



# The Affectionate Wife

for soprano and piano

2026

5 min

music by Melissa Dunphy  
lyrics by Deborah Read Franklin

Commissioned by Lyric Fest  
for "*Benjamin Franklin — Printer*"  
through the generous sponsorship  
of Mignon & Jim Groch

Premiered at the American Philosophical  
Society by Lyric Fest and the Philadelphia  
Chamber Music Society in April 2026  
by Jessica Beebe and Laura Ward

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I am set down to confab a little,  
as it seems a sort of a hollow day.  
For we have an ox a-roasting on the river,  
and most people seem pleased,  
but I stay at home and flatter myself  
that the next packet will bring me a letter from you.

Miss Wyckoff came and told me that you was arrived,  
and was well that her brother had wrote her he had  
seen you.  
Mr. Neate has wrote that you was well.  
And Miss Graham has wrote also  
that she had the pleasure of a visit from you.  
And several have wrote that you was well.  
All these accounts are as pleasing  
as such things can be.  
But a letter would tell me how your poor arms was,  
and how you was on your voyage,

and how you are  
and [how] everything is with you,  
which I want very much to know.

When will it be in your power to come home?  
How I long to see you.  
But I would not say one word that would give you  
one moment's trouble.

You will say what a chit chat letter this is,  
but it is so dark that I can hardly see.  
I must bid you adieu, my Dear Benny.  
I can't write any more.  
I am your affectionate wife.

—extracted from letters written  
by Deborah Read Franklin  
to Benjamin Franklin, 1765-1770

Cover art: 1855 engraving by John William Orr.

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# The Affectionate Wife

Lyrics by Deborah Read Franklin, 1765-1770

Music by Melissa Dunphy

Adagio moderato ♩ = c.52

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It features a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a 12/8 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Adagio moderato' with a metronome marking of ♩ = c.52. The score is divided into three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The piano part consists of a right-hand treble staff and a left-hand bass staff. The vocal line includes lyrics and performance instructions such as 'pp like a flickering candle', 'p tenderly', 'p espress.', and 'mp'. The lyrics are: 'I am set down to con-fab a lit-tle, as it seems a sort of a hol-low day. For we have an ox a-'. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

10 *mf*

roast - ing\_ on the riv - er, and\_ most peo - ple seem pleased, but I stay at home and flat - ter my - self

13 *p*

that the next pack - et will\_ bring me a let - ter from you.

*p* *mf*

16 *stringendo*

**A** Poco piu mosso ♩ = c.56

19 *f* *mf*

Miss Wyc - koff came and told me that you was ar - rived, and was well that her bro - ther had wrote her\_ he had

*f* *mf*

22

seen you. Mis-ter Neate has wrote that you was well. And Miss

25

Gra-ham has wrote al - so that she had the plea - sure of a vis-it from you.

27

And sev'-ral have wrote that you was well. All these ac-counts are as

30

poco rit. . . . a tempo

pleas - ing as such things can be. But a let-ter would tell me how your poor arms was, and how you

rit. . . . .

33

was on your voy - age, and how you are, and how ev'-ry-thing is with you, which I want

36

**B** Tempo primo ♩=c.52

*f*

ver - y much to know. When will it be in your

39

pow - er to come home? How I long to

42

*mp*

see you. But I would not say one word that would give you one moment's

45

trou - ble, one mo-ment's trou-ble.

48 *poco rit.* . . . . . **C** *a tempo*

You will say what a chit chat let-ter this is, but

51

it is so dark, that I can hard - ly see. I must

54

bid you a-dieu, bid you a - dieu, my dear, my dear

57 *mp* *p*

Ben - ny. I can't write an - y more, I can't

60 *poco rit.* . . . . . *a tempo* *p*

write an - y more. I am your af -

63

fec - tion - ate wife, I am your af - fec - tion - ate wife,

66 *rit.* . . . . . *p* *morendo*

I am your af - fec - tion - ate wife, I am your af - fec - tion - ate wife.