

MUSIC OF A MORE PERFECT UNION:
SYMPHONIC CONSTRUCTIONS OF
AMERICAN NATIONAL IDENTITY, 1840–1870

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ABSTRACT

**DOUGLAS SHADLE: Music of a More Perfect Union:
Symphonic Constructions of American National Identity, 1840–1870
(Under the direction of Mark Evan Bonds)**

The genre of the symphony has long been recognized as a medium for constructing national identities in German, French, and Russian culture, yet little is known about the genre's history in the United States. Between 1840 and 1870, the era of the first generation of American orchestral composers, it served as a potent means of expressing American national identity. During this period of American cultural history, two separate processes shaped conceptions of national identity: decolonization from Great Britain and a nascent sense of imperial expansionism. This dissertation explores how mid-century American symphonic composers musically constructed national identities reflecting these conceptions and argues that this practice continued well into the twentieth century.

Composers who focused on decolonization generally employed one of two separate strategies. The first was emulation, or copying European symphonic models with the intention of continuing the symphonic tradition. George Frederick Bristow (1825–1898), for example, wrote symphonies that might be mistaken for music by Mendelssohn or Schumann. The second strategy was exceptionalism, or selectively omitting traditional stylistic elements in order to pave new musical pathways. The exceptionalist William Henry Fry (1813–1864) developed an idiosyncratic style that eclectically blended progressive symphonic aesthetics, Italian opera, and American popular song. Each

composer's symphonies answered the question of how the United States should define itself with respect to the Old World.

The composers who focused on expansionism were more concerned with how the United States should define itself with respect to the rest of the Western Hemisphere.

Anthony Philip Heinrich (1781–1861), for example, constructed a national identity built on the precepts of Manifest Destiny. His symphonies assimilate an exotic musical style intended to represent Native Americans and the aura of the American landscape into the fabric of European classicism and American popular music. Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829–1869) painted musical portraits of nations in Latin America that were heavily laced with continental American musical styles. These symphonies promoted the blossoming imperialist agenda of many Americans at mid-century.

To Avery

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INTRODUCTION

The quest for an American musical identity actively shaped the nation's cultural landscape throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. Each new generation of Americans had its heroes leading the way and the obstacles they faced, but the Holy Grail always remained the same. Americans wanted an *American* music, something they could call uniquely their own. Something about the quest, however, seems odd today: American music has always existed, because Americans of all kinds throughout the nation have always performed and listened to music. Is this music not American? However legitimate it may be, such a simple critique of the quest misses a very important point: people create unique conceptions of national identity that are situated within specific times, places, and cultural environments. This process of identity formation had far-reaching consequences for those seeking an American music. The quest began again and again because new identities for the nation were constantly under construction. How could there be an American music when America itself was always changing?

Several scholarly studies have deftly narrated the various quests for an American music, but there is still more to learn about the historical threads that shaped them.¹ Although these studies are colorfully detailed, they reify and uncritically accept the constructions of national identity underpinning the quest by suggesting that it could actually succeed—that the goal of finding *an* authentically American music could be

¹ Examples of these studies are Alan Howard Levy, *Musical Nationalism: American Composers's Search for Identity* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983); Barbara Tischler, *An American Music: The Search for an American Musical Identity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); and Barbara Zuck, *A History of Musical Americanism* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1980).

achieved. By focusing on the goal itself, a sense of the processes of national identity formation, and thus of competing visions of American music, is lost. How musicians in nineteenth-century America constructed national identities is therefore new territory for investigation. This study, which examines and critiques musical constructions of national identity, is rooted in Benedict Anderson's now classic definition of the nation: "an imagined political community—and imagined as both limited and sovereign."² Although the terms "limited" and "sovereign" are critical for understanding Anderson's definition, the phrase "imagined community" most ably describes the conceptions of nationhood that dominated the intellectual thought of those within the American musical world. Musicians, critics, and listeners encountered only a tiny handful of their fellow Americans but still believed that there was a common national bond between them.³ By understanding the nation in this way, it becomes possible to shift focus from national identities themselves to the methods used to construct them; focusing on methods also opens a window on why these identities constructed at all.⁴ Throughout the nineteenth century, Americans searched for an American music, but they also used music to construct America.

Generally speaking, music can tell us something about the attitudes musicians held about a nation, and in turn, how their attitudes both reflected and shaped broader historical trends. Early nineteenth-century America is a particularly fertile era for this

² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 6.

³ As Anderson puts it, the nation "is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 6.

⁴ In this respect, I am loosely following suggestions for nationalism research articulated by Rogers Brubaker. See his *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

kind of inquiry, because writers on music were obsessed with discussing music's future in the young nation. As in any era, specific circumstances in the nineteenth century posed challenges for Americans constructing a national identity. How to assimilate vestiges of European culture into imaginary constructions of the nation, for example, proved to be a central problem throughout the century; the steady influx of European, and especially German, immigrants only complicated matters. Musicians tended to line up into two different groups, each united by its solution to the question of how to confront Europe musically. One camp believed that America would not grow as a musical nation until it learned how to emulate the musical capitals of Europe. Members of this camp believed that composers should learn to conquer the styles of the great European masters and that cities should model their concert societies' programs on the great orchestras of Europe. The other camp believed that the United States would not grow as a musical nation until its musicians learned to draw inspiration from its magnificent natural landscape, the political freedom of its citizens, or the rugged spirit of the frontier.

The question of the extent of the role European musical hegemony should play in the United States posed a creative dilemma for artists and framed important nineteenth-century discussions of America's musical future, which are discussed in more detail in later chapters. One writer on early American fiction has claimed that this dilemma was a manifestation of "postcolonial anxiety," an inner sense of conflict about how to assert national cultural identity after attaining political independence.⁵ Postcolonial anxiety is an appropriate phrase for describing the American musical landscape in the nineteenth century, given the bitter conflicts often manifested in discussions about music and the

⁵ Laurence Buell, "Postcolonial Anxiety in Classic U.S. Literature," in *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature*, ed. Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 196–219.

nation's future. The anxiety was often particularly acute, because debates about music were frequently laced with charges of anti-patriotism. Those who wanted the nation and its music to move away from Europe could easily label the other side as anti-American, but even those who wished to extend European hegemony held the patriotic belief that America could forge its own identity by emulating Europe. Of course neither side was more American or patriotic; they simply used their respective positions as the basis for questioning the others' motives. As early as the 1830s, the genre of the symphony became the focus of the American concert music scene, and within a few years American composers used the genre as a way of musically constructing national identities. The story of the American symphony in the nineteenth century illustrates the roles musical compositions played not only in discussions about music, but in the very construction of the national identities that supported them.

American National Identity and the Symphony

The genre of the symphony had a significant presence in nineteenth-century American musical life. By the turn of the twentieth century, about fifty composers born or living in the United States had composed almost 100 symphonies. Performances of some of these works and of a hefty number of European symphonies were concentrated in three urban centers—New York, Philadelphia, and Boston—but cities as far west as Lexington, Cincinnati, and St. Louis had hosted several performances of symphonies by 1870.⁶ This steady rise in the prominence of orchestral music, and symphonies in

⁶ Even Columbus, Georgia had a standing orchestra by the mid-1850s. The best place to find basic introductory data on performances of major symphonies is H. Earle Johnson, *First Performances in America to 1900: Works with Orchestra* (Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1979). In addition to the more

particular, mirrored a similar rise in major European cities. The Vienna Philharmonic, for example, was founded in the same year—1842—as the New-York Philharmonic Society. Although the genre originated in Europe, it took on a life of its own in the United States, and as the century progressed, symphonies became widespread fixtures on orchestral concert programs.

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, audiences tended to perceive symphonies as light instrumental music, because symphonic movements typically functioned as overtures to a series of songs. As symphonies appeared more regularly on concert programs, either in part or in their entirety, listeners and especially critics began to develop reverent attitudes toward the genre. Louis C. Madeira, who served as a longtime secretary of the nation's first standing orchestra, Philadelphia's Musical Fund Society, believed that the city's growing taste for fine music hinged on the group's ability to perform symphonies. In recognition of its growing worth to listeners, he called the genre "the true successor" to the oratorio, which had been the most revered musical genre in America until the 1830s.⁷ Although the oratorio continued to be viewed as a significant genre, Madeira's testimony is evidence that the symphony occupied a high position relatively early in the century. In a biographical essay about Haydn written in the 1840s, well before symphonic performances were widespread, the outspoken Boston critic John Sullivan Dwight (1813–1893) confirmed this view. He forthrightly claimed that when

famous works Johnson lists, audiences heard several symphonies by lesser known composers such as Franz Christoph Neubauer (1760–1795) and Ferdinand Ries (1784–1838).

⁷ "In the early years," he wrote, "the great desire was for oratorio...Towards the middle of the century the oratorio seems to have lost ground. In so far as it was overshadowed by Italian opera, this was deplorable. The true successor of the oratorio was the symphony...In Germany the standards of true art were never overwhelmed by these Italian onsets." Louis C. Madeira, *Annals of Music in Philadelphia and History of the Musical Fund Society: From Its Organization in 1820 to the Year 1858*, ed. Philip H. Goepf (Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott, 1896), 144–47.

orchestral music is heard properly, “we forget that there is any other world....And a true symphony, a deep work of art in that form, will be more or less to the minds who hear it, in precise proportion to their own depth, just as nature is.”⁸ After hearing Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony, the noted journalist, Transcendentalist, and feminist Margaret Fuller (1810–1850) exclaimed in words that mirrored Dwight’s impressions, “Saturday evening I heard one of Beethoven’s great symphonies....[W]hat majesty, what depth, what tearful sweetness of the human heart, what triumphs of the Angel Mind!”⁹

For Madeira, Dwight, and Fuller, the symphony was the pinnacle of instrumental music, and the symphonies of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven (and later Spohr and Mendelssohn) were the most awe-inspiring specimens of all. This was not a good situation for American composers yearning to write symphonies. They lacked the support of critics and audiences alike. As Richard Crawford has rightly noted, the simple rules of supply and demand created an atmosphere in which orchestras offered only the music that financiers wealthy enough to buy many tickets wanted to hear.¹⁰ Orchestras such as the New-York Philharmonic Society were always willing to perform symphonies from the ever-growing German canon, and critics who believed performances of this German music were signs of good taste generally saw little need to broaden such offerings. With German symphonies becoming more readily available for performance, why look elsewhere for untested products? Although the economics of symphonic production was

⁸ J.S. Dwight, “Haydn,” *The United States Magazine, and Democratic Review* 14, no. 67 (1844): 20–21.

⁹ Fuller to William H. Channing, 5 April 1851, in *The Letters of Margaret Fuller*, ed. Robert N. Hudspeth (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 2:206.

¹⁰ Richard Crawford, *America’s Music Life: A History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 330.

prohibitive, the primary impulse to compose symphonies stemmed from the desire to forge a unique position for the United States within the greater Western musical world.

The process through which the symphony became an expression of a specifically American identity was intimately tied to the immigration of German musicians to the United States and the concomitant importation of German music, a situation that complicated the processes of decolonization from Great Britain that began around the turn of the nineteenth century. In the 1820s, the symphony in German-speaking lands was steadily becoming an accepted means of distinguishing German national music from French and Italian music; listeners often considered it a distinctly “German” genre.¹¹ A handful of important critics and musicians such as Theodor Hach brought this notion to the United States. They encouraged the performances of works from the budding symphonic canon and openly stated that these performances would be critical for elevating the taste of American audiences—a euphemism for shaping the nation’s musical character. American critics and musicians such as Dwight, Fuller, and the leaders of the nation’s major musical ensembles adopted these ideas and began to create the shift in American taste that Hach and others envisioned.

Around the 1830s, the genre of the symphony started to become one of the primarily musical means for constructing a national identity. Composers produced works that fit into the two common conceptions of America and the accompanying visions for its musical progress—emulating Europe or forging new paths. American works constructing both identities were frequently performed alongside European symphonies, and audiences tended to enjoy all the works equally. The symphony was certainly not the

¹¹ Mark Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 88.

only genre that composers used as a means of constructing national identity; American operas, for example, were used in a similar capacity.¹² The symphony, however, opens a unique window on issues of American national identity precisely because symphonic composers in Europe were considering similar issues at the same time. As opposed to lagging European trends by several years or even decades, the rise of the symphony in the United States was one of few musical developments in the century that happened alongside parallel developments in Europe. Indeed, it was precisely because the genre's growth on both sides of the Atlantic was so fertile that the symphony became an expression of American identity at all. With comparable European products frequently becoming available from overseas, American composers were well-acquainted with the European tradition and well-situated for leaving a mark on that tradition.

William Henry Fry, one of the composers highlighted in this study, rarely expressed his ideas on the nature of the symphony as a genre, but he left important clues that revealed his budding admiration for it. In a letter to *The Message Bird*, a New York-based music journal, he discoursed at length on the impracticality and difficulty of producing an opera. "To write a good opera," he asserted, "is the most difficult of musical undertakings; because the ideas are controlled by the words, and the compass and possibilities of the voice."¹³ In an opera, the libretto and stage action wield absolute authority over the work's musical expression, leaving operatic music without the ability to point beyond the action on stage. The symphony, by contrast, allows for much greater freedom of the imagination. "Beethoven," who wrote only one opera but nine

¹² William Henry Fry's *Leonora* (1845) and George Frederick Bristow's *Rip Van Winkle* (1855), for example.

¹³ "Letter from Paris," *The Message Bird* 2 (Jan. 15, 1851): 595.

symphonies, “shows his sense of the difficulty when he expresses his dislike to be tied down with words, and his preference for the untrammelled *Sinfonia*.” This distinction between opera and instrumental genres opened untold possibilities for the symphony. It could be laden with a mixture of musical and political symbolism not always available to the music accompanying an opera. Comparing it to the grandeur of a cathedral, a frequent trope in his writings, Fry also defined the symphony by its length, or scope.¹⁴ Only the most magnificent instrumental music, the symphony, was worthy enough to represent the American nation.

Constructions of National Identity in the American Symphony: An Overview

This study examines how attitudes about American national identity dramatically shaped the historical and compositional development of a single genre, the symphony. The goal of this genre-based approach is to challenge standard narratives of classical music in America by shifting focus from the endpoint of the quest to find an authentically American sound and to the multitude of ways in which “America” was conceived at all. Whereas most scholars who have studied American musical identity have begun with a goal in mind—an immediately recognizable and quintessential “American sound”—this study follows the paths of several composers and lets their music guide the way. What can the music tell us about America and how people understood their own nationality? While important for creating an understanding of American musical ambitions, previous scholars’ emphasis on the quest itself has led to grave misconceptions about not only this repertoire, but of the historical development of American classical music more generally. Beyond the methodological problem of reifying the national identities constructed by

¹⁴ “Rejoinder from Mr. Fry,” *The New York Musical World* 8 (Feb. 18, 1854): 75.

particular musical works, many scholars have neglected the first generation of American symphonists and presumed that American national identity was a pressing problem only later in the nineteenth century, or in the early twentieth. Joseph Horowitz, for example, insinuates that George Whitefield Chadwick (1854–1931) was the first symphonist to consider issues of national identity at all.¹⁵ Chadwick, however, flourished nearly 40 years after the first generation of American symphonists. With a bolder rhetorical flourish, Nicholas Tawa dismisses the music of nineteenth-century symphonies as “rickety and overly derivative affairs” and early twentieth-century symphonies as “still erected on Central European foundations” in an attempt to glorify the outpouring of a national spirit in the symphonies of Samuel Barber, Howard Hanson, Roy Harris, Aaron Copland, and others of their generation.¹⁶ Narratives such as these, which place a concern with American national identity so late in musical history, have led to the effective removal of earlier symphonists from the historical record and the popular imagination. The entry on John Knowles Paine (1839–1906) in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, for example, states that Paine “was the first native-born American to win acceptance as a composer of large-scale concert music.”¹⁷ Horowitz avoids the earlier generations with the claim that “composers of the late Gilded Age charted an earnest new

¹⁵ “In the long view,” he claims, “Chadwick’s early music qualifies him as the first symphonic nationalist.” Joseph Horowitz, *Classical Music in America: A History of Its Rise and Fall* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2005), 110.

¹⁶ Nicholas Tawa, *The Great American Symphony: Music, the Depression, and War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 18–19.

¹⁷ Kenneth C. Roberts, Jr. and John C. Schmidt. “Paine, John Knowles,” in *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/20712> (accessed January 27, 2010).

beginning.”¹⁸ By letting the music and musicians take the lead—not a pre-determined goal—we can reorganize and reshape our understanding of the development of classical music and national identity formation in America. Because of the rich musical climate and fierce discussions surrounding them and their works, the first generation of American symphonists, who flourished between 1840 and 1870, provides a good starting point. The United States was and is a musical nation gripped by a postcolonial anxiety that created a rich tradition of symphonic writing that deserves a fresh look.

Utilizing concepts from postcolonial theory, chapter one examines the two prevailing strategies of American identity formation found in nineteenth-century musical culture. These strategies, which I call “emulation” and “exceptionalism,” were, in large part, the result of processes of cultural decolonization from Great Britain.¹⁹ Emulation, or extending European cultural influence into the United States, tended to be promulgated by influential critics and leaders of concert societies. Exceptionalism, the notion that America is unique among nations and that its cultural products should reflect that uniqueness, gained hold among a handful of composers—as opposed to critics and performers—at the turn of the nineteenth century. In an environment dominated by the attitude of emulation, however, exceptionalist compositions (e.g., those by James Hewitt) did not garner many advocates. This chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the symphony’s development in the German-speaking lands during the second quarter of the nineteenth century, when the idea that the genre could construct a national identity gained

¹⁸ Horowitz, *Classical Music in America*, 218.

¹⁹ This interpretation answers an important question posed by Richard Crawford on the effects of colonization on American musical life. See Crawford, *The American Musical Landscape: The Business of Musicianship from Billings to Gershwin* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 33.

traction. Primarily through the specific transatlantic channels of German immigration, as well as the importation and performances of German symphonies, this idea traveled to the United States at roughly the same time. Rudimentary musical constructions of both nascent national identities appeared in the earliest American symphonies, but around the 1840s, the genre emerged as one of the primary musical bearers of American identity.

Chapter two treats exceptionalism, the idea of breaking away from European cultural hegemony and musical models, in greater depth. The greatest proponent of this approach was William Henry Fry, whose seven symphonies sound almost nothing like the German works that were rapidly becoming understood as paradigmatic examples of the genre in American cities. Fry believed American music should forge new paths by taking what is best about European music and discarding the rest. Since America was a true democracy, he claimed, its music should be likewise democratic. In order to create this democratic music, Fry used printed narrative programs that demystified musical sounds and guided the imaginations of his listeners; this approach made his music intellectually accessible to a wide audience. Fry's symphonies were also relatively short, usually comprising an uninterrupted multi-movement form. In shape, these works closely resemble Franz Liszt's contemporaneous symphonic poems, but their programs often illustrated scenes from everyday life, such as a country dance, a Christmas party, or a homeless vagrant—a far cry from the grandiose subjects animating Liszt's works. These familiar scenes further reinforced the works' democratic messages. Lastly, Fry used unconventional materials such as *bel canto* operas as “source” music for his symphonies. The combination of these features—innovative form, mundane but detailed programmaticism, and the unconventional use of operatic melodies—cleverly and

substantially distanced Fry from the German symphonists with whom he was competing for space on American orchestral programs and constructed a national identity firmly rooted in exceptionalism.

In stark contrast to Fry's, the symphonies of George Frederick Bristow, the subject of chapter three, constructed an American musical identity founded on European emulation. As many published letters written by Bristow demonstrate, he believed that the national identity constructed in music was greatly dependent on the composer's own sense of personal identity. For this reason, he felt no cognitive dissonance between the openly anti-German invective permeating his letters and the clearly emulative approach found in his symphonies. Taking the great German symphonists as his guides, he composed three symphonies in a style that could be mistaken for the music of his "teachers." Critics responded ambivalently to Bristow's skill at imitation. Some saw it as proof of the nation's ability to produce an American rival to the European canon, whereas others decried his "want of originality." The French conductor Louis-Antoine Jullien, who premiered excerpts from Bristow's Second Symphony in 1853, dubbed Bristow a master of the "classical" style. After Jullien brought the work back to London in 1854, British critics, who adored Mendelssohn and Beethoven, similarly expressed their admiration of America's ability to produce "truly classical" works. By entering fully into the European symphonic tradition, Bristow was asserting that the United States held a rightful place within that tradition. Indeed, as his Second and Third Symphonies demonstrate, he believed that the nation could stand at the forefront of the tradition.

Chapter four explores the ways in which American symphonies from the mid-nineteenth century constructed the emergent imperialist national identity that was

beginning to take shape at that time, a radically new interpretation of mid-century American music. Although the nation was experiencing rapid cultural decolonization, it was also expanding into a role as imperial power. The symphonies of Anthony Philip Heinrich, which blend exceptionalist and emulative techniques, present images of American dominance over the native peoples populating the frontiers and the nation's national wonders. By adopting the detached perspective of a travel writer, moreover, Heinrich seized control over the programmatic subjects of his symphonies. Louis Moreau Gottschalk's symphonies constructed an even more strikingly imperialist identity. Evidence in Gottschalk's published diary suggests that he supported pan-American republicanism, or the idea that the nations of North and South America were equal partners in the project of spreading world democracy. His symphonies, however, grant the United States an eerily paternalistic role in this process. In the symphonies of both Heinrich and Gottschalk, the United States emerges as the *imperium*, not the fledgling postcolonial nation of Fry and Bristow.

CHAPTER ONE

POSTCOLONIAL ANXIETY, MUSIC, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

After the United States Constitution was ratified, the national government had a blueprint for its own organization—rules to follow, structures to build, personnel to assemble, and actions to take. This document was the world’s first national republican constitution, and it allowed aspects of the new nation’s political identity to be fixed from the beginning. The processes of political decolonization took only a matter of years. It did not necessarily follow, however, that the freshness and stability of the nation’s political framework would spur sweeping cultural changes; by and large, most facets of American culture that were independent of national politics did not change at all. This asynchronous rift between radical political change and cultural stasis was the impetus for what literary scholar Lawrence Buell has termed American “postcolonial anxiety.” Before the Revolution, America was primarily a British political and cultural colony; afterward, the United States decolonized politically, but the institutions and mechanisms of British cultural colonization persisted.¹

Like their counterparts in decolonized nations of the twentieth century, post-Independence American cultural figures such as writers, visual artists, and musicians began to assert their cultural autonomy as historical subjects, which often led to contentious debates about how to create or express an “American” cultural identity.

¹ This is not to suggest, however, that other European or local indigenous cultures played no role in shaping American culture. Indeed, as we shall see, German cultural migration played a major role in defining the landscape of American art music in the 1840s and beyond.

Several spiteful interactions between the writers James Fenimore Cooper (1789–1851) and Washington Irving (1783–1859), for example, epitomized the anxious impulse authors felt to create an “American” literature.² This anxiety was so palpable that Ralph Waldo Emerson claimed, “We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe. The spirit of the American freeman is already suspected to be timid, imitative, tame.”³ Commenting on these perceived barriers to national autonomy, the literary scholar Edward Watts has pointed out that American literary decolonization was tinged with the irony that writers, and more specifically the republican elites, retained borrowed British literary conventions, which served as a means for asserting American identity.⁴ It was difficult for authors to assert an American identity without referencing other, already established sources of national identity.

The same was true for musicians. Beginning around 1800, American musicians consistently expressed the belief that the United States had not yet developed a fully formed cultural identity and needed to follow certain steps to get there. As in literature, musicians developed two competing ideologies that produced strategies for solving the problem of national musical identity. Richard Crawford has concisely labeled these two ideologies with the terms “cosmopolitanism” and “provincialism.”⁵ In Crawford’s

² Cooper repeatedly (and often unfairly) accused Irving of Anglophilia, a harsh and politically charged accusation at the time. Andrew Burstein, *The Original Knickerbocker: The Life of Washington Irving* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 293–94. Germanophilia would later become a mantra-like criticism that American composers leveled at critics and audiences.

³ Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The American Scholar: An Oration Delivered Before the Phi Beta Kappa Society, at Cambridge, August 31, 1837,” in *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Co., 1904), 1:114.

⁴ Edward Watts, *Writing and Postcolonialism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998), 5–6.

⁵ Richard Crawford, *The American Musical Landscape: The Business of Musicianship from Billings to Gershwin* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), 7.

schema, cosmopolitans believed that because of its supposedly universally recognized greatness, the musical hegemony of the Old World should be extended into America, either through the importation of European music or the copying of European compositional styles. Provincials, by contrast, either ignored or rejected European music and musical practices in favor of more spontaneous outpourings of a supposedly indigenous spirit.⁶ If this schema were applied to the literary world, Irving would have been a cosmopolitan, whereas Cooper would have been a provincial.

A comparison of two lectures on music from the early nineteenth century illustrates more clearly how these contrasting ideologies served as the foundation for particular strategies of identity formation. Both authors agreed that in order for music to flourish in America, perceptions about music's ability to forge national identity had to change. At a time when music was considered a luxury for the wealthy or a tool for worship, they contended that it was also vital to the growth of a national character. Speaking in front of the Essex (Massachusetts) Musical Association, a one-time president of Dartmouth College, Daniel Dana (1771–1859), lamented that, “to speak of the existing state of music in our country, is a difficult and delicate task: Indeed our character, in this respect, is scarcely formed. Our music...is still in its infancy. Nor do we seem, as yet, to have agreed on any standard by which the merit of compositions is to be tested.”⁷ Five years later, the prominent newspaper editor Caleb Emerson (1779–1853) concurred: “But while the state of our country, though favorable to the general diffusion of knowledge,

⁶ Crawford, *The American Musical Landscape*, 7.

⁷ Daniel Dana, *A Discourse on Music Addressed to the Essex Musical Association, at Their Annual Meeting, at Boxford, Sept. 12, 1803* (Newburyport, MA: Edmund M. Blunt, 1803), 14. Samuel Holyoke (1762–1820), a noted American psalmist, was the Association's director. See Oscar Sonneck, *Early Concert-Life in America (1731–1800)* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1907), 321.

affords little encouragement to the vigorous cultivation of any particular science, we can hardly hope for the production among us of valuable compositions in music.”⁸ Despite this agreement about the problem, Dana and Emerson could not have had two more dissimilar solutions to it. Dana proposed that Americans quickly fashion their musical development on current British taste: “If a delicate and correct taste shall ever diffuse itself through our country, it will certainly bring into reputation and use the immortal compositions of HANDEL, MADAN, ARNE, MILGROVE, BURNEY, and those American authors who have imbibed their spirit, and formed themselves upon their model.”⁹ Emerson, by contrast, felt that Americans should bow to no outside authority in matters of taste or skill: “Excellence in musical composition must originate from natural genius and attentive application. When these are united and *cherished*, then, and not till then, may we expect to be honored with the appearance of distinguished *American* composers.”¹⁰ Whereas Dana wanted to extend the arm of Europe, and especially Great Britain, into the United States, Caleb Emerson was urging American musicians to declare artistic independence. These two views were in direct opposition, but the question of how to manifest these views in new musical compositions created a dilemma: can music itself construct an identity that supports an ideology, and if so, how?

This dilemma of how to decolonize by asserting an American musical identity was the single-most important factor shaping the development of symphonic composition in nineteenth-century America. If they wanted to be taken seriously by critics, who

⁸ Caleb Emerson, *A Discourse on Music, Pronounced at Amherst, N.H. before the Handellian Musical Society, September 13, 1808* (Amherst, NH: Joseph Cushing, 1808), 8.

⁹ Dana, *Discourse*, 18. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁰ C. Emerson, *Discourse*, 7–8. Emphasis in the original.

tended to support Dana's cosmopolitanism by touting the greatness of Beethoven and others, composers were all but forced to compose in a style that resembled that of the European masters. If, on the other hand, they wanted to forge other paths, they had to figure out how to make their music so recognizably different from the mainstream that it could be considered "American" and not a "tame" imitation of European models, as Ralph Waldo Emerson would have called it. As one would expect, some composers chose one path while others chose the other. Consequently, two broad approaches to symphonic composition that manifest the notions of cosmopolitanism and provincialism emerged in the mid-nineteenth century: "emulation," or copying the styles of European models; and "exceptionalism," or moving in more original and "American" stylistic directions. Complicating our understanding of decolonization on both sides, however, was the almost universally shared belief in America's potential to become a great musical nation. As audiences became more familiar with the size and monumentality of the symphonic genre, they began to associate it with national aspiration. Composers from both camps took this tendency to revere the symphony as a genre and capitalized on it by creating musical constructions of American nationhood. Three elements tied to decolonization therefore fell into place at around the same time that the first flurry of American symphonic composition occurred between 1840 and 1870: the cosmopolitan appreciation of European musical traditions, the notion that music can construct an American identity, and the belief that the specific genre of the symphony could serve as a vehicle for expressing national identity. This chapter traces the development of these three interrelated elements.

The Culture of Cosmopolitanism and Compositional Emulation

Over the first several decades of the nineteenth century, Daniel Dana's cosmopolitan ideology dominated provincialism to such a degree that Ralph Waldo Emerson's criticism of American literary thought could very well be applied to the contemporary musical landscape. In concert halls from Boston to as far west as Lexington, Kentucky, the nation's first large ensembles fed audiences a steady diet of European music from around the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The "great" composers Handel and Haydn, as well as more "popular" composers such as Méhul ruled the concert stage. By the late 1840s and early 1850s, well-trained musicians and orchestras from Europe had begun touring the United States and, with their polished performances, created additional demand for Beethoven and the latest European music—Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Spohr. Since the most powerful musical institutions supported a burgeoning European canon through the repetition of these works, the high musical culture in the United States was a culture of cosmopolitanism. The predominance of the cosmopolitan ideology created an environment in which composers could feel comfortable writing in imitative European styles, and most of them did. Since there was practically no market for anything different, this was a practical decision. Concert societies imported larger works from Europe and became successful without the help of American composers.

The early history and critical reception of the Handel and Haydn Society, whose name alone is a testament to its cosmopolitan outlook, shows how one of the nation's leading musical organizations promoted an agenda of cosmopolitanism. From its inception, the Society's leaders wanted it to be a national organization that brought great

works to mass audiences and a model for cities around the nation. Bolstering the works of its namesake European masters, the Society's constitution states,

While in our country almost every institution, political, civil, and moral, had advanced with rapid steps; while every other science and art is cultivated with a success flattering to its advocates; the admirers of musick find their beloved science far from exciting the feelings, or exercising the powers, to which it is accustomed in the old world....

Impressed with these sentiments, the undersigned do hereby agree to form themselves into a society, by the name of the HANDEL AND HAYDN SOCIETY, for the purpose of improving the style of performing sacred musick, and introducing into more general use, the works of HANDEL, HAYDN, and other eminent composers.¹¹

Critics fawned over this approach. Commenting on a concert from 1819, a brief unsigned note in Philadelphia's *Port-Folio* states, "We observe that the celebrated chef d'oeuvre of art, 'Haydn's creation [*sic*],' has been performed at Boston by the *Handel and Haydn Society*. Such performances will remove the vulgar error that we have no taste for music."¹² More than any other critic, John Rowe Parker (1777–1844), a music businessman and editor of the Boston-based *Euterpiad*, praised the Society's cosmopolitan ideology. Reviewing a series of published collections of the Society's choicest repertoire, Parker gushed at the contents while criticizing American composers. He claimed that "many fine specimens of compositions from the works of *Handel*, *Haydn*, *Mozart*, *Pleyel*, *Beethoven* and other Foreign and English composers" would remove the "defects" of American psalmody.¹³ The Handel and Haydn Society, then, was

¹¹ Handel and Haydn Society, *Constitution of the Handel and Haydn Society. Instituted April, 1815* (Boston: Stebbins, printer, 1815), 3–4.

¹² *The Port-Folio* 7, no. 5 (1819): 432.

¹³ *The Euterpiad; or, Musical Intelligencer, and Ladies Gazette* 1, no. 13 (1820): 51. This criticism played into a much larger controversy about the place of American compositions within the sacred repertory. See Richard Crawford, "'Ancient Music' and the Europeanizing of American Psalmody, 1800–1810," in *A Celebration of American Music: Words and Music in Honor of H. Wiley Hitchcock*, ed. R. Crawford, R.A. Lott and C.J. Oja (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 225–55.

an institution that created an agenda for asserting a national identity, but clearly not with the intent of radical decolonization.

The Handel and Haydn Society's national cosmopolitanism as an ideology and a practice was not limited to the Boston area. The leaders of Philadelphia's Musical Fund Society also greatly preferred concerts that showcased popular (and not so popular) European composers and that almost never included large-scale works by Americans. Early Society programs replicated the dominant British trend of potpourri concerts. Its first concert, for example, included excerpts from a symphony by Andreas Romberg, a cello concerto by Bernhard Romberg, the overture to Rossini's *Trancredi*, a violin concerto by Pierre Rode, Beethoven's First Symphony, and the overture to Étienne Méhul's *Les deux aveugles de Tolède*. Lighter vocal fare such as English glees, airs, and choruses was interspersed among these relatively heavy works.¹⁴ Over the next several years, the Society's library saw manifold increases in size due to its financial ability to import scores, and the group tackled the staple large-scale oratorios performed by the celebrated Handel and Haydn Society.¹⁵ In order to educate audiences during the performances of these oratorios, the Musical Fund Society often provided thick booklets containing the texts along with critical commentary taken from leading English experts such as Charles Burney, John Hawkins, and Thomas Busby. There was little original

¹⁴ For the full program, see Louis C. Madeira, *Annals of Music in Philadelphia and History of the Musical Fund Society: From Its Organization in 1820 to the Year 1858*, ed. Philip H. Goepp (Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott, 1896), 71–77.

¹⁵ The Musical Fund Society occasionally borrowed scores from the Bostonians.

commentary in these booklets, and musical works by American composers were rare items on the Society's programs.¹⁶

The dominant culture of cosmopolitanism fostered by critics such as John Rowe Parker and by powerful institutions such as the Handel and Haydn Society and Philadelphia's Musical Fund Society spurred a trend of compositional emulation. With the nation's musical infrastructure paving the way for extending Europe's musical reach into the new nation, most composers must have felt that writing within European traditions was the correct and most practical choice. For example, one of the most prolific composers working in America after the turn of the century, Filippo Trajetta (1777–1854), wrote two Biblically-themed oratorios, four cantatas, a sinfonia, and a violin concerto, all in traditional idioms. At times, though, there was no choice at all. Often colluding with the Handel and Haydn Society, the American composer Lowell Mason (1792–1872) actually attempted to remove unconventional American sacred songs by dead composers such as William Billings (1746–1800) from the staple repertory of local musical organizations.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the country's earliest large-scale symphony, written by Charles Hommann (1803–ca. 1870) in the early 1820s, is idiomatically identical to late eighteenth-century European symphonies. Hommann, an elected and respected professional member of Philadelphia's Musical Fund Society, wrote his first and only surviving symphony for the nearby Philharmonic Society of

¹⁶ The Handel and Haydn Society, as its name implies, also performed new works by American composers very infrequently.

Bethlehem, not his home ensemble.¹⁷ Like the Musical Fund Society, the Philharmonic Society programmed works by European composers, especially Haydn's oratorios.¹⁸ Although the work resembles Haydn's music—models to which Hommann would have had ample access—the much more prominent Musical Fund Society inexplicably never performed the work; it favored symphonies by Andreas Romberg.

The Musical Fund Society did become somewhat friendlier toward local composers about a decade later in 1834, when it offered prizes for overtures written by resident Americans. The directors, however, were not interested in compositional innovation. An entry in the book of minutes of the board's annual meetings explained, "[C]ertainly if the sphere of *emulation*, and improvement shall become once aroused, we may be allowed to indulge a hope, that in music as well as in the other branches of the Fine Arts, our Country shall one day attain an elevated rank."¹⁹ The voice of cosmopolitanism could not ring out more clearly. Instead of generating a flurry of interest in orchestral music, the competition appears to have had the opposite effect.²⁰ The directors of the Musical Fund Society noted a decline in participation at Musical Fund

¹⁷ Charles Hommann, *Surviving Orchestral Works*, ed. Joanne Swenson-Eldridge (Middleton, WI: A-R Editions, 2007), lviii–lxiv.

¹⁸ The Philharmonic Society also performed Beethoven's First Symphony on at least one occasion in 1813 in nearby Nazareth. See Johnson, *First Performances*, 28. For more general information about the Philharmonic, see Rufus A. Grider, *Historical Notes on Music in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania from 1741 to 1871* (Philadelphia: John L. Pile, 1873), 26–34.

¹⁹ Report from the Annual Meeting, May 5, 1835, *Minutes of the proceedings of the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia at their stated and other meetings including the Joint Board. January 7, 1820–May 7, 1822; Minutes of the proceedings of the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia, at their stated annual and other meetings May 1, 1827–May 1, 1866*, p. 227. Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia Records, ca. 1820–1991, Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania. Emphasis added.

²⁰ The Society failed to award the prize within the first year of the announcement, but eventually gave it to Antonio Bagioli (1795–1871), an Italian composer and singing master living in New York City. The unpublished overture, held at the University of Pennsylvania, is an unremarkable example of the prevailing operatic style found in the works of Rossini and Bellini.

Society events in 1834 and attributed this decline to the Philharmonic Society of Philadelphia, a group of amateur musicians that splintered off from the Musical Fund Society in 1833 and offered its own liberal prizes for composition.²¹

The trend toward compositional emulation fostered by prominent critics and the nation's leading performing ensembles during the first third of the nineteenth century helps explain why American symphonies were not prolifically produced during that time. In addition to the factors such as the high costs of producing symphonic works and the lack of mass appeal also faced by early nineteenth-century European symphonists, cultural cosmopolitanism further stifled symphonic composition in the United States. The first roadblock to significant symphonic output in America was the prominence of the oratorio, a vestige of a London-centered musical colonialism that persisted well into the eighteenth century. Although symphonies were beginning to earn respect among critics and audiences, the demand for oratorios far outweighed the demand for expansive orchestral works. Secondly, there was little incentive for writing a symphony, particularly when concert societies wanted composers specifically to write in an emulative style. Even after the symphony as a genre began to take its place alongside the oratorio as a worthy source of musical enlightenment, as we shall see below, the number of European symphonies that had been imported by performing ensembles in Philadelphia and Boston—and later New York—provided an ample stock of symphonic repertoire that critics praised and highbrow audiences seemed to enjoy. Potentially prolific symphonists such as Charles Hommann were therefore caught in a flooded market and had little

²¹ Previously snubbed by the Musical Fund Society, Charles Hommann won the Philharmonic's first prize for orchestral composition in 1835. See Hommann, *Surviving Orchestral Works*, xxxv. The Philharmonic apparently "manifested a disposition...toward the encouragement of native talent," something the Musical Fund Society never added to its official list of functions. See J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609–1884* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1884), 2:1089.

chance of distinguishing themselves against the European competition. If there was a steady supply of masterworks traveling across the Atlantic, why would an American composer bother?

Yet the intent of the cosmopolitans was not altogether universalist or anti-patriotic—quite the opposite.²² Daniel Dana and other cosmopolitans believed that promoting the performance of European masterworks would serve to uplift American culture at large and assert the nation's identity as a unique musical nation. Relying on European products is perhaps an unintuitive approach to the formation of a national musical identity, but according to at least some listeners, it was effective and inevitable. At a celebration of George Washington's birthday in 1815, for example, a large Boston chorus programmed choice works by Handel alongside hymns of peace. One listener later commented, "Nothing but a 'Te Deum Laudamus' could satisfy the emotions of that hour...and a performance of the Dettingen Te Deum and the Hallelujah Chorus of Handel were executed by nearly two hundred and fifty vocal and instrumental performers."²³ By associating European masterworks with a uniquely American celebration of national importance, the programmers of this event gave the music itself a distinct air of patriotism. None other than John Sullivan Dwight (1813–1893), an arch-cosmopolitan, took this attitude of patriotic Europhilia to its extreme. Commenting on Beethoven's symphonies, he gushed,

The truth is, Beethoven's is the music of this age; it gives voice to the imprisoned soul and aspiration of this age. Spiritually and essentially, it

²² Universalism was the idea that music transcended nationality.

²³ One witness claimed that this moving performance spurred the formation of the Handel and Haydn Society, which devoted itself to performing sacred music for the sake of the nation. See Robert C. Winthrop, *Addresses and Speeches on Various Occasions, 1852–1867* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1852–67), 1:334.

can be better comprehended by unmusical Americans in Boston now, than it could in Vienna when it was born. It was prophetic of the great world movement [democracy] that now stirs so many hearts....The child will study what it loves; and we apprehend it is our destiny in this age and in this land to love Beethoven.²⁴

In Dwight's formulation Beethoven's music was really the music of a democratic America in the 1840s, despite the fact that it was deeply enmeshed in the relatively oppressive cultural milieu of Habsburg Vienna. Against this reasoning, American composers stood little chance of asserting a national musical identity, cosmopolitan or otherwise.

The Counter to Cosmopolitanism: Compositional Exceptionalism

In the early post-Independence era, the persistence of cosmopolitanism suggests that the process of decolonization—or asserting a national musical identity—was neither rapid nor radical. It frustrated the efforts even of those American musicians like Charles Hommann who were comfortable working within that culture and who adopted that mode of thought. On the other hand, certain composers wrote in an idiom that can be interpreted as a swifter mode of decolonization. These composers experimented with bolder and more obvious assertions of national identity in small-scale compositions such as overtures and short piano works. Although these works were relatively small in size, the traces of American exceptionalism they contained served as a contrarian voice to the dominant ideology of cosmopolitanism. The presence of this contrarianism helped generate the postcolonial anxiety that would continue to be felt by the first generation of American symphonic composers beginning in the 1840s. Certain symphonists frequently took the compositional tools utilized in these earlier exceptionalist works and applied

²⁴ "Musical Review," *The Harbinger, Devoted to Social and Political Progress* 1, no. 10 (1845): 154–55.

them on a much larger scale in their symphonies. Indeed, without this contrarian voice, the symphony might never have emerged as a viable expression of national musical identity, because the hegemonic culture of cosmopolitanism stifled early attempts at symphonic composition. A close examination of three of these smaller pieces illustrates the compositional context out of which exceptionalist approaches to symphonic composition grew.

One of the earliest proto-exceptionalist pieces for orchestra written after the Revolutionary War is the *Federal Overture* (1794) by Benjamin Carr. Although the work's potpourri construction was not original, the overtly nationalist message it contained was unique for an overture at the time. Written for a series of performances of *The Grecian Daughter* given by the Old American Company at Philadelphia's Southwark Theater, the work comprises nine popular and patriotic tunes flanked by fantasias on "Yankee Doodle," then the most popular patriotic song:

Table 1.1. Structure of Benjamin Carr's *Federal Overture* (1794)

"Yankee Doodle" Fantasia	No. 5 "Rose Tree"
No. 1 "Marseilles March" ("La Marsellaise")	No. 6 "La Carmagnole"
No. 2 "Ça Ira"	No. 7 "President's March"
No. 3 "O Dear, What Can the Matter Be"	No. 8 "Yankee Doodle"
No. 4 "The Irish Washer Woman"	No. 9 "Yankee Doodle" Fantasia/Etc.

Music preceding theatrical performances typically consisted of short selections chosen by audiences in order to rouse their spirits before the show. With political tensions on the rise in America's larger cities two years into George Washington's second term as

president, this practice ran the risk of alienating and even angering a substantial portion of the audience.²⁵

The structure of the *Federal Overture* circumvents this problem. The work's title, "Federal," suggests that Carr, or whoever gave the piece its name, might have supported the Federalist political party, but as Irving Lowens has noted, the opposition party, typically called "anti-Federalists" today, was more officially called the Federal Republican party.²⁶ Since each party's name shared the word "federal," the ways in which Carr's contemporaries understood the word played a role in its construction of a national identity. The word "federal" had a richly symbolic meaning in the post-Revolutionary context. In written documents such as the Constitution, it carried vexingly multifarious and nuanced meanings, but in common parlance, it typically referred in a positive way to the cooperation among the political entities governing a populace.²⁷ With their origins in the French Revolution, numbers 1, 2, and 6 would have appealed to the relatively left-leaning Federal Republicans, whereas number 7 was popular among the conservatively pro-British Federalists. The other tunes, all apolitical except "Yankee Doodle," were likely to please everyone.²⁸ The *Federal Overture*, then, may be heard as a textured portrait of the nation's political landscape, a musical panorama of differing

²⁵ In New York in March of 1794, angry audience members physically attacked composer and keyboardist James Hewitt for not "producing the expected patriotic tunes" quickly enough. See Irving Lowens, ed., *Benjamin Carr's Federal Overture (1794)* (Philadelphia: Musical Americana, 1957), 10–11.

²⁶ Lowens, *Carr's Federal Overture*, 10.

²⁷ Edward A. Purcell, *Originalism, Federalism, and the Constitutional Enterprise* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), 20–21.

²⁸ "Yankee Doodle" was a ubiquitously celebrated patriotic air. See William Gibbons, "'Yankee Doodle' and Nationalism, 1780–1920," *American Music* 26, no. 2 (2008): 246–50.

perspectives conjoined into a work intended to be heard by the very people whose feelings it mirrors. It was an expression of the nation's multi-faceted identity.²⁹

James Hewitt's *The Battle of Trenton: A Favorite Historical Military Sonata Dedicated to General Washington* (1797) infused American exceptionalism into a different genre that had rich history in Europe: the commemorative battle piece. As its name suggests, *The Battle of Trenton* musically depicts George Washington's famous crossing of the Delaware River and subsequent trouncing of the enemy Hessian forces at Trenton in 1776. As if it were a play transformed into music, the markings on the score describe scenes in the action (e.g., "Crossing the Delaware" and "The Hessians surrender themselves"). *The Battle of Trenton* follows standard narrative patterns of European battle compositions, but it bears a remarkable resemblance to the highly popular *Battle of Prague* (ca. 1788) by František Koczwara (ca. 1750–1791), a Bohemian musician who established a successful career in England and Ireland.³⁰ Koczwara's largely forgotten work was itself an expression of national pride that commemorated a Bohemian military victory.³¹ Sensing the older work's potential as a successful expression of patriotism, Hewitt transplanted several of its musical traits—rumbling bass notes depicting cannon fire and rapid chromatic sixteenth-note figuration depicting intense action—into *The*

²⁹ Given the recentness of the composition of songs such as "La Marseillaise" (1792) and "La Carmagnole" (1792), one might also speculate that the overture hinted at a "federal" brotherhood of independent democratic nations.

³⁰ An American edition of the work appeared as early as the 1790s in Boston, although James Hewitt's connections to London would have allowed him to acquire the work around the time of its initial publication. John Tasker Howard has speculated that an earlier piece of Hewitt's written in London, *Overture in Nine Movements, Expressive of a Battle*, likely provides a direct musical link between *The Battle of Prague* and *The Battle of Trenton*. See Howard, "The Hewitt Family in American Music," *Musical Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (1931): 26–31.

³¹ In 1756, during the Seven Years' War, a Prussian army under Frederick II ("the Great") attacked the Austrian army defending Prague but reached a stalemate in the general confusion as the Austrians took refuge inside the city. Since the Prussians did not pursue, the battle was effectively a victory for the Austrians and for Prague's citizens.

Battle of Trenton while adding enough musical Americana to alter its character substantially. **Table 1.2**, which lists successive episodes leading up to the works' respective finales, illustrates this transplantation:

Table 1.2. Structural Modeling of Frantisek Koczwara's *The Battle of Prague* (1788) in James Hewitt's *The Battle of Trenton* (1797)

Koczwara, <i>The Battle of Prague</i>	Hewitt, <i>The Battle of Trenton</i>
"Cries of the Wounded"	"Grief of the Americans..."
"Trumpet of Victory"	" <i>Yankee Doodle</i> "
" <i>God Save the King</i> "	" <i>Quick Step</i> for the Band"
"Turkish Music. <i>Quick Step</i> "	"Trumpets of Victory"
Finale— <i>Allegro</i>	<i>Allegro</i> —"General Rejoicing"

Replacing "God Save the King" with "Yankee Doodle" near the rousing conclusion gives the work an unmistakably American flair. With the tableau narrative style used to commemorate an important national event and his clever use of national tunes, Hewitt created an effective musical monument to America's achievements in war and international politics.

Although *The Battle of Trenton* derived its musical style from a long tradition of writing commemorative battle works, it also participated in broader attempts at national identity formation that swept the nation after the Revolutionary War. Commemoration of the war, which served as a means of constructing a uniquely American identity, quickly spread into every corner of American life. Even before the war's end, printers released engraved pictorial accounts of the early battles along with biographies of the leading officers. American novelist Hugh Henry Brackenridge (1748–1816) penned a five-act commemoration of the Battle of Bunker Hill in 1776, just a year after the battle itself.³² Shortly after the War's end, the famous American artist Charles Willson Peale (1741–

³² Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill. A Dramatic Piece, of Five Acts, in Heroic Measure* (Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1776).

1827) attempted to construct a grand triumphal arch in a prominent downtown area of Philadelphia and painted portraits of famous military personalities. Former officers in the war established the Society of the Cincinnati in 1783 with the express purpose of preserving the War's memory. Citizens from the city of Boston incorporated an organization to build an enormous physical monument to the Battle of Bunker Hill, which stands above the city still today.³³ The prevailing attitude surrounding these activities was one of reverence for sacrifice and united effort. The Americans who publicly consumed commemorative artworks were to model their own growth as citizens on the virtues of American soldiers, and *The Battle of Trenton* certainly suited this purpose. Hewitt depicts, for example, the "ardor of the Americans at landing" with a breathless triplet figuration found nowhere else in the work. In Hewitt's narrative, the heroic Americans were anxious for battle; they were not mounting a desperate undermanned offensive like the actual troops in 1776. Hewitt's Hessians, by contrast, fled from the Americans not once but twice after being defeated. Like the other artists and prominent citizens around him, Hewitt used a publicly consumable work of art as a means of intensifying American nationalist fervor.

Hewitt imbued American exceptionalism into another standard musical genre, the piano sonata, in his *Fourth of July: A Grand Military Sonata* (1801). Instead of drawing on the memory of American military exploits during the Revolution, this work draws on the annual celebration of the country's highest national holiday. Historian David Waldstreicher has argued that a post-Revolutionary American national identity emerged in the exuberant repetition of local patriotic celebrations, especially of the Fourth of July,

³³ Sarah J. Purcell discusses these and several other commemoration efforts in her study on nationalism after the Revolutionary War. See Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

around the country.³⁴ Hewitt's sonata musically depicts a parade of troops walking through town for a Fourth of July celebration. After the parade passes, sustained C major chords signify the "shouts of the populace," which are immediately followed by a rousing rendition of "Hail Columbia," which by 1801 had become the country's unofficial national anthem. Although there is nothing particularly innovative about the work, Hewitt's *Fourth of July* captures the early American spirit of patriotic celebration and creates a vivid musical portrait of the nation that transcends locale. Despite the work's simple music, its title, "grand sonata," a generic designation that signified depth and gravity around the turn of the nineteenth century, draws attention to the importance of its nationalist themes.

While each of the three works discussed above presented a strikingly different picture of the American nation, they all hinted at the thread of exceptionalism that would persist in the music of the first generation of American symphonists. Benjamin Carr's *Federal Overture* meshed the unique political threads of post-Revolutionary America; James Hewitt's *Battle of Trenton* urged the virtues of sacrifice, bravery, and united effort on the American populace; and *The Fourth of July* captured the celebratory spirit of the victorious young nation. Patriotic music was ubiquitous in post-Revolutionary America, but these three works, among others, introduced American exceptionalism into traditional musical genres. Compared to European styles, none of the works broke new musical ground. In the sections that were newly composed and not simple quotations of existing tunes, regular eight-measure phrases predominate, and diminished seventh chords are the most advanced harmonic structure. These works, though perhaps musically inferior to the

³⁴ David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of an American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

best dramatic overtures and piano sonatas remembered today, achieved different goals from their European counterparts. They contributed to the inchoate sense of national identity that was bubbling in many corners of the nation, especially in the northeast, where the most prominent musicians and musical societies were establishing themselves. Despite the potential in their works for a public embrace, however, resident American composers such as Carr and Hewitt did not attain widespread popularity. Throughout their careers, their works were overshadowed by the great oratorios of Handel and Haydn.

Only one symphony with traces of innovation, Leopold Meignen's *Symphonie militaire*, "The Soldier's Dream," appeared within the culture of cosmopolitanism before the initial flurry of American symphonies occurred in the 1840s.³⁵ Meignen (1793–1873) had a profound influence on musical life in Philadelphia for nearly three decades. Born in France in 1793, he began his career as a bandleader in Napoleon's army and attended the Paris Conservatoire before immigrating to the United States in 1828. After his arrival in Philadelphia, Meignen kept his fingers in several musical pies as a composer, conductor, private tutor, and publisher. In 1844, he became conductor of the Musical Fund Society. In this role, he steadily shifted the Society's repertoire from the potpourri concerts of the 1830s toward programs that prominently, if not exclusively, featured the orchestra. Meignen's position afforded him the opportunity to premiere his symphony in 1845. A preview of the work described it thus:

The feature of the evening...will be an original piece, composed by Mr. Meignen, the leader of the orchestra, entitled "The Soldier's Dream." The writer is an old campaigner, understands music as well as military life, and accordingly writes *secundam artem*. His plot is as follows: A soldier is on

³⁵ That it was performed by the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia is all the more surprising, because this group was a bulwark of cosmopolitanism.

guard at midnight: soft music describes the time and scene, the measured tread, the sentinel's challenge, &c. The midnight service of a neighboring church is heard: it reminds the soldier of the scenes of his home; he becomes weary and falls asleep; he dreams of a battle, which is gloriously represented by the confusion of a *double figure* [fugue], as it is called by musicians; the battle ceases; the retreat bugle sounds; and the dreaming sentinel awakes to the sound of a drum.³⁶

Based on its description alone, this work, unlike Charles Hommann's symphonic emulation, was not going to be a copy of a symphony by Haydn. Instead, the program resembled the detailed imagery found in the earlier piano works of James Hewitt. Unlike Hewitt's sonatas, however, the narrative of Meignen's work does not contain an explicitly patriotic or nationalist message. Because the potential of the symphonic genre to construct a national identity was in its earliest stages, the exceptionalism contained in Meignen's symphony could only be inferred.³⁷

The Rise of the Symphony

Although they laid the groundwork for the postcolonial anxiety that the first generation of American symphonists experienced, the two streams of musical thought that shaped the American musical landscape in the early nineteenth century—the dominant stream of cosmopolitanism and the subsidiary stream of exceptionalism—were not enough to spur the rapid growth of symphonic composition in the 1840s. A third development emanating from Europe and continuing in America provided the essential spark that generated this output: the rise of the symphony. The aesthetic status of instrumental music, especially the symphony, changed dramatically in the first quarter of

³⁶ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, April 17, 1845.

³⁷ William Henry Fry, who wrote a review of the concert, made this very inference. A further discussion of this episode follows in chapter two. The idea behind Meignen's symphony also resembled the appeals to the imagination made by other French composers such as Jean-Francois Le Sueur and Hector Berlioz.

the nineteenth century in Europe, and by Beethoven's death in 1827 it had garnered general acceptance as the highest, or at least the most learned, of all musical genres. With such a prominent position in European musical thought, it became a ripe topic for discussion over the next twenty-five years, during which time audiences, especially in the German-speaking lands, increasingly began to hear the genre as an expression of German national identity.³⁸ This particular belief, however, was not what worked its way into American musical thought; instead, it was the more abstract ideas that the symphony could express national identity at all and that it was the most appropriate genre for doing so. Often promoting this belief, concert societies programmed European instrumental music, particularly symphonies, much more heavily in the 1830s and 1840s. In turn, critics developed a reverence for the genre that, when coupled with the combination of aesthetic and political values that the genre could convey, led to the sharp rise of American symphonic compositions between 1840 and 1870.

After Beethoven's death, European discussions about the genre of the symphony revolved around two related issues: extramusical content and generic boundaries. The first of these often generated virulent debates, which culminated in the well-known antagonism of Eduard Hanslick and Franz Liszt in the 1850s. The second issue, though less contentious, created a real sense of anxiety among composers vying for a place in the burgeoning pantheon of great symphonists—with Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven already occupying hallowed positions. Over a period of twenty-five years (1827–1852), both issues heavily shaped the genre's development and reception and created distinct musical camps, or parties as they were often called, among the musical intelligentsia. By the end

³⁸ Mark Evan Bonds, *Music as Thought: Listening to the Symphony in the Age of Beethoven* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 88.

of this period, composers evidently reached an impasse in symphonic composition as the number of new symphonies dwindled considerably.

The majority of musicians from the period agreed that instrumental music had the ability to express or suggest extramusical content. For some, this content involved depiction or description, in which the music presents a vivid visual image or sequence of events. The German words “Tonmalerei” and “Tongemälde,” both common in the period, refer to this idea.³⁹ For others, music could express interior emotions, feelings, or sentiments—in a word, an *ethos*—but little else.⁴⁰ Disagreements about the suitability of extramusical ideas for the genre created two roughly defined musical camps: the “ethos” camp and the “tone painters.” The ethos camp included composers who wrote symphonies relatively untouched by pre-compositional extramusical narratives. Robert Schumann, Felix Mendelssohn, and Niels Gade fell into this group, as did the more obscure George Onslow, Franz Berwald, and Johann Wenzel Kalliwoda. The “tone painters,” Hector Berlioz, Félicien David, and at times Louis Spohr, wrote symphonies heavily laced with extramusical connotations, which were often spelled out in concert programs. The two camps were not always friendly, or even neutral, toward one another. Robert Schumann and other critics associated with the ethos camp repeatedly panned the excessive literary dimension of the tone painters, most notably in Schumann’s review of Berlioz’s *Symphonie Fantastique*. He claimed with a hint of national pride and disdain

³⁹ Heinrich Christoph Koch believed both words referred to a single concept. See his *Kurzgefaßtes Handwörterbuch der Musik für praktische Tonkünstler und für Dilettanten* (Leipzig: Johann Friedrich Hartknoch, 1807, repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1981), 166–67; A.B. Marx wrote a treatise on the subject: *Über Malerei in der Tonkunst* (Berlin: G. Fink, 1828); and several instrumental works bore the designation “Tongemälde,” the most notorious being Spohr’s Fourth Symphony, subtitled “Die Weihe der Töne: Charakteristisches Tongemälde in Form einer Sinfonie.”

⁴⁰ Beethoven’s description of his Sixth Symphony’s first movement, “Erwachen heiterer Empfindungen,” is one of the most well-known examples of this idea.

for the French, “All Germany greeted [the program] thus: such signboards always have a touch of unworthiness and charlatanry.”⁴¹ A suggestion of the music’s meaning—a hint at its ethos—would have been enough for Schumann.

Differing views about the genre’s formal possibilities further sharpened the divisions over extramusical content in symphonies, and two camps that fell along similar lines began to form around this issue. Composers from the extramusical ethos camps did utilize and expand upon Beethoven’s formal techniques—cyclic integration, the choral finale, and sonata form—but these experiments were relatively mild. Of the members of this camp, only Mendelssohn, in his *Lobgesang*, truly tested the genre’s boundaries. The extramusical tone painters, on the other hand, aggressively pushed its outer limits.

David’s *Le Désert*, spoken passages and all, is barely classifiable as a symphony, and no other composer attempted the physical theatricality of the dueling orchestras in Spohr’s grandiose Seventh Symphony, “The Earthly and Divine in the Life of Man.” In his review of the *Symphonie fantastique* by Berlioz, Schumann expressed the notion that the form and structure of Beethoven’s Ninth provided the outer limits of the genre and that further experimentation was not only unnecessary but also detrimental to the genre’s development. **Table 1.3** below illustrates the two competing genealogies of the symphony that emerged during discussions of extramusicality and formal possibilities.

Music critics from the period stimulated the relatively benign factionalization found in these compositional trends by introducing contentious political language in their writing. Openly political, and therefore more ambitious, interpretations of works became common as they increasingly used political rhetoric in their reviews and essays. For

⁴¹ Robert Schumann, “Sinfonie von H. Berlioz,” in *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik und Musiker*, ed. Martin Kreisig (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1914), 1:83.

Table 1.3. Competing Genealogies of the European Symphony, ca. 1827–1852

Ethos/Conventional Symphonies	Year	Tone Painting/Experimental Symphonies
L. Spohr, Sym. No. 3	1828	
F. Mendelssohn, Sym. No. 5, “Reformation”	1830	H. Berlioz, <i>Symphonie Fantastique</i>
	1832	L. Spohr, Sym. No. 4, “Consecration of Tones”
F. Mendelssohn, Sym. No. 4, “Italian”	1833	
	1834	H. Berlioz, <i>Harold en Italie</i>
L. Spohr, Sym. No. 5	1837	
	1839	H. Berlioz, <i>Romeo et Juliette</i> L. Spohr, Sym. No. 6, “Historical”
	1840	H. Berlioz, <i>Grande symphonie funèbre et triomphale</i>
	1840	F. Mendelssohn, Sym. No. 2, “Lobgesang”
R. Schumann, Sym. No. 1, “Spring” R. Schumann, Sym. No. 4 (orig.)	1841	L. Spohr, Sym. No. 7, “Earthly and Divine...”
N. Gade, Sym. No. 1	1842	
N. Gade, Sym. No. 2	1843	
	1844	F. David, <i>Le Désert</i>
R. Schumann, Sym. No. 2	1845	
N. Gade, Sym. No. 3 L. Spohr, Sym. No. 8	1847	F. David, <i>Christophe Colomb</i>
N. Gade, Sym. No. 4 L. Spohr, Sym. No. 9, “The Seasons”	1849	
R. Schumann, Sym. No. 3, “Rhenish”	1850	
N. Gade, Sym. No. 5	1852	

example, in an 1834 review of two overtures by Kalliwoda, Robert Schumann remarked, “The present moment is characterized by its parties. Just as in politics, one may divide the musical into Liberals, Moderates, and Royalists, or into Romantics, Modernists, and Classicists.”⁴² Two years later, another *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* critic praised the inexorability of the unification of politics and music: “Pledge allegiance to our flag, or we will strike you! It is called music and politics, politics and music, and it is the banner

⁴² Robert Schumann, “Kalliwoda: (1) Ouverture à grand orchestre. Oe. 38. (2) Ouvert. Oe. 44. à 2 Rthlr.—Dieselben zu vier Händen à 16 gr.—Leipz., Peters,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 1 (May 5, 1834): 38.

of our century...Politics *in* music!”⁴³ These ideas were not limited to German writers. The French critic Henri Blanchard noted that the French government, in 1844, was “consolidated by the proscription of national songs.”⁴⁴ He recognized the power that government could wield when it controlled musical expression. Swept by this rhetoric, critics applied it to their interpretations of specific works and performances, especially of symphonies, and it is in these writings that the genre of the symphony became recognized as a symbol of unified German nationhood and democracy, as well as a concrete means of achieving those political goals. In the critics’ ears, the live sounds of a symphony created a model for a democratic society.⁴⁵

Typically through German transatlantic channels such as the importation of German music and the reprinting of articles from German musical journals, similar ideas eventually filtered into American musical life, which in turn laid the groundwork for a flurry of symphonic composition. This process began around 1830, when critics and audiences asserted an elevated status of instrumental music that would match that of the oratorio, the most revered genre of art music since at least the turn of the century. In 1831, for example, an anonymous writer for the *New-England Magazine* exhorted his readers to contemplate the high degree of skill that composing orchestral masterworks requires:

Read an overture by Haydn or Mozart, or listen to it, simply as a study of human intellect, and you will confess that the mind which could invent those airs and harmonies, could, in each note, as it was written, calculate

⁴³ Alex. Br., “Parallelen: Politik und Musik,” *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* 5 (Sep. 9, 1836): 84.

⁴⁴ Henri Blanchard, “De la musique séditionnaire,” *La Revue et Gazette musicale de Paris* 11 (Sep. 22, 1844): 315–16.

⁴⁵ Clear examples of this reading appeared in the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* throughout the 1830s and 1840s in contributions by Wolfgang Robert Griepenkerl, Ernst Gottschald, and Franz Brendel, among others. See Bonds, *Music as Thought*, 92–93.

the precise effect of an orchestra of an hundred instruments, give to each its proper office, combine, interweave, and separate and reunite them, so as to produce that matchless result by which you are entranced, is of the rarest order of human genius.⁴⁶

The emergence of more performing ensembles devoted to orchestral music helped shape this trend. Well after Boston's Handel and Haydn Society became one of a handful of the nation's leading musical organizations, prominent Boston musicians and civic leaders attempted to cultivate an appreciation for European orchestral music in addition to the standard oratorio repertoire performed by the Society. Initially founded in 1833 as an educational institution, the Boston Academy of Music soon emerged as the city's leading proponent of orchestral music. Under the leadership of Boston's mayor, Samuel Atkins Eliot (1798–1862), the Academy transformed one of Boston's best theaters into a concert hall and hired a professional orchestra of over thirty musicians.⁴⁷

Although the Boston Academy was originally founded to promulgate great sacred choral music, Eliot eventually enlisted the help of an orchestra to assist the choir in its performances of large-scale works.⁴⁸ This innovation was the first in a series of moves made by Eliot to transform the Academy into an exclusively orchestral organization and distance itself from the mission of the Handel and Haydn Society. It worked. As early as three years later, critics began to opine that despite Atkins's efforts, there was *not enough* orchestral music in Boston. Theodor Hach, editor of *The Musical Magazine* and himself a German immigrant, complained that "orchestral music is neither understood and

⁴⁶ "Music," *The New-England Magazine* 1, no. 6 (1831): 460. The author later noted, like so many others, that "as a people, it may be regretted that we have displayed no musical genius, and not much musical taste."

⁴⁷ See Michael Broyles, *Music of the Highest Class: Elitism and Populism in Antebellum Boston* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 203.

⁴⁸ For the group's original constitution and acts of incorporation, see *First Annual Report of the Boston Academy of Music* (Boston: Perkins, Marvin, & Co., 1835), 9–12.

appreciated by the public, nor is it ever brought out in that style of uniform and effective performance, that commands attention and interest.”⁴⁹ Hach also urged the Academy to cultivate instrumental music even more than vocal music, “because the former is at present in a lower condition among us.”⁵⁰ Atkins and the Academy took this advice to heart, and the group’s ninth annual report insisted that orchestral music would be its primary focus.⁵¹ In 1842, the following year, Atkins believed that he and the Academy had succeeded in swaying public taste in favor of orchestral music. In language reminiscent of the anonymous 1831 critic quoted above, he congratulated Boston audiences for discerning that “solo performances...are discovered to be matters of less interest and effect, in general, than the combination of many instruments, a whole orchestra, in the performance of great compositions of musical genius.”⁵² Tastes had certainly changed within a few short years.

European instrumental music, particularly symphonies, also gained prominence in New York City during the 1840s. In this case the German-speaking community played an even more direct role than in Boston, giving the city’s instrumental music world a distinctively German character. The most prominent institution that promoted instrumental music in the city was the New-York Philharmonic Society, founded in 1842.

⁴⁹ “On Concerts,” *The Musical Magazine; or, Repository of Musical Science, Literature, and Intelligence* 1, no. 11 (1839): 164.

⁵⁰ “The Late Musical Season,” *The Musical Magazine; or, Repository of Musical Science, Literature, and Intelligence* 1, no. 15 (1839): 236.

⁵¹ “In fact, the organization of the orchestra, as regards both skill and disposition, was such as we desire to see perpetuated; and the only change we could wish would be to increase the proportion of well-played string instruments.” *Ninth Annual Report of the Boston Academy of Music* (Boston: T.R. Marvin, 1841), 4.

⁵² *Tenth Annual Report of the Boston Academy of Music* (Boston: T.R. Marvin, 1842), 4. The Boston Academy of Music unfortunately disbanded in 1847, but as Michael Broyles rightly points out, it was Boston’s secular instrumental music organization throughout the early 1840s and left an indelible mark on Boston’s musical landscape. See Broyles, *Music of the Highest Class*, 203.

According to Henry Krehbiel, twenty-two of the fifty-two original members of the Philharmonic were Germans. He called them the “prop” of the organization and claimed that “without them an orchestra would have been an impossibility.”⁵³ By 1865, seventy of eighty-one Philharmonic musicians were German, and the orchestra’s conductors between the mid-1840s and mid-1860s were both German.⁵⁴ Unsurprisingly, then, Beethoven and Mendelssohn were the most frequently performed composers, followed by Spohr, Weber, and Schumann, and then by lesser lights such as Marschner, Kalliwoda, and Lindpaintner—all Germans. The Philharmonic’s German majority brought more than just German music; although the orchestra’s programs comprised a variety of musical genres, the headline work was almost always a symphony. In the first three seasons alone, the orchestra performed Beethoven’s Third, Fifth, and Seventh Symphonies twice, his Second and Eighth once, and other symphonies by Mozart, Spohr, and Haydn.⁵⁵

The full extent of the external musical influences spurring American symphonic composition went beyond the presence of German symphonies on concert programs. Six years after the founding of the New York Philharmonic Society, orchestral music received a further boost at the hands of a group of German-born musicians—the Germania Musical Society—who not only esteemed instrumental music above all other genres but also shared the democratic associations with orchestral music found in the

⁵³ Henry Edward Krehbiel, *The Philharmonic Society of New York: A Memorial* (New York: Novello, Ewer, and Co., 1892), 76.

⁵⁴ Theodore Eisfeld (1816–1882) and Carl Bergmann (1821–1876). See Albert Bernhardt Faust, *The German Element in the United States with Special Reference to its Political, Moral, Social, and Educational Influence* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909), 2:260–61.

⁵⁵ For the contents of each program for the first several seasons of the Philharmonic Society, see the appendix to Krehbiel, *The Philharmonic Society of New York*.

writings of politically-minded German critics such as Wolfgang Griepenkerl.⁵⁶ Around March of 1848, just as revolutionary insurrections were taking place in Berlin, a group of local musicians resolved to form a concert orchestra and depart for the United States, “in order to enflame and stimulate in the hearts of these politically free people, through numerous performances of our greatest instrumental composers,...love for the fine art of music.” Their motto became “one for all, and all for one.”⁵⁷ Because of the Society’s socialist and democratic political organization, the Society’s historian Henry Albrecht claimed that the orchestra

...showed itself in musical respects even as effectively as in the social life of this young artistic group. In the performance of orchestral works, every member realized that it was his holiest duty never to exhibit an exceptional, individual artistic mannerism. In the princely musical courts of Europe, which as everyone knows consists of virtuosi of the first rank, everybody in the orchestra seeks (with few exceptions) to exhibit himself through the assertion of exceptional mannerisms in performance; because of this, of course, a performance rarely appears totally flawless.⁵⁸

Since the political environment of the United States offered a radical contrast to these “princely” barriers to musical perfection, the Germanians thought it was the only logical place for them to settle. They toured the United States for nearly six years and, according to one estimation, gave over nine hundred concerts with more than one million listeners in attendance.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ See, for example, David Levy, “Wolfgang Robert Griepenkerl and Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony,” in *Essays on Music for Charles Warren Fox*, ed. Jerald C. Graue (Rochester, NY: Eastman School of Music Press, 1979), 103–113.

⁵⁷ Perhaps a reference to *Les Trois Mousquetaires* (1844) by Alexandre Dumas, but this phrase might also have drawn inspiration from the American motto, “E pluribus unum.” Nancy Newman, “Good Music for a Free People: The Germania Musical Society and Transatlantic Musical Culture of the Mid-Nineteenth Century” (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 2002), 58–59.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁵⁹ H. Earle Johnson, “The Germania Musical Society,” *Musical Quarterly* 39, no. 1 (1953): 92.

A heightened appreciation of instrumental music, especially symphonies, became widespread among listeners' reactions to the masterworks performed by the Germanians and local organizations such as the Boston Academy of Music, the New-York Philharmonic Society, and Philadelphia's Musical Fund Society. Reviewing a Philharmonic performance of Spohr's "tone painterly" Seventh Symphony in 1849, Henry Cood Watson (1816–1875), music critic for New York's *The Albion*, praised the work to the stars as "truly metaphysical," claiming, "It is not mere surface music, but its depths must be sounded to find the full scope of its power and meaning."⁶⁰ Reflecting on the orchestra's first performance of Beethoven's First Symphony in 1845, the directors of Philadelphia's Musical Fund Society noted, "The ability with which these complicated yet expressive harmonies were produced on this occasion, and their appreciation and evident approval by one of the largest audiences ever gathered within the walls of the Musical Fund Hall is gratifying evidence of advancing musical skill and taste in the community."⁶¹ After hearing a performance of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, the noted diarist George Templeton Strong was beside himself with awe: "It's hardly worthwhile to write any grandiloquencies on the subject...So, to save trouble, I simply write a '!' and anybody who'll have the goodness to dilute the same over six closely written pages will possess my views and sentiments about *Beethoven's Symphony in C minor*."⁶²

⁶⁰ "Music," *The Albion, A Journal of News, Politics, and Literature* 8, no. 5 (1849): 56.

⁶¹ Report from the Annual Meeting, May 6, 1845, *Minutes of the proceedings of the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia at their stated and other meetings including the Joint Board. January 7, 1820–May 7, 1822; Minutes of the proceedings of the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia, at their stated annual and other meetings May 1, 1827–May 1, 1866*. Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia Records, ca. 1820–1991, Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania.

⁶² Vera Brodsky Lawrence, *Strong on Music: The New York Music Scene in the Days of George Templeton Strong*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1:359.

By the end of the 1840s, this heightened appreciation for the symphony had worked its way into the ears of a variety of American listeners, but few revered the genre more than John Sullivan Dwight. Influenced heavily by Friedrich Schiller's notion of the aesthetic state, Dwight brought the full force of German critics' proclivity to interpret symphonies as political works to American shores. The foundation for his political interpretation of individual symphonies came from his social ideals, which were tightly intertwined with his philosophy of music more generally. Mirroring the aesthetic and political values of the Germania orchestra, he used the genre of the symphony as a metaphor for right living in a speech he gave on social harmony and education: "Each note in the great world-symphony is a whole, a unit in itself, and must assert its individuality, insisting on its own peculiar sound, at the same time that it reverently dedicates itself and helps fulfil beyond itself the harmony of the whole."⁶³ In particular, Beethoven's symphonies reflected this ideal model of social harmony.⁶⁴ As we saw earlier, he also argued that Beethoven's music was destined to become the music of America, giving the impression that America—perhaps imperfectly—already embodied many of his democratic social ideals: individual freedom and a collective political voice. It was only natural, then, that like Griepenkerl, he would hear an image of his home nation in the sounds of a Beethoven symphony: "'we are all *one*, though many,' [the notes] seem to say."⁶⁵

⁶³ John Sullivan Dwight, *A Lecture on Association: In Its Connection with Education, Delivered Before the New England Fourier Society, in Boston, February 29th, 1844* (Boston: Benjamin H. Greene, 1844), 5.

⁶⁴ For example, he claimed that Beethoven was "the seventh note in the scale" toward an abolishment of human hierarchies.

⁶⁵ The reference to the motto "E pluribus unum" is unmistakable. "Musical Review. Music in Boston," *The Harbinger, Devoted to Social and Political Progress* 1, no. 21 (1845): 330.

The Symphony as Bearer of American National Identity

On a fundamental level, challenging new ideas were being transplanted in the American musical world in the 1840s, when it was also experiencing rapid decolonization. While Daniel Dana was lamenting the nation's lack of a distinct musical identity at the turn of the century, he was also expressing a desire to elevate the nation by copying British trends—a desire epitomizing cosmopolitanism. Over the course of the next three to four decades, powerful institutions that modeled their programming on British taste for oratorios, such as the Handel and Haydn Society and Philadelphia's Musical Fund Society, became bulwarks of this seemingly paradoxical decolonization strategy. Although they were working within that milieu, turn-of-the-century composers such as Benjamin Carr and James Hewitt experimented with a more radical strategy of decolonization by injecting their compositions with patriotic sentiment. The works themselves were not radical on a musical level, but they expressed national identity in a more obvious way than the oratorios of Handel and Haydn.

After the death of Beethoven and with the increasing demand for national unification and democracy, the German musical world became a fertile area for exploring the political side of instrumental music, which would have significant effects in the United States. German critics such as Theodor Hach urged musical organizations to move away from oratorios toward instrumental music, which they believed was a higher and more sublime art. In an era of political turmoil on the European continent, German musicians left their homeland and bolstered the size of American performing ensembles such as the New-York Philharmonic. Programming trends in the nation's larger cities reflected this demographic shift as orchestras performed not only the great works of

Beethoven and Mendelssohn but the lesser-known works of contemporaries such as Lindpainter and Kalliwoda. The flight from German-speaking lands that followed the revolutions of 1848–49 did not initiate but continued a period of massive migration that radically changed the face of musical culture in America's larger cities, especially New York. As a result, the nation's orchestras became heavily and directly influenced by German musical culture. Dwight's assertion that Beethoven's music was not only democratic but American reflects the intellectual hybridity of this period of simultaneous decolonization and new migration. For Dwight, American national identity was not dependent on an indigenous spirit of the people—as Caleb Emerson suggested forty years earlier—but on an appreciation for and the embodiment of the universal values of harmony and equality expressed in Beethoven's music. Moreover, he believed the United States was the most appropriate place for these values to be embodied musically.

The same intellectual hybridity resulting from the anxiety of decolonization from Britain and the inexorable migration (or infiltration, as many Americans saw it) of German culture—and the concomitant dissemination of German ideas—ultimately spurred a flurry of symphonic composition that began in the 1840s and continued through the 1850s. As symphonies were performed with increasing frequency beginning in the 1830s, the genre itself became almost universally recognized as the highest achievement possible in instrumental music; it had already attained the same status in Europe, especially in the German-speaking lands. Also because of the increased availability of the genre, more serious critical explorations of its potential to convey meaning became more widespread, as the writings of Dwight, Strong, Fuller, and Watson attest. It seems reasonable, then, that American composers would capitalize on the opportunity to express

national identity using the genre that would produce the greatest impact on the musical community. The following chapters reveal how they did it.

CHAPTER TWO

A NEW AMERICA: WILLIAM HENRY FRY'S EXCEPTIONALISM

Prior to the rise of the symphony in the United States, the ideology of exceptionalism lacked clear musical expression. The works of Benjamin Carr, James Hewitt, Leopold Meignen, and other proto-exceptionalists were overshadowed by pieces from the budding European canon. The project of rapid musical decolonization articulated by thinkers such as Caleb Emerson simply had not taken root. For over three decades, there was no real champion of musical exceptionalism with the power or the influence to assert its legitimacy as an expression of national identity—that is, until composer William Henry Fry (1813–1864) arrived on the scene. In a review of Leopold Meignen's *Symphonie militaire*, which premiered in Philadelphia in 1845, Fry outlined the process through which American composers should create truly “American” music distinct from the music of Europe. Acknowledging the lingering dominance of European musical culture, he urged American composers to borrow what was useful from the past, discard the rest, and create something entirely new:

We consider the whole basis of prosperous and triumphant Art in this country to rest upon Originality of Production. We may, and must, import true models from Europe; but taking as our standard the recognized excellence or perfection of the masters in Art of that country [*sic*], we must then originate, re-create, and accord our derived taste and skill to the genius of our own hemisphere. It is alone by this double process that we can make our country the actual mother, as well as the double foster mother of Art.¹

¹ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, April 21, 1845.

These words, penned nearly eight years before Fry ever attempted to compose a symphony of his own, would prove to be decidedly prophetic: his reputation as a serious symphonic composer would later hinge on whether or not he succeeded in the role of “double foster” parent. In his works, the project of rapid decolonization took a giant leap forward. As with all of the composers who wrote symphonies during this era, however, his music was shaped by an inescapable hybridity, a result of the ongoing interchange of European and American musical cultures.

The son of a well-to-do printer and the proprietor of one of the nation’s most prominent newspapers, Fry came of age hobnobbing in Philadelphia’s literate and elite social circles.² He learned about art, politics, and the craft of journalism from his father’s business partner, Robert Walsh (1785–1859), a belletrist and statesman who edited the elder Fry’s newspaper, the *National Gazette and Literary Register*, as well as the *American Quarterly Review*, a leading political and literary magazine. Walsh was one of the first newspaper editors to introduce artistic and musical coverage and criticism into the daily press, which greatly affected the younger Fry’s conception of a journalist’s occupation.³ Shortly after Walsh retired from his position, Fry assumed the task of reviewing Philadelphia’s musical events for the *National Gazette*. The *National Gazette* merged with another paper in 1842, and Fry soon joined the staff of the *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, the city’s first successful “penny paper,” or inexpensive newspaper

² Many of his contemporaries considered Fry’s father, William Fry (1777–1855), one of the finest printers of his day. He also led Philadelphia’s efforts to establish public schools. See the elder Fry’s obituary in the *New York Daily Times*, September 4, 1855.

³ For an “eyewitness” account of Robert Walsh’s literary career in Philadelphia, see Rufus Wilmot Griswold, *The Prose Writers of America: With a Survey of the Intellectual History, Condition, and Prospects of American Literature* (Philadelphia: Carey and Hart, 1847), 196–98.

designed to appeal to the widest possible readership.⁴ A largely self-taught composer, he initially studied the scores of traveling opera troupes and familiarized himself with the music in the library of the Philadelphia Musical Fund Society; he also studied privately with Leopold Meignen. In 1852, Fry left the *Public Ledger* to join the editorial staff of the *New York Tribune*, another penny paper, and remained in that position until his death.

Fry, a journalist and music critic by day, composed seven symphonies: *A Day in the Country* (1852), *The Breaking Heart* (1852, rev. 1853), *Santa Claus* (1853), *Childe Harold* (1854), *Niagara* (1854), *Hagar in the Wilderness* (1854), and *The Dying Soldier* (1863). The first four were performed during his lifetime, and all but *Childe Harold* survive in manuscript today. As the titles suggest, Fry wanted his music to evoke specific imagery and to illustrate the movement of dramatic scenes. Like the “tone painters” of Europe such as Berlioz and Spohr, he expounded on the works’ meanings in narrative synopses that describe the music’s unfolding action in surprising musical and literary detail.⁵ As a result of this infatuation with musical drama, the symphonies themselves exhibit the advanced and colorful orchestration of Berlioz and the stock dramatic gestures of French grand opera, especially of Giacomo Meyerbeer. For Fry, these Frenchmen were his masters, not Beethoven and Mozart, whose music American composers should import and transform into styles of their own making.

Mastery over the latest musical and dramatic techniques was not enough for a national identity to emerge, prosper, and “triumph.” According to Fry’s formula,

⁴ The owners of the *Public Ledger* also became famous as technological pioneers. Its editors made the first use of “pony expresses” and magnetic telegraphs to transmit the news. See Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia, 1609–1884* (Philadelphia: L.H. Everts & Co., 1884), 3:2003–4.

⁵ Despite mocking the idea of distributing narrative programs at all, one contemporary critic so thoroughly enjoyed the style of *Santa Claus*’s synopsis that *The Albion*, an influential news magazine, reprinted the synopsis in full. See “A Literary Curiosity,” *The Albion, a Journal of News, Politics, and Literature* 13, no. 2 (1854): 21.

“originality” and American “genius” were also critical components. His originality lay primarily in his symphonies’ overarching musical forms. Unlike any of his European predecessors or contemporaries, Fry wrote through-composed symphonies that contain discrete but connected musical sections.⁶ In these works, musical structure follows and supports the accompanying literary narratives. In order to incorporate “the genius of our own hemisphere” into this musical innovation, Fry saturated his narrative synopses with imagery symbolizing the virtues of American democracy, the grandeur of the nation’s landscape, and the religiosity of its people. In addition, he used the melodic style of *bel canto* opera to represent the music of the American populace, an appropriate choice given the pervasiveness of Italianate melodic traits in parlor songs of the period. Fry’s symphonies thus rested between fluid mid-century boundaries of “high” and “low” art or “classical” and “popular” music in America, giving them, as Fry himself argued, an “American” sound.⁷

Armed with some of the latest musical techniques available and believing in America’s utmost cultural and political superiority over other nations, Fry began to compose symphonies around 1852. He brought two of them (*A Day in the Country* and *The Breaking Heart*) before audiences for the first time at a series of lectures on the history and theory of music that he presented in New York City during the winter of 1852 and 1853. These lectures, which were heavily attended, firmly established his reputation as a musical authority and an enterprising composer. Less than a year later, the famed

⁶ Liszt’s symphonic poems appeared at roughly the same time, but the generic distinction is critical. By conceiving of these works as symphonies, Fry was invoking the European tradition much more openly than Liszt, who simply created a new hybrid genre.

⁷ See Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); and Karen Ahlquist, *Democracy at the Opera: Music, Theater, and Culture in New York City, 1815–60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

French conductor Louis-Antoine Jullien (1812–1860) directed three of Fry’s symphonies (one of which, *Santa Claus*, was new) in front of New York audiences numbering in the thousands. These concerts were the impetus for some of the most intense debates about the course of American music that the country had yet witnessed. Critics lambasted Fry for his unconventional approach to the genre’s form and for his programmaticism, but Fry defended his compositions on the grounds that they were truly original, and therefore truly American. As the furor raged, Jullien toured the nation from Louisville and New Orleans to Buffalo and Boston, where audiences adored Fry’s entertaining and educational music. Fry composed two more symphonies (*Childe Harold* and *Niagara*) for Jullien upon his return to New York late in the spring of 1854, but Jullien managed to perform only one of them. *Hagar in the Wilderness*, completed on July 4, 1854, and *The Dying Soldier*, which dates tentatively from 1863, fell into obscurity after Fry’s death; apparently neither was performed.

Fry was generally well liked by the public and respected by his fellow journalists and music critics, but his popular symphonies never gained traction as staples of the symphonic repertoire. The New York Philharmonic, the ensemble most likely to program his works or to commission new ones, continued to repeat the already well-worn symphonies of Beethoven. Fry’s symphonies were largely forgotten as examples of an emerging American musical identity, primarily because later observers viewed them as too derivative of European models—as not “American” enough.⁸ The vociferous defense

⁸ These observers have limited their notion of musical “Americanism” to the use of “indigenous” musical sounds. Most recently, Denise Von Glahn writes of Fry’s *Niagara*, “While championing as vehemently as anyone in his time the urgent need of an original American music, Fry could do *little better* than write within the European tradition in his own compositions and encourage others to seek a truly national voice.” Von Glahn, *The Sounds of Place: Music and the American Cultural Landscape* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2003), 50. Emphasis added.

of American composers that Fry consistently leveled at the critics and musicians who touted emulation would instead be his lasting legacy in musical scholarship.⁹ But to understand Fry's contribution to American musical identity, his defense of American music cannot be separated from the music itself, the practical manifestation of his ideas. In the pages that follow, I first explore what Fry meant by suggesting that American music should embody "the genius of our own hemisphere" and "originality of production." Using examples from his symphonies, I then interpret these works as novel visions of an ideal American future that materialize in his realistic portrayals of the American present.

"The Genius of Our Own Hemisphere": Democracy in Fry's Conception of America

Because he used his position on the editorial staff of major newspapers as a platform for adamantly and colorfully defending his symphonies as examples of a truly American art, Fry has been portrayed as an egomaniacal opportunist.¹⁰ Though there is certainly evidence to make this case, those who have characterized him as such have not placed the specifically musical debates in which he participated within the larger context of his political and artistic views; he repeatedly backed up his seemingly self-centered rhetoric with engaging philosophical arguments and historical evidence. Prior to these debates, the clearest picture of Fry's cultural exceptionalism emerged in the letters he wrote from Paris between 1846 and 1852. These letters, which numbered well over two

⁹ See, for example, Irving Lowens, *Music and Musicians in Early America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1964), 22.

¹⁰ See, for example, Vera Brodsky Lawrence, "William Henry Fry's Messianic Yearnings: The Eleven Lectures, 1852–53," *American Music* 7, no. 4 (1989): 382–411.

hundred and assured his success as a journalist upon his return to the United States, chronicled major political events, including the revolutions of 1848–49, and local cultural affairs such as performances—and intrigue—at the Paris Opéra.¹¹ With the eyes of an American in Paris, Fry frequently compared life in Europe with life in America, and one nation—his own—always managed to stand a head above the rest.¹² Beginning in August of 1850, Fry also contributed occasional missives to *The Message Bird*, a prominent music journal based in New York.¹³ Conscious of the journal’s specialized audience, Fry limited his discussions primarily to musical matters, but he nevertheless expressed opinions about the interconnected roles of music and politics. The cohesive content of these little-known letters paves an important avenue for understanding the debates surrounding Fry’s symphonies.

Just four years after he began his tenure at the *Public Ledger*, Fry traveled to Paris, where Robert Walsh had taken up residence as the United States Consul-General. Late in 1849, the prominent editor and social reformer Horace Greeley (1811–1872) enlisted Fry as a Parisian correspondent for the *New-York Daily Tribune*, which extensively covered cultural issues and events. Fry immediately began a series of letters to the *Tribune*, in essence an epistolary *feuilleton*, that he called “Europe by an American.” As the series continued, the scope of Fry’s coverage and the perspicacity of

¹¹ The nearly two-hundred letters I have counted appeared after 1849, which means the total number could be much higher. Before 1849, Fry did not always sign his correspondences with the unmistakable identifier “W.H.F.,” so it might be impossible to know the true extent of his output.

¹² Sometimes quite literally. Commenting on a group of dancers at an opera performance, he boasted, “The tallest girl of the dancers was American—typical, doubtless, of the greatest extent of territory.” *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, August 22, 1851.

¹³ *The Message Bird* changed its title several times while Fry was in Europe. It became *The Journal of the Fine Arts* in 1851 and *The Musical World and Journal of Fine Arts* early in 1852. In July of 1852, it joined with Saroni’s *Musical Times* to become *The Musical World and New York Musical Times*.

his writing became increasingly impressive. To be a successful foreign correspondent in the nineteenth century required three special gifts: a keen eye for detail, a love of people, and a tireless pen. Fry had all three.

Fry loved to take potshots at the French and the British while boosting the American way of life and, most importantly, American democracy. “A great people, the French,” he claimed, “and as fit for liberty as * * * *.”¹⁴ Just a year after Louis-Napoléon was elected President of the Second Republic, Fry eerily foretold the coming of the Second French Empire:

Sudden and fierce revolutions seem in Europe to change tyrants and leave reforms for the most part untouched...But an American, *who has the baptism of Democracy*, can read the French character...Paris, manured into feculent splendor by a system of centralization exceeding the rapacity of ancient Rome, swarms with a bureaucracy, an army of office-seekers, and a whole pandemonium of do-nothings and eat-all.¹⁵

He suggested that Americans should have been able to see through the President’s plot to seize power. The British fared little better a year later:

[G]ood feeling among nations can never exist between *privilege* and *democracy* any more than between *evil* and *good*. And it is precisely because there is no good feeling between the hereditary lords of the English people and soil, and the American democracy, that in England and in America there are constantly made such flowery official pretensions of mutual respect. Full hearts, few words.¹⁶

Fry went on to equate support for the English government with treason and the “compromise of our national *genius* and destiny.” In both instances, he equated American democracy with goodness and righteousness, and autocracy and aristocracy with evil and

¹⁴ We can only guess what the expletive might be. *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, April 27, 1852.

¹⁵ The letter was written on Dec. 13, 1849, just two years before the coup of 1851 that ushered in the new imperial regime. *New York Daily Tribune*, January 12, 1850. Emphasis added.

¹⁶ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, June 2, 1851. Emphasis added.

confusion. In his understanding of contemporary French, British, and American politics, then, centralized government, power, privilege, and hereditary aristocracy were completely immiscible with American culture and democracy.¹⁷

Fry repeatedly asserted that political, economic, or cultural connections to Britain, France, and the rest of Europe were the primary restraints that kept America from realizing its fullest potential as a democratic nation. One issue that caused him particular concern, the “persevering ugliness of American cities,” illustrates the attitude that underlay his feelings toward art in general.¹⁸ Lambasting Philadelphia as a “Quaker abortion,” Fry believed that planners of American cities slavishly followed European designs without accounting for the natural beauty and grace of the American landscape. In New York, he saw “its solemn, stupid squares, its stereotyped forms, its wretched plagiarisms of city plans, made for countries whose climates, habits, pursuits, [and] institutions are different from our own.” Fry developed a two-pronged solution to the problem. Echoing his review of Meignen’s symphony, he first urged city planners to harness the spirit of America’s natural beauty, “lead the eye [and] soul to the religion of Art, and make it an intellectual extension of *aboriginal nature*”—that is, to shape cities using the “genius” of America. In order to accomplish this, leaders should make space for enormous public parks. Taking the Jardin des Tuileries as his inspiration, Fry suggested that cities ask French gardeners to bring their talents to the United States. As “double-foster” parents, then, American cities could begin to thrive. Never leaving an opportunity

¹⁷ He even went so far as to blame British taxation and trade policies, as well as the American government’s complicity with them, for the sectional struggles that culminated in the Civil War, most notably slavery. *New York Daily Tribune*, January 21 and 31, 1851.

¹⁸ The passages quoted in this paragraph are from two separate articles: *New-York Daily Tribune*, April 12, 1850; and *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, July 11, 1851. Emphasis added.

to denigrate the English, he once again extolled the virtues of American democracy, even in the context of building public parks: “A park in England—being Anglo-Saxon—is inartistic. In America—not being Anglo-Saxon, but mixed—we can make it better....If instead of building steamers for the different pauper-holes of Europe, we would worship art at home, there is no measure to our national grandeur under democratic institutions.”

Complete with fresh denunciations of Britain and France, Fry applied his political theories of art to music in his letters to *The Message Bird*. In a letter from the fall of 1850, he argued that European political structures inherently oppressed musicians:

The old bard singing the deeds of the fighting man, shows the relation, modified, it is true, of the musician compared with the present fighting aristocracy of Europe. No man of the most lively ambition will make music a career in Europe, unless he wish to cool his heels in the antechambers of the great...[and] be treated as an inferior, as a kind of upper domestic—a petted servant.¹⁹

If the privileged class controls the means of artistic production, a situation Fry perceived as real in Europe in the 1850s, then the artist is merely a tool for the aristocracy to extend its nefarious influence into all realms of culture. He even attributed Beethoven’s “misanthropy” to the cognitive dissonance induced by the combination of art and beauty with “the science of havoc,” Fry’s metonymy for the actions of Beethoven’s aristocratic patrons. American democracy was the remedy for this crippling condition: “If Art, musical Art, be rendered a profession for a heroic nature, to be accepted as a harvest of social dignities, as well as a means of wealth or fame, it must be under a Democracy like our own.” A democracy, however, was only a necessary condition for music to flourish. Attitudes toward art and life, even within a democracy, had to become more congenial to aesthetic pleasure. Again echoing his review of Meignen’s symphony, Fry argued that

¹⁹ *The Message Bird* 2 (Oct. 15, 1850): 492–93.

aesthetic enjoyment must fully replace the oppressive vices of authoritarianism and greed:

When we shall have shaken off the heavy load of English tradition which bears down upon art,...then all will strive to be artists....I see no hope for Art, but in the extinction of the principle of Force and Privilege, and the substitution of its attractions in their stead. The settlement of political questions, the diminution of the powers of the government, and of the importance of the politician...these things are all necessary to work out the artistic mission. So, too, the undue force of trade and speculation, which grasps at excessive honors by means of brute wealth, this must be abrogated.²⁰

Speaking here of the future of music in America, Fry wanted Americans to sever ties to Europe, with the implication that slavish imitation of European music was potentially dangerous business, for society and for composers themselves. If aristocratic patronage supposedly made Beethoven hate mankind, then we can only dare to imagine what Fry might suggest would happen to an American composer treasonously supported of English economic structures. His message was all the more radical for a nation in which music was hurriedly becoming the purview of the moneyed elite in larger cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, and New York.

Fry was certainly not alone in his view that America's inherent "genius" was fully manifested in its democratic form of government. Led by John L. O'Sullivan (1813–1895), a group of novelists, poets, and journalists calling themselves "Young America" loudly promoted the development of a uniquely American literature with democracy as its defining feature.²¹ Paralleling Fry's ideas, O'Sullivan called boisterously for a separation from English literature:

²⁰ *The Message Bird* 2 (Oct. 15, 1850): 492–93.

²¹ The group included literary greats such as Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville. It was O'Sullivan, incidentally, who coined the term "Manifest Destiny." For an exhaustive investigation of this group's

We depend almost wholly on Europe, and particularly England, to think and write for us, or at least to furnish materials and models after which we shall mould our own humble attempts....The vital principle of an American national literature must be democracy. Our mind is enslaved to the past and present literature of England.²²

Nevertheless admitting the impossibility of shirking English influence once and for all, O'Sullivan, like Fry, suggested that Americans manipulate English models to suit an American sensibility:

No one will misunderstand us as disparaging the literature of our mother language—far from it. We appreciate it with a profound veneration and gratitude, and would use it, without abusing it by utterly submitting our own minds to it; but we look upon it, as we do the political system of the country, as a something magnificent, venerable, splendid, and powerful, and containing a considerable infusion of true principle; yet the one no more suitable to be adopted as our own, or as a model for slavish imitation, than the other.²³

In the same way that the English language forced a relationship between American and English literature, the shared musical languages of tonality and orchestral instrumentation prevented American composers from creating a musical style out of thin air.²⁴ With the spirit of democracy always at their disposal, however, American writers and composers could create an entirely new art by transforming the old.

In contrast to the negativity he directed at Britain and France, Fry filled his letters with optimism for the future of the United States. With democracy as the nation's first principle, its potential for greatness, even in the arts, was unbounded. Americans lacked only originality, a defect that could be corrected by moving away from European trends

activities, see Edward L. Widmer, *Young America: The Flowering of Democracy in New York City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²² "Introduction," *United States Magazine, and Democratic Review* 1, no. 1 (1837): 14.

²³ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁴ Fry, however, was one of the first composers to include the recently invented saxophone in his symphonies.

and practices. Eager to show Americans that originality was possible, Fry advertised a series of lectures on the history and theory of music that he intended to lead upon his return to the United States. “The aim of these lectures,” one advertisement claimed, “will be to present, in a condensed but clear form, an illustrated history of the rise, progress and present state of all departments of instrumental and vocal music.”²⁵ Fry’s true aim, as it turns out, was to present the history of music in order to distinguish his own originality—and the future of American music—from music of the past.

In his series of lectures, which were often described in great detail in the press, he frequently used his own music as a pedagogical tool for illustrating musical concepts. By having it performed side-by-side with more familiar works, such as those by Haydn and Rossini, Fry intended for his audiences to learn how to distinguish between his style and that of older music.²⁶ In a bonus eleventh lecture, Fry gave a peroration in which he declared the independence of American art, a statement that crowned his epistolary efforts of the previous six years. He was aghast at American audiences’ worship of European composers:

The American public are too fond of quoting Handel, Mozart, Beethoven, and European artists generally, and decrying whatever is not modeled after their rules....The American composer should not allow the name of Beethoven, or Handel, or Mozart to prove an eternal bugbear to him.²⁷

²⁵ *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 3 (June 15, 1852): 338.

²⁶ Unfortunately we cannot be absolutely certain, because large remnants of only two of Fry’s lectures are extant: a conductor’s score from the first lecture containing the music used to illustrate concepts (held at the Library Company of Philadelphia) and a transcript of the seventh lecture printed in *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 5 (Jan. 29, 1853): 69–70. The summary press accounts, however, are generally very good. For a thorough summary of the lectures contents and the press reactions, see Lawrence, “William Henry Fry’s Messianic Yearnings.”

²⁷ These statements are summaries, though perhaps exaggerated, of Fry’s lecture given by the editor Richard Storrs Willis. See “Mr. Fry’s Lectures,” *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 5 (Feb. 19, 1853): 115.

Young America shared these feelings. In an article on the value of international copyright for establishing an American national literature, one member of the group complained,

No republic, or confederation, was ever so open to [foreign] influence as the United States, whose citizens almost universally speak and read the language of the parent state, whose literature pervades the civilized world, and to whose opinions and example they have, by long habit, derived from former colonial dependence, been accustomed to bow with great deference, if not blind subserviency.²⁸

Responding to the published account of Fry's lecture, the Boston critic John Sullivan Dwight agreed with him but, on account of his cosmopolitan ideology, believed the situation that Fry and his Young American compatriot were complaining about was positive, not negative.²⁹ In Fry's mind, however, it was critics such as Dwight and Richard Storrs Willis (1819–1900), editor of *The Musical World*, who perpetuated American dependence on foreign music. According to Fry, they consistently fawned over the works of Mendelssohn, Beethoven, and Handel, the great "masters" of Europe, and he resoundingly denounced their efforts: "By original criticism I do not mean repetitions of the words or ideas of Europeans on European compositions—a very easy performance, like glib magazine talk about [painters] Raphael, Claude Lorraine [*sic*], or Vernet—but that arising from the ability of the critic to take an original score and read it and understand it."³⁰ Instead, he argued, critics ought to assess the value of each composition using a thorough inspection and analysis of the score. Only then could audiences learn from them.

²⁸ "National Literature, and the International Copy-Right Treaty," *The United States Magazine, and Democratic Review* 33, no. 8 (1853): 99.

²⁹ Dwight, "Mr. Fry's 'American Ideas' about Music," *Dwight's Journal of Music* 2, no. 23 (1853): 180–82.

³⁰ "Communication from Mr. Fry," *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 5 (Mar. 26, 1853): 196.

In his writings and lectures, Fry expressed a belief that the press on both sides of the Atlantic played an enormous role in what he called America's servile dependence on European culture. The British and the French wrote negative commentary about American products (whether practical or artistic) despite arguing in favor of American-style democracy, perhaps the nation's greatest export. In Fry's opinion, the American press—especially the likes of Willis and Dwight—was doubly evil, because not only did it support European products and ideas at home, it also denigrated American artists. As an American artist and a critic with contrarian exceptionalist ideas, Fry was therefore fighting an uphill battle on two fronts. Curiously, musical style played virtually no role in Fry's early discussions of American artistic independence, probably because he perceived greater, more fundamental threats. When Jullien arrived in New York in 1853, however, Fry was given the opportunity to offer audiences music that manifested his ideas, and style could come to the forefront of the debate. After a well-attended Christmas Eve performance of Fry's *Santa Claus: Christmas Symphony*, Richard Storrs Willis and John Sullivan Dwight, the same critics who rankled Fry after his lectures, incited him to defend his views once again. This time, however, he was able to demonstrate how music specifically fit into his plan for American artistic independence: through “sound originality.”

“Sound Originality” in Music

During his lectures, Fry demonstrated that he was a capable composer and audiences were given an opportunity to assess how well his music illustrated his ideas. Although the lectures generated packed crowds and received support in several literary

journals, Fry's adversarial critics rarely seemed to hear anything virtuous in his music. After hearing a symphony called *A Day in the Country* at Fry's first lecture in 1852, a reviewer for the *New-York Tribune* would have preferred an excerpt from Beethoven's Sixth Symphony as an illustration of a "pastoral" scene.³¹ This quibble, however, was nothing compared to the critical responses to Fry's *Santa Claus: Christmas Symphony* just over a year later. Critics railed against the work, calling it too unconventional and, because of its lack of a defined four-movement structure, barely a symphony at all. Yet unconventionality is precisely what Fry wanted to achieve; American artistic independence depended on it. While still in Philadelphia, Fry wrote, "It is the production of such works [as Meignen's symphony] that must give to the society that which every liberal institution in art and science should comprehend, namely, sound originality; without which its reputation or prosperity must be accidental."³² If anything, *Santa Claus* was original, and in the journalistic firestorm that followed its premiere, Fry attempted to demonstrate how it musically manifested a truly American spirit.

An excited crowd braved the blustery weather on Christmas Eve in 1853 to hear Jullien's virtuoso orchestra, New York's latest musical sensation. If they read the advertisement in the *New York Times*, listeners knew they were in for a "Grand Irish Night" and a program appropriately filled with the music of William Vincent Wallace, Michael Balfe, and Thomas Moore—as well as Jullien's own "Hibernian Quadrille." The second half, as was Jullien's custom, included solos and duets performed by the leading instrumentalists of the orchestra. Curiously for an "Irish Night," but not so strange for Christmas Eve, Jullien also programmed Fry's *Santa Claus*. The work, which lasted for

³¹ *New York Daily Tribune*, December 1, 1852.

³² *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, April 17, 1845.

nearly thirty minutes, was so popular that Jullien programmed it at least five more times before leaving for Boston in early January. During that span, *Santa Claus* appeared on programs alongside Weber's overtures to *Der Freischütz* and *Euryanthe*, the first movement of Spohr's Fourth Symphony, "Die Weihe der Töne," Haydn's "Surprise" Symphony, and Beethoven's august Fifth Symphony. Audiences had ample opportunity to hear Fry's music next to some of the most esteemed orchestral works of that time, and they enjoyed it equally as much, if not more.

The symphony itself lasts anywhere from twenty to thirty minutes and, reminiscent of Berlioz's tone painting, illustrates a series of events relating to the Christmas story. It opens with trumpets in heaven announcing Jesus' impending birth and then quickly pans to a Christmas dance that celebrates the joyous homecoming of family members. A snowstorm interrupts the dance, but the festivities continue after the storm subsides. At the conclusion of the dance, the family performs its nightly Christmas Eve rituals, including a recitation of the Lord's Prayer, and everyone falls asleep. Overnight, another snowstorm hits and at the stroke of midnight takes the life of a homeless vagrant who symbolizes human mortality. The sleigh bells of Santa Claus emerge after the storm quiets, and he proceeds to pass out toys to children as they sleep. The work ends with a rousing rendition of the hymn "Adeste fideles" ("O Come, All ye Faithful"), which celebrates the birth of Jesus. **Table 2.1** below shows how the synopsis maps onto the movements of the piece.

The conflict surrounding *Santa Claus* began when music critic Charles Burkhardt panned it in *The Albion*, a New York-based literary and political magazine. "It is a capital musical Christmas piece," he began, but "we presume that the composer claims for it no

Table 2.1. Structure and Synopsis of *Santa Claus: Christmas Symphony*

Movement/Title	Synopsis Description
I. Andante maestoso	Heaven; choirs of angels
IIa. Allegro non troppo	Christmas dance
IIb. Moderato assai e grazioso	Joy of homecoming after absence
IIc. Allegro—Allegro non troppo	Snowstorm; reprise of the dance
III. Andante sostenuto	Domestic evening rituals
IV. Largo grave	Snowstorm; death of vagrant
V. Allegro non tanto	Arrival of Santa Claus
VI. Finale: Allegro	<i>Adeste fideles</i> : “Choral” Finale

higher rank than that of a *pièce d'occasion*, and as such it is exceedingly clever, rising occasionally above the standard of a mere time-serving production.”³³ Burkhardt went on criticize the work’s length, lack of originality, and difficulty. The review was not entirely negative, however: “It is a production which demands our attention for more reasons than one. It is American; it is home-made, and therefore entitled to a fair hearing and to lenient judgment.” Fry would have approved of those statements. Like Burkhardt, Richard Storrs Willis believed *Santa Claus* was a mere seasonal piece but was not nearly as optimistic about its potential value. His dismissive notice of the work only added fuel to the fire:

Mr. Fry’s “Santa Claus” we consider a good Christmas piece: but hardly a composition to be gravely criticised like an earnest work of Art. It is a kind of *extravaganza* which moves the audience to laughter, entertaining them seasonably with imitated snow-storms, trotting horses, sleigh-bells, cracking whips, etc. Moreover, in the production of these things there is no little ingenuity displayed. The discordant winds are most discordantly well given; and among the graver features of the piece, our Lord’s Prayer (as given in musical recitative), is marked and impressive.³⁴

Willis’s backhanded compliments, like Burkhardt’s, were clearly not meant to generate further interest in the work or any repeat performances.

³³ “Music,” *The Albion, A Journal of News, Politics, and Literature* 12, no. 52 (1853): 632.

³⁴ This quote constitutes the entire review. “Musical News from Everywhere,” *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 8 (Jan. 7, 1854): 6.

Although the reviews were dismissive, a brief discussion of musical style did find its way into Burkhardt’s piece, which foreshadowed the more rancorous debate that would follow. He casually noted that “[the symphony’s] style and formation are not of the high school of art; they are of a modern Italian or French pattern, devoid of the severe but effective simplicity of Mozart and Beethoven.” By explicitly associating Beethoven and Mozart—and their symphonies—with high art, he implicitly devalued a symphony deriving certain stylistic features from Italian and French music. Burkhardt’s criticism notwithstanding, Fry could write effective melodies, and he fully intended a symphonic style derived from Italian *bel canto* opera to be considered sublime “high” art. For example, he used the following cornet melody (**Example 2.1**) to represent a discourse made by an archangel on the “impending advent of the Saviour,” something he certainly would have considered a lofty subject.³⁵ The melody is martial but Italianate; at the end of measure 40, he directs the orchestra to play “colla parte,” as if they were accompanying an aria. In a strangely written third-person response to Burkhardt, Fry

Example 2.1. W.H. Fry, *Santa Claus: Christmas Symphony, I*, mm. 25–41



³⁵ This description is found in the synopsis of *Santa Claus* distributed at performances. In addition to the contemporary reprint already noted, the synopsis may be found in William Treat Upton, *William Henry Fry: American Journalist and Composer-Critic* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1954), 335–38.

defended this gesture: “As to spirit, [the composer] designed it, in the introductory movement, to represent the declamatory style in which he conceives oratorios ought to be written.”³⁶

Two weeks later, after long rumination, Fry fired back a forty-page handwritten response that took up eleven column-inches of printed text spread across four tabloid news sheets of Willis’s journal. This uncommonly comprehensive and detailed document outlined nearly all facets of Fry’s musical and artistic philosophy.³⁷ Beginning with musical structure, he stated his case: “I believe that *Santa Claus* is the longest instrumental composition ever written on a single subject, with unbroken continuity;...and such a work merits extended criticism in a musical journal.” Further laying the groundwork for his philosophy of musical structure, Fry immediately and forcefully rebutted potential counterarguments against his claim that *Santa Claus* was, until that time, the longest instrumental work of its kind (it was thirty minutes):

[A]s we all know that a few of the classical symphonies, composed according to the classical four-movement rule, require over three quarters of an hour to perform; but I intend in this communication,...to demonstrate that there is no more unity in the four distinct movements of the classical symphony, than in four different novels or different plays by the same author,—that their so-called unity is an illogical absurdity of the founder of the school, and only accepted and admired by those...who take on trust in music as in religion, in government, and in political economy all things which bear the sanction of ages.

Not only was *Santa Claus*, according to Fry, the longest unified symphony ever composed, most other symphonies known to Americans were not unified at all—bold claims indeed. But Fry was on to something that had probably not occurred to Willis or Burkhardt: the structure of *Santa Claus* was indeed unique for its time, either in Europe

³⁶ *New York Daily Tribune*, January 2, 1854. Fry’s favorite “oratorio” was Rossini’s *Stabat Mater*.

³⁷ “A Letter from Mr. Fry,” *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 8 (Jan. 21, 1854): 29–31, 34.

or the United States. No compaction of the symphony's six movements would have resulted in a more conventional shape.

Harkening the controversies surrounding the symphony in Europe, Fry argued that true unity could be found only in the interplay of music and drama. He first attacked Beethoven's "Eroica" as a failed example of musical unity: "The ear does not really require anything more after its first movement [in sonata form] if the unities were observed, but as they are not, a dead march follows—a long movement—having no connection whatever with the preceding piece; and instrumentated [*sic*], by the way, as no dead march ought to be."³⁸ With a characteristic pot shot at the British, he then claimed that *Santa Claus*, by contrast, was a fully unified work of art:

But the unities of *Santa Claus*—and those of my other symphonies—are based on dramatic meanings: there is a plot, and they tell their own stories, according to the programme, and each movement is closely connected with its fellow in sequence; and that is what I call unity; and any authority to the contrary I despise as I do the claims of the House of Hanover to the United States, or any other rubbish of the last century that cannot stand the test of time.

Music and drama must serve one another; as the narrative progresses, the music must reflect these changes, either smoothly or with purposeful disjointedness. Fry then illustrated an example of this musical-dramatic unity by showing the congruence of the work's narrative with the chord relationships within the first movement, but the whole symphony actually exhibits these congruent relationships, as **Table 2.2** below shows. Each movement has a logical musical transition into the next, except movement three, which is rudely interrupted by the dissonant snowstorm in a distantly related key. Each

³⁸ He concluded, "The classical unities, in a word, exist in the movements separately, but the four movements are not united as a whole."

musical gesture of *Santa Claus*, Fry maintained, represented some moment of the narrative action, and thus the work was truly unified.

Table 2.2. Key Relationships in *Santa Claus*

Movement/Title	Synopsis Description	Key	Transition
I. Andante maestoso	Heaven	C	C ⁷ –Cadenza
IIa. Allegro non troppo	Christmas dance	F	Sustained F
IIb. Moderato assai e grazioso	Joy of homecoming	D ^b	D ^b –Ger ⁺⁶ –F ^{6/4} –C
IIc. Allegro	Snowstorm; dance reprise	F	Timpani on C
III. Andante sostenuto	Domestic evening rituals	F	Saxophone on E ^b
IV. Largo grave	Snowstorm; death of vagrant	C [#] min	Tremolo E
V. Allegro non tanto	Arrival of Santa Claus	E	Timpani on C
VI. Finale: Allegro	<i>Adeste fideles</i> : “Choral” Finale	E	————

Fry’s system proves that his symphony was indeed the longest unified instrumental composition written on a single subject, but only because it is the only symphony that exhibits all of his criteria for dramatic unity, perhaps a testament to the work’s originality. Beethoven’s “Eroica,” Fry’s punching bag, has a narrative program and occasionally contains the intra-movement unity of sonata form, but it lacks the musical features that would give it “dramatic” unity. Had he used Beethoven’s Fifth or Haydn’s cyclically integrated symphonies instead, they too lacked the other key component in his definition true unity: explicit narrative programs.³⁹ Schumann’s symphonies also would have made good contemporary examples of unified music, but neither he nor New York audiences would have been very familiar with them yet; the first New York performance of Schumann’s First Symphony was in April of 1853, just

³⁹ James Webster, *Haydn’s “Farewell” Symphony and the Idea of Classical Style: Through-Composition and Cyclic Integration in His Instrumental Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

months before *Santa Claus*.⁴⁰ They also had no explicit narratives. Fry strategically avoided any mention of Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* or Spohr's Fourth or Seventh, all of which would have made good comparison pieces, but we can be certain that Fry would have—fairly or unfairly—found faults in each.

Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, the "Pastoral," the only remaining choice for a symphony that most closely approached Fry's conception of unity happened to be the symphony he chose to denigrate most harshly in his letter:

If Haydn, in *The Seasons*, Beethoven in *The Pastoral*, and Rossini, in *William Tell*, had not made dismal botches in attempting to describe a storm I would not have picked out one for delineation—as there is no use of hitting the bull's eye twice. But especially as I have heard Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* praised to the skies, while I consider it as descriptive or suggestive music, with certain exceptions, very bad (mind I don't speak of it as a composition apart, but as a *Pastoral* symphony); I determined to write some music of nature as it ought to be written.

The third, fourth, and fifth movements of the "Pastoral" are conjoined and their key relationships are logical, but the music (according to Fry) simply does not depict very well what it is supposed to depict. Although he did not articulate what specifically was ineffective about the symphony's depiction of a storm, it seems likely that it was not realistic enough, especially given his own predilection for realism, one hallmark of his symphonic style. As we shall see below, Fry believed that pushing the outer limits of instrumental technique in order to create a musical realism was one of the most important components of his vision for American music; Haydn, Beethoven, and Rossini must not have pushed hard enough.

⁴⁰ Interestingly enough, Burkhardt also criticized it for its incoherence and lack of unity. See Vera Brodsky Lawrence, *Strong on Music: The New York Music Scene in the Days of George Templeton Strong, 1836–1875* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 2:420.

Fry's Symphonies: Constructing a New America

Fry's dubious but rhetorically effective defense of *Santa Claus* presented a specific snapshot of how composers ought to approach the issue of "sound originality," the second factor—along with "the genius of our own hemisphere"—in his equation for creating a distinctly American music. Nevertheless, it did not fully explain why Fry chose to write symphonies specifically to accomplish this task, especially when prior to 1852 he had focused his attention primarily on opera. Like several of his German contemporaries on both sides of the stylistic debates about the genre, Fry believed that the symphony was more than a work from a nation; it could represent the nation itself. In the same review of Meignen's *Symphonie militaire* in which he outlined his formula for musical exceptionalism, he plainly stated:

Every work like that of the symphony in question, being produced here by an American citizen, is a *national work*, and according to its merit, should it be approved, and the author and artist substantially rewarded. If we wish our community to be anything beyond a beggarly, cent-per-cent, money-grubbing concern, we must spiritualize it by a worship of the sublime and the beautiful, as these are evolved by a conscientious study of the mysteries of art.⁴¹

Not simply Meignen's music, but specifically his symphony could bring real change to American society; given a "conscientious study" of its mysteries, it could distance America from the greed and rapacity of Britain and France (a theme he developed later in his overseas news correspondence). If Fry, therefore, wanted the public to consider Meignen's relatively unassuming but notably original symphony a national work, then *Santa Claus*, supposedly the longest instrumental work written on a single subject, must have been the musical equivalent to Boston's towering Bunker Hill Monument. Yet Fry left little commentary that concretely explained how he intended works such as *Santa*

⁴¹ *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, April 21, 1845. Emphasis added.

Claus to serve as great embodiments of a national character. A close examination of his writings and of several of his symphonies nevertheless reveals that these works can be understood as Fry's attempt to create a new American music.

As we saw in the introduction to this study, Fry admired the genre of the symphony because of its size, grandeur, and nature as music "untrammelled" by text. In his first Metropolitan Hall lecture in 1852, Fry further developed the idea that music possesses the power to stir the imagination. "Music is the language of the Universe," he began, "not necessarily allied to fabricated words or perishable idioms, it is even a living tongue, requiring neither dictionary nor interpreter to fetch back its departed allusions."⁴² Like countless others before him, he believed that music as such originated in the sounds of nature; nature itself, he claimed, has its own music. Consequently,

The Music of Nature is a large theme for fact or imagination...In the contemplation of so spiritual a subject, the artist feels the worth of his calling. He perceives that he is no intruder, no trifler, no mere minister to amazement in the profane language of the day, but a priest or prophet, like those who wielded the lyric of old. It is precisely the assertion of this character in Art that must open its doors to the generous. The gifted and the conscientious must make them sensible that their time is to be honorably directed, and as available to society as more tangible things.

The composer's job, therefore, is to translate the music of nature into a more readily assimilable product that should be as available to society as any material good. Yet, he continued, this poses a unique problem for musicians, because "of all the arts, Music is the most soul-like....Painting, Sculpture, Poetry, any of these by itself, can deceive, betray and debauch, but Music alone is essentially divine. Its language is of Eternity. It seems to come from some better world, to flit across the senses and be rendered back to its fathomless home." Drawing from the standard language of philosophical idealism, Fry

⁴² Reprinted in *New York Daily Tribune*, December 1, 1852.

was contending that music, and specifically instrumental music, occupies a world of its own. “[I]t may be twisted into the comic or grotesque,” he concluded, “but with the dignity of pure sound there always is a back-ground of the Infinite, a world of the impenetrable and unrevealed, reposing in the awful depths of untold being.” If, however, Fry believed in the awe-inspiring force of “pure sound” and that music always occupied a space in the Infinite, then he seemed to betray his own beliefs in his symphonies. Although none of his symphonies included a musical text, the literary quality of his narrative synopses created a multifaceted mixed artistic medium.

Fry’s idealism, unlike the European critics and composers from the “ethos” camp, was tied to pictorial representation in music. He argued that specific descriptive gestures in music actually point beyond themselves to an ideal representation of that object or feeling, a subtle but important difference from those idealists who believed music should be abstract, thus allowing the mind to have free play while listening. Cautioning against too much musical specificity, however, Fry explained in his first *Santa Claus* letter to Willis, “Now it is a rule of Art—*all* Art—that its value and interest depend on its *near but not precise* resemblance to Nature. If it imitate Nature too faithfully, it loses interest.”⁴³ He used a concrete example of this idea in an 1863 review of *Victory: Peace, Struggle, and Triumph*, a symphonic poem by Robert Goldbeck (1839–1908). Distinguishing between mere painterly imitation of scenes and representation of something greater, he noted,

The Peace—of a nation—includes all peaceful pursuits; omnibuses driving up and down Broadway; fire engines on duty; steamboats going safely or being blown up; [etc.]. But musically, only the *ideal* of Peace—tranquility,

⁴³ “A Letter from Mr. Fry,” 34. Emphasis added.

fluent softness—can be represented: otherwise peace becomes hurry, bustle, noise, and contestation in sound.⁴⁴

He later castigated Goldbeck for using counterpoint to depict peace, an entirely inappropriate choice. Counterpoint, by its very nature, represents contention. For Fry, then, accuracy of depiction was critical, but rigid specificity should be avoided; only a suggestion was necessary.

In his own symphonies, Fry used specific imagery to convey deeper meanings, and his primary goal was always accuracy. During the *Santa Claus* controversy with Willis, he criticized Haydn, Beethoven, and Rossini for being unable to compose an accurate storm. New violin techniques, however, could remedy that problem: “The winds of winter may be imitated since Paganini has given us a new school of violin playing.”⁴⁵ In the fourth movement of *Santa Claus*, Fry used challenging music, muted and extremely long chromatic scales with intermittent *glissandi*, to depict a snowstorm (**Example 2.2**). He intended the snowstorm to serve two functions: first to bring the audience into the present moment—the blustery snowfall in the winter of 1853—and secondly, according to the synopsis and to his letter to Willis, to remind the audience that “God speaks of the passing world in [winter storms]: they are the audible epitaph of mortality—cold, deathlike.”⁴⁶ In order to reinforce this message, Fry introduced a series of double bass solos, played by the great Giovanni Bottesini (1821–1889), interspersed between the wintry weather passages. As the program tells us, these solos were intended

⁴⁴ *New York Daily Tribune*, March 23, 1863. Goldbeck was a German pianist, composer, and teacher who settled in America in 1861. See A. Ehrlich [Albert Payne] *Celebrated Pianists of the Past and Present* (Philadelphia: Theodore Presser, 1894), 380–81.

⁴⁵ “A Letter from Mr. Fry,” 34.

⁴⁶ “A Letter from Mr. Fry,” 34.

Example 2.2. W.H. Fry, *Santa Claus*, IV, mm. 3–12

The musical score for Example 2.2, W.H. Fry, *Santa Claus*, IV, mm. 3–12, is presented in three systems. The first system (mm. 3–4) features Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. Violin I and II are marked 'con sord.' and 'decresc.', while Viola is marked 'con sord.' and 'decresc.'. The second system (mm. 5–6) features Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. Violin I and II are marked 'ff' and 'decresc.', while Viola is marked 'ff' and 'decresc.'. The third system (mm. 7–12) features Violin I, Violin II, and Viola. Violin I and II are marked 'ff' and 'decresc.', while Viola is marked 'ff' and 'decresc.'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

to depict “the wail and woe of [a] Perishing Traveler,” who dies at the stroke of midnight (Example 2.3). These concrete but not overly specific images pointed to a deeper reality—human mortality—hidden beneath their musical surfaces. By combining

accurate musical gestures with implied meanings, Fry urged listeners to think beyond the concrete narrative itself.

Example 2.3. W.H. Fry, *Santa Claus*, IV, mm. 70–96

The musical score is for a Double Bass Solo in 2/4 time, key of F# major (three sharps). It is marked 'Largo Grave'. The score consists of three systems of music. The first system (mm. 70-76) is marked 'molto espressivo'. The second system (mm. 77-88) begins with a six-measure rest (marked '6') and includes dynamic markings 'p' and 'sf'. The third system (mm. 89-96) includes a 'rit.' marking and dynamic markings 'sf' and 'marcato assai'.

Using a similar approach to music, imagery, and meaning, Fry also carefully constructed an ideal portrait of the American nation in his symphonies. With such a profound and pronounced interest in American politics and culture, it would have been a surprise if he had not at least attempted to do so. The most blatant and obvious example is his 1854 symphony, *Niagara*, which he wrote for an orchestra of 1,500 performers led by Jullien at the Grand Musical Congress held at New York’s Crystal Palace.⁴⁷ In the 1850s, Niagara Falls had long been a sublime symbol of expansiveness and the raw power of nature, as well as an American icon.⁴⁸ The famous orator Daniel Webster, for example, was overcome with emotion while visiting the falls in 1825:

There, the grand spectacle has stood, for centuries, from the creation even, as far as we know, without change. From the beginning, it has shaken, as it now does, the earth and the air; and its unvarying thunder existed before

⁴⁷ Inexplicably, however, the work was never performed at the Congress.

⁴⁸ The opening of the Erie Canal led to a surge in visitors to Niagara Falls. This increased access lent the falls an aura of democracy in addition to the powerful image of power that it already possessed. See Angela Miller, *Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825–1875* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press), 217.

there were human ears to hear it. Reflections like these, on the duration and permanency of this grand object, naturally arise, and contribute much to the deep feeling which the whole scene produces. We cannot help being struck with a sense of the insignificance of man and all his works, compared with what is before us.⁴⁹

Fry expressed a similar sentiment in one of his lectures: “And there is water-music of Niagara, from a high pitch through the awful depths of multitudinous octaves, where it beats time on the rocks; and, amid the foamy spray of its variations, is clearly heard a steady Theme, a Hymn to the Ever-Created—the Ever-Existent—the Ineffable Being—the Mysterious Author of all.”⁵⁰ The symphony begins with ten kettledrums playing *pianissimo* tremolos. Four measures later, the cellos, basses, trombones, ophicleides, and bassoons enter in their low registers. Suddenly the rest of the strings emerge, also playing tremolos, and the ensuing crescendo becomes immense as the rest of the orchestra joins the others on a triumphant C major chord. Then, in a strange chord progression that ignores the principles of normal voice leading, the C major chord moves to D-flat major, to E major, and finally to G major in a stunning *fortississimo* (**Example 2.4**). The rocking sonic effect of over one thousand performers sounding a resonant G major chord after such a mysterious opening would not have been lost on American audiences had they heard it. Like visitors to Niagara Falls, they would have been transfixed by the wash of sound created by an ensemble unlike anything they had ever previously experienced.

Fry was not always so brash. In *Santa Claus*, he used another American icon, Santa Claus, as a symbol of the American nation. After the final tolling of the bells at midnight after the snowstorm, the weather clears as the violins play tremolos in their

⁴⁹ Daniel Webster to Mrs. George W. Blake, 15 July 1825, in *The Private Correspondence of Daniel Webster*, ed. Fletcher Webster (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1875), 1:390.

⁵⁰ *New York Daily Tribune*, December 1, 1852.

Example 2.4. W.H. Fry, *Niagara Symphony*, mm. 1–20 (reduction)

highest registers. Out of this ethereal stillness, the bassoon, accompanied by sleigh bells, begins to play Santa’s jaunty theme:⁵¹

Example 2.5. W.H. Fry, *Santa Claus*, V, mm. 1–10

Santa, of course, was not an American invention, but the mythology surrounding him grew to epic proportions in nineteenth-century America. With the anonymous publication of “A Visit from St. Nicholas” (1823), which famously begins, “’Twas the night before Christmas,” a legend was born.⁵² By 1849, Santa Claus had permeated American

⁵¹ Commenting on the significance of the bassoon, Fry noted, “I consider the choice of that instrument and not of any other, equal in musical value to the best fugue ever written.” See “A Letter from Mr. Fry,” 34.

⁵² The poem was reprinted countless times in the nineteenth century. See Phyllis Siefker, *Santa Claus, Last of the Wild Men: The Origins and Evolution of Saint Nicholas, Spanning 50,000 Years* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1997).

Christmas culture so thoroughly that Christian authors began to decry the practice of teaching children about Santa Claus and claimed it was morally decadent to do so.⁵³

Commenting on his own experiences as a child, Fry noted, “These [winter] winds, which are to me the sublimest [*sic*] music in the world, I have noted from childhood, as I lay awake in the dark chamber wondering if Santa Claus had come down the chimney or not.”⁵⁴ If we follow Fry’s logic, then the concrete depiction of Santa Claus, though he was an imaginary character, must have pointed to a deeper reality, an ideal. In Santa’s case, the only possible choice was that the music painted an ideal portrait of the very audiences hearing the music—the American people, the carriers and keepers of the Santa myth. As a semiotic reference, the image of Santa could not be extricated from American society, or viewed outside of it, because it was enmeshed within that very society at the forefront of its Christmas consciousness; Santa was a reflexive image. By extension, therefore, Fry’s Santa also pointed to all of the American virtues Fry extolled in his letters, the most important of which was democracy. Santa’s generosity transcended the artificial barriers of race, class, and education, and so he became an icon of democracy through Fry’s music.

Beyond his use of narrative imagery, Fry also created reflexive portraits of America in his symphonies by mimicking the sounds of Italian *bel canto* opera. A simple example of this style may be found near the opening of Fry’s *The Dying Soldier: Tragic Symphony*, written around 1863 (**Example 2.6**).

⁵³ See, for example, “St. Nicholas, alias Santa Claus, alias Old Nick,” *The Independent; Devoted to the Consideration of Politics, Social and Economic Tendencies, History, Literature, and the Arts* 1, no. 55 (1849): 218.

⁵⁴ “A Letter from Mr. Fry,” 34.

Example 2.6. W.H. Fry, *The Dying Soldier: Tragic Symphony*, mm. 8–16



By the mid-1850s, Italian opera had penetrated into virtually every corner of American culture. As early as the 1820s, the stock gestures of *bel canto*—turns, trills, and a slowly arching melodic rise and fall—had become commonplace in certain genres of parlor song.⁵⁵ Less than a decade later, minstrel troupes, civic and military bands, as well as more “classically”-oriented ensembles regularly programmed music in the Italian *bel canto* style, especially excerpts arranged from operas by Vincenzo Bellini.⁵⁶ Italian opera was so popular in America that several performing troupes also staged lengthy parodies such as *The Room Scrambler* (1839), a burlesque of Bellini’s *La Sonnambula*.⁵⁷ The style appealed to everyone, and it was, simply put, “democratic” music. Fry himself often extolled the greatness of Italian opera and early in his career believed that staging an Italian-style “grand” opera in English would be the definitive means through which the United States could sever its musical ties from Britain, where English-language “operas” contained spoken dialogue instead of recitative. That opera, of course, would turn out to

⁵⁵ Jon Finson, *The Voices that are Gone: Themes in Nineteenth-Century American Popular Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 19.

⁵⁶ The famous Christy’s Minstrels frequently performed the “Phantom Chorus” from Bellini’s *La Sonnambula*. See Crawford, *America’s Musical Life*, 212.

⁵⁷ For more on the pervasiveness of Italian opera, see Paul Charosh, “‘Popular’ and ‘Classical’ in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” *American Music* 10, no. 2 (1992): 117–135; Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 83–100; and Katherine Preston, *Opera on the Road: Traveling Opera Troupes in the United States, 1825–60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

be Fry's own *Leonora*, which premiered in Philadelphia in 1845.⁵⁸ Already a symbol of American nationalism in Fry's attitudes toward music, Italian opera opened other similar avenues of meaning in his symphonies. As in the opening trumpet solo of *Santa Claus* and in the soprano saxophone solo from *The Dying Soldier*, Fry tended to employ Italianate styles at a plot's most serious moments. By introducing the *bel canto* style at these moments, he created associations between the grave images represented in the narrative and the style's musical "American-ness," easily identifiable to Fry's audiences. Two examples will serve to illustrate this phenomenon.

First, in *Santa Claus*, Fry set the standard English translation of the *Pater noster*, or "The Lord's Prayer," using an instrumental recitative (**Example 2.7**). In his seventh lecture on music, given in January of 1853, Fry reminded the audience of his bold claim, made around the time of *Leonora*'s premiere, about Italian-style opera written in English: "I conceive that *music*, originating with English words, may acquire some of the features, which cultivated taste most admires in that of the Italian School."⁵⁹ Beginning with the words of "The Lord's Prayer," a classic, somber, and supplicatory English text, the only logical musical choice for Fry, using his theories, would have been *recitativo accompagnato*—or in this case, an instrumental quasi-recitative. The associations this passage contains—individual and collective piety, prayer before bedtime on Christmas Eve, and the nationalist significance of English-language recitative—congeal in a symbolic matrix that once again points to Fry's "ideal" of America itself: an independent

⁵⁸ The preface to the work's piano-vocal score explains his reasoning about how the work declares artistic independence from Great Britain. See William Henry Fry and Joseph Reese Fry, *Leonora: A Lyrical Drama in Three Acts* (Philadelphia: E. Ferrett, 1846). This is reprinted in Upton, *William Henry Fry*, 327–31.

⁵⁹ Reprinted in *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 5 (Jan. 29, 1853): 69.

Example 2.7. W.H. Fry, *Santa Claus, III*, mm. 13–26

Un poco meno lento (quasi recit.)

Violins I & II

Viola

con sord. *pp*

16

Vln.

Vla.

19

Vln.

Vla.

23

Vln.

Vla.

nation devoted to the common good of its citizens.

In Fry's earliest symphony, *The Breaking Heart* (1852), the primary melody and its harmonization, with luscious appoggiaturas and secondary dominants, also exude the *bel canto* style (**Example 2.8**). Here, a symbolic matrix forms out of quite a different set of nationalist associations. The narrative of the symphony takes place in a cathedral,

where a “delicately reared young lady...[dies] of love and melancholy.”⁶⁰ Though not at

Example 2.8. W.H. Fry, *The Breaking Heart*, mm. 9–16 (reduction)

The musical score is a reduction for Violin I and Strings. It is in 12/8 time, key of B-flat major, and marked "Adagio Sostenuto".

Measures 9-12: Violin I plays a melodic line starting on G4, marked *p cantando*. The Strings provide a sustained harmonic accompaniment marked *p*. A crescendo hairpin is shown over the Violin I part.

Measures 12-15: Violin I continues the melodic line, marked *cresc.* with a crescendo hairpin. The Strings continue with a sustained harmonic accompaniment.

Measures 15-16: Violin I plays a more active melodic line, marked *f*. The Strings play a rhythmic accompaniment marked *f*.

all specifically American, Gothic cathedrals perpetually fascinated Fry, a feeling he reported numerous times in the minutely detailed descriptions of the European cathedrals he visited while corresponding with American newspapers. “When child-like faith, united to adult impulses and passions overspread the world,” he gushed, “then came forth the

⁶⁰ “A Letter from Mr. Fry,” 31.

miracle of beauty, Gothic architecture.”⁶¹ By combining the democratic music of Italian opera, the sublime beauty of an image of a Gothic cathedral, and the macabre scene of a young woman dying of heartbreak, Fry once again created an ideal portrait in which Americans might see themselves. After forcefully and repeatedly urging Americans to “worship” the sublime and the beautiful in order to erase greed and social awkwardness from American society, Fry couched his picture of this ideal in music that was quintessentially, though not intuitively, American.

A Symphonic Declaration of Independence

Fry’s originality and attempts to construct an American identity cannot be fully appreciated without further reflection on the contemporaneous development of aesthetics and the symphony in Germany. Fry was not simply pushing the boundaries of the genre; he was fulfilling the promise of progressive aesthetics that Richard Wagner, Franz Liszt, and others failed to fulfill with their symphonic writing. In doing so, he declared independence from the European symphonic tradition. In Germany during the late 1840s, Richard Wagner appropriated the critical and political language surrounding the genre of the symphony to suit his own operatic aims. In his series of essays written between 1849 and 1851, for example, he doggedly expressed his belief that music could bring about concrete political change by inciting revolutionary activity, which was precisely his intent.⁶² He coined the term “absolute music” in order to derogate instrumental music, which by its very nature, he argued, is detached from the human elements of speech and

⁶¹ Several excerpts of these descriptions, though undocumented, may be found in Upton, *William Henry Fry*, 76–77.

⁶² Wagner’s participation in the Dresden insurrection of 1848 is well known, and as editor of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik*, Franz Brendel—one of Wagner’s closest allies—continued to promulgate this belief.

gesture, and hence from a community's political life. For Wagner, absolute meant impotent. In his formulation of musical history, the chorus in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony broke the shackles of impotent instrumental music and paved the way for an even greater synthesis of all the arts. Wagner called this synthesis the music drama [*Gesamtkunstwerk*], which would serve as the locus for inciting nationalist sentiment and revolutionary activity.⁶³

By associating the music drama with revolution and positive musical progress, Wagner suggested that a vigorous defense of instrumental music—and the symphonic genre in particular—would have appeared reactionary or as a step backward from Beethoven, a position he reiterated in his letter “On Franz Liszt's Symphonic Poems.”⁶⁴ This is exactly how Wagner perceived the ethos camp of symphonists described in the previous chapter. In an 1855 letter to Hans von Bülow, for example, Wagner called Schumann's symphonies “another type of jargon that has the appearance of something profound but in my opinion is the same sort of contentless nonsense as Hegel's philosophical hokum.”⁶⁵ He lambasted Mendelssohn's choral symphonies as the products of “cloying peddlers [*süßlichen Schacher*]” and all but blamed Mendelssohn entirely for

⁶³ See Bonds, *Music as Thought*, 105–6. For Wagner's use of the term “absolute music,” see Sanna Pederson, “Defining the Term ‘Absolute Music’ Historically,” *Music & Letters* 90, no. 2 (2009): 243–44.

⁶⁴ See William Ashton Ellis, ed., *Richard Wagner's Prose Works* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, and Co., 1907), 3:235–54.

⁶⁵ Wagner to Hans von Bülow, 3 March 1855, in *Sämtliche Briefe*, ed. Hans-Joachim Bauer and Johannes Forner (Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1988), 7:39.

“the evanescence and arbitrariness of our musical style.”⁶⁶ The symphony would move forward only if it could be united with speech and gesture in the music drama.⁶⁷

With a history of musical progress that moved directly from Beethoven’s Ninth to his own music dramas, Wagner sidestepped an important set of potential political and musical allies in the early 1850s: the group of composers who pioneered the programmatic symphony after Beethoven.⁶⁸ Despite admiring Berlioz’s originality, Wagner insulted his style by calling it empty technical mastery. Berlioz’s technique also carried political connotations for Wagner: “If we want to acknowledge the inventors of our present-day industrial mechanics as benefactors of the modern human political situation [*moderne Staatsmenschheit*], then we must celebrate Berlioz as the true Savior of our absolute music world.”⁶⁹ Spohr fared better than Berlioz as Wagner’s personal acquaintance, but Wagner considered his music fogeyish. The older Kapellmeister had, by 1843, “brusquely and coldly separated himself from the world of modern music.”⁷⁰ Incidentally, neither Berlioz nor Spohr wrote experimental symphonies after 1841. Although Félicien David was an ardent Saint-Simonian socialist and progressive, his two symphonies, *Le Désert* and *Christophe Colomb*, did not convey an obviously

⁶⁶ Richard Wagner, *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, in *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1912), 3:98; and Wagner, *Das Judentum in der Musik*, in *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1912), 5:81.

⁶⁷ For a more thorough discussion of Wagner’s symphonic aesthetics, see Thomas S. Grey, *Wagner’s Musical Prose: Texts and Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-50 and 305–75.

⁶⁸ Later, he was cold even toward Liszt’s symphonic poems, though he did not consider them true examples of the symphonic genre; they formed a genre unto themselves. See Wagner, “On Liszt’s Symphonic Poems.”

⁶⁹ Richard Wagner, *Oper und Drama*, in *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1912), 3:283.

⁷⁰ Richard Wagner, *Eine Mitteilung an meine Freunde*, in *Sämtliche Schriften und Dichtungen* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1912), 4:280.

revolutionary political message. Throughout the 1840s and early 1850s, no composer or critic boldly challenged Wagner's aesthetics of synthesis by presenting the programmatic symphony as a different but equally revolutionary successor to the Beethovenian symphonic model.⁷¹ This was the aesthetic vacuum surrounding the genre of the symphony in which Fry found himself while reporting on music and politics in Europe between 1846 and 1852, and it was a vacuum that his symphonies filled.

In his narratives and in his music, Fry chose to depict images of American life in order to direct his audiences' imaginations toward an ideal "America" that lay simultaneously within—but unrealized—and beyond their everyday experiences. He wrapped Santa Claus, Niagara, a cathedral, and three different personae on the verge of death in music that tested the boundaries of the symphonic genre in the mid-nineteenth century. In this project, he radically separated the American symphony from its European counterparts. Quasi-narrative European symphonies such as Spohr's Fourth broke little ground in terms of form. No European symphonist so readily adopted the Italian *bel canto* style. There was no need. Since Beethoven's style began to assume an aura of quintessential German-ness on both sides of the aesthetic and political divide, composers did not have to look elsewhere for musical materials to construct a national identity. The most novel European symphonic innovation that combined music with narrative, the recurring *idée fixe* in the symphonies of Hector Berlioz, dissipated in the 1840s and never gained widespread acceptance among symphonic composers; it also had no particularly nationalist overtones. New and nationalist, Fry's symphonies, by contrast, combined elements of music, narrative, and politics in order to transform the American nation into an ideal image of itself.

⁷¹ Liszt did not begin composing his *Faust-Symphonie* until 1854.

Eduard Hanslick began a radical quest that ultimately led to the denial of this potential power for music when he published his magnum opus, *Vom Musikalisch-Schönen* in 1854. Franz Liszt did not mount his vigorous defense of programmatic instrumental music until the following year, when he began writing a series of essays combating both Wagner's synthetic and Hanslick's materialist aesthetics.⁷² Like Fry, Liszt believed in the power of programmatic music to point to a higher ideal, but what distinguished Fry from Liszt in this regard were the peculiarly American democratic metaphors that pervaded Fry's works. Liszt drew his programs from ancient and modern epics, so that their raw poetic force, when joined with music, would *transport* the listener out of this world into a loftier one. Fry, on the other hand, took scenes from everyday life and used music to *transform* the everyday into something sublime.

One final example will demonstrate Fry's radical separation from European symphonic practices. Near the end of *Santa Claus*, Santa's incessant sleigh bells slyly and imperceptibly morph into a stratospherically high rendition of the famous hymn *Adeste fideles* (**Example 2.9**). Functioning structurally like the quiet first presentation of the "An die Freude" theme in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, this passage sets the stage for a rousing choral finale. Instead of entering a series of academic variations, however, this music cuts to a scene depicting Christmas morning. After a broad *tutti* C major chord representing the dawn, a lone clarinet enters with a jolly dance in 6/8 vaguely reminiscent of the second movement's Christmas Eve dance. Then, in order to portray children joyously playing with their Christmas presents, the score requests that noisemaking toys and toy instruments join the dance in a seamless transition that can be repeated

⁷² The most famous of these is his "analysis" of Berlioz's *Harold en Italie* (1834): Franz Liszt, "Berlioz und seine Harold-Symphonie," in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. L. Ramann (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1882), 4:1–102.

Example 2.9. W.H. Fry, *Santa Claus*, VI (Finale), mm. 1–39

The image displays a musical score for the first 39 measures of the finale of W.H. Fry's *Santa Claus*, VI. The score is arranged in four systems, each containing staves for Violin I and Violin II. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is common time (C). The first system (measures 1-10) features a *pp* (pianissimo) dynamic. The second system (measures 11-20) includes a *8va* (octave) marking above the Violin I staff. The third system (measures 21-30) includes a *8va* marking above the Violin I staff and a *vla.* (viola) marking below the Violin II staff. The fourth system (measures 31-39) includes a *8va* marking above the Violin I staff and a *vla.* marking below the Violin II staff. The score is characterized by dense, rapid sixteenth-note passages in the Violin I parts, while the Violin II parts play a more rhythmic, dotted-note accompaniment.

indefinitely at the performers' discretion. Finally, playing at full volume, the entire orchestra returns to *Adeste fideles* as a final reminder—to a predominantly Christian audience in 1853—that Christmas is truly about Jesus' birth. In this patently American and democratic gesture, Fry thwarted the lofty avenue of musical aesthetics that German musicians and philosophers believed Beethoven's Ninth had paved. Thus fulfilling the promise of progressive European musical aesthetics while simultaneously declaring

independence from the political, social, and musical structures that led to the progressive impulse's ultimate failure, Fry combined tragedy, comedy, nature, humanity, heaven, and earth into an ideal image of a transformed American nation, for him the greatest nation of all.

CHAPTER THREE

EUROPEAN MUSIC BORN ON AMERICAN SOIL: GEORGE FREDERICK BRISTOW'S NATIONALIST EMULATION

George Frederick Bristow (1825–1898), one of the nation's most prolific composers during the nineteenth century, lacked William Henry Fry's grandiloquence but was no less committed a proponent of American music. Unlike an exceptionalist such as Fry, Bristow seemed comfortable writing in a traditional stylistic idiom, even if it meant sacrificing the possibility of a "uniquely American" sound. Instead of developing a newly formulated eclectic style to express a unique sense of national musical identity, then, Bristow composed symphonies that rested much more firmly within the European symphonic tradition than Fry's. This seemingly paradoxical combination of tenacious patriotism and dependence on European stylistic models marked the emergence in American symphonic composition of nationalist emulation.¹ Like many of his European contemporaries, Bristow's symphonies exhibit the "anxiety of influence" that surrounded the genre of the symphony during the post-Beethoven era.² It is evident that he wrestled with the problem of how to articulate a respectable and individual compositional voice while simultaneously following and continuing a traditional musical practice. Although

¹ Bristow was certainly not the first composer to write a symphony in the style of a European master, but he was the first emulator whose music can be interpreted in the light of ongoing discussions about musical style and national identity. There is no evidence that Charles Himmann, for example, whose earlier symphony was discussed briefly in chapter one, had feelings one way or the other about the symphony's ability to construct a national identity.

² See Mark Evan Bonds, *After Beethoven: The Imperative of Originality in the Symphony* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 9–27.

Bristow himself seemed less concerned with forging a new American identity with his music, his symphonies nevertheless construct an identifiable American national identity. Never satisfied with works that would be merely accepted by the American musical establishment, Bristow strived to produce masterworks that would be recognized as such by audiences, performers, and critics alike. The national identity that Bristow's music constructs, therefore, is that of the new standard-bearer of the tradition, not the follower.

Like Fry, Bristow was the subject of heated debates about the directions that American musical culture should follow. The controversy surrounding him stemmed from the ongoing spats in the early 1850s between Fry and several influential critics who supported the culture of emulation. They panned Fry's symphonies as unsophisticated and too unconventional—the wrong direction for American music to take. Bristow eventually entered the fray, not so much to defend Fry, but to criticize the New York Philharmonic for its abandonment of American composers, a practice that ran counter to its published by-laws. Yet even sympathetic critics were reluctant to mount a vigorous defense of Bristow's campaign, because they were not certain that his music was worth hearing. They simply did not know it. Had they had the opportunity to hear it, the critics might have turned to the emulator Bristow to be the champion of their cause: the continued expansion of European musical culture into the United States.

Even if critics appreciated his music, Bristow probably would not have accepted such an entreaty. The New York Philharmonic's neglect of Bristow's music pointed to a deeper issue pervading the broader discourse surrounding an American musical identity: a composer's individual nationality. Whereas Fry emphasized that musical style and literary associations were paramount for creating an "American" music, Bristow, like

many Americans in the 1850s, believed that being born on American soil was equally, if not more, important. Out of resentment toward the German-dominated New York Philharmonic, he colored his invective against the orchestra with strong anti-immigrant, or nativist, sentiment. As a long-standing American-born performer in the orchestra and member of its board of directors, he had witnessed the rise of German influence firsthand. After threatening to create a rival orchestra with an all-American membership—a plan that he later dropped—Bristow helped create and support an organization that was originally intended to promote chamber music composed by native-born Americans. This group, called the New-York American Music Association, sponsored performances for three concert seasons between 1856 and 1858. Strapped for new compositions and lacking broad audience support, it eventually began to program non-American works, a move that caused Bristow to withdraw his involvement. As we shall see at the end of this chapter, this episode in Bristow’s career poignantly demonstrates that despite his emulative compositional approach, a personal sense of national identity could contribute as much to a mid-nineteenth century understanding of musical identity as musical style.

Against All Odds: Bristow’s Contretemps with the New York Philharmonic

Bristow’s rocky relationship with the New York Philharmonic began in 1843, the year after its founding, when at the age of eighteen he joined the orchestra as a full member and violinist.³ Following their stated mission of supporting compositions written on American soil, the orchestra allowed him to conduct a performance of his Concert

³ H.E. Krehbiel, *The Philharmonic Society of New York: A Memorial* (New York: Novello, Ewer, and Co.), 41–2.

Overture, Op. 3, in January of 1847.⁴ After neglecting the native music clause for a handful of seasons and feeling pressure from the discontented American composers among its membership, the Philharmonic eventually succumbed to this pressure by scheduling Bristow's Symphony No. 1 in E-flat, Op. 10, and an overture by the German immigrant Theodore Eisfeld (1816–1882) at a public rehearsal in May of 1850.⁵ Perhaps hoping to capitalize on this success, Bristow soon attempted to take greater control of his future with the Philharmonic. Upon the departure of the orchestra's conductor, the Englishman George Loder (1816–1868), two years later, the Philharmonic's governing body became deadlocked in its decision about who should replace him. Probably hoping he could drastically turn the orchestra in favor of American composers, Bristow put in his lot as a candidate for the position. Because he did not receive a clear majority of the vote—he received equal votes for and against his appointment—he was dropped from consideration in favor of the German Eisfeld, who did earn a majority vote; Eisfeld subsequently directed the orchestra either solely or in a shared capacity with others between 1852 and 1865.⁶

⁴ Article VII of the Philharmonic's by-laws states, "If any grand orchestral compositions, such as overtures, or symphonies, shall be presented to the Society, they being composed in this country, the Society shall perform one every season, provided a committee of five appointed by the government shall have approved and recommended the composition." See Krehbiel, *The Philharmonic Society of New York*, 43.

⁵ Giving evidence that there was political infighting and pressure from within, Hermann Saroni, a critic and journal editor, commented before the performance that he had "heard of the rejection of some valuable 'active members,' simply because they happened not to belong to the clique in power.[...] We have even now heard of a number of the most respectable members of the Philharmonic, whose intention it is to secede from the mother institution and to found a new society by themselves." *Saroni's Musical Times*, November 18, 1849. See Vera Brodsky Lawrence, *Strong on Music: The New York Music Scene in the Days of George Templeton Strong, 1836–1875* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 1:614.

⁶ This information comes from the New York Philharmonic Archives. See Vera Brodsky Lawrence, *Strong on Music: The New York Music Scene in the Days of George Templeton Strong, 1836–1875* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 2:229.

Almost certainly feeling snubbed by the Philharmonic, Bristow directed much of his attention elsewhere beginning in 1852. As director of a newly reorganized New-York Harmonic Society, a community chorus akin to Boston's Handel and Haydn Society, he offered the ensemble's services to Henriette Sontag (1806–54), a noted German soprano, and to William Henry Fry for his lecture series.⁷ Bristow also conducted the lecture orchestra, which included members of the New York Philharmonic, the Germania Orchestra, and other important local musicians. During Fry's eleventh lecture in February of 1853, which was devoted to American music, the musicians performed the finale to Bristow's Symphony No. 1, which the Philharmonic had programmed only reluctantly three years earlier, and a selection from *Eleutheria*, a cantata written by the American composer George Henry Curtis (1821–1895) for which Bristow had provided the orchestrations. With this kind of exposure, Bristow's stock as a conductor, and especially as a composer, was rising.

His exposure paid big dividends later in 1853 when Louis-Antoine Jullien and his virtuosic orchestra came to New York and performed selections from his First Symphony. Billing the work as a "New Symphony," though it had been composed at least three years earlier, Jullien and his orchestra performed the minuet on October 12.⁸ After repeating the movement in New York two nights later, Jullien took it on the road during his tour through Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. and eventually programmed it again upon his return to New York City in December.⁹

⁷ Sontag was mounting a series of Festival Concerts modeled on European choral festivals. See Lawrence, *Strong on Music*, 2:284–85.

⁸ See the ad for the concert in the *New York Daily Times*, October 12, 1853.

⁹ Katherine Preston reveals this data in her forthcoming edition of Bristow's Second Symphony, §4.

Returning the favor, Bristow offered the services of his Harmonic Society (recently renamed the Sacred Harmonic Society) to Jullien, who, with Bristow's assistance, directed the chorus and his orchestra in a monumental performance of Handel's *Messiah* on December 26. Three nights later, Jullien staged a performance billed as a "Grand American Night" featuring several works by American composers. The popular minuet to Bristow's First Symphony appeared on the program alongside two of Fry's symphonies. More importantly, the orchestra also premiered the first movement to Bristow's Second Symphony, which, according to advertisements, had been composed "expressly for this occasion."¹⁰ Between October and December of 1853, Jullien performed excerpts from two of Bristow's symphonies at least a dozen times—an impressive number, especially when compared to the Philharmonic's paltry support of the composer.

Although Bristow's relationship with the New York Philharmonic had turned cold since his rejection as their new conductor, the fact that Jullien saw fit to perform excerpts from Bristow's symphonies repeatedly was enough to rekindle Bristow's ire at the orchestra. Following Jullien's initial performance of the minuet from Bristow's First Symphony, William Henry Fry stoked the flames with anti-German vitriol directed at the Philharmonic:

We trust to be able to hear the whole of this work, which is quite as well written as the last German Symphonies played by the Philharmonic Society. It should be fitly performed by the members of that Association, as their main object should be to encourage Art on the spot. When an Artist has qualified himself to write a Symphony he has a right to be heard, and the public should insist on hearing him, instead of like low provincials taking works exclusively at second hand. Shocking and disgraceful is the want of pride on such subjects in this city. Is not New

¹⁰ He programmed the work again two nights later. *New York Daily Times*, December 29, 1853. According to Katherine Preston, there is no evidence suggesting that Jullien paid Bristow for the work. See Preston, Bristow edition, §4.

York as large as Vienna and larger? Then why defer to any German town?¹¹

Three months later, as he was becoming embroiled in the *Santa Claus* controversy with Richard Storrs Willis, Fry again took a shot at the orchestra and used Jullien's acceptance of his and Bristow's music (though he does not mention Bristow by name) as proof of its high quality:

I would say, *en passant*, that I am not led to these remarks on the Philharmonic Society by any personal feeling, as I myself have never asked from that Society the performance of any composition of mine; but I make common cause with Americans...against degrading deference to European dictation, such as if I am rightly informed, is a part of the musical faith of the performers and some subscribers of that Society....[T]he chances for an American to put before the public any work of musical High Art, depend, in this country, upon the accidental presence of such a liberal-minded man and consummate musician as M. Jullien.¹²

Before Willis could publish his own response, Boston editor John Sullivan Dwight entered the fray by offering his own comments on Fry's attacks. Claiming that universal beauty and enlightened audiences would win the day, Dwight brought Bristow's name into the discussion: "Mr. Fry and Mr. Bristow are sure to be accepted...just so soon as their audiences shall feel that there is genius, inspiration, beauty, poetry of music in their symphonies, at all proportioned to the audacity and oddness of their designs."¹³ Fry, who was being assaulted for his unconventional compositional style, retorted that if critics and the Philharmonic wished to reject his music on stylistic grounds, then they had no reason

¹¹ *New York Daily Tribune*, October 14, 1853.

¹² "A Letter from Mr. Fry," *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 8 (Jan. 21, 1854): 29.

¹³ Dwight, it seems, missed Fry's point that powerful cliques, not necessarily audiences at large, were the cause of the Philharmonic's neglect of American composers. "Mr. Fry and His Critics," *Dwight's Journal of Music* 4, no. 18 (1854): 141.

to treat Bristow in a similar manner. Bristow's symphonies, as Fry put it, were "strictly classic" in form and design.¹⁴

All of the tabloid rumor mongering and speculation about Bristow and the Philharmonic eventually compelled him to join the discussion and set the record straight. In a letter addressed to Willis's journal, which appeared on March 4, just over two months after the *Santa Claus* controversy began, Bristow supported Fry's assertion that the Philharmonic systematically failed to support American composers:

As it is possible to miss a needle in a haystack, I am not surprised that Mr. Fry has missed the fact, that during the eleven years the Philharmonic Society has been in operation in this city, it played once, either by mistake or accident, one single American composition, an overture of mine. As one exception makes a rule stronger, so this single stray fact shows that the Philharmonic Society has been as anti-American as if it been located in London during the revolutionary war, and composed of native born English Tories.¹⁵

Not forgetting his fleeting moment of glory in 1850, he piquantly continued, "Your anonymous correspondent...says that a symphony of mine, also, was rehearsed, and not played in public. So Uncle Toby says—'Our army swore terribly at Flanders'—but that army did not fight."¹⁶ Even more forthrightly than Fry and using strong anti-German language, Bristow insisted that the root of the Philharmonic's problem was a toxic mixture of anti-Americanism and German narcissism:

Now, in the name of the Nine Muses, what is the Philharmonic Society...in this country? Is it to play exclusively works of German masters, especially if they be dead, in order that our critics may translate their ready-made praises from German? [...] Is there a Philharmonic Society in Germany for the encouragement solely of American music?

¹⁴ "Rejoinder from Mr. Fry," *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 8 (Feb. 18, 1854): 75.

¹⁵ "The Philharmonic Society," *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 8 (Mar. 4, 1854): 100. All of the following quotations are taken from this source.

¹⁶ Bristow's allusion to the spinelessness of cursing comes from Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759).

Then why should there be a society here for the encouragement solely of German music; unless, as Mr. Fry says, the object be to render us a Hessian Colony, *which we most incontestably are?*"¹⁷

Bristow's frustration, which had been building for at least four years, could not have been more evident in this final question, in which he bluntly states that the United States musical world was in fact a German colony. Giving his letter a decidedly political tone, he further contended that the people and organizations manufacturing this condition had no place on American soil:

If all their artistic affections are unalterably German, let them pack back to Germany and enjoy the police and bayonets and aristocratic kicks and cuffs of that land, where an artist is a serf to a nobleman, as the history of all their great composers show [*sic*]. America has made the political revolution which illumines the world, while Germany is still beshrouded with a feudal darkness. While America has been thus far able to do the chief things for the dignity of man, forsooth she must be denied the brains for original Art, and must stand like a beggar, deferentially cap in hand, when she comes to compete with the ability of any dirty German village.¹⁸

Calling the Philharmonic's attempt to snuff out American music "just short of a conspiracy," Bristow insisted that the orchestra was as *un-American* in its governance as it was *anti-American* in its orientation. Bristow was so furious that he immediately resigned from his position as a Philharmonic performer and member of its board of directors.

The events and exchanges that followed Bristow's opening tirade dragged on for several weeks. At a meeting on March 11, the Philharmonic board of directors read his resignation and approved a public rebuttal to his accusations.¹⁹ The Philharmonic's letter,

¹⁷ Emphasis added. Practically all of Willis's readers would have picked up on the caustic reference to the Hessians, who assisted the British army as mercenaries during the American Revolution.

¹⁸ "The Philharmonic Society," *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 8 (Mar. 4, 1854): 100.

¹⁹ The Philharmonic's treasurer, William Scharfenberg, and an anonymous board member wrote cursory and unremarkable immediate replies to Bristow that appeared in Willis's journal a week after Bristow's

which appeared in Willis's journal two weeks after Bristow's original missive, argued that his accusations were patently false. The orchestra, they claimed, had performed not one, but eleven works by American composers, and the idea that there was some sort of "conspiracy" against American composers was simply baseless.²⁰ In the next week's issue, however, Ureli Corelli Hill (1802–1875), who was then serving as the vice president of the Philharmonic's board of directors and also supported Bristow, wrote to the journal and claimed that his name had been signed to the rebuttal letter without his permission—no conspiracy indeed!²¹ Using the Hill incident as irrefutable proof of his accusations, Bristow responded formally to the Philharmonic's rebuttal by reiterating his claim that only one American work written for full orchestra, his overture, had ever appeared in a true Philharmonic performance; even it, he added, was performed "due to the influence of Mr. Hill."²² In the peroration of this second letter, Bristow announced not only his resignation from the society, but also his intention to form "The American Philharmonic Society, which I trust will be free from all *cliques*, and whose aim will be, to promote, and cultivate the Divine Art, regardless of any *national* prejudices."²³

Bristow's final point—that he wished to form an orchestra devoid of "national prejudices"—was, perhaps ironically, the result of his own anti-German prejudice. He believed that the Philharmonic began as an American organization and only later

original letter. See "The N.Y. Philharmonic Society," *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 8 (Mar. 11, 1854): 109–110.

²⁰ "The Philharmonic Society," *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 8 (Mar. 18, 1854): 121–22.

²¹ "The Philharmonic Again," *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 8 (Mar. 25, 1854): 133.

²² "Second Letter from Mr. Bristow," *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 8 (Apr. 1, 1854): 149.

²³ *Ibid.* Emphasis in the original.

transformed into a tightly knit German-controlled entity. By the present time, he argued in his second letter, Germans “had obtained complete sway over the direction [of the Philharmonic], and had the power...to show their contempt for everything American.”²⁴ Protesting this point, an anonymous writer to *Dwight’s Journal of Music* calling himself “Pegan” contended that “the Society originated in the desire of the German resident musicians to keep up their knowledge of and taste for the music of their native land, and in the wish of Americans to know the music of which they had heard and read so much.”²⁵ Then, echoing the many voices of past cultural emulators, “Pegan” suggested that “the society in question I understand to be formed upon the basis of the great orchestral societies abroad, and like them its performances are to be of music by composers of high and acknowledged standing.” These two statements infuriated Bristow, who responded the following week with another tirade. Countering Pegan, Bristow redoubled his efforts by stating that “The Philharmonic Society never did originate for any such purpose, *there not being a single German* concerned in the formation of the Philharmonic Society.”²⁶ Then, after quoting a lengthy passage about the orchestra’s origin found in one of the Philharmonic’s recent annual reports, Bristow concluded:

According to the above, it will be seen that, the Philharmonic was originated by Mr. Hill with the assistance of Messrs. A. and H.B. Dodworth, and that the constitution was framed by Messrs. Hill, Penson, Walker, Dodworth, whom I take to be Americans, and Englishmen, and *not Germans*.[...]

²⁴ “Second Letter from Mr. Bristow,” *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 8 (Apr. 1, 1854): 149.

²⁵ Reprinted in *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 8 (Apr. 15, 1854): 172.

²⁶ “Letter from Mr. Bristow,” *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 8 (Apr. 22, 1854): 183.

Does this look like being originated “in the desire of the German resident musicians,” for the purpose of performing none but German music? No! The Philharmonic Society commenced upon a good American foundation: but from time to time, the old members, those who had actually built up the Society, have been literally thrust out. [...] Thus it will be seen, that twelve years ago, the Philharmonic Society was American; at the present time, it is German, and wholly devoted to German interests.²⁷

Since the Philharmonic’s original purpose was “the proper performance of great orchestral music” regardless of its national origin, Bristow’s argument seemed bulletproof. With that emphatic closing, the dispute faded into the background. The Philharmonic, without Bristow, continued performing the same German canonical works as it had for the previous several years.

The most striking feature of Bristow’s bitter exchange is that, unlike Fry’s colorful debates with Willis and Dwight, it actually had very little to do with music itself. Instead, Bristow filled his arguments with anti-immigrant invective that characterized Germans as conniving, cliquish, and, worst of all, abusers of American political independence. If not these character flaws, Bristow might have asked, what else could have inspired Germans come to independent America only to recreate the oppressive institutions of the Old World on fresh soil? Bristow’s attitudes reflected a much broader nativist sentiment called “Know Nothingism” that was sweeping the nation at that time. The “Know Nothings,” who created local political parties, were suspicious of the overwhelmingly large number of Irish and German immigrants who came to the United States in the 1840s. They believed that these immigrants would erect the institutions of

²⁷ “Letter from Mr. Bristow,” *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 8 (Apr. 22, 1854): 184. Emphasis in the original.

the Old World, especially Roman Catholicism, in the United States.²⁸ Although there is no evidence suggesting that Bristow belonged to one of these parties, the connection is clear.²⁹ The text of the Philharmonic's by-laws gave Bristow a just cause for his grievances against the organization's governance, but the acrimonious tone taken in his missives reveals that he had more deeply rooted prejudices against Germans in particular. In his list of the founders, for example, he casually characterized men of *English* national origin as pro-American and put them on an equal footing with the native-born American founders. In Bristow's formulation, Germans, who—as he failed to mention—had constituted the bulk of the orchestra's musicians (if not directors) from the beginning, were apparently incapable of holding American values. In his own way, then, Bristow was closing the door on an American musical melting pot and was preparing himself, consciously or not, to fall into the same pattern of exclusionary practices that so upset him in the first place. Would Bristow's Philharmonic refuse to perform works by German immigrants who fled the oppression following the failed revolutions of 1848 and 1849? Would they be allowed to perform? As fate would have it, Bristow's American Philharmonic never materialized, and he returned to the ranks of the Philharmonic violin

²⁸ For more on the beliefs of Know Nothingism, see the first chapter to the revised edition of John Higham's classic 1955 study, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002); and Tyler Anbinder, *Nativism and Slavery: The Know-Nothings and the Politics of the 1850s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). For the relationship of nativism and Know Nothingism to the political party system see Sean Wilentz, *The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005) ; and Michael J. Holt, *Political Parties and American Political Development from the Age of Jackson to the Age of Lincoln* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002).

²⁹ One widely circulated Know Nothing manifesto, for example, claimed that Free German Associations were openly promulgating constitutions, “under the direction of Romish despots, to destroy our liberties.” See Anna Ella Carroll, *The Great American Battle; or the Contest Between Christianity and Political Romanism* (New York: Miller, Orton, and Mulligan, 1856), 355–6.

section in November of 1855, less than two years after the controversy.³⁰ For unexplained reasons, the Philharmonic changed course and programmed Bristow's entire Second Symphony that same season at a concert in March of 1856.³¹ After time had healed old wounds, the orchestra premiered his Third Symphony three years later (March 26, 1859) and, that same year, joined forces with Bristow's own Harmonic Society to offer him a "Grand Testimonial Concert" featuring a movement from his Second Symphony and his Overture to *The Winter's Tale*, written in 1856.³² Amicably ending his relationship with the Philharmonic, Bristow retired from the organization in 1879 after thirty-six years of service broken only by his brief resignation in the midst of the 1854 conflict.

"American and Good": Bristow's Antebellum Symphonies

Bristow composed three symphonies between 1848 and 1858, all of which were performed in full by the New York Philharmonic, either as part of the regular concert series or in public rehearsal.³³ Since Bristow doggedly repudiated the German orientation of the Philharmonic's programs, it is all the more surprising that his symphonies are, by and large, clearly based on German stylistic models. Although style did not play the defining role in constructing a national identity in Bristow's symphonies (as it did in Fry's), his music nevertheless became the focus of discussion about the direction of

³⁰ Lawrence, *Strong on Music*, 2:577.

³¹ Lawrence speculates that it was a peace offering, but Preston conjectures that it was result of negotiations between Bristow and the orchestra—his return in exchange for a performance of his symphony. Although there is no evidence to support either theory, both seem plausible, especially given Bristow's commitment to the orchestra over the next twenty years.

³² See Vera Brodsky Lawrence, *Strong on Music: The New York Music Scene in the Days of George Templeton Strong* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 3:290.

³³ He also wrote two more, but these fall well outside the time constraints of this dissertation and overlap chronologically with works written by the next generation of American symphonists.

instrumental music in America—and thus the definition of “American” music itself.

Bristow’s critics, most of whom espoused a culture of emulation, struggled to articulate how an American composer *should* go about finding an original compositional voice in a marketplace saturated with well-respected musical models, which, as the Philharmonic contretemps made clear, were also Bristow’s competitors. Throughout his early career as a symphonist, he was both criticized and praised for his emulation of the European masters. This conflict, which was endemic to the culture of nationalist emulation, began to resolve only as critics began to detect a more “individual”—and therefore “American”—voice in Bristow’s music.

Critics pegged Bristow as an emulator from his earliest days as a composer, and many critics agreed that emulation was the correct stylistic path for Bristow and other Americans to follow. Following the 1847 premiere of his Concert Overture, given by the New York Philharmonic under Bristow’s own direction, the critic Henry Cood Watson casually praised the work as “very creditable [to Bristow], and proves, we think, that he possesses much talent and promises much in future compositions.”³⁴ Such praise was perfunctory at best, because he also dismissed the work as “wanting in individuality,” a euphemism for the music being overly imitative of Europeans. Reviewing the work in another publication, Watson also noted, “[W]e cannot say that it gives much evidence of original thought, but it proves that he is familiar with the power and resources of the orchestra...We can clearly discover in the Overture that his style is not fixed; we hear reminiscences of the Italian, German, and French schools.”³⁵ Emulation, however, was

³⁴ “Concert of the Philharmonic Society,” *The Albion, A Journal of News, Politics, and Literature* 6, no. 3 (1847): 36.

³⁵ *New York Mirror*, January 13, 1847, quoted in Lawrence, *Strong on Music*, 1:424.

not a problem in itself. When executed properly, it could be desirable. Watson encouraged Bristow to “model himself upon Mozart’s instrumental work, which will be found the safest of all models.”³⁶ Another critic, Richard Grant White, agreed with Watson that the work was too imitative, but in his opinion, Bristow had followed good guides: Auber, Weber, and Mendelssohn.³⁷ The prolific diarist and music-lover George Templeton Strong, who also attended the concert, echoed both opinions. Perhaps more forgivingly than Watson, he remarked in his diary that the overture was “very good, but not remarkable for freshness or originality.” It was, he continued, “made up of reminiscences of Weber and Spohr, though perhaps it was rather a mixture of their respective styles than any appropriating of what they had written.”³⁸ Despite minor disagreements about the work’s merits, all of these critics agreed that Bristow was moving in the right direction if he chose to base his style on established European models, whether Mozart, Mendelssohn, Weber, or many others.

Bristow followed the critics’ advice in his Symphony No. 1 in E-flat Major, Op. 10, which received its only Philharmonic performance in 1850 at a public rehearsal devoted to composers living in America. As reviews appeared, however, certain critics still seemed dissatisfied by Bristow’s execution of this approach. Hermann Saroni, a leading New York critic and a composer himself, claimed that the symphony “might be compared to a musical chessboard, with a field [square] for each composer from the time

³⁶ *New York Mirror*, January 13, 1847, quoted in Lawrence, *Strong on Music*, 1:424.

³⁷ *New York Courier & Enquirer*, January 16, 1847, quoted in Lawrence, *Strong on Music*, 1:424. Unlike Watson, White praised the work as having “freshness and vigor.”

³⁸ Lawrence, *Strong on Music*, 1:422.

of Haydn to Mendelssohn-Bartholdy.”³⁹ Evidently feeling the post-Beethovenian era’s anxiety of influence surrounding the genre of the symphony, Saroni’s only suggestion for improvement was for Bristow to give up trying altogether. Bristow should, he urged, “be content with compositions of less extent. If former masters have begun [*sic*] their career by writing symphonies, they did so at a time when that form was not developed by the master hand of a Mozart, Beethoven, etc., etc.”⁴⁰ The critic Richard Storrs Willis disagreed with Saroni and praised Bristow’s efforts: “This being an achievement withal so respectable, and of so much higher grade, we believe, than anything heretofore attempted in this country, something more than a passing notice is justly due both the author and the work.”⁴¹ Defending Bristow, Willis then justified his attempt at symphonic writing by extolling the composer’s credentials as an experienced orchestral performer and composer of excellent shorter works. In a more thorough review of the work printed a week later, Willis insinuated that Saroni, who had never written a symphony of his own, was simply jealous.⁴²

With a nod toward Watson’s earlier advice, Bristow began his First Symphony much like Mozart’s Symphony No. 39, K. 543, which is also in E-flat and was performed by the Philharmonic around the time Bristow was composing this work. The slow introduction contains sudden, dramatic contrasts between loud and soft passages and the strong rhythmic drive of dotted eighth-sixteenth figures (**Example 3.1**). Like Mozart’s

³⁹ *Saroni’s Musical Times*, June 1, 1850, 422.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *The Message Bird* 1 (June 15, 1850): 362.

⁴² *The Message Bird* 1 (July 1, 1850): 377.

work, Bristow's introduction builds to an intense climax that transforms the opening

Example 3.1. G.F. Bristow, Symphony No. 1, I, mm. 1–8

The musical score for Example 3.1 is presented in two systems, each containing three staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs). The key signature is two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 3/4. The first system (measures 1–4) begins with a fortissimo (ff) dynamic. The melody in the upper staves rises steadily, while the lower staves provide a more active, chromatic accompaniment. The dynamic shifts to pianissimo (pp) at the start of the second system (measure 5). The music concludes with a quiet and mysterious chromatic expansion of the dominant in the final measure (measure 8).

materials into a soaring martial tune. It then concludes with a quiet and mysterious chromatic expansion of the dominant (**Example 3.2**). The strong resemblance to Mozart ends there, as the first movement proper begins in cut time, not the 3/4 of the earlier work.

Displeased with the vague reminiscences of earlier composers, Saroni demolished the music in his review; a brief examination of the rest of the first movement partially reveals why. “There is,” he complained,

the utter want of connection between the different ideas. Almost every sixteen bars, the composer seems to have come to a dead halt. He begins a new melody, and goes again over the same ground, suddenly drops the theme and begins a new one, which has not the remotest connection to the former.⁴³

⁴³ Saroni's *Musical Times*, June 1, 1850, 422, quoted in Lawrence, *Strong on Music*, 2:131. Saroni, incidentally, was in the process of translating Adolf Bernhard Marx's *Die Lehre von der musikalischen*

Example 3.2. G.F. Bristow, *Symphony No. 1, I*, mm. 55–62

The musical score for Example 3.2 consists of two systems of three staves each. The first system (mm. 55-58) is marked *ff* and features a full orchestral texture. The second system (mm. 59-62) is marked *pp* and shows a reduction in texture, with the Violin I staff having rests and the Violin II and Bass staves playing a piano melody. A crescendo line is visible below the Bass staff in the second system.

Following the introduction, the first movement proper (marked *Allegro vivace*) adheres to the standard sonata-allegro form. The primary theme is a delightful tune reminiscent of Haydn or Mozart harmonized with chromaticism akin to Spohr; though constructed symmetrically, the melody concludes strangely on a fully diminished seventh chord (**Example 3.3**). As Saroni suggested, the succeeding material—filigree in the first violins over long, sustained chords—bears no relation to the opening until the primary theme is stated once more by the full orchestra, a needless repetition of the material. A secondary theme in the dominant key appears after a typical modulatory transition, but the melody is, unfortunately, insipid and repetitious (**Example 3.4**). After more aimless wandering, which made Saroni cringe, the exposition ends with a boisterous coda. Saroni's critique

Komposition into English, which might explain his uncharacteristically detailed criticism of the work's syntax. His translation appeared in 1852 under the title *Theory and Practice of Musical Composition* (New York: F.J. Huntington and Mason & Law, 1852). Evidently very successful, the translation ran through at least seven editions over the next decade.

Example 3.3. G.F. Bristow, Symphony No. 1, I, mm. 63–78 (Primary Theme)

pp

71

Example 3.4. G.F. Bristow, Symphony No. 1, I, mm. 149–164 (Secondary Theme)

mf

157

notwithstanding, the development actually makes clever use of preceding materials as the music passes through several keys. The sonata form is completed when the expository materials return, all in the tonic. Summing up his impressions, Saroni remarked that the

symphony as a whole is “too long by half” and has a monotonous character, “which is anything but pleasant.”⁴⁴

Other critics found much to like in the work and, as opposed to their responses to his overture, commented freely but briefly on Bristow’s originality. In a fairly detailed review that appeared several weeks after the original 1850 performance, Willis remarked that the second movement (*Andante*) “happily illustrates his [Bristow’s] unreserved and innate conceptions and peculiar temperament better than [*sic*] any other portion of the symphony. There is a dreamy romance and placid beauty in this strain, which attracts and soothes the listener, almost in spite of his will.”⁴⁵ Scored in a rich A-flat major, the luscious opening melody is judiciously ornamented and spans well over an octave, giving it the dreamy quality that Willis detected (**Example 3.5**). Writing for *The Albion* after Jullien’s 1853 revival of the symphony’s minuet movement, Henry Cood Watson noticed a marked improvement over Bristow’s 1847 overture. “The *Minuetto*,” he began, “pleases us greatly. It is rich in melody, brilliant, and effective.”⁴⁶ Never shying from comparing it to the European masters, he insightfully noted, “The *tema* very greatly resembles Mozart’s accompaniment to *Deh vieni alla finestra*, from ‘Don Giovanni.’” Lest the reader assume this was high praise, Watson added, “We might find some fault with the scoring and arrangements; but in consideration of Mr. Bristow’s antecedents and peculiarities, we cannot but admire it as a meritorious and genial work.” The movement’s

⁴⁴ Part of Saroni’s annoyance with the work’s length is almost certainly a result of Bristow’s tendency to double the length of a phrase by repeating it with a new orchestration, thus making what would normally be 8-bar units into sixteen bars. The work’s monotony, Saroni claimed, was due in part to the key relationships between the movements; all are in closely related major keys.

⁴⁵ *The Message Bird* 1 (July 1, 1850): 377.

⁴⁶ “Music,” *The Albion, A Journal of News, Politics, and Literature* 12, no. 50 (1853): 596.

opening melody does contain the same arch-like gestures found in Mozart's aria, but the overall construction is entirely different (Example 3.6).⁴⁷

Example 3.5. G.F. Bristow, Symphony No. 1, II, mm. 1–8

Example 3.6. G.F. Bristow, Symphony No. 1, III, mm. 1–8

⁴⁷ Watson's comparison therefore echoed one of Saroni's earlier criticisms that the work's ideas are "reminiscences of 'old familiar themes.'" *Saroni's Musical Times*, June 1, 1850, 422.

Despite all the good that critics heard in Bristow's symphony, Willis urged the composer, as many had before, to "study sufficiently; write simply, without aiming to accomplish too much at the outset; don't be impatient of *many* experiments, nor shrink from the severest tests, before producing publicly."⁴⁸ Watson was even more forthright, "If Mr. Bristow would go for a year or two to Spohr, Hector Berlioz, and others, or attend the great Philharmonic and other Grand Concerts and Festivals at the *Gewandhaus* and similar places on the European Continent, he would become a Composer...of whom the country might be proud."⁴⁹ Though he was the first American symphonist to have his works performed by the nation's leading orchestra, he had apparently not yet attained that distinction.

The disagreements about how emulation fit into the bigger picture of American compositional style continued and intensified in critical discussions of Bristow's Symphony No. 2 in D minor, subtitled "Jullien." Following the work's premiere in 1853—a performance of the first movement given by Jullien's orchestra—Richard Storrs Willis praised it highly:

It is a good specimen of the musical abilities of this gentleman. He writes easily, his thought is clear, translating itself in round forms and phrases, and moving always at an expeditious pace. The main idea, entrusted first to the violoncelli, is well conceived and skillfully developed, and the connecting episodes come in naturally and are well adapted to the subject.
[**Example 3.7**]⁵⁰

As in the First Symphony, this movement is in the standard sonata-allegro form. Unlike the analogous passages in the earlier work, however, the succeeding phrases in the

⁴⁸ *The Message Bird* 1 (July 1, 1850): 377. Emphasis in the original.

⁴⁹ "Music," *The Albion, A Journal of News, Politics, and Literature* 12, no. 50 (1853): 596.

⁵⁰ *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 8 (Jan. 7, 1854): 5.

Example 3.7. G.F. Bristow, Symphony No. 2, I, mm. 20–29 (Primary Theme)



primary key area and modulatory transition thoroughly develop motives and melodic materials from the opening melody without rote repetition or plodding intervening passages. This was a marked improvement over his First Symphony with respect to conventional sonata-allegro form. Noting that the work had been composed expressly for Jullien's "Grand American Night," Willis added that "had no mention been made of this it were easy to perceive it: for it exhibits a noted modification in the style of the author."⁵¹ He made no specific reference to a passage in the movement that would suggest an American identity, but he was most likely referring to the melody of the secondary key area (**Example 3.8**). Like several passages in William Henry Fry's symphonies, this melody is in the Italian *bel canto* style and contains the typical ornaments, juicy suspensions, subtle chromaticism, and a well- formed arch-like shape. As with Fry's works, this specific deviation from stylistic convention lends the movement an "American" quality not found in Bristow's earlier symphony.

Following the Philharmonic's revival of the complete work 1856, the exceptionalist Fry commented more openly about what he thought made the symphony specifically "American" in character. After noting that the symphony "is safely in the beaten track: with the tonic and dominant relations, the four separate movements, and so forth," he wrote at length about the second movement (*Allegretto*):

⁵¹ *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 8 (Jan. 7, 1854): 6.

The second movement is the only approach to innovation. In place of having a minuet—which was in Haydn’s and Mozart’s time the dance, and as such suggested to every auditor what a polka does now—Mr. Bristow has, according to a hint we expressed long ago, for the laws of progressive aesthetics in music, adopted the spirit and the accent of the polka instead of the now vitally unsuggestive minuet. This we think the best in the whole symphony. It indicates emancipation of the musical intellect so far as it goes.⁵²

Example 3.8. G.F. Bristow, Symphony No. 2, I, mm. 82–99 (Secondary Theme)

The musical score is for the secondary theme of the first movement of G.F. Bristow's Symphony No. 2. It is in 3/4 time and B-flat major. The first system (measures 82-90) features Vln. I playing a melodic line marked 'mp', while Vln. II/Vla. and Vcl. provide harmonic support. The second system (measures 91-99) continues the theme with more complex melodic and harmonic developments across all three staves.

By substituting the standard minuet (or *scherzo*, for that matter) with a polka, Fry was arguing, Bristow had updated the conventional symphonic structure to suit his American audiences.⁵³ The symphony’s namesake, Jullien, wrote dozens of polkas and was one of

⁵² *New York Daily Tribune*, March 3, 1856.

⁵³ Though in a less radical way than Fry himself, who dramatically altered the standard symphonic mold.

the primary catalysts for the genre's popularity in the United States.⁵⁴ Willis commented that the movement's theme had "truly a slight reminiscence of Jullien," who was still iconic two years after his departure.⁵⁵

Despite the flashes of an American identity detected by Willis, and later by Fry, most critics still found reasons to decry Bristow's music as too derivative of European models. With a nod toward the success of Bristow's opera *Rip Van Winkle* the year before, the music reviewer for *Putnam's Monthly* called the work "a serious mistake" on Bristow's part.⁵⁶ Seconding Fry's admiration of the second movement, but finding little else to praise, the reviewer added that "There is a dash of originality, and of something very like power in the scherzo of the symphony; but persons afflicted with an over action of the memory must have found themselves unpleasantly familiar with too many of our 'tone-poet's' imaginations." The reviewer for *Dwight's Journal of Music*, an anonymous correspondent from New York, echoed Saroni's remarks that Bristow's music is like a chessboard of musical history:

Its chief fault is a pretty serious one: a decided want of originality. It is full of reminiscences of other composers; Weber, Mendelssohn, Spohr, Haydn, Mozart, and I know not what others, seem to be playing ball with snatches of their melodies, and tossing them to and fro in merry confusion. In listening to it, I found myself constantly thinking: 'What is that? Where have I heard this? I surely know this melody,' etc.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ For Jullien's influence on American popular musical culture, including the polka, see George C. Foreman, "The Remarkable Monsieur Jullien and His Grand American Tour," in Frank J. Cipolla and Donald Hunsberger, eds., *Wind Band Activity in and Around New York, ca. 1830–1950* (Van Nuys, CA: Alfred, 2007), 1–30.

⁵⁵ "The Philharmonic Society," *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 14 (Mar. 8, 1856): 110.

⁵⁶ *Putnam's Monthly Magazine of American Literature, Science and Art* 7, no. 30 (1856): 333.

⁵⁷ *Dwight's Journal of Music* 8, no. 23 (1856): 180.

This critic, like the others, most enjoyed the polka, but despite its “freshness and originality,” it “savored of Mozart and Haydn.” The harshest review, however, came from the pen of Theodore Hagen, a German critic for the *Musical Review and Gazette*. He sardonically complained that “the motivos [main themes] are quite common, lacking entirely in nobility of expression, [and] there even seems to be no striving for fine traits in instrumentation and in the polyphonic treatment of the work, if the noble art of polyphony can be applied to the harmonic development of Mr. Bristow’s motivos.”⁵⁸ Instead of hearing traces of the Viennese masters in the symphony, Hagen, who was appalled at the substitution of the minuet with a polka, thought the music “reminded us of the so-called symphonies of Küffner, and similar composers, whose compositions were formerly played by some bands of amateurs, or in some garden-concerts.”⁵⁹

Repetitive and ambivalent comparisons to other composers reflected the inability of American reviewers to develop a critical framework for assessing and evaluating new compositions, especially those that tested boundaries of symphonic convention. Bristow’s Second was written by an American only added to the difficulty, because premieres of “new” works by Schumann or Mendelssohn (for example) were usually anticipated in the press by published reviews from overseas reprinted in the local journals. Like reviewers in Europe, American critics heard bits and snatches of familiar melodies or recognized orchestration patterns and formal structures that reminded them of older composers, but that is simply because Bristow was writing in a similar idiom—in part at their behest, no less. They rarely pinpointed specific passages that could have served as Bristow’s

⁵⁸ *Musical Review and Gazette*, March 8, 1856, 68.

⁵⁹ Josef Küffner (1776–1856) wrote at least seven symphonies during his lifetime. See A. Rosenkranz, *Novello’s Catalogue of Orchestral Music: A Manual of the Orchestral Literature of All Countries* (London: Novello and Co., 1902), 56.

models, and they never accused him of outright plagiarism.⁶⁰ With sporadic live concerts (not careful score study), as their primary source of musical knowledge, most critics simply had no way of knowing how original or unoriginal Bristow's music truly was.⁶¹ In her forthcoming edition of the "Jullien" Symphony, Katherine Preston has exhaustively cataloged the possible sources of Bristow's inspiration for the work, all of which explain the presence of certain musical gestures.⁶² Such cataloging, which demonstrates well how thoroughly imbued Bristow's music was with the styles of his contemporaries, does not adequately capture the individuality of his compositional voice relative to the closed system of works performed by the Philharmonic. His music was European, but it was also born on American soil—an important point for Bristow.

Many critics and performers were content to build an American musical culture that mirrored that of Europe. Yet in order for Bristow to put his patriotic ideals into practice, he had to confront the added problem of *creating* music that simultaneously fell within European traditions and expressed an original American voice. As his spat with the Philharmonic demonstrated, Bristow equated his sense of personal identity with his identity as a native-born American citizen. Aside from the "Americanisms" mentioned briefly by Willis and Fry—the first movement's second theme and the inclusion of a polka, respectively--Bristow's Second Symphony does contain elements that place it near the forefront of symphonic development in the 1850s. One of the most obvious is his attempt at cyclic integration, the technique of unifying movements with specific shared

⁶⁰ Unlike Fry, who was constantly plagued by accusations of plagiarism.

⁶¹ Fry reiterated this complaint several times, because he believed that critics rarely discussed specific musical features. They only gave general impressions (as many of the reviews above show).

⁶² For example, she notes the gestural similarity between the openings of Bristow's Second and Beethoven's Third. See Preston, Bristow edition, §5.

musical parameters.⁶³ In the development section of the first movement (panned by Willis as excessively modulatory), a trombone solo enters startlingly as a third contrapuntal voice in a delicate lyrical duet between the first flute and first clarinet. The trombone appears in an unconventionally lyrical role again in the third movement (*Adagio*) as it states the movement's opening melody:

Example 3.9. G.F. Bristow, Symphony No. 2, III, mm. 8–16



The recurrence of this unusual sound in two separate movements suggests that Bristow was attempting to integrate the symphonic cycle, at least in part. There is more evidence of cyclic integration in the melodic shape of each movement's primary theme (See **Examples 3.10A–D**). Like the brooding cello-bassoon melody that opened the first movement, the primary theme of the polka movement also begins with a noticeable syncopated anacrusis. In the *Adagio*, reprises of the primary melody often begin with the anacrusis tied to the downbeat. Finally, the primary theme of the finale presents this syncopation in a slightly different way.

In addition to the symphony's relatively advanced cyclic integration, it also contains a high degree of technical complexity. Beyond the “modern violinism” of the

⁶³ The technique was common in symphonies by Haydn, Beethoven, and Schumann, many of which Bristow had performed with the Philharmonic.

Example 3.10. Cyclic Integration of Melodies in Bristow's Second Symphony

A. Mvmt. I, mm. 20–29 (Primary Theme)

Bsn./Vcl.

25 *pp*

B. Mvmt. II, mm. 1–6 (Primary Theme)

Vln. I

C. Mvmt. III, mm. 16–20 (Primary Theme)

Vln. I

D. Mvmt. IV, mm. 3–7 (Primary Theme)

Vln. I

finale referenced by Fry in his review, the third movement has passages with a rhythmic richness anticipating Brahms. Like the slow movement of Mendelssohn's Third Symphony, the *Adagio* exhibits this textural and rhythmic complexity in a re-orchestrated statement of the primary theme; it is also similar to the texture of Berlioz's slow movements (**Example 3.11**). Although none of these techniques was original *per se*, that

Example 3.11. G.F. Bristow, Symphony No. 2, III, mm. 100–108

The musical score for Example 3.11, G.F. Bristow, Symphony No. 2, III, mm. 100–108, is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 100 to 104, and the second system covers measures 105 to 108. The score is for four staves: Vln. I, Vln. II, Vla., and D.B. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The music features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and rests. The Vln. I and Vln. II parts are highly active, with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The Vla. part has a more melodic line with some rests. The Vcl. and D.B. parts have a more rhythmic, pulsating quality. The score is divided into two systems, with the second system starting at measure 105.

Bristow chose to incorporate some of the most advanced contemporary techniques into his composition shows that he was working within a conventional idiom while also trying to create a progressive American strand of the symphonic tradition. This strand still relied on older models but it gave a direction for the future that he would explore in his next symphony.

Bristow developed this advanced style of symphonic composition in his Symphony No. 3 in F-sharp minor, Op. 26, which the Philharmonic premiered in 1859. Unlike the first movement of his Second Symphony, which is in a standard sonata-allegro form, the analogous movement in the Third Symphony tested the form's boundaries. The movement opens sparsely with a brooding unison theme in the cellos and basses (**Example 3.12a**). After a re-orchestrated restatement of the theme, Bristow uses a major-mode variation on this melody as the beginning of the modulatory transition (Transition

A, **Example 3.12b**). The secondary theme (**Example 3.12c**), which is a series of rolling scalar passages in the first violin and clarinet, is the most novel part of the movement: it is accompanied by a harp, an instrument never called for in the Philharmonic's standard symphonic repertoire. This theme is followed by more transitional material with its own thematic identity (Transition B, **Example 3.12d**). The exposition concludes with a brief coda derived from previous materials. The development appears loosely modeled on the development from the finale of Mendelssohn's Third Symphony, itself a complex sonata-allegro form. As in Mendelssohn's Third, the development makes heavy use of materials found in the expository transitions, not the themes themselves; Bristow's development centers on Transition A's major-mode variant of the primary theme and the rhythmic drive of Transition B.

The development, like Mendelssohn's, also features an extended fugal treatment of expository materials, but in this case it is the primary theme, not an expository transition. This section of the movement concludes with a statement of the exposition's secondary theme; it is once again accompanied by arpeggios in the harp reminiscent of a *cadenza*-retransition found in many solo concertos with orchestra. Whereas the development seems to have a clear structural model, the recapitulation is thoroughly original. It begins with a *fortissimo tutti* re-orchestration of the primary theme, not the sparse opening of the exposition. Transition B, not the expected Transition A, follows immediately and is developed further in a fugato passage. After a restatement of Transition B materials, the secondary theme appears in the expected location. The rest of the movement, which is a significant expansion of a typical recapitulation, concludes with an unusual sequence of reformulations of the expository materials. It concludes with

Example 3.12. Themes in G.F. Bristow, Symphony No. 3, I

A. Mvmt. I, Primary Theme (Violoncello/Double Bass)



B. Mvmt. I, Transition A (Violin I)



C. Mvmt. I, Secondary Theme (Violin I, Clarinet in A)



D. Mvmt. I, Transition B (Strings)



the opening theme, which returns in its dark unison presentation only in the movement's final measures. **Table 3.1** below outlines the movement's structure.

Table 3.1. Unconventional Sonata-Allegro Form in G.F. Bristow, Symphony No. 3

Sonata Form	Structural Units	Key Areas
Exposition	Primary Theme	F# minor
	Transition A	A major/modulation
	Secondary Theme (harp accompaniment)	C# Major
	Transition B	Modal shift to C# minor
	Coda	C# minor
Development	Alternations of Transitions A and B; A predominant	F# Major; G Major; Ab Major; B minor fugue; F# minor fugue; modulation
	Secondary theme (harp accompaniment serving as retransition)	Modulations through C Major and Db Major ending on chromatic motion to tonic
Recapitulation	Primary Theme re-orchestration	F# minor
	Transition B fugato / Transition B	E minor/Gb minor/F# minor
	Secondary Theme	F# Major
	Transition B developed	F# minor
	Transition A developed	B Major
	Transition B	F# minor
	Primary theme <i>tutti</i>	F# minor
	Primary theme unison	F# minor

The Third Symphony exhibits several traits that Bristow borrowed from other composers, but this did not stand in the way of the work's bold assertion of an American identity. Critics typically noted (and frowned upon) the inclusion in the concert program of poems that inspired each movement, a gesture taken directly from Spohr's Fourth Symphony, which the Philharmonic had performed most recently in 1857; and most praised the fairy-like Mendelssohnian scherzo. Although no critics specifically noted the first movement's structural originality, their reactions proved that they believed Bristow had successfully assimilated the Germanic symphonic tradition and had developed an individual voice within that tradition. Though there was ample opportunity, the relatively long notice of the work in *Dwight's Journal of Music* made no mention of the work's similarity to other composers. Instead, the reviewer claimed that it was "a vast

improvement upon his former work of like character...[and] his work has the happy quality of being popular enough to please the multitude, and yet possessing sufficient depth and *intrinsic worth* to preserve it from being trivial.”⁶⁴ Theodore Hagen, who had disparaged the Second Symphony, was much more encouraged by this production: “Mr. Bristow’s Symphony was well received, and deservedly so, for it points, on the part of the author, to hard studies, which we feel confident will be crowned with ultimate and legitimate success.”⁶⁵ Willis, however, gave Bristow the highest praise possible:

The fact that it included a creditable composition, in classic proportions, was, of itself, a good and commendable feature; not simply because the composition was good, nor because it was of American origin, *but because it was American and good*. [...] The work as a whole is very commendable, and perfectly convinces one that the author is a thorough musician, and possesses a mastery over orchestral mysteries.⁶⁶

It was not until Bristow found, at least in the ears of the critics, a sufficiently original voice that his attempts at emulation garnered recognition not simply as music by an American but as American music.

Bristow’s music and the critical responses to it illustrate the inherent complexity underlying the culture of emulation. In the mode of thought driving Bristow and many of the critics, emulating Europe did not necessarily entail the wholesale subsuming of an American identity into that of the Old World. Instead, the United States had a separate identity, but one that was built firmly on European foundations. For Bristow, this meant pursuing the same goals as other post-Beethovenian symphonists: an individual compositional voice. In his case, that voice happened to be American. As his missives in

⁶⁴ *Dwight’s Journal of Music* 15, no. 1 (1859): 6. Emphasis added.

⁶⁵ *Musical Review and Gazette*, April 2, 1859, 98–99.

⁶⁶ *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 21 (Apr. 2, 1859): 210. Emphasis added.

the conflict with the New York Philharmonic show, his personal sense of American national identity was central to his sense of self. Unsurprisingly, his music has identifiable traces of exceptionalism. These fleeting moments, however, are the exceptions that prove the rule. He did not feel the need to forge new paths, only his own.

From Emulation to Alienation: Bristow and the New-York American Music Association

The critical reception of Bristow's first three symphonies reveals that even someone working within the dominant culture of emulation faced resistance when trying to construct an American musical identity. This resistance was difficult for Bristow to swallow, because as his tirade against the Philharmonic had made clear, he believed that native-born Americans deserved equal, if not preferential, treatment by the nation's established musical institutions. Although his American Philharmonic never materialized, Bristow lucked into another opportunity to test his "all-American" ideas when in 1855, the year after the Philharmonic controversy, Charles Jerome Hopkins proposed to create a chamber music society devoted to compositions by native-born Americans. Hopkins (1836–1898), a pianist and composer, was a precocious nineteen-year old who had been a musical celebrity in his hometown of Burlington, Vermont and who wanted to make a name for himself in New York. Over the next three concert seasons (1856–1858), Hopkins organized ten concerts under the auspices of his organization, the New York American Musical Association. At first, Bristow supported the idea whole-heartedly, but as the goals of the organization began to change, he emphatically withdrew his support. Whereas it was originally intended to support only native-born Americans, Hopkins succumbed to critical pressure by programming works by immigrants and even some

non-residents. Bristow, who had campaigned hard for the total support of Americans, could not abide by the change. This brief episode in Bristow's career reveals that despite his success within the culture of emulation, he nevertheless struggled intensely to find an identity as an American composer, even among like-minded friends.

In the wake of the success following Jullien's masterful performances of works by Fry and Bristow in 1853 and 1854, Hopkins proposed to create a permanent organization devoted to American music. Briefly referencing the contretemps between Bristow and the Philharmonic, Hopkins pitched the creation of an association devoted exclusively to American composers in a letter he submitted to Willis's journal:

It is the opinion of many, and it has often been asserted, more especially by foreigners, that America can boast of no classical music.

Now such an assertion only shows the ignorance of the perpetrator thereof, for, as our efforts thus far in collecting American musical compositions have proved, it does exist, and to a greater extent than many imagine. But heretofore there has been no chance for a native composer to place his music before the public in such a manner as to have it fairly tried and impartially judged.

We speak now more particularly with regard to classical chamber music. [...]

We have already in our possession...instrumental pieces from the pen of...Mr. George F. Bristow, the talented conductor of the New York Harmonic Society.

But to all those who object to it on the ground that American music is not good music, it is un-classical, plagiaristic, or unfit to be compared with German productions, we would say, "Give it a fair trial." If Americans do not know how to compose now, it does not follow that they never will know how. Let them try it.⁶⁷

The tone and the substance of the letter mirrored the assertions made earlier by Bristow and Fry that Americans can compose at least as well as Europeans but need a fair trial of their music; the specifically anti-German sentiment likely appealed to Bristow, who probably heard a similar pitch from Hopkins in person. Critics applauded the effort.

⁶⁷ "The Cause of American Music," *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 12 (June 16, 1855): 79.

Giving notice of the first concert sponsored by the organization, now more officially called the New York American Musical Association, Charles Bailey Seymour remarked in the *New York Times* that “an investment of fifty cents may be profitably made in what we believe to be a deserving undertaking.[...] There are in our midst men who are capable, we believe, of giving to art a new and national impetus. They have waited their opportunity in vain. Tonight they try to seize it. Give them a helping hand.”⁶⁸

As Hopkins suggested in his epistolary manifesto, Bristow played a significant, though not always positive, role in the Association’s affairs. His works appeared on at least three concert programs.⁶⁹ During the autumn and winter months leading up the second season, which began on December 30, 1856, Bristow conferred with Hopkins about a more earnest structuring and organization of the Association.⁷⁰ *Dwight’s Journal of Music* reported on December 16, just two weeks before the concert, that “at a recent meeting of the Society, Charles J. Hopkins...was elected President. [...] The consulting committee includes the well-known names of Richard Storrs Willis, of the *Musical World*, Geo. F. Bristow, and George H. Curtis.”⁷¹ Although there was no constitution drawn up at that time, Bristow also signed a document that promised his participation during the second season.⁷² Nevertheless, Bristow gave Hopkins trouble during and

⁶⁸ *New York Daily Times*, February 16, 1856.

⁶⁹ These included two arias from his 1855 opera, *Rip Van Winkle*, not his symphonies or other instrumental music.

⁷⁰ During the middle of the first concert season, Willis publicly urged Hopkins to solidify the organization with by-laws, etc. *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 14 (Apr. 12, 1856): 173.

⁷¹ *Dwight’s Journal of Music* 10, no. 12 (1856): 93.

⁷² This document, which was also signed by Louis Moreau Gottschalk and William Mason, is now housed at the New York Public Library. Although it is now dated December 30, 1856, Hopkins’s diaries suggest that it was signed much earlier, at the latest by September 16, when his diary entry reveals that he was using the document to woo performers into agreeing to perform at the Association’s concerts. He could

between the Association's first two seasons. When Hopkins asked if Bristow would pay a fee to have his works performed, he reportedly replied, "Now Hopkins you know that I have nothing to do with it, but call upon me next week and I will give you a — — dollar!!!"⁷³ During the September and October preceding the second season, Bristow continually dodged meetings scheduled to set forth a constitution and by-laws. Hopkins finally confronted Bristow about his seemingly intentional lack of participation in the Association's organization. He noted in his diary on October 25, 1856:

Went to Bristow, who refuses to take any particularly active part in our society since we have determined not to confine ourselves to the performance of Native music but also to bring forward that composed by foreigners residing in the country, provided their principles are republican. However, he promised to take part in the quartett [*sic*] playing.⁷⁴

Things got worse on November 11, when Bristow rescinded his offer even to perform as a violinist. Hopkins was furious and commented in his diary, "Where is the end of these constant drawbacks, and discouraging instances of bad faith! Bristow you are a Blackguard!"⁷⁵ An aria of Bristow's appeared on the Association's first and second concerts of the season (December 30 and February 27, respectively), but never again prior to the group's demise in the spring of 1858.⁷⁶

According to Hopkins, Bristow withdrew from the Association's affairs because the latter opposed the inclusion of immigrant or foreign compositions on the programs;

have added the date later upon gathering all the signatures. Charles Jerome Hopkins Journals, Houghton Library, Harvard College Library, Harvard University.

⁷³ I have faithfully reproduced what is in the diary. One can only surmise what expletive Bristow used on this occasion. Hopkins, Diary, January 26, 1856.

⁷⁴ Hopkins, Diary, October 25, 1856.

⁷⁵ Hopkins, Diary, November 11, 1856.

⁷⁶ It is unclear why Bristow allowed his works to be performed even though he withdrew his support; perhaps he had already paid his fee and wanted to get his money's worth.

this policy was a significant shift from Hopkins's original plan, and it would have dramatic consequences for the Association. In his review of the Association's first concert in February of 1856, Charles Seymour briefly quoted a passage from the concert's prospectus, no doubt written by Hopkins:

We do not wish it to be thought that the object of our enterprise is an earnest and total renunciation of all except native American music; but we do wish it clearly to be understood, that we consider the prevalent opinion that the birth of an individual on American soil renders "null and void" his claim to original musical genius a disgrace to the age we live in.⁷⁷

In December of the same year, just a few short weeks after Hopkins wrote a constitution for the Association and Bristow subsequently left, *Dwight's Journal* reported that the Association officially allowed non-native works to be included—for a fee (which Bristow also resented): "Though intended as an *American* society, and as such presenting special claims to public regard, it is by no means proscriptive in its regulations. *Any* resident composer has a right to present his works for public presentation by the Society, on the payment of a fee of \$5.00."⁷⁸ The policy became even more relaxed in February of 1857—the middle of the second season—when a piano reduction of Franz Liszt's *Les Preludes* appeared on the program. The critic George Henry Curtis expressed his irritation in Willis's journal, "We had music by native American composers, by foreigners naturalized and *unnaturalized*, and one piece by a European who has never visited these shores. Is it not time that the Name of the Society, as well as one or two

⁷⁷ *New York Daily Times*, February 18, 1856.

⁷⁸ *Dwight's Journal of Music* 10, no. 12 (1856): 93. Emphasis in the original. Willis, too, did not appreciate the fee. Commenting in his journal, he noted, "A composition that is fit to be performed ought not to be subjected to the ordeal of being pitted against its decided inferior simply because the latter has been whistled in to the tune of \$5." *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 17 (Apr. 25, 1857): 259.

objectionable by-laws of the constitution be changed?”⁷⁹ Evidently happy with the inclusion of foreign works on the Association’s programs, the critic Theodore Hagen recommended an even more radical policy change after the end of the second season, “If the programmes of this young Association have only three numbers by natives done in an artistically satisfactory manner, while the rest of the music is the best of old and modern masters performed by able foreigners...we think the object of encouragement will be better attained than in any other way.”⁸⁰ Hagen meant well with his advice and assured his readers that this was in the Association’s best interest, but his suggestions would have so greatly altered the Association’s complexion that it would become unrecognizable. Hopkins initially ignored Hagen’s advice during the third season, and after it was announced that the Association would disband after its second concert of the season, Hagen published a scathing critique, “Had they adopted the policy which we always advocated...they would not have been compelled to close for want of patronage.”⁸¹ As luck would have it, Hopkins nevertheless managed to organize a third concert for the season that included works by Americans alongside pieces by Donizetti and Mendelssohn, two accepted greats; the variety appeased Hagen, but this concert was the Association’s last.

Bristow’s involvement with Hopkins’s New York American Music Association sheds more light on the interplay between a perceived personal identity as an American and the culture of emulation that dominated the American musical landscape. Although a piece of Bristow’s was performed alongside one of Liszt’s most recent masterworks in

⁷⁹ *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 17 (Mar. 7, 1857): 148.

⁸⁰ *Musical Review and Gazette*, June 13, 1857, 178.

⁸¹ *Musical Review and Gazette*, February 20, 1858, 51.

February of 1857, it was no honor for Bristow, who had vied against European masterworks in the New York Philharmonic for a decade and a half; the young Hopkins, who had only recently arrived on New York's big stage, simply did not have this experience and saw nothing wrong in it. Bristow probably took the policy changes as a personal affront, which explains his passive aggressive neglect of the Association. Bristow's absence puzzled some onlookers. Not privy to Bristow's flat rejection of Hopkins, Willis was upset by the poor quality of American compositions on the Association's programs:

While we wish to see the native music of America advanced in this community, we think that the director might find better compositions to bring before the public...while we have such *good* native composers among us as G.F. Bristow and Wm. H. Fry, among others. [...] To this we must say that the Association would doubtless have been happy to perform any thing of Fry's or Bristow's if they had been supplied by these gentlemen with any thing to perform.⁸²

And why would Bristow supply the fledgling organization with his compositions, when he could simply use the New York Philharmonic as an outlet to achieve the same goals, a choice he most certainly made the following year when the orchestra performed his Third Symphony?

As an emulator himself, Bristow seemed to find no way out of the dominant culture of emulation. His efforts at forging a national identity with his symphonies, while noble and somewhat successful (especially in his Second and Third symphonies), reinforced the notion that the United States was an extension of European musical culture. For many, such as John Sullivan Dwight and Theodore Hagen, this was an ideal scenario. For Bristow, it created an identity crisis. Summing up the effects of the culture

⁸² *The Musical World and New York Musical Times* 19 (May 8, 1858): 291.

of emulation on American composers, Charles Bailey Seymour, who, incidentally, panned Bristow's Third Symphony, despondently wrote:

The American musician unfortunately is wholly indifferent to nationality in art. As a general thing he is nothing but a superfluous appendage to the skirts of Germany; he sings German songs, plays German music, and drinks German lager beer...*He distrusts himself*...It is very foolish for a man to think that he can do everything better than another, but it is deplorable to find a man who thinks that others can do everything better than he.⁸³

As Bristow's contretemps with the Philharmonic and his withdrawal from the American Music Association demonstrate, he was certainly not indifferent to nationality in art; it meant everything to him. Perhaps sensing an inescapable whirlpool of German infiltration fed by his compositional emulation, Bristow never again composed an emulative symphony. Instead, he nodded toward Fry with his Fourth and Fifth Symphonies: one is based on the story of the pioneers, and the other depicts the glories of Niagara Falls.⁸⁴ He, too, constructed a new America, but only after giving up on the Old World.

⁸³ *New York Daily Times*, February 16, 1858.

⁸⁴ The chronology of these two symphonies falls well outside the scope of this dissertation, though the question of Bristow's seemingly radical shift is tantalizing.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPANDING THE NATION: IMPERIALIST TENDENCIES IN THE SYMPHONIES OF ANTHONY PHILIP HEINRICH AND LOUIS MOREAU GOTTSCHALK

The symphonies of William Henry Fry and George Frederick Bristow manifest the two competing visions of America's musical identity that dominated mid-century thought: exceptionalism and emulation, respectively. Not only were their symphonies the most widely performed and heard, but their respective approaches to national identity set the stage for future discussions about the genre's progress and, more generally, about the nation's musical future. Fry and Bristow, however, were not the only mid-century composers who constructed an American identity through the genre of the symphony. In their own idiosyncratic manner, Anthony Philip Heinrich (1781–1861) and Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829–1869) offered novel musical visions of American nationhood in their own attempts at the genre. Unlike Fry and Bristow, neither Heinrich nor Gottschalk participated in boisterous debates about American composers and their rightful place in the nation's musical landscape. This does not mean that their music was any less politically charged or motivated. Heinrich and Gottschalk constructed American identities with music inspired by the continental frontier and the rest of the Western hemisphere, areas that were far afield from the interests of Fry and Bristow but which were at the forefront of political discussion in the United States. As New Yorkers, Fry and Bristow were at the center of the American classical music world. Both Heinrich and Gottschalk, by contrast, spent most of their careers outside America's musical centers and

even outside the country altogether, often for extended periods. This distance powerfully shaped the methods through which their symphonies constructed national identities, as well as the national identities being created.

Although he was an American by choice after emigrating from Bohemia, Heinrich tended to view his new homeland primarily through the eyes of an outsider. Like many immigrants, he was keenly interested in America's natural wonders—its landscape and its creatures; he was also fascinated by Native American history and rituals. Unlike the average American, however, Heinrich's interest in these subjects bordered on obsession. His symphonies, which attempt to depict these subjects in graphic detail using an eclectic mixture of conventional and unconventional musical styles, have the detached air of a foreigner's travelogue. Gottschalk, on the other hand, was an openly patriotic American but chose to concertize for many years in Europe and, later, in South America and the Caribbean. His symphonies, which were written and performed in Havana, Cuba and Montevideo, Uruguay, blend local vernacular musical styles with American tunes and sophisticated compositional techniques. Because of their evocations of the exotic, both composers' symphonies reveal imagined constructions of America that lay far outside the musical mainstream represented by Fry and Bristow on the one hand and the German canon being shaped by the New York Philharmonic on the other.

This designation "outside the musical mainstream," however, does not reveal enough about the potency of the American identities that the symphonies by Heinrich and Gottschalk construct. In both cases, the symphonies' musical subjects cast a much wider net over what subjects might be considered "American" at all. For Heinrich, "America" included not only the vast landscape and natural beauty of the frontier, but also the

indigenous peoples that were rapidly becoming displaced by encroaching settlers.

Gottschalk, on the other hand, was concerned less with North America itself than with the role the United States would play in the affairs of the rest of the Western hemisphere.

Because of their shared interest in the subjects outside of mainstream American culture—or, as they understood it, “civilization”—both Heinrich and Gottschalk wrote symphonies that participated in contemporary discourses of expansionist American diplomacy and foreign relations. In stark contrast to Fry and Bristow, they reversed the idea that America was a struggling nation in the midst of decolonization. The America of Gottschalk and Heinrich, like that of many of their contemporaries, was destined to expand beyond its political borders and to overtake the surrounding, “uncivilized” cultures.

From Immigrant to Imperialist: The Native American Symphonies of Anthony Philip Heinrich

In his own day, Anthony Philip Heinrich was, ironically, one of the nation’s most emblematic composers. He began his career as a Bohemian merchant after inheriting a lucrative import-export business from an uncle. After the devastation left in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars, his business collapsed entirely and he sailed for America in 1816. Following a brief stint as director of a musical theater in Pittsburgh, Heinrich traveled on foot to Kentucky, where he lived until 1823. It was there that he began composing in earnest; as he put it, he was “thrown, as it were, by *discordant events*, far from the emporiums of musical science, into the isolated wilds of nature, where [I] invoked [my] Muse, tutored only by ALMA MATER.”¹ While living in Kentucky, he produced dozens

¹ A.P. Heinrich, Preface to *The Dawning of Music in Kentucky* (1820), quoted in William Treat Upton, *Anthony Philip Heinrich: A Nineteenth-Century Composer in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), 51–54. Emphasis in the original.

of compositions that were published in two volumes, *The Dawning of Music in Kentucky* and *The Western Minstrel*, the size of which surpassed any other collection of pieces by a single American composer of secular music up to that time. Even at this early date, he recognized that it might be his destiny to be considered a specifically “American” composer despite his ethnicity as a Bohemian. In a letter thanking John Rowe Parker, a Boston critic for a notice of *The Dawning of Music in Kentucky* in *The Euterpiad*, Heinrich explained:

I can well assent, that in publishing my humble innocent Firstlings I have acted with every liberal Sentiment & View—From a sincere attachment to America, my newly adopted Country, especially Kentucky, thought I proper to exert myself in Order to prove an honest warm hearted spirited national Minstrel—Small indeed is the Number of Composers in our young musical Commonwealth—Not one yet, I presume has here stept forward to produce a Volume of Compositions, presented in a Toute ensemble of Varieties of any Magnitude, and calculated to travel or exhibit Itself abroad—I have at all events attempted it, and under Privations, Difficulties, and Hardships which might almost raise me to a musical Martyr of Patience & Sufferance if to nothing else.²

In a later review of *The Dawning of Music in Kentucky*, Parker agreed wholeheartedly with Heinrich, perhaps exaggeratedly so, and created a moniker that has persistently followed the composer to the present day:

[Heinrich] seems at once to have possessed himself of the key which unlocks him the temple of science and enables him to explore with fearless security the mysterious labyrinth of harmony. He may, therefore, justly be styled *the Beethoven* of America, and, as such he is actually considered by the few who have taken the trouble to ascertain his merits.³

² A.P. Heinrich to John Rowe Parker, 1 September 1820, John Rowe Parker Correspondence, Van Pelt Rare Books Library, University of Pennsylvania.

³ “Criticism.” *The Dawning of Music in Kentucky*,” *The Euterpiad; or, Musical Intelligencer, and Ladies Gazette* 3, no. 2 (1822): 46. Heinrich was not the first to be compared to a great European composer. Supply Belcher (1751–1836), an eighteenth-century American psalmodist, was also known as “The Handel of Maine.”

From the earliest stages of his career, then, audiences expected not only great music from his pen, but music that would represent America to the rest of the world.

Heinrich opportunistically capitalized on these expectations throughout his career and, like Fry and Bristow, felt the urgency of creating a specifically American musical milieu.⁴ Just after Heinrich left Kentucky for Boston in 1823, the *Boston Daily Advertiser* gave notice of a concert of his music and claimed that “Mr. A.P. Heinrich...is indeed the first regular or general *American* composer—the first who...has almost exclusively devoted himself to the sublime study of harmony. His fame is rising fast, and America will have good reason to be proud of him.”⁵ Beyond marketing himself as “the first” American composer, Heinrich also attempted to validate his authenticity as a genuine American composer by writing works with uniquely and overtly American programs. For example, at the first major concert devoted exclusively to his own compositions, given on June 16, 1842 at the Broadway Tabernacle in New York City, Heinrich led an uncharacteristically large ensemble of over forty instrumentalists and sixty singers in a performance of the overture to the first part of an oratorio, *The Pilgrim Fathers*, based on the storied landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock.⁶ The concert was a success, and in the wake of this triumph, Heinrich tried to secure financial subscriptions in order to publish the oratorio in a bound score of over 500 pages. As further proof of his patriotism, the advertisement noted, “The entire work...will be presented as a LEGACY

⁴ For more on Heinrich’s efforts as an opportunist, see Michael Broyles, *Mavericks and Other Traditions in American Music* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 39–68.

⁵ *Boston Daily Advertiser*, May 29, 1923, quoted in Upton, *Heinrich*, 70. In keeping with the general practice of the time, Heinrich almost certainly wrote this advertisement himself.

⁶ One reviewer remarked, “This was performed by the largest orchestra ever assembled in this country...complete success.” A.P. Heinrich, Scrapbook, Music Division, Library of Congress, 50.

to the Country he has adopted,—THE LAND OF WASHINGTON!!”⁷ With bold capital letters invoking the name of Washington, no patriotic American could doubt his authenticity.

Despite all of his efforts to convince local audiences of his authenticity as an American composer, Heinrich’s opportunism led him to express patriotic sentiments for *other* nations as well. While living in New York in 1844, Heinrich composed a “Royal Symphony” called *Victoria and Albion’s Young Hope, the Prince of Wales*. Seven years later, he sent this and other movements he had added in the meantime across the Atlantic in a musical package he called *The American Eagle’s Flight to the World’s Fair: Grande Sinfonia Carratteristica for full orchestra, dedicated to all nations*. The music was sent directly to Queen Victoria herself, presumably in an attempt to earn her patronage, but she did not send Heinrich any money, only her “official acceptance” of the gift. This same work, under the new title of *National Memories; or, Gran Sinfonia Britanica* was scheduled to be performed at an 1853 benefit concert for Heinrich in New York but was dropped at the last minute due to insufficient rehearsal time. One can only speculate how the work would have gone over with the audience, but with a first movement that contains full statements of “God Save the Queen” and “Rule Britannia” followed by an extended set of variations on the former, it would not have done much to heighten the New York public’s opinion of Heinrich as an “American” composer. In a similar episode that foreshadowed Bristow’s 1854 contretemps with the New York Philharmonic, Heinrich tried to convince the orchestra to perform his 1848 work, *The Empress Queen Maria Theresia and the Magyars; “Noriamur pro Rege nostro;” Sinfonia Patriotica-dramatica*, a strange symphony based on the obscure 1741 coronation of Maria Theresa

⁷ Heinrich, Scrapbook, 37. The music was never published, almost certainly on account of lack of funds.

(1717–1780) as Queen of Hungary in the midst of the War of Austrian Succession. After repeated inquiries with the Philharmonic that went unanswered, Heinrich published his correspondence with the orchestra’s leadership in the *New York Dispatch* and complained loudly about being rebuffed. Whether it was annoyed by Heinrich’s persistence or it found his music wanting, the Philharmonic never relented. Both of these episodes proved that Heinrich’s allegiance to the United States, though perhaps genuine in spirit, was at times an allegiance of convenience. When considered in the light of his extensive European travels, narrated in exquisite detail by his biographer, William Treat Upton, Heinrich’s opportunistic musical exploitation of several national images calls into question his claims of authenticity as an American composer.

Whether Heinrich truly was an “American” composer or not, however, is less important than the ways in which his variable national allegiances and fluid sense of personal national identity shaped his approach to symphonic composition. Each of his fifteen symphonies, less than a handful of which were ever performed during his lifetime, is a musical depiction of historical events, historical figures, or natural phenomena. The utterly graphic realism of the programs describing the narrated events gives each work the air of an eyewitness, quite unlike Fry’s programs, which are filled with metaphor and allegory. Heinrich’s symphonies, then, function in many ways like the popular nineteenth-century literary genre of the travelogue. Unlike true travelogues, these works do not represent the composer’s own impressions of lived events, but rather his responses to these events *as if* he had been there. Like the most artistic travelogues, Heinrich’s symphonies project exotic events with gripping narrative strategies, and it is within these narratives that Heinrich’s imagined America—as Benedict Anderson would put it—

comes into focus. Whereas Fry used an intricate system of musical and literary symbols to construct an American identity manifesting American ideals such as democracy, liberty, and the like, Heinrich always stayed one step removed from “America” as such and painted impressionistic scenes of America filtered through his quirky imagination.

Heinrich’s compositional strategy of musical “travel writing” pervades his entire symphonic output but is most evident in his symphonies based on Native American subjects. Reinforcing assessments of Heinrich’s Native American pieces made by some of his contemporaries such as John Sullivan Dwight, Michael Pisani has argued that Heinrich “was unable to find a musical language on an emotional and intellectual level with his subject matter that lends his works their extraordinary air of eccentricity.”⁸ Though writing nearly a century apart, both Dwight and Pisani noticed Heinrich’s detachment from his subject matter but did not address what images of Native America, and by extension America itself, Heinrich’s music actually constructs. By assimilating detached and eccentric representations of Native American rituals and historical figures into the musical fabric of conventional symphonic writing and his own “American” style, Heinrich fortified the image propagated by believers in Manifest Destiny of a continent that only time prevented Americans from dominating.

Heinrich’s Depictions of Native Americans in *The Mastodon*

Heinrich’s abiding interest in Native Americans manifested itself in the nine orchestral works and several other pieces he composed based on Native American

⁸ Michael Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 108.

subjects.⁹ Despite widespread agreement that these works musically depict Native Americans, there is little consensus about the conclusions that can be drawn from these representations. Like Pisani and Dwight, Michael Broyles detects a sense of cold detachment between Heinrich and the subjects of his music. Heinrich's compositions, he claims, present Native Americans as "idealized stereotypes, a Rousseauian innocent inhabiting the pristine forest."¹⁰ Wilbur Maust, by contrast, sees Heinrich's fascination as evidence of a genuine sympathy for actual Native Americans, who in the first half of the nineteenth century experienced countless upheavals brought on by ambitious white settlers and an even more ambitious United States government.¹¹ Andrew Stiller, who has edited several of Heinrich's compositions, including his Native American symphony *The Mastodon*, takes Maust's argument one step further by claiming that Heinrich used specific images of Native American life as autobiographical metaphors of his own experiences as a composer; not only was Heinrich sympathetic toward Native Americans, but he saw himself reflected in their stories.

Though each one is intriguing in its own right, none of these speculative assessments gives a concrete picture of how Heinrich actually represented Native Americans in his scores. Such lack of critical engagement with Heinrich's music has led to unsubstantiated or irrelevant conclusions about the meaning of his works. Pisani and Broyles both blithely criticize him for not using actual Native American music in his

⁹ For example, *Pushmataha, a Venerable Chief of a Western Tribe of Indians* (1831), *Complaint of Logan, the Mingo Chief* (1834), *The Treaty of William Penn with the Indians* (1834, rev. 1847), and *Pocahontas, fantasia romanza* (1837).

¹⁰ According to Broyles, Heinrich's music can therefore be classified alongside James Fenimore Cooper's Leatherstocking novels as "idealized, romantic" fiction. See Broyles, *Mavericks*, 60.

¹¹ For example, he conjectures that Heinrich used a particular snippet of music to symbolize "the perennial threat to Indian rights." See Wilbur Maust, "The Symphonies of Anthony Philip Heinrich Based on American Themes," (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1973), 181.

work, which would have been unconventional at the time; for Pisani, this made Heinrich's music politically high-minded but effectively impotent. Heinrich did not frequently make use of conventional gestures either, such as stylized pentatonic scales or thumping drum beats that were relatively common in European, especially French, depictions of Native Americans. Without these stock gestures that were more or less universally understood in the West, how is it possible, as Broyles claims, for Heinrich's *musical* Native Americans to be Rousseauian stereotypes? Maust praises Heinrich's admiration of the intelligence, eloquence, and courage of Native Americans but offers little musical evidence for this claim.¹² Relying primarily on musical programs, Stiller likewise offers little insight into the musical techniques through which Heinrich displayed empathy with his subjects. A careful analysis of one of Heinrich's symphonies on Native American themes—*The Mastodon*—reveals that each interpretation is partially true.¹³ He did not use “authentic” Native American music, which does lend his depictions an air of stereotyping, but he did not so bluntly stylize the music that it sounds hackneyed. Instead, he creates a unique sense of exotic difference between his specific depictions of Native Americans and the more conventional surrounding materials. While interesting on its own, Heinrich's exoticism is, more importantly, a window onto his broader conceptions of American national identity. Since the images of Native Americans in each work are embedded within larger musical contexts, it is possible to understand these works as metaphorical representations of “America” as a whole. This interplay

¹² The fact that he wrote symphonies about Native Americans at all must have been evidence enough. See Maust, “The Symphonies of Anthony Philip Heinrich,” 184–5.

¹³ Why Heinrich chose the word “Mastodon” for this Native American symphony is unclear. Editor Andrew Stiller suggests that the mammoth creature is a metaphor for the size and scope of the work. See Stiller's preface to Anthony Philip Heinrich, *The Mastodon: A Grand Symphony in Three Parts for Full Orchestra* (Philadelphia: Kallisti Music Press, 2001).

between the two images—“America” and “Native America”—is the site where Heinrich constructs an American identity.

Heinrich composed *The Mastodon* during an especially productive and busy period of his career in the 1840s. While living in New York City, he produced a grand musical festival that featured several of his larger works and presided at the meeting that set the founding of the New-York Philharmonic Society in motion, both of which occurred in 1842. According to William Treat Upton, his biographer, he was also a busy teacher at the time, though it is unclear what he was teaching—piano, violin, or composition.¹⁴ Most impressive, however, was his enormous compositional output during the mid-1840s. He wrote or substantially revised no fewer than twelve large orchestral works, including *The Mastodon* (ca. 1845). According to their titles, each movement of *The Mastodon* depicts a separate Native American subject: I. “Black Thunder, or the Patriarch of the Fox Tribe;” II. “The Elkhorn Pyramid, or the Indian’s Offering to the Spirit of the Prairies;” and III. “Shenandoah, an Oneida Chief.”¹⁵ Given his voluminous output during this period, Heinrich unsurprisingly recycled fragments of his music in various works, including this one. Such self-borrowing is a noticeable feature of *The Mastodon*, which heavily quotes two of his piano works, “Tyler’s Grand Veto Quickstep” (1844) and “The Students’ March” (ca. 1823, published in *The Sylviad*, vol.2); these two pieces, especially the first, help structure each movement’s unfolding narrative. These quotations and the development of their themes appear in sharp relief to the original musical material interspersed throughout the rest of the symphony. In each movement,

¹⁴ Upton, *Heinrich*, 177–8.

¹⁵ The work’s title, *The Mastodon*, offers no clues about an overarching narrative.

the interaction between the quotations and the surrounding materials is the primary mechanism with which an American identity is constructed.

The Mastodon's first movement, "Black Thunder," depicts a confrontation between "Native America" and "America" on the western frontier of the United States. The movement's title comes from a real meeting in the 1810s between several Native American leaders and the United States government officials concerning alleged treaty violations. Black Thunder, who resented the accusations that his tribe broke any treaty agreements, calmly showed his resistance in a speech that was widely published: "I have never injured you; and innocence can feel no fear. I turn to you all, red skins and white skins—where is the man who will appear as my accuser? I have just been set at liberty; am I again to be plunged into bondage?"¹⁶ Instead of zeroing in on the figure of Black Thunder, the movement begins with a brief introduction that culminates in a nearly complete statement of "Tyler's Grand Veto," which Heinrich wrote in 1844 (**Example 1**).¹⁷ Following two tutti chords marked *fortissimo* with grand dynamic swells, the quickstep dissolves into a lengthy section that develops its themes includes one of Heinrich's idiosyncratic "chromatic rambles" (**Example 4.2**).

¹⁶ This speech was quoted in several sources, one of the earliest of which was "Fragments from the Woods," *The New Monthly Magazine and Literary Journal* 2, no. 7 (1821): 61. Heinrich's score to *The Mastodon* has the note "Vide Origin of the North American Indians by John McIntosh," suggesting that this book inspired the piece. Michael Broyles uses the late date of McIntosh's publication (1843) as evidence that Heinrich's interest in Native Americans must have stemmed from other sources, though several earlier literary sources published the same speeches that McIntosh quoted, including the article cited above. It is also worth noting that this article, "Fragments from the Woods," refers to Shenandoah, the Oneida leader who is the subject of the third movement. It is possible that Heinrich read this—or similar—articles in Boston in the 1820s and later referred to McIntosh in his score out of convenience.

¹⁷ Andrew Stiller conjectures that Heinrich's use of "Tyler's Grand Veto" is an autobiographical allusion to an incident where President Tyler rebuffed Heinrich's request for patronage; Black Thunder, who stood defiant in the face of unfair government accusations, thus symbolizes Heinrich. See preface to Heinrich, *The Mastodon*. Although this conjecture is plausible, it does not account for the music that is not drawn from the quickstep. There could be more literal interpretations, as well. Tyler was well known for his extensive and controversial use of the presidential veto power. See Robert J. Spitzer, *The Presidential Veto: Touchstone of the American Presidency* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 39–52.

Example 4.1. A.P. Heinrich, *The Mastodon*, I, mm. 17–32

Example 4.2. A.P. Heinrich, *The Mastodon*, I, mm. 185–199 (reduction)

After a very brief modulatory transition, the mood of the work changes dramatically in measure 251; the tempo changes from *Allegro* to *Andantino con grazia*, and the key signature changes from three flats to six sharps. The section begins with a sinewy chromatic solo flute line that is almost immediately joined by the second flute in a graceful march. Accompanied sparsely by the rest of the orchestra, including timpani strokes fully evoking the march, the flutes continue their ethereal figurations for eleven measures (**Example 4.3**). The drastic change in musical materials here suggests that the preceding music represents the United States within the narrative, and the new music is our first glimpse at Black Thunder, who according to legend spoke calmly and gracefully. Almost as quickly as the Black Thunder music appeared, however, a bassoon interrupts it with a jaunty syncopated melody that seems to compete with the flute lines. Once the bassoon has completed its interjection, the rest of the orchestra begins to gear up for a return of music that corresponds in character with the quickstep; all traces of Black Thunder disappear until measure 525, when the tempo once again changes to *Andante*. The second flute begins what sounds like a discursive solo reminiscent of the passage before, but before it can take shape, the first flute interrupts with a syncopated passage like the bassoon line that overtook the flutes earlier; the second flute joins in and seems to forget what it had started. After another turn through a bouncing quickstep, the mood shifts one final time at the coda, which is marked *Adagio*. Marking the return of the defiant voice of Black Thunder, the orchestra sustains three chords—B^{o7}, C minor, and E^{o7} (after passing through C⁷ and D-flat major)—with increasing intensity (**Example 4.4**). Unheeding the patriarch's voice, the jaunty American quickstep returns once again and ends as happily as it began.

Example 4.3. A.P. Heinrich, *The Mastodon*, I, mm. 251–262

The musical score is presented in three systems, each containing three staves. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 2/4. The first system includes a flute part, indicated by the label "(flutes)" below the first staff. The piano accompaniment is written on the second and third staves. The second system begins at measure 255, and the third system begins at measure 259. The score features complex rhythmic patterns, including sixteenth and thirty-second notes, and various articulations such as slurs and accents.

Example 4.4. A.P. Heinrich, *The Mastodon*, I, mm. 561–566

The second movement is more impressionistic than the first, a consequence of its picturesque title, “The Elkhorn Pyramid.”¹⁸ It nevertheless contains similar imagery of American encroachment on the Native Americans, albeit more subtle. Where one might expect the exoticism of the Black Thunder music to saturate the movement, it does not.

Instead, most of the music sounds like Heinrich’s typical style: a blend of Viennese

¹⁸ This title comes from a description in Prince Maximilian de Wied’s travels in North America: “About 800 paces from the river, the hunting or war parties of the Blackfoot Indians have gradually piled up a quantity of elks’ horns till they have formed a pyramid of sixteen or eighteen feet high, and twelve or fifteen feet in diameter. Every Indian who passes by makes a point of contributing his part, which is not difficult, because such horns are everywhere scattered about...All these horns, of which there are certainly more than 1,000, are piled up, confusedly mixed together, and so wedged in, that we found some trouble in extricating, from the pyramid, a large one...which we brought away with us.” His travels are reprinted in Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., *Early Western Travels, 1748–1846: A Series of Annotated Reprints of Some of the Best and Rarest Contemporary Volumes of Travel: Descriptive of the Aborigines and Social and Economic Conditions in the Middle and Far West, During the Period of Early American Settlement*, 30 vols. (Cleveland, OH: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1906), 23:34.

classicism and American popular tunes. The movement begins with a fragmentary introduction without a main theme. Near the end of this introduction, Heinrich does evoke the exotic sounds of Black Thunder found in the first movement with a series of cadenza-like passages beginning with a solo flute and continuing with a solo bassoon and the first violins:

Example 4.5. A.P. Heinrich, *The Mastodon*, II, mm. 70–76

The main portion of the movement begins in the next measure with a delightful C minor theme that recalls Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven and contains unconventional chromatic figurations and harmonic progressions reminiscent of Louis Spohr (**Example 4.6**). The next 150 measures are fragmentary variations on this theme that gradually build in intensity and culminate in a statement of, once again, the opening theme of “Tyler’s Grand Veto.”¹⁹ The next section, which Stiller claims is a representation of the pyramid itself, is an untutored attempt at species counterpoint in the strings, marked “fugato” (**Example 4.7**). As before, the section builds in intensity but this time it culminates in a statement from the symphony’s other source of self-borrowing, “The Students’ March.” As in the first movement, there is no return of the mysterious and discursive music that Heinrich seems to associate with Native Americans. Whereas he could have chosen to

¹⁹ Stiller convincingly argues that this long, musically intensifying section represents the placement of horns on the steadily growing pyramid.

Example 4.6. A.P. Heinrich, *The Mastodon*, II, mm. 77–96

Example 4.6 shows a musical score for measures 77–96. The score is written for three staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs) in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. The music features a complex, rhythmic melody in the treble staff, often with slurs and ties. The alto and bass staves provide harmonic support with chords and moving lines. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings.

Example 4.7. A.P. Heinrich, *The Mastodon*, II, mm. 233–251

Example 4.7 shows a musical score for measures 233–251. The score is written for three staves (treble, alto, and bass clefs) in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. The music features a complex, rhythmic melody in the treble staff, often with slurs and ties. The alto and bass staves provide harmonic support with chords and moving lines. The notation includes various note values, rests, and dynamic markings.

write a fantasia in his “Native American” style, he instead chose to portray this Native American image using the musical language that was most familiar to him. This hybrid use of Viennese classicism and popular tunes metaphorically serves to assimilate Native America into a more conventional cultural milieu; in this second movement, Heinrich the composer seems to become one of the aggressive government officials from the Black Thunder story.

The final movement of *The Mastodon*, “Shenandoah, an Oneida Chief,” follows narrative patterns similar to those in the first two. Based on the story of a chief who, according to John McIntosh, gave a poetic final oration before his death, this movement begins and ends with the voice of Shenandoah himself. As in the previous movements, Heinrich depicts the Native American with wildly difficult cadenzalike passages, this time in the flute, violins, bassoons, clarinets, cellos, and oboes. After a brief, marchlike transition sounded by two trumpets, the main part of the movement begins with a *Marcia con spirito* theme in the first violins (**Example 4.8**). A series of different marchlike sections follows, the most notable of which is a quotation of Heinrich’s “The Students’ March” (**Example 4.9**). At the conclusion of “The Students’ March,” Shenandoah’s voice seems to return briefly, but it is rudely interrupted by yet another marchlike theme (**Example 4.10**). The next 500 measures form a seemingly endless string of thematic fragments taken from the stock march material found in the earlier parts of the movement. This maelstrom of marches finally ends with a bang in measure 726, but the movement has not yet finished: Heinrich has added one final moment, marked *Cadenza concertante*, which signals the return of Shenandoah’s voice to the narrative. This brief

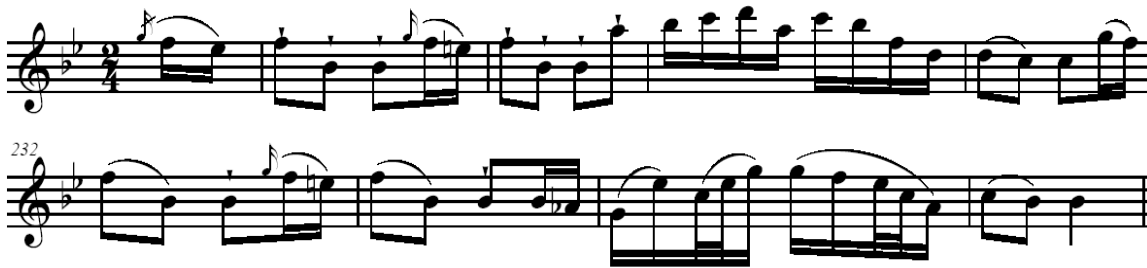
Example 4.8. A.P. Heinrich, *The Mastodon*, III, mm. 44–51



Example 4.9. A.P. Heinrich, *The Mastodon*, III, mm. 160–167



Example 4.10. A.P. Heinrich, *The Mastodon*, III, mm. 228–235



section recalls the movement's opening and ends calmly and quietly on the tonic as the elderly Shenandoah dies with dignity. If the movement is supposed to depict Shenandoah's reminiscences, what can be made of the fact that all he can remember is the music of American marches?

Whether or not Heinrich sympathized with actual Native Americans, as Maust has argued, his music does not give a simple answer. For a symphony that ostensibly represents two heroic Native American figures and an important icon of tribal life, *The Mastodon* gives little musical prominence to its subjects. **Table 4.1** summarizes the

structure of the work and the presence of a Native American “voice,” marked by Heinrich’s idiosyncratic musical exoticism:

Table 4.1. Exotic Music in A.P. Heinrich, *The Mastodon*

Movement	Subject	“Native American” Sections	Surrounding Context
I	Black Thunder (Fox Tribe)	mm. 251–268 mm. 561–566	Quickstep
II	The Elkhorn Pyramid	mm. 70–76	Quickstep March Viennese Classicism Species Counterpoint
III	Shenandoah (Oneida Tribe)	mm. 1–36 mm. 730–734	March

Any Native American voice is drowned out by the quicksteps, marches, and brief forays into more traditional European symphonic fare occupying the nearly 2,000 measures of surrounding music. On the most basic level, the musical narrative suggests a dramatic program in which Native Americans are snuffed out by the steady onslaught of the United States—its settlers and its government (represented here by “Tyler’s Grand Veto”).

Heinrich’s other important Native American symphony written around the same time, *Manitou Mysteries*, takes this strategy of assimilation to the extreme. Whereas *The Mastodon* has movement titles that suggest the subjects of musical portraiture, *Manitou Mysteries* is simply a standard four-movement symphony with no discernible program; the Native Americans have no voice at all. Such oversight, however, is probably less rooted in actual malice than in the national pride that drove Americans westward in the first place, because his curiosity about Native Americans makes it seem unlikely that Heinrich desired their systematic assimilation or extinction. Yet in *The Mastodon*,

Heinrich puts American words (so to speak) into the mouths of Native Americans with the musical gestures of his marches and quicksteps. *Manitou Mysteries*, despite its title, lacks any Native American musical “presence.” Although there may not be malice in these gestures, they construct a national identity based on the images they portray. These works, therefore, present Heinrich’s idealized vision of *America* itself, not Native America, the most common interpretation.

Stranger in a Strange Land: Heinrich’s Visions of America

That Heinrich’s Native American symphonies construct an American identity is not an obvious interpretation. Marches, quicksteps, and the like, all derived from or akin to his collections of shorter piano and instrumental pieces published throughout his career, appear prominently in practically all of Heinrich’s orchestral music, especially those pieces with discernibly American subjects. Their appearance in Native American pieces suggests that these works might be categorized along with those other “American” pieces. The rest of the music in his Native American symphonies more or less resembles either Viennese classicism (as in the second movement of *The Mastodon*) or *bel canto* operatic lines.²⁰ When they appear at all, flashes of his exotic style usually occur at important structural points (e.g., beginnings or endings) but are undeveloped and brief. With their odd juxtapositions of American popular music, conventional European music, and “exotic” music, Heinrich’s symphonies—and, indeed, the rest of his orchestral music—blend the notions of exceptionalism and emulation into a hybrid concoction that resists simple categorization. Although Heinrich dubbed himself an American composer using monikers such as “The Log Cabin Composer” or “The Wildwood Troubadour,” he

²⁰ A notable example is the opening to his *Schiller: Grand sinfonia drammatica* (1834; rev. ca. 1857).

retained relatively intimate ties with Europe throughout his career. Given that he also wrote works with nationalist sentiment for other countries, he undoubtedly had a fluid sense of national self-identity. American musical signifiers recur through Heinrich's music, but this lack of genuine personal attachment to the United States gives his output a sense of detachment, a quality that many other commentators have noted. The paradoxical presence of attachment to America and detachment from it creates a sense of national identity in Heinrich's scores that resembles the identities constructed in another popular genre in the nineteenth century: the literary travelogue.

Travel writing was an exceedingly popular literary genre in nineteenth-century America. Countless American newspapers and literary magazines published the overseas travel writings of noteworthy American figures such as Bayard Taylor, and, on the other side of the glass, major European thinkers such as Alexis de Tocqueville, Charles Dickens, and Anthony Trollope frequently published their literary impressions of the United States.²¹ Beyond these forays into commercially developed societies, a healthy number of travelogues documented excursions into underdeveloped areas in and beyond the outer reaches of European and American colonization. That Heinrich's symphonies resemble this genre is not self-evident, but his use of "voice" in the context of musical narration creates a clear parallel. Heinrich's works create subject-object relationships that create and reinforce notions about American identity that resulted from his unstable sense of nationality.

Heinrich's music exhibits several characteristics that were common in travel writing during the early nineteenth century. In its most essential form, the travelogue

²¹ Newspapers also employed writers to serve as overseas correspondents to write travel narratives on an *ad hoc* basis; as we saw in chapter 2, William Henry Fry served in this capacity for several years.

translates sensory data into literary representation. The accuracy of literary portrayal, however, is entirely in the hands of the author. Literary critic William Spengemann has noted that in the nineteenth century, travel writing became increasingly colored by the author's subjectivity; by that time, travel writers "had invented a method of portraying the world as the cause and symbol of the traveler's response to it, rather than as an independent reality which precedes and dictates his perceptions."²² Around the time that Heinrich came into his own as a composer, travelogues had begun to change in character from purportedly objective representations of real experiences to embellished accounts of experiences that may or may not resemble any external reality. In Heinrich's case, this approach to portraying the world seems to have shaped how he titled and conceived of his symphonies. A shift in focus from external reality to personal responses to an experience explains why Heinrich might have called a work *Manitou Mysteries* when there is no obvious musical reference to Manitou (the Algonquin "Great Spirit"), or even Native Americans in general.²³

As a result of the obscured boundary between inspired subject and inspiring object, travelogues often have a sense of generic hybridity. Building on the idea that travelogues reveal the author-subject as much as the observed object, anthropologist Johannes Fabian claims that that travel writings are consistently marked by "breaks, abrupt transitions, unexplained juxtapositions...sometimes announced by the author," all

²² William C. Spengemann, *The Adventurous Muse: The Poetics of American Fiction, 1789–1900* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 67.

²³ It also explains the titles of his two ornithological symphonies, *The Ornithological Combat of Kings* and *The Columbiad, or Migration of the American Wild Passenger Pigeons*. He also learned about these subjects in books. As in *Manitou Mysteries*, these symphonies are mere "invocations" of American birds, not necessarily musical representations. See William Gibbons, "The Musical Audubon: Ornithology and Nationalism in the Symphonies of Anthony Philip Heinrich," *Journal of the Society for American Music* 3, no. 4 (2009): 479.

of which “keep the process of writing, indeed the writer’s work, visible in ways one will not find in event- and subjectless scientific prose.”²⁴ This subjective mode of narration keeps Native Americans out of focus in works such as *The Mastodon*, which is characterized precisely by its breaks, abrupt transitions, and juxtapositions. Even though Heinrich attempts to draw attention to them, the voices of Black Thunder and Shenandoah are simply lost in the mix; instead of using the conventional narrative possibilities of sonata form to structure the conflict between Black Thunder and the United States, a rolling series of quicksteps is the only image of the scene that the listener ever receives. The same phenomenon occurs in Heinrich’s *War of the Elements and the Thundering of Niagara*, which, though not a symphony, depicts Niagara Falls, one of the most famous American icons in the nineteenth century. Like the opening to the third movement of *The Mastodon*, the work begins with Heinrich’s exotic style (here meant to represent the “aura” of Niagara Falls), which extends for sixteen measures. A scherzo vaguely reminiscent of Mendelssohn or Beethoven follows this introduction and then transforms thematically over the next 150 bars. Music depicting the crashing and thundering of the falls eventually emerges from the scherzo and continues until the end of the work, but the music framing the beginning of the narrative disappears entirely.²⁵

The stylistic hybridity and abrupt mood changes that shape the narratives of Heinrich’s music contribute to what Fabian calls “the politics of ethnographic writing”:

²⁴ Johannes Fabian, *Anthropology with an Attitude: Critical Essays* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), 150.

²⁵ In addition to generic fluidity, travelogues also have stylistic hybridity. Literary theorist Barbara Korte notes that “in different proportions, narration is intermingled with description, exposition, and even prescription.” Much of Heinrich’s music is marked by just such stylistic juxtaposition; popular music (quicksteps, marches, etc.) stands next to themes modeled on Viennese classicism, which in turn stands next to “exotic” moments such as the cadenzas in *The Mastodon*. Barbara Korte, *English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Exploration* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 9.

the author assumes complete control of the subject matter being represented.²⁶ The political element emerges in the fluid boundaries between fiction and reality; the audience can never be certain what is real and what is not, but is made to believe that there is some sense of reality. By invoking reality with detailed accounts of historical subjects (as in *The Mastodon*), Heinrich creates for his listeners a similar expectation of realistic representation, however embellished it may be. In his Native Americans, and, to a lesser extent, natural phenomena such as birds and waterfalls, this expectation amounts to a form of social control over his listeners.²⁷ He forces them to ask how real, or authentic, his music really is—or, put another way, his responses to these subjects were. Given Heinrich's near obsession with promoting himself as an "American" composer, his goal for exerting this control was to demonstrate to his audiences how American he truly was. His seems to argue that he not only had knowledge about these quintessentially American events and subjects, but he could write emotive responses to them.²⁸ If listeners knew that he had written a symphony that included "God Save the Queen," he would have had to make the argument quite well!

In part because he was a foreigner, and in part due to his opportunism, Heinrich never brought exotic American subjects to the center of his musical output. In his symphonies, the music itself seems almost entirely indifferent, and at times even hostile, toward some of the very things that give America any sort of unique character. By

²⁶ Fabian, *Anthropology with an Attitude*, 151.

²⁷ For more on this idea, see Steve Clark's editorial introduction to *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 1–28.

²⁸ Since he consistently labeled himself—in one way or another—as a specifically "American" composer, we can also see his body of work as an attempt to make an "American" style of composition. The most surprising aspect of his work, then, is that he did indeed create an original style with his exoticism but did not put it to greater use.

relegating his exotic style to the fringes of his compositions—or by ignoring it entirely—Heinrich created an image of America that relegates its indigenous peoples and natural splendors to the periphery of civilization. Like a foreign traveler, Heinrich was merely intrigued by these phenomena; they were certainly not a part of his inner sense of self. Instead of surpassing Fry in his efforts to create an exceptionalist music, which might have given new colors to specifically American themes, he relied almost exclusively on Old World musical materials, even for representing these topics. Michael Broyles claims that his music “suffers” as a result, because there is “a dichotomy between material and technique on the one hand and intention on the other.”²⁹ But is the intention so clear, given that Heinrich was indeed able to create musical materials that broke new stylistic ground? Heinrich’s symphonic style is not necessarily a weakness, but it does demonstrate that the conception of America constructed by his music was firmly rooted in middle- and high-brow American cultural values. Although he perhaps saw problems with the violent uprooting of Native Americans from their homelands (a point that is unclear), he evidently saw no moral dilemma with assimilating them into a conventional musical style. Unlike the European composers who represented Native Americans using stock gestures such as pentatonicism and thumping drum beats, Heinrich simply gave them European or American music much of the time. When he did not, he let them speak their own language (which was really his, of course), but only for brief moments. When the hottest topic for political debate in the 1840s was how to expand the United States westward, little could have been more “American” than music that so clearly shoved land and indigenous peoples out of the way. Even a foreigner like Heinrich saw that side of an American identity.

²⁹ Broyles, *Mavericks*, 55.

The Symphonies of Louis Moreau Gottschalk as Instruments of Imperialism

Whereas William Henry Fry, George Frederick Bristow, and Anthony Philip Heinrich attained only limited success in their struggle to be recognized as legitimate American composers, widespread approbation seemed effortless for Louis Moreau Gottschalk. Even before he made his American debut as a piano recitalist, one essayist placed him alongside historian George Bancroft, poet Edgar Allen Poe, novelist James Fenimore Cooper, essayist Edwin Percy Whipple, and sculptor Hiram Powers as an icon of America's superior cultural achievement.³⁰ Just after his debut recital in New York City in February of 1853, another commentator hailed him as a true American original: "His 'Bamboula,' 'Bananier,' &c., are *truly original* specimens of a new and delightful, a *purely American*, or, if you please southern Creole school, the Gottschalk school, as it may yet be called. The warmth, the feeling, the poetry of the compositions...are Mr. Gottschalk's own, are legitimate, *national*, and classical and will hereafter be identified with his name."³¹ Although these writers clearly understood Gottschalk's early music as "purely American," their views are especially remarkable because they took great pains to note that he was a Creole, or a Louisianan-American of French descent, and that his music reflected a Louisianan cultural milieu—a far cry from the northeastern learned culture of Bancroft, Cooper, Whipple, and Powers.³² In the case of Gottschalk's early style, we find one of the first instances in America of local vernacular musical culture coming to represent the music of the nation.

³⁰ H. Didimus [Edward Henry Durell], "L.M. Gottschalk," *Graham's American Monthly Magazine of Literature, Art, and Fashion* 42, no. 1 (1853): 61–69.

³¹ "Music," *The Albion, A Journal of News, Politics, and Literature* 12, no. 8 (1853): 92. Emphasis added.

³² Complicating matters further, nineteenth-century commentators often noted Gottschalk's Jewish heritage, but this seemed to play little or no role in interpretations of his music during his lifetime. For more on Gottschalk's Jewish identity, see S. Frederick Starr, *Bamboula!: The Life and Times of Louis Moreau Gottschalk* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 18–25.

Critics' emphasis on the local vernacular characteristics of Gottschalk's output obscures the fact that he also produced two large-scale, bombastically patriotic American works in the 1850s: *Grand National Symphony for Ten Pianos, Battle of Bunker Hill* (1853–54) and *L'Union* (pub. 1863).³³ In both, he used recognizable patriotic songs to represent national characters, a stock technique found in the music of Anthony Philip Heinrich and James Hewitt—as we have seen—as well as Ludwig van Beethoven and others. The score for *Bunker Hill* is lost, but contemporary accounts reveal that Gottschalk depicted the opposing forces in battle by using and combining their respective national tunes, “God Save the Queen” and “Yankee Doodle,” amidst the thunderous roar of pianistic cannon fire; the work concluded with a rousing contrapuntal rendition of “Hail, Columbia” and “Yankee Doodle,” a sign of American victory.³⁴ Most reviewers of *The Battle of Bunker Hill* did not write about the work with the politicized interpretations of symphonies common in Europe, but one critic did hear the sounds of an American national identity: “We commend Mr. Gottschalk, not the less for his supreme artistic power, than for that good judgment which tells of his country's power—*E pluribus unum*.”³⁵ As Frederick Starr has noted, Gottschalk conceived the work as a way to capitalize on the fervor surrounding the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill, and the symphony therefore participated in the long-standing American tradition of

³³ His other patriotic work, *Columbia, caprice américaine*, Op. 34 (1859) is a shortened version of the second part to the *Grand National Symphony*, which was supposed to depict American life after the Revolution. See Starr, *Bamboula!*, 139.

³⁴ Preceding a performance in New Orleans on February 1, a description of the work appeared in the *Courrier de la Louisiane* (Jan. 31, 1854) and is reprinted in Starr, *Bamboula!*, 157.

³⁵ *The Daily Orleanian* (Feb. 5, 1854), quoted in Laura Moore Pruett, “Louis Moreau Gottschalk, John Sullivan Dwight, and the Development of Musical Culture in the United States, 1853–1865,” (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 2007), 98. Other reviews can be found in the *Courrier de la Louisiane* (Feb. 2, 1854) and in the bilingual newspaper *L'Abeille de la Nouvelle Orleans / The New Orleans Bee* (Feb. 2, 1854).

nationalist commemoration that followed in the wake of the Revolutionary War. Its music seemed to capture feelings about that nation's continuing quest for liberty and justice. Although Gottschalk's *L'Union* is not a symphony in its conception, it certainly contains elements of nation-building similar to those found in *The Battle of Bunker Hill*. Since Gottschalk unveiled it in performance during the Civil War, it also served a similar role as a rallying piece, but in this case for the war-torn republic.³⁶

In addition to his music based on vernacular styles and the patriotic pieces noted above, Gottschalk also composed two orchestral symphonies, *Symphonie romantique* (1859) and *Symphony No. 2: Á Montevideo* (1868), both of which contain Latin American themes and imagery. Like the symphonies by Gottschalk's American contemporaries, these works musically construct national identities, but not necessarily an identity for the United States. On the surface, these works appear to be audience-pleasers for the locals in Gottschalk's host countries at the time each was composed—Cuba and Uruguay—but a closer look at Gottschalk's political views reveals that the national identities these symphonies construct are deeply rooted in his dogged republicanism and sympathy for the peoples of Spanish America, as the region encompassing Central and South America, and parts of the Caribbean, was called at the time. As one would suspect, both symphonies incorporate a large amount of materials derived from the local musical culture, but unlike in his overtly patriotic works such as *The Battle of Bunker Hill*, where the musical characters are obvious, musical references to the United States are more cleverly and subtly intertwined with the music from his host countries. In both symphonies, the national—or perhaps supranational—identities that

³⁶ Or a point of antagonism for supporters of the Confederacy. For a summary of reactions to *L'Union*, see Starr, *Bamboula!*, 320.

emerge reflect Gottschalk's pan-American republicanism, as well as an expansionism that reflected the development of political and social relations with Latin America during the mid-nineteenth century.

Gottschalk's Pan-American Republicanism and the Moral Influence of Music

Unlike many of his compositional compatriots (William Henry Fry being a notable exception), Gottschalk expressed strong political views, often in his diary and letters. During the Civil War, audiences typically believed that he was a supporter of the Republican Party on account of *L'Union*, which seemed to support the Union cause—and thus the Republican Party.³⁷ Yet as his own writings show, his interest in politics ran much deeper than allegiance to any one party. Gottschalk believed whole-heartedly in the goodness of a republican form of government, which colored his views on slavery (he vehemently opposed it) and politics in Latin America, where he spent a considerable amount of time on tour and where he chose to compose his only two orchestral symphonies.³⁸ Most of the Latin American areas that Gottschalk visited were embroiled in efforts to be released from colonial governance (e.g., Cuba) or were fledgling nations that had recently won their independence from Spanish or Portuguese rule (e.g., Uruguay, Brazil). Gottschalk recognized the historical similarity between the colonial and post-colonial conditions in Latin America and the United States and felt a certain political kinship with members of these other cultures. It is this spirit of Pan-American republicanism that shaped the composition of his two symphonies.

³⁷ Starr, *Bamboula!*, 341.

³⁸ The Bunker Hill symphony was performed on piano.

Writing in the midst of the Civil War in March of 1862, Gottschalk directly but profoundly stated his general political philosophy in the pages his diary, later published as *Notes of a Pianist*:

*Although born in the South, I recognize but one principle—that of the Constitution. In a republic where universal suffrage is not a chimera, where the citizens are free and intelligent men and not servile machines, where the ambitious never separate their personal glory from that of their country, no honest and republican conscience ought to feel embarrassed.*³⁹

His fundamental belief in the soundness of the U.S. Constitution compelled him to free his slaves in the early 1850s and shaped his opinions of political discourse during the war. In a colorful round of political invective, for example, Gottschalk expressed his utter distaste for the political views of his friend and touring partner, Carlo Patti, a violinist who served briefly in the Confederate Army and who apparently used the Constitution to justify his views on slavery and secession:

I know nothing more odious than this kind of hybrid patriot...I have only contempt for these *politicasters* of the North who wish peace at any price, without thinking that plastering up a few cracks is of no use when the foundation of the edifice is giving way, and that in the social body, no more than in the individual, an eating wound does not cease its ravages because it is concealed under anodyne plaster.

“The Consitution as it was”—such is their cry. Fools that you are! The Constitution is a chimera, and the veneration you have for the broken pact is at least unreasonable. The Constitution today has become impossible. It would be as unreasonable to require that a man should always wear the clothes of his boyhood and have his limbs shortened in order to accommodate them to his clothes, now become too small, rather than enlarge them in proportion to his growth.⁴⁰

For Gottschalk, the Constitution itself was the foundation of the republican government in the United States, but as the nation grew, the document itself needed to be adapted in

³⁹ Louis Moreau Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist: The Chronicles of a New Orleans Music Legend*, ed. Jeanne Behrend (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), 55–56. Emphasis added.

⁴⁰ Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist*, 199. Emphasis in the original.

order to accommodate changes in the national character.⁴¹ Gottschalk's belief in the Constitution's flexibility, a belief that has continued to shape the political and legal history of the United States, suggests that he considered republicanism an adaptable form of government, a critical factor for understanding his views of republicanism in Latin America.

In Gottschalk's understanding of American identity, the republican nature of the United States was also determined by the character of its citizens and their upbringing. Although he did not believe in the absolute equality of all people—he expressed harsh disdain for African-Americans, for example—he thought that public education and the interplay of individual action and a collective spirit nurtured the American republic and helped it thrive.⁴² In letter offering concerts to benefit the “Friends of Popular Education” in Uruguay, Gottschalk explained:

And, certainly, of all the forms of government, the republic is that which exacts from the people the greatest degree of enlightenment: under it each citizen ought to actively participate in its destinies; as he constitutes, so to speak, a fraction of the government itself.

...[E]very citizen has as imprescriptible [*sic*] a right to the light of the Spirit [education] as he has to the light of the sun which illuminates him.

The popular system of education in the United States, in that austere elaboration, which, of a child, makes successively a man, and later a citizen, has, for its principal object, to prepare him for the use of liberty,—that cuirass of the strong...

It is of great interest indeed to our political existence and prosperity, that the most obscure of the farmers of the “Far West” can lay

⁴¹ Gottschalk's irritation with Patti was a small-scale manifestation of the larger constitutional issues underlying the Civil War. As with Gottschalk and Patti, partisans on both sides of the war used the Constitution to justify any number of conflicting positions. See H. Robert Baker, *The Rescue of Joshua Glover: A Fugitive Slave, the Constitution, and the Coming of the Civil War* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 135–61.

⁴² Concerning African-Americans, Gottschalk wrote, “I do not have any illusions regarding the Negro. I believe him very inferior morally to the white.” Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist*, 56.

aside the plough to ascend the tribune, and spread abroad from thence the most patriotic and progressive ideas.⁴³

Despite his pride in the ability of all classes of citizens to rise to great political heights, Gottschalk was certainly not a quintessential Jacksonian embracing the nobility of the common man.⁴⁴ On a train ride from Harrisburg to Pittsburgh in 1864, he complained in his diary about the negative effects “democracy” has on civilization:

Is it proper that your daughter, your sister, should be exposed without end to the gross and profane language and to the obscene songs of a mixed society that the want of division of [train car] seats forces you to submit to? You will tell me that our republican institutions are opposed to these divisions. I do not think so. You have as much right to force all citizens to have their hands callous and not to wear gloves....One can be a republican and not like the society of those who drink every five minutes, pick their teeth with their penknife, use their fingers for handkerchiefs, and eat sausage and keep you in remembrance of it through its odor a long time after the sausage has disappeared.⁴⁵

For Gottschalk, then, the ideal republic—marked by a sound constitution, free education, upward mobility, and political equality—was not directly correlated with the kinds of people someone might find living there. He attributed this discrepancy in the United States to the nation’s youngness, claiming, “All this is absurd and unworthy of us. In fifty years this will have disappeared, and our children will pity us for having so long tolerated such an abuse.”⁴⁶ The growing pains of civilization under a republican government shaped Gottschalk’s opinions of Latin American countries—which were younger than the United States by at least fifty years—all the more acutely.

⁴³ Octavia Hensel, *Life and Letters of Louis Moreau Gottschalk* (Boston: Oliver Ditson Company, 1870), 165–67.

⁴⁴ In this view I depart from biographer Frederick Starr, who characterizes Gottschalk as a “Jacksonian democrat” several times throughout his biography.

⁴⁵ Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist*, 235–36.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 236.

Gottschalk did not have a generally high opinion of the new Latin American republics. After a trip through Peru in 1865, he railed against all of Spanish America:

The most unbridled corruption in every branch of government, the most shameless venality among all classes, everything is sold, everything is bought. Sloth, ignorance, and hatred of the foreigner, these are the only beliefs profoundly rooted in the heart of this race, debauched physically and morally. Sad spectacle! And is this what the United States should risk its soldiers, navy, military honor, and millions for? No! A thousand times no!⁴⁷

Criticizing each in turn, Gottschalk noted the weaknesses of the Spanish republics. Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Ecuador all “belonged to the clergy;” Honduras and El Salvador were “supernumerary subalterns;” Peru and Bolivia were ruled by merciless killers; and, ironically, “the Republic of Paraguay is governed by a hereditary president for life (?)—a republic!”⁴⁸ If those countries were not bad enough, the Argentine Republic was the worst of all: “The people of the Argentine Republic are the source whence flow all turpitudes, all corruptions, and every bad human passion. In this nation all are abandoned by Providence.”⁴⁹ What fueled Gottschalk’s fire was, as he noted in the case of Paraguay, these nations’ lackluster use of the word “republic” to describe themselves. For such an ardent American patriot and a believer in the fundamental goodness of republicanism and its embodiment—the Constitution of the United States—nothing could be more brazen than to call a state ruled by military leaders or clergy a republic:

[T]he word “republic” (an outrage on the elevated principles this word represents) serves them as a cloak under which they give themselves up to every kind of despotism and vileness....this is the Argentine republic.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 343–44.

⁴⁸ Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist*, 343–44.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 396.

Alas! I might also say, behold the Spanish-American republic; for, except Chile, all the governments of these agglomerations of bandits which sully the banner of American liberty, and which call themselves republics, from Mexico to Cape Horn, are nothing but brigandage, theft, barbarism and cruelty—organized and unpunished.

Nothing affronted Gottschalk's political sensibilities more than this terminological abuse.

Yet Gottschalk held out hope for true republicanism to take hold in Spanish America, and he even considered himself a partner in the struggle. In a letter that was widely disseminated in the press of Buenos Aires, Gottschalk expressed his empathy for his fellow republicans:

As a son of the great republic to the north, I grew accustomed from earliest youth to considering the entire Western Hemisphere, irrespective of language or latitude, as the common fatherland of all who desire progress and liberty. As a citizen of the United States, I find myself profoundly grateful for your divination of the basic Americanist urge [republicanism] that drives me forward.⁵⁰

This "citizen of the West" attitude manifested itself most prominently in Gottschalk's efforts to support public education throughout South America. In 1865 he contributed money to a free school for poor children in Lima, Peru, and an address he made to the director was later published in a local newspaper, "To spread the light of education is a work of patriotism...As a son of the great republic of the United States of the North, I have, like all my compatriots, a real interest in all that is related to the future of its younger brothers in South America."⁵¹ A year later he donated money to the Society for Primary Education in Santiago, Chile.⁵² In Montevideo, Uruguay, he was a charter member of the Society of Friends of Public Education and donated the proceeds of a

⁵⁰ Quoted in Starr, *Bamboula!*, 406.

⁵¹ Quoted in Starr, *Bamboula!*, 388.

⁵² Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist*, 377.

significant concert to the organization.⁵³ As in the United States, education was only part of Gottschalk's equation for cultural uplift; civilizing forces to counteract boorish tendencies (supposedly innate or otherwise) were also critical. For Gottschalk, this meant good music.

Gottschalk casually considered himself a musical diplomat, a luminary from abroad who could elevate the status of music in developing countries. According to his memoirs, "the artist [is] the privileged instrument of a moral and civilizing influence."⁵⁴ In several of the Latin American regions where he concertized, he effected what he believed was a moral and civilizing influence by organizing lavish musical festivals reminiscent of Hector Berlioz's and Louis-Antoine Jullien's "monster concerts." Gottschalk's extravagant festivals tended to include large-scale newly-composed works based on local musical traditions and scored for a dazzling array of native musical instruments, as well as traditional Western instruments from the orchestra.⁵⁵ Although a substantial amount of the music Gottschalk composed for these festivals is lost, two of his most important works—his surviving symphonies—were products of these musical spectacles. Both the *Symphonie romantique* (1859) and the *Symphony No. 2: À Montevideo* (1868) celebrate the respective locales in which they were written by giving the listener a picturesque aural panorama of the surrounding landscape that eventually dissolves into the sounds of local dances. Unlike his Creole piano works or his smaller Latin American dance pieces, these two symphonies construct national identities that go

⁵³ Hensel, *Life and Letters*, 164–68.

⁵⁴ Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist*, 106.

⁵⁵ One such festival in Ponce, Puerto Rico included piece scored for a brass band from the local militia, four pianists, some violinists, eight maraca players and eight guiro players. For more details, see Starr, *Bamboula!*, 269.

far beyond local color; Gottschalk musically instantiated his pan-American ideals by skillfully interweaving regional elements with traditional symphonic techniques.

Gottschalk had a clear vision of how music could construct a national identity, and he applied this vision in his symphonies. In a remarkably deep essay that he wrote for *The Atlantic Monthly* in February of 1865 and which also appears in his published memoirs, he outlined a philosophy resting on the notion that music “answers to that innate, undefinable feeling which every one possesses, *the Ideal*.”⁵⁶ Mirroring debates on similar subjects in Europe, he argued that passive listening makes us aware of the objective, sensory side of music, which awakens our responses to “a warlike march, a waltz, the flute’s imitation of a nightingale, [or] the chromatic scales imitating the murmuring of the wind the ‘Pastoral Symphony,’” for example.⁵⁷ Beyond the objective, music also allows listeners, through an awareness of their own subjectivity, to “discover in [the music’s] general character an agreement with our psychical state and assimilate it.”⁵⁸ Unlike words, which—as he contends—limit our imagination, music opens a window onto our innermost selves. He explains:

Play a melancholy passage to an exile thinking about his distant country, to an abandoned lover, to a mother mourning her child, to a conquered warrior, and be assured that each one of these various griefs will appropriate these plaintive harmonies to itself and will recognize in them the voice of its own suffering.⁵⁹

This “moral effect,” as he calls it, is felt all the more strongly when citizens of a nation hear their own national music. “Play to a Creole of the Antilles one of his dances,” he

⁵⁶ Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist*, 106. Emphasis in the original.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 106–107.

claims, “with its quaint rhythm, its plaintive and dreamy melody, and immediately you will see him filled with enthusiasm.”⁶⁰ This sense of reflexivity—and a concomitant feeling of national pride—is precisely what he was attempting to provoke in his audiences by incorporating local color into his music. In the final section of his essay, Gottschalk comments on the music’s ennobling and healing properties, what he calls its “complexity.” Music, he concludes, “is one of the most powerful means of ameliorating and ennobling the human mind, of elevating the morals, and, above all, of refining the manners of the people.”⁶¹ It is no surprise, then, that he chose the exalted genre of the symphony for achieving these goals in Cuba and especially Uruguay, a country that in Gottschalk’s estimation was in dire need of a civilizing influence. His symphonies were attempts to civilize his host nations with music.

Ennobling the Spirit and the Pan-American Ideal in *Symphonie romantique* and *Á Montevideo*

Gottschalk composed his *Symphonie romantique: la nuit des tropiques* in 1859 while living in Matouba, a remote area on the island of Guadalupe, a colony in the French Antilles; he then orchestrated the work over a period of several months and continued on his travels to Cuba.⁶² On Christmas Day in 1859, the Havana press got wind that Gottschalk intended to produce one of his monster festivals, this time to honor the inauguration of a new captain-general, or colonial ruler, of Cuba. With the assistance of musical illuminati from the around the city, Gottschalk assembled roughly 650

⁶⁰ Ibid., 110.

⁶¹ Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist*, 111.

⁶² For more on Gottschalk’s stay in Matouba, see Starr, *Bamboula!*, 272–88.

musicians, including a band of Afro-Cuban drummers from the far away city of Santiago, to perform three of his works, including the symphony. According to reports, almost 4,000 people filled the famous Teatro Tacón as countless listeners also gathered outside the hall.⁶³ The audiences of Jullien's monster concerts in New York City who heard symphonies by Fry and Bristow in 1853 paled in comparison.

Though Gottschalk used it as a subtitle for the entire work, the phrase *La nuit des tropiques* actually describes only the music of the first movement, a leisurely *andante* in 6/8 depicting a peaceful night rudely interrupted by a thunderstorm that leaves as hastily as it arrived.⁶⁴ The movement is divided into four large sections: the calm of night, a storm, the aftermath, and the restoration of calm. These four sections create a broad trajectory that incorporates all three aspects of music that Gottschalk described in his philosophical essay: physicality, morality, and complexity (i.e., ennobling of the spirit). The first two sections—the opening calm and the storm—each comprise two smaller sections. In both cases, the first of these smaller sections is a realistic musical pictorial designed to awaken and sharpen the listener's senses; the second smaller sections, by contrast, take material from the preceding small sections and “ennoble” it with advanced symphonic techniques. These techniques lend the music Gottschalk's “moral” dimension. In the third section, a lengthy developmental area, Gottschalk ties together all musical dimensions. The fourth and final large section, which depicts the calm after the storm, recapitulates the primary melody from the opening and the melody signifying the storm. A new orchestration gives the restatement of these themes an air of apotheosis and serves

⁶³ See Starr, *Bamboula!*, 290–95.

⁶⁴ Starr conjectures that a movement of Félicien David's *Christophe Colomb* (1847), entitled “Une nuit des tropiques,” might have been the inspiration for the title, though there is no direct evidence. Gottschalk might have heard the work performed in Paris at its premiere. See Starr, *Bamboula!*, 285.

as a means taking the listener fully outside of the sensory context of the movement.⁶⁵

Table 4.2 summarizes my interpretation of the movement’s structure and its relationship to Gottschalk’s philosophy of music, which I argue more fully below.

Table 4.2. Narrative Trajectory of *Symphonie romantique*, I

Section	Subject Matter	Aspect of Gottschalk’s Philosophy Represented
1a	Languor	Physical
1b	Languor, ennobled	Moral
2a	The storm	Physical
2b	The storm, ennobled	Moral
3	Mixed Feelings	Physical, Moral, Complex
4	Languor and storm, apotheosized	Complex

The movement’s opening perfectly captures the tropical countryside that Gottschalk had come to love while living in the Antilles. After returning to New York, he pined wistfully, “I slept for weeks the sleep of the spirit, so delicious, so poetical, in the midst of the voluptuous, enervating atmosphere of those happy lands of the *dolce far niente*, whose lazy breezes murmuring softly bear on their wings the languid, distant harmonies of the countryside.”⁶⁶ A counterpoint between the first flute and the first violins supported by dreamy pulsations in the celli, basses, and French horns gives way to an aimless melody in the violins that could very well be a lazy breeze (**Example 4.11**). After a brief transitional passage that continues the aimless wandering of the violins, a solo played by the *cornet à piston* rises above the rolling accompaniment (**Example 4.12**). The languid ambiance continues, but with the addition of this “unnatural”—and

⁶⁵ Although there is no concrete evidence, parts of the work, notably the storm, might also have been inspired by the Pastoral Symphony. Gottschalk remarked in his memoirs, “Beethoven, taken as a symphonist, is the most inspired among composers, and the one who composes best for the orchestra. The instrumental effects he combines on paper are always realized in the orchestra as he has conceived them.” Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist*, 183.

⁶⁶ Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist*, 103.

Example 4.11. L.M. Gottschalk, *Symphonie romantique*, I, mm. 8–24 (reduction)



very French—timbre to the texture, Gottschalk appears to be ushering a touch of “civilization” into the peaceful tropical atmosphere. Unlike the opening, this new melody has a clear shape and is supported by sophisticated harmonies. Much like the *cornet à piston* solo in Fry’s *Santa Claus*, delicious appoggiaturas and carefully constructed hemiola figures give it the character of an Italian *bel canto* melody. This new sound awakens more than the pictorial imagination and tugs more deeply at the listener’s heartstrings.

The second section, which commences after another brief transitional passage, unfolds much like the first. A rumbling C minor melody in the orchestra’s lower register emerges underneath blustery syncopated figurations in the violins (**Example 4.13**). Here the music returns to its painterly mode with the intention of arousing the listener’s sensory imagination. After a reprise of the storm melody and a short variation, the storm

Example 4.12. L.M. Gottschalk, *Symphonie romantique*, I, mm. 48–56

The musical score is presented in three systems, each containing three staves: Cornet (top), Horns (middle), and Strings (bottom). The key signature is E-flat major (three flats) and the time signature is 6/8. The first system (measures 48-50) includes the dynamics *mf* and *pp*, and the instruction *legatissimo*. The second system (measures 51-53) and third system (measures 54-56) continue the orchestral texture. The score is written for a full orchestra, with the Cornet and Horns parts in the upper staves and the Strings in the lower staves.

music takes a dramatic turn into the key of E-flat major with the entire orchestra sounding a triumphal variation of the storm melody (**Example 4.14**). At this moment, the fright aroused by a wicked tropical storm turns into sublime awe of nature's power and beauty—a deeper understanding of natural phenomena.

Example 4.13. L.M. Gottschalk, *Symphonie romantique*, I, mm. 81–88: The Storm

Musical score for Example 4.13, measures 81–88 of "The Storm" from L.M. Gottschalk's *Symphonie romantique*, I. The score is in 6/8 time and B-flat major. It features a Melody line in the bass clef and two Violin staves (Vln. I and Vln. II) in the treble clef. The first system (measures 81–83) shows the Melody with a forte (*f*) dynamic and the Violins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system (measures 84–86) continues the stormy texture. The third system (measures 87–88) concludes the passage. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

Example 4.14. L.M. Gottschalk, *Symphonie romantique*, I, mm. 93–101 (reduction)

Musical score for Example 4.14, measures 93–101 of "The Storm" from L.M. Gottschalk's *Symphonie romantique*, I, presented as a reduction. The score is in 6/8 time and B-flat major. It features a single staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The first system (measures 93–97) shows a complex harmonic texture. The second system (measures 98–101) concludes the passage. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

The final two sections of the movement combine to make the listener aware of music's role as a "complex agent" of moral uplift, as Gottschalk calls it. As the storm dies away, the triumphal melody from the previous section and the languorous pictorial lines from the opening combine and undergo as a series of thematic transformations akin to a sonata-form development. The complexity and musical rigor of this section surpasses all that came before it, and with such a hodgepodge of musical materials, Gottschalk compels the listener to keep all sides of the imagination open. After a brief transition that recalls the fairy music from Mendelssohn's *Overture to a Midsummer Night's Dream*, all sound dissolves into tremolos in the highest registers of the violins and violas. The *cornet à piston* melody from the opening, supported by a return of the languid pulsations, emerges unexpectedly once again. With this ethereal accompaniment, the character of the original melody becomes transcendent. At the conclusion of the original melody, the *cornet à piston*, joined by a contrapuntal melody played by a solo cello, continues with an apotheosized version of the storm melody. The violins continue their stratospheric tremolos, and the music dissolves into nothingness.

The second movement is a raucous dance called *Une fête sous les tropiques*. Like the first movement, the musical structure propels the listener to an experience of musical "complexity," but unlike the preceding movement does not include pictorial representation. The first third of the movement is built around a single ostinato rhythm, the *cinquillo*):

Example 4.15. The *cinquillo* rhythm



According to Alejo Carpentier, a novelist and historian of Cuban music, the *cinquillo* was an African-derived rhythm that followed the patterns of African diasporic movement throughout the Caribbean in the eighteenth and nineteenth century; it subsequently became a fundamental rhythm in national musical styles throughout the region.⁶⁷ As the *cinquillo* traveled to Havana in the 1850s, it came to be associated in part with lasciviousness and with the lower class Afro-Cuban sectors of the city.⁶⁸ Since Gottschalk specifically sought out an Afro-Cuban drumming ensemble to fill out the ranks of his orchestra for the festival performance of this movement, this stigmatized side of Cuban culture is precisely what he was trying to evoke. The opening section of the movement climaxes with a *tutti* statement of a triumphant *cinquillo*-based melody that is an extravagant celebration of the dance:

Example 4.16. L.M. Gottschalk, *Symphonie romantique*, II, mm, 140–146 (reduction)



⁶⁷ Alejo Carpentier, *Music in Cuba*, ed. Timothy Brennan and trans. Alan West-Durán (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), 150.

⁶⁸ John Charles Chasteen, *National Rhythms, African Roots: The Deep History of Latin American Popular Dance* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2004), 76–77.

After a lengthy transitional area, this section concludes with a rapid cadenza-like passage in the first violins. As Gottschalk noted in his article on musical philosophy, the purpose of this dancelike section of the symphony is to arouse the enthusiasm of the native listener.

The movement's second section differs drastically in character from the first. Its predominant theme appears to blend the Spanish quality of the *cinquillo* with an American flavor reminiscent of Stephen Foster, especially his song "Camptown Races" from 1850:

Example 4.17. L.M. Gottschalk, *Symphonie romantique*, II, mm. 207–214 (reduction)

The musical score is a reduction of measures 207–214 from the second movement of L.M. Gottschalk's *Symphonie romantique*. It is written for Violin (Vln.) and Piano (P). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The time signature is 2/4. The score is divided into two systems. The first system shows measures 207–210. The second system shows measures 211–214. The Violin part features a rapid, dancelike passage in measures 207–210, followed by a more melodic line in measures 211–214. The Piano part provides harmonic support with chords and single notes. Dynamics include *p* (piano) and *pp* (pianissimo), with the instruction *leggiere* (light) appearing in measures 207 and 211.

This technique was not new for Gottschalk. In his lost symphony memorializing the Battle of Bunker Hill, he used quotations of Stephen Foster's melodies to enrich his

musical depiction of American life after the Revolution. After several statements of slightly modified versions of this melody, Gottschalk combines its basic shape and rhythms from the opening section into a fugue subject. At the height of its contrapuntal complexity, the fugue reaches four voices, but it does not reach a climax until the full orchestra participates in a three-voice continuation. This oddly out of place fugal passage serves to “ennoble” the *cinquillo* by introducing a hint of an American sound and giving it a decidedly learned musical context. The fugue takes the audience’s experience of the music beyond reflexive identification with the dance style to a realm of the imagination that would strengthen their character. Unlike the first movement, the second does not conclude with an exposition of music as “complex agent.” Instead, Gottschalk returns to a triumphal statement of the opening section’s primary *cinquillo* melody that ends with a bombastic *tutti* bang. Leaving the “complex” section in a more subtle place in the middle of the work, he knew that this ending would elicit the most approbation from the audience. What better way to celebrate a nation?

Gottschalk’s *Symphony No. 2: Á Montevideo*, is a more obvious expression of his pan-Americanism than his *Symphonie romantique*. The piece was written in 1868 for a grand musical festival held at the Teatro Solis in Montevideo, Uruguay. Like the monster concert in Havana where the *Symphonie romantique* premiered, this festival required the services of hundreds of musicians, including several military bands, two theater orchestras, and dozens of unaffiliated musicians.⁶⁹ The work comprises three primary sections: an introductory *andante* in 6/8, a dashing *presto* in 2/4, and a section in 4/4 marked “Maestoso.” This final section is the most striking part of the work, because it

⁶⁹ For a complete listing of the numbers, see Susana Salgado, *The Teatro Solis: 150 Years of Opera, Concert, and Ballet in Montevideo* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), 46.

includes extended statements of the Uruguayan national anthem and two American patriotic tunes, “Hail, Columbia” and “Yankee Doodle.” On the surface, the juxtaposition of these three national airs gives the work a hopeful aura of pan-American idealism and cooperation, but as we shall see, the national identity that the symphony constructs is far from benign.

The symphony’s opening functions much like the opening of *Symphonie romantique*. After a brief introduction featuring the clarinets and horns, the first clarinet and viola section play a languid and sinewy counterpoint that recalls the opening violin melody in the Cuban work: (**Example 4.18**). At the conclusion of this theme, the oboes and clarinets take over with a new melody reminiscent of the Italianate *cornet à piston* tune (**Example 4.19**). In a progressive “ennoblement” of the mood, the violins eventually take over the melody accompanied by the full orchestra. With this pictorial opening gesture, Gottschalk is again engaging his audience with the objective, sensuous side of music and drawing them slowly into the deeper moral realm.

Example 4.18. L.M. Gottschalk, *Á Montevideo*, mm. 9–15 (clarinet and viola)

The musical score for Example 4.18 consists of two systems of staves. The first system shows measures 9-11, and the second system shows measures 12-15. The first clarinet (B♭ Cl.) and viola (Vla.) parts are shown. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats) and the time signature is 6/8. The first system shows a melodic line in the first clarinet with a slur over measures 9-11, and a counterpoint in the viola. The second system shows a new phrase starting in measure 12 for both instruments, with the first clarinet playing a more active melody and the viola providing a rhythmic accompaniment.

Example 4.19. L.M. Gottschalk, *Á Montevideo*, mm. 16–24 (reduction)

The image shows a musical score for two systems of music, both for Oboe/Clarinet (Ob./Cl.). The first system begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic marking. The music is written in 6/8 time and features a melodic line in the upper staff and a supporting bass line in the lower staff. The second system starts with a measure rest of 21 measures, indicated by a '21' above the staff.

Following a lengthy fast-paced section written in the light style of *opéra comique*, marked *presto*, the symphony takes a triumphal turn in a section marked *Maestoso*. The section opens with a statement of the Uruguayan national anthem in the trumpets and trombones:

Example 4.20. L.M. Gottschalk, *Á Montevideo*, “Maestoso” (Uruguayan National Anthem)

The image shows the beginning of the “Maestoso” section of the Uruguayan National Anthem. The score is for three parts: Bb Trumpet (B \flat Tpt.), Horn in Eb (Hn. in E \flat), and Trombone/Ophicleide (Tbn./Oph.). The music is in 2/4 time and features a strong, rhythmic melody in the trumpet and trombone parts, with the horn part providing harmonic support.

After this initial statement, the melody is taken up by the first violins, which immediately enter into a fugato with the second violins and violas. Here Gottschalk is once again transforming the “moral” dimension of the music into the “complex” dimension by

giving it a context that requires greater active engagement. The joyous mood of the fugato turns ominous for a few measures that seem to recall the turmoil of war. The anthem returns briefly but is again interrupted by a lengthy passage of dark *tremolandi* in the strings. As before, the Uruguayan anthem returns, but this time it is supported by the full orchestra playing *fortissimo*. At a moment that seems like a rousing conclusion to the piece, the music suddenly shifts to a *tutti fortissimo* rendition of “Hail, Columbia,” which for many years was the unofficial national anthem of the United States:

Example 4.21. L.M. Gottschalk, *Á Montevideo*, “Hail, Columbia”



This tune is immediately followed by “Yankee Doodle,” another song symbolizing the United States that Gottschalk had used in *L’Union*, as well as the Bunker Hill symphony.⁷⁰ To close the circle, *Á Montevideo* ends with one final bombastic statement of the Uruguayan anthem.

As in the *Symphonie romantique*, *Á Montevideo* symphonically transforms the nation’s natural landscape into an object of moral reflection, but in this case, Gottschalk also included the national anthem, the ultimate “moral agent.” He commented in his essay that hearing national airs could bring even the most hardened of generals to tears—quite an appropriate image given the war-torn context of Montevideo in 1868.⁷¹ By

⁷⁰ For more on “Yankee Doodle” as a symbol of the United States, see William Gibbons, “‘Yankee Doodle’ and Nationalism,” *American Music* 26, no. 2 (2008): 246–74.

⁷¹ Since 1865, Uruguay, Brazil, and Argentina had been waging a war against Paraguay that started as a boundary dispute between all four nations. Much like the American Civil War, the War of the Triple Alliance (1864–1870), as it is now called, greatly disrupted cultural life in the area and forced musicians, including Gottschalk, to travel throughout the region with great caution. For an overview of the political and tactical side of the war, see Chris Leuchars, *To the Bitter End: Paraguay and the War of the Triple Alliance* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002).

including “Hail, Columbia” and “Yankee Doodle” and giving equal pomp and grandeur to each, Gottschalk appears to be declaring the supranational fellowship of Uruguayans and Americans. This gesture, as Frederick Starr has pointed out, seems to resonate with Gottschalk’s efforts to establish American-style public education in several of the surrounding republics, the ultimate result of the “beneficent relationship Gottschalk hoped to establish between that country [Uruguay] and the institutions of the United States.”⁷² As the crowning moment of a symphony that moves through music’s objectivity to its subjectivity according to the course Gottschalk outlined, the symphony may very well present the picture of a pan-American ideal.

Instruments of Imperialism

Even though Gottschalk’s symphonies seem to celebrate the kindred national spirits of the United States, Cuba, and Uruguay, there is a darker side to the music that hints at American imperialist encroachment on Latin American nations. At mid-century, when Gottschalk’s symphonies were written, the future of American involvement in the political affairs of South America and the Caribbean was being hotly debated inside and outside the halls of government. Aggression and expansion into Central and South America seemed like a real possibility on the heels of the Mexican War (1846–1848), and annexing semi-autonomous regions such as Cuba and Saint Thomas, which were major trading partners with the United States, was a serious consideration.⁷³ Against this political backdrop, Gottschalk’s symphonies can be heard not only as manifestations of

⁷² Starr, *Bamboula!*, 415.

⁷³ Purchased in 1917, St. Thomas is now one of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

one man's idealistic pan-Americanism, but also as purveyors of broader national aspirations of imperialism.

At the relatively late date of his Spanish American travels, Gottschalk was certainly not the first American to believe that the two American continents held a spiritual bond stemming from their shared political experiences. Speaking before the United States House of Representatives in 1818 and urging the government to recognize Argentina's newly won independence, Henry Clay (1777–1852) had used familial imagery to characterize the whole of Spanish America:

Whenever I think of Spanish America, the image irresistibly forces itself upon my mind, of an elder brother,...who has been disinherited by the unkindness of an unnatural parent [Spain]. And, when I contemplate the glorious struggle which that country is now making, I think I behold that brother rising, by the power and energy of his fine native genius, to the manly rank which nature, and nature's God, intended for him.⁷⁴

Clay promoted stronger diplomatic ties to South America and claimed that a deeper relationship would be mutually advantageous. President James Monroe's famous State of the Union Address in 1823 more directly initiated the official alignment of United States political interests with those of the rest of the Western Hemisphere. After gaining wind that Spain, Russia, and other European powers might try to retake some of the newly independent former Spanish colonies, Monroe warned them not to intervene. As Clay had five years prior, Monroe hinted that America's role as guardian was rooted in a kinship between the continents based on the shared values of liberty and self-governance: "The occasion has been judged proper for asserting...that the American continents, *by the free*

⁷⁴ Daniel Mallory, ed., *The Life and Speeches of the Honorable Henry Clay* (New York: Van Amringe and Bixby, 1844), 1:326. Clay also played an active role in drumming up support for Latin American independence during the 1810s. See Robert Kagan, *Dangerous Nation: America's Foreign Policy from Its Earliest Days to the Dawn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 160–66 and George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 160–61.

and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers.”⁷⁵ Although there were several strong proponents, efforts to build a relationship with the South American republics based on shared values dwindled after John Quincy Adams took office 1825.⁷⁶

During the period leading up to the Civil War, the Monroe Doctrine’s effectiveness as a continental unifier waned, the most tangible consequence of which was the Mexican War.⁷⁷ Several years before the war, some Americans expressed hope that the nation’s closest neighbor to the south would be a model of republican cooperation with the United States. Like Gottschalk, one writer for the *North American Review*, a leading literary and political magazine in Boston, suggested that in order for kinship to develop, Mexicans simply needed to eliminate those political and cultural factors that inhibited personal liberty:

Let their moral and intellectual improvement be such as in times of permanent tranquility we hope it will be, let the odious features of their constitution be obliterated, and let their statesmen evince a disposition to act on the principles of ordinary justice and national comity, and they will find in their northern neighbors sincere and zealous friends. The despised and rejected theory of republican co-operation may then be realized.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ James Monroe, Seventh State of the Union Address, 1823. For a summary of the origin and impact of the Monroe Doctrine, see Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 111–16.

⁷⁶ Leaders of South American nations tended to be suspicious of the persistence of slavery in the United States. See Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 163.

⁷⁷ Daniel Walker Howe notes that the South American nations relied more on the British Royal Navy for political support than the United States and the Monroe Doctrine. See Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 116.

⁷⁸ “Foreign Relations of Mexico,” *The North American Review* 32, vol. 71 (1831): 343.

As increasing numbers of settlers from the United States crept into the Mexican territory of Texas during the 1830s, general unrest with Mexican rule eventually led to a declaration of independence of the Republic of Texas; this move shattered any hope of republican cooperation between Mexico and Texas or the United States. With the election of James K. Polk in 1844 (and the defeat of the anti-annexationist Henry Clay), the United States relentlessly pursued the annexation of Texas and succeeded. Once the annexation had been approved, Polk ordered General Zachary Taylor to prepare his troops for the defense of the western border of Texas, which Mexico disputed. After a contingent of Mexican soldiers routed a much smaller troop of Americans in 1846, the United States declared war and over the next two years ravaged the Mexican army and countryside. The war ended with a humiliating defeat for Mexico, including an enormous cession of western lands that extended to the Pacific Ocean.⁷⁹

The Mexican War dramatically and negatively impacted any hope of continued fellowship with the Spanish-American republics. Noted international law scholar John Bassett Moore has argued that the war “produced toward the United States, throughout all Spanish America, a feeling of distrust...There was created a sense of insecurity, which was greatly intensified by numerous filibustering expeditions which set out from the United States for Mexican and Central America during [the 1850s].”⁸⁰ Just after the American victory had been sealed in 1847, Henry Clay himself—the pan-American and the anti-war protester—cautioned against such expeditions, “We ought not to forget the

⁷⁹ A reliable contemporary summary of the origins and unfolding of the Mexican War may be found in Edward D. Mansfield, *The Mexican War: A History of Its Origin* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1848).

⁸⁰ John Bassett Moore, *Henry Clay and Pan-Americanism* (Louisville, KY: Westerfield-Bonte Co., 1915), 13. Slavery was also a very contentious issue. Most of the Spanish republics had abolished slavery, whereas westward expansion by the United States was driven largely by the desire to keep the balance of slave states favorable for slave owners. See Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 206–207.

warning voice of all history, which teaches the difficulty of combining and consolidating together, conquering and the conquered nations.”⁸¹

The United States, however, did not need an army to encroach upon, or even to colonize, Latin America; colonial Cuba—the Cuba Gottschalk knew—was a case in point. In negotiating the terms of peace with Mexico after the war, President Polk, following the desires of many expansionist Americans, offered to purchase Cuba from Spain, an offer that Spain rejected.⁸² Polk’s attempt to purchase Cuba, however, was an unnecessary power play. The United States had already asserted an enormous amount of control over the island commercially and culturally. The novelist and world traveler Anthony Trollope (1815–1882) noted after a trip to the West Indies that “The trade of [Cuba] is falling into the hands of foreigners—into those principally of Americans from the States. The Havana will soon become as much American as New Orleans. It requires but little of the spirit of prophecy to foretell that the Spanish rule will not be long obeyed by such people.”⁸³ Gottschalk agreed, pointing out that Cuba’s “business is almost exclusively with the United States.”⁸⁴ Gottschalk also noticed a different side to America’s dealings with Cuba, the influence of American culture:

Visited principally by Yankees, whose activity, enterprising spirit, and industry agree with the necessities and character of its inhabitants, it [the United States] is at the head of every enterprise and all the progress that for some years past have transformed ancient Cuba, and made of her today

⁸¹ Calvin Colton, ed., *The Works of Henry Clay: Comprising His Life, Correspondence and Speeches* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1904), 3:62.

⁸² See Howe, *What Hath God Wrought*, 803–805.

⁸³ Anthony Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (Leipzig: Bernhard Tauchnitz, 1860), 114–15. For more on the commercial relationship between Cuba and the United States at mid-century, see Richard Gott, *Cuba: A New History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 67–68.

⁸⁴ Gottschalk, *Notes of a Pianist*, 30.

one of the richest, most civilized, and most beautiful countries in the world.⁸⁵

Although Gottschalk made no specific mention of it in his description, the United States and Cuba experienced a rich period of musical cultural exchange during the 1850s. The famed Swedish soprano Jenny Lind (1820–1887) left New York in 1850 for a southern tour that included Baltimore, Washington, Charleston, “thence...the Havanas, and return to New York City by way of New Orleans, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Buffalo, etc.”⁸⁶ A stop in Havana on an American tour was apparently a naturally occurring event that could pass without comment. Max Maretzek (1821–1897), an opera impresario, often engaged singers on American tours that also included Havana as a regular stop. More importantly, Maretzek also used his time in Havana to recruit singers for the Astor Place Opera House, which had a reciprocal effect on musical life in America.⁸⁷ So many Cubans came to New York and enjoyed the city’s musical culture that one observer claimed that the nations’ roles had been reversed, “Instead of annexing Cuba to themselves, we should say that the United States were on the point of being annexed to Cuba....Every steamer that comes from the sunny South discharges new hordes of savage Carribbeans [*sic*] on our undefended coast.”⁸⁸ Considering these close cultural ties, Cuba was practically another state in the union, annexed or not.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 30–31.

⁸⁶ *New York Evening Post*, November 27, 1850, quoted in Vera Brodsky Lawrence, *Strong on Music: The New York Music Scene in the Days of George Templeton Strong, 1836–1875* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 2:82.

⁸⁷ For more on Maretzek in Cuba, see Maretzek, *Crotchets and Quavers: or, Revelations of an Opera Manager in America* (New York: S. French, 1855).

⁸⁸ *The Albion, A Journal of News, Politics, and Literature* 35, no. 29 (1857): 344.

As Gottschalk's own travels and concertizing demonstrate, Cuba was not the only place where American culture—and specifically its musical culture—had made inroads. In their own way, Gottschalk's travels throughout Central and South America were actually a kind of “filibustering expedition,” albeit unarmed and much less threatening. Seemingly everywhere he went, he donated concert proceeds to fledgling organizations that openly supported public education⁸⁹ Under the despotic military regimes leading parts of South America, these acts would have been construed as subversive, if not outright revolutionary. In countries that were more receptive to American values, Gottschalk was hailed as a diplomat and an icon of American republicanism. Even Gottschalk himself recognized that his efforts to “civilize” and Americanize Latin America were starting to bear fruit and would inevitably succeed. In a letter he wrote to the *New York Times* just before his death in 1869, he boldly asserted that “these South American republics understand that, sooner or later, the United States will be the arbiter of taste, and Brazil, though ruled by monarchical institutions, is, in point of fact, the most liberal of all these countries, and the most disposed to avail itself of the impulse we have given to civilization.”⁹⁰

Gottschalk's two symphonies uncover a side of American national identity formation in the nineteenth century that is otherwise lost in a surface analysis of the music, which reveals a merely benign celebration of pan-American values. Underpinned by the local sounds of Cuba, the mixture of cultivated European and vernacular American musical styles in *Symphonie romantique*, which Frederick Starr has characterized as a blend of “Parisian elegance and American democracy,” strongly exudes the

⁸⁹ Several South American countries had no official public education system until after Gottschalk's death.

⁹⁰ *New York Times*, October 24, 1869.

Americanization of Cuba that had already taken place by the time of the work's composition. The subtle quotation of "Camptown Races," for example, was simply a reflection of the cultural reality in Cuba that Anthony Trollope, many Americans, even Gottschalk himself easily recognized. Audiences would, as Gottschalk suggested in his treatise on the philosophy of music, hear themselves in the music. Yet the presence of American tourists and traders radically affected who "they," the listeners, really were. They were a part of a nascent American empire. Similarly, the coupling of "Hail, Columbia" and "Yankee Doodle" with the Uruguayan national anthem in *Á Montevideo* contains more than a simple partnering that evinces brotherhood and a shared love of liberty. It is similar, though less complex, than the strategy of commingling tunes that Gottschalk used to create a portrait of the United States in *L'Union*. The portrait of Uruguay, then, includes the unapologetic presence of the United States. The American musical presence in *Á Montevideo* is therefore not a mere transplantation of American values onto Uruguay, the "abused" brother as Gottschalk put it, but a representation of the inexorable forces that were already working to change the political and social landscape of Spanish America. According to Gottschalk himself, South Americans were in dire need of assistance to attain any sort of cultural respectability and "civilization;" they were doomed to war otherwise. There could have been no bolder diplomatic statement from a musician than writing symphonies that say, "Here we are, and here we stay."

CHAPTER FIVE

CONSTRUCTING A NATIONAL SYMPHONIC HISTORY

About thirty years into the twentieth century, composer Daniel Gregory Mason (1873–1953) felt lost in the nation’s musical eclecticism and offered his own solution to the problem. “The more traditions there are to follow,” he complained, “the more featureless does such an eclecticism become; and in our day the traditions have become so tangled that only the most powerful intelligences can find their way through them.”¹ His problem was not necessarily the lack of an American compositional tradition, but rather the vast extent of traditions that American composers had assimilated into their own idiosyncratic styles. “We are not only parrots,” he added,

but polyglot parrots. Where shall we recapture our native tongue, or at least learn to speak the Esperanto of cosmopolitanism with voices recognizably our own and an authority not borrowed? This has become the insistent aesthetic question of the day, upon our finding a right answer to which seems to depend our artistic salvation.²

Mason was referring to the eternal quest for an American music that was happening all around him, but as his tone makes clear, he believed that his contemporaries might have been exaggerating its importance. Indeed, he concluded his argument by dismissing the quest outright: “Music in America is the richer for each and all of them [traditions]; and

¹ Daniel Gregory Mason, “The Dilemma of American Music,” in *The Dilemma of American Music and Other Essays* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1928), 9.

² *Ibid.*, 13.

music in America is far more worth working for than ‘American music.’”³ Mason’s vision for America’s future therefore sounds much like the contemporary relativist critique of the quest with which I opened this study: isn’t all music in America really American?

Yet Mason, by becoming entangled in all the European traditions pervading American composition—German, French, Russian, Norwegian, Bohemian, English, and Finnish—experienced only one corner of American musical history. This is strange, because his duality of recapturing a native tongue or speaking the language of cosmopolitanism should sound very familiar to us by now. These were precisely the issues confronting Fry, Bristow, Heinrich, and Gottschalk in their symphonies. Their symphonies, which were virtually unknown in Mason’s day, laid the foundation for an American musical practice that persisted well into the twentieth century. The practice, however, has nothing to do with the quest for an “American” style of composition. Instead, it is the notion that the genre of the symphony can musically construct a national identity. As I have shown, Fry, Bristow, and the rest created American identities using musical strategies that reflected contemporary values and conceptions of the nation. Fry envisioned a new America with his hybrid blend of advanced orchestration, Italianate melodies, and vivid programmaticism. Bristow attempted to make the United States the new epicenter of the European symphonic tradition. Both Gottschalk and Heinrich musically projected the nation’s identity as a budding hemispheric and world power. This was only the start.

Though the local political and social issues were different, the second generation of symphonists continued to construct American identities framed by similar conceptions

³ Mason, “The Dilemma of American Music,” 27.

of emulation and exceptionalism. John Knowles Paine, for example, modeled his two symphonies on Beethoven, Mendelssohn, and Schumann.⁴ Paine took Bristow's emulative strategy to the extreme, however, by subsuming American identity fully into a universal musical identity.⁵ Although he wrote in a clearly emulative style during the first part of his career, Bristow changed course later. His Fourth and Fifth Symphonies have forthright American themes: pioneers on the frontier and Niagara Falls, respectively. The sheer grandiosity of these works with regard to structure, instrumentation, and programmatic narratives (especially *Niagara*) places them well outside the European mainstream that he had so arduously tried to stay within earlier in his career. In this sense, he was constructing an American identity resembling Fry's idealized "New America." In his "Emancipation" symphony, the composer and organist Ellsworth C. Phelps (1827–1913) assimilated "indigenous" sounds in order to create a portrait of America that not only included but was defined by the struggle of African-Americans.⁶ Unlike Heinrich's symphonies, which often denied the Native Americans a voice, Phelps's music gave African Americans a resounding voice.

After the turn of the twentieth century, little had changed in terms of the quest. The role that European tradition should play, for example, created a palpable anxiety surrounding symphonic composition. Randall Thompson and Henry Gilbert, for example,

⁴ His First, in C minor, even borrows the recurring rhythmic motive from Beethoven's Fifth, also in C minor.

⁵ He claimed that his music was "not national, but international music, and it makes no difference whether I compose here or in St. Petersburg, so long as I express myself in my own way." See "In Harvard University," *Music* 9 (1896): 648.

⁶ Although the score is lost today, one contemporary reviewer noted, "The first [movement], *adagio*, in F minor, represents the condition of the oppressed and expresses the wailing of a downtrodden people for liberty. The peculiar musical aptitude of the negro race has been well considered, and the main characteristics of their plaintive melody studied and utilized to good effect." *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, March 3, 1880.

believed that European standards were extremely repressive for American composers yearning to express an authentically American voice; others, like Mason, believed that composing within the European tradition was to be applauded.⁷ Unsurprisingly, then, symphonies from the period exhibit many of the stylistic traits found in their counterparts from the nineteenth century: formal experimentation, incorporation of “indigenous” music, adoption of contemporary European styles, and programmatic titles that suggest American themes (or the conspicuous absence thereof). Yet the national identities they construct are undeniably different. Robert Russell Bennett’s “Four Freedoms” symphony constructs not only a vision of modern American liberalism but also a nation ready to stand firm in the midst of world war.

These comparisons between generations, broad as they may be, would not be possible if the search for an American musical identity were our only focus. As the symphonies of the first generation of composers reveal, there has never been one “America” that could lay claim to a singular “American music.” By shifting focus instead to the processes, methods, and results of identity formation, it becomes possible to see how “America” has changed over time and how it has been instantiated differently within a single era. Symphonies from both centuries have expressed national grief, outlined imperialist ambitions, appropriated music from underprivileged peoples, depicted the nation’s natural beauty and wonder (and even the city of San Francisco), commemorated war battles, and set music to some of America’s greatest literature—and still they all sound so different. In doing so, they have created richly detailed portraits of the nation’s many faces. Beyond looking at the music itself, as I have done in this study,

⁷ See Julie Schnepel, “The Critical Pursuit of the Great American Symphony, 1893–1950” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1996), 271–72.

we might also ask how the idealistic democratic republicanism underpinning the social and political organization of the United States has been expressed or heard in *all* the symphonies composed, performed, or listened to by Americans at all times in all places. Even though it was not invented here—as John Sullivan Dwight suggested over a century ago—there is something distinctly American about the symphony, even the word itself: many voices becoming one. Could a greater understanding of these values help to explain why the New York Philharmonic performed Beethoven—and not Fry—on its recent sojourn to North Korea? Or perhaps why there are so many symphonies about Abraham Lincoln, a uniquely American tradition all its own? The history of the American symphony is waiting to be told.

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