"To Look After and Preserve": Curating the American Musical Past, 1905-1945

“To Look After and Preserve”: Curating the American Musical Past, 1905-1945

A dissertation presented

by

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to

The Department of Music

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

Music

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

April 2020

Dissertation advisor: Carol J. Oja Katie A. Callam

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Abstract

This dissertation examines public histories of American music crafted during the early twentieth century. It does so through case studies of four individuals engaged in presenting the musical past to broad audiences. I argue that experiential music histories produced by non-academics enjoyed a significant presence and impact during this period. Historiographers of music in the United States, however, have valued written narratives published at this time. Decentralizing these written histories, which largely focus on white male composers, I demonstrate that their public counterparts often provided an outlet for asserting narratives focused on contributions of women and nonwhites. To account for the diversity of approaches undertaken by individuals who were not trained historians, I contend that approaching them as *curators* of the musical past is a productive way to explain their work. This project relies on a wide range of archival material, including newspapers, letters, music journals, and objects, and seeks to draw musicology into conversation with history and art history.

The first pair of chapters focuses on two vocalists who presented programs featuring music of the past. White soprano and children's performer Kitty Cheatham (Chapter 1) situated African American spirituals as vital to the musical heritage of the United States, but did so from a racially fraught position. The operatic dreams of Atalie Unkalunt, a mixed-race, classically trained Cherokee soprano (Chapter 2), went unfilled; instead, she navigated meeting white audience demand and promoting Native culture in her concerts of Indianist music. The second

pair of chapters probes the careers of two individuals who displayed exhibits of musical objects. White playwright Leonidas Westervelt (Chapter 3) organized exhibits of souvenirs and memorabilia related to the U.S. tour of nineteenth-century Swedish soprano Jenny Lind, positioning a female performer as significant to the development of American music. African American pianist and scholar Maud Cuney-Hare (Chapter 4) advocated for the rich music history of African Americans by gathering objects as evidence of their achievements and displaying them for mixed-race audiences. Together these case studies reveal that many nuanced ideas of what and whose music qualified as American circulated outside of academic circles during this era.

Contents

Acknowledgements

I am sincerely grateful for the following groups and individuals who have invested time and energy into this project and into me. I admire my committee members as scholars and look up to them as humans. Carol Oja has been a tremendous advisor, generous with her time and eternally patient. I have learned a great deal from her sharp editorial eye, thoughtful comments, and sense of humor. Our collaboration with Makiko Kimoto and Misako Ohta was an incredible experience, one that yielded a fascinating project and much laughter. Kay Shelemay has been a steady presence and the provider of thorough and speedy feedback. Laurel Ulrich has taught me that joy and wonder are key ingredients in the making of a world-class scholar. And Sindhumathi Revuluri has helped me articulate my thoughts and guided me with her keen insights. I have enjoyed learning from other members of the faculty, whether in the Davison Room or on Eva's couch. My advisor at Hope, Julia Randel, provided me with encouragement and knowledge in equal measure, and continues to be a key figure in my musicological endeavors.

I have been regularly astounded by the incredible intellects and personalities of my colleagues and friends in the Music Department, with whom it has been an honor to live the graduate student life. Members of Carol's Americanist dissertation group have provided me with feedback, camaraderie, and potluck delicacies: Annie Searcy, Sam Parler, Monica Hershberger, Michael Uy, Caitlin Schmid, Lucy Caplan, Felipe Ledesma-Núñez, Henry Stoll, Alexander Cowan, Elaine Fitz Gibbon, Samantha Jones, Uri Schreter, Jacob Sunshine, and especially Grace Edgar. It was a pleasure to be cohort comrades with Kai Polzhofer, Chris Swithinbank, Michael Kushell, Tamar Sella, and Danny Walden, and, put simply, I could not imagine better historical musicology triplets than the likes of Hayley Fenn and Diane Oliva. Thank you to members of

various iterations of Music 309 for reading my work and to attendees of beer hour, fellow lunch talk sandwich consumers, and the soccer team, all for being wonderful.

Some of the best times I have experienced during graduate school have been those spent with the staff of the Music Department. This group of people has made the department truly feel like home to me, and many have become like family. Thank you to Lesley Bannatyne, Bríd Coogan, Chris Danforth, Kaye Denny, Eva Kim, Mary MacKinnon, Jean Moncrieff, Karen Rynne, Nancy Shafman, and Charles Stillman, as well as Kalan Chang, Evren Celimli, Rich Greunler, Enrique Marquez, Jose Portillo, Mariana Quinn, Abby Rahn, Isabel Rivera, Jonathan Savilonis, and Fernando Viesca.

The librarians of the Loeb Music Library are world class, and my work would be nowhere without them. Liza Vick, Kerry Masteller, and Liz Berndt-Morris have answered countless questions, and Andy Wilson, Sarah Barton, and Nayoung Kim have checked out hundreds of books for me. I have also benefited from the expertise of Sarah Adams, Josh Kantor, Christina Linklater, Sandi-Jo Malmon, Patricia O'Brien and Ling-wei Qiu. Andrea Cawelti is the world's best boss, and the entire team at Houghton Library have made me feel welcome in the place where this all began. Thanks also to Catherine Badot-Costello and Jascha Smilack.

Librarians and archivists at the Library of Congress, National Museum of the American Indian, New-York Historical Society, New York Public Library, New York State Library, Oklahoma Historical Society, Raymond H. Fogler Library (University of Maine), Robert W. Woodruff Library (Clark-Atlanta University), South Dakota State Historical Society, and Tennessee State Library and Archives, among others, have helped with the realization of this project. Special thanks to Maryalice Perrin-Mohr at the New England Conservatory and the Interlibrary Loan department at Widener Library.

My communities at Harvard Recreation and Harvard Memorial Church have enriched my life in Cambridge immeasurably, and I am deeply grateful for the support of my communities in and from the great state of Michigan. Alec, Erin, and Sarah have kept me sane, and eating food and adventuring with Natasha, Sam, Rujing, Prahar, Ashley, Diane, and Frank has been tremendous fun. Thank you to my extended family for checking in and sending packages, to my brother, Dan, for the g-chats and emails, and lately to Jenna and Pippi. Finally, and most importantly, thank you to my parents. For everything.

Introduction
American Musical Histories and American Musical Things

On a summer day in 1935, five hundred people sat and stood on the grass surrounding an unassuming white house with green shutters in Dearborn, Michigan. Girls wearing hair ribbons walked arm-in-arm past clusters of chatting adults, many wearing light colors and hats which did little to combat the near ninety-degree heat. The house was not simply the location of their gathering, but the reason for it: organizers had identified this as the building in which American composer Stephen Foster (1826-1864) was born, and the crowds assembled to participate in its dedication as a historic monument. Millionaire automobile manufacturer Henry Ford had recently arranged for the house to be moved from Pittsburgh to Greenfield Village, his 240-acre outdoor museum. Foster had produced such antebellum hits as "Old Folks at Home," "Oh! Susanna," and "Camptown Races," and many of these songs rang out in his honor for the gathered crowd, performed by several school groups and the Ford Old-Time Orchestra. Ford espoused the belief that as the creator of these iconic melodies, Foster was "the musical Father of His Country."[1] Papers reported that "in the Greenfield village mecca of Americana" the house would be "a shrine for lovers of American folk music."[2] It seemed that music could not get any more American than Foster's: and how could it, when his birthday (and the day the dedication took place) was July 4.

Several themes emerge from the events of this hot summer day, two of which are at the center of this dissertation: the construction of American music history and non-written ways of

[1] "Song Writer Honored By Henry Ford," *Hartford Courant*, July 5, 1935, 8. Photographs from the "Stephen Foster Memorial – Dedication Ceremonies" are part of the Edison Institute Photographs Collection at The Henry Ford and are available online as part of the Digital Collections.

[2] "Song Writer Honored." The weather is reported in "First Heat Wave of Season Leaves 5 Dead in Detroit," *Detroit Free Press*, July 5, 1935, 1. The building, no longer believed to be Foster's birthplace, now holds a collection of musical instruments as *The Sounds of America Gallery*.

bringing it to life. In the following chapters, I explore varied musical-historical endeavors undertaken by four individuals during the first half of the twentieth century. Though music-making in European-settled U.S.-America had been taking place for hundreds of years, it was not until this period that widespread, concentrated research and reflection on the American musical past began to develop.[3] This formative period for American music historiography coincided with and grew out of a time wherein composers, critics, educators, and music lovers across the nation engaged in fierce debate as to what and whose music counted as "American." As Americans began to tell and retell musical stories about who they were and what they stood for, they asked, what sounded good, and what did not? What of the American musical past was worth celebrating, and what was better forgotten? How should these stories be told?

Ford's celebration of Stephen Foster serves as a useful window into some of these issues. In setting up Foster as "the musical father of his country," Ford used his position of privilege to shape the American musical past in a particular way: Foster as a creator of folk music who defined the American soundscape – not, as scholars would later argue, a composer whose minstrel songs contributed to racist, damaging stereotypes of African Americans. The press, too, contributed to this heroic shaping of Foster. Georgia Singleton Ralls was the daughter of a formerly enslaved woman and a freedman father who were servants in the former Foster house immediately following the Civil War; it was a dwelling, as she had learned growing up and later articulated in a letter to Ford, that was "formerly the home of the man who wrote the songs about

[3] Richard Crawford is a leader on this topic, with work including "On Two Traditions of Black Music Research," *Black Music Research Journal* 6 (1986): 1-9; "Oscar Sonneck and American Musical Historiography," in *Essays in Musicology: A Tribute to Alvin Johnson*, ed. Lewis Lockwood and Edward Roesner ([Philadelphia?]: American Musicological Society, 1990); "Cosmopolitan and Provincial: American Musical Historiography," in *The American Musical Landscape: the Business of Musicianship from Billings to Gershwin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

the colored people."[4] Though Ralls made the trip from Pittsburgh to Dearborn for Ford's Foster dedication and appears in several photos of the event, the *New York Times* did not mention Ralls's attendance there, instead focusing on Foster's seventy descendents who also turned up.[5] In addition to the celebration of a white male composer and the relegation of people of color to the narrative's periphery, there are two other aspects of the gathering worth underlining. First, Ford was not a trained historian but nevertheless became deeply involved in crafting narratives about the American past.[6] Second, he did so through public performance for a live audience, both in the sounding of repertoire at the Foster dedication, and, more broadly, by collecting buildings and historical objects to display in his museum.

Ford was, in short, a public historian, one who built Greenfield Village during a period in which "museums, monuments, murals," and pageants – non-written, non-academic, experiential ways of accessing American history – flourished across the United States.[7] Such public-facing approaches to the past during Ford's lifetime helped to shape a vision not only of American history writ large, but also, more narrowly, of American *music* history. Yet, the most obvious narratives of the musical past in the United States from this period, as conveyed in recent decades, are those in book form: indeed, the *Grove Dictionary of American Music* entry on "Histories" is devoted exclusively to "writings on the history of music in the United States" and points to those published by Louis Elson (1904), W.L. Hubbard (1908), Arthur Farwell/W.

[4] Georgia Singleton Ralls to Henry Ford, May 16, 1934, "Correspondence between Georgia Singleton Ralls and Henry Ford concerning the Stephen Foster House, 1934," EI.186.19, from the Collections of The Henry Ford.

[5] "Dedicate Old Home of Stephen Foster," *New York Times*, July 5, 1935, 15.

[6] An early meeting of the Sonneck Society (later the Society for American Music) included a field trip to visit the instruments at the Ford Museum in 1978 (Alan C. Buechner, "Oscar Sonneck and Recent Developments in the Study of American Music," https://www.american-music.org/page/History). See Aaron Robertson Hatley, "Tin Lizzie Dreams: Henry Ford and Antimodern American Culture, 1919-1942," (PhD diss, Harvard University, 2015).

[7] David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 1.

Dermot Darby (1915), and John Tasker Howard (1931) as being among the earliest efforts to record the sweep of the nation's musical activities.[8] Though these volumes did not completely ignore the musical contributions of women and people of color to the American musical past, white male composers largely formed the center of their narratives. Still lining library shelves and influencing historical narratives, they present a lasting view – albeit from a vantage point defined racially and by gender – of how the nation's music was perceived at this time.

Written histories of the early twentieth century are only one way through which Americans explored, crafted, and presented the musical past, however. I argue that "public music histories," though ephemeral and produced by those who were neither academics nor professional critics, nevertheless had a significant presence and impact during this period, and furthermore, that they often provided an outlet for asserting narratives focused on contributions of women and people of color. To examine some of the stories being told, both in terms of subject matter and methodology, I probe the careers of four individuals who employed non-written means to share music of the past with the public during this era. Through her vocal recitals and lectures, white soprano Kitty Cheatham (1865-1946) situated African American spirituals as vital to the nation's musical heritage, even as she did so from a racially problematic position. Soprano Atalie Unkalunt (1895-1954), of European and Cherokee heritage, faced assumptions that American Indians were a "dying race" while she performed versions of American Indian music harmonized by white composers. White playwright Leonidas Westervelt (1875-1952) staged exhibits of souvenirs and mementos related to nineteenth-century Swedish soprano Jenny Lind, positioning a female performer as significant to the advance of music in the United States. And African American pianist and scholar Maud Cuney-Hare (1874-1936)

[8] H. Wiley Hitchcock with Lisa Barg and David Brackett, "Histories," in *The Grove Dictionary of American Music and Musicians*, ed. Charles Hiroshi Garrett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 190-197.

advocated for the rich history of African Americans by using objects as evidence of their musical achievement.

I have organized my case studies in pairs, grouping them by the primary means through which an individual shared history with her or his audiences. Cheatham and Unkalunt constitute the pair of recital-givers: during their regular recital seasons, both singers presented programs featuring spoken historical context and vocal repertoire. Westervelt and Cuney-Hare, in contrast, put on exhibits of musical objects, usually consisting of items from their personal collections. Cheatham and Unkalunt are performers in the most familiar musical sense: they starred in events in which they stood in front of audiences and interpreted repertoire. In a related framework, I read the exhibits of Westervelt and Cuney-Hare as a kind of performance, in that their display cases served as their stage. "Exhibitions are fundamentally theatrical, for they are how museums perform the knowledge they create," writes performance studies scholar Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett.[9] While Westervelt and Cuney-Hare were not physically present for the duration of each exhibit, the objects they arranged and contextualized continued to perform their interpretations of music history in their absence.

Performance studies scholar Diana Taylor has called for scholars to shift away from "the *archive* of supposedly enduring materials" toward "the *repertoire* of embodied practice/knowledge," recognizing with the latter that performance is valid "as a system of learning, storing, and transmitting knowledge."[10] In this vein, Cheatham and Unkalunt used songs they knew through oral transmission to share the music histories of African Americans and American Indians, respectively. Taylor sees the archive as traditionally being a structure of

[9] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 3.

[10] Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, E-Duke Books Scholarly Collection (Durham, NC: Duke University Press Books, 2003), 16.

power: not necessarily in opposition to the repertoire, but a separate entity with assumed authority. Cultural historian Robin Bernstein complicates Taylor's dichotomy with her idea of "scriptive things," reading objects as scripts that "broadly [structure] a performance."[11] While I do not approach the materials in Westervelt's or Cuney-Hare's collections as scriptive things, I do follow Bernstein in seeing them as serving to "archive the repertoire," interpreting them as a record of how Westervelt and Cuney-Hare performed history.[12]

Focus on Cheatham, Unkalunt, Westervelt, and Cuney-Hare has allowed me to address three goals: to bring obscure figures with significant stories to scholarly attention; to probe the contributions of previously under-acknowledged women to the musical-historical enterprise; and to explore how material culture factored into music histories during the early twentieth century while probing how musicologists might engage with such tangible evidence in the twenty-first. As discussed later in this introduction, my work adds to the growing body of scholarship on Cheatham and Cuney-Hare, and I examine their historical endeavors in particular for the first time. To my knowledge, mine is the first scholarly treatment of Unkalunt and Westervelt, however; at least, that is certainly the case within musicology. It is my hope that this work will lay the groundwork for future studies of their rich lives and musical careers.

Cheatham, Unkalunt, Westervelt, and Cuney-Hare approached American music history from a number of angles, each focusing on her or his own subject matter and communicating narratives with audiences in different ways. This diversity of approaches begs the question: what, as a group, should they be called? How is it best to account for their public-facing, varied activities? In this dissertation I demonstrate that thinking of these individuals as *curators* of the

[11] Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing Childhood and Race from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: NYU Press, 2011), 12.

[12] Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*, 13.

musical past is a productive way to explain their work. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "curate" appeared as a verb in *Webster's New International Dictionary of the English Language* in 1934, during the period in which Cheatham, Unkalunt, Westervelt, and Cuney-Hare were all at work. To curate meant "To act as curator of (a museum, exhibits, etc.); to look after and preserve."[13]

In several ways, curating proves a useful framework for explaining the efforts of those engaged with non-written means of articulating American music history. While they were all interested in the past, these individuals cannot be called historians in the narrowest sense of the term, although Cuney-Hare does come close: none were academically trained historians and their work went well beyond the written word. To call each of these individuals a curator, one "in charge of a museum, gallery of art, library, or the like" is a more apt way to signal their dedicated historical work: each was in charge of a collection or repository of musical knowledge, if not of physical materials, and each was dedicated to sharing this material with the public.[14] In addition, "to look after" brings to mind the power dynamic between curator and subject matter, which I explore throughout the dissertation. The two pairs of chapters consider two main modalities of curating: performance of repertoire and the display of musical objects.

But "to look after and preserve" is only part of the scenario: it assumes that the objects or sounds or ideas being cared for and kept are already assembled in one place, that they need only be dusted and loved and carefully shut away in glass cabinets. Here, a meaning of "curate" that has accrued over recent decades – to "select, organize, and present," must also be considered: sifting through, tossing out, putting together, keeping apart, demonstrating, arguing, articulating,

[13] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "curate, *v*.," March 2020, OED Online.

[14] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "curator, *n*.," March 2020, OED Online.

silencing.[15] Another goal of this dissertation is to consider music history as a process, not a static set of unchanging facts. Like "American music," American music history has been in the ear of the listener – and the eye of the beholder – since critics and curators began to craft it at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The contributions of these individuals to American music, while previously lesser-known, are just as valuable as those of their more famous contemporaries, whether critics, composers, or performers. Cheatham, Unkalunt, Westervelt, and Cuney-Hare were able to reach audiences who may not have engaged with written, especially scholarly, discussions of music history; they provided an expanded narrative and an alternative methodology for interacting with the past. Music history did not have to be – and was not – limited to the written word, and audiences could experience its warp and woof visually, tangibly, and aurally. Articulating the history of American music was a way for these individuals to participate in the debate surrounding what "American music" was, and served as a concrete strategy for contributing to a definition of its present and future.

My analysis of four careers involved searching through and downloading hundreds of articles from dozens of digitized newspapers from across the country, which proved key both in providing initial information on Cheatham, Unkalunt, Westervelt, and Cuney-Hare during the formative stages of this project, and later in fleshing out the outlines of their activities. Attempting this study in a pre-digital era would have been immensely challenging. The availability of archival material to supplement newspaper articles – material that needed to be consulted on site – was another key factor in selecting these individuals. Collections dedicated to each of these figures feature varying levels of depth, breadth, and accessibility, and there is a noticeable difference in extant archival material depending on race. That is, collections for

[15] *Oxford English Dictionary*, "curate, *v*."

Unkalunt and Cuney-Hare are smaller and less complete than those of their white counterparts Cheatham and Westervelt, and exploring their careers involves grappling with this unevenness. Writing about figures with a limited archival footprint is a simultaneously rewarding and frustrating experience that requires delving deep into a limited set of documents, stitching together small mentions and facts that at first do not seem useful, and always being aware that more research will lead to more unanswerable questions.

Histories of American Music

On a fundamental level, those with some degree of interest or investment in "American music," whether scholars, recording artists, student musicians, or concert goers, are all forced to confront the question of what exactly the term means. It might be music created, performed, or listened to in the United States, or anywhere in the vast span of the Americas; it might be popular music, art music, or folk music; it might be music crafted to invoke some aspect of national identity, or the identity of any number of groups in said locations.[16] As Glenda Goodman has acknowledged, "Such a question is endlessly fruitful of discussion because it is unanswerable."[17] Unanswerable, yet unavoidable; those partaking in such discussions during the 1960s and 1970s formed the Sonneck Society (later the Society for American Music) in 1975 as an alternative to "hegemonic fixation on European repertories within the academy," particularly in the American Musicological Society.[18] Particularly in recent decades, scholars of American music have

[16] See, among others, Irving Lowens, *Music in America and American Music: Two Views of the Scene with a Bibliography of the Published Writings of Irving Lowens* (New York: Institute for Studies in American Music, Brooklyn College, 1978) and H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1988).

[17] Glenda Goodman, "American Identities in an Atlantic Musical World: Transhistorical Case Studies" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2012), 19.

pursued lines of inquiry which have sought to align the field more closely with the musics actually heard and experienced in whatever they conceive to be "America."

Writing in 2011, Carol Oja and Charles Garrett noted that

> for many scholars, studying American music carries political resonances and responsibilities, whether through positioning music in relationship to the ever-changing complexities of a nation-state, being alert to the implications of power in multiple domains, or advocating through musical scholarship for social justice. At the same time, those of us drawn to the field often value the "experimental, iconoclastic, humane spirit" that has characterized American Studies writ large, respecting its sense of adventure, idealism, and community.[19]

These priorities have manifested in the groundbreaking work of dozens of scholars, from Eileen Southern tracing the music of black Americans to Adrienne Fried Block putting Amy Beach on par with male composers of her era, Glenda Goodman listening for American Indian voices during the colonial period to Charles Garrett focusing on moments of musical conflict during the early twentieth century.[20]

Scholars investigating the contributions of women, people of color, amateurs, or any other marginalized musical group are contributing to a more inclusive scope for American music studies. A rich legacy of this work, however, stretches further back than the 1960s and 1970s: exploration of such topics was alive and well during the first decades of the century, a

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[18] Grove Music Online, s.v. "Society for American Music," by Carol J. Oja and Glenda Goodman, published online January 31, 2014, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2257322.

[19] Charles Hiroshi Garrett and Carol J. Oja, introduction to "Colloquy: Studying U.S. Music in the Twenty-First Century," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 64, no. 3 (Fall 2011): 689-720.

[20] Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (New York, W. W. Norton, 1971); Adrienne Fried Block, *Amy Beach, Passionate Victorian: the Life and Work of an American Composer, 1867-1944* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Glenda Goodman, "'But they differ from us in sound': Indian Psalmody and the Soundscape of Colonialism, 1651–75," *William and Mary Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (October 2012), 793-822; Charles Hiroshi Garrett, *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2008). Other examples include: Carol J. Oja, *Making Music Modern: New York in the 1920s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Katherine K. Preston, *Opera for the People : English-language Opera and Women Managers in Late 19th-century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017); Tara Browner and Thomas L. Riis, eds., *Rethinking American Music* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019); Mark Katz, *Build: the Power of Hip-Hop Diplomacy in a Divided World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

phenomenon that has largely gone unnoticed because scholars have not been looking in the right places; that is, in the nooks and crannies of the past, where curators crafted histories worthy of our attention. My focus on these histories engages with Tamara Levitz's 2017 report on ways in which the Society for American Music might decolonize, with one suggestion being to

> investigate how folk scholars, collectors, librarians, and amateurs created generative bodies of knowledge and research paradigms for studying "American" music within structures of power determined by US settler colonialism and imperialism beginning in the late nineteenth century.[21]

Such work is vitally important for a deeper understanding of how musical inequalities have developed in the United States.

Richard Crawford's chapter on historiography in *The American Musical Landscape* (1990), in which he proposes a framework for understanding histories as cosmopolitan and provincial, remains the go-to source for an overview of histories from the nineteenth century to the late twentieth.[22] This is not his only intervention, however, as he issues a call for scholars of American music to engage with historiography in service of developing "a scholarly tradition in the field."[23] Asking questions of, interrogating, and building from earlier histories will add vitally necessary nuance and richness to the study of American music history. Few scholars have heeded his call, however. [24] One exception is Jeremy Yudkin, who has brought to light several

[21] The Society for American Music's Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Committee asked Levitz to speak at the 2017 annual meeting. Levitz draws on the work of Nelson Maldonado-Torres to explain decolonizing as "a collective project that involves theorizing about and clarifying coloniality of power, considering its spatial and temporal consequences, and taking a wide range of actions to counter it," with coloniality referring to "long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations" (2). Tamara Levitz, "Decolonizing the Society for American Music," *Bulletin of the Society for American Music* 43, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 1-13.

[22] By "cosmopolitan" Crawford refers to approaches "inclined to find European hegemony inevitable, or healthy, or both." In contrast, "provincial" refers to those interested in breaking from European norms and celebrating those results ("Cosmopolitan and Provincial," 7).

[23] Crawford, "Cosmopolitan and Provincial," 33.

histories which Crawford did not explore in his chapter, published during the 1930s and featuring popular musics.[25]

My work aligns with Crawford's stance on the importance of knowing where American music history has come from and Yudkin's that scholars should explore non-academic written histories by broadening the area of inquiry to non-written sources. Looking to curators, as I do here, allows us not only to better understand the history of our field, but to do so from more varied perspectives. It should be stated explicitly that all of the works in Crawford's study – all of the major surveys of music history in the United States to date, in fact – have been written by male authors.[26] As historian Julie Des Jardins has argued,

> perhaps by assuming that male scholars arbitrated all the ways Americans understood the past we give an inordinate amount of attention to the production of academic scholarship and not enough to its actual consumption among the wider populace outside the academy, where women were prolific shapers of history.[27]

Likewise, studying the work of musical curators also reinserts people of color into the historiography of American music, revealing intersections and divergences among approaches to history during this formative period.[28]

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[24] David C. Paul does engage with historiography but looks at surveys written by Americans which did not focus on or include American music: "Consensus and Crisis in American Classical Music Historiography from 1890 to 1950," *Journal of Musicology* 33, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 200-231.

[25] Jeremy Yudkin, "Chasin' the Truth: The Lost Historiography of American Vernacular Music," *American Music* 26, no. 3 (Fall, 2008): 398-409. These include: Howard D. McKinney and W. R. Anderson, *Discovering Music: A Course in Music Appreciation* (New York: American Book Company, 1934); Edwin N. C. Barnes, *American Music: From Plymouth Rock to Tin Pan Alley* (Washington, D.C.: Music Education Publishers, 1936); Helen L. Kaufmann, *From Jehovah to Jazz: Music in America from Psalmody to the Present Day* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1937).

[26] Yudkin identifies several works by women in "Chasin' the Truth."

[27] Julie Des Jardins, *Women and the Historical Enterprise in America: Gender, Race, and the Politics of Memory, 1880-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 5.

[28] For an overview of the historiography of black music, see Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., "Cosmopolitan or Provincial?: Ideology in Early Black Music Historiography, 1867-1940," *Black Music Research Journal* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1996).

Of the American music histories produced during the early twentieth century, those published in book form have proven the most lasting, making them better-known to later scholars than their non-written counterparts. Both types emerged at a pivotal point in United States history, with industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and imperialism transforming the country from its rural roots into a leading global power by the end of the First World War; social, political, economic, and cultural change only accelerated in the following decades.[29] This forward-looking national transformation and upheaval reverberated across the country's music scene. "Musical history is being made very rapidly in America," noted Arthur Elson in 1915.[30] During the first four decades of the century, Elson was the first of four authors to produce a general survey of music history in the United States. His 1904 *The History of American Music* was followed by W.L. Hubbard's *History of American Music* in 1908, Arthur Farwell and W. Dermot Darby's *Music in America* in 1915, and John Tasker Howard's *Our American Music* in 1931.[31]

These historians worked under a post-colonial premise, that European-derived art music was the standard against which American music should be measured. One incident that sparked national discussion of this issue was the U.S. visit of Czech composer Antonín Dvořák during the 1890s, though scholars have often tended to over-emphasize his role in American musical life. On the invitation of philanthropist and arts patron Jeanette Thurber, Dvořák agreed to head

[29] For an overview of the period, see Christopher McKnight Nichols and Nancy C. Unger, eds., *A Companion to the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* (Malden, MA : John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2017).

[30] Louis C. Elson, *The History of American Music*, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillian, 1915), 367.

[31] Louis C. Elson, *The History of American Music* (New York: Macmillian, 1904); W.L. Hubbard, ed. *History of American Music*, The American History and Encyclopedia of Music (New York: Irving Squire, 1908); Arthur Farwell and W. Dermot Darby, eds., *Music in America*, The Art of Music volume 4 (New York: The National Society of Music, 1915); John Tasker Howard, *Our American Music: Three Hundred Years of It* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1931).

the American Conservatory in New York City from 1892 to 1895.[32] His comments to the press regarding the best way to establish an "American school" of composition caused a furor in classical music circles. He told the *New York Herald* that African American spirituals were true American folk song, upon which "'the future music of this country must be founded,'" and he modeled this method in his ninth symphony, "From the New World."[33] Composers in the art-music center of Boston (the "Second New England School") were not interested in this approach, as most did not find music of formerly enslaved people to be relevant to the whole of American life.[34] Elson, Hubbard, Farwell/Darby, and Howard, however, all included "folk music" in their volumes with varied degrees of interest, generally giving more praise to African American music than American Indian music. Howard, for example, believed the latter to be "American in the geographic sense alone."[35] Elson half-heartedly admitted that African American music was "the true folk-song of the United States, if it possesses any at all."[36]

All of these authors were interested in the development of an American school of composition and dedicated many pages to composers. Within this framework, however, each had different emphases, as evidenced in their organizational schemes. Elson began his volume with psalmody, covered developments in instrumental music and opera, and devoted several chapters to composers of various genres. Notably, he included a chapter on "American Women in Music," which detailed the activities of several composers, including Amy Beach and Margaret Ruthven Lang, as well as a smattering of performers. He concluded the volume with chapters on criticism,

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[32] See John C. Tibbetts, ed., *Dvořák in America, 1892-1895* (Portland, OR: Amadeus Press, 1993).

[33] "Real Value of Negro Melodies," *New York Herald* May 21, 1893, 28.

[34] See Joseph Horowitz's discussion of Dvořák's visit in *Classical Music in America: A History of its Rise and Fall* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), 222-231.

[35] Howard, *Our American Music*, 622.

[36] Elson, *History of American Music* (1904), 133.

education, and "qualities and defects of American music." Hubbard, by contrast, did not introduce the eighteenth century psalmodists until the middle of his volume, two chapters after a discussion of popular music throughout American history. "Hubbard's organization undermines the past as a shaping force" in favor of a more democratic approach, notes Crawford.[37] Even with his openness to non-classical music, Hubbard admitted at the end of his book that the nation's "ultimate goal" was centered on composition that followed European high-art models and the development of an "American school." Farwell and Darby organized their history into three sections: appreciation (eighteenth-century English-derived music), organization (operatic, instrumental, choral), and creation (composers, including folk song and popular music). Howard's history is explicitly about composers (the majority concert-music composers), with limited forays into musical activities; it is organized into three historical periods with composers from 1860 onward filling the most pages (this section includes folk and popular musics).

There are several points at which the histories of Cheatham, Unkalunt, Westervelt, and Cuney-Hare intersect, overlap, and disagree with the work of these authors. These books are all characterized by a pervading belief that "the best is yet to come," that is, that American music history is best understood as a series of stepping stones or building blocks toward future musical achievements. Crawford describes this approach as historians showing their readership "a musical culture whose potential outweighs its achievements."[38]

My case studies took, if not the opposite approach, a different tack. Cheatham, Unkalunt, Westervelt, and Cuney-Hare were all invested in envisioning the future to varying degrees, but they also saw music of the past as worthy of celebration and exploration. The authors of traditional histories believed that concert music during the nineteenth century or American

[37] Crawford, "Cosmopolitan and Provincial," 19.

[38] Crawford, "Cosmopolitan and Provincial," 16.

Indian music had value primarily as a stepping stone toward newer and better music. But for these curators, this music and the people who created and experienced it were worthy of study in their own right. Crawford also claims that these writers of traditional histories were more invested in discussing "the present state of American music-making than they were in trying to discover how it got that way."[39] Cheatham, Unkalunt, Westervelt, and Cuney-Hare were not engaged in formal historical inquiry of that sort, either: instead, they were each interested in bringing a marginalized history to the fore, highlighting stories they found to be important to an understanding of who and what "America" was. Studying their work helps to reveal how, during this formative historiographical period, even as women and people of color were being "written out" of history, they were being "performed into" it, albeit by figures often on the margins.

Crawford emphasizes that these written histories were works "more of compilation and summary than of original research."[40] The subjects of my case studies, by contrast, did perform "original" research to some extent, traveling to libraries and museums to find more information on their subjects, whether adding "undiscovered" songs to their repertoire or looking for clues regarding a historical figure. In this way, they mirrored the work of Oscar Sonneck, head of the Music Division of the Library of Congress from 1902 to 1917, founding editor of the scholarly journal *The Musical Quarterly*, representative for the music publishing firm G. Schirmer after his tenure at the Library, and the inspiration for the Society for American Music. Sonneck, like my case studies, was interested in one under-studied corner of American music history: in his case, eighteenth century secular music. The fact that these curators found little interest in celebrating composers as the most important figures of the American music scene also aligns them with

[39] Crawford, "Cosmopolitan and Provincial," 16.

[40] Crawford, "Cosmopolitan and Provincial," 16.

Sonneck, who advocated for "the study of *musical life* rather than of composers and their compositions."[41]

Curating Public Histories

A central tenet of this project is that the term "curator" is a productive way to describe musicians engaged in the crafting of music history during the early twentieth century. In employing the terms "curator" and "curating," my aim is to distill into specific terminology a combination of practices and values espoused by my musician case studies that connect them with broader history-making trends of the time. Art critic David Balzer traced the use of "curating" in his 2014 exploration of what he understands as "acceleration of the curatorial impulse to become a dominant way of thinking and being," which, he argues, is tied to "capitalism and its cultures."[42] As Balzer recognizes, during the early twenty-first century the meaning of curating has become diluted because it is used in a multiplicity of ways: seemingly anyone can curate a playlist or a menu, not just an exhibit. "Curate" has a rich history, however, and carries connotations that surpass "to look after and preserve." The term comes from the Latin *cura*, to care; it has connections to the Christian Church during the Middle Ages; there is an element of connoisseurship, "display of taste or expertise that lends stylized independence to the act of caring for and assembling"; there is a relationship to institutions and structures of power; there is an element of newness and the ability and authority to impart value.[43]

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[41] Crawford, "Oscar Sonneck," 274. Compare to Elson, for example, who wrote that performers were generally outside of the scope of a history, because "while they have undoubtedly aided the development of musical taste in our country, they can hardly be regarded as leading factors in the development of American music" (*History of American Music*, 309).

[42] David Balzer, *Curationism: How Curating Took Over the Art World and Everything Else* (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 8-9.

[43] Balzer, *Curationism*, 33.

These connotations align with the activities and approaches of Cheatham, Unkalunt, Westervelt, and Cuney-Hare, particularly those of care, expertise, authority, and assembly. Each cared about and cared for a particular aspect of the musical past, believing it to be worthy of remembrance and celebration by broad audiences. This care could veer toward the paternalistic, however, as speaking about musicians of the past from a position of authority could mean speaking *for* them. Indeed, caring for the past by sharing it publicly required a musical curator to be seen as an authority, with complete command of and control over her or his subject matter. Lived experience, recognition by critics and other experts, and commitment of time and energy to studying their material contributed to the expertise of these individuals. None were employees within an institutional hierarchy, but all worked with institutions to some extent in order to tap opportunities and resources. Finally, each curator made value judgments in assembling their materials, whether repertoire or objects, allowing for comparisons and juxtapositions to illuminate particular features of the American musical past.

Ideas about care, curating, museums, objects, and history were very much in the air during the first decades of the twentieth century. Take, for example, a discussion at the fifth annual meeting of the American Association of Museums (AAM), held in Buffalo in June 1910, on what qualities were most valuable in a museum director or curator. Dr. A. R. Crook of the Illinois State Museum of Natural History suggested requiring answers to a list of thirty-four questions, plus a thesis, as a good way to determine a candidate's fitness for the job.[44] The organization's past president, Frederic A. Lucas, replied as follows:

> I believe the curator is born and not made. I do not believe you can train a man to be a curator. He is the result of the combination of natural ability and circumstances. He must be a man, as some one has said, who must know something of everything and everything of something. Such a man is difficult to find. It is not so much what a man knows, where

[44] Questions ranged from "3. To what scientific organizations do you belong?" to "27. Discuss items to be considered in the color scheme of rooms and furnishings."

> he has been graduated, as what he can do; that is, what he can do to make the knowledge of others available and understandable by the public and his confreres.[45]

To Lucas, the ideal curator is male, a rarity, and has an inherent ability to share a message with a wide audience. Though Cheatham, Unkalunt, Westervelt, and Cuney-Hare would not necessarily fit his parameters (especially as three were female), there exists interesting overlap: each drew on life experiences that made them well-suited to their respective historical endeavors and each used public performance as a way to share knowledge of the musical past with public and colleagues alike.

This set of four curators engaged in what is now understood as "public history," but defining this concept is a difficult task, in part because the "public," ostensibly referring to a specific group, "conceals the diverse demographics of general populations," as historian Faye Sayer has pointed out.[46] Lucas, for one, was likely imagining a white, middle- and upper-class public for the museum curators present at the 1910 AAM meeting. In general, public history is tied to history involving non-academics, with different projects – some object-based, some not – providing various ways for the public(s) to experience the past and involving different levels of participation.[47] During the first half of the twentieth century, public history was prevalent in a number of guises across the United States. Colonial Williamsburg (restoration beginning in 1927) and Ford's Greenfield Village (dedication in 1929) were living history museums designed to let visitors experience the past with all of their senses.[48] Historical pageants allowed

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[45] Paul M. Rea, ed., *Proceedings of the American Association of Museums: Records of the Fifth Annual Meeting Held at Buffalo, NY* v.4-6 (1910-1912): 64.

[46] Faye Sayer, *Public History: A Practical Guide* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 8.

[47] To this day, the opportunity to experience history viscerally draws visitors to events and spaces including Civil War reenactments and Plimoth Plantation. See Scott Magelssen and Rhona Justice-Malloy, eds., *Enacting History* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011).

communities to reenact their local history while monuments and commemorations, like George Washington's bicentennial in 1932, provided dedicated space and time for reflecting on and learning from the American past.[49] Seth Bruggeman, for example, has examined how material culture played a role in the George Washington Birthplace National Monument.[50] Robert W. Rydell has explored the connections between world's fairs and museums at the turn of the twentieth century, while Steven Conn has demonstrated how the role of museums in society shifted from centers of knowledge production to educating broad audiences.[51]

The Daughters of the American Revolution Museum opened at its current Washington, D.C. location in 1910 and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York opened its American Wing in 1924 to display furniture and household items from the colonial period.[52] In the realm of music, visits from Arnold Dolmetsch (Boston area, 1905-1911) and Wanda Landowska (American debut 1923) sparked interest in European instrumental music of previous centuries, and institutions including the Smithsonian, University of Michigan, Museum of Fine Arts

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[48] Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Anders Greenspan, *Creating Colonial Williamsburg: the Restoration of Virginia's Eighteenth-Century Capital* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Richard Guy Wilson, Shaun Eyring, and Kenny Marotta, eds., *Re-creating the American Past: Essays on the Colonial Revival* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006). See also Thomas Denenberg, *Wallace Nutting and the Invention of Old America* (New Haven: Yale University Press in Association with the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, 2003).

[49] Thomas J. Brown, *Civil War Monuments and the Militarization of America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); Karal Ann Marling, *George Washington Slept Here : Colonial Revivals and American Culture, 1876-1986* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Nancy K. Berlage, "Plotting a Better Future for Agriculture, Women, and the Empire State: Historical Pageantry in the 1920s" *New York History* 97, nos. 3-4 (2016): 319-344.

[50] Seth C. Bruggeman, *Here, George Washington Was Born: Memory, Material Culture, and the Public History of a National Monument* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008).

[51] Robert W. Rydell, "World Fairs and Museums," in *Companion to Museum Studies*, edited by Sharon MacDonald (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006): 135-151; Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[52] See Elisabeth Donaghy Garrett, *The Arts of Independence: the DAR Museum Collection* (Washington, D.C.: National Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, 1985) and Briann G. Greenfield, *Out of the Attic: Inventing Antiques in Twentieth-Century New England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009).

(Boston) and Metropolitan Museum (New York) all continued to grow their collections of historic European instruments established in the late nineteenth century.[53]

Scholars engaged with ideas of curation, collection, and public history traditionally work in the fields of history, art history, and museum studies; my work seeks to bring musicology into conversation with more object-engaged disciplines, and builds on the work of scholars already engaged with ideas of materiality and material culture.[54] Studies of scores and print culture, such as Kate van Orden's study of the sixteenth-century French chanson, as well as instruments, organology, and music technologies, as explored by Emily Dolan, provide avenues of inquiry for approaching music-related "things."[55] Objects and sound are considered together in studies of recording technologies such as phonographs and record collections, and the impact of celebrity culture on audiences has inspired work on memorabilia.[56] Music scholars have written about collectors in terms of folksong collecting and ethnological work among American Indian tribes during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[57]

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[53] Grove Music Online, s.v. "Early-music revival in the United States," by Paul C. Echols, revised by Maria V. Coldwell, published online February 11, 2013, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2235052.

[54] Scholars in various disciplines take a wide variety of approaches to materiality, including Daniel Miller, ed., *Materiality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); Sandra H. Dudley, *Museum Materialities: Objects, Engagements, Interpretations* (London: Routledge, 2010); Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

[55] Kate van Orden, *Materialities: Books, Readers, and the Chanson in Sixteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Oxford, 2015); Emily Dolan and John Tresch, "Toward a New Organology: Instruments of Music and Science," *Osiris* 28, no. 1 (January 2013): 278-298. See also David Hunter, ed., *Music Publishing & Collecting: Essays in Honor of Donald W. Krummel* (Urbana: Graduate School of Library and Information Science, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1994); Laura Tunbridge, "Opera and Materiality," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 26, no. 3 (November 2014): 289-299.

[56] Elodie A. Roy, *Media, Materiality and Memory: Grounding the Groove* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015), as well as other volumes in the "Music and Material Culture" series by Routledge;
Sophia Maalsen and Jessica Mclean, "Record Collections as Musical Archives: Gender, Record Collecting, and Whose Music is Heard," *Journal of Material Culture* 23, no. 1 (March 2018): 39-57; Andy Bennett and Ian Rogers, "Popular Music and Materiality: Memorabilia and Memory Traces," *Popular Music and Society* 39, no. 1 (January 2016): 28-42.

Studying objects that are music-related, but not necessarily in a direct way to the production of music, as I do here, widens the scope of music studies and can encourage scholars of public history to engage with the presence and absence of sound.

Chapter Overview

This dissertation explores questions that arise at the convergence of music, history, and performance, using curating to recognize and examine some of the ways in which the processes of history-making can occur. What stories about the American musical past were told through non-written means during the early 20th century? How did approaches to music history fit in with other trends in history-making of this period? In what ways did these histories address and grapple with issues of authenticity, belonging, race, loss, value, and imagination? Why did musicians care about the musical past, and how did they care for it? My case studies confront these questions and together demonstrate the usefulness of a lens of curating. Music history was not a static entity limited to the published works of white male authors. It was constructed, shaped, and contested in front of audiences nationwide by individuals with a range of agendas and beliefs.

Taken together, these case studies are themselves the result of curatorial decisions, and, as with a concert program or museum display, their power lies as much in their juxtaposition as it does in their individual stories. I selected Cheatham, Unkalunt, Westervelt, and Cuney-Hare to present a diversity of racial backgrounds and approaches to the American musical past, and because they were relatively well-known during their lifetimes and have since fallen into

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[57] Michelle Wick Patterson, *Natalie Curtis Burlin: A Life in Native and African American Music (*Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010); Joan M. Jensen and Michelle Wick Patterson, eds., *Travels with Frances Densmore: Her Life, Work, and Legacy in Native American Studies* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015); G. Peters, "Unlocking the Songs: Marcie Rendon's Indigenous Critique of Frances Densmore's Native Music Collecting" *American Indian Culture And Research Journal* 39, no. 4 (2015): 79-92.

obscurity. Out from the archival record, once prodded, emerge the contours of careers that made significant contributions to the American music scene of this period. Each enjoyed a degree of social standing and education that allowed them to explore their interest in the American musical past. Though cut from the same cloth, each stands apart from the others in some way. Westervelt is the only man, and only non-musician, though his historical subject was notably a female performer; Cuney-Hare is the only one who published a book on her topic and the only one who did not spend the majority of her career in New York City. Cheatham's approach to the past was one built on a racist premise, while Unkalunt, due to stereotypes of American Indians in white society, had less freedom than the other three curators regarding whether or not even to engage with the past. These tensions and differences allow for patterns and themes to emerge that would be less evident if each protagonist were the sole focus of study.

The first pair of chapters explores the process of curation through musical performance, as two vocalists championed the music of African Americans and American Indians, respectively. Their performances of specific repertoire in concert settings served to articulate the American musical past as encompassing living and embodied traditions. The authority of these singers to define American music and its history drew heavily on their racialized identities and related claims of (and audience expectations of) authenticity.

Chapter One examines the work of white, Southern-born Kitty Cheatham (1865-1946), a champion of African American spirituals and folklore who primarily performed for children. Building on Brian Moon's preliminary study of Cheatham's career and Marian Wilson Kimber's analysis of Cheatham's performance of childhood, I situate her within the legacy of the Old South and Lost Cause, a damaging ideology that fondly remembered life in the antebellum

South, including slavery.[58] From approximately 1905 through the end of World War I, Cheatham sang spirituals and told stories as part of her concerts of nursery rhymes and nonsense songs; to her, the task of caring for and preserving spirituals in their original form – a form that she believed to be authentic – was essential, before they were lost to history. She believed herself to be uniquely qualified for this task. Cheatham recalled a childhood of learning spirituals from her African American "mammy," a point which she leveraged so well in interviews and recitals that she was widely considered to be an expert on this repertoire by both white and black audiences. While she believed the music of African Americans to be a vital part of the nation's musical heritage, the fact that she situated this repertoire in terms of nostalgia for slavery and insisted – in racism disguised as whimsy – that African Americans were a "child-race," her work did more harm than good. The chapter focuses on a talk Cheatham gave at the Music School Settlement for Colored People in Harlem in 1914 which provides a window into her racist understanding of music history.

Chapter Two turns to concerts of soprano Atalie Unkalunt (1895-1954), a classically-trained, part-Cherokee vocalist well-versed in European-derived art music as well as the American Indian music for which she was known. Unkalunt drew upon her lived experience – in her case, growing up on Cherokee land in Oklahoma, very different from that of Cheatham – to emphasize her authority. As with all American Indians during the early twentieth century, however, Unkalunt had to perform her Indianness in the face of white expectations and stereotypes. Though her dream was to be an opera star, Unkalunt spent her career performing

[58] Brian Moon, "The Inimitable Miss Cheatham," *Bulletin of the Society for American Music* 32, no. 2 (Spring 2006), 25-27; Marian Wilson Kimber, *The Elocutionists: Women, Music, and the Spoken Word* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017); Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon, 1998).

works by white Indianist composers, who forced Native melodies into the Western harmonic system as a way to "preserve" supposedly disappearing repertoire. This chapter explores how Unkalunt both worked with and against the fact that Indians were considered to be of the past, a supposedly dying race not adapted to twentieth-century life. I discuss the libretto to a previously unstudied Indianist opera, *Nitana*, by Italian-American composer Umberto Vesci (music) and adventurer Augustus Post (libretto). When the project fell through, Unkalunt turned to other artistic endeavors, including the founding of the First Sons and Daughters of America, a New York City-based group promoting the activities of Native artists. Beyond the entry for Unkalunt in Alexander Ewen and Jeffrey Wollock's 2015 *Encyclopedia of the American Indian in the Twentieth Century*, my work is the first to examine Unkalunt's life and career in detail.[59] Framing Unkalunt as a curator highlights that caring for historical material can require making difficult choices.

The second pair of chapters looks to another modality of musical curating: displays of musical objects. During the early twentieth century, relics of material culture – from instruments to candle snuffers – served as important evidence for narratives of American musical life to that point. Objects also allowed audiences to interact with this history differently than they did with written or sounding history: visitors could pause in front of an object and observe multiple things at once, and actually seeing (perhaps even touching) a physical object that was connected to a musician or performer made the past viscerally real.

Chapter Three examines the musical-historical work of white gentleman-playwright Leonidas Westervelt (1875-1952), a New Yorker who spent decades collecting materials related to Swedish soprano Jenny Lind (1820-1887) and her 1850-52 U.S. tour. For Westervelt, Lind

[59] This chapter adds to scholarship on Native musicians during the early twentieth century by Michael Pisani (*Imagining Native America in Music* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005)) and John Troutman (*Indian Blues: American Indians and the Politics of Music, 1879-1934* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009)).

was primarily a hobby and source of fascination, though he did see her visit as marking a pivotal moment in the history of American music, in which a woman performer, through her voice and personality, sparked a nationwide interest in art music and music-making. While Westervelt's displays were largely of and for white Americans, his work invited non-specialists to care about what and whose music "counted" as American; in addition to those who visited his exhibits, many people wrote to him to share memories of hearing Lind sing or to share information about a Lind object. In this light, I read Westervelt's Lind exhibits in the context of historical pageantry, a popular early-twentieth century approach to acting out a community's history. This chapter explores the Lind Centennial Celebration in New York City in October 1920 and also focuses on one Lind object, a piece of scrimshaw, as vital evidence of Lind reception for twenty-first century scholars. My work breaks new ground in an examination of Westervelt's many exhibits of Lind-related materials, from items she once owned to mass-produced figurines and portraits, and demonstrates how an understanding of early twentieth century Lind reception requires an exploration of Lind objects.[60]

In Chapter Four, I return to African American music history to explore the work of African American pianist Maud Cuney-Hare (1874-1936). Cuney-Hare is best known for her book *Negro Musicians and Their Music* (1936), as well as for her tenure as music critic for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) magazine *The Crisis*, and for her lecture-recitals with baritone William H. Richardson. Here I demonstrate how Cuney-Hare's exhibits of instruments, clippings, and portraits played an equally important role in her efforts to educate both black and white audiences about African American music history and should be recognized as a major part of her legacy. Cuney-Hare was one of several African

[60] My work on twentieth century Lind reception follows that of Laura Tunbridge, "Frieda Hempel and the Historical Imagination," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 66, no. 2 (2013): 437– 474.

Americans working during the Harlem Renaissance who used objects as physical evidence of African American achievement. This chapter explores two of her exhibits, one at the Boston Public Library in 1922 and one at the NAACP national meeting in Philadelphia in 1924. I focus on one of her favorite items, a portrait of Afro-European violinist George Polgreen Bridgetower (1778-1860), who premiered Ludwig van Beethoven's "Kreutzer" sonata in 1803. Through her historical work Cuney-Hare both expanded "American" music to include the Caribbean world and demonstrated that black musicians had been contributing to art music for longer than many people realized.

While I group these individuals in pairs by modes of curation (musical performance and display of objects), the chapters nevertheless each speak to the others across this divide in meaningful ways. As women of color, Unkalunt and Cuney-Hare both dealt with daily discrimination that Cheatham and Westervelt did not. Like Westervelt, Cheatham found Jenny Lind fascinating, but the Swede was just one of her many areas of interest instead of her primary focus.[61] Westervelt was interested in American Indian history and culture and supervised the excavation of an Indian burial ground in Queens in 1931, while Unkalunt was living and performing in Manhattan.[62] I have found no evidence that Cheatham and Cuney-Hare met, but they did know many of the same African American musicians. If this dissertation were a concert program or a display case, swapping out even one of these individuals would reconfigure the entire enterprise, so to speak, with new sets of connections and overlap leading to different perspectives on the American musical past as understood during the early twentieth century.

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[61] See, among Cheatham's other articles, "Reviving the Jenny Lind Legend," *Musical America* 48, no. 20 (September 1, 1928): 25.

[62] "Museum Experts to Help Move Indian Cemetery in Queens," *New York Herald Tribune*, September 15, 1931, 23. Mary French, "Indian Cemetery, Little Neck (Waters Family Burial Ground)," New York City Cemetery Project, October 28, 2010, https://nycemetery.wordpress.com/2010/10/28/indian-cemetery-little-neck-waters-family-burial-ground/.

Collectively, these case studies provide new insight into the curation of American music history during the first decades of the twentieth century. Not only was caring for the past an act that required authority, expertise, and assembly, but it also depended on an individual's race, socio-economic status, and resources: despite variation in how these factors impacted this quartet's activities (particularly in regard to race), they all enjoyed the advantages afforded by education, family resources, and the ability to travel. Though inherently public, curation was also intensely personal; each individual worked to craft their own corners of American music with different reasons for their care: memory, nostalgia, fascination, and ethnic or racial pride. Piecing together the past was often linked to curating an individual's own image and career, as the promotion of subject matter became inextricably tied to a sense of self. At the same time, curation involved some level of collaboration, serving to broaden the scope and scale of history shared with the public.

The variety of materials that reveal the contours of the histories these curators shaped are held by museums, archives, and libraries across the country, in addition to digitized early twentieth century newspapers, journals, and books; each chapter draws on a unique constellation of source types. Materials for Westervelt include a collection at the New-York Historical Society Library (N-YHS), consisting of clippings, pamphlets, images, sheet music, scrapbooks, correspondence, and other documents. The N-YHS also holds Westervelt's collection of over one hundred Lind-related objects, most from the 1850s, ranging from candle snuffers to cups and saucers to a parlor stove. Two thick scrapbooks of newspaper clippings from the New York City Lind Centennial at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts (NYPL-PA) reveal extensive coverage of the events. The NYPL-PA is also home to a copy of the talk Cheatham

gave in 1914, while the Tennessee State Library and Archives houses an assortment of photographs, correspondence, sheet music, and other materials related to Cheatham.

Correspondence between Cuney-Hare and W.E.B. Du Bois provided crucial insight into her historical work; she donated her music manuscripts to Atlanta University (now Clark-Atlanta University), where Du Bois taught, but unlike the carefully-stored and -catalogued objects in Westervelt's collection, the whereabouts of Cuney-Hare's collection of clippings, portraits, and instruments is unknown. There are many unknowns in Unkalunt's story as well, exacerbated by the fact that so many variants (and misspellings) of her name appeared during her lifetime. Her materials are spread across institutions in Oklahoma, South Dakota, California, and Washington, D.C., where the National Museum of the American Indian holds a large collection of photographs of Unkalunt.

In its entirety, this dissertation harnesses these materials to explore connections between the visual/tactile and the oral/aural in the crafting of music history: the following chapters consider the extent to which curators employed objects as substitutes for music no longer sounding and the ways in which their performed repertory responded to historical silences.

Chapter One
Kitty Cheatham's Past: Spirituals, the Lost Cause, and a New History

Kitty Cheatham was an expert on childhood, twice over. As a popular, New York-based children's performer from about 1905 to 1918, she covered thousands of miles annually to sing nonsense songs and recite nursery rhymes for audiences across the United States and Europe. Critics frequently referred to Cheatham as a *diseuse*, the French word for a reciter of monologues, as many found this to be the best descriptor for her idiosyncratic style. "I don't sing songs: I speak them," she once declared.[1] Cheatham often dressed in a costume reminiscent of Little Bo Peep and performed on a stage decorated to resemble a sitting room or flower garden.[2] In between numbers, she shared short introductions and anecdotes, chatting with the audience "very much as she might talk to her neighbour at dinner."[3] Performing Jessie Gaynor's "The Sugar Dolly," her voice squeaked to mimic a child's, while her mock fright performing Claude Burton and Amy Troubridge's "The Bogey Man" elicited shrieks of delight from her young

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[1]Mlle. Manhattan [pseud.], "Dainty Kitty Cheatham Resumes Career," *Sunday Telegraph, New York*, March 27, 1904, 4. [Kitty Cheatham], Robinson Locke collection, NAFR + 114. Billy Rose Theatre Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Hereafter *RL*. In this chapter I build off of the two main sources on Cheatham: Brian Moon, "The Inimitable Miss Cheatham," *Bulletin of the Society for American Music* 32, no. 2 (Spring 2006), 25-27 and Marian Wilson Kimber, *The Elocutionists: Women, Music, and the Spoken Word* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017). According to critic Arthur Elson, there was occasionally confusion about this term: "A 'diseuse,' as she calls herself, is not a 'disease,' as one paper put it; although Miss Cheatham is certainly very catching, and bids fair to become epidemic." "Cheatham Recital an Artistic Success," *Boston Advertiser*, January 20, 1913, *RL* 83. Elson's comments on Cheatham's performances are notable; as the author of *The History of American Music* (1904), he approached music of the American musical past in a very different way than Cheatham did.

[2] "More Cheer from Kitty Cheatham," *Musical Courier*, [January 14, 1911?], *RL* 49; W.H., "Kitty Cheatham in Houston," *Musical America* 21, no. 26 (May 1, 1915): 4.

[3] Kitty Cheatham, vocalist, "The Sugar Dolly," by Jessie Gaynor, recorded February 19, 1910, Columbia Col A-5168; "Negro folk-songs: Miss Kitty Cheatham's Recital," *London Times*, [June 25, 1912], *RL* 77.

audience members.[4] Cheatham strove to embody what she believed to be the universal truths of childhood: earnestness, simplicity, and optimism.[5]

There was a darker side to Cheatham's saccharine exterior, however, related to her investment in music of the past. Alongside songs about kittens and gnomes, Cheatham performed African American spirituals and told stories she claimed to have learned from her African American nurse during her own childhood, spent in Nashville following the Civil War. Her deep familiarity with this material was widely respected; she had not simply learned spirituals through transcriptions, but knew them through oral tradition, having sung and clapped them into her memory under the guidance of their supposed truest practitioners. Or so she claimed. In juxtaposing a repertory inextricably tied to the enslavement of African Americans alongside art music aimed at white children, Cheatham created programs in which the combination of these musics was both racist and paternalist. This equation seemingly made sense to Cheatham, however, because she termed African Americans a "child race." Beyond performing this repertoire during her regular concerts, Cheatham received invitations to lecture on spirituals and their preservation for audiences from Nashville to Berlin. One journalist reported in 1913:

> It is doubtful if any one to-day has at command a wider knowledge of the traditions of the negro race in America than this little woman. She was brought up in the atmosphere and she understands, as very few can, the real impulses, the psychology, of these greatly misunderstood people. It is for this reason, partly, that she can tell her stories of the Southland with a sense of conviction, and why she can sing her negro songs with the true fervor and sincerity that has made them the classics they are.[6]

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[4] Kitty Cheatham, "Visitors / The Sugar Dolly," recorded February 19, 1910, Columbia A-5168, 12 in.; "Another Holiday Program of Song and Story Presented by Miss Cheatham," *Musical America* 15, no. 10 (January 13, 1912): 35. Cheatham's recordings are included in Brian Rust and Allen G. Debus, *The Complete Entertainment Discography, 1897–1942*, 2nd ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1989), 148–50.

[5] See, for example, Evelyn Nichols Kerr, "Kitty Cheatham: An Appreciation," *Book News Monthly* (November 1914): 115-117.

[6] "Wanted – A New Title for Kitty Cheatham's Art," *Musical America* 18, no. 2 (May 17, 1913): 19.

"Not only is [Cheatham] our greatest authority on the literature of childhood," wrote another critic the next year, "but she is preëminently the one person of to-day who is thoroughly equipped to preserve the negro folk-lore of America."[7]

This chapter examines the complex ways in which Cheatham leveraged her "authority" on spirituals to position them in relation to the nation's (and her own) past and future. While she did contribute to the popularity of this repertoire allegedly in need of preservation, Cheatham's work ultimately drew from and contributed to a history which further concretized the realities of white supremacy and segregation in the United States. Fifty years after Emancipation, Cheatham insisted on situating spirituals in an antebellum idyll characterized by contented slaves, choosing to overlook the inhumanity of the system which fostered the development of this repertory. Historian Grace Elizabeth Hale has shown that histories of the slaveholding South that appeared during the late nineteenth century would have a huge impact on race relations during the twentieth. She writes that

> academic historians joined with amateur historians, antiquarians, Confederate memorialists, novelists, and short story writers to create a broad historical narrative that despite idiosyncrasies and differences of detail praised a romanticized past of racial "integration." And the more perfect this past became, the more free of racial and class conflict, the more plantation narratives helped destroy the possibility of an integrated future.[8]

Cheatham, too, belongs on this list. Even as she tried to "save" spirituals and in some way help their practitioners, she also contributed to a broader narrative that kept African Americans in what many whites considered to be "their place."

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[7] Kerr, "Kitty Cheatham," 116.

[8] Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York: Pantheon, 1998), 65.

Drawing on extensive press coverage in white newspapers published coast-to-coast, I explore Cheatham's relationship with the songs and tales of childhood before turning to a lecture on spirituals which she gave on December 6, 1914 at the Music School Settlement for Colored People in Harlem. I leverage this previously-unstudied text both to elucidate Cheatham's approach to spirituals and to demonstrate how this message fit with those of her white contemporaries. This lecture stands as the only extant, complete text of one of Cheatham's talks and demonstrates how her message is best understood holistically, that her views on childhood, spirituals, religion, music, race, and history were inseparably intertwined. Like many of her contemporaries, Cheatham believed that spirituals – as African American music – could be mobilized for racial uplift. She also agreed with those arguing that this repertoire constituted the one true folk music of the United States. Particularly her own was the belief in spirituals as divinely-inspired music that could speak broadly to humanity, "inspirational" music of the past that could facilitate a "new history" surpassing (or oblivious to) racial strife. However much Cheatham saw spirituals as African American music, folk music, or human music, they were still *her* music, a means to define her whiteness and her Southernness.

Even with her problematic approach to spirituals, Cheatham joined a succession of early twentieth century musicians, intellectuals, and educators, both black and white, in calling for greater recognition of spirituals' historical value. Cheatham was largely unique in her endeavor among white singers, though her contemporary Jeanette Robinson Murphy (1865–1946) was a less-well known performer of "Negro Slave Songs and Plantation Folklore" who sang spirituals and recited stories at literary clubs, Chautauqua meetings, and similar venues.[9] During this time,

[9] Houghton Library (Harvard University) holds one of her promotional pamphlets; she comes across as virulently racist as Cheatham ("Jeanette Robinson Murphy," Houghton Library p American Broadsides 768). Sandra Graham also points to Polk Miller, though his performances seem to have been more minstrelsy-inflected (Grove Music

a new generation of African American composers and performers was rising, the first to be successful outside of blackface minstrelsy. Musical theater and vaudeville performers included Aida Overton Walker (1880-1914), Bert Williams (1874-1922), George Walker (1872?-1911), Bob Cole (1868-1911), James Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954), and Abbie Mitchell (1884-1960); bandleader James Reese Europe (1880-1919) was a pioneer in ragtime and early jazz, and Theodore Drury (*b* 1860s; *d* ?1945) ran an African American opera company.[10]

In contrast to all of this musical innovation, Cheatham's interest in spirituals was rooted firmly in the past. Her musical-historical endeavor is best understood in the context of the Lost Cause, an ideology developed after the Civil War by Southerners and Southern sympathizers that sought to present the Confederate cause in a positive light. Proponents chose to remember slavery as a positive system, Confederate soldiers as heroic, and Southern women as willing to sacrifice for their cause.[11] In 1894, a group of women founded the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) "with the express purpose of honoring the Confederacy through education, memorialization, and history preservation."[12] Their activities – what we would now see as public history – included holding essay contests for children, organizing memorial celebrations, and establishing monuments to the Confederacy.

Six months before Cheatham's 1914 lecture at the Music School Settlement, the UDC organized the unveiling ceremony for the Confederate monument at Arlington National

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Online, s.v. "Spiritual," by Sandra Jean Graham, published online July 10, 2012, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2225625).

[10] See Karen Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race*: *Black Performers in Turn of the Century America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Kristen M. Turner, "Class, Race, and Uplift in the Opera House: Theodore Drury and His Company Cross the Color Line," *Journal of Musicological Research* 34, no. 4 (Fall 2015): 320-351.

[11] Encyclopedia Virginia, s.v. "The Lost Cause," by Caroline E. Janney, last modified July 27, 2016, http://www.EncyclopediaVirginia.org/Lost_Cause_The.

[12] *Oxford Encyclopedia of American Social History, s.v. "United Daughters of the Confederacy," by Joan* Marie Johnson, last updated 2013, https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199743360.001.0001/acref-9780199743360-e-0448.

Cemetery. Four thousand people, including President Wilson, attend the festivities. The monument, like so many others constructed at the turn of the twentieth century, was the Lost Cause made physical; it was described by one observer as "history in bronze." Historian Karen L. Cox has written that "the plinth is marked by scenes inspired by the Lost Cause narrative, including images of heroic men, self-sacrificing women, and faithful slaves."[13] Nine years later, the UDC attempted to erect a "mammy" memorial in Washington, D.C., though Congress ultimately did not approve the project.[14]

Honoring the Confederate cause was, in an aural sense, what Cheatham accomplished in miniature each time she took to the stage. Just as the image of the mischievous pickaninny Topsy covered consumer goods and Confederate monuments dotted the U.S. landscape during the early twentieth century, Cheatham's constant and pervasive iteration of African Americans as childlike reached thousands upon thousands of listeners worldwide, many of them children.[15] In the span of just two months during 1912, for example, she performed in seventeen cities and covered twelve thousand miles. She gave concerts from Santa Barbara to Kansas City, Minneapolis to Nashville, holiday concerts in New York City and made annual summer trips to European capitals.

In a study of Cheatham's career, taking into account the things she *said* in these and other cities across the nation is as vital to understanding her musical impact as the things she *sang*: her performance of self hugely impacted her performance of repertoire. "I feel," she once stated, "that this work that I am doing to keep alive the genuine old negro songs has a positive historical

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[13] Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), 71. Information from this paragraph is from pp. 69-71.

[14] See Joan Marie Johnson, "Ye Gave Them a Stone: African American Women's Clubs, the Frederick Douglass Home, and the Black Mammy Monument," *Journal of Women's History* 17, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 62-86.

[15] See chapter 4 of Robin Bernstein, *Racial Innocence: Performing American Childhood from Slavery to Civil Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

value, for, no matter how much technical knowledge a sympathetic musician may possess, it is not possible to give them in their crude simplicity and in absolute truthfulness unless one knows the atmosphere."[16] To Cheatham, the task of preserving spirituals in their original, authentic form, before they were lost to history, was one for which she was uniquely qualified. But as the history of this music became *her* story, spirituals became less about the African American experience than they did about an unequal racial future in the United States.

NB: Some of the texts quoted in this chapter employ terminology that is no longer preferred language, and others are unabashedly racist, several with stereotyped simulations of black speech.

Kitty Cheatham, Child

Cheatham's utter dedication to the embodiment of childhood, rooted in her belief that fostering the childlike in adults would lead to a more harmonious world, prompted her to make some unusual declarations. Discussing her work with a reporter in 1911, she announced without pause that "we are all just little children in this great kindergarten of infinity" and that while she herself was childless, she felt "that inside my soul are a million little children."[17] Despite her idiosyncratic framework, the heyday of Cheatham's performing career in the decade before the First World War coincided with larger shifts in views on children and childhood in the United

[16] "Negro Folk Songs: How They Came to Be Composed," [publication not identified], *RL* 11.

[17] Ada Patterson, "The Art of Kitty Cheatham" *The Theatre* 13, no. 124 (June, 1911): 209-211. It is difficult to tell what readers and audiences thought when Cheatham made such claims. But, in a 1904 article, she acknowledged some of her ideas were unusual: "I haven't the slightest doubt that the dead and moldering Cheathams of centuries ago read the early English poets and sung the early English ditties and the lays of ancient France with the same delight that they give me now, and I really – please don't print this, for, I'm sure it would sound absurd – but I really believe that my love for these dear little songs of the poets who sang at the dawn of French and English literature is inherited from ancestors who loved these same old ditties when they were the newest songs of the day" (Mlle. Manhattan, "Dainty Kitty Cheatham," *RL* 5).

States. As David Macleod has shown, middle and upper class urban families – a significant portion of Cheatham's audiences – had fewer children and became more child-centered than in previous generations.[18] Researchers including G. Stanley Hall began to systematically study trends in child development and behavior, while "the concept of a sheltered childhood began to grow permanent teeth" in U.S.-American society.[19]

Cheatham's performance of childhood drew its power from the fact that during the early twentieth century, racial issues were intimately tied to a seemingly harmless and benign stage of life. In her groundbreaking study of race and childhood in the United States, Robin Bernstein argues that by this period, innocence and whiteness had become inextricably tied in the popular imagination, and that furthermore, the innocence of a white child "was transferable to surrounding people and things."[20] Performing the innocence of childhood, Bernstein writes, meant "the ability to retain racial meanings but hide them under claims of holy obliviousness."[21] On the surface, Cheatham's shepherdess outfits and the toys arranged on stage, combined with her ability to mimic children and give voice to dolls (what musicologist Marian Wilson Kimber calls the singer's "stylized, childlike vocal performance"), were harmless and amusing evidence of her dedication to childhood.[22] But in positioning herself this way, Cheatham gave her audiences room to overlook, even forget, issues of racial inequality and arguments of African

[18] David Macleod, *The Age of the Child: Children in America*, *1890-1912* (New York: Twayne, 1998), 13. Broadly, this trend fit both white and African American families.

[19] Macleod, *The Age*, 101. Macleod emphasizes that childhood cannot be collapsed into one monolithic experience, and that "even as they extended real benefits, progressive reformers often reified and reinforced distinctions of gender, race, ethnicity, urban or rural residence, and social class."

[20] Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*, 6.

[21] Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*, 8.

[22] Kimber, *Elocutionists*, 140.

American inferiority sounding through her songs and anecdotes. Through her childlike persona, Cheatham could speak her own historical truth while avoiding much criticism of her position.

Cheatham became a child again around age forty. That is, to this point in her career, spirituals had not factored into her repertoire. But because spirituals had been part of her childhood, they helped her return to it. During and after her formative years, Cheatham had focused on what was likely considered "proper" music for a young white woman. Some time during her teens, she began singing locally in Nashville, performing classical repertoire and operetta.[23] Her first appearance in the local newspaper is an 1882 report on "Mrs. Blandner's soiree." Cheatham "enjoyed the distinction of being the only lady vocalist" on the program and her "light but clear soprano voice" was a credit to her teacher, a Mrs. Hart.[24] Cheatham moved to New York City in 1884 with the hope of cultivating a singing career; she instead "turned actress" in 1885 and toured with several theater companies for the next nine years.[25] In 1894, she left the stage to marry English cotton merchant William Henry Thompson, whom she had met in England during a tour with the Daly theater company.[26] One paper reported in 1897 that "Mrs.

[23] According to Cheatham's entry in the *Cyclopedia of American Biography*, she began serving as a soloist at the First Presbyterian Church in Nashville at age fourteen. "Cheatham, Catherine Smiley." Reprinted from *Cyclopedia of American Biography* (New York: Press Association Compilers, 192-?), 2. Folder 1, Box 1, Kitty Cheatham Papers, 1892-1946, Tennessee State Library and Archives. At an 1885 concert put on for her benefit, Cheatham performed the "Grand Scene" from Vincenzo Bellini's *Il Puritanni* ("Miss Kitty Cheatham's Benefit," *Daily American, Nashville*, April 19, 1885, 7).

[24] "Mrs. Blandner's Soiree," *Daily American, Nashville*, January 17, 1882, 4. One of Cheatham's first theatrical experiences was likely a student performance of Gilbert & Sullivan's *Trial By Jury* the following year ("Trial By Jury," *Daily American Nashville*, January 5, 1883, 3).

[25] "Society: The Summer Season …," *Daily American, Nashville*, September 7, 1885, 5. The first company she toured with visited Southern cities including St. Louis, Nashville, Savannah, and Austin (see "Miss Kitty Cheatham's Welcome," *Atlanta Constitution*, September 26, 1885, 2; "The Professor," *Austin Daily Statesman*, October 23, 1885, 1; "Miss Kitty Cheatham," *Daily American*, *Nashville*, September 11, 1885, 5). For the next three years, Cheatham was a member of several troupes, including McCaull's and the Casino Company ("Notes and Notions," *Daily American*, *Nashville*, July 22, 1887, 2; "Miss Kitty Cheatham," *Daily American*, *Nashville*, November 30, 1887, 8). She joined Augustin Daly's company for the 1888-1889 season and remained for four years, originating "many ingénue and soubrette roles" ("Kitty Cheatham's Success," *Nashville American*, June 8, 1902, 20). Cheatham next performed with Charles Frohmann's company and the Empire Stock Company.

Thompson's marriage has been the happiest possible, and she will tell you that not one day since she left the stage for her very attractive husband has she felt a moment's regret or desire to return."[27] Cheatham did return to the London stage, however, in 1901. The *Nashville American* pitched her return as a response to much urging from unnamed theatrical managers.[28]

The rebirth of Cheatham's career as a recitalist, however, more likely coincided with – or was necessitated by – the demise of her marriage. When, and under what circumstances, Cheatham's marriage ended is unclear; U.S. newspapers make no mention of separation or divorce. The coexistence of the monikers "Mrs. Cheatham-Thompson" and "Miss Kitty Cheatham" well into the nineteen-aughts does little to illuminate when "Miss Kitty Cheatham" became legal identifier as well as stage name.[29] Despite the haziness of the details, it is clear that Cheatham later attributed the idea for her recitals – which would make her a household name and provide her income for the next several decades – to an informal, even accidental, rendition of spirituals. From the beginning, then, spirituals were about Cheatham herself: first, they served as a means of survival for an unmarried woman, with the survival of the repertoire itself at best an afterthought. Cheatham did later credit spirituals as having precipitated her career, but her "new art" of children's concerts quickly overshadowed this fact.

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[26] "Kitty is Well Wed: Miss Cheatham is Twice Married Within a Few Minutes," *Atlanta Constitution*, June 10, 1894, 15. According to this article, the Reverend Charles Todd Quintard, Episcopal bishop, "could not collect himself and appeared to be under the influence of some strong excitement or illness or something. So unsatisfactory was the ceremony that the bridegroom demanded to be married in better style and Rev. J.D. Barbee…was sent for and the ceremony again performed." Friends of Quintard explained he had been taking large amounts of morphine for his rheumatism "and that this was the sole cause of the trouble."

[27] "Mrs. Willie Thompson," *Nashville American*, December 19, 1897, 10. Mr. Thompson is also mentioned in an 1899 article, but I have not found any reference to him after this date ("Kitty Cheatham," *Nashville American*, May 28, 1899, 10).

[28] Ada Scott Rice, "Women of the White House," *Nashville American*, May 19, 1901, 13.

[29] She is "Kitty Cheatham" in "Footlight Flashes," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 23, 1905, 2 (Cheatham was "rehearsing the part of Grace Harkaway at the Knickerbocker Theatre," possibly one of her last stage roles as she transitioned to doing solo recitals only). Cheatham-Thompson in, for example, Mlle. Manhattan, "Dainty Kitty Cheatham," *RL* 3-5.

At its simplest, the story went like this: a friend overheard Cheatham singing spirituals one dark night, and it they decided that she should try them out in drawing room recitals. The longest explanation in her own words appeared in a 1909 *Bohemian* magazine article she wrote herself, "I Like to Sing 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,'" in which she identifies this particular spiritual as "the corner stone of my present artistic career":

> A few years ago I was visiting in an old chateau in France, the home at the time of a very dear friend, an American woman of distinguished Southern ancestry. I was not in a happy frame of mind, as at the time an immediate necessity had arisen for my once more "doing something." One January night, while the wind and rain made wild tumult without, my hostess and I sat alone before a big open fireplace, planning earnestly what might be wisest for me to do. Allusions to other days and conditions in the South brought silence and the spell of memories upon us. Without knowing why, I began to hum some of the old negro hymns, that were naturally a part of my reverie. The music was like a safety valve to my overcharged feelings, and seated there on a low stool, I began to rock and clap my hands as the old Southern "mammys" do, while I crooned "Swing Low Sweet Chariot." It seemed to me, at that moment, *I was literally a child again* [emphasis added].[30]

In a moment of revelation, a path forward materialized; this melody returned Cheatham to her own childhood, though her phrasing conjures an idyllic past free from racial strife and draws dangerously close to the raw racism of equating spirituals and the childlike. Later interviews and feature stories offered conflicting timelines of Cheatham's watershed moment, which added to the organic and almost mythical aspect of the story: it did not matter exactly *when* Cheatham became a child again, because it was what she was always meant to do. The earliest mention of such an event appears in 1902, when Cheatham's hometown paper reported that "Last fall [1901] in an accidental way she demonstrated the talent that seems more destined to make her famous than her previous footlight success. Following it up she is now doing drawing-room work, singing and recitation, and soon hopes to reappear on the stage in a congenial role."[31] Later,

[30] Kitty Cheatham, "I Like to Sing 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot': My Favorite American Song – III," [*Bohemian*] November 1909, *RL* 39.

however, Cheatham implied that her watershed moment occurred in 1903 or perhaps 1904.[32] During this period, Cheatham gradually gained a following on both sides of the Atlantic, performing for "the most influential members of the English peerage," the Lord Mayor of London, and others.[33] She received fifty dollars in London "for singing a few darky songs" in June, 1902; that September, she "sang delightfully" in Newport, Rhode Island.[34] Her rendition here of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" was "without accompaniment, and there was no need of any instrument," noted the reporter, "for the lady sang the Southern melody in a manner that seemed as if no one had ever sung such music before."[35]

The most significant supporting character in Cheatham's construction of her racially inflected childhood was that of the ever-unnamed person she called her "mammy." Throughout her career, Cheatham reminisced about the African American woman who raised her; though Cheatham was born two years after the Emancipation Proclamation, the way she remembered this woman clearly suggested a mistress-slave relationship. Census records list an African American domestic worker named Minerva Smith as having worked for the Cheatham family in 1870 and 1880; not only did she and her fellow workers serve the family as employees, they also served in what Grace Elizabeth Hale identifies as a symbolic role for the Cheathams: "being white meant having black help."[36] It is possible that the real Smith – whom we cannot know

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[31] "Kitty Cheatham's Success," *Nashville American*, June 8, 1902, 20.

[32] "The Art of Singing to Children," *New York Tribune*, February 18, 1906, B2.

[33] "Kitty Cheatham's Success."

[34] "High Prices Paid for Entertainers in London," *New York Times*, June 22, 1902, 4. Cheatham reportedly received seventy-five dollars for giving similar entertainment in Newport ("Didn't Sing for the Duke," *The Sun* (Baltimore), September 12, 1902), 1.

[35] "Kitty Cheatham's Recent Triumphs," *Nashville American*, September 4, 1902, 8.

[36] Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 103. In 1870 other African American servants listed are William White (age 35) and Kitty Doxey (age 28); in 1880, Levinia Thomas (age 38). Nashville Ward 5, Davidson, Tennessee, 1870 United

from Cheatham's accounts – knew spirituals and shared them with Cheatham. It is also possible that in her adulthood Cheatham combined multiple real-life women into one convenient character. Micki McElya explains in her study of the "mammy" character in the twentieth century that "black women did work in white homes, cooked innumerable meals, cared for white children, and surely formed emotional ties to white family members at times, but the mammy was – and is – a fiction."[37] Cheatham was determined to remember – or imagine – her "mammy" as truth, however.

To whatever degree Cheatham remembered her caregiver's singing and appropriated this musical material, she did little to convey the character of the older woman's sound, at least through her anecdotes. Certainly, Cheatham acknowledged that her "mammy" constituted her entry point into the world of spirituals: she recalled learning the repertoire "from my old nurse and from dozens of negroes with whom I was brought into contact during the most impressionable years of my life."[38] She experienced "all the songs of the cotton fields, the baptisms, the marriages and the funerals, the merry-makings and the songs of intimate family grief."[39] Cheatham even suggested that this was the only music she heard as a child: when asked whether she had heard French or English folk songs while growing up, she exclaimed, "My old black mammy never knew a note of music or a word of song except the crooning plantation melodies she had learned in her old far-away girlhood and the camp-meeting ditties that were her

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States Federal Census, published online 2009, Ancestry.com; Nashville, Davidson, Tennessee, 1880 United States Federal Census, published online 2010, Ancestry.com.

[37] Micki McElya, *Clinging to Mammy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 4. For the "mammy" in early twentieth century memoirs and music, see Bernstein, *Racial Innocence* 276n148 and Susan C. Cook, "In Imitation of My Negro Mammy: Alma Gluck and the American Prima Donna" in *The Arts of the Prima Donna in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rachel Cowgill & Hilary Poriss (New York: Oxford, 2012): 290-307.

[38] "Negro Folk Songs," [publication not identified], *RL* 11.

[39] "Singing to the Children," *The Sun*, February 24, 1907. "Cheatham, Kitty," Clipping File, Houghton Library, Harvard College Library.

spiritual comfort."[40] Despite the expertise Cheatham attributed to her "mammy," she remembered this woman, or women, to boost her own authority and highlight her own childhood, keeping the other woman silently and obediently frozen in the past.

Beyond nostalgic reminiscences, the "mammy" character sometimes featured in Cheatham's anecdotes between songs, along with "others of the colored folk of the older generation" who she said discussed "genteel topics" and scorned the superficiality of the younger generation.[41] A New York paper described Cheatham as having "the best spring crop of darky stories, from that of the 'optimist, the pessimist and the "possumist"' to others of the little Southern lady who reckoned she must be uneducated because she 'didn't know till she was 17 that damyankee was two words,' and finally a yarn of the 3-cent lemonade that the kitten fell in."[42] When Cheatham mixed together this repertoire, the innocence of childhood excused and obfuscated some of the racist elements of her material. It is shocking to consider that her story of how "some one lately told an old negro woman there was a 'wah in Europe,' and Aunt Jane replied, 'What, honey, ain't all de slaves free yet?'" was, very problematically, open to laughter just like the story of the kitten and the lemonade.[43]

In one audience favorite, Cheatham told the story of three "little pickaninnies" about to receive their Christian confirmation. As they stood at the altar with heads bowed, "the bishop in his white robes and insignia of office came in and one of the children looking up and seeing him,

[40] Mlle. Manhattan, "Dainty Kitty Cheatham," *RL* 5.

[41] "Miss Cheatham's Christmas Matinee," *New York Post*, December 28, 1910, *RL* 48.

[42] "Music and Musicians: Something Like Folk Songs at a Lyceum Matinee," [*New York Sun*], April 18, 1911, *RL* 57.

[43] W. B. Chase, "Music and Musicians" [*New York Sun*], December 29, 1914. Folder 3, "Cheatham, Kitty," M-Clippings (Names), Music Division Clipping File, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

said, 'Fo' God, Kluklux!' and all the children got up and ran."[44] Bernstein has described how the image of a pickaninny – "an imagined, subhuman black juvenile…merrily accepting (or even inviting) violence" – was ubiquitous in early twentieth-century U.S.-American life, appearing on consumer items from soap to sheet music.[45] Even if Cheatham's pickaninnies were supposed to be amusing, not violent, her stories affected audiences as a facet of the popular culture which "de-sensitized white readers and consumers to African American pain."[46]

At a typical concert, like the one on January 18, 1913 in the New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall (Boston), Cheatham presented a program of songs to excited children and their parents, as these racial undercurrents rustled just out of earshot. The audience that Saturday afternoon "was large, even though some of its members were small" and the program consisted of three parts, with "negro songs and sayings," in the middle section.[47] Cheatham's concerts generally followed this tripartite model, with spirituals together in a cluster. While song recital repertoire is frequently organized into smaller groups, this practice also served to keep African American music segregated aurally and visually on the programs.

The *Boston Herald* complimented Cheatham's "imagination" and "keen sense of humor" and criticized only the French songs by Jean-Baptiste Weckerlin because they lacked "a certain indispensable piquancy."[48] Arthur Elson, writing for the *Boston Advertiser*, found fault with J.L.

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[44] "Miss Cheatham Charms Club with Readings" [*Indianapolis News*], March 11, 1910, *RL* 43.

[45] Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*, 34.

[46] Bernstein, 53.

[47] Elson, "Cheatham Recital," *RL* 83.

[48] "Miss Cheatham Gives Recital," *Boston Herald*, January 19, 1913, *RL* 83. Elson, on the other hand, praised these same songs. Neither reporter mentions the racial makeup of the audience. As the New England Conservatory had admitted African American students since the nineteenth century, it is possible the audience was mixed-race. An announcement in the *New York Age* for Cheatham's Music School Settlement lecture in New York highlights the inexpensive tickets, suggesting that African Americans could attend at least some of Cheatham's concerts if they could afford to do so ("Music School Settlement Notes," *New York Age*, December 3, 1914, 8). See Bruce

Molloy's "Punchinello" for its being "rather spoiled by too intense declamation and mimicry."[49] Otherwise, he praised the "delicate humor" of the anecdotes that prefaced most songs and the "utmost drollery" of Cheatham's impersonations. He continued:

> Her children's songs were absolutely inimitable. The "Little Bisque Doll" with a "pain in its sawdust" convulsed young and old alike, while the settings of Stevenson's "Cow" and Belloc's untruthful "Matilda" gave further chances for Miss Cheatham's captivating presentation of juvenile traits. "Practising," by a recalcitrant boy, allowed the accompanist (Flora MacDonald Willis) to add a clever imitation of the youngster's work on the piano. Of the French songs, "Les Trois Princesses" was a gem of musical sweetness that made one wish for more of its school." [50]

While both of these white critics identified weaknesses in one of the children's songs, neither offered criticism of the spirituals, instead praising Cheatham wholeheartedly. "In negro song and dialect, Miss Cheatham was wholly at home," wrote Elson, who wished she had offered more of this repertoire.[51] Cheatham revealed "a [true] understanding of the negro character," noted the *Herald* critic.[52] Both reviewers expressed genuine fascination and enjoyment with a repertoire likely unfamiliar to them. But by relying completely on what they understood to be Cheatham's expertise, they also furthered the idea that white northerners could never truly know or understand African Americans or their culture, as this was knowledge reserved for southern whites. Historian Nina Silber argues that "northern whites clung to this cover of ignorance, using

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McPherson and James Klein, *Measure by Measure: A History of New England Conservatory from 1867* ([Boston]: Trustees of New England Conservatory of Music, 1995).

[49] Elson, "Cheatham Recital," *RL* 83.

[50] Elson, "Cheatham Recital," *RL* 83.

[51] Elson, "Cheatham Recital," *RL* 83.

[52] "Miss Cheatham," *RL* 83.

it to deemphasize the place of blacks in the American past and to overlook the racial troubles in the American present."[53]

Two months after this Boston concert, audiences at Cheatham's annual Easter matinee at the Lyceum Theater in New York City experienced another aspect of her performance of childhood. This concert featured one of Cheatham's many collaborations with the distinguished African American musician Harry T. Burleigh (1866-1949), whose work with spirituals Cheatham greatly admired. Burleigh, who had served as baritone soloist for the predominantly white St. George's Episcopal Church since 1894, was a well-known figure of the New York City music scene by the time he and Cheatham began collaborating during the 1910s.[54] He had been performing his own arrangements of spirituals since 1900 and was just beginning to publish them as he worked with Cheatham. In her explanations between numbers during her concerts, Cheatham credited Burleigh for his arrangements, often praising him together with poet Paul Laurence Dunbar as a pair "perceiving and using the real talents and artistic beauties of their race, without trying to imitate the types of white poets and composers."[55] Cheatham's praise for Burleigh consistently ran along these lines: her admiration seemed genuine, but always conscious of racial difference.

When performing with Cheatham, Burleigh played the piano accompaniment for his arrangements of spirituals and occasionally provided vocal harmony; the white press consistently commended the results for a combination of reasons.[56] Many critics praised the aural effect of

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[53] Nina Silber, *Romance of Reunion: Northerners and the South, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 141.

[54] Biographical information on Burleigh comes from Jean E. Snyder, *Harry T. Burleigh: From the Spiritual to the Harlem Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016). Brian Moon ("Inimitable Miss Cheatham") gives the dates of their collaboration as 1909-1915.

[55] "Miss Cheatham's Christmas Matinee, " *RL* 48.

their singing together. Of her annual Christmas-time concert in 1913, one reporter noted that "the assistance of Harry Burleigh in the old negro songs was excellent, and when the two joined in the chorus, with Mr. Burleigh's voice, like a mellow, soft accompaniment, the effect was delightful."[57] Another described their renditions of spirituals as "delicious…sung with fine art and no mediocre voice, and once or twice Mr. Burleigh crooned a second [part] very agreeably."[58] Some reviews demonstrate, in racially coded language, that for Cheatham's primarily white audiences, having Burleigh onstage added an element of nostalgia to the experience. "It was certainly like an old camp-meeting to hear the tenor thirds in the chorus" for the spiritual "I've been Searching for a City," declared one critic.[59] For another, Burleigh's piano accompaniment and occasional singing led to a "superb" effect: "with half-closed eyes, the auditor could imagine himself on a Southern plantation"; this critic clearly pictured a romanticized, harmonious scene of antebellum life.[60]

The fact that critics interpreted these performances in this way is due in large part to Cheatham's performance of childhood. According to Bernstein, the innocence of whiteness could be transferred to things associated with it, thus in the eyes of an audience, Cheatham held the power to bestow innocence on both spirituals and Burleigh. As Kimber notes, the pair's performing together may have evoked Harriet Beecher Stowe's characters Eva and Uncle Tom; instead of the pianist's presence on stage with a white woman raising fears of miscegenation,

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[56] *The Crisis* and *The New York Age* both mention some of Cheatham's concerts, but I have not yet located any articles that discuss a Cheatham-Burleigh collaboration.

[57] "Kitty Cheatham's Matinee," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 30, 1913, *RL* 95.

[58] Alan Dale, "Kitty Cheatham Delights at Easter Matinee, Says Dale" *New York American*, April 9, 1912, *RL* 74.

[59] "Music and Musicians: Something Like Folk Songs at a Lyceum Matinee" *New York Sun*, April 18, 1911, *RL* 57.

[60] "Kitty Cheatham's Recital: The American Singer Heard in Negro Songs and Stories" *New York Times*, April 9, 1912, *RL* 74.

Kimber identifies the religious aspect of spirituals and Cheatham's persona as instead conjuring the relationship between the literary characters, which audiences would likely perceive as one of safety and devotion.[61] What is especially important to add to this explanation is specifically the whiteness of Cheatham's childlike performance. As they performed together several times a year at New York concerts for almost a decade, the sight and sound of Cheatham and Burleigh singing spirituals became a highlight of the season for many critics. Given the contemporary context for race and performance, however, the pair's collaboration was not without complicated elements.

Cheatham and Burleigh both valued European art music, which helps to explain one basis of their collaboration. According to his biographer Jean Snyder, Burleigh, like Cheatham, believed that "minstrel songs, coon songs, ragtime, and jazz were all unworthy representations of black musical culture."[62] In response to Henry Creamer and J. Turner Layton, both African American musicians, employing a syncopated version of the spiritual "Deep River" in their hit song "Dear Old Southland," Burleigh declared it was crucial to "revere and exalt [spirituals] as a vital proof of the Negro's spiritual ascendancy over oppression and humiliation" and that "the willful, persistent, superficial distortion of our folk-songs is shockingly reprehensible."[63] Cheatham told *Musical America* she was "glad" that Burleigh did not appear at the 1912 Clef Club Orchestra concert in Carnegie Hall (the first appearance of a black orchestra at the illustrious venue), stating:

> He is a man whom I consider it a privilege to have been able to work with: he has the finest feeling for music and his arrangements of his race's melodies are of a high order. Think of this song which we have done recently:

[61] Kimber, *Elocutionists*, 146.

[62] Snyder, *Burleigh*, 322.

[63] Burleigh, Letter to the NAACP, November 10, 1922, quoted in Snyder, *Burleigh*, 323.

I am seekin' for a city, Halleluia,
I am seekin' for a city, Halleluia.
For a city into de Heabbin, Halleluia
For a city into de Heabbin, Halleluia,

Lord, I don't feel noways tired
Childeren, O'h Glory, Halleluia
For I hope to shout glory when dis worl' is on fiah
Childeren, Oh Glory, Halleluia.

and then of the vulgar, unrestrained sentiments expressed in the ragtime which the negroes sang at this first public concert.[64]

Largely in musical and aesthetic agreement, Cheatham and Burleigh seem to have had a productive collaboration, though details regarding how their working relationship developed or why it stopped are few. It is also unclear what Burleigh thought of Cheatham's persona or her anecdotes. In his own concerts, Burleigh often performed Alex Rogers's "Why Adam Sinned," in which the speaker reasons that Adam had no "mammy" to teach him right and wrong. Snyder notes that it "never failed to amuse his audience, whether black or white, though likely for somewhat different reasons."[65] Perhaps Cheatham would have understood that the song could be heard with a wink of racial pride by African American listeners, or perhaps not. Whatever Burleigh's take on Cheatham's views, both were tirelessly dedicated to promoting spirituals. As she drew on her real or imagined childhood, however, Cheatham's persona allowed audiences to equate this repertoire with her ditties about animals and dolls, perpetuating damaging stereotypes about spirituals and African Americans.

[64] A. W. K. [Arthur Walter Kramer], "Kitty Cheatham's Summer Abroad," *Musical America* 16, no. 1 (May 11, 1912): 36. Cheatham attended this concert, which I discuss in the final section of the chapter.

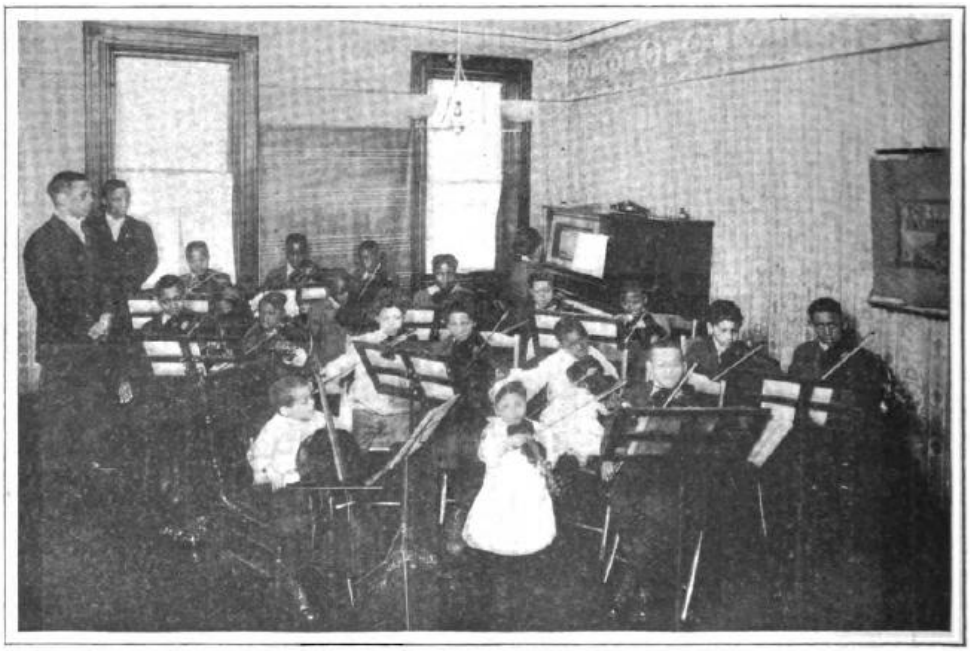
[65] Snyder, *Burleigh*, 155.

Kitty Cheatham, Expert

Given her reputation as a leading authority on spirituals, Cheatham was a natural choice to participate in a lecture series on folk music which began at Harlem's Music School Settlement for Colored People (hereafter MSSCP) in late autumn 1914. Polish-American violinist David Mannes (1866-1959) had founded the school in 1911 as the Harlem equivalent of the East 3rd Street Music School Settlement, which he directed.[66] Like its Lower East Side counterpart, which served as a musical community center for European immigrants, the Music School Settlement provided a space for students from another marginalized group – in this case, African Americans – to receive lessons, attend concerts, and participate in the chorus or one of three orchestras (see Figure 1.1). Teachers offered instruction in "piano, violin, and wind instruments, as well as in theory, sight-singing, and voice culture" for twenty-five cents per lesson; famed Harlem bandleader James Reese Europe, the leader of the Clef Club Orchestra whose Carnegie Hall concert Burleigh had avoided, had helped Mannes find African American music teachers willing to participate in the venture.[67]

[66] Grove Music Online, s.v. "Mannes, David," by Channan Willner and Deborah Griffith Davis, published online 2001, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.17659.

[67] Elbridge L. Adams, "The Negro Music School Settlement," *Southern Workman* 44, no. 3 (March 1915): 162; Reid Badger, *A Life in Ragtime: A Biography of James Reese Europe* (New York: Oxford, 2007), 62.



A CLASS IN THE MUSIC SCHOOL SETTLEMENT

Figure 1.1. An orchestra class at the Music School Settlement for Colored People.
From E.F. Dyckoff, "A Negro City in New York," *The Outlook*, December 23, 1914, 952.

Just as Cheatham's lecture would turn out to be a jumbled message about African American music, at once empowering and demeaning, the dynamics of power and race surrounding the school's establishment were hopeful, while still couched in paternalistic, social Darwinist thinking of the day. On the one hand, Mannes intended to honor one of his childhood violin teachers, an African American musician named John Thomas Douglass (1847-1886), through founding the School.[68] He also enjoyed sight-reading string quartets with faculty members when he visited the school and was invited to African American homes for tea. But the white activists interested in beginning the Settlement did not consult African American community leaders right away, though in its early years the school was connected with an existing music program at an African American kindergarten, and the project eventually became

[68] Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 3rd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 251.

more diverse.[69] Mannes also re-inscribed the essentialist belief that African Americans are inherently musical. In a *New York Tribune* article covering the opening of the school, Mannes was quoted stating that "[African Americans] are the only race who sing naturally in tune, the only people who naturally harmonize. This genius for music might be made the great lever to raise this people…Our aim is to make this new social work one of the agents in bringing about more harmonious understanding between the races."[70]

One of the ways the School fostered "understanding between the races" was via the Sunday recital/lecture series in which Cheatham participated. The talks began shortly after African American composer and pianist J. Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954) assumed the school's directorship.[71] The MSSCP opened for the fall term that year on October 1, 1914 in its new location (and second permanent home after a period without a dedicated space) at 4-6 West 131st St. between Lenox and 5th Avenues. A statement in *The Crisis* explained that leaders hoped the

[69] In his autobiography, Mannes identifies the original group of white activists interested in forming the school: folklorist Natalie Curtis, George Foster Peabody, Dr. Felix Adler, Elbridge Adams, and Mrs. Percival Knauth (David Mannes, *Music is My Faith* (New York: Norton, 1938), 213). On the kindergarten: "To Teach Music for a Small Sum," *New York Age*, November 24, 1910, 7. The full list of board members by April 1912: Elbridge L. Adams, Mrs. Frances C. Barlow, the Rev. Hutchins C. Bishop, Henry T. Burleigh, Miss Natalie Curtis, Miss Dorothea Draper, Dr. W.E. Burghardt Du Bois, Mrs. Benj. Guiness, the Rev. Wm. P. Hayes, Mrs. David Mannes, David Mannes, Mrs. W.H. McElroy, Winthrop L. Rogers, Mrs. Charles Sprague-Smith, Lyman Beecher Stowe, Frederick Strauss, Princess Pierre Troubetzkoy, Miss Louis Veltin and Miss Elizabeth Walton" ("To Be a Big Musical Event," *New York Age*, April 25, 1912, 5, reprinted in "Black-Music Concerts in Carnegie Hall, 1912-1915," ed. J. Southern, *Black Perspective in Music* 6, no. 1 (Spring 1979): 71-88). See also Michelle Wick Patterson, *Natalie Curtis Burlin: A Life in Native and African American Music* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 222 for a list of board members in later years. Patterson acknowledges the Mary Walton Free Kindergarten for Colored Children was part of the initial planning, as Curtis's mother was its vice president (218).

[70] "Melody, Negro's Genius," *New York Tribune*, March 22, 1912, 10. Another instance of trying to bridge the racial divide occurred when MSSCP board members asked *New York Tribune* readers for donations for three hundred people left "homeless and destitute" in Harlem after a fire ("Help for Negro Sufferers," *New-York Tribune*, March 23, 1914, 6).

[71] Johnson was a replacement for the inaugural director, African American violinist David Martin (1880-1923). In his autobiography, Mannes does not state why Martin left, just that there were disagreements between director, faculty, and board (*Music is My Faith*, 215).

school would become "the musical center of the community and… carry the influence of good music into as many homes as possible," positioning the school as a center for racial uplift.[72]

Folklorist Natalie Curtis (1875-1921), best known for her work collecting American Indian music, ran the lecture series, which was designed to "treat of the folk music of different nations and of many other subjects."[73] It was notable not only for its lineup of well-known speakers and for its audiences being mixed-race, but for its affordability. Subscriptions "from friends of the school" for reserved seats were five dollars for six lectures. In buying subscriptions, wealthier attendees would be giving "welcome help" in "defraying the expense of chairs and lighting" at a time when donations to the school were down because of WWI.[74] Lecturers played their part by speaking for free.[75] The widely-circulating African American newspaper the *New York Age* also highlighted the low cost of the event, emphasizing that this was the least-expensive way to hear Cheatham perform:

> It is a rare privilege to hear Miss Kitty Cheatham on any occasion. When it is taken in consideration that her annual Christmas matinee at the Lyceum Theatre and her single appearance with [the] Philharmonic Symphony costs from 50 cents to $5 a seat, it is an unusual opportunity to hear her for the small sum of 10 cents [the price of general admission] Sunday afternoon [December 6] at 3 o'clock, at the Music School Settlement.[76]

Cheatham's lecture text, archived at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, is about thirty-three hundred words and seems to have been taken down in real time.

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[72] "[Advertisement]," *The Crisis* 8, no. 6 (October 1, 1914): 305.

[73] "Music Notes," *New-York Tribune*, December 6, 1914, B7.

[74] Checks could be sent either to Johnson at the Settlement or Curtis at her residence ("Music Notes," *New York-Tribune*, December 6, 1914, B7).

[75] "Music School Settlement Notes," *New York Age*, November 26, 1914, 8. Reserved seats: fifty and twenty-five cents, general admission, ten cents. These prices would be approximately $13, $7, and $3 in 2018 dollars.

[76] "Music School Settlement Notes," *New York Age* December 3, 1914, 8.

Cheatham included sung examples of spirituals and J. Rosamond Johnson provided piano accompaniment.[77] An outline of Cheatham's topics are as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Personal connection to spirituals
3. African American music as divinely inspired
    Musical example: "When I lose my way"
4. Relation to other folk musics
    Musical example: "Danville chariot"
5. Call for societal introspection and African American pride in service
6. *Connection to Ella Sheppard
7. Spirituals related to works of Western "masters"
8. Call for responsibility toward others and a new history
    Musical example: "Seekin' for a City"
9. *Warning against inappropriate dancing
10. Call to free selves from mental slavery
11. Tribute to Dunbar
12. Sense of responsibility in representing African Americans
13. Shared responsibility as American citizens to serve God
    Musical example: "When Malindy Sings"
    Musical example: "Father Abraham Sittin' by the Side of the Holy Lamb"

*Denotes lengthy section

While the organization of Cheatham's lecture is true to the stenographer's label of "extemporaneous" – it meanders and seems stream-of-consciousness in parts – it is nevertheless centered on what her title suggests: "The Ethical Relation of Folk Song to the Development of the Race." [78] Ethical, not in the sense of morality, but in the sense of *ethos*, "the quality of the permanent, as opposed to the transient or emotional."[79] Cheatham repeatedly refers to spirituals as "inspirational," a term which she does not define by itself, but always in opposition to

[77] "Music School Settlement Notes," *New York Age* December 10, 1914, 6.

[78] The title is cited in the *New York Age* review ("Music School Settlement Notes," December 10, 1914, 6) and the *New York Tribune* ("Music Notes," December 6, 1914, B7) but not on the stenographer's copy held by the New York Public Library: Kitty Cheatham, "An extemporaneous talk given recently at the Musical School Settlement for Colored People in New York City, by Miss Kitty Cheatham and taken down by a stenographer," Folder 2, "Cheatham, Kitty," M-Clippings (Names), Music Division Clipping File, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Hereafter "An Extemporaneous Talk."

[79] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "ethical, *adj*. and *n*.," March 2020, OED Online; *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "ethos, *n*.," March 2020, OED Online.

"emotional." She argues that spirituals – as a body of sacred music – were created by enslaved persons who understood Biblical teachings and were truly moved to musical expression. "Technicians have argued with me on this subject," she declared, "insisting that only the sensuous emotions of the negro were stirred by the biblical episodes which have inspired your moving and beautiful old songs. I say 'No! No!'."[80]

With this argument, Cheatham reinscribed an essentialist idea that African Americans are naturally musical, as Mannes did, believing that this was because they were closer to God than other races. In her lecture, as was standard in the talks she typically gave, Cheatham cited childhood conversations with her "mammy" as evidence of blacks' true faith. Cheatham's belief in children as being as nearer to the divine neatly complemented the then-commonly held theory of scientific racisim, that African Americans were a biologically distinct and undeveloped race.[81] "It is the spiritual inspiration of that Child [Jesus] we must seek," she condescendingly told the African American members of the audience at the MSSCP, "and you are a child-race."[82] Even assuming that Cheatham intended this point to be constructive, it is shocking to imagine her delivering such a line to a largely African American audience. She further emphasized her point when she noted how children can seem wise beyond their years, which she attributed to divine inspiration. She explained that

> the great things in life cannot be easily defined. We know that there is a great force of unselfed [*sic*] love that impels our greater acts. We feel its potency and power. I, individually, feel this power when I sing these old songs, because I know they

[80] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 1-2.

[81] Robert Wald Sussman defines scientific racism as a belief held by those "who continue to believe that race is a *biological* reality and categorize human 'races' in a hierarchical fashion" (*The Myth of Race: the Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 8).

[82] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 9.

> represent true inspiration, and their creators consciously know this. They will live eternally in the music of the world.[83]

Here is the crux of Cheatham's own, particular take on spirituals. Keeping this musical tradition alive and sounding was to an extent about racial uplift for African Americans and about American music, but neither was the end-all reason to preserve the repertoire. For Cheatham, spirituals were, above all, a source of a divine and universal truth, that, if sung and embodied and listened to, could bring about great moral and social change in the world. At one point in the lecture, she quoted her "mammy's" understanding of Proverbs 20:27, "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." If each individual would believe this sincerely, she argued, "how much quicker we could reveal the spiritual reality of all our brethern and lift them out of the mental slavery that endeavors to hold mankind in bondage to-day."[84] This concept of mental slavery arose from Cheatham's belief as a Christian Scientist that both evil and matter are illusions experienced "entirely due to mortal belief in [their] power and failure to grasp the infinite might of the Spirit."[85] In Cheatham's mind, then, spirituals were a divinely-inspired repertoire coming from a childlike race which could be used as a tool for more closely aligning oneself with the one true reality, God. Cheatham's underlying mission at the MSSCP, and in all of her concerts and lectures, was to articulate this point; in her moral quest, however, Cheatham espoused disturbingly racist rhetoric.

To facilitate the betterment of the world through spirituals, Cheatham believed that the songs first needed to be saved. A headline in the *Detroit News Tribune* put Cheatham's take on the issue this way: "Negro Folk Music Declines as Race Shuns Slave Memory, Says Interpreter

[83] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 5.

[84] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 2.

[85] Stephen Gottschalk, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 65.

of Melody: Cheap Compositions Replacing Higher Forms of Songs because of this Desire to Forget Ignominy of Servitude." The article quoted Cheatham at length explaining her position:

> "The Negro of today is allowing one of his greatest heritages, his wonderful folk music, to slip from him and instead is taking only the cheapest forms of the compositions by whites for his amusement," stated Miss Kittie [*sic*] Cheatham, one of the most noted interpreters of Negro music, in her recital in the Detroit opera house Friday afternoon. "The members of the race seem to fear that any reference to the days of slavery has the mark of disgrace, but slavery days for the people were in distinct growth from the days of barbarism for the race. In slavery they evolved capabilities for expressing a high form of music, wholly their own, and the development was rapid. Today they are not only not developing it, but they are even losing what they had."[86]

In this explanation and hundreds more like it in the years before the end of WWI, Cheatham presented a twisted interpretation of history: without mention of the horrors of slavery, she instead cited it as a positive system, both for African Americans in general and for their music in particular. Slavery, in her view, had led to racial, musical, and national progress; Cheatham did not recognize that ignoring the inhumanity of slavery harmed the very people she professed to care for.

Kitty Cheatham, Southerner

Though Cheatham makes only two mentions of the past in her MSSCP talk, these short sections are the most striking. They demonstrate her infallible faith in a future realized through personal, internal overcoming of evil; more importantly, they show her willingness to forget the painful national trauma of slavery and the Civil War. In so doing, she was participating in a larger, contemporary movement dedicated to the formalization of segregation and white supremacy. One aspect of this process, as discussed above, was Cheatham's constant

[86] "Negro Folk Music Declines as Race Shuns Slave Memory, Says Interpreter of Melody," *Detroit News Tribune*, November 16, 1912, *RL* 79.

remembering of her loving, wise, and obedient "mammy." As for less positive aspects of recent history, Cheatham urged her audience to keep moving forward:

> Let us cease to think about the unpleasant things of the past; let us put aside and forget all sc[h]isms; let us forget race or creed, North or South; and once more let us eliminate from our own consciousness those qualities which have brought forth this unhappy condition which exists to-day.[87]

Instead of focusing on the problems of American society, she encouraged the African Americans in her audience to embrace the pure qualities of spirituals as a way to better the nation. "God has given you, through your music," she announced, "the essential fundamentals that are needed to build up His universal Temple – 'Not made with hands.'"[88]

Well before the MSSCP lecture, audiences and the press had recognized Cheatham as an expert on spirituals because she was a Southerner, singing what was considered Southern music. One of hundreds of press notices to emphasize this fact in relation to her career had appeared earlier in 1914 in the monthly news and literature magazine *Current Opinion*:

> Kitty Cheatham is a Tennessee woman, the daughter of a Southern General, and she has made a special study of the old songs and folk-lore of the negroes. Always one part of her programs is devoted to a brief talk, with illustrations, on the origin, growth and development of negro music. Miss Cheatham is the only artist before the public today who is equipped by birth and personal observation to speak with authority upon this profoundly interesting subject…She sings these songs with the realism and inspiration that only a Southerner could impart. [89]

As early as the 1880s, historian Nina Silber has argued, white Northerners "accepted the idea that southern white people, simply because of their southern birthplace, possessed a unique

[87] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 9.

[88] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 9.

[89] "Kitty Cheatham, a Masterly Interpreter of the Spirit of Childhood in All People," *Current Opinion*, February 1914, 119, *RL* 98.

understanding of blacks and race relations."[90] Even without having heard Cheatham perform, one could simply assume that she was an expert.

Cheatham was not merely a daughter of the South, either: two elements of her personal history deepened her authenticity but also tied her to racist ideologies and complicated her relationship with spirituals. One was her family lineage, which she claimed stretched back to the earliest U.S.-American settlers and further to the Anglo-Saxons. She stated:

> My American forefathers were cavaliers who came to Virginia in the early days of that colony and settled on the present site of Fredericksburg. But our family strikes root far back into the Anglo-Saxon soil of the tenth century, and the blood of those sturdy Angles mixed later with the Norman strain that followed the Conqueror from France.[91]

On the surface, this was a way for Cheatham to show how music was in her blood. She recalled "a weird, uncanny feeling of recalling rather than learning for the first time the old-fashioned chansonettes and early English songs" that were part of her programs. But it was also a way of aligning herself with a movement of white racial purity. Historian Melvyn Stokes notes that in the mid-nineteenth century, "some members of the American elite began to regard themselves not only as sharing the same descent from Anglo-Saxons roots as the English but also as members of the same Anglo-Saxon *race*," one supposedly characterized by racial purity, "a particular genius for self-government," and superiority over all other races.[92] Cheatham's connection to this part of her history played into early twentieth-century fears held by wealthy, white U.S.-Americans, who believed that other races were ascending at an alarming rate. Though critics did not frequently conjure Anglo-Saxons to prove Cheatham's reliability – just

[90] Silber, *Romance of Reunion*, 140.

[91] Mlle. Manhattan, "Dainty Kitty Cheatham," *RL* 5. Also the following quote.

[92] Melvyn Stokes, *D.W. Griffith's* The Birth of a Nation: *A History of 'The Most Controversial Motion Picture of All Time* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 211-212.

Southernness was fine for that – it made up a significant piece of her entry in the *Cyclopedia of American Biography* published in the mid 1920s. Her very surname, according to the article, was from "the little village of Chetham (Anglo-Saxon, *cyte*, a cottage, and *ham*, home or village[…])."[93]

The second part of Cheatham's history that impacted her public image was that her relatives fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Her father, Colonel Richard Boone Cheatham (1824-1877), was mayor of Nashville from 1860-62, during which time he had to surrender the city to the Union Army.[94] His cousin was Confederate General Benjamin Franklin Cheatham.[95] Instead of being at odds with her support of African American musical traditions, however, this only buttressed Cheatham's air of authority. By the early twentieth century, Confederate veterans were largely viewed not for treason against the United States but for their conviction to a cause – the Lost Cause. In light of class and gender conflicts during the 1880s and 1890s, Northerners began to view the South as an idyllic place free from the social troubles that characterized Northern cities. Cheatham's audiences, largely white Northern urban dwellers, could find an escape in the nostalgia she wove through her performances. Elites in the North sympathized with, and were fascinated by, the post-bellum devastation faced by many Southern elites. Cheatham was not from one of these plantation families (her father is listed as a grocer in the 1860 and 1870 census), but her family was nevertheless well known in Tennessee. And, as

[93] "Cheatham, Catherine Smiley," *Cyclopedia of American Biography*. Focus on prestigious family history is even more evident in the copy held at the Tennessee State Library and Archive. Someone, whether Cheatham or perhaps another relative, has corrected the spelling of Cheatham's mother's maiden name from "Bugg" to "Bugge (Norse spelling)."

[94] Wikipedia, s.v. "Richard Boone Cheatham," last modified September 15, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Boone_Cheatham. He later served in the Tennessee legislature and died suddenly when Cheatham was twelve ("Death of Col. R. B. Cheatham," *Daily American, Nashville*, May 8, 1877, 4).

[95] Richard and Benjamin were likely mixed up in the *Current Opinion* piece (n89 above).

Silber explains, "Northerners showed compassion not for the Confederate cause, but for the sacrifice and ultimate failure which that cause had generated."[96] "She was born of one of the old families of the South," pronounced a 1911 feature on Cheatham, "In the human tapestry of her background there were generals and judges of the revolutionary period, more jurists and generals of the Civil War."[97]

While Cheatham did not grow up during slavery (and it does not seem that her parents, married in 1860, owned slaves), she began her MSSCP lecture by positioning herself as one generation removed from the institution. She was not there to teach the audience about the "terrifying technicalities" of the music itself, she assured them. Instead, she expressed "a very profound affection" for spirituals and explained that she understood them as few could:

> During our civil war, a unique condition of things existed. I think I speak accurately when I say that it was a condition that has never been paralleled in the history of nations. When the men of the South were off fighting against the cause that would emancipate the negro, the negro slaves were protecting at home the unprotected women and children of the South who were left alone. As far as I know these faithful guardians were never known to betray a trust. I wonder if such a thing could happen in the world to-day! I stand before you a child of the protected, speaking, from my heart, to the children of those protectors.[98]

From a structural point of view, starting the talk with her qualifications makes sense. But this move also speaks to a larger point, that in couching her narrative with this history, she was asserting her power over African American music. In an interview a few months before her MSSCP lecture, Cheatham had expressed concern that many African Americans were wrongly concerned with their own forgetting, recalling slavery "with contempt":

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[96] Silber, *Romance of Reunion*, 55. See also Cox, *Dixie's Daughters*. I have found no evidence that Cheatham was a member of the UDC: the only material suggesting Confederate sympathy in the Kitty Cheatham Papers at the Tennessee State Library and Archive is a pamphlet concerning the Stone Mountain Confederate memorial in Georgia (Box 1).

[97] Patterson, "The Art of Kitty Cheatham," 210.

[98] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 1.

> I do not want to be thought a defender of slavery, for it was an unfortunate condition. But it was the association with the Southern families that brought out the negro's best qualities and evolved his wonderful spirituals.[99]

Cheatham's euphemistic language here is an example of what historian David Blight has described as a "compulsion to remember faithful slaves" and forget "the myriad ways that blacks joined the revolution for their own freedom," a simultaneous remembering and forgetting which was a common tactic for promoting white supremacy in the early twentieth century.[100] The fact that spirituals "saved" Cheatham in a sense – or, more cynically, that she was using them for her own benefit from day one – quickly became overshadowed by her emphasis on spirituals as her Southern heritage.

Along these lines, Cheatham's second mention of the past in the lecture centers on its relation to the future. Some things are best forgotten, Cheatham explained, as she advocated for the preservation of spirituals over other forms of black artistic expression:

> There is much that is chronicled of your radical expression, such as "Voodoism," certain unpleasant savage dancing, etc. This is, of course, necessary for so-called historical accuracy. We are makers of a new history today. Let us wipe out the ugly things of the past – no individual would care to read a so-called accurate record of his own life – let us preserve the things that are worth preserving. Therefore I beg you to preserve your old songs and may you yourselves write now and in the future, with the same ideas ever before you.[101]

Here Cheatham advocates for a particular kind of memory, focusing on what she sees as the good that came out of slavery: spirituals. Hale argues that after Reconstruction, "the orderly division of time into past, present, and future" became hazier, with (white) stories of idyllic,

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[99] A. W. K. [Arthur Walter Kramer], "Kitty Cheatham Urges Fisk University Students to Preserve Old Spiritual" *Musical America* 20 no. 4 (May 30, 1914): 9.

[100] David Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 287.

[101] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 6.

bygone days, when blacks and whites knew their respective places, supposedly justifying a segregated present.[102]

This forgetting appears again appears in the portion of her talk which Cheatham devoted to recalling an "incident" which she thought would be "of particular interest" to the audience: her visit earlier that year with famed African American pianist and original Fisk Jubilee Singer Ella Sheppard Moore (1851-1914).[103] Sheppard, who died just a month after Cheatham visited her in Nashville, was a celebrity among those dedicated to the preservation of spirituals, and Cheatham eagerly recounted her interaction with this famed musician in her lecture and in a *Musical America* article. The article described Cheatham's meeting as "one of the big experiences of her life."[104] Like she told her Harlem audience, Cheatham explained to the journal that "the negro of [the antebellum period] was a fine type," "never known to betray a trust." For both the lecture and in the journal article, Cheatham explained that there was actually a history between the Cheatham and Sheppard families:

> I had often heard my mother [Frances] say that when she was a child her mother one day heard some one playing upon the piano in a remarkable manner. Upon entering the drawing-room, she saw a little colored girl, the child of her maid, sitting on the piano stool; her little feet were a considerable distance from the floor. This child was Ella Shepard, who afterwards became the pianist of the original Jubilee Singers.[105]

That Cheatham's grandmother Catherine Bugg employed Sheppard's stepmother Cornelia is an extraordinary coincidence that only adds to the "meant to be" aura Cheatham fostered around her work with spirituals. This scenario is hard to prove, but seems grounded in truth and would have

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[102] Hale, *Whiteness*, 48.

[103] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 4.

[104] "Kitty Cheatham Urges Fisk University Students." Also the following quotation.

[105] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 4. There are a few more details in "Kitty Cheatham Urges," that the maid's name was Cornelia, that Cheatham's grandmother could tell "from the way the piano was being played" that it was not one of her own children.

taken place when Sheppard was between the ages of three and nine. Sheppard's enslaved mother, Sarah, was forced to move to Mississippi in 1854 while her husband Simon, who had purchased his own freedom, stayed behind with Ella. He remarried, and bought the freedom of his new wife, Cornelia; the trio stayed in Nashville until late 1860, the timing of which aligns with Cheatham's story.[106]

Her visit with Sheppard was an extraordinary moment in Cheatham's career as a singer of spirituals; the older musician's approval of her work was significant both to Cheatham and others interested in the repertoire. Cheatham told the MSSCP audience that when inviting her to speak at Fisk University, Sheppard had said, "'it is not often that a woman brought up as you have been can stand with one of my race on a platform, and speak to negro students on the subject we both feel so deeply about.'"[107] Cheatham recalled how she spoke to the Fisk students for an hour, describing the experience as "unforgettable" and Sheppard "a thoroughly equipped musician," "a wonderful woman and an honor to her race."[108] Indeed, Cheatham noted, Sheppard confirmed the idea that spirituals were inspirational instead of emotional. "'When we went on our tour, Miss Kitty,'" Cheatham recalled her saying, "'we never gave a concert, we never went on the stage to sing, until we had knelt down and asked God to make us pure enough and humble enough to go before the people and lift and heal them with our music.'"[109] As with Burleigh, Sheppard's deep Christian faith meant that her views were generally aligned with Cheatham's understanding of spirituals. African American Fisk professor John Wesley Work, author of *Folk Song of the American Negro* (1915), was also a supporter of Cheatham; after her Fisk lecture, she

[106] See Andrew Ward, *Dark Midnight When I Rise: The Story of the Jubilee Singers Who Introduced the World to the Music of Black America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 4-8.

[107] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 4.

[108] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 4-5.

[109] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 5.

recalled, he "rose and paid me a wonderful tribute, impressing on the students the debt the negro owes me for my preserving the old songs and taking them all over the country and to Europe as I have done."[110] Here is one of the moments where the complexity of Cheatham's legacy emerges: even when two respected African American leaders sincerely praised her work with spirituals, when *Musical America* acknowledged that a white Southern woman doing this work was "an unusual as well as a magnificent undertaking," when she clearly loved the music to which she dedicated her career, Cheatham was still complicit in supporting structures of white supremacy.

Kitty Cheatham, Folklorist

Cheatham wielded her authority on spirituals to assert herself in conversations about what African American music should be, by focusing on what it had been. There was room within this overarching goal for Cheatham to situate spirituals as folk music, making her one of many players in a broader debate regarding spirituals and/as folk music in the United States. Writing in 1913, Cheatham's contemporary, *New York Tribune* music critic Henry Krehbiel (1854-1923), assessed the situation, emphasizing that the question of how spirituals fit into U.S.-American musical life was really a series of interlocking questions:

> There has been anything but a dearth of newspaper and platform talk about the songs which the negroes sang in America when they were slaves, [and] most of it has revolved around the questions whether or not the songs were original creations of these native blacks, whether or not they were entitled to be called American and whether or not they were worthy of consideration as foundation[al] elements for a school of American compositions.[111]

[110] "Kitty Cheatham Urges Fisk University Students," 9. Also the following quotation.

[111] Henry Krehbiel, "Study of Music of American Negroes," *New-York Tribune*, June 29, 1913, B4. For an overview of Krehbiel's position in American musical life, see Joseph Horowitz, "Henry Krehbiel: The German-American Transaction" in *Moral Fire: Musical Portraits from America's fin de siècle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 74-123.

Composers and critics held varying – and sometimes strong – opinions on these questions. Cultural leaders, black and white, weighed in on the meanings and uses of spirituals, from Frederick Douglass and members of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, to the white collectors and transcribers of *Slave Songs of the United States* (1867) and the editors of *The Journal of American Folk-Lore*, whose editors declared in their first edition (1888) that music belonging to "the American negroes" was part of its mission to study.[112]

The greatest flurry of debate regarding spirituals as American music had occurred over twenty years before the publication of Krehbiel's article, while Cheatham was still working as an actress in traveling companies. Czech composer Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904), during his stint as leader of the National Conservatory in New York, had famously proclaimed in 1893 that what he called "negro melodies" were indeed American and "must be the real foundation of any serious and original school of composition to be developed in the United States."[113] Several of the country's leading white composers of art music, including John Knowles Paine and Amy Beach, were skeptical; Krehbiel, however, sniffed at critics who in their disagreement "disclosed nothing so much as their want of intelligent discrimination unless it was their ungenerous and illiberal attitude toward a body of American citizens."[114]

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[112] The latter stated, somewhat begrudgingly: "It is also to be wished that thorough studies were made of negro music and songs. Such inquiries are becoming difficult, and in a few years will be impossible. Again, the great mass of beliefs and superstitions which exist among this people need attention, and present interesting and important psychological problems, connected with the history of a race who, for good or ill, are henceforth an indissoluble part of the body politic of the United States" ("On the Field and Work of a Journal of American Folk-Lore" *Journal of American Folklore* 1, no. 1 (April-June, 1888): 5). Jon Cruz, *Culture on the Margins: The Black Spiritual and the Rise of American Cultural Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) studies how understandings of spirituals changed over the course of the nineteenth century. Sandra Jean Graham, *Spirituals and the Birth of a Black Entertainment Industry* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018) also covers spirituals in the nineteenth century, but through the study of performers like the Fisk Jubilee Singers and similar groups.

[113] "Real Value of Negro Melodies," *New York Herald*, May 21, 1893, 28. See also Adrienne Fried Block, "Dvořák, Beach, and American Music," in *A Celebration of American Music: Words and Music in Honor of H. Wiley Hitchcock* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990), 256-280. Block notes that in an 1895 *Harper's* article, Dvořák widened his stance to say that really any type of folk music would do (261).

Cheatham did not advocate for African American music as a foundation of a national school of art music, but she was adamant that this repertoire was American and worthy of preservation. She spent some of her MSSCP lecture trying to drive home their place on the world music stage as folk songs. At the beginning of her lecture, she addressed the African Americans in the audience, exclaiming, "Do you realize that your folk-music has a unique place in the folk-music of the world?"[115] Two years before, a reporter had noted that Cheatham was careful to make the distinction that spirituals should not be termed "negro folk songs," but "folk songs of the American negro," emphasizing that they were, at their core, part of a larger body of music and making them seem more broadly appealing and relevant to the (white) nation.[116]

In the one section of her lecture where Cheatham dives into spirituals-as-folksong, she again reiterates that the repertory "came forth inspirationally, and that is why you [African Americans] must reverence them and treasure them."[117] She then provided what seemed to be her own definition of folk song, stating that "everything that it is uttered, spontaneously, with purity and a simple childlike faith, as its basis of expression, has a lasting value." Again, the racism inherent in her connection between spirituals and the childlike is astounding. Nevertheless, her statement is similar to Krehbiel's definition of folk music as "a body of poetry and music which has come to existence without the influence of conscious art, as a spontaneous utterance, filled with characteristic expression of the feelings of a people."[118] Earlier in 1914,

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[114] See Block for more detail. Henry E. Krehbiel, "Study of Music of American Negroes," *New-York Tribune*, June 29, 1913, B4.

[115] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 1.

[116] I.W., "Miss Cheatham Delights Audience," [*New York Journal*], *RL* 74.

[117] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 2. Also the following quotation.

Krehbiel had published his book *Afro-American Folksongs*, expanded from a series of *New York Tribune* articles printed during the summer of 1913 and focused on "scientific study" of spirituals' musical elements.

Cheatham and Krehbiel both valued spirituals as American music, but one difference in their approaches was how exactly they positioned the "American-ness" not just of the repertoire, but of African Americans.[119] Krehbiel, in his published volume, presents his work quite directly to a white audience, pointing out current injustices suffered by African Americans. He argues passionately for inclusion and recognition of both music and its creators: "They [spirituals] were created in America under American influences and by people who are Americans in the same sense that any other element of our population is American," he wrote.[120] Cheatham, in contrast, comes across in her lecture as unconcerned about advocating for African Americans as true Americans, whether or not she was outside of her lecturing. She declared that "We are all American citizens," drawing upon her Christian Science beliefs that all people needed to attend to "freeing ourselves from the mental slavery which is obviously manifesting itself in the whole world to-day."[121] Again, Cheatham had made spirituals *her* domain; regardless of the intent behind or reception of her message, others, like Krehbiel, seem to have listened to African American voices when Cheatham chose to speak.

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[118] H. E. Krehbiel, "Folk-Song," in *The Musical Guide*, ed. Rupert Hughes (New York: McClure, Phillips, 1903), 131-132. Cited in Henry Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs: A Study in Racial and National Music* (New York: G. Schirmer, 1914), 2.

[119] Unlike the Southern-born Cheatham, Krehbiel was first-generation German-American, and Horowitz attributes his interest in folksong in part to his "quest for American roots" ("Henry Krehbiel," 78). Krehbiel and Cheatham would likely have met at the MSSCP, if not elsewhere in New York City, but their acquaintance seems to be largely undocumented.

[120] Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs*, 26. Horowitz notes that much of Krehbiel's passion was directed against the likes of Boston critic Rupert Hughes, who believed (in Horowitz's words) that "Negroes and Indians […] sat too low on the evolutionary scale to contribute fundamentally to American identity" ("Henry Krehbiel," 98).

[121] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 8.

Krehbiel was one of several lecturers who participated in the MSSCP lecture series in addition to Cheatham. Cheatham was part of an eclectic, mixed-race group of speakers at the school: most addressed folksong, or a musical topic more broadly, but not all did (see Table 1).[122]

Table 1.1. Speakers at the Music School Settlement Lecture Series, winter 1914-1915. From information in the article "Music Notes," *New-York Tribune*, December 6, 1914, B7.

Speaker	Profession	Title
Henry Edward Krehbiel	music critic	"Afro-American Folk Songs"
Talcott Williams	Columbia University journalism professor	"Art and Music of Africa," with stereopticon illustrations of African sculpture and design
W. E. Burghardt Du Bois	author, activist	"The History of the Negro Race"
Kurt Schindler	conductor of the Schola Cantorum	"Folk Music of Russia"
Howard Brockway	composer	"Grieg and Scandinavian Folk Music"
David Mannes	School founder	"The Violin"
Walter Damrosch	New York Symphony director	"The Orchestra"
Thomas Mott Osborne	Warden of Sing-Sing	"Beethoven and His Music"
Canon C. W. Douglas	Canon of cathedral in Fon-du-lac, Wisconsin	"Church Music and Its History," including a survey of early Christian chants in Northern Africa
George McAneny	New York City alderman	"The City and Our Relation to It"

Curtis began the series herself with a talk on November 29, 1914.[123] "A large and delighted audience assembled to hear Miss Natalie Curtis in her instructive lecture on 'The Life, Folk Music and Customs of the American Indian,' reported the *New York Age*. "Miss Curtis

[122] "Music Notes," *New-York Tribune*, December 6, 1914, B7.

[123] "Lecture Course at Negro Music Settlement," *Musical America* 21, no. 5 (December 5, 1914): 37.

handled her subject in a masterly manner and her charming rendition of Indian songs in the native tongue evoked frequent applause."[124] On December 13th, Australian pianist, composer, and folklorist Percy Grainger gave a short recital which included Irish folk-song and an English morris dance. Krehbiel described Grainger as a fine pianist and "a musical folklorist of deep insight and capacious enthusiasms, as the work which he has done for British folk-song bears witness."[125] New York papers also advertised lectures by Dora Cole Norman, an African American activist and sister of performer Bob Cole, and Eva Gauthier, a Canadian mezzo soprano who spoke on Javanese music.[126]

African American intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois (1868-1963), who spoke at the Settlement a few weeks after Cheatham gave her lecture, was originally slated to give a lecture titled "The History of the Negro Race." The title of the lecture he did give, in which he argued that high culture in the African past led to the "excellence" of African-American song, was

[124] "Music School Settlement Notes," *New York Age*, December 3, 1914, 8. It is unclear how many people were in the audience for this or any other lecture in the series, though a report in the *New York Age* warned a few days before the lecture that "Tickets are going rapidly and it is advisable to call or write for reserved seats" ("Music School Settlement Notes," *New York Age*, November 26, 1914, 8).

[125] H. E. Krehbiel, "Archaic Music and Folksongs," *New York Tribune*, December 14, 1914, 9. In Granger's honor, there were faculty performances: Johnson discussed similarities between his "Under the Bamboo Tree" and "Nobody Knows the Trouble I See" and performed in a piano trio. Violinist Felix Wier and cellist Leonard Jeter played "Afro-American folk-songs" arranged as duets. A Miss Richardson "played two of Coleridge-Taylor's transcriptions of African dances capitally."

[126] "Music Notes" *New-York Tribune*, December 20, 1914, B7. A similar list appears in "Music School Settlement Notes," *New York Age*, November 26, 1914, 8. Other lectures that took place in 1915 and early 1916 included baritone Francis Rogers performing English and American songs "followed by impromptu offerings of negro folk music by colored performers" ("Christmas Week Songs, Singers, and Recitals," *New-York Tribune*, December 19, 1915, B7); "Folk Songs of Different Nations," by Walter L. Bogert, January 3 (or 10) 1915 ("Music Notes," *New-York Tribune*, January 3, 1915); "Mr. and Mrs. Henry L. Gideon, who have made a collection of Hebrew traditional chants and folksongs, will give a recital at the Music School Settlement for Colored People, 4 West 131st Street, this afternoon" ("At the Metropolitan," *New York Times*, January 9, 1916, X6). There are not evident advertisements for talks in 1916 or 1917; even mentions of concerts are very few. There are a few Sunday afternoon concerts listed in January, 1916: Jewish folksongs on one occasion, a concert by Harry T. Burleigh and Charles L. Safford on another ("Calendar for the Current Week," *New York Times*, January 9, 1916, B7and "Calendar for the Current Week," *New York Times*, January 16, 1916, B7).

instead "The Social Significance of Negro Folksong."[127] A *New York Tribune* writer sniffed that Du Bois's argument was "an interesting if somewhat fantastic theory…scarcely borne out by scientific study of the music itself."[128] While there are multiple explanations as to why Du Bois may have changed his lecture, it seems possible that after listening to Cheatham's take on spirituals, he wanted to offer another version of history that looked not toward slavery but toward racial pride.

Du Bois, like Cheatham, prescribed to a broadly-held early twentieth-century idea of racial development and progress over time. Historian Mia Bay has studied how social Darwinism had "profound impact" on Du Bois and other African American intellectuals.[129] She writes that while this theory of evolutionary struggle often meant white thinkers assigned blacks to a losing position, black thinkers "did not rule out the possibility that they might ultimately rise to a higher rank."[130] In terms of music, this meant striving for the development of African American music towards the lofty goal of European art music. As Lawrence Schenbeck has argued, "classical music was important to…northern strivers not only because it was linked to moral improvement and racial 'evolution,' […] but also because it conferred social status."[131] In his 1903 *Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois outlined four stages "in the development of the slave song": African music, Afro-American music, "a blending of Negro music with the music heard in the foster land," and a fourth stage wherein "the songs of white America have been distinctively influenced by the

[127] "Fremstad Sings."

[128] "Fremstad Sings." If this critic was Krehbiel, it is possible he meant that Du Bois was giving too much emphasis to the African elements of spirituals, while Krehbiel gave more emphasis on their American development.

[129] Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African American Ideas About White People, 1830-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 190. Also the following quotation.

[131] Lawrence Schenbeck, *Racial Uplift and American Music, 1878-1943* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2012), 7.

slave songs."[132] Du Bois's understanding of spirituals did not deny their worth in favor of more "developed" music; he "suggested to his readers that New Negroes' fight for justice did not require renunciation of the old communal traditions central to black culture."[133]

Cheatham, too, acknowledged a trajectory in the history of African American music in her MSSCP lecture, but still considered the race to be less developed than whites: Du Bois took great pains to demonstrate that in 1914 African Americans were not a "child-race," while Cheatham declared in her lecture both that they had been *and* remained so.[134] Beyond the MSSCP event, Cheatham's recital programs show their own change-over-time in language around this repertoire, a development in her thinking about their development. The second part of Cheatham's tripartite programs was usually devoted to African American music. In the program for a 1906 Jordan Hall recital, this second part is further divided into three categories:

> Negro Readings and Songs
>
> Joel Chandler Harris, "The Wonderful Tar Baby Story," "an old negro chant"
>
> Play Songs
>
> "Georgia Buck," "Sat'd'y Night"
>
> Modern Coon Songs
>
> Bond, "Is You?", Burleigh, "W'en de Angels call," Rogers, "Why Adam Sinned," Hein, "Don't Be What You Ain't"[135]

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[132] W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: Essays and Sketches* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1903), 256. See pp. 121-126 in Sarah Schmalenberg, "The Washington Conservatory of Music and African -American musical experience, 1903-1941" (PhD diss., University of Minnesota, 2004) for the impact of Du Bois's thought on spirituals at the Washington Conservatory.

[133] Schenbeck, *Racial Uplift*, 77. Du Bois's 1913 historical pageant *The People of Peoples and Their Gifts to Men*, later re-titled *The Star of Ethiopia*, outlined a musical trajectory similar to that in *Souls*. See Paul Gardullo, "Spectacles of Slavery: Pageantry, Film and Early Twentieth-Century Public Memory," *Slavery & Abolition* 34, no. 2 (2013): 222-235.

[134] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 9.

[135] Concert program, "Miss Kitty Cheatham's 'Morning of Songs for Children,'" Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory, April 20, 1906, New England Conservatory Archives & Special Collections, Jordan Hall Program Scrapbooks, 1903-1964, box 2, page 112. Extant physical programs from various Cheatham recitals include: four in the Jordan Hall collection (1906, 1913, 1913, 1916), one in the Robinson Locke scrapbook (Yale University, 1914), and two in the clipping file for Kitty Cheatham, Houghton Library (Lyceum Theater (New York), 1909, Melrose Women's Club (MA?), 1913).

The "old negro chant" was likely an unaccompanied spiritual paired with a recitation of the audience favorite "The Wonderful Tar Baby Story," by white author and Lost Cause supporter Joel Chandler Harris. Two African American secular songs, which Cheatham later recorded for Columbia Records, came next, followed by "modern coon songs," loosely referring to recently-composed songs by white and African American composers on African American topics.[136] Similarly, there were "two old negro folk songs" arranged by Burleigh featured on Cheatham's December 27, 1909 holiday matinee, and "some old negro songs and sayings" on two 1913 programs.[137]

In later programs, distinctions begin to appear: on Cheatham's May 4, 1914 Yale recital, the end of part I featured "Old Negro Songs and Tales, primitive and undeveloped." Part II consisted of a Swedish number followed by Paul Lawrence Dunbar's "When Malindy Sings" and two "Old Negro Spirituals" harmonized by Burleigh.[138] Here Cheatham distinguishes between levels of musical advancement: she likely sang the first unaccompanied and with the performance style she remembered from her childhood, in contrast to the numbers which the classically-trained Burleigh had arranged. Similarly, in a 1916 Jordan Hall program, Part I consisted entirely "folk (and modern) songs" from seven countries, and "Old Negro Songs and Legends (Primitive and Undeveloped)" were the American contribution. Burleigh's

[136] "Scandalize My Name / Georgia Buck," recorded February 19, 1910, Columbia Col A-5224, 12 in. "Coon songs" were comic popular songs in dialect composed from about 1880 to 1918. According to the *Grove Dictionary*, "The term 'coon' had been in use as a pejorative term for blacks by the end of the Civil War" and looked back to the blackface minstrel character Zip Coon." Grove Music Online, s.v. "Coon song," by Brandi A. Neal, published online October 16, 2013, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2249084.

[137] Concert program, "Miss Kitty Cheatham's Annual Holiday Matinee," Lyceum Theatre [New York City], December 27, 1909, in "Cheatham, Kitty," Clipping File, Houghton Library, Harvard College Library; Concert program, "Kitty Cheatham, Flora MacDonald Wills, accompanist," January 18, 1913, Jordan Hall Program Scrapbooks, September 1912-June 1913, 25; Concert program, "Kitty Cheatham, Flora MacDonald Wills, accompanist," March 27, 1913, Jordan Hall Program Scrapbooks, September 1912-June 1913, 58.

[138] "Kitty Cheatham Recital," Woolsey Hall [Yale University], May 4, 1914, *RL* 101.

harmonizations of "Old Negro Spirituals" ended Part II.[139] Like Du Bois, Cheatham saw spirituals as part of a musical chronology, but she was less concerned than others with how spirituals could develop further into Du Bois's later stages of interacting with the music of white America.[140]

Understanding African American music as developing over time was one question; a related issue was whether or not to develop specific musical numbers. One of Cheatham's MSSCP lecture musical examples was "I'm seekin' for a city." After she sang, Cheatham explained that it was

> one of the few [spirituals] that are susceptible of development, without losing their original characteristics. We want to be very careful in transcribing these old things and watch that in harmonization we do not get sophisticated, [as] beautiful, simple, elementary things are apt to be spoiled by sophistication.[141]

By warning against too much sophistication, Cheatham was keeping with her belief that simplicity and truth would lead all of humanity closer to the divine which they otherwise failed to experience.[142] But in so doing, Cheatham also was at her most paternalistic, explaining to the

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[139] Concert program, "Kitty Cheatham in her Unique and Original Entertainment," Jordan Hall, November 11, 1916, Jordan Hall Program Scrapbooks, October 1916-June 1917, 18. It seems that 1916 was for Cheatham a year featuring folk songs of many lands. In a *Musical America* advertisement: "Perhaps the greatest of Miss Cheatham's achievements, from a purely artistic point of view, was the singing of a group of folk songs from France, Holland, Russia, Japan, Scotland and England, which she sang, all save the Japanese, in the native dialect. Besides, of course, there were old Negro folk songs, some of them harmonized by H.T. Burleigh")Sylvester Rawlings, *Evening World* quoted in "Kitty Cheatham's Remarkable Record of Four Different Programmes in Nine Days," *Musical America* 23 no. 11 (January 15, 1916): 10).

[140] A plan by Du Bois for a pageant similar to the *Star* clearly shows the evolution of black music in seven stages, with the spiritual "Roll, Jordan, Roll" followed by music of Harry Burleigh, "the developed folk song." Schenbeck, *Racial Uplift*, 104, table 2.1.

[141] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 6-7.

[142] Cheatham warned that not all folk music was suited to this work: "Miss Cheatham spoke eloquently and convincingly of the harm resulting from the belief that folk-song is an infallibly desirable musical offering. This notion, carried to its logical conclusion, has brought before children innumerable things utterly unsuited to their needs. She has labored ceaselessly, therefore, to select from among the folk-songs of all nations those of a purely impersonal character, uplifting and spiritually stimulating in their nature. Music such as this, she feels, the present condition of humanity imperatively demands" (H.F.P., "Perpetuating Kitty Cheatham's Art on the Talking-Machine," *Musical America* 24, no. 3 (May 20 1916): 43).

audience how African American music should be treated, believing her expertise to be the last word. Also at issue were questions of authenticity. Cheatham cited Ella Sheppard as saying that "she [Sheppard] had begged to have the old hymns written down in their crude, elementary expression," but instead others were concerned that "people who had never heard them, would not understand what they meant."[143] Schenbeck also identifies some musicians' anxiety related to this issue as rooted in the belief "that arranged spirituals – certainly the most commonly encountered specimens of 'uplift' music – sadly sacrificed authenticity for polish."[144] Cheatham never made entirely clear where she stood on this issue, seeming to suggest case-by-case decisions (via her expertise) were best.

Whether Cheatham was performing "undeveloped" spirituals or harmonized versions with Burleigh on the piano, she was recognized as an expert who was doing valuable work in preserving national heritage. In *Afro-American Folksongs*, Krehbiel noted that "trained musicians" did not begin studying spirituals early enough in the nineteenth century, leading to the loss of crucial context and musical detail.[145] Though Cheatham was not considered a professional folklorist like Natalie Curtis, her self-promoted qualifications, particularly that her understanding was rooted in first-hand experience, was enough for many interested in American folk life. In *Folk Song of the American Negro*, John Wesley Work listed Cheatham in the section "Agencies of Preservation and Development," alongside Sheppard, Burleigh, Du Bois, Krehbiel, and Dvořák. A few months after her MSSCP lecture, Cheatham gave a talk on "negro folk lore"

[143] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 5.

[144] Schenbeck, *Racial Uplift*, 117. Nathaniel Dett, for one, "vigorously countered" these claims.

[145] Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folksongs*, 26.

at the University of Texas (Austin), organized "through the efforts of Prof. John Lomax, an authority on folk-lore," one of the most prolific folksong collectors in U.S. history.[146]

Indeed, Cheatham received credit in press coverage as being a national hero of sorts for her preservation work. A critic writing for the Santa Barbara *Morning Press* seemed to be caught up in Cheatham's enthusiasm for her topic, stating that after a concert that "there is no American born who does not feel the strong underlying tone of negro lore."[147] Cheatham even served a yardstick for performers of other national musics (at least in *Musical America*, whose critics adored her). In a review of Indian music performed by Englishwoman Ratan Devī, a *Musial America* reviewer gave readers a frame of reference by stating that many of Devī's musical numbers recalled "certain details of melodic formation in those pure negro spirituals of which Kitty Cheatham is to-day the superlative exponent."[148] A publicity pamphlet similarly described Cheatham as

> unceasing in her research, and her own country owes her a debt of gratitude, not only for the beautiful spirit which she propagates in her rare programs of song and story, but for the inestimable value which her authoritative work has been in preserving the old negro folk songs and tales."[149]

For Cheatham, the repertoire she was preserving was the only true American folk music, but as it was still her own music, she defined black music in a very narrow way, and she was not afraid to publicize her opinions.

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[146] "Personalities – Cheatham," *Musical America* 21, no. 25 (April 24, 1915): 22.

[147] "Kitty Cheatham is Alluring in Song, Story and Folk Lore," *Morning Press, Santa Barbara*, February 14, 1913, *RL* 84.

[148] "Exotic Beauties in Ratan Devi's Art: Hindoo Song Strikingly Illustrated in Singer's First American Appearance," *Musical America* 23, no. 2 (April 22, 1916): 44.

[149] "Kitty Cheatham: The Distinguished American Diseuse," [January, 1915], [2], Folder 3, "Cheatham, Kitty," M-Clippings (Names), Music Division Clipping File, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

Kitty Cheatham, Authority

Cheatham championed spirituals – music of the past – in part as an antidote to modern-day African American popular music of which she disapproved. One of Cheatham's opening salvos in the MSSCP talk, after she declared African American folk music as extraordinary and unique, established her authority:

> For years I have defended the inspirational well-springs of this music. I have pleaded for its serious recognition in America and in Europe, and I have ceaselessly protested against its counterfeit being called negro music.[150]

Its counterfeit – something not genuine, an imitation – was, in her mind, African American popular music, and ragtime in particular. Ragtime, with its distinct "ragged" or syncopated rhythm, included both instrumental (especially piano) and vocal music and was highly popular between approximately 1890 and 1918.[151] At several points in her talk and in other interviews, Cheatham focused on the idea of imitation and its supposed manifestation in some forms of African American music. Her concern was ostensibly rooted in care for uplift and racial dignity, but as she warned against ragtime and dancing, she was prescribing what blackness should sound and act like.

Cheatham had been in the audience for the May 2, 1912 Clef Club Orchestra concert, which served as a fundraiser for the Music School Settlement where she would give her lecture two years later. During an interview for *Musical America* later that week (in which she expressed her relief that Burleigh did not participate), she admitted to being "sadly disappointed" in the concert because the artists did not perform spirituals, stating that

> instead they sang popular "ragtime" songs, the kind of thing one can hear in any Broadway musical comedy or *cabaret*; the negro seems to be ashamed of his old

[150] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 1.

[151] Grove Music Online, s.v. "Ragtime," by Edward A. Berlin, published online October 16, 2013, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2252241.

> melodies, those which grew out of his period of slavery. It may even be that he does not like to sing them because they recall the days of bondage, but even so the beautiful melodies which I have sung at my recitals time and again with Mr. Burleigh, sad as some may be, are surely music that leads to light, free from the sensuality and the ribaldry which ragtime embodies.[152]

In fact, Cheatham had never been a fan of ragtime and the vaudeville contexts in which it was often performed; in 1902, she had made headlines for refusing to sing at a dinner party in Newport for this reason. A Mrs. Pembroke Jones was hosting seventy guests, including the Duchess of Marlborough and the Russian ambassador; the scheduled entertainers in addition to Cheatham were reportedly several "singers of 'coon' songs."[153] One paper explained afterword that "[Cheatham's] social position would not permit her appearance with such artists, and while she does sing plantation melodies, she is far removed from a 'coon' singer."[154] Cheatham wrote in to a New York paper to clarify the scenario, claiming it was neither the guests nor the other performers that made her leave, but the fact that the entertainment was to occur while the guests were dining: "what made it impossible for me to sing was the fact that the concert was given on a stage adjoining the dining room, while the guests were actually at table eating, I presume, and smoking."[155]

Even as her career singing spirituals was just beginning, Cheatham was careful to distinguish between coon songs and spirituals – perhaps even understanding them as "low art" and "high art." The distinction was not just about keeping the two art forms separate, but about the social class associations connected with each. In her explanation, her refusal was seemingly

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[152] A. W. K., "Kitty Cheatham's Summer Abroad."

[153] "Didn't Sing for the Duke," *The Sun* (Baltimore), September 12, 1902, 1. These included "Heathe Gregory, basso; Miss Dollie Leach and Miss Murray, singers of 'coon' songs, one of whom has sung before royalty in England; Sydney Grant, an imitator, and George Doe, another 'coon' singer."

[154] "Didn't Sing."

[155] "Why She Didn't Sing," *Nashville American*, September 17, 1902, 7.

informed by her view of herself as an artist, if not respect for the repertoire itself, while the initial coverage looked to her "social position," conjuring her image as a Southern lady careful to distance herself from other white performers of more lowly repertoire.

Regarding the merits of ragtime, Cheatham would have run into some disagreement with members of the audience at the Music School Settlement. Director J. Rosamond Johnson had performed at the Clef Club concert and believed that while it still needed to develop over time, ragtime stood with spirituals as one of the two genres that qualified as "distinctively American music."[156] Lester Walton, music critic for the *New York Age*, wrote in his review of the Clef Club concert that while "many white composers and writers do their best to disparage syncopated music, commonly known as ragtime," whites in the audience perked up and tapped along during the syncopated numbers.[157] Indeed, Edward Berlin has identified multiple points on which those opposed to ragtime took issue with the genre, including supposed moral danger, which was Cheatham's main concern.[158]

A week after her comments on the Clef Club concert were published, Cheatham wrote to *Musical America* to clarify her view, claiming that along with her "regret" about African Americans writing "certain modern, popular compositions," she *had* also expressed "positive appreciation of the interesting songs, 'Swing Along' and 'The Rain Song.'" "The wonderful beauty of [the Clef Club's] united voices – their impeccable rhythm – produced an effect which was stirring and unusual, and I said so," she insisted.[159] (Will Marion Cook's "Swing Along" and

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[156] J. Rosamond Johnson, "Why They Call American Music Ragtime," *Colored American Magazine* 15, no. 1 (January 1, 1909): 638.

[157] Lester A. Walton, "Concert at Carnegie Hall," *New York Age*, May 9, 1912, 6.

[158] Edward Berlin, *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980). See in particular Chapter 3, "The Ragtime Debate," pp. 32-60.

"The Rain Song" from Cook and Rogers's *Bandanna Land* were two numbers that Walton highlighted as particular successes in his *New York Age* review.) Cheatham went on to praise not the musicians directly – no mention of James Reese Europe is made – but Mannes, the school's founder. It was Mannes' work "to encourage the negro to preserve and develop his God-given natural musical expression" that Cheatham agreed with.[160] She stated, with racist ideology:

> The negro of to-day must awaken to the fact that his evolution from savagery to slavery (even in its abuses) was a growth, and the correlative expression of this growth came forth in his music, which in individual and unified expression was of rare beauty and was inspired, usually, by the best emotions of which he was capable. I regret that there is a great tendency among the negroes to-day to ignore this music and its limitless possibilities in development. This fact was obvious at their recent concert. In his expression of freedom the negro must watch himself, that he does not wander into greater bondage through a tendency toward imitation – and its expression in music – of the least desirable traits of the white man. I am sure that the thinking negro of to-day will agree with me.[161]

Musical imitation – a complex and often fraught topic, especially in the context of race – was a concern which Cheatham brought up frequently in her talks and interviews and an issue associated with black musics since the early nineteenth century. Starting in the 1830s, white minstrel performers in blackface combined imitation and imagination to perform gross caricatures of African Americans that became entrenched in U.S.-American, and worldwide, popular culture.[162] Continuing into the twentieth century, whites often (and falsely) assumed that African American musicians were not creating their own music, but merely emulating what they heard white artists produce. In *Afro-American Spirituals*, Krehbiel argued against the charge by

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[159] "Kitty Cheatham's View of the Present-Day Tendency of Negro Music, "*Musical America* 16, no. 2 (May 18, 1912): 34.

[160] In his autobiography, Mannes wrote that he "was always comforted by the thought that the Negro's idea of music in his native sense was intensely religious, and that the majority of them, especially the women, deplored the existence and popularity of jazz music. The high artistic value of the spiritual attests the fact of their fine sense of musical proportion and a naïve devotional quality" (214).

[161] "Kitty Cheatham's View." *Musical America* reprinted this statement the next year in "Wanted – A New Title."

[162] See, among others, Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Austrian writer Richard Wallaschek and others that certain elements of African American songs were also found in European music:

> If the use of such scales and rhythms in the folksongs of the American negroes is an evidence of plagiarism or imitation, it is to be feared that the peoples whose music they put under tribute have been equally culpable with them. Again, if the songs are but copies of 'the national songs of all nations, military signals, well-known marches, German student songs, etc.,' why did white men blacken their faces and imitate these imitations? Were the facilities of the slaves to hear all these varieties of foreign music better than those of their white imitators?[163]

In her warnings against imitation of whites by African American musicians, Cheatham supported the racist view that African Americans were, by nature, primed to imitate. As one paper reported in a paraphrase of one of her talks, "the negro's imitative faculties have in the majority of cases come uppermost making him follow the music of the white race rather than develop the native music that could become so attractive."[164] For Cheatham, imitative popular music was not as authentic and meaningful as spirituals. "My friends, your rare mimetic gifts lead you into temptation," Cheatham told the MSSCP audience. "Imitate only the best."[165]

What is striking about Cheatham's calls for African Americans not to imitate is that, as a white performer of spirituals, some critics occasionally described her as imitating African Americans. Some papers noted that she was a more talented performer than others who "imitate ["negro songs and dialect"] with very varying success," or gave "laborious imitations of the dialect."[166] Another explained that Cheatham did not imitate children but was rather a performer who "interprets child life […] employing the mimetic only so far as it lies within the scope of

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[163] Krehbiel, *Afro-American Folk Songs*, 14.

[164] "Diseuse Charms Audience," *Dallas News*, April 8, 1913, *RL* 87.

[165] "An Extemporaneous Talk," 8.

[166] O. D., "Boston Welcomes Kitty Cheatham," *Musical America* 17, no. 2 (January 25, 1913): 17 (*RL* 83); "Miss Cheatham Gives Recital," *RL* 83.

interpretation."[167] The author continued that in her "delineation of negro character," "she must imitate to a larger extent," though her Southern-ness provided her "fundamental understanding" of her material.[168] A Texas paper, not realizing Cheatham was – and considered herself – a Southerner, wrote that "she showed that if not a Southerner, she is at least acquainted with Southern accents and that she can imitate the music of the negroes with precision."[169]

One lengthy consideration of this issue came from Cheatham's hometown newspaper in 1915 after she spoke in Nashville:

> The negro may or may not be able to gain immensely by imitating the white people in all other things, but there is nothing in the songs of the white people quite so worthy of the negro as are the negro's own songs. Instead of their imitating us, we might well imitate them – if we could. But the negro song cannot be successfully imitated. As Paul Lawrence Dunbar expressed it in "When Malindy Sings," we do not seem to have the physical organs for it. Possibly we have not the spiritual organs, either. Whatever the truth may be as to that, the fact remains that negro singing cannot be successfully imitated, and that it is going to be lost to the world unless the negroes themselves realize the great heritage they have in it, and continue to practice it and to develop it.
>
> A negro singing one of the old plantation melodies, the music that was his naturally, ranks with the greatest singers of the earth, and can send more thrills to the hearts of his hearers. A negro singing a Yankee coon song is simply and plainly disgusting, because an imitation of an imitation is always unbearable to those who really know the original.[170]

If, as this writer asserted, "negro singing cannot be successfully imitated," what explained Cheatham's success as a performer of this repertoire? The best explanation is that she believed herself to be singing spirituals in their "original" form: she was not at risk of being thought an imitator herself because she actually knew and embodied the repertoire. Furthermore, as Brian Moon has demonstrated, Cheatham was constantly described as "inimitable," beyond being

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[167] "Kitty Cheatham Recital," *Kansas City Journal*, March 1, [1913?], *RL* 84.

[168] "Kitty Cheatham Recital," *RL* 84.

[169] "Diseuse Charms Audience," *RL* 87.

[170] "Inspirational Negro Music," *Nashville Tennessean and the Nashville American*, July 6, 1915, 4.

imitated. The fact that she engaged with the repertoire at all, plus "her gestures and charm of accent and tone" and the "curious rhythmic pattings of her hands and swayings of her body" were her own, original knowledge.[171] In contrast, Burleigh's published arrangements of spirituals warned singers against trying "to make them funny by a too literal attempt to imitate the manner of the Negro in singing them, by swaying the body [or] clapping the hands." [172]

Even without any intention of poking fun at African Americans when she sang spirituals, Cheatham's performances, couched in her childlike, Lost Cause-affirming persona, nevertheless upheld racist notions of African American inferiority. For her, this historical genre was useful to the nation as folk music, as an antidote to ragtime and its associations with overt sexuality and loose morals, and above all, as a source of divine truth that could bring about the betterment of society. Cheatham's white audiences, if press accounts are any indication, may not have picked up on the fact that her juxtaposition of spirituals and childhood served to reinforce and perpetuate denigrating views of African Americans, as they appeared to be innocent fun. She was to them, after all, just a child.

[171] "Kitty Cheatham's Matinee," *RL* 95 and H.T.P., "The Variegated Pleasures of Miss Cheatham," *Boston Transcript*, March 28, 1913, *RL* 87.

[172] Snyder, *Burleigh*, 320.

Chapter 2
"One of the Marvels of Musical History": Atalie Unkalunt Sings the American (Indian) Past[1]

The rise of Sunshine Rider, the Indian maiden, to unrivalled popularity and distinction in the realm of song will stand as one of the marvels of musical history…[she] carries one back to the old and forgotten days when the Red Man had a song for almost every act of his daily life. Through Atalie as the interpreter, the old days and yearnings come back and speak to the heart again, in the tender and dramatic intensity of the singer's make-up.

– Pamphlet advertising Princess Atalie Unkalunt, circa 1924[2]

From its opening lines, a 1924 promotional pamphlet positions its subject, "Princess Atalie Unkalunt: America's Foremost Cherokee Prima Donna," as being well-versed in the past. Her success as a vocalist has, the pamphlet informs its readers, all but assured her a place in the annals of music history. Her repertoire will carry them back to a time immemorial, before the anxieties of the modern era – stemming from industrialization, immigration, and urbanization – appeared at every turn. She also stands between worlds: Cherokee ("Atalie Unkalunt") and Euro-

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[1] Throughout this chapter, I employ the term "American Indian" when referring to Native peoples broadly and use tribal names when possible. I acknowledge that while widely used, this terminology is imperfect at best. Neal Salisbury and Philip J. Deloria write in their introduction to *A Companion to American Indian History* that despite the "problems and limitations" of these and other terms, the peoples they describe have also claimed and reclaimed them. "The tension that sometimes surrounds these words illustrates in six-letter bits the complexities that dog the maintenance, retention, and reshaping of culture in…colonial/postcolonial settings," they write (Neal Salisbury and Philip J. Deloria, introduction to *A Companion to American Indian History*, ed. Neal Salisbury and Philip J. Deloria (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 5). Also see Yellow Bird Michael, "What We Want to be Called," *American Indian Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (Spring, 1999): 1-21.

Unkalunt herself tended to use "American Indian" and from the 1930s she advocated for the one-word version, "Amerind." She claimed in a concert program that it had been accepted by the Smithsonian after she and writer Mary Hunter Austin suggested it, though it does not seem the term caught on (Concert program, "A Series of Four Evenings: Vocal, Piano, Chamber Music and Dance," presented by the Society of First Sons and Daughters of America, Hotel McAlpin, March 3, 1937. 1990.078 Indian Music Collection. 1894-1937, Oklahoma Historical Society). The term had been tentatively approved by the Anthropological Association of Washington in 1899 and further debate occurred in 1902 at a meeting of the International Congress of Americanists. Members loudly disagreed as to whether a hybrid word counted as a term worthy of use in the scientific community, all without consulting any of the peoples to which they referred ("Americanists in Dispute," *New York Times*, October 22, 1902, 7; "Amerind: A Designation for the Aboriginal Tribes of the American Hemisphere," in "Notes and News," *American Anthropologist* 1 no. 3 (1899): 582).

[2] *Princess Atalie Unkalunt: America's Foremost Cherokee Prima Donna* ([New York?]: [privately printed?], [1924?]), [1]-[2]. New York State Library.

American ("Sunshine Rider"). The design of the eight page booklet exudes this inbetweenness: though advertising a prima donna, its covers are not glossy, but made with delicate brown paper flecked with pieces of bark and leaves. "Whirling log" symbols in light blue ink frame each page of text, surrounding reviews from the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* with a Native design signifying positivity.[3] The pamphlet features three photos of Unkalunt: a headshot and two views from farther away, revealing more of her outfit. She wears a fringed, beaded buckskin dress decorated with geometric beadwork, her hair in two long braids under a beaded headband (Figure 2.1). In each she gazes past the viewer and a hand on her hip suggests an air of confidence.

Figure 2.1. The cover of a pamphlet promoting "Princess Atalie Unkalunt," circa 1924.
From the collections of the New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York.

[3] Cindy Gresser, "The 'Whirling Logs' Design," *Prescott Living Magazine*, August 6, 2019, https://prescottlivingmag.com/the-whirling-logs-design/.

The pamphlet aims to leave little doubt as to why interested parties should not book Unkalunt immediately for "concerts and recitals of Indian Music." Leaving no hyperbole unused, it provides three reasons in particular. First, her powerful, trained voice, her beauty, and her artistic personality ("dynamic" and "epoch-making") together make her a "magnetic force."[4] Second, she is "one of the most versatile artists on the American concert stage today," performing arias and classical literature before intermission and American Indian songs on the second half of the program.[5] Third, it offers Unkalunt as *the* expert in interracial relations: "Atalie has probably done more to demonstrate the perfect possibilities for a better understanding between the Red Man and his pale-face brother than any other member of her race. The art and legendary of her people have been successfully revealed to multitudes by Atalie and she has convinced her listeners of the unsurpassed beauty of the life of the native American."[6]

Unkalunt's career coincided with, and relied on, an interest in American Indian music in the United States that peaked between the 1890s and the 1920s. During this time, a group of U.S. composers of European heritage regularly incorporated elements of Native music into their Western classical compositions, including character pieces for piano, songs, and operas: works of this ilk made up much of Unkalunt's concert repertory. Some composers interacted with Native musicians directly while others relied on ethnologists' published collections.[7] Though not

[4] *Princess Atalie Unkalunt*, [2].

[5] *Princess Atalie Unkalunt*, [4].

[6] *Princess Atalie Unkalunt*, [4].

[7] Natalie Curtis Burlin (1875-1921), Frances Densmore (1867–1957), and Alice Cunningham Fletcher (1838–1923) (who worked with Omaha collaborator Francis La Flesche (1857–1932)) were among the most prolific white "collectors" of American Indian music. See Michelle Wick Patterson, *Natalie Curtis Burlin: A Life in Native and African American Music (*Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010); Joan M. Jensen and Michelle Wick Patterson, eds., *Travels with Frances Densmore: Her Life, Work, and Legacy in Native American Studies* (Lincoln:

an organized endeavor, scholars generally refer to this phenomenon as the "Indianist" movement, and composers who fit these criteria include Charles Wakefield Cadman (1881-1946), Arthur Farwell (1872-1952), Carlos Troyer (1837-1920), and Thurlow Lieurance (1878-1963); others, such as Edward MacDowell (1860-1908) and Arthur Nevin (1871-1943), are sometimes included.[8] Theirs was work of cultural appropriation to varying degrees; as Tara Browner has articulated, while some composers seem to have genuinely respected their source material, there was "music lost at each stage of removing Native musics from their original models, a practice necessitated by the need for accessibility – a requirement for mass consumption."[9] In his study of musical representations of American Indians, Michael Pisani attributes the approach of these composers both to interest in Native music as folk song and as an escape from modernity. Popular music composers also created hits depicting Indians during this time (often through demeaning stereotypes), though Pisani sees these Tin Pan Alley numbers "as a related but separate phenomenon."[10]

At least two female American Indian performers had professional ties to Indianist composers, which provided them with a certain degree of renown. The most well-known is

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University of Nebraska Press, 2015); Elizabeth Tibbs, "Alice Fletcher's Historical Significance as a Musical Researcher: The Theory of Latent Harmony and its Link Between Early Ethnology and 'Indianist' Composition" (Ph.D. diss., Michigan State University, 2003).

[8] Michael Pisani cites Gilbert Chase as the coiner of this term (Michael Pisani, *Imagining Native America in Music* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 185). In addition, he has noted the broader meaning of "Indianist": "*Indianist*, as the word appears in ethnology, refers broadly to those nineteenth-century activists who favored policies that supported native peoples. It can also be applied to anyone speaking on behalf of Indian culture as well" (167). As of this writing, the *Grove Dictionary* does not include an entry on the Indianist movement. Tara Browner writes that "very few of the Indianist composers wrote only Indian-inspired music: so ultimately the term 'Indianist' is a vague one, used primarily for convenience" (Tara Browner, "'Breathing the Indian Spirit': Thoughts on Musical Borrowing and the 'Indianist' Movement in American Music" *American Music* 15, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 266). Pisani generally avoids this terminology, instead opting for "musical Indianism."

[9] Browner, "Breathing the Indian Spirit," 280.

[10] Pisani, *Imagining*, 213.

Creek/Cherokee mezzo-soprano Tsianina Redfeather Blackstone (1882-1985), who performed with Charles Wakefield Cadman for fourteen years and starred in his 1918 Indianist opera *Shanewis*.[11] Penobscot mezzo-soprano Lucy Nicola Poolaw (1882-1969), also known as Princess Watahwaso, toured for a few years with Thurlow Lieurance.[12] In 1928, Lieurance published a list of notable Native performing artists, and Blackstone and Poolaw were the two female singers he mentioned, calling them "remarkable Indian singers who have had splendid success in various parts of the country."[13] Several of the Indianist composers have received some scholarly attention, particularly Cadman and Farwell, but with the exception of one article, music scholars have yet to focus on either of these performers in their own right, despite their collaborative efforts and their own accomplishments as performers and Native women.[14]

Yet at least Blackstone and Poolaw have received some attention. Unkalunt has been absent entirely from the musicological literature, despite her frequent concertizing and numerous connections with musicians, politicians, and American Indian leaders, and here I bring her to

[11] See her autobiography: Tsianina, *Where Trails Have Led Me* (Santa Fe, NM: Vergara Printing Company, 1970). Deloria discusses Blackstone in *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004).

[12] Bunny McBride, "Princess Watahwaso: Bright Star of the Penobscot," in *Of Place and Gender: Women in Maine History*, ed. Marli F. Weiner (Orono: University of Maine Press, 2005). See entries for Blackstone and Poolaw in Alexander Ewen and Jeffrey Wollock, *Encyclopedia of the American Indian in the Twentieth Century* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015); both are also mentioned in Pisani 2005. See also John Troutman's chapter on professional Native musicians during the early twentieth century in *Indian Blues: American Indians and the Politics of Music, 1879-1934* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2009).

[13] Thurlow Lieurance, "The Musical Soul of the American Indian," in *Indian Music: Thurlow Lieurance*, *Charles Wakefield Cadman, Arthur Nevin*, The Etude Musical Booklet Library (Philadephia: Theodore Presser, 1928), 7.

[14] In addition to the above studies by Browner and Pisani, see Beth Levy, *Frontier Figures: American Music and the Mythology of the American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Beth Levy, "'In the Glory of the Sunset': Arthur Farwell, Charles Wakefield Cadman, and Indianism in American Music," *repercussions* 5, nos. 1– 2 (1996): 124– 83; E.D. Culbertson, "Arthur Farwell's Early Efforts on Behalf of American Music, 1889–1921," *American Music* 5, no. 2 (1987): 156–75; Vera Brodsky Lawrence, *The Wa-Wan Press, 1901–1911* (New York: Arno Press, 1970); Harry D. Perison, "The 'Indian' Operas of Charles Wakefield Cadman," *College Music Symposium* 22, no. 2 (1982): 20–48; Tara Browner, "Native Songs, Indianist Styles, and the Processes of Music Idealization," in *Opera Indigene: Re/presenting First Nations and Indigenous Cultures*, ed. Pamela Karantonis and Dylan Robinson (Farnham, Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2011); Michael Pisani, "From Hiawatha to Wa-Wan: Musical Boston and the Uses of Native American Lore," *American Music* 19, no. 1 (April 2001): 39-50. For a rare work dedicated to an early twentieth century female Native singer, see A. Dean Palmer, "Tsianina Blackstone: A Chapter in the History of the American Indian in Opera," *Liberal Arts Review* no.7 (1979), 40–51.

scholarly attention for the first time. The promotional pamphlet makes her absence all the more jarring: how is it that her voice supposedly carried "the perfume of roses on the wings of song," and yet she has not appeared in any studies of American music? Was she actually an accomplished musician? What was the scope of her career? Did music history factor into it, and in what ways? How did she navigate being a Native female performer at this time? In short, what did it mean to be "America's Foremost Cherokee Prima Donna"?

This chapter addresses these questions in four sections. First, I provide a sketch of Unkalunt's life, tracing her travels and life in New York City. Next, I situate her in the context of the Indianist movement and explore her repertory. This leads to a discussion of what was to be Unkalunt's big break, the opera *Nitana* by Umberto Vesci and Augustus Post, which, like its would-be star, has never made it to musicologists' studies of Indianist opera projects from this period. The work tells a tale of doomed love between a so-called Indian maiden and a white man she encounters during the European colonization of Maryland. Though the music is lost, the libretto is held at the Library of Congress and adds another facet to how early twentieth century understandings of Native people played out on the stage. The final section explores Unkalunt's career after the *Nitana* project fell apart; she kept singing – including a performance at the White House – but also wrote poetry, drew, painted, decorated, and opined on fashion and Native food in national newspapers. As an activist, Unkalunt established the New York-based Society of the First Sons and Daughters of America in 1922, an organization which provided financial and publicity support for Native artists. Unkalunt's story emerges from dozens of newspapers dating from the 1920s and 1930s, primarily in New York and cities in which she toured. Additional information comes from scattered archival documents at the New York State Library, the

Oklahoma Historical Society, the South Dakota Historical Society, and the National Museum of the American Indian.

In her historiography of American Indians at the turn of the twentieth century, Alexandra Harmon identifies a long-standing trend among scholars to focus on issues of U.S. government policy related to Indians, especially armed conflict and massacres of Indians on the Great Plains, forced assimilation of Indian children at boarding schools, and the 1887 Dawes Act. This legislation divided tribal lands into individual parcels, with some sold to whites, and was "a colonial policy…of land disaggregation and social desegregation."[15] While important context, Harmon warns that

> emphasis on policy also reflects and perpetuates a preference for the nation-state as a framework of general American history narratives and Indian history specifically. Such a framework tends to obscure Indian perspectives and discourages thorough assessments of Indians' agency and significance…Although unique in several respects, Indians' history is also part of the larger American story.[16]

Bringing Unkalunt into the narrative of early twentieth century American musical life adds to a growing body of scholarship that seeks to recognize Native participation in, as well as resistance to, mainstream American culture at this time.[17]

Unkalunt consistently faced issues at the intersection of music and history, and she engaged with these issues both out of interest and because she had no choice.[18] During the early

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[15] Philip J. Deloria, *Becoming Mary Sully: Toward an American Indian Abstract* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), 237.

[16] Alexandra Harmon, "From Dispossessed Wards to Citizen Activists: American Indians Survive the Assimilation Policy Era," in *A Companion to the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, ed. Christopher McKnight Nichols and Nancy C. Unger (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 126.

[17] Harmon looks to scholars including Erika Bsumek, *Indian Made: Navajo Culture in the Marketplace, 1868–1940* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008); Deloria *Unexpected Places*; Frederick E. Hoxie, ed., *Talking Back to Civilization: Indian Voices from the Progressive Era* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001); Rosalyn R. LaPier and David R.M. Beck, *"Determining Our Own Destiny": American Indians in Chicago, 1893–1934* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

twentieth century, as historian Philip Deloria has explained, one way white Americans coped with rapid social and cultural change was by looking to American Indians, who were supposedly the antithesis of modern. He writes:

> To reaffirm modern identity, Americans needed to experience that which was *not* modern… To be modern, one acted out a heuristic encounter with the primitive. Indian Others, constructed firmly outside American society and temporality, represented this break not only historically, but also racially, socially, and developmentally.[19]

In the eyes of many whites, then, to be American Indian was to be of the past. Researchers and government experts believed American Indians to be a so-called "vanishing race," as many considered Native peoples to be less advanced than whites and therefore more likely to die out, since white settlement finally stretched from coast to coast. U.S. government officials believed policies of forced assimilation, including sending Native children to boarding schools and redistributing tribal lands, were the best way to help Indians survive as the twentieth century began.[20] The Indianist repertory which Unkalunt performed was part of an effort to "save" historically valuable Native music and culture from its supposed disappearance; Thurlow Lieurance, for example, wrote an article for the music magazine *The Etude* in 1913 titled "Saving Indian Music From Oblivion."[21] Public demand for Indianist repertoire meant that performing this music served as Unkalunt's best option if she wanted to make a living as a performer, as she could draw on her perceived authority and expertise as a Cherokee woman.

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[18] While recognizing there is some danger in re-inscribing the fact that Native people are "almost always framed in terms of pastness," exploring Unkalunt's career in the context of music history is valuable because she both embraced and challenged the notion that she belonged to the past (Deloria, *Becoming Mary Sully*, 22).

[19] Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 105.

[20] David R. M. Beck, "The Myth of the Vanishing Race," *Edward S. Curtis's The North American Indian* website, Northwestern University Library & Library of Congress, February 2001, PDF from https://davidrmbeck.wordpress.com/articles/.

[21] Thurlow Lieurance, "Saving Indian Music From Oblivion," *The Etude* (December, 1913), 857-58.

She also sought out additional performance material, however, American Indian music that, while still out of its original context, composers had not altered to fit into the Western harmonic system.

Unkalunt had to confront the expectations and stereotypes of white society by performing her Indianness, or "playing Indian." According to Deloria, "Indian people participated in the making of Indian Others as never before [during the early twentieth century]. Yet the fact that native people turned to playing Indian – miming Indianness back at Americans in order to redefine it – indicates how little cultural capital Indian people possessed at the time."[22] Unkalunt was one of many such individuals who supported themselves by joining "emerging industries that…drew on white Americans' nostalgia and primitivist desires," including Wild West shows, music and film, and Chautauqua circuits.[23] In her musical performances, and in the performance of everyday life, Unkalunt negotiated between her own identity as a mixed-race Cherokee woman and what white society believed such an individual should sound or act like. Ultimately, she leveraged the musical past as a tool for survival, accepting opportunities that relied on Indian stereotypes while also crafting her career as a modern Native artist. A study of Unkalunt's musical activities reveals that caring for historical material can require making difficult choices.

Assembling a Musical Career

Atalie Unkalunt (translated to Sunshine Rider, English name Iva Josephine Rider) was born in Stillwell, Going-snake district, Indian Territory in 1895.[24] Her father, Thomas Lafayette

[22] Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 125.

[23] Deloria, *Becoming Mary Sully*, 237-238.

[24] Variants/misspellings from contemporary sources include Ida, Eva, Josie, Atlae, Ttlie, Unalaunt, Ryder. Five main biographical sources outline Unkalunt's life: three similar newspaper articles and two biographical encyclopedia entries from later in her life. "Cherokee Music Student Gone Back to Land of Her Fathers," *Boston Globe*, June 9,

Rider (Domgeske Unkalunt) (1856-1932), was a leader in the Cherokee community and served five terms in the Oklahoma state legislature after Oklahoma Territory and Indian Territory combined to form the forty-sixth state in 1907. His father, Charles Austin Augustus Rider, was born in Tennessee and walked the Trail of Tears with his family after the U.S. government forced approximately fifteen thousand Cherokees in Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee to move west in 1838.[25] Unkalunt's mother, Josephine Pace (1861-1923) was of French and English descent and hailed from Cherokee County, Georgia. According to Unkalunt, the Pace family fled Georgia during the Civil War and remained in Indian Territory after the conflict ended.[26] Her mother reportedly had a beautiful voice which had a significant impact on Unkalunt. Unkalunt had nine siblings who survived to adulthood and, like her, are listed as being one sixteenth Cherokee in the 1902 Cherokee Roll.[27] This official register identified tribal citizens as the U.S.

1918, 45; "Cherokee Indian Maid, Highly Talented Singer, Aspires to Grand Opera," *Tulsa Daily World*, March 5, 1922, 10; "Doubt is in the Heart of the Indian Princess," *Baltimore American*, December 31, 1922, 10; "Unkalunt, Princess Atalie (Sunshine Rider)," *Who is Who in Music: A Complete Presentation of the Contemporary Musical Scene with a Master Record Catalogue*. 1941 edition (Chicago: Lee Stern Press, 1940) 228-229 ; "Unkalunt, Princess Atalie," *Encyclopedia of American Biography*, Winfield Scott Downs, ed. (New York: The American Historical Company, 1941), 182-184.

[25] James Taylor Carson, "Indian Eras, Indian Removal, 1800-1840," in *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Volume 3: History*, ed. Charles Reagan Wilson (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 152-53. "Rider, Thomas L." in *History of the Cherokee Indians and Their Legends and Folklore*, ed. Emmet Starr (Oklahoma City: Warden Company, 1921), 658. See *Find A Grave* database, "Charles Austin Augustus Rider," 2 November 2001, Memorial Number 5924832, maintained by Patricia Mechling; *Find A Grave* database, "Thomas Lafayette Rider," 2 November 2001, Memorial Number 5924802, maintained by Patricia Mechling.

[26] "Indian Maid Sings to Aid Native Arts," *Washington Post*, August 1, 1933, 9. There are several versions of this story: in one, after her family died, her mother was adopted by Thomas Rider's family (1918 *Globe*); in another, her mother got lost and members of her father's family found her as a wandering three-year-old (1922 *Tulsa*).

[27] Ola (French), Mary Angeline, Ruth Belle, Phoeba Montana (Barbre), Mittie Earl (Brook), Roscoe Conklin, Milton Clark, Iva Josephine, Cherokee Augusta (Garland). Anna Monetta (Washburn) was born three years later. Dawes Rolls (Cherokee), 1902.

government distributed land allotments according to the 1898 Curtis Act, which divided the Cherokees' communal land into parcels.[28]

Unkalunt would later claim that her identity as mixed race contributed to her ability to advocate for Native art. Her use of language drawing on racial stereotypes is striking, and one wonders the degree to which it was for the benefit of her interviewer: "I have the strength and stoicism of the Indian," she explained, "but the drive of the whites. I am less proud than a full-blood and therefore able to fight for what I want. Of course, the real pioneering has been done. The country has begun to appreciate Indian arts. Now it is up to the Indian to keep his work at the high level of his ancestors."[29] Unkalunt admits to being less than a "full-blood," a label inaccurately assigned to her by many newspaper articles to make her seem more "authentic," but insists she could use her unique background to her advantage as she related to both worlds.

Unkalunt attended what she called "Indian schools" as a child, where her instructors were white; her older sisters later trained as teachers and taught in these U.S. government-run institutions established on reservations.[30] Instead of following in their footsteps, Unkalunt studied at Draughon's Business College in Muskogee, Oklahoma and the Thomas School for Girls in San Antonio.[31] She and one of her sisters spent a year in California, likely around 1915, during which time she worked as an actress in early film. As she described it, "when I had played

[28] "About the Dawes Rolls," Native American Heritage: Dawes Rolls, National Archives, October 4, 2016. https://www.archives.gov/research/native-americans/dawes/tutorial/intro.html#about.

[29] "Indian Singer Here to Study Legends," *The Sunday Evening Star, Washington, D.C.*, August 6, 1933, section 2, 5.

[30] See Gregory D. Smithers, "'This Is the Nation's Heart-String' Formal Education and the Cherokee Diaspora during the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," *Wicazo Sa Review* 30, no. 2 (Fall 2015): 28-55.

[31] Another paper reported that "Miss Iva J. Rider of Stillwell, Ok., arrived Sunday to enter the college. Miss Rider has come to Stephens [College, MO] to specialize in music and expression. She was delayed in entering because of legal affairs she had to transact in connection with her oil lands in Nowata County" ("At Stephens College," *University Missourian*, October 1, 1914, 3). More research is needed to confirm or contextualize this account.

the lead in a picture called 'The Dying Race,' in which I was the Indian girl heroine, my fancy for the screen was gone and I decided to yield to the wishes of my parents, who were violently opposed to my picture ambitions."[32] It is difficult to tell whether Unkalunt decided against a film career simply because she did not care for it, if she found this film and its portrayal of Indians offensive, or if she simply did not receive another such opportunity. Upon her return to Oklahoma, Unkalunt studied voice with a Mrs. Claude L. Steele in Muskogee and performed in concerts as both a singer and reciter. Unkalunt assisted Steele at the latter's recital of Indianist music in spring 1916; notably, Unkalunt did not perform this repertoire herself but instead recited Cherokee stories.[33]

Soon after (likely in the fall of 1916), Unkalunt moved to Boston, where she studied at Boston University, Emerson's College of Oratory, and the New England Conservatory (NEC).[34] At the NEC, she was an active member of the Zeta Chapter of the music-leaning sorority Alpha Chi Omega.[35] In October 1917 she and fellow student Helen Wegmann "sang and played at the Old Men's Home on two Sunday afternoons" as an Alpha Chi community service project, and "they found their audiences to be most appreciative of their efforts."[36] Unkalunt and her fellow

[32] "Cherokee Indian Maid," 10.

[33] "Among Musical Artists," *The Musical Monitor* (March 1916), 364 and "Course of Study of the National Federation of Music Clubs," *The Musical Monitor* (April 1916), 409-410. The program was not for a women's club but for the Camp Fire Girls, a Boy Scouts-like group "who played Indian with…zeal" (Deloria, *Playing Indian* 111-114).

[34] This is another part of Unkalunt's life about which sources are conflicted: "Cherokee Indian Maid" says she studied "literature and short story" with Dallas Lore Sharpe at Boston University; Ewen and Wollock cite "logic, ethics, and psychology" at Boston University and voice at the New England Conservatory with Charles W. White, Clarence B. Shirley, and Millie Ryan (367).

[35] Unkalunt served as corresponding secretary in 1918 ("Corresponding Secretaries," *The Lyre* 21, no. 3 (April 1918), n.p.).

[36] Helen Huit, "Zeta, New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, Massachusetts," *The Lyre* (January 1918), 144. I have not been able to find information on Helen Wegmann.

students at the conservatory became involved in the war effort after the U.S. joined World War I in April 1917. While at home in Stillwell for Christmas in 1917, Unkalunt staged two Red Cross benefit recitals: one song recital and one costume recital.[37] As part of a Jordan Hall (NEC) program on April 30, 1918 (which raised ninety-five dollars for the Conservatory Red Cross Auxiliary), Unkalunt sang a set of five songs in Native costume.[38]

Eager to serve beyond giving concerts on the home front, Unkalunt planned to join the entertainment division of the YMCA to sing for U.S. troops in Europe, but, unable to pay her way as entertainers were expected to do, she joined the Business Unit and served as a stenographer. In December 1918, a month after WWI ended, Unkalunt's passport application was accepted; as the age requirement was twenty five at the time of her application in October 1918, Unkalunt gave her birth year (sworn to by her father) as 1893 instead of 1895.[39] For at least part of her service, she worked in the Paris headquarters of the entertainment division, alongside forty other men and women.[40] She told a reporter a few years later that "[the YMCA] used me alternately as a show girl and as a stenographer. I even baked apple pies for the boys,

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[37] Helen Huit, "Zeta, New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, Massachusetts," *The Lyre* (January 1918), 145.

[38] This concert was mentioned in Boston news in *Musical America*, May 25, 1918, 28. Unkalunt had also taken part in "a very attractive costume recital…given by the advanced students of the Dramatic Department at the Women's Club in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, on the afternoon of November 5. An interesting group of Indian songs was given by Iva Rider and was most heartily received. Beside this, groups of Egyptian, Old English, Russian, and Japanese songs were given." Unkalunt was likely the only student singing from her own tradition (or an approximation of her own tradition) and one wonders whether she was in Cherokee attire or a costume more generically "Indian" (Helen Huit, "Zeta, New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, Massachusetts," *The Lyre* (January 1918), 145).

[39] After the war ended, the age requirement lowered to twenty-three (Lynn Dumenil, *The Second Line of Defense: American Women and World War I* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 118. As troops were not sent home immediately, entertainment was still needed.

[40] Unkalunt once stated while under oath that the British Government awarded her a citation for valor under fire, but I have found no other sources that make mention of this claim ("Ainslie 'Princess' Repudiates Title," *New York Times*, November 11, 1924, 25). She also stated that she helped "in burying the dead on the firing line in France," which also does not align with her service taking place after the Armistice ("Indian Princess Unkalunt, Singer, Held in Theft Case," *The Sun*, November 8, 1924, 2).

hundreds of them, and liked doing it."[41] General John J. Pershing (commander of the American Expeditionary Force) and his staff attended a 1919 Easter concert for which Unkalunt was soprano soloist in John Stainer's *Crucifixion*, an oratorio popular among Christians of the day.[42] She sang with Margaret Wilson at another concert: the eldest daughter of President Woodrow Wilson was also an entertainer and had spent much of 1918 singing for soldiers in the U.S. before sailing to France a few months before Unkalunt.[43] This postwar service gave Unkalunt an opportunity to travel abroad and also demonstrated some level of dedication to the United States, despite government policies wrecking havoc on Native lives.

Upon her return to the United States in mid-1920, Unkalunt settled in New York City, where she would live for most of her adult life. There, her focus shifted to work as a Native performer. For about three years, she worked for the New York City Board of Education as a lecturer, performing Native songs and reciting legends in over three hundred and fifty public schools. Her audiences were not limited to children: at some point during the Washington Naval Conference (November 1921 through February 1922) Unkalunt "gave her lecture recital, under the auspices of the Department of the Interior, before a very large audience made up of representatives of foreign countries, congressmen, President Harding, ex-President Wilson, and others."[44] While so employed, Unkalunt was still studying voice, hoping to make it big on the operatic stage. In 1922, newspapers reported that Unkalunt was about to star in a new opera

[41] "Cherokee Indian Maid." Another source noted that she "fried doughnuts, baked apple pies, and sang now and then in the 'Café du Soldat' and the 'Y' huts." ("'Sunshine Rider' – the Girl on the Cover," *Farm and Fireside* (September 1923), 8).

[42] Julia Lee Godwin, "Zeta, New England Conservatory, Boston, Massachusetts," *The Lyre* (July 1919), 297.

[43] James W. Evans and Gardner L. Harding, *Entertaining the American Army: the American Stage and Lyceum in the World War* (New York: Association Press, 1921), 107.

[44] "Interesting Alpha Chis: Ivy J. Rider (Princess Aulil) [*sic*], Zeta," *The Lyre* (May, 1923), 393 (credited to the *Musical Courier*, March 22, 1923).

called *Nitana*, composed by Italian immigrant Umberto Vesci with a libretto by wealthy socialite adventurer Augustus Post.

The project fell through, however, and after it became clear that Unkalunt would never sing at the Metropolitan Opera, as was her dream, she expanded her career to include other art forms and activities tied to Native culture and activism.[45] Ten years after *Nitana* failed, she told an interviewer about the difficulties she had faced, underscoring her determination to adapt: "I am willing to battle for what I want. I do not sit back and nurse an outraged dignity, I find out why I am not getting the results I have expected and change my methods to suit my opponent's."[46]

Unkalunt became a one-woman force promoting Native rights, particularly related to the arts.[47] She wrote newspaper opinion pieces published in Phoenix, New Orleans, and New York City, championing Native women and rejecting U.S. government interference with and banning of Native religions.[48] In 1929 she and several other Native performers sang at Herbert Hoover's inauguration; his vice president, Charles Curtis, was a member of the Kaw Nation and Unkalunt made headlines for decorating a room in his Washington, D.C. apartment with murals of Native designs.[49] She also decorated the homes of wealthy New Yorkers, broadcasting stations, and theaters. For several years beginning in 1930, she ran the Indian Council Lodge Hall, an "Indian

[45] According to her 1941 entry in the *Encyclopedia of American Biography*, Unkalunt "successfully auditioned," but the wording is vague, and audition cards for the organization do not date back early enough to confirm.

[46] "Indian Maid Sings."

[47] One source claims that "She has visited members of her race in hospitals, claimed their bodies at the morgue and had them properly buried. She has lobbied in Washington, District of Columbia, fighting for the rights of her people and directing the influence of many Senators and Congressmen's support of Indian bills up for consideration" (*Encyclopedia of American Biography*, 182).

[48] See notes 74-76.

[49] Ewen and Wollock reference the inauguration, but I have not been able to confirm independently. Annabel Parker M'Cann, "Indian Princess to Decorate Vice President's Apartment," *Washington Post*, April 21, 1929, M13.

Theatre" and gift shop selling Native wares on West 58th street.[50] Her art appeared at the Art Alliance and the Rehn and Douthitt Galleries in New York; in 1939 she published a collection of poems on Native themes titled *The Earth Speaks*. She gave interviews on Native food and recipes and the impact of Native fashion on mainstream fashion.

Even with her myriad pursuits, singing remained Unkalunt's main passion. "She became the most outstanding singer of the Indian race, with critics generous in their praise of her beautiful voice" proclaimed one source.[51] She performed with musicians from the Boston Symphony Orchestra at their pre-Tanglewood summer home in Lake Placid; she participated in the Wisconsin Dells Indian Pageant (1924-1936), sang in Atlantic City, Philadelphia, Detroit, locations in Oklahoma, and for women's clubs and community organizations across the country. Her recitals were also broadcast via shortwave radio to South Africa, Australia, Italy, France, Germany, Britain, and locations in South America.[52] Unkalunt died in Washington, D.C. in 1954, remembered in one obituary as "an authority on the folklore of American Indians."[53]

Singing the Indianist Past

What is present in – and absent from – the archival record regarding Unkalunt's programs speaks volumes to the complexities of her career as a performer who identified as American Indian. Many sources state that the first half of Unkalunt's programs usually featured "arias and

[50] Ewen and Wollock give the duration as eight years.

[51] *Encyclopedia of American Biography*, 183. This reference work does not appear in the American Library Association's *Guide to Reference Books* between 1929 and 1982. It seems likely that it was a "pay to play" publication and that Unkalunt participated in its creation to some extent. Thanks to Kerry Masteller for her research assistance on this issue.

[52] *Encyclopedia of American Biography*, 184 and *Who's Who in Music*, 229.

[53] "Miss Atalie Rider," *Washington Post*, November 8, 1954, 20.

classical numbers of French, German, Italian and Spanish, unsurpassed in any concert artists' program."[54] Yet, what exactly was this repertoire, and how might its juxtaposition with Indianist selections have spoken to Unkalunt's artistic priorities? For short newspaper announcements, such as women's clubs recitals, there was little room to list the works Unkalunt performed. At public events that garnered more attention, it seems that Unkalunt did not include Western classical repertoire. While one of her major goals was to share Native music with her audiences, this diminution, if not erasure, of her European classical training in recitals might have made her appear one-dimensional to the public; focus on Indianist repertoire also might have made Unkalunt appear more "authentic" to her audiences. The final paragraph of her promotional pamphlet shows an emphasis on her Native expertise but does not completely overlook her conservatory training:

> [Unkalunt] feels that she has a broader mission than to be a singer and nothing more; …in the second half of her program we find her in native costume, chanting in her dialect, the old songs that rang in these woods centuries ago. Atalie has selected the useful, the true and the beautiful music of her race and thus has rescued many sparkling gems of melody that were destined to be buried with the passing of the Red Man. She has studied, searched and researched for primitive melodies to sing with the more modern ones that have been harmonized by the leading composers and musicians of to-day. Her programs never fail to unfold the secret of great classical and romantic song literature to an ever-increasing public.[55]

There is a key distinction here, between two types of "Native" repertoire: melodies that ethnographers transcribed (or recorded), and therefore are out of context yet retain some basic characteristics, and Indianist compositions, in which melodies are even farther removed from their original contexts since composers have fit them into the Western harmonic system.

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[54] *Princess Atalie Unkalunt*, [4]. The one possible exception is a mention of Unkalunt singing in *Montezuma* at the National Exposition at Toronto; no composer is given, and this may refer to Antonio Vivaldi's 1733 opera or possibly Henry Hadley's 1915 *Azora, Daughter of Montezuma*. "Indian Singer Here."

[55] *Princess Atalie Unkalunt*, [4] – [5].

Indianist compositions – "the more modern ones," as her promotional pamphlet described them – were the staple of Unkalunt's repertoire, which drew from the oeuvres of Thurlow Lieurance and Carlos Troyer in particular. Lieurance (1878-1963) was a Kansas-based composer who first visited the Crow Reservation in 1903 and made field recordings in 1911 and in subsequent years, later performing some of his arrangements with his wife on the Chautauqua circuit.[56] German-born Troyer (1837-1920) spent much of his career in San Francisco and reportedly spent time recording and transcribing music of the Zuni people, though the extent of his ethnographic fieldwork is unclear.[57] Both men staunchly supported the material they collected: Lieurance firmly believed that "someday our native Indian themes would form a part of the warp and woof of American music."[58] And yet, Lieurance and Troyer treated their interlocutors as Other, forcing Native melodies into Western harmonic structures and perpetuating ideas of Native music needing "saving" and Indian customs as foreign and strange. Scholars including Robert Stevenson and Michael Pisani have noted Troyer's taste for the dramatic, however, which likely meant he geared his materials more toward audience enjoyment than any semblance of accuracy.[59]

Not satisfied with performing only Indianist works, Unkalunt sought out her own materials to supplement them. She made one such research trip in 1933, when she visited the

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[56] Grove Music Online, s.v., "Lieurance, Thurlow (Weed)," by Douglas A. Lee, published online 2001, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.16636.

[57] He appears as "Carlos" instead of "Charles" after 1885. Little scholarship on Troyer is available; in his *Grove* article, Robert Stevenson does not mention the ethnographic work discussed in Troyer's 1913 *Indian Music Lecture* (Grove Music Online, s.v., "Troyer, Carlos," by Robert Stevenson, published online 2001, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.28481). Troyer is also cited as having "lived for a long time with the mystical Zuñi Indians of the South West" by an editor in the preface to Thurlow Lieurance, "Saving Indian Music From Oblivion," *The Etude* (December, 1913), 857.

[58] Thurlow Lieurance, "The Musical Soul of the American Indian," in *Indian Music: Thurlow Lieurance, Charles Wakefield Cadman, Arthur Nevin*, The Etude Musical Booklet Library (Philadephia: Theodore Presser, 1928), 4.

[59] Pisani, *Imagining*, 180.

Smithsonian Institution (likely the Bureau of Ethnography) "in the [*sic*] search of more legends and their historical background."[60] Despite frequent references to this material broadly, specific song titles or the tribes from which they originated rarely appear in printed programs. These "sparkling gems of melody" appeared in a 1937 program as "a. Traditional and Tribal Songs with tom-tom and rattle; b. Legends." But newspaper reports do not reference such repertory in reports of other performances.[61] Unkalunt may have announced original ("primitive") Native songs from the stage, or she may not have performed them with great frequency.

What follows are transcriptions of four extant Unkalunt programs, which suggest that her repertoire did not change much, and in fact, she was still performing these same songs into the 1930s, when they heyday of Indianist music had largely ended.[62] At a 1918 concert, while still a student at the New England Conservatory, Unkalunt performed the following numbers in costume:

> Victor Herbert, "Campfire Dance" from *Natoma*[63]
> Thurlow Lieurance, "Lullaby" and "Love song"
> Carlos Troyer, "A lover's wooing"
> Navajo [Lieurance], "Her Rosary"[64]

[60] "Indian Singer Here."

[61] Concert program, "A Series of Four Evenings: Vocal, Piano, Chamber Music and Dance," presented by the Society of First Sons and Daughters of America, Hotel McAlpin, March 3, 1937. 1990.078 Indian Music Collection. 1894-1937, Oklahoma Historical Society.

[62] While newspaper reports tell us she was performing, I have not been able to locate any physical programs dated during the 1920s.

[63] This and other operas will be discussed in the next section.

[64] The explanation text in the program matches that for "Her Blanket – From the Navajo" so it is unclear which Unkalunt actually performed. For this performance there was piano accompaniment (Carolyn Rice) and flute obbligato (Frank W. Asper). Concert program, "Concert Under the Auspices of Zeta Chapter, Alpha Chi Omega," Jordan Hall, New England Conservatory of Music, April 30, 1918, New England Conservatory Archives & Special Collections, Jordan Hall Program Scrapbooks, 1903-1964, October 1917 – June 1919, 73.

The printed program included short explanations about the Native context for the Lieurance and Troyer songs; both match (Lieurance) or are close to (Troyer) explanations included with the published scores.

In January 1934, Unkalunt performed at the White House for President and First Lady Roosevelt and two hundred guests, including many members of Congress. Baritone Chief Yowlache (Yakima) also performed, a Miss Ray Levi played the piano and a Mrs. E.H. Pendleton played the accompaniments.[65] Unkalunt's repertoire featured several works by Troyer which the composer based on music of the Zuni people, who lived in what is now New Mexico:

"The Sunset Song" – Zuni traditional with tom-tom
"Invocation to the Sun God" – Zuni and Troyer
"Lover's Wooing" – Zuni and Troyer
"By the Weeping Waters" – Sioux by Lieurance
"Her Shadow" – from *Shanewis* by Cadman

Three years later on March 3, 1937, Unkalunt performed similar repertory at a concert in New York City put on by her Native arts organization, the Society of First Sons and Daughters of America. This concert, a "descriptive recital of the American Indian," according to the program, was the first of a four-part series and also featured Native dancers. Unkalunt's selections were:

Invocation to the Sun God (Zuni), Troyer
Her Shadow, (*Shanewis*) (Ojibway), Cadman
O'er an Indian Cradle (Yankton Sioux), Lieurance

Traditional Songs

Rainbow Land (Winnebago), Lieurance
Song of the Mesa (Hopi), Grunn
By Drowsy Waters (Cherokee), Roos

Spirit of Wannah, Lieurance

[65] "Society: The President and Mrs. Roosevelt Hosts to Distinguished Scientist," *The Evening Star, Washington, D.C*. January 24, 1934, B-2. His repertoire was: "Eagle Dance" – Tewa melody by Grunn; "Ghost Pipes" – "idealized" by Lieurance; "Chant of the Four Hills" – Omaha by Grunn; "Rain in the Desert" – Navajo by Jeancon. Yowlache received praise from a *New York Times* critic for his solo recital at the Barbizon-Plaza Hotel in New York City in November 1930 ("Yakima Indian Basso in Notable Recital," *New York Times*, November 19, 1930, 29).

Ghost Pipes (Idealized), Lieurance
From an Indian Village, [Lieurance][66]

For the final concert of the series, Unkalunt performed three Indianist popular hits on March 24, 1937:

"From the Land of the Sky-blue Water," Cadman
"By the Waters of Minnetonka," Lieurance
"Pale Moon," Frederic Knight Logan[67]

Each of these songs was popular and much-recorded: the concert ended with "dancing till 1am" after intermission, so it seems that Unkalunt selected these numbers – more "popular" than her usual fare – to complement the festive air. [68]

With this repertoire, Unkalunt catered to the musical interests of many white audience members: it was what they could believe to be "real" Native music arranged for voice and piano in a familiar Western style, available for purchase from a music store and inviting repeat performances at home. One noticeable absence from these programs is Cherokee material. Indianist composers usually drew their source material from the traditions of other tribes, and it appears that Unkalunt did not make a special effort to include songs from her own past on her programs. Having grown up in what was then Indian Territory, it seems likely that Unkalunt would have learned some musical material from her father's side of the family, especially since she recited Cherokee legends in public as early as 1916. Instead, she may have used a tactic employed by other Native artists: passing over her own culture in order to protect it. Tara

[66] Concert program, "A Series of Four Evenings," March 3, 1937.

[67] Concert program, "A Series of Four Evenings: Vocal, Piano, Chamber Music and Dance," presented by the Society of First Sons and Daughters of America, Hotel McAlpin, March 24, 1937. Folder 3, Box 1, Northeast Archives of Folklore and Oral History: MF 079 Molly Spotted Elk Collection. University of Maine.

[68] From the Discography of American Historical Recordings (University of California – Santa Barbara Library, https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php): "From the Land of the Sky-blue Water" recorded at least 34 times between 1911 and 1938; "By the Waters of Minnetonka" 59 times between 1915 and 1953; "Pale Moon" 28 times between 1920 and 1953.

Browner has shown how both Tsianina Redfeather Blackstone and Zitkala-Sa (also known as Gertrude Bonnin, Yankton Dakota Sioux activist, 1876-1938) directed composers with whom they worked "away from certain musical repertoires and ceremonial events, in effect hiding what they deemed inappropriate from outsiders by deflection to other musical sources."[69]

Indeed, Blackstone performed repertoire similar to Unkalunt's: a January 1923 program of hers also began with songs by Troyer and Lieurance, for example.[70] At the same time, Blackstone's repertoire included much more music by Charles Wakefield Cadman, as she spent fourteen years performing with him and starred in his 1918 opera *Shanewis*. Lucy Nicola Poolaw (Princess Watahwaso), who toured for a few years with Lieurance, likewise performed Indianist repertory.[71] Blackstone and Poolaw had career advantages that Unkalunt did not: both performed with a well-known Indianist composer giving lecture recitals, and Poolaw recorded and released several numbers with the Victor company in 1917 and again in 1930 (her recordings during the 1920s were never released).[72] Tsianina and Unkalunt both recorded for Victor (1930 and 1929, respectively), but neither of the company did not make release any of their recordings.[73] Missing

[69] Browner, "Native Songs," 182.

[70] Concert program, "Martha B. Reynolds presents Carles [*sic*] Wakefield Cadman, American Composer-Pianist in Joint Recital with Princess Tsianina, Indian Mezzo-Soprano," Auditorium, Portland, Oregon, January 26, [1923]. Multnomah County Library, Portland Historic Concert Programs.

[71] See Ewen and Wollock, 333. One of Poolaw's programs from 1917 features works by Cadman, Lieurance, and Troyer, as well as art song by Coquard, Ponchelli and Bemberg, begging the question as to how frequently she performed art music. Concert Program, "Song Recital in Costume by Princess Watahwaso," Aeolian Hall, April 7, [1917]. Redpath Chautauqua Collection, University of Iowa Digital Library. For information on some of the touring of Native performers, see Paige Clark Lush, "The All American Other: Native American Music and Musicians on the Circuit Chautauqua," *Americana : The Journal of American Popular Culture, 1900 to Present* 7, no. 2, (Fall 2008).

[72] In 1917 these included "Two Indian songs," "Four Penobscot tribal songs," "A Sioux serenade," "By the Weeping Waters," "Aooah," and "By the Waters of Minnetonka." *Discography of American Historical Recordings*, s.v. "Princess Watahwaso (vocalist : mezzo-soprano)," https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/talent/detail/17927/Watahwaso_Princess_vocalist_mezzo-soprano.

[73] Unkalunt: "Land of the Sky Blue Water" and "Navajo Drinking Song." *Discography of American Historical Recordings*, s.v. "Princess Atalie (vocalist : soprano vocal)," https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/talent/

out on the publicity afforded by both collaborating and recording put Unkalunt at a disadvantage in terms publicity compared to her two contemporaries.

Many of the songs Unkalunt performed related to women, children, and love. In Troyer's "Invocation to the Sun God," for example, a mother asks for divine protection for her infant, while in Lieurance's "Wanna," a dead Indian maiden calls to her lover. These selections may well have reinforced stereotypes about Native women which Unkalunt sought to correct elsewhere. In a 1921 interview, she strove to counter popular opinion that Native women had long been under-appreciated by Native men and were essentially treated as slaves. Instead, she argued that women "have always ranked high in authority and esteem" and that women continued to play a vital role in Native society, having developed "initiative and tradition" after generations of managing their households while men were hunting or at war.[74] Unkalunt further explained the tensions between traditional Native practice and modern life in the 1920s, that young Native women were "unlike the white flapper" and faced unique problems. The final paragraph sounds as if Unkalunt speaks from experience:

> In the girl who wins her way and comes back to her people, highly educated and independent, they often take the greatest pride, yet her early path is hard and stormy. Indian girls are naturally quiet and obedient, but today they, too, are restless and ambitious to get out into the world.[75]

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detail/17922/Atalie_Princess_vocalist_soprano_vocal; Blackstone: "Waters of Minnetonka," "Little Star." *Discography of American Historical Recordings*, s.v. "Princess Tsanina (vocalist : contralto)," https://adp.library.ucsb.edu/index.php/talent/detail/17924/Princess_Tsanina_vocalist_contralto.

[74] "Indian Wives Not Slaves," *Arizona Republican*, November 12, 1921, section 2, 6. Cited as from the *New York Mail*.

[75] "Indian Wives Not Slaves."

This article was translated into Finnish by an unknown party for *Toveritar*, a weekly newspaper for socialist women in Astoria, Oregon; it also appeared in the New Orleans *Times Picayune*, spreading Unkalunt's opinion far from the cultural centers of the northeast.[76]

Unkalunt kept up a constant stream of Indianist music performances during the 1920s and 1930s, both as a crucial source of income and to further her cause of increasing appreciation of and respect for Native music and culture among members of white society. She sang and told stories across the country but especially in New York: in the homes of the wealthy, at the Y.W.C.A. and meetings of women's clubs, for children at the American Museum of Natural History.[77] She participated in an inter-racial music festival, leading a group of American Indian singers in a concert that also included Polish, Indian, Armenian, Russian, and Hungarian.[78] She gave public lectures with titles like "Preserving the Red Man's Songs," "Modern American Indians" and "Indian Customs and Habits."[79] She organized an "Indian Day" for the Greenwich [Connecticut] Historical Society, led Native dancers at the Wivel restaurant on 54th St. in New York, served as a guest of the Edgar Allen Poe Society, and recited an original poem at the

[76] "Wife of Indian is Not a Slave," *The Times-Picayune*, October 15, 1921; "Indiaaninaiset," *Toveritar*, November 1, 1921 (no. 44), 4. See Sheila Rabun, "Historic Oregon Newspapers: Preserving History While Shaping the Future," *The Public Domain Review*, October 7, 2015. https://publicdomainreview.org/essay/historic-oregon-newspapers-preserving-history-while-shaping-the-future.

[77] John W. Clark, "The Year's Work," *Forty-Third Annual Report of the National Indian Association* (New York: [n.p.], 1922), 10 ; "Music Notes," *New York Times*, February 8, 1935, 27; "Lectures to Members," *Fifty-third Annual Report of the Trustees of the American Museum of Natural History* (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1922), 138; "Mount Vernon Hospital Auxiliary Holds Annual Bridge as Benefit," *New York Herald Tribune*, April 22, 1928, E12; "In New York City and State, in New Jersey and Other Sections" *New York Herald Tribune*, October 9, 1932, E11.

[78] "An Interracial Festival," *New York Times*, April 26, 1925, E16.

[79] "Public Lectures To-night," *New York Herald*, February 8, 1921, 10; "Public Lectures To-night," *New York Herald*, November 1, 1921, 12; "In the Current Week," *New York Times*, November 23, 1924, E9.

Emerson College Club.[80] Unkalunt furthered the reach of her message by making frequent appearances on the radio in New York and across the nation: on WJZ in Newark, Unkalunt assisted a vocal quartet and on WRC in Washington she presented a program with a Chief White Horn (and composer Geoffrey O'Hara as master of ceremonies) supposedly featuring "Native American music in its original form…with effective orchestral accompaniment and special tom-tom rhythms."[81]

Much of what Unkalunt truly thought – about her repertoire, about being expected to "play Indian," to use Deloria's phrase – is absent from the archival record. By contrast, her friend and collaborator, violinist Princess Nacoomee, did publicly state her opinion not only on the rights of Native women, but also on Indianist music. Nacoomee, who may have been Osage or Kiowa, appears in newspaper reports as performing repertoire only described as "Indian music" on the radio and in person in the greater Washington, D.C. area during the early 1930s.[82] Though she agreed with Unkalunt on women's issues, she went further than Unkalunt regarding repertory, stating on the record that "Pale Moon" (Logan) and "By the Waters of Minnetonka" (Lieurance) "were not real Indian songs, even though based on Indian themes. The true Indian theme changes time about every other measure, which is of necessity destroyed in these songs. The harmonizing also is contrary to Indian custom[,] their songs always being sung in unison."[83] If Unkalunt gave lectures along these lines, big-city newspapers did not record them. Including

[80] "Greenwich Village Days to Be Revived," *New York Times*, November 25, 1923, E8; "Dining and Dancing," *New York Herald Tribune*, December 4, 1937, 9; "Emerson College Club to Give Poetry Program," *New York Herald Tribune*, April 22, 1934, C8; "Poe Society to Open Season," *New York Times*, October 27, 1934, 13.

[81] "Programs for Today," *Boston Daily Globe*, July 3, 1922, 14; "Indians Will Sing Native Airs Tonight," *Washington Post*, May 9, 1929, 12.

[82] "Bethesda Club," *Washington Post*, May 8, 1932, S9; "The Business of Broadcasting: Studio Notes," *Broadcasting*, May 1, 1933, 24; "Indian Princess Speaks at Normal," *Oneonta Star*, October 3, 1936.

[83] "Indian Princess Speaks."

unarranged melodies on her programs, however, may have been a way for Unkalunt to subtly disagree with white composers' ideas of "Indian" music.

A glimmer of insight into Unkalunt's relationship with Indianist repertory comes at the end of a 1933 *Washington Post* article about her: "Her earnings go to her cause. And if you get to know her a litte, she may tell you, chuckling slyly, 'I must sing to get wampum – for my people.'"[84] On one level, the reporter's phrase "chuckling slyly" is loaded terminology, referencing damaging, racist stereotypes of Indians as devious or cunning. On another level, however, we might read this laugh, and Unkalunt's purported use of "wampum" – a word that white audiences might expect an Indian to use for "money," even in 1933 – as the singer poking fun at the expectations and racial stereotypes she dealt with on a daily basis.

Nitana and Operatic Dreams

Multiple news articles about Unkalunt appeared from March 1922 to September 1923 repeating much the same information: that she was to sing the starring role in *Nitana*, an Indianist opera which would soon be produced in New York, Boston, Chicago, Houston, and other leading cities on both sides of the Atlantic.[85] In one article, Unkalunt is quoted as saying:

> Soon I will be singing the leading role in an Indian opera which I believe presents my big opportunity, not only to sound the values of my own voice, but to carry the message of my people to the world that does not know or understand them.[86]

[84] "Indian Maid Sings."

[85] Specific opera houses are not named. "Princess Unkalunt Traces American Styles To Indians," *Women's Wear*, March 22, 1922, 2, 28; "Interesting Alpha Chis"; "Cherokee Indian Maid"; "News in Picture," *The Globe* [Toronto], December 9, 1922, 16; "Doubt is in the Heart"; "The Star's Daily Pictorial Page," *The Evening Star, Washington, D.C.*, November 28, 1922; "'Sunshine Rider' – the Girl on the Cover."

[86] "Cherokee Indian Maid."

Much depended on this project: not just Unkalunt's chance for fame – to be the creator of an operatic role, to tour the country and world singing in renowned opera houses – but the opportunity to promote understanding between Indians and non-Indians. As with her entire career, however, there are multilayered complications and lingering questions surrounding Unkalunt's involvement in the project. The libretto, which I discuss here for the first time, ends ambiguously, and its portrayal of American Indians at times both supports and undermines what Unkalunt was trying to accomplish in championing Native rights. In the opera, Unkalunt would give voice to an Indian female heroine, but one crafted by two men of European descent. The opera is, in short, a musical depiction of the American past that celebrates settler-colonialism. No documentation survives to explain why the project foundered, but regardless of the circumstances, its failure meant that Unkalunt would not realize her operatic dreams.

Nitana was not an unusual project, as the turn of the twentieth century witnessed a host of Indianist operas composed and produced in the United States. They were most often based on a specific Indian legend or set during colonial encounter. Of the several dozen known to scholars, some of the most successful include Arthur Nevin's *Poia* (premiere: Berlin, 1910), Victor Herbert's *Natoma* (premiere: Philadelphia, 1911), Charles Wakefield Cadman's *Shanewis* (premiere: New York, 1918), and Alberto Bimboni's *Winona* (premiere: Portland, Oregon, 1926).[87] Many others, like *Nitana*, were neither published nor produced.[88] Aaron Ziegel has

[87] Levy writes that Cadman was not able to get his Indianist opera *Daoma* staged despite submitting it to several companies during the 1910s and that the composer knew "the opera project was plagued by poor timing…*Poia* been a flop in Berlin, [and] the very next year Victor Herbert's *Natoma* received only lukewarm reviews. F. S. Converse's *The Pipe of Desire* (1905) achieved little success when it finally reached the Met in 1910; his 1911 score *The Sacrifice* did better in Boston, but even this did not work to Cadman's advantage, for when he sent the libretto of *Daoma* to the Boston Opera Company, impresario Henry Russell quickly objected: "Oh, I see you have the 'sacrifice' idea again! Can't you Americans write a plot without *that*?" (*Frontier Figures*, 103).

[88] See Appendix A of Michael V. Pisani's dissertation, "Exotic Sounds in the Native Land" (Ph.D. diss., Eastman School of Music, 1996) for a list including many of these operas. Elise Kirk discusses several in *American Opera* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001). The vast majority of composers of these works were male; one notable

shown that stilted libretti (modeled after translations of Italian libretti instead of vernacular English) often doomed these operas, as composers and librettists strove to create works that were "traditionally operatic yet uniquely American."[89] Unkalunt likely hoped that *Nitana* would replicate the success of Cadman's *Shanewis*, which premiered at the Metropolitan Opera on March 23, 1918 and was the first opera by an American to be produced there in two consecutive seasons. The opera, with libretto by Nelle Eberhart (1871-1944), was among the few from the period that relied on collaboration with a Native artist, in this case Tsianina Redfeather Blackstone.[90] The plot, unusually set in the then-present day just before WWI, was loosely based on Blackstone's life and told the story of a Creek singer, Shanewis, who grapples with living in two cultures, Native and white American. However, "instead of becoming a celebrated recitalist, or a spokesperson for Indian contributions to the arts, the character Shanewis becomes one member of a predictably ill-fated love triangle," notes musicologist Beth Levy.[91] In many of her concerts during the 1920s and 1930s, Unkalunt performed numbers from *Shanewis*, including the duet "The New Trail" with Chief Yowlache at her 1934 White House concert.

The other opera Unkalunt drew upon in her later concerts was Victor Herbert's *Natoma*, which premiered in Philadelphia on February 25, 1911 and three days later at the Metropolitan in New York. Set in 1820s California, the opera ends with the Indian title character entering a

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exception is Mary Carr Moore (1873-1957), who wrote several full-length operas. See Catherine Parsons Smith, *Mary Carr Moore, American Composer* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987).

[89] Aaron Ziegel, "Enacting the Nation on Stage: Style, Subjects, and Themes in American Opera Librettos of the 1910s," *Opera Journal* 42, no. 1/2 (March-June 2009): 17.

[90] The other is Zitkala-Sa's work on Hanson's *The Sun God*. See Catherine Parsons Smith, "An Operatic Skeleton on the Western Frontier: Zitkala-Sa, William F. Hanson, and The Sun Dance Opera," *Women & Music* 5 (2001): 1-30.

[91] Levy, *Frontier Figures*, 110. Also see Briawna A. Anderson, "Troubled Authenticity and the Romanticized West: Reevaluating Charles Wakefield Cadman's 1918 Opera 'Shanewis.'" Masters thesis, University of Utah, 2013, and James Parakilas, "The Soldier and the Exotic: Operatic Variations on a Theme of Racial Encounter, Part II" *Opera Quarterly* 10, no. 3 (Spring 1994): 43–69.

convent after killing a man to prevent him kidnapping her friend and employer, Barbara.[92] Vague references to Unkalunt performing the title role in the full opera appear in some newspaper articles; whether or not she participated in a complete, staged version of the work, Unkalunt did at least have *Natoma* arias in her repertoire, and Herbert even provided the piano accompaniment for her on several occasions. He reportedly once stated that "Princess Atalie is an artist of fine dramatic power, gifted with a voice of exceptional quality."[93]

In *Nitana*, as in *Natoma*, Unkalunt would have portrayed the title character, created by librettist Augustus Post (1873-1952). Post was a graduate of Amherst College and Harvard Law School. He was something of a daredevil: the thirteenth person to fly solo in an airplane, one of the first civilians to descend in a submarine, the first to get a driving ticket in New York City (despite being a founder of the American Automobile Association), and a record-setting hot air balloonist.[94] He studied voice with several teachers, appeared on Broadway in a show titled *Omar the Tentmaker*, and gave vocal recitals. He and Unkalunt may have met for the first time at the March 1922 gathering of the Musician's Club in Carnegie Hall, for which Post served as host and at which Unkalunt performed.[95] Post submitted a copy of the *Nitana* libretto to the United States Copyright Office in January 1916, though the date on the manuscript is 1913.[96]

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[92] See Pisani, *Imagining*, 260-267 and Robert Waters, "Considering the Other in Indianist Opera: Separation and Assimilation in Victor Herbert's *Natoma*" *The American Music Research Center Journal* 23 (2014):1-27.
[93] *Encyclopedia of American Biography*, 183.

[94] Wikipedia, s.v. "Augustus Post," last modified May 9, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Augustus_Post. See also https://www.theunforgettableaugustuspost.com/.

[95] "Mrs. John Davis and Composer-Daughter Pay New York Annual Visit," *Musical America*, April 29, 1922, 38. A photo held by the National Museum of the American Indian appears to show Post and Unkalunt sitting together over a meal in a large tent (National Museum of the American Indian, NMAI.AC.117, P23882).

[96] One source, the *Who's Who in Music* for 1941, states that Unkalunt "created role of *Nitana* in Indian opera written for her" but this seems unlikely given the dates on the libretto.

The composer, Umberto Vesci (b. 1887) was born in Montefusco, Avellino, Italy and emigrated to the United States when he was five years old. He studied in New York with Felice De Matteo, a fellow Italian immigrant, and traveled to Palermo, Sicily to study composition, orchestration and harmony with Pietro Plantania.[97] He had written at least two operas before the *Nitana* project: *The Return from Tripoli* and *Pygmalion and Galatea*, both in Italian. He also wrote music for band, chorus, and orchestra, but very little remains available. A promotional pamphlet for *Nitana* describes Vesci as "one of the few American composers to be proud of": though "his music partakes much of the Italian temperament, his life in this country has developed a versatility which in itself is American."[98] *Nitana*, according to this document, "is full of Indian Music, typically reproduced with tom-tom effects: this, interwoven with the religious music of the early settlers makes a varied combination of melody and harmony, hardly surpassed in any opera."[99] Another page is equally vague and hyperbolic, calling the music "descriptive" and bringing out "the rich color, the marked rhythm and the inspired vision of the drama, rising to the supreme heights of musical, dramatic and literary imagination and the sublime loftiness of historic prophecy."[100]

This promotional pamphlet, or prospectus, declares *Nitana* to be an "American Grand Opera" in large type on its cover. It opens with an announcement that the International Music Festival League "has recommended Nitana as especially adapted for this season's [1920?]

[97] Vesci's biographical information comes from the *Nitana* prospectus. Wikipedia, s.v. "Felice DeMatteo," last modified November 7, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Felice_DeMatteo; Wikipedia, s.v. "Pietro Platania," last modified December 24, 2019, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pietro_Platania.

[98] "Prospectus of Nitana: Grand American Opera," [New York: American Concert Bureau, n.d.], [4]. New York Public Library for the Performing Arts Music Division M-Clippings (Names): Vesci, Umberto.

[99] "Prospectus," [4].

[100] "Prospectus," [6].

activities, namely: The Tercentenary Celebration of the Landing of the Pilgrims."[101] A group of music lovers founded the League in 1915 with the intent of bringing peace to the world through music, modeled after the Peace Jubilee in Boston following the Civil War.[102] One of the organizers, Arthur Leslie Hood of Hanson, Massachusetts, was to conduct the opera at a tercentenary celebration in an unspecified location.[103]

Vesci and Post's three-act opera is filled with stereotypes: it depicts an exoticized and generalized "Indian" village, a swaggering and paternalistic white colonizing hero, a noble Native warrior, and an innocent Indian maiden caught between them.[104] According to the opera's prospectus, *Nitana*'s creators intentionally tied the work to the nation: it was "the Grand Opera that is best suited to the times, and fundamentally the most American Opera ever written."[105] This claim likely refers to *Nitana* being set during one of the first instances of interracial encounter in the New World, which would eventually lead to the founding of the United States. The first act opens in an Indian village of unspecified tribal affiliation as Nitana sings about the start of a new day. A hunting party returns and her lover, Waguntah, plays his flute in the distance. The colonists sing a Christian hymn off stage, causing the Indians to panic and quickly disappear into the forest. In scene II, the colonists come ashore and the colonial governor, Leonard Calvert, names the land Mary's Land after the English queen. The colonists rejoice by singing a nine-line chorale. After a love duet between colonists Mary and Barton, Waguntah

[101] "Prospectus," [1].

[102] "To Bring Peace by Means of Music," *The Hartford Courant*, November 15, 1915, 2.

[103] "Prospectus," [3]. I cannot find much information on Hood.

[104] See Raymond William Stedman, *Shadows of the Indian: Stereotypes in American Culture* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982) and Robert S. Tilton, *Pocahontas: the Evolution of an American Narrative* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

[105] "Nitana," [6].

emerges from the brush. Calvert tells the alarmed colonists that the Indian looks friendly and Waguntah holds back the braves, who are anxious to attack.

Act II begins in a forest. Waguntah plays a melody on his flute, repeats it with his voice, and Nitana appears. They sing about their love but shots in the distance interrupt them. Waguntah leaves to investigate, and during his absence, Barton passes Nitana while on a hunting expedition. He approaches her, calls her a child repeatedly, and offers her some trinkets so she will speak. Here was another stereotype at work: by the early twentieth century, Deloria notes, "The connections between Indians and children already had a long history, the two being paired rhetorically as natural, simple, naive, preliterate, and devoid of self-consciousness."[106] The fact that Barton considers Nitana to be childlike suggests a predatory nature when, for example, he exclaims "On lovely lips how sweet the heathen language! / Shame that I cannot hope to read her meaning!"[107] Barton somehow catches Nitana's name, and the two continue to interact despite not being able to understand the other. He thinks his face must be scaring Nitana and pulls out Mary's mirror, which interests her. He tries to mime that she is seeing her reflection, but Nitana mistakenly believes he's taken her soul and follows him as he leaves, trying to get it back.

In scene II, the pair appear at the colonists' camp, and Barton's friends and neighbors exclaim when they notice Nitana trailing behind him. His disturbing reply is, "Should she not follow me? / Am I not then a mighty proper fellow? / Brown girls or white, they follow where one leads them!"[108] Without giving verbal agreement, Nitana enters Barton's home to work as his servant. "See, child, there's silver money, / Will you come every morning, very early / And

[106] Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 106.

[107] Augustus Post, "Nitana: An Opera in Three Acts," composed by Umberto Vesci (unpublished manuscript, 1913). Library of Congress, Copyright Manuscript Reel 692, [15].

[108] "Nitana," [22].

cook the meal, and set the house in order? / And it is yours? … The bargain's made…go in…I'll follow."[109] The libretto does specify that the door to Barton's house remains open while Mary sings of her jealous worry, but impropriety (or worse) nevertheless hangs in the air. Indeed, Waguntah visits and learns about firearms from Barton, only to be shocked to see Nitana exit the other man's house. The scene closes with a quintet: Mary and Barton worry they are in danger, Nitana is glad to be free of the mirror's spell (broken when she saw Waguntah), and Waguntah vows revenge.

Act III takes place a few months later. Nitana reflects on how the tribe has been freezing her out because she spent time in a white man's house. "Nitana, princess, shamed before her tribe! / For I have dwelt beneath the stranger's roof; / The white man's touch their princess has defiled, / To his command my haughty spirit bowed."[110] Waguntah explains to Nitana that it is Mary and Barton's wedding day, which will also be the latter's death day. While Nitana decides whether or not to warn the colonists, they pass by, singing a bridal song for Mary. In the climax of the opera, Nitana leaps up to deflect Waguntah as he aims Barton's unattended gun at the colonist, wounding but not killing him. Nitana's betrayal devastates Waguntah. The Indians attack, but the colonists (while singing for divine protection) force them to retreat. They almost capture Waguntah, but Nitana holds them off. She turns down their offer of joining the settlement and becoming a Christian, wanting instead to die with her people. She accepts what she believes to be her fate, saying that the future belongs to the white man, and follows the braves winding up the mountain to die. Nitana reaches Waguntah just in time to clasp his knees before he falls back, dead, and the curtain closes.

[109] "Nitana," [23].

[110] "Nitana," [30].

Like other Indianist operas of the period, the libretto uses labored language meant to set a romantic, historical scene, and it trades on crass depictions of Native peoples. Plus, there is a hint of sexual assault, or at the very least of sexual and racial exploitation, in the interactions between Nitana and Barton. Nitana's supposed love for Barton – which she realizes as Waguntah sets off to kill him – reads as contrived at best. "Torn, torn is my heart, torn between love and duty; / Calls the blood in my veins, but calls the heart in my bosom – / Whither go'st thou, Nitana? Princess, where thy decision?" she sings as she considers how saving one man will condemn the other.[111] Just as Shanewis does in Charles Wakefield Cadman's opera, Nitana chooses to return to the life she has always known among her people, "a behavior commonly known at that time as 'going back to the blanket.'"[112] Nitana closes the opera with a resigned lament on the demise of the Indian and the rise of the whites. She addresses the Great Spirit, asking if even the supreme deity itself is dying and retreating. Addressing Barton, she sings:

> And thou, oh stranger
> Child of the sunray,
> Son of the morning,
> Live and be happy.
> Thine is the morrow,
> Thine is the promise
> Sure of fulfillment;
> And I – I go
> Fulfilling my promise;
> Nitana the princess
> To die with her people –
> An Indian – to die![113]

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[111] "Nitana," [37]-[38].

[112] Browner, "Native Songs," 178. In her analysis of *Shanewis*, Levy argues that the title character is undermined musically when pointing out the horrific effects of white settler-colonialism: "As Shanewis offers the opera's most racially charged statements, she simultaneously steps into the role of the outraged soprano, diminishing the specific impact of her words. At the moment when she might be most crucially heard as a Native American voice, Shanewis is even more powerfully linked to the operatic heroines of other nations, Lakme, Aida, and perhaps Carmen" (*Frontier Figures*, 117).

[113] "Nitana," [44].

This speech reinforces what early twentieth century audiences already knew: that not long after this imagined encounter, white settlements began to cover what would become the United States, violently pushing Native populations off of their traditional lands. Despite this anticipated outcome, however, and despite the death of Waguntah, the fact that Nitana does not die before the curtain closes leaves the audience with an ambiguous message. "Every statue of a dejected 'end of the trail' Indian, every Indian death scene, every consignment of Indian people to the past does the ideological work of settler colonialism," Deloria argues. "To assert life and presence in this context is to resist, and even attack, settler colonial violence and ideology, which was never a completed project."[114]

A letter to the editor of the *New York Times* in March 1923 sheds light on how Unkalunt might have viewed this role and its ambiguous message regarding life and death and the place of American Indians in U.S.-American society.[115] Written during the period in which *Nitana* was supposedly in preparation, Unkalunt's letter addresses the question of whether certain ceremonial songs and dances should be banned by the U.S. government; for decades, officials in charge of Indian policy sought to quash various forms of religious and cultural expression deemed to show "savagery" or sexual immorality.[116] Unkalunt defends the dances by asking, "Has [the American Indian] not been deprived of almost everything that should hold his people together, and that teaches him to be natural in a still greater degree, as his forefathers have taught him down the ages?" The letter continues with a tone that balances deference and defiance. Unkalunt argues that the "racial expression" of "the poor Indian" means that he cannot "come forward and

[114] Deloria, *Becoming Mary Sully*, 236.

[115] Princess Atalie Unkalunt, "Indian Dances," *New York Times*, March 27, 1923, 18.

[116] Gabriella Treglia, "The Consistency and Inconsistency of Cultural Oppression: American Indian Dance Bans, 1900–1933," *Western Historical Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (July 2013): 148.

express himself in terms to suit the 'white man's pretty language.'" If he cannot do so, she reasons, he should be left with dance, which is necessary for self-expression.

Notably, Unkalunt distances herself from "the poor Indian," coming across as somewhat elitist as she writes to the *New York Times* in the "white man's pretty language." She even seems to adopt the common race-progression thinking of the day, saying that the dances should not be banned because they allow Native people to express themselves through "inspirational powers," which she defines as "surviving racial faculties that express pure and spiritual moods and concepts of the simplest form" which are important for edifying their souls.[117] Unkalunt objects to Native culture being "accepted in disguise…interpreted by Russian ballets and other foreign presentments" and taught by so-called geniuses who, she implies, know nothing of the cultures they imitate. If Indians are not allowed their own vehicles of cultural expression, she asks, why should these non-Indian imitators be allowed to represent a race that is not their own? Unkalunt walks a rhetorical tightrope between arguing for the value of Native arts and agency while reinforcing the tendency of some Americans to view Indians as inferior to whites. This letter suggests that Unkalunt may have chosen to focus on her character's survival rather than the braves' defeat as the *Nitana*'s lasting message: though white settler-colonialism had destroyed many aspects of Native life, Unkalunt, like her character, refused to be defeated.

Whatever her reservations about the stereotypical plot of *Nitana*, the opera would have given Unkalunt the chance to sing the role of a Native character, a significant opportunity in and of itself. Even the promise of the project provided Unkalunt with a good deal of publicity, and one newspaper blurb in particular illuminates another facet of her complex relationship with the

[117] Also note that Unkalunt is distancing herself from Indians on reservations in using "their" instead of "our." Social Darwinism held that some groups of people, including Indians, were less "developed" than others, namely, whites. See Brian Dippie, *The Vanishing Indian: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982).

(mythologized) past. In November 1922, the Washington, D.C. *Evening Star* mentioned Unkalunt's upcoming role in *Nitana* in the caption of a photograph depicting her wearing a buckskin dress, headband, and braided hair having her portrait painted by Remington Schuyler (1884-1955) (Figure 2.2).[118]

AN INDIAN OPERA STAR. The Princess Atalie Unkalunt of the Cherokees, will appear soon in New York in the Indian opera. "Nitnia." Photo shows princess having her portrait painted by Remington Schuyler. Wide World Photo.

Figure 2.2. Schuyler painting Unkalunt's portrait. The original caption reads: "AN INDIAN OPERA STAR. The Princess Atalie Unkalunt of the Cherokees will appear soon in New York in the Indian opera, "Nitnia" [*sic*]. Photo shows princess having her portrait painted by Remington Schuyler."
Evening Star, Washington, D.C., November 28, 1922

Schuyler was a painter and illustrator known for his depictions of the American West (like his namesake, Frederic Remington), some of which were used as *Saturday Evening Post*

[118] "The Star's Daily Pictorial Page."

and *Life* illustrations.[119] Schuyler and Unkalunt met when she participated in an Indian pageant near New Rochelle, New York, where the painter resided. His portrait of her graced the cover of the September 1923 issue of *Farm and Fireside*, a farming magazine with wide circulation in the West and Midwest.[120] The accompanying article mentions *Nitana*, as well as Unkalunt's WWI service.

Frontier encounters like that in *Nitana* and depictions of "the West" more specifically, such as those in Wild West shows and paintings of "cowboys and Indians" by Schuyler and others, enjoyed popularity during the early twentieth century as part of broader conversations concerning U.S. national identity. Musicologist Beth Levy has argued that the (imagined) West served as a space for artists of all sorts, including musicians, to engage with a mythology of "natives, savages, and Indians; scouts, pioneers, and settlers; mavericks, cowboys, and gunfighters" which played a crucial role in the (hi)stories Americans told to and about themselves, including those related to American exceptionalism.[121]

Having her portrait painted by Schuyler impacted Unkalunt in several ways. On the one hand, it afforded her extra publicity for the *Nitana* project, particularly in light of *Farm and Fireside*'s large readership. In the accompanying article, Schuyler described Unkalunt as having "a rich, full voice…her high notes have a thrilling quality words cannot describe."[122] On the other hand, Schuyler also reinforced an image of Unkalunt as a member of a dying race destined to remain in the past: "She has all the temperament of an Indian – she is gracious, courteous, sensitive, far-seeing, spiritual, and simple," he wrote. The Schuyler portrait inspired at least two

[119] See Henry W. Hamilton and Jean Tyree Hamilton, *Remington Schuyler's West: Artistic Visions of Cowboys and Indians* (Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2004).
[120] Wikipedia, s.v. "Farm & Fireside," last modified March 24, 2020, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Farm_%26_Fireside.

[121] Levy, *Frontier Figures*, 2.

[122] "'Sunshine Rider' – the Girl on the Cover."

men to send fan letters to the artist, asking to be put in contact with Unkalunt. One wrote from San Francisco that she "must be a beautiful girl [and] I am longing to meet her" while another wrote from a ranch in North Dakota that "it would relieve the monotony for me if Miss Rider would not object to a friendly correspondence with me."[123] The portrait, depicting Unkalunt in Native dress, captured their imaginations but also presented her two-dimensionally, a character to be objectified and written about instead of a successful artist who could speak for herself.

Though hoping to participate in an opera that would have been widely understood as an "American" endeavor, a fact further reinforced by the Schuyler painting, Unkalunt never appeared with a major opera company in the United States. When the *Nitana* project fell through, she began to write her own "American Indian opera" libretto, which Victor Herbert agreed to set to music. His sudden death in 1924 disrupted the project, however. One source reported the next year that "others are now finishing the opera in which the Princess Atalie will appear as heroine," but either this too fell through or the text and music have not survived.[124] By the mid-1920s, with the failure of *Nitana*, the demise of her own operatic endeavor, and possibly other undocumented obstacles, Unkalunt "found herself a full-fledged opera singer with nine operas at her command, but no chance to sing in her own country."[125] This statement seems to suggest hurdles including racism and financial obstacles kept Unkalunt from an operatic career, barriers which European or European-trained singers were less likely to encounter. The wording is certainly striking, particularly "in her own country": white society in the U.S. was most eager to

[123] Harry Kincaid to Remington Schuyler, October 10, 1923 and George Clements to Remington Schuyler, October 10, 1923. Folder 81, Box 5192, H87-30 Remington Schuyler Collection, South Dakota State Historical Society.

[124] "Trenton Patrons for Music Events," *Trenton Evening Times*, March 24, 1925, 10.

[125] *Encyclopedia of American Biography*, 183. Which nine operas are not specified.

claim Unkalunt as she fit into the idealized past, much more eager than it was to support a Cherokee soprano in her quest to sing opera.

"One must either go forward or backward"

As it became clear that her operatic dreams would not materialize, Unkalunt turned to other art forms and projects that allowed her to celebrate and promote Native heritage. "'Life is progressive – one must either go forward or backward.' There is no standing still in art, nor should there be a stand-still with the Indian of to-day," proclaimed her promotional pamphlet.[126] Unkalunt chose to go forward. Even as *Nitana* was supposedly in development, she took part in events around New York City as a sort-of "token Indian," where her presence added authenticity and a link to the past. One occasion was the 1922 unveiling of "Aspiration," a statue outside of St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery, where Unkalunt performed with Oskenonton, a Mohawk baritone whose international career included starring in *Shanewis* with Blackstone at the Hollywood Bowl in 1926.[127] She also participated in events around the opening of Inwood Hill Park at the northernmost tip of Manhattan in 1926.[128] At the same time, Unkalunt turned her attention to her own projects, including "erecting an Indian opera house" and organizing "an Indian coöperative selling plan," i.e., a shop of Indian wares.[129] Both endeavors developed in connection with the Society of First Sons and Daughters of America, a Native arts group

[126] *Princess Atalie Unkalunt*, [4].

[127] "'Lo,' the Poor Indian Coming into His Own," *Richmond Palladium and Sun-Telegram*, October 27, 1922, 7. Helmut Kallmann and Edward B. Moogk, "Os-Ke-Non-Ton," in *Canadian Encyclopedia*. Historica Canada. Article published February 07, 2006; Last Edited March 27, 2019. https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/os-ke-non-ton

[128] "Indians Help Open Inwood Hill Park," *New York Times*, May 9, 1926, 17.

[129]"'Sunshine Rider' – the Girl on the Cover." This article also mentions that Unkalunt "has helped in organizing an Indian colony near New York City," possibly referring to a meeting space for the Society.

Unkalunt founded in 1922. Caring for the Native past meant mobilizing and organizing; the group sought to promote and support Indian artists who, like Unkalunt, navigated between their priorities as Native people and the strictures of American society more broadly (Figure 2.3).[130]

Figure 2.3. Nacoomee, Unkalunt, and Blackstone at an early meeting of the Society. The original caption reads: "INDIAN PRINCESSES HOLD COUNCIL. Genuine Indian princesses, who met in New York recently to hold the first council of the First Daughters of America. Left to right: Princess Nacoomee of the Osage tribe, Princess Atalie Unkalunt of the Cherokees and Princess Tsianina of the Creeks."
The Evening Star, Washington, D.C., November 13, 1923.

The organization had three main purposes, as detailed in a 1937 concert program:

[130] The Society of American Indians (1911-1924) was a pan-Indian organization looking to promote Indian rights and culture. Michelle Wick Patterson notes that for members of the group, deciding how best to perform Indianness "proved treacherous as it exacerbated divisions within the SAI over the purpose of the organization, the necessary degree of acculturation it should reflect, and the images of Indian life members hoped to set forth." The group's splintering in its later years may have paved the way for Unkalunt's group to focus specifically on the arts (Michelle Wick Patterson, "'Real' Indian Songs: The Society of American Indians and the Use of Native American Culture as a Means of Reform, " *American Indian Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (Winter 2002), 45).

> FIRST: To create a better understanding with our pale-face brothers and sisters, for Original, Historical, and National Spirit in Art. To keep the Arts alive as a vital part of our community life by providing real and authentic Amerinds with fine and dignified opportunities for artistic expression.
>
> SECOND: To encourage Amerind Artists; to win for them the appreciation they deserve; and to gain recognition and appraisal for their arts as First Americans, thus protecting them from imposters and intruders who attempt to pose, to produce, or copy their arts for cheap, commercial gain.
>
> THIRD: To influence legislation on our behalf. And to establish a National Amerind Building for co-related Arts, Theatre, Museum and Club.[131]

These goals reflect the Society's dedication to art as a tool for increasing interracial appreciation, and indeed, the group offered both "Blood Membership" for "Authentic Indians who can prove their tribal affiliation" and "Associate Membership" for "pale-faces who are sympathetic toward our cause," with applications approved by the Society's council.[132] These points also reveal a desire to champion the value of art created by Native artists, and to do so on a national scale. By 1933 membership had grown to almost three thousand, and a 1937 list of forty-nine patrons includes prominent Euro-American figures such as Mrs. Woodrow [Edith] Wilson, the president's second wife, and his daughter, Margaret Wilson, Indianist composers Homer Grunn and Thurlow Lieurance, diplomat Harry Hayes Morgan, and actress Blanche Yurka.[133]

With no known records, it is not clear what the Society actually *did*, how members participated, or what the group's impact was in New York City and beyond, particularly during the 1920s. While the archival record is scant for this decade regarding the organization as a whole, Unkalunt's name did appear in newspapers across the United States during the fall of

[131] Concert program, "A Series of Four Evenings," March 24, 1937. The program for the March 3 concert of this series also lists these goals, but with slightly different wording.

[132] Concert program, "A Series of Four Evenings," March 24, 1937.

[133] "Indian Singer Here."

1924, stemming from her prosecution on a larceny charge. Accounts of the trial – for which there is no parallel in the careers of Blackstone or Poolaw – provide otherwise inaccessible details regarding how Unkalunt earned her income and spent her time; they also reveal racism both in the accusations and in the sensationalized press accounts.

On November 7, 1924, Unkalunt was arraigned in a New York City courtroom on a charge of grand larceny, reports of which quickly appeared in headlines across the east coast and beyond.[134] A Mrs. Lucie Benedict, daughter of millionaire art dealer George J. Ainslie, accused Unkalunt of stealing $355 worth of clothing and household items, including fur slippers, silks, a clock, and several bedspreads, from her father's home in the New York City suburb of Ardsley.[135] In December 1923 Unkalunt and composer Victor Herbert had performed arias from *Natoma* at the Ainslie Galleries on Fifth Avenue, which led to Unkalunt visiting the Ainslies' home the following summer. Mrs. Anna Ainslie had died in June, and Unkalunt appears to have become involved in a messy relationship with the art dealer.[136] According to newspaper reports, a lonely and grieving Ainslie insisted that Unkalunt take studio space at his 5th Avenue gallery so that she might establish contacts and increase the visibility of her work. Ainslie then invited Unkalunt to move into his home in Ardsley, with Benedict as chaperone, and it seems she stayed from August through October.[137]

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[134] Papers from New York to Los Angeles to Washington, D.C. reported on the story. There was even a full page spread with pictures (including one of Unkalunt giving testimony) in the *Philadelphia Inquirer Magazine Section* ("Wealthy Mr. Ainslie's Surprising Change of Heart," December 7, 1924, 3).

[135] "Lawyer Delves Into the Past of Indian Princess," *New York Herald Tribune*, November 14, 1924, 6.

[136] *Find A Grave*, database and images (https://www.findagrave.com), memorial page for Anna Ainslie (17 January 1862–18 June 1924), Find A Grave Memorial no. 97539035, citing Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Sleepy Hollow, Westchester County, New York, USA; Maintained by Pat (contributor 46871295) .

[137] Other papers say that she was in the dealer's Manhattan home or that she visited Ardsley at weekends. "Lawyer Delves Into the Past."

Unkalunt claimed she had converted Ainslie to Christianity; she also maintained that he asked her to marry him several times, and it was this idea that enraged his daughter and led to the accusations of theft. Benedict eventually confessed to planting the "stolen" items in Unkalunt's room, and a judge dismissed the case. As one paper asked, "Why were so much time and energy spent by Mr. Ainslie and his daughter, Mrs. Benedict, to prove ownership to articles [*sic*] which were of minute value compared to the expense of that long drawn out trial?"[138] Benedict, who was roughly the same age as Unkalunt, seemed worried about her inheritance if her father remarried, and racism was a likely factor. In addition to the household items, Benedict also claimed that Unkalunt stole seven bottles of whiskey to sell at $20 each, and by doing so she played on the trope of Indians as alcoholics.[139] In early 1925, Unkalunt sued the Ainslies for $250,000 for forty missed concerts and damage to her reputation, but it does not seem the case went forward.[140]

As part of the flurry of press that surrounded the trial, several details emerged about how Unkalunt supported herself in New York, coming to light because the prosecution, with racial overtones, "sought to show that the Princess has no standing socially or otherwise and was a parasite" using Ainslie for his money.[141] To do so, the prosecutor listed presumably low-paying

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[138] "Wealthy Mr. Ainslie," December 7, 1924.

[139] "Lawyer Delves Into the Past." For example, see William E. Unrau, *Indians, Alcohol, and the Roads to Taos and Santa Fe* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2013).

[140] "Princess Unkalunt Sues for $250,000," *New York Times*, February 22, 1925, 11.

[141] "Ainslie 'Princess' Repudiates Title," *New York Times*, November 11, 1924, 25. Unkalunt's lawyer was Mirabeau L. Towns, who was known for performing closing arguments (including at Unkalunt's trial) in doggerel. According to his obituary, his cases were often "suits for damages, tried before juries, whose members often showed themselves susceptible to the charms of the lawyer's poetical presentation of his plea" ("Mirabeau L. Towns, Poet Lawyer, Dies," *New York Times*, November 26, 1932, 10). His verse at her defense was: "Now I will tell you our defense – Ainslie in his parlor, with evil thoughts and chuckles; Julia, in the kitchen, cooking kraut and knuckles; Lucie in the guest's room, concocting schemes and plots; the princess in the garden, gathering posies for the pots. Lucie finds some washed-out silk and puts it in the drawer, then tries to frame the princess in the clutches of the law" ("Indian 'Princess' Freed On Larceny Charges," *New York Herald Tribune*, November 15, 1924, 6).

jobs Unkalunt had previously held, including typist at an oil company, freelance journalist, and employee of a real estate agent.[142] For three years she had taken care of the home of Civil War veteran, lawyer, and arts advocate General Stillman Kneeland (she was "hostess," she testified, not a janitor as the prosecution argued), and she remained as a tenant after Kneeland sold the space to a Dr. Logotetti.[143] The trial also revealed that Unkalunt had a foster mother, a "wealthy society woman of Salem, W. Va." named Mrs. Joseph Edgar Traynor, who had given Unkalunt a monthly allowance "between $125 and $150."[144] One paper reported that during cross-examination "[Traynor] clung to her story that she had given the Princess many thousands of dollars, not only to maintain her but to educate her. She was unshaken in her testimony that she now is, and for the last nine years has been, the foster-mother of the Indian Princess."[145] Patronage from Traynor or other wealthy individuals helps to explain how Unkalunt was able to fund some of her later projects, especially having studio space in a prime location on West 58th St. in Manhattan. In 1928 Unkalunt filed for bankruptcy while her countersuit was still pending. From surrounding press coverage, we know that she had recently been taking voice lessons, as one of her creditors is a vocal teacher named Jeanette Hughmann. Another was Abraham Archibald Anderson, an artist with studio space near Bryant Park.[146]

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[142] "Ainslie 'Princess' Repudiates Title." For context, the value of $250,000 (from 1924) in 2018 dollars is $3.7 million (https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/uscompare/)

[143] "Lawyer Delves Into the Past." "…he dabbled in art and poetry with credit, and was one of New York City's strongest devotees of broad culture and civic development" ("Gen. S. F. Kneeland Dies at Age of 81," *New York Times*, August 31, 1926, 17).

[144] Ainslie 'Princess' Repudiates Title." I have not yet been able to locate information on Traynor.

[145] "Indian Princess Free; Lawyer Causes Scene," *New York Times*, November 15, 1924, 28.

[146] "Indian Princess Bankrupt," *New York Times*, September 7, 1928, 32. Anderson's portrait of inventor Thomas Edison is held by the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C. (Transfer from the Smithsonian American Art Museum; gift of Eleanor A. Campbell to the Smithsonian Institution, 1942. Object number NPG.65.23).

A final revelatory tidbit from the trial coverage had to do specifically with Unkalunt's performance of Indianness. "The hearing on the charges against Miss Atalie Unkalunt Rider, a Cherokee Indian, who has said that she was a tribal princess 'by newspaper title,' was continued yesterday at the Harlem Court before Magistrate McAndrews," began one article.[147] The prosecution, looking to discredit the singer and prove a predilection for falsehoods, argued what everyone knew but no one said: that none (or very few) of the Indian "Princesses" at the time were actually princesses, that is, daughters of tribal chiefs. At an April 1925 concert in New York, for example, the Princess Natoma String Sextet assisted "Princess Atalie," and the announcement for a different program described the group as "a women's small orchestral ensemble of six instruments" playing accompaniments in costumes.[148] In his study of American Indians in the pictorial press, John M. Coward has argued that so-called Indian princesses "could be honored for overcoming the limitations of their race and represented in the pictorial press as beautiful, loving, exotic, and innocently sexual, imagery that separated them from the drudge role assigned to other Indian women."[149] Unkalunt's admission to being a princess "by newspaper title" revealed the exaggeration that gave her a stage name, but it also became almost embarrassingly clear that she worked within a system built on white fantasy. "I am what I am expected to be," her statement implied.

Several years after the flurry of press interest in the trial died down, Unkalunt was able to expand her work championing Native arts. She established studio space at 216 W. 58th Street

[147] "Lawyer Delves Into the Past."

[148] "Trenton Patrons for Music Events," *Trenton Evening Times*, March 24, 1925, 10. Further information on this ensemble so far remains elusive.

[149] John M. Coward, *Indians Illustrated: The Image of Native Americans in the Pictorial Press* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016), 92. See also Denise K. Lajimodiere, "American Indian Females and Stereotypes: Warriors, Leaders, Healers, Feminists; Not Drudges, Princesses, Prostitutes," *Multicultural Perspectives* 15, no. 2 (May 1, 2013): 104-109.

around 1928, and the location quickly became a cultural hub for anyone interested in Indian art. "[People] come to talk and to see her walls hung with eagle feathers, prayer plumes, sand paintings and thunder birds," explained one reporter.[150] More narrowly, it became a meeting place for Indians of various tribes living in and visiting New York City, with Unkalunt acting as "the counselor and friend, the big sister and the solver-of-problems."[151] Many of these visitors were likely members of the Society of First Sons and Daughters of America, and in 1933 the New York City Directory lists this address as being both Unkalunt's residence and Society headquarters. One article about Unkalunt cited one hundred and fifty American Indians "of a dozen tribes" living in the New York City area. "They form a constant stream in and out of Princess Atalie's wigwam," noted the reporter, and individiuals included Cherokee actor Will Rogers (1879-1935), Mohawk dancer and Ziegfield Follies performer Princess White Deer (1891-1992), and Chief Running Bear, a Powhatan lecturer.[152]

Unkalunt remained at this location, at the southwest end of Central Park near Columbus Circle, not far from Carnegie Hall, from approximately 1928 to 1933.[153] At the time, the space was still known as the former stables of Frank J. Gould (son of railroad magnate Jay Gould), from a time when "smart New Yorkers displayed their thoroughbreds in Central Park."[154]

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[150] "Indian Singer Here."

[151] "Indian Maid Sings."

[152] "Indian Maid Sings."

[153] Mentioned as her address in connection with larceny case: "Bankrupt Singer's Suit for Libel Listed as Asset," *New York Herald Tribune*, September 7, 1928, 12 and "Indian Maid Sings." It's unclear how many of the three stories Unkalunt rented for what periods of time. In 1933 the *New York Times* announced she was renewing a lease at 559 Madison Avenue but it's unclear when the 58th St. location was no longer hers ("Apartment Renting Again is Active," *New York Times*, May 27, 1933, 27). By 1937 Society headquarters were at 157 E. 56th St. (Concert Program, "A Series of Four Evenings," March 24, 1937).

[154] "Fine Stables in the City," *New York Tribune*, December 7, 1902, B4; "Auto Firm Leases Gould Stables," *New York Times*, September 4, 1920, 19; "Real Estate News of City and Suburbs," *New York Herald Tribune*, August 14, 1928, 33.

Directly to the east were the American Fine Arts Building and John Golden Theatre, where a Society concert took place in 1932.[155] All together, one journalist described the space as being "a kind of Indian community center" and it housed both a performance space and Unkalunt's shop for Native wares.[156] The theatre, sometimes referred to as the Indian Council Lodge Hall, was twenty-five by one hundred feet and could fit approximately three hundred people; Unkalunt decorated it with paintings "of Hopi rites and customs," with a Hopi fireplace in the corner.[157] To bring in revenue, she rented out the hall to other organizations; on April 4, 1931, The Studio Players put on *Delilah* (Gilbert Emory) and *The Dreamy Kid* (Eugene O'Neill) "at Princess Atalie's Studio."[158]

The official opening of the space took place on March 29, 1930 with special guests Tenney Johnson, a Western artist who in 1938 would display work alongside Unkalunt's at a New York gallery, and Chauncey Yellow Robe (Lakota Sioux), an actor and activist, who gave the opening address. The green, tasseled program booklet, a copy of which is now housed at the Autry Museum of the American West, opens with a letter from Vice President Charles Curtis (Kaw), expressing his regrets and kind regards, telling Unkalunt that "you have done and are

[155] Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. *Land Book of the Borough of Manhattan, City of New York [Title Page]* (New York: G.W. Bromley & Co., 1930), Plate 82. New York Public Library Digital Collections. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/35d48fc0-2173-0132-d365-58d385a7b928.

[156] "Towards an American Indian Theatre," *Theatre Guild Magazine*, May 1931, 38.

[157] "Towards an American Indian Theatre."

[158] "News of the Theater," *New York Herald Tribune*, April 4, 1931, 13. The Immigration Restriction League rented out the space later that year; whether or not this booking reflected Unkalunt's views is unclear ("City Brevities," *New York Times*, May 10, 1930, 4.)

doing a great work to help the Indians and to show the people what the Indians are able to do if given an opportunity."[159]

The program featured pianist Harry Mayer performing select works by canonical European composers (Liszt, Chopin, Brahms), followed by Unkalunt singing "selected Indian songs" (unnamed, unfortunately) with Mayer accompanying. After an intermission, there was a "presentation of the modern Indian mode" with piano accompaniment; Rosebud Yellow Robe, the special guest's daughter, and Wahnetah Red Rock served as "Indian models." It is unclear what "the modern Indian mode" was, and whether the women were modeling clothing or displaying bolts of fabric or other goods; whatever the materials, Unkalunt and her assistant Vi Veren had "designed and executed" them.[160] The program informed potential customers that Unkalunt was "striving to place before her public gems of Art that exhibit an atmosphere of individual distinction…of comfort…of beauty unsurpassed…and above all…of lasting livableness!" The program ends with a rousing call to action: "More power to the Re-birth of Pre-historic Amerind Art!"

The shop, which Unkalunt named Princess Atalie Creations, reportedly did "lively business" in 1931 and the profits helped to support the center "until such time as a good Indian play is written."[161] The gift shop carried both "old Indian jewelry, pottery, navajo rugs, baskets and beadwork" as well as materials with Unkalunt's own designs: "mirrors, murals, candle sticks, tea tables and novelty furniture, silks, fabrics fashions, carpets, pianos, screens and many

[159] Charles Curtis to Princess Atalie, March 21, 1930, "Official Opening of Indian Lodge Council Hall, 216 West 58th Street: 8:30 p.m. March Twenty-ninth 1930," Princess Atalie Creations, [3]. Library and Archives, Autry Museum of the American West.

[160] Information on Mayer and Veren have thus far proven elusive.

[161] "Towards an American Indian Theatre." Here again Unkalunt seems to be reclaiming the "princess" stereotype for the sake of publicity.

other original creations of Indian art objects" (Figure 2.4).[162] I have found no English-language advertisements for Princess Atalie Creations, but there is a four-line entry in a German paper, the *New York Volkszeitung*, in which Unkalunt gives a New Year's greeting with the name of the shop and her contact information.[163]

Figure 2.4. Unkalunt stands next to furniture decorated with Native designs, likely her own work, in 1928. National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution (P23874).

Unkalunt had several art and design projects underway before the 58th Street shop opened. Some of her Native-inspired designs reportedly appeared on American-manufactured silks, and others were made into silk floor coverings by "a leading carpet manufacturer" during

[162] "Official Opening," [15].

[163] "Neujahrs-Glueckwuensche," *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, December 31, 1930, 14.

the late 1920s.[164] Unkalunt undertook another project in 1929 when she agreed to decorate a room in the Washington, D.C. apartment of Vice President Charles Curtis, an acquaintance of her father's who would later send his regrets to the Studio opening. She planned murals for the walls and may have included "bedroom suites, tables, chairs, mirrors, lamps, and many distinctive modernistic lighting fixtures."[165]

Unkalunt's association with Curtis is notable because he was a controversial figure in American Indian policy. The 1887 Dawes Act, which broke up tribal governments, had not applied to the Five Civilized Tribes, which included the Cherokees, but in 1898 Curtis sponsored a bill that eliminated this exception.[166] The Curtis Act, as it was known, led to the loss of huge quantities of Native land, and in many cases, financial ruin.[167] Unkalunt's sister Mary was quoted in a newspaper stating that she believed most Cherokees would not vote for Herbert Hoover and his running mate Curtis because of this.[168] It is possible that the sisters had differing political views and Unkalunt accepted Curtis's past legislation, which was supposed to encourage assimilation. It is also possible that Unkalunt did not agree with Curtis politically, but was living her maxim of "find another way," working with the highest-ranking government official of Native descent instead of alienating him.

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[164]Annabel Parker M'Cann, "Indian Princess to Decorate Vice President's Apartment," *Washington Post*, April 21, 1929, M13.

[165] M'Cann, "Indian Princess to Decorate."

[166] Daniel Flaherty, "Curtis Act (1898)," in *Encyclopedia of Native American History*, ed. Peter C. Mancall (New York: Facts on File, 2011), 205-206. Flaherty explains Curtis was trying to block a bill that would "abolish the nations all together."

[167] William E. Unrau, "Charles Curtis: Kaw," in *The New Warriors: Native American Leaders Since 1900*, ed. R. David Edmunds (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 17-34.

[168] Richard V. Oulahan, "Smith Visit Spurs the Oklahomans," *New York Times*, October 4, 1928, 4.

During the years Unkalunt's studio was located on 58th Street, the Society sponsored several concerts of Indian (and some Indianist) music. One took place in February 1932 at the Golden Theatre on W. 58th St. (two doors down from Unkalunt's studio) as a benefit for needy members of the group. Unkalunt and bass Chief Yowlache, with whom she had performed repeatedly, headlined a program of songs, duets, and dances; other performers included Princess White Deer, Henry Red Eagle (Algonquian) and a group of Iroquois performers. The evening also featured a pantomime performance of excerpts from of *The Coming of Pa'yatumu*, an opera based on Zuni legend by Renie Burdett and Bernard L. Jewett.[169] "Renie Burdett" was the pen name of Mabel Irene Kessberger (1887-1933), a white musician from Illinois who later became Mrs. Enos J. Paynter of New York City. [170] Burdett's role of secretary for the Society is proof that the group's welcoming of all races was not a policy in name only.

Though the performers did not fully stage *The Coming of Pa'yatumu*, Unkalunt's involvement with another opera project, this time through her studio, is unsurprising. For the libretto, Burdett may have used the version of the legend published forty years earlier by ethnologist/anthropologist Frank Hamilton Cushing in his Outlines of Zuñi Creation Myths.[171] The legend tells of the flute-playing Zuni god of the dawn and of music, who descended with his musicians from the Cave of the Rainbow to teach the Zuni people music and later taught the tribe

[169] "Activities of Musicians Here and Afield," *New York Times*, February 21, 1932, X7; "Indians Present Benefit" *New York Times*, February 22, 1932, 22. I have not yet located further information on Jewett.

[170] "Who's Who in Women's Clubs: Paynter, Mrs. E.J.," *The Register of Women's Clubs* 34 (New York: Essex Publishing, 1933), 603; *Find A Grave*, database and images (https://www.findagrave.com), memorial page for Mabel Irene *Kessberger* Paynter (1887–31 Jul 1933), added 2011, Find A Grave Memorial no. 64196157, citing Oak Ridge Cemetery, Springfield, Sangamon County, Illinois, USA ; Maintained by BjJ (contributor 46902476). Marriage: May 7, 1932 (Ancestry.com. *New York, New York, Extracted Marriage Index, 1866-1937* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014.)

[171] Cushing, Frank Hamilton, "Outlines of Zuni Creation Myths," Thirteen Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, 1891-92 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1896), 321-448.

how to care for their corn.[172] *Pa'yatumu* premiered in Cleveland on April 26, 1928. A "news in pictures" feature published the week before shows Burdett, about to play "a leading part," in what appears to be a headdress and braided hair.[173] Announcements describe the work as an "Indian pantomime" produced by Cleveland's Napp-Shillet Ballet School and featuring a cast of one hundred. The school's director, Viola Napp, "arranged the musical score from familiar Indian melodies" and designed the costumes, which were supposed to be "beautiful and appropriate."[174] The ballet school's manager, Otar Shillet, received praise for creating a new ballet role, "that of a half man and half animal."[175] Though the Society fundraiser performance was not a complete performance of the work, Unkalunt nevertheless gave the audience the opportunity to experience this work, unlike what had happened with *Nitana* and her own unfinished opera.

The Society also sponsored a series of concerts on four successive Wednesday evenings in March 1937, which showcased a number of Native performers. Unkalunt and fellow soprano Marie Cavan served as organizers, and each participated in at least one of the concerts of vocal, piano, and chamber music, along with dance, at the Hotel McAlpin's Grand Ball Room at Herald Square, a site known mainly as the location of Macy's Department Store.[176] The March 3 concert

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[172]Cushing, "Outlines of Zuni Creation Myths," 432-446.

[173] "Pictures Reflect the News Throughout the Nation and Abroad," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 19, 1928, 20.

[174] "Music Notes of Greater Cleveland," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, April 22, 1928, 73.

[175] "Creates New Role in Dance Recital," *Cleveland Plain Dealer* April 26, 1928, 23. See "Napp-Shillet Ballet School," (Milwaukee: E.C. Kropp Co., [1900-1929]). Postcards of Cleveland: Cleveland State University, Michael Schwartz Library, Special Collections.
http://images.ulib.csuohio.edu/cdm/singleitem/collection/postcards/id/1147/rec/15.

[176] Cavan was singing at the Hamburg Opera when WWI broke out; she became engaged to Czech tenor Otokar Marak during the war and on one occasion took a message written on an opera score (made to look like corrections to the libretto) from a Czech resistance leader to Allied forces on a trip to Switzerland ("Singer-Spy Carried War Messages in Script Music,," *New York Tribune*, November 5, 1919, 8; "Prima Donna Who Took a Hand in History," *Detroit Free Press*, February 1, 1920, D10).

featured Unkalunt along with guest artists Wahsuk-Kiena (The Healer) (Sioux), who presented a narrative of Custer's last stand with guitar accompaniment, and Little Bear and Little Deer (Iroquois), who performed a Buffalo Dance. On March 24 the program was more varied: it began with a peace pipe ceremony and dancing, led by "Chief Be-be-cay-kan-po-ahtun-ho and the United Indian Tribes of the Americas"; next, non-Native artists Harald Hansen ("American tenor"), Chris Borjes (piano), Fritz Borjes (cello), and Joseph E. Weyr (violin) performed Indianist music, which Unkalunt also sang; Cavan sang a set of German songs; and Molly Spotted Elk (Penobscot) performed a warrior dance. Events put on by the Society provided a way for Unkalunt to continue her musical career, collaborating with other Native musicians while engaging with white allies and audiences.

America's Foremost Cherokee Prima Donna

What did it mean for Unkalunt's promotional material to bill her as America's Foremost Cherokee Prima Donna? The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines "prima donna" as both a leading female opera singer, sometimes "of great skill and renown," and also "a person who has the highest standing or who takes a leading role in a particular community or field."[177] For Unkalunt, being the country's leading Cherokee prima donna meant shaping a career around opera and continuing to identify as a singer even after her operatic projects fell through (she is listed as "Cherokee Prima Donna" in a 1937 program, for instance).[178] "Her voice has been described as full, rich, vibrant and brilliant with a subtlety in texture and a magnetism that captivates her

[177] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "prima donna, *n*. and *adj*.," March 2020, OED Online. The phrase also has a connotation of self-importance, and the extent to which this may have fit Unkalunt is difficult to judge from extant archival materials.

[178] Concert program, "A Series of Four Evenings," March 24, 1937.

listeners," proclaimed her 1941 biographical encyclopedia entry, but not as many people were able to hear Unkalunt sing opera as she would have liked.[179] Being America's Foremost Cherokee Prima Donna meant finding new ways to make a living and support Native arts, as a "singer, artist, lecturer, anthropologist, and ethnologist."[180] And, ultimately, it meant being viewed and heard by white society as belonging to the past: singing repertoire in which old melodies were "improved" by Indianist composers and agreeing to an opera project which celebrated settler-colonialism.

Unkalunt's 1927 poem "The Conquered Race" provides a fitting final example of the complexities of her career and artistic identity. She submitted the text to *The American Indian*, the "Official Publication of the Society of Oklahoma Indians" which was published in Tulsa from 1926 to 1931 as a "Magazine Devoted to the Indian Country and Its People"; it featured "American History, Indian Lore, [and] Current News of Indian Life."[181]

Covers for the monthly journal often featured young American Indian women, including Te Ata (1895-1995), a Chickasaw storyteller known on the Chautauqua circuit and Princess Ataloa (1896-1967), a Chickasaw contralto who taught at Bacone College in Oklahoma.[182] Unkalunt's poem reads:

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[179] *Encyclopedia of American Biography*, 182.

[180] *Encyclopedia of American Biography*, 184.

[181] [Advertisement], *The American Indian* 1, no. 4 (January 1927), [n.p.].

[182] The cover subject in January 1927 was "Miss Ann Kennedy: Princess Oklahoma in 1925 of the international Petroleum Exposition held in Tulsa." Performers included on covers in 1927 included "Miss Josephine Bruner: An Accomplished Musician and a Member of a Prominent Creek Family" (February); "Daisy Maud Underwood: A Popular Soprano of KVOO Who is Known as Princess Pakanli, 'The Chickasaw Nightingale'" (June); "Mary Thompson: Princess Te-Ata of the Chickasaw tribe who will appear at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre, Stratford-on-Avon, London, England, in the Illustrous [*sic*] of Cleopatra" (September). Ataloa was featured in April 1928. See Lisa K. Neuman, *Indian Play: Indigenous Identities at Bacone College* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014) and Tamara M. Elder, "Ataloa (Mary Stone McLendon)," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=AT007.

"I am sad!" mourned an aged chieftain
As the sunset sank to rest;
"Because our pathways have been taken,
Our bows unstrung – our homes forsaken,
Our braves – the White Man's ways have fled;
They tolerate their slurs – Lo, the Poor Red."

But the Paleface spoke with sympathy
As he watched the chieftain old.
"Your young will learn and prosperous be,
And all will say, 'A mighty citizen is he!'
Now the gloom which wraps your heart must break,
For the modern Redman – is wide awake!"

But the chieftain's eyes were flashed to flame,
As he stood with folded arms;
For the stranger had kindled a fire of old
That leaped to life, from a warrior bold;
But he fell foremost on the earth-beaten sod,
And left the rest to the White Man's God![183]

Literature scholar Robert Parker notes that like many other Native poets at this time, Unkalunt had to "negotiate a fraught position" between accepting racial stereotypes as a cultural norm and openly defying them; the poem certainly fits with Unkalunt's career-long negotiation between Native and white worlds.[184] Parker interprets Unkalunt's point as being either acknowledgement that American Indians were "conquered and ready to vanish into the past," or "that one kind of Indian will fade into the past but another kind will live on."[185] While both are valid interpretations, I read the poem as a challenge to Native readers. The final couplet of the poem is significant: the speaker states that the white person's words initially roused the chief, "But he fell foremost on the earth-beaten sod, / And left the rest to the White Man's God!"

[183] Sunshine Rider, "The Conquered Race," in *The American Indian* 1, no. 4 (January 1927), 8. Included in Robert Parker, *Changing Is Not Vanishing: A Collection of American Indian Poetry to 1930* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 376.

[184] Parker, *Changing*, 32.

[185] Parker, *Changing*, 32.

Instead of dwelling on either the chief who represented an old way of life, or the white man's promised modern American Indian, Unkalunt closes the poem with the Native cause being suddenly abandoned, and seems to imply indignation that Native culture should be thus treated. Readers who also felt uncomfortable with this ending might decide to take up the chief's mantle: as she demonstrated through her work with the Society, keeping Native art alive "as a vital part of our community life" was one of her life-defining goals.[186] American Indians ran the risk of being double conquered: not just because of white interference and forced cultural reorientation, but if they stopped fighting for their culture.

Unkalunt's ambivalence in the poem stands in sharp contrast to the clear stance of her colleague, Princess Nacoomee, who in 1936 condemned how whites told U.S. history:

> You never read of an Indian victory – they were called massacres. There was not Indian strategy – it was treachery. The greatest crime the Indian ever did was to own this vast domain, America. But today the Indian is asked to stand and sing with you "My Country, 'Tis of Thee."[187]

Unkalunt may have been more comfortable with assimilation programs than Nacoomee, or perhaps she was simply less interested in speaking publicly on such matters, but she still found ways to affirm her agency. One method through which American Indians could assert their agency and modernity, as Philip Deloria has discussed, was through photographs. He points to his great-aunts Ella Deloria (1889-1971) a Yankton Dakota educator and activist, and her sister, artist Mary Sully (1896–1963), who both posed for photographs in Native (or, "Native") dress as well as early twentieth-century skirts and blouses: "for every picture of Ella in buckskin, there is another to be found of her in the sophisticated clothing of her New York City life."[188]

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[186] Concert program, "A Series of Four Evenings," March 3, 1937.

[187] "Indian Princess Speaks."

[188] Deloria, *Becoming Mary Sully*, 238.

So too with Unkalunt. The National Museum of the American Indian holds almost five dozen photographs of Unkalunt. In some, she wears Native costume, clearly posing for publicity shots. But in others, also clearly meant to be distributed, she wears 1920s fashion, demonstrating that she can care for the past through song and activism while living fully in the present. In one shot, Unkalunt poses for a photograph at home in Oklahoma around 1924, looking directly into the camera, sporting a wide hat, embroidered cape, and a fur stole slung over her shoulder (Figure 2.5). She looks like – and is – a modern prima donna.

Figure 2.5. Unkalunt circa 1924. Photograph taken by the Pierson Studio, Muskogee, Oklahoma. National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution (P23848).

Chapter 3
Holding On to a Silent Voice: Leonidas Westervelt Collects Jenny Lind Objects

> *"There is, perhaps, nothing more stimulating to the average man's imagination than a super-woman – an historical queen, a great saint or a famous courtesan, a celebrated actress or a widely known prima donna, and beyond doubt the last named seems to hold his curiosity in captivity to a greater extent than any of the others. The chief reason is that about them grows a wealth of legendary lore, which everyone at all interested in music loves to add to or explore. The source seems to be quite inexhaustible, for such favored daughters of the muses live such hectic and intricately involved lives that the lacy webs they leave behind them can never be completely untangled.*
>
> – Cecil Fanning, "Prima Donnas of Other Days," *Musical Leader*, October 14, 1920[1]

On an uneventful day in the middle of the Pacific Ocean, a man began carving the likeness of Jenny Lind into the tooth of a sperm whale.[2] The year was 1851, perhaps 1852, and the Swedish soprano's fame in the United States was at an all-time high. The tooth that served as the whaleman's canvas was about the length of a deck of playing cards, curved to a point at the top and jagged at the bottom. Out from the discolored surface emerged Lind, standing on a stage framed by a valance (Figure 3.1). She is elegantly dressed: the skirt of her off-the-shoulder gown features four flounces of alternating fabrics and jewelry circles her throat and wrists. Her hair is drawn up, covering her ears in her usual style. She holds a closed fan upright in her right hand; her left hand rests on her waist. Her neck is long, her forearms wide, her waist narrow, and her tiny tiptoeing feet peek from beneath her skirt. Her face, depicted entirely of pinpricks, is difficult to make out. Her eyes are high set and seem to be closed; her nose is long. Her mouth –

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[1] Most news articles included in this chapter are clippings found in two unpaginated volumes created around the time of the 1920 Jenny Lind Centennial Celebration in New York City. Jenny Lind Centennial Celebration Committee, *Press Comments on the Jenny Lind Centennial Celebration, October sixth, 1820-1920* ([New York, 1920]). Two volumes. New York Public Library Performing Arts Research Collections – Music. This article is found in volume II.

[2] Though it is impossible to know for certain due to lack of documentation, it is highly likely that the carver of this tooth was both male and in the Pacific, details which will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

the supposed portal of voice – is neither clearly open nor closed. The concentration of dots at the bottom, though, make it seem like her lips are forming a small "oh."

Figure 3.1. Scrimshaw depicting Jenny Lind (1820-1887), ca. 1850, ivory and ink, The Jenny Lind Collection of Leonidas Westervelt, 1945.215, New-York Historical Society.[3]

Almost one hundred years later, on an uneventful day on Manhattan's Upper West Side, a man displayed this tooth in an exhibit of Lind-related objects at the New-York Historical Society (N-YHS). The year was 1942, which marked forty-odd years since that man – Leonidas Westervelt (1875-1952), a gentleman-playwright of moderate fame – had begun collecting things

[3] At its most broad, scrimshaw can refer to an "object made from the hard byproducts of the whale hunt: sperm whale teeth, walrus tusks, skeletal bone, and baleen" (Stuart Frank, *Ingenious Contrivances, Curiously Carved: Scrimshaw in the New Bedford Whaling Museum* (Boston: David R. Godine, 2012), 3).

related to Lind. Fascinated by the story of the singer who had inspired a popular culture craze in the 1850s, his life's passion became, in his words, "to *recreate* the intimate characteristics, picturesque achievements and charming personality of the Swedish Nightingale."[4] Along with the scrimshaw (the term for an engraving on whale tooth or bone), Westervelt acquired many other objects with connections to the singer: portraits of Lind (miniatures, lithographs, daguerreotypes, sculptured busts, engravings); original tickets and programs from Lind's U.S. tour; newspaper clippings; music (manuscripts, songsters, sheet music, bound music, music sung by or dedicated to Lind); books from Lind's personal library and books that mentioned her; some of Lind's personal effects, several given to him by her daughter Jenny Maude, including a locket Lind received during her U.S. tour and a fan she owned; commercial items inscribed with her image, or name, or both, including an eye glass case, snuff boxes, buttons, pipes, china figurines, plates, pitchers, cups and saucers, toys, dolls, paper weights, trout flies, cigar box covers, glass bottles of all shapes and sizes, doorstops, trivets, candle snuffers, candlesticks, commemorative medals, and a parlor stove. Like the anonymous scrimshander carving a tooth decades before him, Westervelt's interest in and response to Jenny Lind manifested itself in the material.

There was another way, too, that the mid-nineteenth century scrimshander and the early-twentieth century playwright were connected by their relationship to Lind: their very conceptualization of the famous opera singer was steeped in – in fact, required – an imaginative leap. The scrimshander, though he lived in Lind's era and could have attended a concert, was forced to bring her to mind from the vantage point of the open ocean. Westervelt, too, relied heavily on imagination, but due to temporal instead of physical distance. At the heart of his fascination with Lind lay an inescapable conundrum: he was dedicated to a famous soprano whose voice had long since fallen silent. Westervelt invested time, money, and energy in her

[4] Leonidas Westervelt, "My Hobby – Jenny Lind," *Hobbies* (December, 1932): 15. Westervelt's italics.

memory, in spite of, and, perhaps, because of the fact that he never heard her sing. This problem was one Westervelt shared with a host of other contemporary Lind enthusiasts, a community which included fellow collectors, critics, socialites, performers, and everyday people.

Their persistent interest in a soprano who had died in 1887 raises several questions about this historical moment: Why the continued fascination with Lind and her U.S. tour so many years later? What stories were being told about her during the early twentieth century? How did her admirers deal with the fact that her voice, perhaps her most important feature, was no longer sounding? And what can their interest reveal about the crafting of American music history?

This chapter addresses these questions, probing some of the ways in which early twentieth-century music lovers re-imagined Lind and promoted her legacy, particularly during and through the 1920 Lind Centennial Celebration in New York City. Ultimately, I argue that attention to objects is imperative to understanding the reception of Lind – and the ongoing obsession with her – in the early twentieth century. Though these objects were not at the forefront of every discussion or article about Lind, they nevertheless played a significant role as Westervelt and others strove to capture the essence of the famous singer. Objects provided narrative power and heft to stories circulating in journals and newspapers: they were a visible, tangible means through which curious onlookers could experience Lind's allure, consider life in the antebellum United States, and employ their imaginations as they contextualized objects and contemplated Lind's voice. Objects were valuable for their permanence and accessibility: unlike Lind's ephemeral voice, they had lasted for decades and could be admired at leisure, as opposed to the time-bound strictures of a vocal concert. On display, objects sat at the nexus of public and private understandings of Lind: they could be admired and discussed by multiple visitors in a community setting, while holding personal meaning for collector and visitors alike.

A contemporary history-making trend which helps to frame the efforts of Westervelt and his fellow Lind enthusiasts is that of historical pageantry. Citizens of cities and towns across the United States took part in a "craze" for festive reenactments of scenes from their shared past, with goals including patriotic education, a retreat from the modern era, and entertainment.[5] According to historian David Glassberg, how-to books published by pageantry enthusiasts hoping to encourage others to begin projects "emphasized above all that every local resident should be invited to participate."[6] Laura Tunbridge has argued that the concerts of Lind reenactor Frieda Hempel may have had similar appeal.[7] While not fitting the parameters of a pageant in a strict sense, the entire 1920 Centennial Celebration – concert and exhibit – nevertheless exuded an air of community spirit and participation in remembering the past. Making the Lind celebration a public event, a spectacle, even, mirrored the boisterous spirit of community pageants which had been seemingly everywhere during the previous decade.

Some scholars have noted the presence of Lind objects during the 1850s, but focus on material culture has largely been secondary to analyses of Lind's place in antebellum musical life. Rebeccah Bechtold, for example, has argued that Lind's virtuosity complicated the culture of sentimentality and celebrity (manifested in souvenirs) that threatened to turn the singer herself into a reproducible object.[8] Lowell Gallagher has described the Lind object craze as "the circulation of prosthetic tokens" in his study of Lind's impact on U.S.-American society.[9]

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[5] David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry: The Uses of Tradition in the Early Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 1, 5.

[6] Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, 113.

[7] "Frieda Hempel and the Historical Imagination," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 66, no. 2 (2013): 453.

[8] Rebeccah Bechtold, "She Sings a Stamp of Originality": Sentimental Mimicry in Jenny Lind's American Tour," *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* 58, no. 4, (2012): 493-528.

Michael Durwin Coleman includes a chapter that introduces select Lind objects available in Sweden during her lifetime in his dissertation on Lind's celebrity and Swedishness.[10]

To date, the most detailed "looking" at a Lind object is F. S. Schwarzbach's article "Twelve Ways of Looking at a Staffordshire Figurine," which traces connections between a porcelain Lind figurine, nineteenth-century British child workers, and the slave trade, concluding that objects can serve as valuable historical evidence, particularly in regards to issues of class and labor. Taking an object as a starting point to explore macro-histories, Schwarzbach argues, is akin to looking in the wrong end of a telescope, producing "a startling change in perspective."[11] To date, Ruth Stephan's 1975 master's thesis is the most thorough treatment of Lindiana, or Lind objects, in any discipline.[12] The breadth of Lind objects she was able to uncover, either in their physical forms or through references to objects in 1850s sources, constitutes a truly remarkable scholarly effort.

In the first section of the chapter, I introduce Westervelt and his lifelong, object-centered interest in Lind, an interest that relied on and was a showcase for his wealth and social standing.[13] While he began acquiring Lind objects for his own enjoyment, Westervelt's

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[9] Lowell Gallagher, "Jenny Lind and the Voice of America," in *En travesti: Women, Gender Subversion, Opera*, ed. Corinne E. Blackmer and Patricia Juliana Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 190.

[10] Michael Durwin Coleman, "Media(ting) Jenny Lind: Representing Celebrity in Nineteenth Century Sweden," (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2005).

[11] F. S. Schwarzbach, "Twelve Ways of Looking at a Staffordshire Figurine: An Essay in Cultural Studies," *Victorians Institute Journal* 29 (2001), 46.

[12] Ruth Stephan, "From Lindomania to Lindiana: A Study of the Jenny Lind Craze and Jenny Lind Memorabilia," (master's thesis, SUNY Oneonta Cooperstown Graduate Program, 1975). Stephan also lists institutions with Lind collections and met with private collectors as part of her research.

[13] Though my focus is on Westervelt's large collection at the New-York Historical Society, other institutions across the United States hold official Lind collections or own some quantity of Lind material, sometimes limited to sheet music and other paper-based items. These include: American Swedish Historical Museum, Philadelphia; Chicago History Museum; The Henry Ford, Detroit; Harvard University; Stanford University; University of Michigan; Yale University.

knowledge of Lind eventually reached a wide audience through displays of his collection. These exhibits, during the 1920 centennial of Lind's first U.S. concerts and later at the New-York Historical Society and elsewhere, were both for public edification and to showcase Westervelt's hobby. Like Cheatham, and Unkalunt, Westervelt was not a trained historian or educator. Nevertheless, through collecting, discussing, and displaying Lind objects, he contributed to a public history of Lind that positioned her as a pivotal figure in the trajectory of U.S.-American music, and his work in these domains served a parallel function to theirs as vocalists. Westervelt's enthusiasm for his collection also highlights the affective value behind historical work, providing a reminder that even approaches to the past with more of an academic bent than his own, are, on some level, grounded in a curiosity and passion for the subject at hand.

In the second section, I examine the 1920 Lind Centennial Celebration to probe some of the critical issues surrounding the flurry of interest in her career at that moment in time, of which Westervelt was a part.[14] One way in which organizers chose to remember Lind was sonically, through a reenactment of her U.S. debut concert that starred soprano Frieda Hempel as Lind. As I demonstrate, press coverage surrounding the event focused little on Hempel's voice, instead revealing early twentieth century understandings of nineteenth-century American music and its relationship to European repertories and star performers. Specifically, the centennial provided an opportunity for critics to reflect on how far music in the U.S. had advanced over the course of seven decades. Westervelt too promoted Lind's significance to the history of music in the U.S. and was an outspoken champion of a female performer, itself a noteworthy undertaking for the time. Although Westervelt and many other collectors still approached Lind with gender-role

[14] In "Frieda Hempel and the Historical Imagination," Laura Tunbridge discusses the Centennial in her larger study of Hempel-as-Lind, but to my knowledge scholars have not yet studied the Centennial in detail; I seek to provide a starting point here.

assumptions typical of their day, some Lind enthusiasts did credit her with business sense and acumen.

I then turn to the other half of the Centennial: an exhibit of Lind objects on display at the New York Aquarium, then at the southernmost tip of Manhattan and the site of Lind's New York debut. The Centennial concert raised complex issues rooted in the absence of Lind's voice – that is, her career ended before the advent of recording technology – and I demonstrate that in their early twentieth-century context objects served to fill this void of silence. Focus on medals and figurines took the emphasis away from the fact that Lind's voice was missing: the tangible replaced the aural. Westervelt rarely made mention of Lind's voice, but once noted that "Famous overseas were her rippling *cadenzas*, her trill or 'shake,' her marvelous *pianissimo*…plus, a 'something' that reached out over the footlights to delve deep into her listeners' hearts, and win them."[15] It was not that her voice did not matter: it did. But in its absence, it was as if objects could help Westervelt and his contemporaries to get at this "something" that made Lind such a legendary figure. Furthermore, the exhibit highlighted how Lind could be used for very different purposes: she both inspired an outpouring of community involvement during the centennial and was held up as an ideal of whiteness by a eugenicist intent on what is now recognized as a campaign of racial hatred.

Finally, I focus my own musicological lens on the story of one object from the collection, the carved tooth introduced at the beginning of the chapter. For Westervelt, the Lind collection was a hobby and passion, designed to demonstrate the greatness of a nineteenth-century singer and cultural icon. I read the collection as more than this, however: if not quite a history in and of

[15] Charles F. Collisson, "The Amazing American Tour of Jenny Lind," *Etude Music Magazine* ([October 4, 1946?]): [308-9, 355]. Single, separately printed sheet, Folder 6, Box 3, Series XI. Kitty Cheatham's Jenny Lind Collection, Jenny Lind Collection, New-York Historical Society.

itself, it represented a wealth of untapped knowledge and historical evidence that reflects a critical period of U.S. culture. Alongside Westervelt's work, my analysis shows the power – and the limitations – of objects as historical-musicological evidence. I draw on the *Tangible Things* project of Laurel Ulrich, Sarah Carter, Ivan Gaskell, and Sarah Schechner, using their concept of things "in place" and "out of place" to explore how (re)contextualizing objects can lead to new insights.[16] Westervelt placed the scrimshaw in a display case with his other Lind treasures; instead of leaving it on a shelf as he did, I take the tooth out for close inspection, so to speak, and in so doing provide new insight into nineteenth century Lind reception. By intentionally interrogating objects, musicologists can uncover and provide access to individuals, such as Westervelt and the anonymous scrimshander, who otherwise would not factor into histories of music, reception, or performance. Looking closely at an object generates questions, and while some are inevitably unanswerable, it is in looking and wondering that new avenues of inquiry can emerge.

This chapter draws on a wealth of archival material. Though Westervelt is largely a forgotten figure, the Westervelt Lind Collection at the N-YHS stands testament to both singer and collector. The collection includes scrapbooks, songsters, sheet music, programs, clippings, and books, as well as over one hundred Lind objects. Newspaper articles are also vital, particularly those about the Centennial Celebration that were clipped and bound into two thick volumes shortly after the event and presented to the New York Public Library by the Centennial Committee. In order to highlight a handful of the dozens of objects in Westervelt's collection, and also to show how starting with objects can lead in unexpected directions, a different Lind thing begins each section of the chapter. Objects let Westervelt hold on to physical reminders of

[16] Laurel Thatcher Ulrich with Ivan Gaskell, Sara J. Schechner, and Sarah Anne Carter, *Tangible Things: Making History Through Objects* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Lind: he could grasp a book or a trinket she had touched with her own hands. They also allowed him to hold on to memories of Lind: even as time passed, objects permitted Westervelt to keep Lind in mind.

Westervelt, Lind, and the Cost of Imagination

Two of the most visually striking objects in Westervelt's collection are a pair of candle snuffers depicting Lind as a human/bird hybrid. They were also two of the collector's favorites.[17] Four inches tall, both figures look as if they are wearing full head masks: where their human flesh ends above their shoulders, yellow-brown bird feathers begin, with black Vs painted on to show individual feathers. Their bright yellow beaks are slightly too large for their faces and luminous black eyes stare unblinkingly. Each holds sheet music with both hands. The figure in the blue dress, Confidence, has her head thrown back, beak open wide, sheet music disregarded. Diffidence, in a pink dress with a yellow bow at the breast and a gold bracelet on each wrist, looks down, either studying the music or avoiding eye contact with her audience. The candle snuffers appear to have been used mostly for display: neither shows signs of soot inside, but the tip of Confidence's beak is missing and the bottom of her skirt is chipped.[18]

With their bizarre appearance, taking the moniker "Swedish Nightingale" literally, the pair poke fun at the "Lindomania" phenomenon in England at the time of their production. Lindomania was a term coined during Lind's lifetime to describe the widespread and infectious popular culture craze for all things related to her; audiences across Europe, as well as those in the

[17] Westervelt highlighted them in his article "Adventuring with Jenny Lind," *The New-York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin* 26, no. 4 (October, 1942):80-94.

[18] I have not been able to find any nineteenth century references explaining the names "Confidence" and "Diffidence."

United States, were rabid for news, souvenirs, and music related to Lind.[19] In his study of Lind's impact on national identity, Lowell Gallagher writes that by the time of her visit to the U.S., "though numbers of European artists had already gained local popularity, the Lind craze was unprecedented, and it had no immediate successor."[20] The beginning of W. H. C. West's oft-cited song documents this craze:

Oh! manias we've had many,
And some have rais'd the wind;
But the most absurd of any
Has been that for Jenny Lind.
Causing quite a revolution
To compliment her fame; --
From a Toothpick to an Omnibus
All are call'd by her name!

Oh! Manias we've had many,
And some have rais'd the wind;
But the most absurd of any
Has been that for Jenny Lind.[21]

This epidemic swept the United States during 1850 at the instigation of infamous showman Phineas T. Barnum (1810-1891). Known nationwide for his American Museum of so-called freaks and oddities in New York City (and later for his circus venture), Barnum believed bringing Lind to the U.S. would be his next great undertaking.[22] Though he had never heard her

[19] Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon define Lindomania in the United States as "the extremes of emotional, spiritual, nationalist and consumerist responses to the American tour of Lind" (Review of *En Travesti: Women, Gender Subversion, Opera*, edited by Corinne E. Blackmer and Patricia Juliana Smith, *Cambridge Opera Journal* 8, no. 3 (November 1996), 288).

[20] Gallagher, "Jenny Lind," 191.

[21] "The Jenny Lind Mania. A humorous song written by W. H. C. West." Typescript, MS materials for "Jenny Lind Anthology," Series XI. Kitty Cheatham's Jenny Lind Collection, Jenny Lind Collection, New-York Historical Society.

[22] See Bluford Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum: The Great Showman and the Making of U.S. Popular Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997). For a study of Barnum's marketing of Lind and its impact on her reception, see Mark C. Samples, "The Humbug and the Nightingale: P.T. Barnum, Jenny Lind, and the Branding of a Star Singer for American Reception," *Musical Quarterly* 99, no. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 2017): 286-320.

sing, Barnum recalled in his memoir that Lind's reputation was enough to convince him that bringing her to the U.S. would be highly lucrative. After she had signed a contract, he began a publicity campaign "to prepare the public mind, through the newspapers" in order to make Lind a household name.[23] In this publicity, he claimed that even if he did not make a profit, introducing Lind to U.S. audiences was worth the risk, so that the country "should be visited by a lady whose vocal powers have never been approached by any other human being, and whose character is charity, simplicity, and goodness personified."[24] When Lind arrived in New York on September 1, 1850, tens of thousands greeted her at the port; businesses began to hawk all manner of Lind-related souvenirs, whether endorsed by or related to her or not. The American Lind craze had officially begun.[25]

Lindomania continued throughout Lind's tour, with interest waning after she returned to Europe. Half a century later, Westervelt too caught a Lind-related bug, though his lasted for decades. As a student at Columbia University, he "contracted a bad case of collectors' fever" from his friends; before he graduated in 1903, he had settled on Lind as his subject, which he considered "far more interesting" than the stamps and coins that occupied his peers.[26] As

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[23] P. T. Barnum, *The Life of P. T. Barnum, Written by Himself, Including His Golden Rules for Money-Making, Brought Up to 1888* (Buffalo: Courier, 1888), 103.

[24] Barnum, *The Life*, 103.

[25] Ruth Stephans points to Fanny Elssler as having caused a similar, yet smaller-scale, popular culture craze during her 1840-1842 U.S. tour. Though it is not my focus here, Lind's U.S. tour has received a good deal of scholarly attention. For a detailed overview, see W. Porter Ware and Thaddeus C. Lockard, Jr., *P.T. Barnum Presents Jenny Lind: the American Tour of the Swedish Nightingale* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980). For Lind's impact on nineteenth-century audiences, see Sherri Lee Linkon, "Reading Lind Mania: Print Culture and the Construction of Nineteenth-Century Audiences," *Book History* 1 (1998): 94-106; Daniel Cavicchi, *Listening and Longing: Music Lovers in the Age of Barnum* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2011); Austin Caswell, "Jenny Lind's Tour of America: A Discourse of Gender and Class," in *Festa Musicologica: Essays in Honor of George J. Buelow*, ed. Thomas J. Mathiesen and Benito V. Rivera (Stuyvesant, NY: Pendragon Press, 1995), 319-337.

[26] *The Swedish Nightingale: The Jenny Lind Collection Assembled by Leonidas Westervelt, Souvenir Program* (New York:[The New-York Historical Society], 1945), [6].

discussed in the next section, Westervelt was by no means the only twentieth-century Lind collector, but in the decades since her tour, interest in the singer had dipped considerably. Westervelt majored in dramatic literature, and it was through Barnum and circus history that he discovered the Swedish Nightingale. He was fascinated with Barnum in general, but it was the showman's decision to sign Lind that stunned Westervelt. When, in 1850, a spinner at a Massachusetts woolen mill earned one dollar per day, Barnum offered a soprano he had never heard $187,500 for 100 concerts; Westervelt reasoned that only a truly remarkable figure could have inspired such an offer.[27] "'Who was this Jenny Lind that she should be worth risking a fortune on?' he had asked himself. 'What was she like?'"[28] As one source observed toward the end of his life, "For more than forty years Leonidas Westervelt has been collecting the materials for an answer."[29]

Westervelt's dedication to Lind stemmed from curiosity and wonder, but from a practical standpoint was enabled by his wealth and social status. In 1946 the *Etude* magazine described Westervelt, a novelist and playwright, as "a Long Islander of rare tastes and ample means."[30] He was the author (and co-author) of "a number of conspicuously successful plays," which included *By Right of Sword* (produced on Broadway in 1904), *Sweet Seventeen*, *Under Twenty*, and *Made for Each Other*.[31] Westervelt and his wife, H. Alberta Rouse Westervelt, often made the society

[27] Carroll D. Wright, *Comparative Wages, Prices, and Cost of Living (from the Sixteenth annual report of the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, for 1885)* (Boston: Wright & Potter Printing, 1889), 63. Barnum's offer in 2018 dollars amounts to over six million (https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/uscompare/).This amount was not profits, just what Barnum offered; Lind later renegotiated. For more on profits, see W. Porter Ware and Thaddeus C. Lockard, Jr., *P.T. Barnum*, Appendix IV.

[28] *Souvenir Program*, [6].

[29] *Souvenir Program*, [6]. Westervelt received the 1943 Jenny Lind Medal from Sweden's Royal Academy of Music for his Lind-collecting efforts (Collisson, "The Amazing American Tour," [308].)

[30] Collisson, "The Amazing American Tour," [308].

pages for hosting events in their Douglaston, Long Island home, suggesting theirs was a wealthy household.[32] Westervelt belonged to the St. Nicholas Society, the Holland Society, and the Sons of the Revolution of New York, all organizations for descendants of the state's earliest white settlers. Just as money had been – whether Barnum admitted it or not – a deciding factor in the showman's invitation to Lind, it was key to the history of Lind Westervelt told. The wealthier he was, the more Lind objects he would be able to acquire. Though Westervelt (and "the Westervelts," after his marriage) had other collections – American Indian artifacts, presidential campaign medals, seafaring equipment, and dolls, among others – none were remotely as touted or beloved as the Lind memorabilia.[33] Lind even appears prominently in Westervelt's obituaries both in the *Times* and the *Herald*.[34] Westervelt represented an echo of Barnum, who had spent a great deal of cash up front (even taking out loans) for Lind's initial payments. Unlike Barnum, Westervelt's reward for his spending was not more money, but the satisfaction of piecing together and commemorating Lind's life.

There were other ways Westervelt mirrored 1850s fandom. As Steve Waksman has noted, the common spectacle of auctioning tickets for Lind's concerts "[turned] the privilege of

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[31] See Westervelt's professional biography in: Jenny Lind Photoplay Corporation, "Jenny Lind, the Swedish Nightingale," (New York: The Corporation, 1920). Folder 1, Box 3, Collection VIII. Miscellaneous Materials, Jenny Lind Collection, New-York Historical Society. *By Right of Sword* was first produced in Seattle in 1902 ("'By Right of Sword'" *New York Times*, April 1, 1902) and a silent film clip of the sword fight scene survives and has been digitized by the Library of Congress: "Duel scene, 'By right of sword,'" Library of Congress Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division Washington, D.C. 20540 USA dcu. https://lccn.loc.gov/96521564.

[32] See for example "Douglaston," *New York Herald Tribune*, November 27, 1932, E6; "Leonidas Westervelts Give Dance in Douglaston for a Bride-To-Be," *New York Herald Tribune*, September 25, 1938, D5.

[33] See "Jenny Lind Items Among Items in Douglaston Home 'Museum,'" *Long Island Star-Journal*, July 14, 1939. Westervelt's Lind materials were housed in their very own "Jenny Lind Room" in his Douglaston, Long Island home. A picture dated 1945 shows the wall behind a floral couch covered in framed images of Lind, while objects fill an imposing wood cabinet with glass doors: books, figurines, and china, with glass bottles and candelabras arranged in a neat row along its top. Folder 8, Collection IX. Leonidas Westervelt Correspondence. New York Historical Society.

[34] "L. Westervelt, 76, Collector, Author," *New York Times* August 18, 1952, 17; "Leonidas Westervelt, 74, Novelist and Playwright," *New York Herald Tribune*, August 19, 1952, 22.

purchasing the first ticket to any segment of Lind's tour into an occasion to bid for status and recognition." [35] Westervelt too was purchasing reflected glory, aligning himself with Lind's celebrity by acquiring objects that set him on track to being the soprano's most ardent admirer. He had the luxury of spending decades traveling to cities including Havana, London, and Stockholm, looking for Lind memorabilia that would soothe his "incurable 'Collector's-Itch' virus" and relieve his "Jenny Lind enthusiasm fever."[36] "A dozen ocean crossings and thousands of miles of travel by rail and motor in America have brought together what is regarded in cultural circles as the most extensive and most representative collection of Jenny Lind items in the world," reported one newspaper.[37] Because there existed all manner of Lind objects spread across the globe, Westervelt took a "systematic and methodical" approach to collecting, and "found he could approach his subject from a number of standpoints." [38] The primary way he categorized and organized his collection was by type of item, whether music, bottles, china, medals, and so forth.

One category of objects was valuable to Westervelt above all others: those that were not merely representing Lind, but those she herself had owned. Of his collection, "many of the items were bought from dealers, but some valuable and rare pieces were given to him by descendants

[35] Steve Waksman, "Selling the Nightingale: P.T. Barnum, Jenny Lind, and the Management of the American Crowd," *Arts Marketing* 1, no. 2 (2011), 109.

[36] Collisson, "The Amazing American Tour," [308].

[37] Jerry Rand, "Jenny Lind Collection Comprises Items Associate With Songster's Trip Here," *Springfield Sunday Union and Republican*, September 20, 1942, 2E.

[38] "World's Finest Lind Collection Gathered by Douglaston Man," *Long Island Star-Journal*, August 14, 1941. See Philipp Blom, *To Have and to Hold: An Intimate History of Collectors and Collecting* (London: Allen Lane, an imprint of Penguin Books, 2002); Janelle A. Schwartz and Nhora Lucía Serrano, eds., *Curious Collectors, Collected Curiosities: An Interdisciplinary Study* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars, 2010).

of the singer."[39] These items, several from Lind's daughter, Jenny Maude (1857-1935), were literally and figuratively priceless. By 1945, these "intimate objects," which included a locket, personal seal, and sheet of music, were described as "still redolent of the captivating personality which inspired men to bid hundreds of dollars for first choice of seats at her concerts."[40] It was via interaction with these objects that Westervelt could get closest to Lind: the opportunity to hold something she had once held in some way helped to bridge the divide between them. Westervelt was never shy about describing his closeness with his subject-interlocutor. "Jenny Lind, from a hobby standpoint, became my friend, ideal, and guide," he once stated. "Together, we have had many interesting, quaint, and even thrilling adventures, both here and abroad."[41] Indeed, Westervelt positioned Lind not just as someone he knew, but someone he knew through collecting objects. He wrote:

> Although her glorious voice was stilled forever in 1887, before phonograph-recording days, I soon felt we had become friends. So Jenny and I searched out odd nooks and corners in every place where she had lived or studied, sung or visited, or at long last died. In musty curio shops and dusty archives we unearthed autographed letters and documents, clippings and reviews, magazine stories, broadsides and program booklets, portraits and porcelain figurines, tokens and medals.[42]

As these items later sat in display cases, then, Westervelt too was on display, both his privilege and his deep affinity for the Swedish Nightingale.

The Lind/bird candle snuffers held value of a different sort: while they were not Lind's personal belongings, they had taken a good deal of effort to acquire, which endeared them to Westervelt. He had seen one in someone else's collection and was overjoyed when a Long Island

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[39] World's Finest."

[40] *Souvenir Program*, [8].

[41] Westervelt, "My Hobby," 15, 17.

[42] Collisson, "The Amazing American Tour," [308].

antique dealer had one for sale. "*I was happy!!!*" he recalled.[43] Some time later, Maude sent Westervelt a picture she acquired from the Royal Worcester factory showing that the first snuffer had a mate. Westervelt recalled:

> Soon thereafter, I took a trip to England. The morning following my arrival in London, I placed an advertisement in a leading antiques magazine (at the cost of eight shillings) hoping to obtain the missing mate. That afternoon, I wandered through the Caledonia Market which is famous for heterogeneous materials, from works of art to second-hand clothing. In a stall, staring me in the face, was the Royal Worcester snuffer I had been so anxious to obtain. "How much?" I gasped. "Three shillin'" replied the Cockney. "Never see[n] anything like it before. Hain't it worth that, sir?" "I'll take it, anyway," I murmured. Clutching the treasure, I hailed a taxi and beat it to my hotel. On the way, I stopped at the magazine office to cancel my "ad." They refunded the eight shillings![44]

This incident was "one of the most coincidental and satisfying" of Westervelt's Lind adventures.[45] The process – the thrill of the chase, even – excited the collector and contributed to the snuffers' value, which is especially relevant in light of the fact that Westervelt's pride-and-joy candle snuffers were not actually made in the nineteenth century, as he believed they had been. While initial production did occur during Lind's lifetime, such snuffers continued to be made well into the twentieth; the date marks instead indicate that his Diffidence was made in 1909 and his Confidence in 1915.[46] Westervelt would likely have been disappointed had he realized that the snuffers were not original to Lind's period, but his collection was not without twentieth-century Lind objects, and the snuffers' later date made the process of their acquisition no less thrilling. The fact that his favorite items were not "originals," and that he did not seem to notice, or care, highlights Westervelt's approach to his Lind hobby, which was simultaneously

[43] Westervelt, "Adventuring," 89.

[44] Westervelt, "Adventuring," 89.

[45] Westervelt, "Adventuring," 88.

[46] "Royal Worcester Date Marks," Parkview Antiques Blog, December 13, 2015. https://www.parkviewantiques.com/blog/royalworcesterdatemarks. A number of such snuffers sold at a Bonham's auction in spring 2019 with dates of 1892-93, 1895, 1916, 1919, 1928: https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/25361/lot/165/.

all-out and lackadaisical. He was willing to go quite far, literally and figuratively, and was willing to spend significant time and money to acquire Lind objects for his collection. However, his desire for a great quantity of materials and his love of discovering them probably made individual objects in his collection less valuable – and possibly less worthy of study – on their own.

When Westervelt sold his collection to the New-York Historical Society in 1945, its personal value was to become public value. The agreed-upon amount was ten thousand dollars, one of very few records in the Westervelt papers that detail any sort of monetary value for the collection.[47] Extant correspondence does not shed light on whether Westervelt initiated the sale or if a member of the organization approached him, but as Westervelt was a board member there, it seems likely that he was pleased with the N-YHS as the collection's permanent home. "We realize that this has been a sacrifice on your part to let us have this collection and we appreciate it very much," Society president George Zabriskie wrote to Westervelt after the arrangements had been made. [48] "I am delighted to have the Collection go to the New York Historical Society, feeling this is where it will be most appreciated and where, from the standpoint of tradition, it belongs," Westervelt replied, either referring to past exhibits or the fact that Lind spent a significant amount of her tour in New York.[49]

The collection's new, larger audience at the N-YHS followed decades of an intensely personal collecting process. This did not mean that Westervelt kept Lind to himself, however; he was always eager to share his passion for the Swedish Nightingale. Along with fellow Lind

[47] Leonidas Westervelt to George Zabriskie, June 21, 1945, Folder 16, Box 13, New-York Historical Society Bequests, Gifts & Related Matters (NHS-RG 16). All correspondence between Zabriskie and Westervelt in this chapter is from this location. In 2018 dollars this amount would be approximately $140,000 (https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/uscompare/).

[48] George Zabriskie to Leonidas Westervelt, June 20, [1945].

[49] Westervelt to Zabriskie, June 21, 1945.

enthusiasts, his first big opportunity to share Lind with the public had been the one-hundredth anniversary of her birth in October 1920. Though Westervelt's enthusiasm for Lind – the excitement of tracking down objects, the thrill of picking up a book she had owned – could never fully translate to the public, centennial events nevertheless aimed to make accessible even just a taste of this passion.

Centennial Celebration, Part I: Imagining a Voice

"One of the few mementos that we have of Jenny Lind – the Golden medal struck by the Swedish Royal Mint in 1891. Impressive but SILENT." So ran a full-page advertisement in the *New York Sun* on October 7, 1920, hawking the new Edison phonograph. The Lind medal, featuring the singer's shoulders-up profile, is superimposed over an image of Castle Garden during the nineteenth century. Below this, on the right-hand side of the page, four phonograph discs slightly overlap, the topmost one featuring a shoulders-up Frieda Hempel (1885-1955), smiling at the viewer, a twentieth-century alternative to the medal. It was the day after the Jenny Lind Centennial Celebration Concert in Carnegie Hall, which had starred the German soprano as the Swedish singer, re-enacting her original U.S. debut program in costume. The *Sun* advertisement articulated the central issue that all twentieth-century Lind lovers faced: the void created by her unrecorded, now-silent voice.[50] While underestimating the number of surviving "Lind mementos," it scoffed at the object-collecting urge of Westervelt and his colleagues. The medal was fine, the advertisement acknowledged, but it lacked the fundamental quality it needed to truly represent the great singer. A phonograph disc of Hempel, on the other hand, was the best way to experience the sound of the Swedish Nightingale, given the circumstances. "The voice of Jenny Lind is only a memory…but the voice of Frieda Hempel will live forever, re-created in all

[50] In her study of Lindomania in London, Francesca Vella suggests that scholars approach Lind by "[listening] to and through the celebrity craze" ("Jenny Lind, Voice, Celebrity," *Music & Letters* 98, no. 2 (2017): 241).

its exquisite beauty by the magic of Thomas A. Edison's art," stated the advertisement. Hempel and her collaborator Arthur Middleton went "immediately" to an Edison Laboratory to record their Carnegie Hall numbers – owners of the New Edison Phonograph should place their orders now, the ad declared.[51]

The advertisement, like the Centennial Concert, approached Lind's absence with sound instead of objects, identifying the singer's voice as her most important feature (though it is significant that her voice is set up in opposition to objects, which were present enough in the press coverage to be brought up in this way). Similarly, the Associated Press (AP) press release that spread word of the Centennial closed by admitting that

> there is no record of Jenny Lind's voice – no black disc to perpetuate it for coming generations. But the journals of her time; the few living people who heard her; and those to whom the memory has been handed down, all tell the same story: "It was wonderful![52]

With this closing, the article enticed people to attend the Centennial Concert, to experience what it may have been like to hear this "wonderful" voice in person. And while the "journals of the time" did famously sing Lind's praises, there was no consensus during the 1850s regarding what Lind's visit and her music meant for the nation; literary historian Bluford Adams argues instead for understanding Lind's tour as "a crucial moment in the ongoing struggle over the politics of U.S. commercial amusements," particularly in terms of inherent issues of gender, race, and class.[53] The Centennial also raised questions for organizers, audiences, and critics regarding the meaning and impact of Lind's visit. Some were explicit in press coverage: why was Lind worth celebrating in the first place? Was her voice really *that* special? How much of her popularity was

[51] "The Voice of Jenny Lind is Only a Memory," *New York Sun* (October 7, 1920).

[52] "Frieda Hempel as Jenny Lind in Historical Centennial Concert," Press Release, August 21, 1920. In volume I of Jenny Lind Centennial Celebration Committee, *Press Comments*.

[53] Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum*, 42.

solely due to Barnum's hype and publicity? What did her visit mean for music in the U.S.? Some were implied, or skirted: What did Lind's tour mean for women? For race in America? And what was the cost of remembering her? Drawing on seventy-year-old accounts, memories, and objects, the Centennial organizers worked to produce a second wave of the Lindomania that had swept the country during the previous century.

The Centennial Celebration, consisting of an exhibit and Hempel's reenactment concert, was the brainchild of Dr. Johannes Hoving, a Swedish physician active in promoting his home country's culture and heritage during the time he lived in the United States, between 1903 and 1934.[54] In addition to the soprano's one-hundredth birthday, the fall of 1920 also marked seventy years since her debut concert at Castle Garden in New York City. According to the secretary's report on the Celebration, Hoving "said he was particularly anxious to make such a celebration as cosmopolitan, as representative of New York, as possible. He did not want any one class or nation to predominate but rather desired to arrange for a tribute from all the people to the memory of the great singer."[55] This lofty goal proved difficult to realize, however.

After preliminary meetings, Hoving and a small group of interested friends selected a Central Committee of fifty men and women "representative of New York life, musical and dramatic critics, heads of the great musical organizations, noted singers and musicians," and "a

[54] Finding Aid to Johannes Hoving Papers, MSS006, Pennsylvania Historical Society; "Swedish-American Group To Fete Johannes Hoving," *New York Herald Tribune*, May 6, 1934, C13.

[55] Selden E. Marvin, "Jenny Lind Centennial Celebration: Secretary's Report," 1 December, 1920, 1. In volume II of Jenny Lind Centennial Celebration Committee, *Press Comments*. Marvin may have been echoing language from one of Barnum's memoirs: "When we reflect how thoroughly Jenny Lind, her musical powers, her character, and wonderful successes, were subsequently known by all classes in this country as well as throughout the civilized world, it is difficult to realize that, at the time this engagement was made, she was comparatively unknown on this side [of] the water" (*The Life*, 103). The Secretary's Report is also found in a pamphlet produced by the Jenny Lind Association, *Jenny Lind Association, New York* (Brooklyn, NY: Paragon Press, [1923?]). Marvin was a Harvard College graduate and an early committee meeting was held at the Harvard Club of New York; the privilege associated with the elite university ran counter to the spirit of Hoving's proclamation.

number of leaders in the social world."[56] Members included playwright and impresario David Belasco, music critics Henry Fink and H. E. Krehbiel (the latter a champion of African American spirituals), Agnes Huntington Cravath, wife of prominent New York lawyer Paul Cravath, composer Sidney Homer, Polish soprano Mme. Marcella Sembrich, and Mrs. Hilmer Lundbeck, wife of the director of the Swedish American Line.[57] The organizers asked committee members to give what assistance they could to the planning but were not committed financially to the project. Westervelt was added as a seventh member of the Executive Committee during the spring of 1920 and was in charge of printing for the Centennial Celebration. The Committee asked Hempel to star as Lind, performing in period costume and replicating the exact repertory of Lind's debut.

The committee did very little to state explicitly why a celebration for a long-dead soprano was a worthwhile endeavor: in some ways, it seems that questions regarding the necessity of the celebration would have been met with confusion by organizers. Why *wouldn't* we celebrate Lind's centennial? they might have asked. Similar celebrations were planned in Sweden and England as well as other U.S. locations, "to honor the greatest singer of her time – the fine noble-hearted woman, whose charity was as rare as her art."[58] In the *New York Tribune*, Fred B. Pitney explained that "The answer to why should there be a Jenny Lind centenary is not far to seek. Jenny Lind is a tradition, a legend, a fetich [*sic*], an idol and an ideal."[59] Pitney credited Barnum's publicity with turning Lind into a larger-than-life figure – who continued to be (and

[56] Marvin, "Secretary's Report," 2.

[57] "Frieda Hempel," Press Release. Cravath and his wife clearly admired virtuoso singers; he later became chairman of the Metropolitan Opera board.

[58] "Frieda Hempel," Press Release.

[59] Fred B. Pitney, "World Remembers Jenny Lind Though Her Voice Is Still," *New-York Tribune*, September 5, 1920, SM3.

deserved to be) admired, worshipped, longed for, and remembered – and whose lasting popularity necessitated a centennial celebration.

A big to-do for a woman's centenary was quite unusual in 1920. Throughout the early twentieth century, newspapers regularly produced lists of upcoming centennials for people and events and reported on anniversaries that inspired celebrations and exercises, such as Abraham Lincoln's centennial in 1909 and the semi-centennial of the Civil War, 1911-1915. Robert Schumann and Frederick Chopin were both fêted in 1910, one hundred years after their births. In late December, 1918, the *Atlanta Constitution* published a list of women's centennials in 1919, which included Queen Victoria, George Eliot, Julia Ward Howe, and Clara Schumann.[60] None, however, received the same level of celebration in the U.S. as did Lind. The timing of Lind's centenary is notable in the history of women in the U.S., taking place just two months after the Nineteenth Amendment had become law. Suffrage is noticeably absent from discussions of Lind, and opinions varied on how to interpret the role of gender in Lind's career.

Many critics chose to explain Lind's fame via her gender: she was a perfect model of humility, modesty, and generosity – stereotypically feminine characteristics – and it was only natural that "it was Jenny Lind, the woman, who made unforgettable Jenny Lind, the artist."[61] It seems possible that those with more conservative social outlooks, perhaps even some of the Centennial organizers, felt comfortable celebrating Lind with the backdrop of suffrage because she appeared to be a status-quo follower: talented but demure, wealthy but benevolent. By contrast, *New York Tribune* critic Henry Krehbiel challenged Lind's saint-like reputation

[60] "Centenaries of Famous Women," *Atlanta Constitution*, December 29, 1918, 11.

[61] "The Greatness of Jenny Lind," *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, September 19, 1920. Adams argues that Barnum intentionally let himself be portrayed in a bad light to highlight Lind's benevolence: "by exaggerating the singer's giving, Barnum encouraged people to overlook the wealthy, powerful woman she was and focus on the poor girl she had been" (*E Pluribus Barnum*, 45).

(bestowed on her, in part, by his fellow Centennial Committee members), instead arguing that she was a savvy, self-serving artist. Cynically, he wrote that after her official retirement she "sang often enough to keep the popular imagination warm and to keep bright the halo which had surrounded her from the time of her first coming to London."[62] Another critic gave Lind credit for proving women could be on the stage:

> As a woman [Lind] did unlimited service in breaking down prejudices which until then had done much to check musical advancement – that narrow view, which held that a woman who appeared upon a public platform must necessarily not come up to the puritanic standards at that time, which reigned supreme in large circles of American thought. Many Americans learned for the first time that a woman could maintain the highest standard in her private life and still be an artist of pre-eminent rank.[63]

As Pitney had explained in his *Tribune* article, Lind – as a symbol or an idea – had the potential to mean many different things to many different people.

The committee's idea of Lind, a "fine, noble-hearted woman," spread quickly to a broader audience via newspapers and journals nationwide. In a self-conscious move inverse to Barnum's 1850 approach, they chose to keep advertising to a minimum "in order to avoid the possibility of any ante-climax in interest created by the publicity."[64] Nevertheless, Lind's name was soon being published across the country, just as it had been in 1850. Following the AP press release on August 21, first written by the committee's secretary Selden Marvin and cut down by Hempel's secretary Lois Willoughby, Lind's story traveled around the country. From Savannah to Lexington, Racine to Rochester, Portland to Omaha, Riverside (CA) to Jerome (AZ), papers ran more-or-less the same story in the following days and weeks.[65] The press release both

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[62] H. E. Krehbiel, "Recollections of Jenny Lind And the Cult She Created," *New-York Tribune*, October 10, 1920, B5.

[63] "Lind Centennial Celebration," *Musical Courier Extra*, October 23, 1920, 17. "Puritanic" comes up frequently in Edward Wagenknecht's biography of Lind, *Jenny Lind* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1931).

[64] Marvin, "Secretary's Report," 3.

explained the event and also gave a brief overview of Lind's life: her rise from humble beginnings to European operatic stardom, the huge crowds and exorbitant prices paid for auctioned tickets, the cities visited, her popularity with audiences and "prominent" people, her marriage and retirement in England. The first half of the article emphasized the Centennial's historical accuracy: Hempel would wear a replica of Lind's gown from her New York debut, the programs and tickets would be precise copies, the same piano would be used.[66] Many stories were more-or-less the AP version, but a fair number presented additional information on Jenny Lind: the *Detroit Free Press*, for example, quoted a historical account from a Lind audience member to signal her importance: "I could not hear Demosthenes speak or see Napoleon win a battle – and so I went to hear Jenny Lind sing."[67]

While the news of the Jenny Lind Centennial spread rapidly, the event itself did not draw as many big-name attendees as the committee had hoped: while no names are given, the secretary's report states the committee knew that so early in the fall "many people would be out of town and too far away to attend," suggesting upper class households who were still at their summer estates.[68] The organizers sent out over three hundred invitations to the concert and received very few replies; Marvin attributed this to "so-called faithful secretaries" who destroyed the notices before they reached their addressees. Perhaps, Marvin implicitly acknowledged, the Lind event was not as important as the committee believed it to be. Committee members had first

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[65] Examples from *Press Comments on the Jenny Lind Centennial Celebration*.

[66] "Frieda Hempel," Press Release.

[67] "The Theater," *Detroit Free Press*, September 10, 1920, 6. Another development that arose in the days following the centennial celebration was the story of Claes G. Lind, a Brooklyn apartment super, who was the supposed long-lost brother of Lind, twenty-nine years her junior. He had been (conveniently) "found by reporters" on October 11 and the story quickly spread; "he is not musical" and had never met his sister, proclaimed the press (e.g. "Jenny Lind's Brother Recalls Her Career," *New York Herald*, October 12, 1920). In *Press Comments* volume II, Johannes Hoving scribbled in the margin next to one such article, "historical records show that Jenny Lind, the great singer, had no brother!"

[68] Marvin, "Secretary's Report," 4.

dibs on concert tickets before they went on sale to the general public on September 25th. Ticket prices were: boxes $100, orchestra $5, dress circle $4, other seats $3 and $2.[69] These were generally in line with ticket prices at the Metropolitan Opera: the next month, Halévy's *La Juive* opened with prices from $2.50 to $10, while prices for a Thanksgiving matinee of *Carmen* ranged from $1 to $6. Unlike the Centennial Concert, however, the Met and the New York Symphony both offered "popular prices" from $.25 to $1.50 for select concerts.[70] The secretary's report described expenses for the Centennial Concert as "necessarily heavy," possibly explaining the ticket prices. [71] Even so, "receipts were sufficient to provide for a satisfactory contribution" to charity: and not any charities, but to the same ten New York organizations to which Lind gave her first night's proceeds, including the Actors' Fund of America and the Firemen's Emergency Fund.[72] Keeping ticket prices high helped the Committee stay true to its dedication to historical accuracy, despite Hoving's expressed desire to make the event "a tribute for all the people."

Indeed, the concert was as close to "historically accurate" as the oganizers could manage. Krehbiel noted that while the space (Carnegie Hall instead of Castle Garden) and the "conduct of the audience" were not what they had been at the original concert, most everything else was

[69] A form letter invitation to Centennial concert from Selden E. Marvin on behalf of Jenny Lind Centennial Celebration, 164 Madison Avenue, New York, NY, [September 1920]. *Press Comments* volume I.

[70] "Metropolitan Opera House" and "New York Symphony Orchestra" Amusements advertisements, *New York Times*, November 14, 1920. A seat for $2 in 1920 would cost about $30 in 2018 and a $.25 seat would be equal about $3 (https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/uscompare/relativevalue.php).

[71] Marvin, "Secretary's Report," 4.

[72] Marvin, "Secretary's Report," 4. Other organizations were: American Female Guardian Society and Home for the Friendless (formerly Home for the Friendless); Society for the Employment and Relief of Poor Women (formerly Society for the Relief of Indigent Females); Lincoln Hospital and Home (formerly Home for Colored and Aged Persons); Colored Orphan Asylum (formerly Colored and Orphan Asylum); Society of the Lying-in Hospital (formerly Lying-in Hospital for Destitute Females); New York Orphanage (formerly New York Orphan Asylum); Protestant Episcopal Half Orphan Asylum (formerly Protestant Half Orphan Asylum); Roman Catholic Orphan Asylum Society (formerly Roman Catholic Half Orphan Asylum).

tended to in terms of recreating the original event.[73] Hempel herself had prepared over the course of summer 1920 and later recalled:

> I sailed for Europe, laden with books, pictures, and programs of Jenny. In the mountains of Sils-Maria [Switzerland] I studied this material and prepared the music for the program. Before leaving there, I became familiar with all Jenny Lind's mannerisms – her bow, her walk, her gestures, and her posture. Then in Paris I went to Callot Soeurs and ordered an exact duplicate of Jenny Lind's concert gown for the occasion, the details of which I had gleaned from pictures and books.[74]

Audiences experienced the visual effect of a fully-costumed company: not only was Hempel in a replica gown, but the rest of the musicians wore 1850s clothing as well, along with the young women ushers and a few firemen. "Some of them looked uncomfortable," Richard Aldrich noted in his review.[75]

Responses to the concert were largely positive, oscillating between praise of the event's historical nature and acknowledgement that, however "accurate," it was still part reproduction, part imagination. One critic noted with interest how the concert inspired "intense enthusiasm among the younger generation which knows nothing of Jenny Lind save what has been read or handed down to posterity."[76] Conjuring "make believe," another made the event sound somewhat childish:

> There was a good deal of the spirit of play-acting in this commemorative duplication of the historic Battery Park debut seventy [years] ago…members of the orchestra, looking like animated daguerreotypes in their "period" costumes, comported themselves with solemn gravity, the square pianos were properly out of tune and tinkling, while the atmosphere of make believe pervaded even the auditorium...the large and duly edified audience seemed much pleased as matters stood.[77]

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[73] H. E. Krehbiel, "New York Pays Homage in Song To Jenny Lind," *New-York Tribune*, October 7, 1920, 8.

[74] Frieda Hempel, *My Golden Age of Singing*, annotated by William R. Moran, prologue and epilogue by Elizabeth Johnston (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1998), 231.

[75] Richard Aldrich, "Jenny Lind's 100th Birthday is Kept," *New York Times*, October 7, 1920, 26.

[76] Penelope Perrill, "Woman to Woman, Yesterday and Today," *Boston Traveler*, October 7, 1920.

[77] H. F. P., "Miss Hempel Proves a Charming 'Jenny Lind'" *Musical America* 32, no. 25 (October 16, 1920): 4.

Even if the proceedings were a bit silly – everyone knew it was not actually 1850 – the chance to imagine and *almost* experience Lind's debut was welcome nonetheless.

Despite Hempel's dedicated study that summer, the sonic aspect of the concert was not as true to the 1850s as the visual. A perceptive article in the *Brooklyn Eagle* the day before the concert probed the extent to which the musical elements of the concert *could* be recreated, writing that "many singers will be able to reproduce the airs with every note that Jenny Lind sang, but nobody can reproduce the style in which she sang them or the personality which she breathed into them. There will be the difference between a fragrant rose from the garden and the skillful copy of it on a hat."[78] Indeed, in her study of Hempel's later reenactment concerts, Laura Tunbridge has explained that Hempel did not even try to reproduce Lind's singing style, which made her concerts "dramatically different" from the early music movement championed at the time by Arnold Dolmetsch and others.[79] The Edison phonograph advertisement, while pointing out the silence (and supposed uselessness) of the Lind medal, admitted that consumers would be purchasing a lasting record of *Hempel's* voice, not Lind's. Though obvious on one level, it is significant that the most important feature of the Centennial, the voice, required the most imagination.

Critics seemed less concerned with the sound of Hempel's voice, or the sound of Lind's, for that matter, than they were with how her voice had impacted the nation. Instead of imagining what her voice sounded like, they imagined how it had changed the lives of those who heard her. To begin with, however, critics made it clear that Lind's significance did not lie in her repertory, which was largely deemed old-fashioned. Lind's original program was as follows:

[78] "The Jenny Lind Centenary," *Brooklyn Eagle*, October 5, 1920.

[79] Tunbridge, "Frieda Hempel," 442.

Part I
Overture to *Oberon*……...[Carl Maria von] Weber
Orchestra
Aria, "Sorgette" from *Maometto Secondo*……[Gioachino] Rossini
Signor [Giovanni] Belletti
Scena and Cavatina, "Casta Diva" from *Norma*…….[Vincenzo] Bellini
Mademoiselle Jenny Lind
Duet For Two Piano Fortes on Themes of Bellini…….[Sigismund] Thalberg
Messieurs [Julius] Benedict and [Richard] Hoffman
Duetto, "Per piacer alla Signora" from *Il turco in Italia*…….Rossini
Mademoiselle Jenny Lind and Signor Belletti

Part II
Overture to *The Crusaders*……..Julius Benedict
Orchestra
Trio for Voice and Two Flutes from *Camp of Silesia*…….[Giacomo] Meyerbeer
Mademoiselle Jenny Lind, Messrs. J.A. Kyle and Siede
Cavatina, "Largo al Factotum" from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*……Rossini
"The Herdsman's Song" [a.k.a. "The Echo Song"]…….Swedish Melody
Mademoiselle Jenny Lind
The "Welcome to America," text by Bayard Taylor…….Benedict
Mademoiselle Jenny Lind[80]

"Aside from its spectacular aspects the concert was interesting chiefly as illustrating how far our musical tastes have progressed since 1850," wrote the *Musical America* critic. "In the way of genuine music the program offered nothing beyond the 'Oberon' overture and the 'Casta Diva,' unless one excepts the 'Largo al Factotum,' which is ever with us."[81] Another critic explained that the repertoire of the Centennial Concert was unfashionable because "music has developed in a very different direction. The reaction against the tyranny of the prima donna which Wagner led

[80] As reproduced in Ware and Lockard, *P.T. Barnum*, 21-22; many reproduction programs for this and other concerts are in the N-YHS collection. It is not practical to reproduce the physical 1850/1920 program here, as each number was listed on its own page.

[81] H. F. P., "Miss Hempel," 4.

has gone far…A great part of the musical world of today is more interested in instrumental music than in singing, and cares more for dramatic interpretation than for 'bel canto.'"[82]

Though taste had admittedly changed in the seventy years since her visit, critics credited Lind with the fact that American audiences' taste had changed at all. The *Portland Oregonian*, for example, argued that Jenny Lind "is associated in memory with a picturesque epoch in our history…Barnum performed a service when he revealed the foreign singer to a people who had not had so much as a glimpse of the world outside of that in which they moved. Miss Lind was the avant courier of a new period in which, little by little, appreciation of the beautiful was to gain ground."[83] In this critic's interpretation, hearing Lind's voice singing European repertoire with full orchestra left a lasting impression on audiences across the country and jumpstarted interest in "real," i.e., European classical, music in the United States.

The review of the Centennial in the *Musical Courier Extra* is insightful enough on this matter to discuss at length. It emphasized that Americans before Lind's tour were not backward or stupid when it came to musical taste, just that they "had not received the required stimulation" and lacked opportunity to experience high quality music. Of course, the writer admitted, this was because the rugged frontier and "struggle for existence" had to be overcome before antebellum Americans could live "a well balanced and fully lived life" that included culture and entertainment. Thankfully,

> to such communities came Jenny Lind, hailed then as the foremost singer of Europe which at that time meant of the world…They took home with them an enduring desire to

[82] "Jenny Lind," *Springfield Republican*, October 28, 1920. Through analysis of British critics' responses to Hempel's Lind performances (which the singer continued in the United States and then in Europe after the Centennial), Tunbridge demonstrates that Hempel could draw in "low brow" listeners with the showy "Casta Diva" material, but keep "high brow" listeners interested with German lieder. Her concerts "were thus potentially important mediators of taste for those who wanted to conserve genteel traditions and, no less importantly, for those who wanted to upturn them." Tunbridge, "Frieda Hempel," 454.

[83] "The Jenny Lind Centenary," *Portland Oregonian*, October 6, 1920.

> hear more music and better music, one that soon became apparent in the various early musical activities of the Middle West which took their inception at this period, or in the years immediately following – in other words, through the efforts of the generation which had heard and appreciated Jenny Lind. In the East her influence was not less powerful for she brought an art with her, the art of simple music that appealed strongly to the people of that time. Her concerts were attended by all classes and depended for their financial success not upon one particular class as had been the case of various opera companies or the like that had preceded her. She, herself, by her munificent gifts to charities endeared herself to the rich and the poor. But fundamental in her popularity was her music, the rest were merely extraneous circumstances which have all helped to build up the Jenny Lind tradition."[84]

The critic paints a rather harmonious picture of the antebellum United States, with rugged pioneers clearing the land while audiences of all classes supported Lind (when in actuality ticket prices forced the lower classes to listen outside the concert halls), which further sets up Lind as savior to U.S.-American musical life.[85]

By situating Lind thus, critics addressed the long-standing belief that in the realm of classical music, the United States had, for much of its history, lagged behind and been inferior to the musical centers of Europe. One critic wrote that Americans owed a particular debt to Lind, an "obligation that we owe to those who show us that we are better than anybody had suspected."[86] Emphasis on Lind inspired interest in European music let critics show that while it had taken decades, by the time of their writing Americans had developed a robust understanding and appreciation of art music. This approach was a double-edged sword: on the one hand, the "look how far we've come" narrative bolstered the validity and vitality of early-twentieth-century music in the United States; on the other hand, critics reinforced the very idea that was causing them grief. Westervelt too bought into and supported this story: in an article about his collection

[84] "Lind Centennial Celebration," *Musical Courier Extra*, 17.

[85] Adams, *E Pluribus Barnum*, 64-68.

[86] "When Jenny Lind Came," *New York Evening Post*, October 6, 1920.

he stated that during the 1850s, "good music…was almost unknown in our crude, young republic in the fifties. New York featured only tawdry reviews and minstrel shows."[87] As scholars including Katherine Preston and Douglas Shadle have shown, however, the classical music scene in nineteenth-century America was by no means a barren wasteland: though certainly still developing, orchestras, traveling opera companies, and composers were all in existence before Lind's visit.[88]

For the Centennial organizers, Lind was many things: a yardstick for American musical progress, a superstar, a model woman, a legend. The concert and press surrounding it were only part of the celebration, however: there was also the exhibit of objects, which played a distinct role in the festivities.

Centennial Celebration, Part II: Looking at Objects

At her U.S. debut on September 11, 1850, Lind accompanied herself during "The Herdsman's Song" on a square piano made by Chickering & Sons. The ornately carved, Boston-made instrument proceeded to accompany Lind on her U.S. tour. According to a pamphlet produced by Chickering around the time of Lind's centennial, the instrument "had much to do with the success of the tour, and many and interesting are the incidents connected with the transporting of the artist and her piano from place to place. Much of the journeying was made by water."[89] Seventy years later, the piano played a key role in the New York City Jenny Lind

[87] Collisson, "The Amazing American Tour," [308].

[88] Katherine Preston, *Opera on the Road: Traveling Opera Troupes in the United States, 1825-60* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Douglas Shadle, *Orchestrating the Nation: the Nineteenth-century American Symphonic Enterprise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[89] "Jenny Lind and the Chickering," [publication information not identified], [3]. The N-YHS holds a copy gifted to Kitty Cheatham by William Hildebrand (Kitty Cheatham Collection, Folder 1).

Centennial Celebration, and proves a crucial connection between the October 6, 1920 concert replicating Lind's debut and the exhibit of Lind objects:

> The old Chickering piano on which Jenny Lind played her own accompaniments at the first concert will have the place of honor [in the exhibit]…The piano will be missing from the exhibit on the evening of October 6, the hundredth anniversary of Jenny Lind's birth and the night of the centennial concert at Carnegie Hall. Frieda Hempel…will play her own accompaniments to Jenny Lind's songs on the old concert grand.[90]

The piano, along with dozens of other objects, facilitated a celebration of Lind which reached tens of thousands of people in just a few short weeks. [91] The objects got people talking, looking, and imagining Lind together in a way that had not happened since her American tour.

Having the exhibit of objects at the New York Aquarium allowed organizers to take advantage of Lind's original concert venue, which was otherwise not a practical space in which to hold the Centennial Concert. Visitors had to perform more imaginative work themselves, however, as the space – while historically accurate in some ways – was much changed since Lind had performed there. The original Battery, renamed Castle Clinton in 1815, sits at the southernmost tip of Manhattan Island. Used briefly by the U.S. military during and after the War of 1812, the fort became property of the city in 1822; the space received another new name, Castle Garden, and was leased for public entertainment starting in 1824.[92] The venue gained a dome roof in 1844-1845, and when Lind sang there in 1850, it occupied its own island jutting out into the harbor, connected by a drawbridge, until a landfill project in the 1860s made the bridge

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[90] "Complete Lind Fete Plans," *Morning Telegraph*, September 28, 1920. The *Zoological Bulletin* states that it was the Geib, not the Chickering, that Hempel used (Ida M. Mellen, "The Jenny Lind Centennial Celebration," *New York Zoological Society Bulletin* 23, no. 6 (November, 1920): 133).

[91] The Chickering, the link between the exhibit and the concert, was also involved in a discrepancy between the 1850 and 1920 programs. One of the pieces on the 1850 program, a duet for two pianos on Bellini melodies by Thalberg, "could not be found." Organizers replaced it (though this was not reflected on the program) by a piece from the 1870s, Carl Reinecke's *Variations on a Gavotte by Gluck* (Krehbiel, "New York Pays Homage).

[92] Barry Moreno, *Castle Garden and Battery Park* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2007), 15.

unnecessary. The structure opened as an immigration center in August 1855, replaced by Ellis Island in 1890.

The New York Aquarium opened in the same space in December 1896. By 1920 the inside was still somewhat open and dotted with tall pillars, but the addition of upper stories (by famed architecture firm McKim, Mead, and White) meant the space did not look as it did when Lind sang there. The elegant interior resembled the grand, sweeping space of an early twentieth century department store, with tile floor and palms complementing the columns. The animals' enclosures were organized very differently from the large, realistic exhibits popular later in the century: in one 1924 photograph, the penguins sit on wood pallets three feet away from where a visitor might stand, their enclosure marked off with an ornate – and short – metal fence.[93] The penguins are not mentioned in press accounts covering the Centennial, but seals are: organizers arranged the Lind display cases around the seal enclosure at the center of the ground floor. As a result, these animals served as a large part of the soundscape, according to the *Evening Post*: the reviewer noted "loud splashing and gyrations of the uneasy seals" in juxtaposition with the Chickering.[94]

Putting together the exhibit involved Lind fans from across the country, men and women, all with different collecting interests. There were six exhibit cases, with Swedish and American flags hanging over head, and two pianos, one made by the Chickering company (Boston) and the other by the Geib family business (New York). Westervelt's contributions included biographies of Barnum, blue-green glass bottles and fifteen medals featuring Lind's likeness, Barnum's copy

[93] Moreno, *Castle Garden*, 113. Also "History & Culture," NPS Castle Clinton National Monument, New York, last modified May 16, 2015, https://www.nps.gov/cacl/learn/historyculture/index.htm.

[94] "Jenny Lind Again at the Aquarium," *New York Evening Post*, October 2, 1920. In another striking juxtaposition, the November issue of the *Zoological Society Bulletin* featured an article on the Lind celebration beneath a discussion of how to distinguish between different types of pikes.

of Lind's biography, volumes of her music, programs, and two Haviland china statuettes. Miss M.H. Osman of Buffalo shared a fan gifted to Lind by Princess Catherine of Sweden and a black lace veil worn by the singer; Mrs. John W. Tobin of New York loaned a china perfume bottle along with the Geib piano; Mr. John F. Anderson of San Diego contributed programs from the 1850 tour; Mr. Elliott Smith provided an engraving, color print, books, programs, medals, and an envelope with Lind's likeness; Mr. Ashley Cole displayed a daguerreotype, a letter, and a program. There were also three autograph letters, a yellow silk dress worn by Lind, an "image paree" portrait made from original scraps of fabric, "prints, photographs, paintings and daguerreotypes," and a spinning wheel presented to Lind by unnamed American fans.[95]

How the exhibit was organized, and by extension, how visitors may have experienced the Lind objects, is not clear from the archival record.[96] A photo of one of the cases, published in the *New York Evening Post*, shows a close-up of five images of Lind. In the center is a needlework depiction of the soprano with the fan owned by Lind underneath it; they are flanked by portraits on paper on either side. Due to the graininess of the image, it is difficult to tell what else is on the floor of the case, either other paper items or possibly labels.[97] What is clear, however, is that visitors to the Lind objects in "Fishland," as one critic put it, attended an event more accessible than the concert.[98] While concert-goers had to pay to hear Hempel-as-Lind, there was no cost for

[95] Mellen, "The Jenny Lind Centennial Celebration,"130-131, and "Jenny Lind at Castle Garden," *New York Evening Telegram*, September 28, 1920. While the objects returned to their respective owner-collectors at the end of the celebration, the Aquarium did receive a bust of Lind by Wolf von Hoyer (1806-1873) from the committee in January of the next year ("Unveil Bust of Jenny Lind," *New York Times*, January 18, 1921). It is now in the collection of the Museum of the City of New York (object 41.383).

[96] There is a pencil sketch of six cases in Westervelt's papers, labeled 1-6 as "The Woman- Star," "The Impresario," "The City," "Performance," "Reviews," "Effects." Though it is impossible to tell whether this layout was used, or whether it was even for the centennial exhibit, it provides valuable insight into at least one way Westervelt (or possibly someone close to him) conceived of organizing Lind materials. Folder 11, Series IX. Leonidas Westervelt Correspondence, Jenny Lind Collection, New York Historical Society.

[97] "Some Mementoes of the Great Singer," *New York Evening Post*, October 2, 1920.

admission to view the object displays, and while the concert was one night only, the exhibit, originally slated to run for ten days, ran an extra two weeks because of "unusual interest" shown by the public.[99] The Aquarium's official count of visitors during the twenty-three day period was 163,151. The most significant aspect of the object experience was the ability to linger, to give a good long look, to peer closer, to return to an interesting object. The experience of Lind's repertoire, of course, was by its very nature limited to the few minutes it took for Hempel (or Lind enthusiasts at their home pianos) to sing to the last measure, though the Edison company would claim a solution to this problem in its phonograph.

Other than the number of visitors, there is little in press accounts suggesting how people reacted to or interacted with the objects. The perceptive journalist at the *Musical Courier Extra*, whether or not representing what the exhibit meant to the average visitor, drew two related sources of meaning from the objects, the first being a record of how lasting Lind's legacy had been:

> Perhaps the event of the centennial celebration which brought home [Lind's continued fame] most closely to the people of the present generation, to whom the personality of the Swedish artist alone remains, was the exhibition of Lind relics shown at Castle Garden, now the New York Aquarium, during the celebration. It is surprising to those who do not know the strength of the reverence in which…the memory of Jenny Lind is held by many throughout the country, to discover the number of collectors who specialize in the life of this great artist and who are scouring America and Europe in order to obtain objects which were intimately linked with her during her entire life. It must be a great personality which can arouse such fervor, one that has made a distinct imprint upon its time and one that had traits of that eternal quality which are remembered long after its disappearance from the earth.[100]

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[98] "In Memory of Jenny Lind," *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, October 2, 1920.

[99] Marvin, "Secretary's Report," 3.

[100] "Lind Centennial Celebration," *Musical Courier Extra*, 16. These other collectors included Kitty Cheatham, William Hildebrand, and Ragnar Cederlund, a Chicago-based collector whose correspondence with Westervelt is written on Jenny Lind stationery (e.g. Ragnar Cederlund to Leonidas Westervelt, March 9, 1943, Folder 6, Series IX. Leonidas Westervelt Correspondence, Jenny Lind Collection, New York Historical Society). As with many topics, Cheatham was outspoken in her enthusiasm for Lind, though her views on the singer are beyond the scope of this chapter. See, for example, "Jenny Lind stands alone in the world of art for those who have reverently penetrated

The objects, then, were significant for the way they encouraged not only imagination of Lind and the 1850s, but also her effect on past and even current generations of admirers. Interest in Lind was not limited to her centennial, which should make visitors realize how important she was and continued to be.

Though there were many collectors interested in Lind, as the exhibit proved, few were treated so often and so well in the press as Westervelt. One such individual not as wealthy or well-connected as Westervelt (and therefore less able to promote his hobby publicly) was William Augustus Hildebrand, also of New York, who collected Lindiana during the same time period.[101] An article in the *New York Evening Post* makes clear a class – and classiness – difference between the two men. Hildebrand's collection was at the top of "four flights of narrow, rickety stairs," at 24 Beekman Street near City Hall. "So dilapidated is the building which houses his precious museum that with each upward step the conviction grows that one has mistaken the number and entered the wrong door," tutted the reporter. From this article, it seems that Hildebrand had collected more paper-based (and therefore less expensive) things, like sheet music and prints, than Westervelt had. Or at least he had fewer non-paper things: a medal, some buttons, a chair Lind had used during one of her stays in New York (a coveted item the likes of which Westervelt did not own). A photograph at the N-YHS and labeled "Jenny Lind

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the primitive greatness of the woman, which is reflected in her rich and amazing contributions to art from her disciplinary childhood and through each progressive footstep onward" (Kitty Cheatham, "Tribute to Jenny Lind," *New York Times*, May 9, 1937, X6).

[101] Marion Clyde McCarroll, "Ex-Librarian Has 'Jenny Lind Gallery' at Top of Downtown Loft Building," *New York Evening Post*, September 1, 1928. Among the manuscript materials for Hildebrand's Lind anthology is a copy of the article "Jenny Lind's Hotel is Giving Way to Commerce" by Marguerite Mooers Marshall (*The Evening World*, June 4, 1926). Adding to his somewhat pitiable air is that in this article, Hildebrand's name was erroneously given as Sherwood, which he then went through and corrected in pen.

Collection" (part of Hildebrand's "Dramatic Morgue" or "Theatrical Hall of Fame") depicts a room filled floor-to-ceiling with stuff: mostly books and portraits of Lind and related figures.[102]

Hildebrand also comes across as more isolated than Westervelt, though, like Westervelt, Lind was a huge part of his identity. He was a librarian out of work, as the N-YHS and the New York Typographical Library no longer had a place for him at the time he was interviewed. "I haven't any income except what I make by selling some of my old books and documents to collectors occasionally. But this is my life now, and all I have to interest me," Hildebrand stated.[103] He hoped that someone would buy his collection and make it into a museum, stating that it should belong to New York "because that's the place of Jenny Lind's greatest associations in this country. So I suppose if nobody buys it before, I shall leave it to the city when I die."[104] Many of Hildebrand's papers are in Cheatham's Lind collection at the N-YHS and some are at the New York Public Library, but it's unclear where the bulk of his collection ended up.[105] As the *Musical Courier Extra* writer noted, the Aquarium exhibit did provide a glimpse into the phenomenon of Lind collecting, but it also left out much of the nuance in each individual collector's story and relationship with Lind.

The second insight provided by the *Courier* article relates to how visitors perceived individual objects, particularly those that did not seem important at first glance:

> One of the most interesting exhibits in case number 2, the contents of which are also from the Westervelt collection, is a number of glass bottles with Jenny Lind's head and bust, made in America about the time of her famous tour. Artistically they may not perhaps be of much value, but when it is considered that they were a fad at this period and that only

[102] Photograph in MS materials for "Jenny Lind Anthology," Series XI. Kitty Cheatham's Jenny Lind Collection, Jenny Lind Collection, New-York Historical Society.

[103] McCarroll, "Ex-Librarian."

[104] McCarroll, "Ex-Librarian."

[105] The NYPL materials are found under "Jenny Lind/William Hildebrand 1925" (JPG 12-2).

> those who were prominent in the public eye and on whom the entire attention of the country was centered were commemorated in this fashion, some idea may be had of the deep impression the Lind tour made upon the American public.[106]

Even objects that might seem of little value, especially when compared to a beautiful portrait or Lind's own dress, were actually just as important, the writer suggested. They were physical proof of Lind's significance to hundreds of thousands of Americans in the 1850s.

The memories of the few people still alive who could have – and did – buy Lind-inspired objects were valuable to the national conversation surrounding Lind. Two themes emerge from an article telling the stories of Baltimore residents who had heard her: their ability to afford attending the concert in the first place, and nostalgia.[107] Mrs. Block, "a little old lady, as chipper and spry as any cricket," went to one of Lind's Baltimore concerts with her foster-father, Mr. Thomas Murphy, one of the owners of the *Baltimore American* newspaper. She recalled wearing "corn-colored and silver changeable taffeta silk, cut round the neck" and pearl and topaz jewelry. "I was so delighted with the bird song that I purchased a copy of it," she recalled. Sallie Adams Newman attended one of Lind's Nashville concerts while she was a student at the Columbia Female Institute (Tennessee). Her brother wrote from Louisville that his sister should be sent to the concert, no expense spared. After forty miles by stagecoach, Newman had a hotel dinner, a new outfit, and was seated at the center of the first row of the balcony. She remembered the crowd ("floored, walled, and almost ceilinged by human faces"). The "Echo Song" stuck in Newman's memory: "Only God and her half-divine self knew how she achieved the wonder of those resounding echoes from hill to hill and in their growing more distant became more and more wonderful until the heart was racked and ravished by the superhuman power of

[106] "Lind Centennial Celebration," *Musical Courier Extra*, 16.

[107] The entire paragraph draws from "Many Who Heard Jennie Lind Tell Of Her Visit," *Baltimore Sun*, September 26, 1920, B15.

interpretation." Dr. William F. Pentz's father paid twelve dollars for his ticket; his wife, Betty Pentz, remembered her father paid twenty in gold for standing room, and paying one hundred would have been worth it.

Objects – and the larger Lind celebration(s) – had the power to spark common memories of Lind and her era, and were not just limited to the 1920 Centennial. In 1942, after "examining many items carefully at the Historical society showing," one elderly man declared looking at the Lind objects "'the most nostalgic moment of my life. My mother heard Jenny Lind at Castle Garden.'"[108] Thatcher T.P. Luguer of Bedford Hills, NY had a small bust of Lind that he "valued," likely reminding him of his grandfather, who had published an article in 1914 about Lind's debut concert.[109] One couple gave Westervelt a figurine and the accompanying note was written from its perspective:

> For many years I have been entertaining in the home of Carrie and Arnold Smith. Yes, I have brought laughter to lots of people. But, you know, a change of environment once in a while is good for everyone; and so it is with the greatest of pleasure that I anticipate coming to live with you. – The Nightingale[110]

The Smiths approached their figurine with a sense of playfulness and imagination that reveals yet another example of personal investment in Lind and her legacy. People also reached out to known Lind enthusiasts with objects related to Lind, either for sale or just to share information. Ida Sampson of Steubenville, Ohio wrote to Hempel's secretary (who passed the letter on to Westervelt) about a handkerchief ring reportedly given to her aunt by Lind at a masked ball in New Orleans in 1850, and "on account of its association was one of her most valued

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[108] Rand, "Jenny Lind Collection." The N-YHS holds an entire scrapbook of correspondence to Hempel from (supposed and real) Lind hearers in 1922 ("Letters to Frieda Hempel About Jenny Lind: Oct.-Nov. 1924; X. Scrapbooks, Westervelt Collection, New-York Historical Society).

[109] Thatcher T. P. Luguer to Leonidas Westervelt, June 10, 1942, Folder 6, Series IX. Leonidas Westervelt Correspondence, Jenny Lind Collection, New York Historical Society.

[110] The Nightingale [Carrie & Arnold Smith] to Leonidas Westervelt, July 8, 1941, Folder 6, Series IX. Leonidas Westervelt Correspondence, Jenny Lind Collection, New York Historical Society.

possessions."[111] Sampson apologized that she had no way to authenticate her story, but could supply references. The ring was worth fifty dollars, she believed; her letter has a penciled note from Westervelt that reads: "This ring is now in L.W.'s collection."

The Lind objects were never passive, neutral things: they reflected the desires and enthusiasms of the twentieth-century people interacting with them. While we might characterize the approach of Westervelt and his fellow collectors as positive, at the opening of the object exhibit, one speaker cast Lind, and by extension, the objects, in a much different light. The ceremony took place on Lind's birthday, October 6, before the evening Centennial Concert. At the ceremony, Wilhelm Ekengren (Swedish Minister to the U.S.), Hoving (Centennial Committee), Madison Grant (New York Zoological Society), and Charles H. Townsend (New York Aquarium) all spoke. Unlike much of the press coverage for the Centennial, which focused on Lind's U.S. connections, this event emphasized the U.S.-Swedish connection that Lind facilitated. Hoving read cablegrams to and from the King of Sweden, who sent his best wishes for the Centennial.[112] The Swedish Singing Society Svea, directed by Ole Windingstad, opened and closed the event.[113] Their repertoire was not specified, though one audience member was reported as saying that he had never heard the *Star Spangled Banner* performed so musically and beautifully than when the Swedish group did it, seeming to suggest that Swedish Americans were able to best capture the essence of the U.S. national anthem.

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[111] Ida M. Sampson to Lois Willoughby, January 11, 1927, Folder 1, Series IX. Leonidas Westervelt Correspondence, Jenny Lind Collection, New York Historical Society.

[112] Mellen, "The Jenny Lind Centennial Celebration," 130-133.

[113] Windingstad played the role of Julius Benedict (1804-1885), the German conductor who served as music director for Lind's tour, at the reenactment concert later that day.

Grant, a eugenicist and author of *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), used his platform at the Lind celebration to further espouse his theory of Nordic superiority.[114] His comments were reported in detail in the November 1920 *Zoological Society Bulletin*. "Sweden has never been invaded or conquered ethnically from the outside within the historic period [*sic*]," he noted, "and is the only example in Europe of a nation with a single racial stock, language, religion, and culture." The exhibit's location was fitting not only because of the Castle Garden connection but because it also served to honor the many Swedes whose immigration station it had been, he explained. "Of all the many peoples that America has welcomed to her shores, Mr. Grant said none have contributed in proportion to their numbers so largely as have the Swedes to the racial elements and cultural ideals established by the earliest settlers in America," the reporter stated. Grant then went on to explain (possibly inspiring the *Star Spangled Banner* comment) how Lind proved the musical ability of Scandinavians:

> The singing of Jenny Lind, he said, had also refuted the wide-spread belief that the Nordic race, while highly endowed with all the attributes of intellect, was devoid of the soul of music. Its rivals conceded its pre-eminence in physical strength and beauty and its achievements in the manifestations of genius, but always claimed that music could flourish only in the south and east of Europe. They admitted that intellectual capacity and administrative ability diminished as one traveled south and east from Scotland and Scandinavia. As these failed, the emotional expression of song and dance increased proportionately as the traveler approached Hungary and Poland. To all such ideas the singing of Jenny Lind and the instrumental achievements of Ole Bull were a sufficient answer.[115]

To Grant, Lind fit neatly into a virulently racist understanding of past, present, and future, and while his views were extreme, to an extent they mirrored issues of race that were present during Lind's original U.S. tour. Jennifer Lynn Stoever situates Lind's reception as central to the

[114] Grant has been described as establishing "the most damaging nativist rhetoric of the twentieth century" (Erika K. Jackson, *Scandinavians in Chicago: The Origins of White Privilege in Modern America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019), 161).

[115] Mellen, "The Jenny Lind Centennial Celebration," 133.

development of racialized listening practices – and the sense of "whiteness as *the* national American identity" – in the antebellum United States.[116] As 1850s critics employed terms such as control, purity, and brilliance to describe Lind's voice and body, audiences were able to "imagine *and* experience their own whiteness as material."[117] Similarly, Gustavus Stadler demonstrates how critics including John Sullivan Dwight positioned Lind as a cosmopolitan, white Northerner at the top of a musical hierarchy; African American music, while "nationally representative," was tied to "historical and political struggle," and this association made it less important than the supposedly universal music of Lind.[118] There is no way to know how much of Grant's racist rhetoric lingered during the exhibit, but it is important to recognize that it was there explicitly during the opening event. For some, the objects could spark yearning not just for Lind, but for an imagined America, one that was harmonious, uncomplicated, and above all, white.

Beyond the Aquarium, beyond New York, and beyond 1920, Lind objects continued to serve as an imaginative canvas for collectors and the public. In October 1920, Hildebrand displayed his Lind collection at the Jersey Avenue Free Public Library and "a collection of articles, relative to the centenary of Jenny Lind, the celebrated singer," were on display at the Widener Library treasure room at Harvard.[119] In some instances, objects were not widely accessible depending on where they were exhibited: in spring 1942, a "representative selection" of Westervelt's collection was on display at the Union League club in New York "when

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[116] Jennifer Lynn Stoever, *The Sonic Color Line: Race and the Cultural Politics of Listening* (New York: NYU Press, 2016), 104.

[117] Stoever, *The Sonic Color Line*, 104.

[118] Gustavus Stadler, *Troubling Minds: The Cultural Politics of Genius in the United States, 1840-1890* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 52; 51.

[119] "Jenny Lind Exhibit at the Library," *Jersey City Journal*, October 14, 1920; [No title], *Boston Transcript*, October 8, 1920.

members and their friends were privileged to view an exhibition of members' hobbies in the aristocratic clubhouse on Park Avenue."[120]

The projections of Grant or the insights of the *Musical Courier Extra* writer show just a glimpse of what objects could mean and represent during the 1920s. As I will show in the next section, however, diving deep into single objects provides a wealth of latent historical-musical information.

The Whale and the Nightingale

The New-York Historical Society's June 1942 exhibit featuring some of Westervelt's Lind collection was an orderly affair. Portraits of the Swedish singer, arranged vertically in pairs, covered a stretch of the wall surrounding two of the display cases, one upright and one flat.[121] The upright case, the larger of the two, was organized with an eye toward symmetry: a miniature version of Lind's hope chest flanked by two glass bottles on either side, vases bookending white marble busts. The bottom of the case appeared more chaotic because it featured a number of smaller items: snuff boxes, trivets, figurines, a wastepaper basket. In the center left, paired with an open fan across the case, lay two ceramic pipes and two pieces of scrimshaw. The smaller of these items, the whale tooth described at the opening of this chapter, does not stand out at first glance. Like everything else in the case, it silently attested to Lind's legacy by serving as part of a celebratory, critical mass of "Lind things" – the sheer number of objects produced in her name and/or image spoke plainly to her fame.

[120] Rand, "Jenny Lind Collection."

[121] This view is from an image included in Westervelt, "Adventuring," with a copy in the N-YHS Archives: Folder 8, Box 5, New-York Historical Society Pictorial Archive (NYHS-RG 5). A shot of the same exhibit taken from another angle is in Rand, "Jenny Lind Collection."

Looked at another way, however, this tooth sticks out: with its rough, handmade qualities and imperfect natural material, it seems to be a poor specimen of Lind memorabilia compared to the elegant glass bottles and candelabras. As this section demonstrates, there is much to be gained by lingering after the double-take the tooth demands. I draw on the *Tangible Things* approach of historians Laurel Ulrich, Sarah Carter, Ivan Gaskell, and Sarah Schechner, whose work models an engagement with history through things. In their 2015 book, these authors detail a 2011 exhibit of collections at Harvard University where the organization of materials – and how this organization led to seeing objects and history in new ways – was a central theme. At this exhibit, the objects in cases labeled "things in place" were organized according to traditional categories such as manuscripts or natural history, while "things out of place" featured so-called guest objects inserted into preexisting displays of art or scientific instruments around campus. "When boundary disruption occurs in a museum display, it can prompt viewers to reconsider the character of the interloper and the category in which it was placed," they write.[122]

In considering the tooth as "out of place," illuminating questions emerge, as does the idea that Lind objects are capable of doing more historical work than Westervelt meant them to. His stated goal in relation to Lind was "to *recreate* [*sic*] the intimate characteristics, picturesque achievements and charming personality of the Swedish Nightingale, by assiduously and systematically assembling pictures, newspaper clippings, magazine articles, medals, books, autograph letters, programmes, personal souvenirs, in fact anything and everything relating to her, or to the colorful time in which she lived."[123] Through his collection, Westervelt strove to capture who Lind *was*, to know her without ever having met her. But what, if anything, could a

[122] Ulrich et al., *Tangible Things*, 115. Sarah Anne Carter recommends Susan Pearce's appendix, "Models for Object Study," in Pearce's book *Museums, Objects, Collections: A Cultural Study* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993).

[123] Westervelt, "My Hobby," 15.

passerby learn about a famous soprano by looking at a hand-carved, blemished whale's tooth? And, for that matter, what can a musicologist learn by looking at such an object? For observers of any era, the tooth points to Lind's fan base more than it does to the soprano herself. With a little prodding, however, musicologists can move beyond seeing the scrimshaw as a curious piece of memorabilia to understand it as crucial historical evidence, illuminating corners of reception history yet untouched.

Other than bearing the soprano's image, this object is quite unlike anything else in the case, most noticeably for its material, the tooth of a marine mammal instead of paper, glass, porcelain, or metal. During the 1850s when the scrimshaw was created, the whaling industry in the United States had been growing for over a century. Both baleen whales and toothed whales were hunted for the oil derived from their blubber, but sperm whales were particularly valuable due to the presence of a waxy substance called spermaceti, located in the head cavity and used primarily to make candles. During the first half of the nineteenth century, wealthy individuals purchased whale products, as did cities for lighthouse beacons and streetlamps. By the 1850s, whale oil was primarily used to lubricate machines in cotton and woolen mills.[124]

After the sweaty, smelly, and dangerous work of processing a whale carcass, whalemen might have weeks before sighting the next whale. Stuart Frank, senior curator at the New Bedford Whaling Museum, states that scrimshaw allowed whalers to "while away their leisure hours at sea," and were "mostly intended as mementos of the voyage and especially as gifts for loved ones at home."[125] Lind scrimshaw, of which this is just one example, constitutes a particularly American response to the soprano; Frank explains that sperm whaling was "an

[124] Lance E. Davis, Robert E. Gallman, and Karin Gleiter, *In Pursuit of Leviathan: Technology, Institutions, Productivity, and Profits in American Whaling, 1816-1906* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 344.

[125] Frank, *Ingenious Contrivances*, 3.

indigenously American phenomenon" and "scrimshaw…[became] an integral component of the distinctive whaling culture that resulted."[126] To etch an image, a whaleman would use a knife or sailmaker's needle, often starting by pricking holes in an outline of the intended shape. This could be done freehand or based on an image in a magazine. Then the whaleman would either engrave the image by connecting the dots with his blade, or the image would be stippled, with tiny dots filling out the picture. The scrimshander would smear lampblack over the image and wipe it off before it hardened, leaving the holes or grooves filled in.

Being handmade sets the tooth apart from many of the other Lind objects produced during the mid-nineteenth century. Rebeccah Bechtold has shown how for women in the 1850s, the target audience for mass-produced Lind objects, "souvenirs became a critical component of the consumer's self." [127] By interacting with Lind things, consumers could participate in her celebrity. Handmade objects, while also filling this role, can be seen as having an additional layer of significance because of the time and care invested in their creation. There are a few other handmade items in the 1942 exhibit case, including a wastepaper basket lined with Lind sheet music and a handmade box lined with Lind-print paper. Whoever made these items interacted with Lind in a different way, however: they reused her likeness as depicted elsewhere instead of actively fashioning an image of Lind themselves. Because the scrimshawed images are one-of-a-kind, done by hand and painstakingly at that, they show a level of dedication to and interest in Lind – whether her persona, or voice, or celebrity – that is not as obviously present in much of the mass-produced paraphernalia. They show evidence of someone interacting with and imagining Lind in a way that a candelabra cannot.

[126] Frank, *Ingenious Contrivances*, 9.

[127] Bechtold, "She Sings," 501.

The tooth serves as evidence of the extraordinary circulation of Lind's image during the height of her fame, not only by land, but by sea.[128] For several decades beginning in the 1830s, magazines including *Godey's Lady's Book* (by far the most popular), *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, *Graham's*, *Petersons*, and *Scribners'* circulated among whaling ships, with fashion plates from these magazines providing prime material for scrimshaw projects.[129] To transfer an image, the scrimshander would trace or cut out the printed original and place it directly on the bone, perhaps getting it wet to allow it to stick, and then begin to outline it. In general, whalemen were a bit more educated than merchant marine sailors; according to Frank, "newspapers, books, magazines, novels, religious tracts, and anything readable were at a premium on shipboard, not only among the officers but equally or perhaps even more so among the crew."[130]

As George Biddlecombe has demonstrated, there were two main Lind portraits that formed the basis of many other illustrations during her lifetime: a painting by Eduard Magnus from 1846, and a lithography after a portrait by Conrad L'Allemand from 1847.[131] Both show a

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[128] Lind's connection to nautical life was not limited to scrimshaw: many ships were named for her, including the clipper ship *Nightingale* with Lind as the figurehead. What is believed to be the original figurehead, which Karl-Eric Svärdskog discovered in a Swedish barn in 1994, sold at Sotheby's in 2008 for $121,000. See "Historic, Rare and Important Carved and Painted Pine Ship's Figurehead: The Jenny Lind, Attributed to John Mason, Boston, circa 1851," http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2008/important-americana-n08400/lot.197.html; Karl-Eric Svärdskog , *Jenny Lind and the Clipper Nightingale Figurehead* (Portsmouth, NH: Portsmouth Marine Society, 2001); Wendy Moonan, "The Auction Block is the Next Stop for a Well-Traveled Lady," *New York Times*, January 4, 2008, E39. See also, for example, Edward W. Sloan, "The Nightingale and the Steamship: Jenny Lind and the Collins Liner *Atlantic*," *American Neptune: A Quarterly Journal of Maritime History* 51, no. 3 (Summer, 1991).

[129] Frank, *Ingenious Contrivances*, 30. Frank writes that whalemen were generally well-educated: "There was on Nantucket an unofficial mandate that any would-be whaleman finish his schooling first, as (regardless of his merits as a yeoman mariner) he could not hope to advance to captain or merchant unless he could read, write, and calculate...Reading materials were bartered freely and changed hands often, with some of them furnishing pictures that could be transferred directly onto whale ivory and bone" (106).

[130] Frank, *Ingenious Contrivances*, 106.

[131] George Biddlecombe, "Jenny Lind, Illustration, Song, and the Relationship Between Prima Donna and Public," *The Idea of Art Music in a Commercial World, 1800-1930*, ed. Christina Bashford and Roberta Montemorra Marvin (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2016), 93. See also Joanna Elizabeth Penick, "Images of Jenny Lind and the Construction of Identity for the Nineteenth-Century Female Performer," (master's thesis, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2006).

youthful Lind with her signature off-the-shoulder gown and hair drawn up over her ears. One scrimshaw example at the New Bedford Whaling Museum is clearly modeled after the Magnus from 1846: the maker, a John Straton, may have copied the image from a magazine or even sheet music.[132] His is a rather straightforward copy, but it's remarkable for having been done in color, which took more time and was more complicated than just using black ink. At the bottom edge he even decided to add a blue and red pattern.

The tooth in question here is not based on one of these two famous portraits: instead, it was modeled after the lithography by E. Brown Jr. featured on the cover of the sheet music "Greeting to America" (Figure 3.2). Lind premiered this contest-winning song at her first New York concert on September 11, 1850. The scrimshander depicted her multilayered skirt and even copied her feet, though the somewhat crude copy suggests that her carver may have been inexperienced. A particularly fascinating detail is that the scrimshander put Lind on a stage. Did he hear her in Boston or Providence before sailing off to the Pacific? Did his wife or mother or sister attend a Lind concert, or hope to but was not able to afford it? And if he never heard her sing, what about her voice? How important was it, and did he imagine what it sounded like as he carved?

[132] I have located five Lind-related scrimshaw pieces so far: three in the Westervelt collection (1945.270, 1945.215, 1945.216) and two at the New Bedford Whaling Museum (2001.100.1471 and 2001.100.1547). The New Bedford Whaling Museum also holds a carved tooth depicting Italian soprano Marietta Piccolomini (1834-1899), who toured the U.S. in *La Traviata* 1858-1859 (catalog number 00.195.36), and a tooth depicting the Steyermark Musical Company (catalog number 1932.3.3).

Figure 3.2. The scrimshaw compared to the E. Brown Jr. lithograph on the cover of "Jenny Lind's Greeting to America," with text by Bayard Taylor and music by Julius Benedict. Taylor, a poet and author, submitted the winning entry to Barnum's contest for an ode which Benedict, a London-based conductor and composer and Lind's music director on tour, would set to music. Scrimshaw depicting Jenny Lind (1820-1887), ca. 1850, Ivory and ink, The Jenny Lind Collection of Leonidas Westervelt, 1945.215, New-York Historical Society.
Sheet music published by Firth, Pond & Co., 1850.

Like the scrimshander, Westervelt too imagined Lind, but it seems unlikely that he imagined the man who put the singer on this tooth. As an individual item, this jagged and imperfect tooth exposes a crack in Westervelt's otherwise pristine and immaculate façade of Lind objects. Together in a glass case, the elegance and orderliness of the other objects work together to invoke admiration for the singer, almost making them seem too perfect: it can be difficult to imagine they were once bought and treasured and kept in individuals' homes. The tooth, not despite, but because of the fact that it is dirty and disproportionate and handmade,

signals that real people interacted with each of these objects as they stood in for or reminded their onlookers of Lind.

Conclusion

Exhibits were not the only way Westervelt employed and showed off his Lind collection. For Edward Wagenknecht's 1931 biography of Lind, Westervelt provided the illustrations: fourteen images of Lind plus a copy of a ticket for an 1851 concert and a copy of a letter between Barnum and Lind.[133] It is telling that his contributions were two-dimensional depictions of Lind, directly related to the singer and showing her during various points of her life, instead of objects, which perhaps were not deemed useful for illustrating a book. Westervelt also participated in a plan to make a movie out of Lind's life story; riding on the success of the Centennial, an announcement in the *New York Herald* proclaimed the coming of "a photodramatic production" in which "personal souvenirs, costumes and autograph letters from Mr. Westervelt's Jenny Lind collection will be used as properties."[134] The project never came to fruition, however, as Westervelt explained decades later: "this 'Corporation' (to put 'Lind' in the Films) died a quick death."[135]

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[133] Wagenknecht, *Jenny Lind*.

[134] "Jenny Lind's Life in Film," *New York Herald*, October 8, 1920. Even pamphlets outlining the project and citing statistics for "enormous profits in motion pictures" (looking to *Birth of a Nation* as a particular success) could not raise enough interest. "Valuable Information Showing the Great Earning Possibilities of the Motion Picture Industry" and "Jenny Lind: The Swedish Nightingale," Jenny Lind Photoplay Corporation. Folder 1, Box 3. Collection VIII. Miscellaneous Materials, Jenny Lind Collection, New-York Historical Society. Westervelt faced similar lukewarm interest when he tried to tell Lind's story on the radio during the early 1940s: see Folder 5, Box 237, New-York Historical Society General Correspondence (NYHS-RG 2), The New-York Historical Society. Westervelt reportedly completed a biography of Lind "in collaboration with O. K. Armstrong of Springfield, MO" but it does not seem to have been published ("World's Finest," *Long Island Star-Journal*).

[135] Leonidas Westervelt to Mr. Vail, September 9, 1945, Folder 1, Box 3, Collection VIII. Miscellaneous Materials, Jenny Lind Collection, New-York Historical Society. MGM produced a film starring Grace Moore and very loosely based on Lind's U.S. tour, *A Lady's Morals*, in 1931. See H. David Strauss, "'A Lady's Morals' Review," *Billboard* (November 15, 1930), 10.

In whatever context, objects were present where Lind's voice was not; they acted not a replacement, but an alternative way to experience her presence. At the same time, as I have shown, they were present but not always interrogated. A *New York Times* announcement for a 1929 exhibit of Westervelt's collection at the N-YHS is striking because it is a litany of objects, without context or commentary. One particularly overwhelming paragraph reads:

> In another case there are four busts of Jenny Lind made of Haviland china; five figurines of Staffordshire ware, one of bisque, and a beautiful plaster medallion; also plates, cups and sauces, pitchers and mugs, all with her portrait or inscribed as Jenny Lind china. There are nine glass-blown bottles of various New York manufactures; a pair of bronze candlesticks depicting the singer in the role of Fiorilla in the opera "Turco in Italia": flower vases, pipes, flatiron stands, snuffboxes, a watch, dance program and a piece of scrimshaw with her likeness, all testify to her popularity. A model of her hope chest and a doll which she dressed for a little New York girl during her visit in 1850 also appear in the collection.[136]

There may have been placards and pamphlets available at the exhibit itself, but this long list of Lind things points to a hands-off attitude common to the collection. Without any interpretive context, the significance of the tooth, piano, snuffers, and other objects was left up to the viewer.

That the objects were supposed to speak for themselves was not a problem for Westervelt. The act of collecting – forty years of piecing together someone else's life – was enough to achieve his goal of accessing Lind's characteristics, personality, and achievements.[137] An object-based history helped him feel closer to a soprano whom he had never heard sing. In a performance of his wealth and comfortable social standing, all the objects served the same, ultimate purpose: drawing him nearer to Lind and demonstrating his cultural capital. "As the

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[136] "Jenny Lind Relics are Exhibited Here*," New York Times*, June 9, 1929.

[137] Westervelt's writings on Lind include: "The Jenny Lind Medals and Tokens," *Numismatic Notes and Monographs*, no. 5 (1921): 1-25; "On the Trail of Jenny Lind," *Musical Courier* (June 12, 1924): 6-7, 47; "My Hobby – Jenny Lind," *Hobbies* (December, 1932): 14-18; "The Jenny Lind Prize Song," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin* 22, no. 2 (April, 1938): 39-59; "Adventuring with Jenny Lind," *New-York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin* 26, no. 4 (October, 1942): 80-94; and a short biography of Lind in the souvenir program for the 1945 N-YHS Lind event.

years slipped by and the collection grew, I felt I really *knew* Jenny Lind," he wrote. "From a hobby standpoint, she became my friend. Together we have experienced many interesting and even thrilling adventures."[138] Passersby probably did not attain the same level of intimacy with Lind since they had not invested forty years in trying to understand her, but they could see how even decades after her death, she still had the power to captivate. They also perceived how a touring Swedish singer had become part of their own country's musical heritage

Upon the final payment for the collection, N-YHS president Zabriskie wrote to Westervelt that the Society was pleased to "have a clear title to this remarkable collection which will always be a tribute to your scholarly collecting and a source of satisfaction to scholars and visiting public alike."[139] On two occasions since, in 1977 and 2000, the N-YHS has exhibited the collection, though interaction and imagination with the objects is predicated on museum admission, at the very least. And even if the "average man's imagination" may not be drawn to musical celebrities of the past as it once was, it is important that Zabriskie's other target group, scholars, turn their attention to the collection and the power of musical objects more broadly. For scholars and public alike, the value of objects lies, at its core, in the questions that arise from imagining with eyes and fingers, as well as ears.

[138] Westervelt, "Adventuring with Jenny Lind," 87.

[139] George Zabriskie to Leonidas Westervelt, February 20, 1948.

Chapter 4
An Object Lesson in Racial Achievement: Maud Cuney-Hare's Exhibits of African American Music History

During October 1922, the Boston Public Library (BPL) hosted an exhibit of materials illustrating past and present-day successes of African Americans and other prominent figures of African descent. This "Exhibition of Negro Achievement," organized by African American librarian George W. Forbes and African American musician Maud Cuney-Hare, brought together a wide range of materials: sculptures and sheet music, statistical charts and books, all demonstrating that their creators were productive, inventive, and talented citizens of the world. In the *Boston Globe*, critic A. J. Philpott began his detailed review with glowing praise of both the exhibit and the people it celebrated:

> A very remarkable exhibition which shows what has been achieved by the colored race in the United States since the Civil War, has been arranged in the large hall on the third floor of the Public Library building on Copley [Square]. It is a vitally interesting object lesson for the white race fully as much as the colored race, for it is doubtful if any race, out of slavery, could show any such record as these people can in a little more than 50 years.[1]

Even with a wide variety of materials on display, he noted, this was only a small showing of the extraordinary progress made by African Americans in recent decades.

The exhibit which Philpott so admired was one of several exhibits of historical and contemporary objects that Cuney-Hare organized during the 1920s and 1930s; these exhibits constituted one facet of a career dedicated to promoting the rights and talents of African Americans through the arts.[2] By the time of the BPL exhibition, Cuney-Hare was already known nationally in both white and African American musical circles. A classically-trained pianist, she

[1] [A. J. Philpott], "Shows Advance of the Colored Race," *Boston Daily Globe*, October 7, 1922, 4.

[2] Cuney-Hare hyphenated her surname infrequently during the 1920s but did so more consistently during the 1930s. I use this version of her name here while retaining instances of the non-hyphenated form that appear in correspondence and news articles.

toured the United States giving lecture-recitals with baritone William H. Richardson; she also edited a column of music and arts news in the NAACP journal *The Crisis* for several years and maintained a close friendship with its editor, W. E. B. Du Bois. She contributed articles to leading musical publications including *Musical America* and the *Musical Quarterly* on topics ranging from Creole folk song to the pedagogy of Franz Liszt. A few years after the BPL exhibit, Cuney-Hare finished the manuscript for her sweeping history of African and African American music, titled *Negro Musicians and Their Music* (hereafter *NMM*). She struggled for years with finding an interested publisher, and the book was not published for another twelve years, a few months after her death in February 1936.[3] This volume, for which Cuney-Hare is best remembered, explores the musical accomplishments of people of African descent, primarily in the Americas. It opens with several chapters dedicated to characteristics of music in African traditions and ends with twentieth-century musicians whom Cuney-Hare knew personally. In her introduction to the 1996 edition of *NMM*, Josephine Harreld Love calls Cuney-Hare's book "valuable for meticulous, sensitive scholarship, discernment, and devotion."[4]

Because of the book's late publication, however, Cuney-Hare was better known during her lifetime for the other ways in which she understood and publicized African American music history. Cuney-Hare developed exhibits, concerts, lectures, articles, and educational programs as she was researching and revising her book, and to varying degrees these outlets shaped and stood in for *NMM* in the years before its publication. In short, her historical proselytism was multi-

[3] In 1935, Cuney-Hare announced that she would offer a national correspondence course designed for social clubs and school curriculums that would give "a complete survey of the contribution of colored musicians to the art of music" ("National Music School Formed by Woman," *Washington Tribune*, April 6, 1935, 14). The course was especially aimed at "those who live in distant parts" and anyone interested in studying African American music history, as Cuney-Hare's volume had not yet been published and this material was not found "in any existing book on musical appreciation" ("Maud Cuney Hare Develops Library for Music Research," *New Journal and Guide* [Norfolk, VA], April 6, 1935, 4).

[4] Josephine Harreld Love, introduction to *Negro Musicians and Their Music*, by Maud Cuney Hare (New York: G.K. Hall, 1996), xv.

faceted and conceived holistically. Her exhibits are absent from all major reference sources that include her and the small amount of Cuney-Hare scholarship mentions but does not explore her exhibits in detail.[5] This lack of attention obscures the fact that these exhibits were extraordinarily popular during the 1920s, so much so that Cuney-Hare received at least one unsolicited request from an organization hoping to host the next display of her collection. In a 1924 letter to Du Bois, she wrote "…I have been asked to place my collection of data referring to Afro-American Music (the "Music Exhibit" which I arranged for the Boston and New Haven Public Libraries) at Wellesley College. Isn't that rather nice?"[6]

Reconsidering Cuney-Hare's career in this light raises a number of questions: How exactly did objects factor into her approach to African American music history? What can they tell us about her historical message and its reception? How can we reassess her historiographical contribution with her exhibit work in mind? In what follows, I address these questions first by contextualizing Cuney-Hare in the erudite world of Boston's black upper class and exploring how issues of race, music, and history came together in her performances with Richardson. I then turn to her exhibits, drawing on correspondence and press materials to explore the significance of these events for both black and white audiences. To demonstrate how objects supported Cuney-Hare's message of racial achievement on their own as well as collectively, I next home in on a portrait of early 19th-century violinist George Bridgetower, which Cuney-Hare included in many

[5] These include entries on Cuney-Hare in Grove Music Online and the Oxford African American Studies Center (*The Concise Oxford Companion to African American Literature; Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience; African American National Biography)*. Love, Roses, and Hales all acknowledge Cuney-Hare's exhibit work (Love, introduction; Lorraine Elena Roses, *Black Bostonians and the Politics of Culture 1920-1940* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2017); Douglas Hales, *A Southern Family in Black & White: the Cuneys of Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003).

[6] Maud Cuney-Hare to W. E. B. Du Bois, March 30, 1924. W. E. B. Du Bois Papers (MS 312). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries. (hereafter cited as Du Bois Papers).

of her displays. I close by proposing a return to *Negro Musicians and Their Music*, exploring it with Cuney-Hare's exhibits in mind.

In order to shift the focus on Cuney-Hare's accomplishments so that her legacy as a historian more fully includes her display work, it is beneficial to return to a phrase from Philpott's insightful review, that the BPL exhibit was "a vitally interesting object lesson" for both races. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, "object lesson" can either refer to a lesson in which instruction is based on a material object (chiefly *historical*), or, "*figurative* a striking practical example of a principle or ideal."[7] Cuney-Hare's exhibit qualifies as an object lesson in both senses of the phrase: not only did the entirety of the display serve as an example of African American progress and accomplishment, individual objects each played a part in teaching history to attendees. As historian Sarah Anne Carter has shown, object lessons were a widely-used pedagogical method popular across the United States following the Civil War; students would study an object to develop their powers of observation, perception, organizing and categorizing information, and reasoning.[8] Interrogation of a needle might lead students to consider the people and processes involved in creating that needle, for example. By the early twentieth century, object lessons were being replaced by other pedagogical models, but the concept remained in use both in sales and more broadly as a metaphor, a way to get from something concrete to something abstract. With Cuney-Hare's exhibits, that meant starting with a collection of objects and from there considering issues of music and race in the United States.

Cuney-Hare's historical work, which took place during the 1920s, coincided with the Harlem Renaissance. This intellectual and artistic movement, centered in New York City's

[7] *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "object, *n*.," March 2020, OED Online.

[8] Sarah Anne Carter, *Object Lessons: How Nineteenth-Century Americans Learned to Make Sense of the Material World* (New York: Oxford, 2018).

African American community but stretching across the country, encompassed an outpouring of art, literature, and music that celebrated the creative powers of African Americans.[9] Cuney-Hare was one of a number of individuals interested in collecting and history as a method of racial uplift; notably, she was a woman participating in the overwhelmingly male world of black intellectuals during this era. L.S. Alexander Gumby (1885-1961) documented black history through scrapbooks, which he displayed in his Harlem loft.[10] Arthur Schomburg (1874-1938), an Afro-Puerto Rican Harlemite, worked on Wall Street for several decades, but his "real work," as librarian Betty Kaplan Gubert has argued, "was wherever he found others equally impassioned to prove that black people did indeed have an international history of accomplishment that stretched past slavery days to Africa."[11] Schomburg is known for his vast collection of books and manuscripts related to African American history, which the New York Public Library purchased in 1926.[12] In his 1925 essay "The Negro Digs Up His Past," Schomburg noted in the African American community at the time of his writing "the definite desire and determination to have a history, well documented, widely known at least within race circles, and administered as a

[9] See, for example, George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1995); Paul Allen Anderson, *Deep River: Music and Memory in Harlem Renaissance Thought* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance*, updated ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Christopher Allen Varlack, ed., *Harlem Renaissance* (Ipswich, MA: Salem Press, 2015).

[10]See Kristin Gilger, "Otherwise Lost or Forgotten: Collecting Black History in L. S. Alexander Gumby's 'Negroana' Scrapbooks," *African American Review* 48, nos. 1-2 (Spring/Summer 2015): 111-126; Ellen Gruber Garvey, *Writing with Scissors: American Scrapbooks from the Civil War to the Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[11] Oxford African American Studies Center, s.v. "Schomburg, Arthur Alfonso," by Betty Kaplan Gubert, May 31, 2013, https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780195301731.013.34697.

[12] These materials became part of the Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints housed at Harlem's 135th Street branch of the New York Public Library (NYPL). The collection became one of the NYPL research libraries in 1972, and it was renamed the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. "About the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture," New York Public Library, https://www.nypl.org/about/locations/schomburg.

stimulating and inspiring tradition for the coming generations."[13] An excerpt of this essay is particularly noteworthy in terms of African American collectors and history:

> Not long ago, the Public Library of Harlem housed a special exhibition of books, pamphlets, prints and old engravings, that simply said, to skeptic and believer alike, to scholar and school-child, to proud black and astonished white, "Here is the evidence." Assembled from the rapidly growing collections of the leading Negro book-collectors and research societies, there were in these cases, materials not only for the first true writing of Negro history, but for the rewriting of many important paragraphs of our common American history.[14]

This simple pronouncement, "Here is the evidence," mirrors what Cuney-Hare implicitly said with her own exhibit. Here was the evidence that African Americans had a rich musical heritage. Here was the evidence that their history mattered.

Along with Alain Locke, the so-called dean of the Harlem Renaissance (who published *The Negro and His Music* the same year as *NMM*) Cuney-Hare had to negotiate "promoting black achievement and carefully discouraging backlashes from white society" in her musical work.[15] Guthrie P. Ramsey Jr. has noted that this went hand-in-hand with her less-than-enthusiastic views toward jazz and other popular styles.[16] Indeed, Cuney-Hare believed that art music should be held in high regard and jazz was conditionally acceptable, if it did not involve "suggestiveness and vulgar humour of the lyrics, the crash and blatancy of the instruments, and the later distortions and physical gyrations by the performers."[17] This was a highbrow

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[13] Arthur A. Schomburg, "The Negro Digs Up His Past," in *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, ed. Alain Locke (New York: Albert and Charles Boni, 1925), 231.

[14] Schomberg, "The Negro Digs Up His Past," 232.

[15] Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr., "Cosmopolitan or Provincial?: Ideology in Early Black Music Historiography, 1867-1940," *Black Music Research Journal* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1996), 26. In Ramsey's view, Cuney-Hare was invested in "the New Negro rhetoric: racial equality, black cultural nationalism, and American musical nationalism based on black musical idioms" (26).

[16] Ramsey, "Cosmopolitan," 26-28.

[17] Maud Cuney-Hare, *Negro Musicians and Their Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974), 145.

perspective shared by a number of Harlem Renaissance leaders.[18] In the preface to *NMM*, Cuney-Hare expresses hope that African American composers would continue trends toward "the development of an American symphonic, operatic, and ballet school" based on what Ramsey has called "black musical idioms."[19] Cuney-Hare shared another facet of her somewhat conservative approach to music history at a lecture at the Boston Literary and Historical Society, which a news report summarized:

> The present overwhelming tendency to glorify the folkgift at the expense of the composer's artistic production should be counteracted by attention to the aspirations [and] achievements of the gifted and trained individual colored musicians as well as that of the folk. The emphasis on the song of the people, valuable as it is, has created an unfamiliarity of the fact that the Negro race has produced men and women of musical genius who have contributed to music as an art, from an early historic period.[20]

This stance apparently led to "interesting discussion" during the question and answer period, generally in favor of her view.[21]

Cuney-Hare's preference for art music aligned her work with the first major history of black musicians in the United States, written by James Monroe Trotter almost sixty years previously. His *Music and Some Highly Musical People* was published by Lee & Shepard in Boston in 1878; as Eileen Southern has noted, there were other short histories published after Trotter's and before Cuney-Hare's, and the good quantity of writing on various topics that appeared in a handful of small black music journals deserves further study.[22] Cuney-Hare's *NMM*, however, as Ramsey has argued, began "a formal historiographical tradition in black

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[18] See Lawrence Schenbeck, *Racial Uplift and American Music, 1878-1943* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2012).

[19] Cuney-Hare, *NMM*, vi; Ramsey, "Cosmopolitan," 25.

[20] "National Music School."

[21] "Maud Cuney Hare Heard in Boston Lecture Recital," *Afro-American* [Baltimore], March 30, 1935, 9.

[22] James Munroe Trotter, *Music and Some Highly Musical People* (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1881); Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 3rd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 451-452.

music."[23] Her volume both built off of and expanded on Trotter's work.[24] He acquired much of his information directly from the musicians about whom he wrote.[25] While remaining the expert, Trotter also acknowledged the collaborative nature of his project, going so far as to ask readers to "send him such names as have been here left out, together with all facts that may additionally illustrate the subject treated in these pages" to be included in future editions.[26] Cuney-Hare's volume, too, is enriched with anecdotes and facts she learned firsthand from musicians across the country.

In his overview of Trotter's life and work, musicologist Robert Stevenson highlights Trotter's work as remarkable and groundbreaking for an author of any race:

> No previous historian had transcended New England, no previous author had taken account of both sacred and secular outpourings, no previous chronicler had documented his running narrative with a 152-page musical appendix containing thirteen vocal and instrumental selections (mostly complete) by twelve different composers.[27]

Ramsey interprets Trotter's two-part organizational scheme as reflecting his message on race and music: he strove both to express the value of Western art music (which begins the volume) and to highlight the musical achievements of African Americans (especially those engaged in Western classical music).[28] In his preface, Trotter writes that in creating a specifically African

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[23] Ramsey, "Cosmopolitan," 25.

[24] Trotter was the son of a slave owner and a slave named Leticia; he studied music in Ohio, served in the Civil War, and was living in Boston during the time he wrote *Music* (Grove Music Online, s.v. "Trotter, James Munroe," by Robert Stevenson, published online 2001, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.28467).

[25] Jennifer DeLapp, "An Index to James M. Trotter's 'Music and Some Highly Musical People,'" *Black Music Research Journal* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 109.

[26] Trotter, *Music*, 286.

[27] Robert Stevenson, "America's First Black Music Historian," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 26, no. 3 (Autumn 1973), 385. Stevenson expresses frustration here that Cuney-Hare relied heavily on Trotter's work for the early part of her book, yet did not credit him.

[28] Trotter's book is organized in two parts. The first begins with an overview of music in the abstract, followed by fifteen entries on "public performers" including Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, the Hyers sisters, Thomas Greene

American music history, he does not mean to be "clannish" without reason: instead, he wants to counter "erroneous and unfavorable estimates of the art-capabilities of the colored race," establish respect between blacks and whites, inspire African Americans, and to celebrate music.[29]

Cuney-Hare's work, while aligned with these premises, features notable differences: the three chapters devoted to Africa, situated first, which widen the scope of her historical inquiry, two appendices ("African Musical Instruments" and "Negro Folk Songs"), and an extensive bibliography. Finally, the titles of the two works are reflective of their times and their authors. Trotter's *Music and Some Highly Musical People*, without its subtitles, sets Western art music on a pedestal, followed by the people devoted to it. The title both sidesteps and surpasses the issue of race. Cuney-Hare's *Negro Musicians and Their Music*, in contrast, is both explicit about the racial side of its contents, and flips the hierarchy: first come the musicians, then the music. Crucially, it is *their* music, which they have created or composed or (re)claimed or interpreted themselves. In the years before the book's publication, however, Cuney-Hare turned to objects as a way to engage students, music lovers, and community leaders with questions at the intersections of racial progress, music, and history. Cuney-Hare's exhibits not only served as an object lesson in African American progress, but in her own belief in African American music history as a fascinating, rich, and worthy topic of study.

Bethune, the Georgia Minstrels, and the Fisk Jubilee Singers. The second section features "other remarkable musicians," some receiving several paragraphs' attention and others a few sentences, grouped by their home town. These include musicians from singer Sarah Sedgewick Bowers of Philadelphia (known as the "Colored Nightingale" in the 1850s) to George H.W. Stewart, a pianist from Helena, Arkansas (310, 330).

[29] Trotter, *Music*, 4.

An African American Musician in Boston

Cuney-Hare was well-positioned to spend her life in intellectual circles largely because she was born into the African American elite. Her parents, Adelina Dowdie Cuney (1856-1895) and Norris Wright Cuney (1846-1898), were both the children of slaveholder fathers and enslaved mothers in Texas; her father became a prominent Texas politician and African American community leader.[30] Historian Willard Gatewood has noted that many members of the black upper class at the turn of the twentieth century were "fair-complexioned offspring of white masters and mulatto slaves…[who] benefited directly from their white parentage by gaining access to education, wealth, or opportunities unavailable to other slaves or even to free blacks."[31] The children of these individuals, like Cuney-Hare, were often born into privileged positions as a result. Wright Cuney's status meant that Cuney-Hare and her brother "received a cultural education that few black or even white children could hope for" at the time.[32] "Our home was a music-loving one," Cuney-Hare wrote in a biography of her father. "Mother played the piano and sang. Father's appreciation was not that of the ultra-modern school. He liked the old songs of Ireland, martial strains and melodies from the old Italian operas."[33]

As Cuney family biographer Douglas Hales has noted, Cuney-Hare spent her adult life fighting for equality and rights for African Americans, despite the fact that she could have passed as white. Gatewood writes that at the turn of the century, mixed-race, light-complexioned African Americans were generally willing participants in leveraging their socio-economic

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[30] Love, introduction, xix. Sometimes spelled "Dowdy."

[31] Willard B. Gatewood, *Aristocrats of Color: The Black Elite, 1880-1920* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 19.

[32] Hales, *Southern Family*, 99.

[33] Maud Cuney Hare, *Norris Wright Cuney: A Tribune of the Black People* (New York: Crisis Publishing Company, 1913), 82.

advantages to promote racial uplift, though "their day-to-day lives continued to be marked by social distance and exclusiveness."[34] Indeed, Cuney-Hare was able to attend Boston's New England Conservatory as a piano student beginning in the fall of 1890 as one of two African American students there at the time.[35] This was her first extended stay in the city which would become home for much of her adult life. While here, however, white students complained about sharing a dormitory with students of color. Members of the local African American community rallied in support, and Cuney-Hare refused to relocate.[36]

Boston had developed a reputation as an abolitionist stronghold during the nineteenth century, though slavery had not been outlawed in Massachusetts until 1783 and several founding families, including the Boylstons, Faneuils, Mathers, and Winthrops, were slaveholders.[37] In the decades after the Civil War, much of the interracial cooperation fostered by the antislavery fight began to fade.[38] Nevertheless, in *Music and Some Highly Musical People* Cuney-Hare's predecessor Trotter depicted Boston as almost a musical utopia: it was "the acknowledged great art centre" of the United States, a city where students of all races were welcomed in music schools and a love of music "pervade[d] all classes."[39] There would be more African American musicians elsewhere, he explained, if other cities provided as much opportunity and communal love of music as Boston.

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[34] Gatewood, *Aristocrats*, 29.

[35] The other student was Florida L. Des Verney of Georgia. See Hales, *Southern Family*, 100.

[36] See Hales, *Southern Family*, 99-101; Cuney-Hare, *Norris Wright Cuney*, 131-134.

[37] Adelaide M. Cromwell, *The Other Brahmins: Boston's Black Upper Class, 1750-1950* (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 1994), 27, 25.

[38] Cromwell, *Other Brahmins*, 63.

[39] Trotter, *Music*, 287.

In 1900, Boston's African American elite, who valued "family, education, tradition, and respectability," numbered around two hundred and thirty persons, or approximately two percent of the black population, which was itself approximately two percent of the city's total population.[40] The "old families" who made up Boston's black community before the Civil War included the Baldwins and Ruffins, and the "new families" included the Grimkés and Trotters. Members of these elite clans often had white neighbors and white servants and attended Boston Symphony concerts and public lectures at Harvard.[41] According to Gatewood,

> they believed that the genteel performance would in fact promote racial progress. Convinced that the crudities and vulgarities of the black masses, especially in public places, constituted a major source of prejudice and discrimination against all blacks, they themselves behaved in ways that conformed to the prevailing canons of respectability embraced by the dominant race and encouraged other blacks to follow their example.[42]

The home of activist Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin (1842-1924) served as a meeting place for Boston's black elite.[43] According to W. E. B. Du Bois, Ruffin hosted "professional men, students, white collar workers and upper servants" in Boston at her Charles Street home, and it was in this social circle, if not this location, that Cuney-Hare met Du Bois.[44] There is no record of Cuney-Hare's first impression of the young Harvard student, but through his autobiography, we know what Du Bois thought: he fell in love instantly and the pair were engaged for a time.[45]

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[40] Gatewood, *Aristocrats*, 110-111; Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, "Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990 […]," Population Division Working Paper no. 76, U.S. Census Bureau, February 2005, https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0076/twps0076.html.

[41] Gatewood, *Aristocrats*, 113.

[42] Gatewood, *Aristocrats*, 357.

[43] Ruffin's daughter Florida Ruffin Ridley followed in her mother's footsteps, and would become an ally for Cuney-Hare during the 1920s.

[44] William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 137.

[45] For more on their relationship, see Roses, *Black Bostonians*, 78-80 and David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt, 1993), 105-106.

Hales writes that Cuney-Hare's friendship with Du Bois, together with her education, "placed her among the highest circle of the African American intelligentsia of the early twentieth century."[46]

Scholars cite two other incidents from Cuney-Hare's young adulthood which underscore her loyalty to her fellow African Americans. After graduation from the New England Conservatory, Cuney-Hare continued to study piano with Edwin Klahre and Emil Ludwig and theory under Martin Roder. Following her return to Texas, Ludwig scheduled a recital for Cuney-Hare at the Austin Opera House in 1897, but they decided to select a new venue after the pair learned that the audience would be segregated.[47] The next year, Cuney-Hare married J. Frank McKinley, a mixed-race doctor, and the couple moved to Chicago. McKinley spent the next several years passing as Spanish and directed his wife to do so as well; this fundamental disagreement over race and identity led Cuney-Hare to return to Texas and the pair divorced in 1902. During the custody battle over their daughter following their separation, "the case became a sensation in the black press," Hales notes.[48]

Cuney-Hare returned to Boston in 1904 and married her second husband, William Parker Hare, in 1906. No longer required to hide her racial identity, she resumed her place in Boston's black upper class. In his landmark study from 1914 of blacks in Boston, *In Freedom's Birthplace*, John Daniels wrote that "[the black upper class] is made up of lawyers, physicians, salaried employees, business proprietors, literary and musical people, and the like, who are distinguished by superior education and refinement."[49] During the postwar period when Cuney-

[46] Hales, *Southern Family*, 107.

[47] Hales, *Southern Family*, 103-104.

[48] Hales, *Southern Family*, 106.

Hare was developing her exhibits and writing her book, the social fabric of Boston's African American community was changing, as the older generation aged and so-called new money sought to gain influence.[50] Despite changing social dynamics, Cuney-Hare spent the next three decades writing, performing, and teaching, in order to leverage her education and social standing to refute ideas about African American inferiority and to promote racial uplift.

One way that Cuney-Hare accomplished these goals, in tandem with her research, was to give lecture-recitals with baritone William H. Richardson (b. 1870). Richardson originally hailed from Nova Scotia but moved to Boston as a child and spent most of his life there. Like Cuney-Hare, he navigated both African American and white spaces, performing with several otherwise-white groups in Boston. The two performed together as early as 1910, and their first collaboration on "The Contribution of the Negro-American to the Art of Music" took place in 1913.[51] "The progress of Negro music has been greatly aided by Richardson's efforts," Cuney-Hare later wrote, citing his U.S. premieres of compositions by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Ira Aldridge, and Clarence Cameron White.[52] On occasion, Cuney-Hare (and Richardson) performed with other noted African American artists, including vocalist/composer J. Rosamond Johnson, violinist/composer Clarence Cameron White, violinist Felix Weir and cellist Leonard Jeter.[53] Weir and Jeter participated in the same Harlem Music School Settlement lecture series as

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[49] John Daniels, *In Freedom's Birthplace*: *a Study of the Boston Negroes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 181. Roses points out that Daniels's work is particularly useful for scholars of the arts because he gave "careful attention to the issue of taste as a defining element of culture," which later scholars of the black upper class did not do (37).

[50] Gatewood, *Aristocrats*, 347.

[51] "Concerts of the Week," *Sunday Herald, Boston*, April 24, 1910, Editorial and Society, 12; Cuney-Hare, *NMM*, 365.

[52] Cuney-Hare, *NMM*, 367.

[53] R. W. Thompson, "The Passing Show in Washington," *National Forum*, October 15, 1910; "In the Schools," *Evening Star, Washington, D.C*., April 28, 1918, Part 5.

Kitty Cheatham, and though they had many mutual friends, I have found no evidence that Cheatham and Cuney-Hare met.[54]

Cuney-Hare and Richardson presented wide-ranging repertoire that encompassed both art songs by white European composers and music by composers of color, past and present. Beyond performances in Boston, their tour stops included New York, Washington, D.C., Richmond, Cleveland, Lexington, Savannah, Butte (Montana), and Phoenix, with various community organizations, including YWCAs and settlement houses, providing sponsorship. Venues ranged from churches (including the Holy Trinity Cathedral in Havana) to Carnegie Hall.[55] One example of their recital repertoire comes from a 1926 concert in St. Thomas (U.S. Virgin Islands), part of the duo's three-month tour in the Caribbean.[56] The program began with "Songs from the Orient" and "Songs from the Tropics," the former including an Egyptian call to prayer arranged by Cuney-Hare, and the latter including Harry T. Burleigh's arrangements of "Go Down, Moses" and "Sweet Virgin Isles," composed by Alton Adams, the St. Thomas-born first black bandleader of the United States Navy.[57] The second half of the program (after an orchestral interlude) consisted of classical song, ranging from "Hear Me Ye Winds and Waves," an aria from George Frederic Handel's opera *Scipione* and "Dank," from Arnold Schoenberg's *Zwei Gesänge*, op. 1, to "Memnon," a song by American composer Arthur Foote. This repertoire demonstrated the

[54] Cheatham had largely moved on to other projects during the 1920s, but other white women shared her interest in African American music and culture during the time Cuney-Hare developed her exhibits. See Carla Kaplan, *Miss Anne in Harlem: the White Women of the Black Renaissance* (New York: Harper, 2013).

[55] Some of these venues are listed on the duo's official stationary (e.g. Maud Cuney-Hare to Augustus Granville Dill, September 23, 1925, Du Bois Papers) as well as national newspaper coverage (e.g. "Recital at Ezion Church," *Evening Journal* [Wilmington, DE], Late News Edition, December 4, 1922, 2).

[56] The program does not specify the city.

[57] See Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., "Alton Augustus Adams: The First Black Bandmaster in the U.S. Navy," *The Black Perspective in Music* 5, no. 2 (Autumn 1977): 173-187.

duo's versatility and expansive repertoire (which included living composers), as well as the fact that they valued works by black composers equally as those by European and white Americans.[58]

One of the important results of these concerts was the racial pride they fostered among African American audiences, and newspaper advertisements and reviews show how much these recitals meant to black communities around the country. "Maud Cuney Hare, world-renowned pianist, the greatest living woman pianist of the race, is coming!" exclaimed the *Savannah Tribune* in 1916.[59] "The recital is of a high class nature and the general public should appreciate [the duo's] coming," noted a Kansas paper, which also encouraged its readership to "boost and back" the A.M.E. church hosting the recital.[60] African American papers frequently noted when white concertgoers were in the audience, a news-worthy occurrence in an era of broad-based concert-music segregation.[61] At one concert in Louisiana, admission was "fixed at fifteen cents in order that every school child in the City will have an opportunity to hear the entertainment." Held at an African American church, there were "special reserved seats" for white patrons.[62] There was a sense that Cuney-Hare and Richardson were so talented that race did not matter – all people should attend their concerts – which was in line with Cuney-Hare's dedication to welcoming all regardless of race.

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[58] Concert program, "Song Recitals: William H. Richardson, Baritone, Maud Cuney Hare, Pianiste," Apollo Theatre, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, February 10-11, 1926, Library of Congress, Music Division, ML95.H26587 Case. A complete review of Cuney-Hare and Richardson's repertoire is beyond the scope of this chapter, but would make for a fascinating study.

[59] "Maud Cuney Hare Coming," *Savannah Tribune*, February 19, 1916, [1].

[60] "Musical Recital at Bethel Thursday," *The Hutchinson Blade* [Kansas], October 30, 1920, 4.

[61] "Cuney-Hare-Richardson Recital at Texarkana, Texas-Arkansas," *Dallas Express*, March 11, 1922, 6. For another African American artist who regularly faced racial discrimination in performance venues, see Christopher A. Brooks and Robert Sims, *Roland Hayes: The Legacy of an American Tenor* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015).

[62] "Famous Negro Singer and Pianist to Give Entertainment in New Iberia," *New Iberia Enterprise and Observer* [LA] 32, no. 48 (March 3, 1917), 3. A $.15 ticket in 1917 equates to one costing a little under $3 in 2018 (https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/uscompare/).

Cuney-Hare believed in expanding contemporary understandings of "black music" to include the Caribbean, which was one of her important historical interventions. "Distinct from the mountain song of Kentucky, The Negro Spiritual or the tribal melody of the Indian, the Creoles have added a new note in their gift to the folk-song of America," she wrote.[63] One of Cuney-Hare and Richardson's long-term projects was research on and performance of Creole music. By 1920 at the latest, the duo were performing Creole music with a talk by Cuney-Hare on its "origin and development"; according to Cuney-Hare, Richardson was the first American singer to sing Creole folk songs in French and Spanish patois in concert.[64] In 1921 Cuney-Hare published six Creole folk song arrangements with Carl Fischer, a prominent firm that largely served white composers, and described the genre thus in the preface:

> The Creole folk-songs of the New World are those of the people of mixed blood in Louisiana and the bordering south-western states. Mainly African in rhythm, the music was brought to South American countries and to the West-Indies, thence to Louisiana, where it received a French and Spanish-American imprint by the settlers of the land. The majority of the songs that survive show a French influence while a few are known in variant form in France. They are interwoven with the history of Louisiana and the neighboring states and were in most instances linked to the dance [*sic*].[65]

"I wish you could have heard one of my Creole lecture-recitals," Cuney-Hare wrote to Du Bois in 1925, "as it would give you a better idea of my interest in this special line of American folk-song with the influences of the Negro from the West Indies and Africa…A fascinating book could be written around the whole subject, if one only had the chance."[66] Though Cuney-Hare did not end up writing a book dedicated solely to Creole music, she wove some of her research on this topic into *NMM*.

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[63] Maud Cuney Hare, [preface] to *Six Creole Folk-Songs* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1921), 3.

[64] Cuney-Hare, *NMM*, 367; "Concert Notes," *Sunday Herald, Boston*, February 1, 1920, 4D.

[65] Cuney-Hare, [preface], 3.

[66] Maud Cuney-Hare to W. E. B. Du Bois, January 8, 1925, Du Bois Papers.

Thinking of research laterally, with a lecture-recital inspiring dreams of a book – was a hallmark of Cuney-Hare's approach to African American music history. She designed the lecture portions of her programs to contextualize music, like the Creole selections, which would have been new to many of her audiences. A newspaper in St. Croix stated that the lecture part of her recitals were "an essential part of the program," and included the history of a given piece, the composer's intent, particular elements of the music, the "class in which the piece of music has been placed, and the reasons for its ratings."[67]

The program from a Creole music concert at Syracuse University in 1925 also speaks to this interconnectedness: it features eighteen selections (eleven arranged by Cuney-Hare) representing music from Egypt and South Africa to Argentina and St. Kitts.[68] The billing as an "illustrated lecture-recital" likely refers to the fact that musical numbers served as examples for Cuney-Hare's historical lecture, but this phrasing also highlights that multiple layers of teaching and explanation occurred at once. Cuney-Hare and Richardson put on a recital in New Haven in 1924 while the public library there displayed her collection, adding another layer of evidence, this time visual, to their historical endeavor. The local paper described the effect as "a well-balanced exhibit of the theoretical as well as the practical – A RARE ACHIEVEMENT IN ITSELF."[69]

As discussed in what follows, using objects constituted one of Cuney-Hare's most popular strategies for piquing audience interest in African American music history.

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[67] "Music Notes," [unidentified newspaper clipping, Christiansted, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands], February 18 1926. Library of Congress, Music Division, ML95.H26587 Case.

[68] Concert program, "Maud Cuney – Cuney-Hare, Pianist," Syracuse University, March 3, 1925. Library of Congress, Music Division, ML95.H26587 Case.

[69] "Afro-American Music Exhibit," [Maud Cuney Hare promotional pamphlet, 4], Library of Congress, Music Division, ML95.H26587 Case.

On Display: Boston Public Library

The Boston Public Library exhibit which Cuney-Hare helped to organize in 1922 began with an ending, when well-known African American educator Maria L. Baldwin (1856-1922) died suddenly on January 9.[70] As the principal of the Aggasiz School in Cambridge since 1889, Baldwin had been in charge of an institution "98 per cent white in pupils and…attended by the children of the very best people of Cambridge including those of Harvard professors."[71] She was an active lecturer, hosted weekly meetings for black Harvard students, and counted prominent white Bostonians Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Elizabeth Cary Agassiz, Julia Ward Howe, and Charles W. Eliot among her friends; the latter, a former president of Harvard, reportedly believed Baldwin to be the best teacher in New England.[72]

In her honor, two public service organizations of which she was a member collaborated to begin the Maria L. Baldwin Memorial Library, to be housed at the headquarters of the League of Women for Community Service (LWCS) at 558 Massachusetts Avenue in Boston. The LWCS was an African American women's service organization of which Baldwin was serving as president at the time of her death. The group was initially formed as a Soldiers' Comfort Unit during WWI and continued in a modified form after the armistice. Lorraine Elena Roses argues that the LWCS "went beyond carrying out social service projects for the benefit of their community to engage in a significant amount of cultural entrepreneurship," which included lectures, concerts, and study groups.[73] Some of the group's key leaders included Baldwin,

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[70] See Kathleen Weiler, *Maria Baldwin's Worlds: A Story of Black New England and the Fight for Racial Justice* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2019).

[71] "[Obituary – Maria L. Baldwin]" *A.M.E. Church Review* 38, no. 4 (April 1922), 218.

[72] Oxford African American Studies Center, s.v. "Baldwin, Maria Louise," by Dorothy B. Porter, December 1, 2006, https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780195301731.013.40138.

[73] Roses, *Black Bostonians*, 51.

Florida Ruffin Ridley (daughter of Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin), sculptor Meta Warrick Fuller, and Cuney-Hare. In March 1922 members of the Twentieth Century Club, including author Margaret Deland and minister Samuel Crothers (both white), agreed to assist with the development of the Baldwin library.[74] An announcement in the *New York Age* explained the Baldwin memorial project thus:

> An interesting and instructive exhibition of Negro achievement and Abolition Memorials will be conducted by the League of Women for Community Service in the public library of the City of Boston during the month of October, 1922, in the interest of the Maria L. Baldwin Memorial Room which the League plans to open at 558 Massachusetts Avenue.
>
> Mrs. Florida Ruffin Ridley is chairman of the exhibition committee, with Louise Winsor Brooks and Maud Cuney Hare as directors. The exhibition is to embrace photographs and literature illustrating individual and organized achievement in literature, art, music, law, medicine, and all other lines of racial endeavor.[75]

While the exhibit was not exclusively of Cuney-Hare's design, nor did it only feature musical objects, it merits exploration as her first major foray into displaying objects to promote racial uplift. The library exhibit was neither the first music- nor exhibit-related project the LWCS organized. While the League was still the Soldiers' Comfort Unit during and after WWI, Cuney-Hare and another member organized an exhibit (location unknown) of Fuller's sculptures. The *Boston Transcript* reviewer praised the effort and also noted how the arts provided "a broad 'way out' open to all" for African Americans. LWCS musical events to 1922 included musicales organized by Cuney-Hare and a concert by African American conductor James Reese Europe and his band.[76]

Cuney-Hare and George W. Forbes, later praised for their "wide knowledge and associations" and "fine discrimination" in putting together the exhibit, called on leading African

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[74] See Twentieth Century Association records, Massachusetts Historical Society.

[75] "Boston Women to Show Negro Achievement," *New York Age*, August 5, 1922, 5.

[76] See Roses, *Black Bostonians*, 55.

American intellectuals and Boston-area institutions to make the exhibit a success.[77] Forbes (1864-1927), a journalist and librarian, was the son of formerly enslaved parents from Mississippi. He founded a short-lived African-American newspaper, the *Boston Courant*; wrote for several other publications; and served as librarian at the Boston Public Library's West End Branch from 1896 until his death in 1927.[78] Speakers for the opening of the exhibit included Cuney-Hare and Forbes as well as Fuller, poet William Stanley Braithwaite, the Reverend Benjamin Brawley, and noted Harlem-based writer James Weldon Johnson. The materials on display on the third floor of the Copley Square branch included materials from the BPL and materials from Harvard University, including items from the Art Museum and the Peabody Museum, plus things "which had never before left the Treasure Room," a space in Widener Library with books and exhibit cases of "many of the library's choicest possessions."[79] Additional materials came from "artists, writers, musicians, and collectors" until the room was practically overflowing. Collector Arthur Schomburg, bibliophile George Young, and poet Alice Dunbar Nelson all "made large loans."[80] Some of Schomburg's loans were likely items he had included in his own exhibit a few years prior at a YMCA in Brooklyn.[81]

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[77] Florida Ruffin Ridley, "[Introduction]," *Dedication: Maria L. Baldwin Memorial Library*, December 20, 1923, Souvenir Program, [2]. Folder 2, League of Women for Community Service (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1922-1994. B/L434a; T-259. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

[78] Oxford African American Studies Center, s.v. "Forbes, George Washington," by Charles Rosenberg, May 31, 2013, https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780195301731.013.38949.

[79] Ridley, "[Introduction]," [1]. Frustratingly, the report does not mention specific items.

[80] Ridley, "[Introduction]," [1]-[2]. See "George Young Dead; Had Book Exchange," *New York Times*, April 19, 1935; Sharifa Rhodes-Pitts, *Harlem is Nowhere: A Journey to the Mecca of Black America* (New York: Little, Brown, 2011) mentions Young. See also Gloria T. Hull, *Color, Sex, and Poetry: Three Women Writers of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Vaness K. Valdés, *Diasporic Blackness: the Life and Times of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017).

[81] Arthur A. Schomburg, "Exhibition catalogue: first annual exhibition of books […]" ([New York?]: [The Negro Library Association?]: [1918?]).

Cuney-Hare and Forbes put together a truly impressive display of materials that put physical evidence of African American accomplishments in front of the eyes of visitors of all races. The exhibit would easily take several hours to view, announced the *Christian Science Monitor* a few days after the exhibit opened. Materials included books, pamphlets, and a series of paintings: "The Flight into Egypt" by Henry O. Tanner; a landscape by Edward Bannister; a landscape by the late Richard Lonsdale Brown, whose art appeared on the cover of *The Crisis* and who wanted "to prove that negroes were 'not all Jack Johnsons'"; three portraits by Laura Wheeler ("fine in character and very well done"); a scene by Samuel O. Collins ("Beech Wood in Midsummer"), Charles H. Osborne's painting of Gloucester wharves; and William E. Scott's landscape "The Hour of Plenty."[82] Edmonia Lewis's bust of Robert Gould Shaw (1867) stood alongside four of Fuller's works (including "The Future" and "Mother and Child") and etchings by Albert A. Smith.

In addition, there were "portraits of the great men of African descent with summaries of their lives and accomplishments."[83] Featured writers included Paul Laurence Dunbar, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Alexander Dumas, and, special to Boston, poet Phyllis Wheatley.[84] Another New England-specific topic, the abolition movement, received "much attention," with materials from William Lloyd Garrison and prominent Boston families including the Higginsons. One case was devoted entirely to radical abolitionist John Brown ("his diaries, autograph letters, a lock of his

[82] Tanner's painting is now held by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City (accession number 2001.402a). [Philpott], "Shows Advance."

[83] "The Colored Man's Progress," *Boston Sunday Post*, October 8, 1922, 48.

[84] Dumas was the grandchild of the Frenchman Thomas-Alexandre Dumas Davy de la Pailleterie and Marie Cesette, a slave on his Santo Domingo (now Haiti) plantation. See Michael Fabre, "International Beacons of African-American Memory: Alexandre Dumas père, Henry O. Tanner, and Josephine Baker as Examples of Recognition," in *History and Memory in African-American Culture*, edited by Genevieve Fabre and Robert O'Meally (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

hair, the speech he made just previous to his execution"). For the music section Cuney-Hare had chosen to feature "African and Afro-American 'spirituals' or folk-songs, modern compositions, musicians and singers," including a portrait of early nineteenth century Afro-European violinist George Bridgetower.

One section of the exhibit depicted contemporary African Americans' lives via "pictures, charts, and statistics."[85] Visitors learned that at the time of the exhibit, African Americans were running sixty "benevolent institutions," seventy-two banks, and fifty-six thousand businesses, that they had made significant financial contributions to the war effort during WWI, and that ice cream and Saratoga chips (kettle chips) were African American inventions. The *Christian Science* reviewer noted that women were "side by side" with men in the exhibit, including two who served in the American Expeditionary Forces. At the conclusion of the exhibit some of the materials would remain at the BPL to form the nucleus of a permanent exhibit honoring Maria L. Baldwin. The LWCS was so proud of the critical acclaim that they printed a small flier, "Comments of the Press of Boston on the Exhibition of Negro Achievement now being held in the Public Library by the League of Women for Community Service."[86] It includes quotes from four Boston papers (*Globe*, *Sunday Post*, *Transcript*, *Herald*) and cites two more (*Christian Science Monitor*, *Boston American*).

How exactly would visitors view the exhibit during those two hours? Sarah Anne Carter has demonstrated that looking seriously at objects was an integral part of American education for several generations during the late nineteenth century (and subsequently became a way for

[85] "Negro Achievements Recorded at Boston Public Library," *Christian Science Monitor*, October 3, 1922, 4, reprinted in "Exhibit of Racial Art Is Praised," *Chicago Defender*, November 4, 1922, 13.

[86] "Comments of the Press of Boston on the Exhibition of Negro Achievement […]" Folder 2, League of Women for Community Service (Boston, Mass.) Records, 1922-1994. B/L434a; T-259. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

companies to sell their products); while Cuney-Hare's exhibits would have been on the tail end of this period, visitors would have been more used to engaging with and asking questions of individual objects than they would have been later in the twentieth century. Studying an object was an opportunity for "a pause that serves to focus one's attention on something solid and seemingly unassailable…the goal was that the study of material evidence would force one to think more deeply and more clearly."[87] Looking at a manuscript copy of a spiritual might lead someone to think not only about slavery, but whether they knew this repertoire or had seen it performed and how such music was a part of their own lives. In addition, historian Steven Conn has demonstrated how, during the late nineteenth century, museum displays were intended to present "the metanarrative of evolutionary progress," as visitors "followed a trajectory from simple to complex, from savage to civilized, from ancient to modern."[88] Regular museum-goers may have had this approach in mind, if subconsciously, as they toured the BPL exhibit.

The organization of the exhibit held the power to impact how viewers would perceive the sweep and trajectory of African American history. F.D. Benteen, director of the BPL, later wrote of Cuney-Hare's contribution that "the placing of the exhibit was successful, in that the development of Negro musical achievement from the native folk song to the sophisticated score was clearly indicated."[89] There was a risk with this approach that viewers might interpret spirituals as lesser, even as primitive, while they perceived classical music as a marker of civilization: did "development" call to mind an evolutionary scheme or simply change over time? Cuney-Hare was in favor of the growth of classical music based on African American

[87] Carter, 137.

[88] Steven Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876-1926* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 5.

[89] "National Association for the Advancement of Colored People," *The Crisis* 28, no. 2 (June 1924): 69.

idioms, but she did not discount the significance of spirituals. In *NMM*, Cuney-Hare acknowledged that there was no consensus about perceptions of spirituals in the African American community: some did not want the reminder of slavery, some accepted this repertory as part of their history, some were indifferent. Cuney-Hare likened spirituals to wild flowers, which were different than garden-grown flowers but valuable in their own right.[90] Including successful performers and composers from throughout the nineteenth century and before in her exhibit was a way for Cuney-Hare to nuance public knowledge of African American music. She demonstrated visually that the type of music she found most valuable – Western art music – was finally starting to be produced widely in African American musical circles, but it had also been created concurrently with spirituals and even before.

Newspaper reviews, while positive, reveal a tension between what Cuney-Hare and other organizers hoped to convey and what visitors took away. Perhaps primed by the very fact that they were visiting an exhibit (regardless of how the materials were organized), critics focused on African American progress, especially since the abolition of slavery. In contrast, the goals of the Baldwin room, reflective of the spirit of the BPL exhibit, were as follows:

> A desire to spread knowledge concerning the Negro – to focus attention more directly upon his contribution to American life and history; a desire to preserve material relating to Negro history, which might otherwise be lost or overlooked, and not the least of the desires, an impulse to inspire to literary and artistic activity.[91]

Cuney-Hare and the other organizers were interested in African American achievement and accomplishment across time and areas of knowledge: showing "progress" was not unimportant, but the absence of this term is notable, as it might have taken away from their stance that people of African descent had been accomplishing great things long before slavery

[90] Cuney-Hare, *NMM*, 241.

[91] Ridley, "[Introduction]," [1].

was abolished in the U.S. Critics missed this fine distinction, however. A. J. Philpott, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, praised the "very remarkable exhibition" that would appeal "especially to students of race progress." Crucially, he found the entire sweep of black history on display (what he called "the sporadic evidence of what the negro did a century or so ago") to be of less interest than the materials tracing African American successes in the decades since emancipation, which he thought African Americans created in part "to show the world that abolition was not a mistake."[92] This stance perpetuated the idea that African Americans were indebted to whites for their freedom, and that only recently did people of African descent accomplish significant successes. On the other hand, Philpott also employed "genius" throughout the article: Rodin had labeled Fuller thus, the men in the "old history" section – Alexander Dumas, Ira Aldridge, Jacobus Capitein, Toussaint L'Overture – "every one of them men of undoubted genius," and educator Mary McLeod Bettune's Florida school was a success because of her "genius and energy." This recognition fit with what the LWCS hoped the exhibit would demonstrate.

Similar to Philpott, the *Sunday Post* writer was most interested in how much progress African Americans had made since emancipation. "People sometimes complain that the negro does not measure up to the standard set by races of lighter skin. But do they stop to think that only half a century ago the vast majority of the colored folk were held in bondage, sold like cattle and deprived of all chance for education and advancement? Could any other race show much better in so short a time? The League of Women for Community Service is to be thanked for getting up this instructive exhibition. In itself it is a genuine service to the community."[93] Though only focusing on the post-war period, this critic does seem genuinely interested in what

[92] [Philpott], "Shows Advance."

[93] "The Colored Man's Progress."

the exhibit could teach Bostonians: it "ought to be seen by every student of conditions in the United States as they impinge upon the race problem."[94]

A year later, in December 1923, the LWCS dedicated the Maria L. Baldwin Memorial Library at their 558 Massachusetts Avenue location. It included a small collection of African American history materials and space intended for students' quiet study, in honor of Baldwin's years of work as an educator. At the time of the room's opening, with the loaned materials returned to their owners months before, the collection was nascent and the group hoped it would soon grow. They requested donations including anything written by authors of African descent, anything from the anti-slavery movement, "pamphlets, circulars, data in any form" on African Americans, and "pictures or photographs having historical value." The dedicatory exercises included remarks from multiple community members interspersed with musical numbers. Significantly, Cuney-Hare was in charge of the "presentation of the collection." Even though music played only a small role in the BPL exhibit, Cuney-Hare acted as a key player, and her role in the exercises suggest her peers recognized her interest and experience in employing objects as historical evidence.

On Display: Wanamaker's Department Store

Though Cuney-Hare had exhibited some of her music materials alongside a wide array of items at the BPL exhibit, she was soon displaying her collection on its own in various locations across the Northeast. These culminated in her exhibit at the 1924 meeting of the NAACP in Philadelphia: the presence of her collection there demonstrated how Du Bois, in particular, found

[94] "The Colored Man's Progress."

Cuney-Hare's display of objects effective and worthy of a national stage.[95] In November 1922 he wrote to Cuney-Hare expressing hope that she could "carry [her] exhibition about in some way" and thanking her for sending clippings, likely those praising the BPL exhibit.[96] Multiple notices about the NAACP exhibit appeared in *The Crisis* during 1924. In February, the magazine announced that Cuney-Hare had organized "an unusual exhibit of Afro-American music" at the New Haven Public Library.[97] Materials included "ancient and modern music, photographs and papers relating to colored musicians." While most of the items came from Cuney-Hare's personal collection, she borrowed some materials from the Boston Public and Yale University libraries, as she liked to draw from local collections where possible.

The June issue of *The Crisis* highlighted the exhibit as a feature of the upcoming NAACP meeting and recommended that attendees plan to visit. Directly preceding the exhibit information, and thereby linking the two, was an articulation of the organization's purpose:

> The N.A.A.C.P. has been and probably always will be an organization for protest and fight against wrongs. On the other hand, its mission is also to call to the attention of the world the achievements of the Negro in that such progress proves the justness of the Association's contention for full citizenship rights to the Negro.[98]

The exhibit would be one concrete way that conference-goers and the general public could experience evidence of African American achievement. At Cuney-Hare's request, BPL director Charles F.D. Belden even wrote *The Crisis* to share praise for her exhibit. Belden wrote that

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[95] Du Bois valued Cuney-Hare's expertise in the realm of music history. In a January 1925 letter to Du Bois, Cuney-Hare included a list of music she recommended for a Russian singer who had requested advice on African American repertoire. It included spirituals by Burleigh, Dett, White, and Johnson (Maud Cuney-Hare to W. E. B. Du Bois, January 2, 1925, Du Bois Papers). Du Bois himself had helped to organize the Exhibit of American Negroes at the 1900 Paris Exposition, which included books, charts, graphs, and photographs. See The Library of Congress, *A Small Nation of People: W. E. B. Du Bois and African American Portraits of Progress* (New York: Amistad, 2003).

[96] W. E. B. Du Bois to Maud Cuney-Hare, November 20, 1922, Du Bois Papers.

[97] "The Horizon," *The Crisis* 27, no. 4 (February 1924): 183-84.

[98] "National Association for the Advancement of Colored People."

Cuney-Hare's music portion of the 1922 exhibit "attracted much attention and interest" and that he hoped it would "be given important space in Philadelphia" that summer.[99]

The fifteenth annual meeting of the NAACP took place from June 25 to July 1, 1924.[100] Newspaper advertisements in the months and days leading up to the conference highlighted a wide variety of events: the young hometown contralto Marian Anderson and the rising bass-baritone Paul Robeson were both slated to perform; literary critic Stanley Braithwaite of Boston would speak, and the entire mass meeting on the 29th would be broadcast on the radio. Topics of concern during the meeting included segregation, labor issues, and the Ku Klux Klan's continued violence against and hatred of African Americans.[101] In addition, "The exhibition of Negro music, collected by Mrs. Maud Cuney Hare, will be on view during the entire week of the Conference, in the art gallery of John Wanamaker's Philadelphia store."[102]

Cuney-Hare's exhibit was not necessarily an anomaly in the grander scheme of Wanamaker's grand schemes. Shoppers were used to all manner of events, promotions, and exhibits, musical and otherwise, and holding the exhibit there was an excellent way to draw in visitors, especially white shoppers who might not even realize the NAACP was holding its annual meeting that week.[103] The flagship store on Market Street boasted a famous organ, live

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[99] "National Association for the Advancement of Colored People."

[100] "N.A.A.C.P. Mass Meeting to be Broadcasted Over Radio," *Pittsburgh Courier*, June 21, 1924, 3.

[101] Edgar G. Brown, "5,000 Hear Speakers," *Afro-American*, July 4, 1924, A1.

[102] "N.A.A.C.P. Mass Meeting." African American pianist and composer Carl Diton (1886-1962) was in charge of music at the 1924 meeting ("Diton to Direct Conference Music," *Philadelphia Tribune*, May 3, 1924, 1; this article also reports that Cuney-Hare's exhibit was at the BPL in May of that year; this may have been a mix-up with the 1922 exhibit). During the conference, Cuney-Hare and Richardson were featured on the Wanamaker radio station (WOO) broadcast at 9:15pm on June 27. It was a version of their usual "demonstrative lecture on Afro-Creole Folk Music" but this time, Cuney-Hare gave the lecture, Richardson sang, and Diton played the accompaniment ("Philadelphia Broadcasts," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 27, 1924, 6). For Wanamaker and the radio, see Noah Arceneaux, "Wanamaker's Department Store and the Origins of Electronic Media, 1910-1922," *Technology and Culture* 51, no. 4 (October 2010): 809-828.

performances and background music for shopping, employee ensembles, and a fourteen hundred seat concert hall.[104] This space, the Egyptian Hall, also served as a piano showroom. The Byzantine Chamber, which served as Cuney-Hare's exhibit space, was one of several smaller rooms off the concert hall; "the Wanamaker Store has always had its part in the musical education of the public," proclaimed a store publication in 1924.[105] Historian Sharon Macdonald has pointed out that turn-of-the-century department stores and museums "sometimes borrowed design features from one another" and used glass cases "in which things could be seen and admired but not touched."[106] It would be fascinating to know how sales at Wanamaker's may have been affected during the week the exhibit was there.

If the BPL demonstrated the power of exhibits to draw people together, regardless of how critics understood the objects, Cuney-Hare's solo exhibit for the NAACP convention in 1924 demonstrated the power of material culture to make a musical point. In her display cases, Cuney-Hare encapsulated a sweeping history of African American music with a range of materials that verged on a "shock and awe" approach to musical accomplishment. Two similar articles about the NAACP exhibit appeared soon after the meeting ended, one in the largely-white journal *Musical America* and one in the African American newspaper *Norfolk Journal and Guide*: both detail the variety of items in Cuney-Hare's collection.[107] One of the cases was "devoted to Creole

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[103] See Vicki Howard, *From Main Street to Mall: The Rise and Fall of the American Department Store* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Michael J. Lisicky, *Wanamaker's: Meet Me at the Eagle* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2010).

[104] See Linda L. Tyler, "Commerce and Poetry Hand in Hand": Music in American Department Stores, 1880-1930," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 45, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 75-120.

[105] *A Friendly Guide-book to the Wanamaker Store*, 13th ed. ([Philadelphia]: [n.p.], 1924), [13]. Folder 5, Box 277, John Wanamaker collection (Collection 2188), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

[106] Sharon Macdonald, "Collecting Practices," in *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon MacDonald (Malden, MA: Blackwell 2006), 86.

music" and displayed "interesting pictures and old music." The reviews feature a section of anecdotes unconnected to particular items on display, but these were likely portraits or sheet music; Cuney-Hare's method of presentation for contextual information, whether via exhibition notes or captions, is also unclear. One subject the reviews mention was "an Arabian Negro," Mabed Ibn Ouhab, a singer-composer of the sixth century, and another was George Polgreen Bridgetower, who premiered Beethoven's ninth violin sonata in the early nineteenth century. According to the exhibit, repertoire created by black composers included the last two stanzas of "God Save the Queen" (attributed to an Egbert Martin of the West Indies) and "John Brown's Body" / "Battle Hymn" (supposedly transcribed by a white man based on an African American song, "Glory, Glory").[108] There was also information on African American composers in Civil War-era New Orleans: Basile Bares, Lucian and Sidney Lambert, Edmond Dédé, as well as contemporary composer "Montague Ring," aka Amanda Ira Alridge. Most of these people and topics would later appear in *Negro Musicians and Their Music*.

What Du Bois's review of the exhibit in *The Crisis* lacked in detail, it made up for in enthusiasm:

> THE MAUD CUNEY HARE EXHIBIT
> At the annual conference of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People there was a quiet and effective piece of propaganda, which the Association carried out at its own expense. In Wanamaker's great store on the second floor a beautiful room was filled with things that illustrated the rise and development of Negro music. There were African musical instruments, pictures of Negro artists and composers, musical

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[107] "Rare Exhibits Shed Some Light On The History of The Race," *New Journal and Guide* [Norfolk, VA], July 12, 1924, 7. Quotations in this paragraph taken from: W.J. Parker, "Famous Melodies Own Negro Authorship," *Musical America* 60, no. 16 (August 9, 1924): 19.

[108] In 1887, Guyanese poet Egbert Martin (1861–1890) won a Commonwealth-wide competition to write an additional verse for the British national anthem in honor of Queen Victoria's Jubilee. "For his entry, Martin won £50. Some sources state that he wrote two additional stanzas, whereas others indicate that he added only a concluding stanza. Unfortunately, the sources do not detail the actual verse(s)" (Oxford African American Studies Center, s.v. "Martin, Egbert "Leo," by Terencia Kyneata Joseph, 31 May 2017, https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780195301731.013.74481). For the debate around the origin of "John Brown's Body" during the 1920s, see Cuney-Hare, *NMM,* 115-116.

> scores and programs, books and articles – so many and so carefully gathered matters that picture the mighty work of the black man in music. Hundreds of people entered daily, asked questions and lingered. It was an education for white Philadelphia and the teacher and founder was Maud Cuney Hare of Boston who has made this exhibit in many places and ought to be encouraged to add to it and carry it over the nation.[109]

Here Du Bois foreshadowed his famous 1926 speech-turned-essay "Criteria of Negro Art," in which he claimed "all Art is propaganda" and argued that it was a vital element in the fight for racial equality.[110] Also striking is that the exhibit was "quiet," the opposite of sounding music. This did not seem to matter to the hundreds (perhaps thousands) of visitors; the music history on display was silent but crucially visual and allowed people to linger and reflect in a way that music could not.

The NAACP exhibit was the grandest but also the final documented time that Cuney-Hare displayed her collection at a large-scale venue. In September 1924, following the success of the exhibit at the NAACP meeting, Cuney-Hare wrote to Charles Engel, head of the Music Division of the Library of Congress from 1922-1934, to ask if Library of Congress policy would allow her to "arrange an exhibit of Afro-American music there."[111] She explained that it was "the result of some years' study and research" and that she had acquired an "interesting outlay of photographs, pictures, music and clippings." She told Engel how she had received several unsolicited requests to display the collection and stated that she believed there to be "persons in Washington who would welcome the exhibition of the collection in that city." Her offer was to draw from her own materials, "historically from the earliest period," but also to employ materials from the LOC holdings "in order to call attention to its music treasures if so desired." She

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[109] W. E. B. Du Bois, "The Maud Cuney Hare Exhibit," *The Crisis* 28 no. 5 (September 1924): 200.

[110] Oxford African American Studies Center, s.v. "Criteria of Negro Art (1926)," May 31, 2010, https://doi.org/10.1093/acref/9780195301731.013.78645.

[111] Maud Cuney Hare to Charles Engel, September 13, 1924. Library of Congress, Music Division, ML95.H26587 Case (all quotations in this paragraph).

emphasized her personal and hands-on approach to her work: "I found in showing my personal collection, that there was so much interest displayed, it was necessary to be at the Library daily in order to answer questions – but this was a pleasure and therefore not taxing." Engel's response has not survived, and there is no record of Cuney-Hare's exhibit ever making it to the Library, though Engel supported and admired her work as a whole.[112] This was by no means the end of Cuney-Hare's exhibit work, however, and she quickly filled her time with other musical-historical projects.

A Portrait of Musical Achievement

Newspaper reports provided tantalizing clues but few specifics regarding what objects visitors filing through the Byzantine Room at Wanamaker's could examine. One of the few items that can be placed with some certainty both there and at the BPL exhibit is a portrait of violinist George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower (1778-1860), best-known for premiering what would later become known as Ludwig van Beethoven's "Kreutzer" sonata.[113] Bridgetower's father was West Indian and his mother was European, possibly Polish. He spent much of his early life in England, where he was under the patronage of the Prince of Wales (later King George IV) and performed at Haydn-Salomon concerts. Bridgetower met Beethoven in the spring of 1803 and the two premiered the latter's Violin Sonata in A (op. 47) on May 24 of that year; after a disagreement over a female acquaintance, the composer dedicated the sonata not to Bridgetower but to French violinist Rodolphe Kreutzer. Bridgetower lived in Rome and Paris for many years and died in England almost sixty years after the sonata incident. In displaying this portrait,

[112] Charles Engel to Maud Cuney-Hare, March 3, 1926. Library of Congress, Music Division, ML95.H26587 Case.

[113] See Josephine R. B. Wright, "George Polgreen Bridgetower: An African Prodigy in England 1789-99," *Musical Quarterly* 66, no. 1 (January 1980), 65-82.

Cuney-Hare succeeded in highlighting the story of a little-known Afro-European musician who had attained success in Western European art music over one hundred years previously, and pausing in front of this object here yields insight into her historical enterprise.

Cuney-Hare valued Bridgetower's story because of his talent, time period, and the genre of music he played. He served as proof that musicians of color had long held the potential to become well-respected artists in what were traditionally white styles of music. Bridgetower was so talented that he impressed even Beethoven, considered by many to be the greatest composer of all time. During Cuney-Hare's lifetime, the violinist's reputation remained alive in select musical circles; he appears in both the 1899 and 1908 versions of the *Grove Dictionary of Music* and was the subject of "George P. Bridgetower and the Kreutzer Sonata," a 1908 *Musical Times* article by English writer F.G. Edwards.[114] Cuney-Hare relied on both of these sources, as well as Henry Krehbiel's 1921 English translation of Alexander Thayer's *Life of Beethoven*, to write her own article on Bridgetower, which appeared in *Musical America* in August 1921. Two months later, it was reprinted in *Music and Poetry*, a magazine founded by Nora Douglas Holt (1885-1974). Holt, an African American composer, worked as music critic for the African American newspaper the *Chicago Defender* from 1917-1921.[115] With these articles, published in a widely popular journal with largely white readership and a short-lived, primarily African American magazine, Cuney-Hare was able to share Bridgetower's story with an array of interested persons who may never have heard of him: those who enjoyed music but who had not learned about

[114] George Grove, "Bridgetower, George Augustus Polgreen," *A Dictionary Music and Musicians*, ed. George Grove, vol. 1 (London: MacMillan, 1879), 275-276; George Grove, "Bridgetower, Augustus Polgreen," *A Dictionary Music and Musicians*, ed. J.A. Fuller Maitland, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1908), 402; F.G. Edwards, "George P. Bridgetower and the Kreutzer Sonata," *Musical Times*, May 1, 1908, 302-308.

[115] Grove Music Online, s.v. "Holt, Nora [Douglas, Lena]," by Karen M. Bryan, published online May 28, 2015, https://doi.org/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.article.A2283237.

Bridgetower in school or were unfamiliar with the specialized music literature that included his story.

The only known portrait of Bridgetower at the time accompanied Edwards's *Musical Times* article, appearing in print for the first time courtesy of white antiquarian Arthur F. Hill (Figure 4.1).[116] The black and white reproduction of a watercolor miniature depicts Bridgetower in a dark coat with large buttons and a white cravat going up to his chin. He has prominent eyebrows, curly hair, and a hint of a smile. The work has been attributed to Irish artist George Chinnery and was presented by Bridgetower to a Dr. Hague of Cambridge, England in 1805.[117] Alain Locke, Cuney-Hare's contemporary, later published *The Negro in Art* in 1940, in which he posited that studying representations of blacks in European art "might prove one of the strongest antidotes for prejudice."[118] With no record of how or when Cuney-Hare acquired her copy, it seems likely that hers was a copy from Edwards's article, perhaps even a clipping straight out of the *Musical Times*. There is no image of Bridgetower accompanying her *Musical America* article, but the two plates from Edwards's article (the other being a reproduction of a letter from Beethoven about Bridgetower) are included in her book, giving her readers the opportunity to study the face of a musician Cuney-Hare considered remarkable.

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[116] That this was "the only known portrait of Bridgetower" needs qualification, however, as two portraits survive. The other, a watercolor depicting a young Bridgetower seemingly unknown to Edwards, was purchased by the British Museum in 1876. Henry Edridge, Portrait of George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower, violinist, graphite with watercolor. Museum number 1876,0708.2379.

[117] Mike Phillips, "Bridgetower's Early Years," British Library Online Gallery: Black Europeans. https://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/features/blackeuro/bridgetowerbackground.html. The Chinnery portrait sold in 1973 for $3600 ("International Sale Room," *The Connoisseur*, April 1973, 296).

[118] Locke cited in David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., preface to *The Image of the Black in Western Art Volume III: From the "Age of Discovery" to the Age of Abolition, Part 3: The Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), eBook edition.

GEORGE POLGREEN BRIDGETOWER.

1782 ?—1860.

Figure 4.1. Bridgetower's Portrait from the *Musical Times*.

The most significant authorial decision Cuney-Hare made in structuring her article, "The Kreutzer Sonata and Beethoven's Mulatto Friend" was emphasizing Bridgetower's blackness. With her title, Cuney-Hare assumes that many readers would not recognize Bridgetower's name, and instead alerts them to the fact that the great Beethoven had a mixed-race friend. She begins the article by emphasizing the violinist's mixed racial heritage, stating that Bridgetower's father was sometimes referred to as an "Abyssinian Prince," before she states that the violinist was born in Poland (as a comparison, this was the reverse of how Edwards introduced Bridgetower). Betraying her scholarly bent, Cuney-Hare then mentions that much of the then-known information on Bridgetower came from Alexander Wheelock Thayer's biography of Beethoven

and that the British Museum held extant Bridgetower manuscripts. To underscore Bridgetower's significance, Cuney-Hare ends the introduction with:

> Of mixed blood, the son of an African father and a European mother, this talented violinist was destined to have his name linked with Beethoven, the great German master, and to become the first interpreter of the famous work known as the "Kreutzer Sonata."

Cuney-Hare further emphasized Bridgetower's race when, before delving into his early life, she described his appearance, which would have been especially useful for those who had not seen the portrait. A passport described the violinist as being of "middle height, smooth brown face, dark brown hair, brown eyes and somewhat thick nose." With this image in their heads, readers could then read his biography in a new light, picturing a dark-complexioned musician playing at the Drury Lane Theatre or the Hanover Square Rooms.

Even after Cuney-Hare used the portrait in her BPL and NAACP exhibits (and likely those at the New Haven Public Library and Wellesley College), her interest in Bridgetower – and the publicity the portrait allowed him – did not wane. In March 1927, Cuney-Hare and her community arts organization, the Allied Arts Centre, put on a celebration marking the centennial of Beethoven's death, which included a display of musical objects. With assistance from the LWCS, Cuney-Hare had founded the Centre earlier that year as a way to "care for the cultural needs of the colored child."[119] Cuney-Hare envisioned opportunities including experimental drama for children (part of the Little Theatre movement), classes in drama and Eurhythmics, lectures, and Junior Music Clubs, all with assistance by young women from the FMA Art School.[120] One of the Centre's first productions was this "Beethoven-Bridgetower" evening on

[119] Maud Cuney-Hare to W. E. B. Du Bois, January 30, 1927, Du Bois Papers.

[120] The Children's Little Theatre was part of what some historians call the Negro Little Theatre Movement (itself part of a broader movement in U.S. theater moving away from large, commercial productions). From about 1910 through 1930 small theaters operated for and by African Americans popped up across the country in libraries, churches, and community centers like Cuney-Hare's. Jonathan Shandell writes that "these little theatre groups addressed vital needs of African American communities" including self-expression and artistic development (103).

March 24. Cuney-Hare reported to Du Bois the following week, telling him about the event and that students were enjoying everything at the Centre, which she thought was worth the effort despite "lots of work, [and] no money."[121]

In addition to the display of Beethoven-Bridgetower objects, the students put on a musicale written by Cuney-Hare, a scene set in a music room in Vienna.[122] The players, young African Americans in period costume, included Douglass Schenck as Beethoven, Sedrick Hall as Bridgetower, and Celestine Johnson as Countess Guicardi.[123] As recorded in the LWCS minutes, "A little playlet was given with solos and minuet [*sic*] by both composers. A crowded house greeted Mrs. Hare's effort and every minute of the evening was enjoyed."[124] Du Bois was intrigued by this event, and Cuney-Hare must have sent him a copy of her *Musical America* article from a few years previously. "I own a picture of Bridgetower, you know – placed it on exhibit in the Maria Baldwin Memorial Library (a room at the League) with Beethoven and other data," she wrote. [125] Du Bois decided to print the whole article in the June issue of *The Crisis*, and Cuney-Hare parted with the image reluctantly. "Please take good care of my Bridgetower

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Du Bois had established the Krigwa Players in 1926, which may have inspired Cuney-Hare to found her own group for young people (Jonathan Shandell, "The Negro Little Theater Movement," in *The Cambridge Companion to African American Theatre*, ed. Harvey Young (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[121] Maud Cuney-Hare to W. E. B. Du Bois, March 30, 1927, Du Bois Papers.

[122] The players gave the same musicale again the next year in honor of the one hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary of the sonata's premiere. Some of the young people are listed as being students at the New England Conservatory and Boston University Art School. For further early nineteenth century effect, the play was put on by candlelight. "Anniversary of 'Kreutzer' Violinist Observed," *Musical America* 47, no. 21 (March 10, 1928): 4. The article erroneously states that it was for the 125th anniversary of Bridgetower's death.

[123] J. W. Youngblood, "Boston, Mass: Beethoven Festival," *New York Amsterdam News*, March 30, 1927, 9. Ferdinand Rousseve (1904-1925), a student at MIT, played Abbe Vogler. See Ferdinand Lucien Rousseve papers, Amistad Research Center, New Orleans, Louisiana.

[124] Ida M. Parker, "March 24, 1927" in *Record Book Number 3: League of Women for Community Service Beginning January 1924*. League of Women for Community Service Records [volume 2]. Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

[125] Cuney-Hare to Du Bois, March 30, 1927.

picture," she implored. "I had to have it unframed to send you and I really did not like having it out of my possession."[126] The June 1927 article features the portrait front and center, underneath the title. That Cuney-Hare had the portrait framed is striking; her interest in Bridgetower as an example of African American musical achievement transformed a clipping from a journal into a piece of historical evidence worthy of being preserved with care.

Cuney-Hare's dramatic portrayal of the friendship between Beethoven and Bridgetower was a simple but radical act. From a portrait of a violinist who looked like her students, Cuney-Hare went on to build a scene in which blackness and classical music together were remarkably unremarkable. She and the Allied Arts community could celebrate the musical accomplishments of Beethoven on his anniversary while also celebrating that the most famous classical composer of all time had collaborated with a musician of color. A few years later, Cuney-Hare's colleague Carl Diton, an African American pianist, composer, and journalist, wrote of classical music in the U.S. that "The race has not yet brought forth a great composer here or abroad, excluding naturally Beethoven, whom Maude Cuney Hare sought to prove was a black man."[127] This tongue-in-cheek comment points to Cuney-Hare's reputation as a scholar dedicated to shining light on the achievement of black musicians, seeking to prove their talent and worth at every turn.

[126] Maud Cuney-Hare to W. E. B. Du Bois, May 2, 1927, Du Bois Papers.

[127] Carl Diton, "The American Negro in Music," *The New York Amsterdam News*, December 18, 1929, A6. There is a tradition of people trying to prove Beethoven had black ancestry but scholars do not hold this to be true. See Dominique-René Lerma, "Beethoven as Black Composer," *Black Music Research Journal* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1990): 118-122.

Cuney-Hare as Scholar and Expert

Historian Pero Gaglo Dagbovie has grouped black women who engaged in the historical enterprise during the first half of the twentieth century into four categories: novelists, "historians without portfolio" (non-professional, self-taught, non-fiction writers), Ph.D. holders, and "accomplished and professionally trained scholars who, though not formally trained as historians, published historical monographs and/or engaged in rigorous historical research."[128] Because African American women experienced limited opportunities to train as professional historians during these decades because of both race and gender, such categories help account for the wide scope of historical work that they nevertheless produced. Cuney-Hare aligns most closely with the latter category, along with Dagbovie's examples of Shirley Graham Du Bois and Dorothy Porter Wesley, though calling her a curator best accounts for her wide-ranging activities.[129] Without ties to an institution, academic or otherwise, Cuney-Hare experienced both freedom and precariousness as she visited archives, went on folksong collecting trips, and engaged with musical communities in Boston and beyond. Examining key aspects of Cuney-Hare's scholarly activities reveal the challenges she faced as the foremost curator of African American music history of this era.

One of the most limiting factors on Cuney-Hare's career was the issue of funding. Josephine Harreld Love notes, writing of *NMM*, that "in contrast to the financial resources music scholars today often have at their disposal, her efforts would have been undertaken out of pocket: the trips to libraries, archives, and depositories of papers, correspondence, reproduction, and all

[128] Pero Gaglo Dagbovie, "Black Women Historians from the late 19th Century to the Dawning of the Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of African American History* 89, no. 3(Summer 2004): 257n12.

[129] Dagbovie writes that Graham Du Bois's work "was important as that of Arthur Schomburg" ("Black Women Historians," 257n12).

of the incidental costs leading to publication."[130] Cuney-Hare traveled across the southwest United States and Florida as well as Mexico, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.[131] Cuney-Hare may also have purchased materials for her collection throughout her career. In 1925, she wrote to Du Bois to ask if he thought she might qualify for a Guggenheim research fellowship, which were being offered for the first time.[132] Cuney-Hare applied in 1925 to undertake additional research on Creole music in the U.S., of which there was no complete study, but she was not selected. Cuney-Hare's financial situation had a tendency to tip toward the precarious (the Allied Arts Centre was also on a shoestring budget): in May 1926 she wrote to Du Bois in desperate need of work, acknowledging that what she could earn writing "an article now and then" was insufficient for the "present emergency."[133]

Cuney-Hare took her research seriously. In newspaper accounts and in her correspondence, critics and Cuney-Hare herself referred to the collection, and materials related to African American music history, as "data." One paper explained that Cuney-Hare "collected data, clippings and photographs from foreign sources and has been occupied in research in the principal libraries of the East."[134] In approaching her collection thus, Cuney-Hare leveraged otherwise unassuming objects into evidence in a serious, almost scientific, inquiry. Her exhibits were not mere curiosities to peer at, but physical proof that black people had been active and celebrated musicians for centuries. Cuney-Hare was determined to make her research and

[130] Love, introduction, xvii.

[131] Cuney-Hare wrote to Engel to share that she had discovered new musical materials on St. Croix during a 1926 visit. Maud Cuney-Hare to Charles Engel, February 22, 1926. Library of Congress, Music Division, ML95.H26587 Case.

[132] Maud Cuney-Hare to W. E. B. Du Bois, January 8, 1925, Du Bois Papers.

[133] "It may be that there is no place for me in the colored world and that I had best turn my efforts in the opposite direction. That I must soon determine," she told him. Maud Cuney-Hare to W. E. B. Du Bois, May 13, 1926, Du Bois Papers.

[134] "National Music School."

materials accessible for interested parties, whatever their race. During the 1930s she kept her "library for music research" at the Gainsboro building, 295 Huntington Avenue, where the Allied Arts Centre had studio space.[135] Located near the New England Conservatory and close to Symphony Hall, Cuney-Hare placed a black arts center (though open to all regardless of race) in a neighborhood with predominantly white "fine hotels, theaters…attractive shops, interior decorators, [and] student studios." Being in this neighborhood meant a level of normalcy: "it will mean that I can put our young folks' talent and wares in a section that will be in the regular stream irrespective of race. I abhor the segregated districts," she wrote to a friend.[136]

Her network included experts from across the country, and she took advantage of opportunities to further her knowledge wherever she could. Cuney-Hare attended a 1925 lecture on Ethiopian archaeology given by Harvard's George A. Reisner, Professor of Egyptology and director of several archaeological expeditions in North Africa. According to the *Boston Globe*, Reisner showed lantern slides of the past winter's dig and findings; he brought many "beautiful and historically important objects" back from Egypt.[137] Cuney-Hare's account shares a different takeaway: "He says the people were not at all Negro Africans, and then he proceeded to show a statue on the screen of a Negro Prince and Princess. Evidently the Negro royalty had no children!" "I was so angry!" she told Du Bois.[138] Her colleague Carl Engel at the Library of Congress wrote one of Cuney-Hare's recommendations for her Guggenheim Fellowship

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[135] "National Music School."

[136] Maud Cuney-Hare to Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford, September 25, 1927, in Adelaide M. Cromwell, *An African Victorian Feminist: The Life and Times of Adelaide Smith Casely Hayford, 1868-1960* (London: Frank Cass, 1986), 131. As Roses has pointed out, the location of this studio space as well as LWCS headquarters (558 Massachusetts Avenue) was significant because both were on or near the border between the (primarily white) art/cultural center of the city and the primarily black neighborhood of the South End (*Black Bostonians*, 56).

[137] "Dr. George A. Reisner Lectures on Ethiopia," *Boston Globe*, March 25, 1925, 6.

[138] Maud Cuney-Hare to W. E. B. Du Bois, April 1, 1925, Du Bois Papers.

application. He emphasized how important it was that "as many as possible Creole songs should be collected," and that as a mixed-race researcher from the South, Cuney-Hare was particularly suited to "the collecting of these tunes and words."[139] He recognized a need for Cuney-Hare's work over a decade before *NMM* was published. In an answer to his request, Cuney-Hare wrote to Engel in January 1923 with a list of composers of color, handwritten instead of typed because she was on tour. She later explained to Du Bois that Engel sent out typescript copies of this list when music clubs from around the country wrote asking for information about African American musicians.[140] As the list was intended for people interested in performing, she referenced her own *Six Creole Folk-songs* and listed publishers for contemporary composers.[141]

With her writing, as well as her exhibits and concerts, Cuney-Hare sought to widen the scope of American music history geographically and generically, as well as racially. She wrote to ask Du Bois if he would accept an article for *The Crisis* on sea shanties, which were conventionally perceived as white: "There are so many of the sailor songs that were taken from

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[139] Engel to Cuney-Hare, March 3, 1926. It is unclear how they met; her earliest letter to him in this collection is dated 1923.

[140] Maud Cuney-Hare to W. E. B. Du Bois, November 18, 1924, Du Bois Papers.

[141] Handwritten list in Cuney-Hare's hand, Library of Congress, Music Division, ML95.H26587 Case.

"Musicians of Negro descent:"
Chevalier de Saint George, George Bridgetower, José White, Edmund Dédé, Brindis de Salas, Adelemo de Nascimento, Albertini

"Creole composers:"
Basile Barés, Lucien Lambert, Samuel Snaer (cites her *Six Creole Folk-Songs*)

"Composers of today:"
Harry T. Burleigh, Clarence Cameron White, J. Rosamond Johnson, R. Nathaniel Dett, Carl Diton, Will Marion Cook (page one); James de Koven Thompson of Chicago, whose songs were sung by Schumann-Heink, N. Clark Smith of Kansas City, Gerald Tyler (St. Louis), Mellville Charlton, organist, of New York, Nora Douglas Holt of Chicago, J.H. Hebron (Philadelphia), as well as Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and "Montague Ring," aka Miss Ira Alridge" (page two).

Negro song – a fact not denied by folklorists," she told him.[142] In 1922 she wrote an article for *Musical America* in which she highlighted little-known archives and encouraged scholars and music lovers to decentralize New England as their area of focus.[143] "We must now turn towards the far Southwest in seeking new material of value pertaining to the making of America," she urged. She highlighted under-researched materials held by the State University in Austin that shed light on music-making in Spanish colonies well before the founding of the United States, including a keyboard arrangement from 1604. As she worked to promote African American musical achievement, Cuney-Hare encouraged other scholars to consider materials which would enrich understandings of music history and cross-cultural encounter in "America" writ large.

Cuney-Hare's *Negro Musicians and Their Music* was the culmination of decades of research. She completed the book in 1924 and wrote to Du Bois in August saying she had "revised my music history and finally got it off to a publisher…someone ought to accept it."[144] A few months later she wrote that a few publishers had been interested but considered it "too expensive a proposition," given its small potential readership.[145] As she continued to research and revise this project, Cuney-Hare continued to use exhibits as a means to engage the public; it was an integral part of how she presented history to audiences of all races. When her theater group performed the play *Dessalines, Black Emperor of Haiti* in 1930, she put on an exhibit to raise publicity. To Du Bois she wrote, "My music publisher graciously displayed for one week a collection of music, flags, (French and Haitian – I had to make a Haitian flag), a West Indian

[142] Cuney-Hare to Du Bois, November 18, 1924.

[143] "Texas Library Sheds Light on Early Spanish Music," *Musical America* 36 no. 12 (July 15, 1922): 31.

[144] Maud Cuney-Hare to W. E. B. Du Bois, August 13, 1924, Du Bois Papers.

[145] Cuney-Hare to Du Bois, November 18, 1924. She thought about splitting the manuscript into pieces, which Du Bois confirmed was sometimes the best way to get academic work published (W. E. B. Du Bois to Maud Cuney-Hare, November 21, 1924).

instrument and other data and mementoes that I had assembled for the window exhibit."[146] These items made real the history the play was about to bring to life.

Cuney-Hare was even committed to the visual/tangible as a tool for activism beyond history. In 1927 she wrote to Sierra Leonian activist Adelaide Casely Hayford, who had founded a school for girls in Freetown four years earlier, with an idea for how to support the school:

> Why can't you send me some articles and attractively dyed clothes – native work like small pieces of wood carving, bead work, basketry and materials (size suitable for hangings for studios, table covers, etc.). Mark them at a price as reasonable as you can so that we can attract the market. I will have an exhibit of them and then keep permanently a small collection always on hand to sell.[147]

Whether or not Hayford took up Cuney-Hare's offer, this image of exhibiting and selling objects conjures up the latter's 1924 exhibit held at Wanamaker's.

Cuney-Hare also had a collection of "Early American Music" which she had on display at Richardson's studio (connected to the Allied Arts Centre space on Huntington Avenue) in the summer of 1935.[148] Unfortunately, there are few clues as to what this collection contained, though it seems to have been separate from her African American collection. "The exhibit of Early American Music during last music-week, attracted the attention of professors of music and

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[146] Maud Cuney-Hare to W. E. B. Du Bois, May 28, 1930, Du Bois Papers.

[147] Cuney-Hare to Hayford in Cromwell, *Feminist*, 131. Hales, *Southern Family* 159n38: "Adelaide Casely Hayford, wife of barrister-at-law in British West Africa, supplied Cuney-Hare with African artifacts and may have helped with her research of African roots of African American music." This letter is also notable for Cuney-Hare's line that "I have prominent white friends…[who] are the people who will come to our exhibits, etc.," which hints at how Cuney-Hare depended on the support of white friends and patrons. Like the NAACP exhibit at Wannamaker's, Cuney-Hare hoped to attract a mixed-race audience, but even more so knew that in Boston, she could rely on friends and connections who were interested in the work she was doing. In her introduction (1996), Love mentions a list of white admirers who sent flowers to Cuney-Hare's funeral in her obituary in the Boston *Guardian*, but I have not been able to obtain a copy.

[148] This article provides no further description; it is difficult to tell whether these materials were somehow related to the rest of the *Musical America* article, which describes Cuney-Hare and her pupils celebrating the 150th anniversary of Bach and Handel's births. "Maud Cuney-Hare Presents Pupils," *Musical America* 55, no. 12 (July 1935): 33.

music critics with interesting comments from leading daily journals," reported one newspaper.[149] To Du Bois, she wrote:

> Oh, I placed an Exhibit of Early American Music at our Boston studio – open to the public and had fun doing it. There were newspaper notices, interesting visitors and comments. I have material from before 1815 – lovely old lithograph sheet music covers etc.[150]

As with the NAACP exhibit, Cuney-Hare met with visitors personally to discuss and explain the collection, and even when faced with major health issues, as was the case on this occasion, Cuney-Hare was determined to bring African American music history to the Boston community. *NMM* captures this spirit in its many in-text anecdotes, as when Cuney-Hare wonders aloud if an African American couple's yard decorations she once observed were related to a practice of Senegalese musicians.[151]

Finally, over a decade after completing her book manuscript, Cuney-Hare found a publisher in Associated Publishers, a firm led by African American historian Carter Godwin Woodson (1875-1850). In 1915, Woodson had founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and started the *Journal of Negro History* in 1916. Ramsey writes that Woodson's goal, to make African American history popular, "had dual purposes…the building of pride and self-esteem among blacks and the lessening of prejudice among whites."[152]

Because her death in 1936 and the book's publication happened so close together, and because the book was a compact, tangible, multipliable version of her historical work, Cuney-Hare's friends saw it has her lasting legacy. Du Bois wrote soon after Cuney-Hare's death that

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[149] "National Music School."

[150] Maud Cuney-Hare to W. E. B. Du Bois, June 16, 1934, Du Bois Papers.

[151] Cuney-Hare, *NMM*, 18.

[152] Ramsey, "Cosmopolitan," 22.

> she knew deprivation, insult and lack of understanding, yet she seldom flinched; she seldom faltered; she walked the continuing goddess through life, despising the Color Line, communing with the masters, teaching and believing the best, always planning good and fine enterprises, writing books and articles, lecturing, traveling. Above all, she has left us her books.[153]

Clarence Cameron White similarly wrote that "as a crowning achievement she gave the public an authoritative record of *Negro Musicians and Their Music* – a book that is more than an anthology, in fact a source book of great value to musicians, music lovers and all others who wish to be well informed on matters of artistic racial development and progress."[154]

Looking from Cuney-Hare's display cases to her book could mean thinking about juxtapositions. Just as what surrounds an object helps a viewer to interpret it, how might we assess chapter order and subsection placement, both in terms of new insights into the subjects at hand and in terms of Cuney-Hare's priorities? Thumbing to the Bridgetower illustration could mean thinking about pauses. Like a visitor to one of Cuney-Hare's exhibits, what might we accomplish if we studied an illustration for thirty seconds? one minute? What if we thought of these visuals as integral to the book, not supplementary? And walking from exhibit to bookshelf could mean thinking about flow. As visitors spend an entire afternoon among objects or make repeat visits on multiple days, how could we focus on or return to *Negro Musicians and Their Music* in ways that would change how we assess its information as a whole? To consider these questions is to account for Cuney-Hare's approach to African American music history, not one that is two-dimensional, like the page, but three-dimensional, like the book itself.

[153] W. E. B. Du Bois, "A forum of fact and opinion," April 4, 1936, draft of *Pittsburgh Courier* column, Du Bois Papers.

[154] Clarence Cameron White, "Maud Cuney-Hare," *Journal of Negro History* 21, no. 2 (April 1936), 240.

Epilogue
Four Curators Enter an Archive

If, in 2020, Kitty Cheatham, Atalie Unkalunt, Leonidas Westervelt, and Maud Cuney-Hare were each to walk into an archive and view some of their own materials, what might they encounter?[1] The answer could be the start of a project in its own right, one focused on the people, spaces, policies, and things at the institutions looking after and preserving their collections. At the Tennessee State Library and Archives in Nashville, Cheatham would find her collection of glass lantern slides carefully packed away to prevent damage. Now kept in eight boxes, the glass slides are about the size of a floppy disc, but heavier; Cheatham used them to project images for illustrated lectures. Her topics included Iceland (she believed that one of its famous explorers, Leif Ericson, discovered America, thus "AmERICa"), George Washington (Cheatham claimed to be a distant relation), and an alternative national anthem ("bombs bursting in air" was too violent for a patriotic song, she believed).[2] Did she intend for a slide featuring composer George Frederic Handel to be followed by one of Abraham Lincoln in box two? Only she could say if they are in their proper order.

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[1] See Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives*, trans. Thomas Scott-Railton (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013). Impetus for this project came not from the growing body of scholarship on archives, but from a book about taxidermy. In *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), Rachel Poliquin writes eloquently about what many consider to be a bizarre, macabre, and disconcerting practice: stuffing animal skins and posing the creatures as they could have been seen in life. While seemingly polar opposite to music studies, Poliquin's subject matter raises powerful questions that are beneficial for scholars in the latter field to consider.

For one thing, Poliquin's work primes us to look at, and linger in front of, the unusual and the extraordinary, and to experience the joy and wonder in doing so. It can encourage us to find parallels between a stuffed animal and an archival object, both out of their original context, preserved – in limbo – for posterity. It provides us with a starting point for language to help explore motivations behind the historical endeavor, the collection of things, the preservation of materials, and the production of knowledge. And taxidermy, like music, can prompt us to reflect on what it means to be human.

[2] See, for example, "Kitty Cheatham Decries Militant Tone of 'Star Spangled Banner,'" *Musical America* 25, no. 20 (March 17, 1919): 10; "Newport's Stone Mill: A Veritable Norse Relic, in the Belief of Miss Kitty Cheatham, Who Quotes Authorities," *New York Herald Tribune*, September 28, 1930, A8; F. D. P., "Extensive Program at Kitty Cheatham's Town Hall Concert," *New York Herald Tribune*, May 1, 1927, 22.

Unkalunt would find that a collection of fifty photographs – portraits of her in glamorous 1920s outfits and in Indian (perhaps "Indian") garb, group shots with other Indians or with groups of children, and a candid photo on a train between Paris and Nice after WWI – are held by the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. Because these images have been digitized, Unkalunt could first examine them at home before studying them in person. One of the goals of her Native arts organization, the First Sons and Daughters of America, was to work towards the establishment of "a Museum of Art, a Theatre and Art Galleries for co-related Arts at Washington, D.C., and for the United States Government to aid in support of [the] same."[3] While the current museum, which opened in 2004, is perhaps not exactly what she had in mind, it is nevertheless fitting that this collection has ended up there.[4]

Westervelt would find that his collection of Jenny Lind memorabilia is still held by the New-York Historical Society, with the documents housed at the Patricia D. Klingenstein Library on Central Park West and the objects at an off-site storage facility in New Jersey. The documents have been so little used, he would discover, that it might take five staff members to determine the location of a particular call number. Other readers in the Library might come and go, with visitors entering for a quick look while brides-to-be and their mothers tour the reading room as a possible reception venue. From the floor below would come the deep rumble of soundtrack and narration as a film played in the auditorium.

Cuney-Hare would find her sheet music collection in the Robert W. Woodruff Library at Clark-Atlanta University, materials having been carefully labeled with box and folder numbers

[3] Concert program, "A Series of Four Evenings: Vocal, Piano, Chamber Music and Dance," presented by the Society of First Sons and Daughters of America, Hotel McAlpin, March 3, 1937. 1990.078 Indian Music Collection. 1894-1937, Oklahoma Historical Society.

[4] The photographs were originally in the collection of a Mrs. Dale Hall and were donated to the Smithsonian by the C.H. Nash Memorial Museum (Memphis, TN) in 1978.

after they arrived, following her death. A friend wrote to Du Bois on Cuney-Hare's behalf late in her life asking whether he thought Atlanta University (merged with Clark College in 1988), where he was then teaching, could use the materials: "Mrs. H has always suspected to leave this music collection to the Boston Public Library, but is now wondering if it would not be accessible to more colored music students if located in Atlanta or some Negro college."[5] While this collection is a known entity (though scholars have yet to explore it in depth), Cuney-Hare would find that there is still confusion as to where her other materials, like the Bridgetower portrait, have ended up. If they decided to stay and perform research, Cheatham, Unkalunt, Westervelt, and Cuney-Hare might experience moments of joy, frustration, excitement, monotony, confusion, and delight. They might make unexpected discoveries and face dashed hopes. And they might – or, likely, would – be filled many, many questions, only some of which would be answered before being replaced with more.

As part of this dissertation, Cheatham, Unkalunt, Westervelt, and Cuney-Hare have entered an archive of scholarship at Harvard University and on digital platforms. From this vantage point, their stories reveal some of the ways in which individuals looked after and preserved the American musical past during the early twentieth century. Issues of race and gender stood at the core of their efforts: while their work to promote the musical-historical activities of women and people of color can be understood as progressive in some ways, it also had the power to re-inscribe racial and gender inequality. From Cheatham's racist positioning of African American spirituals and Unkalunt's navigation of American Indian stereotypes, to Westervelt's presentation of his view of a female musician and Cuney-Hare's promotion of African American art music, these curators engaged in shaping issues of race and gender in the

[5] Letter from Nadine Wright to W. E. B. Du Bois, February 4, 1936. Du Bois Papers, 1803-1999, MS 312,University of Massachusetts Amherst.

United States that remain unresolved a century later. Depending on how they are crafted, and by whom, narratives of the American musical past can both combat and contribute to artistic and social inequality in the United States.[6] Anyone involved with the crafting of American music history should ask themselves, how has the material I care about shape the realities of race in America, and how does race in America shape my activities of care?

To curate public music history is to share one's care and responsibility for the past with a broad audience. The work of Cheatham, Unkalunt, Westervelt, and Cuney-Hare demonstrates that many nuanced ideas of what and whose music qualified as American were constructed and circulated outside of academic circles – among school children, women's clubs, and concert-goers – during the first half of the twentieth century. Constructing a historiography through the eyes and ears of curators, instead of the work of academics, provides an opportunity to reflect on who participates in, and is included in, the musical-historical endeavor. In a 2013 blog post, musicologist Carol Hess wonders why "public musicology" and "musicology" are now considered separate entities; she explains that a 1939 meeting of the American Musicological Society, which took place at the close of the period this dissertation covers, featured a wide variety of concerts, talks, and approaches to the study of music and music history. "Readers [of the event's press coverage]," she notes, "were given to understand that musicology was not confined to archives and libraries but was a living and breathing enterprise, a dynamic line of inquiry that embraces past, present, and future while enlightening the non-specialist public."[7]

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[6] Reactions to Kendrick Lamar's 2018 Pulitzer Prize for music, for example, raised questions about race, genre, and recognition in American music. See Amanda Petrusich, "The Cultural and Political Forces Behind Kendrick Lamar's Pulitzer," *New Yorker*, April 18, 2018, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-cultural-and-political-forces-behind-kendrick-lamar-pulitzer.

[7] Carol A. Hess, "Public Musicology . . . 1939," *Musicology Now* (blog), American Musicological Society, November 15, 2013, https://www.musicologynow.org/2013/11/public-musicology-1939.html. Cited in William Cheng, *Just Vibrations: The Purpose of Sounding Good* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016), 13n51.

Following Hess's line of inquiry, what can scholars, and the public, learn from the Cheathams, Unkalunts, Westervelts, and Cuney-Hares of the twenty-first century? What American music histories are radio hosts, collectors, bloggers, concert pianists, and archivists telling, and how can scholars engage with these narratives?

Music scholars might benefit from pausing to consider *themselves* as curators of their chosen material. This could mean recognizing in the enthusiasm and dedication of Cheatham, Unkalunt, Westervelt, and Cuney-Hare the joy and wonder that are part of opening boxes and sifting through folders in archives, successfully finagling paragraphs in Word documents, and sharing discoveries with colleagues. This might also mean that music scholars take the time to ponder their authority, examine their juxtapositions, and scrutinize their responsibility to musicians of the past and of the future. Employing a lens of curating would also help us realize, as William Cheng has suggested, a vision of "musicology as all the activities, care, and caregiving of people who identify as members of the musicology community."[8] To enrich our understanding of American music, we need only take care to recognize our own active role in shaping its histories.

[8] Cheng, *Just Vibrations*, 7.

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