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*An Annotated Index to Selected Articles from The Musical
Courier, 1880–1940 (review)*

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the fall of 1929 he closed his record and phonograph business for good.

For his discography, Wile has opted for a chronological listing by recording date. Each entry contains matrix number, take (Edison used letters), artist(s), title of the side along with composer and authors of the lyrics (if any), plus catalog numbers of the releases. Diamond Disc catalog numbers are followed by "L" or "R" to indicate the left or right side of a record (Edison's rather odd way of indicating sides 1 and 2). Many records were issued in multiple formats, so Wile has used the prefix "DD" for Diamond Disc, "BA" for Blue Amberol cylinder, "LP" for Long Playing, "NT" for Needle Type, and "SR" for Sample Record. Sample Records were 12-inch, dubbed, vertically-cut discs for dealer use. Wile lists all unpublished recordings, many of which have survived. "Test" is used to indicate a test pressing still held by the Edison National Historical Site and "MM" is used to indicate if a metal matrix still exists. All Edison disc records were double-faced, and Wile also includes the date when the "Music Room Committee" decided on the coupling for the opposite side.

Blue Amberol cylinders were generally dubbed from vertically-cut Diamond Disc masters, and Wile indicates the cylinder master number along with the take of the disc master used for the dubbing. Once electrical recording began, the Edison Company frequently made simultaneous vertical and lateral disc masters on separate cutters, split from the same microphone feed. In these cases, the lateral matrix number can be identified by the prefix "N" used by Edison to indicate a Needle-Type matrix.

The discography is organized into chapters for each of the four years, plus additional chapters covering the Columbia Street (West Orange, NJ) Matrix Series, Long Playing Records, and the Slogan Reproducing Machine Records. The Columbia Street masters consisted primarily of Edison's monthly advertising records, each 12-inch disc containing a brief fragment of each of the new releases for that month. The series was short-lived, ending in February, 1927. Edison introduced a fine-grooved, Long Playing record in 1926, with a record/play time of twenty-four minutes for a 10-inch disc and forty minutes for the 12-inch discs. The Edison LPs were

prone to skipping and the format was discontinued after about two years.

Experimental recordings are listed in an appendix, nearly all of which are 10-inch, acoustically recorded masters; some are standard Diamond Discs and others are in Long Playing format. Wile uses some terminology which may be confusing. The "groove pitch" of a disc or cylinder is the number of lines per inch (LPI), alternately referred to as "threads per inch" (TPI), on the record surface (the higher the number, the longer the record/play time). Wile refers to this specification as "turns per inch." He also says that the standard for Diamond Discs was 300; it was actually 150 (see Tom Owen, "A Technical and Historical Look at the Stylus/Groove Interface in Recording Past to Present" [presented at the 74th Audio Engineering Society convention, 8–12 October 1983, AES Preprint 2048]).

Wile provides four indexes, by title, artist, accompanist, and vocal chorus, the last being an index of vocalists and speakers on instrumental recordings, when they are documented in the Edison files. Each entry in the index is followed by the matrix number(s) associated with that entry. I found at least one discrepancy in the artist index. Under "Martinelli, Giovanni" the first matrix number is 12053, an Edison LP. However, 12053 contains excerpts from Verdi's *Aida* with tenor Giovanni Zenatello, not Martinelli. Such problems are minor and rare. Wile's reputation for methodical, painstaking research is continually in evidence in this discography. *The Edison Discography 1926–1929* is an important volume which will prove invaluable to researchers, institutions, and collectors.

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An Annotated Index to Selected Articles from *The Musical Courier*, 1880–1940. By Peter H. Adams. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009. [2 vols. (x, 1611 p.) ISBN 9780810866584. \$225.] Indexes.

The Musical Courier, which began publication in 1880 as *The Musical and Sewing Machine Gazette* and appeared weekly for most of its life until its demise in 1962, was one of the most widely read music journals

in the United States before World War I. Its editors, Otto Floersheim and Marc Blumenberg, relished controversy and found themselves the targets of lawsuits on a number of occasions, most famously when Blumenberg accused Victor Herbert of musical plagiarism and was sued for libel in 1902 (for a detailed analysis of the case, see Joseph Kaye, *Victor Herbert* [New York: Watt, 1931], 180–201). W. S. B. Mathews characterized their work thus in 1892:

The Musical Courier affords a great variety of interesting matter, and the treatment is light and brilliant rather than earnest and dignified. It is the tone of the club man after dinner, rather than of the enthusiast at his desk. Accordingly, it has a large following of what might be called the “worldly element” in music. It fills a place, and it would not be impossible [*sic*] to remove from its columns everything against which gentlemanly taste would rebel without in the act depriving it of the source of its real power. (“Musical Journalism and Journalists,” *Music* 2, no. 3 [July 1892]: 240.)

From the beginning, this journal also provided extensive coverage of the “Music Trades,” meaning the manufacturing and marketing of musical instruments and scores. This emphasis on the music business was unique in the late nineteenth century and provides a useful record of the week-by-week evolution of American music manufacturing. Because of the wide range of topics covered in the journal, and because of the “insider” stories that so frequently appeared in its pages, it is extremely valuable to historians.

This journal has never been indexed in its entirety, and its treasures require significant spadework in order to be brought to light. At this time, I know of no projected index to the complete contents of the journal, though this is not for lack of interest on the part of scholars and librarians. Peter H. Adams has compiled a reference work that begins the process of providing access to this journal by indexing articles on selected topics from the journal’s first sixty years, and it is enough to whet the appetite for a more comprehensive treatment.

The index is divided into two volumes. Volume 1 (921 pages) is a systematic index

to subjects selected by the author. Many, but not all, of the entries in this index are annotated, some in considerable detail. Volume 2 consists of a chronological listing of the indexed contents of each issue of the journal during the period covered. Since the coverage is selective, the length of each issue’s description is variable, with some entire issues labeled “nothing of significance.” There are also four appendices, listing: A. Companies and Individuals, B. Occupation headers, C. Cities, States, and Countries, and D. Patent Numbers and Trade Mark Numbers.

The crucial word in the title is “selective,” as the 1,611 pages of the two volumes cover only a small fraction of the journal’s contents. The author states that “the purpose of assembling this annotated index is to provide selective bibliographic control of *MC* for music researchers” (p. vi). The primary focus is on music instrument manufacturing, and in this area the coverage is fairly extensive. The principal manufacturers are well represented, as are such topics as patents, lawsuits, import and export data, exhibitions, and trade associations. The index includes sixty-one references to the Braumuller Piano Company and ten pages of references to Steinway & Sons and the members of the Steinway family. There is one reference to inventor Hugo Ahlstrand and three to the inventor Frederick Horace Clark. Readers will find six entries on “saxophone” and sixty-seven pages of entries on “piano” and piano-related topics. In addition to articles, the index provides selective coverage of advertisements, though only a fraction of the dozens of advertisements that appeared in every issue are included in this index.

During the course of compiling the index, Adams responded to requests from friends and colleagues to look for articles pertaining to certain other topics. These topics include black musicians; ethnomusicology; biographies and obituaries of composers; the industrialization of the United States; the influence of Nazi Germany on Europe’s music scene; the invention of the installment plan; new technologies such as the use of aluminum, electricity, radio, celluloid, cylinder record players, movies; the abolition of the consignment plan; modern dance; John Philip Sousa; and Antonín Dvořák (p. vi). This eclectic list gives a

sense of the range of topics that appear in the index in addition to the principal focus of instrument manufacturing. There are numerous additional subject headings that are labeled "not actively collected" and represented by a few articles that have some bearing on instrument manufacturing.

The end result of this research is a voluminous index that lacks consistency in coverage and format. In some cases the annotations are extensive and informative; in other cases they are brief or nonexistent. The subject index contains many topics that are covered only partially, listing some articles while leaving others unmentioned. Among the topics "actively indexed" is "U.S. music history (including Native Americans)," but Adams only scratches the surface of this broad topic with four entries on Native American music and thirty-three entries on United States music history. Given that the *Musical Courier* was a living chronicle of the American music scene during its period of most active growth and development, the coverage of this index is minimal. There are three entries for Victor Herbert, one for Marc Blumenberg, fifty-two for Musical Courier Co. (all between 1888 and 1897), but no mention of the notorious lawsuit discussed earlier, which surely has a bearing on the music industry in the United States. There are no subject headings for "Ragtime" or "Jazz," although both topics were covered in the *Musical*

Courier and are related to the actively indexed topics of "black musicians" and "U.S. Music History." Adams has proven his perseverance in compiling a large amount of very useful information, but the subjective nature of his selection methods leaves the researcher uneasy about the comprehensiveness of the coverage.

The question at the root of this assessment is whether "selective bibliographic control" (p. vi) is really bibliographic control at all. One has the same feeling with many internet searches: the volume of "hits" returned is so massive that only an ingrate could ask for more. But if the hundreds of thousands of "hits" do not return the one piece of information that is needed, the search is ultimately a failure. Even worse, if the volume of information is so large that the researcher is lulled into a false sense that he could not possibly have overlooked anything, then the integrity of his research will be undermined.

This index deserves a place on the shelves of research libraries, and it will be welcomed by institutions and researchers devoted to the history of musical instrument manufacturing in the United States. Others will continue to look forward to the day when the *Musical Courier* is treated to a comprehensive index.

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