

The 1757 College of Philadelphia Production of *Alfred: A Masque*—Some New Observations

Kevin J. McGinley

ABSTRACT The production of Thomson and Mallet's *Alfred* at the College of Philadelphia in 1757 has been widely recognized as a significant instance of early drama in America. But there has been little attempt to go beyond the findings of early twentieth-century critics in investigating the circumstances of its performance. In this essay, Kevin McGinley undertakes a closer investigation of eighteenth-century sources, revealing substantial new information concerning performance dates, staging, and music. These discoveries show that the production was much more elaborate and professional than previously thought, and open new avenues for exploring the masque's engagement with issues of colonial American cultural identity. **KEYWORDS:** politics of eighteenth-century American theater; William Smith; Lord Loudon; Francis Hopkinson; Benjamin West; John Palma

❧ IN EARLY 1757, STUDENTS of the College of Philadelphia staged a production of *Alfred: A Masque* that was one of the most prominent and widely reported theatrical events to take place in colonial Philadelphia.¹ The piece, originally by James Thomson and David Mallet with music by Thomas Arne, was first produced in 1740 before Frederick, Prince of Wales, at Cliveden House in Buckinghamshire.² The College of Philadelphia production featured substantial revisions to both the text and music by

1. Reports of the 1757 Philadelphia staging of *Alfred* appeared in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, which published a long account spread over four issues, with substantial quotation from *Alfred*, including the new material that had been written specially for this production (Jan. 20, Jan. 27, Feb. 3, Feb. 10). Further references to this periodical will be to *PG* and will be given in the text. Reports also appeared in the *Pennsylvania Journal* (Jan. 27), the *New York Mercury* (Mar. 7), the *New Hampshire Gazette* (Mar. 18, Mar. 25) and the *London Gentleman's Magazine and Monthly Intelligencer* (Apr.), 177–79.

2. James Thomson and David Mallet, *Alfred: A Masque* (London, 1751). Though Thomson and Mallet's *Alfred* was first performed, and published by Andrew Millar, in 1740, the 1751 edition, which was substantially revised by Mallet, was the basis of the Philadelphia production. For fuller treatment of the rather complicated textual history of *Alfred*, see Alexander Scott, "Arne's 'Alfred,'" *Music and Letters* 55 (1974): 385–97.

the college provost, William Smith.³ These included a new occasional prologue and epilogue, together with “nearly 200 new lines”; the introduction of new characters and reassignment of existing lines, necessitated by a decision “to leave out all the Women’s Parts, or put their Words into others mouths”; and “the Introduction of some new Hymns, and Pieces of Music, instead of some necessarily left out” (*PG*, Jan. 20, 1757).⁴ Despite being a college production, the Philadelphia *Alfred* had a broad impact. The performances appear to have attracted sizable audiences and received, according to Smith, “applause from crowded and discerning Audiences during the several Nights of its Representation” (*PG*, Jan. 20, 1757).⁵ Smith also tells us that the piece was performed before the governors of the southern provinces and Lord Loudoun, commander in chief of the British forces in North America, during their congress in Philadelphia in early 1757.⁶ The widespread reporting of the performances, not only in the Philadelphia periodicals but also in New York, New Hampshire, and London, meant that they had influence well beyond their immediate context.

Unsurprisingly, this production has taken on considerable significance in the history of early American drama and music. It is, as Arthur Hobson Quinn notes, “the first native dramatic effort, containing original material and known to have been produced on the stage, that has come down to us.”⁷ It has also drawn much critical attention due to its connections with several eminent figures of eighteenth-century American culture. Smith, for instance, the moving force behind the production, was the College of Philadelphia’s first provost and a prominent figure in the intellectual and political culture of the time.⁸ The part of *Alfred* was played by Jacob Duché, who famously delivered an extempore prayer in support of the American states at the First Continental Congress on September 7, 1774, and was chaplain to the Continental Congress from 1776 until 1777.⁹ The production is often cited as possibly influencing

3. Smith’s authorship of the revisions is indicated by his copy of the 1751 edition of *Alfred: A Masque*, which is preserved in the archives of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, held at the Library Company of Philadelphia, and features his textual alterations, which correspond with those printed in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* accounts. The account in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* of April 1757 notes that “the gentleman who made the alterations” also wrote the prologue and epilogue (p. 178), indicating that Smith composed these as well.

4. This issue of the *Gazette* also published the prologue, while the epilogue appears in the issue of Feb. 10, 1757.

5. Smith’s authorship of the four *Pennsylvania Gazette* articles is indicated by the statement in the Jan. 20 issue that “the Writer of this Account undertook to alter the Piece.”

6. William Smith, “Account of the College, Academy and Charitable School of Philadelphia,” appendix 2 in *Discourses on Public Occasions in America* (London, 1762), 107–27 at 112n.

7. Arthur Hobson Quinn, *A History of the American Drama from the Beginning to the Civil War* (New York, 1943), 18.

8. On Smith’s life and career, see Albert Frank Gegenheimer, *William Smith: Educator and Churchman, 1727–1803* (Philadelphia, 1943); Bruce R. Lively, “William Smith, the College and Academy of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Politics, 1735–1758,” *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 38 (1969): 243–50; and Charlotte Goldsborough Fletcher, *Cato’s Mirania: A Life of Provost Smith* (Lanham, Md., 2002).

9. Edward Duffield Neill, “Rev. Jacob Duché, First Chaplain to Congress,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 2 (1878): 58–73 at 63–67. For a summation of Duché’s career and subsequent

Thomas Godfrey,¹⁰ one of Smith's protégés and the author of *The Prince of Parthia*, the first play by a native-born American to be produced on the professional stage.¹¹ Overshadowing all of these in the critical reception of *Alfred*, however, is Francis Hopkinson, who graduated from the College of Philadelphia in 1757, the year of the masque's production,¹² and whose reputation as one of America's first composers and writer of the first American secular song, "My Days Have Been So Wondrous Free," has made his possible contributions a matter of great interest.¹³

This staging of *Alfred* first came to scholars' attention around a century ago. Works by Horace Mather Lippincott, Oscar G. Sonneck, and Arthur Hobson Quinn were seminal, mapping out elements of the production that have remained at the center of discussions since—the performance before Loudoun, Hopkinson's probable involvement in the music, and the piece's importance in early American theatrical history. Most subsequent critics have relied on these early twentieth-century accounts and followed their thematic agenda, but there has been little effort to build on or extrapolate from them. Nor has there been much attempt to dig deeper into the surviving sources of information for evidence beyond Smith's *Pennsylvania Gazette* accounts and the brief comments in his 1762 "Account of the College," the earlier critics' chief sources.

Yet other sources of information are available. The account of the performances in the April 1757 edition of the London periodical the *Gentleman's Magazine* has scarcely been discussed, yet it provides several significant additional details.¹⁴ Contemporary American newspapers and periodicals, letters, diaries, and manuscripts

disgrace on his apostasy from the cause of American independence, see George Everett Hastings, *The Life and Works of Francis Hopkinson* (Chicago, 1926; repr., New York, 1968), 268–75.

10. See, for instance, Quinn, *History of the American Drama*, 18; Walter J. Meserve, *An Emerging Entertainment: The Drama of the American People to 1828* (Bloomington, Ind., 1977), 48; Don B. Wilmeth and Tice L. Miller, *The Cambridge Guide to American Theatre* (Cambridge, 1996), 24; and Gary A. Richardson, *American Drama from the Colonial Period through World War I: A Critical History* (New York, 1993), 5.

11. On Godfrey's relationship with Smith, see Albert Frank Gegenheimer, "Thomas Godfrey: Protégé of William Smith," *Pennsylvania History* 9 (1942): 233–51. *The Prince of Parthia* was performed on April 24, 1767, at Philadelphia's Southwark Theatre. See Odai Johnson and William J. Burling, *The Colonial American Stage, 1665–1774: A Documentary Calendar* (London and Cranbury, N.J., 2001), 271.

12. See Hastings, *Life and Works of Francis Hopkinson*, 55.

13. See Oscar G. Sonneck, "Francis Hopkinson (1737–1791): The First American Composer," *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft* 5 (1903): 119–54; Sonneck, *Francis Hopkinson: The First American Poet-Composer (1737–1791) and James Lyon, Patriot, Preacher, Psalmist (1735–1794)* (Washington, D.C., 1905; repr., New York, 1967); Thomas Clark Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century, Together with the Day Book of the Same Period* (Philadelphia, 1933), 12; Grace Overmyer, *Famous American Composers* (New York, 1944), 5–6; Gilbert Chase, *America's Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present* (New York, 1955), 100; and Robert A. Gerson, *Music in Philadelphia* (Westport, Conn., 1970), 32.

14. The *Gentleman's Magazine* account of the Philadelphia *Alfred* has been noted in J. A. Leo Lemay, *Ebenezer Kinnersley: Franklin's Friend* (Philadelphia, 1964), 95; Lemay, *Men of Letters in Colonial Maryland* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1972), 33n60; *The Prologues and Epilogues of the Eighteenth Century: A Complete Edition*, ed. Pierre Danchy, 2 vols. (Paris, 1997), 2:592; and Elise Kirk, *American Opera* (Urbana, Ill., and Chicago, 2001), 26, 397n5.

yield further valuable information on the dating, the staging, and the music. As Patricia Virga has pointed out, an overview and reappraisal of the evidence is long overdue.¹⁵ Of course, as is so often the case with the study of dramatic productions from this period, the information from these other sources is often patchy and falls short of absolute certainty regarding the facts of the production. Nonetheless, a more comprehensive and careful sifting through of the evidence opens up fresh insights on the performances and shifts the balance of probability away from some hypotheses and toward others, while also highlighting new aspects of *Alfred's* significance within the cultural life of mid-eighteenth-century Philadelphia and America.¹⁶

Performances and Dates

Critics have suggested a variety of performance dates for the Philadelphia *Alfred*. Some accounts report that the performances took place at some time during the college's Christmas vacation of 1756–57, presumably based on Smith's comment that the masque "has been several Times represented, during the Christmas Holidays" (PG, Jan. 20, 1757).¹⁷ Others expressly trace the staging back to December 1756, when the college's Christmas holidays began, while yet others place it in January 1757.¹⁸ A later date range has been suggested more recently by Odai Johnson and William Burling, who list four performances, two as late as February 3 and 10.¹⁹

Closer attention to the source materials provides some clarification. The number of performances certainly cannot be specified: Smith's *Pennsylvania Gazette* accounts of January 20 and February 10, 1757, refer only to the piece having been "several

15. Patricia H. Virga, *The American Opera to 1790* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1982), 279.

16. On the critical assessment of the often-fragmentary evidence relating to early American drama, see Odai Johnson, *Absence and Memory in Colonial American Theatre: Fiorelli's Plaster* (New York, 2006), 1–2.

17. Quinn, *History of the American Drama*, 18; Meserve, *An Emerging Entertainment*, 43; Kate Van Winkle Keller and John Koegel, "Secular Music to 1800," in *The Cambridge History of American Music*, ed. David Nicholls (Cambridge, 1999), 49–77 at 70.

18. Those who date the performances to January include Sonneck, *Francis Hopkinson*, 22; Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 12; Glenn Hughes, *A History of the American Theatre, 1700–1950* (New York, 1951), 25; and Kirk, *American Opera*, 26. Those who claim performances began in December include George C. D. Odell, who refers to "the performance at the College in Philadelphia, in 1756, of Thomson and Mallet's *Masque of Alfred*," and Frank Shuffelton, whose *American National Biography* entry for Thomas Godfrey refers to "Smith's 1756 production of the *Masque of Alfred*." See Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, 15 vols. (New York, 1927–49), 1:108; and Shuffelton, "Thomas Godfrey," in *American National Biography*, ed. John A. Garraty and Mark C. Carnes, 24 vols. (New York, 1999), 11:150–51 at 150.

19. Johnson and Burling, *The Colonial American Stage*, 182–84. This assertion, however, appears to be a slip caused by mistaking the dates when accounts of the performance were published in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* for performance dates. Johnson and Burling also claim that the *New Hampshire Gazette* article of March 25, 1757, features "another prologue" to *Alfred* (p. 184), but the prologue is the same as that published in the previous accounts of the masque. They further attribute the account of *Alfred* published in the *New Hampshire Gazette* of March 18, 1757, to "J. Duché" (p. 184), but this is simply an excerpted reprint of Smith's *Pennsylvania Gazette* article of February 10, 1757, the confusion arising from the review's ascription to Jacob Duché of an ode in praise of Elizabeth Hopkinson, Francis Hopkinson's sister, who sang in the Philadelphia production.

Times represented” and to “several Nights of its Representation,” respectively. But the introduction to the occasional prologue printed in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of January 20, 1757, refers to “the young Gentlemen of the College of Philadelphia, who, for their improvement in Oratory, acted Alfred, in January, 1757,” a statement repeated in the introduction to the epilogue in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of February 10, 1757. It seems clear then that the performances of *Alfred* referred to in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* took place over several nights in January 1757. The past tense of Smith’s assertion also implies that the run of performances at the College was completed by January 20, 1757.

However, a major piece of evidence reintroduces some confusion. As noted above, one of the most frequently cited details in discussions of the Philadelphia *Alfred* is the performance in the presence of Lord Loudoun.²⁰ The information originates from Smith’s 1762 “Account of the College”: “A number of the students and scholars, with very just applause, performed the Masque of Alfred by way of Oratorical Exercise, before the Earl of Loudon and the Governors of the several colonies, who met at Philadelphia in the beginning of the year 1757.”²¹ Given that this claim comes from Smith himself only five years after the Philadelphia production, it appears reliable, and it has become a commonplace of critical discussion that the masque was “repeated in January, 1757, before no less a person than the Earl of Loudoun.”²²

This would all be very well, were it not for the fact that Lord Loudoun was nowhere near Philadelphia in January of 1757. Loudoun’s whereabouts in the first three months of 1757 are documented in his journal²³ and can also be readily reconstructed from published newspaper accounts, diaries, and letters. He was in New York City over the Christmas season of 1756, remaining there until early January of 1757.²⁴ On January 10 he set out for Boston, arriving there on January 19 after a slow journey, hampered by icy weather and poor roads.²⁵ Loudoun was in Boston for around three

20. On Loudoun, see Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1756–1766* (New York, 2000), 130.

21. Smith, “Account,” 112n.

22. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*, 1:108. See also Joshua L. Chamberlain, *University of Pennsylvania: Its History, Influence, Equipment, and Characteristics* (Boston, 1901), 70; Horace M. Lippincott, *Early Philadelphia: Its People, Life and Progress* (Philadelphia and London, 1917), 116; Richard Moody, *Dramas from the American Theatre, 1762–1909* (New York, 1969), 1; and Jason Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theater* (Philadelphia, 2007), 110.

23. Lord Loudoun’s journals are held in the Huntington Library (HM 1717). My thanks to Ms. Olga Tsapina, Norris Foundation Curator of American Historical Manuscripts at the Huntington Library, for providing a copy of the library’s transcript of the journal for Jan. to Mar. 1757, in volume 1. Hereafter cited as Loudoun, journal.

24. See Loudoun to Governor Denny, New York, Dec. 22, 1756, in *Minutes of the Provincial Council of Pennsylvania: From the Organization to the Termination of Proprietary Government*, ed. Samuel Hazard, 10 vols. (Harrisburg, Pa., 1851–52), 7:379; Charles A. W. Pownall, *Thomas Pownall M.P., F.R.S., Governor of Massachusetts Bay* (London, 1908), 94; and Loudoun to Horatio Sharpe, New York, Jan. 8, 1757, in *Correspondence of Governor Sharpe*, ed. William H. Browne, 2 vols. (Baltimore, 1888–90), 1:518.

25. Loudoun, journal, Jan. 9 to Jan. 19, 1757. See also *New York Mercury*, Jan. 14, 1757; and *Boston Evening Post*, Jan. 24, 1757. Loudoun had intended to reach Boston on Jan. 13: see Loudoun to Horatio Sharpe, New York, Jan. 8, 1757, 1:518.

weeks.²⁶ He left on February 10 and arrived back in New York on February 20.²⁷ He was held up in New York by having to send packets to England and to wait for Major-General James Abercrombie, who was delayed in coming from Albany to New York by bad weather.²⁸ Loudoun remained in New York into March,²⁹ eventually setting out for Philadelphia on March 12, 1757, and arriving there on March 14,³⁰ “when the Guns of the Association Battery, and of some Vessels in the Harbour, were fired, and the Bells were rung” (*PG*, Mar. 17, 1757). Loudoun remained in Philadelphia for almost two weeks, setting out for New York on March 27, 1757.³¹

It is clear from Loudoun’s itinerary, then, that he could not have attended the January 1757 Philadelphia College performances of *Alfred*. Nor could the governors of the southern provinces whom Loudoun came to meet have attended, as they did not arrive in town until mid-February 1757.³² If Smith’s 1762 claim that *Alfred* was performed before Lord Loudoun and the governors is accurate—and it is unlikely to be false, not least because it could have been so readily controverted and cast up to him by his numerous enemies in Philadelphia³³—then in addition to the January performances, there must have been an extra staging of *Alfred* at some time between March 14 and 27, 1757.

Yet no records are known to refer to this performance’s date or location. Loudoun, focused on his military business with the governors, makes no mention of it in his journal. Smith and his students might have held another enactment of *Alfred* at the college, inviting Lord Loudoun and the governors. Another intriguing possibility, however, is that the performance was part of the reception held by the Philadelphia

26. See Loudoun to the Governor and Company of Rhode Island, Boston, Jan. 29, 1757; and The Rhode Island Commissioners at the Congress, in Boston, to Governor Hopkins, Feb. 3, 1757, both in *Records of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England*, ed. John Russell Bartlett (Providence, R.I., 1861), 15–17 at 15, 28–29 at 29.

27. Loudoun, journal, Feb. 10, 1757, Feb. 20, 1757. See also *New York Mercury*, Feb. 21, 1757.

28. Loudoun, journal, Feb. 27, 1757; Loudoun to Horatio Sharpe, New York, Feb. 21, 1757, Feb. 28, 1757, 1:526, 531.

29. Loudoun to Horatio Sharpe, New York, Mar. 2, 1757, 1:532.

30. Loudoun, journal, Mar. 12, 1757, Mar. 14, 1757.

31. Loudoun, journal, Mar. 27, 1757. See also *PG*, Mar. 31, 1757.

32. Loudoun had originally scheduled his arrival in Philadelphia for Feb. 17 (see Loudoun to Horatio Sharpe, New York, Jan. 8, 1757, 1:518), but was delayed by his difficult journey to Boston and by the protracted negotiations there (see Loudoun to Horatio Sharpe, New York, Feb. 21, 1757, and Feb. 28, 1757, 1:526). Robert Diwiddie, lieutenant-governor of Virginia, arrived in Annapolis en route to Philadelphia on Feb. 9, and Horatio Sharpe was to set out for Philadelphia on Feb. 11, 1757 (*Maryland Gazette*, Feb. 10, 1757); Arthur Dobbs, governor of South Carolina, passed through Annapolis en route to Philadelphia on Feb. 19 (*Maryland Gazette*, Feb. 24, 1757).

33. On Smith’s political enmities in Philadelphia, see J. David Hoeveler, *Creating the American Mind: Intellect and Politics in the Colonial Colleges* (Lanham, Md., 2002), 161–69. Although Smith’s *Discourses on Public Occasions*, in which the claims regarding the performance before Lord Loudoun were made, was published not in Philadelphia but in London (by Andrew Millar in 1762), it was within four years made available in America: Hugh Gaines of New York advertises copies for sale in his bookshop in the *New York Mercury* of Dec. 1 and 29, 1766, and Jan. 5 and 26, 1767, and his reference to it as “Smith’s Discourses on Several Publick Occasions during the War in America” might suggest that he expects his potential customers to know of it.

Corporation at the State House on March 18, 1757, at which Loudoun and the governors “were genteelly entertained” (*PG*, Mar. 24, 1757). No account details what the entertainment was.³⁴ But if it was *Alfred*, this would shift the piece from being a privately organized (albeit very well attended) entertainment to being part of a formal civic event that demonstrated not only the accomplishments of the students at the college, but also the cultural sophistication of the city of Philadelphia and even of the American colonies.³⁵ Moreover, this might situate the piece more directly within the social and political tensions between the Philadelphia Assembly and the city’s Proprietary Government, whose relationship became particularly strained during the 1756–57 negotiations with Loudoun.

The March performance of *Alfred* would also coincide with George Washington’s presence in Philadelphia. Washington left Fort Cumberland for Philadelphia in early February with a view to speaking with Loudoun.³⁶ He arrived in the city around February 21, 1757, and stayed there until late March, waiting on Loudoun during the earl’s stay. Washington, an avid playgoer,³⁷ thus could have viewed a March performance of *Alfred*. Eberlein and Hubbard in fact place him at the Philadelphia Corporation reception, though they provide no corroboration for this.³⁸ But, since Washington had come to Philadelphia specifically to seek the ear of Loudoun, it is unlikely that he would have failed to attend him at an event in his honor. This early example of a drama with original material composed in America is thus very likely to have been witnessed by the future president.

Washington’s probable attendance takes on added significance in view of the contemporary political issues that the Philadelphia *Alfred* addresses. Smith’s production seeks to build a sense of transatlantic solidarity during the French-Indian War, striking a strong note of British patriotism while also expressing a sense of pride in the contribution of the American colonies as partners with Britain in building an expanding empire:³⁹

These are the Men
Who, ages hence, shall *Britain’s* Thunder bear
From Pole to Pole, around a trembling World!

.

34. For an account of the Mar. 18, 1757, entertainment, see Harold D. Eberlein and Cortland Van Dyke Hubbard, *Diary of Independence Hall* (Philadelphia, 1948), 94–96.

35. The articles reporting on the Philadelphia *Alfred* also extend the significance of the performances into a broader reflection on colonial culture: the *Gentleman’s Magazine* article comments on the production as giving “great instances of improvement among the youth of this place” (p. 178), while Smith notes in his *Pennsylvania Gazette* article of Feb. 10, 1757, that the performances “would be an Honour to the Taste and Improvement of any Country.”

36. See Robert Dinwiddie to Washington, Feb. 2, 1757, in *The Papers of George Washington, Colonial Series*, ed. William W. Abbott et al., 10 vols. (Charlottesville, Va., 1983–93), 4:107.

37. See Paul Leicester Ford, *Washington and the Theatre* (New York, 1899).

38. Eberlein and Hubbard, *Diary of Independence Hall*, 95.

39. See Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 111–13.

I see *gay* Colonies, and future *Empires*,
 In Glory rise, quite to the farthest Verge,
 Of setting Day; diffusing peaceful Arts,
 And *saving Wisdom*, o'er a savage Land.
 (PG, Feb. 3, 1757)

Washington's visit to Philadelphia was motivated by related concerns, as he sought to have his Virginia militia regiment incorporated into the regular British army, to have its officers granted king's commissions, and to have his advice regarding troop deployment and military strategy heard.⁴⁰ Washington's importunate requests of Loudoun were born of frustration that, although the Americans made a vital contribution to maintaining British imperial power—as Smith was suggesting in his adaptation of *Alfred*—the British authorities failed to appreciate them, viewing the Americans as “a semi-civilized inferior people.”⁴¹ Washington expressed this frustration in a letter to Governor Dinwiddie in January 1757: “We cant conceive, that being Americans should deprive us of the benefits of British subjects; nor lessen our claim to preferment; and we are very certain that no Body of regular Troops ever before servd 3 Bloody Campaigns without attracting Royal notice.”⁴² Washington's wounded colonial pride is the inverse of Smith's idealizing vision. The masque's treatment of the relationship between Britain and the American colonies in terms of mutually reinforcing imperial and provincial patriotisms expresses a sense of colonial pride that readily turns to a sense of colonial rights, which Washington would in later years assert in the most emphatic terms.⁴³

Costume and Staging

Exactly what Washington would have witnessed at the production has attracted little critical comment. Most of those who have addressed the matter have suggested that it was not a full dramatic production but that the performances “were given merely in concert garb” with the students not so much acting as simply having “recited the ‘*oratorical Exercises*.’”⁴⁴ This argument draws on Smith's account of the performances as “*Oratorical Exercises for Youth*” (PG, Feb. 10, 1757). Smith argues that the production

40. Loudoun only granted Washington's request that his Virginia regiment be redeployed from Fort Cumberland and replaced with Maryland troops. See Paul K. Longmore, *The Invention of George Washington* (Charlottesville, Va., 1999), 40–45.

41. Joseph L. Ellis, *His Excellency: George Washington* (New York, 2005), 35.

42. Washington to Robert Dinwiddie, Mar. 10, 1757, in *George Washington: Writings*, ed. John Rhodehamel (New York, 1997), 85–87 at 86.

43. On the relation between mid-eighteenth-century American expressions of British patriotism and the move toward American independence, see John M. Murrin, “A Roof without Walls: The Dilemma of American National Identity,” in *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American Identity*, ed. Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward C. Carter II (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1987), 333–48 at 338–41.

44. Oscar G. Sonneck, *Early Opera in America* (New York, 1915), 28; Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America, 1743–1776* (Oxford, 1971), 194.

gave students the opportunity to practice their oratory, preparing them for public life: “any Person who can modulate his Voice, and form his Gesture to a just expression of that Groupe of Passions incident to any higher *dramatic Character*, will also have it in his power to excel in any of those particular Kinds of *Oratory*, which are fitted to the *Pulpit*, the *Bar* or the *Senate*” (PG, Feb. 10, 1757). The focus of Smith’s account certainly suggests that the performance was more an exercise in public speaking than a proper dramatic presentation.

Elise Kirk, however, has recently given an alternative view on the staging. She argues that, rather than being recited by young men and women in evening wear, “it was presented in costume” and with scenery painted specially for the production.⁴⁵ Kirk’s claim regarding the scenery derives from the seldom-cited account published in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* of April 1757, which asserts that “a set of new scenes were painted for the representation.” Although published in London, this account also appears to have come from the pen of Provost Smith. Certainly a resident of Philadelphia wrote it, as it refers to audience reactions to *Alfred* “in this place.”⁴⁶ The item also incorporates passages from Smith’s *Pennsylvania Gazette* accounts and similarly emphasizes education and oratory in its opening paragraphs. Smith’s authorship is also suggested by the fact that the *Gentleman’s Magazine* article provides some accurate details concerning the revision of the masque. The text of the Philadelphia production is largely based on the London edition of 1751, which David Mallet significantly revised from the first published version of 1740.⁴⁷ The *Gentleman’s Magazine* article correctly notes an instance where Smith has instead drawn on the 1740 text, noting that “The piece . . . concludes with these lines from the first copy by *Thomson* and *Mallet*,” before quoting lines that appear in the third and fifth scenes of the second act in the 1740 publication only.⁴⁸ This detailed knowledge of the variant texts used in the Philadelphia *Alfred* strongly suggests that the *Gentleman’s Magazine* account was by someone very close to the production. The claim regarding commissioned scenery thus appears reliable, suggesting that Smith and his students made the masque’s staging as sophisticated and elaborate as possible.

Kirk does not specify the source of her information regarding costumes in *Alfred*, but her claims are supported by Smith’s passing remarks in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, where he observes that “the REPRESENTATION opens with a Shepherdess at a distance, singing as follows to PEACE” and notes that later in the first scene “The Genius of *Britain* advances to slow and solemn Music . . . and then leaning on her Trident, the following Verses . . . are sung” (PG, Jan. 20, 1757). These remarks indicate that female performers did appear onstage, albeit in singing rather than speaking parts, but they also make clear that costumes and props, such as the trident, featured in the production. The *Gentleman’s Magazine* account provides further evidence on this matter. It comments that, with the female performers being excluded from speaking parts,

45. Kirk, *American Opera*, 26.

46. *Gentleman’s Magazine*, Apr. 1757, 178, 177.

47. Scott, “Arne’s ‘Alfred,’” 389–95.

48. *Gentleman’s Magazine*, Apr. 1757, 177. See *Alfred: A Masque* (London, 1740), 36, 44.

“it was thought proper to leave out the characters of *Eltruda* and *Emma*; as the method of dressing youths in women’s cloaths would have been justly excepted against in this place.”⁴⁹ The need to avoid cross-dressing suggests that costumes were indeed worn, since this would hardly have been an issue if the actors were simply reading the parts in “concert garb.” Moreover, if the college had gone to the trouble of constructing a newly painted set, it would seem odd not to have added costumes; it would have been somewhat jarring to have the actors appear in eighteenth-century evening wear amid scenery evoking ancient rural England. The periodical accounts thus indicate that the Philadelphia *Alfred*, far from being a dry rhetorical recitation, was a full-blown dramatic performance featuring props, costumes, and specially painted scenery.

The *Gentleman’s Magazine’s* information about the new scenery raises the question of who painted it. The students who participated in the production may have, and certainly in later years Francis Hopkinson made art one of his several avocations.⁵⁰ However, a survey of Smith’s circle in the late 1750s reveals a rather more eminent name, for he was a leading early sponsor of Benjamin West, who went on to become famed as an artist throughout America and Europe.

William Smith had become acquainted with Benjamin West in 1756, when, during a visit to Lancaster in Pennsylvania, he was impressed by West’s painting *The Death of Socrates*. He proposed that the young painter come to Philadelphia, where Smith would provide him with free education in classical culture to advance him in his vocation. West accepted and Smith introduced him to other of his students, including Francis Hopkinson and Thomas Godfrey; later, in 1760, he would help arrange West’s trip to Europe to study his craft. West had moved to Philadelphia by August 1756, only a few months before the production of *Alfred*.⁵¹ West’s intimacy with Smith and his circle of students has already led to the surmise of his having attended *Alfred*,⁵² but consideration of his connection to the production has gone no further. And, indeed, in the absence of material evidence or corroborating contemporary testimony, the matter of West’s contribution must remain uncertain. But in view of the information in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* concerning the new scenery that was painted for the performances, it seems a reasonable speculation that Smith might have turned to his young protégé for assistance in this aspect of the production. Benjamin West, then, may well be yet another luminary of early American culture whose early career was connected with the staging of the Philadelphia *Alfred*.

Music and Musicians

The music of *Alfred* has been of particular interest to critics and historians. We know about it mainly from Smith’s *Pennsylvania Gazette* articles, which print the text of

49. *Gentleman’s Magazine*, Apr. 1757, 177.

50. See Hastings, *Life and Works of Francis Hopkinson*, 176, 266, 464–66; Nicholas B. Wainwright, *Paintings and Miniatures at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1974), 115.

51. Robert C. Alberts, *Benjamin West: A Biography* (Boston, 1978), 19–21, 26.

52. Ann Uhry Abrams, *The Valiant Hero: Benjamin West and Grand Style History Painting* (Washington, D.C., 1985), 65.

several of the songs and offer some commentary. Three of the songs that Smith lists are taken from the 1751 edition of *Alfred*, with music by Thomas Arne: the issue of January 20, 1757, prints “O Peace! thou fairest Child of Heaven” and “A Youth adorn’d with every Art,” while the article of February 3, 1757, features “Rule Britannia.” Four songs are introduced from other works: the issue of January 20, 1757, includes “Prophetic Visions strike my Eye” from Handel’s *Occasional Oratorio* of 1746 (libretto by Newburgh Hamilton); the January 27 issue includes Handel’s setting of Milton’s “Let the bright *Seraphim*” from his 1743 oratorio, *Samson*; while the issue of February 3 reproduces the texts of “God of Battles! guide the Sword” from the 1748 *Hibernia’s Triumph* by Nicolò Pasquali (librettist unknown) and of “Figlio ascolta” from Domenech Terradellas’s *Merope* of 1743. These selections have been noted as a particularly fine instance of operatic sensibility in early American musical culture, with Elise Kirk commenting that they effectively reinforced the emotional effects of the drama and “allowed an otherwise turgid play to shine dramatically.”⁵³ In addition, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* of January 20, 1757, prints the text of a duet between two spirits, “*Alfred, Father of the State*,” substantively altered from the piece “*Hear, Alfred, father of the state*” in the 1751 *Alfred*.⁵⁴ This song is of particular interest, as Smith remarks that it was “Fitted to an Excellent Piece of New Music by One of the Performers” (*PG*, Jan. 20, 1757). The Philadelphia *Alfred* thus was considerably shaped by whoever was charged with directing the music, which included one of the earliest secular musical compositions known to have been produced in America.

That person’s identity has been a matter of considerable critical interest. Provost Smith would certainly have been consulted, but he appears to have been no expert in music and not closely engaged with the selection of the pieces, as in his *Pennsylvania Gazette* articles he misidentifies “Prophetic Visions strike my Eye” from Handel’s *Occasional Oratorio* as being from *Hibernia’s Triumph* (which he appears to believe to have been by Handel rather than Pasquali) (*PG*, Jan. 20, 1757). Far and away the most popular candidate for having devised the music is Francis Hopkinson. Famous as one of America’s first composers and for having written the first American secular song, “My Days Have Been So Wondrous Free,” Hopkinson was a leading figure in the musical life of eighteenth-century Philadelphia, arranging and participating in both private and public performances. In later years he composed numerous works in support of the cause of American independence, including many pieces of poetry and prose, as well as *The Temple of Minerva*, a patriotic musical entertainment performed before George Washington on December 11, 1781. Hopkinson also served in the Second Continental Congress as the representative for New Jersey and was one of the signatories of the Declaration of Independence. He was appointed treasurer of loans by Congress in 1778 and was involved in designing the nation’s first paper currency and the American flag.⁵⁵

53. Kirk, *American Opera*, 27.

54. Thomson and Mallet, *Alfred* (1751), 14.

55. Hastings, *Life and Works of Francis Hopkinson*, 212–14, 234–36, 254–57. On Hopkinson’s currency designs, see Benjamin H. Irvin, *Clothed in Robes of Sovereignty: The Continental Congress and*

Hopkinson's stature has made him a major focus of critical interest in discussions of the Philadelphia *Alfred*. Indeed, he was at one time thought to have taken the leading role in the whole production.⁵⁶ In the later twentieth century, criticism gradually relinquished these claims, but Hopkinson's central role in devising the music of *Alfred* continued to be asserted confidently. Critics have been particularly eager to credit Hopkinson with the one original composition in the masque, the music to "*Alfred, Father of the State*." As early as 1903, Oscar G. Sonneck asserted that "Circumstantial evidence forbids to think of any other performer but Francis Hopkinson who could have undertaken to fit the duet to 'this excellent piece of new music.'"⁵⁷ Subsequent critics have agreed.⁵⁸

Yet while there is strong indirect evidence to suggest Hopkinson was involved in the Philadelphia *Alfred* and contributed to the music, he is never named as a participant in contemporary documents. Smith's *Pennsylvania Gazette* articles do not refer to him as an actor⁵⁹ and, regarding the musicians, Smith simply refers to "the Gentlemen who kindly provided us with the instrumental Parts of the *Music*" (PG, Feb. 10, 1757). The *Pennsylvania Gazette* accounts, however, include an ode by Hopkinson written in thanks to Miss Lawrence for her singing in *Alfred* (PG, Feb. 10, 1757). Further circumstantial evidence is provided by a second ode in the same issue, by Jacob Duché, dedicated "*To Miss Hopkinson, on her excellent Performance of the vocal Parts*." This is

the People Out of Doors (New York, 2011), 8, 240–45. For summations of Hopkinson's cultural achievements, see Hastings, *Life and Works of Francis Hopkinson*, 461–74; Otto E. Albrecht, "Francis Hopkinson: Musician, Poet, and Patriot, 1737–1937" *The University of Pennsylvania Library Chronicle* 6 (1938): 3–15; and K. Marie Stolba, "Francis Hopkinson: *Amateur de Musique*," *American Music Teacher* 26 (April–May 1977): 18–22. On *The Temple of Minerva*, see Gillian B. Anderson, "The Temple of Minerva and Francis Hopkinson: A Reappraisal of America's First Poet-Composer," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 120 (1976): 166–77.

56. Arthur Hobson Quinn, "The Early Drama: 1756–1860," in *The Cambridge History of American Literature* (New York and Cambridge, 1917), 215–33 at 215; Wayland F. Dunaway, *A History of Pennsylvania*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1948; repr. 1964), 330; *The Roots of National Culture: American Literature to 1830*, ed. Robert E. Spiller and Harold W. Blodgett (New York, 1949), 13; Julian Mates, *The American Musical Stage before 1800* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1962), 187; Robert L. Ebel, *Encyclopaedia of Educational Research*, 4th ed. (New York, 1969), 303. Even after Quinn discovered William Smith's annotated copy of *Alfred* in the 1920s and correctly ascribed the textual revisions to the provost, he was still inclined to suggest that Hopkinson wrote the prologue and epilogue; see Quinn, "The Authorship of the First American College Masque," *General Magazine and Historical Chronicle* 28 (April 1926): 313–16 at 313–15.

57. Sonneck, "Francis Hopkinson," 136.

58. Hastings, *Life and Works of Francis Hopkinson*, 54; Gegenheimer, *William Smith*, 99; Mates, *The American Musical Stage*, 176; Chase, *America's Music*, 100; Robert A. Gerson, *Music in Philadelphia* (Westport, Conn., 1970), 32; Kenneth Silverman, *A Cultural History of the American Revolution* (New York, 1976), 59; "Hopkinson, Francis (1737–1791)," in *The Oxford Companion to American Literature*, 6th ed., ed. James D. Hart and Phillip W. Leininger (Oxford, 1995), 298–99 at 298; and Shuffelton, "Thomas Godfrey," 150.

59. The performers named by Smith are W. Hamilton, who spoke the opening of the prologue; S. Chew, who spoke the second part of the prologue and played the Danish king (PG, Jan. 20, 1757); and Jacob Duché, who acted the part of Alfred. The singers included Elizabeth Hopkinson, sister of Francis Hopkinson, and a Miss Lawrence (PG, Feb. 10, 1757).

Elizabeth Hopkinson, the sister of Francis Hopkinson (and she must have appreciated the compliment, as in 1760 she became Duché's wife).⁶⁰ It is reasonable to suppose that, if Elizabeth Hopkinson participated in the masque, her brother, who was after all a senior student at the college, would also have played a part.⁶¹ Yet this still provides no clear indication of what that part might have been.

Some further evidence can be gleaned from Francis Hopkinson's manuscript songbooks from the 1750s and the *Gentleman's Magazine* account of *Alfred*, sources that have been much less scrutinized than Smith's *Pennsylvania Gazette* articles. Six of the songs featured in the masque are transcribed in Hopkinson's two extant songbooks.⁶² Moreover, the songbook dated 1755 has a direct textual link to the production. In the text for the song "Prophetic visions strike my eye," the lines "The hostile band / By Alfred's hand / Discomfited" appear twice, altered by Hopkinson from the original "The hostile band / by his right hand/ Discomfited."⁶³ Hopkinson's alteration corresponds with the text of this song printed in the *Pennsylvania Gazette* (*PG*, Jan 20, 1757). Hopkinson's songbooks thus show that he was working with a musical piece in a form specially adapted for the masque, providing further support for the claim that he was closely involved in the music of the production.

Hopkinson's 1755 songbook also provides some evidence on the question of when precisely he transcribed the pieces that appear in it. This question is significant since, if the songs were transcribed before the production, this would suggest that pieces for the masque were selected from a repertoire that Hopkinson had already collected, strengthening the case for his having had a central role in organizing the music. Some details of Hopkinson's 1755 songbook suggest an earlier rather than later date. The phrase in Hopkinson's manuscript, "by Alfred's hand," is an interpolation. The wording of Newburgh Hamilton's original libretto, "by his right hand," that is, has been erased and overwritten, the original text remaining visible beneath the altered words. All the other *Alfred* songs in the manuscript precede this one and were thus almost certainly copied out before Hopkinson made the emendation. If, as seems likely, the emendation was made around the time of the College production of *Alfred*, perhaps in late 1756 or early 1757, then Hopkinson must have transcribed all the songs from *Alfred*

60. *Record of Pennsylvania Marriages prior to 1810*, ed. John B. Linn and William H. Egle, 2 vols. (Baltimore, 2008), 1:76.

61. Sonneck, "Francis Hopkinson," 128.

62. The songbook dated 1755 is a fragment and is preserved in the Van Pelt Library of the University of Pennsylvania, catalogued as Folio M1.A11 .H6 v. 15 (cited hereafter as 1755 songbook). It contains "Figlio ascolta" (incomplete, pp. 48–50), "God of battles guide the sword" (pp. 58–59), "Let the bright seraphim" (pp. 67–69), and "Prophetic visions strike my ye" (pp. 70–74). The songbook dated 1759, known as "Francis Hopkinson His Book," is almost complete, missing only pages 151–52 and 177–78, and is preserved in the Library of Congress (ML96 .H83). It contains "Figlio ascolta" (pp. 32–35), "Let the bright Seraphim" (pp. 74–76), "Prophetic Visions strike mine Eye" (pp. 77–81), "A Youth adorned with every Art" (pp. 126–27), and "Rule Britannia" (p. 146).

63. Hopkinson, 1755 songbook, 74. Hopkinson restores the original text in his 1759 transcription of the piece ("Francis Hopkinson His Book," 81). I am grateful to Mr. J. Bradford Young of the University of Pennsylvania Music Library for drawing my attention to these textual variations in the Hopkinson manuscripts.

that appear in his 1755 songbook no later than around the time of the college production, and possibly beforehand.

Further analysis of Hopkinson's 1755 songbook supports the likelihood that his transcriptions of these songs predate their selection for the masque. The ordering of the songs in the 1755 manuscript shows little relation to the order in which they were performed in *Alfred*. Hopkinson's songbook has the featured songs in the reverse of the order in which they appear in the masque. The songs from *Alfred* are also dispersed rather than occurring in a group. "Figlio ascolta" appears second, "God of battles guide the sword" is sixth, "Let the bright seraphim" is tenth, and "Prophetic visions strike my eye" is eleventh. It is certainly possible that some of the other pieces in the songbook featured in the Philadelphia *Alfred* and were just elided by Smith.⁶⁴ But we would expect that, if Hopkinson had the Philadelphia *Alfred* in mind when he copied out the songs that feature in it, they would appear together and in the same order. Rather than the pieces appearing in Hopkinson's songbook because they featured in the masque, then, it seems more likely that they formed part of a repertoire that Hopkinson had already copied some time before and that was used as a resource when selecting the music. From this, it is reasonable to infer that Hopkinson played a prominent role in organizing the music for the Philadelphia *Alfred*.

This, however, falls rather short of showing that Hopkinson played a leading part as musical director and composer. Caution with regard to such claims is all the more necessary because there is another strong candidate. A footnote in the *Gentleman's Magazine* article refers to "signor Juan Palma, who conducted the instrumental musick."⁶⁵ This refers to John Palma, an Italian musician based in Philadelphia in the late 1750s.⁶⁶ Palma's participation has scarcely been addressed in critical accounts. The only reference to his role as conductor has been by Elise Kirk, who merely notes the fact.⁶⁷ Palma has received occasional mention in discussions of the musical culture of eighteenth-century America. He is mostly cited as having produced Philadelphia's first public concerts at the Assembly Room in Lodge Alley on January 25 and March 25, 1757,⁶⁸ and as one of the professional musicians active in Philadelphia in the late

64. Smith only mentions the pieces performed in the masque proper, but the masque's prologue opens with the entrance of a "Mr. W. Hamilton," who calls for silence with "Peace with your Fiddling there" (*PG*, Jan. 20, 1757), demonstrating that there was music performed before the dramatic action began. There might also have been music performed between the acts, as was common in productions of dramas and oratorios at the time. See Peter Borsay, "Concert Topography and Provincial Towns in Eighteenth-Century England," in *Concert Life in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Susan Wollenberg and Simon McVeigh (Aldershot, U.K., 2004), 19–34 at 26.

65. *Gentleman's Magazine*, Apr. 1757, 178.

66. Palma's first name appears variously as John, Juan, and Giovanni, and his surname sometimes occurs as "di Palma." See Richard N. Juliani, *Building Little Italy: Philadelphia's Italians before Immigration* (University Park, Pa., 198), 6.

67. Kirk, *American Opera*, 28. Pierre Danchy quotes the passage from the *Gentleman's Magazine* without comment (*Prologues and Epilogues*, 592), while Lemay makes some observations about Palma's career but none on his involvement in the Philadelphia production of *Alfred* (*Men of Letters*, 335n60).

68. See Oscar G. Sonneck, *Early Concert-Life in America (1731–1800)* (Leipzig, 1907), 65–66; John Ogasapian, *Music of the Colonial and Revolutionary Era* (Westport, Conn., 2004), 82.

1750s who might have been an early teacher and mentor of Francis Hopkinson.⁶⁹ But beyond these brief notices, there has been little attention to Palma's role in the musical life of Philadelphia and almost none to his role in *Alfred*.

Yet John Palma indeed appears to have been "a prominent colonial musician"⁷⁰ in the region. It is not known precisely when he first came to the area or when he left, there being no record of him after 1757.⁷¹ He was certainly active in late 1756, as is indicated by a letter from Thomas Bacon to Henry Callister, addressed from Dover in Maryland and dated October 26, 1756:

We had on Friday & Saturday last at Col^e Lloyds the most delightful Concert America can afford. My Hon^r the B. Fiddle being accompanied on the Harpsichord by the famous Sign^r Palma who really is a thorough Master on that Instrum^t and his Execution surprizing.⁷²

Bacon's comments on Palma's "surprizing" execution on the harpsichord suggest that the two had not met before, but his description of Palma as "famous" implies that by late 1756 the Italian music master had been active in the area long enough to have built a reputation.⁷³ Bacon also mentions upcoming recitals, suggesting that Palma was establishing himself through regular performances at private homes, then an important part of the region's musical culture:⁷⁴

He [Palma] returns this Week to the Colonel's from Annapolis of which I am to have Notice, and am directed by the Colonel to request your Company on the Occasion. Sign^r Palma, the best natured Man of a Top

69. See Sonneck, *Francis Hopkinson*, 27; David Ewen, *Composers of Yesterday: A Biographical and Critical Guide* (New York, 1937); Gertrude Martin Rohrer, *Music and Musicians of Pennsylvania* (Port Washington, N.Y., 1970), 56; John Tasker Howard, *Our American Music: Three Hundred Years of It*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1946), 39; Nicholas Temperley, "First Forty: The Earliest American Compositions," *American Music* 15 (1997): 1–25 at 16; and Ogasapian, *Music of the Colonial and Revolutionary Era*, 64–65.

70. John B. Talley, *Secular Music in Colonial Annapolis: The Tuesday Club, 1745–56* (Urbana, Ill., and Chicago, 1988), 27.

71. Juliani, *Building Little Italy*, 5. Juliani speculates (p. 6) that Palma may have left Philadelphia to take advantage of the more thriving musical culture of New York City.

72. Thomas Bacon to Henry Callister, Oct. 26, 1756, Callister Papers, Archives of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, Baltimore. I am most grateful to Ms. Mary Klein of the Archives of the Episcopal Diocese of Maryland for her assistance in accessing this document.

73. It has been suggested that the inclusion of "one large Book of Songs Palma" in the 1755 inventory of the estate of Cuthbert Ogle of Williamsburg shows that John Palma had arrived in America a good deal earlier than this: see Giovanni E. Schiavo, *Four Centuries of Italian-American History* (New York, 1952), 112. The Ogle songbook, however, is almost certainly by Filippo (or Filippo) Palma, an Italian musician active in Britain in the 1740s and 1750s, and is probably his *Six Italian Songs with Their Accompaniments* (London, [1750?]). See John W. Molmar, "A Collection of Music in Colonial Virginia," *The Musical Quarterly* 49 (1963): 150–62 at 161.

74. Sonneck, *Early Concert-Life*, 66; Ogasapian, *Music of the Colonial and Revolutionary Era*, 6.

hand I ever met with has promised me one Evening at Jemmy Dickinsons, where I shall also expect your attendance.⁷⁵

Bacon's remarks in this letter also indicate that Palma was building good connections among the network of musicians and musical aficionados in the area. Bacon himself was rector of St. Peter's Parish in Talbot County, Maryland.⁷⁶ The Colonel Lloyd of whom he writes was Colonel Edward Lloyd III, "the richest man in Maryland and possibly in North America,"⁷⁷ while "Jemmy Dickinson" would appear to be James Dickinson, sheriff and justice of Talbot County.⁷⁸ Lloyd, Dickinson, and Bacon himself had all been honorary members of the Tuesday Club, which had played a major role in promoting music in Annapolis and the surrounding area for several years,⁷⁹ and though the Tuesday Club appears not to have met after February of 1756,⁸⁰ it is very likely that Palma performed in Annapolis, drawn by the city's vibrant music scene. In Palma, then, Smith had obtained for the production a conductor who was well regarded as an up-and-coming figure in the musical culture of Philadelphia and the surrounding regions.

The *Gentleman's Magazine* account also notes that Palma was serving as a music teacher, which casts further light on his role in *Alfred* and his relationship with the performers:

The songs were also perform'd to great advantage, by several young ladies of this city, who, having been taught music under an able master, condescended to oblige their friends, by adorning this performance, with their musical voices.

A footnote informs us that this "able master" was "signor Juan Palma."⁸¹ This statement adds considerable weight to Sonneck's tentative suggestion that Francis Hopkinson may have received lessons in harpsichord from Palma. Since Elizabeth Hopkinson was among the "young ladies" Palma tutored, it seems probable that he also taught her brother, especially given that Palma was "a thorough Master" on the harpsichord. The evidence, then, suggests not only that Palma was conductor for *Alfred* but also that the piece featured his own students prominently.

75. Thomas Bacon to Henry Callister, October 26, 1756, Callister Papers.

76. See Dickson J. Preston, *Talbot County: A History* (Centreville, Md., 1983), 98–102; and Lemay, *Men of Letters*, 313–42.

77. Preston, *Talbot County*, 89; see also Samuel A. Harrison, *History of Talbot County, Maryland 1661–1861*, 2 vols. (Baltimore, 1915), 1:164–76.

78. Richard H. Spencer, *Thomas Family of Talbot County, Maryland, and Allied Families* (Baltimore, 1914), 89; Lemay, *Men of Letters*, 335n60.

79. Elaine G. Breslaw, *Records of the Tuesday Club of Annapolis, 1745–1756* (Urbana, Ill., 1988), 10, 19, 186.

80. *Ibid.*, 589.

81. *Gentleman's Magazine*, Apr. 1757, 178.

This information about John Palma alters our perception of the production considerably. Rather than being an entirely amateur affair, the music was led by a professional musician, whose services were presumably solicited in an effort to make the performance as polished as possible, thus helping to achieve Smith's aim of making the production "an Honour to the Taste and Improvement of any country" (*PG*, Feb. 10, 1757). As conductor and tutor to some of the musicians, Palma would clearly have had a leading role in the performance. Thomas Busby in the 1780s defined a "conductor" as "the person who arranges, orders, and directs the necessary preparations for a concert; and also superintends and conducts the performance."⁸² As conductor, Palma would at the very least have exercised oversight, with the selections subject to his advice and approval, and it is very likely that he would have had the chief responsibility for the arrangements. Even assuming Francis Hopkinson played a substantial part in the music of *Alfred*, it would have been under Palma's supervision.

Palma's involvement as conductor also casts doubt on the assumption, almost universal in previous criticism, that Francis Hopkinson played harpsichord in the performances.⁸³ In the eighteenth century, the conductor did not lead the musicians in the modern manner of standing before them and orchestrating the music with a baton, a style of conducting that did not begin to develop until the late eighteenth century in Germany.⁸⁴ Nor by "conductor" would have been meant the time-beater sometimes employed in the eighteenth century to beat out the tempo with a stick. Generally used only for bigger ensembles playing large and complicated pieces,⁸⁵ the time-beater had a mechanical rather than creative role and "was in no sense the conductor of the orchestra," as Adam Carse notes.⁸⁶ Rather, it was customary for the conductor to be a performer, leading the ensemble most commonly from the harpsichord.⁸⁷ Given Palma's proficiency as a harpsichordist, it is likely that he did just that. If so, it is unlikely that Hopkinson also played harpsichord. A second harpsichord tended to be used mostly in larger orchestras (to ensure all performers could follow the continuo) and would be less likely or necessary for smaller ensembles, of the sort that would have performed for *Alfred*.⁸⁸

82. Thomas Busby, "Conductor," in *A Universal Dictionary of Music* (London, 1783–86).

83. Sonneck, *Francis Hopkinson*, 40, 76; Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre*, 12; Mates, *The American Musical Stage*, 187; Ronald L. Davis, *A History of Music in American Life: The Formative Years, 1620–1865* (Huntington, N.Y., 1980), 59; David Ewen, *American Composers: A Biographical Dictionary* (New York, 1982), 338.

84. Adam von Ahn Carse, *The Orchestra in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1940), 101–2.

85. Elliott W. Galkin, *A History of Orchestral Conducting in Theory and Practice* (New York, 1988), 443–44.

86. Adam von Ahn Carse, *The Orchestra* (London, 1949), 39. On the time-beater's role, see Carse, *The Orchestra in the Eighteenth Century*, 102–6.

87. Galkin, *A History of Orchestral Conducting*, 443–44; Carse, *The Orchestra in the Eighteenth Century*, 11, 45, 90.

88. C. Vere Pilkington, "The Harpsichord: Its Present and Future," *Proceedings of the Musical Association*, 62nd sess. (1935–36): 21–38 at 21; Philip Gossett, *Divas and Scholars: Performing Italian Opera* (Chicago, 2006), 438–39. On the likely size of the ensemble that performed at *Alfred*, see Kirk, *American Opera*, 28.

Francis Hopkinson is mostly referred to in contemporary accounts as a harpsichordist, and it was undoubtedly the instrument that interested him most, as indicated by his technical innovations.⁸⁹ He did, however, play other instruments. He certainly played guitar, an instrument that featured regularly in Philadelphia concerts in the following decades,⁹⁰ as he writes in a 1768 letter to his fiancée, “This morning I wrote the enclosed Song which I shall set to Music & play for you on the Guitar when I visit you next.”⁹¹ An account of an “Evening of Colonial Music Including Songs by Francis Hopkinson” that took place on November 12, 1919, at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania notes that “one of the Hopkinson violins gave voice to the Colonial music heard in the composer’s home so many years ago,” suggesting that he may also have had some proficiency on the fiddle.⁹² Smith’s notes on *Alfred* imply the instrumentation included an organ. His annotated copy of the masque, held in the archives of the Library Company of Philadelphia, includes an insert with one verse of Handel’s “Let the Bright Seraphim” copied out in Smith’s hand. He titled the piece “Hymn—with the Organ.”⁹³ The Philadelphia College Hall did not have a permanent organ until 1760,⁹⁴ so the instrument that Smith refers to was most probably a smaller chamber organ, either used routinely in the College Hall until a larger instrument could be acquired, or brought in especially for these performances.

Whether Palma or Hopkinson played this organ is not evident. However, the (admittedly scanty) contemporary records make no mention of Palma as an organist,⁹⁵ whereas Hopkinson in later years served as organist for St. Peter’s in Philadelphia.⁹⁶ He appears to have been a skilled organist as early as 1760 and to have begun composing for the instrument by that time. An account of the graduation ceremony at the College of Philadelphia in May 1760 reports that “One of the Students, who

89. Sonneck, “Francis Hopkinson,” 134–46; Sonneck, *Francis Hopkinson*, 63–73.

90. See Sonneck, *Early Concert-Life*, 76, 81–87, 130, 131, 137, 175.

91. Francis Hopkinson to Ann Borden, cited in Hastings, *Life and Works of Francis Hopkinson*, 164. The letter is undated, but clearly from 1768, as Hopkinson remarks in it, “I find myself entirely absorbed in the Idea of my approaching Happiness, & look forward to Thursday the first of September.” This clearly refers to his upcoming wedding day, which was on that date in 1768 (*Record of Pennsylvania Marriages*, ed. Linn and Egle, 1:136).

92. *The Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies: Acts and Proceedings* (Harrisburg, Pa., 1916), 55. There have also been some references to Hopkinson as a flautist, though I find no corroborating sources for this claim. See Laura Henigman, “Hopkinson, Francis,” in *The Continuum Encyclopedia of American Literature*, ed. Steven R. Serafin (New York and London, 2003), 536–37 at 536; and Donald Barr Chidsey, *The Loyalists: The Story of Those Americans Who Fought against Independence* (New York, 1973), 88.

93. William Smith’s copy of *Alfred: A Masque*, Library Company of Philadelphia, Am 1751 Tho Aq S65.T473. The insert appears after p. 28.

94. The previous year’s charity concert and performance of the play *George Barnwell* on December 27, 1759, for the purpose of “raising of a Fund for purchasing an ORGAN to the COLLEGE HALL in this City, and instructing the Charity Children in PSALMODY” (*PG*, Dec. 27, 1759) was apparently successful; “an *Organ*, which the Liberality of the Town lately bestowed” was installed by the next spring (*PG*, May 15, 1760).

95. John Ogasapian refers to Palma as an “eminent Philadelphia organist and harpsichordist” (*Music of the Colonial and Revolutionary Era*, 64–65) but provides no source for the claim.

96. Sonneck, “Francis Hopkinson,” 126.

received his Master's Degree on this Occasion, conducted the Organ with that bold and masterly Hand, for which he is celebrated; and several of the Pieces were also his own Composition" (PG, May 15, 1760). This was almost certainly Hopkinson, very likely performing as part of an ensemble with violins and bass viol in concert with the organ.⁹⁷ Given the apparent expertise he had attained by 1760, it is very possible that Hopkinson had also tried his hand on the organ at the 1757 production. Much still remains unclear about the ensemble that performed in *Alfred*, and one can certainly not rule out the possibility that Hopkinson played the harpsichord or Palma the organ. But the consensus belief that Hopkinson presided on harpsichord is certainly cast into doubt. Palma clearly led the musicians, and it is probable that he did so from the harpsichord, with Hopkinson perhaps contributing on the organ and possibly other instruments.

Palma's prominent role also reopens the question of who composed the "Excellent Piece of New Music" to which Smith's "*Alfred, Father of the State*" was set. Palma was an active composer around this time, and, while none of his works were printed, they appear to have circulated in manuscript. Francis Hopkinson's manuscript books of music feature six pieces ascribed to "sign^r Palma,"⁹⁸ almost certainly John Palma.⁹⁹ Hopkinson was also composing by the late 1750s: his most famous piece, "My Days Have Been So Wondrous Free," dates from around 1759, and "Francis Hopkinson His Book" includes "An Anthem from the 114th Psalm," ascribed to "F.H. 1760."¹⁰⁰ Both

97. Hastings, *Life and Works of Francis Hopkinson*, 80; Stolba, "Francis Hopkinson," 21.

98. Hopkinson's 1755 songbook includes a "Duetto" ascribed to Palma (pp. 64–66). This piece also appears in the manuscript dated 1759, "Francis Hopkinson His Book," in the Library of Congress (pp. 43–45), together with "Di render mi la Calma" (pp. 1–3), "Va con l'amore delle Ciglia" (p. 25), "Come Sweet returning Morn of Heaven" (p. 106), and "Christmas Hymn" (p. 125), all ascribed to Palma. The last of these is published anonymously as "Christmas" in James Lyon's *Urania* (Philadelphia, 1761; repr., New York, 1974), 192–94. Hopkinson's manuscript collection, "Lessons" (ca. 1760), also features a "Lesson" in B major ascribed to Palma. See *Francis Hopkinson's "Lessons": A Facsimile Edition of Hopkinson's Personal Keyboard Book*, ed. David P. Mackay (Washington, D.C., 1979), 39.

99. As noted above, John Palma has been at times confused with Filippo Palma, but the pieces that appear in Hopkinson's books are not in any of Filippo Palma's known collections that I have seen. There is only one collection by Filippo Palma that I have not been able to consult: *Sei arie con istromenti . . . opera prima* (London, [1749]). The only copy of this publication I have been able to trace is in the holdings of the Henry Watson Music Library in Manchester (call number BRf540Pc1), but at the time of writing, the book is being held in deep store in the Winsford Rock Salt Mine in Cheshire while the library is being refurbished. (My thanks to Ms. Ros Edwards of the Henry Watson Music Library for her kind help with my enquiries about this publication.) Other less-inaccessible works by Palma are *Six Italian Songs with Their Accompaniments* (London, [1750]); *Six Solos for the Harpsichord Violin and German Flute* ([Edinburgh, c. 1740]); *Sei arie con istromenti . . . opera terza* (London, 1749), and *Sei arie con istromenti . . . opera quarta* (London, 1752). The only other surviving published pieces by Filippo Palma from around this time are "Child of the summer, charming rose," published with score in the *Gentleman's Magazine* of December 1748 (p. 569), and the broadsides *Adieu ye Streams that smoothly flow* ([London, [1750?]]) and *The Newgate Calendar, or Malefactor's Bloody Register* (London, [1760?]). None of these published pieces appear in Hopkinson's songbook. Barring the future emergence of information to the contrary from the Cheshire salt mine, it thus seems likely that the pieces that Hopkinson ascribes to "Palma" are by John Palma.

100. "Francis Hopkinson His Book," 180–81. On the dating of "My Days Have Been So Wondrous Free," see Sonneck, *Francis Hopkinson*, 78.

Hopkinson and Palma, then, are viable candidates for having composed the new music. In Hopkinson's favor, this was a performance supposedly aimed at showcasing the talents of the students of the college, like Hopkinson. In Palma's favor, this was not the sole aim: Smith himself took the leading role in revising the text. Moreover, it was customary in the eighteenth century for the composer of a piece of music to conduct its first performances.¹⁰¹ Palma's role as conductor for the production, then, could in itself suggest that he wrote the new music.

The contemporary reports and manuscript materials connected to *Alfred* shed little light on the new composition. Smith's *Pennsylvania Gazette* accounts state that it was a duet, "sung by two invisible Spirits" (*PG*, Jan. 20, 1757). In his annotated copy of *Alfred*, Smith wrote the title "Let ambition fire thy mind" next to the text of "*Alfred*, Father of the State," suggesting that he considered setting the piece to the music for the popular aria of that name, from the 1701 *Judgement of Paris*.¹⁰² But there is nothing in Smith's notes to explain why this idea was abandoned and no hint regarding the new piece's composer. The music does not appear to have survived. The only possible candidate is a "Duetto" ascribed to Palma, which appears in Francis Hopkinson's songbook dated 1755 amid other songs that featured in the production.¹⁰³ Palma's "Duetto," however, is transcribed without words, so there is no way of telling if "*Alfred*, Father of the State" was set to it.¹⁰⁴ The identity of the composer of the new music thus remains uncertain. But Palma's involvement means we cannot simply assume it was Hopkinson.

Palma's role as conductor also suggests that the public concerts that he staged in Philadelphia in early 1757 might have been connected to *Alfred*. The first of these took place on January 25, 1757, and was advertised in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*:

ON Tuesday next, the 25th Instant, at the Assembly Room, in Lodge Alley, will be performed, a CONCERT OF MUSIC, under the Direction of Mr. JOHN PALMA; to begin exactly at Six o'Clock. Tickets to be had at the London Coffee house, at one *Dollar* each; and no Person to be admitted without a Ticket. (*PG*, Jan. 20, 1757)

A second concert, apparently also by Palma, took place on March 25, 1757, and was advertised in the *Pennsylvania Journal*: "To Morrow Evening, in the Assembly Room precisely at 7 o'Clock, will be a / CONCERT OF MUSIC. / Tickets to be had at the Coffee-

101. Carse, *The Orchestra in the Eighteenth Century*, 13.

102. William Congreve's libretto for "Let Ambition Fire Thy Mind" was disseminated in the eighteenth century with various musical settings by John Eccles, John Weldon, Daniel Purcell, and Thomas Arne, Weldon's setting being the most well known and often having new words set to it in ballad-operas of the time. See John Weldon, *The Judgement of Paris*, ed. David W. Music (Madison, Wis., 1999), xi–xii, xiv n. 32; and *The British-Union Catalogue of Early Music Printed before the Year 1801*, ed. Edith B. Schnapper, 2 vols. (London, 1957), 1:41, 308; 2:856, 1065.

103. Hopkinson, 1755 songbook, 64–66.

104. Setting words to an existing piece of music was a common practice in the eighteenth century. See George J. Buelow, "The Case for Handel's Borrowings: The Judgment of Three Centuries," in *Handel: Tercentenary Collection*, ed. Stanley Sadie and Anthony Hicks (Basingstoke, U.K., and London, 1987), 61–82 at 62.

house at one Dollar each.”¹⁰⁵ The timing of these concerts is suggestive. That of January 25 comes a few days after the first run of performances of *Alfred* at the College of Philadelphia in mid-January 1757. The second, on March 25, falls toward the end of the period during which the performance before Lord Loudoun and the governors must have taken place. Assuming that Palma was conductor for the March performance as he was for the January production, the fact that each of his public concerts coincides with a staging of *Alfred* suggests a connection between the masque and Palma’s musical recitals.

At the very least, Palma’s public concerts seem likely to have been an attempt to capitalize on the interest and curiosity generated by the college’s performances. They might even have been a means of reimbursing Palma for his services. The first advertisement describes a concert staged “under the Direction of Mr. JOHN PALMA,” implying that these were not solo performances but involved other musicians. These would undoubtedly have been gentlemen-amateurs of the sort who came to participate in public concerts in mid-eighteenth-century Philadelphia and indeed throughout the colonies.¹⁰⁶ Given the proximity in time, it seems likely that at least some of the student instrumentalists from the Philadelphia *Alfred* participated in Palma’s concerts. As Sonneck points out, “However unwilling the aristocratic Colonials were to put themselves on an equal social footing with a poor devil of a musician, they hesitated not to lend a helping hand for his “Benefit” if he were “an honest fellow.”¹⁰⁷ Palma’s public concerts may have been precisely this kind of “Benefit”: for-profit recitals staged in order to recompense Palma for his creative contributions to *Alfred*.¹⁰⁸



The likelihood that the first public concerts of secular music in Philadelphia arose from *Alfred* underscores the extent of the impact of Smith’s “*Oratorical Exercises*” on the city’s cultural life. The connection of such early American luminaries as Francis Hopkinson, Benjamin West, and George Washington to the masque is one aspect of

105. *Pennsylvania Journal*, Mar. 24, 1757. While this second concert advertisement does not mention Palma by name, an entry in George Washington’s financial ledger headed March 17, 1757, records a payment that indicates that the March 25 concert was also given by John Palma: “By Mr Palma’s tickets 52/6.” See ledger book 1, March 17, 1757 (p. 34), George Washington Papers Series 5: Financial Papers, 1750–72, Library of Congress.

106. See Sonneck, *Early Concert-Life*, 69–70; Chase, *America’s Music*, 72–73.

107. Sonneck, *Francis Hopkinson*, 48.

108. There is no known surviving information about the program of Palma’s concerts, but one further slim possibility that should at least be considered is that they might have actually been performances of *Alfred* or have included music from the production, with the performance of *Alfred* before Lord Loudoun in March perhaps having been at Palma’s concert of Mar. 25, 1757. This, however, seems unlikely, not least because, while gentlemen-amateurs might have been free to participate gratis in a for-profit public performance without arousing too much negative comment, the participation of the Misses Hopkinson and Lawrence would have been likely to result in considerable scandal and damage to their reputations, given contemporary attitudes to women on the public stage. For discussion of early attitudes toward female performers in America, see Faye E. Dudden, *Women in the American Theater: Actresses and Audience, 1790–1870* (New Haven, Conn., 1994), 21.

the performance's historical importance. But these distinguished associations are mostly important in retrospect. At the time, Smith consciously aimed at making the masque a prominent example of American cultural sophistication. Rather than being simply an amateur exercise of his students' rhetorical skills, the Philadelphia *Alfred* was as elaborate as Smith could make it. It was staged with costumes and specially painted scenery, featured original music, and benefitted from the assistance of a professional musician, who as musical director would have given the production something of the polish of a professional performance. The additional staging in March 1757 for Lord Loudoun suggests that Smith viewed *Alfred* as making pertinent comment on colonial identity and politics during the French-Indian War. If it occurred at the Philadelphia Corporation's entertainment, that performance might well link *Alfred* to the local politics surrounding the negotiations between Loudoun and the city authorities, while also raising the masque's status to that of a civic production: a representation of the cultural sophistication of the city and even of the American colonies as a whole.

These suggestions regarding the cultural and political overtones of the Philadelphia *Alfred* accord with the emphasis of some recent studies of the political dimensions of early American theater, which have highlighted the masque's treatment of national identity and of the relations between Britain and the American colonies.¹⁰⁹ The new insights, possibilities, and questions raised by the foregoing review of the evidence indicate that a good deal of further study of this kind is warranted. New evidence could help build a more certain and complete picture of the material conditions of the production. Moreover, future investigation of matters such as the production's music and musicians, the scenery and costumes, and the precise dates of the performances in January and March 1757, will be no mere exercise in antiquarian curiosity. Rather, further study of these matters seems likely to lead to a fuller appreciation of the Philadelphia *Alfred's* far-reaching contribution to the cultural life and political attitudes of mid-eighteenth-century Philadelphia and colonial America.

I would like to thank the Folger Shakespeare Library for the award of a short-term fellowship in the summer of 2011, when this research was carried out, and to express my gratitude to all the staff and librarians for their help and support.

KEVIN J. MCGINLEY, senior lecturer in the School of Language, Translation, and Literary Studies at the University of Tampere, is co-editor of *The Apparelling of Truth: Literature and Literary Culture in the Reign of James VI* (2010) and author of articles on David Lyndsay, Robert Henryson, and John Home. His current research is on Scottish drama in eighteenth-century America.

109. See Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 110–13; and Douglas S. Harvey, *Theater and Empire: Frontier Performances in America, 1700–1860* (London, 2010), 15–17.