

this interpretation as well. The ensemble sounds clean without being too present, and the ambient reverb creates a suitable space that captures the distinctive quality of brass and percussion instruments from this time.

Accompanying these recordings are excellent notes by the Reverend Nola Reed Knouse, director of the Moravian Music Foundation. In volume one, Rev. Knouse gives a history of the 26th North Carolina Infantry and its band, paying particular attention to the band's Moravian heritage. She offers background information on the manuscript books and explains the extensive preparation that went into this project. A history of each piece is given, some fairly detailed, and Rev. Knouse provides amusing anecdotes or contextual details that help explain the role of this music in the soldiers' lives. Robert E. Sheldon (former Curator of Musical Instruments in the Music Division, Library of Congress) then provides additional notes on brass instruments of the time, the horns of the original 26th North Carolina band, and the instruments used for these recordings. In the notes to volume two, Rev. Knouse reuses her original introductory material, then discusses three Moravian regimental bands (including the 26th North Carolina Infantry). Her discussion of the music is more thorough in this volume and includes valuable information on composer-arranger Edward Leinbach of Salem, North Carolina, and other pertinent musicians.

New World Records, the American Brass Quintet, and the Moravian Music Foundation should be applauded for putting together these historically accurate, musically convincing, and pedagogically useful recordings. *A Storm in the Land* and *Cheer, Boys, Cheer!* should be a part of any collection that intends to provide a comprehensive portrait of nineteenth-century American music.

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Journal of the Society for American Music (2014) Volume 8, Number 2, pp. 270–273.
© The Society for American Music 2014 doi:10.1017/S1752196314000157

Noel Lester, *Piano Portraits from 19th-Century America*. Centaur 2250, 1995.

Maria Ferrante and Lincoln Mayorga, *Best Kept Secrets: A Treasury of Passionate American Song Heard in 19th Century American Salons and Concert Venues*. Massachusetts: Maria Ferrante, 2007.

The nineteenth century was, for many music lovers, the golden age of piano music. This view holds true for practitioners on both sides of the Atlantic, but precisely *which* piano music has altered over time. Today most people would agree that composers such as Chopin, Schumann, and Liszt rank as the most popular in performances of music from this era. But it was not the case in nineteenth-century America, for a completely different list of composers showered the public with numerous publications of piano music. Compositions by men such as Charles Grobe, who published almost 2000 works, are much more likely to be encountered

in American binder's volumes and thus represent more fully what music was heard in American homes during this period. As such, Noel Lester's *Piano Portraits from 19th-Century America* presents a representative sampling of character pieces by nine different composers spanning nearly the entire century, from Benjamin Carr's "Yankee Doodle Arranged as a Rondo" from his *Siege of Tripoli* (1804), to Edward MacDowell's *To a Water-lily* (1896). The earlier half of the century is represented by Carr, Charles Grobe, Stephen Foster, and Arthur Clifton. The prolific Charles Grobe (whose catalog includes more than 1000 pieces) gives us the *United States Grand Waltz* (1845), which exemplifies the "brilliant but not difficult" parlor music of the antebellum era.¹ The four selections by Foster also fall in this category and comprise two polkas, variations on his famous "Old Folks at Home," and a schottisch. The *Original Air with Variations* by the lesser-known Arthur Clifton (b. 1784, not 1874, as the back cover mistakenly states) represents a genre (theme and variations) that remained popular throughout the nineteenth century; the writing occasionally exceeds the typical style found in such works, especially in the Schumannesque first variation. William Mason (1829–1908) is another less-familiar figure, although he was the son of the famous hymnodist Lowell Mason. William studied in Europe, and the influence of Chopin (as indicated in the CD liner notes) is evident in his *Lullaby*, op. 10. A lovely work of modest demands, it exemplifies the beauty of this collection.

The midcentury is well represented with Richard Hoffman's *Dixiana* (1859) and four pieces by Louis Moreau Gottschalk, in addition to the four works by Foster. Hoffman studied with top European pianists, including Leonard de Meyer, Ignaz Moscheles, and Anton Rubenstein, and appeared frequently as Jenny Lind's accompanist in the United States. Gottschalk even dedicated *Le banjo* to Hoffman. Such associations would have won him favor with U.S. purchasers of sheet music, who undoubtedly would have admired his creative settings of "Dixie" in *Dixiana*. Gottschalk's works on this CD include a modern favorite, *Le banjo*, and three others. Of these, the *Valse poétique: Sospiro* typifies the parlor piano style of midcentury: a waltz with measured trills, sprinklings of octaves and other filigree in the right hand, and in the left "exquisite details of harmony" (per Gottschalk, as Lester records in the liner notes). Gottschalk's *Pasquinade* is stylistically similar to the *Valse poétique*, but *Union: Paraphrase de concert* exemplifies virtuoso piano concert work of the midcentury.

Gottschalk's *Union* is dedicated to the Union General George McClellan, and with the Hoffman *Dixiana* evokes or refers to the Civil War. In a similar vein, John Knowles Paine's *Funeral March in Memory of President Lincoln*, op. 9 effectively expresses the sadness and shock surrounding the president's death, while employing musical devices associated with the dead hero (march, dotted rhythms, etc.) long familiar in European music. (Paine began an orchestral tone poem on Lincoln but did not complete it.) The other four works by Paine presented on this disc, all taken from his *Ten Sketches: In the Country* op. 26, also strike the listener as strongly connected to the European piano tradition.

¹ Candace Bailey, *Music and the Southern Belle: From Accomplished Lady to Confederate Composer* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), 102–7.

Edward MacDowell's four works on *Piano Portraits* date from 1893–96. The two selections from the composer's *Woodland Sketches*, op. 51 (1896) include his famous "To a Wild Rose." The final two works on the CD are taken from his *Twelve Virtuoso Etudes*, op. 46. no. 5, "Elfin Dance" requires the pianist to move over most of the keyboard with a showy, light touch. MacDowell's "Polonaise" is the final work in this opus and is clearly influenced by Chopin's polonaises; it is the most virtuosic and distinctly European-influenced music on the disc. With this work we have moved beyond the simple parlor music played by young amateur women in the antebellum home to music demanding greater skill, perhaps as exemplified by the "piano girl" derided by James Huneker in 1904.²

The performances on *Piano Portraits* delight the listener with effective dynamic control, effervescent filigree, and sensitive articulation. Performers could easily gloss over this music, but Lester brings to his performance a serious appreciation for each work that makes the entire disc a joy to listen to. His *Le banjo* flies off with a brisk tempo that emphasizes the potential concert nature of this piece. The *United States Grand Waltz* exemplifies the detail and preparation with which Lester approaches these pieces. Another example that requires several carefully placed articulation and dynamic nuances is Paine's *Funeral March in Memory of President Lincoln*. The same composer's "Under the Lindens" confirms this pianist's appreciation for an often overlooked repertory. The sound quality is clear and small details of articulation are easily heard.

The liner notes, written by Lester, provide information on the composers represented on the disc, although discussion of the pianos for which this music was intended would have been instructive as well; acknowledging the physical changes of the piano through the nineteenth century would help put the music in context, particularly since the album is organized chronologically. Similarly, more information on the pianists for whom this music was composed would have augmented the story of the piano in nineteenth-century America.

This is a delightful collection of "Piano Portraits" from nineteenth-century America and one well worth owning. The only genre missing is an operatic transcription or fantasia—a frequently-encountered type of piano piece in binder's volumes. So much U.S.-published piano music survives from this period that a single disc cannot represent it all, and in this regard Lester's *Piano Portraits from 19th-Century America* accomplishes all that it sets out to do.

Piano Portraits makes an excellent companion to *Best Kept Secrets: A Treasury of Passionate American Song Heard in 19th Century American Salons and Concert Venues* by Maria Ferrante (soprano) and Lincoln Mayorga (piano). Besides the obvious overlap of chronology and place, both CDs cover a variety of music designed for amateur and professional performers. *Best Kept Secrets* includes music only from the latter half of the century, but also incorporates pieces composed for parlor use (such as Mrs. Bloede's "Far Away," ca. 1862) and those that belong more appropriately to the post-Restoration concert (Amy Beach's "The Year's at the Spring" of 1899–1900,

² Judith Tick, "Passed Away is the Piano Girl: Changes in American Music Life, 1870–1900," in *Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition, 1150–1950*, ed. Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 327.

not 1841 as given in the notes). This is not to say that “amateur” musicians did not perform both, but rather that the later repertory involves more obvious display and larger sound acquired from more serious study. Surely this distinction is what is meant by the disc’s extended subtitle.

For the most part *Best Kept Secrets* shies away from the obvious songs that might have been included on this recording (“The Year’s at the Spring” being an exception) and seeks out less familiar repertory. For example, the song representing Foster is “Why, No One to Love?” rather than others more traditionally used to represent this composer. The large proportion of songs by Gottschalk (six out of eighteen) skews the representation of composers a bit; on the other hand one is much more likely to hear the composer’s piano music rather than his songs, so this abundance of Gottschalk’s vocal music is welcome. Some of the other composers on *Best Kept Secrets* are more obscure, with Franz Abt being the most frequently encountered composer in binder’s volumes.

A singer could quite easily approach many of these pieces as simple parlor songs and sing with little concern for details, but Ferrante brings a freshness and appreciation that makes the CD a delight. Her diction is clear and she is careful and delicate in the sometimes-awkward melodies, descending or ascending throughout passages with ease and without breaks in quality. She brings a sparkle of enjoyment to each piece, one that is distinctly heard through the recording. This is an admirable quality and especially effective for this repertory. Ferrante captures an appropriate sound for different types of pieces: the delicate approach to “Far Away” in no way suggests the fullness heard in later works such as “Le Papillion.” Her artistry in this regard is matched by Mayorga’s accompaniments, which are as restrained or ebullient as the soprano’s singing style.

Steven Ledbetter’s notes for *Best Kept Secrets* provide an overview of American vocal music in the nineteenth century, but do not distinguish between the “salons and concert venues” of the title. For example, Gottschalk’s virtuoso “Le Papillion” was composed for the opera star Carlotta Patti, intending to display her famous coloratura technique. Such information, as well as dates (even if approximate) for his songs, would supplement the descriptions. A more detailed account of the songs and their placement in the American song tradition of the nineteenth century would assist the listener in better understanding the context for these pieces. They do not represent the same singers, venues, or audience expectations. In this sense, the notes disappoint.

Nonetheless, *Best Kept Secrets* is a lovely recording of a repertory that represents the type of music that many Americans knew in the nineteenth century. Composers such as Schubert were not unknown but, with a few exceptions, many Americans did not encounter his music. Rather, the songs included here illustrate the compositions one might expect to hear in parlors and concert venues across the country. To hear them done as expertly as they are on this recording is a further treat.

Candace Bailey

