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"The Nonmusical Message Will Endure With It:" The Changing Reputation and Legacy of John
Powell (1882-1963)

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia
Commonwealth University.

by

Karen Elizabeth Adam

Bachelor of Arts, University of Richmond, 2006

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Thanks

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Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	vi
Abstract.....	vii
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1.....	7
Chapter 2.....	42
Chapter 3.....	68
Conclusion.....	92
Bibliography.....	101

List of Figures

Figures

1. John Powell, *Sonata Noble*: II, Var. 4, “Canon”24
2. John Powell, *Sonata Noble*: III, Minuetto theme, mm. 1-1125
3. “Motif of Oneness.” John Powell, *Sonata Teutonica*:
I. Allegro Molto Sostenuto, mm. 1-230
4. *Deutsche Wiener Turnerschaft* slogan symbol31

Abstract

“THE NONMUSICAL MESSAGE WILL ENDURE WITH IT:” THE CHANGING REPUTATION AND LEGACY OF JOHN POWELL (1882-1963)

By Karen Elizabeth Adam, M.A.

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Virginia Commonwealth University, 2012

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This thesis explores the changing reputation and legacy of John Powell (1882-1963). Powell was a Virginian-born pianist, composer, and ardent Anglo-Saxon supremacist who created musical propaganda to support racial purity and to define the United States as an exclusively Anglo-Saxon nation. Although he once enjoyed international fame, he has largely disappeared from the public consciousness today. In contrast, the legacies of many of Powell's musical contemporaries, such as Charles Ives and George Gershwin, have remained vigorous. By examining the ways in which the public has perceived and portrayed Powell both during and after his lifetime, this thesis links Powell's obscurity to a deliberate, public rejection of his Anglo-Saxon supremacist definition of the United States.

Introduction

During his lifetime, John Powell (1882-1963) was Virginia's celebrated native son. By all accounts, the Richmond-born man was extremely talented and possessed an astonishingly wide scope of interests. A classically-trained pianist and graduate of the University of Virginia, he developed an international career as a performer and composer. He was a skilled wrestler, an amateur astronomer, and a champion of the Anglo-Saxon heritage. In addition to founding the White Top Mountain Folk Festival in Virginia in 1931, he was actively involved in the Virginia Federation of Music Clubs and the Virginia State Choral Festival.¹ In recognition of his outstanding success, the Commonwealth of Virginia declared November 5, 1951 to be John Powell Day.² In 1967, Radford University named its arts building in Powell's memory.³

For all of Powell's accomplishments while he was alive, it was what he did after he died that secured his place in public memory. After his death, John Powell became a racist.

Powell was instrumental to the perpetuation of racism and Anglo-Saxon supremacy in Virginia during the first half of the twentieth century. In 1922, he and Earnest Sevier Cox co-founded the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America. Two years later, Powell led the charge in lobbying

¹ Ronald David Ward, "The Life and Works of John Powell (1882-1963)" (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 1973), 80-81 and 93.

² John Powell Foundation Booklet, n.d., Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

³ "The Cleansing Process." *Diverse: Issues In Higher Education* 27, no. 18 (October 14, 2010): 7, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 31, 2011).

for Virginia's Racial Integrity Act, commonly known as the "one drop rule."⁴ Working closely with Walter Ashby Plecker of the Virginia Bureau of Vital Statistics, Powell zealously sought to protect Virginia from the threat of miscegenation.⁵

Powell's notion of racial purity and Anglo-Saxon supremacy did not merely consist of bloodlines. In his mind, Anglo-Saxon supremacy depended on the racial integrity of cultural heritage as well. Powell openly acknowledged his use of music as propaganda for Anglo-Saxon supremacy throughout his career.⁶ His White Top Mountain Folk Festival's mission was to preserve and promote Anglo-Saxon folk music.⁷ Additionally, his own compositions often glorified Anglo-Saxon tunes and mocked African-American ones.

When Powell inched toward retirement in the late 1930s, a group of friends and supporters formed the John Powell Foundation in order to encourage his continued activity as a musician in Richmond and beyond. As an incentive to keep him involved in the Richmond area, the Foundation bought Powell's Richmond home from him and gave him the keys when he moved to Charlottesville.⁸ Following Powell's death in 1963, the Foundation attempted to ensure that his legacy would be honored and his music remembered. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the Foundation sponsored Dr. Roy Hamlin Johnson's creation of edited versions of some of Powell's music, and assisted Johnson in producing recorded performances of the new editions of Powell's piano music and symphony.

Despite his celebrated success, the memory of John Powell as a famous musician has virtually disappeared. What the majority of people have remembered, however, is John Powell's

⁴ Ward, 76-77 and J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: North Carolina University Press, 2002), 84.

⁵ J. Douglas Smith, 76-106.

⁶ Ward, 79.

⁷ Sally Twedell Bagley, "John Powell: Folk Musician" (master's thesis, University of Virginia, 1970), 62.

⁸ Ward, 117.

association with Anglo-Saxon supremacy. Even that, however, appears to be an association that most would prefer to forget. In September 2010, for example, Radford University erased Powell's name from campus by renaming its arts building.⁹

The listening public gradually realized that Powell was not simply drawing color lines across society with his politics and propaganda. He was defining America through his music. Like numerous other classically-based composers and musicians of his era, Powell sought a national style of music that would reflect the values that he deemed to be acceptable for American society.¹⁰ Ultimately, by rejecting Powell's musical legacy, Americans rejected his political agenda.

Although scholars have studied Powell's life and work from both historical and musicological angles, there has been no concerted effort to study the evolution and meanings of his legacy. Barbara Barnard Smith ("John Powell's 'Sonate Noble' and His Use of Folk Music", 1943), Philip Lynn Williams ("Music by John Powell in the Music Collection at the University of Virginia: a Descriptive Bibliography," 1968), and Sally Twedell Bagley ("John Powell: Folk Musician," 1970) offered discussions and musical analyses of Powell's compositions, many of which emphasized the folk idioms that Powell employed.

Mary Helen Chapman's thesis, "The Piano Works of John Powell," (1970) provided similar biographical and musical information, with one notable exception. Although she did not expound upon the idea, Chapman's comparison of Powell to composer Charles Ives can give valuable insight about the shaping of Powell's legacy. Ives and Powell were contemporaries who represented two halves of the United States. Powell was born and raised in the South; Ives hailed from the North. Of the two men's musical careers, Powell's was unquestionably the more

⁹ "The Cleansing Process." *Diverse: Issues In Higher Education* 27, no. 18 (October 14, 2010): 7, *Academic Search Complete*, EBSCOhost (accessed October 31, 2011).

¹⁰ Ward, 67.

successful one during their lifetimes. Yet, it is Ives that history has chosen to remember.

Chapman suggested the reason for this was rooted in Americans' sociopolitical perceptions of themselves.¹¹

By far, the most comprehensive work on Powell's life and career is Ronald David Ward's 1973 dissertation, "The Life and Works of John Powell (1882-1963)." Ward coupled the first detailed biography of Powell with a well-rounded overview of Powell's compositions. Although he acknowledged Powell's notoriety, Ward opted to analyze Powell's music over his legacy.

Linda R. Walker's 1980 thesis, "Views of John Powell and His Composing Style," diverged slightly from the prevalent tradition of musical analysis by attempting to understand why the memory of John Powell has faded. Relying heavily on her personal interactions with Powell and his noted pupil, Florence Robertson, Walker implied that Powell's sociopolitical activities interfered with his musical career.

Othel Wayne Smith's 1979 dissertation, "John Powell's Piano Suites and Sonatas 'Noble' and 'Psychologique'," offered another interesting departure from the bevy of musical analyses as he handled Powell's compositions in conjunction with the editorial work of Roy Hamlin Johnson. As Johnson's student, Smith performed a lecture-recital of the Johnson editions of Powell's works, to critical acclaim.

In addition to musicological research, some authors have examined Powell's sociopolitical activities. In *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia*, for example, J. Douglas Smith hardly mentioned Powell's musical career. Instead, he used the framework of paternalism to highlight Powell's sociopolitical efforts through his leadership in the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America and his role in the passage of the Racial Integrity Act of 1924, among other legislation.

¹¹ Mary Helen Chapman, "The Piano Works of John Powell" (master's thesis, Indiana University, 1968), 1-2.

Claudrena N. Harold (*The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918-1942*) and Colin Grant (*Negro with a Hat: the Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey*) both explored John Powell's relationship with Marcus Garvey, leader of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. Although on opposite sides of the color line, Powell and Garvey shared the belief that establishing and maintaining racial purity would be mutually beneficial to their respective races.

Pippa Holloway (*Sexuality, Politics, and Social Control in Virginia, 1920-1945*), and Paul A. Lombardo (*A Century of Eugenics in America: from the Indiana Experiment to the Human Genome Era*) each depicted Powell as a zealous racist who sought to regulate sexual behavior in order to create and preserve the definition of whiteness in the United States.

Recently, musicologists have begun pressing for the unified study of Powell's music and politics. In 2006, David Z. Kushner presented the forceful argument that Powell's music functioned as a strong political statement and ought not to be viewed as separate from his activities as an Anglo-Saxon supremacist. While he noted the current inverse relationship between Powell's respective musical and sociopolitical reputations, Kushner did not explore the reasons for that phenomenon in depth. Similarly, Alain Frogley ("The old sweet Anglo-Saxon spell': racial discourses and the American reception of British music, 1895-1933," in *Western Music and Race*) and J. Lester Feder ("Unequal Temperament: the Somatic Acoustics of Racial Difference in the Symphonic Music of John Powell") have each made convincing studies of the ways in which Powell devoted his musical talents to sociopolitical ends.

The chapters that follow will demonstrate Powell's failed attempt to create an Anglo-Saxon supremacist definition of America through his blend of musical politics. Chapter one shows the intersection of Powell's musical and sociopolitical careers, and establishes his creation

and use of musical propaganda. Chapter two focuses on perceptions of John Powell, both during and after his lifetime, and the various ways in which people have attempted to shape his reputation and legacy. Chapter three provides a historiographical survey to explore how scholars have dealt with and influenced Powell's reputation and legacy. Lastly, the conclusion offers insight on twenty-first century reactions to the music and memory of John Powell. It will ultimately prove that, by purposely forgetting John Powell, Americans have rejected the Anglo-Saxon supremacist definition of the United States that he proffered.

Chapter 1

A composer's reputation can hang him. The notes themselves are often not enough; knowing what went on behind the music can influence our perception of it as much as our grasp of its style and form.

—Paul Harrington, “Holst and Vaughan Williams: Radical Pastoral”¹²

For all of his nearly eighty-one years, John Powell (1882-1963) lived in a world overflowing with social upheaval. Born in the post-Reconstruction South, Powell was reared in a world segregated by color and class, race and creed. *Plessy v. Ferguson* legalized segregation in 1896. During Powell's lifetime, the United States launched itself into imperialism, beginning with the Spanish-American War in 1898. Tensions across Europe ignited in 1914 into “the war to end all wars.” The Immigration Act of 1924 ensured the demographic superiority of the white, native-born population in the United States. Where the Immigration Act's scope failed to reach, American eugenicists intervened willingly. The Great Depression brought America to its knees, while the New Deal transformed the country. World War II erupted and strewn unspeakable devastation across the globe. The Civil Rights Movement, with the reversal of *Plessy* through the triumph of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, shattered the increasingly tenuous social boundaries of Powell's boyhood. Each of these changes represented a nation searching fervidly for its identity, a country seeking to establish its place in the world. While not

¹²Paul Harrington, “Holst and Vaughan Williams: Radical Pastoral,” in *Music and the Politics of Culture*, ed. Christopher Norris (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 106.

every change consisted of forward motion, they all ultimately propelled America and Americans into the future.

For John Powell, this was a bitter paradox. Although his world engulfed him in forward-moving change, he was convinced that America's identity lay in the past. He dedicated his life not just to resisting, but to actively combatting the sociopolitical tremors that were rattling American society. For Powell, the past was pure, uncomplicated, and idyllic. Resurrecting and implementing that past became Powell's life mission. It was a tragic endeavor, for the romantic past that Powell championed existed only in his imagination.

Born in 1882 to a prominent Richmond family with bloodlines of unquestionable European whiteness and nobility, Powell grew up surrounded by all things necessary to produce a fine Virginian aristocrat.¹³ Although the United States had abolished slavery a generation earlier, racism still dictated social hierarchy in numerous ways, the most visible being racial segregation. As Mark S. Weiner stated in his essay, "Teutonic Constitutionalism: the Role of Ethno-Juridicial Discourse in the Spanish-American War," one of the methods by which many white Americans sought to establish their sociopolitical dominance was through the use of "the 'Teutonic origins thesis'," which linked the nation's successful history to race. Weiner wrote, "Teutonic origins scholars characterized Anglo-Saxons as a people with a special genius for law and for state-building; they described the state and legal order itself as Anglo-Saxon in character; and they portrayed dark-skinned peoples as incapable of legality and thus essentially criminal."¹⁴

With the locus of sociopolitical power in the United States on the Anglo-Saxon heritage, the

¹³ Pocahontas Wight Edmunds, "John Powell: Native Musician," in *Virginians Out Front* (Richmond, Virginia: Whittet & Shepperson, 1972), 337-345; and Ronald David Ward, "The Life and Works of John Powell (1882-1963)" (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 1973), 4-6.

¹⁴ Mark S. Weiner, "Teutonic Constitutionalism: the Role of Ethno-Juridicial Discourse in the Spanish-American War," in *Foreign in a Domestic Sense: Puerto Rico, American Expansion, and the Constitution*, ed. Christina Duffy Burnett and Burke Marshall (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2001), 49.

right skin color and the right ancestry became vital to securing one's place in society.

Surrounded as he was by racism, John Powell digested this lesson completely. From his youth onwards, he aspired to hold the highest position in the social hierarchy by cementing his identity as a proud member of the Anglo-Saxon heritage.

John Powell's musical talent was clear from a very early age.¹⁵ He began piano lessons at the age of three under the tutelage of his elder sister, Elizabeth. Seven years later, Elizabeth transferred him to the studio of F.C. Hahr, a naturalized American from Sweden whose own musical background included masterclasses under the great Franz Liszt.¹⁶ When Powell's paternal grandmother died in 1899, she made a special note in her will that her grandson must be given every opportunity to achieve his aspirations of musical greatness. Among other provisions, she emphasized that he must have the chance to study music in Europe.¹⁷

Before Powell could depart for Europe, however, his father insisted—even resorting to including it his own will—that Powell first complete his academic education by attending the University of Virginia.¹⁸ Powell did so, graduating with honors in 1901, two years earlier than was usual.¹⁹ By 1902, he had moved to Vienna, in the Austria-Hungarian Empire, to become a pupil of famed piano pedagogue Theodor Leschetizky.²⁰ In 1906, he would also begin studying composition with Czech composer Karl Navrátil.²¹ Ronald David Ward stated in his doctoral thesis on Powell that Navrátil gave “Powell an affinity for classical forms that stayed with him

¹⁵ Edmunds, 338-344.

¹⁶ Edmunds, 341-343; and Ward, 7-8.

¹⁷ Rebecca Leigh Powell, Last Will and Testament, August, 1899, (photocopy, c. 1970, enclosed in letter from Leigh Williams to Mrs. John H. Landrum, November 10, 1970), Papers and Memorabilia of John Powell, Accession #7276-k, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁸ Edmunds, 343-344; and Ward, 9.

¹⁹ Edmunds, 344-345.

²⁰ Ward, 15-16.

²¹ Ward, 25.

throughout his composing career. Powell maintained that he learned from Navrátil the distinction between a tune and a theme.”²²

While in Vienna, Powell became proficient, if not altogether comfortable, in the German language and Germanic culture.²³ However, he also loyally retained his identity as a Virginian Anglo-Saxon.²⁴ More importantly, his experience abroad heightened his own sociopolitical perceptions as he viewed culture, nationalism, and heritage from new perspectives.

Americans were accustomed to importing their knowledge, their goods, even their citizens, from Europe.²⁵ By the late nineteenth century, however, countries throughout the world had begun to experience increasing levels of nationalism as governments jockeyed for global power. Among its numerous manifestations, this nationalism began circulating throughout the world of classical music.²⁶

German art music had long been the standard for classical musicians.²⁷ Few could argue against the cultural heritage that had sired the great J.S. Bach, Ludwig van Beethoven, Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms. However, with the advent of nationalism, an increasing number of European composers sought ways to incorporate unique, national styles into their works.²⁸ Many found that their country’s vernacular culture could fuel musical ideas through

²² Ward, 26.

²³ Ward, 14-15; Benno Moiseiwitsch, postcard to John Powell, 1917; and Karl Burger, postcard to John Powell, n.d., John Powell Papers, 1895-1940, Accession #7303, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

²⁴ Ward, 14-15.

²⁵ Aaron Copland, *Copland on Music*, Reprint of 1st ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1976), 54.

²⁶ Benjamin Curtis, *Music Makes the Nation: Nationalist Composers and Nation Building in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Amherst, New York: Cambria Press, 2008), 1-7.

²⁷ Christopher Norris, ed., *Music and the Politics of Culture* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 58.

²⁸ Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca, ed., *A History of Western Music*, 6th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 644-645.

native characteristics.²⁹ As a result of the dual efforts to diversify and to incorporate national traditions into art music during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, European classical music underwent a major transformation.³⁰

For Americans, however, the process was not as simple. Westward expansion, immigration, and industrialization generated constant social, political, and economic change for the country.³¹ The country that would later be known as a “melting pot” was being stirred up. For Americans who held Europe as the cultural standard of sophistication, the idea of blending nationalism with classical music was baffling. The United States was still in its adolescence, and the prospect of trying to select a single musical vernacular from a melting pot full of ingredients was confounding at best.³² Alan Howard Levy, author of *Musical Nationalism: American Composers’ Search for Identity*, summarized the situation as follows: “From 1865 to 1930 the often-frustrating efforts to integrate American art and vernacular musical elements were part of a broader search for cultural identity.”³³ However, Levy also noted that Americans faced a dilemma: “Training in art music meant formal study, usually at a music conservatory in New York or Boston, or in Europe. The elitism at these locales vis à vis the American vernacular was strong and infectious. Consequently, many American music students virtually were indoctrinated to consider their vernacular heritage as unworthy of attention.”³⁴ Nevertheless,

²⁹ Grout and Palisca, 646-647, 654, 659, 669.

³⁰ Grout and Palisca, 646.

³¹ Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2008), 5 and 11-12.

³² Garrett, 18.

³³ Alan Howard Levy, *Musical Nationalism: American Composers’ Search for Identity* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983), viii.

³⁴ Levy, ix.

some American composers joined the rest of the nation in attempting to discern exactly what “American” meant.³⁵

John Powell’s Southern origins and travels abroad provided him with a unique perspective on American identity. While Pocahontas Wight Edmunds implied in *Virginians Out Front* that Powell felt the absence of a common American culture after seeing vernacular unity in European countries, Powell himself offered a different interpretation of his experience.³⁶ In a lecture entitled “Music and the Nation,” which was published in 1923 in *The Rice Institute Pamphlet*, Powell stated, “In Austria there were twenty-seven separate and distinct political parties, and seventeen separate and distinct languages, and every one of these component groups considered itself the most important, and strove to force its language and ideas upon the rest of the empire.”³⁷ He labeled this diversity as *the* main cause of World War I.³⁸

Determined to protect the United States from the “bedlam” that Europe had experienced, and seeing diversity as the problem, Powell concluded that the best solution of the issue was to homogenize the American population and culture.³⁹ Additionally, as someone who identified strongly with the Anglo-Saxon heritage and old Virginia, he needed to prove the validity of those identities in the face of change, regardless of whether that change was real or imagined. In order to maintain a perception of social, cultural, and political security, Powell needed Anglo-Saxon supremacy.

³⁵ Garrett, 18.

³⁶ Edmunds, 345-346.

³⁷ John Powell, “Music and the Nation,” in *The Rice Institute Pamphlet*, (1923), 129.
http://scholarship.rice.edu/bitstream/handle/1911/8712/article_r1103127.pdf?sequence=7 (accessed February 8, 2012)

³⁸ Powell, “Music and the Nation,” 129.

³⁹ Powell, “Music and the Nation,” 128-130.

He pursued his quest for Anglo-Saxon supremacy zealously and with much creativity. To justify his cause, Powell cast himself as a crusader against corruption. The original, authentic America, Powell claimed, had been “a people homogeneous in blood, speaking a common language, with common ideals and traditions of liberty and law.”⁴⁰ The first settlers were “Only courageous and adventurous spirits, men and women of sterling character and fearless independence...only the hardiest, bravest, and most intelligent could survive the dangers and hardships of the pioneer life.”⁴¹ Atop these historical misconceptions and scientific racism, Powell manufactured his own version of U.S. history. For example, he stated:

It is pretty generally taught that the tyranny and oppression of England were so great that the colonists could not endure them any longer, and for eight years they fought England to win their independence. As a matter of fact, the colonies did not fight England. The English people were so unwilling to enter the conflict against us that George the Third had to hire Hessian mercenaries to fight his battles in America.⁴²

Using this blend of faulty history and the Teutonic origins thesis, Powell sought to return the United States to its Anglo-Saxon past through a variety of social, cultural, and political tactics. Sociopolitically, Powell proposed to cleanse the United States of all undesirable peoples by restricting immigration and by deporting people—even naturalized citizens—who were deemed unfit to assimilate into an Anglo-Saxon America. He also wanted to use education to imbue the American people with proper Anglo-Saxon American values. Finally, he insisted on the enrichment and propagation of the Anglo-Saxon cultural heritage through cultural activities.⁴³

⁴⁰ Powell, “Music and the Nation,” 130.

⁴¹ Powell, “Music and the Nation,” 133.

⁴² Powell, “Music and the Nation,” 142.

⁴³ Powell, “Music and the Nation,” 139-142.

Lest Powell's approach appear on the verge of fanatic paranoia, it must be remembered that he was not unique in his sentiments. One year after the publication of his "Music and the Nation" lecture, the United States Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924 to reduce the number of total immigrants to the United States, and to limit sharply the number of non-Anglo-Saxon immigrants to the country. During the early twentieth century, many Americans turned to nativism and white supremacy as the logical answer to their search for their country's national identity.⁴⁴

It was only natural that Powell's two passions—music and Anglo-Saxon supremacy—would converge under his unique set of talents and skills. Powell used music as a forceful statement of his sociopolitical views. Those views, in turn, informed his musical activities. Using the pseudonym "Richard Brockwell," Powell stated in program notes that "It is not claimed that a philosophical idea can be presented through the medium of music. The purpose of music is the presentation of emotional experience."⁴⁵ Powell may not have "claimed" anything beyond emotions for his music in the early days of his career, but it is clear that he wielded music as a vehicle not just of philosophy, but of politics, culture, and society as well. By 1928, Powell, again in the guise of Brockwell, brought his true views into the open in program notes for the performance of a cluster of folk-based music by himself, Beethoven, and David Guion. He wrote: "Mr. Powell has confessed to a propaganda purpose in putting together this group."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Matthew Frye Jacobson, "Becoming Caucasian: Vicissitudes of Whiteness in American Politics and Culture," in *Race and Immigration in the United States: New History*, ed. Paul Spickard (New York: Routledge, 2012), 134-138.

⁴⁵ Ward, 79; and Richard Brockwell, program notes on John Powell's *Sonata Teutonica*, (c. 1914), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box #34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁴⁶ Richard Brockwell, program notes for John Powell's recital, (London, England: Aeolian Hall, November 6, 1928), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Indeed, Powell generated copious propaganda during his lifetime. In 1922, he and fellow Richmond, Virginia, resident Earnest Sevier Cox founded the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America. A 1923 article published in Richmond's *News Leader* stated that, "The fundamental purpose of the organization is the preservation and maintenance of Anglo-Saxon ideals and civilization in America."⁴⁷ Like the Ku Klux Klan, whose membership was booming in the early twentieth century, the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America rested on tenets of nativism, racial integrity, anti-miscegenation, and white supremacy.⁴⁸ However, Powell and Cox were careful to differentiate their organization from the Klan. "Although taking a strong stand on racial matters," read an article in *The News Leader*, "the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America insist that these questions shall be handled in the most humanitarian and liberal spirit. They are definitely and explicitly opposed to all religious hatred and intolerance, as well as to racial prejudice."⁴⁹ A 1924 article in Newport News, Virginia's, *Daily Press* clarified the difference further when it stated that "The Anglo-Saxon Club is not a secret organization and all white native born Americans, regardless of religion or creed, are eligible for membership."⁵⁰

As J. Douglas Smith, author of *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia* explained, white supremacist activity in the Richmond, Virginia, was as much an issue of class as it was of race. As the Klan increased its violent tactics nationwide and widened its focus to include religious, as well as racial supremacy, upper-class

⁴⁷ "Post No. 1, Anglo-Saxon Clubs, Has 400 Members," *The News Leader*, June 5, 1923, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁴⁸ "Ku Klux Klan Exposed," advertisement in *The Evening World*, September 5, 1921, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁴⁹ "Post No. 1, Anglo-Saxon Clubs, Has 400 Members," *The News Leader*, June 5, 1923, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁵⁰ "Powell to Speak Here This Evening," *Daily Press*, November 8, 1924, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Richmonders endeavored to distinguish themselves from the perceived ruffianism without sacrificing their support of racial integrity.⁵¹ The solution came in the form of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs.⁵²

The first chapter of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America to open in Virginia gained four hundred members in its first nine months of existence.⁵³ Within its first year, other chapters of the organization had opened in eleven other states.⁵⁴ Although nativism figured into the Anglo-Saxon Clubs' agenda, the Virginian branch of the organization quickly focused its emphasis on racial integrity rather than immigration.⁵⁵

Known obliquely as the "race problem," the issues of racial segregation and white supremacy manifested themselves in the Clubs' push for strong anti-miscegenation legislation in Virginia and elsewhere.⁵⁶ Powell, Cox, and others looked to science to bolster their cause. Using a combination of scientific racism and genetics, the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America condemned the idea of an American melting pot. In his "Music and the Nation" lecture, Powell wrote, "We know that under the Mendelian law the African strain is hereditarily predominant. In other words, one drop of negro blood makes the negro. We also know that no higher race has

⁵¹ J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 12.

⁵² J. Douglas Smith, 75.

⁵³ *The Dictionary of Virginia Biography* (Charlottesville, Virginia: Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, April 7, 2011), s.v. "Cox, Earnest Sevier (1880-1966)." http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Cox_Earnest_Sevier_1880-1966 (accessed February 11, 2012), and "Post No. 1, Anglo-Saxon Clubs, Has 400 Members," *The News Leader*, June 5, 1923, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁵⁴ "Post No. 1, Anglo-Saxon Clubs, Has 400 Members," *The News Leader*, June 5, 1923, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁵⁵ "Post No. 1, Anglo-Saxon Clubs, Has 400 Members," *The News Leader*, June 5, 1923, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁵⁶ "Post No. 1, Anglo-Saxon Clubs, Has 400 Members," *The News Leader*, June 5, 1923, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

ever been able to preserve its culture, to prevent decay and eventual degeneracy when tainted, even slightly, with negro blood...If we, in America, allow this contamination to proceed unchecked, our civilization is inexorably doomed.”⁵⁷

The Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America lobbied successfully for the passage of Virginia’s Racial Integrity Act of 1924.⁵⁸ Also known as the “one-drop rule,” the legislation tightened Virginia’s anti-miscegenation laws significantly. Previous anti-miscegenation laws had banned interracial marriage, but loopholes enabled mixed-race people who “passed” as white to marry white people. The “one-drop rule” attempted to close those loopholes by forbidding white people to marry anyone other than people from undeniably pure, white bloodlines. The only exception to that rule was the permission given for the descendants of Pocahontas and John Rolfe to marry white people.⁵⁹

Powell did not rest with this victory. His zeal was evident in an article published the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* on January 11, 1925. In response to concerns that his involvement in the racial integrity movement would be detrimental to his promising musical career, Powell wrote, “let me say, in all simplicity, that my efforts for racial integrity have as yet caused no neglect of my music. On the contrary, they have better fitted me for the arduous concentration and the physical, nervous, and emotional strain of musical preparation and interpretation....Nevertheless, there are matters which are of more importance than the personal welfare and career of any individual. If the work of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs should demand the sacrifice of my musical career—which is highly improbable—I trust that I shall not hesitate to

⁵⁷ Powell, “Music and the Nation,” 135.

⁵⁸ Ward, 76-77; and J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: North Carolina University Press, 2002), 84.

⁵⁹ *Encyclopedia Virginia*, s.v. “Racial Integrity Laws of the 1920s,” http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Racial_Integrity_Laws_of_the_1920s (accessed February 13, 2012).

meet the demand.”⁶⁰ All sacrifice aside, Powell had long-ago discovered a way to pursue his musical and sociopolitical passions with impressive efficiency: he converted his musical activities to “a propaganda purpose.”⁶¹

To succeed with his musical propaganda, Powell needed to create memories, particularly political memory, on which to found his platform. In her essay, “Re-framing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past,” Aleida Assmann stated that “A memory that is intentionally and symbolically constructed is based on acts of selection and exclusion, neatly separating useful from not useful, relevant from irrelevant memories.”⁶² She defined political memories as those that “tend toward homogeneous unity and self-contained closure...in a narrative that is emotionally charged and conveys a clear and invigorating message.”⁶³ Powell actively used these tactics to express his sociopolitical convictions through music.

Although Powell had composed music throughout his youth, scholars concur that his compositional career began in earnest in the early twentieth century when he became a student of Theodor Leschetizky and Karl Navrátil.⁶⁴ By 1907, Powell had composed, among others, *Sonata Virginianesque*, op. 7, for violin and piano; *At the Fair* suite for piano; *In the South*, op. 16, nos. 1-4, suite for piano; and *Sonate Noble*, op. 21, for piano. Additionally, according to

⁶⁰ “Anglo-Saxon Club Activities No Tax on Artist’s Ability,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, January 11, 1925, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁶¹ Richard Brockwell, program notes for John Powell’s recital, (London, England: Aeolian Hall, November 6, 1928), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁶² Aleida Assmann, “Re-framing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past,” in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, ed. Karin Tilman, Frank van Vree, and Jay Winter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 43.

⁶³ Aleida Assmann, “Re-framing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past,” in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, ed. Karin Tilman, Frank van Vree, and Jay Winter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 43.

⁶⁴ Edmunds, 341 and 346; Ward 25 and 297-302; and Linda Walker, “Views of John Powell and His Composing Style” (master’s thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1980), 18-19.

Mary Helen Chapman's research for her 1969 master's thesis, Powell had also begun work on his *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24 at this time.⁶⁵

While his early compositions met with mixed success, Powell's choice of themes is significant. The American South, racial integrity, and Anglo-Saxon supremacy figure prominently even into these early works. Although it would be nearly another decade before the birth of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America, Powell's propaganda efforts had already begun.

Powell's *At the Fair: Sketches of American Fun* suite for piano consisted of six movements: "Hoochee-Coochee Dance," "Circassian Beauty," "Merry-go-Round," "Clowns," "Snake Charmer," and "Banjo-Picker". While "Hoochee-Coochee Dance," "Circassian Beauty," and "Snake Charmer" focused on perceptions of Eastern exoticism, the remaining three movements drew from more American themes.⁶⁶ Program notes for a 1913 recital described the suite as, "thumbnail sketches, noted in a striking but natural way, of things seen and heard by the composer at a Fair 'down West.' Mr. Powell's psychological theme is 'the people'; while many of his musical motives are tunes that may be heard any day whistled by street-boys in any American city."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Mary Helen Chapman, "The Piano Works of John Powell" (master's thesis, Indiana University, 1969), 7-8. In ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=3&did=761134401&SrchMode=1&sid=1&Fmt=6&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1329160979&clientId=4305> (accessed February 13, 2012).

⁶⁶ Program notes for John Powell's piano recital, Granby Theatre, May 22, 1913), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁶⁷ Program notes, John Powell Piano Recital at Granby Theatre, May 22, 1913, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

“The Banjo-Picker” would later comprise a part of Powell’s cluster of folk-based music that he would deploy for “a propaganda purpose” in recitals worldwide.⁶⁸ In what would become one of his preferred methods of politicizing his music, Powell discredited African-American culture by appropriating its traditions to glorify the Anglo-Saxon heritage instead. Powell wrote in program notes for a 1928 recital: “The banjo has come to be associated in our minds more or less exclusively with the negro race but some of the best banjo-players in America are white folk—men from the ‘Cracker’ districts who are veritable virtuosi on this instrument.”⁶⁹ Fifteen years later, “Richard Brockwell” would publish program notes that described “The Banjo-Picker” as “a verbatim presentment of the way the old banjo-pickers used to play the tune, a way now unfortunately extinct, as the modern jass-craze [*sic*] has destroyed the fifth string of the banjo and degraded the instrument to a mere strident accompaniment of pseudo-primitive monstrosities.”⁷⁰

“Brockwell’s” statement was a loaded one. As a hybrid music, jazz cut across the lines of race, class, tradition, and culture.⁷¹ It was a musical melting pot. Few genres could be a better antithesis for Powell’s quest for Anglo-Saxon purity. His endorsement of white musicians (“old banjo-pickers”) as authentic upheld his notion of Anglo-Saxon supremacy. (It should also be noted in this example that while heavy demand from jazz musicians caused banjo manufacturers to cease making traditional five-stringed instruments in favor of the more popular four-stringed

⁶⁸ Richard Brockwell, program notes for John Powell’s recital, (London, England: Aeolian Hall, November 6, 1928), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁶⁹ Program notes, John Powell Piano Recital at Granby Theatre, May 22, 1913, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁷⁰ Richard Brockwell, program notes for John Powell’s recital, (London, England: Aeolian Hall, November 6, 1928), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁷¹ Grout and Palisca, 749-750, 775.

ones, many folk musicians clung loyally to their five-stringed banjos.)⁷² Powell would avail himself of the theme of the Anglo-Saxons' monopoly on authenticity throughout his lifetime in order to bolster his sociopolitical arguments. As he did so, his methods made him the ideal representative for Aleida Assmann's definition of constructed and politicized memory. To make his sociopolitical message obvious, Powell resorted to his other common practice of fabricating or overlooking historical truth. In this case, he conveniently skirted the fact that Anglo-Saxons had no knowledge of the banjo until they encountered it through their contact with African cultures.⁷³

The sociopolitical agenda in Powell's *Sonate Noble*, op. 21, was much more subtle, but it nevertheless followed the same template of memory construction and politicization that Assmann put forth. Sparsely harmonized and composed within traditional formal structures, *Sonate Noble* connotes simplicity. For this reason, many scholars have not assigned it much significance, especially when Powell's other sonatas are ferociously complex. When viewed from the perspective of Powell's sociopolitical mission, however, the *Sonate Noble* becomes an important component of the composer's propaganda.

Powell began imparting his views of Anglo-Saxon supremacy even before reaching the sonata's first note. Following the title, Powell included a quotation from poet Sidney Lanier:

Vainly might Plato's brain revolve it,

Plainly the heart of a child could solve it.⁷⁴

⁷² Philip F. Gura and James F. Bollman, *America's Instrument: the Banjo in the Nineteenth Century* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 245 and 249-250.

⁷³ Gura and Bollman, 1-2.

⁷⁴ John Powell, *Sonate Noble*, op. 21, for piano (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1921), 2.

Lanier was a very distant relative of Powell's; they traced their mutual ancestry back to the court musicians of Elizabethan England.⁷⁵ Lanier lived a varied life as a poet, musician, composer, Confederate veteran and prisoner of war, and lecturer at Johns Hopkins University, among other things.⁷⁶ His poetry reflected many of the values that Powell sought to perpetuate. In an analysis of Lanier's poem "The Symphony," for example, Jack de Bellis stated that "The poem's closing section finds the oboe urging trade to return to innocence and the bassoons predicting that love will return to the 'modern waste.'"⁷⁷

Numerous music scholars have noted Powell's quotation of Lanier's verses, but none has placed that quotation into context. In *Sidney Lanier*, literary scholar Jack de Bellis provided insight into Lanier's outlook. In de Bellis's opinion, Lanier espoused a Romantic sentimentality that lent him moral superiority over the perceived negative social effects of the Reconstruction era.⁷⁸ "The Symphony" was a very lengthy exercise both in symbolism and in the mechanics of verse. For his symbolism, Lanier chose to highlight broadly the theme of chivalry. "Continuing the chivalric mood," wrote de Bellis, "Lanier calls the oboe a 'hautboy,' but the fourth section is a step further back in time than Camelot: the child as hautboy is a concentration of the violins' assertion that only a child could resolve social injustice."⁷⁹ Thus, according to de Bellis, "The Symphony" contrasted a "return to innocence" with "the 'modern waste.'"⁸⁰

The poem's theme of chivalry can also be placed into an even broader cultural context. In her essay, "The many afterlives of Ivanhoe," Ann Rigney noted that white Southern aristocrats

⁷⁵ Chapman, 4; and Tallu Fish, *Sidney Lanier: America's Sweet Singer of Songs* (Darien, Georgia: Ashantilly Press and The Darien News, 1963), 6.

⁷⁶ Fish, 6-7, and Jack de Bellis, *Sidney Lanier* (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1972), 69.

⁷⁷ De Bellis, 78.

⁷⁸ De Bellis, 68.

⁷⁹ De Bellis, 91.

⁸⁰ De Bellis, 78.

commonly asserted their social superiority during the nineteenth century by styling themselves after *Ivanhoe* and similarly romanticized versions of the past in order to reinforce their social hierarchy and mores. Public commemorations, including medieval-style tournaments and pageantry, had a prominent role in maintaining this social dominance. It was from this culture, Rigney observed, that groups such as the Knights of the Lost Cause and the Knights of Bull Run arose.⁸¹ With its lament that “Men love not women as in olden time” and its command to defend women’s virtue “Like any knight in knighthood’s morn,” Lanier’s poem aligned with the chivalric, white supremacist, Southern culture.⁸²

Lanier’s call to resurrect the purity of yesteryear also paralleled the doctrines of Powell’s sociopolitical crusade. Ronald David Ward alluded to those parallels in his analysis of *Sonata Noble*. He stated, “The essence of the sonata is grasped when the work is considered to be an exercise in nostalgia...”⁸³ The possibility of nostalgia is confirmed in Powell’s addition to the “Allegro moderato” tempo marking in the first movement. He wrote, “nel modo antico” (“in the old style”). He was excluding an unpredictable and diverse modernity in favor of a sentimental and homogeneous past.

Powell further reinforced his sociopolitical agenda through his choice of form and use of folk idioms in the sonata. The sonata itself follows a traditional formal structure, with a few exceptions. The first movement is in sonata form.⁸⁴ However, as Ronald David Ward noted, Powell took a circuitous path between the expected tonic and dominant key areas. Ward wrote, “Between these traditional structural pillars there are exposed key areas lending themselves to

⁸¹ Ann Rigney, “The many afterlives of *Ivanhoe*,” in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 217-220.

⁸² Sidney Lanier, *Poems of Sidney Lanier*, ed. Mary D. Lanier (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1946), 66-67.

⁸³ Ward, 193.

⁸⁴ Othel Wayne Smith, “John Powell’s Piano Suites and Sonatas *Noble* and *Psychologique*: a Recording Project” (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 1978), 9.

ambiguous or dual analysis...The form is thematically clear; the large key areas are also clear. En route there is a felicitous admixture of tonal and modal harmonies.”⁸⁵ Powell’s incorporation of modes into his music connoted antiquity, since modes pre-dated the familiar major and minor scalar harmonies commonly heard in classical music.

The sonata’s second movement, a theme and seven variations, paired very traditional compositional techniques with a few harmonic excursions. Ever focused on compositional structure, Powell constructed his theme so well that he was able to use a modified version of it as a canon—one of classical music’s oldest forms—for the fourth variation.⁸⁶ (See fig. 1).

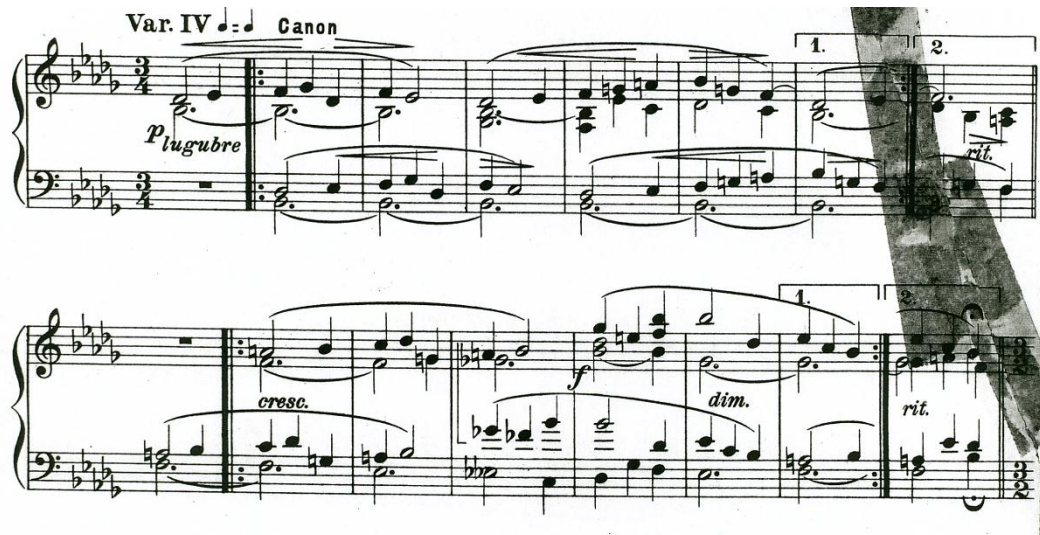


Figure 1. John Powell, *Sonata Noble*: II, Var. 4, “Canon.”⁸⁷

Powell composed the third movement in minuet and trio form, again availing himself of a traditional structural mainstay. Scholars trace the minuet’s theme to an existing folk tune. (See fig. 2).

⁸⁵ Ward, 191-192.

⁸⁶ John Powell, *Sonata Noble*, op. 21, for piano (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1921), 10 and 12; and Thomas Benjamin, *The Craft of Tonal Counterpoint*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 109-111.

⁸⁷ John Powell, *Sonata Noble*, op. 21, for piano (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1921), 12.



Figure 2. John Powell, *Sonate Noble*: III, Minuetto theme, mm. 1-11.⁸⁸

Mary Helen Chapman identified the tune as “The Garden Hymn” from *Southern Harmony*, while Othel Wayne Smith labeled it as “Go Join the Cavalry.”⁸⁹ In her 1970 master’s thesis, Sally Twedell Bagley offered a third and more convincing option of “Old gray mare, she ain’t what she used to be.”⁹⁰

Regardless of which, if any, identification is the most accurate, all three authors agreed that Powell used a tune that reflected a white, Southern heritage. The final stanza of “The Garden Hymn” recalls the resurrection of the past with the lines,

Refreshing showers of grace divine,
From Jesus flow to every vine,
And make the dead revive,

⁸⁸ John Powell, *Sonate Noble*, op. 21, for piano (New York: G. Schirmer, 1921), 18.

⁸⁹ Chapman, 91; and Othel Wayne Smith, 10.

⁹⁰ Sally Twedell Bagley, “John Powell: Folk Musician” (master’s thesis, University of Virginia, 1970), 20.

And make the dead revive.⁹¹

“Go Join the Cavalry,” more commonly known by its colloquial name, “Jine the Cavalry,” was historically associated with J.E.B. Stuart’s mounted Confederate soldiers. The song celebrated the carefree, daring aplomb of the Confederacy with the lyrics:

If you want to have a good time,
Jine the cavalry,
‘F you want to catch the devil, if you want to have fun,
If you want to smell hell,
Jine the cavalry!⁹²

Likewise, the lyrics of “Old gray mare, she ain’t what she used to be” also summoned nostalgia with the frequent refrain of “Many long years ago.”⁹³

Barbara Barnard Smith offered another intriguing explanation of the minuet’s theme in her 1943 master’s thesis, which was devoted almost entirely to analyzing Powell’s *Sonate Noble*. She identified the same three tune possibilities that Chapman, Othel Wayne Smith, and Bagley cited. Unlike the other scholars, however, Barbara Barnard Smith proposed that “Jine the Cavalry” and “Old gray mare” were secular variants of “The Garden Hymn” that had evolved through Southern minstrelsy, with the particular assistance of the “Cracker” banjoists that “Richard Brockwell” had previously identified. From her personal interviews with Powell, Barbara Barnard Smith discovered that he learned the tune from his mother. (While the melody

⁹¹ William Walker, *The Southern Harmony and Musical Companion*, ed. Glenn C. Wilcox (1854; repr. Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 90.

⁹² Frances Wellman and Manly Wade Wellman, *The Rebel Songster: Songs the Confederates Sang* (Charlotte, North Carolina: Heritage House, 1959), 32-33.

⁹³ Iona and Peter Opie, *Children’s Games With Things* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 147.

provided in Barbara Barnard Smith's thesis most closely resembles "Old gray mare," the thesis does not indicate which lyrics, if any, Powell's mother employed.)⁹⁴ Although she did not say so, Barbara Barnard Smith's tune theory further reinforced the argument that Powell used his music to denigrate African-American culture. By drawing from tunes that were anchored both in the Anglo-Saxon heritage and in minstrelsy, Powell asserted Anglo-Saxon supremacy through his music.

Othel Wayne Smith described the sonata's final movement as having "a folk song quality," but neither Smith nor other scholars found any evidence of the incorporation of an existing folk tune into the movement.⁹⁵ The charming melody cycles through the movement, which Chapman and Barbara Barnard Smith classified as sonatina form.⁹⁶ While their categorization is justifiable, other options for classifying the movement's form do exist. A more accurate definition for the movement may be found in the five-part rondo form.

A rondo is a musical form in which the theme recurs between appearances of contrasting musical material. Music scholars commonly label the main theme as "A," with contrasting material being labeled as "B," and referred to as a "digression," or "episode." A five-part rondo, then, could be diagrammed as "ABABA," wherein three occurrences of the theme are separated by two alternate episodes.

Because the fourth movement of Powell's *Sonate Noble* has two distinct musical ideas and a recurring theme, the five-part rondo is a valid formal option. In this case, the movement does not follow the orthodox five-part form (ABABA). Instead, it manifests a modified version

⁹⁴ Barbara Barnard Smith, "John Powell's *Sonate Noble* and His Use of Folk Music" (master's thesis, Eastman School of Music, 1943), 18-20.

⁹⁵ Chapman, 91; and Othel Wayne Smith, 10.

⁹⁶ Chapman, 90 and Barbara Barnard Smith, 15.

of the five-part rondo. The movement opens in the key of D major with its theme (“A”). By measure 50, the “B” theme, or first episode, appears as a tonicization of the secondary dominant key area of E major. With its occasional reminiscences of the “A” theme, the first episode somewhat resembles the development section of a sonata form. However, due to the movement’s subsequent use of themes and key areas, the possibility of classifying it as sonata form becomes remote. Sonatina form would be the next best alternative, except that a genuine version of the “A” theme returns in measure 100. This time, the “A” theme is inverted to appear in the bass clef, with the right hand providing harmonic accompaniment in the treble clef. By measure 146, a version of the “B” theme returns. This time, however, it begins on the dominant (A major), rather than the secondary dominant (E major). In measure 201, the “A” theme makes its last appearance, this time with a fuller texture and a few different harmonies than when it was first introduced at the beginning of the movement. Thus, with its ABABA structure, the movement can be seen to have a five-part rondo form.

Powell’s decision to use this form with his chosen melody is of symbolic significance. As the conclusion of a sonata that operated as sociopolitical propaganda, the five-part rondo movement functioned as a metaphor. The limpid “A” theme was interrupted twice by the more complicated “B” themes. Each time, however, the “A” theme returns stronger than before. The folk-like “A” theme can be interpreted as a symbol of Anglo-Saxon supremacy. Despite the threats of adulteration from the advances of the “B” theme, the pure and simple folk-tune continually asserted its dominance until it triumphed.

Many of Powell’s other compositions were more overt in their propaganda than *Sonata Noble* was. *Sonata Teutonica*, for example, was an almost jingoistic celebration of the Teutonic origins thesis. To ensure that his meaning was not overlooked, Powell, under his “Richard

Brockwell” pseudonym, supplied descriptive program notes for the sonata’s public performances. He wrote, “The word ‘Teutonica’ is used in a broader sense than the merely geographical or racial. It would present the idea of a certain type of mind and character...But in reviewing the historical field of philosophy, statesmanship, science, art, one observes a predominant proportion of this type among those races of Teutonic origin.”⁹⁷ “Brockwell” argued for sociocultural homogeneity by stating:

All-consciousness, the tragic intensity of the struggle towards inner Oneness and harmony, and the resultant triumph through this guiding principle over all inner and outer hindrances in the attainment of the sense of Universal Unity and balance—is it not evident, I say, that these emotions are the deepest, truest, most poignant of all human experiences, and of necessity demand that utterance most adequate to their qualities—i.e., musical expression?⁹⁸

“Brockwell’s” musical analysis of *Sonata Teutonica* is especially revealing, especially when viewed in light of Aleida Assmann’s definition of constructed and politicized memory, which emphasized “homogeneous unity and self-contained closure...in a narrative that is emotionally charged and conveys a clear and invigorating message.”⁹⁹ “Brockwell” stated that the first movement opened with a “Motif of Oneness—an ethereal, yearning, tender theme...” (See fig. 3). “Brockwell” continued by asserting that “The Coda of the movement expresses the

⁹⁷ Richard Brockwell, program notes for John Powell’s piano recital (n.d., c. 1914), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁹⁸ Richard Brockwell, program notes for John Powell’s piano recital (n.d., c. 1914), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁹⁹ Assmann, 43.

attainment of the sense of Oneness, and fades away in ethereal dissonances which give the effect of super-harmonies.”¹⁰⁰

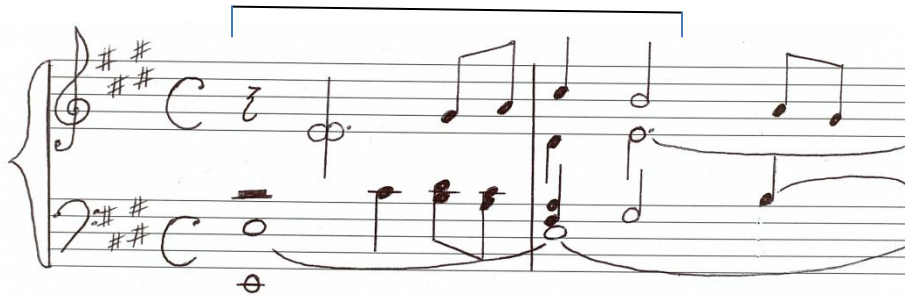


Figure 3. “Motif of Oneness.” John Powell, *Sonata Teutonica*: I. Allegro Molto Sostenuto, mm. 1-2.¹⁰¹

The “Motif of Oneness” would return in the second movement, which Powell composed as a theme and very intricate variations on the German folksong, “O alte Burschenherrlichkeit,” as well as in the final movement.¹⁰² Like the last movement of *Sonate Noble*, the final movement of *Sonata Teutonica* is in rondo form. Although the movement opened with its own unique theme, “Brockwell” identified “the principle climax of the whole work” (that is, the entire sonata), as the “ecstatic announcement of the Motif of Oneness. This fades away, and is followed by a reminiscence of the Folksong.”¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Richard Brockwell, program notes for John Powell’s piano recital (n.d., c. 1914), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁰¹ John Powell, *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24 (Benno Moiseiwitsch score). ca. 1914, Accession #9117, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁰² Richard Brockwell, program notes for John Powell’s piano recital (n.d., c. 1914), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia; and John Powell, *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24, ed. Roy Hamlin Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 16.

¹⁰³ Richard Brockwell, program notes for John Powell’s piano recital (n.d., c. 1914), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

“Brockwell’s” comments could hardly be more convincing. Yet, Powell took one final and intriguing action to communicate the sonata’s meaning even more clearly. According to Roy Hamlin Johnson, Powell’s interpretive program notes included a symbol of four *F*s, arranged in square mirror images of each other, along with the Latin phrase “*in hoc signo vinces!*” (“By this sign you will conquer!”)¹⁰⁴ (See fig. 4). Johnson, who created an abridged edition of *Sonata Teutonica* after Powell’s death, identified the four *F*s as the slogan of the *Deutsche Wiener Turnerschaft*, “one of the many strongly nationalistic organizations in Vienna,” one to which Powell belonged during his stay in Vienna.¹⁰⁵



Figure 4. *Deutsche Wiener Turnerschaft* slogan symbol.¹⁰⁶

Johnson noted that, while the symbol only appeared in the holograph version of Powell’s score, a different copy given to pianist Benno Moiseiwitsch for performance was dedicated to “*Der deutschen Jugend/insbesondere/der Jungmannschaft der D.W.T.*”¹⁰⁷ (“To German youth, especially the comradeship of the D. W. T.”).¹⁰⁸ Johnson identified the “D. W. T.” as the *Deutsche Wiener Turnerschaft*, and suggested that it was linked to Aryan supremacy.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ John Powell, *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24, ed. Roy Hamlin Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 47.

¹⁰⁵ John Powell, *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24, ed. Roy Hamlin Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 47; and Roy Hamlin Johnson, ed., “Preface” in *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24, by John Powell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), v, viii, and ix.

¹⁰⁶ John Powell, *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24, ed. Roy Hamlin Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 47.

¹⁰⁷ Roy Hamlin Johnson, ed., “Preface” in *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24, by John Powell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), v and ix; and John Powell, *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24, ed. Roy Hamlin Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 47.

¹⁰⁸ Roy Hamlin Johnson, ed., “Preface” in *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24, by John Powell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), v and ix, and John Powell, *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24, ed. Roy Hamlin Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 47.

¹⁰⁹ Roy Hamlin Johnson, ed., “Preface” in *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24 by John Powell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), viii.

In contrast to Johnson's conclusions, however, Powell's own writing did not betray specific, pro-Aryan sentiments, although he did continue to make other racial distinctions. Judging from his letters home to his sister, Powell's motives for joining the *Deutsche Wiener Turnerschaft* were remarkably innocuous: he wanted physical exercise. His weariness with Austria's many sociopolitical divisions was evident as he searched for a gymnasium to join. "Austria is composed of 17 different nations all of which hate each other," he explained. "I tried...half a dozen other gyms, but they were all national or political organizations & didn't want me. Only the socialists were kind enough to invite me in, but I couldn't stomach them."¹¹⁰ The physical director at the D.W.T. advised Powell that "the only thing to do was to fake my way in."¹¹¹ Powell did so by emphasizing the Saxon part of his Anglo-Saxon heritage. The equivocation succeeded, but at a cost. "I...felt all the time like a sheep in wolf's clothing. Do you think I am very wicked," he asked his sister.¹¹² Two months later, his guilt still pursued him. "They are so kind and friendly at the gym that I feel like a dog every time I go. But it is not my fault that they don't know who the Anglo-Saxons are."¹¹³

It is difficult to determine just how much, if at all, Powell was involved in any of the nationalistic and political activities in which his gymnasium may have engaged. Powell's persistence in differentiating the Anglo-Saxons from "any other kind of Saxons" demonstrated that his mind actively maintained specific racial classifications. Additionally, he apparently had

¹¹⁰ John Powell to Elizabeth Brockenbrough, February 12, 1906, John Powell Papers, 1895-1940, Accession #7303, Box 1, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

¹¹¹ John Powell to Elizabeth Brockenbrough, February 12, 1906, John Powell Papers, 1895-1940, Accession #7303, Box 1, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

¹¹² John Powell to Elizabeth Brockenbrough, February 12, 1906, John Powell Papers, 1895-1940, Accession #7303, Box 1, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

¹¹³ John Powell to Elizabeth Brockenbrough, March 10, 1906, John Powell Papers, 1895-1940, Accession #7303, Box 1, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

no reservations about joining an organization whose membership (at least officially) was limited to Aryan Germans.¹¹⁴

He also did not hesitate to tie that organization explicitly to his sonata's "Motif of Oneness." In her 1968 thesis, Mary Helen Chapman implied that Powell composed the *Sonata Teutonica* as a token of friendship and solidarity with the Aryans with whom he was trying to gain acceptance.¹¹⁵ Ultimately, the *Sonata Teutonica*'s political overtones, especially in the wake of World War I, were so powerful that Powell's publisher in the United States, G. Schirmer, Inc., declined to publish the work.¹¹⁶ To this day, the original version of the *Sonata Teutonica* has remained unpublished.

Powell intensified his musical propaganda as the years progressed. In 1918, he composed what would become one of his most famous works, *Rhapsodie Nègre*, op. 27, for piano and orchestra.¹¹⁷ Although in program notes based on "Richard Brockwell's" comments Donald Frances Tovey stated that "The 'Rhapsodie Nègre' is music, not political propaganda..." all other evidence indicates the contrary.¹¹⁸

Although it was not uncommon for Powell to be identified as a composer of "Negro music," he rejected that label entirely.¹¹⁹ A 1930 article for the *Musical Courier* described

¹¹⁴ John Powell Elizabeth Brockenbrough, February 12, 1906 and March 10, 1906, John Powell Papers, 1895-1940, Accession #7303, Box 1, Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.

¹¹⁵ Chapman, 17.

¹¹⁶ G. Schirmer, Inc. to John Powell, November 14, 1924, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 4, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹¹⁷ Ward, 250.

¹¹⁸ Donald Frances Tovey, "Notes by D. F. T.", program notes for Reid Symphony Orchestra performance, (Edinburgh, Scotland: Usher Hall, November 29, 1928), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹¹⁹ John Tasker Howard, *Our American Music: a Comprehensive History from 1620 to the Present*, 4th ed. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1965), 405; and Joseph Wagner, program notes for Boston Civic Symphony Orchestra concert, March 20, 1941, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Powell's approach by stating, "To write about the Negro, he says, one must know about the Negro; to paint him in tone pictures one must paint him as he is, or, rather, not as he is but as he was, as he racially was, and as he might be if he were free to develop upon his own roots, free from white cultural influence."¹²⁰ Powell used *Rhapsodie Nègre* much in the same way that he wielded "The Banjo-Picker," by denying and denigrating African-American heritage while endorsing the Anglo-Saxon cultural standard. "'There is no real American Negro music,'" read a statement Powell gave in his 1932-1933 season publicity materials.¹²¹ "'What we consider Negro music today is not native to the Negro, but is invariably our own music which the Negro has adapted.'"¹²²

"Richard Brockwell's" program notes for a performance of *Rhapsodie Nègre* with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra illustrated this opinion in ruthless detail. "Brockwell" wrote, "the Negro not merely occupies a subordinate position in the political and social organization of our country, but is *au fond*, in spite of the surface polish and restraints imposed by close contact with Caucasian civilization, a genuine primitive."¹²³ Using descriptions such as "wild," "terror-stricken," "cannibalistic," "panting," "uncouth," "frenetic," "barbarous," "maniac licentiousness," and "primal sensuality," "Brockwell" demonstrated how Powell contrasted the most negative

¹²⁰ "John Powell, Noted Pianist-Composer, Gives Views on Negro Music, Its Use and Abuse," *Musical Courier*, (May 3, 1930): 8, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹²¹ "John Powell Talks on Negro Music," in "Press Material on John Powell," NBC Artists Service (1932-1933 season), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 27, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹²² "John Powell Talks on Negro Music," in "Press Material on John Powell," NBC Artists Service (1932-1933 season), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 27, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹²³ Richard Brockwell, program notes for Detroit Symphony Orchestra performance of *Rhapsodie Nègre*, (Detroit: 1918-1919 season), 152, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

image of blacks with the implied standard of Anglo-Saxon superiority.¹²⁴ Even on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, Donald Frances Tovey saw Powell's sociopolitical agenda clearly in the music. In 1928 program notes drawn from "Brockwell's" insights, Tovey wrote, "Mr. Powell has the profoundest sympathy for the negro as artist and as human being. But profound sympathy is very different from the facile sentimentality that refuses to recognise the dangers that threaten two races of widely different stages of evolution that try to live together."¹²⁵

Powell explained that the "pessimistic mood of my Negro Rhapsody is no more than recognition of the gloomy outlook for the Negro's racial development in a white country."¹²⁶ Powell believed that "the Negro's racial development" could be improved by deporting all African-Americans to Liberia.¹²⁷ To that end, in the pinnacle of irony, the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America formed a relationship with Marcus Garvey, the black leader of the Universal Negro Improvement Association.¹²⁸

Claudrena N. Harold, author of *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918-1942*, explained that "some outsiders looked with confusion at the alliance between Virginian Garveyites and the ASCOA [Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America]; however, black and white separatists were alike in several ways. Obsessed with the issue of miscegenation, black

¹²⁴ Richard Brockwell, program notes for Detroit Symphony Orchestra performance of *Rhapsodie Nègre*, (Detroit: 1918-1919 season), 152-154, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹²⁵ Donald Frances Tovey, "Notes by D. F. T.", program notes for Reid Symphony Orchestra performance, (Edinburgh, Scotland: Usher Hall, November 29, 1928), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹²⁶ "John Powell, Noted Pianist-Composer, Gives Views on Negro Music, Its Use and Abuse," *Musical Courier*, (May 3, 1930): 8, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹²⁷ "John Powell, Noted Pianist-Composer, Gives Views on Negro Music, Its Use and Abuse," *Musical Courier*, (May 3, 1930): 8, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹²⁸ *Encyclopedia Virginia*, s.v. "Earnest Sevier Cox (1880-1966)," http://www.encyclopediavirginia.org/Cox_Earnest_Sevier_1880-1966 (accessed March 3, 2012).

nationalists and white supremacists tended to openly advocate racial purity...¹²⁹ W. E. B. du Bois, in his essay entitled, “Marcus Garvey,” criticized the alliance. In his opinion, the association between the two groups signaled Garvey’s descent “from progressive and healthy nationalism toward self-centered and reactionary nationalism” and a “Napoleonic complex.”¹³⁰

In a statement telegraphed to the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, Garvey stated, “I believe in a White America for white men and a black Africa for black men.” He would later assert, “I unhesitatingly endorse the race purity idea of Mr. Powell and his organization, and I have pledged my moral support to their program in that direction, expecting of the honorable and honest of his race the same regard and support of ours.”¹³¹ The relationship between the two organizations remained even after Garvey was found guilty of running a mail scam to sell worthless stock to African-Americans. He was sentenced to serve a three and a half year prison term before being deported to his native Jamaica.¹³² Although Powell’s relationship with Garvey eventually waned, his enthusiasm for racial integrity did not.¹³³

Three years after Powell composed *Rhapsodie Nègre*, he completed *In Old Virginia*, op. 28.¹³⁴ He wrote the symphonic overture on commission from the Norfolk Festival of Connecticut; and, by way of dedication, used the work to celebrate the University of Virginia’s

¹²⁹ Claudrena N. Harold, *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918-1942* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 102.

¹³⁰ W. E. B. du Bois, “Marcus Garvey,” in *Marcus Garvey and the Vision of Africa*, ed. John Henrik Clarke (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 232-235.

¹³¹ Marcus Garvey, “The Ideals of Two Races” (New York, November 7, 1925), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹³² “Garvey Goes South Today to Serve Term: Will Be Out of Atlanta in 3 ½ Years if His Record Is Good” (February 1925), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia; and Colin Grant, *Negro With a Hat: the Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 402.

¹³³ “John Powell, Noted Pianist-Composer, Gives Views on Negro Music, Its Use and Abuse,” *Musical Courier*, (May 3, 1930): 8, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹³⁴ Ward, 259.

centennial.¹³⁵ The overture debuted in Connecticut in 1921, and was used again in 1922 for the Virginia Historical Pageant in Richmond, Virginia, where it was performed daily for the entire week.¹³⁶ Once again, Powell knit his sociopolitical agenda together with his music.

The first indication of Powell's sociopolitical campaign can be found in the overture's title. *In Old Virginia* immediately pointed to Powell's desire to return to a nostalgic version of the past. In describing the work, Powell stated, "I have tried to convey an impression of the spirit of the South just prior to the Civil War. A South unaffected, simple, chivalrous and romantic, trembling on the verge of cataclysm but keeping up its heart and dancing gayly [*sic*] toward the approaching disaster in the traditional aristocratic manner."¹³⁷ In this version of the South, Anglo-Saxon supremacy in the social hierarchy was guaranteed.

When viewed in conjunction with the Virginia Historical Pageant, the sociopolitical meaning of *In Old Virginia* becomes even clearer. The pageant used Powell's overture to conclude each day's festivities, which bore heavy traces of the Lost Cause mentality. Like Powell, the pageant's program manufactured a history of the Commonwealth that reinforced the quest for Anglo-Saxon dominance. According to the pageant's version of the past, Virginia originated with white settlers in Jamestown. Although Virginia Indians appeared in the story (alternating between barbarity and benevolence), nowhere was there any mention of black people. Just as Powell had usurped the African-American cultural heritage for Anglo-Saxon

¹³⁵ Bagley, 24.

¹³⁶ Ward, 259; and Virginia Historical Pageant program, (Richmond, Virginia: May 22-28, 1922), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹³⁷ James P. Dunn, program notes for Manhattan Symphony Orchestra (Mecca Auditorium, January 11, 1931), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

purposes, the Virginia Historical Pageant had advanced white supremacy by rendering black Virginians non-existent.¹³⁸

A similar and more famous example of Powell's attempts to perpetuate a strict Anglo-Saxon culture and history can be found through his involvement in Virginia's White Top Folk Festivals. Beginning in 1931 and continuing through 1941, he collaborated with fellow Virginian musician and ethnologist Annabel Morris Buchanan, and Virginian attorney John A. Blakemore (Buchanan's cousin by marriage), to establish the White Top Folk Festival in the mountains of Virginia.¹³⁹ David E. Whisnant, author of *All That Is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region*, observed that the White Top Folk Festival was part of a larger, nationwide movement of preserving American folk culture through public festival performances.¹⁴⁰ Whisnant sensed an undercurrent of fear in the origins of the festival movement. The fear of being annihilated by change drove Powell and his contemporaries to crusade for the past. "Something had to be done, obviously," wrote Whisnant, "if 'pure' tradition was not to be swept aside. Traditional musicians needed to be reinforced in their presumed struggle to hold on to their culture in the face of both the pressures of modernization and the blandishments of radio and recording companies."¹⁴¹

The pursuit for musical purity through the White Top Folk Festival was, in truth, a pursuit of Anglo-Saxon supremacy.¹⁴² Like the rest of Powell's sociopolitical aims, the White Top Folk Festival's premise was to maintain the purity of an idyllic—and imaginary—past. That

¹³⁸ Virginia Historical Pageant program (Richmond, Virginia: May 22-28, 1922), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹³⁹ David E. Whisnant, *All that is Native & Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 187-219; and Ward, 96-97.

¹⁴⁰ Whisnant, 185.

¹⁴¹ Whisnant, 184-185.

¹⁴² Whisnant, 242.

the untainted, Anglo-Saxon past had never existed did not deter the festival's organizers. To the contrary, they convinced themselves so completely of its legitimacy that they used the festival to incarnate a version of history that had never experienced life in the first place. Whisnant noted, for example, that the festival included performances of dances that "had not been in evidence in the United States for three centuries, if ever, and had certainly never been recovered from tradition in the southern mountains."¹⁴³

The criteria for performing in the festival appeared straightforward: "The Festival is given by the folk; the only requirements being that contributions must be traditional, of real musical or literary worth, learned and presented in traditional manner."¹⁴⁴ However, the simple rules proved far more complex than they appeared. Who, for example, were "the folk," and who was to decide? Likewise, what constituted "real musical or literary worth" and a "traditional manner"? The organizers' answers to those questions quickly revealed the festival's sociopolitical overtones.

Powell and, to a lesser extent, Buchanan, pursued an Anglo-Saxon supremacist agenda through their interpretation of the festival rules. Since the definition of American identity was in question, the stakes necessary for propaganda were consequentially high. Accordingly, Powell decided that "the folk" consisted entirely of white people.¹⁴⁵ Buchanan and Powell concurred that "real musical or literary worth" and a "traditional manner" would include only those works that supported the dignity of the illusory Anglo-Saxon heritage.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Whisnant, 200-201.

¹⁴⁴ "White Top Folk Festival" Program (White Top Mountain, Virginia: August 15-17, 1940), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁴⁵ Whisnant, 236.

¹⁴⁶ Whisnant, 228-229.

The program for the 1940 festival stated: “Mr. Powell says that the folk songs uncovered in North America and England demonstrate that the Anglo-Saxon race has a musical heritage as rich as that of any other race.”¹⁴⁷ While it was true that some of these songs were discovered through the Appalachian oral tradition, they were not always accurate reflections of the people’s supposedly-pure Anglo-Saxon roots. David Whisnant’s research revealed that while the “simple people” willingly sailed the modern cultural tide, Powell was fighting desperately to get them to weigh anchor.¹⁴⁸ Many of “the folk” had gladly incorporated modern trends, including jazz music, into their cultural practice. When they presented these hybrid traditions to Powell and Buchanan for inclusion in the festival, however, their offerings were rejected as inauthentic.¹⁴⁹ As a result, Anglo-Saxon propaganda became the dominant force in shaping festival participation. People who wished to perform had to adhere to the definition of authenticity that Powell and Buchanan set forth as the Anglo-Saxon ideal. One performer, for example, “learned ballads for White Top, but never sang them otherwise.”¹⁵⁰ Others received special instruction in order to make their traditional music conform to the Anglo-Saxon tradition that Powell and Buchanan envisioned.¹⁵¹ Thus, rather than being an accurate representation of folk culture, the White Top Folk Festival was another engine in Powell’s Anglo-Saxon supremacist propaganda machine.

Powell’s propagandizing did not cease as he aged. In 1947 he debuted his first symphony, the *Symphony in A major*. Also known as the “Folk Symphony” or the “Virginia

¹⁴⁷ “White Top Folk Festival” Program (White Top Mountain, Virginia: August 15-17, 1940), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁴⁸ Whisnant, 206-207; and “White Top Folk Festival” Program (White Top Mountain, Virginia: August 15-17, 1940), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁴⁹ Whisnant, 206-207.

¹⁵⁰ Whisnant, 207.

¹⁵¹ Whisnant, 231-233.

Symphony”, the work was commissioned in 1932 by the National Federation of Music Clubs with the express purpose of highlighting Anglo-Saxon folk music.¹⁵² Powell fulfilled that purpose remarkably well. In a summary of the work, Ronald David Ward stated that “the overall scheme of the *Symphony* was to present the spiritual essence of the main Anglo-American folk music genres. The first movement is based on the country dance, the second on the folk song, the third on the ballad, the fourth movement expressing the spirit of the Morris and Sword dances.”¹⁵³ Ward attributed the symphony’s delayed release to the challenges Powell faced in composing a symphonic work on modal harmonies, as well as to Powell’s already-busy professional schedule at the time.¹⁵⁴

As an article in the *Virginian-Pilot* stated, John Powell was “sure that music can do more than any other art to build up a national consciousness and national loyalty.”¹⁵⁵ Powell devoted his life to asserting Anglo-Saxon supremacy as the national identity for America. As he stated in an undated interview, “Do I think that negro music will serve as a basis for an American school of composition? No. I do not think so, for the same reason that I think Indian music cannot be so used. Why? Because neither is American. The whole civilization of the United States is European.”¹⁵⁶ Through his blend of musical politics, Powell imagined a past from which he drew memories that bolstered his sociopolitical agenda. In the midst of the sociopolitical upheaval that surrounded him, Powell marshaled all of his talents to seek stability and a national identity in a past that had never existed.

¹⁵² Ward, 273; and Edmunds, 370.

¹⁵³ Ward, 274.

¹⁵⁴ Ward, 273.

¹⁵⁵ “National Art Depends Upon Real Americans,” *Virginian-Pilot*, n.d., Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁵⁶ “With Artist and Musician,” n.d., Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Chapter 2

A nationalist music must generate nationalist imagery, mood, memories, slogans, and overt responses. If it does none of these things, it is not effective, and its message has failed to arrive.

—Arnold Perris, *Music as Propaganda: Art to Persuade, Art to Control*¹⁵⁷

It is clear that John Powell used music as propaganda to craft an identity of Anglo-Saxon supremacy for the American nation. Propaganda is futile, however, unless those to whom it is directed receive and accept it. Thus, an exploration of the ways in which Powell's contemporaries and others perceived him and his work is vital to an understanding of his sociopolitical effectiveness and the subsequent handling of his legacy.

Powell first emerged on the public scene with his European debut during the 1907-1908 concert season.¹⁵⁸ He continued to perform in Europe until the outbreak of World War I necessitated a return to the United States.¹⁵⁹ During the years of his European tour, he was almost universally celebrated as one of the outstanding piano virtuosos of his day. One reviewer hailed Powell as “a pianist of exceptional technical ability and intelligence.”¹⁶⁰ A review from London's *Globe* stated: “About his merits as an interpreter there can be no two opinions. His

¹⁵⁷ Arnold Perris, *Music as Propaganda: Art to Persuade, Art to Control* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985), 43.

¹⁵⁸ Ronald David Ward, “The Life and Works of John Powell (1882-1963)” (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 1973), 29-32.

¹⁵⁹ Ward, 32.

¹⁶⁰ Music Review, *The Athenaeum*, November 29, 1913, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

technique is ample, his tone full and varied, and his touch singularly sympathetic.”¹⁶¹ The *Pall Mall Gazette*’s music reviewer observed that “this clever young American pianist continues to make advances in his art. One has always been able to praise his playing for the many evidences of individuality, of impulse, and musical feeling...He hits hard, aims at the most spacious style of performance, and nearly always succeeds remarkably well.”¹⁶² The *Musical Standard*’s critic praised Powell by writing: “On his ability as a pianist there is no need to dwell, since he is so well known: one can only say that in the last two or three years he has gained in power and understanding, and may be reckoned one of our few really great pianists of the day.”¹⁶³

After garnering sufficient critical acclaim in Europe to secure his professional career, Powell made his concert debut in the United States in 1913 at New York’s Carnegie Hall.¹⁶⁴ His success in the United States rivaled the praise that he had earned in Europe. Ronald David Ward stated that “Powell’s reputation steadily grew until he enjoyed the stature of being one of America’s first-rate pianists with a national reputation.”¹⁶⁵

Although his debut recital in 1907 did not include any of his own compositions on the program, it was not long before Powell began incorporating his own works into his public

¹⁶¹ “Two Pianists,” *The Globe*, June 6, 1914, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁶² “Mr. John Powell: Last Night’s Recital at Aeolian Hall,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, November 26, 1912, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁶³ “John Powell: Aeolian Hall,” *Musical Standard*, December 6, 1912, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁶⁴ Linda R. Walker, “Views of John Powell and His Composing Style” (master’s thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1980), 14.

¹⁶⁵ Ward, 49.

appearances worldwide.¹⁶⁶ He introduced English audiences to his *At the Fair: Sketches in American Fun* piano suite in 1908.¹⁶⁷

This initial foray into the dissemination of musical propaganda highlighted a peculiar obstacle for Powell, since it required him to grapple with the complexities of semiotics. It became apparent that in the absence of American cultural referents, the potency of Powell's musical propaganda suffered. "Mr. Powell has drawn several sketches of the side-shows of a typical Yankee fair," wrote one British reviewer in 1908, "many of which, if a description had not been provided on the programme, would by their titles have conveyed nothing to English minds."¹⁶⁸

In "Music and memory in Mozart's *Zauberflöte*," Jan Assmann noted that "Music draws on two different forms of memory...We may call the first form 'extratextual' memory, because it refers to elements outside the musical text itself, and the second form 'intratextual' memory, since the elements referred to belong to what the listener has already heard within the same piece some minutes ago."¹⁶⁹ Assmann continued: "Music knows only one temporal level corresponding to the time of narration. It cannot 'refer' to the past in the way a text and a film can, but it can refer to the past in two ways: it can create its own past to which it can refer in the

¹⁶⁶ Ward, 30; and "Yesterday's Concerts," *The Globe*, November 17, 1908, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁶⁷ "Unconventional Music," *Daily Chronicle*, November 17, 1908; and "At the Fair: American Pianist's New Suite," *Evening Standard*, November 17, 1908, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁶⁸ "At the Fair: American Pianist's New Suite," *Evening Standard*, November 17, 1908, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁶⁹ Jan Assmann, "Music and memory in Mozart's *Zauberflöte*," in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, ed. Karin Tilman, Frank van Vree, and Jay Winter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 187-188.

course of its temporal progression, and it also can refer to music of the past.”¹⁷⁰ In Powell’s case, the situation was even more intricate. Not only were his citations of the “music of the past” unfamiliar to his non-American listeners, but the past to which they referred was a fictitious one that Powell himself was constructing and perpetuating to support his case for Anglo-Saxon supremacy. Thus, to communicate his message to audiences, Powell had to employ a version of thick description in order to provide sufficient context to make his symbols—however fabricated—meaningful to non-Americans.

Cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz explained thick description in his book, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. He wrote, “In finished anthropological writings...this fact—that what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people’s constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to—is obscured because most of what we need to comprehend a particular event, ritual, custom, idea, or whatever is insinuated as background information before the thing itself is directly examined.”¹⁷¹ Despite its apparent complexity and inherent risk of mixed signals, Powell’s use of thick description actually provided a wider platform for his propaganda. The subjectivity of contextualization (“other people’s constructions”), especially in the presence of an audience that was foreign to that context (“our own constructions”), gave Powell absolute control over his message. That control granted Powell the opportunity to solidify his dogma into a clear and powerful statement—“insinuated...background information”—that he would use for the rest of his life. According to Aleida Assmann, author of

¹⁷⁰ Jan Assmann, “Music and memory in Mozart’s *Zauberflöte*,” in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, ed. Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree, and Jay Winter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 189.

¹⁷¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: BasicBooks, 1973), 9.

“Re-framing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past,” such clarity and strength is vital to the creation of political memory.¹⁷²

Once Powell had surmounted the initial challenge of making his musical meanings accessible to his audience, his listeners began hearing more of the message. “The compiler of the programme,” wrote one reviewer, “frankly admits that the subject of one of the movements, ‘The Hoochee-Coochee Dance,’ is taboo in polite society. Comment, therefore, is out of place here.”¹⁷³ Another reviewer stated, “The pianist’s six ‘Sketches of American Fun,’ called ‘At the Fair,’ are capital drollery, rollicking humoresques, sly, boisterous, savage, mysterious, but full of an unmistakably indigenous flavor.”¹⁷⁴ Although most British critics gave Powell’s compositional abilities a tepid reception, they were almost unanimous in accepting the idea that Powell’s work presented authentic musical portraits of America.¹⁷⁵

The propaganda continued as Powell added new compositions to his performance repertoire. *Sonata Virginianesque*, op. 7, for violin and piano, appeared on a program sponsored by the Fresh Air Art Society (a society which Powell helped to found while he was in Britain).¹⁷⁶ Powell performed with violinist Daisy Kennedy. While it is unknown whether program notes or comments existed for the performance, and, if so, whether Powell himself supplied them, the music critic’s response was surprising. Using derogatory language to refer to the African-

¹⁷² Aleida Assmann, “Re-framing memory. Between individual and collective forms of constructing the past,” in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, ed. Karin Tilmans, Frank van Vree, and Jay Winter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 43.

¹⁷³ “A New Suite,” *The Standard*, November 17, 1908, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁷⁴ H. F. P., “John Powell Wins a Double Triumph,” n.d., Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁷⁵ “Yesterday’s Concerts,” *The Globe*, November 17, 1908; “Aeolian Hall,” *Daily Telegraph*, November 17, 1908; “At the Fair: American Pianist’s New Suite,” *Evening Standard*, November 17, 1908; and “A New Suite,” *The Standard*, November 17, 1908, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁷⁶ Ward, 39; and “Mr. Powell’s New Sonata,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Americans whose tunes Powell incorporated into the sonata, the critic praised the work as a “delightful” taste of “Ole Virginny.”¹⁷⁷ Most startling was the reviewer’s statement that the sonata’s *Virginianesque* title fully implied its content. Unfortunately, the music critic offered no further explanation of the logic behind such an associative leap.¹⁷⁸ Nevertheless, that the reviewer accepted the sonata as a symbolic synthesis of Virginia with white supremacy indicated that Powell was succeeding in his propaganda goal.

Not all of Powell’s early works were as successful in communicating his message to audiences overseas as *Sonata Virginianesque* and *At the Fair* were. *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24, was an example of one of Powell’s abysmal failures. The problem rested not with a shortage of Powell’s thick description, (which was abundant), but in the music’s inability to provide intratextual and extratextual memory to its hearers. Hapless British listeners discovered that the sonata was mercilessly long—it required over an hour to perform—and bewilderingly dense.¹⁷⁹ These two factors made it nearly impossible for audiences to establish extratextual and intratextual memory.

Typically, listeners would develop intratextual memory by recognizing a piece’s main musical ideas and following the incarnations of those ideas throughout the performance. However, despite Powell’s use of what he termed a “Motif of Oneness”¹⁸⁰ throughout the sonata,

¹⁷⁷ “Mr. Powell’s New Sonata,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁷⁸ “Mr. Powell’s New Sonata,” *Pall Mall Gazette*, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁷⁹ “Mr. John Powell,” *The Observer*, June 7, 1914; “Two Pianists,” *The Globe*, June 6, 1914; “A Composer at the Piano,” *Times*, June 4, 1914; and “Concert Platform: American Pianist at Aeolian Hall,” *The Evening Standard*, June 6, 1914, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁸⁰ Richard Brockwell, program notes for John Powell’s piano recital (n.d., c. 1914), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

listeners found the music leaning toward incoherence. They could not slice through the sonata's length and complexities to decipher the basic themes that would assist their intratextual memory.

Furthermore, because the narrative basis of Powell's sonata was ultimately one of his own invention, (complete with references to the Teutonic origins thesis, Aryan supremacy, and "Universal Unity"¹⁸¹), his listeners had insufficient cultural and historical referents to guide them on their aural journey. This vacuum precluded audiences from developing extratextual memory. Not only was the material within Powell's sonata incoherent, but it did not make reference to anything outside itself that would kindle familiarity for listeners. *The Evening Standard's* music critic explained the problem best when he wrote, "The music for the most part is sound and fury, signifying nothing."¹⁸² This time, Powell's Anglo-Saxon supremacist propaganda had missed its mark. (Incidentally, he rarely included the *Sonata Teutonica* on his recital programs in the ensuing years.)

It was in the United States that Powell's musical propaganda struck with far greater accuracy and precision. American concertgoers already possessed familiarity with the cultural and sociopolitical contexts that Powell sought to manipulate. While this familiarity increased the likelihood that Powell's message would be understood, it left his argument little room for error. Since Powell was attempting to define America as an exclusively Anglo-Saxon nation, he had to persuade Americans that his definition was the only right one.

¹⁸¹ Richard Brockwell, program notes for John Powell's piano recital (n.d., c. 1914), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁸² "Concert Platform: American Pianist at Aeolian Hall," *The Evening Standard*, June 6, 1914, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

If critics' reviews are any indication, many in Powell's American audiences were obligingly cooperative. For example, after hearing Powell's performance of *Sonata Noble* to a sold-out audience in Wilmington, Delaware, a reviewer stated that "Mr. Powell has the directness of a real man with a vital message...The first half of the program was devoted to music of this simple, melodious olden style. The quiet beauty of it was restful to nerves rasped by the jazz ragtime horrors of modern so-called music."¹⁸³ The reviewer had digested Powell's subtle message. With elements from a variety of social classes, races, cultures, and traditions, the genres of jazz and ragtime were veritable cocktails of diversity.¹⁸⁴ As such, they were the antitheses of racial purity and a direct challenge to Powell's mission to identify the United States as an exclusively Anglo-Saxon nation. The music critic obviously recognized the sociopolitical message that Powell was communicating through music. Similarly, in program notes for pianist Jeanne Behrend's 1939 recital series at the Curtis Institute of Music, Alexander Kelberine wrote that the *Sonata Noble* was a work of "true American optimism...The theme of the 2nd movement is reminiscent of the old hymn-tunes which figured so prominently at the beginning of the white man's music history in America."¹⁸⁵

The debut of *Rhapsodie Nègre* in 1918 increased the momentum behind Powell's propaganda immensely. Not only did the wildly popular composition for piano and orchestra carry a heavy sociopolitical charge in the United States, but its success in Europe went far in establishing a national pride in American cultural achievements.¹⁸⁶ Music critic Lawrence

¹⁸³ "John Powell Recital a Musical Treat," March 20, 1919, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁸⁴ Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca, eds., *A History of Western Music*, 6th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 749-750, 775.

¹⁸⁵ Alexander Kelberine, program notes for Jeanne Behrend's piano recitals, February 15, 22, and March 1, 1939 (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Casimir Hall, Curtis Institute of Music), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁸⁶ Ward, 51-52.

Gilman wrote, “Again we were reminded that this score is one of the not too many American compositions that stand squarely and securely on their own feet. Even in Europe the piece has been recognized as ponderable music...it is amusing to have Europe follow our lead in respect of an American work.”¹⁸⁷ Gilman continued by stating that the *Rhapsodie Nègre* was possibly “the most searching and veracious of American compositions dealing creatively with negroid material.”¹⁸⁸ Powell, under his pseudonym “Richard Brockwell,” ensured that his propaganda message reached the public through detailed program notes. In one very notable case, *The Detroit News* ran an article announcing the inclusion of Powell’s work on the Detroit Symphony Orchestra’s all-American program for the 1918-1919 season. Alongside that announcement was an article by “Richard Brockwell” headlined, “Mr. Powell’s Rhapsody a Study of Negro Race.”¹⁸⁹

Likewise, Powell’s listeners were quick to hear the sociopolitical message of *In Old Virginia*. After a sold-out concert that featured the New York Symphony Orchestra performing the symphonic overture, a music critic from New York’s *Evening Post* called the work “strikingly effective,” and commented, “No other work from Mr. Powell’s pen shows his ripe musicianship to greater advantage.”¹⁹⁰ A critic from New York’s *Times* wrote that “It is a proud,

¹⁸⁷ “A Notable American Work Played by John Powell and Chalmers Clifton,” *New York Herald*, January 29, 1929, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁸⁸ Lawrence Gilman, “A Notable American Work Played by John Powell and Chalmers Clifton,” *New York Herald*, January 29, 1929, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁸⁹ “Works by Mrs. Beach, John Powell and MacDowell on Gabrilowitsch’s Program of American Compositions,” and “Mr. Powell’s Rhapsody a Study of Negro Race,” *The Detroit News*, December 22, 1918, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁹⁰ “John Powell and Others,” *Evening Post*, December 5, 1921, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

impulsive, gallant people that the young Virginian has pictured...”¹⁹¹ The *Sun*’s reviewer noted, “It is not Virginia of to-day that Mr. Powell has tried to express, nor indeed does he want to hang his overture in the gallery of tone pictures...The thematic material is made up of two old negro songs, an old Scotch tune, and ‘Dixie Land.’ These mix into a refreshing julep, prepared with a native and enthusiastic hand.”¹⁹² The reviewer noted that listeners’ familiarity with the tunes made the music even more accessible.¹⁹³ All three critics in their reviews cited Powell’s program notes, which interpreted the South from a nostalgic, Anglo-Saxon-supremacist perspective.¹⁹⁴

Audience understanding of Powell’s musical propaganda did not evaporate with each concert’s end. To the contrary, enough people accepted his message to allow for the perpetuation of his music in concert halls throughout the United States. *Rhapsodie Nègre*, for example, was performed publicly over fifty times between its inception in 1918 and 1929.¹⁹⁵ The Detroit Symphony Orchestra, for instance, programmed the work for the 1918-1919 concert season.¹⁹⁶ By 1921, the orchestra was performing *Rhapsodie Nègre* again “by request.”¹⁹⁷ The

¹⁹¹ “Southern Airs Heard,” *Times*, December 5, 1921, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁹² “In Old Virginia,” *Sun*, December 5, 1921, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁹³ “In Old Virginia,” *Sun*, December 5, 1921, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁹⁴ “John Powell and Others,” *Evening Post*, December 5, 1921; and “In Old Virginia,” *Sun*, December 5, 1921, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁹⁵ Lawrence Gilman, program notes, “Concert of Music By American Composers,” given by the Academy/National Institute of Arts and Letters and New York Philharmonic Orchestra (New York: Carnegie Hall, April 24, 1929), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁹⁶ Detroit Symphony Orchestra concert program, December 26 and 28, 1918, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁹⁷ Detroit Symphony Orchestra concert program, December 29-30, 1921, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Symphony performed the piece on two separate nights each season.¹⁹⁸ To a lesser but still noteworthy extent, *At the Fair*, (especially “The Banjo-Picker”), *Natchez-on-the-Hill*, and selected folksong settings, (including “Pretty Sally” and “Green Willow”), also remained popular with listeners and performers alike.¹⁹⁹

Another indication of Powell’s sociopolitical success lay in the popularity of his White Top Mountain Folk Festival. Begun in 1931, the White Top Mountain Folk Festival gained national recognition less than two years later when First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt expressed interest in the event.²⁰⁰ Mrs. Roosevelt’s attendance at the 1933 festival marked the beginning of her support of Powell’s ethnomusicological work. Less than a year after her visit to White Top, Eleanor Roosevelt agreed to a guest appearance on a new folk-oriented radio program that John Powell was launching in cooperation with the National Broadcasting Corporation.²⁰¹ Also, as Pocahontas Wight Edmunds noted in *Virginians Out Front*, “Mrs. Roosevelt invited the Powells’ troubadour-like troupe to perform at the White House.”²⁰²

Other activities in addition to the White Top Mountain Folk Festival gave Powell more opportunity to advance his sociopolitical agenda. During the Great Depression, he joined the National Advisory Committee of the Works Progress Administration’s Federal Music Project,

¹⁹⁸ Detroit Symphony Orchestra concert programs, December 26 and 28, 1918, and December 29-3, 1921, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box #34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

¹⁹⁹ Programs, 1900-1950, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁰⁰ David E. Whisnant, *All That Is Native and Fine: the Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 191.

²⁰¹ National Broadcasting Company, press release, “Mrs. Roosevelt starts Powell Folk Series,” (New York: January 31, 1934), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 27, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁰² Pocahontas Wight Edmunds, *Virginians Out Front* (Richmond, Virginia: Whittet & Shepperson, 1972), 364.

which Nikolai Sokoloff directed.²⁰³ An early draft of a letter from Powell to Annabel Morris Buchanan revealed that Powell entertained the hope of using his influence to promote Anglo-Saxon folk music as a primary emphasis of the Federal Music Project.²⁰⁴ Additionally, Powell was on the advisory board of the Stephen Foster Memorial Foundation, a society dedicated to preserving the memory of America's famous songwriter.²⁰⁵ Powell also campaigned for his sociopolitical aims through his involvement in the Virginia State Choral Festival and the Virginia State Music Festival.²⁰⁶ The *Richmond News Leader's* account of the 1932 Virginia State Choral Festival, for example, stated, "Yesterday's programs of the Virginia Choral Festival brought forth the main purpose of the organization, in the furtherance of the cult of Anglo-Saxon folk music, both for itself and as the basis of a school of composition based upon the model form of writing inherent in this traditional music of the people which is a rich musical heritage."²⁰⁷

The ways in which people viewed and remembered John Powell are also good indications of their acceptance of his message. During his lifetime Powell enjoyed international acclaim as a concert pianist, composer, and ethnomusicologist. While some (mostly African-American) people disparaged his sociopolitical stance, many others lauded, or at least acquiesced to, his attempts to define the United States as an exclusively Anglo-Saxon nation. In 1908, for example, a British music critic described Powell as "a serious artist with a keen sense of

²⁰³ Nikolai Sokoloff to John Powell, September 28, 1935, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 11, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁰⁴ John Powell, draft of letter to Annabel Morris Buchanan, n.d. (c. 1936), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 12, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia. For more information on Annabel Morris Buchanan, see *The Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, vol. 2, (Richmond, Virginia: Library of Virginia, 2001), s.v. "Buchanan, Annabel Morris."

²⁰⁵ Stephen Foster Memorial Foundation to John Powell, June 9, 1936, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 12, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁰⁶ Ward, 124-126; and Virginia State Choral Festival program, (Richmond, Virginia: April 25-30, 1932), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁰⁷ "Choral Festival's Purpose Is Brought Out in Program," *Richmond News Leader*, April 30, 1932, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

humour.”²⁰⁸ Another reviewer wrote, “Doubtless his Celtic ancestry gave his work the touch of enthusiasm which helped him to the no small measure of distinction which he has gained since making England his home.”²⁰⁹ By 1914, Powell was identified as “that clever and popular American pianist.”²¹⁰ Even from these few comments, it is clear that Powell was gaining a reputation as an accomplished Anglo-Saxon American pianist.

Following his debut in the United States, Americans added a new facet to Powell’s reputation by trumpeting his abilities as a composer and publicizing his work as an Anglo-Saxon supremacist. A 1927 article from the *Richmond* magazine offered an excellent summary of the ways in which Americans viewed Powell. “He is one of the few great contemporary pianists,” it stated, “a composer of originality and charm, a persuasive protagonist in controversial sociology and a lecturer of rare erudition.”²¹¹

Powell’s “controversial sociology” received the greatest opposition from people who could not claim an Anglo-Saxon heritage. Even this opposition, however, was bound up in complexity. J. A. Rogers, a journalist for the African-American *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, interviewed Powell and

found him and his co-worker, Ernest [*sic*] Sevier Cox, to be very fine gentlemen indeed. Powell is earnest, sympathetic, and very kindly; Cox is jovial, mild-mannered, and quite likeable...Powell, particularly, strikes me as sincere. But who knows but that the Devil is

²⁰⁸ “At the Fair,” music review, *Evening Standard*, November 17, 1908, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁰⁹ “Mr. John Powell,” music review, *Morning Post*, n.d. (c. November, 1912). Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²¹⁰ “Musical Opinion,” July, 1914, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²¹¹ Mrs. Channing Ward, “Richmond’s Music and Musicians: No Season in Recent Years Has Seen So Many Musical Attractions Booked in Richmond. Many Local Artists Have Developed Into National Celebrities,” *Richmond*, December, 1927, 6, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7276-k, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

quite sincere in his mischief...If there is a Devil, you may depend up on it, he is quite an affable fellow.²¹²

However persuasive Powell's personality was, it was clear that his geniality did not sugarcoat his hard sociopolitical stance in the eyes of non-Anglo-Saxon Americans. Many African-Americans weighed in with their opinions of Powell and his musical propaganda in 1933 after he attempted to dispossess African-Americans of their musical heritage by insisting that it was merely a feeble and corrupted imitation of superior Anglo-Saxon music. In response to Powell's claim, Clarence Cameron White wrote,

John Powell started out to be a really great pianist but the Negrophobia possessed him to such a degree that he now attempts to attract attention, not as a pianist, but as a propagandist with his Anglo-Saxon movement agitation. Personally, I think we are dignifying Powell entirely too much to even notice his childish utterances about Negro music.²¹³

J. Harold Brown also responded, stating, "I heartily agree with Mr. Powell, if we are also to believe 'there are no real Americans.'" While many people would observe that Native Americans are the only Americans who can truly claim that label, Brown took the argument even further to assert that "even the Indians came to this country via the Bering Strait."²¹⁴ In doing so, Brown demonstrated his realization that Powell was attempting to use musical propaganda to define the United States.

²¹²J. A. Rogers, "Virginia 'Nordic Blood Purists' Reveal Their Scheme to J. A. Rogers," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, c. 1931, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²¹³ "John Powell's Assertion That There Is No Real American Negro Music Is Disproved by Eminent Musicians and Critics," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, January 28, 1933, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²¹⁴ "John Powell's Assertion That There Is No Real American Negro Music Is Disproved by Eminent Musicians and Critics," *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, January 28, 1933, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

James Weldon Johnson, secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), offered an even more insightful response to Powell's propaganda efforts. In an article published in *The World*, Johnson refuted Powell's sociopolitical argument by attacking the fictitious premise on which Powell had constructed it. "The mythical Anglo-Saxon," Johnson argued, "and his culture as well, never existed...So when Mr. Powell talks about the original American stock and weeps a tear over its submergence; when he orates about the original American principles and virtues, he had better be a little more specific as to what he means."²¹⁵ Whereas Powell labored to make the term *American* synonymous with *Anglo-Saxon*, Johnson offered a different vision of the United States: "The American...can receive the contribution of any spirit, any nation and any race. If he cannot then he had better...stop twaddling about democracy, liberty and what-not."²¹⁶

At the same time that many African-Americans were rejecting Powell's musical and sociopolitical propagandist efforts to define the United States as an exclusively Anglo-Saxon nation, other people were embracing the idea. Frederic C. Martin's program notes for Powell's 1934 concert with the Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra described Powell as "one of an American group of pianist-composers, MacDowell, Griffes, *et al*, that have created an attitude of sincere respect and admiration in Europe for the American musician."²¹⁷ Program notes from 1934 and 1938 concerts, respectively, displayed a subtle, yet increasingly common, trend. The notes from

²¹⁵ James Wheldon [sic] Johnson, "Powell Is Asked to Define What Is 'Anglo-Saxon'," *The World*, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 44, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²¹⁶ "With Artist and Musician," n.d. Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia; and James Wheldon Johnson, "Powell Is Asked to Define What Is 'Anglo-Saxon'," *The World*, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 44, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²¹⁷ Frederic C. Martin, program notes for John Powell and Harrisburg Symphony Orchestra concert, (November 20, 1934), 9, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

the 1934 concert with the North Carolina Symphony Orchestra identified Powell as “a leading American pianist composer and his works are distinctly American in character, utilizing American folk songs as a basis for art-forms.”²¹⁸ Similarly, the notes from the 1938 concert with the Illinois Symphony Orchestra described Powell as “an authority on American folk music.”²¹⁹ By using the term *American*, rather than *Anglo-Saxon*, both of these program notes’ authors implicitly limited the nation’s cultural expressions to Anglo-Saxon idioms. In doing so, they demonstrated that Powell’s efforts to establish Anglo-Saxon cultural dominance were at least partially successful.

In an even stronger perception of Powell and his propaganda, program notes for a 1932 performance of Powell’s *Natchez-on-the-Hill* by the National Symphony Orchestra described him as “perhaps our most outspoken nationalist.”²²⁰ The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* stated that, “It is possible that Mr. Powell and the other Virginians who are active in this field are laying the foundations of a national music—music which has survived since Anglo-Saxon times in the hearts of humble folk who have settled in the Western world. This is an enterprise of ambitious proportions, but it is well worth while.”²²¹ In a similar vein, William Kozlenko authored program notes for Powell’s performance with the Federal Symphony Orchestra. He described Powell as “one of the most outstanding composers of the present-day...who has contributed significantly to the wealth of American music. He is a musician of rare perception and

²¹⁸ Program notes for John Powell and the North Carolina Symphony Orchestra concert, (Elizabeth School Auditorium, Charlotte, North Carolina: October 23, 1934), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²¹⁹ Program notes for Illinois Symphony Orchestra concert, February 20, 1938, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²²⁰ Program notes for National Symphony Orchestra concert, October 20, 1932, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²²¹ “Tribute to John Powell,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, June 14, 1936, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 43, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

imaginativeness, a writer who has something to say, and...is distinguished by his aristocratic nationalism.”²²²

In 1936, in the midst of these various discussions on his life and work, John Powell and his wife, Louise Burleigh Powell, purchased an estate in Charlottesville, Virginia. They named their new home “Longways,” a reference to the lines formed in English country dancing.²²³ The move triggered a reaction that opened an interesting chapter in the history of the development of John Powell’s legacy. As Ronald David Ward stated, “Powell’s friends...were afraid that the bucolic attractions of Longways would lure Powell into a state of semi-retirement.”²²⁴ To prevent that possibility, they organized the John Powell Home Foundation, (later known as the John Powell Foundation), that same year.²²⁵ As an incentive to keep him involved in the Richmond area, the Foundation bought Powell’s Richmond home from him and gave him the keys when he moved to Charlottesville.²²⁶ Beyond this, the Foundation sought to maintain the vigor of Powell’s career “by sponsoring and promoting performances and recordings of his works, organizing lecture-recitals by Powell, and in general doing all it could to further the cause of Powell.”²²⁷

The establishment of the John Powell Foundation marked the first time that anyone had made an overt and concentrated effort to shape Powell’s reputation and legacy in the public memory. The Foundation’s official mission statement made no mention of Powell’s Anglo-

²²² William Kozlenko, program notes for John Powell and Federal Symphony Orchestra concert, February 28, 1937, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²²³ Ward, 117; Halfyard, Janet, "country dance." In *The Oxford Companion to Music*, edited by Alison Latham. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/opr/t114/e1675> (accessed March 13, 2012); and Elizabeth Aldrich. "Contredanse." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2092959> (accessed March 13, 2012).

²²⁴ Ward, 117.

²²⁵ Ward, 117-118.

²²⁶ Ward, 117.

²²⁷ Ward, 118.

Saxon supremacist activities.²²⁸ Given that Powell himself had declared his music to be sociopolitical propaganda, the Foundation could hardly have selected a more challenging public image to handle.

While it is unclear how consciously the members of the Foundation avoided Powell's musical politics, their ambivalence about the issue is apparent. Their mission statement made oblique reference to promoting Powell's "cultural and musical influence" and their desire that Powell "pass on to teachers and serious students the great traditional interpretations of the masters."²²⁹ Another statement from the Foundation's brochure was equally vague. "Like most great artists," it read, "Mr. Powell is also a pioneer. He is a guiding spirit in the collection and full appreciation of the wealth of folk music in the Virginia tradition."²³⁰ From a Foundation that represented a man who vehemently defended the superiority of *Anglo-Saxon* traditions over all others, the statement's lack of specificity leaves historians with two possible interpretations. First, the broad language could signal the Foundation's reluctance to dredge up any sociopolitical controversies. As a second option, however, the statement's imprecision could also indicate that the members of the Foundation had thoroughly digested Powell's propaganda to the point that they believed that "the Virginia tradition" consisted solely of the Anglo-Saxon heritage.

It appears that the Foundation leaned toward the first option and preferred to emphasize Powell as an artist rather than as a sociopolitical activist. Because it is impossible to separate Powell entirely from his Anglo-Saxon supremacist ways, the Foundation compromised by renovating Powell's public image. The Foundation continued to publicize Powell's

²²⁸ John Powell Foundation booklet, n.d., 8, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²²⁹ John Powell Foundation booklet, n.d., 8, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²³⁰ John Powell Foundation booklet, n.d., 4, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

ethnomusicological work; but instead of using it to define America, the Foundation began limiting Powell's music to the South. Hence, terms such as "the Virginia tradition" came into existence in the Foundation's publicity materials. In 1947, for example, the Foundation co-sponsored a recital entitled, "Folk Hymns of the Southland," which featured some of John Powell's arrangements and harmonizations of Christian hymns.²³¹

The transition of Powell's influence from the broader, national level to the narrowly local one was very gradual. The Foundation still incorporated national and nationalistic language into its materials from time to time, but ultimately placed the greatest emphasis on Virginia. For instance, when Powell's *Symphony in A* premiered in Richmond (in a concert that the Foundation helped sponsor), the John Powell Foundation successfully lobbied the governor of Virginia to proclaim November 5, 1951, as "John Powell Day."²³² The official mandate identified Powell as a "distinguished Virginia pianist and composer whose musical genius is internationally known," and recognized him for "his many contributions to the cultural life of America."²³³ Like the statements from the John Powell Foundation itself, the governor's proclamation left Powell's "contributions" open to interpretation.

John Powell died on August 15, 1963. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* printed his obituary the following day. The obituary highlighted Powell's ties to Virginia, calling him "Virginia's most eminent composer...a former concert pianist."²³⁴ It later hailed Powell as "one

²³¹ "Folk Hymns of the Southland" recital program, (Richmond, Virginia: March 11, 1947), Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²³² Edmunds, 371.

²³³ John Powell Foundation booklet, n.d., 5, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²³⁴ "John Powell, 80, Composer, Dies," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 16, 1963, Microfilm, Virginia Commonwealth University Library.

of the country's outstanding contemporary composers" as it described his passion for folk idioms.²³⁵

Similarly, the obituary that appeared in the *New York Times* identified him as "an American virtuoso performer...and as a composer of distinctively American music."²³⁶ The obituary mentioned that "Mr. Powell was a chief sponsor of Virginia's Racial Integrity Act of 1924," but made no reference to his extensive work with folk music of any sort.²³⁷ The omission, combined with the obituary's emphasis on classical music, foreshadowed the Foundation's upcoming strategy on shaping John Powell's legacy.

After Powell's death, the Foundation's efforts shifted from promotion to commemoration. By 1965, Foundation members were discussing the possibility of establishing a memorial scholarship for Virginian music students, or creating an endowed chair in Powell's name for the Richmond Symphony.²³⁸ Radford College (now Radford University) helped realize some of these hopes in 1967 when it named its arts building after Powell.²³⁹ In addition to these

²³⁵ "John Powell, 80, Composer, Dies," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, August 16, 1963, Microfilm, Virginia Commonwealth University Library.

²³⁶ "John Powell, 80, Pianist-Composer," obituary, *New York Times*, August 16, 1963, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://proxy.library.vcu.edu/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=81823802&Fmt=10&clientId=4305&RQT=309&VName=HNP> (accessed October 30, 2011).

²³⁷ "John Powell, 80, Pianist-Composer," obituary, *New York Times*, August 16, 1963, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, <http://proxy.library.vcu.edu/login?url=http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=81823802&Fmt=10&clientId=4305&RQT=309&VName=HNP> (accessed October 30, 2011).

²³⁸ Emma Gray Trigg to Florence Robertson, September 26, 1965, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²³⁹ Christian Trejbal, "Opinion: Radford University Will No Longer Honor a Racist," *The Roanoke Times*, September 12, 2010, Newspaper Source Plus, EBSCOhost, <http://web.ebscohost.com.proxy.library.vcu.edu/ehost/detail?vid=6&hid=15&sid=d62a13d5-2cd1-44d1-9162-4bfd86dcf8ea%40sessionmgr14&bdata=JkF1dGhUeXBIPWlwLHVybCxxjb29raWUsdWlkJnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbG12ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#db=n5h&AN=2W6921882173> (accessed March 19, 2012); Radford University Board of Visitors Meeting Minutes, September 16, 2010, Radford University, <http://www.radford.edu/content/dam/departments/administrative/bov/content-files/meeting-minutes/minutes091610.pdf> (accessed March 19, 2012); and "Our History," Radford University, <http://radford.edu/content/radfordcore/home/about/history.html> (accessed March 19, 2012).

commemorative forays, the John Powell Foundation also expressed an interest in creating editions of Powell's compositions to place in a library.²⁴⁰

The Foundation's initial attempts to publish Powell's works were abortive. The Foundation had selected the *Sonata Teutonica* as their chief candidate for publication. However, as Powell had discovered years ago, the work was so technically demanding that publishers doubted their ability to sell it to the general public.²⁴¹ Undeterred, the Foundation hired Roy Hamlin Johnson, a pianist-composer based at the University of Maryland, to create an edition of the sonata for publication.

This choice marked yet another, perhaps unconscious, shift in the Foundation's portrayal of Powell. The organization had distanced Powell's reputation from Anglo-Saxon supremacy and any negative associations with nationalism by emphasizing his Virginian heritage. In a new trend, the Foundation began spotlighting the works in Powell's portfolio that reflected the European Romantic style of music. In doing so, the Foundation steered Powell's legacy toward a decidedly classical, rather than folk music, pedigree. This new slant conveniently allowed the Foundation to attribute Powell's fading reputation to the unpopularity of the Romantic style in the twentieth century, rather than to a rejection of Powell's Anglo-Saxon supremacist definition of the United States.²⁴²

Roy Hamlin Johnson's subsequent editorial work added an interesting dynamic to Powell's legacy. He edited the *Sonata Teutonica*'s original performance time of over an hour

²⁴⁰ Emma Gray Trigg to Florence Robertson, September 26, 1965, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁴¹ John Cacavas (Chappell & Co., Inc. Music Publishers) to Monroe Leigh, November 14, 1968, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁴² Francis Church, "Is Powell's Time at Hand?" *Richmond News Leader*, November 6, 1976, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

down to about forty-five minutes.²⁴³ By removing the notes that “just didn’t *do* anything,”²⁴⁴ Johnson made it possible for listeners to establish extratextual and intratextual memory with the music. Additionally, the premiere of the edited version coincided with the United States’ bicentennial celebration of the American Revolution. Johnson and the John Powell Foundation took full advantage of the opportunity. Rather than using Powell’s music to define the United States as an exclusively Anglo-Saxon nation, they allowed the United States to define Powell’s music. With bicentennial celebrations proliferating throughout the United States, Powell was cast as one of many American composers whose greatness was cited as a source of national pride and accomplishment.²⁴⁵

The result was astounding. Whereas Powell’s audiences decades earlier had struggled to comprehend the music and its message, and therefore rejected the sonata outright, the bicentennial audiences embraced it. Johnson’s edition instantly expanded listeners’ extratextual memory by making the music far more accessible. As proof, many audience members likened Johnson’s version of Powell’s sonata to works of Liszt, Rachmaninoff, Scriabin, Ives, and Copland.²⁴⁶ It is probable that Johnson’s simplification and abridgement of the sonata likewise enhanced intratextual memory for its hearers.

²⁴³ David Cook, “Sonata Teutonica is Pared Down,” *Tallahassee Democrat*, October 23, 1977, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁴⁴ Roy Hamlin Johnson, quoted in Mary Bland Armistead, “Putting New Life Into Va. Composer’s Work,” 1979, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁴⁵ “Powell: *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24” recording review, *High Fidelity Magazine*, December 1977; Florestan Croche, “John Powell: more than a regionalist,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 25, 1977; and Mary Bland Armistead, “Putting New Life Into Va. Composer’s Work,” 1979, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁴⁶ Florestan Croche, “John Powell: more than a regionalist,” *Baltimore Sun*, September 25, 1977; “Powell: *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24” recording review, *High Fidelity Magazine*, December 1977; Melody Peterson, “Following that Inner Voice and Trying Something New,” *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, October 28, 1977; and Nikki C. Hasden, “Acceptance of ‘New’ Music Slow,” *The Chattanooga Times*, January 2, 1977, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Johnson capitalized on the *Sonata Teutonica* edition's success by creating a similarly abridged version of Powell's *Symphony in A*.²⁴⁷ With financial support from the Foundation, the *Symphony* received public performance to critical acclaim.²⁴⁸ In keeping with the Foundation's rendering of Powell's legacy, Johnson's program notes and other comments about the *Symphony* did not mention the work's Anglo-Saxon roots.²⁴⁹

Not everyone was pleased with Johnson's approach. Ernest C. Mead, Jr., professor of music at the University of Virginia and a former student of Powell's, was particularly critical of Johnson's editorial choices. "My disappointment is matched only by my shock at the callous distortion to which Roy, however well intentioned, is subjecting Mr. Powell's music in print," Mead wrote in a letter to Florence Robertson.²⁵⁰ In a letter to Johnson expressing his dissatisfaction, Mead wrote, "The effect, then, of your editorial policy as a whole is that the reader is allowed to know about the original only what the editor has arbitrarily decided to let him know."²⁵¹ That type of renovation of Powell's reputation, however, was precisely what the John Powell Foundation hoped to achieve.

²⁴⁷ Roy Hamlin Johnson to Florence Robertson, November 29, 1977, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁴⁸ Edmund A. Rennolds, Jr. to Roy Hamlin Johnson, December 12, 1980; and C. A. Bustard, "Powell admirers to gather for composer's centennial," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 30, 1982, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁴⁹ Roy Hamlin Johnson, program notes; and Joe McLellan, WETA Radio script, April 26, 1982, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁵⁰ Ernest C. Mead, Jr. to Florence Robertson, March 8, 1981, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁵¹ Ernest C. Mead, Jr. to Roy Hamlin Johnson, n.d. (c. 1981), Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

In addition to funding Johnson's editorial work, the Foundation helped finance Johnson's recordings of a few of Powell's works on the Composers Recordings record label.²⁵² His recording of the *Sonata Teutonica* ranked among *High Fidelity Magazine* critics' favorite new records for two consecutive months in 1978.²⁵³ Along with these efforts, the Foundation sought to promote Powell's legacy by establishing a John Powell Prize for the University of Maryland International Piano Competition.²⁵⁴

With Powell's works held up as an example of American achievement during the United States' bicentennial, his former use of thick description to translate his musical propaganda was no longer necessary. Because the existence of that thick description was difficult to ignore, however, people began exploring its meaning and providing their own interpretations for it. The majority chose to view it as a "salute to the Romantic ideal," without its Anglo-Saxon overtones.²⁵⁵ That is not to say, though, that people overlooked Powell's sociopolitical stance altogether. In fact, a number of journalists in the late 1970s were making Powell's views on racial integrity and Anglo-Saxon supremacy public once again.²⁵⁶

While many journalists during Powell's lifetime had practically endorsed his sociopolitical mission through their praise of his musical propaganda, the journalists of the 1970s

²⁵² Edmund A. Rennolds, Jr. to Carter Harman (Composer's Recordings, Inc.), January 14, 1978, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁵³ Roy Hamlin Johnson to Florence Robertson, November 29, 1977, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁵⁴ Fernando Laires to Florence Robertson, July 3, 1980, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁵⁵ Melody Peterson, "Following that Inner Voice and Trying Something New," *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, October 28, 1977; and Nikki C. Hasden, "Acceptance of 'New' Music Slow," *The Chattanooga Times*, January 2, 1977, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁵⁶ Irving Lowens, "Classical Recordings: Genuine American Artifacts," *The Washington Star*, September 25, 1977; "Powell: *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24" recording review, *High Fidelity Magazine*, December 1977; and C. A. Bustard, "Powell Work Now Revived," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, January 29, 1978, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

took the opposite approach. “Powell was a rather strange individual who was particularly interested in racial matters,” wrote a critic for *High Fidelity Magazine*.²⁵⁷ In an article on the renovation of Powell’s works, music critic C. A. Bustard wrote, “The neglect his work has suffered since his death in 1963 can be traced in part to his very public espousal of white supremacy.”²⁵⁸ Indeed, Powell’s legacy had not weathered the years of the Civil Rights Era very successfully. The John Powell Foundation managed to rehabilitate his image enough to keep his memory alive into the 1970s. Despite their efforts, the name *John Powell* still had not been added to the canon of great American musician-composers.

Bustard and other journalists came very close to identifying the reason behind the continued decline of Powell’s reputation. Although Americans were willing to give Powell’s music a second hearing, they found that Powell’s sociopolitical agenda was still too enmeshed in his compositions. Bustard noted that Americans had “outgrown Powell’s racial views.”²⁵⁹ Unfortunately, Powell’s music had not.

By the early 1980s, John Powell’s reputation had dwindled from international fame to being known as the “greatest composer” that Richmond had produced.²⁶⁰ The man whose talent and musical propaganda once made him known as “perhaps our most outspoken nationalist,”²⁶¹

²⁵⁷ “Powell: *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24” recording review, *High Fidelity Magazine*, December 1977, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁵⁸ C. A. Bustard, “Powell Work Now Revived,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, January 29, 1978, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁵⁹ C. A. Bustard, “Powell Work Now Revived,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, January 29, 1978, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁶⁰ C. A. Bustard, “Powell admirers to gather for composer’s centennial,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 30, 1982, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁶¹ Program notes for National Symphony Orchestra concert, October 20, 1932, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

and “one of the few great contemporary pianists”²⁶² was acquiring a new reputation in the post-Civil Rights sociopolitical environment. Although deceased, John Powell was slowly but surely becoming known as a racist.

²⁶² Mrs. Channing Ward, “Richmond’s Music and Musicians: No Season in Recent Years Has Seen So Many Musical Attractions Booked in Richmond. Many Local Artists Have Developed Into National Celebrities,” *Richmond*, December, 1927, 6, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7276-k, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

Chapter 3

The public we serve in our scholarship has as much right to contribute to the debate about history and memory as we do.

—Jay Winter, “The performance of the past: memory, history, identity”²⁶³

Another important facet in the shaping of John Powell’s legacy is the ways in which scholars have portrayed him in their works. Before embarking on a historiographical survey, it is worthwhile to explore the history of the archived documents that have comprised much of scholars’ source material over the years. Upon John Powell’s death in 1963, all of his papers were bequeathed to the University of Virginia, his alma mater. They were held on deposit until 1965, when his nieces, Elizabeth and Rebecca Brockenbrough, formally gave the collections and accompanying property rights to the University.²⁶⁴

According to Edward Gaynor, Head of Collection Development and Description at the University of Virginia’s Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, the John Powell collection was fully restricted prior to 1965.²⁶⁵ When the Brockenbroughs officially gave the collection to the University, they retained some restrictions. Access to Powell’s correspondence with Annabel Morris Buchanan from 1931-1938, for example, required written permission from

²⁶³ Jay Winter, “The Performance of the Past: Memory, History, Identity,” in *Performing the Past: Memory, History, and Identity in Modern Europe*, ed. Karin Tilmans, Fran van Vree, and Jay Winter (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 21.

²⁶⁴ Elizabeth and Rebecca Brockenbrough to John Cook Wyllie, December 30, 1965, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁶⁵ Edward Gaynor, telephone interview with author, April 13, 2012.

the Brockenbroughs or from Ernest C. Mead, whose position as Powell's former student and as music professor at the University of Virginia, made him an ideal liaison for the Brockenbroughs.²⁶⁶ The restriction was to be enforced for twenty-five years.²⁶⁷ Additionally, the Brockenbroughs suppressed information on Powell's sociopolitical activism by prohibiting scholars and others from referencing or publishing any of the "Race Relations material" without first obtaining written permission from one of the Brockenbroughs and Ernest C. Mead.²⁶⁸ The Brockenbroughs protected the reputations of Powell and others by similarly restricting access to debt-related, Depression-era correspondence. All of those restrictions were to persist until after Mead and both Brockenbroughs had died.²⁶⁹

The restrictions on Powell's correspondence with Annabel Morris Buchanan expired in the early 1990s. In 1998, Ernest C. Mead—the last surviving guardian of the Powell collection—granted the University of Virginia's Special Collections' request to lift all remaining access restrictions to the Powell collection.²⁷⁰ A few years later, the staff at the Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library began overhauling the collections and their accompanying guides in order to take into account the wealth of information that was now publicly available.²⁷¹

²⁶⁶ Elizabeth and Rebecca Brockenbrough to John Cook Wyllie, December 30, 1965, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia; Greta Dollitz, *Virginia Musician: John Powell*, WCVE-FM Public Radio, audiocassette, 1991; and "96-05-03: Faculty Actions," University of Virginia web site, <http://www.virginia.edu/insideuva/textonlyarchive/96-05-03/13.txt> (accessed April 14, 2012).

²⁶⁷ Elizabeth and Rebecca Brockenbrough to John Cook Wyllie, December 30, 1965, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁶⁸ Elizabeth and Rebecca Brockenbrough to John Cook Wyllie, December 30, 1965, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁶⁹ Elizabeth and Rebecca Brockenbrough to John Cook Wyllie, December 30, 1965, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁷⁰ Edward Gaynor, telephone interview with author, April 13, 2012.

²⁷¹ Edward Gaynor, telephone interview with author, April 13, 2012.

It was inevitable that the limited or prohibited access to certain material would influence the way scholars could depict Powell. Nevertheless, the Powell collections at the University of Virginia would provide many valuable resources to scholars after Powell's death. Even during Powell's lifetime, however, scholars were active in shaping and perceiving his public image.

John Tasker Howard provided one of the earliest scholarly glimpses into the evolution of John Powell's reputation and legacy. Since its first publication in 1929, his book *Our American Music: Three Hundred Years of It* underwent numerous printings and editions. By 1936, the first edition had been printed for the fourth time, with no revisions specified. John Powell appeared in the chapter entitled, "Our Folk-Music."²⁷² Howard described Powell as "one of the outstanding composers of the present day...an able pianist...an excellently equipped musician with something definite to say, and able to say it."²⁷³ Among many other reasons, Howard identified Powell as important because "his social and political creed makes him a nationalist, typical of the Anglo-Saxon southern aristocracy, with fixed racial ideas that are thoroughly apparent in his music."²⁷⁴ Alongside Powell, Howard cited other American "nationalist" composers for their use of tunes from Native American, African-American, and other folksong traditions.²⁷⁵

Our American Music also included a discussion on the historic and sociocultural background of Powell's music. Howard spotlighted *Rhapsodie Nègre* and included excerpts from Donald Francis Tovey's program notes (which were based almost entirely on the notes of

²⁷² John Tasker Howard, *Our American Music: Three Hundred Years of It*, 1st ed., 4th printing (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1936), 457.

²⁷³ Howard, *Our American Music*, 1st ed., 459.

²⁷⁴ Howard, *Our American Music*, 1st ed., 459.

²⁷⁵ Howard, *Our American Music*, 1st ed., 436-461.

“Richard Brockwell,” Powell’s *nom de plume*).²⁷⁶ Howard did not balk at including the racial stereotypes that Powell’s music perpetuated. In writing about Powell’s *Sonata Virginianesque*, for example, Howard noted, “The theme is a Negro song of a type rare among the Negroes, for love is often more a matter of action than of contemplation.”²⁷⁷

Similarly, in his 1943 book, *Our Contemporary Composers: American Music in the Twentieth Century*, Howard included a chapter entitled, “Folk-Song and Racial Expressions.” The chapter’s title is as insightful as it is incomplete, since Howard opened the chapter with a discussion about the definition of *American*, especially as it applied to American music.²⁷⁸ Additionally, Howard’s use of the word *racial* bore no relation whatsoever to *racist*. He merely used the term *racial* to describe the music of what were perceived to be different American races (“Indian,” “Anglo-Saxon,” “Negro”).²⁷⁹ Although Howard’s definition of American music was not as strict as Powell’s was, Howard willingly accepted Anglo-Saxon music as representative of the American nation.²⁸⁰ In supporting his argument, Howard cited Powell’s Virginian background to validate the pianist-composer’s candidacy for prescribing the Anglo-Saxon heritage as the basis for an American national music. Virginia, after all, had laid the foundation for much of the United States’ history and values.²⁸¹ Powell, Howard contended, was a champion of timeless American values.²⁸² Although Powell utilized African-American music in some of his works, Howard was careful to point out that the composer “was seeking to interpret

²⁷⁶ Howard, *Our American Music*, 1st ed., 457-458.

²⁷⁷ Howard, *Our American Music*, 1st ed., 459.

²⁷⁸ John Tasker Howard, *Our Contemporary Composers: American Music in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1943), 267-268.

²⁷⁹ Howard, *Our Contemporary Composers*, 268, 270, and 277.

²⁸⁰ Howard, *Our Contemporary Composers*, 270.

²⁸¹ Howard, *Our Contemporary Composers*, 271.

²⁸² Howard, *Our Contemporary Composers*, 271.

the Negro as a race; he was not voicing America.”²⁸³ Howard briefly cited some of Powell’s best-known compositions as examples, before proceeding to explore other composers in the same Anglo-Saxon school of folk music, such as Percy Grainger and Lamar Stringfield.²⁸⁴ As he did in *Our American Music*, Howard framed Powell as the leader of the Anglo-Saxon school of American nationalist music.

A third edition of *Our American Music: Three Hundred Years of It* emerged in 1946. This time, Powell’s name appeared in the book’s chapter on contemporary composers.²⁸⁵ In an almost verbatim repetition of statements in his previous books, Howard described Powell as a well-known composer who became an Anglo-Saxon folk music activist.²⁸⁶

The fourth edition of *Our American Music*, published in 1965, marked a radical departure from Howard’s previous depictions of Powell. Powell’s name still held a place—albeit a very small one—in the chapter on “Twentieth Century Composers.”²⁸⁷ Gone, however, was the ardent nationalism and brilliant musicianship that Howard had ascribed to Powell. Instead, Powell was labeled as “a friend to all who are interested in our Appalachian tunes and ballads,” and as a composer who was best known for his popular *Rhapsodie Nègre*.²⁸⁸ Although Howard mentioned some of Powell’s other works, he included no sociopolitical commentary on them. The racial stereotypes that had decorated the book’s prior editions were almost completely expunged. The one exception was Howard’s description of the *Rhapsodie Nègre*, a description which strongly resembled “Brockwell’s” program notes. Howard wrote, “The *Rhapsodie*,

²⁸³ Howard, *Our Contemporary Composers*, 272.

²⁸⁴ Howard, *Our Contemporary Composers*, 272-275.

²⁸⁵ John Tasker Howard, *Our American Music: Three Hundred Years of It*, 3rd ed. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1946), 421.

²⁸⁶ Howard, *Our American Music*, 3rd ed., 421.

²⁸⁷ Howard, *Our American Music: a Comprehensive History from 1620 to the Present*, 4th ed. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1965), 405-406.

²⁸⁸ Howard, *Our American Music*, 4th ed., 405-406.

inspired by Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, begins and ends on a primal note, pagan and orgiastic; a note of idealization is felt in the middle section."²⁸⁹

Also in the fourth edition, Howard prominently featured Powell's Virginian ties. Powell was "founder of the Virginia State Choral Festival" and active with the White Top Folk Festival.²⁹⁰ Additionally, Howard noted that John Powell Day was "celebrated by the Commonwealth of Virginia" in 1951.²⁹¹ The idea that Powell's Virginian heritage uniquely prepared him to be a spokesman for the entire United States, however, was nowhere to be found.

The portrayals of John Powell in John Tasker Howard's works are valuable demonstrations of how the pianist-composer's reputation and legacy changed with each passing decade. Once a celebrated nationalist who was praised for using music as sociopolitical propaganda, Powell and his accomplishments could be reduced to three terse paragraphs in the years immediately following his death.

Like John Tasker Howard, Gilbert Chase also wrote a history of American music. *America's Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present* was first published in 1955. A second edition appeared in 1966. In the revised second edition's chapter entitled "Nationalism and Folklore," Chase described Powell as "definitely a composer of the South, one of the few distinctly regional composers of any stature that the United States has produced."²⁹² Chase did not mention Powell's sociopolitical activism, although he acknowledged Powell's efforts to make "Anglo-American folk music" into the bedrock of American national music.²⁹³ Chase,

²⁸⁹ Howard, *Our American Music*, 4th ed., 406.

²⁹⁰ Howard, *Our American Music*, 4th ed., 405.

²⁹¹ Howard, *Our American Music*, 4th ed., 406.

²⁹² Gilbert Chase, *America's Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present*, revised 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), 402.

²⁹³ Chase, 401.

however, characterized those efforts as abortive. In his opinion, Powell's definition of nationalism was too narrow to represent the entire population of the United States.²⁹⁴

Among scholars, Barbara Barnard Smith was one of the first to write exclusively on John Powell and his music. She finished her master's thesis at the University of Rochester's Eastman School of Music in 1943. Smith had an advantage that many subsequent scholars lacked, since she was personally acquainted with John Powell.²⁹⁵ Her thesis opened with a brief biography of Powell's life up to that time. She was careful to trace Powell's lineage on his mother's side to "Nicholas Lanier, court musician to King Charles II of England."²⁹⁶ She highlighted this genealogy to demonstrate that Powell's talent was, in part, inherited.²⁹⁷ "John Powell was brought up on the works of Sidney Lanier and therefore it is not surprising to find some of the Lanier ideals reflected in Powell's philosophy," she wrote.²⁹⁸ Without casting him in too brilliant a light, she traced Powell's musicality and passion for folk music as far back as his early childhood.²⁹⁹ In her estimation, folk idioms were the first inspirations for Powell's compositions.³⁰⁰ She offered a brief survey of Powell's works to that date, and mentioned that he had begun working on a symphony (which would become the *Symphony in A*).³⁰¹ Prior to analyzing Powell's *Sonata Noble*, Barbara Barnard Smith provided her readers with background information on folk music, including modes, rhythmic idioms, and melodic structure.³⁰²

²⁹⁴ Chase, 402.

²⁹⁵ Barbara Barnard Smith, "John Powell's *Sonata Noble* and His Use of Folk Music" (master's thesis, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, 1943), ii.

²⁹⁶ Barbara Barnard Smith, 1.

²⁹⁷ Barbara Barnard Smith, 1.

²⁹⁸ Barbara Barnard Smith, 2.

²⁹⁹ Barbara Barnard Smith, 2-6.

³⁰⁰ Barbara Barnard Smith, 6-7.

³⁰¹ Barbara Barnard Smith, 4-8.

³⁰² Barbara Barnard Smith, 10-12.

Smith attributed *Sonata Noble*'s inspiration to "Powell's feeling that folk music is a simple and sincere expression which is essentially noble."³⁰³ She gave a full musical analysis of the themes found in the sonata's movements, and examined the possible folksong basis of many of those themes.³⁰⁴ She also performed extensive Roman numeral analysis of the harmonies within the sonata before providing thorough, formal analyses of each movement.³⁰⁵ Her thesis remains an excellent resource for scholars due to her thorough musical analyses.

Of Powell's work with folk music, Smith wrote, "Powell is not primarily a collector...His primary interest is in the use of folk songs as the material of musical composition."³⁰⁶ She continued by saying, "His name may not go down in history for this, for history has a way of ignoring individual names in recording the state of folk music."³⁰⁷ She credited Powell with breathing new life into the Anglo-Saxon cultural heritage.³⁰⁸

The final part of Barbara Barnard Smith's thesis explored John Powell's reputation and considered what his legacy might be. She speculated that Powell would be remembered as a pianist. She was not as certain about his legacy as a composer. In an interesting twist, she discounted Powell's compositional efforts with the same philosophy that he used to drive them. She wrote, "It is doubtful that we can have a single national music for some years...because there is no American genus. We are still a motley crowd culturally and ethnologically, and until there is greater sociological unity, there can be no single type of American music representative of us all."³⁰⁹ Smith expected that Powell would not be remembered as an American composer,

³⁰³ Barbara Barnard Smith, 14.

³⁰⁴ Barbara Barnard Smith, 15-22.

³⁰⁵ Barbara Barnard Smith, 22-35.

³⁰⁶ Barbara Barnard Smith, 50.

³⁰⁷ Barbara Barnard Smith, 55-56.

³⁰⁸ Barbara Barnard Smith, 56.

³⁰⁹ Barbara Barnard Smith, 58.

but as an Anglo-Saxon one. In her opinion, Powell would be regarded as a regionalist—a representative of the Anglo-Saxon culture.³¹⁰ Of Powell’s nascent symphony, she wrote, “The *Symphony*, although it probably does not represent the nation at large, is an expression of the Anglo-Saxon folk tradition. It is a sincere artistic expression, and, if it finds its way to the hearts of the listener, it will stand on its artistic merit.”³¹¹

The same year that Barbara Barnard Smith completed “John Powell’s *Sonate Noble* and His Use of Folk Music,” Mary Helen Chapman was born.³¹² By 1968, Chapman was completing a thesis of her own entitled, “The Piano Works of John Powell.” Chapman introduced her thesis with a brief discussion of nationalism in music, and immediately established an intriguing reflection on national values by contrasting John Powell with one of his contemporaries, Charles Ives.³¹³ As “Ives’ Yankee ideals...have generally become recognized as most universally American,” people ultimately saw Powell’s values “to be more regional than national in character,” Chapman noted.³¹⁴

Although Chapman acknowledged sociopolitical influences on Powell’s music, she did not emphasize them throughout her thesis.³¹⁵ She came extremely close to revolutionizing the scholarship on Powell by stating, “The fact that his style diverged so widely from that of most of his contemporaries with such a startling ‘reactionary’ result can only be understood against this

³¹⁰ Barbara Barnard Smith, 59.

³¹¹ Barbara Barnard Smith, 59.

³¹² Mary Helen Chapman, “The Piano Works of John Powell” (master’s thesis, Indiana University, 1968), cover page.

³¹³ Chapman, 1-2.

³¹⁴ Chapman, 2.

³¹⁵ Chapman, 3.

background.”³¹⁶ She had recognized that Powell was making forceful sociopolitical statements with his music, but she refrained from further investigation.

Instead, Chapman provided a thorough biographical summary of John Powell before proceeding to analyze his piano music. Unlike her predecessors, she adopted a more negative and critical tone of Powell’s stance on Anglo-Saxon supremacy. She detailed his involvement with the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America and the passage of Virginia’s 1924 Racial Integrity Act, and funneled the information about Powell’s sociopolitical activism into a discussion of his attempts to establish a national, Anglo-Saxon-based music.³¹⁷

Like Barbara Barnard Smith, Chapman saw John Powell as a regionalist. However, in spite of her displeasure with Powell’s sociopolitical beliefs, Chapman believed that he “was a major composer of the American South and that as such he is a truly important American composer.”³¹⁸ She believed that Powell’s musical legacy could be revived, and perhaps even renovated. If enough Americans became aware of Powell’s works, she speculated, his legacy had a chance of once again becoming that of an American, rather than strictly a Virginian.³¹⁹

Undoubtedly, one of the most comprehensive works on John Powell is Ronald David Ward’s 1973 dissertation, “The Life and Works of John Powell (1882-1963).” Ward provided a systematic biography of Powell, which included a substantial investigation of Powell’s support for Anglo-Saxon folk music. In addition to providing historical context on Powell’s life, Ward traversed the breadth of Powell’s musical works in a thorough examination of the composer’s stylistic, structural, and formal compositional techniques. Ward hinted at the union of Powell’s

³¹⁶ Chapman, 3.

³¹⁷ Chapman, 18-24.

³¹⁸ Chapman, 102.

³¹⁹ Chapman, 102.

sociopolitical agenda and musical pursuits when he stated that “Powell demands a listener of rare sophistication, although his intentions, as a polemicist for Anglo-American folk music, were always to communicate to the widest possible audience the ethical and musical value he thought inherent in this material.”³²⁰ Ward was among the first scholars to explicate, in depth, the idea that Powell’s music and sociopolitical views were not mutually exclusive activities.³²¹ Ward’s overall evaluation was that Powell was a “pianist, composer, and important Virginian musician.”³²²

In contrast to Ward’s even-keeled portrayal of Powell in 1973, Pocahontas Wight Edmunds’s 1972 biographical sketch of the pianist-composer offered readers an extremely slanted, highly sanitized view. Occupying an entire chapter in Edmunds’s book, *Virginians Out Front*, the sketch on Powell was rather chauvinistic, but also very engaging. Unlike many others who published works about Powell, Edmunds focused on Powell’s social and professional history rather than on musical analysis.

Edmunds’s chapter, entitled, “John Powell: Native Musician,” followed Powell’s life as a Virginian destined for greatness. In old Virginian fashion, the chapter opened not with Powell, but with Powell’s illustrious pedigree.³²³ After providing sufficient background, Edmunds launched a charming narrative anchored in anecdotes that she secured from numerous interviews with Powell, as well as with his family, friends, and colleagues.³²⁴ “It was said,” she confided to her readers, “that at three months John Powell beat time with his fingers on the windowsill.”³²⁵

³²⁰ Ronald David Ward, “The Life and Works of John Powell (1882-1963)” (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 1973), 293.

³²¹ Ward, 79 and 81.

³²² Ward, 294.

³²³ Pocahontas Wight Edmunds, *Virginians Out Front* (Richmond, Virginia: Whittet & Shepperson, 1972), 337.

³²⁴ Edmunds, 338, and 376-379.

³²⁵ Edmunds, 338.

Edmunds made obvious her opinion that Powell was a genius descended from a long line of brilliance.³²⁶

In framing Powell as a model citizen, a loving and dutiful son, a Virginian gentleman, and a musician extraordinaire, Edmunds avoided nearly all information about his sociopolitical activities.³²⁷ However, her few nods to Powell's passion for Anglo-Saxon supremacy were peculiarly revealing. For example, she stated, "Many considered Powell a racist, so intent had he been since 1910 on maintaining the purity of the Anglo-Saxon race."³²⁸ Once stated, she did not dwell on the fact.³²⁹

In another instance, she wrote, "Powell was then preaching his constant text that folk music should be the foundation of Anglo-American music."³³⁰ That Edmunds would write "*Anglo-American*" rather than "American" suggests that she had, in one way or another, circumscribed Powell's sociopolitical mission. (It must be remembered that in Powell's idealistic mind, *Anglo-Saxon* and *American* were synonymous terms.)³³¹ Perhaps she viewed Powell as so much of a regionalist that she limited his music to defining only Anglo-Americans. Or, perhaps she realized the futility in his attempts to apply an Anglo-Saxon identity to the entire United States. In order to prevent this realization from conflicting with her description of Powell's Virginian heroism, Edmunds subtly revised his sociopolitical and musical agenda to render his work a success.

³²⁶ Edmunds, 337-343.

³²⁷ Edmunds, 345, 348-349, and 354.

³²⁸ Edmunds, 361.

³²⁹ Edmunds, 361.

³³⁰ Edmunds, 354.

³³¹ "With Artist and Musician," n.d., Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

In all, Edmunds cast Powell as a triumphant Virginian, the local who made the entire Commonwealth proud. Although her scholarship made no attempt at objectivity, the anecdotes she mined as she interviewed people for the chapter enhance people's understanding of Powell as a person, and provide some insight into how at least some Virginians may have viewed their famous musician.

In 1970, Sally Twedell Bagley finished her master's thesis on the folk influences in John Powell's music. "John Powell: Folk Musician" highlighted Powell's definition, interpretation, and use of folk music, as well as the ways in which he synthesized folk music with the classical tradition.³³² With its extensive catalog of musical examples, Bagley's thesis is a good resource for information on Powell's treatment of folk idioms. Bagley devoted little attention to Powell's sociopolitical stance. There was no mention of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America, nor of the sociopolitical implications of the White Top Folk Festival (although Bagley did note the festival's existence). Bagley alluded to the *Rhapsodie Nègre* when she stated that "Powell's objective in the use of traditional material in his earlier compositions was to create character music;" however, she did not specify what the "traditional material" in those compositions was. Interestingly, she later identified the folk music that Powell utilized as "tunes drawn from the Anglo-American folk tradition."³³³

While the numerous musical examples and accompanying discussion on Powell's compositional style comprise important musicological research, it is disappointing that Bagley did not examine the sociopolitical motivations behind Powell's music in greater detail. Although *Anglo-American* carried national and nationalist connotations, Bagley appeared to classify

³³² Sally Twedell Bagley, "John Powell: Folk Musician" (master's thesis, University of Virginia, 1970), 2-3.

³³³ Bagley, 32.

Powell more as a Virginian than anything else.³³⁴ She attributed Powell's obsession with folk music to his desire to combat "the belief that the English-speaking people had no folk heritage."³³⁵ Her inclusion of Powell's quotations on nationalism provided an almost imperceptible link between Powell's music and his sociopolitical agenda.³³⁶ Without further discussion or analysis from Bagley, however, the connection remained a weak one.

Scholarship on Powell tapered considerably during the 1970s. Although brief, Roy Hamlin Johnson's remarks that accompanied his 1977 edition of Powell's *Sonata Teutonica* are noteworthy. Johnson first became acquainted with Powell's history through the John Powell Foundation.³³⁷ Because of this, as well as the fact that the Foundation bankrolled Johnson's editorial work, the comments are an interesting blend of history and publicity.³³⁸ Johnson lauded Powell, calling him, "a highly regarded pianist, and an internationally recognized composer of works based on folk music of the South."³³⁹ Because Johnson's purpose was exclusive to the *Sonata Teutonica*, he focused on the earlier years of Powell's career that pre-dated the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America or the White Top Folk Festival. Johnson did mention Powell's membership in the *Deutsche Wiener Turnerschaft*, but did not devote much time to analyzing its complexities.³⁴⁰ In short, Johnson portrayed Powell as a consummate musician who, despite an international career, remained loyal to his native South.

One of Johnson's pupils, Othel Wayne Smith, undertook a similar project for his doctoral research in 1978. Smith stated his hope that his dissertation, "John Powell's Piano Suites and

³³⁴ Bagley, 59.

³³⁵ Bagley, 59.

³³⁶ Bagley, 60-61.

³³⁷ Greta Dollitz, *Virginia Musician: John Powell*, WCVE-FM Public Radio, audiocassette, 1991.

³³⁸ John Powell, *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24, ed. Roy Hamlin Johnson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), iv.

³³⁹ Roy Hamlin Johnson, ed., "Preface" in *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24, by John Powell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), v.

³⁴⁰ Roy Hamlin Johnson, ed., "Preface" in *Sonata Teutonica*, op. 24, by John Powell (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), viii.

Sonatas *Noble* and *Psychologique*: a Recording Project,” would “become another source of promotion for the works of this neglected American composer.”³⁴¹

Smith saw Powell as a leader in the use of “American folk music.”³⁴² He acknowledged Powell’s “strong, conservative convictions concerning racial-political issues,” but remained vague about Powell’s exact views.³⁴³ While Smith never credited Powell with the creation of musical propaganda, he did offer several insights on what he described as Powell’s program music or character pieces. The insights suggest that Smith suspected Powell of having more than mere artistic motivations. For example, Smith frowned on Powell’s habit of pairing compositions with extensive, explanatory program notes. “The music of *Psychologique* stands quite well on its own without the programmatic explanations,” Smith wrote. “In fact, audiences of this generation are likely to be more receptive to Powell’s sonatas without knowledge of the programmatic content, which might tag the works as being trite or archaic.”³⁴⁴ Despite small observances such as this, Smith did not investigate what Powell’s non-musical agenda might have been. His objective, after all, was to revive and promote Powell’s reputation as a musician and composer.

Prior to 1980, many scholars had considered Powell’s reputation and legacy, but few had examined it in earnest. Linda R. Walker’s master’s thesis, “Views of John Powell and His Composing Style” was the first work devoted almost exclusively to investigating Powell’s image and people’s reactions to it. Although Walker claimed to possess “personal information which no previous writer has had” on Powell, her interactions with Powell were largely based on the

³⁴¹ Othel Wayne Smith, “John Powell’s Piano Suites and Sonatas *Noble* and *Psychologique*: a Recording Project” (DMA diss., University of Maryland, 1978), 14.

³⁴² Othel Wayne Smith, 1.

³⁴³ Othel Wayne Smith, 2.

³⁴⁴ Othel Wayne Smith, 11.

relationship she had with him as his pupil in the last years of his life.³⁴⁵ Walker hoped to use her thesis to probe the reasons why Powell's legacy dissolved.³⁴⁶

Walker framed Powell as a resister to sociopolitical change, a person who sought to spend his entire life inhabiting and enforcing a nostalgic version of the past.³⁴⁷ She traced his sociopolitical activism to his founding of the Fresh Air Art Society in Great Britain. "Here is the same individual as the student in Vienna who reacted against modernisms and immoralities," Walker wrote, "but now he is an acknowledged artist of his time, beginning to use his position to influence and to speak out."³⁴⁸

Walker's handling of Powell's Anglo-Saxon supremacist beliefs was delicate, to say the least. She condemned his racism, but seemed more disturbed by the fact that it diverted his attention from his musical career.³⁴⁹ It was her opinion that Powell's legacy had withered "because he purposely neglected his career when it had reached the point of greatest contribution."³⁵⁰ Even in her restraint, Walker came near to exposing the true motivating factors behind Powell's sociopolitical activities. She stated that Powell's "loyalty to Virginia and American nationalism took form as a deep commitment to the Anglo-American heritage music."³⁵¹ Unfortunately, Walker did not pursue the topic of Powell's musical propaganda in greater depth, nor did she observe the powerful connection that existed between Powell's sociopolitical views and his musical career.

³⁴⁵ Linda R. Walker, "Views of John Powell and His Composing Style" (master's thesis: University of Pittsburgh, 1980), 2.

³⁴⁶ Walker, 1.

³⁴⁷ Walker, 5.

³⁴⁸ Walker, 13.

³⁴⁹ Walker, 18 and 31.

³⁵⁰ Walker, 18.

³⁵¹ Walker, 15.

Charles Hamm in his 1983 book, *Music in the New World*, was more overt in linking Powell's music to sociopolitical motives. Hamm characterized Powell as a crusader for the creation of a national musical idiom based on Anglo-Saxon folk music.³⁵² "It is not my purpose to castigate Powell, at this late date, for his blatant racism," Hamm stated.³⁵³ Nevertheless, he warned, "history tells us repeatedly that racism can ride on the coattails of nationalism."³⁵⁴

Another book published in 1983 transformed Powell's reputation and legacy altogether. In 1983, David Whisnant, author of *All that Is Native and Fine: the Politics of Culture in an American Region*, exposed Powell's reputation in its entirety with a meticulous examination of the White Top Folk Festivals. Whisnant depicted the staging of the White Top Folk Festivals as "systematic cultural intervention."³⁵⁵ In his opinion, John Powell and his fellow musician, ethnographer, and White Top organizer, Annabel Morris Buchanan, were part of a larger movement of cultural reactionaries who sought to combat the corrupting influence of commercialism on traditional music.³⁵⁶

Preserving the past, however, was not simple. Whisnant demonstrated that before any preservation could take place, the White Top organizers had to define what it was they were preserving. As Whisnant ultimately discovered, music was not the organizers' chief priority, but a vehicle through which to secure larger cultural and sociopolitical issues.³⁵⁷ "Powell saw the festival—a showcase of white Anglo-Saxon music—as a major means by which a 'high plane of

³⁵² Charles Hamm, *Music in the New World* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1983), 421-422.

³⁵³ Hamm, 422.

³⁵⁴ Hamm, 422.

³⁵⁵ David Whisnant, *All that Is Native and Fine: the Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 186.

³⁵⁶ Whisnant, 184-188, and 218.

³⁵⁷ Whisnant, 190-191, 200-207, 219-221, 228-232, and 237.

[national] musical culture’ might be rendered ‘reattainable,’” Whisnant stated.³⁵⁸ Rather than serving as a place to keep traditional music alive, the White Top Folk Festivals rapidly evolved into a platform for Powell’s message of Anglo-Saxon supremacy, and an opportunity for the “*creation* of a ‘reality’ tautologically certified as authentic by the self-assured promoters who presented it.”³⁵⁹

At the time of its 1983 publication, Whisnant’s book was one of the harshest and most honest scholarly evaluations of Powell to that date. Whisnant identified Powell as “a thoroughgoing racist who had for many years worked persistently to maintain the racist social and political structure of Virginia.”³⁶⁰ He refuted the notion that Powell’s attitude was “merely characteristic of the times.”³⁶¹ Instead, he framed Powell’s life as anachronistic. While Powell’s sociopolitical views were once mainstream, Whisnant observed that the nation had long since abandoned them in favor of more inclusivity.³⁶²

Although many scholars prior to Whisnant had criticized Powell’s sociopolitical views, Whisnant’s account exposed Powell’s reputation completely. Whisnant’s unvarnished truth was both an indicator of his own era, as well as a catalyst for the future. While its effect was not immediate, Whisnant’s book almost single-handedly changed the course of John Powell’s legacy in the minds of future generations. Henceforth, the reverence attached to John Powell’s name would diminish, while the aversion to his legacy would increase exponentially. From the 1980s onward, scholars largely disregarded John Powell, the musician. Instead, they focused on John Powell, the ardent racist. The 1998 lifting of all restrictions to the Powell collection at the

³⁵⁸ Whisnant, 243.

³⁵⁹ Whisnant, 247.

³⁶⁰ Whisnant, 237.

³⁶¹ Whisnant, 247.

³⁶² Whisnant, 243.

University of Virginia was probably a major reason for this change, but certainly not the only one.

One of the best examples of this shift is in J. Douglas Smith's 2002 book, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Citizenship in Jim Crow Virginia*. Smith identified Powell as "a native of Richmond and a staple in elite social circles," an "extremist elite," the "founder of the Anglo-Saxon Clubs," and a "white extremist."³⁶³ Only in passing did he mention that Powell was also a "world-renowned pianist and composer."³⁶⁴

Smith focused his research within the framework of paternalism as he discussed John Powell's association with Earnest Sevier Cox and Walter Ashby Plecker, who headed the Bureau of Vital Statistics in Virginia.³⁶⁵ "Though never a serious student of eugenics," Smith wrote, "Powell recognized an opportunity to whitewash his extreme prejudice with a veneer of respectable intellectualism by clothing his ideology in theories of biology and ethnography."³⁶⁶ Those theories would serve as a major basis for the enactment and enforcement of Virginia's racial integrity legislation. Powell, Cox, Plecker, and others spent years pursuing the nearly-impossible task of defining and preserving whiteness in Virginia. According to Smith, they hoped that their efforts would maintain white supremacy.³⁶⁷ In some ways, they succeeded, albeit only temporarily. As Smith noted, one of the many results of that legislation was a

³⁶³ J. Douglas Smith, *Managing White Supremacy: Race, Politics, and Culture in Jim Crow Virginia* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 12, 15, 81, and 219.

³⁶⁴ Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, 76 and 81.

³⁶⁵ Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, 78.

³⁶⁶ Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, 82.

³⁶⁷ Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, 15, and 96-97.

concentrated reinforcing of Jim Crow in Virginia in order that any type of racial amalgamation be prevented.³⁶⁸

In the years following the debut of Smith's book, other scholars also began including John Powell in their research on America's race relations. In 2007, for example, Claudrena N. Harold wrote *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918-1942*. Powell appeared in the book through his association with Marcus Garvey, leader of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Harold described Powell as a "racist ideologue" whose concern "about the infusion of contaminated Negro blood into the white race" led him into a rather unorthodox alliance with the black Marcus Garvey.³⁶⁹

Similarly, Colin Grant's 2008 book, *Negro with a Hat: the Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey*, also highlighted Powell's dealings with Garvey. Grant identified Powell with the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America and noted that Garvey urged Powell "to address UNIA branches."³⁷⁰ Grant, however, did not elaborate much further on Powell's interactions with Garvey's activities.

Paul A. Lombardo's essay, "From Better Babies to the Bunglers: Eugenics on Tobacco Road," which appeared in *A Century of Eugenics in America*, made no mention of Powell's musical career. As Lombardo detailed the history of racial integrity legislation in the United States, he described Powell as an "antimiscegenation activist" and "coauthor" of Virginia's

³⁶⁸ Smith, *Managing White Supremacy*, 91, 95-96.

³⁶⁹ Claudrena N. Harold, *The Rise and Fall of the Garvey Movement in the Urban South, 1918-1942* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 102.

³⁷⁰ Colin Grant, *Negro with a Hat: the Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 402.

Racial Integrity Act of 1924.³⁷¹ Powell, Lombardo observed, was instrumental in encouraging racial integrity legislation beyond Virginia as well.³⁷² Interestingly, although Lombardo noted the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America's influence in the racial integrity movement, he did not overtly link Powell to the organization.³⁷³

In contrast, Pippa Holloway, author of *Sexuality, Politics, and Social Control in Virginia, 1920-1945*, made Powell's connections to the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America explicit. Like Lombardo, Holloway did not identify Powell's musical career. Instead, she highlighted his quest for Anglo-Saxon supremacy by framing his cooperation with Walter Ashby Plecker and Earnest Sevier Cox in terms of sexual regulation and eugenics.³⁷⁴ Although she characterized Powell as an extremist, Holloway noted that Powell's views were, in fact, less radical than those of his colleague, Walter Ashby Plecker. "While John Powell focused almost exclusively on the transgressions of white women," she wrote, "Plecker extended his critique to white men as well."³⁷⁵ Holloway argued that while Powell was a key player in the racial integrity movement, it was Plecker's ruthless zeal that carried the heaviest consequences for Virginia and the nation.³⁷⁶

Only very recently have scholars begun taking a holistic approach to the study of John Powell. In 2006, musicologist David Z. Kushner wrote an article entitled "John Powell: His Racial and Cultural Ideologies," in which he argued that Powell's musical and sociopolitical

³⁷¹ Paul A. Lombardo, ed. *A Century of Eugenics in America* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2011), 49-50.

³⁷² Lombardo, 49.

³⁷³ Lombardo, 49.

³⁷⁴ Pippa Holloway, *Sexuality, Politics, and Social Control in Virginia, 1920-1945* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 33.

³⁷⁵ Holloway, 50.

³⁷⁶ Holloway, 50-51.

activities were so intertwined that scholars must begin assessing both together.³⁷⁷ Kushner's article offered an excellent synopsis of all aspects of Powell's public life as it demonstrated how Powell's musical career intersected with his sociopolitical agenda. Most significant, however, was Kushner's commentary on Powell's legacy. Kushner stated: "By the 1950s and 1960s, Powell's earlier involvement in the contentious issues such as race relations in general, and the incorporation of racial and ethnic elements in the formation of an identifiably American music was conveniently forgotten, or, at the least, placed on a back burner."³⁷⁸ Kushner later continued: "In assessing Powell's impact on American music, one is struck by the fact that the eminent conductors under whom he performed seem to have paid little heed to the pianist's ideological stance...the general attitude seems to have been one of benign neglect."³⁷⁹ Kushner contrasted that observation against the disregard or outright disdain of John Powell that prevails in much of America today.³⁸⁰

Not long after Kushner called for a holistic examination of Powell's public life, musicologist Alain Frogley published an essay in *Western Music and Race*, edited by Julie Brown. The essay, entitled "'The old sweet Anglo-Saxon spell': racial discourses and the American reception of British music, 1895-1933," included a noteworthy discussion on Powell's use of musical propaganda. Frogley detailed the respect, admiration, and success that Powell

³⁷⁷ David Z. Kushner, "John Powell: His Racial and Cultural Ideologies," *Min-ad: Israel Studies in Musicology Online*, Vol. 5, Issue 1 (2006): 13-14, http://www.biu.ac.il/hu/mu/min-ad/06/John_Powell.pdf (accessed October 22, 2011).

³⁷⁸ Kushner, "John Powell: His Racial and Cultural Ideologies," 1.

³⁷⁹ Kushner, "John Powell: His Racial and Cultural Ideologies," 14.

³⁸⁰ Kushner, "John Powell: His Racial and Cultural Ideologies," 13-14.

enjoyed during his career, and proposed that Powell's attempts to establish American music on an Anglo-Saxon foundation were much more influential than many have suspected.³⁸¹

In 2008, J. Lester Feder published a paper in the *Black Music Research Journal* that demonstrated how Powell used music to create sociopolitical propaganda.³⁸² While Feder was loath to dredge up Powell's ideologies, he saw the merit of studying them as a means of combating their effects on the modern world.³⁸³ Feder proposed that "Powell's compositions rely on the somatic acoustics of racial difference to characterize blackness and whiteness in ways that assert the bodily basis of their absolute difference and the political implications of their incompatibility."³⁸⁴ He continued his argument by stating that John Powell used music to present "the white body as infinitely tunable," and able to achieve enlightened ideals, while framing the black body as "untunable" and incapable attaining or maintaining higher levels of existence.³⁸⁵ "Jim Crow racialized space so that individuals could never leave their race—their bodies would always be literally *placed* within it," Feder explained.³⁸⁶

Feder supported his claims through analyses of Powell's *Rhapsodie Nègre* and *Symphony in A*. By examining the musical elements and formal structures of the two works, Feder provided a convincing explanation of how Powell saturated his music with his sociopolitical

³⁸¹ Alain Frogley, "The old sweet Anglo-Saxon spell": racial discourse and the American reception of British music, 1895-1933," in *Western Music and Race*, ed. Julie Brown (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 252-256.

³⁸² J. Lester Feder, "Unequal Temperament: the Somatic Acoustics of Racial Difference in the Symphonic Music of John Powell," *Black Music Research Journal*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Spring 2008): 18 and 52-53, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25433793> (accessed October 22, 2011).

³⁸³ Feder, 24.

³⁸⁴ Feder, 23.

³⁸⁵ Feder, 24.

³⁸⁶ Feder, 24-25.

propaganda.³⁸⁷ The *Rhapsodie Nègre*, as its titled implied, was Powell's depiction of the black race. In contrast, Feder argued, Powell's *Symphony in A* was "the heart of whiteness."³⁸⁸

Feder's article was a vital step in uniting the historiographical record of John Powell. By demonstrating many of the ways in which Powell's music and sociopolitical beliefs reinforced each other, Feder opened wide the discussion on Powell's reputation and legacy. Like Kushner, Feder took his fellow scholars to task for their attempts to compartmentalize Powell's life. Historians, Feder observed, emphasized Powell's sociopolitical activities, while musicologists focused on Powell's music.³⁸⁹ Yet, by limiting themselves to one side or another of Powell's life, scholars were failing to see Powell's true significance as an activist who hoped "to define America through music."³⁹⁰

For over half a century, scholars' portrayals of John Powell have been crucial in shaping the ways in which people have perceived his reputation and legacy. Often, scholarly works reflected shifts in Americans' sociopolitical values. Occasionally, scholars led the charge in transforming altogether the ways in which people viewed Powell's reputation and legacy. The evolution of those perceptions is easily discernible through the decades of research. The man whom scholars once regarded as a noteworthy pianist-composer almost completely disappeared. He was replaced by a racist. Only recently have scholars begun to reunite the two halves of Powell's life in their research. While such unification may appear to be a minor exercise in academic semantics, the results would bear significant consequences.

³⁸⁷ Feder, 29-31.

³⁸⁸ Feder, 31-32 and 40.

³⁸⁹ Feder, 50-51.

³⁹⁰ Feder, 53.

Conclusion

If the composition is effective and expressive, the nonmusical message will endure with it, and continue to be restated to succeeding generations.

—Arnold Perris, *Music as Propaganda: Art to Persuade, Art to Control*³⁹¹

On April 30, 1980, the secretary-treasurer of the John Powell Foundation, Edmund Rennolds, Jr., wrote to fellow Foundation member Robert Kirkpatrick with a sober observation. “As more years pass since the death of John Powell and as we all get older, I think we have a real problem regarding the future of the John Powell Foundation,” he divulged. “There is no new blood coming on to handle affairs.”³⁹² Indeed, interest in John Powell had so diminished that the composer-pianist’s legacy was melting into obscurity. November 30, 1982, marked Powell’s birthday centennial. Yet, according to C. A. Bustard of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, only “a small group of Richmond musicians” congregated to honor the occasion, which was “apparently...the only local observance this year of the Powell centenary.”³⁹³ Thanks to the

³⁹¹ Arnold Perris, *Music as Propaganda: Art to Persuade, Art to Control* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985), 9.

³⁹² Edmund Rennolds, Jr. to Robert Kirkpatrick, April 30, 1980, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

³⁹³ Clarke Bustard, “Powell Admirers to Gather for Composer’s Centennial,” *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 30, 1982, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

John Powell Foundation's efforts and to resurging nationwide interest in Romantically-styled music, some of Powell's works were still alive, but barely.³⁹⁴

Since the late 1970s, many of the listening public had distanced themselves from Powell's music because of his association with Anglo-Saxon supremacy.³⁹⁵ That distance amounted to neglect. However, the members of the John Powell Foundation continued their attempts to stimulate interest in Powell's works.

In the early 1990s, for example, Florence Robertson Givens provided much of the initial encouragement to Richmond, Virginia's, local public radio station to create a radio special on John Powell.³⁹⁶ Greta Dollitz hosted the program, which aired in 1991.³⁹⁷ Powell was portrayed as a once-famous musician who suffered an unfortunate lapse into obscurity. The program mentioned Powell's performing career, but emphasized his work as a composer.³⁹⁸ In addition to airing performances of some of Powell's compositions, Dollitz interviewed a few of Powell's former students, including Ernest C. Mead and Jean Carrington Cook, as well as some Powell scholars, such as Sally Twedell Bagley and Roy Hamlin Johnson. Although Powell's enthusiasm for folk music was a central topic in many of the interviews, his racist past never surfaced in the program.³⁹⁹ Among other things, the program attributed Powell's obscurity to his increased interest in folk music and the difficulty of his compositions.⁴⁰⁰ Yet, time would soon

³⁹⁴ C. A. Bustard, "Powell Admirers to Gather for Composer's Centennial," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 30, 1982, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

³⁹⁵ C. A. Bustard, "Powell Work Now Revived," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, January 29, 1978, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

³⁹⁶ Greta Dollitz, *Virginia Musician: John Powell*, WCVE-FM Public Radio, audiocassette, 1991.

³⁹⁷ Greta Dollitz, *Virginia Musician: John Powell*, WCVE-FM Public Radio, audiocassette, 1991.

³⁹⁸ Greta Dollitz, *Virginia Musician: John Powell*, WCVE-FM Public Radio, audiocassette, 1991.

³⁹⁹ Greta Dollitz, *Virginia Musician: John Powell*, WCVE-FM Public Radio, audiocassette, 1991.

⁴⁰⁰ Greta Dollitz, *Virginia Musician: John Powell*, WCVE-FM Public Radio, audiocassette, 1991.

demonstrate that of all the factors responsible for the decline of Powell's reputation and legacy, musical considerations were the least consequential.

For the remainder of the twentieth century, the public's disinterest in John Powell gave every impression that he had been forgotten entirely. However, beneath the veneer of discreet indifference, Powell's reputation and legacy were still powerfully relevant to the American sociopolitical landscape. In an astonishing turn of events, John Powell would prove to be more provoking in death than he ever was during his lifetime.

Scholars had been whispering about Powell's sociopolitical activism for years. By the 1980s, there was little doubt among academics that Powell had been an overt racist. The release of racist materials in the University of Virginia's Powell collection confirmed that fact. In the twenty-first century, however, scholars began making a case for interpreting Powell's musical and sociopolitical activities as parts of the same puzzle. All of these arguments eventually trickled into the public realm until they finally burst the dam that was enforcing the apparent dormancy of Powell's reputation and legacy.

The first indication of new public interest in John Powell came in 2003 when the Virginia Symphony Orchestra, conducted by JoAnn Falletta, released a recording of Powell's *Symphony in A* on compact disc under the Albany Records label. Unlike the 2002 re-release and slight expansion of Powell's *At the Foot of Yonders Mountain*, the Virginia Symphony's recording was not sponsored by members of the former John Powell Foundation.

Drs. Joseph and Elizabeth Kahn of Word Pros, Inc., authored the program notes for the Virginia Symphony's compact disc. They described John Powell as a "Virginia-born pianist, composer and ethnomusicologist" whose "most important work was probably his methodical

collection of rural songs of the South.”⁴⁰¹ Simultaneously, the Kahns noted that “Powell’s reputation has been tarnished by his racial views, which...became totally unacceptable later in his life.”⁴⁰² They implied a link between Powell’s musical and sociopolitical worlds when they stated that the rules for the White Top Folk Festival reinforced Powell’s “conservative agenda,” but they did not probe the relationship further.⁴⁰³ In their description of the *Symphony in A*, they cited Powell’s use of folk idioms, but did not raise the possibility that Powell had manufactured musical propaganda.⁴⁰⁴

Given Powell’s obsession with nostalgia and his resistance to sociopolitical change, it is both ironic and poetic that the impetus for the most recent development in his reputation and legacy came from a history professor and students at a public university in Powell’s beloved home state of Virginia. Inspired by the information they found in David Whisnant’s book, *All That Is Native and Fine*, Dr. Richard Straw’s history students at Radford University encouraged the removal of Powell’s name from their campus’s fine arts building in 2005.⁴⁰⁵ According to a newspaper article by Christian Trejbal, Dean Joe Scartelli and the rest of the University’s administration had planned to honor that request, but were delayed in doing so after other matters

⁴⁰¹ Joseph and Elizabeth Kahn, program notes for *John Powell: Symphony in A Major “Virginia Symphony” and Shenandoah*, Virginia Symphony Orchestra, dir. JoAnn Falletta, Albany Records TROY589, CD, 2003.

⁴⁰² Joseph and Elizabeth Kahn, program notes for *John Powell: Symphony in A Major “Virginia Symphony” and Shenandoah*, Virginia Symphony Orchestra, dir. JoAnn Falletta, Albany Records TROY589, CD, 2003.

⁴⁰³ Joseph and Elizabeth Kahn, program notes for *John Powell: Symphony in A Major “Virginia Symphony” and Shenandoah*, Virginia Symphony Orchestra, dir. JoAnn Falletta, Albany Records TROY589, CD, 2003.

⁴⁰⁴ Joseph and Elizabeth Kahn, program notes for *John Powell: Symphony in A Major “Virginia Symphony” and Shenandoah*, Virginia Symphony Orchestra, dir. JoAnn Falletta, Albany Records TROY589, CD, 2003.

⁴⁰⁵ “Good Riddance to RU’s Powell Hall,” *Roanoke Times*, September 22, 2010, Newspaper Source Plus, <http://proxy.library.vcu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,url.cookie,uid&db=n5h&AN=2W62804408575&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed March 19, 2012), and Gene Hyde, e-mail message to author, March 21, 2012.

demanding their attention.⁴⁰⁶ When the topic resurfaced in 2010, the University wasted no time in making the requested change.⁴⁰⁷ On September 17, 2010, the Radford University Board of Visitors met in a special session and unanimously approved the erasure of John Powell's name from the fine arts building. Henceforth, Powell Hall would be known as Porterfield Hall.⁴⁰⁸

Renaming a university building is not, in itself, an earthshaking event. In Radford University's case, the act of renaming was merely a symbolic gesture. John Powell, the pianist-composer, had disappeared long ago, and few had seemed to care. Powell's reputation and legacy as a racist were clearly a different matter, since the University took steps to censure their influence. Yet, the incident was much more significant than a simple issuance of public criticism.

In the early decades of Powell's career, the listening public accepted his musical propaganda with few complaints.⁴⁰⁹ Likewise, during his sociopolitical activism through events such as the White Top Folk Festival, there was no widespread opposition to his agenda.⁴¹⁰ When Radford University's Board of Visitors first decided to name the campus's fine arts building after John Powell in 1966, for example, they stated that they were naming the building

⁴⁰⁶ Christian Trejbal, "Radford University Will No Longer Honor a Racist," *Roanoke Times*, September 12, 2010, Newspaper Source Plus, <http://proxy.library.vcu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,url.cookie,uid&db=n5h&AN=2W6921882173&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed March 19, 2012).

⁴⁰⁷ Christian Trejbal, "Radford University Will No Longer Honor a Racist," *Roanoke Times*, September 12, 2010, Newspaper Source Plus, <http://proxy.library.vcu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,url.cookie,uid&db=n5h&AN=2W6921882173&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed March 19, 2012).

⁴⁰⁸ Kimberly Chiapetto, secretary, Radford University Board of Visitors, Minutes, September 17, 2010, Radford University, http://www.radford.edu/content/dam/departments/administrative/bov/content-files/meeting-minutes/minutes_091610.pdf (accessed March 19, 2012).

⁴⁰⁹ "John Powell Recital a Musical Treat," March 20, 1919; and "Southern Airs Heard," *Times*, December 5, 1921, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d. Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 37, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁴¹⁰ David E. Whisnant, *All That Is Native and Fine: the Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 191.

after a world-famous Virginian pianist, composer, and folk music advocate.⁴¹¹ They had made no effort to commemorate the Anglo-Saxon Clubs of America, nor the man who had been the primary advocate of the Racial Integrity Act of 1924.

Near the end of Powell's life and for decades after his death, tentative discomfort with his hardline sociopolitical stance manifested itself through listeners' reluctance to embrace his music.⁴¹² By 2010, that discomfort had congealed into outright rejection. "All due respect to his accomplishments as a musician and composer," Joe Scartelli said to the *Roanoke Times*' Christian Trejbal, "but we cannot overlook the rest of his history."⁴¹³ In the resulting article, Trejbal also weighed an opinion: "Powell was one of the commonwealth's most notorious racists."⁴¹⁴ An editorial in the *Roanoke Times* stated that John Powell was "an accomplished musician," but also noted that "a terrible racist does not deserve a point of honor" at a public university.⁴¹⁵ Powell's musical accomplishments became distasteful as people realized that it was sociopolitical propaganda that drove them. Powell "was a firm believer in white racial

⁴¹¹ Report to the Board of Visitors, October 4, 1966, Radford Board of Visitors Papers, Radford University Archives, McConnell Library, Radford University, Radford, Virginia; *Inside the President's Office*, Vol. 1, No. 20, Radford College, April 1, 1968, Charles Knox Martin Official Papers, Radford University Archives, McConnell Library, Radford University, Radford, Virginia; *Inside the President's Office*, Vol. 1, No. 25, Radford College, May 6, 1968, Charles Knox Martin Official Papers, Radford University Archives, McConnell Library, Radford University, Radford, Virginia; and "Dedication of Powell Hall," program, Charles Knox Martin Official Papers, Radford University Archives, McConnell Library, Radford University, Radford, Virginia.

⁴¹² C. A. Bustard, "Powell Work Now Revived," *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, January 29, 1978, Papers of John Powell Foundation, 1945-1986, Accession #8871-g, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁴¹³ Christian Trejbal, "Radford University Will No Longer Honor a Racist," *Roanoke Times*, September 12, 2010, Newspaper Source Plus, <http://proxy.library.vcu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,url,cookie,uid&db=n5h&AN=2W6921882173&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed March 19, 2012).

⁴¹⁴ Christian Trejbal, "Radford University Will No Longer Honor a Racist," *Roanoke Times*, September 12, 2010, Newspaper Source Plus, <http://proxy.library.vcu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,url,cookie,uid&db=n5h&AN=2W6921882173&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed March 19, 2012).

⁴¹⁵ "Good Riddance to RU's Powell Hall," *Roanoke Times*, September 22, 2010, Newspaper Source Plus, <http://proxy.library.vcu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,url,cookie,uid&db=n5h&AN=2W62804408575&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed March 19, 2012).

purity and equated race with culture, especially music,” Trejbal wrote.⁴¹⁶ For the first time ever, the listening public had seen the link between Powell’s musical career and sociopolitical beliefs and condemned him for both.

In his 1985 book, *Music as Propaganda: Art to Persuade, Art to Control*, Arnold Perris stated that “If the composition is effective and expressive, *the nonmusical message will endure with it*, and continue to be restated to succeeding generations.”⁴¹⁷ This was especially true for the musical propaganda that John Powell manufactured. Yet, rather than allowing Powell’s sociopolitical message to be propagated to future audiences, present-day Americans have largely opted to abandon the music and the man responsible for it.

Mary Helen Chapman noted in her 1970 master’s thesis that, while Americans have forgotten John Powell, they have remembered some of Powell’s contemporaries such as Charles Ives.⁴¹⁸ Ives was not as well-known in his day as Powell was, yet his music has prevailed in American musical memory. Ives’s longevity can be traced in part to his sociopolitical beliefs.⁴¹⁹ He stated:

A true love of country is likely to be so big that it will embrace the virtue one sees in other countries... there is good authority that an African soul under an X-ray looks identically like an American soul. There is a futility in selecting a certain type to represent a “whole,” unless the interest in the spirit of the type coincides with that of the whole.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁶ Christian Trejbal, “Radford University Will No Longer Honor a Racist,” *Roanoke Times*, September 12, 2010, Newspaper Source Plus, <http://proxy.library.vcu.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,url,cookie,uid&db=n5h&AN=2W6921882173&site=ehost-live&scope=site> (accessed March 19, 2012).

⁴¹⁷ Perris, 9.

⁴¹⁸ Mary Helen Chapman, “The Piano Works of John Powell” (master’s thesis, Indiana University, 1968), 1-2.

⁴¹⁹ Chapman, 2.

⁴²⁰ Charles Ives, *Essays Before a Sonata, the Majority, and Other Writings*, ed. Howard Boatwright (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1961) 78-79.

The sociopolitical and cultural inclusivity that Ives expressed were the values with which many Americans wished to identify themselves. Powell's rigid and divisive ones were not.

Six years after Powell debuted his *Rhapsodie Nègre* in 1918, his contemporary George Gershwin premiered his own *Rhapsody in Blue*. Both rhapsodies for piano and orchestra were phenomenally popular in their day. However, while the *Rhapsody in Blue* grew into a relished and time-honored classic, Powell's *Rhapsodie Nègre* became virtually extinct. Among the many explanations for this result is that Powell's music ultimately conflicted with the values that Americans decided to claim as their own. *Rhapsodie Nègre* was elite and exclusionary. It demonstrated the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon heritage by denigrating the African-American one.⁴²¹ Gershwin, on the other hand, dissolved the barriers of race and class by drawing material for his *Rhapsody in Blue* from the diversity of jazz music.⁴²² Jazz was a metaphor for the American melting pot, as it blended traditions from a variety of races, classes, and cultures.⁴²³

The saga of John Powell's reputation and legacy may not be over. History has a knack for bringing surprises alongside sociopolitical and cultural change. What is certain, however, is the journey that Powell's reputation and legacy have experienced thus far. Powell was once regarded as a world-renowned musician and Anglo-Saxon supremacist. After he died, he became remembered as a racist. Yet, even that memory seems to be one that many Americans would prefer to forget.

⁴²¹ Richard Brockwell, program notes for Detroit Symphony Orchestra performance of *Rhapsodie Nègre*, (Detroit: 1918-1919 season), 152-154, Papers of John Powell, 1888-1978, n.d., Accession #7284, 7284-a, Box 34, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Virginia.

⁴²² Joseph Horowitz, *Classical Music in America: a History of Its Rise and Fall* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2005), 460-467.

⁴²³ Donald Jay Grout and Claude V. Palisca, eds., *A History of Western Music*, 6th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 749-750, 775.

John Powell had attempted to foist an Anglo-Saxon supremacist identity onto the United States through his use of musical propaganda. Less than two weeks after Powell died, Martin Luther King, Jr., shared a dream with the world. “With this faith,” King proclaimed, “we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood.”⁴²⁴ Americans rejected John Powell’s music, his reputation, and his legacy because they rejected his vision for their country. Instead, they elected to define their nation with the harmony of King’s “symphony.” Though they have yet to render a flawless performance, they clearly share King’s deeply-held conviction that practice makes perfect.

⁴²⁴ Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream,” August 28, 1963, The King Center Digital Archives, <http://www.thekingcenter.org/archive/document/i-have-dream> (accessed April 14, 2012).

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