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Virginians Will Dance or Die!: The Importance of Music in Pre-Revolutionary Williamsburg

Joshua R Lehuray

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Music was everywhere in pre-Revolutionary Williamsburg, Virginia. In 1771, plantation owner Landon Carter noted in his diary that he could hear instruments through the windows of every house in town. In taverns and private homes, at formal performances and dances and casually around the campfire, music filled the daily lives of the people of Williamsburg.
While the average citizen enjoyed music during public events, the city's elite, emulating their British counterparts, spent lavishly on instruments, sheet music and private lessons and held private concerts and dances. Williamsburg's theater, the first of its kind in America, provided a venue for all Virginians and brought numerous musical acts to the stage. Drawing on contemporary newspaper accounts, this book is the first to explore how some 18th-century Williamsburg citizens experienced the growing musical world around them.

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