

gender studies, philosophy and historical musicology; it is a masterclass in interdisciplinary analysis.

The book's epilogue begins with one final opera scene, Act 3, Scene 1 from *Giulietta e Romeo* (1796) by Zingarelli and Giuseppe Maria Foppa. With its remarkable number of revivals (it was produced 57 times from 1796–1837), the opera acts as a bridge between eighteenth and nineteenth-century vocal practices. The two main characters are poetically likened to the figures guiding this book, Orpheus and Sappho. Describing its tragic ending, Peritz intertwines this opera with characters and singers from previous case studies.

This monograph is a testament to Peritz's rigorous historical work and commitment to a wide assortment of sources and scholarship. Knowledge as a construct of culture is not a new idea, yet Peritz's path of inquiry from a Vichian perspective epitomizes innovation. Her creative use of 'originary' (p. 200) genres like song, poetry, literature and myths to investigate the voice provides a rich array of new discoveries. *The Lyric Myth of Voice* satiates the reader like a meaty seven-course meal. Despite some slight overindulgences, no moment lacks in flavour, content or creativity. The reader is left full of a vast variety of abstract ideas made concrete.

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Candace Bailey, *Unbinding Gentility: Women Making Music in the Nineteenth-Century South* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021). xviii + 292 pp. \$30

Musicologists in the United States have come to apply the term 'binder's volumes' to nineteenth century collections of bound sheet music (or, more rarely, musical manuscripts) belonging to a particular person or family. Because of the mass-production and wide accessibility of most of their contents, these volumes have long been dismissed from musicological consideration as ephemeral, even superficial remnants of a homogenous middle-class White female parlour culture. However, Candace Bailey's *Unbinding Gentility: Women Making Music in the Nineteenth-Century South* argues that the condition, marginalia, provenance and content of these binder's volumes have more to tell us about women and music than has previously been supposed. Bailey's study focuses on the American South before, during, and after the Civil War and approaches the volumes from the perspective of gender, class, geography and race. A committed archival historian, Bailey also draws on newspaper advertisements and performance reviews, the rosters and curricula of finishing schools, and family letters and financial documents. The result of her analysis of this broad swath of sources is a newly diversified picture of music making among nineteenth-century women in the South.

At the heart of Bailey's work are numerous examples of 'musicking', or actions including but not limited to music making; in her words, 'musicking belongs in a discussion of performative contexts' (p. 217). The author weaves together narratives of female musicking with women's shared pursuit of gentility in its evolving forms. Bailey describes gentility as a 'borderless ideal' (p. 219) that accompanied

musicking among Southern women, both Black and White, and traversing social strata: 'unlike social status, gentility belonged to no single group' (p. 5). A Southerner herself, and a professor of music at North Carolina Central University, an HBCU ('historically Black college or university'), Bailey argues for the close relationship between musical practice and the pursuit and maintenance of gentility in the South. In the process, she complicates the falsely homogenized notions of the musical practices of nineteenth-century women as taught in the music history classroom. Additionally, the author's focus on many female *amateur* subjects weaves this study into the growing scholarly discourse on amateur musicking as an under-appreciated thread in the fabric of music history.

Unbinding Gentility consists of five parts, including an introduction, 11 chapters, and a conclusion, and proceeds approximately chronologically, from antebellum practices to women musicians in the Reconstruction Era. Her argument engages with and builds upon existing scholarship on gentility, in particular the emphasis on the performance of gentility and its rules in society in Karen Halttunen's *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830–1870*.¹ However, Bailey's deep knowledge of private and public historical collections complemented by her meticulous presentation and interpretation of a wealth of primary sources are at the heart of the book. Bailey's research into the artifacts of musicking in the South is also tied to her current service as a NCCU–Duke University Franklin Humanities Institute Digital Humanities fellow and another of her ongoing projects, a digital archive titled *Binder's Volumes: Musicking in the 19th Century*. The latter online platform relies partly on crowd-sourcing, welcoming contributions from others with access to or information about these musical artifacts.²

Bailey's introduction argues for the need for a more nuanced approach to female amateur musicking in the nineteenth-century South: one that moves away from the 'persistent binary' (p. 4) presented in traditional music history of female musical culture as White and middle-class women singing Stephen Foster, and Black and enslaved women singing spirituals and work songs. She suggests approaching the subject from the perspective of gentility as a way of complicating this binary, since gentility was an ideal to which all kinds of women aspired. Its potential for diversifying our understanding of this chapter of music history is indicated by Bailey's clever title, which can be understood as both a modified noun (a useful lens for researchers of this era) and a progressive verb (as the act of dismantling an over-simplified historical narrative).³ After crediting work on gentility by Halttunen and Richard Bushman, Bailey argues for the special usefulness of approaching the period through music and musicking as a ubiquitous indicator of a woman's refinement.⁴

Part I, 'Social Diversity among Amateur Women Musicians', opens with the sheer diversity of women making music in the antebellum period. Chapter 1

¹ Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830–1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

² Candace Bailey, *Binder's Volumes: Musicking in the 19th Century*, accessed July 20, 2023, <http://clbaileymusicologist.com/BV/>.

³ Although the author does not directly address her title, she reiterates gentility's potential as a tool for liberating women's musical practices from the binaries that falsely omit the middle class and a diversity of repertoires from the established narratives of this chapter of music history.

⁴ Richard Lyman Bushman, *Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage, 1993).

focuses on music making among different social strata of southern White women, while Chapter 2 focuses on southern Black women. With significantly fewer sources available, the second chapter is more limited, relying on information about sisters from one particular family, the Johnsons, and on urban areas that had well-established Black communities, including Baltimore, New Orleans and Charleston, South Carolina.⁵ In both chapters, the author emphasizes the importance of understanding women and their musicking in the context of their larger social circles and the role any practice or performance played in their pursuit of gentility among family members and peers. She also explores the unspoken (but, as the author will eventually show, not always realistic) rule that while musicking for pleasure was acceptable, musicking for profit was *ungenteel* and the work of lower-class women.

Part II, 'Repertory', examines the popular repertoire of the antebellum era, drawing on the contents of binder's volumes from a variety of female amateurs. Chapter 3 demonstrates that the primary purpose of parlour performance was to entertain and/or impress others by highlighting the importance of a woman's ability to recognize melodies as a listener as well as choose recognizable melodies as a performer. This repertoire included dance music with accompanying illustrations which, Bailey argues, provided visual instruction for the performing pianist as well as the dancing participants. Chapter 4 continues the discussion of English-language repertoire that began in the previous chapter, drawing attention to the blurry line between song and translated aria. Bailey highlights the degree to which genteel women of the period were familiar with European opera and its stars, focusing particularly on the way in which the ultra-wealthy further distinguished themselves by singing opera arias in their original language and travelling to European musical events.

Part III, 'Scientific Music and Professional Musicians', turns to women in the antebellum South who used music as a means of income and how the concept of gentility played into their careers. Chapter 5 addresses the role of music teachers and the paradoxes of educating young women in music (and other subjects). The first paradox Bailey highlights was the ability of a music education, so avidly sought after by Southerners, to thrust women into the spotlight when the spotlight was precisely what was considered *ungenteel*. The second paradox is the position that this education put teachers of music in relation to their pupils, whereby teachers, who evidently worked to make a living, were instructing young women how to be genteel. Ultimately Bailey concludes that the built-up trust between teachers and pupils constituted a source of gentility in its own right – though this gentility could be put in peril by the mere mention of a teaching woman's name in a newspaper, as an account of one of Bailey's unfortunate subjects demonstrates. Chapter 6 continues to address the subject of instruction but highlights the presence and testimonies of foreign (European) teachers in the South at this time. The chapter presents an additional paradox, which is that European teachers, in particular men, were considered especially *ungenteel*; and yet being a pupil of a European teacher was considered 'a cut above' in certain social circles. In Chapter 7, Bailey details the

⁵ A portion of this chapter also appeared in Bailey's contribution to the 2021 *JAMS* colloquy on 'Early American Music and the Construction of Race'. Bailey, 'Music and Black Gentility in the Antebellum and Civil War South', *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 74, no. 3 (2021): 600–10.

multi-faceted and successful musical careers of several urban women, arguing that music was more than simply a marker of gentility in the antebellum South.

Part IV, 'The Civil War', details the transition Southern women (and their society) underwent as a result of the financial – and geographical and social – hardships of the ongoing war. Chapter 8 focuses on women continuing to use music as a signifier of gentility throughout the war while negotiating important new societal dynamics. Bailey addresses the nuances surrounding the possibility of music being a means of distinction between freed Black women and Black women of lower class (slaves and 'peasants') at a time when the (low) status of the latter was important for both White and Black Southerners' sense of social identity. Bailey's most intriguing conclusion here is that the binder's volumes became a kind of interactive, multimedia symbol of a society that was now lost for many (White) women. According to Bailey, these women 'strove to maintain the cultural codes they learned from their mothers and grandmothers', but 'their lives differed considerably' (p. 140). Bailey also briefly touches on the presence of both Confederate and Union repertoire in many binder's volumes of this era, urging caution in drawing conclusions about the political convictions of the women based on their collections' contents. Finally, the author highlights the increasing presence of Southern-published music in these volumes due to limitations on travel to and shipments from the North.

Chapter 9 explores the broad spectrum of Southerners who successfully engaged in professional and amateur musicking during the war, despite the antebellum view of professional musicians, or any musician who puts themselves in the limelight, as ungenteeled. Bailey highlights several performances and eclectic gatherings involving women that pushed the boundaries of these previous guidelines and demonstrated that the feat of musicking in the midst of the daily trials of war actually enhanced the genteel efforts of many women from the perspective of the public gaze.

The final Part V, 'Women Musicians in the Reconstruction Era', focuses on two aspects of female musicking following the Civil War. The first is the professional fates of several women, both Black and White, in Chapter 10, and the second, in Chapter 11, is the shift in repertoire, with an increasing acceptance of Germanic composers and instrumental music untethered to other art forms such as dance and opera. The author's short conclusion refocuses our perspective back to broader musical practices among nineteenth-century Southern women as a performance of gentility which results in the attainment of gentility itself.

Bailey's achievement in this complex weaving of Southern accounts is the sheer number and diversity of women whose lives are represented by her many mini-case studies. She also consistently emphasizes the differences between regional practices, especially urban and rural, a distinction that nineteenth-century music scholarship tends to overlook, particularly when it comes to the American South. As she writes, 'within a large region, such as the South, individual variation provides a sharp counterbalance to overarching generalizations' (p. 148). The book's greatest strength – many diverse narratives – may also occasionally be problematic, particularly for researchers utilizing individual chapters. Bailey takes great pains to maintain clarity by first acknowledging historical figures' alternative names and establishing her choice for the remainder of the text. However, when these numerous figures reappear in later chapters, it is nearly impossible even for the cover-to-cover reader to not need to turn back and refresh one's memory. This, of course, is the burden of any large survey and can be partially alleviated by utilizing the reliable index in addition to exploring the online supplemental

materials that include detailed biographical information of her research subjects.⁶ Finally, despite the impressive number of musical pieces mentioned over the course of the study, another potential problem is the relative absence of descriptions of the sheet music that detail the music itself. It would have been useful to know more about the technical requirements for repertoires and specific pieces mentioned; addressing such questions would have added to Bailey's argument that women's repertoire, particularly in the antebellum period, walked a fine line between being enjoyable but not so complex as to seem show-offish.

Bailey's thorough contribution to this understudied corner of American musical life will ultimately serve as both an enlightening introduction to Southern musical culture of the nineteenth century and a reference tool for the researcher looking for specific accounts of nineteenth-century female figures. For the latter purpose, and in addition to her online supplemental materials, the author provides a well-organized list of primary sources ('Collections' and 'Newspapers and Magazines') as part of her substantial bibliography. *Unbinding Gentility* brings a fresh perspective to research on Southern culture in general, and especially nineteenth-century Southern women's society, culture and education.

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⁶ Candace Bailey, 'Biographical Information', University of Illinois Press, accessed July 25, 2023. https://files.press.uillinois.edu/books/supplemental/p085741/Biographical_Information.pdf. For her compiled list of binder's volumes and related collections, see Candace Bailey, 'List of Binder's Volumes and Prominent Collections', University of Illinois Press, accessed July 25, 2023, https://files.press.uillinois.edu/books/supplemental/p085741/List_of_Binder's_Volumes_and_Prominent_Collections.pdf. At the time of this writing Bailey's link titled 'Supplemental Materials' on the 'Supplemental Links' page on the University of Illinois Press site does not work, but you can navigate to the 'Supplemental Materials' page easily through the nearby menu item of the same name.