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Review of Harnessing Harmony: Music, Power, and Politics in the United States, 1788-1865, by Billy Coleman

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Billy Coleman. *Harnessing Harmony: Music, Power, and Politics in the United States, 1788–1865*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020. Pp. 249. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Paper, $27.95.

Most Americans almost certainly recognize that music can be political. Our nation has a well-known history of music being used to support union organizing ("This Land is Your Land"), civil rights activism ("We Shall Overcome"), and anti-war protests ("Blowin' in the Wind"). More recently, the symbolic work done when Colin Kaepernick and other athletes "take a knee" requires that the sound of the "Star-Spangled Banner" open a space for political contestation. It should be of no surprise then that, since the nation's founding, music has been used for diverse political aims. However, these and many other well-known examples show music in support of progressive democratic agendas. As Billy Coleman explains in his new study on the power of music in early American political culture, there is nothing naturally democratic or progressive about music. Music can be put to the use of any social or political agenda. In fact, by understanding how early Americans thought about the effects of music on the individual we may even conclude the opposite. By "harnessing harmony" those committed to a conservative political agenda effectively used music in ways to secure their power—power that was dependent upon a unified "harmonious" nation and the entrenchment of the status quo.

Purveyors of the infamous politics of the street in early America notoriously mobilized music to their cause. This has often been positioned against either an a-musical conservative political culture or an a-political music culture commonly assumed to be the product of unified national patriotic sentiment. What Billy Coleman shows, however, is that this patriotic music culture was carefully cultivated by conservative Federalists in tandem with (and in opposition to) popular politics and its musical expressions. This deliberate deployment of music by those with power may have taken different forms over the decades (the author traces versions of it to the Civil War through what he calls a "Federalist musical tradition"), however a consistent intention of elites to actively engage in a musical agenda stemmed from their belief in music's civilizing nature (21).

Coleman's work is mostly a study of elites' relationship with music, but it also considers how these elites thought about music in relation to the non-elite and democratic impulses. The actors in his narrative all considered music as a means to still the disorderly elements of both self and society and

foster a sense of respectability and order. This conservative music philosophy led various men to use music to shape popular American political culture along lines they saw as better serving their own and the nation's needs. The conservative goal of creating social and political harmony employed unifying patriotic music as central to their strategy and positioned them at odds with movements toward a more democratic and unruly nation.

Harnessing Harmony's four chapters are each able to stand alone as case studies on this larger theme. Chapter 1 begins with a "political lineage" of "The Star-Spangled Banner" that ties its creation and popularity to a particularly Federalist partisan vision of American union (8). Federalists promoted music's use in politics specifically because of its assumed power to "moderate the temperament" and subdue factionalism (9). Thus, this patriotic hymn was in fact part of their political strategy to ensure that elite values shaped national culture. Federalist ideologies infused the thinking of many cultural nationalists in the following generation whose beliefs about the appropriate role of music in civic life shaped early American musical organizations, the topic of chapter 2. Members of the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia and the Boston Academy of Music believed music could serve a public good. This message of uplift echoed and reinforced the traditional Federalist belief that certain music imbibed appropriately would be in service of elite power via controlling the masses. This chapter is followed by a variation on the theme—music's use in political campaigning. The infamously musical 1840 election saw the Whig candidate William Henry Harrison successfully elected after a campaign sung to the tune of moral improvement that sounded particularly partisan to Democratic foes. This musical Whig political strategy was much more than just an attempt to mobilize voters. It was the continuation of a proven political tradition of drawing on the elevating power of music to shape a more benign American democracy in step with elite conservative agendas. The final chapter, and the one most interesting to this reader, creatively explores the diaries of one S. Willard Saxton, a poor itinerant printer passionately fond of music, whose commitment to social reform and eventual politicization reveal the continued belief in music's power to support moral improvement. Through his thoughts about music we see how the arc of this idea stretched from the nation's creation to its dismantling.

Harnessing Harmony simultaneously contributes to discussions about early American politics and music. It inserts a musical lens into a reading of the changing nature of American political culture while simultaneously

sharpening the political considerations of music in the young nation—what he calls "a musically driven political history" (5). This is part of a growing historiography from especially the past decade that tackles the intersection of these phenomena in the nineteenth century especially. This is not a book of musicology and there is no musical analysis (although there is a very interesting "book soundtrack" linked from the press webpage that recreates in a contemporary style some of the songs this book discusses). As such the writings about politics and music by elite men provide the bulk of the source material. The newspapers, private correspondences, reports of musical societies, and diaries reveal that Americans thought about music and politics in tandem. Early Americans thought about music in relation to politics and their ideas about the power of music shaped political experiences. Billy Coleman's *Harnessing Harmony* reminds us that patriotic music is just as political as protest music, even if its political work is done to secure the power of the status quo.

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Richard W. Pointer. *Pacifist Prophet: Papunhank and the Quest for Peace in Early America*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020. Pp. 403. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Hardcover, $36.95.

Richard W. Pointer's *Pacifist Prophet: Papunhank and the Quest for Peace in Early America*, examines an often-overlooked aspect of colonial–Native American relations through the life of Johannes Papunhank, a Munsee prophet and Moravian convert whose deeply held convictions led him to pursue peace in his dealings with colonists and other Native Americans alike. The bulk of his book focuses on the decades surrounding the Seven Years' War, a pivotal event in early America that inspired other religious prophets and political leaders—most notably Neolin and Pontiac—to pursue warfare. Pointer situates Papunhank's story as a counterpart to those of fellow prophets, Delaware Neolin and Shawnee Tenskwatawa, whose messages inspired their followers to military resistance, and to Teedyuscung, his more famous fellow (albeit short-lived) convert to Moravianism. He argues that