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“Ever to the Right”?: The Political Life of *1776* in the Nixon Era

Elissa Harbert

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The United States in the Nixon era (1969-1974) was deeply divided politically, mired in the Vietnam War, and tormented by intense separation and mistrust between the younger and older generations. These societal rifts made it rare for a work of popular culture to cut across lines of political and generational difference. Disheartened by the horrific images of the first televised war, many Americans enjoyed escaping into frivolously entertaining television shows, movies, and musicals, even as entertainment that engaged with politics risked alienating half of its audience. The odds were slim that a stage or screen production could be deeply political in nature, and about the United States itself, without angering or repelling a large portion the population.

Enter *1776*, one of the most successful musicals ever written about American history. When *1776* opened at the 46th Street Theatre in the spring of 1969, people on all points of the political spectrum embraced it, from anti-establishment New Left hippies to right-wing pro-Vietnam War Republicans, and many in between.¹ It appealed to people of every age, with fan mail flooding in from elementary schools as well as older admirers.² It received nearly unanimous praise not only from theater critics and show business professionals, but also was beloved by audience members from diverse walks of life. In addition to countless fans, many entertainment celebrities and high-ranking political leaders went to see the musical. Politicians from President Richard Nixon to Democratic presidential candidate Senator George McGovern praised *1776* and found hope, pride, and patriotism in this lively depiction of the signing of the

Declaration of Independence.³ This musical managed to capture something in America's political heart that could inspire both left-wing radicals, such as Howard Da Silva, who portrayed Benjamin Franklin, and their right-wing foes, such as Nixon, archconservative journalist George Schuyler, and even U.S. military generals.⁴

However, beneath this chameleonic reception, the members of the core creative team were all left-leaning Democrats, and they subtly invested *1776* with their own beliefs about America's political past and present. Sherman Edwards (1919-1981), who first conceived the idea and who labored intensively over historical research while writing the music, lyrics, and initial book concept, always had a historical and educational goal in mind for *1776*. To Edwards, a former schoolteacher, the work's purpose was to educate the public about the drafting and ratification of the Declaration of Independence by the Second Continental Congress. Working with him, book writer Peter Stone (1930-2003) aimed to draw discernable parallels between the past and the present, helping the audience to use the past to make sense of the turmoil of their own time. The third main creative force was producer Stuart Ostrow (b. 1932), an outspoken New York Democrat who was active in both national and New York City politics. Ostrow wanted to use the popularity of *1776* to spark social change and spur its audiences into leftist activism. As a producer, he also wanted to capitalize as best he could on *1776*'s broad appeal, so he created shrewd and versatile advertising campaigns that encouraged people of all political persuasions to come see the show for themselves. In short, Edwards and Stone worked together to create a work that balanced historical fact with contemporary significance, and Ostrow angled to promote *1776* widely and produce a musical that would have both a profitable run and a positive effect on U.S. society

Considering the biases of its creative team, conservatives could easily have dismissed *1776* as leftist propaganda. The fact that they instead adopted the show as their own compels investigation as to why and how a musical about U.S. politics could be equally applauded by the right and the left in a time of seemingly intractable division. The answer lies in its particular historical subject, the American Revolution. The use of this historical touchstone allowed *1776* to become an ideological mirror in which Americans could find a reflection of their own values.

This article explores the political life of the Broadway musical and its film version during the Nixon era. It first delves into the musical's creative collaborators, their political stances, and their individual goals for the show. It then details the musical's reception by critics, politicians, and audiences across the political spectrum and shines a spotlight on the night President Nixon hosted a full performance of *1776* in the White House on George Washington's birthday in 1970. By examining this night, and the political messages woven into two key songs Nixon wanted to censor, "Cool, Cool, Considerate Men" and "Momma, Look Sharp," the musical's political versatility comes into focus. Finally, it documents how *1776*'s advertising campaign shifted following Nixon's public embrace of the show, asserting its independence from the conservative White House so that people of all political persuasions still felt that *1776* was for them. The ways this musical navigated the polarized political environment of the Nixon era demonstrates how Broadway musicals can influence and be influenced by their contemporary culture even if they cloak their political commentary in perukes, brocade, and breeches.

The American Revolution as an Ideological Mirror

The founding story of the United States has fascinated Americans for two centuries. It has long been taught to school children as well as immigrants to acculturate them to the

paradigms of American patriotism, and most U.S. citizens recognize this history to be an important part of national identity. The historian Michael Kammen argued that the American Revolution was the core of national tradition in the United States, particularly because during the twentieth century it remained a “non-controversial phenomenon,” which “had ceased to be vulnerable to political partisanship” by the Centennial in 1876.⁵ Unlike many other chapters in U.S. history, such as Puritanism, westward expansion, and the history of slavery, Kammen notes that the American Revolution “is the one component of our past that we have not, at some point or other, explicitly repudiated.”⁶ The events and people of those formative years of the 1770s and 1780s have been the cornerstone of U.S. tradition for two centuries.

The story of the Revolution has been a cherished national tradition close to the heart of people of all political persuasions, but that does not mean that it is politically neutral. To the contrary, people understand its significance through their own ideological lenses. Andrew Schocket argues that although the American Revolution itself is revered by all Americans, the meanings of those historic events and how they should be interpreted in contemporary politics and culture have always been contested.⁷ Schocket writes, “battles over the contemporary memory of the American Revolution serve as proxies for America’s contemporary ideological divide.”⁸ Politicians have called upon the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights, as well as other works of the founders, time and again to rally the electorate, regardless of political party. Schocket’s analysis of hundreds of presidential campaign speeches from 1968 to 2012 revealed that “political parties and politicians do more than enlist the founders to serve their own political ends,” and “they do so in markedly different ways, depending on where [the politicians] stand on the political spectrum.” He divides the general orientation towards the nation’s founding story into two groups, essentialists and organicists, which map roughly onto

contemporary conservative and liberal viewpoints respectively. The essentialist view, as demonstrated by conservatives, “relies on the assumption that there was one American Revolution led by demigods, resulting in an inspired governmental structure and leaving a legacy from which straying would be treason and result in the nation’s ruin.”⁹ Essentialism conceives of the Revolution as finished, set in stone, and “having one, true, knowable, unchanging meaning for us now and forever: an essence.”¹⁰ Organicists, who tend to align with liberal politics, see the past as a living phenomenon, open to interpretation, and without a single fixed true meaning. Thus, Schocket explains, “While the essentialists see a Revolution with a perfect result, organicists believe that Americans are ever in the process of trying to complete a Revolution that the founders left unfinished. They see themselves furthering the never-ending task of perfecting the union.”¹¹ As this article demonstrates, the creators of *1776* also understood their show’s reception by people of both liberal and conservative viewpoints as corresponding to one of these two sides. It was this dichotomous understanding of the Revolutionary War, in part, that allowed *1776* to appeal to people across the political spectrum.

Regardless of how one interprets its contemporary meanings, the Revolution serves to remind Americans that despite their many differences, the nation exists fundamentally because of an agreement made by a group of disparate individuals, the founders or “founding fathers,” who overcame their personal biases to share a vision for the nation’s future.¹² As a reassuring legend that allows many citizens, particularly those who could claim European ancestry, to feel a sense of national community through shared origins, the signing of the Declaration of Independence has remained a potent national story that has become ever more engrained over time, even as its meanings shift.¹³ Kammen notes that the era of the late 1960s and 1970s, marked by fierce partisanship, distrust of the government sparked by such crises as the Vietnam

War and Watergate, and countless social upheavals of the previous twenty years, was a particularly nostalgic time when “the nation seize[d] upon its past as a source of security and comfort.”¹⁴ They turned to the Revolutionary era as a cultural touchstone from which many Americans could draw inspiration and a sense of common purpose.

This historical moment, and all of the cultural memories and myths that accrued surrounding it, became a sort of mirror in which the many different American political groups could see their particular values and priorities reflected back to them. Indeed, when politicians on both sides of the aisle have invoked the Revolutionary era, it has often been to justify their own political agendas by rooting them in the idealized past and to inspire a sense of righteous providence through their alignment with the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.¹⁵

The historical setting of *1776* allowed the musical to function as a mirror, confirming the particular political beliefs each individual expected to see. Even though its creators--Edwards, Stone, and Ostrow--were progressives and what Schocket would call organicists, rather than asserting a definite political agenda for *1776*, they invited audience members to see the production for themselves and interpret it through the lens of their own ideologies.

Three years after the show opened, the conservative film producer Jack L. Warner (1892-1978) took over the film adaptation of the production. Influenced by his friend President Nixon, he gave the film adaptation a more conservative and essentialist slant, as will be discussed below.¹⁶ All of these different creative hands shaped the meanings of the production. Countless audience members have since peered into the past that it represents and discerned different political values and meanings of patriotism. Overall, though, *1776* has inspired in many a sense of optimism and unity in the shared heritage of the nation’s founding story.

Background

1776 dramatizes the deliberations of the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia as they debate and eventually declare American independence from Great Britain. It centers on the efforts of John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Jefferson, played in both the original cast and the film version by William Daniels, Howard Da Silva, and Ken Howard, but it also robustly characterizes over a dozen of the other congressional delegates. Abigail Adams and Martha Jefferson, the only women in the cast, were played by Virginia Vestoff and Betty Buckley (in her Broadway debut), while Blythe Danner portrayed Martha Jefferson in the film.

1776 began in the imagination of Sherman Edwards, a professional songwriter and former history teacher, whose best-known songs included “See You in September” and “Wonderful, Wonderful.”¹⁷ Nearly every newspaper review and magazine feature took delight in noting that the author was a history teacher, and Edwards encouraged this reputation, bringing it up frequently in interviews and letters. In actuality, he had taught high school history for only a year and a half before pursuing a full-time musical career.¹⁸ Edwards was first and foremost a songwriter. He majored in history at New York University and completed about six months of graduate school in history at Cornell, moonlighting as a jazz pianist all the while.¹⁹

Despite his short stint in front of a class, his affiliation with academic history is central to *1776*'s reception and relationship with the past. As far as journalists and publicity agents were concerned, Edwards's credentials gave *1776* an imprimatur as educational public history, something most people did not expect from a Broadway musical. The show's appeal and success were often attributed to Edwards's intimate familiarity with American history: he was a

trustworthy source of historical information, almost a proxy for one's own history teacher.

Edwards took this responsibility seriously, insisting that the characters and script be as faithful as dramatically possible to historical events, which limited how much present-day political allusion his collaborators Stone and Ostrow could weave into the production.

Edwards worked resolutely from 1961-1967 to write the entire musical on his own, completing most of the music and lyrics as well as early versions of the script before presenting it to potential producers.²⁰ After other Broadway producers turned Edwards down because they didn't want to take a risk on such an unlikely and ostensibly stodgy subject for a musical, Ostrow took the helm of the project. He quickly discerned that Edwards's rough script drafts needed to be rewritten, so his first decision was to find someone to reshape the book. Ostrow enlisted Peter Stone, an Academy Award-winning screenwriter (*Father Goose*, 1964) who would enjoy an impressive career writing the books for many musicals (including *Two By Two*, *The Will Rogers Follies*, and *Titanic*), and the scripts for numerous television shows and films. He served as President of the Dramatists' Guild from 1981-1999.²¹ Coincidentally, Stone happened to be the son of a history teacher. In the end, he fashioned one of the most critically acclaimed books for a Broadway musical. Most important, Stone honored Edwards's commitment to grounding all aspects of the production, except the music, in historical research.²²

1776 opened at the 46th Street Theatre on March 16, 1969, and played on Broadway for three years with an impressive 1,217 performances, before closing on February 13, 1972. It won three Tony Awards, including Best Musical and Best Direction of a Musical for Peter Hunt, as well as two Drama Desk Awards.²³ In addition to these Broadway honors, *1776* enjoyed the recognition of numerous civic and state organizations that celebrated its patriotic spirit, as will be discussed below.²⁴ The scope of these honors and their granting organizations, from traditionalist

groups like the Daughters of the American Revolution, The Sons of the Revolution, and The American Legion, to further left Broadway institutions, shows the wide appeal and cultural significance of *1776*.²⁵

Politics and the Reception of *1776*

With its action confined to the distant past, *1776* became a platform for subtle but significant commentary on the problems facing the United States in the late 1960s, particularly surrounding issues of class, the Vietnam War, the United States' racial history, and the much-debated purpose and nature of political revolution. The three main creative forces behind the production, Edwards, Stone, and Ostrow, each had their own political views and mission for *1776*, which ultimately gave it a balanced character.

According to Edwards, his goal in the show was bringing history to life to teach audiences about the past. He tended to dodge questions about his work having a political message for the present day by instead emphasizing its historical accuracy. As one interviewer noted, "Contrary to his belief in history, he was disinclined to remember, or at least tell, details of his life."²⁶ In a *New York Times* feature, Lewis Funke pressed him about the musical's political relevance to 1969, but Edwards repeatedly redirected him to the historical events. "I didn't have any special pleading in mind when I set out to create this show," Edwards insisted.²⁷ Funke then noted, "Aware that patriotism in this country appears to be old-fashioned in some quarters, Mr. Sherman [*sic.*] said, 'I didn't set out to answer anyone. My concept simply was to show what men and events of the time [did] with honesty and respect for reportage of the facts.'"²⁸ Edwards then made the point that the Nixon government fell far short of the Second Continental Congress: "These men [of 1776] were the cream of their colonies. . . They were

moved by self-interest, of course. But they were non-neurotic, the kind of people I've always liked. . . They understood commitment."²⁹ By 1973, Edwards's disillusionment with the Nixon administration contrasted with his admiration for the men of 1776. In his diagnosis, "the prime problem" was that "the administration doesn't know the meaning of patience. They are the victims of what they think the American people believe in--'think fast'--'come up with a new idea everyday'--that's the way to run an advertising agency, not a country."³⁰ He praised a 1973 re-enactment for the bicentennial of the Boston Tea Party because it would help keep the public's attention on Watergate and the corruption in the nation's capital.³¹ "We should clean [corrupt government officials] out," he concluded, "We need some new blood."³² Perhaps he hoped his dramatization would inspire politicians--and voters--to seek out new leaders who were more like the leaders of the Revolution.

Peter Stone was more visibly involved in radical New Left politics than Edwards, and throughout his life he socialized with Democratic leaders.³³ While Edwards's motivation in 1776 was to teach audiences about the past, Stone's main goal was to draw subtle connections between the past and the present so that Americans could work towards the ideal of a more peaceful and just future. In his writing and interviews, Stone emphasized the ways history echoed the troubles of the present day and wanted audiences to understand the relevance of the nation's founding to contemporary issues. In two similar newspaper articles authored by Stone and published in September and October of 1970, he set forth his beliefs about the American tradition of civil disobedience, rebellion, and revolution that motivated his vision for 1776. He particularly emphasized 1776's popularity among seemingly irreconcilable groups and put forth his philosophy of the essentialist vs. organicist orientations toward the Revolution. In the *San Diego Union*, he wrote, "Last February, on George Washington's birthday, 1776 played at the White

House before the President, the Vice President, members of the Cabinet and representatives of the Senate and House. They found it stirring, moving, patriotic, and valid. On another day, shortly thereafter, it played to an audience of young, radical activists. They found it stirring, moving, patriotic, and relevant. How could this be possible? Had they seen the same play? Of course. What they had both experienced was the birth of their nation. One group believed that the American Revolution had been fulfilled; the other was equally convinced it had not, but was determined to continue their struggle to fulfill it now.”³⁴ In this statement, Stone captures the alchemy of 1776: both Republican politicians and young radical activists could believe it championed their own values. Because the play depicted the founding legend of the United States, a moment so polished with national pride that it gleamed like a prism, it could even reflect disparate political ideologies: those who believed in an essential and permanent truth of the Revolution, and those who saw it as an organic, living process.

Less than a month later, Stone published a similar article in the *New York Times*, opening with a dramatic description of a striking historical parallel: “A group of protesters gathers in the streets to decry government policies--they are angry, they are loud and abusive, they are demanding disobedience. Facing them is a unit of militia, their rifles loaded. . . Suddenly, a guardsman fires into the crowd, claiming later that he had been fired upon first although there was no proof, and immediately, the rest of the detachment fires--point blank, into the mass of protestors, killing a few and wounding several more. Later, the funeral of these dissidents becomes an occasion for great and widespread demonstration against the establishment. Kent State, 1970? No. Boston, 1770. Almost two hundred years to the day.”³⁵ He continues with a rousing account of the Boston Tea Party of 1773, and then writes,

What of the similarities between those troubled times and these (states rights vs. federal rights; property rights vs. civil rights) and the differences (if any)? What of the lessons of the past applied to the problems of the future? . . . It is not the events of American Independence that are being suppressed--it is the concept of revolution as a political solution. Our nation is, intentionally or instinctively, trying to remove the recurrence of such a solution from the list of viable alternatives. "America is through with revolutions," we seem to be telling ourselves. But how can political stability exist when the People don't know their own history? What society can plan a future without an intimate knowledge of its own past?³⁶

Thus, Stone advocated that *1776* could be a much-needed remedy to what he saw as America's dangerous ignorance of its revolutionary history, as well as a depiction of a historical moment that offered many parallels and lessons for the problems of the early 1970s.

In an interview for the *Los Angeles Times*, Stone again emphasized his play's appeal to groups who seemingly had nothing in common: "One odd thing about *1776* is that it has been acclaimed to an embarrassing degree by both Left and Right."³⁷ He noted that this caused some "uneasiness" at first among the cast and crew. "The radicals became embarrassed when the liberals showed enthusiasm for the production, the reactionaries became embarrassed when the radicals were enthusiastic, and so on," he explained.³⁸ He noted that it was the musical's historical subject--the founding of the nation--that explained its appeal to radicals and reactionaries alike: "It got to the point where the people got involved not with the politics but with the beginning of this country. And we're all involved with the way the country began."³⁹

Stone explained that he believed *1776* had become a hit because it “came along in a period of national humiliation and despair when Americans wanted desperately to be reminded of an earlier, prouder time.”⁴⁰ Stone himself felt this humiliation, and he claimed he could no longer fly an American flag on a national holiday because “the identification with right-wing causes would discourage me.”⁴¹ In these articles, Stone explains not only his sense of purpose for *1776*, but also one of its key strengths: it got people thinking about the nature of revolution and its role in U.S. society not only in the past but also in the present.

Similarly Stuart Ostrow, who closely supervised all aspects of the production, wanted it to provoke immediate progressive social change. Ostrow wrote in his 2006 memoir that *1776* had a covert anti-war message to convey: “In 1969 dissent and doubt regarding the war in Vietnam tore at the Republic and the country was evermore shocked by the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Senator Robert F. Kennedy, and by violence surrounding the party conventions in Miami and Chicago. The reason I thought that producing *1776* was so timely then was its relevance to the protest to end the war in Vietnam. America was thwarting Vietnam’s revolution in much the same way England sought to defeat us in 1776. It was my secret.”⁴² He also remarked that he was proud the show “appeal[ed] to all sides of current opinion.” One of his assistants told a reporter, “The New Left at Yale claims the show because it points out quite rightly that those young men were almost anarchists. The right wing, the American Legion, claims us because they say it shows what the country used to be, but no longer is.”⁴³ Ostrow invited political buzz about the show outside the theater through advertising campaigns, interviews, and strategic photo opportunities for political figures from both sides of the aisle with members of the cast in full costume.

Ostrow kept records of a wide array of reactions from people who had seen *1776*. The musical's warm reception ranged from the hippie counterculture to United States military officers. In the counterculture hotbed of San Francisco in May of 1970, a production of *1776* ran simultaneously with the rock musical *Hair*, which celebrated hippie lifestyles and values.⁴⁴ Ostrow observed a powerful show of camaraderie between the two casts: "The San Francisco company of *Hair* didn't play this Monday evening and all went to see *1776*. . . they were so moved that they stood at the stage door and formed a canopy for our cast as they came into the street and held them there singing 'America, the Beautiful.'"⁴⁵ This spectacle of the Broadway casts of two very different shows--out of costume though they were--sharing a patriotic moment might have surprised some conservatives who believed *1776* and *Hair* stood for diametrically opposed visions for the United States.

The solidarity between the cast and crew of these two musicals must have been unknown to several officials of the U.S. military who suggested *1776* would be ideal to bring to Vietnam to entertain the troupes there. Ostrow received a letter from the Undersecretary of the Navy, John W. Warner, explaining, "General Lew Walt, Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, approached me last week concerning your splendid show *1776*. The General, as well as a number of other equally enthusiastic theatergoers, are hopeful that you might be persuaded to send *1776* abroad to Vietnam. Our unofficial reviewers all feel that it would be particularly appropriate for our men overseas. If such a commitment interests you at all, I will be happy to contact the USO and pursue arrangements with them."⁴⁶ Ostrow immediately replied, "I am delighted and particularly proud you think *1776* should be performed in Vietnam. Of course I'm interested."⁴⁷ Most of the USO's records were destroyed in two separate natural disasters, but the archived

papers of Edwards, Stone, and Ostrow indicate that the Vietnam performance never got beyond the planning stages.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, the fact that it was considered and even recommended for a USO production in Vietnam is remarkable. Any subversive or anti-war messages in *1776* must have been veiled enough for Generals to agree it had the potential to motivate and rejuvenate active military personnel. A few months later, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Brigadier General James D. Hittle, sent Ostrow a letter to offer his assistance in the effort to bring *1776* to Vietnam. He praised the show profusely and explained that he thought it was a great play because “it provided a refreshing and reassuring demonstration that very fundamental things about our Nation and what it stands for are still respected.”⁴⁹ Continuing this emphasis on respect and patriotism, Hittle continued, “At a time when some few in this country seek to demean our flag and our form of government, it was good to see *1776* and to realize that talented people, such as its staff and cast, would devote such time and effort to retell an essentially well-known story that needs retelling today. And, of course, the fact that the public and critics have acclaimed *1776* proves that an outstanding play about good old-fashioned patriotism can, in spite of cynics, be an historic event of modern theater.”⁵⁰ By praising *1776*’s “old-fashioned patriotism,” Hittle likely meant conservatism. The word patriotism had come to connote conservatism in the late 1960s; as the Princeton historian Eric Goldman wrote in 1969, “Incontestably, American patriotism has been largely taken over by the right-wing.”⁵¹ More recently, Simon Hall has shown that this alignment of patriotism with the conservatives was more complicated, arguing that many leftists did continue to draw on traditional patriotic symbols and ideals (such as the casts of *Hair* and *1776* singing “America the Beautiful” together) despite the fact that the mainstream media often emphasized “the colorful and the sensational--the burning of draft cards, the waving of enemy

flags, the use of extreme rhetoric.”⁵² Still, Hall writes, “By the end of the 1960s, with some important exceptions, patriotic protests had apparently fallen out of favor among American leftists.”⁵³ Thus, in his letter, Hittle signals his desire for a return to traditional conservatism that would overcome those who no longer looked on the flag with pride, meaning the hippie counterculture and those with radical anti-establishment ideals, as well as what President Nixon called the “vocal minority” who opposed the Vietnam War.⁵⁴

It is surprising that this Brigadier General was as enthusiastic about the same show that prompted Jon DeCles, a critic for the *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, in the heart of the counterculture movement, to write, “We are taught too much respect for our sacred forefathers these days, hence we forget that they were people.”⁵⁵ DeCles praises *1776* for having “some of the greatest writing ever, some of the greatest characters ever conceived, and an incendiary quality that lifts it out of the realm of stage presentation and rockets it straight into the arena of revolutionary drama and ‘now’ politics.” He continues, giving his review a leftist slant and displaying an organicist understanding of the Revolution, “If you live in America today, you should see it. If you are old, it will tell you why young people are rioting in the streets. If you are young, it will tell you what the old are treasuring and trying to preserve; and perhaps help you to keep from making some of the mistakes they have made. If you are black, it may help you to understand how a nation conceived in liberty could condone slavery. Above all, if you are human it may help you to conceive a compassion for great men giving birth to great schemes.”⁵⁶ Young or old, Brigadier General or Berkeley journalist, *1776* inspired patriotism in those who had a very different opinion of this divided nation. The particular details of the pride it inspired depended on who was watching.

Many politicians attended and enjoyed the show. Aside from the large invited audience at the White House performance, political figures from both parties were welcomed backstage at Broadway's 46th Street Theatre to have their pictures taken with the cast. When former First Lady Lady Bird Johnson attended, she had pictures taken with the "first ladies" of 1776, Betty Buckley and Virginia Vestoff, and William Daniels and Howard Da Silva presented her with a copy of the Declaration of Independence.⁵⁷ Daniels and Da Silva also posed with six governors and senators from both sides of the aisle representing some of the original thirteen colonies as part of their celebration of the 195th anniversary of the First Continental Congress.⁵⁸ The fact that so many elected officials made a point of attending *1776* speaks to its cultural significance and the sense of patriotic duty it inspired.

Lyrics from *1776* even echoed in the halls of Congress one day when Representative Fred Schwengel, a Republican from Iowa, recited the entire song "Piddle, Twiddle, and Resolve" during a speech on the House floor to express his feelings on congressional reform.⁵⁹ He added and changed words here and there to suit the occasion, and despite his awkward adaptation (in lines such as, "You see we piddle, twiddle, and resolve, not one damn thing do we solve or evolve that changes things"), Schwengel's use of the *1776* lyrics is a testament to their familiarity and appeal among members of Congress.⁶⁰

During its first National Tour, *1776* made a positive impression in areas that leaned liberal as well as conservative. Some critics for local newspapers made sure to point out the musical's appeal to people of any political persuasion as an invitation to see *1776* without fear of alienation. In Louisville, Kentucky, Dudley Saunders's erudite review reflected *1776*'s reception among the most polarized groups:

Everybody has his own definition of patriotism. Spiro Agnew believes it is one thing and Abbie Hoffman is convinced it is something else. Ed Muskie and George Wallace, Ted Kennedy and Lester Maddox have their own definitions. So have the Black Panthers and the John Birch Society, the American Civil Liberties Union and the DAR. The hard hats and peace marchers feel equally patriotic. Except in dictionaries and oversimplified textbooks, patriotism is a very personal thing. But there is probably one kind of patriotism that just about everyone will agree upon whether Democrat or Republican, far left or far right. That is the kind evoked by moments of national pride or by *1776*, the musical saga of the events that led to the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the birth of this nation. . . *1776* arouses most of us because it reminds us of the hopeful beginning when a bunch of young idealists and old idealists--revolutionaries all--settled their differences and created one of the world's greatest, most nearly perfect political documents. Patriotism is a badly mangled and misused word these days. But the patriotism evoked by *1776* is good. It divides no one.⁶¹

State and municipal governments across the nation bestowed honors on *1776* regardless of their prevailing political stances. For example, Fort Worth, Texas, at the time a primarily conservative city in a conservative state, presented the *1776* company with their Heritage Americana Award, with a citation reading, "Not since the days of Yankee Doodle has there been such an impact on the peoples of this nation, nor has there been a time when 'impact' was needed more."⁶² Boston declared a "Spirit of *1776* Day", and Philadelphia likewise honored Ostrow with a tribute to *1776* during its 1969 Freedom Week.⁶³ Both the deeply conservative state of Oklahoma and its capital city proclaimed a whole week as "Spirit of *1776* Week" in

1970, citing that “this musical rekindles the patriotism and love of country that all Oklahomans and all Americans feel so deeply,” complete with naming Stuart Ostrow the Honorary Mayor of Oklahoma City and the Honorary Lt. Governor of the State of Oklahoma.⁶⁴ Ostrow was honored with various other state and municipal awards, such as Honorary Citizenship in Baltimore.⁶⁵ Although they may have had little in common politically in 1969-70, from Boston to Oklahoma City, Fort Worth to Philadelphia, *1776* was celebrated with fanfare.

In addition to state and local governments, organizations devoted to the preservation and commemoration of U.S. history were especially enthusiastic about *1776*. For example, the American Legion presented Ostrow and Edwards with their Americanism Award, noting that Ostrow’s “foresight and courage to produce the greatest musical show to hit Broadway ‘1776’, justly deserves the highest awards.”⁶⁶ They then referred to Edwards’s WWII Air Force service and stated, “This is his first Broadway musical; and justly deserves the highest awards for his love of country.”⁶⁷ The Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge gave *1776* the “George Washington Honor Medal Award for 1969 Patriotic Production” as part of its mission to honor “outstanding achievements in bringing about a better understanding of the American Way of Life.”⁶⁸ The Daughters of the American Revolution sponsored a performance of scenes from *1776* for the opening night of their 1970 national meeting as well as at least one chapter meeting.⁶⁹ The Pennsylvania Society of Sons of the Revolution Americanism Committee commended *1776*, writing, “It is devoid of ideological slant and any violence to accepted American principles. It develops its thesis with good taste and artistic excellent yet delightfully spiced with thoroughly modern characterizations [*sic*].”⁷⁰ Statements like this hint at a certain relief that *1776* did not skew the founding legend in a way that would offend those with “traditional” values who adhered to “accepted American principles,” an essentialist perspective.

The fact that both Ostrow and Stone proudly admitted their “ideological slant” but that it remained invisible to many who saw the show demonstrates the mirror-like quality of its historical subject, in which an individual could see a show that affirms “accepted American principles” even where the creators intended to convey a subtly anti-establishment message.

1776 Goes to the White House

In the story of *1776*'s political life, no event stands out more than the musical's remarkable evening at the White House (Figures 1 and 2). Due to *1776*'s patriotic and historical subject matter, President Nixon invited the cast and crew to perform at the White House in honor of George Washington's birthday on February 22, 1970.⁷¹ The audience included the Nixon family and a number of invited guests, including representatives from the American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, U.S. historians, and politicians from both sides of the aisle. The evening was a unifying, bipartisan affair.⁷²

<FIGURES 1 AND 2>



Figure 1. William Daniels as John Adams, President Richard Nixon, Howard Da Silva as Benjamin Franklin, and Ken Howard as Thomas Jefferson⁷³



Figure 2. Cast Members, Stuart Ostrow, Sherman Edwards, Pat Nixon, and Richard Nixon at the White House⁷⁴

Before the performance, Nixon introduced *1776* to the audience as “a play which has been a great success even though it has an unpopular subject, patriotism, and has only two women in the cast, both of them fully dressed.” He told his 300 guests that he felt *1776* should be performed at the White House because “We have the spirit of 1776 in this room where Abigail Adams hung out her wash and where two of the characters from the play--Adams and Jefferson--lived. We believe this is the right play for the right time and place.”⁷⁵

This warm reception gave no hint of the trouble that brewed before the event. Nixon’s fondness for the musical did not extend to three songs that had subtly or explicitly liberal messages. He found these songs to be an offensive blemish in an otherwise excellent show, and he asked for them to be excluded from the White House performance. Ostrow wrote about the negotiations behind the scenes at this event: “At the eleventh hour a tough lady on Nixon’s staff called me with a list of songs the White House insisted be cut from the show for the President’s guests. She demanded we take out: “Cool, Cool, Conservative Men,” “Momma, Look Sharp,” and “Molasses to Rum” (The three were: anti-conservative, anti-war, and anti-race hypocrisy, respectively.)”⁷⁶ Nixon must have felt that without these songs, which exhibited the creative team’s left-leaning bias, the show would support his platform and express his conception of patriotism and American exceptionalism. Ostrow informed the cast and crew of Nixon’s request to cut the songs, and allowed them to vote on whether or not to cancel the performance in light of this censorship. The company vowed that they would either perform the show with the songs intact or they would not perform at the White House at all.⁷⁷ When Ostrow brought this ultimatum back to Nixon’s speechwriter William Safire, a former publicity agent for the New York League of Theatres, Safire convinced Nixon to allow an uncensored performance. Perhaps Safire persuaded him that cutting out these songs, which are pivotal moments in the plot, would

have drawn attention to the uncomfortable parallels Nixon saw between the historical play and the divisive issues of his own time.

President Nixon appeared not to harbor any animosity towards the production despite the inclusion of its critical numbers, announcing at the performance, “We are proud of the director, the producer, the cast, etc. Abigail, you can hang your wash here anytime.”⁷⁸ During the reception, he joked with the cast and shared historical anecdotes about the White House. When Pat Nixon posed with the actresses who portrayed Abigail Adams and Martha Jefferson, the President grinned and remarked that it was “the first time that those three First Ladies were ever photographed together.”⁷⁹

Some members of the cast and crew had mixed feelings about the White House performance: even though they were honored to perform there, they found catering to Nixon to be unsavory. Howard Da Silva, a Popular Front radical who played Benjamin Franklin, blamed Nixon for his blacklisting by the House Committee on Un-American Activities.⁸⁰ Because of this, he was ambivalent about the event. “Just think of being able to sign the Declaration of Independence in the White House,” Da Silva commented proudly after the performance.⁸¹ However, as Peter Stone remembered, “[Da Silva] was terribly, terribly angry with Nixon and very anti-Nixon. But he didn’t want to stop the show from going to the institution of the White House; he believed it belonged there. So he went. But to cleanse his soul, the next morning he got up early and joined the demonstrations against the Vietnam War, which were going on outside the White House. And that’s the way he expiated his sin of having played in front of his nemesis, President Nixon.”⁸²

Scott Jarvis (Courier), one of the youngest actors in the cast, told reporters he became quite upset when he heard Nixon wanted to cut the “Momma, Look Sharp” scene.⁸³ As a member

of the Vietnam Moratorium, Jarvis considered it his great honor and responsibility to sing “Momma, Look Sharp” as an anti-war protest.⁸⁴

The White House performance ended up being a successful and much-touted bipartisan evening, and a proud moment for the cast and crew; however, the event almost didn’t happen because of Nixon’s aversion to those songs. His discomfort with those songs, which shifted *1776* in Nixon’s mind from unifying to partisan, and perhaps from essentialist to organicist, complicates how we understand the glowing reception from many other conservatives.

Two Politically Charged Scenes

The numbers Nixon nearly censored from the White House performance were those with the clearest political relevance to 1970; their music and lyrics subtly encode social commentary that peers out from behind the curtain of the historical plot. “Cool, Cool, Considerate Men” and the number that immediately follows it, “Momma, Look Sharp,” show how *1776* inspired multiple viable interpretations of the most controversial subjects.

Nixon’s strongest objection was with the “Cool, Cool, Considerate Men” scene and its unflattering depiction of conservatives. Before the film version of *1776* premiered in 1972, Nixon asked the film’s producer, Jack L. Warner, to release it without “Cool, Cool, Considerate Men,” even though the film crew had already finished shooting this key scene. Warner was a staunch conservative and supporter of Nixon and had sent the President an advance copy of the film for his approval.⁸⁵ With Ostrow no longer involved during the film’s production, Warner had the final say in crafting its political tone. He wanted his film to promote the traditional patriotic values that he so admired in the stage version of the show. “The first time I saw the play on Broadway, I visualized the chance to show millions of people the spirit in which this country

was founded,” Warner told an interviewer.⁸⁶ “I figured what the country needed was an idea of where it came from and how we got the freedom we all enjoy. . . I tell you, I’m prouder of *1776* than any of the pictures I’ve ever been associated with, and that’s saying something. This is number 1,801 for me.”⁸⁷ Warner was eighty years old, and *1776* would be his last film. Out of respect for Nixon and in apparent agreement with him, Warner not only cut the pivotal scene but also ordered the negatives to be destroyed.⁸⁸ Fortunately, someone at Columbia Pictures disobeyed him, saving the footage in unmarked boxes in a salt mine in Kansas, in which studios take advantage of the low humidity level to preserve countless films. This scene, a pivotal moment in the narrative, was restored to the film thirty years later for the 2002 Director’s Cut edition, much to the approval of Peter Stone and Peter Hunt, who directed both the original production and the film version.⁸⁹

In “Cool, Cool, Considerate Men,” Loyalist delegate John Dickinson of Pennsylvania cautions the other conservative Loyalists and undecided members of Congress to think through the repercussions that declaring independence would have on their privileged lifestyles. Taking an opportunity to campaign against independence while Adams, Franklin, and other Patriots are absent, he warns that it would ruin their elite way of life. “Come ye cool, cool, conservative men,” he sings, “our like may never ever be seen again./We have land, cash in hand, self command, future planned.”

Why was Nixon so opposed to this song? First of all, the musical representation of these conservative men reflects class tensions in the 1960s and the reputation of Republicans as wealthy elites (and their followers, who, as Dickinson says, “would rather protect the possibility of becoming rich than face the reality of being poor.”) Although most of the delegates to the Second Continental Congress were white male landowners, Edwards and Stone portray the

conservative Loyalists as wealthier and more concerned with money and the preservation of their social status than the Patriots.⁹⁰ The music they sing has an air of European sophistication, as exemplified in “Cool Men.” Edwards tends to associate Loyalists in the Congress with eighteenth-century European musical signifiers, such as the use of counterpoint, imitation of *basso continuo*, waltz, and minuet styles. “Cool Men” imitates an eighteenth-century minuet, drawing upon associations with European refinement and wealth due to its historical origins. The minuet was the most popular courtly dance of the eighteenth century, and it was originally associated with upper-class elegance.⁹¹ Moreover, Leonard Ratner ascribes to the minuet a certain feminine connotation by contrasting it with the march, writing, “If the minuet, the queen of 18th-century dances, symbolized the social life of the elegant world, the march reminded the listener of authority, of the cavalier and the manly virtues ascribed to him.”⁹²

“Cool Men” contrasts sharply with the music sung by Adams and his pro-independence Patriot colleagues, whom Edwards aligns with U.S. nationalistic and nostalgic music styles, including a march style reminiscent of John Philip Sousa in “The Lees of Old Virginia,” patriotic song conventions in “Is Anybody There?,” folk elements in “Momma, Look Sharp,” and barbershop quartet singing in “But, Mister Adams,” and “The Egg.”⁹³ In reality, the Patriots in Congress were also mostly quite wealthy compared to the general population, but Edwards portrays them as unconcerned with money and focused on ideals of liberty and equality, although he later complicates this image by showing northern complicity in the slave trade in “Molasses to Rum to Slaves.” The contrast between the minuet-based “Cool Men” number and the march-based “The Lees of Old Virginia” and “Is Anybody There?” is compelling, in that, essentially, Edwards represents the conservatives in a slightly effeminized manner and gives liberal Patriots more traditionally masculine music.

Furthermore, other than its conspicuously ironic quotation of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” the music of “Cool Men” lacks sonic markers of U.S. identity, such as barbershop and march idioms or timbral signifiers of fife and drum music with which Edwards and orchestrator Eddie Sauter peppered the rest of the score. The song’s core motive is the “Oh say can you see” arpeggio, making it the only number in *1776* with an unmistakable quotation of early American music (several other numbers have subtle motivic quotations or paraphrases).⁹⁴ John Dickinson sings a variation on the first five notes and words of “The Star-Spangled Banner,” but then fails to ascend to the top of the phrase, instead subverting the famous melody with a descending turn (see Example 1). Dickinson further demonstrates his Loyalist stance by altering the march-like dotted rhythms of the “Star-Spangled Banner” to begin the song with a European minuet style rather than the march style Edwards often associates with the patriots.

The image displays two systems of musical notation. The first system, labeled 'John Dickinson', features a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment for 'Harpsichord and Strings' in treble and bass clefs. The lyrics are 'O - h say do you see what I see?'. The second system, labeled 'J.D.', features a vocal line in treble clef and a piano accompaniment for 'Hch.' in treble and bass clefs. The lyrics are 'Con - gress sit - ting here in sweet se - ren - i - ty!'. Both systems show a melodic line that begins with a descending turn instead of the expected ascending one.

Example 1: Sherman Edwards, “Cool, Cool, Considerate Men,” mm. 6-9

This evasion of a complete statement of the opening phrase continues until the Congressmen sing their final chord and the orchestra completes the phrase correctly. The skewed melody sends a message about the Loyalist characters: their version of the future is wrong, corrupted like their version of the future national anthem.

<EXAMPLE 1>

Edwards's use of the "Star-Spangled Banner" melody in the context of the pro-British Loyalists brings the meaning of patriotism and its traditional symbols into question. This ironic use of the song as a vehicle for the show's antagonists to espouse an upper-class plantation lifestyle, which many Americans in 1969 would have found distasteful, would have heightened the audience's attention to the possible subversive meanings of the song. Geoffrey Stephenson argued that the presence of the skewed quotation "supports the idea that those who espouse conventional patriotism cannot be trusted."⁹⁵ Edwards manipulates the music to characterize the conservatives as untrustworthy, amoral, and threatening.⁹⁶ Throughout the number, tonality shifts abruptly, modulating frequently and employing slippery chromaticism to signify their questionable ethics. Sauter's orchestration emphasizes flutes flutter-tonguing on dissonant major seconds, eerie *col legno* strings, and ominously throbbing low brass.⁹⁷

The song's lyrics probably disturbed Nixon more than the musical semiotics, although he was an amateur musician.⁹⁸ The lyrics characterize the conservative Loyalists and their contemporary Republican counterparts as being out of touch with the ideals of equality and charity, and unwilling to stake their wealth and political clout behind projects that could benefit less fortunate citizens. They also convey the conservatives' reluctance to change the status quo. For example, Dickinson sings,

Come ye cool, cool, considerate set,/We'll dance together to the same minuet,/to the
right, ever to the right, never to the left, forever to the right,/Let our creed be never to
exceed regulated speed, no matter what the need.⁹⁹

Here, Edwards depicts the conservative politicians as refusing to compromise ("never to the left, forever to the right. . . no matter what the need"), and inclined to slow down the legislative

process, even when situations, such as the Revolutionary War (as a parallel to the war in Vietnam), had become dire and in need of immediate action.

When taken as a whole, the music, lyrics, orchestration, and choreography paint the Loyalists as a selfish and menacing coalition. It is no surprise that Nixon interpreted the scene as a blatant vilification of conservatism. What is surprising is that other conservatives did not speak out against the number. The national tour reviews from predominantly conservative states such as Alabama, Kansas, West Virginia, and Texas do not mention “Cool, Cool, Considerate Men.”¹⁰⁰ Instead, they comment on the large crowds of locals who loved the show and consistently offer praise for the production. As one reviewer in Birmingham pleaded, “Give us more shows like this one from Broadway and Birmingham will support them. Certainly the large audience Tuesday night. . . is proof that if you give an audience something worthwhile it will turn out in droves.”¹⁰¹ Somehow, the song that so offended Nixon promenaded in front of the general theater-going public with little controversy. Perhaps this is because conservatives in the 1970s would clearly side with the Patriots in the question of American independence and did not identify with Dickinson and his Loyalist cohort.

Although Nixon asked Jack Warner to cut the “Cool Men” scene, he apparently did not object to “Momma, Look Sharp” remaining in the film version of *1776*. However, other conservatives and liberals in the early 1970s read very different messages into this number, largely depending on their view of the Vietnam War.

For a musical about the political mechanics behind one of the most celebrated wars in American history, a remarkable amount of anti-war sentiment subtly simmers in *1776*. Although many of the delegates argue that the war for independence from Great Britain is necessary and right, “Momma, Look Sharp” shows the gravity of the war and conveys parallels with the U.S.

involvement in Vietnam. The authors certainly intended to draw such parallels, but not all audience members or critics interpreted the song this way. This balancing act is one of the keys to the show's widespread appeal.

“Momma, Look Sharp” immediately follows “Cool, Cool, Considerate Men” and provides a striking contrast. After the wealthy Loyalists have left the State Hall, the working-class congressional custodian McNair, his teenage assistant Leather Apron, and a tattered young Courier delivering a message from General George Washington relax in the congressional chambers. The eager Leather Apron says he wants to join the Continental Army and asks the Courier if he's seen any fighting. The Courier then sings from the point of view of a soldier who has been killed during the Battle of Lexington, calling out for his mother as his dead body lies on the village green. The colloquial lyrics (“Them soldiers, they fired, oh Ma, did we run!/But then we turned round and the battle begun,”) mark the soldier as uneducated, contrasting the lofty dialogue and witty puns of the Congressmen. The soldier's lower social status has a poignant connection to the Vietnam War, during which privileged politicians sent thousands of young men of lower socio-economic status into combat.¹⁰² The historian D. Michael Shafer writes, “General Washington's manpower problems prefigured ours in Vietnam--in particular, the unwillingness of most [wealthy, educated] citizens to serve in the Continental Army (and so its dependence on the poor and disenfranchised).”¹⁰³ This connection between those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to the nation in both the Revolutionary War and in Vietnam, and indeed in all other U.S. military conflicts, was important to the creators of *1776*. On the 2002 DVD commentary, director Peter Hunt explains, “These are the people that have to do the dirty work, that do the cleaning up. . . [The Courier is] the person who's actually in harm's way, and it does bring in that whole level of the real world outside of the rarefied atmosphere of the Congress.”

Stone adds, “They’re the people whose fate is being decided by what the Congress does.”¹⁰⁴

“Momma, Look Sharp” is the only song in the final version of the show that comes from the perspective of the people who fought and died for the cause of Independence.

The musical score for "Momma, Look Sharp" is presented in three systems. Each system includes a vocal line for a Courier, a Military Drum, and a Harp, Cello, and Bass. The key signature is one flat (B-flat) and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are: "Mom-ma, hey Mom-ma, come look-in' for me. I'm here in the meadow by the red ma-ple tree - . Mom-ma, hey Mom-ma, look sharp! Here I be. Hey! Hey! Mom-ma, look sharp."

Example 2. Sherman Edwards, “Momma, Look Sharp,” mm. 5-20

To characterize its working-class singer musically, Edwards composed in a folk-song style, calling on Dorian and pentatonic modes typical of Anglo-American folk music, a limited vocal range, balanced four and eight-bar phrases, and simple, unobtrusive sustained accompaniment (see Example 2). The song has an overall impression of earnest simplicity. By using this folk style, Edwards bridges the historical distance between the folk music of early America and the folk music revival of the mid-twentieth century, which had brought folk ballads

back onto the music industry charts and into the popular repertoire, and which played a vital role in Vietnam War protests.¹⁰⁵ His melody and lyrics are reminiscent of early American folk tunes, but they would also feel familiar and meaningful to the contemporary audience.

<EXAMPLE 2>

Although the authors had their own views of the purpose of this song, conservative reviewers such as George S. Schuyler (1895-1977) interpreted it differently. Schuyler was a prominent journalist and essayist and one of the most vocal conservative African Americans of the mid-twentieth century.¹⁰⁶ In the 1960s and 70s, Schuyler wrote anti-Civil Rights editorials for the deeply conservative *American Opinion Magazine*, published by the far-right John Birch Society.¹⁰⁷ Schuyler wrote a lengthy review praising *1776* in the same magazine, in which he conveys as much about his own mindset as about the show itself. The review is a revealing glimpse into the reception of *1776* by a self-identified right-wing patriot who found respite in *1776* after shows like *Hair* had caused him to be suspicious of the entertainment industry:

It has become *the* play to see, and despite the fact that it is without nudity, gutter language, rock-and-roll bombast, or praise of a future world of collectivist regimentation, it is enjoying a huge patronage. . . All this is somewhat surprising considering that our theatre, radio, and television are so heavily infiltrated by crypto-Communists, homosexuals, and fellow-travelers whose favorite outdoor sport is lending support to subversive movements. After all the ballyhoo, the lonely American patriot approaches even such a play as this with doubts and premonitions, remembering that through the years the gaudiest encomiums have been liberally bestowed upon some mightily scruffy bush-league productions which, peddling the line of renaissance bolsheviki, also had long and financially

rewarding runs. These not unwarranted doubts are dispelled with the first curtain [of 1776].¹⁰⁸

Later in the review, Schuyler praises “Momma, Look Sharp” for “bringing the pathos of death on the battlefield.” He identified the song not as an anti-war protest, but as a salute to the heroic sacrifice made by soldiers: “It took brave and resolute men to stand up to the formidable enemy, Britannia--which then ruled the waves and, they knew, would always waive the rules.”¹⁰⁹

Being of the essentialist school of thought that “believed that the American Revolution had been fulfilled,” as Peter Stone said, as opposed to that which “was determined to continue their struggle to fulfill it now,”¹¹⁰ Schuyler also drew parallels between the Revolutionary War and the ongoing objectives of the Cold War, but from a much different perspective from Stone and Ostrow. He explained, “It was a terrible war, of guerrilla proportions--precisely the sort we are trying to prevent the Communists from bringing to America.”¹¹¹ Other conservatives shared Schuyler’s perspective on “Momma, Look Sharp” as a hymn of respect to the fallen soldier rather than a condemnation of war. In this light, Nixon’s apparent discomfort about the song’s parallels to Vietnam War protests seems defensive and even paranoid compared to other conservatives’ reception of the song.

Many other reviewers thought “Momma, Look Sharp” had obvious associations with the Vietnam War, and most found it emotionally moving. Marilyn Stasio, in a feature comparing the disparate styles but similar leftist intent of *1776* and *Hair* called “Momma, Look Sharp” “as critically pungent as any song in *Hair*.”¹¹² Molly Haskell saw the parallel but did not approve, writing in *The Village Voice* that “Momma, Look Sharp” was an “intrusive lament” and a “sentimental bid for contemporary sympathies.”¹¹³

Geoffrey Stephenson weighed the significance of the song's multivalence in his dissertation, writing, "On the one hand the song is an antiwar ballad, yet on the other, its singer is a veritable poster boy for patriotic self-sacrifice. Is the song a critical comment on the Nixon administration's policy towards the war in Viet Nam? Most assuredly. Yet at the same time, it reminds the audience that the young men fighting that war, whether it was justified or not, were the innocent victims of the machinations of a government the audience saw represented as untrustworthy in 'Cool, Cool, Considerate Men.'"¹⁴ These conflicting interpretations as to whether "Momma, Look Sharp" condemned or celebrated American efforts in Vietnam show how *1776* reflected what people wanted to see by drawing a connection so subtle as to be deniable between America's most heated issue of the time, the Vietnam War, and the war that had by that point become its least controversial and most universally admired.

Advertising *1776*

The performance for President Nixon at the White House may not have altered the show's subsequent reception, for it still garnered praise from both the left and the right, but it did mark a shift in the company's advertising strategies, which moved from an all-inclusive patriotism to a more outspoken left-leaning stance. Before the White House performance, Stuart Ostrow encouraged *1776*'s bipartisan reach through the creative advertising campaigns he oversaw. To promote *1776*, Ostrow approved many conventional newspaper ads, usually featuring the logo, drawn by Fay Gage, of an eaglet hatching out of a Union Jack egg holding an American flag in its beak (as seen in Figure 3), along with short quotes from critics emphasizing the show's quality, popularity, and patriotism. Ostrow also wanted to show people how relevant the musical was to their own time. He and his publicity team drew parallels between the distant

past and the trends and issues of the present day with advertisements such as a *New York Times* ad (Figure 3) featuring astronaut Neil Armstrong juxtaposed beside the show's hatching eaglet logo. The bird and Armstrong seem to be making the same resolute expression, and the caption, "1776-1976. The Eagle has landed. Welcome home," completes the connection.¹¹⁵ At first, these ads displayed no particular political views, and would have appealed to the general public.

<FIG. 3>



Figure 3. "The Eagle Has Landed," *The New York Times*, July 24, 1969

Following the White House performance, however, Ostrow's advertising strategy changed. He explained, "After President Richard M. Nixon invited us to perform at the White House, the nation's right wing conservatives co-opted the musical's revolutionary character."¹¹⁶ To keep potential ticket-buyers from thinking *1776* was a mouthpiece for the Nixon administration, Ostrow publicly asserted that the cast and crew were against the war. In 1970, he

volunteered to serve on the Citizen's Committee to End the War in Vietnam, a coalition of activists and business leaders committed to rallying support for George McGovern and Mark Hatfield's Congressional Amendment to End the War.¹¹⁷ The Citizen's Committee's job, in part, was to place ads in local newspapers around the nation urging Americans to contact their Congressmen about voting in favor of the Amendment. Ostrow decided to make a bold show of support for the cause. He explained, "In an effort to declare our independence from the White House, I took out a full-page ad in the *New York Times* supporting the 'McGovern Amendment' to end the Vietnam War, causing one of my investors to threaten to sue, then back off when our box office suddenly increased."¹¹⁸ The ad (Figure 4) allowed Ostrow to support a cause to which he, Stone, Edwards, and other cast and crewmembers were apparently unanimously committed. The ad assured radicals and liberals distrustful of flag-waving patriotism during the Vietnam era that *1776* was not conservative or jingoistic.

<FIG. 4>

The producer, the authors, the director
and the original cast shown below of the
American Musical **1776** urge you to support

THE AMENDMENT TO END THE WAR*



* In the Constitution, the Founding Fathers determined that no one
has in the United States should have the sole right to make war.
In the Committee they did not have a balance of power. Congress alone
could declare war and subject a nation's armed forces. The President,
as Commander-in-Chief, was empowered to facilitate the deployment
of the armed forces.

THE AMENDMENT TO END THE WAR gives the
American people a new opportunity to make their Constitution work as
the Founding Fathers intended.

It would restore the contract between President and Congress and
bring the United States to an end. Senator George McGovern has
declared that the Amendment would be "an act of law, which, if
enacted, will give us and hold us back in a new direction."

We ask you to join us in this effort to restore the principles of the Constitution and, at the same time, to bring the war
in Indochina, in which we have been mired for years, to a safe and early end.

Explain THE AMENDMENT TO END THE WAR to your friends, neighbors, business associates, your fellow employ-
ees and your fellow students. Ask them to join in speaking out.

Congress, as the people's representatives, will vote on this Amendment. Write, wire, call or visit your Senators and Con-
gressmen. Let Congress know where you stand!

THE AMENDMENT TO END THE WAR, New York, N.Y.



THE AMENDMENT TO END THE WAR provides for:

1. The final withdrawal of American forces from Cambodia 30 days after adoption.
2. The final withdrawal of American forces from Laos by December 31st, 1970.
3. No further funds for military operations in Viet Nam after December 31st, 1970, except for the safe and secure withdrawal of American forces and for Viet Namese endangered by the withdrawal, the exchange of prisoners and non-military aid to Viet Nam. The withdrawal would be completed by June 30th, 1971, unless the President and the Congress agree to an extension.

Figure 4. 1776 Advertisement in *The New York Times*, June 22, 1970

In response to the ad, Senator McGovern wrote to Ostrow that he was “extremely pleased” and that “the fact that a single theatrical production has taken the unprecedented action of advertising its position in connection with the Amendment to End the War is particularly moving. . . You have helped significantly in the effort to speed the end of the War.”¹¹⁹ Ultimately, the

Amendment failed in the Senate vote 55-39, and U.S. involvement in Vietnam continued for five more years.

After the White House performance, Ostrow also slated a series of radio ads designed to play up the rebellious, revolutionary character of the show, aiming to attract young audiences, especially New Left hippies and yippies.¹²⁰ The five ads in this series affirmed that the show was aligned with left-wing politics. One included about 45 seconds of the song “Momma, Look Sharp,” followed by the words, “A young soldier lamenting the agony of war in 1776, the Broadway hit about revolution with a cast that includes the greatest anti-establishment rebel heroes of all time.”¹²¹ Another commercial drew the same parallel to the Kent State shootings that Stone had written about in the *New York Times*. In this radio spot, the announcer spoke over the throbbing drums of “Momma, Look Sharp,” “A massacre in Boston in 1770 leads to a revolution in 1776. An occurrence at Kent State University in 1970--What will it lead to?”¹²² This ad would have gotten the attention of those who were appalled by the shooting at Kent State by affirming to them that their outrage could galvanize another revolution if properly channeled. The use of the equivocal word “occurrence,” however, tempers the ad and rings of compromise. In another ad, the announcer read, “Rebellion is always legal in the first person-- such as “our” rebellion. It is only in the third person--“their” rebellion--that it is illegal. Sound like a young protestor bemoaning the hypocrisy of today’s establishment? Guess again. Those are the words of Benjamin Franklin, supporting a new and daring document. The Declaration of Independence. People listened to Ben and a free country was born. I hope another Benjamin Franklin comes along... to keep it free.”¹²³

Yet another followed the trend of comparing a founding father to a contemporary activist: “This is a revolution! We’re going to have to offend somebody! John Adams said that way back

in 1776. He felt the same about unfair laws and suppression of dissent as I do. I don't mind offending someone for what I believe in, and it's about time others felt the same."¹²⁴ Each of these ads concluded with the urgent words, "Time is running out. *1776*. . . It's Happening Now." These radio commercials, hinting that *1776* is a "happening" and emphasizing the radical nature of the American Revolution, the nobility of dissent, and the imperative of rebellion in the face of unfair laws, spoke to New Left interests, urging them to embrace and learn about "the greatest anti-establishment rebel heroes of all time" by buying tickets to *1776* and bringing their friends. Even though some of *1776*'s advertising after the White House performance emphasized radical politics, Ostrow made sure to continue the more conventional ads along with those targeting liberals and radicals. Thus, the ads appear to have avoided alienating conservative crowds, the people Nixon called the "silent majority." Everyone was welcome at *1776*.

Conclusion: "The birth of our nation in story and song"

The American Revolutionary War has long been one of the most powerful unifying subjects in U.S. culture. During the Nixon era in particular, *1776* created a point of concord in a drastically divided society. It did not repel potential audience members with glaring bias or heavy-handed messages in either partisan direction. Regardless of an audience member's political leanings, *1776* could reflect what one believed, or wanted to believe, about America's past and present. The musical managed both to reaffirm grand narratives of national identity and to call the legacy--and finality--of the American Revolution into question. Whether people saw it as being only about the Revolutionary era or as commentary on contemporary issues, they could feel that it portrayed what made them the proudest in American culture. If they thought the Revolution was over, they saw a patriotic confirmation of traditional values. If they thought it

was still being fought in their own time, it offered encouragement, legitimacy, and rebellious role models. In this way, Edwards, Stone, and Ostrow sought to awaken national pride and political engagement without proselytizing or estranging half of their potential audience. Stone argued this with conviction. For *1776*'s Broadway revival in 1997, he reflected on the show and the reason for its unexpected appeal:

When *1776* opened on Broadway in 1969, it was a different America. . . Americans found themselves separated by generation, race, and political philosophy. The simple word "patriotism" had its meaning split in two. Those who supported the war and the government wore it proudly. Those in rebellion used it disparagingly. Then along came a theatre piece that dealt with the birth of our nation in story and song... That a musical celebrating the birth of our nation should have succeeded during those tumultuous times was surprising to some; what could be more "patriotic" than the telling of our national legend? The simple answer is that, so long as the authors refrained from jingoistic flag-waving and nationalistic cant, the story and its characters could succeed in reinforcing everyone's feelings that, no matter what they felt might be right or wrong with the country at that moment, the reaffirmation of our heritage was indeed inspirational, something to return to in order to regain one's bearings.¹²⁵

Whether the bearings one regained were left wing, right wing, or somewhere in between, *1776* inspired a sense of unity and reignited the optimistic drive to continue forming a more perfect union.

1776 was one of the most honored and culturally significant representations of America's founding story in the second half of the twentieth century, having only been surpassed by Lin-

Manuel Miranda's Broadway production *Hamilton* in 2015. The parallels between *1776* and *Hamilton* are both striking and instructive. Like *1776*, *Hamilton* has been both successful with critics and immensely popular, attracting people of all ages to the theater, including many who hadn't previously been Broadway fans. Like *1776*, *Hamilton* became a favorite of the President and First Lady of the United States, with Barack and Michelle Obama seeing it in the theater several times and hosting the cast for a performance of songs at the White House on March 14, 2016.¹²⁶ Like *1776*, *Hamilton* has attracted celebrities and politicians from across the political spectrum, including Democratic 2016 presidential primary rivals Hillary Rodham Clinton and Bernie Sanders and conservatives such as Dick Cheney, Rupert Murdoch, and Vice-President-Elect Mike Pence.¹²⁷ As Obama joked in his introduction to *Hamilton*'s White House performance, "*Hamilton* I'm pretty sure is the only thing that Dick Cheney and I agree on... But this show brings unlikely folks together."¹²⁸ A full accounting of the parallels between these two remarkable musicals and the cultural work they do must wait for another time, but both seem to have struck the perfect chord to bridge the chasms in their politically divided eras. In both productions, America's founding story becomes the right of all citizens, accommodating all ideologies projected onto it.

1776 presents a version of history that allows people to see what they want to see. It does not attempt to load every moment with contemporary meaning. Instead, it looks back at the past through the nostalgic eyes of the present. The musical reassures a troubled era that the United States was forged from the ideals of visionary though imperfect leaders who were willing to risk everything and overcome their differences to serve a higher purpose. Regardless of our political leanings, *1776* can reflect what we believe, or want to believe, about America's past and present.

NOTES

¹ On radical and liberal politics in the 1960s and the political and social orientation these terms implied, see especially Sidney M. Milkis and Jerome M. Mileur, eds., *The Great Society and the High Tide Of Liberalism* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2005); Michael W. Flamm and David Steigerwald, *Debating The 1960s: Liberal, Conservative, and Radical Perspectives* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008); Douglas Charles Rossinow, *Visions of Progress: The Left-Liberal Tradition in America* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in The 1960s*, 2nd ed. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

² For example, see David Reifman, “Letter from a 7th Grader to Sherman Edwards and Peter Stone,” Letter, (June 11, 1972), Box 29, Stuart Ostrow Papers.

³ Stuart Ostrow, *Present at the Creation, Leaping in the Dark and Going Against the Grain: 1776, Pippin, M. Butterfly, La Bête, & Other Broadway Adventures* (New York: Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, 2006), 55–56; Ymelda Dixon, “Old Patriots Return to Scene,” *The Evening Star Woman’s World*, February 23, 1970, sec. B.

⁴ George S. Schuyler, “Spirit of ’76,” *American Opinion Magazine*, November 1969, Box 49, Stuart Ostrow Papers; James D. Hittle, “Letter from the Assistant Secretary of the Navy Praising 1776” November 24, 1969, Box 29, Stuart Ostrow Papers.

⁵ Michael G. Kammen, *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination*, 1st ed (New York: Knopf, 1978), 15.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Andrew M. Schocket, *Fighting over the Founders: How We Remember the American Revolution* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² On the use of the term “founding fathers” as a marker of an essentialist approach, see *Ibid.*, 28–30.

¹³ Kammen, *A Season of Youth*; Michael G. Kammen, *A Machine That Would Go of Itself: The Constitution in American Culture*, 1st ed (New York: Knopf, 1986).

¹⁴ Kammen, *A Season of Youth*, 13.

¹⁵ Schocket, *Fighting over the Founders: How We Remember the American Revolution*, chap. 1.

¹⁶ As Megan Woller has shown, film adaptations of Broadway musicals tend to be more socially conservative, in part because films have to reach a much larger (and likely more moderate) audience than Broadway productions. Megan Bolander Woller, “‘Happ’ly-Ever-Aftering’: Changing Social and Industry Conventions in Hollywood Musical Adaptations, 1960-75” Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 2014, 19, 97, 138.

¹⁷ Sherman Edwards and Sid Wayne, *See You in September* (Miami, FL: Jack Gold Music Co., 1959); Sherman Edwards and Ben Raleigh, *Wonderful, Wonderful* (New York: E.B. Marks Music Corp., 1956).

¹⁸ “History Teacher (Edwards Bio)” (UPI Roto Service, July 19, 1969), Box 1, Biographical File, Sherman Edwards Papers, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming.

¹⁹ Robert B. Thompson, “1776 and All That,” *Newark News*, September 14, 1969, sec. 5; “A New Star Rises from Our County,” *Morris County Daily Record*, March 19, 1969, sec. Editorial Page; Lewis Funke, “‘1776’ Reaps Fruit of Long Research,” *New York Times*, March 18, 1969.

²⁰ Marion Simon, “Putting ‘1776’ On Stage: How Mr. Edwards’ Affection Became a Broadway Smash,” *The National Observer*, July 28, 1969.

²¹ Diana Bertolini, “Guide to the Peter Stone Papers” (The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Billy Rose Theatre Division, March 2011), ii–iii; Robert Simonson, “Peter Stone Steps Down as Dramatists Guild President; Weidman Elected,” *Playbill*, March 24, 1999, <http://www.playbill.com/article/peter-stone-steps-down-as-dramatists-guild-president-weidman-elected-com-80844>.

²² On the tension between the historically oriented book and lyrics and the anachronistic musical styles, see Elissa Harbert, “Remembering the Revolution: Music in Stage and Screen Representations of Early America during the Bicentennial Years,” Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 2013, chap. 2.

²³ “1776: Awards,” *The Internet Broadway Database* (The Broadway League, n.d.), <https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/1776-2859/#awards>.

²⁴ Janetta Daugherty, “American Legion Americanism Award to Stuart Ostrow and Sherman Edwards,” March 19, 1969, Box 1, Stuart Ostrow Papers, The New York Public

Library Billy Rose Theatre Division; Kenneth D. Wells, “Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge National Award,” April 21, 1970, Box 1, Stuart Ostrow Papers.

²⁵ Lloyd, “Daughters of the American Revolution Bloomington Chapter Request”; Seimes, “Letter from the President of the Daughters of the American Revolution.”

²⁶ Maureen Gibbons, “Sherman Edwards: History with Music,” *Plainfield Courier-News*, December 29, 1973, sec. D, 2, Plainfield Public Library, NJ. I am grateful to Sarah Hull of the Plainfield Public Library for unearthing this rare interview.

²⁷ Lewis Funke, “‘1776’ Reaps Fruit of Long Research,” *New York Times*, March 18, 1969, ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851–2007) edition.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Gibbons, “Sherman Edwards: History with Music,” 3.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ The Peter Stone Papers at the New York Public Library include many personal letters from Edward Kennedy and Hillary and Bill Clinton. The collection also includes Stone’s correspondence with other Democrats including President Jimmy Carter, Senator Barbara Boxer, Vice President Al Gore, and others. Stone attended several receptions and parties hosted by President George H.W. Bush and Barbara Bush, but the archive contains no further correspondence with other Republican politicians.

³⁴ Peter Stone, “What Do You Know About ‘1776’?,” *San Diego Union*, September 13, 1970, sec. E, Peter Stone Papers.

³⁵ Peter Stone, “Afraid of Revolution?,” *The New York Times*, October 3, 1970, Peter Stone Papers. For further historical comparison between the Boston Massacre and the shooting at Kent State, see Ronald L. Hatzenbuehler, “Assessing the Meaning of Massacre: Boston (1770) and Kent State (1970),” *Peace & Change* 21, no. 2 (April 1996): 208–20.

³⁶ Stone, “Afraid of Revolution?”

³⁷ John Crosby, “Musical ‘1776’ Is 1970’s Valentine to the Past,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 12, 1970, Peter Stone Papers.

³⁸ Nancy Vogelsson, “1776 Is New Despite Subject,” *Camden Courier-Post*, August 8, 1971, Peter Stone Papers.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Crosby, “Musical ‘1776’ Is 1970’s Valentine to the Past.”

⁴¹ Eric F. Goldman, “Topics: The Real Revolution--Or Doodle Dandy?,” *The New York Times*, September 27, 1969.

⁴² Ostrow, *Present at the Creation*, 54–55.

⁴³ William Glover, “Broadway’s Current Hit Arrives Quietly,” *The Springfield Sunday Republican*, May 11, 1969. Unfortunately, the reporter failed to identify the aide with whom he spoke.

⁴⁴ Elizabeth Wollman, *The Theater Will Rock: A History of the Rock Musical, from Hair to Hedwig* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 59.

⁴⁵ Stuart Ostrow, “Letter Regarding the San Francisco Cast of ‘Hair’” (Archive, May 21, 1970), Box 29, Stuart Ostrow Papers. Apparently, *Hair* didn’t play that night because it was shuttered by the police. Crosby, “Musical ‘1776’ Is 1970’s Valentine to the Past.”

⁴⁶ John W. Warner, “Letter from the Under Secretary of the Navy Regarding 1776 as a USO Show in Vietnam” May 9, 1969, Box 29, Stuart Ostrow Papers.

⁴⁷ Stuart Ostrow, “Letter from Ostrow to the Under Secretary of the Navy Regarding 1776 as a USO Show in Vietnam” May 20, 1969, Box 29, Stuart Ostrow Papers.

⁴⁸ Charlotte Long, “USO Historical Records,” email to the author, July 24, 2015.

⁴⁹ Hittle, “Letter from the Assistant Secretary of the Navy Praising 1776.”

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Goldman, “Topics: The Real Revolution--Or Doodle Dandy?”

⁵² Simon Hall, *American Patriotism, American Protest: Social Movements Since the Sixties* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 15.

⁵³ Ibid., 25.

⁵⁴ On Nixon’s appeal to the “vocal minority” and “silent majority,” see Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *The Great Silent Majority: Nixon’s 1969 Speech on Vietnamization* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2014).

⁵⁵ Jon DeCles, “‘1776’-- All Should See It,” *Berkeley Daily Gazette*, April 25, 1970.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ “Photographs of Lady Bird Johnson with the Cast of 1776” August 12, 1969, Box 49, Stuart Ostrow Papers.

⁵⁸ The politicians pictured were Governor Robert Scott of North Carolina, Governor Raymond Shafer of Pennsylvania, Governor Nelson Rockefeller of New York, Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, Governor Richard Hughes of New Jersey, and Governor Russell Peterson of Delaware. “Spirit of ’76,” *Daily News*, September 6, 1969, Box 49, Stuart Ostrow Papers.

⁵⁹ Fred Schwengel, "Notable & Quotable," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 28, 1970, Box 49, Stuart Ostrow Papers.

⁶⁰ The original lyric is "You see we piddle, twiddle, and resolve, not one damn thing do we solve." Sherman Edwards, *Vocal Selections from "1776,"* Bicentennial ed. (New York: Music 28 Inc., G. Schirmer, 1976), 7.

⁶¹ Dudley Saunders, "Revolution Set to Music: 1776 Is About Real People and Patriotism," *The Louisville Times*, October 9, 1970, Box 91, Peter Stone Papers.

⁶² David Locker, "Heritage Americana Award of Fort Worth, Texas," March 23, 1969, Box 29, Stuart Ostrow Papers.

⁶³ Kevin H. White, "City of Boston Declares Spirit of '1776' Day," Award, (July 12, 1971), Box 16, Stuart Ostrow Papers; Abe Rosen, "Philadelphia Freedom Week Honors 1776," June 11, 1969, Box 1, Stuart Ostrow Papers.

⁶⁴ James Norick, "City of Oklahoma City Proclamation of 'Spirit of 1776' Week," November 3, 1970, Box 16, Stuart Ostrow Papers; James Norick, "Honorary Mayor of Oklahoma City Presented to Stuart Ostrow," Award, (November 2, 1970), Box 16, Stuart Ostrow Papers; George Nigh, "Honorary Lt. Governor of Oklahoma Presented to Stuart Ostrow," October 15, 1970, Box 16, Stuart Ostrow Papers.

⁶⁵ Thomas D'Alesandro, "City of Baltimore Honorary Citizenship," May 4, 1971, Box 16, Stuart Ostrow Papers.

⁶⁶ Daugherty, "American Legion Americanism Award to Stuart Ostrow and Sherman Edwards."

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Wells, “Freedoms Foundation at Valley Forge National Award.”

⁶⁹ Betty Newkirk Seimes, “Letter from the President of the Daughters of the American Revolution,” Letter, (March 9, 1970), Box 2, Sherman Edwards Papers; Mrs. Robert Lloyd, “Daughters of the American Revolution Bloomington Chapter Request,” August 17, 1973, Box 89, Peter Stone Papers, The New York Public Library Billy Rose Theatre Division.

⁷⁰ Pennsylvania Society of the Sons of the Revolution Americanism Committee, “Commendation from the Pennsylvania Society of Sons of the Revolution” 1971, Box 29, Stuart Ostrow Papers.

⁷¹ Reviewers noted that it was the first Broadway musical to play in its entirety at the White House, although Lyndon Johnson had hosted a full performance of the off-Broadway play “You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown” (1967).

⁷² Columnist Ymelda Dixon, a member of the Women’s National Democrat Club and the daughter of Dennis Chavez, a long-serving Democratic legislator, gave a lively report from the event. She listed among the guests Vice President Spiro Agnew, Nixon’s cabinet members, Vince Lombardi and his wife, ARBA Director Arthur E. Burgess, the Democratic Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, Democratic Senator Clinton Anderson, Republican Governor of Virginia A. Linwood Holton, and many others. Ymelda Dixon, “Old Patriots Return to Scene,” *The Evening Star Woman’s World*, February 23, 1970, sec. B.

⁷³ Nan Robertson, “White House Is Host to ‘1776,’ Its First Full-Length Broadway Show,” *New York Times*, February 23, 1970, ProQuest Historical Newspapers The New York Times (1851-2007) edition.

⁷⁴ Dixon, “Old Patriots Return to Scene.”

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Stuart Ostrow, *Present at the Creation, Leaping in the Dark and Going Against the Grain: 1776, Pippin, M. Butterfly, La Bête, & Other Broadway Adventures* (New York: Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, 2006), 54–55.

⁷⁷ Marie Smith, “Spirit of Cast of ‘1776’ Was All or Nothing,” *Miami Herald*, February 23, 1970. Although Ostrow later acted as though the attempted censorship had been a secret, several journalists reported on Nixon’s request before the performance.

⁷⁸ Dixon, “Old Patriots Return to Scene.”

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front* (London: Verso, 1997), 307.

⁸¹ Dixon, “Old Patriots Return to Scene.”

⁸² Peter H. Hunt, *1776* (Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment, 2002), DVD Commentary, 1:39:00. On Hollywood blacklisting, see Reynold Humphries, *Hollywood’s Blacklists: A Political and Cultural History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).

⁸³ “Nixons Host ‘1776,’ Antiwar Scenes Stay In,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, February 23, 1970.

⁸⁴ Scott Jarvis, “Letter from Scott Jarvis to Stuart Ostrow Regarding ‘Momma, Look Sharp,’” April 23, 1969, Box 1, Folder 2, Stuart Ostrow Papers. For the film version, Jack L. Warner replaced Scott Jarvis with Stephen Nathan, a young folk singer who had earned acclaim in 1971 for creating the role of Jesus in *Godspell*.

⁸⁵ Bob Thomas, *Clown Prince of Hollywood: The Antic Life and Times of Jack L. Warner* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1990).

⁸⁶ Charles Champlin, “Warner and the Spirit of ‘1776,’” *Los Angeles Times*, December 15, 1972, sec. OC.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Hunt, *1776*, DVD Commentary, 1:36:10.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:41:00. This is particularly poignant because Stone died only months after the DVD with the restored scene was released.

⁹⁰ Costume designer Patricia Zipprodt created this distinction visually, for which she won a Drama Desk Award and praise from nearly every reviewer.

⁹¹ Leonard G Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1980), 9.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 16. See also Matthew Head, “‘Like Beauty Spots on the Face of Man’: Gender in Eighteenth-Century North-German Discourse on Genre,” *The Journal of Musicology* 13, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 143–67.

⁹³ There are several exceptions to this pattern, however, most notably in “But, Mister Adams” and “He Plays the Violin,” which combine both the European signifiers and the American. The inconsistencies suggest that Edwards may not have consciously planned this as a dichotomy.

⁹⁴ The earliest known American parody version of this British song didn’t appear until the 1790s, so its use here is anachronistic, but its signification is potent.

⁹⁵ Geoffrey William Stephenson, “Singing History: The Musical Construction of Patriotic Identity in *1776* and *Assassins*” (PhD diss, Bowling Green State University, 2003), 127.

⁹⁶ Choreographer Onna White created a menacing minuet dance for the all-male ensemble, which even included, albeit briefly, the conservatives marching together in a disconcerting goose step and brandishing their canes like rifles, immediately associating them with World War II fascism.

⁹⁷ Sherman Edwards, “Cool, Cool, Considerate Men Piano-Conductor Manuscript” 1969, Box 5, Sherman Edwards Papers.

⁹⁸ Jonathan Aitken, *Nixon: A Life, The Presidents* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery History, 1993), 22.

⁹⁹ Edwards, *Vocal Selections from “1776,”* 52.

¹⁰⁰ “National Tour Reviews” n.d., Box 91, folder 6, Peter Stone Papers. This folder contains over 60 newspaper reviews of which only one, from Minneapolis, is predominantly negative.

¹⁰¹ Emmett Weaver, “1776 Shakes Dust Off U.S. History,” *Birmingham Post-Herald*, February 10, 1971, Box 91, folder 6, Peter Stone Papers.

¹⁰² D. Michael Shafer, “The Vietnam-Era Draft: Who Went, Who Didn’t, and Why It Matters,” in *The Legacy: The Vietnam War in the American Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990), 67–68.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁰⁴ Hunt, *1776*, Commentary, 1:44:00.

¹⁰⁵ Benjamin Filene, *Romancing the Folk: Public Memory & American Roots Music*, Cultural Studies of the United States (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

¹⁰⁶ Yogita Goyal, “Black Nationalist Hokum: George Schuyler’s Transnational Critique,” *African American Review* 47, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 21.

¹⁰⁷ Oscar Renal Williams, *George S. Schuyler: Portrait of a Black Conservative* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), xii.

¹⁰⁸ George S. Schuyler, “Spirit of ’76,” *American Opinion Magazine*, November 1969, 23, Box 49, Stuart Ostrow Papers. Leanne Wood has discussed how similar rhetoric from cultural conservatives surrounded the play and film version of *The Music Man* in Leanne Wood, “‘Persuasive Americanism’?: The Reactionary Promotion and Reception of Warner Bros.’ *The Music Man* (1962),” *American Music* 31, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 476.

¹⁰⁹ Schuyler, “Spirit of ’76,” 27.

¹¹⁰ Peter Stone, “What Do You Know About ‘1776’?,” *San Diego Union*, September 13, 1970, sec. E, Peter Stone Papers.

¹¹¹ Schuyler, “Spirit of ’76,” 27.

¹¹² Marilyn Stasio, “Hair, 1776, Revolution! On the Broadway Stage,” *Cue*, May 3, 1969.

¹¹³ Molly Haskell, “13 Stars,” *The Village Voice*, April 3, 1969.

¹¹⁴ Stephenson, “Singing History,” 152.

¹¹⁵ “The Eagle Has Landed,” *The New York Times*, July 24, 1969, sec. L.

¹¹⁶ Ostrow, *Present at the Creation*, 54.

¹¹⁷ “National Citizen’s Committee for the Amendment to End the War” July 28, 1970, Box 1, Folder 3, Stuart Ostrow Papers.

¹¹⁸ Ostrow, *Present at the Creation*, 55.

¹¹⁹ McGovern quoted in *Ibid.*, 56.

¹²⁰ Stuart Ostrow, “‘1776’ Radio Ad Transcripts by the Blaine Thompson Company”
September 9, 1970, Box 29, Stuart Ostrow Papers.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Peter Stone, “1776 Broadway Revival Cast Album Liner Notes” (New York City,
1997), Box 92, Peter Stone Papers.

¹²⁶ Amanda Stone, “#Bam4Ham: Hamilton at the White House,” *WhiteHouse.Gov*,
March 14, 2016, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2016/03/14/bam4ham-hamilton-white-house>.

¹²⁷ Jennifer Schuessler, “‘Hamilton’ Puts Politics Onstage and Politicians in Attendance,”
The New York Times, March 27, 2015, sec. Theater,
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/28/theater/hamilton-puts-politics-onstage-and-politicians-in-attendance.html?_r=0 THEATER; Elizabeth Titrington Craft, “Op-Ed: Politics Invades the
Teater? It’s Always Been There,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, December 30, 2016,
<http://www.sltrib.com/opinion/4653350-155/op-ed-politics-invades-the-theater-its>.

¹²⁸ Ezra Klein, “Read Obama’s Moving Introduction to the Hamilton White House
Performance,” *Vox.com*, March 14, 2016, <http://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/3/14/11225724/obama-hamilton>.