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I, Thomas J Kernan, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Music (Musicology).

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Sounding “The Mystic Chords of Memory”:
Musical Memorials for Abraham Lincoln, 1865–2009

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Doctor of Philosophy

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by

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ABSTRACT

Composers have memorialized Abraham Lincoln in musical works for the home, concert hall, and theater stage from his death in 1865 to, most recently, the 2009 bicentennial of his birth. They have invoked the name, biography, or character of Lincoln in compositions that address social, cultural, and political movements of their own times and places. In this study I consider the music composed and performed during Lincoln’s national funeral, Reconstruction, periods of mass immigration, the Civil Rights Movement, and the bicentennial of the president’s birth. In this music composers have portrayed Lincoln as martyr and saint, political advocate, friend to the foreigner and common man, and champion of equality. This study touches on issues of modernism and postmodernism, with specific consideration of changes in funerary and mourning rituals as well as the consequences of industrialization, commercialization, and the internet age in shaping presidential legacies. Careful attention is paid to aspects of ritual, protest, and cultural change.

I argue that composers, through their memorial songs, symphonies, and dramas, have shared in creating our historical memory of the first martyred president. Moreover, I posit that the American desire for a civic leader with recognizable moral security, to which subsequent generations have bound their causes, has led to a series of changes in the Lincoln topos itself. The ability of musical memorials to thrive in dynamic, public arts—funerals, rituals, protests, and commemorations—evinces that these compositions provide an effective means for tracing the trajectory of American historical memory over a span of 150 years. This analysis advances our understanding of the role musical culture can play in both shaping a presidential legacy, and promoting social and political causes.
To members of the U.S. Armed Forces who have perished in war
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The CCM Joseph and Frances Jones Poetker Thinking about Music Lecture Series played a critical role in my discernment of a dissertation topic. In March 2008 music theorist Steven Cahn invited James Schmidt from Boston University’s Political Science Department to lecture on a topic that the two had been discussing, “musical monuments.” I was immediately struck by this concept and have been grateful for the encouragement that both scholars have provided me since then.

Beyond the outstanding support that I have received from colleagues and faculty members, I am equally touched by the kindness that I have known from individuals whose names are too numerous for this space, but whose impact has been profound, especially my friends from the Ohio State University History Department and the clergy and laity of Saint Joseph Cathedral (Columbus, Ohio). The aphorism that the best gift a father can give his children is to love their
mother (or similarly, that the best gift a mother can give her children is to love their father) has been thoroughly demonstrated by the love that my parents, James and Ruth Kernan, have for each other, which has left an indelible mark on my heart, and it is a profound privilege for which I am eternally grateful. More recently that blessing has also been a part of my life through the tremendous love and affection that my in-laws, Paul and Vicki Peters, show each other, their daughter, and me.

My wife, Sarah, is at the center of all aspects of my life and this dissertation, too. She generously sacrificed some of her research time to help gather sources for me at the British Library and New York Public Library. Sarah has patiently listened to my ideas in their most unpolished and assuredly frustrating forms. She has also lovingly provided a volume and quality of encouragement that I can only ever hope to reciprocate. Sarah has my enduring love for approaching all of this with her characteristic grace, devotion, joy, and stubbornness.

Finally, I wish to offer a word about the dedication of this dissertation. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 occurred in the early weeks of my sophomore year at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Thus, for nearly the entire time of my undergraduate and graduate degrees, the United States has been at war—multiple wars—and a country with soldiers deployed to the far reaches of the globe. In writing a dissertation in which I regularly contemplated death, mourning, and memory, it has rarely been far from my mind that any difficulties encountered in pursuing a doctoral degree pale in comparison to the extreme sacrifices that have been made by service members and their families; so it was during the Civil War and so it is today. With hopes and prayers for the miracle of peace, but knowledge of the losses suffered by many, I gratefully dedicate this dissertation to the members of the U.S. Armed Forces members who have perished in war.
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INTRODUCTION

It is said an Eastern monarch once charged his wise men to invent him a sentence, to be ever in view, and which should be true and appropriate in all times and situations. They presented him the words: “And this, too, shall pass away.” How much it expresses! How chastening in the hour of pride! How consoling in the depths of affliction! “And this, too, shall pass away.” And yet, let us hope, it is not quite true. Let us hope, rather, that by the best cultivation of the physical world, beneath and around us, and the intellectual and moral world within us, we shall secure an individual, social, and political prosperity and happiness, whose course shall be onward and upward, and which, while the earth endures, shall not pass away.

—Abraham Lincoln, 30 September 1859
Address to the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society

We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

—Abraham Lincoln, 4 March 1861
First Inaugural Address

When read together, Abraham Lincoln’s conclusion from his Address to the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society and final sentences of his First Inaugural Address capture many of the features and factors, problems and pitfalls encountered in the contemplation of a presidential legacy. Lincoln cautioned his audiences to be patient. He reminded fellow citizens that problems—even those of significance—come and go. And with the same insight that new crises would arise, he recognized an aspect of human nature: men and women like to know that they are making a difference in their own time and place. Lincoln tempered the message, “This, too, shall pass away,” with the hope that Americans could come to know certain lasting successes. At his inauguration he instructed the nation—fractured by the secession of six states—that it should have faith, take the long view, and recognize that resolutions to some problems might take years,
perhaps lifetimes, but they would eventually come. He carefully presented his audience with a concept that is often difficult for a proud people to accept: legacies are the business of the living.

The inaugural podium was, perhaps, not the best venue for Lincoln to contemplate all of the ways in which his words and deeds, successes and failures might be understood by future Americans. The presidential campaign trail, not to mention the rough and tumble world of nineteenth-century legislatures, had already demonstrated to the sixteenth president that his life and actions were ripe for criticism and critique. Just as Lincoln could not predict how he would be remembered in subsequent generations, so too have composers been unable to anticipate the role of the Lincoln legacy beyond their lifetime. Perhaps no lyric failed more miserably in this regard than Tony Pastor’s 1863 Civil War song:

Abe Lincoln is going it with a strong hand,
But still he’s our ruler, and by him we’ll stand;
Let us hope in the end he may prove he has sense,
For he’ll be forgotten a hundred years hence.¹

One hundred and fifty years later, Lincoln is far from forgotten. Of course it is easy to mock Pastor’s lyric, knowing as we do that Lincoln’s tide turned, and by his death in 1865 even his harshest critics, such as Mary Darby—the wife of a Confederate military doctor—responded to the news of the president’s assassination with the bitter assessment, “Now he will be Saint Abe for all time, saint and martyr.”² Nevertheless, Pastor’s lyric demonstrates the value of musical works in capturing the opinions and ideas of a specific time. He was giving voice to a widely held view in those sober months ahead of the 1864 election, when battlefield victories and any possibility of reunion seemed so distant that a ballot-box loss was all but guaranteed and

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¹ Tony Pastor, “A Hundred Years Hence” [1863], Magnus Civil War Song Sheets, Binder 1, Jay Last Collection, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

Lincoln’s legacy seemed destined to be connected with having lost the Civil War and Confederate States in the process.

Examining Pastor’s lyric as a historical text reveals much about a difficult period in Lincoln’s presidency. For the musicologist, the repertoire of works for and about Lincoln begs the shift in perspective for which Richard Taruskin has advocated, changing the question from “What does it mean?” to “What has it meant?” Composers did not create the entirety of Lincoln’s legacy; rather, they contributed to the construction of it in their day. This dissertation offers a close reading and analysis of composers’ and performers’ memorializations of Lincoln from his 1865 assassination to the 2009 bicentennial celebration of his birth. It represents a musicological demonstration of psychologist C. Nathan DeWall and his co-authors’ claim that “music and culture share a powerful relationship with each other that heretofore has been left unexplored—music serves as a cultural product that documents changes in U.S. culture across time.” While musicologists may protest that they have often questioned the relationship between music and culture, this study employs music to document long-term changes in U.S. culture. Thus, I have not limited myself to a single composer, composition, genre, or even historical period. The compositions in this study span 150 years, and musical styles in both the cultivated and vernacular traditions. Lyrics matter, so do musical settings, composers’ written intentions, performance contexts, and commissions. No single factor, however, trumps any other in this scheme; to the contrary, I adjusted research methods and considerations as necessary so as to remain focused on the question “What did Lincoln mean at a specific time?” In the chapters that

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follow, composers have constructed Lincoln as martyr, crusader in the bloody-shirt politics of Reconstruction, friend to the immigrant, war-time hero, emancipator, and champion of equality for people of varying races, genders, religious affiliations, or sexual orientations. Musical compositions provide a window into American culture as the issues of the day change—one passing away, another coming to the fore.

While prior studies have examined Lincoln presentations in popular literature, the press, and visual arts, I argue that music, despite its challenges as a memorial medium, offers potent source material for tracking cultural changes over time because of its performative nature. The five chapters that follow address performativity, especially as it relates to political theater, ritual, audience engagement with a historical subject, and the building of community. While the compositions themselves remain ephemeral—sometimes performed once or twice and often never gaining a foothold in the repertoire of any genre, they are nonetheless poignant monuments that combine some form of praise for Lincoln with the advocacy of a topic, issue, or position. James Schmidt has described this type of composition as a “musical monument” or “musical memorial,” terms that I have adopted for this study.

Aaron Copland’s *A Lincoln Portrait* remains the most recognizable of the more than nine hundred compositions that comprise the Lincoln musical memorial corpus. While most of the compositions discussed in this study have seen only a handful of performances, Copland’s 1942

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orchestral ode with narrator remains the most recognizable exception. Its secure placement in the concert canon has caused it to receive more scholarly attention than any of the other works in this study. Howard Pollack offers a short list of some of the many celebrities and politicians who have served the role of narrator, voicing the sixteenth president’s words. Countless other local civic leaders, nightly news anchors, and friends of conductors have read these passages, too. *A Lincoln Portrait* is an evergreen of summer performances at parks as well as marquee events, such as the National Memorial Day Concert, which is staged annually in the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial. While it is exceptional in this regard, *A Lincoln Portrait* and the robust scholarship about it offer several considerations for the vast, little-known Lincoln repertoire.

Contemporary audiences largely fail to identify the composition’s Popular Front ideology, which Elizabeth B. Crist has detailed. Copland’s “imposed simplicity,” accessible topical content, text selections emphasizing either the communal or the struggle of the oppressed against injustice, the abundance of triadic harmonies, and use of folk tunes can be heard collectively as the hallmarks of a 1940s leftist composer. Despite Copland’s claims to the contrary and his evasive answers to Senator Joseph McCarthy’s pointed questions, he was for a long portion of his life sympathetic with leftist groups that by their ideology and activity have been identified as part of the American Communist Party and/or Popular Front. McCarthy’s claims about Copland—largely

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implied in his questions—were on the mark. Copland had been affiliated with and active in the organizations about which he was being questioned. Whether or not the inquiry was germane, appropriate, or in keeping with American political freedoms are different questions. However, that McCarthy and other members of Congress did not interrogate Copland about the content of compositions demonstrates that audiences have often heard *A Lincoln Portrait* primarily as a wartime memorial work, not a piece of political advocacy.

The way audiences hear and understand *A Lincoln Portrait* speaks, in part, to the strengths and weaknesses of music as a memorial medium. Considering the commentary of a one-time *Lincoln Portrait* narrator illustrates how the artistic element of the commemoration can serve to detract from the content it may otherwise communicate. Alan Simpson, the cocksure, no-nonsense conservative American politician, admitted to his biographer that serving as the narrator for a 1990 State of Wyoming centennial concert was a rare occasion of fear and insecurity. At no point does Simpson mention that he was concerned about uttering phrases that through Copland’s particular selection, excerption, and placement could be heard as subversive, if not pro-communist. Rather, Simpson was as nervous as at any point in his life because he was going to be speaking alongside an orchestra. A man who made his career writing, deciphering, and often brashly criticizing federal legislation was too concerned with pairing his text with “those magnificent woodwinds and violins” to offer any thoughts on the musical setting. What would he have said? Simpson likely would not have questioned it, as the piece is, after all, filled with Lincoln’s words.

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To understand *A Lincoln Portrait* with the rich perspective offered by Crist requires a degree of time, contemplation, and most importantly, additional knowledge, to which an audience hearing fourteen minutes of music might not have access. Moreover, *A Lincoln Portrait*, by its very title predisposes listeners to think they are hearing a patriotic, if not chauvinistic, composition. That Simpson and his audience did not find the performance questionable is in keeping with the little attention paid to the composition itself during the most controversial moment in its performance history. The documented case of Congressman Fred Busbey prevailing in his attempt to have *A Lincoln Portrait* pulled from the January 1953 presidential inaugural program was based not on the subversive nature of the composition, but on the political and personal affiliations of the composer.\(^{12}\) This is a valuable reminder that the benefit of score study and analysis through which music scholars can offer a reading of a composition can be rarely replicated by audience members. Such considerations grow more complicated as generations pass and Americans contribute new content to our shared cultural memory. Did Alan Simpson even know of the Busbey incident? If so, he offered no mention of it. Of course, Simpson was a twenty-two-year-old college senior at the time of the Eisenhower inauguration kerfuffle. The senator might not have recalled all of the artists’ names who received congressional subpoenas in 1953. Historical memory, as it turns out, has placed more of a focus on the man whose name is now an “-ism” than on the people he and his colleagues interrogated. *A Lincoln Portrait* remains a composition that is heard today, primarily like it is presented, as a patriotic work. Subsequent generations of performers and audiences add depth to the composition’s meaning by selecting when and where it is performed, the narrator, and musical interpretation. Thus, not only has the Lincoln legacy meant different things to different

Americans at different times, but also have the compositions that address this legacy been received differently over a period of years.

Considering the flexible nature of the Lincoln legacy, I separate any discussion of Lincoln, the historical figure, from what I term the Lincoln *topos*. This distinction between Lincoln and the Lincoln *topos* is comparable to K. M. Knittel’s distinction between Beethoven, the historical figure, and “Beethoven.” In Lincoln studies it is akin to Richard Nelson Current’s description of the division between Lincoln as a man and Lincoln as a legend. Thus, I am not trying to argue that Lincoln, the sixteenth president, supported (or opposed) the many issues to which the Lincoln *topos* has been connected in the musical compositions herein. At times I draw connections between aspects of the historical record and topics in compositions, but this is done either to elucidate issues that composers imply or to demonstrate the origins of some frequently employed elements of Lincoln lore. My effort to focus on the Lincoln *topos*, as opposed to debating the quality and quantity of evidence for Lincoln’s likely support of any nineteenth- or twentieth-century topic, should not be seen as an effort to avoid judging the validity of such claims. It is merely a matter of scope. This study addresses the ways that composers have dealt with the Lincoln *topos* in musical memorials. By considering that question “What has Lincoln meant?” and using musical works as sources for the answer, I am beginning a discussion about music’s role in shaping historical memory as well as music’s value as a medium to trace changes in memory. Further scholarship in music and other disciplines is required to address the relationships between these compositions and the historical record. Annegret Fauser’s recent

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argument for understanding *A Lincoln Portrait* specifically as a World War II composition begins a discussion in this direction. As of yet, few scholars, notably David W. Blight and Jason R. Jividen, have assessed and critiqued the quality of the connections between a given cause and the details of the historical record. These are valuable assessments, but at present, a step beyond the scope of this study.

Beyond defining “musical memorials” and the “Lincoln topos,” a third term deserves a brief explanation. “Historical memory” is more than a mere preference; it is not simply comprised of events and ideas that we excerpt from a chronicle as we would dishes from a menu. Similar to preference, however, historical memory changes over time. The notion of memory changing may at first seem odd. What is the point of remembering a person or event if only to amend those thoughts at a later time? Historical memory, as I employ the term, builds on a rich body of scholarship in memory studies and acknowledges that our recollections of people and events are often colored, enhanced, and amended by other experiences. Those experiences that

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color our memories can come from many places. For example, while American school children
may learn certain historical facts about life in the Antebellum South, they will also see and hear
about it in experiences outside of the classroom, in books, video games, films, assorted non-
fiction accounts, visual arts, conversations with others, and this list could go on a great length.
So, later in life, when questioned about their knowledge of the South, their memories of the topic
may start with that initial construction learned in school, but it will also account for many of the
other images, concepts, and stories they have seen or heard. This is a messy process, especially
since individuals may lock onto some ideas more than others, and within a community some
concepts and stories may be repeated more often than others. While many people may share
knowledge on a given topic, it is rare to find several individuals who have had such identical
experiences and exposure to sources that every piece of information they draw upon is the same.
Historical memory, therefore, is the recollection of a person or event that is shared among a
community of people, taking into account their time, place, and experiences. In this study, the
concept is illuminated in various situations, for example Americans’ memory of Lincoln as an
emancipator was particularly heightened during the Civil Rights Movement, when many artists,
scholars, and commentators discussed the long and ongoing struggle for racial equality. During

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Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century (New Haven: Yale
University Press, 2006).
waves of mass immigration, the newest American populations thought and talked about Lincoln’s rise to power from his humble birth to a poor family and childhood in a log cabin. At times of armed conflict, Americans have remembered Lincoln’s war-time leadership. No one of these perspectives ever wholly eclipses the others, but the way citizens conceptualize Lincoln and his legacy has changed over time.

Parsing out history from memory (or memory from history) is increasingly important work for both historians and musicologists. Since the internet age has provided exponentially more venues for specialists and non-specialists alike to discuss historical topics, increasingly quicker alterations in the meaning of prior events occur. As Eric Foner has pointed out, one should use caution before attempting to ascribe sinister intention to this seemingly constant rewriting of history. It is not the historical record or the sources that are changing, but the way subsequent generations are employing their reading of those sources in order to advance contemporary agendas and reconcile the reality of the world they know with existing national narratives. As this dissertation demonstrates, the use of a historic event to advance a new agenda was present as soon as Lincoln breathed his last breath and the prospect of a national funeral became imminent.

To place this dissertation amid the existing literature, I have considered two pairs of theoretical studies. The first pair, Michael Kammen’s Mystic Chords of Memory and John Bodnar’s Remaking America were responsible for bringing the topic of historical memory squarely into the study of American history. Kammen argues that notions of tradition and history in America are often invoked at times of great division and struggle. Historical memory


19 Kammen, Mystic Chords of Memory; and Bodnar, Remaking America.
is a convenient practice that provides a pathway to nostalgia. At its worst, this notion of history can lead to shifting of blame, and at its best, it can provide a platform built of prior agreements on which new discussions of social or political policy can take place. Bodnar’s thesis is similar, but he views patriotism as the singular impetus for historical memory. Just as any family or organization may communicate its history by actively recalling triumphs and forgetting weaknesses and failures, so too does Bodnar’s America. The second pair, Merrill D. Peterson’s *Lincoln in American Memory* and Barry Schwartz’s *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory*, follow on Kammen and Bodnar’s themes.20 Peterson claims that the modern image of Lincoln draws on a large collection of characteristics identified with the president in the late nineteenth century, whereas Schwartz argues that the modern Lincoln image was crafted as a patriotic outcry in the stress-filled years of the early twentieth century.

To explore Peterson’s notion of the nineteenth-century Lincoln image, I engage literature devoted to music of the Civil War, Lincoln’s funeral, and the attitudes and opinions of the citizenry during the war and Reconstruction. Kenneth A. Bernard’s study of Civil War music mentions only a few Lincoln memorial compositions.21 While Bernard provides brief details of the funeral, he stops short of exploring the musical and textual content of the funeral music. I value Bernard’s monograph for its discussion of songs and dramatic works that were popular with Lincoln and contemporary audiences. A more recent and detailed survey of similar repertoire is Stephen Cornelius’s *Music of the Civil War Era*.22 Other studies that look at portions


of this repertoire include those by Philip D. Jordan, Bruce Kelley and Mark Snell, Elise Kirk, Christian McWhirter, Frank Moore, Kenneth E. Olson, and Cheryl Taranto. In each case the author offers a history of the music and/or musicians of the period. Save Jordan, whose study is a brief and dated article, these authors did not set out to specifically examine how Lincoln has been presented.

Information on the performances involved in the funeral procession come from four studies: Harry Garlick’s *The Final Curtain*, Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt and Philip B. Kunhardt Jr.’s *Twenty Days*, John Randall Neff’s “Heroic Eminent Death,” and Victor Searcher’s *The Farewell to Lincoln*. Garlick and Neff focus primarily on the theatrical elements of the funeral (staging, choreography, production, and promotion) and do not address the music. The Kunhardts occasionally mention performances of music, but their study is primarily an iconographical examination. I find value, however, in the wet-plate photographs, sketches, and paintings that the Kunhardts have collected, since they provide information about the placement of ensembles during the funeral. Searcher also authored a history of Lincoln’s inaugural trip to Washington, and so the structure of the funeral chronicle retraces the previous trip. In trying to draw connections between the two trips, Searcher obscures the differences in size—the funeral

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procession drew larger crowds and was more elaborate than the inaugural trip. The benefit found in Searcher’s “farewell” volume is the identification of the newspaper accounts of the funeral procession.

My consideration of the Lincoln Centennial augments David W. Blight’s Race and Reunion and Gavin James Campbell’s Music and the Making of a New South.25 Campbell does not address any Lincoln memorials, but he provides a valuable discussion of the diversity of music in the post-war South and how it was used to provide divergent experiences of community. The issues of identity that Campbell considers at the local level, I expand to the national level. Blight examines neither Lincoln nor music, but his categorization of responses to the war through the early twentieth century—emancipationism, reconciliationism, and white supremacism—provide a starting place for my considerations.

Charles Hiroshi Garrett has addressed the creation of American musical identity in Struggling to Define a Nation.26 I agree with Garrett that “composers and performers draw on and manipulate musical materials to construct stories about the nation.”27 This dissertation may be considered as a response to Garrett, in that I share his same broad argument, but believe it is best demonstrated by examining how different composers engage a common topic for their own purposes and in their own ways. Comparably, in studies of musical genres, Nicholas Tawa articulated the orchestral search for national identity in The Great American Symphony.28 While


27 Ibid., 11.

he points out the importance of Lincoln in the symphonic *oeuvre* of Roy Harris, many of the other Lincoln symphonies go unmentioned.

Studies that survey music during the Civil Rights era, the 1960s Counterculture, and Vietnam War include Ben Arnold’s article “War Music and the American Composer during the Vietnam Era,” Kenton J. Clymer’s collection of Vietnam music and literature, and Marc Fisher’s analysis of listening during this period, *Something in the Air*.²⁹ Whereas Arnold discusses the cultivated composers of the war, Clymer and Fisher focus on the evocative music of the time and its relation to counterculture lifestyles. Biographies of Marian Anderson and Bob Dylan, by Allan Keiler and Sean Wilentz, respectively, similarly probe Civil Rights issues, but of particular value for this study is their treatment of the Lincoln Memorial as a performance venue.³⁰ My attention to how music at the Lincoln Memorial changed over time is most in keeping with the work of two other scholars: Brent Ashabranner, who argues that the Lincoln Memorial is a venue that citizens have consistently used to address inequality, and Christopher Alexander Thomas, who makes the case for the Lincoln Memorial’s import as a national locale for celebration, mourning, and protest.³¹

The additional information we have on people who surrounded Lincoln has contributed to another change in his identity. General Grant saw biographical treatment in his lifetime, and his presidency has remained a popular topic of scholarly inquiry. However, recent examinations of

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the life and times of Lincoln’s wife, Mary, and his assassin, John Wilkes Booth, have added to our knowledge of the president’s legacy. These other characters also provide new topics for musical consideration, and with them additional scholarship. For example, Mark Fulk and Angela Howard approach Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman’s *Assassins* by arguing that in order to find humor, audiences must become sympathetic with the assassins and accept the notion of the assassin family. This view makes the audience and the assassins united in the plight of the disenfranchised. Conversely, Raymond Knapp has argued that while the show is wholly patriotic and very much in the American theatrical tradition of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Oklahoma!*, it stands apart from this tradition because of the separation between the audience and characters. As Knapp claims, few in the audience can relate to the desire to assassinate a president.

American music scholars are exploring the fertile territory between cultural topics and our recollections thereof. Denise Von Glahn’s examination of musical connections to locations and Beth Levy’s analysis of musical constructions of American West mythology are fine examples of this strain of contemplation. What this study of Lincoln’s musical memorialization shares with those monographs is an argument that composers and performers can effectively shape public conceptions, ideas, and memories. In engaging weighty topics, such as presidential legacies, matters of war and peace, racism, sexism, and definitions of equality and marriage,


composers should be understood as contributors to the cultural dialogue. Any attempt to dismiss their views as merely that of entertainers is to misunderstand both the way that collective cultural views are formed and the way that historical memory functions. Composers and performers should neither be brushed aside as mere entertainers nor given a pass on the grounds of artistic freedom. Their contributions to the national dialogue should be engaged, contemplated, and critiqued, for in a culture increasingly geared toward sound bites and YouTube videos, it is conceivable that composers and performers’ abilities to shape public opinion outweigh the efforts of leaders of other larger, older institutions.

In 2011 the *Journal of the American Musicological Society* featured a colloquy on the state of American music studies.\(^{34}\) Two of the participants, George E. Lewis and Sherrie Tucker, questioned the ability and role of music in teaching critical social and political issues. Lewis offered a position previously argued by Edward Said: music is so devalued in the American public sphere that people assume it has little to contribute to the most important conversations of our time.\(^{35}\) Tucker, by proposing that collegiate music departments could serve as a new home for the types of political and social discussions and activities that have brought the targets of “legislators and state budget committees” to other disciplines, acknowledges that at present music programs are considered relatively safe—less critical and potent in American life.\(^{36}\) Lewis and Tucker remind us that most Americans do not actively turn to the concert stage when they


are contemplating their positions on any number of political, social, or economic issues. I argue that it is precisely because most audiences do not go to the theater or concert hall seeking topical advocacy that composers and performers are able to introduce ideas and concepts that might otherwise receive tentative, if not hostile, reception. Thus, audiences have accepted the communal imagery of *A Lincoln Portrait* in a way that they might otherwise have opposed if it had been presented as a Communist tract. The artistic and scholarly communities have often inhibited the types of discussions Lewis and Tucker seek by declaring pointed criticism of composers and their works as censorship. To examine content and encourage audiences to do the same is not a witch-hunt; it recognizes a composer’s voice and music’s power.

Agendas matter! There is a reason why composers, performers, and audiences continue to embrace Lincoln narratives. Assuredly his popularity has helped to sell sheet music, earn commissions, and fill seats, but why has he remained so popular? What seems to draw many Americans to the sixteenth president is the notion that the nation requires clear indicators that its causes and actions are good and just. We indulge in Lincoln, because his legacy has been so finely tuned that it not only highlights his best qualities, but shines as a beacon of American democratic life. Connecting with Lincoln is to adopt the moral security of his legacy as a bulwark for one’s own causes. His legacy embodies the epitome of America’s promise—both the type of American dream that allows a log-cabin boy to become president and the vision that says the bloody Civil War was well worth the cost in order to preserve the Union and ultimately free the enslaved—and so Americans employ it to say that their proposals are the next steps in building a more perfect union. If Lincoln is for us, who can be against us?

I posit that the American desire for a civic figure with recognizable moral security, to which subsequent generations bound their causes, led to a series of changes in the Lincoln *topos*. 
These musical memorials do not tell us about Lincoln, the man, but they reveal a treasury of information about American cultural change in the past 150 years. The ability of musical memorials to thrive in dramatic, public rituals—funerals, protests, and commemorations—means that these compositions provide an effective medium for sounding “the mystic chords of memory.”
CHAPTER 1

THE LINCOLN FUNERAL AND INITIAL DAYS OF MOURNING

John Sullivan Dwight filled the front page of the 29 April 1865 edition of his *Journal of Music* with five poems for the fallen president.\(^1\) The sight of poems filling the cover’s three columns provided a simple, yet striking tribute in the first edition to run after Lincoln’s death on 15 April. The subsequent four pages, however, contained articles on Beethoven editions, performances in Leipzig, and a new production of Gounod’s *Le médecin malgré lui* in London. It was not until page six that Dwight returned to Lincoln’s death.\(^2\) His limited discussion of Lincoln’s assassination, commemorations, and funeral comported with his view of the occasion as one devoid of music. Dwight summarized the reception of Lincoln’s death in Boston:

During the past fortnight there has been but one theme for all of us to think about. Music itself instinctively made pause and listened to the very voice of God in the great national bereavement which suddenly fell upon us in the midst of a great general joy and gratitude the like of which no people ever knew before.\(^3\)

Dwight described how Lincoln’s death had arrested the triumphant celebrations that had been spreading along with news of the “Rebellion’s” conclusion. The editor reflected the general sentiment as well as some of the specific language employed by newspaper editors, poets, and citizens across the country. That is, Dwight viewed Lincoln as a father for the still young country, a man of humility and strength, recipient of divine providence, and now “the Nation’s martyr.” He echoed one of the day’s most frequent commentaries, the connection between

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\(^1\) *Dwight’s Journal of Music*, 29 April 1865, 17. Dwight published a 15 April 1865 edition, but it presumably went to press prior to the news of Lincoln’s death reaching Boston. The commemorative poems included *A. L.: In Memoriam* by Transcendentalist Christopher Pearse Cranch; *Abraham Lincoln: Assassinated Good Friday, 1865* by journalist Edmund C. Stedman; *Good Friday Evening* (anonymous); *Our President* by Martha Perry Lowe; and *The Lost Chief* by newspaper editor-turned-Army commander Charles G. Halpine.

\(^2\) Ibid., 22.

\(^3\) Ibid.
Lincoln’s Good Friday assassination and Christian salvation. This coincidence further reinforced the metaphor of Lincoln as a religious figure. Campaign and wartime songs had already featured Lincoln leading the enslaved to freedom: the American South cast as the new Egypt, and Lincoln as a modern-day Moses, though the president’s Old Testament surname was adequate enough for Biblical comparisons. Composer A. Bert Tobey capitalized on this metaphor in the title of his 1862 song “Abraham’s Covenant,” a composition riddled with heavenly pleas to shield and protect Abraham and his chosen people.  

Dwight Pivoted from an emotional summary of how the president’s death was felt throughout the fragile Union and recounted the week’s musical events. The scene he presented was not only free of music, but purposefully silent:

But who could raise a voice, or lift a hand to conduct, in such an hour? Who had any ear or heart for music? Every concert was of course suspended,—nay forgotten; every theatre was closed; there was but one thing that man, woman, and child could think of; in spite of ourselves, all were religious then. We wanted to confer with one another, we sought comfort in extemporized meetings, where speech was reverent, earnest and inspired; but Silence was the only music great enough to satisfy…. We chanced once to witness the funeral of a king, and we wondered that the most musical nation on the globe could be restrained by proclamation and authority for several weeks from operas and concerts.

Dwight implied that Lincoln’s funeral passed without musical accompaniment. If watching Lincoln’s commemoration through Dwight’s eyes, readers saw people filling churches without hymns, processions without marches, and even platforms to receive the funeral train without musicians. Dwight’s account—by one of the nation’s foremost music journalists—evinces the deep divide between cultivated concert music and the vernacular musical activities of church

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5 Dwight’s Journal of Music, 29 April 1865, 22.
choirs, civic bands, and casual gatherings of amateur musicians in town squares and near the tracks where Lincoln’s train passed.6

While Dwight specifically mentioned the suspension of a Handel and Haydn Society concert in light of events, he failed to account for all of the music composed and performed in the days following Lincoln’s death. One need only turn a page further in that issue of Dwight’s Journal to find evidence of music for Lincoln’s death in an advertisement from Oliver Ditson, including the song “A Nation Weeps: Dirge on the Death of Abraham Lincoln” by J. W. Turner and the piano pieces “In Memoriam: In Honor of President Lincoln” by Dr. F. Haase, “President Lincoln’s Funeral March” by Edward Mack, and “Requiem March in Honor of President Lincoln” by W. O. Fiske.7 The answer to Dwight’s rhetorical question, “Who could raise a voice, or lift a hand to conduct, in such an hour?” was provided by many mournful Americans, whether in the privacy of their homes, their places of worship, or the public square. The concert and operatic masterworks frequently discussed in the pages of Dwight’s Journal required significant time and attention to compose, rehearse, and perform; similar spans of time would be needed to create the buildings, monuments, and statues that would eventually honor Lincoln. In the immediate aftermath of this tragedy, America’s vernacular music provided potent ways to


7 Dwight’s Journal of Music, 29 April 1865, 24; J. W. Turner, “A Nation Weeps: Dirge on the Death of Abraham Lincoln” (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1865); F. Haase, “In Memoriam: In Honor of President Lincoln” (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1865); Edward Mack, “President Lincoln’s Funeral March” (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1865); and W. O. Fiske, “Requiem March in Honor of President Lincoln” (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1865). During the period when Ditson published *Dwight’s Journal* (1858–1878), his were the only advertisements to run in the publication.
commence memorialization, which were relatively quick, accessible, and familiar. I will chart how diverse composers and performers from across the Union contributed new works and adapted or reissued existing compositions in their efforts to garner attention for their cities and publishing houses as well as their cause: the promotion of Lincoln as both martyr and savior.

Initial Mourning

Drum rolls, church bells, and minute guns were a trio of signals heard repeatedly as the news of Lincoln’s death first broke and the country observed a day of national mourning on 19 April. As Lincoln’s funeral procession made its way west, music-making accompanied all of the funeral ceremonies, save the initial private service in the East Room of the White House. Music remained a part of the early months of Lincoln commemoration, which lasted through the close of 1865. Composers offered more than one hundred memorial compositions during those first eight months. When considered by genre and performing forces, these memorials differ from what would have caught Dwight’s attention and from the concert works and operas that followed in subsequent generations. Of importance was the speed with which composers penned and published these works. The funeral and the angst-filled days that followed provided an imminent need for music. While Grant and Lee had reached the terms of surrender at Appomattox Courthouse on 9 April, small skirmishes and additional surrenders of forces continued throughout May. Troops freed from their long service had only begun the journey

home—which itself was treacherous—when they heard the news of Lincoln’s death. Those at home faced fear of further assassination attempts as reports surfaced about Lincoln’s assassin, the conspiracy against the president, and the related attempt on Secretary of State William Seward’s life. Looming large for all was concern for the fragile state of the Union. While the United States had already twice practiced the process of presidential succession, this was the first time a president had been violently removed from office.

In the days following Lincoln’s death, at local gatherings citizens discussed the event, passed resolutions and proclamations of grief, and planned their own commemorations. Press accounts of these gatherings and even those of Lincoln’s funeral train stops identify musical performances simply as dirges, marches, hymns, and laments, but few sources shed light on the specific pieces. For example, some groups took existing songs and altered stanzas or penned new ones to fit the occasion. A lyric sheet for “Shout Ye Freemen!,” a nine-stanza song with a two-line chorus, has the lone stanza about Lincoln bracketed and in an unknown hand the addition of the words “see over.” On the verso, the same hand penned a new stanza to address the president’s passing:

Here’s a tear for our Chieftain and second Washington.  
Slain by fiendish treason, but his work had been well done!  
The undying Proclamation flaming as the noonday sun.  
We’ll still go marching on ….

This contrafactum is less than artful; while it corrects a previous statement about the living president, it does not address other passages in the song that celebrate the “day of jubilee” or “the joyous hour.”

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9 The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois, is the only public collection of sources from these services (hereafter ALPL).

10 “Shout Ye Freemen!,” ca. April 1865, Lincoln Collection, ALPL.
Publishers issued new memorial lyrics as mementos with brief descriptions of the date and location of the commemoration where they were sung. “A Hymn on the Death of President Lincoln” by James Nicholson includes a publisher’s inscription that it was performed at a service on 16 April 1865, which was Easter Sunday, at Philadelphia’s Wharton Street Methodist Episcopal Church.¹¹ The lyrics on the Lincoln memorial song sheets were sung to familiar hymns, as none contained musical notation. One sheet from the 19 April national day of mourning, titled “Funeral Hymn,” contains six poetic stanzas about the martyred president, with the indication “Tune—Louvan,” an 1847 hymn by Virgil C. Taylor.¹² A four-stanza “Requiem for President Abraham Lincoln” by Richard Storrs Willis was intended to be sung to the melody of “Old [One] Hundred.”¹³ And a sheet of three “Hymns Commemorative of the Death of President Lincoln” does not specify tunes by name, but provides the meters: long (8.8.8.8), long (8.8.8.8), and short (6.6.8.6).¹⁴ These three song sheets also demonstrate the geographical scope of this practice: Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Detroit, Michigan; and Rockton, Illinois.

Performing the Funeral Procession

Selected cities on the funeral train route faced increased attention; in many cases, more of a national spotlight than they had yet known. Mary Lincoln had requested that the body of her son Willie, who had died in the White House, be exhumed and transported with his father back


¹² “Funeral Hymn,” ca. April 1865, Lincoln Collection, ALPL.

¹³ “Requiem for President Abraham Lincoln,” ca. April 1865, Lincoln Collection, ALPL.

¹⁴ “Hymns Commemorative of the Death of President Lincoln,” ca. April 1865, Lincoln Collection, ALPL. The first of the three hymns, “What Solemn Sounds the Ear Invade!,“ had also been performed at George Washington’s funeral.
to Springfield. However, Mrs. Lincoln did not make the trip herself, so much of the planning happened among the President’s cabinet with local ceremonies left to the purview of each host city. The train’s route was not finalized until the day of the White House service, 19 April. Along with the corpses, honor guard, and the corresponding region’s dignitaries, who got on and off the train at the stops in their state, the train also carried reporters for the major newspapers. The developing and industrializing cities in the Midwest used this opportunity for recognition of their residents, institutions, and ability to pay appropriate homage to the president. As much as the rail trip from Washington to Springfield provided a means of moving Lincoln’s and Willie’s bodies, it was also a moment for selected cities to exhibit their finest cultural offerings.

Many cities lobbied for stops. Ultimately, Lincoln took the same route home as he had when traveling to Washington in 1860, with the exception of Cincinnati, which was removed from the itinerary for fear that the president’s corpse would not survive the extra day needed for the southern excursion between Columbus and Indianapolis. The publication of one song demonstrates the level of planning that took place as cities prepared for a chance to host the funeral. Richard Storrs Willis, the composer of a hymn tune titled REQUIEM, which was performed on 19 April in Detroit, composed another four-stanza hymn. “Dirge: Commemorative of the Passage Home of the Remains of Abraham Lincoln” was marked for performance at the “funeral solemnity” in Detroit on 25 April. However, the closest the funeral train came to

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17 Richard Storrs Willis, “Dirge: Commemorative of the Passage Home of the Remains of Abraham Lincoln,” ca. April 1865, Lincoln Collection, ALPL.
Detroit was Cleveland. Detroit had remained a long shot, because of its northern location, though local organizers had accurately calculated an approximate arrival date, had the body of the president not remained in Washington for three extra days as the planners finalized arrangements. As it happened, on 25 April the train was still in New York State, nowhere close to Detroit.

When the funeral commenced it was the largest national commemoration of a person or event in American history. Between participants and spectators, there were anywhere from tens of thousands of attendees in cities like Washington, Albany, and Columbus, to hundreds of thousands of mourners in New York City and Chicago. Participants heard familiar hymns and often the cacophonous sound of unison drum rolls when marches or dirges were not being performed. They also experienced the new and adapted funerary compositions that would form the basis for much of the memorial music sold by publishers for performances at gatherings in homes and churches. The procession from the White House to Capitol Hill included one such work, General John G. Barnard’s “Funeral March Dedicated to the Memory of Abraham Lincoln.” Barnard was a respected military figure and something of a Renaissance man. He had succeed Robert E. Lee as Superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, studied science and engineering, but also fancied himself a writer, especially of military history. General Barnard had served on General Grant’s staff as Chief Engineer. The President’s cabinet selected Barnard as a member of Lincoln’s honor guard, to accompany his body back to Springfield. At the start of the funeral, however, his most notable involvement was the composition of this march or at least a contribution to it. After the funeral, Firth and Pond published it as a piano

\[\text{18 John G. Barnard, “Funeral March Dedicated to the Memory of Abraham Lincoln” (New York: Wm. A. Pond, 1865).}\]
piece and provided Barnard’s name on the cover, but inside listed “W. S.” as having harmonized the work. The march had been performed by the Marine Band during the ceremony and was now accessible to amateur pianists. It featured two sections, the former slow and stately and the latter a contrasting trio with descending sixteenth-note passages. To promote the composition, the publisher recounted the work’s history on the cover: “Funeral March Dedicated to the Memory of Abraham Lincoln by Bvt. Major General J. C. [sic] Barnard. Played at the obsequies of the late President of the United States by the U.S. Marine Band” (see Figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1. John G. Barnard, “Funeral March Ded. to the Memory of Abraham Lincoln,” cover.

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19 The typographical error in Barnard’s initials—a “C” in place of a “G” for his middle name, Gross—appeared in some editions of the printed music. This error has made its way into several catalogs of Lincolniana.
Whereas Barnard was a novice composer, others with experience in the music industry also wrote for the procession. For the train’s arrival in Philadelphia, James W. Porter composed “The Martyred Patriot Grand Funeral March.”\textsuperscript{20} Porter was not only a composer of instrumental music, but also had composed “Henry Clay Grand Funeral March” in 1853.\textsuperscript{21} The Lincoln composition is twice the length of Porter’s previous march, but with many similarities (save for a run of triplets featured in the Clay melody). Dotted eighth-note rhythms abound and are frequently prepared by two dramatic quarter notes. With the Civil War proving very costly for the lives of men on both sides, Porter was not the only composer to have penned funerary music prior to Lincoln’s death. For example, Septimus Winner composed “Col. Ellsworth’s Funeral March” in 1861 and then “A Nation Mourns Her Martyr’d Son” in 1865 for Lincoln.\textsuperscript{22} Similar to Barnard’s march, the only versions of Porter’s or Winner’s compositions to survive are piano transcriptions.

With nearly one-hundred thousand people participating in each of its two funeral processions, New York City hosted the second largest of the commemorations, but instead of performing new compositions, the choruses of New York started a practice that subsequent cities would replicate: the massed singing of choral music.\textsuperscript{23} On 24 April the seventy-five-member Hoboken Liederkrantz Society met the train outside of the city and processed alongside it singing

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} James W. Porter, “The Martyred Patriot Grand Funeral March” (Philadelphia: J. Marsh, 1865).
\item \textsuperscript{21} James W. Porter, “Henry Clay Grand Funeral March” (Philadelphia: J. Porter, 1853).
\item \textsuperscript{22} Septimus Winner, “Col. Ellsworth’s Funeral March” (Philadelphia: Lee & Walker, 1861); and idem, “A Nation Mourns Her Martyr’d Son” (Philadelphia: Lee & Walker, 1865).
\end{itemize}
a setting of Frederick F. Flemming’s hymn “Integer Vitae.”\textsuperscript{24} The Liederkrantz members then met with other musical clubs at the Jersey City dock and formed a choir some two hundred strong, which sang hymns as the body was transferred from train to ferry.\textsuperscript{25} The ferry was met in Manhattan with the sound of Trinity Church’s carillon playing OLD ONE HUNDREDTH. As the body was transferred from ferry to hearse, the Liederkrantz Society began singing again, this time the “Pilgrim’s Chorus” from Wagner’s \textit{Tannhäuser}.\textsuperscript{26} While these performances were something of a middle ground between the works of popular sheet music publishers and those of the Handel and Haydn Society that John Sullivan Dwight was pained to have missed, they underscore a significant aspect of memorialization—Lincoln’s appeal to specific ethnic groups.

All subsequent cities saw press reports about the size and grandeur of the New York City funeral and attempted to muster large crowds, build elaborate arches over the train tracks, and create numerous displays of flowers and banners. Chicago succeeded in presenting the largest farewell. It was also the ideal location for musical memorials, as it was home to multiple publishing houses that had adequate time to prepare compositions. H. M. Higgins, Lyon and Healy, and Root and Cady all had Lincoln musical memorials available to the public. George Frederick Root, who had already composed one of the war’s most recognizable songs, “The Battle Cry of Freedom,” appeared to have the clearest sense of the attention that a Chicago commemoration would garner. For his part, Root kept his published compositions tuneful, set within an amateur’s range, and timely, admitting in his autobiography that “only a few

\textsuperscript{24} Kunhardt and Kunhardt Jr., \textit{Twenty Days}, 158.


\textsuperscript{26} Kunhardt and Kunhardt Jr., \textit{Twenty Days}, 159–61.
compositions had an extended use and popularity, but none was entirely useless.”

Beyond his publishing activities, Root composed the music for a new work, a setting of L. M. Dawn’s poem “Farewell, Father, Friend and Guardian.” Unlike the marches that were available in piano versions for home consumption, Root prepared a SATB chorus arrangement with simple piano accompaniment (see Figure 1.2 and Example 1.1). The chorus was performed at the Chicago funeral and again for Lincoln’s internment at Springfield’s Oak Ridge Cemetery. S. Brainard’s Sons of Cleveland reissued Root’s popular musical memorial that same year.

Figure 1.2. George F. Root, “Farewell, Father, Friend and Guardian,” cover.

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27 George F. Root, The Story of a Musical Life (Cincinnati: John Church, 1891), 137.

28 George F. Root, “Farewell, Father, Friend and Guardian” (Cleveland: S. Brainard’s Sons, 1865).

The conclusion of the long journey west and Lincoln’s interment at Oak Ridge Cemetery saw sizable press coverage. The scene at Oak Ridge was highly structured. There was one very long, but orderly cortege from the Illinois State House to the cemetery. Those who wished to attend the grave-side service had arrived early and sat on the hill above the receiving chamber and slope below. As the coffin was moved from the State House to the hearse, a brass band and what the New York Times reported as “hundreds of voices” sang John Cennick’s hymn “Children
of the Heavenly King.” Then, the band of the One Hundred and Forty-Sixth Volunteer Regiment under the direction of Captain Wilbur F. Heath, who composed a dirge for this occasion, led the cortege.

When the procession arrived at the grave, there was a platform for three hundred singers and a band to the left of the entry and another for the family and invited speakers on the right. The *New York Times* reported the performance of four newly composed funeral marches, a figure repeated by Dorothy Meserve Kunhardt and Philip B. Kunhardt Jr. in their study of the funeral procession. However, the *New York Tribune*, described six musical selections at Oak Ridge: “The Dead March” from Handel’s *Saul*; Root’s “Farewell, Father, Friend and Guardian”; “To Thee, O Lord” from Mendelssohn’s *St. Paul*; two unidentified dirges; and Phineas Gurley’s “Rest, Noble Martyr!” In this format the four new works included those by Root and Gurley as well as the two unidentified dirges. In his study Kenneth A. Bernard identifies “Funeral March Composed and Dedicated to the Memory of the Pure and Noble Patriot Abraham Lincoln” by Edward Cox Davis as one of these compositions, owing to a note about the work in the files of the Lincoln National Life Foundation Museum. I concur with Bernard, but on the basis of primary evidence.

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30 Wilbur F. Heath, “Dirge,” ca. May 1865, SC676, Manuscript Collection, ALPL.

31 Kunhardt and Kunhardt Jr., *Twenty Days*, 285; and “The Burial.”


33 *New York Tribune*, 5 May 1865; and Bernard, *Lincoln and the Music of the Civil War*, 310. The “The Dead March” from Handel’s *Saul* was used at funerals throughout the war.

34 Bernard, *Lincoln and the Music of the Civil War*, plate XLIX. The Lincoln National Life Foundation Museum no longer exists. Since the time of Bernard’s research, the collection has been divided between multiple collections, libraries, and historic societies. The location of this Davis document is unknown.
Davis had composed the march as a piano piece in 1861 for the death of General Nathaniel Lyon, the first Union general to lose his life in the Civil War. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library owns a copy of one of Davis’s memos, in which he described how the composition became associated with Lincoln:

The firm of Balmer and Weber informed me that the ST. LOUIS SILVER BAND, being engaged to attend the President’s funeral at Springfield had selected my march to play on the occasion. They also asked my consent to change the title from General Lyon’s March to “LINCOLN’S FUNERAL MARCH.”

Balmer and Weber subsequently published Davis’s march as a piano piece, but under a new title. The band parts used for the funeral were never published and their whereabouts are not recorded in any collection catalog. While examining band cards for another march, which I will address below, I discovered parts for Davis’s composition on the verso. The cards were marked “Lincoln’s Funeral March by E. C. Davis, arr. by Lebrun.” On the recto was another march, “To the Memory of President Lincoln by N. Lebrun.” The two unidentified dirges in the New York Tribune story appear to be these compositions. Since Davis composed the Lyon march as a piano piece, and even after it was renamed “Lincoln’s Funeral March,” it was published only as a piano work, the lone performance in the band format would have been at Oak Ridge. Similarly, the Lebrun march was never published. Thus, the only copies of the band versions of each of these pieces exist on the band cards, leading to the conclusion that these were the actual cards used by the band at Oak Ridge.

Understanding the roles of publisher Charles Balmer and composer/arranger Nicholas Lebrun reveals how the funeral planners organized these elaborate performances. The German-

35 Edward. C. Davis, “Lincoln’s Funeral March: Composed and Dedicated to the Memory of the Pure and Noble Patriot, Abraham Lincoln,” 1865, Lincoln Collection, ALPL.

36 Nicholas Lebrun, “To the Memory of President Lincoln,” 1865, SC900, Manuscript Collection, ALPL.
born Balmer had arrived in St. Louis in 1839. Along with his publishing house, he had organized and operated multiple music venues and organizations for the local German-American community.\textsuperscript{37} He had composed music for his publishing house and used various pseudonyms, including T. van Berg, Charles Lange, Alphonse Leduc, T. Meyer, Charles Remlab, F. B. Rider, A. Schuman, August Schumann, and Henry Werner, to cater to native-born and immigrant audiences as well as to create the impression that he published a number of composers’ works. While press accounts from the funeral do not mention Balmer’s direct involvement; after the event, he is recognized in St. Louis publications as having conducted an ensemble at Lincoln’s funeral.\textsuperscript{38}

Lebrun was a French-born immigrant who had settled in St. Louis in 1842, at the age of twenty-three.\textsuperscript{39} He had received work as a music arranger and civic band leader. By 1848 he had been working regularly with St. Louis’s finest military bands and had later been asked by the German-American community to lead their Musiker Unterstuetzungs Verein, a musicians’ union. For Lincoln’s funeral the people of St. Louis had provided financial help, as well as an appropriate hearse, black bunting, and musicians, military officers, and organizers, since Springfield, lacked the supplies and personnel to host the final leg of the funeral procession. There is no record of Lebrun making the trip from St. Louis to Springfield; however, there is evidence of his participation in the Oak Ridge service. The Lincoln Presidential Library’s band cards, sixty-four in all, are in six different hands. At least one of the copyists wrote all of the text in German—likely one of Lebrun’s St. Louis colleagues. The cards exhibit slight differences in

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
the phrasing of the title and its capitalization. It appears that in order to produce the parts quickly, Balmer and Lebrun enlisted several copyists—likely members of the band. The trip by Balmer and Lebrun to help Springfield with the funeral also explains how the Davis march made it to Oak Ridge after sitting untouched in St. Louis for four years, and why it appears on the back of a card with Lebrun’s own march. Balmer and Lebrun were ideal musicians to choose repertoire, arrange parts for the band, and oversee the copying of the parts onto cards for an outdoor performance. In an odd coincidence, the hearse sent from St. Louis to Springfield was the same one used for General Lyon’s funeral. Not only did Lincoln’s burial employ Lyon’s hearse, but his funeral march, too.40

The Davis march was never again heard in the same arrangement as it had been performed by the band at Oak Ridge, and neither was the musical setting of Gurley’s “Rest, Noble Martyr!” Gurley had been Lincoln’s pastor in Washington. He had already delivered sermons at the Washington services and accompanied Lincoln’s body on the train where he apparently composed this hymn. Newspapers reprinted Gurley’s lyrics, which became one of the more popular funeral texts; however, no musical notation has ever been tied to the work. Despite press accounts that Gurley composed the work, presumably he wrote the text and had it performed to a familiar tune. Gurley’s contribution became known only for its words, Davis’s only as a solo piano work.

Other sources for music performed along the train’s route remain difficult to verify because Lincoln’s associates altered some of the documents. These post-funeral additions became one way for Lincoln’s friends to both profit from and help shape the president’s legacy.

In the case of the funeral train route, most surviving song sheets, hymnals, or manuscripts include markings of a date or location. The citizens who participated in the funeral had a sense that this was a significant event, and many inscribed dates or locations on objects, from arm bands to sheet music, or retained these items in scrapbooks. Of the undated documents is a manuscript for two hymns: “Bury the Brave Where They Fall” and “Where Can the Soul Find Rest.” The well-worn manuscript has the following note in pencil on the last page verso, “sung at funeral train in 1865—the train bearing Lincoln’s body,” followed by a list of three performers: Ellan Armington, Frank Hobbit, and May Downey.

Commemorations beyond the Train

While hundreds of thousands of Americans witnessed the spectacle of Lincoln’s funeral, most did not. Soldiers on both sides were not yet home from the lines. The residents of the South, especially those who had been fiercely loyal to the Confederacy, did not care to commemorate Lincoln, though their negative opinion of him did not extend to publicly celebrating his assassination. Rather, as Carolyn L. Harrell has argued, they confided their hatred of the man, his cause, and its results to their private journals and diaries. Whether for fear of government reprisal, disdain from those seeking reconciliation, or a sense of decency, the most anti-Lincoln factions did not mount an opposition to his lionization.

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41 Edward Davis Townsend, compiler, scrapbook of Abraham Lincoln funeral and mourning memorabilia, April 1865, Rare Books 441054, boxes 1–2, The Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

42 “Bury the Brave Where They Fall and Where Can the Soul Find Rest,” ca. 1865, Lincoln Collection, ALPL.

43 Carolyn L. Harrell, When the Bells Tolled for Lincoln: Southern Reaction to the Assassination (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), x.
The rest of the country, those who thought fondly of Lincoln, had lithographs, newspaper clippings, and musical mementos through which to remember their fallen leader. Music publishers knew how to capitalize on audience interest. The music newly composed for the funeral was, with few exceptions, quickly published and sold. Composers frequently scored texted works for solo stanzas and four-part choruses in the format of parlor and minstrel songs, while arrangers typically transcribed band marches and dirges for piano.

Just because a composer did not receive a performance of his music at the funeral procession did not prevent him from publishing a Lincoln memorial. Publishing houses from New York to San Francisco prepared Lincoln sheet music. Beyond merely expressing admiration or sorrow by penning a song, some composers sought to capitalize on public interest by offering several works. C. H. Bach, T. M. Brown, Charles W. Everest, M. B. Ladd, Edward Mack, James W. Porter, J. W. Turner, and William Willing all composed multiple Lincoln memorials during the closing months of 1865.

Composers were not the only ones to capitalize on the desire for all things Lincoln. Poets, such as Dexter Smith and Walt Whitman, returned to Lincoln multiple times in their verse. Whitman’s poetry eventually formed a core of Lincoln musical memorials in the twentieth century. In the 1860s, however, Smith provided the types of poems that such composers as E. N. Catlin, Henri Cromwell, M. Keller, Oscar Linden, and J. W. Turner preferred to set. Catlin’s setting of “Ring the Bell Softly” demonstrates an exception to the initial musical memorials. Since the text neither explicitly mentions Lincoln nor engages in topics specific to the war, it appealed to audiences in subsequent decades and even to those outside of the United States. The
British Library contains five different editions of the song published in London from 1874 to 1879.44

Publishers who were not even under immediate pressure to commission new Lincoln memorials hastily retitled existing works, such as Boston’s Oliver Ditson who reprinted the “Marche funèbre” from Gaetano Donizetti’s *Dom Sébastien* under the title “Funeral March Performed at the Funeral of Abraham Lincoln.” The sheet music offers no mention that Donizetti predeceased Lincoln by nearly two decades. If Donizetti’s march was performed during any portion of the large national funeral, then it certainly was not recorded in any of the press accounts or private sources. Ditson dropped the claim of a performance at the funeral on a second edition of this piece and retitled the work “Funeral March to the Memory of Abraham Lincoln” with a portrait of Lincoln on the cover. Donizetti’s best loved opera excerpts had also been used for an 1861 march for General McClellan and even for a Confederate song, “Child of the Regiment.”45

While the lyrics for many memorial songs included depictions of Lincoln’s character or successes of his presidency, or of the citizenry’s sorrow, some attempted to delve into biographical elements by recounting a conversation. The most common of these involved Mary Lincoln’s deathbed comments to her husband, such as Henri Cromwell’s “Oh! Speak to Me Once More” and J. W. Turner’s “Live but One Moment.” Another text that received multiple settings was William Knox’s “Mortality,” a poem widely reported during Lincoln’s lifetime as his favorite. The variants include Charles W. Everest’s “President Lincoln’s Favorite Poem: Oh!


45 Gaetano Donizetti, “General McClellan’s Grand March” (Cincinnati: A. C. Peters & Bro., 1861); and idem, “Child of the Regiment” (Macon, GA: John C. Schriner & Son, 186-).

Everest attributes the poem to Lincoln, while Sedgwick converts “mortal” to “mortals,” and punctuates the poem differently throughout. The minor discrepancies in the wording of the poem foreshadow some of the memorials in subsequent generations, when Lincoln’s speeches become compositional sources. Just as biographers debated details of Lincoln’s life, so too, did the composers who set aspects of that narrative to song.

The flurry of activity in 1865 was followed by a mere trickle of Lincoln memorials in 1866—five in all. Two additional memorials came out in 1867. The bulk of the next round of Lincoln compositions would not come for another decade; and even at that point the number of works remains small until the turn of the century. This rapid production followed by quick disinterest on the part of publishers signaled that the immediate flooding of the marketplace with Lincolniana left consumers with a glut of works from which to choose. There was deep sadness over the loss of Lincoln, but over time those feelings would change to pride and patriotism.

While musico-historical studies often consider cultivated works that survive in the performance repertoire so long as to become part of the canon, that was never a requirement for these vernacular compositions. The authors, composers, and consumers of these works appreciated the

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temporal nature of the event. The songs feature timely lyrics and sorrowful cover art because they aimed to captured a poignant moment in American life.

In Chapter 2, I consider the use of Lincoln musical memorials for the funerals of William McKinley and James A. Garfield as part of the nation’s attempt to construct a lineage for their assassinated presidents. Similarly, during Lincoln’s funeral, composers connected the fallen president to the first president, George Washington. Citizens invoked Washington through lyrics, such as the contrafactum to “Shout Ye Freemen!,” musical borrowing, including the use of Washington’s funeral hymn “What Solemn Sounds the Ear Invade!” at the Rockton commemoration, and even in titling, such as “Washington et Lincoln: Elégie.”

Along with connecting Lincoln and Washington as fathers of the nation, composers mentioned Lincoln’s nobility, strength, and perseverance. He was frequently cast as both guardian and martyr. He was not, however, presented in many of the ways that subsequent generations saw him. Composers did not set lyrics about Lincoln as “The Great Emancipator,” nor was there discussion of his humble roots and rural upbringing. Lincoln’s log-cabin childhood was likely still something of an embarrassment to many in Northern cities and not a point of pride to be touted in song. His speeches, which are regular sources for texts in the twentieth century, do not appear in the funerary music of 1865. George F. Root captures most of the essential themes in calling Lincoln a father, friend, and guardian to the Northern, white audience for whom these works were intended. Even at the moment of first memorialization, composers’ own interests and ideologies naturally prevailed. That so few of these compositions referenced Lincoln’s role in freeing slaves reminds us that this was not a primary concern of composers or their audience. Those who mentioned slavery were already established abolitionists, such as

Henry Clay Work. Abolitionism, however, was not the predominant Northern position. James M. McPherson argues that along with the North’s 1860s divisions between the Republicans and the so-called War Democrats, there were also divisions in the Republican ranks between conservatives and radicals, with Lincoln and his ilk identified best as moderates in favor of preservation of the Union and ending slavery, but willing to seek a variety of options to achieve those goals.49

Short-term Mourning, Long-term Commemoration

John Sullivan Dwight, with his focus on high art, failed to identify the immediate process of musical memorialization in the days and weeks following Lincoln’s death. His shortcoming was in recognizing the venues and genres, not the topic. Dwight understood that the death of Lincoln was important, but he did not consider the role that music had played in the funeral or at home. He was looking for large commemorations, which would come in time, but missed the many ways that vernacular music had filled the immediate void. Dwight’s day would come, when in the twentieth century, composers would pen large-scale Lincoln works for the concert hall. That simply was not the case in 1865. A similar division existed between the initial memorials produced by painters and visual artists. While portraiture of Lincoln was common in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, in the weeks and months following the assassination, it had been print makers who were the first to spring to action, as Harold Holzer and Frank J. Williams have shown.50 The scene they produced many times over, each with its own features, was Lincoln’s deathbed—an image rarely seen in modern times. Just like the musical memorials,


those deathbed prints provided an immediate means of remembering Lincoln, the martyr. Over time artists and their audiences would have less interest in viewing a hero dying and more desire in remembering him in poses worthy of his personal dignity and high office.

Twenty-five years later, Dwight had the opportunity to revise his survey of the music surrounding Lincoln’s death. He authored a chapter that addresses this period for the *History of the Handel and Haydn Society, of Boston, Massachusetts, Vol. I. From the Foundation of the Society through its Seventy-fifth Season: 1815–1890*. There he recycled most of the description from his *Journal*, but with a few telling alterations: “Lincoln is dead! This second Father of his Country has fallen by the hand of the assassin. Music held her breath and listened to the very voice of God in the great national bereavement.” Dwight continues, “Every concert was of course suspended,—nay, forgotten; every theatre was closed. Silence was the only music great enough to satisfy.” He then revised his previous prediction of utter silence, “But this mood, so deep, so wholesome, could not long remain. The grief, the gloom, had a new hope, new life in it. Art soon finds her voice again. The sacrifice has only made the meaning of the victory more clear.” In the very moments of this great tragedy of 1865, Dwight could not have understood how the nation would react and the role music would play. But with the benefits of hindsight, he reconciled his previous statements to reflect the nation’s mourning.

The act of memorialization is the prerogative of the people creating the narrative and not their subject. The existence of a legacy requires a relationship between the subject and the thoughts and ideas of a living people, but not necessarily knowledge of many details of the

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52 Ibid.

subject’s biography. Despite Lincoln’s directive, we have long forgotten the stories of many
great men and women. As interests and considerations change over time, so too, must the
presentation of the subject in order to fit the contemporary conversation, lest legacies fall victim
to the only true enemy of memory: disregard.

54 “The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did
“The President Is Dead!”¹ On a September morning in 1901, bold, block letters informed Washington Post readers that an assassin had plunged the nation into a lament that recalled similar presidential deaths in April 1865 and September 1881.² Twice in the span of thirty-six years newspapers echoed the same elegiac headlines that had marked Abraham Lincoln’s assassination. While the first fifteen presidents had served a combined seventy-two years safe from assassins’ bullets, the same did not hold true after the Emancipator’s death.³ James A. Garfield and William McKinley Jr. were two chief executives who came to the White House having survived the brutality, illness, and hardship of Civil War battlefields only to fall victim to presidential hit men at a railroad station and the Pan-American Exhibition, respectively. Both men followed Lincoln to the grave in a pattern of bi-decadal presidential deaths. In reconciling these terrible events in American history, newsmen drew connections between the lives of the


² John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln on the evening of 14 April 1865. Lincoln died in the early morning hours of 15 April. Charles Guiteau shot James A. Garfield on 2 July 1881. Of Guiteau’s two bullets, one grazed Garfield’s arm and the other lodged behind his pancreas. His physicians failed to locate the bullet in his abdomen, despite repeatedly probing his wound with unsterilized fingers, which led to the infection and complications that claimed his life eighty days later on 19 September 1881. The following morning headlines read “James Abram Garfield: The Second American President to Lay His Life Upon His Country’s Altar,” Washington Post, 20 September 1881, 2; “The Story of a Martyr: The Dead President,” Chicago Daily Tribune, 20 September 1881, 3; and “The President Dead,” New York Times, 20 September 1881, 1. Leon Czolgosz shot William McKinley Jr. twice in the abdomen on 6 September 1901. He died in the early morning hours of 14 September. The newspapers declared, “Our Great President Is Dead: Nation’s Martyr,” Los Angeles Times, 14 September 1901, 1; “Mr. McKinley Dies after a Brave Fight,” New York Times, 14 September 1901, 1; and “The President Is Dead!: William McKinley Passed Away,” Washington Post, 14 September 1901, 1.

³ Prior to Lincoln, two presidents had died in office, but of natural causes: William Henry Harrison (d. 4 April 1841) and Zachary Taylor (d. 9 July 1850). One recorded assassination attempt pre-dates those on Lincoln’s life. Richard Lawrence attempted to shoot Andrew Jackson on 30 January 1835, but the president knocked the perpetrator to the ground with his cane after both of Lawrence’s guns jammed. Jackson’s entourage apprehended the would-be assailant.
three assassinated presidents: Lincoln, Garfield, and McKinley. Those stories were soon linked by amateur historians who compiled such volumes as William Dixon Bancroft’s *McKinley, Garfield, and Lincoln: Their Lives, Deeds, and Deaths* and John Coulter’s *Our Martyr Presidents—Lincoln, Garfield, and McKinley*. And composers followed suit as the nation reprised the sepulchral ritual created for the sixteenth president.

Garfield’s and McKinley’s funerals invited performers to revive the 1865 musical memorials, compositions that had remained dormant in the intervening period. In this chapter, I begin by exploring the chasm between the funerary compositions of 1865 and the wave of commemorative works created in the closing decades of the century. Then, I consider the factors for the decline and subsequent revival of Lincoln’s musical memorialization, with particular attention paid to Garfield’s and McKinley’s funerals, the celebration of Lincoln’s hundredth birthday in 1909, and the fiftieth anniversary of the Civil War from 1911 to 1915. To conclude, I address a large shift in the presentation of Lincoln at the turn of the century. I contend that the Lincoln musical memorials composed during the closing decades of the nineteenth century perpetuated a legacy of saintliness and exceptionality, whereas those of the early twentieth century emphasized the sixteenth president’s familiarity with, and exposure to, the prosaic lives of U.S. citizens.

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May Angels Lead You into Paradise

In her monograph on death during the Civil War, Drew Gilpin Faust argues that human loss “became the most widely shared of the war’s experiences.” She views citizens’ familiarity with war deaths as the basis for the nation’s postwar imagined community. Indeed, northern and southern families knew horrific loss. Barbara A. Gannon has contextualized the situation for a twenty-first-century audience: “The per capita death toll for both sides equaled the losses experienced on September 11, 2001, every day, day in and day out, for four long years.” Such widespread death summoned intensive mourning.

Contemporary funerary practices heightened the shared sense of sacrifice through the democratization of Civil War cemeteries, such as Arlington, Gettysburg, and Marietta with their identical headstones sitting atop rows of graves, as well as the typical mourning customs in which families participated. Faust identifies this ritual of grief as one of the most significant differences between the approach to death then and now. Whereas members of contemporary society often seek premature “closure” in the aftermath of human loss, Civil War families recognized that life was dramatically altered by the deaths of loved ones. Largely Christians, these survivors sought reunion with the deceased in the safety and bliss of heaven, not on earth. It was the grace of God and the devotion and piety of the surviving relatives that could provide

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6 Ibid., 83; and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983). Faust’s “imagined community” builds on Anderson’s concept that social constructions, more than geographic or political borders, form the boundaries of shared spaces.


8 Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 166–70.

for a happy reunion when all were rejoined in celestial comfort. Should the grief-stricken forget this point, authors in the booming genre of literature about heaven offered both support and catechises on the dogma of different denominations. The otherworldly goal of reunion—the only true closure to the separation resulting from a death—required a lifetime of effort on the part of survivors. Thus, society recognized a finite period of formal mourning that was separate from long-term expressions of grief and desires for reunion. The division between these two phases provides the basis for a cultural understanding of a large volume of Lincoln musical memorials in the days, weeks, and months immediately succeeding his death as well as the cessation of works on this topic in the years that followed.

In keeping with the protocol for Victorian mourning, Lincoln funerary music was most applicable in the final months of 1865. Composers and publishers responded to the desires of a grieving nation with hymns and dirges for immediate consumption. As with the lithographers and engravers who produced Lincoln death scenes within hours of the assassination, sheet music publishers also recognized that the window for funerary works would pass quickly. While Lincoln never slipped entirely from the American consciousness, the intense burst of mourning

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10 Presumably, deceased soldiers were already in heaven. This was the benefit of their “good death,” a concept that Faust and Schantz flesh out in relationship to the Civil War. The good lives and actions of survivors were intended to secure their own worthiness for heaven. The degree to which God’s grace, one’s baptism, and subsequent good deeds were factors in the receipt of heaven differed according to each Christian denomination.


12 Pat Jalland, Death in the Victorian Family (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 210–99. Jalland describes Victorian death as a three-stage process including the funeral week, when the family transitioned their loved one from life on this earth to eternal life through the physical preparation of the body for burial, performance of final religious services, and interment. Next, a public grieving period involved the wearing of mourning clothes, limiting or eliminating attendance at festive occasions, and the reading of devotional literature and prayers. Finally, following the structured period of mourning, came life-long prayers for the deceased and long-term rituals, such as grave visits.

compositions fizzled by the end of the year. Analysis of Daniel Fish’s bibliography of Lincoln books and pamphlets published prior to 1900 mirrors the data on musical memorials from the previous chapter. Fish catalogued 693 Lincoln publications from 1848 to 1900 with verifiable dates. Of those sources, I have identified 376 from 1865. By 1866 the number of new Lincoln books and pamphlets dropped precipitously to 34, and then to 19 in 1867, 12 in 1868, and 3 in 1869. In the decade to follow, Lincoln literature amounted to a handful of new publications each year. The country had passed from concentrated public mourning to subdued long-term commemoration.

Faust’s timeline of Civil War mourning, and specifically the division between initial rituals and subsequent commemoration, provides one reason for why publishers ceased production of Lincoln memorial compositions in the late 1860s. Gary Laderman’s discussion of the changing location of death provides another reason. The Civil War produced ample corpses for the testing and development of new mortuary practices, most significantly modern embalming. Laderman argues that the new processes eventually led to the professionalization of nearly every aspect of death with which we are familiar today. The war started the nation on a path toward specialized death maintenance that proliferated in the twentieth century. For example, Americans have grown accustomed to seeing life end in a hospital, long-term care

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14 Daniel Fish, *Lincoln Literature: A Bibliographical Account of Books and Pamphlets Relating to Abraham Lincoln* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Public Library Board, 1900).

15 Additionally, Fish provides 137 sources without specific dates of publication. Since many of these are in the form of copies of funeral sermons and memorial speeches, the total number of sources originating in 1865 likely exceeds the 376 mentioned above.


facility, or hospice complete with monitoring by a medical staff. Professional preparation of the corpse follows. Funeral parlors present the deceased to his or her family and friends in a space reserved solely for that purpose. Survivors may even select from a range of counseling and support services during the grieving process. By contrast, the experience at the time of the Civil War was largely free of professional supervision and, when possible, took place in the decedent’s home. Family members and their clergy gathered to support and pray with the corpse. At the time of death, the closest female relatives had prepared the body for burial. The greeting of mourners and the hosting of wakes occurred in Christian homes. The process of comforting the survivors was accomplished through condolence letters and visits. The American home served as the common site for all rituals of death.

While Lincoln’s assassination occurred in a public setting—Ford’s Theatre—the remainder of his death followed many of the period practices: Mary and Robert, his wife and eldest son, were present at the time of his death; it occurred in a house across the street from the theatre, not a hospital; and the initial funeral occurred in the parlor of Lincoln’s home—the White House. Obviously, the large, public funeral that followed represented an anomalous experience of the death and burial ritual, but it also served as an invitation for Americans to commemorate the president in their homes, too. Models existed for how citizens could perform mourning rituals without the presence of the president’s corpse. For example, when George Washington’s family had elected to celebrate a private funeral in the patriarch’s home in 1799, mourners throughout the country mounted their own ceremonies in houses, churches, and town squares. These commemorations included prayers, the singing of hymns, and in some

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instances, even processions with empty coffins. An even more familiar experience for Americans in 1865 were battlefield graves during the war, which frequently forced families lacking a loved one’s remains to adapt their mourning rituals. In these instances, mourners retained the prayers, gatherings, and commemorations of normal circumstances even though the typical focal point of the ritual was absent. Private household mourning for Lincoln offered one such avenue for participating in the great national sadness.

For a society fluent in grieving, home parlors replicated chapels: walls with crepe-paper-rimmed portraits served as shrines, and the act of reciting a memorial poem or performing a piano dirge transformed gatherings into observances. That publishers offered the preponderance of 1865 musical memorials in arrangements for piano or piano and voice underscores that while the Lincoln funeral train provided a highly public venue for the expression of grief, the home remained the most common site of mourning at the close of the war.

The performative nature of music further explains the role of mourning’s time and place in defining the short lifespan of the 1865 Lincoln funerary compositions. The use of music for mourning required the devotion of time to sitting at a keyboard and playing a dirge. The effort needed for this commemoration separates the use of musical memorials from other artistic memorials for Lincoln. Harold Holzer has argued that Lincoln portraiture remained in American homes over the long term—not mere months, but years after the assassination. Certainly the

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20 Faust, *This Republic of Suffering*, 61–101; and David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2001), 68. Faust and Blight also address mourning for corpses that were lost, misidentified, and transferred between graves.

21 Holzer, *Lincoln Seen and Heard*, 69. Holzer explains, “Americans were still eager to see Lincoln, and so he remained a phenomenon of American iconography for months and years to come: in scenes showing him together with George Washington; holding center stage within the bosom of a presumably happy, loving family; celebrated as a liberator; and portrayed in hundreds of flattering portraits that flooded the country for the remainder of the decade [the 1860s].”
acquisition of a print or lithograph as well as the act of hanging it in a parlor or above a fireplace requires effort on the part of the mourner; however, after the purchaser completes the initial steps, the image may then serve as a passive memorial. Just because Lincoln art adorned walls for many years did not mean that those works continued to be produced. Moreover, unless the owner or his family established a daily routine for praying, talking, thinking, or meditating near that Lincoln image, then it was no longer part of ritualized mourning activities. The requirement for music to be performed provided for an inherent ritual whenever a pianist played a funeral dirge or a singer offered of a memorial hymn. The same cannot be said for an image that may have hung on a wall with little attention paid. When towns removed the black bunting that greeted Lincoln’s funeral train, home music-makers largely retired their commemorative compositions. The nation had plenty of pressing topics to address as mourning gave way to the massive challenges of governing and reconstruction. Not only was the nation rebuilding and reuniting, but the families of the many dead were also dealing with their own arrangements, less a member or more.

Missing from the narrative thus far have been the former slaves, the newly freed. Their absence reveals another crucial factor in piecing together the role of music in commemoration. David W. Blight has vigorously argued that the rapid and widespread replacement of the Civil War’s emancipation narrative—the story of the war’s eventual purpose in freeing slaves—with reconciliation and white supremacy narratives, survived as a lasting challenge through at least

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22 Harold Holzer and Frank J. Williams, “Lincoln’s Deathbed in Art and Memory: The ‘Rubber Room’ Phenomenon,” in The Lincoln Assassination: Crime and Punishment, Myth and Memory, ed. Harold Holzer, Craig L. Symonds, and Frank J. Williams (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 48–49. Holzer and Williams concede that purchasing Lincoln funeral art was a popular activity for a mere three months, ending by mid-June: “The April 29, 1865, issue of Harper’s Weekly was the first to feature advertisements for pictorial products inspired by the assassination. For the next twelve weeks, its pages were filled with offerings for medals, mourning badges, and, of course, prints. By July 22, the ads had ceased. After only three months, the vogue for assassination, deathbed, and funeral prints had not only quickly come but, by the standards of 1865, had even more quickly gone.”
the early twentieth century. The displacement of the emancipation narrative with other explanations of the war’s origins and outcomes, and thereby Lincoln’s role, underpins all of the subsequent chapters of this dissertation. Lincoln’s connection to emancipation ebbs and flows with the tide of musical memorials, with large strands of the emancipation legacy earning a robust consideration during the Civil Rights Movement. Thereafter, composers augmented and altered the emancipation legacy in the generations following bus boycotts, marches, and sit-ins.

The lack of the emancipation narrative in Lincoln compositions from late 1865 and 1866 speaks to the audience for sheet music. Countless testimonies survive of black musical commemorations of Lincoln, the Union dead, and their own freedom. On the death of Lincoln, a black preacher on St. Helena Island, South Carolina, declared, “Christ had saved them from sin, and Lincoln saved them from bondage.” As the service continued, women cried and children sang hymns. Blight has brought to light a poignant example with the 1 May 1865 Decoration Day in Charleston, South Carolina, where a chorus of black children sang “John Brown’s Body,” “The Star-Spangled Banner,” “America,” and several unidentified hymns to honor Union Soldiers’ unmarked graves behind the grandstand at a local race track. It had also been a black choir that had welcomed Lincoln to the recently captured Confederate Capitol of Richmond,

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23 Blight, Race and Reunion, 2–3; James M. McPherson, For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Chandra Manning, What this Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007). Blight details the competition between the emancipationist, reconciliationist, and white supremacist postwar views, with each fighting to gain ground in the territory of American memory from 1865 until 1915. McPherson’s, and more recently, Manning’s surveys of soldiers’ writings further support Blight’s case for the clear presence for the emancipationist narrative during the war. Both demonstrate that soldiers, even those who included other topics, such as family, liberty, governance, and ways of life in their diaries and letters, ultimately understood slavery as the primary cause.

24 Carolyn L. Harrell, When the Bells Tolled for Lincoln: Southern Reaction to the Assassination (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 57. Harrell’s account is largely based on the diary of Laura Towne, who describes of a scene of inconsolability and disbelief, when the St. Helena freedmen learned of Lincoln’s death.

Virginia, on his 4 April 1865 visit.\textsuperscript{26} One month after his second inauguration and ten days before his assassination, it had been the choir of freedmen who serenaded the sixteenth president as he had arrived on the wharf.

Both in slavery and freedom, Southern blacks were familiar with popular songs, particularly the most prevalent abolitionist lyrics, as well as patriotic odes and Christian hymns.\textsuperscript{27} However, Root and Cady and their competitors were not looking to black audiences as consumers for their sheet music. While freedmen choirs sang for Lincoln, they were the least likely to have the financial means to purchase sheet music, much less pianos.\textsuperscript{28} Moreover, while the newly freed had performed in public and private during the postwar period, these were not typically instrumentalists and vocalists trained in reading Western music notation. Though some slaves had learned to read written English, the nature of their bondage allowed few to develop these skills.\textsuperscript{29} In the postwar era, African American literacy remained an exception, thus the effectiveness of election literacy tests and the focus that the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist organizations placed on disrupting and destroying African American schools. Northern music printers had their audience, and in 1865 freedmen were not part of it.

In the context of the time and place of mourning, the close of the 1860s could not have been more unsettled. Lincoln’s death made the lives of the newly freed even more uncertain. That writers and preachers had already cast the martyred president in religious terms made


\textsuperscript{28} Holzer, \textit{Lincoln Seen and Heard}, 11. Holzer notes a similar inability on the part of African Americans to participate in purchasing prints and lithographs for their homes at this early stage in their freedom.

hymns appropriate when he was invoked in a church service or public event. To Blight’s point, it also meant that composers and publishers did not need to provide space for the emancipation narrative in their catalogues. With slaves freed, Lincoln dead, and some soldiers making their way home while others rested permanently in their battlefield graves, the United States had new agendas, and composers followed the current of political waters.

Deliver Me

Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee reached the terms of surrender on 9 April 1865 in Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia, with relative ease, but the many difficult discussions of the war’s aftermath went unspoken that afternoon. The war had provided the Union with its most significant victories since its founding: the states would remain united and the institution of slavery—which had proven financially beneficial but ethically problematic since Thomas Jefferson first wrote of the equal creation of men—was abolished.  

Citizens did not treat these successes with equal vigor. Through a hearty serving of moral relativism at the banquet of Civil War memory, a third area—the notion of soldiers’ honor—soon obtained more recognition than either Union preservation or slave emancipation. But on that April afternoon, the two generals had left Wilmer McLean’s front parlor without discussing the topics of black and white equality, citizenship, or voting, and they certainly did not speculate on how countrymen from either’s side would remember the war’s origins and outcomes.  

30 Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 43–48 and 59–64. While many authors have examined the clash between American egalitarian principles in the nation’s founding documents and the presence of slavery, Foner provides a specific explanation of how the ideological platform of Lincoln’s Republican Party addressed this conflict.

31 McLean, a grocer who had supplied the Confederacy with goods during the war, had moved to a house in Appomattox Courthouse from Manassas, Virginia. The Union Army had fired upon General P. G. T. Beauregard and other Confederate officers who were using McLean’s first home as their headquarters in the opening battle of
fighting had been important steps along the path that historians collectively term Reconstruction, but the two sides were many miles from a finish line, if something that finite even existed. As expected in a democratic republic, Grant and Lee left the work of reunion in the hands of legislators, government officials, and the citizens who had elected them. Three days after the surrender, in what would become his final public address, Lincoln described the unfinished work ahead: “By these recent successes the reinauguration of the national authority—reconstruction—which has had a large share of thought from the first, is pressed much more closely upon our attention. It is fraught with great difficulty.” 32 Noting that this work would require not only the efforts of government but also individual citizens, he charged, “We simply must begin with, and mould from, disorganized and discordant elements.” 33 His assassination later that week shifted the president’s role from Reconstruction’s protagonist to its prop—politicians and the public pulled his legacy into debates, placed it on display to gain attention, and amended it to fit any scenario. However, when composers and lyricists of the Reconstruction era invoked Lincoln, it was primarily in reference to the topics of emancipation and freedmen’s rights.

The starting point of Reconstruction policies can be situated with Lincoln issuing the Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863, proposing the ten-percent plan in December 1863, or signing the Thirteenth Amendment in February 1865, but the lion’s share of reunification came after his assassination. 34 From then until the Compromise of 1877, which ended the


33 Ibid.

34 In the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln freed all slaves who were held in states currently in rebellion. His ten-percent plan provided a quick means for rebellious states to re-enter the Union via ten percent of a state’s
contested Tilden-Hayes presidential race and with it Reconstruction, the nation experienced intense governmental turmoil.\textsuperscript{35} Along with such upheaval, it was during Reconstruction that ex-Confederates and their sympathizers founded the Ku Klux Klan. Such groups ushered in a lingering cloud of terror predicated on violence that would remain unimaginable were it not for the extensive documentation of such brutal acts.\textsuperscript{36} It was a period when politicians waved the bloody shirt of Civil War memory in order to gain support for shifting social and economic bulwarks.\textsuperscript{37} The degree to which the debates of Reconstruction dominated the life of the country cannot be overstated. In practice, sheet music publishers, who were well versed in migrating between topics of the day, simply moved from remembering Lincoln to debating Reconstruction.

The popular songs of Reconstruction evince the diversity of opinions competing in the public sphere. For example, Samuel Jordan and J. H. McNaughton contributed compositions in support of President Andrew Johnson and, in particular, his vetoes of Radical Republican legislation.\textsuperscript{38} Jordan denigrated Johnson’s Congressional opponents: “Let Sumner rant, and

\textsuperscript{35} New York Democrat Samuel J. Tilden won the popular vote in the 1876 presidential election; however, 20 of the 369 electoral votes were not initially awarded because of multiple voting disputes. The 20 votes were essential for declaring the winner, since the electoral count sat at 184 for Tilden and 165 for his Ohio Republican opponent, Rutherford B. Hayes. The election ultimately went to an electoral commission that, after political negotiating, awarded Hayes the final 20 electors. In return, the Republican-controlled government agreed to grant a variety of positions and perks to Democrats and to withdraw the remaining federal troops from Southern posts.

\textsuperscript{36} U.S. Congress, Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, 42\textsuperscript{nd} Cong., 1872. In 1871 Congress held a series of detailed hearings on Klan violence. These sessions included testimony from surviving victims and their families. The complete report that Congress released the following year provides the earliest record of atrocities.

\textsuperscript{37} Blight, Race and Reunion, 51–53; and Eric Foner and Olivia Mahoney, America’s Reconstruction: People and Politics after the Civil War, The Bloody Shirt: Terror after the Civil War (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 87. Bloody-shirt politics, as it was called, remained prevalent during Reconstruction and until the end of the century.

\textsuperscript{38} Samuel Jordan, “The Dawn of Peace” (Baltimore: Samuel [Jarden], 1866); and J. H. McNaughton, “Where Is Our Moses?” (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1866).
Stevens rage, together they must fall.” McNaughton struck a more positive tone by promoting the new president as the savior of slaves in his song “Where Is Our Moses?” The lyrics reminded freedmen that Johnson was their new deliverer, a reference to an exchange that he had had with a black audience in Nashville, Tennessee, while a vice presidential candidate in 1864. P. G. Salis equally praised Johnson by setting lyrics about the “Swinging ’Round the Circle” campaign tour of 1866; however, E. W. Locke matched this effort with a song by the same name attacking the President’s tour as the plan of a fool, drunkard, and dictator.

Johnson was not the only political figure to feel the wrath of Reconstruction lyricists. The song of unrepentant Confederate James Innes Randolph Jr. titled “O, I’m a Good Old Rebel” was facetiously, “respectfully dedicated to the Hon. Thad. Stevens.” Randolph listed Confederate criticisms of the North with the full-throated declaration:

For this “Fair land of freedom”  
I do not care at all.  
I’m glad I fit against it,  
I only wished we’d won.  
And I don’t want no pardon  
For anything I done.

The song’s protagonist proceeds from the Constitution, through the Freedmen’s Bureau and Union flag, to his dead Southern comrades, and along the path flings blistering criticism of life in postwar America. Ulysses S. Grant earned equal scorn in the racially tinged terms of “Captain Grant of the Black Marines,” a song in which the General is portrayed as singing in the first

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39 Charles Sumner led the Radicals in the Senate, and Thaddeus Stevens was his counterpart in the House of Representatives.


41 P. G. Salis and S. H. M. Byers, “Swinging ’Round the Circle” (Chicago: Lyon & Healy, 1866); and E. W. Locke, “Swing ’Round the Circle” (Boston: G. D. Russell, 1866).

42 James Innes Randolph Jr., “O, I’m a Good Old Rebel” (Baltimore: n.p., ca. 1867).
person: “I am Captain Grant of the Black Marines, the stupidest man that was ever seen.”
In this narrative song, the Grant character describes how he smokes and drinks gin on the tax-payer
dime, serves as the pet of the radical army—a reference to Congress’s Radical Republicans—and
enjoys the company of teenage girls. The lyrics were set to the tune crafted for “Captain Jinks of
the Horse Marines,” so the setting is a lilting 6/8 with a gallop pattern.

In another portion of the Reconstruction repertoire, composers focused on topical issues,
such as a song that attacked carpetbaggers for their alleged thievery: “Now we’ll get kick’d out
for bummin’, around this cotton land …. Now I’m off with spoons and plunder all in my
carpetbag.” The stinging lyrics match the cover art (see Figure 2.1). Along with employing
humor to draw attention to problems, lyricists adopted cynicism, especially when addressing the
challenge of treating men with whom you recently fought a war as your new friends and
compatriots:

    Wayward brothers, don’t despair,
    You’ll come in and take a chair,
    And we’ll all be friends and happy as of yore!
    But before you enter now,
    You must make an earnest vow
    To adore the starry banner evermore.

Beyond bruised egos and difficult reunions, Southern publishers, in particular, used
Reconstruction sheet music to raise funds for various causes. These were usually piano pieces
in popular, stylized forms, such as a waltz published for a Southern relief fund and a

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45 J. H. McNaughton, “Wayward Brothers!” (Buffalo: Penn and Remington, 1866).
46 “Relief Waltz” (Baltimore: George Willig, 1866); and Charles Young, Reconstruction Grand March
(New Orleans: A. E. Blackmar, 1868). For an example of a texted relief composition, see P. G. Anton, “A Nation’s
Orphans” (St. Louis: Rich. J. Compton, 1866).
Reconstruction march that featured poignant cover art with a septet of angel musicians performing on billowing clouds above the caption “as it should be,” while a band of fictional, beastly characters perform in a dark forest “as it is” (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.1. Alfred von Rochow and T. E. Garrett, “The Carpet Bagger,” cover.
Relief societies were not the only groups to use sheet music. Printers also produced instrumental works for the Ku Klux Klan—an organization with so many publications that it has earned its own catalog.\textsuperscript{47} The Klan’s relief compositions emphasized the type of assurance of a

\textsuperscript{47} Gustavus Dolfuss, “Ku Klux Klan or Bloody Moon Waltz” (Nashville: James A. McClure, 1868); Walter Owen, “Ku Klux Polka” (Louisville: D. P. Faulds, 1868); Walter Owen, “Ku Klux Klan Waltz” (Louisville: D. P. Faulds, 1868); and R. L. Steinbagen, “Ku Klux Klan Schottische and Mazurka” (Knoxville: n.p., [1868]). For a
genteel, refined society that the members wished to portray as their goal. For example, the
“Bloody Moon Waltz” features a slow introduction with a series of held chords and graceful
arpeggios in 6/8 followed by a delicate F-major waltz with eight-measure strains (see Example
2.1). Even the composers’ pseudonyms were intended to make specific allusions, such as
Gustavus Dolfuss, a likely play on the seventeenth-century Gustavus Adolphus, of Thirty Years’
War fame.


Henry Clay Work, an abolitionist composer, provided Lincoln with a rare mention in his
song “Andy Veto,” a condemnation of President Johnson as an impediment to the Radical

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detailed catalog of Klan sheet music, see Danny O. Crew, Ku Klux Klan Sheet Music: An Illustrated Catalog of
Republicans’ Reconstruction plan.⁴⁸ Work employed Lincoln in five previous songs on the topic of slave emancipation, but “Andy Veto” remains Work’s only postwar mention of Lincoln.⁴⁹ In it, he describes the ongoing battle for the memory of the emancipation narrative:

Andy Veto never slept a wink last night  
Darkeys, he’s your Moses!  
Andy had to take an extra drink last night  
For, darkeys, he’s your Moses!  
There was one who led you thro’ the sea, you know  
He who paid his life, and left you free, you know  
But Andy V. receipts the bill, so he, you know  
Why, darkeys, he’s your Moses!

With phrases about the one who “led them thro’ the seas” and “paid his life, and left you free,” Work reminded everyone of Lincoln’s efforts and, by contrast, Johnson’s idleness. Along with Johnson’s claim to be the freedmen’s new Moses, the press roundly condemned the seventeenth president for such brash statements as those in which he compared himself to Jesus Christ, because of his willingness to forgive those who persecuted him.⁵⁰

Another of the few Lincoln Reconstruction compositions was the anonymous “Lament for Lincoln” published in an 1869 edition of Henry De Marsan’s New Comic and Sentimental Singer’s Journal:

White folks listen to the singing,  
Of the negro once a slave,  
Now made free by Father Abey,  
Who is resting in his grave.  
Of our much despised nation,  
Tongue could speak but mind was mute,  
Man denied us education,

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⁴⁹ “Grandmother Told Me So” (1861); “Kingdom Coming” (1862); “Uncle Joe’s ‘Hail Columbia!’” (1862); “Washington and Lincoln” (1864); and “‘Tis Finished! Or Sing Hallelujah!” (1865).

⁵⁰ “The Tour,” New York Herald, 1 September 1866; “The Tour,” New York Herald, 3 September 1866; and “Address by Wendell Phillips,” New York Times, 26 October 1866. For the Phillips address, the Times elected to reprint the entire speech, “Reject the Amendment, Depose the President,” which was the abolitionist’s strongest condemnations of Johnson and his policies.
And then classed us with the brute.

Oh! Sadly now, in silent sorrow,
Shed the bitter tear with me,
O’er the kindly hearted Lincoln,
Who has set the negro free.

Say are we not fellow-creatures?
Colors may be different; well,
’Tis not color, ’tis not features
That the inward heart can tell.
Brother man had long been cruel,
To the skin of dusky hue,
But gratitude is now the jewel
Unto Lincoln’s memory due.51

This is the most reverence for Lincoln’s work in freeing slaves found in a Reconstruction song.

Sam Dennison has argued that it is an example of the association created between the memory of Lincoln and “the cause of fairness in black-white relationships.”52 However, he misreads the impetus for such a song as an attempt by Radical Republicans to connect Lincoln to black freedom, despite the late president’s negative views on the topic.53 The notion that Lincoln held unchanging views about slavery is one that David Herbert Donald, among others, has soundly dispatched.54 Drawing on a variety of speeches, writings, and policies, Donald has argued that Lincoln was not only willing and able to change his opinions on important topics, but also that his views on slavery, in particular, demonstrates growth throughout his life. Eric Foner has expanded this argument into a book-length study on Lincoln’s changing view of slavery.55

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53 Ibid.
“Lament for Lincoln” is not a post-mortem facelift for Lincoln’s racist views, it articulates the regret that one who had fought so vigorously for slave freedom was deceased at the time when he could have helped provide freedmen with an education and protection from violence.

Henry Clay Work and the anonymous composer of “Lament for Lincoln” launched a weak offensive in the cause of Civil War memory. They advanced a single squad on the side of remembering Lincoln’s work as an emancipator, while advocates of reconciliation countered with brigades of composers and lyricists trumpeting stories of the Lost Cause—a mythology predicated on Confederate soldiers having fought honorably despite facing overwhelming Union forces. The composers of these songs avoided Lincoln and Confederate President Jefferson Davis, and instead played up the similarities between Northern and Southern soldier honor. Charlie L. Ward, the ostensible balladeer of the Lost Cause, created songs that highlighted Confederate valor. Singing of the Confederate battle flag, he wrote, “We fought bravely to uphold it, but valor was in vain,” which is echoed in the statement, “We fought you hard and long, now overpowered stand,” from his reunion ode “Why Can We Not Be Brothers?” As a matter of rhetoric, Lost Cause lyricists stepped over the topic of the war’s causes to reach a plateau on which intention was muted and battlefield valor was instead mutually honored. Ward and his ilk mended musical fences by composing musical settings reminiscent of battle songs. With marches and anthems, they fought a war on behalf of reconciliation.

56 Gaines Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy: Defeat, the Lost Cause, and the Emergence of the New South, 1865–1913 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987); Gary W. Gallagher, The Confederate War (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Charles Reagan Wilson, Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865–1920 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1980). Lost Cause ideology is a vast subject, and so I am considering only the most widely held components, but am not excluding other factors that some could argue also appear in these compositions.

57 Charlie L. Ward and Clarence Prentice, “We Know That We Were Rebels, or Why Can We Not Be Brothers” (Louisville: D. P. Faulds, 1865); Charlie L. Ward, “The Conquered Flag” (Louisville: D. P. Faulds, 1866); Ward and Caroline A. Rutledge Ball, “The Faded Gray Jacket, or Fold It Up Carefully” (Louisville: D. P. Faulds, 1866); and Ward, “Fading, Still Fading” (Washington, DC: n.p., 1869).
One song captures the byzantine nature of promoting old, new, and lost causes. Charles Halpine, an Irish immigrant, was a journalist by trade. He earned positions at several American newspapers during the 1850s. Politically, he—like most Irish immigrants of the time—was a Northern Democrat and therefore opposed to the war. When the war came, however, Halpine joined the Union Army, and by the time of the New York City Draft Riots in the July 1863, the army solicited his help to sway Irish support for the war. Democratic politicians and newspapers had galvanized poor Irish immigrant opposition to the new conscription law, which was necessary to keep the Union Army staffed. These Irish immigrants frequently found themselves at odds with Northern free blacks. They neither wished to fight in an army that included black soldiers nor recognized the benefit in fighting to free slaves who they feared would move north and occupy the low-wage jobs that remained their best opportunities. Halpine, the Irish, Democrat, and Unionist soldier—by now an assistant adjutant general—responded as he knew best and created a fictional character, Private Miles O’Reilly. First- and third-person accounts of O’Reilly ran in newspapers, and garnered sympathy and support for the cause of Irish soldiers in the war. The O’Reilly character, who was often either mentioned in Halpine’s songs or was listed as the song’s lyricist, understood Irish motivation. Since the audience for these compositions did not recognize the fictional character, Halpine could carefully craft messages to support his goals. One of the most popular O’Reilly wartime songs, “Sambo’s Right to Be Kilt,” employed Irish-American dialect in a concise, racial argument: the Irish

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60 Ibid.
should support the inclusion of black soldiers in the military, because it is better that the black man spill blood for his freedom than to have that sacrifice coming from only the immigrant community (see Example 2.2).  


Halpine had done his part to draw support from his fellow Irish to enter the war themselves and support the use of black regiments. Through the O’Reilly stories and songs, Halpine remained true to his Union allegiances, ethnic background, and race. When the war was over, however, he used O’Reilly for reconciliation. In 1866 he again strove to bring together

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different sides, but instead of the Irish American and African American communities, it was the North and South. O’Reilly’s lyrics, set by William Ketchum, avoided blaming either side with specific crimes or even misgivings; rather, they committed “errors on both sides.” Halpine assigned guilt to the British for being “false to both [North and South] alike,” and to famine and drought, for causing Southern suffering. Stanza after stanza reminded soldiers of their mutual valor on the battlefield and their brotherhood that not only survived the war, but also had been renewed and reinvigorated in the shared experience of battle. The narrator sings about “the men who were beaten, but fought so well” and describes those who “met in volleying lines” and “made such a gallant fight.” Emphasizing the goal of reunion, Halpine declared, “Brothers we were in the glorious past, and brothers again we must be at last!” He went still further in writing the finest Lost Cause musical apologia of the period:

Again, like two parted friends,
With our quarrel fought out, the hatred ends:
And none more welcome this day
Than the Boys in Blue and the Boys in Gray,
Who fought for the North and the South.

Halpine, a Union Army officer who had told his fellow Irish-Americans to embrace black soldiers for the benefit found in their shedding blood, revealed that he remained a great distance from Lincoln’s position in the Second Inaugural Address:

Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman’s 250 years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said “the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”

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Halpine was not eager to pass judgment on those who fought to sustain what Lincoln proclaimed a national sin. To the contrary, he promoted an argument that allowed all soldiers to walk away from the conflict with equal glory, regardless of their military triumph or defeat. They were all victors of battlefield honor. Any “hatred” that they felt in the “quarrel” had little to do with the war’s causes or consequents. The layers of conflict within Halpine’s oeuvre run still deeper, when we recall that his Lincoln lament was one of four poems mourning the president that appeared on the cover of Dwight’s Journal in April 1865. War memory changed people and narratives quickly, and the world that Halpine saw in 1865 differed from the one he experienced in 1866—equally honorable soldiers, not Lincoln, occupied the latter.

Lincoln was as equally ignored in live performances as he was in sheet music. One might expect to find tributes to Lincoln in Patrick S. Gilmore’s monumental Peace Jubilee of 1869. Gilmore, another Irish immigrant, had settled in Boston in 1849, and before the war, had had a hand in many avenues of American musical life from publication and promotion, to the minstrel theater, and eventually to the area where he would leave his greatest legacy, the development of an American wind band tradition. After having led several bands, Gilmore had founded his own in 1858. At the outset of the war, he and his ensemble had accompanied the Twenty-fourth Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment and in this capacity had provided soldiers with a rich variety of camp entertainment.\footnote{Lawrence W. Levine, \textit{Highbrow / Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America} (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 99. Levine quotes a soldier from the Twenty-fourth Regiment as writing, “I don’t know what we should have done without our band. Every night about sun down [bandmaster Patrick S.] Gilmore gives us a splendid concert, playing selections from the operas and some very pretty marches, quicksteps, waltzes and the like.”} Gilmore’s band had served in this capacity until August 1862, when many regimental ensembles had been mustered out of the army in order to focus supplies on
fighting troops.\textsuperscript{65} Even outside of service, Gilmore had remained familiar with the war, the pain it was causing, and the experiences of his countrymen. In 1864 General Nathaniel P. Banks had invited Gilmore to serve as chief bandmaster of Union-held New Orleans. Here he had gained a clear view of the work required to rebuild and reunite a whole section of the nation.\textsuperscript{66} By the end of the war, Gilmore had been sensitive to the deep wounds that the conflict left, but his entrepreneurial spirit remained undiminished. Such an understanding of the national mood and an ability to capitalize on it suited Gilmore well, since his business ventures—taking bands on tour—required having audiences interested in spending leisure time enjoying music. Below, I will explore the mixed interests of industry and the desire for reconciliation; in this realm, Gilmore provides an early example of someone eager for reunion, but for reasons other than those supporting Lost Cause ideology.

Gilmore claimed that his idea for a national musical event to promote reunion had come as early as 1867.\textsuperscript{67} Two years later, when he mounted the National Peace Jubilee in Boston, it was the recently inaugurated President Grant who was the obvious choice for praise and recognition. Lincoln had been surpassed by other political figures not only in sheet music, but also in newspaper headlines and national discussions. Pundits, at least those favorable to Republicans, touted Grant’s victory in the 1868 presidential election as a permanent victory over the recent conflict.\textsuperscript{68} If Lincoln’s election had driven Southerners out of the Union, then Grant’s election would welcome them back. Grant provided the national imagination with a model of the

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
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\bibitem{Gilmore} Patrick S. Gilmore, \textit{History of the National Peace Jubilee and Great Musical Festival} (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1871), 2.
\bibitem{Blight} Blight, \textit{Race and Reunion}, 105.
\end{thebibliography}
conciliation possible among honorable soldiers. It was an illusory use of the respectful surrender of Lee to Grant, complete with Grant’s favorable terms, but this time staged in the theatre of politics, not war. The nation would learn only in the coming years of Grant’s significant shortcomings in governance, but as a token statesman, he was exactly what the Peace Jubilee needed: someone who represented unity, the Union, and the nation’s future, without rekindling a debate over the war’s actual causes.

Gilmore’s five-day program stared into the future—at least for those seeking reconciliation—while glancing back to the past for comfort. Western art music oratorios and choruses as well as small ensemble pieces and solo works filled the jubilee programs. Gilmore selected compositions devoid of contemporary U.S. political messages; instead, he programmed compositions by Felix Mendelssohn and George Frideric Handel. Gilmore’s series of concerts returned American life to antebellum normalcy: bands and choirs sang the works of European masters instead of funeral laments and war songs. When spectacle was necessary, Gilmore grabbed attention by having local firemen join the combined forces to perform the anvil chorus from Verdi’s *Il trovatore.* The conclusion of Mendelssohn’s Second Symphony, the “Lobgesang,” served as the Peace Jubilee’s finale. It was a massive and triumphant finish with lush B-flat-major chords likely doubled at octaves above and below by the expanded ensemble and a Biblical text emphasizing unity and thanks to God:

> Ye nations, offer to the Lord glory and might.
> Ye monarchs, offer to the Lord glory and might.
> Thou heaven, offer to the Lord glory and might.
> The whole earth, offer to the Lord glory and might.
> O give thanks to the Lord, praise him, all ye people, and ever praise His Holy Name.
> Sing ye the Lord, and ever praise His Holy Name.
> All that has life and breath, sing to the Lord.

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This finale did not reconcile Blue or Gray; rather it provided a nod to John Sullivan Dwight and those in the Boston musical community who had been instrumental in the Jubilee’s success. The Handel and Haydn Society had performed the “Lobgesang” for two other war-time occasions, the March 1862 celebration of the fall of Fort Henry and Fort Donelson to Union troops, and a January 1863 performance in honor of the Emancipation Proclamation.\textsuperscript{70} The final chorus was so popular in concert halls that Oliver Ditson published a version with the English translation known by American audiences of the time.\textsuperscript{71}

For Grant’s part he received a formal welcome and reception followed by a full military review, which were scheduled on the second day of the event. Gilmore marked the president’s attendance with military pomp and pageantry, and employed his portion of the event as a symbol of national continuity. Gilmore caught the direction of the prevailing political winds:

The excitement created by the impeachment trial of President Johnson had scarcely died away when the Presidential campaign of 1868 began. From the moment of his nomination it was evident that General Grant would be called to the high office so sadly made vacant by the tragic death of Lincoln; but his popularity only made the contest the more exciting, the enthusiasm of the contestants increasing up to the last moment of the canvass.\textsuperscript{72}

Grant had become the new standard bearer. Honoring Lincoln directly could have reopened wounds, but fêting Grant provided a means to recall the past and his political lineage without creating complications.

Political tides changed quickly in the tumultuous years of Reconstruction. By 1872 some citizens had set aside the hope of Grant’s election four years earlier. The types of receptions that greeted him after his first inauguration, such as the one at the Peace Jubilee, were replaced with

\textsuperscript{70} Sablosky, \textit{What They Heard}, 52; and Dwight’s Journal of Music, 27 May 1865, 39.

\textsuperscript{71} Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, \textit{Hymn of Praise (Lobgesang): A Cantata} (Boston: Oliver Ditson, [18--]).

\textsuperscript{72} Gilmore, \textit{History of the National Peace Jubilee and Great Musical Festival}, 22.
near constant claims of political graft, cronyism, and corruption in his administration. Horace Greeley, the vocal editor of the *New York Tribune*, had supported Grant as a conciliatory figure in the 1868 election, but by 1872 the newspaper editor directly challenged Grant as the nominee of the Liberal Republican and Democratic parties. Greeley’s complex and shifting political positions are useful in considering the incentives that an entrepreneurial concert organizer, such as Gilmore, experienced in promoting national reconciliation.

In the early months of the Civil War, Greeley had criticized Lincoln for not pursuing a more aggressive offensive against the Confederacy and not freeing all slaves immediately—Lincoln’s approach had been too conservative and incremental for the editor.\(^73\) Greeley had grown more complimentary toward Lincoln after the president issued the Emancipation Proclamation. An even more unexpected swing in Greeley’s views occurred after the war: in 1865 he had called for Jefferson Davis to be tried for treason, but by 1867 he had joined abolitionist Gerrit Smith and business tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt to post bail for the former Confederate President.\(^74\) This was not a quiet act of long-distance diplomacy in an attempt to resolve the looming legal and political problems surrounding what the nation should do with Davis; Greeley traveled to Richmond to post the bail himself and while there he delivered speeches on the topic of reconciliation.\(^75\) Why would a man so staunchly opposed to slavery and the Confederacy suddenly put both his money and reputation on the line to free Davis? Was Greeley not participating with the same kindness toward an enemy for which he had chided Lincoln?


Greeley was not simply an abolitionist turncoat. The changes in his opinions on how to handle Davis’s imprisonment, the South, and Reconstruction remain some of the most difficult chapters in Greeley biography. The publisher advocated a path for rebuilding the nation that avoided the clear divisions resulting from the examination of moral rights and wrongs. He had often spoken out on the problem of slavery while also aiming to maintain peace. Vanderbilt, other businessmen, bankers, merchants, music publishers, and even conductors like Gilmore, readily embraced Greeley’s inclination toward keeping the peace and promoting moderation, even if it meant avoiding what seem like the clearest of moral judgments. In their view, the nation required tremendous citizen energy and productivity in order to rebuild and regain industrial progress. Rather than let Americans wallow in the pain of the war’s aftermath, debate the conflict’s causes, or contemplate which path to take; much of the business community advocated for the first Transcontinental Railroad, Montana gold rush, and Southern port cities. Reconciling the country, finding quick fixes, and returning citizens to their normal lives was by no means new. Congresses and presidents had crafted a litany of pre-war slavery compromises dating back to the Constitutional Convention, all aimed at avoiding the moral question and instead asking how to keep the country fiscally strong. Time and again legislators refocused the debate on how to allow the sides to coexist. An entire generation of legislators had gained prominence based on their ability to craft intricate and fragile agreements that sustained American life through the addition of new states and territories without clearly delving into a world of decisiveness on the topic of slavery. Thus, the compromises of Greeley, Gilmore, and

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76 Snay, Horace Greeley, 152 and 159–61. Most recently, Mitchell Snay has addressed the question of Greeley’s seeming contradictions: “How can the peace-seeking Greeley be reconciled with the Radical sympathizer Greeley who pushed Lincoln on emancipation and supported the Radical approach to Reconstruction?” Snay answers by focusing on Greeley’s notion of “Universal Amnesty [for former Confederates] and Impartial Suffrage [for freedmen].”
others who had seemingly known the evils of slavery, seen the hardship of war, and still embraced reconciliation, may at first blush seem contradictory, but they were also in consort with a national tradition, and therefore a shared memory that predated the war, Lincoln, and Republican politics for that matter. In this instance, freedmen suffered considerably when the cause of reconciliation continued to push the war’s memory away from African Americans’ role in the nation’s future. Lincoln had provided great clarity on the moral question in the portion of the Second Inaugural cited above. In the 1870s, however, Lincoln and questions about the meaning of the war were set aside.

While memories of the war existed, there remained distinctions. The reconciliation view differed from that of the Lost Cause. Gilmore, for example, did not need to salvage honor for Confederate soldiers. Rather, his reconciliation was an attempt to keep the country productive and unified. Alternatively, Oliver Ditson printed Northern battle hymns, Southern anthems, postwar reunion compositions, songs lamenting the loss of slavery, and those that decried the peculiar institution. In a world inhabited by composers, performers, and publishers, much could be gained by embracing a diverse audience either in their assorted camps or as a reunited national caucus. In one sense the story of all groups was one of deliverance. Slaves achieved deliverance from their bondage through the war, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Thirteenth Amendment. Soldiers found deliverance from the tragedy of the battlefield in Blue and Gray reunions. Southern society snatched deliverance from the jaws of defeat by explaining their loss as inevitable. Businesses sought deliverance from the economic upheavals of the time by returning the country to stability. And through a reductive process, Lincoln musical memorialization received a lone respite in the past century and a half following his death.
If a flickering candle kept light on the altar of Lincoln musical memorialization, it was in the form of compositions that celebrated the growing number of commemorative places named for the late president. One impetus for associating locales with Lincoln came in February 1874, when citizens reflected on what would have been his sixty-fifth birthday. Unlike later anniversaries of Lincoln’s birth and the Civil War, the 1874 commemoration was neither nationally organized nor widely celebrated. It did, however, provide reason for a few Lincoln-based compositions. James W. Porter, a composer who had offered two of the 1865 funerary compositions, completed the *Lincoln Medley Quadrille* during the anniversary year.  

A piano solo with five figures or movements drawn from the antebellum cotillion tradition, it includes a 6/8 meter “plain” figure, which opens the dance, followed by a polka, schottische, mazurka, and waltz. The work remained popular during the coming years, and in 1881 J. W. Pepper published an Ernest C. Walston arrangement for dance orchestra. This publication included a piano reduction, orchestral parts, and prose instructions of the dance steps required for each of the quadrille’s five figures. The following year, Septimus Winner, another of the Lincoln funerary music composers, offered his own arrangement of Porter’s quadrille and included it in his *Dance Folio*, a collection of popular pieces that could be performed on piano or organ for gatherings and parties. Montgomery Ward & Co. sold this edition of *Winner’s Dance Folio* for more than

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a decade. In 1895 it still received a full-page advertisement with mention of the Lincoln composition in the company’s spring and summer catalogue.  

Less successful in terms of the number of reprints and editions were Mrs. A. H. Whitney’s “Lincoln Boys March,” a piano solo dedicated to George W. Schock, the principal of the Lincoln Boys’ Grammar School in Philadelphia, and Charles Breytspraak’s “Lincoln Park March,” which celebrated the Chicago park that the city had renamed for Lincoln in the wake of his assassination. A publisher’s note on “Lincoln Park March” mentions that it had been performed by Hans Balatka’s orchestra; however, if one of Balatka’s Chicago-based ensembles included the composition in a concert program, the instrumental parts have not survived. The only extant copy is a solo piano version published during Lincoln’s sixty-fifth birthday year by John Molter. It features an opening fanfare, then two sections with abrupt changes in dynamics, followed by a trio. Beyond the possible connection to Balatka’s orchestra, Breytspraak’s march became the first of multiple attempts by composers to write works for the park. In 1877 when the city added a horticultural conservatory to Lincoln Park, George Schleiffarth composed “Lincoln Pavilion Souvenir Polka.” Then, Sebastian Simonsen and Henry Wannemacher each offered his own “Lincoln Park March” in 1879 and 1895, respectively.

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81 Mark Clague, “Building the American Symphony Orchestra: The Nineteenth-Century Roots of a Twenty-First-Century Musical Institution” in American Orchestras in the Nineteenth Century, ed. John Spitzer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 35–39; and James Deaville, “Critic and Conductor in 1860s Chicago: George P. Upton, Hans Balatka, and Cultural Capitalism” in American Orchestras in the Nineteenth Century, ed. John Spitzer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 178–79. The chronology of Balatka’s ensembles evident through the dates identified by Clague and Deaville make it unlikely that the conductor was even in Chicago at the time this work was composed and published. Balatka appears to have been working in St. Louis and Milwaukee during these years, and the publisher likely added his name to the Lincoln sheet music merely for promotional purposes.

82 George Schleiffarth, “Lincoln Pavilion Souvenir Polka” (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1877).

Beyond Lincoln birthdays and Civil War anniversaries, which continued to grow more popular with time, annual events in African American communities also included musical memorializations of the sixteenth president. Freedmen were faithful custodians of Lincoln memory, and because of their years in bondage, were eager to celebrate emancipation. African American Southerners, in particular, created and maintained rituals and ceremonies for Decoration Day and Juneteenth or Emancipation Day, which provided an avenue for integrating the narrative of emancipation with praise and gratitude for those who sacrificed their lives in the war.\(^{84}\) However, the two events and musical works associated with each developed in different directions. Along with the Decoration Day ceremony in Charleston, South Carolina, mentioned above, many towns and cities in both the North and South began to honor fallen soldiers by processing to graves, laying flowers upon headstones, reading passages from scripture, singing, and making speeches.\(^{85}\) While twentieth-century composers, notably Charles Ives, drew on these events for the topics of new compositions, the people creating the early rituals were inclined to select familiar hymns, presumably for both their ease in communal singing and appropriateness for the solemn context. The use of hymns was also in keeping with an understanding of freedmen’s financial resources and training in reading Western music notation.

Both Blight and Gannon have argued that the scenes of Decoration Day allowed freedmen to remind white populations of slavery’s role in the Civil War, but over time the national focus for these events shifted to remembering the lives lost in conflict, regardless of

\(^{84}\) While “Decoration Day” was the name used by the earliest participants, the term “Memorial Day” also circulated in the late nineteenth century. The latter was retained by the U.S. Government when it made the day a federal holiday in 1967.

uniform. As such, it became fertile ground for the stories of North/South reconciliation. Decoration Days were held in cities and towns through the North and South, and by the 1880s musical works supported the view offered by Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., who in addressing a New Hampshire post of the Grand Army of the Republic for Decoration Day 1884, encouraged all to remember the soldiers, but not to judge their actions. The publishing house of White, Smith & Co. advertised an entire list of annual “Hymns for Decoration Day,” all of which embraced this theme of a reunion built on the sacrifices of men in both blue and gray.

By contrast, Emancipation Day remained an event largely isolated to freedmen communities. It was not adopted nationally, and therefore the cultural products from its rituals contain telling statements about the narrative of slavery, the war, and emancipation in African American communal memory. While the White, Smith & Co. “Hymns for Decoration Day” do not mention Lincoln, the works composed for Emancipation Day laud the sixteenth president as a national hero. An 1875 song titled for the day and dedicated to G. Swaine Buckley, a minstrel performer in Buckley’s Serenaders, declared that Lincoln’s name will “ever live with Washington.” The cover featured an image of a victorious freedman carrying a ballot to a ballot box. The following year, Dave Braham, the London-born song composer with a burgeoning career in New York theaters, set G. L. Stout’s lyrics for an “Emancipation Day Song and

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87 Blight, “Decoration Days,” 121–22; and Foster, Ghosts of the Confederacy, 42. Foster provides examples of annual Confederate memorial celebrations as early as 1866.

88 Charles A. White, “A Grateful Nation: A Hymn for Decoration Day” (Boston: White, Smith & Co., 1883). The back cover of White’s hymn includes the complete list of eighteen “Hymns for Decoration Day” issued by the publisher.

The song includes two mentions of Lincoln that demonstrate his bifurcated place in freedmen’s memory: as a blessed man to whom they remain thankful for his past works and as a symbol of the ongoing desire for equality. Braham with his collaborators Edward Harrigan and Tony Hart published a related song, “Slavery Days.” In 1876, at the very same time as many citizens were rushing to Philadelphia to celebrate the Centennial International Exposition highlighting one-hundred years of history with no mention of slavery and inclusion of African American culture in token ways, “Slavery Days” goes even farther than the “Emancipation Day Song and Chorus” to remind the nation of its legacy of bondage.

Emancipation remained a small portion of the music about Lincoln, but it held on through the end of the century. In 1884 Thomas J. Martin composed an “Emancipation March,” and as late as 1902, Will Marion Cook and Paul Laurence Dunbar collaborated on the song “On Emancipation Day,” which captured the range of emotion and celebration experienced by multiple generations during Reconstruction: elderly freedmen recalled the past, musicians played their songs of freedom, and children danced naively. For most of the country, music moved passed Lincoln in the late 1860s and 1870s, but for African Americans it had not. He was a central part of their narrative, so while composers preoccupied by topics of the day would need a reason to rekindle their interest in the sixteenth president, African Americans did not. As I will show in subsequent chapters, the musical vigil for Lincoln found in emancipation compositions provided the basis for some of the Lincoln topics that reach their apex during the Civil Rights Movement.

90 Dave Braham, “Emancipation Day Song and Chorus” (New York: Wm. A. Pond, 1876).
The Day of Wrath

When President Garfield died on 19 September 1881, Lincoln’s funeral provided a model for the national mourning to follow, and symbiotically, the twentieth president’s death renewed and reoriented composers’ interest in the sixteenth president. The occasions were largely different but each served the other, and the resulting musical memorials evince the relationship. Unlike the shock surrounding Lincoln’s assassination, Garfield’s demise seemed to be an impending death as he hung by a thread to life for eighty days after being shot only four months into his first term. Lincoln had seen great tests and political challenges in the White House, while Garfield was barely familiar with its furnishings. But the moment of Garfield’s death marked the founding of a lineage of assassinated presidents, with Lincoln at the head of the memorial procession. Henceforth, when the pall of presidential death descended, both orators and composers would invoke Lincoln.

Aside from the traditional newspaper pronouncements cited at the beginning of this chapter, other press reports reveal a certain ease with which the nation approached Garfield’s funeral. Questions of presidential succession and governance had been discussed and decided during the previous two months. While concerns loomed over the likely success or failure of the new chief executive, Chester A. Arthur, the public was familiar with what would happen next. Citizens also knew what they could expect to see and do as Garfield’s funeral train made its way from Washington, DC, to Cleveland, Ohio, for his burial. Instead of the many frantic stories that had run the day Lincoln had died, the morning after Garfield’s death, the New York Times ran such headlines as “The Mourning Dresses: Description of the Costumes which Mrs. Garfield and Others Will Wear” and “President’s Death Formally Announced to the Army and Navy: The
Usual Honors Ordered.” Also underscoring the comparison between Garfield and his assassinated presidential predecessor, the Times ran “The South Sincerely Mourning: Grief at the Loss of One Who Did Much to Unite the Whole Country”:

It has always been the opinion of the best informed people that the troubles which afflicted the Southern States, and through them the whole country, during and immediately after the reconstruction period, were mainly attributed to the removal of Mr. Lincoln from the presidency by assassination, and, while there now is every disposition to uphold and sustain Mr. Arthur in the discharge of the responsible duties devolved upon him by the hand of death, there is that indefinable feeling that the certainty of a just and generous administration toward the entire people has been suddenly changed to an uncertainty and to an untried public servant.

The author continues, “It is not beyond the truth to say that if [Garfield] had been permitted to live, he would have been more beloved by the people than any President since Washington.” Perhaps, but as fate would have it, Garfield played second fiddle to Lincoln. To commemorate Garfield’s death, several Lincoln funerary compositions were merely reissued with a new cover, as was the case with Augustus Buechel’s “We Mourn Our Country’s Loss,” in which the face of Garfield was centered with a slightly smaller Lincoln bust located above him and crowned with a star (see Figure 2.3). The musical content did not change, but the 1881 version includes a notice on the first page that “copies for brass or string bands can be had by addressing the publisher.”

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95 Augustus Buechel, “We Mourn Our Country’s Loss” (New York: P. A. Wunderman, 1881).
The largest efforts to connect the Lincoln and Garfield funerals came from the St. Louis publishing house of Balmer and Weber. Charles Balmer was the same conductor and publisher who had led the performance of Nicholas Lebrun’s arrangements at Lincoln’s interment. The first of Balmer and Weber’s 1881 reissues was the march that Edward Cox Davis had originally composed for the funeral of General Nathaniel Lyon. This had been one of Lebrun’s selections for Lincoln’s burial, and immediately following the 1865 funeral Balmer and Weber had also published Davis’s original piano version with the new Lincoln title. In 1881 the reprint saw no
changes. However, Balmer added a new version, a guitar arrangement attributed to one of his pen names, “A. [Augustus] Schuman.” Balmer had grown interested in publishing guitar arrangements after meeting and performing alongside Spanish guitar virtuoso Antonio C. Martinez. With these reissues and arrangements carrying Lincoln’s name, Balmer also composed an entirely new funeral march specifically for Garfield, and attributed it to yet another pseudonym, “Henry Werner.” While certainly the most economical in adapting and reissuing funeral music, Balmer was not alone. Edward Mack, who had composed a Lincoln mourning song as well as a funeral march, and who had a fondness for memorializing just about anyone who held a high military, political, or church post, offered a new work, “President James A. Garfield’s Grand Funeral March.”

Politicians and commentators turned their gaze to Robert T. Lincoln, the president’s eldest son, in order to establish a still closer connection between the two assassinations and the Republicans’ possible next steps. Robert had served in Garfield’s cabinet as Secretary of War.


97 A. Schuman, “Lincoln’s Funeral March” (St. Louis: Balmer and Weber, 1881).


100 Edward Mack, “Dirge! Our Deeply Lamented Martyred President” (Philadelphia: Lee & Walker, 1865); Mack, “President Lincoln’s Funeral March” (Philadelphia: Lee & Walker, 1865); and Mack, “President James A. Garfield’s Grand Funeral March” (New York: Gordon and Son, 1881). Along with the Lincoln and Garfield compositions, Mack composed marches for many political and military leaders. During the Civil War, he frequently created victory marches for generals who had taken important cities or battles, with some generals earning multiple marches. After the war, Mack converted to creating funeral marches for these same famous men. His subjects included Union Generals Nathaniel P. Banks, Don Carlos Buell, Ulysses S. Grant, Winfield S. Hancock, Joseph Hooker, George B. McClellan, George Meade, William Rosecrans, Winfield Scott, John Sedgwick, Philip Sheridan, and William Tecumseh Sherman; Union Major J. H. Dandy; Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase; Pennsylvania Governor John W. Geary; Rhode Island Governor William Sprague; and U.S. Presidents Ulysses S. Grant and Rutherford B. Hayes. Mack was not solely nationalist; he also composed marches for King William of Prussia [Wilhelm I] upon the unification of Germany and for Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich of Russia (who Mack identified as Prince Alexis) upon his visit to the United States. Beyond politics, Mack composed funeral marches for religious leaders, including Pope Leo XIII, Pope Pius IX, and Brigham Young.
and had been with him when he was shot at the Sixth Street Train Stain. Robert had already heard calls to run for the Republican nomination in 1880, and with yet another assassination robbing the nation of its executive, citizens and politicians again lobbied for a Lincoln campaign. This led to Malcolm Gordon’s 1884 song “Massa Linkum’s Boy,” a reminder that Lincoln remained the champion of freedmen and that Robert need only run and he would have their support. Though Robert held subsequent appointed offices, nothing came of the attempt to draft another Lincoln into a presidential election.

The closing decades of the nineteenth century saw westward expansion, continued industrialization, and war—the American Indian Wars, Spanish-American War, and Philippine-American War. The nation deployed young soldiers across the plains and around the globe. Recollecting and reminiscing about the War of the Rebellion—the official War Department description for the period from 1861 to 1865—became a national hobby. Large veterans’ organizations fostered camaraderie, reunion, and in some instances the creation of a war experience that did not exist until well after pistols had been holstered. The Grand Army of the Republic and the United Confederate Veterans were the largest of these groups. Many men who participated in each sought to differentiate their world and experiences from the people around them: immigrants, newly returning veterans, and urbanites in bustling cities, which were little more than outposts when the Confederate forces had bombarded Fort Sumter. These veterans gathered to remind each other of a nation, time, and conflict a generation in the past. The meetings frequently included musical performances, and scholars have probed some of these for

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102 McWhirter, Battle Hymns, 187. In the case of musical works, McWhirter demonstrates that songs, such as “Tenting on the Old Camp Ground” and “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” grew increasingly popular in the postwar songsters and gatherings of the Grand Army of the Republic, often leaving behind those compositions more frequently sung by the soldiers during the war, such as “Battle Cry of Freedom” and “John Brown’s Body.”
case studies of cultural memory, racial politics, and veteran identity. As for Lincoln historical memory, the gatherings underscored that the Civil War and the people who fought it were worthy of memory.

Simultaneously, the publication of John George Nicolay and John Hay’s *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, which appeared first in serial form in *The Century Magazine* from 1886 to 1890, and William Herndon and Jesse W. Weik’s *Herndon’s Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life* provided multi-volume biographical memorials, regardless of their respective veracity and reception. In concert with American life and the national mood, composers placed Lincoln in a new and expanded context. No longer isolated to a single event, Lincoln was at the heart of a narrative that stretched from at least George Washington to the present. Other presidents had died in office, prior commanders-in-chief had faced wars and conflicts, and many chief executives had compelling biographies. But Lincoln, at the close of the century, transcended this coterie. As E. F. Morse described in the song “The Right Men in the Right Place,” any number of men had helped the nation at important points and through their own great talents—Grant was smart and Garfield was honorable—but “[Lincoln’s] equal at present would be hard to find.”

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103 David W. Blight, *American Oracle: The Civil War in the Civil Rights Era* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 2011), 84; Gannon, *The Won Cause*, 1 and 55; and McWhirter, *Battle Hymns*, 188 and 192. Each author has examined the GAR and/or UCV with different intent and written about only a small portion of the musical performances from each. A thorough study of the music of both organizations and a comparison of the repertoires requires an independent study.


The lyrics of late-century songs describe an exceptional figure who continued to oversee the nation—more demigod than father. In James Holberton and Burton Lawrence’s “Flower from Lincoln’s Grave,” the narrator describes how Lincoln observes the country from his position hanging on the walls of citizens’ homes. Lincoln remained the protector who could see Americans’ lives and actions, and in heaven, they would be granted the opportunity to be reunited with him. For the time being, a flower from his grave was like an amulet providing safe passage. This view of an omnipresent Lincoln also came to the fore in John Philip Sousa’s setting of the William Knox poem “Mortality,” described as the late president’s favorite poem. In light of the 1865 assassination, Knox’s poem and Lincoln’s affection for it had been coupled as a sign of the departed president’s Christ-like awareness of the import of own death. Setting the poem was to say that Lincoln exceeded mere mortality—presidents come and go, but Lincoln had to live so that he could fulfill his mission. Charles Wood similarly composed a memorial from another commemorative work with his song on Walt Whitman’s “O Captain! My Captain!” In layering one memorial onto another, these compositions emphasized reverence by providing distance and awe from the subject. Only one additional step was required to solidify Lincoln’s new place: offering him as the model for which all other presidents should aspire. Paul Dresser completed this task with the song “Give Us Just another Lincoln.” If Sousa and Wood crafted monuments for the sixteenth president, then Dresser challenged subsequent presidents to live up to them.

106 James Holberton and Burton Lawrence, “Flower from Lincoln’s Grave” (San Francisco: Lawrence and Holberton, 1898).


Composers had passed over Lincoln as a subject in previous decades, but by the end of the nineteenth century, they elevated him to idol. His pathway to still greater glory came with the continued evocation of his example, guidance, and wisdom, even from the grave. Two events from the first decade of the twentieth century provided opportunities for the martyred president’s post-mortem leadership: the assassination of William McKinley in 1901 and the centenary anniversary of Lincoln’s birth in 1909.

McKinley’s death reified Lincoln’s role as chief of fallen presidents. Garfield’s death had created the notion of a lineage of assassinated presidents, but the loss of McKinley meant that the group of three was now a clan. In 1901 Seth A. Cook captured this relationship between Lincoln, Garfield, and McKinley in the song “The Shooting of Our Presidents.”\textsuperscript{110} While the first two assassinated presidents shared service to their nation, the connections between Lincoln and McKinley were more compelling: both were born to rural families of modest means; both were self-made men who built careers as lawyers; both held special significance in Republican presidential politics, having provided the party with its first presidency and then ushering in one of its longest runs of federal control; both led the nation through wars (the Civil War and Spanish-American War, respectively) and both had just started a second term when assassinated.\textsuperscript{111} McKinley was also the last president to have been a Civil War veteran. During the war he had risen through the ranks from private to brevet major. His successor, Theodore Roosevelt, was but a six-year-old boy peering out the window of his grandfather’s home in New


\textsuperscript{111} With the exception of 1913–1921, when Democrat Woodrow Wilson held the presidency and his party took majorities in Congress, McKinley led a wave of Republican control of the White House, Senate, and House of Representatives from 1897 to 1933.
York City as Lincoln’s funeral procession passed. Thus, McKinley’s death ended the line of presidents who had come of age during the Civil War. To honor McKinley’s funeral procession, veterans living at the Danville (Illinois) Branch National Military Home organized a performance of a march that Capt. Wilbur F. Heath had composed for the procession of Lincoln’s casket from the Illinois State House to Oak Ridge Cemetery. Citing the Illinois State Register, Kenneth Bernard has argued that it was only the second performance of this composition. Since the composition remained unpublished, two sets of manuscript band cards held by the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library further support Bernard’s claim. The band cards provided in the first set match the instrumentation of the other surviving Lincoln funeral manuscripts; whereas the second set includes parts for E-flat and B-flat saxophones (soprano, alto, and baritone), instruments still rare in 1865 America, but common in band scores from the turn of the twentieth century. These two arrangements of Heath’s dirge provided a parallel commemoration for the sixteenth and twenty-fifth presidents.

As the decade progressed, composers flocked to Lincoln, who once again became a popular song topic. Paul Dresser returned to him for a reconciliation song, “The War Is Over Many Years, Or Lincoln, Grant, and Lee”; Thomas R. Confare and W. C. Piatt wrote about Kentucky as Lincoln’s birthplace like Charles Wood before them; and Harvey W. Loomis and

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114 Ibid.; and Illinois State Register, 12 February 1909.

115 Wilbur F. Heath Papers, SC676, Manuscript Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

Frank C. Butcher each turned to Whitman’s poetry for their memorials “Hush’d Be the Camps To-day” and “O Captain! My Captain!” While these works, with their new textual sources and inclusion of biographical information, began to change Lincoln’s musical image, it was ultimately his birthday centennial that invited the largest and most diverse body of compositions since his funeral. Along with multiple marches, 1909 commemorations included Silas G. Pratt’s *Lincoln Symphony*, the first such work in a genre that was popular with the next generation of composers, as well as Peter J. Bacon’s “Song of the Emancipation Proclamation,” which was a setting of Lincoln’s own words, another technique that subsequent composers would thoroughly exploit.

The interest in Lincoln continued with the 1911–1915 commemorations for the Civil War Semicentennial. The combination of these events burst the floodgates of Lincoln musical memorialization. Once open, they remain so for the rest of the century as composers regularly turned to the Lincoln *topos*. Part of this fresh exploration of Lincoln came through the continued expansion of genres. No longer was Lincoln just a subject for popular songs and marches; he was equally appropriate for orchestral and chamber music, art song, and choral works. Running parallel to the expanding genre options was the deepening interest in little stories and large themes from Lincoln biographies, which were going to print at a rapid pace. On the shoulders

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of Lincoln, citizens placed their own narratives, family histories, and experiences of America. With World War I on the horizon, Lincoln would also remain a pillar of strength amid the cruelty of man.

*He Shall Be Justified in Everlasting Memory*

Presenting Lincoln as a partner and champion to different people in divergent situations required a significant shift in his musical depiction. At the turn of the century, Lincoln remained a national martyr and savior. Now he was required to also serve as a man with whom citizens could identify. Such a change was not isolated to music. Roy P. Basler observed similar divisions in the field of literature, where authors transformed Lincoln from martyr at the time of his death, to either slave emancipator or Union preservationist during Reconstruction, and then to a phase that Basler calls “the American,” in which Lincoln’s life was treated as a metaphor for concepts such as the American dream and the frontier in America.¹²⁰

Along with repackaging aspects of Lincoln’s image, composers also reoriented him in the contemporary American landscape. Nineteenth-century industrialization provided dramatic changes to notions of time, the work day, and careers, but also to ideas about art, craftsmanship, and leisure. Intersecting with industrialization—sometimes as a result, other times a cause, and still other times as wholly independent factors—were societal tastes. Preferences in the arts changed. Divisions between high art and low art, the cultivated and the vernacular, did not merely arise as a line of temporal segregation. Indeed, Lincoln’s place in popular song continued uninterrupted through the entire period of this study. Similarly, the Handel and Haydn Society’s

1865 memorial concert as well as Sousa’s chamber choir setting of “Oh! Why Should Spirit of Mortal Be Proud” demonstrate that cultivated music commemorations had predecessors. Shifts in musical taste are typically more gradual in their arrival and less likely to result in the wholesale adoption or abandonment of any genre or style. Beyond identifying a specific moment of conversion, the appreciation of the cultural trend and its relationship to the social and political factors in presidential memorialization remain central to this study. Both Derek B. Scott and Lawrence W. Levine, in writing about changes in music and class, have argued that in the latter half of the nineteenth century American audience interests shifted dramatically toward high-class culture; this included an intense fascination with opera and other musical forms that could be intellectualized and sacralized.121 Drawing one example from the career of Adelina Patti, Scott describes how New York audiences fawned over her popular song performances at the middle of the century, while critics at the end of the century panned her ballad-oriented programs for her lack of intelligence and musical development.122

John Knowles Paine and Charles Ives, two composers divided by a generation, shared a fondness for Lincoln. Each created several Lincoln works, and the periods of their interest overlapped by seven years. Paine concluded his life with a Lincoln composition, while Ives included a Lincoln reference in a cantata that he hoped would launch his musical career. Both were New Englanders, albeit Paine served as Harvard’s first professor of music and Ives was a Yale man. The two composers combined body of Lincoln works serve to summarize many of the factors that separate the memorials of the late nineteenth century from those that took hold early in the new century.


Lincoln memorials bookend Paine’s career. In 1865, just four years into his nearly forty-five year appointment at Harvard College, he honored the fallen president with a funeral march. Retiring in 1905, Paine lived just one year longer, dying in the midst of composing a Lincoln tone poem. The piano composition, *Funeral March in Memory of President Lincoln*, Op. 9, is in keeping with Paine’s European training: a *Trauermarsch* featuring thick chords, which one could imagine orchestrated for a processing brass band; strong agogic accents on the downbeat of every second measure; and short passages on one pitch that evoke the tapping of eighth and sixteenth notes on a snare drum.\(^\text{123}\) The only publication of Op. 9 featured a bust of Lincoln centered on the cover, surrounded by clouds, bracketed by a laurel wreath, and lofting a radiant halo of stars (see Figure 2.4). The march has fared well in the performance repertoire, likely because of its composer’s significance in American music history. It remains one of the few Lincoln funerary works for piano that has enjoyed multiple recordings in the twentieth century.\(^\text{124}\) Even after a century, the march saw further interest when the U.S. Marine Band arranged it for winds and percussion, and included it on a 2005 recording of Lincoln music.\(^\text{125}\)


As John C. Schmidt has noted, we know little about Paine’s politics, beyond his interest in Lincoln. The comments of the composer’s family and friends indicate that he had a strong interest in the Lincoln tone poem and that his idea for this work had percolated over the years. His wife, Mary, donated two unfinished manuscripts to Harvard, and included in one is a short note in which she describes the work and its status: “The composer had just commenced this ‘Large Tone Poem,’ and was working on it at the time of his death; he had it in mind for forty years and had hoped it would be his greatest achievement—it must remain a fragment.”


127 John Knowles Paine, Lincoln: A Tragic Tone Poem [ca. 1906], orchestral score, fMS Mus 57.10, Houghton Library, Harvard University; and John Knowles Paine, Lincoln: A Tragic Tone Poem [ca. 1906], piano
tribute submitted by Paine’s fellow faculty members to the *Harvard University Gazette* mentioned that the composer wanted to spend his new found leisure working on “a large Symphonic-poem, which was intended to portray the career and tragic fate of Lincoln.”

*A Boston Evening Transcript* obituary even offered a paragraph about his current project:

> Professor Paine had been ill since Sunday, when he contracted a severe cold. He had been feeble for a number of years. At the end of the last session of Harvard College he retired from active work in the class room. Professor Paine leaves unfinished his symphonic poem, “Lincoln,” based on the characteristics of the martyred President.

The two manuscripts from Mary E. Paine include a short score on two staves and an orchestral score. The former contains 188 measures of music in pencil, while the latter has 158 measures in pen. It appears that Paine sketched his ideas at the piano, including some instrument markings, such as an indication of a melody for harp and another for bass clarinet. That both manuscripts were left unfinished implies that he orchestrated one section at a time, as opposed to composing the whole work at the piano and then setting about the orchestration. This process allowed for emendation and revision at the time of orchestration; for example, the piano score includes a tempo indication of “moderately fast” and the orchestral version is marked “adagio.” Aside from occasional tempo changes, there are no other prose descriptions in either manuscript. Atop each is the title followed by the general direction “with solemnity and pathos.” Paine included a slow introduction giving way to *tutti* passages marked “fast” and “fast and agitato.”

The triple-wind orchestration is typical for the turn of the century. If Paine had specific

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Lincolnian events in mind for the composition, he did not leave any hints. Similarly, there is no indication that he planned to use either Lincoln speeches or popular Civil War songs as source material for his tone poem. Much in the way his piano funeral march captures a mood, so too the tone poem appears to have been an abstract presentation of the tragic life of a noble man—a composition that would have commemorated, but not personified. Paine provided listeners with a monumental Lincoln—one viewed with an admiring gaze, from a few steps back. The working title for his unfinished composition captured the mythical and daunting, *Lincoln: A Tragic Tone Poem*.

At Paine’s death in 1906, the Lincoln of pure wonderment was also winding down if for no other reason because the audience was changing. Civil War veterans had eagerly told their stories to grandchildren or published reminiscences for others to read. The war and its characters had become approachable as a new generation of children came of age hearing the tales of glory but without having to experience fields of death. Authors and average citizens now wrote and spoke about Lincoln, Grant, Lee, and countless other soldiers without ever having met or even lived at the same time. The war was both a ways off but still present for Americans who had elderly family members, old uniforms still hanging in closets, and portraits on the living room walls. The tunes from Grand Army of the Republic and United Confederate Veterans’ meetings were whistled and hummed, and children’s literature recounted the conflict.

The world of Charles Ives was more similar to that of Robert Penn Warren or Bruce Catton than it was to John Knowles Paine. Born in Danbury, Connecticut, two decades after

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130 Warren and Catton were two of the most identifiable Civil War writers of the early twentieth century. Warren was born in Kentucky, raised in Tennessee, and went on to write Pulitzer-prize winning Civil War poetry and novels. Catton, born and raised in Michigan, authored popular, narrative histories of the war. Each cited their proximity to veterans and the stories they heard in childhood as crucial factors in their professional development.
the war, Ives never saw battle, but heard about the rebellion, knew his father was a veteran, and observed the rituals of postwar American commemoration. Scholars have explored many paths toward understanding Ives’s thoughts about the war, Lincoln, American government and politics, and his father. Stuart Feder argues that the composer’s interest in Lincoln grew from his relationship with his father, George.131 There existed family lore that the sixteenth president had complimented the Union Army band led by George Ives.132 This interest in Lincoln as part of family history could explain why, according to Feder, Ives referenced the fallen president in such an early work as *The Celestial Country* (1902), the cantata that he hoped would provide the same launch to his career that his teacher Horatio Parker had received with his oratorio *Hora Novissima* (1893).133 The third movement of *The Celestial Country*, an accompanied quartet, describes an army being led by its captain, and if we accept Feder’s reading, then “captain” is—taking after Whitman—a Lincoln signifier. The movement opens:

Seek the things before us,
Not a look behind;
Burns the fiery pillar
At our army’s head.
Who shall dream of shrinking
By our Captain led.134

If this “captain” is indeed Lincoln, then he is a heroic military leader, the likes of which were common in funerary lyrics.135

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132 Ibid.
133 Ibid., 172.
In 1905 Ives and Harmony Twichell began a courtship that led to their 1908 wedding. As with George, Harmony’s father, Joseph Twichell, had his own brush with Lincoln: he was present on the Gettysburg battlefield for the 1863 dedication. For Feder, Charles and Harmony’s shared patriotism and pride in their fathers’ connections to Lincoln served as encouragement for both their relationship and the composer’s works. By 1915 Ives approached the Civil War in a more personal light. “Decoration Day,” from the *Holidays Symphony*, is the composer’s response to the sights, sounds, and emotions of the commemorations and rituals discussed above for this national day of mourning the war dead. J. Peter Burkholder explains that the first three movements of the symphony, of which “Decoration Day” is the second, are dependent on memory. Ives draws on personal recollections and in so doing demonstrates the degree of distance between himself and the actual war. His is not a freestanding memorial, but a monument based on a ritual created by people before his time. This will be one mode of commemoration employed by his contemporaries and successors, who cannot speak of the 1860s through firsthand experiences, so they offer their perspective of the memories created by family members, other artists, and society.

The approach found in “Decoration Day” could at first blush separate composers and their audiences from the subject. That division, however, simultaneously underscored a sense of each subject’s historical significance. That is, in thinking about the time and people who have

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passed between the original event and the present, listeners are reminded that the act of memory demonstrates a topic’s importance—it was worth the effort of memory and commemoration over the years. Audience members are left to determine why the subject is still important. Michael Broyles has articulated how Ives’s adoption of this view of history and tradition has often confused analysts aimed at deciphering his political identity.\footnote{Michael Broyles, “Charles Ives and the American Democratic Tradition,” in \textit{Charles Ives and His World}, ed. J. Peter Burkholder (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 119–20 and 134.} Ives lived at a time when the reminiscence industry took root, and so for him to look to the past and identify with a person or event did not inherently equal the acceptance or advocacy of a political philosophy; rather it spoke of an interest in buttressing the events that the country remembered and celebrated as those with which a contemporary citizen could relate.

In \textit{Lincoln, The Great Commoner} Ives provided an image of the historical figure, but also invited audiences to contemplate why the late president might be important to them. No longer a deity, Ives presented Lincoln in this work—a song and the choral arrangement that followed—as a fellow citizen who acted honorably. Rosalie Sandra Perry has called Ives’s ability to find realism in his subject a “sympathy with the common people.”\footnote{Rosalie Sandra Perry, \textit{Charles Ives and the American Mind} (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1974), 59.} Meanwhile, Frank R. Rossiter identifies in \textit{Lincoln} a shift in Americans’ perspective of the relationship between themselves and their leader.\footnote{Frank R. Rossiter, \textit{Charles Ives and His America} (New York: Liveright, 1975), 128.} Ives kept these attributes at the fore by setting Edwin Markham’s 1901 poem “Lincoln, Man of the People,” from which he choose only a few lines. It captures a turn-of-the-century view of the president and the types of changes and perspectives, identified by both Perry and Rossiter, in American citizens of the time. Ives began with a clear statement of Lincoln’s
humble background: “And so he came from the prairie cabin to the capitol.” Then, to ensure that such a path did not appear too easy, he also included a line about Lincoln’s work as a rail-splitter: “He built the rail pile as he built the state.” For the composition’s core, Ives selected two lines from Markham’s poem that address his view of Lincoln’s qualifications for the presidency: “One fair ideal led our chieftain on,” and “So came our Captain with a mighty heart.” It was Lincoln’s singular, but fair ideal and his mighty heart that led to his greatness. Already we find Lincoln to be a man whose actions anyone could replicate; regardless of birthright, fellow citizens can maintain their ideals, keep hearts open, and then lead significant lives based on these two factors.

In the second half of the song and chorus, Ives includes some of Markham’s simplified descriptions of Lincoln’s trials. He presents the war as a house rocking in an earthquake. The image reminds the listener that Lincoln acted in an obvious and reasonable way. He did not attempt to build a new or bigger house, nor did he panic, nor did he ask for advice. Markham and Ives’s Lincoln reached up and grasped the rafters as they swayed, and through strength and determination, held the house together. In contrast to nineteenth-century presentations of Lincoln, he is not a mythical being; rather, a man whose example we could follow. Burkholder has described the notion of profiling Lincoln for his heart and clear ideals as an example of Ives’s tolerance and concern for social justice.¹⁴² Indeed, the composer is offering the president as a guide for approaching challenges in our own time.

For all of the changes found in Ives’s presentation of Lincoln versus those that have come before, the musical content serves to ground the work as one from another time, or at least one that recalls the past. In analyzing Ives’s musical borrowing in Lincoln, Burkholder has identified

¹⁴² Burkholder, Charles Ives, 35.
passages relating to or excerpted from “Hail! Columbia,” “The Star Spangled Banner,” “America,” “Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean,” and “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” These references are among some of the most evasive in Ives’s oeuvre thereby allowing the listener to hear a melody or accompaniment but often without precisely placing its exact origin. Such an approach requires the listener to evaluate the musical content, like the lyrical content, in relation to his or her own life. The listener is not merely bathed in familiar melodies. This is also a technique that will take hold in subsequent twentieth-century Lincoln memorials.

Ives’s Lincoln would amount to pure nostalgia had he maintained a larger-than-life hero, martyr, or saint. World War I shook the beliefs and imaginations of much of the globe, which was a world apart from the 1860s. If Ives had merely upheld the prior century’s portrait of Lincoln, listeners could have easily cited changes in their culture, standard of living, or social mores as the reason that their lives and that of sixteenth president were incomparable. Rather, Ives embraced the challenge of composing Lincoln in his time and portrayed him as a common man, with a few simple, though not necessarily easy to maintain, principles. Paine’s Lincoln: A Tragic Tone Poem would have captured the narrative in the nineteenth century; while Ives’s Lincoln, The Great Commoner opened a realm of possibilities for the twentieth.

At the turn of the century, the visual arts faced a similar challenge of reconciling Lincoln’s place in the past with his role in contemporary memory. What Ives introduces is akin to the Lincolns found in John F. Peto’s trompe l’oeil paintings. The Philadelphia native spent much of his adult life at the home he shared with his wife along the Jersey Shore. Critics paid little attention to his art. Peto, like Ives’s father, George, had played cornet in a village band. And

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as for the works that both Peto and Ives are known for today, audiences only learned about them decades after they were created. John Wilmerding has argued that Peto’s interest in Lincoln, which led the artist to complete at least a dozen canvases in the late 1890s and early 1900s, came when his father, a Civil War veteran, died in 1895.\textsuperscript{144} Peto was not particularly close with his father, but nonetheless connected this loss with the one the nation felt in 1865. A psychoanalytic study in the model of Feder’s biography of Ives could draw personal associations between Ives’s and Peto’s relationships with their fathers and their transference of these feelings onto Lincoln, but more important for this context is that both men understood and presented the president as a man of the people. They remind us that Lincoln was present in American homes, and not only as a martyr, but now also as a national father. While Peto’s Lincoln canvases each have different features, they often include some depiction of a wooden background, such as a cabinet door or paneled wall. As if nailed to these surfaces, Peto painted what appear to be clipped-out and tacked-up copies of Lincoln lithographs and prints. Some of the images contain etchings on the wooden background, such as “ABE” or the dates “1809” and “1865.” Most of the images also include an array of other odds and ends: a bowie knife hanging from a hook, a coin held between two nail heads, scraps of paper, and so forth. The musical borrowing that Burkholder has identified in Ives’s music could be mapped onto Peto’s depictions of borrowed ephemera. Both Ives and Peto allowed some components to appear clearly to the viewer, while others are only a fragment that cannot be identified.

All of Peto’s Lincoln paintings share a sense of the familiar. The items on the cabinet door, painting stretcher, or wall are all objects found sitting around a home. The wall itself

\textsuperscript{144} John Wilmerding, “Images of Lincoln in Peto’s Late Paintings,” \textit{Archives of American Art Journal} 22 (1982): 3. That Peto’s father died one year after Ives’s father shows a further similarity in the experiences of these veterans’ sons.
appears to be something that we have viewed many times before, even at first glance. It is then left to us to piece together how all of the common images relate to both Lincoln and our own lives. Gone are the clouds, angels, and halos of Lincoln funerary art. Instead, we find an invitation to see Lincoln as part of the typical day, the ordinary life. Like the diverse elements of a Peto painting, Ives’s Lincoln foreshadows the treatment of the president in the coming decades complete with an assortment of other themes, ideas, and references. These works are reminders that while Lincoln is often presented as the leader of certain groups—assassinated presidents, Civil War personalities, and American heroes, to name a few—he is also a ubiquitous character in our historical memory, and he can be at his most potent when considered as a common citizen, a member of the national family.
“And the war came,” said Abraham Lincoln to the audience gathered at the Capitol Building’s East Portico for his second inauguration.¹ This had been a plainspoken, yet poignant, observation of the Civil War’s commencement. Arriving midway between Lincoln’s assessment of the Union and Confederate positions, it had amplified the dire situation that greeted the president in 1860 and had reinforced the need for his bold actions. He had continued by acknowledging God’s providence and judgment, but in the memorable forward-looking conclusion Lincoln had addressed the new charge:

> With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation’s wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.²

Moving from the extraordinary to the mundane—from the will of God to the works of men—Lincoln’s rhetorical progression had provided momentum for the task at hand. This movement from the divine to the human parallels the path of the Lincoln *topos* from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century: from John Knowles Paine’s *Lincoln: A Tragic Tone Poem* to Charles Ives’s *Lincoln, The Great Commoner*.

Paine and Ives, as I have discussed above, were separated by a generation. Also dividing them was the Great War. Many smaller armed conflicts arose between the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865 and the U.S. declaration of war on Germany in 1917, and while significant for the

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² Ibid., 201.
populations and policies in the American West, Central and South America, and the Pacific Rim, they were incomparable with the horror known when “the war came” in the form of the First World War. Details of World War I’s battles, atrocities, and deaths traveled from the frontline to the home front and stunned the nation. Scholars of American memory have credited World War I with the loss of nineteenth-century sentimentality, a significant factor in memorialization that I examine below. Narratives of the Great War have also describe some of its immediate and long-term outcomes as benefits for the American economy. For example, Europe’s disarray and considerable destruction following 1918 provided many avenues for the type of U.S. industrial expansion that led to the so-called American Century in the subsequent decades. These dramatic changes instigated a renewed search for national identity, which in music would come to fruition in the 1930s.

Despite the efforts of Paine and his contemporaries, few would point to Gilded-Age American musical compositions as representative of a specific national style; that is, a New World sound with wide acceptance among performers and audiences beyond narrow geographic, ethnic, or generational boundaries. Charles Hamm places nationally identifiable music as the outgrowth of turn-of-the-century efforts, acknowledging the composers addressed below as the people who succeeded in offering the world discernible American music.3 Richard Crawford, who jostles traditional American music historiography by avoiding period divisions and replacing them with a patchwork of emerging trends in various genres and traditions, provides a

3 Charles Hamm, Music in the New World (New York: W. W. Norton, 1983), 410–59. Hamm’s “The Search for National Identity” chapter extends from Antonín Dvořák’s 1892–1895 American visit to Samuel Barber and his contemporaries, with the conclusion: “A succession of individual composers, beginning with Charles Ives, discovered ways of making their music reflect the musical and cultural life of America in the first half of the twentieth century. The 1930s in particular produced an extraordinary series of scores which drew composers, performers, audiences, and critics together in common cause, in a way never witnessed before in America—and unfortunately never recaptured.”
nod to the notion of a national musical identity that comes to the fore in the work of Ives, to whom he grants the title “American Composer.” In keeping with Crawford’s skepticism of narratives that have twentieth-century American music coalescing to form a singular national tradition that superseded all others, Lincoln-based compositions of this time reveal that genre diversity expanded, musical styles and forms remained fertile territory for exploration, and even something of a national topic—like a heroic late president—saw many new presentations, but few attempts to fit the man into a single biographical mold.

In this chapter I argue that the Lincoln musical memorials following the First World War evince a search for meaning—an interest in understanding the American experience. This exploration has many facets. As immigrant and native-born ethnic populations demonstrated their familiarity with the history and culture of their adopted home, their artists embraced nineteenth-century poets and politicians, alike, but situated their words in contemporary contexts. Herein I extricate the various appearances of Lincoln during the period extending from 1918 through 1945. Often these topics overlap, with artists experimenting with genres and styles while also examining social and political ideas of the time. The resulting body of compositions includes some of the finest examples of how musical style and cultural memory interact.

Factum historicum

The confluence of Americans’ growing comfort with Lincoln as a historical figure but their generational distance from him, served as an invitation for composers to employ him in ways that replaced amplification of his character with exegesis of his biography and legacy. This shift from compositions that magnified Lincoln’s attributes, to interpretive works, in which

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artists sought to isolate, problematize, and then explore a Lincoln theme, reveals information about the creators’ interests, politics, and objectives. However, composers of works in the new trend did not sideline aspects of Lincoln biography in order to make room for self-referential music; rather, they attempted to demonstrate their ideological proximity to the historical figure.

Instead of adopting a hermeneutic stance that dissociates the exegetical compositions from the prior body of memorial music, I understand these works as exhibits of continuity. After all, notions of collective memory, from which this study assuredly borrows, rely on participants across generations amending and adapting a growing national narrative. The difference between what I call the amplification and exegesis modes is best understood as a change in function. Prior to this shift, Lincoln memorials operated as a magnifying glass; they intensified characteristics of the fallen president’s legacy. Depending on the position and angle of the glass, the viewer could magnify different aspects of the underlying subject, but the subject was not removed from the context of the whole. The shift during the interwar period turned the magnifying glass into something of a prism. A view of Lincoln was broken into its component parts: no longer a single light, but an array of colors. These compositions did not aim to see Lincoln the complete man, but rather a slice of Lincolnian principle that could be abstracted, studied, and commented upon. Lincoln could be interpreted through his poverty, wisdom, leadership, banality, humor, or any other characteristic. Later we will see that yet another shift occurs in the second half of the century whereby the exegetical mode is replaced with formulative presentations. In those settings the composers are venturing to create a new Lincolnian image by borrowing from some aspect of his legacy and then magnifying that narrative. In the exegetical mode, however, the assertion of authenticity remains critical. The generation of composers in this chapter did not grow up in the
same age as Lincoln, but by treating his life as a factum historicum, they borrowed from the moral authority that Americans had granted the president in the fifty years since his death.

*Culture after the Great War*

Barbara A. Gannon argues that twentieth-century historians avoided nineteenth-century Civil War soldier reminiscences because of the distaste for sentimentality that resulted from these scholars’ exposure to the horrors of the First World War. Gannon has posited that Americans lost the ability to carefully separate heartfelt, sensitive statements of emotion from over-the-top Victorian displays. The mass killing of fellow men hardened the nation. As a result, post-war Americans were inclined to embrace discussions that focused on the mundane and thereby avoided probing into the depths of men’s minds and psyches. The types of sentimental comments found in the nineteenth-century journals of Gannon’s study were long viewed as unctuous and unfit for historical research. But even shelving the most extreme accounts of Civil War sentimentalism could not purge the event from American memory. Accepting Gannon’s rationale is to say that avoiding sentimentality contributed to the muting of American senses and the willingness to replace difficult inquiries with the shallowest of questions.

Such an argument about America’s lost sentimentality explains one aspect of interwar interest in Lincoln, since a composer could employ the late president’s legacy as part of a blanket treatment of the Civil War without having to delve into the conflict’s contested details. Then, as quickly as the composer touched his toe to the cold pond of war memory, he could retract and

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draw himself into the warmer waters of a contemporary discussion about national identity. In this setting the flag of patriotism could even fall upon the composer’s shoulders for added comfort.

Gannon has offered compelling claims for her primary question about black and white veteran relations, but it does not fully explain the dramatic nature in which one day’s sentimentality became the next day’s indifference. World War I was deeply painful for Americans, but so, too, was the Great Depression, which would close the subsequent decade. The financial collapse furthered American tastes away from the maudlin and toward the practical, if not cynical. Families who had previously been able to enjoy the benefits of a leisure-class lifestyle now aimed solely to survive. Moreover, those who weathered the economic storm still inhabited an industrialized world in which discriminating taste served little benefit amid large, undifferentiated quantities of products. World War I, Great Depression, and World War II each contributed to an American life that was for sizable portions of society less dignified than the world they had heard about from their parents and grandparents.

David W. Blight has contended that author Robert Penn Warren and film director Ken Burns, despite working in different media and at different times, met an unrequited desire of modern Americans to be part of a cause that is greater than themselves—an effort that is nobler than mundane daily life. This desire will grow increasingly central through the latter half of this study. Important in Blight’s analysis is the role of dehumanization, particularly as it was experienced through industrialization, the World Wars, and urbanization. Warren based his questions on the issue of why the Civil War, complete with its battles, heroes, and villains, has gripped the American imagination. Burns seemingly answered the question with Homeric stories

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tied to period images that embrace elements of historical memory and our desire to say that Americans are inherently part of a large and important narrative. I concur with Blight’s assessment, but disagree with how the factors fit together. For example, I agree that World War I’s death and destruction thoroughly shocked the globe and World War II’s horrors took humanity even further down the road of devaluing human life. However, for the remainder of the twentieth century, the World Wars did not create a lasting sense of disruption with the past, but instead a cause for continuity. While the World War generation—Warren included—may have deeply felt the conflicts’ pains, over the long term, American memory gained new heroes and stories from these hostilities. The doughboy and G.I. returned to the states shell shocked, but his descendants have gone on to valorize heroes, demonize villains, and even craft an all-encompassing theme about the role of everyone in the decades surrounding these events. Those are the men and women who comprise the “Greatest Generation.”

Sentimentality may have been lost, but the yearning for a sense of purpose is a human characteristic preceding the Civil War and one that is likely to continue in the future. What Blight has recognized in Warren’s and Burns’s books and documentaries is not merely the Homeric stories of the Civil War, but the epic tales that form the fabric of American historical memory. Such stories exist for the Revolutionary War and nearly every major conflict since. Moreover, the narrative of an American hero facing and defeating a transgressor has become our most frequently employed national trope, with appearances as common in news magazines’ personal-interest stories and summer blockbuster movies as they are in grand historical surveys. The Lincoln *topos* exists as part of this tradition, not separate from it.

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Instead of asking why the Civil War captured the American imagination, I wish to delve into why the Lincoln narrative was so attractive during the interwar period and World War II. In this question, the answers that Blight has found in Warren and Burns hold true: Americans embraces heroes who act for purposes beyond their personal benefit. If other aspects of contemporary life seem meaningless, then our thirst for a national *raison d’être* is quenched by stories of Lincoln and his ilk, who faced situations requiring personal sacrifice for the service of others. Not only does the nation thrive on such narratives, but in them the citizenry finds moral security. Americans advancing various causes via Lincoln memory employ a simple equation: if Lincoln was morally true and fought for the good of the nation, then any cause that can be connected to the Lincoln narrative is also morally sound and altruistic.

The equation, however, has heightened Warren’s discomfort with people who invoke the Civil War in order to seek their own moral righteousness. The author did not like what he called Southerners’ “Great Alibi” and Northerners’ “Treasury of Virtue.”8 The former contends that the Confederacy could never have won the war, because of the Union’s superior numbers, but regardless of that, the rogue states were not fighting in favor of slavery, rather, against Northern aggression. The latter posits that the Union’s victory provided an indulgence from all past and future wrong doing; the North freed the slaves and saved the nation and thus represents the more advanced society.9 For more than a century, the basis of these positions has allowed citizens to believe that their views on topics that are unrelated to the causes of the Civil War retain respectability. Blight has suggested that Warren’s disdain for these extremes has often left him at a relativist’s impasse in which neither side was responsible. Warren’s response has been to argue

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9 Ibid.
that pragmatism must remain the order of the day.\textsuperscript{10} In Lincoln music, any calls for pragmatism go largely unanswered in the first half of the twentieth century. Compositions that interpret and problematize Lincoln tend to draw him into new discussions. These works are predicated on the sense of purpose or righteousness gained by the composers themselves and their audiences.

\textit{National Genres}

This study largely follows a trend in genre expansion of Lincoln musical memorials from primarily popular songs, to instrumental commemorative works, and eventually to art songs, symphonies, choral compositions, and musicals in the twentieth century. I have discussed above how some Lincoln compositions tracked cultural tastes, with growing numbers of compositions in the cultivated tradition. The twentieth-century genre explosion can also be explained through one other consideration. The same factors of industrialization and urbanization contributing to shifts in American sentimentality mentioned above also led to expanded Lincoln commodification. In 1905, for example, Indiana entrepreneurs requested from Robert Lincoln the rights to use his late father’s name and image in marketing the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company. By 1917 Henry Leland had named his motor company for Lincoln.\textsuperscript{11} These are two of the many corporate brands that were soon built in part or total around the president’s legacy. Citizens could expect to encounter Lincoln in all aspects of their daily life.

Popular song, the largest nineteenth-century Lincoln memorial genre, continued to offer new Lincoln compositions, primarily arriving from Tin Pan Alley, rather than the former

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 72.

\textsuperscript{11} Early examples of Lincoln branding, such as B. Leidersdorf & Co.’s “Old Abe Tobacco,” which came to market in the 1870s, demonstrate that the name held sway with regional firms in the nineteenth century, but the nationwide marketing efforts employing Lincoln flourished only in the twentieth century.
publishing houses in Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, and Cleveland. Theater and film musicals provided new venues for popular songs, which often went still further in charting the relationship between Lincoln and contemporary culture. Predating the Great War, the song “You Can’t Fool All the People All the Time” from the musical Nancy Brown (1903), demonstrates how an apocryphal quotation can move from the pulp press into published sources with encouragement from popular culture.12 The two-act musical blends exotic foreign characters and locales with American chauvinism. The title character travels to the foreign land of Ballyhoo to serve as a match-maker for a royal family in need of heirs. The musical juxtaposes the exoticism of the native women (“Oriental Girls”) and the virtues of American women (“The Red, White and Blue Girl”). In this context, Lincoln imagery provides another reminder of American virtue. In “You Can’t Fool All the People All the Time,” the audience is greeted with an amalgamation of memory, implication, and popular idioms that comprise two stanzas and a long refrain. The complete statement of the phrase “You can fool some of the people all of the time, you can fool all of the people some of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time” is set

with a simple *colla voce* accompaniment allowing the primarily eighth-note melody to take on a quaint, spoken characteristic with syncopated rhythms (see Example 3.1).

Example 3.1. Shepard N. Edmonds, “You Can’t Fool All the People All the Time,” mm. 67–75.

Lincoln’s identity is vaguely obscured at the beginning of the song—the first stanza mentions the fictional character “Mose Lincoln Lee from Tennessee”—and his apocryphal quotation is then written in African American dialect with “de” replacing “of” throughout, which along with tied syncopations in the melody, demonstrates the influence of ragtime. While encoded with African American stereotypes, this ragtime song is not blatantly racist.\(^{13}\)

\(^{13}\) Charles Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), 317–21. The moments of overt patriotism in the musical also comport with Hamm’s discussion of George M. Cohen’s ragtime-inspired offerings from this period.
The use of ragtime elements and the willingness to play with elements of race in Lincoln songs cropped up occasionally in subsequent periods, but failed to form a clear minstrel Lincoln character. Each of these efforts presented the president and topic of race in a different manner. For example, forty years later, Bing Crosby’s “Abraham” scene in Irving Berlin’s film musical *Holiday Inn* (1942) had the actor singing in blackface. Rife with racial cues, Berlin’s “Abraham” features a jazz band dressed as minstrel characters in overalls and tatter straw hats. In place of Lincoln’s signature chinstrap beard, Crosby wears curly mutton chops. The song’s second stanza is even introduced by a mammy character, who shares the story of Lincoln freeing slaves.

Conflating Lincoln and minstrel stereotypes occurs most blatantly in the Yiddish theatre production *Yente Telebende* (1916) at the famed Thomashefsky National Theatre. Largely a revue drawing scenes from existing books, plays, and serial publications about the title character, the show included the song “Washington, Lincoln, and Moses Rabiney.” It was performed by two female characters, Pine and Niger, the former white and the latter black. The lyrics mention Lincoln in order to establish his role in freeing slaves, but the remainder of the song displays the racial tension existing between African Americans and Jewish Americans in New York City. The song opens with a playful accompaniment and an offensive nineteenth-century version of the counting rhyme “Eeny, meeny, miny, moe”:

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Iny meenee maine mo
Catch a niger by the toe
If he hollers let him go
Iny meenee maine mo
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Despite the seeming friendship between Pine and Niger, the mood is undercut by mentions of the stereotypes common to minstrelsy, such as the African American character’s big ears, random dancing, and taste for watermelon. “Washington, Lincoln, and Moses Rabiney” displays the cultural lens through which the Jewish population viewed African Americans. *Yente Telebende*, like *Holiday Inn* and *Nancy Brown*, painted Lincoln’s legacy in sepia tones.

Even more than the increase in theatrical genres, presentations of Lincoln flourished in large-ensemble compositions. The interest in Lincoln that as part of a thirst for a nobler America—one that eschewed urbanization, industrialization, and dehumanization—fed the interest in creating a national genre, specifically the “Great American Symphony.” Nicholas Tawa has connected the genre to aspirations for something nobler: “[Citizens] often viewed [symphonies’] contents as having exalted moral and mental characteristics. The music could embody the most elevated principles for them.”¹⁵ And Richard Taruskin has firmly positioned rural and self-subsistent America as the spring at which symphonic composers drew water:

Artistic inspiration tended now to flow not from the industrial centers of the Eastern seaboard but from the traditional mythology of the American West, which in place of bustling urban scenes—crowds, haste, frenzy—emphasized open spaces, imperturbable vision, fortitude, and self-reliance, in other words the pioneer spirit.¹⁶

Lincoln, the pioneer hero, a man who was born in a log cabin, embodied this sought-after identity. And while composers found flexibility within the symphonic form for their Lincoln odes, they also experimented with orchestral variants too (see Table 3.1).

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Table 3.1. Large Ensemble Lincoln Compositions, 1919–44.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPOSER</th>
<th>AUTHOR / LIBRETTIST</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>PERFORMING FORCES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rubin Goldmark</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Requiem (Suggested by Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address)</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernest Bloch</td>
<td>Bloch</td>
<td>America: An Epic Rhapsody</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>orchestra (with concluding chorus of “The People”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Russell Bennett</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Abraham Lincoln: A Likeness in Symphony Form</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normand Lockwood</td>
<td>Walt Whitman</td>
<td>Requiem: When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>tenor soloist and orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Damrosch</td>
<td>Walt Whitman</td>
<td>An Abraham Lincoln Song</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>baritone soloist, chorus, and orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob Weinberg</td>
<td>Abraham Lincoln</td>
<td>Gettysburg Address, Op. 36</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>baritone soloist, chorus, and orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elie Siegmeister</td>
<td>Vachel Lindsay</td>
<td>Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight</td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>chorus and orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George McKay</td>
<td>McKay</td>
<td>To a Liberator, Op. 51</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>chorus (optional vocables) and orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaromir Weinberger</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Lincoln Symphony</td>
<td>1940</td>
<td>orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morton Gould</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Lincoln Legend</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John J. Becker</td>
<td>Abraham Lincoln</td>
<td>Symphony No. 6, “Out of Bondage”</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>soprano soloist, chorus, and orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aaron Copland</td>
<td>Abraham Lincoln</td>
<td>A Lincoln Portrait</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>narrator and orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earl Robinson</td>
<td>Millard Lampell and Abraham Lincoln</td>
<td>The Lonesome Train: A Musical Legend</td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>6 speakers, 8 vocal soloists, chorus, and orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Kleinsinger</td>
<td>Walt Whitman</td>
<td>Farewell to a Hero</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>baritone soloist, chorus, and orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Haubiel</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>1865 A.D.</td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>orchestra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy Harris</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>Symphony No. 6, “Gettysburg Symphony”</td>
<td>1944</td>
<td>orchestra</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Composers embraced Lincoln as a means to capture the essence of America in symphonic form, such as the compositions by Bennett, Mason, Weinberger, Becker, and Harris. Additionally, Goldmark, Gould, and Haubiel took up the Lincoln topos in single-movement orchestral odes; Goldmark’s Requiem title is more indicative of the composition’s reverence than of any formal affinity to a funerary ritual. A narrator or vocal soloist were added to the orchestra for
Lockwood’s and Copland’s offerings. The remaining compositions in Table 3.1 combine large choruses, orchestras, and often one or more soloists in order to laud Lincoln with large format performances. Equally notable is the degree to which Lincoln’s own words became the texts for orchestral songs, choral symphonies, requiems, and accompanied narration. The “Gettysburg Address,” in particular, inspired two instrumental compositions, Goldmark’s *Requiem* and Harris’s Symphony No. 6. When Lincoln’s words were not the focal point, Whitman’s poetry served as a seminal textual source.

Roy Harris summarized the essence of Lincoln in these works when he wrote of his Sixth Symphony, “As we mature in America, from childhood to manhood, we gradually begin to realize that Lincoln was the personification of a human ideal, an ideal for freedom, which had to be fought for, bled for, and lived for.”\(^{17}\) More than Harris’s words, his vast Lincoln *oeuvre* demonstrates the versatility the late president provided symphonists. Of course, Harris never avoided the biographical similarities that made him appear as the composer sent from “Central Casting,” specifically for the task of composing America’s soundtrack.\(^ {18}\) Harris was born in a log cabin, in Lincoln County (Oklahoma Territory), on Lincoln’s birthday, 12 February 1898. While other composers sought to tie their compositions to a historical Lincoln, Harris welcomed fate’s hand in providing him the ideal biography with which to contribute the accompaniment to the new national identity. He would not stop with the Sixth Symphony, but go on to compose a new Lincoln memorial in each decade for the rest of his life: *Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight: A Cantata of Lamentation* (1953), Symphony No. 10, Abraham Lincoln Symphony (1965), and

\(^{17}\) Roy Harris, Symphony No. 6 program note, Boston Symphony Orchestra, April 1944.

Symphony No. 13, Bicentennial Symphony (1975–76), to which I will return in Chapter 4.¹⁹ Few of his contemporaries approach Harris in terms of volume of Lincoln memorial music, but aspects of his works were shared by many, such as the use of Vachel Lindsay’s “Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight” and the connections made in his later works between Lincoln and the Civil Rights Movement.

*Lincoln and the Immigrant*

Throughout U.S. history, immigrant groups and those who have occupied distinct religious or ethnic communities in the generations after their ancestors arrived have faced challenges with regards to assimilation and acceptance as well as familiarity with cultural norms and language fluency. One method of learning a new culture and then demonstrating a love for one’s adopted home is by drawing connections between outsider narratives and those of insiders. Doing so can happen through a variety of scenarios, several of which I have noted above, such as the participation of German-American Liederkranz Societies and Männerchor during Lincoln’s funeral procession. Similarly, Charles Halpine’s Private Miles O’Reilly character remained an active figure in sheet music and Irish-American periodicals during Reconstruction. Jewish Americans, however, provided some of the most numerous musical statements of Lincoln memorialization during the first half of the twentieth century.

The prevalence of musical works by Jewish American composers is partially due to the number of people in this immigrant community who arrived in the New World with advanced

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¹⁹ Out of superstition Harris skipped “thirteen” in numbering his symphonies, and originally identified this composition as Symphony No. 14. Dan Stehman, Harris’s biographer, with the permission of the composer’s heirs, renumbered the composition as Symphony No. 13 in his catalogue. Additionally, Harris excerpted material from the third movement of Symphony No. 10 to form a stand-alone work, *Brotherhood of Man* (1966).
training in Western music. But Jewish familiarity with American musical traditions and even with the music printing industry, does not fully account for the variety of compositions that Jewish American composers contributed to the Lincoln memorial *oeuvre*. Similarly, the Jewish Americans described herein display a range of religious and social views, so I aim solely to capture the diverse ways that Jewish American composers approached Lincoln and do not seek to define a single Jewish response. Jewish Americans with Lincoln memorial contributions from this period include Harold Arlen, Irving Berlin, Ernest Bloch, Harry Coopersmith, Aaron Copland, David Diamond, Rubin Goldmark, Morton Gould, Jerome Kern, George Kleinsinger, Joseph Schrogin, Elie Siegmeister, Kurt Weill, Jacob Weinberg, Jaromír Weinberger, and Stefan Wolpe. However, these composers’ Jewish heritage did not lead them to seek similar ways to portray their identity. Philip V. Bohlman has even questioned the role of race and religion versus politics in pre-Holocaust compositions, reminding scholars of how compositions that on their face appear to espouse Jewish identity, upon analysis may contain content more suited to readings from alternate contexts.20 In the case of Lincoln compositions, the primary consideration is how composers incorporated the sixteenth president into statements of their immigrant and/or Jewish cultural experience.

Jewish American interest in Lincoln extended back to the president’s lifetime.21 It is also equally observable in art forms other than music. For example, Nathaniel Chasin of Washington, DC, created a 1926 calligraphic in which he formed Lincoln’s bust through microcalligraphy of

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21 Gary P. Zola, *We Called Him Rabbi Abraham: Lincoln and American Jewry, A Documentary History* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014). Zola’s study demonstrates that Jewish affection for Lincoln has had an unbroken narrative from the 1860s to the present.
the “Gettysburg Address.”\textsuperscript{22} Despite the presence of Lincoln in Yiddish theater, the concert hall provided the venue where audiences encountered the largest number of the Jewish American Lincoln compositions. Simultaneous with Chasin setting pen to paper for his Lincoln commemoration, Ernest Bloch dedicated his three-movement symphonic survey \textit{America: An Epic Rhapsody} to Abraham Lincoln and Walt Whitman. Bloch, a composer frequently identified with music on Jewish topics, such as his \textit{Three Jewish Poems} (1913), \textit{Schelomo} (1915–16), and \textit{Suite hébraïque} (1951), crafted a rhapsody that was greeted as both entirely Jewish and American by the Jewish American press.

The question for many immigrant composers was whether to merge their past and present by employing various melodies, styles, or markers. Writing about Bloch’s rhapsody the following year, on the sixty-second anniversary of Lincoln’s death, Heyman Zimel addressed the composer’s balancing act.\textsuperscript{23} Zimel’s title, “The Composer Who Expresses His Hebraism: Ernest Bloch Believes That the Racial Strain Is Dominant in Man,” implies that the composer’s Jewishness is inherently at the fore in his work. While the article remains hagiographic throughout, with Zimel calling Bloch “the finest great composer of Jewish music,” the author absolves Bloch of needing to include Jewish melodies in order to fully capture the spirit of his heritage. Zimel avoids a detailed discussion of Bloch’s \textit{America}—likely because he had yet to see the score or hear a performance—but he provided a nuanced schema through which to understand the rhapsody: \textit{America} should be heard as a New-World ode, imbued with Jewish

\textsuperscript{22} Nathaniel Chasin, \textit{Abraham Lincoln}, 1926, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois, Lincoln Collection, LP-1308.

spirit, but free of identifiably Jewish content. Zimel’s argument, beyond the broad praise for Bloch, was not adopted by other critics.

After the rhapsody won the $3,000 prize offered by Musical America for a new symphonic work by an American composer, David Ewen commented:

It has taken a foreigner and a Jew to show us the true spirit of America and to set it down in sublime and imperishable music. America: An Epic Rhapsody does not come from a Nordic, nor from a descendant of one who came here on the Mayflower. It comes from one of those “poor Jews” who find it so painfully difficult to be assimilated here, from a poor Jew who loves his America more profoundly than any true-blooded American.24

Ewen’s comments reveal a pertinacious pride that appears to have resulted from others’ assumptions about Jewish Americans. He adds: “America is the first work to speak of America in an American idiom. It is also the first work of our modern age that is not a thing ‘of shreds and patches.’”25 If by “shreds and patches” Ewen meant musical borrowing, then his case was indefensible.26 The American-ness of Bloch’s America results, in large part, from the types of features often associated with the music of Charles Ives. The second movement, for example, which is the seemingly nearest to Lincoln as it represents the Civil War period, bears an epigram from Whitman’s Leaves of Grass:

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear …
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else …
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious song …

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26 Klára Móricz, Jewish Identities: Nationalism, Racism, and Utopianism in Twentieth-Century Music (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 3–4. Móricz has demonstrated that Ewen’s critiques of Jewishness were, at best, amorphous, and this often led to his use of indefinable terms and phrases.
In responding to Whitman, Bloch borrowed from the songs that Americans sang, including “Row after Row,” “Old Folks at Home,” “Pop Goes the Weasel,” “Hail Columbia,” and “America.” Then, during the movement’s middle section, which represents the war itself, Bloch has four battlefield anthems converge—“Dixie,” “Battle Cry of Freedom,” “Tramp, Tramp, Tramp,” and “John Brown’s Body”—as if multiple bands were approaching the frontline. He not only borrows these tunes in the second movement, but also concludes the third movement with brief reprises before the melodies coalesce into a newly composed hymn, which he notated on a single staff for “The People.” The hymn’s lyrics are closely tied to a theme of the period: “America! Thy name is in my heart. My love for thee arouses me to nobler thoughts and deeds.” That Ewen missed Bloch’s stylistic allusion to American hymnody can be blamed on excessive pride. To wit, the critic exclaimed, “America is perfection and, in being perfect, defies analysis.” Perhaps Ewen, so transfixed by the rhapsody, failed to contemplate that Bloch’s success—especially as a newly naturalized American citizen—was in creating a composition that had the fingerprints of someone fully immersed in American culture. Leta E. Miller, on the other hand, has considered this finale a testament to the composer’s understanding of American idioms: “For Bloch—who was accused, even in this work, of imbuing all his music with a distinctively Jewish flavor—this ending evoked instead the elegant simplicity of the U.S. Protestant hymn tradition.”

Other reviewers understood America as a very different musical work: an example of Bloch’s cultural versatility. Isaac Goldberg dismissed any notion of musical nationalism; rather, he argued that Bloch’s success was in understanding his subjects and then composing in a manner that was topically relevant. Goldberg concluded, “The Bloch of America is just as

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much a Jew in any valid sense as the Bloch of *The Israel Symphony* (1916).” Such analysis allowed audiences to separate the composer and his identity from the tools, techniques, and styles he employs in any given composition. The debate about Bloch’s Jewish identity and how it appeared in his compositions can be contextualized with the efforts of his Jewish contemporaries.

In 1926 as Bloch had submitted *America* for *Musical America*’s contest, Jacob Weinberg entered his opera *Hechalutz [The Pioneers]* for the U.S. Sesquicentennial Exposition composition contest.29 On its face, Weinberg’s Hebrew libretto describing the homesteading of Palestine by Polish immigrants appears an odd choice for a patriotic festival; however, parallel narratives in American and Jewish memory converge in the first of its three acts.30 The audience meets characters who yearn for religious freedom, people willing to work hard to establish lives and maintain property and families eager to set out for a new homeland.31 The first-act finale elucidates these immigrants’ cultural similarities when two of the pioneers, Zev and Deborah, are joined by the Chorus in a number that addresses threats of pogroms, life in the ghettos, and persecution that recalls slavery in Egypt. The characters resolve to seek a new life in Palestine,

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30 Weinberg began composing the opera in late 1923 or early 1924 while living in Palestine. He drafted the libretto in Russian, his native language, and recruited Joseph Markovsky to do the Hebrew translation. If Weinberg set the Russian text to music, it was never published and has not survived. The 1926 score that Weinberg submitted to the Exposition used a Hebrew text. Thereafter, Weinberg commissioned an English translation from Arthur Mendel of New York, and a Yiddish translation from Meyer Chartiner of Vienna. The Hebrew, English, and Yiddish texts were included in the first published vocal score: Jacob Weinberg, *The Pioneers: Scenes from Folk-Life in Palestine*, Op. 18 (New York: J. Fischer, 1932).

31 In the first-act finale, Weinberg addresses Eastern European Jews’ desire to escape the pogroms, presumably a specific reference to the still-raw wounds of the Lwów Pogrom (1918) and Kiev Pogroms (1919).
and the four-part chorus launches into a canon on the declaration “We go.”

Throughout the opera Weinberg, an Odessa-born, Moscow-trained composer, draws on the scriptural and historical notion of voyaging to the Promised Land. However, the opera’s performance history—having won the $1,000-prize offered by the Sesquicentennial Exposition and then earning initial stagings solely at U.S. venues—meant that even gentile audiences were able to appreciate the notion of a national identity predicated on traveling to a new land and seeking opportunity. This narrative recalls the journey to Canaan, but also emphasizes the importance of an uncompromising work ethic, a trait lauded by Americans.

As a matter of style, The Pioneers is comedic, while also addressing such weighty issues as anti-Semitism and Zionism. It displays the composer’s interest in musical borrowing through paraphrases of Jewish folk songs and Arabic melodies. Most significantly, it is an opera in

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32 The 1932 publication uses the exclamations “heydad” and “hurrah” in place of “we go.”

33 Lewis Appleton, Music of Gershon Ephros, Solomon Rosowsky, Heinrich Schalit, and Jacob Weinberg (New York: National Jewish Music Council, 1963), 25; “Jacob Weinberg, Composer, Was 77,” New York Times, 3 November 1956; “Jacob Weinberg Heard,” New York Times, 8 April 1928; Ellen Weinberg Mausner, e-mail message to author, 17 July 2013; Macy Nulman, Concise Encyclopedia of Jewish Music (New York: McGraw Hill, 1975), 259; and Jacob Weinberg, “Autobiography,” Tatslil 6 (January 1966): 100. Authors have provided a range of dates from 1924 to 1928 for Weinberg’s arrival in the United States. His New York Times obituary reads: “Developments of the Russian revolution induced him to leave [Odessa] for Palestine, where he lived from 1921 to 1926. In the latter year he came to this country.” Appleton does not provide a specific year for Weinberg’s arrival, but uses a later date for the start of the composer’s time in Palestine—1923—and implies that Weinberg was in the United States in time for the 1926 Sesquicentennial Exposition. Since the Exposition’s composition contest did not involve any performances by Weinberg, it is possible that he merely submitted his composition without being on site. Regardless of Weinberg’s whereabouts in 1926, we know that he was assuredly stateside by 1928, because of an April 1928 concert review. Based on Weinberg’s 1928 performance and his appointment that year to the faculty of the New York College of Music, Nulman provides this late date as the time of his arrival. Weinberg’s one-paragraph autobiographical sketch, which was only published posthumously in Tatslil, does not include an arrival date, only a mention that he came to the United States after being in Palestine. Based on Weinberg family history, I place the composer’s arrival c. 1926.

keeping with Weinberg’s belief that composers, in order to create “poignant works of art,” must embrace their own cultural, ethnic, and political identity.\textsuperscript{35} He was steadfast in his profession of this ideal, using the op-ed page of the \textit{New York Times} and a series of public lectures to profess his belief. He criticized composers, such as Arthur Honegger \textit{[sic]}, Darius Milhaud, and Arnold Schoenberg, as “musician-Jews.”\textsuperscript{36} Weinberg claimed that they were “automatically connected with their race … by origin,” but lesser quality composers than artists in a second category, “Jewish musicians.” He considered the music of composers from the former group to be “a contribution to mankind,” but he continued, “It is of no high national value.” Stated simply, Weinberg prized composers who used their art to reflect their identity. This was the case with \textit{The Pioneers}, and it became an increasingly identifiable characteristic in the music he composed during his time in the United States.

Weinberg’s dichotomy of the “musician Jew” and “Jewish musician,” however, was precisely the type of division to which Aaron Copland objected in his 1951 lecture “Jewish Composers in the Western World.”\textsuperscript{37} Copland was not only dismissive of “the specifically ‘Jewish’ composers,” claiming that the only leading figure to emerge from the pack was Bloch, but he concluded, “The truly Jewish composer need not worry about his Jewishness—it will be evident in the work.” Weinberg took a different track. Aiming to blend his identities, Weinberg employed American political speeches, incorporated folk melodies in his compositions, and


\textsuperscript{36} Weinberg, “Racial Music.” Weinberg’s inclusion of Honegger, a gentile, in the list of “musician-Jews,” demonstrates that perhaps more than familiarity with these composers and their lives and works, he based his classification on the reception of their \textit{oeuvre} at the time. Weinberg’s inclusion of Schoenberg, in particular, raises questions about how he may have responded to one of the composer’s post-World War II compositions, such as \textit{A Survivor from Warsaw} (1947).

\textsuperscript{37} Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, \textit{Copland since 1943} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 173.
memorialized national heroes. No American topic was more important for this immigrant
composer than Abraham Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address,” which he treated as the epitome of the
nation’s promises for those seeking her asylum. Weinberg was so fond of the speech that he set it
three times.

Weinberg’s first foray into America’s musical life produced mixed results. The Pioneers
won the $1,000-prize, but earned few performances. The opera’s Hebrew text proved to be a
stumbling block, forcing the composer to include excerpts in smaller concert performances and
commission translations of the text, eventually mounting the premiere in 1934, a decade after
starting the project. During those intervening years, the composer immersed himself in the life of
the Jewish-American community: he taught and advocated for Jewish culture, and studied the
traditions and history of the New World.38

Weinberg’s first attempt to compose a work about the American experience came in
1936, when he set the “Gettysburg Address.” This choice of topic was familiar to Jewish-
Americans immigrants. Sociologist Barry Schwartz has argued, “Since Jews epitomized the
marginal and despised, their representations of Lincoln illustrated newcomers’ feelings best of
all.”39 And Beth Wenger has suggested that authors’ attempts to place Lincoln in the mind of
Jewish characters prior to their arrival in the United States helped to demonstrate that this was a
population eager to belong in American society.40 The idea of Lincoln as a man with whom Jews
could relate was then common in the performing arts. For example, in a moment rich with


Press, 2000), 196.

University Press, 2010), 88.
symbolism and cultural meaning, Elma Ehrlich Levinger provided the audience of her one-act play *At the Gates* (1925) with a dialogue between two brothers making their way to America aboard an ocean liner:

[Joseph (11) to his brother, Herschel (14)]: Remember, Herschie, how father used to read to us from his little book about Abraham Lincoln, till we got to think he must have been a king in America or something. He was just a poor boy like us, too, and as soon as I get to New York I’m going to start cutting wood and making speeches till I get to be president.41

Meanwhile in literature, Jewish-American writers, such as Edward A. Steiner, penned Lincoln historical fiction.42

Weinberg composed *The Gettysburg Address* simultaneously with his *Servizio pentatonico*, a five-note Sabbath service for baritone soloist and mixed chorus, thereby establishing a characteristic found in his three Gettysburg settings: he often composed works for identical performing forces at the same time.43 In this instance these compositions use the same vocal parts—male voice and accompanying choir. A practical alteration is the only difference in performance requirements for the two works: Weinberg included an organ accompaniment for the liturgical Sabbath service, but two pianos for the concert piece. For *The Gettysburg Address*, he offered three further arrangements: he orchestrated its two piano parts for large ensemble, maintained the two pianos and added obbligato parts for brass and percussion, and composed additional choral parts to replace the instrumental accompaniment entirely. M. Witmark and Sons published all three versions as Op. 36 in 1936.


As early as January of that year Weinberg had promoted the composition as “a musical memorial for Abraham Lincoln.”⁴⁴ He continued to discuss the work with the press for five months prior to the May premiere of the two-piano version as part of the Federal Music Project’s American Music Festival in New York City.⁴⁵ Copland participated in the same festival, conducting his First Symphony earlier in the day. Biographer Howard Pollack has identified this as one of at least two occasions when Copland heard performances of Lincoln memorials, prior to his own Lincoln Portrait.⁴⁶

The following year baritone Theodore Webb, the Dessoff Choirs, and the National Orchestra Association led by Leon Barzin offered the orchestral version of The Gettysburg Address at Carnegie Hall.⁴⁷ Unlike the muted reception of The Pioneers, The Gettysburg Address enjoyed frequent performances. A February 1940 performance of Weinberg’s Gettysburg Address by a 110-piece orchestra and 300-member choir comprised of New York high school students showcased the work’s potential for large, public displays.⁴⁸ Later that month, WNYC radio aired a performance for a special program in honor of Lincoln’s Birthday.⁴⁹ U.S. involvement in World War II increased the American public’s interest in and respect for Lincoln. And two weeks after the liberation of Auschwitz and Birkenau in 1945, the choir of the United

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States Naval Reserve Midshipmen School performed Weinberg’s unaccompanied version at New York’s Riverside Church.\textsuperscript{50}

In comparison with his other secular vocal compositions, \textit{The Gettysburg Address} is an extended work, at approximately fifteen minutes. For the baritone soloist, Weinberg set the complete text of the Bliss copy of Lincoln’s speech.\textsuperscript{51} The text is in English throughout. Weinberg offered a syllabic setting of Lincoln’s address that is free of word repetition, until the final statement, “That we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth,” which is repeated verbatim; and then the concluding words “from the earth” are echoed twice more. The only text that Weinberg appends is a paraphrase provided by the choir to introduce Lincoln’s speech: “This message to mankind shall not perish from the earth” (see Example 3.2).\textsuperscript{52} The remaining choral entries occur only as accompanimental humming and for the emphasis of dramatic passages—in total a mere fifty-seven measures of choral music. The composition’s musical focus is the baritone’s melody, supported by sparse piano accompaniment. That melody features repeating notes and frequent step-wise motion recalling the spoken nature of the original address. Further emphasizing the text’s origins, Weinberg frequently changes meter to accommodate Lincoln’s uneven phrases and prosody (see Example 3.3).


\textsuperscript{51} Small variations exist among the five extant versions of the speech in Lincoln’s hand. The copy provided to Colonel Alexander Bliss is the most commonly reproduced version of the speech, as it is believed to be Lincoln’s final version, complete with title, signature, and date.


Weinberg’s setting remains wholly secular, free of any musical or textual clue of the composer’s religion, ethnicity, or cultural background—at first blush, the work of a “musician-Jew” not dissimilar to Copland’s *A Lincoln Portrait* (1942). However, viewed through the lens of early twentieth-century Jewish-American identity, Weinberg’s composition comports with the terms he used: “a musical memorial” and a “symphonic ode” to an American who was revered by natural-born and immigrant alike.
Weinberg titled his second setting *The Gettisburg Address*, in keeping with the Yiddish translation that he employed. This version, without an opus number, survives in two hand-written scores, both dated November 1943.\(^5^3\) Weinberg credited the Yiddish translation of Lincoln’s speech to Lazarus Trommer, a civil engineer and professional writer known for his English, Hebrew, Russian, and Yiddish poetry, and prose in a range of Jewish periodicals.\(^5^4\) In the early 1940s, Trommer was politically active in the American League to Combat Anti-Semitism. There is no record of Weinberg’s involvement in the organization, but one can at least see a shift in his wartime benefit concerts—initially his efforts were for British troops, but his later events supported the suffering Jewish communities in Europe and those attempting to immigrate to Palestine or the United States. On 6 February 1943, just one month before *The Gettisburg Address*, Weinberg participated in a Jewish benefit concert, and then on 20 February he performed at a similar event at Carnegie Hall hosted by the Jewish Music Alliance, an organization that attempted to publish *The Gettisburg Address* later in the year.\(^5^5\) These Jewish benefit concerts consumed a sizable portion of Weinberg’s time and may help to explain the differences found in his second Gettysburg setting. Weinberg’s interest in composing music that captured his cultural, ethnic, and political identity explains why he would seek to have one of America’s most recognizable political speeches translated into Yiddish—in Weinberg’s parlance,


\(^{54}\) “Lazarus Trommer, Engineer Here, Dies” *New York Times*, 10 August 1957. Trommer used a variety of pen names including Elbert Aidline, Elbert Aidline-Trommer, and Elbert A. Trommer. He served on the staff of multiple Jewish periodicals, such as associate editor of the *American Hebrew* (1916–1919), and as managing editor of the *Jewish Tribune* (1920), *Jewish Daily News* (1921–1924), *The Nation*, and *Menorah Journal*.

\(^{55}\) “Jewish Arts Fete Planned,” *New York Times*, 5 February 1943. *The Gettisburg Address* score housed at the New York Public Library includes Jewish Music Alliance publication information, but the composition was not prepared or printed for distribution.
the act of a “Jewish musician.” Unlike the sung setting of his Op. 36, *The Gettisburg Address* shifts from sung text to spoken text for the passage starting, “We are met on a great battlefield of the war” (see Example 3.4).


This shift to recitation underscored the address’ relevance to the war at hand. He repeated this technique for “We cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate …,” as well as, “The world will little note nor long remember what we say here.” Weinberg went one step further to emphasize the setting’s wartime context by including excerpts from the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” (see Example 3.5) and “Taps” (see Example 3.6) for which he included an obbligato bugle part. In this regard, a composition that could have sounded foreign to non-Yiddish speakers was made familiar through musical borrowing. Weinberg had melded his musical worlds.
Example 3.5. Jacob Weinberg, *The Gettisburg Address*, mm. 43–49. Copyright administered by the Weinberg family. Used by permission.

As with his first Gettysburg composition, The Gettisburg Address mirrors Weinberg’s contemporaneous musical output. Having only rarely set Yiddish texts prior to this time, the composer had started participating in Yiddish concerts during the war, signaling ethnic and cultural solidarity with European Jews. During these concerts Weinberg learned more of the national themes that other Jewish-American composers were including in their works, and he responded with a flurry of American topics for his new compositions. In Song of Heroes (1944), he set the Ten Commandments alongside speeches by Dwight Eisenhower and Douglas MacArthur. His Taps (1945) is a setting of a speech by Catholic Cardinal Samuel Stritch opposing the rise of anti-Semitism in Europe and the United States. That same year Weinberg expanded his sources from American political speeches to American poetry, when he set Vachel Lindsay’s “An Indian Summer Day on the Prairie.” Weinberg’s outpouring of musical works on American topics in general, and his setting of Lincoln’s speech in a Jewish cultural tongue in particular can be understood as an effort to blend his musical and personal identities—in Weinberg’s parlance, the acts of a “Jewish musician.”

In the postwar period, Weinberg grew increasingly overt in connecting his experiences and interests with social and political positions. When in 1947 he organized a New York performance to support the Zionist cause, he did not turn to Jewish folk songs or scripture;

57 George Kleinsinger set Walt Whitman’s I Hear America Singing (1941), Vladimir Heifetz turned to Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s 1941 “State of the Union” address for Four Freedoms (1943), and Hugo Adler adapted the words of Benjamin Franklin for Parable against Persecution (1946).
59 Jacob Weinberg, Taps, music manuscript, Hebrew Union College, New York, NY.
60 Florence Price set Lindsay’s “An Indian Summer” in 1936. Coincidentally, she also composed a Lincoln musical memorial with her setting of Lindsay’s “Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight.”
rather, he began a composition titled *The Statue of Liberty.*

Surviving in a fragment it shows Weinberg’s interest in employing music to juxtapose identity, and in this case, the ideals of Emma Lazarus’s sonnet “The New Colossus.”

Weinberg was equally willing to wade in political waters. He set an Adlai Stevenson presidential campaign speech to music in a song he called *I See an America* (1953). But it was his last American-themed composition that provided a return to Lincoln. Weinberg’s *Gettysburg Address*, Op. 64, is a four-part vocal setting. Absent are the dramatic instrumental flourishes of Op. 36 and the Yiddish text of *The Gettisburg Address*. Again he set the Bliss copy of the address in its entirety, without any repetition until the concluding *pianissimo* echo of the words “from the earth.” The Jewish People’s Philharmonic Chorus and conductor Eugene Malek premiered the work on 18 December 1954 at New York’s Town Hall. Transcontinental Music immediately published it with Lincoln’s bust on the cover. The composer prepared orchestral parts that an ensemble could rent from Transcontinental, and a copy of these rental parts survive.

Weinberg’s final *Gettysburg Address* represents the degree to which the composer embraced his American citizenship. He composed it in the style of eighteenth-century psalmody—a fuging tune. The composition begins with the expected homophonic and homorhythmic section (see Example 3.7).

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Weinberg used duple and triple rhythmic divisions in order to accommodate Lincoln’s prosody—a departure from the mixed meters he employed in Op. 36. The initial section concludes with a cadence to an open octave; after a caesura, the imitative “B” section begins (see Example 3.8). Unlike Weinberg’s initial lengthy symphonic ode, his fusing tune lasts for just six minutes.

While some of Weinberg’s papers have survived, they presumably comprise a small portion of his Nachlaß. We do not know if he was reading Lincoln biographies or Civil War histories at the time of these compositions. We also do not know if he discussed his Lincoln

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65 The bulk of Weinberg’s papers are held by the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.
compositions with other composers. We can tell, however, that his affinity for Lincoln exceeded merely that of a musical topic. For Weinberg, Lincoln’s words represented the very finest statements of American hope. Two weeks before his death, when he spoke at the fall 1956 American Musicological Society Greater New York Chapter Meeting, he offered a paper in which he encouraged the membership to remember the centennial of Sergey Ivanovich Taneyev, his teacher. Weinberg described Taneyev’s place in the history of Russian music and provided an overview of his student-centered pedagogy. In one extraordinary passage, Weinberg employed the “Gettysburg Address” as a metaphor for a 1905 political manifesto on the lives of Moscow musicians. Taneyev had been the first of twenty-nine prominent composers to sign the letter, and while not a significant turning point in his own biography, Weinberg’s framing of the document provides a window into the student’s passion for Lincoln. Weinberg began the passage by pointing out Taneyev’s morals, and then wrote:

In politics Taneyev was an irreconcilable foe of despotism, which ruled his country for centuries. In [February] 1905 he was the first one to sign the famous Address of Moscow Musicians, a fiery protest against the suffocating acts of the regime and a request for basic governmental reforms in the direction of the Western democracies. The Address’s lofty spirit reminds one of Lincoln’s Gettysburg speech, or even more, the Declaration of Independence.

For Weinberg, the “Gettysburg Address” was not only good rhetoric, it was a great ideal.

Considering Weinberg’s three “Gettysburg Address” settings in the context of his own paradigm, ranging from “musician-Jew” to “Jewish musician,” requires acknowledging that his framework holds all of the qualities that Klára Móricz has identified as a form of anti-Semitism.

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67 Though Taneyev was first to sign the letter, Joel Engel drafted the contents.
promulgated by Jews. Weinberg attempted to judge a qualitative measure of Jewishness and thereby remove others’ claims to their cultural identity. In rejecting that scheme, the analyst is still left with three settings of the “Gettysburg Address” through which Weinberg attempted to assert both his Americanness and Jewishness in varying degrees. To this end the 1936 setting contains the smallest number of identifiably Jewish characteristics. The 1943 setting, appears more Jewish, because of the use of a Yiddish translation, but it is also a setting that employs musical borrowing from “Taps” and “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” And while Weinberg crafted the 1954 setting as a fuging tune, it is one of his rare late compositions directed to a Jewish audience. While the composer had succeeded in attracting major publishers for many of his compositions, he sent Op. 64 to Transcontinental, a small Jewish publishing house. And while he had secured performances of his music from diverse ensembles, he opted to have Op. 64 premiered by the Jewish People’s Philharmonic Chorus. These choices betray some of Weinberg’s otherwise guarded political and ideological associations. The Jewish People’s Philharmonic Chorus, for example, was founded to promote Jewish socialist organizing. And Lazarus Trommer’s Yiddish translations were adopted not only by Zionist figures, but also Jewish labor and communist advocates.

Weinberg’s identity was more complicated than the degree of Jewish extroversion that he sought in other composers. His paradigm failed to acknowledge a place for other Jewish

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68 Móricz, Jewish Identities, 9–10.

69 Schirmer and Theodore Presser had published his early piano music, such as Op. 13 and 19 (Schirmer) and Op. 25 (Presser). Presser continued publishing Weinberg’s new piano compositions as late as 1959. Weinberg has also worked with Carl Fischer on the publication of his Op. 55 string quartet.

Americans engaged in similarly difficult questions. For example, where did Jaromír Weinberger fit into Weinberg’s outline? Weinberger had significant interest in the Palestine pioneer narrative, for which he composed his *Homage to the Pioneers* (1940). Weinberger also displayed a fondness for Lincoln, having composed his wartime *Lincoln Symphony* (1940), which was premiered by the patriotic programmer Eugene Goossens and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra on 17 October 1941.\(^{71}\) Weinberg would have presumably held a dim view of Weinberger’s *Lincoln Symphony* since it contains no overtly Jewish elements; to the contrary, the composer employed Christian themes, including incipits drawn from Matthew’s and Luke’s Gospels. Weinberger’s Americanism was most clearly underscored with the third movement, which was an instrumental depiction of Walt Whitman’s poem “O Captain! My Captain!”

Historian Beth Wenger has called the reinvention of Lincoln by American Jews an attempt to draw the president into a shared cultural fold.\(^{72}\) While Weinberg assuredly attempted to connect his experience as an American with Lincoln’s, he also discounted the efforts of many other émigré and/or ethnic composers, including fellow Jewish Americans. Other composers in comparable situations, such as Weinberger, sought Americanness through the experience of the nation’s culture with which they were most familiar, and for many émigrés in the 1930s and 1940s, that was often the poetry of Whitman.

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\(^{71}\) Sarah Anne Melton, “An American Idea: Aaron Copland’s Fanfare for the Common Man” (MM thesis, University of Cincinnati, 2010), 4–5. Goossens, a British citizen, served as the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra’s resident conductor from 1931 to 1947. Especially during World War II he led efforts to build patriotism and support the U.S. Armed Forces, most notably with his second series of fanfare commissions.

\(^{72}\) Wenger, *History Lessons*, 81.
Walt Whitman as Lincoln Lyricist

Bloch, Weinberger, and even Weinberg in The Pioneers employed Whitman’s poetry for epigrams or movement titles. While Whitman is the most set American poet, none of these three composers employed his poetry for sung texts. A mere dozen native-born composers had set Whitman’s Lincoln poems in the years prior to 1918. By contrast, after World War I interest in setting Whitman exploded (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. Lincoln Musical Memorials with Whitman Texts, 1918–48.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPOSER</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>GENRE</th>
<th>POEM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Farwell</td>
<td>O Captain! My Captain!</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>chorus</td>
<td>O Captain! My Captain!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Campbell-Tipton</td>
<td>Two Songs to Words by Walt Whitman, Op. 33</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>art song</td>
<td>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James H. Rogers</td>
<td>Dark Mother, Always Gliding Near</td>
<td>1919</td>
<td>art song</td>
<td>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William H. Neidlinger</td>
<td>Memories of Lincoln</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>art song</td>
<td>Memories of President Lincoln</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gustav Holst</td>
<td>Ode to Death, Op. 38</td>
<td>1922</td>
<td>chorus</td>
<td>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fay Foster</td>
<td>O Captain! My Captain!</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>children’s song</td>
<td>O Captain! My Captain!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Anderson</td>
<td>O Captain! My Captain!, Op. 19</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>chorus</td>
<td>O Captain! My Captain!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edgar S. Kelley</td>
<td>O Captain! My Captain!, Op. 19</td>
<td>1926</td>
<td>chorus</td>
<td>O Captain! My Captain!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Ching</td>
<td>Ode to Death</td>
<td>1927</td>
<td>cantata</td>
<td>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas C. Whitmer</td>
<td>Choral Rhapsody</td>
<td>1928</td>
<td>chorus</td>
<td>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will Earhart</td>
<td>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>art song</td>
<td>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johanna Müller-Hermann</td>
<td>Lied der Erinnerung (In Memoriam), Op. 30</td>
<td>1930</td>
<td>chorus</td>
<td>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


74 Whitman published his four Lincoln poems—“When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d,” “O Captain! My Captain!,” “Hush’d Be the Camps To-day,” and “This Dust Was Once the Man”—collectively known as Memories for President Lincoln in his insert “Sequel to Drum Taps.” The “Sequel” made it into many of the first editions of Drum Taps, even though that collection had already gone to print at the time Lincoln was shot. In 1888 Whitman published a fifth Lincoln poem, “Abraham Lincoln, B. February 12, 1809.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composer/Songwriter</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Year(s)</th>
<th>Genres</th>
<th>Text/Setting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normand Lockwood</td>
<td><em>Requiem: When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</em></td>
<td>1931</td>
<td>requiem</td>
<td>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter Damrosch</td>
<td><em>An Abraham Lincoln Song</em></td>
<td>1934 &amp; 1936</td>
<td>orchestral song</td>
<td>O Captain! My Captain!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl Amadeus Hartmann</td>
<td>untitled cantata for soprano and orchestra</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>cantata</td>
<td>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John L. Seymour</td>
<td><em>O Captain! My Captain!, Op. 42</em></td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>chorus</td>
<td>O Captain! My Captain!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russel Wragg</td>
<td><em>Lilacs</em></td>
<td>1937</td>
<td>art song</td>
<td>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthur Bergh</td>
<td><em>O Captain! My Captain!, Op. 29</em></td>
<td>1938</td>
<td>chorus</td>
<td>O Captain! My Captain!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurt Weill</td>
<td><em>O Captain! My Captain!</em></td>
<td>1942</td>
<td>art song</td>
<td>O Captain! My Captain!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Kleinsinger</td>
<td><em>Farewell to a Hero</em></td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>cantata</td>
<td>Memories of President Lincoln</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Ward</td>
<td><em>Hush’d Be the Camps To-day</em></td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>chorus</td>
<td>Hush’d be the Camps To-day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Hindemith</td>
<td><em>Sing on There in the Swamp</em></td>
<td>1943</td>
<td>art song</td>
<td>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman Söring Wright</td>
<td><em>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</em></td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>art song</td>
<td>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurt Weill</td>
<td><em>Street Scene (Duet “Remember That I Care”)</em></td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>American opera</td>
<td>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Hindemith</td>
<td><em>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d: A Requiem for Those We Loved</em></td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>requiem</td>
<td>When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stefan Wolpe</td>
<td><em>Three Songs</em></td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>art song</td>
<td>O Captain! My Captain!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celius Dougherty</td>
<td><em>Hush’d Be the Camps To-day</em></td>
<td>1948</td>
<td>art song</td>
<td>Hush’d be the Camps To-day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The information above raises questions about the increased interest in Whitman’s Lincoln texts. Had the boom in settings occurred only in 1941–1945, then I would concur with Annegret Fauser’s assertion that wartime composers saw Whitman as the “quintessential poetic embodiment of Americanism.” However, there are several factors that explain the pre-1941 interest in setting Whitman, especially since setting his poetry was one approach to the Lincoln *topos* that native-born and immigrant composers shared. First, in the decades following Lincoln’s assassination many authors and private citizens contributed poetry and prose descriptions of the

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president, but very few of these circulated to the same extent as Whitman’s poetry. This was the case in the United States, but also in Europe, as Kim H. Kowalke has shown. A76 Austrian and German-born composers, such as Walter Damrosch, Karl Amadeus Hartmann, Paul Hindemith, Johanna Müller-Hermann, Kurt Weill, and Stefan Wolpe learned Whitman’s poetry while growing up in Europe. Thus, while one could expect that émigrés, such as Damrosch, Hindemith, Weill, and Wolpe, benefited from additional exposure to Whitman while living in the United States, the trip across the Atlantic was unnecessary for Hartmann and Müller-Hermann, who each composed lengthy concert works based on “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d.”

A second consideration is the added interest in Whitman that resulted from the 1919 centennial of his birth, which was commemorated in both Europe and the United States. Similar to the increased interest occasioned by Lincoln’s birth commemorations, the Whitman centennial invited reprints of his works, featured stories in periodicals and literary journals, poetry readings, and even ceremonial dinners with memorial speeches. Biographies from the time highlighted the topics widely seen as central to his life and works. Léon Bazalgette’s French-language biography, which was translated into English by Ellen Fitzgerald, as well as the biographies offered by Will Hayes and John Bailey shared a common narrative about Whitman’s Civil War years. All three authors distilled that part of Whitman’s life into a story about his service as a

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volunteer nurse. The Whitman of the centennial biographies was a man with whom war-weary, early twentieth-century readers could relate. He was an artist who faced war, but not as a soldier. He was horrified by what he saw, and he responded with his daily visits to field hospitals and his art. His wartime poetry embraces the soldiers, contextualizes the tragedy, provides comfort, lauds the heroes—especially Lincoln—but does not glorify war. For composers who had experienced the First World War or who were experiencing the effects of the Second World War, Whitman provided a model for how they could serve humanity during wartime. In returning to that search for meaning, the nobler purpose, which Gannon and Blight have identified as critical to understanding this time, twentieth-century composers found comfort and support in Whitman’s texts. Through the wars of their time, composers shared in Whitman’s experience. By setting his words they validated their service: chronicling the factum historicum of their lives. That these poems discussed Lincoln added an even greater sense of authenticity to their experience.

This is brought into relief when comparing Hindemith’s setting of “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d,” with settings of the same poem offered decades later by George Crumb and Jennifer Higdon. Crumb in Apparition (1979) and Higdon in Dooryard Bloom (2004) omitted all of Whitman’s passages that specifically addressed Lincoln’s funeral train, such as

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,
Through day and night with the great cloud darkening the land,
With the pomp of the inloop’d flags with the cities draped in black,
With the show of the States themselves as of crape-veil’d women standing ….

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descriptions of Whitman’s time as a volunteer nurse during the Civil War. Bazalgette and Hayes each devote a chapter to the topic. Fitzgerald dedicates her translation to her father, and in so doing provides the following note, “Best type of the common average for whose stories of the war and of Lincoln I dedicate this tribute to the poet of the war and of Lincoln.”
In Hindemith’s setting—which was not only a musical expression of Whitman’s tribute to Lincoln, but it was Hindemith’s memorial to the recently deceased Franklin Roosevelt, by way of Whitman’s ode to Lincoln—the composer presents a funeral march where the accompaniment turns to staccato quarter notes that intensify the martial and solemn nature of the scene. Hindemith not only embraced the story of Lincoln’s death, but the concept of a nation in mourning; as it had been in 1865, it was again in 1945. Kowalke has shown that Hindemith carefully cloaked Jewish signals in his composition in order to establish a platform for his conflicted post-war emotions. Hindemith’s is a requiem that reconciles public and private mourning, concern for his wife’s family members and friends in Europe and America, and the commemoration of Lincoln and Roosevelt. Crumb and Higdon, writing at very different times, offered presentations of Whitman’s poetry that focused solely on personal mourning, not on communal grief. While Weinberg and Bloch were able to join Americans in triumph and pride, Hindemith embraced those suffering in both Europe and the United States.

*The Cycle of History*

The compositions of the first half of the twentieth century demonstrate how Americans, native-born, émigré, and naturalized citizen alike, embraced Lincoln in order to express their national identity and in the process seek nobler aspects of post-World-War-I life. Society was fragile after suffering through the Great War. The 1920s may have provided a diversion from the dramatic changes that occurred through intense industrialization, warfare, and urbanization, but the Great Depression and World War II brought into even harsher focus the realities of modern life.

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78 Kowalke, “For Those We Love,” 159–60.
Even native-born Americans were aligned with Lincoln for the purpose of creating national narratives. For example, when Woodrow Wilson, the American commander-in-chief during World War I, died in 1924 his political associates sought to tie his legacy to Lincoln’s. Wilson’s family had planned a two-part funeral. The simplicity of Wilson’s funeral service—a private ceremony in his Washington home—differed greatly from his burial in the National Cathedral. A leader at the crux of progressivism was buried not like the common man, but like the nobility of the Old World. Wilson’s widow preferred privacy and simplicity, but was ultimately convinced by James Edward Freeman, a zealous Episcopalian bishop, to bury her husband’s body in the cathedral of Washington, DC. This cleric was not the only person to leap at the chance to make Wilson’s death into something larger. Composer William Jerome and lyricist Jack F. Mahoney offered in song the barefaced proposal for how to manage the late president’s legacy: “We’ll Link His Name with Lincoln.” This Wilson tribute was a point-by-point comparison of the two men’s similarities that formed a cycle of American history.

Cyclicism cuts both ways however, and as I address in the next chapter, leaders of a variety of mid-century movements forced the nation to reconcile past injustices. While many of the wartime and interwar compositions had provided opportunities for individuals to locate their national identity in the sixteenth president’s memory, the Lincoln topos of the Civil Rights Movement returned to a theme of Lincoln’s “unfinished business.” In the field of Lincoln

79 Wilson is notably the only U.S. president who has been formally entombed in a church. John Adams and John Quincy Adams along with their wives now share a crypt below the United First Parish Church in Quincy, Massachusetts, but both were originally interred in Hancock Cemetery, across the street from that church, then exhumed and moved years later.


81 Jerome was already a master of crafting music about American memory, having composed the star-crossed lovers hit, “I Love You like Lincoln Loved the Old Red, White, and Blue.”
memory, a lasting question of the Civil War is racial equality. Just as the World Wars, immigration, and forming an American identity drew increased composer attention in the early half of the twentieth century, a thorough consideration of Civil Rights must include music’s potent contribution. This was far from a new topic, but by the 1950s even the citizens who had yet to engage directly in contemplating racial disparity were now forced to do so as news of sit-ins, marches, boycotts, and protests spread. With deeply entrenched sides, it was a difficult battle with lives lost, but the renewed call to address questions left unanswered at the time of Lincoln’s death was overwhelming, “and the war came.”
CHAPTER 4
MUSIC OF LINCOLN AND CIVIL RIGHTS,
FROM EMANCIPATION TO BARACK OBAMA

Act I: Creating a Lincoln Civil Rights Ritual: Easter Sunday 1939

On 9 April 1939, Marian Anderson, who at that time was already an internationally celebrated American contralto, stepped up to a microphone in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, and began a concert with Samuel Francis Smith’s “America.” Opening with patriotic fare may have seemed appropriate considering the venue, but as Scott A. Sandage has revealed, it was a choice rife with irony.\(^1\) Not only did the opening line have Anderson warmly embracing a nation that provided African Americans with a patchwork of policies and practices that too often fell short of equal protection under the law, but she then altered the passage “Of thee I sing” to “To thee we sing.”\(^2\) This emendation, slight as it may have been, extinguished any possibility of Anderson merely serenading the crowd with a national ode; rather, this was a full-throated vocal remonstrance. She was, after all, singing outside on a chilly afternoon, because the Daughters of the American Revolution had rejected a request to host her concert in its Constitution Hall.\(^3\) Howard University had submitted its concert request on Anderson’s behalf with the intent of challenging the “white artists only” policy adopted by the Daughters in 1932. Instead of Anderson greeting the 3,500-member audience that could have filled Constitution Hall, a cadre of politicians and activists, including NAACP president Walter White, First Lady


\(^2\) Ibid.

Eleanor Roosevelt, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, Anderson’s management, and Howard University’s leadership, conceived a plan to have the contralto perform a free, public tribute at the Lincoln Memorial. With a crowd of 75,000 gathered before her and millions more listening via radio, Anderson performed Donizetti’s “O, Mio Fernando” from La Favorita and Schubert’s Ave Maria, but bookended the concert with musical reminders of her race’s struggles: initially, a hopeful plea in the form of her revised “America” and later a set of spirituals that recalled the slavery of her people, and concluded with “Nobody Knows the Troubles I’ve Seen.” This conclusion carried equal irony to her opening, since many African Americans knew precisely the troubles Anderson had seen and could immediately empathize with the experience of a woman who had perfected her artistry, but still faced discrimination.

The legacy of Anderson’s Lincoln Memorial concert has benefited from a variety of studies that identify the performance as a key early moment in the Civil Rights Movement, which absorbed the nation in the 1950s and 1960s. This concert also serves as an opening act for the Civil-Rights-Era Lincoln musical memorials below, because it demonstrates a specific model for public tribute: the ritual. Anderson’s concert shared many similarities with the less fraught recitals she had offered around the world. Certainly, the Easter Sunday performance was outdoors, the audience was especially large, and the media scrutiny more intense; but the largest difference between Anderson’s many previous appearances and that afternoon’s event, was that

in the former she portrayed operatic and art song characters, while in the latter she was the key participant in an ongoing national discussion about race, civil rights, and Lincoln’s legacy.

Secretary Ickes drew attention to this with his introduction of Anderson:

“In this great auditorium under the sky, all of us are free. When God gave us this wonderful outdoors, and the sun, and the moon, and the stars, He made no distinction of race or creed or color. And one hundred and thirty years ago He sent to us one who was truly great in order that he might restore freedom to those from whom we had disregardingly taken it. In carrying out this great task, Abraham Lincoln laid down his life. And so it is as appropriate as it is fortunate that today we stand reverently and humbly at the base of this memorial to the “Great Emancipator,” where glorious tribute is rendered to his memory by a daughter of the race from which he struck the chains of slavery …. Genius draws no color line. She has endowed Marian Anderson with such voice as lifts any individual above his fellows, as is a matter of exultant pride to any race. And so it is fitting that Marian Anderson should raise her voice in tribute to the noble Lincoln, whom mankind will ever honor ….”

Were the symbolism of the venue lost on anyone in attendance or those listening to the radio broadcast, Ickes unambiguously identified the concert as both a performance by a world-class vocalist and a tribute to the “Great Emancipator.”

Tributes, however, can involve varying degrees of activity. A composer who drafts a short melodic sketch for a Lincoln composition, even if never finished nor ever performed, engages in a commemorative exercise. Similarly, citizens participate in the practice of offering tribute when they rush to build what Erika Doss calls “temporary memorials,” those seemingly simultaneous piles of flowers, stuffed animals, candles, and photographs that become the focal point for media coverage, candlelight vigils, and grieving during a tragedy, not unlike the track-side displays for Lincoln’s 1865 funeral train. Still another form of tribute comes from the public commissions and presentations that often fade into the background of our lives—the

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6 Erika Doss, Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010), 61–68.
Religion provides many experiences of ritual. Here, practitioners commonly address twofold goals. For example, the Catholic Mass, Jewish Seder, and Muslim Hajj have the immediate goal of commemorating the Last Supper and Paschal Sacrifice; Exodus, Passover, and Deliverance; and the pilgrimages of Abraham and Mohammed, respectively. However, all three also serve a long-term goal of maintaining a tenet and the practitioner’s path toward the end times.


acts—the central performances that anchor my consideration of this repertoire—I have placed three interludes that provide context for the theoretical and historical issues at play. I posit that this era’s ritualization of the sixteenth president encouraged the creation of musical memorials that presented a peripheral Lincoln. The late president and his legacy were presupposed in the venues, images, and event narratives, but additional struggles of the time were understood as the primary focus of each event. In the instance of Easter Sunday 1939, while Anderson offered a tribute to Lincoln, her audience recognized the performance as carrying a far greater message about the racial discrimination that she and countless other African Americans still faced.

Interlude I: The Spirituality of Lincoln Memorialization

When Harold Ickes contextualized Lincoln’s placement in the course of American life as an act of God, he made a poignant argument for why Lincoln commemoration has been ritualized. The argument provided that God had sent the sixteenth president with a sacred and morally superior mission: to right the wrong of U.S. slavery. Ergo, if twentieth-century Americans followed in the work of Lincoln, then they were similarly part of a moral battle, which was accompanied by the type of divine intervention that Ickes described. The religious bent of this argument speaks to the nation’s Judeo-Christian roots, but also Americans’ growing need to locate and redefine their raison d’être in the midst of the Great Depression. In the prior century, when legislators, authors, and composers connected the Lincoln topos to their moral security, it was often as the culmination of an argument. For example, national discussions over Reconstruction policies routinely featured two or more sides positing that their plans were not only the best course for the nation, but also the most morally sound option; thus, Lincoln would have agreed with them. Concluding with Lincoln’s approval was a rhetorical coup de grâce.
However, in the post-Great War world of Icke’s and, even more so, in the post-Holocaust, nuclear-armed planet of the Civil Rights Movement, Lincoln’s implied stamp of approval was no longer a moral finial, a coda to a politician’s pronouncement. Now the Lincoln mantel provided advocates a means to address issues of their time by undergirding their narratives with the sixteenth president’s time-tested legacy. A Lincoln connection provided current topics with a historical origin and a sense of lineage.

Of course, promoting social movements or seeking shelter from political fallout does not require the use of spiritual metaphors. The religiosity employed in Lincoln ritualization provided something of a rubric through which citizens could comfortably meld aspects of their culture—preaching, singing, sharing moments of silence, and offering prayers—with the problems and questions of the day. This rubric offered twofold comfort: first, participants needed only to adapt a few elements of the model to create the program for their event; and second, the comparable format of these many disparate events provided unity, which in turn furthered the concept of a Lincoln lineage. That is, the rituals’ spiritual language and imagery encouraged a teleological scheme that identified God’s will as the reason for national progress on any number of issues. This is seen in the conclusion of Paul M. Angle and Earl Schenck Miers’s *Ballad of the North and South* (1959). The adapters juxtaposed Walt Whitman’s “O Captain! My Captain!” with the salvation stanza of Julia Ward Howe’s “Battle Hymn of the Republic.” A narrator reads the words of Whitman and then cues the final choral entrance:

**NARRATOR:**
My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;
The ship is anchor’d safe and sound, its voyage closed and done;
From fearful trip, the victor ship, comes in with object won;

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Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!
But I, with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

“... With object won”—so sang the poet. And the people responded:

CHORUS:
In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea
With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me
As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free
While God is marching on.

The over-arching theme of Angle and Miers’s ballad is the benefit of reconciliation between the title parties, “North and South.” The concluding presentation of Lincoln’s death and transfiguration from Whitman’s captain to Howe’s Christ adds a heavenly imperative to the otherwise trite notion—especially by 1959 standards—that the two sides needed only to achieve some form of symbolic reunion. Angle and Mier’s merger of the mortal and divine, accompanied by the wartime hymn, which by the 1950s was more commonly sung in church pews than on battlefields, supported the idea that God was in favor of the two sides completing the work that was left to be done. After all, “God was marching on.”

The concept of citing the will of God as a means to reconcile assorted Civil War topics is found throughout the Civil-Rights Era. African American composer Ulysses Kay, for example, set the “Bixby Letter,” a document widely praised as a fine example of Lincoln’s prose, despite its questionable authorship. The letter, with its poignant final turn to “our Heavenly Father” and a description of each Civil War death as “a sacrifice upon the altar of Freedom,” led Carl

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Sandburg to describe it as part of the “American Bible.”

Kay drew attention to these two potent moments of religiosity. He set the “our Heavenly Father” passage to commence after a fermata, in a slower tempo, and in the composition’s dominant key. It is the first solo vocal passage of the composition, with the bass soloist seemingly envoicing a lone believer before God: “I pray that our Heavenly Father ….” Kay returned to this sober approach with the bass soloist for the longer passage, “the solemn pride that must be yours to have laid so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom.” In the moments that linger between presidential consolation and the evocation of holiness, Kay heightened the solemnity of the musical setting and drew attention to the will of God.

Beyond lyrical and musical efforts at amplifying religious representation, Lincoln ritualization required spaces for commemorative performances and gatherings of the late president’s worshippers. Gods are given temples. People need only step inside a sacred space and all of their actions carry additional layers of meaning. Thus, President Warren Harding understood the case he was making when, in dedicating the Lincoln Memorial, he compared Lincoln and “the Child of Bethlehem,” both entering the world’s stage as unassuming figures, but with their required salvific roles. Harding stopped short of calling the memorial “Lincoln’s cathedral,” but with nearly a century of worship committed to the space, David W. Blight has described the marble structure as the “unofficial secular temple of the United States.”

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13 Warren Harding, *President Harding’s Address at the Dedication of the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, DC, 30 May 1922* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), 7. Lincoln is not always presented as the martyr; he has also see comparisons to the Christ child, notably in President Harding’s passage from the Lincoln Memorial dedication: “Lincoln came almost as bumbly as the Child of Bethlehem.”

adjective “secular” in this instance is perhaps more appropriately understood as “civic,” since it is not a place separated from religiosity, but a state-sponsored and maintained memorial, open to diverse groups and home to many national devotional practices. A central aspect of the Lincoln teleology is that even in the pluralistic United States, citizens can enter into communion with each other as they share in their respect for Lincoln. This trans-spiritual approach helps to explain the concept of a great power guiding America toward increasingly better days—whether it is called “manifest destiny,” “American exceptionalism,” “arc of justice,” “progress,” or by another name. So while Christian imagery may predominate, the result of the decades of patriotic fervor surrounding Lincoln has been to elevate him as a deity of a national faith into which citizens are members by their birthright.

All of this moralization, deification, and symbolism have a very specific goal: they provide a starting point from which the citizenry can address new political and ethical topics in a manner that seems in keeping with their history and identity. Barry Schwartz and Alexander Rehding have approached these topics of commemoration and ritual from different disciplines, but offer studies that originate from similar sources, namely the work of Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora.15 Read together, Schwartz and Rehding identify two crucial and related aspects for understanding commemoration as a form of ritual—something more than a historical act. Schwartz offers the distinction that while commemoration is often foregrounded in history, it

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eventually proceeds to address societal values.\textsuperscript{16} Thus, one may recall an event that brings pride or shame or a mixture of both, but the inertia to remember originates in a moral reasoning that believes the topic is worth highlighting. Rehding provides the principle of commemorative growth, whereby what he offers as a “scrap or pebble” can “achieve the status of a monument” if over time it successfully engages increasingly more imagination and adoration.\textsuperscript{17} From a lone value judgment, we can have a landslide of commemoration.

The process Rehding identified is not merely a matter of momentum; scraps do not form statues without human agency. People, with their own reasons and interests, are necessary participants in the perpetuation of rituals. Twentieth-century Americans, alienated from each other through industrialization, the World Wars, and urbanization, sought an ordering of their history that captured both their point of origin and a clear horizon. Celebrating Lincoln rituals reminds Americans that they are completing the work of a mighty power. It was more than serendipity that questions about what the superpower should do next were answered by a reminder of Lincoln’s legacy: the systematic dismantling of Jim Crow laws. This was not a re-evaluation instigated by U.S. institutions. To the contrary, it came about through the demonstrations, sit-ins, and boycotts of activists in what is collectively termed the Civil Rights Movement. In a way the Civil Rights Movement and the growing national alienation were oppositional. The former was a call to remember the inherent humanity of all people in the face of systemized educational, social, and economic discrimination. The latter was the development of a modernized way of life that placed lower values on the skills, knowledge, and gifts of

\textsuperscript{16} Schwartz, \textit{Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory}, 10–12.

\textsuperscript{17} Rehding, \textit{Music and Monumentality}, 27.
individuals. As modern American life stripped away the patchwork of individuality, the Civil Rights Movement recalled our common humanity.

*Act II: Performing the Lincoln Civil Rights Ritual*

On a spring afternoon, 17 May 1957, an American contralto again walked to a bank of microphones on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. She began singing:

I’ve been ’buked an’ I’ve been scorned, children.
I’ve been ’buked an’ I’ve been scorned.
I’ve been talked about, sho’s you’re born.

Dere is trouble all over dis world, children.
Dere is trouble all over dis world.

Ain’t gwine to lay my ’ligion down, children.
Ain’t gwine to lay my ’ligion down.

As with Marian Anderson’s Easter Sunday concert, the audience in place for this event, nearly two decades later, recognized the lyrics not only for their familiarity as part of the rich African American spiritual tradition, but also for their description of a shared experience. This time gospel star Mahalia Jackson stood at the spot previously occupied by Anderson, and while her voice was different in timbre and training, little else had changed. The audience understood that this was a commemoration as well as a reminder of the significant work left to do for African American civil rights.

The occasion for Jackson’s performance was the “Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom,” an event organized by two veterans of social and political advocacy, A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin, to mark the third anniversary of the Supreme Court decision in the case of Brown v. Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, 353.

Board of Education. Randolph and Rustin, familiar with the potency of political theater, wove many symbolic threads throughout the event’s tapestry. They wanted participants to celebrate the historic ruling, but not forget how little federal action had occurred to enforce the many required changes in schools access, district boundaries, and bussing. Randolph and Rustin planned the event to resemble a religious service; an afternoon in which attendees called on divine intervention and found new hope for the work ahead. In keeping with the practices for such a ritual, the audience was encouraged to wave handkerchiefs instead of applauding after Jackson’s performance. The day’s program included prayers, music, and speeches, with the final speaker, Martin Luther King Jr., emphasizing the sermon-like nature of his rhetoric by delivering it while wearing a church robe. The promotion of the day as a “prayer pilgrimage” to the Lincoln Memorial highlighted the sixteenth president’s role as an intercessor to higher powers in the nation and beyond. In coming before the seated, marble Lincoln and juxtaposing Americans’ memory of the president with the problems of the day, the organizers were adding to the ritual offered by Anderson, Ickes, and the planners of the 1939 concert. Moreover, Randolph, Rustin, and Jackson reminded the nation of the essential connection between Lincoln, the Civil War’s emancipation narrative, and the Civil Rights Movement. In turn composers would develop Civil Rights Era Lincoln musical memorials in a tradition that David W. Blight and Robert J. Cook have identified as the “black counter-memory,” an effort to recall the role of Lincoln and the results of the war as they related to the abolition of slavery.


The very cause of the 1957 pilgrimage—the lack of action in the aftermath of the Brown v. Board of Education ruling—underscores that while Anderson, Jackson, King, Randolph, Rustin, and countless other citizens were battling for civil rights, they were met with stiff resistance. Opposition to the Civil Rights Movement ranged from the harsh discrimination of fervent segregationists to the avoidance and inaction of the nation’s white political elite, who often remained unwilling to confront the issues of the day. It was with this backdrop that the nation entered the centennial anniversary of the Civil War, an occasion that seemingly begged for exploration of the lessons learned in the century that had passed. Cook has argued that despite early successes in celebrating a national Civil War centennial, the commemorations spanning 1961 through 1965 were ultimately derailed for several reasons, most importantly disagreement over the narratives about African Americans and racial politics during and after the war. At the outset, the congressionally mandated Civil War Centennial Commission—filled with a contentious group of descendants of Civil War generals, leaders of sectional political factions, and business magnates—sought to skirt the Civil Rights Movement by planning their events around a theme of national unity. This unity narrative was not without merit, as both post-war nationalism and Cold War fervor were strong contemporary sentiments. However, as Cook describes, it was only a matter of time before adherents of a reconciliationist view of the war clashed with those arguing for the emancipationist counter-memory. The debate over the

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Cook, Troubled Commemoration, 2–5. Other challenges to hosting a large-scale series of national centennial celebrations included the ongoing concerns prompted by daily Cold War headlines and, eventually, the overwhelming domestic news events, such as President John F. Kennedy’s assassination and the movement of specific civil rights legislation. These events led Americans to focus more closely on their own lives and care less about reviewing historical accounts from a century earlier.

Ibid., 8–10.
national memory of slavery and freedom came to a head with the centennial celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Lincoln’s path to emancipating slaves of the Confederate states had begun with a preliminary proclamation on 22 September 1862, which had foretold what would occur if the seceded states did not return to the Union. The formal executive order followed on 1 January 1863. While the proclamation had immediate impact in some corners of the Confederacy, in others it was recognized only when federal troops arrived years later, most notably General Gordon Granger’s reading of General Order No. 3 in Galveston, Texas, on 19 June 1865. In the decades to follow, African Americans created emancipation day, independence day, jubilee, and Juneteenth celebrations to commemorate their experiences of hearing the news of their freedom. In commemorating the Civil War centennial, the commission could not avoid the Emancipation Proclamation, but it had set out to present the document in the context of national successes on behalf of freedom, that is, as an example of the liberties guaranteed to people in the United States, but not known by the inhabitants of the country’s Cold War foes. Karl Betts and John A. May, the most vocal segregationist voices on the Civil War Centennial Commission, had specifically lobbied for the national commemoration of the document to avoid mention of civil rights.24 Considering that Martin Luther King Jr. had publically called for President John F. Kennedy to issue a “Second Emancipation Proclamation,” in which he would strike down segregation laws across the country by means of an executive order, opponents to civil rights legislation understood the power located in discussions of Lincoln’s document.25

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24 Ibid., 148–49.

Initial plans for the commemoration, which were unveiled on 22 September 1962 at the Lincoln Memorial, included speeches by national political leaders, including President Kennedy. However, it would be a program devoid of African Americans. Blight orients this level of racial division as part of the Kennedy administration’s need to retain the support of Southern Democrats. Bishop Smallwood Williams, an African American minister who led the Bible Way Church in Washington, DC, with the support of Martin Luther King Jr., threatened a boycott of the proposed commemoration. The commission, recognizing the tensions and with pressures from many sides, attempted to broker a compromise. Blight has addressed it as a “type of racial stereotyping and tokenism” on the part of the Kennedy White House that is “nearly unthinkable in the twenty-first century.”

The lone African American invited to participate in any part of the original event was Ulysses Kay, who had been commissioned to compose a new work. To meet the demands for the event’s integration, the commission added to the list of speakers Thurgood Marshall, the winning counsel in the Brown case, who in 1961 President Kennedy had appointed to the federal bench, as well as Mahalia Jackson, who would return to the Lincoln Memorial. Any effort to separate the commemoration of the Emancipation Proclamation from the narrative of civil rights had failed. While assuredly far from the event that Williams may have envisioned, it was once again an occasion that drew on the Lincoln rituals developed throughout the era. In Rehding’s parlance, these were the “scraps or pebbles,” with which composers could build and create the memorials of this time.

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26 Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 149.
28 Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 175.
Whereas Jackson’s first performance at the Lincoln Memorial featured the stinging lyrics of “I’ve Been ‘Buked an’ I’ve Been Scorned,” her return to the marble steps began with the national anthem.30 The musical feature of the day came with the U.S. Marine Band’s performance of Kay’s *Forever Free: A Lincoln Chronicle* (1962). Taking its title from the opening passage of the Emancipation Proclamation, the suite featured three movements: “Young Lincoln,” “Conflict,” and “Proclamation.” Kay’s very structure of a “chronicle” that started with Lincoln’s childhood, moved into his presidency and the war years, but concluded with the Emancipation Proclamation and not his assassination was a nod to the event for which the work was written as well as a striking statement about Lincoln’s legacy of freeing the enslaved. It was the most poignant statement until that date of a composer embracing the black counter-memory. Whereas Kay’s first Lincoln musical memorial, the setting of the Bixby letter, emphasized the holiness of Civil War military service and sacrifice, his second contribution recognized Lincoln’s legislative victory.

Jackson returned to the microphone to close the centennial celebration with a performance of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” that even the event’s opponents recognized as embodying remarkable power.31 It was a musical tribute that drew the minds of twentieth-century Americans in two directions: their church pews and the struggle of the day. The crowd for this event was small, roughly four thousand, which supports Cook’s argument about the waning interest in the Civil War centennial as a whole. It also did not help that as African American involvement in the day’s program grew, the Kennedy administration gradually backed out of the event. Ultimately, they sent a video of President Kennedy to be played before

30 Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 175.

Jackson’s finale; the chief executive cited a scheduling conflict for his inability to attend. Any shortcomings in the audience’s size or the media’s attention for this event were eclipsed eleven months later when more than 200,000 Americans filled the National Mall and faced the Lincoln Memorial for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on 28 August 1963. Whereas the Emancipation Proclamation centennial had as a goal recognizing Lincoln and his words—though even that goal had gradually shifted—the March on Washington was conceived from the outset as a direct challenge to the status quo, a massive peaceful protest. It was organized by civil rights leaders, who did not need to negotiate and compromise on the program’s content with segregationist members of a commission. Lincoln’s role was to serve as host, as a backdrop in front of which a cadre of representatives from civic, religious, and political organizations would offer a vision for the nation and demands for its leaders. The ritual presented on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in 1963 built on the previous events in the musical elements of the ritual.

Marian Anderson, who had opened the space to civil rights events twenty-four years earlier, was invited to begin the program by singing the national anthem. Owing to traffic and congestion from the vast number of marchers she arrived late and offered “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” later in the day. Mahalia Jackson also returned, singing “How I Got Over.” These gospel offerings were complimented by Odetta Holmes who sang “I’m on My Way.” In keeping with what Michael Kazin has identified as a crucial path to success for the twentieth-century American left, the Civil Rights Movement demonstrated that its narrative was precisely the story of all Americans by drawing upon celebrity white performers, too. For example, Joan Baez sang “We Shall Overcome” and “Oh Freedom.” Bob Dylan joined her for “When the Ship

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32 Cook, *Troubled Commemoration*, 175.

Comes In.”34 Dylan also performed “Only a Pawn in Their Game.”35 Peter, Paul and Mary offered “If I Had a Hammer” and “Blowin’ in the Wind.” The musical performances of the day merged the gospel tradition, folk songs, and protest chants and cheers in a manner that expanded the context of the march beyond the confines of the African American experience. None of these songs, however, represented a Lincoln musical memorial as I have discussed them in this study. Understood collectively, these performances provided an image and sound heard not only by those present, but by millions more watching and listening via television and radio coverage, of artists drawing the Great Emancipator’s narrative into their own struggles. It was a reminder that Lincoln’s legacy provided the basis for the nation’s most consequential discussions about racial equality and his memorial served as a backdrop for its most ardent protests.

Roy Harris provides a case study for considering the role of how the civil rights ritualization of Lincoln encouraged composers to draw this element into their new works. As I have discussed above, Harris had a biography full of Lincoln connections and had turned to the sixteenth president as early as 1944 for his Sixth Symphony, the wartime “Gettysburg Symphony.” Harris returned to Lincoln in 1953 for his chamber cantata on Vachel Lindsay’s “Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight,” and began to shift his perspective on the late president’s role in contemporary American culture.36 Audiences may hear the Sixth Symphony as a musical portrait of Lincoln—something of concert hall Americana, not unlike nineteenth-century symphonic efforts to portray Niagara Falls or western pioneers—but in Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight, Harris invited the audience into a contemplation of what the president’s legacy

meant in contemporary life. To maintain this orientation toward the present, Harris avoided any sense of twentieth-century citizens’ separation from Lincoln. He goes so far as to remove Lindsay’s most reflective stanza:

A bronzed, lank man! His suit of ancient black,
A famous high top-hat and plain worn shawl
Make him the quaint great figure that men love,
The prairie-lawyer, master of us all.

In 1953 Harris evidently did not want Lincoln seen as a figure from a different time, but rather a man actively lamenting his surviving nation. Lincoln’s mourning is heard in the vocal sighs and the descending passages in the violoncello part, throughout (see Example 4.1). The composer stops short of offering a specific statement on the emancipation narrative.


Harris addressed the civil rights connection to Lincoln in his Tenth Symphony (1965), subtitled “The Abraham Lincoln Symphony.” The Music Educator’s National Conference
commissioned the work, and as a result Harris scored the symphony for brass, percussion, two amplified pianos, chorus, and speaker, since he believed well-trained string players were difficult to find in high schools, colleges, and community ensembles.\footnote{Dan Stehman, “The Symphonies of Roy Harris: An Analytical Study of the Linear Materials and of Related Works” (PhD diss., University of Southern California, 1973), 757–58 and 761. Harris subsequently composed a version of the symphony for full orchestra.} While Harris composed this symphony to commemorate Lincoln’s assassination, the work says more about Lincoln’s legacy than his death.\footnote{Neil Butterworth, \textit{The American Symphony} (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 1998), 91.} Assessing the movements individually demonstrates the composer’s civil rights interests. Harris first composed the final movement, a song of praise for Lincoln. It was largely based on material he had composed the previous year for another composition, and while it suitably concludes the work, Harris had recognized that it did not fit with the rest of the movements as well as it could. He had contemplated replacing it with a movement inspired by Whitman’s “O Captain! My Captain!”\footnote{Stehman, “The Symphonies of Roy Harris,” 761.} Harris intended the first, second, and fourth movements to address Lincoln’s childhood, coming of age, and war years: “Lonesome Boy,” “The Young Wrestler,” and “Civil War: Brother against Brother,” respectively. Each movement features different source material or inspiration: he employs the melody and lyrics from the African American spiritual “Lil’l Boy Named David” with the name “David” changed to “Abraham” for the first movement, then relies largely on Carl Sandburg’s discussion of Lincoln’s youthful wrestling for the second movement, and finally turns to large portion of Lincoln’s own words in the “Gettysburg Address” for the fourth movement.\footnote{Carl Sandburg, \textit{Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years} (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1926), 146–58.} To this end, the biographical movements and their musical portraiture are most similar to Harris’s Sixth Symphony in their function.
The Tenth Symphony’s third movement, “Abraham Lincoln’s Convictions,” captures the essence of Harris’s views on the Civil Rights Movement. He weaves together the “Bill of Rights” with famous Lincoln speeches and documents in a manner comparable to how Martin Luther King Jr. combined passages from the nation’s founding documents and Lincoln’s words throughout his “I Have a Dream” speech. In connecting Lincoln’s words with the “Bill of Rights,” Harris advances the notion that Americans cannot know or experience the country’s promises until all are provided equal rights. It is a musical statement about equal treatment and equal protection. The symphonist underscored this point when the following year he excerpted the third movement with some adaptations to form a single-movement work for orchestra and chorus, *Brotherhood of Man.*

What Harris accomplished in the Tenth Symphony and *Brotherhood of Man* was the appropriation of Lincoln, civil rights, and emancipation narratives at the very heart of the black counter-memory. The periodic rituals that had been performed on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial had succeeded in offering the nation the case for a relationship between Lincoln and civil rights, and with Harris that message had moved into the concert hall, school auditorium, and community band shell. I will return, as Harris did, once more to his interest in the civil rights theme, to consider how he again merged Lincoln and the emancipation narrative for his final Lincoln work, Symphony No. 13, “The Bicentennial Symphony” (1975–76).

*Interlude II: The Emancipation Narrative since 1865*

At the heart of David W. Blight’s argument for a black counter-memory is the notion that an emancipationist view of the Civil War was already present in 1865 and the years immediately following, but then in the face of vast opposition from factions that preferred to seek
reconciliation and reunion rather than to continue the battle for equal rights, it faded from the national stage.\textsuperscript{41} The emancipation narrative was never wholly lost as it continued to be a part of African American cultural memory, and even appeared from time to time elsewhere. What had changed in the late 1950s and early 1960s was the focus and attention that civil rights leaders paid to return to this aspect of Lincoln and Civil War memory. The musical repertoire from 1865 until the 1950s provides a valuable gauge by which to measure Blight’s argument. In music from both the vernacular and cultivated traditions, the emancipation narrative never entirely goes away. We find moments when it comes to the fore in recognizable ways, but it was not fully presented and performed until the Civil Rights Era.

The first emancipationist songs that featured Lincoln were those dating from the early years of his presidency. These were abolition songs, composed by the Hutchinson Family, Susan McFarland [Mrs. E. A.] Parkhurst, and Henry Clay Work, to name a few.\textsuperscript{42} Citizens learned these songs through sheet music versions, which were widely distributed, as well as performances during abolition rallies. Kazin argues that the Hutchinson Family’s abolition meeting concerts helped to create interest in these events by attracting people who were already of a shared mind but may not have otherwise set aside the time to attend a meeting as well as by encouraging people on the sidelines to at least listen to the music and then possibly stay for a speech or two.\textsuperscript{43} As with Lincoln funerary music, this repertoire of topical songs had a limited


\textsuperscript{42} Abolition songs mentioning Lincoln include Parkhurst’s “Come Rally, Freemen Rally,” Work’s “Kingdom Coming” and many of the offerings in the Hutchinson Family’s \textit{1860 Republican Songster}.

\textsuperscript{43} Kazin, \textit{American Dreamers}, 22–23.
period during which it related to issues of the day, so it is understandable that a few years after the war, these songs lost their appeal.

The next wave of music featuring the emancipation narrative came at the turn of the twentieth century. The new body of songs, such as Robert P. Jackson’s “Will You Ever Give the Colored Race a Show” (1898), were political commentaries on the state of African American life in the post-Reconstruction era.\(^{44}\) Jackson’s playful melody and dance accompaniment may have taken some of the sting out of his lyrics, but with the subtitle “An Appeal to Congress” it was an undeniable call for change. The song expresses frustration over the time that African Americans have spent waiting for improvements. It outlines how African American communities went about building homes and families, raising and educating children, and serving their government and military, yet they saw little support in return. Jackson included an essay on the inside cover that offers specific inequities, especially in terms of economics. The sheet music’s cover art features three photographs: Charles Sumner, who had been the champion of the enslaved; Abraham Lincoln, who had brought freedom; and William McKinley, who was providing a first glimpse of hope (see Figure 4.1). However, the images below the three busts include African American brigades marching ahead of white soldiers into the Spanish-American War as well as a line outside of a factory in which white laborers were allowed in but African Americans were kept waiting. The comparable songs of this time describe the lost hopes of a people who had heard decades of promises and were eager to remind the nation of the reasons that the Union fought the Civil War.

In the latter half of the 1930s and during World War II, European American composers employed the theme of emancipation, but did so with a nationalist intent: they were offering criticism and scorn of other nations. Walter Damrosch provided the instruction for a “chorus of liberated slaves” to sing his *An Abraham Lincoln Song* (1936). The German American composer and conductor presented freedmen as a community that looked to Lincoln and the nation with whole-hearted gratitude. George McKay, while not making the same boasts of African American satisfaction, placed the United States in contrast with Spain in his *To a Liberator*, Op. 51 (1939). McKay composed this work for orchestra and chorus in response to his growing disgust over the
Spanish Civil War. And as the Second World War grasped Asia, Europe, and the United States, John Becker’s Sixth Symphony, “Out of Bondage” (1941–42), spoke of Lincoln’s relationship to liberty and freedom vis-à-vis the contemporary European experience of German occupation. The conflict between the view of Jackson—that the nation had not fulfilled its promises to African Americans—and those of Damrosch, McKay, and Becker—that the U.S. was a model for other nations—reflects the chasm between black and white perspectives of emancipation at the dawn of the Civil Rights Movement.

Some of the most poignant musical memorials that brought Lincoln into the cultural experience of African Americans arrived from mid-century composers who examined aspects of hope and despair. In 1949 Howard Swanson set Langston Hughes’s poem “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” which situates Lincoln’s adolescent trip down the Mississippi River as part of an African American history with rivers. Swanson employed Hughes’s Lincoln passage, “I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans,” in order to set up the song’s dramatic arabesque passage (see Example 4.2). Considering that most Lincoln scholars place significant weight on his journey into the South and his first encounter of slavery, Swanson provides an additional measure of music (m. 52) for this statement to linger in listeners’ minds prior to moving onto the second part of Hughes’s sentence, “and I’ve seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.” It is the only point in which the composer does not follow

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45 McKay’s interest in touting Lincoln had as much to do with the appropriation of the president’s name by the international group who entered the Spanish Civil War fray, the “Abraham Lincoln Brigade,” as it did with any actual issues of slavery.


Hughes’s punctuation and phrasing. Rather, Swanson draws attention to the moment when Lincoln saw and understood the horror of slavery, an experience important in his eventual role as the Great Emancipator. Swanson dedicated the song to Marian Anderson, who a decade earlier had made her own historic trip south from Philadelphia to Washington in 1939. Anderson was so fond of Swanson’s song that she included it in her American farewell tour.


Harold W. Gammans’s sketch To Rosa (1956) never made it to the concert hall. It survives only in a holograph that the Lincoln scholar and amateur composer prepared on 1 January 1956. The text comes from a little-known poem that Lincoln wrote in the autograph book of Rosa Haggard, the daughter of a hotel owner in Winchester, Illinois, during a stay there.
in 1858. The sketch, from the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library collection, contains only half of the poem, with the composer’s name, date, and location written below the penultimate staff of music. The final staff contains four measures of piano music that mirrors the introduction to the first stanza, and while it could serve as the introduction to a second stanza, it functions more effectively as a coda, since without those measures the song would end with an unfulfilling supertonic to tonic progression. Considering the date of composition, the “Rosa” from Gammans’s title was likely Rosa Parks, who had been arrested one month earlier, on 1 December 1955 for refusing to give up her seat on a public bus to a white passenger. When heard in this context, Lincoln’s poem to a little girl takes on a new meaning:

You are young, and I am older;  
You are hopeful, I am not.  
Enjoy life, ere it grow colder;  
Pluck the roses ere they rot.

Had Gammans continued to set the next stanza, which is about finding a beau, it would not have worked as an ode to a middle-aged married woman at the nexus of a civil rights battle.

Throughout the twentieth century, Lincoln’s name was frequently employed in genres associated with African American communities. Lincoln branding appeared on venues, including jazz clubs, dance halls, and theaters. Chicago’s Lincoln Gardens, for example, was Louis Armstrong’s first home base in the north, when he joined King Oliver’s Creole Jazz Band in 1922. Jazz artists mentioned Lincoln in song titles and lyrics. Buddy Bolden’s biographers have speculated that around 1902 he paired lyrics to a song identified as “I Thought I Heer’d Abe Lincoln Shout” with the tune that would eventually become his “Funky Butt.”49 Donald Marquis

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48 Harold W. Gammans, To Rosa, 1956, Lincoln Collection, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, IL.

49 Danny Barker, “Memory of King Bolden,” Evergreen Review (March 1965): 67; Donald Marquis, In Search of Buddy Bolden: First Man of Jazz (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978), 108–10; and Luc...
and Luc Sante agree that the lyrics likely predate Bolden, but that he heard them from other musicians and then popularized them:

I thought I heer’d Abe Lincoln shout,
Rebels close down them plantations and let the niggers out.
I’m positively sure I heer’d Mr. Lincoln shout.

I thought I heer’d Mr. Lincoln say,
Rebels close down them plantations and let the niggers out.
You gonna lose this war, git on your knees and pray,
That’s the words I heer’d Mr. Lincoln say.

Interest in Lincoln also extended into the blues with John C. Baker composing “Abe Lincoln Blues” (1954) and John Lee Hooker recording “Blues for Abraham Lincoln” (1961). While certain aspects of the emancipation narrative may appear a ripe topic for these blues, neither Baker’s nor Hooker’s gained much traction. This underscores that the potency located in black counter-memory came about through public discussions of the emancipation narrative: blues lyrics tend to be self-reflexive and in the realm of private emotions. The public acceptance of Lincoln as part of the emancipation narrative helped secure it as a musical topic well into the closing decades of the twentieth century. The connection between the sixteenth president and the struggles of African Americans was so effective, that, as I will discuss below, in order to avoid referencing the Civil Rights Movement, late-twentieth-century composers attempted to hide Lincoln.

Act III: Challenging Ritual, Avoiding Lincoln for the U.S. Bicentennial

After its seventh Broadway performance, the curtain fell on Leonard Bernstein and Alan Jay Lerner’s 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, and it entered the annals of American musical theater as

“a spectacular flop.” Considering the involvement of an accomplished composer and playwright, the use of a historical topic during the nation’s bicentennial, and the financial backing of Coca-Cola, the show appeared poised for success. However, *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* was plagued with problems from the start. For the purpose of this study, examining the show and its critical reception provides an alternate approach to Lincoln and the emancipation narrative: avoidance. The two most significant criticisms that followed the show throughout its tryouts had to do with its structural inconsistencies and the creators’ deeply negative views of race relations throughout U.S. history. Assuredly, a playwright would be Pollyannaish to claim complete racial harmony from the colonial era to the present; however, even civil rights leaders, who faced far more opposition than did Bernstein and Lerner, held up and praised important victories in their struggle.

The creative team set out to craft a concept musical that focused on times when democracy, seen through the image of the White House, was nearest its demise. In the minds of Lerner and Bernstein, race was the great wrongdoing around which all of the stories would function, thus the desire to learn about the White House through the eyes of its African American staff. As Erik Haagensen has pointed out, the shortcoming of this narrative was that it relied on four stories, in which race was a compelling factor in only one. The remainder of *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* forced the issue of race in a manner that did not seem historical, but dark

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51 Ibid., 28. Securing Coca-Cola’s support occurred after financial hardship hit the show, and Lerner turned to an old friend, who had become an executive with the soda company.

and sinister, especially for a bicentennial musical. Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation would have been at least one moment that the creative team could have celebrated; in an interview early on Bernstein even mentioned it as an idea for a scene. When Roger L. Stevens was brought on as co-producer, he shared with the press that this would be a patriotic show, not wrapped up in contemporary politics or in an “upstairs and downstairs” drama. What eventually made the stage was, indeed, an upstairs and downstairs drama about life with politics. Its cynical assessment was that U.S. leaders always make the wrong decisions.

Lerner was especially candid about his ideas for the show, admitting that his initial interest in 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue grew out of his disappointment and anger over the 1972 Watergate burglaries. Both Lerner and Bernstein were, in fact, friends of the Kennedy family and despised President Nixon, so their resentment at having a Republican in the White House was personal as well as political. Their challenge in crafting a musical that highlighted racism throughout the nineteenth century was to downplay any moments of hope. Lerner and Bernstein accomplished this by excluding Lincoln from their narrative. In a show subtitled “A Musical about the Problems of Housekeeping,” it would have provided too much of a bright spot in the otherwise sour story if Lincoln would have appeared. Lerner and Bernstein went only far enough

53 Haagensen, “1600 Pennsylvania Avenue,” 26. The four events of the show are the 1814 British invasion, the Civil War, Andrew Johnson’s impeachment, and the rise of robber baron industrialists.


56 Haagensen, “1600 Pennsylvania Avenue,” 25.

to provide a glimpse of Lincoln. In “Bright and Black,” the show’s opening number, Lincoln receives a veiled mention:

Happy dreams of long ago
Comin’ back,
bright and black.
Lawdy, who’d a ever know
that a stovepipe hat
could do that!

James Buchanan, who preceded Lincoln in the Oval Office, is depicted as desiring only to dodge the question of slavery and the growing calls for war in the first act finale, “We Must Have a Ball.” The Civil War seemingly occurs during intermission and the second act opens with an embattled Andrew Johnson administration. For the case that could have been made about American shortcomings in the realm of race relations, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue refused to offer any moments of shared triumphs. The work came across as patently partisan and bitter, a point that was further underscored when Lerner and Bernstein lent the show’s only touching song, “Take Care of This House,” for a performance by Frederica von Stade at the 1977 inaugural gala for Jimmy Carter. It was a final act that solidified that 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue offered more in the way of hard feelings than political advocacy.

Lerner and Bernstein were not the only ones attempting to avoid Lincoln in order to highlight American problems during the bicentennial. Lukas Foss with the assistance of Arieh Sachs compiled a libretto of U.S. sources ranging from founding documents, such as the Declaration of Independence, to Whitman’s poetry, tourism brochures, a psychology thesis, and a financial journal. The varied sources formed the basis for American Cantata, in which the audience hears from Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, and a Civil War soldier, but not

58 Myers, Leonard Bernstein, 181.
Lincoln. There are federal court decisions and African American spirituals, which provided textual content, but not the “Gettysburg Address” or Emancipation Proclamation. While economic inequality and consumer culture played more prominently in *American Cantata* than they did in *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*, race remained a common theme for both works. Foss and Sachs’s only hinted at Lincoln by way of a single passage from “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d.” In the mixed choral, aria, and recitative section titled “Earth, Water, Air,” and following a line from a tourist brochure, “For further information, see your local travel agent,” the Whitman passage appears to the audience as a description of a swamp. Out of context from the rest of the poem, the passage provides no allusion to the late president, but to those who recognized the source, Lincoln at least made a brief appearance, similar to the way that his top hat appeared in *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue*. For Foss and Sachs, the counter-memory was a nation that had consumed itself; attempting to connect that scenario with the Lincoln of Civil Rights Era rituals would have undercut their case.

Bernstein, Lerner, Foss, and Sachs would have likely agreed with the arguments offered by civil rights leaders over the significant shortcomings in national policies and practices regarding African Americans. However, when civil rights leaders had constructed rituals with Lincoln’s legacy as the backdrop, it had been as a means of directing action—reminding society of the man and his legacy and the unfinished work. The creators of *1600 Pennsylvania Avenue* and *American Cantata* devoted their attention to defining national problems, and since a central aspect of this case was a power struggle whereby the strong controlled the weak—the upstairs/downstairs divide—they showed little interest in revisiting the types of rituals predicated on narratives of great men in a great nation, even if the man was Lincoln.

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Roy Harris provided an alternate path to amending the civil rights rituals of Lincoln memory. Rather than sidestepping a man who he had previously lionized, Harris altered his Lincoln trope for a post-civil rights symphony. In his Thirteenth Symphony, “The Bicentennial Symphony,” scored for narrator, chorus, and orchestra, Harris revised the Lincoln narrative of his Tenth Symphony. Whereas that composition had retained biographical elements in three of its movements and a finale borrowed from a previous work, the Thirteenth Symphony tells the story of racial struggle and success, in which Lincoln is an important character, but not the work’s hero. The opening movement draws on the U.S. Constitution’s preamble in order to share concepts of opportunity, while the two middle movements address slavery and the Civil War. The concluding two movements represent a departure from Harris’s prior Lincoln works. In the fourth movement, Lincoln emancipates the enslaved, but the symphony’s finale extends past Lincoln’s lifetime to address the freedoms, rights, and respect that were recently secured in the Civil Rights Movement. The symphony ends with a restatement of the preamble to the Constitution, but this time it is understood as the promise for all citizens, regardless of race. Passages of the preamble that were spoken by members of the chorus in the first movement are sung in the finale—reflecting the difference in having words that exist on paper and those that are put into action. In the context of Harris’s symphonic oeuvre, the Thirteenth is nearest the Third in its reliance on directionality: from a concept, through oppression, to emancipation and civil rights, to the realization of an ideal. Compared to Harris’s other Lincoln works, the Thirteenth eclipses the president with freedom for all depicted in the finale. In practice Harris took the Lincoln ritual and added an epilogue to state that the Civil Rights Movement would succeed in advancing the late president’s goals.
Interlude III: Remembering Abraham, Martin, and John

When at the height of the Civil Rights Movement three national figures were assassinated in a span of five years, 1963–1968, two popular song composers had turned to Lincoln in order to contextualize the men’s placement in American history.\(^{60}\) The use of Lincoln to memorialize twentieth-century political figures demonstrates the effort to create a compelling narrative stretching from the unfinished work of Lincoln to the struggles and victories of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy. As noted above, the teleological aspect of this narrative provides the essence of its potency. Four years after the thirty-fifth president’s assassination on 22 November 1963, his similarities to Lincoln, which were little discussed prior to his death, were presented in great detail by country singer Buddy Starcher in “History Repeats Itself” (1966). The composition opens with a choir singing a short excerpt of the “Battle Hymn of Republic,” then banjo, guitar, and strings enter with a phrase from “America.” In the recording of the song, which moved quickly up both the Billboard Hot 100 and Billboard Country charts, Starcher provided a spoken laundry list of comparisons between the two late presidents.\(^{61}\) The folksy nature of the accompaniment and the musical borrowing added to the song’s sense of historical depth—the feeling that all listeners inherently knew that Lincoln and Kennedy, whose biographies present striking differences, were nonetheless part of the same fabric. Even during the month of national mourning that had followed Kennedy’s death,

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\(^{60}\) Concert music composers also offered tributes to the Kennedys and Martin Luther King Jr. by way of connecting their legacies to Lincoln’s. In the same manner that Hindemith honored President Roosevelt, by setting “Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d,” so too, did Roger Sessions set the poem on the occasion of the assassinations of King and Robert Kennedy.

\(^{61}\) “History Repeats Itself” reached No. 2 on the Billboard Country chart and No. 39 on the Billboard Hot 100.
President Johnson had held a public visit to the Lincoln Memorial, thereby giving some official acknowledgment of a comparison between the two fallen presidents.  

When considering John Kennedy’s role in events such as the Emancipation Proclamation centennial, he had been an inconsistent ally to the Civil Rights Movement. While he provided support and federal action at several crucial points during the tumultuous years of his short presidency, he also remained on the sidelines for most others. His brother Robert, however, worked after the president’s death on the 1964 Civil Rights Bill and continued to speak out on civil rights topics as a New York senator. The younger statesman also publically opposed racial discrimination around the globe, making a trip to South Africa to denounce its apartheid policy. Because of the brothers’ nearness in political life—their work together as president and attorney general—Robert’s subsequent successes on civil rights topics burnished the memory of his late brother. But of the three men assassinated in the 1960s, it was King who epitomized the movement. More than either of the Kennedy deaths, King’s assassination echoed Lincoln’s in that it came at the moment when he was finally beginning to see the fruits of his labor. Having these three assassinations occur in a short period, and especially at a time when the nation was not only faced with dramatic domestic policy changes but also mired in foreign affairs, left citizens eager for a narrative that could reconcile the events.  

Dick Holler, an aspiring songwriter, approached Phil Gernhard, a producer for Laurie Records, with the concept, lyrics, and melody for a song that captured the sense of sudden loss surrounding the assassinations. Gernhard took the song to Dion [DiMucci], who recorded “Abraham, Martin and John” (1968), and since then artists, including Smokey Robinson (1969),  

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Harry Belafonte (1970), Marvin Gaye (1970), Bob Dylan (1981), Emmylou Harris (1992), Whitney Houston (1997), Jon Bon Jovi (2001), and Tori Amos (2003), have adapted it in diverse styles to commemorate a range of events. “Abraham, Martin and John” includes three opening stanzas during which the singer is searching for the men from the title, only to realize that each has died young. In the finale stanza the listener learns that Bobby [Robert Kennedy] has walked over the hill, too, to join the trio. Combining the story of these four men resonated with American audiences. To consider such varied men as fellow travelers on the same path to bring freedom to an oppressed people provided some comfort for a battered nation.

*Act IV: Retaining the Ritual in the “Present Age”*

On 12 April 2009, Denyce Graves, an American mezzo-soprano, stepped to a microphone in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, and began a tribute concert to Marian Anderson. It had been two hundred years since Lincoln’s birth and seventy years since Anderson’s concert, but only four month’s since the nation held a musical celebration at the Lincoln Memorial to begin the inauguration festivities of its first African American president. Harold Ickes had called Anderson’s original effort a “tribute” to Lincoln. Following in kind, Graves’s Easter Sunday concert was a tribute to a tribute, the commemoration of a commemorative ritual. In the years between Anderson and Graves, the many events staged at the Lincoln Memorial had proved effective in connecting the president’s legacy with contemporary issues, especially civil rights.

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Little more than a year after the Graves concert, a group of high school students started singing the national anthem at that same spot on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. A park officer rushed to stop the singing, and the U.S. Park Police subsequently released a statement about the incident that said the Memorial had to remain “completely content neutral.”

Assuredly, the students or their chaperones from the Young Americans Foundation, a partisan conservative group, may have had a political motivation for their performance; however, claiming the Lincoln Memorial to be a content-neutral space ignores the many times during its near century existence that artists, activists, and citizens have performed there precisely because of its potent political imagery. Demanding that those who plan to sing on the steps go about securing advance permission may be the nature and function of government offices, but declaring as content neutral the same spot that the planners of the Anderson concert, Prayer Pilgrimage, or March on Washington purposefully selected for their events demonstrates a lack of understanding of the role that the Memorial has played in American culture.

A challenge to rituals is the loss of their intensity and purposefulness. Contrary to Erika Doss’s claim that regularly gathering at a place such as the Lincoln Memorial can become little more than a demonstration of imperial might; the more likely risk is for the exercise to be eventually reduced to *panem et circenses*, or at least the musical memorial version of bread and circuses. The twentieth-century Lincoln Memorial performances were active attempts to connect a legacy to a specific cause. As with any ritual the question is whether additional decades of engaging the space and the Lincoln legacy can continue to transform the individuals

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66 Doss, *Memorial Mania*, 212.
who participate. For those who seek to be a part of something greater, obtaining observer status at an important event may provide temporary nourishment or at least entertainment, but it will not sustain them. This is the reason why Smallwood Williams was not content for African Americans to merely listen to a program celebrating the Emancipation Proclamation. While zealous park police and changes in cultural norms may prefer for visitors to maintain only an observer status, forcing the Memorial’s visitors to merely observe the efforts of others leads society nearer to Søren Kierkegaard’s notion of the “present age,” the times in which people fail to connect their thoughts, ethics, and actions with their deeper passions. The result is a United States in which citizens lead lives disconnected from greater purposes and causes, and ultimately, a society that does not critically engage with the questions of its day.

If Kierkegaard’s “present age” is ours, then Lincoln rituals have been reduced to spectacles oriented more toward entertainment than cultural betterment—a reality that would undoubtedly shock the people who turned to the space as a final place to air their grievances and seek hope. Amy Hughes has argued that these events are effective at inspiring people to sudden action, but not necessarily greater intellectual contemplation of the issues presented. These are events in which mob mentalities can develop. Instead of individuals responding to what they are seeing and hearing based on their own beliefs, celebrity and glamour can wash over complacent observers of mere spectacle. Michael Kazin has described the manner in which American celebrity culture aided the introduction of the New Left, but his argument is not isolated to just


one point on the political spectrum. Presenting celebrity without content, even if it wins supporters who are entertained in the moment, does not change the equation of moral security.

Barack Obama’s election to the U.S. Presidency marked a unique moment in the history of race relations in the United States, for an African American had been granted the trust and authority of the majority of U.S. citizens by way of the popular vote and electoral college. As Stephen Tuck describes, the Obama election was yet another significant milestone in the long history of civil rights. So when planning an inaugural concert to commemorate the occasion, the Lincoln Memorial was an obvious venue. The evening could have proceeded down a path of addressing the unfinished work, the legacy of Lincoln, as well as the many others who had stood on those steps. The clearest motion in the direction of offering the new president’s approach to the unfinished business was his inclusion of an invocation offered by the Right Reverend Gene Robinson, the first openly gay bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States. I take up Robinson’s prayer along with Lincoln musical memorials and the Gay Rights Movement in Chapter 5. Aside from that pre-concert invocation, the evening was largely a spectacle aimed at celebrity entertainment. Thirty-eight celebrities from the fields of music, film, sport, and media filled the concert program. The various hosts mentioned Lincoln during two segments of the concert, and Tom Hanks served as narrator for a performance of Aaron Copland’s *A Lincoln Portrait*. With references to Marian Anderson, Martin Luther King Jr., Thurgood Marshall, and Rosa Parks, the concert’s most gripping narrative was the story of people who had surpassed racial boundaries to have an impact on the nation. However, after Obama

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70 Tuck, *We Ain’t What We Outh to Be*, 9 and 417.

71 The Obama inauguration concert also followed on a similar event held for the election of President Clinton in 1992.
addressed the assembly, the evening was not concluded with a charge for what the audience should do next; rather, it ended with superstar Beyoncé Knowles leading a performance of “America the Beautiful.” Kazin’s assessment of the merger of celebrity culture and politics was assuredly on display. So, too, was Kierkegaard’s “present age,” as the lion’s share of the evening was a glance backwards from the perspective of observers.

The success of twentieth-century rituals on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial came from the encouragement they provided citizens to remember and re-evaluate what they thought of Lincoln and his legacy, and to galvanize them to complete the unfinished work of civil rights. Race was an understandable topic to connect with Lincoln because of the roles that slavery and emancipation had played in his presidency. However, it was not the only topic that would allow for composers and performers to unite their challenges with his moral security. At the turn of the twenty-first century composers connected even more causes to the Lincoln legacy. The line that civil rights leaders, such as King, carefully walked was to contextualize their narrative amid the efforts of the sixteenth president, but still to maintain the authority and moral responsibility for their message. The antidote to the “present age” is to draw on as much of a history or legacy as one chooses, but not to cede one’s identity in the process.
CHAPTER 5
THE OUTSIDER AND PROTAGONIST OF THE LINCOLN BICENTENNIAL

Midway through Act I, Scene 4, of *Appomattox* (2007), an opera with music by Philip Glass and a libretto by Christopher Hampton, Abraham Lincoln sings his last line of the evening. He has not been assassinated at this point; to the contrary, the opera’s libretto never addresses the president’s death. Glass and Hampton’s Lincoln is on stage for only a handful of lines in two scenes, leaving the remaining characters to provide information about the chief executive and to convey his presence. For example, Lincoln’s wife, Mary, details her husband’s dreams (Act I, Prologue, and Act II, Interlude 1); Lincoln’s commander, General Ulysses S. Grant, echoes the president’s specific desires for peace with the Confederacy (Act II, Scene 1b; Act II, Scene 2; and Act II, Scene 3); even Julia Grant, the general’s wife, offers the opera’s concluding line (Act II, Epilogue), which draws attention to Lincoln’s appreciation of human nature:

> “War is always sorrowful,” he said, and stepped into the morning. War is always sorrowful, and this war the most sorrowful of all. Never before had so much blood been drained, Ulysses said it never would again. He always trusted in his fellow man, never heeded the words of Mister Lincoln, who once said: “Human nature will not change, what has occurred must ever recur.”

This statement not only punctuates the opera’s primary narrative, the close of the U.S. Civil War, but also two further storylines that Glass and Hampton interpolate between General Grant and Confederate General Robert E. Lee’s interactions; namely, the 1965 March to Montgomery, Alabama, and the 2005 jailhouse confession of Edgar Ray Killen, the unremorseful murderer of

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1 After Julia Grant sings, the chorus echoes this passage once more before the final curtain. The inclusion of Lincoln’s words at the end of the opera marks a significant departure from the Act I, Prologue, in which the primary female characters sing, “This will be the last time.” In the Act II, Epilogue, the chorus underscores the message, singing: “This is not the last time, what has occurred must ever reoccur. This will not be the last time.”
several Jewish civil rights advocates and the African American teens they were assisting.\textsuperscript{2} Thus, when Mrs. Grant’s epilogue concludes it is with a nod to Lincoln’s prescient prophecy. In this manner, Lincoln remains a pivotal voice in the opera, even though the audience’s attention is largely focused on the lives and stories apart from the traditional great man and his works.

\textit{Appomattox} is an opera imbued with the thoughts and words of Lincoln but not his person, since the secondary characters take center stage. Earning the most combined stage time are the significant women in the lives of the president and leading generals: Mary Lincoln; Julia Grant; Mary Curtis Lee, Robert E. Lee’s wife; Agnes Lee, Lee’s daughter; and Elizabeth Keckley, Mrs. Lincoln’s African American seamstress and confidant. There are also military generals, officers, and enlisted soldiers who appear throughout the two acts. One officer, Ely S. Parker, is noted in the opera’s synopsis for his Native American (Seneca) heritage. Several African American men round out the cast, including an unnamed freedman who speaks with the president in Richmond, Virginia, journalist T. Morris Chester, and a soldier’s chorus comprised of the First Arkansas Volunteer Regiment. In retaining Lincoln’s thoughts and words but placing them in other characters’ mouths or exploring the events from other characters’ perspectives, Glass and Hampton remind their audience that the Civil War was an event that enveloped the nation, it was not solely an event in the life of Lincoln, or the generals, or the traditionally powerful figures of the day. \textit{Appomattox} is the composer and librettist’s attempt at history from below.

\textsuperscript{2} Glass and Hampton provide the second narrative thread in Act II, Song 2, in which the chorus transports the audience to the Selma-to-Montgomery March. The chorus then introduces Ku Klux Klan violence by telling the story Jimmie Lee’s murder and the beating of his family. The third narrative thread also receives one scene, Act II, Scene 4, an aria in which Killen provides a chilling account of the beating of “a commie and a Jew-boy and a nigger, or maybe it was two Jews and a nigger, I misremember ….”
In composing the opera, Glass and Hampton examined the consequential conclusion of the Civil War and the century and a half to follow through the eyes of characters outside the traditional power structure. The composer and librettist were not the first creative team to expand Lincoln’s musical memorialization by considering other players of the time, though their effort to draw together Lincoln with the women, newly freed, and soldiers of his day and then to connect this narrative to events in the twentieth- and twenty-first centuries is notable in its scope. Glass and Hampton’s exploration of outsiders functions in two ways: first, it presents the stories of individuals and groups who have seen limited attention in prior compositions; and second, in a time that Barry Schwartz has called the “post-heroic era,” it provides audience members with relatable characters outside the Lincoln archetype (the strong, white, male commander-in-chief). Whereas prior Lincoln narratives often encouraged audience members toward feelings of triumphalism through the president’s wartime victory or in his post-mortem civic sainthood, the story presented in Appomattox and other musical memorial histories from below remind Americans that Lincoln was more cautious than cavalier when discussing the difficult work left unfinished at the war’s end.

The shift in American culture that audiences had experienced in Bernstein and Lerner’s 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue—that movement away from late 1940s and 1950s post-war national pride to the bitterness and cynicism that accompanied the Vietnam Era, Watergate Scandal, and Richard Nixon’s resignation from the presidency—is one of several factors that drove some Americans to seek new heroes who were more likely found at the fringe than seated in marble temples. One could add social changes, such as the Civil Rights Movement, second-wave

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feminism, sexual revolution, and gay liberation, as well as rapid reevaluations of academic methodologies and disciplinary boundaries owing to the linguistic turn and thereafter the work of post-structural theorists, to the list of influences that encouraged some composers to replace the previous historical heroes with outsiders. A glimpse at Lincoln compositions from the end of the twentieth century evinces the growing interest in Mary Lincoln and John Wilkes Booth as at least two of the characters’ whose stories were before that time rarely explored. However, the composers of these turn-of-the-twenty-first-century works also employed other fictional and non-fictional individuals, such as assorted presidential assassins, a gay Lincoln, professional actors, and ordinary citizens. These musical memorials attempted to explore the many facets of American life through the familiarity and structure of Lincoln, but without one of his stock identities: the “rail splitter,” “honest Abe,” or “great emancipator.”

Previously I addressed the ways in which composers used the Lincoln topos as a political device during Reconstruction, the interwar period, and Civil Rights Movement. The history-from-below approach offered by Glass, Hampton, and their contemporaries adjoins another trend in American political discourse whereby identifiable names, images, and ideas can serve as cues for political causes. Samuel L. Popkin first described this process as “low-information signaling.” In his model, political sloganeers and message-makers condense a large amount of information into a simple, recognizable symbol that reminds voters of their allegiances. Popkin offers as a metaphor that while most Americans can immediately distinguish a penny from a nickel; far fewer can describe the specific features that differentiate the two. Most citizens may recognize a penny when they see it, but cannot engage in a discussion of all of its details. When

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5 Ibid., 134.
applied to voters, it is not to say that someone who reads signals lacks other knowledge; rather, the information they have been provided exists largely in the realm of slogans, sound bites, and symbols. Unless one devotes time to studying currency design or political platforms, respectively, they may pick up on the most noticeable features of each yet have limited ability to describe the other nuanced and important differences.

What Popkin first identified in 1980s presidential campaigning has grown even more common in subsequent decades. The twenty-first-century American electorate is not wholly unaware of policy issues, but signal-focused discussions have encouraged citizens to respond to sound bites instead of delving into substantive debates. Herein lays added value for an expanded Lincoln topos, or what I define in this chapter as a postmodern Lincoln topos. Not only does the late president’s likeness hold a political value, but when paired with other signifiers, for example those associated with African American civil rights, gay rights, or gender equality, the new signaling grows still more potent, since an American versed in this lexicon of symbols can piece together otherwise disparate images and ideas that effectively draw Lincoln out of nineteenth-century politics and into the center of twentieth- and twenty-first-century debates.

Schwartz has pointed out that subjecting Lincoln to a vast number of contemporary discussions—even those in which he is criticized—has surprisingly not raised the ire of Lincoln specialists or non-specialists. I posit that the flexibility of the Lincoln topos as well as Americans’ willingness to have the president’s legacy adapted to fit various cultural and political agendas has enhanced, not diminished, his status in contemporary culture. In contrast to

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7 Schwartz, Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era, 146–47.
Schwartz’s argument that a “weakening faith in human greatness” has led to Lincoln “losing prestige” in contemporary life, I contend that it has been a loss of faith in institutions and an increasing sense of self that has caused Lincoln’s stock to rise. The relationship between an increased sense of self-importance and the postmodern Lincoln topos is not only enhanced when people eagerly publish information about the most mundane details of their lives on social media outlets, but also when they yearn to connect current political debates to a presidential legacy of their own making. These connections that Americans make between their causes and Lincoln are a part of the age-old borrowing of Lincoln’s moral security. What is different in this context is the volume and diversity of attempts to employ a flexible Lincoln topos as well as citizens’ willingness to embrace the president’s legacy without offering a connection between the historical record and the topics and causes of the present age—a frequent starting point in previous compositions and commemorations.

This chapter contains two sections. I begin by exploring some of the characters added to the Lincoln narrative in the closing decades of the twentieth century and then conclude by examining the body of works composed for the 2009 bicentennial of the president’s birth. Throughout, I assess the approaches composers have taken in presenting Lincoln and the people who surrounded him as new protagonists. In the first half, I argue that the expansion of the Lincoln narrative has embraced histories from below. The second half demonstrates how the diversity of Lincoln images presented for the bicentennial provided a sense of national unity around the man and his legacy. Whereas prior national commemorations, especially the Civil-Rights-Era events that I discussed in Chapter 4, were chock full of battles over the meaning of Lincoln’s legacy, the approach that composers adopted during the bicentennial was one of relativism. I will discuss a range of compositions that show a Lincoln who is at times seemingly
in conflict with himself. Musical works that pull the Lincoln topos in many directions demonstrate that memorialization of the sixteenth president remains a prominent artistic activity in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, I posit that these musical works provide an ideal lens through which to examine an American culture that can unite in patriotic fervor over a shared love of Lincoln, but employ him as a political signal for disparate causes.

Part I: Changing the Protagonist in Late-Twentieth-Century Lincoln Compositions

Music and musical dramas provide ideal media for the type of political signaling discussed above since audience members already understand artistic compositions as works enriched by metaphor, suggestion, and modeling. This signaling can take place in the musical content, libretto, character selection, or action. In Appomattox, Glass attempted to recall the mood of the time by including Civil War melodies as source material, a technique common in television and movie scores as well as concert-hall compositions that address mid-nineteenth-century American topics. In several parts of the score, Glass quotes Walter Kittredge’s “Tenting on the Old Camp Ground.” In the context of Glass’s otherwise slow-moving, minor-mode triadic harmonies, Kittredge’s jaunty, major-mode, popular melody tends to stick out of the compositional texture. It provides more of a postmodern contrast in genre than evocation of the life and time of the characters. Since the drama hinges on its ability to convey a historical story in a way that encourages audience members to question Americans’ collective role in race relations over more than a century, Glass’s use of “Tenting on the Old Camp Ground”

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acknowledges the nineteenth-century placement of the initial scenes without allowing the audience members to believe that they were fully transported to the past. A literal statement of “Tenting on the Old Camp Ground” might have allowed audience members to distances themselves from the action.

In the same effort to draw audience members into a Civil War opera while simultaneously defamiliarizing the narrative so as to keep the message contemporary, Glass and Hampton decision to use female leads for the opera’s opening and closing scenes was not mere novelty, but an essential reworking of the traditional narrative. Beyond the value found in using female characters to deconstruct the traditional gender power structure, the creative team also benefited from this opportunity to manipulate both nineteenth-century gender stereotypes as well as operatic norms. The first manipulation was to retain male characters for the presentations of distant historical interactions, such as Grant and Lee’s discussions in Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia, but to allow the female characters to demonstrate a trans-historical perspective, spanning the opera’s two-century scope. Julia Grant’s closing lines in the opera not only accentuate the shift from Grant’s view—that this will be the last war—to Lincoln’s view—that this will not be the last war—but highlight her role as a protagonist in what Linda Hutcheon would term a “historiographic metafiction.” Julia Grant seemingly steps out of the nineteenth century, assesses the twentieth century, and then points out a lineage of racial discrimination to the audience. Because the opera is self-reflexive, moving between three distinct events and relying on chronological later points in order to elucidate previous ones, the characters of Mary

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Lincoln and Julia Grant take on added significance. The former is able to establish the importance of prophecy in the opera’s narrative, by revealing her husband’s dreams about the future; while the latter is the character who can seemingly view enough of the plot to piece together the three historical threads. Julia Grant’s character could be understood as functioning both within the opera’s Civil War timeline and in a time and space that encircles all of the opera’s 150-year scope. Mary Lincoln’s periodic returns to the president’s dreams draw on presentations of her character in biographies and the compositions that I discuss below. Julia Grant is the character with the thinnest historical record and thus provided the creative team with the widest latitude for their intertextual fiction. Taken together these women also signal a collective feminist understanding of the nature of war and peace—one that at best divides the male characters.

Glass and Hampton accomplished their second manipulation, that of undermining operatic norms of characters’ “presence,” by replacing Lincoln’s stage time with the offering of his words and ideas through the mouths of the female characters. Lacking is the type of presence described by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht as “a spatial relationship” between “the world and its objects.”11 Inherently, this study concerns the meaning, symbolism, and signification that is encoded, assumed, or discovered in musical compositions; however, owing to the content of this period of Lincoln compositions, the historian must employ special scrutiny to what Gumbrecht calls the oscillation between the “meaning effect” and “presence effect.”12 Were it not for the women in Appomattox, Lincoln’s inclusion would be minimized. Mary Lincoln and Julia Grant communicate most of his role. The creative team problematized Lincoln’s potency by providing


12 Ibid.
audience members with much of the encoded meaning of Lincoln, but very little of his physical presence. The opera’s resolution comes from a present character, but is based on the words of an absent character. Examining projects in which Glass has previously eclipsed his Lincoln characters during their stage presence confirms that the composer and librettist’s dramatic choice to use Lincoln but put the spotlight on others was not merely the outcome of the complicated chronological shifting in *Appomattox*. Working with director Robert Wilson, Glass contributed music to the vast (and yet unrealized) multi-city, multi-night opera, *the CIVIL warS: a tree is best measured when it is down* (1984), and with director Godfrey Reggio he composed the score for the film *Naqoyqatsi: Life as War* (2002).\(^{13}\) As with *Appomattox*, each of the two previous projects addressed notions of war and violence covering long spans of time. Glass and his collaborators employ Lincoln in these each of these works in order to provide a bridge to the American Civil War, but other characters, images, and actions are responsible for the relevant content.

Glass’s Lincoln characters are historical figures, but always viewed from the perspective of modern times and commenting on the future. The composer has acknowledged such a posture, stating that he feels compelled to compose for the future and not the present; he desires to write for the understandings of topics that are to come, and not only as a reflection of a current understanding.\(^{14}\) The shifting of time is similarly embedded in *Appomattox*, during which Glass

\(^{13}\) By the time Glass joined the team of *the CIVIL warS*, Wilson had already inundated the opera with Lincoln images. The subtitle, “a tree is best measured when it is down,” came from the title of the chapter on Lincoln’s death in Carl Sandburg’s biography. Wilson’s “Act V” Lincoln is physically large—an actor on stilts elongated to the height of the theater, but his only action is a slow walk across the stage. Upon reaching the far side, he gradually falls backward to the floor. Lincoln interacts only with mythical characters and sings in Italian. The Lincoln of *Naqoyqatsi* is part of a non-narrative sequence of images. Lincoln’s bust appears during a segment of scrolling wax faces that pass horizontally across the screen, separated only by brief frames of manipulated film. The faces each have some relation to war or violence.

and Hampton transport the audience from 1865, to 1965, back to 1865, then to 2005, and finally to an epilogue in the style of a non-temporal commentary akin to a Greek chorus.

Glass and Hampton’s jettisoning of historical chronology, juxtaposition of contemporary and period musical content, and obscuring of Lincoln’s presence in favor of women as meta-fictional characters serves what the composer has described as his desire to address “emotional truth” rather than “historical truth.” For Glass the “emotional truth” of the Civil War is found in the story of racism—a far more expansive topic than the slavery narrative found in other Lincoln musical memorials. He has stated that racism—alongside religion—is what “causes all the greatest suffering in the world,” and so he needed a symbol aside from Lincoln’s “Great Emancipator” archetype through which to communicate with an audience. Creating an opera about the Civil War with nineteenth-century female protagonists not only established a compelling platform for a history from below that was better suited to challenging the white, male, powerful figures of the day, but it also allowed Glass and Hampton to connect the on-stage action of fringe characters with the lives of their audience members. While it is easy for audience members to distance themselves from the late president, the likes of Mary Lincoln, Julia Grant, and the opera’s other women serve as deeply human—albeit sensationalized—characters.

Mary Lincoln

More than three decades before Glass and Hampton drew attention to Civil War women, Mary Lincoln received her first thorough musical-dramatic treatment in The Trial of Mary Lincoln, Thomas Pasatieri’s sixty-minute, made-for-television opera based on a libretto by Anne

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16 Ibid., 47.
Bailey. Kirk Browning directed the opera’s taping, which first aired on 14 February 1972 and featured Elaine Bonazzi in the title role. Pasatieri’s Mary Lincoln character confronts a series of transgressions interpolated throughout the primary narrative, her 1875 sanity trial. While the setting—a courtroom examination of whether the former first lady required institutionalization—lent itself to a flamboyant score, Pasatieri provided Mary Lincoln with a sympathetic voice. Her singing is largely controlled, with arching melodies comprised of stepwise motion, moderate dynamics, conventional rhythmic patterns, and typical pacing within each of her scenes. This musical presentation of a poised character makes her few breaks from convention appear exceptional. Pasatieri’s Mary Lincoln is a woman of tremendous composure. When the television audience first hears her, she is informing the judge of the extreme pains that she has suffered. Bailey’s libretto provides graphic detail, such as Mary Lincoln’s passage, “I have followed three young sons to cold, small graves and watched my beloved husband’s brain spill from a bullet track.” Having Mary Lincoln’s human loss greet the audience as their first exposure to the character establishes her identity as a sympathetic protagonist; Pasatieri presents her as neither the child of a Southern, moneyed family nor a power-wielding presidential wife. At the outset Pasatieri highlights Mary Lincoln as a woman who had strength, intellect, and influence but who was constantly undercut and vulnerable because of nineteenth-century gender norms and the many burdens she faced. In this regard, Pasatieri’s Mary Lincoln is an outsider battling the tragedies of her life and the culture of her day. That the character manages to labor forward without male assistance makes this a thoroughly feminist opera.

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17 Thomas Pasatieri, The Trial of Mary Lincoln, composer holograph, Theodore Presser Rental Library, King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. The NET Opera Theater, a short-lived venture to produce opera on non-commercial television, commissioned the work for its 1972 season.

18 Ibid., 16–17.
Pasatieri drew on Homer Croy’s *The Trial of Mrs. Abraham Lincoln*, a book that is equal parts biography, history, and historical recreation (or historical fiction, depending on the reader’s faith in the author’s claim to have “understood his characters”). Homer Croy provided sensational accounts of Mary Lincoln’s courtroom scenes, but is less kind to the other characters involved. Pasatieri imbues these courtroom scenes with 1970s feminist signals by presenting the first lady as her late husband’s political partner, a characterization that has proven attractive at various points in Mary Lincoln’s legacy, but as Michael Burkhimer has argued, has exaggerated her role in the president’s political affairs. While characters frequently discuss Abraham Lincoln in the opera, he never appears on screen. For example, television viewers are transported to 1841 and learn that Abraham Lincoln has arrived at the Springfield, Illinois, residence of Ninian Edwards, the husband of Mary’s sister Elizabeth, where Mary is currently residing. The viewer learns that Lincoln waits in the parlor as Mary Todd is summoned to see him. From off stage Mary is heard breaking-off their engagement: “Go if you will, but when you want me back, you will crawl here on your knees.” Then again at the Edwards home during an 1860 party celebrating the newly elected president’s success, Abraham is in another room talking with advisors and Mary makes every attempt to join him so as to provide counsel, but Ninian and Elizabeth intercept her and remind her that she is the new first lady and not a presidential advisor. Mary again attempts to politically partner with Abraham when Confederate forces fire on Fort Sumter, but White House staff block her from gaining access to the president.


21 Pasatieri, *The Trial of Mary Lincoln*, 44.
Pasatieri presents Mary Lincoln as multidimensional. In some of the most anguished music of the opera, she reads letters from citizens criticizing her for spending money on clothes and parties after returning to the White House from having visited a Civil War hospital. Later Mary witnesses her son Willie’s final breath, begging him to stay with her until the President can join her. Pasatieri offers Mary as a sympathetic character so that by the end of her trial, when she is screaming for her husband with only a bass drum accompanying her cries, television viewers are left feeling gutted. Rather than understanding these moments as the delusions of a broken mind, Pasatieri presents them as the pained cries of a wronged wife and mother. Mary Lincoln twice more calls for Abraham, reaching an A5 before sighing and falling two octaves. The viewers do not witness the madness of a woman requiring institutionalization; rather, a wife with near debilitating love for her husband and a desire to serve others in the face of lifelong adversities.

Pasatieri’s championing of Mary Lincoln seems restrained when compared to Carmel Owen’s 2006 musical, *Asylum: The Strange Case of Mary Lincoln*. Owen presents her as a woman who was sane and lucid, and who battled not only the hardships of life but also a conspiracy to institutionalize her. The musical portrays the first lady as an unlikely hero, but goes further in exploiting twenty-first-century acceptance of scandal and conspiracy as the norm for American political life. Indeed, the second act is predicated on journalists unraveling the conspiracy surrounding Mary Lincoln’s institutionalization in the ensemble piece, “What a Story.” *Asylum* portrays the former first lady as perfectly healthy, but wronged by her politically and financially greedy son Robert, members of Congress, and alleged friends. The musical, with

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a book by June Bingham, features more comedic moments than Pasatieri’s opera, but those serve only to lighten the otherwise stinging indictment of American life: that Mary’s son and closest friends were all too willing to have her locked away.

Owen and Bingham’s critique of Mary Lincoln’s treatment required them to reach well past the historical record of the trial. And in the instances when the creative team retained the historical record, they often did so in a manner that diminished the late president and promoted his wife. For example, Owen and Bingham drew on accounts that support a view of Abraham as a country bumpkin who required Mary’s polishing. In “The Lincoln Waltz,” Mary teaches Abraham how to dance, which sets up the legendary exchange, “Mrs. Todd since first I saw you, I’ve wanted to dance with you in the worst way,” to which Mary responds, “Well, that is exactly what you are doing.” Similarly, in the number “Oregon,” Abraham is flattered by Zachary Taylor’s invitation to serve as the governor of the Oregon Territory. Mary puts him in his place, claiming that this would be a terrible move and that he must stay focused on national politics in Washington. She is the driving force in his career, and Abraham reluctantly follows Mary’s lead. Abraham initially sings that Washington is not really the place for him and claims that he would rather be on the frontier. In the strophic song, Abraham’s repeated statements of “Oregon” are soon replaced with Mary’s insertion of “Washington.” There is a brief moment in which Abraham continues to sing “Oregon,” but then realizes that Mary is correct in knowing what is best for him and he concedes, “Washington.”

Owen included in the musical’s cast recording the following note:

Mary Lincoln went to live with her sister in Springfield until she was able to reverse the insanity verdict and regain control of her financial and other assets. At that time she left

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23 Along with creating text to portray Mary as the politically wise and Abraham as the politically foolish, Owen and Bingham also created new characters, such as the sympathetic Nurse Delia, the former first lady’s African American caregiver, who is able to recognize that Mary is healthy, despite what others say.
for Europe and lived in Pau, France, for sixteen more years. She returned to Springfield only when illness required her to do so. She died in Springfield at her sister’s home soon after. There is no evidence that her behavior was erratic or crazed after she left Bellevue. She left a substantial estate to her son Robert, in spite of what had occurred.24

Similar to Glass and Hampton’s denunciation of the United States’ legacy of racism, condemnation drives Owen and Bingham’s musical. Whereas Pasatieri attempted to offer a sympathetic Mary Lincoln, Owen and Bingham censure Mary’s family and friends, demean the president, and question how the nation let these events happen to a brilliant and respectable woman. Owen and Bingham wrote a musical from below with the biography of the president found throughout, but one in which his gravely wronged wife is the central character and heroine.

*John Wilkes Booth*

Replacing the sixteenth president with the first lady in turn of the twentieth-first-century musical theater shifted the focus from the hero narratives that often surround Lincoln to considerations of individuals and groups who were outside the nineteenth-century power structure. Such efforts have expanded audiences’ awareness of alternative struggles and narratives. Composers have opted to venture still further in their use of outsider protagonists and even questioned if the traditional narratives hold any value whatsoever. Whereas the potency of the Lincoln musical *topos* originated in the historical figure’s moral security, which generations of Americans have eagerly sought, a different puissance can be found in adopting Lincoln’s assassin, John Wilkes Booth. Artists need not champion the legitimacy of Booth’s action and alleged cause in order to broach discussions of American shortcomings and struggles.

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comparison to the grand boulevards of patriotism and Lincoln historical memory, these narratives represent its foreboding back alleys.

The late twentieth-century compositions that include Booth as a primary character, if not the protagonist, fall into two categories: relativist works in which composers assert some level of moral equality between Booth and Lincoln and works in which the assassin is emblematic of the problems found in American culture. Within this second category exists a diverse collection of Booth portrayals, each oriented toward challenging American narratives of greatness. The composers of these works adopt Booth’s perspective as a means of calling into question whether the concepts and narratives of egalitarianism, good fortune, successful underdogs, and freedom from oppression are ever truly found in the United States.

In addressing the compositions surrounding the Lincoln bicentennial, I examine the issues at play in the first category, the relativist compositions. While this approach flourished in 2009, composers employed it throughout the nineteenth century—such as those early attempts to equate the Blue and the Gray—and maintained it in the twentieth century—as found in Tony Rice’s song “John Wilkes Booth” (1988). Rice, a bluegrass artist, commissioned Mary Chapin Carpenter to compose a track for his album Native American. In his liner notes, Rice describes his fascination with Lincoln’s assassination and then asserts, “To some extent this song displays the idea that it is possible to appreciate both Abraham Lincoln and the man who felt compelled out of patriotism to assassinate him.” In this context “appreciate” is an imprecise verb. Reading Rice’s comment alongside the generous treatment Carpenter affords the assassin in her lyrics, the song appears more inclined to justify than to condemn. Carpenter presents Lincoln in two ways:

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25 Tony Rice, Native American, Rounder Records CD0248, 1988; and Emory Lester and Mark Johnson, Acoustic Rising, Mountain Home CD1100, 2006. Following Rice’s release, bluegrass musicians Lester and Johnson recorded an instrumental version of “John Wilkes Booth” for banjo and guitar.
as “a tired old man when he won the war” and as “the man who caused the South to weep.”

Moreover, eight times Rice repeats the song’s chorus: Booth acted “in the name of God and Dixieland.” While Rice is known for his bluegrass guitar virtuosity, this lyric-driven folk song is a departure. The narrative that Carpenter developed consistently returns to question whether the assassination was the work of a lone man or a group of conspirators, a point that further blurs individual culpability. Taken as a whole, Carpenter’s lyrics, the folk-song setting, and Rice’s liner notes advance the relativist reading of Booth. Rice stops short of praising the act of murder, “Speaking on behalf of Mary Chapin [Carpenter] as well as myself, neither of us could condone such a criminal act as the one committed by John Wilkes Booth,” but the performer does not indict the assassin either.26 This attempt to find equality in the men’s motivations invites an assessment from listeners and analysts: one can rejected this argument of equality on the basis of its ethical ambiguity or one can adopt it as an effort to achieve parity between Lincoln and Booth.

An interpretive challenge faces listeners and analysts of compositions in which Booth is employed as a means to probe the shortcomings of the American dream. The question in these compositions extends beyond whether Booth is good or evil and into a complex evaluation of American society. It is not so much about “appreciating” the man, to use Rice’s term, but exploring questions surrounding Americans’ shared expectations of the opportunities that society (or government) should offer its citizens. In this narrative, composers can question whether the American dream portrayed in Lincoln musical memorials is realistic. Can a poor boy growing up in a dirt-floored log cabin ascend to greatness? When men take up arms, does good always triumph over evil? Is Lincoln an effective symbol of the everyman? What has emancipation

26 Ibid.
meant for the descendants of the enslaved? These questions do not validate the assassin, but use his story to probe the direction of the country.

Bluesman David Vidal offers a response to some of these questions when he reminds his listeners that Lincoln, even with his virtue and success, could not avoid disappointment and every mortal’s demise: death. In “John Wilkes Booth,” Vidal sings:

They say Abe Lincoln was prone to depression.
He just saw the world as it is I’m guessing.
If you just tell the truth,
Life brings you John Wilkes Booth.

Similar to the accompaniment found in Carpenter’s “John Wilkes Booth,” Vidal’s choice of a one-man composition for voice, guitar, and harmonica offers a sense of folk-oriented timelessness. However, in contrast to Carpenter’s focus on the equality of two distant figures, Vidal shifts his attention to struggles in contemporary American life by addressing topics of human trafficking and global climate change. Vidal’s world is not devoid of goodness or nobility, but evil—Booth—is always present to snatch victories from the hands of average Americans.

Composers have embraced Booth in order to contest another aspect of the American dream, economic mobility. The hard rock band Clutch, whose music has at times skirted the rock ’n’ roll subgenres of southern rock and stoner rock, provides cultural markers—or in Popkin’s parlance, “low information signals”—by crafting its song “I Have the Body of John Wilkes Booth” around a fishing metaphor. Specifically, Clutch plays with the metaphor of fishing but without getting any bites in the waters of the nation’s Mid-Atlantic region, around Booth’s home

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state of Maryland. The song targets the economic difficulties of the region and the waterways of the Susquehanna and Sassafras Rivers and Chesapeake Bay as well as the Appalachian and Blue Ridge Mountains. After failing to reel in prize catches, it is Booth, or his corpse, who provides the catch in this American story of financial struggle. The song’s narrator claims that he has hooked Booth’s body, and then mixing elements of a circus barker and auctioneer, he pitches his find:

I have discovered the body of John Wilkes Booth.
Yes, it’s true, I have Mr. Booth.
Everybody got to make a living somehow.
Do I hear a million?

The song is a reminder that the United States is a land of struggle and that to survive many Americans turn to the sensational to make a buck. In tough economic times, Mid-Atlantic Americans take whatever steps are necessary to earn an income. In this instance the only path to survival is cashing in on the value of Booth’s body.

David Vidal’s and Clutch’s statements are outside the Lincoln narratives addressed in prior chapters; each begins to pry back the veneer of the American dream. In these songs Booth serves as a reminder of vulnerabilities and economic realities. And while Clutch and Vidal attempt to make the vulnerabilities universal, or at least widely known, listeners may be tempted to see themselves in opposition to Booth and lured to occupy the heroic Lincoln role. That is, Clutch and Vidal did not compose songs that specifically task listeners with questioning how they may have victimized others; rather, they provided songs that invite listeners to see themselves in Lincoln’s role, as society’s victim.

Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman ask more of their audience by establishing Booth as the patriarch in the family of American presidential hit men and women in their 1991 musical,
In so doing Sondheim and Weidman neither argued for a Booth/Lincoln equivalence nor did they craft a Booth counternarrative in which he becomes the hero to whom audiences can sympathize. Rather, by recasting Booth into Lincoln’s traditional role, they were able to demonstrate the need to understand both the president and his assassin (and their stories) as essential participants in American society. Raymond Knapp has claimed that theirs was not an effort oriented toward glorification of the assassin nor is it even a variation of the softer “appreciation” described by Rice. The musical reminds audience members that assassins, with all of their motivations, anger, and frustration, were historical realities as much as were their targets. In the realm of historical memory, *Assassins* reminds audience members that if the United States wishes to claim greatness for having formed its presidents, then it must also reconcile its role in creating their killers. *Assassins* claims that presidents and those who have wished them dead have both existed and their lives have collided, so praising one without addressing the other fails to understand what occurred. A society with insiders inherently also has outsiders. In shining a light on the latter group, Sondheim and Weidman attempted to understand the relationship of the two.

To prevent audiences from taking sides—presidents versus hit men—Sondheim and Weidman provide a one-sided cast of assassins. This one-sided cast of characters encourages contemplation of a complex society without falling victim to an us-versus-them mentality.

Lincoln is physically absent from *Assassins*, but Sondheim and Weidman transfer his role in our

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national memory to Booth. In the first scene, the creative team establishes Booth as the only cast member who can fill Lincoln’s shoes. The show opens with each assassin making his or her way through a fairground. A midway proprietor invites them, one at a time, to visit his stall. The proprietor’s attraction is a shooting gallery and his targets are the heads of U.S. presidents. The proprietor’s bark, “C’mere and kill a President,” is off-putting, but it gives way to his comic taunting of the various assassins in a manner that draws each of them to play the game and attempt to prove him wrong.

The proprietor’s ribbing as well as the assassins’ sour moods change when Booth enters. Weidman offers a scene suitable for a presidential arrival:

John Wilkes Booth enters, handsome and thoughtful, theatrically but elegantly dressed in black. He contemplates the scene. After a beat the proprietor and the assassins slowly turn and look at him. It is clear that all of them, even the proprietor, view him with a certain deference.31

The other assassins, who until this point had remained largely to themselves—consumed by their own problems, anxieties, and frustrations—turn and acknowledge the prim and proper gentleman. The proprietor’s tack also changes; instead of poking fun, as he did with the other assassins, for Booth he has only laudatory comments: “Hey, gang, look who’s here. There’s our pioneer. Hey, chief, loud and clear ….” For this passage (mm. 168–73), the tempo slows to quarter note equals one hundred, the slowest and most deliberate tempo of the opening scene. A similar, though slightly quicker passage appeared once before, but in that instance the proprietor delivered his sales pitch to John Hinckley: “Everybody’s got the right to be happy.” Now, when the music returns at the slow tempo, the proprietor begins his pitch but is interrupted by Booth,

31 Sondheim and Weidman, Assassins, 11; and Harold Holzer and Mark E. Neely Jr., Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: The Civil War in Art (New York: Random House, 1996). The presentation of Booth dressed in an elegant black suit draws on another connection to Lincoln: portrayals of his wartime rival Jefferson Davis. Harold Holzer and Mark E. Neely Jr. have addressed paintings of Davis in which his clothing and pose are modeled on Lincoln images. Holzer and Neely claim that these were attempts to legitimize Davis and equate their roles as presidents.
who delivers it himself. Unlike the other characters who are seemingly sold the idea of killing a president, Booth confidently presents his case without the proprietor’s assistance. Booth is as steadfast in his goal of assassination as Lincoln characters are often presented in their efforts toward ending the Civil War and restoring the Union.

While Lincoln’s oratory is a component of our historical memory of the president, the same cannot be said of Booth.\(^\text{32}\) In studying Booth’s writings, John Rhodehamel and Louise Taper describe his speech drafts as far less impressive than his acting, for which he was known.\(^\text{33}\) Booth never gained the courage, nor found a suitable location, to deliver his draft of a pro-Confederacy address. Despite Booth’s apparent shortcoming as an orator, Sondheim and Weidman alter history in their effort to draw a comparison to Lincoln. For example, Booth steals attention from the proprietor by taking his sales pitch and thereby converting the remainder of the opening scene into a duet. Only Booth can conclude what at first appeared to be the proprietor’s attraction. At the end of the first scene, Sondheim and Weidman have given the impression that Booth’s fellow assassins are introverted and nervous; whereas the first among them is a charismatic leader who commands respect.

The second scene provides another Lincoln comparison. Not only is the Booth of Assassins a better orator than we might expect from the historical record, but he also engages in debate. Lincoln’s courtroom experience as well as his formal quarreling in the 1858 debates with Stephen Douglas provided his legacy with the image of the great orator, even if the memory of a man with a booming voice, prized pronunciation, and the ideal words for every situation falls


\(^\text{33}\) John Rhodehamel and Louise Taper, Right or Wrong, God Judge Me: The Writings of John Wilkes Booth (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 11 and 67.
wide of the mark. Sondheim and Weidman provide Booth a defining debate in “The Ballad of Booth.” In this exchange between a balladeer and the assassin, Sondheim and Weidman use the balladeer to represent the American dream, which is “that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement.”

The balladeer’s American identity is scored by Sondheim with a folksy melody introduced by banjo or mandolin and later augmented by harmonica, fiddle, snare drum, and wood block. The balladeer sings his passages, but the musical accompaniment always stops for Booth’s entrances. Often the balladeer’s verbal jousting with each assassin is comic but cruel. He highlights their quirky characteristics and obtuse delusions, while they respond with the reasons for their actions. With Booth, however, the balladeer suggests that “Johnny” shot the president because of bad theatrical reviews, jealousy of his brother, and alcohol addiction. Whereas the balladeer relentlessly criticizes the other assassins, his behavior changes when addressing Booth.

“The Ballad of Booth” is divided into three parts. The criticism of Booth as a silly man and crazy assassin is confined to Part I. In Part II Booth delivers an uninterrupted case for his actions—a privilege the balladeer does not give the other assassins. Part II is similar to the opening scene, with Booth overtaking the balladeer. His power over the assassins comes from his ability to trivialize them and their actions, yet by Part III he is treating Booth seriously: “How could you do it Johnny, calling it a cause? You left a legacy of butchery and treason we took eagerly ....”

The balladeer concludes the scene:

Listen to the stories.
Hear it in the songs.


Angry men don’t write the rules, and guns don’t right the wrongs.
Hurt’s a while, but soon the country’s back where it belongs,
And that’s the truth.
Still and all … damn you, Booth!

Composers have accepted the honored place that Lincoln’s speeches occupy in American historical memory, and similarly Sondheim and Weidman provide Booth’s oratory with favored status.

Another component of the Lincoln *topos* is his position as the first martyred president. Comparably, Booth, as the first successful assassin, offers the model for his successors. To maintain the parallelism between Booth and Lincoln, Sondheim and Weidman, who were otherwise willing to include the unsuccessful assassination attempts by Giuseppe Zangara, Samuel Byck, Lynette “Squeaky” Fromme, Sara Jane Moore, and John Hinckley Jr., excluded Richard Lawrence, who had attempted to kill Andrew Jackson. The exclusion of Lawrence is likely not out of lack of narrative interest, since his biography is one of the most colorful of the American assassins, but his presence would have undercut Booth’s position.\(^{36}\) Booth takes on the role of a sage leader in part because of his “pioneer” status, as the proprietor points out. Part of the assassins’ attraction to killing a president is Booth’s iconic status. Just as Lincoln was memorialized as a father and guardian, so too is Booth depicted as the head of a household in Scene 16, when he demonstrates his knowledge of Oswald’s life, then offers his fatherly, but horrifying, advice to shoot President Kennedy. In a moment that harkens back to the instruction Sondheim offers another of his outsider characters, *Company*’s Bobby—“Want something”—Booth tells Oswald, “All your life you’ve wanted to be part of something, Lee. You’re finally

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\(^{36}\) Lawrence attempted to kill Andrew Jackson, since he believed Jackson had killed his father, a fact that is unlikely since Lawrence’s father never traveled to the United States. Lawrence also believed for a time that he was King Richard III. During his assassination attempt he fired two pistols and both jammed. He was immediately apprehended. Francis Scott Key led Lawrence’s criminal prosecution.
going to get your wish … The past you never had, the future you’d abandoned—it’s called history, Lee.”  

During this exchange the other assassins join Booth, and the image of a family is complete. While its members are still bent on killing Kennedy, the family provides acceptance, joy, and camaraderie for these outsider characters. Booth has brought them together and in their unity of mission they have developed community. His patriarchal status in the musical’s narrative required Sondheim and Weidman to place his defining scenes, his assassination of Lincoln and his ballad, in their correct chronological order—another privilege they denied the subsequent assassins.

Their decision to accord Booth with the appropriate chronological position comports with another recurring issue in musical presentations of Lincoln: the attempt to create a sense of historical legitimacy, even if sidestepping historical accuracy. Sondheim’s score is an example of American musical pastiche, with many styles employed to highlight character identities. The composer describes his “Ballad of Booth” as being in the style of Stephen Foster. If pastiche, stylistic sensitivity, and musical borrowing anchor Lincoln musical memorials in his biography, then Sondheim employs them similarly for Booth and his fellow assassins. The composer creates a musical parallel between the president and the assassin by underscoring “Hail to the Chief” for Booth’s cue to depart the stage and assassinate Lincoln. Since a Lincoln character never appears (the actual assassination is only implied), Booth assumes the presidential anthem as his musical cue. As it begins he gracefully says, “Excuse me,” as if being called away. Sondheim and Weidman provide Booth with character development through biographical details, such as his alcoholism, temper, and frustration with his co-conspirators. Composers have provided similar

37 Weidman, 96.

personal details about Lincoln’s character in order to form a connection between the drama and the audience. In Asylum, for example, Carmel Owen revealed Lincoln’s love of Shakespeare, while in Appomattox, Glass and Hampton provided insight into the president’s subconscious through Mrs. Lincoln’s discussions of his dreams. Including details of Lincoln’s and Booth’s biographies establishes historical credibility and provides greater character depth than merely a wartime president or a disgruntled actor turned assassin. Biographical details are necessary for humanizing both figures.39

Sondheim and Weidman transform Booth into the dramatic equal of Lincoln, as Americans have come to know him more through decades of literature, music, film, and visual art portrayals. In bringing Booth and Lincoln into parity, Sondheim and Weidman do not suggest a relative relationship of motives; rather, a searing assessment of the United States. The paradox offered in Assassins is that the balladeer’s and assassins’ messages are true: the United States provides extraordinary opportunities and “All you need to do is move your little finger and you can change the world.” The musical does not leave audiences questioning whether Lincoln and Booth’s actions were equally respectable; rather, they are left with the understanding that Lincoln and Booth are united in a single narrative—they did not act separately, they interacted. The musical contemplates the ways in which Americans understand individual and communal identity, how they seek relationships, and the ways that people can feel disappointed and disgruntled when relationships break apart. Sondheim and Weidman do not downplay the assassins’ psychosis; the proprietor and balladeer draw attention to them throughout. Thus, Knapp’s assessment that the assassins seemingly want the same things as all Americans, is not an

39 Miller, “Assassins and the Concept Musical,” 197. Miller also notes the role of humor and moments of comic relief in humanizing the otherwise distant personalities of the assassins.
isolated subtext, but part of the musical’s central theme: citizens of a nation will share desires and frustrations, and their actions will have consequences for fellow citizens they never meet. *Assassins* differs from other Booth narratives in that it tears down the straw man created by demonizing Booth.40 Rather, the musical reminds audiences that to explore a historical topic requires that we dive headfirst into the issues, aspirations, emotions, and personalities of all the actors involved, whether they are at the very center of the societal power structure or on its fringe.

While a musical offers many avenues for plumbing the Lincoln and Booth paradigm, Mark Steyn has pointed out the lingering friction found in the genre:

> With memories of Ellis Island not far below the surface, Broadway’s first generation hymned the American dream; Sondheim, born into moneyed Manhattan, tells us it’s a nightmare and, in *Assassins*, makes the great American songbook of cakewalks and Stephen Foster a soundtrack for psychopaths.41

In acknowledging a society with psychopaths, paupers, and presidents, Sondheim and Weidman offer what Raymond Knapp has described as “the disturbing presence that has always been there.”42 As Glass challenged operatic norms to reexamine the Civil War through the lenses of race and gender, Sondheim departs from musical theater expectations in *Assassins*. To date it represents the composer’s largest collection of outsider characters.43 A history from below that goes beyond mere gazing at the underside of the American dream, as has been argued by

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40 Knapp, “*Assassins, Oklahoma!* and the ‘Shifting Fringe of Dark around the Campfire,’” 82 and 84.


42 Knapp, “*Assassins, Oklahoma!* and the ‘Shifting Fringe of Dark around the Campfire,’” 84.

The creative team did not merely explore the assassin family’s dysfunction, nor is the musical a simple glimpse into “Sondheim’s dark view of humanity,” as Douglas Braverman describes it, and nor is it a story about loners, people who choose non-conformity. Assassins explores outsiders, people who desire community with their neighbors but fail to obtain it. Thus, it should be of no surprise that one of its most effective performances came from the inmates at Ashwell Prison in Rutland, England. The imprisoned possess a heightened sensitivity to the realities of belonging, community, and identity.

Sondheim and Weidman avoided exploiting a support-group mentality, whereby once the assassins found each other, all of their problems were resolved. The show’s climax belies any notion that adequate solutions can be found in grouping similar people together. When the assassins gather in the Texas Book Depository, they still engage in the type of peer pressure and rationalization that makes it possible for Lee Harvey Oswald to shoot President Kennedy.

Sondheim and Weidman argue that the narratives of Lincoln, Booth, presidents, and assassins, combine to form a story about a complex American society. Whether in our daily lives or our telling of history we should not push people aside, remember some, forget others, ignore still many more, and expect to maintain peace and harmony. Assassins argues for audiences to employ the Booth topos—not merely the Lincoln topos—in examining ourselves and our culture.

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The shift from president to assassin reifies the difference between late-nineteenth-century and late-twentieth-century Lincoln musical memorials: the change from compositions that praised the great man from afar to works that ask what the narrative of the assassin and all of those who followed him mean to our identities as Americans. *Assassins* adumbrated the deeply personal and malleable approach to Lincoln memory found nearly two decades later during the bicentennial of the president’s birth.

*A Gay Lincoln*

Shifting attention from Lincoln to his wife or assassin has afforded composers opportunities to explore outsiders—characters on the societal fringe. In so doing Glass, Hampton, Owen, Pasatieri, Carpenter, Vidal, Sondheim, and Weidman have offered histories from below and reevaluated characters typically considered lunatics and villains in our historical memory. These alternate examinations have favored an approach in which the outsider—the first lady, Confederate general, or assassin—is presented as familiar. To provide time for character development, less time is spent praising the president’s heroic actions and laudable character, hallmarks of many previous compositions. Instead audiences learn details of Booth’s life as an actor and Mary Lincoln’s psychological suffering. Beyond building familiarity between audience members and the new protagonist, the composer of a musical history from below also attempts to raise the outsider’s status in parity with the late president. Booth, for example, dresses, speaks, and acts presidential in *Assassins*. Mary Lincoln becomes the couple’s principle decision-maker in *Asylum*. This one-directional process raises the new protagonist to the level of respect afforded the president. Less common is to place Lincoln in an oppressed or minority setting. That is, instead of merely improving the status of the outsiders, moving the insider to the marginalized
fringe. Before assessing the musical memorials of the 2009 bicentennial, a final consideration will be an example of recasting Lincoln as a minority figure.

Given the role that the Lincoln topos played in movements advocating rights and protections for immigrant groups, the working poor, and African Americans, one might assume that early homophile and gay rights organizations would have connected their cause to the narrative and legacy of the sixteenth president. While Civil War imagery can be found in gay rights materials from the 1970s, the use of Lincoln was rare, and becomes common only decades later. The 14 October 1979 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, did not feature a program on the Lincoln Memorial steps. The organizers opted instead to have the participants process through the city in a route that circumscribed much of the National Mall, the lawn that stretches east from the Lincoln Memorial, Reflecting Pool, and Washington Monument to the west portico of the Capitol Building. The 1979 march did find ways to use Civil War tunes; for example, the souvenir program featured a parody of “John Brown’s Body” for slain San Francisco Supervisor Harvey Milk, the first elected openly gay official in California. Similarly, the song “Frankie and Johnnie,” which Neil Powell has argued is a Civil War era song, was glossed with Frankie altered from a female to male character for the new song. In this adaptation “Frankie and Johnnie” are a gay couple who fear the backlash from families, friends, and co-workers if anyone discovers their relationship. While the 1979 organizers could

47 Hosting a march, instead of a demonstration, maintained the practice of holding annual gay pride marches commemorating the 1969 Stonewall Riots. Gay rights organizations held the first such march from Stonewall Inn to Central Park on 28 June 1970, the riots’ one-year anniversary.


49 Ibid., 27; and Neil Powell, The Language of Jazz (Manchester: Carcanet, 1997), 53.
not have known it at the time, within a few short years, the space where they marched and sang these songs would serve as the site for one of the country’s largest public displays of memorial art, the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. The project has served as a moveable monument to people of all ages, genders, races, and sexual orientations who have died from HIV/AIDS; however, it was conceived by gay rights advocate Cleve Jones, initially planned by the organizations that he led in San Francisco, and first displayed on the National Mall at the 1987 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. Planners of the quilt’s national display selected the location between the Lincoln Memorial and Capitol Building in order to draw attention from the throngs of citizens visiting Washington to see the monuments as well as the politicians and power brokers in the Reagan administration and the halls of Congress, who had ignored the AIDS crisis.50

At times mere feet from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, participants in the Gay Rights Movement had not yet embraced the sixteenth president as a symbol or hero for their cause. The early attempts to identify with Lincoln came in the public policy realm, when a group of gay, politically conservative individuals formed an organization on the premise that ideals of equality and liberty, which were associated with Lincoln’s presidency, should apply to their rights. The result was the 1977 founding of the “Log Cabin Republicans.”51 The organization’s formation sheds light on at least one reason for the apparent avoidance of connecting the Lincoln topos to the broader Gay Rights Movement. Whereas immigrants could make a connection to Lincoln’s

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rise to power from humble roots and African Americans could argue for their Lincoln association by way of his role as the “Great Emancipator,” gay Americans lacked a specific biographical link to the sixteenth president. While Log Cabin Republicans merged Lincoln’s status as the first Republican president with certain egalitarian principles that he represented, their case was not based on a compelling personal connection to the man and his presidency. Since narratives, more so than shared principles, provide a means to effective advocacy, drawing together Lincoln’s image and the Gay Rights Movement stood to benefit from the queering of the sixteenth president.

In the 1980s a growing body of literature questioned Lincoln’s sexuality. The topic gained attention with a *New York Times* feature in 1995 and four publications in the opening decade of the twenty-first century, notably psychologist C. A. Tripp’s posthumously published *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*. Tripp offered a full-throated endorsement of the gay Lincoln narrative, but his editor and publisher remained skeptical enough to include as an

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epilogue Lincoln biographer Michael Burlingame’s response, “A Respectful Dissent.” Scholars and authors of mainstream Lincoln monographs preparing for the president’s bicentennial, did not accept the gay Lincoln narrative; however, contributors to American popular culture have embraced the concept. With more than a thousand forty-character messages, a rainbow-cloaked Twitter feed from “@GaybrahmLincoln” has provided a mixture of quips on history and culture beginning with the post, “Four score and seven years ago, our fore-daddies made this FAAAAABULOUS country!”54 Comedienne Joan Rivers used material about Lincoln’s sexuality in her act, and the long-running animated Fox sitcom The Simpsons has employed a gay Lincoln character, too.55 The contrast of scholarly skepticism on one hand and intense public interest on the other is understandable according to Linda Hirshman’s reading of queer topics in American culture. In addressing the significance of Ellen DeGeneres’s coming out on the ABC sitcom Ellen, Hirshman writes that while formal political debates on the moral foundation for and against same-sex marriage have had limited effect in shifting opinions, the promotion of gay individuals and families in popular culture has had the ability to offer the types of affirmative examples identified in queer theory literature as “gay is good.”56 After the affirmative position was established, Hirshman demonstrates that it was possible to have rapid success in advancing the previously fraught moral- and merit-based arguments.

The forty-seventh U.S. Vice President, Joe Biden, validated Hirshman’s case for the path from popular culture successes to victories in winning hearts and minds on the morals and


merits—the areas that eventually form the basis for policy initiatives—when asked whether his views on gay marriage had changed from opposition to support, he stated that they had. Biden then pointed to the potency of American popular culture in advancing political agendas:

> When I take a good look at when things really begin to change, it is when the social culture changes. I think [the NBC sitcom] Will and Grace probably did more to educate the American public [about gay rights] than almost anything that anybody has ever done, so far.\(^{57}\)

> While Lincoln imagery was employed for advocacy of causes in bicentennial compositions, the Lincoln musical *topos* had already seen use on the cultural front. It was not with a didactic setting; rather, as with Joan Rivers’s comedy, Will and Grace, The Simpsons, and @GaybrahamLincoln, it was disarming humor. While Jonathan Katz and C. A. Tripp were offering arguments for the re-evaluation of Lincoln’s sexual orientation, the Detroit-based alternative rock band Electric Six released its song “Gay Bar” (2003) and for all of its lyrical ambiguity, the corresponding music video provided visual clarity.\(^{58}\) Electric Six’s lyrics never directly address Lincoln:

> You, I wanna take you to a gay bar,
> I wanna take you to a gay bar,
> I wanna take you to a gay bar, gay bar, gay bar.
>
> Let’s start a war, start a nuclear war,
> At the gay bar, gay bar, gay bar. Wow!
>
> Now tell me do ya, do ya have any money?
> I wanna spend all your money,
> At the gay bar, gay bar, gay bar.
>
> I’ve got something to put in you,
> I’ve got something to put in you,
> I’ve got something to put in you,
> At the gay bar, gay bar, gay bar.

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\(^{57}\) *Meet the Press*, “Vice President Joe Biden Interview,” episode 66-19, originally aired on 6 May 2012.

You’re a superstar, at the gay bar.
You’re a superstar, at the gay bar.
Yeah! You’re a superstar, at the gay bar.
Superstar, super, super, superstar.

Indeed, the only U.S. president even obliquely identified by the band is George W. Bush, about whom the second stanza passage, “Let’s start a war, let’s start a nuclear war,” was presumably aimed.59

While the band’s leader, Tyler Spencer, contributed sexually provocative lyrics and musical content that was wholly in keeping with the group’s alternative rock style—an up-tempo accompaniment built on a driving lead guitar riff—the video that Tom Kuntz and Mike Maguire directed for “Gay Bar” adds an extra layer of meaning.60 The video opens with Victorian patterned wallpaper serving as a backdrop for the text that identifies the time and place: Washington, D.C., 1863. The viewer is greeted by an image of the White House with a silhouette of Lincoln wearing his identifiable top hat in a window. The camera moves inside the Oval Office with a Lincoln look-alike sitting behind a desk singing directly to the viewer, “You, I want to take you to a gay bar.” By the end of the first stanza, Lincoln stands from the desk to reveal that his traditional shirt and coat end at his waist and below that he is wearing nothing more than laced-up leather boxers. As the video progresses, the directors mix camp and sexual provocation. There is not just one gay Lincoln, but all of the characters are gay Lincoln. Aside from the telltale top hat and beard, the characters are in varying degrees of undress including leather straps, tank-tops, short shorts for exercise scenes, and cut-off denim shorts with tool belts.

59 Since “Gay Bar” debuted in 2003, during U.S. military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, some radio stations opted for an edited version of the song in which the nuclear war statement was replaced with the sound of a whip being cracked.

Absent from the video are scenes in which Lincoln encounters other real or fictional characters. In this regard an unauthorized parody version, which was widely circulated in online forums in 2003 and 2004, featuring British Prime Minister Tony Blair and U.S. President George W. Bush singing the song to each other provides a similarly provocative demonstration of homoerotic attraction.\footnote{\textit{“Gay Bar: Blair and Bush Version,”} https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCZvXYwBlkk (accessed 29 April 2013).} The Blair and Bush version clearly plays on the notion of the two men’s mutual admiration for one another and their shared desire to go to war.

Electric Six has neither discussed gay rights issues nor offered a historical case for Lincoln’s sexuality; rather, filmmakers Kuntz and Maguire played on an idea that was circulating in American popular culture. In pairing the image of gay Lincolns with Electric Six’s provocative lyrics, Kuntz and Maguire offered a popular culture perspective on the gay Lincoln narrative. Operas, musicals, and videos that draw attention to Mary Lincoln, Booth, and gay Lincoln demonstrate that the potency of the Lincoln \textit{topos} in the post-heroic era originates in the relationship between these new narratives and the diverse American lives found in demographic and cultural identifiers. This reflects American cultural changes. Whereas prior generations of Americans were encouraged to find value in the life and actions of the sixteenth president, works at the turn of the twenty-first century offered characters that were nearer to outsiders. This change not only draws on increased academic interest in histories from below, but it also signals a desire on the part of Americans to have Lincoln narratives closer to their own experiences. To do this, composers have relied on a range of signals. Electric Six, for example, never had to comment on Lincoln’s sexual orientation in order to have Kuntz and Maguire’s music video chock full of images that played on the popular idea of Lincoln’s homosexuality. Sondheim and
Weidman never specified that they were recasting Booth in Lincoln’s role. Owen and Bingham never stated that Mary was the brains behind Lincoln, in order for Asylum audiences to see the manner in which the president was lost without his wife making decisions. In each instance the composers, collaborators, and music video directors drew on the social signals of the time in order to offer their claim on Lincoln.

Part II: Composing New Lincolns for the 2009 Bicentennial

In this study I have examined the rich and diverse ways that composers and their collaborators have used the Lincoln topos to address the social and political issues of their time. In examining these works, I have demonstrated that musical memorials provide an especially compelling medium for tracking changes in Lincoln’s historical memory, though this approach can provide similar benefits when applied to other people or events. The nature of musical performances allows for a particularly strong connection to ritual, a topic explored in Chapter 4. While other forms of memorial art may prove more viable for long-term visibility in the public square, such as the stone monuments and bronze plaques, musical works benefit from their ability to draw communities together in civic ceremonies.

Contrary to Schwartz’s argument about the declining nature of Lincoln memory in the post-heroic era, the musical memorials of the 2009 bicentennial evince the vitality of his memory; albeit one that is measurably distant from previous decades. Composers employed the postmodern Lincoln topos in multiple genres and new works created for the bicentennial of the late president’s birth. When coupled with the election of the nation’s first African American president, Barack Obama, in the previous year—an event that invited a revisiting of the country’s history of race relations and therefore the Lincoln presidency—as well as mixed feelings of
national pride and frustration owing to political rifts over U.S. military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Lincoln bicentennial came at a moment when Americans were contemplating many of the issues addressed in prior chapters: war and peace, slavery and freedom, and hope and despair. Beyond the volume of music involved and the predisposition of composers to return to topics for which Lincoln imagery has a deep history, the bicentennial came at a time when social commentators, historians, and critics of many stripes were arguing that the developed world was quickly headed down a path to rampant individualism. A desire to make Lincoln’s legacy meet the needs of subsequent generations has inevitably been a part of his memorialization since April 1865; however, Americans have often balanced it with a desire or at least a claim to seek some form of truth, be it historical accuracy, a consensus view, or the merger with an overt political agenda. For the bicentennial, the prior generations’ heated discussions over what Lincoln meant were seemingly bypassed in route to inviting all Americans to make of Lincoln’s legacy what they wanted. In this new context, the tripartite framework that David W. Blight has applied to Civil War memory—emancipationism, reconciliationism, and segregationism—requires an additional category: relativism. Unlike reconciliationism, which often allows for the altering of the historical record or the avoidance of some topics from that


record for the sake of reaching a viable consensus, a relativist reading of Lincoln does not require the alleged goal of drawing people together. Whereas a reconciliationist might argue that the best way to unite Americans is to honor the validity of both the Union and Confederate positions; a relativist might say, “You can honor the Union, if that is what you believe. I will honor the Confederacy, because that is what I believe.” Thus, there is not a singular consensus on Lincoln in bicentennial compositions; a variety of composers created the image that they wished to memorialize. While this approach avoids the types of tensions and struggles found in prior Lincoln and Civil War commemorations, it also leaves the nation less unified by the lessons that should have been learned from the Civil War.

The problems and tensions found in Civil War and Lincoln commemorations have been well documented. Barry Schwartz has reconstructed the conflict present at the centennial of Lincoln’s birth in 1909, when African Americans were excluded from the official banquet.64 David W. Blight has analyzed the mess left in the wake of the Civil War semi-centennial, 1911–1915.65 Perhaps most poignantly, Robert J. Cook has drawn attention to the Civil-Rights-Era challenges of the Civil War centennial, 1961–1965.66 While the Lincoln bicentennial succeeded in avoiding the problems of its predecessors, it also ceded ground to individualism and relativism, and thereby avoided the confrontation of different opinions.

Moving from Slave Emancipation to Racial Progress

The “Great Emancipator” legacy hallmarked a sizable portion of the Lincoln memorial music that I addressed in previous chapters. Those narratives often paint Lincoln as a hero for his accomplishments with the Emancipation Proclamation, Thirteenth Amendment, and Civil War, which ultimately recast American Southern life. Keeping in mind that the 2009 celebration of Lincoln’s bicentennial coincided with President Obama’s inauguration, the sixteenth president’s legacy was reformulated from victor over slavery to originator of the long struggle toward racial equality. Instead of representing a culmination, he became a sign post in a narrative of racial progress. This change in perspective was audible in the language that composers employed in discussing their bicentennial works. Michael Daugherty, for example, responded to a commission from the Spokane Symphony with a seven-movement suite for baritone soloist and orchestra. *Letters from Lincoln* features lyrics crafted largely from Daugherty’s own adaptation of the late president’s words. Some of the movements include close readings of original Lincoln texts, such as the fifth movement’s “Letter to Mrs. Bixby” and the seventh movement’s “Gettysburg Address.” None of Daugherty’s chosen texts directly address race, yet in describing the composition in the published score and liner notes of the premiere recording, the composer drew a specific connection between his renewed interest in Lincoln and his volunteer work for the 2008 Obama presidential campaign. Daugherty’s fascination with Lincoln as part of a story of racial progress is particularly striking in 2009, since he had composed a Lincoln musical memorial two years before with the “Trail of Tears” movement from his piano and orchestra composition *Deus ex Machina*. The 2007 composition had explored trains in American culture in

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general and Lincoln’s funeral train in particular. In the composer’s notes, he primarily discussed his use of a “Taps” theme that he shifted from the piano, to strings, and eventually to winds.  

While he had mentioned his “ghost melody” in this Lincoln composition, he never mentioned racial progress or Lincoln’s legacy for African Americans. By 2009, however, the topic of racial progress reinvigorated Lincoln for the composer. Daugherty’s work on behalf of the Obama campaign enabled him to find a new meaning in the sixteenth president.

Daugherty was not the only one revisiting his feelings on Lincoln in light of the 2008 election. Choreographer Bill T. Jones funneled his excitement and hope for the Obama presidency into the multi-media rich Fondly Do We Hope ... Fervently Do We Pray, a composition for dance that is accompanied by new and borrowed music, spoken and sung texts, and elements of image and film projection. Jones addressed Lincoln as a part of the history of racial progress by including scenes of a slave auction, discussions of the “peculiar institution” from the 1858 Lincoln-Douglas debates, and a scene addressing the Obama election in which an older, white, female character laments having an African American president. Jones never mentions Lincoln as an emancipator. He is a part of a narrative—even portrayed by a specific dancer—but never promoted as the singular great man. Jones, when interviewed about the piece, pointed out his clear skepticism of great men narratives and his desire to craft this Lincoln story as a history from below. With the assistance of a trio of composer-arrangers, George Lewis Jr., Jerome Begin, and Christopher Antonio William Lancaster, Jones avoided placing the piece in

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70 Ibid.
any single musical period. Scored for violoncello, piano, guitar, and voice, the piece manages to merge elements of rock ’n’ roll, Romantic chamber music, and fragments of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” “Dixie,” and Mozart’s *Requiem*, K. 626. The lyrical content is similarly assorted with passages from the Old Testament, the writings of Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, and Whitman, as well as newly created material by Jones and his collaborators. The constant shifting of topics, musical styles, visual content—dance, film, projected images—and the spoken and sung texts dissociates the audience from any single point in American history. What is seen and heard does not allow one to feel as if they were transported to a specific time, but it conveys a sense of duration—of all of the struggles that have taken place over centuries.

The connection that Daugherty and Jones individually made between the Obama election and Lincoln’s bicentennial were similarly picked up in music scholarship, with Annegret Fauser reading the Obama campaign’s reliance on Aaron Copland and other World War II-era composers as a means of uniting Obama with wartime presidents for which American historical memory has provided favorable views—Lincoln and the Civil War and Franklin Roosevelt and World War II—as well as to offer added contrast with George W. Bush, Obama’s predecessor, and the president who started the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.  

Comparative attempts, such as Fauser’s, also demonstrate that few composers or commentators have embraced the racial progress narrative without also addressing a range of other topics, typically part of a politically progressive tradition. For Jones this meant appending to his primary racial progress narrative discussions of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, gay marriage, and immigration. This is both a statement of shared interests in a range of topics associated with progressive politics as well as a

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practical reality that in attempting to connect leaders who are otherwise separated by a century and a half—Lincoln and Obama—one needs to account for a large range of events that have taken place in the intervening years. Thus, when the Right Reverend Gene Robinson, the first openly gay bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States, offered an invocation at the Obama inaugural concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial he, too, drew on these themes: “O God of our many understandings …. Bless this nation with anger—anger at discrimination, at home and abroad, against refugees and immigrants, women, people of color, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people,” and later mentioned Lincoln: “Give him [President Obama] wisdom beyond his years, inspire him with President Lincoln’s reconciling leadership style, President Kennedy’s ability to enlist our best efforts, and Dr. King’s dream of a nation for ALL people.”

Robinson was not only drawing together a range of causes, concerns, and the imagery from prior national leaders, but by his participation he was giving gay rights a place in the inaugural events. The connection that Daugherty found between contemplating Lincoln, while campaigning for Obama, and that Jones discovered in tying together his progressive concerns, were ultimately offered up to God and the nation in Robinson’s prayer for the work ahead.

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72 Gene Robinson, “A Prayer for the Nation and Our Next President, Barack Obama” (Inaugural Concert, Lincoln Memorial, Washington, DC, 18 January 2009). Robinson’s invocation did not reach the national television audience, since HBO did not air portions of the concert’s program identified by the Obama inaugural committee as pre-show content. The network and inaugural committee offered apologies after receiving criticism for their roles in the excluding Robinson from the telecast.

Along with the attention paid to gay rights issues as part of the larger progressive agenda offered by Jones and his collaborators, composers have also addressed gay rights as part of a civil rights campaign—connecting sexual orientation to race, for which Lincoln’s legacy was already closely aligned. *Abraham Lincoln’s Big Gay Dance Party* is a three-act play with music and dance interludes that premiered at the 2009 New York Fringe Festival and despite its name employs the president only peripherally. The audience learns that a fourth-grade class in rural Illinois is rehearsing their production of a Lincoln Christmas pageant. The teacher, Ms. Harmony Green, has adapted the script in order to address Lincoln’s sexual orientation. A controversy ensues, drawing attention from Republican Party political leaders, a *New York Times* reporter, and the parents of the school children. The role of Lincoln, however, is thereafter in the background. The audience never sees the children’s play nor hears much about Green’s proposed emendations. The ordering of the acts of *Abraham Lincoln’s Big Gay Dance Party* is decided by the audience members, who are presented with three options: the story of the teacher’s trial, the wheeling and dealing discovered behind the scenes in a Republican Party primary election, and a young man’s revelation to his family about his sexual orientation. Each act is related through its characters. While seven dancing gay Lincolns open the acts with stylized dances, roller skating, disco moves, and even some finger snapping and strutting inspired by *West Side Story*, we never hear a complete discussion of Lincoln, his life, times, or policies. The comedy of *Abraham Lincoln’s Big Gay Dance Party* questions the status of gay rights in America. Playwright Aaron Loeb commented in preview interviews that a gay dance party is something of his view of the
United States, and his use of the appropriate music and dancing provides unity to the show. The role of Lincoln’s name in the title, his appearance—at least in the form of dancers—and the premise for the trial does little to advance the plot, but it nonetheless lingers in audience members’ minds. Without addressing Lincoln’s biography or policies, the play relies on his legacy as a man who represents the national ideal of equality in order to prod viewers into questioning U.S. policies on gay rights. When the three acts are completed, regardless of the order, the audience is left with a compelling narrative of a young man who has lied to his parents about recent injuries he suffered when he was beaten because of his sexual orientation. The audience sees that same young man carry on a charade of bringing a girl home to meet his parents, as they grow eager to know if he has any relationships. The young man is the son of a prominent Republican politician who regularly speaks against a range of gay rights issues. In this narrative Loeb does not attempt to question whether related topics of Lincoln’s time were similar to those of today; rather, the playwright merely juxtaposes the Lincoln backdrop with narratives of contemporary life in America. Gay Lincoln is not the protagonist, but his specter hovers over the proceedings.

Moving from Civic Leader to Spiritual Champion

The postmodern Lincoln topos relies on its flexibility to suit many causes and its ability to connect varied topics by way of signals. Whereas Jones did not directly describe Lincoln as the “Great Emancipator,” the choreographer placed him amid relevant and related topics through which audience members could piece together a narrative addressing race. Loeb used an even

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more sophisticated range of signals including heightening the *New York Times* reporter’s liberal *bona fides* through the recurring mentions of his Pulitzer Prize. The show’s Republican fulfills the white male stereotype so well that a politically astute audience member could come up with a short list of office holders who served as Loeb’s model. The playwright never ventured to provide specific statements about Lincoln’s biography or sexuality, but used suggestion to make a claim about Lincoln’s likely sensitivity to and interest in a contemporary cause.

Employing subtle suggestion to draw Lincoln into a contemporary topic, has not been isolated to issues of African American advancement or gay rights. Songwriters who identify with diverse religious views flocked to the Lincoln bicentennial and offered a juxtaposition of the late president and their own faith. Each embraced Lincoln without ever explicitly claiming him as a member of their church. They highlighted some connections to the fallen president and then allowed their listeners to infer the similarities in their beliefs. Two bicentennial composers fit this model. Judith Tellerman, a psychologist by trade, spends her free time recording and performing Jewish adult contemporary albums. In 2009 she released “Abe Lincoln,” a tribute song reliant on familiar tropes: Lincoln helped free the enslaved, argued that a house divided against itself could not stand, and led the nation with candor and honesty. However, she also emphasizes one of the most frequently cited connections that Jewish Americans have made with Lincoln, a comparison with their Biblical forefather, Abraham:

Abe Lincoln he’s the one,
Who brought us home,
Where we belong.
Sing out.
Praise the man.
His name is Abraham.
It was said that he was honest,
We could trust him with our land.
The song is simple with eight-measure phrases and a recording that features synthesized drums, strings, and piano. During the refrains Tellerman’s harmonizing voice is over-dubbed on a second track. The final product sounds like the work of an amateur, but even so, the song received multiple performances during the bicentennial year, including a featured spot at the unveiling of the third of four new Lincoln pennies on the steps of the Old Capitol Statehouse in Springfield, Illinois.\(^7\) Promotion for that event specifically highlighted Tellerman’s background as a Jewish American singer. The “Looking for Lincoln Heritage Coalition” had commissioned Tellerman for the song. In so doing, the coalition was not attempting to capture Lincoln’s biographical connection to the performance venue, the Old State House, such as his service therein as a member of the Illinois Legislature or his work as a lawyer in an office across the green from the capitol building. Instead the event planners for this new Lincoln penny ventured to portray Lincoln as a man for all people, and with Tellerman’s billing, Jewish Americans were now included. Without focusing on the struggles of Jewish American immigrants, as the previous Jewish Lincoln memorials had, Tellerman’s song and her placement at the bicentennial event spoke to the national desire to define the United States as a land free of religious and ethnic divisions, and maintain that Lincoln was at least, in spirit, connected to all faiths.

The Evangelical Protestant composer Glen Rice, who proclaims his music as art for “God, Family, and Friends,” took a comparable approach to Lincoln in orienting him amid an output of songs that champion a patriotic country built on Judeo-Christian values. Rice had already used flag-draped Lincoln images for two prior album covers, but for the bicentennial he composed a new song, “Lincoln a Man for All Times” (2009), which claims that Lincoln grew

up learning traditional, Christian lessons of freedom, justice, and equality. The songwriter then emphasizes Lincoln’s sacrificial offering and its divine lineage:

He died for man’s freedom;
He died for me and you.
He honored his country,
As all of us should do;
One nation, under God,
With the red, white, and blue.

The federal bicentennial commission endorsed the composition, as did several regional committees. Rice saw such success for his commemorative song that he adapted it into a children’s play by the same title. Rice never declares that Lincoln was an Evangelical Protestant—Lincoln’s religious practices are a point of debate—rather he takes the more circuitous path of identifying the Christian values upheld by his Evangelical audience and offering Lincoln’s biography in a side-by-side comparison. The implication is that Lincoln was not just a great commander-in-chief, but also a supporter of conservative Christian and thus American values.

Returning to the Working Man

Musically memorializing Lincoln in 2009 did not only occur in new compositions. A 12 February 2009 performance of Earl Robinson’s cantata The Lonesome Train: A Musical Legend (1945) at the Aaron Copland School of Music featured the Queens College Orchestra and Chorus, narrator Ruby Dee, the Riverside Inspirational Choir, New York City Labor Chorus, and conductor Maurice Peress. While ensembles resurrected many Lincoln concert pieces in 2009, the performance of this composition—a work that had not been performed in nearly fifty years—

by a combined chorus of the city’s largest unions demonstrates a desire to return the Lincoln legacy to some of its Popular Front fervor. Richard Taruskin has drawn readers’ attention to the rebellious cantata’s absence from concert stages. The Lonesome Train is large—requiring up to six narrators, eight vocal soloists, four-part chorus, and orchestra—but also awkward. Robinson and lyricist Millard Lampell present the story of Lincoln’s death and the long funeral train procession that followed, but intersperse it with wholly fictionalized segments, such as a scene in which Lincoln visits an African American church in Alabama. The cantata is also littered with anachronistic meetings between a living Lincoln and the crowds gathered to mourn his death. In this regard, it fits perfectly with Hutcheon’s definition of a historiographic metafiction, yet Robinson composed it well before our postmodern age.

Robinson employed a variety of musical styles in The Lonesome Train. He ventured to use a musical patchwork to connect the divergent scenes. For example, one vocal soloist impersonates a balladeer who provides biographical passages about Lincoln. He is often accompanied by a banjo, emphasizing Lincoln’s rural roots. The accompaniment also depicts much of the setting and implied action, such as pulsing eighth notes that increase in frequency and receive a mechanical accent pattern, prior to a quickening of the tempo in an effort to demonstrate a train moving down the tracks. Robinson used soloists to forcefully sing out the names of the cities through which the train passed. And when Lincoln appears in that Alabama pew, Robinson offered a stylized spiritual, which if possible he requests to have sung by an

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77 Richard Taruskin, The Danger of Music and Other Anti-Utopian Essays (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 159.

78 Robinson also prepared a reduced scoring for two speakers, baritone solo, chorus, and piano. In this setting many of the soloist passages from the original version are provided to chorus section members. While the piano replaces the orchestra, much of the spoken and vocal parts remain demanding on the personnel involved.

79 Hutcheon, A Poetics of Postmodernism; and idem, “Historiographic Metafiction,” 3–32.
additional “Negro church group.” The passage features hand clapping, shouted “amens,” and vocal turns, trills, and growls.

Lampell’s libretto for the cantata includes the refrain that argues Lincoln’s spirit lives: “wearing a shawl instead of a shroud.” But Lampell and Robinson went even further in having Lincoln speak to the audience, a technique animating a trope that Allen C. Guelzo has identified as one of the longest running in Lincoln legacy: “What would Lincoln do?” Whereas Popular Front contemporary Aaron Copland provided only a veiled message that Lincoln would favor the toiling common man against his inherently oppressive master in *A Lincoln Portrait*, Lampell and Robinson give Lincoln a podium from which to offer a contemporary commentary. Copland’s narrator reads excerpts that Lincoln actually spoke in his lifetime, but Lampell and Robinson’s Lincoln borrows phrases from Karl Marx and Frederick Engels. The cantata’s most controversial moment comes when the train pulls into Springfield, Illinois. Lincoln introduces himself to the crowd: “I presume you all know who I am. I am humble Abraham Lincoln.” Citizens then engage the president in a colloquy. A man asks, “Isn’t it right that some men should be masters, and some men should be slave?” Lincoln replies with a variation of a passage from his 1859 Cincinnati speech: “If God intended some men to do all the work and no eating, he would have made some men with all hands and no mouths.” Next, a woman asks about what the United States should do overseas. She opines, “Well I say: America for Americans! What happens on the other side of the ocean shouldn’t be any skin off our backs. Isn’t that right, Mister Lincoln?” As the choir hums on a G-major chord, an arrival point for the bold words to come, Lincoln replies, “Well I’ll tell you, Ma’am: It seems to me the strongest bond of human sympathy,

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outside your family, of course, should be the one uniting all working people of all nations, tongues, and kindred!” The choir re-enters with “Wearing a shawl instead of a shroud,” and the woman, now speaking to the crowd, says, “Somehow I wouldn’t expect the President of the United States to be such a common man!” The choir returns to humming the G-major chord as Lincoln offers his last statement of the cantata: “I think God must have loved the common people. He made so many of them!” In that climatic passage Lincoln’s call for “uniting all working people of all nations,” is an echo of Marx and Engels’s “Workers of all countries, unite!” The final statements in the choir remind listeners that the Lincoln spirit about which they have just heard must not die:

He was made of stuff that doesn’t die,
He was made of hopes, he was made of fears, he was made to last a million years,
Freedom’s a thing that has no ending,
It needs to be cared for, it needs defending.

R. Serge Denisoff has claimed that The Lonesome Train “has been under attack by rightists, despite its orientation.” Unfortunately, Denisoff never clarified its precise “orientation.” The notion of any misunderstanding of its orientation rings hollow when The Lonesome Train is considered with Robinson’s previous Lincoln composition. His folk song “Abe Lincoln,” composed four years before the cantata, includes a similarly “revolutionary” chorus that quotes a passage from Lincoln’s first inaugural address:

This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it.
This country, with its constitution, belongs to us who live in it.
Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government,
They can exercise their constitutional right of amending it,
Or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it!

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Absent from Robinson’s song are Lincoln’s contextualizing passages in which he provides the options above, but then advances the cause of peaceful constitutional amendments by way of conventions. The Lincoln presented throughout the song is honest, tall, hardworking, kind to all people, and “a working man.” Robinson takes the step of not only presenting his view of Lincoln as a working man who fights oppression, but he also challenges the validity of others’ claims on the president’s legacy:  

Now, old Abe Lincoln is dead and gone, he’s eighty years,  
[spoken] A great man.  
Now, every year the party he made says that Lincoln’s theirs.  
[spoken] No sir!

Aside from his politics, Robinson offers much in the way of descriptions of Lincoln’s physical appearance and biography so that the song appears largely measured and factual. For the labor groups of New York to select Robinson’s little-known, rarely performed cantata as their contribution to the bicentennial was a bolder statement than Robinson and Lampell’s creation of *The Lonesome Train* decades earlier.

Each artist who composed a bicentennial work engaged in a process of offering their view of Lincoln’s unfinished business. This aspect of Lincoln memorialization comports with the efforts of previous generations. The contrast between the troubled commemorations of the twentieth century and the diversity found in the twenty-first-century bicentennial is largely a difference in the definition of, and value placed on, consensus. Whereas prior generations sought a “true” meaning of Lincoln’s life and death as well as an explanation of the Civil War, and then battled with each other over that definition, the bicentennial kept pace with prevailing relativism in other areas of American culture. Assuredly the bicentennial artists were addressing some topics that were either not present or little considered in prior decades, most notably those surrounding gay rights and the opposition to the foreign policies of George W. Bush; however,
the significant differences are not topical. The prior commemorations had their own share of sizeable disagreements—the Civil Rights Movement chief among them—but the approach of the organizers was to seek a consensus, which had to do with which aspects of the war and its leaders were agreed upon by all of the participants. This type of consensus was all but forgotten by the 2009 contributors. The lone agreement that the bicentennial participants reached was that Lincoln’s legacy can be used to provide support to diverse causes. Once everyone agreed on Lincoln’s value for themselves, then they were content to disagree on the content of the contemporary topics. While the twentieth-century commemorations attempted to find consensus around certain truths that all agreed were important to the Lincoln legacy, the problematic twenty-first-century exercises gave up on such discussions in favor of individualism. In 2009 Americans were not merely trying to argue that Lincoln was politically conservative or liberal; Christian, Jewish, or secular; gay or straight; blue collar or white collar; rather, they wanted to create a new Lincoln more in line with themselves and then borrow from the moral security provided by his time-honored legacy.

The results of the 2009 celebrations may have been the appearance of unity, because everyone involved agreed in Lincoln’s greatness; however, lost were opportunities to address the issues presented by the artists. There is a benefit to composers being able to contribute a voice to national discussions—the bicentennial committees and commissions were laudably inclusive—but seeking unity by means of relativism meant that audiences did not need to engage with

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82 Karl-Maria Kertbeny, Paragraph 143 des Preussischen Strafgesetzbuches vom 14. April 1851 und seine Aufrechterhaltung als Paragraph 152 im Entwurfe eines Strafgesetzbuches für den Norddeutschen Bund (Germany, 1869). Whereas, Kertbeny coined the term “homosexual” in a nineteenth-century effort to replace other prerogative identifiers for same-sex attraction and thereby aid efforts to repeal German prohibitions; similar efforts to raise gay rights issues in U.S. legislatures did not occur until the twentieth century.

83 Cook, Troubled Commemoration, 227–60.
aspects of Lincoln’s legacy if they did not want to do so. All participants were free to retain their own views and interests, avoid those with which they disagreed, and ultimately leave feeling legitimized that their positions had equal status with all of the others. Musicians of the bicentennial brought many and varied topics to the national stage. I have presented only a selection of the scores of compositions offered from 2007 to 2010.\textsuperscript{84} The lingering question is whether the collective national response—listening to performances without engaging in the contents they posed—was an adequate and appropriate means to commemorate a man of great action. Addressing sectarian divides, political and social schisms, and cultural fissures with a response of polite relativism allowed the citizenry to avoid the messiness of disagreement encountered in prior decades. It also meant that Lincoln’s death and his bicentennial share one recognizable characteristic: they kicked the can of unfinished business further down the road.

CONCLUSION

Americans of the twenty-first century wish to be the curators of their own legacy. People find increasingly new ways to document and share with others each moment of their day and every thought that enters their mind. And when people depart their earthly existence there are often obituaries and eulogies in newspapers, at prayer services, and on websites that highlight what they contributed in their time and place. Even those memorial words—little more than days separated from an American’s last breaths—are the product of others. Stewardship of memory is the purview of the living. Thus it has been with Lincoln.

Eric Foner titled a broad-reaching collection of his historiographical essays *Who Owns History?* I have aimed in this study to remind the scholar and citizen, alike, that in the United States’ bustling cities, quiet towns, and far-off outposts, the caretakers of history are not the individual’s whose legacy is at stake. Composers, whether they timidly accept the mantel or gallivant with it are serious players in crafting these narratives. They should be treated as such, with all of the criticism of method, message, and intention that we willing use for our political and intellectual leaders. If a composer has offered a composition, then he or she does not need protection; rather, they require scrutiny and criticism. Doing so is not to hate the arts, nor is it censorship: it is a statement of respect. It represents the only reasonable response to acknowledge that composers and performers are participants in the discussion of historical memory.

In the United States, a country with plenty of conflicts and significant pain, of which the African slave trade was a horrendous, life-stealing experience, and the Civil War a brutal ordeal for all who lived through it and still worse for those who did not survive, the Lincoln *topos* provides a means to address the difficult national discussions. In this study I have documented how composers have confronted Lincoln’s legacy and often embraced it as support for their own
agendas. As I pointed out initially, music has its shortcomings as a medium for studying historical memory. For of the nine hundred Lincoln musical memorials that I have identified, there are likely many more that served specific purposes, but are now lost. However, the advantages in understanding these works are many. We can track changes in the political and cultural climate. We can understand genre and its relationship to specific memorial events. And we can learn more about the interactions of composers and their collaborators, performers, and audience members, who are ultimately engaged in these discussions and debates.

Lincoln employed music as a metaphor at the conclusion of his first inaugural address. He pointed out that the people and events of one time are both remembered and forgotten in future times. Composers in turning to Lincoln, his name, biography, and character have sounded what the late president termed “the mystic chords of memory.” History and memory have long been components of industries that have their own motivations. At present, the post-heroic or postmodern Lincoln remains potent because society is deeply invested in acting publically. The loss of faith in institutions and the lack of history rooted in long traditions has paved a way for a sense of self-importance that is only temporarily quenched by newsworthy moments and events. This means public memorializing, mourning, and emoting are on the rise. While Barry Schwartz may be right about the changes in U.S. citizens’ familiarity with and affinity for Lincoln, he failed to recognize that our desire to act in the public sphere makes the sixteenth president more poignant than he has been in decades.¹ For all of music’s shortcomings as a medium for memorialization; it is increasingly one of society’s best means to meet the obligations we feel toward commemoration.

David W. Blight opens his seminal study of the Civil War in American memory with an epigram by Thucydides: “The People made their recollection fit in with their sufferings.” I close this study with the caveat that our memorials are rarely offered altruistically for the dead. They remain very much about the living. Americans make our memorials fit in with our suffering, goals, and desires. This is precisely the process in which composers have engaged for a century and a half. Lincoln musical memorials, at their best, offer a paradox: commemorating the sixteenth president can lead to action as well as complacency. Composers love Lincoln for the platform he provides them to address issues; but citizens can remain so focused on praising or critiquing the past that they fail to contemplate and then act in the present. Musical memorials that help to recall a person or an event can prove meaningful, but the test of their potency is whether they help people to decide what steps should be taken next, what policies enacted. To think of these memorials merely as statements about the past is not to ignore Lincoln, but to obscure human agency and the will of the people.
The list of published lyrics, music, and scripts provided in the bibliography include only specific compositions mentioned in this study. Similarly, the discography includes only the recordings identified in portions of the text and is not intended as a comprehensive list of recordings related to this repertoire. Published materials, such as memoirs, presidential speeches, and specialized collections, are listed separately from other primary archival sources.

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