



Music and the Southern Belle: From Accomplished Lady to Confederate Composer

Candace Bailey

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Candace Bailey's exploration of the intertwining worlds of music and gender shows how young southern women pushed the boundaries of respectability to leave their unique mark on a patriarchal society. Before 1861, a strictly defined code of behavior allowed a southern woman to identify herself as a "lady" through her accomplishments in music, drawing, and writing, among other factors. Music permeated the lives of southern women, and they learned appropriate participation through instruction at home and at female training institutions. A belle's primary venue was the parlor, where she could demonstrate her usefulness in the domestic circle by providing comfort and serving to enhance social gatherings through her musical performances, often by playing the piano or singing. The southern lady performed in public only on the rarest of occasions, though she might attend public performances by women. An especially talented lady who composed music for a broader audience would do so anonymously so that her reputation would remain unsullied.

The tumultuous Civil War years provided an opportunity for southern women to envision and attempt new ways to make themselves useful to the broader, public society. While continuing their domestic responsibilities and taking on new ones, young women also tested the boundaries of propriety in a variety of ways. In a broad break with the past, musical ladies began giving public performances to raise money for the war effort, some women published patriotic Confederate music under their own names, supporting their cause and claiming public ownership for their creations. Bailey explores these women's lives and analyzes their music. Through their move from private to public performance and publication, southern ladies not only expanded concepts of social acceptability but also gained a valued sense of purpose.

Music and the Southern Belle places these remarkable women in their social context, providing compelling insight into southern culture and the intricate ties between a lady's identity and the world of music. Augmented by incisive analysis of musical compositions and vibrant profiles of composers, this volume is the first of its kind, making it an essential read for devotees of Civil War and southern history, gender studies, and music.



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