

The Euterpiad, or Musical Intelligencer (1820-1823)

“The first true music periodical in the USA,”¹ *The Euterpiad*² or *Musical Intelligencer: Devoted to the Diffusion of Musical Information and Belles Lettres*, was published in Boston by Thomas Badger, Jr. from 1 April 1820 until 16 March 1822,³ and, from 30 March 1822 until March 1823⁴ by its founding editor John Rowe Parker.⁵ Volume I (4 April 1820 to 24 March 1821) comprises fifty-two weekly issues, each containing four quarto pages. Volume II (31 March 1821 to 16 March 1822) comprises twenty-six issues, each containing eight quarto pages. With the appearance of the first issue of this volume, the journal was renamed *The Euterpiad, or Musical Intelligencer & Ladies’ Gazette* owing to the inclusion of non-musical materials specifically prepared for the interest of women, and presented in a section entitled the “Ladies’ Department”. Volume III was first issued bi-monthly, as an eight-page octavo publication, from 30 March to 14 September 1822, and then, as a sixteen-page monthly from October 1822 to March 1823. The “Ladies’ Department” does not appear in this volume, and consequently “Ladies’ Gazette” is dropped from the title. Two twenty-four-page numbers of a “New Series”—titled *The Euterpiad, or Musical Intelligencer; and Select Repository of Classic and Polite Literature*—were issued in May and June 1823, at which point the journal ceased publication. The pages of volumes one and two are divided into three columns, while the pages of subsequent volumes are divided into two columns. The pages of all volumes are numbered individually.

The journal was available by subscription (\$2.50, \$3.00, and \$2.00 for volumes 1, 2, and 3 respectively), with issues distributed by post. While it has been conjectured that subscribers numbered only about sixty,⁶ this support was very important for the journal’s financial security for, in the words of its editor, it was “destitute from profits accruing from advertisements.”⁷ The journal was also available from agents throughout eastern

¹Imogen Fellingner and John Shepard, “Periodicals,” *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, edited by H. Wiley Hitchcock and Stanley Sadie (London, Macmillan Press Limited, 1986) 3: 505.

²Titled for Euterpe, the Muse of lyric poetry, represented with the double aulos in Greek mythology. The naming of publications and societies after the Greek Muses and gods was a feature of nineteenth-century American musical and literary life.

³This RIPM catalogue and index was prepared from the reprint published by the Da Capo Press, New York, 1977, with a new introduction by Charles E. Wunderlich.

⁴The precise date in March is not specified.

⁵During this period it was printed by True and Green at Merchants’ Hall, Boston.

⁶Michael Broyles, “*Music of the Highest Class*”: *Elitism and Populism in Antebellum Boston* (New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1992): 164.

⁷John Parker, Editor, “Prospectus of the second volume of *The Euterpiad*,” *The Euterpiad* 2, no. 1 (March 31, 1821): 1.

North America.⁸ Lists of up to thirty-nine agents from Montreal to Augusta, Georgia are found in the journal.⁹

Musical supplements consisting of songs and simple pianoforte pieces were issued with many issues of *The Euterpeiad*.¹⁰ Over seventy selections are reproduced in the facsimile reprint.¹¹ Scotch and Irish songs and ballads, favorite American songs of the period, and hymns are prominent. While many of these consist of a melody line and a bass line without harmonization, Lowell Mason's hymn tunes "Andover" and "Bridgeport" are given in four-part harmonizations. Solo pianoforte selections include waltzes and marches. One supplement contains the opening measures of several songs published in Whitaker's anthology *Seraph*, while another gives musical examples discussed in the article "Musical Student, no. 3."¹² References to the titles of compositions distributed as supplements are not found in the journal proper. In the reprint edition they are presented in an ordered proposed by Richard Wolfe.¹³

Apart from its two final issues, *The Euterpeiad* was edited by John Rowe Parker (1777-1844), a music dealer and amateur musician. A native of Boston, Parker was a merchant plying his trade selling pianofortes, church organs, chamber organs and string and wind instruments, as well as sheet music from the premises of the Franklin Music Warehouse at No. 6 Milk Street in Boston. A circular of 1819 states that Parker's pianofortes and organs were built at his warehouse. In 1820, Parker published *A Catalogue of Music and Musical Instruments*, which is said to be one of the "earliest extant music trade catalogues in America."¹⁴ Parker also contributed a "Euterpeiad" column to the *Boston Intelligencer and Morning and Evening Advertiser* from 27 December 1817 to 20 March 1820. While the main intent of the column was to review musical activities in Boston, Parker also wrote about miscellaneous music matters including the metronome, singing and instrumental performing styles, and musical gadgetry.¹⁵ Little is known about Parker's musical credentials.¹⁶ In his own words Parker admitted that he was "not a musician," but rather "a deeply interested witness of the innocence and purity of mind the

⁸The "Conditions" of the journal state that "Non-subscribers [are charged] 6 ¼ cents each." [*The Euterpeiad*, 1, no. 1 (April 1, 1820): 1.

⁹*The Euterpeiad*, 1, no. 14 (1 July 1820): 55, and 2, no. 21 (5 January 1821): 1.

¹⁰Mention of supplements is rarely encountered in the journal's text. The "Prospectus of *The Euterpeiad*," vol. 1, no. 1 (April 1, 1820) indicates "Every third or fourth number will contain a fash-nable [sic] song, air with variations, march, waltz or dance."

¹¹"Musical supplements," *The Euterpeiad*, (New York, Da Capo Press, 1977) 3: 1-78.

¹²*Ibid.*, 50-51; and 52-53.

¹³For further details on the order selected for the musical supplements in the Da Capo Press reprint, see Richard Wolfe, *Secular Music in America. 1801-1825. A Bibliography*, 3 vols. (New York Public Library, 1964): 271ff.

¹⁴Ann Dhu Shapiro, "Parker, John Rowe," *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music* 3: 479.

¹⁵Broyles, op. cit.: 161-62.

¹⁶For an overview of Parker's dealings as an editor and a businessman see Broyles, 162-67.

practice of the science has contributed to preserve.”¹⁷ Such nobility of opinion and purpose is encountered throughout Parker’s writings. A year after the demise of *The Euterpeiad*, Parker published a “compilation of reprints” from the journal entitled *A Musical Biography, or Sketches of the Lives and Writings of Eminent Musical Characters, Interspersed with an Epitome of Interesting Musical Matter*.¹⁸ In 1838 he became a member of the editorial board of the *Boston Musical Gazette* in the company of Lowell Mason and John Sullivan Dwight.¹⁹

Even less is known about Charles Dingley, a New York writer on musical topics who “conducted” (edited) the journal’s final two issues.²⁰ In 1830-31 Dingley edited another short-lived music periodical *The Euterpeiad: An Album of Music, Poetry and Prose*, published in New York.²¹

The issues of volumes I and III contain three major divisions. The first part is given over to histories, biographies, essays on music, and announcements of forthcoming concerts. Prominent among major articles is “A Brief History of Music from the Earliest Ages” which occupies first place in the fifty-two issues of volume I. The editor compiled this series from the well-known histories of Dr. Charles Burney and Sir John Hawkins.²² Also featured in the first section are biographies of composers such as Alessandro Stradella, Corelli, Purcell, Paisiello, Arne, Bianchi, singers including Mme Mara, Mrs. Billington, Mme Vestris, John Braham, William Harrison and Henry Incedon, the violinist Viotti, and the music theorist Padre Martini. Many of these biographies, as well as series of articles such as “The Musical Student” and “Elements of Vocal Science,” originally appeared in Richard Mackenzie Bacon’s English periodical *The Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review*.

An outstanding contribution to the annals of American music history is the fourteen-part 1822 series entitled “Musical reminiscences or biographical notices. Of several eminent musical characters, who have merely visited or domesticated in America, and who are deceased, returned to Europe, or have declined their professional avocations.”²³ These biographical sketches recount the early nineteenth-century musical activities of singers,

¹⁷[John Rowe Parker], “The Musical Profession,” *The Euterpeiad*, 2 (February 16, 1822): 188, cited in Charles E Wunderlich’s introduction to the Da Capo reprint.

¹⁸Shapiro, op. cit.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰*The Euterpeiad*, vol. I, new series, nos. I and II.

²¹Broyles: 302-03.

²²See Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1741-1850* (New York: D. Appleton, 1930): 39, for an explanation of the borrowing practices of the period.

²³Parts 1 and 2 appear under the title “Musical gossip.” The editor changed the title to “Musical reminiscences.” The first two parts deal with musicians and singers active in London; singers names marked with asterisks in the second article also appeared in the United States. The series is incorrectly numbered: part 14 is mistakenly identified as part 15.

pianists, organists and orchestral instrumentalists, active in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Charleston.

The second part of each issue is given over to local interests and is announced by a repetition of the journal's title, and the date. This section features reviews of important musical events, plays at the Boston Theatre, and of new music publications. The concerts (called oratorios) and publication activities of the Handel and Haydn Society are the subject of the majority of the journal's reviews and announcements. The society's programs are of interest, as they reflect the state of musical understanding and appreciation in contemporary Boston. Announcements and reviews of instrumental concerts are rarely encountered. Fewer than twenty reviews and announcements deal with the activities of the Philo-Harmonic Society, an association of musicians established for the purpose of presenting instrumental music to the Boston public.²⁴ Some interest in music education is shown, for example in reviews of Logier's "chiroplast" a device for assistance in the formation of a correct hand position for beginning pianists, and Galin's "meloplaste," devised as an aid in the teaching of sight reading. Newly invented musical instruments—the euphony, the guitar-lyre, the self-acting harp and panharmonicon—are regularly described. A critical appraisal is given of Anthony Philip Heinrich's volume *The Dawning of Music in Kentucky*. Social deportment at concerts is discussed; one concern is the individuals who, with a single ticket, pass the gate with several people. This breach of etiquette as well as the issuing of complimentary tickets reduced the profits of concert organizers.²⁵ The journal's feature articles are surrounded by a great array of nuggets of gossip, anecdotes and miscellaneous items.

A new section entitled "Ladies' Department" appears only in Volume II. The new section contains articles for and about women's issues. With the exception of a biographical sketch of Mme de Stael, articles in the "Ladies' Department" section are not catalogued in this publication. A final section entitled "The Bouquet" or "Poetry" is found in all volumes and contains poems written by amateur and professional writers, and includes fragments by Milton and Byron. Many of the poems reveal a deep appreciation of the art of music or deal with the beauties of music. Occasionally a poem appears with the heading "For music" which is clearly an invitation to composers to set the text to music. The two issues of Volume I, New Series are divided into two sections: music and literature. A variety of notices from music teachers and concert societies appear in the final columns of each issue. There are also advertisements from music dealers noting the recent arrival from Britain of musical instruments and sheet music, and, from the Boston Theatre announcing its repertory.

²⁴Parker incorrectly calls this society the Philharmonic Society. See Broyles, op. cit, p. 350 for a discussion of the several names of the society.

²⁵Admission to Philo-Harmonic Society concerts "by favor" and not by purchased tickets or subscriptions is discussed in *The Euterpeiad*, 3, no. 17 (January 1823): 166, and 3, no. 18 (February 1823): 181.

It is clear that Parker embraced an “ideology of American sacred music” that included the development of musical taste, as at least thirty-four of the journal’s articles deal with this topic. Among these is a reprint of excerpts in a fourteen-part series entitled *A Dissertation on Musical Taste*, by the Albany-based “composer, compiler, hymn writer and writer on music” Thomas Hastings.²⁶

Author attributions rarely appear in the journal. Moreover, the titles of periodicals from which texts were frequently reprinted are, when not omitted entirely, often abbreviated or corrupted. For example, Bacon’s *Quarterly Musical Magazine and Review* is referred to as the *London Musical Review*. In other cases the actual title of a periodical is replaced with a general term such as “English paper.”

²⁶Richard Crawford, “Hastings, Thomas,” *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music* 3: 344-45.