

This album presents American piano music from the later part of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. Chronologically it ranges from John Knowles Paine's *Fuga Giocosa*, published in 1884, to Henry F. Gilbert's *Mazurka*, published in 1902. The majority are from the nineties, a time of great prosperity and self-satisfaction in a nation of philanthropists and "philanthropied," as a writer characterized it in *The New York Times*. Though the styles are quite different, there are similarities among the composers themselves. All were pianists or organists or both, all went to Europe for musical training, and all dabbled in the classical forms.

If their compatriots earlier in the nineteenth century wrote quantities of ballads, waltzes, galops, marches, polkas, and variations on popular songs (New World Records 80257-2, *The Wind Demon*), the present group was more likely to write songs (self-consciously referred to as "art songs") and pieces with abstract titles like prelude, fugue, sonata, trio, quartet, and concerto. There are exceptions. MacDowell's formal works include two piano concertos, four piano sonatas, and orchestra and piano suites, but he is perhaps best known for his shorter character pieces and nature sketches for piano, such as *Fireside Tales* and *New England Idyls* (both completed in 1902). Ethelbert Nevin was essentially a composer of songs and shorter piano pieces, most of them souvenirs of his travels, but he, too, worked in the forms that had become most prestigious in his generation.

The central reason for the shift away from dance-inspired and entertainment pieces to formal compositions was that American wealth created a culture that created a musical establishment. Education was one of its pillars. Colleges and private schools existed in this country at least from 1636, when Harvard was founded, and music was generally on the fringes, perhaps a class or two in church singing. But these schools were exclusive, expensive, and usually associated with religious denominations. With greater immigration from Europe in the nineteenth century, especially from Germany in the forties, and the increasing wealth and mobility of the middle class, education received a great boost. State institutions formed, and opportunities for higher learning improved. Incipient professionals were able to receive the special training and attention that was possible in earlier years only from tutors and under the master-apprentice system.

In music—still a fairly exotic pursuit by mid-century, except for the traveling virtuosi, who were sometimes poor but had social status—vocal and individual instrumental (usually piano) training were abundant: the German-American musicians saw to that. But the teaching of theory, harmony, counterpoint, orchestration, or other aspects of technique and musical training were unknown in schools before the eighteen-sixties.

Around mid-century the democratic institution known as the conservatory appeared. In a sense, these were (and still are) trade schools designed to prepare young people to earn livelihoods in music. Instruction was practical and modest. Vocal and instrumental training and preparation for music teaching were emphasized. For the gifted student seeking to understand artistry and develop superior craftsmanship, they were inadequate where they existed at all. When Paine went to Berlin in 1858, there were no conservatories in the United States. Three of the earliest still exist: Oberlin Conservatory (1865) in Ohio, the New England Conservatory (1867) in Boston, and the Cincinnati Conservatory (also 1867).

The Italians originated the *conservatorio* in the sixteenth century to train orphans and needy children for duty in courtly or municipal bands and choirs. In the eighteenth century one of these institutions, the Conservatorio dell'Ospedale della Pietà in Venice, was famous for its concerts and the music provided by its teacher-composer, Antonio Vivaldi. The French Conservatoire de Musique (the Paris Conservatory), founded in 1795, initially was free and in the nature of a charitable institution. It broadened the function of the conservatory to provide a general music education.

One of the American conservatories staffed by the generation of young musicians and academics trained in Europe, the National Conservatory of Music, founded in New York in 1885 by the philanthropist Jeanette Thurber, was intended largely for black children and the children of recent immigrants. Tuition was usually free. The excellent modern faculty included Horatio Parker in his mid-twenties, the brilliant young writer James Gibbons Huneker (1860–1921), and Henry T. Finck (1854–1926), a critic and former Paine student at Harvard. Among the students later active in composing and performing were Harry T. Burleigh (1866–1949), a songwriter and arranger of Negro spirituals; Will Marion Cook (1869–1944), composer of early all-black Broadway musicals; and Edwin Franko Goldman (1878–1956), a cornetist, composer of marches, and bandmaster. Mrs. Thurber was liberal in hiring Americans for the faculty, but she insisted on European directors, preferably famous ones. Her great catch was the nationalist Bohemian composer Antonin Dvořák (1841–1904), who led the school from 1892 to 1895. He grew tired of the job quickly, even though he received a handsome salary. But he composed a clutch of “American” works between his duties and remained in New York long enough to attend the rapturous premiere of his symphony *From the New World*, a title suggested to him by Mrs. Thurber.

Like aspiring nineteenth-century American painters and architects, musicians traveled abroad for study. Lowell Mason (1792–1872) was among the first, followed by some of his fellow hymn writers and music educators; like Isaac B. Woodbury (1819–1858), they may have been most interested in finding scores they could raid for their innumerable and highly lucrative school songbooks. Among the army that followed was the young Louis Moreau Gottschalk (1829–1869), who settled in Paris in 1842 and learned first-hand how to be a Romantic and a piano virtuoso (New World 80208-2, which includes Gottschalk's *Night in the Tropics* in its two-piano arrangement; and New World 80257-2, *The Wind Demon*). His friend Ernest Guiraud (1837–1892), also from New Orleans, came to the Paris Conservatory and eventually joined the faculty.

The musicians of the next decades were perhaps more somber and considerably less glamorous. They were generally in their teens or early twenties, middle-class, from the East and Middle West, and willing to travel a long distance for self-improvement and the possibility of security and status back home. It could be an arduous experience, mentally, physically, emotionally, and financially, and relatively few made the trip. Those who did were serious about music and determined to learn.

For some there were the unexpected benefits of performing (like Paine as organist and MacDowell as pianist), teaching, and hearing their compositions played. A few lived abroad permanently or for long periods, such as Arthur Bird (1836–1928), who knew Liszt in Weimar and died in Berlin; George Templeton Strong (1856–1948), a good friend of MacDowell's, who also knew Liszt and who lived in Germany and Switzerland; and Louis A. Coerne (1870–1922), whose *Zenobia* was the first American opera performed in Germany (Bremen, 1905).

Their first concern was usually the acquisition of performance techniques not possible at home; their second was no-nonsense theoretical drilling to prepare them for teaching and administrative jobs. Composition was seldom the immediate goal. (To cite an extreme case, MacDowell was considering training as a painter until his second year in Paris.) They were cautious, but they were alert to the musical currents and brilliant personalities that swirled about Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century. The three decades between Paine's arrival in Berlin and MacDowell's return to America from Wiesbaden were memorable: Brahms composed his four symphonies, his four concertos, and all his piano music before Opus 116; Wagner produced *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Parsifal*, and the four music dramas of the *Ring* cycle; César Franck composed his Symphony in D minor; Verdi composed four operas, including *Aida*; Bizet's *Carmen* was premiered; Tchaikovsky composed four symphonies, *Swan Lake*, and the *1812 Overture*; and Gilbert and Sullivan wrote four operettas, among them *The Mikado*.

In the avant-garde of the day were Richard Wagner (1813–1883), stumbling through a haze of concocted mythology, interminable operas, unreadable theories, and a flood of stunning sensuality, and Franz Liszt (1811–1886), master of a virtuoso style of piano composition and performance unknown before his day and creator of the form known as the symphonic poem, a one-movement orchestral work with a programmatic title.

On the conservative side were composers and performers such as Joachim Raff (1822–1882), who was MacDowell's composition teacher; the pianist and composer Karl Reineke (1824–1910); the Austrian teacher, organist, and composer Anton Bruckner (1824–1896); the organist and composer Josef Rheinberger (1839–1901), teacher of Henry Holden Huss, Horatio Parker, and Arthur Whiting; and, most successful and convincing of all, Johannes Brahms (1833–1897). This group continued the traditions inherited from Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven (who was alive when three of this group were born) and wrote symphonies, sonatas, and chamber music but few if any stage works. The instrumental forms were the bastions of absolute music.

Whether in the classrooms, theaters, and concert halls of Europe or studying scores and devouring essays and reviews in America, American musicians were profoundly influenced by the great richness of creativity on all sides. Their own styles and preferences became widely different as they matured. Many gloried in their newfound abilities as composers and proudly paraded their fugues and double canons. Some of them—George W. Chadwick, Horatio Parker, Henry Hadley, Ethelbert Nevin, and others—wrote symphonic poems and concert overtures. Amy Marcy Cheney wrote a symphony; Paine wrote two and also a huge opera; MacDowell wrote no symphonies or operas. They all wrote for the piano, and, as this recording testifies, their writing for the instrument was fluent, stylistically distinctive (and therefore "American"), and bathed in the glow of Romanticism's embers.

Ethelbert Nevin (1862–1901)

Étude in Form of a Scherzo, Opus 18, No. 2

At a lavish dinner party in Venice given by Andrew Carnegie in the eighteen-nineties, one of the guests—a rather frail high-strung man in his early thirties—went to the grand piano to improvise an obbligato to the gondolier's evening serenade from the canal. It was Ethelbert Nevin, enjoying the milieu he loved best. He was a talented composer of songs (about forty-six plus two collections), choral

works, and piano pieces (about thirty-six and three collections)—nothing-large scale—who would have been more likely to starve for the artistic life than for art itself.

Nevin was born in his family home in Sewickley, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh, one of eight children. His father was Robert Peebles Nevin, a generally unsuccessful businessman who wrote poetry and knew Stephen Foster. His interesting article “Stephen Foster and Negro Minstrelsy” was published in the *Atlantic Monthly* in November 1867. Perhaps because of Foster’s unsteady career, Nevin was opposed to his son’s becoming a musician.

Ethelbert Nevin attended Western Reserve (now the University of Pennsylvania) but dropped out after a year. He had been taken to Europe as a child by his parents, and he was apparently restless for a career and a Continental lifestyle, both of which he achieved.

With a natural flair for playing the piano but little formal music training except mail-order harmony lessons, Nevin moved to Boston at nineteen and was accepted as a piano student by Benjamin J. Lang (1837–1909), a distinguished Boston musician, and as a theory student by Stephen Austin Emery (1841–1891), with whom George Chadwick, Henry Hadley, and Arthur Foote had studied in the seventies. After two years Nevin felt prepared for the traditional journey to Berlin for further study. He attended the school run by Karl Klindworth (1830–1916), then returned to Boston in 1886. In the city were a host of the new musical establishment, including Chadwick, who was thirty-two and teaching at the New England Conservatory; Arthur Foote, a busy thirty-three-year-old organist and teacher; and John Knowles Paine himself, already the grand old man of American music and letters, in his twenty-fourth year at Harvard. Nevin had friendly relations with at least one important musician of his generation, Edward MacDowell. After MacDowell returned to America in 1888, the two appeared in a benefit concert playing a movement from *Three Symphonic Idyls*, a suite for two pianos by George Templeton Strong (1856–1948).

The nineties saw Nevin's greatest celebrity and his decline.

The piano suite *Water Scenes*, Op. 13, published in 1891, contained “Narcissus,” which was taken up by piano teachers and amateur pianists as an ideal showpiece that sounded and (because of crossing hands) looked harder than it was. Nevin came to refer to the piece as “that nasty little ‘Narcissus,’” though he saw it choreographically “interpreted” by the twenty-year-old Isadora Duncan in 1898, the same year he composed another big hit, the song “The Rosary.” This setting of a rather maudlin poem by Robert Cameron Rogers is not especially typical of Nevin’s work, but it became his posthumous signature and a continuing source of income for his family. (The fame of another song from his last years, “Mighty Lak’ a Rose,” is more deserved, especially as heard in the lovely recording by Geraldine Farrar with violin obbligato improvised by Fritz Kreisler.) Nevin played at the White House for Grover Cleveland in 1895. There is a spirited drawing of him from this period by his friend Charles Dana Gibson (1867–1944). Nevin increasingly drank too much and always hovered near nervous collapse. He died of apoplexy at age thirty-nine.

“Étude in Form of a Scherzo,” Op. 18, No. 2 was composed in Paris in the fall of 1892 and was published by the Boston Music Company, run by Nevin’s friend Gustave Schirmer, Jr.

Henry Holden Huss (1862–1953)

Prelude II, Opus 17, No. 2

In a letter from New York on December 12, 1876, fourteen-year-old Henry Huss wrote:

Dear friend Edward!

. . . It pleases me very much to find you would like to correspond with me and be my friend. I know we shall have many interesting, pleasant chats on paper. I heartily agree with you on hoping that we shall soon see each other; if flying machines were invented I would certainly avail myself of the opportunity of using one.

His pen pal was sixteen-year-old Edward MacDowell, who was in Paris with his mother, studying piano. Huss witnessed the invention of flying machines and transatlantic air travel, though he probably never used either and probably never met MacDowell. These two young men were put in touch by family friends because of their serious interest in music and their nearness in age.

They followed similar paths: local training in New York after an early show of pianistic ability, European conservatory training, emergence of composing over performing as a dominant interest, and early publication of works in Europe and America. Back in the United States each man taught, performed, and composed, but Huss became known primarily as a piano teacher and lecturer during a long, active career (though he continued to compose—seven hundred works in all, he claimed), while MacDowell had prominence over all his generation as the leading American composer.

Huss was born in Newark, New Jersey, but was taken to New York at two and grew up there. His father, George John Huss, was an experienced piano teacher and a composer and gave his son lessons at home until age fifteen. When Henry was considered ready for more formal training, George Huss traveled to Germany to select a school for him. He chose the Royal Conservatory of Music in Munich, where Henry studied from 1882 (the year of *Parsifal*'s premiere at Bayreuth a few miles away) to 1885.

Henry Huss studied piano with Joseph Giehl, a pupil of Liszt's, and organ with Josef Rheinberger. From his studies in theory and harmony came a number of compositions, one of which, the *Ballade* for piano (1884), was published by G. Schirmer in New York while Huss was still a student. He also composed a small-orchestra piece, *Wald Idylle* ("Forest Idyls"), in 1884, the year MacDowell published his own piano suite *Forest Idyls*, Op. 20.

At his graduation exercises Huss played his own Rhapsody for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 3 (1885) (as well as Beethoven's Opus 111), which would be a useful vehicle for him as a soloist with orchestra when he returned home. He performed it with the Boston Symphony in 1886 and subsequently with the New York Philharmonic, the Cincinnati Symphony, the Pittsburgh Symphony, and other orchestras. Huss composed a number of large works before 1900: the Piano Concerto, Op. 10 (begun in 1888), which he performed with the Boston Symphony, the New York Philharmonic, the Pittsburgh Symphony under Victor Herbert, and other orchestras; the *Romance and Polonaise*, Op. 11, for violin and orchestra, which was performed in concerts at the Paris Exposition of 1889 and in New York by the American virtuoso Maud Powell (1868–1920); the Violin Concerto, Op. 12 (begun in 1889), which was dedicated to and performed by Powell in New York.

Early in 1896, when it became known that Columbia University was searching for its first professor of

music, many musicians applied for the job. Huss, at thirty-four already an experienced music teacher and performer, was one of them. His application listed the above compositions and mentioned that his *Ave Maria*, for soloists, female chorus, strings, organ, and harp, had been performed by Theodore Thomas in Chicago in 1891 and that his works were published in the United States and abroad. It was accompanied by letters of recommendation from Anton Seidl, conductor of the New York Philharmonic, and the critics Henry T. Finck and Henry Krehbiel. Huss lost out to MacDowell, his onetime pen pal.

John Knowles Paine (1839–1906)

Fuga Giocosa, Opus 41, No. 3

Romance, Opus 12

Charles Callahan Perkins (1823–1886) and James Cutler Dunn Parker (1828–1916), both from Boston, and Dudley Buck (1839–1909), from Hartford, studied music abroad in the eighteen-fifties. Parker and Buck had important careers as teachers (Parker at the New England Conservatory), composers, and performers, especially Buck, who composed cantatas and was a virtuoso organ recitalist. John Knowles Paine studied in Europe later than these and other men but is considered leader of a school because he composed large concert works (including the two symphonies that were his tickets to greatness—in those days composers could not really be considered for greatness if they did not compose symphonies), because he was praised, published, and performed in Europe, and because he taught at Harvard for forty-four years. His career is surveyed by Peter Eliot Stone in the *New World* recording of Paine's *Mass in D* (1866) (80262-2) and by Barbara Owen in *Fugues, Fantasia, & Variations* (80280-2).

The *Fuga Giocosa* is delightfully indicative of Paine as man and composer. The fugue form is one of the favorites of musical academia and was a special favorite in the late nineteenth century among young Americans talented enough to solve its problems and compose interesting music at the same time. It was much revered by Paine the organist, Bach devotee, and professor. But the subject, or leading tune, he used for this fugue is the old baseball song “Over the Fence Is Out, Boys.”

The image of Paine that emerges from the history books is of a rigid academic snob, and this is not dispelled by the frequently reproduced Notman photo showing him with small eyeglasses, receded hair, and a walrus mustache. In reality Paine was lively, though absorbed in his work. He was perhaps an absentminded professor. One summer he joined his grandchildren in swimming—he was an excellent diver—and afterward could not locate his glasses. They were found only after the pool was drained. He was unaware that he had had them on while swimming.

After Paine's death his students remembered his concern and indulgence, his likable eccentricities, his naïveté and gentle spirit. Someone contributed an epitaph with tongue in cheek:

His harmony and counterpoint
Are both without defect,
For all the works of John Knowles Paine
Are Paine-fully correct.

Henry F. Gilbert (1868–1928)

Mazurka

In 1901 Arthur Farwell (1872–1952) inaugurated his Wa-Wan Press in Newton Center, Massachusetts. The use of the Indian title was deliberately provocative and a strike against the internationalism that had been achieved by American musicians in the last decades of the nineteenth century. It proclaimed the new nationalism that would dominate American composition into the thirties and forties with such works as Aaron Copland’s cowboy ballets, Roy Harris’s *Folksong Symphony*, Elliott Carter’s *Pocobontas*, and the Gertrude Stein–Virgil Thomson opera *The Mother of Us All* (New World 80288-2).

Farwell resented the older composers whose works got published by Arthur K. Schmidt of Boston, G. Schirmer of New York, and other houses, though he also wanted to be published by them. Since he couldn’t enter the establishment, he started his own company.

Henry F. Gilbert, a friend of Farwell’s and sympathetic to his ideas, was published sixteen times by Wa-Wan, beginning in 1902 with *Mazurka*. (His life and music are discussed by R. D. Darrell on New World 80228-2.) Gilbert is a transitional figure in the context of this recording. Though essentially an early twentieth-century composer, righteously attempting to exploit Negro spirituals and other folk material for concert works, he was strongly influenced by American composition of the eighties and nineties. He attended the New England Conservatory while Chadwick was director and, at twenty, became MacDowell’s first American student after the latter returned to Boston from Wiesbaden. Gilbert later wrote a delightful memoir about MacDowell (who was only seven years older than his pupil), speaking of his rigorousness as a teacher and his charm as a person.

The *Mazurka* has nineteenth-century roots—the old dance form that Chopin nostalgically took from Poland, which became a staple of piano composers after him, is retained—but the shifting tonality and suggestion of modality place it in the twentieth century.

Adolph Martin Foerster (1854-1927)

On the Sea

Adolph Martin Foerster, born in Pittsburgh to German-American parents, was one of the “Smoky City’s favorites,” according to *Musical America* in 1907. At the time he was born, Stephen Foster was living in the city and at twenty-seven was composing some of his best songs. As Foster was typical in ways of some earlier American musicians—uncertain of his role, haphazardly trained—Foerster stood firmly in the middle of the newly cultured generation. He studied music locally and then at the Leipzig Conservatory from 1872 to 1875. He returned to take a teaching job in Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1875–76, and then settled permanently in Pittsburgh, where he contributed importantly to the musical life of the booming industrial city.

During his long career Foerster was the choral conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphonic Society and the Musical Union, taught voice and piano, and worked with the newly formed Music Teacher’s National Association (founded in 1876). He was eventually historian of another music organization, the Pittsburgh Symphony (founded in 1875).

Foerster was a prolific composer of songs, which were highly acclaimed. He also wrote seven sonatinas for piano; piano quartets, trios, and other chamber music; and overtures and symphonic poems. His music was published regularly from his return to Pittsburgh into the nineteen-twenties by houses in

New York, Philadelphia, and Leipzig.

Pittsburgh did not neglect him. The city held a May Music Festival annually, and among Foerster's pieces performed were *Thusnelda*, conducted by Theodore Thomas in 1884; *Love Song*, for soprano and orchestra, in 1889; and *Festival March*, composed especially for the festival of 1891. The last was also presented by Thomas in one of his concerts at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893.

It was appropriate that Foerster be represented at the opening of one of Pittsburgh's most important cultural attainments, the Music Hall, built by Andrew Carnegie, the city's great benefactor, in 1895. Walter Damrosch and the New York Symphony were brought in to open the hall—they had performed at the inaugural concert of New York's Carnegie Hall four years earlier—and Carnegie himself spoke from the stage. Tchaikovsky was unable to come up with a new march as he had in New York (he had died in 1893), and so Foerster composed his *Dedication March* for the occasion. It reached an apogee of local pride: it was dedicated to Carnegie, based thematically on the notes A and C, Carnegie's initials, and incorporated Stephen Foster's "Old Folks at Home." If it did not exactly bring Foerster immortality, it was popular for years and was played by John Philip Sousa's band, among others.

Horatio Parker (1863–1919)

Valse Gracile, Opus 49, No. 3

As the professor of music at Yale University, Horatio Parker was one of the leading young music academicians in the nineties. He received the job when he was thirty-one and held it until his death twenty-five years later. It is probably no coincidence that he was approached for the job within a year of the premiere of his widely acclaimed oratorio *Hora Novissima* (1893), as two years later MacDowell was approached by Columbia University after New York Philharmonic performances of his Piano Concerto in A minor.

Parker was only the second person to hold the post. Music instruction of sorts originated at Yale in 1855 when the Bavarian immigrant Gustave J. Stoeckel (1819–1907), who went to New Haven in 1848, was appointed Instructor of Vocal Art, Organist, and Chapelmeister, or master of the chapel (the *Kapellmeister* was a familiar role of the German court musician of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.) Stoeckel played the organ for chapel every day and formed a choir, a glee club, and an orchestra. The study of music was generally considered unworthy for university curricula. Speaking of this time at Yale, a later dean of music said that it was thought suitable only for "young ladies and a few effeminate young men." The scene had improved considerably forty years later when the hard-working Stoeckel retired. The endowed Battell professorship of music was established about 1890, and the School of Music at the same time.

Parker did not give up performing and composing despite the prestige of Yale and his teaching duties. He was an organist in Boston and New York and composed orchestra works as well as a large body of choral music that was performed all over the United States and England.

Aside from *Hora Novissima*, his most famous work, Parker was known for two glamorous operas with librettos by Brian Lee Hooker (1880–1946): *Mona* (1912), produced at the Metropolitan Opera House, and *Fairyland* (1915), produced in Los Angeles. Each won an incredible prize of ten thousand dollars,

Mona in a contest for Best American Opera sponsored by the Metropolitan, and *Fairyland* from the National Federation of Music Clubs. Other than Paine and his unproduced *Azara*, Parker is the only composer on this album to have shown much interest in opera. He was also one of the relatively few American composers of his time to have seen his operas staged.

In the early eighties Parker studied with various teachers in Boston, including the busy Stephen A. Emery, Nevin's harmony teacher, and in Munich with Josef Rheinberger at the same time as his friends Henry Huss and Arthur Whiting. It was perhaps from Rheinberger that Parker derived some of his seriousness about organ playing and church music (see New World 80280-2, *Fugues Fantasia, & Variations*, for commentary on Parker's organ works), though he was a serious young musician in general, composing a symphony when he was twenty-two and still a student.

Among Parker's first composition students was the freshman Charles Edward Ives (1874–1954). In the rush to elevate Ives, later critics cast Parker as merely an academic hack who thwarted the unconventional ideas of the young composer. They have little knowledge of Parker or his music, however, and have forgotten Ives's own evaluation. He did think Parker was strict—a familiar undergraduate sentiment—and considered his own father a greater man, but wrote:

I had and have respect and admiration for Parker and most of his music. It was seldom trivial. His choral works have dignity and depth that many contemporaries . . . do not have. [He] had ideals that carried him higher than the popular, . . . was a bright man a good technician, but perfectly willing to be limited by what Rheinberger had taught him (Cowell, pp. 33–34, see Bibliography).

Parker had a lighter side, too, and occasionally could turn out something like the glittering and popular *Valse Gracile*, published in 1899.

Edward MacDowell (1861–1908)

Twelve Virtuoso Studies, Opus 46

(*Novellette; Moto Perpetuo; Wild Chase; Improvisation; Elfin Dance; Valse Triste; Burlesque; Bluettes; Träumerei; March Wind; Impromptu; Polonaise*)

“You ask me about my ‘politics,’” wrote Edward MacDowell at sixteen to Henry Huss, “and I am happy to say in this, as in music, I join you most heartily in your opinion as to [Rutherford B.] Hayes and [William A.] Wheeler. By birth and inclination, I am *Republican*.” For the following few years he forgot politics and concentrated on music.

By the turn of the century MacDowell's compositions had been published in Europe and America for twenty years and performed on both continents. He was a concert pianist and the first professor of music at Columbia University. Critics considered him the leading contender for the title of Great American Composer. Indeed, at forty he was one of the more talented composers working anywhere in the musical mainstream of the time. Five years later he suffered a mental breakdown, and he died in January 1908.

MacDowell was born into a prosperous New York family, and his aptitudes were recognized early and nurtured. In 1876 he was taken to Paris, where his talents could blossom and where he could absorb

European culture. He had French lessons with a tutor and piano lessons from Antoine-François Marmontel (1816–1898), a famous teacher at the Paris Conservatory who twenty years earlier had befriended another talented young American, Louis Moreau Gottschalk. In this heady atmosphere MacDowell decided that music would be his chief pursuit and in 1877 enrolled as a piano student at the austere Paris Conservatory, directed at the time by Ambroise Thomas (1811–1896), remembered for his charming opera *Mignon* (1866). A year of rigorous studies formed the technical basis for MacDowell's later work, though he thought the school pedantic. In the examinations of 1878 he played a piano concerto by Carl Reinecke and passed, as did his fellow student in Marmontel's class, Claude Debussy (1862–1918).

In the autumn of 1878 the Paris Exposition presented several concerts of contemporary Russian music, including Tchaikovsky's three-year-old piano concerto, performed by Nikolai Rubinstein. MacDowell was overwhelmed. He left for Germany in search of greater keyboard technique, and he found it. He did so well in Wiesbaden and Frankfort that in just two years he was recommended to succeed his own piano professor at the Frankfort Conservatory.

MacDowell's formal music training ended in 1880, but not before Joachim Raff, his prestigious teacher and mentor in Frankfort, had stimulated his interest in composition. Raff introduced MacDowell to Liszt, and within four years nine compositions by the young American were published in Germany. Two were ambitious piano works, the *First Modern Suite* (1881) and the *Second Modern Suite* (1882). From March until May of 1882 MacDowell composed a piano concerto, which he played for Liszt in Weimar and saw published in 1884 on Liszt's recommendation. It was dedicated to Edvard Grieg (1843–1907), whose piano concerto in the same key was composed in 1868.

MacDowell's friend Benjamin J. Lang persuaded him to return to the United States in 1888 to establish his growing American reputation in person. MacDowell and his young wife, Marian Nevins (1858–1956), lived for ten years in Boston, where he was gradually Americanized (Henry F. Gilbert wrote about MacDowell's severe Germanic haircut and goatee in his early days in Boston), performed his first and second piano concertos with the Boston Symphony (the second concerto was completed in 1886), and accepted piano students who could pay his very high fee of five dollars an hour (he gave free lessons on Sundays to those who couldn't pay).

In 1896 MacDowell accepted the offer of Seth Low, president of Columbia University, and Columbia's trustees to teach music at the school. He worked alone for the first year and with only little assistance after that until he resigned in 1904 in a dispute about policy with Columbia's new president, Nicholas Murray Butler.

The *Twelve Virtuoso Studies*, Op. 46, were written in 1894 in Boston. They are characteristic of MacDowell's mature style and show the composer in full command of his medium. He gave the studies programmatic titles, as he did all his works except the piano concertos.

The compositional flair and technical difficulties are reminders that MacDowell was a professional pianist with considerable technique. He had a fondness for the perpetual-motion romp (as in Nos. 2 and 11) and the slightly satanic scherzo (Nos. 3 and 5). The writing can be passionate and rhapsodic, as in Nos. 4 and 9; expansive, personal, "American," as in No. 1; and dutifully traditional, as in No. 12.

—Richard Jackson

MALCOLM FRAGER was born in St. Louis on January 15, 1935 and died June 20, 1991. He gave his first piano recital at six and played a Mozart concerto with the St. Louis Symphony under Vladimir Golschmann four years later. At fourteen he began studying in New York with Carl Friedberg. In 1952 he received the Prix d'Excellence at the American Conservatory at Fontainebleau, followed in the next few years by top honors at the Geneva International Piano Competition and by the Michaels Memorial Music Award in Chicago and the Career Award of the National Society of Arts and Letters in Los Angeles. He won both the Leventritt and Queen Elisabeth of Belgium competitions, and later served as a juror for both. Frager pursued an active career internationally, particularly in Europe and the former Soviet Union. He was also a scholar, concerned with the historical study of the piano repertoire, particularly Robert Schumann.

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SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

Ethelbert Nevin

Piano Music. Donna Amato, piano. Altarus CD 9024.

John Knowles Paine

Fantasia über "Ein' feste Burg." Richard Morris, organ. New World Records 80280-2.

Mass in D. Soloists and The Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Gunther Schuller conducting. New World Records 80262-2.

St. Peter. J. Ommerié, soprano; A. Fortunato, mezzo-soprano; P. Kelly, tenor; D. Evitts, baritone; Back Bay Chorale; Boston Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra, Gunther Schuller conducting. GM 2027CD 2.

Symphony No.1 in C minor. New York Philharmonic, Zubin Mehta conducting. New World 80374-2.

Symphony No. 2 in A (*In Spring*). New York Philharmonic, Zubin Mehta, conducting. New World 80350-2.

Henry F. Gilbert

The Dance in Place Congo. Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Calvin Simmons conducting. New World Records 80228-2

Nocturne. Royal Philharmonic, Karl Krueger conducting. Society for the Preservation of the American Musical Heritage MIA-141.

Suite. American Music Ensemble Vienna, H. Earle conducting. Albany TROY 033-2.

Horatio Parker

A Northern Ballad. Albany Symphony, Julius Hegyi conducting. New World 80339-2.

Fugue in C Minor. Richard Morris, organ. New World Records 80280-2.

Hora novissima. A. Soranno, soprano; J. Simson, mezzo-soprano; K. Hall, bass-baritone; D. Andersen, bass-baritone; Nebraska Chamber Orchestra; Abendmusik Chorus; Nebraska Wesleyan University Choir; J. Levick conducting. Albany 2-TROY 124/25.

Trio in C. Rawlins Piano Trio. Albany TROY 107.

Edward MacDowell

Concerto No. 1 in A minor. D. Amato, piano; London Philharmonic Orchestra, Paul Freeman conducting. Olympia OLY 353.

Concerto No. 2 in D minor. Van Cliburn, piano; Chicago Symphony, Walter Hendl conducting. RCA Gold Seal 60420-2-RG.

Poems after Heine. James Barbagallo, piano. Marco Polo 8.223633.

Woodland Sketches. Constance Keene, piano. Protone 2-NRPR 2202/3.

Sonata Tragica. Constance Keene, piano. Protone 2-NRPR 2202/3.

To a Wild Rose. Van Cliburn, piano. RCA Gold Seal 60420-2-RG.

Producer: Horace Grenell

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