

# [II.5] Amateur and Professional, Permanent and Transient

## *Orchestras in the District of Columbia, 1877–1905*

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In January of 1905, Oscar G. Sonneck, then head of the Music Division at the Library of Congress, wrote to the editors of the *Washington Post*: “It seems incredible that the Capital of the United States should not be willing to support a symphony orchestra. . . . All who love good music and know its uplifting power on a community should contribute their share, be it ever so small, and should induce even their unmusical friends do the same toward the establishment of a permanent orchestra.”<sup>1</sup> Sonneck was responding to an appeal from a local ensemble, which warned that without greater financial support, it would “in all probability go permanently out of existence with the stamp of failure upon it.”<sup>2</sup>

Such exchanges were commonplace in District of Columbia newspapers throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Local musicians would announce a new permanent orchestra, and an inaugural concert would be given to great fanfare before a sympathetic press. After a season or two, a circular would be issued seeking additional funds, and in short order the ensemble would disintegrate, sometimes with a farewell concert but just as often without comment. Blame was then assigned to Washington’s cultural naiveté, the lack of an acceptable concert venue, or the difficult financial times. Finally, the press would lament: “The shores of Washington are strewn with the wrecks of musical endeavor.”<sup>3</sup>

Such stories of a national capital unable to sustain a permanent professional orchestra are gloomy only when one is concerned with institutional permanence and fixated on professionals. Once other models of orchestral success are admitted, however, late nineteenth-century Washington proves

1 · O. G. Sonneck, “Views of People on Various Subjects,” *Washington Post*, January 30, 1905, 9.

2 · “Plea for Orchestra,” *Washington Post*, January 25, 1905, 10.

3 · “Is Washington a Musical City?” *Washington Post*, April 17, 1905, 6.

to have been home to a host of ensembles, a fact noticed by the *Musical Courier*: “Although Washington is a little place, she is well supplied with local orchestras. There are the Philharmonic Orchestra, under William H. Santelmann; the Marine Band Orchestra, also under his direction; the Georgetown Orchestra, directed by Josef Kaspar, and the Haley Orchestra, not counting bands and several small orchestras.”<sup>4</sup> Two such local ensembles are of particular interest: the Georgetown Amateur Orchestra, which welcomed non-professional players, and the Washington Symphony Orchestra, which went through several brief incarnations. Taken together these ensembles demonstrate that the tendency to privilege permanence and praise professionalism can cause us to undervalue the orchestral life of an American city.

### *An Amateur Ensemble: The Georgetown Orchestra*

After serving as the unified District of Columbia’s first governor, Henry David Cooke (1825–81) settled in the west part of the district and made a name for himself as a local benefactor. In what must have been a particularly pleasing donation, he opened his parlor to rehearsals by a trio of chamber musicians beginning in 1877. None of the men who gathered in the Cooke home were professional players; rather, their meetings were a way of pursuing music “as a recreation and pleasure in the evening, after their regular avocations of the day were over.”<sup>5</sup> This trio consisted of the host’s own son, financier Henry David Cooke Jr. (violin), painter Charles S. Hein (piano), and dentist Francis Sinclair Barbarin (cello).<sup>6</sup>

It did not take long for other friends to join this group of chamber musicians, and by the early 1880s they had formed a small orchestra: “The enjoyment experienced by these gentlemen, and the improvement they derived from their practice attracted the attention of other performers, and so gradually their number increased until they found they had a very fair orchestra.”<sup>7</sup> This new ensemble presented its first concert on January 19, 1882, at Curtis

4 · *Musical Courier* 42 (May 29, 1901): 29.

5 · “The Georgetown Amateur Orchestra,” *Washington Star*, April 25, 1885.

6 · Barbarin was not unknown in Washington’s artistic community, as he had served as assistant curator at the Corcoran Gallery since 1874; he would become the gallery’s curator in 1889. Several histories of the Georgetown Amateur Orchestra appeared in the press. See especially Ray C. B. Brown, “Fostering of City’s Musical Growth throughout Years No Easy Task,” *Washington Post*, December 6, 1937, AN17.

7 · “The Georgetown Amateur Orchestra,” *Washington Star*, April 25, 1885, 2. The Historical Society of Washington, D.C., owns a photograph, probably from the late 1870s, labeled “Original Georgetown Amateur Orchestra.” It shows eight well-dressed men with instruments. Three have violins or violas, and there are also two flutes, one cello, a guitar, and an alto horn.

Hall in Georgetown, with the leader of the Albaugh Opera House orchestra, Robert Camp Bernays, serving as conductor.

With regular performances and steady paychecks, theater orchestras served as one of the best musical employers in the District of Columbia. Even so, it was often necessary for theater musicians to supplement this income, and Bernays chose to aid a number of Washington's amateur clubs by providing music lessons to their members. It is thus likely that two of the musicians at that first Georgetown Amateur Orchestra concert came from the Bernays studio: a young Hermann Rakemann, who "performed a violin solo so well as to elicit an encore," and "a little miss of not more than ten summers, Miss Lillie Parsloe by name," who played "upon a viola with perfect unconcern and apparent correctness."<sup>8</sup>

In 1885 the ensemble accompanied a production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*, which was "rendered entirely by ladies and gentlemen prominent in society."<sup>9</sup> This benefit performance for the orchestra raised its profile considerably. According to the *Washington Star*, the ensemble had given the city complete symphonies by Haydn and Beethoven at a time when "no local assemblage of musicians had ventured upon symphonic work."<sup>10</sup> The *Washington Post* proudly announced that the Georgetown Amateur Orchestra had "demonstrated that it is the best organization of its kind."<sup>11</sup> With their new success the group established a subscription series, and annual dues of five dollars entitled passive members to four tickets to each of the season's four concerts. The press urged Washingtonians to sustain their orchestra and gain the "knowledge that they are aiding to support a most excellent and successful educational organization."<sup>12</sup>

In November 1886 the ensemble turned to a new conductor and engaged one of the most active professional musicians in late nineteenth-century Washington, Josef Kaspar (1858–1936). Kaspar took up the baton on condition "that he be allowed to have absolute control of the orchestra."<sup>13</sup> The new conductor immediately set to work transforming the ensemble from a social club into a well-rehearsed local symphony. His musical standards were higher than some of the players had expected: "The very first rehearsal proved too rigorous for several members and they resigned. A few who were incapable

8. "Amusements," *Washington Post*, January 20, 1882, 2.

9. "A Society Event," *Washington Post*, March 29, 1885, 2.

10. "The Georgetown Amateur Orchestra," *Washington Star*, April 25, 1885, 2.

11. "Amusements," *Washington Post*, February 14, 1885, 2.

12. "The Georgetown Amateur Orchestra," *Washington Post*, May 23, 1886, 8.

13. "Kaspar Takes the Baton," *Washington Post*, November 21, 1886, 2. That same year, Kaspar's wife, Annie Roemer, created the leading role in *The Queen of Hearts*, an operetta by Marine Band leader John Philip Sousa.

of performing upon their instruments were allowed to step aside, and others who were second-rate musicians were spurred on to better work."<sup>14</sup> Kaspar replaced these players and expanded the ensemble to fifty instrumentalists. Although most of the musicians were still amateurs, Kaspar announced that "professional players will be engaged to supply deficiencies."<sup>15</sup>

Programs from the mid-1880s reveal a steady increase in the number of professional musicians aiding the Georgetown amateurs. They also reveal that Kaspar, who served "without remuneration," created demanding programs that mixed complete symphonies with popular selections.<sup>16</sup> At a concert in December of 1887, the ensemble opened with Mendelssohn's *Scottish Symphony*. It then accompanied a local vocalist in a selection from Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice*. This was followed by a movement from Anton Rubinstein's Violin Concerto, a *Norwegian Rhapsody* from Johan Svendsen, a song by Dudley Buck, Camille Saint-Saëns's *Jota aragonese*, and a "patrol" based on Louis Desormes's *En revenant de la revue*. Such programs were fairly typical of late nineteenth-century Washington, and Kaspar often included both complete symphonies and individual movements from Beethoven, Schubert, and Mendelssohn.<sup>17</sup>

In 1889 the press praised the orchestra's decade-long contributions to Washington's cultural education: "For nearly ten years the public rehearsals have been attended by large audiences, the number at each concert for the last three years averaging 1,500 people. They have listened to programmes which have been, in the main, well and judiciously chosen, and by studious attention have advanced in the knowledge of musical compositions. To be sure, the ensemble playing is not faultless, and there is often a painful amateurishness about the work of the soloists, and yet, despite this fact, I believe it is not extravagant to say that the Orchestra has been influential in educating a great mass of people to the enjoyment and intelligent appreciation of such organizations as the band which Mr. Gericke lately directed."<sup>18</sup>

Kaspar led the Georgetown Amateur Orchestra for nearly a decade, and when he resigned in 1894, the ensemble turned to the young musician who

14 · "Music and Musicians," *Washington Post*, November 13, 1887, 5.

15 · "Kaspar Takes the Baton," *Washington Post*, November 21, 1886, 2.

16 · "Professor Kaspar's Tenth Anniversary," *Washington Post*, May 4, 1890, 12.

17 · Several printed programs can be found in the scrapbooks compiled by orchestra member Mattie Saxton, now in the Washingtoniana Division of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Washington, D.C. The orchestra performed many of the European classics that were favorites of late nineteenth-century Americans, including works by Bizet, Chopin, Dvořák, Gade, Gounod, Grieg, Raff, Eduard Strauss, Ambrose Thomas, and Weber.

18 · "In Its Tenth Season," *Washington Post*, December 1, 1889, 12. The "band" referred to here is the Boston Symphony, which Karl Gericke led in a concert of works by Haydn, Wagner, and Moskowski at Washington's Congregational Church on January 18, 1889.

had soloed at their first concert in 1882. Hermann Rakemann was now a well-known Washington violinist, and he continued Kaspar's reforms by increasing the frequency of rehearsals and enlarging the ensemble to some seventy-five players.<sup>19</sup>

Washington had seen orchestras come and go, often surviving only a season or two, but the Georgetown amateurs held together for nearly two decades. By the 1890s the ensemble was recognized as one of the city's greatest artistic accomplishments: "Washington may well be proud of the Georgetown Orchestra. Few cities in the land can boast of an amateur organization so closely approaching a professional standard."<sup>20</sup> One critic was especially proud of this local ensemble. In 1894 he compared the Georgetown amateurs to the Boston Symphony and thanked them for occasionally providing audiences with a "number of less length and greater melodic brilliance." The Georgetown amateurs could even boast "twenty-four violins, a larger number than the symphony orchestra brings here."<sup>21</sup>

In 1895 the Georgetown Amateur Orchestra, at least temporarily, came to an end. The *Washington Post* announced, "From present indications the Georgetown Orchestra has played its last season, it being the general impression of the members that it will not be continued next year." No explanation was given other than that the ensemble had completed its "missionary work in bringing local musical people up to a love of orchestral performances."<sup>22</sup> The amateurs met in October and held rehearsals, but they gave no further concerts.<sup>23</sup> For the time being, the Georgetown Amateur Orchestra was gone.

### Membership

Although theater orchestras were an important source of income for local musicians, Washington's most lucrative musical employment was to be found in the United States Marine Band. In addition to providing players with a stable paycheck, this ensemble acted as a clearinghouse for musical employment within the District of Columbia. Concert programs from the nineteenth century reveal that Marine Band musicians were involved in al-

19 . "Under a New Leader," *Washington Post*, December 24, 1893, 9; and "Concerts and Entertainments," *Washington Post*, February 1, 1894, 5.

20 . "A Creditable Performance," *Washington Post*, January 5, 1895, 4.

21 . "Concert of the Georgetown Orchestra," *Washington Post*, April 1, 1894, 20.

22 . "Musical Topics," *Washington Post*, July 28, 1895, 7. It was clear that Rakemann planned to leave the orchestra and form his own professional ensemble.

23 . "Musical Topics," *Washington Post*, October 27, 1895, 18; *ibid.*, November 15, 1896, 18.

most every aspect of the city's musical life.<sup>24</sup> It is hardly surprising that when Josef Kaspar sought to expand his amateur orchestra with more solid players he turned to the "President's Own." The list below shows the orchestra's roster as printed in a program from 1886. Of the forty-seven players listed on it, six were members of the Marine Band (Francis Lusby, Franklin Pearce, Charles Thierbach, Louis Tillieux, and Salvatore and Vincent Petrola). Later rosters included so many Marine Band musicians that in 1891 the orchestra had to arrange its concert schedule to finish the season "before the 1st of April, when the Marine Band, from which the brass and wood wind of the orchestra are obtained, will leave on a six week's tour."<sup>25</sup>

Membership of the Georgetown Amateur Orchestra, December 28, 1886

<i>1st Violin</i>	<i>Violoncello</i>
H. D. Cooke	I. Thos. Davis Jr.
E. Szemelenyi	J. H. Alexander
F. Weiler	Chas. Thierbach
J. R. Hill	Carl Fischer
T. Nordlinger	Ernest Lent
Dr. George Arthur	A. E. Knorr
Emil Kubel	<i>Contra Bass</i>
Miss Birdie Lucas	A. W. Tyler
Miss Nona Stosch	H. Schuldt
<i>2nd Violin</i>	L. Brandt
T. E. Rogers	<i>Flute</i>
F. C. Schaefer	E. W. Stone
Carl Keferstein	H. Schutter
C. H. Seaton	<i>Oboe</i>
Miss Mattie Saxton	C. S. Hein
Miss Emma Prall	O. L. Wolfsteiner
<i>Viola</i>	<i>Clarinet</i>
W. H. Burr	T. M. Fields
Geo. K. Finckel	Wm. Jardine
R. C. Stearns	<i>Cornet</i>
A. Fischer	Wm. Long
	J. R. Gibson

24 · For more on the Marine Band's place in Washington's musical culture, see Patrick Warfield, "John Esputa, John Philip Sousa, and the Boundaries of a Musical Career," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 6 (2009).

25 · "Music and Patriotism," *Washington Post*, November 22, 1891, 14.

*Horns*

N. D. Adams

L. Tillieux

S. Petrola

V. Petrola

*Trombone*

F. H. Barbarin

W. C. Babcock

F. Pearce

*Tympani and Drums*

F. Lusby

S. Tanhauser

*Bassoon*

J. Ulke

J. Henings

Not all professional players in Washington were military or theater musicians, however. Given the city's large number of musical amateurs, there was great demand for professional instructors, and several musicians managed to cobble together an existence by running music studios and working with amateur groups. More often than not, these men (and women) were European born and trained, and they frequently used that background to their professional advantage. Kaspar, who had studied in Prague and maintained a violin studio in Washington, clearly belonged to this class of teacher-professionals.<sup>26</sup>

A particularly interesting example is Ernest Lent (1856–1922), who briefly led the orchestra. Lent was a German immigrant who came to New York to join the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra as principal cellist in 1883. He moved to Washington the next year to open a music studio, and his 1884 card boasts of training at the Royal Conservatory in Leipzig and advertises lessons in piano, violin, cello, and composition. Lent was also a member of New York's Manuscript Society and its corresponding secretary in Washington, where he evidently had some success as a composer.<sup>27</sup> To support himself Lent was active in a number of Washington's musical associations, both professional and amateur. In addition to the Georgetown Amateur Orchestra, he led the Washington String Orchestra, the Ladies String Quartet, and the

26 · Information about Kaspar can be found in "Professor Kaspar's Tenth Anniversary," *Washington Post*, May 4, 1890, 12; and "Josef Kaspar, Noted Teacher and Orchestra Director, Dies," *Washington Post*, March 20, 1936, 14. Kaspar was successful enough to be able to purchase a summer home in the Blue Ridge Mountains, where he laid out the grounds of Mont Salvat in three movements: a formal park (*maestoso*), a homestead (*symphonia domestica*), and a "rugged stretch of ground" (*finale allegro*). A "winding path led to Valhalla and a Bruennhilde Rock," overlooking the Shenandoah Valley.

27 · See E. Douglas Bomberger, "A Tidal Wave of Encouragement": *American Composers' Concerts in the Gilded Age* (2002), 208. Elise K. Kirk suggests that Lent's 1898 performance of his own Piano Trio was one of the first times serious chamber music had been brought to the president's home; see her *Music at the White House: A History of the American Spirit* (1986), 158–59.

Lyric (Vocal) Quartet. He played with a professional chamber music society known as the Philharmonic Club, took part in a series of Working People's Concerts, and provided music for Oscar Sonneck's lectures at the Library of Congress.<sup>28</sup>

Both Kaspar and Lent seem to have lacked regular orchestral employment, but they were prominent teachers in Washington, and their names are frequently found as conductors, performers, and composers, often in amateur circles. They were presumably paid for their services or used the city's amateur clubs to enlarge their private studios. Several other musicians from the above roster also fit into this group of professionals among the amateurs. These include Robert Stearns, who conducted the orchestra on one occasion, the instrument maker Emil Kubel, and William Burr, William Long, and Henry Schuldt, each of whom listed his occupation as "musician" in the city directory. These professional players account for twelve of the forty-seven musicians listed in the roster.

This was an amateur orchestra, however, and many of its members really were amateurs. Like the professional musicians, these amateurs fell into two groups. First, there were those for whom music was very nearly a vocation, but whose principal jobs were not musical in nature. Ernest Szemelényi Jr. (1852–1919) was a model of this type of player. Szemelényi's father was a Hungarian immigrant and a prolific composer of parlor music. We can assume that the son studied with the father before enrolling at Harvard, where he appears to have been a student of John Knowles Paine and a frequent vocalist prior to his graduation in 1875.<sup>29</sup> He taught briefly in New York (having the young Civil Service commissioner Theodore Roosevelt as a pupil). Then in 1881 Szemelényi won a post as translator in the D.C. Patent Office, a position he would occupy for most of the rest of his life.

Szemelényi was hardly a simple public servant. A profile published in 1891 was correct in reporting that since his "advent in Washington there have been few musical undertakings in which he has not taken an active part."<sup>30</sup> In addition to serving as conductor of the Georgetown Amateur Orchestra, Szemelényi was a periodic concertmaster, violinist, violist, or pianist with a variety of other amateur groups, including the Choral Society, the Richard

28 · The 1905 Working People's Concerts were organized by Maria von Unschuld and sponsored by the American Federation of Labor for the purpose of "giving the best class of music by good artists at modest prices." See "Miss Unschuld's Concert," *Washington Post*, March 13, 1905, 2.

29 · Szemelényi's connection to Paine is uncertain, but a collection of pieces by Paine's students, now at the Houghton Library at Harvard University, includes a short song in manuscript by E. Szemelényi Jr. titled "Put Forth Thy Leaf."

30 · "Leads as an Amateur," *Washington Post*, November 15, 1891, 14.



Wagner Society, the Travel Club, the German Club, and the French Club. In short, Szemelényi, although not a professional musician, was hardly an amateur. He was the product of a musical family, was well trained as a musician, and took part in a wide range of musical events. He had a regular nonmusical source of income, but was constantly active in musical circles.

Another vocational amateur was Albert W. Tyler, a veteran of the Civil War who worked his way up from watchman to clerk in the Treasury Department. He was a remarkably active musician who “was connected at different times with numerous musical organizations.”<sup>31</sup> In addition to playing double bass in the Georgetown Amateur Orchestra, Tyler directed Heald’s American Band and served as president of the Washington Musical Assembly, No. 4. Much the same could be said of Edward W. Stone, the orchestra’s librarian and flutist. He does not appear to have been a professional musician, but he was devoted to the ensemble. The *Washington Post* observed, “It is only justice to say that the orchestra was kept alive during one or two periods of disaster solely by his energy and persistence.”<sup>32</sup>

Perhaps the most interesting type of musician was the true amateur, the player for whom the orchestra was a periodic social event and artistic outlet. More often than not, such players were highly educated musically (often by artists such as Robert Bernays, Josef Kaspar, and Ernest Lent); they were usually from wealthy families and frequently well connected in Washington’s political and business life. All of the orchestra’s founding members fit into this group, as do most of the remaining players listed in the above roster. Because many of the ensemble’s early members were residents of Georgetown, it is not surprising to discover that they often had jobs in government, an aspect of the ensemble not lost on the press: “The interesting fact remains that on its bead-roll of honor are men prominent in our official, social, and business life.”<sup>33</sup>

A brief tally of the remaining musicians from the roster reveals just how prominent these true amateurs were in Washington. John Hill was the chief of the Engraving Division at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, and Ferdinand Weiler was the chief of the Loan Division in the United States Treasury. The treasury was also represented by Thomas Rogers, the superintendent of the National Bank Redemption Agency. There were a significant number of clerks in the orchestra, including Frank Schaefer, Charles Seaton, and Wallace Babcock. James Alexander was a clerk in the Post Office Department and the brother of Congressman De Alva Alexander from New York.

31 . “A Good Citizen Gone,” *Washington Post*, March 7, 1892, 2.

32 . “His Work for Harmony,” *Washington Post*, October 11, 1891, 14.

33 . “Good Amateur Music,” *Washington Post*, January 31, 1891, 5.

The military was also well represented. George Finckel was chief clerk in the Quartermaster-General's office, James Gibson was a clerk in the War Department, and Dr. George Arthur was a U.S. Navy surgeon. Other federally employed members included I. Thomas Davis Jr. and Augustus Knorr, chemists in the Department of Agriculture, and Nelson Adams, a clerk in the Government Printing Office and presidentially appointed notary public.

Several orchestra members were in real estate or construction. Carl Keferstein was a well-known architect, Tyler Nordlinger a real estate developer, Otto Wolfsteiner a builder, and Julius Ulke a draftsman; William Jardin worked for the Washington Granite Company. Others were connected with the visual arts, such as F. S. Barbarin, who became curator of the Corcoran Gallery, painter Charles S. Hein, and H. Schutter, who had the intriguing job of superintendent of painting at the Post Office. Of the rest, Anthony Fischer was a mining engineer, Louis Brandt a tailor, and Francis Hyde Barbarin (Dr. Barbarin's son) a bookkeeper.

The bulk of the orchestra's players were men, but there were also several young women in the ensemble, most of whom came from Josef Kaspar's violin studio. Over its history the ensemble included a number of women belonging to prominent families. Miss Mabel Clare Money was the youngest daughter of Senator Hernando DeSoto Money of Mississippi. Some went on to pursue professional careers in music. Mattie Saxton, for example, moved to New York to study violin with Edward Arnold before her untimely death from tuberculosis. Birdie Lucas had a successful career as a local soloist. Nona Stosch (1872–1956) achieved much more fame. After training with Bernays and Kaspar, she traveled to Europe to pursue a musical education and began a concert career as Leonora von Stosch. She gave up the violin after her marriage to Sir Edgar Speyer, but in 1927 won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry as Lady Leonora Speyer.<sup>34</sup> Finally, Ernest Lent's daughter was the well-known concert violinist Sylvia Lent (ca. 1907–72).<sup>35</sup>

The press could not resist commenting on the visual benefits that the women brought to the orchestra's concerts: "It is wholly without the bounds of competent criticism to speak rationally of a performance which deliberately intrenches [*sic*] itself behind a double-banked row of blushing young womanhood, mostly still in the 'teens, a charm of 'waving arms and woven faces,' wielding the bow like so many virgin Dianas."<sup>36</sup> But the presence of women was also a source of local pride. In writing that German orchestras were considering the addition of women, the *Washington Post* noted that this

34 · On Speyer's Washington career, see "They Play the Violin," *Washington Star*, March 12, 1892, 7.

35 · Sylvia Lent would marry the critic Alfred Frankenstein.

36 · "Good Amateur Music," *Washington Post*, January 31, 1891, 5.

District of Columbia ensemble was well ahead of the curve: “America will probably lead in this as in other reforms, and at present the Georgetown Orchestra is probably the largest and most important organization of its kind in which women are admitted on an equal footing with men.”<sup>37</sup>

### *Amateur Reception*

What did audiences think of this assortment of men and women, amateurs and professionals? Hundreds of reviews of the orchestra have been preserved, but just one major event reveals the public’s impression. The 1888 election of the New Yorker Levi P. Morton to the vice presidency of the United States led the New York–based cultural philanthropist Jeannette Thurber to take a new interest in the musical life of Washington, D.C. She and Mrs. Morton conspired to equip the capital with a concert hall that would “elevate the standard of culture in this country.” The press agreed that the election of Benjamin Harrison might finally allow Washington to construct the much-needed venue: “The change of Administration, with its infusion of new blood in the city, may, however, bring about the erection of the much-desired building.”<sup>38</sup> The Thurber-Morton enterprise was soon realized with the opening of Lincoln Hall on December 20, 1889.

But Thurber was not finished with the capital. She recognized that if the city was to have a permanent and professional orchestra, it would be best to engage Washington’s large population of amateur musicians. In January of 1890 she and Major John W. Powell (another musically inclined amateur and director of the U.S. Geological Survey) floated a proposal. They promised that if all of the city’s amateur orchestral and choral organizations would band together, they would have access to Lincoln Hall as well as conductors and section leaders from New York and Boston.<sup>39</sup>

This scheme never materialized, but it did lead to a number of telling reactions in the papers. The most vicious letter was signed by Naphtali Nordlinger (probably a relative of Tyler Nordlinger, an amateur violinist, real estate developer, and Georgetown Orchestra member). Nordlinger’s argument focused on local pride. He began by charging that “either through ignorance of the exact condition of local musical affairs, or the misrepresentation of some

37. “Musical Notes,” *Washington Post*, November 25, 1900, 20. Women were not unknown in nineteenth-century American orchestras, but as Anna-Lise P. Santella shows in this volume (chapter I.2), they most often appeared in all-woman ensembles.

38. “A Music Hall Possible,” *Washington Post*, March 24, 1889, 10.

39. “Music and Music Lovers,” *Washington Post*, January 19, 1890, 12; “Mrs. Thurber’s Ideas,” *Washington Post*, January 20, 1890, 6.

cackling ‘deletante’ [*sic*], her ideas were unpractical and tended in the wrong direction.”<sup>40</sup> Thurber’s offer of a professional conductor was unneeded, inspired by an “ignorance of the make-up, condition and temperament of an amateur orchestra.” Celebrated conductors could never hope to “cope with the thousand and one difficulties which surround the efforts of an amateur band,” and quite simply there was no need to bring in New Yorkers to prop up the ensemble. Not only did the orchestra take pride in its amateur status, but Washington was fully capable of supplying expert players: “If the orchestra desired a professional first violinist there are in Washington several competent men to select from without calling on New York.” If Thurber believed that Washington’s musical culture was incomplete without a professional ensemble, Nordlinger suggested the opposite: “Let not, however, the public believe that the standard of musical culture here is not high. We have a discriminating and intelligent public—musical societies as well as individuals of recognized ability.” Indeed, Washington did not even need a New Yorker’s money; the capital had its own philanthropists: “It will not be so far in the future when some or one of our own music-loving citizens will, ‘Higginson-like,’ give the financial impetus to the establishment of a professional orchestra.”<sup>41</sup>

It is striking just how much Washingtonians rallied around this amateur ensemble. They were understandably proud of the accomplishments of their friends and neighbors, but they also defended the musical benefits of an amateur orchestra. One writer suggested that a group of amateurs could coexist more harmoniously than an ensemble of professionals: “In the first place, the active members are under no expense; in the second place, all quarrels or jealousies are instantly suppressed, and, thirdly, its composition is thoroughly democratic. Rich and poor play side by side, and social inequalities are lost sight of on the common plane of music.”<sup>42</sup> Another critic suggested that the performances themselves benefited when the players were volunteers instead of employees: “It is a pleasure to hear orchestral music where it is evident that performers are appreciative, intelligent men and not automations, where they and their conductor interpret *con amore* and not at so much per hour.”<sup>43</sup> As a result of its amateur members, the orchestra “has risen, step by step, to a position now on a plane unattained, perhaps, by any similar amateur musical organization in this country.”<sup>44</sup>

40 · All quotations in this paragraph are from Naphtali Nordlinger, “From the Amateur’s Standpoint,” *Washington Post*, January 26, 1890, 10.

41 · The reference is to Henry Lee Higginson, the businessman who founded the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1881.

42 · “Kaspar Takes the Baton,” *Washington Post*, November 21, 1886, 2.

43 · “Some Musical Matters,” *Washington Post*, February 15, 1885, 2.

44 · “Amusements,” *Washington Post*, February 14, 1885, 2.

The story of the Georgetown Amateur Orchestra and its local reception in the 1880s and 1890s reveals that Washington had a symphony of which to be proud, and its inhabitants were able to enjoy orchestral music performed by their friends and neighbors. The Georgetown Amateur Orchestra's twenty-year history and remarkable continuity in membership effectively qualified it as Washington's permanent orchestra, at least in comparison to its professional rivals.

### *A Transient Ensemble: The Washington Symphony Orchestra(s)*

The Georgetown Orchestra was hardly the only amateur ensemble in the District of Columbia. On November 14, 1886, the *Washington Post* announced: "The Washington Symphony Orchestra's first concert will take place on the 30th and will be for the benefit of the Nurses' Training School."<sup>45</sup> This first incarnation of the Washington Symphony Orchestra was led by none other than Robert Bernays, who had just been replaced as conductor of the Georgetown amateurs. In forming the Washington Symphony, Bernays was looking to create a musical outlet for his private students, and like Josef Kaspar, he turned to the "judicious employment of several professionals" who "did much to steady" his new ensemble.<sup>46</sup>

This early version of the Washington Symphony did not establish a regular concert routine, but rather appeared sporadically throughout the late 1880s. Perhaps its most impressive performances came in 1888 when Bernays took a seat as concertmaster and handed the baton to the leader of the Marine Band, John Philip Sousa.<sup>47</sup> Surviving programs indicate that Sousa led Sunday concerts of light classical works at the New National Theatre and directed the orchestra in conjunction with Washington's Choral Society in a performance of John Francis Barnett's cantata *The Ancient Mariner*.<sup>48</sup> Sousa would lead a number of semiprofessional organizations in Washington, including the Philharmonic Society, a choral organization often accompanied by players from the Marine Band.<sup>49</sup>

Even Sousa could not hold the Washington Symphony together for long. Attracting audiences meant playing "music of the lightest, frothiest charac-

45 . "An Oratorio Society," *Washington Post*, November 14, 1886, 2.

46 . "Amusements," *Washington Post*, December 1, 1888, 2. A roster of Bernays's orchestra was printed in "A Round of Concerts," *Washington Post*, November 28, 1886, 2.

47 . "Amusements," *Washington Post*, February 12, 1888, 4. Bernays married his conductor's sister, Elizabeth Sousa, in January 1890.

48 . Programs, Fowles Scrapbook, United States Marine Band Library, 8, 11.

49 . See unlabeled clippings in the Sousa Scrapbook, Blakely Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.

ter,” and Sousa could not get his professional players to donate their services unless the repertory was worthy of their attention: “The men who really desire to add to their musical education by reading meritorious works, even at some sacrifice, are not willing to lose time and money without adding to their intelligence.”<sup>50</sup> The Bernays-Sousa Washington Symphony vanished by the late 1880s.

The next incarnation of the Washington Symphony Orchestra came in February of 1902 when the famous composer of comic opera, Reginald de Koven, attempted to form a new orchestra for the District of Columbia. Recently married to the daughter of Illinois senator Charles B. Farwell, de Koven had joined the city’s social circles and was determined to harness local talent and “put a permanent orchestra on a sound and practical basis.”<sup>51</sup> His plans were grand; de Koven hoped to raise \$300,000 to establish a sixty-five-piece ensemble and a self-sustaining concert hall. After fifteen rehearsals and considerable press, the orchestra gave its first concert on April 28, 1902, with pianist Ignacy Paderewski as soloist. The *Washington Star* noted that the city had heard “symphonies played by Washington musicians” before, as “the Georgetown Orchestra has done that for many years.” The new ensemble was different in that it “starts out with the symphony as its basis of operations, and one may expect one composition of that character at each concert.”<sup>52</sup>

De Koven’s enterprise generated considerable buzz; announcing a “New Epoch in Music,” the *Washington Post* published the orchestra’s roster on April 27, 1902. A glance through the names reveals that de Koven drew his men from the same sources his predecessors had used: strings from the city’s theater pits and winds from the United States Marine Band. Violinists Chris Arth Jr. and Raymond Schroeder, as well as violist Charles Donch, came from the National Theater. Violinist Sol Minster was music director at the Columbia and Belasco Theaters, and his section mate Victor Johnson led the orchestra at the Lafayette Square Opera House.<sup>53</sup> The Marine Band gave the orchestra nearly half its musicians, and William H. Santelmann, the band’s leader, became the orchestra’s associate conductor. These men, as well as several others who listed their occupation as musician or music teacher in the city directory, reveal an orchestra consisting of local, professional musi-

50 · “A Memorable Musical Season,” *Washington Post*, March 11, 1888, 7.

51 · Reginald de Koven, quoted in “For a Symphony Orchestra,” *Washington Post*, February 12, 1902, 10. A more detailed look de Koven’s Washington Symphony appears in Orly Leah Krasner, “A Capital Idea: Reginald de Koven and the Washington Symphony Orchestra,” in *Music, American Made: Essays in Honor of John Graziano*, ed. J. Koegel (2011).

52 · “Symphony Orchestra,” *Washington Star*, April 29, 1902, 5.

53 · Robert Bernays had used some of the same theater musicians (including Victor Johnson and Sol Minster) in his version of the Washington Symphony.

cians. In this way, the new Washington Symphony Orchestra was quite different from the Georgetown amateur ensemble.

But such an ensemble of professionals faced a serious problem. Marine Band players, with their guaranteed government salaries, could presumably underbid any civilian for musical work within the District of Columbia. The musician's union—Local 161 of the American Federation of Musicians—viewed this as a threat, and their rules therefore prohibited members from playing alongside military musicians. This regulation was often quietly ignored, but a composer as well known as de Koven presented all-too-visible a target.<sup>54</sup> In June of 1902, a few months after the Washington Symphony's inaugural performance, the American Federation of Musicians recommended that its locals boycott de Koven's compositions so long as he employed enlisted men in his orchestra.<sup>55</sup> The *Washington Post* immediately recognized the danger: "If the Marine Band is to be debarred from participating in the concerts because the men are ineligible to membership in the federation, or per contra the union men are to be excluded, the concerts are impossible." Furthermore, it was hardly fair that de Koven's fame forced him to "bear the brunt of this ungalant attack."<sup>56</sup>

The orchestra met in October and put the situation to a vote. With the Marine musicians abstaining—an action "deserving of much commendation"—the Washington Symphony disbanded itself and reorganized without its military members. The Marine Band's assistant leader, Walter F. Smith, noted that the orchestra had little choice and that the result was "a case of accepting the lesser of two evils. The absence of the band from de Koven's orchestra will be a detriment, but not so great a one as a boycott against his music."<sup>57</sup> In less than a year, this permanent ensemble had given a single concert, dissolved, and reformed as the De Koven Orchestra. The AFM subsequently dropped its boycott.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the name change, the orchestra was still commonly referred to as the Washington Symphony, and during the season of 1902–3, it gave five monthly concerts on Tuesday afternoons and made one "popular" Sunday

54 . Given Washington's large supply of military musicians, there was frequent conflict with the union, which led to several efforts to legally separate military and civilian musicians. See, for example, "The Marine Band versus Civilian Bands," *Musical Courier* 44 (February 12, 1902): 27.

55 . "Proposed Boycott on De Koven's Music," *Washington Post*, June 5, 1902, 10.

56 . "The World of Amusement," *Washington Post*, June 8, 1902, 30.

57 . "Marine Band Dropped," *Washington Post*, October 16, 1902, 2.

58 . "De Koven Boycott Lifted," *Washington Post*, October 18, 1902, 12. De Koven commented on this situation in "Reginald de Koven," *Musical Courier* 47 (September 2, 1903): 12.

evening appearance.<sup>59</sup> But the dismissal of the Marine Band caused a significant problem. While string players could still be found locally, many of the winds now had to be supplied by bringing in union musicians from other cities.<sup>60</sup> Despite local players willing to work for “a minimum of remuneration” and a conductor “receiving no compensation,” the orchestra’s first season ended with losses totaling \$10,000. Some twenty benefactors covered this deficit, but such a “condition of affairs is certainly unjust and unsatisfactory, and the public should not require this handful of enthusiasts to bear such loss another season.”<sup>61</sup>

Still, de Koven struggled on. The season of 1903–4 consisted of five monthly concerts on Friday afternoons. The Sunday evening popular concerts had proved so successful that the orchestra gave eleven of them.<sup>62</sup> In a clever gimmick, de Koven allowed one concert to be programmed by audience vote. The selected works in order of popularity were Grieg’s *Peer Gynt Suite*, the largo from Handel’s *Xerxes*, and the intermezzo from Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana*. De Koven congratulated Washington because he “received only one request for rag-time, and the person who asked for it apologized for doing so.”<sup>63</sup> Despite this grand season, the absence of Marine Band musicians remained a fundamental problem. Forced to import players from other cities, the orchestra had to guarantee them a salary. This increased the operating budget so dramatically that the treasurer was forced to concede that “even were every seat in the house sold for each performance, there would still remain a considerable deficit.”<sup>64</sup>

59 · The Tuesday concerts were held on December 9, January 6, February 10, March 10, and April 21. The Sunday concert was on April 12.

60 · “The World of Amusement,” *Washington Post*, November 1, 1903, FP6. Some of the imported players were named in “Symphony Orchestra,” *Washington Post*, November 15, 1903, L5.

61 · Edward H. Droop, “Symphony Orchestra,” *Washington Post*, April 5, 1903, B6. Droop was the orchestra’s treasurer and general manager.

62 · The Friday concerts were held on December 11, January 15, February 12, March 18, and April 15. The popular concerts were held almost weekly on January 3, 17, and 31; February 14, 21, and 28; March 6, 13, and 27; and April 3 and 24. The orchestra also gave three joint concerts with local choirs (December 13 and 27 and April 10). In February de Koven was named conductor of the Carroll Institute Choir, further facilitating such collaborations. “De Koven’s Musical Coup,” *Washington Post*, February 13, 1904, 7.

63 · “Plays Request Numbers,” *Washington Post*, February 29, 1904, 7. The orchestra’s role in saving Washington from the new popular music had been noted in the *Musical Courier*: “Permanent orchestras are the very features that are necessary in the large cities of America for the permanent education of the people in good music. They are the best cure for the rag-time proposition” (“The Washington Orchestra Question,” *Musical Courier* 46 [January 21, 1903]: 10).

64 · E. H. Droop, “Appeal for Symphony Orchestra,” *Washington Post*, April 17, 1904, A8.



For the third season, de Koven put all of his chips on the table. Five monthly concerts were planned, with each to be repeated in Baltimore. The weekly popular concerts would be expanded to include a series of Wednesday promenade matinees and six young people's performances. Because this plan required more rehearsal time, de Koven decided to bring in orchestral musicians from Boston, New York, Chicago, and Cincinnati and to keep them in Washington not just for the concerts but on salary for eighteen weeks. To cover the projected \$40,000 cost, de Koven established the Washington Symphony Orchestra, Incorporated stock company. The capital would now have an official orchestra, and the press was pleased to report that "Washington is one of six cities of America that have permanent orchestras."<sup>65</sup>

De Koven's efforts were heroic, and he was clearly willing to weather financial risks, but in January 1905 he received an unexpected blow from Washington's elite. The highest-profile engagement of the season would be Theodore Roosevelt's inauguration, and a music committee solicited bids for the inaugural ball. De Koven offered his symphony for \$1,800 but was outbid by William Haley, who promised to provide his band for \$200 less. De Koven was also underbid for a series of inaugural concerts, which went instead to the Marine Band.<sup>66</sup>

De Koven was furious. In a letter to the *Washington Post*, he argued that the decision was "so prejudiced and pitifully provincial that any thinking man . . . will call absolutely every action in question."<sup>67</sup> The conductor took the affair personally: "I have neglected my profession, which has earned me a livelihood for many years, cut my professional income in half, given my entire time, thought, and energy for three years without compensation" to the Washington Symphony. "I cannot but feel that the result of my sincere effort has been that the Washington public . . . prefers Haley's Band . . . to the Washington Symphony Orchestra, and thereby declines to recognize an organization which, through its supporters, has spent \$30,000 during the last three years to further the cause of good music in Washington. . . . I can only accept the verdict thus rendered of the total failure of my efforts."<sup>68</sup>

65 · "Gave Concert in Baltimore," *Washington Post*, November 20, 1904, 2; "Campaign for Music," *Washington Post*, November 27, 1904, 11. The quotation is from "Permanent Orchestra," *Washington Post*, November 18, 1904, 4.

66 · "Inaugural Day Music," *Washington Post*, January 26, 1905, 2.

67 · Reginald de Koven, "Mr. De Koven Protests," *Washington Post*, January 26, 1905, 2.

68 · Reginald de Koven, "Gives Way to Haley," *Washington Post*, January 31, 1905, 12. The situation elicited considerable debate in the press, including another fight with the union. This time the union took de Koven's side and questioned the right of the Marine Band to bid on the inaugural performances. See "Parade Plans Ripen," *Washington Post*, January 13, 1905, 2; Percy S. Foster, "Chairman Foster Denies," *Washington Post*, January 27, 1905, 2; "Inaugural Music Discord," *Washington Post*, January 29, 1905, 2; "Says Protest Was Made," *Washington Post*, January 30, 1905, 2.

The ensemble's February concert was advanced to January "owing to the financial troubles" of the orchestra, which issued a circular wherein it lamented declining audiences and complained that "many of the subscribers have failed to make good."<sup>69</sup> The *Post* chastised the city: "Washington has not covered itself with glory in its treatment of the Symphony Orchestra."<sup>70</sup> The ensemble gave what appears to have been its last regular concert on February 5, 1905. Because of an illness, de Koven did not conduct, and his wife later remembered the events: "My husband struggled heroically to save the cause of the orchestra. . . . The effort to continue the orchestra without the promised financial subsidy was finally very harmful to my husband's health and diminished the vitality necessary for the writing of his operas."<sup>71</sup>

With the orchestra collapsing and de Koven in despair, blame could now be assigned. Reviews indicate that the ensemble had its fair share of problems. Without a dedicated hall in Washington, regular concerts had to be held in theaters, which required afternoon performances.<sup>72</sup> It took de Koven some time to realize that he must keep programs short "in order to permit hungry people to reach home at a reasonable dinner hour." Afternoon concerts conflicted with the "social duties demanding the attention of so many of the patronesses," which further complicated fund-raising.<sup>73</sup>

But the real culprit was the American Federation of Musicians. In an effort to protect its members, the union had effectively bankrupted the orchestra, a fact not lost on critic Berenice Thompson. Forcing the orchestra to import civilian players from other cities when Washington already had a wealth of Marine Band musicians placed the ensemble in a position of "water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink." As Thompson explained, "With all due consideration for a certain few orchestral players in town who want to earn as large a livelihood as possible," the orchestra should not endure losses "caused by the weak subservience of union dictation."<sup>74</sup>

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*ton Post*, January 30, 1905, 2; Jno. Pool, "Symphony Orchestra Music," *Washington Post*, January 30, 1905, 9; "Marine Band Will Play," *Washington Post*, February 4, 1905, 2; "Inaugural Sky Clear," *Washington Post*, February 5, 1905, 2.

69 · "The Symphony Concert," *Washington Post*, January 28, 1905, 3.

70 · *Ibid.*

71 · Anna Farwell de Koven, *A Musician and His Wife* (1926), 204.

72 · The *Musical Courier* stated bluntly: "The lack of a hall in which to give concerts is the basic cause of the suspension of the Washington Symphony Orchestra." See "Washington Symphony Orchestra," *Musical Courier* 50 (February 1, 1905): 41.

73 · "News and Gossip," *Washington Post*, January 18, 1903, 34.

74 · "Case of the Marine Band," *Washington Post*, June 25, 1905, S9.

## *Epilogue: The Marine Band, Washington, and the Possibility of a Local Orchestra*

Oscar Sonneck noted the “threatened disbandment of the Washington Symphony Orchestra with extreme regret,” but the ensemble’s rapid disintegration was guaranteed almost from the start.<sup>75</sup> Despite Jeannette Thurber’s efforts, the city still lacked a dedicated concert hall, a vacuum that forced ensembles such as the Washington Symphony to hold afternoon performances when the theaters were otherwise unoccupied. De Koven quickly discovered that such scheduling interfered with his patrons’ social obligations and severely limited his efforts to build an audience or engage in fund-raising. Even more detrimental to the success of any professional orchestra was the presence of the United States Marine Band. This group, which did not require indoor performance space, provided Washingtonians with free outdoor concerts. During summer afternoons these occurred Wednesdays at the Capitol, Thursdays at the Marine Barracks, and Saturdays at the White House. On winter Sundays the band often presented sacred concerts of light orchestral music at the National Theatre.

The Marine Band’s presence had two effects. First, it served as the professional ensemble Washington was otherwise lacking. Much of the band’s repertory consisted of the Italian opera selections and light dance pieces so popular with nineteenth-century audiences. The band also performed more serious numbers, including overtures and selections from Wagner’s *Tannhäuser*, *Rienzi*, *Lohengrin*, and *Der fliegende Holländer*. Thanks to the Marine Band, Washingtonians may well have been the first Americans to hear selections from Pietro Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana*.<sup>76</sup> But the Marine Band was important for a second reason: many of Washington’s professional musicians were members of the ensemble, members eager to both supplement their military pay and heighten their musical experiences. This limited the opportunities available for civilian professional musicians to find work within the District of Columbia.

As de Koven discovered, any publically ambitious effort to combine

75 . Sonneck, “Views of People,” *Washington Post*, January 30, 1905, 9.

76 . The Marine Band performed selections from Mascagni’s opera in early 1891. See Kirk, *Music at the White House*, 129. Sousa had a catalog of the band’s library prepared and published as *Catalogue of Music: Band, U. S. Marine Corps* (1885). It includes operatic and concert overtures, a large number of opera selections, as well as songs, various dances, and some orchestral music. The most frequently listed composers, in order, are Giuseppe Verdi, Johann Strauss, Emile Waldteufel, Arthur Sullivan, Fred Godfrey, Jacques Offenbach, Franz von Suppé, Gioachino Rossini, Gaetano Donizetti, Charles Gounod, Felix Mendelssohn, Adolphe Adam, Giacomo Meyerbeer, and Richard Wagner.

Marine Band players with their handful of civilian counterparts could run afoul of union rules. These rules forced de Koven to bring in musicians from other cities, musicians toward whom Washington audiences felt little loyalty. The city's many amateur ensembles, on the other hand, relied on native talent, which helped them to foster a sense of community that imported professionals could not match. The players brought in by de Koven or promised by Thurber were strangers; the amateurs were friends, neighbors, and colleagues. Because union rules did not apply, these amateurs were free to supplement whatever talent they might have with the skills of professional musicians borrowed from the Marine Band.<sup>77</sup>

The longest running of these ensembles was the Georgetown Amateur Orchestra, which began entertaining Washington audiences in January of 1882. It had largely ceased operations in the summer of 1895, and when the *Washington Post* first heard of de Koven's efforts seven years later, it decried Washington's lack of a permanent orchestra. There was only the Marine Band, "splendid in its way, but not an orchestra," and touring ensembles, "uncertain, vagrant, and not always satisfactory."<sup>78</sup> The Georgetown amateurs had made a second, tentative debut in May of 1900, and, provoked by this newspaper article, the orchestra's president, Brainard H. Warner, wrote to the *Post*, calling the city's attention "not only to our existence, but to the fact that we think we have a brilliant future." He continued: "For more than twenty years we have had an organization in this city in which several hundred Washington artists, young and old, combining our best professional and amateur talent, have given concerts to the satisfaction of the music-loving public."<sup>79</sup> The ensemble's vice president, Frank B. Metzertott, published a letter in the same issue of the paper in which he praised the Georgetown Amateur Orchestra and went on to express doubts about the viability of de Koven's enterprise: "We have an orchestra which has been in existence for many years, giving concerts of a very high order, so fine, in fact, that it will be a long time before the new organization will be able to equal them. . . . Why not encourage what we have instead of chasing rainbows, something that seems to be chronic in our city?"<sup>80</sup>

77 · Programs demonstrating the Marine Band's collaborations with various amateur ensembles can be found in the Fowles Scrapbook (Marine Band Library), as well as in the endless requests for the ensemble in Record Group 127, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

78 · "Artistic Prospects at This Capital," *Washington Post*, February 25, 1902, 6.

79 · Brainard H. Warner, "The Georgetown Orchestra," *Washington Post*, February 28, 1902, 4. On the orchestra's 1900 debut, see "Musical Notes," *Washington Post*, January 21, 1900, 17; "Georgetown Orchestra," *Washington Star*, May 4, 1900, 16.

80 · Frank B. Metzertott, letter to the editor, *Washington Post*, February 28, 1902, 4. The paper responded in "A Really Local Orchestra" on March 1, 1902, 6, to say that it merely meant

Whatever the musical value of de Koven's orchestra, its makeup prevented Washington audiences from seeing it as a local ensemble. The same cannot be said for the Georgetown Amateur Orchestra. It may have begun as a casual pastime, but after spending some two decades before Washington audiences, it could take credit for elevating the public taste: "Washington is becoming more and more a musical center. Of all the factors in the city's musical life there is none that excites more widespread interest than the Georgetown Orchestra. For over a quarter of a century it has united the amateurs and professionals of the city, and afforded a school for the younger generation of musicians. Most of the younger members of the orchestra—and they are in the majority—heard their first symphony at the concerts of the organization they are helping to perpetuate."<sup>81</sup> There can be little doubt that the personal connection felt between the Georgetown players, their audience, and the city's press led to many overly flattering reviews. However, the ensemble was also seen as contributing to Washington's musical edification: "The Georgetown Orchestra is a whole musical education in itself for those who are fortunate enough to possess the requirements necessary for membership in it. When a student in any of the musical institutions in this city becomes far advanced enough to be able to keep up with the playing of the orchestra, he is taken in and given a thorough course of instruction, for no better instruction can be obtained than that which is given in this practical way. The only requirement is that he be able, through practice and study, to play his part as well as the rest."<sup>82</sup>

Washington would see other orchestras come and go, some of which were made up of professional musicians. In October of 1906, Hermann Rakemann announced plans for a Rakemann Concert Orchestra, drawn from members of the Washington Symphony.<sup>83</sup> An orchestra formed by German-born conductor and composer Heinrich Hammer undertook a Beethoven cycle in 1909–10. In 1925 Kurt Hetzel proposed a professional orchestra, and the next year he pulled together "eighty-one musicians chosen from the theatres and cinema houses of Washington."<sup>84</sup> Such efforts kept professional orchestral music alive until Hans Kindler conducted the first concerts of the National Symphony in 1931.<sup>85</sup> Amateur ensembles also continued to exist. These in-

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Washington needed an orchestra that would present concerts "thirty or forty times during a season."

81 . "Last Concert of the Georgetown Orchestra," *Washington Post*, May 21, 1901, 6.

82 . "Georgetown Orchestra's Fiftieth Concert," *Washington Post*, April 22, 1900, 26.

83 . See "New Orchestra Pleases," *Washington Post*, October 29, 1906, 12; "Under Director Rakemann," *Washington Post*, May 2, 1909, ES3.

84 . "In Washington," *Time*, May 3, 1926, 15.

85 . The National Symphony's early rosters reveal several musicians borrowed from its predecessors, including Minster, Arth, and Rakemann. My thanks to David Bragunier, princi-

cluded the Rebew Orchestra, put together in 1900 by H. W. Weber; the Government Printing Office Orchestra, which could be heard between 1900 and 1940, and the Agriculture Orchestra, which performed sporadically between the 1930s and 1960s.<sup>86</sup>

Modern scholarship often privileges professional ensembles, and it seems only fair to seek the roots of the National Symphony Orchestra in de Koven's turn-of-the-century efforts. Indeed, the first history of the National Symphony begins by noting that de Koven's ensemble "seems to have been the first organized attempt to form" a serious orchestra in the capital.<sup>87</sup> But focusing on professional musicians too easily dismisses the efforts of Washington's amateur musicians who during the late nineteenth century "devoted themselves, heart and soul, to the cult and gospel of the best music rendered by the best methods."<sup>88</sup> By the time it gave its last concert on May 17, 1905, the Georgetown Amateur Orchestra had managed to play fifty-seven "public rehearsals," as well as many benefit and joint concerts. Lasting more than a quarter century, this was, in many ways, Washington's first permanent orchestra.

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pal tuba (emeritus) of the orchestra, for sharing his early rosters. The orchestra gave its first performances in Constitution Hall, where it often played before making its home at the Kennedy Center.

86 · Very little is known about the various government office orchestras, although some—such as the National Institutes of Health Philharmonia—continue to exist. Washington's most important amateur organization continues to be the Friday Morning Music Club. Its history is told in Charlotte Shear, *The First Hundred Years of the Friday Morning Music Club of Washington, D.C.* (1987).

87 · *A Short History of the National Symphony Orchestra* (1949), 1.

88 · "Good Amateur Music," *Washington Post*, January 31, 1891, 5.