The Kingscote Chitarrone and Stanford White's Musical Legacy

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Musical Material Culture at the Newport Mansions

Gilded Age Newport is one of the greatest American examples of the confluence of wealth, society, architecture, and arts. Like any place in Western history where these elements intersect, music stands as an inescapable component of America's cultural identity. As a Research Fellow with The Preservation Society of Newport County, my goal was to determine how and where musical instruments fit into the material culture and history of the American Gilded Age in Newport, Rhode Island.

Analyzing the musical instruments that appear in the Preservation Society's houses and collections led to the rediscovery of one remarkable instrument whose path led from Renaissance craftsmen in Europe to an American Gilded Age architect: a 16th century chitarrone. An Italian bass lute with an extended neck and extra strings, this chitarrone from the collections of the Gothic Revival cottage, Kingscote, became the cornerstone of my inquiry into the wider connections between musical material culture in the Gilded Age in Newport and further afield. Among those connections, one of the most tantalizing is to Stanford White, the great American Beaux-Arts architect, and his previously unappreciated place in the confluence of musical instruments, art, and interior design.

The collections at the Preservation Society's properties contain a staggering range of examples of musical material culture. Visitors can see over 500 individual representations of musical instruments in decorative finishes, furnishings, objects and textiles, ranging from hand-held miniatures of guitars to towering architectural embellishments. They can be found at every one of the properties. However, the vast majority of these representations are merely that, *depictions*: images of musical instruments incorporated into other works such as statues, sconces, drapery, and cabinetry. The number of actual musical instruments, objects created to elicit the sounds of music, pales in comparison.

Figure 1. Various manifestations of musical instrument imagery among the collections of The Preservation Society of Newport County. L to R: The ballroom piano at Rosecliff, statuary from The Elms, and a chandelier at Marble House. Images by author.

In fact, most of the houses contain only one or two true musical instruments, typically a piano, with few exceptions. A regimental drum can be found in Chepstow, serving as an end table, and a reed organ is among the collections of Chateau-sur-Mer, but these are rarities within the houses. However, one particular house emerges as uniquely rich in its holdings of historic musical instruments beyond the piano variety. Kingscote, the 1839 Gothic Revival cottage, contains five musical instruments, including the aforementioned chitarrone that links Kingscote to the complex story of Stanford White's musical legacy.

The Musical Instruments of Kingscote

Originally built in 1839 by architect Richard Upjohn for Southerner George Noble, Kingscote was acquired by a China trade merchant, William Henry King, in 1864. In 1880, the King family commissioned the firm of McKim, Mead & White to enlarge and remodel portions of the home. The house remained in the King family until 1972 when it was bequeathed to The Preservation Society of Newport County.

Figure 2. Exterior view of Kingscote. Image courtesy of The Preservation Society of Newport County Archives.

Kingscote's five musical instruments are as eclectic as its curio-filled Victorian interiors. There are three stringed instruments including a violin, a mandolino, and the chitarrone, which are all fine examples from prominent classical European makers. Also present are two early Chinese temple bells, brought back to the United States during the family's Asian trading excursions. At one point there was a piano in Kingscote, as could be found in most affluent homes of the time, but it was sold at an auction in 1900 along with other furnishings.[1]

The violin, purchased for King's daughter Maud Gwendolen King while the family was in Paris in 1887 or 1888, is now attributed to the workshop of Nicolas Chappuy, from the last quarter of the eighteenth century. It is a violin of good quality, most notable for its exaggerated acid-staining around the edges, a technique used by this particular workshop to create the illusion of age and harken back to more desirable instruments of the seventeenth century.

Figure 3. The Chappuy violin of Kingscote. Image by author.

[1] There is no archival material at the PSNC that illuminates the presence of a piano. Its existence is only known by way of a newspaper advertisement from the *Newport Daily News*, announcing the auction of some of the contents of Kingscote, among them a piano of unidentified type and origin. "Auction Sales," *Newport Daily News*, March 28, 1900.

The mandolino is from the same period as the violin—dated by its label to 1792—but hails from the Italian workshop of Milanese luthier Giuseppe Presbler. It came to the estate not from the King bloodline, but through the family of artist David Maitland Armstrong, whose son, Edward Maitland Armstrong, married Maud Gwendolen King in 1901. Before its arrival at Kingscote with other Armstrong effects, this mandolino was used by Edward as a costume prop for the infamous Bradley Martin Ball.[2]

Figure 4. Edward Maitland Armstrong in costume with the Presbler mandolino, 1897. Image courtesy of The Preservation Society of Newport County.

[2] The mandolino was not the only "vintage" prop Edward used that night, as his costume can be clearly seen as the same one worn by his father some twenty years earlier in Rome: *David Maitland Armstrong and Helen Neilson Armstrong in 15th-century Style Fancy Dress in Rome*, photograph, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2012. 400.29.

The Kingscote Chitarrone

The final stringed instrument from Kingscote, the titular chitarrone, is certainly the most intriguing of the three. Before this investigation, only two points in its history were known; it was built, in some form, in 1574, and ended up at Kingscote. Today, it presents as a fairly typical instrument of the type. The finely arched bowl, made of 18 staves of darkly stained yew; the delicate soundboard of spruce with a carved inset rosette; and the two-piece ebonized, inlaid neck holding twelve strings in the lower pegbox and eight in the upper, are all rather ordinary in the lute world.

Figure 5. The Kingscote Chitarrone. Composite image by author.

Closer examination of the Kingscote chitarrone revealed that between those two known dates were at least two noted stages of significance within its history, marked by stark evidence of alteration and repair. Deconstructing and investigating these alterations has allowed a fascinating lineage to emerge for this unexpected musical artifact. The Kingscote chitarrone has lived four distinct lives, which add up to a nearly five-hundred-year lifespan of varied utility.

It came into existence in the year 1574, as a short-necked lute of the standard Renaissance variety, or at least a portion of it did. The neck was later extended into the chitarrone form that still holds today.[3] This likely occurred in the seventeenth or early eighteenth century, when chitarrones and archlutes were popular continuo instruments.[4] Sometime later, it was beautified in the mid-nineteenth century, following a particular trend in Milanese marquetry.[5] Finally, it was purchased by American architect Stanford White (date of purchase unknown) and installed by White in Kingscote's dining room in 1881. It has lived out the rest of its years as part of the Kingscote estate and the collections of the Preservation Society.

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[3] Though the exact date is unknown, the concept of the chitarrone seems to have been conceived around 1589 for the court celebrations of the Medici wedding. No known chitarroni predate this demarcation, aside from the example at Kingscote, alluding to its later modification.

Douglas Alton Smith, "On the Origins of the Chitarrone," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 32, no. 3 (Autumn, 1979): 440–443.

[4] Continuo instruments played accompaniment parts that featured a bass line and harmonization, used to support a solo instrument in orchestral and chamber compositions.

[5] Beautification was the process of applying new decorations, often in elaborate styles, to antique musical instruments to increase their aesthetic value.

Antique lutes are a rarity in the United States, but the rarity of this particular lute is unsurpassed in an American home setting. Not only is it the sole lute with this particular decorative scheme found outside of Europe, but it bears the label of one of the most significant lute making dynasties of Western history: the Tieffenbrucker family. The parchment label, delicate, yet legibly preserved on the interior of the bowl, reads in full: *IN PADOVA VVENDELIO VENERE / DE LEONARDO TICFEMBRUCKER / 1574*.[6] This simple yet important label takes us to the starting point of this instrument's revelatory journey, a small town in Bavaria around five hundred years ago.

Figure 6. Detail of paper label. Image courtesy of The Preservation Society of Newport County Archives.

By the 1500s, the lute was one of the most important instruments in Western European art music. The Tieffenbrucker family were part of a generation of luthiers who first established themselves in their namesake town of Tieffenbruck, in the Füssen region of Bavaria, in the early sixteenth century. By the 1550s, Füssen had become known as one of the lute-making centers of Western Europe. By the end of the century, members of the Tieffenbrucker family had migrated from Füssen to establish their workshops in more receptive centers of French and Italian commerce such as Paris, Padua, and Milan. It was in Padua that Vvendelio Venere aka Wendelin Venere Tieffenbrucker the elder, son of Bavarian migrant Leonardo Tieffenbrucker, opened business as a *lautenmacher* around 1570.[7]

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[6] An English interpretation of the label states: In Padua, Vvendelio Venere, son of Leonardo Tieffenbrucker, 1574. Vvendelio Venere was the Latinized name of Wendelin Tiefembrucker (the elder), who worked in Padua from roughly 1570 to 1590. The name Vvendelio Venere was also later used by Wendelin's cousin, Wendelin Eberle, though the labels of Vvendelio the younger abandoned the patronym *de Leonardo Ticfembrucker*.

Royal College of Music, Royal College of Music Museum of Instruments III: European Stringed Instruments (London: Royal College of Music, 2007) 57–59.

[7] Ian Harwood and Giulio Ongaro, "Tieffenbrucker," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, accessed May 20, 2018.

Following its 1570s fabrication, the Kingscote chitarrone's trajectory is decidedly unclear until the nineteenth century. At some point during this period, it was converted from its original short-necked form to the long-necked chitarrone displayed today. This conversion likely took place either while the instrument was still in use, during the heyday of lutes in early-Baroque composition, circa 1600 to 1675, or possibly later when the instrument had metamorphized from a musical tool to a decorative object.

Under ultra-violet (UV) examination, a light was used to view the varying fluorescence of different adhesives, coatings, and materials, which revealed that the chitarrone exhibits at least four distinct sets of repairs. Even a passing glance at these stages shows them to be clearly of differing quality. The workmanship of the neck extension, as well as the UV fluorescence of the natural adhesives and the undisturbed oxidation of the nails used to attach the neck to the interior block hint that the extension and resetting of the neck predates the final aesthetic interventions of the 1800s. How far it predates them, however, is yet to be determined.

Beautification and the Antique Trade

Three hundred years after its genesis, the Kingscote chitarrone underwent another radical transformation. For centuries it had existed ostensibly as an object with the foremost purpose of emanating musical tones. However, this functionality came to a decisive end when it was beautified with the distinctive decoration of ebony and ivory inlay.[8] Beautified lutes were not uncommon during the nineteenth century, and can be seen often in encyclopedic publications of the time such as the *American History and Encyclopedia of Music*,[9] and also among the inventories of educational institutions and artist studios.[10] The beautification of the Kingscote chitarrone draws particular attention, as it can be linked quite directly to the ideas and production of the workshop of a notable contemporary artist, the Milanese *ébéniste* Ferdinando Pogliani.

The Kingscote chitarrone is one of a quartet of known instruments that bear the same decoration. Of the four, it is the only one that made it out of Europe. The others, a chitarrone by Wendelin Tieffenbrucker (W.6-1940), a chitarrone attributed to Pietro Railich (no. 5505), and a lute by Hans Frei (number unknown), can be found respectively in the collections of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, the Grassi Museum für Musikinstrumente der Universität Leipzig, and the Warwickshire County Museum, Warwick, United Kingdom. The decorations are nearly identical, with the same inlay panels being used on the Tieffenbrucker and Frei instruments. The Railich is missing the inlay panel on its fingerboard, but the geometric stringing shows the same placement and execution as the other three examples.

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http:////www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000027940.

[8] The fingerboard, beck, and bridge, areas that would normally indicate wear caused by the hands and strings, show no signs of use. There was very little historical interest in playing these antiquated instruments at the time, and it was more valuable as an aesthetic commodity than a musical tool.

[9] William Lines Hubbard, *American History and Encyclopedia of Music*, Vol. 4, Musical Instruments (New York: Irving Squire, 1908) 158–160.

[10] Albert Stanley, "The Value of a Collection of Musical Instruments in University Instruction*," Papers and proceedings of the Music Teacher's National Association* (New York: Music Teachers' National Association, 1908), 85–95.

Taken as a composite whole, these four instruments present a remarkable example of the style pioneered by Pogliani around 1860 in the wake of the turbulent Italian unification.[11] Looking back to the characteristic aesthetic of the Renaissance, Pogliani and his contemporaries crafted an idealized, unified Italian style which was popular with those looking to refurbish, or reinvent, numerous Italian estates and apartments that were affected by the political turbulence of the day.

Pogliani distinguished himself from the competition by the exceptional quality of his work. Often implementing a strict ebony and ivory palette, he paired elaborate inlay panels with the clean, angular, geometric stringing that framed scrolling floral motifs and mythological grotesques. His work won praise for its style and execution at numerous international competitions in the late 1800s.[12]

Figure 7. Cabinet from the workshop of Ferdinando Pogliani.[13]

[11] The Italian Unification was the course of events from roughly 1820 to 1871, where the various states of the Italian peninsula were integrated into a united Kingdom of Italy. See Martin Collier, *The Italian Unification 1820–1871* (Italy: Heinemann, 2003).
[12] Ernesto Trevisani, *Revista Industriale e Commerciale di Milano e Provincia* (Milan: Stabilimento Tipografica A. Cesana: 1894), 414; Elissabetta Ferrari, et al., *Arredi dell'Ottocento: il mobile Borghese in Italia* (Modena: Artioli Editore, 2002), 98–105.
[13] https://www.tarashaw.com/shop-products/antiques/case-goods/armoire/, accessed September 3, 2025.

This revival style can be clearly seen on the necks of the four beautified lutes. It is tempting at first glance to assume that the lutes were in fact beautified by the reputable Pogliani workshop, but further evaluation reveals this to be improbable. Compared to the cabinetry of Pogliani, the beautified lutes present a subtle yet notably less refined form of execution and decoration. Interestingly, the work also seems devoid of the hallmarks that would indicate it came from the hands of a highly experienced contemporary luthier. The most likely explanation, though still in need of further research, is that these four lutes were beautified after Pogliani's work had received acclaim, in the workshop of an amateur cabinetmaker or luthier, and sold into the antique trade as conceptual copies of the highly regarded style.[14]

This would have occurred around 1870, as by then, Pogliani's work and style had reached American audiences, garnering acclaim in domestic exhibitions.[15] Pogliani thus spawned another, related market in America, with American furniture firms importing tables, chairs, chests, and other wares in the revival style to sell to the burgeoning class of Gilded Age parvenus who took their directives from European fashion. These works were featured in notable publications such as *The House Beautiful*.[16]

Figure 8. Pogliani-style chairs from Kingscote, acquired during Stanford White's 1880 renovations. Image courtesy of The Preservation Society of Newport County Archives.

Following its beautification in Europe, the Kingscote chitarrone found its way into the market, and ended up far away in the United States. It was likely purchased between 1878 and 1880 by architect Stanford White.[17]

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[14] The craftsman responsible for the four beautified lutes is one of the great mysteries that has emerged from this study. The depth of the Pogliani-style trade and its function as viewed by the greater community is referenced quite explicitly in contemporary literature: "[works of this style] were produced to satisfy the taste of the antiquarian. . . At present they are considered in general as that which they really are, modern articles of furniture in the Renaissance style, but with a view to apartments appointed *à l'antique*. The manufacture of them has attained a certain importance through the agency of dealers by whom the business is chiefly carried on, and several cities, especially Venice, Milan, Florence, Siena and Rome have a great trade in this branch."
Jacob Falke, "The Vienna Exhibition in Connexion with Art-Industry," The Workshop 7. No. 4 (1874): 49–51.

[15] United States Centennial Commission, *Reports And Awards*, Vol. III, Groups III–VII (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), 747.

[16] Clarence Cook, *The House Beautiful* (New York: Scribner & Co, 1878), 34.

[17] This date range is a best approximation based on two factors: the designs of Kingscote were underway by 1880, and White's first European tour came in 1878. It was across the Atlantic where White feasibly encountered the antiquarian instrument trade among other delightful *objets*.

Stanford White and His Musical Instruments

In 1880, the King family sought to enlarge portions of Kingscote to facilitate their ambitions of summer entertaining. To do so, they commissioned a rising firm in American architecture at the time, McKim, Mead & White. This White was the very same Stanford White who purchased the chitarrone for Kingscote. White incorporated the chitarrone in the newly added Aesthetic Movement dining room, an addition to the original structure. It was there, in the delightfully textural dining room of the Kingscote expansion, that White installed what appears to be his earliest commercial use of a musical instrument as a decorative object. He suspended, from the plate rail of the paneling, the beautified chitarrone that traces its roots back to sixteenth century Italy.

Figure 9. Detail of Kingscote chitarrone on wall in dining room. Cropped from plate RI-307-11, Historic American Buildings Survey HABS RI, 3-NEWP, 61.[18]

[18] Jack E Boucher, "Dining room, looking Northeast," Photograph, Historic American Buildings Survey, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1969. From Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress (HABS RI,3-NEWP,61- RI-307-11).

Based on its presentation at Kingscote, a few interesting observations can be made on the chitarrone. The way the instrument was suspended from the wall prevented it from being strung, indicating that no attempt was made to make the instrument appear playable. With its overall dark construction and relatively low profile, it was quite unobtrusive; a subtle interjection into the complex aesthetic assemblage that White created. The incorporation of the chitarrone in the Kingscote dining room was in a way a calling card, one which was indicative of Stanford White's unique interior spaces and their allusion to his own fascination with music.

Absent any qualifications, the name Stanford White stirs images of grand commissions complemented by sumptuously decorated interiors. White (1853–1906) was, after all, one of the preeminent architects, art collectors, and social figures of the grandiose American Gilded Age. While his often innovative and always spectacular buildings are well known, his interest in musical instruments is significantly less studied.

Though White's reputation as an organologist, or student of antique musical instruments, is non-existent, he deserves recognition as one of most notable collectors of antiquarian musical instruments in the United States before the Early Music Revival movement of the 20th century.[19]

White's collections, though small in total number, illustrate an exceptional aesthetic fascination, and a wide-reaching ability to acquire and utilize musical instruments of global and historic origins.

A single source contemporary to White lays forth a snapshot of his organological endeavors – the estate catalog, published for the auction that followed White's scandalous murder in 1906. The catalog, *The Artistic Property Belonging to the Estate of the Late Stanford White*[20], set into written record that his New York townhouse at 121 East 21st Street contained a music room filled with a great variety of rare musical instruments used as decorative accents and centerpieces. Commenting on the proceeds of the auction, an essay in *American Carpet* and *Upholstery Journal* noted that "It was in the musical instruments that Mr. White displayed the greatest taste. He inherited his love for music from his father, and in furnishing his music room, Mr. White had a collection of instruments that were not only sweet to hear, but pleasing to the eye."[21] His vast music room, with over twenty instruments of all shapes and sizes, stood unrivaled in American high society.

[19] Organology is the name used for the broad discipline concerned with the study of musical instruments.
[20] The American Art Association, *The Artistic Property Belonging to the Estate of the Late Stanford White* (New York: The American Art Association, 1907).
[21] No author, "What Stanford White's Art Treasures Brought," *American Carpet and Upholstery Journal* 25, no. 5 (1907): 77.

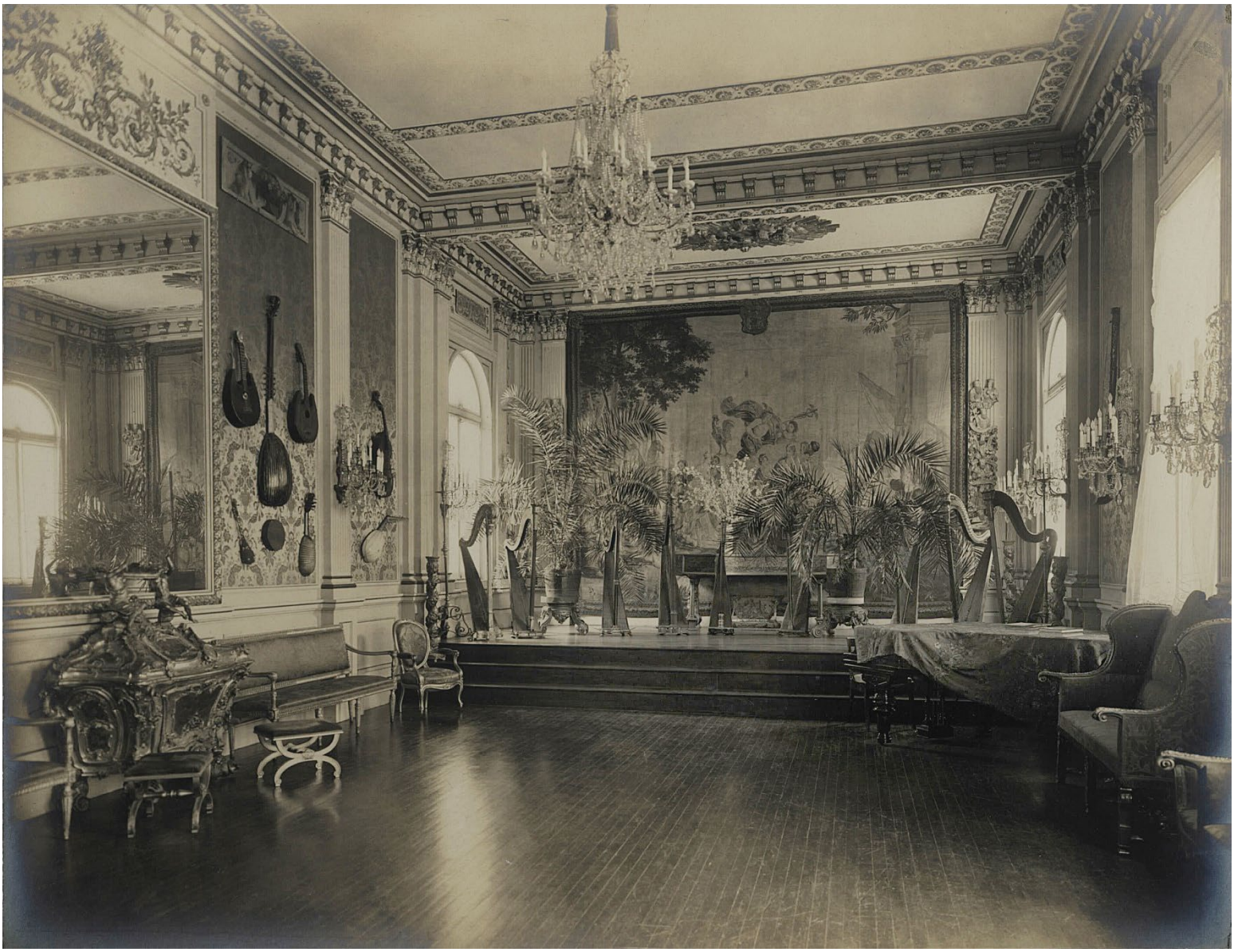

Figure 10. The music room of White's Gramercy Park home. Image courtesy of The Stanford White Family Collection.

Beyond the little-acknowledged holdings of this Gramercy Park residence, research into White's vocation as a collector has produced an image of a larger phenomenon in which he pursued organological avenues throughout his career. Just as White developed a personal collection of musical instruments, he also amassed a commercial selection of instruments destined for the walls and sitting rooms of his many architectural commissions, and helped spread musical instruments to the artistic milieu of his compatriots.

The gamut of instruments that passed through White's hands represents what could be an aestheticized tableaux of the history of music. His instruments confronted the viewer with embodiments of beauty, allegory, and musical symbolism. They were separated both by their

decorative nature and their temporal obsolescence when it came to musical currency. They were frozen *as objéts d'art*, not muses of the ear. They were varied in their form, period, and origin, but almost never in their reduction to the status of decoration, harkening back to practices of the Renaissance, in a way similar to the revivalist practices White employed in much of his decorative work.[22]

White's musical interests can subsequently be divided into three broad categories: European keyboard instruments, European stringed instruments, and indigenous or otherwise non-European instruments that undoubtedly touched on the "exotic" sensibilities which emerged in the worldly curiosity of American Aestheticism and the allure of global antiquities.

One of White's primary interests was in keyboard instruments. Five of these can be associated with his life – four directly, and one by implication. The showpiece of the keyboards was the well-known harpsichord that once belonged to the Colonna family.[23] A second antique keyboard instrument can be seen in the alternative 1907 auction catalog compiled for the objects to be sold at American Art Galleries, instead of on location at the Gramercy Park townhouse. Unlike the Colonna harpsichord, this instrument has passed into the unknown and is unrecognized beyond this single catalog entry as an antique French spinet by Angelo Spinelli.[24] The same catalog also includes a painted harpsichord lid, attributed to the Early Italian School.[25]

In addition to his historic keyboards, White possessed a modern grand piano at Gramercy Park, likely used more for musical expression than aesthetic admiration. A second modern grand piano can also be connected to White. It remains in the living room of Box Hill, White's Long Island summer home acquired through marriage—though its provenance is nondescript and known only by family lore.[26]

One further keyboard is rooted in White's work as an architect. In his design of Rosecliff (1899–1902), the Newport cottage of Mrs. Herman "Tessie" Oelrichs, White incorporated a large Aeolian organ with casework of his own design.[27] Unfortunately, the organ was auctioned in 1941, passing into the hands of the New York antiques dealer Killian and Ryan, and has since been lost to history.[28]

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[22] Baroque and Renaissances styles and antiques, for White's customers, presented the opportunity to project an aura of old wealth in their newly wealthy American lives. For Renaissance musical indulgence, see The British Academy, "Music in Venetian Art: seduction and spirituality", *British Academy Review* 20 (Summer 2012): 21–24.
[23] The Colonna harpsichord now resides among the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
[24] The American Art Association, *Illustrated Catalog of the Artistic Property Collected by the Late Stanford White* (New York: The American Art Association,1907), 17, 58.
[25] Ibid, 111.
[26] Samuel White, great-grandson of Stanford White, relays that the piano was actually a gift from Stanford's business partner Charles Follen McKim to White's wife Bessie Smith. Samuel considers that the piano might have been given to McKim by White. The true story remains unknown.
[27] Rollin Smith, "Endnotes," *The Tracker – Journal of the Organ Historical Society* 57, no. 3 (Summer 2013): 42.
[28] "Oelrichs Villa Sold for $21,000," *New York Times* (July 17, 1941): 16; "Rosecliff Organ Sold for $1,700," *Newport Mercury*, July 18, 1941.

The stringed instruments of White's acquisitions represent two distinct groups: plucked strings and bowed strings. The three known bowed strings were most likely given to White by his father.[29] One of the cellos pictured in the 1907 estate catalog is now in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2010.42). This peculiar cello, with a highly unusual festooned outline certainly came from White's father, before adorning the walls in his Gramercy Park townhouse, a chamber in Box Hill, and before that, a crowded study in White's earlier New York apartment at 56 West 20th Street.[30]

Plucked strings form the bulk of White's apparent interest in musical instruments. The 1907 catalog lists twenty of them: eleven harps, two fanciful harp-guitars, five lutes, and two guitars. Ten of the harps were of the concert variety: large pedal instruments of the type championed by French firms such as Erard in the early to mid-nineteenth century. The last, lacking further images or information beyond the cryptic catalog description, can only be qualified as a French child's harp.[31] White utilized the same kind of pedal harp in at least two commissions, placing a pair of harps in the drawing room of the William C. Whitney House remodeled by White from 1896 to 1902, and one in the mirrored salon of the Payne Whitney House (New York City, 1902–1906).[32] White also kept a foliate gilded harp among his personal collection at Box Hill.[33] The various guitars are perhaps White's most directly symbolic collections, as these fanciful instruments were invented in the nineteenth century as visual allegories of classical grace.[34]

Aside from these archetypal elements of European elegance, White collected unusual exotic wares. He kept on display an *armadillo*, a type of guitar crafted using a shell from the animal as its bowl, a selection of three sitars of unknown Asian origin, and a tambourine attributed to the Apache peoples.

Notable among White's collections, aside from what can be seen, is what never appears. White's legacy reveals no interest in instruments of the brasswind family, nor of the woodwinds, save for a single nondescript set of French provincial bagpipes. The 1907 catalog certainly does not encompass the entirety of White's antique holdings. In an attempt to surmount an increasingly troublesome debt, White amassed a great portion of his collections in a warehouse for auction in 1905. However, tragedy struck before the sale came to fruition, and the contents of the warehouse

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[29] White's father, Richard Grant White (1821–1885), was a well-known member of the musical community in and around New York City in the 19th century. He played cello, most notably as a founding member of his eponymous string quartet, and also dabbled in the repair and construction of violin-family instruments. R. G. White is also recalled by some as a prominent collector of instruments. For further commentary on R. G. White and his place at the emergence of Stanford's musical interest, see Suzannah Lessard's *The Architect of Desire* (New York: Random House, 2013), Charles C. Baldwin's *Stanford White* (New York: Springer, 1931), and Fred Schroeder's *Nothing If Not Critical: A Biography of Richard Grant White* (Doctoral thesis: University of Minnesota, 1968).

[30] The images showing the interior of 56 West 20th Street are held by The Stanford White Family Collection.

[31] American Art Association, 43–45.

[32] Wayne Craven, *Stanford White: Decorator in Opulence and Dealer in Antiquities* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 94–95, 128.

[33] Samuel White, e-mail communication with author, November 27, 2017.

[34] Gregg Miner, "Lyre Guitars & Related Instruments," *Organology: Harp-Guitar "Relatives,"* accessed January 25, 2018, http://www.harpguitars.net/history/org/org-lyres.htm.

burned, causing a complete loss.[35] With no known inventory of this auction, it is possible that White had other musical instruments, perhaps including some of the brass and wind variety, but the extent of his collection before 1907 remains impossible to determine.

The movements of White's collection in the last months of its existence present another interesting development. Between the time that the images were taken for the 1907 auction catalog and the time the auction took place, a number of instruments were removed from the Gramercy Park music room to Box Hill. The instruments that were relocated include the cello linked to White's father, a second cello, a smaller unidentified member of the violin family, and one of the various aestheticized harp-guitars. Someone acquainted with White's collection felt compelled to save these particular pieces from the auction block. Perhaps due to their familial association tracing back to Stanford's father, Richard Grant White, or by some undiscovered directive of White himself, they received preferential treatment above the dozens of instruments left behind for sale.[36]

Figure 11. Musical instruments piled in White's apartment, 56 West 20th Street, 1893 ca. Image courtesy of The Stanford White Family Collection.

[35] "Stanford White Loses Art Objects in Fire," *The New York Times* (February 14, 1905).
[36] The pathways of White's collection after the 1907 auction is equally obscure. The current whereabouts of White's instruments are largely unknown, save for a few examples. The Colonna harpsichord now at The Metropolitan Museum of Art (accession number 45.41) and the festooned cello at the Museum of Fine Arts, while both a three-armed lyre-harp and one of White's other beautified chitarroni reside in the Belle Skinner collection at the Yale University Collection of Musical Instruments (nos. 4479 and 4582). The rest of the instruments, including a lute made of ivory – arguably some of the finest and most recognizable to come to the United States at the time – have yet to resurface.

Aside from the instruments themselves and the scant public mention of White's musical life, one other source solidifies his place among the American Aesthetes as an influential musical figure: his association with the tonalist painter, Thomas Wilmer Dewing. Depictions of lutes were common in nineteenth-century romantic imagery. They were often directly inspired by Renaissance still-lifes and portraits which frequently featured musical instruments as symbols of antiquity, mythology, and classical idealism.[37]

The most frequent portrayer of lutes in the American school, especially lutes with extended necks such as chitarroni, was Thomas Wilmer Dewing. We know that Dewing personally owned at least one chitarrone, which was a gift from none other than Stanford White, given to him 1900.[38]

There are five known works by Dewing which depict chitarroni. Four of these images were from the tonalist series in his final style and date from 1904-1906, all picturing the chitarrone ostensibly gifted from White. One earlier image, titled simple "Lady with a Lute," depicts in a less subdued style, a woman holding a chitarrone, or other similar lute, in her lap.

With the painting dating from 1886, it is unclear if this instrument was connected to Stanford White, or if it is the same instrument that White later gifted into Dewing's ownership. "Lady with a Lute," like other examples of Dewing's musical works, survives in its original White-designed gilt frame, indicating that he was at least somehow connected with the creation of the piece, and had already developed a relationship with Dewing that would last twenty more years.

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[37] Two other chitarrone in museum collections can trace their roots to nineteenth century Artistic movements. The Wendelin Tieffenbrucker instrument at the V&A came from the estate of painter Sigismund Goetze. A second instrument, from the collections of the Musical Instrument Museum in Brussels, was acquired by the museum's first director from painter Vincenzo Capobianchi, who used it as a prop for his work *The Mandolin Shop*.

Musical Instruments Museum, *Theorbo*, accessed May 1, 2018, http://www.mim.be/theorbo.

[38] Freer Sackler Galleries, "Girl with Lute," oil on wood panel, Thomas Wilmer Dewing, accessed May 20, 2018, http://archive.asia.si.edu/explore/american/dewing_slideshow.asp#girl-with-lute. The citation of the letter from Dewing to White is yet unidentified, but its contents and existence were verified by Lee Glazer, Curator of American Art.

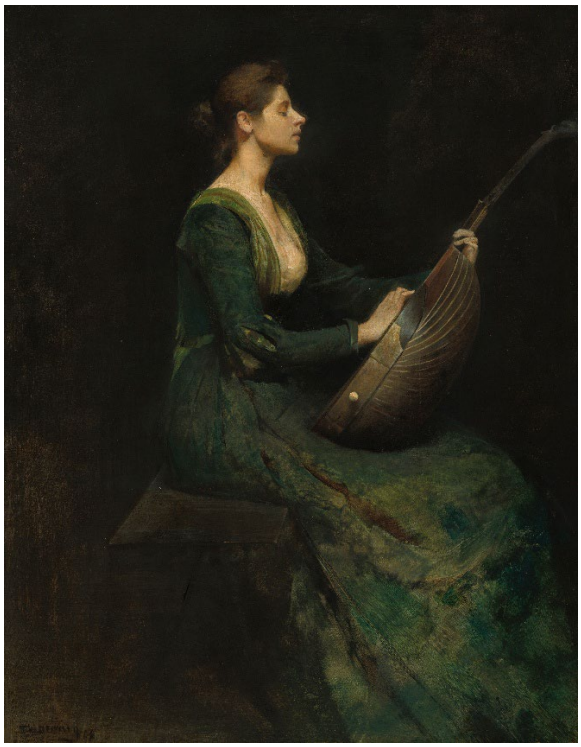

Figure 12. “Lady with a Lute,” 1886. Thomas Wilmer Dewing, American, 1851-1938. Oil on wood. Open access image courtesy of The National Gallery of Art. 1978.60.1.

Figure 13. “Girl with Lute,” 1904. Thomas Wilmer Dewing, American, 1851-1938. Oil on wood panel. Frame by Stanford White. Open access image courtesy of Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution. F1905.2a.

When looking at White's long history of acquiring and using musical instruments as a form of decorative currency, there is one looming question that offers little in the way of answers: where and from whom did White acquire these European artifacts? The source of only a handful of his instruments is known. Two harps came from Parisian antiques dealer Emile Peyre.[39] Others came from the decorating firm of Jules Allard & Sons, whom White commissioned to create many of his architectural suite interiors.[40] One plausible source for White's more antiquarian acquisitions was Stefano Bardini, a renowned antiques dealer in Florence who also collected and sold exquisite musical instruments.[41] Uncovering further information of White's musical commerce network could provide insight into other matters, such as the workshop responsible for the Kingscote chitarrone and the other beautified lutes, and the whereabouts of other instruments from Gramercy Park.

Of all of the examples of Stanford White's musical legacy, the Kingscote chitarrone remains the single instrument that White used as part of a residential design that survives in its original setting. Stanford White likewise represents the last notable movement in the Kingscote chitarrone's history. From 1881 to 1969 it was on view in the same dining room location where White placed it. Following the death of Maud Gwendolen King in 1968, the instrument was removed from the wall in either 1969 or 1970 and stored on top of a dresser in one of the bedrooms. There it rested until Kingscote and its contents passed into the hands of the Preservation Society in 1972.

Looking forward, the research and interest surrounding the Kingscote chitarrone have spurred another notable movement; its return to its original location after a 49-year absence. The Kingscote chitarrone presents a fascinating opportunity to display a variety of historical moments from its final Gilded Aged setting, such as the story of Stanford White's musical endeavors, the Gilded Age use of musical instruments, and the cross-century influence of the Tieffenbrucker dynasty. Most of all, however, it allows the public once again the opportunity to view the beautiful, curious existence of a Renaissance lute as an unprecedented, intentional component of an American Aesthetic interior.

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[39] Craven, 94.

[40] *Invoice, August 18, 1898*, Allard & Sons Invoices, Stanford White Letterpress Books, Avery Architectural Library, Columbia University, New York City, lists two harps shipped to White. Another note in the same from January 10, 1899, states that Allard was "putting three harps in order for Stanford White."

[41] Bardini was perhaps the best-known instrument dealer at his time. His own collection, preserved now in the form of the Museo Bardini, contained at least one Tieffenbrucker lute, attributed to Magno of Venice, 1609.

Ray Nurse, "Design and Structural Development of the Lute in the Renaissance*," Proceedings of the International Lute Symposium* (1988): 110. (101-112).

John Henry Van Der Meer, "Reviews: 'Bartolomeo Cristofori: La Spinetta Ovale Del 1690: Studi E Ricerche,' Edited by Gabriele Rossi Rognoni." *The Galpin Society Journal* 58 (2005): 275-76.

A New Chapter for the Kingscote Chitarrone

Despite its importance, prior to the Preservation Society's acquisition of Kingscote, the obscurity and longevity of this instrument left it subject to a variety of degradations. Compounded by the fact that the instrument was not in an entirely stable condition when it first arrived at Kingscote in 1881, it was further left to endure ninety-one years of Newport summers and winters without climate control, and various casual cleanings and interactions along the way.

Figure 14. Unidentified staining to the bowl of the Kingscote chitarrone, revealed under ultraviolet imaging. Image by author.

The Preservation Society relocated the Kingscote chitarrone to safe storage in the Conservation Lab after acquiring the property. Once the compelling background of this object came to light through this research, the Preservation Society launched a conservation initiative to stabilize and consolidate the instrument so that it could be returned to its original placement, bringing the dining room one step closer to fully realizing Stanford White's vision.

Following extensive analysis and examination, including Ultra-Violet imaging and allowances for dendrochronology and carbon dating,[42] a multi-institutional, international Advisory Committee was established to draw on the expertise and insights of external musical instrument curators and conservators. Together the committee established a baseline restorative approach including cleaning the instrument to remove the decades of environmental contamination; carefully detaching the soundboard so that the bowl and soundboard could be examined, cleaned, and

[42] Samples were taken from 5 sites for carbon dating different elements of the lute's construction and lineage: from the staves of the bowl; the assumed original parchment lining; the block near the neck attachment; the soundboard; and the neck itself. The results of these analyses will provide better insight into the feasible date-ranges of the various components, helping confirm (or contradict) the possible stages of the Kingscote chitarrone's existence.

stabilized from the interior with new linings and patches, and the various loose or otherwise fragmented elements of the decoration and body were made safe for handling and display without compromising the historical integrity of the previous interventions or the elements assumed original to the 1574 Tieffenbrucker iteration.

Figure 15. Interior of the removed soundboard, showing the linen linings and prior repairs, as well as the clamps holding the pieces in place during gluing. Image courtesy of The Preservation Society of Newport County.

Figure 16. Magnets used to locate and stabilize the fragmented staves for gluing and reforming. Image courtesy of The Preservation Society of Newport County.

The work performed during this conservation initiative was intended to facilitate the return of the object to display, while also ensuring that none of the information it could relay in its pre-restorative state would be obscured to future researchers. To this end, interventions were executed with the aim to minimize intrusion and removal of original materials, using standard conservation materials and practices, and allowing for the complete retreatment of any alterations. Following its careful restoration, the chitarrone received a new mount, allowing it to hang safely back in the Kingscote dining room for years to come.

Figure 17. The chitarrone reinstalled on the panel wall of Kingscote's Stanford White dining room. Image by author.

Towards New Understanding

Over the past twelve months, what began as an abstract survey of the material musical legacy in the properties of the Preservation Society evolved into a focused exploration of the ways Stanford White, architect and designer of the 1880 Kingscote expansion, wove musical instruments into his life and designs. It is clear that White, in addition to setting trends in architecture and interior design, crafted an identity as an aesthetic accumulator of antiquarian musical instruments. His personal musical spaces, especially his masterpiece Gramercy Park music room, were among the finest in the Gilded Age. His use of musical instruments in residential endeavors of Gilded Age interior design is unsurpassed.

More broadly, this study has illuminated one of the most spectacular instruments to be found among the cottages of Newport. Reinstalled in its proper place, the Kingscote chitarrone stands as a delightful gateway into the past for visitors of The Preservation Society of Newport County. Alongside its Gilded Age provenance, it is an unexpected example of the work of history's most prominent lute-making family, as well as the curious practices of an as yet unidentified luthier who beautified a surprising number of antiquarian lutes in mid-nineteenth century Europe in a wholly relevant style.

In Newport, the Kingscote chitarrone stands as a microcosmic representation of Gilded Age social movements such as the co-opting of antiquarian European aesthetics to promote the semblance of old-world money, the tight knit yet far reaching network of the artistic elite, and the eclectic *joie de vivre* of Stanford White's decorative aesthetic and musical curiosity.

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