Northern Music Culture in Antebellum New Orleans

Warren Keith Kimball
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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NORTHERN MUSIC CULTURE IN ANTEBELLUM NEW ORLEANS

A Dissertation

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Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
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Warren Keith Kimball
B.M., Louisiana College, 2008
M.M., Louisiana State University, 2011
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ABSTRACT

In the three decades before the Civil War, immigrants from the Northern United States flooded into New Orleans in search of new economic opportunities. These newcomers brought to the Southern city many elements of Northern life, such as Protestant churches, English-language newspapers, public schools, and distinct political views. They also brought with them musical practices specific to that region: Protestant church music, amateur choral societies, instrumental concerts, music publication, and English-language opera all flourished from the late 1830s until the late 1850s.

This dissertation situates the musical practices of New Orleans during the decades preceding the Civil War within the larger context of American music history. Through an examination of new archival evidence, it demonstrates how these “Americans”—the term used at the time to distinguish the city’s English-speaking residents from its French-speaking inhabitants—recreated a musical culture similar to those they left behind in the North. These New Orleans residents participated in the burgeoning national system of sheet music publication, introduced musical instruction into the city’s newly minted public schools, and developed a performance tradition of sacred concert music similar to those in Boston and New York. Examining these aspects of New Orleans’s musical past offers important lessons about the nature of American musical identity in the antebellum era and sheds new light on the far-reaching influence of Northern culture in the age of Jacksonian democracy and westward expansion.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

In February of 1851, New Orleans was buzzing with anticipation over the arrival of the international sensation Jenny Lind. The Swedish soprano, through the brilliant marketing of the impresario P. T. Barnum, had captivated American audiences with her skillful singing and her “respectable” persona.\(^1\) Lind had previously given highly anticipated concerts in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and other northeastern cities, and her stop in New Orleans caused similar excitement. Although New Orleans was situated over a thousand miles from the large metropolises of the Northeast, it could pride itself in being one of the most vibrant musical centers of the United States. Long considered the operatic capital of North America, the city had grown accustomed to the regular appearances of famous European singers who braved the long journey to try their luck on the stages of John Davis’s French Théâtre d’Orléans or James Caldwell’s English St. Charles Theater, and the city’s residents prided themselves as exceptional judges of musical talent.\(^2\) Considering their familiarity with star performers, it is surprising how excited the city’s populace became in the days surrounding Lind’s visit in February of 1851.

Although the public excitement that attended Lind’s arrival in New Orleans has been discussed by scholars, one important aspect of this reception has been overlooked: that various portions of the city’s population reacted quite differently to her visit. The only known records of her reception in New Orleans are preserved in the city’s French- and English-language newspapers and in a letter written by the Northern musician and New Orleans resident Elijah

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\(^1\) The reception of Lind’s tour of the United States stands as a pillar in the historiography of American music, and has been the subject of commentary from a number of scholars. For an introduction to the topic that presents some of the important historical issues surrounding Lind’s tour, see Richard Crawford, *America’s Musical Life: A History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 186–90, and John Dizikes, *Opera in America: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 126–38.

Dunbar, quoted below. Therefore, while the reactions to her visit by the city’s French- and English-speaking populations can be examined, the opinions of those who did not participate in the city’s print culture remain, as they quite often do, a mystery. Nevertheless, examining Lind’s reception by both the city’s French- and English-speaking populations in New Orleans reveals that the city’s Anglophone residents, who were often called “-Americans,” were the primary participants in the “Lindomania” craze, and that the French-speaking population remained more ambivalent.

Nearly every issue of the Daily Picayune, the city’s most prominent English-language newspaper, that was published during the month of Lind’s visit included some commentary on her reception in other cities, details about her visit to New Orleans, reviews of her performances, or announcements of her concerts. Likewise, the English-language columns of the New Orleans Bee (or L’Abeille)—the city’s only newspaper published in both English and French—contained numerous references to her visit. The French columns, however, contain virtually none. For example, on 3 February 1851, a lengthy article was printed on the front page of the English portion of the Bee that explained the approach that the city’s music critics would take to reviewing her performances, while the French portion of the paper makes no mention of her name.3 Likewise, on 6 February 1851, the English section of the paper included a column that described in detail the rooms that Lind would occupy during her stay in New Orleans, proclaiming that “New Orleans is the only city in the Union of which the accomplished vocalist will hereafter be enabled to say, that she really enjoyed the pleasure of a home to herself.”4 On the other hand, the French portion of the paper from the same day included a lengthy column that was highly critical of her visit, and that referred to Lind as “the eminent singer for whom the

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3 New Orleans Bee, 3 February 1851, pg. 1, col. 1.
4 New Orleans Bee, 6 February 1851, pg. 1, col. 1.
usually unintelligent enthusiasm of the Yankees has furnished with the most ridiculous titles [and] whose charm alone equals her talent.” While the opinion of this writer could not have represented the opinions of the entire Francophone population in New Orleans, the contrasting public reactions to Lind’s visit bring to light some differences in the attitudes of the city’s English-speaking and French-speaking residents.

Additional evidence demonstrates the enthusiasm of the city’s English-speaking population towards Lind’s visit. When she arrived in New Orleans in early February of 1851, her boat was greeted by thousands of the city’s residents eager to catch a glimpse of the star singer. One of the city’s musicians, a Northerner living in New Orleans, wrote a letter to his sisters in Boston that captured the general feeling of excitement:

Jenny Lind has arrived at last. She arrived Friday afternoon about 5 o’clock. The place where she landed had been crowded for two or three days and nights before she arrived it having been reported that the boat was due. When she landed she was dressed very plain and was veiled. She took the poorest carriage that was there and got started before the crowd knew that she had come off the boat but as soon as they knew it they ran after the carriage and shouted to a great extent but she got into her house before many had got there but they [the crowd] were not to be fooled so they shouted until she came out on the balcony and bowed to them after which they retired. …The tickets were sold yesterday at auction for her first concert which is to take place tomorrow evening. You will see by the paper that the first ticket sold for [$]240…all of the tickets sold very high much more so than expected. It has been the cry all winter that Jenny Lind could not make so much excitement in N.O. as she did in N. Y. and Boston. Thus far she has more if it is possible.6

Yet even before her visit of 1851, New Orleanians had hoped to one day hear Lind perform. As early as 1845, the Daily Picayune published a column articulating that desire:

It is but recently that the American public has heard aught of Jenny Lind, a Danish vocalist, who has attained great celebrity on the Continent of Europe. She has been

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5 New Orleans Bee, 6 February 1851, pg. 3, col. 1. The translation is mine.
6 Elijah Dunbar, letter to Chloe Dunbar, 9 February 1851. Mss. 985, 991, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA. Throughout this dissertation, quotations from archival sources will be included without changes to incorrect or antiquated spellings. Likewise, grammatical and typographical errors in personal correspondence will be included as they appear in the original. Factual inaccuracies, if they appear in quotations, will be corrected in footnotes. Editorial comments within quotations will be placed in brackets.
engaged for the London boards, and straightway the newspapers are prodigal of notices of her voice, and talent and history. Our curiosity to hear her is stimulated by every foreign arrival, and we cannot doubt that she is indeed a marvel. Should her success in London confirm the impression she has made upon those who have listened to her in Germany, there is no part of the world, it would seem to us, where a more profitable and brilliant career is open for her than the United States presents. A consummate vocalist and actress, with a tolerable familiarity with the English language and some charms of person, would become almost an idol of popular enthusiasm on this side of the water, and would coin money at her pleasure. Is there no benevolent entrepreneur, who will enter into this speculation a la Wykoff?7

This article is surprisingly prophetic, predicting both Lind’s incredible popular and commercial success in the United States as well as her tour organized by the “benevolent entrepreneur” P. T. Barnum. Indeed, Lind became an instant star, even in New Orleans, where she gave a total of thirteen concerts in packed theaters. People from all over the Gulf Coast flocked to New Orleans to hear her perform, purchasing tickets that were at least five times higher than normal prices.8 Many enterprising New Orleanians took the opportunity to cash in on the popular craze. Local composers and sheet music publishers began marketing new music using Lind’s name. In 1851, for example, William Mayo—a Northerner and the city’s leading sheet music publisher—published the piece “The Swedish Nightingale Mazurka” that was written by a local composer and “respectfully dedicated to Miss Jenny Lind” (see Figure 1.1).9

Jenny Lind’s visit to New Orleans brings to light many previously-unknown aspects of the city’s musical life during the early nineteenth century. While musicians and scholars have

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7 *Daily Picayune*, 22 October 1845, pg. 2, col. 3. Emphasis in the original. The paper mistakenly describes Lind as Danish, rather than Swedish. “Wykoff” most likely refers to Henry Wikoff, a wealthy socialite and promoter who was influential to P.T. Barnum.

8 Tickets for most concerts in New Orleans generally sold for around $1-$2, but general admission tickets for Lind’s concerts regularly sold for $5, and often much more. These were significant amounts of money in the 1850s. See Hambrick, 395.

Figure 1.1. Cover page of “The Swedish Nightingale Mazurka,” by Henry de Brueys (New Orleans: William T. Mayo, 1851). Lillie Gray Collection. Instrumental Selections, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.
acknowledged the thriving opera culture that was cultivated by the city’s Francophone residents during the antebellum years and the development of jazz by African-American musicians during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, little effort has been made to document the musical practices of other portions of the city’s population, including those of its English-speaking residents in the 1840s and 1850s, who by all accounts were the primary participants in the Jenny Lind craze. They worked as composers, conductors, publishers, performers, teachers, retailers, and church musicians, bringing to the city elements of a musical life that reflected not its heritage as a French and Spanish colonial territory but rather its newly acquired identity as an American city. Bearing close ties to the Northern United States, and accordingly known as “Americans” to the city’s other residents, these New Orleanians are the subject of this dissertation, which seeks to shed light on their musical practices. Their music making has gone virtually unnoticed by historians, yet the musical culture they fostered would remain in place for nearly a century.

The Northern Community of New Orleans

The population of New Orleans was exceptionally diverse during the 1840s and 1850s. Crowded together in its narrow streets near the Mississippi River were immigrants from a variety of European nations and the Caribbean; recently transplanted northerners from the Eastern seaboard of the United States; Native Americans and people of African descent, both free and enslaved; and the city’s native-born, French-speaking inhabitants. Two of these groups exercised social and economic control over the city during these years: the Francophone population—consisting primarily of the old-guard “creoles” and the newer “foreign French”—

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and the recently arrived Anglophone “American” transplants from the Northeast. Commenting on this bifurcated social structure, French pianist and composer Henri Herz remarked in 1851 that “New Orleans is divided administratively into six quarters or districts. In reality, however, there are only two quarters: the English or American, and the French. They are, to all intents and purposes, two cities in one, two cities perfectly distinct from each other in every respect, from physical appearance to spirit of the inhabitants.” Herz’s description of the city does not do justice to its diversity, but it does help reveal the extent to which these two groups dominated New Orleans public life.

Most members of the city’s middle and upper classes belonged to these two groups, and they held nearly all the political and economic power in the city for the first half of the century. In addition, both groups cultivated musical traditions that were modeled on those of other cities in the United States and Europe. New Orleans’s Francophone population, which consisted of its older creole residents and its newer arrivals from France, cultivated an opera culture unlike anywhere else in the United States. This operatic tradition came to define the music of New Orleans for contemporary music writers and critics outside of the city. In an 1856 column titled “Music in New Orleans,” a writer for Dwight’s Journal of Music opined that “the musical taste

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11 The terms commonly used to refer to the “American” and “French” populations in New Orleans are problematic and have a contentious history. For an excellent discussion of these issues, see Joseph G. Tregle, Jr., “Creoles and Americans,” in Creole New Orleans: Race and Americanization, edited by Arnold R. Hirsch and Joseph Logsdon (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 131-85. The word “French” was generally used to refer to anyone in New Orleans who could claim ancestry from the city’s earliest French and Canadian settlers, as well as the “foreign French” population who immigrated to the city from France in the early nineteenth century. English speakers in New Orleans were generally referred to as “Americans.” This term is problematic because many of the city’s native French-speakers were actually American citizens. Additionally, Irish and German immigrants, many of whom spoke English and lived in the city’s “American sector,” nearly outnumbered New Orleans residents who spoke English and were born in the United States. For the purposes of this article, I will retain the nineteenth-century definitions and refer to the English-speaking portion of the population as “American,” and the French-speaking portion as “French.” As with their nineteenth-century usage, these terms do not necessarily reflect the citizenship of the people to whom they refer, but instead reflect the largely self-conscious attempts by the city’s residents at this time to distinguish themselves from one another.

of that city has seemed to us, at this distance, to be quite a remarkable reflex of the taste of Paris.”¹³ This perception of New Orleans as a city whose tastes and musical practices were solely tied to its colonial and cultural French heritage has persisted into modern historical and musicological scholarship primarily because of the attention that scholars have paid to the city’s operatic tradition, and particularly its French operatic tradition, which was indeed closely tied to Paris.¹⁴

Yet to place New Orleans within the historical narrative of American music history as a quasi-European city whose only contribution to the country’s musical life was a vibrant French opera house would be to ignore the great diversity of the city’s music. Two weeks after Dwight’s Journal of Music published the column quoted above, a writer for the New Orleans Daily Picayune printed a response that scolded Dwight’s Journal for its over-simplification of the city’s musical life:

The musical taste of New Orleans, our friend Dwight thinks, is quite a remarkable reflex of that of Paris. He is partly right and partly wrong in this opinion…True it is, we get most of our operas and all our singers from France, but we are not ready to admit that we import our musical taste from its capital: certainly not all of it, nor even in any such degree as to strike an understanding observer as remarkable. A very considerable portion of our population here is German, and we had a proof…that there is such a thing in New Orleans as a decided taste for German music; while English and Italian opera, oratorio, and concert singing are received with a degree of favor, and an appreciativeness that show the existence of something besides a French musical taste in our midst.¹⁵

¹⁵ Daily Picayune, 28 December 1856, Pg. 2, col. 1.
Clearly, the editors of the English-speaking *Daily Picayune*, who in fact had Northern roots, were not pleased that the rest of the nation viewed New Orleans as an outpost of French musical culture. While French opera thrived in the city unlike anywhere in the United States, the citizens of New Orleans experienced a diverse musical life that in many ways resembled those of Northern American cities such as New York and Boston.

The following chapters will examine various aspects of the musical practices of New Orleans that were put in place by the city’s Northern population during the 1840s and 1850s. For two primary reasons, the scope of this study is limited to the twenty-five-year period preceding the Civil War. First, most of the new Anglophone immigrants to New Orleans began to arrive in the city shortly before the 1840s, and by the end of the period many had left as anti-Northern sentiments increased and Southern nationalism became widespread. Second, although there are no surviving archival sources that document a distinctly Anglophone music culture in the city prior to the late 1830s, the number of sources that point to its existence during the 1840s and 1850s is overwhelming.

During these two decades, musicians from New York, Boston, and other Northern cities immigrated to New Orleans in search of new economic opportunities. These primarily white, middle-class merchants made the city their own, bringing to New Orleans from their Northern homes institutions, practices, and values distinct to that region. Along with free public education, English-language newspapers, Northern politics, and Protestantism, these immigrants established a musical culture in New Orleans that was distinctly Northern: Protestant church music, amateur choral societies, instrumental concerts, music publication, and English-language opera all grew and flourished from the late 1830s until the late 1850s. Furthermore, they created a transregional
A community of musicians that connected New Orleans to Northern cities with a degree of symbiosis that proved beneficial for all parties involved.

Published research on music making in nineteenth-century New Orleans is limited. The work of two writers, historian Henry Kmen and musicologist John Baron, currently stands as the primary focused scholarship on the history of music in nineteenth-century New Orleans. Kmen’s 1966 book *Music in New Orleans: The Primitive Years* is an important survey of the city’s music prior to 1841, but it is limited by its nearly exclusive focus on opera.\(^{16}\) John Baron’s 2013 book *Concert Life in Nineteenth-Century New Orleans* is a valuable study that documents the history of public concerts in the city.\(^{17}\) This dissertation complements Baron’s research by examining how areas such as music publication, music education in public schools, public sacred music concerts, and church music played into the city’s musical life—and thereby demonstrating how music making in antebellum New Orleans fits into the broader spectrum of American musical practices. Several focused studies on the music history of New Orleans have also been instrumental to this dissertation, particularly Peggy Boudreaux’s and Florence Jumonville’s work on music publication in the city, Paul Richard Powell’s master’s thesis on music publisher A. E. Blackmar, and Warren C. Fields’s dissertation on the composer Theodore von La Hache.\(^{18}\) Additionally, Ann Ostendorf’s work on music and national identity in New Orleans and the


surrounding region serves a good introduction to the role that music played in the formation of ethnic, national, and other collective identities in antebellum New Orleans.¹⁹

This dissertation, which seeks to contextualize the musical life of New Orleans within the broader spectrum of American music cultures during the nineteenth century, is indebted to a number of authors whose works examine aspects of the history of music in the United States. Michael Broyles, in his book on the musical practices of antebellum Boston, has shown how sacred concert music worked as a marker of social class and as a type of cultural capital in the North.²⁰ Likewise, Katherine Preston’s and Lewis Levine’s respective studies on opera in the United States during the early nineteenth century provided models for reinterpreting musical practices within specific cultural contexts.²¹ Additionally, Howard Smither’s general history of the oratorio was important for contextualizing public performances of sacred music in New Orleans within the broader history of the repertoire of sacred concert music.²² The work of several historians has also been instrumental to this study. The seminal research of William Chenault and Robert Reinders on the Northern community in New Orleans has made this dissertation possible.²³ Eric Foner’s famous study of Republic ideology before the Civil War has helped in identifying and contextualizing Northern political ideals in New Orleans.²⁴ Likewise, Jonathan Daniel Wells’s history of the middle class in the Southern United States has helped to

¹⁹ Ostendorf, Sounds American.
define the social and economic space occupied by middle-class musicians in antebellum New Orleans.25

Drawing upon new archival evidence, this dissertation establishes the history of music making in antebellum New Orleans that took as its model the musical practices of Northern cities. To establish this history, it will explain the various ways that professional musicians modeled their careers on those of Northern musicians; demonstrate how amateur choral societies and public concerts of sacred music helped establish a concert life in New Orleans that was modeled directly on Boston’s; and show how business connections between composers and publishers in both New Orleans and Northern cities helped to create a transregional musical economy that strengthened cultural ties between the two regions. To this end, each chapter examines a different facet of Northern musical practices in New Orleans and demonstrates how these practices transformed the musical life of the Crescent City.

Chapter 2 examines the professional life of the conductor, organist, and music educator Fredrick F. Müller, who moved to New Orleans from Boston and modeled his career directly upon those of the New England reformers, and especially Lowell Mason. This discussion of Müller’s career will demonstrate how distinctly Northern musical practices spread to New Orleans largely as a result of the professional musicians who moved there during the 1830s and 1840s. These practices were closely associated with the Northern middle class, and their presence in New Orleans points to the formation of a middle-class culture that was likewise inherited from the North.

Müller, who was born in Germany and most likely immigrated to the United States at an early age, was representative of the Northern model of the professional musician. His diverse

career consisted of concurrent work as a public-school music teacher, a concertizer, a church
organist and choir director, the leader of an amateur choral society, a composer and arranger, and
a singing school teacher. These activities point to the major features of musical life in Boston,
where Müller had worked for a time both before and after his years in New Orleans. Müller may
not have introduced these Northern musical practices to New Orleans, but he was instrumental in
filling a growing demand in the city for musicians in the New England mold. This chapter relies
heavily on the three extant samples of Müller’s personal correspondence and newspapers records
from New Orleans, Boston, and Brooklyn—the three cities where he spent most of his
professional life.

Chapter 3 describes the history of public sacred music concerts in New Orleans. After
tracing the development of public sacred concerts in the city, it examines ways in which these
performances served as markers of national, ethnic, and class identity during the 1840s and
1850s while spreading a Northern political ideology amongst the city’s American community.
This ideology played a vital role in the social performance of an American identity by the
Northern residents of New Orleans, for whom oratorios and other sacred choral works became
markers of Americanism in the context of the city’s French and Spanish heritage.

One of the earliest and most important proponents of public sacred music performances
in the city was the New Orleans Sacred Music Society, formed in 1842. The history of this
society can be reconstructed in some detail by examining New Orleans newspapers in the 1840s.
Concert programs, reviews of concerts, and announcements to members of the society were all
published in the papers with some frequency. In addition, the official records of the society,
which date from its organization in 1842, are held in the special collections library of the
University of Texas at Austin. These handwritten records, which span the first three years of the
society’s existence, reveal its goals, its bylaws, its history of purchasing music from Boston, its hiring of professionals, and the make-up of its membership. An examination of this source also allows for a more detailed history of the society’s performances.

Chapter 4 documents the thriving transregional musical economy that existed between New Orleans and Northern cities, as well as the New Orleans-based merchants whose music stores played a vital role in the day-to-day musical life of the city’s residents. This chapter will show how, through a national system of music publication and music retail stores that included New Orleans merchants, local composers were able to reach a larger audience and forge commercial ties to Northeastern cities. Despite increasing sectional divisiveness in the country’s political and social life at the beginning of the 1850s, these Northern and Southern merchants retained stable relationships, and at times even promoted a sense of unionism through the patriotic music they sold and published.

Music publishing boomed in New Orleans in the 1840s and 1850s, when more and more individual publishers made their way into the city. The imprints of New Orleans publishers appeared on thousands of pieces of sheet music that originated with both New Orleans composers and those from New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. By forming partnerships with Northern firms, New Orleans publishers supplied sheet music for the many musicians in the city and the surrounding rural areas. In addition to music publishers, music stores run by the city’s anglophone residents formed a vital part of the musical economy in New Orleans. These stores served as ticket box offices; sheet music suppliers; instrument builders, repairers, and dealers; and agents for professional musicians. Most of these stores—which were all located within a one-mile-radius of one another on Canal and Camp streets—formed
professional relationships with instrument makers and music publishers in the Northeast, such as the piano manufacturer Chickering in Boston and organ builder Henry Erben in New York.

Chapter 5 discusses the musical legacy of the New Orleans American community and describes how its ties to the Northern United States waned in the final years of the 1850s as sectionalism intensified and many Northern migrants to the city either returned to the North or came to identify politically with the Southern states. The careers of composer Theodore von La Hache and music publisher A.E. Blackmar are examined to demonstrate how anti-Northern sentiments all but eliminated the cultural and economic ties that New Orleans had to the North. La Hache was New Orleans’s best-known composer in the antebellum period (besides Louis Moreau Gottschalk, who did not live in the city), and he maintained close relationships to music publishers in New York. Yet by the end of the 1850s, he was one of the city’s most prolific composers of Confederate music. A.E. Blackmar was a music publisher from Vermont who established his business in New Orleans in the 1850s only to become known as the most prolific publisher of Confederate sheet music in the country. As demonstrated by these two examples, most of the city’s Northern residents had to either adapt to rising sectionalism or leave the city due to increased political violence and intolerance.
CHAPTER 2
FREDERICK F. MÜLLER AND MIDDLE-CLASS MUSIC MAKING

On 9 July 1842, Frederick F. Müller, a musician and teacher living in New Orleans, penned a letter to an acquaintance in Cambridgeport, Massachusetts, describing for her the musical life of the city. Müller was part of the group of transplanted Northerners living in New Orleans who moved to the city to take advantage of new economic opportunities and who sought to preserve and disseminate their New England culture within their adopted city. A portion of his letter reads:

The people here are beginning to appreciate more and more church music but it is still at a low ebb. The amateurs of this city of the American population have formed a society similar to the Handel & Haydn Society of which…I am a conductor with a salary of $300 a year. Opera music especially Italian music is the fashion here and this is mostly owing to the many good operas in French and Italian language which are performed here during the winter and generally performed most superb…Public schools have been also established on the Plan of the Boston schools and vocal music is made one of the branches of instruction. I have to attend two schools composed of girls and Mr. Daniel Mason one school composed of boys. There was last week a public examination of the scholars and they gave general satisfaction. The church at which I am officiate close[s] by tomorrow for the rest of the summer.¹

This letter is significant because it describes in vivid detail the life of a professional musician in early nineteenth-century New Orleans, uncovering the various musical activities that constituted his career. In the early nineteenth century, the concept of the “professional” musician was still a relatively new idea in the United States. Prior to this time, the country had supported few full-time composers or professional performers. Most Americans relied on European composers for their notated music, while touring foreign performers dominated the operatic and concert stages.²

¹ Frederick F. Müller, letter to Rebecca Valentine, 9 July 1842. Mss. 895, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA. Although Müller dated this letter only by the month and the day, not by the year, his reference in the postscript to two theater fires, as well as other clues, identifies the letter as being written in 1842.
² “All indications are that through the first four decades of the nineteenth century, a majority of professional performers in America…were foreign born.” Richard Crawford, The American Musical Landscape (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 73.
Yet in the early decades of the nineteenth century, a musical infrastructure began to emerge that would enable skilled musicians to find new sources of income as music educators, church musicians, solo performers, conductors, and composers. According to Gilbert Chase:

As the nineteenth century advanced, [cities], particularly those of the North, grew in wealth and size due to the effects of a steadily expanding commerce and a rapidly increasing rate of immigration…It was during the first half of the nineteenth century that [the] pattern of music as big business began to take shape in the United States. For the first time, musicians began to make real money from their art.³

In light of recent historical research on the social and economic life of the antebellum South, this statement can be applied to cities in the Southern United States, and especially New Orleans, which by the early 1840s was the economic capital of the South. By then, many residents of Southern cities took their cultural and economic cues from Northern counterparts, whom they learned about through travel, business connections, and the popularity of Northern newspapers in the South.⁴ This fact was nowhere more true than in New Orleans, where a sizeable portion of the middle class was made up of Northern migrants to the city.⁵ Frederick Müller found a niche within this American middle-class economy, working variously as a teacher, conductor, and organist. In assuming these roles, he based his career on those of the famous musicians Lowell Mason and George James Webb, both of whom he would have encountered during his time in Boston. As New England musical influence spread to the Southern frontier, opportunities for professional musicians became more abundant.⁶ Furthermore, as music-making in the Northern tradition became an important element of middle-class culture in New Orleans, the prestige of

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⁵ Ibid., 21.
musicians such as Müller also grew, affording them the social privileges that came with middle-class status.

This chapter will demonstrate how, by the early 1840s, New Orleans was on the cusp of the same economic and cultural shifts then occurring in Northern cities such as Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, shifts that created a musical infrastructure supportive of professional musicians such as Müller. The result was a more active concert life in these cities, as well as the growth of music education in public schools, the creation of amateur musical societies (discussed in Chapter 3), and the expansion of music publication (discussed in Chapter 4). Furthermore, the rise of the professional musician in the Bostonian mode coincided with the rise of the middle class and the market economy in New Orleans. Drawing on recent studies that examine economic life in the nineteenth-century South, this chapter will situate the activities of professional musicians from New Orleans’s American community within the city’s newly-emerging middle-class merchant economy.⁷

Beginning in the early 1840s, the demand for cotton created a commercial boom in New Orleans that would last until the Civil War. These newly prosperous circumstances helped draw Americans from the Atlantic North to the Crescent City and created new opportunities for the city’s working musicians. Professional musicians from New Orleans’s American sector can thus be understood as members of the “artisan” or “merchant” class because their activities often coincided with those of other middle-class professions. Music teachers, publishers, church musicians, composers, instrument builders, and performers often shared similar modes of

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employment as other Southern artisans and merchants. Likewise, these musicians also benefitted from the same economic impulses that led to the rise of the American middle class.\textsuperscript{8}

\textbf{Müller’s First Boston Period: 1839–1842}

Frederick Müller was born in Gernrode, Germany on 19 December 1815.\textsuperscript{9} Although information on his early life is scant, the surviving evidence is enough to suggest the social and economic circumstances in which he began his career. When Müller arrived in the United States from Germany is a mystery.\textsuperscript{10} The earliest records of his life place him in Boston beginning in 1839, when he was twenty-three years old. That year, he was hired by the Boston Academy of Music to serve as the organist for its public concerts after George James Webb resigned from that position due to some internal conflict within the academy. The 1839 annual report of the Boston Academy described this situation in detail:

The intention of the government [of the Academy] was to have commenced a series of concerts early in the autumn of 1839, and the rehearsals of the choir, and all other necessary preparation…were suddenly terminated, and the concerts postponed, in consequence of a disagreement between the two professors, which…resulted in the resignation by Mr. Webb…Upon inquiry for the most suitable person to take the vacant seat, the reputation of Mr. F. F. Müller, then of Cincinnati, appeared to give him strong claims upon the attention of the government, and proposals were accordingly made to him, to come to Boston, and try whether the situation would be acceptable to him, and if it were probable that his labors would be useful in the Academy. He accepted the proposition, and has acted as organist at the rehearsals of the winter, and the concerts which were given in the spring. The evidence of the musical talent and acquirement of Mr. Müller is now partly before the public, and cannot but give him a high rank among musical professors; while his devotion to business is such as to encourage the belief that the cause of taste and knowledge in the art is in his hands.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{8} Musicians, including Müller, worked as merchants, dealers, and store keepers (usually selling or producing musical instruments and sheet music), religious workers (church musicians and performers), and teachers (both in public schools and privately). According to Wells, each of these professions falls under the category of either “commercial” or “professional” occupations that made up the Southern middle class. See Wells, \textit{The Origins of the Southern Middle Class}, 239.

\textsuperscript{9} Greenwood Cemetery (Brooklyn, NY), Frederick Ferdinand Müller tombstone.

\textsuperscript{10} Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate any records of Müller’s life prior to his residence in Boston in 1839.

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Seventh Annual Report of the Boston Academy of Music, Read at the Anniversary Meeting, in the Odeon, July, 1839} (Boston: Perkins and Marvin, 1839): 3–4. The identity of the other “Professor” who was involved in the argument is unclear.
Without documentation of Müller’s earlier work in Cincinnati, the above description stands as the earliest known record of his life and career. Before he came to Boston, however, Müller had probably already established himself as a prominent organist and possibly as a music teacher (thus his designation as a “musical professor”) in Cincinnati, a city that also had a sizable Northern population and that by the late 1830s had, like New Orleans, begun implementing music education into its public schools. \(^{12}\)

Shortly after his arrival in Boston, Müller began performing in concerts strikingly similar to those he would give in New Orleans in the ensuing years. His work in Boston immediately drew positive attention in the musical press, as he was praised in *The Musical Magazine* for his skillful playing and teaching: “the forte of [Müller] is the organ, which he plays with skill and a fine organ touch. As a solid and faithful teacher of the pianoforte he promises also to help the art onward; and as a performer on the violin he will further be useful.”\(^ {13}\) Müller’s first concert with the Boston Academy of Music was held on 13 May 1840.\(^ {14}\) Under the direction of Lowell Mason, this concert featured both the Academy’s orchestra and choir and included performances of a cantata by F. E. Fesca and a portion of *The Seasons* by Haydn. The concert also featured a solo piece performed by Müller, described as a “Popular Melody, with variations and obligato pedals—composed by Rink.”\(^ {15}\) Another concert featuring Müller and other solo performers was held on 6 June 1840.\(^ {16}\) Described as a “Grand Charity Concert,” the program consisted of a variety of different numbers, including a “Grand Introduction on the Organ—with pedal


\(^{14}\) *Boston Morning Post*, 9 May 1840, pg. 2, col. 7.

\(^{15}\) Ibid.

\(^{16}\) *Boston Morning Post*, 6 June 1840, pg. 2, col. 7.
obligato” performed by Müller. There were also several numbers by “Mrs. Franklin,” who was then the principal soprano of the Handel and Haydn Society, and who would later give a concert of sacred music in New Orleans in 1842, just prior to Müller’s arrival in the city.¹⁷ On 21 November 1840 the Boston Academy of Music gave its second concert of the season, which featured both Müller as organ soloist and the Rainer Family, a touring group of singers from the Tyrol region of Austria who gave concerts in the eastern United States from 1839 to 1843.¹⁸ The Rainers were among the first popular “singing families” in the United States during the 1830s and 1840s, and they paved the way for similar groups who would later become famous, such as Hutchinson Family Singers.¹⁹ The Boston musical press praised Müller’s playing in the concert, stating that, “the execution of Mr. Müller pleased us very much; it was full of life, energy, and distinctness. His accompaniment also of the Rainer’s [sic] was neat and appropriate; here this light tinkling upon the upper notes is in its place; it suits the light, gay character of the music, while any full-chorded accompaniment would disturb the effect.”²⁰ Müller’s contact with the Rainer Family would eventually prove even more fruitful. In 1841, he arranged three of the Rainers’ songs in a work for solo piano that was published by William H. Oakes of Boston and titled “Tyrolese Melodies, as sung by the Rainer Family, arranged with symphonies and accompaniments by Friedrich F. Müller.”²¹ The collection included piano arrangements of the songs “Was it not at one?” “The Alpine Hunters,” and “The Tyrolese War Song.”

¹⁸ *Boston Morning Post*, 20 November 1840, pg. 3, col. 2.
²¹ Friedrich F. Müller, “Tyrolese Melodies, as sung by the Rainer Family,” (Boston: Wm. H. Oakes, 1841). Despite the different spelling of his name, this was certainly the same Frederick Müller. Müller was perhaps attempting to capitalize on his German origin to make these pieces sound more authentically Austrian while tapping into the ever-growing respect that Americans were beginning to feel for German musicians. While the spelling of his last name varies occasionally in contemporary sources (although he always spelled it “Müller”), this is the only record I have found of him using the first name “Friedrich.”
During Müller’s time in Boston, he participated in at least eight public concerts. Some of these performances were organized by the Boston Academy of Music, while others were put on independently for charity. Their programs primarily comprised European sacred music, operatic excerpts, and popular pieces, all typical for Boston concerts at the time. These performances would serve as models for Müller’s later concerts in New Orleans, including those with the New Orleans Sacred Music Society, an organization for which he served as organist and conductor. Müller’s concerts in Boston, like his later performances in New Orleans, often featured oratorio choruses by Handel, Haydn, and Neukomm; operatic overtures and arias by Rossini, Weber, Auber, and others; and popular songs sung by a soloist or performed instrumentally on the organ or piano.

While Müller’s stay in Boston was relatively short, his efforts were successful with the public and the press, and they helped to bolster his reputation as a musician. One newspaper column dating from these years described him as a skilled performer whose concerts were quite popular. Writing in the *Boston Morning Post* prior to a March 1841 concert, an anonymous reviewer not only praised his musical talents, but also his personal merit:

> Professor Muller has had the good fortune to secure an extraordinary array of talent for his concert this evening, and will, consequently, have a full house. Mr. Muller is deservedly a favorite with the public, and all who attend at the Melodeon tonight, must have the satisfaction derived from the entertainment increased by the reflection that they have been enabled, while seeking their own pleasure, to benefit one whose professional merit and moral worth make him eminently deserving of their approbation.\(^2\)

This column not only attests to Müller’s successful career as a concert performer and organizer in Boston but also to the public’s positive view of his moral character, an important consideration given the value that Bostonian music culture placed on the moral aspects of public musical performance.

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\(^2\) *Boston Morning Post*, 3 March 1841, pg. 2, col. 3.
The surviving historical evidence of Müller’s life suggests that he was more a part of the “Yankee” contingent in Boston (and later in New Orleans) than of any German community. All surviving samples of his correspondence are in English, and during his time in New Orleans there is no evidence that he ever participated in any of the musical or social events organized by the city’s large German community. During the 1840s, most of the German residents of the city were seasonal laborers who worked in the city temporarily before moving up the Mississippi River to settle elsewhere. In a letter he wrote from New Orleans to Boston in 1842 describing the burning of the city’s two English-language theaters, Müller explained that “the other [American] theater has also been burned, and we have no theater now except a French theater.”

His identification with the American theaters, his fluent English throughout his correspondence, and his later marriage to an American woman from North Carolina indicate that he identified more with the city’s American community than of any other cultural group. Regardless of Müller’s ethnic identity, the fact remains that he was thoroughly entrenched in Bostonian musical practices, and his subsequent work in bringing them to New Orleans had a profound impact on its musical culture.

Müller in New Orleans: 1842–52

Müller’s tenure as the organist for the Boston Academy of Music was relatively short, lasting a little more than two years. The final piece of evidence documenting his time in Boston

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23 Historian Ann Ostendorf has described the problematic nature of prescribing the cultural label “German” on those who immigrated to the United States from Germany in the early nineteenth century. She explains that “Germans in America largely became German only on their arrival. Their regional, religious, and other components of identity that may have separated them in Europe were enveloped in America by non-Germans who grouped all German speakers under the common nomenclature. Language, instead of continental heritage, seemed to have been the assumed ingredient necessary for group cohesion by outside labelers. German speakers, on the other hand, often felt little kinship with these other ‘Germans’ beyond their shared language.” See Ostendorf, 5.


25 Frederick F. Müller, letter to Rebecca Valentine, 9 July 1842. Emphasis mine.
was a letter he wrote on 17 December 1841 to George Stevens, a prominent organ builder in Cambridge, Massachusetts who would later become the mayor of that city. Müller requested that Stevens visit him so that Müller could ask him advice “in some important affair.” The next record of Müller’s life places him in New Orleans in April of 1842, when he joined the New Orleans Sacred Music Society as a performing member. On 10 May of the same year, Müller was hired as the organist for the society’s first concert and was unanimously elected its vocal leader, the latter of which position included a salary of $300.

Müller’s work with the New Orleans Sacred Music Society, as well as his other musical activities within New Orleans, is described in detail in the letter (quoted above) that he wrote to Rebecca Valentine, a musical acquaintance from his time in Boston. In this letter, Müller also explained that he had already established himself as a teacher of vocal music in two of the city’s public schools and as an organist and vocal leader in one of the city’s Protestant churches. Although the existence of such occupations in Müller’s former residence of Boston has been previously documented by historians, their presence in New Orleans has not. The spread of these musical practices from Northern cities to New Orleans points to the growing influence that Northern culture was beginning to have on the musical life of antebellum New Orleans, which was the direct result of the influx of Northern immigrants into the city in the late 1830s and early 1840s. Examining the history of Northern musical practices in New Orleans is vital to our understanding of the city’s shifting economic, political, and cultural life during the 1840s and 1850s, the years immediately preceding the Civil War. By establishing a specifically Northern

26 Frederick F. Müller, letter to George Stevens, 17 December 1841, Private Collection of Stephen Best, Utica, NY.  
27 Ibid.  
28 Minutes of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society, 1842–1844. Music Manuscripts Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.  
29 Ibid.  
30 Frederick F. Müller, letter to Rebecca Valentine, 9 July 1842.
brand of music culture in New Orleans, English-speaking musicians such as Müller worked to spread Northern culture and establish themselves as a dominant social force in their adopted city. Additionally, their success contributed to the broader acquisition of economic and cultural power by New Orleans’s Northern-born residents during the 1840s and 1850s, a phenomenon well documented by historians.31

Perhaps most indicative of Boston’s influence on the Crescent City was the introduction of public schools in 1842, the year that Müller arrived. By 1840, after decades of unsuccessful attempts by city officials to provide free public education to the city’s poorer residents, several of New Orleans’s Northern-born inhabitants joined together to create a free public school system in the Second Municipality, also known as the “American Sector.” The new school system was to be based on the model of the public schools in Boston, the oldest and one of the most successful in the country. In 1840, New Orleans city officials met with Horace Mann, an important figure in Boston politics, to discuss the possibility of creating a public school system in the Second Municipality. A year later, on Mann’s recommendation, they hired as superintendent of the schools John A. Shaw of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, who instituted a distinctly New England school system.32 In 1851, ten years after the city’s public schools were established, a teacher from Massachusetts visited New Orleans and remarked on the success of the schools, comparing them favorably to those in New England:

It is gratifying to know that Massachusetts has had so much to do with the great work of free schools in New Orleans, and it must be gratifying to the Second Municipality to find that its noble example has moved the other Municipalities, and the vicinity…the teachers, female as well as male, are liberally paid, and not only instruction of the best sort is given to all children who ask for it, but all books and stationery are provided at the public expense, a point of perfection to which no New England schools has attained…never have I witnessed any schools better ordered and disciplined, where the classes were better

taught, and where there existed such a friendly feeling between the teacher and the taught.\textsuperscript{33}

Part of this success is likely attributable to Shaw’s insistence on hiring teachers from the North, whom he recruited on an 1841 scouting trip through Massachusetts and Pennsylvania. His efforts must have been successful, for in 1851 the visiting Massachusetts teacher remarked that “with few exceptions, the teachers are natives of New England.”\textsuperscript{34} We can therefore speculate that Shaw’s recruitment efforts may have contributed to Müller’s decision to move to New Orleans. Certainly his association with the Boston Academy of Music would have made him an attractive candidate to Shaw: one of the organization’s original goals was to introduce vocal music as a branch of instruction in Boston’s public schools and to provide education to musicians who could serve as instructors for those schools.

Müller’s letter to Rebecca Valentine gives more evidence of the presence of Northern music teachers in New Orleans in the early 1840s. In this letter, Müller mentioned that an instructor named Daniel Mason was employed as a music teacher in New Orleans’s schools. Newspaper evidence from 1842 indicates that this Daniel Mason was indeed the son of Lowell Mason, and it hints at a direct connection between the Boston Academy of Music and New Orleans’s public schools. On 11 November 1842, a “Mr. D. G. Mason” published an advertisement in the \textit{Daily Picayune} for a singing school, describing himself as the “son and pupil of Lowell Mason, of the Boston Academy of Music,” thus confirming that he was indeed in the city at that time.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 171.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Daily Picayune}, 11 November 1842, pg. 2. col. 1.
Lowell Mason’s method of instruction, which was based on the then-popular Pestalozzian method, became standard for the instruction of vocal music in New Orleans’s public schools. From the earliest days of public schools in New Orleans, textbooks—including those for the instruction of music—were purchased directly from Boston. Müller and Daniel Mason, along with any other music teachers who worked in the city’s public schools, used Lowell Mason’s *The Boston School Song Book* as the primary instructional manual. This book called for the teaching of simple songs, basic music theory, and the rudiments of singing. Its preface states that “when music is introduced into schools, it should be the leading object to give the children a thorough knowledge of its elementary principles, and not merely to teach them to sing songs by rote.” To this end, however, the book did not include any instructional material. Rather, the book claims that its purpose was to “furnish music” for “the singing of suitable songs, (at first by rote) as a relief from the severer study of the elements and as an exercise for the voice; also, as a means of improving the general taste and style of performance.” The collection includes 109 songs, most of them simple, strophic songs arranged in two- or three-part harmony.

Several times each year, students in the New Orleans public schools performed in “public exhibitions” that showcased their abilities to the public. These were large-scale, well-attended events that occurred semi-annually in one of the city’s prominent Protestant churches and showcased children’s skills in public speaking and singing. The students of the public schools, or “scholars,” as they were commonly called, would give recitations interspersed with musical

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37 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
numbers. The first of these exhibitions that Müller participated in was held on 1 July 1842 at First Presbyterian Church, located in Lafayette Square (see the program in Figure 2.1).  

![Program](image)

Figure 2.1. Program for Public School Exhibition. New Orleans. *Daily Picayune*, 1 July 1842, pg. 2, col. 5.

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40 *Daily Picayune*, 1 July 1842, pg. 2, col. 5.
This event was clearly the public examination mentioned by Müller in his letter to Rebecca Valentine, as it took place only eight days before he wrote it. In the letter, Müller mentioned that the students “gave general satisfaction.”\footnote{Frederick F. Müller, letter to Rebecca Valentine, 9 July 1842.} The program contained a significant amount of music, and it suggests that there were multiple performing forces, listing both music by “the choir” and “vocal music by the children.”\footnote{Daily Picayune, 1 July 1842, pg. 2, col. 5.} The former may refer to a performance by the church choir of First Presbyterian Church, which was known as one of the best in the city at the time, while the latter clearly refers to songs performed by the school children. The program also specifically mentioned Müller as the leader of the students’ singing. His presence at these exhibitions would have showcased his work as a music educator to a large portion of the city’s public, as these examinations were some of the most widely-attended public events in the second municipality. A column in the \textit{Daily Picayune} from 1845 described just how impressive these exhibitions, and especially the musical portions, were to the public:

\begin{quote}
PUBLIC SCHOOL EXHIBITION.—The exhibition of the public schools of the Second Municipality yesterday, was one of the most imposing we ever witnessed. The church on Lafayette Square was crowded to its utmost capacity. The great body of the house was filled by the children belonging to the different municipalities. There could have been but very few less than four thousand of these, all neatly attired, and presenting a picture of health, cheerfulness, and intelligence to warm the heart of every lover of his kind…We have said that the exercises of the day were interesting; they could scarcely have been more so. When the whole array of children had succeeded in getting into the church and to the places assigned to them, the anthem, “God Bless our Native Land,” was sung by them to the accompaniment of an organ. It was soul-stirring to hear thousands of youthful voices thus blending with the solemn tones of the organ and hymning forth patriotic invocations…Then commenced the exercises in declamation and composition, interspersed with music by the different schools…In their manner and style they resembled those of the best schools and academies of New England. They were not one whit behind them in the indications they gave of cultivation of mind and of manner.\footnote{Daily Picayune, 31 January 1845, pg. 2, cols. 2–3.}
\end{quote}
Clearly the writer of this column was struck by the skill exerted by so many children singing together, accompanied by the organ. But it is also clear that New Orleanians, at least those in the American community, still associated the public-school system with New England. The favorable comparisons that the writer makes between the New Orleans students and those in New England reflected his pride in the city’s school system and validated the efforts of New Orleans’s American community to establish New England social institutions and cultural practices within the city.

Müller’s tenure as a teacher of vocal music in New Orleans’s public schools lasted the entirety of his stay, from 1842 until 1852. In 1851, the visiting Massachusetts school teacher who published an account of his visit to the New Orleans schools (published in *The Common School Journal* in 1851 and quoted above) noted that Müller and John A. Shaw, the superintendent, both gave him personal tours of the various New Orleans schools. The writer praised Müller in his letter, both for his New England roots and his teaching abilities. “Accompanied by Mr. Shaw,” he wrote, “I visited nearly all the schools under his supervision, and afterwards occupied a day in visiting them again with Prof. Müller, formerly Professor in the Boston Academy of Music, who has taught music in these schools constantly for a number of years, and, to judge by their performances, with great success.”

Müller’s work as a music teacher in New Orleans was not limited to his efforts in the public schools. Beginning in 1842, he established singing schools for both adults and children. Depending upon the number of students that enrolled in his classes, they may have been quite lucrative. Singing schools, which had existed in New England for over a century by the early 1840s, had begun to decline in the Northeast after vocal instruction was introduced into the

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curricula of public schools. Yet during the 1840s, they were still a useful method for professional musicians to train new singers and earn extra money. In Boston, singing schools for adults and children were a substantial source of income for Lowell Mason and his protégés. Singing schools not only provided income from the tuition paid by the students, but it also helped boost the teacher’s reputation and often served as a platform for them to sell their own arrangements and tune books. According to H. Wiley Hitchcock, the singing school instructor was the “veritable prototype of the Yankee peddler,” who “taught his pupils to sing accurately by note, enlarged his reputation and the use of his tunebooks, and perhaps [got] in a few licks for some other business interest.”

Müller’s work as a singing school instructor extended back at least as early as his original stay in Boston. In 1841, he published an advertisement in the *Boston Morning Post* for a “glee school”:

**GLEE SCHOOL.**— Mr. F. F. Muller will commence a school for instruction in glee singing, on Thursday evening, Feb. 4 at Harmony Hall, No. 7 ½ Tremont Row, to be continued each Thursday evening for fifteen weeks. Tickets.— Gent’s $2—Ladies’ $1—to be obtained at Reed’s music store, Tremont Row, and at the door. The Boston Glee Book will be used.

Organization of singing schools in this manner was quite common. Students (who in this case were adults) would pay for the entire course upfront and would meet once a week for a set number of weeks. The singing schools that Müller established in New Orleans were similarly organized, but they also reveal that his motivation for establishing the schools was multifaceted.

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46 According to one account, in the early 1830s Mason made roughly $2,500 for teaching one singing-school session consisting of twenty-four lessons, a substantial sum at the time. See Crawford, *America’s Musical Life*, 148.


On the one hand, they provided him with extra income by way of enrollment fees; on the other hand, they allowed him to train and identify vocal musicians who could potentially serve as singers in the choirs that he directed. On 3 November 1842, he published an advertisement in the *Daily Picayune* for a weekly singing school to be held in the basement of First Presbyterian Church. The advertisement was specifically targeted toward those who wished to learn the elements of singing sacred music:

**Sing School: F. F. Mueller will give a course of instruction on the elementary principles of vocal music, consisting of twenty-five lessons, commencing at 7 ½ o’clock on Tuesday evening, the 8th of November, in the basement of the church on Lafayette Square. The introductory lesson will be given free to all on that evening. Those who desire a thorough knowledge of Sacred Music are respectfully invited to attend. Mr M. is sufficiently known to the public as organist of Christ Church, conductor of the N. O. Sacred Music Society, and instructor of vocal music in the schools of the 2d Municipality, to render further reference unnecessary. Terms—$5 for the course. Tickets may be obtained at the store of Messrs. Tyler & Jacks, 39 Camp Street.**

In his letter to Rebecca Valentine, Müller made clear his motivations for establishing a singing school aimed at teaching the singing of sacred music. Commenting on the state of the church choir at Christ Church Cathedral, where he worked as the organist and choir director, Müller described the need to recruit and train new singers: “The choir was composed of 6 singers (it is an episcopal church) two ladies singing treble, a gentleman singing the alto in a falsetto voice, one tenor and two basses…A lady alto singer is difficult to find in New Orleans but I believe by next winter I shall have some as I intend to help several singing schools and train up some.”

Müller’s singing school, therefore, not only served as additional income but also as way to find singers for his church choir, or perhaps even potential performers for the New Orleans Sacred Music Society.

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50 Frederick F. Müller, letter to Rebecca Valentine, 9 July 1842.
Müller was not the only musician to offer singing schools in New Orleans during this time. His colleague Daniel Mason also established a weekly singing school toward the end of 1842:

**VOCAL MUSIC.**—D. G. Mason (son and pupil of Lowell Mason, of the Boston Academy of music,) proposes to give a course of twenty-five lessons on the elements of vocal music. The introductory lesson will be given (free to any interested) on Saturday Evening, the 5\(^{th}\) instant, at half-past 7 o’clock, at Bullard’s School Room, 143 Julia St. Terms—$5 for the course. Tickets to be had at Woodall’s Book store, 149 Camp Street, or at the school room.

There is no way to confirm how many pupils these singing schools attracted or if they were in fact successful in recruiting singers for Müller’s choirs. Newspaper records show that he was still conducting a singing school in February of 1843, three months after the initial advertisement appeared.\(^{51}\) In July of 1844, Müller published an announcement for a new singing school aimed at “young ladies of the age of from four to fourteen years.”\(^{52}\) Because the cultivation of musical skills was a popular endeavor for young girls in New Orleans, as elsewhere, this singing school would have most likely proven popular.

In addition to working as an educator and conducting the New Orleans Sacred Music Society, Müller served as the organist and pianist for one of New Orleans’s Protestant churches. Throughout his career, both in New Orleans and in the North, Müller’s reputation was built primarily on his work as an organist, and the number of positive reviews surrounding his performances suggests that he was well respected. Regarding his work in New Orleans, it was Müller’s role as a church organist that best demonstrates the influence of New England musical practices on the Crescent City. In the 1840s, when he first arrived in New Orleans, Protestantism was relatively new in the city. Throughout much of the nineteenth century, New Orleans

\(^{51}\) *Daily Picayune*, 16 February 1843, pg. 2, col. 1.

\(^{52}\) *Daily Picayune*, 3 July 1844, pg. 2, col. 5.
remained a primarily Catholic city due to its large French and Irish populations. Beginning in the 1840s and extending until the Civil War, however, New Orleans experienced a boom in Protestantism that increased both the number of churches and the number of people attending them. Yet church attendance and religious fervor was never as strong in New Orleans as it was in Boston. Due to the transitory nature of the city’s American merchants, many Protestant churches were poorly attended and struggled financially during the summer months, when many middle-class merchants left the city for milder climates in the North. Despite these facts, the city’s most prominent Protestant churches grew in attendance from the 1840s on, and several of them built impressive church buildings, complete with large organs ordered from prominent organ builders in New York and Boston. Much like in New England, Protestant churches in New Orleans served as social and cultural institutions for the city’s merchant class. As this group grew in number and influence in the Crescent City, so too did the importance of its Protestant churches and the music that they produced.

Müller’s work within the Protestant church in New Orleans was relatively stable. He served as an organist in a single church for the entirety of his ten-year stay in the city, and he was well paid for most of that time. According to Müller’s letter to Rebecca Valentine, he worked as the organist and choir conductor at an Episcopal church—the oldest Protestant denomination in New Orleans. In fact, organized Protestantism reached the city when Christ Church Cathedral, its first Protestant congregation, formed in 1805 as an Episcopal Church.53 This denomination proved to be the most popular with the city’s American merchants and middle-class citizens, most likely due to its high social standing and its relatively less-demanding theology compared to other denominations.54 Along with Christ Church Cathedral, First Presbyterian Church and the

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53 Reinders, End of an Era, 117.
54 Ibid.
Unitarian Church led by the then-famous Theodore Clapp became New Orleans’s most prominent Protestant congregations. These churches would come to boast impressive music programs during the 1840s, and their buildings—complete with impressive organs purchased from Northern builders—would each host many public concerts of sacred music.

Contemporary newspaper records confirm that Müller was employed as the organist at Christ Church Cathedral. He was hired to the position early in 1842 and, according to his correspondence, was paid the generous salary of $900. In 1845, Müller wrote a letter to the leaders of the church revealing that the position as church organist played a key role in his decision to move to New Orleans:

New Orleans November 11th 1845
To the Rector, Churchwarden, and Vestrymen of Christ Church,

Gentlemen,

It is well known to you that when I was induced to come to New Orleans, it was in consideration of the liberal salary of $900 offered me by Christ Church. Then I was a single man, with no one but myself to provide for,—now I have a family, and with it all those additional expenses incident thereto. Notwithstanding, my salary has been cut down from time to time, until it is now but $600. This sum I can readily procure in Northern cities, where living is much cheaper, and many circumstances to make a residence more desirable, indeed, I am informed that a congregation in this city, who are now advertising for an organist, are willing to pay a much larger salary for a competent performer on the organ, and although I have made no formal application for the situation, I am assured by a gentleman who has long had charge of the choirs of that church, that if freed from other engagements, I could readily procure the vacant situation. Others, I am also informed, have applied, and I have thought it a duty toward myself to propose to you that my salary be increased to its original amount for at least one year, or that all obstacles be removed which may stand in the way of my making immediate application for the situation. I trust you will concede to my proposition as I should very reluctantly sever a connection which has hitherto so pleasantly existed between us.

Most respectfully,
Fr. F. Müller

56 Frederick F. Müller, Letter to the Rector of Christ Church Cathedral New Orleans, 11 November 1845. Episcopal Diocese Records of Louisiana, 1805–1998, Christ Church, 1845, box 2, folder 4, Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.
57 Ibid.
Clearly, Müller’s position at Christ Church Cathedral was important in drawing him to New Orleans, as $900 was a respectable salary in 1842. Along with the income he gained from teaching, leading the New Orleans Sacred Music Society, performing, arranging, and even repairing and tuning instruments, this sum would have provided a comfortable income for Müller and his family.\textsuperscript{58} According to the church’s records, his request for a raise was met with a slight compromise: his salary in 1848 and 1850 (the years for which this information exists) was $840.\textsuperscript{59}

As this letter indicates, by 1845 Müller was married and had a child. On 27 December 1843, he married Mary S. Grice, and their daughter was born the following year. Mary was originally from North Carolina, and she moved to New Orleans with her siblings sometime after her father died in 1833.\textsuperscript{60} Mary’s brothers, W.A. and James M. Grice, were steamboat captains in New Orleans and took charge of the family after their father’s death. Mary’s family was originally of Northern origin—both her father and mother were from Philadelphia. Yet by the early nineteenth century, the family had moved to North Carolina and become well-to-do Southerners. According to the 1830 census, Mary’s father Charles Grice owned seventeen slaves.\textsuperscript{61} This was a substantial number and signified at least moderate wealth. Despite their father’s slave ownership, however, two of his children—Mary and her younger brother Joseph—left biographical evidence that suggests they were sympathetic to Northern political and social attitudes. Frederick Müller’s connection to the Radical Republican movement, detailed below,

\textsuperscript{58} In November of 1845 Müller placed an advertisement in the \textit{Daily Picayune} announcing his availability to tune and repair musical instruments. \textit{Daily Picayune}, 25 November 1845, pg. 1, col. 6.
\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Daily Picayune}, 4 January 1844, pg. 2 col. 6.
suggests that Mary may have also held anti-slavery views. Joseph Grice, Mary’s youngest sibling, eventually became an officer in the Union army during the Civil War—notable considering that he spent the first two decades of his life in the South. The possibility that these two siblings may have come to share similar anti-slavery views is not surprising, given that they maintained a close relationship. According to 1850 census records, Joseph, then twenty years old, was living in New Orleans with Mary and Frederick and working as a clerk. In 1861, when Frederick and Mary were living in New York, Joseph joined the Union army in New York City, indicating that he may have relocated there with them. They both appear to have lived the remainder of their lives in the New York area, as they are buried next to each other, along with Frederick, in Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn.

Frederick Müller’s career in New Orleans is remarkable in that he found success in a wide range of professional activities. As a working musician, he earned an income that was adequate enough to support his family, and through his roles as a church organist, teacher, and conductor, he achieved a respected position in the social life of New Orleans’s American community. This is significant, for not only did Müller make a living as a musician in the United States when such a concept was still relatively new, but his work as a professional musician gained him a respectable middle-class social position—an occurrence that was likewise new for musicians in the United States. The American middle-class was certainly full of amateur musicians who performed in the parlor, in churches, and in musical societies such as the New Orleans Sacred Music Society or the Handel and Haydn Society, but the idea that a professional musician could achieve a respectable middle-class status was just beginning to be realized.

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Müller, of course, was not the first person in the United States to achieve this status. In fact, his predecessors in Boston, Mason and Webb, had achieved very respectable positions in Boston society, and Mason’s immense wealth would have even set him outside of the middle class. Müller’s career in New Orleans, however, demonstrates how the role of musicians can be examined alongside other professional occupations.

**The Musician in the New Orleans Merchant Economy**

Like much of the urban South in the late antebellum years, New Orleans experienced a growth in the number of its middle-class residents. Consisting largely of skilled workers, artisans, and merchants, this group of Southerners did not belong to the wealthy planter class or the free working class, which in New Orleans primarily comprised poor, newly-arrived German and Irish immigrants. Rather, this expanding portion of the population comprised businessmen who were financially stable and independent, but who rarely owned slaves. Unlike other Southerners, these merchants typically held Whig (and after 1854, Republican) political views, which caused them to be viewed with suspicion by their neighbors. Yet this was not the case in New Orleans’s American Community, where the presence of a Northern-based culture allowed merchants to thrive and become well-respected members of society.

By the 1830s and the 1840s, musicians throughout the United States were increasingly able to enter the ranks of the middle class. During this time, the value of music as a commodity for the bourgeoisie grew significantly as it became a means for social distinction.\(^\text{65}\) This change was

important for merchants in the antebellum South because of the public nature of their work.

According to one scholar:

Buying, selling, and investing made merchant families conspicuous in the antebellum South. Every day merchants had to perform before an audience. Whether selling goods to a reluctant customer, mollifying a nervous creditor, or simply attending church, men and women in merchant families negotiated public roles determined by their trade…successful merchants understood the sundry ways their public behavior could affect profits and made sure they and their families acted accordingly.66

In New Orleans, the types of music making that Frederick Müller practiced served as an important mode of social distinction that middle-class merchants could utilize to shape their public identity. Because of the important social function that the Protestant church played in the lives of middle-class Americans in New Orleans, sacred music became a way for them to establish their class identity. The success and flourishing of a church’s music program not only brought enjoyment to the congregation, but also a sense of self satisfaction, as the cultivation of high-quality music was a marker of cultural and economic means in the United States.

Public performances of sacred music outside of regular church services could serve a similar purpose for participants. They placed increasing value on the prestige of music, and the cultivation of “high-class” sacred music gave middle-class musicians a way to simultaneously distinguish themselves from New Orleans’s working class and establish their cultural and ethnic identity. Like Protestant sacred music, public school music education in New Orleans was also tied to class identity for middle-class Americans. The prospering of the public schools was a testament to their concomitant charity and economic prosperity, as the schools typically served the poor. As one anonymous columnist in the Daily Picayune put it:

The very brightest gem reflecting honor upon any community is the attention and culture bestowed upon education, and we have no small pleasure in taking notice of the rapid advances made by our section of the city in relation to the subject…All history goes infallibly to show that education is the only basis of intelligent prosperity, and therefore all

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66 Byrne, 41.
good citizens should be grateful with us in the flourishing state of juvenile culture in this municipality. As times grow better, and as our great city still improves, we hope to rejoice in the wide utility and onward progress of our public schools.\footnote{Daily Picayune, July 2, 1842, pg. 2, col. 2.}

For the American residents of New Orleans, the success of their public-school system and the public musical performances by the students at school exhibitions stood as a beacon of class pride that allowed them to compare themselves favorably to their peers in Northern cities.

Private music education, whether through singing schools or through private lessons from a professional, had long served as a vehicle for the cultivation of class identity. As the middle-class grew in the early nineteenth century, more people had the economic capital and time to invest in learning musical skills, leading to a higher demand of not only teachers but also sheet music and musical instruments. By the 1840s in New Orleans, the demand for these services was extremely high, as more and more people sought to become involved in either public or private music making, allowing Müller and many other musicians to find success as private teachers.

It is because of this economic and cultural climate that we can understand Müller’s career as an extension of Northern mercantilism. Through his diverse musical and professional activities, he played a similar role in New Orleans’s economy as the many wholesalers, shopkeepers, clerks, artisans, and skilled workers who thrived in the Crescent City. The lives of these Southern middle-class artisans and merchants have recently become the subject of a number of scholarly studies. Historians Scott P. Marler, Jonathan Daniel Wells, and Frank J. Byrne, among others, have examined the origin of the New Orleans merchant class and the Southern middle class and noted how these groups interacted with and drew from their Northern brethren.\footnote{The scholarly consensus is that Northern and Southern merchants shared many similar political and social views, yet differed in their attitudes toward slavery. Southern merchants, although they often valued the ideals of free labor, did not necessarily oppose slavery, and many outright supported the institution and saw it as necessary} New Orleans’s important location at the mouth of the enormous Mississippi River
system accounted for its important place in the American economy. A strategic point for the import and exports of goods, the river also served as a way to reach the interior of the United States, and many retailers and merchants based in New Orleans began to sell and distribute goods both in the city proper and to the inland towns, cities, and plantations that existed on the city’s periphery. It was within this retail sector of New Orleans’s merchant population that musicians such as Müller thrived. They were not concerned with selling or exporting raw materials to supply Northern industry, but rather with providing goods and services to the residents of the city and its environs. And it was precisely the rich economic life of New Orleans—fueled by the arrival of American merchants from the Northeast and the financial and economic boom that occurred in the 1840s and 1850s—that allowed musicians such as Müller to thrive.

The Southern merchant class was in many ways a direct parallel of its Northern counterpart. “Like Northern artisans,” one scholar argues, “Southern mechanics believed strongly in the tenets of free labor and its superiority to slave labor.” Jonathan Daniel Wells explains how the Southern middle class was directly influenced by Northern political and social ideas through travel, education, business ties. He wrote:

Middling Southerners by the 1850s had come to see their interests and values as fundamentally different from those above them and below them in the Southern social order. The development of this Southern middle class provides insight into a neglected but significant facet of class formation: the fact that emerging classes can be influenced and shaped by ideas emanating from sources far removed from them geographically...through travel, private correspondence, education, and business

for the flourishing of the Southern economy. American businessmen in New Orleans, however, tended to hold a more Northern stance on slavery. According to William Chenault and Robert Reinders, the most common attitude of this group toward slavery was ambivalence, although anti-slavery views were not uncommon. These merchants were also outspoken opponents of succession in the years preceding the Civil War. See Chenault and Reinders, 244–45.

69 Marler, 4.
70 Ibid., 37.
relationships, middling Southerners learned about and came to appreciate Northern middle-class ideas.  

This fact was nowhere truer than in New Orleans, where the connection to Northern cities was stronger than in other areas of the South. According to Marler, because of its close ties to the North and because of the large number of Northerners residing there, New Orleans was often “widely disparaged as corrupt and dissolute by most Southerners. Particular disdain was directed toward the city’s commercial elites, whose…extensive connections with the North made them more distrusted than those in other regional seaports.” In fact, Southerners associated mercantilism so closely with the North that Southern merchants (both in and outside of New Orleans) were sometimes referred to as “Southern Yankees.” In most cities in the South, white Southerners distrusted merchants and spread negative press about them in the newspapers. Yet this was not necessarily the case in New Orleans, where the most prominent daily newspaper, the *Daily Picayune*, was originally established and run by immigrants to the city with ties to the North. Besides supporting Whig and later Republican politics, its pages throughout the 1840s and 1850s were filled with news concerning the state of the city’s economy and advertisements for many of its merchants.

Examining the ways in which musicians such as Müller participated in the market economy explains how music served as a form of both cultural and economic capital in antebellum New Orleans. As the demand for music based on Northern models increased, so too did its value as a commodity, which in turn helped professional musicians flourish in the city and reach the ranks of the middle class. As a result, the reputation of these musicians became an

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73 Marler, 4–5.
75 Byrne, 41.
important aspect of their work. As in the case of other Southern merchants, the public and private lives of these musicians became intertwined with their professional endeavors. Müller, whose musical activities were tied up in respectable, Northern institutions such as the Protestant church and the public schools, benefitted greatly from this relationship. As his reputation as a musician grew, so too did his stature in the society of New Orleans’s American community, which in turn continued to help his professional career.

The Later Years: Boston and New York, 1851–1886

Frederick Müller’s last documented concert in New Orleans took place on 21 April 1851. The announcement for the concert printed in the Daily Picayune listed him as a “well-known musician.” Later the same year, Müller moved back to Boston and auditioned to be the organist for the Handel and Haydn Society. He was awarded the position and served in that capacity until 1857. His work as organist for the society was well received, and reviews of his playing were positive. In addition to his work for the society, he also served as the organist for Old South Church and taught instrumental and vocal music at the Charleston Female Seminary, a prep-school for girls. His five years in Boston in these prestigious positions did nothing but increase his reputation as an organist, and in 1857 Müller was offered a job at Second Presbyterian Church in Albany, NY, which he accepted. There is little evidence of his work in

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76 Daily Picayune, 21 April 1852, pg. 2, col. 3.
77 Ibid.
80 Ibid., 159.
82 Thompson, The History of Plymouth Church, 138.
Albany, but in 1861 he relocated to New York City, and his life there is better documented. His first position in New York was organist at Church of the Ascension, where he worked until 1865. That year, amidst a highly publicized search for an organist at Plymouth Church in Brooklyn—then led by the famous pastor Henry Ward Beecher—Müller was offered the position for the generous salary of $2,000. In this role, he would become a widely regarded performer throughout New York City. In 1866, while Müller served as organist, Plymouth Church installed the largest organ in the country at that time and marked the occasion with a well-publicized concert featuring Müller and several other well-known organists. During his tenure there, he also began a popular series of free organ concerts at the church. Henry Ward Beecher, commenting on these concerts to a reporter for the *New York Herald*, claimed that Müller “did more than any other man…to develop a cultured musical taste among people.”

In 1866, while he was still the organist at Plymouth Church, Müller provided music for what the newspapers called a “Powwow of the Miscegens Convention.” This was a meeting of various factions of the Radical Republican movement from Brooklyn and New York, along with leaders from the Southern states who had been invited to the city to speak. The Radical Republicans were a group of politicians and citizens who strongly opposed slavery before the war and fought for equal rights, including suffrage, for newly freed slaves during reconstruction. A New Orleans paper that reported on the event noted Müller’s “skillful manipulation” of the organ. It also described the fervor elicited when Müller led the singing of the popular Union song “John Brown’s Body”: “here, the big organ burst out into ‘John Brown,’ at which the

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85 *New York Herald*, 8 November 1870, pg. 9, col. 2.
86 *The New Orleans Times*, 20 September 1866, pg. 1, col. 3.
87 Ibid.
audience grew frantic with excitement, and shouted in a vociferous manner the chorus, not
forgetting the line, ‘We’ll hang Jeff. Davis on a sour apple tree.’” Paradoxically, the Brooklyn
Daily Eagle, reporting on the same event, painted a different picture of Müller’s performance:

the organist…, whose playing is an abortion,…and knows as much about the new organ as a
cat does of heaven, started up the popular tune of: “John Brown’s body lies a mouldering in
the grave,” which he played quite as well as an amateur pieman makes pies. There rose the
mighty “cry of freedom,” and the vast audience rolled out with absolute majesty of sound—
the old time threat of hanging Jeff. Davis—poor old Jeff—on a sour apple tree.

This review stands as the only known example of negative press directed toward Müller during
his career. Of course, the poor response to his playing must be understood in the context of the
political nature of the event. The Brooklyn Daily Eagle was primarily an organ of the moderate
branch of the Republican Party, and it printed numerous editorials condemning the Radical
Republicans. In fact, this negative review of Müller’s playing was included in a column
criticizing Henry Ward Beecher and the Radical Republicans in general. Perhaps the most
interesting aspect of this event is that it reveals Müller’s involvement, however indirectly, in
Radical Republican politics.

The strongest evidence of Müller’s political views exist in several songs he set for male
chorus sometime before 1870 while he was living in New York. In a collection titled “College
Songs,” Müller composed six patriotic choral pieces with texts that specifically expressed
support for the Union. The most interesting (if somewhat bizarre) song in the collection was the
unusual pastiche of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” and “The Battle Cry of Freedom.” Müller was not

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88 The New Orleans Times, 20 September 1866, pg. 1, col. 3. For an excellent discussion of the history of
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89 Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 15 September 1866, pg. 2, col. 4.

90 F. F. Müller, College Songs, unpublished autograph manuscript, F. F. Müller Choral Scores, JPB 14–28,
box 1, Music Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. The collection is undated but was
probably written during or shortly after the Civil War. The cover page indicates that it was written in New York,
where Müller worked from 1861–65 and again in the late 1860s.
the first to juxtapose these two texts, but their inclusion in his collection is nevertheless significant. The text depicts Mary’s little lamb “shouting the battle cry of freedom” and supporting the cause of the Union:

Mary had a little lamb, its fleece was white as snow,
Shouting the battle cry of freedom
And ev’rywhere that Mary went the lamb was sure to go
Shouting the battle cry of freedom

The Union forever! Hurrah, boys, Hurrah!
Down with the traitor, and up with the star,
And ev’rywhere that Mary went the lamb was sure to go
Shouting the battle cry of Freedom. 91

Müller’s inclusion of this song in his collection strongly indicates that his political ideals were aligned with the Republican Party and the Union, and that despite his lengthy stay in New Orleans before the Civil War he clearly did not develop any sympathetic feelings toward the Southern cause.

While in New York, Müller continued to pursue the same professional activities that made up his career in New Orleans. He worked as a music teacher at the Packer Institute, a preparatory school for girls, and later at the Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute. He also continued performing and leading public concerts of sacred music. To this end, he organized a series of regular concerts at Plymouth Church that were free and open to the public, and the programs for these events included performances by various virtuoso performers. In 1866, Müller formed the Brooklyn Oratorio Society, which was “organized for the practice of the Messiah and other similar compositions.” 92 He also participated, sometimes as organist and sometimes as conductor, in various other public concerts of sacred music in Brooklyn and New York.

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92 Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 19 September 1866, pg. 1, col. 5.
When Müller died in 1886, a special concert was given in Tarrytown, New York—the city where he lived the last several years of his life—to raise money for his wife. The report of the concert in the *New York Times* shows that it was a well-attended event, demonstrating the respect that New York’s musical community had for Müller:

> A concert was given in New Music Hall, Tarrytown, last evening, under the [a]uspices of the Irving Club for the benefit of the widow of Prof. F. F. Müller…The hall was crowded, nearly every reserved seat and every box having been sold several days before the concert. There were a large number of people present from New York, Yonkers, Sing Sing, and other places along the Hudson, for whose accommodation a special train was run.93

Müller’s career as an organist and educator spanned over four decades, during which he worked in some of the most prestigious musical institutions in Boston, New York, and New Orleans. Examining his place in the musical economy of these cities demonstrates how music functioned as a form of both commercial and cultural capital. The value placed on Müller’s brand of music making in New Orleans allowed him to make a comfortable living while reaching a social standing that would have been difficult to attain for American musicians of previous generations. Yet it was his role in spreading the musical practices of the North to New Orleans that is most remarkable. His work in that Southern city helped not only to transform its musical life but also contributed to the formation of a Northern, Protestant identity among the city’s American population.

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93 *New York Times*, 14 April 1886, pg. 8, col. 4.
CHAPTER 3
NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE ORATORIO

In January of 1842, around thirty amateur musicians and businessmen met in the offices of Banks Arcade in New Orleans to form a musical society dedicated to performing European sacred concert music. With a formality typical of the time, they drafted a twenty-page-long constitution complete with bylaws that laid out the foundation of what would become one of New Orleans’s most respected performing societies for the next seven years.¹ Adopting the name The New Orleans Sacred Music Society, these musicians worked so intently to spread the popularity of sacred concert music in New Orleans that by the 1850s concerts featuring sacred compositions by European composers were a fixture of the city’s musical life.² With this newfound acceptance of sacred concert music came new employment opportunities for the city’s professional musicians, including Northern-born organists, European-born conductors, and even touring star singers and instrumentalists. Likewise, new opportunities arose for the city’s amateur musicians, especially those of English-speaking, Protestant background; as documented in the previous chapters, these musicians came to form a large and influential segment of the city’s population. Prior to the 1840s, when the city’s Protestants were overshadowed both in number and in influence by its French-Catholic majority, amateur singers—many of them equipped with

¹ Minutes of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society, 1842–1844. Music Manuscripts Collection, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin.
² I use the term “sacred concert music” throughout this chapter to refer to the large body of non-liturgical sacred music that was widely performed in public concerts in New Orleans beginning in the mid-1830s. This term was not used by musicians and audiences in early nineteenth-century New Orleans, who commonly referred to this repertoire simply as “sacred music.” It consisted of non-liturgical concert pieces with sacred, Christian texts (usually in English) that often featured a choir, vocal soloists, orchestra, and organ (or other keyboard instruments). Frequently, public performances of sacred concert music included pieces drawn from oratorios composed by European composers, most commonly choruses and arias. Nineteenth-century commentators in New Orleans generally referred to public performances of this music as “sacred concerts” or “oratorios.” The latter term, although it commonly referred to a specific musical genre in the nineteenth century, could also describe public performances of sacred music, as opposed to “concerts,” which were performances that included both instrumental works and secular vocal pieces. For more information on the terms that were used to describe this repertoire, see Howard E. Smither, A History of the Oratorio Volume 4: The Oratorio in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 384–85.
choral-singing skills acquired in the wake of the nation’s recent singing school boom—had little opportunity for public performance. As the number of Protestant churches in New Orleans increased beginning in the late 1830s—making the singing school and the church choir regular fixtures in the city’s musical life—more and more amateur singers sought opportunities to perform music outside of a liturgical setting. The result was the formation of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society, an organization whose goals emphasized personal edification and the moral improvement of society through the performance of “high class” sacred music, a concept that grew out of the sacred music reform movement that originated in Boston and spread throughout the country in the first half of the nineteenth century. By working toward such goals, the society promoted a distinctly New England brand of moral ideology.

This chapter will establish the history of public sacred music performance in antebellum New Orleans and explain how musical practices that were not seen as distinctly American in Boston and New York became identified as such in New Orleans. In doing so, it draws upon the work of Douglas Shadle and Charles Hiroshi Garrett, who have defined American musical identity as a “contested moving target” in which musical practices took on new meanings in different contexts. In antebellum New Orleans, such a resignification was carried out by transplanted Northern musicians whose social performance of their Northern identity was understood by their neighbors as the performance of an American one. Of course, this

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5 This chapter is indebted to the work of Celia Applegate, whose writings have demonstrated how the musical practices of traveling German musicians helped create a German national identity in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England. She explained that “musicians, traveling or otherwise, represented a kind of distilled version of their nationality,” and that “the traveling musician became an especially potent representative of national identity.”
transformation represents just one thread in a larger story of shifting political ideologies and identities that played out against a backdrop of migration in the American nineteenth century. New Orleans stood as perhaps the most diverse American city during the antebellum period, and because of that diversity groups of immigrants such as those from various European nations, the Caribbean, and people of African descent—both free and enslaved—found that they could establish communities of cultural and class identity through shared musical experiences.6

Examining the history of sacred concert music in New Orleans has important implications for our understanding of the dual issues of social class and national identity as they related to the city’s middle-class. Musicologists and historians have discussed how different musical practices in the United States, especially those relating to opera and symphonic music, played a role in establishing national and class identity for some Americans during the nineteenth century; however, I believe that choral music and the repertoire of sacred concert music offers a unique perspective due to its widespread popularity at this time and its prestige with middle-class audiences.7 Carl Dahlhaus has argued that although the nineteenth century “seems in retrospect to have been an age of opera and instrumental music, [it] was, at the time…dominated by

6 These communities of shared cultural identity reflected the diversity of the young nation’s musical practices, like those of African slaves in the South and those of working-class German and Irish immigrants in American cities, to name a few examples. Of course, not all migration came from the North, and much of it was forced, rather than voluntary. The themes of cultural solidarity pervade the literature on the musical practices of African slaves in the United States; for example, see Eileen Southern, The Music of Black Americans: A History, 3rd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999); and Katrina Dyonne Thompson, Ring Shout, Wheel About: The Racial Politics of Music and Dance in North American Slavery (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014).

nontheatrical vocal genres from the lied to the cantata to the oratorio.” Likewise, musicologist N. Lee Orr has rightly suggested that “by the end of the nineteenth century, many [in the United States] viewed choral music as the most important musical activity in the country.” Yet it is this same popularity that has led to the absence of the oratorio from the narrative of nineteenth-century American music. As sociologist Pierre Bourdieu famously argued, musical works can be “devalued…by their popularization,” and “pretension designates as devalued ‘middle-brow’ art those legitimate works which become ‘popularized.’” As symphonic music and opera became designated as “high-class” genres during the second half of the nineteenth century, popular choral music—ever associated with the amateur and the middle class—began to lose its sense of prestige.

**Early Public Concerts of Sacred Music in New Orleans: 1836–41**

The first known performance of sacred concert music in New Orleans coincided with the arrival of Northern musicians in the city and took place in 1836, which was relatively late when considered alongside the performance history of Boston and other American cities. Although they were isolated incidents, public sacred concerts occurred as early as 1770 in Boston and slowly became fixtures of concert life in the first two decades of the following century when choral groups such as the Handel and Haydn Society were organized. Likewise, sacred concerts in New Orleans remained scattered affairs until the formation of a choral society made them regular events in the city. In this case, the group was the New Orleans Sacred Music Society,
which gave several performances each year after its organization in 1842 and helped popularize
the repertoire of sacred concert music among the city’s American residents.

The first public concert of sacred music in New Orleans was announced in the bilingual
newspaper *The Bee* on 13 February 1836. The announcement read:

*A grand oratorio is to be given tomorrow in St. Charles church at 3 o’clock p.m. The*
*Messiah* of Handel, and *Creation* of [Haydn] are to be performed by a talented company,
with a powerful orchestra; and to those who know that the oratorios above are the chief
d’œvres of the best masters of sacred harmony, it is unnecessary to request their
attendance: but to others we may assert that they will experience a rich treat of good
music likely to be efficiently performed…But we hope that this is only an experiment to
test the taste of the public; and that we shall have oratorios and concerts during the
season. Yet if not, we shall accept the present treat as a Godsend and must attend, lest we
should be disappointed in expecting more.*

The two works chosen to introduce New Orleans audiences to the oratorio—Handel’s *Messiah*
and Haydn’s *The Creation*—would become the foundation for public concerts of sacred music in
the United States, New Orleans included. According to the paper, the concert took place at the
“St. Charles church,” which was the First Congregational Church on St. Charles Avenue. The
fact that this performance was held at a Protestant church is significant, as organized
Protestantism did not reach New Orleans, a historically Catholic city, until after the Louisiana
Purchase in 1803. The city’s first Protestant Church, Christ Church Cathedral, had only fifty-
three members at its inception in 1805, and members had to cast votes to determine which
denomination the church would be. Yet in the ensuing decades, as many Northerners flooded
into the city, the number of Protestant churches increased dramatically. By the 1830s, the First
Congregational Church had become one of the most popular churches in the city. Situated in
New Orleans’s “American Sector,” it was a direct outgrowth of the city’s Northern community.

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12 *The Bee*, 13 February 1836, pg. 2, col. 2.
13 Hodding Carter and Betty Werlein Carter, *So Great a Good: A History of the Episcopal Church in
Following this inaugural concert, a review of the performance appeared in *The Bee*. The reviewer explained that he had heard oratorio performances in England early in his life and was therefore fit to judge the quality of the music. The performance was deemed adequate, but it did not meet a high enough standard to be compared favorably to European performances. The reviewer wrote, “[we] cannot say that we were disappointed—al tho we have often heard the oratorios much better executed. We had believed that the attempt was an experiment to test the taste of the public; and that the necessary preparations for an efficient display were not made.”

The reviewer deemed the organ performance lacking and explained that the orchestra overpowered the singers, although the “vocal displays were of a superior order.”

The writer concluded the review by asserting that “the performers would do better a second time were their efforts properly encouraged—not by compelling them to appear on the footing of charitable displays, but emulous to please others and profit themselves.” As this statement suggests, the concert was put on for the benefit of a charity, specifically the “Orphan Boys Asylum,” although it was the reviewer’s opinion that the performance would have been better had the musicians been financially enticed to play well. Despite the problems with the performance, attendees of the concert were “numerous and respectable.” This “experiment to test the taste of the public” must have been deemed successful by the reviewer, who “trusted that oratorios will be given every Sunday during Lent,” although there are no more mentions of sacred concerts in *The Bee*, or any other papers, during the Lenten season of that year.

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15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid. This recommendation perhaps comes from the old tradition that barred secular performances from being held on Sundays during Lent. However, by the mid-1830s and through the rest of the century, this prohibition was largely ignored in New Orleans. In fact, contemporary observers, especially those not native to the city, were often struck by the large number of non-sacred musical performances held on Sunday mornings. See Henry Kmen,
New Orleans continued to see performances of sacred concert music in English over the course of the next several years, although they were relatively infrequent. The next documented sacred concert took place over two years later, on 7 March 1838. Described as a “Grand Oratorio,” this concert was organized and arranged by a Mr. and Mrs. Watson and featured some of the city’s best-known instrumental soloists.\(^{19}\) “Mr. Watson” was John Watson, a well-known English organist, conductor, manager, and composer who had formerly worked as a manager and accompanist for Nicolò Paganini, and who fell in love with his daughter Charlotte Watson, creating an international scandal in the press.\(^{20}\) The *Daily Picayune* described Mr. Watson as the “composer to the Theatres Covent Garden and English Opera House, Member of the Royal Academy of Music, and late organist of Quebec Chapel in London, and Conductor of the New York Concerts.”\(^{21}\) Mr. and Mrs. Watson, who had been touring the United States together since the previous year, would have been familiar to New Orleanians because of the press coverage they had received in the city’s papers before their visit. The *Daily Picayune* had frequently printed information about the performers throughout 1837, including gossip about another alleged scandal involving their daughter Charlotte and reviews of their New York performances. Prior to their sacred concert in New Orleans, the Watsons gave several performances of secular music throughout the city. An announcement in the *Daily Picayune* showed that there was some excitement over the prospect of hearing them perform sacred music, with one writer proclaiming: “we are happy to observe that we are to be again gratified with the sweet warblings of Mrs.

\(^{19}\) *Daily Picayune*, 7 March 1838, pg. 3, col. 2.  
\(^{21}\) *Daily Picayune*, 6 March 1838, pg. 3, col. 2.
Watson, and that too in *Sacred Music*, in which, we understand, she is still more captivating than in those descriptions of music in which she is more accustomed to appear.”

Public concerts of sacred music were often used to raise money for charitable organizations. This practice was so common in New Orleans that sacred music and charity became inextricably linked. An 1850 newspaper announcement for a performance of Rossini’s *Stabat Mater* at St. Patrick’s Church, which was given for the benefit of the Orphan Boy’s Asylum, bluntly summed up this relationship when it implored its readers to “go all to the Cathedral, hear fine music, and relieve the poor orphans.” Another charitable concert was organized in 1841 for the benefit of the New Orleans Temperance Society and held at First Presbyterian Church. An article printed in the *Daily Picayune* stated that “the services of the members of the choir are gratuitous, and the proceeds of the concert will be appropriated to the printing and distribution of the address, publishing proceedings, and other necessary expenses of the New Orleans Temperance Society.” If an orchestra was used for this concert, they undoubtedly would have been professionals who were remunerated for their services. Choir members, on the other hand, were unpaid volunteers. This practice was the norm for most public sacred concerts given in New Orleans. Of all those documented performances prior to 1861, only two were explicitly given for the profit of the musicians. The moral element of these concerts

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23 *Daily Picayune*, 20 November 1850, pg. 2, col. 1.
24 *Daily Picayune*, 1 September 1841. Pg. 3, col. 2.
25 *Daily Picayune*, 1 September 1841, Pg. 2, col. 1.
26 *Daily Picayune*, 28 April 1855, Pg. 6. After organizing two concerts for the benefit of the Orphan Boy’s Asylum, the composer and New Orleans resident Theodore von la Hache gave another for his own benefit; *Daily Picayune*, 20 March 1854, Pg. 3. During her time in New Orleans, the famous German soprano Henrietta Sontag gave a performance of sacred music assisted by the New Orleans Italian Opera Company that included portions of Rossini’s *Stabat Mater*, Handel’s *Messiah*, and Haydn’s *The Creation*. Unlike other touring vocalists who gave public performances of sacred music in New Orleans, including the Watsons, “Mrs. Franklin” of Boston, and Jenny Lind, there is no indication that Sontag donated the proceeds of this concert to charity.
would have appealed to the middle-class amateur talent of the city, for whom personal edification, and not money, was the primary reward for their efforts.

The organizers of the Temperance Society concert also viewed its musical offerings as possessing a higher moral character than other forms of concert music. The same *Daily Picayune* article related to its readers that “the object of the concert, and the high character of the pieces selected, present a strong claim to the liberal patronage of our liberal community.”27 There is no mistaking that the phrase “liberal community” refers specifically to the American community in New Orleans, and that the author of the advertisement viewed this “patronage” as a moral attribute specific to that community. A longer column that appeared in the *Daily Picayune* the following day further emphasized the event as one of moral uplift and obligation:

To those who take pleasure in witnessing the march of moral improvement amongst all classes of mankind, the manifestations of energy on the part of our Temperance Association to accomplish the purpose for which they commenced laboring, must be eminently gratifying…To raise [funds], it has been determined to hold a Concert of Sacred Music this evening, at the Presbyterian church on Lafayette Square—and judging by such portions of rehearsals as have been heard by us, we do not hesitate to declare that it will be worthy of attention and the highest commendation. Leaving the excellence of performance, however, entirely out of the question, the object for which the concert has been gotten up ought to command the attention of every good citizen. We say, then, go and purchase a ticket, and it may be that the investment of your *one dollar* will save from misery and degradation some family whose father is far on his road to ruin through the influence of ardent spirits. Fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, and especially young men, should contribute to this excellent cause, and lay up for themselves the delightful satisfaction of having aided in drawing some wretched fellow being from the shades of dissipation and infamy.28

The writer made a clear attempt to align sacred music concerts with the moral, charitable, and even intellectual ideals of potential audience members. The emphasis on the “moral improvement amongst all classes of mankind” and personal edification recalls the sacred music reform movement that took place in Boston in the early nineteenth century. According to

27 *Daily Picayune*, 1 September 1841, Pg. 2, col. 1.
Michael Broyles, these “reform efforts resonated long after the movement had spent itself by the end of the 1830s...[and] by the late nineteenth century, the premise of musical duality in America, that some types of music were morally superior to others, was derived directly and consciously from the sacred-music reform movement.” Sacred concert pieces such as oratorios that were European in origin and written by well-known composers are one example of the types of music that were deemed “morally superior to others.” In New Orleans and New England alike, the oratorio achieved the status of a moral art form that could uplift and encourage listeners, performers, and the public in general.

The fact that these performances were held in churches instead of one of the city’s numerous theaters or concert halls stands as a testament to their perceived religious and moral functions. Yet to neglect that these concerts also had some value as entertainment would be a mistake. Many of the newspaper articles announcing and describing sacred concerts from this time describe the “satisfaction” that the performances brought to the listeners. The distinction, however, between sacred concert music and other forms of entertainment lay in its reputation as a morally acceptable and edifying enterprise. In 1842, prior to a performance by the New Orleans Sacred Music Society, the *Daily Picayune* published an advertisement that promoted the idea of sacred music as a more wholesome and uplifting form of entertainment than other types of musical performance, namely opera:

This concert of Sacred Music is especially worthy of the attention of heads of families and such as are opposed to the lighter attraction of operatic entertainments. No better school for the cultivation of the musical taste of the young can be found than a series of concerts in which the chef-d’ouvre of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven are worthily performed. On this ground, then, and as affording their families a source of pleasure both innocent and refined, we call upon gentlemen to give their countenance and support to the Concert this evening, by attending, each with his family.  

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29 Broyles, 33.
This notice was undoubtedly intended to increase revenue by encouraging ticket buyers to bring their entire families. By associating this music with both “the cultivation of musical taste” and “pleasure,” however, the writer also reveals how European sacred concert music served the dual purposes of entertainment and edification. According to Richard Crawford, Lowell Mason and other New England reformers of the early nineteenth century sought to teach young children to “appreciate ‘good music’” before their tastes were formed, which, in their view, would “strike a powerful blow for musical improvement in America.” The author of this advertisement for the New Orleans Sacred Music Society seems to have been well aware of the ideals and goals of the New England reformers and used them to promote the concerts of the society.

At least one additional concert took place in New Orleans prior to the formation of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society that further strengthens the connection between the musical practices of New Orleans and Northern cities. On 27 January 1842, a group of amateur performers, aided by a “Mrs. Franklin,” gave a concert of sacred music at First Presbyterian Church, once again for the benefit of the Orphan Boy’s Asylum. According to the newspaper advertisement printed in the Daily Picayune two days prior to the concert, Mrs. Franklin was “the principal soprano of the ‘Boston Handel and Haydn Society.’” This last fact was only partially true: Mrs. Franklin had in fact worked for the Handel and Haydn Society as a soprano soloist from 1838 to July of 1841; she refused to accept a lower pay rate for the following season, however, and was no longer engaged. She appears to have then set out on a tour of the United States, which included a stop in New Orleans. The program for this concert differs from

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33 Handel and Haydn Society Records, 1808–2011. Series 1, Box 2, Folders 1–2, Boston Public Library. I am very grateful to Todd Jones of the University of Kentucky for providing information regarding Mrs. Franklin’s tenure with the Handel and Haydn Society.
other sacred concerts given in the city, as the focus was clearly on solo performances by Mrs. Franklin rather than choral numbers.

The New Orleans Sacred Music Society: Origin, Ideals, and Repertoire

The early public concerts of sacred music in New Orleans set the stage for the flowering of the repertoire within the city’s concert life in the 1840s and 1850s. By the end of the century, sacred concerts became much more common, with many being offered in the city each year—an exponential increase from the sporadic efforts of the late 1830s. This growth in popularity of sacred music was the direct result of the efforts of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society, whose concerts proved that sacred music could successfully serve as a popular form of entertainment in the city. The newspaper announcement for the society’s first concert relates the excitement that attended the earliest sacred music concerts in New Orleans:

Sacred Music.—One of the best organized entertainments in the way of sacred music that we have noted in a dozen seasons, is just at this writing about to come off. All who secure seats in time to get into the Rev. Mr. Clapp’s church to-morrow evening, will enjoy a treat of more than ordinary excellence.34

There was clearly a demand for sacred concerts, and the paper’s anticipation of an excellent performance speaks to the high hopes held by the city’s Anglophone residents, some of whom had certainly heard the oratorio concerts presented in Boston by the Handel and Haydn Society. The sacred concerts given in New Orleans after 1842, with only a few exceptions, were almost always aimed at an English-speaking audience and held in the city’s American sector. This nearly sudden spike in the popularity of sacred concert music can be traced directly to the formation of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society in 1842.

In January of 1842 the founders of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society met to draft the society’s constitution and bylaws, and the language used in the introduction reflects the then-

34 Daily Picayune, 17 May 1842, pg. 2, col. 1.
typical Northern ideals regarding sacred music. In this newly penned constitution, the society’s founders laid out their goals, which included “cultivating a taste for ‘Sacred Music’” and “associating together the amateur musical talent of this city for mutual improvement.” This “cultivation” of musical taste for the “improvement” of society had motivated the New England reformers, whose efforts stemmed from a Northern ideology grounded in notions of social mobility and democratic self-rule. Historians such as Eric Foner have long acknowledged the pervasive idea in antebellum American culture that people should—and could through hard work and propriety—improve their social and economic position in life. Middle-class Americans, especially those in the North, tended to hold fast to this idea, along with those of financial prosperity, moral rectitude, and political independence, which were all key concepts of a Northern political ideology that encouraged middle-class Americans to constantly work towards bettering their social and economic circumstances. When middle-class merchants from the Northeast settled in New Orleans, this ideology found a home in the city as well. And although it may seem contradictory, some residents of this city in the Deep South—at the center of the slave trade—based part of their musical practices upon ideas drawn from a Northern, liberal ideology.

This same ideology guided the leaders of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society in planning and promoting their performances. Prior to an 1842 concert, the *Daily Picayune* published an advertisement that promoted the idea of sacred music as a more wholesome and uplifting form of entertainment than opera:

This concert of Sacred Music is especially worthy of the attention of heads of families and such as are opposed to the lighter attraction of operatic entertainments. No better school for the cultivation of the musical taste of the young can be found than a series of

35 Minutes of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society, 21 July 1842.
concerts in which the [chief works] of Mozart, Haydn, and Beethoven are worthily performed.\footnote{Daily Picayune, 16 January 1842, pg. 2, col. 2.}

Not only does this column attest to the ideological goals of the society, but it also hints at its repertoire. On 21 July 1842, shortly after the society’s second concert, its board of managers requested that its conductor make a “list of such music as he may think the Society should purchase and hand the same to the music committee for their consideration.”\footnote{Minutes of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society, July 21, 1842.} A week later, the board made a resolution to purchase a substantial amount of music from Boston publishers:

1. 30 copies of the Oratorio “Creation” by Haydn with the orchestral accompaniment, complete
2. 30 copies [of the] Cantata “The morning” by F[erdinand] Ries
3. 6 copies of the “Lyricist”: a collection of solos, duets, etc.
4. 6 copies of any other collection of equal or superior merit to the “Lyricist”
5. The balance of the orchestral accompaniments for the collection of choruses the society [has] now in use.\footnote{Minutes of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society, July 28, 1842.}

The society’s reliance upon music that was both arranged and published in Boston demonstrates how integrally related the musical practices of New Orleans were to those of the Northern city.

Examining the surviving programs of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society’s concerts shows that many of the works performed in Boston became quite popular in New Orleans. Some of these works come as no surprise: for example, Haydn’s oratorio \textit{The Creation}—the second most performed piece by the Handel and Haydn Society—was by far the most popular oratorio in New Orleans.\footnote{Smither, 399.} \textit{The Creation} was the only oratorio the New Orleans Sacred Music Society performed in full other than the less-famous \textit{David} by Sigismond von Neukomm. When the society announced its intentions to perform \textit{The Creation} in full for the first time in the history of the city, the \textit{Daily Picayune} reported that they would “look in eager anticipation for the event”
and later assured its reader that the “music will be given perfect in every department.” Two days prior to the concert, the paper published a lengthy, glowing review of Haydn’s oratorio that shows the high esteem with which New Orleans’s American population held Haydn’s music:

Haydn’s oratorio of “The Creation” is not only deemed his masterpiece, but the greatest of all compositions in sacred music. It may be centuries ere we shall hear it performed in the United States with the effect which is given to it in Germany—thanks to their thorough musical education, which teaches them to appreciate and fitly to reward high excellence in this art. The Sacred Music Society of this city, having determined to give our citizens an opportunity of hearing this great composition, have been busily engaged for some weeks past in rehearsing it. They have secured whatever of vocal or instrumental talent has been at their command in the city, and we are assured by those who have attended some of the rehearsals, that better justice will be done to the composition than has ever yet been in the United States.

This claim was quite audacious, yet the society’s concert apparently did not disappoint. Following the performance, the reviewer gushed over the evening’s proceedings:

**THE CREATION.**—At an early hour last evening, Mr. Clapp’s church was crowded with a fashionable audience. The oratorio was listened to with unmingled satisfaction—the sacred character of the music, and the precincts in which it was delivered, alone restraining the large assemblage from manifesting their satisfaction in tumultuous applause. We have had no musical treat during the whole winter at all comparable to it; and it would be absolutely wrong were the society to fail to repeat the oratorio.

The society did, in fact, repeat the oratorio shortly thereafter, and would continue periodically to give performances of it over the next several years.

The absence of Felix Mendelssohn’s name from the programs of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society may appear surprising in light of the popularity of his oratorios with European and American audiences. Although the organization of the society predates the composition of Mendelssohn’s most famous oratorio, *Elijah* (premiered in 1846), it is unusual that none of the composer’s sacred works found a regular place in the concert life of New Orleans, especially

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given the popularity of these works in Boston and New York and of his instrumental works in
New Orleans. The first documented performance in the city of any sacred music composed by
Mendelssohn did not occur until 1856, when the touring virtuosi Teresa Parodi and Maurice
Strakosch performed one aria from \textit{St. Paul} in a concert on 15 January of that year and an
additional aria from both \textit{St. Paul} and \textit{Elijah} in a concert two days later.\footnote{Daily Picayune, 15 January 1856, pg. 2, col. 2; Daily Picayune, 17 January 1856, pg. 2, col. 3.} These concerts were
not exclusively sacred; as was typical of the time, they presented oratorio numbers, usually arias,
alongside operatic selections, popular songs, and instrumental pieces. Nonetheless,
Mendelssohn’s oratorios do not seem to have taken hold in New Orleans as they did elsewhere.
Also somewhat surprising is that the New Orleans Sacred Music Society seems to have given no
complete performances of Handel’s \textit{Messiah}, by far the Handel and Haydn Society’s most
performed work in the nineteenth century.\footnote{Smither, 399.} Instead, the works that were performed as
standalone concert pieces may be unfamiliar to most twenty-first century audiences, although at
the time they were well established in the American oratorio repertoire.

A survey of the programs for the society’s concerts in the 1840s gives us a sense of the
types of works they performed. The society’s first public concert was held on 18 May 1842,
shortly after its organization. A critic for the \textit{Daily Picayune} attended one of the rehearsals prior
to the performance and wrote a preview that showed a high level of anticipation for the event:

\textbf{GRAND SACRED CONCERT.}—We attended one of the rehearsals of the Concert to take
place this evening in the Rev. Mr. Clapp’s church, and if anything in the way of
commendation is needed where the professional directing artists are so well known, we
can very readily give our unqualified voice in favor of the affair. It is exceedingly well
got up, and some of our most beautiful and interesting belles are among the officiating
amateurs on the occasion. We don’t know where to look for words, out of the run of
ordinary newspaper usage, to urge as warm a compliment as we desire about the matter.
We are very sure, however, that all who attend this evening will echo our favorable
opinion of this laudable public effort of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society.\footnote{Daily Picayune, 18 May 1842, pg. 2, col. 2.}
The program for this concert included a number of selections from differing composers, listed below in Figure 3.1 as it appeared in the newspaper.\textsuperscript{47}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Composition</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Composer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>Glory to God on high—from the 12\textsuperscript{th} Mass</td>
<td>Mozart\textsuperscript{48}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solo</td>
<td>The Hymn of Eve</td>
<td>Arne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>Come gentle Spring—from the Seasons</td>
<td>Haydn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solo</td>
<td>Mary’s Gift: She Loved Her Saviour—Music arranged from Il Puritani</td>
<td>Bellini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>Hallelujah to the Father—from the Mount of Olives</td>
<td>Beethoven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>The Lord is Great</td>
<td>Reghini</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solo</td>
<td>From the Oratorio of David</td>
<td>Chev. Neukomm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recitative and Chorus</td>
<td>Now the Philistines and Lo! He Cometh</td>
<td>Haydn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duett</td>
<td>Awake, My Trembling Lyre</td>
<td>C. Keller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus</td>
<td>Hallelujah—from Messiah</td>
<td>Handel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1. Program for the First Concert of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society. \textit{Daily Picayune}. 18 May 1842. Page 2, Column 5.

This program is typical of the early concerts of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society: a number of works, written by a variety of composers for differing performing forces, are presented together on the same program. Solo and ensemble pieces alternated with pieces for chorus, which stood as the focal point of the performance. Most of these pieces were drawn directly from music collections that were compiled and edited by Lowell Mason and his associates and published in Boston. One of the society’s favorite collections was \textit{The Boston Academy’s Collection of Choruses}, published in 1836.\textsuperscript{49} Every chorus performed by the society in the first two years of its existence, excepting those drawn from \textit{The Creation}, are included in this collection; moreover, of the forty-one numbers it contains, seventeen were performed by the society at some time. These

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Daily Picayune}, 18 May 1842, pg. 2, col. 5.
\textsuperscript{48} This work is no longer attributed to Mozart. See Mark Everist, \textit{Mozart’s Ghosts: Haunting the Halls of Musical Culture} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 131.
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{The Boston Academy’s Collection of Choruses: Being a Selection from the Works of the Most Eminent Composers, as Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, and Others: Together with Several New and Beautiful Pieces by German Authors, Adapted to English Words Expressly for this Work} (Boston: J. H. Wilkins, R.B. Carter, and G. W. Palmer and Company, 1836).
numbers range from well-known choruses such as the “Hallelujah” from Beethoven’s *Christ on the Mount of Olives* to lesser-known ones such as “The Lord is Great” by Vincenzo Righini.

We can be reasonably assured that *The Boston Academy’s Collection of Choruses*, rather than individually published scores for each of these pieces, was used as the primary source of music for the society’s concerts. This fact is made clear by examining two numbers from the collection that appear on the society’s programs, Haydn’s “Now the Philistines” and “Lo! He Cometh.” Neither of these works can be directly attributed to Haydn, nor did he set any texts that dealt with the biblical story of the Israelites and the Philistines. Furthermore, Mason’s collection does not indicate the original source of these pieces. Tracing the origin of these two works demonstrates the likelihood that the Society utilized the *Boston Academy’s Collection of Choruses* for their performances and further strengthens the connection between Boston’s musical practices and those of New Orleans’s American community.

Both “Now the Philistines” and “Lo! He Cometh.” are textually and musically connected. In the short span of twenty-five measures, the recitative recounts the biblical story of David and Goliath:

Now the Philistines gathered themselves together with chariots and with horsemen, and there came forth a champion, a giant of Gath, to fight against Israel, and David said, “Thou comest with spear and shield, but I come in the name of the Lord, the God of Israel, whom thou has defied this day.” And David smote the Philistine with a stone and slew him. And all the women came out with timbrels and with dances, saying:  

The chorus follows immediately, set to the words of the Israelite women described in the recitative:

Lo he cometh, victorious David,  
Welcome, welcome, mighty David;

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50 *The Boston Academy’s Collection of Choruses*, 66.
He the giant monster slew,
Ten thousand praises are his due.51

Organ accompaniment is included for both pieces, and the chorus is written in standard SATB format. The relatively short chorus (included in Appendix 1) in fast triple meter begins in G major and proves to be relatively simple. It begins with a short keyboard introduction that leads into a homophonic choral statement on the words “Lo he cometh” in measure 27, which quickly breaks into a more contrapuntal section in measure 35 on the words “welcome mighty David.” The remainder of the piece continues in a style typical of late eighteenth-century oratorio choruses, alternating contrapuntal and homophonic sections and ending with a short keyboard passage. This triumphant-sounding chorus would have been accessible to most trained amateur singers of the nineteenth century and would have delighted most audiences with its fast tempo, **forte** dynamics, and straightforward harmonic language.

But what of the origin of these pieces and Haydn’s authorship? Both the recitative and the chorus are clearly attributed to the composer in *The Boston Academy’s Collection of Choruses*, although the texts cannot be found within Haydn’s body of work. Instead, the origins of these pieces can be found in another contemporary source. In 1821 the *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* of London mentioned a chorus titled “Lo, he cometh” by Haydn that was included in the oratorio *Judah: A Sacred Oratorio* by British composer William Gardiner.52 An examination of this oratorio reveals that it is a pasticcio: Gardiner arranged and combined the works of multiple composers (in this case Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven) into a single work, translating the texts into English and at times supplying new texts for various numbers. According to the oratorio’s preface, the composer “selected at pleasure, from all parts of the

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51 *The Boston Academy’s Collection of Choruses*, 67–68.
canon of the Old Testament, such passages as appeared to him most analogous in sublimity, pathos, or beauty, to the character of the Music to which they were to be applied.”

Therefore it was Gardiner himself, rather than any of Haydn’s librettists, who selected the texts for these particular numbers. As for the music, the versions of “Now the Philistines,” and “Lo! He Cometh” contained in The Boston Academy’s Collection of Choruses are direct copies of the numbers from Gardiner’s published score. The single major difference between the two versions is that Gardiner’s work is scored for full orchestra, while the Boston collection includes only keyboard accompaniment.

Gardiner himself adapted “Lo He Cometh” from a choral hymn composed by Haydn in 1772 titled “Ens Aeternum Attendе Votis.” Gardiner’s arrangement and Haydn’s original work are very similar; Gardiner maintained the same orchestration, key, and general melodic and harmonic structure as Haydn, changing the rhythms of the vocal parts at times to accommodate his new, English text. The primary difference between the two pieces is their lengths: Gardiner shortened Haydn’s hymn from one hundred and ten measures, plus a lengthy repeat, to ninety-one measures with no repeat. Gardiner also recycled the final five measures of the orchestral introduction as the closing measures of the piece, which differ from the final measures of “Ens Aeternum Attendе Votis.” Given this evidence, The Boston Academy’s Collection of Choruses surely served as the society’s source for these two pieces. Haydn’s original works used different titles and included Latin texts, and it is unlikely that Gardiner’s version was used given the society’s history of purchasing music that was published and arranged in Boston.

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53 William Gardiner, Judah, A Sacred Oratorio in Score: Written, Composed, and Adapted to the Works of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven (London, Clementi et. al., 1821), iii.
The Boston Academy’s Collection of Choruses was apparently quite popular, as it went through many subsequent editions and was still in print in the 1850s. It begins with an inscription that explains the aim and purpose for its publication:

This volume is filled with popular and approved Choruses of the most distinguished composers. It contains most of those published at various times and in different works in this country, which experience has proved to be truly excellent and useful, now brought together in a single volume; and, of a very high order, and the volume forms in itself a complete library of Choruses, for the practise of societies, for concerts or public exhibitions of Sacred Music. A collection so extensive and interesting, may be emphatically styled “The Complete Chorus Book,” and it is hoped that it will supply the wants, and meet the approbation of the numerous musical Societies, formed and forming, in all parts of our country, to whom, with the lovers of Sacred Music generally, the work is most respectfully inscribed.  

This inscription indicates that this music collection was aimed directly at organizations such as the New Orleans Sacred Music Society and aspired to provide them with a large selection of music that could be performed easily at public concerts or private, social rehearsals.  

The New Orleans Sacred Music Society also relied on other collections of music published in Boston under the auspices of the Boston Academy of Music or the Handel and Haydn Society. Most of these books were compiled and edited by Lowell Mason and George James Webb, both leaders in the Boston music scene. Frederick Müller’s connection to the Boston Academy of Music, which included serving as organist for some of its public concerts before his time in New Orleans, may have played a role in the society’s choice to purchase these collections. In 1842, Müller recommended to the board of managers that the society purchase copies of The Lyricist, a Boston collection of songs edited by Mason and Webb, for their library.  

This collection, published in 1838, contains forty-seven short solos, duets, and trios on

55 The Boston Academy’s Collection of Choruses, 1.
56 Minutes of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society, July 29, 1842.
both sacred and secular topics.\textsuperscript{57} The society’s published programs include only one piece from this collection, a duet for two sopranos titled “What Holy Calm,” which was performed at the society’s fifth concert on 2 January 1843.\textsuperscript{58} The reviewer for the \textit{Daily Picayune} praised the performance of the society in this concert and noted the attendance of Henry Clay, who “seemed a delighted listener.”\textsuperscript{59} “What Holy Calm,” which is representative of the types of pieces found in the collections published by Mason and Webb, is a simple duet with piano accompaniment in which the lower voice mostly mirrors the upper melody a major third below, rarely breaking from the homophonic texture. And while the title of the piece and its inclusion in a sacred concert suggest that the lyrics are religious in nature, it in fact simply depicts a peaceful evening of rest using language couched in Christian imagery, such as “holy calm,” “heaven’s peace,” “devotion’s calm,” and “virtue’s love.”\textsuperscript{60}

Pieces performed by The New Orleans Sacred Music Society, especially solos and ensemble numbers, appear in other Boston-published music collections, such as the \textit{Gentlemen’s Glee Book} (1841). Collections such as these were popular with performers and societies and were often financially profitable; by the 1840s they were becoming common in Northern cities. The earliest reference to a collection of this type in New Orleans appeared in an 1837 advertisement for “Mason’s Sacred Harp” (\textit{Sacred Harp, or Eclectic Harmony}, 1835), a famous collection of hymns and psalm tunes intended for church use.\textsuperscript{61} By the 1840s, however, Boston-

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[58] \textit{Daily Picayune}, 30 December 1842, pg. 2, col. 3.
\item[59] \textit{Daily Picayune}, 3 January 1843, pg. 2, col. 2.
\item[61] \textit{Daily Picayune}, 20 June 1837, pg. 4, col. 2.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
published vocal music collections were sold by many of the city’s music and book sellers. An 1844 advertisement for S. Woodall & Co. listed the following for sale:

A large collection of works on sacred music, containing the latest compositions for the use of Choirs, Singing Schools, etc., among them will be found the following popular works: Boston Academy Collection; Musical Manual; Mason’s Sacred Harp; Southern Harmony; Boston Odeon; Boston Singing School; Boston Anthem Book; Juvenile Singing Book; Mason’s Sacred Choir; Mason’s Book of Chants; Carmina Sacra; — also—the following works on secular music: Dempster’s Melodies; New York Glee Book; Boston Academy’s Manual; American and Gentlemen’s Glee Books, etc.\(^1\)

On first impression these collections may seem quite out of place in New Orleans. In the primarily Catholic city that also stood as the operatic capital of the United States at the time, selling collections of secular songs notably void of operatic numbers and books of Protestant sacred music seems perhaps to have been financially risky. Yet this advertisement, and the many others like it that appeared in the papers in the 1840s and 1850s, attests to the demand for such music in the city at the time. This evidence suggests that New Orleans’s English-speaking residents—or at least a sizable number of them—had by the 1840s acquired a taste for the same types of music being composed, sold, and performed in Boston. This repertoire found its place in New Orleans’s music stores, churches, concert halls, public schools, and private homes. It served as a tangible way for Northerners in New Orleans to maintain a sense of American identity within a city that seemed to them so foreign—an identity that strove to exude the ideals of Yankee self-reliance and moral rectitude.

**Membership of the Society**

The constitution of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society defined the rules and categories of membership for the organization and in the process reinforced notions of socioeconomic class and gender that were common in nineteenth-century American society. The membership of the

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\(^{62}\) *Daily Picayune*, 11 January 1844, pg. 2, col. 5.
society was divided into three distinct categories: performing members, non-performing members, and honorary members. Performing members consisted of the male membership of the choir and probably some instrumentalists as well; these members could participate in all business of the society and were eligible to vote and hold offices. Non-performing members were not allowed to cast a vote on the society’s business, but were allowed admission to all the meetings and could hold some offices, and they also received a set number of tickets to each performance, which seems to have been the primary benefit of non-performing membership. Honorary members consisted of the clergy of the city and all the women of the society, whether they performed or not. They could not hold an office, vote, and were not required to pay dues. Thus, women were not considered equal to men within the group’s membership. Although many women were admitted as members, they received no voice in the business of the society and could not hold an office—both rights that were afforded to most of its male members.

In addition to these gender inequalities, the New Orleans Sacred Music Society helped to enforce notions of class structure embedded into New Orleans society through its membership practices by maintaining a well-to-do, upper-middle-class membership. The society’s method for admitting and approving members (described below), as well as its strict requirements for membership, would have made it difficult of working-class musicians to join the society. This privileging of white, middle-class men in the rules governing the society’s membership had antecedents in choral societies in Northern cities. The New Orleanians were probably aware of the rules governing the membership of these other societies and most likely based their
constitution and bylaws directly on Northern models, ultimately duplicating their pattern of class-based membership.⁶³

Members were admitted to the society through a vote of its officers, who themselves were elected by a popular vote. During board meetings, officers could propose new members for admittance, and these names were recorded in the minutes. At the next meeting, officers would vote to accept these persons. The names of the prospective and newly-elected members have been preserved in the society’s minutes for the years 1842–44, and although some of them are impossible to trace, those that remain in the historical record paint a picture of a society made up of white, English-speaking, middle-class merchants and public servants, some of whom were influential members of the American community in New Orleans. And whereas the membership of the society was officially open to anyone who could pay the annual dues (which would have been restrictive), gaining admission required the approval of a select group of officers, who either purposefully or coincidentally limited the membership of the society to white, middle-class members of New Orleans’s American community. This social make-up mirrored those of other choral societies in the North. Commenting on the Handel and Haydn Society, Michael Broyles wrote that “although [it] did have some members from the working class, it was predominantly a middle-class organization…[and] whatever the official reasons, the overall pattern of original membership, new admissions, discharges, and resignations suggests that members of the working class were not especially welcome.”⁶⁴

Thanks to the meticulous documentation of its membership by the officers of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society, the lives of various members can be subjected to examination,

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⁶³ Michael Broyles points out that admission to membership in the Handel and Haydn Society required an audition and “unanimous approval of the board of directors.” This was also true of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society. See, Broyles, 140–41.

⁶⁴ Ibid.
demonstrating the relatively high social standing of its contingent in these formative years. The earliest members, whose signatures are found at the end of the constitution and bylaws, were primarily middle-class artisans and merchants. The first president of the society, Thomas N. Morgan, was the son of Northern immigrants to New Orleans and was born in the city in 1809 to parents who were natives of Pennsylvania. He was sent to New England to attend Yale, where he became a “gold medal graduate.” After completing his studies, Morgan returned to Louisiana and eventually became a judge in New Orleans at the age of twenty-four. A biographical sketch of his life published in 1907 described him as model citizen who “took an active and leading part in reform work in municipal matters as well as along humanitarian lines, being a member of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church and officiating for many years as its warden.” Morgan exemplified the Northern middle-class values of hard work, financial independence, and public charity, which he presumably inherited from his Northern-born parents and his Yankee education.

Other founding members of the society also participated in the economic and cultural institutions of New Orleans’s American community. Hamlet Jacks and Edward A. Tyler, a silversmith and a jeweler, respectively, operated a jewelry store that also sold and published sheet music and served as the box office for the New Orleans Sacred Music Society’s concerts. Under his later partnership with Horatio Hewitt, Tyler would eventually become one of the most prominent publishers of sheet music in the city. Another founding member of the society was Luther Field Tower, a merchant of housewares from Vermont whose diary gives an account of music making in the city during the years 1845 and 1846, including brief descriptions of the

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66 Guinn, 432.
67 Ibid.
rehearsals and performances of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society.\textsuperscript{68} James and Thomas Day, whose signatures both appear at the end of the society’s constitution, were merchant brothers born in New York who operated a hardware firm by the name of Stark, Day, and Stauffer, which did business both in New York and New Orleans. Other signatories include James Maguire, a well-known daguerreotypist famous for his portrait of General (and future President) Zachary Taylor after his return from Mexico in 1847; George Hews, a furniture maker; and Frederick Edward Southmayd, a merchant.\textsuperscript{69} These members were independent businessmen of good standing within New Orleans’s American community, and of those original members for whom information is available, none except Thomas Morgan had been born in New Orleans. These men typified the social makeup of what was then seen as New Orleans’s American population: they were educated, white, and English-speaking merchants who participated in public societies—such as the New Orleans Sacred Music Society—for the “mutual benefit” of themselves and the general population. 

\textbf{Legacy of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society}

The fate of the New Orleans Sacred Music Society is something of a mystery. Although its first three years are relatively easy to reconstruct because of the abundance of documentary evidence, the history of its later years becomes hazier, as fewer of its concert programs or reviews of its performances appeared in the papers. In 1843, the society petitioned the Louisiana State Legislature for incorporation, which was granted on 14 March of that year.\textsuperscript{70} In 1844, 

\textsuperscript{68} Luther Field Tower Diary, 1845–1846, Mss. 765, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.
\textsuperscript{69} \textit{Daily Picayune}, 21 April 1847, pg. 3, col. 1.
\textsuperscript{70} \textit{Acts Passed at the First Session of the Sixteenth Legislature of the State of Louisiana, Began and Held in the City of New Orleans, On the 2d Day of January, 1843} (New Orleans: Alexander C. Bullitt, 1843) 30–31.
however, the society made an announcement in the *Daily Picayune* that would change the course of its history:

**NEW ORLEANS SACRED MUSIC SOCIETY.**—This Society has now been in existence more than two years. It is incorporated and intended to be permanent, and has for its object the cultivation and elevation of a taste for the high orders of Sacred Music in our city. Something has already been done towards this end, and in order to its more full attainment a change in the operations of the Society has been made. There exists with many a decided objection to the *public* concert, and this objection has deprived the Society of the assistance of many whose talents and musical culture render their aid of the highest importance. In order to secure this aid the Society will hereafter be a strictly private one, admitting none but its members, and the board of Managers announce to their friends and the public the following terms of admission to membership.  

The decision to become a private society and forego public concerts is puzzling, especially given the society’s goal of “the cultivation and elevation of…taste” for sacred music. Nonetheless, the society operated in this capacity for at least six more years. It continued to perform each year at the annual anniversary ceremonies of the New Orleans Fire Department and occasionally published an advertisement for one of its private concerts in the papers. The last time the society was mentioned in any public document was in a notice to its members published in the *Daily Picayune* in 1850:

**NOTICE**—The members of the Sacred Music Society and all those wishing to join the same, are hereby requested to attend a meeting, to be held at the Rev. Theodore Clapp’s Church, on St. Charles street, on Tuesday Evening, the 26th inst., at half-past 7 o’clock.  

If this meeting was at all successfully attended, it is likely that the society persisted for some time afterward, although I have uncovered no documentation of any further activity. But regardless of the society’s ultimate fate, its impact on New Orleans’s concert life would be felt for the remainder of the antebellum years. From the society’s inception in 1842 until the outbreak of war in the South in 1861, sacred concerts were held regularly each year. These

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71 *Daily Picayune*, 7 June 1844, pg. 2, col. 5. Emphasis in the original.  
72 *Daily Picayune*, 24 November 1850, pg. 5, col. 3.
concerts took place in both churches and concert halls, with both well-known performers and unknown amateurs, who performed pieces viewed today as both canonic and obscure. The results of this musical transformation in New Orleans point not only to changing musical tastes of its middle-class residents, but also to a shift of New Orleans’s ethnic, cultural, political, and economic landscape during the 1840s and 1850s.

The New Orleans Sacred Music Society was undoubtedly an “American” society in the way that term was construed in antebellum New Orleans. In a letter written shortly after the society’s organization, its conductor specified that “the amateurs of [New Orleans’s] American population” constituted its membership. Yet the society’s members did not engage in the burgeoning nineteenth-century debate over what constituted, exactly, an American musical style. Rather, these residents, who viewed themselves as Americans, created a distinct musical community that helped reinforce their sense of national identity while allowing them to maintain practical connections to other portions of the country. As N. Lee Orr has argued, choral singing could act to “preserve one’s specific ethnic and cultural identity.” Indeed, because of the collaborative nature of choral singing and the ethnic homogeneity of choirs in New Orleans, these public performances of sacred music helped to cement within this population a sense of idealism and community. As one contemporary writer observed, the American community in New Orleans viewed themselves as “a class apart from the balance of the population, though entering actively in every scheme for the public good.”

73 Frederick F. Müller, letter to Rebecca Valentine, 9 July 1842. Mss. 895, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.
74 Orr, 476. Emphasis in the original.
could elements of a Northern music culture. And although the importance of amateur choral societies would eventually wane, the society’s impact on our understanding of American musical identity, transnational musical relations within the United States, and the cultural shifts that led to the eventual Americanization of New Orleans is lasting.
CHAPTER 4
TRANSREGIONAL MUSIC TRADE

“The Flag of Our Union: A National Song,” published jointly in New York and New Orleans in 1851, boasts a frontispiece perhaps more striking than the song itself (Figure 4.1). Depicted on the cover are two women, both similar in appearance; their nearly identical white dresses, flowing hair, and matching diadems suggest a familial kinship. They stand abreast, with the arm of one draped over the shoulder of the other, together supporting the staff of an immense American flag, which billows toward the sun at their backs. The two women clasp hands at the center of the flagpole—a symbolic gesture emblematic of their dual role in supporting the banner. At their feet, a large eagle spreads its wings and bears its talons, and on its chest the word “UNION” is inscribed in bold typeface. Finally, to make the symbolism more explicit, each woman was given a geopolitical moniker—one is labeled “North” and the other “South.”

There is no mistaking the artist’s intent in this allegory: the North and the South are both integrally connected and uniquely vital to the foundation and preservation of the American union. They are more alike than they are different, and they should stand together in solidarity. The song’s text likewise describes this relationship between North and South:

What God in his Wisdom and mercy designed,
And armed with his weapons of thunder,
Not all the earth’s despots and factions combined,
Have the power to conquer or sunder!
The union of lakes, the union of lands
The union of States none can sever
The union of hearts, the union of hands
And the Flag of the Union forever

“A song for our banner?”—the watchword recall
Which gave the Republic her station:
“United we stand, divided we fall!”

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It made and preserves us a nation!
The union of lakes, the union of lands
The union of States none can sever
The union of hearts, the union of hands
And the Flag of the Union forever

The text, written by George P. Morris and set to music by composer William Vincent Wallace, consists of two stanzas, each with a refrain. The first stanza describes the strength and divine appointment of the Union, while the second stanza invokes the famous platitude “united we stand, divided we fall” to emphasize the importance of sectional solidarity to the preservation of the nation. The song itself imparts a sense of triumph through martial musical tropes, which were typical of early nineteenth-century parlor songs invoking national pride. It begins with a lengthy fanfare in the piano, its march-like rhythms suggesting a sense of patriotism and pomp. The melody is straightforward and diatonic, with an abundance of quick, dotted rhythms.

This forgotten work sheds light on how New Orleans, and particularly its American community, fit into the larger political and social landscape of the United States prior to the Civil War. When the song was published in 1851, the sectional divide between the Northern and Southern states was intensifying. At the heart of this political chasm was the issue of slavery, and specifically whether newly admitted states would permit or ban the institution. At midcentury, Congress passed the famed Compromise of 1850, a collection of legislative measures aimed at satisfying both pro-slavery politicians and their opponents. These measures allowed states newly admitted to the Union to decide for themselves whether to allow slavery within their borders. Although this set of laws was designed to ease sectional intensities and promote national unity, it ultimately failed in satisfying either side of the political spectrum. By 1850, however, sectional differences had not completely overtaken the American political climate or demolished all sense of unity among the country’s citizens. In fact, a surge of nationalism throughout the United
States began in the years after the Mexican-American War (1846–48) and continued to spread with Americans in both the North and the South during the presidential election of 1848. Although sectional loyalty and the issue of slavery would increasingly divide the nation’s political life over the course of the next decade, Americans in portions of the country’s economic and commercial sectors—including, in this case, the expansive network of musicians active across the United States—continued to live and work outside of this divisive political climate.

“The Flag of Our Union: A National Song” reflects the sense of hopeful patriotism felt by many Americans around midcentury. Although the song’s musical and visual depiction of national unity was idealized, the facts surrounding its publication demonstrate real effects of economic and social cooperation outside the country’s political life. By examining various aspects of the transregional music industry in New Orleans in the 1840s and 1850s, this chapter will demonstrate how musicians and merchants in the United States created commercial bonds that overcame, at least temporarily, sectional divisions between residents of Northern and Southern cities. Chapter 2 discussed how professional musicians in New Orleans were linked to Northern middle-class merchants, demonstrating how this connection disseminated Northern ideology in the Southern city. The current chapter will examine the parallel issue of how the musical economy of New Orleans was directly tied to that of the North through music publication, the proliferation of music stores, and the manufacture and selling of musical instruments. Because the history of music publication and the musical economy in the United States is not well-known, the first section of this chapter will provide an overview of music publication, music retail stores, and instrument manufacturing in New Orleans (while also touching on national trends). The remainder of the chapter will focus on two specific examples—

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the publisher and music store owner William T. Mayo and the organ builder Henry Erben—to demonstrate specifically how music store owners, publishers, and instrument manufacturers created a thriving transregional musical economy.

**Music Publication**

In the second quarter of the nineteenth century, music publication in the United States was just becoming a national industry.\(^3\) Prior to this time, local publishers produced sheet music for consumption in their own cities and the surrounding rural areas.\(^4\) By midcentury, however, several larger music publication firms began to dominate the national market, and the publishing and sale of sheet music became more a more centralized industry that was rooted in the large, metropolitan cities in the Northeast. New York, Boston, and Philadelphia each housed a few prominent firms that supplied most of the country’s sheet music. Likewise, several publishers in New Orleans emerged as prominent suppliers of sheet music for the entire Southern region.\(^5\)

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\(^3\) There is little scholarship that documents the history of music publication in the United States during the antebellum years. Currently, the most comprehensive studies are Russell Sanjek, *American Popular Music and Its Business: The First Four Hundred Years*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); and D.W. Krummel and Stanley Sadie, eds., *Music Printing and Publishing* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1990). The former provides short vignettes on many of the country’s most important music publishers in the first half of the nineteenth century. The latter, while extremely useful, only contains a three-page overview of the history of music publication in the United States for the years 1700–1860. An older book titled *Early American Sheet Music* by Harry Dichter and Elliott Shapiro is out of date and incomplete, and is primarily a partial list of music publishers active in the United States during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; see Harry Dichter and Elliott Shapiro, *Early American Sheet Music: Its Lure and Its Lore, 1768–1889* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1941). Several studies have documented the state of scholarship on music publication in the United States, including Ralph W. Holibaugh and D. W. Krummel, “Documentation of Music Publishing in the U.S.A in the 19th Century,” *Fontes Artis Musicae* 28, no. 1/2 (1981): 94–97; and D. W. Krummel “Counting Every Star; or, Historical Statistics on Music Publishing in the United States,” *Anuario Interamericano de Investigacion Musical* 10 (1974): 175–93. In the former source, the authors state that, with regards to music publication in the United States, “the period from 1825 to 1891 is the vast unknown” (95). Because of the sheer volume of music published during these years and the scattered state of archival records, no large-scale study of music publication during this period has been done.

\(^4\) A significant portion of the retail trade in New Orleans, which included the sale of sheet music and musical instruments, relied heavily on purchases made from plantation owners and their families who lived on the outskirts of New Orleans, and not just residents of the city proper. See Scott P. Marler, *The Merchants’ Capital: New Orleans and the Political Economy of the Nineteenth-Century South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 16–17.

Eventually, even smaller cities—especially those with access to coastal or river trading routes—such as Mobile and St. Louis—could boast their own music publishing houses. The larger the city, and the more direct its shipping routes, the better the chances its publishers had of reaching a large consumer base and producing more titles. Music publishers at midcentury did not only produce sheet music, they sold it directly to consumers through the music stores that they operated. Mid-nineteenth-century music publishers, therefore, controlled nearly every aspect of the sheet music trade: they purchased pieces and copyrights from composers, arranged for them to be printed, distributed the works to other cities, and sold them directly to consumers in their own cities.

In the 1840s and 1850s, most American music publishing firms appear to have respected copyright laws. Usually, a publisher would purchase a song or piano piece from a composer and copyright the work. Nearly all the sheet music produced by major publishers in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and New Orleans from the 1830s to the early 1860s that I have examined includes copyright information. The holder of the copyright was nearly always the publisher, and only in exceptional cases did the composer maintain the rights to his or her own works. By law, pieces that were imported from Europe were not under copyright in the United States and could be reproduced freely by publishers. Reprinting European works, especially operatic selections,
made up a large portion of the music publishing industry in the United States. At the same time, American composers produced thousands of new titles aimed at amateur consumption and performance. Parlor songs and stylized dance pieces for piano, usually written with the skill level of amateurs in mind, made up the bulk of these compositions.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, it was common for music publishers in different cities to form informal partnerships with one another. These relationships allowed firms to supply each other with sheet music that could be sold in their music stores and helped them to avoid flooding the market with multiple editions of the same pieces, thus limiting competition. These practices appear to have been borrowed from the American book publishing industry. According to one scholar, book publishers in different cities often entered into partnerships with one another to share the costs of printing new books, to avoid competing, and to help supply their partners with inventory. These benefits appear to have motivated music publishers to form similar partnerships. For example, the music publisher William Mayo of New Orleans often worked closely with the music publisher William Hall & Son of New York. William Hall & Son would often include Mayo’s name as a joint publisher on pieces that they produced, and would allow Mayo to sell these pieces in his music stores in New Orleans. Likewise, Mayo would produce pieces that also listed William Hall & Son as a joint publisher, and these pieces would then be sold in music stores in New York.

A closer look at “The Flag of Our Union” demonstrates this exact relationship. It was composed by William Vincent Wallace in New York and published by William Hall & Son in

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6 While several scholars have acknowledged that these partnerships existed, there have been no attempts to document them or to critically analyze their role in the American musical economy. For example, see Jumonville, 129. Jumonville briefly makes note of the cooperative nature of American sheet music publication in the nineteenth century, and claims that further investigation is needed to fully understand the phenomenon.

1851. The name William Hall & Son is shown prominently on the music’s cover page (see Figure 4.1), but appearing immediately beneath this name is the inscription “New Orleans, W.T. Mayo.” These two firms would have each sold this piece in their respective cities, and although William Hall & Son was the sole copyright holder, both firms were considered the publishers of the song. The function of the publisher, therefore, was making pieces available for public consumption by selling them directly to the consumer or other music sellers. Publishers should therefore be distinguished from music printers, who were responsible for the actual physical production of the sheet music. Music publishers rarely printed the music themselves, instead contracting this work out to independent engraving and lithography firms. Nearly every piece of sheet music that I have examined, regardless of where it was printed, lists a lithographer or engraver in addition to the publisher. Additionally, it was not uncommon for some store owners to sell sheet music that they did not publish, much like retail book or music stores do today. These sellers, however, would not have been considered music publishers, as their names were not inscribed on the music and they would have had no stake in its original publication.

In New Orleans, the demand for sheet music produced in the North was high, but there was also a demand for pieces written by local musicians. Similarly, composers in New Orleans could often find a market for their works in the North, and the most prominent among them usually maintained good relationships with Northern publishers. These New Orleans composers often wrote parlor pieces stylistically similar to those being composed in the North, but were sometimes colored with local flair. One such piece was the “Grand March,” dedicated to “Washington Artillery of New Orleans,” composed by Theodore von La Hache (see Figure 4.2). 

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8 Theodore von La Hache, “Grand March,” (Boston: Oliver Ditson, n.d.), Maxwell Sheet Music Collection, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.
Figure 4.2. Cover page of “Grand March,” by Theodore von La Hache (Boston: Oliver Ditson, n.d.). Maxwell Sheet Music Collection, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.
This undated piece, published by Oliver Ditson of Boston, H.D. Hewitt of New Orleans, and others, is adorned by a brightly lithographed cover page depicting three soldiers from New Orleans’s Washington Artillery, a militia unit that served in the Mexican American War and that would eventually work as part of the Confederate Army. A march for solo piano, this piece’s reference to New Orleans, like many others, can only be found in its title and on its cover page. Another New Orleans-specific piece that was published in the North was the “Polka de la Nouvelle Orleans” composed by Charles Mueller and published in 1855 (see Figure 4.3). This simple piano work, in the fashionable polka style, was published by Ph. P. Werlein (more commonly styled as P. P. Werlein). It was also published in New York by William Hall & Son and Firth, Pond, & Co. and in Mobile by Werlein & Hartel. Amateur pianists in New York could have thus purchased this piece—which was originally composed and published in New Orleans—and added it to their collection of other exotically-titled polkas and other dances.

Music Stores

Each of the sheet music publishers active in New Orleans during the 1840s and 1850s not only arranged for the publication and sale of sheet music, they all also operated music stores from which they sold their wares. None of these stores sold only sheet music; in fact, nearly all of them sold musical instruments. Pianos were their most important source of income, but they also sold a variety of wind and string instruments. Additionally, music stores served as ticket agents for local theaters and as home offices for the city’s music teachers and performers. These

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9 Charles Mueller, “Polka de la Nouvelle Orleans,” (New Orleans: Ph. P. Werlein, 1855), Maxwell Sheet Music Collection, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, L.A. Charles Mueller, to the author’s knowledge, was not related to Frederick F. Müller, who is discussed in Chapter 2.

10 American popular songs and instrumental works in the nineteenth century frequently evoked geographically and culturally “exotic” locations through their titles and the use of stereotypical musical devices, and thus participated in the larger movement of exoticism that was prominent in other spheres of Western music making as well. Pieces of this nature were popular with Northern consumers, who also had developed a taste for music that evoked idyllic images of Southern life. See, Lee Glazer and Susan Key, “Carry Me Back: Nostalgia for the Old South in Nineteenth-Century Popular Culture,” Journal of American Studies 30, no. 1 (April 1996): 1–24.
Figure 4.3. Cover page of “Polka de la Nouvelle Orleans,” by Charles Mueller (New Orleans: Ph. P. Werlein, 1855). Maxwell Sheet Music Collection, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.
stores existed in every section of the city, but during the 1840s and 1850s most of them were concentrated below Canal Street in the newly-emerging commercial district, also known as the American sector. Camp Street was a particularly popular location for such businesses; in fact, all the city’s most prominent music stores, including those of William Mayo, E. A. Tyler, Benjamin Casey, and Henry Parsons, were located on Camp Street within the first several blocks below Canal Street.

Figure 4.4 shows a map of New Orleans in the 1840s with the approximate location of these stores. This illustration reveals that a music-selling district of sorts existed in New Orleans prior to the Civil War, somewhat akin to the famous “Tin Pan Alley” district in New York that came to prominence later in the nineteenth century. The sheet music sold in these

Figure 4.4. Map of New Orleans showing the approximate location of the major music stores in the 1840s. Map (without annotations) taken from Benjamin Moore Norman, *Norman’s Plan of New Orleans & Environs* (New Orleans: B. M. Norman, 1845).

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11 The addresses of these stores are drawn from newspaper advertisements published in the *Daily Picayune* between 1845 and 1851. In fact, these stores were all in business at the same time; the wide range of dates in this citation stems from the availability of the advertisements, and does not reflect the dates that these stores were in operation. *Daily Picayune*, 1 October 1845, pg. 6 col. 3; *Daily Picayune*, 22 June 1850, pg. 2, col. 2; *Daily Picayune*, 14 March 1851, pg. 3, cols. 1 and 5. This map also does not account for the numerous non-musical retail stores that sold small quantities of sheet music or musical instruments. The map, without annotations, is drawn from Benjamin Moore Norman, *Norman’s Plan of New Orleans & Environs* (New Orleans: B. M. Norman, 1845).
businesses was typical of nineteenth-century popular music and was similar to the types of sheet music sold in the North and in Europe. Although simple songs in English with piano accompaniment were the most common, the vocal music offered by these stores ranged from songs with patriotic and sentimental texts to operatic selections from the best known French, Italian, and German operas. The latter pieces usually contained text in both the original language and in English. Also popular were dances for solo piano. The most commonly published dances were polkas, which became popular in the United States in the mid-1840s. Likewise, many waltzes, mazurkas, schottisches, marches, and quick steps were sold in music stores in New Orleans. These dances were typically given descriptive titles to make them more appealing to consumers. Some examples include “Coquette Polka,” “La Louisianaise Polka,” “Parodi Polka,” “Evergreen Waltz,” “Texas Annexation March,” “The Swedish Nightingale Mazurka,” “Bridal Schottische,” and “Union Quickstep.”

Owners of music stores in New Orleans also practiced their own form of “plugging,” or promotion, often associated with Tin Pan Alley. While song plugging was commonly used in New York to help sell sheet music, music store owners in New Orleans seem to have typically used it to sell pianos. According to a letter written by William Mayo in 1848, Henry Parsons, a prominent music store owner in New Orleans, kept his “best Chickering” (a piano produced by the Boston manufacturer Jonas Chickering) near the door of his establishment and had popular songs played on the piano for all to hear. Owners sometimes arranged to have well-known performers visit their stores to give presentations on the instruments they had for sale. In 1845, for example, music store proprietor Benjamin Casey arranged for Henry Phillips, an English baritone and pianist who was then touring the United States, to give a concert of songs at his

12 William T. Mayo, Letter to Elijah Dunbar, 1848, Mss. 4895, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.
music store, accompanying himself on a Chickering piano. Phillips apparently knew Jonas Chickering and was perhaps working for him under some sort of sponsorship agreement. The reputation of the famous singer would have potentially drawn an audience to the store, and his demonstration on the instrument perhaps helped Casey sell more pianos.

**Piano Manufacturers and Sellers**

The manufacturing and selling of instruments was another crucial part of the transregional American musical economy. Pianos dominated this market, as they were vital to the musical life of middle-class American amateurs, and large manufacturing firms competed to meet their needs. Yet those firms were all Northern: although New Orleans had many sheet music publishers and composers to feed the demand for printed music, the city lacked any large-scale piano manufacturers. Music store owners in New Orleans, and likewise in other Southern cities, had to rely on Northern instrument builders to meet the demands of their customers. Prior to the 1830s and the influx of Northerners to the city, most of the pianos sold in New Orleans were imported from France. For example, Emile Johns, the largest seller of pianos in the city at that time, imported his instruments from the Parisian manufacturer Pleyel and Sons. Northern piano manufacturers, however, would eventually dominate the market. As the size of New Orleans’s population increased in the 1840s and 1850s, the large piano manufacturing firms in New York and Boston found a ready market for their instruments in New Orleans, and by building relationships with merchants in the city, they helped create a national musical culture built on trade and commercialism.

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14 *The Commemoration of the Founding of the House of Chickering & Sons Upon the Eightieth Anniversary of the Event* (Boston: Chickering & Sons, 1904), 40-41.
15 Baron, 167.
William T. Mayo: Sheet Music Mogul of New Orleans

The most prominent music publisher and music store owner in New Orleans from 1841 to 1853 was William T. Mayo. Mayo began publishing and selling sheet music late in 1841 after he purchased the music store of Emile Johns, a Frenchman and the city’s first resident music publisher.16 Johns, who primarily imported and sold music from Europe (although he sometimes arranged for local compositions to be printed and sold), was responsible for some of the earliest pieces published in New Orleans, which date from the late 1830s.17 When Mayo took over Johns’s business in 1841, he began actively publishing pieces on his own and arranging for joint publications with Northern firms. Mayo’s business was not solely invested in music publication, however, as he also operated as a music store where he sold sheet music and musical instruments, offered lessons, and repaired instruments. Although it changed ownership in 1853 and operated under another name, Mayo’s music business was continually in operation for over a century, not closing its doors until 2005 in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.18 Figure 4.5 shows an 1850 advertisement for Mayo’s store, which gives a sense of how diverse and far reaching his musical offerings were. The ad boasts “the largest catalog [of sheet music] in the South,” and “new music received by every arrival from the North.”19 It also reveals the large inventory of musical instruments that Mayo kept on hand, and the various partnerships that he maintained.

16 John Baron has done extensive biographical research on Emile Johns. See Baron, 164–68.
17 Emile Johns was involved in music publication in New Orleans beginning in the early 1830s. In 1830, he published a piece of his own composing with George Willig of Baltimore, who arranged for the printing of the piece. The earliest piece that Johns published without a co-publisher and had printed in New Orleans dates from 1839. John Baron does not make a distinction between music publishing and music printing, and therefore does not consider the 1830 piece to have truly been published in New Orleans. As noted above, however, such a distinction should be made, since American music publishers in the early nineteenth century virtually never printed the pieces themselves. Therefore, the pieces sold in New Orleans prior to 1839 that bear the names of New Orleans publishers could be considered the earliest pieces published in New Orleans. See Baron, 166.
18 P. P. Werlein purchased Mayo’s music business in 1853, and under Werlein’s name it remained in operation in New Orleans until 2005.
19 Daily Picayune, 2 February 1850, pg. 7, col. 1.
Mayo’s Music Store.

No. 5 and 7 Camp street—Three doors from Canal.

The undersigned desires respectfully to inform the public, that they can always find at his Music Store a choice and large assortment of PIANO FORTEs, at very reasonable prices, and on accommodating terms.

Among these are Piano Fortes made by the old and celebrated manufacturers, T. Gilbert & Co., of Boston, of rich tone, and finished beautifully in Rosewood, Black Walnut, and Mahogany, with iron frames, made in the most substantial and workmanlike manner. Also, the justly celebrated Eolian Piano Fortes, which, for sweetness of tone, have not been equalled. They are peculiarly suited to the country, as the Eolian does not require tuning for years.

The new improvement in Piano Fortes, the patent Vibrating Overbridge, is also for sale at the same establishment. This improvement gives peculiar firmness and brilliancy to the tone, adds to the durability and strength of the Piano, and renders it capable of remaining much longer in tune than those in ordinary use.

W. T. M. is agent for Henri Hare’s celebrated Grand Pianos and Pianinos, made in Paris. For power and sweetness of tone, they stand pre-eminent.

The Dolce Compania Attachment, J. Pleyel & Co., Paris Pianos, and instruments from all the best manufactories, constantly receiving, and for sale on liberal terms.

SECOND HAND PIANOS for sale from $50 to $200 each, and taken in part payment for new Pianos.

Pianos repaired, tuned, turned, and appraised.

CATHCART’S MELODEON.—This beautiful toned wind instrument, for Village Churches, Lodges, Stimulating Parties, and the private practice of Organists, possesses a sweet and powerful tone, is portable, (weighing only 25 pounds,) and offered at $60 each.

Orders for Guitars, Violins, Violoncellos, Flute, Clarinets, Flageolets, Strings, and Musical Merchandise of every kind, will be promptly executed at reasonable prices. Bands supplied with Brass Instruments and Band Music.

HARPS—Double and Single Action, on hand and made to order to suit the taste of purchasers.

MUSIC—The largest catalogue in the South. The stock is an accumulation of over twenty years. In it are many old and beautiful pieces out of print.

NEW MUSIC received by every arrival from the North, and by the foreign steamships. Spanish Songs, Dances, Waltzes, &c., in regular supply. Original Music published every week at the store. Native compositions solicited. Music bound, copied, and arranged. Subscriptions received for the “Message Bird,” “Saroni’s Musical Times,” and the “Baltimore Olio.” By addressing the undersigned, Catalogues of Music will be sent to any part of the adjoining States.

W. T. MAYO.
with instrument manufacturers in the North.

There is little extant biographical information on William Mayo. For instance, the date and place of his birth are both unknown. There is also no information on why he decided to buy Johns’s music company in 1841 or why he sold his own successful business in 1853. What little information that does exist suggests that Mayo was a part of New Orleans’s American community. For instance, Mayo spoke English (as evidenced by his surviving letters), and when he bought Johns’s business he relocated from 89 Chartres Street to 5 Camp Street, effectively moving the establishment from the French Quarter to the American Sector. In one of the two existing samples of his correspondence, Mayo also exhibited the typical attitude towards slavery and American politics that is often associated with Southern merchants and Northerners living in the South, which was one of ambivalence. Writing to Elijah Dunbar, a resident of Massachusetts (who would eventually move to New Orleans), Mayo stated:

We are not much excited here with politics. I would not be surprised if General Taylor was elected President by Congress, with a very small majority…If Van Buren is elected in ‘52 the South will have an independent government sure. It will be for her interest. The slavery subject pushed by the North can produce no other result. Such is fate. I suppose there will be no slaves in North America in the course of time.

In this letter, Mayo expressed many beliefs typically held by Northerners, including the idea that the institution of slavery would eventually die out on its own “in the course of time,” or without Northern intervention. Likewise popular among Northerners was the idea that “the slavery subject pushed by the North” would ultimately end up dividing the Union.

20 Chartres Street becomes Camp Street once it intersects Canal Street, which was the traditional dividing line between the French and American sections of the city.
22 William T. Mayo to Elijah Dunbar, 1848.
24 Ibid., 188–89.
Mayo’s connection to the North is also revealed through the many business ties that he maintained in nearly every major Northern city, including New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. A survey of the sheet music that bears Mayo’s name shows that he had connections with major publishers in each of these cities, including William Hall & Son and Firth, Pond & Co. of New York; Oliver Ditson and George P. Reed of Boston; Miller and Beacham, F. D. Benteen, and George Willig of Baltimore; and Lee & Walker and Augustus Fiot of Philadelphia. At times, Mayo worked jointly with the publishers and appears to have been an equal partner in publication. Other times, he seems to have worked as a subsidiary publisher for these larger Northern firms, who provided music that he could sell to his customers. Nonetheless, Mayo’s name is inscribed onto the cover pages of many songs and piano pieces published by Northern publishers, and he likewise published a sizable number of compositions on his own in New Orleans. Furthermore, the fact that he sold music that was published in the North seems to have worked as a selling point in 1840s New Orleans. One advertisement that Mayo placed in the *Daily Picayune* in 1849 alerted readers of “new music, just received from the North, for sale at No. 5 Camp Street,” suggesting that despite growing sectional divisiveness and the fact that many Southern nationalists and secessionists were calling for Southern artistic independence before the Civil War, Northern music and art were still popular with most urban Southerners, especially in New Orleans.\(^\text{25}\)

In 1850, Mayo wrote another letter to Elijah Dunbar that hints at how Mayo’s business relationships with Northern publishers may have functioned.\(^\text{26}\) In this correspondence, Mayo


\(^{26}\) William T. Mayo, Letter to Elijah Dunbar, August 1850. Elijah Dunbar Letters, 1851, Mss. 985 and 991, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collections, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.
described his dealings with publishers and piano dealers in the North, and he requested that Dunbar arrange an order of pianos for Mayo to sell at his store. He also discussed his competitors in New Orleans, namely E. A. Tyler, Henry Parsons, and H. D. Hewitt, the latter being a young New York musician and businessman who would eventually move to New Orleans and enter into a partnership with Tyler. Mayo’s letter is excerpted here at length with editorial notes included in brackets:

I have heard of you [Dunbar] by Willig [music publisher in Baltimore] and Lee & Walker [music publishers in Philadelphia]. Willig says July 21 young Hewitt got here the last of the week and has also gone East. I think you attach more consequence than he merits. I do not think he is calculated to conduct business successfully. If he does, he is the first of his family that has done so. Willig recommends Coverhaven [identity unknown]. Benteen [music publisher in Baltimore] says I believe it was Willig who recommended Hewitt to you. I loaned him the money to go to New Orleans which you refunded. I often wanted to give you a hint about Hewitt’s wanting to go into business etc., but I presumed he saw the letters and I did not say anything. I have no opinion of his business abilities. I intend to refuse to sell him anything. I do not think you need be afraid of him or Tyler. His father has a great opinion of him and thinks he is a wonderful son. He will soon find his level. Lee & Walker and yourself have recommended Coverhaven so highly that I have written to him, and think he will suit better than Wheeler. I shall hear soon from Wheeler as to what he has to say. Reed [music publisher in Boston] it seems meets with no success. He said Boston could not produce so good a clerk as Hewitt. Poor Boston! She is of little account if this be so. Thank Mr. Reed for his kindness to me in this and many other favors which I can never forget. I sold two pianos yesterday, one Gale [piano builder in New York] and the other Lem[uel] Gilbert [piano builder in Boston]...I sold four second hand pianos in one day and most all of Wm. Hall & Co.’s pianos are gone. You had better send out early in the season ten plain tablets and 5 fancy case 7 octaves. Tell Hallet Davis Co. [Boston Piano manufacturer] to send only one 6 octave and one 7 octave rose piano and draw at 3 & 6 months. If you say so we will take them on joint account. Parsons has got down close by me now. I do not see what he is doing. We can run Chickering Pianos [Boston piano manufacturer, sold by Parsons] out of the market if we manage right. Hewitt was taken down very sick on the boat with an ulcerated throat. That thing will kill him yet. How did Wm. Hall & Son appear? The only points Hewitt can reach are Ditson in Boston, Wm Hall & Son in N.Y., and Peters in Baltimore. I wish you would call on Ditson and tell him how foolish he was to refuse to sell me without the cash on a draft on a Boston house accompanying the order. Tyler is again protested. How he can get along and be protested every summer I do not understand...Almost everybody has left. My business is principally on orders from the country, which has increased since last summer.

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27 The Hewitts were a famous musical family from New York.
28 William T. Mayo to Elijah Dunbar, August 1850.
This important letter gives clues as to how the relationships between music publishers in the North and New Orleans worked. First, it seems that Mayo knew each of these publishers personally, and was in regular contact with them. He and other New Orleans publishers apparently worked out deals with these Northern firms to sell their music and instruments in New Orleans, thus explaining Mayo’s disappointment in not being able to work out a specific deal with Boston’s Oliver Ditson—the most prominent music publisher in the United States at the time—and his wariness of Hewitt’s business prospects due to his presumably limited contact with other Northern publishers. Second, Mayo seems to have been searching for a clerk to work in one of his music stores (he maintained several at the time), and he must have contacted his friends in the North asking them to recommend someone. These facts indicate that Mayo, as well as Henry Parsons, E. A. Tyler, and later Horatio Hewitt, all worked closely with Northern publishing firms, which was key to the successful operation of their businesses.

This letter also demonstrates the steep degree of competition between the various publication firms in New Orleans. Mayo’s music store was certainly the largest in the city at the time, but the sheer number of places where one could purchase sheet music caused each of these merchants to find ways to diversify their commercial offerings. In fact, it appears that the primary source of income for Mayo and a few of the other publishers was not sheet music, but was instead the sale of instruments. Advertisements placed in The Daily Picayune for Henry Parsons’s store, for instance, seem to indicate that he did not publish any sheet music, but instead relied on the sale of pianos as his major source of revenue. Most of the advertisements for Parsons’s store indicate that he was a seller of Chickering Pianos.29 Based in Boston and founded by Jonas Chickering, the firm of Chickering & Sons was one of the largest and most prominent

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manufacturers of pianos in the United States during the nineteenth century. Chickering pianos were popular with both amateurs and professionals, including New Orleans-born virtuoso Louis Moreau Gottschalk, who toured the United States with two Chickering grand pianos.\(^{30}\) Mayo, on the other hand, sold pianos produced by A. H. Gale and William Hall & Son. His loyalty to his suppliers, and his desire to outsell his competition, are surely what drove his desire to “run Chickering Pianos out of the market.”\(^{31}\)

E. A. Tyler, on the other hand, was a maker and seller of jewelry, although he was quite active as a publisher of sheet music and instrument dealer. During the 1840s Mayo and Tyler were the most prolific music publishers in New Orleans. Mayo appears to have been much more active than Tyler, judging primarily from the number of surviving pieces bearing their imprints. There are far more pieces featuring Mayo’s name that have survived than those bearing Tyler’s, and Mayo appears to have published more sheet music without the aid of Northern firms. Tyler did produce pieces without co-publishers from the North, but they were typically songs or other pieces that dealt specifically with New Orleans or Louisiana subjects.

Some surviving examples of Tyler’s Louisiana pieces include “La Belle Creole Waltz,” “The Louisiana Polka,” and “Eulogy on the Death of Henry Stephen Green.”\(^{32}\) Mayo likewise published New Orleans-specific pieces, including “La Louisianise Polka,” “The Lafourche Quick Step,” and “No. 5 Camp Street.” The latter piece (shown in Figure 4.6), which was named after the location of Mayo’s store, was a simple, short polka for piano. It is somewhat unusual compared to other pieces published by Mayo, as it is undated, anonymously composed, and lists


\(^{31}\) William T. Mayo to Elijah Dunbar, August 1850.

\(^{32}\) Henry Stephen Green was a prominent New Orleans musician who had worked as the choir director at St. Patrick’s Church in the 1840s.
as its engraver someone named (presumably as a joke) “Stickinthemuddini.” Tyler similarly published a piece specific to his own store, titled “The Crescent Mazurka,” (see Figure 4.7). Like “No. 5 Camp Street,” this piece is a simple stylized dance for solo piano, yet its cover sheet is engraved with a depiction of the façade of Tyler’s store. The image shows a store front several stories high with the words “Piano Fortes” written in large print above the second-floor windows. According to newspaper advertisements for his store, Tyler sold pianos produced by a number of Northern manufacturers, including A.H Gale and Nunns & Clark of New York and Chickering of Boston. The coversheet for “The Crescent Mazurka” hints at just how important pianos were to Tyler’s business: the words “piano fortes” are the largest in the image, and just inside the door of the store a small square piano (a style of piano popular for home use in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) is shown, which would have been visible to passersby and was perhaps also used for the type of promotion described by Mayo in his letter.

Unlike Tyler, Mayo published as the primary publisher many pieces that were not strictly of local interest. One such work was the “Sea Serpent Polka,” a piece for solo piano published in 1850 (see Figure 4.8). This work is significant in that it was composed by the well-known New York composer and pianist Maurice Strakosch, who was giving concerts in New Orleans in through his contacts in the North, also arranged for the piece to be published by George Reed in 1850. Mayo must have secured the original publication rights to the piece from Strakosch and, Boston. Obtaining the publication rights to a piece from such a widely known and

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33 “No. 5 Camp Street,” (New Orleans: William T. Mayo), Lillie Gray Collection. Instrumental Selections, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.
34 “The Crescent Mazurka,” (New Orleans: E.A. Tyler, 1850), Music Collection of New Orleans Imprints, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.
35 Daily Picayune, 4 December 1846, pg. 4, col. 5.
37 The primary evidence that this piece was originally published in New Orleans is the copyright information listed on the sheet music itself. It reads, “Entered according to Act. Of Congress in the year 1850, by
Figure 4.6. First page of “No. 5 Camp Street,” (New Orleans: William T. Mayo). *Lillie Gray Collection. Instrumental Selections*, Louisiana and Lower Mississippi Valley Collection, LSU Libraries, Baton Rouge, LA.

Wm. T. Mayo in the clerk’s office of the district court of the eastern district of LA.” The information is most likely reliable as Mayo often published pieces that he indicated were copyrighted in the North.
Figure 4.7. Cover page of “The Crescent Mazurka,” (New Orleans: E.A. Tyler, 1850). *Music Collection of New Orleans Imprints*, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.
well-respected composer was surely a significant financial success for Mayo. As shown in Figure 4.8, the sheet music was adorned by a bizarre cover page that depicts an enormous snake winding its way down what is probably the Mississippi River, but instead of a snake’s head, the creature possesses a human head—which closely resembles contemporary depictions of the composer. This version of the cover page, which was probably the original, was lithographed by Xavier Magny, one of the two major sheet music lithographers active in New Orleans. Magny was also most likely responsible for designing the cover page. This version of the piece does not indicate that it was published outside of New Orleans, as the cover page reads “published and for sale by Wm. T. Mayo No. 5 Camp street,” and lists no additional publishers. Subsequent versions, however, were published in Boston and list George Reed as a publisher in addition to Mayo. The cover page for these versions are slightly less bizarre than the Mayo edition, as they depict a serpent with a snake’s head instead of a human’s head.

Examining some of the sheet music published by Mayo demonstrates the high degree to which music publication in New Orleans was dependent upon Northern publishers and composers. One useful example is the piece “While My Thoughts Still Turn to Thee,” subtitled “Brilliant Cavatina from the Popular Opera Giovanna di Napoli” (see Figure 4.9). According to the first page of the sheet music, the song was published in 1851 in New York, and the copyright was secured by William Hall & Son. The coversheet lists two additional publishers: Oliver Ditson of Boston and William T. Mayo of New Orleans. Clearly, William Hall & Son was primarily responsible for securing the publication rights for the song and arranging for its printing and distribution. Nonetheless, the name of a New Orleans publisher on the title page arouses interest into why such a composition would be sold in New Orleans in the first place.

Figure 4.9. Cover page of “While My Thoughts Still Turn to Thee,” by Maurice Strakosch, with a portrait of Teresa Parodi (New York: William Hall & Son, 1851). *Music Collection of New Orleans Imprints*, Hill Memorial Library, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA.
Like many pieces of sheet music from the early nineteenth century, its cover page is adorned with a lithographed image that made the music more visually appealing to the consumer. Framed at the center of the of the cover page is the portrait of Teresa Parodi, who is listed as the singer who popularized this cavatina through her role in the opera from which it was taken. Parodi was an Italian soprano who had success in Europe before moving to New York to sing for the Astor Place Opera Company, where she was enthusiastically received. Beginning in 1851 (the year this piece was published), Parodi embarked on a tour of the United States that included stops in New Orleans. New Orleanians would have undoubtedly recognized her name on the sheet music, if not her portrait.

The composer of the song and the opera from which it was taken was Maurice Strakosch, who also composed “Sea Serpent Polka,” mentioned above. Strakosch gave numerous concerts in New Orleans during 1849 and 1850 to much acclaim. After his first concert in the city, one reviewer proclaimed that “he is the most brilliant performer upon the piano forte we have yet had among us.” Strakosch left New Orleans in 1850, but returned in 1851 with Teresa Parodi. They gave their first concert in the city on 25 April 1851, the newspaper announcement for which is shown in Figure 4.10. According to the advertisement, the concert included selections of favorite bel canto operatic selections and featured Parodi singing numbers from Strakosch’s opera Giovanna di Napoli, the source of the cavatina “While My Thoughts Still Turn to Thee.” Also included in the newspaper advertisement was the announcement that tickets could be purchased at the music stores of William Mayo and Tyler & Hewitt. Perhaps customers visiting these stores to purchase tickets for the concert would be enticed by Parodi’s portrait to also buy

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40 *Daily Picayune*, 10 March 1849, pg. 4, col. 1.
41 *Daily Picayune*, 25 April 1851, pg. 3, col. 3.
Figure 4.10. Advertisement for a concert given by Teresa Parodi and Maurice Strakosch in New Orleans. *Daily Picayune*, 25 April 1851, pg. 3, col. 3.
“While My Thoughts Still Turn to Thee.” The information revealed by this piece of sheet music paints a picture of a transregional musical economy in which musicians and music publishers from cities hundreds of miles apart developed relationships that were wholly integral to their success. Without Northern composers and publishers, New Orleans music store owners would have had significantly fewer pieces to sell to their customers. Conversely, Northern publishers, composers, and performers could expand their reach, bolster their reputations, and increase their sales by partnering with firms in the South, where New Orleans was by far the largest market.

During the 1840s and early 1850s, Mayo was the most prominent music publisher in New Orleans. There were others, however, who operated successful businesses in the city’s American sector and fostered relationships with Northern firms. Perhaps the most successful of these firms was that of E. A. Tyler (discussed above), who was also active in the city beginning in the early 1840s. From approximately 1841 to 1845, Tyler was in partnership with Hamlet Jacks, a silversmith. I have not located any pieces that were published by Tyler and Jacks, although they were clearly working as dealers of sheet music at least as early as 1842.\(^42\) By 1845 Tyler had dissolved his partnership with Jacks and worked alone. There are numerous pieces that bear Tyler’s name as a publisher, and nearly all of these also list Northern publishers as well. In 1850, Tyler went into business with H. D. Hewitt, the New York native discussed in Mayo’s letter. This partnership was probably quite fruitful for Tyler, as Hewitt, contrary to Mayo’s prediction, was able to successfully cultivate relationships with several Northern music publishers.

Another publisher with ties to Northern cities about whom little is known was Benjamin Casey. Casey operated a bookstore on Camp Street (in the city’s American sector) with William McKean in the 1830s and 1840s, but in 1842 the partnership was dissolved and Casey opened a

\(^{42}\) The earliest reference to the music store of Tyler and Jacks appears in a newspaper advertisement for a sacred concert in March of 1842. *Daily Picayune*, 5 March 1842, pg. 2, col. 5.
music store.\footnote{Daily Picayune, 22 November 1842, pg. 1, col. 2.} Casey operated this business until approximately 1847, when William Mayo published an advertisement stating he had acquired Casey’s stock of sheet music.\footnote{Daily Picayune, 14 April 1847, pg. 4, col. 7.} Casey did publish some music under his own imprint, but these pieces are rare and undated. According to Peggy Boudreaux, Casey was “far more active” as a “distributor of music published in Northern American cities,” than William Mayo.\footnote{Boudreaux, 17.} This was most likely not the case, as far more pieces published jointly with Northern publishers survive bearing Mayo’s name than Casey’s. Additionally, Casey seldom published advertisements for sheet music in the newspapers, whereas advertisements for Mayo’s store appeared almost daily for over a decade.

The transregional economic system of music publication in the United States was not only vital to the lives and careers of musicians in Northern cities and New Orleans, but it also helped foster a sense of national unity in the pre-war years. Business and commercial ties helped musical merchants in these various cities overlook sectional division and create a business infrastructure that complemented the sense of general patriotism held by many Americans during the 1840s and early 1850s. This phenomenon was part of a large movement in the American economy in which business ties promoted national unity. According to Jonathan Daniel Wells,\footnote{Jonathan Daniel Wells, The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800–1861 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 5–6.} Northerners and Southerners established prewar business ties that were instrumental in keeping the Union intact despite mounting national disagreements over slavery. Not only did antebellum Americans travel to other regions, sometimes settling permanently, and not only did they exchange ideas about culture and intellectual life through newspapers and magazines, but they also joined in collaborative economic pursuits that entwined the sections.

Through both personal and business relationships, publishers in Northern cities and in New Orleans created relationships that united their cities together politically, culturally, and
economically and helped create a shared music culture despite geographical and political distances.

**Henry Erben: Celebrity Organ Builder to the South**

While sheet music publishers and piano manufacturers were central to the musical and economic relationships between New Orleans and Northern cities, organ builders likewise played a prominent role. As sacred music became vital to the city’s musical life, and as denominations of Protestant churches that utilized the organ as a part of worship began to proliferate, the demand for organs in New Orleans skyrocketed. Because there were no organ builders working in the city before the Civil War, New Orleans churches relied on Northern manufacturers to supply their instruments. Although these organs were expensive and difficult to import and build, local congregations were not deterred from purchasing instruments from the most prominent builders in the country.

Organs occupied an important place within American music of the nineteenth century. Newspapers in New Orleans regularly ran stories about new organs being built in different cities around the country. It was even common for papers to report on technical details of these instruments, such as the number of the stops, pipes, and ranks they featured, while also providing reviews of performances. When new organs were built in New Orleans, it would draw a considerable amount of press, and many of the city’s residents would clamor for a chance to examine and hear the new instrument. The mere presence of these organs in the city spurred more public performances of sacred music, as churches held ticketed concerts to help finance

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47 For example, a column was printed in the *Daily Picayune* in 1843 providing details about the organ that Henry Erben built for Trinity Church in New York. See *Daily Picayune*, 21 September 1844, pg. 2, col. 4.
them or to exhibit the instruments once they were installed.\textsuperscript{48} The sale and construction of these organs in New Orleans served as one facet of the American transregional musical trade, much like sheet music publication and piano manufacturing.

For the first half of the nineteenth century, the most sought-after organ manufacturer by New Orleans congregations was Henry Erben, a prominent builder who ran the largest firm in New York. By the end of the 1850s, nearly every New Orleans church could boast having owned an Erben organ sometime in the previous two decades—including St. Louis Cathedral, the city’s most prominent Catholic Church, located in the heart of the French Quarter. Erben had become something of a celebrity in New Orleans, and the city’s papers regularly included stories detailing his work. Even aspects of his personal life were sometimes reprinted by the city’s newspapers.\textsuperscript{49} In 1860, the \textit{Daily Picayune} reported that at least nine of his instruments were currently in use in New Orleans churches.\textsuperscript{50} Erben was born to a musical family in New York in 1800, and his father was one of the earliest American-born organists to work in New York.\textsuperscript{51} During his apprenticeship as an organ builder under his brother-in-law and future partner Thomas Hall, Henry Erben made several trips to the South to install organs they had built, setting the stage for his future endeavors in that section of the country. He entered into a partnership with Hall in 1824, and one of his earliest organs during this time was built for First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans.\textsuperscript{52} Their partnership was dissolved by 1843, but Erben had taken main control of the business well before then.\textsuperscript{53} He was a shrewd salesman and a fierce competitor,

\textsuperscript{48} For example, in 1847 Christ Church Cathedral, under the direction of Frederick Müller, organized a performance of the oratorio \textit{David} by Sigismond von Neukomm to help finance the purchase of a new organ from the New York builder George Jardine. See \textit{Daily Picayune}, 11 April 1847, pg. 2, col. 1.
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Daily Picayune}, 7 November 1843, pg. 2, col. 5.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Daily Picayune}, 1 June 1860, pg. 4, col. 1.
\textsuperscript{52} Ogasapian, 7.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 11.
which, along with the high quality of his work, brought him a great deal of success as a merchant and organ builder.

The process of purchasing and building a new organ from a Northern builder was often long, complicated, and usually quite expensive. First, a church would typically seek bids from Northern builders and determine whom they would contract to build their instrument. Once a manufacturer was chosen, that builder would construct the instrument entirely in his own factory in the North. By midcentury, the firms of Henry Erben in New York and E. & G. G. Hook in Boston were the largest and most successful organ builders in the United States. These firms operated as large organ factories that could produce many instruments at quickly.\textsuperscript{54} They also produced increasingly large and expensive organs that could sell for as much as $10,000.\textsuperscript{55}

Once the various parts of the organ had been manufactured in the Northern shop, the completed instrument would be shipped to New Orleans via boat, usually accompanied by either a representative of the manufacturer or the organ builder himself. This person would oversee the installation of the new organ into the church, which could take weeks or even months to complete. When the instrument was finally installed, a series of public concerts showcasing the new organ was held, often with the proceeds helping to offset building costs. In some specific cases, this entire process can be traced through newspaper articles that documented each step. This is the case for the organ that Henry Erben built for St. Patrick’s Church in New Orleans in 1843, just after he terminated his partnership with Thomas Hall. The cathedral, built in 1840, was a Catholic church that stood in Lafayette Square, the popular public park that sat in the heart of the American sector. St. Patrick’s stood apart from the other Catholic churches in the city for

\textsuperscript{54} Orpha Ochse, \textit{The History of the Organ in the United States} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975), 103.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 103. $10,000 was the price that Trinity Church New York is reported to have paid Henry Erben for its new organ in 1844. See, \textit{Daily Picayune}, 21 September 1844, pg. 2, col. 4.
being the first in New Orleans whose parishioners—most of Irish descent—spoke English rather than French.

As early 1841, the church was organizing sacred concerts to help raise funds for the construction of the organ. Sometime before March of that year, they hired Erben to build for them a large organ, which he would have constructed in its entirety in his factory in New York. On 28 March 1843, the Daily Picayune reported that Erben’s organ was complete and had arrived in New Orleans via the steamboat Vicksburg. According to the article, the organ was “the largest probably in America.” Unfortunately for St. Patrick’s Church, the organ would remain in the New Orleans port for several weeks due to legal issues. In 1843, the church was still in debt after constructing a new building in 1840, and according to the laws then in existence, any property belonging to the church that passed through the New Orleans port would be seized for those debts. Several days after the organ arrived in New Orleans, it was confiscated by port authorities, and the church made a request to the state legislature that it be exempted from seizure. Apparently, the request was eventually granted, because by early April the Daily Picayune reported that the construction of the organ had begun in the church. In the same article, the writer advised that “the trustees [of the church] would do well to get up an oratorio on the occasion of its being first heard, and the receipts might go to the aid of the church. We are told the organ is the most elegant ever seen in the South.” Several weeks later the organ was completed, and the paper published a lengthy description of the instrument:

**THE ORGAN OF ST. PATRICK’S CHURCH.—** This magnificent instrument, now put up and perfect in all its parts, will be exhibited to the public tomorrow afternoon…New Orleans

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57 *Daily Picayune*, 28 March 1843, pg. 2, col. 3.
58 *Daily Picayune*, 28 March 1843, pg. 2, col. 3.
60 *Daily Picayune*, 8 April 1843, pg. 2, co. 1.
61 *Daily Picayune*, 8 April 1843, pg. 2, co. 1.
may now boast—thanks to the praiseworthy efforts of her fair daughters—of having an organ the like of which, in point of size, elegance, and scientific construction, is not to be seen on the American continent! The frame or case of the organ is modeled after the purest and most elaborate style of Gothic architecture, and is, therefore, in uniformity with the building in which it is placed. Its height is 37 feet, width 25 feet, and depth 17 feet. It contains nearly 2000 pipes; of these, the largest wooden one is 23 feet long, and 2 feet by 20 inches square. The largest metal pipe is 14 feet long and 13 inches in diameter. It has 13 diapasons, 4 of which are double diapasons. It has four reed stops, two trumpet, one clarion, one hautboy and one cremona. It will be played upon tomorrow afternoon by several of our musical professors, when it will send forth a concord of sweet sounds that will soothe with their melody while they startle with their grandeur.62

The day after this description was published, on 21 April 1843, a concert was held at St. Patrick’s to raise money to defray the cost of the organ and to allow interested members of the public to hear and examine the instrument.63

Such newspaper articles document the very public process that New Orleans churches went through to purchase large, state-of-the-art organs from Northern manufacturers. In 1847 Christ Church Cathedral, which had recently relocated to a new building on Canal Street, went through a similar—and just as well-publicized—process to purchase a new organ from George Jardine, Erben’s largest competitor in New York.64 Ten years later, when New Orleans’s First Presbyterian Church purchased a large organ from Henry Erben, the Daily Picayune likewise covered its installation and opening with interest.65

The transregional trade of sheet music and musical instruments between New Orleans and Northern cities thrived despite intensifying sectional differences that arose between North and South during the 1840s and 1850s. During the Civil War, the opportunity for those in the music trade to continue doing business in the same fashion dried up. After the war, Henry Erben, who relied heavily on purchases from clients in many Southern cities, never saw his business

63 Daily Picayune, 21 April 1843, pg. 2, col. 1.
64 Daily Picayune, 9 June 1847, pg. 3, col. 3.
65 Daily Picayune, 2 December 1857, pg. 4, col. 1.
recover to its antebellum success. Many of the music publishers who were active before the war went out of business by the end of the 1850s, all for unknown reasons. Those who succeeded during that time, such as music store owner and publisher A. E. Blackmar (see Chapter 5), did so through the publication of Confederate sheet music, feeding the Southern desire for cultural artistic legitimacy that manifested itself during the war. But prior to the war, both the Northern and Southern musical economy were wholly reliant upon each other and driven by the popular demand in New Orleans for Northern sheet music and instruments. For residents of New Orleans’s American community, these business partnerships came naturally, as old friendships and family ties helped Northerners maintain economic relationships to their native homes once they relocated to the Southern city. In other cases, such as the organ and piano trade, there was simply no Southern production of these goods, creating a reliance on Northern products out of necessity. Ultimately, this transregional musical economy was one of the main forces driving the formation of a musical culture in New Orleans based on Northern models. It affected many facets of music making in the city: from public concerts in grand halls, to private recitals in drawing rooms, and corporate performances in places of worship.

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66 Ogasapian, 14.
67 For information regarding Southern intellectual nationalism and the efforts to produce distinctly Southern art during the war, see Bernath, Confederate Minds.
CHAPTER 5
THE INFLUENCE OF SOUTHERN NATIONALISM

In the 1840s and 1850s, New Orleans underwent important cultural and economic shifts that had direct, often positive effects on the city’s musical life. Its music economy flourished, and new professional musicians were drawn to the region, providing amateurs with resources such as sheet music and teachers. With this influx of professionals came a robust culture of music education, as opportunities to learn became available both privately and through the city’s newly formed public schools. Likewise, the city’s concert life thrived. Performances by touring and local artists competed with oratorio concerts held in area churches and with the ever-popular French and American opera companies. By mid-century, New Orleans could pride itself as one of the musical capitals of the United States. Yet this picture of antebellum New Orleans is incomplete, for it distorts the morbid reality of life in the Crescent City.

Even for lifelong natives of New Orleans, the climate was so unagreeable that the city became a ghost town during the summer months, occupied only by those who could not afford to leave. Disease and pestilence were omnipresent due to the lack of a proper sewage system, unpaved streets, and the unrelenting heat. Particularly devastating were the many outbreaks of yellow fever that plagued the population and claimed thousands of lives. Nearly twenty-five thousand people in New Orleans died from the disease in the 1850s, with the outbreaks in 1853, 1855, and 1858 being particularly severe.¹ In addition to unsanitary living conditions, poverty and violence made New Orleans exceedingly unsafe. Crime was rampant, and the city’s fledging police force did little to control it. Con-artists, pirates, and criminals prowled the streets and took advantage of inadequate law enforcement.²

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² Ibid., 63–68.
Violence also spilled over into the local political arena. During the 1850s, the Whig and Republican ideals that were brought to New Orleans from the North transformed into the nativism of the newly-formed American Party (also known as the Know-Nothing movement). This party was anti-immigrant and sought to support the rights of white “native Americans.” This national phenomenon found a stronghold in New Orleans and other cities that were flooded with Irish and German immigrants in the 1840s. It became especially popular amongst the city’s Northern contingent, as it stressed the importance of “native-born” Americans, free labor, patriotism, and unionism. By the mid-1850s, however, the American Party of New Orleans turned to violence and voter intimidation to gain political power. Gangs of “ruffians,” apparently under the employ of American Party candidates, roamed the streets of New Orleans and monitored polling places to suppress oppositional votes and control elections. It was not until 1860, the year immediately preceding the Civil War, that election-day violence began to subside, although by this time the city’s political landscape had shifted markedly. Robert Reinders, explaining how these changes helped to align the city more closely with the rest of the South on the eve of the Civil War, summarized:

A.D. Crossman, the first mayor of the decade [1850s] was a Whig, a unionist, a merchant, and a native of Maine; John T. Monroe, the last mayor of the era, was an American, a secessionist, a laborer, and a Virginian. The differences between the two men symbolize the far-reaching political transformation, fostered by violence, which took place in New Orleans in the 1850s.

Despite the social reforms and political ideals that Northerners brought to the Crescent City in the 1840s and 1850s, by the end of this period New Orleans had absorbed some Southern

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3 Eric Foner has explained that “Republicans feared that the influx of immigrants was threatening to destroy the free labor ideal of an open society.” See Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 231–32.
4 Reinders, 56–57.
5 Ibid., 58.
6 Ibid., 61.
influences that further transformed its musical life, even though its population was never as committed to the Confederacy as were those of other Southern cities.

In the late 1850s, a movement began in the Southern states “dedicated to liberating the South from its intellectual ‘vassalage’ to the North and to creating an autonomous and distinctly Confederate national culture.”7 This movement of Southern artistic nationalism was especially prevalent in the literary world of the Confederacy, but it also touched the region’s music culture, as composers and publishers began creating music that expressed support for the Southern cause. As the South became cut off from the North during the Civil War and trade with Northern publishers and composers became impossible, it was necessary for musicians in the region to furnish their own supply of sheet music. This wave of Southern nationalism in music, however, never shed the vestiges of the Northern musical culture that were already in place, especially in New Orleans. The ever-popular forms of the parlor song and the piano dance piece did not fall out of fashion, but they began to exhibit signs of Southern nationalism through their titles and lyrics. Furthermore, the musicians whose work can be understood as the product of Southern nationalism participated in a music culture whose foundation was rooted in Northern practices. Therefore, while Confederate sheet music composition and publication became a dominant force in New Orleans during the early 1860s, its creation and distribution would not have been possible without the work of Northerners in New Orleans over the previous two decades.

Musicians, of course, were not the only residents of New Orleans whose careers and political views were shaped by the onset of the Civil War and by the spirit of Southern patriotism that swept through the South at the end of the 1850s. In fact, the Daily Picayune—the most prominent newspaper in New Orleans, underwent such a transformation at the beginning of the

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1860s. Established on the model of New York’s “penny press” newspapers by two editors with ties to the North who moved to New Orleans, the *Daily Picayune* was for over two decades the city’s most widely distributed newspaper, and its editors prided themselves on steering clear of sectional politics. At a time when most newspapers worked as organs for a specific political party, the *Daily Picayune* avoided overt political affiliation, instead focusing on local concerns and calling for improvements to the city.

The founders and editors of the *Daily Picayune* were Francis Lumsden of North Carolina and George Wilkins Kendall of Vermont. They met while working in Washington for the *National Intelligencer*, one of the Nation’s most influential papers at the time, and moved to New Orleans to start their own periodical in 1837. The *Daily Picayune* found quick success because of Kendall’s skillful, humorous writing and the paper’s cheap price. Like Northern penny papers, the *Daily Picayune* targeted middle-class readers, often ridiculing the city’s politicians, reporting on humorous or unique stories, and calling for improvements to the city’s infrastructure, education, healthcare, and governance. This focus was in line with the general sense of civic responsibility espoused by many of New Orleans’s Northern residents, who constituted the primary readership of the *Daily Picayune*. According to one historian, “what party politics was to other journals, the improvement of New Orleans was to the *Picayune* in its early years. Largely ignoring national politics, Kendall and Lumsden saw themselves not as defenders of the South but rather as advocates of the public good and spokesmen for civic improvement in New Orleans.”

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9 Ibid., 48.
10 Ibid., 55.
By the 1840s, the editors of the *Daily Picayune* had expanded the paper’s focus from purely local concerns to coverage of the Mexican-American War, for which it received national prominence. Because of the relative proximity of New Orleans to Texas, the writers for the *Daily Picayune* could quickly gather information from the war front and circulate it throughout the rest of the country. As its audience and reputation expanded during these years, the paper became more outspoken about national politics. As it reported on political events, the paper tended to side with “the strongest political winds.”¹¹ In the 1840s and the early 1850s, this was the Whig Party, which found support amongst the Northern contingent in New Orleans. During this time, the *Daily Picayune* was also outspokenly unionist, and used its columns to argue against secession and disunionism.¹² During the Crisis of 1850, when sectional politics were increasingly divisive, the paper served as “the Southwest’s most vigorous champion of the Union.”¹³

During the 1850s, however, support for the Whigs and (eventually the Republicans) waned in New Orleans, and the dominant political force was nativism and the Know-Nothing Movement. The *Daily Picayune* followed suit and became an “outspoken supporter of the American Party.”¹⁴ Yet despite this shift in political allegiance, the paper did not become a champion of the Southern cause. This change in political support did not occur until after the election of 1860, when Abraham Lincoln was elected as president and war between the North and South became imminent. According to one historian, “with the Republican triumph in 1860, the *Picayune* had little choice but to go with the people and support secession and the Confederacy.”¹⁵ The transformation of the *Daily Picayune* from an apolitical penny paper to a

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¹¹ Reinders, 228.
¹² Osthaus, 66.
¹³ Ibid., 66–67.
¹⁴ Reinders, 228.
¹⁵ Osthaus, 68.
major, Union-supporting periodical with a national scope, and finally to a Southern regional
journal that slowly accepted the Confederacy represented the gradual shift that occurred in New
Orleans politics over the two decades preceding the Civil War. And while the city never
completely lost its Northern roots, it became less hospitable to those who supported the Union,
and many who were a part of the Northern community either changed their public stances on
national issues, as did the *Daily Picayune*, or left the city altogether, as did the musician
Frederick Müller (discussed in Chapter 2).

The two brief biographical sketches below provide examples of how musicians in New
Orleans dealt with the changing political and social climate in the years immediately preceding
the war. The first concerns composer Theodore von La Hache, who, like the *Daily Picayune*,
slowly accepted the Confederacy and composed music that reflected his support for the South.
The second concerns Armand Blackmar, a Southerner and music publisher whose wholesale
support of the Southern cause helped him become the largest producer of Confederate sheet
music. His work in New Orleans demonstrates how support for the Confederacy became
widespread, even within a music culture that for so long supported Northern music making and
consumed large quantities of Northern sheet music. Both musicians worked within the already
existing musical infrastructure in New Orleans that was put in place by its Northern residents.
But by composing and publishing Confederate sheet music, they contributed to a culture of
Southern nationalism that was decidedly anti-Northern.

**Theodore von La Hache: Reluctant Southern Nationalist Composer?**

Theodore von La Hache (see Figure 5.1), like many American composers active in the
early nineteenth century, quickly fell into obscurity following his death. La Hache was not, like
his New Orleans contemporary Louis Moreau Gottschalk, an international star during his
Figure 5.1. Portrait of Theodore von La Hache. Included in Theodore von La Hache, *Album for 1857* (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1856), *Maxwell Sheet Music Collection*, Hogan Jazz Archive, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA.
lifetime, but he did find relative success as a composer of songs, piano pieces for virtuoso performers and amateurs, and large-scale sacred works. From the time he arrived in New Orleans from Dresden in 1842 until his death in 1869, La Hache was the most prolific and well-known composer living in the city. His music was published locally as well as nationally, and he developed good relationships with publishers in New York and Boston. Like many other American composers of the early nineteenth-century, La Hache did not make a living solely from composing, but supplemented his income through work as an organist, teacher, and conductor. Examining his extensive musical activities in New Orleans during the 1840s and 1850s indicates that his career was similar to other professionals in the Crescent City in that he was able to support himself through a variety of musical endeavors that served the city’s American community. In one respect, La Hache’s career differs from those of other professionals in New Orleans, such as Frederick Müller. Instead of leaving the city or maintaining a neutral political stance in order to avoid conflict with the city’s Confederate government, during the 1860s La Hache became an outspoken supporter for the Southern cause through his compositions, and especially his songs. During the war years, La Hache began composing and publishing songs that expressed Confederate patriotism. When considered as an expression of this Southern nationalism, this aspect of La Hache’s career is not so striking or unusual. When it is understood in the context of the Northern musical culture that was prevalent in New Orleans over the previous two decades, however, it reflects an important shift in the city’s music life.

Before the onset of the Civil War, when sentiments of patriotism and national unity ran high within the American community in New Orleans, La Hache’s compositions were written in a cosmopolitan style that reflected the popular tastes of the country’s urban centers. One such composition is “Near the Banks of that Lone River,” composed and published by La Hache in
1854 (reproduced in Appendix 2). The song’s text was written by the New York-based poet George P. Morris, who also wrote the text for “The Flag of Our Union,” discussed in Chapter 4. The poem is a sentimental narrative of romantic love that employs themes of nostalgia, natural beauty, and death, which were typical for early nineteenth century parlor songs.

Near the banks of that lone river
Where the water lilies grow,
Breathed the fairest flower that ever
Bloomed and faded years ago.
How we met and loved and parted
None on Earth can ever know,
Nor how pure and gentle hearted
Beamed the mourn’d one years ago.

Like the stream with lilies laden,
Will life’s future current flow,
Till in heaven I meet the maiden,
Fondly cherished years ago.
Hearts that love like mine forget not
They’re the same in weal or woe;
And that star of memory set not,
On the grave of years ago.¹⁶

Morris’s text would have easily appealed to the genteel tastes of middle- and upper-class amateur musicians in New Orleans, and it is typical of parlor songs of that time. La Hache’s music likewise catered to the tastes and abilities of amateur musicians. The song is short (two sixteen-measure stanzas preceded by an eight-measure introduction) and strophic with a simple melody that spans only an octave (E₄ to E₅). It begins with a relatively simple piano introduction that presents the main melodic figure twice, making the singer’s entrance on the highest note of the piece a much easier feat.

“Near the Banks of that Lone River” is representative of the types of pieces composed by La Hache prior to the early 1860s. He primarily wrote songs and piano pieces, but he also occasionally composed sacred works and collections of church music for Catholic services. His secular music was usually aimed at amateurs and utilized titles meant to appeal broadly to urban, middle- and upper-class musicians. A survey of his works published prior to the onset of the war included pieces with titles such as “La Fleur de Lis,” “The New Orleans Fireman’s Grand Procession March,” “General Taylor’s Victory March and General Worth’s Quick Step,” “Jenny Lind, Grande Valse de Caprice,” “Woodman, Spare that Tree,” “Les charmes de New York,” and “I Wish You Would Propose, or The Leap Year.”

During the 1850s, La Hache even composed songs whose texts were explicitly patriotic and supportive of the American Union. One such example is “Keep Step to the Music: A National Song” composed in 1856, published by Oliver Ditson in Boston, and dedicated to the “Union Men of the Republic.” Its text, which was written by M. F. Bigney “of the New Orleans Picayune,” consists of patriotic lines that are clear in their support of national unity:

Keep step to the music—the music that thrills
The national heart, from the sea to the hills,
And which in one glorious anthem combines
Its holiest hopes and its noblest designs.

Keep step to the music—though traitors advance
With a banner of black, and with uplifted lance,
Be our footfall but firm they will soon pass away
Like the dew-damps of night in the brightness of day.

Keep step to the music—that song of the stars
Which brighten our standard—come peace or come wars,

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17 Warren C. Fields, “The Life and Works of Theodore von La Hache,” volume 1 (PhD dissertation, University of Iowa, 1973), 344–45. While fields discussed some of the pieces La Hache composed on Confederate themes, he did not argue that the composer’s embrace of the Southern cause was primarily opportunistic or financial in nature.

Our step shall be true, and the UNION shall be
The watchword and hope of the brave and the free!

Keep step to the music—and trample in scorn
On fratricide foeman of treachery born;
Tear down their black banner, and raise in its stead
The flag 'neath which freeman and heroes can tread.

Keep step to the music—its tones are as dear
As the voices of home to the patriot’s ear;
The march is a Nation’s, whose states e’er shall be,
“Distinct as the billows, yet one as the sea.”

This text clearly expresses support for the Union and its survival, even if defended by military action. Considering that La Hache’s later songs show his embrace of the Confederacy, “Keep Step to the Music” is somewhat surprising and demonstrates how a full-scale acceptance of the Southern cause came relatively late for some residents of New Orleans. In fact, La Hache’s first Confederate song wasn’t published until 1861, the year the Civil War began.

Catering to Northern tastes, pieces such as “Keep Step to the Music” were unsurprisingly published in the North. According to his biographer, La Hache published pieces with George P. Reed and Oliver Ditson in Boston; Firth, Hall, & Pond (and the later Firth, Pond, & Co.), William Hall & Son, C. G. Christman, and J. L. Peters in New York; and A. Fiot in Philadelphia. In addition to his connections to Northern publishers, La Hache published numerous works with each of the major New Orleans publishers active during this time, including William Mayo, E. A Tyler, T. E. Beniot, H. D. Hewitt, P. P. Werlein, and Louis Grunewald.

By 1861, the year the Civil War began in New Orleans, many of La Hache’s songs started to include expressions of Southern nationalism. One of the first such pieces he composed was “The Free Market: A Local Song,” which was published in New Orleans by Louis

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19 La Hache, “Keep Step to the Music.”
20 Fields, 344–52.
Grunewald in 1861 (see Appendix 3). The song’s text is unmistakably supportive of the Southern war effort, and asserts patriotic pride in the sacrifices of Confederate soldiers:

The Southern blood is running fast
Through Southern veins tonight
Our patriots boys on tented fields,
Are eager for the fight.
On many a hill and many a plain
Rifle, Sabre, Knife,
In bright array flash night and day for mother, sister, wife

Refrain:
Hurrah for our Southern boys
The Ladies should adore them,
Our flag above them flies
And Heaven is watching o’er them,
Hurrah hurrah hurrah

Oh! Near to us, and dear to us,
Is every darling treasure
That round the soldiers fireside
Tills home with love and pleasure,
And while the patriots absent be,
Let’s stand by our Committee,
And keep our market full and free!
Pride of the Crescent City

Yet, though our boys are gone to war,
And left the dear ones here,
They need not heave a single sigh,
Nor shed a single tear.
For generous hearts and open hands,
Each soldier left behind him,
So let him fight with all his might,
Our hearts know where to find him.22

This text reflects a sense of optimism towards the Southern war effort at a time before the most devastating losses of the conflict occurred. The writer’s assurance that Confederate soldiers

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22 Ibid.
“need not heave a single sigh, nor shed a single tear,” was clearly naïve at the start of what became and remains the bloodiest conflict in the history of the United States. The reference in the text to “our market full and free,” while somewhat vague, is surely a reference to slavery.

The music itself lies well within the abilities of most amateurs, as was often the case with La Hache’s songs. Set in G major and a quick compound meter, the piece has a march-like feel that reflects the text’s sense of confidence and patriotism. Much like the earlier parlor song “Near the Banks of that Lone River,” described above, the range of the melody is contained mostly to a single octave, and features no difficult leaps. La Hache even provided the option for the singer to sing the final high G5 in a lower octave in case the piece proved too difficult as written.

“I Would Like to Change My Name,” written in 1862 and published by Louis Grunewald, was another song composed by La Hache aimed at amateur performance and containing themes of Southern nationalism. This simple, strophic song uses a text that recounts the desire of a young woman to marry:

I would like to change my name,
And share another’s home,
With a heart that’s kind and true,
And one that would not roam;
For my schooling days are over,

The books I’ve thrown aside,
I’ve often been a bride maid,
’Tis time I was a bride.  

While this first stanza contains no references to the South, its trite lyrics are typical of early nineteenth-century parlor songs. The second verse, however, does include text that links the song with the Confederacy:

I would like to change my name,
And settle down in life,
Here’s a chance for some young man,
That’s seeking for a wife;
But he must be a soldier,
A vet’ran from the wars
One who has fought for “Southern Rights,”
Beneath the Bars and Stars.  

The reference to the Confederacy and the war in this stanza transforms this piece from a sentimental parlor song to one that promoted a type of masculine identity that required Southern patriotism and military service.

Like “I Would Like to Change My Name,” many of La Hache’s Confederate songs placed expressions of Southern nationalism within sentimental texts that were typical of nineteenth-century parlor songs. These songs were not distributed as widely as his earlier pieces, both because their Southern nationalist texts would not have appealed to consumers outside of the South and because of the difficulty of reaching Northern publishers from New Orleans during the war. Therefore, nearly all the music that La Hache composed during the first year of Civil War, before New Orleans was captured by the North in 1862, was published only in the South. Most of these pieces were published in New Orleans and Augusta, Georgia by Armand Blackmar (discussed below), who was an outspoken supporter of the Confederacy.

La Hache continued to publish Confederate songs for the remainder of the war years, even though New Orleans was under Union occupation after 1862 and therefore no longer controlled by the Confederacy. Towards the end of the war, however, his songs began to turn away from overt Southern nationalism. In some cases, he published new editions of his

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25 La Hache did publish several pieces, including some with Southern Nationalist themes, through J. L. Peters of New York. These pieces were all published after 1862, and presumably during the Union occupation of New Orleans. There are no surviving details on how La Hache was able to arrange for these publications during the war. For a chronological list of works published by La Hache in the early 1860s, see Fields, 351–52.
Confederate songs with new, modified texts that placed less emphasis on Southern patriotism. In 1864, he published through Armand Blackmar a new version of “I Would Like to Change My Name” that omitted the second half of the original second stanza (quoted above) with lines that contain no references to the South or the war:

Perhaps you think I’m jesting,
And mean not what I say,
But if you think so try me,
You’ll find I’ll not say nay.26

La Hache, like other Southerners at the time, must have realized late in the war that Confederate victory was unlikely and therefore began to change his public stance towards the conflict. In addition to his songs, he also composed other works that suggest a softening of his stance on Southern patriotism. In 1864, he published a complete mass titled Mass for Peace. While the text contains no specific references to the Civil War, the connotations of his title could not have been clearer. Many Americans, both Northern and Southern, were hoping for an end to the conflict as the fourth year of the war reached its end. On 9 April 1865, La Hache organized a public sacred concert in the church of St. Therese that featured a complete performance of his Mass for Peace; later that same day, Robert E. Lee famously surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant in Virginia.27

Whether La Hache—a German native who immigrated to New Orleans in young adulthood—truly supported the Confederacy or just wrote Southern songs for financial gain is a matter for speculation. Nonetheless, the fact that the most prolific and successful composer living in New Orleans turned to writing Confederate songs, despite strong musical and commercial connections to the North, demonstrates how the musical culture of New Orleans’s American contingent was transformed during the war. For residents of the Confederacy,

27 Fields, 185.
especially those with ties to the North, it was unwise and even dangerous to oppose the Southern cause. And for composers such as La Hache, publishing Confederate sheet music proved lucrative when the Northern market that they previously relied on was closed off. Composers and sheet music publishers in New Orleans depended heavily on sales to wealthy plantation owners and their families who lived in rural areas of the state, supported the Confederacy, and were often exempt from the actual fighting—allowing them the free time to continue to make music at home despite the ongoing conflict. This last fact was also partially responsible for the success that Armand Blackmar found during the war as the South’s most prolific publisher of Confederate sheet music.

**Armand Blackmar: Southern Nationalist and Sheet Music Publisher**

Armand E. Blackmar was an unabashed supporter of the Confederacy and a sheet music publisher who worked in New Orleans beginning in the late 1850s (see Figure 5.2). During the Civil War, in partnership with his brother Henry Clay Blackmar, he published more pieces than any other music publisher in the South.\(^\text{28}\) Blackmar found success publishing Confederate sheet music during the war at his music stores in New Orleans and Augusta, Georgia, despite that after 1862 New Orleans was captured by the North and was under occupation of the Union army for the remainder of the conflict. While most of the other sheet music publishers ceased operations during the war, Blackmar continued his work by temporarily moving his center of operations to Augusta, Georgia, and from there his firm provided residents of the entire Southern region with Confederate sheet music.\(^\text{29}\) Prior to Union occupation, however, New Orleans served as the


\(^{29}\) The Augusta branch was operated by Henry Clay Blackmar, while Armand himself remained in New Orleans. Powell, 24. The New Orleans branch apparently remained operational during the war and occupation, despite Armand’s arrest and temporary imprisonment. Powell indicates that at least nineteen pieces (and probably more) with Confederate themes were published with dual New Orleans and Augusta imprints between 1862 and
1865, with an additional ninety-eight pieces published solely in Augusta, accounting for roughly one-sixth of all Confederate imprints. Powell, 29. It is unclear, however, exactly how involved the New Orleans branch was in releasing and selling these pieces, considering the crackdown on Confederate sheet music put in place by Union general Benjamin Butler, who oversaw the occupation of New Orleans. Additionally, Blackmar published a number of pieces that did not utilize Confederate themes, which perhaps helped the New Orleans branch remain afloat during occupation.
primary location for Blackmar’s Confederate sheet music publishing enterprise. In 1861, Blackmar sold a number of new songs and piano pieces heralding the beginning of the war and championing the Southern cause, including such pieces as “The Beauregard Manassas Quickstep,” “The Confederate Flag,” “Dixie War Song,” and “The Bonnie Blue Flag” (discussed below).³⁰

Unlike his contemporary Theodore von La Hache, Armand Blackmar did not slowly embrace Southern nationalism as public opinion in New Orleans changed; he was a die-hard supporter of the Confederacy from the beginning. Blackmar was born in Vermont in 1826 and moved with his family to Cleveland, Ohio ten years later. He graduated from Western Reserve College in 1845 and then relocated to Huntsville Alabama, where he made a living as a music teacher and conductor.³¹ Blackmar’s unflinching support for the Confederacy later in life is puzzling given his New England roots; nonetheless, his time in the South apparently molded his political views to reflect those of his adopted region. By 1850, Blackmar and his brother Henry had moved to Jackson, Mississippi, where they continued to work as music teachers. In 1852, Armand was hired as a Professor of Music at Centenary College, which was then located in Jackson, Louisiana, approximately ninety miles northeast of New Orleans.³² This position, which Blackmar held until 1855, would certainly qualify him as one of the first people to hold the title “Professor of Music” at a college in the United States. In 1856, Blackmar left his job at the college and opened a music store in Jackson, Mississippi, and two years later he purchased a different store in Vicksburg, Mississippi. While operating these stores Blackmar began to publish sheet music. According to one account of his life, no pieces survive from this time that list

³⁰ Powell, 19.
³¹ Ibid., 5–6.
³² Ibid., 6. Centenary College is now located in Shreveport, Louisiana.
Blackmar as the sole or primary publisher, although he did act as a subsidiary publisher to firms from both New Orleans and Northern cities. Like many other music stores throughout the country, Blackmar’s businesses at the time relied more heavily on the sale of musical instruments, and especially pianos, than the sale of sheet music.

The accepted date for Blackmar’s move to New Orleans is 1860, when he opened his first music store in September of that year on Camp Street—the section of the city that housed such stores. There is, however, evidence that Blackmar was in New Orleans as early as 1854. In December of that year, Armand Blackmar, listing himself as a “Professor of Music in Centenary College,” placed an advertisement in the \textit{Daily Picayune} offering instruction “to the citizens of New Orleans” in guitar and singing. It is not clear if Blackmar was residing in New Orleans at this time, as he was still employed at Centenary College in Jackson, Louisiana. Travel from Jackson to New Orleans along the Mississippi River via steamboat was certainly possible, but not fast enough to make frequent travel between the two cities convenient. Regardless of how Blackmar managed this arrangement, he is not known to have established permanent business ties to the Crescent City until 1860.

Blackmar’s most successful venture as a publisher in New Orleans came in 1861, shortly after he opened his music store. Earlier that year, an actor named Harry Macarthy composed a song titled “The Bonnie Blue Flag” to commemorate the state of Mississippi seceding from the Union. Macarthy had performed his song successfully in theater shows and decided to sell the rights to a publisher. He presented the song to Blackmar, who purchased the rights to it for “five

\begin{flushright}
33 Powell, 7–8.\\
34 \textit{Daily Picayune}, 19 December 1854, pg. 3, col. 1. One possible explanation for Blackmar’s temporary residence in New Orleans in 1854 was to teach music lessons during Centenary College’s winter break.
\end{flushright}
hundred dollars and a piano,” which at the time was an exorbitant amount. This price, however, proved to be a smart investment for Blackmar, as the “The Bonnie Blue Flag” became one of the most popular songs of the Confederacy. According to one source, Blackmar published nine editions of the song, with only minor changes to each edition. The text is a patriotic, militaristic call to arms for all the Southern states:

We are a band of brothers,  
And native to the soil,  
Fighting for the property  
We gain’d by honest toil;  
And when our rights were threaten’d,  
The cry rose near and far,  
Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue Flag,  
That bears a single star!  
Hurrah! Hurrah! For Southern Rights  
Hurrah! Hurrah! For the Bonnie Blue Flag,  
That bears a single Star!

This first stanza is a clear expression of Southern nationalism, and it almost immediately became one of the most popular songs amongst supporters of the Confederacy. General Benjamin Butler, the Union General who was charged with governing New Orleans during the Union occupation, outlawed singing or humming the song in the city and charged anyone caught singing it with treason. In 1862, Armand Blackmar himself was arrested, fined $500 dollars, and briefly imprisoned for his role in its publication. After his imprisonment, he temporarily relocated to Augusta, Georgia, where he opened another branch of his music business, although his New Orleans location remained in operation.

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36 Ibid., 57.
38 Abel, Singing in the New Nation, 55.
39 Powell, 21.
Paul Richard Powell, an archivist who studied Blackmar, catalogued the sheet music in Louisiana collections that bear his name as publisher. According to Powell, Blackmar produced as the primary publisher over two hundred works during the years of the Civil War, making him the most prolific publisher of new music in the Confederacy.\textsuperscript{40} Through his two locations in New Orleans and Augusta, along with a wholesaler located in Richmond, Virginia, Blackmar was able to successfully distribute his sheet music throughout the South after the region had been cut off from its previously free-flowing supply of Northern sheet music. Over the course of his career as a publisher, which lasted until his death in 1888, Blackmar published over 500 new titles.\textsuperscript{41} His financially successful years, however, were limited to those of the Confederacy. According to Powell, most of Blackmar’s business ventures after the war, including attempts at opening locations in New York and San Francisco, were unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{42} Regardless, through his efforts as a publisher of songs, Blackmar helped establish New Orleans as a capital for Confederate music.

As a publisher and a Southern nationalist, Blackmar’s life closely resembled that of the more famous New Orleans resident James D. B. De Bow. As the editor and founder of \textit{De Bow’s Review}, which was first published in New Orleans in 1846, De Bow was a staunch supporter of the South and slavery. Like Blackmar, De Bow had Northern roots, as his father was a native of New York, although De Bow himself grew up in Charleston, South Carolina. After working as a writer for the \textit{Southern Quarterly Journal} in Charleston, De Bow left for New Orleans in 1845, where the following year he founded his own commercial journal. According to one historian, both De Bow and his Review quickly achieved national renown. After 1849 he seldom had trouble soliciting articles. Many Southerners…used the Review as a forum to express their views on a variety of topics to a wide audience. De Bow did not, however, limit the Review to Southern issues or readers. “We have the broadest notions of our country,” he

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Powell, 49.
\item This figure accounts for both Confederate sheet music and generic sheet music.
\item Powell, 49.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
wrote…“We cherish Maine and Louisiana as sisters.’ Although Northerners constituted only a small fraction of his subscribers, many held his work in high regard.\textsuperscript{33}

Despite any respect that De Bow may have had from his Northern peers, he was an unflinching Southern partisan. He often published articles in support of slavery and in the years before the Civil War “emerged as a leading defender” of the institution.\textsuperscript{44} De Bow, along with Armand Blackmar and other Southern intellectuals, publishers, artists, and religious leaders, helped to transform New Orleans in the late 1850s and early 1860s from a Southern outpost of Northern culture to a stronghold of Southern nationalism in the Confederacy.

**The Legacy of Northern Culture in New Orleans**

In the three decades before the Civil War, New Orleans was one of the most diverse cities in the United States. At the beginning of this period, newcomers from the Northeast moved to the city and struggled to wrestle power from its French elite. As more and more Northerners and European immigrants began to occupy New Orleans during the 1840s, the city changed from a remote colonial outpost at the edge of the American frontier into the third-most populous city in the United States. Through this transregional migration, the Northern residents of New Orleans created a society whose cultural institutions mirrored those of Northern cities such as New York and Boston. By establishing public schools, theaters, English-language newspapers, businesses, fire departments, churches, and many other civic and social institutions, these newcomers permanently transformed public life in New Orleans. By the start of the Civil War, however, the city’s political culture had changed. Outspoken Southern nationalists such as James D. B. De Bow helped to refashion New Orleans’s reputation from a cosmopolitan port city to a center for Southern nationalism. During this time of transformation, it became dangerous for those who

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{33} Eric H. Walther, *The Fire-Eaters* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 200.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 201.
opposed slavery or supported the Union to remain in the city. Many radicals or even moderate Republicans, like Frederick F. Müller, left New Orleans and returned to the North. Others, such as composer Theodore von La Hache and the editors of the Daily Picayune, who were not outspoken about sectional politics before the late 1850s, slowly accepted or feigned support for the Southern cause.

In the years after the war, New Orleans was not able to fully resume its place as a cultural or musical center in the United States and would not again be known for its musical life until it gained a reputation as the birthplace of jazz in the early twentieth century. After the Civil War, Northern and Republican political views were met with hostility and violence in New Orleans, culturally isolating the city from the rest of the nation. Despite this detachment from the North during the Reconstruction period, public concerts of sacred music, music publication, English-language opera, public school music education, and other markers of Northern musical culture were not completely abandoned in New Orleans. John Baron, in his far-reaching study on the concert life of nineteenth-century New Orleans, documents the efforts of several musicians to revive the city’s musical offerings after the war. Further research, however, is needed to determine how closely the postbellum musical practices of New Orleans mirrored those of Northern cities, and if some of the transregional trade practices that were established in the antebellum period remained intact after the war. Furthermore, other aspects of the musical life of antebellum New Orleans remain unexamined or have not been fully studied despite a wealth of historical documentation in Louisiana archives. For example, the musical practices of both the city’s French speaking population and its German and Irish immigrant populations have yet to be

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studied in detail. Available historical evidence suggests that antebellum New Orleans was not only the site of a transregional musical-cultural exchange, but also of an international one, where musical practices from Europe, Africa, South and Central America, and the Caribbean intermingled to form a rich musical tapestry. The influence of the North on the musical life of antebellum New Orleans remains, however, an integral part of its cultural history.
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APPENDIX 1
“LO HE COMETH” FROM THE BOSTON ACADEMY’S COLLECTION OF CHORUSES
APPENDIX 2
THEODORE VON LA HACHE, “NEAR THE BANKS OF THAT LONE RIVER”
Near the banks of that lone river
Where the water lilies grows.

Breathed the fairest flower that ever
Bloomed and faded years ago.

How we met and loved and parted,
None on earth can ever know.
Nor how pure and gentle hearted
Beamed the mourn'd one years ago

Like the stream with lilies laden,
Will life's future current flow,

Till in heaven I meet the maiden,
Fondly cherished years ago,

Hearts that love like mine forget not
They're the same in weal or woe;

And that star of memory set not,
In the grave of years ago.

Webb's Sons, Pub'd & Pr.
APPENDIX 3
THEODORE VON LA HACHE, “THE FREE MARKET”
CHORUS (ad libitum)

SOPRANO:

Hurr - rah for our Southern boys, The ladies should adore them Our flag above them

ALTO:

Hurr - rah for our Southern boys, The ladies should adore them Our flag above them

TENOR:

Hurr - rah for our Southern boys, The ladies should adore them Our flag above them

BASSE:

Hurr - rah for our Southern boys, The ladies should adore them Our flag above them

PIANO:

-call molto.

flies, And Heaven is watching over them. Hur - rah, Hur - rah Hur - rah

-call.

flies, And Heaven is watching over them. Hur - rah, Hur - rah Hur - rah

-fly.

flies, And Heaven is watching over them. Hur - rah, Hur - rah Hur - rah

-call molto.

flies, And Heaven is watching over them. Hur - rah, Hur - rah Hur - rah
VITA

Warren Kimball, a native of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, received his bachelor’s degree in
church music from Louisiana College in 2008 and his master’s degree in musicology from
Louisiana State University in 2011. His thesis “Ives’s Seasonal Songs” was supervised by Brett
Boutwell. Warren has worked as a teaching assistant at LSU and served as an instructor. In 2017,
he was awarded the LSU Dissertation Year Fellowship. Warren has presented his research at
numerous national and regional conferences, including the annual meetings of the American
Musicological Society and the Society for American Music.