

THE PIANOLA JOURNAL

The Journal of the Pianola Institute

No. 19 2008

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

The Pianola Journal - Vol.19

I. Player-piano - Periodicals

I. Pianola Institute

789.72ML 1070

ISSN 0952-6323

The Pianola Journal is published by the Pianola Institute Ltd, registered office, 111a Station Road, West Wickham, Kent BR4 0PX.

Registered in England number 1937014.

Registered Charity number 292727.

Website: *www.pianola.org*

The aims of the Institute

A small number of pianola owners and musicians have been concerned for some time at the unnatural break between the world of music rolls and the world of music. Few members of the musical public know much about player pianos, and the Institute aims to bring about a better understanding and appreciation of the instrument in a number of ways.

The Institute publishes a regular journal, puts on public concerts, and has plans for a lending library of rolls, a travelling exhibition, and in addition a roll and information archive, with a small collection of player pianos for listening and study purposes.

The Pianola Institute will endeavour to preserve, research and document the pianola's history, to improve the instrument's present standing, and by the commissioning of new compositions, to ensure that it remains an important musical force for the future.

The directors of the Institute are:

Louis Cyr, Keith Daniels, Mike Davies, Denis Hall, Eileen Law, Rex Lawson and Claire L'Enfant.

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UK and EU - £15

Rest of the world - £25

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Editorial

You may be aware that, in British law, the present mechanical copyright on a sound recording lasts for 50 years from the date of its first publication. In layman's terms, what this means is that for 50 years after it first appears, a recording, whether a gramophone record, tape, CD, or any other format, is the property of the company which issued it. After those 50 years, it passes into the public domain. So if, for example, one copied a recording which EMI had made 20 years ago, and reissued it without their permission, one would be breaking the law, and could be prosecuted. If, however, the recording were published more than 50 years ago, it would be available for anyone to copy and reissue.

The European Union has published a proposal, under the terms of which the present 50 years of copyright protection would be extended to 95 years. The prime movers behind this proposal seem to be mainly in the field of popular music, where there is a lot more money to be made. Classical recordings dating back to the days of early LP and 78 rpm records, apart from rare exceptions, are very much a specialist interest, and if they were to remain under the control of the major recording companies, reissue would not be a commercial proposition, and it is unlikely that they would ever see the light of day again. This would bar all those excellent small CD labels such as Pearl, APR and Marston, from issuing many fascinating recordings from the teens, '20s and '30s of the last century, which are such a valuable insight into music making of that time. In some cases, it would prevent us from hearing interpretations which even now have not been superseded, and it would even prohibit recordings being made of any Ampico or Duo-Art rolls, as well as many of those for the Welte-Mignon.

The UK government has already rejected a similar proposal on the evidence of the Gowers Report, and the European Broadcasting Union is also against any change, but it seems that the matter has not been laid to rest. If the change is accepted, it would make quite a difference to any record collector and player piano enthusiast. Those interested in knowing more can find the full text of the proposal on the Web at the following address:

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/copyright/term-protection/term-protection_en.htm

We are delighted in this issue of the Pianola Journal to be bringing you two articles by colleagues who are real authorities in their respective fields. More frequently than we should wish, we seem to lament the fact that some so-called experts are happy to rush into print with books or articles containing misquotations and even, on occasions, direct errors. Of course, this situation is not a new one; but once a misleading statement has appeared in print, it is very difficult to put it right, even when a correction is subsequently made. We hasten to add that neither of our contributors is guilty of such misjudgments!

Mark Reinhart, piano enthusiast and Welte-Mignon specialist, gives us a well-rounded portrait of Josef Lhévinne. Lhévinne was one of the pianistic greats of the twentieth century, and he really shone, even in the generation which produced Cortot, Dohnanyi, Godowsky, Hofmann, Landowska and Rachmaninov. The fact that he was not a composer, and was of a retiring nature - it is said that he enjoyed nothing more than fishing, table tennis, billiards and bridge - has contributed to his neglect by later generations. Nevertheless, his playing lacks nothing in technical brilliance, elegance and poetry.

We are pleased to welcome a new contributor, Francis Bowdery, another piano lover and academic of considerable ability, as his article clearly demonstrates. Ferruccio Busoni, the great Italian all-round musician, was considered by many to have one of the most searching minds of the late nineteenth century, in addition to being an outstanding pianist. His transcriptions for piano broke new ground in terms of pushing forward the limits of the modern concert grand. His most famous transcription, that of the *Chaconne* from Bach's *Partita no. 4* for solo violin, went through several stages of development prior to its appearance in its final form in 1916. Bowdery takes us through this evolution, with particular reference to the version Busoni played for the Duo-Art in 1915.

Inside the back cover of this issue, you will find a CD which contains recordings of the playing of Busoni and Lhévinne, and we hope that these will add to your enjoyment of the articles. On this occasion, the CD will only be available with the Journal, and will not be issued separately.

It is with great pleasure that we welcome Eileen Law to the Board of the Pianola Institute. Eileen has given her support as an enthusiastic Member of the Institute for a number of years, and her increasing responsibilities with regard to the Friends' Committee have ensured that this is an appropriate and welcome appointment. We are also pleased to confirm four new Institute Members, namely Francis Bowdery, Professor Roger Buckley, Jo Santy and Peggy Smith. These are all long-term friends who have a serious interest in the player piano in all its guises, and we look forward to enjoying the closer relationship which these various appointments will bring.

Ferruccio Busoni, The Duo-Art and Bach's Chaconne

Francis Bowdery



Ferruccio Busoni playing the Duo-Art Recording Piano

In the writing of this article I have been indebted to Antonio Latanza's book, *Ferruccio Busoni – Realtà e utopia strumentale*, which, in addition to very rare photographs, reproduces facsimile correspondence between Busoni and the Welte, Hupfeld and Aeolian companies and the Columbia Graphophone Co, regarding his various recordings.¹ Thanks are due to Marc-André Hamelin, who kindly provided me with copies of out-of-print early editions of a number of Busoni's Bach transcriptions including the *Chaconne*. I would also like to express my gratitude to Denis Hall and John Taylor for loaning an original and a copy of Busoni's Duo-Art roll for close examination, and whose counsel and splendidly performing instruments raise a number of questions – and answers.

Busoni's most well-known Bach transcription is undoubtedly that of the *Chaconne* from the Violin Partita BWV 1004. It was first performed by its author in Boston, USA on 30 January 1893, and published not long after by Breitkopf and Härtel with a dedication to Eugen d'Albert – who preferred Brahms' left hand solo version. The 1893 first edition differs substantially from that now in print; like others of Busoni's Bach transcriptions it was rethought and reworked, in this case through four editions, up to its final form. Breitkopf and Härtel's Bach-Busoni Edition, comprising the major and some minor keyboard (not organ) pieces, also collected together and revised the whole series of

transcriptions dating back to 1888. The project was completed in 1917, the *Chaconne* being prepared in 1916 for this purpose.² Busoni's observations on the piece are worthy of note:

'The editor, in his transcriptions of the Preludes and Fugues in D, Eb, and E minor, has devoted much care to the registration, and begs to call attention to them as a series of examples in point. His piano-transcription of Bach's *Chaconne* for violin may also be added to this series, inasmuch as the editor has, in both cases, treated the tonal effects from the standpoint of organ sonority. This procedure, which has been variously attacked, was justified, firstly, by the breadth of conception, which is not fully displayed by the violin; and secondly, by the example set by Bach himself in the transcription for organ of his own violin-fugue in G minor.'³

Thus, as Larry Sitsky observes, this is a double transcription, first into organ style, and then for the piano. Whatever one makes of the aesthetics of this in a very different age to Busoni's, the precedent of Bach's own practice is undeniable.⁴

As a pianist, Busoni is something of an enigma. He was widely hailed as one of the most extraordinary pianists of his time: a recurring observation is that of his interpretative 'eccentricity'. It is clear from his correspondence that he found gramophone recording a strain, even though he was aware of its potential artistic and documentary value.⁵ It has been repeatedly observed by his peers and others that he was at his best in the large scale repertory which reflected his interests, rather than the miniatures demanded of recording artists at the time. This would appear to be borne out by his surviving discs, with the additional qualification that his approach to Chopin, eccentric to present day tastes, was not universally admired even in his own time. With the exception of Liszt's thirteenth *Hungarian Rhapsody*, it is difficult to form a cogent impression of Busoni from his sound recordings.⁶

Like several other pianists, Busoni seems to have found piano roll recording more congenial, if one is to judge by the number of rolls he made. There may be justifiable reasons for this: lack of time restrictions (limited side duration): possibility of correction of small errors: lack of intrusive studio equipment: the possibility of playing in a natural manner, rather than one adapted to the needs of the acoustic recording device: a more enlightened and comprehensive view of repertory. Among the considerable ground he covered – Beethoven Op. 111, substantial works by Liszt and Chopin – Busoni made recordings of only a few of his Bach transcriptions, and none at all of his own music. The chorale prelude, *Nun freut euch, lieben Christen g'mein*, is the best documented, appearing on Welte-Mignon and Philipps Duca rolls as well as one of the Columbia discs. Others include the *Adagio and Fugue* from the C major organ toccata, BWV 564, and the *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*. The *Chaconne* was recorded once, for Aeolian's Duo-Art in New York in July 1915.⁷ Thus the rolls can present

a broader repertory unencumbered by the technical limitations of acoustic sound recording. The *Chaconne* was one of a dozen substantial pieces Aeolian requested from Busoni, including another of Bach's organ preludes and fugues, Chopin's fourth *Ballade* and other pieces by Liszt. It is not clear whether all of these were ultimately recorded; certainly, not all were issued.

It may be worth noting the background to Busoni's 1915 American visit, which resulted in all of his Duo-Art rolls except for the Chopin Preludes recorded in London in 1920. His visit was relatively brief, and an unwelcome interruption to composition time and editing work on Breitkopf's Bach-Busoni Edition begun the previous summer: his growing awareness of the seriousness of the War and its horrifying implications would lead to his spending the duration in exile in Switzerland. His renown as a pianist provided him with his principal income, while seeming to him an increasingly futile occupation: the peripatetic life was not suited to a sensitive and easily disturbed man who deeply missed family and his Berlin home. All of these factors may have contributed to his haste in securing recording work, the short stay which allowed no participation in post-session editing, and perhaps the agitation of mood described by Percy Grainger backstage after Busoni had played – 'stunningly' in Grainger's estimation – Liszt's E flat Concerto.⁸

Harold Bauer, himself a Duo-Art recording artist who worked extensively with the company on the preparation of his rolls, commented in a 1922 letter to W. Creary Woods, New York recording manager, that most of the rolls he had heard were good 'with the exception of the Busoni records, which are all poor. The principal reason for this, however, is I believe that he made no corrections whatever himself and as his readings were liable to certain eccentricities, it has simply happened that the person who tried to reproduce his characteristics from memory, failed'.⁹ Whether the present roll was among those Bauer had heard is not clear. Aeolian Company correspondence with Busoni makes clear that the company actively sought to involve artists in the post-recording editing of their rolls. The Aeolian recording piano, a medium sized grand (possibly a Weber), detected key and pedal movements only, and a separate device beside the instrument, operated by the recording manager, enabled editorial insertion of dynamics during the performance. The information was fed to a perforating machine elsewhere in the building which produced a Duo-Art roll as the artist played. Thus, in accordance with claims in trade articles of the time, Aeolian could produce a playable roll as soon as the recording was finished. However, a playable roll is a very different matter, especially in subtle detail, from the finished article, and for the creation of this degree of finesse the artist's supervision was desirable.

There is no inherent reason why a reproducing roll recording should not capture the salient detail of the performance which recorded it. However, various factors may be subject to modification, either by the recording

apparatus, general requirements of roll preparation, or general editing policy of the company. One general point to note in this case is the limitation of Duo-Art 'bandwidth', meaning that the lowest and highest four notes of the eighty-eight note keyboard could not be played. The *Chaconne* ranges from A₂ to b flat⁴. Another consideration is the use of the sustaining pedal. It is a maxim that the pedalling of an artist sometimes requires some modification in the preparation of a finished roll – the human foot seems to 'clear' more quickly and precisely than the pneumatic unit is able to, and compensation is required. Thus the point of pedal registration on the recording piano becomes significant, both for the adequate capturing of detail and the minimising of editing. A comparison of Granados' *Danza Española* No. 10 recorded by the composer for Welte-Mignon and Duo-Art would suggest that in a number of passages Granados pedalled heavily for Welte and not at all for Duo-Art.¹⁰ Such an about-face does not seem likely, especially in contradiction to the score. Rather, it raises the possibility that, at least at this time, the Welte recording device detected half and quarter pedalling and encoded a mark while the Aeolian device registered later, effectively shortening or even overlooking some pedalling. The implications of this will be seen later.

Given the methods of preparation for Duo-Art rolls, it will be seen that the dimension most open to error is that of dynamics, particularly in the absence of the recording artist during final editing work. The *Chaconne* presents considerable difficulties here: the extent and complexity of polyphony throughout its nearly thirteen minute duration would make heavy demands on any reproducing system and the ingenuity of its editors, and some of the details do not seem to jell, even within the context of a performance of rather combatively monumental character. As well, the dynamic coding of the 1915 Busoni Duo-Art rolls is generally rather loud when played back on a correctly regulated reproducing instrument, as is also the case with other rolls of the same period by other artists: this raises questions regarding the editing piano then used for final preparation. Busoni's other rolls, discs and scores do not suggest a heavy-handed player. One might consider, though, the Busoni pupil Egon Petri's 1945 Columbia disc recording, which although devoid of the occasional awkwardnesses of the Busoni roll retains much of the directness of character its playing suggests – and incidentally retains the opening from the 1907 edition (see Fig. 2).¹¹

A pianistic curiosity is shown by the two errors in the roll. One anomaly is an E flat instead of E in bar 179. A minor emendation of the score at this point might betray an uncertainty on the part of the pianist; it could conceivably be an editing error. More significant is the missing semiquaver at bar 106 (Fig. 1): a curious parallel case can be found in the 1922 Columbia disc of Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in C* ('48' Book I), where in bar 5 of the *Prelude* there is a similar though smaller rhythmic stumble.¹² Could this be the result of nerves?

106 107

crescendo non troppo

This image shows two staves of music for bars 106 and 107 of the Chaconne. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat). The tempo/mood is indicated as *crescendo non troppo*. The music features a complex rhythmic pattern with many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. A vertical grey bar highlights the transition between bars 106 and 107.

106

p una corda

This image shows a piano roll variant of the same two staves. The notation is simplified, with many notes represented by dots or short stems. The dynamic is marked *p una corda*. The same vertical grey bar highlights the transition between bars 106 and 107.

Figure 1: Bach-Busoni: Chaconne, bars 106-7 (1907) and Busoni's piano roll variant

Chaconne für Violine allein.

Zum Konzertvortrage für Pianoforte bearbeitet von
F. B. Busoni.
An Eugen d'Albert.

Andante maestoso, ma non troppo lento.
Feierlich gemessen, doch nicht schleppend.

f sehr gehalten

ten.

This image shows the first six bars of the Chaconne for solo violin, arranged for piano. The title is *Chaconne für Violine allein.* It is a work by F. B. Busoni, based on the original by Johann Sebastian Bach, and arranged by Eugen d'Albert. The tempo is *Andante maestoso, ma non troppo lento.* The music is in 3/4 time and features a complex harmonic structure with many chords and moving lines. The dynamic is marked *f sehr gehalten* (fortissimo, very sustained). The word *ten.* (tenuis) is written at the end of the sixth bar.

An Eugen d'Albert.

Chaconne

Joh. Seb. Bach.
F. B. Busoni.

Andante maestoso, ma non troppo lento.
Feierlich gemessen, doch nicht schleppend.

f

This image shows the first six bars of the Chaconne for piano, based on the 1916 edition. The title is *Chaconne*. It is a work by Johann Sebastian Bach, arranged by F. B. Busoni. The tempo is *Andante maestoso, ma non troppo lento.* The music is in 3/4 time and features a complex harmonic structure with many chords and moving lines. The dynamic is marked *f* (fortissimo).

Figure 2: Bach-Busoni: Chaconne, bars 1-6, 1907 and 1916 editions

The basis of the roll recording is the third score (1907), which removes most of the elaborations of the first version and lays the ground for the final edition. However, the roll performance is a transitional version. A number of elements to be reworked in 1916 remain – the opening statement setting (bars 1-5) and the reharmonised theme statement (bar 130) for example (Figs 2 and 3). The difference in the opening is both one of layout and resultant sonority. Rather than splitting the parts between the hands in 1907, the 1916 setting for the left hand alone places the thumb on the top line, giving a quite different sound. The result is better integrated – including the reduction of the darkening bass octaves at bars 4-5 to a single line played by the right hand, crossed over.

The figure consists of two musical staves, one above the other, representing the 1907 and 1916 editions of Bach's Chaconne, bars 130-3. Both staves are in G major and 3/4 time. The top staff (1907 edition) shows a complex texture with multiple voices in both hands. It includes a 'ten.' (tenuendo) marking over the right hand in bar 130, and 'ff' dynamics. The bottom staff (1916 edition) shows a simplified texture with a 'ff' dynamic and 'ff molto tenuto' marking. Both scores are marked 'Tempo I.' and show bar numbers 130, 131, 132, and 133.

Figure 3: Bach-Busoni: Chaconne, bars 130-3, 1907 and 1916 editions

However, the coda of the 1916 version is in view – although masked by the Duo-Art ‘bandwidth’ restriction. Visual examination of the roll in the coda reveals that, though held by the pedal, the left hand chords of bars 258-9 are held as less than quavers, unlike the crotchet chords of the right: this is explained at bar 259 second crotchet, where a variant of the 1916 bass sequence is heard. Evidently this complete sequence, running below the Duo-Art range, was played and editorially modified. It seems likely that the first and second crotchet chords and A_2 , left hand, in bar 259 were played an octave lower and editorially transposed up: this would not be without precedent in Aeolian (and other) company policy (Figs 4 and 5). It might be noted that Busoni repeatedly asks for wide stretches in organ transcriptions to be played without arpeggiation, finding this alien to the original instrument. The alteration of the *Chaconne* coda achieves this while also giving a rhythmic movement to the broad sonority, as a substitute to the violin’s sustaining power. Either this or the desire

to avoid fortissimo stretches are also in evidence throughout the performance, especially in the left hand, where large chords are frequently contracted to the octave and internally reinforced. This tends to produce sonority at the expense of clarity, whether as a response to the sound of the recording piano or from the desire to avoid technical strain being impossible to judge.¹³

254 **Tempo I.**
Largamente maestoso. **255** **256** **257** *pesante*

ff *fff*

258 *sempre più allargando* **259** **260** **261** *ten.* **262**

*ten. Ped. **

V. A. 2334.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for the Chaconne by J.S. Bach, as edited by Ferruccio Busoni in 1907. It covers bars 254 to 262. The tempo is marked 'Tempo I. Largamente maestoso.' The dynamics range from fortissimo (ff) to fortississimo (fff). The score includes performance instructions such as 'pesante' (heavy) and 'sempre più allargando' (increasingly slowing down). There are fingerings indicated in the left hand, and a 'ten.' (tenuto) marking in the right hand. A 'Ped.' (pedal) marking with an asterisk is present at the end of bar 262.

254 **Tempo I.**
Largamente maestoso. **255** **256** **257** *pesante* **258** *sempre più*

ff *ff*

259 *allargando* **260** **261** **262**

Ped. Ped. Ped.

E. B. 2334.

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for the Chaconne by J.S. Bach, as edited by Ferruccio Busoni in 1916. It covers bars 254 to 262. The tempo is marked 'Tempo I. Largamente maestoso.' The dynamics range from fortissimo (ff) to fortissimo (ff). The score includes performance instructions such as 'pesante' (heavy) and 'sempre più' (increasingly). There are fingerings indicated in the left hand, and a 'Ped.' (pedal) marking in the right hand. The 1916 edition shows some differences in the right hand's texture and dynamics compared to the 1907 edition.

Figure 4: Bach-Busoni: Chaconne, bars 254-end, 1907 and 1916 editions

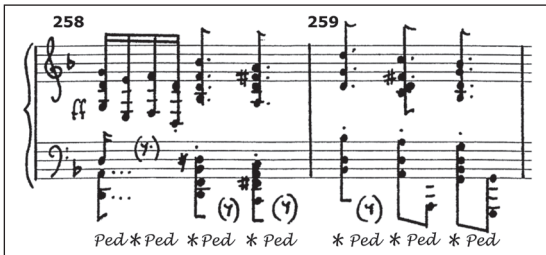
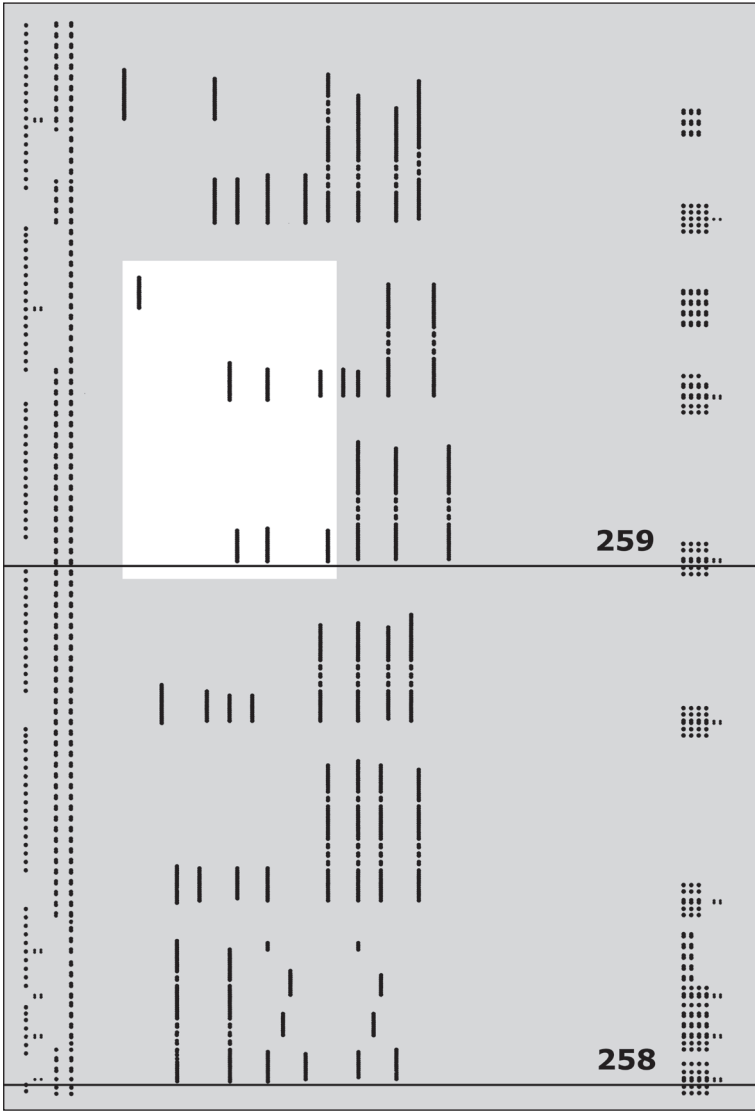


Figure 5: Busoni's piano roll bars 258-9 (bar lines superimposed) and scored

This musical score covers bars 122 to 125 of the Chaconne. It is written for piano and features a complex texture with multiple voices. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff* (fortissimo) and *m.g.* (mezzo-giochiato). Performance instructions include *m.d. A* (mezza-dolce) and *più allargando*. An *ossia:* section is present in bar 125, marked *fff* (fortississimo) and featuring a triplet of eighth notes. The score is divided into systems, with bar numbers 122, 123, 124, and 125 clearly marked at the beginning of their respective systems.

This musical score shows a piano roll variant of the Chaconne, specifically bars 122 to 125. It is written for piano and features a complex texture with multiple voices. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The score includes dynamic markings such as *ff* (fortissimo). Performance instructions include *etc* (et cetera). The score is divided into systems, with bar numbers 122 and 123 clearly marked at the beginning of their respective systems. The variant includes triplet markings in the bass line.

Figure 6: Bach-Busoni: Chaconne, bars 122-5 (1907) and Busoni's piano roll variant

A number of other minor and inconsistent alterations to texture and part-writing and some more substantial alterations, such as the double-dotting of rhythm in the first variation (bars 10-24), were never incorporated into the 1916 edition. This may represent the evolution of “functional economy” in Busoni’s performance pianism in the manner suggested by Beaumont, or simple exigencies of the particular day of the recording.¹⁴ Beside the contraction of large stretches discussed above, the two obvious examples are the alteration to triplets of the semiquavers of bars 122-5, a feature taken up by Michelangeli in 1948, and the homogenising of alternating hands at bars 130 and 157 (Figs 6 and 7).¹⁵

Meanwhile, editorial technicalities have been mentioned in relation to the coda. Editorial intervention also may be inferred at bar 76, where A and B flat in both hands are substituted with a tenuto A flat, whose duration can be measured as that of the two missing semiquavers (Fig. 8). The lowest notes of the double octaves from the C₂ in bar 73 are meanwhile also omitted through ‘bandwidth loss’.

The question of sustaining pedalling has also been raised. On the whole, the pedalling throughout the performance is not obviously unconvincing, but does not suggest the character of Busoni’s other recordings. A late pedal registration by the recording piano in the manner discussed above might elucidate passages

The figure consists of four musical excerpts arranged in a 2x2 grid. The top row shows the original 1907 edition for bars 130 and 157. The bottom row shows a piano roll variant for the same bars. In the piano roll variant for bar 130, the texture is simplified, and the bottom staff has markings 'Ped * Ped * Ped *' with upward arrows indicating pedal points. In the piano roll variant for bar 157, the texture is also simplified, and the bottom staff has markings 'Ped * Ped *' with upward arrows.

Figure 7: Bach-Busoni: Chaconne, bars 130 and 157 (1907) and Busoni’s piano roll variant

Musical score for Bach-Busoni: Chaconne, bars 75-77. The score is in G minor and 3/4 time. It features a treble and bass clef. Bar 75 is marked *ten.* and bar 76 is marked *cresc. possibile*. The score shows a complex melodic line with many accidentals and a dense harmonic texture. A large slur covers the entire passage from bar 75 to the end of bar 77.

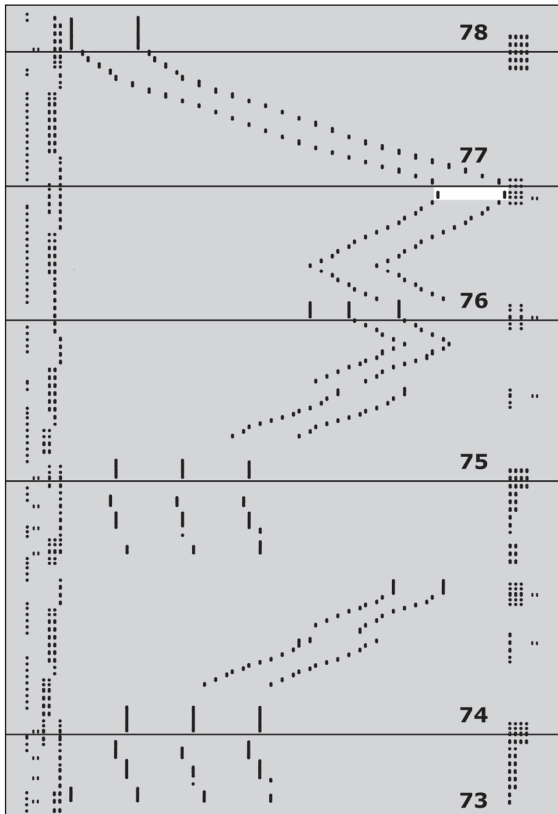


Figure 8: Bach-Busoni: Chaconne, bars 75-7 (1907) and Busoni's piano roll bars 73(end)-78(beginning)

such as that from bar 158 second crotchet in the present performance, where the right hand is staccato as marked over the left hand's sustained melodic material, but virtually without sustaining pedal. Its absence and inconsistency at this point seem improbable. If one posits a half change and gradual pedal re-depression from quarter-depth through half-depth at this point, the beginning of the pedal perforation at bar 159 becomes the registering of something that has in fact been gradually in progress since perhaps the beginning of the bar, and the musical and technical implausibility disappears (Fig. 9). Busoni's biographers Edward Dent and H.H. Stuckenschmidt and the 1922 Columbia discs verify the sophistication and extent of Busoni's pedalling in combination with very finely graded differentiations of touch.¹⁶

In summary, the roll certainly conveys the outlines of Busoni's performance, at least on a particular day in July 1915. The freedom of his interpretations has already been noted, and is much in evidence here – although it might be thought to be less obvious in the other issued rolls from the same session.¹⁷ Tempo variation within the piece is notably free, in a manner that may not have characterised his playing a few years later.¹⁸ Similarly, the evolutionary nature of the transcription at the time of the recording points both to Busoni's editorial activities and his deeper involvement with the philosophy of creativity. The latter theme pervades his booklet *Outline of New Aesthetic of Music* and in its far-reaching development there was responsible for his influence on Varèse and others. Whatever factors were in play, the performance suggests an almost impressionistic evocation of the piece, rather than the very detailed logic of the score.¹⁹ This implies a very different interpretative approach from the desire for correctness, even 'definitiveness', which has superseded late Romantic pianism.

The image shows a musical score for measures 156 through 162 of a piece. The score is written for piano and includes dynamic markings and performance instructions. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 156, 157, and 158. The second system contains measures 159, 160, 161, and 162. The dynamics range from *mf* to *ff* and then to *p*. Performance instructions include *tranquillo*, *legg. staccato*, *dolce poco marcato, espress.*, and *sempre stacc.*. Fingerings are indicated for both hands, with the right hand using fingers 1-4 and the left hand using fingers 1-5.

It may be that, in common with any form of recording, it is not simply the detail captured – always, even with ‘perfect digital sound’, a matter of variable success – which is the most significant or valuable record, but also the aesthetic and interpretative overview. In this case, it seems indisputable that the Busoni found on Duo-Art rolls is not that of the Welte-Mignon rolls or Columbia disc recordings, and allowances should be made. But particularly since Busoni is so sparsely documented as a performer in his own central repertoire, the opportunity of a better than partial glimpse of this transcription in development and performance under its composer’s hands is valuable, and deserves discriminating attention when considering the piece – or even contemplating a scholarly approach to performing it.

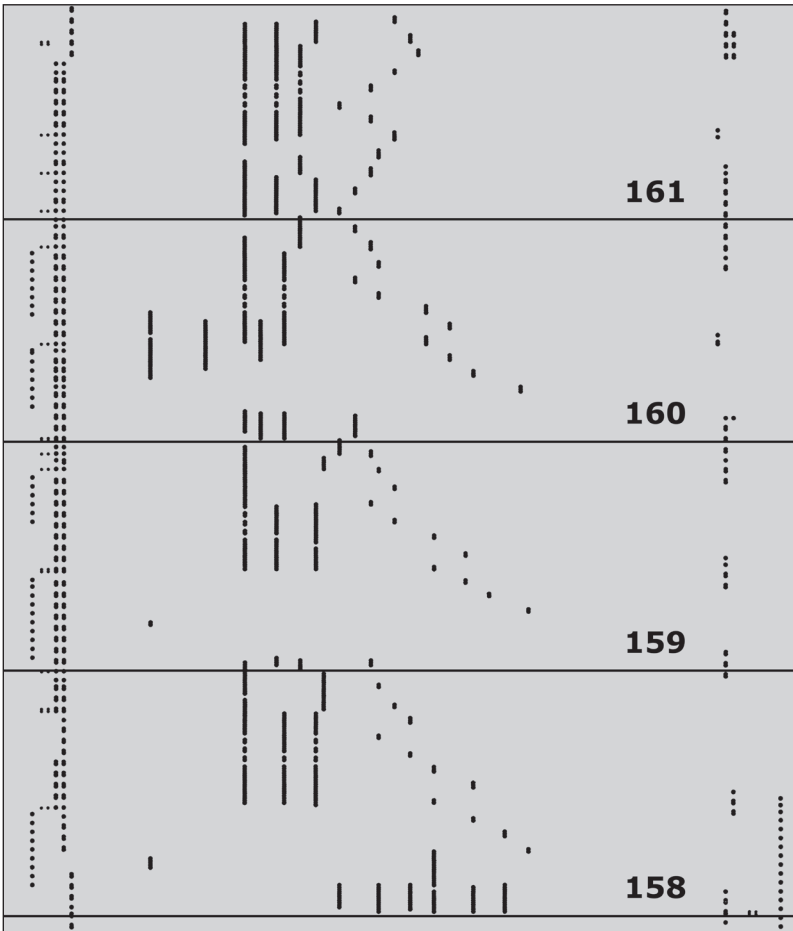


Figure 9 *Bach-Busoni: Chaconne, bars 156-162 (1907) and Busoni's piano roll bars 158-161*

NOTES

1. Antonio Latanza, *Ferruccio Busoni – Realtà e utopia strumentale*, Antonio Pellicani Editore, n.d. (2001) pp. 100-110, 119-128

2. Bach-Busoni *Chaconne*: Peters Edition No 7346, ed. Paul Banks (1997) lists:

First Edition: Breitkopf & Härtel 19792, (1893)

Second Edition: Breitkopf & Härtel V.A. 1916 (1902)

Third Edition: Breitkopf & Härtel 23764 (1907)

Fourth Edition: Breitkopf & Härtel, in *Bearbeitungen, Übertragungen, Studien und Kompositionen für das Pianoforte nach Johann Sebastian Bach von Ferruccio Busoni, Band III: later single B&H 2334 (1916)*

With regard to the evolution of Busoni's Bach transcriptions more generally, see also the transcriptions of the Organ Prelude and Fugue in E flat [BWV 552] in the first Rahter edition (1394) in comparison to the later Breitkopf final version (*ibid*), and the Organ Prelude and Fugue in D [BWV 532] in its first (18146) and final (3355) Breitkopf prints.

3. Ferruccio Busoni, *On the transcription of Bach's Organ Works for the Pianoforte*, appendix to the "Well Tempered Klavier Bk I", Breitkopf & Härtel 4301d

4. Larry Sitsky, *Busoni and the Piano*, Greenwood Press, London 1986, p. 307

5. Ferruccio Busoni to Gerda Busoni, November 1919:

'To do it is stupid and a strain . . . For example: they wanted the Faust-Waltz [Gounod-Liszt] (which lasts a good ten minutes) – but only four minutes' worth ! – so I quickly had to make cuts, patch and improvise, so that it still retained its sense: give due regard to the pedal (because it sounds bad), had to remember that particular notes must be struck louder or softer – to please the infernal machine: not to let myself go – for the sake of accuracy – and remain conscious throughout that every note was being preserved for eternity – how can freedom, élan or poetry arise ?'

Most recent citation, Antony Beaumont, notes to Pearl GEMM CD 9347, *Busoni and Petri*

6. Liszt: *Hungarian Rhapsody* No 13: Ferruccio Busoni, Columbia L 1456 (London, 1922)

7. Bach-Busoni: *Nun freut euch lieben Christen g'mein*, BWV 734:

Welte-Mignon 439 (Freiburg, 1905)

Philipps Duca 1150 (Frankfurt, 1912)

Columbia L 1470 (London, 1922)

Bach-Busoni: *Intermezzo (Adagio) and Fugue*, BWV 564:

Hupfeld Animatec 52379 (Leipzig, 1908)

Hupfeld Phonoliszt 12361 (Leipzig, 1908)

Bach-Busoni: *Adagio* BWV 564:

Philipps Duca 1149 (Frankfurt, 1912)

Bach-Busoni: *Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue*, BWV 903:

Philipps Duca 1151-2 (Frankfurt, 1912)

Bach-Busoni: *Chaconne*, from BWV 1004:

Aeolian Duo-Art 6928 (New York 1915)

8. John Bird, *Percy Grainger*, p 154

Also, Antony Beaumont, *Busoni the Composer*, Faber and Faber, London 1985, p. 23:

'Even after living ten years in [Berlin], he realised that he would never be considered anything but a foreigner, and this was painfully confirmed during the First World War when he approached the German Embassy in Washington for aid in securing concert engagements. The reply came at once, cold and discourteous: His Excellency the Ambassador was unable to give aid to the citizen of a hostile nation.'

9. Harold Bauer to W. Creary Woods, Aeolian Company, 16 June 1922, reprinted *Player Piano Group Bulletin* No. 79

10. I am indebted to Denis Hall and John Taylor for this comparison:
 Granados: Danza Espagnola No. 10: Welte-Mignon 2778 (Paris, c. 1912)
 Aeolian Duo-Art 5759 (New York, Jan/Feb 1916)
11. Bach-Busoni: *Chaconne*: Egon Petri, US Columbia 17582-83D (New York, 1945)
12. Bach: *Prelude and Fugue*, BWV 846: Ferruccio Busoni, Columbia L 1445 (London, 1922)
13. H. H. Stuckenschmidt, *Ferruccio Busoni: Chronicle of a European*, Atlantis Verlag AG Zurich, 1967
 English translation by Sandra Morris, Calder & Boyars Limited, London, 1970, p. 79:
 'The pianist Mark Hambourg, who had known Busoni since his visit to London in 1906, is quoted by Harold C Schonberg as witness to the fact that [Busoni] had very slim hands and had to practise a lot to keep in form.'
14. Beaumont, *ibid*, 1985, pp. 298-307
15. Bach-Busoni *Chaconne*: Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli, HMV DB 21005-6 (London 1948)
16. Edward J Dent, *Ferruccio Busoni*, Oxford, 1933, reprinted Eulenberg, 1974, p. 259:
 'He played the first Prelude of the *Forty-eight*, and it became a wash of shifting colours, a rainbow over the fountains of the Villa d'Este: he played the fugue, and each voice sang out above the rest like the entries of an Italian chorus, until at the last stretto the subject entered like the trumpets of the *Dona nobis* in the Mass in B minor, though in the middle of the keyboard, across a haze of pedal-held sound that was not confusion but blinding clearness.'
17. Ferruccio Busoni, other Duo-Art rolls recorded in New York in July 1915 and issued:
- | | | |
|--------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Liszt: | <i>Paganini Etude</i> No. 5 | 5671 (July 1915) |
| | <i>Polonaise</i> No. 2 | 5675 (September 1915) |
| | <i>Transcendental Etude</i> No. 5 | 5686 (October 1915) |
| | <i>Paganini Etude</i> No. 3 | 5698 (November 1915) |
18. Sitsky, *ibid*, p. 308:
 '... according to Petri, in later life Busoni used to play the *Chaconne* with a much more uniform overall tempo, minimising the rather sudden shifts of speed indicated ...'
19. Dent, *ibid*, p. 267:
 'Finally Busoni said he would play something which he had not played for thirty-five years; sat down to the pianoforte then and there and played the C sharp minor *Scherzo* of Chopin. Philipp said he had never heard Busoni play Chopin like that before ...
 this impromptu performance was something quite different. It was not very accurate: it was an impression of the work, almost a transcription; he played it 'as he remembered it, as he felt it.'

Josef Lhévinne - Reproducing Piano Roll Artist

Mark Reinhart



Josef Lhévinne, Concert Pianist (1874-1944)

Josef Lhévinne was born in Orel, Ukraine, on 13 December 1874, receiving his earliest piano lessons at the age of six, from a local teacher, the Swedish-born Nils Krysander.¹ Once the young Josef had reached the age of eight, Krysander arranged for him to perform publicly from time to time, evidently proud to be able to show off the talent of his quite outstanding pupil. At one such function arranged by Krysander, the Grand Duke Constantine, second son of Czar Nicholas I, was present, and the eleven year old Lhévinne played Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata* and the Wagner-Liszt *Pilgrims' March* from *Tannhäuser*. The Duke was greatly impressed by Josef's playing, and as a result, arranged for him to study at the Moscow Conservatoire under the tutelage of Vassily Safonov, who gave him lessons every day.²

In November 1889, a Jubilee Gala Concert in honour of Anton Rubinstein was held at the Conservatoire, in which a number of students took part. Lhévinne and a cellist played Rubinstein's Sonata, Op. 11/2, and the composer's own opinion was sufficiently favourable for him to ask Safonov to allow the young pianist to take part in an annual benefit concert for the widows and orphans of musicians. On that subsequent occasion, the fifteen-year-old Lhévinne played Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto, under the baton of Rubinstein himself. The Moscow critic, Nicholas Kashkin, writing in *Russkie Vedomosti* (Russian News), observed that the young Lhévinne already showed the qualities of a virtuoso, with a colossal technique and perfect tone colouring, characteristics hardly to be expected from someone of his tender age.²

In 1892, Josef Lhévinne graduated from the Moscow Conservatoire, winning the gold medal for piano playing, even though his contemporaries included such luminaries as Rachmaninov and Scriabin. In August 1895 he went on to win the Rubinstein Prize in Berlin, playing on that occasion Rubinstein's Fifth Piano Concerto. After graduation, Lhévinne undertook small-scale tours of Russia and Europe, gradually establishing himself as a solo pianist.² In the summer of 1898 he married Rosina Bessie, another gold medal graduate from the Conservatoire.¹

During the next few years, Lhévinne's career and reputation gradually developed, and in 1901 he became a professor of piano at the Moscow Conservatoire, a post he held for five years. In 1906 however, he had decided to move his family and set up home in Paris, concerned by the unease caused by the Revolution and the effect it was having on their lives, and it was there that Rosina gave birth to their first child, Constantine, on 21 July. At the end of 1905 and beginning of 1906, Josef had been involved in an abortive concert tour of America which failed as a result of poor management, and a New York review noted that, while he was touring in the US, his wife was in Moscow, 'in which the days of terror were at their height.' But in the autumn, the family set sail for New York in the French steamer, *La Savoie*, arriving on 20th October. Lhévinne's successful American tour at that time improved the family's financial situation, which enabled him to resign his post at the Moscow Conservatoire.³

In 1907 the Lhévinnes moved again, this time to Berlin, where they lived for the next thirteen years. It was there that 'Lhévinne gained a reputation as one of the leading virtuosos and teachers of the day. With the onset of World War I, the family were trapped as enemy aliens in Berlin, losing the money saved in Russian banks as a result of the 1917 Russian Revolution. During the War the Lhévinnes endured considerable hardship; as an enemy alien, Josef was unable to concertise, surviving on the income from a handful of students.'¹

In 1919, after the War, the Lhévinnes moved permanently to New York City, where Josef taught piano at the Juilliard School.¹ The family, which now consisted of Josef, Rosina, and their two children, Constantine and Marianne (born 1918), took up residence in Kew Gardens, Brooklyn, one of the boroughs of New York, which became their home for the rest of Josef's life.⁴

Successful tours by Lhévinne in South America and Europe took place in 1926, 1928 and 1937. In 1928, a critic wrote of him that, 'Like every great pianist, he has the style that is strongly personal and yet interferes in no way with the faithful presentation of the composer's music.'² Abram Chasins enthused, 'Every piano lover could revel in his fabulous technical equipment and ravishing tonal palette. His style was refinement itself; his sounds glittered and flowed.'⁵ And Harold Schonberg positively gushed, 'His tone was the morning stars singing together, his technique was flawless even measured against the fingers of Hofmann and Rachmaninov' – this was praise indeed from a man for whom the latter two could do no wrong!⁶

Josef Lhévinne died in New York from a heart attack on 2 December 1944. He is buried in Kew Gardens, Brooklyn, New York.

LHÉVINNE'S RECORDINGS

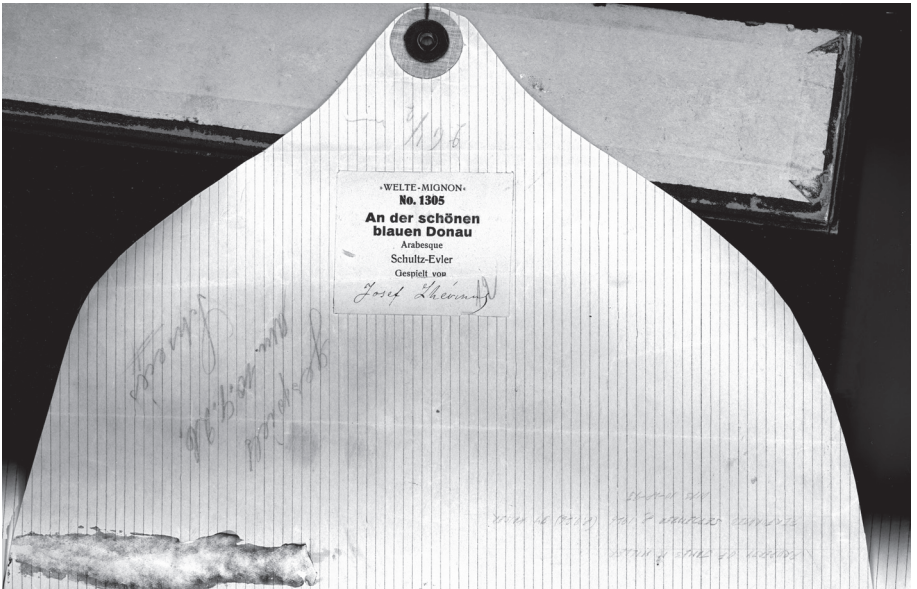
Josef Lhévinne's piano roll recording career was extensive, lasting some 25 years. His first rolls were made for M. Welte und Soehne in the salon of their factory in Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany, on 6th October 1906.⁷ The session yielded ten titles, most being released in time for the 1907 catalogue.⁸ The fact that these rolls were issued so quickly is an indication of the importance Welte attached to him.

Two recordings from this first session are interesting, but for different reasons. Roll 1300, the *Nocturne for the Left Hand* by Scriabin, one of Lhévinne's classmates at the Moscow Conservatoire, was the first recording of a work by Scriabin in the Welte catalogue, and in fact the only Scriabin composition recorded by Welte, apart from those recorded by the composer while the recording piano was in Russia in 1910.¹⁵ The *Arabesques on Themes from the Blue Danube* by Strauss/Schulz-Evler (roll 1305) became Lhévinne's standard encore (like Paderewski's *Minuet* and Rachmaninov's *Prelude in C Sharp Minor*) and remained in his repertoire for his entire career. The Welte-Mignon recording stayed in the catalogue until the 1930s, and the frequency with which this roll turns up suggests that it must have sold well both in Europe and the United States.

Lhévinne's second visit to the Welte recording studio took place on or about 7 July 1911, when he played twelve selections, a mixture of what we would now regard as salon pieces as well as some more substantial items.¹⁰ Outstanding is the Meyerbeer-Liszt *Robert le Diable* Fantasia (roll 2441), and the Czerny *Octave Study* (roll 2430) shows off his remarkable technique to advantage.



Josef Lhévinne recording for the Welte-Mignon in July 1911



A Welte-Mignon master roll of Lhévinne's recording of the Blue Danube

Once the Lhévinnes had moved to New York, Josef's third recording session for Welte was quite naturally for the American branch of the company. M. Welte and Sons, Inc. owned premises in Poughkeepsie, New York, about 50 miles north of New York City, where Welte organs, Mignon pianos and rolls



One of Josef Lhévinne's American Welte-Mignon recordings

were manufactured. Towards the end of World War I, these so-called 'assets of enemy aliens (German)' were seized and sold at auction, and re-formed as the Welte-Mignon Corporation under the stewardship of George Gittins, a major figure in the player piano industry in the United States.¹¹ Gittins promptly sold the buildings at Poughkeepsie, and moved the machinery to the Estey Piano factory in the Bronx, New York City. It was there in 1920 that Lhévinne played what were to be the last 'red' (T-100)

Welte rolls recorded in America. The five rolls issued from that session all bear the Bronx address. Sadly, another casualty of the War was the loss of all stock interest in the New York branch of their firm by Edwin Welte and Karl Bockisch, the original inventors of the Welte-Mignon.

Lhévinne recorded one major work from his repertoire in its entirety on that occasion, the *Études Symphoniques* by Schumann, as well as works by Beethoven, Liszt, Rachmaninov and Dohnanyi. Rachmaninov's *Prelude in B Flat*, Op. 23/2 (roll 4059), was also included in his Carnegie Hall recital on 17 October 1920.¹²

The Welte-Mignon Corporation made no more new recordings after the Lhévinne session, but it did perforate rolls bearing the Purple Seal label, which were Welte-Mignon rolls from the German catalogue, but in what were to become known generically as *Licensee* format.¹³ These were the same 'red' (T-100) recordings, but perforated on 11 1/4 inch paper, the standard width for 88-note rolls. A large selection of the old performances was also available during the 1920s on rolls perforated to the 11 1/4 inch standard by the De Luxe Reproducing Roll Corporation. Thus, many of Lhévinne's rolls were available in both the United States in *Licensee* format, and in Europe as the wider 'red' (T-100) type. One must assume that he received royalties from all three sources, the Welte-Mignon Corporation, the De Luxe Reproducing Roll Corporation, and M. Welte und Soehne in Freiburg.

In June 1923, Lhévinne entered into an exclusive recording contract with the American Piano Company, makers of Ampico rolls, to last for one year, but with the option of renewal.¹⁴ The contract called for a minimum of three recordings per year, and in the event, until the end of 1929, when the

RECORDING ARTISTS RECORD

8 B

CONCERT Yes PIANO Chick RECORDING Yes NAME OF ARTIST Josef Lhévinne

DATE CONTRACT EXECUTED _____ EXCLUSIVE _____ MANAGER Mueller

DATE OF CONTRACT June 7 1923 EXPIRATION OF CONTRACT Sept. 1 1926 *extended June 7 1928*

NO. OF RECORDINGS PER YEAR 3 TOTAL RECORDINGS 9 *same terms*

TERMS OF PAYMENT \$5,000.00 per year, payable in two sums January 1st and July 1st and 10% Royalty on net wholesale selling price of each roll in continuity.

ROYALTY RATE _____ DATE ROYALTY PAYABLE January and July

RENEWAL OPTION Artist will not enter into any agreement with any other concern without discussing the matter with this Company.

RENEWAL TERMS Optional

REMARKS _____

1923-24 - 3	1923-24	50.00
25 - 3	24.75	50.00
26 - 3	25.25	50.00
27 - 3	26.75	50.00
28 - 3	27.25	50.00
29 - 3	28.75	50.00

DATE	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT PAID	AMOUNT DUE	BALANCE
	Balance Brought Forward to 12-31-22	15642.50	15642.50	
June 30 1926	Royalties earned 12-30-25		123.90	
July 3 1926	Cash advanced	2500.00		
Jan 18 1927	Cash advanced	2500.00		
Feb 18 1927	Cash advanced	2500.00		
June 21 1927	Cash advanced	2500.00		
June 30 1927	Royalties 1-1-27 to 6-30-27		239.10	
Aug 5 1927	Cash			
Dec 31 1927	Royalties 7-1-27 to 12-31-27		465.70	465.70
Jan 5 1928	Cash advanced	2500.00		
Mar 5 1928	Cash		465.70	
July 11 1928	Cash	2500.00		
June 30 1928	Royalties 1-1-28 to 6-30-28		196.60	
July 9 1928	Cash	196.60		
Dec 31 1928	Royalties 7-1-28 to 12-31-28		214.30	
Feb 12 1929	Cash advanced (504.55 deducted for Studios rent)	2500.00		
Nov 30 1929	Cash	714.30		
Jan 15 1929	Royalties 1-1-29 to 6-30-29		198.50	
July 1 1929	Cash (254.61 deducted for Studios rent)	2500.00		
July 15 1929	Cash	198.50		
Nov 18 1929	Royalties 7-1-29 to 11-18-29 Paid by Receiver		1124.45	
			1099.99	

The first part of Ampico's contractual record for Josef Lhévinne, 1923 - 1928

contract was allowed to lapse, 23 recordings were made, all but the last two being published.¹⁵ The terms of the contract included an annual payment to Lhévinne of 5,000 US dollars, as well as royalties of 10% of the net wholesale price of any rolls sold, payable in perpetuity.

I am indebted to Alan H. Mueller, an authority on Ampico recordings, for his research into the Ampico Corporation's recording ledgers, and for providing illustrations from them for this article.

Although Lhévinne had recorded the Schulz-Evler *Blue Danube* for Welte, he nevertheless recorded it again for Ampico and, unusually, he was called to play it twice, once on 7 June 1924, and again on 11 February 1927. Since the first version was not issued, one can only assume that there must have

RECORDING ARTISTS RECORD

CONCERT _____ PIANO Chickering RECORDING _____ NAME OF ARTIST Josef Lhévinne

DATE CONTRACT EXECUTED _____ EXCLUSIVE _____ MANAGER _____

DATE OF CONTRACT March 15th, 1928 EXPIRATION OF CONTRACT March 15th, 1933

NO. OF RECORDINGS PER YEAR up to 7 per year TOTAL RECORDINGS _____

TERMS OF PAYMENT \$500.00 per year, payable in two sums on January 1st, and July 1st and a royalty of 10%
of the wholesale selling price of each roll in continuity.

ROYALTY RATE _____ DATE ROYALTY PAYABLE _____

RENEWAL OPTION _____

RENEWAL TERMS It is further agreed that this agreement is to remain in force for a period of (5) five years
reckoning from date of this agreement subject only to the option of the Piano company to cancel
this agreement at the end of any year by giving the Artist notice of such cancellation not
less than three (3) months before the end of such year.

REMARKS _____

DATE	DESCRIPTION	AMOUNT PAID	AMOUNT DUE	BALANCE
June 30 1930				
Aug 21 1930	Cash		29 56	
Dec 31 1930	"	7-1-30 - 12-31-30	63 30	0 -
Feb 23 1931	"		63 30	0 -
June 30 1931	"	1-1-31 - 6-30-31	29 42	
Aug 31 1931	"		29 42	0 -
Dec 31 1931	"	7-1-31 - 12-31-31	31 27	0 -
Jan 30 1932	"		31 27	0 -

The second part of the contractual record, 1928 - 1933

been a problem with the earlier recording, necessitating a second session. Breathtaking examples of his perfect technique and musical elegance are the Schumann Toccata (Welte) and the Chopin Studies, Op. 10/11 and 25/9 (Ampico).

In contrast with the practice of Welte in Freiburg, which claimed that once a recording had been made, no input from the pianist was sought or needed in preparation of a roll, it was normal for Ampico to undertake considerable amounts of roll editing, normally with the help of the artist concerned. There is little published information with regard to the identity of the Ampico editing staff, beyond what appears in the Nelson Barden interviews.¹⁶ Alan Mueller, reports having examined trial copies of two of Lhévinne's rolls, 100375 and 100605, and states that in both cases the editor was listed as Emse Dawson.¹⁷ However, both of these were reissues on jumbo-sized rolls of previously published recordings. Barden's interview with Dawson seems to bear out that he did indeed carry out extensive amounts of editing to the post-1926 classical releases. Earlier, Milton Susskind (Edgar Fairchild) was responsible for the editing of many classical rolls, but it is not known whether he was ever involved with those of Lhévinne.

For such an important artist, Lhévinne's catalogue of disc recordings is surprisingly small. He made four sides for Pathé in New York on 28th September 1921, including the *Écossaises* by Beethoven, arranged by Busoni, whom Lhévinne had known in Berlin.² These *Écossaises* were also recorded for Welte in New York (roll 4056). The remaining records were for Victor and RCA: a single disc (two sides) of the Schulz-Evler *Blue Danube* in 1928, and a series in 1935 and 1936. The Schulz-Evler arrangement of the *Blue Danube* is legendary among pianists and connoisseurs of recorded music.¹

These rolls and discs are the recorded legacy of one of the greatest pianists of his generation. The fact that Lhévinne was never one of the big 'stars' of the concert platform probably accounts for the fact that he was not apparently invited to make more records for the gramophone at a time when it could do his artistry justice. Economic circumstances must also have played a significant part in this. Around 1930, RCA cancelled the recording contracts of even its most prestigious artists, and no classical discs were made until 1935/6, when both Lhévinne and such pianists as Rachmaninov once again began to make solo recordings. There is, however, much to treasure within the 30-year recording history of this magnificent artist.

APPENDIX I

The Welte-Mignon Recordings

Number	Title	Composer	Recorded
1296	Etude de Concert in E flat, Op 1/1	De Schloezer	6 Oct 1906
1297	Etude in B minor, Op. 25/10	Chopin	6 Oct 1906
1298	Scherzo in B flat, Op. 107/12, <i>En Route</i>	Godard	6 Oct 1906
1299	Charakterstück in E, Op. 7/7	Mendelssohn	6 Oct 1906
1300	Nocturne in D flat, Op. 9/2, <i>For the Left Hand Alone</i>	Scriabin	6 Oct 1906
1301	Toccata in C, Op. 7	Schumann	6 Oct 1906
1302	Sechs Poésies, no. 1, <i>Die Lorelei</i>	Liszt	6 Oct 1906
1303	Gavotte, from <i>Iphigénie en Aulide</i>	Gluck, arr. Brahms	6 Oct 1906
1304	<i>Le Bal</i> , Op. 14: No. 6, Polka	Rubinstein	6 Oct 1906
1305	<i>Arabesques on the Beautiful Blue Danube</i>	Strauss, arr. Schulz-Evler	6 Oct 1906
2430	Octave Study, Op. 740/5	Czerny	7 Jul 1911
2431	Kamennoi-Ostrow, Op. 10/22, <i>Rêve angelique</i>	Rubinstein	7 Jul 1911
2432	Unknown		
2433	Quattro Pezzi, Op. 18: No. 2 in D flat, <i>Vecchio Minuetto</i>	Sgambati	7 Jul 1911
2434	The Ruins of Athens, Op. 113, <i>Chorus of Dervishes</i>	Beethoven, arr. Saint-Saëns	7 Jul 1911
2435	Three Piano Pieces in Dance Form, Op. 17: No. 2 in G, <i>Menuett</i>	Moszkowski	7 Jul 1911

2436	Barcarolle in C minor, Op. 104/4	Rubinstein	7 Jul 1911
2437	<i>Album de Peterhof</i> , Op. 79: No. 9, Prelude in D	Rubinstein	7 Jul 1911
2438	Mazurka in D, Op. 33/2	Chopin	7 Jul 1911
2439	Rondo in C, Op. 24, <i>Perpetuum Mobile</i>	Weber	7 Jul 1911
2440	Etude in C minor, Op. 25/12	Chopin	7 Jul 1911
2441	Fantasie on <i>Robert le Diable</i>	Meyerbeer, arr. Liszt	7 Jul 1911
4056	<i>Eccossaises</i>	Beethoven, arr. Busoni	1920
4057	<i>Der Lindenbaum</i> (The Linden Tree)	Schubert, arr. Liszt	1920
4058	Marche <i>Mignonne</i> , Op. 15/2	Poldini	1920
4059	Prelude in B flat, Op. 23/2	Rachmaninov	1920
4060	Symphonic Studies, Part 1	Schumann	1920
4061	Symphonic Studies, Part 2	Schumann	1920
4062	Etude <i>Caprice</i> in F minor, Op. 28/6	Dohnanyi	1920

Appendix II

The Ampico Recordings

Number	Title	Composer	Recorded	Published
62523-H	<i>Die Lorelei</i>	Liszt	27 Aug 1923	Nov 1923
63243-H	<i>Ungarische Zigeunerweisen</i> (Hungarian Gypsy Dances)	Tausig	15 Jan 1924	Jun 1924
62883-H	Nocturne in B, Op 9/3	Chopin	15 Jan 1924	Mar 1924
67563-H	<i>An der Schönen Blauen Donau</i>	Strauss, arr.	11 Feb 1927	May 1927
100755	(On the Beautiful Blue Danube)	Schulz-Evler		Oct 1931
63903-H	<i>La Campanella</i>	Paganini, arr. Liszt/Busoni	7 June 1924	Jan 1925
63513-H	<i>Auf Flügeln des Gesanges</i>	Mendelssohn,	7 June 1924	Sep 1924
100755	(On Wings of Song)	arr. Liszt		Oct 1931
64273-H	Etude, Op. 40/6, <i>Causeurie</i>	César Cui	16 Feb 1925	Apr 1925
64933-H	Kamennoi-Ostrow, Op. 10/22,	Rubinstein	21 Mar 1925	Sep 1925
100755	<i>Rêve angélique</i>			Oct 1931
65213-H	Valse Caprice no. 6,	Schubert, arr.	21 Mar 1925	Nov 1925
100375	<i>Soirées de Vienne</i>	Liszt		Apr 1930
66613-H	Sonata, <i>Moonlight</i> , Op. 27/2,	Beethoven	1 April 1926	Oct 1926
100185	First movement			Nov 1929
67283-H	Sonata, <i>Moonlight</i> , Op. 27/2,	Beethoven	1 April 1926	Mar 1927
100185	Second and Third movements			Nov 1929
66713-H	<i>Chants d'Espagne</i> , "Cordoba"	Albeniz	1 April 1926	Nov 1926
68473-H	<i>Suite Espagnole</i> , "Sevilla"	Albeniz	1 April 1926	Jan 1928
			7 June 1927	
68001-H	Etudes, Op. 10/11 & Op. 25/9	Chopin	11 Feb 1927	Sep 1927
100375				Apr 1930
100755				Oct 1931
68113-H	<i>A la Bien-Aimée</i> , Op. 59/2	Schütt	6 June 1927	Oct 1927
100755				Oct 1931
68653-H	<i>Liebestraum</i> no. 3, "Nocturne"	Liszt	10 Nov 1927	Mar 1928
100375				Apr 1930

DATE 1923	SELECTIONS RECORDED	DATE ISSUED	REMARKS
Aug 1927	Die Loreley	Liszt	Nov 1923
Jan 15	Hungarian Koppas Dance	Tausig	June 1924
Jan 15	Nocturne, Op 9, No 3	Chopin	Mar 1923
June 7	Blue Danube ^{arranged by} Schullz. Ewer.	Liszt	May 1927
June 7	La Campanella	Liszt	Jan 1925
June 7	Auf Flügeln des Gesangs	Mendelssohn	Sept 1924
Feb 1925	Gavaises, Op 4, No 6	Cui	Apr. 1925
Mar 21	Ramenai-Catrou	Rubinstein	Sept 1925
Mar 21	Souven de Veinme Vela	Schubert, Liszt	Nov 1925
Apr 1926	Florata Morbidge 1st movt	Bethoven	Oct 1926
Apr 1926	" " 2+3rd Movt.	Bethoven	Mar 1927
Apr 1926	Cordoba Chanto d'Espagne	Albeniz	Nov. 1926
Apr 1926	Semilla Santa Espagos	Albeniz	Jan 1928
Feb 1927	Etude op 25, No 9, Etude op 10 No 11	Chopin	Sept 1927
June 1927	A Lu Bain Annies	Schubert	Oct. 1927
Nov 10 1927	Liebestraum	Liszt	Mar. 1928
	- 1928 -		
Aug 1928	Polonaise, a fleur Op 53	Chopin	May 1929
1928	Gondoliera	Liszt	Mar 1929
	- 1929 -		
June 18 1929	Rustle of Spring	Sinding	Jan. 1930
June 18 1929	Marche Militaire	Schubert	4/32
Mar 28 1929	Papillons Complete (arranged)	Schumann	
Mar 28 1929	Waltz op 34, No 7 a Min	Chopin	
Nov 27 1929	Polonaise F# minor	Chopin	

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Mr Hudson
Butterfield 5.9385

Josef Lhévinne's recording list for the Ampico, 1923 - 1929

69833-H	Polonaise in A flat, Op. 53	Chopin	29 Aug 1928	May 1928
69693-H	Années de Pèlerinage, Venezia e Napoli, "Gondoliera"	Liszt	29 Aug 1928	Mar 1929
70441	Frühlingsrauschen, Op.32/3	Sinding	18 June 1929	Jan 1930
100375	(Rustle of Spring)			Apr 1930
70963	Marche Militaire	Schubert, arr. Tausig	18 June 1929	Apr 1932
70783	Papillons (Part 1)	Schumann	28 Mar 1929	Nov 1930
100605				Nov 1930
70793	Papillons (Part 2)	Schumann	28 Mar 1929	Nov 1930
100605				Nov 1930
No number	Valse in A minor, Op. 34/2	Chopin	28 Mar 1929	Unissued
No number	Polonaise in F minor, Op. 71/3	Chopin	22 Nov 1929	Unissued

All the information on recording and publishing dates has been kindly provided by Alan H. Mueller.

Appendix III**Disc Recordings**

Number	Title	Composer	Recorded
Pathé – USA			
5691	<i>Ecossaises</i>	Beethoven, arr. Busoni	28 Sep 1921
	<i>El Contrabandista</i>	Schumann, arr. Tausig	28 Sep 1921
10393	<i>Trepak</i>	Tchaikovsky	28 Sep 1921
	Prelude in G minor, Op. 23/5	Rachmaninov	28 Sep 1921
RCA Victor – Solo			
6840	<i>Arabesques on the Blue Danube</i>	Strauss/Schulz-Evler	21 May 1928
8766	Toccata, Op. 7	Schumann	7 Jun 1935
	<i>Frühlingsnacht</i>	Schumann/Liszt	7 Jun 1935
8868	Etudes, Op. 10/11 & Op. 25/6	Chopin	10 Jun 1935
	Etude, Op. 25/11	Chopin	10 Jun 1935
14024	Etude, Op. 25/10	Chopin	10 Jun 1935
	Preludes, Op. 28/16 & 17	Chopin	6 Jan 1936
1765	Polonaise in A flat, Op. 53	Chopin	6 Jan 1936
RCA Victor – with Rosina Lhévinne			
1741	<i>Fêtes</i> (Nocturnes)	Debussy, arr. Ravel	11 Jun 1935
Published on LP	Sonata for Two Pianos, K. 448	Mozart	23 May 1939

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Richard J. Howe (ed.), *The AMPICO Reproducing Piano*, Music Box Society International, 1987.

Helen Kaufmann, Eva Hansl, *Artists in Music Today*, New York, Grosset & Dunlap, 1933.

Elaine Obenchain, *The Complete Catalog of Ampico Reproducing Piano Rolls*, Darien, Connecticut, William H. Edgerton, 1977.

Harold Schonberg, *The Great Pianists from Mozart to Present*, Simon & Schuster, 1963

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Waldo Selden Pratt (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Music and Musicians*, New York, The MacMillan Company, 1935.

Robert K. Wallace, *A Century of Music-Making: The Lives of Josef & Rosina Lhévinne*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1976.

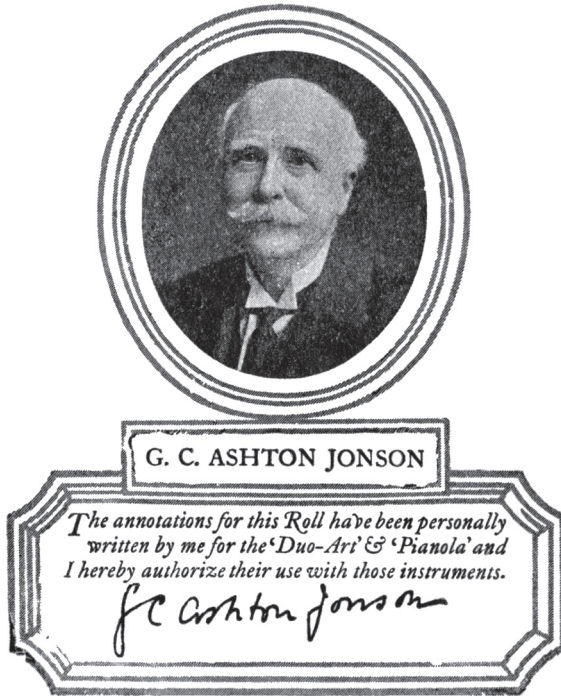
NOTES

- 1 <http://www.spiritus-temporis.com/josef-lhevinne/>
- 2 <http://www.naxos.com/artist>” http://www.naxos.com/artistinfo/Josef_Lhevinne/2229.htm
- 3 ‘Two Pianists Arrive for Tours of America’, in: New York Times, 21 October 1906, no author given.
- 4 Helen Kaufmann, Eva Hansl, *Artists in Music Today*, New York, Grosset & Dunlap, 1933, p. 69.
- 5 Abram Chasins, *Speaking of Pianists*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1958, p. 155.
- 6 Harold Schonberg, *The Great Pianists: from Mozart to the Present*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1963, p. 379.
- 7 Charles D. Smith, Richard J. Howe, *The Welte-Mignon, its Music and Musicians*, Vestal, New York, Vestal Press, (for the Automatic Musical Instrument Collectors’ Association), 1990, p. 414 – 415.
- 8 Gerhard Dangel, Hans-W. Schmitz, *Welte-Mignon Piano Rolls, Complete Library of the European Recordings 1904-1932 for the Welte-Mignon Reproducing Piano*, Stuttgart, Published by the Authors, 2006, p. 520.
- 9 *ibid*, p.525. The rolls stemming from the recording sessions in St Petersburg and Moscow are numbered from 1937 to 2170 in the Welte-Mignon catalogue.
- 10 *ibid*, pp. 114, 528.
- 11 Under the terms of the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1917, the US President was entitled to seize assets owned by citizens of enemy countries, to be held and, if necessary, liquidated by the Custodian of Alien Property.
- 12 Richard Aldrich, ‘Music’, *The New York Times*, 18 October 1920.
- 13 In published literature the word ‘*Licensee*’ is always italicized.
- 14 All contract and recording information kindly provided by Alan H. Mueller, Rochester, New York.
- 15 Elaine Obenchain, *The Complete Catalog of Ampico Reproducing Piano Rolls*, Darien, Connecticut, William H. Edgerton, 1977, p. 140.
- 16 Richard J. Howe (ed.), *The AMPICO Reproducing Piano*, Music Box Society International, 1987, p. 213.
- 17 According to Alan Mueller, the American Piano Company referred to its trial rolls as ‘Sub-Supers’.

Mechanical Piano-Players

G.C. Ashton Jonson

This article is reprinted from the Proceedings of the Musical Association, 42nd session, pp. 15-32, 1915-1916. The lecture was given on 15 December, 1915, and Charles MacLean Esq., M.A., Mus.Doc., Vice-President of the Association, was in the Chair.



G. C. Ashton Jonson (1861-1930), from an AudioGraphic roll leader

Editor's Note

G.C Ashton Jonson, born in 1861, is remembered mainly for his Handbook to Chopin's Works, for the Use of Concertgoers, Pianists and Pianola-Players, first published in 1905, which was so lastingly successful as a vade mecum that in 1926 he was chosen to represent British music at the inauguration of the Chopin Memorial in Warsaw. Initially a stockbroker and amateur pianist, Jonson changed direction in middle age and devoted himself to artistic activities. He travelled widely, on two occasions around the world, and he lectured on music and musical appreciation in Britain and America. At various times he was the Chairman of the Poetry Society and the Hon. Librarian of the Royal Automobile Club. From the discussion recorded at the end of this paper, it is clear that he was also an accomplished pianolist.

When I was invited by the Association to read a paper on Mechanical Piano-players, my memory carried me back to a lunch party of some twenty people that I attended in New York shortly before I left there some three years ago, at the end of the second lecture season that I had spent in that interesting country. The hotel at which the lunch was given bears a deservedly high reputation for its cookery, but what was my surprise on glancing at the menu to see that it contained not a list of things to eat, but a series of topics suggested for conversation! After each course our hostess would rap on the table and address some leading question to some particular guest, who was expected to reply briefly, and then that particular topic lasted till the next course. All the people at the lunch were supposed to be qualified to talk interestingly on some particular subject, and the question to which I had to reply was directed to ascertain my opinion as to the value of the Pianola in musical education. I remember that I replied that I considered the 'Pianola' as great an aid to the proper appreciation of fine music as was the invention of printing to the wide spreading of knowledge of the great literature of all ages.

When I was in America I found the younger generation especially, extremely alive and enthusiastic about music, and they seemed to take naturally to works that the average amateur in England is rather apt to consider ultra-modern, such as Debussy's *Pelleas and Melisande*, and after careful inquiry I could not but attribute this open-minded appreciation of the new in music to the fact that in leading Universities such as Harvard and Yale and the women's colleges, and in over two hundred of the leading schools, the Pianola is being systematically used to familiarise not only the musical students but all the pupils with the best music.

Wagner once said that musical masterpieces are kept alive at the pianoforte desks of amateurs, and it is through the medium of the sometimes unjustly despised pianoforte that we have the opportunity of becoming familiar not only with pianoforte music, but with orchestral and choral works, by means of pianoforte arrangements. But the most accomplished head of a musical staff in a school or college cannot possibly devote the time necessary to being able to play an enormous, not to say unlimited, range of new and difficult music in order that a wide and comprehensive knowledge of musical literature should be the privilege of all his pupils. And this is where the Pianola comes in.

Now what exactly is the Pianola? The word itself is really the trade name for the particular make of mechanical piano-player manufactured by the Aeolian Company, of New York, and the allied Company called the Orchestrelle Company, of 135, New Bond Street, London. Now I do not know whether these two companies take it as a compliment or consider it a nuisance, but the general public and the Press have adopted the term 'Pianola' as a generic term for all mechanical piano-player devices. It is a short and convenient and not uneuphonious word that has found its way into the language. You meet it in

the up-to-date novel and in the comic papers, where the jokes about it would fall flat if the humour-assassinating term 'mechanical piano-player' had to be used every time on pain of an action for infringement by the Orchestrelle Company.

There are innumerable makes of players now on the market, and practically every large firm of pianoforte makers is prepared to sell you a piano-player as well as a pianoforte. With your permission therefore, I am going to use the convenient generic term 'Pianola' this afternoon, and you will understand that when I say Pianola I mean any and all of the makes of mechanical piano-players that exist, and each of which for my purposes to-day is the finest and best on the market. Owners of piano-players are rather like owners of motor-cars. Each man is prepared to swear that his particular purchase is the best thing ever made. The cellars of the rival companies are cluttered up with derelict makes of every other kind on the market that have been taken in part payment of each particular firm's more perfect productions. Each make has practically the same device handicapped with a made-up name of the 'Uneda Biscuit' or 'Osoeezi Saddle' type. But I should need days if I were to go into particulars of the minute, but in the opinion of the makers important, differences in these various devices and their results, and so this afternoon I must confine myself to a general description of mechanical piano-players exemplified in the most advanced model of the type with which I am most familiar. This happens to be the grand 'Pianola-piano' manufactured by the Orchestrelle Company in their factories at Hayes, a specimen of which the Company have kindly lent me this afternoon to explain and illustrate the remarks I am about to make.

Although the Pianola has been on the market now for some fifteen years and has been widely advertised, I find that there is still considerable misapprehension both as to its capabilities, its limitations, and its use. It is usual to refer to the Pianola and similar instruments as mechanical piano-players. Now in my opinion the Pianola is not so much a mechanism as a new instrument. When the Pianola was first placed on the market it took the form of what is known as a cabinet player. It consisted of what looked like a small cabinet which was wheeled up to the pianoforte, and from the back of which felt-covered hammers projected, which were adjusted to the keyboard. For commercial reasons the first models were limited to sixty-five notes instead of the full eighty-eight of the pianoforte. Then cabinet players which played all the eighty-eight notes, or the full compass, were introduced. The next improvement was the placing of the mechanism inside upright pianofortes, which had the great advantage that the pianoforte could then be used as an ordinary pianoforte and played by hand, without having to push away the Pianola, and now the final form is a horizontal grand which, with the exception of a small cabinet which contains the pedals controlling the bellows,

looks, as you will see, exactly like an ordinary grand pianoforte and can of course be used as such.

Now the early models had considerable limitations: but one by one these have been gradually eliminated. I think it might only perplex you if I were to go into the past history of the instrument, and I had better confine myself to the latest model, such as we have here this afternoon. The music is produced by placing a roll of perforated paper in the mechanism and blowing a bellows by means of pedals, which in appearance resemble those of a harmonium. The perforated paper passes over what is known as a tracker board, in which there are eighty-eight holes, each hole controlling the sounding of the corresponding note. When the perforation in the paper goes over one of these holes the note is sounded, loudly or softly in accordance with the amount of pressure you place upon the pedals. There are six little levers placed in a convenient position just below the keyboard, to be used by both hands. The first on the right is the one by which the music is rolled and re-rolled. Once the roll is adjusted in the mechanism this lever is not touched until it is required to re-roll the music to remove it. The next lever controls the time. The mechanism is all pneumatic throughout the instrument, and the control of the time is so perfect that you can do anything with this lever that you can do with your hand in the matter of fluctuations in the time.

Then come two levers placed one above the other. The uppermost of these cuts off half the pneumatic pressure from the bass or the lower forty-four notes of the pianoforte, and the lower one does the same thing for the treble. When used together they control what is known as the Themodist or device for bringing out the melody, which I will explain more fully later on. The remaining two levers work the loud or sustaining pedal of the pianoforte and the soft pedal for *una corda* effects.

On the music roll itself the dynamics of the piece are indicated, that is to say, the fortes and the pianos, the crescendos and decrescendos. These are indicated by a row of dots. When the dots are on the extreme left it signifies pianissimo, and when on the extreme right fortissimo, and when they are in the middle mezzoforte. When the line of dots slopes to the right it means crescendo, when it inclines to the left decrescendo, so that whether you are familiar with the piece or not, the dynamic effect to be attained is broadly indicated. When a note is to be accentuated a musical accent is placed against the perforation controlling that note.

Attached to the time-lever is an ingenious device known as the Metrostyle. On the roll you will see a continuous red line which zigzags backwards and forwards. If you keep the pointer attached to the time-lever pointing to this red line you will so control the time that the piece will be played in the exact time indicated by the composer in those cases where the composer has given this indication. Those rolls not marked by the composer have been

metrostyled by a musician who is also a thorough artist, and his indications can be followed with confidence. This Metrostyle line is extremely useful when reading music with which you are unfamiliar. Naturally, if you are a finished musician you will, when you know the piece, give your own reading and play it at your own time. You will then not need to look at or pay any regard to the Metrostyle line, which, however, serves a very useful purpose for beginners.

If you examine one of these modern music rolls, you will see that there are two kinds of perforations employed, one consisting of a row of continuous little holes and the other of slits. The notes that are cut with slits are the notes of the melody of the piece. After a little practice a musician who is familiar with the intervals can read one of these perforated paper rolls as he would a printed score. You will notice running down the middle of the roll a fine blue line. This only indicates the division of the bass from the treble, and enables you to see which lever is controlling the notes that are to be played. By a most ingenious device the loud pedal can, by throwing over a little lever placed near the music roll, be made automatic. On the extreme left of the music roll you will see a row of little holes, and these correspond with the period during which the pedal is to be held down. These little holes open an additional bellows, by which the dampers of the pianoforte are elevated or depressed exactly as the indications for the use of the pedal are marked in the printed music. Here again, as with the time, when you know the piece and if you understand pedalling, you have only got to throw over the lever controlling the automatic pedalling and once more the pedalling is within your own control.

And now for a more detailed discussion of the Themodist, or device for accentuating the melody. You pull over to the left the levers which I have already described as controlling the pressure of air in the bass or treble. All the accompaniment will then be subdued, but the melody notes, being left open to the variations of the normal wind pressure, will now be entirely under your control and you can play them loudly or softly just as you like, controlling the force by the amount of air you exhaust from the bellows by your feet.

You sometimes hear it said by those who have heard only a bad instrument in incompetent hands that the Pianola has no tone; but the tone produced by the Pianola piano is conditioned largely by the quality of the tone of the pianoforte itself. The Pianola cannot get a good tone out of a pianoforte that has a bad tone. Also the quality of the tone is largely controllable by the force with which you depress the pedals. But let us admit at once that a highly-trained sensitive pianist can produce qualities and finesse of tone and touch by hand that the most skilful performer on the Pianola cannot equal. Perhaps one of the main reasons for the considerable prejudice that still exists against the Pianola in the minds of some people is that in their endeavour to combat the belittling and absurd criticisms that have been put forward, ultra-

enthusiastic amateurs of the Pianola have dwelt too much on its possibilities as producing artistic results and not enough on its overwhelming value to the cause of musical education. The Pianola has a technique of its own. It is perfectly true that an absolute beginner having been shown how to use the levers can play an elaborate and difficult piece of music with a certain amount of effect, but to get a really artistic and musicianly rendering of a piece, you require to be a trained musician and to have thoroughly mastered the technique of the instrument.

You can practise on the Pianola. Some things are quite difficult to do. The phrasing, for instance, of certain rhythmic passages may give you a lot of trouble until you have mastered the knack. You can repeat bars and passages in which you find difficulties by rolling and re-rolling that particular part of the music, and the effect that you will get in playing any particular piece is personal and peculiar to yourself. It is quite an easy task to demonstrate that you can give a distinctive reading of a piece on the Pianola, and as an interesting instance of the truth of what I am telling you, when my friend, Mr Edwin Lemare, the celebrated organist, was staying in my house for some time, Mrs Jonson could always tell when she was out of the room whether it was Lemare or myself who was playing the Pianola. It is a curious thing, but the easier a piece is to play on pianoforte, the more difficult it is to play on the Pianola, and the greater the technical difficulty of the piece on the pianoforte the easier it is to render it effectively on the Pianola. It is easier, for instance, to play the colossally difficult *Paganini Variations* of Brahms than the first movement of Beethoven's *Moonlight Sonata*.

A glance at the catalogue of the music available will show that the range of music now opened up for use on the Pianola is so immense and all-embracing that practically one may say the whole range of fine pianoforte, orchestral and chamber music, and opera is at our service. Now, why is it that with all of these advantages so much opposition to the Pianola still lingers in the minds of some musicians? I think it must be largely on account of the prejudice arising from ignorance of the possibilities of the instrument, and then the fear that the more perfect it became the greater rival it would be to the great artist and incidentally to the teacher. I am quite convinced that these fears are groundless; in fact, I am prepared to argue, and I believe I shall succeed in convincing you, that the Pianola, so far from being a rival is absolutely an invaluable aid to, and a firm ally of, the intelligent teacher. I base this opinion first of all on my own personal experience, and secondly on the experience and testimony of my friends and acquaintances.

Before I took up lecturing on music professionally, which I did only some five years ago, I was a Stockbroker. I had been taught to play the pianoforte when I was a little boy, and having always lived in London in a musical set, music had been my hobby and recreation. Just before the advent of the

Pianola I was really almost giving up playing the pianoforte. I got tired of my somewhat limited repertoire, and had no time to keep up my technique. I remember the incredulity with which I received the first reports of what the Pianola could do. It seemed to me too good to be true that here was a means by which I could play with a certain amount of personal expression all the fine music of the world regardless of technical difficulty, but from the moment that I heard a lady whom I knew to have very little facility in music play the Schumann Concerto with an extraordinary brio, I realised the wonderful new world that lay before me. I rushed to buy a Pianola, and forthwith proceeded to gorge myself on all the beautiful music that the limitations of my technique had hitherto prevented my becoming fully acquainted with. 'Of course,' said my friends, 'now you have a Pianola you never play the pianoforte,' but the exact contrary was the case. I found that the Pianola opened up to me a wide range of new music, much of which I found was within my technique. I always made it a rule to put the sheet music on the desk of the pianoforte before me, and very soon I observed that the rapid following of the music by my eye as it was played on the Pianola had the effect of improving my sight-reading. With this, and the additional facility of technique arising from more constant playing, I soon found that the net result of my possessing a Pianola was that my music rapidly improved. Also I became widely read in music. For instance, I knew intimately every note that Chopin ever wrote from Opus 1 to Opus 74. I was able to follow the development of the composer by taking his works in chronological order, omitting none, however difficult. I followed up my study of Chopin with an equally systematic study of Schumann and Beethoven, and as the monthly supplements of the catalogue were issued I continued to make myself rapidly familiar with a great deal of new music with which up to that time I had only been very slightly acquainted.

Another result was that I went a great deal more often and a great deal more eagerly to the recitals of the greatest pianists; and amongst my friends in the Stock Exchange who had bought Pianolas I found exactly similar keenness. It became amusing to find how a man who a short time before had known practically nothing of music would discuss with me quite eagerly the merits of various composers and pianists. Those who had children told me that it stimulated their wish to learn music. I also found that people who honestly believed that they cared only for quite light music, and did not like classical music with the exception of some few pieces with which they had a fortuitous familiarity, discovered that with the possibility of constant repetition there came a liking and indeed a preference for the best music.

It is undoubtedly much easier to learn a piece of music when one knows exactly how it ought to sound. This is the more marked in modern music such as Debussy, Ravel, and other composers, where the strange harmonies make it often very difficult for the amateur to know if he is playing the right notes

until he becomes familiar with the unaccustomed idiom. Excellent practice in reading can be obtained by playing the pianoforte part of a violin sonata on the Pianola, and rendering the violin part on the upper octaves of the pianoforte with your right hand. Songs can be treated in the same way. Not many people go very keenly to a concert to hear a mass of entirely new works with which they are unfamiliar, but the enjoyment of a concert is enormously enhanced by a previous study of the programme on the Pianola. In London and centres where there is a large choice of good concerts, this is a method of using the Pianola which must surely appeal to everyone.

If I were on the staff of a school where the headmaster or mistress desired that the boys or girls should become familiar with the literature of music, I should at the commencement of each term make out a programme including so many symphonies, sonatas, concertos, and other great works, and at some stated hour of the day's proceedings I should repeat each day one of these great works for a week, preceding its first performance on the Pianola by a brief description of the work, stating where it came in the development of the composer's individuality and its relative importance and position in the history of music, and playing on the pianoforte the first and second themes and leading episodes of the different movements, repeating these two or three times, and making the pupils sing them. They would then find that the performance of the complete work on the Pianola would have all the charm of familiarity, and we should hear no more of that parrot-like repetition of the phrase, 'Oh, I don't care for classical music,' or 'I cannot understand Bach or Beethoven or Wagner.'

If the choice of the music that could be gone through during a school term was to be limited by the technical accomplishment of the instructor, I think there is every chance that a great deal of fine music that should be the mental possession of everyone would remain unknown. How many music masters or mistresses have the technique required to give a satisfactory rendering of, say, such a piece as Chopin's *Revolutionary Etude*, No. 12 of Opus 10? This is the kind of piece where, unless the technique is overwhelmingly perfect, the emotional effect must suffer. How often have we not heard this magnificent piece played by someone so hopelessly pre-occupied with its technical difficulties that even when they were surmounted it left one with a painful sense of effort and no clear mental picture of the emotion dominant in Chopin's mind when he wrote it? For an audience to whom every note is familiar I need not describe this piece, but I want to play it to you on the Pianola in order that you may see that it is possible to give a definitive reading of a piece: that although the results may be mechanical in the sense that you will hear no wrong notes, still there is scope for a very considerable expression of personal feeling.

It has always seemed to me that when the first defiant and majestic theme recurs that it should be played in a kind of heartbroken way, as one might fancy Paderewski playing it as he thinks of the cruel ruin that has overtaken his unfortunate land. It seems to me as if it stammers in its utterance: the rage has died out of it, only the pathos is left, and it ends with a questioning phrase like a broken sob, followed by one last defiant and despairing effort.

[At this point Mr. Jonson played the *Revolutionary Etude on the Pianola*.]

There are certain pieces of great technical difficulty in which it would be difficult for the most consummate artist to better the performance of the Pianola. As an example we might take Chopin's Study in A minor, Opus 10, No. 2. The chromatic scale here has to be played with the third, fourth, and fifth fingers, while the thumb and first finger play the harmonies underneath the scale on each beat of the bar. In spite of these technical difficulties, it is when properly rendered as delicate as a silver point drawing, as rounded and finished as a lyric by Heine. The treble ripples up and down over the lightly accentuated harmonies in the bass, and the concluding scale drops as delicately as a bird alighting on a swaying branch. When you can play this study really well, you are in a fair way to become a Chopin player. One undoubted result of the Pianola as far as regards proper appreciation of the performances of the great pianists, is that you soon begin to despise mere technical dexterity when it is obviously displayed as an end in itself, and not subdued to its proper place as a means whereby an artistic reading can be arrived at. Of what use would it be for a pianist now to seek to dazzle us by a display of fluency when the Pianola could play this Etude like this if it wanted to?

[Here an illustration was given of the extreme speed obtainable on the Pianola.]

We all know Ernest Newman, the trenchant critic who is nothing if not courageously outspoken in his opinions. He wrote an article not long ago in *The English Review* in which he says that for a man to put in a plea for the piano-player in these days is to make a good many worthy people doubt his sanity or his honesty, or both. He says that to praise the piano-player is to subject oneself to the suggestion that one is in the pay of a mysterious entity known as the makers, and that one is not a real musician. Such remarks in my opinion can only arise from interested prejudice or from a more or less complete ignorance. On the contrary, it is I who doubt the honesty and sanity of any who venture to deny the evident value of the Pianola to musical education. Personally if I was looking for a school in which to place my sons or daughters I should look upon the presence of a Pianola as the hall-mark of an open-minded up-to-dateness that would most certainly be a deciding factor in the balancing of rival claims.

Looking at the matter broadly, how can the proved increase of interest and delight in music caused by the intelligent and guided use of the Pianola be anything but a benefit to the teaching profession? It must and demonstrably does stimulate an increased wish to learn to play by hand and, in addition, I believe the time is not far distant when there will be a separate and distinct branch of teaching opened out, and that people will want to be taught not only how to play the Pianola but how to play the music that they love to the best and most artistic advantage on the Pianola.

As I daresay has been evident to you this afternoon, I simply love playing the Pianola. I cannot describe to you the joy of feeling fine music rolling out from under one's feet with an effortless concentration on the emotional content of the music as opposed to the harassed inefficiency that one feels when attempting to play something just beyond one's technique. The advantages of this freedom from the barriers of technique are nowhere more clearly to be seen than when one wishes to give an idea of a concerto, as it really requires very considerable technique and musicianship if one is to give a reasonable idea on the pianoforte of how a concerto would sound with the orchestral part woven into the solo.

I think I have now fairly covered the points that were indicated to me that the Association would like to have elucidated as the basis for the discussion to follow. I have not dealt with the mechanical part of the construction of the instrument, because that cannot be made intelligible without a mechanism stripped for inspection, and then it can only be displayed satisfactorily to a very limited number. I have, however, no doubt that the Orchestrelle Company would be very pleased to show to any professional musician who is seriously interested, their factories at Hayes where the machines are built and the perforated rolls of music produced. They have there an electric recording pianoforte, and as a piece is played by hand on that, the roll is simultaneously cut exactly as it is being played by the pianist, so that when finished the roll can be re-wound and played at once on the Pianola. The editing of the music, the cutting of the stencil, the machines which produce fifteen copies of the stencil at a time in the perforated paper rolls, the ingenious device by which the expression marks are reproduced simultaneously on all the rolls together with the *Metrostyle* line and other indications are all of fascinating interest.

I think it is difficult for professional musicians to understand the intense keenness of the amateur lover of music who has never learned to play an instrument and to whom music was almost a sealed book till the invention of the Pianola placed in his grasp an instrument on which he could become proficient in a week and proceed to wreak his thoughts upon expression. There are many pianolists so keen that they will cut their own music in unique single copies if they want to have some piece that is not to be found in the catalogue. I know one friend who cannot play a note, but who has built

himself a lovely music-room panelled in oak, and behind these panels are literally thousands of rolls. He also has the printed music of every roll that he buys, and has four different mechanical piano-players in this room, and he gives weekly recitals to his friends of the best music, which he plays with an astonishing artistry considering, as he says himself, that ten years ago he knew no music at all but a few Handel choruses and *God Save the King*. The mention of which reminds me that it is quite time I stopped talking and invited the commencement of the Discussion.

Discussion

The Chairman: You will agree with me in rendering our best thanks to the lecturer. We could not have had a better or clearer. He knows his subject most thoroughly, and he has played in a manner which must excite our admiration. It is desirable to-day that experts present should contribute to the discussion, and I will only make two remarks myself. The lecturer's principal concern is to combat the delusion that individuality disappears with the use of the piano-player. We have all of us suffered from that delusion, and it is right that an Association like this should aid in dispelling it. The mechanism attached to the piano-player is by its control of the dynamics and of the pace what stop-registration is for the organist, and more; and doubtless in that direction lie further effective developments in the future.

You have heard from the illustrations played to-day by the lecturer the difference between purely mechanical rendering and rendering with the performer's individuality added. And if it did not act in this direction, the influence of the piano-player would be retrograde, for the infusion of some individuality into performance is nowadays an absolute *sine qua non*. The performances of fifty years ago in all classes had, as a general rule, a coldness which would not be tolerated by the audiences of to-day. Those who were at the Philharmonic concert yesterday heard a Mozart Symphony transformed by what I must describe as the genius of Sir Thomas Beecham; yet so recently as twenty years ago such a rendering would not have been thought of. And if I am not greatly mistaken in the nature of the artistic temperament, the old masters themselves would have been quite the first to welcome the warmth added to the production of their works by modern resources, finding therein, in fact, what their own brains had conceived. One of the main characteristics of the piano-player is that it enables the performer to concentrate his whole attention on expression; and, as I said, I believe that there will be further mechanical devices invented with this object.

In the second place the lecturer is plainly right in the claims which he makes for the instrument in the quality of a general educator. Tens of thousands get music hereby who would otherwise not get it at all. And through the rolls they have access to the highest music. I do not believe that

the instrument will damage the teaching profession. No invention which has widened musical interests has ever yet done that.

Mr F. Gilbert Webb: I should like to emphasise what Mr Jonson has said about the necessity of learning the pianola and the necessity of practising. I speak with some authority because I had the good fortune to have two patents of mine bought by the Orchestrelle Company, so I know the machine thoroughly and I know its capabilities. The whole expressive force lies in two things - the supply of wind-pressure by the feet, and the lever which controls the tempo. It is astonishing what you can do by practising with the feet. When you begin you find that the ankles are not sufficiently lissom, and it is only by practice that you get that quickness of movement which can secure effective rendering. It is the same with the control lever that marks the tempo; you can accentuate the notes in a wonderful way.

I think much of the prejudice against the pianola and similar machines has arisen from the fact that the makers have advertised that they can be played by a child. A child can make a noise with it, but it requires considerable practice to obtain satisfactory results - also knowledge of the musical phrasing of the piece you are playing. I do not think that this is any disadvantage; it is a great advantage. It shows that you have the power to give your reading of the music, that you have a mechanical pair of hands besides your own. The pianola is a musical medium, and it is wonderful how sensitive it is and what delicate effects you can get. Indeed, I think there are some pieces that can be played more perfectly by means of the pianola than with human hands, unless you are gifted with extraordinary executive facility, which is the exception. As to its educational value, it is enormous in almost every way. When MacDowell's Pianoforte Concerto was played some years ago I was ignorant of the work, so I went to the Orchestrelle Company, got a machine, and in a couple of hours or so played through the whole of his compositions. By this means I became intimately acquainted with the idiom and style of the composer in the shortest possible time, and gained a clear idea of the position of that particular Concerto in the order of his compositions. I know Paderewski uses the pianola, and also Sir Henry Wood to try the effects of tempi. There are many ways in which the pianola is most useful. The way in which it develops what may be termed latent musical ability is remarkable.

I have known people incapable of playing any instrument develop an astonishing sense of musical balance and rhythm through the medium of the pianola. So it is a pity that there is any prejudice against it. Certainly I do not regard its use as detrimental to teaching; it cultivates a sense of music which you want to satisfy. There will always be a charm attached to the use of the hands, but it is obvious that the capabilities of the large majority of fingers are very limited, especially with modern music. The pianola enables you to extend your knowledge enormously. So I believe the more people have pianolas the more musical we shall become as a nation.

Mr Percy A. Scholes: A lady present wishes to know who invented the pianola. Whilst our lecturer is counting back the years and cudgeling his brain for names, I would like to make a remark upon something Mr Webb has said. Is music going to get beyond the reach of the ten fingers before long? Will not our present scales break down altogether, and shall we not have more than twelve notes within our octave? And when that time comes about shall we not be compelled to use an instrument like the pianola to enable us to make a step forward - if 'forward' be the word? Like Mr Webb, I would support all that Mr Jonson has said. On reflection we must all feel that we have been advantaged by this invention. Like Mr Webb, I made a thorough acquaintance with MacDowell by playing through the whole of his works in chronological order. And recently for a particular purpose I went quickly through all Grieg's works. So the pianola is enormously useful for anyone desiring to cover much ground without preliminary practice. Without it in a great many cases people form a judgment of a composer without going through the whole of his works.

For school use I am sure the pianola is very valuable indeed. The other day I heard or read of the headmaster of a school who bought a fifty-guinea gramophone, and who every day gave his pupils the delight for one hour of listening to it; thus by means of the gramophone they went through all the masterpieces. I am not at present altogether in favour of using the gramophone in that way, and I am always sorry when the gramophone is classed with the pianola, because it seems to me these instruments fall under different classifications altogether. The pianola has been brought to a certain pitch of perfection. But the gramophone I look upon as still imperfect. For instance, on the gramophone a fine pianoforte tinkles as if fifty years old.

With a pianola you can give children in school a wide range of musical knowledge and appreciation. At the same time it might be worth while reading something I saw only to-day for the first time in this month's issue of *The Author*:

'Taking, now, the piano-player and the gramophone at their best, as reproductions of masterpieces made cheaply and easily accessible, let us ask ourselves if this is a desirable achievement. It is the same in the case of the multiplication of good reproductions of famous paintings, of old English furniture, or Oriental stuffs, where these are used as substitutes for local invention and contemporary art. Is it our real aim to multiply reflections of existing or special achievements, or that in every community there should exist at least some form of living art? Do we value appreciation or creation highest? Is not genius-worship the infallible sign of an uncreative age?'

That seems to me to derive ultimately from the Rousseau doctrine of the noble savage. It seems to tend towards doing away almost altogether with the need for great men, and to putting all on a level. It seems to say because peasantry can originate folk-songs there is no place for the composer who

can write symphonies, and the objection which is made in the same article to people enjoying their music easily and without much effort is an objection which would rule out attendance at an orchestral concert. I do not think any of us will take that criticism very seriously, and yet I feel there is some grain of truth in it.

I fully agree with Mr Ashton Jonson, but I would like to try, if I may, to put him in an awkward corner for once and ask him about things. I may probably be putting up so many ninepins for him to knock down, and I hope it may be so. For one thing, I have not yet been able to play a shake properly with the pianola. If I attempt to do so it comes out so unpleasantly hard that I fear a complaint from my neighbours. And string tremolos are not as a rule successful. Each stroke of the tremolo has to be given in the roll form by a separate little perforation, and these perforations cannot be brought close enough together on the paper, so one is never able to get the string tremolo. When I play a Symphony with a string tremolo - as, for instance, Elgar's first Symphony - I find the Symphony is spoilt at that part. And a drum-roll means a similar difficulty. All you can do is to play the passage tremendously quickly, and so get a rapid roll, but then the thing is done in a tenth part of the time.

Another fault I find is that frequently, though the red line is marked accurately, the green line strays before the roll comes to an end. It starts right, but probably through some difficulty in printing so long a roll of paper, before long it begins to give you *pianissimo* when it should be *fortissimo*, and so forth. I play with the music before me, but the pianola is meant to help people who cannot read music, and I think the Company should pay attention to the defect I have just mentioned.

Then another point: in some cases two or more pieces are played from one roll. I was trying to show a friend how a certain Bach *Invention* came out on the pianola; but in order to get to this I had to play a large number of earlier *Inventions* found on that roll. I played these with the utmost rapidity to get them over, and find I have lost my reputation for musicality in consequence with a person who happened to be waiting outside the door and overheard my playing. And there is a corresponding difficulty where a movement is so long that it will not all go on one roll.

The first movement of Elgar's first Symphony, for instance, is so long that two rolls have to be used. That means you have to stop to rewind before you can start again. Well, the Company should find some way out of that difficulty. They have been so diabolically ingenious in getting over difficulties that those I have mentioned should not long prove stumbling-blocks. Because I have dwelt last upon these difficulties I hope you will not forget what I said at the outset: that I have found the pianola to be one of the most useful of household possessions - perfectly invaluable to anyone who wishes to have a wide knowledge of music.

Dr Southgate: I doubt if anyone who has heard the remarks of the lecturer will go away with any prejudice against the pianola. Our lecturer has shown us in his illustrations how necessary it is to study the instrument. The music must not be ground out as with a barrel organ, though it seems to be the opinion of some people that a pianola is much like a barrel organ. However, Mr Ashton Jonson has shown us that, if played properly, the pianola is at once elevated from a mechanical to an artistic instrument. Then as to the educational advantage of it, - I doubt whether we shall now hear any contention to the contrary. It has enormous educational value. The pianola opens to us a wide field of music that it would be impossible to get hold of in any other form, just as the pianoforte with its arrangements for two and four hands has made it possible for people to hear symphonies by great masters that otherwise would be beyond their attainment.

I was interested in the remarks Mr Ashton Jonson made on wind control. In speaking of the necessity for absolute command over the wind, I am reminded of what happens in the harmonium with the expression stop - difficult, it must be admitted, to manage. So sensitive are some of these instruments that the movement of a toe in one's boots makes all the difference to the strength of tone.

Mr Scholes has remarked about the enlargement of our scale and the difficulty of finding more fingers to play it. The scale could be enlarged with such an instrument as the pianola; but you have to remember wind-instrument players, and if it is to be used in an orchestra I should like to hear what the performer would do in the rubato parts. I think there would be difficulty there.

Now as to the necessity of being taught to play. For this teachers are required. If we are to get an instrument played with adequate expression, one must obtain a grasp of the music, so I think it is likely there may arise a certain number of professional musicians specially to teach people how to play these pieces - a legitimate and proper occupation. I am reminded here of something that happened to myself in this respect. Some few years ago there was a bazaar got up at Dean's Yard, Westminster, for the benefit of a local hospital, and a benevolent person presented a pianola to be raffled for. Sir Frederick Bridge said to me, 'Don't you think we could get people to play this pianola, and then let it go to the best player?' I replied: 'It would not be a bad plan, but we must have some method of testing their ability.' So we plotted. Some of the competitors pumped away magnificently, some stopped a little tired, some were better than others; but before they went out of the door they each had to pay 2s. 6d. for the lesson! A good many objected strongly, but we got the half-crowns. One said: 'I think you ought to present certificates for playing.' We considered. A kind friend designed a charming certificate. On it was represented a spider's web with a few printed lines saying that 'Mr or Miss

So-and-So has played the pianola before us as judges, and plays as well as could be expected under the circumstances!’

The result was that we issued quite a large number of certificates, and got a considerable sum of money. The instrument was eventually raffled for, as we could not determine who was the best player; thus a good deal of money was got for the hospital. Charity covers a multitude of sins!

Dr McNaught: I have had no experience of the pianola; not being a millionaire I have not been able to possess one. But perhaps we may be able to get one in a raffle. Yet I have been hankering after one, for I feel it has tremendous advantages. I would like to know what is the cost of these things, and what is the life of the instrument if played, say, two hours a day? Then another question: Have pieces been composed for the pianola, or do we only use pieces already composed?

Mr Cobbett spoke of music being composed for the pianola which no human bands could play.

Mr Baker said he wondered how it had happened that there were so many other instruments of the same type on the market, since presumably the original was protected by patents. It was some fifteen years ago that this was invented, and that seemed a short life if protected.

The Chairman: I am curious to know what class of men make the arrangements. They must require enormous skill. Also I want to know, Is there any consolidated catalogue of pianola music?

Mr Ashton Jonson: As it is some four or five years since I lectured last on the subject of the pianola, I can only speak from memory in regard to some details that have been asked for. The main idea of playing the notes of the pianoforte by means of pneumatic pressure actuated through the perforations in a roll of paper was, I believe, a French invention of some thirty years ago, which was, however, neglected. Then it was revived by an Englishman, who, failing to get the thing taken up in England, took it to America. An early make, called the Pianotist, used perforated cardboard through the holes in which wooden levers struck the notes: but this was so clumsy and inefficient from an artistic point of view, that it soon went out of use. I believe that the first makers of the pneumatic instrument (though it is a disputed point) were the firm who now sell the Angelus over here.

With regard to patents: this is an interesting question. The whole instrument is strewn over with little patent devices, some of which, like the Metrostyle, are quite protected; but many of the so-called patents could not, I am sure, be defended in a court of law. It was about twenty years ago that the pianola really came on the market in America, and it was brought over here about eighteen years ago.

With regard to the playing of shakes and trills on the pianola: the instrument can do this to perfection, but the attempt to reproduce the effect of a string tremolo in the rendering of an orchestral piece leaves a great deal to be desired. This, however, is a mere matter of care in the arranging. All pianolas should be fitted with devices for working both the loud and soft pedals of the pianoforte. There is a great deal in the skilful use of the levers, but the real differences of touch on the pianola are produced by the pressure of the feet on the pedals controlling the bellows. You cannot play the pianola satisfactorily in thick, tightly-laced boots. I always play the pianola in shoes - indiarubber-soled for choice - and I know one enthusiast who always plays in carpet slippers.

As to wrong markings on the rolls, Mr Scholes should visit the Orchestrelle Company's factory at Hayes and see the process of the manufacture not only of the instruments, but of the music rolls. There is no reason why the expression marks should not be absolutely accurate. It is only a question of care on the part of the mechanic using the patent device by which these marks are reproduced simultaneously on fifteen rolls at a time. If the machine were used only by a skilled and conscientious musician who was also a skilled mechanic, these errors would not occur. This, however, would add enormously to the cost.

Concerning the inconvenience of two pieces on one roll: In the newest models of the pianola you can roll off any portion of the roll silently. You can do this with the earlier models by a trick, putting the re-roll lever at half-cock. It is difficult to see how the problem of playing a very long piece or movement of a symphony, without employing two rolls, can be solved. It could of course be done by enlarging the space on the instrument where the music roll is placed, and using a longer roll: but I expect that then fresh difficulties would arise, as the roll would become very unwieldy. At present the longest roll it is possible to use will accommodate a piece that takes about ten minutes to play. So a piece that takes longer than this to perform must necessarily be divided. We may be thankful that the pianola is in a better position as to this particular than the gramophone, which can only play a record for about four minutes.

The ability to help the accentuation by means of the levers is very important: this is where the levers as employed on the pianola are, in my opinion, so superior to the push-button devices of some other makes. They are, so to speak, pianistic in their use. It is quite easy to alter the strength of the accompaniment when using the Themodist. It is only a question of adjusting a spring. It would, however, be a great advantage to be able to do this from the keyboard whilst playing.

With regard to the use of the pianola by musicians, I know one gentleman who has a large music school and whose time is enormously occupied: he is expected to conduct a number of works for a local orchestra, and he uses the pianola to make himself rapidly familiar with a great many orchestral works.

Dr McNaught asked about the price of these instruments. You can buy pianoforte-players for almost any price. The most expensive is the Steinway Pianola-pianoforte in America, where those people who will always buy the dearest thing they can see will pay as much as £420 for an instrument. For an instrument like the one we have here the net cash price would be about £180. An upright pianola-pianoforte costs from £90 upwards according to the elaboration of the case. The best cabinet player costs £73, and you can buy secondhand models of an earlier make for £15 and possibly £10 if you are lucky.

As to the life of the instrument, my experience is that they do not wear out at all. The indiarubber of the pipes is kept alive as it were by the constant differences of pressure and does not perish. Occasionally dust may get into the pipes, but is easily removed by a little suction pump.

Music has been specially composed for the pianola. In some of these pieces when the limitations of ten fingers have been disregarded the effect is somewhat unpianistic. The arrangements of orchestral works are made by very clever musicians. Every maker and every firm have their own catalogue, and I think now that all the music is interchangeable. The biggest catalogue is that issued by the Orchestrelle Company, which contains a very full selection of the classics.

Someone asked if the pianola can be hurt by inexperienced players. I think the pianola is practically fool-proof, but if a strong young man starts in to play ragtime with all his strength it is certainly not good for the pianoforte. You can injure a pianoforte with the pianola, but so you can with your hands. Properly played, the pianola does a pianoforte good.

Mr Cobbett asked if the pianola in accompanying lends itself to singers who take liberties with their songs. A skilled accompanist can follow any singer or violinist no matter how rubato their performance may be. But naturally the performers must play or sing the music as it is written. They must not sing wrong notes or leave out or put in bars at their own sweet will.

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the Lecturer and to the Orchestrelle Company.

Book Review:

After the Golden Age: Romantic Pianism and Modern Performance,
Kenneth Hamilton, Oxford University Press, 2008

Denis Hall

Kenneth Hamilton is to be congratulated on tackling a question which many a music lover must have asked. 'Why need 'classical' music concerts be such deadly serious affairs?' Hamilton produces indisputable evidence that this was not always the case. In his book, he chooses to deal with pianists and the piano during the period from 1837, the year of Liszt's pianistic duel with Thalberg, until 1941, when Paderewski died. During that century, he describes how the public concert developed from being a largely social occasion, when the audience ate, drank and chatted, and generally made merry while the pianist played, to the attentive, silent, and sometimes dull recitals we are accustomed to today. He also covers in considerable detail the changing repertoire, and the slow transformation of the performer 'super star' into the present day humble servant of the composers' scores and intentions. Without passing judgment, Hamilton suggests that we may have lost something in this change of attitude.

I am very sympathetic to Hamilton's argument, but I have to admit that I find that he presents his case in an unbalanced and distinctly selective manner. His research and knowledge of scores and written material about piano performances and repertoire are quite remarkable, and one must admire his facility in being able to produce the relevant quotes in such detail. To back these up, he is meticulous in giving his sources (incidentally, he complains of the 'footnote-itis', which he first notices in the writings of Moscheles and Fétis (p. 158) - maybe a case of the pot calling the kettle black?) In dealing with the earlier part of his chosen period, he relies on the written word, which is right and proper. There is no other evidence.

It is when he comes to that period when there are sound recordings that he is less good. One wonders if his knowledge of them is as wide as it patently is of the written word, and one must suspect that it is probably not. This is disappointing in that, while a printed review or criticism of a performance



of a bygone age may appear detailed and precise, today's reader is inevitably reading it with the pre-conditioned brain of 2008. But if he could hear it as well, he would be more likely to understand where the reviewer was coming from. Of course, there is always the risk that he might not like what he heard! There exist sound recordings of pianists born and trained during the first half of the nineteenth century, and these, listened to in conjunction with the scores and reports Hamilton cites, would give the reader a well rounded conception of the manner of playing 100 and more years ago.

Hamilton is very sketchy in his references to sound recordings. He never mentions a 78 rpm record unless it has been transferred to CD, nor does he quote the original catalogue number, and very seldom gives a recording date, even when his source is a CD reissue where the information would be readily to hand. His treatment of piano rolls is even more cavalier. While many old records are rare and difficult to access, they are surely no more obscure than many of the scores and books he quotes.

I cannot accept that the piano roll recording can be written off as a 'highly unsatisfactory medium' (p. 28). Reproducing piano rolls, when played back on a well-restored instrument, are an invaluable source for the student of piano performance practice during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first 30 years of the twentieth century. Of course they have their weaknesses as well as their undoubted strengths, but then, so do disc recordings. The Welte-Mignon (introduced 1904/5), the Hupfeld DEA (1906) and the Philipps Duca (1908) recorded an amazingly enlightened repertoire, played by many of the greatest pianists of the day, particularly during the period up to the beginning of the First World War. Many of the rolls are of large scale works which the gramophone at that time did not attempt, or of pianists who either made no disc recordings, or are only poorly represented by them. Hamilton's experience of rolls seems to be limited almost entirely to the Duo-Art recordings put out by Nimbus some years ago, which is a pity as there is so much other material on roll which he could have used. For example, taking only the Welte-Mignon, there is d'Albert playing both the complete Liszt Sonata and Beethoven's Sonata Op. 101 in 1913. Busoni playing the big Liszt transcriptions in 1905 is very different from the reluctant Columbia recording artist of the early 1920s. And there is even the elderly Carl Reinecke, born in 1824 while Beethoven was still alive, playing Mozart in a way that would astound many 21st century academics. Yet Reinecke was an acknowledged Mozart interpreter, and wrote on the subject of how to play his music.

The over generous attention Hamilton has paid to Liszt, Anton Rubinstein, Busoni and Paderewski and their pupils has led to serious omissions in other areas. The French, English and Russians (apart from the influence of Anton Rubinstein) are written off in a couple of pages. Alfred Cortot is surely a major figure in influence, and yet he receives only one serious reference, and none

of his books appears in the bibliography. Fauré, Franck, Debussy and Ravel are ignored, and even Rachmaninov hardly gets a mention. In his obsession with Horowitz as the 'last romantic', Hamilton does not even consider, for example, Shura Cherkassky, whose approach to playing is at least as 'romantic' as that of Horowitz. From time to time, Hamilton writes about the construction of early pianos, and yet even in the bibliography, there is no listing of any book on the subject. At the very least, I should have expected to find Rosamund Harding's treatise of *The Piano-Forte: Its History Traced To The Great Exhibition of 1851*, Cambridge University Press, 1933, second edition 1978. Hamilton is too selective in whom he considers, with the result that many key figures are overlooked.

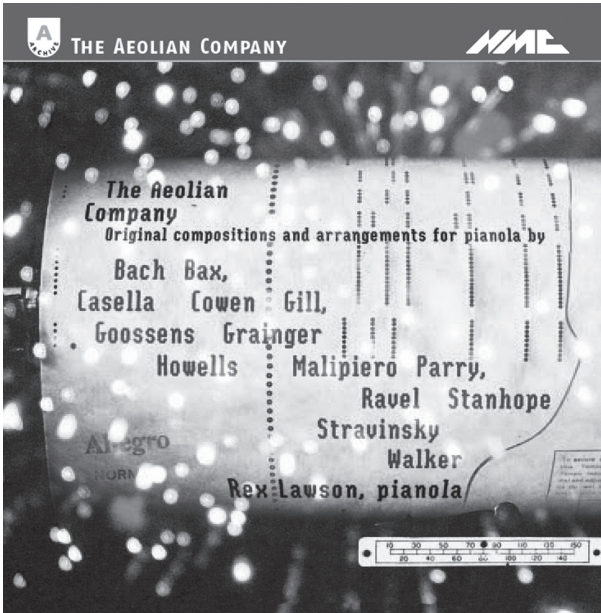
While I do not have the knowledge to check the accuracy of Hamilton's sources of the scores and books he uses, there are errors in other areas which ought not to have slipped through. The *Nocturne à Ragusa* which he attributes to Stojowski (p. 4) was composed by Ernest Schelling. He probably means Stojowski's *Chant d'Amour*, which Paderewski also recorded. He writes 'Francois' Plante instead of 'Francis', whose only recordings date from 1929, not 1908 as Hamilton states (p. 28). Bernhard Stavenhagen's only disc recording was of Chopin's *Nocturne Op 27/2 (Pathé 3) - Vertical-Cut Cylinders and Discs*, Girard and Barnes, British Institute of Recorded Sound, 1971 - a record so rare that it is unlikely that a copy has survived. The *Liebestod*, which Hamilton cites, was not one of Stavenhagen's piano rolls either (p. 148).

This book is a good read, but it could have been much more - the definitive study of pianists and pianism in the 'romantic' era. Unfortunately, there are too many omissions for this to be the full and balanced account that we need.

CD Review:

The Aeolian Company: Original compositions and arrangements for Pianola, Rex Lawson (Pianola), D136, NMC Recordings Ltd

Denis Hall



One of the causes Rex Lawson has championed for as long as I have known him is the establishment of the Pianola as a musical instrument in its own right, with its own repertoire and even a place on the concert platform, rather than, as Lawson sometimes recites, ‘an invention by means of which the untalented daughters of rich American businessmen could play Chopin to a mediocre standard of artistry, and

thereby enhance their chances of betrothal!’ This CD offers strong evidence to support his firmly held belief.

The Aeolian Company’s first model of Pianola played only 65 notes of the standard 88-note piano compass, but don’t imagine that restricted range limited its musical credentials. By the early years of the twentieth century, a very large library of music, consisting not only of pieces for solo piano, but also of orchestral arrangements and concertos was available on roll. Lawson’s first item, the *Organ Prelude and Fugue, BWV 541* by J.S. Bach, shows just what can be achieved by careful choice of registers, even if some of the deeper sixteen foot pedal notes are missing. The roll is a tribute to the musical skill of Esther Willis, the niece of the English organ builder, ‘Father’ Henry Willis who transcribed the roll from the score.

Among the earliest special arrangements to use the full compass of the 88-note Pianola are the two Folk Song ‘compositions’ from 1914 by Percy Grainger, whose understanding of the instrument’s strengths make these two rolls among the most attractive and successful in the Pianola’s repertoire. If my own preference is for *Molly on the Shore*, I have to admit that *Shepherd’s Hey* is

not far behind. The variety in exploiting the piano's qualities, both tonally and dynamically, has not been surpassed.

Around 1917, the Aeolian Company, through the good offices of Edwin Evans, a London music critic, commissioned a series of compositions and arrangements for the Pianola by distinguished composers of the day. A large part of this CD is taken up with a selection of the most noteworthy of these pieces. Five were original compositions, all of which Lawson plays, and the rest, arrangements.

The one piece to have survived in the standard repertoire is Stravinsky's *Etude pour Pianola*, more often heard these days as one of his *Studies for Orchestra, Madrid*, but it is fascinating to hear it in its original form.

Sadly, none of the composers in this series wrote a major work for Pianola. Nevertheless, it is interesting to hear the variety of styles which resulted, from Howells' romantic *Phantasy Minuet*, strongly reminiscent of his very personal church music, through the more typically early twentieth century *Rhythmic Dance* of Eugene Goossens III, to the pieces by Casella and Malipiero, composers who rebelled against the romanticism of the nineteenth century, and who saw the mechanical properties of the Pianola as being ideal for their approach. The arrangements by Cowen, Parry and Bax are all thoroughly enjoyable, and it was quite a feather in Aeolian's cap to get such eminent musicians to participate in the series.

The major composer for player piano, Conlon Nancarrow, has not been included. There are already two sets of his *Studies* available on CD (the first recording from 1977 on 1750 Arch Records LPs - a four record set - has just been reissued by Other Minds in San Francisco, and is well worth buying), and Lawson has made the decision to use the time available to present more recent compositions. The Australian composer, pianist and orchestral musician, David Stanhope, wrote his *Three Folk Songs for Pianola* for Lawson, and perhaps as a tribute to Stanhope's fellow Australian, Percy Grainger. If you liked *Molly on the Shore* and *Shepherd's Hey*, then you will love these! The final work is by the English composer, Robin Walker, who wrote his evocative tone poem *Halifax* for Lawson in 1995.

This wide-ranging survey of music specially written for the Pianola will, I hope, open the ears of musicians and critics alike to the fact that it is an instrument, like any other, to be used in the interpretation of music, and that it is not the unmusical machine so widely misunderstood. Much of the music on this CD is powerful stuff, but, listened to a few tracks at a time, it will prove to be a real ear-opener to the uninitiated.

Lawson interprets the rolls with the understanding that can only come from having lived with the music for nearly half his life, and with his intimate knowledge of Pianola technique, he is in a unique position to share his love of the music and the instrument with us. The recording was made using his own Pianola piano player on a fine Steinway concert grand, and the whole benefits from excellent sound.

Appendix CD: Aeolia 1004

With this Journal, we are enclosing a CD of recordings of rolls by Ferruccio Busoni and Josef Lhévinne to accompany the articles by Francis Bowdery and Mark Reinhart. We trust that these will add to your enjoyment and illustrate many of the points which the authors make.

We thank Richard Black, Robin Cherry, John Farmer, Thomas Jansen, Denis Hall, Rex Lawson and John Taylor for their assistance in the production of this CD.

Ferruccio Busoni

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------|--------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Chaconne
(from Partita in D min for solo violin) | Bach-Busoni | Duo-Art 6928 | Recorded 1915
Published 1925 |
| 2. Don Juan | Mozart/Liszt/Busoni | Welte 1323 | Recorded 1907 |

Josef Lhévinne

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| 3. Etudes Op. 10/11 & 25/9 | Chopin | Ampico 68001 | Published 1927 |
| 4. Fantasia on Hungarian
Gypsy Songs | Tausig | Ampico 63243 | Published 1924 |
| 5. Sevilla (Suite Espagnole) | Albeniz | Ampico 68473 | Published 1928 |
| 6. Octave Study Op. 740/5 | Czerny | Welte 2430 | Recorded 1911 |
| 7. Kammenoi-Ostrow
Op. 10/22 | Rubinstein | Welte 2431 | Recorded 1911 |
| 8. Toccata Op. 7 | Schumann | Welte 1301 | Recorded 1906 |
| 9. Gavotte
(from Iphigénie en Aulide) | Gluck/Brahms | Welte 1303 | Recorded 1906 |
| 10. Nocturne for the Left
Hand Op. 9/2 | Scriabin | Welte 1300 | Recorded 1906 |
| 11. Arabesques on the
Blue Danube | Strauss/
Schulz-Evler | Welte 1305 | Recorded 1906 |

Contributors

Francis Bowdery became interested in player and reproducing pianos while still at school. He has researched and re-scored historic compositions for both types of instrument, and prepared new music rolls of a number of these, ranging from Stravinsky to Ligeti, for both concerts and recordings. His parallel interest in historic piano recordings and performance style embraces both piano roll and gramophone recordings, and greatly influences his work as a musical instrument restorer.

Mark Reinhart has been involved with the Welte-Mignon for nearly thirty years, drawn by the music and interpretational styles of the distant past. By profession he is an electrical engineer working for the United States Patent Office, but his articles on musical and instrumental topics have been published in several specialist journals. Mark lives in rural West Virginia with his partner, a number of Welte pianos, and six cats.

G.C. Ashton Jonson was born in 1861 in London and for many years pursued a career on the London Stock Exchange. However, in middle age his passion for music got the better of him, and he gave up City life to become a lecturer and writer on musical matters. His handbook on the music of Chopin, which is still in print, was so successful that he was asked to represent Britain at the unveiling of the Chopin memorial in Warsaw in 1926. By all accounts he was a fine Pianola player, and his other interests included travel, taking him twice around the world, and motoring, for which he was honorary librarian of the Royal Automobile Club. He died in January 1930.

Denis Hall has been interested in recordings of pianists since his schooldays when he could buy new 78 rpm records of his keyboard heroes. He first became aware of reproducing pianos in the early 1960s, and bought his first Duo-Art in 1965. These days he spends much of his time in retirement maintaining his own reproducing pianos in a condition which he hopes does justice to the virtuosi of 100 years ago who entrusted their art to the piano roll medium.

