

# Lincoln, Persichetti and the 2nd Inauguration of Richard Nixon: a Study in Artistic Vision Versus Political Expediency<sup>1</sup>

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On December 15, 1972, Vincent Persichetti was contacted by Ed Cowling, Chairman of Entertainment for the second inauguration of Richard Nixon, to write a new piece for orchestra and narrator based on Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address of 1865.<sup>2</sup> Eugene Ormandy was to lead the Philadelphia Orchestra in the performance of this commission, and the role of the narrator was to be assumed by Charlton Heston, who would read selected passages from Lincoln's speech. Purportedly, later that same month, a decision was made by the Inaugural Committee to remove selected passages from Lincoln's text and, finally, to substitute it with something else entirely. Persichetti was deeply inspired by these words, and he would not replace Lincoln's speech to alleviate the concerns of the Inaugural Committee; consequently, the piece was dropped from the program entirely. I will explore the dynamics that led to the rejection of *A Lincoln Address*, a piece of music that is both patriotic and exemplary of American values.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, this paper reviews the decisions of the committee that pertain to the Inaugural concert—the Inaugural theme and the selection of an alternative text—and reveals a pattern of arbitrary decisions that belie the democratic values the inauguration is meant to celebrate. Indeed, the Persichetti incident does not merely recount the decision to remove a piece of music from an inaugural concert; I argue that it is a cautionary tale demonstrating how a decision meant to quell negative publicity, or worse, riots, ended up fomenting the very controversy it was intended to avoid.

## The Commission

When the Inaugural Committee first approached Persichetti, his initial inclination was to decline the commission given his political convictions. However, a gift from his wife, Dorothea, caused a change of heart:

When Dorothea and I were married in 1941, we absolutely had no money—but that June 6, for my birthday, she came in with this big package for me: it was the Sandburg Lincoln books—all of the volumes. That cost a fortune—a fortune for us in those days ... I had read the second inaugural address then, and was very impressed with it. When the Nixon Inaugural

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<sup>1</sup>A version of this paper was read at Juilliard School's Persichetti Centenary, October 20, 2015.

<sup>2</sup>Judith Martin, "Inaugural Concert: Dissension in Philadelphia," *The Washington Post*, January 16, 1973.

<sup>3</sup>I have consulted four archives in my research: The Vincent Persichetti Papers (hereafter VPP) located at the music division of the New York Public Library, Archives and Manuscripts, permission granted by Lauren Persichetti; the Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda, CA, which is part of the National Archives and Records Administration (hereafter NPLM and NARA); the John Willard and Alice Sheets Marriott Papers (hereafter JWASMP) at the University of Utah Marriott Library, Special Collections; and the Eugene Ormandy Papers (hereafter EOP), Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, at the University of Pennsylvania, permission granted by the Ormandy Estate; the first three archives were consulted in person.

Committee approached me on the phone about doing a work for the inauguration ... what I told them was that I don't take commissions: I can't work that way. The only time I take a commission is when it coincides with what I am already planning to do ... I told the committee I would call them back the next morning ... I was up all night and reread this [address]. I got involved again. You don't 'look' for a text—you don't search for a poem: you have to read all the time, live with it, and suddenly it will mean something musical to you. So I called them back and said that I would do it.<sup>4</sup>

To be sure, Persichetti was very concerned with text setting and in realizing its potential in an authentic way:

I had always felt that I dare not touch a text; I used to think 'Why bother a good poem, it's so complete already?'... then I realized that poetry is, in reality, a distilled concept full of implications that you can interpret in many ways. So my composition is a statement of *one* of the implications of the poem, as I see it.<sup>5</sup> [emphasis mine]

Thus, the text of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address inspired Persichetti to a point where he felt he could create a work that presented a meaningful interpretation of the text. The composer completed the work in December (he finished in two weeks; this astonishing pace is due to the fact that he drew heavily from the first movement of his seventh symphony).<sup>6</sup> Significantly, in a recorded interview from 1987, both Dorothea and Persichetti adamantly attest to the fact that Ormandy received the finished composition and, in the words of Dorothea, "he loved it!"<sup>7</sup>

The committee's misgivings about the Persichetti commission came at a crucial time in the conflict between the U.S. and North Vietnam. In October of 1972, Henry Kissinger predicted that an end to hostilities was at hand; however, on December 13 talks between Kissinger and Lê Đức Thọ, the North Vietnamese representative, came to a halt.<sup>8</sup> Nixon made the controversial decision to bomb North Vietnam shortly afterwards. The so-called "Christmas Bombings" lasted from December 18 to December 30 of 1972.<sup>9</sup> This campaign created a lot of anxiety in the U.S., and the Inaugural Committee was keen not

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<sup>4</sup> Robert E. Page, "In Quest of Answers: An Interview with Vincent Persichetti," *Choral Journal* 14, no. 3 (November 1973): 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Persichetti is quoted as saying: "I worked around the clock—in my case that means 26 or 27 hours a day—and I finished the full score in two weeks." Allen Hughes, "Inaugural-Concert Work Deleted as 'Not in the Spirit,'" *New York Times*, January 14, 1973, 1. The Seventh Symphony was composed in 1958 and published in 1967; it is also known as the *Liturgical Symphony* because it includes material from his choral work *Hymns and Responses for the Church Year* (1955). Donald L. Patterson and Janet L. Patterson, *Vincent Persichetti: a bio-bibliography* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 84. A letter from Persichetti to Ormandy that is undated, but—due to the content—would have been written in 1967, says: "I have missed seeing you this season. I have been busy touring and writing. My Seventh Symphony has just been published and I wanted you to have a copy for your personal library." Letter from Vincent Persichetti to Eugene Ormandy, undated, folder 1126, EOP, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, the University of Pennsylvania. Given the short amount of time that Ormandy would have had to rehearse the orchestra for the Inaugural Concert—and given that Persichetti earlier sent Ormandy a copy of the score for the Seventh Symphony—the decision to reuse material from a work with which Ormandy was familiar was certainly pragmatic.

<sup>7</sup> Terry Payton interview, TN 14465, EOP, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, the University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>8</sup> Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 666–67.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 667–68. Haldeman recounts a discussion at Camp David: "later in the afternoon, he [Nixon] had Henry [Kissinger] and me come over, and got through ... the long discussion of the whole rationale, how we got where we are and what the current situation is, how we should be dealing with it. Mostly an exercise on the President's part to try and buck Henry up, because he feels he's overreacting to the press, and so forth, as a result of his concern on the whole bombing deal." H. R. Haldeman Diaries, December 18, 1972, NPLM and NARA. A scant two days later, the President already began to have misgivings: "The President is obviously very concerned about the reaction on the B-52s. The military apparently anticipated three losses for every 100 planes in raids, but we're running somewhat higher than that. He says, however, that we must knock it off, and Kissinger agrees." H. R. Haldeman Diaries, December 20, 1972, NPLM and NARA. These diary entries provide a vivid glimpse into the apprehensions of the administration during the bombing campaign, and it is entirely

to do anything that might cause unwanted controversy at the inauguration itself. Consequently, it was during this time that members of the committee first asked Persichetti to remove key passages from Lincoln's speech before deciding to eliminate *A Lincoln Address* altogether.

The press reported two conflicting reasons for this decision: on the one hand, the committee stated that a reading from 1776, such as a portion of the Declaration of Independence, was more appropriate to foster enthusiasm for the upcoming bicentennial celebrations;<sup>10</sup> on the other hand, there were reports that Lincoln's text might prove embarrassing to the Nixon administration.<sup>11</sup> Persichetti recounted to a reporter from the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin* that "I started getting a lot of phone calls from inaugural committee members asking me to delete certain lines [*sic*]. Although I'm completely against what's going on in Vietnam, I agreed to the deletions ... I agreed to cut out a line that goes, 'insurgent agents were in the city seeking to *destroy* it without war.' These aides were very sensitive to lines like these."<sup>12</sup> Another passage from Lincoln's text that was put forward as being uncomfortable for the Nixon administration was this: "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away..."<sup>13</sup> In an interview from November 1973, Persichetti wryly commented that "what really disturbed the Inaugural Committee ... was that I did not get disturbed about it."<sup>14</sup>

Persichetti claims that he was never formally notified about the decision to drop *A Lincoln Address* from the program until Tuesday, January 9, via a telephone call from Eugene Ormandy to Dorothea.<sup>15</sup> In response to this message, Persichetti promptly wrote a letter to President Nixon in which he stated:

I had been invited by the Inaugural Committee to compose this work on the Second Inaugural text of Abraham Lincoln. Now, the Inaugural Committee has informed me that the text would embarrass the President and has cancelled the premiere. It occurs to me that perhaps you have not been consulted about this [decision] and that perhaps they will reconsider the text after this matter has been called to your attention.<sup>16</sup>

Persichetti's fear that the Inaugural Committee was acting unilaterally is palpable. The letter did not have the desired effect (as we shall see, it was intercepted by a White House staffer), and his piece was never played at the inauguration. Moreover, the removal of *A Lincoln Address* garnered a great deal of attention by the press, which motivated Persichetti to draft a letter to his friend and colleague Eugene Ormandy:

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possible that these apprehensions were communicated to the Inaugural Committee by Haldeman.

<sup>10</sup> Hughes, "Not in the Spirit," 1.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Indeed, it was reported in the Hughes article, contrary to other press articles, that "he [Persichetti] had not been told which parts were deemed particularly undesirable for the concert." Instead, they asked whether Persichetti could "substitute 'some pretty poem' so that Charlton Heston could read it." By contrast, another report quoted Persichetti in reference to this line from Lincoln's speech: "with malice toward none, with charity for all..." Richard Freed, "The Great Concert Caper," *High Fidelity and Musical America* 23, no. 4 (April 1973): 13.

<sup>12</sup> Persichetti quoted in James L. Felton, "Inaugural-Concert Becomes 'Political Nightmare,'" *The Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, January 16, 1973. This quote directly contradicts the Hughes article because a specific line from the Lincoln speech was cited. My inference is that whereas Persichetti was fervently trying to persuade President Nixon to keep the piece before the inaugural concert—which will be discussed shortly—after the fact, Persichetti had no reason to be discreet. In an interview with both Vincent and Dorothea Persichetti, conducted by Terry Payton in 1987, Dorothea confirms this Lincoln quote. Terry Payton interview, TN 14465, EOP, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, the University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>13</sup> Walter Simmons, *The Music of William Schumann, Vincent Persichetti, and Peter Mennin: Voices of Stone and Steel* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2011): 189. John Ardoin, ed., *The Philadelphia Orchestra: A Century of Music* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999): 89.

<sup>14</sup> Page, "Interview with Persichetti," 6.

<sup>15</sup> *The Washington Post*, January 16, 1973.

<sup>16</sup> The original handwritten draft is found in the VPP, Box 22, file 30, located in the music division of the New York Public Library, Archives and Manuscripts.

First, I wish to say that I was most pleased that you suggested that I write this piece, and I hope that it will stand us all in good stead in time [*sic*] to come. As you know, neither I nor my wife released this problem to the press nor did anyone else with my knowledge or approval ... We have tried at every point to answer the press factually because we wished to keep the record straight, but knew that we must answer if we are to have a free press. We have made it clear that the rejection was not your decision, have made every attempt to keep you notified and tried with our best efforts to keep you uninvolved at this point with political repercussions. The telephone calls to my home now number some 500 and we have tried to manage them well. At this point I feel that I am left with my personal integrity, a good piece of music, and, hopefully, your confidence and friendship.<sup>17</sup>

There is marginalia on the letter that reads “no, do not send.” Thus, while it is likely that this letter was never sent to Ormandy, it provides a clear indication of the degree of scrutiny that the Persichetti family was under.<sup>18</sup> Not only was Persichetti greatly disturbed by the revocation of *A Lincoln Address* but also by the fallout from the intensive media reports.

## The Inaugural Committee

The Chairman of the 1973 Inaugural Committee was the famous hotelier J. Willard Marriott, who had also been the chairman of the 1969 committee.<sup>19</sup> His second in command, the Executive Director, was Jeb Magruder.<sup>20</sup> The organizational structure for the 1973 Inaugural Committee changed substantially from the 1969 Inaugural Committee based on the latter’s recommendation: “This plan called for a decentralization of management based on six individual groups, each of which was given responsibility to perform a variety of functions.”<sup>21</sup> The group that is germane to the present discussion is Group II, which was entrusted with organizing the following events: the Vice President’s Reception, “A Salute to the States,” the Inaugural Concerts, and the Inaugural Balls. Our attention will focus on the Inaugural Concerts, namely the Symphonic Concert in which *A Lincoln Address* was originally considered.

The Vice Chairman of Group II was Mark Evans, who was appointed by Marriott.<sup>22</sup> The Executive Coordinator of Group II was Ken Rietz, and it was he who made many important decisions regarding the Inaugural Concerts.<sup>23</sup> Ed Cowling—who was often quoted by the press regarding the decisions of Group

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<sup>17</sup> Handwritten letter dated January 20, 1973 from Vincent Persichetti to Eugene Ormandy, VPP, Box 13, file 6, NYPL, Archives and Manuscripts.

<sup>18</sup> Another indication that it was not sent is that there is no copy of it in the EOP at the University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>19</sup> The names and titles in this list are derived from an official flow chart of the 1973 Inaugural Committee and sundry correspondence of the Inaugural Committee. I use the gender-specific language of the 1970s to be consistent with the documentation.

<sup>20</sup> Jeb Magruder originally joined the White House staff in 1969 to become a Special Assistant to the President. “Magruder had been brought into the White House by Haldeman ... and was considered one of Haldeman’s protégés...” Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978, 1990), 651. Magruder was also an integral part of the Committee to Re-elect the President in 1972. I forego any tangential references to the Watergate scandal to keep the focus of the paper on the Persichetti incident.

<sup>21</sup> “Comparison of 1973 and 1969 Inaugural Committees,” Group I Final Report, January 31, 1973, Box 153, file 3, JWASMP, The University of Utah Marriott Library, Special Collections, 5.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Evans (born Marcus Jacob Austad) was a close friend of Marriott who wrote the forward to the 1977 biography *Marriott*. Robert O’Brien, *Marriott: The J. Willard Marriott Story* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book Company, 1977). At the time of the 1973 inauguration, Evans was a well-known political commentator in Washington. He later became the ambassador to Finland (1975–77) during the Ford Administration and the ambassador to Norway (1981–84) during the Reagan Administration.

<sup>23</sup> Ken Rietz was previously the Youth Director on the Committee for the Re-Election of the President and was “Haldeman’s choice as the next Republican National Chairman.” Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, *All the President’s Men* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1974), 265.

II—was The Chairman of the Entertainment Committee and was the person who originally contacted Persichetti.<sup>24</sup> Ann Dore was the Press Secretary for the Inaugural Concerts, and the Chairman of the Inaugural Concerts was Pam Powell, the daughter of Hollywood celebrities June Allyson and Dick Powell.<sup>25</sup> This is a list of the people most intimately associated with the Inaugural Concerts; however, there is one looming figure, not officially part of the committee, who must also be named given his important role in the decision-making process: White House Chief of Staff, H. R. Haldeman. The following discussion will demonstrate that his name comes up at crucial points when important decisions about the Inaugural Concerts were being made.

## The Inaugural Theme

Given the controversy surrounding the removal of *A Lincoln Address* from the Symphonic Concert, it is important to have a clear understanding of the official theme of Nixon's second inauguration in order to adjudicate whether it was a sincere consideration. An official memo was distributed on December 14, 1972, to all "Vice Chairmen" and "Group Directors" that outlines both the scope and the intent of the theme:

‘The Spirit of ’76’, the 1973 Inaugural theme, will stress the joint efforts of all Americans of diverse backgrounds who came together and worked together for the freedoms of this country and its status as a world leader. *Emphasis will be placed on the ‘spirit’ that prevailed during the American Revolution and not necessarily ‘1776’.* While symbols of the Revolutionary period may be utilized to some extent, thematically all materials should be in keeping with the feeling, emotion, [and] spirit of the times. *The theme of the Inauguration can be rightfully extended to embrace the start of our third century and not simply the celebration of the last two hundred years.*<sup>26</sup> [emphasis mine]

When the memo admonishes the committee leaders that, in reference to the theme, “all materials should be in keeping with the feeling, emotion, [and] spirit of the times,” the term *spirit* takes on a meaning that transcends the War of Independence to include the contemporary American experience as well.

Moreover, the Inaugural concert was broadened to become three concerts instead of one in order to embrace this transcendent meaning of the theme. In a letter to Charlton Heston dated January 4, 1973, Ken Rietz explains that “[t]his is the first time in any Inaugural that three concerts have been performed at one time, and, of course, the first time the Kennedy Center has been used. Our theme for the evening, in keeping with the overall inaugural theme of the ‘Spirit of ’76’, is the history and breadth of American

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<sup>24</sup> Ed Cowling in discussion with the author, December 2017. He is currently the manager of the Washington, DC, operations for Gordon C. James Public Relations and was a campaign staff member in eight presidential campaigns and a member on both inaugural committees for George W. Bush (2001 and 2005). Cowling went on to confirm that the reason Persichetti was approached instead of Dmitri Tiomkin—who was also under consideration—was that the committee had reservations Tiomkin could finish on time and Ormandy vouched for Persichetti.

<sup>25</sup> Only 24 at the time when she was recruited for this symbolic role, Powell was charged with liaising with the media in order to cast a youthful complexion on the face of the Inaugural Committee.

<sup>26</sup> Memorandum for all Vice Chairmen and Group Directors from Anthony McDonald, December 14, 1973 [*sic*]. There is a typo in the date because the year is listed as 1973, a full eleven months after the actual inauguration. RG 274 – Box 1, NPLM and NARA. The wording used at the very beginning of this memo is also found in another memo dated one week earlier discussing a recent letter sent out by the Young Voters Inaugural Committee. Memorandum from Anthony McDonald to Mark Evans and Ken Rietz, December 7, 1972, RG 274 – Box 1, NPLM and NARA.

music.”<sup>27</sup> The three concerts were to be the American Music Concert, the Youth Concert, and the Symphonic Concert in which Heston himself was to participate alongside the Philadelphia Orchestra.

The genesis for this decision can be traced back to November 27, 1972, in a memo from J. Willard Marriot and Jeb Magruder to H. R. Haldeman entitled “Program Decisions for 1973 Inaugural,” in which the following recommendation for “Three Simultaneous Concerts” is presented: the first concert is “A Show for financial contributors” (the Symphonic Concert), the second concert is “A show for young people” (the Youth Concert, which includes entertainers such as the Osmonds and the Carpenters), and the third concert is “A show for all others” (the American Music Concert, which would feature American music—country, folk, jazz, Dixieland, etc.).<sup>28</sup> The times of the concerts were going to be staggered so that the First Family could attend portions of all three. The important point to glean from this memo is that nowhere is the music associated with the Inaugural Concerts and the official theme restricted to the Revolutionary Period; instead, inaugural attendees are intended to experience a broad swath of American music.

Furthermore, in a memo dated December 11, 1972, Ken Rietz suggests various musical acts to greet the guests as they enter the Kennedy Center:

Emphasis for the evening would be geared to a night of the historic music of America. On arrival at the entrances to the Kennedy Center the guests would be greeted by hostesses in appropriate historical costume such as Colonial Period, Civil War Period and Gay 90’s and musical groups representative of various eras of American history (fife and drum corps, Dixieland, early 1900’s circus with perhaps a calliope, etc.) The music of the three concerts would also be aimed at covering the breadth of American music.<sup>29</sup>

Since some of the costumes suggested for the hostesses are those from the “Civil War Period,” and since the *Civil War Fantasy* by Jerry Bilik was contemplated as a possible musical selection for the Symphonic Concert, there was nothing incongruous about including the text of Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address in the program for the Symphonic Concert.<sup>30</sup> On the contrary, the fact that the music of a twentieth-century American composer was wed to a text of Lincoln—truly a trans-century collaboration—affirmed

<sup>27</sup> Letter to Charlton Heston from Ken Rietz, January 4, 1973, RG 274 – Box 48, NPLM and NARA.

<sup>28</sup> Memorandum from J. Willard Marriot and Jeb Magruder to H. R. Haldeman, November 27, 1972, RG 274 – Box 10, NPLM and NARA. The choice of entertainers goes beyond the scope of this paper; however, as with the choice of the Philadelphia Orchestra and the *1812 Overture*, it seems likely that the suggestion to include the Osmonds and the Carpenters for the Youth Concert had more to do with the preferences of the President than what was appealing to America’s youth. Consider that two of the best-selling albums in 1972 were David Bowie’s *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust*, and Neil Young’s *Harvest*. The list of entertainers varied greatly during the period from December to January as the committee scrambled to get confirmations. For instance, in a memo from December 11, 1972, the following list of entertainers is suggested for the American Music Concert: Sammy Davis, Jr., Tony Bennett with Count Basie, Sonny and Cher or the Pat Boone Family, Ella Fitzgerald or Petula Clark, and Johnny Cash or Ray Stevens. Beside this list Haldeman writes this comment “Were they all for us?” and then writes some performer-specific comments. Beside the names of Tony Bennett and Count Basie he writes, “Bennett endorsed as did Basie but did ‘not’ perform.” Beside the name of Ella Fitzgerald is written, “Did not endorse to our knowledge—but offered to help.” Beside the name of Petula Clark is written, “endorsed.” It is clear from Haldeman’s marginalia that the performer’s support for the president during the election, or lack thereof, was an important consideration. Memorandum from Ken Rietz through Jeb Magruder to H. R. Haldeman, December 11, 1972, RG 274 – Box 48, NPLM and NARA.

<sup>29</sup> Memorandum from Ken Rietz through Jeb Magruder to H. R. Haldeman, December 11, 1972, RG 274 – Box 48, NPLM and NARA. Haldeman placed his signature beside the ‘AGREE’ line on the bottom of the memo along with his marginalia that exclaims, “Great Idea!”

<sup>30</sup> Committee member’s handwritten notes about possible musical selections, undated, RG 274 – Box 55, NPLM and NARA. I conferred with the archivists at the Nixon Presidential Library, but they were unable to identify with certainty the authorship of the handwriting in the notes. I speculate that it was Ken Rietz. In addition, given that this is a piece for concert band, it may have been intended as a vehicle for the Valley Forge Military Academy Band that would be brought in to supplement the orchestra for the *1812 Overture*.

the Inaugural theme because it was *not* to be anchored solely in the past, but was to “be aimed at covering breadth of American music,” and was “not simply the celebration of the last two hundred years.” Hence, any assertion that suggested *A Lincoln Address* was not in keeping with the inaugural theme was inaccurate at best and disingenuous at worst.

### Which Text to Use as an Alternative?

Given that the committee was not inclined to use the text from Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, a substitute had to be secured. Many texts, beyond the Declaration of Independence, were in consideration for the collaborative work between the Philadelphia Orchestra and Heston. Aaron Copland’s *A Lincoln Portrait*, composed in 1942, was under consideration because it already included a narration, and it could be used in the event that there was not enough time for an original work to be composed.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the narration in *A Lincoln Portrait* included both biographical information (such as “He was born in Kentucky, raised in Indiana, and lived in Illinois”) and excerpts from speeches (such as his Annual Address to Congress of 1862 and the Gettysburg Address of 1863), but nothing from his Second Inaugural Address. Thus, there was another opportunity to include the words of Lincoln even if it meant not including text from the 1865 speech.

The consideration of the Copland piece instead of proceeding with the Persichetti commission is intriguing. It has been well documented that Copland was summoned to appear before Senator Joseph McCarthy’s Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations in 1953.<sup>32</sup> How curious that a composer who was once associated with a perceived Communist threat should be given consideration by Nixon’s inaugural committee, especially given that *A Lincoln Portrait* had been banned from a pre-inauguration concert for Dwight Eisenhower in 1953.<sup>33</sup> In this instance, however, the removal of *A Lincoln Portrait* from the Presidential Inauguration had to do with the reputation of the composer rather than the text of Lincoln. Copland survived the grilling with his reputation relatively intact, and the ensuing twenty years saw him become ensconced as the beloved American composer of *Rodeo* and *Appalachian Spring*.<sup>34</sup>

*A Lincoln Portrait* did not make it on to the concert program of the 1973 inauguration either—a contingency plan that was abandoned—although another of Copland’s works did, which will be discussed later. As to why the committee chose not to use this piece, I suspect that it again comes down to fears about how the audience might interpret the text in relation to the conflict with North Vietnam. When peace talks broke down in December 1972, Nixon was eager to put an end to the conflict once and for all. The Christmas Bombings campaign was a heavy-handed measure—by a President tired of dealing with

<sup>31</sup> Memo from Ed Cowling and Ray Caldiero to Ken Smith, November 29, 1972, RG 274 – Box 48, NPLM and NARA. A photocopy of the text from *A Lincoln Portrait* is found in the Inaugural Committee’s materials.

<sup>32</sup> Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland: The Life and Work of an Uncommon Man* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1999), 454–460. Elizabeth B. Crist, “Aaron Copland and the Popular Front,” *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 56, no. 2 (Summer 2003): 413. <https://doi.org/10.1525/jams.2003.56.2.409>. Crist examines Copland’s works composed between 1932 and 1946 using his self-named “imposed simplicity” within the context of the Popular Front.

<sup>33</sup> The FBI included Copland in a list of 151 artists in its *Red Channels: The Reports of Communist Influence in Radio and Television* in 1950. Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 452. This action was taken because Representative Fred Busby voiced his concerns on the floor of the House of Representatives and referred to the piece as “Communist Propaganda.” Alex Ross, “Appalachian Autumn,” *New Yorker* (August 27, 2009): 34. Howard Pollack, *Aaron Copland*, 452.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* It has been reported that the journalist George Sokolsky contacted Senator McCarthy in private to ask him to refrain from publicly questioning “one of America’s greatest living composers.” Copland only had to appear at a closed hearing on May 26, 1953, and was never called back for a public hearing. See Ross and Crist, “Aaron Copland,” 413. <https://doi.org/10.1525/jams.2003.56.2.409>.

the chronic intransigence of Tho—used to avoid another world war.<sup>35</sup> By the time a tentative agreement was struck a month later, the end result was a horrific loss of life for all parties. A sobering contemplation of such sacrifices appears in a quote from the Gettysburg Address at a poignant moment in *A Lincoln Portrait*:

that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion: that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain: that we this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom: and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.<sup>36</sup>

Henry Kissinger remarked that “Vietnam is still with us. It has created doubts about American power—not only at home, but throughout the world. It has poisoned our domestic debate. So we paid an exorbitant price for the decisions that were made in good faith and for good purpose.”<sup>37</sup> The doubts identified by Kissinger were certainly on display in Washington by the protestors, and it may be that Lincoln’s words, “we here highly resolve that these dead shall have not died in vain,” touched a nerve. No, something else was in order if the celebratory tone of the inauguration was to be upheld.

Another text that was given special consideration was Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s *Song of Hiawatha* of 1855. This Romantic epic was supposedly inspired by the lore of the Ojibwe figure, Manabozho, who lived on the south shore of Lake Superior. However, the final name used by Longfellow, namely Hiawatha, was a figure from the lore of the Iroquois, who was believed to have been a Mohawk and was unrelated to the Ojibwe figure.<sup>38</sup> Of necessity, only a portion of the epic was isolated for consideration in the inaugural concert, which was taken from Book I – “The Peace Pipe.” This book addresses the Great Spirit’s discontent with his warring peoples, and the excerpt under consideration by the committee begins halfway through the book. Here is a stanza taken from this excerpt that exhorts the adversaries to set aside their hostilities:

I am weary of your quarrels,  
Weary of your wars and bloodshed,  
Weary of your prayers for vengeance,  
Of your wranglings and dissensions;  
All your strength is in your union,  
All your danger is in discord;  
Therefore be at peace henceforward,

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<sup>35</sup> Anthony Summers reports that “at dinner on the first night of the attack, Nixon had talked in an astonishing vein in front of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Admiral Moorer, Henry Kissinger, Teddy Roosevelt’s daughter Alice Longworth, Pat and Julie, and the columnist Richard Wilson. He said, Wilson recalled, that he ‘did not care if the whole wide world thought he was crazy in resuming the bombing. If it did, so much the better. The Russians and Chinese might think they were dealing with a madman and so had better force North Vietnam into a settlement before the world was consumed in a larger war...’” Richard Nixon quoted in Anthony Summers, *The Arrogance of Power: The Secret World of Richard Nixon* (New York: Viking, 2000), 440. David Gergen contends that there are times when a politician needs “to carry a big stick,” and the bombings were a calculated measure to get the North Vietnamese back to the negotiations. David Gergen, *Eyewitness to Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000): 49.

<sup>36</sup> Photocopy of the text of *A Lincoln Portrait*, RG 274 – Box 59, NPLM and NARA. The score is available through Boosey and Hawkes.

<sup>37</sup> Stanley Karnow, “Vietnam: The War Nobody Won,” in *Foreign Policy Association Headline Series*, no. 263 (March/April 1983): 3.

<sup>38</sup> “Native American Legends: Hiawatha the Unifier,” First People, accessed on June 26, 2015, <http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-Html-Legends/Hiawatha-The-Unifier-Iroquois.html>. Henry Rowe Schoolcraft inspired Longfellow’s understanding of the indigenous people he writes about, while the poetic devices such as the meter, trochaic tetrameter, were indebted to the Finnish Kalevala. Francis P. Magoun, Jr., review of *Hiawatha and Kalevala: A Study of the Relationship between Longfellow’s “Indian Edda” and the Finnish Epic* by Ernest J. Moyné, *American Literature* 36, no. 3 (November 1964): 369



And as brothers live together.

In a memo dated January 6, 1973, Ken Rietz explains that the excerpt “is a very poignant and eloquent piece on the theme of peace—very much in keeping with the President’s goals of the second term.”<sup>39</sup> However, if the committee was concerned that passages from Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address might be construed as critical of the administration’s policies in North Vietnam, how could this passage be seen as any less problematic? Indeed, in the very next stanza, the Great Spirit issues a strong warning:

I will send a Prophet to you,  
A Deliverer of the nations,  
Who shall guide you and shall teach you,  
Who shall toil and suffer with you.  
If you listen to his counsels,  
You will multiply and prosper;  
If his warnings pass unheeded,  
You will fade away and perish!

Ironically, this prophet figure could be interpreted as Henry Kissinger—who advised against the Christmas Bombings—and who later sardonically stated, “we bombed the North Vietnamese into accepting our concessions.”<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps the most fantastical choice found amongst the materials is a set of five poems by the well-known science-fiction writer Ray Bradbury included in a work for choir and narrator called *Madrigals for the Space Age*: “I walk in space,” “We search and find,” “A million meteors,” “Space! Is space not curved?” and “What a wonder, what a dread!”<sup>41</sup> Why would Bradbury be given consideration for a presidential inauguration? In view of the popularity that he had attained since the publication of *The Martian Chronicles* in 1950, the committee may have been looking for a way to include a text in the Symphonic Concert that was more contemporary and popular; additionally, the music for the choir was composed by Lalo Schifrin for a commission by the Roger Wagner Chorale, which was scheduled to perform at the inauguration.<sup>42</sup>

Whatever the reason his poetry was given consideration, Bradbury is an odd choice given the nature of the occasion. For instance, here is the first stanza of “What a wonder, what a dread!”:

What a wonder, what a dread!  
All lives, yet all is dead!  
All’s a fraud, yet all’s one Plan.  
Man is God, God is Man.  
All is innocence, all is sin.

<sup>39</sup> Memorandum by Ken Rietz through Jeb Magruder to H. R. Haldeman, January 6, 1973, RG 274 – Box 49, NPLM and NARA.

<sup>40</sup> Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 483.

<sup>41</sup> Annotated photocopies, RG 274 – Box 59, NPLM and NARA. *Madrigals for the Space Age*, for Mixed Chorus and Narrator with Piano Accompaniment by Lalo Schifrin (New York: Associated Music Publishers, 1972), <http://www.schifrin.com/credits.htm>. Schifrin is perhaps best known for composing the theme song to the television series *Mission Impossible*. I infer that these poems were given serious consideration because there is an approximate recitation time penciled in beside each poem.

<sup>42</sup> It is possible that the Inaugural Committee was made aware of this piece via Roger Wagner himself. The Los Angeles Bureau of Music appointed Wagner as the Supervisor of Youth Choruses in 1945. By 1946, what started as a madrigal group of 12 members had grown to an ensemble of 32 members that became the Roger Wagner Chorale. Wagner then founded a second ensemble, the Los Angeles Master Chorale, in 1964. William Belan, “An Interview with Roger Wagner,” *The Choral Journal* 32, no. 1 (August 1991): 7. While the official Inaugural program lists the Los Angeles Master Chorale, many of the memos refer to the Roger Wagner Chorale.

Where does God stop, and Man begin?

On the one hand, the repetition of the word “All” creates an incantatory force conducive to recitation that helps bind the poem when it deviates from the prevailing trochaic tetrameter<sup>43</sup>:

/ ˘   / ˘   / ˘ /  
what a wonder , what a dread ||

On the other hand, the Nietzschean existential thread is not conducive to the celebratory atmosphere of a presidential inauguration (not to mention that the line “All’s a fraud, yet all’s one Plan” was more incriminating than anything found in Lincoln’s speech). It is not surprising that this poem alone in the set of five had the word “omit” annotated on the side. Even so, this existential thread can be found in most of the poems selected. Take, for example, the first stanza from “We search and find”:

We search and find:  
 The Universe has *not* been waiting  
 On our entrances and exits.  
 It celebrates us not,  
 Nor weeps at our demise.  
 It occupies itself with Space and Time and Size.  
 Shout!  
 But, no echo!  
 Only Silence hears your cries.

I can only suppose that the futile shout of a forlorn figure into the ether was ultimately deemed unsuitable for the actor who once brandished the staff of Moses, and the madrigals were abandoned.

To sum up, a wide range of texts were considered as an alternative to Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address: from the eighteenth century, portions of the Declaration of Independence; from the nineteenth century, the Lincoln text contained within Copland’s *A Lincoln Portrait*, and a portion of Book I from Longfellow’s Romantic epic, the *Song of Hiawatha*; and from the twentieth century, selected poems of Ray Bradbury.<sup>44</sup> The committee narrowed it down to either selected passages from the Declaration of Independence or an excerpt from Book I of the *Song of Hiawatha*, and on January 6, 1973, a memo was sent from Ken Rietz to H. R. Haldeman to seek his final decision. Rietz concludes by saying:

We feel that either one would be fitting and proper for Charlton Heston to narrate. A soft choral background of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” would seem to be appropriate for the reading the Declaration. A soft orchestra background of the New World Symphony by Dvorak would seem very appropriate for the Longfellow piece.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> I use the convention of an *ictus* (stressed) and a *breve* (unstressed) to indicate the scansion.

<sup>44</sup> While including the *Song of Hiawatha* can be argued to be a slice of Americana that would have allowed the audience to indulge in a dollop of childhood nostalgia, including the poetry of one of the pre-eminent science fiction writers at a presidential inauguration, the very same author of *Fahrenheit 451* and its theme of censorship, would have been utterly ironical.

<sup>45</sup> Memorandum by Ken Rietz to H. R. Haldeman, January 6, 1973, RG 274 – Box 49, NPLM and NARA. In the case of the Longfellow work, I am curious to know which part of symphony could be used to provide “a soft orchestra background?” Surely not the *Allegro* from the first movement—the brass would quickly drown out the recitation by Heston. An educated guess suggests that the opening to the famous *Largo* movement might have been a viable choice. Dvořák himself indicated that parts of the symphony were inspired by Longfellow’s work, and James Hepokoski suggests that we must embrace the notion of a Hiawatha symphony. Antonin Dvořák, “Regarding Symphony No. 9, the New World Symphony,” *The New York Herald*, December 15, 1893, and James Hepokoski, “Culture Clash,” *The Musical Times* 134, no. 1810 (December 1993):

An important admission materializes in the choice of music to accompany the Declaration text: the use of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” conflates the Declaration text of the eighteenth century with the Battle Hymn text/music of the nineteenth century, specifically, 1776 with 1861.

Furthermore, consider that the most famous line of the hymn, “As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,” places the spirit of the hymn in support of Lincoln and the Union cause.<sup>46</sup> That being established, why not read the words of Lincoln himself at the Inaugural Concert? Haldeman ultimately made the decision to use selections from the Declaration of Independence, which was done, I believe, for two reasons: 1) to allow the committee to provide a palatable excuse to the press (i.e., something, ostensibly, more in keeping with the Inaugural theme) once it became known publicly that Persichetti’s piece, *A Lincoln Address*, had been summarily removed; and 2) the text extracted from the *Song of Hiawatha* could be potentially even more embarrassing than Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address.

## The Symphonic Concert and the Aftermath

It was evident from the early days of planning that one piece, without exception, was to be included in the concert, which was Tchaikovsky’s *1812 Overture*, Op. 49. H. R. Haldeman sent a memo to Jeb Magruder urging:

On the Inaugural Concert with Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra on the 19<sup>th</sup>, one number that should be done is the 1812 Overture, using the Valley Forge Military Academy Choir, who do an excellent job of this with the orchestra.<sup>47</sup>

There are two important facts presented in this memo. First, it is dated November 13, 1972, and it already asserts that Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra are to perform.<sup>48</sup> The National Symphony held that honor since the 1930s, and the decision to give it to the Philadelphia Orchestra would turn out to be very controversial.<sup>49</sup> Second, the inclusion of Tchaikovsky’s *1812 Overture*—a piece of music that

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685–86. This is what Dvořák says specifically: “The second movement is an adagio. But it is different to the classic works in this form. It is, in reality, a study, or sketch, for a longer work, either a cantata or opera which I purpose writing, and which will be based upon Longfellow’s ‘Hiawatha’. I have long had the idea of some day utilizing that poem. I first became acquainted with it about thirty years ago through the medium of a Bohemian translation. It appealed very strongly to my imagination at the time, and the impression has only been strengthened by my residence here.” Dvořák, Symphony No. 9, *The New York Herald*.

<sup>46</sup> “We—even *we here*—hold the power, and bear the responsibility. In *giving* freedom to the *slave*, we *assure* freedom to the *free*...” Abraham Lincoln, *Annual Address to Congress*, December 1, 1862.

<sup>47</sup> Memorandum from H. R. Haldeman to Jeb Magruder, November 13, 1972, RG 274 – Box 55, NPLM and NARA. As has already been discussed, it was the Roger Wagner Chorale that was invited; hence, there may be an error in Haldeman’s memo in that he meant to say the Valley Forge Military Academy *Band*, which had performed the *1812 Overture* with the Philadelphia Orchestra on January 24, 1970 in a concert at which President Nixon was in attendance, accessible online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JO3uRR2X-Q>. In addition, Ed Cowling was reported as saying: “the choice of the bombastic Tchaikovsky overture to close the concert had been the committee’s and not the President’s.” *The New York Times*, January 20, 1973. This assertion is questionable because it is more likely that the request from Haldeman came directly from the President. Indeed, in a letter to Ormandy from the President sent after the Inauguration, to be discussed later, the President stated that the program for the Symphonic Concert was “partly mine.” To be fair to Cowling, it is possible that he was instructed to tell the press that the decision was made by the committee to divert attention from the White House. Cowling could not remember this decision when asked, which is understandable given that forty-five years have elapsed. Ed Cowling in discussion with the author, December 2017.

<sup>48</sup> Official confirmation from Ormandy would not be secured until December.

<sup>49</sup> Eliska Hasek wrote to presidential advisor Dave Gergen about a letter received from Ormandy to express his gratitude for being asked to perform at the upcoming inauguration. Hasek says, “1) It doesn’t need a response since it is simply a thank you letter to the President. 2) As you know, the National Symphony has its nose quite out of joint at the decision that the Philadelphia Orchestra will be performing at the Inauguration Concert. It seems to me it would be rubbing salt into these wounds if, on top of everything, we sent another—and quite unnecessary—letter to Eugene Ormandy.” Memorandum from

commemorates Napoleon's defeat in Russia—in an event that is intended to be a celebration of all things American is idiosyncratic. The second inauguration of Nixon was held in January 1973, a year and a half before the televised performance of Tchaikovsky's work by Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops on Independence Day of 1974. This concert has been credited with the ubiquitous presence of the *1812 Overture* at Independence Day concerts throughout the U.S. since.<sup>50</sup> Thus, while the appropriation of this piece has become a mainstay at Fourth of July concerts subsequent to Nixon's second inauguration, its mandated inclusion by Haldeman can best be understood in the context of the personal preferences of the President. Cowling was quoted in the *New York Times* as saying: "we just had the feeling the President would enjoy it [the *1812 Overture*] ... no one on the committee was aware of the historical background of the overture."<sup>51</sup>

To get a better sense of the President's preferences, both in terms of the choice of orchestra and of the pieces that would be included in the Symphonic Concert, I turn first to a letter written by Rose Mary Woods, the Secretary to President Nixon. A private citizen wrote to her to ask about the musical tastes of the President, and this is her response:

When the President listens to music, it is usually very late at night and while he listens he does not read, but concentrates on the music and enjoys it for itself. His preferences are classical [*sic*] music such as Tschaikovsky [*sic*], Beethoven, Rachmaninoff, Liszt, and with the exception of the choral conclusion of Beethoven's Ninth he prefers symphonic, non-vocal recordings. The President likes opera, although seldom has an opportunity to go to the opera, but prefers all vocalists in person to recordings. Eugene Ormandy is a favorite conductor.<sup>52</sup>

Next, compare the list of composers compiled by Woods to the repertory associated with Ormandy's tenure as maestro of the Philadelphia Orchestra:

As a program-maker, Ormandy was no reformer; he was willing to take the audience as he found it. There were occasional forays into the unknown, but the "Three B's" appeared with increased regularity ... Ormandy seemed especially at home in the big-orchestra Romantic repertory—Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Dvorak, Richard Strauss, Rachmaninoff and Sibelius.<sup>53</sup>

Taking into account this overlap in literature, one can appreciate why Nixon would have an affinity for the repertoire choices of Ormandy. In addition, they had a personal relationship that was cemented when

Eliska Hasek to Dave Gergen, December 15, 1972, White House Central Files (WHCF), alphabetical listings: Nesse-Prox, NPLM and NARA.

<sup>50</sup> "Why Tchaikovsky's Bells and Cannons Sound Every July 4," *Weekend Edition Saturday*, June 29, 2013, an NPR Interview by Scott Simon of Keith Lockhart, Music Director of the Boston Pops, and David Mugar, Executive Director of the Boston Pops Fireworks Spectacular in 2013. Mugar states that he made the suggestion to Arthur Fiedler in 1973 in order to revitalize lackluster attendance at Boston Esplanade concerts. This claim does not imply that the piece was not known or not popular before 1974; but rather, "in 1974 the *1812 Overture* came into its own as a pan-American tradition." Andrew Druckenbrod, "How a rousing Russian tune took over our July 4th," *Post-Gazette*, July 4, 2003.

<sup>51</sup> Linda Charlton, "Concerts Reflect Moods of Divided Washington," *The New York Times*, January 20, 1973, 14. Cowling was left to explain to the press why a piece with cannons was included in the concert in view of the opposition to the Administration's recent policies in Vietnam. Cowling clarified that Ormandy chose not to use cannons with blanks for the performance. However, if the *1812 Overture* was to be appropriated for this inaugural event, there was a missed opportunity to tie it in to the inclusion of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address because the sixteen canon shots required in the score could have been couched to represent the sixteenth President. In addition, a counter-concert was staged at the Washington Cathedral—that included another reference to Napoleon—by Leonard Bernstein, Senator Eugene J. McCarthy, Francis B. Sayre (Dean of the Washington Cathedral) and Martin Peretz (a professor of social studies at Harvard). The Inaugural Day Concert was held at the same time as the Inaugural Concert. This counter-concert included a performance of Haydn's *Mass in Time of War*, which was billed as a counterpoint to Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*.

<sup>52</sup> Letter from Rose Mary Woods to Longin W. Marzecki, February 8, 1972, WHCF, alphabetical listings: Nesse-Prox, NPLM and NARA.

<sup>53</sup> John Ardoin, ed., *The Philadelphia Orchestra*, 80.

Ormandy was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1970.<sup>54</sup> The relationship was so strong that Ormandy was able to successfully lobby President Nixon and Henry Kissinger to make arrangements for the Philadelphia Orchestra to tour China.<sup>55</sup> Consequently, it was not surprising that Nixon desired the presence of the Philadelphia Orchestra to play at the Symphonic Concert.

Subsequent to Haldeman's memo, Rietz wrote to Magruder about the inclusion of the Philadelphia Orchestra:

As you know, H. R. Haldeman has recommended that the Philadelphia Orchestra with Eugene Ormandy conducting perform at the Inaugural Concert on Friday, January 19. To prevent any misunderstanding with the National Symphony, we recommend that a telephone call be made either by you or by Mr. Marriott to the National Symphony in Washington stating that the Philadelphia Orchestra will be invited to perform as the guest orchestra for the concert. Further, we recommend that the call be made the same day the Philadelphia Orchestra is invited.<sup>56</sup>

This was undoubtedly a sensitive issue because the timing suggested by Rietz is intended to ensure that the National Symphony will not find out *after* the Philadelphia Orchestra has already been extended an invitation. The participation of Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra was confirmed on December 6, 1972.<sup>57</sup> Ultimately, it was left to Marriott to explain the reason for this decision at a press conference:

The idea [is] that this is a national event and we are using talent from all over the United States, not only from the District of Columbia. As you know, Eugene Ormandy and his Philadelphia Orchestra is a famous orchestra, so the National Symphony has had the opportunity to do this for a long time, but we think it is appropriate to bring in outside talent, outside groups, and of course, you know the President likes Eugene Ormandy's orchestra. I wouldn't say he likes it any better than the [National] Symphony Orchestra, but he does like it. He is fond of Eugene Ormandy personally. But that's no determining factor in this thing. We just want to make this Inaugural not a local affair, but a national one.<sup>58</sup>

This contradictory answer came after a reporter pressed Marriott to explain the decision himself rather than to refer the press to an article that came out in the *Washington Post*. Notwithstanding Marriott's quasi-assurances, the decision to include the Philadelphia Orchestra was made precisely because, as

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<sup>54</sup> In a thank-you letter written to the President, Ormandy says that "the fact that you took time from your pressing national and world affairs to come to Philadelphia was the highest tribute that could be paid to my colleagues in the orchestra and me. To be the recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom and have you read the citation on the stage of the Academy is something that will remain as the most important and rewarding experience of my life." Letter from Eugene Ormandy to President Nixon, January 26, 1970, WHCF, alphabetical listings: Nesse-Prox, NPLM and NARA.

<sup>55</sup> In a letter dated July 18, 1972, Kissinger relates that he has forwarded a note to the Chinese Ambassador expressing the desire of the Philadelphia Orchestra to perform in China. He goes on to explain that "in this period of our effort to build positive relations with the People's Republic of China, you would be an ideal cultural ambassador." Letter from Henry Kissinger to Eugene Ormandy, July 18, 1972, WHCF, alphabetical listings: Nesse-Prox, NPLM and NARA. After much negotiation, the plans were finalized and Ormandy wrote a letter to the President to confirm the same: "Thanks to your friendship for our orchestra and to your suggestion to Premier Chow En Lai of the People's Republic of China, our orchestra and I will be leaving for a two week tour of China on September 10th" Letter from Eugene Ormandy to President Nixon, August 30, 1973, WHCF, alphabetical listings: Nesse-Prox, NPLM and NARA.

<sup>56</sup> Memorandum from Ken Rietz to Jeb Magruder, November 29, 1972, RG 274 – Box 55, NPLM and NARA.

<sup>57</sup> Memorandum from Ed Cowling through Ken Rietz to Jeb Magruder, December 6, 1972, RG 274 – Box 12, NPLM and NARA.

<sup>58</sup> The JWASMP, Box 160, folder 10, The University of Utah Marriott Library, Special Collections. The National Symphony first played at Roosevelt's inauguration on March 3, 1933. Tom Shales, "Inaugural Bypass," *The Washington Post*, December 8, 1972. It is reported that when Nixon presented Ormandy with the Medal of Freedom in 1970, "the President told Ormandy then that he owned many Philadelphia Orchestra recordings and said that hearing the Philadelphians play 'Hail to the Chief' for him was 'the highest honor that could ever come.'"

Marriott himself concedes, “He [Nixon] is fond of Eugene Ormandy personally,” and the explanation about a “national event” is purely a public-relations ploy. This decision is also important because it was Ormandy who recommended that Persichetti be given the commission by the Inaugural Committee.<sup>59</sup>

Regarding the order of performance for the concert, the final fascinating piece of information to be reviewed is found in some hand-written notes by one of the committee members that comes under a heading that declares “Symbols of America:”

- National Anthem
- Battle Hymn
- 1812 Overture
- no religious<sup>60</sup>

I am intrigued by the last bullet point, “no religious,” because there is religious content within both the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” and the *1812 Overture*.<sup>61</sup> In respect to the “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” the tune is taken from the Methodist hymn “Say Brothers Will You Meet Us.” Moreover, the text by Julia Ward Howe that begins with the proclamation, “Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord...” has been published in over 400 hymnals.<sup>62</sup> It strains credulity that no one on the committee was aware of the history of this hymn; consequently, I can only draw the conclusion that it is an instance of a piece of music that is considered so quintessentially American its religious content can be overlooked for the occasion. There is another layer of complexity in regards to the Battle Hymn because its roots as a Union Army marching song have also been forgotten. Annie J. Randall explains that “the ‘elevated’ classical language [of Howe’s version] served the government’s purpose perfectly by supplanting political contentious reminders of John Brown and his terrorist acts with images of transcendence and eternal righteousness.”<sup>63</sup>

By January 2, 1973, the final version of the Symphonic Concert had been devised for Haldeman’s approval:

National Anthem

*Fanfare for the Common Man* – Copland (3 minutes)

Fifth Symphony – Beethoven (32 minutes)

Intermission

Choral Medley of Patriotic American Music, ending with  
“America the Beautiful” (12 minutes)

(This segment will be conducted by Roger Wagner, and, if

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<sup>59</sup> See 17n.

<sup>60</sup> Committee member’s notes, undated, RG 274 – Box 55, NPLA, NARA.

<sup>61</sup> For instance, a chorus sings the Russian Orthodox hymn *Spasi, Gospodi, Iudi Tvoya*, “Oh Lord, Save Thy People” at the opening of the overture.

<sup>62</sup> “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” accessed June 30, 2015, [http://www.hymnary.org/text/mine\\_eyes\\_have\\_seen\\_the\\_glory](http://www.hymnary.org/text/mine_eyes_have_seen_the_glory).

<sup>63</sup> Annie J. Randall, “A Censorship of Forgetting: Origins and Origin Myths of ‘Battle Hymn of the Republic,’” in *Music, Power and Politics*, ed. Annie J. Randall (New York: Routledge, 2005), 9. While the inaugural committee were not expected to undertake an exhaustive musicological review of the history of the Battle Hymn, they most certainly would have been aware of its theme of emancipation. Moreover, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. quoted the following passage, “Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.” on the day before his assassination in 1968.

an appropriate text can be settled on with Charlton Heston, we would like to include him in the program performing a narrative reading with choral accompaniment).

Piano Concerto – Grieg (26 minutes)  
(Van Cliburn as soloist)

*1812 Overture* – Tchaikovsky (15 minutes)<sup>64</sup>

It is important to observe that, as of the beginning of January, an alternative text had still not been settled on since—according to the committee—they had notified Persichetti of their decision the previous month. Furthermore, the memo also indicated that Heston himself was part of the decision-making process as it pertains to the text. Rietz made the following observations about the content of the Symphonic Concert to Heston in a letter sent two days after the memo to Haldeman:

The symphonic concert will have Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Philharmonic Orchestra [*sic*]. In addition, Van Cliburn will perform a piano solo. The Roger Wagner Chorale will offer traditional choral selections and the Valley Forge Military Academy Band will provide additional brass to the orchestra for the performance of the *1812 Overture*. The overture will be played at the specific request of the President and is the only piece certain to be performed.<sup>65</sup>

To be sure, the committee was not prepared to disseminate the content of the other pieces in the concert until confirmation had been received from Haldeman.<sup>66</sup> I believe the choice of the text was not finalized until very late because, in the official program for the Symphonic Concert, the only difference to the program as outlined in the January 2 memo to Haldeman was the following addition listed right after the choral medley: “Special Narration – Charlton Heston.”<sup>67</sup> If the choice of text had been finalized by the time the program was sent to the publishers, it would likely have read, “Special Narration of Excerpts from the Declaration of Independence – Charlton Heston.”

I turn now to the final reports generated by several executive officers after the concert.<sup>68</sup> One such document was sent from Cowling to Marriott on January 31, 1973. Before providing a final summation, it listed accomplishments for each of the concerts by month. Regarding the Symphonic Concert, the report stated as its accomplishments for the month of January:

Firmed the appearances of the Los Angeles Master Chorale and Charlton Heston. Mr. Heston

<sup>64</sup> Memorandum from Ken Rietz through Jeb Magruder to H. R. Haldeman, January 2, 1973, RG 274 – Box 47, NPLM and NARA.

<sup>65</sup> Letter from Ken Rietz to Charlton Heston, January 4, 1973, RG 274 – Box 48, NPLM and NARA. This letter confirms that Cowling’s assertion about the Inaugural Committee selecting the *1812 Overture* is incorrect. Charlton, “Concerts Reflect Moods,” 14.

<sup>66</sup> Pam Powell, the Chairman of the Inaugural Concerts, sent a memo to Ken Rietz asking permission to communicate the full content of the symphonic concert to the press: “in so far as the program for the symphonic concert has been approved, are we free to release this to them?” to which Rietz responded, “No.” Memorandum from Pam Powell to Ken Rietz, January 9, 1973, RG 274 – Box 54, NPLM and NARA. Remember—as reported by Persichetti—this is the date on which Dorothea received the telephone call from Ormandy.

<sup>67</sup> Official program of the symphonic concert, January 11, 1973, RG 274 – Box 54, NPLM and NARA.

<sup>68</sup> Memorandum from Jeb Magruder, December 15, 1972, RG 274 – Box 1, NPLM and NARA. “All the principal executive officers, vice chairmen of the six groups, and the chairmen and directors of committees are required by the Chairman to submit to him final reports upon the completion of their individual activities.”

did a reading of segments of the Declaration of Independence accompanied by the Chorale. It had earlier been decided to approach Mr. Vincent Persichetti about composing a musical work to accompany a reading of Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address. It was later decided by the Group II staff that a 1776 period reading would be more suitable. The cancellation of Mr. Persichetti's work caused much press reaction.<sup>69</sup>

The most significant item in this list is the reference to Persichetti; by contrast, December's list of accomplishments included securing Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, Van Cliburn, and the Valley Forge Military Academy Band.<sup>70</sup> Cowling concluded the report by saying the Philadelphia Orchestra, Van Cliburn, and, Roger Wagner Chorale all received a standing ovation and that "Charlton Heston's reading was also well received."<sup>71</sup> However, given that the paragraph for January is longer than the final summation, it would appear that the controversy was lingering in the minds of the committee.

Next, in an unsigned final report for the Concerts Committee, the role of the Symphonic Concert is given special attention "due to its different nature compared to the other two which were essentially stage shows."<sup>72</sup> The report indicates that the only piece requested on their part was the *1812 Overture*, while the remainder of the program was left to Ormandy.<sup>73</sup> Just as with the final report of Group II compiled by Cowling, a great deal of attention is paid to the Persichetti incident:

An idea which was eventually acted on for the Concert was that of a dramatic reading. Charlton Heston was our first choice and did a fine job. Among the texts discussed was Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, and, after a meeting with Ormandy, we contacted composer Vincent Persichetti regarding composition of a background piece of the reading. After some reluctance and our willingness to only pay expenses, he agreed to attempt the piece. We emphasized the tentative nature of this request but he agreed if we were going to do it, we had to get started. Approximately 15 days later, on December 23, we notified Persechettii [*sic*] that we had decided a reading of the Declaration of Independence would be more appropriate in keeping with the Inaugural theme of the Spirit of '76. We agreed to pay his incurred expenses and, while disappointed, he said he understood. The later press reports were inaccurate in any reference to a dispute between the Committee and Persechettii [*sic*]. We do hope that his piece can be performed at a later time.<sup>74</sup>

The first point I find of interest is the discrepancy in the date when Persichetti was first contacted. Persichetti states that it was on December 15 whereas, in the report above, if one counts fifteen days back from the 23rd, the date of contact would be December 8. Nowhere in the documents I reviewed did the

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<sup>69</sup> Final Report of Entertainment Committee, Group II, from Ed Cowling through Ken Rietz to J. Willard Marriott, January 31, 1973, RG 274 – Box 4, NPLM and NARA, 4. Cowling indicated that there were several reasons why the piece was eliminated, and the choice of text was only one concern. He further explained that the committee was also concerned about Persichetti's ability to finish the piece in time, which is perplexing since that was the reason the committee approached Persichetti instead of Dmitri Tiomkin (see 24n). Ed Cowling in discussion with the author, December 2017. Additionally, there is a glaring discrepancy between the report contained in the archives of the Nixon Presidential Library and Museum and the report contained in the John Willard and Alice Sheets Marriott Papers because, in the report held at the University of Utah, the following reference is made: "see attachment B", Box 156, file 7. There is no such reference in the report held at the Nixon Presidential Library, and I have not been able to locate this attachment in either collection. It may be that attachment B was an assemblage of news articles about the controversy, or it may have contained additional documentation about the discussions between the committee and the White House—specifically Haldeman—regarding Persichetti.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Final Report, Ed Cowling, 5–6.

<sup>72</sup> Final Report: the 1973 Inaugural Concerts, January 19, 1973, RG 274 – Box 4, NPLM and NARA; the JWASMP, Box 156, file 7, The University of Utah Marriott Library, Special Collections. I believe that the report was authored by Ken Rietz.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. Charlton Heston was not the sole choice because Jimmy Stewart was also under consideration for the role of the narrator. Memo from Ed Cowling and Ray Caldiero to Ken Smith, November 29, 1972, RG 274 – Box 48, NPLM and NARA.



committee record a date of contact; consequently, I am more inclined to take Persichetti's date at face value because it is not an everyday occurrence for a composer to be approached by a presidential inaugural committee with a commission. In Persichetti's own words, "I don't do this sort of thing, but I thought at the time, 'It's my government.'" <sup>75</sup> What is more, if he had been contacted on December 23 regarding his work's deletion, why would Persichetti have either continued feverishly working on it or wait until January 11 to write the President? <sup>76</sup> Conversely, taking into consideration that the committee was hastily making final decisions in order to secure people/performers—not just for the Symphonic Concert but also for all of the concerts—it is entirely possible the committee was providing an approximate date or the date on which Persichetti was asked to remove certain key passages from the Lincoln speech. The second point that does not ring true is the statement that "we emphasized the tentative nature of this request..." It was not Persichetti's habit to take up commissions because of his need to be fully inspired by, and committed to, the project. Consequently, Persichetti would have most likely declined the commission right away had Cowling demonstrated any hesitation or ambivalence. A professor at Juilliard and an active composer had far too much to do than to take up a "maybe" commission.

Those are the assessments found in the two final reports for the Symphonic Concert, and, curiously, both spend more time discussing the Persichetti incident than the concert itself. Indeed, in the case of the January 19 report, there is just a single line: "The orchestra, chorale, band, Van Cliburn and Heston all offered outstanding performances and we were most satisfied with the results." <sup>77</sup> Now, if the Persichetti incident was only a minor hiccup, why mention it at all? Why not just state categorically that Charlton Heston read a portion of the Declaration of Independence while patriotic music was sung in the background? I believe the answer has to do with the amount of press coverage that the incident was receiving, which is mentioned in the January 31 report of Group II, but not mentioned in the Inaugural Concerts report of January 19. Moreover, Haldeman would want cogent reasons when he discussed what happened with the President; I will return to this point shortly.

In fact, Rietz was so concerned about the Persichetti incident that he sent a memo to Len Garment, Special Consultant to the President, on January 18, 1973, the day before the Inaugural Concerts. <sup>78</sup> The memo opens: "Per your request the following is the background on our discussions with Mr. Persichetti regarding composition of a background piece for the Inaugural Concerts." Then, at long last, an official disclosure offers an answer about who decided to remove Persichetti's piece. "On December 23, approximately 15 days after the go-ahead to Persichetti, the Inaugural Committee notified him of our decision (made by me) that the Declaration of Independence was more appropriate to our theme." <sup>79</sup> How striking that on the day before the inaugural concerts, which would have been inordinately busy for Rietz,

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<sup>75</sup> Judith Martin, "Inaugural Concert: Dissension in Philadelphia," *The Washington Post*, January 16, 1973, B3.

<sup>76</sup> Had Persichetti been informed at that early date, he assuredly would have written immediately to allow more time for a response from the President – a response that, if favorable, would allow enough time to rehearse with the orchestra. The January 9 date – via a telephone call from Ormandy – seems more likely because the letter was sent a scant two days later.

<sup>77</sup> Final Report: the 1973 Inaugural Concerts, January 19, 1973, RG 274 – Box 4, NPLM and NARA; JWASMP, Box 156, file 7, The University of Utah Marriott Library, Special Collections.

<sup>78</sup> Nixon first met Garment, who was also a lawyer at the Wall Street law firm Mudge, Stern, Baldwin, and Todd, when Nixon joined the firm in 1963. Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978, 1990), 242 and 272.

<sup>79</sup> Memorandum from Ken Rietz to Leonard Garment, January 18, 1973, RG 274 – Box 44, NPLM and NARA. While Rietz was identified as the person to make the decision, it is highly unlikely he would have done so unilaterally without consulting both Magruder and Haldeman. In addition, it is based on this memo that I have attributed the authorship of the January 19 Inaugural Concerts report to Rietz because the content is almost identical, and there is a paragraph in this memo that is worded identically to a paragraph in the final report.

he is taking time to communicate formally with Garment—an attorney—about an incident that had previously been characterized as inconsequential. Clearly, word of what happened had reached the White House, and Garment wanted to know how much damage had been done.

As it happened, just three days earlier, White House staffer, Mike Smith, sent a memo to Ken Smith, Chairman of the Gala Committee, to inform him of the incident and how to proceed:

I relayed to Dave Gergen the substance of our conversation. He then recommended that the reply to Persichetti be in the form of a memo from Ken Rietz to Len Garment, explaining the background (as you told me), which would then be covered by a Len Garment short note to Persichetti. Len Garment's office concurs with this approach and, therefore, it would be appreciated if such a Rietz-Garment memo could be prepared by your office and forward to me as quickly as possible.<sup>80</sup>

Word of the incident had indeed reached the White House to which the conversation with Dave Gergen attests. Attached to this memo was a copy of Persichetti's hand-written letter of January 11 with Mike Smith's initials printed in the margin. The White House wanted to do damage control, and do it quickly, given the amount of unwanted attention the incident was garnering as can be seen in the political cartoon shown in Figure 1.

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<sup>80</sup> Memorandum from Mike Smith to Ken Smith, January 16, 1973, RG 274 – Box 44, NPLA and NARA. It is also important to note the names of those who were cc'd on this memo: presidential advisor Dave Gergen, White House staff correspondents Dick Moore and Dave Parker, and Garment.



**Figure 1:** Political Cartoon by Wayne Stayskal, reprinted with permission from Bob Stayskal

A careful review of the pertinent Garment files yielded no letter to Persichetti.<sup>81</sup> The only response Persichetti ever received was from Cowling who wrote:

In all seriousness I appreciate very much your attitude and understanding with respect to the

<sup>81</sup> Specifically, I consulted those files pertaining to the second inauguration, which only contained notes to the President about his Second Inaugural Address, and the alphabetical listing under 'P'.

contact between us. I understand that your work incorporating the Second Inaugural Address of Lincoln is being performed at several concerts in the near future and hope that I will have the opportunity to hear it some time soon.<sup>82</sup>

What Persichetti was hoping for was an explanation of why the piece was removed, and whether the President was aware of the decision. In a letter to the President dated May 31, 1973, Persichetti writes:

I have received no answer from you nor your staff to my letter of January 11, 1973 (see enclosed copy). I wonder at this point whether you received the letter or [if] it got lost in the Inaugural Committee files. The publicity about the unperformed 'Lincoln Address' has caused me considerable duress. It may even have alienated me from my long time friend, Eugene Ormandy. I regret this notice which I did not seek. I would appreciate hearing from you.<sup>83</sup>

When Persichetti mentions an "unperformed" *Lincoln Address*, I interpret it to mean unperformed at the Presidential Inauguration because the St. Louis Symphony performed it on January 25.<sup>84</sup>

What role, if any, did the President have in this incident? In a White House recording from February 6, 1973, there is a conversation between Nixon and Haldeman about Persichetti. The President is first heard asking Haldeman, "What the hell is this [inaudible] about some sort of a Perishetty at the Inaugural Concert?"<sup>85</sup> I infer from Nixon's annoyed tone and inability to pronounce the name of the composer that he had only recently heard about this situation. Haldeman goes on to suggest that "I never knew about it till I read about it in the paper."<sup>86</sup> The veracity of this statement is dubious because, as has already been established, Rietz was in constant contact with both Magruder and Haldeman about many decisions regarding the Symphonic Concert, such as the inclusion of the Philadelphia Orchestra and the choice of text.

There is another even more compelling reason to doubt Haldeman's veracity that occurs a few moments later in the recording. Nixon asks Haldeman, "What do you think happened?" to which Haldeman replies, "I think they [the committee] made the right decision, to be perfectly frank." Nixon then asks if Haldeman had spoken to Ormandy, and Haldeman states that Ormandy confirmed "the issue had been settled," and, furthermore, the only question Ormandy asked was which text, Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha* or the Declaration of Independence, should be used for the narration.<sup>87</sup> Haldeman relates that he told Ormandy to use the Declaration of Independence and says, "I didn't have a lot of trouble deciding

<sup>82</sup> Letter from Edward Cowling to Vincent Persichetti, January 31, 1973, RG 274 – Box 60, NPLM and NARA.

<sup>83</sup> Letter from Vincent Persichetti to President Richard Nixon, May 11, 1973, WHCF, alphabetical listings: Nesse-Prox, NPLM and NARA. Both Dorothea and Persichetti acknowledged that Ormandy was very distressed because he was under the misapprehension that Vincent had gone to the press. What is more, it took several years for their relationship to heal. Payton Interview, TN 14465, EOP, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, the University of Pennsylvania. The good news was that Ormandy later continued to program music by Persichetti; for example, there is correspondence to the Theodore Presser Company that the Philadelphia Orchestra would include Persichetti's Piano Concerto in its 1978–79 season. Letter from Mary Krouse to Eugene Moon, November 28, 1978, EOP, folder 1126, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, the University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>84</sup> The orchestra played under the direction of Walter Susskind, and baritone William Warfield assumed the role of the narrator.

<sup>85</sup> Nixon White House Tapes from the Oval Office, Conversation 851-3, February 6, 1973, NPLM and NARA.

<sup>86</sup> Vincent suggests, in the 1987 interview, that it was Haldeman himself who made the phone call on January 9, which is then contradicted by Dorothea who cannot remember precisely who it was. Fourteen years had elapsed since this incident, and, at the time of the interview, Vincent was being treated for his lung cancer to which he would succumb three months later. Thus, it is not surprising that his memory is not accurate, but it is unfortunate that neither he nor Dorothea can remember who did make the call, especially as it was originally attributed to Ormandy. Terry Payton Interview, TN 14465, EOP, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts, the University of Pennsylvania.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. Haldeman mispronounces Longfellow as "Longhorn."

that and Ormandy completely agreed.”<sup>88</sup> Then Haldeman says, “but apparently this [music] was commissioned by somebody.” Nixon interrupts to clarify, “for the Inauguration?” and Haldeman confirms, “for the Inauguration, for the Inaugural Concert, to be with Lincoln’s Second Inaugural; but, Lincoln’s Second Inaugural says ‘we’ll keep fighting till every drop of blood has been avenged by another drop of blood...’ a few glorious lines like that.”<sup>89</sup>

Let us address the inconsistencies in Haldeman’s briefing of the President. First, Haldeman’s response to Nixon’s original question, “What do you think happened?” is confusing because it does not address the question that was asked. Nixon was not asking for Haldeman’s assessment of the decision to remove *A Lincoln Address* from the program; he wanted to know what led to that decision. Second, it was not just “somebody” that put forward the commission to Persichetti, it was the Inaugural Committee via Ed Cowling; Haldeman—clearly aware the conversation was being recorded—was trying to obfuscate who was involved.<sup>90</sup> Lastly, and most importantly, Haldeman misquotes Lincoln. The exact passage to which Haldeman refers is found towards the end of the speech: “Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman’s two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said ‘the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.’”<sup>91</sup> Lincoln is arguing that the war is a divine debt to be paid for the sin of slavery and concludes by quoting one of the Psalms: “the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”<sup>92</sup> The Psalm invokes a sense of introspection and humility that Lincoln invokes as well, which is absent in Haldeman’s clumsy paraphrasing.

The fact that Haldeman quotes, or more accurately misquotes, a passage from Lincoln’s speech is telling because his ability to make reference to it at all indicates that he was aware of specific reservations concerning the text—reservations that he himself may have had and communicated to the committee. To be sure, if the only question to be answered in Haldeman’s discussion with Ormandy had been about a choice between the Declaration of Independence and the *Song of Hiawatha*—as Haldeman maintained earlier in the briefing—there was absolutely no reason to discuss the Lincoln speech with Nixon. Mr. Persichetti was thanked for his efforts, but the committee decided to go another route. The fact remains, however, that a specific passage from Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address was on the tip of Haldeman’s tongue, which is damning. Consequently, I surmise that it was the words of Lincoln that were at the heart of the decision to remove *A Lincoln Address*, and not, as was indicated by Haldeman and the Inaugural Committee, an attempt to find something more in keeping with the theme. Regarding the President himself, it is apparent from his questions to Haldeman during the briefing that he was out of the loop on

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<sup>88</sup> It is now unequivocal that Haldeman made the decision of which text to use.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Haldeman wrote an article explaining the decision to record White House discussions. H. R. Haldeman, “The Decision to Record Presidential Conversations,” *The Nixon White House Tapes*, NARA 30, no. 2 (Summer 1988): 1–5. At first Nixon was reluctant to record such conversations and had all of Johnson’s machinery removed from the Oval Office. However, by 1971, Nixon was convinced to begin recording conversations, which he wished only to be heard by himself and Haldeman. Ibid. Another example of Haldeman’s self-edited responses comes when he refers to Charlton Heston as “that guy, that actor who did the recitation...” It is important to remember that Heston is mentioned by name in the January 6 memo asking Haldeman for his final decision on the text to use for the narration. Memorandum from Ken Rietz through Jeb Magruder to H. R. Haldeman, January 6, 1973, RG 274 – Box 49, NPLM and NARA. Moreover, Heston was an ardent supporter of Nixon and the Republican Party, and it is highly unlikely that Haldeman would be unfamiliar with such an important celebrity and advocate.

<sup>91</sup> President Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865.

<sup>92</sup> Psalm 19:9, King James Version.

the Persichetti incident.

On the same day as Nixon's discussion with Haldeman in the Oval Office, the President sent a letter to Ormandy to thank him for his participation in the Symphonic Concert:

This is the first opportunity I have had to express my heartfelt appreciation for the splendid Inaugural Concert given by the Philadelphia Orchestra. While the program was partly mine, you and your outstanding musicians deserve all the credit for the superb quality of the performance...<sup>93</sup>

This letter suggests that the Symphonic Concert was a collaborative effort between Nixon and Ormandy. Irrespective of all the chatter about the Inaugural theme—the “Spirit of ’76” that was intended to transcend the historical milieu of 1776 to include the full breadth of American music and a comprehensive cognizance of the contemporary American experience—for all intents and purposes the Symphonic Concert was a collection of European heirlooms displayed for the pleasure of the President. Meanwhile, the music of Persichetti and the words of Lincoln were shut out, and so too an opportunity to celebrate an authentic piece of Americana.

In conclusion, I turn to a speech given by President Nixon on February 12, 1974, on the 165th anniversary of Lincoln's birthday at the Lincoln Memorial:

The question that I would like to address briefly this morning on Lincoln's birthday is why, why is Lincoln, of all the American Presidents, more revered not only in America but in the world? What we sometimes forget is that Abraham Lincoln was a world statesman at that time that America was not a world power. Here on these walls are inscribed many of his very familiar usages. One from the second Inaugural comes to mind when Lincoln said, “To do all that we may to achieve and to cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and between all Nations.”<sup>94</sup>

A year after his own Second Inauguration, and six months before his resignation from the Office of the Presidency, Nixon freely quotes from the 1865 speech of Lincoln. Perhaps he saw a parallel between the final days of the Civil War and the final days of the conflict with the North Vietnamese during which both leaders delivered their respective Second Inaugural Addresses; whatever the reason, words that Haldeman and the Inaugural Committee once found subversive were now being heralded. What is more, the press printed quotes from Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address and disseminated words that were intended to be locked away, while the Inaugural Committee wrote a final report that, paradoxically, spent more time explaining what had been discarded than commending what had been accomplished.<sup>95</sup> I close with a quote from Nixon's thank-you letter to Ormandy written the same day as his briefing with Haldeman: “An Inauguration is an important national ceremony, a time for reaffirming our faith and our loyalty to the principles on which this Nation was founded.” Regrettably, neither faith nor loyalty were present in the decision to eliminate *A Lincoln Address*.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Letter from President Nixon to Eugene Ormandy, February 6, 1973, WHCF, alphabetical listings: Nesse-Prox, NPLM and NARA.

<sup>94</sup> White House Central Files, Nixon's Speeches, February 12, 1974, Box 169, NPLM and NARA.

<sup>95</sup> It is curious to consider how many people who were only vaguely familiar with Lincoln's speech became more acquainted with it after reading the sundry newspaper quotes. Furthermore, had the concert proceeded as originally planned, it is conceivable that Persichetti's *Liturgical Symphony*—and not *A Lincoln Address*—would have garnered more scholarly attention.

<sup>96</sup> Letter from Richard Nixon to Eugene Ormandy, February 6, 1973, WHCF, alphabetical listings, Nesse-Prox, NPLM and NARA.

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## Abstract

On December 15, 1972, Vincent Persichetti was contacted by members of the Second Inaugural Committee of Richard Nixon to see if the composer would be willing to write a new work for the occasion. Specifically, the work was to be written for orchestra (Ormandy leading the Philadelphia Orchestra) with a narrator (Charlton Heston) who would read selected passages from Lincoln's second inaugural address of 1865. Later that month—after an intensive bombing campaign in North Vietnam—Persichetti was contacted again and asked to substitute another text. The concern stemmed from the fact that portions of the text could be interpreted as critical of the administration's campaign in North Vietnam. Persichetti refused to make the change because he did not believe the words of Lincoln could, or should, be construed as subversive. A decision was made to remove Persichetti's work, and it was left to Eugene Ormandy to notify the composer about this outcome.

Making reference to materials found in the Persichetti Collection in the music division of the New York Public Library, the John Willard and Alice Sheets Marriott Collection in the J. Willard Marriott Library at the University of Utah, the Richard Nixon Presidential Library in Yorba Linda, and the Eugene Ormandy Papers in the Kislak Center for Special Collections at the University of Pennsylvania, this paper will review the dynamics that led to the rejection of a piece of music that is representative of American values from a presidential inauguration.