Music in the Early Federal Era

Even after Philadelphia had become the National Capital, the people of the city and distinguished visitors, diplomatic and otherwise, if they were inclined to any theatrical diversion, had to content themselves with going to the old Southwark Theatre, on the south side of South Street.

Hallam's Old American Company played there and gave excellent and varied performances, but the theatre itself was little better than a shabby old barn; it was small and often insufficient for the audiences; it was ill-ventilated; it was in an inconvenient place, not at all central; and the approaches to it were unprepossessing at best and, in wet weather, the mud was a menace to the clothing of all who went there. In short, it was a reproach to a city of the size and rank of Philadelphia.

At last came an opportune chance of remedy. Thomas Wignell, the chief comedian of Hallam's company, had a disagreement with the manager. At the end of the 1790 season, therefore, Wignell left Hallam's company and, along with Alexander Reinagle, set about establishing a new and better equipped theatre, in a more central place. For this end, they formed a joint stock company to which Robert Morris, William Bingham, Charles Biddle, John Vaughan, Edward Tilghman and many more of the foremost citizens subscribed.

The new building, on the north side of Chestnut Street above Sixth, begun in 1791, is said to have been "a perfect copy of the Bath Theatre." John Inigo Richards, Wignell's brother-in-law, procured the plans, which are supposed to have been prepared by a Mr. Palmer, who had remodelled the Bath Theatre in 1784. In this case, for once, Philadelphia looked to Bath for inspiration, and not London.

This new structure, which would have been an ornament to any city, was nearly enough finished early in 1793 to be used for concerts, and Alexander Reinagle lost no time in bringing it within the orbit of the most brilliant social life in the country.
THE NEW THEATRE

This Evening, the 7th Feb. at the New Theatre, there will be a
GRAND CONCERT,
OF VOCAL & INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC.¹

Act 1st.

**GRAND OVERTURE** ................................................................. Haydn:
**SONG** ................................................................. Mr. Chambers:
**CONCERTO VIOLIN** ................................................................. Master Duport:
**DUETTO** (for two voices) ................................................................. Mrs. Morris and Mr. Reinagle:
**HUNTING SONG, “While over the mountain’s brow”** ........................................... Mr. Harper:
**SONATA PIANO FORTE** ................................................................. Mr. Reinagle:

Act 2d.

**QUARTETTO, PLEYEL** ................................................................. Messrs. Petit, Boulay, Mallett and Jehot:
**DUETTO, “From morn till night”** ...................................................... Messrs. Chambers and Reinagle:
**CONCERTO CLARINET** ................................................................. Mr. Foucard:
**SONG, “Poor Tom Bowling”** ............................................................. Mr. Harper:

Act 3d.

**OVERTURE** ................................................................. Mr. Reinagle:
**SONG, “Wives and Sweethearts”** ...................................................... Mr. Harper:
**CONCERTO VIOLIN** ................................................................. Mr. Pettit:
**SONG, “The Traveller benighted”** ..................................................... Mrs. Morris:
**FINALE** ................................................................. Stamitz.

A very considerable number of lights, in addition to the former, are now added by means of branches.

Between the first and second acts, a Dance, in the character of Punch; and after the Concert, A GRAND DANCE, called L’ESPAGNOLE, by Master Duport.

Places to be taken, and Tickets to be had at Mr. Young’s tavern, back of the Theatre, every day from 10 till 5 o’clock.

Box one Dol.—Pit 3-4 Dol.—Gallery 1-2 Dol.

The doors to be opened at 6 and the performance to begin precisely at 7 o’clock.

¹ Much of the music performed at these concerts at the New Theatre is to be found in the Music Collection of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.
So ran the announcement in Mr. Bache’s Philadelphia General Advertiser on Thursday morning, February 7, 1793. This concert was the last of a series of three that Alexander Reinagle had arranged, after the completion of the theatre structure but before it was quite ready for dramatic performances. The concerts mark a new step forward in the revival of the city’s musical life.

Before the Revolutionary War, music in Philadelphia had reached a very respectable stage of advancement; there was music in the homes of the people, there was music they could hear in public, there were self-supporting professional musicians, and there were not only sellers of musical instruments, but makers of musical instruments as well. About 1775, John Behrent, in Philadelphia, made the first American pianoforte.

Philadelphia, it is true, in comparison with Boston, New York and Charleston, for a long time had been backward in cultivating organised musical expression, or even amateur performance in private. Prior to the middle of the eighteenth century, Quaker influences had been strong enough to repress almost wholly any public rendering of music outside the churches, even to discourage individual efforts in the homes of citizens. In New England, New York and the South, ingrained inhibitions and prejudices—religious, disciplinary or social—offered no such obstacles to either amateur or professional performance. Music, without let or hindrance, was free to make such progress as local circumstances permitted. And circumstances permitted it to attain a status in both popularity and excellence that we have too habitually overlooked. But after about 1756, Philadelphia forged rapidly ahead and made up for lost time—thanks, chiefly, to the exertions of Francis Hopkinson. At the outbreak of the Revolutionary War, the city equalled, if indeed it did not surpass, the other Colonial cities as a musical centre.

Although in general throughout the Colonies “fiddle and harpsichord gave way to fife and drum” at the approach of hostilities, the musical life of Philadelphia did not go into total eclipse. During the British occupation there was music a-plenty. Captain Johann Hein-

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2 Governour John Penn was a good violinist, Francis Hopkinson was a skilled harpsichordist and a composer, and Dr. Kuhn was an accomplished musician, to mention only a few. Governour Penn had frequent Sunday evening soirees at his house in Third Street. See correspondence between John Penn and Francis Hopkinson.
riches of the Hessian Jäger Corps, writing from Philadelphia on January 18, 1778, says:

... Assemblies, concerts, comedies, clubs, and the like make us forget there is any war...³

And Rebecca Franks, writing to her friend Mrs. Paca, in September, 1777, says:

Oh! how I wish Mr. P. would let you come in for a week or two. I know you are as fond of a gay life as myself. You'd have an opportunity of raking as much as you choose, either at Plays, Ball, Concerts or Assemblies. I've been but three evenings alone since we moved to town... .

For a short time after the return of peace, a powerful part of officialdom frowned upon all musical activity. As O. G. Sonneck points out in his admirable sourcebook,⁴

... the element of the people which, previous to the war, had opposed all theatrical or musical amusements for the sake of a narrow, though well-meant, principle and for the salvation of their philistine souls, now gained the upper hand for a while.

This time it was mainly Presbyterian Whigs who opposed innocent musical and dramatic diversions. There seems also to have been some infusion of petty personal rancours into the situation, quite apart from either religious or political grounds.

But this attitude did not, could not, last long in the face of reawakened aspirations for progress on every side. A prolonged attempt to dam up the natural outlet of music, in opposition to widespread public sentiment, would have been inexpedient, if not dangerous. In 1783, John Bentley, conductor of the orchestra for the Old American Company at the Southwark Theatre, established the fortnightly "City Concert" in October. The advertisement of the second concert, printed in the Pennsylvania Packet of November 6, reads:

CITY CONCERT

The subscribers will please take notice that the next concert will be on Tuesday the 11th instant, at the Lodge Room. As a number of gentlemen expressed a desire of subscription, whose subscriptions Mr. Bentley could not receive till he had ascertained the number the room would hold; he now informs them that the subscription is open for 25 more subscribers, after which it will be finally closed. Tickets for non-subscribers may be had at 10s each...

⁴ O. G. Sonneck, Francis Hopkinson and James Lyon, 56.
There were eleven concerts in all in this series, the last on April 2, 1784. Unfortunately, we know almost nothing of Bentley's repertoire; the newspapers of the day throw little light on the programmes he presented. We do know that Signora Mazzanti, as a celebrated soloist, got advance notice; and we know that in the second concert series the following season "some favourite catches and glees," "several favourite airs," and a "glee and chorus from the opera of Castle of Andalusia," by Dr. Samuel Arnold, appeared on the "plan"—the term plan occurs quite commonly instead of programme—at one time or another. However, there is no doubt that Bentley secured the best performers obtainable—some of them, in all likelihood, "gentlemen musicians," that is to say talented amateurs who were often quite ready, in the interests of music and the public good, to assist the professionals gratuitously; and it is safe to assume that he rendered the type of music that would win approbation from such discriminating music-lovers as Francis Hopkinson.

Bentley's advertisement of his second concert series (1784–85), printed in the Pennsylvania Packet of September 9, 1784, reads:

CITY CONCERT

Mr. Bentley once more submits his proposals to the public, for a Subscription Concert, to be continued during the six winter months. Having considerably enlarged his plan, in compliance with the general wish, and having obtained a reinforcement of vocal as well as instrumental performers, he flatters himself that he shall be able to furnish a more elegant and perfect entertainment than it was possible (from the peculiar circumstances of the time) to procure during the last winter. The liberal indulgence which was then shewn to a first attempt, obstructed by many difficulties, the rising taste for music, and its improved state in Philadelphia, are objects that must constantly excite Mr. Bentley's attention to whatever can increase the public satisfaction, or entitle him to a continuance of their favour and applause.

Proposals

1st. That there shall be a Concert once in two weeks commencing in October; each concert to conclude at half past nine in the evening, after which rooms will be opened to Dancing and Cards.

2d. That every subscriber shall be entitled to tickets for two ladies, besides his own admittance.

3d. That each Subscriber pay two guineas and a half.

5 Dr. Samuel Arnold, 1740–1802. Composer, producer and editor; Mus. Doc. Oxon. 1773; edited Handel's works at request of George III; organist and composer to the Chapels Royal, 1783; published his great collection of Cathedral Music, 3 vols., 1790; organist to Westminster Abbey, 1793.
4th. That officers of the army and strangers (only) shall be admitted on paying 10s each.

The room, last season, having been found cold, proper care will be taken to prevent it this season, by placing stoves in different parts, in which fires will be placed in the early part of the day.

Anyone reading “between the lines” of this announcement can draw many trustworthy inferences. It is, at least, quite plain that the institution of public concerts at recurrent intervals had become firmly established and that it was getting public support.

During the season of 1785–86 there were no “City Concerts.” Their discontinuance seems to have been because of a three-cornered quarrel between the leading musicians, Bentley, William Brown and Henry Capron, the latter an exceptionally able violinist who had played at important concerts in Paris. The public, however, were not cheated of their musical recreation. At this point arrived Alexander Reinagle. By “virtue of his superior talent and individuality” he took “control of the musical affairs of the city.” He succeeded in reconciling Capron and Brown; Bentley went to New York. On October 18 the Pennsylvania Journal printed proposals signed by Reinagle, Capron, Brown, and A. Juhan. There were to be twelve fortnightly concerts, the first of the series on October 19, at the City Tavern. Reinagle and his associates promised the public their “greatest endeavours . . . to render every performance agreeable and satisfactory to the lovers of music”; they further said that “a new orchestra is erected and the greatest care will be taken to make the room agreeable.”

Fortunately for us, Reinagle published the programmes of his concerts in the daily papers. From one of the “plans,” that of November 1, 1786, we may gather some idea of the music presented:

Act I.
Overture ................................................................. Toeschi
Song, Mr. Reinagle from the Duenna
Concerto Flute ..................................................... Stamitz

Act II.
Concerto Violin .................................................... Fiorillo
Symphony ............................................................. Lachnith
Sonata Piano Forte ............................................... Reinagle

Act III.
Concerto 2d ................................................................. Corelli
Duet, Violin and Violoncello ........................................ Breval
By particular desire, the Miscellaneous Concerto

We have no means of knowing whether the pianoforte sonata Mr. Reinagle played was one of his own compositions or the work of some other composer; the programme-writers of the early Federal Era had a curiously nonchalant habit of sometimes putting down the name of the composer, sometimes the name of the performer without any reference to the source of the number given. Nor, when the orchestra performs a symphony, can we tell whether they are playing the complete work or only one or two movements.

The City Tavern concerts achieved a deserved popularity and continued their annual appeal to the music-loving public. For the "City Concert," holden at the City Tavern January 3, 1788, the Pennsylvania Packet of January 1 announces the "plan":

Act I.
Overture ................................................................. Stamitz
Song ................................................................. Brown
Concerto Flute ............................................................ Brown

Act II.
Trio, Piano Forte, Flute and Violoncello ................................ Schroeter
Song ................................................................. Gretre [sic]
Concerto ................................................................. Corelli

Act III.
Overture ................................................................. Abel
Solo Violoncello .......................................................... Schetky
Symphony ................................................................. Bache [sic]

The concert was to begin at 7 o'clock precisely and tickets, at 7/6 each, were to be had at the City Tavern.

The proofreading for this newspaper announcement might have been improved. Perusal of the list of composers represented prompts the query, "Did the proofreader really imagine that Mr. Bache had combined publishing, belligerent politics and musical composition in his repertoire of darling activities (Heaven save the mark!), or was the uncorrected lapsus a bit of subtle flattery?" However, ignoring

7 Benjamin Franklin Bache (1769-1798), grandson of Benjamin Franklin; founder and publisher of the General Advertiser, afterwards known as The Aurora; bitter anti-Federalist and hostile critic of President Washington.
printer's errors, the programme shows us that Reinagle was maintaining the standard he had set at the beginning of his Philadelphia career. It is worth noting that the numbers played included not only the acknowledgedly classic works of Bach, Handel, Corelli, Vivaldi and others, but also the compositions of writers who were almost contemporary, and likewise productions that were distinctly "modern."

Reinagle did not confine his energies to concert work. It was on March 17 of this same year, 1788, that the *Pennsylvania Packet* carried the following advertisement:

**Music**

**JUST PUBLISHED**

A Collection of Favourite Songs; divided into two Books (Price 15s) Each containing most of the airs in the Poor Soldier, Rosina, &c. and the principal Songs sung at Vauxhall. The Basses rendered easy and natural for the Piano Forte or Harpsichord. By A. Reinagle: Sold by Messrs. Rice, Poyntell, Dobson and Young, At their respective Book-Stores, in Second street.

Messrs. Rice & Co., booksellers and stationers, who acted as one of the agents selling Reinagle's musical publications, in January, 1788, after listing a long array of law books and literary "heavies," advertise: Harpsichord, violin and guitar strings of the best quality. Instruction books for the harpsichord, violin, guitar, flute &c. It was the usual thing for booksellers to purvey supplies of this sort; incidentally, such advertisements furnish an index to the amount of amateur musical life in the city. Only several years later, F. P. Besselievre (evidently one of the French émigrés) acquaints the public, through the columns of the *General Advertiser*, that he has for sale, "wholesale & retail," "six dozen of violins . . . upwards of one half of the first quality; with bows, strings and bridges." However astounding it may be to advertise violins for sale "by the dozen," as though they were eggs or tea-buns, this commercial announcement, at any rate, is further testimony to the prevalence of amateur music and musicians in Philadelphia at the period. Would
any musical-instrument dealer today, in a city of less than 50,000 inhabitants, have the hardihood to stock "six dozen of violins" at one time, even though upwards of one half were of the first quality?

On November 29, 1788, an advertisement in the *Federal Gazette* reads:

This day is Published, and to be sold by Thomas Dobson, at the Stone House, in Second street, between Chestnut and Market streets,

A Set of Eight Songs

The Words and Music composed by the Honourable Francis Hopkinson.

These songs are composed in an easy, familiar style, intended for young Practitioners on the Harpsichord or Forte Piano, and is the first Work of this kind attempted in the United States. Price 7s 6.

The engraved title page says "Seven Songs," but a note on a subsequent page says, "This Eighth Song was added after the Title Page was engraved." The dedication reads:

To His Excellency

GEORGE WASHINGTON, ESQUIRE

SIR,

I Embrace, with heartfelt satisfaction, every opportunity that offers of recognising the personal Friendship that hath so long subsisted between us. The present Occasion allows me to do this in a manner most flattering to my Vanity; and I have accordingly taken advantage of it, by presenting this Work to your Patronage, and honouring it with your Name.

With respect to this little Work, which I now have the honour to present to your notice, I can only say, that it is such as a Lover, not a Master, of the Arts can furnish. I am neither a profess'd Poet, nor a profess'd Musician; and yet venture to appear in those characters united; for which, I confess, the censure of Temerity may justly be brought against me.

If these Songs should not be so fortunate as to please the young Performers for whom they are intended, they will at least not occasion much Trouble in learning to perform them; and this will, I hope, be some Alleviation to their Disappointment.

However small the Reputation may be that I shall derive from this Work, I cannot, I believe, be refused the Credit of being the first Native of the United States who has produced a Musical Composition. If this attempt should not be too severely treated, others may be encouraged to venture on a path, yet untrodden in America, and the Arts in succession will take root and flourish amongst us.

I hope for your favourable Acceptance of this Mark of my Affection and Respect, and have the Honour to be

Your Excellency's most obedient, and Most humble Servant,

Philadelpbia

Nov. 20th, 1788

8 The 1790 census reckons Philadelphia's population as 42,520. In 1800 the population numbered 69,403.
Some, at times, have challenged Hopkinson's claim to be the "first Native of the United States" to produce a musical composition, and have urged that the credit belongs to James Lyon. The evidence, however, seems to substantiate Hopkinson's priority conclusively.  

Francis Hopkinson's interest in the harpsichord, his favourite instrument, extended beyond his role as an accomplished performer. For some years he busied his leisure in trying to better the instrument's tonal and mechanical properties, and his "Improved Method of Quilling a Harpsichord" appears in the second volume (1786) of the Transactions of the American Philosophical Society. A condensed form of this treatise appeared also in the Columbian Magazine for May, 1787. Hopkinson likewise experimented with the application of a keyboard to Franklin's Armonica, that ingenious improvement of the Musical Glasses devised by Dr. Franklin about 1760.

The early Federal Era in Philadelphia could boast not only such excellent amateur musicians as Francis Hopkinson, John Penn, Dr. Kuhn, Mrs. Thomas Willing, an accomplished harpist—the harp, about this time, was becoming a fashionable instrument for ladies—and others whose social prominence gave them a certain prestige in forming public taste. Interest in music and delight in its performance, whether vocal or instrumental, were widespread amongst great numbers of citizens and not confined to "society"; this we gather from such advertisements as that published in the Pennsylvania Packet of February 19, 1788:

Musical Club

The 9th Amateur Concert will begin This Evening, the 19th instant, precisely at 7 o'clock, at Mr. Henry Epple's [the Rainbow Tavern], in Race street, when the subscribers will please to attend.

Besides such evidences of popular concern, we know that professionals like Reinagle, Brown, Capron and Juhan found considerable occupation—they didn't have to advertise—with private pupils. Those of less eminence let the public know through the advertising columns of the daily papers that they were prepared to give instruction on the harpsichord or pianoforte, at home or abroad, and published their terms. Some of them also add that

Piano Fortes and Harpsichords [are] tun'd with the greatest exactness, at one dollar per time, or 12 do. per year.

9 O. G. Sonneck, Francis Hopkinson and James Lyon, passim.
10 In the next to last decade of the eighteenth century, Dr. Franklin was well advanced in years and too unwell to play an active part in musical life.
Instrumental instruction was not limited to the pianoforte and harpsichord. One “Music Master” announces that he teaches on several kinds of instruments, viz. Harpsichord, Piano-Forte, Harp, Guitar, Flute, Clarinet, Bassoon, Hautboy, and French-Horn.

Another indication of the general taste of the people for music was that Benjamin Carr, when he came to Philadelphia from England, in 1793, saw the opportunity and established his Musical Repository in Market Street devoted entirely to the sale of music and musical instruments, and the publishing of music. And his venture was successful.

What was true of the state of music in Philadelphia in the early Federal Era was true, by and large, also in the other cities of the Atlantic Seaboard from Boston to Charleston, only with different dramatis personae. With reference to Boston, it seems only fair to say that “the New England Puritans were human, after all, on six days of the week and not so frightfully bigoted, ascetic and narrow-minded as they usually are pictured and that they did not consider music . . . a stolen pleasure.” From 1731 onwards—and with singularly slight interruption during the Revolutionary War—Boston enjoyed a succession of good concerts, most of which had adequate patronage. The yeoman services of William Selby—for many years organist of King’s Chapel—as a concert organiser, performer and composer, deserve especial mention. Selby successfully arranged and conducted a number of sacred concerts, as well as the more numerous concerts of secular music. Private concerts, also, there were a-plenty, and the number of amateur musicians assured abundance of music in domestic circles.

New York’s concert-life, too, began at an early date and Manhattanites enjoyed a musical pabulum of no less excellence than did the Bostonians. The Revolutionary War brought no dearth of music—thanks to the long British occupation of the city, the amount of musical talent disclosed amongst officers in His Majesty’s army, and the general determination of the Loyalists to maintain all possible social gaiety. Up to the evacuation of the city by the British troops

in 1783, New York, indeed, was blessed with a probably hitherto unprecedented amount of music, both public and private.

During the early Federal Era, for which we have abundant sources in old newspaper files, music in New York ran a parallel course, in both excellence and variety, with music in Philadelphia, as already outlined. Outdoor music, in connection with the "Vauxhall" or pleasure-garden, was a significant feature of New York's concert-life in the Federal Era, as it was in Philadelphia and the cities of the South, in all of which the idea met with a ready reception. In Boston, we must remember, the "Vauxhall," for one cause or another, did not reach a comparable development until much later in the period.

Baltimore, despite her smaller population and the consequent difficulty of assuring the financial support to be counted on from a large music-loving public, nevertheless made a distinctly creditable showing. In the *Maryland Gazette* of April 14, 1786, we read:

**CONCERT**

It is proposed to establish a Musical Concert, by subscription for three months certain or any time longer the subscribers may chuse, to be held at Mr. William Page's large room in Gaystreet, which room is extremely adapted for the purpose. There are already provided, several well-toned instruments and suitable music, with eight capital performers. As every attention will be observed to conduct the performance in the most elegant and approved manner it is hoped that the proposal will meet with the approbation and encouragement of those ladies and gentlemen who are friends of the polite arts. Subscription papers with the Rules of the Society are lodged in the hands of several gentlemen at Mr. Page's in Gaystreet, and Mr. Murphy's bookstore in Market Street.

In the *Maryland Journal* of November 9, 1787, occurs the announcement:

This evening, at the request of a number of gentlemen, promoters of the Baltimore dancing assemblies and concerts for the season, will be a concert at Mrs. Starck's new building.

Evidently the scheme of a series of concerts had met with favourable response, a deduction further confirmed by an announcement in the *Maryland Journal* of April 3, 1789:

The public are respectfully informed that there will be a concert performed on Thursday next, at Mr. John Starck's tavern. Those ladies and gentlemen who have heretofore honoured Mr. Boyer with their subscriptions, are in a particular manner requested to attend the same.

On May 25, 1790, the *Maryland Journal* advertised:

A GRAND CONCERT Vocal and Instrumental will be performed at Mr. Starck's rooms, at the sign of the Indian Queen in Market Street, on Friday evening next the 28th instant, by a company of French musicians, lately arrived in this town. It will begin precisely at eight o'clock.

Then follows the full programme, with the names of the performers. Thence onward there are announcements of concerts at fairly frequent intervals, often with the full programmes published in advance. The music advertised to be given at these concerts compared favourably with the contemporary selections rendered at Philadelphia and elsewhere. In Baltimore, when it was impossible to maintain artists of the first rank in permanent residence, singers and players of outstanding reputation—men like Reinagle, for instance—not seldom visited the city for special occasions that called for their talents. We may note, in passing, that the programmes performed in Federal America bore close resemblance to the programmes offered in London, however much or little the quality of actual performance might differ from the London standard. Considering the sound training and known ability of many of the players and singers, it is safe to conclude that high standards of excellence obtained.

Charleston, too, can exhibit a long musical history with its record of known concerts running back to 1732 but, like Baltimore suffering under the handicap of a relatively small population, it occasionally had to depend upon visiting celebrities to add the requisite attraction to the public. Nevertheless, from the middle of the eighteenth century there were resident musicians who could, and did, organise successful concerts. One of them, Thomas Pike, who taught dancing and fencing as well as music, advertised in the *South Carolina Gazette* of September 7, 1765:

On Wednesday the 25th instant, September, the Orange Garden, in Trade Street, will be opened for the Night only, when a *Concert of Vocal and Instrumental Musick* will be performed by Gentlemen of the place, for the entertainment of all lovers of harmony. Concerto on the French Horn and Bassoon by Mr. Pike.

... The subscription is two dollars for three tickets, to admit two ladies and a gentleman. ...

N.B. It is hoped no persons will be so indiscreet as to attempt climbing over the fences to the annoyance of the subscribers, as I give this public notice that I will prosecute any person so offending, to the utmost rigour of the law.

*Thomas Pike.*
Music "performed by Gentlemen of the place" plainly indicates dependence upon talented local amateurs. It is something of a relief to know that "gate-crashing" is not a purely twentieth-century annoyance.

That admirable organisation, the St. Cecilia Society, which was born in 1762 and bound Charleston music-lovers into a club with a definite purpose, for a long time efficiently managed the concert-life of the community. That is possibly why we get so little light from concert advertisements over a considerable period of years. At last, in the early Federal Era, the advertisements become more enlightening. From 1793 we have a fairly clear record of the concerts and of the programmes performed at them. These concerts were much like those in other American cities at the time. It is noteworthy, however, that the French refugees from San Domingo brought to Charleston amongst their number not a few musicians, music teachers and also deserving beneficiaries of "charity" concerts got up for their relief by warm-hearted Charlestonians.

Even little Alexandria was not without its concerts in this dawn of the "golden age" of music in America. Of a concert advertised for April 30, 1793, but postponed to May 1, and then to May 4, the Columbian Mirror of May 1 says:

By this unexpected delay, however, a considerable acquisition will be made to the music—the addition of a Thorough Bass upon the harpsichord, which will be performed by a lady, will render the entertainment much more pleasing and satisfactory, than anything of the kind heretofore experienced in this town.

The advertisement adds a further naïve touch when it continues:

For the convenience of the ladies who mean to attend the concert this evening, a carriage is provided for their conveyance, going and returning; applications to be made to Mr. Jesse Simms—the Concert will not begin until the carriage is unemployed.

On June 27, 1795, Mrs. D'Hemard gave a concert on the pedal harp in Alexandria. She played concertos, sonatas, and variations upon favourite airs; she also played an harp accompaniment to songs. A gentleman, who seemingly was locally considered a musical authority and had previously heard Mrs. D'Hemard, published the following letter of encouragement in the Columbian Mirror urging his fellow-townsmen to attend the concert:
I have heard Mrs. D'Hemard perform upon the harp, and presuming my testimony may, in some degree, contribute to promote the object of this lady, on the present occasion, I can venture to predict that the expectations of those who shall attend her performance will not be disappointed. Mrs. D'Hemard's judgement, taste and execution upon the pedal harp are not, in my opinion, to be surpassed by any one.

The testimonial apparently had the intended effect, and others agreed with the writer; Mrs. D'Hemard had to repeat her recital at least once.

As in Charleston, so too in Philadelphia, the advent of French refugees, whether from France or from San Domingo, had an appreciable effect upon musical conditions. It brought music teachers and skilled performers upon various instruments, who straightway entered into the current of musical life. One direct evidence of this is an advertisement that appeared in Dunlap's *American Daily Advertiser* January 23, 1793:

**MUSIC**

The French gentlemen, Musicians, respectfully inform such Ladies and Gentlemen of this City, as might be pleased to have Music performed at their own Houses, to enquire for them at Mr. Oellers's Hotel, or at Mr. Merkel's, No. 224, at the sign of the Drover, Northeast corner of Calowhill and third streets. The said Musicians will be very glad to attend at the first Requisition.

Is it too much to assume that this was a bid to give recitals of chamber music in private houses? We know from the correspondence of Hopkinson and John Penn, and from other sources, that Philadelphians did, at least occasionally, enjoy the delight of chamber music and, in all likelihood there was much more of it than we shall ever know about. From its very nature, performed as it was in the privacy of domestic surroundings, the record of chamber music in Federal America is well nigh impossible to trace. When we see how often numbers that obviously belonged in the category of chamber music were included in concert programmes and were, therefore, known to concert goers, it seems not unreasonable to believe that a good deal of chamber music was played in private, which we have no means of knowing about. Of course the advertisement inserted by "The French gentlemen, Musicians" might be interpreted merely as a bid to fiddle at weddings, balls and the like; one prefers to think they were seeking engagements to play chamber music. It would have been in keeping with the spirit of the times and of the city.
There is good inferential ground for believing that some of these same "French gentlemen, Musicians" played stringed instruments in the New Theatre orchestra under Reinagle.

The up-and-doing spirit of enterprise and self-sufficiency was abroad amongst instrument-makers, as it was nearly everywhere else in America, as the eighteenth century drew to its close. On March 19, 1793, Charles Tawes—along with Albrecht, one of Philadelphia’s early pianoforte-makers—announced in the General Advertiser, "a few fine toned FORTE PIANOS, which he will warrant superior to any imported.” He assured prospective customers that sale would be on reasonable terms, and then went on to caution them against “the great number of Forte-Pianos lately imported from London and Dublin” which he characterised as grossly inferior, not durable, and soon doubling their original price by the cost of frequent repairs required. He was clearly a protectionist. Tawes, or Taws, was only one of a number of instrument dealers who appear to have had a thriving trade. He concluded his advertisement, “N.B. Musical instruments to let out by the month or quarter,” and likewise offered his services for tuning and repairing. All of which testifies to the number of “practitioners” on musical instruments amongst the citizens of Federal Philadelphia. Also, we see how much “water had gone over the dam” since January 1, 1788, when William Prichard, “Bookseller & Printer in Market street” had advertised in the Pennsylvania Packet “An Elegant Organised Harpsichord . . . the make of one of the first artists in England.”

One might search far in old newspaper files without finding any mention of an organ for sale. But there were, nevertheless, good organs in the churches and good organists to play them. Both Christ Church and St. Peter’s had notably fine instruments and other Philadelphia churches also had organs of which they were justly proud. The art of organ playing had able exponents in such men as Raynor Taylor,¹³ for many years organist of St. Peter’s, who was peculiarly gifted in his powers of improvisation. Benjamin Carr, too, at one time organist of St. Joseph’s Church in Willing’s Alley, though he afterwards held other important posts, was no less cele-

¹³ 1747-1825. Educated at the King’s Singing School in London; 1765 Music director at Sadler’s Wells Theatre; came to America in 1792; one of founders of Musical Fund Society. For further particulars, v. Dictionary of American Biography, XVIII, 339.
brated as an organist and composer, besides being a fine pianist and a good singer.

But not all organ playing of the time was good. Much of it, indeed, must have been extremely bad if we may judge from Francis Hopkinson’s castigation of sundry anonymous performers. Hopkinson himself could hold his own quite creditably at the organ, and often played at Christ Church when there was need for him to fill in. Knowing what good organ playing was, the behaviour of some organists, not blessed with Hopkinson’s sense of fitness, scandalised him. He says in unmistakable terms what he thinks in his “Letter on the Conduct of a Church Organ,” addressed to Bishop White, and afterwards printed in the *Columbian Magazine* for September, 1792. He writes in part:

I am one of those who take great delight in sacred music. . . .

Unless the real design for which an organ is placed in a church be constantly kept in view, nothing is more likely to happen than an abuse of this noble instrument, so as to render it rather an obstruction to, than an assistant in, the good purpose for which the hearers have assembled.

Give me leave, sir, to suggest a few rules for the conduct of an organ in a place of worship according to my ideas of propriety.

1st. The organist should always keep in mind, that neither the time or place is suitable for exhibiting all his powers of execution; and that the congregation have not assembled to be entertained with his performance. The excellence of an organist consists in his making the instrument subservient and conducive to the purposes of devotion. None but a master can do this. An ordinary performer may play surprising tricks, and show great dexterity in running through difficult passages, which he hath subdued by dint of previous labour and practice. But he must have judgement and taste who can call forth the powers of the instrument and apply them with propriety and effect to the seriousness of the occasion.

. . . All sudden jirks, strong contrasts of piano and forte, rapid execution, and expressions of tumult should be avoided. . . .

4th. The prelude which the organ plays immediately after the psalm is given out [playing the hymn tune over], was intended to advertise the congregation of the psalm tune which is going to be sung; but some famous organist, in order to show how much he could make of little, has introduced the custom of running so many divisions upon the simple melody of a psalm tune, that the original purpose of this prelude is now totally defeated, and the tune so disguised by the fantastic flourishes of the dexterous performer, that not an individual in the congregation can possibly guess the tune intended, until the clerk has sung through the first line of the psalm. And it is constantly observable that the full congregation never join in the psalm before the second or third line, for want of that information which the organ should have given. The tune should be distinctly given out by the instrument. . . .

6th. In general, the organ should ever preserve its dignity; and upon no account issue light and pointed movements which may draw the attention of the congregation and induce them to carry home not the serious sentiments which the service
should impress, but some very petty air with which the organist hath been so good as to entertain them. It is as offensive to hear lilts and jigs from a church organ, as it would be to see a venerable matron frisking through the public streets with all the fantastic airs of a columbine.

Hopkinson had no quarrel with the time-honoured English cathedral custom of improvising for a few minutes before the anthem. Nor was he registering any objection to organ recitals as such, at which some of the things he condemns, when introduced into a church service, might have been wholly in order. He was speaking of seemliness in accompanying the service; under any circumstances, however, we may be sure he would have mercilessly pilloried mannerisms, affectations and mere pyrotechnical virtuosity. What he would have said to some of the organ playing today we can only conjecture—the endeavours of numerous "modern" organists (too often altogether successful) to make their instruments sound as nearly as possible like a juke-box; their aimless, incoherent tootlings on the "squeal" pipes, regardless of the fact that the "mixtures" are meant to add brilliance to ample combinations of foundation stops and are not intended for solos; their obsession for using such reedy combinations that their playing often sounds as though the organ's "innards" were being squeezed through a fine-holed colander, and other horrible perversions completely foreign to the inherent genius of the organ!

Execrable as was much of the organ playing in the early Federal Era, it was no worse than the psalmody associated with it. In Andrew Law's *Art of Singing in Three Parts*, published at Cambridge in 1803, the dedication "To the Ministers of the Gospel, and the Singing Masters, Clerks and Choristers throughout the United States," says:

It will not, perhaps, have escaped the observation of any one of you that very much of the music in vogue is miserable indeed . . . all, who entertain a sense of decency and decorum in devotion, are oftentimes shocked with that lifeless and insipid, or that frivolous and frolicsome combination of sounds, so frequently introduced into churches, where all should be serious . . . and devout. . . . Much of the predominating Psalmody of this country is more like song singing, than like solemn praise.

A few sterling old hymn tunes had survived—and still do, praise be!—in spite of the wave of uninspired rubbish that swamped the country wherever there was dexterity enough to perform it. The ambitious products of the Singing Class—that institution of essen-
tially New England origin—were ever ready to exhibit from organ lofts their prowess in quavers and flourishes in the "fuguing" embellishments of the tanner-composer, William Billings,14 whose flights exceeded those earlier Sternhold and Hopkins "jiggs" condemned by many a long-suffering parson. It would be a mistake to imagine that these musical absurdities won the unqualified approbation of those who had to listen to them. The victims, both lay and cleric, frequently spoke their minds in no uncertain terms. One outraged clergyman, the Sunday after his choir had let loose one of the fashionable new compositions, preached from the text in the prophecy of Amos (VIII, 3), "The songs of the temple shall be howlings." Can we blame his indignation when such lines as

With reverence let the saints appear  
And bow before the Lord,

could be sung, "'And bow-wow-wow, And bow-ow-ow,' and so on until bass, treble, alto, counter, and tenor had bow-wowed for about twenty seconds?" Can we not sympathise with the man who "hung two cats over Billings's door to indicate his opinion of Billings's caterwauling?"15 Surely nobody nowadays would censure the irate churchgoer who thus recorded his views:

Written out of temper on a Panel in one of the Pues in Salem Church:—

"Could poor King David but for once
To Salem Church repair;
And hear his Psalms thus warbled out,
Good Lord, how he would swear!"

The American Apollo reprinted these lines in 1792.

While there were some churches where the old tradition still obtained, where one could hear legitimate organ playing, hymn tunes undisguised and untortured by musical curlicues, and occasionally an anthem by Dr. Maurice Greene, John Blow or Dr. Arnold, the majority seem to have succumbed to the lure of novelty. The plight of country churches was better, where the congregations depended on a bass viol, a 'cello (often called a "chapel bass") or a pitch pipe to set them off on such simple hymn tunes and chants as they could compass otherwise unaccompanied. Until late in the nineteenth cen-

tury, indeed, country churches frequently had no other instrumental equipment, as at St. David’s, Radnor, 16 “where Jesse Brooke played his bass viol in church to accompany the singing until about 1855, when they got a melodeon.” Even Andrew Adgate, 17 who rendered invaluable service as an organiser and conductor of choral singing in Philadelphia, cannot be wholly absolved from the charge of offenses in the realm of sacred music.

If the greater part of the current church music was objectionable per se, the words of the majority of hymns were more so. In fact, with few exceptions, all the way from Sternhold and Hopkins 18 to Dr. Watts—and later—they were unmitigated balderdash. When the “improvers” on either the King James Bible or the Prayer Book version of the thirty-fifth Psalm could paraphrase the fifteenth and sixteenth verses thus:

15. But they in mine adversity
did gather in a rout:
Yea, abject slaves reproachfully
at me did mock and flout.

16. The belly-gods, & flatt’ring train,
that all good things deride:
At me do grin with great disdain,
and pluck their mouths aside.

they perpetrated a travesty whose only present excuse is the preservation of some vigorous seventeenth-century words and forms of diction. Through far too many of the eighteenth-century hymns there is a constant repetition of “I,” “I,” “I,” and “me,” “me,” “me”—a revolting exhibition of selfish subjectivity. The unwhole-some and omnipresent egotism, the eternal introspective contemplation in verse (often very poor verse), make one wish the authors could have known, and taken to heart before writing, a quatrain Charles Kingsley either wrote or quoted:

If you your ears would keep from jeers,
Four things keep closely hid—
“Myself” and “I,” and “Mine” and “My,”
And what “I” said and did.

These “first-personal” metrical musings are what a learned Doctor of Divinity recently called “bellyache psalmody”—an apt name. How futile and flimsy they seem compared with the grand old Latin

16 Eberlein and Hubbard, History of St. Peter’s Church in the Great Valley, 115.
hymns of the Middle Ages, the Corde Natus, the Vexilla Regis and scores of others that are definitely expressions of prayer or praise, unspoiled by the injection of the first personal pronoun!

Furthermore, a morbid quality marred a considerable portion of the eighteenth-century hymns and religious songs. Andrew Adgate's Philadelphia Harmony, eighth edition, "Printed for, and sold by Mathew Carey," 1803, contains,

Hark! from the tombs a doleful sound!
My ears attend the cry.
"Ye living men come view the ground
Where you must shortly lie,"

set to the tune gruesomely called "Funeral Thought." Dwelling with evident relish on the subject of mortality, not long after Washington's death there appeared (January 27, 1800) a heavily black-bordered funeral cantata, one number of which, designated "Mount Vernon, A Solo," proceeds,

From Vernon's Mount, behold the Hero rise,
Resplendent forms attend him through the skies;
The shades of war-torn Vet'rans round him throng,
And lead enwrapt their honor'd Chief along.
A laurel wreath th' immortal Warren bears;
An arch triumphal Mercer's hand prepares;
Young Lawrence 'erst th' avenging bolt of war,
With port majestic guides the glitt'ring car;
Montgomery's god-like form directs the way,
And Greene unfolds the gates of endless day.
While angels trumpet-tongu'd proclaim through air,
Due honors, Due honors, Due honors for the First of Men prepare.

All you can say of the banal and puerile tune set to this combination of self-constituted apotheosis and questionable theology is that it is an organised noise, and a pretty bad one at that. It certainly has no claim to be called music.

But worse still, and positively ghoulish is this, from James & Allison's Selection of Psalms & Hymns, 1819:

Ah! lovely appearance of death,
No sight upon earth is so fair;
Not all the gay pageants that breathe,
Can with a dead body compare;
With solemn delight I survey
The corpse when the spirit is fled,
In love with the beautiful clay,
And longing to lie in its stead.
What a cheerful ditty for an undertaker! With such things appearing in print, with such things read and sung, one is inclined to suspect somewhere a serious warping of public mentality. At least, one can more readily understand why in that period there were so many samplers, paintings on glass, embroidered pictures and other representations depicting weeping-willow trees overhanging tombstones, funeral urns inscribed with the names of the "dear departed," lachrymatory vases with tearful females drooping over them, broken shafts, and other emblems of death and woe—and used as decorations!

The realm of secular music in the early Federal Era is vastly more heartening and normal in its atmosphere, and it behooves us to return to our starting point and explain why the opening of the New Theatre marked a new epoch in the city's musical life. For one thing, it immensely broadened the opportunities of adequate presentation. Although many concerts continued to take place elsewhere, there was no longer the enforced dependence on taverns and hotels as the only convenient premises in a central position that afforded sufficient facilities for concert-giving. Then, too, the regular maintenance of a theatre orchestra assured enlarged opportunity of steady employment to an increasing number of trained musicians; at the same time, the public could more frequently hear orchestral music rendered in a favourable environment, with its consequent inspiration to a rapidly growing clientele of music-conscious patrons. Likewise, the ballad operas—Robin Hood, the Beggar's Opera, the Castle of Andalusia and many more—with the rich musical heritage they embodied, could be heard oftener, and in a place more accessible and far better equipped than the old Southwark Theatre. In short, the New Theatre supplied a potent educational stimulus that made itself felt throughout the community and substantially contributed to Philadelphia's prestige as a musical centre.

Recording the first of Reinagle's three concerts at the New Theatre, in February, 1793, the Federal Gazette provides an instance of early music criticism in Philadelphia:

Last Saturday evening it [the New Theatre] was first opened to the public with a grand concert of vocal and instrumental music and notwithstanding the inclemency of the evening, a large number of citizens appeared in every part of the house—the boxes exhibited a blaze of beauty—the pit was a display of respectable judges and the gallery was filled with orderly, well disposed citizens whose decency of behaviour deserves the greatest applause. . . . But of all others that part of the
entertainment, wherein Mrs. Morris's abilities in *Kiss me now or never* and Master Duport's dancing came in, seemed to afford the most attractingly delightful sensations. Indeed, upon the whole, this theatre may be esteemed a place of the most rational amusements that have ever been exhibited to the attention and protection of the public in these United States.

Not much said in the way of musical criticism, and the critic was relieved that the gallery didn't interrupt—a disturbance that would have surprised nobody at that period.

The New Theatre was ready for dramatic performances in the late summer or early autumn of 1793, but the yellow fever epidemic was then raging. Consequently, the dramatic opening did not take place until February 17, 1794. The *General Advertiser* of February 19 says:

> The Theatre on Monday evening opened with a representation of the Castle of Andalusia and Who's the Dupe? to a crowded audience. The performance was preceded by an address from one of the managers. . . . The whole went off with considerable éclat, and the sanguine expectations of the friends of the drama, were in no particular disappointed.

After a very indifferent dramatic critique (the critic wasn't used to the job), the notice continues:

> The band is well chosen and full; the audience could have dispensed with the noise of the kettledrums. [Critic evidently didn't appreciate the function of tympani in an orchestra.]

> The favorite Ça ira was the first air played. The orchestra by attending to the call for it, and by a voluntary repetition of it in the course of the evening, shewed that they did not forget their audience was American. [Mr. Bache simply had to inject his pro-French-Revolutionary sympathies, willy-nilly; this was a deliberate slap at the President and the Government.]

On February 25, after praising some of the singers, the *General Advertiser* comments:

> The orchestra deserve great encomiums as able in their profession; we will take, however, the liberty to suggest to them and to the managers, whether it might not be well, now and then, to give the gallery some simple tunes more agreeable to the taste [meaning, apparently the *Carmagnole*] of the generality of the audience.

Again, on February 28, the *General Advertiser* says:

> Last Wednesday the house was again crowded. The orchestra opened with the President's march, and then, after repeated calls from the mountain, favoured the audience with Ça ira. [Another slap at Washington; also the Federalist stockholders.] The Minister of the French Republic was present and was greeted by three huzzas.
The *New York Magazine, or Literary Repository* for April, 1794, in giving an account of the opening of the New Theatre, says:

The managers have used their utmost endeavours to form a theatre of elegance and convenience. That part of the theatre, before the curtain, forms a semicircle, having two rows of boxes extending from side to side, with another row above these on a line with the gallery in front. The boxes are lined with a pink coloured paper, with small dark spots, and supported by pillars representing bundles of reeds (gilt) bound with red fillets; between the pillars, festoons of crimson curtains, with tassels intervening, and a profusion of glass chandeliers, form an assemblage that captivates the eye, and renders the whole a most pleasing spectacle. The paintings and scenery are equal to the generality of the European, and do the greatest credit to the pencil and genius of Mr. Milbourne. The dresses correspond with the elegance of the whole. The emblematical device over the stage is very applicable, and well executed— it represents an eagle hovering in the air; beneath it a boy holding a blue ribbon on which is inscribed, “The eagle suffers little birds to sing,” Shakespeare.

A picture published in Joseph Jackson’s *Encyclopaedia of Philadelphia* (p. 733) shows the interior of the New Theatre on the occasion of the first singing of “Hail, Columbia!,” April 25, 1798.

When one examines the records of the musicians who gave the early Federal Era its lustre, one is amazed at the number of different things they did, and did well. In his *Music in Philadelphia* (pp. v–vi), R. A. Gerson says:

Students of the present day ... will be impressed by the varied activities and surprising versatility of each musician in early days of Music in Philadelphia.

This, of course, is quite at variance with the modern obsession for rigid specialisation, the notion that if a person does one thing well he must stick to that one thing and can’t, or mustn’t, do anything else. May we submit that versatility, the capacity to do many things well, was one of the essential factors in the greatness of the Renaissance, not only in Italy but elsewhere. It made for a more universal critical quality, and a more universal aptitude for appreciation as well as creative activity in many fields. At any rate, the musicians of the early Federal Era, happily for them and for us, were not victims of the specialisation fallacy.

Respecting the content of Francis Hopkinson’s poetic and musical compositions, Sonneck¹⁹ says:

Artistically, of course, he resembles his contemporaries. His musical world, like theirs, was an untrue Arcadia, populated with over-sentimental shepherds and

shepherdesses, or with jolly tars, veritable models of sobriety and good behaviour, even when filling huge bumpers for drinking bouts.

What Sonneck says of Hopkinson, holds true of the people of his era in general. This pseudo-romantic tendency was symptomatic of the age and appeared, at least to some extent, in every branch of creative activity. It was symbolised in Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill Gothic episode and reached its culmination in the Waverley Novels. The age was under the urge of a dual impulse, classic and traditional on the one side, pseudo-romantic and "modern" on the other. Had it not been so, Latrobe could not have designed the chaste Graeco-Roman Bank of Pennsylvania and, only a short time afterwards, the romantically pseudo-Gothic Sedgley. Nor could Robert Mills have designed with equal facility the pseudo-Gothic Philadelphia Bank and the splendidly classic monument to Washington in Baltimore or the old State Capitol at Harrisburg. The work of both expressed the current dual impulse in visible architectural forms.

But possession by the dual impulse in the Graeco-Roman age did not bar appreciation of, nor creative aptitude in, more than one manner. This was true in the case of the musicians. They could, and did, appreciate and sympathetically interpret the more sterling works of an earlier age; while a good many of their own compositions may now seem weak or insipid judged by rigorous standards of merit, they were merely expressing musically one of the psychological aspects of their era, just as sundry composers nowadays seem to feel called upon to produce African rhythms punctuated by a tom-tom obbligato.

Philadelphia

Harold Donaldson Eberlein
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