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**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.

Plans have been made for a regular journal, public concerts, a lending library of rolls, a travelling exhibition, and in addition, a roll and information archive is to be established, 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, Rex Lawson, Claire L’Enfant.

It is possible to support the work of the Institute by joining the Friends of the Pianola Institute. The Friends subscription includes a copy of the journal. Membership enquiries should be sent to Mike Davies, The Granary, Wharf Road, Fenny Compton, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV33 0XE, England.

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Editorial

One of the aims of members of the Pianola Institute is to bridge the gap between the world of music rolls and the world of music. We have always stressed the musical aspect of the subject rather than laying emphasis on the mechanical side. The instruments, be they magnificent reproducing pianos, organs, pianolas or whatever, and however desirable and attractive in themselves, are a means to an end – to enable us to listen to the music which is encoded in the paper rolls – not an end in themselves. In modern terminology, the instruments are the hardware and the rolls the software carrying the music.

Traditional music rolls have a venerable history of something over 100 years, and hold the key to a magnificent library of performances and scores. It is therefore hardly surprising that up till now, the Institute has concentrated on them and shown little interest in modern reproducing pianos such as the Yamaha Disklavier. Clever as they may be from a technical point of view, they are poor in terms of sheer musical value. Few, if any, of today’s top-flight performers are likely to record for them commercially in view of their limited market when compared with the CD or compact cassette. The recent Telarc CDs of the Ampico recordings by Rachmaninov as reproduced by Wayne Stahnke’s Bosendorfer SE computer piano may oblige us to thing again.

These CDs have been greeted either with uncritical acceptance or complete rejection depending on where the listener is coming from. The enthusiasts argue that the sound is excellent, and what they hear really does sound like someone playing without the mechanical hiccoughs reminiscent of so many LP and CD issues of reproducing piano recordings. They are, however, usually not qualified to make judgement as to how truthful they are to the Ampico rolls. Those who dismiss the project start by asking where the paper music roll is, and what is the point of the whole thing. Why not restore an original Ampico piano properly and there it all is, with no questions brookable.

Sympathetic as one may be to this approach, there are good reasons for what Stahnke is doing. When piano roll recordings were made, the actual instruments were brand new, and pneumatic technology was the current medium. Craftsmen in abundance were around to manufacture the action parts to a supremely high standard as a matter of course. Today, the number of first-class pneumatic player and reproducing piano restorers is small, and those who can regulate the instruments to play as they would have done when new are even fewer. The technology of the 1990s is in electronics, and so is it wrong to want to harness modern methods where we can work to finer
tolerances to allow us to listen to piano roll recordings of 70, 80 or even 90 years ago? It is only natural that those of us brought up on traditional player and reproducing pianos should be suspicious of something where we can see no moving parts! But if what we really desire and what is really important is to listen to the pianists reproduced as truthfully and naturally as possible, then should we not retain an open mind on the prospect of hearing our heroes via fine new pianos driven by electronic discs rather than paper music rolls?

Let it be said: Rachmaninov courtesy of the Bosendorfer SE is indeed impressive. But there is no harm in maintaining some healthy doubts. Wayne Stahnke has been more than a little coy in disclosing how he has produced his results. Perhaps more information of a technical nature would help to convince some sceptics. The Ampico system is probably the easiest to convert successfully to computer technology, but even so an enormous amount of work into how the original pianos performed must have gone into writing the conversion programme. Stahnke does not have all the answers, but his results so far are surely sufficiently believable for him to be encouraged to continue his work. However, let us hope and trust that before anyone tries to flood the market with 'Duo-Art and Welte performances as you have never previously experienced', very careful analysis of these systems and how the original reproducing pianos interpreted the coding on the rolls is undertaken and the maximum refinement applied to the computer programs. Welte and Duo-Art may prove less amenable to the computer transfer process than Ampico, and the last thing anyone wants to see is ill-prepared recordings rushed on to the market to give critics yet another opportunity to rubbish what should be an invaluable source of recorded history.

This latest reincarnation of the reproducing piano does not in any way challenge the supremacy of the original instruments with their pneumatic actions when restored to pristine condition. They were the medium for which the rolls were recorded, edited and approved by the recording artists, and at the end of the day must be the yardstick against which any new developments are measured. But they do have limitations, the most serious from a commercial recording angle being that they exist almost exclusively in medium sized and small instruments designed for domestic situations, and there seems to be an inbuilt resistance to listening to a CD of anything smaller than a full 9' concert instrument. With careful handling, then, modern electronic reproducing pianos properly programmed may be one answer to making piano roll recordings readily available to the musical public.

At the time of the 100th anniversary of the arrival of the first Pianola in Britain, our major item in this Journal is a detailed study of the commercial history of the Aeolian Company. Rex Lawson has lived with the subject for many years, and his conclusions are a distillation of his research both in the United Kingdom and North America. He is uniquely placed to write on this subject.
With this Journal we are delighted to announce our first Institute CD, a Pianola recital by Rex Lawson. The Pianola has over the years lost much of its reputation as an instrument with real musical potential, and it is fitting that we should be issuing this trail-blazing recording of special arrangements from Handel to Rachmaninov and Stravinsky. The publication of this disc can only help to bring the Pianola some way back towards its rightful place in the mainstream of music.

The Institute’s website is now up and running at the address www.pianola-inst.ndirect.co.uk. We look forward to it being visited frequently enabling us to make contact world-wide with those interested in music as it pertains to player and reproducing pianos.
Towards a History of The Aeolian Company

Rex Lawson

Foreword

In July 1998 my Pianola and I travelled to Greece to accompany the Siobhan Davies Dance Company in a performance of ‘88’, a choreographic work created around some of the dazzling player-piano studies of Conlon Nancarrow. High up amongst the olive groves, in the balmy twilight that envelops the little hillsides above the Peloponnese coastline, birds chattered the gossip of the day and the echoes of Orthodox chant drifted upwards from the cupolas of a sun-ripened basilica. I sat on the steps of a baking greystone amphitheatre in Kalamata and reflected that this Arcadian setting was the nearest my Pianola had ever come to the music of the winds. The Aeolians were, after all, one of the early Greek tribes.

My modish musings were interrupted by a friendly Scottish accent asking me to play some of the louder Nancarrow excerpts for a sound check, and I blinked my eyes and returned to the twentieth century. Thus it was that I came to meet Ronnie Thomson, a Highlander with a personality as sunny as the surrounding Mediterranean coastline, and who, it later turned out, had recently removed to Manhattan, close by Union Square.

Later in the year, visiting the USA for work, I telephoned Ronnie and arranged to visit him and his partner one Sunday afternoon in their spacious apartment at 12 East 14th Street. Note well the address. A pleasant evening ensuing, and the following morning elapsing with a visit to Merce Cunningham’s dance studios, I found myself on the Monday afternoon with a few hours to kill before the return bus for Pennsylvania was due to leave.

How better and more productively to spend one’s time than to visit New York’s grandiose Public Library and consult the ancient city directories in search of the origins of Aeolian incorporation? Back in the volume for 1879 I found the Mechanical Orguine Company, and before that, the earliest musical instrument manufacturer with a direct Aeolian succession, the piano firm of Lighte & Ernst, with factories at Nyack, NY, and showrooms in Manhattan. There stood the entry, in the volume for 1875: Lighte & Ernst, pianos, 12 East 14th Street.

Were I a believer, I should have reckoned that Harry B. Tremaine, Edwin S. Votey and perhaps even Orpheus himself were watching me from on high and laughing heartily. As it was, my rationalist tendencies simply made me glad of the serendipitous hook on which to hang the start of this essay, and it drove home to me the almost village-like nature of the musical instrument industry in mid-nineteenth century New York. At 11 East 14th was the Mechanical
Orguinette Company, and at 14 and later 21 East 14th were Tremaine Brothers. Since 1866 Steinway Hall had been on East 14th, replacing the concert facilities of the burned out Academy of Music further down the street, and George Steck was also close by. In short, East 14th Street was the epicentre of New York musical life, a fitting birthplace for the once largest musical instrument corporation in the world.

Acknowledgements

There are three classes of acknowledgement to be made, covering organisations, friends who have offered help and advice, and former employees of the Aeolian Company and their families.

I should like to thank John Shepard of the New York Public Library, Carol Sandler and Patricia Tice of the Strong Museum, Rochester, NY, Ralph Jones of the Westfield, NJ, Historical Society, and Donald Manildi of the International Piano Archives in Maryland. John Shepard, Kathy Canfield and their cats, Susie and Abigail, have also been my regular and welcoming hosts in Manhattan.

Of the many friends who have generously shared their own research and advice, I should particularly like to thank Frank Diamond, Julian Dyer, Richard Groman, Denis Hall, Paddy Handscombe, Dick Howe, Jeff Morgan, Alan Mueller and Dan Wilson. All of them in their various ways have been very generous, and it is especially fitting that they form a latter-day circle of wise men on both sides of the Atlantic.

Over three decades I came to know many former employees of the Aeolian Company and their families. The experience of sharing distant memories with them has been as warmly rewarding as a love affair, and every one of them spoke with great affection of times, friends and colleagues past. There was a universal pride in the standard of their own workmanship, a shared skill that will live on through the many thousands of player-pianos and other musical instruments that survive in museums and private collections.

Pat and Ted Votey, with whom Denis Hall and I spent my fiftieth birthday, unearthed Ted's grandfather's remaining archive of papers. Thank goodness they kept everything! Russell Tremaine shared the family tree and photographs almost as his house was being sold. Robert Armbuster reminisced saucily about meeting Stravinsky and played some typically disarming arpeggios on his Steinway. Elmer and George Brooks gave a guided tour round the eerily silent factory at East Rochester, with dozens of abandoned pianos testifying to the final shutdown the week before.

provided many insights into later Aeolian practices. Mary Mackenzie, Bill Mowbray and Vera Reade described the working lives of their fathers, J.A. Findley, Frank H. Mowbray and Reginald Reynolds respectively. I can never forget playing one half of the pianola with Mrs Reade after her leg had been amputated. What a plucky lady!

But four friends stand out. Bill Candy took me in to his musical world at a time when he only had a few years to live. As William Delasaire, Bill reviewed piano rolls for the Musical Times, and he passed on not only his knowledge, but also his roll library, which forms one of the founding collections of the Pianola Institute. Bob and Amy Good both worked at Aeolian Hall, and a friendlier couple it would be hard to imagine. Bob’s memories in particular were crystal clear, and from his engaging manner one could see how successful he must have been at selling just the right instruments to just the right customers. His and Amy’s Steck Pianola Piano and roll collection are also part of the Institute.

Above all I want to thank Yvonne Hinde Smith, née Reynolds, younger daughter of Reginald Reynolds, the ‘Paderewski of the player-piano’. Yvonne has repeatedly shared her memories and her father’s archive, and it is only right that she is a founder member of the Pianola Institute. But I should like to see it fixed in print that she and her husband, John, have been two of the most genuine friends I have ever known.

Introduction

In many ways, the history of the Aeolian empire is a simple reflection of the development of North American commerce. The Tremaine brothers set up a small family business in the aftermath of the Civil War, as did James Morgan and John Nichol along the street with Mechanical Orguinette. The founding of the Aeolian Organ and Music Company in 1887 in Meriden, Connecticut, allied technical...
expertise to small-town capital, and ran alongside the incorporation of
countless similar medium-sized companies throughout the prosperous
heartland of New England. Finally, Harry Barnes Tremaine, son of the general
manager of Aeolian, represented a new breed of college-trained businessman,
and his commercial acumen and alliance with Edwin Scott Votey allowed the
multi-national Aeolian, Weber Piano and Pianola Company of 1903 to become
one of the dominant commercial forces in music throughout the world.

Aeolian influence is still to be found in 1998. The Aeolian Lumber
Company advertises on the Internet. Concerts in London, Ontario, are given
Shoppers in East Rochester, NY, purchase their groceries at the Piano Factory
mall. Railway commuters in New Jersey on their way home from Newark to
Scotch Plains can still read ‘IANOLA’ on the chimney beside the tracks at
Garwood. Those making a similar journey from London, England, to the West
Country can just about see the defunct Aeolian clock at Hayes fixed at half-
past-six, half an hour before the daily closing time. And most importantly, the
player-piano is still alive and pumping in homes, bars and museums all over
the world.

This treatise, which will be spread over a number of issues of the Pianola
Journal, is a stepping stone towards a fuller treatment of the Aeolian
Company's century-long existence. It evokes the changing musical scene from
1878 to 1985 and beyond, but it does not yet contain all the carefully-
researched data needed for complete authority. In particular it does not seek
to be a general history of mechanical music or the player-piano.

In essence the history of any organisation is the history of its personnel, with
their dreams, their achievements and their failures. Unfortunately, most of
the major players in the Aeolian Company did not write autobiographies, and
no major comprehensive archive like that of Steinways has survived. But
perhaps that makes the challenge all the more inviting, and I hope some of
the excitement generated by the constant flow of fascinating inventions,
dazzling recordings and groundbreaking advertising can be reflected in these
pages.

The peak years of Aeolian activity began with the incorporation on 18
August 1903 of the Aeolian, Weber Piano and Pianola Company. From that
date onwards until 1930 all Aeolian’s activities around the world were
controlled by this one holding company, and during that time it is easy to view
the activities of the Company as those of a single entity. However, prior to that
date, the origins of the Aeolian empire came from a number of distinct
sources, in particular the reed organ, pipe organ, piano, and music roll
industries. To save complexity in this treatise, it is easier to deal with each of
these sources separately, beginning with the origins of reed organs operated
by perforated music roll.
Part One: The Historical Perspective 1870 - 1915

Perforated Music in North America Before Aeolian: Pre-1878

Most of us know that ‘music that goethe with a wheel’ has been around for centuries. Pinned barrels of many types were used to play simple melodies on ancient keyboards and carillons, and the nineteenth century built on this tradition to create complex music boxes and barrel organs. Orchestrians, the orchestral CDs of our great-great-grandparents (though they were hardly compact!), used some of the fattest barrels of all, and one of the spurs towards the use of perforated card and paper was the limitations of time and complexity imposed by these prickly musical tree trunks.

Before the Aeolian Organ and Music Company sprang to life in 1887, the mechanical musical scene in North America depended entirely on individuals and reed organ companies. John McTammany, a Scotsman born in Glasgow in 1845, in his extensive treatise, The Technical History of the Player, claims that he was essentially the first main pioneer in the industry; the first to manufacture a working instrument that used music rolls, the first to manufacture the rolls themselves, and the first to go into the business of selling such instruments to the public. In later life McTammany was clearly a man who felt that history risked ignoring him, but despite his obsessive literary style, it is clear that many of his inventions paved the way for others more skilled in the art of marketing such instruments. Whether he really was the first to construct a pneumatic player is not entirely proven, for after all, what defines a pneumatic player? As with many human activities, the development of mechanical music has been the labour of many hands.

Robert Pain, mainstay of the Aeolian Company’s experimental department for many years, has left testimony in his own hand that he conceived the idea of a roll-operated reed organ as a young engineer in the employ of Carhart & Needham of New York between 1874 and 1876. He states that an experimental twenty-note instrument, using perforated paper as a valve, was made by him in 1877, and called the ‘Celestina’, and that ‘this model and many more like it was [sic] made for and sold by the [Mechanical] Orguinette Co’. Pain’s handwriting and use of English suggest an elderly man, and in an accompanying letter to Edwin S. Votey, he apologises for ‘my forgetfulness as to dates and circumstances connected with the matter’. In any case, we know from earlier testimony contributed by Pain that the Celestina was not manufactured until September 1884, so he is most likely referring to the work that he did on the 14-note Orguinette. Nevertheless, we know that Elias Needham was granted a patent in 1877 for the use of paper as a valve, so this date has some credence as the origin of the standard roll-operated organette, and it is indirectly confirmed by McTammany himself.
McTammany, on the other hand, reckons to have begun experimenting as early as 1866 in Ohio, and to have demonstrated a complete instrument to a church minister in Carrollton in that state in 1870. His design of 1876, constructed in St Louis and exhibited at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, shows a floor-standing instrument with pneumatic foot-pedals, more akin to a simple Aeolian or Angelus reed organ, but in which the roll or sheet is still read by means of sprung fingers that press through the note slots.

Both Pain's and McTammany's instruments have elements in their favour. On the one hand, McTammany's organs look externally more like the styles that were to follow during the remainder of the century. However, Pain's early organettes have a certain elegant simplicity, despite McTammany's attempts to deride the use of paper as a valve. But it is clear that in 1879 the Mechanical Orguinette Co and E.P. Needham & Son tried before the US Commissioner of Patents to register priority over McTammany by means of patents issued to Elias P. Needham, Henry B. Horton, Mason J. Matthews and Newman R. Marshmann, and that they were unsuccessful in the attempt, so history and the government would seem to be on McTammany's side.

McTammany also claims to have been the true father of the music roll in the spring of 1876, presumably manufacturing one himself while in St Louis. He further states that a certain Orrin Ingalls of Cambridgeport, Mass., was the first person to set up in the business of roll perforation, at a time when the McTammany Organette Co was based at 511 Main Street in that town. Again there are conflicting claims from Aeolian sources. According to an Aeolian paper prepared in 1922, at the time of one of Edwin S. Votey's original Pianolas being presented to the Smithsonian Institution, it was reckoned that Roswell T. Smith of Nashua, NH, had invented a machine to perforate patterns in wallpaper, and that this machine was adapted to the manufacture of music rolls, being set up in the East Cambridge works of the Mason & Hamlin Organ Co in 1874, where it was operated by George B. Kelly and his partner, Mr Rand, who were organ action contractors at the factory, together with Kelly's nephew, John L. Given. The detail is even given that the first paper rolls cut in East Cambridge played fourteen notes, with a roll width of eight inches. For whom the rolls might have been perforated in 1874 is not clear, since neither McTammany nor Needham were yet manufacturing organettes, and in any case, Smith's first patent for a perforating machine dates from 1877.

In a relatively small musical community, it seems very likely that most of those active in the field knew each other quite well. Some of the action manufacturing work for McTammany's organettes was undertaken by the Kelly Action Co, and it could well be that Ingalls, and Kelly, Rand & Given were using the same perforating machine on a contract basis for different customers. The Kelly, Rand & Given business expanded very quickly, taking
on as a further director W.A. Webber, an organ tuner from Medford, Mass., who became the first full-time musical arranger. The new business moved in 1880 into the abandoned Mason & Hamlin four story building in Boston, occupying the top two floors, and was incorporated as the Automatic Music Paper Co. The fact that this company made rolls for a number of competing instruments, including the McTammany Orchestrone, suggests that there was really only one roll-producing organisation at the outset. Whatever the case, the area of Cambridge, Mass., is convincingly established as the original home of music roll production, with 1877 as the probable date of the commencement of operation on a full commercial basis. The huge coincidence that the Mechanical Orguinette Co obtained its rolls from a supplier in the same town as the already existing McTammany Organette Co, tends to confirm that the organette industry was the result of shrewd commercial brains following McTammany's lead.

The actual manufacture, as opposed to marketing, of pneumatically operated organettes prior to 1878 is a little more difficult to pin down. In the absence of other trustworthy evidence at present, one can only assume that there were two original source areas, namely contractors in East Cambridge, including the Kelly Action Co and the Seavers Action Co, and E.P. Needham & Son of New York. In addition there was one quixotic competitor in the field, an inventor every bit as ingenious as McTammany or Pain, namely Merritt Gally of New York, but Gally's inventions do not seem to have borne commercial fruit until after 1878.

Although McTammany proved to the satisfaction of the Commissioner of Patents that he was the first to produce a fully working instrument that operated by means of music rolls, his efforts to establish the priority of his Cambridgeport business do not amount to anything very substantial. He was still in St Louis on 8 July 1876 and was occupied thereafter with the supply of one of his organs for the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. In late August of that year he visited Needham's factory in New York and demonstrated a number of his models, drawings and plans, in an effort to interest Elias Needham in their manufacture on a partnership or royalty basis. Not receiving any encouragement in that direction, he proceeded to Cambridgeport in the autumn in order to attempt manufacture on his own account, with the help of outside contractors. No doubt Elias Needham saw the value of the ideas but preferred the attempt to outsmart McTammany in order to avoid payments on licence, especially as the latter had failed to take out any patents prior to that date.

There is no evidence to suggest that McTammany's removal to Cambridgeport was based on anything other than the convenience of setting up near the existing Mason & Hamlin organ works, and it seems unlikely that he would have been able to establish himself to any significant degree before
the year end. In any case, his contract with Orrin Ingalls for the supply of music rolls is dated 8 October 1877, surely a much more telling piece of evidence for the actual start of his business in earnest. This places him in the same year as E.P. Needham & Son, and it is altogether a safer assertion that organettes and their rolls began to be sold to the public in 1877.

**The Mechanical Orguinette Company: 1878 - 1887**

New York in the mid-1870s was a teeming hive of cosmopolitan humanity, with music as one of the dominant forces that held society together. Transport was well established; railways ensured regular and reliable communication, propellor-driven steamboats had been crossing the Atlantic for nearly thirty years, and international news and business communication was unremarkably carried out on a daily basis by transatlantic cable. In the absence of that ultimate goal of civilisation, the television, the time was ripe for a form of home entertainment that obviated the need for too much brain power. It seems that the man of the hour was not John McTammany, the dedicated inventor, not even Elias Needham, the canny manufacturer of the ‘silver-tongued organs’, but rather an ambitious and hard-nosed businessman, an exporter of Scotch and other granites, one James H. Morgan, Esq., of Manhattan and Brooklyn.

James Morgan & Co traded in granite from at least 1876 onwards at 99 Maiden Lane at the south end of Manhattan, initially with George Morgan as partner, but later with John Nichol. George Morgan also acted as an insurance agent for a couple of years, with an office next door at 101 Maiden Lane. The family would be hard pressed to carry on these activities today, since their premises would occupy centre stage between Wall Street and the World Trade Center! Morgan was an irascible and litigious man, according to McTammany, with no particular expertise in the field of musical instruments. He founded the Mechanical Orguinette Company (henceforth MOC for short) on 10 July 1878 in New York, with a capital of $60,000 and very modest premises at 11 East 14th Street.

The low-numbered end of East 14th Street is dominated geographically by the conjunction of Broadway and Union Square, the Union having won the Civil War some ten or so years earlier. Steinway Hall had been built at 71 and 73 East 14th Street in 1866 (though the street numbering changed it to 107 and 109 in due course), and it was universally regarded as the premier concert hall in Manhattan at that time, so it is clear that the whole area was highly fashionable. Many piano manufacturers were drawn towards the reflected glory of Steinways, and by the late 1870s, both Lighte & Ernst, and the brothers Tremaine, two early precursors of the Aeolian empire, also had their warerooms there.

The MOC operated from its premises on East 14th Street for only a very
short while, moving a few hundred yards south and round the corner to 831 Broadway, on the west side of the famous thoroughfare, near West 13th Street. Here it remained, occupying the ground floor and basement only, until the end of April 1891, latterly under the guise of the Aeolian Organ and Music Company. It also had industrial premises in Greenpoint, at the northern tip of Brooklyn.

At the outset, James Morgan was president of the company and John Nichol treasurer, and in its first two years the MOC appears to have sold instruments manufactured for it by E.P. Needham & Son. As mentioned earlier, the inventor of the Orguiente, which was a small 14-note table reed organ, seems to have been Robert W. Pain, though the earliest patents appear in the name of Elias Needham, his employer, and it may well be that a number of experts were working on the project. By contrast, the patent for another early MOC instrument, the 8-note mouth-operated Trumpetto, was awarded to the two engineers concerned with its development, Newman R. Marshmann and Mason J. Matthews, even though Marshmann had for a time worked for Needham. As far as the public was concerned, however, it appeared to be the Mechanical Orguiente Co which both manufactured and sold the instruments.

The earliest 14-note Orguinettes used paper as a valve, which meant that the rolls were relatively large, since all the air for the reeds had to be drawn through the perforations. This also limited the number of notes available in a compact instrument, but the great novelty of the venture ensured an overnight success.

The directors and stockholders of the MOC thought they had found a way to turn perforated paper into gold, and their roaring success led to the Company buying out its main supplier, Elias Needham, in January 1880. Robert Pain transferred to the new employers, working for them in a room shut off from the rest of the factory at 143 East 23rd Street, with the additional help of A. Durkee from 1881 onwards. During these first halcyon years, in 1880, Pain also developed the Musical Cabinet, a 39-note floor standing instrument without a keyboard that worked in exactly the same way as the Orguiente, the Cabinetette, a little smaller at 25 notes, and in 1882 a larger organ, which also had no keyboard, but which played 46-note music like the later Aeolian.

Relations between the stockholders and management of the MOC were not always easy, however, since the immediate flurry of business was not long-lived. For a period James Morgan and John Nichol were ousted as executive directors, and since it was they who owned the licence to the ‘paper as a valve’ patent of Elias Needham, Robert Pain was effectively precluded from developing instruments along these lines. He left the employ of the MOC for one year, from January 1883 until January 1884, at which point Morgan and
Nichol were apparently once again taking an active role.

Clearly in the late 1870s mechanical music was a highly speculative affair, and although fortunes and reputations could be made in a very short time, they could also be lost as well. According to an Aeolian Organ and Music Co leaflet published in the autumn of 1889:

‘When the old orguinette was first put on the market, it was so decidedly new and novel that immediately there was an enormous demand for them [sic], everybody wanted one and many thousand were sold. In a short time, however, the novelty wore off, then the reaction came; the demand died out almost as rapidly as it had sprung up and many dealers who stocked heavily were compelled to realize at a loss’.

No doubt this small crash caused the ire of the MOC’s stockholders, and help was sorely needed, especially since James Morgan was about as diplomatic as a bull elephant under fire. In 1883, therefore, according to family sources, the stockholders brought in two additions to the management team, in the shape of some commercial neighbours from East 14th Street, William Barnes Tremaine and his brother, Charles.

**W.B. Tremaine as General Manager of the MOC**

Even though Tremaine Brothers' Pianos was not doing well, some businessmen are more adept at managing other people's businesses than they are at running their own, and William B. Tremaine seems to have been taken on as General Manager of the MOC in 1883. Brother Charles died in 1886, at the relatively young age of 48, and at that time he was in charge of the MOC's factory in Brooklyn, so it seems likely that the two brothers might have joined at about the same date.

Under W.B. Tremaine's guidance, the MOC expanded its range of instruments to include a 14-note Melodia. In late 1884, after Morgan and Nichol had been re-established as executive members of the board, the Company brought out its two most famous early inventions, the 20-note Celestina, and the 46-note Aeolian, in addition to a 31-note device, not named in Aeolian records. All these instruments used a much more complicated pneumatic system of puppet valves, as they were called at the time, which allowed more compact music rolls to be used, since the perforations themselves no longer had to pass all the air needed to play the reeds.

Although the MOC's small instruments were manufactured at its factory in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, it needed other suppliers to help it cope with the expansion of trade, particularly with the larger reed organs, and in due course it came to an agreement with the Munroe Organ Reed Co of Worcester, Mass. Worcester was an important city for the reed organ and player industry; Theodore Brown, who later developed the Aeriol Piano and the Simplex piano-player, had his factory there, as did the Morris Wright, Taber, and
Taylor & Farley Organ companies. John McTammany removed there in 1879/80 from Cambridge, so that the G.W. Ingalls Organ Co could manufacture organettes for him. Amongst other organs manufactured in Worcester was the Vocalion, an English invention which later became an Aeolian phonograph and record label.

The MOC dominated the output of the Munroe Company, and its orders ran into thousands of instruments each month, according to John McTammany. These were sold throughout the USA and around the world with increasing success, witness the fact that William B. Tremaine set sail for England on Thursday, 16 April 1885, in order to attend the International Inventions Exhibition at South Kensington, where the MOC had several instruments on display.

George Whight and Co was the Aeolian agency for Great Britain in the 1880s and 1890s.
European Trade Estimates for the Mechanical Orguinette Company

An interesting deductive analysis of the relative sales of different models can be made from the Liverpool, England, import statistics for March to July 1885, which are printed in detail in the Piano, Organ and Music Trades Journal of the time. At that time George Whight & Co of 143, Holborn Bars, London, was the main agency for the MOC in Europe. The full list of imports from the USA through Liverpool to Whights is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Iberian, Boston</td>
<td>4 cases music paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Istrien, Boston</td>
<td>1 case music paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>City of Berlin, NY</td>
<td>1 boxed organ, 17 crts organettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Venetian, Boston</td>
<td>25 crts organettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Arizona, NY</td>
<td>17 crts organettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Nevada, NY</td>
<td>17 crts, 1 cs organettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>City of Richmond, NY</td>
<td>2 cs organs, 2 boxes music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>City of Chicago, NY</td>
<td>17 crts organettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Nevada, NY</td>
<td>50 bxs, 17 crts organettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Virginian, Boston</td>
<td>50 crts organettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jly</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Nevada, NY</td>
<td>54 crts organettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jly</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>City of Berlin, NY</td>
<td>66 crts organettes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jly</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Iberian, Boston</td>
<td>5 cs musical paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jly</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Wyoming, NY</td>
<td>14 crts organettes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Crates of organettes probably contained an even number of instruments, since this would be implicit in packing them economically. Many of the orders contain 17 crates, which only makes sense if there were either six instruments per crate, or, less likely with manual unloading using nets, a dozen. 17 crates of six instruments each would amount to 100 organettes, with two for spares, or with the space filled with rolls, catalogues or other paperwork. 100 organettes seems a very reasonable quantity for a consignment. Only those organettes coming from New York are sent in quantities of 17 crates, which suggests that those coming from Boston were from a different factory.

The International Inventions Exhibition from May onwards will have made a difference to trade in this particular year, accounting for the larger numbers of crates from New York during July. George Whight may well have ordered more organettes for delivery as soon as possible, and space on the Nevada (arriving July 6) may well have been full, forcing the consignment to be split on to the Wyoming as well. Again, on the basis of six organettes per crate, 54 crates equates to 320 units, with four spare, and 14 crates equates to 80 units, again with four spare. This leads to a total of 400 organettes, with the City of Berlin arriving on July 15 with a further 66 crates, equalling a further 396 instruments, thus using up four of the Nevada’s spares to reach 400. Like
many things in life, this is all too neat to be a simple coincidence, and in the absence of further data, I am inclined to identify the New York organettes as Orguinettes, probably manufactured at the MOC factory in Greenpoint.

The Boston organettes come in two consignments of 25 and 50 crates, suggesting perhaps four instruments per crate, which leads to a neat round total of 300 instruments for the period. Since their shipment via Boston implies a different factory, we can similarly guess that they came from the Munroe Organ plant in Worcester, which was contracting to manufacture the Musical Cabinet, which was considerably larger than the Orguinette.

Since the Celestina and the Aeolian were not first manufactured until September and December 1884 respectively, we might expect them to have reached London only in small quantities by the early part of the following year. In the case of the Celestina, there is really no way of telling whether crates of organettes contained the original Orguinette or the new model. On the other hand, the Aeolian seems to have been a complete novelty at the International Inventions Exhibition in May, and it was probably the boxed organ mentioned as arriving on March 30 on the City of Berlin. Although this was very likely manufactured in Worcester, such an exhibition instrument would have needed careful attention at the MOC's own premises prior to its despatch across the Atlantic. The same may be said for the two cased organs that arrived on April 27 on board the City of Richmond, along with William B. Tremaine.

Finally, the 50 boxes of organettes that arrived on May 30 imply a smaller size of container than a crate. Maybe these were the small 8-note Trumpetos that, like the QRS Rolmonica, must always have sold to the younger generation of the day!

Extrapolating these five monthly figures to a whole year is not all that unreasonable. Although the Inventions Exhibition must have made some difference to trade, the season of Christmas probably did as well, and we are not searching for the highest levels of accuracy. Disregarding the new Aeolian organs, we arrive at a total of about 3,000 Orguinettes or Celestinas from New York, and about 700 Musical Cabinets from Worcester. Some of these were probably for re-export to the Continent. Assuming six days of trading each week, this means that about ten Orguinettes and two Cabinets needed to be sold each day. Given that John McTammany estimates the demands from all sources on the Munroe Co as a total of 50,000 instruments for a twelve month period ending in 1888 (and he was working for the Company at that time), our calculation of the European trade of the MOC alone some three years before seems to fall within limits that are not too outlandish.
Legal Wrangles with McTammany and Others

In the year that William B. Tremaine, as General Manager of the MOC, sailed to Europe to establish a cordial personal relationship with George Whight, his president, James H. Morgan, continued to deal with all commercial rivals using the big stick of legal confrontation. Owing to an interference between patent applications of Robert Pain of the MOC, Frank Stone of the Munroe Co, and Merritt Gally of New York, a case was heard in New York City which led to the defeat of the MOC by the other two parties. Hitherto the MOC had held the Munroe Organ Co to very sharp commercial terms, but after the court case, Munroe began to manufacture its own range of organettes and player organs, with the help of McTammany and his colleagues, notably William D. Parker.

McTammany had come to an agreement in 1885 that he would run the experimental department of the Munroe Co, while the Company would pay him royalties and affix a licence announcement on every instrument sold under his patents. This meant that from that date onwards any musical goods manufactured by the Company for the MOC carried such a label. As mentioned before, the MOC in alliance with Elias Needham had waged a legal battle against McTammany and lost some six years earlier, and since James Morgan was such an irascible man, the sight of his opponent's name on what he regarded as his own instruments must have been like a red rag to a bull.

The resulting court case was heard in New York, and at the outset the Munroe Company was ranged with its major client, the MOC, against Merritt Gally. However, John McTammany reckoned to have perceived James Morgan's intentions as being first to eliminate the competition from Gally, and then to retrain his guns on Munroe. With this in mind, McTammany managed with some difficulty to forge a new alliance with Gally, and thereby to defeat the MOC, and to loosen the stranglehold that it had over the output of the Munroe Company.

Since the MOC could not instantly abandon one of the major sources of its supply, James Morgan's only course was to think in the long term and bide his time. Somehow or other, he had made the acquaintance of Horace C. Wilcox, a multi-millionaire from the silver trade, whose Britannia Company of Meriden, Connecticut, was renowned as silversmiths throughout New England. In order to consolidate and indeed amalgamate the parallel businesses of roll-operated instruments and rolls, Meriden seemed the ideal site for a large, new factory that might obviate the need for supplies from Worcester, especially by co-operating with Horace Wilcox's reed organ company of Wilcox & White, which had been founded in Meriden in 1877. As a temporary measure in 1886, the MOC immediately transferred its manufacture of small goods from Greenpoint, Brooklyn, to the 'old glass shop' in Meriden, and in this way it made trading contacts with the local
business community in that city. It dipped its toes in the water gently and made careful preparations.

The Birth of the Aeolian Organ & Music Company: 1887 - 1889

In due course, on Tuesday 26 July 1887 a meeting of subscribers to the Aeolian Organ & Music Company was held in Meriden, the Company being registered next day at Hartford, the state capital. The first major stockholders were James H. Morgan, John Nichol and William B. Tremaine from the MOC, each with 800 shares, and George B. Kelly and John L. Given from the Automatic Music Paper Company of East Boston, who had 1200 shares each. George Kelly presided. The only other major stockholder was Horace Wilcox, with 710 shares, and the remainder of the stock was purchased by well-to-do local businessmen, such as the Whites, of Wilcox & White, John Billard, the local bank manager, and the Curtis family, whose sons became important members of the Aeolian Company board for many years.

In describing the Company's intended line of business, the articles of association speak for themselves.

'The purpose for which said corporation is constituted is as follows, to wit: To manufacture, buy, sell and deal in all kinds of music organs and other musical instruments, and the several parts thereof, and of musical paper of all kinds, and of all musical articles and appliances, and all articles used in connection therewith. To purchase, receive, hold, convey and dispose of all property, real or personal, which may be necessary or convenient in the prosecution and carrying on of said business, and generally to do all acts that may be necessary or convenient to be done in the management and prosecution of said business.'

It is worth noting that throughout the main years of the Aeolian organisation, it generally named itself and its subsidiaries after the instruments that it was manufacturing at the time. The Mechanical Orguinette Co (1878) of New York, the Aeolian Organ and Music Co (1887) of Meriden, and the Aeolian, Weber Piano and Pianola Co (1903) of Garwood, NJ, were all uncomplicatedly descriptive in their titles. Similarly the Orchestrelle Co (1899) (operating in Great Britain and Europe but initially registered at Garwood), and the Pianola Co Pty (1904) of Australia, reflected the current popularity of the instruments in question.

In the summer of 1887 the capital worth of the Aeolian Organ and Music Co (henceforth AOMC) stood at $150,000, consisting of 6,000 shares of $25 each. Most of the stockholders paid cash, no doubt as needed for the construction of the new Company’s factory at the corner of Cambridge and Tremont Streets. The prior assets of the MOC and Automatic Music Paper Co were valued at $140,000 and AOMC shares to the value of $120,000 were accordingly distributed to the existing partners of both companies, effectively
giving the new subscribers a slight discount.

James Morgan was elected President of the Company, James H. White the Secretary, Horace Wilcox was also on the Board, and William B. Tremaine was appointed Treasurer and Business Manager. Immediately work was put in hand to construct a new factory, and a week later a meeting was held on the afternoon of Tuesday 2 August 1887 at the office of Architect Jones, with members of the board present, in addition to the Superintendent designate of the new factory, J.H. Chase. It was decided to erect two buildings of four storeys each, one 120 ft x 40 ft on Tremont Street, and one 60 ft x 40 ft on Cambridge Street, with a bridge across the street to the existing Wilcox & White factory, which would supply the power from its engine house. All of these arrangements bespeak a very close and harmonious relationship between Aeolian and Wilcox & White. As we shall see, this was not to last.

After gaining the upper hand in its relationship with James Morgan and the MOC in 1885, the Munroe Organ Reed Co in Worcester began to manufacture and sell its own roll-operated instruments in earnest, since it had control of enough patents to give the competition a healthy run for its money. John McTammany was sent out on the road as chief salesman, a good choice because he was trusted by retailers on account of his technical knowledge. Unfortunately, his frequent absences from the factory in Worcester led to his being less aware of the detailed technical changes that took place from time to time, and he ended up achieving great success with sales of an instrument that subsequently proved to be a disastrous failure.

In the earliest days of mechanical music, there was no rubbercloth with which to construct airtight devices. Around 1888 the Munroe factory bravely used this brand new material for the primary pneumatics of an organette that otherwise looked much the same as a previous model, and initially the absolute tightness resulted in a rapidity of execution that excelled anything McTammany had seen or heard before. As a result he travelled the US, from Boston in the East to St Paul, Minnesota in the mid-West, and achieved a great quantity of sales, 8,500 instruments alone going to the department store of Gately & Co in Boston.

Disaster struck when the rubber became brittle, presumably because of the filler with which it had been mixed, and almost overnight the whole run of instruments became leaky and useless. The result was a complete disaster for the Munroe Company, and it was probably the major reason why John McTammany ended up in relative obscurity. All the instruments had to be recalled, the Munroe Company could no longer pay dividends on its shares, and James Morgan and the Aeolian Company were not slow to sense the opportunity for a bargain acquisition.

If we are to believe McTammany, what James Morgan really wanted was to organise sufficient capital to purchase Munroe outright, and to relocate the
factory in New Jersey, nearer to the AOMC’s offices and retail base. However, he simply could not manage to raise sufficient funds, even though the value of the Munroe stock had fallen greatly, and in the end he negotiated a deal in 1889 with Horace Wilcox, whereby Wilcox & White would purchase a licence under the Munroe Company patents, and the business would be moved in some mutually beneficial way to Meriden.

What happened in practice was that Wilcox & White saw the advantages of starting up in the mechanical music business in their own right, taking on William D. Parker, who had been McTammany’s assistant in Worcester for many years. No doubt for a while Aeolian was still supplied by its new business rival from across the street, but inevitably the strains of competition caused increasing friction. A reflection of this can be seen in the relationship with the Aeolian agency in London, England, George Whight & Co, which in 1888 also became sole representative in the UK for the Wilcox & White reed organs, advertising as such from then until 1890. However, on 17 November 1891 the AOMC entered into a new contract with George Whight, as a result of which he opened new showrooms on Regent Street and became the agent for Aeolian goods exclusively.

Meriden, and particularly Cambridge Street, must have been a tense locality in the 1890s and even later. What had started out as an almost co-operative venture turned into fierce competition at a distance no greater than the opposing goalposts at Wembley. The Meriden street directories, which are breathtaking in their attention to detail, even include some households where fathers and sons worked for the opposing camps, across the equivalent of the Berlin wall. Even after the time the 88-note system had been generally introduced, which in practice probably means until the time of the First War, Wilcox & White’s ‘Angelus’ music rolls still carry the evidence of separate arrangers and separate perforating machines, flying in the face of the largest quality music roll manufacturer in the US just across the street.

**Aeolian Activities in the 1890s - The Years of Preparation**

In 1890, at the start of the decade, and apart from its local difficulties with Wilcox & White, the Aeolian Organ and Music Company was an established and reasonably thriving business on a small scale. Its perforating department employed 41 people, who turned out about 16,000 rolls per month. It manufactured the Aeolian, a 46-note player reed organ with keyboard, the Celestina, a 20-note table-top organette, several other instruments including the Tonsyreno and Musette, and in November 1888 it had begun installing 58-note electro-pneumatic actions on a custom basis into a range of pianos brought in from other manufacturers, including Steinway.

It still operated from 831 Broadway, and its officers were much as they had been in 1887, except that owing to the competitive difficulties with Wilcox &
White, J.H. Chase was now combining the duties of factory superintendent and company secretary, replacing J.H. White in the latter capacity. But now its affairs began to accelerate. On 26 January 1891 the board approved the leasing of a new building at 18 West 23rd Street, moving in by the following May. The new premises were considerably larger, although still hardly the size for an international corporation, but capable of housing the first Aeolian Pipe Organ in 1893.

On 17 November 1891 it approved a new contract with George Whight in London, and the very next day a Company Meeting approved the increase in its capital to $225,000 by the issue of 3,000 new shares @ $25.00 each. 600 of these were floated in December 1891, and a further 2,400 about a year later. But the most significant development came on 5 January 1892, when Harry B. Tremaine was appointed General Manager of the Company, his father, William B. Tremaine, having left to go into the business of slot machine entertainments.

Harry B. Tremaine became for nearly forty years the personification of the Aeolian Company. Whereas his father had been a genial and perhaps unreliable entrepreneur who enjoyed life to the full, Harry was an intense, well educated planner, whose genius was to draw together a number of strategic elements that rendered the Aeolian empire the largest manufacturer of musical instruments in the world. One can only speculate how as a child and young man he saw the alternate success and failure of Tremaine Brothers’

*Harry Barnes Tremaine, President of the Aeolian Company.*

*Edwin Scott Vothey, Inventor of the Pianola.*
Pianos, of the Mechanical Orgunette Co with its undiplomatic President, and of the early Aeolian Organ and Music Co, which depended too heavily on unpredictable outside suppliers. As a result, Harry B. Tremaine at the prime age of 35 set about the business of making good, friendly and reliable contacts throughout the musical and business world, and he did it with a vengeance.

For six years, each successive year saw at least one new product being developed or coming on to the market. In 1892 the first Aeolian Grand was made, a larger roll-operated reed organ using 58-note music rolls, and in 1893 the firm of Farrand & Votey in Detroit manufactured the first Aeolian Pipe Organ, which was installed at the rear of the AOMC's showrooms in West 23rd Street. 1894 saw a contract being arranged with the Vocalion Company of Worcester, Mass., for the supply of Orchestrelles, a new type of luxury player reed organ on the pressure system. Edwin S. Votey in the spring or summer of 1895 completed his first experimental Pianola in a workshop on the third (second to us Brits) floor of his residence at 312 Forest Avenue, Detroit. In the same year Theodore Brown made the first Aeriol player-piano in Worcester, and the newly-renamed Aeolian Company (henceforth AC) bought it out and put it on sale in 1896. Later that year Edwin S. Votey made the large Pianola that was presented to the Smithsonian Institution in 1922, and in 1897 the standard Pianola, still manufactured in Detroit, went on sale to the public. Small wonder that Harry B. Tremaine's health gave out from time to time! In tabular form, the succession of events was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>AOMC moves from 831 Broadway to 18 West 23rd Street. New contract signed with George Whight of London. AOMC capital increased to $225,000. Atherton Curtis joined the AOMC board.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>First Aeolian Pipe Organ made by Farrand &amp; Votey in Detroit. Installed at 18 West 23rd Street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>First Orchestrelle made by Vocalion Co of Worcester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>First Aeriol Piano made by Theodore Brown of Worcester. First Pianola made by Edwin S. Votey at his Detroit home. AOMC changes name to the Aeolian Company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Aeriol Pianos marketed by AC. Second Pianola exhibited in New York.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Pianolas marketed by AC.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is worth taking a brief look at the AC’s trading figures for the decade. Initially the Company proceeded unremarkably, the accounts showing a small but steady increase each year. The move to the new showroom in 1891 seems to have made very little difference, since the retail figures remain fairly constant, and even drop in 1893/94. The introduction of the Aeolian Pipe Organ and the Aeolian Orchestrelle begin to affect the sales figures from 1894/95 onwards, with the trading losses perhaps explained by Harry B. Tremaine’s more effective but costly advertising. But the real jump in the Company’s fortunes comes with the introduction of the Pianola in 1897. When, in August 1903, the Aeolian, Weber Piano and Pianola Company (henceforth AWPPC) was organised, it had Wall Street multi-millionaires such as Frederick G. Bourne (Commodore of the New York Yacht Club) on its board, and with the AC making yearly trading profits equal to double its issued capital, or 25% of turnover, it is not difficult to see why such men should have decided to invest in such a promising concern. Harry B. Tremaine had carefully prepared the ground for the dissemination of his business throughout the world at the start of the twentieth century.

### Aeolian Company Trading Figures: 1887 - 1902

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wholesale</th>
<th>Retail</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Profit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1887/88</td>
<td>$115,194</td>
<td>$41,683</td>
<td>$156,877</td>
<td>$24,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888/89</td>
<td>$110,277</td>
<td>$46,535</td>
<td>$156,812</td>
<td>$23,706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889/90</td>
<td>$127,403</td>
<td>$48,281</td>
<td>$175,684</td>
<td>$11,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890/91</td>
<td>$129,224</td>
<td>$55,051</td>
<td>$184,275</td>
<td>$17,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891/92</td>
<td>$147,960</td>
<td>$59,328</td>
<td>$207,288</td>
<td>$25,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892/93</td>
<td>$195,166</td>
<td>$59,508</td>
<td>$254,674</td>
<td>$47,312</td>
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<tr>
<td>1893/94</td>
<td>$132,364</td>
<td>$43,604</td>
<td>$175,968</td>
<td>$15,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894/95</td>
<td>$207,715</td>
<td>$67,208</td>
<td>$274,923</td>
<td>$4,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895/96</td>
<td>$220,167</td>
<td>$83,902</td>
<td>$304,069</td>
<td>$35,827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896/97</td>
<td>$177,652</td>
<td>$100,317</td>
<td>$277,969</td>
<td>$14,008</td>
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<tr>
<td>1897/98</td>
<td>$266,107</td>
<td>$151,535</td>
<td>$417,642</td>
<td>$85,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898/99</td>
<td>$477,309</td>
<td>$246,078</td>
<td>$723,387</td>
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<tr>
<td>1899/00</td>
<td>$884,663</td>
<td>$334,791</td>
<td>$1,219,454</td>
<td>$392,478</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900/01</td>
<td>$1,027,039</td>
<td>$322,767</td>
<td>$1,349,806</td>
<td>$344,374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901/02</td>
<td>$1,427,453</td>
<td>$369,341</td>
<td>$1,796,794</td>
<td>$401,643</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Subsidiary Companies

Towards the end of the decade there were several specialist companies involved in the manufacture and sales of the Aeolian Company’s instruments and music. These suppliers and overseas agencies were all finally controlled by the AWPPC, and their various origins and histories to August 1903 are worthy of mention.
The Votey Organ Company (1897)

In 1883, at the age of 27, a young reed organ salesman and builder, Edwin S. Votey, settled in Detroit, and together with a local music dealer, C.J. Whitney, he bought out the failing Detroit Organ Company and renamed it the Whitney Organ Co. W.R. Farrand joined as treasurer, and in 1887, when Whitney retired, the name was changed to the Farrand & Votey Organ Co. In 1890 Edwin S. Votey spent six months in Europe studying pipe organs and selling reed organs, and later that year his firm added the manufacture of church pipe organs to its business.

In 1892 Farrand & Votey purchased the pipe organ business of Hilborn and Frank Roosevelt, located at 135th Street and Park Avenue, on the death of Hilborn L. Roosevelt, a cousin of Theodore, the US President. This gave Farrand & Votey control of many fine patents, especially connected with electric action work, and they soon scored a notable success with an organ constructed in 1893 for the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. In the same year they also built the first Aeolian Pipe Organ, which was installed in the early Aeolian Hall at 18 West 23rd Street.

Edwin S. Votey constructed his first Pianola by the spring or summer of 1895 in Detroit, with other prototypes following in 1896, and production starting in earnest in 1897. In that year the work on Aeolian Pipe Organs and Pianolas grew out of all proportion, and the Votey Organ Company was organised, buying out the relevant areas of the Farrand & Votey business. From then on, the first three years of Pianola manufacture were undertaken in Detroit, though Edwin S. Votey was already intimately connected with the AC, having been elected to the board, also in 1897.

In 1898 the Votey Organ Company was purchased by the AC, and a new purpose-built factory was soon constructed for it at Garwood, NJ, the Pipe Organ and Pianola action manufacture being transferred there from around August 1900.

The origins of the brand-name, 'Pianola', are to some extent shrouded in the mists of the late nineteenth-century. However, browsers on the Internet may well know that there is a small village of that name in the vicinity of L'Aquila, to the north-east of Rome in Italy. Since 1793, a famous nativity play has taken place each year on the hillside around Pianola, in which over three hundred local people dress in medieval costume and re-enact the events surrounding the birth of Christ. The centenary of what must have become quite a famous event in the Christian calendar therefore took place on Christmas Day 1893.

It happens that Edwin Votey's father, Charles Augustus Votey, was a minister of religion, and an amateur historian, who in 1896 recorded in some detail the history of the Huguenot 'De Vauxtie' family from their arrival in North America in about 1745. Such a man would have been interested in
religious history, and it seems reasonable to suppose that the American religious press would have carried an article on the centenary of the Pianola nativity play, probably in early 1894. It would certainly be interesting to investigate the Church publications available in Detroit around that time.

Edwin Votey himself had been co-operating with the Aeolian Company since at least 1893, and the first Pianola was completed in 1895, so once again it seems reasonable to assume that the conception of the instrument was in his mind during 1894. One can well imagine his father mentioning the Italian village in the course of everyday family conversation, and the suitability of the name making its mark in Votey’s mind. Of course, there is no proof of this theory, but it is the most plausible explanation so far of the instrument’s seminal title.

The Vocalion Organ Company (1898)

Curiously enough, the Vocalion was a British invention, dating from the early 1880s. It was a fine reed organ on the pressure system, developed by a Hampshire inventor, Baillie Hamilton, who had financial backing from the well-to-do Yorkshire musical businessman, Archibald Ramsden. Both men travelled to the United States, where they felt it would be most successful, and in late 1885 or 1886 the Hamilton Vocalion Organ Company was formed in Worcester, Mass.

The company did not prosper on its own, and in 1888 it seems to have been reorganised, part of it changing its name to the New York Church Organ Company, and the other becoming the Vocalion Company, without the word ‘Organ’ in its title, remaining in Worcester as a subsidiary of the Canadian piano manufacturer, Mason & Risch.

In 1894 the AC entered in to a contract with this Worcester branch of Mason & Risch for the supply of Aeolian Orchestrelles, a new style of luxury player reed organ based on the Vocalion, and four years later Harry B. Tremaine organised the Vocalion Organ Company, which in 1899 bought out the Worcester factory and so brought the supply of Orchestrelles into the Aeolian fold.

The Orchestrelle Company (1899)

One might have thought that the Orchestrelle Company would have been organised in order to manufacture Orchestrelles, but it was in fact the organisation set up to control the AC's export business. The AC itself dealt initially with export to Canada, and perhaps Mexico, but trade with Europe, the British Empire and South America was handled through London, no doubt in view of the strong imperial connections still in force.

The managing director of the original Orchestrelle Company and its successors from incorporation until 1924 was Alfred J. Mason junior, who had
previously been in charge of the Mason & Risch Vocalion business at Worcester, and was a director of the Aeolian Company itself, a similar position to Edwin S. Votey through the Votey Organ Company. The choice of title for this British Aeolian subsidiary may therefore have been chosen as a compliment to Mr Mason, or it may have been because Aeolian saw the European market, with its royal families, nobility and prosperous gentry, as favouring the more expensive player reed organs. Unlike the Votey Organ Company or the Vocalion Organ Company, the Orchestrelle Company was not a subsidiary of the AC, though in due course it became owned by the AWPPC.

In August 1899 the Orchestrelle Company purchased the business of George Whight & Co, which had hitherto been the main agency in Britain for the Aeolian line. Whight had started up in business in 1861 as a partner in Whit & Mann, sewing machine manufacturers, with a factory in Ipswich and a London showroom on Holborn Hill. In 1863 the firm moved to Holborn Bars, to a corner shop next to the famous Prudential building, and in 1879 George Whight became the sole proprietor.

It was at 143 Holborn Bars that Aeolian goods first went on sale in Britain, probably in 1879, because the Kelly directory for 1880 credits Whight & Co as manufacturers of the musical cabinetto, which must have been the MOC's Musical Cabinet. In 1885 the firm exhibited the Aeolian for the first time, at the International Inventions Exhibition at South Kensington, where it won a bronze medal, and William B. Tremaine came over specially to set the seal on the burgeoning trade relationship across the Atlantic.

In 1888 George Whight & Co opened new premises on Farringdon Road, where they acted as agents for Wilcox & White, just after the Aeolian move to Meriden, but around 1890 this branch reverted to dealing only in Whight & Mann's sewing machines and bicycles, and the firm's main Aeolian agency moved from Holborn Bars to 225 Regent Street.

George Whight has gone down in legal history as the defendant in a law suit brought in the spring of 1899 by Boosey & Co, the well-known sheet music publishers. On 19 April, in the Chancery Division of the High Court of Justice in London, Mr Justice Stirling opined that, while under existing British law, George Whight & Co had no obligation to pay any copyright fee for the transfer of music into perforated form for use on its instruments, it did not have the right to include printed expression marks on music rolls, since the latter constituted an infringement of music publishing rights. Needless to say, the 1913 and subsequent Copyright Acts in Britain have rendered any form of recorded music liable to copyright payments.

The Regent Street showrooms of George Whight & Co no longer exist, having been demolished when virtually the whole street was redeveloped in the 1920s. The Orchestrelle Company main showrooms remained at 225 Regent Street until the move to the former Grosvenor Gallery in New Bond
Street, renamed Aeolian Hall, in the autumn of 1903, but the Company retained the previous premises for other uses later on.

**The Choralion Company (1901)**

A parallel development to that in London took place in Berlin, where the Choralion-Saal at Bellevuestraße 4 was one of the city’s main recital halls for many years, with 400 seats and an Aeolian Pipe Organ with 43 speaking stops. Unfortunately Adolf Hitler chose to install his Führerbunker just down the road at the Potsdamerplatz, so by 1945 there was not much left of the old

*The Choralion-Saal, Headquarters of the Choralion Company in Berlin.*
concert hall. The choice of the name Choralion when the AC was already manufacturing and selling Vocalion organs smacks of a similar model of organ from the Worcester factory. This likelihood is enhanced by the fact that Frank W. Hessin, who was sent out to Berlin in 1901 to set up the AC's agency, had started his career, like Alfred J. Mason, at the Mason & Risch Vocalion plant.

Just to confuse the issue, the firm of Jones & Co, of Bridge Street, Bristol, England, is credited in the November 1894 issue of the Piano, Organ and Music Trades Journal as inventors and makers of a New Choralion Organ, but it is far from clear whether there was any connection with the AC.

The Need for Pianos

With one exception, we have now discussed each of the Aeolian Company's subsidiary or associated companies that existed prior to 18 August 1903, when the AWPPC was incorporated in New Jersey. The quantity that still remains unknown, alas, is the Orchard Land Company, which was sufficiently important to merit having Harry B. Tremaine and Edwin S. Votey on the board. Was it, perhaps, a property company formed to exploit land from defunct factories, or to develop the extensive new site at Garwood? Only time and the New Jersey commercial archive at Trenton will tell.

Two other important events took place prior to the turn of the century, however. On 25 July 1898, Harry B. Tremaine was elected President of the Aeolian Company, and in November 1902 the Company moved its Manhattan headquarters, and its Aeolian Hall, to purpose-built premises at 362 Fifth Avenue, near 34th Street.

No doubt for several years Harry B. Tremaine had been working away at his plan. The profits he had generated, especially as a result of Edwin S. Votey's patented inventions, had become extremely attractive to the men in suits. He already had pipe organs, reed organs of many varieties, and piano-players in his portfolio of instruments. But to expand and to develop a firm and secure range of products, he needed to have some piano factories either under his control, or at least closely allied to his company's interests. It must have been glaringly obvious at the turn of the century that the major market of the future would be in player-pianos. To achieve this urgently-needed diversity he turned to a family friend, the son of his father's cousin, William E. Wheelock, who together with partners owned the Weber, Wheelock and Stuyvesant brands of piano.

As we shall see later, in discussing the details of the Tremaine family background, the Tremaine, Wheelock, Newhall and Billings families of nineteenth-century Brooklyn either intermarried, or were at least on friendly, sociable terms with each other. A deal of genealogical research needs to be undertaken, but all these names appear on early American pianos, and it seems very likely that a common social circle also meant a common range of business interests.
The new Aeolian Hall was the first premises the Company had occupied that could fairly be said to reflect the stature of an international corporation. There were luxurious showroom suites, a pleasant concert hall, and ample administration facilities, as befitted a company that would before long own factories in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Hayes and Gotha, retail establishments in Manhattan, Chicago, St Louis, London, Paris, Berlin, Madrid, Melbourne and Sydney, and whose products would span the globe, from Indiana to Indonesia, via motor trucks in Manhattan or on the backs of camels in the outback of Australia.

*Aeolian Hall, 363 Fifth Avenue, New York – 1902 to 1912.*
Albert Weber - Father and Son

Albert Weber was born in Bavaria on 8 July 1828, according to Dolge, or in 1829 if one trusts the New York Times obituary writer, and was the son of Dr Johannes Weber of either Hellingen or Heiligenstadt in that provincial land. In his youth he displayed a marked talent for music, and was able to turn his hand to the violin, cello, piano, organ or harp, as the occasion demanded. He settled in the US in about 1845, with the intention of earning a living by teaching and playing the piano and organ, but soon took up as a trainee pianomaker during the daytime, since there was rather better money to be made in that way.

He worked first with D.J. Van Winkle, who had showrooms at West 16th Street, and a factory at Port Chester, north-east of New York City, and then served an apprenticeship with the firm of Holden in New York. In Port Chester he met his future wife, Martha Woodward, whom he married on 27 February 1855 at Trinity Church, Brooklyn. The couple had one son, Albert junior, and two daughters, Robina and Martha.

Having served his time, Weber senior set up in business as a repairer of pianos, finally commencing manufacture on his own account in 1852, with a little music shop at 103 West Broadway, near White Street in Manhattan. After only two years his business was destroyed by fire, against which he was only modestly insured, but he at once removed to 155 West Broadway, where he remained until 1865.

At this point he was making about four pianos a week, and he took new premises in a five-storey marble-faced building on the corner of Broome and Crosby Streets, where he became rather well-known to the musicians of the city. His hard-working and genial temperament seems to have endeared him to both the musical profession and the fashionable classes of New York, and his resultant success allowed him to move in 1869 to extensive warerooms on the corner of 16th Street and Fifth Avenue, with a factory only two blocks away, on the north-east corner of 7th Avenue and 17th Street.

Albert Weber was a bright man, with a ready wit. On the occasion of a piano workers' strike, in which the men demanded higher wages and shorter hours, a vociferous minority also wanted to be able to audit the manufacturers' books on a weekly basis, to ensure that any rogue bosses were not profiteering at their expense. In mid-nineteenth century New York, this rendered the employers speechless, until Weber, in characteristic fashion, suggested with lively sarcasm that the strikers were being far too modest in their demands. After their heavy duties of auditing, surely it was only right that they should repair to the bowling alley, and that the employers should stack up the skittles for them?

Even 125 years later, it is easy to sense the bright intelligence of such a man. The New York Times obituary, on 26 June 1879, describes the zenith of Albert Weber's career with a little humour and great affection:
'Here [on 5th Avenue] his business reached splendid proportions, and the fame of his pianos grew until they ranked among the finest instruments in the city. He was now a man of large capital and could give vent to his tireless energy in whatever direction he pleased. He made his mart on Fifth Avenue the rendezvous of musical people while his enterprise took on more especially a professional complexion. In his contentions with rival manufacturers, he was aggressive, full of resources, and most fertile in expedients. Whether he had or had not the best piano at the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, he labored indefatigably to show that he had. With great sagacity and forethought he made every provision that the business which he had built up should not suffer by his death, and with this view he brought up his son as a practical piano manufacturer. 'In his personal relations, Mr Weber was a gentleman of the most social type. He was full of good nature and had hosts of friends. He was a man of rare liberality. By his death many a struggling artist loses a warm friend, and his intimate personal friends a genial and beloved companion.'

From a technical and business standpoint, Albert Weber was generally reckoned to use the best materials, to employ the best workmen on generous terms, to have a natural ear for beauty of tone, and to possess an innate genius for advertising. He made a firm and useful friend in Charles B. Seymour, one of the main New York music critics, who wrote many sympathetic articles about him and his pianos, and in general he had a good-humoured, pushing way (which he himself called 'plunging') of making friendly contacts.

On Weber's untimely death, the piano business passed to his son, though a mortgage had been arranged on the factory building a year earlier, which provided a comfortable living for his wife and daughters, a singularly wise and far-reaching decision, as we shall see.

Albert Weber junior was born in New York on 17 September 1858 and destined to live only for the same two score years and ten as his father, but for very different reasons. In 1876 he entered his father's business as an apprentice, with the stipulation that he was not to enter the warerooms on Fifth Avenue until he could make a piano with his own hands. He also studied music and played the piano, but did not have his father's natural ability in this respect. On his father's death he was only twenty-one years of age, not far short of a millionaire overnight, and in overall control of one of the finest piano companies in America. Unfortunately the responsibility was too great for this bright but unstable man, and he gambled and fornicated away his entire fortune in the space of some four years.

Some business developments did nevertheless take place under Albert junior's stewardship, including the establishment of a Weber Hall in Chicago, and Weber pianos won prizes at the 1887 American Exhibition in London and the Paris Exposition of 1889. In addition, some technical progress was made, largely because the Weber factory remained for many years in the capable hands of Mr E. Stroud, whose name was preserved in the early twentieth
century as one of main Aeolian brands of piano and player-piano.

By 1883, having spent his fortune and lost the $180,000 stock he held in his father's company, Weber remained as manager only, at an annual salary of $8,000, but after two divorces, countless court judgments and finally insolvency proceedings in 1896, he ended up in an insane asylum in New York State. He was rescued by his mother, who signed a bond to guarantee his safe keeping, and he survived quietly until 1908, when he died in McIntosh, Florida on 16 October of that year.

Origins of the Wheelock and Stuyvesant Pianos

Edwin S. Votey's historical notes rather grandly state that Light & Ernst were building pianos in Nyack, NY, in 1840. This may have been part of Mr Votey's presentation to the Smithsonian, but it is nonetheless an impossibility! Ferdinand C. Lighte (the name is an anglicisation of the German ‘Leuchte’) began his business around 1848 in Manhattan, at 22 Canal Street. Within a few years he had gone into partnership with W.H. Newton, and the two men were joined in 1853 by a wealthy musician from Maine, W.B. Bradbury, forming the piano manufacturing firm of Lighte, Newton & Bradbury.

In the 1850s, Lighte, Newton & Bradbury were the premier New York piano makers, for whom Theodore Steinweg worked immediately upon his family's arrival in that city, prior to the foundation of Steinway & Sons. Newton subsequently left the firm, which continued as Light & Bradbury until 1861, when William Bradbury set up in business on his own.

By the mid 1870s Ferdinand Lighte had joined forces with Louis Ernst, who was well known as a talented piano teacher, and at the time the Mechanical Orguinette Company was founded, Lighte & Ernst had their premises across the road at 12 East 14th Street, which is where we began this article about thirty pages ago. In due course the firm was taken over by the Sturtevant Piano Company.

Meanwhile, William Wheelock was born in 1852, and as a young man in 1873, set up in the piano trade as a partner in Billings & Wheelock. In 1877 he left to start his own business at premises on 26th Street, which in May 1880 was incorporated as William E. Wheelock & Co. Since mention was made earlier of the connection of parts of the piano trade with the wealthier levels of Brooklyn society, it is worth noting that Wheelock's father, A.M. Wheelock, was for many years Brooklyn City Treasurer.

Owing to William Wheelock's financial and marketing skills, his business grew quickly, and in 1880 it moved to a new factory on East 149th Street and Third Avenue in the Bronx. Although the initial building proved inadequate, a new factory was erected and subsequently enlarged and, like the Weber factory further south, became part of the Aeolian Company's property in due course.
Another native of Brooklyn who joined with William Wheelock was Charles B. Lawson, who started with the firm as a confidential bookkeeper in 1880, but later acquired an expertise in the more mathematical and technical areas of piano manufacture. Under the guidance of both men, and another partner, John W. Mason, the Company was reorganised several times, changing its name in 1887 to the Wheelock Piano Company. In the meantime, in 1886, Wheelock had organised the Stuyvesant Piano Company, which took over the Sturtevant and Lighte & Ernst business mentioned earlier.

In 1887 the Wheelock business absorbed Henry Lindeman & Sons, successors to a business started as early as 1835 by William Lindeman, a German immigrant from Dresden. Henry Lindeman, grandson of the founder, remained as factory superintendent. This particular branch of William Wheelock’s empire never fell under the control of the Aeolian Company, having been sold off to the Wanamaker organisation in the mid-1890s. However, the Lindeman factory on 147th Street became the Wheelock Piano Company’s main manufacturing base, and was subsequently used by Aeolian for the manufacture of various upright pianos, and later the Technola.

In 1890 the Wheelock Piano Co also obtained control of the failing business of Albert Weber, setting up the Weber Piano Company in 1892 as a separate entity. But this new acquisition proved difficult to administer, probably because it was insufficiently capitalised and trading on its former glory, and certainly because it still included Albert Weber junior on its staff. Also the mortgage on the East 17th Street factory was becoming more urgent, since its total worth of $200,000 was due by 31 August 1903. To reorganise temporarily, William Wheelock in 1896 put the Weber Piano Company and the Stuyvesant Piano Company into receivership, and the two companies were dissolved by order of the courts, Wheelock and his partners buying back the main assets on 1 January 1897 in the name of the newly-formed Weber-Wheelock Piano Company.

The mortgage that Albert Weber senior had arranged on his factory with the Nassau Trust Company enabled him to leave $100,000 in cash to his wife and $50,000 to each of his two daughters. Repayment of the total sum of $200,000 was the responsibility of whoever owned his factory, and was to fall due on 31 August 1903. Since this was 24 years, two months and five days after his death, and not a neat 25 years, one may suppose that the arrangements had been made in 1878, and either that he knew that he was ill, or more likely that he entered into the agreement at the time of his fiftieth birthday. But the mortgage made the acquisition of the Weber piano organisation something of a poisoned chalice, and one can only guess how William Wheelock’s mind was turning as the century came to its close.

Coincidences in life so often provide telling clues as to what is really happening in secret, and it is surely no accident that the Aeolian, Weber
Piano and Pianola Company came into existence thirteen days before the Weber factory mortgage was finally due. As with the Munroe Organ Reed Company some twenty years before, and George Steck & Co a year later, the Aeolian organisation in 1903 seized a commercial opportunity with great alacrity when there was a good chance of doing a sharp deal. Of course, one can also draw more general conclusions in the longer term, since to form large corporations reflected the spirit of the age, and there was undoubtedly a certain security to be had from operating under one banner. But it would be a very unusual businessman who voluntarily submitted himself to another's control, and the straw that broke William Wheelock's resolve to remain independent may well have been Albert Weber's shrewd provision of a right royal pension for his widow and two daughters.

**Aeolian Links with Union County, New Jersey**

Prior to 18 August 1903, the Aeolian Company and its subsidiary and associated companies controlled a music roll and Aeolian factory in Meriden, an Orchestrelle and Vocalion organ factory in Worcester, a Pianola and Aeolian Pipe Organ factory in Garwood, and retail, warehousing and workshop facilities in many parts of the world.

Staff and senior management had already made the move to the New York area where necessary, and Harry B. Tremaine and Edwin S. Votey, the two main players, lived in Westfield and Summit, NJ, respectively, both within easy striking distance of the Garwood factory. Garwood was in fact nearly not called Garwood at all, because if Harry B. Tremaine had had his way, it would have been known as Aeolian, NJ. There is after all a town nearby called Edison. In one or two advertisements around this time the idealised factory village name creeps in, but in the end the inhabitants decided to name the locality after a local politician.

Garwood was to be the centre of Aeolian manufacturing for around thirty years, from 1900 to 1931, so a brief mention should be made of its location and surroundings. When Aeolian bought the factory site (perhaps by means of the Orchard Land Company), it must have been quite undeveloped, lying between Cranford and Westfield, NJ, on the north side of the railway line that ran south-west from the Pennsylvania Railroad Station in Manhattan, to Newark, Scotch Plains and places west. Penn Station is on 34th Street and Seventh Avenue, a mere two avenues across from the new Aeolian Hall of 1902.

Garwood, Cranford and Westfield are in Union County, NJ, whose administrative seat is Elizabeth, to the east. To the north is a range of high wooded hills, with the aptly named towns of Summit and Mountainside. To the south is Plainfield, and to the west is Scotch Plains, along the road towards Pennsylvania. Many of the Aeolian Company's patents were awarded to
inventors who lived and worked in this area, and it is clear in any case that a
great deal of America's technical and consumer revolution was engineered in
this north-eastern part of New Jersey, just across from Manhattan.

Westfield was, and still is, a rich commuter suburb for New York City. Harry B.
Tremaine organised Stoneleigh Park, a development of exclusive housing
for friends and business colleagues, with underground electric and telephone
wiring, discreet street lighting with globe lamps on low brick posts, and a
number of restrictions on house building. The fact that Tremaine was able to
purchase the entire parcel of land himself in order to achieve this end, but
nevertheless chose to live in only one house, albeit a comfortable one, throws
a clear light on his relative modesty of tastes. He was no Citizen Kane.

Nevertheless, the workers were definitely excluded. Only private residences
with outbuildings appurtenant to a gentleman's residence could be
constructed, no houses erected on the property were to cost less than $5,000,
and no stores, factory, saloon, hotel or any business establishment whatsoever
were to be built. In due course Charles M. Tremaine junior and Edward R.
Perkins lived in Stoneleigh Park, with Edwin S. Votey as the only founder
member of the AWPPC who chose to assert his independence by resorting to
the hill top at Summit.

Also in Stoneleigh Park in 1904 was H.M. Wilcox, for a short while one of
the assistant treasurers of the AWPPC, but he accidentally shot and killed a
young boy who was playing near his house on Hallowe'en in that year.
Although he was subsequently cleared of manslaughter, because his bullet had
ricocheted, he nevertheless very sensibly left the area forthwith.

Harry B. Tremaine was 37 years old on 28 July 1903, and the choice of
Westfield and Garwood for his family home and main musical instrument
factory had been as carefully thought out as his development of the Aeolian
Company over the previous ten years. Now, for the pinnacle of the corporate
expansion that he had engineered, he chose to register the Aeolian, Weber
Piano and Pianola Company on home ground, in Union County, his fellow
founder members consisting of his two neighbours, and one man who lived
about three miles away. At the heart of the international corporation, the
family business was still visible.

**The Aeolian, Weber Piano & Pianola Company (1903)**

The articles of incorporation of the AWPPC were adopted by Harry B.
Tremaine, Edwin S. Votey, Charles M. Tremaine and Edward R. Perkins on 18
August 1903, in the presence of a Master of Chancery in the State of New
Jersey, and recorded in Book 11 of the Union County Incorporations at 3.10
pm that afternoon by William Howard, the County Clerk. The four men
subscribed $1,000 between them, four shares being taken by Harry B.
Tremaine, and two by each of the others. The principal office was to be
located at Garwood, and Charles M. Tremaine was designated as the agent therein.

Most of the articles were concerned with the issuing and trading of stocks and shares, the ownership of property at home and abroad, and the use and disposal of patents and copyrights. However, the first part of the third article describes in detail the company's intended lines of manufacture, and it is worth reproducing in part as a contrast to the AOMC articles quoted earlier.

'To manufacture, buy, sell, lease and in every way to deal in pianos, organs, aeolians, orchestrelles, pianolas, musical instruments and musical merchandise of every description, mechanical, musical instruments of every kind, instruments and devices for playing musical instruments, and any and all things of every kind that can be used in connection therewith or in the manufacture thereof; to produce or perforate or manufacture perforated music and to print, publish and sell music and books and to carry on any other business, manufacturing, commercial or otherwise, which may, in the discretion of the directors, seem capable of being conveniently carried on in connection with the above objects, or calculated directly or indirectly to enhance the value of this company's property and rights, and to the ends above mentioned to acquire, purchase, hold, own, mortgage, lease, sell, assign, transfer, invest, trade or deal in, or in any way dispose of any and all personal property of every description and to hold, acquire, purchase, grant, sell, convey, mortgage or lease any real property and estate within or without the State of New Jersey, and any interest or rights therein without limit as to the amount of such property.'

With the help of Roget's Thesaurus, one might well sell hamburgers in Piccadilly Circus under these liberal terms, but they do nevertheless give a clear indication of the Company's current products and intended plans, and unlike the AOMC articles, they give pride of place to the mention of pianos.

The new company was capitalised at $10,000,000, or 100,000 shares of $100 each. This was split into $3,500,000 of preferred, and $6,500,000 of common stock, the preferred shares to have first call on the company's assets, but the common shares to include voting rights. The first company meeting was held at Garwood at 10.00 am the following day, at which Edwin S. Votey was appointed Company Secretary, and a board of fifteen directors was elected, whose composition is of some interest, namely:

Harry Barnes TREMAINE - The President of the Aeolian Company.

Atherton CURTIS - Members of the Curtis family were amongst the original AOMC subscribers in 1887, and they put up the majority of the capital in the Company's share issue of November 1891, at which point Atherton Curtis joined the board. He moved to Paris, probably in the summer of 1904, though whether this was in connection with Aeolian business is not clear. However, he remained as 1st Vice-President of the
AWPPC until after 1918, and was still on the board in 1931.

William Burton TREMAINE - Previously on the board of the MOC and the AOMC. Father of Harry Barnes Tremaine.

William E. WHEELOCK - The previous owner of the Weber, Wheelock, Stuyvesant and Stroud piano organisation. Treasurer of the AWPPC until 1919.

Frederick G. BOURNE - The Aeolian Company's major stockholder, Commodore of the New York Yacht Club, and probably a stockbroker. In a December 1910 AC stock issue of 15,000 7% preferred shares, Bourne took 10,533 shares, worth $1,053,000. He also bought the land and developed the 1912 Aeolian Hall on 42nd Street.

Robert MAXWELL - Another subscriber to the AOMC stock issue in 1891, becoming the second largest stockholder of the AC, he and his family having 1,762 preferred and 455 common shares by 1914.

George Warrington CURTIS - Probably son of one of the original AOMC subscribers, and a large AC stockholder, with 1,610 preferred and 230 common shares by 1914. Remained on the board until the early 1920s.

Charles B. LAWSON - Formerly partner with William Wheelock in the Weber-Wheelock Company. He was put in charge of plants and manufacture for the Aeolian organisation.

Henry Warren BEEBE - A New York commercial lawyer, with offices on Wall Street, who helped to draw up the AWPPC articles of incorporation, and was probably on the board to advise on legal matters.

George B. KELLY - The founder and senior partner of Kelly, Rand & Given, who began perforating music rolls in Cambridge, Mass., in 1877. One of the founders of the AOMC, and inventor and patentee of many notable advances in the player field, especially the slide valve wind motor for driving music rolls.

Edward R. PERKINS - As Vice-President and General Manager, Perkins was Harry B. Tremaine's right-hand man, who had come with him from Meriden, and who lived in Stoneleigh Park as his neighbour. Perkins was born in 1869 and joined the AOMC in 1893, but he was considerably overweight and was to die rather early, in 1917, although his family went on to make its name in New Jersey politics.
Charles Milton TREMAINE - Harry B. Tremaine's cousin, the son of Charles M. Tremaine senior, with whom William B. Tremaine made and sold pianos as Tremaine Brothers. Charles M. Tremaine junior later became the founder of National Music Week, for which he is still remembered, even in the 1990s.

Edwin Scott VOTEY - Organ builder, and inventor of the Aeolian Pipe Organ and Pianola. Company Secretary, and a consummate expert on the setting up and design of factory production lines.

John W. HEINS - Director of the Pipe Organ Department. Remained on the board until 1924, when he was replaced by his colleague, Frank Taft.

J.A. COFFIN - Director of the Wholesale Department.

At the board meeting that followed a week later, Harry B. Tremaine was elected as President, Atherton Curtis and William B. Tremaine as 1st and 2nd Vice-Presidents respectively, Edwin S. Votey as one of two Assistant Treasurers, in addition to his existing duties as Company Secretary, William Wheelock as Treasurer, and Frank R. Wyckoff as the other Assistant Treasurer, even though he was not apparently on the board. Wyckoff did not stay long with the AWPPC, although he was a very senior member of the AC management team, and it may be that he was AC treasurer, who was sacrificed in order to provide William Wheelock with a responsible position after the new merger.

Using the capital stock that they had just issued, in order to effect a paper transaction, the new directors approved the purchase of property and rights from W.L. Perkins, acting as agent, to the value of $2,923,000, and stock in subsidiary companies to the value of $5,402,000. In addition, William Wheelock and Charles Lawson were to be paid $30,000 cash by December 1903, and a further $30,000 by January 1904. The AWPPC was now in command of the entire Aeolian empire, although its control of the Aeolian Company itself was achieved informally through the totality of common stock owned by individual members of the AWPPC board and their families.

If one were to summarise what had actually happened, it would be that Harry B. Tremaine had spent just over ten years building up a mechanical music business with intelligence and sensitivity. He had acquired strategic companies, inventions and patents, and he had formed an alliance with Edwin S. Votey, one of the most talented inventors and practical organisers in his field. In addition he had gained the confidence of Frederick G. Bourne, a man who was ready and willing to pour vast sums of capital into what he regarded as one of the most profitable enterprises of the day.
The Pianola in High Society – Christmas 1902.
Aeolian

Some idea of the magnitude of Aeolian activity is given by this picture of the main Aeolian building, built in the 19th century in the USA and Europe. Aeolian Hall, New York, is the centre of the ancient Aeolian Empire.

Aeolian City – The Aeolian Empire

- SERVICE DEPT, Long Island City
- AEOLIAN HALLS, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane
- SALLE AEOLIAN, Paris
- CHORALIONSAAL, Berlin
- AEOLIAN HALL, 42nd Street
- AEOLIAN HALL, London
fire at the Time of the First War.
THE AEOLIAN "VOCALION"

inbuilt like a musical instrument with an equal degree of tonal refinement. It reproduces all musical tones with a fidelity foreign to instruments of the gramophone class, preserving exactly the characteristics and quality of the original instrument or voice.

The Graduals, which is an exclusive feature of the Aeolian "Vocalion," gives you personal control of tone. By the pressure of a finger you can vary every performance, note by note and phrase by phrase, in harmony with your mood. What this means to the quality of the music, no longer bound by the rigid limitations of the record, can only be realized by hearing and playing the instrument; this you are always welcome to do at Aeolian Hall.

If unable to call, write for Catalogue 20.

THE AEOLIAN COMPANY LTD.
(Formerly the Orchestrelle Co.)

Aeolian Hall,
131-7 New Bond Street, London, W.1

Christmas 1917 at the Aeolian-Vocalion.
The First Year of Acquisitions

As a result of the influx of capital, the AWPPC went on a shopping spree of gigantic proportions, in order to expand and consolidate its operations both at home and abroad. It lent $100,000 to the Orchestrelle Co in September 1903, presumably in order to finance the move to Aeolian Hall at 135-7 New

*Aeolian Hall, London, Headquarters of the Orchestrelle Company.*
Bond Street the following month. This fine building had been erected in 1876 as the Grosvenor Gallery, which had for a short while been a highly fashionable art gallery and later a club, which the likes of Oscar Wilde and his friends had frequented. W.S. Gilbert gave one of his ethereal poets in *Patience* the name of Archibald Grosvenor, whose rival for the affections of the ladies, Reginald Bunthorne, describes himself in one duet as ‘A greenery-yallery, Grosvenor Gallery, Foot-in-the-grave young man!’ The establishment was twenty years past its prime when the Orchestrelle Company purchased the leasehold, but the main gallery was converted to a luxurious concert hall, an Aeolian Pipe Organ was duly installed, and with the deft management of Alfred J. Mason jr, and the architectural skills of Walter Cave, it once again became the mecca of fashion.

In November 1903 the directors of the AWPPC approved the sale of $9,000 of preferred stock to the Orchestrelle Company, to be used by it in part purchase of Toledo & Cie of Paris, which was to become the Aeolian Company S.A. at 32, Avenue de l’Opéra. The Toledo family who had hitherto run the Parisian firm had been Aeolian agents for many years, and as early as 21 January 1896 they took part in an Aeolian Pipe Organ concert at Mendelssohn Hall in New York, in which V. Toledo played the organ accompaniment while F. Toledo took the solo part of one of the movements of the Mendelssohn G minor Concerto. As an interesting sidelight on this particular concert, Widor’s Symphonie Gothique received its first American performance, and not by hand, but by means of three Aeolian 58-note music rolls.

February 1904 saw plans being made to acquire the Australian business of Henry M. Birge, for not more than $50,000, though this figure was reduced to $30,000 by the following April, and in due course the Pianola Company, Pty, was organised in Melbourne and Sydney, and later Adelaide and Brisbane as well.

In May 1904, three of the largest stockholders, Frederick Bourne, Robert Maxwell and Atherton Curtis, proposed giving a stock incentive to selected employees, to which the board agreed, and Edwin S. Votey was asked to draw up lists of suggested personnel, based on both seniority and length of service. The lists that he drew up still survive, and they provide a fascinating insight into the salary structure at the turn of the century, and to the origins of some of the Aeolian Company’s staff. Two lists were prepared, the first containing firm nominations for the scheme, and the second a selection of more doubtful cases. They are reproduced here, with any omissions filled in where possible:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H.B. Tremaine</td>
<td>President</td>
<td>$15,000 + 5%</td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>AOMC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.B. Tremaine</td>
<td>Vice-President</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>MOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.R. Perkins</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>AOMC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.S. Votey</td>
<td>Technical Director</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Votey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.R. Wyckoff</td>
<td>Finance Director ?</td>
<td>$ 6,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.S. Pain</td>
<td>Supt, Meriden</td>
<td>$ 3,600</td>
<td>1871</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Swift</td>
<td>Mus Dir, Meriden</td>
<td>$ 2,500</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td>AOMC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.W. Pain</td>
<td>Experimental Dept</td>
<td>$ 2,500</td>
<td>1870</td>
<td>Needham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M.S. Wright</td>
<td>Supt, Worcester</td>
<td>$ 6,000</td>
<td>1886</td>
<td>Munroe ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.L. Emmons</td>
<td>Supt, Garwood</td>
<td>$ 3,000</td>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Votey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.F. Meade</td>
<td>Book-keeper</td>
<td>$ 1,700</td>
<td>1894</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Pinner</td>
<td>Salesman</td>
<td>$ 2,080</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>M.P. Currier</td>
<td>Salesman</td>
<td>$ 3,185</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F.L. Young</td>
<td>Music Department</td>
<td>$ 7,000</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.D. Moses</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>$ 5,000</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.M. Wilcox</td>
<td>Credit</td>
<td>$ 3,000</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.W. Heins</td>
<td>Pipe Organ</td>
<td>$ 4,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank Taft</td>
<td>Pipe Organ</td>
<td>$ 4,000</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.A. Coffin</td>
<td>Wholesale</td>
<td>$ 4,000</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.M. Tremaine</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>$ 4,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.B. Kelly</td>
<td>Patents</td>
<td>$ 3,000</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>AMPCo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.B. Chilton</td>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>$ 2,400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chas Wirth</td>
<td>Truck</td>
<td>$ 2,600</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.H. Gomez</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>$ 2,500</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.B. Proudfit</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>$ 3,120</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td></td>
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<td>J.R. Slater</td>
<td>Retail Music</td>
<td>$ 2,500</td>
<td>1903</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.W. Flagel</td>
<td>Supt, Pipe Organ</td>
<td>$ 2,500</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.W. Hessin</td>
<td>Choralion, Berlin</td>
<td></td>
<td>1889</td>
<td>Vocalion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.B. Schaad</td>
<td>Choralion, Berlin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard Spear</td>
<td>Aeolian Cincinnati</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.J. Mason jr</td>
<td>Orchestrelle, London</td>
<td></td>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Vocalion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac Barbour</td>
<td>Packer</td>
<td>$ 1,100</td>
<td>1881</td>
<td>MOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene Hayliger</td>
<td>Book-keeping</td>
<td>$ 1,250</td>
<td>1883</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.J. Budracco</td>
<td>Salesman</td>
<td>$ 2,340</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Aeolian Company Senior Staff - May 1904 – List Two

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Scherrer</td>
<td>Janitor</td>
<td>$ 770</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>MOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Proudfit</td>
<td>Salesman</td>
<td>$ 2,340</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Handley</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>$ 1,250</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guy C. Mead</td>
<td>Music Department</td>
<td>$ 1,250</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.C. Mansfield</td>
<td>Book-keeper</td>
<td>$ 1,250</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flo Grover</td>
<td>Pipe Organ</td>
<td>$ 936</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.H. Grover</td>
<td>Pipe Organ</td>
<td>$ 1,250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Bernstein</td>
<td>Cashier</td>
<td>$ 1,500</td>
<td>1895</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.G. Chace</td>
<td>Salesman</td>
<td>$ 1,250</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.A. Kross</td>
<td>Building sup’t</td>
<td>$ 2,500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chas. E. Apgar</td>
<td>Salesman</td>
<td>$ 1,800</td>
<td>1901</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.C. St. John</td>
<td>Salesman</td>
<td>$ 1,500</td>
<td>1903</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ed. F. Coil</td>
<td>Repair Dept</td>
<td>$ 1,248</td>
<td>1901</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.A. Wagner</td>
<td>Aeolian Cincinnati</td>
<td>$ 1,040</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Stroup</td>
<td>Aeolian Newark</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Cordingley</td>
<td>Wholesale</td>
<td>$ 2,100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.R. Hunter</td>
<td>Aeolian Baltimore</td>
<td>$ 1,820</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.E. Draper</td>
<td>Aeolian Brooklyn</td>
<td>$ 1,560</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If Harry B. Tremaine was really earning a basic salary plus 5% on the profit of the whole international group of companies, then he was fast becoming an exceptionally wealthy man. The Aeolian Company profit for 1901/02 was just over $400,000, five per cent of which amounts to $20,000, and one may confidently assume that the group profits increased substantially for many years.

Edwin S. Votey also earned rather more than his salary at first suggests, because under the agreement of 4 February 1905, by which he ceded his famous 1904 patent rights to the AC, he was paid $2.00 for every instrument after 19 July 1904 that used his original Pianola patent, up to 2,500 instruments each year, and $1.00 thereafter. The serial number on the author’s 65/88-note Pianola push-up is 44,864, dating from roughly 1910 or 1911, and by that date Pianola Pianos were a great deal more plentiful than push-ups, so it is easy to see how Edwin S. Votey’s grand house and Stanley Steamer with negro chauffeur were afforded.
At about the same time as Edwin S. Votey's patent was awarded, a contract was drawn up between the AWPPC, the AC and the Weber Piano Company, which put the informal relationship via individual directors on to a more permanent footing. Then, right at the end of the year, another of the Aeolian Company's bargain acquisitions suddenly occurred.

The History and Acquisition of George Steck & Co.

Georg Steck was born in Kassel, Germany, in the province of Thuringia, on 19 July 1829. As a young man, he served an apprenticeship with Karl Scheel of that city, who in the early 1840s had been factory superintendent for Erard in Paris. Steck moved to New York in 1853, adding a silent vowel to his Christian name, and setting up his own business and factory on 12th Street and Third Avenue in 1857. Two years later he outgrew his premises and had to move to Walker Street, and subsequently to the factory in which his business operated for many years, on West 34th Street. In 1865 he opened a spacious retail showroom at Steck Hall on Clinton Place, but in view of the magnetism of East 14th Street, he moved to even larger premises there in 1871.

Steck pianos were known for their clear and full tone, and also for their reliability and solidity of construction, making them favourites with schools and colleges. Steck was also a particular expert in the use of iron in pianos, and he introduced independent iron frames in all his instruments in 1870, one such model winning first prize at the Vienna Exposition of 1873. He was not as commercially motivated as Albert Weber, and in 1884 he incorporated his business, giving a whole stack of Steck stock to his employees, in order to leave the organisation largely to its workforce. Gradually taking a less active role, he retired in January 1887 and devoted his energies to new experiments, including the design of a piano without strings, which would remain permanently in tune. He died on 31 March 1897.

After Steck's retirement, George Steck & Company was run for seventeen years by George Nembach as president, initially with Robert C. Kammerer and Fred Dietz as managing director and factory superintendent respectively. At some point during the 1890s the factory was moved to 48th Street, between Ninth and Tenth Avenues.

As Nembach began to make plans for his own retirement, the AWPPC saw the opportunity of acquiring a reputable concern at a bargain price, and so negotiations were held, and a preliminary agreement was reached, whereby Aeolian would purchase Nembach's entire stockholding before 1 July 1905 at 75% of face value. In addition, a Mr Everest had offered $28,000 of common stock at $25 per share. The AWPPC had $750,000 of its own preference stock remaining unissued, and this was taken, probably by its existing major shareholders, in order to finance the Steck deal.

A special Aeolian board meeting was held on 28 December 1904, at which
Harry B. Tremaine reported on progress, and the purchase was duly completed in January 1905. George Nembach became a director of the AWPPC for a while, taking the place of Henry Beebe, who resigned, since his position on the board was only that of a legal adviser.

Later in the year, the German piano firm of Ernst Munck was purchased by the Orchestrelle Company, the factory in Gotha being turned over in 1906 to the manufacture of Steck pianos in Europe, to meet the need for Pianola Pianos on that side of the Atlantic. Ernst Munck himself became an Orchestrelle shareholder, and some very early European Pianola Pianos carried the Munck name.

**Aeolian Factory Developments Between 1900 and 1910**

At the century's start, the 65-note Pianola had been generally on sale for just over two years in the US, and rather less overseas. The 46-note Aeolian had been superseded by the 58-note Aeolian Grand and Orchestrelle, and the 58-note Aeolian Pipe Organ was seven years old. The manufacture of Pianolas and Pipe Organs was transferred from Detroit to Garwood in August 1900, but Aeolians and music rolls still came from Meriden, and Orchestrelles from Worcester. There is some evidence to suggest, once Pianola production expanded rapidly, that Worcester was also used for the manufacture of Pianola cases. Electro-pneumatic Aeriol Pianos, designed by Theodore Brown, were also part of Aeolian's range, though renamed 'Aerilas'.

The Garwood plant of the Votey Organ Company began in 1900 with one four storey building for the manufacture of Pianolas, one four storey building with basement for the manufacture of Aeolian Pipe Organs, and one high single storey building with basement for the subsequent assembly of the organs. In 1901 a further four storey building for Pianola manufacture, larger than the first, was erected, testimony in retrospect to the speed of Aeolian development at that time.

The alliance in 1903 with William Wheelock brought a number of Manhattan factories under Aeolian control, specifically the Wheelock (formerly Lindeman) plant on 147th Street, the Weber factory on West 17th Street, and the Stuyvesant works, probably on East 107th Street. Similarly, the absorption of George Steck in very late 1904 included the Company's well-established manufacturing facility on West 48th Street. In addition, the Aeolian Company had warehousing and service buildings on 36th and 32nd Streets, and retail showrooms at 108 and 136 Fifth Avenue, in addition to its headquarters, Aeolian Hall at 362 Fifth Avenue.

In 1905 a new Wheelock Piano Company was organised, and manufacture of both Wheelock and Stuyvesant pianos was concentrated on the 147th Street site, which was expanded by the addition of what was known as the Stuyvesant building. The New York Steck factory was also enlarged, and in 1906 the Ernst
Munck factory in Gotha was purchased by the recently formed Steck Piano Company of Germany. By 1908 this factory had been doubled in size.

The manufacture of Weber pianos and Pianola Pianos in Europe was facilitated by the construction of a purpose-built factory adjoining both the Great Western Railway and the Grand Junction Canal at Hayes, to the west of London, which was commenced in 1908 and finished the following year. This site was expanded in 1910 by the addition of a building for the Universal Music Company, designed for the perforation of music rolls. Prior to the use of the Hayes site, Pianola installation and repairs in Britain had been carried out in Elm Street, just off Gray’s Inn Road in central London, and music rolls had been produced in relatively small quantities in Covent Garden.

Back in New York, at the end of the decade, the Technola Piano Company was organised, to manufacture a replacement for the 65-note Aeriola and meet the demand for a more modestly-priced Aeolian player piano, and a manufacturing base was set up at 132nd Street. It is worth noting that the Aeriola had been available until at least 1910 in the Chilton piano, also manufactured by Aeolian, and it seems very likely that the Technola was a renamed Chilton with an inexpensive 88-note player action. Perhaps in order to finance this new venture, the Aeolian Company in early 1911 increased its capital by $1,500,000 through the sale of 15,000 preference shares, mostly to Frederick G. Bourne. In due course the Technola business prospered to such an extent that it swapped places with the Wheelock and Stuyvesant 147th Street plant. By the early 1920s all Aeolian upright manufacture in the USA took place at 132nd Street, and grands, including Stecks, were made at the former Weber factory on 17th Street.

The Aeolian City Photograph

Although the large composite photograph on pages 40 and 41 dates from the early twenties, there are nevertheless many important factory and showroom buildings contained within it that played an important part in the history of the Aeolian Company throughout the early part of its existence.

Although the showroom in the bottom left-hand corner of the illustration was almost the first Aeolian trading premises, it is the factory at Meriden that is the earliest building in ‘Aeolian City’. The original factory, inset at the bottom right, is the left-hand end of the building in the larger photograph. Meriden was initially used for the building of Aeolians and the perforation of music rolls, but in later years the manufacture of Vocalion phonograph records supplanted that of reed organs.

The Garwood plant consisted of three main factories, two for the Aeolian Pipe Organ, and one for the Pianola, and it was regarded as the Aeolian Company’s most important site, since both Harry B. Tremaine and Edwin S. Votey lived nearby. The small castellated addition to the right-hand building
was used as the registered office of the Aeolian, Weber Piano and Pianola Company, and the railway line actually ran down the far side of the plant, not as incorrectly illustrated in the photograph.

The Hayes factory, to the west of London, initially only included the building on the left, which was used for the manufacture of Weber pianos, but later the Universal Music Company building was added at right angles, and used for the production of music rolls. Further buildings were added in about 1920, which do not appear in the photographic collage, but the small tower at the left-hand end of the UMC building (behind the power house) was reputedly erected in 1919 to help with the printing of song lyrics on roll, and this tends to confirm the period of the imaginary city as the late teens.

The central building in the group of piano factories is probably the Weber factory, but not yet a definite identification. The style of building and number of tiny onlookers in front of it suggest downtown Manhattan rather than the Bronx or Harlem, where the Wheelock and Stuyvesant factories were located. By the early 1920s Aeolian was using the former Weber factory for the manufacture of all of its grand pianos, including Stecks.

The main avenue of Aeolian Halls contains mostly the Company’s overseas premises, not all of which are yet identified. Probably the street behind and to the left of the Hayes factory contains American outlets.

Once upon a time there was probably a coloured oil painting of this multiple photograph, no doubt taking pride of place in the Aeolian board room, but so far nothing of the sort has come to light.

**Technical Progress During the Century's First Decade**

The main instrumental developments between 1900 and 1910 were the 116-note system for the Pipe Organ and Orchestrelle, the Metrostyle, the Themodist, the splitting of the Pianola action into treble and bass sections, full-scale or 88-note Pianolas, and the Pianola Piano and Grand Pianola Piano. In addition, an agreement was reached in 1909 to install the Pianola in Steinway uprights and grands. All these innovations will be dealt with in detail in a later section of this treatise, devoted to the Aeolian Company’s instruments and patents, but a brief indication of their relative chronology would be useful at this point.

Although Theodore Brown of Worcester patented the double tracker bar for the 116-note reed and pipe organ systems well before the turn of the century, it was not used publicly in any instruments until 1901, according to Edwin S. Votey's papers. It is difficult to pin down the introduction of the split Pianola action, though it was the first item claimed in Edwin S. Votey's famous Pianola patent of 19 July 1904, which had been filed on 16 November 1899. It is worth noting that, despite the claims by Alfred Dolge that Votey's Pianola was patented on 22 May 1900, it was the later patent that remained the Aeolian
Company's own archive, and on which Votey was paid his liberal royalties.

The Metrostyle, patented by Francis L. Young in 1901, was to be found in Pianolas from 1903 onwards in London, and probably no earlier in New York, since it was introduced to the public from Aeolian Hall at 362 Fifth Avenue. The Themodist system that was patented by James W. Crooks on 4 December 1900 was an early and unrefined device that neither used the familiar ditto-mark perforations, nor was applied to a split treble and bass mechanism. On the other hand, it did establish the principle of two levels of suction that could be alternated automatically by means of perforations on a music roll. The actual patent for the Themodist perforations as we know them today was applied for by Willard S. Pain, superintendent of the Meriden factory, on 11 May 1909, and granted on 3 January 1911. Themodist Pianola Pianos were advertised from 1908 onwards in London.

The Pianola Piano itself was not sold under that name until 1904, if one is to believe Edwin S. Votey's notes, which are very specific on this point, even giving the detail that the first such pianos produced were Webers. However, it does appear that Aeolian was selling interior players from at least 1902, perhaps not according them the later title. The Grand Pianola Piano was first marketed in 1909, although there are several Aeolian patents assigned by Edwin S. Votey from 1904 onwards. Also in 1909 the 88-note system was introduced into Aeolian instruments, the new 88-note Pianolas going on sale for $450, and the 88-note Weber Grand Pianola Pianos for $1875.

After an agreement made on 9 March 1909 between Charles H. Steinway and Edward R. Perkins, the first Steinway Pianola Pianos came publicly on to the market in 1910, and in return for the kudos of being associated with the Steinway name, Aeolian had to drop its use of the Weber as the premier piano of its range. By September 1912, two weeks before the Company moved to its new Aeolian Hall on 42nd Street, the Steck 6 ft grand Pianola Piano was $1,350, the Weber 5 ft 10 ins $1,800, and the Steinway 6 ft 5 ins (an enlarged Steinway 'O') a cracking $2,000.

To take a good five years to develop the Grand Pianola Piano is not fast, and a similar observation could be made about the nine years by which the Aeolian Company's reproducing piano, the Duo-Art, lagged behind the German Welte-Mignon system, introduced in 1905. A tacit acknowledgement of this apparent tardiness was made in an Aeolian advertisement in the New York Times in January 1909, which is worth quoting in full:

‘During the past year important advances have been made in the development of the Pianola. Some of the recent improvements represent years of effort and the expenditure of large capital. It is a cardinal principle of The Aeolian Company not to offer a new invention until we have fully tested it and believe we have arrived at the best solution of a particular problem. In other words we prefer to do our experimenting at our own expense rather than that of our patrons.’
Cynics might argue that Aeolian was hiding inefficiency under the cloak of wisdom, but Harry B. Tremaine might well have reflected on the cracked rubbercloth that led to the downfall of the Munroe Organ Reed Company, or on the various roll-operated pianos that had antedated the Pianola, but which by virtue of its far greater reliability and subtlety it outsold in its hundreds of thousands.

Synchronised Pianos and Phonographs - The Elusive Art of the Duo

Once Edwin S. Votey had developed the Aeolian Pipe Organ, the Pianola, the Pianola Piano and the Grand Pianola Piano, which were his especial instrumental interests, he set out on what he, or perhaps Harry B. Tremaine, regarded as the Holy Grail of contemporary automatic music technology, the synchronisation of Pianola and phonograph. Given clever pianists, it was in any case possible to accompany a phonograph record, and indeed the public Pianola recitals at Aeolian Hall occasionally paired the Victrola and the Pianola, since Aeolian was a major dealer for the Victrola in the days before it brought its own phonograph on to the market. However, Edwin S. Votey wanted automatic synchronisation that could be achieved without the exertion of too much brain power, and he and many of Aeolian's top inventors tried their hardest to solve the problem.

James Crooks, Joseph Dickinson, George Kelly, Philip Meahl and Votey himself all attempted unsuccessfully to produce an instrument that would play piano and orchestra, piano and voice, piano and violin, with the ultimate fidelity of a real Pianola Piano in the days when horn gramophones painted a pale imitation of the keyboard. Unfortunately none of the designs succeeded well enough for the company to put them on sale, even though much ingenuity had been expended, one man even putting a shellac soundtrack down the side of a roll.

Perhaps this concentration on the unattainable was the real reason the Duo-Art reproducing piano was so long in the making, and certainly Edwin S. Votey's Duo-Art recording piano patent included a device whereby the pianist could listen to a phonograph record as he played. In some respects this technical byway is out of place in our commercial historical survey, but it perhaps explains the gap of five years between the introduction of the Grand Pianola Piano, and the Aeolian Company's next two innovative instruments, the Duo-Art Pianola Piano and the Aeolian-Vocalion phonograph, for which we have to look ahead to 1914 and 1915 respectively.

Expansion and the New Aeolian Hall of 1912

The replacement in 1910 of the 65-note Chilton Aeriola Piano by the Technola Piano was mirrored in early 1911 by the loudly-trumpeted launch of the Stroud Piano in place of the standard Chilton upright. In practical terms,
all Aeolian had done was to change the name of its lowest-priced piano, and to increase the price from $210 to $250, but the ensuing marketing campaign was assiduously carried out, with testimonials from Christian Sinding, Moriz Rosenthal, Artur Nikisch and Louis Diémer. Of course, it may well be that the quality of the renamed upright had been improved, and the advertisement heralding ‘Stroud Week’ at Aeolian Hall in late March 1911 made great play of the advantages of scale accruing from Aeolian’s predominance in the music trade.

In an advertisement in the New York Times in January 1909, the Aeolian Company copywriter mentioned the five piano manufacturing houses that had their headquarters at Aeolian Hall, namely the Weber, Steck, Wheelock, Stuyvesant and Chilton Piano Companies, to list them in order of price. The Aeolian Company itself was referred to at the foot of the advertisement as ‘The Largest Institution in the Musical Industry of the World’, and this epithet evidently struck a chord with the management, because by 1911 the phrase ‘The Largest Manufacturers of Musical Instruments in the World’ had become a regular feature.

In March 1911 the AC listed its products as:

The Steinway Pianola Piano
The Weber Pianola Piano
The Steck Pianola Piano
The Wheelock Pianola Piano
The Stuyvesant Pianola Piano
The Technola Piano
The Famous Pianola
The Weber Piano
The Steck Piano
The Wheelock Piano
The Stuyvesant Piano
The Stroud Piano
The Aeolian Orchestrelle
The Aeolian Pipe Organ

Such a sizeable organisation, and especially one that was using its own relative importance as a shrewd marketing tool, needed a change of location and style to match both the new decade and the inexorable uptown progress of Manhattan’s fashionable shopping areas. Although in 1911 Aeolian’s lease at 362, Fifth Avenue still had fifteen years to run, the decision was taken to move to a site on West 42nd Street, near Times Square.

Frederick Bourne, the AWPPC’s major capitalist, accordingly purchased the West Presbyterian Church property at 29-33 West 42nd Street, between Fifth and Sixth Avenues, for $1,150,000. The church had been erected in 1865, its
authorities having acquired the site two years earlier for $28,000, at a time when much of Manhattan's common land was being sold off. The plot had a frontage of 78 feet on 42nd Street, and extended through to 43rd Street, 200 feet deep, where it also had a frontage of some 43 feet. Latterly the congregation had dwindled, owing to the gradual residential drift uptown, so although application had to be made to the court regarding the use of a religious site for business purposes, approval was simply a matter of form. An
Aeolian Hall Company was duly set up, and demolition and building work commenced in June 1911. The new Aeolian Hall was to be seventeen storeys high, and would cost approximately $1,000,000 to construct.

The building was opened on Sunday 13 October 1912, and the Aeolian Company's commercial business recommenced at 8.30 am the next day, a fleet of trucks having operated round the clock, after the close of business at 6.00 pm on Saturday night, to move all the instruments, rolls and office equipment from 362 Fifth Avenue up the intervening eight blocks. The New York Times article noting the new premises is sufficiently detailed and interesting to be worth reproducing in full:

‘The formal opening of the new Aeolian Hall Building, in Forty-second Street, facing Bryant Park and the Public Library, will take place to-day. The Aeolian Company began moving last night from the old hall at 362 Fifth Avenue, near Thirty-fourth Street. The new home, a seventeen-story structure of attractive design by the architects Warren and Watmore, enjoys an unusual location, and is a marked architectural ornament to the Fifth Avenue section of Forty-second Street. It covers the site [sic] of the old West Presbyterian Church, and runs through the block to Forty-third Street. In order to provide for the three basements the foundation was put down through fifty-two feet of the hardest flint rock. A remarkable point in the actual erection of the building was accomplished when eight four-story columns weighing nineteen tons apiece were put in place, and attached to four sets of girders each weighing seventy-six tons and having a span of seventy-eight feet. This is by a few feet the largest span of girders to be found in any building in the world having a superstructure.

‘Before beginning work on the plans it was necessary to have the architectural note of the surroundings thoroughly in mind. The Public Library stands nearby. Directly opposite, overlooking Bryant Park and the paved terraces of the library, is the Engineers’ Building. A distinctive structure was designed, and yet one in harmony with its surroundings.

‘From a musician’s point of view, probably the most unusual feature of the building is the organ. The biggest pipe is 32 feet long, while the smallest measures just half an inch. There are 5,079 pipes in the organ. In the centre of the auditorium ceiling there is a screened opening which to the casual observer seems rather like an ordinary ventilator. This is the outlet to the echo room, a space of about twenty feet square, situated directly above the ceiling of the concert hall. In this echo room there is another complete organ, an auxiliary, to use an engineering phrase, to the main organ. This second organ, as well as the large instrument, has an attachment of harp and chime notes. The purpose of such an echo organ, installed in an echo room far from the main instrument, is to allow the performer, by throwing a switch, to produce the effect of a distant echo in the music.

‘While an architect would describe the general style of the building as chastened Louis XVI, at the thirteenth story four Corinthian columns serve to modify the appearance of plainness as well as helping to harmonise the outline with the Engineers' Building directly opposite. Also at the fourth floor level there is a carved frieze of bas-reliefs, representing various musical symbols. ‘Apollo’, one of the two bronze busts
which occupy the niches over both main entrances, was executed by Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, while the other, a figure Calliope is by Saliere, who lately took the second Grand Prix de Rome.

‘From the Forty-second Street side of the building one enters the main showroom. To the artist the most noticeable thing in the building is the double-flair marble stairway, recalling somewhat the famous horseshoe stairs at Fontainebleau.

‘On the fourth floor is a clubroom for the use of musicians and their friends. When the purchase of the ground was contemplated, it was almost impossible to reach any close appraisal of its value, as there had been few sales of real estate throughout the section in over thirty years. While many appraisals were over $1,350,000, and others under $500,000, the price finally agreed upon was $1,150,000. Quickly following this sale came rumors of projected uptown locations in the section of several old department stores long identified with the downtown shopping district. And, as a result of this sudden activity, this land is now appraised at figures running from $1,350,000 to $1,600,000.’

**Concert Performances and Acoustics**

The Aeolian Company did not occupy the entire building by any means, and much of it was rented out over the course of the following two years. Concerts began in the 1,800-seater auditorium on the afternoon of Saturday 2 November 1912, with a piano recital by Gottfried Galston. It is ironic for reproducing piano enthusiasts that Mr Galston was a Hupfeld rather than an Aeolian artist, but it was the Aeolian Company’s policy to make the hall freely available to all, and just as in London, Aeolian Hall concert programmes frequently carried advertisements for rival manufacturers.

During the rest of November there was a variety of orchestral concerts, chamber music and solo recitals, including Fritz Kreisler, John Thompson, Reinald Werrenrath, the Kneisel Quartet, and the medium-sized New York Symphony Orchestra under Walter Damrosch, which made its permanent home in the new Aeolian Hall. The first work played by the NYSO was Beethoven’s *Leonore no 3* Overture, though *The Consecration of the House* might have been more appropriate! Also featured in the concert were the English soprano, Maggie Teyte, and the first American performance of Ravel’s *Mother Goose* Suite.

Reaction to the acoustic of the concert hall was generally good. The New York Times critic reacted to the NYSO concert with enthusiasm, and was quite complimentary about the clarity of sound:

‘The new hall seemed well adapted to orchestral music, even played by an orchestra the size of Mr. Damrosch’s. The tone of the orchestra seemed, of course, powerful in an audience room of such a size. It had a big and round quality that was of itself satisfying. In forte passages there seemed some lack of continuing, vibrating resonance that gave the tone a slight quality of dryness, but there is little cause for complaint in this hall of tonal quality that is produced as good tonal quality originally. The various instrumental
voices, while they fuse sufficiently, are clearly distinguishable. The whole effect of this will be merciless toward any weakness or misfortune in the way of scraping or harshness. Nothing of this sort will be mellowed or concealed.¹

In many ways the move to 42nd Street saw the Aeolian Company at the very summit of its commercial and musical achievement. Around the world its business was expanding, with no real hint of the disaster that would eventually be brought about by the delayed aftermath of the First World War and the development of the radio. Almost as a celebration of American pre-war technology, it set about introducing two of its most lasting achievements. While the Pianola itself was so intensely successful that it virtually added a new word to Webster's Dictionary, the instruments whose musical effects are still to be found on CDs in 1999 were the Aeolian-Vocalion Phonograph and the Duo-Art Pianola Piano, both introduced to the world in a white-heat of Aeolian achievement, in that brief period between the move to 42nd Street and the commencement in earnest of war in the trenches.

The Public Flotation of the Orchestrelle Company Limited

Also in 1912, English law forced the Aeolian Company to reorganise its British, European and Empire subsidiary, turning what had been a private company registered in New Jersey into a publicly accountable and quoted stock company registered in London. Owners of businesses taken over by the Company were given preference shares in part exchange, and an air of respectability was engendered by the inclusion of two members of the British nobility on the board. Sir Richard Williams-Bulkeley, Lord Lieutenant of Anglesey, was appointed as Chairman, and Sir William Younger, a Scottish brewery magnate, was also included.

Eventually the Company changed its name to the Aeolian Company, Ltd, although for a while it was using the latter name as a trading subsidiary. The Orchestrelle Company in 1912 owned the Choralion Company of Berlin, the Steck Piano Company of Gotha, the Universal Music Company of Hayes, the Aeolian Company, and a couple of provincial music houses that had been turned into Aeolian branches.

Pianola Recitals and Testimonials

Having built itself a first-rate New York concert hall, the Aeolian Company decided to put it to occasional advertising use, and Pianola and Aeolian Pipe Organ recitals were held fortnightly, or even weekly during busy seasons. Gerard Chatfield took part as the expert Pianolist, and Dion W. Kennedy either played or operated the organ. Singers, violinists, and the Victrola were all treated to the Pianola's accompaniment.

It is testimony to the fact that the Pianola piano-player had all but
disappeared from Aeolian showrooms, that from 1913 onwards the Company referred to its former Pianola Pianos simply as Pianolas. On the concert programmes for the various 1913 Pianola recitals, it was stated that the Weber Pianola was used, whereas in 1912 the distinction between piano-player and player-piano would still have been made. In Europe, however, pianos with the Pianola mechanism inside were still referred to as Pianola Pianos right through the 1920s.

While the final touches were being put to the Steinway pianos that introduced the Duo-Art to the world, a bold advertising campaign was needed to ensure that Christmas 1913 would be as successful as the previous year. By luck, Paderewski was due to give two recitals at Carnegie Hall on 14 and 29 November, and the Aeolian publicity department capitalised on his visit with full page advertisements in the newspapers, reproducing the actual pages of his latest handwritten testimonial in full:

Nov. 8th 1913

The Aeolian Company
Aeolian Hall
New York City

Gentlemen,

It is several years since the Pianola was
brought to my attention, and having been, if I am
not mistaken, the first to endorse this important
invention, I have since watched its development with
the utmost interest.

From the first the wonderful possibilities
of a piano technique immediately available to every-
one, which should yet be under the control of the per-
former, appeared to me as the means to make music
an accessible Art, - just as accessible to the great
public, as literature, sculpture, and painting.

Your first Pianolas, one of which I
myself own, contained this possibility in embryo, &
it has remained for you, with gradual development
during intervening years, to realize it. Your success
with the Pianola is therefore well deserved, and
I view the growth of your popularity, both in
America, and in Europe, with satisfaction, as
verification of my early opinion as to the
future of the Pianola.

I cannot conceive of any reason why the
Pianola should not be in every home. As a
pianoforte, when the keyboard is used, it leaves
nothing to be desired, while for acquiring a broad
musical education, for the development of the
understanding of good music, which modern culture
demands, it is undoubtedly the most perfect, and
really great medium.

There have appeared in recent years
a great many mechanical devices for piano-
playing. I have heard several of them and, though
not denying their certain qualities, I have to
maintain my former opinion:- The Pianola is
still the best, unsurpassable, supreme.

Most cordially yours

I.J. Paderewski

By November 1913 it would have been possible to have heard Paderewski’s
actual playing on the Welte-Mignon for a good six years in New York, and yet
compared to Aeolian’s breathtaking full-page advertisements, Welte’s smaller
and duller announcements fail to catch the eye. Small wonder that the
Aeolian Company achieved such magnificent sales figures.

It really was the year of testimonials, one advertisement carrying no less
than fourteen of them, from Paderewski to Puccini, from Sauer to Sousa. But
perhaps the best recommendation of all came from the German composer
and enthusiastic Pianola owner, Engelbert Humperdinck, who in writing on
27 November to the Choralion Company in Berlin, asked for a supply of music
rolls for his children, including Beethoven’s Fourth and Fifth symphonies, and
Brahms’ Third. A testimonial that is paid for with goods rather than a discreet
cheque has a very shrewd advertising executive behind it!

**The Zenith of Invention - The Duo-Art Pianola and Aeolian-Vocalion**

By 1913 the Aeolian Company was primarily a manufacturer of pianos, with
at least five, and possibly six factories devoted to them throughout the world.
In retrospect, it is clear that the reproducing piano, the piano that
reproduced the actual playing of well-known pianists, was the most complex
and challenging achievement of the pianomaker’s art. The Duo-Art Pianola
Piano was the Aeolian Company’s reproducing piano, and as such it
represented a high point in the Company’s history.

In Edwin S. Votey’s notes, there is one roughly written and intriguing entry
against the year 1913 - ‘Duo-Art’. But one can look high and low to find any
public mention of the instrument before March 1914, even though the 1919
*Piano Dealer’s Guide* boldly states that it was introduced to the public in the
autumn of the earlier year. In fact, the first public appearance of the Duo-Art
Pianola Piano occurred at 3.00 pm Eastern Standard Time on Monday 2 March 1914 in the Steinway Salons at Aeolian Hall on West 42nd Street in Manhattan. An Aeolian advertisement in the New York Times the previous day is quite specific on this point, and it is confirmed in a further advertisement later in the month which states that:

‘Although it was announced to the public and placed on sale only a few weeks ago, it is already recognised as the greatest achievement in the history of the piano industry.’
At the very outset the Duo-Art was available only in the Steinway upright version, but Steinway grands, and Weber grands and uprights were added to the range later in the year. Pinning down the inventors of the Duo-Art is a difficult process, because there seems to be no patent for the complete instrument. Individual mechanisms from its dynamic control system, such as the accordion pneumatic and the double-ended knife valve, appear in Aeolian Company patents from as early as May 1906, and of course it used a modified version of the Themodist device that can be traced back to 1900. All one can say with any certainty is that Aeolian’s factory superintendents and experimental department staff were undoubtedly involved, and these included Joseph H. Dickinson, Philip J. Meahl and Robert W. Pain, probably supervised by Edwin S. Votey.

A recording studio was set up at Aeolian Hall, supervised by A.F. Lachmund and W. Creary Woods, and within two years there was a range of some 200 Duo-Art rolls available. Whereas up to 1914 the publicity recitals in the concert hall had featured the Pianola, from 1915 onwards these were to some degree supplanted by Duo-Art ‘Musicales’, by which expression Aeolian meant informal concerts with occasional dancers and singers. One notable early

Camille Saint-Saens recording a Duo-Art roll in 1915.
prize amongst Duo-Art recording pianists was Camille Saint-Saëns, who at the age of eighty called in on his way to California, where he was to be the French Government's representative at the San Francisco Exposition.

And so we come to the Vocalion, a reed organ designed by Baillie Hamilton from Hampshire in England, and manufactured in Worcester, Mass., from the 1880s onwards. This instrument was still being advertised by the Aeolian Company as a church organ in January 1909. In January 1915, however, it had become a phonograph, so sometime during the intervening six years its manufacture as a reed organ must quietly have ceased. Thanks to an imaginative advertisement in the American press, its invention and development in its second incarnation were well documented. It seems sensible on this occasion to let the Aeolian Company speak for itself, and the following narrative is taken entirely from an Aeolian advertisement published in the New York Times on Sunday 17 January 1915:

The Interesting Story of the Aeolian-Vocalion

'The Aeolian-Vocalion is a new musical instrument of the phonograph type. Its greatest feature, the vital feature of any musical instrument, is its tone - the hitherto unapproached fidelity with which it reproduces the distinctive quality of every voice and instrument. But, in addition, the Aeolian-Vocalion possesses another feature of revolutionary character - one that adds immeasurably to the value of the instrument by putting its extraordinary tone under the direct personal control of its owner. This immensely important and absolutely unique accomplishment in connection with the phonograph, is the result of a single, brilliant invention, the story of which is so fraught with human interest that its brief relation is justified.

The Birth of a Great Invention

'As the largest manufacturers of musical instruments in the world and originators of many of the most notable innovations in the music industry, The Aeolian Company has had a wide experience with inventions and inventors. The open-minded policy of this house, its dissatisfaction with ends achieved and constant striving for better and still better results, and its courteous and equitable treatment of all with whom it deals, are proverbial in the music trade. This attitude brings to it practically all who have inventions of value in connection with the art of music, and is largely responsible for its position in the forefront of musical development.

'Of temporary discomfort to himself, however, was the fact that The Aeolian Company was but little known to an inventor from Australia who arrived in London, England, late in the summer of 1912 with a phonograph containing a revolutionary invention.

'This man had purchased a phonograph of leading make for his home in Australia several years before. He was intensely musical, however, and from the first his
instrument had failed to satisfy him. Wonderful and interesting as it was he felt keenly its inability to reproduce certain of the finer and more subtle musical effects. But most of all it left him nothing to do. Even had its playing been absolutely perfect, it was always the same, and the intense desire that he felt to exercise his interpretative instinct by introducing the slight modifications needed to give the records new meaning and interest, remained unsatisfied. It was a marvelous mechanical instrument, but still only mechanical.

‘Fortunately, however, this man possessed rare inventive genius. Instead of finally discarding his phonograph or resting content with its limitations, he devoted himself to overcoming them. He sought a means by which the wonderful records of the world’s master artists could be heard again and again without monotony - a means for introducing the subtle and changing shades of expression with which the musician himself varies each performance.

‘To make a long story short, his efforts met with signal success, and after securing letters patent on his invention he sailed for London, confident that he need but show it to the manufacturers of phonographs to arouse their enthusiasm and secure its immediate adoption.

F. J. Empson showing his new gramophone to the Aeolian Company in London.

The Inventor Finds Recognition

‘In London, however, he met with an experience unfortunately not unusual for an inventor. He found so much difficulty in getting a satisfactory hearing from phonograph manufacturers that, finally becoming discouraged, he made his arrangements to return home, and had he not just at this period met a friend who gave him good advice, the wonderful results of his labors would have been lost to the world, temporarily at least.
'This friend was well acquainted with the management of The Aeolian Company in London, and strongly urged that before giving up he submit his invention to this house. Unable to assure him of its adoption, he was at least able to promise a courteous reception and careful consideration of what he had to offer.

'That he not only received courteous and intelligent consideration, but that the immense value of his invention was recognised by people ever awake to improvement is shown in the following cablegrams, destined to be of such extraordinary importance to music lovers, that passed between the President of The Aeolian Company and the manager of its London house a little over two years ago.

*Tremaine, New York

Have been offered exclusive rights for very remarkable talking machine, different from and superior to any machine have ever seen. Propose sending inventor to America to submit his instrument for your approval.

(Signed) Mason, London

*Mason, London

As we are not at present considering manufacturing talking machines, do not see how instrument can interest us. If you think it sufficiently exceptional to send under circumstances, do so, but secure option on invention before inventor sails.

(Signed) Tremaine, New York

*Tremaine, New York

Inventor with machine sailing Saturday. Mauretania.

(Signed) Mason, London

'On the following Saturday, Mr. F.J. Empson, the inventor, arrived in New York. He was met at the pier by representatives of The Aeolian Company and an audience arranged with the officials of the Company for the following Tuesday.

'It was a highly interested and expectant gathering that met in the Directors’ Room at Aeolian Hall at the appointed time.

'The skepticism born of wide experience was tempered by a knowledge of the conservatism of the London officials. Mr. Mason’s cablegram had expressed unusual enthusiasm and the inventor faced a sympathetic, though highly critical audience as he began to play his phonograph.

'That afternoon will never be forgotten at Aeolian Hall. As the different department heads left the room after Empson had finished, each one realised that a new epoch had dawned for the phonograph - that in this wonderful invention was the feature that the phonograph had hitherto so greatly needed.
A New and Better Phonograph

‘Were the patents sound - were they fundamental? These were the important questions. The Aeolian Company was thoroughly familiar with the phonograph - had already experimented with an idea of finding means for improving its tone, and knew what it could accomplish should it be decided to enter the field.

‘When Mr. Empson’s patents were found basic the matter was settled. The Aeolian Company took up its option, the inventor, gratified beyond measure at the recognition his genius had received and at his treatment, sailed for home, and the great organization, recognised as the most powerful force in the music world, set itself seriously to the task of making a new and better phonograph.

‘This was more than two years ago. The rest is another story in itself. No man and no body of men in the world were so well equipped for the task of improving the phonograph as the men constituting the expert staff of The Aeolian Company. Not only artists and musicians of exceptional capabilities, but scientific, mechanical engineers comprise this staff. While in addition, the greatest authority on sound alive to-day, is a permanent consultant, and the most perfectly equipped laboratory in existence for photographing and analysing sound-waves, is at this company’s command.

‘The result of The Aeolian Company’s entrance into the field of phonograph manufacture might readily have been foreseen. In The Aeolian-Vocalion, its new phonograph, recently announced, this Company has produced an instrument that is not only fully up to the high standard of its other celebrated products, but one that is unquestionably the most perfect as well as most interesting phonograph the world has ever seen.’

Odds and Ends

Of course, the intimate detail of eighty-seven years ago is fascinating, and provides some real insights into the ways in which the Aeolian Company operated. But in retrospect it is a little amusing to reflect that all the copywriter’s purple prose is in essence simply describing a volume control. F.J. Empson’s invention, which Aeolian named the ‘Graduola’, was an application of the principle of an organ swell shutter mechanism to a cabinet phonograph. The operator (who, if Aeolian had been consistent, should have been called a Vocalist) simply squeezed a plunger connected to a Bowden cable, very much like the remote camera shutter mechanism of the day.

F.J. Empson assigned only one other patent, for a phonograph tone arm, to the Aeolian Company, but the fourth volume of the Company’s own patent collection, which begins with Edwin S. Votey’s Duo-Art recording piano, dated 21 October 1913, contains no less than 72 phonograph patents. The Company was clearly very busy in this area throughout the teens and early twenties.

One other instrument was introduced at about the same time as the Duo-Art, namely the electrically equipped Pianola Piano. This was not generally available outside North America, and although it could with practice be
controlled with some subtlety, the main thrust of its advertising was for
dancing or relaxation without the exertion of too much mental effort. A series
of rolls known as Metro-Art, to some extent in parallel with the Duo-Art, but
antedating it by a couple of years, could be used with the electric Pianola
Piano to allow it to play dance music quite automatically.

The Iron Fist in the Velvet Glove - H.B. Tremaine's Management Style

We have now reached 1915, the point where this first part of Aeolian's
history comes to a natural break. Throughout all the discussion of
instruments, musicians, inventors, patents, factories and advertisements, the
shadowy figure of Harry B. Tremaine lingers in the background. By rights any
discussion of his character should come in the later part of this treatise that
deals with Aeolian personnel. But in looking retrospectively over this initial
period of about forty years, he is the one person who predominates. Edwin S.
Votey's chief memorial is his portfolio of inventions; if his gravestone were to
be annotated like that of John McTammany, one might carve out 'Edwin Scott
Votey - Inventor of the Pianola', and the world would understand him. But in
Greenwood Cemetery in Brooklyn, where Harry B. Tremaine was laid to rest
after his heart attack in May 1932, what brief phrase could be inscribed that
would encapsulate his achievement?

Tremaine was an intense man, a calculating man, a man who saw his own
father's career go forward by fits and starts. There are occasional glimpses of
raw power, such as when in 1924 he fired Alfred J. Mason in London and gave
him half an hour to leave the desk he had occupied for twenty-five years. But
he took both Edwin H. Votey and his own niece with him on that trip, which
suggests that he didn't relish his unpleasant duty.

Alfred Dolge fuels the mystery in his first volume of *Pianos and Their Makers*:

'A pioneer of the most forceful, aggressive type, he is withal of a gentlemanly and
most retiring disposition, shunning publicity to an unwarranted degree.'

At his home in Stoneleigh Park in Westfield, NJ, he was a quiet, affluent
family man whom all the local children respectfully called 'Uncle', an expert
tennis player, a cultured man with an interest in art and music. He married
Maude Cooke and had three children, Henry, Dorothy and Ruth. His grave is
next to his wife's parents, but his wife is not there. And for some reason his
two daughters are buried with their uncle in Westfield, and not with either
their husbands or their father. Why?

He had a country estate in Camden, South Carolina. He travelled the world
widely and frequently. He was an Episcopalian. Family lore suggests that his
intense commitment to the Aeolian Company caused his health to break
down. He remains an enigma.
There is one very personal letter sent by Harry B. Tremaine at the age of 41 to his cousin, Charles M. Tremaine, and dated March 1908, at a time when the latter was Vice-President of the AWPPC, Chairman of the Executive Committee, and head of the sales department. It seems to deal with the slight thwarting of Charles M. Tremaine’s Aeolian ambitions, and the way in which other players in the Aeolian hierarchy are referred to by surname or Christian name speaks louder than any newspaper article or Aeolian advertisement in defining the dynamic of the relationships between the various directors and staff of the AWPPC and its subsidiaries.

The characters in order of appearance are:

Mr. Perkins – Edward R. Perkins, Vice-President and General Manager of the AWPPC.

Arthur – Probably Arthur T. Chester, of the Aeolian Experimental Department. Harry B. Tremaine’s aunt had married Colby M. Chester, so it seems likely that Arthur was family.

Votey – Edwin S. Votey, inventor of the Pianola, etc.

Bob Pain – Robert S. Pain, doyen of the Aeolian Experimental Department.

Mr. Curtis – Atherton Curtis, Vice-President of the AWPPC, who had lived in Paris since 1904.


Mason – Alfred J. Mason jr, a director of the AWPPC, and Manager of the Orchestrelle Company, London.

Mr. Maxwell – Robert Maxwell, a major shareholder and director of the AWPPC.

Mr Bourne – Frederick G. Bourne, the AWPPC’s major source of capital. A director and by far the largest shareholder in the Company.
Dear Milton:

As you will see from the above heading, I am at Camden. I came last Thursday. I had hoped to stick it through in New York, but finally had to give it up and go away. I went into town Monday after you left, and stayed until Wednesday, getting very tired, after I got back to Westfield I had a severe attack of indigestion, and following that an attack of tonsilitis that kept me in bed for two days. It is only since coming here that I have realized how tired I have been getting and how necessary this rest and change of air.

Before leaving, I had a talk with Mr. Perkins, also with Arthur. I was much interested in what Arthur said, and very much impressed. He suggested writing me in detail, setting forth his ideas. I told him to go ahead and do so. I haven't yet received this letter, but the day after I got here I received a long letter from Votey, saying that Arthur had been to Bob Pain, trying to get Bob to write me that Votey had taken his, Pain's, ideas, and patented them in his name, that he, Arthur, had written me such a letter regarding Votey's taking his ideas, and patenting them in his name, without giving Arthur credit.

By a singular coincidence, Arthur's letter has just this minute been handed to me. I will stop and read it. It seems hardly possible that Arthur could have been so inconceivably foolish as to go to Pain and say what Pain says he did, and yet I fear he did, as he touched upon that matter in his talk with me.
I have read Arthur’s letter, and am disappointed by its contents, but pleased, in a measure, by the keen interest it betokens. I will talk over this matter with you when I see you.

I received the letter you wrote me from Cuba, just before I came away, and I note what you say regarding the organization, or rather the reorganization, and the difficulties this subject presents. I have had this matter almost constantly in my mind ever since Mr. Curtis began to correspond with me about it, way back the latter part of last summer. In fact, long before that I had it in mind in a general way, and the first step to bring it about was taken when I put you in charge of the entire selling department, which, as Wheelock said at the time, was putting you practically in entire charge of the American business.

Since my last talk with you I have decided that taking everything into consideration, it will for many reasons be unwise to make the changes that I have decided upon, before I go abroad, and that it will be for the best interests of the business and all concerned to wait until my return in September, and let the reorganization take effect at the time of the annual meeting.

Aside from any personal feeling of disappointment, which it is not unnatural that you should feel in having your promotion deferred, you must agree with me, that in view of all the existing circumstances, it is the thing to do.

In the first place, you must bear in mind that my period of absence from the business this time I plan to make a comparatively short one, returning to New York early in September, and thus being absent only four months. Then again, I will not on this occasion be out of touch with the business, but can be reached at any time, either by letter or cable.

My reasons for not putting you in complete charge now, as I had planned, are briefly these - In the first place, there is no doubt whatever in my mind that Will would resign. He told Mason last fall he would do so if you were given any more authority and has plainly intimated the same to me in the talks I have had with him. You will doubtless say we are only putting off the time of his resignation by delaying action, but this is just what I desire to do.

I deem it absolutely necessary for the interests of the business that I should go to Europe at the time I had planned, and take the Nauheim treatment once more, and incidentally see Mr. Curtis. It is of vital importance that I should have sufficient strength to enable me to devote considerable time to the business during the coming fiscal year. It would be impossible for me to leave should Will resign, even were he willing to remain and perform his duties temporarily, for it is well to bear in mind that your position will be a difficult one, even under the most favorable circumstances, and you will need the hearty support of everyone once you assumed more authority.

As you say in your letter, you cannot afford to fail, and as you also say, ‘I cannot afford to have you.’ If I am here at the time the change is made and thereafter until
such time as everyone accepts the new conditions, and things are working smoothly, I believe the change will prove a successful one.

You said in a conversation with me, you felt confident Will would not stand in the way of your bettering your position in the Company. It is true that he probably would not openly oppose it, but what he would do would be to resign on the grounds that he was not in sympathy with the manner in which the business was being conducted. Were Will the only one who disapproved of your promotion to more authority, the situation would be less difficult, but the action would have to be taken without the support or approval of either Mr. Votey or Mr. Perkins. This is not a matter of surmise, but I know exactly how both of these men feel on the subject.

Should I put you in charge they will accept the new conditions, thus brought about, as they do any other act of mine, but they would consider that I had made a mistake and their support and assistance would necessarily be half-hearted, and perfunctory.

Again, if the principal stockholders were convinced that you were the man to occupy this position, and were entirely qualified to do so, the problem would be much simplified, but these men accept you on my say-so, and while, as I have told you, I am perfectly willing to stand back of you and be responsible for anything you may do, I do not feel that I have the strength at this time to force the issue and to meet and overcome the objections, and to adjust conditions so that you will be left in a position where you can do yourself and the business justice.

And this brings me to the consideration that has chiefly influenced me in making the decision that I have and that is the present condition of my health.

There are a great many things for us to do before I sail, and the business I have done this winter with its attendant anxieties, has brought me to a condition where I feel the necessity of husbanding my strength with the utmost care.

The attempt to place you in the position we have in mind would require an amount of force I feel I have no right to expend at this time.

What, you will ask, is the alternative? It is this:- You will go on and manage the business, its practical, if not its nominal head. I can and will secure for you the support of both Mr. Perkins and Mr. Votey, and in a large measure both that of Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Bourne. The authority already vested in you by virtue of your position of Vice-President and Chairman of the Executive Committee, as well as absolute head of the selling department, is very comprehensive and far-reaching.

There should be fewer meetings of the Executive Committee, and you should go ahead and act on your own initiative, without the authority of, or consultation with this body, except in instances where you wish the Committee's advice or aid. Cases of this kind should be few in number, as in my opinion, it would be better in every way to consult the members individually, rather than in their capacity as members of the Committee.

Before I leave, we will have a complete understanding regarding the general policies to be followed during my absence. If it is deemed advisable at any time to
change these, it will always be possible to communicate with and obtain an expression from me in a very short time.

I know that no one connected with the business is more anxious than you that I should regain my health. You can assist me materially at this time by accepting my decision in the spirit in which it is made, and taking hold of our many problems with that vigor and singleness of purpose that has made your service to the Company so valuable in the past.

Regarding the matter of Will and the action of the directors in the matter of salaries, over which there was a disagreement, I will now be in a position where I can be much more insistent with him and I shall take this matter up again upon my return home.

Yours sincerely
H.B. Tremaine

Coda

The man who jumps out from these pages is a manipulator of men, but probably an honest one, dealing with a younger, close relative with tact and kindness, but making decisions very firmly indeed where necessary. In view of the references to William Wheelock as ‘Will’, it is perhaps surprising that Edwin Votey is not similarly known as ‘Edwin’, or more especially that Edward Perkins, who was a neighbour of both the Tremaine cousins in Stoneleigh Park should have been referred to by his surname. But it is as well to remember that we are looking at business practice of ninety or more years ago.

The power structure at the top of the Aeolian empire is fascinating. There is a balance between the major stockholders, Bourne and Maxwell, and the main executives, Perkins, Votey and Wheelock, with Atherton Curtis apparently acting as a long-term confidant and advisor. The idea that Edwin S. Votey might have been borrowing other people's ideas for his own patents also has a tiny ring of truth about it, but borders on the realms of speculation.

The Nauheim treatment presumably refers to a spa in Germany, where there are two Nauheims, one near the Rhine about halfway between Mainz and Darmstadt, and a smaller one about fifty kilometers to the north-west, near Limburg an der Lahn. What is remarkable is that the President of such an important corporation should regard an absence of four months as a comparatively short period. Perhaps in some years he visited the Aeolian establishments overseas, but there is every indication that in 1908 he was travelling to Europe primarily to recuperate his health.

Whatever the President's personal arrangements were, it is clear that he was a commercial genius, every bit as talented in his own specialty as Edwin S.
Votey was in his. By 1915 the Aeolian Company was at the very peak of its existence; the Duo-Art was about to flourish, the Vocalion likewise, the alliance with Steinways was secure, and there was still the explosion of popular music to come in the 1920s. In the early 1890s the Aeolian Organ and Music Company had been struggling along with small-scale instruments, and small-scale profits, but the commercial acumen of Harry B. Tremaine, the technical wizardry of Edwin S. Votey, and the massive capital backing of Frederick G. Bourne turned a provincial Connecticut business into an international corporation, which could truly call itself ‘The Largest Manufacturers of Musical Instruments in the World’.
Vladimir de Pachmann – an Appreciation by Samuel Langford

Introduction by Denis Hall

The great Russian pianist, Vladimir de Pachmann, was born 150 years ago on 27 July 1848. It is curious that this important anniversary has gone virtually ignored. To what can this be attributed? That he was eccentric is indisputable, and his approach to music and the piano is not currently fashionable. Yet he had a long and successful career, and was admired by Liszt, Godowsky and Friedman. It was probably his non-musical activities – the obsessional adjusting of the height of the piano stool on stage, his conversations with the audience while playing, and so on – which divided the musical public. There seems little doubt that he was well aware of what he was doing, and thoroughly enjoyed the publicity it brought him; what is important is that none of these foibles got in the way of his playing; but they were all part and parcel of a unique personality.

His recording career, extensive for such an early artist, stretched from the Welte piano rolls of 1906, through his first discs in 1907 to his last in 1927, interspersed with Duo-Art piano rolls in the early twenties, and further recordings for Welte in America in 1925. There is, therefore, the opportunity to hear him from the time he was a mature artist of 58 until his last efforts when he was an old man of nearly 80, ill with cancer. The late Harry Anderson heard him three times in America and regrets that neither his rolls nor his discs capture the unique piano tone he could create and for which he was so famous. Pachmann, in an interview with the Italian pianist Aldo Mantia, claimed not to have liked his disc recordings. ‘Whenever you find a disc of mine, buy it and break it! It is not even one per cent De Pachmann’. He preferred his piano rolls, especially the Chopin Valses and Mazurkas: ‘When I make a mistake, it is possible to take it out’. This was always one of the advantages of piano roll recordings, and yet many of the discs are first takes and do not suffer from wrong notes. He was probably just ill at ease in the confines of the recording studio. This is borne out by Fred Gaisberg’s reminiscences (The Music Goes Round, 1943) where he describes how some of the more attractive typists working at HMV’s Hayes factory provided an audience for the pianist, and he speaks to them on his late electric recordings. Nevertheless, the early rolls and the discs up to the Columbias of 1915-16 include many fine performances and indicate a major artist at work.

In an age where the score is sacrosanct, and authentic performance practice (provided it is not straight-jacketed by actual recorded evidence) is admired, an artist such as Pachmann is an embarrassment. His joy in playing for the delight of himself and his audience as an end in itself is not appreciated in the studious 1990s. Two writers who heard Pachmann in recital, J. Cuthbert Hadden (Modern Musicians, 1913) and Samuel Langford, Manchester
Guardian critic from 1905-1927, were sympathetic to his art. Hadden writes:

‘and considerations of the intentions of the composer probably never occur to him. But he is a superb artist both in conception and development. His playing is thoughtful and charged with sentiment and as an interpreter of Chopin he is absolutely unrivalled.’

In Langford’s opinion, he ‘has always been unquestionably among the greatest pianists in the world; yet hardly among the world’s greatest interpreters of music.’

We are reprinting Langford’s review of a Manchester recital given by Pachmann in November 1925. Langford was one of the great music critics and a most perceptive writer. His concert-going must have taken in most of the important events in Manchester for 45 years or more. That he recalls the first time he heard Pachmann in 1885 playing a concerto by Mozart is quite remarkable; few occasions are so noteworthy.

**Pachmann, November 1925**

Pachmann was in good vein for his recital at the Brand Lane Concerts, and played more finely than he has done here for some years. It was mainly in his additional pieces that his greatest skill was shown, and possibly it was his good fortune in coming off so well in pieces of rapid execution that disposed him to extend his recital so far. It is almost forty-two years since he first played in Manchester at the Hallé Concerts, on January 3, 1884, when he played Chopin’s F minor Concerto, the Barcarolle, and other pieces. Our own first recollection of him is at his second appearance a year later, when he played Mozart’s D minor Concerto as it has never been played since, with an irresistible animation which seemed to beam not only from the music but from his whole being. Never, surely, did a player appear at the concerts who was so openly and graciously delighted with himself. He ended with a performance of Henselt’s study ‘Si oiseau j’étais’, which made this piece the most popular of all pianoforte pieces for many a long day, and which still remains, in our own mind, as a performance that has never been at all nearly approached. The notes seemed absolutely to be borne up by the air and to have had no material being whatever. Pachmann has always been unquestionably among the greatest pianists in the world; yet hardly among the world’s greatest interpreters of music. He himself, in his moments of ecstasy, has always pointed to his fingers as the secret of his magic; and there is no need for the world to quarrel with the verdict. He has always been one of the first purists of his instrument, and has been almost first a lover of the pianoforte, and a lover of music afterwards. ‘If I played it like the rest I would not play at all,’ he said of something on Saturday, and it is in this extreme
conscientiousness of the exacting purist that he plays everything. He was opening out the great C minor Fantasia of Mozart with an awe-inspired loveliness of tone. ‘Now listen to my left tumultus,’ he exclaimed; but it was no more than a capricious tumult that Pachmann made, and one remembered how the great Rubinstein had thundered out these left-hand tones from the very spot where Pachmann was now playing. But Pachmann kept a Mozartean loveliness throughout, and as the music is of such beauty that nothing better could be chosen for the farewell to an instrument, one could be content to be carried no farther than its liveliness carried one. The main part of the Chopin pieces were small, but at the end there came the B flat minor Scherzo, ‘the best of all’, as Pachmann put it, and in this superb work Pachmann at once rose to greater heights. As a feat of velocity and polished execution it was astonishing. Careerering along to the end of the working out, he cried, ‘So-and-so took it like this, and Liszt at this tempo.’ One might venture to think that Liszt would also have kept a fuller energy in the bass, but Pachmann had made a splendid climax in one of the most difficult of all Chopin’s pieces.

He began his encores with the little D flat Valse, indulging his favourite ninths in the left hand, which are a fastidious addition of which Chopin himself might have been proud. Then came a little Barcarolle of Henselt, also with charming additions from his own hand, and then the pianoforte was closed. Yet he came back after a while and gave the little-played B major Nocturne. Then came a dazzling performance of the ‘Black Note’ study with the middle section given in a marvellous lyrical manner, and the final octaves taken in contrary motion. It was this piece also, we think, which he enriched in the harmonies by a superbly sustained ninth – a real stroke of genius. Then he went back to the favourites of days gone by – the E flat Rondo of Weber, which he played with marvellous vigour and velocity. Could any other player in the world have equalled this feat to-day? Not satisfied with this triumph he went on to the ‘Rigoletto’ fantasia of Liszt, strewing the notes of the cadenza passages around him with a true Oriental lavishness. One began to forget his age, for he had worked himself into a sort of youth once more, and his opulence and rapidity of execution enabled one to sense the true Pachmann, the exhaustless genius of the piano. We had almost forgotten what we thought was the greatest musical feat of the recital. Few would associate Pachmann with Brahms, yet it was in the composer’s rugged ‘Rhapsody’ in B minor that we found him wrestling, and that quite triumphantly, with heroic ideas. He played the purist here, too, and we should not have guessed, from the satisfying result, that Brahms was, as Liszt said, the worst of all pianoforte writers.
Reviews:
The Siobhan Davies Dance Company Tenth Anniversary Tour: May – November 1998

Jeanette Koch

Deborah Saxon performing a lively solo from Siobhan Davies’ dance work, ‘88’.
Many dancers prefer performing to live music. They find it altogether more stimulating; reactions are sharper; new aspects present themselves and the resulting shifts within the set routine ensure that no performance is ever the same. The background to this particular dance company’s choice of programme, which uses a mix of taped and live music, hinges upon a choreographer’s desire to explore the language of dance through the polyrhythmic dynamism of Conlon Nancarrow’s Studies, a daunting challenge which brought Siobhan Davies and Rex Lawson together to produce a highly successful tour of exciting and innovative contemporary dance.

Siobhan Davies has spent thirty years making dance. She was one of the first students at the London Contemporary Dance School, and went on to be a leading dancer and choreographer for London Contemporary Dance Theatre. In 1982 she founded Second Stride with Richard Alston and Ian Spink, and as associate choreographer for Ballet Rambert from 1988 to 1993, she created a number of pieces including the award-winning *Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues*. This piece, which formed the first half of the programme, momentarily recalls the great Soviet exponents of artistic social realism of the Moissejew Teatr who so expressively celebrated the working man’s pride and empowerment through mechanical advancement. But here Davies exposes decades of exploitation and disillusion where the factory workers are trapped in an endless cycle of monotonous manual exertion and spiritual deprivation in the service of their unseen masters. Roger Heaton and Mark Underwood create a highly effective taped soundscape of mill machinery noise, suggestive of a complex web of menace and relentless effort. Frederic Rzewski’s piano score played by Andrew Ball then takes over. The high rigged lighting bars are lowered at this moment until they almost touch the floor. The machine noises blur in pitch and quieten down and one hears the opening long insistent trill of the piano as the lighting bars are raised again. The dancers are both human and machine. They do not imitate the movement of machine parts but express their human emotions in relation to the mechanical actions. Their costumes are functional, unisex T-shirts and denim. No scenery relieves the bleakness, other than the play of two moveable spotlights. The soundtape has given way to the live piano, and the music drifts into blues and jazz rhythms as the atmosphere shifts and the workers become more wayward and relaxed. They interact no longer as parts of a gigantic machine but as members of a human relationship. Movements become more dreamy as the dancers move in and out of more personal interactions. This piece interested me more for the musical content than for the subject and its treatment which inevitably appeared dated – the piece after all is six years old. It was the second piece which made the evening a memorable experience, and the background to its creation is fascinating!

In 1997, Davies heard Nancarrow’s Studies on CD, which prompted her to
find out more about Pianolas. Her enquiries via the BBC and Schotts led her
to make contact with Rex Lawson, and in October of that year, her technical
manager met Rex to discuss what was involved technically. Davies then met
Rex and listened to the Studies on CD and live on rolls played on a leaky
upright. Her choice of Studies was steered by a number of factors. She chose
pieces where dancers would not be tempted to mirror the music, as might be
the case with the boogie-woogie Studies, but where they could interpret the
underlying thoughts. She avoided aurally brilliant pieces like the Canon X in
Study 21, which would undoubtedly grab the audience’s attention at the
expense of the dancers, and tended to seek repeat structures which she could
choreograph episodically. Having made her choices, an artistically unique
collaboration began.

Firstly a title had to be found. Rex sent two pages of suggestions to the
company and finally they hit upon ‘88’, signifying the eighty-eight notes of a
piano, and incidentally the founding year of the Siobhan Davies Dance
Company. Then in April of this year, a fortnight before rehearsals were due to
start, Davies wanted to include two extra Studies which did not exist on roll.
Rex managed to unearth a performance artist, Trimpin, in Seattle, who had
these two rolls on computerised Midi-file format. He sent the files through e-
mail to a German pianola specialist, Wolfgang Heisig, in Leipzig, who
converted the Midi-files and punched the rolls out on his perforator.

Having overcome the first hurdle, rehearsals began. The abstract nature of
Nancarrow’s music allowed the dancers to choreograph themselves by
responding directly to the music. They investigated types of double and triple
body movements not normally compatible or familiar, and so unusual
contrasts and combinations evolved. The physical shape of each dancer was
also taken into account and choreographed in. Copious rehearsal time was
vital. From Rex Lawson’s side, as live musician, tempo was the most critical
element. The way one feels each evening influences the speed at which one
plays, and Rex quickly discovered how careful he had to be to keep consistent
speed. On to the next hurdle. He found out that Trimpin’s original Midi-files
had been created by reading a roll as it passed over the tracker bar and wound
on to the take-up spool. However, any roll winding onto a spool rotating at a
constant velocity will result in the speed of the paper increasing. This does not
necessarily mean that the performance increases in speed, but if one uses a
Midi-file made in this way as the basis for making another piano roll, this built-
in acceleration is incorporated into the second generation roll. If the copy roll
is then played on to another take-up spool, one ends up with twice the
acceleration. Rex’s problems had only just begun! It meant that he had to
play that particular roll with constant deceleration in order to get back to the
original speed, ending up going less than half the speed at which he began
the roll.
The production gradually came together in rehearsal rooms in Woburn Square. Davies had successfully raised money enough for ten dancers to tour for six months throughout Britain, with two extra bookings in Greece and Slovenia. She chose dancers whom she had known for some time. Some were ex-Rambert, one male dancer was ex-Merce Cunningham, but all were older than most dancers – in their late twenties up to forty years old – and for a good reason. Davies wanted to create a true ensemble of experienced, mature performers who could work selflessly together without being over-pushy or ambitious. The rehearsals involved a great deal of discussion and intellectual consideration in working out the movements. But joint collaboration can be risky, and my only criticism in this case is that the result tended to lack an overall unifying concept. Peter Mumford, the lighting designer, also attended rehearsals and worked out his lighting ideas from seeing how the choreography was evolving. He saw lots of square shapes emerging in the dance so he played around with the stage divided into four sections, using a remarkable arrangement of side lights and baby spots in a subtle myriad of colour filters. Because of the lack of time on tour to rig the lighting, Vari-lite lent four computer-controlled lights which allowed instantaneous variability of hue, focus, intensity and pattern. The difference in stage size on tour meant that the set had to be adaptable, and David Buckland’s ingenious design was minimal but effective: silver ventilation ducts reminiscent of organ pipes or the inner tubes of a Pianola on one side of the stage, and ten flat pillow-like structures containing the individual dancers’ portraits on the other, set against a simple black background and dark floor. Rex at the Pianola was positioned centrally in the pit with good sightline to the dancers on stage. The sequence of Studies began with nos. 16 and 24 on Pianola, changing to tape for no. 4 and no. 31 which was repeated later, then back to live Pianola for Studies 12, Tango, 20, 6 and 27. The dancers’ blue costume were simple and neutral; no power messages here. They were all equal human beings concentrating the mind and body on music and movement. All the dancers came across as affectionate and committed to a project that was technically and physically challenging. These wildly eccentric Studies, with fractured rhythms one minute and dreamlike moments of tranquility, even silence, the next, provided a highly charged environment for these psychologically attuned performers. They flowed in and out of combinations, constantly regrouping with and against the complex polyrhythmic music, occasionally ending up with dancers moving in silence (an opportunity for Rex to re-roll!). The Spanish influence in Nancarrow’s Tango was not used in a prosaic way. The dancers managed to transmit the music’s fiery excitement without resorting to national style. In Study 16, two dancers performed a figure of eight on stage against the constant whirl of notes, creating a static, quasi-minimalist piece, a contrast to the more episodic nature of the other pieces.
The complex timing and superhuman speed of Nancarrow’s music, despite its roots in everyday dance rhythms, makes it impossible to dance to. Davies gets her dancers to dance within the music, and the shift of style and tempo make for an intricately dense and contradictory visual impact as dancers alternate between awkwardness and harmony, rationality and madness, yet firmly in the grip of Nancarrow’s mathematical permutations. His music is magical, witty and breathtakingly wild, and it is no surprise that Davies is not the first to be inspired. John Cage arranged some early Studies for Merce Cunningham in 1960. However Siobhan Davies, renowned for her interest in challenging 20th century music, has made a superb tribute to Nancarrow’s genius, and has done a great deal in keeping his music alive.

Contributors

JEANETTE KOCH graduated from Nottingham University in 1969 with a BA Hons degree in French. While a student, she regularly participated in opera productions staged by the university’s music department and struck up a friendship with a fellow student by the name of Rex Lawson. Twenty years later, while she was running her own typesetting business in Covent Garden, she invited Rex to play the pianola at a client reception, and this resulted in her becoming a member of the Friends of the Pianola Institute. She currently serves on their committee, owns Rex’s old Schiedmayer Pianola, and takes great pride in her collection of opera rolls including the complete Wagner Tristan und Isolde and Die Meistersinger. Opera remains her passion alongside her new career in hand bookbinding and restoration.

SAMUEL LANGFORD (1863-1927) was music critic of the Manchester Guardian from 1905 until his death. His father was a nursery gardener, and Langford inherited a love of flowers - ‘I’d rather be thought a gardener’ he once said to Neville Cardus. He was largely self-educated and in time turned to music, and before he was twenty, he was able to take on the duties of organist at a district church. It was decided that he should have a musical training, and he was sent to Leipzig where he was a pupil of Carl Reinecke from 1896-1900. He lived in the Manchester area all his life, pursuing his career as music critic and his hobby of gardening. His Guardian columns were generally written after evening concerts, when he would arrive at his desk about 10pm, and by 11pm be on his way home. He was appointed music critic after Ernest Newman and was succeeded by Neville Cardus.

REX LAWSON is a concert pianolist who has been involved in research and music-making with these instruments since 1971. He has travelled with his pianola to the USA, Canada and many European countries, transporting it by plane, ship, car and even, in 1986, by gondola in Venice. He has made a special study of music written for the pianola, by the eighty or so composers who have been interested in its possibilities during the course of this century. In 1998 he accompanied the Siobhan Davies Dance Company in their many performances of 88, a new dance work to the music of Conlon Nancarrow.