized affairs, revolved around conversation, music, chess, cards, and/or dancing and generally lasted until eleven or

Papers; Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 21 December 1823, APM, reel 265; Diary of Anna Maria Thornton, 3 March 1807 and 9 September 1804, AMT Papers.

¹²⁷ Klaus, "'Some of the Smartest Folks Here': The Van Nesses and Community Building in Early Washington," 28, 51.

¹²⁸ Moore, *Picturesque Washington*, 33.

¹²⁹ Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle Van Havre, 25 March 1819, in *MOR*, 346; Allgor, *A Perfect Union*, 328.

midnight. During the winter social season, parties occurred almost daily. Rosalie Stier Calvert was pleased that Washington had “every kind of social activity except gambling parties,” for which she had little appetite. However, hosts often set up tables for whist “in the corner for those who are so disposed;” players were usually men.¹³⁰

Routs, also known as drawing rooms or less formally as “squeezes” or “jams,” were like balls without the dancing. In 1828 Frances Parkes wrote that “the preparations for a rout, with the exception of removing the carpet, chalking the floor, and providing music and a supper” were similar to those for a ball. More selective gatherings called conversaciones offered the opportunity for “persons of rank and fortune” to patronize literature. Conversaciones never achieved much popularity in the capital owing to the absence of music, “without which no species of entertainment” was “regarded worthy of attention.”¹³¹ Their lack of interest in conversaciones underscores how deeply Washingtonians felt that music enriched their social gatherings and provided necessary amusement.

Parties with dancing—the “universal amusement”—required music to dance to and musicians to create that music. Small “social orchestras” consisting of two or three string instruments and one or two woodwinds made up the usual ensemble for dancing in the early nineteenth century. Other ensembles for small parties might feature a piano and one or two other melodic instruments, while larger parties employed a larger ensemble or even a brass band. James William Glass, Jr.’s sketch

¹³⁰ Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle van Havre, 25 March 1819, in *MOR*, 348; Margaret Hunter Hall to Jane Hunter, 3 January 1828, in *Aristocratic Journey*, 168.

¹³¹ Frances Byerly Parks, *Domestic Duties* (New York: J & J Harper, 1828), 86-87; Chevalier, *Society, Manners, and Politics in the United States*, 303.

of musicians at a party at Tudor Place depicts a typical four-man ensemble of two violins, a cello, and a clarinet (fig. 15).¹³²

Music could be provided by amateurs or by musicians hired for the evening, who were often members of the Marine Band or music instructors in town. A dancing party hosted by Colonel Tayloe in 1804 displayed the height of music at a private ball. Not one but two bands of musicians performed. One band played dances; the other (probably the Marine Band) played popular patriotic songs and marches on military instruments such as clarinets and kettledrums, reinforcing the Tayloes' nationalism and military connections.¹³³ The Marine Band played at balls sponsored by the officers of the Marine Corps, as well as at a ball at the Navy Yard for the "Miss Hamiltons," who shocked Dolley Madison by "danc[ing] t'il morn[ing]."¹³⁴ According to Louisa Catherine Adams, private citizens who hired the Marine Band were obliged to pay a "heavy tax...of five dollars to each performer besides wine and supper."¹³⁵ This substantial fee meant that Louisa, and presumably other Washington hostesses, hired the Marine Band for only the most important events.

¹³² Anne Hollingsworth Wharton, "Social Life at the White House," *The Era*, July 1902, 85; Elizabeth Aldrich, *From the Ballroom to Hell: Grace and Folly in Nineteenth-Century Dance* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 14.

¹³³ Rosalie Stier Calvert to Mme. H.J. Stier, 2 March 1804, in *MOR*, 77.

¹³⁴ Phoebe Morris to Rebecca Morris, 23 February 1812, Morris Papers, Box 1 (1757-1812), Folder 40, Dumbarton House; Dolley Madison to Phoebe Morris, received 20 October 1812, quoted in Kym Rice and Laura Haines Belman, *Dolley at Dumbarton*, 18.

¹³⁵ The commandant of the Marine Corps, however, could employ the "whole Band" at no cost, as Colonel Henderson did for a ball he hosted in 1823. Louisa wrote that the ball was "unusually brilliant," with "five rooms open and dancing in each." Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 20 February 1823, APM, reel 265.

Hosting a large event such as a ball required a considerable investment of time, energy, and financial outlay as well as a great deal of work for both hosts and free or enslaved servants. Ruth Barlowe offered to assist Margaret Bayard Smith to make the latter's ball more elegant, including the "use of her servants and everything in her house." Barlowe "seem'd about as anxious as if it had been her own party," highlighting the ties between Washington's leading families and the enormous amount of labor and goods—food and drink, dining and drinking vessels, chairs, etc.—needed to equip a large party. Louisa Adams grumbled about how "republican simplicity" meant that hostesses had to spend disproportionate time and energy to produce a party in America, as opposed to Europe, where the leisured classes had more stores, equipages, and servants to entertain both with style and ease.¹³⁶

The competitive nature of entertaining only compounded a host's stress, as competition led many people to spend expansive sums on lavish and frequent entertainments to the detriment of their own economic well-being. As early as 1805 Rosalie Calvert noted, "Luxury is increasing a great deal and European customs are becoming prevalent. It is only the planters who stay the same preserve their old-fashioned ways of life and behavior." In addition to paying the musicians (if there were any), hosts spent lavish sums on victuals and drinks for a party, "where all species of luxury is exhibited," noted British emissary Warden.¹³⁷ Massachusetts politician Harrison Gray Otis was amazed at the continual edible offerings and the duration of dancing at one private party he attended in 1801, at which "the

¹³⁶ Margaret Bayard Smith to Jane Bayard Kirkpatrick, 19 January 1817, in *First Forty Years*, 136; Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 21 December 1819, APM, reel 265.

¹³⁷ Busey, 338; Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle van Havre, 8 August 1805, in *MOR*, 124; Warden, *A Chorographical and Statistical Description of the District of Columbia*, 181.

entertainment consisted first of tea served out about 8 o'clock—Then the dancing continued without interruption until *twelve*. *After that* chocolate in cups with dry toast was handed round among the ladies, and *after that*, the gentlemen were regaled in a back parlour with a cold ham, mutton & tongue.”¹³⁸ This sumptuous spread of tea, chocolate, and meats, plus the hiring of musicians, was expensive but expected if one hoped to maintain his or her position in society. In an era when the average wage laborer made \$1 a day, it cost the Calverts over \$20 to host a single dinner party.¹³⁹

By the 1830s, a French traveler observed that a rout or ball in an American city could cost \$700 or \$800.¹⁴⁰ Although these numbers are based on unknown sources and may have been exaggerated, Louisa Catherine Adams confirmed that “in this country...people put themselves to great expense and frequently to great inconvenience to make such entertainments.” Consequently she made “it a point not to disappoint,” although in order to entertain on such a scale she had to spend more money than she cared to acknowledge.¹⁴¹

The frenetic pace of the winter social season could be repetitive and exhausting as well as dizzying and exhilarating.¹⁴² Even its most avid participants occasionally

¹³⁸ Harrison Gray Otis to Sally Foster Otis, 1 February 1801, quoted in Carson, 129.

¹³⁹ Seth Rockman, *Scraping By: Wage Labor, Slavery, and Survival in Early Baltimore* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), 140; Rosalie Stier Calvert to Henri J. Stier, 22 September 1805, in *MOR*, 127.

¹⁴⁰ Chevalier, *Society, Manners, and Politics in the United States*, 303.

¹⁴¹ Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 28 December 1822, APM, reel 265.

¹⁴² Between calling, dinners, parties, drawing rooms, and assemblies, Phoebe Morris found she was socializing so much during her first winter in Washington that “my head is almost turned, but I hope to become accustomed to it in a few weeks.” Phoebe Morris to Rebecca Morris, 6 January 1812, Morris Papers, Box 1 (1757-1812), Folder 33, Dumbarton House.

felt that Washington society could feel confining and boring. In addition to being small, the fashionable social circle was also transient as Congressmen came and went. Most social activities occurred in a handful of private homes. People tired of one another's company, of the constant obligation to present one's most genteel self, and of the political overtones of entertaining. Louisa Adams was extraordinarily ambivalent about Washington society. In her diary she complained about the unremitting cycle and intolerable sameness of parties: "As a young woman I detested society and always looked upon it as a toil; as an old one it is becoming an insupportable burden" because of the political "footing on which [society] is set in this place." She found that "the most trifling occurrences are turned into political machinery – Even my countenance was watched at the Senate."¹⁴³

Catherine Akerly Mitchill also complained of "a great sameness" of the parties one year and expected she would "soon get tired of them"; only so much novelty was possible at multiple engagements with the same activities and cast of characters. After many years of spending the congressional season in Washington, Harrison Gray Otis reflected, "There is a sameness in these scenes after awhile that is insufferably flat. The same folks doing the Same things."¹⁴⁴ Overwhelmed by constant invitations to Dolley Madison's drawing rooms, dancing assemblies, and parties in Georgetown (and anxious about maintaining her few party dresses), Mary Boardman Crowninshield wrote, "I shall begin to be tired soon and want to go home."¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 29 January 1820, APM, reel 265.

¹⁴⁴ Mitchill quoted in Earman, "Remembering the Ladies," 112; Harrison Gray Otis to Sally Foster Otis, 23 December 1818, Otis Papers, quoted in Carson, 165.

¹⁴⁵ Mary Boardman Crowninshield to Mary Hodges Boardman, 24 December 1815, in *Letters*, 31. Crowninshield offered a sampling of her full schedule in January 1816: "To-morrow evening is dance night. Thursday we are invited to dine at the

After attending yet another dinner party at the same house, Margaret Hall began to tire “sadly of the society” of the host and his guests. The only element of the evening in which Hall found pleasure was the male guest who “played [the piano] and sung most beautifully.”¹⁴⁶ As much as good music could add desperately needed entertainment to an otherwise dull evening, mediocre music could ruin an affair. Guests were quick to criticize parties that provided inferior musical entertainment or, worse, no music at all.

Letter writers and diarists evaluated evening diversions as if they were writing a theatrical review.¹⁴⁷ Candidly, sometimes harshly, judging the performance and performers, they frequently used the word “dull” to describe lackluster social gatherings. Laura Wirt complained to her father, Attorney General William Wirt, that a party the Decatur hosts hosted in 1819 was on the whole “rather *dull*,” offering cards but “very little that could be called conversation & no music!” The Adamses’ sons expected to dance at a neighbor’s evening soiree, “but in consequence of the music disappointing them they had a *dull* party.” In 1809, John Quincy found a ball in honor of new president James Madison excessively crowded, hot and, to make matters worse, “the entertainment bad.” Like his wife, Adams placed a high value on quality entertainment, especially music, to energize and give life to a party. With “scarcely any music, and no other occupation,” he found one of Louisa Catherine’s tea parties

President’s. Friday eve we are engaged to Mr. Dallas, to a large party.” Mary Boardman Crowninshield to Mary Hodges Boardman, 2 January 1816, in *Letters*, 37.

¹⁴⁶ Margaret Hunter Hall to Jane Hunter, 21 January 1828, in *Aristocratic Journey*, 187.

¹⁴⁷ Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 55-56.

extremely “*dull*.”¹⁴⁸ Of course, partygoers wanted to enjoy themselves and have a good time. But the frequency of these complaints also suggests that many elite Washingtonians viewed parties as a social duty; they attended even if they found the events wearisome and monotonous, because they knew they would be criticized and risk losing social capital if they did not.

Referring to private entertaining in the United States in general, English traveler Frances Trollope offered an even harsher assessment of Americans’ evening parties and musical abilities. She criticized parties as being “supremely *dull*” with “very little music, and that little lamentably bad. Among the blacks, I heard some good voices, singing in tune; but I scarcely ever heard a white American, male or female, go through an air without being out of tune before the end of it; nor did I ever meet a trace of science in the singing I heard in society.”¹⁴⁹ This negative view should be considered in the context of Trollope’s biases as a proud Englishwoman with an overarching sense of cultural superiority, embittered from a succession of entrepreneurial failures in America. Nevertheless, at the heart of Trollope’s observations is an indication of Americans’ persistent aspirations to gentility without always achieving it.

Even members of the diplomatic corps, who Trollope would have deemed truly genteel, did not necessarily appreciate one another’s style of entertaining. Mary Bagot attended a birthday party hosted by the French minister’s wife, Baroness Hyde de

¹⁴⁸ Laura Wirt to William Wirt, 23 November 1819, Wirt Papers, quoted in Carson, 134; Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 31 January 1820, APM, reel 265; John Quincy Adams, diary entries, 4 March 1809 and 3 April 1819 in *The Diary of John Quincy Adams, 1794-1845*, 58, 213 [emphasis added].

¹⁴⁹ Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 160-161 [emphasis added].

Neuville, where she found “the rooms full & dancing to vile music.”¹⁵⁰ Americans tended to regard the de Neuilles’ entertainments more favorably. Louisa Catherine Adams appreciated the couple’s “cheerful hospitality” and the “handsome” set-up of their balls.¹⁵¹ John Quincy Adams thought the Bagots’ card and conversation-parties were “elegant,” but the de Neuilles’ were more “gay.” Known for their lavish dinners and entertainment, the de Neuilles caused a minor scandal by hosting dances on Saturday evening, which Puritan New England women had been “educated to consider as holy time.”¹⁵²

Considering the opportunities for disappointment and pretensions associated with formal parties, many women preferred to play music as a means of self-improvement, relaxation, and family bonding. They viewed their music making as a cheerful and soothing pastime, literally a way to pass the time. Always interested in honing her musical skill, Anna Maria Thornton frequently practiced on her own. As she had no children, her main occupation was managing the household, which generally left her ample time to play music. One diary entry reveals the mundane nature of Thornton’s daily life; she simply “read—worked—slept—playd at Chess—piano forte de.—” During a quiet Christmas evening at home, she played while the

¹⁵⁰ Mary Bagot, diary entry, 19 December 1816, in Hosford, “Exile in Yankeeland: The Journal of Mary Bagot, 1816-1819,” 45.

¹⁵¹ Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 18 December 1819, APM, reel 265.

¹⁵² John Quincy Adams quoted in John T. Morse, Jr., *John Quincy Adams* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1898), 102-103.

gentlemen wrote and drew. Another night she and her husband had “quite a musical evening,” words Louisa Catherine Adams repeated in her diary as well.¹⁵³

Although much of the Adamses’ entertaining was calculated for political gain, they also had low-key evenings at home with family and close friends, where music, dancing, and conversation could occur spontaneously and naturally. Louisa and John Quincy often sang ballads and arias together. One of their favorite pieces was “Angels Ever Bright and Fair” from Handel’s oratorio *Theodora*, a tragedy about the Christian martyr Theodora and her converted Roman lover. The da capo aria was intended to be sung by a soloist accompanied by several instruments, but like most airs popular at the time, it could also be played on a single piano, as the Adamses would have likely performed it.¹⁵⁴

A family could play cards, listen to music, or dance while someone played familiar cotillions or new waltzes, with or without company. Early nineteenth-century dance music was frequently composed for a single melodic instrument, usually the violin, but dance music for the piano became increasingly popular for these private, at-home dance parties.¹⁵⁵ Margaret Bayard Smith often wrote about the spontaneous musical and dance performances of her family and friends. While visiting William and Elizabeth Wirt, Smith marveled at “the very large and elegant drawing room...a union of comfort and elegance, I might say splendor.” Although she was extremely fond of music, Smith was so engrossed in conversation with Mr. Wirt that she

¹⁵³ Diary of Anna Maria Thornton, 7 [unknown month] 1805, 25 December 1804, and 20 October 1812, AMT Papers; Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 16 January 1823, APM, reel 265.

¹⁵⁴ Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 2 January 1821, APM, reel 265; Kirk, *Music at the White House*, 42.

¹⁵⁵ Carson, 42; Aldrich, *From the Ballroom to Hell*, 14.

“regretted the interruption” of music when an impromptu harp and piano performance began. The Wirts’ daughter Catherine “played on the harp and sung to it some sweet songs; afterwards she accompanied Elizabeth on the piano, with her harp in some very fine pieces.” Mr. Wirt, a lover of music with a good ear, listened to the performance “in apparent rapture” and required “the harp to be tuned and retuned, till as he said it was within ‘half a hair’s breadth’ the same tone as the piano.”¹⁵⁶

After “the sun was completely excluded” at a birthday party for one of Smith’s children, the company drank punch and ate cake until “they all felt in a good humour for dancing.” Having placed the piano at “one end of the large piazza and the sofa [sic] at the other,” Lucretia Clay played as the children “romp’d rather than danced till a late dinner.”¹⁵⁷ At another of Smith’s gatherings, Lucretia sang with Representative John W. Taylor while the children danced. Perfectly contented with this simple evening of family, friends, music, checkers, chess, and sewing, Smith enjoyed “this easy, social, gay manner of passing the evening...better than a ball.”¹⁵⁸ Low-key, unplanned festivities at home involved less pressure and formality than large, organized parties. Perhaps Smith appreciated the opportunity for more genuine interactions or simply more fun when one could sing and dance without the fear of being scrutinized. Her two novels, *What is Gentility?* and *A Winter in Washington*, also feature impromptu concerts, singing and dancing in a family’s parlor, which,

¹⁵⁶ Margaret Bayard Smith to J. Bayard H. Smith, 23 November 1828, in *First Forty Years*, 244.

¹⁵⁷ Lucretia Hart Clay was the wife of Henry Clay, then Speaker of the House of Representatives. Margaret Bayard Smith to Jane Bayard Kirkpatrick, Summer 1811, in *First Forty Years*, 88.

¹⁵⁸ Margaret Bayard Smith to Jane Bayard Kirkpatrick, 13 February 1814, *First Forty Years*, 93.

along with company and conversation, enlarged the domestic circle and “diversified the winter evenings.”¹⁵⁹

Playing certain songs could evoke pleasurable memories as well. While in Philadelphia, away from her parents in Washington, Josepha Nourse was delighted when she found “a treasure” looking through a friend’s music that reminded her of her mother, Maria Bull Nourse. Josepha wrote her mother, “Do you remember Mama a beautiful verse you used to sing about dreams I found it with the addition of two more verses set to a sweet little Scotch air—I thought I could hear Mama sing it and play’d it over until it was so dark I could not see.” That single piece of music, a song about dreams set to a Scottish melody, transported Josepha to happier times with her parents and gave her “more pleasure than I can describe, an association of ideas so delightful that it was with real reluctance I left the instrument.”¹⁶⁰

Many women found that once they were married, raising children, and managing a household, they had little time to devote to musical pursuits. Benjamin Rush wrote of married women’s keyboard instruments serving only as “sideboards for their parlors,” highlighting their aesthetic appeal as pieces of furniture but proving “by their silence that necessity and circumstances will always prevail over fashion.” In the country, social isolation could also curb a woman’s desire to play. New wife and mother Rosalie Stier Calvert lamented, “I rarely play [piano] anymore. I have so many

¹⁵⁹ Smith, *A Winter in Washington; or, Memoirs of the Seymour Family*, Vol. 1 (New York: E. Bliss and E. White, 1824), 270.

¹⁶⁰ Josepha’s letter is even more poignant given that she passed away within the next year after suffering from a long illness. Anna Maria Joseph Nourse to Maria Bull Nourse, ca. 1804, Nourse Manuscripts, Transcriptions & Letters, Box 2 (1800-1815), Folder 29, Dumbarton House.

other occupations, but even more because there is no one in my circle who is musical.”¹⁶¹

Calvert’s concern about a dearth of musical friends underscores the power of music as a communal activity. Women like Calvert did not necessarily view playing the piano as a solitary experience; rather, they derived the most satisfaction from music if they could play and sing with others. In *A Winter in Washington*, Margaret Bayard Smith’s character Adeline, who played harp and piano and sang beautifully, complained that “it was so tiresome to play and sing, when no one listened.”¹⁶² Music provided powerful social bonds among women, families, and eligible young ladies and their suitors, linking them through a shared experience. Gathering around the piano was a social activity that united women with their families and friends in an enjoyable, harmonious, even inspiring environment. Containing the power to stir the emotions or put people at ease, music was meant to be played and listened to in group settings, from a small family gathering to a ball with hundreds of guests. Listeners could take pleasure in the opportunity for relaxation and cultural refinement that a musical performance afforded.¹⁶³

Although music made Calvert “more sociable,” she preferred to spend her few private leisure hours reading, “which is more interesting and amusing than music and restores me to good humor when sordid household cares have irritated me.”¹⁶⁴ In a

¹⁶¹ Benjamin Rush, “Thoughts upon Female Education” (1787), in *Essays on Education in the Early Republic*, ed. Frederick Rudolph (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965), 34; Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle van Havre, 5 November 1806, in *MOR*, 150.

¹⁶² Smith, *A Winter in Washington*, 124.

¹⁶³ Wetzel, 39.

¹⁶⁴ Rosalie Stier Calvert to Charles J. Stier, 5 May 1808, in *MOR*, 185.

house full of bustling activity and all sorts of sounds—from the cries of children to the clanging of slaves setting up for a meal—Calvert probably wanted to get away from the noise and welcomed the serenity of peace and quiet during the precious hours she had to herself. Reading helped her relax, whereas playing music added to the cacophony she already experienced each day.

When her brother offered to send her music from Antwerp, she was embarrassed to confess that given how little free time she had, “I play very rarely and then I choose the simplest airs for songs or other easy little pieces.” She could “never hear music—not even the violin our old servant plays—without a sigh for the pleasures of the theatre and balls which I have so long been denied.”¹⁶⁵ By reminding her of her carefree youth, music made motherhood and running a household seem even more difficult. “Good reading,” on the other hand, made Calvert “happier and more content with our daily existence,” which, for her, included supervising the activities of her children and the work of her slaves.¹⁶⁶ Music transported her to the world of culture and entertainment to which she had once belonged, but it provided an acute reminder of all she had given up to become a wife, mother, and plantation mistress.

¹⁶⁵ Rosalie Stier Calvert to Charles J. Stier, 5 May 1808, in *MOR*, 185. The servant to whom Rosalie refers is probably a black male slave who worked at Riversdale, reminding us that slaves were exposed to the music of their masters and had their own thriving musical traditions with African and American, black and white influences. Upon hearing about the end of the War of 1812, James Madison’s enslaved manservant, Paul Jennings, played “The President’s March” on the violin as servants launched a two-day fete. See Allgor, *A Perfect Union*, 334.

¹⁶⁶ Rosalie Stier Calvert to Charles J. Stier, 5 May 1808, in *MOR*, 185. Eight years after informing her brother that she hardly played music anymore, she wrote her sister the same, declaring, “I must confess that I don’t have time for that [music]. You have no idea of the multiplicity of my tasks.” One can almost hear the resentment in her voice that her siblings did not have as many responsibilities as she did. Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle van Havre, 25 October 1818, in *MOR*, 304.

Over the course of her life, Calvert's relationship with her piano evolved, underscoring that a woman's life cycle played an important role in determining how often she sat down to the piano and what motivated her to perform.

In her youth, Rosalie Calvert had been able to lead a privileged, carefree life, full of music, arts and fashionable society. How and why did young European and American women like Calvert learn to play musical instruments? To understand why parents invested in their children's musical training, we must first ascertain the state of female education during this period. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth century was an era of dramatic expansion in women's schooling. Public schools were just beginning to develop, especially in the North, but women's education was far from standardized or uniform. Different groups and individuals exhibited a range of opinions on the desired goals of female education. While working-class women were often trained to enter a trade, many middle- and upper-class women had private tutors and/or attended boarding or day schools to learn a more classical curriculum.

The elastic idea of "republican womanhood" entailed that respectable women should be educated in order to properly instruct their families, and, by extension, all males in the republic, the wisdom of virtue, sensibility, and civility. Elite women walked a fine line between the private and public spheres as they "were seen to make a crucial, though indirect, contribution to the commonwealth."¹⁶⁷ Benjamin Rush, a

¹⁶⁷ See Rosemarie Zagarri, "Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother," *American Quarterly* 44 (June 1992), 205, and Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash*. Although "republican motherhood" has become an embattled term, it remains useful as one of the myriad models women could follow as they constructed identity in the early republic. Rather than viewing "republican womanhood" as a problematic historical construct, Zagarri interprets the concept in historical context as a "moderate, non-threatening response to the challenge of the Revolution for women," which preserved traditional gender roles at the same time it carved out a new political role for women (*Revolutionary Backlash*, 5).

vocal proponent of female education, believed that well-informed women would shape the morals and manners of their husbands and sons, improving the quality of male citizenship.¹⁶⁸

A young woman's studies generally included more intellectual pursuits such as history, arithmetic, geography, and languages, as well as one or more of the finer and more domestic arts of sewing, fancy needlework, fine penmanship, drawing, dancing, and music. Young women and their families increasingly valued the ornamental arts as both a means to, and evidence of, gentility.¹⁶⁹ Yet accomplishments in music and the arts were only considered valuable if they were properly balanced with practical skills, academic proficiency, and moral instruction.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ See Rush, "Thoughts upon Female Education," 25-40. See also Zagari, "Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother," 206.

¹⁶⁹ Mary Kelley has perhaps offered the best explanation of the importance of genteel accomplishments to the post-revolutionary generation: "Schooling in refinement had a second and more immediate purpose in the increasingly contested social dynamics of the early Republic. Readily identifiable signifiers of privilege became all the more important to a post-Revolutionary elite struggling to preserve the legitimacy of a rank-ordered society in the face of political democratization. A privileged daughter's education, including her command of the social accomplishments, was deeply imbricated in this contestation. Not only did the ornamental and decorative arts serve as an emblem of elite standing, but the refinement they manifested was visible confirmation of resistance to challenges to the prevailing social hierarchy" (69). However, Kelley also notes that during the 1820s, the curriculum at many women's schools transitioned to match the offerings of men's colleges, bringing academic subjects to the forefront of girls' educational experiences and relegating the ornamental arts, including music, to the margins (86). See Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America's Republic*.

¹⁷⁰ One writer on domestic economy stated that the "education of females is a very delicate and difficult task," but, if done properly, will make a young woman an "amiable and accomplished companion for life," underscoring the power of the ideal of the companionate marriage in the early republic. According to the author, the "advantages which can be acquired at a boarding school blended, with domestic attainments, calculate to make an accomplished young lady and a useful wife." Thus, knowledge of academics, the ornamental arts, and household skills worked together to

Americans worried that women who spent too much time playing music or pursuing other leisure activities would neglect their household duties. Although Rush supported instructing girls in vocal music and dance, he objected to instrumental music as a distraction and waste of time. Practicing an instrument two to four hours a day for the three to four years required to become proficient afforded women less time to enrich their minds by reading the “useful branches of literature.” Rush advised his readers to think “how much more would the knowledge acquired upon these subjects add to the consequence of a lady with her husband and with society than the best performed pieces of music upon a harpsichord or guitar.”¹⁷¹

Women who used their musical abilities to show off and gain public approval were perceived as shallow and conceited, not the unassuming, hard-working wives necessary to the success of the Republic.¹⁷² Etiquette books cautioned that a young lady should never dance, sing, and play only to impress others, nor should she act so presumptuously and arrogantly to believe that she was “the tenth muse” and the audience “her adorers.”¹⁷³ Musical displays were acceptable as long as they were not

create the ideal wife, friend, and mother. Howard, “From the National Advocate, Domestic Economy,” *National Messenger*, July 26, 1819, p. 4. See also Wetzel, 10.

¹⁷¹ Rush made an exception for affluent women with an ear for music who had time to practice because of an “exemption from the usual cares and duties of the mistress of a family.” See Rush, “Thoughts upon Female Education,” 34.

¹⁷² Wetzel, 9-10.

¹⁷³ A Lady of Distinction, *The Mirror of Graces*, 152. Margaret Bayard Smith discouraged her niece from playing the piano at one of Dolley Madison’s lightly attended drawing rooms, where she would have been too conspicuous. However, Smith said, “Had it been a squeeze, I should have urged her playing.” Margaret Bayard Smith to Jane Bayard Kirkpatrick, 5 December 1816, in *First Forty Years*, 132.

too public, vain, or immodest. Never seeking admiration, a woman was sure to find it.¹⁷⁴

The “empty baubles of life connected with courts,” which Americans tended to view as breeding grounds of luxury and vice, included music, according to John Adams. His son John Quincy, who generally appreciated music, once criticized his wife’s harp-playing as nothing more than a “trivial accomplishment,” because it failed to cultivate intellect, virtue, or practicality. Since music could provide little “domestic happiness,” he wrote that he would willingly give up his pleasure in music if Louisa would improve herself, presumably by engaging in activities which he thought would make her a better wife and mother.¹⁷⁵

Of course, music also served an important social function, which both Adamses recognized to a greater degree than any other couple in early Washington. Thus John Quincy continued to encourage his wife’s musical pursuits. But his uncharacteristic outburst draws attention to the fact that feminine musical accomplishment was not universally appreciated. It was easy for critics to dismiss women absorbed in playing their harp or pianoforte as frivolous and indulgent. After all, music did not produce a measurable, tangible benefit or contribute to household economy or efficiency. Husbands who complained that their wives were too extravagant, vain, or trivial could easily place part of the blame on music, a luxury which undoubtedly made some women appear conceited, pretentious, or obsessed with their own abilities rather than the pursuit of “domestic happiness.”

¹⁷⁴ Julia Eklund Koza, “Music and the Feminine Sphere: Images of Women as Musicians in *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, 1830-1877,” in *The Musical Quarterly* 75, no. 2 (Summer 1991), 109; A Lady of Distinction, *The Mirror of Graces*, 141.

¹⁷⁵ Quoted in Kirk, *Music at the White House*, 43.

Nevertheless, many parents decided the benefits of music outweighed any potential negatives and began their children's musical instruction at an early age. Most girls concentrated first on learning the piano, and then occasionally advanced to the harp as they became more proficient. As Kristen Wetzel explains, "Pressing a piano's keys is an easier way to produce a tone, and thus to learn and play music, than manipulating a harp's complicated sets of strings and pedals." In addition to its high level of difficulty and maintenance, fewer women learned to play the harp because it cost more than a piano, and harp lessons were usually the most expensive offered at a female academy.¹⁷⁶

Rosalie Stier Calvert recognized that in both Europe and America, "music is an indispensable talent for a young lady," but "dancing is even more essential." Benjamin Rush agreed that dancing promoted health and rendered "the figure and motions of the body easy and agreeable," which indicated genteel gracefulness.¹⁷⁷ Social dances were much more elaborate and stylized then than now, and both girls and boys, including Calvert's children, began dance lessons as early as age five. Girls could study music and dance under private tutors and/or away from home at ladies' academies. While attending a school run by a French headmistress, Jannette Thruston appears also to have received private music lessons. As a young woman, Marcia Burnes Van Ness learned the minuet and gavotte from a local dance instructor and practiced her singing with a voice instructor.¹⁷⁸ The older daughters of Charles and

¹⁷⁶ Since the United States had no domestic harp manufacturers in the early nineteenth century, all harps had to be imported, contributing to their high cost. By 1820, a new harp cost at least \$300. See Wetzel, 25, 44.

¹⁷⁷ Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle van Havre, 5 November 1806, in *MOR*, 150; Rush, "Thoughts upon Female Education," 30.

¹⁷⁸ Diary of Justice Buckner Thruston, 1810-1843, MS 251, typescript copy with preface by Job Barnard, 1906, the Historical Society of Washington, DC, 121, 133

Rebecca Nourse were instructed in writing, drawing, reading, music, and Spanish at their Washington home, Highlands. Mrs. Nourse noted that her daughter Caroline spent “all the time that is not necessary for relaxation” or household chores studying English and the piano.¹⁷⁹

Mary Boardman Crowninshield took her two eldest daughters, both under the age of ten, with her to Washington. Although she regretted not sending them to boarding school, Crowninshield was pleased that her daughters were improving their musical skills on the piano they acquired for their private quarters in the boardinghouse in which they resided. She boasted that their music master “tells the Misses C’s they will be great belles.” Such a compliment was appreciated in a culture that placed a great deal of importance on young ladies’ entrance into society for furthering their marriage prospects.¹⁸⁰

[hereinafter cited as “Diary of Justice Buckner Thruston, 1810-1843”]; Huntington, “The Heiress of Washington City: Marcia Burnes Van Ness,” 84-86.

¹⁷⁹ Charles Nourse was the son of Joseph Nourse, first US Register of the Treasury. The main house at Highlands, built in 1827, is now part of the Sidwell Friends School. Rebecca Morris Nourse to Anthony Morris, 27 June 1830, Morris Papers, Box 3 (1817-), Folder 23, Dumbarton House.

¹⁸⁰ Mary Boardman Crowninshield to Mary Hodges Boardman, 28 January 1816, in *Letters*, 47-48. Crowninshield was also anxious that her daughters become familiar with and display their dancing talents in Washington society, so she ensured they attended dancing parties for other young people. So did Rosalie Calvert, who took her daughter Caroline to a dancing party, where she partnered with the “best dancer there” for her first dance. Calvert “couldn’t help thinking that it was a good omen for her future success. She [Caroline] is, however, quite lazy about learning—everything that costs some effort fatigues her. George is much more energetic. He is the best dancer in the school.” Mary Boardman Crowninshield to Mary Hodges Boardman, 16 February 1816, in *Letters*, 54; Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle van Havre, 12 August 1810, in *MOR*, 244.

Not everyone has innate musical abilities, and children then, as now, often protested having to learn music, a discipline requiring patience and hard work in order to progress and make the effort worthwhile. Crowninshield had difficulty making her eldest daughter take music lessons. Rebecca and Charles Nourse's daughter Caroline had "the best ear for music," but her sister Mary had the most "perseverance."¹⁸¹ Mary struggled with her twice-weekly lessons from Frederick Wagler and worked hard to improve; her mother confided that she "sheds a few tears over the piano, the days it is so hard—but as she is anxious to learn, I hope a few more lessons will diminish the difficulties." Mrs. Nourse was pleased that both her daughters "were improving faster than I expected on the Piano," but however much effort Mary exerted, her mother still thought Caroline "will play the best."¹⁸²

As the Nourse daughters demonstrate, learners possessed different levels of innate ability as well as learned skill. Music sellers capitalized on a wide market by selling primers intended for various levels of proficiency. Mrs. Nourse wrote her father in Philadelphia, "Mary has been asking me if there was any easy song that you liked particularly that she might learn it before you came [to Washington]." Mary's request for an "easy" piece probably reflected both her skill level in the early stages of her musical instruction and her desire to learn a piece quickly and not embarrass herself in front of her visiting grandfather. Likewise, Rosalie Calvert recognized that some pieces of music sent to her daughter "are still too difficult for her, as she is not

¹⁸¹ Mary Boardman Crowninshield to Mary Hodges Boardman, 1 December 1815, in *Letters*, 21; Rebecca Morris Nourse to Anthony Morris, 30 September 1830, Morris Papers, Box 3 (1817-), Folder 24, Dumbarton House.

¹⁸² Rebecca Morris Nourse and Charles Nourse to Anthony Morris, 9 June 1830 and 28 November 1830, Morris Papers, Box 3 (1817-), Folders 21 and 25, Dumbarton House.

sufficiently advanced.” How far a student could progress also depended on whether they had regular access to an instrument and to a tutor. Costs of instruments, maintenance, and lessons conditioned access. Josepha Nourse’s aunt told her about a young woman who “has no instrument of her own so she often comes here to practice, and if she had but a good Master and proper opportunities for practicing she would make a good Player for she neither wants for ear or application.”¹⁸³ Perhaps this young musician’s parents could not afford a piano or a tutor, inhibiting her ability to improve her playing.

Financially well-off, Rosalie Calvert was able to provide musical instruments and instruction for her family. But she lamented living in the country “when it comes to educating children,” for she and her husband had to go to enormous length and expense to hire tutors. After unsuccessful experiences with two tutors at home, the Calverts decided to enroll their two oldest children, Caroline and George, at French-run private boarding schools. In addition to continuing piano lessons, Caroline also learned to play the lyre.¹⁸⁴ However, as she was not a naturally talented musician, she favored drawing and painting over music and dancing.¹⁸⁵

Rosalie herself had studied harpsichord and dance between ages nine and fourteen at a convent school in Liege conducted by the English nuns of the Order of

¹⁸³ Rebecca Morris Nourse to Anthony Morris, 27 June 1830, Morris Papers, Box 3 (1817-), Folder 23, Dumbarton House; Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle van Havre, 25 October 1816, in *MOR*, 304; Sarah Bull to Anna Maria Josepha Nourse, ca. 1795-1800, Nourse Manuscripts, Box 2 (1800-1815), Dumbarton House.

¹⁸⁴ Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle van Havre, 5 November 1806, 150 and 25 October 1816, in *MOR*, 305.

¹⁸⁵ Rosalie not only ensured her girls had music lessons but also her boys, who studied flute. Louisa Catherine Adams’ sons George and Charles took lessons for flute and violin as well. Rosalie Stier Calvert to Henri J. Stier, 26 March 1817, in *MOR*, 317; Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 9 January 1821, APM, reel 265.

the Holy Sepulchre.¹⁸⁶ In the United States, members of the middling and upper classes, like the Calverts, often sent their daughters to schools run by French émigrés or by German Moravians, who were known for their commitment to educating women and belief that women were intellectually equal to men. As young socialites, Margaret Bayard Smith and Catharine Mitchill attended the Moravian Young Ladies Seminary in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, one of the country's most prestigious female schools and one of many seminaries offering musical, vocal, and dance instruction as part of its curriculum in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.¹⁸⁷

In Washington, parents could send their daughters to several ladies' academies located in Georgetown. Marcia Burnes attended Georgetown's School for Young Ladies before completing her education at Madame Lacombe's Female Academy in Baltimore. The Academy of the Visitation in Georgetown was founded in 1798 by French nuns of the Poor Clares sect. One of the oldest and most successful Catholic girls' schools in America, in its early years the Academy suffered from a lack of English-speaking instructors, suitable school books, and instruments. However, by 1817 the Reverend Joseph Picot de Cloriviere, a highly educated French aristocrat, had improved the curriculum to equal the standards of French schools. Consequently, more well-to-do girls of all denominations began to attend the Academy, which offered

¹⁸⁶ Gerard LaRoche, "Music at Riversdale," in *The Riversdale Letter* (Riversdale Historical Society, Inc., Summer 1995), 1.

¹⁸⁷ Earman, "Remembering the Ladies," 115. The Moravian Young Ladies Seminary, founded in 1742, began accepting non-Moravian students shortly after the Revolution. Jewel A. Smith has argued that the seminary's "importance in the history of women's education in America lies in a liberal philosophy that provided, as part of a strong academic curriculum, an education in music equal to that of its European counterparts." See Smith, "Academic and Music Curricula in Nineteenth-Century American Women's Education: A Comparison of the Moravian Young Ladies' Seminary and Nazareth Hall," *Musical Quarterly* 90, no. 2 (2007), 275.

courses in religion, reading, writing, geography, arithmetic, English grammar and composition, needlework, French, drawing, and music.¹⁸⁸

Washington parents sent their daughters to schools both around the District and further afield, especially Philadelphia. The Monroes' younger daughter Maria Hester and Ann Elbertina Van Ness attended Madame Grelaud's school in Philadelphia together. Josepha Nourse, the beloved daughter of Register of the Treasury Joseph Nourse, studied in Philadelphia at Mrs. Capron's Boarding School, where she excelled in music, receiving at least three music merit cards in 1799 and 1800, when she was fourteen or fifteen years old (figs. 16 and 17).¹⁸⁹

As Rosalie Calvert found out with the nearly \$1200 it cost for each of her children's annual room and board, formal education was expensive. For example, in 1804 Mrs. Keets' Young Ladies Seminary in Annapolis charged, per quarter, \$18 for voice and piano, \$15 for drawing, and \$10 for dancing lessons. A student at Miss Charlotte Taylor's Academy in the District in 1818 had to pay \$50 for full boarding, or \$30 for half-boarding, plus \$10 each for English, orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, plain sewing, and muslin work, all per quarter. Music, dancing, painting, drawing, French, and Italian were separate charges.¹⁹⁰

For its size, the District of Columbia supported an abundance of music tutors who offered students access to the latest songs, composers, and musical tastes. At least twenty-four German, English, French, Italian, and American instructors

¹⁸⁸ Klaus, 26; Wetzell, 13-14.

¹⁸⁹ Huntington, "The Heiress of Washington City," 98; Nourse manuscripts, Box 1B, Folder 27, Dumbarton House.

¹⁹⁰ Margaret Law Calcott, ed., *Mistress of Riversdale*, 248; "Young Ladies Academy in Annapolis, Maryland," *Washington Federalist*, May 23, 1804, p. 4; "Female Academy," *Daily National Intelligencer*, June 19, 1818, p. 1.

advertised their services in Washington area newspapers from 1796 to 1820. Many music teachers were foreign-born professional musicians, composers, or publishers teaching for additional income. Some stayed in Washington for a brief period before moving to a different city; others were permanent residents, like Frederick Wagler, who also published sheet music and sold musical instruments. Instructors' offerings ranged from comprehensive piano, flute, violin, and voice lessons to piano lessons only to copying music. Male teachers generally taught both female and male students and could accompany young ladies' piano playing on the violin; female teachers taught female students only. Instructors gave lessons in their own chambers (often taverns or boardinghouses) or privately at a pupil's residence.

The cost of lessons varied widely, from about \$12 to \$24 a quarter, depending on supply and demand and the quality and renown of the instructor.¹⁹¹ In 1811, Judge Buckner Thruston paid Mr. Woodbury \$12 per quarter to give piano lessons to his daughter Sidney Ann three times a week. In 1820, it cost Thruston twice that amount for his daughter Jannette to receive the same amount of instruction from Gaetano Carusi (see Appendix A).¹⁹² Instead of charging by the quarter, George F. Norton quoted \$1 per private lesson at a student's house or \$.75 for public lessons in his

¹⁹¹ In 1801, a Mr. Falla in Alexandria, recently from Edinburgh, charged \$18 per quarter for lessons on piano or violin ("Music," *Alexandria Advertiser*, June 9, 1801, p. 2). J.B. Duclairacq in Georgetown gave piano, violin, or flute lessons for \$16 a quarter in 1804; a year later Francesco Masi, "Major of the Band of Musicians in the service of the United States," offered lessons for only \$12 a quarter. ("Dancing and Music," *Washington Federalist*, October 6, 1804, p. 1; "Music," *Washington Federalist*, May 22, 1805, p. 2). Frederick Wagler charged \$15 per quarter (a total of thirty lessons, forty-five minutes each) in 1812. He also accommodated students by the half-quarter ("A Card," *The National Intelligencer and Washington Advertiser*, December 12, 1812, p. 4).

¹⁹² Diary of Justice Buckner Thruston, 1810-1843, 25, 133.

Alexandria school in 1819.¹⁹³ Paying per lesson made economic sense only if a student needed a few lessons. Regardless of whether each individual lesson cost forty cents or a dollar, musical education was a substantial investment. The ability to afford the costs of musical training represented economic capital in a marketplace. Part of Benjamin Rush's opposition to musical training for young women stemmed from what he saw as the exorbitant "price of musical instruments and the extravagant fees demanded by the teachers of instrumental music."¹⁹⁴ Many artisans and laborers who only earned \$1 a day would have needed to work at least half a day to afford a single music lesson for their son or daughter. Thus for the vast majority of Washington's population, musical training, either as individual lessons in the student's home or part of a boarding school curriculum, was prohibitively expensive.

It only makes sense that parents who spent so much money on their children's music lessons regarded music as an important component of their education and expected their children to be proficient. Josepha Nourse's aunt informed her niece that she would be displeased if Josepha failed to practice enough to get better on the pianoforte: "I am glad you have an instrument some times to practice on or you would entirely forget your music and I should be very much disappointed when ever I see you next if you are not much improved."¹⁹⁵

Parents believed music delivered a variety of benefits. They viewed music as a "means of improving" a girl's taste and "giving refinement and delicacy" to her emotions. Music was a therapeutic and enjoyable activity which complemented a

¹⁹³ "Music," *Alexandria Herald*, April 16, 1819, p. 3.

¹⁹⁴ Rush, "Thoughts upon Female Education," 33.

¹⁹⁵ Sarah Bull to Anna Maria Josepha Nourse, ca. 1795-1800, Nourse Manuscripts, Dumbarton House.

girl's more rigorous academic studies, but it also built skills to discipline the mind and body. Music increased social capital and prepared a young woman for work in the public sphere as an entertainer, wife, and mother in the upper echelons of American society.¹⁹⁶ According to Benjamin Rush, vocal music in particular “soothed the cares of domestic life. The distress and vexation of a husband, the noise of a nursery, and even the sorrows... may all be relieved by a song, where sound and sentiment unite to act upon the mind.”¹⁹⁷ Less wealthy families concerned about their daughter's future employment recognized that a female musician could obtain teaching positions in schools or with families if she needed to support herself. Finally, and perhaps most importantly to many anxious parents, music prepared young women for courtship and enhanced their prospects for marriage.

Musical performances and dances created delightful opportunities for potential suitors to notice a young woman's talents and attributes. Unable to pursue men themselves, ladies could only hope that their piano playing attracted attention from male admirers. In her analysis of female musicians in *Godey's Lady's Book*, Julia Koza notes that music making often appeared in courtship scenes. The ostensible purpose of performances was to entertain, but they often ended in romance. One story even declared that musical accomplishments were the “passports to consideration” for young women.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Almira Phelps, *The Female Student; or, Lectures to Young Ladies on Female Education* (New York: Leavitt, Lord & Company, 1836), 375-376; Kirk, *Music at the White House*, 18; Wetzell, 7-8.

¹⁹⁷ Although he had hesitations about instructing women in instrumental music, Rush thought “vocal music should never be neglected in the education of a young lady in this country.” Rush, “Thoughts upon Female Education,” 30.

¹⁹⁸ Koza, “Music and the Feminine Sphere,” 109; Meeta M. Duncan, ed., “Ellen Litchfield. An Autobiography,” in *Godey's Lady's Book* 43, August 1851, 79.

In her novel *What is Gentility?*, Margaret Bayard Smith wrote of the passions excited in young Timothy McCarty when his music master's daughter sang to accompany his flute: "McCarty's heart vibrated to the tones of her voice." Unsurprisingly, the pair eventually married and spent joyous evenings playing and singing music with their family at home. In Smith's other novel *A Winter in Washington*, the hero Wilmot's "happiest hour" was when he could "sit by the side of Louisa, at her piano, or harp, listen in silent rapture to her sweet accents, or, joining his voice to hers, would feel as if, in mingling voices, they likewise mingled souls."¹⁹⁹ Music had the ability to transcend ordinary male-female interactions and even provided a window to the soul.

In boardinghouses, bachelor Congressmen might meet eligible daughters of the tavern keeper or other Congressmen at the piano. For example, seventeen-year-old Anna King played two to three evenings a week in the common parlor of her mother's small boardinghouse. Her talents did not go unnoticed or unappreciated. When Representative Manasseh Cutler moved out of Mrs. King's boardinghouse, he missed "the amusement Miss Anna used to afford us with her Forte-Piano and excellent voice."²⁰⁰ Playing the piano offered young women like Anna King a rare opportunity to be the center of attention in a manner approved by society.

Eligible men and women could also interact musically at the President's Mansion. At her weekly drawing rooms, Dolley Madison encouraged young people to mix and display their musical talent. One young woman finding herself the object of male attention at the piano was Phoebe Morris, the daughter of one of Dolley's close

¹⁹⁹ Smith, *What is Gentility?*, 32; Smith, *A Winter in Washington*, 269.

²⁰⁰ Quoted in Anne Hollingsworth Wharton, *Social Life in the Early Republic* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1902), 82.

friends from Philadelphia, who spent several months in Washington under the Madisons' care. At one of "Mrs. Madison's Wednesday nights," Phoebe attracted the notice of a young lieutenant. After being introduced to her, he requested that she "indulge him with an air on the Piano." Clearly embarrassed and flattered at the same time, Phoebe wrote her sister about the performance which ensued:

I endeavored to excuse myself alledging that I could not perform sufficiently well to exhibit before such Company. Madam, said he, with the high powers of entertainment which you possess, it is utterly impossible that you cannot do any thing you please—he then pounced upon me like an Eagle on his prey & led the way to the music room. I did my best – which you know to be nothing extraordinary & was overwhelmed with compliments which were too high flown to remember.²⁰¹

The lieutenant showed his interest in Phoebe by asking her to play on the piano. In keeping with modesty and respectability, she demurred at first, but quickly acquiesced. Ultimately, Phoebe's performance allowed her to receive praise in a socially acceptable manner, although, as she admitted, the compliments were excessive, more an excuse for the lieutenant to applaud her than to offer an accurate assessment of her musical skills.

Frances Trollope noted that American men and women usually stayed separate at social gatherings, but "sometimes a small attempt at music produces a partial reunion," as "a few of the most daring youths, animated by the consciousness of curled hair and smart waistcoats, approach the piano-forte, and begin to mutter a little to the half-grown pretty things, who are comparing with one another 'how many quarters' music they have had." Trollope failed to see that music was one of the few arenas in

²⁰¹ Phoebe Morris to Rebecca Morris, 26 April 1811, Morris Papers, Box 1 (1757-1812), Folder 26, Dumbarton House.

which young men and women could share similar talents, play for one another within the bounds of proper behavior, and even perform together.²⁰²

Dancing also allowed young men and women to display their physical attributes and experience close bodily contact. As the only sanctioned way for members of the opposite sex to touch one another, dancing could provide an outlet for physical energy and spark romantic feelings. Although members of the colonial gentry had attended balls as a proud display of their cultural pre-eminence, especially in the South, after the Revolution balls served primarily as courtship vehicles for the young elite. Referring to her experiences in Cincinnati and New York, Trollope complained that only parties expressly for young people offered the level of entertainment she expected. Dancing was “almost wholly confined to the unmarried of both sexes.”²⁰³

Washington does not seem to have suffered from the dearth of dancing parties and balls that Trollope suggested. Married men and women in the capital did dance on numerous occasions, perhaps because of the influence of the diplomatic corps who danced and entertained in the European manner as well as the persistence of social gatherings as a way to gain, consolidate, and flaunt cultural and political power.²⁰⁴ Nevertheless, Trollope was correct in her observation that dancing at social events *was* primarily intended for young people, and dance they did, enjoying parties most when the music and dancing continued throughout the evening. Louisa Adams was amused

²⁰² Trollope, 35; Brandt, “Penned and Printed: The Sheet Music Collection of Eliza Ridgely, 1803-1867,” 37.

²⁰³ Kierner, 146; Trollope, 86, 175.

²⁰⁴ For example, Louisa Adams reported that a Mrs. Johnston “valed very beautifully” at one of her sociables, and a Mrs. Durand “danced most elegantly” at William Wirt’s ball. *Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams*, 28 January 1823 and 2 January 1824, APM, reel 265.

by two young women who “returned home so fatigued they could scarcely walk” after a full night of dancing at James Thompson’s ball. Young women enjoying music and dancing could also enliven an entire gathering. Louisa remarked that all 130 guests at one of her own parties were “very sociable and good humoured,” while the “very merry” young ladies danced, played and sung.²⁰⁵

Washingtonians had such an appetite for dancing that those who did not dance often found themselves at a disadvantage, or their wishes simply ignored. Floride Calhoun’s mother was a “rigid Calvinist” and usually refused to go into society, especially if there was dancing. But in Washington, Louisa Adams wryly observed, “All prejudices must give way,” and at one party, against the Calhouns’ wishes, “a cotillion was made up and the young Ladies danced very much to the annoyance of the Secretary [John Calhoun] who is desirous to show every respect to the Mother of his Wife.” The Hyde de Neuilles hosted another dance where guests had been “expressly informed that there was to be no dancing, but as usual the young ladies paid no sort of attention...and danced all the Eveng.” The ladies’ desire to dance could trump an elderly woman’s propriety or the requests of a host.²⁰⁶

Young brides occasionally entertained wedding guests by putting on a musical performance, such as one woman who “played on the harp and sung” for the large party after the marriage ceremony. Another couple who had a “grand wedding” did not play themselves but “danced stoutly” to the sound of a fiddle, played in turn by

²⁰⁵ Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 7 December 1820 and 24 December 1822, APM, reel 265.

²⁰⁶ Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 11 February 1820 and 24 March 1821, APM, reel 265.

“several fiddlers.”²⁰⁷ To celebrate marriage or the transition between girlhood and womanhood, fathers sometimes gave a piano or harp to their daughter. When Buckner Thruston, US District Court judge for the District of Columbia, bought a second-hand “piano of Mrs. Rankin for \$130,” he presented it to his daughter “as her absolute Property” and recorded the gift in his diary “in Fee & in Evidence of it.” Because the piano was her exclusive property, when she married she could take the instrument to her new household as a tool to entertain and to preside over the musical and moral education of her family.²⁰⁸

Rosalie Calvert, who had avoided the Washington social scene as she raised her children and managed Riversdale, re-entered society in 1818, when Caroline was old enough to be introduced as an educated, eligible young woman. During the 1818-1819 social season, which Rosalie called “quite sparkling,” she and Caroline attended an endless parade of tea parties, private and public balls, dinners, and assemblies. Echoing Mary Boardman Crowninshield’s breathlessness at the frequency of social engagements, she wrote that “few days [pass] without one [tea party or dance], and sometimes two are given on the same evening, even though invitations are sent out ten to twelve days in advance.” Rosalie kept careful track of the year’s social events, indicating that she took these engagements seriously. The Calverts also hosted luncheons and dinners at Riversdale, many of which involved dancing.²⁰⁹ Surely they gave these parties with an eye towards showing off Caroline, who during her debut

²⁰⁷ Mary Bagot, 18 November 1816, in Hosford, “Exile in Yankeeland,” 44; Diary of Anna Maria Thornton, 8 September 1806, AMT Papers.

²⁰⁸ Diary of Justice Buckner Thruston, 1810-1843, 5; Wetzell, 40.

²⁰⁹ Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle van Havre, 11 January 1819, 340 and 26 April 1818, in *MOR*, 335.

social season attended thirteen dancing parties in addition to dinners, tea parties, and the Monroes' biweekly assemblies. However, Rosalie was always vigilant in regards to her daughter's welfare and did not "think it is good for a young person to be constantly in society—a little spacing is better."²¹⁰

Like many young, well-to-do women in Washington, Caroline Calvert learned to play the piano and to dance for her own edification and for reasons of social import. Her parents invested heavily in her musical education to prepare her for entering society and finding a husband. As a friend, wife, and mother she might play at formal and informal social events to entertain, to relax and unwind, to strengthen bonds with her friends and family, or to simply amuse herself and others.

²¹⁰ Rosalie Stier Calvert to Henri J. Stier, 13 March 1819, in *MOR*, 343.

Section 5

WHAT WOMEN PLAYED: SONGS AND SONGBOOKS

What kinds of music did women play? Women in Washington, like elsewhere in America, played music from popular culture. The middle-class “parlor song,” with its emphasis on moral instruction, hardly existed in the early republic, nor did the divide between refined, elite musical taste and popular, vernacular music. Not until later in the nineteenth century did middle-class and elite households self-consciously embrace “classical” music with the goals of edification and the cultivation of spiritual, ethical, and aesthetic values. Women in early Washington played a mixture of urban and rural music: the sonatas of Boccherini and Mozart alongside “Yankee Doodle” and “The President’s March.” Americans of the early republic marched, sang, and danced with gusto. Printers published an enormous amount of music for the pianoforte alone or in combination with voice, violin, harp, or flute.²¹¹

Amateurs with limited abilities could successfully play rondos and variations on airs, which were well-suited to home entertainments and became increasingly popular as the nineteenth century progressed.²¹² Other popular instrumental music

²¹¹ Cynthia Adams Hoover, “The Instruments & Performance Practices,” in *Members of the Federal Music Society, Music of the Federal Era* (New World Records LP, 1978), 3.

²¹² Richard J. Wolfe, *Early American Music Engraving and Printing* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), 179. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the gulf widened between what music historian H. Wiley Hitchcock called music in the *vernacular tradition*—more plebian, native, not approached self-consciously but grown into, and valued for its utility or entertainment—and music in the *cultivated tradition*—self-aware, exotic, and oriented towards effort and a spiritual, moral, or

included marches and dances, notably reels, hornpipes, minuets, and especially cotillions and country dances—square and line dances which involved maximum group participation. Lighthearted and gay, cotillions and country dances were nevertheless middle-class and elite dances, rarely performed by the lower sorts. Although some etiquette guides published the steps for cotillions and contra-dances, they had to be learned from dancing instructors to be mastered.²¹³ Other dances advertised by music sellers in Washington newspapers included the gavotte, allemande, and the recently introduced waltz.

Vocal music, however, constituted the majority of American sheet music during the period, including French, Italian, and English arias; sentimental or satirical songs of the theater and semi-operatic stage, particularly the ballad opera; and Scottish, Irish, and English ballads.²¹⁴ As Richard Wolfe notes, “The citizens of emerging America liked to parody and poke fun; to be stirred by noble sentiments and

aesthetic purpose. See H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1988), 54.

²¹³ According to Francis Nichols, a Boston dance instructor, cotillions were harder to learn than contra-dances, being “more complicated than...most other dances, and so intricate in figure, that few persons have sufficient time and opportunity to familiarize themselves to them.” Thus his “guide to politeness” contained cotillions which he “deemed would be the most easy for new beginners.” Francis D. Nichols, *A Guide to Politeness; Or, A System of Directions for the Acquirement of Ease, Propriety and Elegance of Manners* (Boston: Lincoln & Edmands, 1810), 60.

²¹⁴ Theatrical performances, such as ballad operas, involved music of some kind either before, during (between acts), or after the main performance. Unpretentious diversions performed in truncated form as “afterpieces,” ballad operas alternated between singing and spoken dialogue. A staple of the eighteenth-century theatrical repertory, ballad operas continued to thrive in the US even after their popularity waned in England. On their pianos at home, women eagerly reproduced the ballad opera’s familiar, simple folk tunes and ballads reset to satirical lyrics. Operas in general in this era were more lighthearted than they are now, not dissimilar from a contemporary Broadway musical. See Kirk, *Music at the White House*, 11.

cry; and to celebrate their heroes, leaders, and institutions, through musical as well as verbal utterance.”²¹⁵ Although popular songs like sentimental ballads crossed class lines and obscured social distinctions, only women of means could afford to reproduce the songs they heard at the theater or at parties privately on pianos or harps in their parlors. Using sheet music, they could recreate their own version of a complicated production like an opera by playing the piano-vocal score that distilled the music into relatively simple, reproducible form.²¹⁶

The federal period also coincided with the classical era of European art music, and Americans were enamored with composers such as Bach, Steibelt, Clementi, Pleyel, and later Haydn and Beethoven.²¹⁷ American amateurs as well as composers avoided Europeans’ more complex, challenging sonatas in favor of lighter and briefer compositions. For example, Martha Custis, George and Martha Washington’s granddaughter, owned a book of six Boccherini sonatas, which had been “transposed, altered, & the fingering & Execution rendered more easy” by another musician in London, who took “no small labor to obviate the difficulties experienced, formerly, in various passages of the original work [for violin], and...endeavour’d to alter the fingering in such a manner, as to benefit the Scholar, and yet preserve the original beauties of the great Master.”²¹⁸ Rosalie Calvert played popular arias from the comic

²¹⁵ Wolfe, *Early American Music Engraving and Printing*, 179.

²¹⁶ In her analysis of the sheet music of Eliza Ridgely, Tova Karissa Brandt argues that sheet music broke down the “barriers between public spectacle and private entertainment.” See Brandt, 35.

²¹⁷ Richard Crawford, “The Recordings,” in *Music of the Federal Era*, 5.

²¹⁸ Giuseppe Diettenhofer, *Six Favourite Sonatas for the Piano Forte or Harpsichord, with an accompaniment obligato for a Violin, first Composed by the Celebrated Signor Luigi Boccherini* (London: T. Skillern, 1783), preface.

operas of Andre Gretry and less technically difficult pieces by Bach, Haydn, Mozart, and her fellow Belgian Francois Gossec on her piano in the west parlor, or *salle de compagnie*, at Riversdale. Calvert also played easier pieces she would have heard during her children's dance lessons, such as hornpipes, minuets, and upstart waltzes, which were rapidly gaining popularity.²¹⁹

Although Americans still looked to Europe for musical styles and taste, they increasingly sought out compositions by Americans as well.²²⁰ The songs of Francis Hopkinson, generally accepted as the first truly American composer, and William Billings, who wrote choral music in the American tradition of psalm singing, would have been heard at parties and dances in Washington.²²¹

Patriotic tunes and military marches provided a popular way for citizens to reaffirm their burgeoning nationalism. Using the music of the "President's March," composed by Philip Phile in 1789, Joseph Hopkinson penned the words for "Hail Columbia" in 1798, and the song could soon be heard from Georgetown to Georgia, serving as America's de facto national anthem (fig. 18). Americans also displayed a strong affinity for political songs, which were widespread and deeply contested in the early republic. Nearly anyone, male or female, could learn to sing a party song and express his or her beliefs in the political arena, creating an idealized version of what their nation was and should be. Current events and political winds affected the popularity of Federalist and Republican songs. For example, as Simon Newman argues, nationalistic songs associated with the Federalists, such as "Hail Columbia,"

²¹⁹ LaRoche, "Music at Riversdale," 1-3.

²²⁰ Unsurprisingly, Britain exerted a strong influence on American musical traditions, but Americans were also enamored with foreign-language songs and operatic arias, especially in French or Italian. See Brandt, 31.

²²¹ LaRoche, 3.

“Adams and Liberty,” and “God Save Great Washington,” enjoyed a popular resurgence as Franco-American relations deteriorated towards the end of the 1790s.²²²

Patriotic tunes also had political implications in foreign affairs. British minister Charles Bagot’s entertaining helped improve relations between the United States and England after the War of 1812. Gracious hosts, the Bagots entertained frequently and even opened one ball with a rendition of “Yankee Doodle,” while Mary Bagot danced solely with Americans. “God Save the King” was also performed, which caused a stir among Congressmen who had demanded that the song pledging allegiance to George III should *not* be played when relations between the two countries were still so tense.²²³ Nevertheless, after the party Mary Bagot felt confident enough to write, “Our Ball! & never did any thing go off as well. Never were individuals so feted. Never were there such a flattering testimony from such a whole nation.”²²⁴

Other dances, such as annual birth night balls celebrating George Washington’s birthday, validated and spread patriotic tunes. At a birth night ball in Georgetown in 1812, the band honored the entrance of the current president by playing “Madison’s March,” and then initiated the dancing by commemorating the father of the country with “Hail Columbia” and “Washington’s March,” the leading instrumental work of the late eighteenth-century American repertoire.²²⁵ Washingtonians listened to,

²²² Simon P. Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Street: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 177-181.

²²³ Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 26 February 1819 and 27 February 1819, APM, reel 264.

²²⁴ Mary Bagot, diary entry, 26 February 1819, in Hosford, “Exile in Yankeeland: The Journal of Mary Bagot, 1816-1819,” 49.

²²⁵ Phoebe Morris to Rebecca Morris, 23 February 1812, Morris Papers, Box 1 (1757-1812), Folder 40, Dumbarton House.

danced to, and played not only American marches, like “The Battle of New Orleans,” which commemorated Jackson’s victory during the War of 1812, but also tunes celebrating European events and figures, such as “The Waterloo March” and “Lord Wellington’s Grand March.” The “Battle of Prague,” written in 1788 by Czech composer Frantisek Kotzwara to commemorate a bloody battle of the Seven Years’ War, was especially popular, going through several editions. Count Julien Niemcewicz, a Polish statesman and poet who traveled in America in 1798, heard a rendition of the tune when he visited George and Martha Washington at Tudor Place, the home of their granddaughter Martha Custis Peter. Niemcewicz recalled that Mrs. Washington requested “Mrs. Peteers [sic] to play the harpsichord, which she did, and played very well for us the eternal Battle of Prague, a favorite piece in America.”²²⁶

When President Adams feted the Marquis de Lafayette during the general’s 1825 visit to the capital, the celebration included the Marine Band playing the French revolutionary anthem “La Marseillaise,” a fitting tribute to the Revolutionary War hero making his triumphal final visit to the United States. Now a longstanding tradition to announce the president at formal state events, “Hail to the Chief” was first played for John Quincy Adams by the Marine Band at the ground-breaking ceremony for the excavation of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal in 1828.²²⁷

Although one later writer who disparaged early Americans’ musical taste called these marches “bombastic pieces which delivered maximum noise with little

²²⁶ Julien Ursyn Niemcewicz, *Under their Vine and Fig Tree: Travels through America in 1797-1799*, 85, quoted in Rebecca Jenkins, Notes on the Program, “Musica Festiva: Attractive Music for all Occasions,” Armistead Peter, Jr. Papers, Tudor Place Archives.

²²⁷ Kirk, *Music at the White House*, 43; Kirk, *Musical Highlights from the White House*, 21.

difficulty,” people of all classes could connect to the patriotic messages of such intentionally loud music.²²⁸ Indeed, to most Americans at the time, instrumental music meant the martial tunes of band music, performed on woodwinds and horns by the Marine Band in Washington and by militias and other local organizations across the country.²²⁹ The military band, in setting and instrumentation, may have been far removed from the intimacy of the parlor, but musical selections were much the same.

Americans also sang vast quantities of religious psalms and hymns. Parents combined religious and musical instruction for their children by teaching them church refrains. Young Caroline and Mary Nourse presumably had access to the “Hymns & Spiritual Songs” and “Spiritual Songs” listed in their father’s catalogue of books under the heading “School Books and Religious Books for Children.”²³⁰ Although they may have learned hymns, Washington’s well-to-do women seem to have played little religious music for social gatherings, and they did not think highly of the music supplied at worship services, either.²³¹

²²⁸ Louis Charles Elson, *The History of American Music* (New York: B. Franklin, 1971), 53.

²²⁹ Michael Broyles, *“Music of the Highest Class”: Elitism and Populism in Antebellum Boston* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 127.

²³⁰ Nourse Family Papers, 1751-1918, Accession #3490, Box 9, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.

²³¹ Before enough churches were built to accommodate the city’s growing population, religious services took place at the House of Representatives, and the music was supplied by the Marine Band. Margaret Bayard Smith wryly observed that although the members of the band in their scarlet uniforms “made quite a dazzling appearance in the gallery,” the music was “as little in union with devotional feelings, as the place.” She wrote, “The marches they played were good and inspiring, but in their attempts to accompany the psalm-singing of the congregation, they completely failed and after a while, the practice was discontinued,—it was *too* ridiculous.” Apparently the congregation exhibited little devotion at these services, which quickly became what

Amateur musicians could obtain sheet music for hymns, marches, and other pieces by subscribing to musical magazines which were published in Philadelphia, New York, or Boston and often advertised in Washington newspapers. For example, the short-lived *Literary and Musical Magazine*, published in Philadelphia in 1819-1820, offered its readers a supplement of actual music—"24 quarto pages of Fashionable Music," primarily ballads and comic songs—for only \$.50 a quarter.²³² Almost all of the songs had recently been performed in Philadelphia theaters or concert halls, making them relevant and exciting to readers eager to reproduce a favorite song they had heard in concert on their piano at home. Publishers did not always identify the composer of a tune, but they did include, when applicable, the name of the singer who performed the piece in Philadelphia, such as "'The Bewildered Maid,' sung by Mr. Philipps."²³³ Although most of the tunes were arranged for voice and piano, a few were published for flute, clarinet, or violin.²³⁴

The burgeoning music publishing trade in America was directed primarily towards amateur performers who desired song sheets and instrumental pieces to play at

Smith called a "sabbath-day resort," another society event where the fashionable mingled. Margaret Bayard Smith, "Reminiscences," 1837, *The First Forty Years*, 14.

²³² "Advertisement," *City of Washington Gazette*, October 26, 1819, p. 2.

²³³ "The Bewildered Maid," *The Ladys and Gentlemans Weekly Literary Museum and Musical Magazine* 3, no. 14, Jan 25, 1819, p. 110.

²³⁴ The magazine was called the *Ladys and Gentlemans Weekly Literary Museum and Musical Magazine* until March 1819 and then the *Literary and Musical Magazine* until the magazine ceased publication in 1820. Following is a partial list of the songs published in the magazine: "Love's Young Dream," "The Sailor's Last Whistle," "Tho Love is Warm Awhile," "Is There a Heart That Never Loved," "Roy's Wife of Aldivaloch," "Virtue Lives within her Heart," "Oh Where is the Rose," and "Love Sheds No More His Genial Ray." See *Ladys and Gentlemans Weekly Literary Museum and Musical Magazine* 3, no. 9-26; *Literary and Musical Magazine* 4, no. 1-20.

home. Piano reductions of overtures, ballets, operas, marches, and oratorios circulated widely, while the most elaborate pieces were fantasias on popular airs. Musicians could buy songs individually and either keep them as loose sheets or bind them into a volume. Music publishers usually charged 12 ½ cents, or one shilling, per page of printed music. Since the usual format for songs and vocal pieces of the stage was two pages printed from two plates, most sheet music cost twenty-five cents.²³⁵ More elaborate pieces had a separate title page with the actual music beginning on page two, which increased the overall cost of the piece. At one Washington bookstore in 1814, an instruction manual for beginners on the piano sold for \$1.50; blank music paper cost \$1.50 per quire.²³⁶ When Anna Maria Thornton recorded spending seven dollars on music in one day, she must have come home with a significantly augmented collection of songs.²³⁷

At least fourteen shops in Washington City, Georgetown, and Alexandria sold sheet music and instruction, lesson, hymn, and various other music books to eager buyers. Only a couple of music sellers in Washington were also publishers; most retailers had to import sheet music from Baltimore, Philadelphia, or elsewhere.²³⁸ Music sellers often took out a substantial amount of advertising space in newspapers

²³⁵ Wolfe, *Early American Music Engraving and Printing*, 177, 205.

²³⁶ “J. Milligan & Co.,” *Daily National Intelligencer*, May 26, 1814, p. 1.

²³⁷ Anna Maria frequently attended the theatre, sometimes taking in several performances in one week. If she heard songs she liked and wanted to play herself at these and other performances, she could see if the sheet music was available from music sellers in town. Diary of Anna Maria Thornton, 10 February 1804, AMT Papers.

²³⁸ The four known publishers are William Cooper, Francesco Masi, and Frederick A and Charles K Wagler; Henry Stone was a sheet music engraver. Retailers often sold music as part of their larger bookselling, stationery, musical instrument, or dry goods business. See Richard J. Wolfe, *Secular Music in America, 1801-1825, A Bibliography*, vol. III (New York: New York Public Library, 1964), 1172-1176.

to list the “new” and “fashionable” song titles they had received. William Cooper, a music and bookstore owner and publisher, and Robert Gray, a stationer, advertised the most aggressively and frequently during the second decade of the nineteenth century. The majority of sheet music was arranged for the piano, although advertisers occasionally mentioned they had music for harp, flute, clarinet, or violin.

Amateur musicians who obtained loose, printed sheets of individual songs might decide to have the music bound into a volume. America Peter, the daughter of Thomas and Martha Custis Peter and great-granddaughter of George and Martha Washington, compiled the music for her book as a student in Philadelphia.²³⁹ The front of the green leather cover contains a black label with a gold-embossed inscription, “Miss America P Peter at Mrs Mallons Seminary.” The back cover has a similar label, “Philadelphia Jany. 11th 1821.,” which probably marks the date America received her bound compilation.

Usually a collector assembled a group of twenty to forty favorites or similar types of music to bind together, forever imprinting their identity onto a collection of mass-printed pages. The loose, folded format of sheet music conformed to bookbinding practices that stitched pages together through the folded seams, with each group of folded sheets forming a signature and the signatures lining up to form the spine.²⁴⁰ America’s book contains about forty songs, mostly variations on foreign airs and ballads with lyrics, which were all printed by the prolific Philadelphia publisher G.E. Blake. Many of the pieces were longer than two pages or had title pages with elaborate engravings, and hence cost 37 or 50 cents. America may have bound these more expensive pieces to ensure they were preserved in a book, rather than risk the

²³⁹ America Peter’s music book measures H 13 ³/₄” x W 9 ³/₄” x D 1 ³/₄”.

²⁴⁰ Brandt, 3-4, 17.

music getting lost as individual sheets. Many of the tunes were arranged for the harp or pianoforte, presumably to appeal to as wide an audience as possible.

Like America, Maria Hester Monroe also obtained the sheet music for her music book while attending a boarding school in Philadelphia. The extremely worn book has a marbled paper cover and brown leather spine and corners. A red leather label in the center of the front cover is embossed with a decorative gilt border and “M.H. Monroe. 1818” (figs. 19 and 20). Maria finished her studies at Madame Grelaud’s school in Philadelphia in 1819 before moving into the President’s House. Her music book contains thirty-one songs in English or French (with one operatic air in Italian). Songs are loosely organized by type—waltzes, marches, sentimental songs, ballads, and variations on airs—for piano or harp. Like America’s sheet music, the song titles identify the author, composer, arranger, and/or singer. Songs include “Stantz Waltz with Variations for the Pianoforte or Harp,” “Buonaparte’s Coronation March,” “The Bewildered Maid” (also published in the *Literary and Musical Magazine*), and “Jessie the Flow’r o’Dumblane” (fig. 21).

In addition to acquiring loose sheet music, amateur musicians bought various instruction manuals and guides. America Peter owned a book of musical catechisms, or lessons.²⁴¹ The fourth edition of David Hogan’s *Musical Catechism, in Three Parts*, in which America inscribed her name on the inside of the front cover, was published in 1817 “for the use of schools and private families.” The introductory remarks stress that the manual “is not to supersede the necessity of a Master, without whose assistance no practitioner can ever attain a knowledge of Music,” but to provide instruction to supplement a pupil’s learning, including musical terms, the valuation of

²⁴¹ The *Musical Catechism, in Three Parts* measures H 4 ¼” x W 3 ½” x D ½”. The cover is stock paper covered with marbled decorative paper. The pages are bound with hemp.

notes, and the division of Time, which apparently “too many, who pass for tolerable performers, are totally unacquainted with.”²⁴² America may have used the “Musical Catechism” when she was learning to play the piano at Tudor Place or as a student in Philadelphia to help her learn notes and basic musical structure and terminology.

Finally, players could improve their penmanship and musical understanding by copying songs on loose sheets of paper or in bound music books in which only the staves were printed. James Monroe’s daughters copied songs for harp into a blank music book which was published in London and “sold by R. Birchall” at the “Musical Library Handels Head” on Bond Street. Either Monroe or his older daughter Eliza likely acquired the book when the family resided in London intermittently from 1803 to 1807, when Monroe served as Minister to France, Spain, and England.²⁴³

The staves were printed on the book’s pages so that the user could write in the clefs, signatures, notes, and, if there were any, lyrics, for various songs. In addition to songs, the Monroe music book contains scales, exercises, and notations written in pencil. These instructions, likely copied from published manuals, include tables of notes and rest and advice such as, “In reading as in playing it is best to read the base first and then the treble.” The player could refer to this supplementary material while practicing on her own. At one point the copier even crossed out the beginning of a song, “Come away my ___,” to write short lessons by each line instead.

More than a collection of tunes and musical instruction, however, the book also reveals the strong family connections involved in creating, keeping, and passing down

²⁴² David Hogan, *Musical Catechism, in Three Parts*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: D. Hogan, 1817).

²⁴³ Now in the Dumbarton House archives, the book has a brown leather cover that has faded and discolored over time, and the spine is also wearing away. The book is composed of four separate sections loosely bound together.

music. Different people wrote in the book at different times. The title page, for example, features the handwriting of three Monroe girls (fig. 22). Eliza probably wrote “Miss Monroe” at the top of the page first, as well as the indication that the book was for “Harp Music.” Charles E. Hay, a relative of Eliza’s husband George Hay, copied several of the songs at the beginning of the book, including “Damon & Clara,” “Adieu Sweet Girl,” and “Love my Mary, dwells with Thee” (fig. 23).

Perhaps after she married, Eliza found little time to play or fill in the rest of the book’s blank pages and thus decided to give it to her sister Maria Hester, who was sixteen years younger. Maria Hester identified herself as the new owner of the book, writing “Miss Monroe” beneath her sister’s inscription on the title page (fig. 22). She also wrote “Copied by Maria H. Monroe” next to a section of notes and the title of one song in the middle of the book.

But Maria Hester was not the music book’s last active user, for Eliza’s daughter Hortensia, “Miss H Hay,” also inscribed her name on the title page. One of the song titles towards the end of the book, “Malbruck,” bears Hortensia’s writing: “Coppied [sic] by Hortensia Hay.” The last eight pages of the book are notes, tables, and scales also copied by Hortensia. Because Maria Hester was only six years older than Hortensia, they grew up more as sisters than as aunt and niece. Both would have been learning and practicing music at the same time. The act of Maria Hester sharing the book with Hortensia, or perhaps even giving it to her entirely, demonstrates the pair’s closeness and devotion to one another. The exchange also hints at a shared taste in music, as the girls would have learned and heard many of the same songs.

In addition to revealing strong family bonds, the book illustrates the musical interests of the three young women. Unsurprisingly, the book contains popular songs including French, Italian, and Spanish airs; ballads; and Irish tunes, as well as the melody (but no words) for “Auld Lang Syne.” Many, but not all, songs identify the

copier as Charles Hay, Maria Hester, or Hortensia; Eliza never wrote her name by a song. Figures 23, 24, and 25 show three songs with distinct styles of penmanship, again indicating that each song was copied by a different person.

Like the Monroes, young women shared music books or exchanged sheet music as a means of reinforcing emotional bonds and maintaining the memory of the giver. Music conveyed personal sentiments and could easily be sent over long distances, making it a suitable gift between peers. Rosalie Calvert's daughter Caroline was deeply appreciative when she received a "little notebook of waltzes" from her cousin in Belgium.²⁴⁴ Although the two cousins had never met, a gift of music united them in the shared experience of playing the same pieces of music. Women often developed intense friendships with one another in this era, and musical bonds deepened these meaningful relationships.

Female amateur musicians in early Washington like America Peter and Maria Hester Monroe did not aspire to the artistic pretensions that characterized much of the parlor music their counterparts later in the nineteenth century would play. The ladies of Washington tended to play the familiar, simple songs they would have heard at concerts, the theater, or the Navy Yard—the dances, ballads, marches, light airs, and traditional tunes that most Americans of the time would have recognized and appreciated for their entertainment or patriotic value.

²⁴⁴ Brandt, 39-41; Rosalie Stier Calvert to Isabelle van Havre, 25 October 1816, in *MOR*, 304.

Section 6

HOW WOMEN PLAYED MUSIC: PIANOS AND HARPS

The Piano-forte is a badge of gentility, being the only thing that distinguishes “Decent People” from the lower and less distinguished kind of folks, known by the name of “middling kinds of folks.” . . . So those ambitious spirits that aspire to the elevated rank and imposing title of “Quite decent People,” place a piano-forte in their parlours, to give notice that they belong to this useful class of society, as well as to beautify the room by so superb an ornament. — Felix, “Piano Fortes,” in The Euterpeid, or Musical Intelligencer 3, no. 18 (February 1823), 179.

In a letter to her sister, Margaret Bayard Smith offered an amusing assessment of the event which unfolded when two “venerable” senators from the western backcountry visited her for tea. As her sister-in-law Susan played the piano for the senators, Margaret realized that it was probably the first time “they had seen or heard such a thing.” The senators’ astonishment prompted them to examine the piano thoroughly, and they “seemed so curious to know how the sound was produced,” that Margaret “begged Susan to open the lid and to display the internal machinery.” She continued:

Never did I see children more delighted. ‘Dear me,’ said the judge, ‘how pretty those white and red things jump up and down, dear me what a parcel of wires, strange that a harp with a thousand strings should keep in tune so long.’ ‘Pray,’ said the other senator, ‘have you any rule to play musick?’ We tried to explain how the keys were the representatives of the notes, they did not seem to comprehend, supposing all Susan’s sweet melody was drawn by chance or random from this strange thing. When the examination was over, they both said it was a very pretty thing.

Margaret was fascinated by the senator's curiosity and lack of comprehension and told her sister not to think of these men as fools: "Far from it, they are very sensible men and useful citizens, but they have lived in the back woods, that's all."²⁴⁵

The senators represented the many Americans who had never "seen or heard" a piano, let alone had the opportunity to own one. Margaret's story reinforces that in the early nineteenth century pianos were expensive—luxury items possessed by a small minority. It also highlights that pianos, unlike other pieces of furniture, had complicated internal mechanisms that allowed them to create music, which was governed by its own rules and language of notes, scales, and keys. This section will analyze pianos and, to a lesser extent, harps: the instruments of choice for elite women in early Washington.

Respectable women in federal America played only instruments which were considered feminine: keyboard instruments (usually the pianoforte or harpsichord), the harp, the English guitar, or, less commonly, the lyre. Woodwind instruments, like the flute or oboe, or string instruments, like the violin, required the player to distort his face or posture and were therefore considered improper for a woman.²⁴⁶ The harp was thought to be the best suited instrument for a woman's figure, as the player's stance

²⁴⁵ Margaret Bayard Smith to Jane Bayard Kirkpatrick, 9 February 1808, in *First Forty Years*, 52-53.

²⁴⁶ Wetzel, "Susan Jane Gaston Donaldson and the Pedal Harp in the Early Republic," 41. See also Koza, "Music and the Feminine Sphere," 103-129. In her study of references to women playing music in *Godey's Lady's Book*, Koza found that in fictional pieces, males were most often linked with orchestral string and woodwind instruments and females with keyboard instruments. Such stereotyping was reinforced in nonfiction articles; no woodwind or percussion instrument was ever mentioned in connection to females, although guitars were associated with women three times more than men. Although Koza's inquiry deals with a slightly later time period than this study, her conclusions are still applicable to the way Americans thought about gender and musical instruments in the early nineteenth century.

could be viewed as an affectionate embrace or something more suggestive.²⁴⁷ Playing the harp or piano allowed a woman to maintain her physical composure and show herself to advantage. *The Mirror of Graces*, one of the countless etiquette books dispensing advice to women on both sides of the Atlantic in the period, claimed that it was easier for women to appear graceful at the harp: “The shape of the instrument is calculated, in every respect, to show a fine figure to advantage.” It was more difficult to appear refined while sitting erect in front of a straight line of keys at the piano, so *The Mirror of Graces* directed its readers to move their hands easily and hold their head elegantly. They must “avoid a stiff, awkward, elbowing position...and observe an elegant flow of figure.”²⁴⁸ In the world of fashionable society, observers would pay attention to every detail of the way a lady played her instrument and be quick to scrutinize any missteps. Thus it behooved a woman to carefully rehearse her appearance at the piano and indeed, to practice every element of her behavior.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the piano had replaced the harpsichord as the preferred keyboard instrument to play both solo and as an accompaniment for violin or voice.²⁴⁹ Pianos, which produce sound with hammers that strike strings, had more keys, tonal variety, and a capacity to change loudness of play depending on how hard one strikes the keys (the literal meanings of *piano* and *forte* are soft and loud), whereas harpsichords, which use jacks that pluck strings, lack pedals and a dynamic

²⁴⁷ Wetzel, 33.

²⁴⁸ A Lady of Distinction, *The Mirror of Graces; Or, The English Lady's Costume*, 194-195.

²⁴⁹ By 1792, pianofortes were appearing in announcements for public concerts. See Elson, *The History of American Music*, 42.

range and were essentially played at one volume.²⁵⁰ Harpsichords and pianos are played very differently, and as more music was composed for the piano, the harpsichord fell further out of fashion.²⁵¹

Responding to the piano's versatility and its value as both a cultural symbol and a source of entertainment, American publishers sold an exceptional amount of piano music.²⁵² Although most strongly associated with women, the piano was not an exclusively feminine instrument. Middling and upper-class men occasionally played the piano, perhaps in addition to the flute or clarinet, as a way to develop musical skill and as a form of recreation and entertainment. Of course, professional musicians, who were almost all male, played keyboard instruments as well. But in private household performances, women, and especially young women, had a virtual monopoly on keyboard performance.

Most pianos in early America were square pianos, which are really oblong to accommodate the diagonal overlapping of the bass strings.²⁵³ The strings run parallel to the keyboard on the long side of the rectangular case, and the hammer striking the

²⁵⁰ Ed Crews, "Peter Redstone Builds a Barton Portable," *Colonial Williamsburg*, Spring 2002, <http://www.history.org/Foundation/journal/Spring02/harpsichord.cfm>.

²⁵¹ A great deal of baroque music was composed for the harpsichord; by the end of the eighteenth century, most composers, including Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven, wrote songs for the pianoforte. Music of the romantic era was more suited to the dramatic tones of the piano than to the monotonous sounds of the harpsichord. Pianos were capable of simulating what H. Wiley Hitchcock calls the "sustained, affective melodic curve of a single voice," as well as "dense polyphonic textures" appropriate to a romantic sensibility "which viewed tonal flux as a musical mirror of life itself." See Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction*, 78.

²⁵² Hitchcock, 79.

²⁵³ Owing in part to the overwhelming popularity of the square, grand pianos were exceedingly rare in the United States until the mid-nineteenth century. In Europe, members of the upper class primarily played grand pianos.

strings produces the piano's sound. The square piano was restricted in range and string tension by its wooded framing and case, which derives its horizontal orientation from the clavichord.²⁵⁴ Although such cramped actions meant that that square pianos were usually incapable of producing the rich sounds of grand pianos, squares were more affordable, practical, and often aesthetically pleasing as pieces of furniture. Grand pianos took up more space than squares, which could be placed against the wall and fit in a smaller room of the average house. The square piano also had a pleasing tone, neither too loud nor too harsh, that was well-suited for home music making.²⁵⁵ Producing a sound like a chamber instrument, the square was expected to blend with voice and small instrumental groups in drawing rooms and minor concert halls.

In 1786, John Geib, a London piano manufacturer who later immigrated to New York, patented a modified double action which allowed a player to repeat notes more quickly; many, but not all, English and American pianos made after 1787 had this "English action."²⁵⁶ Manufacturers continued to devise mechanical improvements to make the pianoforte a more reliable instrument which would stay in tune longer. In the humid, swampy climate of Washington, both amateurs and professionals must have been constantly frustrated by changes in temperature and humidity that caused their pianos' strings to slacken as the wood expanded and contracted.

²⁵⁴ The English double action used an escapement in the form of a spring hopper. Donatella Degiampietro and Giuliana Montanari, "Square Piano," in *The Piano, An Encyclopedia*, 2nd edition, ed. Robert Palmieri and Margaret W. Palmieri (New York: Routledge, 2003), 372.

²⁵⁵ Jewel A. Smith, *Music, Women, and Pianos in Antebellum Bethlehem, Pennsylvania: The Moravian Young Ladies' Seminary* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 2008), 63.

²⁵⁶ Degiampietro and Montanari, "Square Piano," 373.

Because pianos needed to be tuned at least once a year, tuning provided a lucrative side business for many musicians. One musician advertising in the *Alexandria Advertiser* made clear that tuning was a branch “entirely different, and altogether independent of that of teaching Music.” He stressed that “the most eminent professors in Music, have always expressly forbidden their pupils playing upon instruments which were not in good tune; it spoils the ear of the scholars in such a manner, that they scarcely know when they are playing good or bad.” To ensure their instrument stayed in tune, owners could pay this music professor \$5 to tune their piano once, or \$24 to keep it in tune for the year.²⁵⁷ Over time, hiring a professional tuner added substantially to the overall cost of maintaining a piano in playable condition.

The need for high-tension, high-strength strings, which would keep a piano in tune longer, prompted the introduction of metal braces and an iron frame in piano construction around 1820. In 1825, Alpheus Babcock, an instrument maker in Boston, patented a cast-iron frame for square pianos, permitting larger and louder instruments. Although Babcock’s development clearly marked a major development in piano construction, both European and American manufacturers were hesitant to adopt the metal frame. They already had sound, well-tested manufacturing methods using all wood, and many piano players were reluctant to introduce a base metal to an instrument as sophisticated and refined as the piano. However, by mid-century, the widespread use of steel and iron had ushered in a new era of piano manufacturing that eventually rendered all-wooden construction obsolete.²⁵⁸

The history of two pianos belonging to James and Elizabeth Monroe—they acquired several during their lifetime—illustrates the variety of available models and

²⁵⁷ “Advertisement,” *Alexandria Advertiser*, January 26, 1798, p. 1.

²⁵⁸ Degiampietro and Montanari, “Square Piano,” 373-374.

the significance of individual choice in buying and using pianos. During their several years in Paris, the Monroes cultivated a French taste in furnishings. Upon taking residence in the newly refurbished President's Mansion in 1817, they decided to import furnishings directly from France to fill the near empty rooms.²⁵⁹ Included in their order was a pianoforte, which at a cost of 2,200 francs was the most expensive item listed for the Sitting Room (what had been "Mrs. Madison's Parlor," or today's Red Room). The account accompanying the shipment described the piano as "made by Erard Brothers, decorated with bronze, having three legs ("colones") and four pedals and a "tambourin" (fig. 26).²⁶⁰ The prestigious firm Erard frères enjoyed an international reputation for excellent pianos as well as harps, highlighting the Monroes' desire to furnish the Executive Mansion with fine furnishings and, like Dolley Madison, a piano that both pleased the eye and produced exceptional sound.

The Monroes' piano, however, had the latest bells and whistles in piano construction. According to Elise Kirk, its "multiple pedal mechanism allowed for theatrical colors and sound effects to serve the era's new descriptive piano pieces." This flexibility meant that the pedals could deliver a plucked sound like a lute or a reedy sound like a bassoon, while the "tambourin" effect was created by either a fifth pedal or a sideways-moving "genouillère," a lever pushed by the player's knee which also worked a triangle and drum built into the piano's base. In addition to its imposing sound, appropriate for the Executive Mansion's public entertaining rooms, the Erard piano also would have impressed visitors with its size. One of the few grand pianos in

²⁵⁹ The British army had burned the President's House during their attack on Washington in the War of 1812, leaving a hollowed-out shell which needed massive restoration to make the mansion habitable.

²⁶⁰ Kirk, *Music at the White House*, 41, from Account #37.131, May 8, 1818, Record Group 217, National Archives.

the nation at the time, it embodied luxury and the sense of grandeur the Monroes appreciated in their state furnishings. A visitor to one of the Monroes' drawing rooms called the piano "very elegant;" unfortunately, it no longer survives.²⁶¹

While the Erard piano served as a symbol of republican splendor for the Monroes' public entertaining, the family also had an Astor square piano for their private use. The piano, now at the James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library, is made of mahogany, Olivewood, satinwood, ebony, ivory, and bronze (fig. 27).²⁶² The nameboard is inscribed "G. Astor and Co. / No. 79 Cornhill / London," and the piano bears the Astor and Company serial number 2195 (fig. 28).²⁶³

The piano's rectangular case has solid mahogany sides and is decorated with an Olivewood, satinwood, and ebony line inlay enclosing a geometric ebony inlaid band. The case has a hinged front lid and lockboard opening to a keyboard with ivory naturals and ebony sharps. Thumb molding surrounds the lid, which is conventional in layout with a narrow flap split between the keyboard and the front section of the soundboard. The crossbanded stand is mahogany veneered and has a similar line inlay. The stand, with a shaped undershelf, is raised on square tapering line inlaid supports headed by floral stamped, gilt bronze bosses and ending in brass casters. A small compartment to the left of the keyboard opens to hold a single candlestick,

²⁶¹ Kirk, *Music at the White House*, 41; "The Drawing Room, Extracts of a letter from a Lady in Washington, February 19," *City of Washington Gazette*, April 22, 1818, p. 2.

²⁶² The piano is 33 ½ inches tall, 62 ¼ inches wide, and 22 inches deep; the keyboard is 33 inches wide.

²⁶³ Most manufacturers assigned serial numbers to each piano they produced. However, serial numbers from this early period of piano manufacture tell us little about the model.

which would have assisted the Monroe women if they were playing in the evening.²⁶⁴

The piano's four straight, tapered legs; restrained ornamentation; flat, lightwood veneered surfaces; and extensive use of inlay are all characteristics of the early neoclassical or Federal style, popular in America from about 1790 to 1820.²⁶⁵

Originally, the piano's compass was FF-f³ (strings for 47 notes, or five octaves), and the stop action consisted of one pedal to raise the dampers in addition to one hand stop, also to raise the dampers, and another hand stop to raise a buff stop. The two hand stops have been restored, one of which makes the piano produce a deeper sound, like an organ; the other creates a higher, tinny sound. The position of the stops remained the same for an entire song and could not be changed between notes, unlike the action of a pedal, which produced a brief change in tonal color. The piano has the English single action, which was the simplest of piano mechanisms in use in the period. It is one of the few surviving Astor square pianos made after the late 1790s that does not display the words "New Patent" on the nameboard to designate the piano has a double action or new damper system.²⁶⁶ Elizabeth Monroe may have desired the older technology because that was what she grew up playing, or perhaps

²⁶⁴ The exterior of the case was probably sanded smooth to diminish the appearance of surface flaws and patina from use and age. For a full report of previous conservation work completed on the piano, see John R. Watson, Conservation Report, Project No. JRW-2003-02, April 27, 2003, curatorial files, JM76.185, James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library. Tim Hamilton then conserved the piano in 2005 to make it into playing condition. See also Lee Langston-Harrison, *A Presidential Legacy: The Monroe Collection at the James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library* (Fredericksburg, VA: The James Monroe Museum, 1997), 143.

²⁶⁵ Scottish designer and architect Robert Adam had espoused airy, geometric, and delicate furniture forms in his interpretation of classicism in the 1760s. His designs had an enormous influence on consumer taste and on the work of English and American cabinetmakers, who often made piano cases as well.

²⁶⁶ Watson, Conservation Report, 4-5.

the Monroes were not willing, or financially able, to afford a double-action piano at the time. Monroe probably purchased the instrument in London while serving abroad from 1803 to 1807.

However, the piano was most likely not complete when Monroe ordered it. Astor may have made the top section in London and then shipped the half-finished piano to New York, where his brother John Jacob Astor also sold pianos. The piano then would have been attached to a separate base and legs, made in the US, to complete the instrument for the Monroes to use upon their return to America. The Astors' practice of assembling pianos in two stages demonstrates the resourcefulness of instrument makers, who could make cases themselves, employ journeymen in their own shops, or hire outside cabinetmakers for all or part of the case.²⁶⁷ As Laurence Libin states, such "conspicuous instruments [as pianos] figure prominently as furniture, challenging designers of the stature of Duncan Phyfe to cloak their unwieldy innards in fashionable cases."²⁶⁸

Once it was finished, the Monroe family took their Astor piano to several of their homes, including possibly the President's House. An 1825 government inventory taken after Monroe left office lists at least two "gilt-mounted pianofortes" in the Executive Mansion.²⁶⁹ For a time the Astor piano was almost certainly in their I Street townhouse, which the family had occupied since Monroe became Secretary of State in 1811. Furthermore, the Astor is likely the piano listed in the inventory of Oak Hill, Monroe's home in Loudoun County, Virginia, where he spent his retirement.

²⁶⁷ Charles Montgomery, *American Furniture: The Federal Period* (New York: The Viking Press, 1966), 426.

²⁶⁸ Laurence Libin, *American Musical Instruments in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985), 11.

²⁶⁹ Elise Kirk, "Pianos in the White House," *Magazine Antiques* (May 1984), 1166.

The inventory was taken in 1836, five years after Monroe's death, and includes a "piano forte" in "Room No. 5" along with two paintings, a small marble table, a sofa, a candlestand, a French secretary, and three mantle ornaments. Worth \$75.00, the piano was by far the most valuable item in the room; the next most expensive object, the sofa, was only \$30.00.²⁷⁰ But the room was probably a small sitting room or office, not a prominent space for entertaining. Elizabeth had died in 1830 after years of ill health, and the Monroes' daughters were grown and caring for their own families, so the piano probably saw little use. Monroe may have saved it knowing he would bequeath the piano to Maria Hester, who acquired it after her father's death.

The next occupants of the Executive Mansion, the Adamses, introduced changes to the home's furnishings, including its musical instruments. Louisa Catherine acquired a new mahogany and rosewood square piano, made by Alpheus Babcock in Boston. She likely sought an American piano after criticism surrounding the Monroes' French tastes, which included their Erard piano, prompted Congress to order that the White House contain more American-made furnishings.²⁷¹ As Babcock was one of the most distinguished American piano makers of the early nineteenth century, Louisa's purchase demonstrated she was committed both to American manufacturing and to securing for the President's Mansion a fashionable, well-made piano from a reputable manufacturer.

²⁷⁰ "List of the appraisement of Colo. James Monroe's property Oak Hill 22 Jany 1836," Loudoun County will book, curatorial files, JM76.185, James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library.

²⁷¹ Elise K. Kirk, "White House Pianos," in *The Piano: An Encyclopedia*, 450. Furthermore, Congress was probably indignant that presidents were spending so much money on decoration for the Executive Mansion when resources were scarce and the new, undeveloped nation, like Washington City, still needed basic civic improvements, such as drainage systems and roads.

The Adamses' piano features the rounded corners and six legs that were becoming fashionable, and advertised by Washington piano retailers, after about 1815. Piano manufacturers responded to changing furniture styles by making their instruments more visually massive and bolder in form. A Babcock piano at Winterthur, made between 1821 and 1825, is strikingly similar to the Adams White House piano (fig. 29).²⁷² It displays new features of the Empire or classical style, including rich, figured veneers, gilding, and heavy, turned legs.

Although the harp was “now the most fashionable instrument,” as Louisa Adams noted in 1820, most women in Washington and other American towns played the piano, as it was less expensive and easier to find than a harp.²⁷³ The piano was also a more versatile instrument, easier to learn and maintain. In addition, it was socially acceptable for a man to play the piano, whereas a harp was considered an exclusively feminine instrument. However, even more than the piano, the harp exuded wealth, status and refinement. Associated with Europe's most fashionable cities of Paris and London, the harp epitomized civilized society.²⁷⁴

²⁷² Unlike the Winterthur example, the Adams piano does not have drawers at the bottom of the case, but its legs feature more carved detail. Both pianos are double-action squares; the Adams piano retains its single pedal. All but one extant Babcock pianos are double-action squares with one or two pedals. See Martha Novak Clinkscale, *Makers of the Piano*, vol. 2: 1820-1860 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 13-14.

²⁷³ Diary of Louisa Catherine Adams, 6 December 1820, APM, reel 265. In *What is Gentility?*, Margaret Bayard Smith alludes to the availability of pianos and the scarcity of harps. Wandering the Washington's music stores, two of the characters “easily procured a first rate piano; but there was to be found in the whole City only one harp, and the price of that was 800 dollars” (46). Although this anecdote is fictional, the lack of harps in inventories and advertisements confirms that pianos were far more prevalent than harps.

²⁷⁴ Wetzel, 35-46.

Several women in federal Washington are known to have played the harp, including Susan Decatur, Catherine Wirt, Eliza Monroe, and Louisa Catherine Adams. Eliza's "lap" harp and Louisa Catherine's floor harp provide an instructive contrast in harp styles. While serving as foreign minister in France, James Monroe wrote to his elder daughter Eliza at her boarding school in St. Germain: "Don't forget among all your useful acquirements the comparatively trivial one of playing & singing several airs on the harp; I will get you one in Paris. That is an accomplishment that will be really useful to you."²⁷⁵ Monroe firmly believed that it was important to educate his daughters in both academics and the ornamental arts and that musical skill would enhance eighteen-year-old Eliza's achievements as well as her marriage prospects. Although Monroe told his daughter that he would acquire a harp for her in Paris, he most likely purchased the instrument in London shortly after he arrived in July 1805. The form of the harp, sometimes called an "Irish lap harp," originated with the Celts; they were manufactured in Ireland and in England in the early 1800s.²⁷⁶ The Monroes shipped the harp to America when they returned in 1807, along with other pieces purchased during their tenure in France and England.

²⁷⁵ James Monroe to Eliza Monroe, 1 March 1805, curatorial files, JM76.238, James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library.

²⁷⁶ Various called "Irish," "lap," "lever," and "folk" harps, lap harps are distinguished by their size, 15 to 38 wire or gut strings, and use of levers to change keys. Levers push against the strings to make them shorter and thus sharpen the string. However, not all lap harps have a mechanism for changing pitch; Eliza's lap harp lacks levers. Also, not all lever harps are lap harps; some are floor harps. Because of their small size and limited range, lap harps were often recommended for children and beginners. See Ann Griffiths, Joan Rimmer, and Sue Carole DeVale, "Harp," in *The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments*, vol. II, ed. Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1984), 139 and Kari Gardner, "Types of Harps," <http://harpinfo.blackandgoldharp.com/types.html>.

Constructed entirely of wood, the ebonized and parcel gilt harp is fitted with 35 full gut strings (fig. 30). Although it stands only 35 inches tall and 26 ½ inches wide, it is relatively large for a lap harp. The capital of the rear columnar support is decorated with three carved and applied female figures about a rosette, all of which have been gilded (fig. 31).²⁷⁷ The figures and other decorative elements are attached to the frame with hide glue. The wood, ebonized and darkened over time, has not yet been identified. At some point in its history, its original strings were removed and replaced with simple cotton twine, intended only to give the impression of playable strings. The structure of the harp has also warped over the years, and several applied pieces have detached from the frame (figs. 32 and 33).²⁷⁸ To play, Eliza would have positioned the harp on her lap or perhaps a table.

In contrast to Eliza's lap harp, a portrait of Louisa Catherine Adams from about 1824 depicts her gracefully, if somewhat formally, positioned with a floor harp and a sheet of music placed on her lap (fig. 34).²⁷⁹ Charles Bird King painted the popular song "Oh Say Not Woman's Heart is Bought" exactly as it appeared on the page. If Louisa was playing the harp, she would remain seated, with the harp tilted back onto

²⁷⁷ According to Meghan Budinger, curator at the James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library, the figures are most likely gilded, but future analysis may reveal that the figures were not gilded but simply gessoed, a less expensive alternative that did not use real gold leaf.

²⁷⁸ Hide glue was the only adhesive used to attach the figures to the frame, which are consequently separating from the frame of the harp as the glue's adhesive powers diminish and the wood continues to expand and contract.

²⁷⁹ Pedal harps change pitch by the action of pedals. Pushing the pedals moves discs at the top of the harp, which performs the same function as levers by shortening or lengthening the strings to achieve sharps or flats. A harpist can play accidentals and change keys more quickly and efficiently with a pedal harp than a lever harp. Because of their greater range, pedal harps are more versatile and suitable for playing a wider variety of music. See Griffiths, Rimmer, and DeVale, "Harp," 145-147.

its two rear feet, gripped lightly between her knees and resting on her right shoulder. Her feet would have rested on the floor, and she would have used only her thumbs and first three fingers to play.²⁸⁰ Rather than holding her music book, she would have positioned it on a music stand for ease of reading.

Louisa's actual harp, slightly different from the one in the portrait, also displays the classically-inspired ornamentation characteristic of nearly all harps of the period and many concert harps today (fig. 35).²⁸¹ Like Eliza's lap harp, Louisa's floor harp has 35 strings and is not a pedal harp, making it easier to play. Louisa probably acquired the harp, which was manufactured in Europe in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, in England and later brought it with her to America.

The harp has a boldly S-curved neck, a fore-pillar resembling fluted architectural columns, and an elaborately carved capital and base. Erard's influence is apparent in the capital, which has ram's heads, acanthus leaves, and mummy-like female figures, all elements borrowed from Greek, Roman, and Egyptian ornament.²⁸² Through classical features, Americans emulated the virtue, style, and valor of the ancients as well as referenced their own nascent power. Unlike an extremely fashionable, entirely gilt, stenciled, and ebonized harp at Winterthur, Louisa's harp has a gilt column; ebonized neck, base, and four carved feet; but a plain soundboard (fig. 36). Louisa's ebonized music stand echoes the colors and classical design of her harp. The stand's decoration features a lyre, acanthus leaves, and gilt stenciling, as well as

²⁸⁰ Wetzel, 26.

²⁸¹ Harp makers emphasized the instrument's classical origins by decorating with classically-inspired motifs. See Wetzel, 56.

²⁸² Erard manufactured and patented inventions for harps as well as pianos. Other makers widely copied changes he introduced to the design of harps ca. 1780-1795.

two gilt shield-backed candleholders to provide light for her sheet music (fig. 37). Simple but elegant, her harp and stand were appropriate for the republican ruling class.

Louisa's ownership of a harp set her apart from the vast majority of Washington residents, including other middle- to upper-class amateur musicians. The relative expense and unavailability of harps in the District meant that far more women played the piano, or even the guitar. Maria Bull Nourse, wife of the first Registrar of the Treasury Joseph Nourse, copied several songs and dances as well as "a scale of all the notes" for the guitar into an undated, blank book, in which she even drew the staves (figs. 38 and 39). She passed the book down to her daughter Josepha, who played piano and may have studied guitar as well.²⁸³

How did women in Washington obtain musical instruments? Many wealthy residents imported furniture and instruments from Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, or, like the Monroes, had agents in Europe to secure items for them. But the District of Columbia also had a flourishing local cabinetmaking trade; approximately 110 master cabinetmakers were working in the area between 1791 and 1840.²⁸⁴ Some of these cabinetmakers also made, repaired, and/or tuned musical instruments. For example, John Sellers in Alexandria advertised himself as a musical instrument and cabinetmaker who made, repaired, and tuned organs, harpsichords, and pianofortes. He also sold violins and music.²⁸⁵ I have found eleven musical instrument manufacturers plying their trade in Alexandria, Georgetown, or Washington City between 1803 and 1822—not an insubstantial number.

²⁸³ The music book is in the collection of Dumbarton House, 1930.001.

²⁸⁴ Klaus, "Some of the Smartest Folks Here," 40.

²⁸⁵ "Musical Instrument and Cabinet Manufactory," *Alexandria Daily Advertiser*, July 30, 1805, p. 4.

However, most advertisements for pianos in the period promote English or French pianos, reflecting not only Washingtonians' desires for high-quality, fashionable pianos but also market availability. Foreign pianos signified respectability and superior taste and probably produced a more even, rich sound, but they were also manufactured in far greater numbers than American pianos.²⁸⁶ In spite of foreign competition, a growing native population as well as a continual influx of European craftsmen expanded the techniques and capabilities of American makers. Increased tariffs on foreign imports after the War of 1812 also stimulated domestic manufacture. By the 1820s, Americans had achieved the harmony of form and function that would enable them to dramatically increase production and, by mid-century, surpass European manufacturers in technique and reputation.

Considering the large number of pianos advertised by musical instrument makers, retailers, and owners in Washington in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, city inhabitants with sufficient means could obtain a new American or foreign-made piano with little difficulty. The number of pianos advertised in local newspapers increased substantially from about 1815 onwards, which suggests both Washington's growing population and merchant community as well as the greater availability of pianos in general.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁶ Relatively few piano manufacturers are named in newspaper advertisements. Those manufacturers listed are: George Astor, Allareches, A. and James Stewart (Baltimore), Mazio Clementi, William Stodart, Walker and Grewe (Baltimore), Thomas and J. Loud (in the US from London), C. Pommes (Philadelphia), Longman and Brodereps, Joseph Hiskey (Baltimore), and John Geib.

²⁸⁷ I have found approximately fifty pianos listed for sale in Washington newspapers from 1800 to 1814, and 119 pianos from 1815 to 1821. (The exact number of pianos a retailer had on hand was not always given.) Almost all were square pianos; only seven were grand pianos, and two were upright pianos. Most were new instruments, but there was also a significant secondhand market. Owners sometimes directly listed used pianos for sale, or they consigned their instrument to a retailer. Retailers

Retailers often advertised their pianofortes as “elegant,” “excellent,” or “well toned” in their attempt to attract the notice of a consumer who wanted a piano that not only appealed to the eye but also produced pleasing sounds. Frederick A. Wagler, a consummate salesman, boasted of some of his pianos: “Ladies and gentlemen will unquestionably admire both their external beauties and internal worth.” He offered to consider a deal if a buyer wanted to trade in his or her second-hand piano for a new one, although the usual methods of payment were credit or ready cash.²⁸⁸ Many of the London-made pianos arrived in Washington on ships via New York or Philadelphia and had additional keys to play an expanded range of notes. Fewer pianos were advertised as having pedals (a maximum of five—the forte, piano, harp, drum, and bassoon).²⁸⁹ In addition to selecting a piano based on its form (square, grand, or upright), manufacturer, or number of keys and pedals, buyers also had their choice of less expensive “plain” or more costly “ornamented” pianos.

The price of pianos fluctuated widely depending on these factors and on supply and demand. Various retailers claimed that they sold pianos for the lowest prices that one could find in the larger urban markets of Philadelphia or Baltimore. Yet these markets also supported a greater diversity of pianos than Washington. For example, in Baltimore in 1819, Eliza Ridgely’s father bought her “An Elegant Harmonic Piano

included musical instrument makers, teachers of voice and music, musicians, music publishers, booksellers and stationers, confectioners, or a combination of the above. Advertisers used “piano forte” and “forte piano” interchangeably.

²⁸⁸ “Forte Pianos,” *Daily National Intelligencer*, June 15, 1814, p. 1. One retailer even offered to barter “2 Elegant German Pianos” for “good Maryland Tobacco.” See “A.C. Cazenove, & Co.,” *Alexandria Gazette*, July 13, 1820, p. 3.

²⁸⁹ All early square pianos had a compass of five octaves, but the growing demand for a wider compass up to c⁴ required additional keys in the keyboard. See Degiampietro and Montanari, “Square Piano,” 373.

Forte” for \$600.²⁹⁰ In Washington, however, advertised prices ranged from \$100 for a secondhand piano to \$300 for a Geib piano. The Washington market did not support an “upright grand piano forte” worth \$400, which was raffled off instead. Certainly pianos in the \$300-\$600 range were sold, but such expensive pianos may have occupied a smaller share of the market.²⁹¹ In comparison, flutes sold in the \$1-\$14 range and guitars cost \$8-\$30.²⁹²

Although pianos were easily accessible, probate inventories support the claim made by English travel writer Henry Bradshaw Fearon in 1818 that Washington was well behind Boston and New York in evincing an “accurate knowledge of that English word *comfort*,” the “officeholders, place-hunters, and boarding-house keepers” in the capital city did not “appear to be in possession of too much of this world’s goods.”²⁹³ The lack of material display by most of the city’s residents, whether by choice or necessity, increased the visibility and significance of those houses which did have pianos and other expensive objects.²⁹⁴ Table 2 shows the percentage of Washington

²⁹⁰ Brandt, “Penned and Printed: The Sheet Music Collection of Eliza Ridgely,” 8.

²⁹¹ “Important Raffle!,” February 14, 1821, *City of Washington Gazette*, p. 3. Arthur Loesser calculated that around 1820, a new square piano typically cost between \$200 for the simplest American model and \$475 for an elegant Clementi piano. See Loesser, *Men, Women, and Pianos: A Social History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), 459.

²⁹² “New Music for the Piano Forte,” *Daily National Intelligencer*, November 21, 1820, p. 2; “New Music,” *Daily National Journal*, May 28, 1827, p. 2.

²⁹³ Fearon, *Sketches of America*, 290-295.

²⁹⁴ Scholars have long recognized the usefulness of inventories for reconstructing aspects of material life in the past. Generally taken after a person’s death by court-appointed members of the community, inventories record the property, including household goods, of the deceased at that specific moment in time. However, inventories are not without limitations. They are skewed in favor of the elderly, who have accumulated more possessions over their lifetime. Nor do all goods necessarily appear on inventories, especially if they have already been given or bequeathed to

inventories, roughly by decade, which list a keyboard instrument (pianoforte, harpsichord, or chamber organ) or any musical instrument (including keyboards).²⁹⁵

Table 2. Pianos: Percent Ownership by Year (1801-1839)

| | <u>(1801-1811)</u> | <u>(1812-1821)</u> | <u>(1822-1830)</u> | <u>(1831-1839)</u> |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | % | % | % | % |
| Musical Instruments | 3.24 | 5.90 | 8.37 | 9.61 |
| Keyboard Instruments | 1.62 | 4.17 | 6.40 | 9.23 |

Only four harpsichords are listed, and all before 1823, which conforms to the general trend that by the early nineteenth century, pianos had replaced harpsichords as the preferred keyboard instrument. As early as 1802, the inventory of Notley Young, a wealthy landowner, showed that he had removed the old harpsichord from a place of prominence and social use on the first floor to a sparsely furnished bedchamber upstairs. Another harpsichord in 1803 was missing its keys and jacks, again demonstrating that it probably had not been played for some time. One entrepreneur

family members or others. In Washington, because many residents were transient, the inventories do not necessarily record their total possessions, only what they had with them at their boardinghouse or other lodgings when they died. If one did not include these non-permanent residents, the percentage of inventories with large, expensive items such as pianos would have been slightly greater. All inventories used for this study are part of Record Group 021, Records of the United States District Courts, Circuit Court for the District of Columbia, Entry 119, Inventories and Sales, HCN 1, at the National Archives in Washington, DC.

²⁹⁵ Other instruments listed are: German and cane flutes, violins and fiddles, harmonicons, Jews harps, one guitar, and one pedal harp which belonged to Stephen Decatur. “Piano forte” is the most common designation for pianos, but “piano” is also used.

even advertised that he could alter a harpsichord—that “unfashionable instrument”—into a piano by adding hammers and stops, for the considerable cost of \$50.²⁹⁶

As expected, pianos became more prevalent over time, both as more people moved to the District and as new and used pianos became more widely available, and, after about 1830, more affordable. Keyboard instruments are found in less than two percent of inventories from 1801-1811; by the 1830s, almost ten percent of households inventoried had a piano.²⁹⁷ Of the 48 total pianos listed in inventories from 1801-1839, exactly half are from the 1830s. The total number of inventories does not increase dramatically each decade, but the total number of pianos does, demonstrating that piano ownership was becoming more widespread among a population that was also settling down and gaining more permanent residents who were more likely to live in their own houses and own large, valuable objects like a piano.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁶ Notley Young inventory (July 26, 1802), HCN 1 (July 1, 1799-August 22, 1807), 16; Elizabeth Doyle inventory (July 10, 1803), HCN 1 (July 1, 1799-August 22, 1807), 38; “J. Simpson,” *Independent American* (Georgetown), March 1, 1810, p. 1.

²⁹⁷ The household of Robert King, inventoried in 1831, had a chamber organ instead of a piano. This organ is the same organ which appeared in the 1812 inventory of Nicholas King and again in 1822 in the inventory of Margaret King. Each inventory valued the organ at \$400. According to Len Levasseur, the King organ, which may date from the eighteenth century, is now located in historic St. John's Episcopal Church, Broad Creek, Fort Washington, Maryland, where it continues to be played. The organ, “the wind trunk of which was signed in 1819 by local organbuilder Jacob Hilbus, belonged to the family of Nicholas King. It may be the organ that was listed among King's effects shipped from England in 1797. One of his heirs was Robert King, Jr., surveyor of the city of Washington.” See Len Levasseur, “Organ Historical Society 56th National Convention,” *The Tracker*, Winter 2011, http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_7179/is_201101/ai_n56829185/pg_6/?tag=content;col1. See also Robert King inventory (February 26, 1831), HCN 1 (November 12, 1834-August 10, 1839), 300; Nicholas King inventory, July 24, 1812, (April 14, 1807-December 8, 1815), 243; Margaret King inventory November 25, 1822, (July 27, 1805-November 2, 1823), 410.

²⁹⁸ The total number of inventories counted is 185 inventories from 1801-1811, 288 from 1812-1821, 203 from 1822-1830, and 260 from 1831-1839.

Inventoried pianos were estimated to be worth anywhere from \$20 to \$300; the average value of a piano across the period was \$115.10.²⁹⁹ Although some pianos were valued together with a stool, music stand, or music books, most pianos were counted as individual items. Significantly, the piano was almost always the single most expensive object listed in an inventory. Each inventory also provides the value of the deceased's entire estate, which usually includes the value of all enumerated household goods, property, slaves, and any commercial investments, such as stocks or bonds. The average value of the estate of each individual who owned a piano was \$5740.50—a substantial sum, again suggesting that most pianos were owned by relatively wealthy individuals. Many, but certainly not all, owners had other objects which indicated they led an educated, genteel lifestyle—silver, books, secretaries, card or backgammon tables, and other mahogany furniture.

However, in Washington especially, a flourishing secondhand market enabled upwardly mobile members of the middle class to buy used pianos. The capital was home to an eclectic diversity of furnishing styles, in part because the transient nature of the city's population led to a great deal of turnover in furniture and household belongings.³⁰⁰ Margaret Bayard Smith lamented the “elegantly furnished homes,

²⁹⁹ The values are remarkably consistent over time, partially because the declining relative price of pianos would have mitigated the effects of inflation. Also, the pianos in inventories closer to 1800 were likely newer (and therefore more expensive) than some of the pianos found later, which would have been older (and consequently worth less). This fact may help explain why the average value of an inventoried piano actually decreased slightly over time, from \$136.67 in the period 1800-1820 to \$110.13 in 1821-1839.

³⁰⁰ John N. Pearce, “Decatur House Furnishings, 1818-1967: The Classical and the Victorian Styles on Lafayette Square,” in *Decatur House*, ed. Helen Duprey Bullock and Terry B. Morton (Washington, DC: The National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1967), 27.

stripped of their splendid furniture...exposed to public sale.”³⁰¹ Yet frequent auctions meant that consumers benefited from an extensive network of buying and reselling. At least thirty-six pianos were advertised at auction or raffle in local newspapers between 1800 and 1825, and this number probably represents only a fraction of all the pianos sold at auction during this time. After Stephen Decatur was killed in a duel in 1820, his wife was forced to auction off their furniture, including her pedal harp and piano. Fortunately for her, the piano sold with its stool for \$162.00, well above the \$60.00 it was estimated to be worth in the estate inventory.³⁰² An unmarried fancy dress maker owned an “elegant Piano Forte, of easy touch and brilliant tone” which she was trying to sell in 1817, perhaps because she was experiencing financial difficulties or no longer had time to play.³⁰³

A dressmaker possessing a piano in early Washington dispels any notion that only members of the elite owned pianos, although upper-class individuals did have more capital not only to purchase but also to maintain and keep an instrument in tune. The form of pianos and harps depended on function, but they could be altered and embellished in countless ways to suit the changing tastes of a fickle marketplace. After all, musical instruments were objects made to be seen, touched, and most importantly, heard.

³⁰¹ Smith, *The First Forty Years*, 298.

³⁰² “Sale of Furniture,” *Daily National Intelligencer*, May 1, 1820; Stephen Decatur inventory (April 27, 1820), HCN 1 (July 11, 1818-April 20, 1821), 94; Stephen Decatur sale at auction (May 6, 1820), HCN 1 (July 11, 1818-April 20, 1821), 95.

³⁰³ “Fashions,” *Daily National Intelligencer*, June 11, 1817, p. 3.

Section 7

CONCLUSION

Like any object of decorative art, musical instruments offer aesthetic beauty to complement their individual purpose. Yet, as pieces of material culture, few objects are as potent or versatile. Seldom has the significance of musical instruments been more apparent than in the elite social settings of Washington in the early republic. Whether played by amateur or professional musicians, the music of pianos, harps, and other instruments did not simply provide a soundtrack to the District's political, cultural, and social life. From official galas to intimate gatherings, music figuratively and literally set the tone for the most meaningful scenes in early Washington. Pianos and harps, one could argue, were actors in this world in their own right.³⁰⁴ They had unique voices, demanded vigilant tuning and maintenance, and required specialized knowledge of how to play them in order to function properly. Visually appealing as pieces of furniture, they reflected the ancient ideals of classical design.

In many ways, however, the women who played them gave musical instruments their potency. In a variety of social settings that ranged the spectrum between public and private, Washington's elite women exercised identity and power through music. They used pianos and harps as instruments of sociability, entertainment, political gain, social advancement, recreation, and bonding among family and friends. Their music books reveal that they played music from popular

³⁰⁴ In actor-network-theory, developed by Bruno Latour and others, objects are viewed as agents. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

culture and shared musical tastes with Europe and other American cities. Parents believed that dancing and musical proficiency prepared their daughters for entering society and for their future roles as entertainers in their families and social circles.

The end of John Quincy Adams' presidency in 1829 also marked the end of an age when piano ownership was restricted to the wealthiest classes. Between 1830 and 1860, piano ownership in the United States boomed, owing to both technological advances that made pianos more affordable as well as the rising purchasing power of the American middle class. Washington's elite women no longer had a near monopoly on piano-playing. Interestingly, and perhaps not coincidentally, the same period was characterized by women's partial retreat from the public sphere, as the cult of domesticity extended its influence, leaving less room for women to conflate society with politics, even in a town as political as Washington.

The uses of entertaining in Washington changed after the first quarter of the nineteenth century, as the population of both the District and Congress continued to grow. The society of local and official elites became less closely connected, and the Peggy Eaton affair dealt a severe blow to sociability and to Washington's ingrained patterns of etiquette. More public spaces for entertaining, such as theatres, hotels, and assembly rooms, also meant that private homes were partly abandoned as sites of the public sphere, which women entered in different ways, especially through reform movements. The piano became less an instrument of sociability and more an instrument of middle-class family values. As a significant aspect of parlor culture, music making in the home embodied ideals of domesticity and safe, enjoyable family activities. Pianos continued to be firmly associated with women, courtship, education, and gentility. As parlors, pianos, and "parlor songs" multiplied, more Americans embraced gentility on their own terms rather than simply observing or imitating it.

The writings of Margaret Bayard Smith epitomized this shift. Although a participant in aristocratic social circles, Smith, like many nineteenth-century Americans, increasingly viewed domestic happiness as an antidote to aristocratic pretense and fashionable display. Contrasting comfort to pomp, rank, fortune, etiquette, and ceremony, they turned to family circles of the kind Smith embraced: family members gathered together to write letters, read, play games, sew, sing, or talk. These activities took place in the parlor, a space for leisure and relaxation. As Richard Bushman has noted, while the parlor's predecessor, the drawing room, was the setting of high teas and polite conversation, the parlor became closely associated with family intimacy and the Victorian domestic ideal.³⁰⁵

In Smith's novel *A Winter in Washington*, books, music, painting, and the society of her family left one character "nothing to wish for, which is not to be found beneath her own roof." Smith reiterated this path to pure happiness in her second novel *What is Gentility?*, which also extolled the "tranquil, intellectual, and heartfelt pleasures," the simple comforts of the parlor, and perfect contentment with one's station in life. According to Smith, the "insipid and tiresome amusements of the gay world," the cold, if elegant, affectations of the drawing room, and the drive to constantly impress others above one's own station left people empty, unfulfilled, and unhappy.³⁰⁶

Still, members of elite Washington society, including Smith, perfected and eagerly participated in this "gay world." Perhaps because of the generous hospitality and endless parties, Sir Augustus Foster, a British diplomat who at first "grumbled about the discomforts and provincialisms" of the capital, later wrote that "in spite of

³⁰⁵ Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 268-273.

³⁰⁶ Smith, *A Winter in Washington*, 30; Smith, *What is Gentility?*, 220.

its inconveniences and desolate aspect, it was...the most agreeable town to reside in for any length of time.”³⁰⁷ Foster’s usually acerbic countrywoman Frances Trollope appreciated Washington’s potential, heralding the future when she said, “The appearance of the metropolis rising gradually into life and splendor, is a spectacle of high historic interest.”³⁰⁸ Through their entertaining and music making, the women of early Washington contributed to that vitality and brilliance of life. By playing popular music, elite women exercised their voices, both literally and figuratively, and contributed to the development of sociability, society, and political culture in the new capital city.

³⁰⁷ Quoted in Maud Wilder Goodwin, *Dolly Madison* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1896. Reprint. Spartanburg, SC: The Reprint Company, 1967), 115.

³⁰⁸ Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 114.

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Record Group 21, Records of the United States District Courts, Circuit Court for the District of Columbia, Entry 119, Inventories and Sales, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. HCN 1 (July 1, 1799-August 22, 1807); (April 14, 1807-Dec. 8-1815); (January 11, 1816-June 25, 1818); (July 11, 1818-April 20, 1821); (July 27, 1805-Nov. 2, 1823); (August 12, 1823-May 26, 1826); (April 21, 1830 to May 4, 1833); (January 8, 1833 to Nov. 10, 1835); (Nov. 12, 1834- August 10, 1839).

APPENDIX A

THE MARINE BAND AND THEATRICAL ENTERTAINMENT IN EARLY WASHINGTON, DC

Women in federal Washington were exposed to music in a variety of public settings, from concerts to outdoor performances by the Marine Band. The Marine Band, founded in 1798, was the official music ensemble of the United States government. Based on the *harmoniemusik* model, by 1801 the Marine Band consisted of two oboes, two French horns, and two clarinets, as well as a bassoon and a bass drum.³⁰⁹ A popular attraction in the District, the Band performed at outdoor concerts on Saturday afternoons. By Madison's administration, the band had expanded to include these instruments as well as more horns, a bugle horn, a pair of cymbals, and a serpent, the predecessor of a bass tuba.³¹⁰

Thomas Jefferson was instrumental in expanding and professionalizing the Marine Band. He may have suggested that musicians be recruited from Italy to play in the Marine Band. Whether or not this story is true, the commandment of the Marine Corps did instruct one of his captains to recruit some musicians from southern Italy where American ships were based during the military conflict with Tripoli. Sixteen Sicilian musicians arrived in Washington in 1805 but were dismissed from the band over a year short of their three-year contract. Undeterred, the Italians formed their own band led by Gaetano Carusi and his three sons. Accounts of the time mentioned

³⁰⁹ Eric L. Hinton, *Conducting the Wind Orchestra: Meaning, Gesture, and Expressive Potential* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2008), 29; Elise Kirk, 22.

³¹⁰ Cripe, *Thomas Jefferson and Music*, 29; Kirk, *Music at the White House*, 41.

both an “Italian Band” and a “Marine Band,” indicating that the Italians played separately from the main corps of the marine band.

Although Carusi left Washington for Baltimore by 1810, he returned to the capital by 1831, and his sons never left, establishing the Carusis as the dominant musical family of early nineteenth-century Washington.³¹¹ Lewis Carusi founded “Carusi’s Saloon” in 1822 on the site of the former Washington Theatre. Perhaps because the Carusis were already well-known in Washington, elite patrons quickly established the saloon, also known as the Washington Assembly Rooms, as the premier site to attend theatrical performances, balls, concerts, and other entertainments.

The first theater in Washington, called the United States, was nothing more than a small room in Blodgett’s Hotel near the President’s House.³¹² The New Theatre in Georgetown was operating by 1799, and the Washington Theatre opened in 1804. Traveling companies from Philadelphia and other cities brought their own orchestras when they performed in Washington theatres, usually for no more than a few weeks at a time.³¹³ The Monroes, who saw the *School of Reform* at the Washington Theatre in 1819, may have been the first presidential couple to attend the theater in Washington. John Quincy and Louisa Adams also attended regularly.³¹⁴

³¹¹ Kirk, *Music at the White House*, 31-32.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 25.

³¹³ The Philadelphia Company, managed by Alexander Reinagle and Thomas Wignell, occasionally performed in Washington. The Company put on operatic and dramatic productions, often abbreviating plays to include musical acts, and numbered as many as seventy people with a twenty-piece orchestra. See Cripe, 28.

³¹⁴ Kirk, *Music at the White House*, 41.

Advertisements for comedic or dramatic plays and ballad or comic operas frequently stated who was singing the “comic” or “favorite” songs interspersed with the main performance, perhaps to entice theatregoers who had heard of a particular singer who was in town. In addition to a play and songs, theatrical performances might include everything from ballets to pantomimes.³¹⁵ Performances generally started in the evening sometime between 6:30 and 7:30. Smaller performances, often by subscription only or benefits for the performer, usually cost one dollar, or, the average daily wage for a laborer. Besides professional troupes performing in theaters, musicians frequently gave performances in hotels, assembly rooms, even private houses. They ranged from a five-year-old “musical prodigy” on piano to an Italian musician on “that much admired and fashionable instrument King David’s Pedal Harp” and the Spanish guitar.³¹⁶

Compared to large East Coast cities, however, early Washington’s public entertainments, especially its musical talent and offerings, were very poor. Philadelphia dominated the nation’s art scene, and Boston, home of the Handel and Haydn Society, was also musically sophisticated.³¹⁷

³¹⁵ See, for example, “Theatre,” *The Columbian Mirror and Alexandria Gazette*, April 24, 1798, p.3; “Miss Melford,” *The Centinel of Liberty, and George-Town and Washington Advertiser*, April 19, 1799, p. 2; “Alexandria Theatre,” *The Times and District of Columbia Daily Advertiser*, August 31, 1799, p. 3.

³¹⁶ “From a Correspondent,” *Alexandria Advertiser*, October 16, 1797, p. 3; “At McLaughlin’s Hotel,” *The Alexandria Herald*, February 12, 1816, p. 3.

³¹⁷ Allgor, *Parlor Politics*, 171.

APPENDIX B

FIGURES



Figure 1. T. Cartwright after George Beck, *George Town and Federal City, or City of Washington, 1801*. Aquatint. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

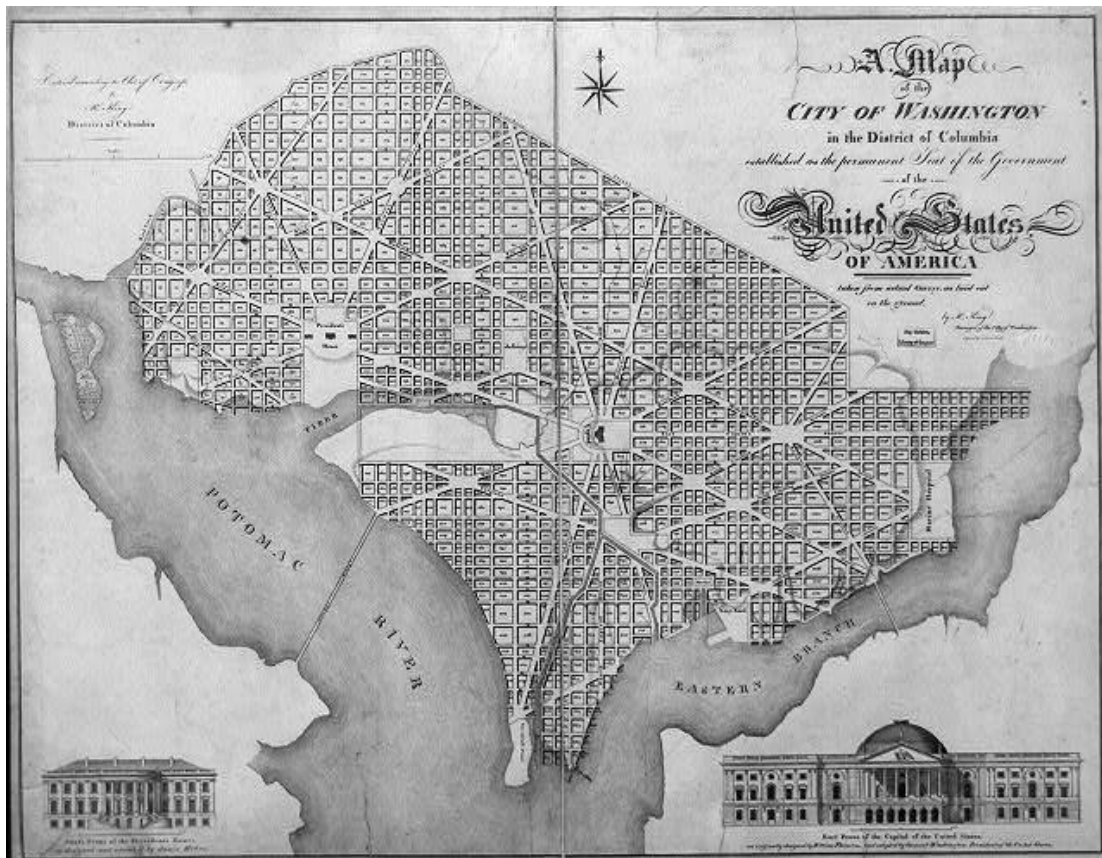


Figure 2. Robert King, *A map of the city of Washington in the District of Columbia established as the permanent seat of the government of the United States of America, 1818*. Engraving. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.



Figure 3. W.J. Bennett after G. Cooke, *City of Washington from beyond the Navy Yard*, ca. 1833. Aquatint. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Figure 4. Attributed to Robert Gilmore, Jr., Drawing from a Sketchbook, c. 1817-1818. Watercolor on paper. Maryland Historical Society, Collection #1922.6.1.



Figure 5. Riversdale, Riverdale Park, MD, 1801-1807, façade. Photograph by author.



Figure 6. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *House for Commodore Stephen Decatur, 748 Jackson Place, N.W., Washington, D.C., Sliding door elevation and pilaster capital, 1818.* Watercolor, ink, and wash on paper. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Figure 7. The Octagon, Washington, DC, 1798-1800, façade. Photograph by author.



Figure 8. Tudor Place, Georgetown, Washington, DC, 1805-1816, rear façade. Photograph by author.

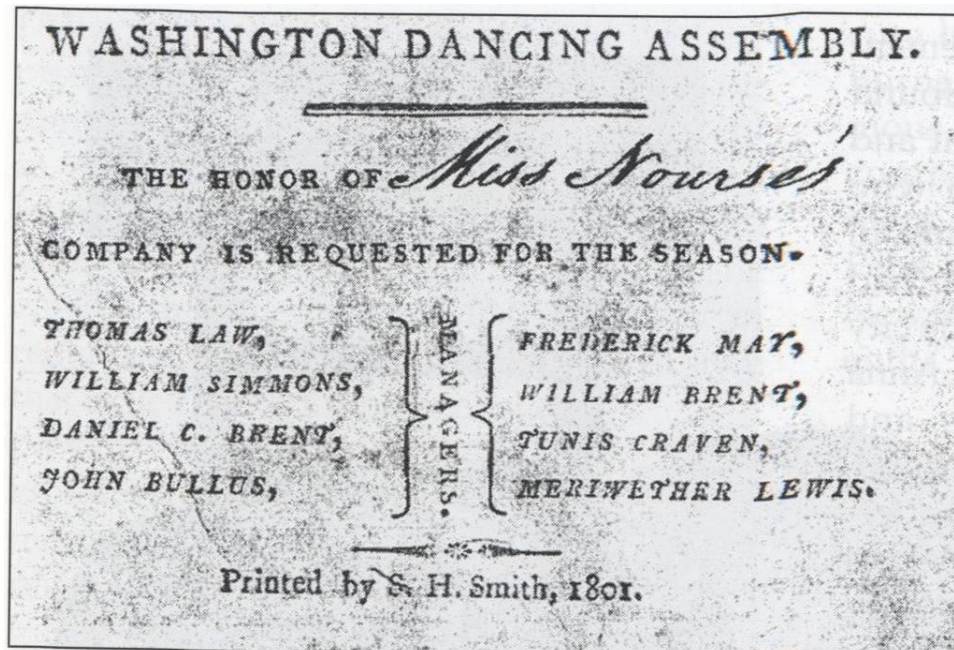


Figure 9. Josepha Nourse's invitation to the 1801 season of the Washington Dancing Assembly. Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, MSS 3490-a.

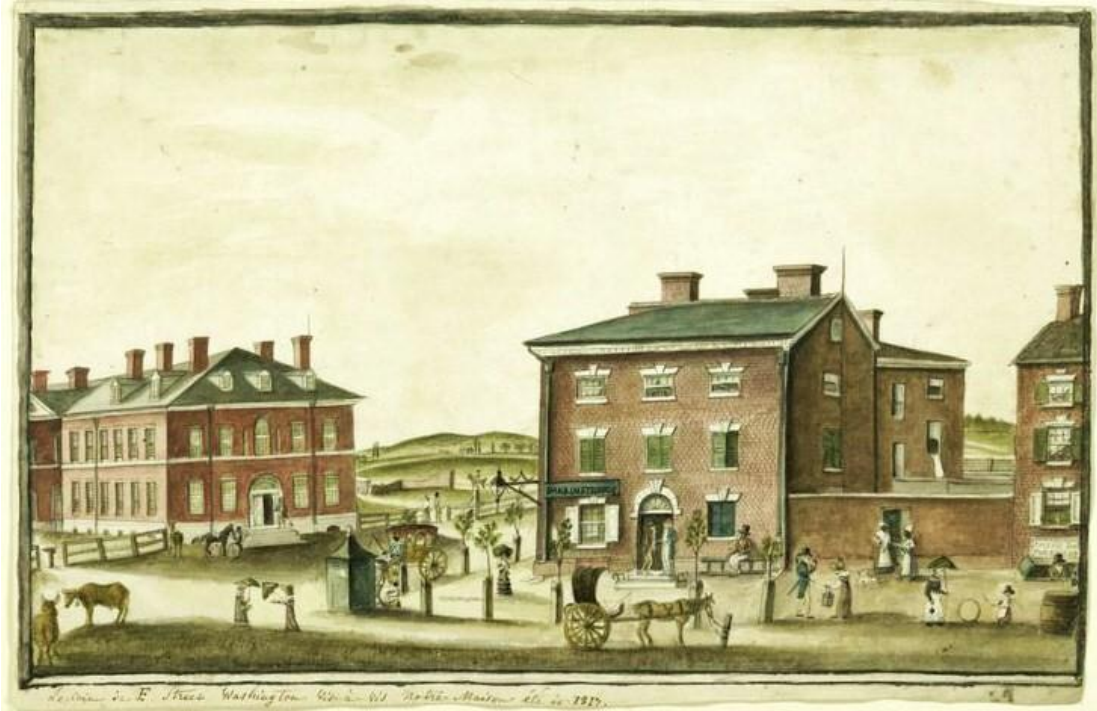


Figure 10. Baroness Hyde de Neuville, *F Street, Washington, D.C., 1817.* Watercolor. Courtesy of the New York Public Library.



Figure 11. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, *The President's House, Washington, D.C. South front elevation, 1817.* Watercolor, ink, and wash on paper. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.



Figure 12. Gilbert Stuart, *Mrs. James Madison*, 1804. Oil on canvas. The White House Historical Association (White House Collection).

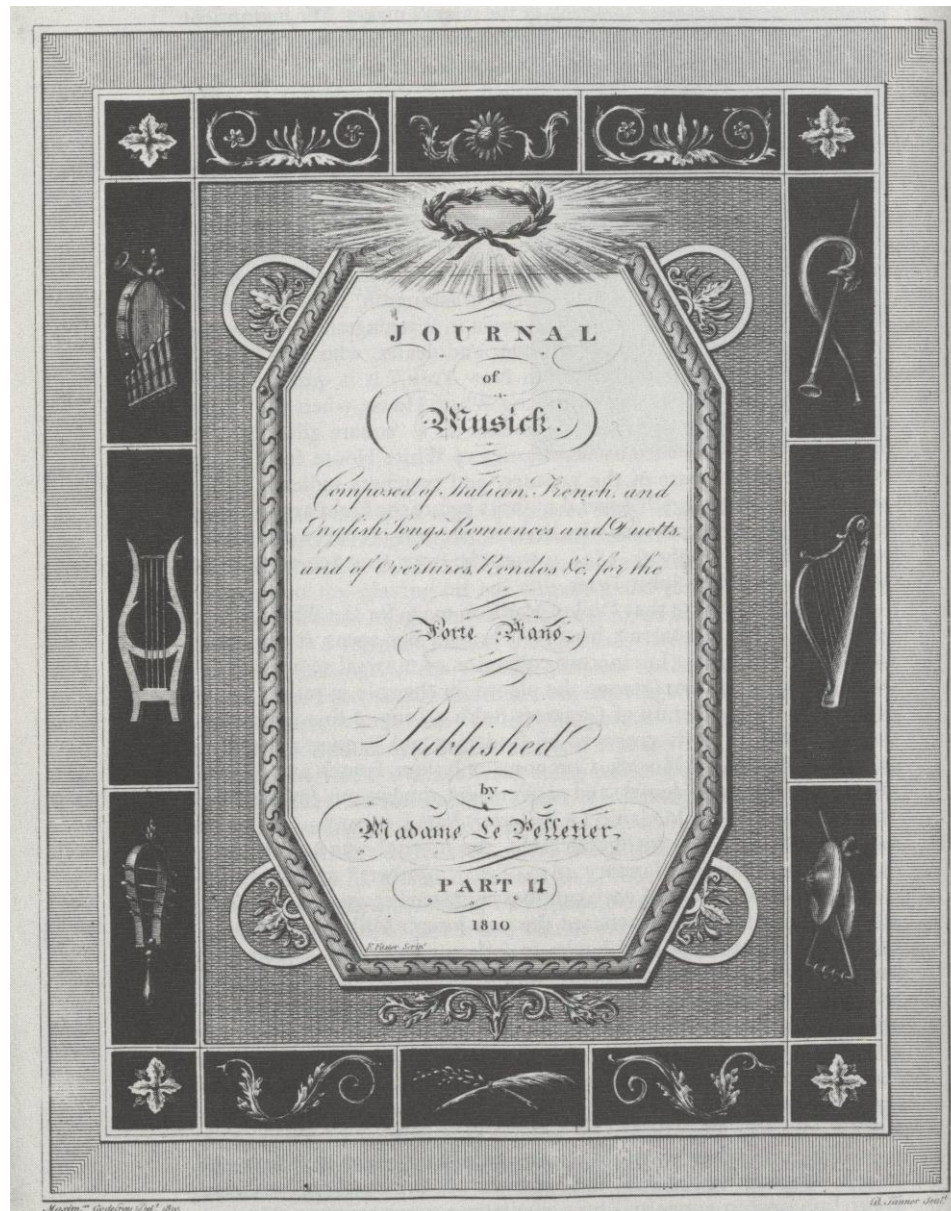


Figure 13. Title page of Madame Le Pelletier's *Journal of Musick*, 1810. Engraving. Library of Congress.



Figure 14. Gilbert Stuart, *Anna Maria Brodeau Thornton (Mrs. William Thornton)*, 1803. Oil on canvas. Andrew W. Mellon Collection, Image courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington.



Figure 15. James William Glass, Jr., *A Party in Georgetown at Mrs. Peter's Tudor Place, 1840.* Ink and graphite on paper. Tudor Place Historic House and Garden, Washington, D.C. Photograph by Red Tack Arts.



Figure 16. Josepha Nourse's merit ticket from Ms. Capron's Boarding School, 1799, obverse. © Dumbarton House; Courtesy NSCDA/Dumbarton House.



Figure 17. Reverse of fig. 16.

HAIL COLUMBIA!
National Song
Written to the
PRESIDENTS MARCH
by
F. HOPKINSON ESQ.

Baltimore. Published by F. D. Benteen.

Maestros

Hail! Co-lumbia happy land, Hail! ye heroes heaven born band, Who fought and bled in
free-dom's cause Who fought & bled in freedom's cause, And when the storm of war was gone, En-
joyd the peace your valour won. Let In-dependence be our boast, E-ver mindful
what it cost, E-ver grateful for the prize, Let its al-tar reach the skies;

* The President's March was composed by Prof. Pfitz and first performed by the Band stationed at Trenton Bridge when Washington passed over in his inauguration at New York, in the Year 1799.

Figure 18. “Hail Columbia! National Song,” written to the President’s March by F. Hopkinson, Esqr. Baltimore: F.D. Benteen, [n.d.]. The Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, Special Collections at the Sheridan Libraries of the Johns Hopkins University.

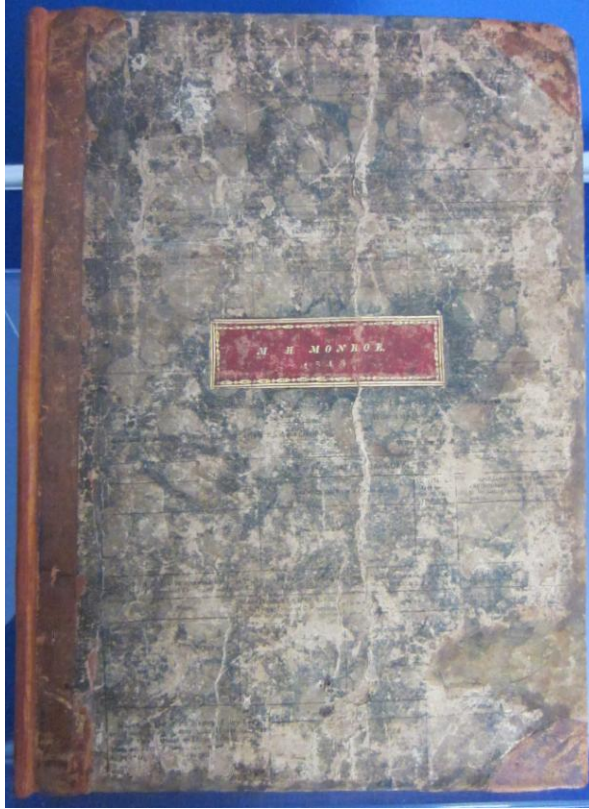


Figure 19. Front cover of Maria Hester Monroe's music book, 1818. Courtesy of the James Monroe Museum & Memorial Library, Fredericksburg, VA. Photograph by author.



Figure 20. Detail of fig. 19.



Figure 21. “Stantz Waltz, with Variations for the Piano-forte or Harp,” Maria Hester Monroe’s music book. Courtesy of the James Monroe Museum & Memorial Library, Fredericksburg, VA. Photograph by Meghan Budinger.



Figure 22. Title page of Monroe family music book. © Dumbarton House; Courtesy NSCDA/Dumbarton House.



Figure 23. "Damon & Clara," copied by Chas. E. Hay. Monroe family music book. © Dumbarton House; Courtesy NSCDA/Dumbarton House.

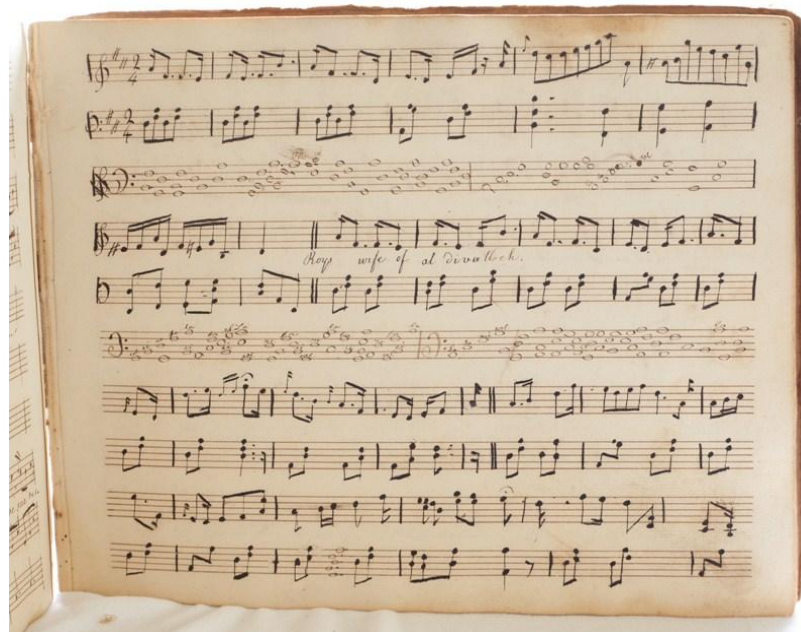


Figure 24. "Roy's Wife of Aldivalloch," Monroe family music book. © Dumbarton House; Courtesy NSCDA/Dumbarton House.

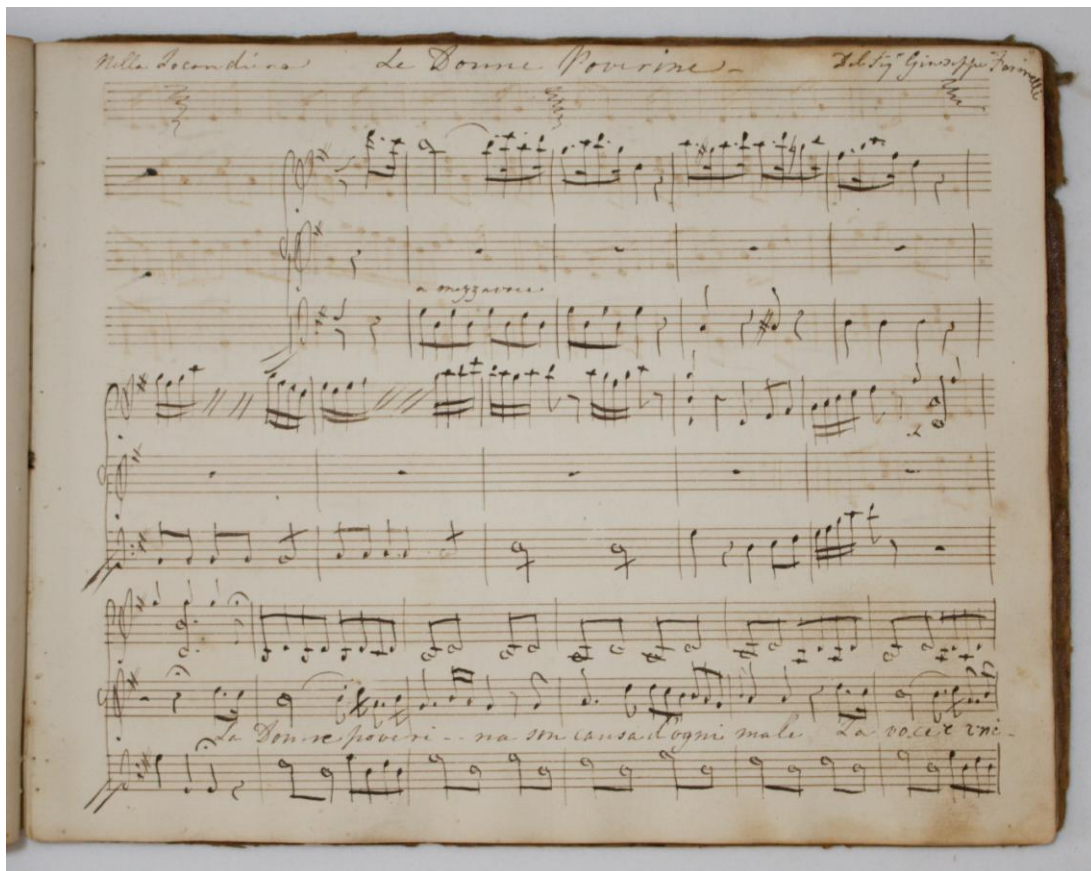


Figure 25. “Le Donne Poverine,” Monroe family music book. © Dumbarton House; Courtesy NSCDA/Dumbarton House.



Figure 26. Grand piano, 1818, Paris. Made by Erard frères. Colt Clavier Collection, Bethersden (Ashford), England.



Figure 27. Square pianoforte, c. 1799-1806, London. Made by George Astor and Co. Courtesy of the James Monroe Museum & Memorial Library, Fredericksburg, VA (JM76.185). Photograph by author.



Figure 28. Detail of nameboard of fig. 27.



Figure 29. Square pianoforte, 1821-1825, Boston. Made by Alpheus Babcock. Courtesy, the Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum, Gift of Mrs. Thelma Josephson.



Figure 30. Eliza Monroe's Harp, c. 1800, Ireland or London. Unknown maker. Courtesy of the James Monroe Museum & Memorial Library, Fredericksburg, VA (JM76.238). Photograph by author.

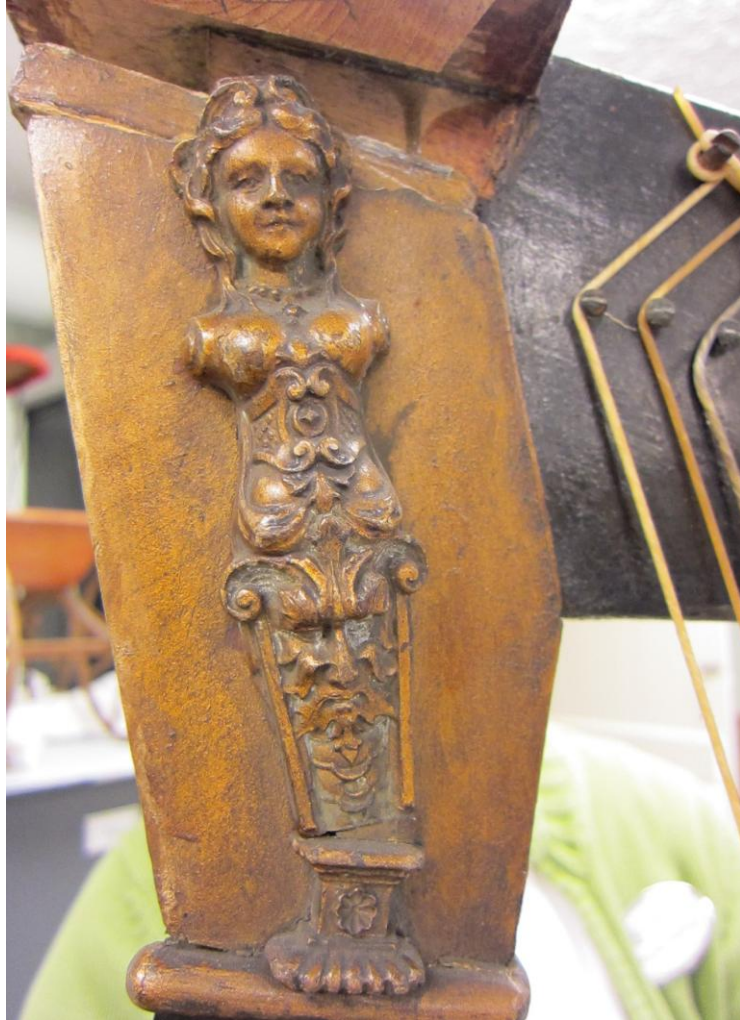


Figure 31. Detail of fig. 30.



Figure 32. Detail of fig. 30, showing missing carved figure.



Figure 33. Detail of fig. 30, showing losses of applied decorative elements on base.



Figure 34. Charles Bird King, *Mrs. John Quincy Adams*, ca. 1824. Oil on canvas. Smithsonian American Art Museum, Adams-Clement Collection, gift of Mary Louisa Adams Clement in memory of her mother, Louisa Catherine Adams Clement.



Figure 35. Louis Catherine Adams' harp, ca. 1775-1800, Europe. Smithsonian Institution Collections, National Museum of American History, Behring Center.



Figure 36. Harp, 1800-1830, London. Made by J.A. Stumpff. Courtesy, the Henry Francis duPont Winterthur Museum, Bequest of Henry Francis du Pont. Photograph by Laszlo Bodo.



Figure 37. Louisa Catherine Adams' music stand. Smithsonian Institution Collections, National Museum of American History, Behring Center.



Figure 38. “My Dog and my Gun,” Maria Bull Nourse’s music book. © Dumbarton House; Courtesy NSCDA/Dumbarton House.

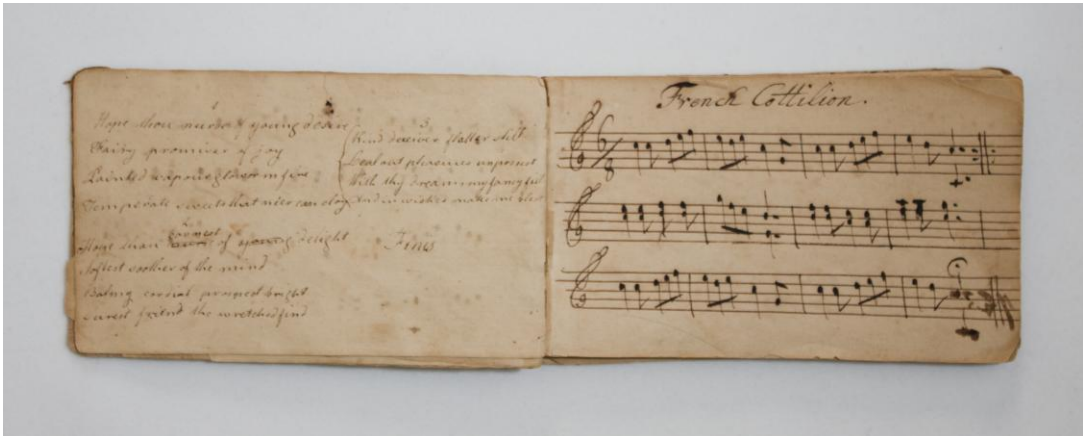


Figure 39. “French Cotillon,” Maria Bull Nourse’s music book. © Dumbarton House; Courtesy NSCDA/Dumbarton House.

APPENDIX C

REPRINT PERMISSION LETTERS

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fax: [\(212\) 930-0533](tel:(212)930-0533)

Leah Giles <leah.giles@gmail.com>

Thu, Apr 21, 2011 at 2:56 PM

To: permissions@nypl.org

Dear Mr. Lisanti,

Thank you for responding to my email so promptly. I will use the lower-resolution image at no cost. I have faxed the permissions request form to the library and look forward to hearing from you again.

Thank you,

Leah Giles

permissions@nypl.org <permissions@nypl.org>

Thu, Apr 21, 2011 at 2:58 PM

To: Leah Giles <leah.giles@gmail.com>

Dear Ms. Giles,

Permission is granted to use the image requested in your dissertation.

Sincerely,
Thomas Lisanti

Leah Giles <leah.giles@gmail.com>

Thu, Apr 21, 2011 at 9:31 PM

To: permissions@nypl.org

Reproducing Image for Master's Thesis

4 messages

Leah Giles <leah.giles@gmail.com>

Thu, Apr 21, 2011 at 3:19 PM

To: rights@whha.org

Hello,

I am writing to request permission to reproduce the portrait of Dolley Madison by Gilbert Stuart at the WHHA. I already have a high-enough resolution image from the Internet ready for inclusion in my thesis, which is entitled "Entertaining a New Republic: Music and the Women of Washington, 1800-1825."

As this is an academic master's thesis and I will receive no payment for my work, I of course would be grateful for any concessions you might be able to make towards the costs of the reproduction rights.

Many thanks,

Leah Giles

Hillary <rights@whha.org>
To: Leah Giles <leah.giles@gmail.com>

Fri, Apr 22, 2011 at 10:39 AM

Dear Leah,

Thank you for your e-mail. I have attached our use guidelines and fees. There will be no fees associated with your request.

Please credit the image:

The White House Historical Association (White House Collection)

Should you wish to publish this image in the future, please contact the White House Historical Association for permission.

Best regards,

Hillary

Hillary Mannion

Curator of Visual Resources

The White House Historical Association

phone: [202-218-4314](tel:202-218-4314)

fax: [202-789-0440](tel:202-789-0440)

street address:

740 Jackson Place, NW Washington, DC 20006

mailing address:

P.O. Box 27624 Washington, DC 20038-7624

RE: Color Image Request

Wood, Barbara <B-WOOD@nga.gov>
To: leah.giles@gmail.com

Wed, Apr 6, 2011 at 4:01 PM

Dear Ms. Giles,

For a non-published thesis, the National Gallery of Art does not object to your (gratis) use of the jpeg image from the NGA website. I have gone one step further and included a larger size file herein.

Please use the following caption/credit: Gilbert Stuart, *Anna Maria Brodeau Thornton (Mrs. William Thornton)*, Andrew W. Mellon Collection, Image courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Barbara C.G. Wood

Images & Permissions Coordinator, NGA Collections

Department of Visual Services

National Gallery of Art

4th Street & Constitution Ave., NW

Washington, DC 20565

t: [202.842.6229](tel:202.842.6229)

f: [202.842.6126](tel:202.842.6126)

From: leah.giles@gmail.com[SMTP:LEAH.GILES@GMAIL.COM]
Sent: Monday, March 21, 2011 12:28:00 AM
To: DIVS-COLOR

Subject: Color Image Request
Auto forwarded by a Rule

form imagertransparencies

subject Color Image Request

Name Leah Giles

Organization Winterthur Museum/University of Delaware

Address Wilmington, DE 19806

Phone

Email leah.giles@gmail.com

project info Master's thesis for the University of Delaware/Winterthur Program
in American Material Culture, Sounds of a New Republic: Music
and Entertaining in Washington, DC, 1800-1825, by Leah Giles,
interior usage, nonprofit/educational.

image
requested Gilbert Stuart Anna Maria Brodeau Thornton Mrs. William
Thornton, 1804 Andrew W. Mellon Collection 1942.8.26

Photo Request

Fay Winkle <fwinkle@tudorplace.org>
To: Leah Giles <leah.giles@gmail.com>

Fri, Apr 1, 2011 at 9:21 AM

Dear Leah,

Please find attached an image of *A Party in Georgetown at Mrs. Peter's Tudor Place*, James William Glass, Jr. (ca. 1825-1855), American, 1840, Ink and graphite on paper (Accession No. 6161) from the Tudor Place Historic House and Garden Collection. Tudor Place has given permission for this image to be used on a one time only basis in your thesis, in accordance with the terms stated on the Tudor Place Image Order Form. Any further use of the image is subject to an application for approval of reproduction rights from Tudor Place.

The image must be credited "Tudor Place Historic House and Garden, Washington, D.C. Photograph by Red Tack Arts."

I have also put in the mail the computer printouts of the music book images you requested.

Thank you again for your request and for your interest in the Tudor Place Collection. Please do not hesitate to contact me if we can be of any further or future assistance.

Regards,

Fay

Fay Winkle
Collections Manager
Tudor Place Historic House and Garden
1644 31st Street, NW | Washington, DC 20007
P: [202.965.0400](tel:202.965.0400) ext. 114
F: [202.965.0164](tel:202.965.0164)

Images for Thesis

Scott Scholz <ScottScholz@dumbartonhouse.org>

Thu, Mar 24, 2011 at
1:40 PM

To: Leah Giles <leah.giles@gmail.com>

Cc: Jennifer Michaelree Squire <education@dumbartonhouse.org>

Leah,

I am working on the images for you and hope to have them to you by the latest Monday. We of course would not charge for any images for educational use like yours, but I would appreciate a copy of your thesis for our files if you are willing to share upon completion. As a side note, we have an active Programs schedule here which often includes scholarly lectures. I mentioned you and your work to our Education Director as a possible program in the future and she liked the idea. So, would you possibly be interested in speaking on your thesis here at Dumbarton House later in the Fall? No answer needed right away, but I thought I would plant the idea.

Regards,

Scott

S. Scott Scholz

Museum Curator

Dumbarton House

[202-337-2288](tel:202-337-2288) x223

ScottScholz@DumbartonHouse.org ■ www.DumbartonHouse.org

Re: Dumbarton House #6

2 messages

Leah Giles <leah.giles@gmail.com>

Tue, Apr 12, 2011 at 5:18 PM

To: Scott Scholz <ScottScholz@dumbartonhouse.org>

Scott,

I'm putting the finishing touches on thesis images and realized I'm not sure what credit line I should use for the Dumbarton House images. At your earliest convenience, could you send me what line you would like me to use?

Thanks,

Leah

Scott Scholz <ScottScholz@dumbartonhouse.org>
To: Leah Giles <leah.giles@gmail.com>

Tue, Apr 12, 2011 at 5:21 PM

© Dumbarton House; Courtesy NSCDA/Dumbarton House

Thanks,

Scott

p. 2
James Monroe Museum
(540) 654-1106
Mar 30 11 04:00p

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DATE OF CREATION/PUBLICATION/RELEASE:
May 2011

PUBLISHER/PRODUCER:
University of Delaware/University Microfilms

AUTHOR/EDITOR/DIRECTOR:
Leah Rene Giles

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Leah Giles

Authorizing Agent (requesting organization)
Printed Name: *Leah Giles*
Title: *Graduate Student*
Organization: *University of Delaware/University Program in American Material Culture*
Address: *1301 N. Harrison St, #1104*
Phone: *330-672-9744* Fax: _____
Email: *leah.giles@gmail.com*

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Date 3/31/2011

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1301 N Harrison St
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PUBLISHER UMI/ Univ of Delaware

AUTHOR Leah Giles

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Image Permissions for Thesis

Susan Newton <Snewto@winterthur.org>
To: Leah Giles <leah.giles@gmail.com>

Thu, Mar 31, 2011 at 3:07 PM

last 2 credit lines:

From: Julia Hofer
Sent: Thursday, March 31, 2011 3:06 PM
To: Susan Newton
Subject: RE: Image Permissions for Thesis

Susan,

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Confirmed.

Julia

Registration Department

Reproducing Image for Master's Thesis

Sorensen, Richard <SorensenR@si.edu>
To: Leah Giles <leah.giles@gmail.com>

Thu, Apr 21, 2011 at 8:08 AM

Dear Leah,

Congratulations on your thesis! You have the museum's permission to use the image. Please use the following credit line:

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March 30, 2011

Ms. Leah Giles
Lois F. McNeil Fellow
Winterthur Program in American Material Culture
Academic Programs Department
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Jane Rogers, Associate Curator
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