

PIANO ROLLS AND GENDER ROLES: DECODING THE
AMERICAN PLAYER PIANO IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

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Abstract

This dissertation presents a gender-based historical investigation of the player piano during its heyday (1900-1928), focusing on its connections with advertising and the piano roll industry. Broadly influenced by Actor-Network Theory, I contend that this self-playing instrument (in its many forms), with regard to the cultural category of gender, had agency, acting as a medium of communication and a site of negotiation. Specifically, this refers to gender expression and mediation as presented within the frames of player piano advertisements and via performances by female musicians in the piano roll recording studio.

Benefiting from archival research – advertisements, piano rolls, music reviews, photographs, paintings, player piano manuals, sheet music and other primary source material – and situated within the subfield of critical organology, my research is organized through case studies. The first is a reading of the gender codes in player piano and piano advertisements from multiple piano/player piano companies (as well as paintings featuring the piano). The second examines the lives and musical careers of piano roll artists Edythe Baker (1899-1971) and Pauline Alpert (1905-1988). Consisting of biographical summaries (that are the most comprehensive to date in the literature) which incorporate analyses of two performances by these women in the Duo-Art recording studio, this case study utilizes examples of Baker and Alpert's piano arrangements. Based on Tin Pan Alley tunes, these pieces were written in the piano novelty style – a distinct “White”-dominated musical genre with roots in the popular piano rag.

Framed by background research that includes a detailed historical account of the player piano, the findings of this dissertation are conclusive. Within the context of player piano advertising and female performance in the piano roll studio, the player piano, as a non-human

actor enmeshed within a social network of human intermediaries, had a role to play in the expression and mediation of ideas about gender that both contested and conformed to early twentieth-century gender norms in American society.

Dedication

In memory of my great grandfather, Llewellyn Augustus Webb, and his grand old player piano.

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Chapter 1: Research, Conceptual Framework and Methods

Introduction

During the Progressive Age (1890-1920) and into the Roaring Twenties (1920-1929), the player piano¹ and the phonograph² – two divergent but historically complementary sound-reproducing mediums – were transforming the American musical culture scene. These developments included the alteration of established nineteenth-century musical processes: the manner through which music was created and circulated.³ In other words, music's aural presentation and propagation were no longer limited to live performance and the dissemination of sheet music, respectively.

The changes implemented by the action of recording⁴ impacted the country's citizens' ontological perceptions and treatment of music. In general, their relationship with the art form

1. I utilize the umbrella term player piano to refer to recording pianofortes (in the piano roll studio) as well as all commercial foot-driven and motor-driven self-playing pianos of the early twentieth century (1900-1928). The context is made clear in my research when discussing the capabilities of these specific renditions of the instrument in historical situations.

2. The terms phonograph and gramophone are attributed to cylinder-based devices and disk-based machines (in the order as mentioned). Nonetheless, for the purpose of brevity, the former is used in this dissertation to designate both labels.

3. In the Gilded Age (circa 1870-1900), the monetary reach of the bureaucratic music machine was significantly extended, largely due to a blossoming sheet music industry. The majority of consumers purchased scores with the intention of performing music in their homes. Beyond the domestic front, Americans could also access music (the degree of admittance was in part dependent on identity factors of gender, race, and class) by travelling to different performance venues, such as the concert stage, the music hall, the saloon, and the burlesque house.

4. In the field of sound studies, discussions concerning sound reproduction are almost entirely limited to tympanic machinery (many scholars cannot comprehend sound reproduction technologies as existing without either stereo microphones and/or speakers). Nonetheless, I approach this concept from a wider perspective, making note of the distinction between the creation and reception of mechanically reproduced music. Hence, in this dissertation, the terms recorded music and recording classify sounds also mediated by the player piano (I position this mechanical instrument as a contributing member of the modern sound reproducing family). cf. Nicolas Patrick Seaver, "'This is Not a Copy': Mechanical Fidelity and the Re-enacting Piano," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 22, no. 2-3 (December 1, 2011): 14-15, 69-70, accessed March 14, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-1428843>; Nicholas Patrick Seaver, "A Brief History of Re-performance (master's thesis, MIT, 2010), 14-15, accessed March 14, 2014, <https://cmsw.mit.edu/brief-history-reperformance>; and John Durham Peters, "Helmholtz,

transformed into one of consumer and consumed. By way of explanation, before the phonograph and the player piano in their various established designs came into existence, making music and listening to music were only ephemeral actions (an interpretation of the score as existing in performance, fashioned by the performer and often heard by others). When these devices and their software (piano rolls, and records) infiltrated the American economic system of exchange, the population – the majority of whom were embracing a new mass national culture – came to view music as a concrete object separate from its visual production. Music was bought, sold and indistinguishable from its material shell.⁵

This development, however, did not happen overnight, as can be ascertained when examining advertisements, how-to guides, journalism, and other kinds of writings from the era. For example, the *Edison Realism Test*, which instructed viewers on how to visualize a performance when listening to the phonograph, was often given out to possible consumers in various shops throughout the country.⁶ Many people were still thinking of music in terms of a performance, and this and other texts addressed the anxiety that these consumers felt when listening to music without the physical presence of a performer(s).

Edison, and Sound History,” in *Memory Bytes: History, Technology, and Digital Culture*, eds. Lauren Rabinovitz and Abraham Geil (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2004), 191.

5. From a macro point of view, this is connected to the commodification of music in the early twentieth century. Although the sheet music industry played a role in this process, the repeated musical experience, as allowed by early sound reproduction technologies, such as the player piano, helped constitute music “as a commodity in the sense we know it in today’s market.” Timothy Taylor, “The Commodification of Music at the Dawn of the Era of ‘Mechanical Music,’” *Ethnomusicology* 51, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2007): 283, accessed March 1, 2014, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20174526>. See also Timothy J. Dowd, “Culture and Commodification: Technology and Structural Power in the Early U.S. Recording Industry,” *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 22, nos. 1-3 (February 1, 2002): 106-40, accessed March 1, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1108/01443330210789979>.

6. Mark Katz, *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 21-23.

With reference to the player piano, an appreciable amount of the instrument's literature in the first decade of the twentieth century focused on the importance of the consumer's selfhood in the practice of musicking.⁷ The player piano was described merely as a tool and the consumer was still a "performer;" the self-expression (musicality) was attributed to human contribution.⁸ Indeed, the earlier player pianos required an "operator" to manage the delivery of the music by pumping the instrument's bellows and controlling the dynamic output (if the proper dynamic mechanisms were attached to the machine). In this respect, these player pianos, and not phonographs, functioned as transitional devices, allowing the population to adapt to the disembodiment between the audio and the visual. They provided their users with a role, albeit a diminished one (when compared to performing on a piano), regarding the undertaking of making music themselves.

On the other hand, with the introduction of the electric player piano, the "administrative" duties of its purchasers were greatly reduced. Their movements were restricted to that of inserting the roll into the machine, turning it on and, depending on the model, operating the expression levers.⁹ Hence, these motor-controlled instruments presented a considerably more

7. Christopher Small, *Music of the Common Tongue: Survival and Celebration in African American Music* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 49-79.

8. Taylor, "The Commodification of Music," 291-92; cf. Gustav Kobbé, *The Pianolist: A Guide for Pianola Players* (New York: Moffat, Yard, and Company, 1920), 12, Kindle; Ernest Newman, *The Piano-Player and Its Music* (London: Grant Richards, 1920), 30, Kindle; and D. Miller Wilson, *The 'Player-Piano': Its Construction, How to Play - What to Play, and How to Preserve it and Make Adjustments When Necessary* (London: Pitman, 1923), 55-56, Kindle.

9. The reproducing piano, a special type of player piano, did not require intervention by a human operator regarding the performance of musical expression. Specifically, reproducing piano rolls consisted of musical expression details encoded in the perforations. First introduced by M. Welte & Sons in 1904 in Germany and in 1906 in the United States (the *Welte-Mignon*), the reproducing piano was controlled by an electric suction pump (no manual foot control was required). Other famous types of reproducing pianos include the *Duo-Art* by the Aeolian company, and the *Ampico* produced by the American Piano Company.

passive interaction with the consumer.¹⁰ Nonetheless, it is important to note that both foot-driven and electric player pianos were able to cross societal perceptual barriers by means of their material design. They were linked to a more recognizable instrument – the piano – and the visual cultural showcasing of musical activity from the previous era.¹¹ The phonograph, a product entirely enmeshed in the Machine Age (1880-1945), did not offer this connection. Therefore, in the early twentieth century, the player piano, in its capacity as a transitional medium, became the favourite sound-reproducing device among most Americans.

With the explosion of sales for player pianos during this time, numerous music historians, critics, and piano manufacturers considered the device to be the future of sound reproduction technology.¹² The phonograph, conversely, was still commonly viewed as a novelty item. Consequently, it was difficult for many people to foresee the player piano's demise, specifically as its expiration was *partially* linked to the increased popularity of the phonograph in the late

10. It could be argued that there was still a form of musicking involved in these human/motor driven player piano events – this includes listening and possibly dancing – that negates an explanation of complete passivity for those involved. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, I utilize the terms passive and active to highlight the discrepancy between listening and performing, respectively, as the act of learning and playing a musical piece is much more difficult than listening to a performance.

11. The player piano's connection with the piano – a symbol of Victorian ideology and the bedrock of musical culture in nineteenth-century America – also made it more appealing than the phonograph to early twentieth-century American consumers (this is examined in greater detail in chapter 3). Furthermore, the sound fidelity of the player piano was superior to that of the phonograph in the early years of the twentieth century.

12. One of the player piano's most fervent supporters was piano and player piano manufacturer Alfred Dolge, whose writings provide one of the earliest and most comprehensive historical accounts of the mechanical instrument's technological developments in the early twentieth century. Dolge believed that the piano industry would continue to move forward with the player piano and that, in the future, the mechanical device would be “a musical instrument par excellence.” Alfred Dolge, *Pianos and their Makers: A Complete History of the Development of the Piano from the Monochord to the Concert Grand Player Piano* (Covina, CA: Covina Publishing Company, 1911), 160, Kindle; cf. Harvey Roehl, *Player Piano Treasury: The Scrapbook History of the Mechanical Piano in America as Told in Story, Pictures, Trade-Journal Articles and Advertising* (New York: The Vestal Press, 1961), 17.

1920s.¹³ Within the span of this decade, Americans had become accustomed to listening to music without seeing its means of production. This adjustment, coupled with the phonograph's ability to reproduce all sounds, its cheaper price, and improvements in sound quality (by 1925, phonograph music was recorded electronically) was one of the reasons that this machine prevailed in the sound reproduction "wars." The player piano as transition was no longer applicable, and by the 1930s the instrument had no economic or social value to offer the consumer public; it summarily became obsolete.

Player Piano Literature: An Overview

Due in part to its defeat (as well as the fact that most present-day music historians do not recognize the mechanical instrument as a sound-reproducing device), scholarly research on the player piano, unlike its forebear, the conventional piano, is limited. While there is a large output of information on the cultural history of the piano in America,¹⁴ the majority of player piano research (which is mostly found in treatises on mechanical musical instruments, and articles from mechanical instrument organizations) examines the instrument as only a technical curiosity, emphasizing its material properties. Some notable examples consist of Arthur W.J.G. Ord-

13. A more thorough explanation concerning the expiration phase of the player piano's lifecycle is discussed in chapter 3 and the epilogue.

14. Numerous piano historians contend that the piano was a cultural icon and the foundation of Victorian middle-class life in the Western world. This includes, but is not limited to Derek Carew, *The Mechanical Muse: The Piano, Pianism, and Piano Music, c.1760-1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Cyril Ehrlich, *The Piano: A History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990); Dieter Hildebrandt, *Pianoforte: A Social History of the Piano*, trans. Harriet Goodman (London: Hutchinson, 1988); Arthur Loesser, *Men Women and Pianos: A Social History* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954); Sean Murray, "Pianos, Ivory, and Empire," *American Music Review* 38, no. 2 (Spring 2009): 1, 4-5, 13-14, accessed January 22, 2016, www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/web/aca_centers_hitchcock/NewsS09.pdf; James Parakilas, ed., *Piano Roles: Three Hundred Years of Life with the Piano* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); and Craig H. Roell, *The Piano in America: 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

Hume's book on the technological history of the instrument and Richard Howe and Jeffrey Morgan's detailed investigation of the different types of AMPICO player pianos.¹⁵

Inquiries extending beyond the traditional methods applied to instrument categorization and technical review are sparse, as only a few scholars have begun to explore the social and cultural impact of the player piano on various historical processes. Historians Harvey Roehl and Craig Roell's writings on the mechanical device deserve mention. Roehl's *Player Piano Treasury* provides a detailed history of the instrument through the analysis of piano advertising (this pioneering publication is an excellent collection of player piano primary source material).¹⁶ Roell also utilizes document analysis, among his methods, to argue that the player piano, in its heyday, was a mediating object for two contrasting ideologies. He contends that it was a manifestation of Victorian ideals as well as a reflection of an evolving consumer/recreational culture.¹⁷

While both historians' research is ground-breaking, Roell's conclusions have affected more current work on the player piano. This includes the following: musicologist Catherine Hennessy's analyses of player piano print media, socio-cultural theorist Timothy Taylor's examination of the player piano's transitional function in relation to the commodification of music, and musicologist Allison Rebecca Wente's dissertation that examines how industrialized labour practices (the role of the player piano machine) effect music performance and

15. Arthur W.J.G Ord-Hume, *Player Piano: The History of the Mechanical Piano and How to Repair It* (South Brunswick, NJ: A.S. Barnes, 1970); and Richard Howe and Jeffrey Morgan, "The Evolution of the AMPICO," *Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association*, accessed April 2, 2014, www.amica.org/files/publications/EvolutionOfTheAmpico.pdf.

16. Roehl, *Player Piano Treasury*.

17. Roell, *The Piano in America*, 150-60.

composition.¹⁸

Concerning player piano discourses on the importance of including the instrument in sound reproduction history, both anthropologist Nick Seaver and historian David Suisman contribute to the dialogue. In his research, Seaver explores the issue of re-performance and its connection with the reproducing piano, while Suisman investigates the player piano as a different and often ignored aspect of modernity, in contrast to the phonograph.¹⁹

Other sources that are worthy of merit and are unique in the player piano research arena include media historian Lisa Gitelman's article on the semiotic fluidity of the piano roll (in a specific historical moment), and English literature scholar Cecilia Björkén-Nyberg's comprehensive account of the scope of the player piano's influence on the concept of the musical work.²⁰ Both authors use historical documents – Björkén-Nyberg examines Edwardian fiction and Gitelman reviews court records and transcripts of a landmark music copyright infringement case (the supreme court case *White-Smith v. Apollo*) – as a means of observing the instrument's effect on people's perceptions of music during certain historical periods and geographical locations.

18. Catherine M. Hennessy, "Playing with Pianos: Print Media, Mechanization, Gender and Change in Victorian America" (master's thesis, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 2011), accessed January 8, 2018, <http://hdl.handle.net/2142/26274>; Catherine Hennessy Wolter, "Print Conversations: Print Media, Player Pianos, and Early Radio in the United States" (PhD diss., University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 2016), accessed January 8, 2018, <http://hdl.handle.net/2142/92787>; Taylor, "The Commodification of Music;" and Allison Rebecca Wentz, "Magical Mechanics: The Player Piano in the Age of Digital Reproduction" (PhD diss., University of Texas, 2016), accessed March 10, 2018, <https://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/items/934c487d-c1bd-4151-841c-280ac1c915dd>.

19. Suisman, "Sound, Knowledge, and the 'Immanence of Human Failure;'" Seaver, "A Brief History of Re-performance;" and Seaver, "This is Not a Copy."

20. Lisa Gitelman, "Media, Materiality, and the Measure of the Digital, or the Case of Sheet Music and the Problem of Piano Rolls," in *Memory Bytes: History, Technology, and Digital Culture*, eds., Lauren Rabinovitz and Abraham Geil (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 199-217; and Cecilia Björkén-Nyberg, *The Player Piano and the Edwardian Novel* (London: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2016).

Situated within this circumscribed research landscape and following in the footsteps of Roell and Taylor, my dissertation offers an expanded social and cultural history of the player piano that takes into account the significance of the device's mediator status as it pertains to the cultural category of gender. My work thus contributes to and takes advantage of the expansive literature on gender and music as well as research emerging from the subfield of critical organology.²¹ These occasionally overlap, as many musicologists and ethnomusicologists researching in the former area of study (when applicable to musical instruments), and some scholars working in the latter domain apply gender as a mode of inquiry in their attempts to broach the issue of identity and power in cultural contexts through the study of musical instruments.²² The differentiating factor, however, between research on instruments that solely falls in the subdiscipline of gender and music, and research that can also be considered an inclusion in the subspecialty of critical organology is an interdisciplinary focus on the subject matter. Critical organologists examine the affiliation between musicology and other branches of knowledge to answer questions regarding the range of impact instruments have on their environments and the overall implications of their technology.

During the course of my research, I observed that a detailed history of the player piano

21. For more information, see Emily Dolan and John Tresch, "Toward a New Organology: Instruments of Music and Science," *Osiris* 28, no. 1 (January 2013): 278-98, accessed January 7, 2016, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/671381>; Jessica Wood, and Emily Dolan, "Perspectives on Critical Organology," *Newsletter of the American Musical Instrument Society* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 14-16; Kelly Hiser, "Electronic Musical Sounds and Material Culture: Early Reception Histories of the Telharmonium, the Theremin, and the Hammond Organ" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2015), accessed March 6, 2016, ProQuest (1686103700); and Maria Somevytsky, "The Accordion and Ethnic Whiteness: Toward a New Critical Organology," *World of Music* 50, no. 3 (2008): 101-18, accessed March 10, 2016, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41699850>. Current research in this field was also showcased at the annual meeting of American Musicology Society, Pittsburgh, PA, November 7, 2013. The roundtable discussion was entitled "Musical Instruments and Cognition."

22. The strategic maneuvering between humans over control of musical instruments is often enacted through gender lines.

can be used as a means of exploring the gender historiography of the time in question. However, this connection is contingent on an investigation of the former's multi-operational attributes in the social order. For instance, depending on the circumstances, this includes the player piano's usage by its human intermediaries as a sound-reproducing device, an instrument, and a symbol (such as a visual representation in print media). Therefore, the complex nature of the instrument's function necessitates an integrative approach as I engage with ideas from the fields of musicology, science and technology studies (STS), anthropology (material culture studies) and sociology. My focus of attention, which benefits from this interdisciplinary research method, is two player piano connections: female piano roll artists making piano rolls in the piano roll studio, and player piano advertising. I contend that, within this context, the player piano acted as a medium of communication and a site of negotiation. In other words, situated within a web of human relationships – player piano advertising departments and women performing in the player piano recording studios – the instrument had a role to play in the expression and mediation of ideas about gender that consolidated as well as challenged early twentieth-century gender norms in America (1900-1928).

Chapter Overviews

In the remaining part of this current chapter, I situate this dissertation within existing scholarly work on gender and music and in the subfield of critical organology. Reviewing literature relevant to my topic, I continue by outlining principal sources that have influenced the methodological direction of my study – two techniques taken from sociology and musicology. Lastly, I define my theoretical framework, also multidisciplinary in nature, as it threads together theories from material culture studies and science and technology studies. This section points to

the validity of using this type of framework for a musicological topic, highlighting its relevance to my thesis and recapitulating the main purpose of my study.

Chapter 2 is a background chapter, a synopsis of the historical context for the player piano. In order to provide a comprehensive analysis of player piano advertising and female piano roll recording studio performances, it is important to understand that the instrument was a product of its time, deeply rooted in early twentieth-century American culture. Hence, this chapter details the emergence of consumerism as the dominant culture and the diminishing influence of Victorianism in the Modern Age.²³ It also includes a review of class and race relations, and an investigation of American ideologies of gender and gender stereotypes (in relation to women's changing role in society).

Chapter 3 presents an historical summary of the American piano (1865-1915) and the player piano. It briefly outlines the technical modifications and symbolic affordances of the former, before providing a detailed exploration of the latter's invention and usage – referencing its sound reproducing and symbolic capabilities – in the social order. The chapter continues with a summary of the reproducing piano's role concerning the commodification of music and music appreciation, and then concludes by theoretically positioning the player piano as a culture mediator. This is established by building on Roell's framework and continuing my inquiry from chapter 2 on consumer culture and Victorianism. Through an examination of various sources, including advertisements and article reviews, I assert that the player piano reflected a period of social transition, a time when consumerism and Victorianism co-existed (although the former

23. When utilizing this term, or the Modern Era, I am generally referring to a time that spans approximately from the late nineteenth century to the end of the Roaring Twenties. Specifically, this points to the emergence of Modern America. See chapter 2 for more information.

was more influential in the early twentieth century). While its symbolism was first and foremost tied to the piano, its emblematic framework also came to represent newer ideas linked to the consumer culture. As such, it often accommodated conflicting value systems, and thus acted as a mediator between two cultures.

In chapters 4 and 5, I examine the codes of gender made visible by means of player piano advertising. This section of my dissertation confirms that several player piano companies (specifically their advertising departments) both contested and supported early twentieth-century conventions of gender through their creative choices in the advertising of the instrument. This medium utilized the player piano as a symbol through its visual image to broadcast various ideas about gender to a consumer public.

Following a summary of early twentieth-century societal gender expectations in musical activity (in the home), and a methodological overview, chapters 4 and 5 present a semiotic compare-and-contrast content analysis of player piano advertisements from the early twentieth century, and nineteenth-century Victorian pianoforte visual media. I pinpoint the way in which the former endorsements both enforced Victorian notions of femininity and masculinity and propagated new ideas about gender as linked to the consumer culture of the Modern Age. Additionally, this section of my dissertation confirms that numerous piano/player piano companies also contested gender roles through some of their decisions in the advertising of the player piano. In other words, ideas that did not align with the culture of the time were expressed via the instrument through the mediation of various player piano advertising departments.

Chapter 6 offers pertinent background information for chapters 7 and 8. It provides a brief overview of American gender customs as manifested through professional musical behaviour and summaries of popular music genres relevant to my research. For instance,

concerning the latter, this includes an examination of the piano novelty genre as I analyze its musical properties and similarities with jazz and ragtime. Indeed, the pieces utilized in the analyses of piano roll performances in the recording studio (chapter 8) are written in the piano novelty style. Furthermore, the issue of cultural appropriation is raised, as the piano novelty was primarily a White genre. Thus, an understanding of the complexities of its evolution, which entails an explanation concerning its connection with African American idioms, is necessary regarding the examination of the performances.

Chapters 7 and 8 present an exploration of the lives and musical careers of piano roll musicians Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert. This case study is situated within the broader framework of the piano roll industry and female piano roll artistry (women²⁴ making virtuosic recordings of their compositions and arrangements using a specific type of player piano²⁵) in the post-war era and during the Roaring Twenties. Therefore, my work contributes to a general research trajectory concerning women's history in music: restoring historical agency to women and observing their degree of access to cultural modes of production.²⁶ Except for the investigations of a few dedicated scholars, Baker and Alpert have been relegated to the footnotes

24. This context does not include female piano roll technicians, as many of the names of these women have been lost to history. Nonetheless, there are some sources that exist and are worth mention. See "Recording the Soul of the Piano Playing," *Scientific American* (November 1927): 422-23; Bill Edwards, "Mary Elizabeth 'Mae' Brown," ragpiano.com, accessed April 12, 2016, ragpiano.com/comps/mebrown.shtml; and Gary S. Hedges, "My Grandmother: Lillian V. Bollow – US Music Rolls Arranger," *AMICA Bulletin* (March/April 2020): 35-37. While the foremost source does not list the names of the women working in the Ampico Research Laboratory, it does provide images of them engaged in various activities: hand perforating pilot holes in the piano rolls, examining the dots and lines of the recording in the rolls, transferring measurements, and eliminating wrong notes.

25. This is the recording piano: an aggregate structure of a piano wired to a real-time perforator and, in some cases, an expression marking machine.

26. *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, 2nd ed., s.v. "Women in Music, I: Historiography."

of music history.²⁷ By taking advantage of and expanding the short list of scholarly writings on these women, I not only strive to address the error of their marginalization in the music canon (I make note of their accomplishments), but to also demonstrate the social impact of their musical efforts (as piano roll artists) on gender relations of the time.

As the point of convergence in my dissertation is the player piano, the parameters of this examination are defined by a broad research question that brings my topic to the forefront. Specifically, this query pertains to the ways in which the instrument was able to influence human interests. Concerning female agency and the proliferation of gender dissent and conformity, I observe the effect the instrument's location, symbolism and technical/musical uses had on Baker and Alpert's musical activities and chosen career pathways, focusing on their efforts to make piano rolls. This refers to the showcasing of their talents in music arranging and performing.

To elaborate, I present in chapter 7 an investigation of Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert's musical lives, followed by analyses of piano roll performances in chapter 8, one by each artist, within a generalized musical context.²⁸ The evidence provided by these examinations yields results: within the space of the piano roll studio, the player piano as an instrument; a piece of technology; and an object of symbolic meaning was exploited by Baker and Alpert as a way of both crossing gender boundaries while at the same time conforming to certain gender roles. In

27. The only sources that have compiled relevant biographies and incomplete rollographies (and discographies) of these artists are AMICA (Automatic Musical Instrument Collector's Association), and ragpiano.com. Furthermore, pianist and harmoniumist Artis Wodehouse has compiled useful information on the life of Edythe Baker.

28. I am tracing these performances by means of historical documentation including piano roll performances as played-back by re-constituted reproducing pianos, performance reviews, advertisements, and written descriptions of the general process of making piano rolls during the time. Nonetheless, the recorded performances on the rolls are edited. Hence, while I do not judge these performances by traditional performance standards – and thereby do not limit my analysis criteria to the binary constructs of live/performance and natural/artificial – I do consider the fact that I am listening to edited musical performances. This is discussed in greater detail in chapter 8.

other words, their performances were mitigated by the recording piano as a site of negotiation – a place from which the artists’ dispute and compliance with societal conceptions of gender were on full display.

Literature Review and Methodology

My dissertation utilizes gender as a lens through which to view and evaluate the player piano’s significance in its historical time frame. Gender is historically contingent and fluctuates from culture to culture. Furthermore, its boundaries are fluid, as its meanings are constantly negotiated within its cultural and historical context. One of the ways this contestation unfolds is through musical places, such as instruments, genres, and performance styles. Moreover, music performance contexts are often the sites from which musical places connect with one another. Thus, as an aggregation of various parts, music performance can act as “an agent in inter-gender relations, transforming, reversing or mediating conflict between the sexes.”²⁹

Much of the research on gender locates musical instruments and certain genres as gendered objects and gendered classifications (in that order). Other sources acknowledge the prominent belief that one’s manner of playing (for example, one’s virtuosity) can strengthen and/or dispute ideas about gender and has validated the argument that gender is manifested in music performance. While studies on these topics are extremely extensive, exemplary sources include the following: with reference to the gendering of instruments, historical musicologist Rita Steblin presents a comprehensive overview of the gendered categorization of orchestral instruments (in Western society); musicologist Richard Leppert examines the Victorian piano as

29. Ellen Koskoff, “An Introduction to Women, Music, and Culture,” in *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Ellen Koskoff (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 9.

a “visual-sonoric simulacrum of family, wife, and mother;” ethnomusicologist Veronica Doubleday outlines hypothetical models about musical instruments, gender, and power relations; and ethnomusicologist Ellen Koskoff investigates the association between musical instruments and gender style in cross-cultural contexts.³⁰ Additionally, scholars Carla Zecher and Laura Vorachek, in their research studies, examine the influence of literature (poetry, method books, and novels) on the gendering of the sixteenth-century French lute and the Victorian piano, respectively.³¹

Concerning the importance of an instrument influencing the creation of a gendered musical genre, popular music scholar Steve Waksman explores the role of the guitar as a conceptualized “male” instrument (both in male/female collaborative performances and men’s solo performances), and how this affected the development of rock and roll.³² Furthermore, musicologist Ruth Solie, in her journal article, “Gender, Genre, and the Parlor Piano,” and her book chapter entitled “‘Girling’ at the Piano,” situates the piano and piano parlour music as a significant conjoined factor in the process of gender formation in the mid- to late nineteenth

30. Rita Steblin, “The Gender Stereotyping of Musical Instruments in the Western Tradition,” *Canadian University Music Review* 16, no. 1 (1995): 128-44, accessed February 10, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1014420ar>; Richard Leppert, *The Sight of Sound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 119; Veronica Doubleday, “Sounds of Power: An Overview of Musical Instruments and Gender,” *Ethnomusicology* 17, no. 1 (June 2008): 3-39, accessed February 10, 2016, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20184604>; and Ellen Koskoff, *A Feminist Ethnomusicology: Writings on Music and Gender* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), chap. 8.

31. Carla Zecher, “The Gendering of the Lute in Sixteenth-Century French Love Poetry,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 53, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 769-91, accessed February 12, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2901497>; and Laura Vorachek, “Instruments of Desire: Women’s Domestic Music-Making in Victorian Literature and Culture” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2004), accessed March 2, 2016, ProQuest (305112656).

32. Steve Waksman, *Instruments of Desire: The Electric Guitar and the Shaping of Musical Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999). In his analysis of the guitar and its influence on the creation of the rock and roll genre, Waksman also focuses on the interconnectivity between technology, race, gender, and music.

century (1837-1901).³³ Her research also emphasizes gender itself as “a performative function of domestic music making.”³⁴

Other music scholars, following this line of reasoning, have examined the performance of gender as connected with pianistic virtuosity. This includes Jennifer R. Caines’ investigation of the concept of female virtuosity and its ability to reinforce and/or subvert gender expectations. Moreover, Beth Abelson Macleod analyses the various methods used by women virtuosos (in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) to navigate their virtuosity within the gender restrictions of their societies.³⁵ Additionally, Vivian Sarah Montgomery’s Doctor of Musical Arts major research paper uses genre/gender as a framework to study the role of pianistic expertise within the performance space of the Victorian piano parlour.³⁶

Lastly, research that explores the ways in which gender makes itself visible through music performance includes the following: ethnomusicologist Carol E. Robertson’s useful analysis of the role of a performance in the power relations between men and women, and historian Sherrie Tucker’s gender analysis of the musical activities of New Orleans Jazzwomen

33. Ruth A. Solie, “Gender, Genre, and the Parlor Piano,” *The Wordsworth Circle* 25, no. 1 (Winter 1994): 53-56, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://jstor.org/stable/24042977>; and Ruth A. Solie, *Music in Other Words: Victorian Conversations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), chap. 3.

34. Solie, “Gender, Genre, and the Parlor Piano,” 54.

35. Jennifer R. Caines, “Clara Schumann, the (Wo)man and her Music: An Examination of Nineteenth-Century Female Virtuosity” (master’s thesis, McMaster University, 2001), accessed May 10, 2017, <http://hdl.handle.net/11375/11560>; Beth Abelson Macleod, *Fannie Bloomfield-Zeisler: The Life and Times of a Piano Virtuoso* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2015); and Beth Abelson Macleod, “A Gypsy Demon Possessed the Little Woman,” in *Women Performing Music: The Emergence of American Women as Instrumentalists and Conductors*, ed. Beth Abelson Macleod (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company Inc., 2001), 96-123.

36. Vivian Sarah Montgomery, “‘Brilliant’ Variations on Sentimental Songs: Slipping Piano Virtuosity into the Drawing Room” (DMA thesis, Case Western Reserve University, 2007), accessed April 15, 2017, <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/%E2%80%9CBrilliant%E2%80%9D-Variations-on-Sentimental-Songs%3A-Piano-Montgomery/16fec3b680d461bef3e93592d216cb6ee8fc1676>.

(Tucker's comprehensive study is an exemplary illustration of the effectiveness of utilizing gender as a mode of inquiry in jazz history).³⁷ Ethnomusicologist Ellen Koskoff's study also provides an excellent schema for the analysis of gender in performance; she summarizes four different categories of music performance that arise in connection with inter-gender communications.³⁸

As mentioned in the earlier section of this chapter, some of these sources also make use of techniques and theoretical models employed in the subfield of critical organology. In the above list, this includes Doubleday's article, "Sounds of Power, an Overview of Musical Instruments," and Leppert's book, *The Sight of Sound: Music, Representation, and the History of the Body*. The former can be considered an example of a critical organology research article. It delves into the interconnectivity between material culture studies and musicology/ethnomusicology through an examination of the process by which an instrument's physical properties invest the body of a performer with meaning. Ethnomusicologist Marion Jacobson's book on the accordion, musicologist Kelly Hiser's study of the telharmonium, and musicologist Heather Hadlock's article on the glass harmonica are also positioned within this category.³⁹

37. Carol E. Robertson, "Power and Gender in the Musical Experience of Women," in *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Ellen Koskoff (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 225-44; and Sherrie Tucker, "A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen," *A NOJNHP Research Study*, submitted to New Orleans Jazz National Historical Park, accessed July 19, 2017, https://www.nps.gov/jazz/learn/historyculture/upload/new_orleans_jazzwomen_rs-2.pdf.

38. These are as follows: 1) performance that supports and perpetuates the established social/sexual framework; 2) performance that, on the surface, reinforces accepted norms in the interest of protecting other, more significant values; 3) performance that objects to, yet continues to maintain the traditional arrangement (through symbolic action); and 4) performance that disputes and threatens the gender order. See Koskoff, "An Introduction to Women, Music, and Culture," 10.

39. Marion Jacobson, *'Squeeze This!' A Cultural History of the Accordion in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012); Hiser, "Electronic Musical Sounds," chap. 2; and Heather Hadlock, "Sonorous Bodies: Women and the Glass Harmonica," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 53, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 507-42,

Additionally, these sources present an expansive gendered approach to critical organology. For instance, one of Jacobson's book themes explores how feminism influenced the accordion's popularity in America, and Hiser highlights the ways in which the "sight of physical practices and gendered bodies inflected the hearings" of the sounds of the telharmonium.⁴⁰ Furthermore, Hadlock investigates the glass harmonica's feminine associations in eighteenth-century Europe, while Doubleday examines the various ways an instrument becomes gendered and how these meanings are paramount in the "power play between humans over musical instruments."⁴¹

Richard Leppert's observations, at first glance, can be viewed as one of many sources in a very large output of scholarly work on the piano. Nonetheless, his unique treatment of this very popular instrument – an examination of its representation in visual art, and the history of the body – also situates it within the field of critical organology. Piano scholar Sean Murray's article on the piano, colonialism and racial Whiteness (the ivory trade), and musicologist James Parakilas' (and his collaborators') comprehensive exploration of the piano as a product of industrialization (and the cornerstone of the early Tin Pan Alley music industry) also reflect a growing interest in research on the instrument that departs from the norm. This includes a study of the human body, its gestures and meaning in performance, as well as the impact of industry on the piano's material evolution.⁴²

accessed July 8, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.2307/831937>. Hiser's dissertation is the only study among these works listed that openly acknowledges its affiliation with critical organology.

40. Hiser, "Electronic Musical Sounds," 5.

41. Doubleday, "Sounds of Power," 4.

42. Murray, "Pianos, Ivory, and Empire;" and Parakilas, *Piano Roles*.

While my dissertation is broadly informed by the sources above, it is the work of Robertson and Leppert that has guided my analyses in chapters 4, 5 and 8. For instance, I utilize some of Robertson's queries in chapter 8 (those relevant to my research) concerning the manner in which gender protest and conformity are acted out in piano roll performances. Robertson recommends that when one examines a musical performance, one should ask whether the instruments are under gender-specific protection and if there are historical reasons for this guardianship. She also urges the researcher to investigate the circumstances under which women perform (such as the type of space, and the other people and musical places that interact in the performance). Furthermore, she states that it is important to trace the methods by which these women's performances are evaluated and if, when compared to men's, they are considered of equal value.⁴³ Robertson's questions have thus framed my exploration concerning the degree to which dissent and compliance were "performed" within the context of the piano roll studio, by Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert.

Richard Leppert's book on the semiotics of musical imagery in the Victorian Era presents an examination of the visual representation of both the piano and the woman in artwork. Their images were frequently used in paintings from the period, often to legitimize, or in some cases contest numerous binary distinctions of Victorian gender ideologies. Leppert's approach is a unique coupling of methodologies from musicology and art history, as he focuses on details such as lighting, positioning of subjects and body language. These visual cues draw the viewer into the symbolism of the image of musical activity.⁴⁴

43. Robertson, "Power and Gender," 242-43.

44. Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*, 156.

In chapters 4 and 5, I apply many of Leppert's techniques in my analyses of various advertisements, examining the proximity of people and objects to the player piano and the emblematic potency of their placement in the pictures. Hence, I situate the player piano and the depiction of other things and humans as signs. I also take note of the use of colour (if applicable) in ads as well as the employment of light and shadow to highlight and/or centre various subjects and objects.

Nonetheless, my general focus in these chapters pertains to gestures as they are associated with musical behaviour. While Leppert does offer some helpful guidelines, my interest in the communicative properties of gestures, and my understanding of the differences between paintings and advertisements led me to the field of sociology, particularly the work of Erving Goffman. This renowned sociologist, in his ground-breaking book, *Gender Advertisements*, posits that gender codes are embodied in advertising displays through the language of gesture.⁴⁵ His techniques are organized into seven classifications: Relative Size, Feminine Touch, Modern Shift, Function Ranking, The Family, Ritualization of Subordination, and Licensed Withdrawal.⁴⁶

The benefits of utilizing Goffman's methodological toolkit are widespread. This includes giving my study a strong foundational backing in sociology (Goffman's book is still widely accepted and used in the field by various scholars⁴⁷) and allowing for an in-depth look at the

45. Erving Goffman, *Gender Advertisements* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), vii-27.

46. Goffman, 28-82.

47. Some notable examples include Penny Belknap and Wilbert M. Leonard II, "A Conceptual Replication and Extension of Erving Goffman's Study of Gendered Advertisements," *Sex Roles* 25, nos. 3/4 (August 1991): 103-18, accessed August 8, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00289848>; Mee-Eung Kang, "The Portrayal of Women's Images in Magazine Advertisements: Goffman's Gender Analysis Revisited," *Sex Roles* 37, nos. 11/12 (December

“hyper-ritualized”⁴⁸ exhibitions hidden within scenes of musical activity. While there are gestures in musical performance, as shown in advertisements, that are inherent to the production of music, others are extra-curricular and connected to the gender displays of the time.

Furthermore, some body movement that is required for creating music can be slightly adjusted by the artist so that it signifies various codes of gender. Therefore, implementing both Goffman and Leppert’s methodologies accommodates a broader understanding of the communication of gender in advertising (this concerns gendered behavioural posturings as connected with musical activity in player piano advertising during the early twentieth century).

Theoretical Framework: The Agency and Symbolism of Objects

By postulating that the player piano, in its heyday, had the ability to bring about social action, I am also stating that it had agency. There are, however, problems in assigning agency to non-human objects: can a thing have legitimate agency if it is not alive?⁴⁹ Sociologist Tim Dant avoids this dilemma by introducing the concept of material intermediaries with humans in an object’s system of connections.⁵⁰ By applying this term in his research, Dant is clearly

1997): 979-96, accessed August 8, 2017, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02936350>; and “The Codes of Gender: Identity and Performance in Pop Culture,” directed and written by Sut Jhally (Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 2009), DVD.

48. Goffman, *Gender Advertisements*, 26.

49. See Malcolm Ashmore, Robin Woofitt, and Stella Harding, eds., “Humans and Others: Agents and Things,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 36, no. 6 (May 1994): 733-40, accessed April 6, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764294037006>; Derek Edwards, Malcolm Ashmore, and Jonathan Potter, “Death and Furniture: The Rhetoric, Politics and Theology of Bottom Line Arguments Against Relativism,” *History of the Human Sciences* 8, no. 2 (1995): 25-49, accessed April 5, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0952695195008002>; and Carl Knappet, *Thinking about Material Culture: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (Philadelphia: The University of Philadelphia Press, 2005), 29.

50. Tim Dant, *Material Culture in the Social World: Values, Activities, Lifestyles* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1995), 124.

acknowledging that, while an object does have agency, the intention and motivation always, in some form, lies with its human associates.⁵¹ His premise is based on anthropologist Alfred Gell's theory of agency and Actor-Network-Theory (ANT).⁵² The latter aims to investigate how networks are assembled and maintained in order to reach a specific goal. The former, in his ground-breaking book, *Art and Agency*, argues that important objects can be considered as social agents in human culture.⁵³ He deduces that these objects have a personhood of their own and become "enmeshed in a texture of social relationships."⁵⁴

ANT, in particularly the writings of philosopher, sociologist and anthropologist Bruno Latour, also supports a focus on the web of relationships that are socially constructed between humans and non-humans. According to Latour, many entities that exist in both categories can be thought of as actors, because they are able to "modify a state of affairs by making a difference."⁵⁵ Hence, taking into account Gell's theory of agency and Dant's unique perspective concerning non-human entities within the context of ANT, both an object and its affiliates –

51. Dant, 124.

52. Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). For more information on ANT, see Michel Callon, "Society in the Making: The Study of Technology as a Tool for Sociological Analysis," in *The Social Construction of Technical Systems: New Directions in the Sociology and History of Technology*, Wiebe E. Bijker, Thomas P. Hughes, and Trevor J. Pinch, eds. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 83-103; John Law, "Notes on the Theory of Actor-Network: Ordering, Strategy, and Heterogeneity," *Systems Practice* 5 (August 1992): 379-93, accessed April 5, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01059830>; and Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

53. Gell, *Art and Agency*, 7. Research that examines objects as things that have social lives include the various contributions made in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). In this volume, anthropologist Igor Kopytoff's "The Cultural Biography of Things," 64-94, deserves special attention. See also Dick Hebdige, *Hiding in the Light: On Image and Things* (New York: Routledge, 1988); and Rom Harré, "Material Objects in Social Worlds," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 19, no. 5-6 (December 2002): 23-33, accessed May 7, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1177/026327640201900502>.

54. Gell, *Art and Agency*, 17-18.

55. Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 71.

human and non-human intermediaries – are actors that have agency. Specifically, this refers to a “drifting agency that translates action at great distance”⁵⁶ through the object’s actor-network. This agency is not concentrated just with the object but is enacted by the connection between itself and other actors. Therefore, influenced by the work of these theorists in broad outlines, I contend that the player piano had a non-fixed agency, as the breadth of its influential reach was instigated through its association with various groups of actors (for example, piano manufacturers, advertising departments, piano roll artists, and piano roll editors).

Nonetheless, the boundaries of my study, necessary to maintain cohesion and relevance to my thesis, have limited my focus to specific institutions and people connected with player piano advertising and the piano roll industry. Indeed, while ANT is also a research methodology – it originated in the field of science and technology studies – and was utilized as a means of assembling my initial documentation for this dissertation, I consequently had to filter my research through the lens of gender. The player piano’s network was vast; there were many actors in its web of connections. However, the goal of this dissertation is not to show every connection, but to demonstrate that the player piano, in its various functions, was able to express and mediate ideas about gender. And as such, it played a role in the process of consolidating and challenging societal gender norms. This can be done by focusing on the creative choices of different player piano advertising departments (positioned as an institution of actors) conveyed via the advertisements, and the means by which women – a case study of two women in the piano roll industry – made use of the instrument in their musical lives. I accomplish this task in chapters 4, 5 and 8, examining the various ways the player piano influenced and was influenced

56. Benjamin Piecut, “Actor-Networks in Music History: Clarifications and Critiques,” *Twentieth Century Music* 11, no. 2 (May 22, 2014): 198, accessed August 6, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1017/5147857221400005X>.

by these human intermediaries.

One of the main objectives of my dissertation is to investigate the symbolism that an instrument affords. To clarify, this branches out into various research areas, which include studies concerning the emblematic expression of objects, the symbolism encoded in music performance, and the semiotics of musical imagery. Nevertheless, it is the first discipline that theoretically frames my dissertation; it positions the player piano, before any other defined capacity, as an object, albeit a special type regarding its connection to music.

In the field of anthropology, there is an extensive body of literature that examines how objects become symbols. Numerous scholars in this field have developed hypotheses that allow one to comprehend the range of cultural and communicative properties that objects possess. Specifically, these scholars who specialize in the sub-discipline of structural anthropology have provided a clear theoretical understanding of the methods by which linguistic and non-linguistic media can express values and beliefs associated with gender, social class, occupation, and ethnicity.⁵⁷

Structural anthropology has also provided the foundational underpinnings for several sub-specialities. This includes material culture studies; from examining objects as emblems of status and identity⁵⁸ to material entities of signification within and between different cultures,⁵⁹ themes

57. For more information, see Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Broke Grundfest Schoepf (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1963); Roland Barthes, *Elements of Semiology*, trans. Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967); and Marshall Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976).

58. See Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: The Modern Library, [1899] 1934); and Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

59. See Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things*; Mary Douglas and Baron E. Isherwood, *The World of Goods*:

for the analysis of objects are wide-ranging in this area of study. In relation to my topic, it is the latter function that I utilize, drawing from anthropologists Marshall Sahlins and Grant McCracken's research. Both scholars concentrate on a particular type of object: the consumer good. Sahlins argues that goods "stand as a...code for the signification and valuation of persons and occasions, functions and situations."⁶⁰ McCracken (who has employed Sahlins' premise as the foundational basis for his study) has surmised that this object-code permits meaning to be made visible and allows goods to be used as agents of change and continuity.⁶¹

Concerning the former function, consumer goods act as "ballasts." In other words, they are "concrete public record[s] of the existing cultural categories and principles that make up [a] culture."⁶² Hence, goods have a conservative function, acting as a stabilizing object-code, reinforcing old, or more "traditional" cultural principles. Individuals and/or groups wanting to reform society and change the culture are often powerless to do so when confronted with this conservative aspect of goods; this is especially pertinent when it comes to gender. The ideas associated with femininity and masculinity are thoroughly inscribed in material culture and are often difficult to change or expunge. At times, however, it can be done, particularly in historical periods that are marked by social upheaval (the early twentieth century, for example). The object-code, through various means, can be expanded as it absorbs change and configures it in consonance with the current terms sanctioned by culture. Thus, new cultural concepts can be

Towards an Anthropology of Consumption (London: Routledge, 1996); Jean Baudrillard, *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd.,[1998] 2017); and McCracken, *Culture and Consumption*.

60. Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason*, 178.

61. McCracken, *Culture and Consumption*, 131.

62. McCracken, 131.

introduced “through the selective use, novel combination, and premeditated innovation of existing cultural meanings.”⁶³

This hypothesis is broadly in concert with the guiding principle of archaeologist Christopher Tilley’s research on the symbolism of objects. In his article on the Wala canoe, Tilley surmises that the activity between producers and products creates meaning in objects.⁶⁴ By means of clarification, in these relationships with humans, which are part of social practices as outlined by a society’s ideologies, an object’s material form can become associated with cultural categories and principles from the culturally constituted world.⁶⁵ Furthermore, people can use the relationships to manipulate the object-code as they attempt to revise one or many cultural categories, including gender. It is this supposition that supports my general focus on instrument-human relationships.

There were various methods of meaning transfer utilized by the player piano’s human intermediaries in these relationships. Music is one of them, particularly music performance, as has been discussed in the previous section of this chapter. Advertising is another effective medium, particularly in a consumer culture. Theoretically guided by McCracken’s model of meaning transfer, advertising is especially effective in conjoining the consumer good and a “representation of the culturally constituted world” in a way that allows the viewer/reader to

63. McCracken, 134.

64. Positioning the canoes on Wala Island, Vanuatu as polysemous objects, and utilizing ethnographical information and personal field observations, Tilley examines the ways in which notions of “place and landscape, rootedness and journeying, exchange, gender and historical meanings became layered and entangled together” by means of these artefacts. Christopher Tilley, “The Metaphorical Transformations of Wala Canoes,” in *The Material Culture Reader*, ed. Victor Buchli (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 5, 27.

65. McCracken, chap. 5.

glimpse at their essential similarity.⁶⁶ Specifically, the viewer/reader “attributes certain properties...[of the] culturally constituted world to the consumer good,” and thus the “transfer of meaning from world to good is accomplished.”⁶⁷

This process is complicated, but in general, can be summarized as follows: the advertising creative director chooses ideas from a “network of cultural categories and principles,” and then decides upon the manner in which the objects in the frame of the advertisement substantiate these ideas from the culturally constituted world.⁶⁸ The verbal material “serves as a...prompt which instructs the viewer/reader in the salient properties that are supposed to be expressed by the visual part of the advertisement.”⁶⁹ Once this is attained, it must be decoded by the viewer/reader, who acts as the “final author in the process of transfer.”⁷⁰ According to McCracken, this is accomplished through symbolic action, or ritual, by which the individual is given the “opportunity to affirm, evoke, assign, or revise the conventional symbols and meanings of the cultural order.”⁷¹

In relation to my topic, the piano’s emblematic function was formulated by means of its various relationships with human agents – through methods of meaning transfer that included performance and advertising – during the nineteenth century. Hence, by the early twentieth

66. McCracken, *Culture and Consumption*, 77.

67. McCracken, 77.

68. McCracken, 79.

69. McCracken, 79.

70. McCracken, 79.

71. McCracken, 84.

century, the values, ideas, and beliefs that became associated with the piano were, by this time, completely substantiated by means of the instrument's material form, as well as that of the player piano.

To clarify, the player piano's object-code is grounded in the symbolism of the piano (as the former is also a piano and can be utilized in the traditional manner). Nevertheless, its object-code was expanded via contemporary interplay with human agents during the early twentieth century. Meaning tied to the consumer culture, and, in some instances, new cultural concepts became embedded in the player piano's object-code through its relationships with people (this includes inventors, manufacturers, editors, performers, such as player piano operators, and advertisers). In turn, these relationships were inflected by the symbolism already made manifest through the player piano, as well as, in some cases, the instrument's material and musical affordances.

Regarding gender expression, the various actions of player piano advertisers and female piano roll artists both influenced and were influenced by the player piano's object-code. Within the parameters of the modern technological and musical affordances of the player piano (in certain instances) and various ideologies of gender, people were able to use the instrument to broadcast their dissent and conformity with the established order. Many of these ideas about gender as originating by means of their actions with the instrument were already part of the consumer culture of the early twentieth century. However, other ideas communicated notions of equality between the sexes (illustrated in both the visual imagery of music performance, and performance in recording sessions) that were not completely aligned with societal expectations of gender. In this function, the player piano can also be positioned as an object of change.

Additionally, in this capacity, the activities of these player piano human intermediaries can also be viewed as attempts to expand the object-code so that the instrument would symbolize newer ideas from the culturally constituted world, as well as ideas that did not conform to gender norms. This was achieved, and thus the player piano's concrete form gradually took on new meanings throughout its short lifespan as a viable object in the social world.

Conclusion

This dissertation addresses ongoing discourses in various areas of study. Following the example of musicologists who employ interdisciplinary techniques to discern the ways gender manifests in musical processes, my work illustrates how this kind of focus can be integrated into early twentieth-century mechanical instrument historiography. Undeniably, studies of this nature, with reference to the player piano, are sparse in the academic world. Moreover, while augmenting the body of literature in critical organology, this project's approach to the subdiscipline – making use of gender as a means of examining the ways the player piano impacted and was impacted by the social structures of its environment – is singular in the literature on the instrument.

From a more general perspective, my dissertation contributes to research in the fields of material culture studies, sociology, and science and technology studies. I examine the concept of agency and the expression of meaning in objects, while implementing a unique theoretical and methodological framework that synthesizes musicological considerations (regarding the special quality of an object that also functions as a musical instrument).

In the subsequent chapters of this dissertation, through the course of mapping out the analytical layers of my thesis, I arrive at three fundamental conclusions. First, the history of the player piano is a complex narrative of social entanglements that is rarely understood by

historians and music scholars. Indeed, a detailed investigation of the intricate manner by which the instrument's operative capacity and symbolic properties were appropriated by female piano roll artists (to transgress and at times conform to the confines of gender norms) has not, until this study, been outlined in any scholarly writings on the subject.

This leads to my second point, which is that female artists performing and arranging in the piano roll industry were far more prominent and productive than has been detailed in mainstream historical accounts. They are barely mentioned or not mentioned at all in most sources. Although these women were still few when compared to men, their achievements and abilities were, at times, recognized in the industry. While these women did face gender discrimination, they also learned to circumvent the various restrictions they encountered, usually through careful negotiation instead of outright contestation.

This historical reality brings me to my last conclusion: gender expression in the history of the player piano was often, though not always, more nuanced in its deliberation, as is delineated in the following chapters through my examination of Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert, and in my analyses of contemporary player pianos advertisements. Concerning the former, this includes Baker and Alpert's use of the player piano as a site of negotiation for both disputing and conforming to gender norms of the time. Regarding the latter, many of the codes of gender are subtle in player piano advertising and are, at times, misinterpreted in player piano research. For instance, these illusive reorientations of gender are often not recognized, or comprehended merely as traditional representations of gender, passed down from the Gilded Age. Therefore, the employment of techniques from both the fields of musicology and sociology, and a thorough understanding of the role of women and the family during the Progressive Era and into the Twenties allow for a more detailed reading of player piano advertising. Hence, while this

dissertation's focus is limited to a chosen group of actors in the player piano's network, it nonetheless demonstrates how an integrative method in the study of musical instruments can yield insightful results as to the range of a musical instrument's power and influence in its social environment.

Chapter 2: Socio-Historical Context for the Player Piano in the United States, 1900-1928

Introduction

The historical background of the player piano spans two epochs: the Progressive Age (circa 1890-1920), and the Roaring Twenties (1920-1929). Scholars have recognized that this time frame was marked by a momentous transformation of American culture and intellectual life. The player piano was generated by this context – a social world of constant flux. Therefore, a study of this instrument must be framed by its historical situation; if not, it could mistakenly be viewed only as a relic and a mechanical curiosity of a bygone era. On that account, this chapter presents a socio-historical framework for the discussion of the player piano. It begins with a summary of the period from which the instrument gained recognition, continues with a review of race and class relations, and concludes with an examination of the changing role of women.

The last section is the most comprehensive in this chapter, as it provides the historical basis for my gender analyses in chapters 4, 5, and 8. It explores the binary constructs of Victorian gender ideologies and outlines the suffrage movement in America. Furthermore, it presents statistical data concerning the increasing rate of women entering the workforce and examines women's position in relation to marriage and sexuality in early twentieth-century American life.

The Emergence and Reverberations of Modern America: A Concise Overview

In this chapter, I refer to distinct eras for the sake of clarity and convenience. It must be said, however, that the fluidity of the past often resists periodization; this is demonstrated through the

manifestation of twentieth-century modernity.¹ The origins of many of the essential transformations that characterized early twentieth-century Modern America began in the late nineteenth century, during the Gilded Age (1873-1896), as a result of massive immigration and the quickening pace of industrialization and urbanization (see table 2.1). For example, consumerism, which blossomed in the 1920s, accelerated steadily throughout the late nineteenth century, as industrial developments in manufacturing increased productivity, resulting in the mass production and consumption of goods. Moreover, industrial progress, with respect to transportation technology (steamships and the expansion of the railways), allowed for urban centres and agricultural settlements to become more closely connected.

This contact, in conjunction with various other industrial advancements, gave rise to a comprehensive network of bureaucratic structures that integrated the country into a national economy.² In other words, this changed the very nature of America's social and economic order. For example, the shift in the late nineteenth century from unsystematic entrepreneurial capitalism to an embryonic version of corporate capitalism led to a more organized society. As a result, individuals often found themselves affected by influences outside of their control.³

An outcome of this conversion was the gradual destruction of the local autonomy of

1. *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology* defines twentieth-century modernity as the confluence of the cultural, social, and political currents that led to the emergence of new modes of behaviour, thought and consciousness. *Blackwell Reference Online*, s.v. "Modernity," by Gerald Delanty, 2007, accessed April 10, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1111/b.978140124331.2007.x>.

2. Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), 4.

3. The specialization of labour in factories and bureaucracies reinforced the tendency toward social interdependence, as people living in both rural and urban locations became more reliant on others to supply their basic needs.

Table 2.1. Urban and Rural United States Population Growth

<u>Year</u>	<u>Urban</u>	<u>Rural</u>
1880	28%	72%
1890	35%	65%
1900	40%	60%
1910	46%	54%
1920	51%	49%
1930	56%	44%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

small towns in America.⁴ Since the growth of American cities was intertwined with the growth of a national market economy, citizens living in rural areas found themselves increasingly removed from the centre of economic and political power. Their livelihood progressively depended on decisions being made in distant cities.

The country's urban residents, many of whom initially left small towns to find work in the big cities,⁵ also experienced a disconnect, as the friendly workplace associations they enjoyed in smaller communities were replaced by the less personal relationships made in large factories and offices. These individuals had to contend with the indifference of their employers and the monotony and drudgery of long hours. Combined with low wages and an increase in workplace injuries, particularly in factory work, labour uprisings became commonplace, as cities became sites of class struggle. Furthermore, the changing racial demographics in American cities (see table 2.2), as a result of immigration in the nineteenth century (most immigrants chose to stay in the cities, which offered better opportunities for paid employment), was a source of constant

4. Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877-1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967).

5. This includes many African Americans, who, post-slavery, moved from the rural south into the urban north and south looking for work apart from sharecropping.

Table 2.2. United States Population

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage of Immigrants</u>
1850:	23,191,876	9.7%
1890:	62,979,755	14.8%
1920:	106,461,000	13.2%
1930:	123,202,624	11.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, “Historical Statistics of the United States: 1789-1945,” https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/1949/compendia/hist_stats_1789-1945/hist_stats_1789-1945-chB.pdf

strife between old stock Americans and the newly arrived Americans of Eastern European descent. Nevertheless, despite the conflict, these changes did plant the seeds for cultural pluralism, and challenged older notions concerning the definition of American citizenship. Likewise, as developing cities beckoned female workers, more and more women entered the labour force (gradually altering the gender balance in various areas of employment), and the issue of women’s rights became increasingly prevalent nationwide.

The social and economic upheaval of American culture in the late nineteenth century created an atmosphere in which individuals and groups were increasingly able to question, on a national level, the existing state of affairs. This status quo was, in part, connected with Victorian culture.⁶ Three broad reform currents that flourished in the twentieth century – the women’s movement, the drive for civil rights, and the organized labour movement – had their origins in the post-Civil War Era. These campaigns were challenging a Victorian outlook that valued race, gender, and class hierarchies (Protestant, Anglo-Saxon, middle- and upper-class men were

6. Victorianism as culture is particularly characterized by its value system and the control its converts held over the communication systems of various countries in the nineteenth century; this included the British colonies and the United States. Victorian ideals can be defined as a combination of “premodern modes of thought” (originating from patriarchalism and Calvinism) “with attitudes specifically linked to the modernization process.” See Daniel Walker Howe, “American Victorianism as Culture,” *American Quarterly* 27, no. 5 (December 1975): 521-22, accessed January 23, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2712438>.

positioned at the top of the social ladder) as well as a single standard of morality and values.

It must also be noted that the loss of some degree of self-dependence for most Americans (due to the effects of industrialization and urbanization) increasingly subverted individual autonomy (a solid sense of self). The primary tenet of Victorianism, which is the belief in the internal moral authority of an individual, was undermined. In the early to mid-nineteenth century, many people considered the Victorian standards of conduct – which taught people to “work hard, postpone gratification... and to be sober and conscientious”⁷ – to be the “moral gyroscope”⁸ required to confront the ethical and psychic dilemmas of modern civilization. This can also be understood as the internalization of Victorian “character:” an “intangible strength of purpose, combining self-reliance; self-discipline; and responsibility.”⁹ In the earlier age of self-consciousness (early to mid-nineteenth century), Victorian character was considered, by many citizens, as essential with regard to their ability to function within the social structure.

Nevertheless, by the late nineteenth century, with the aforementioned changes in American society taking form, this vision of the self was becoming increasingly inadequate; the basic principles of Victorianism could not relieve the cultural confusion felt by many Americans. As such, more and more people began searching for alternate means to combat feelings of insecurity and helplessness. According to cultural historian Jackson Lears, these citizens began to embrace the “therapeutic world view,” which emphasized self-gratification, moral tolerance,

7. Howe, 521.

8. T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 326.

9. Howe, “American Victorianism as Culture,” 528-29. Key words, garnered from the literature of the time as associated with Victorian character include the following: “citizenship, duty, democracy, work, building, golden deeds, outdoor life, conquest, honor, reputation, morals, manners, integrity, and above all, manhood.” See Warren Susman, *Culture as History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), chap. 14, Google Play Books.

and material consumption.¹⁰ Conflicting with the values of Victorianism, these modes of behaviour were connected to consumerism, or more precisely, the new consumer culture of the Modern Age. During this time, and in the early twentieth century, these two cultures co-existed in opposition to one another. However, consumerism was becoming the dominant culture in the country, although Victorian ideals and values did not completely disappear.

From an anthropological perspective, culture is defined as the “way in which [a] group understands and adjusts to its environment.”¹¹ It is evident that there are many cultures in America, both during the time in question and in the present. Nonetheless, one can also delineate culture as a “general way [of] approaching the world.”¹² Consumerism and Victorianism as cultures represent, more so, this latter definition. Many Americans from different racial, class and ethnic backgrounds utilized the value systems of these cultures to help them adapt to the various stages of modernization.

But as mass consumption progressively exercised powerful influence over the country – a producer ethic was giving way to the consumer ethos, with American society increasingly organized by ideals as connected with the concept of abundance rather than that of scarcity – a new modal type was required for the new social order. Tied to the behaviours as promoted by the therapeutic world view, the new personality emphasized the importance of being liked as opposed to stressing the moral qualities of the Victorian character. Moreover, the cult of

10. Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 47-58.

11. George Cotkin, *Reluctant Modernism: American Thought and Culture, 1880-1900* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers Inc., 1992), 102, Kindle.

12. Cotkin, 102.

personality¹³ encouraged its devotees to express themselves not through individual accomplishment, but through the ownership of things (reflecting on the immediate satisfaction that commodities provided to one's life). By the early twentieth century, personality had become the prevailing ideal, with more people adhering to the dynamic pleasure-oriented consumer culture of the Modern Era as opposed to Victorianism as culture.

The roots of this transformation, however, while generally occurring during the late nineteenth century, had a specific boom in the 1890s: a watershed decade with regard to the reorientation of American social life. According to historian John Higham, the “dynamism that characterized the whole political and social scene from the turn of the twentieth century through WWI emerged during the 1890s in large areas of popular culture.”¹⁴ The growth of public nightlife, the ragtime craze, and the population's fervent interest in sports and recreation contributed to the decline of Victorian culture. The latter favoured private, formal entertainment, and, concerning musical repertoire, preferred parlour songs and Western art music. In part due to the emergence of new forms of popular culture, individuals were breaking away from older forms of the Victorian social code, gradually embracing leisure as a positive good and not placing the same restrictions on their personal desires and impulses.

The 1890s was also marked by a new period of activism – continued challenges to the Victorian hierarchy and the indifference of the Gilded Age – which resulted in the formation of

13. Key terms as connected to the cult of personality include the following: “plenty, play, leisure, recreation, self-fulfillment, dreams, pleasure, immediate gratification, personality, public relations, publicity, [and] celebrity.” See Susman, *Culture as History*, chap. 14.

14. John Higham, “The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890s,” in *The Origins of Modern Consciousness*, ed. John Weiss (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1965), 27.

the Progressive movement. The civil unrest that began in the late nineteenth century persisted into the early twentieth century, as Progressives responded to the imbalances in the American social and economic order. By the end of the nineteenth century, its followers, many of whom belonged to the growing middle class, had increasingly become dissatisfied with the situation in the country and were pressing an uninvolved government to act. This included an appeal for federal aid and intervention.

Progressives were also advocating for change within the government itself, as graft existed in every level on the political spectrum. With the election of President Theodore Roosevelt (in office from 1901 to 1909), who many historians view as the first leader of the movement, Progressives finally had the authority to implement their agenda on a national scale. Roosevelt's administration expanded the power of the executive branch of government, giving the president the ability to make policy, and the administrative branch control over economic regulation. Under his leadership, improvements were made in areas such as labour relations and healthcare, laws were implemented to curtail the power of Big Business, and federal agencies were created to regulate various industries.

Throughout the presidencies of his successors William Howard Taft (1909-1913) and the first term of Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921), new administrative agencies and legislation continued to substantially modify American political and social life.¹⁵ Nonetheless, when the United States entered World War I on April 6, 1917, the focus of the federal government's administration under Wilson significantly changed to that of manufacturing, handling labour

15. Four new constitutional amendments (the Sixteenth through to the Nineteenth) passed during their presidencies consecutively resulted in a federal income tax (1913), the direct election of senators (1913), prohibition (1920-1933), and women's suffrage (1920).

union disputes, and quashing subversion. Additionally, on the domestic home front, there was more cooperation between government and private business, in part, because of the establishment of a multitude of wartime agencies. This was a connection that generally benefited corporations. Increasingly, the government served as an instrument for Big Business, supporting their various actions and acting as an intermediary among interest groups.¹⁶

By the 1920s, despite the perseverance of some Progressive reformers, the major force in the American polity had shifted from Progressive social engineering to interest group politics.¹⁷ Revelling in a new era of postwar economic growth fuelled by electricity and oil (after a brief depression from 1920 to 1921), the decade's three presidents, Warren G. Harding (1921-1923), Calvin Coolidge (1923-1929), and Herbert Hoover (1929-1933) committed their administrations to helping businesses thrive, while also limiting federal regulation processes. Harding's administration led the way for his successors to push through a pro-free market. Business consolidations and mergers passed unhindered as the regulatory state had become "thin to the point of invisible."¹⁸ American corporations wielded immense economic strength, which was only matched by the political power they utilized to shape public policy and manipulate the various branches of government in their favour.

For most of this decade, the majority of Americans did not object to the corporatism¹⁹ in

16. Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 21.

17. Steven J. Diner, *A Very Different Age: Americans of the Progressive Era* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 263.

18. Robert H. Ferrell, *The Presidency of Calvin Coolidge* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 72.

19. For the purpose of this chapter, when utilizing this term, I am referring to the various levels of control over American politics by corporations, rather than government and party control over other organizations and movements.

American politics, content to let those in power “design the corporate state”²⁰ rather than pressing for reforms in social welfare.²¹ This reversal in the issue of private and public power is striking; the public’s distrust of rampant corporate powers in the Progressive Age deviated to that of suspicion of federal influence concerning state and business affairs in the 1920s. The most obvious reason for this stems from the country’s long-held fears of state and federal power, and the ideal of individualism, which formed an important part of the American political tradition.

Nonetheless, the media also played a large role in shaping public opinion. Anti-statist sentiment was spread through newspapers and journals: sensational stories concerning the “evils of federal government expansion”²² were abundant. Furthermore, the redemption of business during WWI allowed much of the public to view corporations as the servants of public welfare (this image was also propagated by the media). Lastly, the complacency of the government, in relation to the free rein given to private corporations, re-affirmed the general public’s belief that there should be a minimum of state and federal interference in the affairs of Big Business. Hence, during this time Big Business was celebrated as the “savior of American democracy”²³ and, according to the media, an era of peace and prosperity had begun. In the pro-business climate of the 1920s, however, the strong resistance to federal regulation had left a corporate and banking structure with many weak links. This, among various other factors, inevitably led to the

20. Maureen A. Flanagan, *Seeing with their Hearts: Chicago Women and the Vision of the Good City, 1871-1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 166.

21. Morton Keller, *Regulating a New Society: Public Policy and Social Change in America, 1900-1933* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 196-209.

22. Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 22.

23. Dumenil, 7.

domino-effect of the Great Crash of 1929.

The Demand for Equal Citizenship: Overview of Race and Class Relations from 1900-1928

Equal American citizenship was an elusive goal for minorities during the early 1900s and into the 1920s, as most Progressives and the majority of Anglo-Americans continued to cling to hegemonic notions of Americanness: the rights and privileges of citizenship were, at this time, synonymous with Protestantism and Whiteness.²⁴ Undeniably, the Progressive movement itself comprised middle-class Anglo-Saxon Protestants who were often unable to look beyond their own biases concerning race, gender, ethnicity, and class when enacting Progressive agendas. Reform proposals either excluded marginalized people or were initiated as a means of assimilating minorities to the dominant model of Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture.²⁵

One of the more insidious examples of this acculturation process was the Americanization movement. In the early years, it consisted of educational programs for immigrants, but by WWI its focus had shifted to that of war propaganda. This version of Americanization integrated preparation for citizenship with the promotion of patriotic support for the war, and surveillance of “suspicious” foreign-born individuals and certain organizations. In the postwar years, this intense public interest and concern did not diminish, as nativists and many Progressives wanted the new immigrants to be eliminated from voting or kept out of the country

24. Historian Janine Giordano Drake’s article, “Race, Class, Religion and American Citizenship,” in the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion* (February 2017), provides an excellent abridged overview on American identity and its connection with Christianity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Accessed May 20, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.489>.

25. This was aimed at European immigrants (those whose skin colour was considered to be “more or less” White) who did not meet Protestant expectations of literacy, sobriety, social mobility, and religious practice. They were predominately Catholic or Jewish and spoke languages that were unfamiliar to Anglo-Americans. These people were thus viewed as a possible “corrupting alien influence” on “traditional” American social values and institutions.

altogether, questioning their ability to contribute to a functioning democracy.

This concept of civic racialism is an unfortunate part of the American heritage and, in the 1920s, was linked to the burgeoning eugenics movement. Their goal was to increase the procreation of those whose genes they considered desirable (Nordic, Germanic, and Anglo-Saxon peoples) and limit reproduction of those whose genes they viewed less favourably (Eastern and Southern European immigrants). Congress was influenced by this theory of Nordic superiority,²⁶ restricting immigration through the passage of the Emergency Quota Act in 1921 and the Reed-Johnson National Origins Act of 1924 (see table 2.2). Quotas continued to be reduced over the next five years, and by 1929, immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe and Asia was limited to 20,000 in total.²⁷

Organized labour, such as the American Federation of Labor (AFL) – the principal federation of American unions – also opposed unregulated immigration. Mounting an anti-immigration campaign, the AFL promoted restricting immigration through various racist, economic, and political discourses, often mirroring the same arguments made by eugenicists and Americanizers. The AFL viewed immigrants, as well as women and African Americans as competition, strike-breakers, and an unskilled labour reserve that would lower wages. They capitalized on White male workers' apprehension of these people, drawing them in to join the ranks; large memberships and full treasuries thus became commonplace for unions.

Furthermore, Woodrow Wilson's administration, in the pre-war and war years, was

26. Eugenicists "testified" before Congress during the Congressional debate over immigration in the 1920s.

27. Tom Streissguth, *The Roaring Twenties: An Eyewitness History* (New York: Facts on File, 2001), 62.

sympathetic to the labour movement.²⁸ This made the AFL a dominant force of influence in the political arena, as they called for better working conditions, higher wages, collective bargaining, and restrictions on immigration. Nonetheless, the power they wielded was short-lived. The union's ability to bargain was significantly diminished during the postwar years and into the 1920s, as many wartime advancements in their favour were rolled back. Trying to fight the retraction of gains, the AFL called for a series of widespread strikes in meat, steel, and other industries. The government at this time had no tolerance for strikers, with many officials designating them pro-communist and anti-American.

For instance, the organized labour disputes inflamed dissent among the American public, and in part, created the perfect atmosphere for government adversaries of the labour movement to instigate a witch hunt for "Reds:" labour leaders, leftists in general, numerous immigrants who were believed to harbour revolutionary sentiments as well as self-proclaimed anarchists and communists.²⁹ This was the First Red Scare (1919-1920), a time period characterized by an intense nationwide fear of Bolshevism and anarchism. Strikers and labour activists were quickly and often violently subdued, and thousands of people were arrested. Further trampling on the civil rights of its citizens, the American federal government had many of these individuals deported.³⁰ The Red Scare was a principal determinant in the crippling of union progress. Hence,

28. Wilson believed that collaboration between unions and the government would benefit every American. Congress, under his leadership, passed numerous pro-labour legislation (specifically during the war), realizing that they needed workers and the unions on their side.

29. U.S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, an enemy of the organized labour movement, expressed intense hostility toward these and all strikers. He tasked J. Edgar Hoover, as the chief of the Bureau of Investigation's General Intelligence Division, to carry out raids (commonly referred to as the Palmer Raids, which included mass roundups of suspected extremists).

30. For example, on December 22, 1919, 249 prominent "radicals" (who were first detained without charge on

class conflict, with regard to the demands of the working class as manifested through union uprisings, including strikes, was basically subdued throughout the Roaring Twenties.³¹

Nonetheless, regardless of the near complete ruination of the labour movement (or the fact that the rights of the working class were increasingly violated by corporate employers), after the depression of 1920-1921, salaries for White urban workers steadily increased throughout the decade. For these employees who worked in factories, the wage gains were partially due to the eruption of new mass production industries. This was the result of a vigorously growing economy. Items were cheaply made, and thus a very small portion of the monetary gains was distributed to workers. Moreover, during this time, employment for the continuously expanding middle class was evolving. With the tremendous growth of a broad range of white-collar jobs, many of these individuals started working for corporations instead of small family businesses.

People from the working class (specifically White males and females) were also able to find jobs as low-level white-collar office employees. While climbing the social ladder was difficult for these individuals (particularly for the women), employment as white-collar workers did give them some middle-class “respectability,” although their salaries were mediocre and did not finance a middle-class lifestyle. Therefore, to some extent, class mingling (mostly white men and women) occurred in various corporations and the fabled prosperity of the 1920s was not completely fictional.

It should be noted, however, that key images of the Roaring Twenties in much of the media – of a fast and frivolous life, propelled by easy money – were, for the most part,

Ellis Island) were cast out of the country on a troop transport called the *Buford*. The vessel was nicknamed the Soviet Art, as its detainees – after the ship made port at Helsinki, Finland – were sent across the border to Russia.

31. Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 221.

associated with the lifestyle of the urban White middle and affluent classes. Many other individuals did not share in this good fortune (of White and other races). In rural America, during the 1920s, the farming industry did not recover from the post-war depression. The stark contrast between the rich and the poor was mirrored by the city and the country, with the latter resenting the economic advancements of the former.

Within the urban areas, income disparity also continued to be a problem for the struggling lower class. The imbalance in the distribution of wealth in American society continued to grow during the 1920s,³² especially for minorities, who were generally excluded from the prosperity of the time. They often struggled with economic hardships, paying more for rent, and living in poverty with their employment opportunities limited to menial jobs. Many in this group, including First Nations peoples, individuals of Asian descent, Eastern and Southern European immigrants, and African Americans also had to contend with issues of segregation, voting disenfranchisement, and violence.

The 1920s is encompassed within an epoch in the history of the United States where racism, which permeated every aspect of American social life, was worse than in any other period after the Civil War. Concerning African Americans, anti-Black violence increased in the early 1900s. The Progressive Age coincided with the Jim Crow Era,³³ a period in which African

32. 71% of American families during the decade had an annual income below \$2,500: the minimum required for a decent living. By 1928, the top 1% of families earned 23.9% of all pre-tax income while the bottom 90% received 50.7%. Drew Desilver, "U.S. Income Inequality on Rise for Decades is Now Highest Since 1928," *Fact Tank: News in Numbers*, Pew Research Center (December 5, 2013), accessed May 10, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/12/05/u-s-income-inequality-on-rise-for-decades-is-now-highest-since-1928/>.

33. This was a time in American history, after the Reconstruction and Post-Reconstruction periods, when racial segregation in all public facilities was mandated by law in the former Confederate States of America. Collectively labeled the Jim Crow laws, they institutionalized educational, social, and economic disadvantages for African Americans and were continuously enforced until 1965.

Americans in the South faced rampant discrimination and terror. Many were brutalized and/or murdered by White mobs, with most of the perpetrators escaping justice. African Americans in the North also had to deal with prejudice and violence, particularly when the racial tensions erupted into widespread nationwide hostility by White America during the postwar years and into the 1920s. This was grievously exemplified in the race riots of the Red Summer of 1919. In cities such as Knoxville, Omaha, Philadelphia, Norfolk, New Orleans, Syracuse, Baltimore, and Wilmington (Delaware), White and Black residents fought each other in the streets, attacked street cars and burned homes and businesses. When the fighting stopped, more Blacks had been killed and injured than Whites, and more Black businesses and homes destroyed.

While there are numerous complicated reasons for this antagonism, the underlying motivation for such resentment was the fact that African Americans were challenging the long-assumed hierarchies in pursuit of economic security and autonomy. For instance, in the early twentieth century, African Americans began to quietly travel North in record numbers to escape the violence of the South and to search for better employment. This First Great Migration saw over 1.5 million African Americans leave the South from 1910 to 1940. While moving to the North did provide them with some relief from Southern brutality (particularly with regard to lynchings), and the jobs there allowed for marginal increases in wages, after the race riots of 1919, African Americans recognized that White hostility would not lessen.

As history recounts, African Americans continued to mobilize throughout the decades, despite the swinging pendulum of progress and backlash. Nonetheless, until the advent of the civil rights movement of the late 1940s, little progress was made by various government administrations in the improvement of quality of life for African Americans. Much of the fault for this general absence of advancement lies with the Progressives, particularly those who held

powerful positions but still failed to act in the best interests of all their citizens (when they had the opportunity to do so). Progressives were blind and/or indifferent to the racial discrimination that was occurring in every aspect of the country's political, social, and economic order. This is clearly evident regarding the fact that the Jim Crow laws in the South stayed in effect throughout the early to mid-twentieth century and were, for the most part, not challenged by Progressive reformers. Hence, for the majority of the twentieth century, African Americans were denied the basic privileges and liberties that American citizenship entailed.

Victorian Ideologies of Gender: The Doctrine of Separate Spheres and the Cult of True Womanhood

During the nineteenth century and into the beginning of the twentieth century, a Victorian gender ideology of spheres and realms and public/private separation was widely propagated in all forms of American media (such as novels, advice books, magazines, schoolbooks, newspapers, and political speeches). Recognized by scholars as the Doctrine of Separate Spheres, this belief system reflected ideals and values around “bi-polar constructs of [male and female] “sexuality and labour.”³⁴ For example, femininity was related to nurturance, volunteerism, reproduction, dedication to family, and domesticity.³⁵ Contrastingly, masculinity was associated with wage earning, conquest, competition, enterprise, and the manufacturing of merchandise.³⁶

Although many of these gender norms and roles can be traced even further back in

34. Cheryl Robertson, “From Cult to Profession: Domestic Women in Search of Equality,” in *The Material Culture of Gender, the Gender of Material Culture*, eds. Katherine Martinez and Kenneth L. Ames (Winterthur: Winterthur Museum and Gardens, 1997), 75.

35. Robertson, 75.

36. Robertson, 75.

American history, in nineteenth-century America, the understanding of this constructed gendered division between males and females was further elaborated by the belief that women had to live in their own private world to avoid the temptations of public life. The reason for this originates from the core belief of Victorian “True Womanhood” (coined by historian Barbara Welter in 1966), which prescribed that a woman’s worth was dependent on her *successfully* fulfilling a series of chronologically designated roles as daughter, wife, and lastly mother. Accomplishing such a feat required the woman to align herself to four cardinal virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity.³⁷ The ideology posited that these attributes made the female an ideal caregiver, allowing her to create a nurturing home for her father/brother/husband/children. She had to be what the men in her circle were not (or not expected to be) – “refined, controlled...self-effacing, and stable.”³⁸

Undoubtedly, the actions of many men in an increasingly materialistic society were at times malicious in nature. This was considered acceptable and often recommended as a means of surviving the hostile world of economic competition. Therefore, men needed refuge – escapism and reflection from the “real world” – and the home was the place for them to soothe their conscience. The wife was obligated to be a source of moral uplifting for the husband.

Furthermore, her responsibilities as a mother were sacred; Victorians exalted motherhood, and the home was the place from which to indoctrinate children with proper Victorian values. The mother was the agent of cultural transmission in the home and the

37. Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 152, accessed February 10, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2711179>.

38. Lewis A. Erenberg, *Steppin' Out: New York Nightlife and the Transformation of American Culture, 1890-1930* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981), 7.

“guardian of moral, religious, and other cultural values among American Victorians.”³⁹ The ideologies of True Womanhood and the Doctrine of Separate Spheres held that none of these duties could be accomplished unless the Victorian home and the wife/mother remained isolated and untouched by the outside world.

Although the hegemonic influence of Victorian values, norms and beliefs on American society cannot be overstated, the degree to which the ideology of separate spheres was truly realized in real families and in society at large is highly debatable. It was not difficult to find women in public in nineteenth-century America. Working-class women participated in the American economy (and did so long before the twentieth century), toiling in factories, agricultural settings, or working as domestic servants. Middle-and-upper class women – while many did not have to take on paid employment to survive – also moved back and forth between home and the public sphere. They went to church meetings, visited friends and family, led and or participated in other ways in women’s organizations, and travelled frequently to their local department stores. Moreover, they did all the above while birthing and weaning their infants (and their working-class counterparts laboured at their jobs while also raising, in many instances, numerous children).

During this period, however, none of these activities qualified under the definition of public; the term had different meanings and rarely described true living realities. Thus, while it is important to understand the ideologies of a culture, in this case Victorian culture, as it demonstrates how Victorians saw themselves and the world around them, utilizing these belief systems as paradigms for analysis of real women can give a false or incomplete representation of

39. Howe, “American Victorianism as Culture,” 530.

historical facts. For instance, the traditional polarities of inside/outside and private/public do not adequately describe the complexities of women's movements in various spaces during the time. Separate spheres ideology depicts "public women," also categorized mainly as prostitutes, as the only visible women. Therefore, scholars often assume that "respectable" women were invisible. This is obviously a fallacy. Hence, applying the private/public binary as a model for organizing research obscures the range of women's involvement in various public arenas during the period.

Some researchers in the field of women's studies have instead focused on visibility, particularly women's various modes of visibility within multiple publics and spaces during specific time periods.⁴⁰ Among the most compelling transformations that occurred in the time spanning the Gilded Age into the Roaring Twenties was the new and different visibility of women in a variety of settings. For example, women became increasingly present and visible in various leisure spaces (one of the many outcomes of a burgeoning consumer culture). These areas included dance halls, amusement parks, nickelodeon shows, and movies. In their daily routine, more and more women travelled to various parts of the city and were visible on the streets and sidewalks.

By entering these spaces in greater numbers, women were unintentionally or purposefully redefining these areas, altering public spaces physically to make room for their gender. One of the more striking examples of this are the suffrage parades of the early twentieth century.

Leaving the indoor halls and meeting rooms, suffragists took to the streets demanding the right to

40. For more information, see the excellent articles compiled in Janet Floyd, Alison Easton, R.J. Ellis, and Lindsey Traub, eds., *Becoming Visible: Women's Presence in Late Nineteenth-Century America* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010). See also Carole Pateman, "Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy," 118-40, in Carole Pateman, *The Disorder of Women: Democracy, Feminism and Political Theory* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989).

vote. The Washington parade of 1913 is the most memorable of these events: 5,000 women marched on Pennsylvania Avenue on March 3, the day before President Woodrow Wilson's inauguration. It garnered much attention and was a pivotal event in the advancement of women's suffrage in the United States. Nonetheless, the violence that ensued – over one hundred marchers were hospitalized due to injuries they received from spectators⁴¹ – demonstrated that although women had the power to change a space by stepping into it, this change was not always easily accepted.

The Women's Movement from 1900-1928: The Fight for Suffrage and the Post-Suffrage Years

As the nineteenth century ended, suffrage for all American women remained an elusive goal; by 1900 only Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, and Idaho had granted full voting rights to women.⁴²

Building on the successes of the old guard – Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony, among others – a new generation of suffragists, including Carrie Chapman Catt, Ida B. Wells, Alice Paul, and Lucy Burns, continued the fight. These women and their contemporaries, however, utilized new and different strategies from their predecessors, abandoning most nineteenth-century tactics of the white suffragists, such as the concept that a woman's right to vote was a part of her natural citizenship.⁴³ The next generation of suffragists also cast aside the

41. "The Woman Suffrage Parade of 1913," *Rare Historical Photos*, first published November 18, 2017, accessed August 10, 2018, <https://rarehistoricalphotos.com/the-woman-suffrage-parade-of-1913/>. The accompanying commentary details the violence experienced by the women.

42. Elizabeth Frost-Knappman and Kathryn Cullen-DuPont, *Women's Suffrage in America* (New York: Facts on File, 2005), 266.

43. While Stanton, Stone, Anthony, and other suffragists utilized various tactics, their main strategy during the early years, called "the New Departure," was to bring the issue of voting rights before the courts. They asserted that the nature of American citizenship automatically conferred suffrage.

malicious idea that White, Victorian women were deserving of the vote because of their supposed “moral superiority” to men and other minorities.⁴⁴ Instead, they stressed the usefulness of the vote for working women.⁴⁵ Their new campaign hinged on the fact that more women had entered the workforce than ever before by the early twentieth century, and these working women needed the vote in order to protect themselves. Undoubtedly, working conditions for women were generally intolerable in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; gender discrimination, and workplace deaths and injuries were commonplace. Working women increasingly joined the ranks of middle-class suffragists, realizing that having a voice in government was the only way to improve working conditions.⁴⁶ With the addition of these women, the suffrage movement flourished.

Nevertheless, it was unquestionably WWI that made a critical difference to the advancement of women’s suffrage in the United States. Women participated in the economy in greater numbers, filling the void of jobs left by men who were conscripted into the military.

44. These highly racialized tactics were grounded in Victorian gender ideologies, particularly in relation to The Cult of True Womanhood and its emphasis concerning a woman’s alleged moral authority. See Louise Michelle Newman, *White Women’s Rights: The Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5.

45. During the fight for suffrage, African American women were, with a few exceptions, excluded from the White-dominated suffrage groups. Racism was a part of the history of the suffrage movement, and not just with reference to their earlier “moral superiority” tactics. In general, they discriminated against Black women’s participation in their organizations, in part because they feared they would lose the support of White suffragists in the Southern States (many of which backed the racist system of Jim Crow). In 1896, several African American women’s organizations formed the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) in Washington D.C., and along with other prominent African American women’s groups, argued and advocated for Black women’s legal rights, in particular the right to vote. They faced a double bind as they struggled for equality as women and respectability as Black women.

46. The International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union strived to protect female sweatshop workers by fighting for better working conditions. Nonetheless, despite the progress made by the ILGWU, for the most part, women had difficulty unionizing or joining other unions, such as the AFL (which was prejudiced against women and minorities).

Numerous women took on employment in areas from which they were previously barred. These included positions as traffic cops, drivers, and mail carriers – gender roles that aligned with traditional notions of masculine behaviour. Their wartime work, in the eyes of many, finally put to rest questions concerning their fitness to participate in the American economy as well as their eligibility for suffrage. In the words of Democratic President Woodrow Wilson, “we [the country] made women partners in the war...shall we admit them only to a partnership of suffering and sacrifice and toil and not to a partnership of privilege and right?”⁴⁷

Wilson, nonetheless, initially attempted to evade the issue of suffrage in his political career. For instance, when the United States entered the war in 1917, Wilson requested the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) (including its affiliates) and other suffrage organizations to suspend their suffrage activities so that they could focus on their war work. This type of petition had been asked of the suffragists of the nineteenth century, during the Civil War, and their compliance with the request had pushed back the goal of suffrage by many years.

Learning from history, the suffragists of the twentieth century refused to stop campaigning. Much of their contention was aimed at Wilson during the war years. NAWSA continuously pressured him to intervene with Congress, and the National Woman’s Party’s (NWP) picketing in front of the White House embarrassed the President, particularly when the public expressed concern over the mistreatment of NWA suffragists upon their arrest and unconstitutional confinement (they were released November 27 and 28, 1917). President Wilson finally relented, taking a pro-suffrage political stance when he issued, on January 9, 1918, a

47. John Milton Cooper Jr., *Pivotal Decades: The United States, 1900-1920* (New York: Norton, 1990), 308.

statement in support of a woman's federal suffrage amendment. Colloquially named the Susan B. Anthony amendment, on June 4, 1919, after finally passing through Congress and the Senate, it was sent to the States for ratification. On August 18, 1920, Tennessee became the required thirty-sixth state to ratify the amendment. Eight days later, on August 26, the Nineteenth Amendment took effect, and American women became enfranchised.⁴⁸

With the uniting goal of suffrage finally accomplished, the women's movement began the relentless task of combating a fully-formed legal and political order that had only grudgingly opened the door, albeit slightly, for women. The vote did not allow for a complete legal and political equilibrium between the sexes.⁴⁹ Hence, in order to end the legal differences between men and women in terms of divorce, property, employment and other matters, the NWP, led by Alice Paul, proposed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) in 1923. It was, however, highly controversial, as its opposition included other women reform organizations.⁵⁰

The antagonism directed towards this amendment in the 1920s exposed conflicting opinions about women's nature and the meaning of equality.⁵¹ These problems plagued the women's movement throughout the post-suffrage era. During the years of the fight for suffrage, the leaders emphasized the bond between women: "a shared gendered identity [that] had been

48. Despite the passage of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth amendments, the vote for African American men and women was systematically taken away by Southern State laws and practices (such as the literacy test and the annual poll tax).

49. For example, in the 1920s most States did not allow women to serve on juries.

50. These women feared that an ERA in the constitution would damage their efforts in attaining or preserving sex-based labour legislation that protected working women from exploitation.

51. Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 104.

forged by the rigid roles for men and women.”⁵² Women’s political and economic exclusion had helped to define their unity.⁵³ Although this was in many ways fictive (class and race barriers were evident throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries), within the White upper and middle classes there was a separate political culture that aligned women’s activities to a common goal.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, by the mid-1920s, as was evident in the increased opposition to the ERA, this cohesion began to erode. The leaders of the women’s movement were unable to provide a framework from which they could constitute a plan that could integrate the ever-increasing objectives of *Feminism*:⁵⁵ “individuality, full political participation, economic independence, [and] sex rights.”⁵⁶ Other reasons for this included a younger generation of women’s indifference towards the movement (they believed that suffrage was the end goal in the struggle for equality), and women’s increasing awareness of the importance of categories other than gender that defined them.⁵⁷ Thus, the women’s movement did not have enough supporters to effect real change in the 1920s.

52. Dumenil, 109

53. Dumenil, 109.

54. Estelle B. Freedman, “Separatism as Strategy: Female Institution-Building and American Feminism, 1870-1830,” *Feminist Studies* 5 (1979): 512-29, accessed March 24, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3177511>.

55. This word came into use in the 1910s (capitalized at first in the literature), at the height of the suffrage movement. See Nancy F. Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 4.

56. Cott, 8.

57. Many African American women were resolute in their beliefs, forming their own organizations, such as the Alpha Suffrage Club in Chicago, led by Ida B. Wells-Barnett, and the National Association of Colored Women (NACW), founded by Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin and Charlotte Forten. These, and other African American suffrage groups were undeterred in their fight for equality. While focusing on similar issues as white suffragist groups (political and economic rights for women as well as access to equal education), the women in these organizations also spoke out against lynching, race rioting and the rape of African American women. They published periodicals, such as the *Women’s Era*, which became a major forum for their views. When some states adopted suffrage in the

New Women versus 'The New Woman: ' Reality or Ideal?

The term “New Woman” was coined by British writer Sarah Grand (a pseudonym for Frances Elizabeth Clarke), in “The New Aspect of the Woman Question.”⁵⁸ This essay describes an educated, middle-upper class White woman of independent means. She became a representation of a new feminism that was emerging during the time. Writers Henry James, Ouida (Maria Louisa Ramé), Lady Florence Caroline Dixie and many others continued to utilize this type of character as a means of addressing contentious issues about women. This included the marriage question, maternity, and education for women.

Undeniably, many women began to rebel against the virtuous “Angel in the House”⁵⁹ role prescribed to them by the ideology of the Cult of True Womanhood.⁶⁰ They wanted to be free from the constraints of household and familial duties and to seek fulfillment in other ways. For example, a growing number of women in the 1880s and 1890s were driven to pursue higher

early twentieth century, Black women’s organizations launched numerous voter registration campaigns. After the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, African American women began to focus more on racial issues, rather than specifically women’s issues. While these women continued to work within their own women’s groups, many others increasingly joined male-dominated black organizations, in the pursuit of common issues involving race.

58. Sarah Grand, “The New Aspect of the Woman Question,” *The North American Review* 158, no. 448 (March 1894): 270-76, accessed December 8, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25103291>. It is interesting to note that Charles Reade used the term in 1877, before Sarah Grand, in his novel *A Woman Hater*. In chapter 17, he describes a female character named Rhoda Gale, who was “bright and keen as steel, quick and spirited, yet controlled by judgment and always mistress of herself.” She confounded the male character of Edward Severne, who “felt himself in the power of this new woman...[as] she seemed to him a new species.” Charles Reade, “A Woman Hater,” Project Gutenberg, chap. 17, last modified January 27, 2021, www.gutenberg.org/files/3669/3669-h/3669-h.htm.

59. Coventry Patmore, *Angel in the House* (London: Cassell & Company, 1891), trans. David Price for Project Gutenberg, accessed January 8, 2022, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4099/4099-h/4099-h.htm>; and Andrea Powell, “The Shaping of the New Woman in the Rise of Silas Lapham,” *MP: An Online Feminist Journal* 1, no. 1 (December 2004): 60, academinist.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/010106Powell_New_Woman.pdf.

60. In the nineteenth century, this term refers to white womanhood as the prescribed ideal of femininity. See Angela Y. Davis, “The Legacies of Slavery: Standards for a New Womanhood,” in Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race & Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983), 3-29, Google Play Books.

education and careers. The feminist ideal of the New Woman, in some way, was associated with these female catalysts for change.

Nonetheless, while it referred to White women's increased college attendance and entry into the professions, the term also signified a new sexuality and changing ideas of femininity. The New Woman rejected the bulky restrictive Victorian garments and embraced a new athleticism. She rode bicycles, sometimes smoked, and played golf and tennis. She valued her sexual autonomy; she could divorce and remarry, and her economic independence allowed her to make her own choices (she was no longer constrained by a guardian).

The New Woman is best described in a poem entitled "The Athletic Girl," in Munsey's Magazine: "With her golfing cap tip tilted and her golfing costume kilted, all her lovers she has jilted and forsworn.... She has tried her hand at boating, and at diving, and at floating, almost everything but voting she controls.... Running, jumping...she seeks for recreation in a whirl; she's a highly energetic...magnetic, peripatetic and athletic kind of girl."⁶¹ According to this description, and others in the popular media of the time, the New Woman was, in many ways, an elusive ideal – her image a formation of the media.⁶² Furthermore, as an archetype of perfection that was difficult for a normal woman to attain, the New Woman was also a subject of the male

61. "The Athletic Girl," *Munsey's Magazine* XV (April-September 1896): 633, accessed February 8, 2016, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/pst.000068739133?urlappend=%3Bseq=975%3Bownerid=13510798902985708-991>.

62. A range of men's creations, from illustrator Charles Dana Gibson's *Gibson Girl* drawings to John Sloan's various paintings and etchings of early twentieth-century women in New York, influenced the form and characteristics of the New Woman. For more information, see "The Gibson Girl as the New Woman," in *The Gibson Girl's America: Drawings by Charles Dana Gibson*, Library of Congress, accessed January 4, 2024, <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/gibson-girls-america/the-gibson-girl-as-the-new-woman.html>; and Janice M. Coco, "Re-viewing John Sloan's Images of Women," *Oxford Art Journal* 21, no. 2 (1988): 79-97, accessed January 4, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1366615>.

gaze.⁶³ She thus became a commodity to male desires, as these qualities made her physically alluring and engaging to men.

She was also, however, a symbol of commodity, or more specifically, mass consumption was increasingly feminized through its connection with the New Woman. Her role, her choices, and her femininity were tied to the consumption of goods. Advertisers appropriated the concept of the New Woman to sell their products; they propagated the notion that a woman's valued autonomy was dependent on her purchases. For example, in an excerpt from *Printers' Ink Monthly*, the writer asserts that a "woman gets what she wants. The vote. Slim sheaths of silk to replace voluminous petticoats.... The right to a career... [and] [s]oap to match her bathroom's color scheme."⁶⁴ These and other advertisers connected, and in some ways, trivialized a woman's choice by integrating more important issues within the context of buying items.

The New Woman was not exempt from the barriers of race and class. Her image reflected an idealized version of a White middle-class woman's experience of the world. The characteristics and freedoms ascribed to her, including her sexual and economic autonomy, did not predominantly describe the experiences of minority women and/or women of modest means. For example, the New Woman's new sexuality was not helpful or liberating for African American women reformers who were trying to invalidate the historically rooted societal stereotypes that depicted them as sexually promiscuous and immoral. Furthermore, many working-class women at the turn of the twentieth century did not have enough money to offset even their basic economic needs. Moreover, they often had to give all their meagre wages to the

63. Laura Prieto, *At Home in the Studio: The Professionalization of Women Artists in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 146.

64. "Feminine Values," *Printers' Ink Monthly* (March 1930): fourth cover.

heads of their households.

Nonetheless, this practice was changing by the 1920s as young working women, eager to participate in the consumer culture, insisted that they keep some or all their earnings. With the increasing flexibility of working hours, due to government regulations,⁶⁵ these women had more leisure time and thus the opportunity to spend their money on cheap amusements: nickelodeons, amusement parks, and dance halls. Furthermore, they wanted to beautify themselves and therefore purchased cosmetics and other cheap mass-produced items, such as clothing and jewelry. This group of various employed women included minorities and children of Eastern and Southern European immigrants. They tried to conform, as consumers acclimatized to the “American way of life” (they spoke better English than their mothers and fathers and could pass as Anglo-American), to the image of the New Woman.

Indeed, in the Roaring Twenties, in mainstream media, the New Woman was still a White middle-class female, embracing both the consumerism of the era and her purported autonomy. Nonetheless, other characteristics attributed to this “model of perfection” had changed in the Roaring Twenties. For example, according to journalist Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, the *new* “New Woman” was unwilling to “wear the mantle” of her predecessors, whom she viewed as zealots.⁶⁶ She was a modern woman, a new type of feminist who wished to live a full life that included

65. From 1900 to 1920, working hours declined 16%. See the “Expansion of Leisure Time,” *Encyclopedia of Recreation and Leisure in America* (Farmington Hills, MI: The Gate Group Inc., 2004), accessed November 1, 2014, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/expansion-leisure-time>.

66. Dorothy Dunbar Bromley, “Feminist-New Style,” *Harper’s Monthly Magazine* 155 (October 1, 1927): 552, accessed March 10, 2016, ProQuest (1301528986).

marriage, children, and a career.⁶⁷ While she took pride in her employed occupation, she did not feel the “economic compulsion which drives men on to build up fortunes.”⁶⁸ These women did not wish to work full time or earn a substantial income, as they did not view themselves as the primary breadwinners. Bromley accurately describes the mindset of many young women of the 1920s. With the vote finally won, these new women were ambivalent towards the goals of the women’s movement, their focus shifted to that of their families and to the pursuance of personal interests.

The image of the New Woman projected a somewhat emancipated youthful persona, without seemingly challenging conventions too greatly. Her liberation was also, to a point, a cultural construct portrayed by the media. For instance, her sexual autonomy, even into the 1920s, had limits. The sexual double standard was in place and women had to exercise discretion in their sexual relationships.⁶⁹ The sacrament of marriage was still the end goal and working women, while espousing that they could have a career and a family, were often required to give up work once they married (and especially when they had children within the confines of marriage). Thus, while the Doctrine of Separate Spheres and the Angel in the House ideologies of the nineteenth century were no longer dominant in the early twentieth century, many of the gender norms that flowed from these ideologies were also part of the new consumer culture of

67. While most feminists in the late nineteenth century remained single or postponed marriage in order to pursue careers or social reform, many educated women in the 1920s were increasingly getting married. See Beth Abelson Macleod, “‘Whence Comes the Lady Tympanist?’ Gender and Instrumental Musicians in America, 1853-1990,” *Journal of Social History* 27, vol. 2 (Winter 1993): 291, accessed September 20, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3788304>; and Bromley, “Feminist-New Style,” 555.

68. Bromley, 555.

69. For example, a woman would often only engage in sexual relations with a partner that she planned to marry in the near future. Phyllis Mary Blanchard and Carlyn Manasses, *New Girls for Old* (New York: Macaulay Co., 1930), 71.

the Modern Era. For example, nurturance and domesticity were still bound to the core definition of femininity.

Nevertheless, despite the lack of choices when it came to their main prescribed role in life (wife and mother), women during this era continued to push the bounds of their social environments, empowering themselves, even as their identity markers (such as age, race, ethnicity, and economic status) added additional constraints to their already difficult situations. For instance, immigrants and first-generation working women, while they could not afford three or four years of college, increasingly finished high school and took post-secondary courses to help them obtain higher paid white-collar jobs. Female sweatshop workers, who were constantly denied membership to male-dominated unions, would sometimes form their own unions to fight for their rights in the workplace. African American women, who migrated with their families to the Northern States, took on low paid factory work or work on the railways (both had fixed hours) in an effort to avoid live-in domestic work where they were exploited by their employers (long hours, low status, lack of freedom and close supervision). While many of these women did not fit perfectly into the mold of the media's portrayal of the New Woman, each was a New Woman in her own right. In the words of American historian Lynn Dumenil, "there was not a new woman, but many new women."⁷⁰

Working Women in the Early Twentieth Century: The Goal of Economic Security

During the Progressive Era and into the 1920s, women increasingly entered the labour market. From 1900 to 1930, the percentage of females over sixteen who worked for wages rose from

70. Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 111.

20.6% to 25.3%.⁷¹ Within these shifting labour developments, however, the most significant change was the rising proportion of older women in the workforce. From 1890 to 1920, the group of employed women between the ages of twenty-five to sixty-four rose from 28.2% to 39.5%.⁷² One of the reasons for the aging of the female labour force was that children were increasingly staying in school and getting their high school diploma. State child labour laws had impeded working-class parents' ability to take their children out of school and put them into paid working occupations; this was usually for the purpose of supplementing the family income. This greatly impacted the number of children working at jobs from the ages of ten to fifteen between 1890 to 1920, when the percentage dropped from 18.1% to 4.7%.⁷³

The ramifications of this affected both the workforce and the American family. One of the consequences was that more mothers took on paid employment, as they were now required to bolster their families' economy in place of their daughters. Statistical data makes this more apparent, as the percentage of married women who worked outside the home rose from around 4% at the turn of the twentieth century to 14% by 1940 (although there are also other reasons for this increase).⁷⁴ Furthermore, as children became more educated, after graduating they were able to obtain more desirable jobs in the white-collar sector. So, while child labour laws did prevent

71. United States Census Bureau, "Comparative Occupation Statistics, 1870-1940: Part II," generated by Alba M. Edward (1943): 92, accessed February 10, 2016, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1940/population-occupation/00312147ch2.pdf>.

72. S.J. Kleinberg, "Women's Employment in the Public and Private Spheres, 1880-1920," in Floyd, Easton, Ellis, and Traub, 96.

73. United States Census Bureau, "Comparative Occupation Statistics," 92.

74. Evan Warwick Roberts, "Her Real Sphere? Married Women's Labor Force Participation in the United States, 1860-1940" (PhD diss., The University of Minnesota, 2007), 1, accessed January 10, 2016, http://econterms.net/pbmeyer/research/occs/morecontent/evan_roberts_dissertation.pdf.

some parents from taking their children out of school, an increasing number of American families came to realize the value of educating their sons and daughters as a means of moving up the class hierarchy, and intentionally kept them in school.⁷⁵

By 1900, more than 3 million women were employed in positions other than that of domestic servant.⁷⁶ The 1900 census included 431,153 women with careers.⁷⁷ Moreover, 503,574 laboured in the trades, 1,315,890 worked in manufacturing, and 980,025 worked in farming.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, the percentage of Black women working in domestic and personal services rose by 19% from 1900 to 1930 and dropped by approximately 8% in agriculture.⁷⁹ African American women were almost completely blocked, by means of racial discrimination, from obtaining clerical and white-collar work. In 1900, while 43.6% of African American women worked in the services (domestic and other), 35% (who reported an occupation in the census) worked as a farmer or farm labourer, and only 0.4% worked in sales and clerical work.⁸⁰ By 1930, not much had changed as only 0.6% of Black women found employment in clerical work.⁸¹

75. Kleinberg, "Women's Employment," 97.

76. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, "Introduction," in *History of Woman Suffrage Vol. 4: 1883-1900*, eds. Susan B. Anthony, and Ida Husted Harber (Indianapolis: The Hollenbeck Press, 1902), xxx, accessed January 8, 2016, <https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/29870/pg29870-images.html>.

77. Stanton, xxx.

78. Stanton, xxiii.

79. United States Census Bureau, *Negroes in the United States: 1920-32*, U.S. Department of Commerce, generated by Charles E. Hall (Washington: Government Printing Press, 1935), 290, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiug.30112047636300?urlappend=%3Bseq=312%Bownerid=109572431-334>.

80. United States Census Bureau, "African Americans in the Twentieth Century," generated by Thomas N. Maloney, EH.net operated by the Economic History Association, information taken from the 1900 Census, accessed February 9, 2018, <https://eh.net/encyclopedia/african-americans-in-the-twentieth-century/>.

81. United States Census Bureau, "Negroes in the United States," 290.

Despite the gains that some African American women found in employment due to vacancies left by men fighting overseas during World War I, most of these higher paying desirable jobs were given to White women. These opportunities, however, were temporary for both White and Black women. Men were still viewed as the primary breadwinners, and thus women who held traditionally male jobs which tended to pay more were, for the most part, let go so that returning veterans could find work. Hence, a division between men and women's work was once again upheld in the postwar years and into the 1920s. While identity markers such as marital status, race, ethnicity, and class did determine women's working experiences from one another, together they all participated within a highly sex-segregated workforce; their labour was devalued by being classified as women's work.

This gender separation made its way into the professions as well. For example, while the "professional woman" had much publicity in the 1920s, the percentage of women working in the professions was small. Doctors, lawyers, and others working in leadership positions were mostly filled by men, as this line of work catered to ideas tied to masculinity: creativity, higher-reasoning, and problem solving. Most women in the professions laboured in the "feminized" fields of teaching, nursing, and social work – traditional gender roles as shaped by gender stereotypes which continued to equate femininity with nurturance and domesticity.

In the 1920s, the popular image in the media of the New Woman as economically independent rang false for women. While some could afford cheap amusements, the wages for clerical and factory occupations were very low and could not sufficiently guarantee a typical middle-class lifestyle. Most of them experienced sexual discrimination in the workplace and had to contend with gendered (reduced) wages, regardless of their duties. These jobs did not bring women financial freedom. Although they did achieve some measure of personal autonomy, many

had to live under harsh conditions in rooming houses and tenements, barely meeting their basic living expenses.

The Social Consequences of the “Affectionate Family”

By the early twentieth century, the number of members in the American family continued to decrease. From 1900 to 1920, the average family size decreased from 4.7 to 4.3 persons.⁸²

Although there are numerous reasons for this decline, the most significant one concerns the changing function and nature of the family. It was no longer a productive economic unit but an “affectionate family,”⁸³ less authoritarian, with its focus on the proper socialization of children. The family became a place of community, with consumption being its main economic activity.

The housewife’s duty as a consumer was linked to this change. For example, her purchases of a washing machine, iron, toaster, sewing machine, refrigerator, and percolator gave her more leisure time to focus on more important tasks, such as spending time with her children. A woman’s principal function was to be a wife and mother. Marriage, with children and the proper attention to the family – by being the best housewife – was constantly propagated in the media.

As portrayed in women’s magazines, a woman’s role as homemaker was glamorized. Nurturing her family, in these magazine articles and advertisements, was tied to her self-worth and a source of personal fulfillment. This placed heavy emotional tolls on the marriage and

82. Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 129.

83. See Dumenil, 130, for more information regarding the concept of the “affectionate family.”

family and was an outcome of the nature of the “affectionate family.”⁸⁴ This was not a consequence of Victorian gender ideologies. As Alexis de Tocqueville noted in 1830, “the Americans...are puritanical people.... [They] require much abnegation on the part of woman and a constant sacrifice of her pleasures to her duties.”⁸⁵ Happiness for a woman in marriage was considered irrelevant and unnecessary for Victorians. Marriage was often a burden that a woman had to quietly endure.

The outlook of the affectionate family was in direct contrast to this philosophy, and women, unhappy in their marriages, were getting divorces more frequently in the early twentieth century. By 1910, 8.9 out of 100 marriages ended in divorce. This escalated in the Roaring Twenties with 13.4 out of 100 divorcing in 1920, and 16.5 couples out of 100 getting a divorce in 1928.⁸⁶ While there were other reasons for the rising divorce rates, historian Elaine Tyler May has postulated that these great expectations of happiness through marriage were the most important determinant influencing divorce during this time.⁸⁷

The chain reaction of these great expectations also connected to the growing acceptance by the public that sex was a crucial part of a good marriage. For Victorians, sexual intercourse for men was an essential release, but for women, it was their duty. The Victorian moral code did not allow middle-class women to even acknowledge that they had sexual needs. Thus, the

84. Dumenil, 130-31.

85. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America, Vol. II. Book 3*, trans. Henry Reeve (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1875), 182, Google Play Books.

86. Streissguth, *The Roaring Twenties*, 37.

87. Elaine Tyler May, *Great Expectations: Marriage and Divorce in Post-Victorian America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).

heightened significance given to sexuality in marriage during the early twentieth century was an indication of the changing ideas concerning female sexuality in American society. Sex was much more out in the open than ever before, as the popularization of the teachings of Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, among many others, challenged older ideas about sexuality.

The attention given to the new sexuality in the early twentieth century coincided with the historical trend toward an increase in women pursuing autonomy in their social lives. The new forms of public leisure allowed young women to shed the traditional chaperone as they went to dance halls, amusement parks and the moving pictures on their own. In these places of recreation and consumption, the sexes socialized freely. This gave young women more freedom to date multiple partners, often leading to various forms of sexual experimentation.⁸⁸ By the 1920s, the validity of this new female sexuality was further acknowledged, in part, by the increased availability of birth control devices. In addition, with reference to the engendering of a new societal mindset towards sexuality, the mass media was just as significant as contraception. By the 1920s, numerous magazines, including *Time*, and *Life*, were promoting the message that sex was valuable for both men and women.⁸⁹

Furthermore, these mass media enterprises were also broadcasting images of attractive women – flappers – who, in their poses and attire, were unabashedly advertising their sex appeal. The flapper was a symbol of modernity and the new sexuality of the 1920s. She most obviously manifested this freedom through her dress, which encompassed a minimum of undergarments, short skirts at the knee, sometimes sleeveless dresses, and flesh-coloured stockings. She was also

88. Kissing, petting, and premarital sex became much more commonplace, as women searched for love and compatibility among their partners.

89. Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, 132.

characterized by her short-bobbed hair, her makeup, and prominent display of jewelry and hats. She also smoked, drank, and danced close and unashamedly. These actions further represented her demand for sexual and personal autonomy.

Nonetheless, the flapper was a caricature in the media (in the same manner as *The New Woman*); her supposed sexual freedom was, for the most part, an illusion. In fact, women attempting to live the flapper lifestyle had to navigate their actions within narrow boundaries, walking a fine line between exploring their sexuality and protecting their reputation by exercising discretion. Unmarried mothers were still considered “fallen” women, and contraceptives, while more readily available in the 1920s, were still, at times, difficult to obtain – especially for single women. While the world had changed very quickly for young women in some ways, much had still stayed the same. The legacy of the Victorian moral code and its gender ideologies had left an imprint on society that was not easily erased.

Conclusion

The twentieth century witnessed more transformations – social, political, and economic – than in any other in recorded history. Concerning the American past, much change occurred during the early decades with the continuous disruption of the country’s social structures. Furthermore, certain significant events – more precisely the social developments that were partially incited by events such as World War I and the eventual culmination of women’s suffrage – in some measure stretched the gender, race and class limitations passed down from the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, to portray this period in history, in any form, as a time of

“equality...is to perpetuate the myth of equality.”⁹⁰ Most African Americans and other minorities in this era were kept in a state of perpetual poverty due to the racial disparities in the system and had to contend with discrimination and sometimes violence by the public at large. Furthermore, class struggles, particularly regarding the evolution of the labour movement, were momentarily silenced during the 1920s.

Although women had proven, through their contribution to WWI and their demands for suffrage, that they could participate in the “masculine” public arena, most men did not consider them to be their equals. For example, women were more accepted into the workforce so long as their jobs were temporary and/or necessary to keep the family financially secure. Furthermore, in the political field, men in the major parties had hoped that with the goal of suffrage finally reached, their female counterparts would keep quiet about other issues, such as gender discrimination.

Women in the post-suffrage years had to contend with a fully-formed American social, political, and economic system that was developed to accommodate only the needs of White men. Moreover, in the face of social change in relation to women’s roles in society, messages that supported the idea that a woman’s place was in the home intensified in the media. Debates concerning the ever-changing relationships of men and women, inside and outside of the household, continued during the time. Hence, rather than defining the early twentieth century as a period characterized by the evolution of equal opportunity for women, it is more factual to state that while an amalgamation of various factors gave a modern outline to the lives of women, these changing circumstances did not make them free.

90. Estelle B. Freedman, “The New Woman: Changing Views of Women in the 1920s,” *Journal of American History* 61 (1974): 393, accessed March 24, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1903954>.

Chapter 3: The Social and Cultural History of the Player Piano in the United States, 1900-1928

Introduction

The rampant industrialization that took place in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries affected every aspect of its culture, including music. The modernization of the manufacturing process allowed for the mass-production of sheet music and musical instruments on a scale previously unknown: this included the modern piano, which by the late nineteenth century, had become the primary musical instrument in America. Furthermore, also during this time, people were experimenting with the mechanical reproduction of sound, which became manifest with the invention of the player piano and the phonograph.

These products were part of an advanced industrial society and represented the increased interconnectivity between music and machine technology. It is important to note that all these devices are machines, with the modern piano, the player piano, and the phonograph, being at the time and in that order, the most complex in terms of their mechanicality. Unlike the phonograph, however, the player piano and the modern piano are also musical instruments. Moreover, while the former instrument was further along the spectrum of mechanization than the latter, the intention behind its technological developments and its social significance in the historical continuum cannot be fully understood unless its connection to the modern piano is explored.

The development of the player piano was greatly contingent on its ability to expand the piano culture for multiple generations. Not fully appreciating this connection would diminish the player piano to that of a musical/mechanical Other. Hence, in this chapter, I provide an overview of the modern piano from the late nineteenth century into the early twentieth century, which

includes an analysis of its position as an emblem of Victorian ideals, followed by an historical narrative of the player piano's lifecycle. This account considers the instrument's multiple affiliations with its forebear while also outlining its connection with the new consumer culture of the Modern Era.

The Modern Piano in America (1865-1915)

During the early to mid-nineteenth century, several technical modifications were made to the piano in Europe.¹ These included metal frames, felt-hammer coverings, refinements in actions, and the extension of the keyboard range from five to seven octaves.² Nevertheless, from 1865 to 1915, many of these developments were combined and improved by the Americans, as the form and function of the modern piano became standardized.³ The United States emerged as the leading country in piano manufacturing and innovation in the Western world, making their mark at the International Exposition of 1867 in Paris. In particular, it was the American companies, Steinway and Chickering who introduced ground-breaking advancements in piano construction. The latter presented five pianos that consisted of their new overstrung system (the bass strings fan out above the other strings), improvements in the securing and position of the agraffes, and a

1. For more information, see Edwin M. Good, *Giraffes, Black Dragons, and Other Pianos: A Technological History from Cristofori to the Modern Concert Grand* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001) chaps. 6-7; and Dorothy Jean De Val, "Gradus ad Parnassum: The Pianoforte in London, 1770-1820" (PhD diss., King's College, 1991), chaps. 2-3, accessed August 5, 2023, <https://kclpure.kcl.ac.uk/portal/files/2931107/308701.pdf>.

2. *The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments*, vol. 3, s.v. "Pianoforte: 1860-1915."

3. For example, the various types of pianofortes were simplified, as large vertical pianos and square pianos gave way to the smaller upright.

single cast-iron frame.⁴ Chickering, Steinway's most significant competitor, and the older American piano manufacturing company of the two, is known for inventing both the first practical casting of a modern iron frame and creating the large overstrung circular scale system.⁵ These modifications resulted in Chickering's pure tone quality and uniformity of timbre.

Steinway and Chickering received numerous awards and argued inconclusively as to whom had won the most important prize. Both were winners, however, and both illustrated American ingenuity and "The American System." This represented the shift from the craft shop to a factory system, particularly the "American Factory System" of specialization, labour-saving machinery, and scientific management, which allowed piano manufacturers to produce many more pianos on a massive scale.⁶ Additionally, the spread of factories also brought about an increase in growth in piano production. These factors, in part, allowed for cheaper upright pianos to be made available to lower income families; many more Americans were able to purchase a piano.⁷ The cost of pianos approximately halved from 1850 to the end of the nineteenth century, with piano production increasing from 1850 to 1890 at a rate 1.6 times faster than population growth. From 1890 to 1900, this ratio rose to 5.6 times, and then 6.2 times during the first decade

4. *Steinway and Sons Catalog* (1888), 8, 16, 23, quoted in "The International Exposition of 1867 in Paris," Smithsonian Institution – The William Steinway Diary Project 1861-1896, accessed September 7, 2014, <https://americanhistory.si.edu/steinwaydiary/annotations/?id=946>.

5. See Margaret Isabella Doherty, "The Development of the Construction of the Pianoforte of America" (BA Thesis, University of Illinois, 1915): 34; and "The Evening Post on Pianos," *The American Art Journal* (April 25, 1866): 8-9, accessed February 15, 2017, <https://archive.org/details/jstor-25306050/page/n1/mode/2up>.

6. Ehrlich, *The Piano*, 137.

7. The financial accessibility of the piano was also due to its standardization, as the simpler, smaller upright allowed for the standardization and interchangeability of its parts. See Good, *Giraffes, Black Dragons, and Other Pianos*, 199.

of the twentieth century.⁸ Thus, one can surmise that the instrument's growing popularity as connected to its affordability was inseparable from the rise of industrial manufacturing.

By the late nineteenth century, as Americans dominated the piano market, the five largest piano manufacturers in the world were based in the United States.⁹ According to social and economic historian Cyril Ehrlich, this period of growth and development of piano production in American history is ascribed to various determinants: an "enormous and continuous increase in effective demand within a highly protected market...was amply satisfied by ideally elastic conditions of supply."¹⁰ From approximately 1840 to 1940, the American population grew exponentially "through natural increase and massive immigration, from seventeen to 132 millions, and real income per head doubled every forty-three years."¹¹ Furthermore, the index of U.S. manufacturing output rose from 16 in 1860 to 172 by 1910.¹² In other words, there were more people in the country every year, making more money, and many of them wanted pianos.

The growth of U.S. industrialization allowed for more affordable pianos to be mass-produced, but it also made pianos more accessible to people living in remote areas in the country. For example, advancements in transportation technology, such as the expansion of the railroad in the Mid-Western States, brought the piano into regions that, in the early nineteenth century, had been too difficult to reach. Moreover, the instrument was also being dispatched on a global scale,

8. Loesser, *Men, Women and Pianos*, 549.

9. Ehrlich, *The Piano*, 128.

10. Ehrlich, 128.

11. Ehrlich, 128.

12. Ehrlich, 128.

as American pianos were shipped to various European and Asian countries as well as to American colonies such as Hawaii and the Philippines.

Nonetheless, it was not just the instrument's material form that was being sold and consumed worldwide, but also that which it symbolically represented: the cultural categories and principles of Victorianism. By the late nineteenth century, Victorians were disseminating their various values, ideas, and norms on an international scale through numerous didactic measures. This included the piano, which was the foundation of Victorian middle-class life. It was their emblem, for to play it demanded toil, sacrifice, and perseverance – fundamental virtues of the Victorian work ethic. Therefore, while the piano's popularity was partially contingent on its affordability and its capabilities as an instrument, a large dimension of its adoration by so many people can be equated with its function as a Victorian symbol. This is summed up perfectly in an article in the *American Art Journal* in 1886. A section of the text reads, “today the piano is an indispensable part of a well [-] regulated household; its social position is unquestionable and impregnable.... How would society go on without it?”¹³

Undeniably, owning a piano represented, particularly for a working-class family, upward movement on the social hierarchy. The rationale for this line of reasoning was that, regardless of the piano's diminishing price tag, the instrument still “represented for many families the biggest single purchase, other than a house.”¹⁴ Money and material possessions were a sign of success and power, and the piano continued to maintain its position as a representation of wealth

13. Henry Cood Watson, ed., “The Social Position of the Piano,” *American Art Journal* 46, no. 10 (December 25, 1886), quoted in Ehrlich, *The Piano*, 130.

14. Edward John Hasse, “Ragtime: From the Top,” in *Ragtime: Its History, Composers and Music*, ed. Edward John Hasse (New York: Collier Macmillan Inc., 1985), 11.

throughout the nineteenth and into the early twentieth centuries. Its presence in the home indicated a family's ability to afford both the instrument and piano lessons.

This is most effectively illustrated in the various advertisements of the time, such as in the following example: a late nineteenth-century B. Shoninger piano trading card (figure 3.1) depicts finely dressed men and women seated in a luxurious home filled with rich carpets, drapes, and knick-knacks. One could argue that the people presented in this ad include Anton Rubinstein (1829-1894) and the other well-known musicians listed in the title (regarding Mozart and Wagner, the former is featured in a picture and the latter is portrayed in a portrait bust).¹⁵ In turn, the one playing the piano appears to be the famed concert pianist Franz Liszt (1811-1886) as he performs his greatest masterpieces (this scenario is fictional, as Liszt retired in 1846, never concertized in America, and most likely never used a Shoninger piano). These images of material possession depict the owner of the home's financial status – possibly one of the artists in the image – and their dignified position in the Victorian pecking order. They were able to produce such finery and could host the master pianist to perform in their home (although Liszt is playing on an upright piano and not a grand, so one can interpret this as a representation of middle-class wealth as opposed to elite upper-class prosperity).¹⁶

This can also be discerned in a 1921 Steinway ad (see figure 3.2). Rubinstein's image, akin to the Shoninger ad, is also utilized, but this time he is performing (instead of listening in the audience) for the perceived "highest echelon" of individuals. This includes the czar of

15. The names of the artists appear to line up with the images of the figures presented in the advertisement.

16. In the nineteenth century, the European virtuoso was idealized by middle-class American audiences as the personification of the ideals of the Victorian work ethic.



Figure 3.1. B. Shoninger Piano Trade Card, *Rubenstein [sic], Thomas, Materna, Nilsson, Patti, Liszt, Mozart, Wagner*, 1870-1900, chromolithograph, 14 x 9 cm. (From the *Nineteenth-Century American Trade Card Collection*. Boston Public Library. Flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/boston_public_library/8410995417/in/album-72157632598780629/)

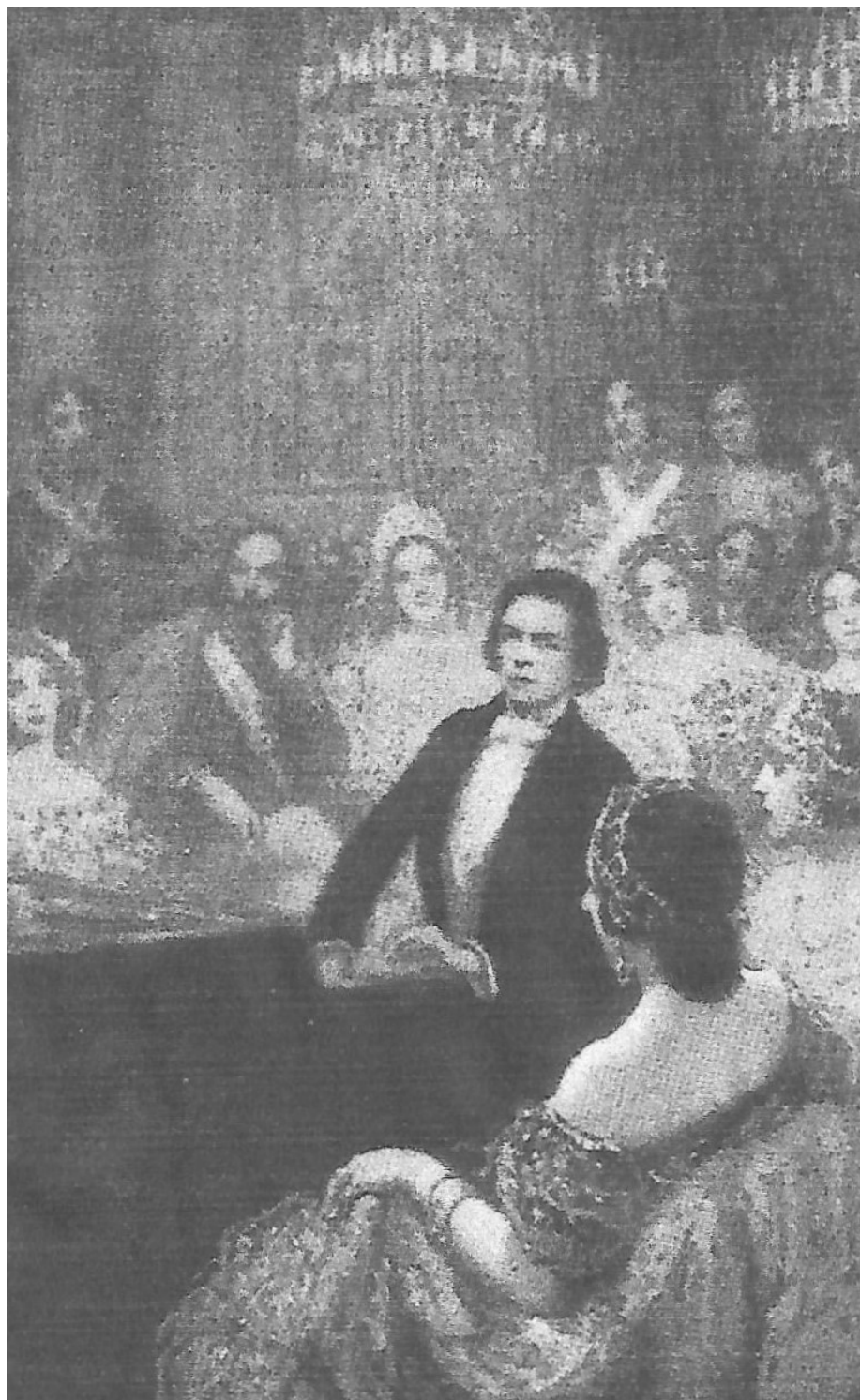


Figure 3.2. F. Luis Mora, *Rubinstein Plays for the Czar*. Steinway's Harmonious Collection. Oil Painting Reproduced in a Steinway Piano Advertisement (*The Literary Digest*, November 5, 1921: 34, https://archive.org/details/sim_literary-digest_1921-11-05_71_6/page/34/mode/2up)

Russia, Nicholas I,¹⁷ seated behind the pianist, and possibly members of his family (also seated next to and close to the Russian ruler). Obviously, an historical image to a 1921 audience – Rubinstein is portrayed as a young man, performing in court in nineteenth-century Russia – the advertisement, nonetheless, associates the piano with the most extreme examples of wealth and status: royalty.

It is worth noting, however, that the significance of the piano as a Victorian symbol was not limited to that of class and social mobility. The instrument also became associated with the virtues attributed to music as medicine for the soul. Throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, music critics, educators and admen regularly preached the moral value of music and its power to “refine character” and improve “the affections” thereby “elevating the whole man.”¹⁸ For example, during World War I, Dr. Walter Damrosch, who was the music director of the New York Philharmonic, stated in an article, “Music at the Front,” that “music makes morale.... And morale means a successful army.”¹⁹ Damrosch also suggested that the American military personnel be “provided with the inspiration which music gives.”²⁰

Undoubtedly, the piano, which was classified in 1917 by the Council of National Defense as “essential to the national welfare,”²¹ was often used in various training facilities, military

17. As children, Anton Rubinstein and his younger brother Nikolai first performed for Nicholas I and his family in 1843 at the Winter Palace. As a young adult, the former became a leading figure in the musical scene in Saint Petersburg from 1848-1853: he composed, taught, and frequently performed at the Imperial court.

18. Lowell Mason, *Manual of the Boston Academy of Music for Instruction in the Elements of Vocal Music on the System of Pestalozzi* (Boston: Carter, Hendee & Co., 1834), 35, Google Play Books.

19. Gabrielle Elliot, “Music at the Front: An Interview with Walter Damrosch,” *Outlook* (October 23, 1918): 286, accessed September 12, 2014, ProQuest (136658363).

20. Elliot, 286.

21. “Big Non-Essential Bugaboo Scotched,” *The Music Trades* 54 (December 15, 1917): 27.

vessels, and YMCA huts as a means of lifting the spirits of American soldiers.²² Following WWI, the idea of music as a moral restorative agent was used in the “music-in-industry” crusade. Business leaders and government officials “sought to remedy the adverse effects that a mechanized industrial economy inflicted upon the...constitution of [the]...workers,” by utilizing the “replenishing quality of music” in the workplace.²³ In 1929, the National Bureau for the Advancement of Music found over 500 major industries involved in this program, as lunch hours became times of musical experimentation. People were encouraged to participate in activities such as playing the piano, singing in a choir, and/or taking part in an instrumental ensemble.²⁴

Music’s moral therapeutic powers as ascribed to Victorian culture were, however, originally meant to counteract the negative effects of money, anxiety, hatred, intrigue, and enterprise which men confronted in the business world; this purpose was more prominent during the Gilded Age and into the early twentieth century (Pre-World War I Era). According to the ideals of the Cult of True Womanhood, women were tasked with negating these unpleasant aspects their husbands, brothers and fathers faced in a world of cut-throat capitalistic opportunity. Their gender role in society was thus closely associated with music and the piano. A mother and/or daughter was expected to provide uplifting musical entertainment in the piano parlour, located in the sanctity of the Victorian home, for the benefit of her male guardian(s). For example, a popular nineteenth-century etiquette book, *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook*

22. Roell, *The Piano in America*, 19.

23. Roell, 11.

24. Kenneth S. Clark, *Music in Industry: A Presentation of Facts Brought Forth by a Survey, Made by the National Bureau for the Advancement of Music, on Musical Activities Among Industrial and Commercial Workers* (New York: National Bureau for the Advancement of Music, 1929), 383.

for Ladies and Gentlemen, claims that a husband or brother “may be made almost domestic by the cheerful notes” of music, and that music “carefully played” soothes the troubles of the world that weighs heavily upon their shoulders.²⁵

These ideas were reinforced decades later into the twentieth century in multiple media forms, including numerous periodicals. For example, an opinion piece from the magazine *The Musician*, “Why Should a Young Girl Take Up the Study of Music?,” bolsters traditional Victorian values by stating that “in the home life[,] the daughter who can contribute to lighten the hours free from the cares of business...is a boon to her father.”²⁶ The author further elaborates on this by referring to the piano when stressing the value of music.

Clearly, through various means, including the fact that many writers made note of the instrument in their commentaries about music as a moral influence, the piano’s object-code became embedded with these ideas. Moreover, these ideas were enmeshed with the social principles as tied to Victorian gender norms – specifically concerning those that governed a woman’s role in the family. In other words, the piano was “an analogical referent to social harmony and domestic order.”²⁷ Domesticity was linked to the feminine. Hence, the piano was predominantly a woman’s instrument (when situated in the home) and a symbol of female accomplishment. This was disseminated and reinforced, in part through an abundance of American piano endorsements and other forms of media (particularly evident in illustrated scenes of domestic piano parlors) from the era. Women – mostly unknown amateurs – are

25. Jane Aster (pseud.), ed., *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook of Etiquette for Ladies and Gentlemen* (New York: Carleton, 1864), 261, Google Play Books.

26. “Why Should a Young Girl Take Up the Study of Music?” *The Musician* 14 (February 1909): 72.

27. Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*, 139.

featured significantly more than men, as they are depicted playing the piano in the home, surrounded by images of familial bliss.²⁸

For example, a Decker Bros. piano advertising trading card from the late nineteenth century depicts a young woman performing for her mother and siblings (see figure 3.3). She is looking over her shoulder at her younger sister who is dancing to the music. Furthermore, her brother leans against the piano, resting his face on one of his hands as he thoroughly enjoys listening to the music. The mother is sitting in a chair, embroidering, and although focused on her work, is still listening to the music performed by her oldest daughter. The father is absent, as he is most likely out at work. Hence, the brother fills in the role of the male figure (although his youth limits his overall control in the patriarchal hierarchy, thus allowing for this scene to emanate a more intimate femininity in atmosphere) as attributed to the musical gender dynamics of the family. For instance, he is the only individual in this image who is listening to the music without being occupied with additional work. Therefore, akin to the father, the function of music in his life, unlike that of his sisters, is only for his contentment and moral well-being. Victorian gender roles are clearly delineated in this advertisement, with the females attending to domestic issues while the male looks on. Furthermore, there are no windows in the picture, as the family life is visually isolated from the outside world; the separate spheres ideology is pictorially defined.

A 1908 Baldwin piano advertisement utilizes many similar themes from the previous

28. In accordance with the parameters of this dissertation, my survey of various nineteenth-century piano trading cards, sheet music covers, images from different piano company catalogs from the era, drawings, and paintings did not yield portrayals of professional female pianists (in domestic scenes). Nevertheless, I did observe a few instances of female professional opera singers in home settings.



Figure 3.3. Decker Bros. Piano Trade Card, *Decker Bros.*, 1870-1900, chromolithograph, 13 x 18 cm. (From the *Nineteenth-Century American Trade Card Collection*. Boston Public Library. Flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/boston_public_library/8410996811/in/album-72157632598780629/)

example (see figure 3.4).²⁹ For instance, the oldest male, in this case the father, is seated with his arms loosely crossed, listening to his wife perform. Both are well dressed, with the woman in a long draping gown, and the man in a suit. Two very young children, one boy and one girl, are playing in the background with their Christmas gifts: a doll for the girl and a train for the boy. The daughter's activity and choice of plaything, and the mother's role as a musical caregiver are domestic in nature. The father, on the other hand, while being soothed by the music, is not

29. Although there is a small image of a player piano in the left corner of this ad, the overall text and most of the pictures presented in this Baldwin endorsement are geared towards selling conventional pianos.



The Gift of all gifts

ACCUSTOM man, woman or child to good music—popular music, if you like, but good—and you lay the foundation for one of the greatest sources of mental enjoyment there is.

To do this, bring into your home the piano that is now conceded to be the world's best—

The one that the greatest player of the piano now living, de Pachmann, and the greatest soprano of the world, Sembrich, use in their own homes—

The piano that received the broadest, most sweeping recognition ever accorded any piano—the Grand Prix at Paris.

FORMERLY a man left his business to his children, whether or not they were competent. Today, the successful business is the one that has eliminated this very thing. And success is due to the fact that in selecting men for responsible positions everything must give way to fitness, *not to inheritance*. The organization of today must have efficiency.

It is the realization of these facts that has made the wonderful success of The Baldwin Company.

The men who make the Baldwin Piano have developed one of the most complete organizations the piano world has ever known. Large enough in its aims, broad enough in its policy to offer opportunities that would attract the best skill.

If a tone regulator has trained his ear to a marvelous degree of accuracy he naturally becomes associated with the Baldwin organization—he wants the skill that goes into every other part to measure up to his.

The price of this Baldwin Piano is \$7,000—American Art Case. While for tunes may be spent in cents, the Baldwin instrument is always the same. Grand, \$800 and up; Uprights, \$550 and up.

It stands to reason that none of the several piano men working apart in competition could accomplish as much as these men working together to attain one end. No one individual could have furnished the skill, experience and resources necessary to get the great advance in tone, action and enduring qualities achieved in the Baldwin.

Hear the Baldwin Piano either in the Baldwin salesrooms in Cincinnati, Chicago, New York, Boston, St. Louis, Indianapolis, Louisville, Terre Haute, Denver, San Francisco, or in other cities in the salesrooms of any of their several thousand dealers.

THERE ARE SPECIAL FEATURES of piano construction in the Baldwin which you should know. Let us send you a book which tells about them.

Address, THE BALDWIN COMPANY, CINCINNATI.

It is the man who comes home too tired to read who needs music. With the BALDWIN PLAYER PIANO he can enjoy the selections he likes, can play them himself, and he is sure to find the Baldwin tone sympathetic and resilient.

"Artists have an inborn reluctance even to practice on Uprights. My prejudice has vanished completely. Today I enjoy playing on BALDWIN UPRIGHT PIANOS in my hotel apartments as much as I enjoy using your Grands on the concert platform."
—de Pachmann.

Grand Prix
Paris, 1900

Grand Prix
St. Louis, 1904

The Baldwin Company

INCORPORATED



Figure 3.4. The Baldwin Piano Company, "Advertisement 38 – No Title." Piano Advertisement (*Outlook*, December 3, 1908: 52, ProQuest 9062380)

actively engaged in any household task. The home is self-contained, with the world, although signified by a window in the picture, having no effect on the family (in the space); the reader cannot see outside. This advertisement recognizes the world beyond the home with the drawing of the window, but the lack of scenery from outdoors allows for the family unit to remain insulated from the public sphere (or, more accurately the ideas concerning the definition of public in Victorian literature).

While middle-class women were expected to play the piano in the privacy of their own homes, with only their family members in attendance, they were not required to become piano virtuosos. The danger for a woman in becoming too good at playing the piano meant that she not only approached the status of a professional, i.e. lower-class, musician, but also was perceived to be abandoning her family responsibilities. Nevertheless, these women still needed to play a few light classical tunes, and to perform the tunes accurately and effectively enough to gain the respect of their families.

The details of women's musical endeavours are captured in numerous American paintings – images that, similar to advertisements, proliferated and strengthened the ideological connection between women's gender roles and the piano – from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This includes Theodore Robinson's *Girl at the Piano* (1887) and Marguerite Stuber Pearson's *At the Piano*, circa 1920s (see figure 3.5 and figure 3.6). While both works of art are surprisingly intimate in nature (allowing outsiders a glimpse into the “insulated, privatized, feminized shrine”³⁰ in which the women practise on their pianos alone, without family members present), they still demonstrate these women's adherence to Victorian gender

30. Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), 117-18.

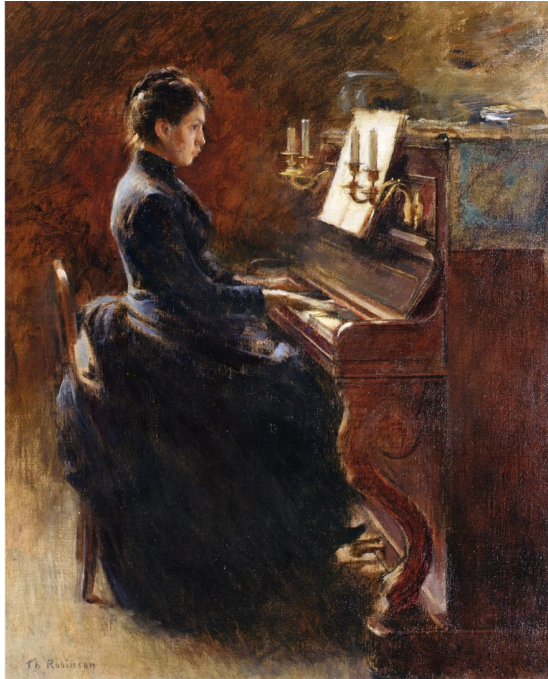


Figure 3.5. Theodore Robinson, *Girl at the Piano*, 1887, oil on canvas, 21.7 x 18 in. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (Reproduced in *Theodore Robinson: 140+ Reproductions of Landscapes, Portraits, and Genre Scenes*. By Denise Ankele. California: Ankele Publishing, 2000-2011, n.p.)



Figure 3.6. Marguerite Stuber Pearson, *At the Piano*, circa 1920s, oil on canvas board, 16 x 20 in. (Reproduced in Pinterest, uploaded by Bonnie Tallo, <https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/205476801719444054/>)

and work ideals. The female subjects in these paintings are practising intently, dedicating their leisure hours to achieving musical proficiency.

Moreover, the signification of the piano concerning its emblematic function in this manner is heightened by the contrast of these women's situations. Robinson's model, most likely a widow (as younger Victorian women generally only wore black to signify mourning) is placed in a sparse environment, performing on an upright piano, and is focused on the score. In contrast, the woman in Pearson's picture is practising on a square piano in a more colourful setting, dressed extravagantly – the instrument and style of fashion evoking a much earlier time than the date of the artwork – and is playing her music from memory while looking at her hands. The latter is presented in a more affluent setting than the former, presumably benefiting from the financial support of a male guardian (although the woman in Robinson's painting is probably middle class, with the meagre setting of her surroundings a symbol of her grief).

As illustrated by these images, the piano as a Victorian symbol crossed social and economic boundaries (and eras, as the historical scene of Pearson's painting suggests an early nineteenth-century home, while Robinson's subject is in a late-nineteenth century piano parlour). By way of explanation, regardless of these women's social and economic standing, both are controlled through their union with their pianos; their bodies are locked in a grid of geometric moldings³¹ with the instruments. The pianos in each painting allow the women to sit gracefully upright with perfect posture, their feet together as their bodies become outward symbols of Victorian grace and charm. Besides a calm concentration, none is showing any exertion on their

31. H. Barbara Weinberg, Doreen Bolger, and David Park Curry, *American Impressionism and Realism: The Paintings of Modern Life, 1885-1915* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1994), 305.

faces.³² The colour scheme, background, and orientation of elements in the paintings visually symbolize their composure. For instance, the women are centred in the paintings, with the sun-drenched interior of *At the Piano* (the items surrounding the woman are difficult to define) and the somber palette of *Girl at the Piano* (the image only consists of the woman, the piano, the score, a book, a chair, and candelabras) enabling the viewer to focus more on the women. Their presence outwardly reflects feminine skills, rather than just a woman's form being utilized as a symbol of their family's financial and social status.

To summarize, the piano symbolized the complex interrelation of the work ethic, the virtues attributed to music, the Cult of True Womanhood and, to a certain extent, the ideology of separate spheres. The Victorian principles organized by these structures continued into the early twentieth century. Nevertheless, Victorian values were increasingly being rejected by the younger population, as the new consumer culture of the Modern Era emphasizing recreation, leisure, instant gratification, and rampant consumerism was becoming the new norm. Why were these Victorian ideals continuously upheld in much of the piano literature and visual media of the time? The piano was a powerful Victorian symbol, and severing this connection in its entirety was impossible, even in a society increasingly grounded in a consumer ethos. Moreover, Victorian culture was still present in the early twentieth century, although no longer the main cultural force in American society.

According to American historians T.J. Jackson Lears and Ellery Sedgwick III, some of these individuals could be considered "anti-modernists;" they observed the rules of the "genteel

32. For more information on Victorian middle-class modesty, the female body, and the piano, see Loesser, *Men Women and Pianos*, 65; Macleod, "'Whence Comes the Lady Tympanist?'" 291; and Vorachek, "Instruments of Desire," 8, 16, 39-40.

tradition,”³³ a heritage based on the Victorian ethic of the mid-nineteenth century. They wished to disseminate to a new generation the values of the golden age, such as discipline, work, and obedience, through intensified evangelism. Within this group were piano manufacturers and dealers, who utilized the piano as a means through which to promote Victorian values.

Nevertheless, in the early twentieth century, this instrument had considerable competition with other consumer goods that represented a more recreationally oriented way of thinking (in their advertising and initial function) that was in line with the emerging consumer culture. These included the radio, the automobile, and the player piano. Surprisingly, regarding the latter device, one of the piano’s most important competitors was a version of itself. A mechanical piano that, for the most part, played itself in a country where so many homes housed pianos that were never played or played badly was eventually viewed as a necessity by the general American population. Indeed, despite the importance of playing the piano in Victorian culture, few amateur pianists could play the instrument well. Music critics and teachers complained about the frequent inability among girls and women to play even simple pieces on the piano properly. Therefore, this need for the repeated musical experience allowed the player piano, for a very short period in history, to become the primary musical instrument of America – replacing the prestigious position of the “silent piano” (see figure 3.7).

Mechanical Sound Reproduction: The Push-Up Piano Player and the Player Piano

Numerous attempts in the nineteenth century were made to build a working mechanical piano.

33. George Santayana, “The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy,” in *The Genteel Tradition: Nine Essays*, ed. Douglas L. Wilson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 39-40; and Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 17, 151, 179. See also Anne Ruggles Gere, *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in U.S. Women’s Clubs, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 175-93.

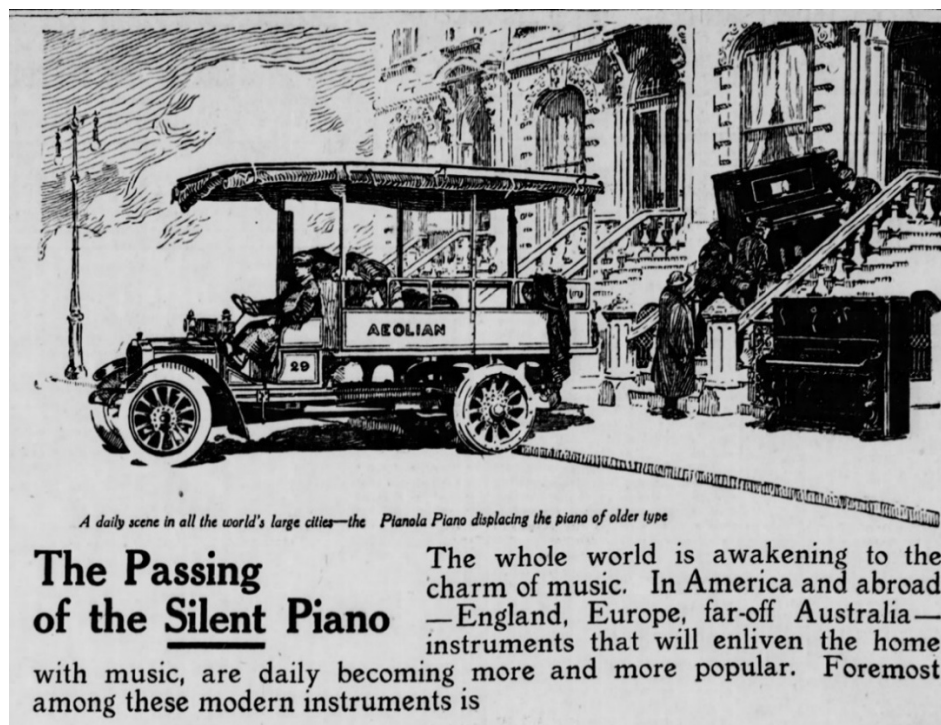


Figure 3.7. The Aeolian Piano Company, “The Passing of the Silent Piano.” Player Piano Advertisement (*New York Tribune*, April 30, 1911: 2, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/79208905>)

The instrument’s inventors, very much ahead of their time, recognized – much earlier than the American public at large – the need for such a device in the Victorian home. Moreover, each of these inventors benefited from the contributions of the others in its development. Hence, there is no one pioneering creator of the player piano.

There are, nonetheless, some important design contributions that should be mentioned, as they laid the groundwork for many other developments in the field in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to historian Q. David Bowers, author of the *Encyclopedia of Automatic Musical Instruments* (a definitive source on the topic), the first roll-operated piano was invented by French mechanical engineer Claude-Félix Seytre in 1840. Patented as the *Autophon*, this contraption utilized thick pieces of perforated cardboard strips that passed over a

plate with pins which, in turn, activated the mechanisms that played a keyboard. Powered by a hand crank, the *Autophon* was a cabinet that rolled up to a row of keys and played them by means of external plungers.

Undeniably, while an abundance of changes and adaptations were made to the mechanical piano after 1840, most early home piano playing contraptions were *push-up piano players* (or *Vorsetzer*, the well-known German name for a piano playing apparatus that “sits before” the instrument) that were theoretically very similar to Seytre’s design. For example, French harmonium builder Louis Nestor Fourneaux’s invention, at the time the most commercially successful mechanical piano, was also a pneumatically operated push-up machine. Patented in 1869 and showcased as the *Fourneaux Pianista Automatique* (see figure 3.8) at the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, it consisted of a hand crank which produced a vacuum controlling a set of mechanical fingers that played the keyboard of a regular piano. The music of this apparatus, however, was not stored on a paper roll, but instead on a pinned barrel, similar to a music box. Another type of “software” for the instrument during the mid- to late nineteenth century, the repertoire range and selection of these wooden barrels was limited, partially because of their cost and dimension. Thus, by the turn of the century, there was a consensus among inventors that paper rolls were more practical than wooden barrels as storage mediums for the mechanical piano.

In 1897, using the former music depository system while building broadly off Fourneaux’s construction – as well as many other mechanical piano mechanisms – the American inventor E.S. Votey perfected the system of the pneumatic action triggered by a perforated paper roll. Marketed as the *Pianola* by the Aeolian Company, this push-up 65-note piano player (which did not require any substantial operative know-how by its consumer) was mass-produced at the

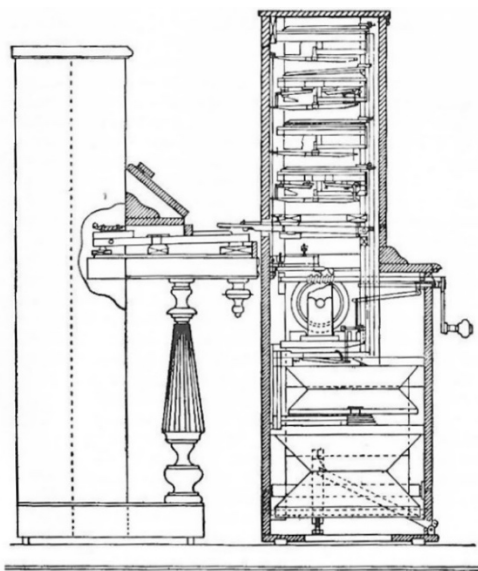


Figure 3.8. Alfred Dolge, *Fourneaux's Pianista*, 1911, Ink Drawing (In *Pianos and Their Makers: A Comprehensive History of the Development of the Piano from the Monochord to the Concert Grand Player Piano*. By Alfred Dolge. Covina, CA: Covina Publishing Company, 1911, 191, Kindle)

beginning of the twentieth century and commercially well-received by the American public. This was largely in part due to the efforts of Harry B. Tremain, who became director of the Aeolian Company in 1899.

Under his leadership, Aeolian launched a unique advertising campaign that utilized the conceptual element of equal opportunity associated with the American Dream; this is the most dominant political ideology in the country concerning the American way of life.³⁴ Namely, Tremain and his company exploited the theme of the democracy of goods,³⁵ in terms of equal access to consumer products, by selling the idea of the democratization of ability and access to

34. Political scientist Cyril Ghosh argues that the American dream consists of three main consecutive elements: individualism, equal opportunity, and happiness through success. See Cyril Ghosh, *The Politics of the American Dream* (New York: Palgrave, 2013), 2.

35. This term was coined by American historian Roland Marchand in *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 47.

music through the medium of the piano player. This is best illustrated in Aeolian's groundbreaking four-page Pianola ad (see figures 3.9 and 3.10 for the first two pages) – composed of two colours, which was unheard of for piano and mechanical piano advertising during this time – that proclaims that “every member of the household may be a performer...”³⁶

This endorsement (the themes of which many other Aeolian mechanical piano ads continued to promote) and the Pianola's subsequent success stunned a piano industry that had, until the advent of this particular design, viewed mechanical piano automation as absurd. Alfred Dolge's 1911 exemplary treatise on mechanical pianos and their manufacturers confirms this, as according to his detailed records, “there was neither competition nor encouragement from the piano trade” before the Pianola.³⁷ Furthermore, to an industry steeped in traditional Victorian values, the many versions of the piano player were, in the 1890s, “cruelly criticized by the [piano] trade in general.”³⁸ The instrument was “laughed at as a useless plaything, or at best, a brother to the barrel organ.”³⁹

Nevertheless, under Tremaine's guidance, Aeolian successfully tapped into the public's need for mechanically reproduced music through their unique packaging and marketing of the instrument that made use of the ideology of the American Dream. They also set a precedent from which many other piano companies decided to follow. For example, a Starr Piano company ad,

36. The Aeolian Company, “Advertisement 42 – No Title,” *The Cosmopolitan: A Monthly Magazine* 32, no. 6 (1902): 750, accessed September 15, 2014, ProQuest (124208864).

37. Dolge, *Pianos and their Makers*, 328, 330.

38. George P. Bent, *Tales of Travel, Life and Love: An Autobiography* (Los Angeles: Times-Mirror Press, 1924), 306, accessed September 18, 2014, <https://archive.org/details/talesoftravellif00bent/page/306/mode/2up>.

39. Dolge, *Pianos and their Makers*, 194.



M U S I C

The Pianola solves the problem of music in the home. Its production was the crowning achievement of musical activity in the century just closed.

Within the home, where there is a Pianola, music reigns supreme, and every member of the household may be a performer. The piano is available to all. In its rhythmic tones the busy man forgets his cares. The hostess finds relief from thoughts concerning entertainment for her guests; and happy young folks respond with feet or voice and in a dance or song find wholesome recreation underneath the family roof.

Of music man never tires. Every new example of the art awakens new emotions in his breast. One piece may lose its freshness, but with the next comes back, enhanced, the pleasure of the first.

The owner of a Pianola need never fear it may grow tiresome. The music for it has no limit. Its repertoire, enormous in extent, magnificent in variety, absolutely precludes such a possibility.

Eight thousand one hundred and thirty-one pieces at present, and new selections added monthly at the rate of two hundred and fifty, makes a collection such as the world has never heretofore seen brought together.

In view of this, how apparent it is that one can never tire of the Pianola.

The Pianola's self is not the question. The music it makes possible is the consideration, and every new selection renews again the novelty and freshness of the instrument.

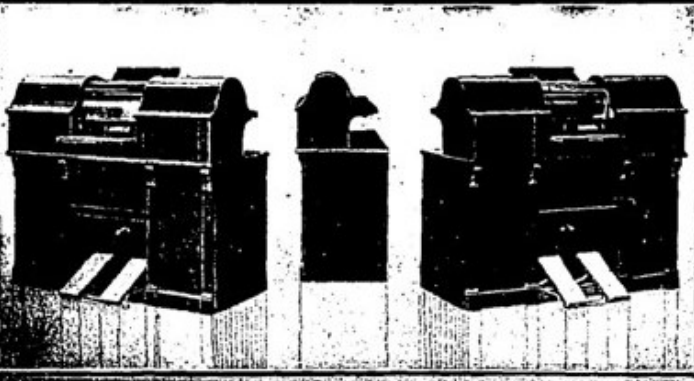


Figure 3.9. The Aeolian Company, "Advertisement 42 – No Title." Pianola Advertisement (*The Cosmopolitan: A Monthly Magazine* 32, no. 6, 1902: 750, ProQuest 124208864)

Without the Pianola, what possibilities are hidden within the piano?

Before the Pianola came, how very few there were who even caught a glimpse into the grand world of harmony. Toiling laboriously to reproduce a small part of the great compositions of the masters, even the best pianists were sadly limited.

The iron rules of technique, the inexorable necessity of long hours spent in daily practice, forbade *pianists* the pleasure of roaming at will throughout the world of music. To all the rest of human kind the masterpieces of the grandest art that is known to man were buried treasures.

This is what the Pianola does for man.

To those who never yet have felt the fascination of pouring forth the best emotions of their souls in music, or those who *used to play*, but have been weaned by other cares from practice, it brings a joy that any time before it came the wealth of all the world could not have bought.

The music of the world is free to all.

For those whom classic pieces interest, Scarlatti, Bach, Haydn, and old Händel have written oratorios and fugues. Unhappy Schubert speaks to them in the sweet tones of Rosamunde. Beethoven, master of masters, thrills alike the listeners and the performer with his Appassionata or beautiful Fifth Symphony.

Chopin bemoans the fate of Poland in his Nocturnes or breathes the fiery valor of his countrymen in Polonaise.

Mendelssohn, Rubinstein, Moszkowski, Liszt, all help to weave tone-pictures for ear and mind alike to revel in.

For other tastes, where settings of the stage have served

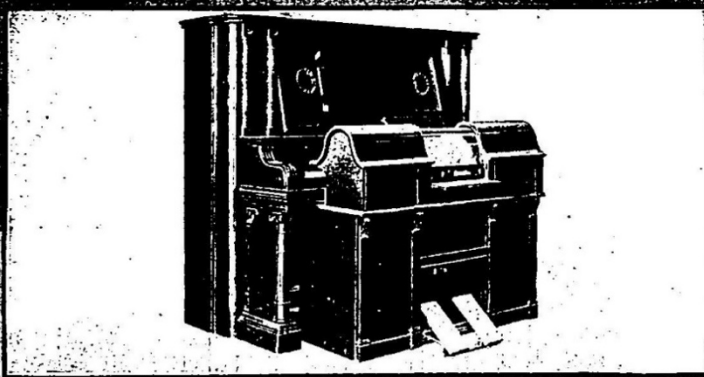


Figure 3.10. The Aeolian Company, "Advertisement 42 – No Title." Pianola Advertisement (*The Cosmopolitan: A Monthly Magazine* 32, no. 6, 1902: 751, ProQuest 124208864)

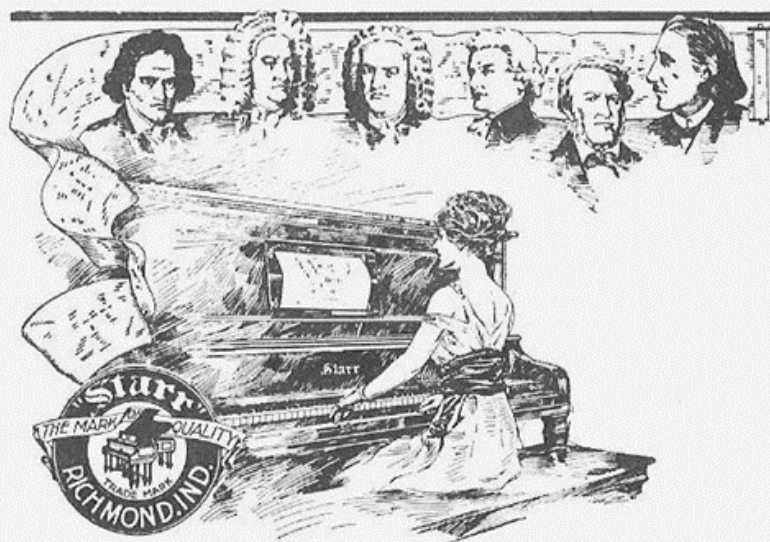
utilizing the same strategy, asserts that its product “removes every barrier of technical inability and gives [one]...access to all the music of all time”⁴⁰ (see figure 3.11).

This company, like many others, originally manufactured only pianos, but upon witnessing the success of Aeolian’s Pianola began, in 1906, to produce mechanical pianos at an alarming rate. These devices, however, were not push-up piano players, but player pianos. Also controlled by paper rolls and pneumatically powered by an air motor, the playing mechanism of the player piano was integrated into the piano cabinet and sold as one unit.⁴¹ The themes of the democracy of ability and access to music continued to be promoted in the advertising of this piano player successor, or, more precisely, the piano player’s counterpart.

It is important to highlight the fact that while piano players generally pre-date player pianos, the invention of the latter did occur much earlier than one would imagine. It is inventor R.W. Pain that is acknowledged in mechanical piano history as the first to pioneer a thirty-nine-note pneumatic player piano for Needham and Sons in 1880, and then the sixty-five-note version in 1888. These were not commercially successful. It was not until innovator Melville Clark designed one of the first eighty-eight-note range player pianos in 1902 that the instrument gained momentum in the market. Other piano companies took note and began mass-producing player pianos. Nonetheless, many of these manufacturers continued to make and promote sixty-five-

40. The Starr Piano Company, “The Starr Piano Company,” reproduced in *Quad-City Times* (June 23, 1963): 74, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/302287191>.

41. Player pianos, later in their development, also featured other mechanisms that affected playback when utilized by the player pianist. These included a tempo lever, an accented device, a sustain pedal lever, and sometimes a button that would soften the sound. See William Braid White, *The Player-Pianist: A Guide to the Appreciation and Interpretation of Music through the Medium of the Player-Piano* (New York: Edward Lyman Bill, 1910), 49, accessed September 9, 2014, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=iau.31858025510326&view=1up&seq=65>.



What Stands Between You and the Music of the Masters?

The Starr Player piano removes every barrier of technical inability and gives you access to all the music of all time. With one of these players at your command the most classical selection is no more difficult than the latest popular song and with the individual interpretation which the Starr makes possible you can produce the grandeur of one or the rag-time swing of the other with equal success. Compositions beyond the ability of the most accomplished pianist you know may be played with a faultless technique and with the same artistic expression of the master musician.

THE STARR PIANO COMPANY

RICHMOND, INDIANA

GRAND

UPRIGHT

PLAYER PIANOS

Also Manufacturers of

The Richmond, The Trayser, The Remington Upright and Player Pianos

Figure 3.11. The Starr Piano Company, "The Starr Piano Company," 1913 (Reproduced in *Quad-City Times*, June 23, 1963: 74, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/302287191>)

note player pianos. Furthermore, most of the perforations for sixty-five-note rolls were not interchangeable from company to company (and much of the eighty-eight-note rolls were also not compatible).

In 1905, four manufacturers, including Aeolian, attempted to solve the problem by standardizing the perforations so that they could be played on the different devices offered by each company. It was during the Buffalo Convention of piano manufacturers in 1910, however, that an agreement was finally brokered. Sixty-five-note rolls would be perforated at six holes to an inch, and eighty-eight-note rolls at nine holes to an inch. This made it possible for almost all sixty-five-note rolls and eighty-eight-note rolls to be adaptable with any sixty-five-note player piano and eighty-eight-note player piano, respectively. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, player pianos overtook push-up piano players; the latter subsequently became obsolete.

The themes of the democracy of ability and access to music embedded in much of the player piano advertising of the early twentieth century, in conjunction with the standardization of roll perforation spacing in 1910, helped set the stage for the great mass penetration of player pianos in the piano market. Statistics confirm the player piano's popularity, as sales rose from roughly 2,180 in 1905 to 95,000 by the end of the decade.⁴² Moreover, sales for the player piano overtook those of the conventional piano during WWI (with regard to the year when the Americans entered the war) and immediate post-war years. According to Cyril Ehrlich, in 1919 approximately 180,000 player pianos were mass-produced, in contrast to the 156,000 regular

42. "1900-1909: Talking Machines and Player Pianos Transform the Industry," in *The Music Trade 100th Anniversary Issue: A History of the U.S. Music Industry*, ed. Brian Majeski (Englewood, NJ: Music Trades, 1990), 52.

pianos that were manufactured during the same time.⁴³

The high demand for these automatic and conventional instruments meant that, as reported by the National Piano Manufacturers Association bulletin, the industry had to operate at full capacity by 1919.⁴⁴ This continued into the early and mid-1920s, as production culminated in 1923, with the construction of 205,556 player pianos out of 347,589 pianos in total.⁴⁵ In other words, these instruments consisted of 53% of the entire yield of American pianos during 1919 and peaked at 56% in 1923. American expenditures on all types of pianos also reached a record high in the latter year: \$104,362,578 in total.

One of the main reasons for this high figure was that mechanical pianos were generally more expensive than regular pianos. For example, in 1898, the push-up Pianola retailed for \$250.00 – a major investment at the time for a single household.⁴⁶ Prices for player pianos were even more expensive at the beginning of the twentieth century and continued to skyrocket into the Roaring Twenties. For many families, this mechanical device replaced the piano as the costliest purchase for the home. Thus, partially the result of its expense, the player piano became a symbol of wealth.

Nevertheless, this connotation extended beyond a mere price tag. To a considerable degree, the player piano's emblematic potency as a sign of wealth was greatly contingent on its

43. Ehrlich, *The Piano*, 134.

44. "Pianos Selling Well: Good Demand Generally for Costlier Musical Instruments," *The New York Times* (May 18, 1919): 34.

45. See Data Table in Roehl, *Player Piano Treasury*, 43.

46. Michael Montgomery, Trebor Jay Tichenor, and John Edward Hasse, "Ragtime on Piano Rolls," in *Ragtime: Its History, Composers and Music*, ed. Edward John Hasse (New York: Collier Macmillan Inc., 1985), 92.

connection with the piano; this is specifically referring to its link with the piano's symbolic properties as related to affluence and social status. In broader terms, the semantic province of the player piano in the early twentieth century was, in many respects, the same as that of the pianoforte. This is due to two important factors, the first being that the piano formed the basis of musical culture on which the player piano was founded. By continuing and expanding the nineteenth-century piano-centred practice of adapting an abundance of music for the keyboard – making available in the home a vast range of musical styles and works – the player piano attached itself to its precursor. The second reason concerns the fact that, although the player piano consisted of a self-playing action apparatus, it was still a standard acoustic piano, as its owners were also able to play it in the traditional manner. Therefore, when one looked at the player piano, one saw a piano, and the various values, norms, ideas, and belief systems of Victorian culture associated with the conventional instrument.

This is made evident most effectively in player piano advertising. For example, regarding the player piano's efficacy to connote wealth and high social rank, a large quantity of the instrument's artwork in advertising employed the same imagery displayed in the previous examples of Victorian piano ads and paintings as presented in this dissertation (as well as many other Victorian endorsements and works of art not mentioned here). This is exemplified in a Kranich and Bach player piano advertisement from 1915 that depicts a man and a woman dressed extravagantly (see figure 3.12). The man is wearing a tuxedo, and the woman is clothed in a pink evening gown that trails along the floor. The woman is operating the player piano with her very small feet; she is wearing sparkling white, high heeled shoes. The room has three beautifully framed paintings, flowers in a vase on the top of the player piano, and a cabinet upon which rests a small statue and a vase with pink cherry blossoms.



To the critical musician who selects a piano or player piano for its tonal and artistic worth there is never any question of the supremacy of the Kranich & Bach. It is the master's recognition of quality accorded only to real musical merit—a quality attained through half a century of striving for perfection, and which should be valued more than all other considerations by discriminating buyers who wish their selections to reflect good taste.

Golden Anniversary Booklet Mailed on Request.

KRANICH & BACH
Ultra-Quality PIANOS
 and PLAYER PIANOS

233-243 EAST 23d STREET NEW YORK CITY

JUBILEE PLAYER
 Price \$700
 F.O.B. New York

"The Instrument You Will Always Enjoy"

H. T. FULCH & SONS
 PICTURE COLLECTION

RECORDED 1915

Figure 3.12. The Kranich & Bach Piano Company, "Kranich & Bach." Player Piano Advertisement, September 1915, Halftone Photomechanical Print, 30.6 x 20.9 cm. (From *The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art Prints and Photographs: Picture Collection*. New York Public Library Digital Collections, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e3-3d10-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>)

The luxuriousness of middle-class wealth in this advertisement can also be observed in a Gulbransen ad from 1925 (see figure 3.13). The imagery, consisting of a fireplace, candelabras, upholstered chairs, rugs, and well-dressed family members, signifies the social status offered by the player piano. The instrument is housed in a beautiful home, and everybody appears content.⁴⁷ All turned towards the player piano, these individuals' happiness, and the exemplary behaviour of the children is directly associated with the mechanical instrument, which becomes the focal point of the household. Thus, this endorsement for Gulbransen also reflects themes of home life and family and paints a picture of the player piano as the source of familial joy. This is supported by the text, which states that "no family group [is] more closely knit together – no home life more delightfully congenial and enjoyable than where the entertainment centers around a Gulbransen."⁴⁸

The similarities concerning the physical positioning of the instrument in the ad, the arrangement of family members, and the portrayal of family cooperation and merriment as illustrated by their body movements and facial expressions are striking when compared to the Victorian advertisements depicted in figures 3.3 and 3.4. The former and the latter examples are accurate representations of many Victorian piano advertising trading cards, piano paintings and drawings, sheet music covers, and pictures in piano catalogues that employ images of family. Hence, while the historical background of this Gulbransen ad is fixed in the 1920s, its showcasing of a household conforming to the ideals of perfect domesticity in music is similar to

47. For a clearer, more detailed rendition of this advertisement, please refer its reproduction in the secondary source, Roehl, *Player Piano Treasury*, 31.

48. The Gulbransen Piano Company, "You'll Like Gulbransen Music, Too," *The Burlington Free Press* (June 10, 1925): 8, accessed February 16, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/197276255>.



YOU'll Like Gulbransen Music, too

No happier folks anywhere—no family group more closely knit together—no home life more delightfully congenial and enjoyable than where the entertainment centers around a Gulbransen!

In the tens of thousands of Gulbransen homes—ask the fathers and mothers. Ask the sons and daughters. Young or old, all say the same about it. All have the same warm feeling for it. Good piano music speaks in language everybody loves and understands. There's no age limit to enjoyment of the Gulbransen! Children take to the Gulbransen naturally, eagerly, enthusi-

astically. It's so easy to play. To sing their school songs to Gulbransen accompaniment—"Columbia," "Sweet and Low," "Sleep Kentucky Babe"—is such fun. Quickly and easily mastered Gulbransen Instruction Rolls stir their interest in music—encourage and sustain it—where tedious finger practice and long months and years of study only dull it.

EXTRA-EASY TERMS

Mail This for Gulbransen
information. Easy Payment
Name
Address

Four Models—Nationally Priced
\$450 - \$530 - \$615 - \$700

E. E. Clarkson & Co.

GULBRANSEN

The Registering Piano

Figure 3.13. The Gulbransen Piano Company, "You'll Like Gulbransen Music Too...." Player Piano Advertisement (*The Burlington Free Press*, June 10, 1925: 8, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/197276255>)

many Victorian piano endorsements and visual media (depicting families) of the late nineteenth century.

Another example of pictorial family happiness as associated with the player piano is illustrated in a Behning ad from the WWI era (see figure 3.14). It shows a soldier performing on the player piano for the pleasure of a family. Two children, a mother and father watch him intently; the children are well-behaved, mesmerized by this player pianist and the music emanating from the player piano. The soldier is not looking at the player piano, but at the family, who are all smiling in contentment. The title of the endorsement is “Home and Memories.”⁴⁹ In the same picture, a “bubble” at the corner also displays another soldier performing on a player piano surrounded by other soldiers with cheerful dispositions. The soldier performing in the bubble also has his head tilted, his gaze fixed not on the instrument but on one of the soldiers. Everyone in this second picture imposed within a picture is also smiling. The domestic order and joyfulness shown by the player piano in the family image is perfectly in sync with that portrayed in the soldier’s image. In the illustration, through their actions and facial expressions, the soldiers’ display of joy and contentment in a war environment reinforced the belief that the player piano, akin to the piano, was also a monument to the moral value of music.

In reality, the player piano did share some of the same responsibility as its predecessor; it was often employed to help raise the morale of the military men fighting in a grueling war. A newspaper clipping in figure 3.15, “The U.S.S. Delaware has Six Autopianos Onboard,” supports

49. The Behning Piano Company, “Home and Memories,” Player Piano Advertisement, n.d., reproduced in Roehl, *Player Piano Treasury*, 32.



Figure 3.14. The Behning Piano Company, "Home and Memories." Player Piano Advertisement, n.d. (Reproduced in *Player Piano Treasury*. By Harvey Roehl. New York: The Vestal Press., 1961, 32)

**Eight More Autopianos
For the U. S. Navy**

Wherever the United States Navy goes, and there isn't one of the seven seas where it doesn't go, an Autopiano goes, too, for this instrument lives up to its proven claim—"The Choice of the Navy." More than 130 vessels of the American fleet are now equipped with Autopianos.

**The U. S. S. Delaware
Has Six Autopianos Aboard**

**"The
Choice
of the
Navy"**

A battleship is a big affair and when often all six Autopianos are going at the same time, giving amusement to hundreds of officers and men, there is no confusion or commingling of music.

The Autopiano is Supreme with our Sea Fighters at sea or in port and when they come home they buy Autopianos—just what you will do if you investigate the reason why the Autopiano is the "Choice of the Navy."

It's because it reproduces music correctly—is economical in price—and gives lasting satisfaction.

One hundred and forty thousand owners and users recommend them.

Call at the store or send the coupon for catalogues, prices and terms of payments.

Other pianos taken in exchange.

Steinway & Sons
46 North Pennsylvania St.

S. Sept.
STEINWAY
& SONS,
46 N. Penn. St.
Indpls., Ind.

Please send Steinway's Music in the Home—New purchasing plan of Autopiano and Pianola.

Name.....
Address.....
Street No.....
State.....

Figure 3.15. "The U.S.S. Delaware has Six Autopianos Onboard (*The Indianapolis Star*, September 4, 1920: 34, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/119329844>)

this claim.⁵⁰ While the latter three player pianos were purchased after the war, a supplementary source confirms that the first three were acquired during WWI.⁵¹ Moreover, it states that these player pianos were an addition to a "long list [of Autopianos] sold for use on various [U.S. Navy] vessels..., many of which have been on ships...[that] have seen active service during the war."⁵² Upon further research, I have ascertained that in total, U.S. Navy and Royal Navy

50. "The U.S.S. Delaware has Six Autopianos Onboard," *The Indianapolis Star* (September 4, 1920): 34, accessed February 17, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/119329844>.

51. Leathers, T.L. Lutkins Inc., "Three More Autopianos on Board U.S.S. Delaware," n.d., reproduced in Roehl, *Player Piano Treasury*, 32.

52. Leathers, 32.

warships housed eighty Autopianos by the onset of World War I.⁵³ Hence, the rather large number of player pianos on board battleships illuminates the fact that the U.S. Military did value these devices as morale builders among the armed forces.

Behning's World War I player piano endorsement in figure 3.14, as well as the Gulbransen ad in figure 3.13 also depict another questionable occurrence: men and boys playing the player piano. While my examination of player piano advertisements and Victorian visual media suggests that males were drawn more frequently operating the player piano in the former as opposed to playing the piano in the latter (see chapter 5 for more information), female player pianists were overall more commonly displayed controlling the mechanical instrument. The image of a female pianist presented in figures 3.3. and 3.4, as the musical guardian of her family's spiritual and religious well-being, was characterized in various guises in countless player piano advertisements. The advertising departments of most player piano manufacturers exploited the familiar ideals associated with the Cult of Domesticity – music and women in the early twentieth century were still symbolically linked – to sell these mechanical instruments.

One of the most obvious examples of this is a Baldwin player piano ad that includes the exact images of family life (see figure 3.16) as presented in figure 3.4. Nevertheless, there are some notable changes: a replacement of the grand piano in the right corner with a player piano and a different text. The musicking of the female player pianist in this Baldwin player piano ad, however, is tied to feminine accomplishment in a similar fashion to that of the conventional piano; her portrayal is identical to the image in the Baldwin piano ad.

A comparable illustration is also presented in figure 3.12. Within the encompassed image

53. Richard J. Howe, "Battleships with Player Pianos," *The AMICA News Bulletin* 28, no. 2 (March/April 1991): 5, accessed April 2, 2014, <https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:nw502rf3483/28-02.pdf>.



The Gift of all gifts

You cannot give "Genius"
for Christmas but you
can closely approach it.

The Baldwin Player-Piano

offers two-thirds of genius's equipment: Suppleness of execution with the power to produce musical effects artistically.

The other third is personality.

It invites you to express the soul and color in music as *you* feel them. It emancipates you from mechanical tyranny, permitting spontaneous and independent effects of beauty wholly new to player music-making.

"In playing the Baldwin Player-Piano," said a famous pianist, "one *really* does share the artist's sensation of 'doing it all himself.'"

"THE BALDWIN PLAYER-PIANO"—this book sent on request.

The Baldwin Company

CINCINNATI
142 West Fourth Street

New York
8 E. 34th Street

Chicago
323 So. Wabash Ave.

St. Louis
1111 Olive Street

San Francisco
310 Sutter Street

Indianapolis
18 N. Penn'a St.

Louisville
425 S. Fourth Ave.

Denver
1626 California St.



Figure 3.16. The Baldwin Piano Company, "Advertisement 1 – No Title." Player Piano Advertisement (*Overland Monthly and Our West Magazine* 58, no. 6, 1911: 0_002, ProQuest 137409106)

of moderate wealth, the woman in this advertisement is operating the player piano, as her husband or fiancé, with his arm leaning against the instrument, affectionately watches her. She is entertaining her male companion as women were expected to do when playing the piano by hand. Furthermore, her body, in relation to the player piano, is framed in a similar way to Victorian endorsements and paintings that displayed women playing pianos. She is in direct union with the player piano, the focal point of the image, as she sits up straight, her arms level and her fingers curved, even though she is not playing the keys but operating the levers. The mechanical instrument is utilized, like the piano, as a means of disciplining the woman's time and body. Her playing is presented as a socially accepted and valued feminine skill favoured in courtship, marriage, and family.

Nonetheless, there are deep underlining discrepancies in this depiction. The piano's symbolic design, as an emblem of womanly accomplishment and a family's financial wealth and high status, was grounded in the Victorian work ethic. The player piano, although also broadcasting the same ideals in its advertising campaigns, was not tied to this governing Victorian structure, but, through its connection to the democracy of ability and access to music, the underpinning of its symbolic foundation was instead linked to passivity and inaction.

The satirical drawing by R.B. Fuller in the *Saturday Evening Post*, "Mrs. Neurich – "Yes, My Daughter Has a Great Foot for Music," (see figure 3.17) outlines this ideological dissonance in a unique and effective manner. Regarding the image, one's eye catches the various vestiges of wealth on display. There are two female adults in the picture, a mother and her friend who are dressed in their Sunday best. They are wearing gloves, elegant gowns, and various pieces of jewelry while sitting in comfortable upholstered chairs. The room has beautiful drapes, large windows with an implicit high ceiling, and various decorations, including a candelabra, an angel

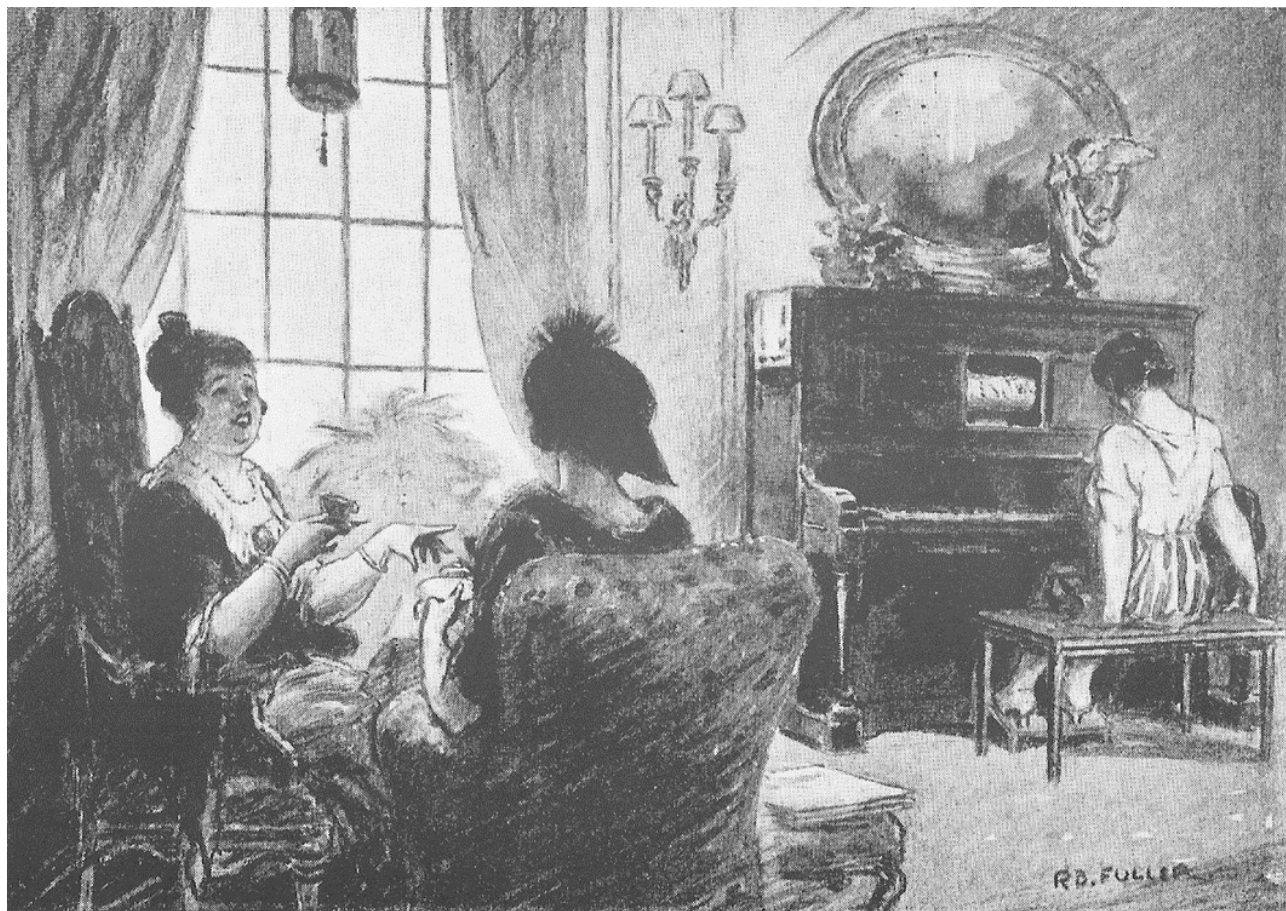


Figure 3.17. R.B. Fuller, “Mrs. Neurich – Yes, My Daughter has a Great Foot for Music” (*The Saturday Evening Post*, February 24, 1923: 74, <https://archive.org/details/the-saturday-evening-post-1923-02-24/page/n75/mode/2up>)

ornament, a plant, and an oval mirror above the player piano. The daughter, hands nowhere near the keyboard but resting on the bench, is operating the mechanical instrument, entertaining her mother and the guest with music.

Located underneath the picture is the phrase, “she has a great foot for music,” which is a play on words of the phrase “she has an ear for music.” Herein lies the satire of Fuller’s cartoon. The daughter’s pedalling technique in this picture is connected to that of pianistic skill. While there is a form of performing occurring in this image, it is obviously different from practising on the conventional piano. The artist is making note of the disparity between the work involved in

mastering the piano, and the general idleness associated with the pedalling of the player piano (although there was some difficulty in pumping the bellows to achieve the proper tempo). Hence, the phrase “my daughter has a great foot for music” also reveals the illogicality of this connection.

The mother, in the cartoon, is boasting about the daughter’s musical proficiency as a sign of the family’s high social status. Nevertheless, this “proficiency” requires little to no work on the part of the girl. The cartoon’s artwork depicts this inactivity by drawing the girl as bored and unamused; she is slouching with her shoulders hunched over and her hands leaning on the back of the piano bench. The contradictory nature of the player piano’s messaging is thus exposed, as this cartoon provides an insightful social commentary of a period in which two cultures – the consumer culture of the Modern Era and Victorian culture – co-existed within a short time span. The theme of democratization concerning musical ability and access to music was linked to the more prevalent consumer culture (as opposed to the weakened structures of Victorianism), which placed high value on leisure and pleasure in one’s life.

As the former increasingly exerted hegemonic domination over American culture, the enjoyment of the beauty of music, as connected to one’s personal fulfillment, was gradually viewed as more important than the work involved in achieving the end result (when playing by hand). For example, the quotation in the Starr Piano advertisement from figure 3.11 (regarding the player piano’s ability to remove all technical difficulties for the user) can be interpreted as a declaration that the effort required for mastering one’s technique when performing in the traditional manner – the years of practice – is both unnecessary and unimportant.

In the late teens and twenties of the last century, this mindset became more widespread in player piano advertising. For instance, unlike the Starr player piano ad and other player piano

endorsements earlier in the century, the passivity that was an outcome of the democracy of ability and access to music was not merely hinted at but emphatically proclaimed through various means in later advertisements. This includes the Gulbransen player piano endorsements with the “Easy to Play” headlines and “Baby” trademark (see figures 3.18 and 3.19). Pumping the bellows of a player piano could be tiring for the operator. The Gulbransen image of a baby’s hand pushing one of the bellows, with no physical exertion illustrated on his face, communicates the message that using their instrument was both instantly gratifying and effortless. The text in figure 3.18 supports the message as interpreted through the imagery: “anyone can [perform] on a Gulbransen...as it is...a piano you learn to play in two weeks, instead of two years.”⁵⁴

Another Gulbransen example that utilizes similar textual and pictorial communications and still exploits the topic of age and physical weakness is “The-Easy-to-Play Gulbransen Inspires Young and Old” advertisement. Presenting a picture of an older woman seated at the instrument, with a young child standing beside her, the ad also broadcasts the characters’ intentions by means of the text. It reads, “Grandma, aren’t you tired?” The grandmother assures her granddaughter that she is not exhausted, and that she can perform for hours because the Gulbransen is “easy to play.”⁵⁵ In this case, by referring to the elderly, rather than the extremely young, Gulbransen continued to emphasize the extent of ease for the consumer when operating their player piano.

Many Gulbransen ads, as well as endorsements from other player piano companies, while

54. The Gulbransen Piano Company, “Gulbransen Player Piano,” *The Dispatch* (December 7, 1921): 13, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/339583315>.

55. The Gulbransen Piano Company, “The Easy-to-Play Gulbransen Inspires Young and Old,” *The Miltonvale Record* (January 20, 1921): 2, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/482183947>.

(Pronounced Gul-BRAN-sen)

GULBRANSEN

Player-Piano



Oh! Ride-a-Cock-Horse to Banbury Cross, th' Gulbransen Has Made a Boy of the Bos

Look at the Joneses—Such Fun With Their Gulbransen!

IF YOU knew the Joneses you'd know why. The merry music of the Gulbransen—the delight each of them takes in playing it—here's a world o' new fun for family and friends.

Listen—mechanically produced music is pretty tame compared with the human playing anyone can do on the Gulbransen. Listen—your ear tells you it is real; you warm up to it; you try it yourself—and you are amazed.

For the Gulbransen is not a “player-piano” as you have known them. It is more truthfully a piano you learn to play in two weeks instead of two years. Instruction rolls show you how to play with every form of musical expression. You'll find it an ever-growing, delightful recreation; an unequaled education in music.



Gulbransen Trade Mark

White House Model, \$700
Country Seat Model, \$600
Suburban Model, \$495

Convenient Terms of Payment.

Nationally Priced

Gulbransen Player-Pianos, three models, all playable by hand or by roll, are sold at the same prices to everybody, everywhere in the United States, freight and war tax paid. Price, branded in the back of each instrument at the factory, includes a set of Gulbransen instruction rolls.

*Try the
Gulbransen Only
Ten Minutes*

At our store you can prove to yourself in ten minutes that the Gulbransen is easy for you to play well—a marvelous instrument—positively fascinating.

Baxter Piano Co.

216-218 W. Third St.—One Block East of Kahl Bldg., Davenport, Ia.

Figure 3.18. The Gulbransen Piano Company, “Gulbransen Player Piano.” Advertisement (*The Dispatch*, December 7, 1921: 13, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/339583315>)



Figure 3.19. The Gulbransen Piano Company, “Easy to Play.” Gulbransen Trademark (*Janesville Daily Gazette*, March 6, 1920: 12, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/74087904>)

promoting leisure and instant gratification through their advertising, also directed their messaging towards an emphasis on the individual’s self-expression, as showcased through musical performance (this is grounded in the signification of experiencing music with regard to one’s immediate satisfaction by its aesthetic qualities). For example, in figure 3.13, while stating that the children are enthusiastic about the Gulbransen because “it’s so easy to play,” the text also argues that the Gulbransen player piano allows the consumer to “play...with...much feeling

and musical expression.”⁵⁶ Moreover, an ad for Kranich and Bach player pianos reads, “without study or practice,” its owner is endowed with “an absolutely technical perfection.” It continues by enthusiastically praising its “marvelous ‘Tri-Melodene’” expressive attachment, which is “simple and easily operated,” thereby providing a “means for personal control and expression.”⁵⁷

To be able to communicate, through various methods, one’s individuality – personal autonomy came under threat due to the reorientation of American culture – was very important to the country’s citizens in the early twentieth century. Specifically, Americans did not want to surrender their individual “self” to the machine. This included the assembly line in factory settings as well as the self-playing mechanism of the player piano. Recognizing these concerns, many player piano advertisements, as well as numerous other forms of player piano media, attempted to re-create the idea of performance.⁵⁸ Each person who “played by foot” was assured that they were not relinquishing their selfhood (or musicality) to the machine; the machine only assisted with the technical aspects of playing the piano. For instance, the trade magazine, *Player Piano*, states that player piano salesmen should emphasize the artistic when attempting to sell their instrument to potential buyers: “never use the word ‘operator’ when referring to one who uses or demonstrates a player piano” as this “person is a performer.”⁵⁹

Additionally, player piano manuals, method books, and trade reviews would often

56. The Gulbransen Piano Company, “You’ll Like Gulbransen Music, Too,” *The Burlington Free Press* (June 10, 1925): 8, accessed February 17, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/197276255>.

57. The Kranich & Bach Piano Company, “Advertisement 69 – No Title,” *Life* (December 7, 1911): 1055, accessed September 9, 2014, ProQuest (90750845).

58. See original research by Taylor, “The Commodification of Music,” 288-92.

59. “Player-Piano Nomenclature: Words to Use and Avoid,” *Player Piano* 1, no. 5 (September 1911): 5-6.

highlight the word “soul” when referring to a consumer’s player piano performance. For example, a quote from D. Miller Wilson’s player piano instruction book says that in order “to give free play to the imagination, and to bring out – coax out – the melody[,] which is echoed from the soul, one must be freed from the mechanically difficult operation of fingering.”⁶⁰

American pianist and composer Arthur Whiting also utilized this symbolically charged vocabulary in one of his articles. He declared that “the mechanical art meets one not only halfway but all the way, for there are no preliminaries to its master and the soul becomes at once articulate.”⁶¹ By evoking the human soul, these authors surmised that it was not just the agency of the individual that was being safeguarded, but the very essence of their being.

This type of player piano literature was reflecting some of the main tenets of Victorianism, as well as ideals of the consumer culture, by re-framing the limited action of participation in player piano events as performances and connecting them to the “sacred” act of self-expression of the human soul. This presentation of the self was an amalgamation of some of the traits tied to the notion of Victorian “character” as well as that of the new “personality.” Concerning the latter, creativity was portrayed as a means of exercising self-development.

The parameters of this promotional material are, nevertheless, aligned with producer values: the process of making music through live performance. The culture of character was tied to the work ethic and the concept of performance as action. Although there was limited labour involved in player piano renditions, much of the framework of the encounters with regard to

60. Wilson, *The ‘Player-Piano,’* 55-56.

61. Arthur Whiting, “The Mechanical Player” *Yale Review* 8 (1918-1919): 829, accessed October 4, 2014, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924057529780&view=1up&seq=843&q1=%22soul%20becomes%20at%20once%22>.

passivity was ignored in these writings in favour of focusing on the self as fixed to the aforementioned concept. However, as the player piano was being marketed as a machine that allowed for freedom of individual expression through performance, there were traces of the inevitable end result of this precarious path of increasing passivity in the musical experience: the consolidation of music as a commodity as defined by the repeated musical experience.

Situating the Reproducing Piano Within the Process of Music's Commodification

In advertising, the player piano's connection with the commodification of music can be traced back as early as 1902, in an Aeolian piano player advertisement (see figures 3.9 and 3.10). While the text states that the device gives joy to "those who never yet have felt the fascination of pouring forth the best emotions of their souls...",⁶² it also declares that the "Pianola's self is not the question...the music it makes possible is the consideration."⁶³ It continues by listing various composers including "Scarlatti, Bach, Haydn...and Schubert."⁶⁴ In this endorsement, the selfhood of the Pianola recedes into the background so that the composer and the performer – recorded in piano rolls – as well as the human operator can assume their dominant positions in the hierarchy. Hence, owning great music and knowing that more was always being manufactured was considered as significant as performing music "by foot" in a live performance setting.

Indeed, by the mid-1920s, for consumers in general, the prominence given to the self and

62. The Aeolian Company, "Advertisement 42 – No Title," 751.

63. The Aeolian Company, 750.

64. The Aeolian Company, 750.

the soul in player piano advertising had shifted to that of owning music in the form of the piano roll. This signified a milestone in the process of the art form's commodification.⁶⁵ In no small matter, this was due to the advancement of the reproducing piano,⁶⁶ which was viewed by scholars as the final phase of the development of the player piano. The Welt-Mignon reproducing piano, Aeolian's *Duo-Art*, and the American Piano Company's Ampico emerged as the leaders in the industry. Many of the great artists recorded rolls for these companies, as reproducing rolls were recordings of human pianists.⁶⁷ This "software" consisted of additional punched holes on the edges of the rolls which activated the apparatuses that controlled expression, volume, and tempo.

Unsurpassable in mechanical music technology and sound recording fidelity for the time,⁶⁸ these devices (when powered by electricity) did not require an operator, as the human personality was eliminated from the equation. The user's body was completely displaced, as there were no levers to activate and no bellows to pump. Although these dismissed operators would sometimes watch the invisible hands play the keys, their only contribution in this process was the purchasing of the roll. Hence, the musical experience is progressively tied to inactivity, as the conversion of music from an ephemeral action to a commodified consumer good, in

65. Taylor, "The Commodification of Music," 292.

66. Taylor, 293.

67. Nevertheless, the reproducing piano's recording process could not directly capture the pianist's expression, such as their dynamic nuances and accentuation in performance. This was recorded via a producer's edits, sometimes during the live performance in the studio. See chapter 8 for more information.

68. This statement is legitimized when one compares the fidelity of the reproducing piano to that of the phonograph before the mid- to late 1920s. The reproducing piano was the first choice for pianists in the teens and early 1920s, as recording for the phonograph imposed many restrictions on the artists (editing, time etc...). Moreover, the latter device could not, during the time, reproduce proper piano tone in the same manner as the reproducing piano.

relation to sound reproduction, was nearly complete.⁶⁹

This is demonstrated in various reproducing piano advertisements, including an Artrio-Angelus ad entitled “Lean Back and Listen” (see figure 3.20). Its illustration presents a woman, elegantly dressed, sitting in a comfortable chair listening to the reproducing piano “perform” her favourite pieces. The text states, “this very evening, in the quiet of your home, you may summon for your delights such artists as Yolando Mere...[and] Godowsky....”⁷⁰ In another example, a Duo-Art Pianola advertisement, a man sits in a comfortable armchair – the background presents a roaring fire in the fireplace with a reproducing piano – resting his eyes with his body turned away from the instrument (see figure 3.21). He has, according to the wording in the endorsement, turned “the lights low...[for] nothing else is so restful” than listening to the “great pianists.”⁷¹ The text is written in a first-person account, as the character in this picture also declares that the spirits of “Paderewski...and Joseph Hofmann” come into his room to perform for his own personal enjoyment.⁷²

In both examples, the musical encounters are best described as possessive and passive. These individuals own the music; their instant gratification is achieved through its commodification. They do not actively engage with the music in any way that would signify a

69. Taylor, “The Commodification of Music,” 293. A detailed examination of the phonograph and radio, while beyond the parameters of this dissertation, demonstrates the fact that these devices also influenced the process of music’s commodification in the early twentieth century.

70. Wilcox & White Piano & Organ Company, “Advertisement 17 – No Title,” *McClure’s Magazine* 51, no. 21 (December 1919): 35, accessed September 28, 2014, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015030656048&view=1up&seq=791&q1=%22lean%20back%20and%20listen%22>.

71. The Aeolian Company, “My Wonderful Piano,” *The South Bend Tribune* (December 14, 1921): 10, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/513546668>.

72. The Aeolian Company, 10.



Lean Back and Listen

THIS very evening, in the quiet of your home, you may summon for your delight such artists as Beryl Rubinstein, Herma Menth, Harold Bauer, Yolande Mero, Doris Madden, Gabrilowitch and Godowsky.

Lean back and listen. They will play your favorite compositions. Science and art have struck hands to make your dreams come true. They have created

THE ARTRIO ANGELUS REPRODUCING PIANO

In itself a superb example of craftsmanship, the electrically operated Artrio brings to every home the true pleasure of hearing music as the artist himself first played it.

The Artrio is also a beautifully constructed and beautifully toned grand piano that you may play yourself. There are no projections to interfere with playing as in other reproducing grands.

We are makers of the Angelus Piano, The Angelus Player Action, The Artrio Angelus (electrically operated) and Angelus Artistyle Rollis. Send for our interesting catalog number 33.

THE WILCOX & WHITE CO.
MERIDEN, CONN.

Figure 3.20. Wilcox & White Piano & Organ Company, "Advertisement 17 – No Title." Advertisement for the Artrio Angelus Reproducing Piano (*McClure's Magazine* 51, No. 21, December 1919: 35, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015030656048&view=1up&seq=791&q1=%22lean%20back%20and%20listen%22>)

Victrolas Pianos
MUSIC
ELBEL BROS.



My Wonderful Piano

▼ ▼ ▼

MY PIANO stands in the corner of our living room. To appearance it is a beautiful little mahogany Weber Grand.

Pianists who occasionally come to our house and sit at it marvel at its tone. It seems incredible that such a dainty little instrument can hold so full and rich and deep a tone.

But the tone of my piano, glorious as it is, is but the smallest part of its wonder. It is really a magic instrument. To explain, let me tell you about last night.

After finishing my paper, I turned the lights low. It had been a hard day in town and I wanted music. Nothing else is so restful and so uplifting.

When ready I summoned the fairies who preside over the destinies of all magic things. "I want to hear the most beautiful music in the world," I said. "Not too heavy and classic, but fine music with a melody exquisitely played." And then the miracle. One by one there came into my room a troop of the spirits of the great pianists—the living masters of today.

First at the keyboard was Paderewski. Bravo! No one in the world can play his Minuet as he. Dainty, crisp, sparkling, the superb voice of my Weber sang a melody into the notes under those wonderful fingers that was balm to my music-hungry soul.

And then Josef Hofmann. Mendelssohn's "Rondo Capriccioso." No one who has ever heard Hofmann's playing can forget it or mistake it. No wonder the world pays such high tribute

to its master artists. Pieces that you think you know take on such beauty and a new meaning under their hands.

One by one the other spirits played. Harold Bauer, Ossip Gabrilowitsch, Rudolph Ganz, Percy Grainger, Guimard Novae, dainty little Wilfred Byrd—each gave freely of his or her genius to make my enjoyment and happiness complete. And then as my mood changed, came others—masters of dance and popular music—and played as only these can play these light and rhythmic pieces.

• • •

This isn't the whole story of my wonderful piano, but only a very small part. Complete, it's the most wonderful musical story the world has ever heard. And the world is beginning to find it out.

You may have a piano like it—a Steinway, a Steck, a Stroud or a magnificent Weber, like mine. And you may have it either as a Grand or an Upright.

Moreover, when you wish, this wonderful instrument will make a pianist of you. You may listen to Paderewski play his Minuet and then you can play it after him. Because this piano is a Pianola as well as a reproducing piano. And the Pianola music-rolls make a wonderful artist of you.

• • •

Those who would like to know more about this new piano are invited to write for a catalog describing in detail the Duo-Art Pianola.

The DUO-ART PIANOLA

Grand and Uprights—Electric or Foot-Pedal

Liberal Allowance for Your Old Piano

Trade in Your Ordinary Player-Piano

\$795 to \$3850

CONVENIENT MONTHLY TERMS
(other Player-Pianos as low as \$425)

Pianos Victrolas
Elbel Bros.
106 S. Mich. South Bend

Figure 3.21. The Aeolian Company, "My Wonderful Piano." Advertisement for the Duo-Art Reproducing Piano (*The South Bend Tribune*, December 14, 1921: 10, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/513546668>)

performance. Therefore, it can be stated that the revolutionary nature of the reproducing piano widened the disassociation between the ideals of Victorianism – particularly regarding the work ethic – and the musical experience during the 1920s.⁷³

The Music Appreciation Movement / The Player Piano as a Culture Mediator

Although increasingly fragmented – “a fragile veneer...upon a decayed frame”⁷⁴ – and no longer the dominant culture, Victorianism in the Roaring Twenties, or more accurately Victorian principles, continued to be associated with both the passive experience of listening to music, the player piano, and the reproducing piano. This is most aptly illuminated through a brief examination of the Music Appreciation movement (during the late teens and into the twenties of the early twentieth century.) Manifested in part by the induction of National Music Week, the objective of the movement was to both calm and elevate the morals of the masses through music appreciation. It was founded on the assumption that music encourages civic advancement, and was a deterrent to crime, inspiring young people to beauty and morality.

While the many celebrations included participation in music performance – public school singing programs and school orchestras and bands competing for prizes – much was focused on the importance of listening to music. For example, utilizing the phonograph and various instruments, including the player piano and the *Ampico* reproducing pianos, the Music Memory Contest, first established in October 1916, had students listening to music and naming the titles and composers of pieces. Within five years, this contest had become popular on a national level;

73. The phonograph and the radio, more so in the late 1920s, also contributed to the erosion of these values as tied to the passive musical experience.

74. Roell, *The Piano in America*, 49.

by 1927, approximately 1,500 cities were holding annual contests. The National Bureau for the Advancement of Music, in the words of its director Charles Milton Tremaine, saw this as a means of bringing “about a wider understanding of the value of music.”⁷⁵

Undeniably, the alleged educational benefits of music appreciation through listening intertwined with the ideals of the moral value of music. Akin to player piano ads and opinion articles that examined the benefits of music on soldiers’ morale during WWI, many reproducing piano endorsements propagated the purported virtues of music both in school and home environments. For example, a Baby Ampico advertisement presented in figure 3.22 proclaims that its instrument is the ideal medium “for classroom work in schools.”⁷⁶ It continues by stating that the Ampico is “the perfect auxiliary to the work of the teacher in Music Appreciation Classes and other Musical Departments.”⁷⁷

Another example, a Duo-Art reproducing piano advertisement from 1927, although not explicitly referring to the Music Appreciation movement, nevertheless exploits the same line of thought with regard to the moral value of music and the passive musical experience (see figure 3.23). It headlines with the statement, “Bring Music – the Finest Music – Nature’s Greatest Gift to Man.”⁷⁸ It further clarifies, by means of its text, that music, when provided by the Duo-Art,

75. Charles Milton Tremaine, *History of National Music Week* (New York: National Bureau for the Advancement of Music, 1925), chap. 2, accessed October 4, 2016, https://archive.org/stream/historyofnationa000616mbp/historyofnationa000616mbp_djvu.txt.

76. The American Piano Company, “The Baby Ampico in the Schools,” n.d., reproduced in Roehl, *Player Piano Treasury*, 59.

77. The Aeolian Company, “The Duo-Art Reproducing Piano,” *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (January 2, 1927), 9, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/100496639>.

78. The Aeolian Company, 9.



DR. SIGMUND SPAETH, CONDUCTING A MUSICAL APPRECIATION CLASS WITH THE BABY AMPICO



THE BABY AMPICO

IN THE SCHOOLS

An Ideal Instrument for Classroom Work

THE BABY AMPICO is an ideal instrument for classroom work in schools. The top of the piano is low enough to allow the teacher to face the class and watch the recording simultaneously. The BABY AMPICO combines the advantages of the diminutive instrument, which has been found so practical as a school piano, and the inestimable value of the Ampico, which is every day increasing its popularity as the perfect auxiliary to the work of the teacher in Music Appreciation Classes and other Musical Departments.

It makes possible the hearing of a perfect performance by any of the great pianists of practically all the important literature of the piano, and comparative interpretations of two, or often more, pianists playing many of the great classic masterpieces.

As in the Ampico Grands and larger Uprights the integrity of the piano as an instrument to be played by hand is in no way impaired by the presence of the Ampico. And there is the attractive attribute of the beautiful quality of its tone and the flexibility of its action.

The ease with which the BABY AMPICO may be moved from one classroom to another is an additional advantage gained in the small size and compactness of this wonderful instrument—a genuine Ampico bringing to the schoolroom the authoritative interpretations of the greatest pianists, commanding a repertoire of practically the entire piano literature of the world.

Figure 3.22. The American Piano Company, "The Baby Ampico in Schools." Advertisement for the Ampico Reproducing Piano, n.d. (Reproduced in *Player Piano Treasury*. By Harvey Roehl. New York: The Vestal Press., 1961, 59)

The DUO-ART Reproducing Piano



Ann Pennington dances to this music in the "Scandals"

Master-played Classics for January

Blade in C Minor: Paganini
Chopin: ... Alfred Cortot
Impromptus Op. 90 No. 2
Schubert: ... Ernst Hutschman
Bach: Harpsichord
Schubert: ... Ignaz Friedman
Sonata No. 27
Debussy: ... Irene Scharrer
Tristan and Isolde
Wagner: ... Edwin Leopold
New World Symphony
Dvorak: ... Budapest Gans

New Duo-Art Dance Music

Broken Hearted—Fox Trot
Lullaby—Bessie & Lela
Clap Yo' Hands from "Oh Kay!"
Gershwin: ... Phil Ohman
Do—Do—Do from "Oh Kay!"
Gershwin: ... Phil Ohman
How I Love You—Fox Trot
Friedman: ... Phil Ohman
Hollering—Fox Trot
Friedman: ... Phil Ohman
It Made You Happy
Donaudy: ... Phil Ohman
I've Lost All My Love For You
Friedman: ... Chas. M. Mering
Just One More Kiss
Mingus: ... Felix Aerts
The Little White House
Friedman: ... Phil Ohman
My Baby Knows How
Doris: ... Phil Ohman
Take in the Sun
Friedman: ... Phil Ohman
That's a Good Girl
Boris: ... Frank Banta
When You Walk With Me
One You Love
Boris: ... Chas. M. Mering

Brings Music—the Finest Music—nature's greatest gift to man

Music is always associated with merriment, with happiness, with almost every form of enjoyment or entertainment. From earliest days this has been so. In medieval times the harpist was the central figure of every festivity. Yesterday the pianist gave his skill to help make the day merry. Today the piano itself—the wonderful Duo-Art and its music rolls—furnishes a measure of musical enjoyment beyond the dreams of other times. Happy the homes this holiday in which this great dispenser of music's choicest treasures is to be found!

Music such as this wonderful piano—the Duo-Art—provides will bring real happiness and lasting benefit to every member of your household.

Duo-Art music is real music—fine music. It is the music of the best pianists reproduced on and by the piano itself, in the very tones of their original performances. *Everything* that music is and does comes with the Duo-Art. The classic masterpieces played by world-famous interpreters; the latest dance favorites played by the pianists from leading dance orchestras; the dear old familiar ballads and the popular songs played by those who specialize in music of this type, all come with the Duo Art.

In world famous pianos

The Duo-Art is available in the Steinway, Weber, Steck, Stroud, Wheelock and Aeolian pianos—in grands and up-rights. Some one of its many models will just meet your requirements. Duo-Art prices are from \$695. Immediate delivery of any style may be secured upon the payment of a moderate deposit—balance in monthly installments conveniently distributed. Make up your mind now to have one of these marvelous instruments in your home.

Equitable allowance on your present piano.

The Otto Grau Piano Co.

224 WEST FOURTH STREET
Norwood Branch—4739 Main Avenue

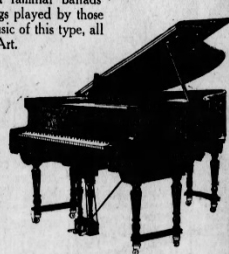


Figure 3.23. The Aeolian Company, "The Duo-Art Reproducing Piano." Advertisement (*The Cincinnati Enquirer*, January 2, 1927: 9, <https://www.newspapers.com/newspage/100496639>)

will bring happiness to its listener/customer. Hence, drawing on themes of music's supposed beauty and morality concerning its effect on humanity, this ad, in essence, reflects the messaging core of the Music Appreciation movement.

The signification of both the player piano and the reproducing piano as associated with the ideals of the moral value of music was ingeniously revised during the early twentieth century. However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the origins of this belief system were in a similar bind to many other Victorian values that were fixed to an earlier time, a different idea of self, and a disparate experience of music (an experience that conflicted with the foundational

underpinning of the mechanical piano as linked to passivity and inaction). In particular, one had to work towards accessing the virtues of music, akin to the constant struggle that the Victorian individual was expected to endure in the attempt to regulate their internal moral character.

Indeed, referring to Walter Damrosch's quote in the "Music at the Front" article, the ability of music to assist in perfecting one's character in order to elevate their moral standing is tied more to the notion of Victorian "character," rather than to the traits of "personality" as connected to the consumer culture of the Modern Age. Hence, the attempt to re-work – to integrate – the ideals of the moral value of music within the listening experience, cutting it off both from the creativity and work involved in performing music, allowed for additional discrepancies in the player piano's already contradictory emblematic coding. This, in turn, continued the juxtaposition of Victorian values with those associated with the new consumer culture.

Piano historian Craig Roell surmised that the many symbolic inconsistencies of the player piano, in part created and disseminated by player piano media was, to a certain extent, due to the role of piano and player piano manufacturers as "custodians of Victorian sensibilities."⁷⁹ Namely, these piano men continued to promote Victorian traditions even when Victorianism was no longer the primary culture. While I agree with this conjecture (although I use the term anti-modernists, rather than custodians of Victorian sensibilities), I infer that many of the creative choices that allowed for these contradictions to manifest also stemmed from a pragmatic acknowledgment, from the instrument's advertisers, concerning the efficacy of Victorian structures in the early twentieth century. The utilization of this culture's values was still

79. Roell, *The Piano in America*, 62.

applicable in certain situations. Hence, the player piano, with its divergent symbolism, mirrored a time marked by a convergence of contradictions.

By way of explanation, although consumerism was becoming the dominant culture in the early twentieth century, there were still many people that adhered to Victorian codes of conduct during this time. Victorianism did not disappear overnight, and thus the player piano reflected this transitional period in American history. More precisely, it acted as a medium between two different cultures (Craig Roell, when referring to the instrument's intermediate status, attributes this to its expression of two conflicting ideologies⁸⁰). Supported by my research in this current chapter and chapter 2, I position the player piano as a culture mediator. The instrument's connection to the piano, and its technological affordances as a sound reproducing device permitted its mediational capacity, which, in turn, allowed for people to make use of the instrument as an agent of change and continuity.

As is demonstrated in chapters 4, 5 and 8, gender codes that adhered to certain elements of Victorian conventions of gender were present in the symbolic form of the player piano. Furthermore, ideas about gender as connected to the consumer culture of the Modern Era quickly became part of the instrument's object-code by means of its various relationships with humans. Moreover, people also introduced new codes of gender (not aligned with the gender norms of the time) within existing cultural frameworks that were symbolically anchored to the player piano. Regarding player piano advertisers, this was accomplished through their chosen form of media, which was required to both reflect the demands of its consumers while also creating additional demand for the instrument's consumption. Concerning female piano roll artists, these women

80. Roell, 150-60.

made use of the player piano as an intermediate object to assist in charting a course in their profession (this is discussed in greater detail in chapter 8). In other words, these people used the instrument, as an object of change and continuity, to consolidate and challenge the gender norms of their time, embracing the conflict imbued from its designation. This allowed for social change, gradual and microscopic in some manner, but nevertheless consequential to those affected in the historical timeline.

The Demise of the Player Piano

The advancement of the reproducing piano, in the second decade of the twentieth century, signified the expiration phase of the lifecycle of the player piano. The instrument, akin to the phonograph and radio, allowed its consumers to adapt to the idea of music as an object that could be owned and consumed (as it is recognized in today's market). In the consumer culture of the Modern Era however, the dominance of the phonograph and radio was, in many ways, imminent. The instrument, akin to the phonograph and radio, fully displaced the human counterpart from the act of performance, allowing for a much more passive encounter with the music enabled by the player piano. This is exemplified in an article from the *Music Trades Review* entitled "The Day of the Electric." An Eastern dealer is quoted saying that "the player-piano [has] never...been well played by the people and never will be satisfactory to them as long as they have to work it themselves."⁸¹

Increasingly, the population preferred the ease that marked the new passive musical encounter; the older model player pianos, even when spouting the "Easy to Play" mantra, could

81. "The Day of the Electric," *Music Trades Review* 64, no. 13 (March 31, 1917): 3, digitized by The Musical Box Society, International, accessed April 22, 2016, mtr.arcade-museum.com/MTR-1917-64-13/3/.

not provide this effortless experience in comparison to the reproducing piano and its mechanized counterparts. Nevertheless, when making a choice among these three devices, consumers, by the late 1920s, preferred the radio and the phonograph. This was, in part due to the fact that both were much more affordable than the reproducing piano (and inexpensive when compared to the older player pianos as well). Furthermore, these devices took up less space, were not as difficult to move, were easier to use, and could record and broadcast more than just piano music. However, it was improvements in sound quality and the development of the standard dynamic loudspeaker that was the turning point for many consumers. The culmination of all these factors eclipsed the benefits of owning a reproducing piano (and a normal player piano) and made the radio and the phonograph the primary music apparatuses for passive music listening in the second half of the Roaring Twenties.

The market for player pianos thus reflects this change. For example, as opposed to the 347,589 player pianos produced in 1923 – with 20,661 of those being reproducing pianos – only 218,140 were made in 1927.⁸² Out of the latter number, 12,501 were reproducers.⁸³ Furthermore, by 1929, 130,973 player pianos were manufactured; 9,515 from that figure were reproducing pianos.⁸⁴ In other words, annual production of player pianos fell almost 86 percent from 1923 to 1929.⁸⁵ By 1931, the market for player pianos was, for all intents and purposes, dead, with only

82. Roehl, *Player Piano Treasury*, 43.

83. Roehl, 43.

84. Roehl, 43.

85. Roell, *The Piano in America*, 200.

51,370 player pianos produced; 625 of those were reproducing pianos.⁸⁶

The dramatic drop in production of player pianos in the 1930s was mainly the result of the Wall Street Crash of 1929. Even so, the decline of player piano production was already occurring by the mid-1920s. With the stock market crash, many piano companies, specifically those that stopped or rapidly reduced their production of conventional pianos to focus primarily on producing player pianos, did not survive. Most piano companies did make this decision, viewing their choice as advantageous when the market for player pianos was blossoming. Hence, while the player piano was, in many ways, the “saving grace” of the piano industry in the early twentieth century – it was the principal machine for music in the home – it ultimately played a large role in the almost near collapse of the industry.

In a period (late 1920s) that no longer held Victorian values in the same high esteem as they once were, with consumerism as a way of life now exercising cultural control over American society, the player piano, even in its reproducing piano version, could not compete with the radio and the phonograph. Therefore, it can be argued that the Crash merely sped up the unavoidable demise of the player piano. By the 1930s, the player piano was obsolete; it was no longer culturally or economically viable in the social order. As such, the instrument was often left behind or given away when people moved. An unceremonious end to a fascinating, but antiquated technological curiosity, the player piano, like many other “latest” fads in the consumer culture of the Modern Age, was quickly abandoned for the next best thing.

86. Roehl, *Player Piano Treasury*, 43.

Conclusion

The breadth of the player piano's economic and social vitality, as encompassed within its brief historical run, depended on both the instrument's material/musical affordances and symbolic tendencies. Tapping into the semantic and practical domain of its predecessor (the pianoforte) while also espousing the ideals of a consumerist culture through its marketing and technological feats, the player piano was a cultural whirlwind that transformed the American music scene during the early twentieth century. As I have outlined in this chapter, the player piano, by means of its messaging and sound reproducing capabilities, changed the way people experienced music. That alone makes it deserving of more than just a passing reference in the history books.

Nevertheless, the benefits of researching this topic also stem from the instrument's confluence of contradictions as a symbol of two opposing cultures. In other words, this can also be described as activity versus inactivity – the consolidation of values as connected to the Victorian work ethic with those tied to instant gratification, pleasure, and leisure. Hence, by thoroughly delineating the melange of ideas from both cultures that are embedded to the player piano's material form, I have, in this chapter, theoretically grounded my arguments.

While acknowledging the quick pace at which the instrument became obsolete, and the practical reason for its invention, I also recognize that material objects' social reach, particularly one positioned as a culture mediator, often expands beyond what was originally intended (its drifting agency). This is what is explored in chapters 4, 5 and 8 – the intentional as well as the unintentional ramifications of the player piano's very existence and usage on the cultural category of gender. The instrument's symbolic and functional form was teeming with discrepancies, yet people were able to exploit the various properties of these discrepancies to challenge and consolidate gender conventions. Therefore, the player piano not only

revolutionized the musical scene, but also the American cultural landscape of the early twentieth century.

Chapter 4: Pictorial Representations of the Female Player Pianist in Early Twentieth-Century American Player Piano Advertising

The 'Piano Girl' in Modern America

By the late nineteenth century, the American family had completely transformed from that of a productive economic assemblage of its pre-industrial life to a specialized unit whose main responsibility was to educate and socialize its children. As a point of clarification, responding to the effects of industrialization – new technology brought about the shift in production from home to factory, thereby stripping the family of its basic historical function – Victorians re-doubled their efforts, emphasizing the importance of the home in their social ideology. As stated in chapter 2, the indoctrination of their values occurred within the home, with the mother being mainly responsible for this duty (the children's moral upbringing and adherence to Victorian standards of conduct). The piano developed an intrinsic link with the traditional concept of the home, a connection that endured into the twentieth century.

Nevertheless, despite the Victorian reorientation of the home, the vital loss of its pre-industrial foundational essence meant that it could not withstand the onslaught of twentieth-century modern life. In other words, as values stressing production and the work ethic gave way to the consumerist ethos, the home no longer held an exalted position as the centre of social life in American culture. While many families in the nineteenth century would gather around the piano or the parlour organ in the home (the daughter or mother would, on almost all occasions, be the one performing on the instrument) for entertainment, by the early twentieth century they were instead more likely to be leaving the home in search of amusements associated with the

multiple publics of the outside world.¹ The numerous distractions of nightlife were often the preferred choice among young people, including young single women. When they were at home, in many cases, they would be dancing around the *Victrola* gramophone or the player piano, as opposed to performing on the traditional piano (which was no longer viewed, by many people, as a necessity in the household).

According to critic and music journalist James Huneker, by 1904, the “girl who played the piano in the stiff Victorian drawing rooms of [their] mothers” had “passed away.”² He concluded that this ideal, this “piano girl” was replaced by the “new girl” – one who was far too busy with other pursuits to be “chained to the keyboard.”³ Huneker was acknowledging a change in the culture, “a new relationship between gender and the piano as a sign of modernity.”⁴ Undeniably, the practice of playing the piano as a sign of feminine accomplishment, of which the “piano girl” was a part, did not hold as high a prominent position in the social order as it did in the earlier days.

However, the dissolution of the piano girl occurred neither swiftly nor without warning. Amateur music-making and the piano, in the home, was still generally understood as feminine in the early twentieth century.⁵ Many of the Victorian gender codes associated with domestic piano

1. For more information, refer to chapter 2, 51-52, 60.

2. James Huneker, *Overtones: A Book of Temperaments* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1912[1904]), 286, accessed January 8, 2016, <https://archive.org/details/overtonesbookoft00huneiala/page/286/mode/2up>.

3. Huneker, 309

4. Judith Tick, “The Piano and Women of Accomplishment,” *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music: The United States and Canada* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

5. Roell, *The Piano in America*, 27.

performance were still applicable in the new age. For example, if a girl or woman *chose* to play the piano, she was expected to be proficient, but not to reach the level of virtuoso. Her family was still the main concern, and everything she did, including playing on the piano, was in service to them; this included educating her children as to the importance of music as a moral influencer.⁶

This reasoning also undergirded the usage of the player piano as dictated by the social norms of the time. For example, the instrument was categorized with other such items as the washing machine and the vacuum cleaner; it was a labour-saving device meant to give the mother more time to nurture her children and respond to the demands of her husband.⁷ Hence, it is not difficult to discern that the social philosophy concerning the invention of the player piano was grounded in traditional notions of family and duty.

Nevertheless, it can be argued that the propagation of the notion that a woman did not have to work to obtain results on the keyboard, that she no longer had to be musically proficient,⁸ was linked to a more modern definition of womanhood as opposed to the “Angel in the House”⁹ ideal. The removal of this component regarding the delineation of femininity, from a micro point of view, can be understood as both liberating and constraining for women in the early twentieth century. While many women found the experience of learning the piano to be debilitating and oppressive, others with talent, acquired skills that were empowering and, depending on the

6. See chapter 2, *The Affectionate Family*; and chapter 3, 81-86.

7. See chapter 2, *The Affectionate Family*; and Wentz, “Magical Mechanics,” 156-64.

8. See chapter 3, 86-89.

9. Patmore, *Angel in the House*; and Powell, “The Shaping of the New Woman,” 60.

circumstances, could sustain a livelihood.¹⁰ This point of issue forms the basis of this chapter: the female player pianist, and the piano girl, or more accurately, the performing woman. I utilize these two concepts as a means of analyzing the player piano in relation to gender stereotypes and roles and the continuous transitional nature of femininity and masculinity in musical activity.

A Conceptual Amalgamation of Erving Goffman's Behavioural Styles in Gender Advertisements, and Richard Leppert's Semiotic Mappings of Domestic Musical Activity

Sociologist Erving Goffman, in his book, *Gender Advertisements*, posits that gender roles can be discerned by means of examining commercial advertisements. Organizing his ideas into seven categories, his emphasis on small gestures allows one to see what would otherwise be hidden: the codes of gender. In other words, Goffman analyzes body language as communication in ads, specifically with regard to how men and women are expected to act in their social environments. These behavioural gestures connote traditional ideas about gender, which, upon comparison with my research in chapter 2, I have determined aligns with early twentieth-century gender norms (when interpreted within an historical context). Indeed, while Goffman's research was conducted at a later time, much of the gesturing that symbolizes gender separation is, by and large, the same in many advertisements (that represent day-to-day activity) from the earlier part of the century.

The first category in Goffman's methodological toolkit, Relative Size, considers the positioning of men and women as a means of conveying social weight. Namely, males are usually physically situated in the space to express superiority to the female in traditional scenes of print advertisements. For example, they are often portrayed as hovering over the woman, their

10. This is examined in more detail in a subsection presented in chapter 6, *A Brief Summary of the Changing Gender Norms in American Women's Professional Musical Activity During the Early Twentieth Century (1900-1928)*.

height and weight amplified through their gestures. Moreover, in these images of male and female interaction, men often take on the dominant role as defined by Goffman's Function Ranking. The man is frequently shown instructing the woman, performing an executive role in the hierarchy of functions. The woman portrays an inability to solve a problem and learn on her own thus engendering a sense of inferiority.

This is heightened by means of what Goffman defines as The Feminine Touch. Unlike men, who are often shown grasping or manipulating objects in their physical environment, women would frequently be cradling or tracing the objects they encounter. This display transmits the idea that women are weak and vulnerable, having no control over the material world. Their lack of agency is also communicated through the Ritualization of Subordination and Licensed Withdrawal. The former category consists of numerous defined gestures of deference on the part of the woman, including lying down and/or contorting the body in a manner that leaves it unbalanced in the environment. The latter involves groupings of gestures as well as facial grimaces that also reveal a lack of control traditionally associated with femininity. This includes a sense of abandonment such as frenzied laughter, or an expression of distraction – the woman is lost in thought. When compared with men, whose gazes are direct and whose bodies are physically grounded by their gestures in the space, the divergence is considerable. Advertisements that show men and women together in the frame are often the best indicators of gender roles, as one can clearly see the contrast between depictions of femininity and masculinity.

Additionally, examining domestic settings – the home, particularly the family – produces, without a doubt, the most beneficial results regarding the perception of gender roles. The Family, another of Goffman's categories, is a social structure unto itself; the pictorial representation of its

members can tell one much about the ways in which gender defines relationships. For example, daughters are often presented near their mothers, as opposed to their fathers, who often stand at a distance from the family, assuming the protective role. The shared gender identity between mother and daughter is characterized as being a stronger connection than their biological affiliation. Furthermore, the father's protectiveness relates to his supposed superiority in a patriarchal culture. He is the head of the family; his masculinity creates a dissociation with his daughter. Namely, her femininity connotes weakness and therefore she must be protected. Furthermore, his masculine selfhood cannot be associated with vulnerability, and thus a separation must occur.

The last category in Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* is defined as The Modern Shift. This refers to the fashion industry as a site of transformation – the line between traditional notions of femininity and masculinity can be blurred. For example, some male models are shown displaying The Feminine Touch, whereas females, particularly those in the fashion sub-category of sports attire, exhibit gestures associated with men – grasping and holding objects with an intense gaze directed towards the audience. In 1979, when Goffman wrote his book, this gendered turbulence was, in some respects, still in its infancy.

In the twenty-first century, however, one can now not only witness a complete gender reversal in the fashion world, but also, in various circumstances, glimpse at the impression of gender neutrality. This was not the case in the early twentieth century, both in fashion and in general settings with regard to advertising (although the flapper look of the 1920s, with the bobbed hairstyle and the dresses that de-emphasized the waistline, could be viewed as planting the seeds of androgynous fashion). Nevertheless, in some of my analyses, I discovered that, on a superficial level, there were instances that could be interpreted as the Modern Shift – gestures

that appear to reflect a sense of gender reversal – as defined within the parameters of domestic music performance. This could only be discerned by a researcher with musical knowledge of the historical processes of the latter activity.

Additionally, a more thorough comprehension of these gestures that moved beyond the bounds of a surface interpretation of the Modern Shift required the implementation of Richard Leppert's various techniques that examine the semiotics of musical imagery. To clarify, in the initial stages of my investigation of player piano advertisements, I inquired as to whether any of Goffman's communicative gestures were evident in the actions of musical interplay. I also pondered whether the musicological viewpoint concerning gender roles as showcased through music performance could be explained by only utilizing Goffman's methodological schema. As a musicologist, while attempting to maintain an objective outlook, I was, nevertheless, eager to prove that the employment of a sociological model alone could not wholly ground my thesis. And as discussed in the preceding section concerning behavioural gesturing and the Modern Shift, I was not disappointed.

Musical interplay is a part of social organization, and thus Goffman's research is extremely relevant with regard to the decoding of ideas about gender as communicated via body language in advertisements. Nevertheless, his behavioural gesturings refer to day-to-day activity as captured in commercial advertisements. Musical contexts are unique situations that require additional interpretations. One must first refer to the symbolism as specific to musical activity, before utilizing the methodology of Goffman's gender displays. Hence, Leppert's points of examination concerning the way one could locate the sight of music are highly effective – an interpretive key to the images presented in player piano and piano media. First and foremost, according to Leppert, the piano is a floating signifier; the semantics of the instrument change

according to the cultural parameters of the time and place in question. In addition, the piano as sign is often used to stabilize and socially construct another sign: the woman.

As delineated by my research in chapter 3, this can also be applied to the player piano, as the sound-reproducing device is, in many ways, an extension of its forebear. Leppert asks many questions that prove useful in his probing of the semantic richness concerning the integration of the piano and the woman in the frame. For example, these queries focus on issues such as the use of specific gestures only applicable to music performance: hand, wrist, and forearm positions, as well as upper body stances. He checks to see if these gestures are correct in terms of proper technical ability, and if they are visually displayed differently depending on the biological sex of the individual. If they are different, he questions as to the reasons for this discrepancy, as the ways in which women and men approach music performance convey a great deal about their gender identity.

Leppert also makes use of non-musical techniques borrowed from art history – details such as lighting and colour in paintings. For example, in one of his analyses, Leppert acknowledged his familiarity with the dominant art theory of the time (from which the painting was created). This theory presupposed certain colours as connected to specific emotions, and in turn, these emotions were gendered as dictated by the social customs of the place and historical period. This communicates a breadth of information regarding the artwork's messaging and purpose. He also utilizes more general art history approaches – this includes determining if a painting consists of a stable locus. The inclusion of these various techniques from art history in Leppert's analyses of piano paintings allow for a multidisciplinary perspective and answers many questions concerning the development and preservation of Victorian society. His techniques greatly serve my purpose with respect to the analyses of piano artwork in nineteenth-

century America, while the musicological methods also satisfy my investigation of player piano advertising.

Nevertheless, this medium has many differences when compared to paintings. Moreover, the player piano advertisements presented in the next section were created in a different time period. Hence, techniques of art history, while still applicable in some of my analyses, had to be reoriented in the early stages of my research when working with advertising print media. Goffman's model, on the other hand, was specifically developed to assist the researcher when interacting with commercial advertisements, and thus is a necessity with reference to my analyses. Therefore, this chapter also makes use of a multidisciplinary approach to gain a broader outlook as relevant to the subject matter of this dissertation. Leppert's techniques, as well as Goffman's well-established apparatus provide the necessary components for the proper mapping of acceptable meanings concerning the challenges and consolidations of gender norms in player piano advertising (in the early twentieth century).

Pictorial Representations of Mothers and Daughters in Piano and Player Piano Print Media

I begin my analysis by presenting my noted observations of gender displays in musical activity that include girls in various piano and player piano media. One of the most prominent displays of these interactions are between mothers and daughters. During the mid- to late nineteenth century in America (and in much of the Western world), it was important for females to begin piano instruction at an early age, a requirement for a "proper" girl's education. Mothers were often assigned this duty, either leading by example or teaching their daughters the skills to become musically proficient.

This is illustrated in American artists James McNeill Whistler's (1834-1903) *At the Piano* (1858-1859) and James Francis Day's (1863-1942) *The Piano Lesson* (1895). The former was Whistler's first major work, the site being in the home of his half-sister, Deborah Delano Haden. A composition in horizontal format, Mrs. Haden is displayed in the painting, dressed in black (in mourning for her father), sitting in profile to the right, performing on her grand piano. A young girl, the daughter Annie – wearing a short white dress contrasted against her brown shoulder-length hair – leans on the piano, completely captivated by her mother's performance. In point of fact, Haden was an accomplished pianist. This is visually portrayed through the absence of a score, which often indicates advanced piano skills, and is not only linked to memorization but also to improvisation and freedom of expression (as opposed to the idea of notated music as connoting control and preservation).¹¹ Recurrently, in piano paintings of this time, when a woman's advanced pianistic skill is made obvious, it is often tempered by other images, or lack thereof. For example, in *At the Piano* (figure 4.1), there are no men in the painting to witness the woman's act of virtuosity. Moreover, her body stance is perfectly demure, she is adhering to Victorian customs regarding mourning attire (and is not pictorially sexualized in any manner) and is present in the feminine shrine of the parlour (or in this case, the music room), performing her duty for the next generation.

This connection between these two family members and the piano is depicted through the use of colour, positioning, shapes, and angles. Haden and Annie's dresses form two triangles, with two images of pictures (in gold frames) hanging on the wall, geometrically holding their

11. See Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*, 8.



Figure 4.1. James McNeill Whistler, *At the Piano*, 1858-1859, oil on canvas, 67.0 x 90.5 cm. Taft Museum of Art, Cincinnati, Ohio, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Whistler_-_At_the_Piano.jpg

figures in place.¹² Furthermore, the white and black dresses and the piano make “a visual pyramid and referenc[e] the presentation of black and white on the piano keys.”¹³ This relationship, delineated by these visual cues, is clearly connected to a moral message and

12. Tamera Lenz Muentz, “Taft Chat: ‘At the Piano,’” Taft Museum of Art, YouTube Video, 4:27, May 22, 2021, accessed June 8, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3sxioYTgng&t=1s>.

13. Angelle M. Vinet, *James McNeill Whistler: An Evolution of Painting from the Old Masters* (Morrisville, NC: Lulu Publishing Services, 2017), 117, Kindle.

Victorian gender roles (despite Whistler's artistic creed of "art for art's sake"¹⁴). The daughter will one day follow in the mother's footsteps, or, in other words, the daughter will become the Angel in the House (a mother), preordained to the same duties as assigned to that role.

When understood through Goffman's categorical renderings of behavioural displays, this artwork manifests gender distinction through the pictorial representation of a family's social structure. As previously noted, various devices are engaged to show the supposed special bond between the girl and her mother as linked by their shared gender identity. It is, however, the comprehension of the musical context, and the cultural parameters, which allow the viewer to witness the full extent of this connection. The girl and her mother's distinctive association is instigated through music, and, by extension, the music room's separation from the various publics of the male domain. While one does see reflections of light on the girl's shoes and the framed pictures, thereby indicating the world outdoors (thereby relieving, to some degree, the stifling feeling the viewer could experience when looking at a visually closed-off area), the girl and her mother are still isolated from the outside world of commerce and motion. Their intimacy is thus dependent on this isolation, with the performance of music being the link that ties space, place, and human relationships together as a governing force connoting gender differentiation.

In James Francis Day's *The Piano Lesson*, the mother-daughter attachment is again on full display. The figures are connected visually through colour schemes. Both females have blond hair, and are wearing flowing white gowns, with the daughter's frock framed by a blue bow around her waist, and the mother's dress decorated with pink and green flowers (see figure

14. This phrase, originating in nineteenth-century France, was the motto for Britain's late nineteenth-century Aesthetic art movement; Whistler was an ardent proponent of this campaign. In its condensed definition, the goal of art should be beauty, and should have no other underlying message or purpose.

4.2). These same colours match those of a vase with blossoms on top of the piano, therefore also linking the mother and daughter to the instrument and the music emanating from it. One could infer visually that the “sight” of the music is symbolized by the sunlight coming through the windows, reflecting on the dresses and the mother’s hands, which are laid out on the keyboard. Moreover, the warm, “natural” light can also be interpreted as reflecting the “natural” bond between the mother and daughter.

Undoubtedly, this painting, akin to Whistler’s *At the Piano*, is also portraying an intimate moment between the females by utilizing music as the connecting force in the image. The difference in this example, however, is that the mother is directly teaching the daughter how to play the piano. She is standing up, most likely demonstrating a key musical passage as dictated by the score, while appearing to be ready to shift to the side so that, once the instructive moment is complete, her daughter can move over and sit on the stool to play. The daughter, in turn, is focused on her mother’s hands as she holds up her own hands, elevated at a 90-degree angle from the forearms at the elbow, curved in little shapes, preparing to play what is shown to her by her parent. She is eager to begin (or continue) the lesson and, although we cannot see much of her face, is excited. This is demonstrated by her arm gestures, contrasted against the calm, patient expression, and graceful movements of her mother.

The manner by which these girls and their mothers are characterized in the aforementioned illustrations (which serve as representative examples of the majority of piano media that utilized similar images) – existing within the process of music instruction as prescribed by Victorian standards of feminine conduct – was, in some ways, imitated in early twentieth-century automatic piano advertisements. For example, an Angelus 1909 player piano advertisement (see figure 4.3), a 1903 *Cecilian* piano player endorsement in figure 4.4, “The



Figure 4.2. Francis Day, *The Piano Lesson*, 1895, oil on canvas, https://www.wikigallery.org/wiki/painting_118658/Francis-Day/The-Piano-Lesson-1895

THE countless delights afforded by
really good music are nowhere so com-
pletely realized as in the home in which there is an

ANGELUS Player-Piano

If now, or in the future, you contemplate the possession of a player-piano, it is
your duty to yourself and to those who are to participate in its enjoyment, to visit
your nearest ANGELUS dealer and have him demonstrate the ANGELUS instru-
ments to you. Do not, as some others have done, permit yourself to be led to
purchase any other instrument before you have made this investigation. First,
hear and play the ANGELUS instruments yourself. In this way you will avoid
the certainty of disappointment later on. *Let us send you the dealer's name.*

THE WILCOX & WHITE CO. Established 1876 **MERIDEN, CONN.**
(Regent House, Regent Street, LONDON.)

Figure 4.3. Wilcox & White Piano & Organ Company, “Angelus Player-Piano.” Advertisement (*The Saturday Evening Post* 181, no. 3, January-May 1909: 514, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiug.30112109515897>)



Figure 4.4. The Farrand Piano Company, “The Cecilian – The Perfect Piano Player.” Advertisement (*Booklovers Magazine* 1, no. 5, May 1903: 403, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva.x03069342>)

Perfect Piano Player,” and a turn of the century *Apollo* piano player print advertisement (see figure 4.5) pictorially present outlines of a mother and daughter linked through biology and a shared gender identity. Nevertheless, the question remains as to the degree at which this is symbolized by music. At first glance, all three advertisements appear to be identical to figures 4.1 and 4.2 with regard to the most important shared features: 1) a mother “performing” for her daughter; 2) the daughter mesmerized by the music and also by the mother who enables the experience; and 3) the two figures sharing this moment in a private setting, away from the eyes



Figure 4.5. The Melville Clark Piano Company, “The Apollo Piano Player.” Advertisement (Dekalb, Illinois, circa 1901, www.pianola.org/factsheets/apollo.cfm)

of men and the outside world.

Victorian gender roles as tied to music seem to be upheld in these early twentieth-century images. Undoubtedly, this is partly because Bush & Lane (who sold the high-quality line of *Cecilian* pianos and player pianos), Melville Clark¹⁵ (producers of the *Apollo* line), and Wilcox & White¹⁶ (who manufactured the *Angelus* player system) were all well-known, older piano companies. With their origins dating back to the nineteenth century,¹⁷ the social philosophy of these businesses was grounded in Victorian culture. Furthermore, all three of these advertisements were produced within the first ten years of the twentieth century, when Victorian traditions still held sway in the population (although consumerism was becoming the dominant

15. Edward E. Blake was the advertising manager for Melville Clark Piano Company at the beginning of the early twentieth century.

16. Russell White, grandson of co-founder Henry White became the advertising manager of the company after his father's untimely death.

17. Although inventor and innovator Melville Clark started his own company in 1901, he previously was a partner in the Story & Clark firm with Edward H. Story, established in 1884.

culture, Victorian traditions offered a comforting familiarity to many people, particularly of the older generation, in a rapidly changing world). Moreover, the Angelus and the Cecilian piano player ads are located in *The Saturday Evening Post* and *Booklover's Magazine*, respectively. These print sources catered to White, middle-class audiences, many of whom still adhered to various Victorian codes of conduct.

Nevertheless, a more detailed examination of these ads reveals minute changes as applicable to the consumer culture of the Modern Age. Referring to figure 4.3, the difference can first be perceived when paying attention to the appearance of the child. Wearing a large bow in her hair and holding a teddy bear, the girl's innocence as connoted by these items is enhanced by her wonderment at the player piano. She focuses on the roll unfurling inside the machine instead of on her mother. As a point of clarification, this change in focus alters the mother-daughter relationship, as her primary interest is the mechanicality of the player piano rather than the musical occurrence.

Furthermore, the mother, who is a picture of grace and charm – her presence is almost ethereal in nature due to her flowing dress which hides her feet and the pedals of the instrument – is working the levers of the player piano with ease. Her fingers flat and long instead of curved on the keys, she is not modelling the tenets of the Victorian work ethic to her child. She is an operator, not a performer in the conventional sense. While there are indications that symbolize a familiar association – the daughter is physically close to the mother, and her small form contrasts against the mother's larger frame thereby signifying the mother's authority in the relationship – this advertisement evokes only the façade of the mother-daughter bond as connected to the work ethic and music.

This is also evident in figures 4.4 and 4.5, when a more comprehensive investigation is made, albeit within a different process and not as divergent as the Angelus ad. The children, unlike the daughter in figure 4.3, are focusing on their mothers (direct eye contact), who are in turn looking back at them. Moreover, both girls' physical stances communicate a more complete sense of delicacy and vulnerability. For example, the child in the Cecilian ad is clasping her right hand over her heart. A posed gesture according to Goffman, "self-touching" is a form of the Feminine Touch that "is readable as conveying a sense of one's body being a precious thing."¹⁸ Concerning the small girl in the Apollo ad, her body posture is relaxed; she is seated on the floor with her legs crossed. This symbolizes a lack of balance, as she has no control over her surroundings in this position.

Additionally, the bodily stances of both girls and how they are placed in the advertisements suggest subordination to their maternal figures. For instance, the child in the Apollo endorsement is situated lower to the ground in the frame, while the girl in the Cecilian ad, seated on the piano stool, is holding her head back, looking up to her parental figure who is taller than herself. Both girls rely on their mothers, not so much as protectors (this is the gendered role of the father) but as maternal supporters in their upbringing. Thus, the mother-daughter bond is visually more substantiated in these images than in the Angelus player piano advertisement.

Nonetheless, the same issue as apparent in the Angelus ad persists in these advertisements as well. Specifically, the mothers are not performing in a conventional way for their children as is evident both by the positioning of their hands, which are operating the controls of the device, and their facial expressions. The fact that they can look at their daughters

18. Goffman, *Gender Advertisements*, 31.

– unlike much piano imagery from the nineteenth century that features women at the piano – indicates an absence of intense concentration (required when performing on the silent piano). The mother-daughter bond, in these ads, is not dependent on Victorian codes of gender associated with the work ethic but more on newer codes of gender that flowed from the consumer culture of the Modern Age – particularly, the affectionate family. Namely, the mothers can focus solely on their children by means of the labour-saving capacity of the player piano.

Furthermore, the mothers' facial expressions denote pride and contentment directed at the listening experience of their children and not part of the process of learning music through practice and dedication. What is presented in these images is thus an early rendition of the appreciation of music as associated with the affectionate family. The mothers are still responsible for their daughters' upbringing, but in these ads, that upbringing is dependent more on the listening of music rather than learning to play the piano as an indispensable feminine goal. In nineteenth-century America, the appreciation of music as tied to listening was only for the boys, as they listened to their mothers perform.

Pictorial Representations of Fathers and Daughters in Player Piano Print Media

As mothers and daughters were shown frequently together in player piano advertisements, to a lesser extent, so were fathers with their daughters. For example, in the 1909 Angelus player piano advertisement (see figure 4.6), I found that the image mimicked very traditional scenes presented in nineteenth-century piano media. This is illustrated by means of a visual representation of a woman, in a flowing gown, operating a player piano with a calm demeanour, looking down at her hands while the daughter watches her in amazement. Moreover, the father sits in a chair, a hand resting on the side of his forehead. The man is demonstrating, according to



The New 88 Note

ANGELUS PLAYER-PIANO

If you have ever spent the evening in the company of some well-skilled, versatile pianist you have experienced in part only the numberless delights which every evening await the owner of an *Angelus* Player-Piano. Many music lovers on first hearing the *Angelus* Player-Piano have expressed their absolute amazement that the music which it enables the player to produce is so much more artistic, so superior in every way to that which any other player-piano makes possible. This for one reason is because the *Angelus* Player-Piano only is equipped with

THE MELODANT

that wonderful device which picks out and emphasizes the melody notes in such splendid contrast to those of the accompaniment. Using the *Melodant* rolls the *Angelus* player is enabled to bring out all the delicate beauties of the melody which, with the ordinary player-piano are usually lost in the maze of ornamentation which surrounds it. The *Melodant*, like the *Phrasing Lever*, the *Diaphragm Pneumatics* and the *Artistyle Music Rolls*, is a patented exclusive feature of the *Angelus*.

Hear the *Angelus* instruments before you purchase any other. The *Knabe-Angelus*, *Emerson-Angelus* and the *Angelus Player-Piano* in the U. S. The *Gourlay-Angelus* and *Angelus Player-Piano* in Canada

Write for our beautiful new booklet, and name of convenient dealer

THE WILCOX & WHITE CO.

Regent House,

Business Established 1877

Regent Street,

MERIDEN, CONN.

London.

Figure 4.6. Wilcox & White Piano & Organ Company, "Advertisement 24 – No Title." Angelus Player Piano Advertisement (*Life* 54, no. 1406, October 6, 1909: 458, ProQuest 90674325)

Goffman, body language that symbolizes his dominance in the scene. His eyes are open, allowing him to be aware of his surroundings, and his two fingers from his hand are on his temple, connoting gender normative higher reasoning, rational thought, and concentration within the confines of masculinity. While not disregarding this evidence, a second reading that focuses on the girl shows that there is a physical closeness between the father and daughter. She is either resting on his knee or standing between his legs, with her right foot next to his right foot.

In domestic piano visual imagery of the nineteenth century, fathers, or paternal figures, when they are present in the image (which only occurs occasionally), are usually situated at a distance from the other people, standing at a doorway or wall, or sitting on a chair listening to the music. For example, in an 1890 Everett piano advertisement (see figure 4.7), one can see the depiction of a man, standing at a door-opening in his home, acting as chaperone to the small gathering of boys and girls dancing and engaging in small talk. The mother is playing the piano, her right hand turning a page of the score, while the left hand maintains the rhythmic accompaniment.

As stated earlier, Goffman's research dictates that the separation of the father within the space in advertisements (and sometimes the son if the father is absent) symbolically expresses protectiveness, as the father is the dominant authority figure. This was the societal requirement, or, in other words, the duty of the patriarchal head of the household. While this manner of positioning the father to connote superiority and social status was still utilized in player piano advertisements, there was a greater number of ads that portrayed fathers as more affectionate, as opposed to aloof family members. They would often be shown physically interacting with their children. For instance, the "Look at the Joneses" advertisement in figure 3.18 can, on a superficial level, be understood as a gender reversal – by means of the Modern Shift – of



The EVERETT PIANO.

UNEXCELLED IN WORKMANSHIP,
MATERIAL AND DESIGN.

If not for sale by your local Dealer, address
THE JOHN CHURCH CO., - CINCINNATI, O

"From Andante to Allegro," a beautifully illustrated pamphlet, will be sent free to anyone who will mention where this advertisement was seen.

Figure 4.7. The Everett Piano Company, "The Everett Piano." Advertisement (*The Ladies Home Journal* 7-8, July 1890: 17, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015012341569>)

traditional family dynamics dictated by Victorian standards. The father is walking on his hands and knees while his son sits on his back. The mother stands at a distance at the doorway, in many ways adopting the protective body stance that was usually reserved for the father figure.

Nevertheless, these changes in gender coding in this advertisement are aligned with the gender norms of the time, as well as traditional guises of gender. For instance, the mother in this image is smiling, her eyes focused on her son and husband. She is observing the family

happiness; her body position, in essence, is not communicating protectiveness, but feminine joy. The cohesion of her family, as governed by the ideals of the affectionate family represent her ultimate purpose in life. Secondly, the father is only physically interacting with the boy, while the other two girls watch the interplay. Goffman has observed that fathers in advertisements, when not distanced from the family circle, are usually in closer proximity to the male child or children.

Hence, in some measure, the Angelus ad in figure 4.6 offers a more contemporary framing of gender codes than the Joneses Gulbrandsen ad, on account of the slight emphasis concerning the father-daughter connection by means of their physical encounter. An Artemis player piano advertisement from The Steger Piano Company (1879-1959) is another example, among many, whose iconography also depicts a daughter situated within the physical space of her father (see figure 4.8). Steger (1879-1959), incorporated as The Steger & Sons Piano Manufacturing Company in 1892 – a small firm and one of the few piano companies that survived the Great Depression and avoided being absorbed into a merger – utilized various methods in their player piano endorsements. This included illustrating (through pictorial representations) close relations between opposite genders of the family in their Artemis player piano promotions.¹⁹ Hence, in the following Artemis ad, a drawing of a girl with her arm wrapped around her father is presented, as she sits on the arm of the chair beside him.

In the images from figures 4.6 and 4.8, the fathers' masculinity is re-defined, which includes a familiar closeness with the girls' femininity, both symbolically, and through their

19. T.H. Thompson was sales and advertising manager for Gulbrandsen-Dickinson Co. in the early twentieth century. He was replaced by T.J. Mercer in 1921.



**ARTEMIS
PLAYER-PIANO**

Good music has an appeal that touches the heart of young and old alike. The lifelike expression and beautiful tone of the wonderful ARTEMIS make such music a treat indeed. It is always ready to entertain you with dances, songs, operas and favorite melodies. The ARTEMIS can be used as a Player-Piano or played by hand.

Artemis Universal Prices
 Popular Idol Model \$495 Musician Model \$590
 Music Lover Model \$535 Artist Model \$645

Some reliable piano merchant near you represents the Artemis Line. Ask his name and address and get our beautiful Artemis Catalog No. 38 Free.

Manufactured and Guaranteed by the
Thompson Piano Mfg. Co.
 (Division of Steger & Sons Piano Mfg. Co.)
 Steger Building, Chicago, Ill.
 15,000 Satisfied Artemis Patrons Every Year

Figure 4.8. The Steger Piano Company, "Advertisement 5 – No Title." Player Piano Advertisement (*The Youth's Companion* 94, November 4, 1920: 688, ProQuest 127161765)

gesturing. The definition of their masculinity includes affection and compassion for their daughters. Despite the societal push for fathers to be more present in the various day-to-day dynamics of their families, their placement in the frames of these advertisements conflicted with societal gender roles, as many family-based advertisements of the day still felt the need to position their paternal figures at a distance from the females.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the redefinition of masculinity was situated within

the parameters of older gender codes associated with Victorianism. In particular, the illustrated connections between fathers and daughters can also be read as a realignment of the protective father stance. The physical presence of the fathers in figures 4.6 and 4.8, when compared to the smaller stature of their daughters, allows the viewer to see the contrast between the fathers' masculinity and the girls' femininity. This is a closeness that is viewed as a requirement to protect the delicate forms of the young females. The fathers are not playing with their children, in contrast to the father and son interaction presented in the Joneses ad. My survey of player piano advertisements that utilized parental figures and children often showcased this slight gender differentiation regarding gestures and body positions. In general, when fathers were depicted in the family circle, their physical closeness with the daughters was not of a fun-loving nature, as opposed to the interplay with their sons. I conclude that these were loving connections, connoting the need to safeguard the female children.

Expressive Displays of Feminine Joy and the Automatic Piano

Female displays of happiness were subject to various gender restrictions that depended on many factors. This included location and situation: where these women were physically positioned and whom they were with. As made clear by Richard Leppert, with women and the piano, there was, in the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, fear "of a musical 'she' who ceased to charm" [her family and members of her social circle]...and loses her "simplicity, becoming complex, astonishing, and more like a man."²⁰ This refers to the fact that women were not expected to become more than adequately proficient at playing the piano. This included the

20. Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*, 69.

portrayal of women in illustrations as controlled and graceful when seated at the instrument. Excessive emotional expression and accentuated gesturing, often associated with virtuosity, were frowned upon.

Undeniably, when examining American piano visual media of the nineteenth century, such as the examples presented in figures 3.5, 3.6, 4.1, and 4.2, none of the women are smiling. Calm, graceful, and poised, they are all utilizing the keyboard in various ways. Piano advertising from the nineteenth century, when positioning women sitting at the keyboard, often followed suit. However, the question remains as to whether women seated at the player piano were permitted to display happiness, joy, and other forms of emotional abandonment. Figure 4.4 and the advertisement in figure 4.5 have allowed for their female figures to exhibit joyful looks, not unabashed glee but contentment regarding their daughters' reactions to the music. When compared to figures 3.5, 3.6, 4.1 and 4.2, these slight changes in facial expressive details are compelling. The women are allowed to display delight at the piano when limited by the parameters of their gender role and the piano player mechanism. In other words, their satisfaction is not directed at what they have achieved – the piano player requires little effort on their part – but at the outcome of their daughters' reactions.

One is therefore able to view this change as another consequence of the affectionate family. The mothers' reactions allow for the viewer to interpret the music educational process as being directed in a less authoritarian (or serious) and more loving manner. Certainly, the whole course of this activity is portrayed as being fun and joyful as opposed to a sombre, necessary requirement of femininity. The lack of work involved in these experiences, made apparent in the ads, and the gesturing and expressions of the women renders the Victorian connection as superficial in nature.

In player piano ads that depict women entertaining guests and suitors or husbands, their facial expressions, in some instances, are also animated. For example, in figure 3.12, the female player pianist is smiling while looking directly at the piano roll placed inside the instrument. In this case, her emotional stance is directed towards entertaining her husband, as her enjoyment of the music is set within the parameters of the courtship ritual. Her happiness is complementary to the mothers in figures 4.4 and 4.5; it is situated within the context of service.

This can also be observed in figure 4.9, a Virtuolo player piano endorsement. The woman in the following advertisement is the hostess, entertaining her guests with music. The ad states, “now every home, your home, can enjoy a piano [like] never before, and for double service. Played as player piano or the ordinary piano, each member [of] the family can use it.”²¹ In the illustration, “after a game of bridge,”²² the wife sits at the player piano, working the levers with curved fingers as her husband and some of the guests watch her operating the instrument. The husband, who is assuming the courtship pose of leaning against the piano, smiles, gazing directly at his wife. His posture and situation in the frame emanate dominance; he is positioned to be taller than everyone in the room and is dressed formally in a tailored suit. Nevertheless, his hands are in his pockets, symbolizing a casual confidence. The scene depicts a more relaxed atmosphere of a friendly get-together. The female player pianist is smiling and is breaking through the fourth wall by looking directly at the viewer(s) of the advertisement and not at anything or anyone else in the scene. She is entertaining the guests, but also the people who

21. The Hallet & Davis Piano Company, “The Wonderful Virtuolo,” *The Saturday Evening Post* 195 (March-April 1923): 159, accessed December 20, 2018, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015016748017>.

22. The Hallet & Davis Piano Company, 159.

THE SATURDAY EVENING POST 180

The Wonderful Virtuolo

Player Piano for Every Home



After the game of bridge

NOW every home can possess the wonderful Virtuolo, the supreme player piano, the product of the Hallet & Davis factories, makers of famous pianos since 1839. Forget all your former ideas about player pianos—so new-day Virtuolo is entirely different, improved in countless ways, a final achievement, rict beyond description. Forget old-time prices, when the Virtuolo was idly for the home of the wealthy. The success the Virtuolo and the world-wide demand has allied Hallet & Davis to bring the Virtuolo within a reach of all. Now every home, your home, can enjoy a piano never before, and for double service. Played as player piano or the ordinary piano, each member the family can use it.

The final achievement
vidy thousands of the better homes of the try have Virtuolos. And everywhere music lov- even the most critical, proclaim the supremacy the Virtuolo.

Hallet & Davis have invented a fortune in the de- velopment of the Virtuolo. Years have been spent in its refinement. The reward has been the unanimous public pref- erence—a Virtuolo is always the choice when com- parisons are made. There are two ways to compare, first by perfor- mance and second by construction. The brilliance of a Virtuolo rendition, whether it is classic or popular music, is without equal.

Easiest to play in every way
The construction of the Virtuolo has reached a new extreme in simplification. One exclusive inven- tion reduces the number of parts to one-fifth of those formerly used. The result is obvious—the Virtuolo maintains its playing precision. There is nothing to get out of order.

The Virtuolo brings to your home all the world's finest piano selections, solemn or gay, classic or popular, your favorites and the favorites of friends.

Visit your Virtuolo Dealer
There's a leading dealer in your community who will be delighted to demonstrate the Virtuolo for you or let you play it. It is so easy to play in every way. Learn how easy it is to own a Virtuolo—the low- ered prices, the easy terms. Don't wait and wish longer for the rare pleasure of having a Virtuolo in your home. Visit your Virtuolo dealer—if you should not know his name, write us. We'll send it, together with "The Virtuolo Book".

The Virtuolo in 5 Models	
Hallet & Davis Parlor Model	Conway Cottage Model
\$750	\$595
Hallet & Davis Parlor Model	Conway De Luxe Model
\$685	\$575
Lexington Home Companion Model	\$495
The same price everywhere	

Hallet & Davis Piano Co., Boston, Mass. Division of Conway Musical Industries

VIRTUOLO

The World's Finest Player Piano

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Figure 4.9. The Hallet & Davis Piano Company, "The Wonderful Virtuolo." Player Piano Advertisement (*The Saturday Evening Post* 195, March-April 1923: 159, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015016748017>)

glance upon the ad, flipping through the pages of their magazine. As the text implies, her happiness is subject to the music she brings into the home, allowing her viewers to recognize that they can also find contentment through service if they own a Virtuolo player piano.

Girls Operating the Player Piano: The Veneer of Tradition

Akin to piano print media, girls were often displayed as operators of player pianos. Story & Clark (established 1859) utilizes these images frequently in their advertisements from the time.

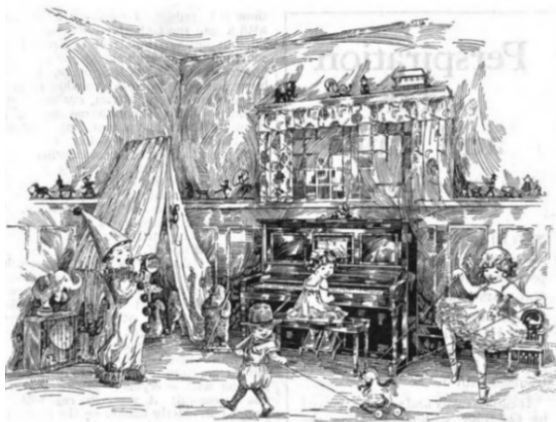
The company also made use of numerous other signs of femininity (objects and clothing for instance) in their endorsements, as is made clear in one of their ads. A young girl sits at the player piano, her head turned as she observes her siblings and/or friends simultaneously playing in the music/playroom. She is smiling and wearing a frilly dress with a bow in her hair. There is another girl at the right corner of the frame, dressed in a tutu, and is skipping to the music (using a skipping rope). There are two boys also depicted in the advertisement: a younger male playing with a toy horse that he is pulling with a string, and an older male dressed in a clown suit blowing a toy horn (see figure 4.10).

At times, girls were positioned in a way that resembled the body stance of a traditional performance on the piano. For example, an early twentieth-century Apollo player piano advertisement features a young girl sitting at the player piano, her right hand resting against (or pointing to) the piano roll (see figure 4.11) – a comparable gesture to that of the “piano girl” writing on a score. She is sitting upright, with perfect posture, her long hair trailing down her back. She wears a lace dress with puffed sleeves and dainty shoes. Her mother stands beside the instrument, glancing down at her daughter, readying herself to sing while holding sheet music with both hands.

If not for the piano roll and the pumping of the bellows, most viewers would mistake this image as a piano advertisement that is making use of typical music behavioural gesturing connected with Victorian ideologies of gender. In fact, the mother’s presence heightens this association, as it takes advantage of the nineteenth-century established practice depicted in figures 4.1 and 4.2: the mother-daughter bond as linked with the feminine pursuit of obtaining an adequate music education.

EVENING POST

57



*"The heart hath its own memory, like the mind,
And in it are enshrined the precious keepsakes
Into which are wrought the giver's loving thought"*
Longfellow

Give Your Children a "precious keepsake"—The STORY & CLARK PLAYER PIANO

*Will teach them to appreciate the finest
of music which they can easily play*

*The most desirable and satisfactory in-
strument you can buy for musical quality
-priced low enough so that it is the dominating
value of the year in musical instruments—and
priced high enough so that the smallest
detail of construction is of the finest
material and workmanship necessary to
permanently maintain its beauty of tone
and your satisfaction*

FREE! *A beautiful brochure about our in-
struments and the term payment
plan upon which they are sold will
be gladly sent upon your request Write for it*

"Instruments of finest quality since 1857"

The Story & Clark Piano Company
Chicago

New York Brooklyn Philadelphia Pittsburgh Detroit

CLIP AND MAIL CLIP AND MAIL CLIP AND MAIL

Story & Clark Piano Company—315-317 So. Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Please send your booklet of designs and name of nearest dealer. Have you a
Name _____
Street _____
City _____

Figure 4.10. The Story & Clark Piano & Organ Company, "Give Your Children a Precious Keepsake." Player Piano Advertisement (*The Saturday Evening Post* 194, no. 49-52, June 3, 1922: 57, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/umn.319510014591729>)

ANTIQUEPIANOSHOP.COM – with which the
"Key" is changed to suit the range of the voice



The Apollo Player-Piano

The First And Only Complete Player Piano	In this advertisement we wish to call particular attention to the fact that the Apollo is the only instrument having an adjustable keyboard so that the "Key" of the composition may be changed to suit the voice of the singer. This new feature puts the Apollo in a class by itself and places it in a position of supremacy that is reached by no other player. This wonderful invention is covered fully by patents and is used only on the Apollo. Do you fully appreciate the advantage and importance of this device?	It Plays The Entire Keyboard 88 Notes
---	---	--

Prices from \$650 to \$1050. Easy Payments Accepted. Used Pianos, Player-pianos and Piano-players taken in Exchange for the Apollo

THE APOLLO COMPANY, 102-104 W. 38th Street, New York

ANTIQUEPIANOSHOP.COM

Patents Pending and Strictly Reserved

that were 90 per cent. of material composition cover a range of more than 65 notes of the piano keyboard. Would you buy a 65 note piano?

Figure 4.11. The Melville Clark Piano Company, "The Apollo Player Piano." Advertisement (*Antique Piano Shop*, <https://antiquepianoshop.com/online-museum/apollo/>)

When comparing the Apollo ad in figure 4.11 with the Story & Clark advertisement (figure 4.10) – specifically focusing on the girls seated at the player piano – the younger player pianist in the latter advertisement is much more relaxed, her body stance connoting the purported ease of operating this sound reproducing device. She is turned away from the keyboard, pressing her hands into little fists as they rest on the levers; this posture is not applicable when performing

on a piano. The Story & Clark advertisement in figure 4.11 does not try to hide this fact.

Indeed, this is made even more obvious in a 1922 Emerson player piano endorsement. Founded in 1849 by William P. Emerson (a prominent piano institution in old Boston), the Emerson Piano Company was one of many well-established piano manufacturers of the time. While employing traditional images connected to Victorian values, they also embraced newer ideas tied to the emerging consumer culture, as is made evident in the following ad. For example, in figure 4.12, the image of this advertisement does not offer any symbolic cues concerning the visualization of music as being heard in the scene (the player piano is not electronically controlled), as it situates a little girl on a piano bench, with her whole body turned away from the instrument. Her feet, unlike that of the child player pianist in figure 4.10, are not on the bellows. Her right leg is swinging up, the left leg hanging down, as both feet are not grounded by the bellows or the floor. Her hands are positioned behind her, as she leans back on the bench in a stance like the female player pianist in “My Daughter Has a Foot for Music” advertisement (figure 3.17). The second individual, a younger girl, has her elbow resting against the arm of the player piano; the palm of her hand is leaning against her face. She is watching the older girl. Both children appear to be bored, with the older child fidgeting on the piano bench. She is not operating the instrument, and hence this is a posed picture connoting the “playing without effort” theme that was prevalent in many player piano ads of the early twentieth century.

At first glance, concerning figures 4.10 and 4.12, the gestures and posturing of the player pianists showcased in these scenes appear to be revolutionary. Discussed in chapter 3, by means of their body language, one can discern that the work ethic associated with female accomplishment and musical achievement is no longer applicable. Thus, what is presented here are new gender codes (drawn from the consumer culture of the Modern Age) as manifested by



"We've got a new player-piano." "That's nothing, we've got one too."
 "Yes, but *ours is an Emerson.*"

Legitimate pride and satisfaction come from knowing you have a player-piano with an established reputation that is universally appreciated.

Write for catalogue. Dealers in principal cities and towns.

EMERSON PIANO CO., Boston, Mass.

Figure 4.12. The Emerson Piano Company, "We've Got a New Player-Piano." Advertisement (*Woman's Home Companion*, April 1913: 94, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015011949552>)

the labour-saving ability of the player piano. However, as music performance in the home was still considered a feminized activity in the early twentieth century, albeit no longer a *defining* component of feminine accomplishment, a girl seated on a piano bench operating a player piano was not as symbolically charged as a boy operating the instrument. Moreover, as the work ethic gave way to a consumer ethos, these advertisements offered the familiarity of Victorian culture with the instant gratification enabled by the new passive musical experience of the Modern Age – an experience that, in these types of ads, was gendered feminine.²³

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have addressed the details of social interaction as portrayed primarily by representations of females in their musical domestic settings. As such, this highlights the way cultural compositions of femininity in American social history are continuously re-formed. Gestures in musical settings take on a heightened symbolic significance due to the musicological stance in the literature that gender roles are made manifest in music performance (in this case, the sight of music performance). Furthermore, an incorporation of methods from Goffman's sociological model allows for a deeper understanding of the layering of semiotic material – the codes of gender display in advertising examined in relation to the coding of gestures in musical activity. One is thus able to witness the small, at times, miniscule changes in gendered behaviour in relation to the player piano, such as facial expressions connoting more joy and satisfaction

23. This ad was posted in a woman's magazine – *The Woman's Home Companion* – and thus it was beneficial from a marketing perspective to allow the pictorial representation of the musical experience and the instrument itself to be symbolized as female. The mother-daughter bond as linked to the piano (in the guise of the automatic piano) was still highly regarded in the culture, especially, in general, by middle-class women.

than was allowed with the silent piano. One also views gestures that evoke slight changes in the family, due to the evolving nature of music appreciation in passive listening.

A continuation of this investigation occurs in chapter 5, which focuses on the male player pianist and his interactions with the opposite sex in various musical situations. It concludes by applying the research from both chapters to McCracken's theoretical positioning concerning the movement of meaning from goods to consumers.

Chapter 5: Pictorial Representations of the Male Player Pianist in Early Twentieth-Century Player Piano Advertising

Introduction

The image of a man or boy operating a player piano is more symbolically charged than pictorial representations of female player pianists, particularly when presented within the advertising frame of a domestic musical setting. These images, in general, do not align with the gender norms of the time, as traditional traits of masculinity are called into question when a male, presented in the home, is seated on a bench in front of the instrument. In many player piano ads, however, the male player pianist takes advantage of the mechanical components of the player piano, and his interaction with the females in the various scenes often negates a reading of complete gender reversal.

Utilizing the same methodology outlined in chapter 4, this chapter examines the small gesture changes (and other symbols) in these ads and presents a thorough account of the ways in which masculinity and femininity have been codified by means of gestures and other symbolic information. Hence, this chapter and chapter 4 account for the first part of my thesis: the player piano as a culture mediator, vis-à-vis its advertising, was used by piano/player piano companies as an object of change *and* continuity, challenging as well as conforming to expectations of the roles of women and men. The main goal of the instrument's advertisers was to firmly implant in the mind of every American the idea that the player piano was indispensable to the household (as was done for the piano in the nineteenth century); their intention was to sell as many as possible.

Boys Operating the Player Piano: Masculinity Recodified

In Victorian culture, women were associated with musical caregiving, as the role was tied to nurturance, domesticity, and servitude. Through her performance on the piano, a woman utilized music's supposed moral influence to calm and educate the various members of her family.

Playing the instrument in the home, in nineteenth-century America, was a part of the definition of femininity. Operating the player piano, however, was slightly more ambiguous, as player piano advertising promoted both men and women making use of the instrument (although there were many more images of women controlling the player piano than men in early twentieth-century ads). Men operating the player piano in the home can be viewed as a type of gender reversal. By means of advertising, the instrument's object-code was gradually expanded, taking on these new ideas about gender that did not align with societal gender expectations, specifically regarding the re-codification of certain elements that defined masculinity.

For example, concerning images of children in piano and player piano print media, figure 5.1, when compared to a Victorian Sterling piano trade card presented in figure 5.2, can be interpreted as an attempt by Gulbrandsen to reformulate ideas about gender in childhood vis-à-vis musical activity. In the Sterling endorsement, conventional gender roles are in play: a young girl dressed in pink is seated at the traditional piano; and a young boy holds a violin, coded masculine at this time, dressed formally in blue with a necktie. She is performing on an instrument associated with femininity, taking on an accompanying role to that of the boy, who is the soloist (he is leading the rehearsal).

In direct contrast, the Gulbrandsen ad positions the boy as the accompanist, seated in a confident upright position, while the girl, standing taller behind the boy, takes on the solo part as singer. He is partially responsible for the familiar bliss observed via music in the home. As such,



YOU'll Like Gulbransen Music, too

No happier folks anywhere—no family group more closely knit together—no home life more delightfully congenial and enjoyable than where the entertainment centers around a Gulbransen!

In the tens of thousands of Gulbransen homes—ask the fathers and mothers. Ask the sons and daughters. Young or old, all say the same about it. All have the same warm feeling for it. Good piano music speaks in language everybody loves and understands. There's no age limit to enjoyment of the Gulbransen! Children take to the Gulbransen naturally, eagerly, enthusi-

astically. It's so easy to play. To sing their school songs to Gulbransen accompaniment—"Columbia," "Sweet and Low," "Sleep Kentucky Babe"—is such fun. Quickly and easily mastered Gulbransen Instruction Rolls stir their interest in music—encourage and sustain it—where tedious finger practice and long months and years of study only dull it.

EXTRA-EASY TERMS

Mail This for Gulbransen
Easy Payment
information.
Name
Address

Four Models—Nationally Priced
\$450 - \$530 - \$615 - \$700

E. E. Clarkson & Co.

GULBRANSEN

The Registering Piano

Figure 5.1. The Gulbransen Piano Company, "You'll Like Gulbransen Music Too..." Player Piano Advertisement (*The Burlington Free Press*, June 10, 1925: 8, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/197276255>)

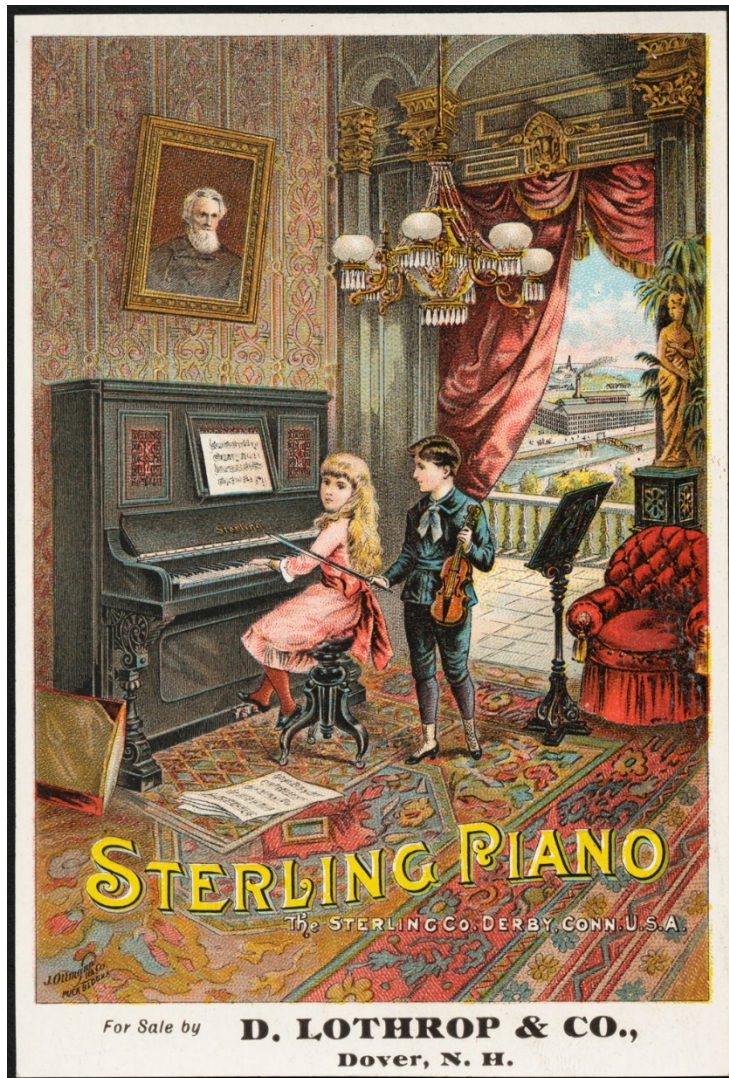


Figure 5.2. The Sterling Piano Co. Trade Card, *Sterling Piano*, 1870-1900, chromolithograph, 13 x 9 cm., published by J. Ottmann Lith. Co., New York (From the *Nineteenth-Century American Trade Card Collection*, Boston Public Library. Flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/boston_public_library/8412091982/in/album-72157632598780629/)

his masculinity is linked with domesticity and dedication to family. Moreover, he is not the leader in the musical activity. This position is held by the female in the image.

However, a detailed reading of this ad in comparison to figure 5.1 reveals more subtle differences. Namely, the Gulbransen boy, while not using the piano in the conventional sense, is still controlling the instrument, in contrast to the male child holding the violin in the Sterling

piano ad. As stated earlier, boys, in many nineteenth-century American piano images, were often shown listening to music being performed: this is demonstrated in figure 5.1. When they were pictorially displayed interacting with instruments, their interplay was often similar to what is presented in figure 5.2; they did not play the instrument, but would merely hold it, or stand or sit near it. In these images, boys, when displayed, were frequently utilized as props – their masculinity contrasting with the feminine traits connected to music and the piano. This is not evident in figure 5.1, with the boy engaging with the player piano, albeit not in the traditional manner.

Furthermore, when examining this ad in its entirety, one observes how the imagery employs a contrasting notion of traditional femininity in another form as a way of trying to emphasize a dissociation of the feminine with the player piano. For example, this refers to the girl featured in this Gulbransen endorsement, standing behind the boy singing a song to the accompaniment enabled by the instrument and her brother. Upon an initial read of the advertisement (which makes use of Goffman's ideas concerning behavioural representation of gender in media), this appears to further substantiate the supposition that gender roles are being inverted (embodied in music performance). The Modern Shift appears to be applicable to the gesturing and bodily stances of the individuals involved in the process. The girl is the soloist, taking on the lead role in the musical activity and is positioned in the frame as taller than the boy (according to Goffman, this could symbolize social authority, as defined by the category of Relative Size). The male player pianist is sitting up straight on the piano bench, hands curved and resting over the levers as he directs his gaze towards the player piano roll, which has replaced the score.

It should be noted that the Gulbransen Piano Company, a Chicago-based firm established

in 1904, did not have the same historical roots as Bush & Lane and other older piano companies. Hence, they were, in some ways, less reliant on Victorian ideological concerns in the messaging of their advertisements. For instance, the “playing without effort” theme in many of their ads embraced the values of consumerism in a way that surpassed numerous advertisements from many other piano companies. Nevertheless, upon further examination of this ad, one can see that there are still elements of Victorian gender ideologies present (by means of the visual material), and that a clear-cut interpretation of gender reversal (the gesturing reflecting the Modern Shift) does not provide an all-inclusive interpretation of the material. For example, the young female in this image is singing, an action considered in many historical settings to be even more feminine than playing the piano.

From a broad outlook of gender relations, playing an instrument for women has always been subject to “contexts of sexual and social marginality,”¹ whereas the process of singing has generally enjoyed a less stringent reliance on the cultural situations at large.² In other words, it was considered more natural for a woman to sing than play an instrument; the former action was not controlled, to the same degree, by social norms. This was true in America during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as women and girls in many works of art and advertisements were often displayed in singing postures – the physical configuration required of a singer and accompanist in the activity dictating these situated body stances. Hence, the sister’s posture in the Gulbrandsen ad (figure 5.1) does not signify dominance in the scene but is merely a close representation of a performance stance (however, singers would not usually stand behind

1. Koskoff, *A Feminist Ethnomusicology*, 122.

2. Koskoff, 122-24.

the pianist, thereby implying that this girl might be reading over the boy's shoulder, which suggests his control of the situation).

Moreover, when one continues to unravel the various layers of symbolic material encoded in this picture, it is made apparent that only the daughter is participating in the process of traditional music performance. Hence, although both the actions of the girl and the boy in the image manifest ideas about gender that are tied to femininity, Gulbransen player piano advertisers attempted to create an additional gendered division through musical activity: positioning the operation of the player piano as masculine in direct contrast to traditional performance as feminine.

Upon recognizing, during my secondary analysis, that the newer gender codes embedded in this visual scene of musical activity (figure 5.1) are positioned within the conceptual parameters of older ideologies of gender (as tied to music), I inquired as to what symbolically occurs when there is no representation of traditional performance in advertisements that situate a boy at the player piano. I questioned if this could be considered more thoroughly codified as gender reversal – the gesturing a sign of the Modern Shift. In the many commercial prints gathered, I observed that this was not particularly the case when examining the foundational symbolic meanings of these advertisements. Two general methods were employed (not always in tandem) to obscure this straightforward reading. First, the ads would utilize various emblems of traditional masculinity in the picture. Second, they would make use of other gestures and physical stances that connote more conservative aspects of masculinity and/or visually make obvious the difference between performing on a piano and operating a player piano (both methods would recurrently also use specific language to further heighten the variance).

For example, referring to the first approach, figure 5.3 introduces a 1923 Story & Clark player piano advertisement that features a young boy operating the player piano while his friends dance around him in playful merriment. The headline reads, “Wouldn’t you rather hear that boy of yours play ‘The Star-Spangled Banner’ than listen to the performance of the greatest artist who ever lived?”³ The scene features various symbols of outdoor masculinity: excluding the player pianist, the other boys, while dancing, are holding a baseball and bat (sports); a rope (rodeo); a knife; and what appears to be a dead animal (hunting). In the room, there are no traces of *bric-à-brac* (except a picture of an outdoor mountain scene hanging above the player piano).

In contrast to many nineteenth-century piano pictures that present scenes of enclosed areas that are often cluttered, the setting for this advertisement is a clear space consisting of long vertical wall panels, a high ceiling, and an opening with no door that extends onto a deck. Images of trees and more outdoor space are also made present. The meaning communicated in this advertisement is freedom. This relates to the origin mythology of the country,⁴ the freedom of technique that the instrument enables, and the outdoor freedom of the outside world that has become, in this ad, part of the indoor scene (disenabling the piano, in its player piano form, with the ideology of separate spheres).

Nevertheless, while this image creates more of a dissociation between domesticity and music performance than in figure 5.1, the boy in figure 5.3 is still performing in the home, acting as a musical caregiver, not for his family, in this instance, but for his friends. Moreover, his

3. “Story & Clark Player Piano,” *The Saturday Evening Post* 195 (March-April 1923): 52, accessed June 28, 2021, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015016748017>.

4. By referring to the national anthem, the “Star-Spangled Banner,” the player piano, in this ad, becomes associated with American national ideology.



Wouldn't you rather hear that boy of yours play "The Star Spangled Banner" than listen to the performance of the greatest artist who ever lived? He can do it with ease on the

STORY & CLARK PLAYER PIANO

and without hours of practice. It's fun for him and for you, too, and for the whole family!

THE NEW STYLE MINIATURE

brought out just a year ago met with instantaneous approval of the music-loving public.

Thousands sold are giving utmost satisfaction. It's a beautiful instrument with a rich, full,



singing tone; small, only four feet, two inches high; and equipped with the Story & Clark Imperial Player-Action, so simple to operate a child can play it.

For those who love the piano, yet cannot play—for those thousands of homes where there are pianos unused because there is no one to play them—the Story & Clark player is the ideal instrument.

Nearly every Story & Clark dealer will gladly show you the several styles of Story & Clark pianos and player pianos, and from whom you can purchase one on terms within your income. Your present piano will be accepted in part payment.

Instruments of finest quality since 1857
The Story & Clark Piano Company
 General Offices 315-317 South Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Illinois

Figure 5.3. The Story & Clark Piano & Organ Company, "Story & Clark Player Piano." Advertisement (*The Saturday Evening Post* 195, March-April 1923: 52, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015016748017>)

physical stance is very similar to that of performing on the instrument in the traditional way. His fingers are curved, and he is sitting upright with good posture, with his attention completely directed towards operating the instrument. The boy is providing music for the other males in the image, and thus his role is still linked to serving others in a domestic environment. What one witnesses in this image is a type of masculinity that includes a juxtaposition of freedom and

servitude: a new reading of male behaviour in musical activity associated with both traditional feminine and masculine gender codes.

The Male Player Pianist: Music Appreciation, Male Camaraderie and Courtship

Undeniably, through the careful positioning of new gender codes within the framework of older ideologies of gender, as applicable to various musical situations, piano companies increasingly also utilized images of grown men operating the player piano in the early twentieth century.

They were portrayed in family settings, as seen in a 1909 Weber Pianola advertisement, which displays a man sitting at the instrument, pumping the bellows and controlling the levers while his two daughters listen intently to the music emanating from the machine (see figure 5.4). There is no maternal figure present in the image, thereby suggesting a complete gender reversal regarding gender roles in musical activity.

The symbolism of this image, when compared to the previous examples, appears to be a straightforward challenge to early twentieth-century gender roles and norms since the father is positioned as the musical caregiver of his family. Unlike the ad in figure 5.3, this image carries more symbolic weight in the social order, as the father is the head of the household. In the patriarchal society of early twentieth-century America, his role in the family was that of the breadwinner – tied to the outdoor publics of the economic world, not to the domestic home. In direct contrast to this, the father in this ad is shown nurturing his daughters' musical development within the piano parlour, with the dedication to his family pictorially evident by means of his physical stance. It is made obvious that he is operating the instrument, and that he takes the role seriously by displaying an intense concentration through his facial gesturing.



Figure 5.4. The Aeolian Company, "The Weber Grand Pianola Piano." Player Piano Advertisement (December 1909, www.pianola.org/history/history_playerpianos.cfm)

Nevertheless, there are symbolic references in the ad that attempt to dissociate elements of the feminine connection tied to this duty. First and foremost, the girls are physically separate (although not too distant) from the father, with one leaning against an armchair and the other sitting down. Unlike the images in figures 4.6 and 4.8, the daughters' physical disengagement from the father in this Weber ad is deemed necessary, as he is assuming a role, unlike that of sitting in a chair listening to music, which is symbolically charged (in its association with

femininity). Moreover, the man is wearing a suit and is much larger in stature than his tiny daughters, who are wearing frilly dresses and are surrounded by dolls. Both daughters are physically unbalanced (the Ritualization of Subordination). This is due to the younger child's bent posture and the older daughter's feet that dangle off the chair, not touching the floor. Contrarily, the father is grounded in the image: his much larger feet are firmly planted on the bellows of the player piano. While his seated posture is the same as a woman's, in comparison to his daughters he conveys social weight and authority, enhanced by his position at a solid grand piano.

However, it is the advertisement's surroundings that symbolically reflect the father's status within the social world at large. For instance, the fact that he is operating a Weber pianola indicates that this man is financially successful, as these instruments were some of the finest and most expensive player pianos ever built. Indeed, the Weber Piano Company – a very old institution, founded by Albert Weber in 1852 and absorbed into the Aeolian Corporation in 1903 – marketed their self-playing and traditional pianos to the affluent elite. Furthermore, the pianola presented in this advertisement is a grand; the top of the instrument is raised, thus visually representing the dynamic, dominant sound emerging (by means of its mechanicality) from within its material frame. This auralty is also marked by the black colour of the man's clothing, which matches that of his instrument. The powerful sounding pianola is specifically connected to the equally powerful male, in contrast to the white outlines of the delicate frames of his subordinate daughters.

Furthermore, the open, powerful sound is semiotically referenced by means of the spaciousness of the scene, facilitated by the door that opens to a patio. One can see plants and the faint traces of trees in the background. Similar to the Story & Clark advertisement from figure

5.2, a male operating a player piano is connected with the outdoors – the multiple publics of the outside world juxtaposed against the indoor private sphere of the feminine piano parlour. The inside has become outside as advertisers tried to dissociate the male experience of operating the player piano from its historical roots: a woman performing on the piano in her home.

Men at the player piano were also depicted in other domestic conditions. For example, an interesting trend in this grouping of player piano advertising was to situate men controlling the instrument while in the company of other men. Male camaraderie over a love of music, enabled by the technology, became the focus of these ads. One strategy employed among many companies was to direct their messaging on the time-saving capacity of the device for the “busy man.” The audience for these advertisements were middle-class businessmen; they did not have the time to learn the piano because they were out in the world making a living and supporting their families.

For example, a 1914 Emerson player piano endorsement, presented in *McClure's Magazine* (considered a men's magazine during this time period) states that “Mr. Average man – the man of business cares, and untutored hands when it comes to piano playing – sits at his Player and gives a real treat to a musical friend, with touch, technique, and colour in his execution.”⁵ This man is entertaining his friend, who stands above him, leaning against the piano with his arm resting on the top of the instrument (see figure 5.5). The friend is looking at the man's hands, which are operating the levers – his expression is one of interest and curiosity. Both are dressed formally, in business suits, thus conveying a sense of dignity and respectability.

5. The Emerson Piano Company, “Advertisement 79 – No Title,” *McClure's Magazine* 42, no. 4 (February 1914): 197, accessed April 3, 2017, ProQuest (135624514).

A Busy Man Remarks

"I got even with myself" last Sunday—you know how it rained—well, I spent the whole day at my Emerson Player Piano!" Mr. Average Man—the man of business cares, and untutored hands when it comes to piano playing—sits at his Player and gives a real treat to a musical friend, with *touch, technique and color* in his execution. It may be grand opera, or an aria from one of the great Masters, or a hit from the latest comic production. The Emerson Player Piano translates his mood perfectly—putting into music his own imaginings—transporting him, as it were, into new hands and among strange peoples.

A simple *liking* for music makes all this possible, with the Emerson Player—the ear to hear and the hand to play simply merge into one, in the most natural way. With the Emerson Player you will attain the sympathetic and melodic quality you love in music.

Write for catalog. Dealers in principal cities and towns.

Emerson Piano Company, BOSTON MASS.



Figure 5.5. The Emerson Piano Company, "Advertisement 79 – No Title." Player Piano Advertisement (*McClure's Magazine* 42, no. 4, February 1914: 197, ProQuest 135624514)

A significant image regarding the framing of new gender codes in musical behaviour, this advertisement associates the musical performance with male bonding, instead of the act of service. The man is pleasing *himself* and his friend with music, rather than a woman catering to her husband and children's musical demands. Furthermore, while we can assume that this is occurring in the home, besides the player piano and the two male figures, there is no imagery in the ad that signifies a domestic setting. Moreover, the text and imagery in this advertisement delineates the disparity between playing a piano and operating a player piano. Akin to the Weber pianola ad and the examples of advertisements that featured boys sitting at the self-playing

instrument, performance has been re-imagined, with the player piano allowing for musical “excellence” without technique.

Discussed in chapter 3, this disconnect from the values associated with the work ethic was increasingly of little concern in a consumer culture that progressively valued personality over character. Moreover, the ad was catered to men who worked all day, and whose efforts in the business world were considered more important than women’s work in the home. Therefore, it positions the labour-saving capability of the player piano as of little consequence – a boon to the man who need not concern himself with work as historically connected to domesticity (learning to play the piano). The advertisement in figure 5.5 allows for the man’s creativity to emerge as it “translates his mood perfectly – putting into music his own imaginings”⁶ and so forth.

Predominantly, the parameters of this male encounter with the player piano were, nevertheless, connected to Victorian ideologies of gender, specifically concerning the moral value of music as tied to the nineteenth-century masculine experience of listening to music. The Emerson player piano operator still requires music to calm his mind after a long day at work, but, on account of the purported ease of operating the machine, he no longer needs a female to complete this task. For all intents and purposes in this and other similar automatic piano endorsements, the woman and the feminine have been erased from the musical experience so as not to threaten the masculinization of this activity. However, when one examines this image in contrast to the various courtship scenes as illustrated in nineteenth-century piano media, the

6. The Emerson Piano Company, 197.

similar stances and gestures associated with the feminized activity of music-making are difficult to ignore.

For example, a Stieff Piano Company trade card depicts a well-dressed man in a tuxedo leaning against the grand piano, his eyes fixated on the woman's face while her eyes are focused on the score (a sentimental ballad entitled "How Can I Leave Thee?"). His social dominance in the scene is evoked by his size, position, and situation within the frame of the endorsement. Namely, he is taller than the woman and hovers over her, invading, to some degree, her personal space (see figure 5.6). Although the music enables this activity, his focus is on her, especially her face, and not her hands. These gestures, when translated in the Emerson player piano ad, still convey a sense of superiority, albeit not through the lens of gender. By way of explanation, the friend leaning on the piano is, according to the text, musically literate as opposed to the musically uneducated operator. Hence, by means of knowledge, and not gender, the standing friend symbolically conveys a social weight and status through his skill set.

This ad exemplifies the attempted de-gendering of these gestures and bodily stances that were linked to highly feminized traits as embedded in courtship rituals involving music and the piano. Nevertheless, there were many player piano advertisements that continued to utilize almost identical imagery to replicate the façade of a woman playing the piano as a mark of womanly accomplishment, including the Kranich & Bach ad in figure 3.12.

Considered to be one of the most cutting-edge piano makers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Kranich & Bach made use of the various guises of the courtship ritual as a common theme in their advertising campaigns for both silent and automatic pianos. In this ad, a man, in the image, has his arm leaning on the top of the player piano, as he stares directly at the woman's face. If this image was of a piano, and her hands were on the keys, with her feet on the



Figure 5.6. The Stieff Piano Co. Trade Card, *Stieff Prize Medals at Centennial. 1876. Paris 1878. New Orleans 1884-1885. Worlds Columbian Expositions 1893, 1870-1900*, chromolithograph, 14 x 9 cm (From the *Nineteenth-Century American Trade Card Collection*. Boston Public Library. Flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/boston_public_library/8412093160/in/album-72157632598780629)

piano pedals, it would be, in terms of iconography, equivalent to the Stieff trade card. Hence, when comparing the Emerson ad to the Stieff endorsement, the Kranich & Bach ad, and others of comparable content, one can hypothesize that these gestures were still semiotically charged. Moreover, there were more of these types of ads being made than those like the Emerson advertisement in figure 5.5. Hence, these gestures continued to hold meaning tied to Victorian gender roles. The Emerson ad, instead of erasing the feminine associated with domestic music-making, directly connects it to player piano operation, or more precisely, the masculine experience of operating the instrument. Thus, a gender reversal of Goffman's Modern Shift has occurred. In this manner, the Emerson advertisement, and those similar to it, unequivocally challenged early twentieth-century gender norms in America.

Courtship involving the piano, when represented in nineteenth-century visual media, also included other gestures and actions that signified intimacy. The most notable one was a man turning the pages for the woman of his interest. The image presented in a late nineteenth-century Harvard piano trade card epitomizes this common occurrence. For example, a young woman, dressed elegantly, wearing a white, off the shoulder evening gown, with short, puffed sleeves performs on the piano. She has perfect posture, as her arms and fingers move gracefully over the keys. A man and a woman sit in comfort, listening to the hostess perform while her suitor turns the pages of the score. With his knee slightly bent and his body leaning towards the piano, he appears eager to fulfil his role as the helpful, romantic companion (figure 5.7).

Nonetheless, with the invention of the player piano, this limited act of participation had become obsolete; there was no need to have a page turner, as the piano roll became the new



Figure 5.7. Harvard Piano Co. Trade Card, *The Harvard Piano*, 1870-1900, chromolithograph, 14 x 9 cm. Published by Strobridge Lith. Co., Cincinnati, Ohio (From the *Nineteenth-Century American Trade Card Collection*. Boston Public Library. Flickr, https://www.flickr.com/photos/boston_public_library/8410999239/in/album-72157632598780629/)

medium of reading, replacing the score in these situations.⁷ A unique representation of this courtship ritual thus emerged: the “play her accompaniment yourself”⁸ became a common theme in player piano advertising. For example, a 1909 Angelus player piano ad (see figure 5.8) features a woman performing on the cello while a man accompanies her on the player piano. An image of great symbolic significance on multiple levels, the first point of contention concerns the gendered role of the male in the image. Musically one could argue that he is taking on the subservient role of accompanist, performing in a domestic environment with a body stance and instrument historically linked to feminine musical activity – that this is a role-reversal. The man fades into the dark background while the woman is illuminated, assuming the function of soloist.

Nevertheless, if one considers the matter of operating the player piano as equivalent to the duty of turning pages, one can also view this function in a different way. In other words, advertisers were trying to define it as a masculine role linked to established practices of convention. Operating a player piano is not the same as performing by hand, and thus it can be viewed as more of an observable role, limited participation in musical activity by the male as dictated by courtship. This is part of the same method that advertisers used in figure 5.1: the experience of operating the player piano is encoded as masculine when set side by side with the musical and technical skills necessary for performing in the traditional manner. However, it is more effective in this ad (figure 5.8), as it utilizes the theme of courtship rather than family obligation. The man is not a musical caregiver, and the ties of domesticity and the feminine,

7. Although it was possible to play the player piano the traditional way, and thus a score would, at times, be required, this is rarely presented in player piano ads.

8. Wilcox & White Piano & Organ Company, “Advertisement 6 – No Title,” *Indiana Farmer’s Guide* 37, no. 7 (February 15, 1919: 785), accessed February 5, 2018, ProQuest (90656122).

**The New
88 Note
ANGELUS PLAYER PIANO**

In purchasing a player-piano or exchanging your old-style piano, for the modern one which every one can play, (as you will soon find it expedient to do) it is to your best interests to secure for yourself the finest and most completely equipped instrument it is possible to have. Month after month, we have been advancing argument after argument in favor of the ANGELUS Player-Piano. We have given you reason after reason why it is better, and why, from every practical view-point, its possession is infinitely more desirable than that of any other instrument of its kind. To these reasons, we now add still another.

The ANGELUS Player-Piano, instead of restricting the user to the incomplete 65-note range, is now built to play the full 88 notes, the entire compass of the piano keyboard. This new, and extremely important feature, gives you exactly the same playing range as that of the concert-pianist—the full 88-note range—from the lowest note in the bass, to the highest note in the treble. The new 88-note ANGELUS plays all 88-note and 65-note music rolls. This gives the user a far more comprehensive selection of music than is available for any other player-piano.

The Phrasing Lever, the Melodant, the Diaphragm Pneumatics, Melody Buttons, Artiststyle Music-Rolls, and the Duplex Spoof, are other patented and exclusive advantages of the ANGELUS. These comprise the most complete and most invaluable playing-equipment possessed by any player-piano made today. It will therefore, be to your ultimate satisfaction to hear and play the ANGELUS instruments yourself, before you are led into purchasing any other.

Write for our beautiful new booklet, and name of convenient dealer.

THE WILCOX & WHITE CO. *Business Established in 1877.* **MERIDEN, CONN.**
Regent House Regent Street Low

Figure 5.8. Wilcox & White Piano & Organ Company, “Advertisement 26 – No Title.” Angelus Player Piano Advertisement (*Life Magazine*, June 3, 1909: 53, ProQuest 90735385)

which are conventionally associated with this role, are weakened.

This leads into another query of concern. In figure 5.1, the masculinization of operating the player piano contrasts against the feminized musical activity of singing. Figure 5.8, contrarily, displays a woman playing the cello, an instrument that was, for most of the nineteenth century, associated with male players. This is mostly due to the technical positioning of the

instrument between the legs of the performer; it was considered inappropriate for women.⁹

Nonetheless, women did play the cello during this period, but they were required to play it in the side-saddle position.¹⁰ It should be noted, however, that over the course of time, particularly around the turn of the twentieth century, more women were playing the cello as a solo instrument, wrapping their legs around the instrument. Therefore, a woman playing the cello in a 1909 advertisement was no longer as shocking as it once was in nineteenth-century America. Furthermore, this woman in figure 5.11, while not holding the instrument in a side-saddle position, is also not firmly positioning the instrument between her legs. Instead, it appears to be resting at the front of her legs (an endpin is not visible, although they were universally adopted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). Her long gown, which fades out at the bottom of this Angelus advertisement, does not allow the viewer to see any semblance of her legs.

Like many other Angelus ads of the time, the manner by which the female figures are depicted gives the impression that they are floating creatures whose movements are balletic in nature. The advertisers determined that the overt feminization of the cellist and her performance in this ad – as she plays on an instrument that was increasingly being viewed by society as gender neutral – required that the male not be too involved in the process. His behaviour needed to be viewed in contrast to the feminized activity of the woman. Moreover, from a visual perspective, the man is drawn quite differently from the female; his arms are positioned with no

9. Women were only supposed to play instruments that “required no facial exertions or body movements that interfered with the portrait of grace that... [they were expected] to emanate.” Hence, for women, utilizing the cello in the proper way was deemed inappropriate, symbolizing overt sexuality. Judith Tick, “Passed Away is the Piano Girl: Changes in American Musical Life, 1870-1900,” in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition 1150-1950*, eds. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 327.

10. Margaret Campbell, “Nineteenth-Century Virtuosity,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Cello*, ed. Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 64, Google Play Books.

rounded contours, as his hands work the levers. This is set against the flowing ethereal figure of the woman, with her fingers and right arm curved, as she holds the bow. Her hair is pinned up, but not in a tight bun, and her slightly low-cut gown in the front sexualizes her form (not overtly), further emphasizing her feminine nature. Moreover, the man is taller than the woman and has a bulkier build. Hence, his status in society as the one that holds more social weight is grounded in his positioning in the scene.

This image is a gender negotiation of a kind – it both challenges and conforms to gender stereotypes. An interweaving of gender codes, both old and new, this advertisement pictorially represents contemporary and established musical behaviours. The woman's eyes are glancing down, she appears to be withdrawn, lost in the moment. Nevertheless, this look is equated with that of listening and concentrating within the process of playing an instrument (and not License Withdrawal). She symbolizes power in this activity, and she is the one controlling the musical happening (the one with the applicable skills). However, unlike the Emerson ad, in which the musically literate friend is visually situated to symbolically reference his superior skill set, this woman's performance is still positioned within the parameters of gendered musical activity. In other words, the man is displayed as the one of social importance, as his lack of skills in this case is a necessary component of his masculine gendered identity.

In another player piano advertisement that utilizes stringed instruments, a woman stands apart from the rest of the figures in the frame, performing as soloist on a violin. She is accompanied by a male amateur orchestra, which consists of a player pianist, a banjoist,¹¹ and

11. The banjo and the saxophone juxtaposed with the violin is notable. Given the time period, this could be an attempt by Gulbransen to showcase the possibilities of the player piano. For instance, with the popularity of early jazz music, they may be suggesting that the instrument can bridge the gap between the former genre and classical music.

what appears to be two saxophonists. Additionally, there are a few people observing the scene, and two others are dancing to the music (see figure 5.9). This is a Gulbransen illustration and is also different from other player piano ads that have been presented thus far because there are men and a lone woman both participating in traditional music performance. Nonetheless, this is a band musical setting, and hence the gender dynamics of this situation must be understood in their historical context. Firstly, the banjo and the saxophone were gendered male instruments in the early twentieth century, whereas the gendering of the violin was more ambiguous. Comparable to the cello, more women were playing the violin by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Secondly, during this period, professional women instrumentalists were often given solo roles in an orchestra or band that were part-time positions. This was often a manifestation of gender discrimination, a way to keep women from filling the full-time posts. These women were, in general, viewed by male musicians as an economic threat to male employment.¹² The manner by which a woman is given a solo role to have her stand apart from the rest of the male musicians thus applies in this situation. This is pictorially represented by the woman's positioning in the frame, her clothing, and her facial expression. For example, the banjoist and the player pianist are looking directly at her, smiling, while the woman is looking down at her instrument, portraying a serious expression. Similar to the Stieff piano trade card, she is the object of the male gaze. In other words, they look at her, but she doesn't look at them. She is the object of scrutiny, a symbol of music as a sign of the feminine.

Furthermore, the woman is wearing a long white gown, contrasting against the dark suits

12. This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6.

(Pronounced Gul-BRAN-sen)

GULBRANSEN

Player-Piano



© 1919, G. D. Co.

The Amateur Orchestra Plays Best With a Gulbransen

THE Gulbransen is the center—the inspiration—of many a home orchestra. It supplies an accomplished performer on the most difficult and important instrument—the piano.

The one who plays the Gulbransen may not "know one note from another," yet he can always play without stumbling—smoothly and with freedom of expression—leading and helping the other players.

Practically the entire world of music is ready in player-rolls. If the orchestra is learning a new piece, the Gulbransen shows "how it goes." It is a great help to band leaders for rehearsals.

There are many refinements in the Gulbransen that help in playing with other instruments. It transposes to any key that is wanted for the other instruments. It responds instantly to change in tempo. Any part of a roll may be silenced. Other bass or treble on the entire scale may be subdued to bring out solo on other instruments.

The Gulbransen is so Easy to Play that it never tires you. The pedals act so gently that a baby once played the Gulbransen as shown in the picture below—which gave the idea for this trade mark. You have never tried a player that is so Easy to Play, so responsive, so alive.

If you will spend ten minutes with the Gulbransen, you will get a new idea of the possibilities of such an instrument. You can play it not only easily, but satisfyingly—to yourself and others.

Whether you make our store your first or last stop you will not be giving your dollar its greatest buying opportunity until you see the Gulbransen Player and witness its wonderful performance.

Nationally Priced
Three models, all playable by hand or by roll, sold at the same price to everybody, everywhere in the U. S. Freight and tax included. Price brooded in the back of each instrument at the factory.

White House Model, \$275
Country Seat Model, \$325
Waterloo Model \$495

The Gulbransen stands fairly and squarely upon its merit and occupies a place of honor in over three hundred homes in Davenport and vicinity, every one a satisfied customer and a booster for the Baxter Piano Co. service.

To those wishing to purchase a Gulbransen on time we will arrange terms to suit your convenience. Our prices are as low as possible consistent with guaranteed quality and strictly one price to all.

To those who have been waiting so long for a Gulbransen, come in now we have any style and finish you desire but only a limited number of them. If you will come in at once you will be sure of getting the Gulbransen of your choice.

Baxter Piano Company

216-218 W. 3rd St.

Davenport, Iowa

Tel. Dav. 5934

Figure 5.9. The Gulbransen Piano Company, "Gulbransen Player-Piano." Advertisement (*The Daily Times*, September 16, 1919: 10, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/302682122>)

of the male musicians and the player pianist. Indeed, the latter, although not participating in the performance in the conventional sense, by way of his clothing, gender, and positioning, is visually linked to the rest of the musicians: he is part of the band. The female musician, however, is situated at the right front corner of the image; she is physically set apart from the rest of the musicians. Even so, it is worth mentioning that soloists often stand apart from the

band/orchestra, as their status demands the distance for reasons concerning the signification of their special talent. The visual representation of gender differentiation is telling, and thus the player pianist's role in this situation, even though he is performing in the home, is defined as a male activity in this ad.

Moreover, comparable to the Angelus cello advertisement, the violinist's skills as a serious musician, and the fact that she is utilizing an instrument that was, at the turn of the twentieth century, gendered male, also paint a picture of female empowerment (while her male counterpart operates an instrument whose predecessor was gendered female) – although this is not a complete gender reversal in musical activity.¹³ Furthermore, the male player pianist is operating the player piano and not “playing” it. Therefore, this does not allow for the complete re-working of gender codification, but a slight change regarding traditional courtship musical behaviours.

Male Player Pianists: Entertainers to Female Listeners and Solo Musicking

Another very prominent theme in player piano advertising was male player pianists operating the instrument while a woman sits and listens to the music. These advertisements, when compared to Victorian piano endorsements, can also be positioned as a type of gender reversal, as it was traditionally the man who was the listener, while the woman performed in domestic music-making scenarios. Nevertheless, in an attempt to re-codify the operation of the player piano as

13. From my research, I concluded that this ad was most likely placed specifically in urban general magazines and newspapers. For example, *The Daily Times* was a newspaper in Davenport, Iowa, whereas an exact copy of this endorsement was also found in other similar sources, including *The Saturday Evening Post*. Hence, one can presuppose that the Gulbransen company was catering more to middle-class families. Thus, partially due to the general scope of its audience, the messaging of this advertisement, although offering a slight re-working of gender codes, was limited with regard to the pushing of boundaries of societal gender expectations.

masculine, these types of player piano ads often situated the “listening woman” versus the “performing man” as passive versus active, respectively. For example, a 1913 Apollo player piano advertisement features a “listening woman.” Her eyes are closed as she sits forward in a chair while the man, presumably her husband, operates the player piano. In this situation, the woman is not participating in the music “performance” in any manner. Her female form and her passive musical experience represent the feminine in this image, rather than the act of playing an instrument. Moreover, the man is portrayed as active when compared to the woman’s body stance. His eyes are open as he looks directly at his wife, with his arms straight out and his fingers on the levers (they are curved and positioned in a way similar to performing on a keyboard). The clothing of both figures is dark black while the player piano is white, contrasting against the two people and the background.

The focus in this ad is the woman. She is the object of the male gaze and the stable locus in the image, as the player pianist’s attention is directed towards her, together with the viewers of this advertisement. The woman seems disengaged (License Withdrawal) or perhaps lost in the experience. Due to the passivity of the experience, this present image (see figure 5.10) adheres to a reading that follows Goffman’s exploration of this particular behavioural coding. Undeniably, listening women in piano media are often delineated in the same way – lost in the experience, not aware of their surroundings, and in need of male “protection.”¹⁴

For instance, a late nineteenth-century periodical illustration, *The Flowers of Life Will Never Bloom More*, from a story by Dorothy Prescott, “Our Tolstoi [*sic*] Club,” presents an

14. This ad was found in a San Francisco literary men’s magazine, and thus it is reasonable to surmise that this may have influenced its messaging concerning the male character’s symbolically fortified masculinity, and the female’s passivity and objectification in the musical experience.

MELVILLE CLARK **APOLLO**
Player Piano



**The Rarest Thing in The World
Is Now on Sale—**

This Christmas—make it different. Give your loved ones the “rarest thing in the whole world.” It’s on sale. Peace of mind—contentment—real enjoyment—aren’t these the rarest gifts the world has to offer? And the Apollo Player Piano brings them with it and keeps them where it is. You and yours enjoy music—good music. It turns unrest into peace of mind—it transforms dull, yawnful evenings into hours of pleasure. What more can your money buy?

We said “good music.” We meant it. Accenting the melody—omitting it altogether, playing only the accompaniment and playing that accompaniment in any one of eight different keys. The Solo-Apollo does this. No other player piano is permitted to—Melville Clark’s basic patents stand in the way.

And the Apollo touches down on the keys—just like every human being who ever produced a sound from a piano by striking the key. And the Metronome Motor—as finely made and accurately adjusted a piece of mechanism as the best watch ever built—relieves you of the necessity of pedaling to rewind the music rolls—a touch of a lever—no pedaling—and the roll’s rewind and you’re ready for another. All these things and more are yours when you select the Apollo Player Piano.

Investigate right now so that Christmas morning will find a Solo-Apollo in your home. Send us your name on a postal card, a letter, a telegram. We’ll send you reference books on the player piano proposition that are worth having.

MELVILLE CLARK PIANO COMPANY
EXECUTIVE OFFICES— 512 FINE ARTS BUILDING, CHICAGO
NEW YORK SHOW ROOMS: 305 FIFTH AVENUE
The Melville Clark Piano possesses unexcelled tone quality



**We’ll Give You
These Books—
upon request.
They’re worth
having and worth
reading.**

Figure 5.10. The Melville Clark Piano Company, “Advertisement – No Title.” Player Piano Advertisement (*Overland Monthly* 61, no. 1, January 1913: X, ProQuest 137394691)

array of gestures as linked to the listening experience for both male and female guests (figure 5.11). Mrs. “Loulou” Williams, one of the main characters, plays the piano and sings a song while elegantly clothed women and men dressed in formal wear (tuxedos) surround her. A woman, leaning back into a comfortable armchair, situated in front of the piano at the right side of the image, is looking outwards at a distance, lost in thought. Her hands are pressed against her stomach; she is completely immersed in the experience of listening to Mrs. Williams perform. Another female guest, positioned on the left side of the image, behind the pianist, exhibits a dreamy look, with her eyes closed, head tilted to the right, and her face leaning against the palm of her hand.

Many of the men, however, are standing, positioned at the back of the image and against the wall in protective poses (including Walter Dana – the man who, according to the gossip, she was in love with – situated at the doorway). They are watching the performance, their eyes open, listening but still present in the moment. Five men are seated, one of them her husband (possibly the one closest to the piano) and another at the back of the piano, who appears to have his eyes closed. Nevertheless, unlike the female in the left corner of the picture, his hand, which is also resting on his face, has two fingers positioned at the temple: the thinking or concentrating pose. Indeed, the “listening man” in both piano and player piano media is often portrayed very differently, which is also demonstrated in the Angelus ad in figure 4.6 and the Harvard piano trade card presented in figure 5.7. The male’s mannerisms in the former depicts an intense reasoning composure, and the man in the latter ad sits upright in an armchair, his eyes open with a direct gaze.

The Harvard endorsement, however, unlike the Angelus advertisement, displays a more gendered depiction of the listening experience. It also showcases a listening woman (not the



Figure 5.11. A.B. Wenzell, *The Flowers of Life Will Never Bloom More*. Periodical Illustration for "Our Tolstoi [sic] Club" by Dorothy Prescott (*The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* Vol. 42-43, November 1891-April 1892: 770, Google Play Books)

pianist) – most likely the sitting man’s wife – who is resting back into a chair, her eyes closed, with her head tilted and leaning against the front side of her left hand. According to Goffman’s research, the woman, unlike the man, is displaying, by means of listening, the gesturing and facial expressions associated with License Withdrawal as well as The Ritualization of Subordination. She is vulnerable and unaware of her surroundings, whereas the man is leaning forward, readying to act, if need be, listening to the music but also alert in his environment.

One can also view a gender distinction concerning the listening pose between male and female solitary figures seated at the player piano in many advertisements of the time. This can be keenly discerned when comparing the following examples: figures 5.12 and 5.13 portray women, and figure 5.14 presents a male. The foremost example, which features a 1912 Virtuolo piano advertisement from the Hallet & Davis Piano Company, illustrates its model gazing off into the distance, her hands curved as she operates the levers. Of significance is the headline of this ad, which asks the question, “Is Music made by REASON Or by INSTINCT?”¹⁵ The text continues by stating that the “Virtuolo aims to lead” a person to express themselves in their “own instinctive way.”¹⁶ Hallet & Davis, a nineteenth-century piano company of excellent repute, utilized, more so than many other piano companies of the day, traditional themes in their player piano endorsements. Language and imagery that linked the woman and music with expression and the emotional state were frequently employed in their advertising campaigns.

Nevertheless, this is also observed in advertisements from numerous differing piano

15. The Hallet & Davis Piano Company, “Is Music Made by Reason or Instinct?” *The Saturday Evening Post* (January 24, 1912): 24, accessed January 18, 2019, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/ucl.31175024527130>.

16. The Hallet & Davis Piano Company, 24.



**No Imitator Can Equal
The Original 88-Note
Apollo**

THE MELVILLE CLARK PIANO COMPANY ARE THE ORIGINATORS OF THE 88-NOTE PLAYER PIANO AND THE PIONEERS IN THAT LINE OF WORK. FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS THE 88-NOTE PLAYER ENJOYED A MONOPOLY IN THIS FIELD, AND THOUSANDS OF THESE INSTRUMENTS WERE SOLD BEFORE ANY 88-NOTE PIANO PLAYER WAS PUT OUT ON THE MARKET. THE 88-NOTE APOLLO PLAYER PIANO HAS REVOLUTIONIZED THE PLAYER BUSINESS OF THE WORLD, AND NOTHING EVER MADE IN THE PLAYER LINE WILL EQUAL THIS INSTRUMENT. NO 88-NOTE PIANO IS ORIGINAL UNLESS THE NAME "APOLLO" APPEARS ON THE FALLBOARD. ALL OTHER MANUFACTURERS OF 88-NOTE PLAYER PIANOS MUST FOLLOW. THEY CANNOT LEAD.

THE MELVILLE CLARK

Apollo-Piano

The Famous Human Touch

The Marvelous Human Expression of the Apollo Players is recorded by the DOWNWARD STRIKE of the pneumatic finger on the piano key from front. This is the STROKE GIVEN IN MANUAL PLAYING, and a GENUINE HUMAN EXPRESSION is the result.

Other desirable features of the APOLLO Player are: THE ADJUSTING AND TRANSDUCING DEVICE, by which you can change resistance to five or more different keys by the touch of a finger; THE SELF-ACTING MOTOR, which regulates the power and distance of travel, preventing sudden and fantastic changes in tempo by automatic hand pedalling.

An Innovation in Player-Piano

The new SOLO-APOLLO contains all the superior features of the regular 88-Note Apollo, and has in addition the marvelous ascending Device.

The Melville Clark Piano, in which the Apollo action is placed, is THE HIGHEST TYPE OF PIANO ARTISTRY. (6)

which brings out the MELODY IN STRONG RELIEF without impairing the symmetry and power of the accompaniment. Other so-called scoring devices, MERELY GIVE A PROMINENCE to the theme by adding the accompaniment. NO STRONG LEVERS ARE REQUIRED TO PRODUCE THE BEAUTIFUL EFFECTS IN THE SOLO. Apollo does the merest nuance can perceive them immediately.

Cultural Influence of the Apollo Player

The 88-Note Apollo Player Piano plays the music of the world's greatest composers exactly as well as the most popular melodies. It selects many tunes to the highest limits. It facilitates legends with absolutely correct technique—the most delicate shading and true tone values from the very start. Its influence as a cultural medium in the home is incalculable.

Write for free literature and samples, explaining all about the Melville Clark SOLO-APOLLO and the APOLLO Player-Pianos

Melville Clark Piano Co., 426 Steinyway Blvd., Chicago

Figure 5.13. The Aeolian Company, “Music Without Effort.” Pianola Advertisement (*The New York Times*, January 24, 1915: 13, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/20493458>)

After the day's work, nothing is so soothing, stimulating, inspiring, as music. Enjoy a little everyday recreation at The Pianola.



Music Without Effort

MUSIC without touching fingers to keys, without pressure of foot upon pedal. Yet music which has the quality and color that come of the delicate elasticity of the human hand and the most responsive piano action. Music which is yours—which you swell to a crashing volume here, touch with a brilliant accent there, shade to a delightful diminuendo, weave and color with your mood—music which is your own expression, which voices the melody you have in your heart.

The barrier of physical restrictions which separates mankind from music has been so reduced that all who desire may brush it aside and discover for themselves the fascination, the inspiration, the stimulating satisfaction of self-expression in this most wonderful of arts.

The remarkable instrument which makes this possible is—

THE PIANOLA
(Electrically Equipped) Requires No Pumping

In the electrically equipped Pianola, the bellows are driven by electric power, eliminating entirely the necessity for pumping.

The addition of the electric power entails no radical change in The Pianola action. Those who feel that a more intimate expression is to be secured by the use of the pedals, and so prefer to dispense with auxiliary power and pump the instrument themselves, will find the electrically equipped Pianola identical with the non-electric model. In fact, the pedals may be used in combination with the electric power, for special accents, or very brilliant climaxes, adding to the scope of the already remarkably flexible Pianola expression.

The electrical equipment is positive in action, efficient and noiseless. It permits the playing of The Pianola without any physical effort whatever, yet with the retention of all the unequalled clarity of Pianola touch which can be secured only by pneumatic power and the perfect design of The Pianola action.

This new Pianola feature will appeal especially to those who appreciate the artistic possibilities of the increased sensitiveness of the electrically equipped action; to those who for any reason find objectionable the small carbon tetrachloride pump to play the conventional Pianola action; to those who desire to use The Pianola in connection with the musical education of young children; a child too small to reach the pedals may operate the electrically equipped Pianola with ease.

For Dancing

For the playing of dance music, the electrically equipped Pianola is ideal. Employed with the standard Metronome-Musical rolls, the instrument plays itself absolutely without attention from anyone. None need miss the enjoyment of the dancing, for with this added feature, The Pianola is precise and musician combined.

All models of The Pianola are now obtainable electrically equipped. Prices are only slightly higher than the non-electric instruments. You are cordially invited to come to Aeolian Hall and see and try this wonderful new Pianola.

The Stroud Pianola, Electrically Equipped, Delivered to Your Home Upon a First Payment of \$35

THE AEOLIAN COMPANY
"Largest Manufacturers of Musical Instruments in the World"

AEOLIAN HALL, 29-33 West 42nd St., Bet. 5th and 6th Aves.

Figure 5.14. The Melville Clark Piano Company, "Advertisement 50 – No Title." Player Piano Advertisement (*Life*, December 2, 1909: 783, ProQuest 90729892)

companies, including a Melville Clark advertisement presented in figure 5.13. A woman is seated at the instrument, looking up in the distance, while the text claims that the Apollo Player Piano allows for "genuine human expression" by means of its mechanical properties.¹⁷ Both the women in figures 5.12 and 5.13 are not focusing on any item in particular, and their lack of effort in operating the instrument thus points to a listening pose as aligned with Goffman's behavioural modes (which evoke a lack of control in their surroundings).

17. The Melville Clark Piano Company, "Advertisement 50 – No Title," *Life* (December 2, 1909): 783, accessed February 5, 2018, ProQuest (90729892).

Conversely, images of lone men operating the player piano, while, at times, also tied with language that elicited their expressive and creative capabilities, were, in almost all occasions – as represented by my survey of player piano advertisements – surrounded by masculine items (akin to the Story & Clark advertisement in figure 5.3). The men in these ads also remain alert in their physical settings. Moreover, the language of these ads is tempered by other phrases that point to masculine life experiences, such as “The Busy Man” (figure 5.7) or the popular “Music Without Effort” theme (figure 5.14) that was discussed in chapter 3. Regarding the latter catchphrase, the overall promotion of the effortless nature of the player piano catered to both men and women. Nevertheless, when paired with pictures of just men (more accurately, men operating the instrument) whom, it should be noted, historically listened to music but were never expected to learn how to play the piano, the musical experience was gendered male. Essentially, the male established practice of listening – of being soothed by music “after the day’s work”¹⁸ – but not actually doing anything else regarding the musical activity, was, to a certain extent, carried through into the early twentieth century with the player piano (since the operation of the instrument was promoted as an effortless engagement with music).

As stated earlier, however, an image of a man sitting at the player piano was still symbolically charged, and thus had to be carefully constructed so as to indicate the essence of masculinity. This is strikingly exemplified in the pianola advertisement¹⁹ (figure 5.14) as centred around the male figure. The cigar in the man’s mouth,²⁰ his direct focus on the levers of the

18. Melville Clark Piano Company, 783.

19. As stated in chapter 3, Aeolian was a large piano conglomerate who made their fortune manufacturing various player piano devices, including the pianola, and were well-versed in unique advertising strategies.

20. Although women were gradually adopting the habit of smoking in the early twentieth century, it was still, for the most part, a male activity. In other words, the cigar was a signifier of masculinity.

instrument, and his bulky frame and erect posture all symbolize power and authority in the scene. Along with the man's gesturing and physical stature, he "owns the scene," as he owns the music he accesses. Indeed, the commodification of music is also gendered male in this ad. The text implies that the music belongs to this man. Specifically, he commands the music, and therefore also his listening experience.

The elimination of the woman as musical caregiver in this advertisement is thus another attempt to signify male control. While this can also, to some degree, be observed in the Emerson advertisement (figure 5.7) and the Weber player piano endorsement presented in figure 5.4, the men in these ads are still catering to others: a friend and daughters, respectively. When presented alone in figure 5.14, the man's authority is on full display. Everything in his surroundings belong to him and is controlled by him. Namely, the player piano and all other material objects in the scene are there to fulfill his wants and needs.

Many piano companies were very confident in promoting gender codes that dictated the player piano as a male instrument that enabled a complete masculine experience. Hence, in these ads, one sometimes witnesses Goffman's Modern Shift, a gender reversal, through the depiction of the men in poses that resemble License Withdrawal. For example, a 1909 Farrand Piano Company advertisement for a Cecilian player piano (see figure 5.15) presents a man whose eyes appear to be gazing off into the distance; he is not fixated on any object in the scene. Nevertheless, the rendering of Beethoven – his ghostly figure leaning against the player piano with his hands pressed against his forehead (a variation of the thinking pose), portraying a determined, serious expression – allows for a different interpretation. Entitled "The Inspiration of the Master," the coding of the player pianist's listening pose is male, or more precisely,



THE INSPIRATION OF THE MASTER

THINK of being able to play Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata as you would like to play it.

¶ Think of being able to make the melody sing its sad and touching theme, and a subdued accompaniment the while.

¶ Think of being able to perform any composition, in the manner in which your mood dictates—without the least preparatory study—with no previous musical education or experience.

¶ That's what you can do with the Cecilian Player Pianos and that's something you can't do with most every other player piano.

¶ For the reason first that most Player Pianos have not the perfection of construction of the Cecilian Player Pianos—and second, for the reason that if a Player Piano can be made to do these things you must be an expert performer with an extensive experience with all sorts of levers—stops—charts, etc., to be able to make them.

¶ The chief difference between Cecilian Player Pianos and most every other is in the mechanism. Where wood is used in most every other Player Piano—subject to climate and temperature changes—liable to warp and twist—heavily nicked metal, non-corrosive—non-rusting—is used in Cecilian Player Pianos.

¶ An absolutely perfect construction is thus assured in Cecilian Player Pianos, positively air tight and durable—unaffected by dampness, heat or cold.

¶ And because of this perfection of construction each note can be played in the same way as a Performer would play it with his fingers.

¶ It's easy for you to phrase as you wish on Cecilian Player Pianos—it's easy to accent any note you wish—it's easy to change the tempo and you can play each composition as *it is written*, for the Cecilian is an eighty-eight note Player Piano, not merely sixty-five.

Write for (free) Brochure

If you are at all interested in Player Pianos, kindly drop us a postal and we'll mail you our art brochure giving complete information as to the construction of the Cecilian Player Pianos, showing the advantage of its playing the entire key board of 88 notes and not merely 65 notes as most Player Pianos do. Please drop us your postal to-day and we'll advise you where you can investigate the Cecilian Player Pianos.

PLAYS THE ENTIRE KEYBOARD OF 88 NOTES—NOT MERELY 65

CECILIAN PLAYER PIANOS

THE FARRAND COMPANY - Dept. B - Detroit, Michigan

Figure 5.15. The Farrand Piano Company, "Advertisement 846—No Title." Cecilian Player Piano Advertisement (*McClure's Magazine*, January 1, 1909: 46 E, ProQuest 135771735)

masculinity and its connection with the concept of genius. Although an amateur, the man is in communion with the “master ghost,” a signifier of the male genius. In this case, this is Beethoven, who represents creativity associated with male ingenuity.²¹

Undeniably, the concept of genius has rarely been linked with the feminine, and although images of famous composers have been utilized in advertisements that featured women, they are manipulated in different ways to convey a much more divisive explanation. For example, the Starr player piano advertisement in figure 5.16 depicts images of famous male composers, set against a long looping player piano roll that comes out of the instrument and decorates the top of the frame of the advertisement. Nevertheless, this ad is not about the inspiration of the male genius, but as mentioned in chapter 3, concerns the ability to access and consume music. The pictures of male composers are coming out of the player piano, and the compositions, which are “beyond the ability” of this female player pianist, are now made accessible by means of the instrument.²²

The Reproducing Piano: Gender Roles and the Passive Music Experience

Rampant consumption during the early twentieth century was often gendered feminine in advertisements ranging from products such as soap and fabrics to player pianos. As exemplified in an excerpt from *Printer's Ink Monthly* (see chapter 3), in which female material consumption was associated with other issues of significance, so was it the same with many player piano advertisements. Music appreciation, and the democracy of ability and access to music were

21. Found in *McClure's Magazine*, one can posit that the thoroughly inscribed masculine codification of this ad is partially due to its target audience: middle-class men.

22. “The Starr Piano Company,” 74.



What Stands Between You and the Music of the Masters?

The Starr Player piano removes every barrier of technical inability and gives you access to all the music of all time. With one of these players at your command the most classical selection is no more difficult than the latest popular song and with the individual interpretation which the Starr makes possible you can produce the grandeur of one or the rag-time swing of the other with equal success. Compositions beyond the ability of the most accomplished pianist you know may be played with a faultless technique and with the same artistic expression of the master musician.

THE STARR PIANO COMPANY
 RICHMOND, INDIANA

GRAND UPRIGHT PLAYER PIANOS

Also Manufacturers of
 The Richmond, The Trayser, The Remington Upright and Player Pianos

Figure 5.16. The Starr Piano Company, "The Starr Piano Company," 1913 (Reproduced in *Quad-City Times*, June 23, 1963: 74, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/302287191>)

linked with the consumption and ownership of music; the more music one retained, the more one continued to want it in excess. Both men and women were connected to the mass consumption of music in player piano ads, but as outlined in the previous analyses, men were often displayed as having command over the music, their ownership a sign of wealth and power in their situation. The consumption of music for women, however, was often linked with vulnerability, delicacy, irrelevance and, regarding its time saving capacity, focus on the family. Yet, as the musical experience became increasingly accepted as one consisting of inactivity and passivity (with the

process of music's commodification) – associated with the reproducing piano – the gendering of this experience became less dissonant.

This is particularly evident in Duo-Art advertisements from the Aeolian Corporation that display men and women in a similar manner as they listen to the music (with less to none of the signifying objects of masculinity and femininity in the frame). For example, a Duo-Art advertisement from 1920 depicts the image of a man leaning into the back of his chair, his eyes closed, as his right hand hangs down, barely holding a newspaper, which has other pages resting on the floor (see figure 5.17). However, the most extraordinary evidence of this interchange between men and women's purported similar listening positions and experiences of music is another Duo-Art advertisement from 1920, figure 5.18, which uses the same text from figure 5.17 but depicts, in the image, an alert female, dressed formally, eyes open, looking at the reproducing piano. Of importance is the text, which states that for the female figure in the image, "it had been a hard day at the office, and [they] wanted music."²³ As made clear in chapter 2, there were many women in the workforce during this time, employed as secretaries, or working in other low-level white-collar jobs. Hence, this was a new reality of a transformative period, and as such was replicated in the advertisements.

Nonetheless, indicative of this very confusing moment in history, with all the changes that occurred in society, much also remained the same. Reproducing piano ads also perpetuated very traditional ideas concerning gender roles. This is made evident in the following

23. The Aeolian Company, "My Wonderful Piano," *The Oregon Daily Journal* (March 7, 1920): 49, accessed February 7, 2018, <https://newspapers.com/image/77210902>.



“My Wonderful Piano”

The Marvelous Duo Art

“My piano stands in the corner of our living-room. In appearance it is a beautiful mahogany Steinway Upright. Pianists who occasionally come to our house and sit at it marvel at its tone. It seems incredible that such a dainty instrument can hold so full, and rich, and deep a tone.

But the tone of my piano, glorious as it is, is but the smallest part of its wonder. It is really a magic instrument. To explain, let me tell you about last night.

After finishing my paper, I turned the lights low. It had been a hard day at the office and I wanted music. Nothing else is so restful and so uplifting.

When ready I summoned the fairies who preside over the destinies of all magic things. “I want to hear the most beautiful music in the world,” I said. “Not too heavy and classic, but fine music with a melody exquisitely played.” And then the miracle. One by one there came into my room the great pianists—the living masters of to-day. First at the keyboard was Paderewski. Bravo! No one in the world can play his Minuet as he. Dainty, crisp, sparkling, the superb voice of my Steinway sang a melody into the notes under those wonderful fingers that was balm to my music-hungry soul.

And then Josef Hofmann! Mendelssohn’s “Rondo Capriccioso.” No one who has ever heard Hofmann’s playing can forget it or mistake it. No wonder the world pays

such high tribute to its master artists. Pieces that you think you know take on such beauty and such new meaning under their hands. One by one the others played. Harold Bauer, Ossip Gabrilowitsch, Rudolph Ganz, Percy Grainger, Guilmer Novaes, dainty little Winifred Byrd—each gave freely of his or her genius to make my enjoyment and happiness complete. And then, as my mood changed, came others—masters of dance and popular music—and played as only these can play these light and rhythmic pieces.

This isn’t the whole story of my wonderful piano, but only a small part. Complete, it’s the most wonderful musical story the world has ever heard. And the world is beginning to find it out.

You may have a piano like it—a Weber, Steck, a Stroud or a magnificent Steinway like mine. And you may have it either as a Grand or an Upright.

Moreover, when you wish, this wonderful instrument will make a pianist of you. You may listen to Paderewski play his Minuet and then you can play it after him. Because this piano is a Pianola as well as a reproducing piano. And the Pianola music rolls make a wonderful artist of you.”

We cordially invite you to come in and hear this wonderful piano—the marvelous Duo Art.

Sherman, Clay & Co.

Ninth and J Streets, Sacramento
4434 Third Street, Chicago
223 N. Virginia Street, Reno, Nev.

Figure 5.17. The Aeolian Company, “My Wonderful Piano.” Advertisement for the Duo-Art Reproducing Piano (*The Sacramento Bee*, March 10, 1920: 10, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/616766995>)



“My Wonderful Piano”

The Marvelous Duo Art

“My Piano stands in the corner of our living-room. In appearance it is a beautiful mahogany Steinway Upright. Pianists who occasionally come to our house and sit at it marvel at its tone. It seems incredible that such a dainty instrument can hold so full, and rich, and deep a tone.

But the tone of my piano, glorious as it is, is but the smallest part of its wonder. It is really a **magic instrument**. To explain, let me tell you about last night.

After finishing my paper, I turned the lights low. It had been a hard day at the office and I wanted music. Nothing else is so restful and so uplifting.

When ready I summoned the fairies who preside over the destinies of all magic things. “I want to hear the most beautiful music in the world,” I said. “Not too heavy and classic, but fine, music with a melody exquisitely played.” And then the miracle. One by one there came into my room the great pianists—the living masters of today. First at the keyboard was Paderewski. Bravo! No one in the world can play his Minuet as he. “Dainty, crisp, sparkling, the superb voice of my Steinway sang a melody into the notes under those wonderful fingers that was balm to my music-hungry soul.

And then Josef Hofmann! Mendelssohn’s “Rondo Capriccioso.” No one who has ever heard Hofmann’s playing can forget it or

mistake it. No wonder the world pays such high tribute to its master artists. Pieces that you think you know take on such beauty and such new meaning under their hands. One by one the others played. Harold Bauer, Ossip Gabrilowitsch, Rudolph Ganz, Percy Grainger, Guiomar Novaes, dainty little Winifred Byrd—each gave freely of his or her genius to make my enjoyment and happiness complete. And then, as my mood changed, came others—masters of dance and popular music—and played as only these can play these light and rhythmic pieces.

This isn’t the whole story of my wonderful piano, but only a small part. Complete, it’s the most wonderful musical story the world has ever heard. And the world is beginning to find it out.

You may have a piano like it—a Weber, Steck, a Stroud or a magnificent Steinway like mine. And you may have it either as a Grand or an Upright.

Moreover, when you wish, **this wonderful instrument will make a pianist of you.** You may listen to Paderewski play his Minuet and then you can play it after him. Because this piano is a Pianola as well as a reproducing piano. And the Pianola music rolls make a wonderful artist of you.”

We cordially invite you to come in and hear this wonderful piano—the marvelous Duo Art.

Sherman, Clay & Co.

Sixth and Morrison Streets, Portland
(Opposite Postoffice)

Seattle Tacoma Spokane

Figure 5.18. The Aeolian Company, “My Wonderful Piano.” Advertisement for the Duo-Art Reproducing Piano (*The Oregon Daily Journal*, March 7, 1920: 49, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/77210902>)

advertisement.²⁴ A Stieff *Welte-Mignon* reproducing piano sits in the middle of a living room on Christmas morning, with other presents placed on the floor surrounding the instrument (see figure 5.19). The children's attention is on the wrapped gifts, whereas the mother's focus is directly drawn to the reproducing piano. Her arms are up, palms of the hands upwards in a surprised gesture, and her head tilted back with a smiling expression. The text clarifies that this is, for her, the "culmination of a dream of years."²⁵ The father stands back at a slight distance from the family unit, at the edge of the frame adopting Goffman's protective stance as head of the family. He is the one who made her "dream come true," and should, according to the text, be "congratulated upon his gift to the family."²⁶

In this image, the woman's joy is based on dependence – relying on her husband and dependent on consumerism as enabling her happiness. The mother's gleeful disposition is linked with that of her children, and as such she appears childlike, in need of protection. Stieff pianos, during this time, were often referred to as "The Poor Man's Steinway."²⁷ They were higher-end pianos, only second in line to the mighty Steinway Company. Moreover, akin to Steinway, they

24. The advertisements presented in figures 5.17, 5.18 and 5.19 were discovered in the *Sacramento Bee*, the *Oregon Daily Journal* and *The Baltimore Sun*, respectively. The lattermost newspaper was founded in 1837 and is the largest general-circulation daily newspaper in Maryland. The *Oregon Daily Journal* was a day-to-day afternoon newspaper in Portland that operated from 1902-1982, and the *Sacramento Bee* (1857-), has become the largest newspaper in Sacramento, California. I also found the endorsements from figures 5.17 and 5.18 in other sources, including *The Saturday Evening Post* and *The Seattle Star*. From the evidence thus far, it appears that these ads were placed in print media that catered to an urban middle-class audience. Indeed, as mentioned in chapter 3, the Duo-Art reproducing piano was every expensive; only upper middle-class families and the wealthy could afford it.

25. "Stieff Pianos," *The Baltimore Sun* (December 18, 1927): 66, accessed February 10, 2018, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/373600927>.

26. "Stieff Pianos," 66.

27. "Stieff, Charles M.," *Antique Piano Shop – Online Museum*, accessed March 7, 2018, <https://antiquepianoshop.com/online-museum/stieff-charles-m/>.

STIEFF PIANOS



*Will Your Home Know
the Happiness That Music Brings?*

Christmas—the realization of a dream—and the music of a Stieff Welte-Mignon (Licensee) Reproducing Piano, the three elements embodying the very spirit of the day!

The children engrossed in their toys, quite unaware of the importance of the day—unaware of the fact that this Christmas will mark a milestone in their life march—because it assures a cultural opportunity that music alone provides. Little do they realize how this all-important opportunity will help to mold their character—develop finer sensibilities—influence their viewpoint of life—create an interest in and a desire for things culturally and artistically beneficial.

The Father is to be congratulated upon his “gift to the family,” for no one thing could possibly be so far-reaching in its effect on the whole family—or assure equal educational and entertaining possibilities.

This wonderful day will be remembered by the Mother as the culmination of a dream of years—it will be remembered by the Father with sincere happiness for being able to make that dream come true.

Many gifts of equal monetary value could have been given, but none hold out the promise of happiness that the Stieff Welte-Mignon (Licensee) Reproducing Piano assures—the gift that continues to bring happiness—not for one wonderful Christmas, but day after day, year after year, for a lifetime.

The companionship of Paderewski—of De Pachmann—of Hofmann and of several hundred more of the world’s greatest pianists is assured by the ownership of this marvelous instrument. The genius of these masters can be enjoyed by the family—developing their love for and appreciation of fine music.

Come in and hear this piano—you’ll realize that we have been modest in our statements as to its value to the home and as to the faithfulness of its reproduction. Let it play for you selections of your own choice by your favorite pianist and you will recognize the characteristics that have become identified as theirs.

Stieff Welte-Mignon (Licensee) Reproducing Pianos, \$995 to \$5150. The House of Stieff also offers the Welte-Mignon (Licensee) Action in other makes at \$850 to \$1750.

Let this be the year of years—let your gift to the family be a Stieff Welte-Mignon (Licensee) Reproducing Piano. It would surprise you to know that you can buy this piano with a modest cash payment—paying the balance in monthly amounts over a period of years.

Chas. M. Stieff, Inc.
Stieff Hall 315 N. Howard St.

Figure 5.19. The Stieff Piano Company, “Stieff Pianos.” Reproducing Piano Advertisement (*The Baltimore Sun*, December 18, 1927: 66, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/373600927>)

were one of the few old nineteenth-century piano companies to survive the Great Depression.

Thus, a Stieff piano signified wealth, and was also a symbol of a man’s economic progress in the multiple publics of the outside world. The husband in this Stieff advertisement is the obvious breadwinner, grounded in the frame, contrasting against the child-like dependency of his wife.

This was a common theme in piano endorsements of the late nineteenth century. Specifically, the aforementioned Stieff ad is comparable to many piano advertisements, including a Sohmer Piano Company ad. A beautiful Sohmer grand piano, consisting of ornate legs and an accompanying bench under which lies an animal-skin rug, is situated in the right side of the frame of the advertisement (figure 5.20). A man, standing at a distance (on the left side of the advertisement) from the wife and other family members and/or guests, gestures with his hand pointed towards the instrument. The woman, who has received the piano as a gift, has her hands together in an exuberant gesture resembling that of the wife in figure 5.19. One witnesses, by means of these bodily motions of communication, the woman's dependence on her husband.

Sohmer pianos, similar to those of Steinway and Chickering, were also awarded numerous prizes at the Centennial International Exhibitions in the nineteenth century.²⁸ Hence, like owning a Steinway or Chickering piano, being in possession of a Sohmer piano was considered to be akin to owning a work of art – an expensive material object that symbolized the affluence and prestige of its owner.

Movement of Meaning from the Player Piano to the Consumer: A Theoretical Premise

In chapter 1, I provided a summary concerning the transfer of meaning from advertising to the consumer good, and then to the consumer through a variety of processes. Player piano advertising departments chose different ideas that flowed from cultural categories and principles of the culturally constituted world, and then decided upon the way in which the image of the

28. Most notably, this included the First Medal of Merit and the Diploma of Honor (1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia).



Figure 5.20. The Sohmer Piano Company, “A Magnificent Gift.” Nineteenth-Century Piano Advertisement (*Antique Piano Shop*, <https://antiquepianoshop.com/online-museum/sohmer>)

instrument and other objects would represent these ideas. Gender coding associated with the player piano thus worked in the same manner. New codes of gender, as part of the new consumer culture, were mediated via older Victorian ideologies of gender through the manipulation of imagery and text. Furthermore, advertisers also introduced ideas about gender – within the parameters of the gender coding of Victorian and consumer cultures – that did not align with early twentieth-century conventions of gender. When the reader looks at the ad, making the connection between the image of the player piano and its concrete counterpart, the meaning is

transferred to the instrument. In this case, the object-code of the player piano is expanded by means of these new ideas about gender.

The meaning made manifest through the player piano is then transferred to the consumer – it is absorbed into their beliefs systems – through rituals. According to McCracken, there are four rituals of transfer meaning from consumer good to individual: exchange, possession, grooming, and divestment.²⁹ Exchange rituals represent gift-giving. The giver chooses the particular gift because they believe it is endowed with the special properties that they wish to transfer to the gift-taker. In the case of the player piano, this was usually a husband giving his wife and/or family the instrument (a wife, unless she inherited wealth, could not afford to give her husband this type of expensive gift). This could mean that he wishes for his wife to assume the role of musical caregiver, similar to that of a nineteenth-century husband giving his wife a piano. This could be the case if he read and absorbed the cultural meaning from advertisements such as the representative endorsement presented in figure 5.19. Or he could want to bring the passive music experience to the forefront of the family's pastime activities, wishing to have music in the home without the need of lessons for his wife and children. In other words, the husband, influenced by the various cultural meanings embodied in player piano advertising, attempts to initiate meaning transfer through his gift-giving.

The second ritual, possession, involves activities such as cleaning, discussing, comparing, reflecting, and photographing possessions. This is important because it allows the consumer to claim the item as their own, both its symbolic properties and material ones. Namely, “with their

29. McCracken, 84.

possession rituals, individuals move...meaning out of the goods [and] into their lives.”³⁰

Operating the player piano, with regard to McCracken’s line of reasoning, can be considered a possession ritual. Exposed to the various player piano advertisements of the time, individuals engage with these ideas by means of their operating the instrument. Hence, a man seated at the player piano, through his renditions of various pieces as delivered by the piano roll and his working of the machine, may allow for him to reassess the terms of his masculinity – if he so believes the ideas propagated by certain advertisements. This could include the idea that the operation of the player piano is a masculine activity, and/or a means of courtship. Moreover, a woman listening to a piece as rendered by a reproducing piano may no longer feel the need to sit around the instrument, or at the bench. This is because the passive music encounter, communicated by various sources, including player piano media, was becoming increasingly acceptable for both men and women. It was considered by many of the time to be the new norm of experiencing music.³¹

Nevertheless, this is, in McCracken’s words, “the meaning of the collectivity,” and this meaning, in turn, is “inflected by the particular experience of the individual consumer.”³² Namely, not every individual who read these various advertisements that promoted music passivity adapted to the ideas in the same way. For example, a woman who played the piano manually may have chosen to sit and perform along with the roll, creating her own interpretation of the music. All versions of the player piano were also pianos, and performing on the instrument

30. McCracken, 85.

31. For more information, see chapter 3, 118-22.

32. McCracken, *Culture and Consumption*, 86.

while it rendered a musical interpretation by means of a piano roll did occur at times with people who were musically literate. The point, however, is that consumers' engagement with the player piano as a sound-reproducing device allowed them to extract the meaning as invested in the instrument and was framed by their individual experiences.

Grooming rituals are especially aimed at perishable consumer goods and includes activities such as cleaning and other forms of maintenance. In the early twentieth century, the player piano, similar to a piano, needed to be serviced every year; this included tuning as well as keeping the parts clean and lubricated. Users also had to remember to keep the device covered when not operating the instrument (so that dust would not accumulate on the keyboard), and to maintain a proper temperature in the room. Consumers of the player piano also needed to "keep the bellows moving" so as to prevent sluggishness, looping and leaking. In essence, this generally meant that one was required to use the instrument at least once a month to avoid the bellows getting stiff, and to keep dust from accumulating on the valve facings, as dust in large quantities prevents the valve from closing all the way. All of these activities can "supercharge" the player piano as a consumer object. Its owner, in particular, by giving the instrument special attention, is drawing out its meaning on a repeated basis, as the time and energy lavished on its maintenance further heightens its symbolic properties.

The last ritual labelled as a divestment ritual is associated with selling or giving away a consumer item. In the case of the player piano, the activities involved include removing the roll from the machine, cleaning, sanding, and polishing the player piano, and/or getting it tuned. Some of these activities are similar to those of grooming rituals, but instead of investing meaning, they are utilized to remove meaning from a material object. Specifically, individuals sometimes correlate their possession with meanings of a personal nature. Hence, disconnecting

the instrument from the user's musical choice in the form of rolls, and changing the item's material form, either by superficial means (cleaning), or by more assertive methods, such as sanding down the curves and other features of the instrument, can allow the individual to remove the meaning by their physical actions. This type of behaviour can be interpreted as the consumer's "implicit acknowledgment of the movable quality of the meaning with which goods are invested."³³

The meaning made manifest thus includes all the gender codes disseminated by player piano advertising, which, when comes to rest in the consumer by ritual, allows them, within the context of musical activity, to make sense of their changing ideas about what it is to be a man or a woman. Player piano advertising departments utilized the instrument as an object of both change and continuity. Thereby, their actions, made clear by means of a semiotic content analysis of player piano advertisements, consolidated and challenged early twentieth-century gender conventions. This is made obvious within the frame of each player piano endorsement.

Moreover, by theoretical design, one can appreciate that these advertisements had an impact on their audience, particularly those that purchased a player piano. It can be deduced that the "meaning of the collectivity" was communicated and absorbed by player piano consumers. The interpretation by individual consumers is, of course, impossible to determine. Nevertheless, changing notions about masculinity and femininity, within the context of music performance and the player piano – as described in detail in this chapter and chapter 4 – were communicated by

33. McCracken, 85.

means of advertisements. It was an indispensable site within the trajectory of the movement of cultural meaning as associated with consumer goods in early twentieth-century American consumer society.

Conclusion

The player piano, as a consumer good, was an adaptable agent of meaning manipulation for piano companies, since the origins of its object-code stem from its predecessor: the Victorian piano. While the instrument could be used in the conventional sense – playing by hand – the cultural principles and categories tied to the piano's materiality were thus inextricably linked to the player piano's form as well. Nevertheless, the player piano was an object of the consumer culture of the Modern Age. The historical frame of the instrument's lifecycle was situated in the early twentieth century, with its sound reproducing affordances and its new relationships with human intermediaries – this includes advertising – connecting it to the new value system of the consumer culture. In essence, the player piano was a culture mediator and was utilized by the advertising departments of numerous piano companies as an object of change and continuity. The industry wanted to expand their consumer base, and as such, promoted the player piano to middle- and upper-class men and boys (as well as to girls and women).

While it must be noted that the image of a male seated in front of the player piano was revolutionary in general, this chapter has presented a more detailed examination concerning the nuances of these depictions. Often, the gendered parameters of these images were based on Victorian conventions. This was also the case with women seated at the player piano. Nevertheless, the passive music experience that was illustrated, in varying degrees, in every single player piano advertisement, continuously created symbolic discrepancies, allowing for the

complex interweaving of old and new gender codes in images of musical activity. As there were increasingly more similarities in gesturing and body position between men and women in player piano advertising, the passivity that marked the various guises of the player piano thus allowed for a reworking of gender roles as instigated by the player. In other words, advertising communicated the notion that anyone could operate a player piano, regardless of gender. This included the idea that music, as performed on a keyboard, was no longer the province of females alone, although there was still a disconnect with males operating the instrument versus playing the piano in the traditional manner. In these instances, these ads were challenging the gender customs of the time, for as music appreciation had become gender neutral, the action of performing by hand on a keyboard was still feminized, albeit no longer considered an indispensable requirement of female accomplishment.

Chapter 6: The American Popular Music Scene, and Women's Changing Role in Professional Musical Activity, 1900-1928

Introduction

This chapter provides background information pertinent to my case study: Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert. It offers a review of various popular music genres – ones relevant to my research (such as ragtime) that sprang forth in America during the early twentieth century (1900-1928) – followed by an outline of the changing ideas about gender associated with female musical activity in the professional world. The latter section is generally not specific to genre or musical style, although I provide a summary of the gender norms concerning the business of Tin Pan Alley,¹ as the songs utilized in my performance analyses are Tin Pan Alley hits (and the women in my case study worked in this industry). Nevertheless, detailed descriptions of the piano roll process (particularly referring to the Duo-Art piano roll studio) as linked to an examination of gender roles and behaviours are discussed in chapter 8. I consider this information to be more useful in conjunction with the performance analyses of Baker and Alpert.

Ragtime and the American Popular Music Scene

As discussed in chapter 2, America's developing interest in spectator and participant sports, the emergence of amusement parks and midways, and the expansion of public nightlife (with reference to the cabaret) signified a movement away from Victorian gentility. American entertainment had shifted from a private, formal setting to a more informal, public arena. In

1. A sheet music industry (circa 1880-1950) controlled by various publishing houses in New York City (located at West 28th Street between Fifth and Sixth Avenues in the Flower District of Manhattan). For more information, see the following sub-section, *Gender Norms and Tin Pan Alley*.

music, the demand for the sentimental conventional song style of the nineteenth century (the parlour song tradition²) had waned as new genres including the “coon songs,”³ the cakewalk,⁴ and ragtime gained recognition, infusing a vitality and rhythmic drive into the popular music scene. It was ragtime, however, that became the first African American music of the United States to achieve commercial success on a national level. This musical idiom grew out of the red-light districts (in venues such as casinos, salons, and brothels) in the heavily African American populated regions of the American South during the 1880s and 1890s, and was, fundamentally, an oral folk tradition. Its relentless syncopation and offbeat accents were subject to more advanced techniques of variation and modification (than heard in the cakewalk and coon songs) by numerous, mostly male African American musicians (who were banjoists, brass and string instrumentalists, while many others were itinerant pianists).

Undeniably, while ragtime – in its early years – was a popular vehicle for brass and string bands as well as banjo and mandolin clubs, it was, nevertheless, the piano that was most perfectly suited to the percussive timbres that ragtime requires. The instrument allows for the rhythmic juxtaposition of two hands which creates tension and contrast and thus, in many ways, is what makes ragtime function as a genre unto itself. The rhythm of ragtime, which is the

2. For more information, see Charles Hamm, *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1979); Nicholas E. Tawa, *Sweet Songs for Gentle Americans: The Parlor Song in America, 1790-1860* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1980); and Laura Ann Pilkington, “Three Ragtime Women in Socio-Historical Context: The Lives, Times and Music of May Aufderheide, Julia Lee Niebergall and Adaline Shepherd” (MA thesis, University of Oregon, 2000): 26-28, accessed October 17, 2016, ProQuest (250055507).

3. See Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Ragged but Right: Black Traveling Shows, Coon Songs, and the Dark Pathway to Blues and Jazz* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 11-80; and James M. Dormon, “Shaping the Popular Image of Post-Reconstruction American Blacks: The ‘Coon Song’ Phenomenon of the Gilded Age,” *American Quarterly* 40 (1988): 450-71, accessed February 7, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2712997>.

4. See Brooke Baldwin, “The Cakewalk: A Study in Stereotype and Reality,” *Journal of Social History* 15, vol. 2 (Winter 1981): 205-18, accessed February 8, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jsh/15.2.205>; and Megan Pugh, *America Dancing: From the Cakewalk to the Moonwalk* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 10-28.

essence of the art form's individuality, reached its most intricate development in piano rag compositions. In its basic form, ragtime piano (classical ragtime) consists of the following: three or four separate and disparate sections, with the left hand carrying a march-like rhythm accentuating the first and third notes contrasted against syncopated right-hand melodies (typically 16 measures each). This results in a "rhythmic base of metric affirmation, and a melody of metric denial,"⁵ or, in the words of ragtime composer Scott Joplin (1868-1917), a musical effect that is "weird and intoxicating."⁶

To this day, Joplin is considered the king of ragtime, and like many other ragtime musicians (both African American and White) at the turn of the twentieth century, such as Charles Hunter (1876-1906), Thomas Turpin (1871-1922), Louis Chauvin (1881-1908), and Charles L. Johnson (1876-1950), he eventually settled in Missouri – specifically in Sedalia, Missouri, the main centre of ragtime ingenuity at the turn of the twentieth century. For instance, the oeuvre of core piano rag compositions was published in this city, including Joplin's piece, the *Maple Leaf Rag* (1899), which is acknowledged by most historians as the most famous ragtime composition of all time. Indeed, it can be argued that ragtime's popularity did partially stem from the individual creation of the *Maple Leaf Rag*. One could often visit a middle-class home and hear an amateur rendition of the piece performed by the daughter or wife of the household male patriarch.

The printing press was both an essential distributing device of ragtime and, from a

5. Rudi Blesh, "Scott Joplin: Black-American Classicist," in *Scott Joplin – Complete Piano Works*, ed. Vera Brodsky Lawrence (New York: New York Public Library, 1981): xv.

6. Scott Joplin, *School of Ragtime: Six Exercises for Piano* (Published by Scott Joplin, 1908), *Library of Congress*, accessed January 10, 2020, <https://www.loc.gov/item/ihas.200033489/>.

cultural hegemonic perspective, was utilized predominantly by White Americans with Victorian sensibilities. Ragtime had moved from the oral tradition to the printed form (it first went into print in 1896). Printed music allowed ragtime some “respectability,” as the genre had moved away from its African American origins as an oral form and instead became bound to the printing press, deemed acceptable by the White middle class.⁷

However, more importantly, as mentioned earlier, was ragtime’s coupling with the piano. The instrument was readily available in most homes, hotels, meeting places, and theatres across the country during this time.⁸ In the piano parlours of the White middle class, the genre broke the frame, allowing the mostly women pianists in these homes to experience music that offered a refreshing contrast not only in rhythm, but also tempo and formal structure, when compared to the staple items of the bland White female musical diet. These included sentimental parlour songs and accessible, small-scale examples of Western art music, such as minuets, waltzes, and character pieces.

It was during this time, at the beginning of the twentieth century, that ragtime moved to the mainstream, and this was due, in part, to the genre’s established association with the piano.

7. In the early twentieth century, White America’s experience with ragtime shifted from that of “[B]lack musical exoticism” to “mainstream urban popular music.” However, while ragtime became a representation of “the American city, with its restless bustling motion,” the subject of race was still an integral factor of the genre’s identity. See Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 22; Hiram Moderwell, “Ragtime,” *New Republic* (October 16, 1915): 286; Ronald Radano, “Hot Fantasies: American Modernism and the Idea of Black Rhythm,” in *Music and the Racial Imagination*, eds. Ronald Radano and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 459-82; Tom Lutz, “Curing the Blues: W.E.B. Du Bois, Fashionable Diseases, and Degraded Music,” *Black Music Research Journal* 11, no. 2 (1991): 137-56, <https://doi.org/10.2307/779263>; and Werner Sollors, *Beyond Ethnicity: Consent and Descent in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

8. Honky-tonk, a genre related to ragtime, also owes much of its development to the piano – specifically the ones in various locales that were not maintained and in poor condition. The sound and style of honky-tonk was dependent on these unfavourable conditions (an out of tune piano that most likely was missing a few keys).

According to many ragtime scholars including Michael Montgomery, Trebor Jay Tichenor, John Edward Hasse, and Edward Berlin, this was one of the main reasons for ragtime's widespread American acceptance. While the art form's link to the printing press is important, these ragtime experts surmise that ragtime's national prominence in the music scene would not have occurred without the assistance of the piano, a celebrated Victorian institution that was still considered to be an indispensable musical object in their households.

It is important to note that in the early years of the twentieth century, ragtime had also been appropriated by White artists in the popular music scene and Western art music composers such as Claude Debussy (1862-1918), Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971), and Charles Ives (1874-1954). While the piano and the printing press were effective in the spread of ragtime, the fact that White composers and performers were dominating the ragtime market was also a reason for its recognition by the consuming public. African American artists were limited by the constraints of a highly segregated society. They were often barred from performing in "proper establishments," and many White music publishing houses would not publish their compositions. Meanwhile, White artists benefited from their privilege, as they could perform in reputable venues. Their performances and compositions received more press and were plentiful in the music scene. Furthermore, they received more money for their work than African American artists. In essence, ragtime's image and its economics, by the early twentieth century, was taken over by White popular culture. In the hands of these artists, ragtime was generally separated from its originators, no longer an effective "affirmation of the unique cultural experiences"⁹ of

9. Perry A. Hall, "African-American Music: Dynamics of Appropriation and Innovation," in *Borrowed Power: Essays on Cultural Appropriation*, eds. Bruce Ziffi and Pratima V. Rao (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 32.

the African American struggle.¹⁰

The Player Piano and Ragtime: Capturing the Zeitgeist of America, 1895-1917

The player piano, of course, was another important element in the rise and spread of ragtime. Player piano rolls were essential to the transmission of the ragtime sound to the public, as the mechanical instrument was the dominant recording medium for piano music until the mid-1920s. In contrast to the printing press, the player piano additionally brought ragtime into the homes of those who could not play the piano. Moreover, perforated player piano rolls of ragtime music, which were often enriched with flashy effects such as tremolos and extra octaves, allowed the public, including those who could play the piano (but not well), to enjoy the flawless execution of a stimulating and entrancing music. Watching a ragtime player piano performance, as the piano keys moved rapidly without human fingers was, for its audience, similar to witnessing a feat of wizardry. As mentioned in chapter 3, with the rise of the player piano, one did not have to struggle, practising for many hours every day to perform music on the conventional piano. Consequently, ragtime enhanced this magical experience, as much of the instrument's audience had never heard anything so rhythmically complex.

Nevertheless, ragtime was not the only music imbued in rolls, as the player piano was responsible for carrying all types of music to the public: blues, jazz, and the piano novelty are but a few genres that were disseminated on piano rolls. For example, there are numerous blues rolls from the early 1910s, as the genre was evolving and gradually making way into mainstream

10. Ragtime and jazz scholarship that utilizes race and gender analysis include Susan C. Cook, "Passionless Dancing and Passionate Reform: Respectability, Modernism, and the Social Dancing of Irene and Vernon Castle," in *The Passion of Music and Dance: Body, Gender, and Sexuality*, ed. William Washabaugh (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 1998), 133-50; and Kathy J. Organ, *Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

culture concurrently with the rise in popularity of the player piano. Early jazz and the piano novelty were also competing for attention.

Why then do historians often use the designation of Ragtime as reflective of this specific period (overlapping with the Progressive Age)? To answer this requires more than just an adequate comprehension of the genre in question. Ragtime, in this context, characterizes the *zeitgeist* of the time. Americans, or more specifically, America as a nation, were very optimistic, as events such as the end of a depression in 1898 and the United States victory in the Spanish-American war, strengthened their assurance in the tenets of American Exceptionalism.¹¹ Ragtime music contributed to contemporary cultural debates concerning American identity and the country's revolutionary origins. For example, Arnold Bennett of *The Times* stated in 1913 that "ragtime is absolutely characteristic of its inventors – from nowhere but the United States could such music have sprung."¹² Additionally, early twentieth-century Hungarian-born virtuoso vaudeville pianist Vilmos Westony declared that "the dash and vim of [ragtime] is in the American blood and no European composer can ever hope to compose such music."¹³ These critics, performers, and teachers provided good reviews of ragtime as a unique American invention.

There were, however, others who did not view the genre as a positive musical influence on the public. These self-appointed protectors of public taste reacted to ragtime as a perceived

11. In brief, American Exceptionalism is defined by its core belief that the United States is superior to other nations. Political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset purports that this ideology is based on "liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, republicanism, democracy, and laissez-faire economics." See Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 17-19.

12. Arnold Bennett, "The Achievement of Ragtime," *The Times* (February 8, 1913): 11.

13. "Hail, Ragtime," *Life* 59 (April 4, 1912): 703, accessed November 26, 2014, ProQuest (90747851).

threat to American morality, many of their opinions stemming from racist assumptions. Nonetheless, the same denunciations often included statements pertaining to ragtime's extreme popularity in America and, while some did not consider it to be a prestigious example of American music, the fact remains that the genre is an "American product." It is an African American musical form which represented the first great impact of Black folk culture on the dominant White middle-class culture of America. Ragtime, utilized as an expression of the time, reflected an ethos of modernity by simplifying the complex and multifaceted set of events, cultural tensions, characteristics, and individual experiences of the era into a structure of feeling. The restless energy and dynamism of the American people (in some measure the result of their reaction to the changing racial and class divides, and revived faith in the ideological principles of American Exceptionalism) were condensed into a musical form and pushed back out into the multiple publics of the outside world. In other words, the music was an aural embodiment of a society on the cusp of social change.

A Divergent Musical Pathway to Jazz: The Piano Novelty

America formally entered WWI on April 6, 1917, and thus the overall mood of the country shifted from that of exuberance to melancholy. However, as outlined in chapter 2, a fervent nationalism was also characteristic to the general American frame of mind. A brief euphoria defined the national atmosphere following the Allied victory, but this was short-lived. The worldwide influenza pandemic of 1918-1919 (which killed over 40 million people including 675,000 Americans), the Red Scare and race riots (1919-1920), and the post-war depression from 1920-1921 created intense economic, political, and cultural turmoil in the country, as its citizens grappled with feelings of hopelessness due to the situation.

Nevertheless, by late 1921, the prosperity that historically marked the Roaring Twenties had begun; the shift from a wartime to peacetime economy had finally materialized. In general, the White middle-class and affluent youth of this period, rebelling against the social constraints put in place by the previous generation and reacting to the lifting of tensions of a war that had just ended, revelled in this newfound freedom. In the words of songwriter and actor Hoagy Carmichael (1899-1981), “the postwar world came in with a bang of bad booze, flappers with bare legs, jangled morals, and wild weekends.”¹⁴

This defiance found its musical accompaniment in jazz, a genre that, while created by African American innovators, was utilized by White musicians to reflect the experience of the aforementioned White, coming-of-age population. When historians refer to the Jazz Age, they are often referring to the reckless, bouncy music of the latter group – music that symbolized their rebellion, being performed in the illegal bars of the Prohibition Era and providing an invigorating accompaniment to dances such as the Charleston, Black Bottom, and Varsity Drag. Moreover, akin to ragtime, jazz had also moved into the mainstream popular music scene by means of sheet music publishers, and other forms of media – specifically the radio. However, for all intents and purposes, it had replaced ragtime as the dominant music genre in the public eye by the 1920s. Undoubtedly, by the time WWI had ended, ragtime had passed its prime, as the White youth of this period were responding to the sounds of hot jazz emerging from various parts of the country.

Jazz has a complicated history. It has spawned numerous sub-genres – and is in part, responsible for the creation of new genres – and was appropriated by White musicians. While a history of jazz is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is important to have a rudimentary

14. Hoagy Carmichael with Stephen Longstreet, *Sometimes I Wonder: The Story of Hoagy Carmichael* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 1965), 43.

understanding of the music and its connection to other genres of music that are relevant to my research. According to *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, the term jazz “conveys different although related meanings: 1) a musical tradition rooted in performing conventions that were introduced and developed early in the 20th century by African Americans; 2) a set of attitudes and assumptions brought to music-making, chief among them the notion of performance as a fluid creative process involving (group) improvisation; and 3) a style characterized by melodic, harmonic, and timbral practices derived from the blues and African American religious musics, cyclical formal structures, and a supple approach to rhythm and phrasing known as swing.”¹⁵

Jazz’s early development took place in the late nineteenth century in New Orleans by African American artists such as Charles “Buddy” Bolden (1877-1931), Manuel Perez (1871-1946), and Edward “Kid” Ory (1886-1973). The ensembles of this traditional jazz idiom consisted of five or six performers, playing a combination of instruments: clarinet, cornet, trombone, piano, banjo, string bass, and drums. A signature feature of this music (performed by these early bands) was collective improvisation, dissonant tonalities, and complex polyrhythms, with the drum set adding a whole new polyrhythmic sound to the overall textual fabric of the music.

The rhythmic vitality of jazz was contagious. While New Orleans was the principal hub of this emerging musical form, as bands consisting primarily of African American musicians moved North during the Great Migration, jazz centres rose all along the Mississippi River. Furthermore, as bands travelled up this natural route (they also migrated using the train),

15. Mark Tucker, and Travis A. Jackson, “Jazz,” *Grove Music Online*, accessed June 11, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/omo/9781561592630.013.90000358106>.

connecting to the Illinois Waterway, Chicago eventually emerged as the main site of jazz development. The city retained this prestigious position throughout the 1920s.

Nevertheless, New York City also became an important place of jazz activity, specifically with many famous jazz musicians performing in prestigious nightclubs, such as the Cotton Club in Harlem, and Reisenweber's Café in Columbus Circle. Concerning the latter, many historians consider the January 26, 1917 Original Dixieland Jazz Band (ODJB) performance at this locale to have initiated the Jazz Age in New York. However, the validity of this claim can be debated, as the ODJB's work during this time, which included a number, "Lively Stable Blues," illustrates the fact that the term "jazz" was often used loosely to identify a broad number of pieces that were not jazz, but various other genres of music. For instance, the "ODJB performed in a style that was an amalgam of ragtime, march music, and early dance music."¹⁶ They did not employ very many blues notes and their pieces were often characterized by a "kind of 'pogo-stick' rhythm."¹⁷ This was a derivative form played by a White band that did not resemble the early New Orleans original synthesis by African American artists.

Nevertheless, in the minds of many listeners, jazz was associated with White musicians and the sound of the Dixieland band. Much of the work by the original African American innovators, and those that continued to develop that sound, remained invisible to White audiences during this time, as the segregated music world (discussed in the ragtime section) kept the music of many African American artists from reaching the mainstream. For example, in the 1920s, recordings were distributed on "race record" labels. In other words, the performances and

16. Arnold Shaw, *The Jazz Age: Popular Music in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 16.

17. Shaw, 16.

compositions of these musicians were not promoted or geared to White consumers, and as such, their work often remained unnoticed (on a national level). Meanwhile, White dance bands, like the one led by Paul Whiteman, were being introduced to the public as jazz. They were thus reaping the economic profit, as they performed in venues that African Americans were barred from and made records marketed to White audiences. Hence, akin to ragtime, much of the African American experience was removed in these renditions of jazz performance, and the appropriation and confusion over the genre remained in place.

The issue concerning what constituted jazz was also showcased in the area of the piano novelty. For example, while doing research on Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert, I noticed that these women were often labelled as jazz pianists in the media, even though the bulk of their work is now recognized as piano novelty music, or music performed in the piano novelty style. Such was the confusion surrounding the term “jazz” or, also importantly, the misunderstandings concerning the musical features of piano novelty music.

The piano novelty was a popular piano idiom developed by piano roll artists in the United States in the late 1910s and 1920s. It was the genre’s “pseudo-Jazz”¹⁸ sound that caused many to mistake it for jazz. One of the similarities is the extensive use of syncopation primarily in the right hand, while the left hand highlights the downbeats with infrequent syncopation. Furthermore, both genres make use of such musical devices as blues notes (flattened thirds and sevenths), “walking bass lines of octaves and tenths in which the left hand ascends or descends

18. Arnold Shaw, *Black Popular Music in America: From the Spirituals, Minstrels and Ragtime to Soul, Disco, and Hip-hop* (New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1986), 59-60.

by whole or half steps, and a stride bass¹⁹ in which the left-hand alternates between a low bass note or chord, and a chord an octave or two higher.”²⁰ Moreover, the piano novelty and jazz use breaks and fills. The latter refers to an “unaccompanied solo generally played at the midpoint of a section or immediately preceding a final cadence,” and the former consists “of repeated figures used to replace long notes in the melody or to embellish a prevailing chord.”²¹

However, the piano novelty differs in many respects to jazz. Although one of its primary evolutionary antecedents is ragtime, it has deep roots in classical music, it is not dance music, it lacks improvisation, and most notably was strongly connected to the player piano. By way of explanation, the piano novelty was not recognized as a genre during the postwar years and into the 1920s. While contemporary scholars acknowledge the distinction between jazz and the piano novelty, many still consider the latter a sub-genre of ragtime (labelling it novelty piano). Literature on the subject is often found in books on ragtime music.²² There is a reason for this categorization. According to pianist and ragtime scholar Terry Waldo, piano roll arrangers from various piano roll companies arranging piano rags each tried to make their “versions different from...[their] competitors by adding frills – counter melodies, doubled octaves, tremolos, [and]

19. This is a more complicated version of the oom-pah bass in ragtime, as adapted by stride jazz pianists. For more information, see chapter 8, pages 321-23.

20. Rosilee Walker, “The Piano Novelty: A Distinct Musical Genre” (DMA thesis, University of Missouri, 1994): 6, accessed September 28, 2016, ProQuest (9519019).

21. James Richard Dossa, “The Novelty Piano Style of Zez Confrey: A Theoretical Analysis of his Piano Solos and their Relation to Ragtime and Jazz” (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1986): 39, accessed August 12, 2023, ProQuest (303428049).

22. See Terry Waldo, *This is Ragtime* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1976), 84-86; Edward A. Berlin, *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 162-65; Ronald Riddle, “Novelty Piano Music,” in *Ragtime: Its History, Composers, and Music*, ed. Edward John Hasse (New York: Collier Macmillan Inc., 1985), 285-93; and Dossa, “The Novelty Piano Style of Zez Confrey,” 1-36.

rapid chromatic runs.”²³ He continues by stating that, in the late 1910s, a distinct style of ragtime emerged created by these piano roll artists “based on these pianistic devices.”²⁴ Nevertheless, for this dissertation, I position the piano novelty as a distinct musical genre, accepting that while many elements of ragtime are evident in these pieces, they can also be viewed as a synthesis of several other different styles of music.

Experts on the subject, Frank Himpsl and Alex Hassan, have hypothesized that many classically-trained piano roll artists were carrying the tradition of nineteenth-century salon writing into the piano novelty.²⁵ One of the definitions of the genre is that it “combines classical piano technique in a syncopated rhythmic structure with light entertaining melodies, all of which served to display the pianist’s technique.”²⁶ From a broad perspective, one finds much of the lyricism of Edward MacDowell (1860-1908), the rhythmically pleasing melodies of Louis Gottschalk (1829-1869), and the technical flamboyance of Moritz Moszkowski (1854-1925) in this music.²⁷

It has been inferred by Himpsl and Hassan that the compositions of Moszkowski have laid the groundwork for the piano novelty idiom. He composed short, facetious character pieces with catchy titles, and the musical content consists of cheerful tunes, quicker rhythms, and harmonic surprises at peak moments.²⁸ Elements of Moszkowski’s virtuosic piano writing – his

23. Waldo, *This is Ragtime*, 84.

24. Waldo, 84.

25. Walker, “The Piano Novelty: A Distinct Musical Genre,” 9.

26. Walker, 6.

27. Walker, 9.

28. Walker, 9.

use of figurations such as hand crossovers and alternating hand effects that, in an improvisatory nature, explore the whole range of the keyboard²⁹ – are, in consolidation with these other musical features, prominent in piano novelty writing.

George Gershwin and Franz Liszt (and his contemporaries) also greatly influenced the piano novelty composers of the day. For example, Liszt's style, which includes his use of "consecutive three and four-voice chords in the right hand with filled-in tenths in the left hand at a fast tempo"³⁰ are typical in many piano novelty compositions. Additionally, Gershwin's "unresolved seventh chords and sudden chromatic shifts in harmony, along with cross-rhythms and shifting accents"³¹ are also common traits of the piano novelty style. Liszt's notable influences on piano novelty artists were specific to the nineteenth-century manner of transcribing classical vocal pieces into ingenious and elaborate piano arrangements, concert pieces in themselves.

As a point of clarification, it was the popular songs that were selling well in the form of sheet music that became the template for numerous pieces written in the piano novelty style (piano novelty musicians also often transcribed nineteenth-century Western art music, piano and vocal, in this syncopated idiom). This established practice was born out of the need to sell player pianos and piano rolls – to showcase the expansive material capacity of the player piano (including exploiting all idiomatic possibilities of the piano). The fuller textures and complex rhythmic devices of piano novelty arrangements demanded a high level of technical skill of its

29. Walker, 11.

30. Walker, 7

31. Walker, 7.

contract pianists. Incorporating virtuosic fingerwork, these musicians' arrangements utilize the full range of the keyboard, which creates an orchestral effect. Specifically, while the music was not meant to be danced to, it was written in such a way as to bring to the forefront the energy and brilliance of dance music. Furthermore, the technical complexities presented in these rolls were sometimes edited in a fashion from which it was made evident that one person alone could not possibly perform the music. Also, due to the capabilities of the player piano, the rolls could be played at an incredibly fast tempo.

All these aforementioned techniques and musical elements were also assigned to piano novelty compositions, as some piano roll artists were composers, writing original songs. The musical form of the genre is as follows: akin to ragtime, the piano novelty employs a duple metre (usually) and a standard ABACA format (sectional form) that, in general, utilizes a different key for each contrasting section. Additionally, pentatonic melodic and ornamental construction are prominent in both genres, although piano novelty pieces often use chromaticism more frequently, with an array of conspicuous harmonic devices that are not present in much of ragtime. These include "higher-interval chords (the ninth particularly), the prominent use of minor modality, augmented triads and whole-tone-scale effects, and sudden unprepared shifts of key."³² Some trademark characteristics of the piano novelty include the following: 1) "parallel fourths in the right hand" (see figure 6.1); 2) "rapid alteration of chords or single notes between" the hands (see figure 6.2); 3) explosive chromatic passages often used for riffs and other episodic musical material (see figure 6.3); and 4) the "secondary rag" (rhythmic groups of three within a

32. Riddle, "Novelty Piano Music," 287.



Figure 6.1. Zez Confrey, *Kitten on the Keys*: *Zez Confrey's Novelty Piano Solos as Played by the Composer*, New York: Jack Mills Inc., 1921, page 2, mm1-3 (parallel fourths)



Figure 6.2. Pauline Alpert, "Perils of Pauline" in *Novelty Masterpieces of the Gershwin Age: The Music of Zez Confrey, Pauline Alpert, and Rube Bloom*, Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2014, page 60, mm62-63 (rapid alteration of chords between the hands)



Figure 6.3. Rube Bloom, "That Futuristic Rag" in *Novelty Masterpieces of the Gershwin Age: The Music of Zez Confrey, Pauline Alpert, and Rube Bloom*, Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 2014, page 96, mm59-62 (chromatic riff)

quadruple metre that is a trait of ragtime music)³³ (see figure 6.4).

A complex and technically demanding, show-off type of popular music, the piano novelty represented a time of worldly “know-how” that marked much of the Roaring Twenties. Gone were the days of pre-war innocence, with the humour and good-time fun of ragtime music now obsolete, making room for new genres that reflected the wittier and more artful cunningness of the new “self” – the defining traits of “personality.” The piano novelty, with its musical ambiguities and surprises (moreover, the titles of these pieces such as, “Dizzy Fingers, and “Fancy Fingers,” also signify these musical traits) was a product of the age.

While historians often utilize the term “jazz” to define the music of this era, the piano novelty was just as popular, with many musicians lured to the call of this innovative musical form. In other words, while the latter genre disappeared into obscurity along with the player piano by the early 1930s (as the two were inextricably linked in the United States³⁴), at the time, in the music industry, it appealed to a large consumer base, and was a great opportunity for pianists to showcase their musical potential. Indeed, most player piano roll artists were virtuosos (many were child prodigies), as this was almost always a requirement of performing the piano novelty in an effective manner. The depth of their training was on full display in the medium.

It should be noted that my research has not yielded results concerning African American artists that composed or performed in the piano novelty style. They did make piano rolls of various genres including stride piano and ragtime, but, apart from Clarence M. Jones (1889-1949), it appears that the piano novelty was an artform adapted primarily by White musicians.

33. Riddle, 290, 291.

34. In Europe, the piano novelty evolved as a genre disassociated with the player piano – its popularity hitting a peak in the late 1930s. See Walker, “The Piano Novelty: A Distinct Musical Genre,” 32, 44, 50-77.



Figure 6.4. Zez Confrey, *Dizzy Fingers: Zez Confrey's Novelty Piano Solos as Played by the Composer*, New York: Jack Mills Inc., 1921, page 4, mm35-38 (secondary rag)

Hence, one may question whether the piano novelty can be considered an act of cultural appropriation by White artists, since the genre was influenced by African American idioms such as ragtime and jazz. The answer is yes, as one cannot ignore the fact that the piano novelty was highly commercial, part of the mainstream music scene, and created to display the capabilities of the player piano. Elements borrowed from ragtime and jazz (such as the stride bass) were completely removed from their source – the African American experience – and adapted to suit a commercial purpose that displayed White talent and ability.

Moreover, the systemic racism of the time may have kept African American artists from writing piano novelty pieces or working in the reproducing piano roll recording studio. However, unlike White artists directly appropriating ragtime or jazz, it is important to note that it is a distinct genre, and while consisting of elements from the aforementioned musical idioms, was,

nonetheless, in its finished form, a creation of piano roll artists.³⁵

A Brief Summary of the Changing Gender Norms in American Women's Professional Musical Activity During the Early Twentieth Century (1900-1928)

Women's Music Education and Composition

Nineteenth-century women in America were encouraged to study music – particularly the piano – as a feminine pursuit. Therefore, one may speculate as to the reasons why there were so few of their sex performing in public venues for most of the century. Undoubtedly, there were many more musically literate women than men in the population, and one could rightfully, to some degree, be confused as to why music was a less fertile ground for women's employment during this time. In chapters 2 and 3, we saw that the overarching framework of Victorian ideologies of gender was grounded by the idea of separation. Women were expected to stay in the home while men went out to work. Nevertheless, many women (the working class, many from immigrant families) did work during this time, as the reality of their economic situation did not allow them the “comfort” of acquiescing to social standards. They often laboured in low-paying jobs that were designated as feminine: factory workers (such as shirt making and shoe stitching), and servants or teachers of young children. While there were some women (mostly working-class single women) who worked in the music industry, they were far less numerous than men, as they had to surmount immense social obstacles in their pathway (and often faced societal stigma due to their non-conformity).

Undeniably, for most of the nineteenth century, American society, particularly in the

35. With reference to Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert, this is discussed in greater detail in chapter 8.

economic realm, was marked by gender stratification. Victorian social conventions dictated that musical women should perform only in their home (or in the home of a friend or acquaintance), and/or teach piano (or singing or another feminine instrument such as guitar) as a governess or a music teacher. Moving beyond these established paths for many women was impossible, and thus required a change in their society's structural belief system. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this was exactly what occurred, with older Victorian ideas about women in the workplace giving way to more modern views that granted women greater mobility and visibility in various public spheres of the economic world (and, by the 1920s, due in part to the development of photography, women were becoming increasingly sexualized in various magazines and other forms of media). These ideas were, in many ways, pushed into the mainstream by the women's suffrage movement and women occupying designated "male" jobs during WWI (this allowed for, to a certain extent, the normalization of women working in various areas of employment).

Gender constraints, or the loosening of these restrictions in the social sphere, directly translated to the roles and activity of women in the musical sphere, particularly regarding education and the music professions. Hence, the changes outlined above and those mentioned in chapter 2 opened the door to new opportunities for women to excel in music. Of great importance was the gradual acceptance of women in American university and conservatory music programs. This occurred during the late nineteenth century and marked a significant advancement in women's music education, which was, previously, more accurately understood as instrumental tuition: to learn the skills required to adequately perform on instruments gendered feminine, such as the piano and guitar. From a simplistic point of view, societal perceptions of learning an instrument – the mechanical, repetitive practice – was viewed as

suitable for the female temperament, as the act was considered less intellectual than other musical endeavours and were re-creative rather than creative. But as was mentioned in chapter 3, some women moved beyond mere competence in their performance skills, and those who came of age in the later part of the century were able to advance in post-secondary education.

Furthermore, by the early twentieth century, American women were increasingly allowed to enroll in music theory classes, acquiring the qualifications necessary to become composers. Certainly, particularly in music composition, they were making progress in combating gender hierarchies based on traditional ideas concerning what was deemed feminine or masculine in the music professions. This was a system of values in place that regulated who should teach, create, and re-create music. Victorians relegated the greatest honour to the composer and conceptual interpreter (conductor), with less importance placed on the physical re-creator (instrumental performer and singer),³⁶ and the educator (music teacher). Men dominated the top of this hierarchy in the nineteenth century, as creativity, confidence, and higher order thinking were traits that were associated with masculinity and were viewed as necessary to being an effective composer and conductor. This proved very difficult for women to surmount for most of the nineteenth century, although some bypassed these restrictions by adhering to the defining characteristics of the “amateur lady composer:”³⁷ one who writes small-scale compositions – miniature classical works, such as piano character pieces – as an extension of her performance duties in the parlour (dictated by Victorian gender ideologies).

36. Vorachek, *Instruments of Desire*, 125.

37. Jill Halstead, *The Woman Composer: Creativity and the Gendered Politics of Musical Composition* (London: Routledge, 2017), 90.

Undeniably, women who adhered to the aforementioned category were constantly pushing gender boundaries, albeit in a more traditional manner. Nonetheless, many early twentieth-century female composers, such as Amy Beach (1867-1944) and Florence Price (1887-1953) (who, incidentally, was mixed race but, during this time, was considered a Black woman in the United States due to the country's racial formation) – particularly those that were educated before WWI – spent their careers attempting to break away from the ideas that centred around the amateur lady composer. Having received serious theoretical training in music, these women wrote large scale Western art works. This included symphonies and chamber works, which thereby exemplified the supposed masculine traits mentioned above. Indeed, by the early twentieth century, women composers' presence and work in the public arena counteracted the prevailing views concerning their alleged inferiority in creating art music.

However, women composers at times faced criticism or ambivalence to their compositions and did not always receive the recognition their work deserved. In many ways this was due to the more non-musical, practical details of the profession. Only 20% of faculty positions in America in 1900 were held by women (and less so in prestigious universities),³⁸ and thus fewer women than men received faculty funding such as fellowships, prizes, and commissions, which often paid for their living expenses as composers. Older gender ideologies that allowed for the questioning of women's suitability for leadership positions were still in play in the early twentieth century, as women were largely barred from positions of authority in

38. United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, "National Center for Education Statistics, Digest of Education Statistics" (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1976), accessed June 11, 2023, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED123755.pdf>.

many professions.³⁹

Nonetheless, much of this discrimination towards women (in this period) is linked more so to job security than traditional gender ideologies. By way of clarification, there is an equivalence between social opinion and employment opportunity: the sociological model of occupational change.⁴⁰ The justifications men made for their prejudices against women musicians were, for the most part, a result of protecting a limited job market against female competition. Thus, in the early twentieth century, women were still far from shattering the glass ceiling when they tried to obtain jobs that were equivalent, professionally and financially, to their male colleagues.

In music, this also included orchestra and band positions. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, positions in most of the major orchestras were inaccessible to women. However, in popular music, such as jazz bands, some women were able to gain employment as pianists (less so as other instrumentalists), although many were often given only part-time solo gigs. On the surface, this appeared to be a prestigious offering, but it was, in most cases, a means of protecting male full-time band positions. Hence, many women formed professional female orchestras and bands during this time. For instance, in the United States, between 1925 and 1945, there were approximately thirty eighty-piece women orchestras,⁴¹ many of which were popular

39. Patsy Parker, "The Historical Role of Women in Higher Education," *Administrative Issues Journal: Connecting Education, Practice, and Research* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 3, accessed June 11, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.5929/2015.5.1.1>.

40. Tick, "Passed Away is the Piano Girl," 333.

41. Shelly M. Jagow, "Women Orchestral Conductors in America: The Struggle for Acceptance – An Historical View from the Nineteenth Century to the Present," *College Music Symposium* 38 (1988): 131, accessed April 7, 2018, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40374324>.

as the women were seen as a novelty – an exception to the rule. This gave the women the experience they required and exposure to large-scale Western art music. Moreover, these orchestras also performed music by women composers, many of whom were having difficulty accessing male orchestras, bands, and chamber groups.

Undeniably, this was one of the significant barriers for women composers, as hearing one's own piece performed by a proper ensemble was a requirement of developing one's craft. Even the most educated and popular women composers struggled to hear their compositions performed, as they encountered discrimination and/or lacked the connections and money to bring to fruition a proper performance of their works.

Gender Norms in Tin Pan Alley

For most of the nineteenth century, subscription magazines were the main marketing medium for sheet music in the United States. However, by the 1890s they were met with stiff competition in the form of Tin Pan Alley.⁴² Distributing various popular styles and genres on paper, and then combining its sales with phonograph and piano roll recordings,⁴³ by the early twentieth century Tin Pan Alley had established complete control over the popular music industry.

Men dominated Tin Pan Alley in terms of composition, lyrics writing and publishing. Women such as Kay Swift (1897-1993), Dorothy Fields (1905-1974), Ann Ronell (1905-1993),

42. The true origin of its name is unknown, although some state that it was due to the “tinny” sound of the pianos (songwriters changed the sound of their pianos by sticking paper on the strings) observers could hear emanating from the various row houses and brownstones in the alley. Others claimed that the sound coming from the district was so dissonant and loud that it sounded like “tin pans” playing.

43. The term “Tin Pan Alley” also loosely represented a variety of commercial music – this included ragtime, parlour music, dance music, and the piano novelty – and, in time became synonymous with the general designation of American popular music.

and Dana Suesse (1909-1987) were an exception to the rule. Many of their songs are still well-known, but during the early twentieth century, these women received limited press coverage. Other Tin Pan Alley female composers used male or gender-ambiguous pseudonyms, such as Caro Roma (alias for Carrie Northey, 1866-1937). And although there were some notable female ragtime composers – May Aufderheide and Adaline Shepherd to name but two – most of them did not rely on Tin Pan Alley,⁴⁴ but instead used local publishing companies or published their compositions themselves. In general, women composers found more opportunities to compose in the semi-classical genres (this includes character pieces, which were considered to be within the margins of the popular song), which were published in women's magazines and by some local companies rather than in Tin Pan Alley publications.

Nevertheless, women did find other means of employment in the Tin Pan Alley industry. For instance, to promote the millions of Tin Pan Alley tunes, publishers and music stores hired song pluggers. These consisted of two types: 1) pianists and singers who were hired by music stores to demonstrate the various songs; and 2) salespeople (employed by publishers) who attended numerous shows for the purpose of encouraging key players in the music industry to make use of the compositions in their various projects. Indeed, the sale of sheet music was closely connected to Broadway and Hollywood. There were many female song pluggers of the former category, as women were involved in the performance of Tin Pan Alley songs. Undeniably, by the early twentieth century, there were also many more opportunities for women to perform on the stage – musical revues and variety shows (and later musicals on Broadway) – as they sang and/or danced to (and, to a lesser extent, performed on an instrument) the various

44. Tick, "Passed Away is the Piano Girl," 341.

Tin Pan Alley hits of the day.

Furthermore, women were also making phonograph recordings and cutting piano roll arrangements of these popular tunes. In this latter category, artists including Mary Elizabeth “Mae” Brown (1884-1934), Zema D. Householder “Randale” (1893-1918), Muriel Pollock (1895-1971), Ruth Mack (1897-1983), Bertha Walker (1898-1987), Vee Lawnhurst (1905-1992), and the women in my case study – Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert – featured prominently. While Tin Pan Alley was extremely limiting when it came to female composition, many women came into their own with regard to piano roll arranging and performing in the piano roll industry. Although they did not dominate the field, they were visible, being recognized and given credit for their work. These women were White, classically trained pianists, who performed and arranged music of various genres. Many of them contributed to the piano novelty scene, performing and arranging in the piano novelty style.

Moreover, some of these women also composed music, including Baker and Alpert, although their output was limited. Regrettably, the historical impact of these women on the Tin Pan Alley music scene has not, in many cases, been addressed. Their lives and work have been largely forgotten. Hence, in the following chapter, I present biographies of Baker and Alpert.⁴⁵ While far from complete (as the addition of full biographies is beyond the scope of my work), they serve their purpose concerning my thesis and are the most thorough biographies of these

45. It should be noted that musicologist Artis Wodehouse’s research on Edythe Baker, in particular her rollography on the artist, was extremely helpful when compiling this biography and organizing my performance analysis. Although I found additional information on Baker through other sources, Wodehouse has laid the groundwork and continues to offer exemplary research on Edythe Baker through her research papers and YouTube channel. For example, see Artis Wodehouse, “Edythe Baker 1919 original song manuscript & piano roll,” YouTube, April 11, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xc0iZMFrTwU>; and Artis Wodehouse, “Edythe Baker (1899-1971): American Pianist, Composer, Piano Roll Artist,” academia.edu, accessed February 25, 2017, https://www.academia.edu/38819849/Edythe_Baker_1899_1971_piano_rollography.

women in the musical canon thus far.

Chapter 7: Biographical Summaries of Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert

Introduction

Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert were versatile performers, arrangers, and, to a lesser extent, composers during their lifespan, yet they have been consigned to the footnotes of history. These women came of age during the early twentieth century. As such, they were part of an era that saw American women gain the right to vote. Even so, as highlighted in chapter 2, this period was still marked by gender stratification. Baker and Alpert were well-known musicians during this period; numerous mentions and full articles were written about them. Hence, the questions that I kept asking as I delved into my research concerned the following: how they became famous; how they were able to bypass or work around the various gender hurdles of their society; and in turn, how they used the player piano to meet their goals.

This chapter presents biographical summaries of Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert, laying the groundwork for my inquiries. It is in chapter 8 that these inquiries are directly acknowledged – in the performance analyses – by referring, in part, to the information from this chapter. Full biographies, while needed in the literature, move beyond the scope of my dissertation, as my thesis pertains to the player piano, and not directly to the lives of these women. Nevertheless, the information gleaned in this chapter represents the most comprehensive biographies to date.

Edythe Baker (1899-1971)

Edythe Baker (birth name, Edith Ann Baker) came from humble beginnings – born into a working-class family on August 25, 1899, in Girard, Kansas to labourer Asa Baker and his wife

Gertrude (née Arnold).¹ She had one brother, Cecil, who was a year younger, born in 1900. Her parents divorced in 1905, and Gertrude and Asa both remarried, the latter to Sophronia A. King (who died sometime before 1910) and the former to Paul McDonald. By 1915, Edith – by now spelled Edythe – was living with her stepfather and her mother in a Kansas City (Missouri) boarding house, while her brother stayed with their father and his third wife in Humboldt, Kansas (Asa had married again after Sophronia’s death).

During these early years, it seems that Edythe Baker received a somewhat irregular music education. While some newspaper clippings from the early 1920s state that she did not have any musical schooling, or only had “four lessons”² in her life, it can be surmised that the purpose of these articles was to propagate her rags to riches story, emphasizing her natural pianistic ability. Although Baker did not travel to Europe and study with any of the “classical masters” (as many upper middle-class and wealthy American girls were expected to do in their formative years), she did receive piano instruction as a child. From the age of eight to approximately fourteen, Baker attended and lived at St. Mary’s Convent in Independence, Missouri, where the course curriculum for girls included rudimentary training in both piano and voice.³ Furthermore, later articles written about Edythe Baker confirm that she was classically trained. For instance, in a 1925 *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* piece, Edythe Baker states that from the cradle she “played and

1. This was obtained from the passenger manifests of three different trans-Atlantic ships that made port in New York City in 1934, 1945, and 1958. Since Edythe Baker’s date of birth is not listed in any United States census, this documentation, which was acquired from her official passport, is accepted as the most accurate proof concerning the place and date of her birth. See Bill Edwards, “Edythe Baker,” ragpiano.com, accessed April 12, 2016, ragpiano.com/comps/Baker.shtml.

2. See “Edythe Baker Writes Musical Comedy, *The Evening Sun* (March 6, 1923): 8, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/368056414>.

3. Edwards, “Edythe Baker.”

played,” and “at the end of 14 years” she had “reached the ‘promising’ class.”⁴ Some of this endless practising most likely took place at the Alamo Movie Theater in Leavenworth, Kansas, where Baker spent a year or two playing the piano for silent movies after she left the convent (before moving to Kansas City).⁵

Edythe Baker’s piano practising and the early development of her “peculiar manner of playing the piano”⁶ that made her a star – her unique pianism and virtuosity as connected with her venture into popular music – occurred in her later teens in Kansas City under the tutelage of Ernie Burnett (1894-1959). A vaudeville pianist and composer, Burnett, during this time, was playing gigs at the Edward cabaret (a major centre for Kansas City’s theatrical nightlife, located in the basement grill of the Edward Hotel⁷), the same establishment where Edythe Baker also performed as a pianist. She was hired in 1915 by the hotel’s manager, Joe Donegan (also the manager for The Century Theater), who was one of the first to notice her undeniable talent at the piano. Given this chance, Baker learned the “fundamentals of cabaret swing music” from

4. “The Baker Method,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (August 16, 1925): 92, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/686494331>.

5. Some articles state that Baker’s father had died when she was 14, and the girl subsequently ran away from the convent to make money (working at the movie house), as her family was “penniless.” However, since both her father Asa and stepfather Paul McDonald were still alive by 1915, one can surmise that this is a false statement (although the family did have limited funds). See “High-Halted Herself Right into the Nobility,” *El Paso Times* (January 24, 1937): 34, accessed February 13, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/433122013>; and “How the Kansas Beauty ‘High-Halted’ Herself into the Nobility,” *Springfield Daily News* (February 12, 1928): 27, accessed February 13, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/671746719>.

6. “Edythe Baker to Visit Here,” *The Kansas City Times* (Feb. 23, 1934): 4, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/656795250>.

7. Although the Century Theater (renamed The Folly Theater), which was connected to the Edward Hotel, is still standing (closed to the public, awaiting restoration), the Edward Hotel was demolished in 1965.

Burnett.⁸ Moreover, she frequently traveled to the Orpheum Theater, observing the many performers at this crowd-pleasing spot for vaudeville, located a mere block away from the Edward Hotel.

It was at these locales that Baker was exposed to numerous styles of popular music, as Kansas City was, in general, a crossroads for the exploding American popular entertainment industry. It drew in several well-known ragtime and blues musicians as well as vaudeville performers and, by the 1920s, jazz musicians. Concerning the last-mentioned group, it should be noted, however, that by the time jazz music – specifically, the Kansas City style of jazz – took flight (as a genre unto itself during the Roaring Twenties), Baker was no longer living in the city. She briefly moved to Chicago in 1918 before eventually settling in New York City in late 1918 or early 1919, remaining there for most of the 1920s. Hence, while she was exposed to jazz in New York, her early influences stem from ragtime, the blues, and vaudeville.

Undeniably, it was in vaudeville that Edythe Baker found her footing as a musician. Although many articles state that she was a jazz musician, Baker was more of a vaudeville pianist whose piano playing was indicative of the new piano novelty style that erupted in the 1920s. While her compositions and arrangements did not always conform to the structural format of the piano novelty genre, the majority of Edythe Baker's musical output was either piano novelty pieces or songs (many of which were Tin Pan Alley blues pieces) that employed piano novelty style gimmicks. She played her various compositions and arrangements live in her vaudeville "pianologues" and recorded much of the material in piano rolls, although a few of her

8. "Edythe was a Favorite," *The Kansas City Times* (December 9, 1936):1, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/656946949>.

pieces can also be heard on phonograph records.⁹

After Baker finished a brief stint with a local vaudeville troupe associated with the B.F. Keith organization in 1918, and either following or between her April-July 1919 performances of the New York vaudeville act, “Two Girls and a Piano” (with singer Corrine Harris), she took advantage of an opportunity to cover for an ill pianist, playing a gig at the Aeolian Hall (in Manhattan). As such, she was immediately approached by the Aeolian Company, who gave her a two-year contract to make piano rolls. Veritably, Aeolian had no choice but to take note of this young artist, as various reviews claimed that her performance was an immense success. The audience continued to encore, keeping “her ragging, jazzing, and doing ‘blues’ until she was exhausted.”¹⁰

Undoubtedly, Baker thrived in live performance settings, her reputation growing exponentially in both the press and within the inner circles of the music industry. Amidst her engagements, she cut numerous piano rolls, with one of her first pieces being a composition of her own entitled “I’ll be True to the Girl of my Dreams” (1919). Aeolian piano roll promotional material from this period shows that this ballad was advertised frequently, and often the messaging included text that described her performance achievements in vaudeville. For example, in a Washington D.C newspaper, the *Evening Star*, a piano roll advertisement lists Baker’s composition at the price of \$1.00 (the normal price for piano rolls at this time) and reads,

9. “Pianologue” was a term used frequently in music reviews, as associated with vaudeville. It is “a comic monologue accompanied by piano playing.” Dictionary by Merriam-Webster, s.v. “pianologue,” accessed April 6, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pianologue>.

10. “Edythe Baker, Pianiste, New Comer in Vaudeville,” *The Standard Union* (March 28, 1920): 35, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/544431221>.

“Pretty Edythe Baker, who entertained hundreds at Keith’s last week, wrote this hit.”¹¹

As stated in this ad, following a theatrical commitment on the Orpheum Circuit – a team up with singer Nellye de Onsonne named “A Bundle of Blues” (for which Baker wrote the music and lyrics)¹² – Baker returned to Keith’s, appearing as a feature in vaudeville star Harry Fox’s new act, *Harry Fox with Five Fascinating Beauties, and Edythe Baker*. She accompanied Fox on the piano, followed by a few solos, which, according to one review in the *New York Clipper*, “stopped the show,” as the young pianist was a “wizard with the ivories.”¹³ Although her appearance with Fox was a success, Edythe Baker only worked with him for ten days, as she wanted to focus on other musical pursuits.

Following the Fox show, she joined the cast of the musical, Ager, Yellen and Anderson’s *What’s in a Name?* (1920), and then undertook a short-lived promotional tour with Aeolian. Baker, along with other Melodee roll artists including Frank Banta and Harry Akst, performed their pieces for enthusiastic audiences in various cities and met various piano roll distributors and dealers in person to promote their compositions and arrangements on piano rolls.¹⁴

During this time, Baker attracted the attention of columnist and press agent Walter Kingsley, who not only became a mentor to the blossoming artist, but also helped her secure an audition (after her brief Aeolian tour) with theatrical entrepreneur Florenz Ziegfeld Jr. Baker was

11. O.J. Demoll & Co., “Xmas Song Rolls,” *Evening Star* (December 7, 1919): 48, accessed February 13, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/332693112>.

12. “Vaudeville Reviews,” *The New York Clipper* (November 26, 1919): 8, <https://archive.org/details/Clipper67-1919-11/page/n121/mode/2up?q=Nellye>.

13. “New Acts and Reappearances – Harry Fox,” *The New York Clipper* (February 4, 1920): 10, Kindle.

14. “Melodee Roll Artists on Tour,” *Music Trade Review* (April 10, 1920): 41, <https://mtr.arcade-museum.com/MTR-1920-70-15/41/>.

given the chance to impress Ziegfeld with one piano number during the *Midnight Frolic*, a famous cabaret revue that followed the Ziegfeld Follies, which took place on the roof of the New Amsterdam Theater (214 West 42nd Street) on Broadway. If he enjoyed her performance, she was guaranteed a salary for two weeks. This public audition was a success with the audience, but unfortunately Ziegfeld had not been able to attend. The boss gave her another opportunity, however, and was not disappointed, as it was reported that he was “amazed at [Baker’s] powerful playing and...wanted to know where on earth all her strength came from.”¹⁵ Ziegfeld signed her to play for the *Midnight Frolic* on a consistent basis for most of 1920. Performing on her signature white Steck baby grand piano, the number was entitled “Ten Fingers of Syncopation.” Influential people, such as celebrities attended this Ziegfeld show (which had become an annual event since 1915), and Edythe Baker garnered much attention – so much that Ziegfeld extended her contract to cover the 1921 *Nine O’clock Frolic* as well as the *Midnight Frolic* for that year (see figure 7.1).

In these performances, it was both Baker’s piano skills and her feminine form that were on display. Ziegfeld shows were renowned for their beautiful women, and while not a Ziegfeld girl, Baker was sometimes labelled in the press as a Ziegfeld beauty. In actuality, she was an attractive woman, with red, short, bobbed hair (later dyed platinum blonde) and a small petite frame. Hence, reviews of her playing – descriptions of her virtuosity – were often paired with reports concerning her appearance. As an early twentieth-century columnist stated, “the fact that Miss Baker is strikingly good-looking has not been held against her.”¹⁶ Indeed, her physical

15. “How the Kansas Beauty ‘High-Halted’ Herself into the Nobility,” 27.

16. “New Pianist on Keith Circuit,” *New-York Tribune* (March 21, 1920): 42, accessed February 13, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/469530971>.



Figure 7.1. *Edythe Baker, Pianist – Follies of 1923*. Photograph of Edythe Baker. 1923 (*From the Vaults*, <https://fromthevaults-boppinbob.blogspot.com/2015/08/edythe-baker-born-25-august-1899.html>)

beauty was an asset (in combination with her pianistic virtuosity) and ensured her continuing to secure employment in the theatre, specifically on Broadway, which marked the next stage of her career.

Following several music engagements, including a role in Ned Wayburn's musical comedy revue *Town Topics* (which opened in Baltimore on Labour Day in 1921) and a musical sketch at the Winter Garden Theater (1634 Broadway) entitled *Moments from Music Comedy*, Baker succeeded in procuring a spot in the Broadway musical, *The Blushing Bride* by Cyrus

Wood (February 4, 1922 to June 10, 1922). According to the various music reviews, her piano specialty was “among the comedy’s [most] captivating features,”¹⁷ as she “displayed considerable virtuosity at the piano.”¹⁸

Although Baker’s most dominant talent was her ability to play the piano with immense ferocity and accomplished artistry, she was also cultivating her other skills as a dancer, actor, and singer. For example, she took dance lessons with a “Professor Morris” at the Rainbow Studio,¹⁹ starred in the short-lived Cole Porter musical revue *Hitchy-Koo of 1922*²⁰ (see figure 7.2) (which required much “hoofing”²¹ on her part) as well as secured a position in *The Dancing Girl*, a two-act musical revue by Harold R. Atteridge. This show ran from January to May 1923 at the Winter Garden, and then moved to the Colonial Theater at Broadway and 62nd Street. Baker continued to perform her piano specialty, while also adding various forms of dance to the act, thereby allowing the audience to witness her ample skills as an artist.

Furthermore, due to her rise on Broadway, her piano rolls during this time received good press from Aeolian and sold rapidly to a wide-ranging consumer base. Some of these included theatre and vaudeville songs, such as “Avalon” by Al Jolson,²² but much of Baker’s repertoire

17. “Blushing Bride Receives Ovation,” *The Morning News* (February 1, 1922): 8, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/154179622>.

18. “Along Broadway,” *Dayton Daily News* (February 19, 1922): 7, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/397550501>.

19. “New Dance Steps Exhibited Here by Professor Morris,” *The Courier* (February 25, 1923): 8, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/95849707>.

20. The Stephen Sondheim Reference Guide, “Hitchy-Koo of 1922” (*Sondheimguide.com*, accessed January 18, 2021, <https://www.sondheim.com/porter/hitchy22.html>).

21. This is a Jazz Age slang word which, in this context, means tap dancing.

22. This song was utilized in the musicals *Sinbad* (1918) and *Bombo* (1921).



Figure 7.2. *Same Girl...Different Clothes*. 1922. Photograph of Edythe Baker Dancing with Comedian Raymond Hitchcock in *Hitchy-Koo* of 1922. “How the Kansas Beauty High-Halted Herself Right into the Nobility” (*Springfield Daily News*, February 12, 1928: 27, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/671746719>)

from the early 1920s was Tin Pan Alley blues pieces (mostly on the Melodee label). These were still in vogue, and thus her arrangements of pieces such as “St. Louis Blues” by W.C Handy, “Kansas City Blues” (Euday Bowman), “Dardanella Blues” (Johnny S. Black), and Effie Tyus and Charles Tyus’ “Omaha Blues” were instant hits with much of the consuming public.

Baker also composed her own blues piece in 1920 called “Dreaming Blues,” which was

not only published as sheet music, but also played and recorded by numerous performers, including the composer herself. Moreover, by 1923, while she was performing in *Dancing Girl*, Baker had written the score for a musical comedy that was tentatively entitled *Little Miss Muffet*.²³ Although never produced (it was supposed to be sponsored by vaudeville performer Kitty Doner), this nevertheless points to an undeniable fact: Baker did more than just “dabble” in the field of composition. Her earliest pieces on piano rolls, “I’ll be True to the Girl of My Dreams,” and “Blooie-Blooie” (1920), were works of her own. Moreover, following *Dancing Girl*, this young pianist featured in the musical revue, *Innocent Eyes* by Harold Atteridge, where she principally played her own compositions. “Jazz a While,” and “Again and Again” were among the selected pieces.²⁴ These songs were published, according to various news clippings (although a detailed search unfortunately did not reveal any surviving sheet music) but were never recorded on either piano rolls or phonograph records.

Nevertheless, Edythe Baker did cut a roll of her arrangement, “Hard-Hearted Anna” (Milton Ager), which she performed in *Innocent Eyes*, accompanying singer Frances Williams. This was frequently advertised in Aeolian catalogues of the time. Edythe Baker’s performance in *Innocent Eyes* received much praise, both in the form of piano rolls and piano roll endorsements, sheet music publications, and music reviews. Her pianologue, according to one commentator, had “become a fad with social circles.”²⁵ Thus, seeking to reach an international stage, Baker

23. “Edythe Baker Writes Musical Comedy,” 8.

24. “Edythe Baker,” *Brooklyn Times Union* (July 6, 1924): 13, accessed February 13, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/556168688>; and “Edythe Baker,” *Daily News* (July 2, 1924): 59, accessed February 13, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/410767892>.

25. “Words Come From New York,” *Evening Star* (June 15, 1924): 70, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/618266439>.

stepped out of the cast of *Innocent Eyes* in the summer of 1924 and took her pianologue to Paris, France to perform at the *Casino de Paris*, a well-known music hall (in the 9th arrondissement) dating back to the eighteenth century. By the Fall she had returned to the United States doing various gigs, including radio shows with WGBS, cutting music rolls, and doing a feature act in a musical production by the Shuberts entitled *School Belles* (based on the 1921 silent comedy film *The Charm School*).

By November 1924, however, Edythe Baker was tapped for an important role in Al Jolson's musical comedy, *Big Boy* (both in the tryouts in Pittsburgh, then on Broadway at the Winter Garden) – her most prominent role in her career thus far. While actress Patti Harrold initially held the lead female role (with Baker securing the juvenile role of Phyllis Carter), Edythe Baker replaced her in *Big Boy's* second run²⁶ (which began in August 1925 in Atlantic City) playing the part of Annabelle Bedford. While there is no mention in the reviews as to the reason for this cast change, the early reviews of *Big Boy's* first run were favourable to Baker. She made an impression, and the audience fervently enjoyed her performance. In other words, her piano speciality “stop[p]ed the show,”²⁷ as Baker, according to the *Buffalo Times*, could “sing, play the piano and dance with grace and beauty.”²⁸ In between the first and second run of *Big Boy*, Baker found work in the cabarets of New York, teaming up with vaudeville actor

26. One review in November 1924 stated that “Edythe Baker [leads] the feminine contingent,” even though the *New York Times* review of the show in January 1925 lists Patti Harrold as the lead female character. It can be reasonably surmised that Baker may have been Harrold's understudy during the first run of the musical and could have played the lead on occasion before securing the role in the second run. See “Jolson's Big Boy,” *The Pittsburgh Press* (November 25, 1924): 35, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/150040265>; and “Al Jolson Triumphs as Jockey in Big Boy,” *The New York Times* (January 8, 1925): 28.

27. “Jolson's Big Boy,” 35.

28. “Jolson Scores in ‘Big Boy,’” *The Buffalo Times* (December 9, 1924): 6, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/494322007>.

William Reardon (a previous dancing partner of fox trot pioneer Irene Castle²⁹). They performed at the famous *Club Lido* in Manhattan for several months, as Baker provided piano interludes to Reardon's various acts.

Moreover, during this time, the increasingly famous pianist cut some of her most advanced piano roll arrangements for Aeolian. Most of her rolls were now principally made for the reproducing piano, under Aeolian's Duo-Art label. For example, in the early summer of 1925, these included a fast-paced, clever arrangement of "Don't Bring Lulu" (Billy Rose and Ray Henderson), which was advertised in various Aeolian newspaper announcements, and a fun foxtrot version of the popular Tin Pan Alley song, "If You Knew Susie (Like I Know Susie)" by Buddy DeSylva and Joseph Meyer.

By the late summer of the same year, Edythe Baker was back in *Big Boy*, but amidst her engagements was still making Duo-Art rolls. This included the famous "Yes Sir! That's My Baby" (Walter Donaldson, with lyrics by Gus Kahn) and "Manhattan" (Richard Rodgers), from the musical revue *Garrick Gaieties*. Her success in *Big Boy* was a selling feature for her piano rolls, highlighted in the piano roll advertisements from 1925 into the later years of the decade. For example, while advertising their dance music selections of Duo-Art piano rolls, Aeolian, in a feature ad in the *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader* (Wilkes-Barre, Pa.) stated that one of the "jazz-kings" that records for Duo-Art is Edythe Baker – the "pianistic marvel of Al Jolson's Big Boy."³⁰ Furthermore, another piano roll ad from the *Daily News* (New York) exclaims that

29. William Reardon collaborated with Irene Castle from 1922 through 1924 in the vaudeville act *Let's Dance*, choreographed by Fred and Adele Astaire.

30. The Aeolian Company, "Dance Music that is Perfection on the Duo-Art Reproducing Piano," *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader* (February 3, 1927): 11, accessed February 13, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/142075370>.

“Edythe Baker is the Darling of the Gods of Broadway...featured in Al Jolson’s *Big Boy*.”³¹ In later journalistic exposés of Edythe Baker’s life and performance career written in the 1930s, her role in Jolson’s *Big Boy* continued to illustrate the high point in her vaudeville career.

Nevertheless, it was also utilized as a means of creating contrast with regard to her short life in show business against her equally short marriage into the British nobility. A complete change of pace and lifestyle was, according to reviews, a welcome change for Edythe Baker, as she chose to marry prominent merchant banker Gerard d’Erlanger,³² son of Baron d’Erlanger, on January 2, 1928, and subsequently retired from the stage. However, this did not occur soon after her performance of *Big Boy*, although it was the long-term plan, according to her press agent Walter Kingsley.

Baker was professionally successful by 1925 and socially “had won a place for herself among the ‘400.’”³³ These were, according to an article published in the *New York Times*, the 400 people in New York Society who “really mattered.”³⁴ She wanted to “rub elbows” with royalty, and thus a trip to London was planned. Following her performances in the musical *Hello, Lola!* as the lead female character (winter of 1926) at the Broadway Eltinge Theater, and

31. The Aeolian Company, “The Favorites of Broadway Play Dance Music Exclusively for the Duo-Art Reproducing Piano,” *Daily News* (September 9, 1926): 46, accessed February 13, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/411493524>.

32. “Edythe Baker Weds,” *Daily Herald* (Tuesday, January 3, 1928): 7, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000681/19280103/139/0007?browse=False>.

33. “How the Kansas Beauty ‘High-Halted’ Herself into the Nobility,” 27.

34. I believe Walter Kingsley is referring to an article written by Ward McAllister during the end of the Gilded Age, that included an “official list” of New York society as led by Caroline Schermerhorn Astor. Kingsley mentioned that he had introduced Edythe Baker to Mrs. Astor, and that the pianist had subsequently performed many times in the home of this prominent socialite before being invited as a guest. See “How the Kansas Beauty ‘High-Halted’ Herself into the Nobility,” 27; and “The Only Four Hundred: Ward McAllister Gives Out the Official List,” *The New York Times* (February 16, 1892): 4, https://archive.org/details/sim_new-york-times_1892-02-16_41_12629/page/n3/mode/2up?q=McAllister.

her subsequent acts in other venues (such as “Edythe Baker and Her 8 Boys,” which accompanied the silent film *The Road to Yesterday* at Proctor Theater, Yonkers, New York), Baker travelled to England’s capital, where she was noticed by various important people in theatre, including producer Charles B. Cochran and Richard Rodgers. After obtaining a role in the former’s production of Ronald Jean’s *The Little Revue*, Baker went on to star in the London revue, *One Damn Thing After Another*, in 1927, with the same producer. It received rave reviews in the English press. Staged at the London Palladium, Edythe Baker’s performance, specifically her arrangement of the Rodgers and Hart’s song “My Heart Stood Still” (she continued to perform this hit and many other songs on her white baby-grand piano) was a sensation with audiences. She recorded this piece, and other popular songs from *One Damn Thing After Another*, including “I Need Some Cooling Off” (Rodgers and Hart) and Cole Porter’s “Play Us a Tune,” for Columbia Records, having left Aeolian when she moved to England.

Baker did not make any more piano rolls professionally in her lifetime after she crossed the Atlantic to make her home in England, although it was rumoured that she cut rolls privately for the Prince of Wales. Indeed, while Baker was making her mark in London on the musical stage, she was also, more so during her second season in London, performing in the city’s most exclusive nightclubs, which was frequented by the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York, and Lord Mountbatten. This is the story, as told by Kingsley:

The Prince sent Lord Mountbatten to bring Edythe to his table. Edythe...explained gracefully and charmingly that she was just an unknown professional and did not feel worthy of the honor. She declined. But, the Prince would not accept her refusal, so Mountbatten made a second sortie and that time brought back the demure and blushing Edythe. Everyone knows what happened after that. Edythe was always seen in the

company of the Prince and his friends. Through the Prince she met Gerald d'Erlanger, who fell in love with her.³⁵

Undoubtedly, the rags to riches theme underpinned by a Cinderella romance, has probably, to some extent, obscured the complete truth of the real story. This re-telling of the meeting is part of Baker's public story, as connected with her public persona. However, when listening to her performances on records and piano rolls, it can be easily surmised that the English royalty was most likely just as enamoured by her skill as any other audience member.

The tabloids of the day had speculated on a supposed romance between Baker and the future King Edward VIII, based on the fact that they were often seen together. He did enjoy her company. Nevertheless, she was not the only name linked with him in the press, as he had numerous female friendships, many of them attractive Americans, including Mrs. Dudley Ward, Thelma Furness, and Mrs. Wallis Simpson, who was to become his wife. Thus, through her connection with the future King, specifically at one of his parties, Baker turned her eyes on Gerald d'Erlanger. In a newspaper article from the *Amarillo Globe-Times* (Amarillo, TX), she is quoted saying that they "became acquainted at bridge parties" where she "watched him [as her opponent] ...to figure out his plays."³⁶ Later they "became partners," although Baker contended that she played "a better game than he did."³⁷

It should also be noted that d'Erlanger only saw her perform on stage once, and that, according to some articles, she said that her and her fiancé agreed that when married, she should

35. "How the Kansas Beauty 'High-Halted' Herself into the Nobility," 27.

36. "Pianist-Dancer to Wed Bridge Player She Beat," *The Amarillo Globe-Times* (October 25, 1927): 7, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/29467037>.

37. "Pianist-Dancer to Wed Bridge Player She Beat," 7.

give up the stage.³⁸ Given the times and the classism of the British aristocracy, one can contend that this was more of a societal expectation than a choice for Edythe Baker. Nevertheless, various primary sources, including newspaper and magazine articles, paint a picture of a woman thriving in her new setting. From flying in an airplane with her fiancé, to spending her honeymoon on the Riviera and then hosting lavish parties as an aristocrat, in the public eye it appeared that Baker's matrimonial triumph had given her everything she wanted (see figures 7.3 and 7.4).

Furthermore, although Baker had abandoned the limelight of the theatre, she had not stopped playing for various high-society functions and recording music. For instance, in late 1931 she was back in the studio, having obtained a contract with Decca Records. Virtuoso arrangements of hits such as Harold Arlen's "Music, Music, Everywhere (But Not a Song in my Heart)" and Ann Ronnell's "Willow Weep for Me" are some of the highlights. The music on these rare Decca 78 rpm phonograph discs, while written in the European piano novelty style of the 1930s, did not, in form or function, evoke the Tin Pan Alley blues of her earlier works, as the genre was no longer in fashion. As always, Edythe Baker was more than familiar with the popular music scene of the time, and while her vaudeville days were over, being a pianist continued to be part of her overall identity.

Her identity was about to be shaken, however, as her marriage to d'Erlanger quickly fell apart. Having had to elope with the young man due to his family's disapproval of her status as both an American and an actress, it was rumoured in the news that d'Erlanger was disinherited.

38. "Pianist-Dancer to Wed Bridge Player She Beat," 7; and "Actress Abandons Stage to Marry," *The Bristol Herald Courier* (September 25, 1927): 1, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/584864327>.



Figure 7.3. *Social and Aerial Heights*. Photograph of Edythe Baker, Gerald d'Erlanger and Lieutenant Colonel G.P.P Henderson. "The Gerald d'Erlangers Ready to Start by Airplane for their Honeymoon on the Riviera, after the Beautiful Bride's Long Struggle for Social Recognition had Ended in Triumph" (*Springfield Daily News*, February 12, 1928: 27, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/671746719>)



Figure 7.4. *From Footlights to Title*. Photograph of Edythe Baker and Gerald d'Erlanger (*Chicago Tribune*, January 29, 1928: 135, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/355140777>)

By 1934 the couple had separated and were officially divorced by June 1937.³⁹ While it was often speculated that his supposed disinheritance may have led to some friction in the marriage, the divorce decree cited d'Erlanger's unfaithfulness to his wife as the reason for the dissolution of the marriage.⁴⁰ Edythe Baker is later quoted as saying that they "didn't get along" and that there was "no ill feeling" between them.⁴¹ Much speculation in the press continued as to whether she would return to the stage now that she was no longer tethered to d'Erlanger. But, as stated earlier, this did not occur, as it was supposed that Baker, akin to many American expatriates, preferred "Piccadilly [a fashionable area in London's West End] to Pershing Square [the intersection of Park Avenue and 42nd Street, in front of Grand Central Terminal]."⁴²

While it can also be surmised that she may have been absent from Broadway far too long to re-start her career, in any case, it appeared that Baker had other plans. During her separation from d'Erlanger, she was often seen in the company of Prince George (the Duke of Kent), as part of his "American set," which also included Mrs. William Allen (British model Paula Gellibrand). Baker was one of the Duke's favourite "dancing and talking and sitting-out partners," and that her "social graces and...skills as a pianist, monologist, and singer...made her the toast of scores

39. "Divorce for Edythe Baker," *Daily News* (Tuesday, June 15, 1937): 7.

40. "High Court of Justice," *Times* (December 8, 1936): 4, accessed June 7, 2023, link-gale-com.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/apps/doc/C567841928/TTDA?u=yorku_main&sid=bookmark-TTDA@xid=Aa911889; and "Edythe Baker Asks Decree," *The Kansas City Times* (June 14, 1937): 1, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/656975343>.

41. "Kent's Two Women Pals Excite London," *Daily News* (January 7, 1937): 190, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/420805955>.

42. "Another Dark Young Lady," *Detroit Free Press* (September 11, 1932): 26, accessed February 13, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/97995932>.

of Mayfair drawing rooms [the exclusive London Mayfair clubs].”⁴³ Moreover, it was often reported that the Duke of Kent and Baker shared “one great taste in common – an expertness at the piano.”⁴⁴

Undeniably, the Duke played the piano well, was fascinated by the arts and theatre, spoke multiple languages, and was, by all accounts, a stylish “playboy,” having several romantic affairs before and during his marriage to Princess Marina of Greece and Denmark. According to the press, before his engagement to the Princess, Edythe Baker was considered an object of the Duke’s affections, even more than Mrs. Allen, although she always declined to comment on the gossip, stating that “the prince is a friend of mine...but I don’t see any point in mentioning it.”⁴⁵ Nevertheless, after his marriage, he purportedly no longer was in the company of the socialite-pianist, as reports of their engagements ceased in the newspapers. It was rumoured that his mother, Queen Mary of Teck, put an end to the relationship.

Following a trip to Trinidad in 1938 with some of her companions (a brief notice in the American newspapers) – after Edythe Baker and the Duke parted ways – almost all mentions of Baker disappeared from the press. She remained in England throughout World War II and, according to an interview (conducted in her home in 1956), she was bombed out several times, with her house once taking a direct hit. After the war, she returned to the United States, where she briefly lived in New York. However, Baker had discovered that since she was retired from the theatre, the city had now lost its appeal. She subsequently moved to the small seacoast town

43. “High-Halted Herself Right into the Nobility,” 34.

44. “London Agog Again: Now It’s Duke of Kent,” *Chicago Tribune* (January 7, 1937): 1, accessed February 13, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/355146786>; and “Kent’s Two Women Pals Excite London,” 190.

45. “Edythe Baker to Visit Here,” 4.

of Laguna, California, where she explained to her interviewer, while pointing to the various photos of her glamorous youth, that “all this...is pretty well in the past.”⁴⁶ Indeed, around this period, Edythe Baker had listed herself as retired, and twenty-four years after the formal dissolution of her first marriage, had decided to try again, marrying Maine native Girard S. Brewer on December 2, 1961, in Orange, California. It was at this location that she lived her final years, passing away on August 15, 1971, right before her seventy-second birthday. She was survived by her husband, who died in October of 1978.

Edythe Baker made a significant impact on the popular music scene during the early twentieth century. Unfortunately, due to a variety of circumstances outlined above, the effect of this was brief, as her professional career was short-lived. One may wonder why she did not return to the stage and/or the recording studio following her divorce and American homecoming. In an interview from 1956, Baker had stated that she liked living a “pleasant quiet life,” and that after she retired, “New York had lost its appeal.”⁴⁷ But these words were meant for an audience, and while she had implied that it was due to personal reasons, one may speculate that the demise of the player piano industry, the changing trajectory in popular music, and her marriage to d’Erlanger set Baker on a life path that was divergent to that of a long-term career in music. As she is no longer alive, the real reasons may never be known.

46. Henry W. Clune, “Seen and Heard,” *Democrat and Chronicle* (July 22, 1956): 35, accessed February 13, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/135578148>.

47. Clune, 35.

Pauline Alpert (1905-1988)

Pauline Edeth Alpert Roofff (December 27, 1905 – April 11, 1988) was born in The Bronx, New York City to Samuel A. Alpert and Anna Rosk. The former was a portrait painter and the latter an opera singer and pianist. Due to the nature of her father's employment, Pauline Alpert's early childhood was marked by poverty and rootlessness. Samuel Alpert had difficulty finding work and often had to relocate the family; they lived any place where he "could get an order to do a portrait."⁴⁸ After "wandering from one place to another," however, the family "finally settled down in Rochester."⁴⁹

Regardless of this new established permanence in location, the family's continued financial situation was dire. With the birth of her sister Ethel in 1915 – a new mouth to feed – Pauline Alpert decided to start working, teaching piano in 1916 (twenty-five cents a lesson) when she was eleven years old. Alpert's mother began her piano instruction when she was seven years old and, because of her diligence and talent, the girl progressed quickly and was therefore able to rely on her skills to help support the family from a young age. Whether Alpert initially learned the piano as a means of necessity, distraction, interest, or all the above, she was a natural, focusing mostly on classical music but also, to a lesser extent, learning popular music as well. In a later interview with performer and historian Peter Mintun, she confessed that her first popular tune was Irving Berlin's *All Alone* and, at the age of eleven, she was creating arrangements of this song and some other pieces. In her words, she would add "the little frills and things," as she

48. Jane Alexander, "Kitten on the Keys," *Popular Songs* (June 1936): n.p., Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association, accessed November 27, 2016, https://www.amica.org/files/Pauline_Alpert.pdf.

49. Alexander, n.p.

always “had that knack.”⁵⁰

While the seeds of Pauline Alpert’s performance style were planted in her early childhood music experiences, it was not until her university years that she began to develop her particular manner of playing the piano regarding popular music selections. Undeniably, her initial goal was to become a classical concert pianist – to earn a living and give financial assistance to her mother and younger sister. Samuel Alpert had died in 1919, possibly a victim of the Spanish flu pandemic, and Anna Alpert and her two children had to cope with the loss of an immediate family member and primary caregiver. During these difficult years, Pauline Alpert managed to not only finish high school (East High School in Rochester) but to also win a four-year scholarship to the prestigious Eastman School of Music (now part of the University of Rochester). She dedicated her time to studying classical music – her teachers included Alf Klingenberg, Selim Palmgren and Arthur See – but during her lunch hours (and probably the evenings as well) she would entertain her friends on the piano with her own arrangements of the popular music hits of the day (these included tunes by George Gershwin, Zez Confrey, and Felix Arndt⁵¹).

It was these sessions that, in part, encouraged Alpert to pursue a vocation as a popular music pianist. In addition, she was also desperate to make money and as reported by various journalists of the time (newspaper review articles), she saw that there was a demand for popular music and had decided that, due to her family’s precarious situation, she could not endeavour

50. Peter Mintun, “Perforated Profiles – Pauline Alpert,” *The AMICA* 13, no. 7: 166, accessed November 27, 2016, <https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:cr015dr5770/13-07.pdf>.

51. “Nola” was the first popular song that Alpert performed in public. See Alexander, “Kitten on the Keys,” n.p.

to seek out a more difficult and perhaps financially unrewarding venture into classical music.⁵²

Hence, even before she had finished her studies, the promising musician had charted a course in her new career path. She entered the Eastman School Amateur Piano Contest at the Rochester Temple Theater (in collaboration with Anne Drucker, a young, female violinist) playing her own arrangements of popular tunes.⁵³ According to Alpert, she was “making them in jazz.”⁵⁴ Although this could be the case, it is more likely that she was developing her own unique voice in the field of piano novelty music, and that these arrangements were early piano novelty style renditions in her repertoire list. Be that as it may, they won the contest, and thus got some public attention.⁵⁵

Furthermore, during the competition, Alpert and the violinist met a dance team called “Hackett and Delmar,” who encouraged the young women to go to New York City in pursuit of their dreams. They did, and apparently it “was a very bad season,” as they only “secured three or four days work” out of many months.⁵⁶ One of these gigs was at the Haven Theater, where Alpert received some recognition as a “speed artist on the piano.”⁵⁷ But another more infamous

52. For example, see James Muir, “Scenario Writers Insistent,” *Dayton Daily News* (July 13, 1927): 12, accessed February 17, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/397424042>; and “Rochesterian to Broadcast from New York,” n.d., SC 1995.8, scrapbook 1, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester.

53. “Tunes and Steps,” *Times Herald* (September 26, 1924): 15, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/35552243>.

54. Alexander, “Kitten on the Keys,” n.p.

55. See “Girl on Temple Bill is Promising Pianist,” *Democrat and Chronicle* (January 30, 1923): 16, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/135638628>.

56. Alexander, “Kitten on the Keys,” n.p.

57. “Tunes and Steps,” 15.

engagement was at a theatre called Glen Falls, located in a hotel that burned to the ground.

Alpert and Drucker lost everything they had brought with them, including the violin, but escaped the fire with no injuries.⁵⁸ Forced to return home to Rochester, Pauline Alpert, for a short period of time, gained employment “as a secretary in the Ryan Vanilla concern.”⁵⁹ It was not to her liking, as she couldn’t get the smell of vanilla out of her clothes, and she decided to return to New York City and try once more to gain a footing in the music entertainment industry.

In March 1926, she was part of a production entitled *Knick-Knacks of 1926*: a “miniature production of dance cameos” presented by producer Harry Krivit.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, besides a few notices for her programs broadcasted on WMSG in late May 1926, there are not many print media reviews written for most of this year concerning Pauline Alpert’s career. However, this talented artist did mention in a later article from 1927 that she started out as “an average trouper” doing “one-nighters” in numerous towns across the United States and Canada.⁶¹ She was part of a tour group called “The Frivolous Fancies” that, according to Alpert, “played twenty-four one night stands in succession.”⁶² She professed that she enjoyed the experience and that, as a young woman beginning her career, she found it to be an “adventure, and a lot of fun.”⁶³

58. Jo Ranson, “Radio Dial Log,” *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (February 24, 1936): 18, accessed February 17, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/685962407>.

59. Alexander, “Kitten on the Keys, n.p.

60. “Knick Knacks of 1926,” *The Morning Herald* (March 19, 1926): 12, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/63589627>.

61. “Dramatic,” *Deseret News* (July 30, 1927): 18, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/594551704>.

62. “Dramatic,” 18.

63. “Dramatic,” 18.

By 1927, Alpert was busy with multiple engagements on Broadway. These included the following: providing musical numbers in *Le Maire's Affairs* (a revue in two acts) at the Majestic Theater and performing frequently as a guest pianist with the group, *The Roxy Jazzmanians* (and the only woman in the ensemble), at the Roxy Theater (see figure 7.5). She received rave reviews from the critics, which included reports that characterized her as “the girl who sizzles the ivories till they turn red-hot,”⁶⁴ and – less descriptive but more accurately – a pianist “with excellent technique and understanding.”⁶⁵

Most notably, for her career trajectory, were her performances as “The Flying Pianist.” Discovered by a Publix unit show producer, Pauline Alpert was incorporated into Murray Anderson’s *Shadowland* – her solo act entitled “The Phantom Piano.” Suspended from a stout belt and harnessed by an array of wires and ropes, Alpert and her piano – both covered in phosphorescent paint – hovered above the stage on a platform, encircling the dancers below. She brilliantly performed this act at multiple Publix theatres across the country, including the Paramount on Broadway, and the Worth in Texas (Fort Worth). But it was a rehearsal performance at the Riviera Theatre in North Tonawanda, New York, that became the most memorable. By way of explanation, while playing the piano, a pulley snapped, and Pauline reportedly fell off the platform, although she avoided serious injury (see figure 7.6).⁶⁶ The young

64. “Homage Club,” n.d., SC 1995.8, scrapbook 2, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester.

65. Roy Chartier, “Reviews of Programs,” *Billboard* (June 18, 1927): n.p., SC 1995.8, scrapbook 1, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester.

66. “Narrow Escape,” *Variety* (October 26, 1927): n.p., SC 1995.8, scrapbook 1, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester; and Bill Edwards, “Pauline Edeth Alpert Roof,” *ragpiano.com*, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://ragpiano.com/comps/palpert.shtml>.



Figure 7.5. *Jazz Pianist to be Featured by Roxy*, n.d. Photograph of Pauline Alpert. SC 1995.8, scrapbook 1 (*Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester)

pianist wrote one of her first compositions, “Perils of Pauline,” to commemorate the experience.

While Alpert was performing at multiple venues, she was also composing and promoting her material by various means, including making phonograph records. For example, she signed a lucrative contract with The Victor Recording Company, and in December 1926, and January, June, and November of 1927, Alpert recorded 10 songs, including “Perils of Pauline,” written in the piano novelty style, and another composition, “Night of Romance,” a waltz tune.

Additionally, these two compositions were both published by the Mills Music Company in 1927.

However, a large part of her repertoire during this time was arrangements of popular tunes, and much was distributed by means of another medium. In late 1926, Alpert obtained employment cutting piano rolls for Aeolian. As stated by the pianist in a 1936 interview, she “had no contact with the Duo-Art people” and walked into the Aeolian building in New York City – Fifth Avenue and 54th Street – presenting herself to Frank Milne (head of the Popular Music Artist and Repertoire Department).⁶⁷ She “sat down and played for him,” and in her own words, “he was flabbergasted!”⁶⁸ In fact, Milne’s son corroborates this statement, as he remembers his dad saying, “that of all the pianists, he never saw a pianist play as well as... Pauline Alpert.”⁶⁹ Undeniably, Alpert’s virtuosity was on full display, and she was summarily hired.

A listing of her first roll appeared in the June 26, 1926, *Music Trade Review*: an arrangement of “What’s Good in Good Morning? (There’s More Good in Good Night!)” by Henry W. Santly, with lyrics by Sam M. Lewis and Joe Young.⁷⁰ By 1927, the listings became more frequent, with roll arrangements such as “Sweet Marie” (music by Abe Frankl and lyrics by Bill Rose) and “I’m Learning Now” by Jack Little (lyricist, Ted Meyn) being sold both on the

67. Alexander, “Kitten on the Keys,” n.p. As director, Frank Milne recruited pianists for Aeolian, chose the repertoire, and managed the process of transferring performances captured on raw stencils to a master roll. For more information, see the interview conducted by Artis Wodehouse, “Alexander Farquar Milne (1913-2013): Recalling the Work of Frank Milne, Piano Roll Arranger,” academia.edu, July 1990, accessed March 2, 2020, https://www.academia.edu/39939536/Recalling_the_work_of_Frank_Milne_1887_1959_Piano_Roll_Arranger.

68. Alexander, “Kitten on the Keys,” n.p.

69. Wodehouse, “Alexander Farquar Milne,” 9.

70. “New Music Roll Issues for July,” *Music Trade Review* (June 26, 1926): 25, accessed November 14, 2016, <https://mtr.arcade-museum.com/MTR-1926-82-26/>



Figure 7.6. *Riviera – Pauline Alpert*. Photograph of Pauline Alpert (*Sun World Herald*, January 22, 1928: n.p., SC 1995.8, scrapbook 1, *Pauline Alpert Collection* from Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester)

Melodee label and Duo-Art.

Alpert continued to steadily turn out numerous rolls during the late 1920s and was promoted frequently – her photo often included – in Melodee and Duo-Art advertisements. It is estimated that she cut more than 200 rolls. Sadly, many of these musical artifacts have been lost to time, and although there are some sources that indicate that she did compose more songs in the 1920s than the two published by Mills, the piano rolls now available consist only of popular song arrangements (her two known compositions in the Twenties were recorded on phonograph records). If more compositions had been recorded on either medium, they have not yet been

discovered on the piano rolls made available by piano roll enthusiasts and archivists (or on phonograph records). For example, in a 1929 article, the writer states that “Miss Alpert is a composer and has had several of her compositions played by big orchestras in theaters in which she has appeared.”⁷¹ Furthermore, in 1927, another article explains that Pauline Alpert was in the process of publishing a song called “Pals of Pauline.”⁷²

The bulk of Alpert’s compositional material, however, was published in the 1930s, including her signature piece, “Dream of a Doll” (1934), which “inspired a ballet at the Radio City music hall in 1936.”⁷³ She played this piece many times on the radio and in several live performances at numerous venues across the country. Undeniably, as outlined in a print article by Galen Wilkes, she recalls that her career “really didn’t get going until the late 30s, around 1938.”⁷⁴ Nevertheless, it was in the late 1920s that Alpert, in many ways, finalized or worked out her compositional and arrangement style – cutting piano rolls was a large part of this process – and made many notable choices in her career that allowed her to gain national recognition. For example, her *Shadowland* act gave her a stage name and forever cemented her virtuosity as linked with boldness and daredevilry.

Shadowland also brought her to the attention of the Fachon & Marco theatrical booking

71. “Makes Piano Keys Talk,” *San Jose Mercury Herald* (Sept. 12, 1929): n.p., SC 1995.8, scrapbook 1, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester.

72. “Rochester Girl on Vitaphone Program” (April 13, 1927): n.p., SC 1995.8, scrapbook 1, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester. Another explanation could be that this song was an earlier unused title for “Perils of Pauline.”

73. “Fred Allen’s Town Hall Program,” *The Spokesman-Review* (March 24, 1937): 5, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/568946296>.

74. Galen Wilkes, “The Whirlwind Pianist,” *The Rag Times* (May 1988): n.p., accessed November 27, 2016, https://www.amica.org/files/Pauline_Alpert.pdf.

company. She was contracted for a two-year tour, where she was introduced to West Coast audiences, traveling as far as San Francisco and San Jose, then Los Angeles and San Diego. It was during her engagements with the aforementioned company that Alpert met fellow star Roy Rogers (not Leonard Slye, whose stage name was also Roy Rogers). Her stage collaborator in various theatrical releases, including the *Jazz Cinderella Idea* (1929), Rogers was the acrobatic vaudevillian, while Alpert both engaged him in comedic dialogue and presented pianistic feats of wizardry (see figure 7.7). Their close teamwork engendered numerous rumours in the media that their relationship was more than platonic: “Pauline Alpert, Victor recording pianist, is engaged to marry Roy Rogers....”⁷⁵ In mid-April 1929, several articles propagated the idea that a marriage was imminent, with one going so far as to predict that “Scar Face Al Capone” may serve as the “sergeant of arms.”⁷⁶ Whether there was any truth behind the announcement of their impending nuptials, or if it was a mere fabrication – perhaps a publicity ploy – in fact, Alpert remained unmarried (during the 1920s and 1930s), with no other mention of marriage for another eleven years (according to the substantial documentation I gathered). Besides this brief stint of sensationalist material, the subject matter relating to the many articles written about this pianist in the late 1920s concerned her career as a musician.

One of Alpert’s many accomplishments in this chosen path, as reported by the media, was her participation in the Vitaphone films. Warner Brothers was searching for performers in various vaudeville theatres to participate in their Vitaphone project. Discovering Pauline Alpert,

75. “Alpert-Rogers Marriage,” *Variety* (April 10, 1929): n.p., SC 1995.8, scrapbook 1, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester.

76. “No Title,” April 13, 1929, SC 1995.8, scrapbook 1, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester.



Figure 7.7. “They Prove his Point.” Photograph (*Daily Mirror*, February 13, 1930: n.p., SC 1995.8, scrapbook 1, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester)

they engaged her to make two Vitaphone shorts in the 1920s, *What Price Piano* (417), and *Pauline Alpert* (418) in 1926 and 1927, respectively.⁷⁷ She received much recognition in the press for this work, as the films were shown across the country well into 1929, further allowing many more people to familiarize themselves with her name.

The act for the former Vitaphone short consisted of a medley of popular selections, which included the following songs: “Sunday” (Chester Conn, lyrics by Jule Styne, Bennie Krueger, and Ned Miller); “Barcelona” (Tolchard Evans & Gus Kahn); “Because I Love You” (Irving Berlin); “Tonight You Belong to Me” (Lee David & Billy Rose); “What Good is Good Morning? You Gotta Know How to Love” (Harry Warren & Bud Green); and “Save Your Sorrow” (Al Sherman & B.G. De Sylva).⁷⁸ The latter Vitaphone project was also comprised of a medley of

77. “Paderewski Recording,” *Variety* (February 22, 1926): n.p., SC 1995.8, scrapbook 1, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester.

78. “Columbia Program,” *The Paducah Sun-Democrat* (April 27, 1927): 7, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/503440848>.

popular hits. These included “That’s Why I Love You” (Walter Donaldson & Paul Ash); “Hello Bluebird” (Cliff Friend); “At Peace with the World” (Berlin); “In a Spanish Town” (Mabel Wayne, lyrics by Lewis & Young); “Breezin’ Along” (Haven Gillespie, Seymour Simons & Richard A. Whiting); “Nola” (Felix Arndt); and “Kitten on the Keys” (Zez Confrey).⁷⁹

The last piece was, according to Alpert, one of her favourite go-to pieces, and she received an abundance of praise from the composer, Zez Confrey (1895-1971) concerning her interpretation. Unbeknownst to her, he had heard her play the piano novelty at one of her engagements and subsequently wrote her a letter, letting her know how much he enjoyed the performance.⁸⁰

Pauline Alpert was also heralded as an exemplary pianist by many other musicians during this period, including the famous classical pianist, Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860-1941). When Alpert was nineteen years old and was recording various pieces for Victor Records, Paderewski was listening in the background. He did not let her see him. When she was finished, he “warmly congratulated her” and kissed her forehead “as an indication of his esteem.”⁸¹ It was during this time that some in the media started referring to Alpert as the “female Paderewski,”⁸² or the “female George Gershwin.”⁸³

Veritably, her pyrotechnics on the piano often resulted in comparisons with her male

79. “Warring’s Pennsylvanians,” *News-Democrat* (June 5, 1927): 20, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/501549656>.

80. Wilkes, “The Whirlwind Pianist,” n.p.

81. “Rochesterian to Broadcast from New York,” n.p.

82. “Syncopated Revels Heads Fox Program,” *Courier-Post* (April 28, 1928): 13, accessed February 14, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/480126049>.

83. “Paderewski Recording,” n.p.

counterparts, as critics were often in awe of a woman, particularly one that stood less than 5'3" tall, that could perform as well as, and in many instances, better than some of the most powerful male pianists of the time. It was thus during the late 1920s that Alpert proved her worth and by the 1930s was flourishing in her chosen field. At the beginning of this decade, she was participating in her second national tour for Fachon & Marco, was still cutting piano rolls and recording phonograph records, and had gained a foothold in the radio industry.

During the Great Depression, steady musician jobs were difficult to find, as previously lucrative gigs were drying up. Alpert only recorded two songs for Victor Records in 1932: "St. Louis Blues" (W.C. Handy); and "Song of India" (Rimsky-Korsakov). Although she continued to cut rolls for Duo-Art in the early 1930s, her output was sparse, as the piano roll business suffered during the Depression trying to compete with the radio (Aeolian moved to Rochester in 1932, as they could no longer afford maintaining their current setup at their prestigious New York City address). Hence, the business savvy Pauline Alpert continued to maintain a good professional relationship with the management of the early CBS flagship radio stations, which included WOR-710 in New York City.

As mentioned earlier, Alpert's diverse portfolio in the late 1920s did consist of various gigs at radio stations in New York City. These not only included WMSG, but also WMAC, WMAQ, WYZ, WGHP, and WPHG. Her Roxy Jazzmanian performances were often broadcasted live as well as collaborations with numerous artists such as her familiar theatre partner, vaudevillian Roy Rogers; baritone Oscar Taylor; and Australian soprano Stella Power (see figure 7.8). So it was with the radio, during the 1930s, that Pauline Alpert found steady, full-time work – almost daily radio appearances – sustaining a profitable career throughout a most tenuous decade. For example, her WOR programs became weekly shows – fifteen to twenty



Figure 7.8. “Stage Stars at WMAQ Tonight.” Photograph (*Chicago Daily News*, December 24, 1927: n.p. From Left to Right: Roy Rogers, Pauline Alpert and Stella Power, SC 1995.8, scrapbook 1, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester)

minutes in length – on Mondays at 5pm, Tuesdays at 7:45pm and Fridays at 10pm.⁸⁴ And as the oldest CBS broadcaster, WOR-710 became part of MBS (Mutual Broadcasting System, an American commercial radio network) in 1934, Alpert continued working with them during the changeover. She also appeared as a guest artist for other radio shows on different stations, such as those on NBC. This included *The Fleishman Hour* with Rudy Vallée, and Fred Allen’s *Town*

84. “No Title,” *Evening Star* (February 25, 1933): n.p., SC 1995.8, scrapbook 2, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester.

Hall program.

Although Alpert's radio appearances did occasionally consist of accompanying acts – singers, instrumentalists, and small orchestras – most of her radio work in the 1930s consisted of solo performances. Critics were increasingly enamoured with her playing, as is evident by the abundance of reviews that significantly outnumbered those written in the late 1920s. She was, according to many writers, “The Whirlwind Pianist,” a title that was bestowed upon her by the print media of the 1930s.⁸⁵ While this was the most frequent descriptor utilized to describe her performance style, others include “the world's greatest symphonic jazz pianist,”⁸⁶ the “favorite jazz keyboard pounder,”⁸⁷ “Houdini of the air,”⁸⁸ and “the queen of the keyboards.”⁸⁹

Moreover, critic Abe Greenberg called her a “genius,”⁹⁰ while singer Rudy Vallée stated that she was “the greatest living woman pianist.”⁹¹ Although the former title was bestowed to other

85. See “Listening In with Ben Gross,” *Daily News* (July 1, 1934): n.p., SC 1995.8, scrapbook 2, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester; “The Piano Interludes Supplied by Pauline Alpert,” *Daily News* (November 29, 1938): 44, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/421972232>; and “Record Radio Programs,” *Meriden Record* (December 29, 1932): 5, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/676360276>.

86. “Radio Today,” SC 1995.8, scrapbook 2, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester.

87. “Listening In with Ben Gross,” *Daily News* (November 15, 1935): n.p., SC 1995.8, scrapbook 2, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester.

88. “Fred Allen's Town Hall Program,” 5.

89. “Listening In with Ben Gross,” SC 1995.8, scrapbook 2, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester.

90. “Listening In with Abe Greenberg,” SC 1995.8, scrapbook 2, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester.

91. Quoted in Edwards, “Pauline Edeth Alpert Roofff.”

female pianists by many different musicians and critics, it illustrates the fact that Alpert was respected by her peers. Her talent and workmanship were made obvious to them through her performances.

It was during this time that Alpert increasingly performed her compositions. Indeed, she was much more confident in her work, as she preferred “to play her own music like ‘Perils of Pauline’ ...and her theme song, ‘Dream of a Doll.’”⁹² From 1934 to 1938, the Mills Music Company published the latter selection, and seven other compositions: “Piano Poker” (1935); “March of the Blues” (1935); “The Merry Minnow” (1937); “Ivory Tips” (1937); “A Million Stars Just Can’t Be Wrong” (1937); “Mindin’ the Baby” (1938); and “A Happy New Year to Love” (1938). Furthermore, reviews of Alpert’s musical endeavours during this decade often included listings of her original works. By now, her compositions and arrangements were more so characterized as “popular songs,” “novelty piano numbers,” and/or “piano novelties” as opposed to jazz pieces.⁹³

The breadth of Pauline Alpert’s musical feats of ingenuity was, by this time, fully recognized by the media. Her accomplishments as a pianist were acknowledged and celebrated (her medley arrangements continued to delight audiences), and she was identified as a composer – her piano novelties accepted as “being on par with the selections of the great Zez Confrey.”⁹⁴ Concerning the former, Alpert consistently performed on Broadway between or after her radio broadcasts. In 1930, for an unspecified period of time, she would broadcast over WOR on

92. Ranson, “Radio Dial Log,” 18.

93. See Justin Gilbert, “Scene on Broadway,” *The Record* (September 17, 1937): 5, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/489718069>; and “No Title,” *The Evening Star*, n.p.

94. Gilbert, “Scene on Broadway,” 46.

Thursdays and then travel to the Paramount Theater to provide live entertainment to enthusiastic patrons as well as play at benefit concerts, dinner clubs, and prestigious events. For example, on two separate occasions Alpert performed for President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the White House. On the local level, she participated in a *Spring Music Festival* at the Union Temple (Temple Auditorium),⁹⁵ while in two other official programs, she is listed as performing for the Naparock Christy Club as accompanist to her sister Ethel, a violinist,⁹⁶ and playing a solo act at the Bleddyn Hebrew Home (see figure 7.9).

Alpert was consistently busy with a variety of projects throughout the 1930s. Some were small, such as her forementioned appearance with her sister, a non-professional but still aptly talented musician, and some, like her performances at the White House, continued to promote her status as a renowned pianist nationwide. Another such opportunity on a grander scale was her final appearance, in 1935, in another Vitaphone feature entitled the *Katz' Pajamas*. Directed by Joseph Henabery, with David Mendoza as the music director, and the screenplay written by A. Dorian Otvos, this movie was a musical romantic comedy made by Warner Brothers (Vitaphone Varieties, "Miniature Masterpieces of the Talking Singing Screen") and filmed in Brooklyn. The cast included the following: Duffin & Draper; The Meadowbrook Boys; George Tapps, Frank Kindon; Maurice Hill; actress and singer Fifi D'Orsay (she carried the lead role as a New York City nightclub singer); and Alpert's character, "Pauline the Pianist."

Pauline Alpert's interest in the "talking pictures" extended beyond her participation in the

95. "To Entertain," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (May 8, 1935): 7, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/686046742>.

96. "Naparock Christy Club," Summer 1934, SC 1995.8, scrapbook 2, *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester.



Figure 7.9. *Hom-age*. Photograph of Pauline Alpert (*Bleddyn Hebrew Home Program*, September 12, 1934: n.p., *Pauline Alpert Collection*, Ruth T. Watanabe Special Collections, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester)

Vitaphone project. In the 1940s, she briefly explored a new medium – television. On April 24, 1940, she appeared on the NBC experimental station W2XBS in New York. She possibly made a few more appearances. Nevertheless, it was the radio that Alpert continued to utilize both as a source of continuous employment and as a means of promotion throughout most of this decade. Her performances for WOR generally remained uninterrupted throughout the tumultuous years of WWII (although the broadcast during the war years was most likely confined to New York City). Her radio work included a half-hour show she split with harmonica virtuoso Larry Adler and guest appearances with the Paul Whiteman Orchestra. Nevertheless, notifications and

reviews of her programs in the press were less frequent during this time, and by early 1947, her regular radio shows had ended (although she continued to work occasionally with the medium until the early 1950s).

Pauline Alpert, during the pre-war and WWII years, continued to make numerous phonograph recordings. This included tracks for Muzak (from 1943-1945). She cut a few 16-inch records for the company mostly under the pseudonym of Peggy Anderson (using the same initials as her real name). The music was utilized for a variety of background settings, including hotel lobbies and elevators. Alpert, in a 1988 interview, stated that she would occasionally hear herself playing when she went into a lobby and that it was “nice to know” that she “was still around.”⁹⁷ Alpert also recorded for Sonora (based in Chicago) in 1944, cutting eight sides for the label. These included her composition “Dream of a Doll” (although this piece had been performed numerous times on the radio in the 1930s, there was no recording made until this time), and a variety of favourites, such as Irving Berlin’s “You, The Piccolino” (1935) and Raymond Scott’s “The Toy Trumpet” (1937). This provided a temporary sales boost to the company, which had experienced difficulty producing new music (this was in part due to a musicians’ recording strike and various other restrictions created by the war). Also, having a well-known pianist in their catalogue, among a few other artists, was a great asset concerning the push for sales during this time.

Alpert continued to make records in 1946, going back to her roots and recording a series of classical favourites for the Pilotone label, a small Long Island based company. Although it is uncertain as to how many sides were cut (she most likely recorded sixteen tracks), eight were

97. Wilkes, “The Whirlwind Pianist,” n.p.

initially released in 1946. The listings include the “Blue Danube” (1866) by Johann Strauss II and “The Minute Waltz,” op. 64, no. 1 (1847) by Frédéric Chopin. The tracks were reissued in 1955 by Enoch Light’s Waldorf Music Hall label (with one additional song). Moreover, they were also reissued by Sparton Records (a Canadian label) around the same time, together with eight extra tracks. These include Chopin’s Prelude in A major, op. 28 no. 7 (1839) and the Sonata in C major, K. 159 (1753) by Domenico Scarlatti.

There is no evidence thus far that Alpert made any new recordings after her days with Pilotone. Hence, one can surmise that 1947 was the expiry date concerning her recording career, although her time as a professional musician continued throughout the late 1940s and into the early 1950s. She performed in local vaudeville and Broadway theatres as well as on a few ocean liner cruises⁹⁸ (a form of employment that Alpert had embraced back in the 1930s). Nevertheless, by 1951, Pauline Alpert had disappeared from the public eye, as she was, for the most part, no longer mentioned in the press.

By this time, the piano novelty style had fallen out of favour with audiences, as the player piano had become obsolete. The silent piano, while still important to some people as a speciality item, was no longer the dominant medium for music in the home. Hence, the piano novelty became the last *mainstream* popular music that was completely piano oriented. For a pianist who mastered this style, the piano novelty era was a time where they could, through the careful cultivation of contacts and talent, achieve national celebrity. However, while this era had come

98. On one of these aquatic trips, Pauline Alpert met (not the first occasion) Gershwin’s mother, who invited the pianist to her home on their return to Manhattan. George Gershwin had recently died due to a brain tumour, but was survived by most members of his family, including his brother, whom Alpert became acquainted with during her visit. He subsequently requested piano lessons, and she obliged him for a time. Edwards, “Pauline Edeth Alpert Roof.”

to an end, Pauline Alpert continued to gain recognition in the 1930s, performing piano novelty arrangements and compositions, when interest in the style, in America, had waned considerably. Thus, it is a testament to Alpert's resourcefulness and talent that her career had peaked in a time when most musicians could not find work. As a versatile artist, she was constantly evolving, searching out new mediums to promote her work and, as can be heard in her later recordings, returning to classical music, which, although not of interest to the general public, did have an audience.

After more than two decades of work in the professional arena, it appears that, by the 1950s, Pauline Alpert had settled into a more traditional lifestyle as a doctor's wife. She had already been married for over ten years to Dr. Sidney Barnet Roofff, whom she met during the war years (wedded August 9, 1940). Indeed, according to a 1936 interview by Jane Alexander, Alpert's hopes to fall "in love...with someone who loves music" were realized.⁹⁹ Dr. Roofff was a talented amateur musician, a violinist, who played in a doctor's orchestra that performed for various charity events and other occasions. The couple settled in West Bronx, New York (they had no children), in an apartment building at 1505 Grand Concourse. Although Alpert's celebrity career was over by the 1950s, ironically, in 1953, she was finally recognized by the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers (ASCAP), and admitted into the organization as a professional composer.

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was a renewed interest in Pauline Alpert's work by player piano scholars and archivists. Specifically, it was members from the Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors' Association (AMICA) that sought her out, interviewing her and

99. Alexander, "Kitten on the Keys," n.p.

discovering much about her years making rolls for Duo-Art. By this time, however, Pauline Alpert was a senior citizen, suffering from debilitating arthritis among other conditions, and when she listened to a quick tempo rendition of a roll of hers, and insisted that she played much faster, the AMICA interviewers assumed that she was confused, not remembering the details of her pianistic abilities. She quickly proved them wrong, performing the same piece at a much faster tempo, bringing to life the truth that the many advertisements of her day had stated: that she was truly a whirlwind pianist.

Alpert's last public performance was on October 1, 1978. She performed for the AMICA New Jersey Chapter. By this time, she was using crutches to walk, but nevertheless, performed a virtuosic medley of her various compositions and arrangements – including various pieces by Gershwin – stunning the audience with her pianistic feats. Signing autographs and answering over a hundred questions, Alpert, while no longer known among the general public, was back in the spotlight, as player piano enthusiasts marveled at her, both for her piano playing abilities and her detailed knowledge of the player piano industry. Alpert was clearly happy to be recognized once more in the last decade of her life. Unfortunately, her disabilities advanced during these years, and, by the mid-1980s, she was forced to move into assisted living at Hudson in Thiells, Rockland County, New York. She passed away at St. Barnabas Hospital in The Bronx in 1988, at the age of eighty-two.

Conclusion

Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert were two great pianists of the piano novelty era in early twentieth-century America. While the latter had a much longer career in the music industry than the former, both showcased brilliant inventiveness as arrangers, performers, and composers.

Coming from working-class backgrounds, these women learned to be versatile in the field, working in areas such as vaudeville, the piano roll industry, Broadway, and the radio.

Nevertheless, were it not for the contributions of a few dedicated scholars and roll collectors, their musical offerings would have been largely forgotten, as there is little written about them in mainstream history books. These biographical summaries and the performance analyses in the next chapter add to the limited literature on female piano roll artistry and shed some light concerning Baker's and Alpert's impact on the popular music scene during the early twentieth century.

Chapter 8: Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert – Gender, Performance, and the Recording Piano in the Duo-Art Piano Roll Studio

Introduction

In chapter 3, I positioned the player piano as a culture mediator, inferring that due to this special status, advertisers were able to utilize the instrument as an object of change and continuity. This was made evident in chapters 4 and 5 by means of a detailed content analysis of various player piano advertisements and other visual media. Of importance to this chapter, however, is my contention that the player piano's mediating capacity remained unchanged in another space and place – the piano roll recording studio. Making hand-played piano rolls during this time was connected to the Victorian work ethic as well to the consumer culture of the early twentieth century. Thus, an explanation of the culture mediator process in this situation, followed by a detailed examination of cutting piano rolls in the Duo-Art piano roll studio is presented in this chapter.

This research not only supports my hypothesis but, similar to chapter 7, also provides the background information required for the performance analyses of two pieces by Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert. This case study concludes the chapter and provides evidence that female piano roll artists, as actors in the recording piano's actor-network, took advantage of the instrument's mediator status, using it as an object of change and continuity to negotiate their musical pathways in the Duo-Art piano roll studio. At times, they transcended gender barriers, while also adhering to some of the gender norms of the time. In turn, their actions influenced the symbolic expression of the player piano, gradually allowing for the expansion of its object-code with regard to new ideas about gender.

Cutting Piano Rolls: An Overview

The earliest piano rolls (made during the first decade of the twentieth century) cannot be considered as recording mediums per se, as they were not hand-played. Instead, music arrangers would mark and punch out perforations on a master roll (an approximately thirty feet long and eleven and a quarter inch wide blank sheet of paper). The positioning of these “perfs” was based on the arranger’s knowledge concerning the number of inches of paper that would pass over the tracker bar for every measure of music. Specifically, within a given number of measures on the master, the arranger would divide the notes presented on the score into perforations of different lengths, cut these holes into the master (so they would coincide with the notes to be played), and generate a master roll of any composition.¹

Nevertheless, the arranger was not bound to the notes of the original sheet music, as it was frequently their own arrangement that they followed when cutting the perfs on the master roll. These were, in the earlier days of cutting piano rolls, often heavily arranged – orchestral arrangements that sometimes played more notes than humanly possible on the keyboard. These arrangements fell out of favour with the public during the 1910s, as listeners demanded more lifelike performances (additions were often still made by editors after this time, albeit in a manner that reflected a human performance). Therefore, many companies hastily attempted to perfect the technology to record live performances.

It was QRS, in 1912, that issued the first hand-played roll of Lee S. Roberts’ (1884-1949) composition, “Valse Parisienne.”² QRS founder Melville Clark had invented the first recording

1. Montgomery, Tichenor, and Hasse, “Ragtime on Piano Rolls,” 93.

2. Montgomery, Tichenor, and Hasse, 94.

piano from which this performance was captured on piano roll. An acoustic piano was fitted with eighty-nine carbon-tipped rods (one for each key and one for the sustaining pedal). Pencil marks were made by these markers (when the pianist played a key and used the pedal) on a moving drum of paper underneath the rods. Hence, a map of the performance was delineated on the roll indicating when keys and pedal were pressed and released. However, this was not the final product. It served merely as a rough draft, subject to considerable editing before final production. Editors corrected wrong notes and often added extra notes to the master. Furthermore, editors also quantized (made rhythmic corrections) the beats. This guaranteed that the distance between the beats of music was spatially equal on the roll, so that when played-back on a player piano, the music was synchronized to a metronome even if some note entries were staggered.³ The purpose of quantizing was to ensure a constant tempo, regardless of the inconsistencies of foot pedaling. Once the master score was sufficiently edited and quantized, perforations were made on the marked spots with special die punches. Machinery then mass produced many stencils from the master roll.

Hand-played rolls were also produced using the direct-punch method. Instead of having an editor cut the perforations manually, the special recording piano was additionally equipped with high-speed die punches which cut holes into the paper drum as it moved throughout the performance. Some of these master rolls were immediately playable, meaning they could be inserted into a player piano and played-back in the studio directly after the recording process. Alterations followed, such as editors taping over the perforations of wrong notes and then punching in the correct ones. Moreover, embellishments such as octave doublings and chromatic

3. Artis Wodehouse, "Tracing Gershwin's Piano Rolls," in *The Gershwin Style: New Looks at the Music of George Gershwin*, ed., Wayne Schneider (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 212.

runs were often added (to the popular music rolls) as well.

The most advanced hand-played rolls were reproducing piano rolls, made utilizing the pencil marked process or the direct-punch method. Akin to cutting rolls for a player piano, the pianist would sit and play a piece at a special recording piano, which would either mark or perforate the pitch and duration of the notes (as well as the duration of the damper and soft pedals) on a music roll. Nevertheless, what made reproducing rolls unique from other rolls was that they had additional control codes for dynamics. These were special perforations located on the edges of the music rolls. Recording the dynamics in the piano roll studio was different for each company. In some cases, the process is unknown or technically advanced, or contingent on the recording producer's notes. Hence, reproducing rolls from different companies were not interchangeable with different reproducing pianos. For example, a Welte-Mignon reproducing roll would not work, or work properly, in a Duo-Art reproducing piano.

Famous pianists including Claude Debussy (1862-1918) and Sergei Rachmaninoff (1873-1943) often embraced the reproducing piano as their choice recording medium over the phonograph in the early twentieth century (1905-1925). This was because early phonograph recording technology could not pick up the sound of the piano very well. Furthermore, pianists could not edit their performances; they were cut directly to the record with one mistake ruining the whole recording. On the other hand, the reproducing rolls allowed for detailed corrections/edits to be made concerning notation, dynamics, touch, and rhythm. For example, the timing of notes in a chord could be evened out, and the main melody could be highlighted for an intricate multi-voiced piece of music. Moreover, in some companies, well-known reproducing pianists were allowed to hear their performances played-back and make corrections before saleable copies were made from the master roll.

The Duo-Art Recording Process

By 1914, there was a Duo-Art piano roll studio situated in the Aeolian Building (which housed the famous Aeolian Hall) in New York (see figures 8.1 and 8.2) – 29-33 West 42nd Street and 34 West 43rd Street.⁴ Artists such as Teresa Carreño (1853-1917), Josef Hofmann (1876-1957), and Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860-1941) flocked to the prestigious location, invited to engage with one of the most sophisticated recording apparatuses available at the time. This was the Duo-Art reproducing system, which utilized a real-time perforator that turned out a roll as the artist performed on the recording piano. Patented by Edwin Votey, this machine was able to punch out around 3,600 perforation rows per minute, giving the first roll an accuracy of 1/60th of a second.⁵ Under each key of the piano were two electrical contacts (by the mid-1920s, half of these were removed to improve the piano action) which ran through a cable to another room that housed the perforating machine.⁶ Comparable to player piano recording technology, these notes were captured by this real-time perforation.

However, contrary to popular belief and Aeolian advertising, Duo-Art had not developed the technology for recording the pianist's note *velocities* – the dynamics as calculated by the speed of the hammer as it travels to the strings connected to each note. This expression was re-created by Duo-Art recording producers through various means. In the earliest days, dynamics were formed on the roll by a pianolist (the recording producer) pedaling a muted push-up

4. A second Duo-Art piano roll studio was set up near the end of 1919 in London, England.

5. The Pianola Institute, "The Reproducing Piano – Duo-Art," n.p., accessed March 18, 2016, http://www.pianola.org/reproducing/reproducing_duo-art.cfm.

6. The Pianola Institute, n.p. There were probably electric contacts also connected to the sustain and soft pedals (as mentioned earlier, with regard to the general process of capturing pedal action, the duration of the pedals was recorded either by markings or real-time perforation), although the source does not indicate any specific process of Duo-Art perforation concerning the motions of the pedal.



Figure 8.1. “AEOLIAN HALL, NEW YORK. Where many of the world’s greatest singers and instrumentalists appear. It is likely to become the music centre of America, for the music of the masters may be enjoyed by a greatly enlarged audience.” Photograph (*Radio Broadcast*, April 1923: 442, <https://worldradiohistory.com/Archive-Radio-Broadcast/Radio-Broadcast-1923-04.pdf>)

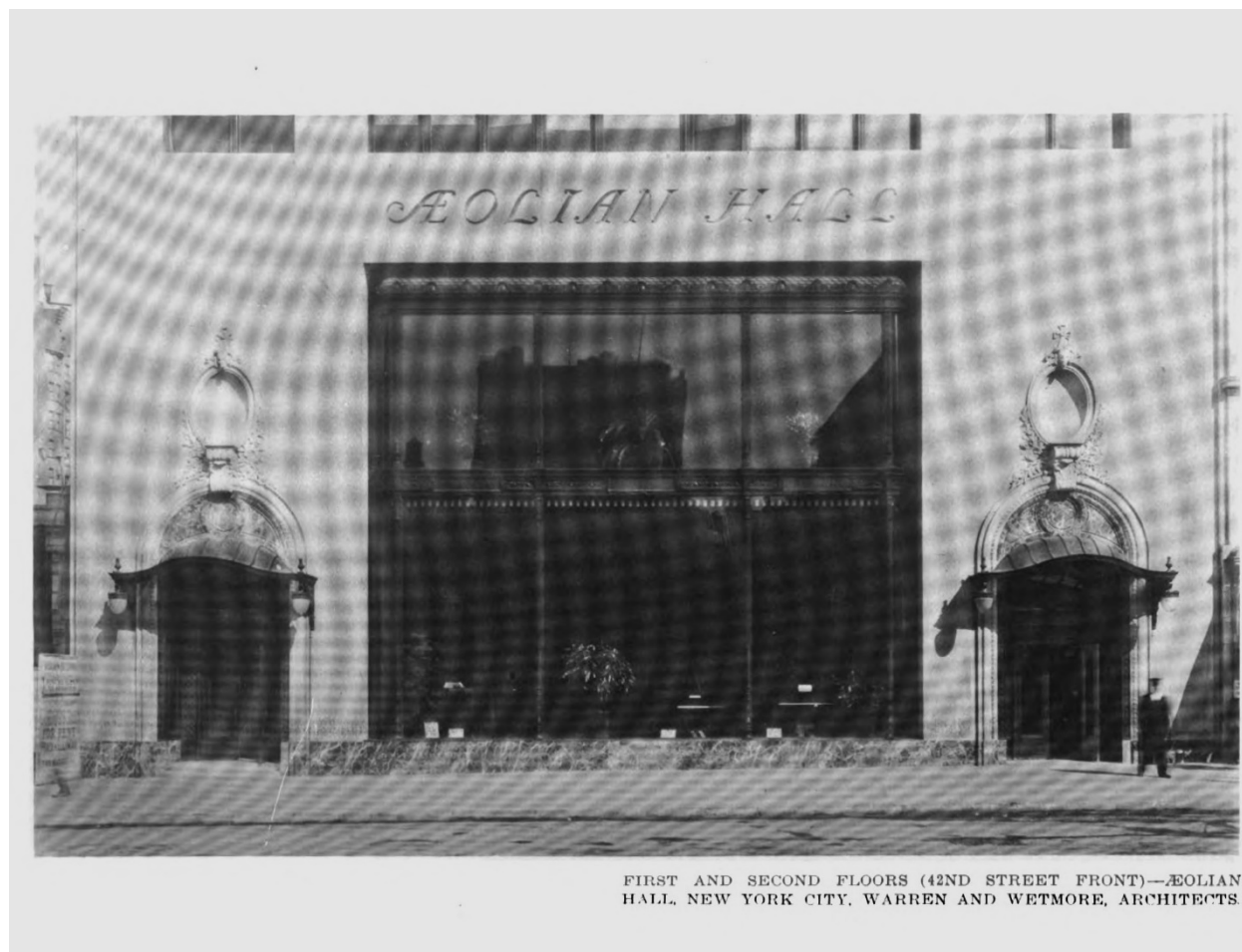


Figure 8.2. C. Matlack Price, *Aeolian Hall, New York – 42nd St. Front at Night*. Photograph (*Architectural Record* 32, 1912: 534, <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/osu.32435022834543>)

pianola.⁷ This instrument sent dynamic levels via electric signals to the perforating machine. By the 1920s, the pianola had been replaced by an expression marking machine (in the form of a cabinet) that included two dial controls and other similar components that were operated by the producer's hands⁸ (see figure 8.3). As the pianist performed, the producer, who was situated next to the recording piano, utilized the dials, attempting to translate the dynamics heard, which were

7. The Pianola Institute, n.p.

8. The Pianola Institute, n.p.



Figure 8.3. *Ferruccio Busoni Recording for the Duo-Art with Reginald Reynolds as Recording Producer*. Photograph. “The Reproducing Piano – Duo-Art” (The Pianola Institute, London, c. 1920, https://www.pianola.org/reproducing/reproducing_duo-art.ctm)

then sent electronically to the perforating machine.

It is important to note that the difficulties of recording expression information secondhand was not limited to dynamics, but also included a larger problem regarding how the Duo-Art system could be manipulated to capture the more subtle ways a pianist performed. For example, an unedited Duo-Art recording was limited in that it could not re-create the slight differences among individual note velocities within a blocked chord (chord balances). Thus, once a master roll was created, an editor had to slightly change attack points of notes on the roll spatially to create a facsimile of chord balance.⁹ Since details such as these are unique to the

9. Artis Wodehouse, “Tracing Gershwin’s Piano Rolls,” 11.

artist, the producer and editor's musicianship skills were critical with regard to coding equivalents to the pianist's touch.

Aeolian's first recording producers for Duo-Art in New York City were Arno Lachmund (1893-1962) and W. Creary Woods (1881-1967), trained musicians more than equal to the task of interpreting and coding a pianist's dynamics. The former came from a musical family. His father, Carl Lachmund (1853-1928) was a concert pianist and student of Franz Liszt (1811-1886). Woods later became the Director of the Delaware College of Music. By 1919 (or shortly before), Frank Milne (1887-1959), another exemplary musician, became the head editor of Aeolian's Artist and Repertoire popular piano roll department. His responsibilities included choosing the repertoire for piano rolls released monthly, selecting performers for the Aeolian roster, managing the Duo-Art expression coding, and serving as an artistic advisor to the piano roll artists.

The editing process entailed perforating a Duo-Art original roll,¹⁰ and then copying it to a longer stencil roll which was used to make trials.¹¹ Milne and/or other editors would make edits on the trials, such as changing the dynamics because the original perforation came out too soft or too harsh, lengthening a ritardando, and changing the tempo of different passages. Sometimes the recording pianist would be called in to listen to the trial rolls, as Milne (or perhaps another editor or the recording producer) explained the edits, with the artist giving their approval and/or suggesting additional edits (see figure 8.4). Once completed, the artist would sign a final trial. The corrections were copied to its stencil (the master roll), which was then mass produced using

10. Although it is difficult to ascertain the identity of the recording producer who collaborated with Baker and Alpert, it was probably W. Creary Woods, as he was still working for Aeolian during Frank Milne's tenure.

11. These were cut at an Aeolian factory in Meriden, Connecticut and then sent back to the New York branch.



Figure 8.4. *Percy Grainger and W. Creary Woods Editing a Duo-Art Music Roll*. Photograph. New York City, circa 1915, “The Reproducing Piano – Duo Art” (The Pianola Institute, www.pianola.org/reproducing/reproducing_duo-art.cfm)

the production perforating machines.

The Recording Piano as a Culture Mediator

In chapters 2 and 3, it was made clear that Victorian ideologies, while not part of the dominant culture, still held sway over many in the population, with the piano remaining a symbol of Victorian values during the early twentieth century. Hence, one can conclude that the recording piano, in the piano roll studio, when utilized as a traditional piano by piano roll artists (interacting with its conventional mechanicality and materiality) also had symbolic ties to

Victorian values, ideas and beliefs. Indeed, the actions of the performers were both reinforcing and reinforced the instrument's emblematic link to the work ethic.¹² By way of explanation, most of these pianists were highly trained virtuosos, their expertise a result of talent, but also the consequence of years of practice that demanded hard work and dedication. While the recording piano on its own symbolized the work ethic – a result of its historical connections – the piano roll artists themselves, in the act of performance, continued to strengthen the symbolic association. Conversely, the pianists' performances are more clearly viewed within the symbolic parameters of the work ethic due to their connection with the instrument.

The editing process that came after the initial performance was also tied to the work ethic, as it was a time-consuming enterprise that required painstaking work. These editors had to be musicians of great accomplishment: master arrangers with exceptional aural skills. The end result – the master roll – thus represented a labour-intensive endeavour by all involved. Undoubtedly, the recording piano and the piano roll are inextricably linked through the work ethic, as both objects were part of a continuum of collaborative effort.

Nevertheless, while the recording piano may have looked like a piano and was utilized as such by various artists, the high-speed die punches and electronic contacts under the keys (that connected to a perforating machine) – as well as the numerous trial rolls – were part of the process of sound reproduction, which changed the way music was made and experienced from that of the previous era. For instance, in the piano roll studio, with reference to the piano novelty, “the cult of the new” was in full force. With new technology, a new style of music was created,

12. The work ethic as associated with the recording piano had gendered overtones. For instance, the symbolic potency of the work ethic was heightened more so when a woman played the instrument due to its association with the Victorian piano and the domestic situation. This is explained in more detail in the performance analysis section of this chapter.

originating in the studio and, in part bound to the sound reproducing technologies of the recording piano that satisfied the musical desires of a consumer public.¹³

Furthermore, the process of commodification had reached a milestone with regard to the music-object. In other words, the medium of the piano roll represented a final stage concerning music's commodification as an object to be owned. However, much of the conversion of music as an ephemeral action to a commodified product took place in the piano roll studio. These changes are due to the material affordances and symbolic characteristics of the recording piano's new technology which, in turn, was linked to the technological advancement and rampant consumerism of the early twentieth century. Therefore, the recording piano in the piano roll studio was, akin to the player piano in the home, a culture mediator between Victorianism as culture and the consumer culture of the Modern Age.

Consequently, this allowed for musical behaviour changes regarding gender to occur in the piano roll studio as female piano roll artists, similar to player piano advertisers, made use of the instrument by means of its special status to serve their own purposes. This is explored in detail through the following performance analyses of piano roll arrangements by Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert.

Carol E. Robertson's General Performance Questions

In her essay "Power and Gender in the Musical Experiences of Women" (published in *Women*

13. This refers to consumer culture's fixation on the "new:" owning new things and having new experiences. See William R. Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 3.

*and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective*¹⁴), Carol E. Robertson formulated a series of performance questions divided into three categories: Social Authority, Gender and Access, and Notions of Power. Although designed for ethnomusicologists in the field, I found her approach relevant to my analyses of Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert's piano roll recordings. The questions direct the researcher towards an understanding of the social and cultural circumstances of female musical performance. Indeed, they allow for a thorough investigation of Baker and Alpert's status as women in a male-dominated industry. Both Baker and Alpert are similar to Robertson's female subjects, the latter who lived and worked in different, but equally male-dominated societies.

Nevertheless, there are some questions that are not applicable to a musicological topic (or allow the research to stray too far from the thesis) and are thus not utilized in this dissertation. Moreover, I found that an organizational schema grouping the questions into two parts as opposed to Robertson's three groups was more effective regarding my thesis. For instance, the first four questions (in the first group) are specific to the instrument's agency, exploring the connection of knowledge, power, and gender with the object, and investigating the historical reasons behind this association.

Concerning my performance analyses, this first part examines the studio and recording piano's gender coding and mechanicality, referring to the previous section outlining the Duo-Art recording process. This research grounds both performance analyses, as it proves useful in demonstrating the way the recording piano was used as an object of change and continuity. Understood within the context of material culture mediation, female piano roll artists were able

14. Robertson, 225-44.

to transcend certain gender boundaries, while conforming to others, by making use of the recording piano's special status.

This is highlighted by the second group of questions, which are directed towards the performances. Utilizing the information from the first section, this next part focuses on aspects of both performances as they relate to gender expression, and how much the instrument's status has affected the conditions and circumstances of this performance of gender in musical behaviour. Hence, while the questions are grouped into two categories, there is some interweaving. This allows for a thorough illustration of the recording piano's influence as pertaining to gender.

The questions utilized are as follows: Part I – 1) “Are certain objects associated with power?” 2) “Are they under gender-specific protection?” 3) “Are power objects inherited?” 4) “Is the line of inheritance of specific goods determined by gender?” Part II – 1) “Do women shield parts of their knowledge from men?” 2) “Are certain attributes of gender used to restrict authority or ritual access?” 3) “Are the performances of women and men given equal value?” 4) “Are they critiqued or praised in the same ways?” 5) “By whom?” 6) “Based on what criteria?” 7) “Are the performances of women public, private, or both?” 8) “Under what conditions?” 9) “Are women and men allowed to perform together?” 10) “In what circumstances?” 11) “In co-performance, how are decisions made?” 12) “Do women control their own performances?” 13) “Do women seek to change the power in their communities?” 14) “Do they accomplish or define these changes in performance?” 15) “Is dissent acted out through performance?” 16) “Through what means?” 17) “With what effect?”¹⁵

Tracing a piano roll performance in the recording studio by utilizing the historical

15. Robertson, “Power and Gender,” 242-43. See also Appendix B.

document is a difficult endeavour, as it presents an edited performance. Moreover, a reproducing piano roll performance's dynamic nuances were interpreted by a recording producer and were not recorded directly by the artist. Pianist, arranger, and composer Percy Grainger (1882-1961) sums up the problematic nature of this device: he viewed his Duo-Art piano rolls as representations of how he would have liked to have played.¹⁶ As such, musicologist Artis Wodehouse's categorization of piano rolls as "musical portraits"¹⁷ is useful with reference to conceptualizing the parameters of this medium. While piano rolls did not feature live performances, the musical renderings of the various pieces on these devices gives the researcher a glimpse into the pianist's performance artistry.

Undeniably, when comparing the phonograph recordings of Pauline Alpert and Edythe Baker with their piano rolls, both were similar in terms of texture and tone – reasonable enough to come to some conclusions about their musicianship skills. There are some differences, however, which can tell the researcher much about the workings of the piano roll industry. For example, some edits made to the music, when thoroughly analyzed through the lens of gender, provide information concerning issues of power and authority in the industry. The music on piano rolls was carefully curated to be acceptable to an audience, and an understanding of how much control an artist had over their piano roll creation, and what this representation entailed in the social order, offers much insight concerning gender norms. Therefore, by acknowledging the unique characteristics and makeup of a piano roll with regard to investigating a piano roll

16. Ehrlich, *The Piano: A History*, 136.

17. Wodehouse, "Tracing Gershwin's Piano Rolls," 1.

performance and answering Carol E. Robertson's various questions,¹⁸ my examination of two piano roll performances – Edythe Baker's arrangement of Walter Donaldson's "Yes Sir! That's My Baby," and Pauline Alpert's arrangement of "I Know That You Know" by Vincent Youman – showcases the former and the latter women's various methods of negotiating gender boundaries as career musicians.¹⁹ The focus of my inquiry is the recording piano, a musical place connecting other musical places, acting as a medium of communication and a site of negotiation regarding gender conformity and dissent as interpreted through the performances of Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert.

Part I: Power, Gender, and the Player Piano in the Piano Roll Studio

The first question of significance to this dissertation from Carol E. Robertson's chapter article concerns an object's association with power (Part I – 1). There are many definitions of the word power, but one that applies to this context is from the Merriam-Webster dictionary: "possession of control, authority, or influence over others."²⁰ Specifically, does an instrument give one power over another individual or group? In its original context, this question applies more to the symbolic nature of an instrument as displayed in ritual procession. When applied to the commercial setting of the piano roll studio, in terms of payment and position, the established

18. My answers are derived from information gleaned from music analysis, interviews, advertisements, and other literature, and the previous outline of the general context of making piano rolls within the piano roll studio.

19. These pieces are excellent representations of Baker and Alpert's virtuosity and musical knowledge with regard to variation form. I also chose these works due to their availability, as many of the other recordings that I had access to had bad sound quality, were not reproducing piano rolls (and thus had no expression details) or did not sound like performances by the artists (possibly due to over-editing).

20. *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "power," accessed June 06, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/power>.

hierarchy of a 1920s working environment remained in place. In other words, Frank Milne was the head editor at Duo-Art (popular division) and thus had more influence in the studio than the artists, who, while often respected, were still considered lesser, contract employees of Duo-Art (although the more famous musicians were allowed to hear the playback of their performances and were given a certain amount of control over the final edits). Furthermore, while both male and female piano roll artists performed on the recording piano, women were paid significantly less due to the gender wage gap.²¹ The instrument did not change these circumstances.

Nevertheless, concerning the particulars of musical behaviour and gender, there was a shift that both reflected and, in some ways, instigated, change in the power dynamics between men and women. Although this is explained in further detail in the following performance analyses, in general, female piano roll artists (particularly those who utilized the piano novelty) performing their own arrangements were expressing both gender dissent and conformity by means of the recording piano. Their virtuosity and skills in music arranging can be viewed as promoting newer codes of gender that were working towards re-establishing the parameters of this type of expertise, represented in performance, as gender neutral (as opposed to masculine). At the same time, they also relied on older codes of gender that positioned elements of these activities, such as the act of arranging, as feminine due to its historical ties with the piano parlour.

Additionally, within the broader context of the music industry, these women who had access to the recording piano exerted a certain amount of control over the public's musical

21. Craig Brougher, "Pauline Alpert Piano Rolls," *Mechanical Music Digest* (February 28, 1998), <https://www.mmdigest.com/Archives/Digests/199802/1998.02.28.05.html>. In the 1979 AMICA conference, Craig Brougher spoke with Pauline Alpert, who mentioned that, because she was a woman, she only received \$50.00 per recording. Although she did not mention how much the men made, it was implied that they earned more money.

choices. Namely, the repertoire and the style of music recorded on piano rolls in part swayed the direction of the popular music scene, specifically having to do with the popularity of the piano novelty, as the genre was created by piano roll artists. Therefore, Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert, making use of the recording piano as piano roll artists in the field, furthered the development of the genre and influenced what the public listened to by means of the piano roll. Undeniably, the player piano was celebrated by the public, as sales of piano rolls skyrocketed for a short period of time. For the more well-known female piano roll artists (this included Baker and Alpert), participation in the studio additionally helped to cement their celebrity status, as rolls disseminated their music to a wider audience. Thus, the player piano, in all its forms, was associated with power. And Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert, thoroughly enmeshed as part of the instrument's network of human and non-human actors, were connected to that power through their performances.

Another important question by Robertson refers to the gender-specific protection of an object, querying the historical explanations of its situation (Part I – 2). When these objects are instruments, their gender coding becomes the central locus in the symbolic landscape of music performance. This position is dependent on two issues – the gender manipulation of space, and control of technology. Concerning the latter, in Western society, the term “technical” was coded male and linked with production. Although there is nothing intrinsically masculine about technology, modernity has cast a strong connection between the Western man and the male engineered machine, where it was most powerfully expressed by male artists and writers.²² The engineer was the “cultural hero” in many of these stories. Using highly gendered terms in “tone,

22. For more information, see Ruth Oldenziel, *Making Technology Masculine: Men, Women and Modern Machines in America, 1870-1945* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999), 14.

image, and practice,” they employed the engineer’s machine “simultaneously as a metaphor, model, and microcosm of modernity.”²³ This rhetorical positioning was key to early twentieth-century’s societal comprehension of the Machine Age and was used by many in public and private discourse as a means of becoming modern. Therefore, in a culture that valued technological change, men were privileged with what society regarded as the most important information. Women were thus often barred from obtaining this knowledge, limiting their upward movement, or in many cases, basic entrance into the technical world.

These hurdles, which were due to a gendered discourse and understanding concerning technology as male, branched out into various disciplines, including music. Musical instruments are technological objects, with men, during this time generally responsible for their invention, production, and innovative design. This was true for the modern piano, as many of its modifications made during the early nineteenth century,²⁴ and its standardization in the late nineteenth century,²⁵ represented male ingenuity in the technical sphere. By this account, one could reasonably assume that the piano was, in all cases, gendered male.

In performance, when situated on the stage and tied to pianistic virtuosity in the economic realm (an unlocking of the technology to its full potential), the piano’s gendering did lean towards masculinity, as American women were discouraged from professional music-

23. Oldenziel, 14.

24. See Rosamond E. M. Harding, *The Piano-Forte: Its History Traced to the Great Exhibition of 1851* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), Part I; Good, *Giraffes, Black Dragons, and Other Pianos*, chaps. 6-7; and De Val, “Gradus ad Parnassum,” chaps. 2-3.

25. Good, *Giraffes, Black Dragons, and Other Pianos*, chap. 8.

making.²⁶ However, in the home, the instrument was gendered feminine, as women were not only encouraged but often expected to learn how to play the piano as a sign of feminine accomplishment. This musical knowledge in the hands of women was tempered by domesticity.

In the nineteenth century, when a woman played the piano on stage, there was in general, according to Richard Leppert, a societal fear of the “feminine eruption” (of her becoming “more like a man”²⁷) or, as understood within this context, fear of the feminine body and mind accessing the technology in the same manner as a man – a detailed professional performance that gleans economic reward. This was to be governed by men. According to sociologist Daphne Spain, “by controlling access to knowledge and resources through the control of space, the dominant group’s ability to retain and reinforce its position is enhanced.”²⁸ Thus, as dictated by the Doctrine of Separate Spheres, women’s performances were only to be heard in the home or other domestic spaces. They were generally discouraged from acquiring any monetary compensation for their skills after marriage (piano teaching was becoming an increasingly acceptable vocation for single women) and were only expected to be basically proficient at the keyboard. While, in reality, there were women who worked in the music industry in nineteenth-century America (mostly working-class women whose numbers were small when compared to

26. While fewer in number than male pianists, there were still American female concert pianists during this time, including Amy Fay (1844-1928), Adella Prentiss Hughes (1869-1950), Olga Samaroff (real name Lucy Jane Olga Hickenlooper) (1880-1948), and Gertrude Sans Souci (1872-1913). Furthermore, European concert pianists such as Clara Schumann (1819-1896), Arabella Goddard (1836-1922), Teresa Carreño (1853-1917), Fanny Davies (1861-1934) and many others were well-known and accepted. Some worked for piano roll companies, including Fanny Davies who cut piano rolls for Welte-Mignon in 1909. Dorothy De Val, “Davies, Frances Mary Jemima Woodhill [Fanny] (1861-1934), pianist,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (September 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/67636>.

27. Leppert, *The Sight of Sound*, 69.

28. Daphne Spain, *Gendered Spaces* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 15-16.

men) for many middle-and upper-class women, these societal expectations did limit their upward movement in the field of music.

These examples illustrate how the intersections among gender, space, and technology are diverse, as gender relations during this time were carefully controlled through the use of space. This included material objects, such as technology presented in a location. Nonetheless, since gender as a concept is fluid, gender relations in a variety of spaces were constantly in flux, as women could often change the power dynamics in a particular location through their increased visibility and usage of that space. Hence, the authority over that knowledge becomes less stringent concerning the domination of one gender over another.

While this was easier said than done, the reorientation of American culture in the 1890s and the rise of the woman's suffrage movement (in the early twentieth century) allowed women to gain traction regarding purposefully altering public spaces and defining the gender relations of new spaces, with the intention of making room for their sex (see chapter 2). In the music industry, through the examination of historical documents, one can witness this through the use of the player piano in the various departments of a piano roll company. The invention of the player piano, its production and distribution, similar to the piano, was a male endeavour. However, women became increasingly active in the numerous areas of employment offered by the piano roll industry. This included piano roll performers as well as technicians who hand-perforated holes in the roll, and those who transferred the measurements of dynamic shading to the special reproducing piano rolls.

The technology utilized in the making of piano rolls was advanced for the time, and the piano roll studio was a relatively new space, with its gendering open to interpretation. Regarding the Duo-Art studio, although there were more men making piano rolls than women, the

catalogues list numerous women, not just Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert, playing a range of styles in the recording studio. In popular music, the visibility of Duo-Art artists such as Constance Mering (1900-1933), Hilda Myers (1895-1985), and Muriel Pollock (1895-1971) influenced the gender relations of that space. Furthermore, there were many women in the Duo-Art studio also performing classical works, such as American pianists Carolyn Cone Baldwin (1894-1946), Edna Bentz Woods (1891-1974), and Augusta Cottlow (1878-1954). Therefore, one can suppose that the Duo-Art piano roll studio and their recording piano leaned more towards gender neutrality than gender specific-male. While the technicalities of this in performance are presented in Part II, essentially this refers to the space as more inviting to women, with some older codes of gender in musical behaviour being dispelled through their use of the instrument, in the unique space.

The newness and relatively private ambience of the Duo-Art studio makes the location, in some ways, similar to the piano parlour, a space more welcoming to women than the concert stage. To clarify, a useful comparison is ethnomusicologist Beverley Diamond's essay concerning the musical life stories of Prince Edward Islanders, where she commented that female fiddlers found places and locations that allowed them to participate in the male-dominated fiddle tradition. This included the recording studio, which was seen as "devoid of the dangers of social interaction, [and] is clearly more gender neutral than the dance hall or even the house party."²⁹ The Duo-Art piano roll studio, although situated in the heart of New York City (in the economic world), was a new type of public space that emulated a more private sphere with less social

29. Beverley Diamond, "The Interpretation of Gender Issues in the Musical Life Stories of Prince Edward Islanders," in *Music and Gender*, eds. Pirkko Moisala and Beverley Diamond (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 112.

interaction as well; it was a room limited to three (or a few more) people. Thus, akin to women participating in the fiddling tradition, one can posit that the Duo-Art piano roll studio was more of a “safe space” for female piano roll artists to participate in the music scene.

As outlined in chapter 4 – *The Piano Girl in Modern America* – learning the piano in the early twentieth century was still considered a feminized activity.³⁰ The various twentieth-century player piano advertisements illustrate this fact. For instance, although they experimented with images that placed men at the keyboard, advertisers clearly favoured situating women operating the instrument (there were more images of women at the player piano than men) in domestic settings.

This aligns with the next Robertson question about the inheritance of power objects, specifically concerning the idea that gender determines inheritance (Part I – 3, 4). Although this does not at first appear applicable to the recording piano context, in the music industry, while women were often considered an economic threat to men, many men also considered women to have better musicianship skills – particularly with regard to playing the “correct chords.”³¹ For instance, jazz historian Karl Koenig observed a long tradition of women being employed as pianists in New Orleans jazz bands. He asked jazz pianist Sadie Goodson (1900-2002) the reason for this, and she stated that “there weren’t many men playing the piano,” as opposed to women who, “to be socially accepted, learned the piano as part of their upbringing.”³² In other words,

30. Roell, *The Piano in America*, 15-17; and Tucker, “A Feminist Perspective on New Orleans Jazzwomen,” 116-17, 128.

31. Tucker, 224.

32. Karl Koenig, *The Jazz Lectures – Essay 7*, 1996, 28, Basinstreet.com, <https://basinstreet.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Essays7.pdf>.

this was due, in part, to the fact that there were more women pianists and gender stereotypes that linked piano playing with feminine accomplishment. Indeed, many of these female jazz pianists received formal piano instruction, benefiting from this tradition akin to female piano roll artists. Both acquired the necessary qualifications to work in their respective fields.

In the piano roll industry, with women entering the space, one cannot dismiss the idea that men working there may also have observed this same connection between playing the piano and feminine accomplishment. Moreover, as illustrated in chapter 4, through some of the artwork, the skills of playing the piano (more so in a child's early development) were often "passed down" (through instruction) from mother to daughter. In a space that was more inviting to women, similar in some respects to a piano parlour, this musical knowledge could be considered a feminine inheritance. When women played the recording piano in the piano roll studio, they were showcasing this inheritance as symbolized by their gender (their presence) and the instrument. The woman and the piano were signs of feminine inheritance. Hence, female piano roll artists engaged with the object-code of the recording piano, as connected to Victorian codes of gender (female inheritance), which, conversely, was reinforced by their gender, thereby heightening the symbolic efficacy of the activity. Although this did not make the studio and the recording piano gender feminine, it did help to further define the space and the instrument as more accessible to women.

Part II: Performance Analyses of "Yes Sir! That's My Baby," Arranged by Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert's Arrangement of "I Know That You Know"

Music Analysis

Edythe Baker's "Yes Sir! That's My Baby," is written in common time and exemplifies the

artist's command of variation form.³³ It never loses track of the melody, the sections are defined by dynamics, phrasing and/or clever riff endings, and the music gradually builds in technical difficulty through each variation. The musical form of the original sheet music³⁴ (also written in common time in the key of Eb major) is as follows: Introduction (mm1-10); Verse 1 (mm11-26); Chorus with first ending (mm27-58); Verse 2 (mm11-26); and Chorus with second ending (mm27-58). Edythe Baker's arrangement of the song is divided into eight parts: Introduction (mm1-2, 0:17-0:21); Verse 1 (mm3-10, 0:22-0:39); Chorus (mm10-26, 0:40-1:16); Chorus – Variation 1 (mm26-42, 1:17-1:52); Break (mm43-50, 1:53-2:10); Verse 2 – Variation 1 (mm50-58, 2:11-2:28); Chorus – Variation 2 (mm59-73, 2:29-3:03); and Coda (mm74-77, 3:03-3:15). The piece is arranged in the piano novelty style, as it employs numerous characteristics of the music. These include rapid sequences of arpeggiated intervals of a fourth, augmented chords in the high range of the keyboard (including seventh, ninth and thirteenth chords), surprising accents and rampant syncopation, whole tone effects, and a persistent stride bass that leaps over a two and three octave range while exploring the low registers of the piano.

Although the piece presents a frenzy of harmonic and musical/technical extravagance, Baker makes sure to ground the listener in the tonality by presenting the tonic (of Eb major) as the first chord, and keeping her introduction short, thereby moving into familiar musical material promptly. Undeniably, one of the main functions of these piano rolls was to help sell the sheet music of the original songs. Hence, it was important to keep the melody relatively recognizable

33. Aeolian Hall, "Yes Sir! That's My Baby by Donaldson & Kahn pl by Edythe Baker," September 29, 2013, YouTube video, 3:17, accessed January 14, 2016, https://youtu.be/31anL8_9KO8. See also Appendix A for the full transcription.

34. See Appendix A for the complete sheet music.

and, while dissonance regarding seventh, ninth and thirteenth chords is aptly evident in this arrangement, there is still a careful balance – enough of the chord structure from the original music so as to not distance the listener from the song. Furthermore, the words are written on the side of the piano roll (this was a common practice when writing piano roll arrangements of Tin Pan Alley songs).

Some highlights include the first section in the first variation of the chorus (mm26-34, 1:17-1:34). Modulating into the key of Ab major (a common move into the subdominant key), parts of the melody are supplanted by figurations that begin at an interval of a seventh higher than the original. It is still identifiable, however, as it maintains the same rhythm and is written in the high range of the keyboard, while the stride bass pushes the music forward (see figure 8.5). This creates a dynamic and playful character in the music, which allows the first variation to shine, thereby musically illustrating the start of the variations.

The first part of the second variation of the chorus (mm59-66, 2:29-2:46) is even more flamboyant, as it occurs near the end of the piece, and thus offers, in some respects, a culmination of the “tricks” in Baker’s musical arsenal. It consists of a thick texture that sounds more like a duet than a solo piece (nevertheless, when writing the transcription, I discovered that, for the most part, it can be performed by one person, although some of the chords are very large and need to be rolled) with the melody interweaving between both hands. Meanwhile, the left hand is also maintaining a stride bass and the right hand decorates the melody with arpeggiated fifths, fourths, and thirds in the high register of the piano (performed in a syncopated fashion). Played at an incredibly fast tempo, the rapid leaps in the left hand between the stride bass and the melody make this the most technically demanding section in the piece (see figure 8.6).



Figure 8.5. Walter Donaldson, "Yes Sir! That's My Baby," arranged by Edythe Baker, February 1925, mm26-29. See Appendix A for the transcription by Amy Gajadhar from Duo-Art Piano Roll #713142 as heard in Aeolian Hall, "Yes Sir! That's My Baby by Donaldson & Kahn pl by Edythe Baker," September 29, 2013, YouTube video, 3:17, 1:17-1:21, https://youtu.be/31anL8_9KO8



Figure 8.6. Walter Donaldson, "Yes Sir! That's My Baby," arranged by Edythe Baker, February 1925, mm58-61. See Appendix A for the transcription by Amy Gajadhar from the Duo-Art Piano Roll #713142 as heard in Aeolian Hall, "Yes Sir! That's My Baby by Donaldson & Kahn pl by Edythe Baker," September 29, 2013, YouTube video, 3:17, 2:29-2:33, https://youtu.be/31anL8_9KO8

Pauline Alpert's arrangement of "I Know That You Know"³⁵ is also written in the piano novelty style, as she employs numerous characteristics of the music. This includes V9 and applied V9 chords, a stride bass that spans three octaves and employs intervals of a tenth, suddenly and purposefully jolting chromatic passages, heavy syncopation, and intervals of a fourth sequential patterns. The form of the original sheet music³⁶ (written in cut time in the key of C major) is as follows: Introduction (mm1-4); Verse 1 (mm5-35); Chorus with first ending (mm36-68); and Chorus with second ending (mm36-68). Pauline Alpert's arrangement of this piece is divided into seven sections: Introduction (mm1-4, 0:12-0:18); Chorus (mm5-36, 0:18-0:57); Verse 1 (mm37-68, 0:58-1:34); Chorus – Variation 1 (mm69-97, 1:35-2:09); Break (mm97-106, 2:09-2:17); Chorus – Variation 2 (mm107-136, 2:18-2:51); and Coda (mm137-140, 2:51-2:58).

Upon listening to this arrangement, one gets a sense that Alpert was the variation "queen" of the piano roll industry. Her variations are extremely well-crafted and exhibit, among many musical traits, clever chromatic countermelodies interweaving between the hands, catchy riffs, and syncopated alternating third and fourth interval arpeggios to decorate the melody. Of particular interest is Alpert's variations of the chorus. For example, in Chorus – Variation 1, Alpert interrupts the stride bass, on and off, with slow moving triplet ascending and descending chromatic intervals and single notes, in the left hand and the right hand, moving in similar motion (mm70, 72, 74, 78, 1:35-1:48). This creates an erratic feeling of running and stopping

35. Aeolian Hall, "I Know That You Know by Vincent Youmans Played by Pauline Alpert. Big Hit in 1927," August 8, 2013, YouTube video, 3:01, accessed January 17, 2016, <https://youtu.be/NF6cZJIsTgc>. See also Appendix A for the full transcription.

36. See Appendix A for the complete sheet music.

(see figure 8.7) in the music, and also highlights the difference from the first rendition of the chorus (mm5-36, 0:18-0:57), which maintains a consistent stride bass.

In the second part of this variation, Alpert drops the chromatic musical lines and adds rapid arpeggios – descending sixteenth-note figures – that were part of the chorus in mm5-36, but are played, in this variation, quicker and louder, with more intensity (mm85-88, 1:53-1:57). Chorus – Variation 1 is followed by a Break of descending dissonant chords (mm99-106, 2:09-2:17) – Alpert reuses this later in her composition, “Perils of Pauline” – and then the last iteration of the chorus (mm107-136, 2:18-2:51), which is by far the most technically demanding section in the piece.

Chorus – Variation 2 has modulated into the key of F major before moving into Bb major. Moreover, it drops the stride bass for the most part in the first section (mm107-117, 2:18-2:29) and brings in blocked four-and-five note chords and rapid arpeggios in both hands (the arpeggios are utilizing some of the same harmony as the interjecting blocked chords). The stride bass comes back with relative consistency in the last half of the chorus (mm119-136, 2:31-2:51), and the melody, for the first time is slightly changed. The two repeat note melodic points on the words “I Know” and “You Know” that exist in all the variations of the chorus, are altered in this last section to one melodic point (mm123-133, 2:36-2:49), thereby allowing for longer arpeggiated filler sections (see figure 8.8). The melody, however, is still recognizable, and this change, among the others, makes this last section the most dramatic, as it is the climax of the piece.

The “Negro Vogue” and the Performances of Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert

Although the issue of cultural appropriation and the piano novelty was briefly addressed in



Figure 8.7. Vincent Youmans, “I Know That You Know,” arranged by Pauline Alpert, February 1927, mm68-80. See Appendix A for the transcription by Amy Gajadhar from the Duo-Art Roll #713326 as heard in Aeolian Hall, “I Know That You Know by Vincent Youmans Played by Pauline Alpert. Big Hit in 1927,” August 8, 2013, YouTube video, 3:01, 1:41-1:46, <https://youtu.be/NF6cZJIsTgc>



Figure 8.8. Vincent Youmans, “I Know That You Know,” arranged by Pauline Alpert, February 1927, mm123-130. See Appendix A for transcription by Amy Gajadhar from the Duo-Art Roll #713326 as heard in Aeolian Hall, “I Know That You Know by Vincent Youmans Played by Pauline Alpert. Big Hit in 1927,” August 8, 2013, YouTube video, 3:01, 2:35-2:40, <https://youtu.be/NF6cZJIsTgc>

chapter 6, when one listens to the piano novelty performances of Baker and Alpert, one is nonetheless struck by the common elements in the music to that of stride jazz piano. While not applicable to my thesis, it is still important to highlight the main similarities, albeit from a general perspective, as the cultural appropriation of African American creative property was a common occurrence during the Jim Crow Era.

Developed in Harlem, New York, around the same time as the piano novelty, stride is an African American virtuosic piano genre³⁷ – its evolutionary pathway can be traced to ragtime – that incorporates many of the same “tricks” as the piano novelty. These include the following: rapid chromatic passages, frequent use of ninth and thirteenth chords, alternating octaves, fast alternating arpeggiated duple and triple figures, blues notes, and complex syncopations.

However, it is the stride bass played at breakneck tempos that most directly ties the genre to its White, commercialized “cousin.” Defined as the expansion of the ragtime oom-pah bass, by adding thicker dissonant chords in the left hand and/or tenths, and a wide span between the strong and weak beats, the stride bass was created by stride artists such as Jelly Roll Morton (1890-1941), Willie “The Lion” Smith (1893-1973), James P. Johnson (1894-1955), and Thomas “Fats” Waller (1904-1943).

Furthermore, variations on the stride bass, which include reversing the stride pattern (the

37. For more information on stride jazz piano, see Tom Davin, “Conversations with James P. Johnson,” in *Ragtime: Its History, Composers, and Music*, ed. John Edward Hasse (London: Macmillan Press, 1985): 166-77; John L. Fell, *Stride!: Fats, Jimmy, Lion, Lamb, and All the Other Ticklers* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1999); Lawrence Koch, “Piano (jazz) [pianoforte],” *Grove Music Online*, 2003, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.J354200>; and Jacob Womack, “Lucky Roberts, Willie ‘the Lion’ Smith, ‘Fats’ Waller, and James P. Johnson: An Analysis of Historical, Cultural, and Performance Aspects of Stride Piano from 1910 to 1940” (DMA thesis, West Virginia University, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.33915/etd.5012>.

octaves, chords, and tenths falling on the weak beats), backward tenths,³⁸ and a walking bass in single notes, octaves, or tenths, were frequently employed by the aforementioned pianists, and utilized in piano novelty compositions and arrangements, including this dissertation's two selected performances. For example, Alpert and Baker made use of the reverse stride, as heard in m86 ("I Know That You Know," 1:53-1:55) and m9 ("Yes Sir! That's My Baby," 0:35-0:38), respectively. Both artists also exploited the walking bass frequently, with Baker using descending chromatic tenths to lead into the main harmonies on the strong beats (this includes m15 – 0:49-0:51 and m21 – 1:04-1:05), and Alpert using them in longer patterns at the end sections in the variations of the chorus (mm81-82 – 1:48-1:50). Moreover, Alpert and Baker also occasionally use the backward tenth (see m20 – 0:36-0:38 in "I Know That You Know," and mm72-73 – 2:58-3:03 in "Yes Sir! That's My Baby").

There are differences between stride and the piano novelty – the main one being improvisation, as stride pianists of this time extemporized with the right hand, whereas piano roll artists working in the piano novelty style played from their written score. In addition, as explained in chapter 6, unlike stride, the piano novelty was grounded in classical technique, although some stride pianists in the 1930s and 1940s, particularly Art Tatum Jr. (1909-1956), experimented with Impressionistic harmonies introduced by composers such as Claude Debussy (1862-1918) and Erik Satie (1866-1925). Indeed, it would be detrimental to suggest that stride pianists were unaware of the European musical tradition, as some of the pianistic devices in stride did originate from classical music, although when generally comparing the piano novelty and stride, the former leaned more towards the broader categorization of classical music, while

38. The upper notes in the tenth intervals act "as a countermelody to the main tune and is played slightly before the lower note[s] (which carr[y] the bass line)." Womack, 64.

the latter was firmly entrenched in the established practices of jazz music.

During the 1920s in Manhattan, various African American idioms, including the Blues and stride jazz piano, emanated from the numerous clubs and speakeasies in Harlem. Additionally, stride artists like James P. Johnson and Thomas “Fats” Waller cut piano rolls for Aeolian (not Duo-Art). Notably, many African Americans during this time were making recordings of their music, albeit on race labels, and were also working in music theatre and vaudeville. After the success of the African American Broadway show *Shuffle Along* (1921), there was an insatiable White desire for Black music and dance – a 1920s fad labelled the “Negro vogue” in Manhattan – as White spectators flocked to Black musical theatre and vaudeville shows and frequented the Black entertainment districts in the city.³⁹ They also purchased piano rolls and records by African American artists and listened to the live music on the radio from Harlem locales such as the Savoy Ballroom and the Cotton Club. And similar to the ragtime craze two and half decades before, White artists capitalized on this interest by continuing to appropriate Black musical forms.

Hence, it can be reasonably assumed that Baker and Alpert, working in the music industry in New York City during the 1920s, cutting piano rolls and phonograph recordings, and performing in vaudeville, were more than familiar with the new sounds emerging from the African American community. As such, while an appreciation of their musical ingenuity is presented in the next section through a gender performance analysis, this dissertation nevertheless acknowledges the fact that these arrangements are representative of cultural

39. Shane Vogel, *Stolen Time: Black Fad Performance and the Calypso Craze* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018), 37. Vogel also recognizes Mamie Smith’s record “Crazy Blues” (its unexpected popularity) as the second catalyst for the Negro vogue.

appropriation at play, particularly with reference to stride piano, in the piano novelty.

Gender Analysis: Women Arranging Music in the Piano Novelty Style

While conducting research as guided by Robertson's queries, I concluded that there was one overarching question that tied many of the others together: Is dissent acted out through performance (Part II – 15, 16, 17)? The focus of this chapter concerns the ways female piano roll artists were able to use the instrument as an object of change and continuity to consolidate and challenge gender norms in music performance. Therefore, I adapted Robertson's question to examine both dissent and conformity through performance, with the recording piano being the focus of inquiry. In answering this question, I utilize information from the first section, as well as make applicable the new questions, framed by my research parameters. Incorporating results from the previous musical analysis of two novelty piano arrangements by Baker and Alpert⁴⁰ (which gives evidence of their musicianship skills), I examine gender dissent and conformity by first answering questions concerning women and performance ability – specifically, do women shield parts of their knowledge from men (Part II – 1)?

The technical and musical demands of Baker's arrangement of "Yes Sir! That's My Baby," and Alpert's arrangement of "I Know That You Know," showcase the artists' mastery of

40. Baker and Alpert also wrote compositions, but I could not find any evidence that they recorded any of their own pieces for Duo-Art (this was obtained through observing catalogues and research compiled by piano roll enthusiasts and other scholars). From the research gathered, it appears that Baker recorded her compositions for Mel-o-Dee and other player piano labels with an instrument that did not reproduce expression. And Pauline Alpert's compositions seemed to be only recorded for phonographs. However, both Alpert and Baker's rollographies and discographies are incomplete due to missing information, so it is not out of the realm of possibility that they recorded compositions on Duo-Art that may be lost to time. Nevertheless, while a performance analysis of their compositions would have begun to address the gap in Tin Pan Alley research concerning female piano novelty compositional output, it would not be relevant to the focus of this chapter: the role of the recording piano as positioned in a Duo-Art performance that showcases an artist's expression (or more accurately, an interpretation of an artist's expression). Thus, this chapter examines female piano roll arrangements in the Duo-Art piano roll recording studio.

variation form. Thus, the act of arranging music in the piano novelty style can be viewed – when presented in performance in the public space of the Duo-Art piano roll studio, with the music commodified and distributed by piano rolls to numerous customers across the country – as a form of gender dissent. For instance, women making their own advanced arrangements that demonstrated a high level of comprehension concerning musical form and function (which was appreciated by many consumers in their homes) challenged early twentieth-century gender conventions that positioned creativity and ingenuity in music as tied to masculinity. Undeniably, as outlined in chapter 6, women were taking steps to countermand these ideas. For instance, many enrolled in music theory courses in university, and a greater number of female composers and arrangers were working in the music industry. While they were outnumbered by their male counterparts and faced rampant discrimination (this was also due to male and female competition for jobs in the industry), with the recognition and credit they received for their work, these women were beginning to break down some of the core elements that held these gender norms in place. Female piano roll artists cutting rolls in the Duo-Art piano roll studio played a role in this process. This recording studio, with its recording piano, was one of the places where these women, in particular women arranging music in the piano novelty style, got their work “out there.”

However, one may ask the question, besides being the instrument that female piano roll artists utilized to disseminate their music, how is the recording piano part of this expression of gender dissent? Referring to chapter 1 and my discussions on ANT, while the intentions lie with the human actors, the instrument was an actor with a non-fixed agency in the web of connections regarding the communication of dissent and conformity. To explain this function, one must first examine the piano novelty’s purpose. For instance, as a genre and style, the piano novelty was

created by piano roll artists to help sell player pianos. In other words, it was used to manifest the material capabilities of the instrument, both as a piano and as a sound reproducing machine (similar to a demo on a digital keyboard of the present day). Concerning the latter, as connected to editing and playback, the piano novelty's character required "extra tricks." This included sometimes editing in countermelodies or adding in extra notes in a chord. Furthermore, most piano novelties or pieces written in the piano novelty style were performed at an extremely quick speed, with the piano roll allowing its consumers to hear the music at a tempo that, at times, was faster than humanly possible (like the play-back of a digital score or midi).

Regarding the former function, the variety of musical traits in the piano novelty that made the genre technically and musically advanced demonstrated the idiomatic features of the player piano. For example, the instrument's powerful orchestral range was made evident by the piano novelty's significant utilization of the extreme highs and lows of the keyboard – by means of musical devices such as rapid arpeggios in the high register of the player piano, and a stride bass, in the low register, that leaps over a multiple octave range. Moreover, the percussive nature of the player piano is exemplified by the piano novelty's extensive syncopation and accentuation. Specifically, the characteristic polyrhythmic texture of the genre was magnified when played-back on the player piano.

Piano roll artists who arranged in the piano novelty style were thus fulfilling a marketing requirement in the industry. Thus, regarding the expression of gender dissent in the Duo-Art piano roll studio, certain gender conventions, in some manner, were bypassed (in the space and through the use of the instrument), as the need for this type of music, with all its inherent complexities and musical demands, outweighed societal demands concerning gender conformity. In the studio, both women and men were expected to exhibit traits of musical intelligence in

terms of creativity and ingenuity, as this was a necessity to producing advanced novelty arrangements. Namely, in terms of their performance, in front of male editors and producers, Baker and Alpert (and the other female piano novelty artists) showcased their knowledge in a public venue. As part of the job requirement, particularly concerning the recruitment process, they had to demonstrate their full potential as professional musicians.

Moreover, in the form of the piano roll, although their visibility was not evident, the women's music was heard by countless consumers, both male and female, in domestic settings. None of this would have been possible if not for the player piano, or more specifically the recording piano, when referring to the Duo-Art studio. The instrument's role in the creation of a genre that many female piano roll artists utilized to reveal their expertise (not just as virtuosos but also with regard to musical theoretical concepts) ties it to the communication of gender dissent in performance. Specifically, women arranging music in the piano novelty style made use of the instrument's material capabilities to exhibit their talent in advanced music arranging to the public – both in the studio and by means of their piano rolls – thereby combating gender stereotypes through the promotion of new ideas concerning equality in music performance. In turn, the object-code of the player piano (in the form of the recording piano) was gradually expanded to include these ideas – that creativity and ingenuity in music did not belong to the province of men alone. In other words, these women were attempting to re-define the definition of femininity as manifested via musical activity, and the recording piano took on these new meanings through its relationships with these women and their female counterparts (by means of performance) in the player piano studio.

The next Robertson question that I utilize as connected to my main research question concerns the restriction of access to certain musical activities due to gender (Part II – 3).

Regarding my case study, this specifically refers to composition. Undeniably, it is worth noting that when comparing the symbolism concerning gender and music, composition is far more potent than music arranging. The former has often been linked with creativity and the concept of genius, which were both, in turn, historically connected to masculine traits. Namely, with regard to gender roles, composition was, in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, generally associated with men.

Music arranging for piano, conversely, was considered a more acceptable activity for women in the domestic setting, as defined through certain cultural parameters. For example, in Antebellum America, there was an established practice of women creating advanced variations of vernacular songs in the piano parlour.⁴¹ This type of arranging can be positioned as a mediating activity: they experimented with popular music which, in general, was considered an inappropriate occupation for middle-class women; and they did so in their homes, not in public; and were arranging, and not composing.⁴² Furthermore, they were not working with “serious” art forms,⁴³ such as sonatas, which were symbolically heightened with regard to Victorian customs of gender norms; popular music was considered “low-brow” music as opposed to “high-brow” Western art forms. Moreover, these women were using a feminized instrument, the piano, which helped to situate arranging within the framework of Victorian feminine accomplishment. Concerning the last statement, the actions of the women in performance are inflected by the symbolism of the instrument, and thus, the more women made arrangements on the piano, the

41. See Montgomery, “‘Brilliant’ Variations on Sentimental Songs.”

42. Montgomery, 10.

43. Montgomery, 10.

more that arranging was viewed as a feminine activity – a “natural” outcome of their piano training in the parlour. All these factors, in combination, allowed for these female pianists to “slip”⁴⁴ their advanced arranging into the piano parlour.

Although American women in the 1920s did not have to contend with the same gender restrictions of the nineteenth century, many of the older Victorian codes of gender in music that made the arrangements of vernacular pieces a necessary mediatory genre were still in play in early twentieth-century culture. While there were more female composers in general that found work during this time than in the previous era, women still had a very difficult time charting a career pathway in the field of composition.⁴⁵ For example, in the Duo-Art studio, while there were some women who composed music for piano rolls, the majority of female piano roll artists performed pieces written by other composers (mostly men), many of which were fashioned into their own piano novelty arrangements⁴⁶ (which, according to my research, were not published as sheet music). Hence, akin to the women writing arrangements of vernacular pieces in the nineteenth-century piano parlour – since the act of composition was still a highly contested issue with regard to gender – female piano roll artists utilized the piano novelty as a mediating genre (this categorization includes the piano novelty’s small-scale “low-brow” musical form) to demonstrate their musicianship skills concerning variation form. This was brought to the

44. This refers to the title of Vivian Sarah Montgomery’s major research paper, “‘Brilliant’ Variations on Sentimental Songs: Slipping Piano Virtuosity into the Drawing Room.”

45. For more information, refer to chapter 6 subheading, *A Brief Summary of the Changing Gender Norms in American Women’s Professional Musical Activity During the Early Twentieth Century (1900-1928)*.

46. Men working in the Duo-Art recording studio also wrote piano novelty arrangements. However, their gender did not elicit the same symbolic response with regard to arranging as women performing advanced arrangements (since traits such as creativity and ingenuity were historically associated with the male gender). Moreover, they also wrote more compositions than their female counterparts.

forefront through their use of the recording piano, which, as a material expression of female inheritance, allowed female piano roll artists to tap into older codes of gender associated with arranging as a feminine activity. In this way, these women were conveying gender conformity through the performances of their piano novelty arrangements.

This is not to say that the piano novelty is related to these nineteenth-century arrangements, as the two genres have different origins (also, these piano novelty arrangements were, in general, more difficult than the advanced vernacular arrangements of the nineteenth century) or to negate the fact that women arranging in the piano novelty style also expressed a sense of gender dissent, as discussed earlier in this chapter. Undeniably, the recording piano was an object of change and continuity, and thus situated newer codes of gender – both those that aligned with the consumer culture, and those that contested societal conventions of gender – within the parameters of existing values associated with Victorian culture. Thus, women's arrangements in the piano novelty style can be theoretically framed within the ideological borders of tradition (piano arranging as a feminine pursuit), and this can be viewed as helping to position newer codes of gender concerning equality in arranging, linked to the recording piano (its connection to the creation of the piano novelty), as more applicable in the new age.

Gender Analysis: Female Virtuosity and the Piano Novelty

The technical and musical requirements of Baker and Alpert's piano novelty arrangements, "Yes Sir! That's My Baby" and "I Know That You Know," respectively, permitted women to showcase their virtuosity in the piano roll studio and to their consumer base through the medium of the piano roll. Similar to their arranging skills, the women's virtuosic performances can also be situated within the context of nineteenth-century female domestic pianists adapting vernacular

songs by means of musical variation treatment. The “free arpeggio and scale passages, alternating-hand hocket, tremolos, trills, ornamentation, and long stretches in the extreme ranges of the instrument”⁴⁷ of these nineteenth-century arrangements made allowance for displays of female pianistic wizardry in the home. Also, because of the mediator status of these older variations, and their connection with the piano, akin to advanced arranging, these women were also able to “slip” their virtuosity into the piano parlour.

In comparison, the piano novelty, as a mediating genre connected to the recording piano, allowed Baker, Alpert, and other female piano roll artists arranging in the piano novelty style to articulate their virtuosity within a controlled venue. These women, demonstrating their virtuosic skills via popular music arrangements (and not by performing their own compositions of large-scale Western art forms), showcased their talent to a consuming public through the piano roll (which detached their bodily actions from the music), and utilized the symbolic and mechanical capabilities of the recording piano. It is the latter determinant that ties everything together: the women’s virtuosity was illustrated through an action (music arranging) linked to feminine accomplishment by means of the recording piano (feminine inheritance); and the mechanical affordances of the instrument as a sound reproducing machine permitted a rendering of these women’s performance skills that was not linked to their visibility (and thus was not as symbolically charged as a female virtuosic performance on stage). Hence, through their use of the recording piano, Baker and Alpert benefited from the emblematic efficacy of the instrument’s ties with Victorian ideas – music as a feminine pursuit and surprisingly, trace elements of the Doctrine of Separate Spheres ideology, as related to music and gender, were in place.

47. Montgomery, “‘Brilliant’ Variations,” 77.

Although female piano roll artists performed in the piano roll studio and not in the home in the early twentieth century, it can be argued that player piano sound reproduction allowed for a recontextualization of the aforementioned ideology by means of disembodied performances. While the Doctrine of Separate Spheres was significantly weakened in the culture by the 1920s, there was still a heightened gendered division in the “economic, labor, social, and cultural experiences”⁴⁸ between men and women, with music and the piano still considered by society in general as feminine labour. Hence, the recording piano, as a symbol of feminine inheritance, in combination with its mechanical enabling of a woman’s disembodied performance, accommodates a reading that aligns female virtuosity with Victorian gender codes in music.

However, if one examines this more closely, one can see that Victorian codes of gender were contradicted by other factors. For instance, the piano roll studio was not a domestic space, as women revealed their virtuosic skills to both the male editors and producers of Duo-Art. Furthermore, consumers experienced female performances as objects in the home, their disembodied virtuosity also commodified for the pleasure of the purchaser. This commodification, in the studio, changed the way female virtuosity was perceived, as its connection to the work ethic, although still intact, was contradicted by its positioning as a sellable feature. The outcome of this, the recording piano’s ties to both consumer culture and Victorianism as culture – as an object of change and continuity – allowed for dissent and conformity through female virtuosity to be expressed in music performance. Following an outline of Baker and Alpert’s virtuosic skills and taking into account Robertson’s query

48. Kim Warren, “Separate Spheres: Analytical Persistence in United States Women’s History,” *History Compass* 5, no. 1 (2007): 262, accessed June 25, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2006.00366.x>.

concerning equality in performance (Part II – 4, 5, 6), both are further detailed in the following section.

In the Duo-Art piano roll studio, Edythe Baker's piano roll performance of "Yes Sir! That's My Baby" represents a prime example of her virtuosity. She performed with assertive power, forcefulness, endurance, vitality, and a signature "growl" in her bass passages. Undoubtedly, Baker's driving bass line is a characteristic trait of her playing. It moves the piece into a frenzy of perpetual motion, with strong accents outlining the various dissonant chords. Nevertheless, her right-hand melody is always crystal clear, emphasizing her rapid, sparkling fingerwork. Additionally, her dynamic shading in the longer phrase passages is organic, with crescendos growing gradually out of harmonic expansion. This is especially noticeable in the most technically demanding section, mm59-66 (2:29-2:46), in which the melody interweaves seamlessly between Baker's hands in a three-voice texture. The tempo is consistent, with smooth phrasing also demonstrating her quick lateral arm movements across the keyboard. In this recording, Baker also displays both percussive dynamic playing, as well as smooth, round tone quality in the coda, outlining her musically diverse touch on the keyboard. Moreover, the spirit and humour of her playing shines, as her wild accents emphasizing the syncopation jar the listener on purpose, and her quick dynamic surges and grace notes in the high range musical passages (mm39-42, 1:44-1:52) emphasize a playful character.

Pauline Alpert's virtuosity, as heard in "I Know That You Know," can be described as pyrotechnic, charismatic, and at the risk of being too general, powerful in the classical sense. Her playing does not exemplify the driving bass heard in Baker's performances, but instead showcases a finesse of perfect octave technique and phenomenal speed of crisp staccatos and scale passages. Undeniably, Alpert received more classical training than Baker, although both

types of playing exemplify unique and original forms of virtuosity. Alpert's arpeggiated fingerwork is light and clear, and her accents are delicate yet discernable. This is most aptly expressed in mm107-136 (2:18-2:51), as this variation of the chorus is the highlight of the arrangement. In addition, similar to Baker, Alpert employs organic dynamic nuances, voices her main melody, and differentiates between filler sections and verse and chorus by means of layered musical dynamic choices. Furthermore, at times her playing allows for a dizzy, erratic feel, as heard in the first variation of the chorus, mm69-97, from 1:35-2:09 (typical of piano novelty pieces). This is created by Alpert's playing of the triplet chromatic passages a little louder for effect, as she stops and starts her stride bass, akin to running and stopping and repeating the process.

Virtuosity in piano performance was still linked to traditional masculine traits (strength, stamina, and power) in the early twentieth century. Hence, Baker and Alpert's assertive virtuosic abilities were at odds with contemporary expectations, as they were both beautiful, petite women. In point of fact, many observers wondered where their power came from, as descriptors of virtuosity were often equated with masculinity. Nevertheless, accounts of their "masculine" virtuosity on the stage were often tempered by their femininity (one does not see this use of "masculine" when reading performance critiques of male virtuosos). By way of explanation, critics who witnessed Baker and Alpert's musical feats on stage (around the same time these artists performed "Yes Sir! That's My Baby" and "I Know That You Know"), inevitably male, would often remark on their femininity through their writings. For example, with Baker, in *The Washington Herald*, the author states that "Edythe [Baker] came to New York not so long ago,

bringing with her a remarkable gift for piano playing and a supply of extreme good looks...”⁴⁹ Moreover, the *Daily News* describes Baker’s fingers as “highly-insured” while mentioning that she “will draw silk gloves” over them for protection.⁵⁰ With Alpert, the *Deseret News* referred to her as “pretty Pauline Alpert, whose ten fingers of syncopation [are] famous on piano keys...”⁵¹ And the *Hartford Courant* stated that “Pauline Alpert is a pianist with phenomenal technique and a lot of grace and abandon.”⁵² These quotations are connecting femininity, such as Baker and Alpert’s features, feminine items, and attributes with performance prowess. The last one maintains a careful balance between femininity and extravagant virtuosity by utilizing the terms “grace” and “abandon,” respectively.

Unlike the aforementioned reviews of Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert’s stage performances, the many Duo-Art advertisements (for reproducing pianos and rolls) which feature these women, never mention their appearance. They do often describe them as popular stars and list well-known vaudeville performances, and sometimes their pictures are posted in the ads. One can surmise that the reason for this is the advertisement is trying to sell a reproducing piano, and not a live performance of Edythe Baker or Pauline Alpert. Thus, it does not concern itself with applying the considered appropriate gendered language to describe their playing (unlike other types of advertising, including twentieth-century automobile ads). This further illustrates the fact

49. “Edythe Baker’s Gift with Piano Keys Wins Her Distinction,” *The Washington Herald* (April 4, 1920): 28, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/75988375>.

50. “Trouping: New Leading Woman for Jolson Show Goes South,” *The Daily News* (August 15, 1925): 30, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/431013965>.

51. “Dramatic,” *Deseret News*, 18.

52. “Cradle Snatcher’s Week’s Feature at Majestic Theater,” *Hartford Courant* (June 12, 1927): 53, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/36941462>.

that Baker and Alpert's virtuosity is not so tied to gender in the Duo-Art recording studio. Indeed, in many of the advertisements, Baker and Alpert's playing is described in the same terms as their male piano roll artist contemporaries. For example, a Duo-Art ad in the *Fresno Morning Republican* states that, concerning the reproducing piano, the hostess' "guests love the merriment, the quixotic flashing from Chopin to George Gershwin, the brilliant Paderewski interlude, and the dancing to the flying fingers of Newell Chase, Phil Ohman, Frank Milne, Pauline Alpert, or Rube Bloom!"⁵³ Another Duo-Art ad from 1926 asks the consumer to "invite the world's greatest pianists into your home!.... The Kings of Jazz, George Gershwin, Phil Ohman, Edythe Baker, Willard Robinson, Frank Milne – favorites of Broadway will answer to your call for popular dance music through the Duo-Art."⁵⁴

Hence, regarding virtuosity, one could surmise that there was, for the most part, a sense of equality when comparing men and women's performances in the Duo-Art piano roll studio. Nevertheless, as mentioned in Part I concerning power and instruments, equality did not extend to pay; the disparity was great, in favour of men.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, this rather grievous discrepancy in salary, in combination with female virtuosic performances in the Duo-Art studio can be viewed as a form of gender dissent when positioned within the broader context of the music industry. For instance, female virtuosity during this time was symbolically potent and subject to much debate (as briefly outlined above by the various music reviews describing Baker and

53. The Aeolian Company, "Duo-Art in the Weber." *The Fresno Morning Republican* (December 16, 1928): 10, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/607334161>.

54. The Aeolian Company, "The Duo-Art Reproducing Piano." *The Cincinnati Enquirer* (July 23, 1926): 5, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/100535660>.

55. Brougher, "Pauline Alpert Piano Rolls."

Alpert's stage performances).

To add further clarification, while American women performers in the 1920s had made significant strides towards acceptance in the industry and were visible on the stage as soloists and band members alongside men, they also faced discrimination, and (more so for middle- and upper-class women) a general loss of reputation due to the stigma of being in showbusiness. Therefore, in the early twentieth-century Duo-Art piano roll studio, women, by getting their performances on rolls, with their playing being equally compared to men's, but not equally valued concerning pay, were, in fact, expressing dissent. In other words, new codes of gender transmitted ideas about the traits of virtuosity as not masculine by design, and that virtuosic performances by women should be celebrated, equal to men's performances, and as such deserving equal payment in measure (although in reality, despite their performances of dissent, female piano roll artists in the 1920s did not receive the appropriate salary for their many efforts).

However, there were other factors involved regarding the communication of gender codes in a woman's piano novelty performance in the studio. The first is brought into focus by means of Robertson's queries concerning the conditions of performance – public, private or both (Part II – 7, 8)? There were multiple publics and performance venues in the economic world, and each carried with it a different degree of symbolic weight. Referring to the Duo-Art piano roll studio, as explained in the previous section about an instrument and the process of its gendering, the more women made their presence known in the Duo-Art studio as performers, the more the gendering of both the instrument and the space leaned towards gender neutrality. When a man, or more so a woman performs on an instrument that is more gender neutral than gender specific, the symbolic significance of this can help dispel many older codes tied to the sex of the performer.

One influences the other, and both influence the reading of an artist's performance. In other words, female virtuosity as tied to the piano novelty and emanating from the recording piano cannot only be understood as dispelling the traits that link virtuosity with masculinity, but also appreciated more so as just "virtuosity" in this context – in essence, akin to the recording piano, becoming more gender neutral in the piano roll studio. Hence, within these interweaving, complex instrument-human relationships, the recording piano's object-code was progressively manipulated to include ideas that linked strength, stamina, and power to both male and female virtuosic music performances in the piano roll studio. In other words, the de-gendering of these traits became linked to the symbolic framework of the recording piano, via mediation by Edythe Baker, Pauline Alpert, and their female contemporaries.

The Recording Piano, Performance Control, and the Musical Interplay Between Male and Female Piano Roll Artists

Some of Robertson's questions concern the circumstances of co-performance and control (Part II – 9, 10, 11, 12). In the Duo-Art piano roll studio, the performance of gender conformity also occurred in a surprising manner: through the scarcity of combined performances between members of the opposite sex. Female piano roll artists only occasionally performed duets and piano duos with male pianists, and many of these were with family. For example, this included Percy Grainger and his mother Rose Grainger⁵⁶ (1861-1922), Walter Damrosch (1862-1950) and his daughter Leopoldine (Polly) Damrosch Howard (1899-1964), and Tina Lerner (1889-after 1947) and her husband Vladimir Shavitch (1888-1947). Historically, piano duets in the piano

56. The piano duo by Percy Grainger and his mother is called *Two Musical Relics of My Mother: Hermund the Evil (Faeroe Island Dance Folk-Song); As Sally Sat A-Weeping* (English Folk-Song from Dorsetshire).

parlour were often performed by men and women if they were family members, or if a man was courting a woman (if he had the skills, although many times, this translated into only turning the pages of the score) in the presence of a chaperone. While one may argue that the lack of duets and piano duos between men and women could be a lack of interest in the public for this form, my research into Duo-Art catalogues negates this supposition, as there were many duets and piano duos between men recorded for Duo-Art. Hence, it can be presumed that the separation between the sexes concerning performance in the recording studio is associated with older Victorian codes of gender as linked to propriety. This, in turn, was symbolically reinforced by the recording piano as a material manifestation of the cultural contradictions of Victorianism and consumer culture. Performances in which men and women participate on equal terms signify a more unbiased “playing field” in a society at large, and thus this lack of male/female cooperation, together with the gender wage gap, counters the idea that, in the Duo-Art recording studio, there was complete equality in all manner of things.

Nevertheless, female piano roll artists in the Duo-Art studio did interact with the recording producers and the editors, who were all male. While these women performed on the recording piano, the recording producer would interpret their dynamics on the expression making machine. In a way, this interaction could be considered a music performance between a man and woman. However, when comparing the woman’s work with that of the man’s, one does see an obvious hierarchy with regard to control within the performance. For example, while the recording piano was connected by means of wires to the expression making machine and the perforating machine, and the woman was interacting with this technology through her performance, she was still utilizing the recording piano in the traditional way. She was performing by hand as she engaged with values such as the work ethic and the idea of

inheritance concerning music as a feminine pursuit. The male recording producer, on the other hand, was purely involved with the technical side of the recording process, working with material objects of the player piano industry that conventionally reflected male inventiveness, while he attempted to translate her musical dynamics. One sees the unequal power dynamic in this interaction, as the recording process was regulated by a man, and the woman's musical expression is filtered by his musicianship skills. To be sure, male piano roll artists also had the same interplay, although the gender relations were very different – they do not take on the same symbolic meanings/potency as interactions between men and women.

While the producer who controlled the expression making machine and the male editor had much control over the interpretation of the specific way in which a piano roll artist performed, sometimes the pianist had the final say regarding the finished product. For example, Duo-Art allowed most of its famous artists to hear the roll before being mass produced, and to make comments and changes if required. It can be reasonably assumed that Baker and Alpert were among this group, as, according to Alexander Milne (Frank Milne's son), Frank Milne "thought very highly of those artists like Phil Ohman, [Constance] Mering, Edythe Baker. And Pauline Alpert."⁵⁷ His son also stated that, concerning the latter, Frank Milne was particularly enamoured with her piano playing, and that "he thought the world of her as an artist."⁵⁸

Therefore, it is interesting to note that Pauline Alpert was asked by Milne to "simplify some of her rolls."⁵⁹ Taken out of context, one could come to the conclusion that Alpert's control

57. Wodehouse, "Alexander Farquar Milne," 20.

58. Wodehouse, 20.

59. Peter Mintun, "Perforated Profiles," 166.

over her performances, despite having the last word when it came to the end result, was limited due to gender discrimination. This is not the case, as Milne's request was not the result of a gendered bias towards Alpert's phenomenal virtuosity, but instead was a business decision concerning audience expectations. Specifically, by the 1920s, consumers wanted to hear what they considered "live, unedited performances," and not the overdubbing that was a common practice in early player piano musical culture. This did not stop editors from occasionally adding in extra countermelodies or additional notes in chords, although they had to make sure that these augmentations sounded natural. While the marketing requirement to sell reproducing pianos and piano rolls called for a difficult type of music that exhibited the capabilities of the instrument (the piano novelty), consumers had to believe there was a human behind such extraordinary feats. Regarding Pauline Alpert, Frank Milne was concerned that consumers of her rolls would not believe a real artist was playing, as she was doing "too many fancy things," and that "they would think we were editing more notes in."⁶⁰ Alpert slightly thinned out some of her arrangements, and stated in an interview that they were still "a good reproduction of her work."⁶¹

When comparing phonograph recordings of Pauline Alpert's pieces with her piano rolls (I also listened to a live 1979 YouTube video of Alpert performing at an AMICA conference), they are similar with regard to the general characteristics of her arrangement style. As to her virtuosity, in her piano rolls, her sparkling fingerwork, tone quality, and dynamic sound are comparable to that heard in her phonograph recordings. Nevertheless, her pieces on records and in the 1979 video, for the most part, had more musical figurations such as chromatic trills,

60. Mintun, 166.

61. Mintun, 166.

additional four-and-five note chords, and arpeggios with interval progressions. Alpert also made more use of the extreme ranges of the keyboard (especially in the high range).

Baker's performance and her arrangements on piano rolls, on the other hand, when compared to her phonograph recordings, were more similar in texture and tone than the comparisons between Alpert's rolls and phonograph recordings (and the video). However, while not noticeable, when listening to Baker's rolls, some of the transcriptions I made revealed additional parts in the music that could not possibly be played by one person. It appears that edits were made to make some musical lines technically more complicated. For example, as illustrated in figure 8.6, the span of some chords was too large for any human hand to reach. As mentioned earlier, this was the custom for piano novelty arranging (albeit in a manner that still reflects human performance), and thus Baker's piano rolls represent the norm.

It is Pauline Alpert's performances on piano rolls that are the exception to the rule. Frank Milne worked with some of the best pianists in the world – male and female – yet, as reported by his son, of all these pianists, “he never saw a pianist play as well as this Pauline Alpert.”⁶² She was a special case, and thus deserves special attention. The fact that Alpert was requested to cut down some of her arrangements does illustrate some loss of control for her as a performer (although, as we have seen, this was not because she was a woman). It does not, however, negate my earlier supposition that the Duo-Art piano roll recording studio was an environment in which women were allowed to write advanced arrangements and perform in a virtuosic manner. Alpert still performed virtuosic musical works, and the essence of her arrangement style is apparent when listening to some of her well-known piano rolls.

62. Wodehouse, “Alexander Farquar Milne,” 9.

Moreover, Edythe Baker's virtuosity and arranging skills, akin to many other artists that recorded for Duo-Art, are exemplified in their entirety in the piano roll studio. Women still benefited from recording in the Duo-Art piano roll studio, performing on an instrument that allowed for the communication of new gender codes, as well as older ones (sometimes re-imagined for the new era), in a location not as hindered by the gendered constraints of early twentieth-century American society.

Conclusion

The last question I have utilized from Robertson's methodology meets the requirements of a conclusion, as it allows for the summary of my research presented in this chapter. It asks about motive, specifically, if women want to change the balance of power in their communities and if this is accomplished through performance (Part II – 13, 14). During the early twentieth century, American women fought and won the right to vote, forever altering the gendered landscape of their society. They entered the workforce on an unprecedented scale, filling positions during WWI that were considered masculine work, thus proving their ability to manage any type of employment. In the music industry, women performed in vaudeville, musicals, played in bands and did solo work. They also composed and arranged in a variety of styles, and made radio broadcasts and piano roll and phonograph recordings. Although the men outnumbered them, and they had to contend with rampant discrimination, women musicians secured a place for themselves in the industry. Through the maneuvering and pushing of boundaries of their society, these women sometimes worked within the gendered restrictions – engaging with older gender codes as a way of promoting newer ideas – and sometimes contested gender norms through outright dissent.

Concerning the Duo-Art recording studio, while it is difficult to ascertain if Alpert and Baker intentionally sought to change the gender relations between men and women in this respect, there was a shift in the music industry. Their activities, and those of other female piano roll artists did alter the power relations as it affected musical behaviour. And their presence in the studio, among the many other female piano roll artists, helped make a public venue tied to the economic world more gender neutral and inviting to female participation in the player piano industry. Furthermore, through their efforts and by utilizing the recording piano as an effective object of change and continuity (engaging with the emblematic and mechanical properties of the instrument), their virtuosic performances – crystalized in piano rolls and purchased by numerous consumers – signified the fact that pianistic virtuosity, in all its forms, was not confined to men. Furthermore, by arranging advanced works of music, women piano roll artists were demonstrating their creativity and combating older gender codes. Moreover, their actions inflected the object-code of the player piano (the recording piano), so that it gradually came to symbolize newer ideas that promoted these elements of gender equality in music performance.

In her later years, Pauline Alpert spoke about how, when she was young, women were often dismissed and not given the respect they deserved.⁶³ However, her efforts in the piano roll studio (and her many other musical escapades on stage and for radio) and those of her female contemporaries such as Edythe Baker, effected change in the music industry. They opened doors for themselves and enabled future generations of female artists to build on their success.

63. Craig Brougher, "Pauline Alpert Piano Rolls."

Conclusion and Epilogue

A cultural historiographical account of the player piano's lifecycle involves a complex web of stories, each outlining the instrument's far-reaching influence in the social order. In the preceding chapters, two significant narrative threads have been considered: player piano advertising, and women making piano rolls in the recording studio. The first of these examined player piano advertisements from multiple piano companies spanning three decades, while the second investigated the life and work of two female piano roll musicians – Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert.

Utilizing gender as a mode of inquiry and positioning the player piano as an actor with agency, I have explored the complex symbolic coding of the instrument as well as studied its musical/technical affordances in performance. These findings align with my thesis. The player piano acted as a medium of communication regarding gender expression, and a site of negotiation from which piano advertising departments and women piano roll artists broadcasted their dissent and conformity with societal gender norms.

Drawing on an abundance of primary source material, and situated within the subfield of critical organology, my research has relied on case studies, mapped out in chapters 4, 5, 7 and 8. Chapters 4 and 5 read gender codes by means of a compare-and-contrast analysis of player piano advertising and piano print media. Additionally, biographical summaries of Baker and Alpert, and an analysis of gender roles in musical behaviour (via their piano roll performances) as mediated by the player piano are presented in the last two chapters, respectively.

Background information can be found in the remaining chapters. These include a detailed account of the piano novelty: a “White” genre employed by piano roll artists with musical ties to

ragtime and jazz; an historical account of the player piano; and an overview of the evolving conventions of gender in the early twentieth century, connected to the changing role of women in America. This research has been shown to be relevant to my case studies, as a thorough understanding of the instrument, the music on the chosen rolls, and the various gender ideologies of the period allow us to gain a broader perspective concerning the player piano's importance in the early twentieth century. The instrument was a product of its time, with its invention, purpose, and multiple uses defined by its historical parameters. In a musical culture defined by the piano, the player piano was briefly considered to be the evolutionary pathway for sound reproduction. Therefore, its importance in the social order cannot be underestimated.

Nevertheless, by the late 1920s, consumers had grown accustomed to listening to music rather than making it, and as a result, Americans generally preferred the more affordable radio and phonograph to the self-playing instrument. As such, player piano sales declined. Piano companies, in general, did not foresee this outcome. Indeed, by 1923, most of the manufacturers in the piano industry were heavily invested in the production of player pianos, with the silent piano, in essence, being replaced as the universal instrument in the American home. To use a colloquial expression, most companies had "put all their eggs in one basket," and therefore did not have any backup alternatives. Ironically, this was one of the contributing factors to the end of the golden age of the piano industry in the early twentieth century. In other words, by ceasing to produce pianos (or greatly limiting production), they unintentionally harmed their own interests.

However, companies such as Steinway & Sons, Baldwin, and Aeolian (while they had invested in player pianos) continued to make pianos throughout the Roaring Twenties and were thus able to manage the downward economic spiral of the late 1920s and to survive the Great

Depression.¹ Indeed, there was a renewed enthusiasm for buying pianos in the mid 1930s – albeit not close to the same degree as seen during the nineteenth century – as the public turned to traditional values of home and family in the wake of economic hardship and uncertainty. Piano advertising continued to draw on these values, “the appeals to [a] lost Victorian ethos,”² emphasizing the timeless joy of creating music as opposed to the instant gratification of sound reproduction. Moreover, public schools’ promotion of music appreciation for children through group piano instruction and the offering of second-hand pianos and cheaper modern uprights also encouraged thrifty Americans to purchase pianos.

Player piano manufacturing, on the contrary, had, for the most part, ceased in the 1930s. The stock market crash of 1929 delivered the final death blow to many piano companies, who either went bankrupt or were absorbed by the few remaining larger companies left standing in the wake of economic collapse. For example, older well-known companies such as Bush & Lane went out of business, while others, including Hallet & Davis, and Kranich & Bach, were taken over by the Aeolian-American Corporation (itself a composite of Aeolian and the American Piano Company, which merged in 1932).

The piano roll industry was also greatly affected by the Great Depression, as sales of piano rolls plummeted, with many businesses closing shop in the early part of the decade. For instance, the last Welte-Mignon piano rolls were produced in 1932. Nevertheless, there were a few companies that continued to cut rolls during the 1930s: these included Aeolian’s subsidiaries

1. It should be noted that there were also other circumstances concerning the reasons for these companies’ longevity in the business. For example, Aeolian was a piano conglomerate, and thus had more cash flow to sustain them through the lean years, as opposed to smaller piano companies. Moreover, Steinway & Sons and Baldwin were renowned for their craftsmanship, appealing to a niche market, selling high-end grand pianos to wealthy consumers.

2. See Roell, *The Piano in America*, 276.

Duo-Art and, with the merger, Ampico. By 1931, however, Aeolian's piano roll division, reeling from the loss of sales, had to dismiss most of its employees. By 1932, only Frank Milne was making rolls for the company, which had moved its headquarters to a more affordable location in East Rochester. Gone were the days of famous artists cutting rolls at the prestigious New York building. Aeolian's contract pianists and former employees were forced to seek out other means of employment in the music industry.

Pauline Alpert was one of these musicians. She found full-time work as a radio pianist during the Great Depression. Always an exception to the rule, Alpert spent her most profitable years performing on the radio in a time when many artists were struggling to make ends meet. Furthermore, she successfully engaged with a dying musical genre – the piano novelty. While people enjoyed listening to Alpert's piano novelty compositions, such as "Dream of a Doll," in America, there was a general lack of interest in the art form by the 1930s.

Nevertheless, the piano novelty did remain popular in Europe throughout this decade, with European pianists such as Lothar Perl (1910-1975), Billy Mayerl (1902-1959), and Patricia Rossborough (1900-1992) arranging and composing fanciful and engaging novelty piano pieces for the consuming public. Moreover, Edythe Baker, while American born, was also making recordings of piano novelty arrangements and compositions overseas (England) during this period (1931-1933). Undeniably, the piano novelty arrangements she recorded for Decca Records, including "Mad About the Boy"³ (Noël Coward) and "She Didn't Say Yes" by Jerome

3. Noël Coward, "Mad About the Boy," performed by Edythe Baker, Decca GB5062, Oct 21, 1932, uploaded by Pianokeys88, "Edythe Baker – Mad About the Boy," June 16, 2023, YouTube video, 3:06, accessed August 15, 2023, https://youtu.be/F-YaIRs_Gu4?si=kynx6Rzt7o_5JNgY.

Kern⁴ exhibit refined melodic lines, a varied stride bass, and a full orchestral sound on the keyboard.

By the 1940s, however, most artists had abandoned the piano novelty, as it had fallen out of favour with international audiences. Pauline Alpert turned to classical music in the later part of the decade, and Edythe Baker was no longer cutting records of syncopated piano solos, as she had given up performing professionally. In America, the genre was the last piano-based form to achieve national popularity. While the piano novelty detached itself from the player piano in Europe during the 1930s, its origins were still grounded in a piano culture that was no longer relevant. The piano novelty was connected to the player piano, which was, in turn, linked to its predecessor. Approaching the end of the Roaring Twenties, the parameters of the American musical culture were no longer geared towards the piano. With the development of radio and the phonograph, this was a natural outcome in the evolution of the music industry.

Today, one can still find player pianos in the homes and studios of piano roll enthusiasts and collectors. Digital player pianos have also been made – the most popular ones developed by QRS Music Technologies,⁵ the last surviving piano roll company. Furthermore, piano rolls are being rediscovered and shared by the community via digital music platforms such as Spotify, Apple Music, and YouTube. Hence, the piano roll artistry of musicians long forgotten is being introduced to a new audience. Although obsolete, the player piano continues to spark interest

4. Jerome Kern, “She Didn’t Say Yes,” performed by Edythe Baker, Decca GB4084, March 11, 1932, uploaded by Pianokeys88, “Edythe Baker – She Didn’t Say Yes,” June 16, 2023, YouTube video, 2:36, accessed August 15, 2023, <https://youtu.be/ysM6lkNSIq0?si=XHUP5ypyhMW3ZEDn>.

5. “QRS PNOMATION: THE WAY MUSIC SHOULD BE HEARD,” QRS Music Technologies, Inc., 2023, accessed November 27, 2023, www.qrsmusic.com.

among many people, as it allows a glimpse into a musical world of bygone days, enveloped within a society on the cusp of social change.

Appendix A: Sheet Music

Edythe Baker cut many piano rolls between 1919 and 1926, although few were ever published as sheet music. Most of these recordings consisted of arrangements of Tin Pan Alley songs, examples of Baker's virtuosity at the keyboard. This includes her musical adaptation of Walter Donaldson's "Yes Sir! That's My Baby." A famous popular piece in its heyday, figure A1 consists of a copy of Donaldson's piano/vocal sheet music (now in the public domain). This is followed by figure A2, a transcription of Baker's Duo-Art piano roll arrangement of the song (#713142).

In figures A3 and A4, an additional two musical scores are presented. The former is the original sheet music of Vincent Youman's "I Know That You Know" (also no longer under copyright protection), and the latter a transcription of Pauline Alpert's Duo-Art piano roll version of the same song (#713326). While Alpert made over 500 piano rolls in her lifetime, akin to Edythe Baker, there are no sheet music publications of her Tin Pan Alley arrangements.

Donaldson and Youman's songs are early-intermediate level pieces that could be performed by most people with basic piano skills, whereas Baker and Alpert's arrangements are highly advanced, and were never meant to be hand-played by consumers. Their purpose was to showcase the capabilities of the artists and the player piano, and to help sell the sheet music of the original songs. However, transcribing the music on these rolls to score provides the researcher with a more complete description of these women's musical talents. Indeed, as described in chapter 8, when analyzing the music, one cannot deny Baker and Alpert's exemplary musicianship skills and personal approaches to variation form.

Both Baker and Alpert's arrangements were transcribed by this author from the piano rolls as heard on YouTube via Duo-Art reproducing pianos. The recordings allowed for a clear rendition of the notation, as well as the dynamics and other musical articulations captured by the Duo-Art reproducing system. All these musical elements are accurately delineated to the written score.

Appendix Figure A: 1. Walter Donaldson, *Yes Sir! That's My Baby* (New York: Irving Berlin Inc., 1925)

2

Yes Sir, That's My Baby

Words by
GUS KAHN

With Piano
Tune Ukulele
A D F# B
Put Uke Capo on 1st Fret

Music by
WALTER DONALDSON

Moderato

Till ready

VOICE

Who's that com-ing down the street? Who's that look-ing so pe-tite?
Who's the "who" I rave a-bout? Who do I feel blue with-out,

Who's that com-ing down to meet me here?
In the Win-ter, Sum-mer, Spring and Fall?

Ukulele arr. by
MAY SINGHI BREEN

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Who's that you know who I mean, Sweet-est "who" you've ev-er seen,
What was I just "gon-na" say, I for-get, but an-y way,

I could tell her miles a-way from here.
Here's the most im-port-ant thing of all.

CHORUS

Yes, Sir, That's my Ba-by, No, Sir,
Yes, Sir, That's my Ba-by, No, Sir,

Don't mean "May-be" Yes, Sir, That's my Ba-by now.
Don't mean "May-be" Yes, Sir, That's my Ba-by now.

4

Yes, ma'am we've de-cid-ed
Well well, "lookit" that ba-by

No ma'am, we won't hide it, Yes, ma'am
Do tell, don't say "may-be" Nell's bells

you're in-vit-ed now. By the
won't she cause some row. Pret-ty

way, soon By the way When we
Pret-ty soon We will

reach the preach-er I'll say, (with feeling)
hear that Lo - hen-grin tune, (I'm sayin')

Yes, Sir, That's my Ba - by, No, Sir,
Who for should she be sir, No one

don't mean "may - be" Yes, Sir, That's my Ba - by
else but me sir, Yes sir, That's my Ba - by

now.
now.

Appendix Figure A: 2. Walter Donaldson, “Yes Sir! That’s My Baby,” arr. by Edythe Baker, February 1925, transcription by Amy Gajadhar from Duo-Art Piano Roll #713142 as heard in Aeolian Hall, “Yes Sir! That’s My Baby by Donaldson & Kahn pl by Edythe Baker,” September 29, 2013, YouTube video, 3:17, https://youtu.be/31anL8_9KO8

Donaldson

Yes Sir! That’s My Baby

Arranged by Edythe Baker

Transcribed by Amy Gajadhar



Yes Sir! That's My Baby

Walter Donaldson/Edythe Baker

Transcribed by Amy Gajadhar

Swing

The piano score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score consists of four systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff joined by a brace. The first system begins with a treble staff introduction marked with a '3' and a 'Swing' tempo instruction. The main melody in the treble staff features various dynamics including *f* (forte), *mf* (mezzo-forte), and *sfz* (sforzando). The bass staff provides a steady accompaniment with chords and single notes. The second system continues the melody with a *f* dynamic. The third system starts at measure 5 and includes a *rfz* (rassordito forzando) dynamic. The fourth system starts at measure 7 and includes *f*, *mp* (mezzo-piano), and *sfz* dynamics. The score includes numerous musical notations such as slurs, ties, and triplet markings.

2

Musical score for piano, measures 9-17. The score is written for two staves (treble and bass clef) in a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The time signature is 4/4. The music features complex chordal textures and melodic lines.

Measures 9-10: Treble staff has a series of chords and a melodic line. Bass staff has a series of chords and a melodic line.

Measures 11-12: Treble staff has a series of chords and a melodic line. Bass staff has a series of chords and a melodic line. Dynamics include *f* (forte) and *p* (piano).

Measures 13-14: Treble staff has a series of chords and a melodic line. Bass staff has a series of chords and a melodic line. Dynamics include *p* (piano).

Measures 15-16: Treble staff has a series of chords and a melodic line. Bass staff has a series of chords and a melodic line. Dynamics include *mf* (mezzo-forte).

Measures 17: Treble staff has a series of chords and a melodic line. Bass staff has a series of chords and a melodic line. Dynamics include *p* (piano).

This page contains a piano score for measures 19 through 28. The music is written for a grand piano, with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The score is characterized by dense, complex chordal textures and frequent use of triplets. Measure 19 begins with a triplet of eighth notes in the treble and a triplet of eighth notes in the bass. Measures 21 and 23 feature prominent triplets in both hands. Measure 25 includes a triplet of eighth notes in the treble and a triplet of eighth notes in the bass. Measure 28 features a triplet of eighth notes in the treble and a triplet of eighth notes in the bass. The score is marked with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic in measure 23. The notation includes various musical symbols such as slurs, ties, and accidentals.

19

21

23

25

28

mp

4

30

Measures 30-31 of a piano piece. Measure 30 features a treble staff with a melodic line containing two triplet markings and a bass staff with a sustained chordal accompaniment. A dynamic marking of *p* (piano) is placed over the bass staff. Measure 31 begins with a treble staff marked *mf* (mezzo-forte) and a bass staff with a more active accompaniment. The key signature has two flats.

32

Measures 32-33. Measure 32 shows a treble staff with a triplet and a bass staff with a steady accompaniment. Measure 33 continues the accompaniment in the bass staff while the treble staff has a melodic line. The key signature remains two flats.

34

Measures 34-35. Measure 34 features a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a steady accompaniment. Measure 35 begins with a treble staff marked *mp* (mezzo-piano) and a bass staff with a sustained accompaniment. The key signature remains two flats.

36

Measures 36-37. Measure 36 shows a treble staff with a melodic line and a bass staff with a steady accompaniment. Measure 37 continues the accompaniment in the bass staff while the treble staff has a melodic line. The key signature remains two flats.

38

Measures 38-39 of a piano piece. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Measure 38 features a complex texture with sixteenth-note runs in the right hand and chords in the left hand. Measure 39 continues this texture. A dynamic marking of *mf* (mezzo-forte) is placed above the right hand in measure 39.

40

Measures 40-41. Measure 40 shows a continuation of the sixteenth-note patterns. Measure 41 features a more active right hand with sixteenth-note runs and a left hand with chords. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present above the right hand in measure 41.

42

Measures 42-43. Measure 42 includes a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand, both marked with a '3'. Measure 43 features a right hand with sixteenth-note runs and a left hand with chords. A dynamic marking of *f* (forte) is placed above the right hand in measure 43.

44

Measures 44-45. Measure 44 features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand, both marked with a '3'. The right hand has a dynamic marking of *f* and the left hand has a dynamic marking of *p* (piano). Measure 45 features a right hand with sixteenth-note runs and a left hand with chords. A dynamic marking of *f* is placed above the right hand in measure 45.

6

Measures 46-47. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Measure 46 features a treble staff with a triplet of eighth notes and a bass staff with a triplet of eighth notes, both marked with an accent (>) and a forte (*f*) dynamic. The bass staff also includes a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. Measure 47 continues the melodic lines with various articulations and dynamics.

Measures 48-49. Measure 48 shows a treble staff with a triplet of eighth notes and a bass staff with a triplet of eighth notes, both marked with an accent (>) and a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. Measure 49 continues the melodic lines with various articulations and dynamics.

Measures 50-51. Measure 50 features a treble staff with a triplet of eighth notes and a bass staff with a triplet of eighth notes, both marked with an accent (>) and a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. Measure 51 continues the melodic lines with various articulations and dynamics.

Measures 52-53. Measure 52 shows a treble staff with a triplet of eighth notes and a bass staff with a triplet of eighth notes, both marked with an accent (>) and a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. Measure 53 continues the melodic lines with various articulations and dynamics.

54

Measures 54-55 of a piano piece. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Measure 54 features a complex, arpeggiated chordal texture in the right hand, with a long slur spanning across it. The left hand has a few notes. Measure 55 continues the right-hand texture, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The left hand has a few notes.

56

Measures 56-57 of a piano piece. The key signature has two flats. Measure 56 is marked with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The right hand has a complex, arpeggiated chordal texture. The left hand has a few notes. Measure 57 continues the right-hand texture, marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The left hand has a few notes.

58

Measures 58-59 of a piano piece. The key signature has two flats. Measure 58 is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand has a complex, arpeggiated chordal texture. The left hand has a few notes. Measure 59 continues the right-hand texture, marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The left hand has a few notes.

60

Measures 60-61 of a piano piece. The key signature has two flats. Measure 60 continues the right-hand texture from the previous system. The left hand has a few notes. Measure 61 continues the right-hand texture, marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The left hand has a few notes.

8

62 *mp* *mf*

64

66 *f* *sfz* *p* *f*

68 *mp* 3 3

70

This musical score is for a piano piece, spanning measures 62 to 70. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The score is written for piano, with a treble and bass staff. Measure 62 begins with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The right hand features a complex, flowing melody with many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. In measure 63, the right hand continues its intricate pattern, and the left hand has a brief rest. Measure 64 shows a change in the right hand's texture, with more sustained chords and a different rhythmic pattern. Measure 65 continues this texture. Measure 66 is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The right hand has a series of chords and moving lines, while the left hand has a more active, rhythmic accompaniment. Measure 67 features a sforzando (*sfz*) dynamic in the right hand, followed by a piano (*p*) section and then a return to forte (*f*). Measure 68 is marked mezzo-piano (*mp*) and includes triplet markings (3) in the right hand. Measure 69 continues the piece with similar textures. Measure 70 concludes the section with a final chord in the right hand and a sustained bass line in the left hand.

72

mf

mf

Musical score for measures 72-73. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Measure 72 features a melody in the right hand with eighth and sixteenth notes, and a bass line in the left hand with eighth notes. Measure 73 continues the melody and bass line. Dynamics include *mf* (mezzo-forte).

74

Straight

p

rit. *sf* *p*

Musical score for measures 74-76. Measure 74 is marked "Straight". The right hand has a complex, fast-moving melody with many beamed notes. The left hand has a steady bass line. Measure 75 continues the fast melody. Measure 76 shows a change in dynamics to *p* (piano) and includes the marking "rit. *sf* *p*".

77

Musical score for measure 77. The right hand has a single chord, and the left hand has a single chord. The key signature remains two flats.

Appendix Figure A: 3. Vincent Youmans, *I Know That You Know* (New York: Harms Inc., 1926)

22 "Oh Please" **I KNOW THAT YOU KNOW**

Words by ANNE CALDWELL 1926 Music by VINCENT YOUMANS

VOICE *Moderato*

PIANO

VERSE

Life's a game, — but who can play —

it all a-lone? — Ev - 'ry chap — should

hold a heart — that's all his own. — Love may

come at first sight, they told me; When I saw you, I knew —

I had found — my on - ly love, — When I met you.

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REFRAIN

So, dar - ling, I know — that you know — That I'll go — where

molto rit.
R.H. *p-mf*
a tempo

you go. — I choose you; — won't lose you. — I wish you knew how

cresc.

much I long To hold you in — my arms. This time — is my time, — 'Twill

mf
p

soon be — good-bye time, Then in the star - light, — Hold me tight. — With

cresc.
mf
p

one more lit-tle kiss, Say Night-y night! — So, dar - ling, night!

poco rall.
p
a tempo
molto rit.
R.H. *p*

1. C G#dim Am B^b5 C B7 C7 C#7 2. CFma7 Fm7 Fm6 C

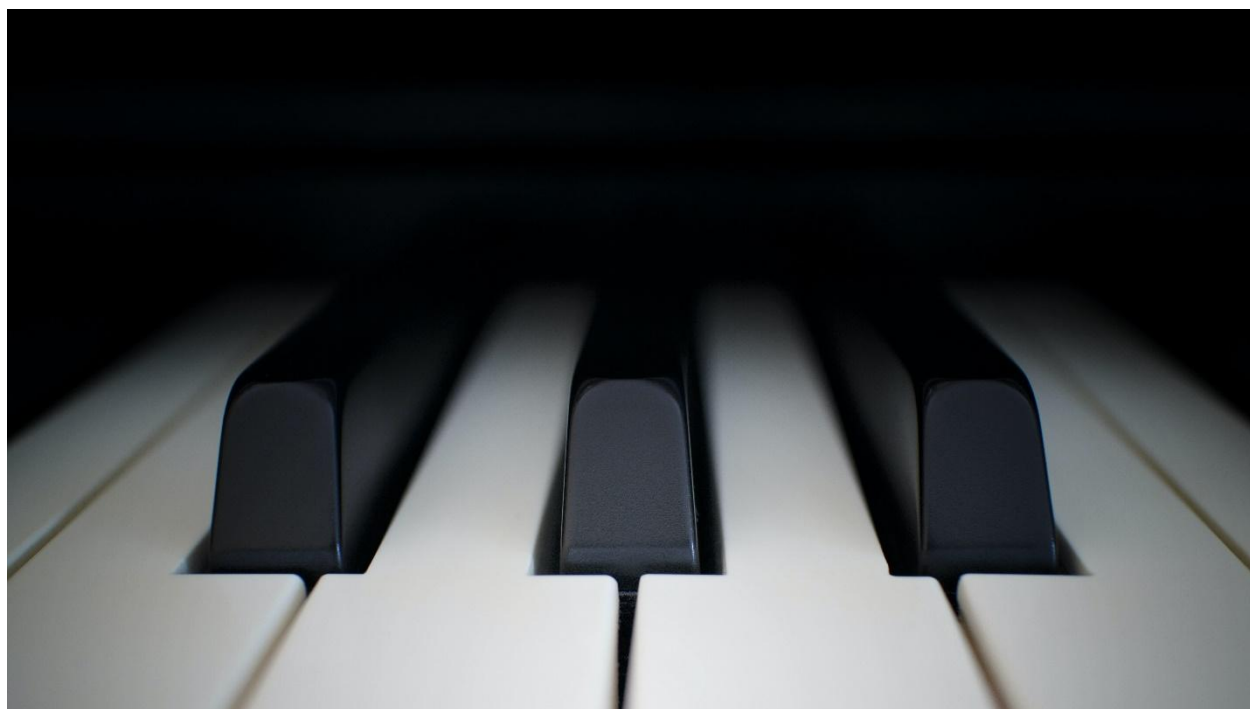
Appendix Figure A: 4. Vincent Youmans, “I Know That You Know,” arr. by Pauline Alpert, February 1927, transcription by Amy Gajadhar from the Duo-Art Roll #713326 as heard in Aeolian Hall, “I Know That You Know by Vincent Youmans Played by Pauline Alpert. Big Hit in 1927,” August 8, 2013, YouTube video, 3:01, <https://youtu.be/NF6cZJIsTgc>

Youmans

I Know That You Know

Arranged by Pauline Alpert

Transcribed by Amy Gajadhar



I Know That You Know

Vincent Youmans / Pauline Alpert
Transcribed by Amy Gajadhar

Swing

The piano score is written in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of five systems of staves, each with a treble and bass clef. The score includes various musical notations such as chords, single notes, and triplets. Dynamic markings include *mp* (mezzo-piano), *p* (piano), and *pp* (pianissimo). Measure numbers 4, 9, 13, and 18 are indicated at the start of their respective systems. The piece concludes with a final chord in the fifth system.

2

22

Measures 22-26 of a piano piece. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). Measure 22 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. Measures 23-24 are marked mezzo-piano (*mp*). Measure 25 returns to piano (*p*). Measure 26 features a complex chordal texture with a fermata over the final chord.

27

Measures 27-31. Measure 27 begins with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The piece continues with a series of chords and moving lines in both hands, maintaining the *mf* dynamic throughout the system.

32

Measures 32-35. Measure 32 starts with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The system concludes with a complex, multi-measure rest for the right hand in measure 35, while the left hand continues with a melodic line.

36

Measures 36-39. Measure 36 begins with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The music features a mix of chords and moving lines, with a fermata over a chord in measure 38.

40

Measures 40-43. Measure 40 starts with a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic. The system ends with a complex chordal texture in measure 43, featuring a fermata.

44

Measures 44-47 of a piano piece. Measure 44 features a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb). The dynamic is *mf*. Measure 45 continues the triplet in the treble and has a *mp* dynamic. Measure 46 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb). Measure 47 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb).

48

Measures 48-51 of a piano piece. Measure 48 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb). Measure 49 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb). Measure 50 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb). Measure 51 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb).

52

Measures 52-55 of a piano piece. Measure 52 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb). Measure 53 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb). Measure 54 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb). Measure 55 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb). The dynamic is *cresc.*

56

Measures 56-58 of a piano piece. Measure 56 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb). Measure 57 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb). Measure 58 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb). The dynamic is *mf*.

59

Measures 59-62 of a piano piece. Measure 59 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb). Measure 60 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb). Measure 61 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb). Measure 62 has a treble clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb) and a bass clef with a triplet of eighth notes (Bb, Ab, Gb). The dynamic is *mp*.

4

63

mf

68

3

3

73

mp3

3

77

mf

3

81

mp

mf

3

6

102

mf *mp*

106

mf

110

mp

114

mf *mp* *mp* *mf*

117

mp *mp* *cresc.*

Detailed description of the musical score: The score consists of five systems of piano music. The first system (measures 102-105) begins with a *mf* dynamic and a crescendo leading to *mp*. It features dense chordal textures and a triplet in the right hand. The second system (measures 106-109) starts with *mf* and includes triplet patterns in both hands. The third system (measures 110-113) begins with a triplet in the right hand and a *mp* dynamic. The fourth system (measures 114-116) contains multiple triplet markings and dynamic changes from *mf* to *mp* and back to *mf*. The fifth system (measures 117-120) starts with *mp*, includes a crescendo, and ends with a *mf* dynamic. The music is characterized by complex voicings and rhythmic patterns.

7

This musical score page contains five systems of piano music, measures 120 through 136. The music is written for piano on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat). Measure numbers 120, 124, 128, 132, and 136 are indicated at the start of their respective systems. The score includes various musical notations such as chords, arpeggios, triplets, and dynamic markings. The dynamics *mf* (mezzo-forte) and *mp* (mezzo-piano) are used. The piece concludes with a final measure (136) featuring a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a triplet of eighth notes in the left hand.

120 *mf* *mp*³

124 *mf*

128

132

136 *mp*³ 3 3 3 3 3 3 3

8

139

The musical score consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It contains two measures. The first measure has a triplet of eighth notes (B4, C5, D5) followed by a quarter note (E5), a quarter note (F5), and a quarter note (G5). The second measure has a triplet of eighth notes (F5, G5, A5) followed by a quarter note (B5), a quarter note (C6), and a quarter note (D6). The lower staff is in bass clef. It contains two measures. The first measure has a triplet of eighth notes (B3, C4, D4) followed by a quarter note (E4), a quarter note (F4), and a quarter note (G4). The second measure has a triplet of eighth notes (F4, G4, A4) followed by a quarter note (B4), a quarter note (C5), and a quarter note (D5). The piece ends with a double bar line.

Appendix B: Carol E. Robertson's Performance Questions

Carol E. Robertson, "Power and Gender in the Musical Experience of Women," in *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Ellen Koskoff (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), 225-44.

Introduction

Ethnomusicologist Carol E. Robertson proposed a series of questions at the end of her chapter essay in the book, *Women and Music in Cross-Cultural Perspective*.¹ These could be applied to various performance settings, as demonstrated in chapter 8. Specifically, I utilized several queries and divided them into two groups as a means of analyzing Edythe Baker and Pauline Alpert's piano roll performances. Other questions were not applicable to a musicological topic and were therefore not used in this dissertation. Appendix B provides a summary of all questions as organized by Robertson into three sections: Social Authority; Gender and Access; and Notions of Power, Gender, and Performance.

Social Authority

This category refers to the specifics concerning power and authority in a society. It first asks the researcher to determine who makes the decisions and what institutions are in place to authorize these uses of power (and if they are gender-exclusive). The focus then shifts to material culture: "Are certain objects associated with power?"² Further inquiries examine the gendering of these objects (and the historical reasons for this) and their line of inheritance. The last group of

1. Robertson, "Power and Gender in the Musical Experience of Women," 242-43.

2. Robertson, 242.

questions in this section refer to familiar descent – how it is determined and what role “women play in the fabric of kinship?”³ It also suggests that one look beyond the family, investigating the bonds between other groups of people.

Gender and Access

These questions probe the gender hierarchies in a society. They determine how many genders are recognized, the characteristics and attributes “associated with each gender”⁴ and if these are used to restrict a person’s power in the culture and entry into certain ritual practices. Furthermore, it is important to determine if people’s interactions with other genders are rooted in fear, respect, or other reasons.

Queries are then guided towards performance: “Are performance-inclusion decisions based on the notion that one gender lacks something by virtue of sexuality, or that a gender has access to kinds of power through sexuality?”⁵ They also investigate the degree to which worldviews are shared by men and women, and if the differences in these beliefs about life are mirrored in public or gender-specific performances. Additionally, one is encouraged to look at the manner in which women and men are viewed as “opposites or as complements,”⁶ and if this is also reflected or rendered inadequate in performance. Lastly, the questions examine secrecy as a component of power, and that the way in which it is maintained offers much insight to the

3. Robertson, 242.

4. Robertson, 242.

5. Robertson, 242.

6. Robertson, 242.

researcher with regard to understanding the inner workings of a society. Knowledge is also defined as a type of power, and one should question if it also falls under gender-specific protection.

Notions of Power, Gender, and Performance

These questions in general are tailored to the conditions of performance and performance practices as guided by a society's gender ideologies. For example, the researcher is requested to observe if "performances of women are public, private or both,"⁷ and the situations under which these occur. Specifically, how much control do women have over their performances? Do they behave differently with men, and do they feel obligated to safeguard elements of their knowledge from men? Furthermore, through performance, "do women seek to change the balance of power in their communities?"⁸ Is this achieved through the execution of dissent as reflected in performance?

Regarding male and female co-performances, one should make note of the circumstances of these performances, particularly concerning the decision-making process. In other words, is there a man or woman who makes the final decisions, or is there unbiased collaboration? This connects with the notion of power, how it is used in performance – for example, how one performer (or one group) controls the other(s). Additionally, in what manner does the "acting out of values in performance reflect divisions of labor, spirituality, and power?"⁹ And "what

7. Robertson, 243.

8. Robertson, 243.

9. Robertson, 243.

relationships are perceived between emotion, communication, gender, and power in the performance arena?”¹⁰ Concerning these last two questions, how are these connections justified by different cultural groups? Moreover, by what means do people attain access to musical power sources? For instance, if the answer is musical training, is this available to all people in a society?

There are also queries in this last section that direct the researcher towards methods of comparison, specifically with reference to male performances and female performances, as well as musical materials. For instance, with regard to the former, do men and women’s performances attain different goals as differentiated by gender? And are women’s performances viewed and critiqued in the same way (or not) as men’s performances (in terms of equality)? Referencing the latter, what is their degree of accessibility with different members of a culture? Is this regulated by gender, with certain attributes of music linked to sexual characteristics (as determined by a culture)? One is also asked to examine the process of gendering of instruments and repertoires, and if there are situations from which both gendered male and female repertoires overlap.

Robertson’s queries thus broaden the outlook of the researcher, allowing for a fuller appreciation of the diverse musical experiences of men and women in various cultural systems around the world in the past and present. One also gains a more thorough comprehension of the “dynamics of control and access”¹¹ by means of studying music performance, as it both reflects and generates change and continuity in a society.

10. Robertson, 243.

11. Robertson, 243.

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