

**“THE FOLLOWING RECORD”:  
MAKING SENSE OF PHONOGRAPHIC PERFORMANCE, 1877-1908**

Patrick Feaster

Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology,  
Indiana University  
April 2007

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

---

Richard Bauman, Ph.D., Chairman

---

John H. McDowell, Ph.D.

---

Michael McGerr, Ph.D.

---

Ruth M. Stone, Ph.D.

April 6, 2007

© 2007

Patrick Feaster

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

## Preface

I started collecting 78 rpm records as a grade-schooler, along with a variety of other old things: coins, stamps, newspapers, books, beer cans; in fact, I used to joke that I “collected collections.” My family spent a lot of weekends at estate sales, swap meets, flea markets, and antique shops, seeking out disheveled furniture to refinish and parts for a 1930 Model A Ford truck my father had begun to restore as a bicentennial project. In retrospect, I suppose my collections gave me something to do during these outings that was also feasible on a dollar-a-week allowance. Most of these collections fell by the wayside in high school, but a few years later, now with a master’s degree in history, I happened across a stack of 78 rpm records—cheap—at a junk store in Martinsville, Indiana, and picked them up for old time’s sake. This find rekindled my interest, and soon I was combing the Internet for information about “pioneer recording artists” and record labels, bidding on hard-to-find items in vintage record auctions, and branching out into wax cylinders and other more challenging formats.

In the course of listening to some of these recordings, I began to notice intriguing patterns in them—peculiarities of wording and structure that seemed to embody conscious adaptations to the medium. Neither the academic nor the “hobbyist” literature on the early phonograph seemed able (or inclined) to survey or account for these patterns, which seemed to me to hold within them the secret to understanding how people of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had first approached the mediation of performance in actual practice. Newly armed with the ethnographic perspectives of a folklorist, I set about trying to make sense of these puzzling aural documents—to rediscover their conventions, their aesthetics, and the contexts of their making and use.

The task of doing so ended up taking rather longer than I had anticipated, as some new and indispensable trove of source material seemed to turn up every few months—in this dawning era of digital source repositories with full-text search capabilities, it became ever harder to know when to say “when.” By the same token, the project also yielded richer results than I had expected, and I ended up needing to split off a number of lengthy sections I had originally envisioned as parts of this dissertation: a performance-centered prehistory of phonography, an examination of early notions of phonographic

“authenticity” and “fakery,” and an analysis of the life and work of the talking-machine storyteller Cal Stewart. However, I believe what remains will still serve as a thorough introduction to a new analytical framework I am advocating for “reading” early sound recordings and interpreting the events surrounding them—one which I have found illuminating, and which I hope others may find useful as well.

I would like to thank Richard Bauman, the chair of my dissertation committee, in whose Spring 1999 seminar on “genre” this project first began to take shape, and whose advice, support, and enthusiasm have been invaluable ever since; also John McDowell, Michael McGerr, and Ruth M. Stone, the other members of my committee, for their helpful comments and suggestions. I am grateful as well to the University Graduate School for supporting my writing in 2004 with a Summer Dissertation Fellowship. A number of other individuals shared rare source materials, served as willing sounding-boards for the ideas presented here at various stages of their development, or otherwise helped me somewhere along the way, including Jean-Paul Agnard, Deborah Beckenbaugh-Kligora, Tim Brooks, Paul Charosh, Aaron Cramer, Leonard De Graaf, Peter Dilg, Jerry Fabris, Tim Fabrizio, Cornelia Fales, Peter Fraser, David Giovannoni, Michael Khanchalian, Bill Klinger, Allen Koenigsberg, David N. (“Uncle Dave”) Lewis, David R. Lewis, Michael Quinn, Steve Ramm, and Jake Smith. But I owe my greatest debt of gratitude to my wife, Ronda L. Sewald, both for our frequent conversations on mutually frustrating aspects of phonographic theory and for her unflagging support and patience as my dissertation seemed to hover about “two weeks” from completion for a couple years straight.

**Patrick Feaster**

**“The Following Record”:**

**Making Sense of Phonographic Performance, 1877-1908**

This dissertation extends our knowledge of early sound recording practices by tracing the initial construction of the “phonogenic frame,” a mode of behavior intended to yield phonograms or “records” for use on future occasions rather than performances for immediate apprehension by a traditional audience. By combining close listening to actual surviving phonograms with a survey of contemporaneous writings about them, I document a variety of acoustic, structural, and linguistic adaptations through which people in the United States first sought to make the phonograph “work” meaningfully as a medium of performance.

I begin with an account of the first public demonstrations of Thomas Edison’s tinfoil phonograph in 1877-78, which—contrary to received opinion—were far from simple as sounds were “reproduced” at different speeds or backwards, layered one over the other into elaborate montages, and otherwise manipulated to create novel effects. Next, I introduce the key factors that shaped the commercial recording industry between 1888 and 1908 (the new arts of sound recording, phonogenic performance, and phonograph exhibition, coupled with imperfect methods of duplication) and some speech conventions that arose to fit the distinctive exigencies of new sound media (e.g., the word “hello” in telephony and the spoken phonogram announcement). The remainder of the dissertation explores the phonographic representation of an assortment of individual performance genres ranging from minstrel shows to auctioneering chants, from sales pitches to vaudeville acts, and from band music to dance calling.

I conclude that early phonographic practice involved much creative reworking of “recorded” subject matter and the emergence of new conventions that were as essential to the success of the medium as was the development of the machines themselves. In particular, my analysis reveals an enduring tension between two modes of phonographic representation in which the listener was respectively invited to eavesdrop on an event or to become a full participant in it—a distinction with broad formal and social implications.

## Table of Contents

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <b>INTRODUCTION</b>                               | 1   |
| Listening Through Phonograms                      | 5   |
| Phonographicists, Academics, and Listening        | 9   |
| Past Views of the Phonographic “Art”              | 21  |
| Secondary Orality and Schizophonia                | 26  |
| Tympanic Transduction, Induction, and Education   | 30  |
| Performing For and With the Machine               | 34  |
| Acoustic Recording and Phonographic Transcription | 49  |
| <br>  |     |
| <b>1. TRICKS WITH TINFOIL</b>                     | 70  |
| Retroduction and Deictic Inversion                | 74  |
| Rhymes, Songs, and Laughter                       | 89  |
| Speed-Shifting and Reverse Education              | 102 |
| The Phonographic Montage                          | 107 |
| Prerecorded Tinfoils                              | 113 |
| <br>  |     |
| <b>2. THE EARLY COMMERCIAL PHONOGRAM</b>          | 132 |
| “A New Kind of Books”                             | 132 |
| How the Phonograph Became “Practical”             | 138 |
| The Recording Industry Gets Underway              | 147 |
| The Arts of Recording and Phonogenic Performance  | 155 |
| The Drama of Education                            | 181 |
| Phonography Becomes a Mass Medium                 | 199 |
| <br>  |     |
| <b>3. SPEECH CONVENTIONS OF EARLY SOUND MEDIA</b> | 263 |
| “Don’t Hello to Me—I’m no Telephone”              | 264 |
| “Graphophone Says the Line is Busy”               | 277 |
| “My Mother Was a Phonograph”                      | 287 |
| The Spoken Phonogram Announcement                 | 304 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| <b>4. PHONOGRAPHIC DEPICTION</b>                | 367 |
| The Simulated Ovation                           | 369 |
| Roots of Audio Theater                          | 375 |
| Ethnic Caricature and Early Phonographic Comedy | 391 |
| The Quartet Descriptive                         | 417 |
| <br>  |     |
| <b>5. DANCE CALLS AND SALES PITCHES</b>         | 461 |
| Dances with Calls                               | 461 |
| The Verbal Art of the Marketplace               | 486 |
| <br>  |     |
| <b>6. COMPLEX ENTERTAINMENTS</b>                | 552 |
| Minstrelsy                                      | 552 |
| Vaudeville                                      | 596 |
| <br>  |     |
| <b>CONCLUSION</b>                               | 658 |



## INTRODUCTION

A stentorian voice announces “The Passing of the Circus Parade, by Len Spencer and Gilbert Girard!” Next comes a fanfare on a trumpet. Then, while a band begins to play in the background, you hear a confusion of voices, including what sounds like the declamation of an evangelist. After a few seconds, one speaker drowns everything else out: “Attention, people! You are now about to witness the grandest pageant that ever graced the streets of your beautiful city—the passing in splendor of a carnival from ancient Rome, costing over two hundred thousand dollars! Witness this pageant of all its glorious magnificence! Follow it to the circus ground, where its snow-white canvasses covering six thousand square feet will be thrown open to the public at one o’clock today! Don’t forget the grand balloon ascension by Manzilvosky! Also Signior Spaghetti, the king of wire walkers, suspended between the earth and sky by a slender wire!” At this, the band grows suddenly louder for a few moments. As it begins to fade out, you hear a loud voice shout: “Hold your horses, the elephants are coming!” An ear-splitting trumpeting immediately follows, at which a spectator pipes up: “Oh, gee, see de elephants—one, two, t’ree, oh, dere’s *ten* of ’em!” Murmurs of admiration ensue. An artificial-sounding “ma-ma!” is answered with: “Oh, don’t cry, Willie, don’t cry, the big elephant won’t hurt little Willie.” Then a rube interjects: “Hey, here comes the cowboy band!” It plays once through the refrain of “Creole Belles” and then starts to fade out as an Irishman shouts: “Aw bidevil, look at the funny clown on the donkey!” Laughter and a blast on a party horn are followed by the hee-haw of a mule. After a pause, someone admonishes: “Here, boys, keep away from that lion’s cage.” You hear the growling of a lion and more murmuring. Next, a shout of “aw gee, here comes the dog fight!” introduces a few moments of yipping and laughter. Then some whinnying: “Oh, look at the little pony!” Next: “Ach lieber, here’s the German band, haw haw haw!” An out-of-tune brass ensemble plays Lauterbach’s Yodel Song, better known as “Oh Where, Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone,” ending on a mirth-provoking discord. Finally: “Make way for the steam calliope, hold your horses!”

The calliope plays through its piece and then wheezes away comically on the last note. You can hear someone enthusing over the cheers: “Oh gee! Hey, Jimmy, that was a great parade, oh gee, that was a great parade, I’m a-goin’, yeah!” The noises of the crowd fade away to nothing, and then the needle hits the locked groove at the center of the disc.<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

The phonogram, or sound recording—of which the above is a description of one example—arose in the last quarter of the nineteenth century as a medium capable of representing speech, music, and other sounds in a radically new way. Over the past several years, there has been an explosion of academic interest in the early history of phonography, which I will define here as covering the period up through 1908. Among other things, scholars have now reexamined the policies of the early recording industry with an eye towards issues of class, race, and gender;<sup>2</sup> explored connections between the phonogram and other forms of inscription;<sup>3</sup> and identified phonography as one part of a broader, emergent culture of mediated listening.<sup>4</sup> For all the attention early phonography has been receiving lately, however, a significant blind spot still remains—or maybe I should call it a “deaf spot,” because it involves a failure of hearing rather than of seeing. Apart from the few exceptions that go to prove any rule, academic scholars of early phonography have not been doing much close listening to actual *phonograms*. Imagine for a moment what early film studies would be like today if the watching of films were done, if at all, in only a haphazard and casual fashion, without any methodical effort to discover, either from the films themselves or from contemporary writings about them, what their representational strategies and conventions were and how these changed over time. There would be plenty left to do in that field under such conditions, but much of its current richness would be lost. At present, research into early phonography unfortunately finds itself in an analogous position. The early phonogram has received precious little in the way of serious formal scrutiny, leaving us basically ignorant of its rules, its goals, its

aesthetics—and, ultimately, of how early phonographic communication or “performance” worked in practice.

This neglect of early phonograms is all the more striking when one considers the special communicative watershed they mark. The phonograph was the first medium by which a live performance (other than, arguably, the tapping of a telegraph key)<sup>5</sup> could be mechanically recorded in fixed form and then “reproduced” automatically from that record at another time and place. Today this feat is taken pretty much for granted. We are surrounded by prerecorded sounds and moving images, and it is hard to imagine a world without them. When now-forgotten pioneers first put the “talking machine” to such uses in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, however, they were entering uncharted cultural territory. Indeed, this was the principal context in which the dichotomy between mediated and “live” performance was first practically constructed in anything resembling its modern form, marking the signal moment at which “live” oral storytelling could become an entity distinct from mediated oral storytelling, or “live” musical performances from “reproduced” ones. The initial, exploratory stages of phonography should therefore be of interest not just to media historians but also to students of those “live” forms of expression which both furnished its subject matter and were afterwards defined, to some extent, in contrast with it.

The present work aims to describe and account for the ways in which phonography was actually applied to a wide assortment of subjects in the United States between 1877 and 1908, ranging from minstrel shows to auctioneering chants, from sales pitches to vaudeville acts, and from band music to dance calling. I have chosen these subjects not for any characteristic they intrinsically share in common, but rather for the complexity of their initial adaptation to the phonographic medium and for the correspondingly rich insight into early phonographic strategies of representation their study can offer us. While much of the evidence presented here will come from written sources, I find that some of the most interesting practices and adaptations in early phonography left little or no trace in writing. They are, however, there for the *hearing* in the form of mimetic sound effects, spoken announcements, revealing abridgements, simulated audience responses, peculiarities of wording, and a

host of other meaningful aural cues. My overarching goal here is twofold. First, I want to demonstrate that close listening can be a valuable methodology for understanding early phonography more broadly—one that warrants a more prominent place in current critical discussions than it has so far received. Second, I want to help make the experience of listening to early phonograms a richer, better informed, and more rewarding one in which auditors can assess not only the “content,” but also the nuances of its representation and their significance for the culture that generated them.

Before proceeding further, I would like to clarify a few terminological issues. The word *phonography* itself has been used historically to mean several different things. I will use it myself only when referring to what is commonly known as sound recording and reproduction,<sup>6</sup> as opposed to “phonetic spelling” or “phonetic stenography,” two of its most common alternate meanings. Besides these, there have also been some more restricted definitions according to which “phonography” is only one subcategory of what I will mean by it. Eric W. Rothenbuhler and John Durham Peters have proposed to redefine it as analog sound recording and reproduction in contrast to digital,<sup>7</sup> and it has also been adopted as a self-designation by an artistic movement centered on the recording of environmental sounds in which “the capture of sound is privileged over its production,” reflecting “an attempt to discover rather than invent.”<sup>8</sup> Both usages involve much narrower definitions than mine, although I certainly acknowledge what they refer to as *kinds* of phonography. I will use *phonograph* as a generic term for any machine used to effect phonography, even though this word has sometimes been used to distinguish Thomas Edison’s proprietary technology from rival graphophones and gramophones. Granted, it specifically means a cylinder machine in Great Britain, where analog disc machines are still “gramophones,” and in American English it is coming to have an antiquated flavor, like “Victrola.” However, there is also a long-standing tradition of treating it as a generic term for the whole category, and it will be a simple matter to qualify it as needed for clarity: “cylinder phonograph,” “tin foil phonograph,” and so forth. I will call the inscription used in phonography a *phonogram*, a term well established in the nineteenth century but now rarely used. The more common alternative, *record*, is

slowly becoming synonymous in American usage with the long-playing discs of the latter part of the twentieth century and has other drawbacks I will explain momentarily. In line with my transtechnological definition of phonography, these definitions would recognize an iPod as a digital phonograph and an mp3 file as a digital phonogram. This usage might strike the reader as odd, but I consider it vitally important for us to continue identifying the general terms with the general classes rather than squandering them on individual historic formats or technologies and so jeopardizing our ability to articulate what it is that cylinder phonographs and iPods have in common.

### **Listening Through Phonograms**

University-based students of the early history of the phonograph have not been doing much close listening as part of their research, but there is still a venerable academic tradition of studying phonograms for other purposes. The “stuff” the phonograph is able to record, preserve, and play back has now occupied researchers in various fields for many decades, enabling them to examine fleeting aspects of human expressive behavior, to reveal their formal and aesthetic complexity, and to open them up for new kinds of analysis, appreciation, and respect. A number of disciplines and popular analytical approaches are supposed to owe their very existence to the availability of sound recording technology as a research tool. Comments by established practitioners imply that, had it not been for phonography, we would not now have ethnomusicology,<sup>9</sup> ethnopoetics,<sup>10</sup> oral-formulaic theory,<sup>11</sup> or discourse analysis,<sup>12</sup> and I am sure this list could be expanded. Nor has phonography necessarily been limited in its impact to the status of a tool in the service of preexisting ends: in her 1998 essay on the “crisis” of folklore, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues that the very category of orality was initially conceptualized in phonographic terms. Folklore, she claims, “is a discipline made and defined by technology and especially by technologies of communication,”<sup>13</sup> a process she believes occurred twice. Initially, folklore had been formulated largely in contrast with print culture, as the traditions of people who lived in isolation from

writing and printing, but these traditions were also thought to be entextualizable *as* print, for instance in published volumes of national folktales. The introduction of phonography, in turn, “made it possible to conceptualize orality, not simply as transmission, as conduit, as something other than writing and print, or as a type of literature and stage in its history, but as a phonic event and constitutive process, as performance,”<sup>14</sup> i.e., instigating a shift from the printed text to the phonogram as a tangible model for the material of oral transmission. From this perspective, phonography did not just facilitate research into folk performance but created its object of study by allowing scholars to “imagine a phonic artifact, the recording,” and through it the anterior “phonic event.”<sup>15</sup> Indeed, it is to the phonographic construction of orality that Kirshenblatt-Gimblett attributes an alleged “acoustic bias in folkloristics” and a corresponding neglect of the other senses.<sup>16</sup> Complaints now abound among ethnomusicologists and folklorists that phonograms, even when accompanied by visuals, do not capture the synesthetic and social qualities of an event: the phonogram, like the printed “text” of a folktale, is not an objective or holistic representation of its subject. Whatever their shortcomings may be as documentation of reality, however, “phonic artifacts” have proven interesting and complex enough to engage generations of investigators.

The goal of using older “artifacts” of this kind intelligently in new research has required some reflection on the historical dimension of phonographic practice itself. While Erika Brady was working in the 1970s as a technician on the American Folklife Center’s Federal Cylinder Project, she discovered that scholars who sought to use early field recordings in their research were often drawing incorrect conclusions because of their lack of familiarity with the media involved. She thus resolved to compile “a kind of ‘retrospective manual’ for users of wax cylinders: a summary of the characteristics of the early phonograph and its use in fieldwork that would enhance the understanding of the capabilities and limitations of the machine as an ethnographic tool.”<sup>17</sup> Such a manual would help researchers to identify and factor out those aspects of early phonograms that were imposed by the medium itself, rather than by the performance tradition a given ethnographer was attempting to document. A recorded performance might last for three minutes simply because that was the

maximum duration of the format used; voices and instruments might have been chosen or specially arranged for recordability, not fidelity to the norms of live performance practice; a repeated “thump” audible today might not represent a drum, but a crack in the surface of the cylinder. This project evolved into Brady’s 1985 dissertation,<sup>18</sup> and from that into her book *A Spiral Way* (1999), both of which comprise a general history of the use of the phonograph in ethnography rather than the “retrospective manual” she had originally envisioned. Even if Brady had produced such a manual, however, this approach to the conventions and exigencies of early sound recording is inherently negative: the point of learning about them is so that they can be factored out, leaving behind a residue of meaningful data. Still, her work does represent an effort to develop informed listening skills for the interpretation of early phonograms, and in that sense it is an important step in the direction I am proposing here.

Although Brady’s study concerns ethnographic field recordings made specifically for research purposes, scholars have also listened to *commercial* phonograms as documentation of live performance practices in which they have taken an interest. In 1979, Cathleen Flanagan surveyed what had been done so far in this direction and found commercial phonograms being used to study subjects ranging from the oral interpretation of actors to stylistic variations in jazz, blues, “hillbilly,” popular, and classical music.<sup>19</sup> Efforts to use commercial phonograms as windows on live performance practices have continued to the present day. Thus, Timothy Day’s *A Century of Recorded Music* (2000) centers on the author’s appeal to musicologists to start listening seriously to commercial phonograms as documentation of western art music on a par with the written score.<sup>20</sup> Focusing on a different kind of content, verbal humor, Robert Cogswell’s dissertation *Jokes in Blackface: A Discographic Folklore Study* draws on commercial phonograms of comic “blackface” (i.e. minstrel-dialect) dialogues made between 1908 and 1932 as sources for the study of traditional jokelore. He acknowledges, however, that the comedians heard on commercial phonograms

wove elements of folk humor into the larger fabric of monologues, dialogues, and skits which reflected the patterns of vaudeville stage performance. In effect, the traditional jokelore in comedy recordings is a step removed from the folk mold. Unlike performances of folk music, oral joking

could not be strictly reproduced in the studio, for much of folk humor is dependent upon the informal settings of everyday speech.<sup>21</sup>

Cogswell goes on to downplay the disparity between phonograms and traditional jokelore by noting that performers “attempted to simulate” traditional settings and that they “likely remained attuned to oral sources.”<sup>22</sup> Still, he treats it as a minor disadvantage that his source material is two steps distant from the folk humor of oral tradition, having been refracted in unpredictable ways through vaudeville and the commercial recording industry. As Risto Pekka Pennanen observes of the use of analogous sources for the study of live musical traditions, “it is axiomatic that such surviving commercial recordings, far from being direct and/or accurate documents of contemporary living music culture, are documents, several times filtered, of the culture of recorded music.”<sup>23</sup> Erika Brady’s work shows that early ethnographic phonograms often involved particular adaptations of live performance practices to the medium; commercial phonograms are presumed to involve, if anything, *more* adaptation. The distinction between the two types is generally articulated more or less as follows (in this case, by Archie Green): the aim of ethnographic recordists is “to document complex cultural patterns and perhaps to test rival hypotheses about expressive life,” whereas that of commercial recordists is “to obtain products that can be sold across music store counters or on supermarket display racks.”<sup>24</sup> When the goal in recording a phonogram was something other than “documentation,” one supposes, the researcher should exercise more caution than normal in using it that way.

In a sense, one might say that such uses of phonography, whether commercial or otherwise, involve researchers seeking to listen *through* phonograms to anterior events, rather than *to* them as cultural products in their own right. This can be a valid, theoretically sophisticated, and valuable approach if properly undertaken, and I do not mean to disparage it in any way. However, what I am interested in is exactly the other side of the equation: what was done *differently* because of phonography, how forms of expression were *adapted* to the phonographic medium, and with what results. The epistemology of close listening that has been lavished on the “documented” content of phonograms has hardly ever been applied to the question of



how phonography itself was originally developed as a mode of communication. In short, what the other approach treats as regrettable “distortion” I take here as my principal object of study. At the same time, I believe that those disciplines that have historically engaged most intensively with “phonic artifacts” have a valuable contribution to make to the type of study I am proposing. Not only have their practitioners developed the skills and patience necessary for analyzing recorded sound in detail, but they also possess much of the available knowledge about the specific cultural forms undergoing phonographic adaptation as well as an essential appreciation for the pertinence of context to all aspects of performance.

### **Phonographicists, Academics, and Listening**

Academic students of early sound media have tended not to prioritize listening as a research methodology, but I must stress that this does not mean *nobody* is listening seriously to early phonograms or writing insightfully about them with the goal of better understanding the early history of the medium. An independent community of enthusiasts has been fostering the study of early phonography for many years, disseminating its findings through various specialty publications and organizational gatherings. “Enthusiasts” is not really a satisfactory word for referring to members of this community, but other terms are equally problematic. The point is that whether they are tagged as specialists, experts, amateurs, or hobbyists, they have collectively developed a distinct and coherent body of knowledge and common experience which is not the subject of formal teaching or credentials but which must be taken into consideration by any researcher seeking to work responsibly in the field of early recorded sound. There is no commonly recognized name for this body of knowledge, but for purposes of discussion I will call it *phonographics*, and I will refer to the people whose relevant expertise is grounded primarily in it rather than in some academically established field—such as history, American studies, media studies, or English—as *phonographicists*. Some phonographicists are interested mainly in collecting and restoring vintage machines, but the definitive characteristic for a large

subset of this community, the “record collectors,” is a shared enthusiasm for early phonograms.

Two books first published in the 1950s may reasonably be regarded as a starting-point for the historiography of the phonograph as recognized by phonographicists today. The first was Roland Gelatt’s *The Fabulous Phonograph* (1955), a chatty, popular overview that was updated for new editions in 1965 and 1977. The author was a critic and connoisseur of western art music, an orientation that is reflected in some of his value judgments, but he did attempt to cover the whole of sound-recording history to the best of his abilities.<sup>25</sup> The second book was *From Tin Foil to Stereo* (1959), by Oliver Read and Walter Welch, a thick volume densely packed with technical details, facsimile documents, and source citations, reprinted with minor revisions in 1976. This book has a reputation for its unabashed pro-Edison bias, but its unprecedentedly encyclopedic scope makes it a milestone in the field.<sup>26</sup> Although these two books seem to be the ones best known to non-phonographicists, who often cite them, it is important to realize that they are now almost half a century old, and that further research has since rendered them largely out of date. Some of this research has involved establishing finer technical details that may only be of interest to people who collect and restore vintage machines. However, one “technical” book that stands out is Allen Koenigsberg’s *Patent History of the Phonograph* (1990), a directory of every known phonograph-related patent issued in the United States through 1912, illustrating the rich diversity of uses to which inventors and entrepreneurs sought to apply the principle of phonography during its first thirty-five years.<sup>27</sup> Other recent books in the field defy easy categorization, such as the annual collaborations between Tim Fabrizio and George Paul for Schiffer Publishing, which combine the format of full-color coffee table books with substantial new research on all aspects of early phonography—and price guides thrown in at the end.<sup>28</sup>

Some topics of research in phonographics pertain directly to my subject, the early phonogram. The most prominent of these is *discography*, the phonographic equivalent of bibliography. The discography, as a kind of writing, serves two interrelated but distinct goals. First, it typically provides an account of what was

recorded, by whom, where, and when within its chosen parameters, so far as the information is known. Second, it allows researchers to look up specific phonograms and to find out more information about them. Much of the data in a typical discography consists of unique identifying numbers found on the labels or surfaces of phonograms: *catalog numbers*, used by companies in marketing and the public in ordering; *matrix numbers*, used for internal record-keeping purposes; and *take numbers*, used to distinguish between successive “masters” associated with the same matrix number.<sup>29</sup> To illustrate how this information is used, I can look up my copy of THE PASSING OF A CIRCUS PARADE in a Victor discography by its catalog number, 1382, and find out that the master phonogram from which it was derived was recorded on May 9, 1902. My copy is a ten-inch disc, and two takes of that size were recorded that day along with two twelve-inch takes that seem not to have been released.<sup>30</sup> Different discographies may contain different kinds of information based on the strengths and weaknesses of the available source base. In the example just given, the date May 9, 1902, comes straight from the original Victor recording ledgers, but equivalent information would not have been available for a Columbia disc of the same period because that company’s early ledgers do not survive.

Discography lays essential groundwork for certain kinds of research, and yet it is often perceived as separate from that research, perhaps something like the computer programming that allows us to use word processors for writing dissertations. The folk music discographer Will Roy Hearne was thus described in 1964 as a “peripheral folklore scholar,” one of “a host of nonacademic workers who have been delving into areas peripheral to the study of folk song.”<sup>31</sup> However, it is important to recognize that discography, in the sense that parallels bibliography, is actually only one of the tools used to identify early phonograms. Such work also shares some similarities with the paleography of written documents—*paleophonography* might be a good word for it. Physical characteristics of cylinders, label types on discs, and even the wording of spoken announcements can all be just as important in identifying the origin and date of a phonogram as the numbers, which in some cases do not exist and in other cases have never been adequately researched.<sup>32</sup> Again, this kind of work may seem somewhat removed from the analysis and

appreciation of what is *on* phonograms. “Discographers have been derided as ‘musical bookkeepers,’ and label enthusiasts as ‘philatelists more interested in the label on a record than in the music in the grooves,’” as discographer Brian Rust has observed.<sup>33</sup> But discography—or paleophonography, in a larger sense—is not as easy to separate from other branches of phonographic study as might at first seem to be the case. An awareness of discography is ideally not just a matter of knowing *what* we know about a given phonogram or recorded repertoire, but *how* we know it, and with what degree of certainty. When drawing conclusions based on the supposed date or circumstances of a phonogram, it is crucial that we know how solid that information is, where it comes from, and what its possible range of error might be. Furthermore, discography determines the specificity with which we can designate given phonograms as discrete, distinguishable units; thus, “Columbia disc 21” refers to a range of recorded performances of ARKANSAS TRAVELER by Harry Spencer, whereas “Columbia disc 21-3” refers to a single, unique take, and “Columbia disc 21-12” to a different one (and, to avoid ambiguity, I would also need to specify whether these are seven-inch or ten-inch discs). Knowledge of this sort is vital for comparing variants, or even just for realizing that most early commercial phonograms should be thought of as existing in multiple versions rather than as single, invariable items. Discographies also allow us to survey what was recorded, by whom, and when, and so can provide insight into the output of particular record companies and, through them, of the recording industry more generally.<sup>34</sup>

Along with discographies and company histories, phonographicists have also done research on many of the individuals who performed commercially for the phonograph in its early years. The major early contributor in this line was Ulysses “Jim” Walsh, a Virginia journalist who spent many decades of his life tracing the careers of performers he called “pioneer recording artists,” many of whom he discovered in retirement and befriended. He is best known for a regular column he published in *Hobbies* magazine from 1942 through 1985, “Favorite Pioneer Recording Artists,” based largely on his personal correspondence and interviews.<sup>35</sup> More recently, there have been books published on the individual performers Cal Stewart and Billy Murray,<sup>36</sup> along with two other books devoted to multiple

performers: Tim Gracyk's *Popular American Recording Pioneers* (2000), which provides information on over a hundred artists, combining much of Walsh's information with substantial new research by its author;<sup>37</sup> and Tim Brooks' long-awaited *Lost Sounds* (2004), which surveys the lives and contributions of black phonograph performers active from 1890 to 1919 and raises the bar considerably for scholarship of its kind.<sup>38</sup>

Until recently, phonographicists in this tradition had the history of phonography pretty much to themselves. In 1979, Tim Brooks observed that "most serious users of recording source materials are not professionals in the music field, or even degree holders in the fields they are researching.... Probably no area of cultural research is so 'democratized' as that of recording history." Meanwhile, he also noted that the quasi-amateur status of publications in the field often made communication among researchers difficult.<sup>39</sup> Fourteen years later, Guy Marco published an *Encyclopedia of Recorded Sound in the United States* with alphabetically arranged entries seeking to consolidate all current knowledge of developments up through the year 1970. In his introduction, Marco suggested that synthetic work in the field might have progressed at a slower pace "because the scholars have almost invariably been amateurs (occupied full-time in other work). The field has not had the typical base of scholarly endeavor found in other disciplines, the university department."<sup>40</sup> Today, there is still no university department dedicated to the history of recorded sound. However, by the mid-1990s book-length histories of phonography by academically situated scholars were beginning to appear. The first of these sought mainly to collate and repackage the content of scattered secondary writings for new constituencies interested more in broad cultural issues than in understanding particular machines and phonograms. Michael Chanan's *Repeated Takes* appeared in 1995, a general consideration of the historical impact of phonography on musical practice. "This book is modest in its endeavour and I make no claim to original research," Chanan explains, "yet the story is in many respects unknown."<sup>41</sup> That same year saw the publication of a new general survey history, Andre Millard's *America on Record*. Millard presents his work as a "concise narrative" of the development of the commercial recording industry and its cultural implications, written specifically for

students of history and American studies.<sup>42</sup> “I have not provided a full account of the technology or its cultural effects—I leave this to the experts,” he writes, and I presume it is the phonographicists he has in mind.<sup>43</sup>

Over the past several years, the focus of academic writing on the history of the phonograph has sharpened and turned increasingly to new research using primary source material. William Kenney’s *Recorded Music in American Life* (1999) exemplifies a more rigorous engagement with the social history of phonography, linking various developments in the marketing of phonographs and the subject matter of commercial phonograms to broader issues of class, race, and gender.<sup>44</sup> David Morton’s *Off the Record* (2000) seeks to expand the usual boundaries of the subject in another direction, to include telephone answering machines, dictaphones, and other rarely-foregrounded aspects of what he calls the “culture of recording.”<sup>45</sup> Other recent scholars have explored the history of phonography as one part of a larger field of inquiry—thus, Lisa Gitelman’s *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines* (1999) situates the phonograph among other automatic inscriptive technologies including shorthand, motion pictures, and typewriters,<sup>46</sup> while Jonathan Sterne’s *The Audible Past* (2003) charts the emergence of a modern “sonic order” based on the isolation of hearing through the use of such media as stethoscopes, telephones, and phonographs.<sup>47</sup> John Picker’s *Victorian Soundscapes* (2003) and Steven Connor’s *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (2000) both contain substantial and insightful sections on early phonography.<sup>48</sup>

From the point of view of phonographicists whose engagement with the subject predates the new “academic” interest developed since the mid-1990s, recent developments have been a mixed blessing. As Tim Brooks has observed:

The early history of the phonograph is finally beginning to attract serious attention from professional academics. That can be a good thing, to the extent that they bring rigorous analysis, a broad contextual view, and thorough documentation of sources—factors often missing in articles by collectors. Unfortunately, since they are usually strangers to the field, it can also mean misunderstandings, garbled facts, and over-reliance on flawed secondary sources.<sup>49</sup>

These faults are by no means universal, and the above quotation actually comes from a generally positive review of Kenney’s *Recorded Music in American Life*. In a review of another recent academic work, however, phonographicist Tim Fabrizio still chides the author for his apparent lack of first-hand experience with phonographs and

other “technologies that he seems to understand only ‘on paper,’” suggesting that he would “benefit from a visit to his friendly neighborhood collector.”<sup>50</sup> But the differing perspectives of academics and phonographicists can result in difficulties even when attempts to build such bridges between the two do occur, as Steve Frangos observes:

Interactions between academics and collectors are reported, by both groups, as almost inevitably ending in open argument. For the academic focusing on particular musical, historical or cultural problems evident in music, the record collector’s attention to collectible detail is simply too removed from the academic’s own set tasks to be taken seriously. Collectors are usually labeled “too difficult to work with,” and academics are reported to be totally ignorant of whole areas in the history of commercial music. Collectors contend that academics simply don’t listen very well. The academics are also said not to adequately credit the collector’s contributions in the scholar’s final printed works.<sup>51</sup>

Frangos’ typical academic lacks the familiarity with phonographic history that the collector enjoys from long-term first-hand exposure to its artifacts. Meanwhile, the collector is supposedly unaware of the “musical, historical or cultural problems” that connect his or her specialty with the broader concerns of a given academic field. The collector is, instead, infatuated with “collectible detail,” perhaps including the arcane science of discography. Frangos considers collectors potentially valuable as informants and collaborators, and not merely as sources for hard-to-find records, but he also implies that the collector and the academic will not ordinarily be the same person. In fact, that has not always been the case. Robert Cogswell not only reports positive experiences from his contacts with the collecting community, whose interests he fully respects, but he effectively became a member of that community himself in his effort to obtain both material for study and insight into its significance—he calls his dissertation a “discographic folklore study” and asserts that his topic required “a merger of discographic and folkloristic procedures.”<sup>52</sup> I see no particular reason why an academic researcher cannot also be a fully engaged phonographicist. However, these two identities do not as yet seem to be overlapping to any great extent, creating an unfortunate gap between what phonographicists and academic researchers know respectively about the field and impeding the formation of shared discourses and constituencies.

One of the most basic differences between the typical academic researcher and the typical phonographicist lies in the nature of their access to early recorded

sound itself. Phonographicists tend to have their own collections of early phonograms, to spend a significant amount of time listening to them, and to know how to go about acquiring elusive items through auctions, record shows, private trading, and other sources. By contrast, academic researchers have often had to rely on public archives for their listening examples. For instance, William Kenney writes: “I have been able to listen to early disc recordings through the Rigler and Deutsch Index of 78 rpm records held by Syracuse University, Stamford [sic] University, Yale University, the New York Public Library, and the Library of Congress. At present, cylinder recordings are unavailable to the public.”<sup>53</sup> Jonathan Sterne cites a similar encounter with audio artifacts with the endnote: “Based on a listening survey of descriptive specialties on file at the Library of Congress Recorded Sound Reference Center.”<sup>54</sup> In both cases, such institutional exposure appears to have been the researcher’s only contact with actual phonograms from the period covered by this thesis. Timothy Day writes as follows about the researcher’s typical experience in this kind of institutional listening environment:

Recordings are difficult to work with and to investigate; they are easily damaged and archives are reluctant to allow tapes and discs to be handled by researchers themselves. So recordings will usually be played back to listeners by staff, which is obviously inconvenient if the research requires the sampling of a large number of performances, though close individual supervision may sometimes be offered. But the provision of such services will necessarily be labour-intensive and therefore expensive. Copying material is difficult and time-consuming and so extremely expensive and copyrights will rule this out with certain categories of material.<sup>55</sup>

Of course, this situation is far better than not being able to hear the material at all, and I certainly do not mean to imply that sound archives are not doing vitally important work in terms of preservation and access—they are. Even under the conditions described by Day, researchers can probably get the gist of a number of phonograms, transcribe a few key quotations if appropriate, and leave the archive with a “feel” for a particular genre or period in phonography. Indeed, this is what Kenney and Sterne both appear to have brought away from their listening experiences. Here are a couple examples of how they respectively represent phonograms in their writing:

In [Ada] Jones’s solo record “Coming Home from Coney Isle,” she sang and talked about her working-class character’s blithe enjoyment of a day’s trip by trolley car to and from Coney Island, complete with belligerent ethnic stereotypes, fist fights, Chimmie and Maggie routines, a drunk, and general hilarity.... In a world of swiftly passing one-liners, her hardy deformation of a society lady’s décolletage as “de cold tea” stands out. When Chimmie explains that the Hippodrome is a dance hall, she quickly replies, “Oh, I’m hip.”<sup>56</sup>



Some recordings were essentially medleys of music interspersed with brief dialogue and sound effects. Others consisted mostly of dialogue, interspersing the fabricated noises of a horse race or yells of victorious soldiers. Still others re-created actual events such as Theodore Roosevelt's inauguration (which concludes with a spectator saying that he has seen "every inauguration since Andrew Jackson's and this one beats them all") or fictional scenes such as night in a clock store.<sup>57</sup>

Kenney and Sterne do both draw meaningful conclusions from their listening at this level; given the circumstances, however, it is likely that they did not have a chance to listen repeatedly to particular examples with pause for reflection in between, to prepare verbatim transcripts at leisure, or otherwise to engage with the material in a more intensive way. The level of detail is not very high. In an ironic disavowal of the revolutionary documentary properties of the phonographic "record," these are the kinds of account an ethnographer might have given of a series of live performances based on hastily penciled notes, having inadvertently left the tape recorder behind. By contrast, phonographicists routinely include extensive verbatim transcripts of early phonograms in their work.<sup>58</sup> And yet the phonographicists are writing for a constituency that is likely to have heard early phonograms before, whereas Kenney and Sterne are not: for a majority of readers, these written representations may be their only exposure to the material.

In fact, opportunities do exist for researchers who are not collectors to engage in more intensive forms of listening to early phonograms. Archives sometimes can and will duplicate such materials for outside use, and there are also a handful of commercial "reissues" on the market. Over the past few years, access to early phonograms has broadened significantly thanks to such major online repositories of digital sound files as the National Library of Canada's Virtual Gramophone and the Cylinder Digitization Project of the University of California at Santa Barbara.<sup>59</sup> It would undoubtedly have broadened yet more were it not for the hazy legal status of this material, which makes some established American institutions and record labels wary of disseminating it to the public. In most countries, intellectual property rights in recorded sound have a clear-cut limit of fifty years, but in the United States intellectual property rights in pre-1972 phonograms are presently covered not by federal copyright law but by a little-understood and mutually contradictory assortment of state laws not due to be superseded by federal public domain status

until the year 2067. Many of these laws, as written, do not seem to apply equally to all early phonograms, but their finer implications have yet to be worked out publicly by anyone with legal credentials.<sup>60</sup> In spite of this frustrating legal uncertainty, access *has* broadened in practice to the point that anyone who wants to listen to large numbers of early American phonograms can now do so through a web browser rather than having to make a physical visit to an archive. Moreover, the ability to download such sound files facilitates repeated listening and close, leisurely analysis. Certainly not every early phonogram one might want to consult will be available from these sources—it still helps to be a private collector, or at least to know one—but the opportunities to listen to such material are far greater now than they were just a few years ago. Perhaps the tide is now turning: Rick Altman, the leading scholar on sound practices in early cinema, states in an interview of early 2006 that the UCSB cylinder digitization project had finally exposed him to the phonographic work of Russell Hunting, “whose recordings, until now, were nearly inaccessible,” and about whom he had formerly had to write “without ever having heard him.”<sup>61</sup>

Still, it cannot be assumed that academic researchers with an interest in early phonography will necessarily take advantage of these expanding opportunities for listening simply because they exist. The emphases of much existing secondary literature actually tend to steer interest *away* from those areas in which the analysis of individual phonograms (as opposed to their transparently mediated “content”) might seem most attractive as an approach. One widespread tendency has been to equate phonography with commercial phonography, or, in other words, with the recording industry in its role of supplying “records” for home entertainment. As already noted, David Morton objects to this view, pointing out that it ignores the many other contexts in which phonography has become a part of everyday life, among them business dictation, prerecorded material for radio broadcasting, and telephone answering machines. Researchers who have listened critically to these recorded forms have found them to be analytically rewarding; the work by linguists, sociologists, and folklorists on modern-day answering machine messages is one example.<sup>62</sup> As a random example of another vernacular phonographic form, I offer

the following item recorded in 1948 (from my collection; I found it at a church rummage sale):

H'lo, Pete!  
Merry Christmas.  
We're all here in Martin's house  
and—we thought we'd make a record for you, everybody's got their speech  
written out.  
So [*laughing*] I wanna start off the proceedings  
by wishing you a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.  
And I wish you all—you were *here*—to enjoy the day with us.  
Now I'll start off by introducing you to the gang, first my sister,  
Millie...<sup>63</sup>

Phonograms such as this one provide an aural equivalent to the vision-centered “home mode” of photography, film, and videotape, characterized by interpersonal, small-group communication.<sup>64</sup> “Although the phonograph record speaks,” it has been said, “it is decidedly mute about the circumstances of its recording and the performers who gave rise to its sounds.”<sup>65</sup> This may be true of many phonograms, but as the example quoted above shows, it is far less true of others which abound in reflexive gestures and so can shed light on the social complexity of phonography as a medium of communication. However, those who assume that the phonogram is a straightforward item of commerce whose one “use” (home entertainment) is already obvious might understandably see little reason to tease out such details.

A second factor tending to steer certain kinds of researcher away from listening-based research, which overlaps to some extent with the last one, has been the equation of the content of phonograms with music. “While the word ‘record’ has become virtually synonymous with music recordings,” David Morton observes, “these represent only a single facet of sound recording’s complex history.”<sup>66</sup> However, even Morton does not question the correctness of this assumption as long as it is limited to commercial phonography; he himself writes about the “record industry...and its products, music records.”<sup>67</sup> William Kenney calls his social history of the same industry *Recorded Music in American Life* and explicitly attributes the phonograph’s connection with popular memory to the affective potential of music in general.<sup>68</sup> I do not mean to single these two scholars out; in fact, nearly every historian of the recording industry or the phonograph has expressed the connection in a similar fashion and developed arguments in which it is taken for granted. It is true

that “music” might sometimes be intended as a synecdoche for all audible forms of expression, including verbal art and sound effects. However, most scholars seem to mean it literally, and in a traditional sense, as when Pekka Gronow writes: “The message of records is usually music, and communications research does not know how to deal with music. But musicologists have been equally blind to music as mass communication, and, as a consequence, the relatively few studies on the record industry which are available usually fail to consider this aspect.”<sup>69</sup> He was writing in 1983; Chanan, Kenney, Day, Millard, and others have since filled much of this gap. However, the assumption that commercial phonography is synonymous with musical recording itself limits the kinds of question that are likely to be asked to ones pertaining more or less directly to music.

A third factor, and probably the most significant of all, is the very notion that a phonogram “reproduces” something (usually music). In marked contrast to the elaborate conceptual frameworks and vocabularies we have for grappling with the distinction between writings or visual arts and the subjects they “record,” the language generally used for discussing phonography reinforces a naïve sense of transparency. When critics do notice phonography doing anything other than faithfully “reproducing” a subject, they tend to construe this as either a damnable failing or a surprising paradox. I will propose some alternative language later in this introduction; for now, suffice it to say that the conceit that the phonograph “reproduces” its subjects, whether one accepts it or not, has been allowed to dominate the discourse so exclusively as to discourage more nuanced inquiries into how it *represents* its subjects.

The history of phonography offers rich and, in many respects, untilled soil for interdisciplinary efforts of many kinds. Each of the recent contributions to this topic by academically situated researchers has enhanced our understanding of it in one way or another, and hopefully the current boom of interest will continue. However, there has not been as much crossover as might be desired between recent academic research and the essentially nonacademic area of expertise I am calling phonographics, grounded in direct and regular contact with the “stuff” of phonography. This is nowhere more apparent than in the hasty treatment academics

dealing with issues of phonographic history have given to actual early phonograms. Without hearing these phonograms to begin with, such scholars rarely seem to be formulating the kinds of questions that would provide an impetus for seeking them out and spending time with them. After all, if one assumes phonography can be equated with the commercial “reproduction” of music and one is not particularly interested in the music as such, why bother listening? When they *have* listened to them, they have often had to do so under circumstances that have encouraged quick generalization rather than leisurely analysis. To reiterate my earlier analogy, it is as though only “film buffs” were watching and writing about specific films in detail, while academic film studies scholars were working from plot summaries and saw no reason to do otherwise.

### **Past Views of the Phonographic “Art”**

One more obstacle impeding listening-based research into early phonographic practice has been a belief among influential critics that all the techniques that now make phonography a distinctive “art” worthy of study and appreciation did not come into existence until decades after the period I will be discussing here. In order for us to understand the origins of this belief and the perspective it reflects, it will be informative for us to compare and contrast the analytical treatment of phonography with the treatment of the motion picture. Whereas phonography has been widely equated with recorded music, classic film theory vehemently denied the parallel assertion that cinema is merely filmed theater. As Victor F. Perkins puts it:

The danger was that if the movie were not shown to be an extension of visual art, it would be seen as a corruption of drama. It would be exposed as ‘canned theatre’, drama without the power of speech and thus deprived of its most powerful resource.... ‘Theatrical’ became, and has remained, the most contemptuous adjective in the theorist’s vocabulary, being used to indicate that the filming has *added* nothing to the recorded event.... [The theorists’] model, fine art, imposed the view that the real scene or human figure had no relevance; what mattered was the way it was *rendered* in paint and marble, or on film. The resulting dislocations can be seen in the theorists’ inability to find the recorded action a place in the critical scheme or to allow it any artistic status.<sup>70</sup>

The derogatory epithet “canned theatre” recalls “canned music,” a phrase John Philip Sousa popularized a century ago for lambasting the recording industry as a force corrupting American musical culture.<sup>71</sup> In the case of cinema, visual art existed as an

alternative frame of reference, a prestigious mode of expression with which film theorists could associate what filmmakers did, as opposed to what their machinery—or the subjects it recorded—did. Classic film theory accordingly foregrounded those areas in which cinema was furthest removed from sheer mechanical reproduction of a “theatrical” subject: camerawork and/or montage, depending on the theorist. In phonography it was music itself, a kind of recorded action, that seemed to offer the greatest prestige to the medium, notwithstanding the resistance of critics like Sousa. This led to marketing strategies during the early twentieth century in which “fidelity” with respect to highbrow music was advanced as the principal criterion of phonographic value—a campaign that was highly successful not just in expanding the market, but in shaping subsequent discourse about the medium as well.<sup>72</sup> Because early phonography was less “faithful” to its subjects than later phonography, its products are less “valuable” when measured against this yardstick; and, again, if phonograms simply “reproduce” music, there is little to be said about how they *represent* music.

An alternative trajectory in phonographic theory has involved identifying and emphasizing phonographic equivalents to the cinematic practices of camerawork and montage. This approach was pioneered by theorists of film sound, whose goal has been to explore the artful use of recorded sounds—dialogue, music, sound effects—as a component of cinema. At first, film theory had treated soundtracks as a matter of transparent reproduction, not representation: sounds did not “represent” their originals, but were effectively identical with them. However, Alan Williams challenged this view in an article of 1980, suggesting that recorded sounds ought to be approached in the same way as recorded images, as representations rather than reproductions. Much as a flat image differs from its three-dimensional subject, the argument goes, so phonography records a three-dimensional complex of vibrations from a single vantage point. In Williams’ view, recorded sounds are distinguished from their originals by their subjective two-dimensionality, such that phonography “implies by definition a reading, a deciphering, an attending to a sonic event.”<sup>73</sup> Williams accordingly identifies the placement and strategic use of microphones as a signifying practice on a par with creative camerawork. Once recorded, he adds,

phonograms are also subject to the same kinds of postproduction editing as images: “all manipulations possible in image recording have analogs in sound. There are sound edits, for example, as well as dissolves, super-impositions, and so on.”<sup>74</sup> He concludes that “if we ask whether messages of some sort are...transmitted from a source to a receiver via sound recording without directly depending on those languages simply relayed by the apparatus (spoken language, music), the answer must be yes.”<sup>75</sup> On the whole, Williams makes a compelling case for treating phonography as a system with its own communicative conventions and resources over and above its recorded subject matter. However, it is important to note that in his scheme the originals of recorded sounds are regarded as untransformed reality. It is only through what happens to them through the process of recording and afterwards that phonography adds its special layer of meaning.

Williams focuses on the use of phonography in conjunction with film, but some critics whose interest lies in phonography on its own—“sightless” phonography, we might say—have pursued a similarly filmlike approach to their subject. This is how Evan Eisenberg introduces his chapter on phonography, which for him is “a new art, the art of recorded music”:<sup>76</sup>

The word “record” is misleading. Only live recordings record an event; studio recordings, which are the great majority, record nothing. Pieced together from bits of actual events, they construct an ideal event. They are like the composite photograph of a minotaur. Yet Edison chose the word deliberately. He meant his invention to record grandparents’ voices, business transactions and, as a last resort, musical performances. The use we put it to now might strike him as fraudulent, like doctoring the records.<sup>77</sup>

Eisenberg defines “pure phonography” as “a pure studio product,” in which the live performance serves as raw material for an art based on such factors as microphone placement and postproduction editing. In general, he regards parallels with cinema, such as the similarity of the record producer to the film director, as the “linchpin” of his argument that phonography is an “art.”<sup>78</sup> Meanwhile, he supposes that current studio practices can be contrasted with a phonographic past in which the only ideal was to document live events faithfully and objectively. Unlike film segments, early disc or cylinder phonograms, once recorded, were incapable of being edited; they could not be juxtaposed by splicing or cobbled together into ideal events. The concept of the “mythical” ideal phonographic event is crucial to Eisenberg as the

basis of his claim that the playing of a phonogram in one's home is a self-sufficient "ritual" rather than a vicarious experience of questionable authenticity.<sup>79</sup> The less transformative technological tinkering occurs, the less able he is to justify treating phonography as an art or, in consequence, phonographic listening as a mode of reception of equal validity with live musical listening. Although Eisenberg does write about one producer from the early period I am covering—Fred Gaisberg—he asserts that this pioneer viewed himself as "an engineer and a businessman, charged with getting the best musicians to record and seeing to it that the disks were without serious blemish," not as a creative artist working in a new medium. Although Gaisberg gave his performers "occasional bright ideas," these were indistinguishable from issues of musicianship: namely, the expressive use of dynamics and the pairing of particular voices.<sup>80</sup> So, although Eisenberg asserts that there is a distinct phonographic "art," he does so in a way that effectively denies this status to *early* phonography, or at least frames the efforts of early producers as rudimentary, unambitious, and stymied by technological limitations. His phonography is also always in the service of a musical aesthetic; even if it is a distinct "art," it is still one dependent on music. To take a more recent and specific case, Peter Doyle's study of the fabrication of spatiality in popular music recording centers on the manipulation of echo and reverb, something that became feasible only with the introduction of electrical recording equipment in the 1920s. The older acoustic processes had limited recordists to constructing "an almost comic-book spatiality," Doyle writes, as opposed to achieving the "real sense of spatial depth" that interests him.<sup>81</sup> Early phonography thus ends up characterized, once again, as insufficiently advanced to invite study on the same terms as later phonography; whatever strategies it *did* have for representing space are trivialized and dismissed without further examination.

Eisenberg tacitly assumes that music is uniquely appropriate as subject matter for phonography, but another critic, Douglas Kahn, disagrees, proposing instead a future avant-garde "art phonography" based on overt mimesis and filmlike editing techniques. While he approaches phonography with very different aesthetic preconceptions than Eisenberg does, he too sees a "developed artistic practice of phonography" as necessarily predicated on splicing and montage. Like Eisenberg, he



concludes that such a practice could not have existed until long after the period I will be covering here. Since early phonography did not involve splicing, from this point of view it was not an “art” in its own right, the argument goes; it was missing the one tool that makes creative phonography possible today. In his historical overview, Kahn claims that musical notions exercised a stranglehold on early phonography, barring a few “scattered novelties,” and he instead confines himself to considering why recognized avant-garde artists of the past did *not* pursue phonography, or why “there hasn’t been a phonographic art” yet. Elsewhere Kahn does acknowledge that phonography has been applied to subjects other than music, but he asserts that those uses have not lived up to the normative standard he is proposing:

The problem has been that phonography has not migrated over the expanse of sound, but has been limited to the reproduction of existing aural cultural forms—music, poetry and literature, theatre, reportage—when it could reproduce all these forms at once, inhabit their conventions and break them open to the general aural environment. In the audio-visual forms of film and video, sound recording has suffered from a subsumption under the visual and, within a hierarchy of sound itself, of a full range of sounds under speech.

In Kahn’s scheme, there seems to be no middle ground between the unimaginative recording of existing art forms and the programmatic shattering of generic boundaries. Kahn uses his bleak verdict on the phonographic past as a source of optimism for the future: “It signals an expanse of artistic possibility in a situation where other arts battle exhaustion.”<sup>82</sup> His stance may provide inspiration for a new phonographic avant-garde more to his liking, but, like Eisenberg’s, it discourages one from expecting to find anything interesting in the actual practice of early phonography.

In terms of the “art” as Eisenberg and Kahn define it, they are largely correct about the pioneer recording era, though not entirely. Early phonography did involve some practices analogous to camerawork, among which the most important were the placement of recording horns, selection of diaphragms, and modifications to the acoustic environment of the recording studio. The importance of these practices, especially in helping to establish the professional legitimacy of the expert recordist, should not be underestimated. Rather than turning to cinema, which was not yet available as a point of reference, some early recordists drew legitimizing analogies between what they did and the art of photography:

I find that in making these records I cannot establish any set rules. One man will make a better photograph with the same light and lens than another. So with records. The subject has to be studied. The singer and all his peculiarities have to be studied. No two men will work alike and it would be hard to establish any set rules.<sup>83</sup>

Not every person having a camera can take a good picture. Nor can every person who has a phonograph take a good record.<sup>84</sup>

However, intervention of this sort was not obvious to the listener in the way fancy camerawork is to the viewer, so it would be misleading to think of it as a signifying practice in the same sense. It is not readily apparent when we listen to early phonograms today. Montage is another matter. Although early phonography did not have the splice as a tool, it did have the ability to superimpose one sound onto another through recording a second or third time over the same groove or recording a live subject while simultaneously playing back prerecorded sounds to produce a composite of the two. As I will show, montage was in fact a regular feature of the phonography of the late 1870s, but it later fell out of favor and played only a very minor role in the phonography of the 1890s and 1900s. The vast majority of early phonograms available for listening today do not feature it at all. Consequently, although there were equivalents to cinematic camerawork and montage in early phonography, these cannot very well serve as our primary basis for interpretation—there would be, in most cases, nothing there to interpret. If we are to illuminate early phonographic practice, we will instead have to approach it from some other angle.

### **Secondary Orality and Schizophonia**

A number of popular theoretical approaches touching on aural aspects of culture in general have implications for phonography, as one might expect, although they must be handled with due caution here as elsewhere. One is Walter Ong's concept of *secondary orality*. Ong divides cultures into "oral" ones, oriented towards the spoken word and the sense of hearing, and "literate" ones, induced by the introduction of writing and print to adopt an epistemology favoring the sense of sight. Because the senses of hearing and sight have different characteristics, Ong argues, oral and literate cultures also have distinctively different ways of thinking; most

controversially, he associates the development of analytical and abstract thought with the interiorization of literacy. By secondary orality, Ong means the technologizing of aural communication by telephones, radios, television sets, and sound tape, as contrasted with the “primary” orality that precedes knowledge of writing. Because of its aural status, Ong suggests, secondary orality shares with primary orality “its participatory mystique, its fostering of a communal sense, its concentration on the present moment, and even its use of formulas” but is nevertheless “a more deliberate and self-conscious orality, based permanently on the use of writing and print,” and thus likely to foster some distinctively new configuration of the sensorium, not a reversion to an older one.<sup>85</sup> Ong’s broader claims about orality and literacy are tendentious, to say the least. However, when secondary orality is defined in terms of the technologization of aural culture and the spoken word, rather than with reference to some more abstract or idealized sense of what orality is, it invites applications whose validity does not necessarily hinge on the rightness or wrongness of the rest of Ong’s ideas.<sup>86</sup> For instance, Alan Durant suggests that the pressing task with regard to secondary orality is to identify the distinctive semiotic properties of spoken language (e.g., accent, intonation, vocal quality or “grain,” and paralinguistic and prosodic features in general) and then to explore the implications of their availability and deployment in technologically mediated form.<sup>87</sup> There is some overlap here with Friedrich Kittler’s notion of “discourse networks,” according to which the domain of literature is constituted by and varies in relation to the set of communications technologies available at any given time, such that literary studies can be treated as the study of material channels of communication. For Kittler, phonography’s significance lies in its apparent status as the technology that historically broke the monopoly of “writing” as a format for the storage of information.<sup>88</sup> Kittler offers few hints as to how one might go about evaluating any actual phonographic “texts,” but Durant’s examination of the semiotic resources of secondary orality suggests that what we should listen for are specific kinds of expressive resource associated with what Kirshenblatt-Gimblett calls the “phonic event.” It is true that, for Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “phonic event” is a pejorative term referring to an analytical abstraction that distorts the reality of live events more properly regarded in their synesthetic and

participatory totality. However, the “phonic events” I am proposing to examine here have an undeniable social reality of their own, just as books do quite apart from the question of whether a book of folktales is faulty as a representation of its subject matter.

Because many semiotic properties of secondary orality were traditionally unique to “live” enactments, they were long identified with them and invested with meaning accordingly. In particular, hearing a particular voice was once a sure sign that the person belonging to the voice was present and speaking; once phonography had appeared, such correspondences could no longer be assumed, and the resulting uncertainty, confusion, and paradoxes have been an enduring source of fascination. Some scholars have approached issues of this kind through Jacques Derrida’s critique of what he calls “phonocentrism,” the tendency of Western philosophy to operate in terms of a binary opposition between the speech of an immediately present speaker and the written text and to privilege the former over the latter. The phonograph challenges the speech/writing dichotomy by making the voice separable from presence and incorporating it into a new kind of independently circulable “text,” the phonogram.<sup>89</sup> A related concept in soundscape studies is *schizophonia*, which R. Murray Schafer defines as “the split between an original sound and its electroacoustical transmission or reproduction.” The term is modeled after schizophrenia; as Schafer explains, “I employ this ‘nervous’ word in order to dramatize the aberrational effect of this twentieth-century development.”<sup>90</sup> Unlike Williams, Schafer treats “reproduced” sounds not as two-dimensional representations, but as indistinguishable from their originals; this makes it all the more alarming that they “have been torn from their sockets and given an amplified and independent existence.”<sup>91</sup> Whether the “split” of sounds and voices from their points of origin is regarded as a modern aberration (Schafer) or as further evidence that the differences between speech and writing have never been quite what they have been cracked up to be (Derrida), it has been a prominent part of the discourse surrounding phonography and so warrants consideration.

Unlike the filmlike approach to the phonographic “art” championed by Eisenberg and Kahn, the concept of secondary orality and the various arguments

about “splits” between original sounds and “reproduced” ones seem potentially relevant to much of *early* phonography, and not just the phonography of later periods. At the same time, they must be handled with caution; we cannot simply apply them in cookie-cutter fashion to the history of the phonograph and expect to yield interesting or accurate results. Ruth Finnegan devotes much of her book on *Literacy and Orality* to rallying studies of particular cultural practices that contradict or complicate generalizations made by Ong and other proponents of grand theories. “These detailed studies remain essential,” she writes, “revealing as they do the specificities and contingencies, rather than the general laws, of human action.”<sup>92</sup> However, she laments the lack of attention to what she regards as potentially illuminating transitions in the use of technologies of communication:

Amidst all the speculation about consequences of literacy, why are there so few studies which investigate the consequences of orality, or of the loss of literacy, or of a choice to use one rather than another? What about the changing balance and possible consequences when people rely less on written communication and more on oral forms? What happens when telephones are increasingly used for communication rather than letters...? If the implications of using different media of communication are indeed significant, then it is surely worth looking at the differing combinations and changes between them, rather than—as often in the implicit technological determinism model—just at apparently unidirectional and ‘natural’ progress based on ‘ascending’ technologies of communication.<sup>93</sup>

The advent of phonography is one of those cases in which the greater specificity of research Finnegan calls for is sorely needed. Again, I suggest that those disciplines with established traditions of studying “phonic artifacts” with sensitivity and methodological rigor may be in a better position to spearhead such work than those less experienced at dealing directly and specifically with aural aspects of culture and the nuances of spoken language. If folklorists’ past focus on “phonic events” constitutes a regrettable misperception of the essence of “live” events in their participatory and multisensory totality, as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett suggests, it would be wasteful not to bring this hard-won expertise to bear on the one cultural form for which it is undeniably appropriate. What I want to develop in the following sections is an analytical framework for early phonograms that will keep our findings applicable to current critical conversations without simply being dominated by one or the other of them.

## Tympanic Transduction, Induction, and Education

I find that the language popularly used to talk about phonography, which has been built up over time through a gradual process of accretion, can become more of a hindrance than a help when we try to use it analytically. One of the greatest challenges I have encountered in trying to write about this subject has been that of developing an analytical vocabulary that is sufficiently flexible and neutral to accomplish what we will need it to accomplish.

The arguments I have surveyed so far reveal that there is some room for debate as to just what kind of relationship exists between recorded sounds, original sounds, and the sounds that come out of phonographs: for instance, does phonography “split” sounds from their sources, or does it “represent” them, or what? A working definition of phonography, and the vocabulary we use to talk about it, ought to be sensitive to uncertainties of this kind and allow various possibilities to be explored rather than imposing one or another *a priori* view. Here Jonathan Sterne offers a promising starting point. When trying to find a neutral way of defining “sound-reproduction technologies” in general—a term that, in my opinion, is itself already problematic—Sterne settles on the criterion of *transduction*: modern sound media such as the telephone, phonograph, and radio “turn sound into something else and that something else back into sound.” Furthermore, they transduce based on a principle Sterne refers to as *tympanic*, because it was initially modeled after the effect of sound waves on the tympanic membrane of the ear or “eardrum.”<sup>94</sup> Much as the eardrum passes the vibrations that converge on it along to the inner ear, the diaphragms of phonographs and telephones transduce them respectively into phonograms and transmissible signals. For this part of the process, I see no problem in employing the usual verbs *record* in reference to the phonograph and *transmit* in reference to the telephone, although the principle in general is sometimes known more abstractly as *input transduction*. This “drawing-in” aspect of transduction does not present any serious theoretical difficulties.

The problem is what to call the second process, the “drawing-out” (or *output transduction*) in which something other than sound is converted tympanically into

sound. That process has usually been called *reproduction*: a telephone receiver or phonograph *reproduces* a person's voice, and the technical name for the component that transforms a phonogram into sound is the *reproducer*. But Alan Williams and others who have followed his lead hold that phonography never "reproduces" originary sounds but instead subjectively represents them, an objection that makes a more neutral term desirable—even though these same critics do continue to use the word "reproduce," apparently for want of a viable alternative. A more practical problem is the ambiguity inherent in statements such as "Mr. Edison is reproducing the phonogram," which could mean either (1) that he is playing it, reproducing the sounds it embodies; (2) that he is duplicating it, making extra copies of it; or even (3) that he is producing a new phonogram from scratch in imitation of an earlier one. Finally, in situations where several phonograms have been edited together into an "ideal event," it would be misleading to speak of the results being *reproduced* when they may never have been produced as such before, quite apart from the question of whether phonographs ever reproduce sound at all. The alternative term *playback*, or *to play back*, is open to the same criticism, insofar as its "back" implies an anterior "playing"; and *output transduction* has the practical disadvantage of requiring two words—a clunky way to express so fundamental a concept. Because of these objections, I prefer the verb *educe*, which has the more appropriate definition "to bring out, elicit, develop, from a condition of latent, rudimentary, or merely potential existence," and the derivative words *eduction* and *eductive*.<sup>95</sup>

Distinguishing *eduction* from duplication, rather than calling both processes "reproduction," means reconsidering some popular generalizations that have been made about mechanical media in the past. In his influential essay on the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction, Walter Benjamin treats the "reproduction" of static art objects and of live performances as equivalent acts. "Even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art," he writes, "is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be."<sup>96</sup> Thus, a perfect reproduction of a famous painting is not that painting, and a perfect reproduction of a live speech is not that live speech. What is missing from the reproduced version, in each case, Benjamin calls the "aura" of the original, a term he

associates with ritual value. Simultaneously, reproduction eliminates “distance”: people can experience these famous paintings and live speeches in their homes, where the originals either would not have been permitted to go or would not have taken place. However, there is a distinction to be made between the ability to “reproduce” a recorded enactment by educing a phonogram, and the ability to “reproduce” a phonogram by making duplicates of it. Multiple educions of a unique phonogram might be compared to multiple viewings of a painting, rather than to copies of the painting. They might not, for that matter, but making the distinction at least allows us to articulate and explore different possibilities.

The word “educe” also helps reveal certain continuities that the word “reproduce” would tend to mask: for instance, a musical box might be said to “educe” the sounds encoded on its manually pinned barrel, but not to “reproduce” any originary enactment. Other examples of automatic “eduction” could include the projection of a motion picture and the running of a computer program—indeed, I am not quite sure what the boundaries of this concept might turn out to be. At the same time, we gain an opportunity to sharpen our understanding of the real difference between the eduction of a phonogram and these other categories of eduction. We can define tympanic eduction, as opposed to eduction in general, as *artificially causing a surface to vibrate as though it were a point through which atmospheric sound waves were passing and thereby introducing a sound wave based on these vibrations into the surrounding atmosphere*. In turn, I will define phonography as *tympanic transduction between sounds and inscriptions* and telephony as *tympanic transduction between sounds and other signals transmissible across distances*. Note that none of these definitions mentions “reproduction,” though none of them rules it out either.

Defining phonography in these terms forces us to rethink just what constitutes its history and prehistory. There is not room here to do full justice to the prehistory of the phonograph, but I would at least like to summarize one unexpected finding about the invention of the phonograph itself. Past researchers, who have understood the phonograph only as an instrument for “reproducing” recorded sounds, locate its origin in Edison’s decision to adapt an earlier invention for recording and “reproducing”



telegraphic signals to the more complex signals of the telephone. The earliest evidence they have found for this line of thought appears in some laboratory notes of July 17, 1877, which set forth the idea of recording rapid speech via telephone for playback at lower speeds; and of July 18, describing an experiment in which Edison had actually recorded and “reproduced” some shouts using a telephone mouthpiece, a pin, and a strip of paraffined paper, leading him to conclude: “theres no doubt that I shall be able to store up & reproduce automatically at any future time the human voice perfectly.”<sup>97</sup> If we define phonography in the terms I have suggested, however, we suddenly discover that Edison had already begun working on it as of May 26, 1877 when, because his telephone mouthpieces did not pick up certain speech sounds very well, he had started toying with the idea of something he called the *keyboard talking telegraph*. Instead of speaking into this instrument, the operator would sit at a keyboard connected with a set of electrical breakwheels, each corresponding to a different frequency—thus, pressing the T, H, I, and S keys would set particular combinations of wheels in motion corresponding to the desired fundamental and overtones, causing the apparatus to “send the proper vibrations over the wire” and the telephone receiver on the other end of the line “to speak plainly the word *this*.”<sup>98</sup> Once Edison had gained a better understanding of speech acoustics, he set forth a revised plan in some notes of July 11, according to which each letter key was to activate not a combination of simple breakwheels but a single wheel with teeth in varying numbers and heights, corresponding to both frequency and amplitude.<sup>99</sup> The main obstacle to developing this idea would have lain in discovering what patterns to inscribe on the wheels in order to produce the sounds of the various letters, and Edison’s solution, apparently, was to record examples from actual speech—hence the experiments of July 17-18, which culminated not in an enthusiastic announcement of the invention of the phonograph, as one might have expected, but in the inclusion of the keyboard talking telegraph idea in a British provisional patent text.<sup>100</sup> Edison apparently gave up on the whole idea when he discovered that the “same” speech sound could produce an entirely different-looking trace each time he recorded it,<sup>101</sup> and it was not until a few months later that he began to appreciate and develop the further potential of the principle he had discovered.

Previous historians of the phonograph have overlooked Edison's keyboard talking telegraph project, apparently failing to see in it any relevance to the subject at hand. Perhaps the idea behind it is simply too far removed from the way in which critics understand the phonograph today for the connection to be apparent. However, the evidence leaves little doubt that Edison first envisioned phonography as something useful not in terms of faithful "records" of past events that could be "reproduced," but in terms of programs that could synthesize speech in the future at the push of a button—a handy new technique for generating complex sounds mechanically. Granted, the programs had to be tympanically *recorded*; there was, as yet, no other known means of inscribing the patterns of vibrations necessary to educe, say, the sound of the letter "a." From the beginning, however, we find phonography linked to tasks that were not perceived primarily as "reproduction," even if they happened of necessity to involve "reproduction." Rather than thinking of all phonograms as "copies" of "originals," it will often be more illuminating to understand them as programs waiting to be enacted, their social significance rooted in moments of education rather than in the moment of recording—which, in turn, has far-reaching implications for the nature of the originary events that still formed a necessary part of the process.

### **Performing For and With the Machine**

While Williams, Eisenberg, and Kahn all argue that the "art" of phonography resides in acts of technological manipulation such as placing microphones in strategic spots or splicing together bits of tape, another school of thought locates it in the *adaptation of what is being recorded*. Nearly every account of early phonographic performers comments on the fact that they adapted their performance styles to suit the peculiar strengths and weaknesses of the current technology. To take a particularly elaborate example, Mark Katz suggests that violinists' increased use of vibrato over the course of the twentieth century may have originated as a tactic for producing more satisfactory phonograms. The advantages in this case would have been both acoustic, allowing performers to "increase the effective loudness of a note without overplaying

and without coming into contact with the horn,” and affective, since vibrato seems to have been regarded as a means of conveying emotion and individuality in the absence of gesture, facial expression, and presence. The adaptation of violin-playing for recording purposes, Katz’s argument goes, eventually had a reciprocal effect on live performance practice. A similar transformation seems to have affected the standard instrumentation of klezmer music: because *tsimbl* and double bass did not record well, they were replaced by clarinet and tuba for the phonograms that later served as a model for the klezmer revival. In general, Katz refers to this process as the “phonograph effect.”<sup>102</sup>

Some writers argue that adaptations of the kind Katz describes created a special relationship between originary events and their resulting phonograms, one for which the terms “original” and “copy” would be misleading. Drawing from work by John and Susan Harvith on recording practices of the 1910s and 1920s, James Lastra observes that Edison employed a roster of relatively unknown performers in preference to celebrity talent with a reputation earned in live performance, sometimes reacting to test phonograms by the latter with such comments as “THE PHONOGRAPH IS NOT AN OPERA HOUSE.” With the Harviths, he concludes that Edison “assumed that live performance and phonography were different enterprises altogether,” both having their distinct “techniques and standards,” so that being good at one did not necessarily translate into being good at the other.<sup>103</sup> Specifically, the originary event in commercial phonography was judged not according to how it would be perceived immediately by a human being, as live performances were, but purely by the effectiveness of the resulting phonogram. “Edison showed that the so-called original has only a functional importance, serving simply as one step in the process of producing a satisfactory recording,” Lastra observes. “No one was ever meant to listen to Edison’s ‘originals’ nor were they *designed* for listening—they were designed to accomplish one stage of a multistage representational process.”<sup>104</sup> As to the ways in which originary events could be “designed” for recordability, he writes:

Performers and technicians alike learned that it might...be advantageous to change aspects of a particular musician’s performance style in order to take advantage of the machine’s peculiarities. Through repeated exposure to the most mundane and practical aspects of musical recording, both groups came to believe that sonic representation was not simply a matter of precisely transcribing completely prior and autonomous events, and to concede that a performance, for instance, might

deviate from its customary *presentational* norms in order to achieve a particular *representational* effect, like intelligibility, regardless of its effect on the character of the “pro-phonographic” event [i.e., anterior to inscription].

Judging from the examples Lastra cites, the kind of adaptation he has in mind here is the practice of exploiting musical effects that the machine recorded well, such as pure tones in singing, while eschewing ones that it did not, such as tremolo. While Lastra acknowledges that the practice of early commercial phonography was predicated on the creation of “coherent but spatiotemporally nonliteral musical worlds,” rather than on merely recording preexisting subjects, he still treats the field as limited to the adaptation of musical performance.<sup>105</sup>

Jonathan Sterne presents an argument much like Lastra’s, but he expands on it in some fruitful ways. “Making sounds for the machines was always different than performing for a live audience,” he asserts. “Studio work was widely understood as a practice entirely different from live performance.”<sup>106</sup> On the basis of this observation, he draws a conclusion similar to Eisenberg’s about the autonomous validity of the phonographic “ideal event,” except that in Sterne’s version phonography no longer requires special recording techniques or postproduction editing to be regarded as a distinctive cultural form:

If its reproduction exists even as a possibility, sound production is oriented toward reproduction from the very moment a sound is created at a “source.” Sound reproduction always involves a distinct practice of sound production.... Therefore, we can no longer argue that copies are debased versions of a more authentic original that exists either outside or prior to the process of reproduction. Both copy and original are products of the process of reproducibility. The original requires as much artifice as the copy.<sup>107</sup>

To support this claim, Sterne turns not to music but to the genre of the *descriptive specialty*, of which THE PASSING OF A CIRCUS PARADE with which I opened this introduction is one example. “Somewhere between a contrived re-creation of an actual event and a vaudeville sketch,” he writes, “descriptive specialties offered their listeners ‘tone pictures’ of different places and events,” ranging from the funeral of President McKinley to battle scenes of the Russo-Japanese War. Because these phonograms were studio “re-creations” rather than literal “reproductions,” Sterne supposes, “the point was not to get as close to reality as possible but rather to establish a kind of auditory realism and, through that realism, present a distinct aesthetic experience.”<sup>108</sup> In other words, a descriptive sketch phonogram was not

meant to be a transparent medium for some authentic reality transpiring in the recording studio; rather, what went on in the studio was enacted solely to produce a phonogram capable of effecting a desired aural illusion. Some of this phrasing suggests a kind of paradox—“originals” are being enacted solely for “reproduction”—but once we reformulate the process more neutrally in terms of education, the concept should be no more peculiar than that of “writing” being enacted to produce a particular effect during “reading,” rather than simply to document the moment of writing itself.

The distinction Lastra and Sterne make with regard to certain kinds of performance—that “originals” may be enacted not for direct listening, but as one step in a larger communicative process—has especially interesting implications when applied to spoken language, as one familiar example will illustrate. The telephone answering machine and the distinctive communicative situations it embodies have, within the past few decades, become pervasive social institutions, and the nature of the language found in outgoing answering machine messages has sparked some discussion and debate in philosophy, beginning with Alan Sidelle’s formulation in 1991 of the following puzzle:

Anyone who has called an absent party with an answering machine has heard the words ‘I’m not here now,’ and, save for those unpleasant occasions when the answering machine is being used as a screening device, it seems undeniable that what one hears on the other end of the phone is true. This is the answering machine paradox: the semantics for ‘I,’ ‘here,’ and ‘now’ seem to ensure the truth of any utterance of ‘I am here now,’ and consequently, the falsity of any utterance of ‘I am not here now,’ yet answering machines provide us with ‘I’m not here now’s which are true.<sup>109</sup>

Sidelle proposes to solve this puzzle by introducing the concept of the *deferred utterance*:

When one records an answering machine message...one is not, at that time, (typically) making an utterance, or at least, making an assertion. One is not saying that one isn’t there when one is recording...—this would be pointless. One is rather arranging to make an utterance at a later time, or, if one likes, *deferring* an utterance. The genuine utterance(s) will occur when someone calls and hears the message.<sup>110</sup>

Thus, “here” and “now” will refer to the time and place of the “genuine utterance” even though its speaker, “I,” is legitimately elsewhere. However, Stefano Predelli argues that the context of a “genuine utterance” in this sense might not be the relevant one for evaluating its referents if it ends up occurring under circumstances unforeseen by the speaker. As an alternative, he proposes that the “utterance” itself still happens

at the time and place of encoding, but that its “here” and “now” are anchored to the time and place in which the speaker *intends* it to be decoded and interpreted, or even to a plurality of such times and places.<sup>111</sup> In turn, Eros Corazza, William Fish and Jonathan Gorvett counter that a speaker’s intentions cannot explain why such cases also make sense to listeners, and that their success really depends purely on convention:

Our proposal is that, for any use of the personal indexical, the contextual parameter of the agent is *conventionally given*—given by the *social or conventional setting* in which the utterance takes place. For instance, with “now”, the setting or context in which it is used changes the time that the term refers to: if “now” is heard on an answering machine, we take the relevant time to be the time at which it is heard, and we arrive at the referent accordingly.... [The “I am not here now” approach] succeeds because we are aware of the conventions governing the use of answering machines and the fact that the purpose of such devices is to inform the caller of the state of affairs *at the time the call is made*.

According to Corazza et al., we interpret the referents correctly in such cases because of a tacit mutual understanding about how “I,” “here,” and “now” should be understood in outgoing answering machine messages, even if they would mean something else when received on, say, a postcard from a friend on vacation. What is at stake here, and in similar cases, is our identification of the conventional deictic zero-point for a given type of utterance, in reference to which its indexicals are to be evaluated.<sup>112</sup> But what happens when the relevant conventions are in flux, as in the emergence of new media? As Daniel Wojcik states, the formal features of the outgoing answering machine message have certain “similarities to traditional greeting and leave-taking formulas” but were, as of his writing in the mid-1980s, “themselves rapidly *becoming* traditions,”<sup>113</sup> which we can read as implying that the process was not yet complete. Although the conventions of the form may now be widely recognized, there is still room for cognitive dissonance, such that the potential for confusion in the delivery of outgoing messages is still being tapped as a source of comedy on a regular basis. Examples may be found (1) in lists of humorous answering machine message texts posted on the Internet:

I can’t come to the phone now, so if, well, actually, I CAN come to the phone now, I mean, like, I’m at the phone NOW, recording this message, but I’m doing this NOW, while you’re listening to it LATER, except for you I guess it’s NOW, like, when you’re listening to it... I mean, like, wait, gosh. This is so confusing.<sup>114</sup>

(2) in a “Frank & Ernest” comic strip of the year 2001:

HELLO. THIS IS A RECORDING... THAT IS, IT ISN'T A RECORDING RIGHT NOW WHILE I'M MAKING IT, OF COURSE, BUT IT WILL BE, OR RATHER IS, A RECORDING WHEN YOU HEAR IT... OR, IN OTHER WORDS....<sup>115</sup>

and (3) on a British website that invites visitors to download sound files for use as outgoing messages on their own answering machines:

Hello.  
[*laugh*] What am I saying, there's no-one there.  
Well—there *is*,  
but not as I *speak*, so to speak.  
I know—later, some time—in the indefinite future,  
someone *will* ring,  
someone like yourself.  
I shouldn't say someone like yourself, I—I mean, in point of fact  
*you*,  
yourself....<sup>116</sup>

What these parodies are simulating is the uncertainty that might arise if no conventions existed for the outgoing telephone answering machine message and it were, instead, subject to evaluation on the same terms as ordinary telephonic speech. In 1877, there really *were* no conventions for evaluating any form of phonography, whether answering machine messages or musical phonograms. Any such conventions still had to be worked out through analogy, trial, and error. The debate over the “answering machine paradox” suggests that the use of indexical language is likely to offer rich insight into how this process occurred, providing us with an empirical tool for mapping the emergent relationship between phonographic “originals” and “reproductions.” An even more fundamental point to be made, however, is that there is a conceptual unity linking modifications in performance (as in the peculiarities of “studio work”) and referential speech (as in the deixis of answering machine messages) to compensate for the fact that neither was intended for immediate apprehension. I consider these to be two mutually illuminating manifestations of a single underlying principle of adaptation, although as far as I am aware they have not been linked analytically with each other before.

So far I have considered two different perspectives on what might constitute a phonographic “art.” The first is modeled after classic film theory and suggests that the “art” of phonography resides in acts of technological manipulation, such as the strategic placement of microphones and postproduction editing. The second, which I find is more relevant to analyses of *early* phonograms, is based on the concept of

“performing for the machine,” emphasizing ways in which the recorded enactment is itself adapted to the medium. However, a third perspective worth considering locates the “art” of early phonography at a later point in the process than either of the others, namely in the act of exhibition. This position has been articulated most forcibly by Charles Musser, who is primarily a film historian and whose approach to the phonograph exhibition can be seen as an extension of his work on the origins of postproduction editing in cinema. Film theory has been deeply concerned with the editing and sequencing of shots. However, until roughly 1903 films were distributed (with rare exceptions) in the form of single, unbroken shots. Editing these shots together into coherent programs was, during that time, the responsibility of the individual exhibitor, not the production company. Initially, exhibitors chose to split up selections with similar themes—seeking variety—rather than juxtaposing them to create a sense of continuous narrative. Throughout the latter half of the 1890s, however, exhibitors came increasingly to show thematically related films in connected sequences, as production companies began producing selections more consciously in multi-part series. In the first decade of the twentieth century, production companies took over this editorial role themselves, distributing elaborate sequences ready-made—such as *THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY*. But the art of film editing had begun as the work of individual exhibitors.<sup>117</sup> If early film exhibitors displayed creative artistry in their sequencing of separate films, then—Musser supposes—early phonograph exhibitors might have done the same thing in their sequencing of separate phonograms, even though they did not actually splice them together into larger physical units. His principal example of an exhibitor is Lyman Howe, who left behind a rich trove of scrapbooks covering his phonograph work in the early 1890s and who later gained a reputation for incorporating prerecorded sound effects into his exhibitions of moving pictures. Although Howe did use prerecorded phonograms purchased from other recordists, he also recorded many of his own and accompanied his presentations with live introductions and commentary. Musser argues that it was in exhibition, rather than in the recording studio, that the greatest creative potential of phonography lay:

Howe and Haddock [his partner during the season of 1890] held the principal creative responsibility for their shows. They were not exhibitors in the modern sense: they did not simply



present the works of creative artists. Rather, they functioned as directors, performers, and technicians. Their concerts can be more appropriately viewed as live performances with prerecorded components. These live theatrical presentations were built around mechanically reproducible elements but were not dominated by them.<sup>118</sup>

Although Musser's concern may ultimately come from an interest in film editing, the creative role he assigns to Howe is not based on the "editing" of shorter phonograms into composite phonograms, but on the live juxtaposition and introduction of separate phonograms during exhibitions.

Some consistent vocabulary will be helpful for referring to the events of phonography and their participants, rather than just to recording and education as technical processes. The most elaborate classification scheme of which I am aware is Rick Altman's in "The Material Heterogeneity of Recorded Sound," which defines the *sound event*, such as the original plucking of a string; the *sound narrative*, a resultant complex of vibrations in the air capable of being heard at multiple points; the *sound record*, a pattern of waves "collected" at a single point in space; *sound reproduction*, which I am calling education; and the *hearing event*, in which an audience listens to the result. However, this classification scheme does not quite fit the needs or perspectives of the present study. Altman's main purpose in formulating these categories is to emphasize the three-dimensionality of live sounds and its absence from phonographically educed sounds, which—with Alan Williams—he takes to be subjective representations rather than "reproductions" of their originals. His classification scheme accordingly emphasizes technological transformations of sound that can take place at various points in its mediation: "Though they may constitute distortions for the sound engineer, the marks of the sound narrative and the recording process that appear as part of the sound record constitute the very text of the sound analyst, the fundamental signs of the sound semiotician, the basic facts of the sound historian."<sup>119</sup> But I am concerned just as much with the contributions of the people who "perform" for the machine, and of the other people who work the education of phonograms into their "performances"; of the person who dictates an outgoing message into an answering machine and the callers who trigger its education. Finding a place for them requires a somewhat different analytical framework, one

centered more on complexities of coding and decoding than on the phenomenology of sound as such.

For my purposes, there will be two basic kinds of events connected with phonography: *recording events*, during which sounds are produced and recorded, and *eduction events*, in which phonograms are used to generate sound. Two principal roles are associated with the recording event. One is the *recordist*, the person deploying the recording equipment. The other is the source of the sounds being recorded, but it is difficult to find a word neutral enough to cover all of the possibilities, which range from operatic arias to business dictation to the sounds of nature. Subjects that produce sounds suitable for recording have been called *phonogenic*, which further suggests to me a corresponding noun *phonogen*, or “sound-producer,” for anything that produces sounds, although in practice the adjectival form actually tends to be more useful.<sup>120</sup> This distinction is also worth expressing in the form of a verb, in order to avoid such ambiguous phrases as “John recorded a song,” which in ordinary usage could refer either to the activity of the recordist (“John Lomax recorded a song performed by a prison inmate”) or the phonogen (“John Lennon recorded a song he had just composed”). Since John Lomax is the one who most literally “recorded” something, I will say that John Lennon *phonogenized* his song, and that the ordinary production of sound for any phonogram is its *phonogenization*. The eduction event centers on two other roles. I will call the person for whose hearing a phonogram is educed the *listener*, and the person in charge of deploying the equipment the *eductionist*.<sup>121</sup> Two of the aforementioned roles are equivalent to those found in “live” encounters (the phonogen and the listener), while the other two are tied to the mediation itself (the recordist and the eductionist). These roles need not always be filled by people: for example, a phonogen might just as easily be a waterfall or a bird. Alternatively, a single person might sometimes act as both phonogen and recordist, or as both listener and eductionist, or even as all four in quick succession (for instance, if I record myself speaking into a tape recorder, rewind, and then listen to hear how I sound). All four roles are also capable of being filled by more than one occupant: there might be multiple phonogens or multiple listeners, and the roles of recordist and eductionist

might be divided into sub-roles such as “producer” and “recording engineer” in the first case or “lecturer” and “phonograph operator” in the second. In early phonography, meaning was potentially negotiated between phonogens, recordists, educationists, and listeners. I do not mean to deny the possible contribution of other participants, such as those involved in the sale and marketing of phonograms or—later on—in postproduction editing. However, I have found these four roles the most analytically useful ones to distinguish in phonography alongside more widely encountered and acknowledged roles such as, say, that of addressee.

Another useful concept for exploring phonograph-centered events will be that of *frame*. Erving Goffman borrows this term from Gregory Bateson and defines it as a basic organizing principle governing the ways in which people are subjectively involved in social events—for example, “make-believe” or “joking.” As these two examples suggest, participants may interpret what is going on in a given situation very differently depending on what frame they believe is in effect. There are, accordingly, conventionalized cues that serve to invoke or sustain particular frames, which Goffman calls *keys*; the act of invoking a frame using one of these conventions is known as *keying* it. One of the many frames Goffman discusses is the “theatrical” one, defined as “that arrangement which transforms an individual into a stage performer, the latter, in turn, being an object that can be looked at in the round and at length without offense, and looked to for engaging behavior, by persons in an ‘audience’ role.” In “ordinary” social interaction, by contrast, such intense scrutiny could be considered disrespectful and offensive. Goffman contrasts his definition with Dell Hymes’ view of performance as “an attribute of any behavior, if the doer accepts or has imputed to him responsibility for being evaluated in regard to it.”<sup>122</sup> However, these two approaches can be viewed as complementary rather than contradictory. Richard Bauman combines them to identify performance itself, at least in terms of verbal art, as a frame in which a performer invites intense attention and promises engaging behavior (Goffman), simultaneously opening himself or herself to evaluation in terms of “competence” in the relevant performance tradition (Hymes). The formal characteristics associated with performance may vary from culture to

culture, the argument goes; what unifies them is the implicit promise of aesthetic enjoyment and the concomitant invitation of attention and critical evaluation.<sup>123</sup>

Something much like a theatrical or performance frame appears to govern much of the behavior surrounding the phonograph: the phonogen is often described as a person who “performs” for the machine; the eductionist is sometimes regarded as “performing” *with* the machine; the listener often attends to an eduction event as “performance.” At the same time, the interposition of the phonograph also changes participants’ orientation towards what is going on. Thus, listeners who understand more or less how a phonograph works, and who know that they are listening to a phonogram of a speech, are unlikely to try to interject a question with the expectation of a reply from the “speaker” because they recognize that the medium does not provide for that kind of interaction. On the whole, the relationships found in phonography are different enough from the ones found in more traditional performance settings that I feel that referring to “performance-like phonograms” or “phonographic performances” would ultimately be more confusing than illuminating. Consequently, I have settled on an alternative—and admittedly whimsical—term for discussing phonograms associated with a performance-like response. By analogy with *spectacle* and *spectacular* (from *spectare*, “to look at”), I will use the words *audicle* and *audicular* (from *audire*, “to listen to”) for a broad category of sounds marked as affective, moving, entertaining, and aesthetically valuable, regardless of their formal characteristics.<sup>124</sup> Along with Bauman’s definition of the performance frame, a comparable concept is Robert Plant Armstrong’s *affecting things and events*, an alternative to the word “art” that is supposed to be unburdened by normative formal criteria and defined purely by local sensibilities.<sup>125</sup> The field of soundscape studies developed by R. Murray Schafer and Barry Truax recognizes a few subcategories of what I am calling audicles, but for all its jargon it seems to have no term for the concept as a whole, which is why I have felt the need to coin one.<sup>126</sup>

My interest is not so much in the audicle in general as in the *audicular phonogram*, i.e., a phonogram that is promoted and valued for the affective impact of the listening experience it generates. Many musical phonograms fall into this category, but so can phonograms of other potentially audicular subjects: verbal art,

for instance, or the roar of a waterfall. Indeed, my only motive for advancing the audible as a concept is that it would otherwise be difficult for me to write about these disparate aural phenomena as a unified subject without a lot of clumsy circumlocution (e.g., “entertaining, aesthetically significant, and/or emotionally moving sounds”). There is no single “opposite” to the audicular phonogram, just as there is no clear “opposite” to performance, no satisfactory way of defining “literal reality” as opposed to something else. It is certainly possible, however, to contrast the audicular category with individual non-audicular uses of phonography. For instance, there was the phonography of business dictation: since it was merely one step in the production of a typewritten document, the fact of its auralness was not valued; it did not matter how it sounded, so long as a secretary could understand it and transcribe it. On the other hand, consider the following use scenario proposed in 1893 by J. Mount Bleyer, a doctor specializing in diseases of the throat and lungs:

For the more audible sounds like the whoop of the whooping cough, asthmatic breathing in all its forms, stenosis of the larynx, due to whatever form, and which is so evident in cases of cramp and diphtheria, nasal troubles, cries of babies at different periods of their growth, sneezing, normal breathing as contrasted with abnormal breathing, the phonograph is the instrument for their recording beyond all doubt. Certainly, students and members of the medical and other professions would learn more from one lecture in any branch of science aided by phonograms than from a dozen lectures of the usual sort. Cabinets can be arranged as libraries in which all kinds of records may be preserved, referring to, or representing, the different kinds of disease of the throat, nose, chest, etc., and in their different stages.<sup>127</sup>

Bleyer’s phonograms were to be listened to for the sake of information, not an affective experience, but at the same time the information was embedded in the aural character of the phonogram and could not have been conveyed as effectively through, say, a transcription. Meanwhile, the importance attributed to acoustic detail, “fidelity,” or any other formal characteristic seems to be a factor independent of audicularity.

During a recording event, the creators of a phonogram generally expect it to serve a circumscribed range of audicular and non-audicular ends, or some combination of these, and how they proceed depends largely on the sort of education events they expect the resulting phonogram to make possible. Like other “writings,” however, phonograms can be used for purposes other than those intended by their creators. If a listener can approach birdsong or rain pattering on a tin roof as an

audicle, then it should also be possible to approach a phonogram as an audicle even when it was not created intentionally to be one. Nor is the listener the only participant in an education event capable of rekeying a phonogram in this way; the educationist, if this is a separate person, might also key audicularity. One listener might listen to a commercial musical phonogram for enjoyment (audicular use), while another might use it to learn to play the music (non-audicular use, closer to “demonstration”).

As we have seen, Lastra and Sterne both argue that the ordinary enactment of phonography is inherently different from the live communicative act, being designed not for immediate apprehension or appreciation in its own right, but to generate a record capable in turn of being educated as an “ideal event.” It is subordinate to the phonogram, not the phonogram to it. The phonogenic performer might still be thought of as “performing,” in the sense of being subject to critical evaluation, but what is being claimed and evaluated is competence specifically in the skills needed to yield a satisfactory audicular phonogram. This model fits virtually all early commercial phonography, and many other kinds too, but it should not be taken too far. Not all events recorded by the phonograph were consciously adapted to the medium or enacted in order to be recorded, the most obvious counterexamples being cases in which it has recorded incriminating remarks made by a person unaware of its presence. The value of this model is that it recognizes the existence of a relationship in phonography other than that between originals and lesser, disembodied copies, not that this alternative relationship is the only one possible between tympanically educated sounds and original sounds, or between “live” events and “reproduced” ones. Meanwhile, performance is only one sphere of activity that is susceptible to phonogenic adaptation. Recorded business dictation, for instance, will generally involve a more or less phonogenically adapted form of speaking. So, of course, does the outgoing answering machine message “I am not here now.” Despite their formal differences, all adaptations of this sort can be reasonably subsumed under the rubric of the *phonogenic frame*.

The transformative potential of what I am calling the phonogenic frame should be old news to ethnographers. Turning on recording equipment has been

credited with such effects as introducing a mechanical “third presence” alongside fieldworker and informant and inducing certain kinds of code-switching (e.g., talking self-consciously “for the record”).<sup>128</sup> What I am proposing is simply a shift in emphasis: we should investigate phonogenic adaptation as a creative response to the communicative circumstances of phonography, and not just as material for fieldwork anecdotes. Scholars are already reluctant to accept most early phonograms as transparent windows onto “authentic” live performance practices, and by emphasizing processes of adaptation and transformation I may seem to discourage this kind of approach even further. However, if early phonograms can sometimes be regarded as conscious, intelligent adaptations of live performance genres, then they gain significance in their own right as subjective reflections on whatever it is they are seeking to represent. *THE PASSING OF A CIRCUS PARADE* is probably not a very accurate record of what an early twentieth-century circus parade actually sounded like, but it does reveal what the people who produced it thought would pass for a satisfactory “circus parade” phonogram in the year 1902. As a result, we learn something about both their understanding of the circus parade and their ideas about what should go into the phonographic representation of a complex public event.

Among the most revealing features of a phonogram in this respect are its metacommunicative devices, such as spoken announcements. One of the only previous studies to have taken this aspect of phonography seriously is John Minton’s dissertation, *Phonograph Blues* (1990), in which the author analyzes the conventions by which phonogenic performers oriented themselves and their listeners to musical performances mediated via “race” and “hillbilly” records of the 1920s and 1930s. For instance, the Riley Puckett recording *DARKEY’S WAIL* (1930) opens with the statement, “Hello, folks. Now I’m with you once again. I’m gonna play for you this time a little piece which an old southern darkey I heard play coming down Decatur Street called ‘His Good Gal Threw Him Down.’” Minton finds that such metacommunicative segments frame the content of phonograms variously as documentation of live events or as functional substitutes for them, and that they occasionally incorporate reflexive comments about the medium itself.<sup>129</sup> In focusing on southern folksong traditions, Minton has chosen to explore a case in which the

mutual influences of face-to-face and mediated forms were already problematized and recognized as a subject worthy of investigation. The phonograms themselves have been widely reissued in modern formats, and so are still readily accessible; their keying is elaborate and conspicuous. It is, therefore, not surprising that this was the first phonographic genre to be analyzed seriously in terms of its metacommunicative conventions. However, Minton suggests that other corpi of recorded sound should be open to similar kinds of interpretation. The key assumption underlying his approach is “that people learn to interact with electronic media as a cultural activity and that the nature and significance of those interactions are, as in any such exchange, mediated or otherwise, culture-specific and cross-culturally variable.”<sup>130</sup> That is, different cultures may be expected to display different orientations towards phonography and its relationship to live performance, and these orientations might manifest themselves through distinctive formal features on the phonograms themselves, as in the “race” and “hillbilly” examples. My findings tend to confirm his suspicions, the culture in my case consisting of phonographically active individuals in the United States between 1877 and 1908.

To summarize: I distinguish two kinds of event in phonography, the recording event and the education event. During education events, educationists use phonographs to educate phonograms for listeners. When the educated phonograms receive attention from the listeners equivalent to that given by an audience to a performance, I call them “audicular.” During recording events, recordists use phonographs to record the sounds produced by phonogens. Anything that produces recordable sound can be a phonogen, and a person who is a phonogen may be unaware that he or she is being recorded, but phonogens can also tailor the sounds they make, their phonogenizations, specifically for recording and use in anticipated future education events, a mode of behavior I identify with the “phonogenic frame.” In particular, the “phonogenic performance” has as its goal not the engagement of an immediately present audience, but the production of an “audicular” phonogram. This classification scheme for the events and participants of phonography is not intended to be particularly interesting or insightful in and of itself. The interesting part will be seeing how, in practice, participants in early phonography actually negotiated their way through all these



unfamiliar situations and relationships in an effort to put the new technology to various uses.

### **Acoustic Recording and Phonographic Transcription**

Before we get underway, there are still a few practical points we will need to consider with regard to representing phonograms on the printed page for purposes of quotation and analysis. Until the 1920s, nearly all phonography was based on what is known as the *acoustic* recording process, as opposed to *electric*. In acoustic recording, the palpable mechanical force of the sound vibrations themselves drives the movement of the recording stylus. Thomas Edison once illustrated the mechanical force of sound waves by inviting a newspaper reporter to place his hand on the top of his silk hat and “feel the rumble and the roar of the mighty city.” The reporter obliged and acknowledged that “sure enough it thumped away as though a living heart were beating against it.”<sup>131</sup> Edison even devised a “phonomotor” which harnessed the mechanical power of the human voice to turn a small wheel attached to a gimlet—during an exhibition of 1878, someone had asked him if he could “talk a hole through a board,” and the design for the phonomotor was his immediate answer to the challenge.<sup>132</sup>

Certain sounds did not record well under the acoustic recording process. This had an effect on musical sounds, as seen in the arguments of Katz and Lastra, but it also impacted the recording of speech sounds. In 1878, William Preece remarked of the phonograph: “The *s* for instance at the beginning and end of a word is almost entirely lost—is entirely lost, although it is heard slightly in the middle of a word. The *d* and the *t* are exactly the same; and the same in *m* and *n*, *mane* and *name* are not distinguishable.”<sup>133</sup> Soon after, he noted that both the phonograph and telephone had difficulty transducing sibilants: “Thus, if through the telephone you ask a person to ‘waltz,’ it will come out ‘walk,’ and names like my own, with the sound of ‘s’ in it, would come out ‘Pree,’ not ‘Preece.’”<sup>134</sup> In the late 1880s, Edison’s improved phonograph was supposed to have initially “refused to say ‘specia’—it dropped the ‘s’ and said ‘pecia.’”<sup>135</sup> “Well, I have about solved the problem now,” Edison

claimed in 1889, “and the sound of ‘s’ is inscribed with the other letters.”<sup>136</sup>

However, the results were still imperfect. The phonogenic performer Russell Hunting noted some remaining flaws in an interview of 1903:

“Are there any words,” I asked, “which present greater difficulties than others?”

“There are lots. But two only will serve to prove my point. Just notice how the ordinary man enunciates ‘truth’ and ‘teeth.’ You know what he says, because you are watching his face. But let him talk into the trumpet. And what do you hear when you switch on the reproducer? Truth becomes merely an ‘oo’ sound, teeth an ‘ee’ sound; it is impossible to recognize them as words.”<sup>137</sup>

These problems persisted throughout the acoustic recording era and affected Berliner’s gramophone as much as the cylinder phonograph. “Sibilants remained strangers to the gramophone record until the introduction of the electrical recording process in 1925,” claimed recordist Fred Gaisberg.<sup>138</sup> In the period covered by this thesis, the speech sounds uttered by a phonogen were not quite identical to the ones recorded on the phonogram for future education.

One result is considerable uncertainty over the words heard today on early phonograms, which can make transcribing them more of an art than a science. Debates have arisen over the correct interpretation of particular examples of acoustically-recorded speech and singing. Rumors still abound that Geraldine Farrar sang not “si, per la vita” but “he’s had a highball” in her performance with Enrico Caruso of the love duet from *Madame Butterfly*.<sup>139</sup> The opening words of an 1889 cylinder documenting a piano performance by Johannes Brahms have been the source of another controversy, at issue being whether the composer is identifying himself in the first person or being introduced by someone else—and in what language.<sup>140</sup> The spoken segment towards the end of a 1904 take of *TURKEY IN THE STRAW* by Silas Leachman has phonographicists disagreeing as to whether he shouts “Mister Booth,” addressing Victor Talking Machine Company house pianist C. H. H. Booth, or “Mister Coon,” consistent with the blackface genre.<sup>141</sup> These are merely some of the most conspicuous examples of a general problem. Robert Cogswell comments on the difficulties he experienced in transcribing early “blackface” dialogue phonograms:

Once the researcher has obtained a copy of some rare and long sought-after recording, poor sound quality, due either to the inadequacies of earlier technology or to the ravages of time, may render portions of the recorded text indecipherable. Whereas the folklorist who transcribes and studies his own field recordings can rely on memory to reconstruct all aspects of a performance, the student of commercial records lacks any recall from the collecting situation.<sup>142</sup>

When the *New Amberola Graphic* published the lyrics to some political campaign songs as transcribed from cylinder, the transcribers' work was accompanied by the note, "Anyone who has ever tried to make out all the words of a song from an ancient brown wax record knows the difficult conditions under which they worked."<sup>143</sup> Even then, a subscriber immediately wrote in to point out that a name they had transcribed as "Hannah" should actually have been Marcus Alonzo *Hanna*, an Ohio senator.<sup>144</sup>

This uncertainty over wording is not unique to modern-day researchers working with badly worn materials, nor does it necessarily imply that our ability to analyze them is flawed. Rather, lexical indeterminacy has been a part of phonographic listening from its beginnings. One of the first pieces of fan mail ever received by a recording artist—William Hooley of the Haydn Quartet, in 1899—centered on the following request:

In "The Chapel," I fail to distinguish all the words and my object in writing you, partly, is to ask if you would be kind enough to send me the words as you sing them and the composer's name. I have a song by the same name, but the words are entirely different, nor can I find among my friends, any who know the one you sing, or I would not trouble you.<sup>145</sup>

It must be kept in mind that this request was not made as a complaint but appeared as part of an otherwise flattering letter from a pleased gramophone customer. It was a fact of phonography that one might not be able to make out all the words. Some scholars have concluded from such comments that early phonography was unsuited to recording spoken language and that this was why the business dictation phonograph was doomed to failure and the entertainment phonograph had a greater chance of success:

Only as it became obvious that the phonograph was a failure as a "talking" machine did a few adventurous (and probably desperate) investors begin to reconfigure it as a "singing" machine.<sup>146</sup>

Business dictation required clear, intelligible records that the early phonograph simply was not capable of producing, at least not without careful attention from the machine's operator. Music, ironically, was in some ways well-suited to the phonograph's limited sonic range and high levels of noise and distortion. Listeners often knew the words to songs already, or could recognize the melody of even a badly recorded song. Then, as now, it was not usually necessary for the recording of a song to be perfectly free of scratches, hissing, or distortion for it to be thoroughly enjoyable.<sup>147</sup>

When the goal of phonography was to produce written business correspondence, lexical indeterminacy was an obvious drawback. For instance, when George Gouraud, Edison's agent in London, sent phonographic correspondence overseas to

America during 1888 for purposes of experiment and publicity, he enclosed transcriptions prepared by his assistant H. de Coursey Hamilton as a backup, and the transcriptions contain a number of passages in which Hamilton had been unable to make out all the words and marked his guesses as uncertain, yielding relatively untidy documents:

I sent you a cable immediately explaining to you that you are wrong in supposing that ----? deter? you. You have last said ?, we should have the necessary means of making three complete machines.<sup>148</sup>

Each Phonogram will contain a message to you, informing you the route by which it has reached you. The baït one has left me, & consequently when you receive it, you will be able to judge, as to the effect, if any, of the various stages of private & conditions of handling, incident to the voyage which it has made.<sup>149</sup>

However, lexical indeterminacy did not necessarily make phonography inferior to writing as a medium of language in all cases, even if it made transcription difficult. Recorded utterances that cannot be understood or identified with certainty as specific words often still have other appreciable qualities, such as the ones Alan Durant identifies with secondary orality: paralinguistic and prosodic features, accent, intonation, vocal quality or “grain.” Indeed, much of what made the phonogram formally distinctive relative to the written or printed word was its embodiment of these qualities. Durant goes further, arguing that

in commonly-encountered fast-tempo speech or melismatic singing under conditions of poor audio fidelity, a range of provisional senses are liable to intervene in hearing the spoken text, putting unusually to the test the ‘redundancy’, or surplus of identifying cues which exist in spoken communication. Effects of temporary polysemy of this kind amount to more than mere stylistic felicity, and can in fact create a potent—and often psychically invested—sub-script which it is left to following sounds to cancel out.<sup>150</sup>

The possibility of mishearing words through the phonograph was, minimally, tapped as a source of humor. In 1879, a tinfoil phonograph was reported as having garbled the phrase “In heaven y-clep’d Euphrosyne” into “In heaven she crept, and froze her knee.”<sup>151</sup> In 1908, a customer entered an Edison dealer’s shop asking about a song called “Harry Warner” he had heard educed on some other company’s equipment. The song turned out to have been “Arrah Wanna,” and the customer obligingly concluded “that if he wanted good music and be able to get all the words right, he must have an Edison.”<sup>152</sup> The relationship between the sounds a telephone mediated and what a speaker had originally uttered were similarly subject to playful reportage:

What Beattie thought he said: “This is William J. Beattie. I want to get my bell ringers.”  
What the telephone made Beattie say: “Sizz Wibbum Jbeedy swantttergit—br—ingers  
whrrrrr.”<sup>153</sup>

Mr. Watson was asked to repeat some phrase loudly and slowly a number of times. The phrase was announced to be, “Do you understand what I say?” What came from the boxes was, “Oo, boo, booboobo, boo, boo, boo.” Mr. Watson next tried to say “How do you do?” but only succeeded in transmitting “boo, boo—boo, boo.”<sup>154</sup>

Lexical indeterminacy may even shed some light on the uncertainty over the wording of the famous first spoken message transmitted by Alexander Graham Bell to Thomas Watson over the telephone on March 10, 1876. Bell wrote that he had shouted “Mr. Watson—come here—I want to see you.” Watson himself recorded the phrase as “Mr. Watson come here I want you,” with “come here” inserted with a carat.<sup>155</sup> While this discrepancy might be attributed to faulty memory, it is also likely that what Bell *said* and what Watson *heard* were not identical on this occasion. If the telephone had failed to transmit some of the words intelligibly, then which part of this communication (if any) can be regarded as authoritative: the words Bell spoke, the imperfectly mediated sounds, or the message Watson understood? More practically: when transcribing a recorded phonogenic performance, enacted purely for recording, should the ideal be to transcribe what the person originally spoke into the phonograph horn, what part of it was recorded, or what we actually hear?

For better or for worse, we are usually stuck with the last of the three options by default. The problem is that a listener’s ability to make out the words from a phonogram is often due just as much to cultural conditioning as it is to acoustics—for example, understanding a given set of sounds as “Hanna” or “Hannah,” as “Harry Warner” or “Arrah Wanna.” What was a hundred years ago a witty reference to some commonly-known subject may today be unintelligible, not because we are hearing anything different acoustically, but because the intended word or name is not part of our vocabulary. “I’d like to see the Sandow that handles that pick,” says an Irish character in one version of *STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS*.<sup>156</sup> Anyone who did not already know that Eugen Sandow (1867-1925) was a famous body-builder would not only fail to understand the reference, but would probably be unable to give a confident phonemic rendering of the name—or the word, since it is not clear from context that it *is* a name. Except for the joke that follows—the

Irishman is indicating the boat's anchor and thinks it is a giant pick—the transcriber might also easily mistake the final word for “pig.” At the same time, the distinctive stage-Irish accent comes through loud and clear. One word that gave me pause for thought in my opening transcription of *THE PASSING OF A CIRCUS PARADE* was *pageant*, which Len Spencer twice pronounces “PAY-geant”; I was unfamiliar with this mostly archaic pronunciation and was only confident about what I was hearing once I had found it listed as an alternative in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.<sup>157</sup> Another word I thought might be either “silver wire” or “single wire,” though neither seemed quite right; only when I heard a different take of the selection issued on Columbia did the sounds finally resolve themselves into “*slender wire*.”<sup>158</sup> As another example, Jonathan Sterne takes as one of his epigraphs the quotation “That shows that the phonograph can be...for a very long time,” identified as “*THE VOICE OF JESSE WALTER FEWKES* on a test cylinder, ca. 1890, as heard ca. 1980.” What amuses him is the ellipsis. “In a manner both geologic and poetic, some of Fewkes’s own ruminations on the preservative power of sound recording have eroded from the surface of his own recording,” he comments. “The transcribing engineer could no longer hear what he had to say.”<sup>159</sup> Actually, this example is open to multiple interpretations. The phonogram has probably degraded over time, but perhaps Fewkes’ recorded words were no more intelligible when the cylinder was new, as Hamilton had found when trying to transcribe Gouraud’s dictations in 1888; the issue is not necessarily one of permanence. There is also the issue of subjective hearing: if Sterne had listened to the phonogram in question, would *he* have been able to make out the words? Would he or the unnamed transcribing engineer have understood “I’d like to see the Sandow that handles that pick” or “this PAY-geant of all its glorious magnificence”? The subjectivity of such transcriptions must always be borne in mind.

In light of these considerations, I have felt it important to adopt some textual convention for indicating greater-than-usual uncertainty over wording in my transcriptions of early phonograms. Robert Cogswell explains his practice as follows: “The omission of words, phrases and sentences which are unintelligible because of poor sound quality is noted in brackets. In some of the dialogues I have deleted the

words of song fragments which were especially difficult to understand.”<sup>160</sup>

Whenever I have been unable to make so much as a guess at the words being spoken at a particular point, I have noted it as [*unintelligible*]. But usually I *can* hazard a guess, and in those cases I have marked uncertain passages with dotted underlining. Of course, other words about which I felt confident when making my transcriptions could also be naïve mistakes on my part, in the sense of not being what the phonogenic speaker meant to utter. Some aspects of my transcriptions are almost always based on guesswork. Rarely is it possible to distinguish “said” from “says” on a worn phonogram other than from context, and often not even then. Unfamiliar proper nouns are especially difficult: in my opening transcription of THE PASSING OF A CIRCUS PARADE, the name “Manzilvosky” is almost certainly “wrong,” but it is the closest I am likely to get.

Another factor complicating phonographic transcription is the need to deal with the artful use of dialect. Cogswell writes of his transcripts of “blackface” dialogues: “The transcriptions use ‘eye dialect’ to express, as accurately as possible, the actual pronunciations of the comedians. The many inconsistencies reflect real variations in the Negro stage dialect; even the same comedian often altered his pronunciation from one line to the next.”<sup>161</sup> However, “eye dialect” itself involves a set of conventions that overlap only in part with those of spoken dialect, and that have connotations of their own. I will discuss this more later on; for now, suffice it to say that this transcription practice is never completely neutral, but that leaving dialect out of transcriptions would be a distortion too.

There is the further question of how best to format phonographic transcriptions on the page. In an article of 1994, David A. Banks proposes a method for transcribing early speech recordings by which he seeks to reflect the speaker’s “unique rhythmic speech pattern” by dividing the text “so that each line ends at a rhythmic beat in the speaker’s delivery.” His goal is to produce texts in which it is easy to read along while listening, and the example he gives is a transcript of an 1888 phonogram of the voice of Sir Arthur Sullivan, one representative segment of which runs as follows:

DEAR MISTER EDISON,  
FOR MYSELF

I CAN ONLY SAY  
THAT I AM ASTONISHED  
AND SOMEWHAT  
TERRIFIED  
AT THE RESULTS  
OF THIS EVENING'S EXPERIMENT.<sup>162</sup>

As a means of entextualizing one aspect of performance style, Banks' practice is similar in its conventions and rationale to Dennis Tedlock's use of line breaks to represent pauses in the delivery of Zuni oral narrative. Tedlock asserts that "prose has no real existence outside the written page," and that it is "unfit for representing spoken narrative" because "it rolls on for whole paragraphs at a time without taking a breath: there is no silence in it."<sup>163</sup> Phonograms of speech, like Sir Arthur Sullivan's, likewise incorporate pauses. While there is no reason to regard all spoken-word phonograms as "poetry," I will nevertheless format all transcribed phonograms in this way, first as a means of drawing attention to their auralty, and second because there is no compelling reason to format them in any other way. In general, I have divided transcriptions into lines based on longer pauses which may or may not correspond to taking breaths. Occasionally, when a shorter pause conspicuously affects the rhythm of a particular line, I have indicated this by an m-dash (—), and I have shown "latching," or the juxtaposition of speech by two speakers without pause, with an equal sign (=). I have also indicated conspicuously emphasized words or syllables through the use of italics. These efforts do not, of course, represent the full load of prosodic and paralinguistic features found in the phonograms themselves, but I regard them as a minimal effort to entextualize those details for which conventions are easiest to establish.

Apart from matters of transcription, another textual convention I have adopted is the use of small capitals to indicate titles of individual phonograms, e.g. UNCLE JOSH ON A STREET CAR, and italicized small capitals to indicate larger units such as albums, e.g. *EMILE BERLINER'S GRAMOPHONE: THE EARLIEST DISCS, 1888-1901*. I have several motives for adopting this practice, apart from the precedent set by some publications on early cinema.<sup>164</sup> First, I want to distinguish clearly between compositions and their recorded-sound manifestations. "The Preacher and the Bear" refers to a musical composition, whereas THE PREACHER AND THE BEAR refers to a



phonogram centered upon it, including any announcements, spoken interludes, and sound effects such as—in this case—the growling of a bear. In any case, I will be referring to specific phonograms very frequently, and multiple quotation marks tend to produce cluttered-looking sentences. There is also the troublesome issue of discrepancies between the way a title appears written on a label, printed in a catalogue or discography, and in a spoken announcement; in my citations, I have used the version of the title appearing earliest in this list. Finally, whenever I have drawn my conclusions from *listening* to a phonogram, I have indicated this in the endnotes with the mark §. When this mark is absent, it means I am basing my conclusions on the *visual inspection* or *mere existence* of a phonogram.

\* \* \* \* \*

It remains for us to preview the contents that will make up the body of this thesis. Chapter one covers the first public demonstrations and exhibitions of Thomas Edison’s phonograph in 1877-78. During this time, phonograms were typically recorded and educed on the spot, and whatever the audience heard back from a phonograph it had generally just heard “live.” However, these events were far from simple as sounds were educed at different speeds or backwards, layered one over the other into elaborate montages, and otherwise manipulated to create novel aural and linguistic effects. As we will see, the practice of phonography did not start out as mere “reproduction” and become complex only later; rather, it proves to have been extraordinarily complex from its very beginnings.

Chapter two takes a fairly traditional approach to the history of the early commercial recording industry in the United States, although much of the specific information presented is new. It begins by surveying the popular speculation of the 1870s into how the future industry might unfold and then describes the key technological and business developments through which it first became a reality. It also treats in some detail the practices on which the industry was founded: the imperfect methods of duplication that restricted the number of copies any single master phonogram could generate and the new arts of sound recording, phonogenic performance, and phonographic education.

In chapter three, I expand upon the linguistic side of phonogenic adaptation. To introduce the idea that distinctive speech conventions have evolved over time to fit the special constraints of sound media, I trace the origins and early development of two relatively familiar examples: the use of “hello” in telephony and the wording of outgoing telephone answering machine messages. The second half of the chapter deals with a less well known phenomenon, the formulaic spoken announcements with which commercial phonograms typically opened until being phased out between 1903 and 1908. I find that medium-specific speech conventions such as these initially helped users to orient themselves to unfamiliar new media which might otherwise not have “worked” properly. However, they invited critical reevaluation once these same media had been successfully integrated into social life, pitting ingrained but now supposedly unsophisticated habits against a new ideal of transparency and immediacy.

Chapter four opens by defining two distinctive modes of phonographic representation: a *descriptive* mode, in which a phonogram depicts its subject for detached eavesdropping (e.g., we *overhear* a speech or performance), and a *substitutive* mode, in which the phonogram is designed as a fully engaging functional replacement for its subject (e.g., someone is speaking *to* us, performing *for* us). The remainder of the chapter is devoted to early “audio theater,” in which sound is used to depict imaginary scenes analogous to those in a fiction film. Borrowing techniques from “descriptive” music, ventriloquism, vocal mimicry, and the conventionalized imitation of ethnic speech styles, early phonography evolved a rich fictional idiom, albeit one that has been largely forgotten in favor of the radio drama that eventually superseded it. For purposes of analysis, pieces of this kind—like all selections offered commercially in early phonography—bear more resemblance to mutable live traditions than they do to fixed “texts,” in that each one exists in innumerable variants, so this chapter also begins exploring the extent and significance of that variability.

Chapter five examines the early phonographic representation of two performance genres—dance calling and the sales pitch—which ordinarily required very specific kinds of engagement from their audiences in order to be regarded as

successful: dancing and buying. Because these two types of performance anticipated such specific responses, it is relatively easy to distinguish between the descriptive and substitutive modes and to explore the implications of both modes for the form phonograms would take and the uses to which they could be put. Chapter six then covers the translation into phonography of two complex popular entertainments: the minstrel show and vaudeville. “Minstrel records” and “vaudeville records” display a variety of approaches to their subjects in terms of both temporal structure and audience involvement, shedding further light on how early commercial phonography went about representing performance in a meaningful way rather than merely “reproducing” it. Industry-wide conventions arose to govern the recording of many of these performance genres as recordists and performers hit upon approaches that worked, and those conventions changed over time to reflect shifts in both aesthetic sensibilities and the social and technological bases of the new medium.

I have chosen this particular combination of examples to present here because it seems best to illustrate the range of techniques I have found useful in “opening up” early commercial phonograms for analysis and reveals some significant aspects of early phonographic culture that other approaches have missed. It by no means exhausts the material available for investigation, or even the material I have already worked through myself. However, it should provide a fair introduction to the approach I am advocating, as well as a foundation on which additional studies of early phonograms can build.

---

<sup>1</sup> Transcribed from Spencer & Girard, *PASSING OF A CIRCUS PARADE* (Victor M-1382-[1], recorded May 9, 1902) §.

<sup>2</sup> William Howland Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890-1945* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Lisa Gitelman, *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> For one such recording-and-reproduction device, see Thomas Edison, “Improvement in Automatic Telegraphs,” U. S. Patent 213,554, filed Mar. 26, 1877, granted Mar. 25, 1879, which also cites a precursor from 1860. Telegraphic sending did have an element of performance about it. Individual senders’ styles were recognizable (George B. Prescott, *History, Theory, and Practice of the Electric Telegraph* [Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866], 337) and could serve as markers of identity; thus, a story of 1877 contrasts the “nervous and staccato” sending of a country girl with the “smooth, legato and placid” sending of a city girl (“Kate: An Electro-Mechanical Romance,” in *Lightning Flashes and Electric Dashes* [New York: W. J. Johnston, 1877], quoted in Sterne, *Audible Past*, 152-3). Edison himself was criticized for his “jerky, spasmodic style,” which branded him socially as a “sort of ‘Erie

---

Railroad sender” (“A Visit to Edison,” *Boston Daily Globe*, May 28, 1878 [TAEM 25:223]). Telegraphers also tapped out the rhythms of songs over the wire in their spare time (Prescott, *History, Theory, and Practice*, 334-5).

<sup>6</sup> At first, the term had to be qualified when used in this sense to distinguish it from stenography, as in the article title “Automatic Phonography,” *Manufacturer and Builder* 10 (Apr. 1878), 84. The usage of “phonography” in connection with the phonograph was actually somewhat rare during the period I am covering here, but instances of it can be found. For instance, Charles Marshall stated that a new form of phonograph exhibition with electrically produced visual effects would “surpass anything of the kind in the history of electricity and phonography” (“Fun in a Phonograph,” *New York Morning Advertiser*, Apr. 8, 1894 [TAEM 146:907]), and the recording of the presidential campaign phonograms of 1908 was said to be “the most remarkable thing that has happened in phonography in the last five years” (“What Bryan and Taft Advertising Means to You,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:9 [Sept. 1908], 8).

<sup>7</sup> Eric W. Rothenbuhler and John Durham Peters, “Defining Phonography: An Experiment in Theory,” *Musical Quarterly* 81 (1997), 242-64. The shift from analog to digital sound mediation has admittedly had far-reaching consequences, but to restrict the definition of “phonography” as Rothenbuhler and Peters propose would strip our language of the one single-word term potentially broad enough to cover the whole gamut of technologies from tinfoil to mp3. We recognize that digital photography is still a form of photography, even though the photographic negative is physically very unlike the data stored in the memory of a digital camera. Why should phonography be any different? I suggest that what we are experiencing now is not post-phonography but *digital phonography*, the latest variation on an old theme, constituting neither more nor less of a disjuncture than has the digitization of text documents or images or telephone signals or anything else. To argue otherwise would mean arbitrarily subordinating the many continuities in phonographic practice to a technical detail that in other cases has not been accorded the same degree of importance.

<sup>8</sup> Yitzchak Dumiel (Isaac Sterling), “What is Phonography?” <http://www.phonography.org/whatis.html>, accessed Feb. 27, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Jaap Kunst, who coined the term “ethnomusicology,” claims that it “could never have grown into an independent science if the gramophone had not been invented” (Jaap Kunst, *Ethnomusicology: A study of its nature, its problems, methods and representative personalities to which is added a bibliography*, reprint of 3rd Edition [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974], 12).

<sup>10</sup> Dennis Tedlock writes: “Earlier field workers... were hampered in their recognition of the poetic qualities of spoken narratives by the fact that handwritten dictation was their only means of collection.... But now that the tape-recorder has become practical and accurate as a field instrument, it is possible to capture true performances and to listen closely, as many times as may be necessary, to all their sounds and silences” (Dennis Tedlock, *Finding the Center: Narrative Poetry of the Zuni Indians* [New York: Dial Press, 1972], xix). Working from taped performances, Tedlock found that Zuni narrative retained more of its power in translation if it was formatted not as prose but as poetry, with its pauses translated by line breaks and dots and spacing between lines and its shifts in pitch and volume shown through other conventions. Without the tape recorder, however, he would not have had access to this kind of detail and could not have incorporated it into his translations.

<sup>11</sup> Albert Lord writes: “Before the advent of electrical recording machines, written texts of actual performances—not from dictation—were possible only in a very limited number of cases.... If the singer of oral epic always sang a song in exactly the same words, it would be possible, of course, to ask him to repeat the performance a number of times and thus to fill in on the second or third singing what was lost in notating the first singing. But bards never repeat a song exactly, as we have seen. This method, although it has been used often, never results in a text that truly represents any real performance” (Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* [Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964], 125). Once again, sound-recording technology had created conditions in which texts of “real performances” could be made, allowing Lord and his mentor Milman Parry to reveal emergent qualities in the performance of Serbo-Croatian oral epic, specifically its reliance on formulas rather than verbatim memorization—the core principle of oral-formulaic theory.

<sup>12</sup> “Spoken language data for discourse analysis consist in the first instance of recordings (audio or video) of people talking” (Deborah Cameron, *Working with Spoken Discourse* [London, Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2001], 19).

- 
- <sup>13</sup> Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Folklore's Crisis," *Journal of American Folklore* 111 (1998), 309.
- <sup>14</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Folklore's Crisis," 315.
- <sup>15</sup> Milman Parry's work on South Slavic epic would have been "inconceivable" before phonography, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett argues, "not only because sound recording allowed him to capture a performance and listen to it many times for the purposes of a detailed analysis not possible otherwise, but also because it encouraged him to conceptualize epic as a phonic event in the first place" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Folklore's Crisis," 314).
- <sup>16</sup> Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Folklore's Crisis," 318.
- <sup>17</sup> Erika Brady, *A Spiral Way: How the Phonograph Changed Ethnography* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999), 6-7.
- <sup>18</sup> Erika Brady, *The Box That Got the Flourishes: The Cylinder Phonograph in Folklore Fieldwork, 1890-1937* (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, Bloomington, 1985).
- <sup>19</sup> Cathleen C. Flanagan, "The Use of Commercial Sound Recordings in Scholarly Research," *ARSC Journal* 11 (1979), 11.
- <sup>20</sup> Day does show some interest in the exigencies of the recording industry, their effect on the recorded repertoire, and so forth, but for the most part it is the documented musical performance that engages his attention: his book's subtitle is "Listening to Musical History." Like Erika Brady, he discusses how the practices and limitations of early phonography "distorted" its subject matter and seems to hope that his readers will actually put this knowledge to use in their listening, although he spends most of his time on the comparatively "undistorted" phonograms of later periods (Timothy Day, *A Century of Recorded Music: Listening to Musical History* [New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2000], esp. 6-12).
- <sup>21</sup> Robert Gireud Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface: A Discographic Folklore Study* (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1984), 37.
- <sup>22</sup> Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 37-8.
- <sup>23</sup> Risto Pekka Pennanen, "The Nationalization of Ottoman Popular Music in Greece," *Ethnomusicology* 48 (Winter 2004), 5. He does, however, believe the study of such material has a place in ethnomusicology; see his "Commercial Recordings and Music Research," *East European Meetings in Ethnomusicology* 7 (2000), 101-4.
- <sup>24</sup> Archie Green, "Sound Recordings, Use and Challenge," in *Handbook of American Folklore*, ed. Richard M. Dorson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 440.
- <sup>25</sup> Roland Gelatt, *The Fabulous Phonograph: 1877-1977*, second revised edition (New York: Collier Books, 1977).
- <sup>26</sup> Oliver Read and Walter L. Welch, *From Tin Foil to Stereo: Evolution of the Phonograph*, second edition (Indianapolis: Howard W. Sams & Co., 1976). In 1994, a pared-down but somewhat more readable version of this book appeared under the authorship of Walter Welch and Leah Burt: Walter L. Welch and Leah Brodbeck Stenzel Burt, *From Tin Foil to Stereo, 1877-1929* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994).
- <sup>27</sup> Allen Koenigsberg, *The Patent History of the Phonograph, 1877-1912*, U. S. Patent Bi-Centennial Edition (Brooklyn, New York: APM Press, 1991). An earlier edition had appeared the previous year. This directory is even handier today than when it was first published, since the full text of any of the patents it lists can now be called up by its number and viewed online through the website of the United States Patent and Trademark Office (<http://www.uspto.gov/patft/index.html>, accessed March 30, 2004).
- <sup>28</sup> Timothy C. Fabrizio and George F. Paul, *The Talking Machine: An Illustrated Compendium, 1877-1929* (Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Co., 1997); *Antique Phonograph Gadgets, Gizmos, and Gimmicks* (Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Co., 1999); *Discovering Antique Phonographs*. (Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Co., 2000); *Phonographs With Flair: A Century of Style in Sound Reproduction* (Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Co., 2001); *Antique Phonograph Advertising: An Illustrated History* (Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Co., 2002); *Antique Phonograph Accessories & Contraptions* (Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Co., 2003); *Phonographica: The Early History of Recorded Sound Observed* (Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Co., 2004).
- <sup>29</sup> In practice, these terms are used somewhat loosely. For another set of definitions, see Brian Rust, *The American Record Label Book* (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1978), 335-6.

- <sup>30</sup> Ted Fagan and William R. Moran, *The Encyclopedic Discography of Victor Recordings, Pre-Matrix Series* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983), 117. In fact, I have two copies of this disc, both of which sound like the same take. No take number is visible on either, which usually indicates take number one. However, the discography lists only take two as having been released.
- <sup>31</sup> Ed Kahn, "Will Roy Hearne: Peripheral Folklore Scholar," *Western Folklore* 23:3 (July 1964) 173-9, reprinted in *JEMF Quarterly* 14:51 (Autumn 1978) 113-117.
- <sup>32</sup> For an introduction to what I would call the paleophonography of cylinders, see Peter Shambarger, "Cylinder Records: An Overview," *ARSC Journal* 26 (Fall 1995), 133-61.
- <sup>33</sup> Rust, *American Record Label Book*, 9.
- <sup>34</sup> The key discographies available for the periods and topics to be covered here are Ted Fagan and William R. Moran, *The Encyclopedic Discography of Victor Recordings, Matrix Series 1 through 4999* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986); and their *Encyclopedic Discography, Pre-Matrix Series*; Tim Brooks and Brian Rust, *Columbia Master Book Discography* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999); Paul Charosh, *Berliner Gramophone Records, American Issues 1892-1900* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995); Allen Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records, 1889-1912* (New York: Stellar Productions, 1969) and 2nd edition (Brooklyn: APM Press, 1988); Ernie Bayly and Michael Kinnear, *The Zon-o-phone Record: A discography of recordings produced by the International Zonophone Company and associated companies in Europe and the Americas, 1901-1903* (Heidelberg, Victoria, Australia: Michael S. Kinnear, 2001); Allen Koenigsberg, "In the Pink: A Lambert Discography," *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 6:8 (1981), 4-10; part two (five-inch concert cylinders), *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 6:9 (1981), 8-9; J. R. Manzo, "A Lambert Sampler," *New Amberola Graphic* 32 (Spring 1980), 4-7; Christian Zwarg's Edison cylinder list in the Truesound Online Discographies, <http://www.truesoundtransfers.de/disco.htm>; Kenneth M. Lorenz, *Two Minute Brown Wax and XP Cylinder Records of the Columbia Phonograph Company* (Wilmington, Delaware: Kastlemusick, 1981); see also the two-part pdf files listing of Columbia "XP" Cylinders (1901-1909) at <http://www.mainspringpress.com/articles.html>. There are further reference books dedicated specifically to changes in the designs of Victor and Columbia disc labels over time (Michael W. Sherman, *Collector's Guide to Victor Records* [Dallas: Monarch Record Enterprises, 1992]; Michael W. Sherman and Kurt R. Nauck III, *Note the Notes: An Illustrated History of the Columbia 78 rpm Record Label, 1901-1958* [New Orleans: Monarch Record Enterprises, 1998]), and yet others dealing with the histories of multiple "labels," in both senses of the word (Allan Sutton and Kurt Nauck, *American Record Labels and Companies: An Encyclopedia (1891-1943)* [Denver, Colorado: Mainspring Press, 2000], containing a CD-ROM with label images; Rust, *American Record Label Book*, is both less comprehensive and less reliable. A somewhat outdated equivalent for cylinders is Duane D. Deakins, *Cylinder Records*, 2nd ed. [Stockton, California: Duane D. Deakins, 1958]). These, too, can be useful in determining when, where, how, and by whom particular phonograms were produced. Many discographies and "label" books also include histories of the recording companies they cover. Turning-points in company histories often correspond to changes in numbering systems and the physical characteristics of their products, so there is a lot of overlap between these areas of inquiry. However, there has also been some important work on company history *not* combined with a discography, such as Tim Brooks' writings on Columbia's prerecorded cylinder business in the 1890s (Tim Brooks, "Columbia Records in the 1890's: Founding the Record Industry," *ARSC Journal* 10 [1978], 5-36; "A Directory to Columbia Recording Artists of the 1890's," *ARSC Journal* 11 [1979], 102-143).
- <sup>35</sup> Tim Gracyk, "The Life and Writing Career of Ulysses 'Jim' Walsh," *Victrola and 78 Journal* 13 (Autumn 1998) 44-59.
- <sup>36</sup> Randy McNutt, *Cal Stewart: Your Uncle Josh* (Fairfield, Ohio: Weathervane Books, 1981); Frank Hoffmann, *Billy Murray: The Phonograph Company's First Great Recording Artist* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1997).
- <sup>37</sup> Tim Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers, 1895-1925* (New York, London, Oxford: Haworth Press, 2000).
- <sup>38</sup> Tim Brooks, *Lost Sounds: Blacks and the Birth of the Recording Industry, 1890-1919* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004).
- <sup>39</sup> Tim Brooks, "The Artifacts of Recording History: Creators, Users, Losers, Keepers," *ARSC Journal* 11:1 (1979), 21.

- 
- <sup>40</sup> Guy Marco, ed. *Encyclopedia of Recorded Sound in the United States* (New York: Garland, 1993), xviii.
- <sup>41</sup> Michael Chanan, *Repeated Takes: A Short History of Recording and its Effects on Music* (London and New York: Verso, 1995).
- <sup>42</sup> Andre Millard, *America on Record: A History of Recorded Sound* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1995), vii.
- <sup>43</sup> Millard, *America on Record*, vii. For a phonographicist response, see Ron Dethlefsen, review of *America on Record*, by Andre Millard, *In the Groove* 21:6 (June 1996), 7.
- <sup>44</sup> Kenney, *Recorded Music*.
- <sup>45</sup> David Morton, *Off the Record: The Technology and Culture of Sound Recording in America* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2000).
- <sup>46</sup> Gitelman, *Scripts*.
- <sup>47</sup> Sterne, *Audible Past*.
- <sup>48</sup> John M. Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 110-45; Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 362-93.
- <sup>49</sup> Tim Brooks, review of *Recorded Music in American Life*, by William Kenney, *ARSC Journal* 31 (Fall 2001), 308.
- <sup>50</sup> Tim Fabrizio, review of *The Audible Past*, by Jonathan Sterne, *ARSC Journal* 34 (Fall 2003) 225-6.
- <sup>51</sup> Steve Frangos, "Large Record Collectors: The Unrecognized Authorities," *Resound: A Quarterly of the Archives of Traditional Music* 10 (April 1991), 1.
- <sup>52</sup> Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 51. It should be noted that he defines discography as "the study of the phonograph industry and its products" (28). For him, it spans "the historical investigation of the phonograph and the recording industry, the compilation of data about recordings, and the improvement of sound collections and archives" (29). This is roughly what I am calling phonographics as a whole. However, his own methodology is closely tied to "discography" in the narrower sense of phonographic bibliography and classification.
- <sup>53</sup> Kenney, *Recorded Music*, 210, n. 41. The note refers to some comments on Cal Stewart's "Uncle Josh" recordings (33). Probably this listening experience is also the basis of his apparent familiarity with Len Spencer and Ada Jones.
- <sup>54</sup> Sterne, *Audible Past*, 395, n. 45.
- <sup>55</sup> Day, *Century of Recorded Music*, 244.
- <sup>56</sup> Kenney, *Recorded Music*, 36.
- <sup>57</sup> Sterne, *Audible Past*, 244-5. Although he does not cite any specific titles, he apparently listened to ROOSEVELT'S INAUGURAL PARADE (which actually describes the inaugural *parade* rather than the inauguration itself) and IN A CLOCK STORE.
- <sup>58</sup> See, for instance, Brooks, *Lost Sounds*; Fabrizio and Paul, *Antique Phonograph Advertising*, 9, 51-8; Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 51-2, 70-1; Michael G. Coenthel, *Cohen on the Telephone: A History of Jewish Recorded Humor and Popular Music, 1892-1942* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Yesterday's Memories, 1984).
- <sup>59</sup> Found respectively at <http://www.collectionscanada.ca/gramophone> and <http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu>. Various commercial "reissues" have been available as well on LP (e.g., Mark56), cassette tape (e.g., American Gramophone and Wireless), and compact disc (e.g., Glenn Sage at [www.tinfoil.com](http://www.tinfoil.com) and Archeophone Records), but the combination of scale and accuracy of documentation associated with the two online projects is unprecedented. Furthermore, much other material "reissued" commercially or online has undergone processes considerably more intrusive than the colorization of black-and-white films, including aggressive reequalization and noise reduction.
- <sup>60</sup> The Library of Congress has commissioned a study of this issue, but the results have not yet been published. In the meantime, see Tim Brooks, "How Copyright Law Affects Reissues of Historic Recordings: A New Study," *ARSC Journal* 36 (Fall 2005), 183-203; "Piracy on Records," *Stanford Law Review* 5 (Apr. 1953), 433-58.
- <sup>61</sup> John Letzing, "Changing History," *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 15, 2006, p. R10. For Altman's earlier take on Hunting's work, see Rick Altman, *Silent Film Sound* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 149.

- <sup>62</sup> Daniel Wojcik, “‘At the Sound of the Beep’: An Analysis of the Structure and Traditional Speech Forms of Answering Machine Greetings,” *Folklore and Mythology Studies* 11/12 (1987-88), 80-103; Ruby Gold, “Answering Machine Talk,” *Discourse Processes* 14 (1991), 243-60; Silvia Dingwall, “Leaving telephone answering messages: Who’s afraid of speaking to machines?,” *Text* 12 (1992), 81-101; Celso Alvarez-Caccamo and Hubert Knoblauch, “‘I was calling you’: Communicative patterns in leaving a message on an answering machine,” *Text* 12 (1992), 473-505; Kristyan Spelman Miller, “A new mode of spoken interaction? The case of the telephone answer-machine,” in *Writing vs Speaking: Language, Text, Discourse, Communication*, edited by Světlá Čmejrková, František Daneš, and Eva Havlová (Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1994), 267-73; Silvia Dingwall, “‘Hello. This is Sally’s answering machine.’ Deixis in answerphone messages,” *Bulletin suisse de linguistique appliquée* 62 (1995), 129-153.
- <sup>63</sup> GREETINGS DEC. 20 1948, eight-inch “Aim” disc, 78 rpm §.
- <sup>64</sup> On the “home mode,” see Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987), 8.
- <sup>65</sup> Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 33-4.
- <sup>66</sup> Morton, *Off the Record*, 5.
- <sup>67</sup> Morton, *Off the Record*, 14.
- <sup>68</sup> Kenney, *Recorded Music*, especially xvi-xix. This is all the more notable because Kenney also cites Ong’s work on orality in connection with verbal poetics—as an argument in favor of the significance of “familiar musical and lyric patterns” (!)—and pages 32-43 describe the content of various spoken-word sketches.
- <sup>69</sup> Pekka Gronow, “The record industry: the growth of a mass medium,” *Popular Music* 3 (1983), 53.
- <sup>70</sup> V. F. Perkins, *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies* (New York: Penguin Books, 1972) 16-17.
- <sup>71</sup> John Philip Sousa, “The Menace of Mechanical Music,” *Appleton’s Magazine* 8 (1906), 278-84.
- <sup>72</sup> Marsha Siefert, “Aesthetics, Technology, and the Capitalization of Culture: How the Talking Machine Became a Musical Instrument,” *Science in Context* 8 (1995) 417-449; Emily Thompson, “Machines, Music, and the Quest for Fidelity: Marketing the Edison Phonograph in America, 1877-1925,” *The Musical Quarterly* 79 (Spring, 1995) 131-171.
- <sup>73</sup> Alan Williams, “Is Sound Recording Like a Language?” *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980), 61.
- <sup>74</sup> Williams, “Is Sound Recording Like a Language?,” 60.
- <sup>75</sup> Williams, “Is Sound Recording Like a Language?,” 64.
- <sup>76</sup> Evan Eisenberg, *The Recording Angel: Explorations in Phonography* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1987), 105.
- <sup>77</sup> Eisenberg, *Recording Angel*, 109.
- <sup>78</sup> Eisenberg, *Recording Angel*, 110, 114, 116.
- <sup>79</sup> Eisenberg, *Recording Angel*, 50-1.
- <sup>80</sup> Eisenberg, *Recording Angel*, 116-7.
- <sup>81</sup> Peter Doyle, *Echo & Reverb: Fabricating Space in Popular Music Recording, 1900-1960* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), 57.
- <sup>82</sup> Douglas Kahn, “Audio Art in the Deaf Century,” online version, [http://www.soundculture.org/words/kahn\\_deaf\\_century.html](http://www.soundculture.org/words/kahn_deaf_century.html), accessed Aug. 14, 2002. See also his *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999).
- <sup>83</sup> Victor Emerson, in *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention of the National Phonograph Association of the United States, Held at Chicago, Sept. 20, 21, and 22, 1893* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Houtkamp & Cannon, [1893]), 54; name given incorrectly as “W. V. Emerson.”
- <sup>84</sup> *Edison Phonographic News*, 1 (Mar.-Apr. 1895), 86.
- <sup>85</sup> Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 136.
- <sup>86</sup> For instance, Susan Rodgers applies the concept to her work on the Batak tape-cassette dramas of Indonesia: “The tape-cassette dramas represent a stage of secondary orality in which a literate culture with new mass media technology rediscovers and revises its oral traditions and its printed world. The dramas frame *edited* renditions of ‘traditional’ village oratory within a theatrical art form. In so doing they help create ‘traditional’ Angkola Batak culture in the first place” (Susan Rodgers, “Batak tape



---

cassette kinship: constructing kinship through the Indonesian national mass media,” *American Ethnologist* 13 [1986], 29).

<sup>87</sup> Alan Durant, “The Concept of Secondary Orality: Observations About Speech and Text in Modern Communications Media,” *Dalhousie Review* 64 (1984), 332-53.

<sup>88</sup> Friedrich Kittler, *Discourse Networks, 1800/1900*, tr. Michael Metteer, with Chris Cullens (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990); and *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, tr. Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999), especially 21-114.

<sup>89</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, tr. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), passim. From this perspective, Ivan Kreilkamp finds interesting parallels between the rhetoric surrounding phonographically disembodied voices and the treatment of the voice in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (Ivan Kreilkamp, “A Voice Without a Body: The Phonographic Logic of *Heart of Darkness*,” *Victorian Studies* 40 [Winter 1997], 211-44). William Pietz develops an argument about the status of phonocentrism under capitalism by analyzing a *New York Times* article of 1885 that imagines the scheme of taking a phonograph to Africa, recording a local King as he makes particular commands in the native language, and then using his recorded voice to control the populace (William Pietz, “The phonograph in Africa: international phonocentrism from Stanley to Sarnoff,” in *Post-structuralism and the question of history*, edited by Derek Attridge, Geoff Bennington and Robert Young [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987], 263-85).

<sup>90</sup> R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, Vermont: Destiny Books, 1994), 273.

<sup>91</sup> Schafer, *Soundscape*, 90.

<sup>92</sup> Ruth Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality: Studies in the Technology of Communication*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1988, 176.

<sup>93</sup> Finnegan, *Literacy and Orality*, 160.

<sup>94</sup> Sterne, *Audible Past*, 22.

<sup>95</sup> J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, ed. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 5:75.

<sup>96</sup> Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, transl. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969), 220.

<sup>97</sup> Notebook entry, July 17, 1877, Document 969, TAEB 3:440-1, an earlier page of which appears to be lost; and notebook entry, July 18, 1877, Document 972, TAEB 3:444.

<sup>98</sup> Notebook entry, May 26, 1877, Document 921, TAEB 3:360; facsimile at TAEM 3:981. A separate device for recording telephonic speech on paper, also dated May 26, 1877, is Document 921, TAEB 3:361; facsimile at TAEM 3:980.

<sup>99</sup> “Speaking Telegraph,” notebook entry, July 11, 1877, Document 964, TAEB 3:430-1.

<sup>100</sup> Document 973, TAEB 3: 447. Since this document was filed in London on July 30, 1877, the editors note that it had probably been mailed before July 20.

<sup>101</sup> This development is alluded to in a number of accounts, but the most explicit is the following Edison quotation drawn from a tinfoil-era interview: “It is a mechanical invention, begotten out of an attempt to emboss an alphabet for telegraphy. I found that repeating the letter ‘A’ many times produced an ever varying puncture, all of unlike depth or size under the microscope. Then it was plain that the voice was its own recorder and measurer. The phonographic alphabet was impossible, but articulation was easy” (Gath, “A Visit to Edison,” *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, Apr. 27, 1878 [TAEM 25:189]).

<sup>102</sup> Mark Katz, *The Phonograph Effect: The Influence of Recording on Listener, Performer, Composer* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1999); on violin vibrato, see especially 130-37; on klezmer, 91. These ideas are also advanced in his more recent *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2004).

<sup>103</sup> James Lastra, *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 86; 241, n. 71; John Harvith and Susan Edwards Harvith, *Edison, Musicians, and the Phonograph: A Century in Retrospect* (New York; Westport, Connecticut; London: Greenwood Press, 1987), 1-23.

<sup>104</sup> Lastra, *Sound Technology*, 128.

- <sup>105</sup> Lastra, *Sound Technology*, 86-8. He defines the *pro-phonographic* as “encompassing all manipulations of a sound that occur anterior to the processes of technological inscription” (241, n. 70).
- <sup>106</sup> Sterne, *Audible Past*, 235, 237.
- <sup>107</sup> Sterne, *Audible Past*, 241.
- <sup>108</sup> Sterne, *Audible Past*, 243-4.
- <sup>109</sup> Alan Sidelle, “The Answering Machine Paradox,” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 21 (1991), 526.
- <sup>110</sup> Sidelle, “Answering Machine Paradox,” 535.
- <sup>111</sup> Stefano Predelli, “Utterance, Interpretation and the Logic of Indexicals,” *Mind & Language* 13 (Sept. 1998), 400-14; “I Am Not Here Now,” *Analysis* 58 (Apr. 1998), 107-115.
- <sup>112</sup> Eros Corazza, William Fish and Jonathan Gorvett, “Who is I?,” *Philosophical Studies* 107 (2002), 1-21, quotation on 11, 13.
- <sup>113</sup> Wojcik, “At the Sound of the Beep,” 80, italics added.
- <sup>114</sup> This example appears on many different websites (Google reports over six hundred hits); one, however, is “The Canonical List of Answering Machine Messages,” <http://quasisemi.com/humor/ind.php?id=190>, accessed Jan. 6, 2005.
- <sup>115</sup> Bob Thaves, “Frank & Ernest” comic strip, June 5, 2001, archived at [www.frankandernest.com](http://www.frankandernest.com), accessed Mar. 29, 2006.
- <sup>116</sup> Transcribed excerpt from *hesitant.wav*, in the “comedy” section of [www.answeringmachine.co.uk](http://www.answeringmachine.co.uk), accessed Sept. 15, 1999 §.
- <sup>117</sup> Charles Musser, *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1990), 179-81, 232, 258-61.
- <sup>118</sup> Charles Musser, *High Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880-1920*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), 28.
- <sup>119</sup> Rick Altman, “The Material Heterogeneity of Recorded Sound,” in *Sound Theory Sound Practice*, ed. Rick Altman (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 15-31.
- <sup>120</sup> My usage differs from the norm mainly in that I do not imply any positive value judgment. The word *phonogenic* has been defined as “with pleasing voice qualities; well suited to mechanical reproduction of sound; of or pertaining to pleasing recorded sound” (Simpson and Weiner, *Oxford English Dictionary*, 11:702). Film sound theorist Michel Chion defines *phonogeny* as “the rather mysterious propensity of certain voices to sound good when recorded and played over loudspeakers, to inscribe themselves in the record grooves better than other voices, in short to make up for the absence of the sound’s real source by means of another kind of presence specific to the medium” (Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, transl. and ed. by Claudia Gorbman [New York: Columbia University Press, 1994], 101). *Phonogen*, with a capital P, has been used as a band name, as the title of a CD, as the name of a Swiss music collective ([www.phonogen.com](http://www.phonogen.com), accessed Sept. 30, 2003; they define *phonogen* as an adjective, “angenehm anzuhören,” or “pleasant to listen to”), as an audio equipment brand name, and as the name of an experimental musical instrument consisting of a keyboard-controlled variable-speed tape recorder. All of these instances do involve phonogens according to my definition.
- <sup>121</sup> The relationship between the cinema terms *projector* : *projection* : *projectionist* suggests to me the analogous pattern *educer* : *eduction* : *eductionist*.
- <sup>122</sup> Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London: Harper Colophon Books, 1974), 124.
- <sup>123</sup> Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance* (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1984).
- <sup>124</sup> A *spectacle* (from *spectare*, “to look at”) is a sight associated with the promise of an emotional impact, such as aesthetic enjoyment, enhanced experience, entertainment, amusement, affect, or being “moved.” It might be defined as something that appeals to the spectator’s eye, except that this attributes agency either to the thing being seen or to its creator, which becomes problematic when applied to such cases as a tree or a natural landscape. Instead, it would appear that the spectacle must be determined fundamentally from the point of view of the spectator, not the thing seen, even if many things and events are also produced with the intention of being received as spectacles. An informal online search reveals a few previous uses of the word *audicle* or *audacle* in English. On January 21, 2003, Kate Marianchild wrote to the Peregrine Audubon Society describing the sights and sounds of robins at Lake Mendocino: “I went to see [sic] this spectacle and ‘audacle’ and it was truly wonderful” (<http://www.pacificsites.com/~chaniot/peregrine/archive.html>). On Apr. 29, 2002, someone identified

---

as Curt C. wrote of “an amazing spectacle (audicle??),” which suggests that he was struggling to express the same concept I am (<http://www.cm.nu/~shane/lists/happytown/2002-04/0342.html>). Finally, Steve Williams has contributed the word *audacular* to the [www.pseudodictionary.com](http://www.pseudodictionary.com) website with the definition: “Spectacular for the ears instead of the eyes,” e.g. “The new Cher album is an audacular experience.” There have been some similar coinages in other languages, too: I find *auditacle* (used by the composer Luc Ferrari in his *Allo, ici la terre*), *Audakel* (in the title “Babylon—Ein Audakel,” a 1992 interactive presentation of the Bonner Entwicklungswerkstatt für Computermedien) and *Auditakel* (in the course description for “Quick Start: Aufbau des Internet-Radios,” offered at the Fachhochschule Köln during the winter semester 1999/2000). All relevant websites were accessed on Oct. 2, 2003.

<sup>125</sup> Robert Plant Armstrong, *The Affecting Presence: An Essay in Humanistic Anthropology* (Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 3-23.

<sup>126</sup> The *sound romance* is defined by “a romantic or nostalgic quality,” such as the wail of the steam locomotive whistle now associated fondly with a past era. Schafer also refers to certain sounds with “richer connotations” as *symbols*, interpreting these—sea, wind, bells—in terms of primordial Jungian archetypes. Apart from nostalgia or archetypal significance, however, soundscape studies tends to attribute the affective value of sound to formal characteristics such as richness and fullness, in connection with the terms *sonority*, *sonorous*, and the *soniferous garden*. Practitioners in this field have conducted surveys of the opinions different communities have of particular sounds—whether they like them or dislike them—but whether these communities consciously mark a given sound as affective is a secondary concern. For instance, the *soundmark* is defined as a unique or characteristic community sound, but according to Schafer the community itself may not even be aware of it. The audicle, by contrast, is an audicle specifically because it is marked as special. See Barry Truax, ed., *The World Soundscape Project’s Handbook for Acoustic Ecology* (Vancouver, Canada: A. R. C. Publications, 1978) 114 (soniferous garden, sonority, sonorous), 119 (soundmark), 126 (sound romance). This use of *soundmark*, modeled after “landmark,” should not be confused with another usage, based on “trademark,” referring to intellectual property rights in sounds such as the NBC chimes. See also Schafer, *Soundscape*, 169-80 (symbolism), 246-52 (soniferous garden). “Often it will take the visitor to point out the value or originality of a soundmark to a community,” he writes (240); “for local inhabitants it may be an inconspicuous keynote.”

<sup>127</sup> Spencer H. Coon, “The Phonograph,” *Advertiser* ([...], Massachusetts), Dec. 11, 1893 (TAEM 146:877).

<sup>128</sup> Brady, *Spiral Way*, 7; Bruce Jackson, *Fieldwork* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 88-90.

<sup>129</sup> John Stephen Minton, *Phonograph Blues: Folksong and Media in the Southern United States Before the Second World War* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1990), especially 74-173; Richard Bauman, “American Folklore Studies and Social Transformation: A Performance-Centered Perspective,” *Text and Performance Quarterly* 9 (July 1989), 180-1.

<sup>130</sup> John Minton, “The Reverend Lamar Roberts and the Mediation of Oral Tradition,” *Journal of American Folklore* 108 (Winter 1995), 10.

<sup>131</sup> “How the Noise of the G[reat?] City was Felt on the Top of a Silk Hat,” *Washington Star*, May 7, 1878 (TAEM 25:189). A French author of 1878 claimed that Edison had himself been inspired to invent the phonograph by an observation of this kind; see René Rondeau, *Tinfoil Phonographs: The Dawn of Recorded Sound* (Corte Madeira, California: René Rondeau, 2001), 11.

<sup>132</sup> “Edison’s Phonomotor,” *Scientific American* 39 (July 27, 1878), 51. The “talking a hole through a board” story is reported in various sources, including: “Washington... Wonders of Edison’s Inventions,” *New York Herald*, Apr. 24, 1878 (TAEM 25:171); “The Morning’s News: Edison’s Laboratory,” *Boston Evening Transcript*, May 23, 1878 (TAEM 25:208); “Edison and His Inventions,” *Boston Journal*, May 25, 1878 (TAEM 94:212). The idea seemed to have some promise in the realm of playthings: “Toys, such as dolls which bow their acknowledgments when spoken to, paper figures which commence work at the word of command, etc., will soon be upon the market” (George Bliss, “Thomas A. Edison,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 4, 1878, p. 12).

<sup>133</sup> W. H. Preece, “The Phonograph,” *Journal of the Society of Arts*, May 10, 1878 (reproduced in TAEM 25:204-6), 537.

- <sup>134</sup> “The Microphone,” lecture given before Society of Telegraph Engineers, May 23, [1878], by W. H. Preece, unidentified clipping (TAEM 94:261).
- <sup>135</sup> “The ‘S’ Sound,” from *New York Commercial*, in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 5:9 (Nov. 1907), 15.
- <sup>136</sup> “The Wizard’s Chat,” *Dispatch* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania), May 23, 1889 (TAEM 146:452).
- <sup>137</sup> Leonard W. Lillingston, quoted in *FPRA* Nov. 1944, 28.
- <sup>138</sup> F. W. Gaisberg, *The Music Goes Round* (New York: Macmillan, 1942), 9, n.
- <sup>139</sup> “The story goes that Caruso arrived late for the session in which he and Miss Farrar were to record the love duet in Act I of the Puccini opera. Caruso had stopped on the way for some refreshment, and as soon as they started to sing, Miss Farrar smelled the liquor on his breath. She said nothing, but at one of the climaxes of the duet, on the phrase ‘Si, Per la Vita,’ she sang instead, ‘He had a highball.’ The original of that record commands premium prices among collectors” (Harold C. Schonberg, “Link With Golden Age,” *New York Times*, Mar. 12, 1967, p. 86). The same writer expands on the story: “On the relatively primitive recording equipment of the day, her interpolation passed unnoticed. At best the words are not easy to hear, and many believe the story is apocryphal.” He had recently listened to the record again and concluded, based on his listening, that it was true, although another part of the story was not: “Caruso, according to legend, is supposed to have sung, immediately after, ‘I had two.’ He didn’t. But Geraldine now stands vindicated” (Harold C. Schonberg, “The Goddess That Was Geraldine Farrar,” *New York Times*, Mar. 19, 1967, p. D21). See also Gary A. Galo, “Did He Have a Highball? The Caruso-Farrar *Butterfly* Duet,” *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 9:1 (1989), 13-14; “Off the Record,” *New Amberola Graphic* 31 (Winter 1980), 16.
- <sup>140</sup> The interpretation of the announcement I find most probable is: “In Dezember achtzehnhundertneunundachtzig. Haus von Herrn Dr. Fellingner. Bei Herrn Dr. Brahms, Johannes Brahms” (“In December Eighteen Hundred and Eighty Nine. House of Doctor Fellingner. With Doctor Brahms, Johannes Brahms”; Gert-Jan C. Lokhorst, “Johannes Brahms’ 1889 Wax-Cylinder Recording,” <http://www.eur.nl/fw/staff/lokhorst/brahms.html>, accessed Feb. 18, 2004). As an example of a radically different hearing of the same announcement, however, compare: “At the beginning of Brahms’s cylinder, he greets Thomas Edison in German and English: ‘Grüss an Herr Doktor Edison. I am Johannes Brahms, Doktor Brahms.’ Why would Brahms, a somewhat shy man, have thus greeted Edison?” (Robert Matthew Walker, “The Recording of Johannes Brahms,” *International Classical Record Collector* 2 [Summer 1997], 26).
- <sup>141</sup> Fagan and R. Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography, Matrix Series*, 320. Based on my own copy of this record, I am strongly inclined to agree with the latter interpretation.
- <sup>142</sup> Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 33.
- <sup>143</sup> Martin Bryan, “Songs of the 1900 Election,” *New Amberola Graphic* 50 (Autumn 1984) 12-3, at 13.
- <sup>144</sup> *New Amberola Graphic* 51 (Winter 1985), 9.
- <sup>145</sup> E. G. H. to William Hooley, July 4, 1899, in *Phonoscope* 3 (June 1899), 13.
- <sup>146</sup> David Nasaw, *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 121.
- <sup>147</sup> Morton, *Off the Record*, 17.
- <sup>148</sup> George Gouraud to Edison, Aug. 11, 1888 (TAEM 124:735).
- <sup>149</sup> George Gouraud to Edison, undated (TAEM 124:754). Based on context and experience with hard-to-decipher phonograms, I suspect the underlined words should be “late” and “transit.”
- <sup>150</sup> Durant, “Concept of Secondary Orality,” 340-1.
- <sup>151</sup> “The Phonograph,” unidentified clipping labeled “Jan [18]79” (TAEM 25:293).
- <sup>152</sup> Letter from Wadena Phono Co., Wadena, Minn., *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6 (Apr. 1908), 1.
- <sup>153</sup> “‘Gee!’ Exclaimed Brenner,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Apr. 8, 1902, p. 3.
- <sup>154</sup> “The Speaking Telephone,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1877, p. 2.
- <sup>155</sup> Robert V. Bruce, *Bell: Alexander Graham Bell and the Conquest of Solitude* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1973), 181-2.
- <sup>156</sup> Haydn Quartette, STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS (7” shield Zonophone 1621-2) §.
- <sup>157</sup> Simpson and Weiner, *Oxford English Dictionary*, 11:61.
- <sup>158</sup> THE PASSING OF THE CIRCUS PARADE (Columbia A277, mx. 746-9) §.
- <sup>159</sup> Sterne, *Audible Past*, 287.

---

<sup>160</sup> Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 59.

<sup>161</sup> Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 59.

<sup>162</sup> David A. Banks, "Texts for Early Speech Recordings," *Victrola & 78 Journal* 2 (Fall 1994), 14-5.

<sup>163</sup> Tedlock, *Finding the Center*, xix.

<sup>164</sup> E.g., Musser, *Emergence of Cinema*.

## Chapter One

### TRICKS WITH TINFOIL

When the newly-invented phonograph first emerged from Thomas Edison's laboratory in 1877-78, the demonstration instruments shown to the public were intended only to illustrate the principle of the invention as a novelty, not to accomplish anything "practical." In this period, recording typically consisted of wrapping a sheet of tinfoil around a pregrooved drum and rotating it under a mouthpiece fitted with a stylus that registered sounds by indenting the foil into the helicoidal groove. The recorder would then be exchanged for a reproducer and the sounds would be given back through a funnel. From the perspective of posterity, the biggest drawback of this process was that tinfoil was not a durable medium: once a phonogram was removed from its drum, it could not easily be replaced and educed again.

It is true that audience members eagerly grabbed up scraps of recorded tinfoil as souvenirs, a tendency Lisa Gitelman has used to connect these early demonstrations with the broader rhetorical construction of the phonograph as an inscriptive technology, already producing a new kind of acquirable, preservable text.<sup>1</sup> At least one phonogram of 1878 was put on public display for people to gawk at in a Washington store window,<sup>2</sup> and in Chicago sheets of recorded tinfoil were even cut into strips and attached to advertising fliers printed with the inscription: "On the Tin Foil below is a record of the Human Voice made on Edison's Speaking Phonograph, and it reads: Come and see Edison's Wonderful TALKING MACHINE at the MERCHANTS' BUILDING, Corner Madison and Dearborn Streets. ADMISSION ONLY TEN CENTS."<sup>3</sup> The tinfoil thus supposedly contained a spoken advertisement for the phonograph exhibition, augmenting the printed one; but, of course, the spoken tinfoil "advertisements" for the Chicago phonograph exhibition could no longer be heard once they had been cut up and dispersed on fliers throughout the city. Similarly, the very act of converting foils into keepsakes generally meant sacrificing their viability as phonograms—in one instance, it was reported that an exhibitor "tore up the strips of tin foil that had been used, and distributed them among the audience,"<sup>4</sup> while in

another case this was described as a general practice: “When a sheet of tin foil on which the speech is recorded is filled, it is cut up and distributed among the audience as a curiosity.”<sup>5</sup> Whatever value these bits of foil may have enjoyed as mementos of an interesting experience, the actual recorded content was clearly not preserved; the phonogram could no longer be used as the basis for an education event. Such a record was instead usually treated as a thing of the moment, never straying far from its originary context and only slightly less evanescent than sound itself. Despite a rhetoric centered on the “preservation” and “permanence” of sound, the actual practice of tinfoil exhibitions was dictated largely by the ephemerality of the medium.

This ephemerality limits the approaches available to us today as we try to make sense of these events. It is likely that one or more of the surviving tinfoil phonograms of the 1870s will eventually be “read” by laser in educible form, but this has yet to be accomplished, and after conducting a survey of known specimens in public and private hands, René Rondeau has concluded that “there aren’t many potential sounds to be recovered” anyway.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, instead of listening to actual phonograms, the researcher of the “tinfoil era” must work solely from accounts left in conventional writing and print. These sources do reveal what was done with phonograms after they were recorded and what audiences thought of them, however, so this source base has advantages as well as disadvantages. Although we cannot listen to the phonograms themselves, in some respects we know more about the contexts that surrounded them than we do about the phonograms of later periods.

Thomas Edison himself exhibited his phonograph outside the laboratory to a few select groups, starting with a crowd in the editorial office of the *Scientific American* on December 7, 1877.<sup>7</sup> Most prestigious, perhaps, were his demonstrations in Washington before President Rutherford B. Hayes and members of the United States Congress in April 1878.<sup>8</sup> For the most part, however, the inventor left formal public events and exhibitions to other people. “It is a novel thing for Mr. Edison to appear as a public exhibitor,” stated one newspaper of a demonstration to a group of nuns at Mount St. Vincent, in which he operated the machine but delegated the preliminary talk to a local lawyer: “Indeed this was his first appearance, and it may be his last.”<sup>9</sup> The claim was not quite true, but it nevertheless attests to the relative

rarity of prearranged public demonstrations by the inventor himself. Edison had set ideas about the social roles he would and would not perform. He objected to making formal public appearances, partly because his partial deafness made it awkward for him to know when or how to respond appropriately, and partly because he found such occasions unbearably “ceremonious.”<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, he seems greatly to have enjoyed giving shows on his own terms, fulfilling ambitions as a performer he had entertained since his youth as a telegraph operator.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, David Lindsay considers Edison an example of a “show inventor,” a term he has coined to describe a type of showman who presented his own invention before live audiences, combining technological innovation with a flair for theatricality. In Lindsay’s view, Edison built “a new kind of theater” in the form of his laboratory at Menlo Park, New Jersey, a “focal point in which the many traditions of the show inventors could converge”; despite his awkwardness in formal settings, “on his own turf, he was master of the show.”<sup>12</sup> It is true that the majority of phonograph demonstrations conducted by Edison himself ended up taking place in his own laboratory. But some ambivalence remained: Edison also liked to think of his laboratory as a place of refuge in which he could pursue serious work without interruption. “I went to Menlo Park to get where people wouldn’t come much,” he told one reporter, “and if they invade that, I shall take to the woods again.”<sup>13</sup> But invade they had. As word of the phonograph’s invention spread during late 1877 and early 1878, curious members of the public and credentialed reporters alike swarmed to see and hear it and were generally treated to an exhibition of some sort by the inventor and his colleague Charles Batchelor. The specifics of these exhibitions varied depending on the audience and the nature of work in progress,<sup>14</sup> but the locals grew to see Edison’s laboratory as “a sort of free mechanical museum, which they are always at liberty to visit and enjoy without money and without price,”<sup>15</sup> delighted by the inventor’s “enthusiasm in working the product of his own brain, his manner being much like one’s fondling a pet.”<sup>16</sup> For a while, Edison appears to have relished the opportunity to indulge in the “show inventor” tradition without having to leave his workplace or endure the hassles he associated with formal public events. However, the uninvited guests eventually began to make a nuisance of themselves,<sup>17</sup> and in mid-June, Edison’s workplace was



declared off limits to all but “those who have important business to transact,” with the gruff explanation: “His laboratory is not intended for a place of exhibition, but for serious thought and hard work.”<sup>18</sup>

Menlo Park had not been the only site of phonograph demonstrations during this period. Edward Johnson, Edison’s leading publicist, had worked the new invention into an exhibition routine centered on the telephone, prefacing its efforts with a popular science lecture in which he explained how and why it worked. Similar exhibitions had been conducted in early 1878 by William Applebaugh and, in Europe, by Theodore Puskas and William Preece. Meanwhile, Edison had sold the right to exploit his invention in the United States, excepting its use in speaking clocks and dolls, to a syndicate of five investors who organized what was known as the Edison Speaking Phonograph Company. This company was really formed to market the phonograph in its eventual “practical” form, but in May 1878 it moved to reap a profit from short-term public curiosity by formalizing a methodical program of nationwide phonograph entertainments in collaboration with the Redpath Lyceum Bureau. Exhibitors would buy phonographs ranging in price from \$100 to \$200 and, in return for an additional 25% of exhibition receipts based on a 25¢ admission charge, would enjoy the exclusive right of showing them in a designated territory through October 1, 1878.<sup>19</sup> These instruments were built strictly for demonstration purposes,<sup>20</sup> and the company had accordingly cut some corners in producing them—retrospectively, the official line was that they had “purposely sacrificed distinctness of articulation, in order to secure a loud tone which could be heard in a large room when emitted through a funnel-shaped transmitter.”<sup>21</sup>

Since the exhibition phonograph was still a deeply flawed prototype, exhibiting it required not just an outlay of money, but also special training. Edison admitted years later that “no one but an expert could get anything intelligible back from it.”<sup>22</sup> Among the techniques that required practice, one was how to talk into the machine in order to yield satisfactory results. “There is considerable knack in the effective use of the voice, and in properly directing it into the mouthpiece, so much, indeed, that a good voice is sometimes rendered ineffective by the lack of it,” wrote Edward Johnson. “It is however, readily acquired by a little practice.”<sup>23</sup> Such

practice was just what the phonograph company aimed to give would-be exhibitors. On May 16, 1878, a reporter visited the company's headquarters and witnessed eighty students "learning the art of manipulating the talking-machine," with "Mary's Lamb" as their text.<sup>24</sup> Once a student had graduated from this makeshift school of phonography, he tended to set himself up in some downtown location within his assigned territory, keeping the talking machine on exhibition throughout the day in addition to operating it more formally for specially scheduled events.<sup>25</sup> After October 1, 1878, members of the public were free to purchase phonographs of their own and do with them as they pleased, which put an end to these exhibitors' exclusive rights and to this initial phase in the history of the phonograph exhibition.

### **Retroduction and Deictic Inversion**

The tinfoil phonograph had a peculiar sound which contemporary critics made a valiant effort to describe in writing by bringing more familiar frames of reference to bear on it. Some turned to visual analogies: the difference between an original sound and a phonographically educed one gave one listener the impression of "shadows,"<sup>26</sup> another "the same feeling as the difference between a worn print and an early proof of an engraving,"<sup>27</sup> and a third the sensation of looking "through the large lenses of a lorgnette."<sup>28</sup> Others drew analogies with spatial distance: the phonograph had the voice of "a person talking in a loud voice in an adjoining room with the door closed,"<sup>29</sup> or "a far-away voice, as if shouting in a distant field or speaking on the other side of the partition."<sup>30</sup> Yet another, perhaps influenced by the prospect of hearing the preserved voices of the dead, likened the phonograph's voice to one echoing from beyond the grave: its "muffled" speech "sounded like the voice the ghost in 'Hamlet' might be supposed to sound when he orders the friends to 'Swear!'"<sup>31</sup> On the other hand, it was "not a ghostly voice, nor ventriloquization," but the speaker's "own natural voice, nearly as loud as life's voice, exquisitely sculptured out of echo as if a mirror had spoken to the face before it in complacent unison,"<sup>32</sup> a kind of acoustic reflection, much like the relationship between the photographic camera and the mirror. Educed sounds also seemed more diminutive

than their originals—what the phonograph recorded, it “whispered back, lower and fainter...just like some timid maiden repeating and returning her lover’s words,”<sup>33</sup> its voice “muffled and minified” or “weak and piping.”<sup>34</sup> In response to a scream, it “returned a mere squeak, which resembled the voice of a Chinaman more than it did the voice of the speaker,”<sup>35</sup> and which reminded some critics of the “squeaky tones” or “masked voice” of a Punch and Judy show,<sup>36</sup> and another of the difference “between the voice with which a ventriloquist addresses his dummies and the voices with which he makes them seem to reply.”<sup>37</sup> Yet others confided that the phonograph’s “voice is a little metallic,”<sup>38</sup> having specifically a “metallic hoarseness of tone” because of “the use of a tin trumpet in delivering the sound,”<sup>39</sup> which “gives to its utterance a peculiar, strained, ventriloquial effect, and disguises, to some extent, the quality of different voices, making them all sound a little alike, as they naturally would if all the speakers spoke through a trumpet.”<sup>40</sup> A German-American reporter observed that it “has that timbre which we incorrectly regard as produced ‘through the nose,’” although “it would be more accurate to say ‘without the nose.’”<sup>41</sup> A San Francisco newsman commented that it “talks very decidedly through its nose and in a reckless, rollicking way withal, as if it thoroughly appreciated the right of free speech,”<sup>42</sup> whereas an Australian article attributed the phonograph’s “decidedly nasal twang” and “thickness in the utterances...as if it had been suffering from a cold” to its American origin; that is, it seemed to impose an American accent on whatever it recorded.<sup>43</sup> Phonographic speech was hard to understand, and “some of the vowels, as ‘a’ and ‘i,’ and several of the consonants, as ‘p,’ ‘b’ and ‘s’ were almost unintelligible,”<sup>44</sup> but, “even if in its present imperfect form many words are not clearly distinguishable, there can be no doubt but that the inflections are those of nothing else than the human voice.”<sup>45</sup> To sum up this montage of contemporary reports, the tinfoil phonograph’s voice was a muffled, squeaky, nasal, metallic falsetto, hard to understand but nevertheless unmistakably human in its contours. It did not resemble any known category of sound closely enough for listeners to gravitate naturally towards any one obvious analogy for it, but at the same time its strange aural qualities did invite a variety of possible evaluations (e.g., muffledness, squeakiness, nasality), some of which were perceived tentatively or playfully as

indices of familiar conditions (e.g., spatial distance, ventriloquism, maidenly timidity, rollicking recklessness). Throughout 1878, technical improvements in the phonograph were presented as having minimized its aural peculiarities,<sup>46</sup> but these improvements were only relative: the phonograph still “sounded” a particular way. Indeed, the sound of the tinfoil phonograph was so distinctive that the author William Dean Howells likened the sound of a voice heard through a heating register to it and had one of his characters imitate its “thin phantasmal squeak.”<sup>47</sup>

Because tinfoils were so rarely used again once removed from their drums, most listeners never had the experience of hearing one that had been damaged through actual misuse or carelessness, but exhibitors would sometimes scratch a phonogram on purpose in order to show how the damage would affect intelligibility.<sup>48</sup> This “mutilation” of records, as it was called, produced another new set of peculiar sounds, and listeners again sought to evaluate them in terms of familiar frames of reference. One visitor to Menlo Park reported that Edison “scratched the tinfoil and the words came just as well, but with audible scratches, as if a woman was talking and scrubbing.”<sup>49</sup> Another reported of this trick that “when the words were repeated by the instrument they were accompanied by sounds resembling little grunts,”<sup>50</sup> and yet another that the sound was marred “only about as much as hoarseness in a speaker would mar his speech.”<sup>51</sup> Thus, the physical scratching of the phonogram was perceived either as superimposing the noises of “scrubbing” or “little grunts” over the recorded voice or as damaging it in a way analogous to hoarseness—that is, I assume, having a negative impact on what it sounded like but not rendering it unintelligible.

The telephones of the 1870s likewise altered the sounds they transduced in noticeable ways, whether by muffling the voice or by superimposing static over it—the latter introducing another novel sound which writers likened variously to pattering rain, the roar of a raging storm, bubbling, and frying fat.<sup>52</sup> However, such effects had different implications for early demonstrations of phonography than they did for early demonstrations of telephony. During telephone exhibitions, an audience was not directly privy to the setting in which sounds were being induced; it heard only the mediated education, not the unmediated originals. There was no opportunity for

making direct A-to-B comparisons or to observe what performers were up to in their remote, backstage locations. I will refer to this phenomenon as *cold education*, the idea being that listeners had to make sense of mediated sounds “cold” without having initially experienced them in their immediate form. Early telephone exhibitions accordingly alternated between two-way conversations and “concerts” in which people at one end of the line listened to performers on the other end of the line, hopefully without too much distortion in between. Tinfoil phonograph exhibitions worked differently. Because exhibitors could not rely on prerecorded material, they recorded sounds in full sight and hearing of their audiences. As a result, there were not separate recording and education events, but only a single continuous event alternating between recording and education, in which the audience had already heard the original of each sound it heard being educed. To distinguish this phenomenon from cold education, I will call it *retroduction*, literally a bringing *back*, modeled after the term “playback” to imply a continuity of experience linking phonogenization and education. The fact that the sounds used to demonstrate the tinfoil phonograph were typically retroduced rather than educed cold diminished their value as the stuff of a straightforward telephone-like concert; the repetition would have been monotonous. Instead, after establishing that the talking machine could “reproduce” sounds, phonograph exhibitors retained the attention of audiences by demonstrating a variety of ways in which the device could *change* its subject matter, producing a variety of illusions whose artifice listeners were free to observe and appreciate. In the case of the telephone exhibition, conspicuous technological manipulation had been limited to such gimmicks as switching back and forth between multiple receivers, causing the educed music or speech to proceed from different points in a hall.<sup>53</sup> As we will see, phonograph exhibitors cultivated a far more extensive stock of tricks.

Much as listeners tried to assimilate telephone static and the sound of “mutilated” phonograms to familiar categories of aural experience, so they turned to existing models of social and verbal interaction when seeking ways to conceptualize what the phonograph did with spoken language. One term frequently encountered for phonographic retroduction was “repetition”; for example: “Presently the machine would *repeat* word for word what he [the exhibitor] had spoken, and with such

distinctness that it could be heard in every part of the room.”<sup>54</sup> Repetition may seem to be a fairly neutral concept, but it inspired a number of social analogies, both positive and negative. One was with the stereotypical female gossip, an association that spawned innumerable jokes: “The phonograph will probably be called a ‘she,’ because it repeats everything,” it “is feminine in gender—because it talks back,” and so forth.<sup>55</sup> Another writer imagined the machine acquiring the immoral character of the people who spoke into it: “Whatever was said to it, it said back, and it gave plain evidence of the adage that ‘evil communications corrupt good manners,’ for it faithfully copied everything bad as well as everything good that fell upon its ferreotype tympanum.”<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, a different critic wrote of “the admirable example it sets many garrulous and wearisome individuals,” in that it “never speaks until it has first been spoken to.”<sup>57</sup> Framing the phonograph’s retrodution of speech as “repetition” was, therefore, not just a neutral observation about what was going on, but an interpretation that could predispose listeners to understand the retroduded words in certain ways and not others.

There were other ways of perceiving the phonograph’s “repetition” of sounds than as gossip or the corruption of good manners. One familiar model for the experience of hearing a song repeated a second time in a concert was the “encore,” a term we find both writers and exhibitors applying to what the phonograph did.<sup>58</sup> More common than the “encore” was the orientation implied by “talking back,” “singing back,” and so forth, namely that the repetition was being done by an entity other than the originary speaker or performer, and that it was in some sense a response to its phonogenization—“The talking-phonograph feels its response-ability,” joked the *New York Daily Graphic*.<sup>59</sup> Tom Gunning has asserted that, during this period, “the phonograph in performance was treated as a clever imitator, a human-like virtuoso with a genius for imitation, rather than simply a recording device.”<sup>60</sup> This was certainly one of the yardsticks by which critics of 1878 measured the phonograph’s accomplishments, asserting that it “mimicked sounds with wonderful accuracy”;<sup>61</sup> that it spoke “with great *care* as to inflection and emphasis,”<sup>62</sup> and even that it “would be impossible for any human mimic to do it so well.”<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, this orientation often manifested itself through the suggestion of a competitive or

even adversarial relationship between a performer or speaker and the phonograph—after all, prior to the invention of the phonograph, the emulation of a particular individual’s peculiarities of speaking or performing had been a conscious act, typically associated with parody, denigration, or identity theft. One way of conceptualizing the phonographic education derived from a specific person’s phonogenization was thus as an impressive but fraudulent “counterfeit.”<sup>64</sup> Not only did the phonograph seem to be engaging in mimicry simply by virtue of its “repetition” of sounds, but its built-in acoustic distortions could also be interpreted as exaggerated caricature: “to some extent it is a burlesque or parody of the human voice,” rather than a machine by which song and speech “can be faithfully repeated,” wrote William Preece,<sup>65</sup> while a minor shift in emphasis yielded the quip: “The phonograph is a perfect mockery.”<sup>66</sup> Sometimes differences between a phonogenization and its retroduction lent themselves unusually well to interpretation as mockery:

The *World* reporter was invited to say something to the phonograph. He approached the machine and stammeringly said to it: “The world is mine oyster and I shall not want.” The instrument was readjusted, the crank turned again, and all that could be heard was “shall.” The reporter was embarrassed, for he felt that the phonograph was prophetically mocking him. Mr. Edison, however, kindly explained that the reporter had so emphasized the “shall” that the other words were lost in the reproduction.<sup>67</sup>

Edison assured the reporter that there was a purely acoustic explanation for the unexpected result, and that the phonograph was not being oracular, disrespectful, or anything other than an objective recording-and-reproduction device. However, the reporter’s initial response to the phonograph’s “shall” had been to interpret it as a biting contradiction of his prior recorded statement: namely, “yes, you *shall* want.”

The last anecdote introduces us to a range of cases in which the phonograph’s utterances were treated as sensible “responses” or “answers” to their phonogenizations, rather than as mere repetitions, encores, or imitations. To put this in Harvey Sacks’ terms, the recorded utterance and the educed one were treated as the two halves of a dialogic adjacency pair, the former serving as a first pair part anticipating a response, and the latter as a second pair part interpretable as a rejoinder. This model fit some situations better than others. Take the following example:

“How is the phonograph to-day, Mr. Edison?”

“Oh, about the same as usual,” was the answer; “but come and ask it. It has an answer for every man, and generally in his own words.”

The reporter followed Mr. Edison to an upper room where the phonograph was resting on a table, and as the cylinder slowly turned he shouted at it, pleasantly: “How are you?” Then the cylinder was shifted backwards and again turned and the phonograph cried out in the same cheerful tone that the reporter had used: “How are you?”

Mr. Edison seated himself before his favorite invention and talked, scolded, sung and whistled to it for a while, receiving answers according to his folly or his wisdom.<sup>68</sup>

Here, the reporter’s encounter with the phonograph could be interpreted in terms of greeting and response because of the widespread custom of answering “How are you?” with “How are you?” The first phrases Charles Batchelor documented as having been repeated by the phonograph in early December, 1877, may have worked similarly: “How do you get that?”<sup>69</sup> and “How do you do?”<sup>70</sup> Another way of interpreting the phonograph’s repetition of an utterance as a response to it was “agreement,” as we find in the account of one California exhibition:

Mr. Bugbee next entered into conversation with the stranger [i.e., the phonograph], and imparted some information on California politics. Mr. Phonograph agree[d] with marked emphasis with the prevailing sentiments and howled out in sand-lot recitativos,

“THE CHINESE MUST GO.”<sup>71</sup>

However, most utterances did not lend themselves to this kind of symmetry. On another occasion, Edison recorded himself speaking the phrase: “Well, old Phonograph! how are you getting on down there?” On education, we are told, the phonograph “answers back in its grumbling or spiteful metallic tones,” at which point “it is difficult to rid one’s self of the notion that there is indeed an elfish personality there which has its own views of things and must be considered in its feelings.”<sup>72</sup> What it must have educated, specifically, was “Well, old Phonograph! how are you getting on down there?” But who was “you” at the time of education, and where was “down there” (assuming that the end of the funnel was “up here”)? In this instance, the listener seems to have considered the form and content of the utterance unimportant; it was identifiable as an “answer” simply by virtue of its being the second pair part in a retroductive demonstration. But the case clearly exposes a deeper problem of indexicality.

Here it will be useful to recall the debate over the telephone answering machine message “I am not here now,” as paraphrased in my introduction. This utterance works as it does, according to Corazza et al., only because convention



dictates a consistent deictic zero-point for answering machine messages in reference to which their indexicals can be evaluated. But in 1877 there were no such conventions available to guide phonogenic speaking or phonographic listening. The hypothetical situation of the answering machine message parodies, in which a speaker is ignorant of the relevant speech conventions (“I’m doing this NOW, while you’re listening to it LATER, except for you I guess it’s NOW....”) really pertained, except that such ignorance was then necessarily universal. The resulting uncertainty left its mark on some of the earliest accounts of phonographic education events we have.

When Edison first demonstrated the phonograph to the editors of the *Scientific American* on December 7, 1877, the episode was reported as follows: “Mr. Thomas A. Edison recently came into this office, placed a little machine on our desk, turned a crank, and the machine inquired as to our health, asked how we liked the phonograph, informed us that *it* was very well, and bid us a cordial good night.”<sup>73</sup> At first glance, this seems straightforward enough: a case of “playful personification,”<sup>74</sup> right? But a closer examination of the details suggests that something more complex was actually going on. The foil had evidently been recorded beforehand, somewhere outside the hearing of the audience, and left in place on the drum until it could be educed cold during the demonstration. Working backwards from the written account, we can infer that the actual phonogram must have gone something like this: “How do you do? How do you like the phonograph? I’m very well. Good night!” This first part of this reconstruction is confirmed, later in the article, by an illustration of one of the foils bearing the caption: “This is a part of the sentences, ‘How do you do?’ and ‘How do you like the phonograph?’”

Despite the undoubted novelty of the editors’ listening experience, there was in fact a precedent available to them for interpreting utterances of this kind. Edison’s phonograph was not actually the first machine capable of simulating articulate speech, having been preceded by a sequence of “talking machines” modeled physically after the human speech organs and made to “speak” by the action of bellows in place of breath. The first known instruments of this type had been built in the late eighteenth century by the Abbé Mical and Wolfgang von Kempelen, but the one most often compared and contrasted with Edison’s invention was the work of a

German mechanic named Joseph Faber, who had exhibited it extensively in the United States and Europe during the 1840s as another of David Lindsay's so-called "show inventors."<sup>75</sup> When Faber had died in 1866,<sup>76</sup> his talking machine had passed into the hands of his niece Maria Trunka, who had resumed exhibiting it in company with her husband, Samuel Hussert.<sup>77</sup> Falling squarely into a long-standing tradition of mechanical androids, Faber's talking machine had been built to resemble a human figure in appearance, and its utterances during the exhibitions Maria and Samuel had conducted during the early 1870s had likewise been gauged to evoke an anthropomorphic response:

"I—can—talk—as—well—as—anybody—but—I'm—a—ma—sheen."<sup>78</sup>

"I—am—a—mere—mach—ine—but—I—can—talk—as—well—as—you—sir."<sup>79</sup>

It said: "I was born in Vienna in 1841, and my inventor was Professor Faber," and at the conclusion apologized for its imperfections by saying, "Thank you, gentlemen, for your attention. I hope you are satisfied with the little talking machine. You must not expect too much of me. My modulation is not perfect, because I am a machine. I am very tired, and I must, therefore, bid you good-bye. Adieu."<sup>80</sup>

The Faber instrument had been operated by a keyboard at which Maria and Samuel had taken turns "playing," but they had caused it to speak as though it were talking on its own behalf, not as though they were speaking "through" it. Its first person had referred to it, not to them. Insofar as any precedent had existed for evaluating the deictic zero-point of a "talking machine" at the time the phonograph was first exhibited, therefore, it had linked "I" to the machine itself, not to the person responsible for causing it to speak or for formulating the message.

In December 1877, the listeners in the *Scientific American* office apparently identified the agent of Edison's prerecorded assertion "I'm very well" (or whatever equivalent phrase Edison may have used) as the phonograph speaking on its own behalf, since they substituted the pronoun *it* in their article; Edison was a *he*. Soon afterward, however, Edison included a remarkably similar phonogram with the first phonograph he sent to England, containing the words: "How do you do? What do you think of my phonograph?"<sup>81</sup> Here the possessive *my* implies that the voice is to be taken as Edison's, not the machine's, and Edison's earlier "I am very well" can also be interpreted in this way. Meanwhile, his earlier "how do you like the

phonograph?” actually resists an identification of “I” with the phonograph, since in that case we would also expect “how do you like *me*?” for the sake of consistency. Without evidence to the contrary, it is reasonable to assume that Edison’s intentions were consistent across the two cases, and that he was proceeding much as speakers do today when recording outgoing answering machine messages; in Sidelle’s terms, he was simply deferring an utterance. If so, then the communication in the *Scientific American* office misfired. The editors, drawing an analogy with precedents such as Faber’s talking machine, evaluated Edison’s prerecorded speech in an unintended way, though in a way that nevertheless made cultural sense. He meant “I” to refer to himself; they thought it referred to his machine.

The episode in the *Scientific American* office was a rare case of cold education, but there was also potential for similar uncertainty in retroduction, and arguably even more so, since utterances occurred in pairs and the audience had both an “original” and a “reproduction” to evaluate. Sometimes such utterances were worded—perhaps intentionally—in ways that ensured no serious cognitive dissonance would take place either when the exhibitor spoke them live or when the phonograph “said them back,” for instance:

“The Phonograph presents its compliments to the audience.”<sup>82</sup>

“The phonograph presents his compliments to the audience.”<sup>83</sup>

“The speaking phonograph has the honor of presenting itself before the Academy of Sciences.”<sup>84</sup>

“Mr. Edison’s phonograph presents its compliments to the pupils of the Convent of the Sacred Heart and bids them a very good morning.”<sup>85</sup>

These examples carefully avoid any use of first and second person pronouns, thereby allowing the referents to be kept straight during both recording and education. Take the first example. When the exhibitor spoke the words “the phonograph presents his compliments to the audience” into the mouthpiece, he could be understood as announcing what was about to happen to the audience or, perhaps, as “prompting” the phonograph. The phonograph, in turn, “presented its compliments to the audience,” the only peculiarity in wording being its use of the third person in reference to itself (or, in the second example, *himself*). There is evidence that some people picked up quickly on this strategy and clung to it as a serviceable convention. When a

phonograph was exhibited before the French Academy of Sciences by one of Edison's associates, both he and the phonograph could speak appropriately as representatives of the inventor: "Mr. Edison has the honor of greeting the members of the Academy." The Count du Moncel, in delivering his response into the machine, followed the exhibitor's example: "The Academy thanks Mr. Edison for his interesting communication."<sup>86</sup> Another group of retroduced utterances ventured into an explicit or implied second person:

"How do you do? How do you like the Phonograph?"<sup>87</sup>

"What does the Daily Graphic think of the Edison phonograph?"<sup>88</sup>

"Well, Mr. Davids, what do you think the people of Poughkeepsie would say if they could hear this Phonograph talk as it does here?"<sup>89</sup>

When the crowd pressed too closely, he [Mr. Bullard, the exhibitor] had only to shout to the phonograph, "Gentlemen will please stand back," and the request was pressed upon the public's attention with special emphasis, as coming from the mysterious instrument.<sup>90</sup>

During phonogenization, these utterances invited the interpretation that they were being spoken into the machine but addressed to one or more designated human listeners. During education, the utterances were again appropriately directed towards the addressee(s), the only oddity being, sometimes, the phonograph's reference to itself in the third person.

The situation grew far more complicated as soon as exhibitors explicitly addressed statements to the phonograph or recorded phonograms enabling the phonograph to speak in the first person. In San Francisco, for instance, an exhibitor alternated between statements that made sense when phonogenized ("Good Morning, Mr. Phonograph") and ones that made sense when educated ("I am the astounding Edison phonograph, I am! What do [you] think of me?"). A reporter commented on the impression phrases of this sort made when coming from the machine:

Then amid peals of laughter and exclamations of unbounded astonishment, the phonograph *went into a conversation with itself*. "Well, Mr. Phonograph, are you all right?" "Mr. Phonograph, what is the matter with you anyhow, to-day?".... Then it *asked itself sarcastically*, "Why don't you talk louder, Mr. Phonograph?" "How do you do, Mr. Phonograph?"

This demonstration was met with "an uncontrollable burst of laughter and as hearty a clapping of hands as if the cylinder of cast-iron was a sentient being, a belief, indeed, that it was hard to overcome."<sup>91</sup> For his part, the reporter had identified a frame

within which it would make sense for a phonograph to say “Why don’t you talk louder, Mr. Phonograph?”—namely, sarcasm—and interpreted the educed words accordingly, sustaining a playful illusion of sentience. Another exhibitor, George Bliss, opened a demonstration in Chicago with the shout, “Halloa! Halloa! Mr. Phonograph, are you there?” These words were “echoed back by the phonograph a few moments later,” which demonstrated that the instrument “was evidently there.” Next, Bliss recorded himself shouting “All right! all right!” and had the phonograph utter “All right! all right!” in turn. He moved on to a formal greeting: “The phonograph presents its compliments to the press of Chicago and its friends assembled today to witness its performance.” Then he reverted back to the second person, asking: “I say, Mr. Phonograph, can you say your letters? Let us see what you can do: A, b, c...” and then commanding: “Spell b-o-y, boy, g-i-r-l, girl, h-a-t, hat.”<sup>92</sup> In short, Bliss formed most of his statements on the basis of what a person might say to a phonograph as interlocutor, and not the other way around. As a result, the instrument’s “responses” came out worded as questions and requests. Still, the phonograph did “answer” Bliss’s requests appropriately in another sense. When he asked if it was there, it emitted some sounds to show that it “was evidently there.” When he asked it to say the alphabet and spell some words, it did. This rationale may have governed some other cases, too. The first phonograph exhibition in Atlanta, Georgia, opened with “Mr Phonograph, will you talk?” Its repetition of the phrase was, arguably, an affirmative answer.<sup>93</sup> The second phonograph experiment carried out before the French Academy was to ask the machine, “Monsieur phonographe, parlez-vous français?” It successfully repeated the question, showing that it did, indeed, speak French.<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, the San Francisco exhibitor’s recordings do not welcome this interpretation, except possibly for “Well, Mr. Phonograph, are you all right?”

Many of the examples just cited display a phenomenon to which I will refer as *deictic inversion*: a consistent complex of contextual shifts by which certain deictics (e.g. “here,” “now,” “me,” “this”) could seem to “point” differently when educed from a phonograph than when originally spoken for recording. I do not claim that phonographically “reproduced” deictics were always and necessarily interpreted in an

inverted way, which is clearly not the case, but only that the relocation of utterances from their originary zero-points to new ones made inverted meanings available along with originary ones. Speakers and listeners had the opportunity—or maybe even the obligation—of choosing between them, and then not just as a block, but individually with respect to time, place, and person. For future reference, and to clarify matters, I suggest that the following shifts in indexical reference are the most common manifestations of deictic inversion in phonography:

|        | <b>Recording Event</b>         | <b>Eduction Event</b>   |
|--------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| “I”    | originary speaker              | phonograph              |
| “you”  | phonograph                     | listener                |
| “here” | proximity to originary speaker | proximity to phonograph |
| “now”  | time of recording              | time of eduction        |

As Corazza et al. suggest, generic conventions may restrict the options available to speakers and listeners, imposing on utterances what we might call a particular deictic configuration. For instance, the prevailing conventions of the modern-day outgoing telephone answering machine message can be expressed like this:

|        | <b>Recording Event</b>         | <b>Eduction Event(s)</b> |
|--------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| “I”    | <u>originary speaker</u>       | answering machine        |
| “you”  | answering machine              | <u>caller(s)</u>         |
| “here” | proximity to originary speaker | <u>“at home”</u>         |
| “now”  | time of recording              | <u>time of eduction</u>  |

Or take the case of a song written expressly for use in phonograph exhibitions, entitled “My Name is Mister Phonograph,” which adheres to a different convention, that of the speaking automaton which is understood as speaking on its own behalf even though someone else is responsible for “playing” it, or in this case for phonogenizing it:

My name is Mister Phonograph and I’m not so very old;  
 My Father he’s called Edison and I’m worth my weight in gold.  
 The folks they just yell into my mouth and now I’m saying what’s true:  
 For just speak to me I’ll speak it back and you’ll see I can talk like you!<sup>95</sup>

A phonogenic performer would have sung this song into the phonograph in the hearing of an exhibition audience in order for the phonograph to “repeat” it, but only during eduction would the referents have lined up as intended:

|       |                        |   |
|-------|------------------------|---|
|       | <b>Recording Event</b> | <b>Eduction Event</b>                   |
| “I”   | originary speaker      | <i>phonograph</i>                       |
| “you” | phonograph             | <i>listener (and originary speaker)</i> |

On the other hand, the referents might invite an inverted evaluation during the eduction event even if the originary speaker had clearly uttered them with the circumstances of the recording event in mind. Thus, a phonograph insulted in the second person might be perceived as “replying” with an insult on its own behalf addressed back to the insulter:

Senator Beck, of Kentucky, said it was all a humbug. Said he: “The operator is making game of us. He is a ventriloquist.” “Try the machine yourself,” said the operator. Beck pushed the operator back and walked hastily to the machine. He thought a moment, and then his eyes twinkled as he howled into the machine “You are an arrant humbug, and you know it.” The machine was reversed and the crank turned energetically, bawling in reply: “You are an arrant humbug, and you know it.” The crowded room bust into a yell of laughter and applause as Beck threw up his hands and said: “My God, I am satisfied.”<sup>96</sup>

It should be stressed that deixis need not be expressed lexically for inversion to occur, so long as it is present in some form, as when time deixis manifests itself through tense morphology. For instance, if “now” is to be understood as anchored to the recording event, the phonogram might be referred to as in the process of being recorded from an enactment still underway, either in the present or future tense. On the other hand, if “now” is to be understood as anchored to the eduction event, the phonogram might instead be referred to as already completed, with all parts of the phonogenic enactment being relegated to the past tense. The following episode, whether true or not, exposes some other bewildering possibilities:

Mr. [Henry] Bentley experimented with numerous nursery rhymes, giving them various intonations, which were perfectly reproduced. By applying different sized cornucopias, made of pasteboard, to the speaking tube, an amusing change of voice ensued.

“Tell her to love me,” said an interesting young man, as he gazed affectionately at a pretty girl on the other side of the room.

“Love him!” cried the wheel, in tones of thunder. Mr. Bentley applied a smaller pasteboard cornucopia, and the phonograph realized the propriety of low and tender accents, and whispered “love him.”

“I didn’t mean him. I meant me,” said the swain.

Mr. Bentley blushed, but complied with the request, and the wheel groaned out “love me.” The young lady glanced over at the operator as much as to say that that was a different thing, and worthy of consideration.<sup>97</sup>

When Bentley first recorded himself saying “love him!” into the phonograph, “him” referred unambiguously to the young man in the audience who had just requested the

demonstration. The first time Bentley educed the phrase, the funnel he used caused it to sound in “tones of thunder,” like a command from heaven. Since this seemed inappropriate to the subject matter, he substituted a different funnel to decrease the volume to a seductive “whisper.” Despite the fact that the audience had witnessed this whole exchange, the young man now interpreted the educed “him” as referring to someone else—probably to Bentley himself, who would have been standing right alongside the machine as a more obvious third-person referent. He accordingly chided the phonograph: “I didn’t mean *him*. I meant *me*.” Bentley felt obliged to try again, this time literally substituting the word “him” for “me,” since there were no other pronouns available. However, Bentley’s phonogenization of “love me!” risked inviting the interpretation that *he* was asking the young lady in the audience to love *himself*. He accordingly blushed and made the phonograph “groan out” the phrase, perhaps through some kind of intentionally distorted eduction. The young lady now “glanced over at the operator,” meaning Bentley as “operator” of the phonograph (a term used in this sense earlier in the article), showing that she had not approved of the “love him” but was willing to consider the “love me.” However, this reaction still fails to clarify how she understood the contrast between “him” and “me”: man in audience versus Bentley, Bentley versus phonograph, man in audience versus phonograph?

The “love him”/“love me” episode nicely illustrates the potential for uncertainty about the respective status of the recording event and the eduction event, and which, if either, was to take precedence in establishing meaning and to count as the definitive context of utterance. Was the proper paradigm one in which a phonogenization was simply “reproduced,” in which case its originary context was to be taken as the deictic zero-point and the referents interpreted accordingly? Or was it more appropriate to think of the phonogenization as a deferred utterance or phonogenic performance, produced only to be recorded, so that it should not be taken literally when first spoken—the exhibitor who shouted “I am the astounding Edison phonograph, I am!” was not really claiming to be a phonograph—but instead understood with reference to the context of the future eduction event it anticipated? Some utterances were clearly intended one way, and others in another way, but in a



number of cases the unfamiliar circumstances of phonography led to ambiguities and paradoxes that contemporaries found endlessly amusing.

### **Rhymes, Songs, and Laughter**

When exhibitors provided the phonograph with contextually anchored utterances, addressed the phonograph in the second person, or relied in general on deixis, this could lead to amusing results but also to potential confusion as to who was meant to be saying what and to or about whom. Edison's first public demonstration of his invention to the editors of the *Scientific American* was a technological success but a communicative failure: his words were not taken as he had (probably) meant them to be taken. However, a repertoire of standard demonstration pieces developed that was free of such complications, consisting of short songs, dramatic and poetic recitations, and nursery rhymes. Certain examples were reported again and again in accounts of phonograph exhibitions. "Mary Had a Little Lamb" was considered "the favorite and standard piece to which any well-behaved phonograph will invariably respond"<sup>98</sup> as well as "the standard melody of Menlo Park,"<sup>99</sup> but a list of the ten next most popular selections of 1878 would have looked something like this:

"Jack and Jill"  
"Old Uncle Ned"  
"There was a little girl, and she had a little curl"  
"John Brown's Body"  
"Bingen on the Rhine"  
"Nineteen years in the Bastille"  
"Now is the winter of our discontent," from Shakespeare's *Richard III*  
"Annabel Lee," by Edgar Allen Poe  
"The Refugee"  
"Yankee Doodle"

Edison biographer Robert Conot notes that the inventor and his laboratory colleagues "all had small children, so it was natural that nursery rhymes became a vehicle for the endless testing."<sup>100</sup> However, only a few items in the standard repertoire were actually nursery rhymes, so this can hardly be taken seriously as an explanation. Short, memorized recitations and songs had a number of advantages as subject matter.

First, these pieces did not refer explicitly to anything in the immediate environment (although when Edison used “There was a little girl, and she had a little curl” during his visit to Washington, Senator Roscoe Conkling of New York is reported to have taken umbrage, being sensitive about a curl of hair on his own forehead that caricaturists of the day liked to exaggerate in editorial cartoons).<sup>101</sup> Consequently, such recitations did not undergo conspicuous shifts in meaning or appropriateness between recording and education: “Mary had a little lamb” is virtually immune from deictic inversion.

Another factor encouraging exhibitors to rely on familiar pieces like these was that many audience members would already have known them and so were in a better position to reconstruct unintelligible parts of their education. The tinfoil phonogram displayed a high degree of lexical indeterminacy, far greater than that of the phonograms of ten or twenty years later. According to one account written a decade after the fact:

One of the main difficulties with the original phonograph was its indistinctness of articulation. While giving a loud sound, it was utterly impossible to reproduce intelligible speech, and for that reason in exhibiting the instruments, experiments were confined to recording familiar nursery rhymes and songs, which the ear could recognise from the rhythm.<sup>102</sup>

It is true that familiar nursery rhymes and songs played a major role in early exhibitions of phonographs and telephones, a fact on which Jonathan Sterne bases much of his analysis of such events. At first, Sterne argues, sound media required imagination on the part of listeners and adaptation on the part of speakers: “when sound-reproduction technologies barely worked, they needed human assistance to stitch together the apparent gaps in their ability to make recognizable sounds”; consequently, “what is truly fascinating is the automatic response of the speakers and listeners: *to help the machine*.”<sup>103</sup> The role he assigns to the listener, in line with his concept of “audile technique,” is actually hard to distinguish from traditional modes of listening: a person will typically strain to make sense of *any* speech once it has become the focus of attention, filling in the gaps as well as possible when it is indistinct.<sup>104</sup> There is also the well-documented tendency of participants in an experiment “to provide the results they assume the experimenter is concerned to demonstrate,”<sup>105</sup> in this case the viability of sound media. That said, listeners’

expectations clearly did shape what they thought they heard through early sound media, as we see in the following anecdote about a telephone exhibition:

Mr. Preece said that he himself had recently exhibited the telephone before a very large audience including many learned men. He selected “one of the leading scientific men of the day” and placed the telephone in his hand, expecting to hear from his lips some words of special wisdom. The sage shouted through the telephone, “Hi diddle diddle—follow up that!” Then putting the telephone to his ear for the response, he stated with great satisfaction, “He says—‘The cat and the fiddle.’” The person who was supposed to have made the answer was fifty miles away. The next day Mr. Preece met him and asked if he understood the “Hi diddle diddle.” The man said, “No, I asked him to repeat.”<sup>106</sup>

Here a member of the audience, asked to utter a test message over the telephone, had chosen an example of highly conventionalized language. Since he expected to hear the second half of the opening strophe of “Hey Diddle Diddle” in response, this was what he *did* hear, even though the person at the other end of the line had not understood his request and had actually said something entirely different. The exhibitors of the 1870s are likely to have adopted familiar rhymes as their favored subject matter with this same dynamic in mind. As Sterne observes, “conventionalized language helped the machine along in doing its job of reproducing”; it “helped lower the threshold at which reproduced sound became comprehensible and still proved the possibility of mechanical reproduction of all language.”<sup>107</sup> In the case of retroductive tinfoil phonograph exhibitions, the audience had ordinarily heard the original of whatever was being educed a few moments before anyway, so they already knew what words to expect regardless of conventionality. Still, the use of conventionalized language would have offered an extra safeguard against embarrassingly unintelligible results.

It is popularly believed that the first words Edison spoke into the phonograph were the nursery rhyme “Mary Had a Little Lamb.” Phonograph historians have tended either to accept this belief at face value or, pointing out the lack of early documentation, to insist that we can never know for sure what phrase Edison used at the decisive moment.<sup>108</sup> As noted earlier, “Mary Had a Little Lamb” did eventually become the acknowledged centerpiece of the tinfoil-era phonographic repertoire. The earliest reference to its status as the *first* recorded speech, to the best of my knowledge, appeared in print on April 10, 1878, when a reporter was reflecting on the sort of phonographic monument Edison should build for himself: “The first thing

which the phonograph said was ‘Mary had a little lamb,’ but this bit of historical-pastoral information would get to be monotonous if spoken forever from the top of a cenotaph.”<sup>109</sup> However, this statement almost certainly refers to the first phrase the phonograph was made *routinely* to utter during exhibitions. The tradition linking the “Mary” rhyme with Edison’s first-ever experimental phonogram does not seem to have arisen until at least a decade after the date of the invention itself. Indeed, an item published in the *Oil City Derrick* during mid-1878 presented an alternative story:

“In all that has been written concerning the Edison phonograph,” said Grandfather Lickshingle yesterday, “the first words uttered by the machine have not been mentioned. Mr. Edison doubtless has a delicacy in giving them to reporters, but as it is a matter of national interest, and as I was the only other person present in his workshop at Munlo [sic] Park when the phonograph first gave utterance, I feel it my duty to speak up.”

According to Grandfather Lickshingle, the first words the phonograph had emitted in the laboratory had reflected Edison’s frustration upon trying to get it to talk:

“Confound the confounded thing to confoundation and be confounded to it!”<sup>110</sup>

Although this piece was plainly intended as humor rather than as news, it does presuppose that there was no popular consensus at the time about what the machine had first “said.” Thus, Grandfather Lickshingle’s yarn is presented not as contradicting another account but as filling a frustrating gap in the narrative of the invention. Quite apart from what words were involved, there is even some uncertainty as to which event might have been regarded at different times as having been Edison’s “first speech into a phonograph,” since the invention actually came about in several stages over roughly half a year.

Early accounts agree that the first utterance Edison recorded experimentally on paraffined paper in July 1877 was “Halloo! Halloo!,” disagreeing only on whether it should be spelled “halloo” or “halloa.”<sup>111</sup> However, Charles Batchelor recounted the paraffined paper episode somewhat differently thirty years later: “Mr Edison sat down and putting his mouth to the mouthpiece delivered one of our favorite stereotyped sentences used in experimenting on the telephone ‘Mary had a little lamb’ whilst I pulled the paper through.”<sup>112</sup> As we have seen, the first words the phonograph educed in public on December 7, 1877, were originally reported in the *Scientific American* as having been something to the effect of “How do you do? How do you like the phonograph?” Edison’s memory of the event just over thirty years

later was, instead: “I opened up the package set up the machine and recited Mary, etc., then I reproduced it so it could be heard all over the room.”<sup>113</sup> In both of these cases, participants reminiscing years after the fact identified the “Mary” rhyme as the sample speech used at different turning-points in the history of the phonograph, in both cases flatly contradicting accounts actually written in the 1870s. However, “Mary” has been associated most closely with Edison’s first laboratory test of a tinfoil cylinder phonograph at the beginning of December 1877, a connection made in print as early as 1888.<sup>114</sup> In this case, no contradictory contemporary accounts exist. Although “How do you get that?” and “How do you do?” were both cited as early test phrases, neither was ever explicitly identified as the *first* words on which the instrument had been tested. Still, the readiness with which the same authorities identified “Mary Had a Little Lamb” as the test phrase used on *other* occasions, when the claim conflicts with contemporary sources, should make us wary about taking any such accounts at face value.

Batchelor’s identification of the rhyme as “one of our favorite stereotyped sentences used in experimenting on the telephone” suggests something of the broader significance of these claims in connection with Edison’s laboratory practice. I am not aware of any pre-1878 document specifically identifying “Mary Had a Little Lamb” as a telephonic test phrase, but Edison later said of his work on telephony in mid-1876 that “you could tell that someone was talking and if you knew what they were saying it sounded awful like what they were saying.”<sup>115</sup> Knowing what was being said would have meant agreeing in advance on a test phrase of *some* kind. However, when the listener already knew what was going to be said, the test was also of limited value; when Edison and his colleagues really wanted to test the intelligibility of experimental sound media, they read passages at random out of the newspaper.<sup>116</sup> The “stereotyped sentence” was useful in two specific contexts: finding out whether a device would respond to speech *at all*, or public exhibitions in which shortcomings were supposed to be concealed rather than evaluated. When participants in the invention of the phonograph shared their reminiscences in later years, they seem to have adopted “Mary Had a Little Lamb” as a synecdoche for the “stereotyped sentence” in general, introducing it into their stories by default whenever they had

cause to refer to a stock phonographic test phrase. Edison's memoir even has him using "Mary" for working a phonomotor toy he had designed: "if one shouted Mary had a little lamb, etc., the paper man would start sawing wood."<sup>117</sup> Since this rhyme became the centerpiece of public exhibitions and the text on which prospective exhibitors were drilled when learning to use the phonograph, it is not surprising that it would later have been remembered as the standard experimental test subject of the whole tinfoil era, crowding out other contenders. Perhaps Edison and his colleagues simply did not have very vivid memories of specific test phrases they had used; after all, "halloo!," "how do you get that?," and "how do you do?" are not particularly memorable utterances. On these grounds, the identification years after the fact of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" as Edison's first phonographic test phrase should be considered part of a general conventionalization of such narratives rather than reliable evidence for what was actually phonogenized on any particular occasion. In these cases, I suspect that "Mary Had a Little Lamb" represents not a specific phrase, as has been assumed, but the speech genre of which it had later become the prime exemplar.<sup>118</sup>

Nevertheless, the rhyme's conventionality as a standard phonographic recitation during 1878 is not in doubt. Its use in phonography should be considered within the context of its broader status as a stock recitation in nineteenth-century America, something usually taken to be so obvious that it escapes mention. First published by Sarah Josepha Hale in 1830, "Mary Had a Little Lamb" had been disseminated throughout the United States by its inclusion in the popular McGuffey series of school readers. Over 120 million copies of these books are supposed to have been sold, and D. A. Saunders considers it "a justifiable surmise that some of them were used at some time in every county of every state that had a public school system."<sup>119</sup> Persons who knew no other recitations by heart were likely to have been drilled on these texts as schoolchildren and to have turned to them by default later in life when called on to speak in unfamiliar or tense situations. So, for instance, the following conversation was reported in 1886 between a recently-eloped couple in a telegraph office:

"Emily," said he, when he had got to the blank, "tell me a verse to telegraph to your father. It'll tickle the old man."

Emily reflected. "I can only remember two pieces," she said, "and I don't believe they'll do. One is, 'Mary had a little lamb,' and the other is, 'Who ran to catch me when I fell! My mother!'" "No," said the young man. "Those are not a bit appropriate. I'm blessed if I can think of anything." Then he turned to me [the telegraph operator]. "Can't you help us out?"<sup>120</sup>

Again, in an account of a physician visiting an insane woman in the year 1900:

When I arrived at the house Miss Wendel was in bed. I went to her room. She had her hands over her face, and when I came in she said: "Dr. Guernsey, Dr. Guernsey, Mary had a little lamb, Mary—Mary had a little lamb!"<sup>121</sup>

These two examples, chosen at random from a larger pool, show speakers reverting to "Mary Had a Little Lamb" as a kind of default utterance when they were called upon by circumstances to say something but did not know what to say. The rhyme may also have offered an appealing solution for persons unsure, when suddenly put on the spot, as to what kind of speech was appropriate for speaking into a phonograph. "It is less than accidental," Saunders states, "that Edison should unconsciously choose one of the rhymes of William Holmes McGuffey" when recording his first words on tinfoil.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, the earliest known account identifying "Mary Had a Little Lamb" as the stuff of Edison's first test of the tinfoil cylinder phonograph refers to it as "some words of a rhyme he remembered from his boyhood's days,"<sup>123</sup> most likely from being drilled on a McGuffey Reader. Jonathan Sterne acknowledges that conventionalized speech in general "probably struck lab staff and their guests as an obvious choice for experimental recordings since it was easily performed and came to mind with little thought."<sup>124</sup> Familiar rhymes and songs featured so prominently in early phonographic experimentation and exhibition not just because they were expected to be easier for listeners to understand when educed, but also because they were so readily available at the tips of performers' tongues.

One less commonly acknowledged effect of using familiar rhymes and songs for exhibition purposes was to redirect attention to *how* subject matter was being delivered and reproduced. Exhibitors could assume that their audiences would be familiar with the "content," and so probably felt themselves able to play with it more freely than they might have otherwise. "Mary Had a Little Lamb" in particular has probably been more subject to comic distortions than any other verse in the English language. A glut of print parodies had filled the popular press at the start of 1871 and

was already so pronounced as of that March to provoke a reflexive commentary on “the many recent effusions” on the theme:

“Mary had a little lamb,  
We’ve heard it o’er and o’er,  
Until that little lamb’s become  
A perfect little bore.

So I propose there shall be dug  
A grave both deep and wide,  
In which that lamb and all its bards  
Be buried side by side.<sup>125</sup>

Previous folkloristic research has traced parodical treatment of the poem back to 1869, when an anecdote in *Harper’s Weekly* centered on the mishearing “fleas were white as snow.”<sup>126</sup> Straightforward parodies of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” were occasionally retroduded during the tinfoil phonograph exhibitions of 1878, including the “fleas” one,<sup>127</sup> although the fact that the phonograph did not parody the rhyme without being prompted was also taken as evidence “that it will be a faithful recorder” more generally.<sup>128</sup> Still, textual parodies were not the only humorous treatment of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” familiar to audiences at that time. A *New York Times* review from the summer of 1868, a year or so before the earliest previously discovered parody, documents a subtly different use of the rhyme in stage comedy:

The principal actor is Mr. ALFRED BURNETT—and what he does in the way of humorous character acting, is quite clever and entertaining. The declamatory portion of his exhibition is not so good. He personates a school-boy reciting, or trying to recite, “Mary had a little lamb,” with a deal of comic effect.<sup>129</sup>

Although Burnett’s sketch may have involved humorous mistakes in wording—we are not told one way or the other—it is also likely to have involved other, hard-to-entextualize aspects of impersonation: the schoolboy fumbling around, making false starts, getting confused. When the use of familiar rhymes was later reported in phonograph exhibitions, they were often followed by comments about how faithfully the machine had copied the specific aural peculiarities of their delivery:

He [Edison] first talked to it himself. He recited:  
“Mary had a little lamb,  
    Its fleece was white as snow;  
And every place that Mary went,  
    The lamb was sure to go.”

Back from the phonograph came every tone of his voice, every pause that he made in his reading; it was really a perfect reproduction of Mr. Edison’s voice, his accent, and his vocal peculiarities.<sup>130</sup>



Such classical selections as “Jack and Gill” and “Mary had a Little Lamb” were the favorite pieces.... The lightest emphasis, the peculiar inflections of the speaker’s voice, every pause was as faithfully reproduced as it could have been by the original speakers themselves.<sup>131</sup>

The familiar “Old Mother Hubbard” was given, with all Mr. Bullard’s peculiarities of intonation.<sup>132</sup>

These “peculiar intonations” were not always just the natural speech patterns of the exhibitor. Rather, exhibitors consciously played with paralinguistics and prosody, intentionally distorting their delivery to demonstrate how effectively the phonograph would repeat idiosyncrasies of speech. Henry Bentley did not just recite nursery rhymes but “experimented with” them, “giving them various intonations.”<sup>133</sup> Edison himself “frequently changed the tone of his voice very decidedly in one sentence, the phonograph repeating the precise changes each time.”<sup>134</sup> In another report, we read: “If the operator commences a sentence in a high pitched voice, and gradually modulates the tones down to a low muttering almost a whisper, the phonograph repeats, marking every change in the tone, and without any loss of distinctness”;<sup>135</sup> this comment presumably reflects something an exhibitor had actually done. Exhibitors could modulate their voices in peculiar ways regardless of whether or not they used conventionalized language; thus, one read a newspaper article into the machine while intentionally “hesitating at or stumbling over some of the words.”<sup>136</sup> However, familiar rhymes such as “Mary Had a Little Lamb” were particularly well-established vehicles for intentionally idiosyncratic treatment.

Meanwhile, phonograph exhibitors sometimes included self-conscious disclaimers of their own performances, both in terms of singing and recitation. Thus, Charles Batchelor once stated: “I will now try and sing a song...but you must excuse me if the notes occasionally get a little mixed. I am not much of a singer.”<sup>137</sup> George Bliss similarly “explained that he was not an experienced hand at this kind of speech-making, and he might not do entire justice to the instrument.”<sup>138</sup> It may have been unclear to them what criteria would or ought to be applied to their phonogenic singing and oratory, since the more conspicuously quirky or muddled their live performances were, the more impressive the accurate retrodution of their “flaws” would be, and the more satisfactory the overall “performance.” Musical performances too were rendered, at least some of the time, in ways that prioritized recordable idiosyncrasy

over traditional aesthetics of musicality: “A few turns on the crank and the same tunes were heard again, each note, the runs, trills and *even a false note purposely played*, sounding out clear and distinct and plainly audible at the further end of the room.”<sup>139</sup> Such mistakes were not considered failings of musicianship but desirable proofs of the technology’s accuracy—without them, there might be nothing in an originary performance to warrant phonographic “mimicry.”

Exhibitors especially liked to imitate particular dialects and examples of vernacular or unusual speech, thereby demonstrating the phonograph’s ability to manage these aspects of spoken language.

To show its precocity in dialect, he [Edison] shouts in a strident tone: “Ah-o—o—I say—stranger—ah—ah—would you—ah—would you—ah—ah—how far is it—ah—ah—what time is it?” The machine repeats this absurd speech precisely, and its stammers are very amusing indeed.<sup>140</sup>

It repeated with the real spirit and twang such expressions as “What d’ye soye?” “Does yer mother know yer out?” and numberless other Americanisms.<sup>141</sup>

Prof. Wm. Henry Peck spoke a Shakspearian quotation into the phonograph, and every sound of his voice was reproduced with perfect distinctness, *even the catches that he purposely threw in*, being duplicated. In pronouncing the word “rat” he rolled his “r’s” and the machine in reproducing the word would have made a Frenchman ashamed of himself[f].<sup>142</sup>

Demonstrations of the phonograph’s ability to handle dialect and other speech styles often took the form of comic dialogues between two or more characters distinguished by contrastive voices:

He [Edison] represented two strangers meeting in a beer saloon, and one said to the other; “Sprechen sie Deutsch?” “Ya, meinheer. Ein, zw[e]i, drei bier.” This afforded considerable amusement.<sup>143</sup>

Then he [Batchelor] carried on an amusing dialogue between two fictitious individuals named John and Benjamin, the latter being affected with a stammering voice.<sup>144</sup>

A conversation in various dialects was carried on, and the phonograph repeated it in the most amusing manner.<sup>145</sup>

The phonograph’s “dialect” was apparently considered amusing whether it was intentionally contrived or not, consistent with the impression that phonographic representation was tantamount to conscious mimicry. When James Adams, an exhibitor of Scottish origin, used his own habitual pronunciation while phonogenizing, the result was given “not only as distinctly as he had uttered it, but with so perfect a mimicry of the Scotch accent as to cause a general outburst of

laughter, in which the genial operator heartily joined.”<sup>146</sup> Adams’ Scottish accent had not seemed funny when he had originally spoken, but when the phonograph educed his speech, it was perceived as poking fun at him.

The phonograph was often applied not just to “nonstandard” dialects but to foreign languages in general. One account from January 1878 states: “On one occasion three gentlemen spoke in succession—the first in English, the second in Spanish, and the third in Hungarian,” with good results,<sup>147</sup> and a month later the phonograph “proved its capacity as a linguist by repeating sentences spoken to it in English, Dutch, German, French, Spanish, and the Hebrew.”<sup>148</sup> In Georgia there even seems to have been a regional competition among exhibitors to see who could record the most languages:

In Augusta Mr. Morey succeeded in having nine languages spoken into the machine, and in Savannah eleven languages were spoken. Atlanta must decidedly outdo these towns. Prof. Peck has already lead off with some English, Irish, Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, Italian, Hebrew, Chinese, Indian and nigger. A half dozen languages can doubtless be added to these.<sup>149</sup>

Over time, exhibitors sought to record languages with increasingly “exotic” features. Shortly after the wane of the tinfoil phonograph craze, for instance, William Preece concluded a lecture by inviting Sir Theophilus Shepstone to speak to a machine in Zulu, noting that they were “anxious to know if the phonograph itself will reproduce the Zulu tongue, because in the Zulu and Kaffir languages there are sounds we do not know on this side of the globe—curious clicks.” Shepstone said the phonograph “repeated the words very faithfully.”<sup>150</sup> About the same time, a Syrian missionary concluded that words recorded in Arabic “came forth shorn of their gutturals, of which, as every student of Oriental literature is aware, the Arabic alphabet contains several of such depth that few Europeans can acquire their enunciation.”<sup>151</sup> In these cases, the goal was to learn whether the phonograph could utter sounds that most speakers of English did not or could not produce. More broadly, the experiment of recording “foreign” languages meant tapping yet another speech skill that ordinarily took human beings considerable practice to master and demonstrating once again that the phonograph could outperform human imitators. “I am sure that I quite envied the phonograph in being able to so easily acquire the Parisian roll of the ‘r,’” wrote one reporter.<sup>152</sup>

The phonograph was not limited during these events to speaking and singing. Exhibitors also retroduced a wide variety of inarticulate sounds: coughing, sneezing, laughing, sighing, groaning, whooping, kissing, and clearing the throat.<sup>153</sup> When the phonograph educed such sounds, it was sometimes described as assuming associated emotional and physical states, or at least behaving “as if” it had:

It imitated with marvelous fidelity the barking of dogs, crowing of cocks, etc., and then taking a severe cold, coughed and sneezed and wheezed, *until the physicians in the audience instinctively began to write prescriptions.*<sup>154</sup>

“Now, Mr. Phonograph,” said Mr. Batchelor, “you have sung for us and laughed for us; now, suppose you cry for us,” and in a moment the strange apparatus was crying *as though it had a heart to break.*<sup>155</sup>

The phonograph is very provocative of eccentricities of utterance, for to hear it crow, stammer and hiccup *as if it were inebriated*, is funny enough.<sup>156</sup>

Judging from these accounts, the phonograph gave listeners the anthropomorphic impression that it was suffering from a cold, heartbroken, or drunk when it produced the distinctive sounds that had ordinarily indexed these human conditions. Animal noises were also retroduced on a regular basis, for instance the “whole repertorie [sic] of barn-yard music, from the cooing of a dove to the quacking of ducks, cackling of hens, crowing of cocks and lowing of cows.”<sup>157</sup> These sounds were not actually originated by animals during demonstrations, but by people imitating animals—literal examples of the art of vocal mimicry. On one occasion, for instance, an exhibitor of the phonograph “barked into it, and when he turned the crank you would have thought that he was turning it over the toes of an imprisoned dog.”<sup>158</sup> Usually, these episodes were described as “imitations,” either on the part of the original mimic or the phonograph,<sup>159</sup> but the phonograph had complicated the distinction between “imitations” and “reproductions,” and the line between the two may have been blurred even more in these cases than in others. “The barking of a dog and the mewing of a cat were then accurately reproduced,” wrote one reporter,<sup>160</sup> but the “accuracy” of the “reproduction” in this case would clearly have been limited to the capacity of a human mimic. The eduction of all these sounds by phonograph, whether understood as “imitation” or “reproduction,” was felt to be inherently humorous, on a par with snatches of comic dialog. Laughter tended to provoke more

laughter, as “real” laughter does; but so did the animal noises and coughs, and even an “inimitable representation” of a crying baby.<sup>161</sup>

Sometimes the various aforementioned effects were each recorded and educed in turn as discrete units, but at other times they were all combined into single, continuous utterances which newsmen made a valiant effort to transcribe. In these cases, exhibitors seem to have been trying to cram as many complicated vocal sounds as they could into the shortest time possible:

Mr. Johnson responded to the introduction by turning the crank to the cylinder, and, at the same time, talking to the mouthpiece as follows: “How do you do, — —? How are all the people in Providence? Mary had a little lamb; it’s [sic] fleece was white as snow, and everywhere that Mary went, the lamb was sure to go. Ha! ha! ha! (cough), (cough), (cough), Ha! ha! ha!” The latter in a high key, and then, in conclusion, Mr. Johnson sang a verse of “Uncle Ned.”<sup>162</sup>

Mr. Edison then opening a volume of Poe’s poems proceeded to read, interspersed with coughing, laughing, etc.:

It was many and many a year ago ha! ha! ha!  
In a kingdom by the sea,  
That a—cough—maiden lived whom you may—cough—know  
By the—whistle—name of O! ah! ah!—Annabel Lee!  
And this maiden she lived with no other—cough, cough—thought  
Than to—ha! ha! ha!—love and be loved by me!

The verse, it need scarcely be said, was repeated verbatim with the coughing, laughing, and whistling, as interpolated.<sup>163</sup>

Mr. Adams again put his mouth to the diaphragm and uttered in more varying tones, which had a range from almost a whisper up to a screeching soprano, the following:

Hallo! Hoop-la! Ya-hoo!  
Nineteen years in the Bastile [sic]!  
I scratched my name upon the wall  
And that name was Robert Landr-y-y-y.  
Parlez vous Francais? Sprechen sie Deutsch? <sup>164</sup>

Sometimes it appears that an exhibitor may have been enacting additional material to fill out the remainder of a sheet of tinfoil after the main recitation was finished:

There was a little girl  
And she had a little curl  
Right in the middle of her forehead;  
When this little girl was good  
She was very, *very* good,  
And when she was bad, she was horrid.  
Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!  
Well I do *de-clare*. <sup>165</sup>

In one exhibition, the same pattern was followed twice in a row, with stock recitations followed by apparently extemporaneous exclamations and shouts of “yahoo” and “heigho.”<sup>166</sup> Much like the exhibitors’ quirky delivery of nursery rhymes with

“various intonations,” these intentionally garbled phonogenic recitations provided the machine with plenty of aural nuances to “imitate.”

### **Speed-Shifting and Reverse Eduction**

Once a particular phonogram was recorded during a tinfoil-era exhibition, it still had to be educed, which introduced a further set of technical variables. If the drum of a phonograph was rotated at an irregular speed, or at different speeds during recording and education, this had a dramatic impact on the resulting sound. For instance, it was reported of one exhibition that sounds “were repeated with precision, except when the gentleman who turned the crank gave a sudden jerk, when the tone would be considerably elevated.”<sup>167</sup> In his own laboratory, Edison sometimes ran his phonographs at a uniform speed using steam power,<sup>168</sup> but nearly all exhibitions that took place anywhere else involved more or less irregular hand-cranking. A couple of design strategies were tried in order to help exhibitors achieve a more uniform speed (either the weight and diameter of the drum itself were increased or a heavy flywheel was added to the axle),<sup>169</sup> and exhibitors were advised to adapt subjects for recording with speed fluctuations in mind, including instrumental music: “The airs should be played in rapid time, since, when there is no system of clock-work, they will be more perfectly reproduced than those which are played slowly.”<sup>170</sup> On the other hand, exhibitors sometimes took advantage of this built-in flexibility in recording and education speeds to produce novel effects.

When a phonogram was educed at a speed faster or slower than that at which it had been recorded, it “reproduced” its phonogenization at a higher or lower pitch and rapidity. This was not just a matter for scientific curiosity. Listeners attributed social meanings to high and low-pitched voices, and to slow and rapid speech, that could make such transformations absurd and amusing—Edward Johnson had observed already in December 1877 that the phonograph’s words were “snapped out like a fish-woman’s” without some means of ensuring a uniform speed.<sup>171</sup> As reporters noted later on, speed manipulation could convert “the high voice of a child

into the deep bass of a man, or *vice versa*”;<sup>172</sup> “the bass voice may re-appear as a soprano, or in a high piping treble far above the pitch of any human voice,” while “a soprano voice may re-appear as a very deep bass”;<sup>173</sup> “the deep bass tones may be made in turn to pass through baritone and tenor up to a piping treble,” while “the shrill notes of a soprano can be suddenly changed into a low bass, in a manner worthy of the most gifted negro minstrel.”<sup>174</sup> These were all cases of one extreme being converted into the other, but ordinary voices could also be transformed into “a low bass” or “a shrill treble,”<sup>175</sup> “a bass tone” or “a childish treble,”<sup>176</sup> “a bass” or “a falsetto,”<sup>177</sup> “a very bass voice” or “a voice of a pitch so high that its sounds are really elfish and entirely unnatural.”<sup>178</sup> Depending on the speed of eduction, the phonograph could thus cause utterances to shift back and forth between different categories of speech, determining whether they would be perceived as unmarked, as childlike or feminine, or as a deep bass performance in blackface. When exhibitors educed phonograms at different speeds, audiences accordingly interpreted the results in terms of changes they created in meaning, not only in pitch and rapidity:

Our friendly exhibitor then ran the cylinder back to the starting point a second time, and turned the crank very fast. The same words now rattled out with explosive rapidity. The laughing was hysterical, and the cough spasmodic, to the last degree. Then, a third time Mr. Johnson ran the cylinder back, and turned the crank, this time, slowly. The same words drawled out hoarsely, the laughing was very sad, and the cough lingering; “Uncle Ned” was struck on a lower key and was very lugubrious.<sup>179</sup>

The Professor [J. W. S. Arnold] ran the wheel back to its original position and tried again, slowly this time. Then was heard quite distinctly the story of Mary’s little lamb in the voice of a decrepid [sic] old man with his mouth full of water. A third trial, the crank being turned very fast, elicited a repetition of the story in the shrill voice of an angry old woman, heard at a distance, but perfectly audible.<sup>180</sup>

The cylinder was again set back, and the crank turned very slow. The effect was ludicrous, for the Professor [Edison] had originally pronounced the words with great gravity and dignity, and the drawling way in which the instrument repeated them would have made a horse laugh. The cylinder was then turned very fast, and the words flew out of the funnel so fast that they struck the ear in a confused mass.<sup>181</sup>

Mr. Edison then said to the instrument, “Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer,” etc. Turning the crank slowly a *Richard* was heard to speak with deep and diabolic voice. Turning the crank rapidly, the same words were heard in a shrill and petulant voice, as though *Richard* was in a bad humor and did not care to play his part.<sup>182</sup>

The effects described here had nothing to do with the qualities of the originary performances but were created purely by educing phonograms at “wrong” speeds. Inadvertent speed-shifting may also account for some of the comments quoted earlier

in this chapter about the distinctive sound of the phonograph, such as its transformation of the voice into a diminutive falsetto.

The use of speed-shifting as a phonographic technique assumes unusual prominence in the *Scientific American* report of a demonstration featuring the famous cornetist Jules Levy. First, Levy is praised for possessing “the phenomenal ability of getting notes out of the cornet which, he says, ‘are not there,’ or in other words, he plays airs in notes an octave lower than any one else has succeeded in producing on the cornet, and thus he has extended the range of his instrument over four full octaves.” This introduction implies that the best gauge of Levy’s virtuosity on the cornet is his wide tonal range, setting up a critical standard for what is to follow. The reporter is impressed with the machine’s “remarkably accurate reproductions” of Levy’s solos, but observes that it was also able to transform them: the phonograph “not only follows Levy, but surpasses him, by reproducing cornet notes in entirely new octaves of its own origination, proving itself to have a compass of extraordinary range, if not especial tonefulness and brilliancy.” The phonograph’s outperformance of Levy is then recounted in greater detail:

After several other popular airs had been similarly replayed, Mr. Edison showed the effect of turning the cylinder at different degrees of speed, and then the phonograph proceeded utterly to rout Levy by playing his tunes in pitches and octaves of astonishing variety. It was interesting to observe the total indifference of the phonograph to the pitch of the note with which it was to end. Gravely singing the tune correctly for half a dozen notes, it would suddenly soar into regions too painfully high for the cornet even by chance to follow it. Then it delivered the variations on Yankee Doodle with a celerity that no human fingering of the cornet could rival, interspersing new notes, which it seemed probable were neither in the cornet nor on any other instrument—fortunately.

The article’s title is “The Phonograph Wins a Victory,” and Levy is portrayed as the losing party. It concludes with a slightly inebriated Edison having to be dissuaded from pitting his phonograph against a grand organ on display at the same time: “the phonograph was thus saved the strain of a second struggle, with a more formidable competitor.”<sup>183</sup> Occasional remarks throughout the article betray the writer’s opinion that the results of the phonograph’s speed-shifting were not musically impressive: it was “fortunate” that the cornet could not play such notes, the phonograph was “indifferent” as to specific pitches, and it lacked “tonefulness and brilliancy.” At the same time, the reporter evinces a playful sense of admiration for the phonograph in



terms of its sheer audio acrobatics. The framing of the incident in terms of a contest between phonograph and cornetist also reflects a wider tradition of play-off “duels” between famous cornetists, such as the ones between John T. Norton and Alessandro Gambati in 1834 and between Edward Kendall and Patrick Gilmore in 1856. The year after the phonograph won its “victory” over him, Levy himself engaged in a much-publicized contest with a live opponent, his rival Matthew Arbuckle.<sup>184</sup> In this sense, the phonograph could be understood as stepping into an established role as one party to a clash of dueling cornets. However, the *New York Times* presents Levy’s encounter with the phonograph somewhat differently. The evening’s entertainment had begun earlier with a public exhibition at which the phonograph had utterly mangled Levy’s playing: “Owing...to the crank being turned by hand instead of by clock-work, and the consequent irregularity of the motion, the key was changed, and many discords and false intonations were introduced that caused Levy to writhe in his chair, and sent shudders through the audience.” At a press reception afterwards, Edison himself took charge of the machine to vindicate its reputation:

To show that the regularity with which the crank of the machine is turned is everything in attaining a correct reproduction of sounds, Mr. Edison invited Levy to play once more into the instrument, while he turned the crank, his practiced hand moving with the regularity of a machine.... To further show what the phonograph could be made to do by an inexperienced operator, Mr. Edison turned the crank very rapidly, and irregularly. The result was the pitching of the tune an octave higher, and a horrible combination of discords.<sup>185</sup>

Here the speed-shifting was framed as a demonstration not of something positive and entertaining the phonograph could do, but of the dangers of operating it incorrectly. The phonograph itself was not flawed; it just took a certain knack to work it. But Edison was also capable of mimicking an inexperienced educationist.

Another trick of the tinfoil era was reverse education, i.e., playing recorded sounds backwards. When phonograms of music were educed in reverse, the results were perceived as new pieces of music; thus, one report states that “‘Yankee Doodle’ was whistled and given backward, producing a different tune.”<sup>186</sup> The term “musical kaleidoscope” was suggested to describe this phenomenon, “by means of which an infinite variety of new combinations may be produced from the musical compositions now in existence.”<sup>187</sup> In fact, simply reversing any given composition would have produced only *one* alternative composition, but the idea still offered promising

results. Edison said of some Offenbach that he found it “made better music backwards than it did forwards.” As a result, he proposed: “I can take a dozen old familiar tunes sung by a good voice, grind them out backwards, publish them, and they will be as good as new, and sell in forty-eight hours for more than the old tunes ever did.”<sup>188</sup> In the case of spoken-word phonograms, the same technique was described as “making the machine talk the language backward.”<sup>189</sup> A stock recitation could be turned into something radically unfamiliar; for instance, “the tale of the little lamb was brought out in an unrecognizable form.”<sup>190</sup> Reporters experimented with different methods of transcribing this effect in print. One represented it by giving the letters in reversed order,

Supposing a stanza, say the first in Mrs. Homans’s *Fall of D’Assas*, be projected into the machine, and in reproduction the cylinder be turned backwards as it were, the words would not be:

“Alone through gloomy forest shades  
A soldier went by night, etc.,”

but a confusion of sounds, giving, indeed, the letters as follows:

thgin yb tnew reidlos a  
sedahs tserof ymoolg hguorht enola.<sup>191</sup>

Others opted simply to reverse the word order:

But a most extraordinary effect was produced when the Professor [Edison] turned the cylinder backward. It said:

Go to sure was lamb the,  
Went Mary that everywhere and,  
Snow as white was fleece its,  
Lamb little a had Mary.

All this with profound gravity, as if the fate of the world depended upon the accent and pronunciation.<sup>192</sup>

A copy of this latter article pasted into one of Edison’s scrapbooks has the sarcastic comment “Wonderful ain’t it?” scrawled to the side.<sup>193</sup> And yet it would have been difficult to find any fully satisfactory means of representing in print the experience of hearing a spoken-word phonogram educed in reverse.

The feat of reversing a phonogram was mostly described as garbling words and converting music into new compositions never heard before, but additional meanings could also be read into the reversal, as happened during one exhibition in England:

Another experiment was the turning of the cylinder in the reverse direction after it had received a communication in the ordinary way. The communication submitted to this experiment was the song “We don’t want to fight,” &c., and the result of the vibrations constituting this composition

when rendered backwards was very curious, and gave rise to the remark that it would be specially appropriate as the song of the peace party.<sup>194</sup>

The song in question was, more specifically:

We don't want to fight but by jingo if we do,  
We've got the ships, we've got the men, and got the money too.  
We've fought the bear before and while we're Britons true,  
The Russians shall not have Constantinople.<sup>195</sup>

This music-hall ditty had become the anthem of the party that favored sending the British fleet into the Turkish straits to oppose a Russian advance on Constantinople in 1878, and it contributed the word “jingoism” to the English language. The audience that heard this song phonographically reversed apparently felt that its sentiments must have been reversed along with everything else; hence the facetious proposal that the anti-war cause should consider adopting the backwards version as their rallying song. Meaning was attributed to the reversed Jingo song on the basis of reasoned analogy rather than the sound of the results, but another example of reversal owed its impact to what it caused listeners to hear. The trick, apparently perpetrated more than once by Edison and his colleagues, was to record the innocuous phrase “mad dog” and then to play the results backwards to produce the delightfully taboo words “God damn.”<sup>196</sup> Educing phonograms in reverse did produce strange effects, but casual listeners were rarely able to make anything of the results—except for the “mad dog” trick, which was not suitable for mixed company. Not all machines were even capable of running in reverse; when Applebaugh received an audience request to play something backwards, he excused himself on the grounds that his phonograph was designed so that it could rotate only in one direction.<sup>197</sup> Still, reverse education was not an uncommon feature of tinfoil phonograph exhibitions and was reported about as frequently as intentional speed-shifting.

### **The Phonographic Montage**

In the cases I have described so far, the phonograph retroduded the sounds of one subject at a time: a single person talking, or coughing, or whistling, or playing the cornet. Sometimes multiple voices were recorded at once, but doing this properly

was thought to require special equipment, and with good reason. “In speaking,” tinfoil phonograph exhibitors were taught, “the lips must touch the mouth-piece,”<sup>198</sup> and two or more people could not very conveniently place their lips into the same mouthpiece at once. When vocal duets were recorded at Menlo Park, therefore, a special double “forked” mouthpiece was used, and there also seems to have been a quadruple mouthpiece for quartets.<sup>199</sup> Sometimes a single mouthpiece did in fact capture comments made by someone other than the principal phonogenic speaker, although such asides cannot have been recorded very clearly:

Then came the Editor’s opportunity, and applying his lips to the Phonograph he repeated:

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day;  
The lowing herd winds slowly o’er the lea.

“*Louder, louder if you please,*” interrupted Mr. Edison. So the Editor raised his voice:

The ploughman homeward plods his weary way  
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

The cylinder was duly reversed, the crank turned and the Editor had the pleasure of hearing some one else speak his own voice: “The curfew tolls the knell of parting day; the lowing herd winds slowly o’er the lea—louder, louder if you please—the ploughman homeward plods his weary way and leaves the world to darkness and to me”! When the Phonograph so unexpectedly repeated Mr. Edison’s interpolation, which was spoken away from the instrument, the Editor was taken all aback, and a strange light dawned in the Astronomer’s eyes.<sup>200</sup>

Edison’s words had been “spoken away from the instrument,” so they were probably intelligible when educed only because the listeners already knew what it was he had said. It is worth noting that the phonograph’s “reported speech” is set off in only one pair of quotation marks, with Edison’s interruption set off by dashes. As we have seen, the phonographic eduction of speaking was often interpreted as the phonograph itself “speaking.” When the instrument educed a phonogram recorded by *two* voices, listeners could choose to interpret them both as part of the “same” utterance, regardless of their different phonogenic origins. In another case, we read:

“Hurrah for Grant!” screamed Mr. Bliss, forgetful of the antiquity of the sentiment.

“Hurrah for Grant!” returned the instrument; but somebody had laughed at Mr. Bliss’ patriotic exclamation. So the machine laughed while getting out the sentence, in such a manner as would not have sounded really flattering to the ex-President.<sup>201</sup>

Here the phonograph is described as combining the cheer and laugh into a single, unified utterance: it “laughed while getting out the sentence.” This combination is no longer “flattering” to Grant because the laughter seems to render the words insincere or derisive. Through this particular interpretation, the reporter highlights the

phonograph's ability to produce aural illusions—in this case, transforming two voices into one.

The illusion could also work the other way around: if one speaker alternated between two or more contrastive voices, the result could be heard as a “scene” involving multiple characters. I have already cited some reports of dialect “conversations” phonogenized by single speakers, but the principle was not restricted to imitations of dialect:

Edison then speaks into the mouthpiece: “Mary had a little lamb its fleece was white as Jack and Jill went oh stop that! shut up!”—the last rebukes being sharply spoken.<sup>202</sup>

A particularly elaborate example of this technique was reported from an exhibition in St. Louis. “Now, then,” began the exhibitor, “we will have a mass-meeting.” The recording event proceeded as follows:

“Fellow-citizens,” begins the operator in a high key as if addressing a crowd of 10,000 people from the Court-house steps, “we have met here this evening to discuss the political situation, and as the first speaker who will address you I have the honor of introducing Hon. Berry Mitchell, of Cahokia Creek, who will address you on the issues of the day. Before the gentleman begins I propose three cheers for Mr. Mitchell, which I know you will give. Now, again, hip, hip, hurrah. Now once more to close up on.”

Into the ear of the phonograph the gentleman pours all these excited utterances. He then changes his talk. Assuming another voice, supposedly from some disgruntled member in the crowd, he calls out, as people always do at political meetings, “Put him out.” “Put him out.” “Let’s hang him.” “Pull down his vest.” “Down with the fraud.”

Then, resuming his character as chairman of the meeting, the gentleman goes on to say: “Let’s have no disturbances, gentlemen. In order to harmonize the feeling of all present, we will have a little music.”

#### A CORNET INTRODUCED.

At this point, a cornet player steps forward, and, applying the instrument to the aperture in the phonograph, proceeds to blow a blast. It is a strain from “Garry Owen,” but the phonograph receives it with its usual impassibility.

The gentleman now steps forward, and indulges in a loud and ironical laugh, supposed to come from some scornful member of the crowd, who repudiates the speakers and the music, and despises in advance the political sentiments that are about to be promulgated.

The resulting phonogram was then educed:

“Fellow citizens, we have met here this evening,” the exact tone of the speaker being imitated perfectly, and then come the scornful remarks and the derisive laughter, the cheers, the hoots and yells, and all the usual accompaniments of a political meeting, including the music, which is reproduced perfectly.

The crowd laugh and demand a repetition of the amusing scene, and it is repeated without the variation of a vowel, and as many times as may be desired.<sup>203</sup>

Although the above example is far from typical, it shows what one creative exhibitor was able to accomplish in terms of illusory audio theater during the tinfoil era, recording different voices and sounds sequentially to produce an “amusing scene.”

The tinfoil phonograph did a poor job of recording multiple voices simultaneously unless a double mouthpiece was used, and the standard demonstration phonograph did not even come equipped with one. Therefore, it was mostly restricted to recording one subject at a time, even if these could be strung into elaborate sequences as in the case of the St. Louis political “scene.” However, multiple traces could be *superimposed* to produce overlapping sounds during education,<sup>204</sup> and this principle was used to comic effect in several ways. One was to construct a fictional audio scene in which multiple sounds would be heard simultaneously rather than sequentially, as in the following case reported from an exhibition in Kansas:

By whistling “Oh, no, we’ll never get drunk any more,” and yelling “Shut up,” “Go soak your head,” “G’way,” into it on the same piece of foil, we produced a very natural scene, all the sounds coming out at once, and in a very boisterous manner. It was so natural that we could smell its breath.<sup>205</sup>

Edison built up an even more elaborate audio scene in this way, first singing two parts of the same song and harmonizing with his own recorded voice:

[T]he most interesting performance is to hear the Professor [Edison] sing a duet alone. Singing first the air of “John Brown’s body,” etc., and afterward the bass over the same matrix while listening to the air as reproduced by the instrument, he produces a matrix which will sing both treble and bass. Not satisfied with this, he whistles Yankee Doodle, and finally, over the same matrix, talks in a loud voice, so that when the whole is reproduced, we have a firstclass street corner bawl, which is like this: Two fellows singing John Brown, another whistling Yankee Doodle, and a perturbed citizen crying from an upper window, “O shut up! Go away! If you can’t sing better than that the police will arrest you! Police! police!”<sup>206</sup>

In both instances, the effect of combining the recorded material exceeded the sum total of the constituent parts. The first example was perceived not just as certain superimposed sounds, but as a scene of drunken revelry—“we could smell its breath”—and the second represented a “firstclass street corner bawl.” Most authorities have assumed that montage was unavailable as a technique to early sound recordists. However, these examples show that it was being used consciously in 1878 to create roughly the same effect desired and described by Sergei Eisenstein in terms of film: “The juxtaposition of two separate shots by splicing them together resembles

not so much a simple sum of one shot plus another shot—as it does a *creation*. It resembles a creation—rather than the sum of its parts—from the circumstance that in every such juxtaposition *the result is qualitatively* distinguishable from each component element viewed separately.”<sup>207</sup> The type of phonographic montage most commonly encountered in the 1870s created the impression of an unruly performance event by combining the representation of a single “performer” with those of imaginary “hecklers.” Rather than simply layering material at random, an exhibitor would first phonogenize a “serious” song, speech or recitation and then superimpose heckling during a second pass over the foil:

Among other things he [J. W. S. Arnold] took one of the already indented strips of tin foil, and while turning it shouted absurd orders at it at intervals. These came out in their proper place at a subsequent turning, in this style: “Mary had a little—oh shut up—lamb. Its fleece was white—give us a rest—as snow. And everywhere—go to bed—that Mary went, the lamb was sure to go—How’s that.”<sup>208</sup>

Journalists experimented with different techniques for transcribing the overlapping speech of phonographic montage, such as arranging it into parallel columns,<sup>209</sup> but most of the time the heckling was set off in parentheses or with dashes, as in this last example. One time Edison first recorded a standard double-mouthpiece duet and then went on much as in this last example, explaining in advance the effect he hoped to achieve:

“Sometimes, you know,” said the inventor, with a merry laugh, “rude people will talk at concerts; suppose we see if we can produce that effect.” Reversing the cylinder, he then poured into the mouthpiece a string of meaningless sentences and ejaculations, occasionally interpolating a shrill whistle and a cat call. The effect when the phonograph again began to operate was droll and wonderful beyond conception. The strains of the duet came forth clear and harmoniously, but it was as if a riot had broken out in a concert room.”<sup>210</sup>

Edison is reported to have produced similar scenes on at least two other occasions, the initial subjects being a dramatic reading of “Bingen on the Rhine” and a lecture about travel in Bible lands, and the overdubbed heckling consisting of such shouts as “cheese it” and “shut up.”<sup>211</sup> In another case, Charles Batchelor first phonogenized a dull speech on the “sacredness of the family tie” and then educed it while superimposing a series of interruptions on the same foil:

Rewinding back the cylinder again the phonograph spoke as follows, reproducing all the variations of tone:—“The sacredness of the (oh, dry up) family tie is the (what are you givin’ us?) condition, both of the (music) physical soundness and the (go hire a hall) moral vigor of (miaeow, miaeow) nations. The family is (git eout) the miniature (bow wow-wow) commonwealth upon whose (ki yi, ki yi, yow, yow) integrity the safety of the (took, took, tooky, took, took) larger commonwealth

depends. It is the seed (hur-r-r-r-r-oo-o-o) plot of all (give us a rest) morality, in the child's (sah [sic], sshh), intercourse with its (I want to go home) parents the sentiment of (oh, Chawlie!) reverence is instilled (boo, hoo-oo); the essence of all (rr-r-r-R-R-r-rrrr) piety, all idealism; also (let go my hair) the habit of obedience (phit, miaeow) to rightful (police, po-o-ole-e-e-ce) authority which forms so (fire! fire!! fire!!!) invaluable a feature (look at his nose) in the character of the (tooral-looral-loo) loyal citizen." It is difficult, indeed, to describe the effect of the combined sounds issuing from the phonograph. If the reader can imagine the interruptions as above given being sounded or uttered at the same time with the measured sentences of the speaker, and that they do not impair in the least the distinctness of the words spoken, he can understand in some degree the capacity of the phonograph.

The newspaper article that reports this last episode also explains the goal of the demonstration in greater detail than usual, shedding some light on what exhibitors like Batchelor were hoping to prove:

Among the experiments made was one to test the capacity of the phonograph for producing multifarious sounds, such as one might hear at a public meeting where the principal speaker was being interrupted by cries and jeers, catcalling and hooting by his audience, the crying of babies, the shrieks of frightened women and cries of "fire." We can easily imagine what an utter confusion of sound such a medley would make and how difficult even a practised and attentive listener in a public hall or theatre would have in distinguishing the consecutive utterances of the speaker or catching the point of witty or other interruptions. Yet judging from the test made by Mr. Batchelor the confusion of sound can be accurately reproduced by the phonograph without involving the interruption of the sequence of any particular series of sounds.<sup>212</sup>

The tinfoil-era phonographic montage was presented as evidence that public events could in fact be recorded in all their complexity without becoming incomprehensible. After describing another event in which the phonograph had combined several sounds, "intertwisting them into one strand," congressman Samuel Sullivan Cox speculated: "I could not help but wonder whether the instrument would survive some of the turbulent incoherencies which distinguish a field day in Congress."<sup>213</sup> At a time when phonographs could not yet record such complex scenes directly from life, the phonographic montage demonstrated that the medium was at least capable of *containing* them and educating them intelligibly.

Meanwhile, these composite phonograms also demonstrated the phonograph's ability to serve as an instrument of illusion rather than transparent mediation. The heckling episodes, the "very natural scene" of drunken revelry, the "firstclass street corner bawl," and the duets in the voice of a single vocalist were all engineered through phonographic manipulation, not "reproduced" ordinary events. Even the political scene produced at St. Louis and the various dialogs delivered by single speakers alternating between contrastive voices were artful illusions. Although they



were phonogenized and recorded all at once rather than assembled through phonographic montage, they did not involve the “reproduction” of actual political scenes or conversations but of phonogenic performances calculated to yield the effect of political scenes and conversations during education. Still, the originary performances in these cases, like the mimicry of animal noises, had a prehistory of their own in the art of ventriloquial polyphony, a performance tradition in which single performers contrived aural scenes onstage similar to those described here, and which I will discuss further in chapter four. The production of such artificial scenes was, thus, arguably consistent with the broader understanding of the phonograph as comparable to a skilful mimic or ventriloquist: the machine could either repeat “live” ventriloquial polyphonies or assemble them itself by superimposing the constituent parts on each other. In the latter case, however, it could perform ventriloquial feats no human could, such as singing and whistling at the same time—something which, as Edison said, “no man can do, any more than he can smell his own breath.”<sup>214</sup>

### **Prerecorded Tinfoils**

Most tinfoil phonograms were retroduced—i.e., recorded and educed within view and hearing of their intended audiences. However, we have already encountered a few exceptions to this rule, cases in which tinfoil phonograms were instead educed cold—i.e., for listeners who had not perceived the phonogenic subjects directly at the point of induction but who were hearing them for the first time in technologically mediated form. The first sounds Edison educed for the editors of the *Scientific American* were prerecorded: he reportedly carried the machine into their office and made it speak without first speaking into it in their presence. The phonograph Theodore Puskas took with him from the United States to England at the beginning of 1878 had similarly come equipped with a tinfoil containing the message “How do you do? What do you think of my phonograph?” William Preece stated of this phonogram: “These words had been imparted to it by Mr. Edison in New York before its departure for England; they had been reproduced several times *en route* for the gratification of the passengers on board the steamer, and were again made distinctly

audible to me at the Langham Hotel a fortnight after they had been originally uttered.”<sup>215</sup> These were by no means the only instances in which the viability of tinfoil phonograms seems to have outlasted the events during which they had been recorded. In May 1878, the steamship magnate John Roach is supposed to have sent a phonograph as a gift to Emperor Dom Pedro of Brazil aboard the *City of Rio de Janeiro*: “The phonograph was charged before its departure with the delivery of an address from Mr. Roach to the Emperor, of compliments and congratulations in view of the establishment of the new line. This is the first instance of the use of the phonograph for such a purpose.”<sup>216</sup> That December, some members of the Theosophical Society of America phonogenized a series of phonographic messages on tinfoil in New York for its leaders to take with them to their associates in India.<sup>217</sup> On a smaller geographic scale, a phonogram recorded by Jules Levy during an exhibition in New York was afterwards taken to a press reception and educed again,<sup>218</sup> and a tinfoil phonograph exhibition held in Atlanta, Georgia, seems to have featured a cornet solo recorded during an earlier exhibition in Macon.<sup>219</sup> In most cases of this sort, the tinfoil was left in place on its machine after the moment of recording, but this was not invariably so: an exhibitor was described at least once during this period as placing a previously recorded sheet back onto the cylinder of a phonograph and educing its contents at various speeds.<sup>220</sup>

Some more elaborate feats reported during the tinfoil era likewise required a significant discontinuity in time, space, or audience between recording events and education events. For instance, there was a variant on the phonographic montage which involved recording shouts of derision in advance and then coaxing a guest to speak or sing over them, thereby unwittingly providing the “serious” half of a fictional heckling scene. A journalist had noted in general terms “that when you talk one speech upon the slip, which already has something else upon it, you will hear the words of the first speech or sentence, faintly. It is talking back, as it were.”<sup>221</sup> This feature was supposedly used to enable the phonograph to *talk back* in other senses:

One of his [Edison’s] assistants told a story concerning a trap laid for a well-known divine, who was skeptical regarding the capabilities of the instrument, and evidently had a suspicion that the Professor was a ventriloquist. He wanted to talk into the mouthpiece himself, and see if his own words would be recorded and repeated. A matrix was put on the cylinder that had been used once

before. The Doctor repeated a Scripture quotation, and, to his great astonishment, it came out as follows:

He that cometh from above is above all (“Who are you?”); he that is of the earth ([“]Oh, you can’t preach!”) is earthly, and speaketh of the (“I think you’re a fraud!”) earth; he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he has seen and heard (“Louder, old pudding head!”) that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony (“Oh, go and see Beecher!”)<sup>222</sup>

The phonograph could also be made to “heckle” a speaker even when there was no overlap between the earlier and later phonograms, as long as the heckling was recorded on the same piece of foil:

A party who had evidently been bracing up his voice for the occasion with tonics, asked permission to talk into the thing, which Mr. [Ezra] Gilliland granted courteously. The individual then talked awhile, and waited for the repetition of his words. The operator, in a spirit of mischief, gave the crank a few extra turns, and brought the needle in contact with the indentations of a previous talk. And suddenly the party who had waited for the response was astonished to hear the thing blurt out, “Dry up, old puddin-head!”<sup>223</sup>

In these cases, the victim did not hear the originary heckling, but only its eduction, whereas the person operating the machine, and perhaps some other witnesses to the event, knew in advance what had been recorded and were therefore in on the joke. What was cold eduction for the victim was retroduction for the operatives. Sometimes the whole audience of a phonograph exhibition was let in on a joke of this kind at the expense of a particular individual. During one of Applebaugh’s exhibitions in the spring of 1878, for instance, it was reported that “a boy entered the room, saying that a gentleman in Elizabeth had sent his negro servant to the Telephone office after a new mouthpiece, and had written that, if convenient, he would like to have Mr. Applebaugh show the negro the phonograph.” Applebaugh ascertained the servant’s name, phonogenized a message for him, and then had him invited in, orchestrating the following scene:

The African, with some timidity, approached the instrument and looked curiously down into the zinc funnel which was attached to the mouthpiece. Mr. Applebaugh, amid dead silence, quietly began to turn the crank, and in a moment the machine burst out vehemently with “Hey, you Steve! what the d—l you doing here! come over from Elizabeth after a mouthpiece, did you? haven’t you got a mouthpiece of your own out there? what’s the matter of you, anyhow? get out of this! get out! get out!”

Never was there a more astonished negro than the one who was thus unceremoniously hailed through a zinc speaking trumpet, by an innocent looking brass cylinder covered with tinfoil. His mouth and eyes opened and his face fairly whitened with amazement, as he looked first at the machine and then at Mr. Applebaugh, while we stood around him roaring with laughter.<sup>224</sup>

In these cases, the humor of the situation—such as it was—required the victim not to have been present during the recording event. During the same period, there were

also numerous speculative articles and fictional stories involving similar uses of prerecorded phonograms. What distinguishes the examples I have cited here is that they were reported as actual happenings, not as fantasies about a possible phonographic future.<sup>225</sup> On the whole, tinfoil phonograms do seem occasionally to have been used for cold education—for conveying sounds to listeners who had not heard their originals—even if such cases were very much the exception.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the start of May 1878, a journalist reported Edison's claim that a new cylinder then being built would soon allow sheets of tinfoil to be transferred interchangeably from machine to machine and re-educated indefinitely, but added that even if this proved unworkable, "the invention will still be valued simply for the novel amusement it affords."<sup>226</sup> In this chapter, I have attempted to reconstruct the kinds of "novel amusement" associated with the phonography of the late 1870s in as much detail as contemporary written accounts will allow. Contrary to what many critics have stated, I conclude that the culture of phonography did not start out simple and become complex only later on. The tinfoil phonograph may have been technologically crude, a mere "toy" rather than a "practical" instrument, with relatively poor "fidelity," but the events constructed around it were sometimes quite interesting and sophisticated, rich in their implications for the future development of the medium. The phonographic practice and criticism of this period were marked by a fascination with the phonograph's transformations of sounds listeners had already heard moments before: acoustic transformations audicular for their sheer strangeness, such as converting a normal voice into a "falsetto," and dialogic ones that turned recorded sounds into "responses" to or "mockeries" of their originals. The value of these demonstrations as amusement emerged primarily through the efforts of exhibitors and listeners to bring familiar frames of reference to bear on the relationship between original sounds and what the phonograph did with them. The dynamics of phonographic practice were to change significantly in the late 1880s, when further technological developments made it much more feasible for phonograms to outlive the events during which they had been created. Although

retroductive demonstrations continued to take place, phonograms were now just as likely to feature cold education and so to expose listeners to sounds whose phonogenization they had not heard, and new sets of conventions arose to meet the changed circumstances, as we will see.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lisa Gitelman, "Souvenir Foils: On the Status of Print at the Origin of Recorded Sound," in *New Media, 1740-1915*, eds. Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 157-73. In some cases, emphasis was indeed placed on the goal of "carrying away a specimen of the writing of the talking machine" ("Edison's Phonograph," *Newark Evening Journal*, May 3, 1878 [TAEM 25:178]) or of the "sheets of tinfoil bearing the dotted lines of sound waves" ("Edison's Phonograph," *Sunday [...]*, May 5, 1878 [TAEM 25:183]).

<sup>2</sup> "A sheet of tinfoil upon which the phonograph has engraved not only the words and notes, but the very voice of Marie Roze, is on exhibition in a Washington street window" (from *Boston Globe*, in "Edisoniana," *Daily Graphic*, May 9, 1878 [TAEM 94:195]).

<sup>3</sup> Fabrizio and Paul, *Antique Phonograph Accessories & Contraptions*, 64. The fliers also featured a picture of the same Marie Rôze whose recording was ostensibly on display in Washington.

<sup>4</sup> "The Phonograph Exhibited," *New York Times*, Mar. 24, 1878, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> "The Edison Phonograph," *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, Wisconsin), June 21, 1878, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Rondeau, *Tinfoil Phonographs*, 135.

<sup>7</sup> For the Dec. 7, 1877 date of the *Scientific American* exhibition, see TAEB 3:659, n. 1 and 3.

<sup>8</sup> "President Hayes roused the ladies in the White House at 1 a. m. to receive him and listen to the phonograph. While he was exhibiting the phonograph before the Committee on Patents, Congress was without a quorum for nearly an hour" (George Bliss, "Thomas A. Edison," *Chicago Tribune*, May 4, 1878, p. 12).

<sup>9</sup> "Mr. Edison in a Convent," *New York World*, May 31, 1878 (TAEM 25:225).

<sup>10</sup> Two examples drawn from interviews conducted during the phonograph craze: "The inventor is shy and shrinking, and did not show off at all ornamentally in the kind of reception which he was compelled to hold after the exhibition was over. His deafness is an embarrassment to him in this connection..... 'Yes, I don't like these crowds. I can't hear for one thing. Now, when the president welcomed me in the academy hall I didn't hear a word he said. So, if I had wanted to, I could not have replied'" ("National Academy of Sciences," *Washington Evening Star*, Apr. 19, 1878 [TAEM 25:162]); "I suppose complimentary dinners and receptions will have to be given, in the present state of society, and it is very kind of the gentlemen, and all that, you know; but such affairs are ceremonious, and not in my line. I can not be a party to them" ("New York Letter," *Cincinnati Commercial*, May 5, 1878 [TAEM 25:183]).

<sup>11</sup> Back when he had been a telegraph operator in Cincinnati, his erstwhile colleagues recalled, "his ambition was to be a tragedian. Richard III. is said to have been his favorite character, and whenever his duties in the office permitted he would arise from his instrument, hump his back, bow his legs, and proceed with 'Now is the winter of our discontent,' to the great amusement of his fellow-operators" (*Cincinnati Commercial*, Apr. 8, 1878 [TAEM 94:162]).

<sup>12</sup> David Lindsay, *Madness in the Making: The Triumphant Rise and Untimely Fall of America's Show Inventors* (New York, Tokyo and London: Kodansha International, 1997), 187-9.

<sup>13</sup> "New York Letter," *Cincinnati Commercial*, May 5, 1878 (TAEM 25:183).

<sup>14</sup> For Batchelor's general recollection of these events, see *American Graphophone Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, printed record, 595.

<sup>15</sup> "The Workshop at Menlo Park," *Daily Graphic*, July 13, 1878 (TAEM 94:288).

<sup>16</sup> "Edison at Home," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, May 24, 1878 (TAEM 25:211).

<sup>17</sup> We begin to find accounts like this one: "Then Mr. Edison was called for, and, with a look of surprise at the fact there was an evening party in his place, he went up stairs and began to repeat 'Mary's little lamb' to the phonograph" ("Mr. Edison's Reception. The 'Wonderful,' Having Given a Party, is Surprised to Find His Shop Invaded," *The World*, undated clipping, ca. May 1878 [TAEM 94:196]). On another occasion Edison's secretary let drop that "a whole car load had lately

---

telegraphed from Boston that they were coming to Menlo Park a hundred strong. He was not aware that they had ever been invited” (“Edison’s Latest,” *Sun*, May 18, 1878 [TAEM 94:196]). Once, the inventor simply fled in response to such a “raid on the laboratory” (“EDISON is so overrun...,” unidentified clipping #607 [TAEM 94:199], also quoted in Paul Israel, *Edison: A Life of Invention* [New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1998], 156). An editorial warned that the public was grossly misinterpreting the purpose of Menlo Park, much to Edison’s detriment: “The Bores of Science,” *Sentinel of Freedom*, May 21, 1878 (TAEM 25:192).

<sup>18</sup> *Weekly Fredonian*, June 13, 1878 (TAEM 94:235).

<sup>19</sup> Raymond R. Wile, “The Rise and Fall of the Edison Speaking Phonograph Company, 1877-1880,” *ARSC Journal* 7:3 (1976), 19; “The Phonograph’s Last Device,” *New York World*, May 17, 1878 (TAEM 25:195).

<sup>20</sup> When similar phonographs were put on general sale in October, the written instructions opened with a disclaimer: “The adaptation of this wonderful discovery to the practical uses of commerce and social life not having, as yet, been completed, in all its mechanical details, this company is prepared to offer to the public only that design or form of apparatus which has been found best adapted to its exhibition as a novelty” (*Instructions for the Management and Operation of Edison’s Speaking Phonograph* [Philadelphia: Burk & McFetridge, 1878], reproduced in TAEM 96:509-15, 1). As if to underscore this limited use, the company inscribed the instruments’ bedplates: “Experimental Apparatus for Demonstrating the Principle of EDISON’S SPEAKING PHONOGRAPH” (Illustration 1-4, Fabrizio and Paul, *Talking Machine*, 11). The expectation was that a truly practical machine would hit the market sooner or later, and the company wanted to be sure nobody would mistake these preliminary instruments for the real thing. Indeed, one plan even proposed that the company “call them in and smash them up” when the exhibitions were over, in order to avoid damage to the phonograph’s reputation later on (Gardiner Hubbard to Charles Cheever, Mar. 20, 1878, cited in Israel, *Edison*, 150).

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Edison, “The Perfected Phonograph,” *North American Review* 379 (June 1888), 644.

<sup>22</sup> “Wizard Edison Talks,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Nov. 6, 1887 (TAEM 25:306).

<sup>23</sup> E. H. Johnson, “Edison’s Speaking Phonograph,” in Read and Welch, *Tin Foil to Stereo*, 488.

<sup>24</sup> They were said to be working “under the tuition of trained teachers, provided by the company” (“The Phonograph’s Last Device,” *World*, May 17, 1878 [TAEM 25:195]).

<sup>25</sup> More research still needs to be done on these local phonograph exhibitions, for which an important source will be the Uriah Hunt Painter papers in Philadelphia. However, one contemporary account of an exhibitor’s strategy runs as follows: “Mr. F. L. Lundy, of Morristown, has secured from the ‘Edison Speaking Phonograph Company’ the exclusive right to exhibit the phonograph in the eleven northern counties of New Jersey, including Mercer, and will at once commence a tour through the principal cities and towns of his district with the wonderful talking machine. He proposes to open in Newark on an early day next week, and will give us two days in which to see Edison’s latest and greatest invention. Mr. Lundy does not intend to make the mistake of exhibiting the phonograph in a large hall or before crowded audiences whereby the throng would prevent the instrument being distinctly heard or examined by all present, but will secure a room in some convenient locality, and keep the phonograph on exhibition during the entire day and evening. This will give all an opportunity to drop in at any hour and see and hear the instrument without the disadvantage of a crowd, while there will also be an afternoon and evening special entertainment, at which various musical instruments will be played and their tones reproduced by the phonograph, while singing, stump speeches and other modes of showing off the powers of the phonograph will aid in making an interesting programme” (“The Phonograph in Newark,” *Newark Daily Advertiser*, May 10, 1878, [TAEM 94:196]). One Edison biography portrays these phonograph operators as something of a motley crew: “To 203 Broadway from all over the Union flocked a swarm of showmen, cranks, and particularly of old [telegraph] operators, who, the seedier they were in appearance, the more insistent they were that ‘Tom’ should give them, for the sake of *Auld lang syne*, this chance to make a fortune for him and for themselves” (Frank Lewis Dyer and Thomas Commerford Martin, *Edison: His Life and Inventions* [New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1929], 1:213). One, at least, was spotted by police and arrested for a prior act of forgery while exhibiting a phonograph in Ohio (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Sept. 30, 1878, p. 2).

<sup>26</sup> “Its sounds are the shadows, so to speak, of the originals” (“The Phonograph,” *Cincinnati Commercial*, June 1, 1878).

- <sup>27</sup> Alexander J. Ellis, "The Phonograph," letter dated Apr. 13, 1878, *Nature* (TAEM 25:176).
- <sup>28</sup> "The Phonograph and its Future," *Chicago Tribune*, May 31, 1878, p. 4.
- <sup>29</sup> "Improving the Phonograph," from *New York Evening Post*, in *Indianapolis News*, Mar. 28, 1878, p. 2. Again, its speech was "like that of a person a long way off, or in another room" ("Phonograph [...]," *Daily Star* [Marion, Ohio], June 17, 1878, p. 3).
- <sup>30</sup> "New York Letter," *Cincinnati Commercial*, May 5, 1878 (TAEM 25:183).
- <sup>31</sup> "Phonograph. A Machine that Talks and Sings," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Feb. 26, 1878 (TAEM 94:118).
- <sup>32</sup> Gath, "A Visit to Edison," *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, Apr. 27, 1878 (TAEM 25:189).
- <sup>33</sup> "Two Hours with Edison," *Brooklyn Daily Times*, n.d. (TAEM 25:197).
- <sup>34</sup> Quoted respectively from "The Edison Phonograph," *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (Apr. 1878), 749 and "The Phonograph," *Cincinnati Commercial*, June 1, 1878. Again: it was "a faint, small voice, [but] clear, distinct, audible, giving out in exact facsimile of Mr. Batchelor's voice" a sequence of words that had been recorded ("Genius Before Science," *Washington Post and Union*, Apr. 19, 1878 [TAEM 94:170]). It spoke with "a tone not unlike that of the falsetto, but having all the characteristics of Mr. Edison's voice both as to quality and emphasis" (Marshal H. Bright, "All About the Phonograph," *Christian at Work*, May 23, 1878 [TAEM 94:200]); that is, the phonograph preserved a male speaker's distinctive vocal timbre, but somehow effeminized it. Or, alternatively: "It has not yet succeeded in reproducing the qualities perfectly that distinguish one voice from another, except that it indicates very clearly the distinctions of the male and female voice" ("The Phonograph and its Future," *Chicago Tribune*, May 31, 1878, p. 4).
- <sup>35</sup> "The Amusement Record," *Indianapolis Saturday Herald*, June 15, 1878, p. 5. Again: "the squeak of the phonograph is heard through the land" (*Washington Weekly Star*, June 7, 1878 [TAEM 94:232]).
- <sup>36</sup> A phonograph reproduced sound in "the squeaky tones familiar to the observers of a Punch and Judy show" ("A Talking Machine," *New York Herald*, Apr. 9, 1878 [TAEM 27:798]); again: "At present the sound is precisely like the masked voice in a Punch and Judy show coming through a London fog" ("A Call Upon the Phonograph," *Daily Advertiser*, May 3, 1878 [TAEM 25:178]). A similar comment was made of the telephone: "the tone somewhat resembled that of the man in the Punch and Judy box" ("Edison's Telephone," *North British Daily*, Aug. 30, 1879 [TAEM 94:512]). This analogy continued to be used of audio technologies in later years: a defective graphophone was once described as having "a somewhat quivering, squeaking tone, or as the lecturer facetiously termed it, a 'Punch and Judy' tone" ("A Speaking Machine in Liverpool," *Liverpool Courier*, undated clipping, ca. 1889 [TAEM 146:414]). In France, the tone quality was referred to as *voix de polichinelle*, and was noticed in both telephones and phonographs according to Charles Cros' French patent 124,213, filed July 27, 1878 and reprinted in Charles Cros, *Inédits & Documents*, ed. Pierre E. Richard (Villelongue d'Aude: Atelier du Gué; Remoulins, Gard: Editions J. Brémond, 1992), 206; also in *American Graphophone Company vs. United States Phonograph Company*, printed record, 315. The official court translation renders *voix de polichinelle* as "quavering voice," on p. 322. Note that this part of the printed record was omitted from TAEM, but a copy of the complete document is preserved at ENHS.
- <sup>37</sup> "The Phonograph," *Cincinnati Commercial*, June 1, 1878.
- <sup>38</sup> "The Modern Miracle," *Chicago Evening Journal*, May 21, 1878 (TAEM 25:215).
- <sup>39</sup> "Edison's Last Feat," *Washington Post and Union*, May 20, 1878 (TAEM 94:199).
- <sup>40</sup> George Kennan, "The Wonderful Phonograph," from *Norwalk Reflector*, in *Elyria Republican* (Elyria, Ohio), Mar. 21, 1878, p. 2.
- <sup>41</sup> In the original: "die Sprache des Phonographen denjenigen Timbre hat, den wir fälschlicherweise als „durch die Nase“ erzeugt betrachten. Bekanntlich wäre es richtiger zu sagen „ohne die Nase“,—wie sich jeder leicht durch einfaches Zuhalten der Nase beim Sprechen überzeugen kann" (G. W. Rachel, "Eine neue Sprechmaschine," *N. Y. Belletristisches Journal*, Mar. 29, 1878 [TAEM 27:793]).
- <sup>42</sup> "Edison's Phonograph," *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 28, 1878 (TAEM 25:233).
- <sup>43</sup> "The Phonograph in South Australia," extract from *S. A. Advertiser*, July 6, 1878 (TAEM 94:341). In general, "all the speakers, the rooster included, have very bad colds" when heard through the phonograph ("A Call Upon the Phonograph," *Daily Advertiser*, May 3, 1878 [TAEM 25:178]).
- <sup>44</sup> "New York Letter," *Cincinnati Commercial*, May 5, 1878 (TAEM 25:183).
- <sup>45</sup> "The Talking Phonograph," *Scientific American* 37 (Dec. 22, 1877), 385.

---

<sup>46</sup> For example: “At first it only spoke in a kind of infantile falsetto, somewhat difficult to hear; now it gives the volume, tone, inflection, emphasis, and brogue, if any, of the voice which speaks through the mouthpiece” (“Washington Notes,” *Dayton Democrat*, May 11, 1878 [TAEM 25:197]); “The first model that was brought to our notice certainly talked, that is, it produced sounds, the *timbre* of which was unquestionably that of the human voice; but, as we said at the time, it required some previous knowledge to distinguish what was said. The speech was the lisplings of infancy. At present previous explanation is wholly needless. The machine repeats the voice with perfect articulation and with every inflection, so that the tones may be recognized as those of the speaker who made them” *Scientific American* 38 [Mar. 30, 1878], 193). See also the claim that the “metallic” nature of the reproduced sound had been eliminated by experiment: “Edison’s Last Feat,” *Washington Post and Union*, May 20, 1878 (TAEM 94:199). A decade later, when tinfoil had been replaced by wax as a medium, one commentator coined the term *phonos intonation* for the still-troubling phenomenon and observed: “With the old phonograph, when tinfoil was used, this was *very* noticeable, so much so at times as to render the instrument almost unintelligible” (“The Graphophone and Phonograph,” from *Engineering*, in *Scientific American Supplement*, Oct. 28, 1888, p. 10681). Another retrospective account: “In the apparatus previously shown in England, these microscopic curves were traced on tinfoil, and the result was, for every sort of voice, when it was given back, a grating, metallic, and, truth to say, harsh, and often squalling echo of the original—it was a tin-message” (“Speech and Song Embalmed,” *Fireside News*, July 13, 1888 [TAEM 146:276]).

<sup>47</sup> On hearing a voice through a heating vent, one of his characters remarks: “Sounds like the ghostly squeak of the phonograph” (W. D. Howells, “The Register,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, 68 [Dec. 1883], 85). Another, while talking about the phonograph, is said to have “imitated the thin phantasmal squeak of the instrument” (William Dean Howells, “The Minister’s Charge,” *The Century* 32 [Sept. 1886], 737).

<sup>48</sup> To some extent the goal was to show the theoretical durability of tinfoil recordings, but a later design change provided a further reason for emphasizing how much of a phonogram could be physically lost without catastrophic results. On early demonstration phonographs the tinfoil had been stuck to the drum with shellac varnish: “To fix the tin-foil, apply varnish to the end with a paint-brush; take this end between the finger and thumb of the left hand, with the sticky part toward the cylinder; raise it with the right hand and apply it quite smoothly to the cylinder; bring round the sticky end, and join them firmly” (instructional note by M. [presumably Hilborne] Roosevelt, quoted by Count du Moncel, *The Telephone, The Microphone, and the Phonograph* [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1879], 249); “shellac varnish” is mentioned in Edison to William Preece, Feb. 11, 1878, Document 1204, TAEB 4:77. Later models—starting at the end of May 1878—held the sheets in place with a bar pressing the foil into a slot: “Keep the foil perfectly free from kinks, draw it firmly around the cylinder, so that when fastened it is perfectly smooth and free from buckles or looseness in every part. Let the under edge pass over the slot just reaching the opposite edge, but not passing it, press the wedge into the slot with the ends of the fingers, deep enough to prevent the stylus from touching it” (*Instructions for the Management*, 5). The idea was apparently to make the tinfoils easier to remove and replace, but Ray Wile notes that “even when the improved crimping bar was added, it was impossible to line up the grooves once again” (Ray Wile, review of *The Encyclopedia of Victor Recordings, Vol. I*, by Ted Fagan and Wm. R. Moran, *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 7:7 [1984], 6). The stylus now passed over this slot once per revolution, causing a short gap in the recording: “It was thought that this slot, which is about an eighth of an inch wide, would affect the reception of sound; but it was found on experiment that after a strip of tin foil has been indented with sound vibrations a piece can be cut out of it without marring the reproduction of the words” (“Mr. Edison in a Convent,” *New York World*, May 31, 1878 [TAEM 25:225]).

<sup>49</sup> Gath, “A Visit to Edison,” *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, Apr. 27, 1878 (TAEM 25:189).

<sup>50</sup> “The Father of the Phonograph,” *Boston Journal*, May 23, 1878 (TAEM 25:210).

<sup>51</sup> “Edison at Home,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, May 24, 1878 (TAEM 25:211). Again, Edison had explained “that if two inches were taken out of the record, that is, a strip two inches wide, running from end to end of the cylinder, the machine would still repeat the words, but the sound would be like that of a man who was hoarse” (“The Father of the Phonograph,” *Boston Journal*, May 23, 1878 [TAEM 25:210]).



---

<sup>52</sup> For instance, telephonically transmitted organ music had a peculiar quality “as though the sound came through a tube between the first floor and the upper story of a building,” while Thomas Watson’s educated voice sounded “as if he was calling out of a cellar, or, indeed, was shut up in the telephone box” (“Bell’s Telephone,” *Journal of the Telegraph*, Apr. 16, 1877 [TAEM 94:43]). Others described the telephonic voice as resembling “some one a mile away being smothered” with “his mouth full and his head in a barrel” (Bruce, *Bell*, 224) or “a far off voice that sounded as though it came through a dozen thicknesses of flannel” (“Fairs,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Dec. 12, 1877, p. 2). The telephone not only altered the sounds it transmitted but also introduced some unfamiliar noises of its own. Induction from adjacent lines caused interference that reminded listeners of “the pattering of rain” or “the less poetical phenomenon of fat crackling in a frying-pan” (*The Journal* [London], Nov. 1, 1877 [TAEM 94:85]; the “frying fat” analogy is also found in Thomas David to Edison, July 11, 1877, Document 963, TAEB 3:430); Bell himself wrote of a “roaring rushing sound like wind mingled with the crashing of branches and all the noises of a storm” (Bruce, *Bell*, 208); while another writer described a “peculiar bubbling noise” and observed that an electrical storm “made sounds as if a battle were in progress” (“The Speaking Telephone,” *New York Times*, May 20, 1877 [TAEM 94:53]).

<sup>53</sup> “It is a most bewildering sensation,” wrote one listener, “to hear a song faintly emitted first from a box on the stage, then from another suspended overhead, and finally from a third across the room, as the operator switches the current from one telephone to another” (“The Speaking Telephone in New York,” *Scientific American* 36 [June 9, 1877], 351).

<sup>54</sup> “Ladies’ Day at the Telephone Office,” *New York Tribune*, Mar. 21, 1878 (TAEM 94:130), italics added.

<sup>55</sup> From *Cincinnati Breakfast Table*, in *Evening Post*, Apr. 26, 1878 (TAEM 26:171); “In General,” from *Boston Post*, in *Atlanta Constitution*, June 28, 1878, p. 2.

<sup>56</sup> “A Call Upon the Phonograph,” *Daily Advertiser*, May 3, 1878 (TAEM 25:178).

<sup>57</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Harper’s Weekly* 22 (Mar. 30, 1878), 250.

<sup>58</sup> During one exhibition conducted by Edward Johnson, an audience member named Isaac Ellis “sang into the instrument ‘Uncle Ned’ and a humorous piece, and for the first he received an encore. Mr. JOHNSON informed the audience that it would not be necessary for Mr. ELLIS to sing it again, as the phonograph could respond to all encores without being given the song again” (“The Telephone and Phonograph,” undated clipping [Lockport, New York], [TAEM 27:744]). It was reported of another occasion: “Madame [Marie] Rôze warbled into the mouthpiece, which is simply an artificial diaphragm, singing an entire *scena* from ‘Faust.’ Was it an encore? Had madame been gracious enough to repeat the *scena*? Note by note, roulade by roulade, shake by shake, passage by passage, the delicious music came steadily from the phonograph even more softly, mellower, but true as the score just rendered by the gifted *prima donna*” (“The Phonograph. A Practical Application of the Nineteenth Century Miracle,” *Frank Leslie*, Apr. 20, 1878 [TAEM 27:789]). The phonograph itself could also respond to encores of its own educations. Thus, we read: “Mr. Spagnoletti sang into the instrument a stanza of a popular song, which was reproduced by the phonograph, and on being encored was again distinctly reproduced by the instrument” (“The Phonograph,” *Journal of the Society of Telegraph Engineers* 7 [1878], 72, reproduced in TAEM 25:285). And, on another occasion: “It reproduced songs very well, which were encored, and were duly ‘wound out’ a second time” (“The Phonograph,” *Manchester Examiner and Times*, undated clipping [TAEM 27:750]).

<sup>59</sup> *Daily Graphic*, Apr. 22, 1878 (TAEM 26:169); see also follow-up puns in *Daily Graphic*, May 6, 1878 (TAEM 94:194).

<sup>60</sup> Tom Gunning, “Doing for the Eye What the Phonograph Does for the Ear,” in *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, ed. Richard Abel and Rick Altman (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 19. Jason Camlot, “Early Talking Books: Spoken Recordings and Recitation Anthologies, 1880-1920,” *Book History* 6 (2003), 156, suggests to the contrary that critics drew a sharp distinction between the naturalness of phonographic fidelity and the artifice of human mimicry, but the examples he cites fail clearly to sustain such an argument.

<sup>61</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Herald*, undated clipping, ca. Apr. 1878 (TAEM 94:174).

<sup>62</sup> “The Phonograph,” from *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, in *Burlington Hawkeye* (Burlington, Ohio), Mar. 21, 1878, p. 1, italics added.

<sup>63</sup> “The Phonograph,” *American Inventor* (Cincinnati Ohio), Mar. 8, 1878 (TAEM 94:138).

---

<sup>64</sup> “When Miss Cole sang to it ‘Comin’ thro’ the Rye,’ there was intense curiosity to hear how it would be returned, as her voice has a birdlike quality in the upper register that it was thought impossible for the phonograph to *counterfeit*. When Professor Johnson turned the crank Miss Cole herself was petrified in astonishment as she heard her very trills *imitated* by the insensible piece of machinery before her. Of course the song of the phonograph was nothing to that of Miss Cole, because the voice was metallic and without the attributes of flesh and blood, but its *close rendition* of the words and accent was really marvelous to hear” (“The Musical Phonograph,” from *New York Herald*, in *Scientific American* 38 [June 29, 1878], 405, italics added).

<sup>65</sup> Preece, “Phonograph,” 537.

<sup>66</sup> *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Sept. 5, 1878, p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> “The Phonograph,” from *New York World*, in *Manitoba Daily Free Press* (Winnipeg, Manitoba), Jan. 15, 1878, p. 3; and in *Bucks County Gazette* (Bristol, Pennsylvania), Jan. 3, 1878, p. 3. The motif of the phonograph selectively “reproducing” only certain words with comic effect resurfaced in an account of a hellfire-and-brimstone sermon; see “One on Magenis,” *North Adams Transcript* (North Adams, Massachusetts), July 1, 1895, p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> “That Wonderful Edison,” *New York World*, Mar. 29, 1878, (TAEM 94:147).

<sup>69</sup> Notebook entry by Charles Batchelor, Dec. 4, 1877, Document 1140, TAEB 3:657. The similar question “how do you get this?” was the test phrase Edison recommended in a letter to William Preece, Feb. 11, 1878, Document 1204, TAEB 4:78.

<sup>70</sup> Charles Batchelor to *English Mechanic*, Dec. 7, 1877, Document 1144, TAEB 3:661. “How do you do” was also the first phrase recorded in Edison’s notebooks as having been transmitted successfully by one of his experimental telephones; see Document 759, notebook entry of July 6, 1876, TAEB 3:64.

<sup>71</sup> “Edison’s Phonograph,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 28, 1878 (TAEM 25:233), italics added.

<sup>72</sup> William H. Bishop, “A Night With Edison,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 17 (Nov. 1878), 99.

<sup>73</sup> “The Talking Phonograph,” *Scientific American* 37 (Dec. 22, 1877), 384. Many years later, F. C. Beach recalled that the words had been “Good morning! What do you think of the phonograph?” (reported by Frederick A. Talbot, *World’s Work* [Oct. 1911], quoted in George S. Bryan, *Edison: The Man and His Work* [London and New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926], 86). However, this does not appear to match the content of the phonograph’s speech as originally reported in 1877. Another alternative account from considerably earlier, written on uncertain authority, runs: “Mr. Edson [sic] walked into the office with the little machine, set it down on the editor’s table, began to turn the crank, and it at once proceeded to wish him good-day; to ask ‘are you well to-day?’ and to inform the scientific gentleman that ‘I am a phonograph, and am very well, and come to see you!’ It chatted quite freely when Mr. Edison turned the crank to make it talk. Of course he had previously talked into it what it talked out at the editor” (“Too Much to Believe,” *Decatur Weekly Republican* [Decatur, Illinois], Jan. 24, 1878, p. 3).

<sup>74</sup> Gunning, “Doing for the Eye,” 19.

<sup>75</sup> Lindsay, *Madness in the Making*, 6.

<sup>76</sup> Fabian, *Deutsches biographisches Archiv*, 301:410.

<sup>77</sup> “Romance of a Talking Machine,” *New York World*, Dec. 11, 1885, p. 5.

<sup>78</sup> Ralph M. Townsend, “Faber’s Talking Machine,” *Philadelphia Medical Times* 2 (Nov. 15, 1871), 72.

<sup>79</sup> From *New York Sun*, in *Indiana Messenger* (Indiana, Pennsylvania), Oct. 25, 1871, p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> “A Talking Machine,” from *Baltimore Sun*, in *Petersburg Index* (Petersburg, Virginia), Nov. 16, 1872, p. 3.

<sup>81</sup> “Phonograph,” *Journal of the Society of Telegraph Engineers*, 72-3; Preece, “Phonograph,” 537.

<sup>82</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Engineering*, Mar. 8, 1878 (TAEM 94:141).

<sup>83</sup> J. Munro, “The Phonograph,” *Cassell’s Family Magazine* (June 1878), reproduced in TAEM 94:278-80, 443.

<sup>84</sup> “Genius Before Science,” *Washington Post and Union*, Apr. 19, 1878 (TAEM 94:170)

<sup>85</sup> “The Phonograph,” *New York Herald*, June 27, 1878, (TAEM 94:241).

<sup>86</sup> “*M. Edison a l’honneur de saluer MM. les membres de l’Académie.*” and “*L’Académie remercie M. Edison de son intéressante communication.*” quoted in Louis Figuier, “Causerie Scientifique,” *Grande Revue* 5 (Dec. 25 [?], 1890, reproduced in TAEM 146:636-44), 561-2.

<sup>87</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Engineering*, Mar. 8, 1878 (TAEM 94:141).

---

<sup>88</sup> “Strip of tinfoil containing the above sentence,” in “Edison’s Speaking Phonograph,” *Daily Graphic*, Mar. 15, 1878 (TAEM 94:123).

<sup>89</sup> “Singing and Talking by Machinery,” *Daily Graphic*, Mar. 15, 1878 (TAEM 94:124).

<sup>90</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Boston Daily Globe*, May 10, 1878, p. 4.

<sup>91</sup> “Edison’s Phonograph,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, May 28, 1878 (TAEM 25:233), italics added.

<sup>92</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 23, 1878, p. 7.

<sup>93</sup> “Wonder Agape!”, *Atlanta Constitution*, June 22, 1878, p. 4. Another similar case: “Well, old boy, how are you this morning? All ready for business?” (*Globe* [Atchison, Kansas], June 27, 1878, p. 3).

<sup>94</sup> Figuiet, “Causerie Scientifique,” 561.

<sup>95</sup> This piece was advertised in one leaflet as a song

which has been sung with great success at the Phonographic Exhibitions in New-York.

It is just long enough to be sung into one sheet of tin-foil and is admirably reproduced.

A discount of fifty per cent (50%) will be allowed to Phonograph Exhibitors on the retail price, which is twenty-five cents (25 cts.) per copy.

This was followed by a testimonial from James Redpath, who was in charge of the tinfoil exhibitions, and who said the song was “quite effective” (Kurt Nauck, “Ad Lib: A Look at ‘Commercial’ Recordings from the First Half of the Century,” *New Amberola Graphic* 78 [Oct. 1991], 14).

<sup>96</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Burlington Hawkeye* (Burlington, Iowa), Apr. 25, 1878, p. 4.

<sup>97</sup> “Ladies’ Department: No Family Without a Phonograph,” *Philadelphia Sunday Times*, June 7 [?], 1878 (TAEM 27:794).

<sup>98</sup> “Edison’s Early Efforts,” *Philadelphia Press*, Mar. 28, 1878 (TAEM 27:772).

<sup>99</sup> It was so designated “laughingly” by Charles Batchelor during an exhibition (“The Phonograph,” *New York Herald*, June 27, 1878, [TAEM 94:240]).

<sup>100</sup> Robert Conot, *A Streak of Luck* (New York: Seaview Books, 1979), 108.

<sup>101</sup> “The unconscious aptness of the rhyme was irresistible. There was a ripple of laughter, and the gentleman from New York, ‘who had the little curl,’ condemned the instrument by saying ‘he could see nothing wonderful in it at all’” (“The Phonograph Described,” *Indianapolis News*, Apr. 24, 1878, p. 2); see also Bryan, *Edison*, 88; Dyer and Martin, *Edison*, 1:210.

<sup>102</sup> Charles Sumner Tainter, quoted in Henry Edmunds, “The Graphophone,” *Engineering*, Sept. 28, 1888 (TAEM 146:339).

<sup>103</sup> Sterne, *Audible Past*, 246, 251.

<sup>104</sup> Still, it was recognized that there were distinctive acquired listening skills, as with the early telephone: “Conversation can easily be carried on after slight practice and with occasional repetition of a word or sentence. On first listening to the telephone, although the sound is perfectly audible, the articulation seems to be indistinct, but after a few trials the ear becomes accustomed to the peculiar sound and finds little difficulty in understanding the words” (J. W. Stehman, *The Financial History of the American Telephone and Telegraph Company* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925], 6; quoted in Brian Winston, *Misunderstanding Media* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986], 331).

<sup>105</sup> Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, 158, citing the research of Martin T. Orne.

<sup>106</sup> Frederick Leland Rhodes, *Beginnings of Telephony* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1929), 43.

<sup>107</sup> Sterne, *Audible Past*, 247, 255. This strategy was consciously applied to phonography in later periods, as in the exhibition of Emile Berliner’s gramophone during the early 1890s: “Berliner himself contributed a record of the Lord’s Prayer, spoken with his fruity German accent. Listeners were amused when hearing this record and always exclaimed ‘How distinct! I can understand every word.’ It was the only talking-record we exhibited, and Berliner confessed that as ninety-nine out of every hundred people knew the Lord’s Prayer by heart everyone could understand it with ease” (Gaisberg, *Music Goes Round*, 11).

<sup>108</sup> Meanwhile, those who accept the claim occasionally also find deeper significance in it. Roland Gelatt comments: “This was hardly the most profound quotation to utter at the birth of a great invention, but it at least gave fair warning of Edison’s future lack of discrimination in the quality of phonographic repertoire” (Gelatt, *Fabulous Phonograph*, 21). Critics have regularly disparaged Edison’s sensibilities in terms of which musical recordings he would and would not release; the “Mary” episode suggests that he had shown this “lack of discrimination” from the beginning. For an

---

example of a writer expressing uncertainty over the actual first recorded words, see Morton, *Off the Record*, 189, n. 2.

<sup>109</sup> “A Hint to Edison,” *Daily Graphic*, Apr. 10, 1878 (TAEM 27:789).

<sup>110</sup> “The Phonograph’s First Words,” from *Oil City Derrick*, in *Chicago Tribune*, July 6, 1878, p. 7.

<sup>111</sup> “Marvellous Discovery,” *New York Sun*, Feb. 22, 1878 (TAEM 94:115-16); Preece, “Phonograph,” 536; *Daily Telegraph*, May 22, 1878 (TAEM 25:230).

<sup>112</sup> Account by Charles Batchelor, TAEB 3:699. His earlier description of this episode, at TAEB 3:445, does not identify the subject of recording.

<sup>113</sup> TAEB 3:696.

<sup>114</sup> The claim was made by George Gouraud, as quoted in “The Phonograph and Graphophone,” *South London Press*, Nov. 10, 1888 (TAEM 146:355), and again in Edward H. Johnson, “Edison’s Phonograph, Its History and Development,” *Scientific American Supplement* 743 (Mar. 29, 1890), 11872.

<sup>115</sup> *Speaking Telephone Interferences: Evidence for Thomas A. Edison*, 1:35-6, quoted in TAEB 3:90, n. 1.

<sup>116</sup> On June 25, 1877, a new policy had been instituted for telephone tests at Menlo Park: “Hereafter we are going to test all for articulation by reading an article from Daily paper and if after the article is finished we get the sense of it we shall know how good our articulation is” (Laboratory notebook entry, June 25, 1877 [TAEM 11:339]). Subsequent notebook entries show that this was indeed the favored procedure from then through the time of the first phonographic experiments in mid-July (Laboratory notebook entry, June 26, 1877, Document 944, TAEB 3:400; Edison to Thomas David, July 9, 1877, Document 958, TAEB 3:424; laboratory notebook entry, July 17, 1877, Document 968, TAEB 3:439). The same test was also being applied to the phonograph by the spring of 1878, when Edison was reported to have recorded phonograms “with such degree of accuracy in each and every detail as to enable his assistants to read, without the loss of a word, one or more columns of a newspaper article unfamiliar to them, and which were spoken into the apparatus when they were not present” (Thomas Edison, “The Phonograph and its Future,” *North American Review* 262 [May-June 1878], 528-9; actually ghostwritten for him by Edward Johnson [see TAEB 4:224-5]). Newspaper readings were doubly appropriate as subject matter. Their content was unpredictable, so Edison and his laboratory staff could assess the telephone’s (or the phonograph’s) ability to communicate information without the risk that it was actually being gleaned from context or prior familiarity. At the same time, newspaper reports were the very genre with which Edison himself had wrestled as a telegraph operator, keeping up on current events so that he could “supply missing words and sentences when conditions made it difficult to receive the press copy clearly” (Israel, *Edison*, 34). When he proposed testing the telephone listener’s ability to get the “sense” of a newspaper report, he probably had precedents of this sort in mind. Alternatively, there were some situations in which it was actually useful for listeners to know in advance what they were supposed to be hearing. For instance, Edison performed some experiments in which listeners were exposed to pairs of two simple recorded sentences in a row. If they were not told beforehand what either sentence would be, they could not understand the phonogram “even after a dozen repetitions,” but if they knew what to expect for the first sentence in advance, they quickly understood both it and, after one or two tries, the second sentence as well. When listeners had been helped along in understanding one recorded sentence, it seemed that they were afterwards able to understand others. “I think it lack of confidence, or some obscure defect of the mind upon the hearing apparatus,” Edison wrote of listeners’ inability to understand phonograms without first being conditioned in this way. “They do not expect or imagine that a machine can talk hence cannot understand it[s] words” (Edison to Alfred Mayer, Feb. 11, 1878, Document 1203, TAEB 4:75). Despite Sterne’s emphasis on the use of conventionalized speech in early phonography as an aid to comprehension, Edison and his colleagues were not so naïve as to skew their results by relying on it all the time; to the contrary, many of their experiments were quite sensitive to issues of this sort. Even in public exhibitions, exhibitors and audiences were aware that other, more rigorous kinds of test were potentially more meaningful. Thus, during the speaking telephone exhibition of Feb. 12, 1877, Thomas Watson reportedly “took up a newspaper and informed the assemblage [via telephone] that gold had closed the previous evening at New York at 105 5/8. As there was quite a number of business men present, the effect that this practical demonstration of the value of the telephone produced can scarcely be exaggerated.” The number 105 5/8 was not

---

predictable from context, nor was it an example of conventionalized language; rather, it was a valuable piece of real information, and the audience was accordingly impressed (“The Speaking Telegraph,” *Scientific American* 36 [Feb. 24, 1877], 120).

<sup>117</sup> TAEB 3:696.

<sup>118</sup> The situation is further complicated by a surviving framed half of a tinfoil phonogram, once in the possession of Henry Ford and now at the Belfer Archives at Syracuse University, marked: “The original phonograph record, ‘Mary Had a Little Lamb,’ made by Thomas A. Edison.” For the effort to establish its provenance, see Anthony Wellman, “From Tinfoil to Digital,” *In the Groove* 26:2 (Feb. 2001), 4-5, 16, with illustration on front cover; an exchange between René Rondeau and Anthony Wellman in “Letters to the Editor,” *In the Groove* 26:4 (Apr. 2001), 6, 17, 22; and Anthony Wellman, “Tinfoil Mystery Solved,” *In the Groove* 26:5 (May 2001), 6, which concludes the tinfoil was produced on a 20 tpi “Brady” phonograph of a design not built until late Dec. 1877. Regardless of the origins of the tinfoil itself, I presume the typed inscription dates from after the conventionalization of the invention story.

<sup>119</sup> D. A. Saunders, “Social Ideas in McGuffey Readers,” *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 5 (Winter 1941), 580.

<sup>120</sup> “He Enjoyed the Romance,” *New York Times*, Dec. 12, 1886, p. 5.

<sup>121</sup> “Miss Wendel in Court,” *New York Times*, Oct. 3, 1900, p. 1.

<sup>122</sup> Saunders, “Social Ideas,” 579.

<sup>123</sup> “The Phonograph and Graphophone,” *South London Press*, Nov. 10, 1888 (TAEM 146:355); prior to this, all sources of which I am aware can be read as references to the first *routine* phonographic utterance, as e.g. “The history of the phonograph has it that the first thing the machine learned how to say was not ‘Goo, goo,’ or anything like that, but ‘Mary had a little lamb’” (“Odd Items from Everywhere,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Mar. 31, 1888, p. 8; “The Last of the Month,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 31, 1888, p. 6). A later account suggests that the choice of text was an “absentminded” reflex: “When the time came to make an actual test Edison, with his mind on mechanical details, absentmindedly tested his contrivance with the familiar phrase, ‘Mary had a little lamb’” (“The First Phonograph,” *Coshocton Age* [Coshocton, Ohio], Mar. 11, 1905, p. 7).

<sup>124</sup> Sterne, *Audible Past*, 255.

<sup>125</sup> From *Worcester Gazette*, in *Edwardsville Intelligencer* (Edwardsville, Illinois), Mar. 9, 1871, p. 2.

<sup>126</sup> C. Grant Loomis, “Mary Had a Parody: A Rhyme of Childhood in Folk Tradition,” *Western Folklore* 17 (1958), 45-6.

<sup>127</sup> “Washington Letter,” *Democrat (Dayton, Ohio?)*, Apr. 23, 1878 (TAEM 25:173).

<sup>128</sup> “The Modern Miracle,” *Chicago Evening Journal*, May 21, 1878 (TAEM 25:215).

<sup>129</sup> “Dodworth Hall,” *New York Times*, July 3, 1868, p. 4.

<sup>130</sup> “Edison’s Machine,” *Newark Morning Register*, May 3, 1878 (TAEM 25:178).

<sup>131</sup> “Marvellous Mechanism,” *Philadelphia Press*, March 9, 1878 (TAEM 94:121).

<sup>132</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Boston Daily Globe*, May 10, 1878, p. 4.

<sup>133</sup> “Ladies’ Department: No Family Without a Phonograph,” *Philadelphia Sunday Times*, June 7 [?] 1878, (TAEM 27:794).

<sup>134</sup> “The Phonograph at the Capitol,” *Washington Evening Star*, Apr. 19, 1878 (TAEM 94:171).

<sup>135</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Herald*, undated clipping, ca. Apr. 1878 (TAEM 94:174).

<sup>136</sup> “The Father of the Phonograph,” *Boston Journal*, May 23, 1878 (TAEM 25:210).

<sup>137</sup> “The Phonograph,” *New York Herald*, June 27, 1878 (TAEM 94:241).

<sup>138</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 23, 1878, p. 7. Such disclaimers of performance do not seem to have been common later on, when exhibitors had access to prerecorded material, but one was included in a theatrical burlesque on a wax cylinder phonograph exhibition: “‘Tis the—(to audience) I’m sorry I haven’t a better voice, but you quite understand that this is not a concert that is going on now, it’s a *scientific lecture*; you’re learning something now, it’s not like a lot of tomfoolery (*taking up egg-cup and singing into it*). ‘Tis the—’ (to audience) of course, if I had a better voice I should use it. I am doing the best I possibly can with what Nature has provided me with, and I can’t do more than that—if I had a voice like Santley or Sims Reeves I shouldn’t be playing the fool here, I should be at the Albert Hall. (*Mouth to egg-cup, and then to audience*) You understand this is a scientific voice, quite good enough for science” (Robert Ganthony, *Bunkum Entertainments: being a collection of original laughable skits on conjuring, physiognomy, juggling, performing fleas, waxworks, panorama*,

---

*phrenology, phonograph, second sight, lightning calculators, ventriloquism, spiritualism, etc., to which are added humorous sketches, whimsical recitals, and drawing-room comedies* [London: L. Upcott Gill, n.d.], 61-2).

<sup>139</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Toledo Blade*, May 15, 1878 (TAEM 25:190), italics added.

<sup>140</sup> “The Papa of the Phonograph,” *New York Daily Graphic*, Apr. 2, 1878 (TAEM 94:151).

<sup>141</sup> “The Modern Miracle,” *Chicago Evening Journal*, May 21, 1878 (TAEM 25:215).

<sup>142</sup> “Wonder Agape!,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 22, 1878, p. 4, italics added.

<sup>143</sup> “The Phonograph, Etc.,” *Daily Evening Traveller*, May 23, 1878 (TAEM 25:218).

<sup>144</sup> “The Phonograph,” *New York Herald*, June 27, 1878 (TAEM 94:241).

<sup>145</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Toledo Blade*, May 15, 1878 (TAEM 25:190).

<sup>146</sup> “Bottled Talk,” *Philadelphia Times*, Mar. 9, 1878 (TAEM 27:747).

<sup>147</sup> “A Marvellous Invention,” *New York Sun*, Jan. 2, 1878 (TAEM 94:95).

<sup>148</sup> “The Talking Phonograph on Exhibition,” *Scientific American* 37 (Feb. 9, 1878), 86.

<sup>149</sup> “Wonder Agape!,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 22, 1878, p. 4.

<sup>150</sup> W. H. Preece, “Recent Wonders of Sound,” in *Scientific American Supplement* 217 (Feb. 28, 1880), 3455.

<sup>151</sup> Account of a farewell address by Henry Harris Jessup, *New York Times*, Oct. 7, 1879, p. 4.

<sup>152</sup> “Mr. Edison’s Inventions,” *New York World*, Jan. 12, 1878 (TAEM 94:99).

<sup>153</sup> “Mr. Edison coughed, sneezed, and laughed at the mouthpiece, and the matrixes returned the noises true as a die” (“Marvellous Discovery,” *New York Sun*, Feb. 22, 1878 [TAEM 94:115]); “Ha-ha-ha! Ahem! Heck! heck! heck! (coughing). Halloo! Well, that gout and bronchitis catch the old man together. Whoa-a-a!” (Gath, “A Visit to Edison,” *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, Apr. 27, 1878 [TAEM 25:189]); “Laughter and whistling and singing and sighing and groans—in fact, every utterance of which the human voice is capable—was stored in that wondrous wheel and emitted when it was turned” (“Marvellous Mechanism,” *Philadelphia Press*, Mar. 9, 1878 [TAEM 94:121]); “The marvelous instrument then crowed, prayed, laughed, whooped, coughed and issued every sound that the human voice was capable of suggesting to it” (“Wonder Agape!,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 22, 1878, p. 4); “Mr. Davids began on a new piece of foil. He laughed to his heart’s content, and Mr. Applebaugh, putting his mouth to the mouthpiece, coughed, sent kisses, whistled, sneezed and imitated the human voice in various ways; and the sounds were well reproduced” (“Singing and Talking by Machinery,” *Daily Graphic*, Mar. 15, 1878 [TAEM 94:124]).

<sup>154</sup> “The Talking Phonograph on Exhibition,” *Scientific American* 37 (Feb. 9, 1878), 86, italics added.

<sup>155</sup> “The Phonograph,” *New York Herald*, June 27, 1878 (TAEM 94:241), italics added.

<sup>156</sup> “Edison the Magician,” *Cincinnati Commercial*, Apr. 3, 1878 (TAEM 27:790), italics added. One final example: “It then recited poetry, sang songs, coughed and crowed, laughed heartily, and gave vent to a succession of jubilant hurrahs. One after another, in an amusing parody of human speech, it truthfully expressed a variety of emotions—enthusiasm, merriment, patriotism, and even pathos—and proved itself capable of reproducing, at least to a certain extent, the individual tone and manner of the speaker that it mimicked” (Munro, “Phonograph,” 443, italics added).

<sup>157</sup> “Washington Letter,” *Democrat (Dayton, Ohio?)*, Apr. 23, 1878 (TAEM 25:173), sentence fragment in original.

<sup>158</sup> “Wonder Agape!,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 22, 1878, p. 4.

<sup>159</sup> “The wonders of the phonograph were first displayed, Professor Edison putting his mouth to the instrument and imitating the crowing of a rooster, the barking of a dog, the cry of a peacock, the peculiar enunciation of the darky, the squealing of a pig and a general medley of barnyard sounds” (“Phonograph and Telephone,” *New York Herald*, May 31, 1878 [TAEM 25:226]); “And then followed a noisy, successful imitation of a barn-yard rooster calling upon his hens to cackle and scratch” (“Genius Before Science,” *Washington Post and Union*, Apr. 19, 1878 [TAEM 94:170]); “The phonograph has some odd preferences. It likes what is bizarre and out of the common. It will give back imitations of animals, such as the cackling of hens, crowing of roosters, lowing of cows, barking of dogs, and mewing of cats, more faithfully than it will the ordinary utterances that make human speech” (“The Phonograph and its Future,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 31, 1878, p. 4).

<sup>160</sup> “The Phonograph,” *New York Herald*, June 27, 1878 (TAEM 94:241).

<sup>161</sup> The reproduction of an imitation of crying, described in a contemporary account as “very amusing,” is reported in Gitelman, “Souvenir Foils,” 162. Further examples: “Comical sounds were made, such

---

as the crowing of roosters, terrible coughing spells, boisterous laughter; questions and answers, such as ‘Do you want to hire a bass singer?’ ‘No: get out!’—all of which was greeted with shouts of laughter and applause by the audience” (“Edison’s Phonograph,” *Newark Evening Journal*, May 3, 1878 [TAEM 25:178]); “Occasionally the phonograph would indulge in a fit of coughing and laughing, which never failed to call out hearty laughter from its hearers” (“Ladies’ Day at the Telephone Office,” *New York Tribune*, Mar. 21, 1878, [TAEM 94:130]); “Mr. Batchelor was next taken with a fit of laughter and in due time the phonograph convulsed the audience with a prolonged ‘Ha, ha, ha! ho, ho, ho! oh, dear!’” (“The Phonograph,” *New York Herald*, June 27, 1878, [TAEM 94:241]).

<sup>162</sup> W. F. C. [William F. Channing], “Edison’s Phonograph,” *Evening Bulletin* (Providence, Rhode Island), Jan. 30, 1878 (TAEM 94:103).

<sup>163</sup> Marshal H. Bright, “All About the Phonograph,” *Christian at Work*, May 23, 1878 (TAEM 94:201).

<sup>164</sup> “Bottled Talk,” *Philadelphia Times*, Mar. 9, 1878 (TAEM 27:747).

<sup>165</sup> Text given identically in two apparently independent sources: “The Wonderful Phonograph in Washington,” *Baltimore Sun*, Apr. 21, 1878 (TAEM 25:163) and “Genius Before Science,” *Washington Post and Union*, April 19, 1878 (TAEM 94:170).

<sup>166</sup> See Alberto, “Practicing with a Phonograph,” *New York Daily Graphic*, Apr. 12, 1878 (TAEM 27:781). I have found only one instance in which an exhibitor actually ran out of foil in mid-recording, reported by two different earwitnesses: “Just as the assistant was remarking in a bass voice to the phonograph on the subject of Uncle Ned that ‘he had gone wh—,’ the tin foil gave out and the line remained unfinished. One of the audience, not a member of the Academy, however, suggested that the line be completed by adding the words ‘where tin foil fuses’” (“National Academy of Sciences,” *Washington Evening Star*, Apr. 19, 1878 [TAEM 25:162]); “It sang ‘Uncle Ned,’ reproducing the fine baritone voice of the operator, and stopping short as he did and for the same reason—want of tin foil” (“Genius Before Science,” *Washington Post and Union*, Apr. 19, 1878 [TAEM 94:170]).

<sup>167</sup> Undated clipping, but letter dated Rahway, Nov. 6, 1878 (TAEM 25:262).

<sup>168</sup> The first such report appeared in Jan. 1878: “In reproducing singing, it was found that the irregular way in which the crank was turned by hand reproduced the sounds in a jerky way, very much as a hand-organ. To avoid this, Mr. Edison yesterday placed a pulley upon the axle, and from a bell attached to a lathe ran the phonograph in that way. This obviated the difficulty; but, as a matter of course, it is scarcely to be expected that the phonograph will come into such general use during the present generation that it will be necessary to rig them up to run by steam” (“Mr. Edison’s Inventions,” *New York World*, Jan. 12, 1878 [TAEM 94:99]). Edison was also reported as using steam to run the phonograph on other occasions, e.g.: “He adjusted a strap and ran the cylinder by steam power” (“The Inventor of the Age,” *New York Sun*, Apr. 29, 1878 [TAEM 94:186]); and when it was unavailable he commented on the fact: “‘As it’s Sunday,’ says Mr. Edison, ‘I haven’t got the steam power on and must turn the crank with my hand’” (Gath, “A Visit to Edison,” *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, Apr. 27, 1878 [TAEM 25:189]). Steam power made a big difference. In Feb. 1878, reporting on some particularly promising experiments running a tinfoil phonograph by steam power, Edison noted: “I have dictated more than a dozen letters and Mr Batchelor copied them correctly without knowing previously their nature. attempts to do this with the hand turned machine was comparatively a failure, although to persons who heard it dictated it was plain” (Edison to Henry Edmunds, Feb. 12, 1878, Document 1205, TAEB 4:82; see also Edison to Alfred Mayer, Feb. 12, 1878, Document 1206, TAEB 4:83-4; Edison to Theodore Puskas, Feb. 12, 1878, Document 1207, TAEB 4:85). Uniformity of speed thus seemed to be *the* decisive factor in making phonograms of speech intelligible in cold education.

<sup>169</sup> Israel, *Edison*, 149, 151; TAEB 4:11-2, 63-5, 368.

<sup>170</sup> Instructional note by M. Roosevelt, quoted by Moncel, *Telephone*, 251; also: “It is impossible to turn the crank so even as to make any harmony in a song with notes long dwelt on like the Last Rose of Summer etc but any thing very quick comes out fairly” (Edison to William Preece, Feb. 11, 1878, Document 1204, TAEB 4:78). By the end of the year, some operators had evidently mastered hand-cranking well enough to permit live musicians to play along with musical phonograms, implying a reasonable consistency of pitch during recording and education: “Yesterday afternoon [Nov. 12, 1878] we were present at the rooms of Messrs. Annable & Noxon [in Decatur, Illinois], and heard some extraordinary performances of their phonograph. The Italian musicians were present, and the little girl sang several pieces finely, and they were so perfectly reproduced that the balance of the musicians

---

accompanied the songs from the phonograph, to a perfection that delighted the audience” (“The Phonograph,” *Decatur Daily Review* [Decatur, Illinois], Nov. 13, 1878, p. 4).

<sup>171</sup> Edward Johnson to Uriah Hunt Painter, Dec. 8, 1877, Document 1147, TAEB 3:665-6.

<sup>172</sup> “The Talking Phonograph,” *Scientific American* 37 (Dec. 22, 1877), 385.

<sup>173</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 15 (Apr. 1878), 899.

<sup>174</sup> Munro, “Phonograph,” 443.

<sup>175</sup> “The Inventor of the Age,” *New York Sun*, Apr. 29, 1878 (TAEM 94:186).

<sup>176</sup> “The Phonograph,” *London Times*, Jan. 17, 1878, p. 4.

<sup>177</sup> S. S. Cox, quoted in “The Poetry of the Phonograph,” *Washington Post and Union*, Apr. 24, 1878 (TAEM 25:170).

<sup>178</sup> Alfred M. Mayer, “On Edison’s Talking Machine,” *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (Apr. 1878), 723.

<sup>179</sup> W. F. C. [William F. Channing], “Edison’s Phonograph,” *Evening Bulletin* (Providence, Rhode Island), Jan. 30, 1878 (TAEM 94:103).

<sup>180</sup> “The Phonograph Exhibited,” *New York Times*, Mar. 24, 1878, p. 2.

<sup>181</sup> “Marvellous Discovery,” *New York Sun*, Feb. 22, 1878 (TAEM 94:115).

<sup>182</sup> “The Phonograph,” from *New York World*, in *Manitoba Daily Free Press* (Winnipeg, Manitoba), Jan. 15, 1878, p. 3; and in *Bucks County Gazette* (Bristol, Pennsylvania), Jan. 3, 1878, p. 3.

<sup>183</sup> “The Phonograph Wins a Victory,” *Scientific American* 38 (June 22, 1878), 384. This account refers to the whole event as a reception; however, “Edison Phonograph and Thermopile,” *New York Herald*, June 4, 1878 (TAEM 94:221) clarifies that the first phonograms were taken at a church organ fund concert at Irving Hall, with the manipulation occurring later at a press reception. This involved about one hundred people in an adjacent room: see “An Evening with Edison,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1878, p. 5.

<sup>184</sup> Margaret Hindle Hazen and Robert M. Hazen, *The Music Men: An Illustrated History of Brass Bands in America, 1800-1920* (Washington DC and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987), 117; H. W. Schwartz, *Bands of America* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1951), 109-10.

<sup>185</sup> “An Evening with Edison,” *New York Times*, June 4, 1878, p. 5; for another similar commentary, see “The Phonograph and its Future,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 31, 1878, p. 4.

<sup>186</sup> “The Morning’s News: Edison’s Laboratory,” *Boston Evening Transcript*, May 23, 1878 (TAEM 25:208).

<sup>187</sup> George B. Prescott, “The Telephone and the Phonograph,” *Scribner’s Monthly* 15 (Apr. 1878), 858.

<sup>188</sup> “Rapid Transit’s Clatter,” *Daily Graphic*, July 9, 1878 (TAEM 94:268). On another occasion he apparently said: “Wagner hasn’t the monopoly of the music of the future. I’m going in to the machine composing business. Just think of it: ‘Faustus, backwards by Edison in 56 sheets—phonographically, price 30 cents, for sale by all dealers in phonograph materials” (quoted without citation in Paul Israel, “The Unknown History of the Tinfoil Phonograph,” *NARAS Journal* 8 [Winter/Spring 1997/98], 34). The conceit that musical phonograms could be educed in reverse to produce “new” compositions continued to appear into the wax cylinder era: see Osgood Wiley to Charles F. Deems, June 21, 1888 (TAEM 122:380) and “Reversing the Phonograph,” *Literary Digest* 19 (July 29, 1899), 136. Edgar Cayless, a major phonogram collector in Denver, Colorado, also advised that “some very funny effects” could be produced in this way (letter from “Selah” in *Phonoscope* 1:8 [July 1897], 13).

<sup>189</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Scientific American* 38 (Mar. 30, 1878), 193.

<sup>190</sup> “The Phonograph,” *New York Herald*, June 27, 1878 (TAEM 94:241).

<sup>191</sup> “The Phonograph, Etc.,” *Daily Evening Traveller*, May 23, 1878 (TAEM 25:218).

<sup>192</sup> “Marvellous Discovery,” *New York Sun*, Feb. 22, 1878 (TAEM 94:115). Another example: “Having put on and caused the steel point to perforate a new sheet of tin foil, again speaking ‘Jack and Jill’ into the instrument, Mr. Adams made the point travel backward and the diaphragm reproduced the recitation, beginning with the last word, ‘after,’ and ending with the first word, ‘Jack’” (“Bottled Talk,” *Philadelphia Times*, Mar. 9, 1878 [TAEM 27:747]).

<sup>193</sup> Reprint entitled “The Phonograph,” *Shellsburg Record*, n.d. (TAEM 27:750); this is one of the examples of a hard-to-evaluate “error” mentioned by Gitelman, *Scripts*, 71.

<sup>194</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Engineering*, Mar. 8, 1878 (TAEM 94:141).

<sup>195</sup> George William Hunt, “We Don’t Want to Fight,” in Aline Waites and Robin Hunter, *The Illustrated Victorian Songbook* (London: Michael Joseph, 1984), 180-184.



---

<sup>196</sup> “At this point in the conversation the Professor [Edison] sat down at his table and halloed ‘Mad dog!’ ‘Mad dog!’ ‘Mad dog!’ into the phonograph a half dozen times, and then amused himself by turning the crank backwards” (“Marvellous Discovery,” *New York Sun*, Feb. 22, 1878 [TAEM 94:115]); “Mr. Edison has not yet succeeded in putting a conscience into the phonograph, for in his absence, during the afternoon, one of his assistants mildly called it a ‘mad dog’ and turning the cylinder backwards was answered in a shockingly profane manner” (“The Morning’s News: Edison’s Laboratory,” *Boston Evening Transcript*, May 23, 1878 [TAEM 25:208]); “He [Batchelor] also projected several times in succession the words ‘mad dog, mad dog,’ and the little machine replied, being turned backwards, with the utmost disregard of the distinguished persons present: ‘God d—m, God d—m’” (“The Phonograph, Etc.,” *Daily Evening Traveller*, May 23, 1878, [TAEM 25:218]); see also a 1911 recollection by Oberlin Smith of Edison recounting this trick in James Gandy, “Oberlin Smith and the First Phonograph,” *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 3:2 (Feb. 1975), 5.

<sup>197</sup> “Singing and Talking by Machinery,” *Daily Graphic*, Mar. 15, 1878 (TAEM 94:124); G. W. Rachel, “Eine neue Sprechmaschine,” *N. Y. Belletristisches Journal*, Mar. 29, 1878 (TAEM 27:793).

<sup>198</sup> Instructional note by M. Roosevelt, quoted by Moncel, *Telephone*, 250. “To speak to the instrument with the greatest effect,” advised a later set of instructions, “the lips should be placed as far into the mouth-piece as possible, consistent with a clear and distinct utterance of the words” (*Instructions for the Management*, 6).

<sup>199</sup> “A lady and gentleman sang a round into it by use of a double (forked) mouthpiece,” in “Edison the Magician,” *Cincinnati Commercial*, Apr. 3, 1878 (TAEM 27:790); “A double mouthpiece was placed over the diaphragm of the instrument, and while Professor Edison sang ‘John Brown’s Body’ in a loud voice at one side Martin struggled at the other side” (“That Wonderful Edison,” *New York World*, Mar. 29, 1878, [TAEM 94:147]); “‘Shall we give you a song?’ he [Edison] asks, and, as the suggestion is received with applause by the ten or a dozen visitors, he calls an assistant, adjusts a queer-looking double mouthpiece with two tubes meeting in one (see picture), and they sing, ‘Tramp, tramp, tramp, the boys are marching’—the assistant singing bass and Edison singing the air in a bass voice” (“The Papa of the Phonograph,” *New York Daily Graphic*, Apr. 2, 1878 [TAEM 94:152]). Despite the reference in this last text to a double mouthpiece, the accompanying illustration actually shows a *quadruple* mouthpiece, with the caption “Mouthpiece of phonograph for quartette” (“A Visit to the Inventor of the Phonograph,” *New York Daily Graphic*, Apr. 2, 1878 [TAEM 27:776]). Bell had faced a similar obstacle early in his telephone work, since his first instruments similarly required the mouth to be in close contact with the receiver: on Aug. 12, 1876, he successfully tested “an instrument made so that three persons could sing different tunes or different parts of the same tune into the instrument at the same time” (“The Human Voice Transmitted by Telegraph,” *Scientific American* 35 [Sept. 9, 1876], 163). The provisions for multiple mouthpieces were not just a temporary measure Edison used for demonstration purposes, but are consistent with his broader approach to recording “complex” phonogenic subjects in this period—in a lengthy caveat he executed at the end of May 1878, he described three methods for “recording and reproducing two or more sounds or speeches simultaneously,” all of which involved multiple mouthpieces (Phonograph caveat executed May 29, 1878, Document 1341, TAEB 4:311, 316, 322). However, the forked-mouthpiece approach was evidently not extended to the recording of instrumental accompaniments. One forked-mouthpiece vocal duet of this period was described as recorded with pipe organ accompaniment, and illustrated pictorially with the organ shown in the background, but no special provision was made for mixing the sounds of the organ with the two voices: “He [Edison] sits down at the phonograph, fixes a double mouth-piece to it and summons one of his assistants, while another places himself at an organ in the corner. They sing in two parts ‘John Brown’s Body’” (Bishop, “Night with Edison,” 97). An illustration of the performance on page 93 shows the two men crouched by the machine with the organist off in the background. On another occasion, after Edison had just participated in recording a duet of “John Brown’s Body,” the demonstration continued as follows: “Then calling two assistants, Mr. Edison repeated a verse of ‘Annabel Lee,’ an assistant at the same time repeating eight lines of ‘Mary had a little lamb,’ while another turned a little music box which played a waltz. Back to the starting point the cylinder was turned, and then simultaneously the words of ‘Annabel Lee’ and ‘Mary had a little lamb’ could be heard, accompanied by the music of the waltz!” (Marshal H. Bright, “All About the Phonograph,” *Christian at Work*, May 23, 1878 [TAEM 94:201]). Although the double mouthpiece is not explicitly mentioned in this account, it was almost certainly being used to record the

---

two simultaneous recitations, with the musical box “accompaniment” left to be picked up in the background. Charles Batchelor later testified that he and his colleagues at the laboratory had thought of the musical box as a fundamentally different kind of phonogen from the human voice: “I remember particularly that that little music-box was on all occasions on the table ready to use it in just such experiments. It was the means of getting a vibration that was purely a vibration, and when we put that on the speaking cup, the diaphragm, of course, received none of the wind rushes from the mouth that naturally very much disturbed it in talking. If we wanted to know whether we were reproducing the very smallest vibration, we would always try it with the music-box, after having experimented with speech” (*American Graphophone Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, printed record, 594). Because breath impulses seemed to be implicated in the recording process, the voice had to be treated differently from other phonogens.

<sup>200</sup> Marshal H. Bright, “All About the Phonograph,” *Christian at Work*, May 23, 1878 (TAEM 94:200).

<sup>201</sup> “The Modern Miracle,” *Chicago Evening Journal*, May 21, 1878 (TAEM 25:215).

<sup>202</sup> “The Papa of the Phonograph,” *New York Daily Graphic*, Apr. 2, 1878 (TAEM 94:152).

<sup>203</sup> “The Funny Phonograph,” *St. Louis Evening Post*, May 30, 1878, p. 2.

<sup>204</sup> In its most basic form, this practice gave results as follows: “When a sentence has been spoken to the phonograph, a subsequent record may be made over the first, and the two utterances will be reproduced at the same time, although there is some confusion and a slight indistinctness” (George H. Bliss, “The Wonders of the Phonograph,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 16, 1878 [TAEM 25:193]); “Among the experiments tried was the reproduction of three different kinds of sound on the same sheet of tinfoil. Over ‘Mary and the Lamb’ he [Batchelor] spoke ‘Jack and Gill,’ and over both he whistled a lively air. The turning of the cylinder, strange to say, brought all three out distinctly, so that the hearer might follow any one to the exclusion of the others” (“The Phonograph,” *New York Herald*, June 27, 1878 [TAEM 94:241]); “Mr. B. [Batchelor] started it [the phonograph] again with a new sheet of foil, and made the little point on the diaphragm print the indentations of the song sung into the hole in the wooden dish, ‘Old Uncle Ned.’ This he reproduced, and then set the point against the foil in the same indentations, and started the machine again, this time singing, ‘Mary had a little lamb,’ &c. Running the cylinder back and arranging his point and line, both songs were trolled out by the machine. The effect was ludicrous” (“Visiting Mr. Edison,” *Evening Journal* (Jersey City), May 9, 1878 [TAEM 25:191]).

<sup>205</sup> *Globe* (Atchison, Kansas), June 27, 1878, p. 3.

<sup>206</sup> “An Hour With Edison,” *Scientific American* 39 (July 13, 1878), 17.

<sup>207</sup> Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), 7-8.

<sup>208</sup> “The Phonograph Exhibited,” *New York Times*, Mar. 24, 1878, p. 2.

<sup>209</sup> “The Magician of Science,” *Sun*, May 31, 1878 (TAEM 94:218).

<sup>210</sup> “Inventor Edison’s Last,” *New York World*, Mar. 26, 1878 (TAEM 27:760).

<sup>211</sup> “Marvellous Discovery,” *New York Sun*, Feb. 22, 1878 (TAEM 94:115-6); “Edison the Magician,” *Cincinnati Commercial*, Apr. 3, 1878 [TAEM 27:790]. For a similar presentation by James Adams, see “Bottled Talk,” *Philadelphia Times*, Mar. 9, 1878 (TAEM 94:120).

<sup>212</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Herald*, undated clipping, ca. Apr. 1878 (TAEM 94:174).

<sup>213</sup> S. S. Cox, quoted in “The Poetry of the Phonograph,” *Washington Post and Union*, Apr. 24, 1878 (TAEM 25:170). Another writer drew a connection between the phonographic montage and “Helmholtz’s theory of the mode in which the ear recognises different tones in a chaos of sound, by analysing the compound wave, which it receives, into its component simple vibrations” (George P. Bidder, “The Phonograph,” *Nature*, July 18, 1878 [TAEM 94:330]). Even though the vibrations were all mixed together on the tinfoil, the ear could still distinguish one from the other.

<sup>214</sup> “The Father of the Phonograph,” *Boston Journal*, May 23, 1878 (TAEM 25:210).

<sup>215</sup> “Phonograph,” *Journal of the Society of Telegraph Engineers*, 72-3; see also Preece, “Phonograph,” 537.

<sup>216</sup> “A Message by Phonograph to the Emperor of Brazil,” *Washington Evening Star*, May 7, 1878 (TAEM 25:189). Roach’s phonographic message captured the popular imagination enough for a newspaper correspondent to parody its contents; see J. C., “To Dom Pedro: Greeting! Captain Codman Sends an Advance Report of Mr. John Roach’s Phonographic Speech,” *New York Evening Post*, May 24, 1878 (TAEM 25:207).

---

<sup>217</sup> See e.g. Henry Steel Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves: The True Story of the Theosophical Society. First Series: America, 1874-1878* (Adyar, Madras, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1941), 480-1.

<sup>218</sup> “The cylinder of the phonograph was first reversed [at a press reception following the exhibition] and the tunes that had been played at the concert were again wound off—not so perfectly as before, because the tinfoil had been considerably worn down by the repassing of the sharp point of the disk over its surface” (“Edison Phonograph and Thermopile,” *New York Herald*, June 4, 1878 [TAEM 94:221]); “Levy, the great cornetist, played a solo into one in New York, and it was taken to Irving Hall on Monday evening and reproduced it splendidly; it could be heard in all parts of the hall” (quotation attributed to Edison from a telephone interview in “Edison ‘At Home,’” *Philadelphia Record*, undated clipping ca. early June 1878 [TAEM 94:223]).

<sup>219</sup> The exhibition in Atlanta was held after there had already been exhibitions in Macon and Augusta. A reporter stated: “A cornet solo that was poured into the instrument from the lips of some musical Maconite, was then reproduced, and gave great delight to the crowd” (“Wonder Agape!,” *Atlanta Constitution*, June 22, 1878, p. 4). In all other cases, the act of recording was also described and the participant was identified by name, suggesting that this phonogram was left over from an earlier event. Newspapers announced imminent plans in the summer of 1878 to send prerecorded musical tinfoils from the east coast of the United States to the Paris Exposition, and others to a Grand Musical Festival in San Francisco, although in neither case do the plans appear to have been realized; see “Two Hours with Edison,” *Brooklyn Daily Times*, n.d. (TAEM 25:197) and “Thomas Edison and the Phonograph,” *The Pacific Rural Press*, May 25, 1878 (TAEM 25:222).

<sup>220</sup> “The Professor [J. W. S. Arnold] placed a narrow strip of tin foil covered with little pricks in spiral circles on the face of the wheel, fastening the edges with gum. Then he held a paper funnel over the hole in the adjustable arm and turned the crank. The first result was a succession of wheezy sounds which nobody understood. The Professor ran the wheel back to its original position and tried again, slowly this time” (“The Phonograph Exhibited,” *New York Times*, Mar. 24, 1878, p. 2).

<sup>221</sup> “Phonograph,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Feb. 26, 1878 (TAEM 94:118).

<sup>222</sup> “Marvellous Discovery,” *New York Sun*, Feb. 22, 1878 (TAEM 94:115); original text uses square brackets instead of parentheses. Another version of this story can be found in George Kennan, “The Wonderful Phonograph,” from *Norwalk Reflector*, in *Elyria Republican* (Elyria, Ohio), Mar. 21, 1878, p. 2.

<sup>223</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Cincinnati Commercial*, June 1, 1878.

<sup>224</sup> George Kennan, “The Wonderful Phonograph,” from *Norwalk Reflector*, in *Elyria Republican* (Elyria, Ohio), Mar. 21, 1878, p. 2.

<sup>225</sup> Sometimes it is hard to know whether to take an account of a supposed event seriously. One report from Edison’s laboratory first describes a two-phonograph montage and then describes three machines educing three separate phonograms to produce a comic sketch, with each machine assuming the role of one character (“The Inventor of the Age,” *New York Sun*, Apr. 29, 1878 [TAEM 94:187]). Although it is unlikely that the three phonograms could have been successfully synchronized in the tinfoil era through mechanical means alone, each operator could conceivably have educed one successive phrase in the script, paused, and waited for his machine’s next turn in speaking. If the “conversation” was effected as described, it must have relied on prerecorded speech, since there is no reference to the phonograms having been recorded as part of the demonstration.

<sup>226</sup> “Edison’s Phonograph,” *Sunday [...]*, May 5, 1878 (TAEM 25:183).

## Chapter Two

### THE EARLY COMMERCIAL PHONOGRAM

Most of the phonograms we will be considering from this point on will be *commercial* ones, which is to say that they were manufactured for profit as audicular commodities, whether sold or used to conduct professional exhibitions. In order to analyze early phonograms of this kind in an informed way, we will first need to familiarize ourselves with the processes that generated them and the contexts within which they were designed to be heard. Several survey histories of the American recording industry do already exist, as I noted in my introduction, but none has yet treated the early period in sufficient detail or from the perspectives necessary to sustain the arguments I will be presenting later on. The following chapter accordingly provides some essential background information on the recording, duplication, and education of early commercial phonograms, starting with initial speculation into the form the future recording industry was expected to take and concluding with the establishment of phonography as a mass home entertainment medium.

#### “A New Kind of Books”

The prospect of a commercial recording industry had apparently not occurred to Edison or his colleagues yet when they initiated the public discourse about the new invention in November 1877, judging from their failure to mention it in their writings, either public or private.<sup>1</sup> Rather, it was journalists who took the crucial step of imagining phonograms as a new kind of cultural and economic commodity in their own right. The *Scientific American* had already published a speculative, technically vague piece on phonography back in 1867, predicting that books of the future “would be read to the phonograph by elocutionary experts, and thenceforth read by the

phonograph to the hearing (not reading) public,”<sup>2</sup> and Edison’s invention prompted it to repeat the prediction:

Are we to have a new kind of books? There is no reason why the orations of our modern Ciceros should not be recorded and detachably bound so that we can run the indented slips through the machine, and in the quiet of our own apartments listen again, and as often as we will, to the eloquent words. Nor are we restricted to spoken words. Music may be crystallized as well. Imagine an opera or an oratorio, sung by the greatest living vocalists, thus recorded, and capable of being repeated as we desire.<sup>3</sup>

This editorial immediately inspired others, including one in the *New York Times* that centers on the idea that audicular sounds could be “bottled” and that libraries would give way in the future to repositories more akin to wine cellars, with conventional books becoming a dead medium, the ability to read them being of no more practical use to most people than a knowledge of Latin or Greek.<sup>4</sup> Rather than complementing print literature, the phonogram would replace it altogether, leading to the abandonment of literacy in favor of a secondary orality—an expectation we find expressed again in a *Cincinnati Commercial* editorial of early 1878:

It may be thought wild to predict that within the next thirty years we shall become a nation of listeners instead of a nation of readers, and save our eyesight for other and less trying occupations than the perusal of fine or half illegible printed matter. And yet the probabilities favor the prediction that within that time phonographic machines will be as common and of as daily use as watches and clocks or other household or personal conveniences.

What more agreeable home entertainment than a novel read aloud by the phonographic machine, which never tires, never is hoarse, never coughs, never grows husky, to the family circle. History, romance, poetry, narratives of travel and adventure, scientific books, sermons—whatever, in fact, interests the human mind, can be reproduced to the ear and in a style perhaps attainable only by professional elocutionists and readers.<sup>5</sup>

In this account, we find ordinary reading associated with a number of negative attributes. For the reader, silent or aloud, it was an unpleasant experience because of tiny and imperfect print. For the audience—in cases of reading aloud—it was unreliable because a reader might grow tired, hoarse, and husky, and even start coughing. The “new kind of book” made possible by phonography would overcome these disadvantages: nobody would have to squint at miniscule fonts by gas or candlelight, and audiences could enjoy the mediated oral delivery of a professional reader rather than prevailing upon a weary friend or family member to read to them.

During the phonograph craze of 1878, there was no clear-cut distinction between professional and amateur sound recording. There were professional and amateur *performances*, of course, but that distinction applied to the phonogenic

subject, not to phonograms made of the subject. Promoters implied that no special skills or arrangements would be needed to record a performance, or anything else, once a standard phonograph was ready for sale in practical form. Any phonograph owner would then be just as well equipped as any other to record any subject, professional or otherwise:

Now, with one of these instruments (and they are of portable size) under his arm, one can attend a lecture or a public meeting, and not only enjoy it himself, but take so faithful a record of it that he can reproduce not only word for word, but tone for tone. The audiences of the future will present a curious spectacle—each auditor not only listening, but turning the crank of a phonograph instrument with the motion of the grinders of a hurdy-gurdy, that he may have it for reproduction in the home circle.<sup>6</sup>

The do-it-yourself paradigm was suitable for scenarios in which phonograph owners actually attended the performances they wished to have in recorded form, but it did not offer people the chance to hear any material to which they did not already enjoy access. Therefore, it was expected that phonograms would also be “exchanged” between cities, regions, and even continents, culminating in a regular commercial “trade” in hard-to-obtain material:

As these phonographic records can be reproduced indefinitely, there will spring up a great trade in them. New York will exchange BEECHER for SWING of Chicago, and Cincinnati will send WENDTE on “Future Punishment,” for example, for JOSEPH COOK on “Materialism.” The thoughts and words and voices of poets, orators, scholars, statesmen, philosophers and scientists the world over will be on sale, just as their writings and photographs are now reproduced and scattered broadcast.<sup>7</sup>

Edison himself quickly incorporated these ideas into his own plans for the talking machine. “We’re going to start a publication office in New York when the phonograph is ready,” he told an interviewer in March 1878. Asked what this enterprise would be publishing, he replied: “Music, novels, general literature and many other kinds of matter that are read by persons and reproduced by instruments or their vocal organs for the benefit of themselves or other persons.”<sup>8</sup> One point of comparison was the inexpensive stereoscopic image, another commercial medium that required a special piece of gadgetry for proper apprehension.<sup>9</sup> Most writers assumed the site of education would be a private home, the idea being “at any time to hear the great ones of the earth discourse in our own parlors,”<sup>10</sup> although it was thought that literary phonograms might also be educed “in a public hall or school room for the benefit of large audiences.”<sup>11</sup>

If companies like Edison's were to deal in mass-duplicated phonograms, they would have to obtain their material from somewhere. Professional recordists might simply be able to attend live performance events with their phonographs, but it was still unclear whether—or how much—a musical concert would have to be adapted for phonogenicity once the phonograph was in a more mature state of development, and elocutionists did not normally read novels in public straight through from beginning to end. In many instances, the plan was therefore to induce special performances just for the phonograph, with no live audience at all. When Edison explained how his phonographic publishing enterprise would obtain its master phonograms, he distinguished between two categories: to obtain its musical selections, the company would “phonograph orchestral concerts by brass and string bands, instrumental and vocal solos and part songs,” whereas literary matter would “be read to the phonograph by elocutionists and persons understanding the subjects presented.”<sup>12</sup> In the latter case, it was assumed elocutionists would have to be paid for their special phonograph work as they were for reciting to live audiences. They might find it slightly more difficult to read into a phonograph, the argument went, but a single phonogram would enable fifty or one hundred education events before wearing out, and due to this added value the recordist or purchaser could afford to pay elocutionists slightly more than the “live” rate to compensate them for the hassle.<sup>13</sup> However, if a performance were already taking place for some other reason, such as a live concert, it seems performers were not expected to receive any extra payment for being phonographed: “The costly engagements of prima-donnas and heroic tenors will yield the impresario a splendid profit, insofar as he can conserve entire operas from their throats in the speech-boxes, to be dispatched on order to some city or other for reproduction of the same opera.”<sup>14</sup> In this situation, the phonograph was to help a manager recoup some of the money he had spent on hiring celebrity talent for a more conventional set of engagements; his vocalists would be compensated fairly for their work on the stage, so they would not be entitled to anything extra for the phonograms. In short, performers would be paid to perform, either for a live audience or for a phonograph; but once they were already being paid for this work, they were to receive nothing extra for allowing it to be recorded. Then, once a

phonogram was recorded, it would presumably be possible to duplicate it any number of times, perhaps through plaster casts<sup>15</sup> or electroplating,<sup>16</sup> so that it could enable not just fifty or a hundred education events, but thousands or even millions. Predictions of a future recording industry were rapidly shaping up in a way that promised to bring the phonograph-owning public unprecedented access to a wide range of experiences but seemed to put professional performers at a decided disadvantage. It was assumed that a performer would be paid the same amount for working for the phonograph as for an unrecorded performance, or only marginally more, but the recordist could then duplicate the phonogram and profit from selling innumerable copies of it.

Some writers even foresaw the possibility that phonograms would eventually supplant live public performances in their traditional contexts, rather than merely creating a secondary venue for them in people's homes:

And then, possibly, there will follow a revolution in all departments of public singing and speaking. There is no reason why we should not have all the great men of the age, as well as all the brilliant singers and actresses, *taken possession of and driven off the course by the phonograph*. The tin-foil, whereon all they have said is duly recorded, will be electrotyped, and copies sold at so much a piece.<sup>17</sup>

[After Jules Levy's cornet-playing was "reproduced"] an opinion seemed to prevail that, with the perfecting of the phonograph to the degree Edison's industry and skill give promise, the occupation of the skilled performer will be gone. Once he plays an air, and that it is frozen, as it were, for future use and unlimited repetition in the phonograph, he surrenders his right to it and its beauties ever after.<sup>18</sup>

One possibility, therefore, was to view the future industry as a transformation of the role of the manager, who—if he didn't want to be out of a job—would now "publish" his artists' performances rather than coordinating public events:

And what a grand business stands in view for the impresario of the future! Hereafter in the circles in question there will be no disputes at all over presenting a celebrated artiste to a country in a "series of so and so many performances," but it will be a matter of who pays the highest price for the monopoly on the trade in "personally sung arias by great male and female singers" or in "personally spoken monologs, speeches etc. by great speakers, actors etc." After all, that is certainly much easier—mainly for the impresario—than the constant travel to and fro, not even counting the irritation with theater owners and personnel that is also done away with. A singer will then auction off to the highest bidder the right to sell her original arias on tinfoil. She will stipulate in her contract how many arias she is inclined to deliver to the contractor per week, month or year. Extra tinfoil at increased prices!<sup>19</sup>

If phonography replaced a singer's live appearances altogether, rather than just complementing them as an extra source of income, the singer was still to be paid based on "how many arias she is inclined to deliver," i.e., how often she actually had



to perform for recording purposes. The writer also mentions an abstract “right to sell” the results but does not suggest any mechanism for administering such “rights.”

Furthermore, indented sheets of tinfoil seemed remarkably compact, cheap, and simple for the recordist to produce, compared to the materials and labor that went into preparing traditional books, such that the cost to “phonographic publisher” and public alike could be trifling:

The library of the future will be one which any man can carry under his arm. Bound between proper covers will be a thousand thin metallic leaves 10 inches square, each leaf a volume of 40,000 words. And each book will read itself to a man while he works at his bench, waits at his counter, or eats and smokes; in most trades he will educate himself while he is earning a living. The cost of reproducing a book, if Mr. Edison is right in his belief that phonographic [sic] plates can be copied by electrotyping, will be much less than the cost of printing a small handbill. The paper maker and binder and printer will have less to do, but few men will be too poor to own a library.<sup>20</sup>

Ten-inch discs of tinfoil or copper could hold entire novels and “be sold cheaper than the books,” Edison stated; they could be “reproduced as fast as wanted, and much cheaper than books can be sold.”<sup>21</sup> Exactly how much cheaper varied from interview to interview, though in the “book” market the idea seems to have been to undercut the “ordinary 50-cent novel.”<sup>22</sup> Edison did foresee the prospect of much higher profits on certain kinds of phonogram:

If the last benediction of Pope Pius [who had died earlier that year] had been taken by the phonograph, the matrix could have been duplicated, and every true Roman Catholic on the face of the earth might have heard the benediction in the Pope’s own voice and accentuation. There was a fortune in it. The matrixes could have been sold at five dollars apiece.<sup>23</sup>

He did not speculate about whether this would have been five dollars of pure profit for the entrepreneur, disregarding the cost of tinfoil, or whether he would instead have expected some kind of profit-sharing arrangement with the Vatican—but I strongly suspect he had the former scenario in mind. Nor, of course, was subject matter limited to the spoken word. The phonograph would “soon be giving us the best music in the world for a mere song” in addition to “making Beecher’s talk very cheap”;<sup>24</sup> it would “give even the poor man a chance to have beautiful music in his cottage, warbled in the sweet voice of a Patti or a Nilsson.”<sup>25</sup> Overall, phonographic publication was “a scheme in which millions seem to lurk,”<sup>26</sup> but those millions were expected to go to recordists and publishers, while performers were at best to receive a

pittance over the going rate for live performance, and at worst to find their very livelihoods threatened. What actually happened was rather different.

### **How the Phonograph Became “Practical”**

In January 1878, Edison signed an agreement with a syndicate of five investors, mostly telephone entrepreneurs, granting them the exclusive right to manufacture and sell phonographs in the United States except in connection with speaking dolls and clocks. His main compensation was to come from royalties, but he would also receive ten thousand dollars immediately “to be used...to perfect the said Phonographic invention so as to render it of great practical value for many uses such as the reproduction of speeches and musical compositions.”<sup>27</sup> In April, the syndicate incorporated the Edison Speaking Phonograph Company based on this agreement,<sup>28</sup> expecting that the perfection of a practical machine would be only a few months away. Creating a practical phonograph required, among other things, the development of a convenient and durable recording format. Edison had begun working on an alternative disc or “plate” model by December 1877,<sup>29</sup> and it was this configuration rather than the cylinder which he expected to develop into a general-purpose standard phonograph.<sup>30</sup> However, he soon abandoned his work in phonography, redirecting his attention to the problem of electric lighting.<sup>31</sup> In September 1879, a reporter visited the headquarters of what was left of the Edison Speaking Phonograph Company. “Has Edison ever finished the phonograph which was to have a disk capable of containing an entire sensational novel instead of a phonograph with a cylinder such as these you are making now?” he asked. “No,” said one of the employees. “I think he’s abandoned that idea.”<sup>32</sup>

Alexander Graham Bell, with his formidable background in sound media, took up where Edison had left off, working together with his physicist cousin Chichester Bell and an instrument maker named Charles Sumner Tainter.<sup>33</sup> Their work resulted in an instrument known as the Bell-Tainter *graphophone*, which cut a vertically modulated trace in the surface of a cylinder coated with ozocerite instead of indenting a sheet of tinfoil. Because the volume of education was low, users had to listen

through stethoscope-like ear tubes. Unlike tinfoil phonograms, however, graphophone cylinders could be removed from the machine and replaced at will without becoming virtually unplayable, and they could be standardized so that cylinders recorded on one graphophone could be educed on another. As a result, the graphophone seemed to make viable a wide range of uses that, since 1877-78, had existed only in the realm of speculation and fantasy. Some of these centered on audicular sound, but by mid-1886 the graphophone was pronounced “in a condition at the present time to do the amanuensis work usually done by stenographers,”<sup>34</sup> and the most enthusiastic response to it came from government shorthand experts. The consensus was that the graphophone’s phonograms of speech were intelligible but did not capture the quality of the voice even as well as the tinfoil phonograph, making them unsuitable for audicular applications but fine for transcription.<sup>35</sup> The American Graphophone Company was accordingly formed to manufacture and market the graphophone primarily as a substitute for manual stenography,<sup>36</sup> and a new model was designed specially for that use, powered by a foot treadle like a sewing machine.<sup>37</sup> A syndicate of investors began negotiating to obtain exclusive rights to the invention in the United States, culminating by March 1888 in a formally personal contract with millionaire investor Jesse Lippincott.<sup>38</sup> Even though graphophone cylinders could theoretically have been recorded on one occasion and educed on another, early graphophone exhibitions seem to have been strictly retroductive, and insofar as recorded material was put to use after the events during which it was created, it was in the form of interviews transcribed and put into print to illustrate the machine’s practical stenographic value.<sup>39</sup>

Emile Berliner, an inventor already known for his work on microphones and in telephony, had a hypothesis as to why the graphophone could not transduce the nuances of the voice more successfully than it did. Because the cutter faced more resistance moving in one direction (down, into the wax) than the other, he argued that the recorded waveform was necessarily distorted.<sup>40</sup> His proposed solution was to make laterally modulated phonograms—with a side-to-side groove rather than an up-and-down one—so that the recording stylus would face a consistent amount of resistance all along its path, and he called his corresponding invention the

*gramophone*. The principal drawback Berliner encountered with his idea was that his phonograms required an unwieldy processing stage before they could be reduced: his early work involved recording on lampblack glass plates and photoengraving the results, and in February 1888 he substituted zinc plates coated with a thin layer of wax, the traces on which had to be etched into the metal with acid.<sup>41</sup> These messy processes made the gramophone an unlikely candidate for use in business dictation or court reporting, so Berliner believed as of 1887 that the graphophone and his gramophone might have different “ultimate respective utilities.” While the graphophone was suitable for ordinary business use, the gramophone would instead serve the “domain of higher art” and “the portion of public demands which require a recognition of the voice, its full character and also a certain loudness of reproduction.”<sup>42</sup> If the field had been limited to these two contenders from mid-1887 onward, there might well have been a clear-cut division in the phonograph market between graphophones, used for everyday dictation purposes, and gramophones, used for preservation and performance—two different machines for two different categories of aural material.

The situation changed abruptly with Thomas Edison’s resumption of his own work in phonography. When the graphophone people had begun approaching him about merging interests, he had rebuffed them in the spirit of a quotation attributed to him years later: “Those fellows are a bunch of pirates. They are trying to steal my invention. I’m going ahead now to improve the phonograph and I’ll show them that they can’t get away with it.”<sup>43</sup> At the same time, he was clearly influenced by the direction the graphophone had taken—indeed, what seems to have rekindled his enthusiasm was the realization that a phonograph could be valuable for business purposes even if it were audible only through ear tubes.<sup>44</sup> While moving from Menlo Park into a new laboratory complex at West Orange, New Jersey in late 1887, he began issuing bold but technically vague statements to the press about an improved phonograph he was supposedly in the final stages of perfecting.<sup>45</sup> The machine he finally unveiled resembled the graphophone in that it recorded by cutting a vertically modulated groove in wax, but it differed in a number of its technical details, such as its use of a battery-powered electric motor rather than a foot treadle. Furthermore,

unlike graphophone cylinders, Edison's cylinders were made of solid wax, enabling each to be shaved down and reused multiple times. The first demonstrations of this new phonograph for outside observers were, as with the graphophone, limited to retroduction, but some of the subject matter was strategically chosen to hint at future audicular uses: a reading from *Nicholas Nickleby* and a montage of overdubbings much like the ones that had been produced during tinfoil phonograph exhibitions, the latter contrived to show "the ease with which the phonograph can reproduce the music of an orchestra, each of the instruments coming out distinctly, and the voice of the singers, if there is also singing."<sup>46</sup>

Sometime in the spring of 1888, Edison hired Adalbert Theo Edward Wangemann, a technician who had the advantage of also being able to play the piano,<sup>47</sup> to develop audicular recording techniques for the phonograph.<sup>48</sup> Wangemann carried out this work in Room 13 of the West Orange laboratory complex, also known as the "music room." Surviving correspondence indicates that experiments at phonographing piano music had not yet begun as of late April,<sup>49</sup> but by the afternoon of May 11 the results of musical recording were deemed successful enough for the procedure to be demonstrated to the press in the form of a retroductive exhibition on site at the laboratory.<sup>50</sup> The next day, May 12, prerecorded phonograms of various vocalists, speakers, instruments, and combinations of instruments were presented at the Electrical Club in New York City, probably including some of the ones recorded during the previous day's demonstration.<sup>51</sup> This appears to have been the first occasion on which prerecorded phonograms formed the centerpiece of a public entertainment, but Edison did not remain alone in this achievement for long. On May 16, Emile Berliner educed selections on a disc gramophone at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia which he had recorded beforehand in Washington,<sup>52</sup> and during a Bell-Tainter graphophone exhibition in Boston in June 1888, "cylinders were put in on which were words and music recorded hours or days before, and the reproduction was perfectly clear and intelligible."<sup>53</sup> From this point onward, the cold eduction of prerecorded phonograms was to form a significant part of phonograph exhibitions alongside the older practice of retroduction.

Towards the end of May, Edison started making tentative arrangements to have his new phonograph exploited commercially as a source of audicular entertainment in the United States. The composer Monroe Rosenfeld began negotiating deals for the phonograph “rights” to his compositions,<sup>54</sup> and some understanding had been reached by June 23, judging from a newspaper interview:

“There is a rumor, Mr. Edison, that you purpose publishing music, or securing copyrights of popular songs for the use of the phonograph; is this true?”

“Yes; I have already secured three of Mr. M. H. Rosenfeld’s most popular recent works, viz.: ‘The Kentucky Gallopade,’ the ‘Dramatic News Waltzes’ and the song ‘Kutchy, Kutchy, Coo!’ which THE EVENING WORLD recently printed. It is the intention of the company in which I am interested to make a regular business of publication of music for use upon the phonograph, and already I have in view an enterprising publisher in New York to handle it for me and place it on the market. Of course, this will not be printed music, but merely impressions upon the wax cylinders of the phonograph, so that the owner of an instrument can have repertoire of the latest songs at a nominal price of twenty cents each.”<sup>55</sup>

The prospective “company” apparently existed in the form of a verbal agreement Edison had made with George Parsons Lathrop, a well-known writer and journalist who had founded the American Copyright League in 1883, and who now planned to establish something he called the “Amusement Phonograph Company.”<sup>56</sup> However, Edison scuttled these plans at the end of June.

One factor in Edison’s decision to abandon his partnership with Lathrop may have been a recent court case in which William Kennedy, composer of the song “Cradle’s Empty, Baby’s Gone,” had sued John McTammany,<sup>57</sup> a pioneer manufacturer of organettes, the first mass-produced automatic musical instruments that could educe interchangeable media rather than being limited to a fixed set of tunes like a musical box or barrel organ. Kennedy claimed that McTammany was infringing his copyright by copying and selling his song in the form of perforated sheets akin to later player piano rolls, but this was really uncharted legal territory. United States copyright law had protected music in conventional notation since 1831, but the constitutional mandate for copyright law read: “That the Congress shall have power to promote the progress of science and useful arts by securing, for limited times, to authors and inventors, the exclusive right to their respective *writings* and discoveries.”<sup>58</sup> In the 1884 case of *Burrow-Giles Lithographic Company v. Sarony*, when the Supreme Court had confirmed the constitutionality of a copyright in photographs, it had further glossed “writings” as any forms “by which the ideas in the

mind of the author are given visible expression.”<sup>59</sup> An organette sheet was certainly a visible, tangible thing, but the judge in *Kennedy v. McTammany* ruled on January 27, 1888 that it did not “express” its contents visibly in the way that books, photographs, or sheet music did and was therefore not subject to copyright but was rather a piece of a machine, an invention more properly handled under patent law.<sup>60</sup> Presuming that this precedent would also be found to apply to phonograms (as it eventually was, before being overturned by the 1909 Copyright Act),<sup>61</sup> Edison would not in fact need to secure agreements with copyright holders to engage in phonographic publishing, the task for which the proposed Amusement Phonograph Company had most likely been conceived.

But another reason Edison had to abandon his agreement with Lathrop was that he had decided to sell all the marketing rights to his new phonograph to a single party: Jesse Lippincott had resolved to forestall litigation and competition between the Bell-Tainter graphophone and the new phonograph by consolidating both interests, and at the end of June he bought the patent and marketing rights to Edison’s machine, forming a new entity called the North American Phonograph Company to control them. Since the American Graphophone Company claimed exclusive patent rights in the process of recording by cutting in wax, it was to receive a royalty on Edison phonographs and phonograph supplies, the actual manufacturing of which was assigned to the Edison Phonograph Works, still under Edison’s own control. The distinctive patented features of one system could not be incorporated into the other, and the two machines were to be promoted equally and impartially, with clients invited to choose freely between them—the idea being to let the best system win.<sup>62</sup> Understanding the phonograph as a communications service package for businessmen, Lippincott borrowed his business model from the telephone industry and so began by selling franchises to numerous local sub-companies, each of which was offered exclusive rights to the phonograph and graphophone in a designated territory.<sup>63</sup> As was the case with telephones, phonographs and graphophones were to be not sold but leased to “subscribers” for use in designated places. This system turned out to have some drawbacks, since it was the sub-companies’ responsibility to service machines and to replace broken or outmoded equipment, whereas if the

machines had been sold, the sub-companies could then have charged for servicing them and would have been rewarded rather than penalized for introducing improved models.<sup>64</sup> Some sub-companies remained eager to preserve the telephone-like rental system because, under a sale system, it would become hard for them to ensure they were receiving their contractually guaranteed cut of the profits on leases of machines and sales of supplies in their assigned territories.<sup>65</sup> As a kind of compromise, a few machines were finally offered for sale on a “restricted” basis starting in 1891, which meant that buyers had to pledge to use them only in specific places and not to adapt them to nickel-in-the-slot use. In 1892, North American finally undertook a major “reorganization” in which the sub-companies, with several important exceptions, agreed to what was called a “suspension agreement” and turned the running of their franchises back over to the parent company in return for a fixed royalty on the income derived from their respective territories. Sales of machines now became “unrestricted”; that is, people could finally buy phonographs, use them however they saw fit, and take them wherever they chose.<sup>66</sup> However, the territorial subdivision of the phonograph industry, and its initial policy of leasing rather than selling machines, had wide-ranging implications for the early history of the medium.

Edison, Lippincott, and their allies believed that the real money lay in leasing phonographs as substitutes for manual stenography. Their focus on this side of the business is often read as a simple lack of foresight, considering the direction in which the industry later evolved, but it can also be interpreted more sympathetically as a sensible rhetorical effort to reshape the discourse that had arisen around the phonograph since 1878, dominated by a binary opposition between the “practical” instrument and the “toy.” Their goal was to convince potential customers, and perhaps themselves too, to take the phonograph seriously when their principal first-hand experience had consisted of hearing it reproduce laughter, animal imitations, and cornet solos ten years before. Edison and his colleagues initially seem to have associated audicular applications rather indiscriminately with the phonograph as toy; thus, one newspaper report of the first public exhibition of musical recording on wax cylinder on May 11, 1888 included the following passage:

It will reproduce the words and tones of a human voice, and of several voices speaking at the same time with surprising accuracy; also a piano solo, a singing quartette, or an orchestral performance.



“But the phonograph,” said Mr. Edison, “is not limited to the purposes of a toy by any means. Just step this way, and I will show you one of its chief practical uses.”

The inventor then led the reporter down to his business office, where his secretary, Alfred Tate, was busy dictating a letter to the machine.<sup>67</sup> Many other early exhibitions likewise sought to strike a balance between audicular entertainment and the practical illustration of business applications; in Detroit that September, for instance, prerecorded music and recitations were exhibited alongside a spoken “letter” from New York and a compositor busily setting type from dictation.<sup>68</sup> Still, the education of prerecorded entertainment tended to make a more lasting impression than demonstrations of the “practical” side of phonography, even when local agents protested that they carried musical phonograms “merely as side issues to show what the phonograph will do.”<sup>69</sup> One manager was typical in believing that his company had “made a mistake...at the outset of giving too much prominence to the musical exhibit, and many business men would leave, thinking that the machine was a very delightful toy but not a business machine.”<sup>70</sup> In the meantime, curiosity-seekers, “the majority of whom never had an idea of using the instrument practically or otherwise,”<sup>71</sup> flocked to the offices of their local phonograph companies expecting free demonstrations. Valuable time had to be spent entertaining people “who just come in [and] bore us to death for an hour or half an hour listening to the selections that we have.”<sup>72</sup> As another manager put it:

We opened offices and had our rooms crowded from morning to night with curiosity seekers. People wanted to hear what the phonograph would do; then of course we had to go through with the whole rigmarole and show everything there was about it, and it amounted to simply nothing—it was a waste of time. Of course it was a very nice entertainment, and the audience was very much pleased and then would—go out.<sup>73</sup>

Audicular entertainments thus not only led businessmen to dismiss the phonograph as an impractical toy but also forced agents to spend much of their time in what seemed to be a profitless activity. The Metropolitan Phonograph Company, finding that “150 to 300 visitors a day who came purely out of curiosity to see what a phonograph was like...interfered with our regular business,” ended up posting a sign on the wall of its office announcing that machines would be demonstrated there only to persons actually thinking about leasing one.<sup>74</sup> The Texas Phonograph Company “left positive orders that no one is to hear music on the phonograph at the business office,”<sup>75</sup> the

goal in such cases being to ensure that agents would have enough time to deal with serious customers and that the standard sales pitch would challenge rather than reinforce damaging preconceptions about the new technology.

But this did not constitute a total repudiation of phonographic entertainment, as a hasty reading of the evidence might lead us to conclude. These sub-company executives and managers objected mainly to presenting phonographic entertainments *in their central offices*, where they got in the way of leasing machines and where there was no provision for making any money out of them. The same people were perfectly content to permit phonographic entertainments in other settings, especially if they could be used to turn any kind of profit, as in the case of the Texas

Phonograph Company:

[W]e propose to confine ourselves strictly to business, with reference to exhibiting the machines in any of our offices, but at the same time to provide for the amusement feature in such a way that all can have the opportunity of seeing and hearing the very many attractive features of this machine as a source of amusement, and as a means of livelihood for exhibitors in any city in which we have a branch office. Our arrangement at present in Dallas, is that in our regular office there are no musical cylinders on exhibition under any circumstances; but we inform them that next door there is a young man ready to exhibit the machine for amusement purposes to all who come and pay him a fee for hearing it.<sup>76</sup>

Sometimes sub-companies hired men to conduct phonograph “concerts” on their behalf, one example being Edward Howard Low’s work as an itinerant exhibitor and recordist for the New York Phonograph Company in the summer of 1889.<sup>77</sup> At other times, they arranged to let exhibitors work in their assigned territories in return for a cut of the proceeds. The Metropolitan Phonograph Company made one such arrangement on April 3, 1889, with Victor Emerson, whom it had just dismissed from a regular job as a phonograph operator due to delays in receiving machines:

A request was presented by Mr. V. H. Emerson...to have the privilege of exhibiting the Phonograph within our district and to charge an admission fee therefor.

It was voted to give this privilege on the following terms. The Company to furnish the instrument and Mr. Emerson to keep it in repair and purchase his own supplies [which would have included phonograms or cylinder blanks], that his territory be in Westchester County and that portion of New York north of Harlem River, that he charge an admission fee of not less than 25 cents, that he pay the Company one fourth of the gross receipts, and that on all signed orders he may secure for the instruments which the Company accepts, he be allowed a canvasser’s commission of \$2.00 each. It was also provided that this permission to Mr. Emerson be not exclusive and can be revoked on one week’s notice to him.<sup>78</sup>

Although the company offered Emerson a commission in the event one of his audience members decided to lease a phonograph, he focused on admission fees and

treated his exhibitions as entertainments with educational overtones rather than as advertising pitches, judging from newspaper reports.<sup>79</sup> Overall, the industry's reservations about entertainment uses of the phonograph did not impede public "concerts," but they *did* ensure that entertainment uses were segregated from business uses. North American's sub-companies tended to handle the leasing of dictation machines themselves in their own offices, on the assumption this was where the real money was to be made, while farming out the right to conduct phonographic entertainments in their territories to designated employees or, more often, independent entrepreneurs. These exhibitors were, in turn, freed from any obligation to pitch business uses and could focus on the "concert" as an end in its own right.

### **The Recording Industry Gets Underway**

Despite Lippincott's lack of interest in phonographic entertainment,<sup>80</sup> prerecorded phonograms were written into the agreement governing the phonograph business in the United States, granting the Edison Phonograph Works an exclusive right to manufacture them and specifying terms on which North American would market them through its network of local agencies.<sup>81</sup> Wangemann had already succeeded in recording acceptable audicular phonograms by May 1888; the problem was finding a viable means of mass-duplicating them. Edison had filed a patent on a method for making duplicates from cylindrical galvanoplastic moulds, described as "a practical process for the duplication of phonographic records, so that the new art of phonographic publication can be established,"<sup>82</sup> and another employee, Franz Schulze-Berge, had been assigned the job of transforming this idea into a commercially viable process. Contrary to all expectations, he was unable to do so;<sup>83</sup> instead, developing a reliable method for moulding duplicate cylinder phonograms was to take years of research and development. Meanwhile, domestic requests for exhibition cylinders began arriving in the middle of September, as soon as a few sample phonographs had been distributed through Lippincott's agency to different places in the United States,<sup>84</sup> and for the moment, there was no way to meet this demand except with originals, which Wangemann made a valiant effort to produce in

sufficient quantity.<sup>85</sup> Apart from his own piano solos, he is known to have recorded a wide variety of subjects by the end of 1888, including Broadway star Henry E. Dixey and his *Adonis* company;<sup>86</sup> Effie Stewart, soloist at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York;<sup>87</sup> the famous blackface minstrel Lew Dockstader;<sup>88</sup> Theodore Thomas' Orchestra;<sup>89</sup> the National Fife and Drum Corps of Newark;<sup>90</sup> and Markwith's Fifth Regiment Band of Orange.<sup>91</sup> Still, he had a hard time keeping up with requests and sometimes failed to fill them.<sup>92</sup> One technique he used to maximize his results was to record each performance simultaneously on multiple phonographs, yielding a greater quantity of originals, something first known to have been done during a session with the Arion Singing Society on December 2, 1888.<sup>93</sup> In May 1889, the North American Phonograph Company sent out the first new Edison phonographs for commercial lease to the public,<sup>94</sup> and the recording program was simultaneously put on a more regular footing: Wangemann started keeping a formal recording ledger,<sup>95</sup> and North American published terms on which sub-companies could order "assorted" musical cylinders by the dozen or half dozen.<sup>96</sup> In June, Wangemann was called away to run the phonograph exhibit at the Paris Exposition,<sup>97</sup> leaving Walter Miller and Henry Hagen in charge.<sup>98</sup> By mid-January 1890, Miller had regularized production to the point that North American could issue a catalog of specific musical selections rather than offering only "assorted" items.<sup>99</sup> However, complaints were coming in about such matters as phonograms damaged in transit,<sup>100</sup> and Edison responded by concluding that the "original" phonogram business was more hassle than it was worth and abruptly stopping production at his laboratory.<sup>101</sup>

In the meantime, some of the sub-companies had undertaken more or less methodical recording programs of their own. For example, the Metropolitan Phonograph Company of New York City had instituted a policy of buying musical cylinders from independent local recordists, the most prominent being Charles Marshall,<sup>102</sup> selling these in turn not just to subscribers in its own territory, but to other sub-companies as well.<sup>103</sup> When Edison ceased production of musical cylinders at his laboratory, it was the sub-companies that filled the gap. Agencies in different parts of the country had ready access to different performers and ensembles, and their recordists had developed different skills and techniques, precipitating a lively

interregional trade. Victor Emerson, the former New York phonograph operator, convinced the owners of the New Jersey Phonograph Company centered at Newark that musical phonograms were a worthwhile venture and developed a major recording program there based on his expertise as a recordist.<sup>104</sup> The Columbia Phonograph Company of Washington, D. C., the sub-company owning territorial rights to the District of Columbia and the states of Maryland and Delaware, seems to have limited itself to recording material for local sale until mid-1890,<sup>105</sup> when a majority of the company's stock of phonograms was accidentally knocked off a table one morning and broken. The company arranged to replenish its supply by manufacturing a large number of its own phonograms in a short time, resulting in a locally unprecedented economy of scale, and the results convinced the company to cultivate this side of the business more aggressively.<sup>106</sup> By September it was recording the United States Marine Band "for the entertainment of people in all parts of the United States,"<sup>107</sup> and at the start of October it issued a catalog announcing that these cylinders were "now being sold to nearly all the local phonograph companies in the country."<sup>108</sup> The Michigan Phonograph Company similarly marketed phonograms of Schremser's Fourth Regiment Band of Detroit,<sup>109</sup> and other sub-companies developed other specialties, as we will see. North American itself introduced a new official line of musical phonograms but found itself struggling to compete with its own sub-companies.<sup>110</sup>

In late 1890, Edison began to look into recovering the recording business which he had let slip out of his hands. He felt he still had a contractual right to monopolize the whole business,<sup>111</sup> but he had assumed from the beginning that "phonographic publication" would only become a viable enterprise once he could perfect a method of mass duplication, and it was duplication he really hoped to control.<sup>112</sup> Up to this point, all commercially produced phonograms had been originals. Moulding experiments were sometimes giving excellent results, but the process remained inefficient and expensive, and Edison recognized that putting it on a commercial footing would require an enormous investment of money and effort. At the end of the year, he managed to interest some of the sub-companies in his latest moulded duplicates,<sup>113</sup> but North American refused to accept any orders for them,<sup>114</sup>

unwilling to invest in the process unless the sub-companies voluntarily agreed to give up their competing recording programs for the greater good of the industry.<sup>115</sup> During an annual convention of phonograph sub-companies in the summer of 1891, the delegates were formally asked to make this sacrifice if they wanted Edison to initiate his moulding process with its high-quality duplicates. They refused,<sup>116</sup> so Edison did not introduce moulded duplicates at this time.<sup>117</sup>

However, there were alternative duplication methods available. One, recommended in an 1889 handbook for phonograph users, was known as *acoustic* duplication and consisted of connecting the reproducer of one phonograph to the recorder of another phonograph with a tube so that a phonogram could be reproduced on one machine while the sounds were recorded on the other at roughly half the original volume.<sup>118</sup> This method was cheap and simple, but the generation loss between master and duplicate was distressingly high. Another alternative, known as *mechanical* or *pantographic* duplication, had been developed at West Orange by the fall of 1890:<sup>119</sup> a stylus tracking the groove of a master cylinder was linked mechanically to a cutting stylus on another machine, mediating the waveform from cylinder to cylinder without actually transducing it into sound. As a commercial solution, mechanical duplicates were still far from ideal: masters and duplicates alike tended to wear out quickly, so sound quality was sure to vary and performers would still have to repeat the same selections frequently to fill demand.<sup>120</sup> However, unlike the previous alternatives, mechanical duplication did give respectable results without requiring a major initial outlay of capital, and Edison accordingly regarded it as a valuable trade secret. At the same time he offered to develop moulded duplicates in return for a monopoly over the phonogram business, he also announced his intention to start using a “less expensive” duplication process (the secret mechanical duplication method) regardless of whether the local sub-companies agreed to stop competing with him or not.<sup>121</sup>

The moulding process would have required master cylinders to be recorded using special equipment, but the mechanical process could be used to copy any cylinder phonogram at all, with or without the consent of its creator.<sup>122</sup> The delegates to the sub-company convention in the summer of 1891 therefore took up the question

of intellectual property rights in phonograms, resolving to support Edison's duplication scheme but asking that he pay royalties to the sub-companies whose originals he duplicated.<sup>123</sup> In fact, Edison had no intention of doing so. He did revive his own recording program in April 1891, now that he was no longer limited to selling its originals directly to the public, and some of its new masters were used to prepare sample sets of six duplicate cylinders that were sent out at the beginning of August along with an invitation for sub-companies to send in their own masters for duplication.<sup>124</sup> When the sub-companies failed to submit any material voluntarily, Edison's colleagues began secretly procuring specimens of the sub-companies' most popular items, including Columbia's United States Marine Band selections, and duplicating them for sale without permission.<sup>125</sup> Complaints of piracy were countered with the observation that the sub-companies technically had no right to be dealing in their own phonograms in the first place.<sup>126</sup> To complicate matters, the Chicago Central Phonograph Company initiated a record piracy scheme of its own, selling inferior acoustic tube copies of United States Marine Band phonograms presumably also sourced from Columbia.<sup>127</sup> Resolving to avert this new threat, Columbia obtained the patent rights to the tube duplicating method Chicago Central was using, warned the competition not to use it,<sup>128</sup> and then began pirating other companies' phonograms in turn.<sup>129</sup> Although Edison's superior mechanical duplication technique had still not been revealed to the public, a patent on a similar system was granted in December 1892 to Gianni Bettini, an independent New York recordist who made a specialty of phonograms of "high-class" material such as arias by famous operatic stars. Within a few years, control of this patent ended up split between Columbia and Edison,<sup>130</sup> but that secret too was now out. Rampant record piracy, whether conducted openly or covertly, became a staple of the industry; after all, apart from patent restrictions on certain methods, there were no laws against it. The one counterbalancing factor was that both acoustic and mechanical duplicates were still inferior in quality to the originals from which they were sourced.

The Bell-Tainter graphophone had long since lost its contest with Edison's new phonograph: a poll taken in 1891 revealed that there were then over three thousand phonographs under rental but only sixty-odd graphophones.<sup>131</sup> However,

the American Graphophone Company was still a force to be reckoned with because it owned the basic patent on recording sound by cutting a groove in wax, and this had gained new significance in May 1891, when Jesse Lippincott had to withdraw from participation in the talking machine industry under the strain of declining health and financial embarrassment. Although the North American Phonograph Company continued to control the rights to Edison's phonograph, the American Graphophone Company soon concluded that it was free from the formally personal arrangement Lippincott had made with it and could therefore market its graphophones however it saw fit.<sup>132</sup> Granted, there was no demand for Bell-Tainter graphophones of the old kind, but American Graphophone was no longer contractually prohibited from borrowing the most attractive features of Edison's phonograph for use on its own machines, so it began retooling and upgrading its warehouse stock of instruments to use Edison-style solid wax cylinders. In this way, "graphophone" became little more than a competing brand name for Edison-style phonographs over which the North American Phonograph Company had no control.

Edward Easton, president of the Columbia Phonograph Company, was also a director of the American Graphophone Company and so was in a unique position to exploit the rift after gaining decisive control of the latter company during a board election of 1893. In a sly tactical move, American Graphophone sued Columbia for violating the Bell-Tainter patents, a suit Columbia obligingly lost.<sup>133</sup> Columbia and American Graphophone went on to complete a formal merger in 1895,<sup>134</sup> but the lawsuit had set a precedent by which any company handling Edison's phonographs could be sued for infringing the Bell-Tainter patents that covered recording by cutting a groove in wax. According to some sources, American Graphophone and Columbia now began preparing to gain absolute control over the phonograph business in the United States by acting on a clause in the old agreement with Lippincott that had granted American Graphophone the right to buy Edison's own phonograph patents from the North American Phonograph Company for the same amount Lippincott had paid for them. However, Edison responded to the situation by throwing the North American Phonograph Company into bankruptcy in August 1894,<sup>135</sup> a move that ultimately allowed him to buy back his patents himself, but which temporarily forced



him to sell phonographs and supplies exclusively through a court-appointed receiver, John R. Hardin.

Columbia's recording program had now gained a decisive advantage over the competition through its alliance with the American Graphophone Company. The graphophone interests, as I will call this group for the sake of convenience, used their joint arsenal of patents to protect their own activities while targeting competitors with litigation that, even when unsuccessful, served to discourage them and drain their financial resources.<sup>136</sup> At the same time, the other sub-companies found themselves unable to control even the sale of Edison phonographs in their assigned territories. Hardin, acting as receiver for North American, did not recognize their exclusive rights and made a policy of "selling phonographs and supplies to anybody who wanted to buy."<sup>137</sup> The fledgling recording industry had been based mostly on the efforts of North American's local sub-companies because of their guaranteed monopoly over the phonograph business in general, but by 1894 those sub-companies that had built up successful recording programs were being forced to follow Columbia's lead and to strike out on independent courses of their own in a business environment that had suddenly grown far more risky and competitive. For example, the important recording program of the New Jersey Phonograph Company, still under the direction of Victor Emerson, was absorbed into the new, independent United States Phonograph Company of Newark.<sup>138</sup> Thomas Edison finally regained control over the marketing of the products of the Edison Phonograph Works from the Hardin receivership in January 1896 and founded the National Phonograph Company to take over the role formerly filled by North American. After some inevitable legal skirmishing with the graphophone interests, he reached a compromise with them in December in the form of a cross-licensing agreement by which both parties could use all patents then owned by the other,<sup>139</sup> including those involving phonogram duplication, which they could jointly prevent others from using.

Throughout this period, an enduring tension existed between the industry's belief in the aural superiority of original phonograms and its awareness of the economic rewards to be gained from acoustic and mechanical duplication. In 1899, a

recordist for one of the major companies explained the rationale behind duplication as follows:

“The ‘masters’ are the children and the ‘dubs’ the grandchildren of the human voice or the instruments,” said the record-taker, jokingly. “The public very rarely hears the children. The majority of the Phonographs you see, from the cheapest to the best, use ‘dubs.’ We do not sell ‘masters’ for the reason that an orchestra can only produce a certain number at a time, and some of these are liable to be rejected as defective. Each of our solo singers, for instance, sings into two machines at a time, so that each time he sings a song we get two records, one of which may be rejected. But the one which is acceptable in its turn sings the same song into scores of other Phonographs, so that while we pay the singer a dollar, we can afford to sell the ‘dubs’ containing his song at a very low price.”<sup>140</sup>

One critic also pointed out that the quality of individual originals was unpredictable, whereas companies that duplicated could afford to be pickier about which masters they accepted for duplication and so could produce a superior item.<sup>141</sup> Nevertheless, in the trade press and among exhibitors it was more often accepted as axiomatic that “the original record of any artist is more desirable than the duplicate.”<sup>142</sup>

Furthermore, anyone with a phonograph and an entrepreneurial spirit could try to earn a living by recording and selling such originals without worrying about violating leases or patents—and many people did. The presumed distinction in quality between “originals” or “masters” and “duplicates” gave a host of minor recording companies their *raison d’être*, allowing them to present themselves as suppliers of specialty higher-grade phonograms for customers who were not satisfied with what the major companies were willing to sell them. The cylinder recording industry of the late 1890s was thus bifurcated into two halves: a few concerns that focused on the mass production of inexpensive duplicates, such as Columbia and Edison, and a much larger number of companies that manufactured smaller quantities of higher-priced originals.

Like the sub-companies of the early 1890s, the “original” recording companies of the late 1890s tended to develop reputations for particular specialties rather than for doing every kind of recording equally well.<sup>143</sup> For instance, Reed and Dawson of Newark, who had started out as retailers, began selling their own phonograms in the spring of 1898, at first specializing in violin phonograms that they said could be heard through a horn at a distance of a hundred feet.<sup>144</sup> Some independent recording enterprises were set up by recordists and performers who

hoped to cut the middleman out of the business,<sup>145</sup> while others were established as sidelines by sheet music publishers.<sup>146</sup> Most of these enterprises were clustered in and around New York City, but there were minor commercial recording operations in other parts of the United States as well, including Hawthorne & Sheble in Philadelphia,<sup>147</sup> Peter Bacigalupi in San Francisco,<sup>148</sup> the Kansas City Talking Machine Company,<sup>149</sup> the San Antonio Phonograph Company,<sup>150</sup> and doubtless many others.

### **The Arts of Recording and Phonogenic Performance**

As the recording industry had become an increasingly profitable enterprise, the difficulty of obtaining good audicular results from the phonograph had gone from being a liability (i.e., the machine was imperfect and hard to use) to a bragging point that enhanced the reputations of professional recordists and the saleability of their work. Thus, an article of March 1891 credited the independent New York City recordist Charles Marshall with being the “artist” of his phonograms just as the photographer was the “artist” responsible for a photograph.<sup>151</sup> Two years later, the New York Phonograph Company’s expert recordist was George B. Lull, a former professor of music whose work was contrasted favorably with phonograms “made by amateurs.”<sup>152</sup> Another expert recordist was Victor Emerson, described in 1898 as “well-known for his skill in the art,” namely “the art of securing records,” to which he was said by then to have devoted years of study.<sup>153</sup>

The place in which recordists like these did their work was most commonly known, in the 1890s and 1900s, as a recording *laboratory*,<sup>154</sup> the word *studio* being comparatively rare.<sup>155</sup> Insofar as “laboratories” were places of science and “studios” places of art, the choice of one or the other word implied a judgment as to which category the recordist’s occupation seemed best to fit, although the fact that prerecorded phonograms had first emanated from Edison’s “laboratory” in 1888-9 may also have influenced the terminology. The acoustic properties of the phonogenic environment had to be brought under control, which meant, first of all, that the rooms companies dedicated to recording were generally located on the upper floors of

buildings to insulate them from the noise of the street.<sup>156</sup> Besides keeping unwanted noises out, the laboratory was also designed to keep the sounds of the phonogenic performance in, which tended to make it a stiflingly hot and physically unpleasant place to work, very unlike a concert hall.<sup>157</sup> Indeed, the very existence of special recording laboratories was justified on the grounds that the presence of a noisy audience made ordinary live concerts phonogenically unsuitable:

[I]t is necessary, in order to obtain satisfactory results, to exclude all foreign and discordant sounds, so that the instrument shall record only what is desired. It would not do, therefore, to take an instrument into a public music hall and set it in operation in the presence of an audience, since the foreign noises, such as that made by persons entering or leaving the hall, and the like, would render the attainment of entirely satisfactory results impossible, for many of the finer tones of the instruments would be likely to be lost or impaired.<sup>158</sup>

“Foreign” sounds were defined here not as those that were “foreign” to the typical performance arena, but as those that were not produced by the performers themselves, and in the recording laboratory, such “foreign” sounds were strictly forbidden:

“During the recording process no talking, singing or other noises should be allowed on part of the bystanders as the Phonograph will record them and they cause imperfections in the records when reproduced.”<sup>159</sup> Charles Musser aptly associates the practice of placing phonogenic performers in an environment that “isolated them from miscellaneous sounds” with the decision, soon afterwards, to film early cinematic subjects against a black backdrop that “eliminated visual distractions.”<sup>160</sup>

One of the professional recordist’s principal tools was the *recording horn or funnel*, which served a function analogous to that of the hearing trumpet by concentrating sound at a single point, in this case not an ear but a recording diaphragm. Edison had already envisioned the use of “funnels” for recording purposes during the tinfoil era,<sup>161</sup> and accounts of the earliest musical recording sessions of 1888 routinely mention them.<sup>162</sup> First, the recordist had to choose between horns of different shapes and dimensions—at one point, Room 13 of Edison’s laboratory was said to contain “forests of horns, ranging in length from a few inches to eighteen feet.”<sup>163</sup> Just as important as the dimensions of the horn itself, however, was how it was positioned vis-à-vis the phonogenic subject or subjects. In the case of a vocalist, for instance, the recording horn was to be aimed at the head such that he or she could sing directly into it while standing.<sup>164</sup> For recording a

piano, the best results were found to come from aiming the horn at the back of an upright instrument at keyboard height. If the subject consisted of a combination of phonogens, recording it successfully could require its elements to be arranged in unconventional positions relative to each other—for instance, a piano was often placed on a platform to elevate its keyboard to the same height as the head of a vocalist standing between it and the recording horn.<sup>165</sup> By the time Wangemann went to Europe in June 1889, he was already accustomed to rearranging performers around recording horns to achieve superior phonograms, so that when he set about recording the German Emperor's royal orchestra in Berlin he "suggested certain changes in the position of the instruments which experience had convinced him were more favorable to the blending and recording of sound than their ordinary disposition." The conductor at first refused to rearrange his orchestra, but when Wangemann went ahead and recorded it in its usual configuration, the Emperor was so dismayed upon listening to the phonogram that he ordered everything to be redone according to Wangemann's instructions. "The result," it was reported, "so pleased the emperor that at the next royal concert the strings, wood-wind and brass were placed 'à la phonograph.'"<sup>166</sup> Such phonogenic "posing" remained essential to achieving acceptable results, but it could also provoke objections and even cause physical discomfort, as S. H. Dudley recalled of quartet work: "the singing position was decidedly cramping, as the crude methods of recording made it necessary for us to bump our heads close together."<sup>167</sup> Although the horn or funnel was the most common implement for capturing and focusing sound for recording purposes, a speaking tube was recommended for talking selections, like the ones used for dictating business correspondence.<sup>168</sup>

Phonogenic performances also differed from live ones in the size and composition of musical ensembles, as opposed to mere spatial rearrangement. Larger ensembles such as brass bands and orchestras tended to be scaled down for recording purposes, as Victor Emerson stated in an interview of 1893:

"How many instruments can be used with good effect in making records?"

"A limited number only can be employed," replied Mr. Emerson. "The best results are usually obtained in brass band music with from 15 to 17 instruments. Sometimes as few as two or three, and for other purposes not more than one."<sup>169</sup>

More instruments than these were typically “used with good effect” in live band and orchestra performances, for instance by doubling parts to increase overall or relative volume, but in early phonography those effects were achieved through careful positioning around the recording horn, while a greater number of instruments would only have complicated such arrangements and risked muddying the results if performers did not play quite in unison. Even Columbia’s celebrated phonograms of the United States Marine Band were created by a smaller number of musicians than would have performed under that name in concert, as one of the company’s executives acknowledged years later: “It was impossible at that time to record a full band or orchestra but on a phonograph cylinder ten or twelve instruments carefully selected and properly placed produced a very good imitation of a full band and in comparison with the wheezy band records then in vogue, the effect was startlingly realistic.”<sup>170</sup> In its advertising, the company emphasized its phonograms’ status as records of performances by “the same band that plays for the President,”<sup>171</sup> but at the same time it understood these phonograms as “imitations” of that band, meant to be judged not for their authenticity (although the performers were in fact members of the United States Marine Band) but for the “realistic” effect they produced during education. Columbia’s first known musical director, Joseph Bianchi, was said to have arranged the music for this scaled-down band “with a view to the best phonograph effects,”<sup>172</sup> further underscoring the qualitative differences between phonogenic and live performance. Certain instruments were also eliminated in adapting ensembles to phonography. “In making a band record bass drums are never used, as these blur or ‘fog’ the record,” commented an article of 1903; “cymbals are seldom used and snare drums in solo parts only.”<sup>173</sup> Phonogenic instrumentations changed and expanded over time as techniques and recording technologies improved, such that, for example, the studio “orchestras” of 1908 bore little resemblance to those of 1889. What remained constant, however, was the presence of conscious adaptation to the phonographic medium.

During the early 1890s, recordists repeatedly emphasized that an individual’s success as a live performer was no guarantee that he or she would be able to phonogenize acceptably:

The man who tests their voices listens to the applicant while he sings a few bars, and if he thinks the voice suitable he spends considerable time in instructing its owner in the way he should sing into the phonograph. It is very difficult to do that well.... Not one out of ten of the singers who appeal to the public possesses a voice suitable for the phonograph.<sup>174</sup>

There is a knack in singing or playing for the phonograph that I can't explain, and it can only be acquired in practice. I've tried hard to teach some good singers, who have failed. Again, some very poor singers are successful. Some cannot be understood and some can't be heard.<sup>175</sup>

As these quotations reveal, phonogenicity depended on a special “knack” as well as on inherent vocal quality, and part of the professional recordist's job was therefore to coach singers in how they ought to modulate their voices in the laboratory, generally prescribing evenness and naturalness of tone and warning against “straining the voice” and “singing with too much expression.”<sup>176</sup> No single preexisting model suggested itself for phonogenic singing or audicular speech—we never find them identified simply as being “like” any familiar kind of singing or speech—but they were invariably contrasted with the live vocal performance in a large concert hall:

“Singing for the phonograph is a different matter from singing to an audience. In a great hall the singer sends his voice out, away from him. For the machine he must keep it close to him—like this,” and the speaker illustrated the difference between chest tones and head tones.<sup>177</sup>

Many of the applicants want to throw a cartload of pathos into their voices, or sing in a stogy tone and strut about melodramatically, as if they were before an audience. That won't do at all. The tone must be natural, and the words distinctly spoken. Articulation is a very important element in securing good results. The singer must stand still at a certain distance from the receiver, and sing loudly and clearly.<sup>178</sup>

These statements differ in that the first focuses on projection and the second on expression and bodily movement, but both agree that a good phonogenic performance should be unlike a good live concert performance in certain formally definable ways. Over time, performers who did phonograph work on a regular basis learned what did and did not record well and so developed their own medium-specific skills, distinct in kind from those of the recordist although exercised in conjunction with them. In 1891, the *Phonogram* referred to “a man in the phonograph business who is so expert that he can talk to a pine board, and make a ‘record’”;<sup>179</sup> this was the expertise of the phonogenic performer, the person who made a good “record” not by manipulating the phonograph or the surrounding environment but by knowing what to do with his or her voice and body.

The most fundamental constraint on phonogenic performers was that they learn to “perform” without the customary presence of a live audience, as a journalist observed in 1900:

An odd occupation is that of singing to a Phonograph—singing where no plaudits welcome, no evidence of attention encourages, no hush evinces an audience in the spell of delight, or hearts swayed by emotion; no outburst to tell the artist of triumph won; no bowing right and left to rapturous applause, and no bouquets. Only an unresponsive machine, which makes no sound or sign either of approval or disapproval, which has no joy in swelling note, rich tone or exquisite phrasing; but, yet records alike unerringly the singer’s merits and defects. A performance quite foreign to the musicians’ province, as impersonal as an unsigned article.<sup>180</sup>

Unlike a live audience, the phonograph did not react appreciatively to a performance but, being “unresponsive,” only recorded it without comment. This allegedly made the recording event an “impersonal” affair, “foreign” to the sensibilities of artists who presumably tolerated it only for financial gain. “It is not a very cheerful outlook to stand and sing with all your might and all your best talent and technique into several hollow tubes with reverberating sides and not to face a responsive eye or ear,” agreed another writer in 1898, noting that “it takes especial art to sing in this extraordinary fashion to this dumb audience,”<sup>181</sup> “dumb” in that it could neither cheer nor applaud, being comprised, as an earlier commentator had put it, of “imaginary hearers.”<sup>182</sup>

Again, the *Philadelphia Record* quoted an unnamed female phonogenic performer in 1903 who expressed much the same feelings:

“In this work,” she said, “there is one great difficulty, and that is the absence of an audience. When a singer comes out before a big audience to sing the sight of all those persons is frightening to her, but at the same time it is inspiring; it keys her up; it takes her out of herself and beyond herself. She does better than she would have thought it possible to do. Singing into a phonograph is hard because there is nothing there to inspire and intoxicate you. Instead of a house of people eager to be pleased you have an empty room and a big cylinder. You can’t put into your voice the brilliance, the exhilaration, and the sympathy that come of themselves when there are human ears listening and understanding. Some of the best singers can’t sing into the phonograph at all solely on this account. Others can’t sing into it unless they have taken a glass or two of champagne.”<sup>183</sup>

The Scottish comic singer Harry Lauder, whose live performances and phonograms both enjoyed considerable popularity in the United States, recalled that the unexpected lack of audience interaction had actually caused him to flub his first recording session:

I sang the first verse o’ ma song. And then, as usual, while the orchestra played a sort o’ vampin’ accompaniment, I sprang a gag, the way I do on the stage. I should ha’ gone straight on, then. But I didn’t. D’ye ken what? Man, I waited for the applause! Aye, I did so—there in front o’ that great yawnin’ horn, that was ma only listener and that cared nae mair for hoo I sang than a cat nicht ha’ done!<sup>184</sup>



Such blunders may have been rare, but Lauder's example underscores the fact that the phonogenic performer exchanged his or her relationship with an immediately co-present audience for a new kind of mediated relationship that required a certain amount of conceptual reorientation. The pressures of live performance were off, but other pressures were very much on, grounded in one's responsibility towards a strange new virtual audience that was both like and unlike an actual one:

"They say Treppo, the concert pianist, always practices with a phonograph running opposition."

"How strange! What's his object?"

"Why, it makes him feel as if he were playing before a fashionable audience!"<sup>185</sup>

As a corollary, phonogenic and live performance induced phobias in different people: a person immune to conventional "stage fright" was sometimes susceptible to phonogenic "stage fright," and vice versa, confirming that the two contexts were associated with different responsibilities and vulnerabilities. A journalist of 1890 reported the existence of distinctively phonogenic "stage fright" with some surprise:

The first appearance of an actor or singer before the phonograph is a study by itself, and well worth the observation of a student of human nature. It would naturally be supposed that these people, who pass their lives in the glare of publicity, would approach the machine with the same *sang froid* and self-possession which characterize them on the stage, and, in most cases, this is a fact. But some of the most collected of them when before an audience become victims of "stage fright" before the phonograph, and when they succumb to this it is most difficult to secure a good record.<sup>186</sup>

This particular writer provided no explanation for phonograph fright, but others who mentioned it sometimes offered tentative hypotheses about it, as did one recordist in 1899:

"It is often difficult to get the proper attitude on the part of the singer. Curiously enough, some of those who seem to lose themselves when on a stage, confronting an audience, appear to be terribly self conscious when they face the machine.

"There is such a thing as 'stage' fright in performing for the phonograph. I do not know how to explain it, whether it comes from the thought that the record will be reproduced far away from the singer's presence and perhaps long after he is dead or from some other reason. But I have observed it many times and in some noted persons."<sup>187</sup>

Performers could gauge the circumstances of their live performances more or less accurately, but they could not begin to predict all the future education events their phonograms might enable. In essence, they were being compelled to assume responsibility as performers to unknown and unknowable audiences, a fact this

recordist supposed they might find daunting. Another recordist offered a different hypothesis during an interview of 1893:

“I don’t know why it is, but half of the professionals who sing for me have genuine attacks of stage fright,” said Mr. Clarence. “It’s strange that a man or woman who can face a crowd of a couple of thousand or more and never feel nervous should tremble like a leaf and sometimes break down when singing in this room in the presence of only two or three people. Perhaps it is because they will afterward hear for themselves the imperfections and defects.”<sup>188</sup>

This was not just a matter of exposing people to the unsettling experience of hearing themselves for the first time “as others heard them”; rather, the phonograph struck many commentators as *hypersensitive* to imperfections, something that placed an extra burden on the professional phonogenic performer:

A singer before an audience may excuse his hoarseness, and find sympathy; the audience will take his best, and probably enjoy it to some degree. But the Phonograph accepts no excuses. It gives back the hoarseness as it hears it, sometimes emphasizing it. The reproduction is ridiculous and entirely marred. A record that is flawed must be thrown away.<sup>189</sup>

The pressure to avoid flaws and mistakes may have been what another reporter had in mind in 1897 when asserting that “the nervous tension of singing for the sole benefit of a graphophone is very great.”<sup>190</sup> At least, we find similar wording linked to this concept later on: “It is the nervous strain of knowing that you must not make a single mistake, that wears on you,” Ada Jones confided in 1917 after about a dozen years in the business. “On the vaudeville stage a false note or a slight slip in your pronunciation makes no difference. On the phonograph stage the slightest error is not admissible. To make one means that you must make the record over again.”<sup>191</sup>

About 1913, Edison himself is supposed to have rejected some master phonograms with the comment: “People may think some of these folks are great singers. Lots of little defects don’t sound in the concert hall, but when they come out of that hole they do! They can’t fool my phonograph! I’ve got them!”<sup>192</sup>

One factor contributing to this hypersensitivity was that the barrier separating the phonogenic performer from the phonographic audience worked both ways, focusing attention on the aural channel while removing access to the others. On one hand, phonogenic performers did not have to worry about visual appearance: Markwith’s Band of Orange, New Jersey was free to phonogenize in informal work clothes rather than flashy uniforms during its first recording session of 1888 with listeners in England being none the wiser.<sup>193</sup> “If the day is warm,” a reporter

commented a decade later, performers “may strip off their coats for the conventions imposed by the presence of an audience are not enforced here.”<sup>194</sup> On the other hand, performers could not rely on visual cues to draw attention away from their aural shortcomings, as Alma Gluck observed in 1916:

On the concert platform one can easily counteract the impression created by one’s errors, calling in the assistance, if need be, of facial expression, or pose, or, on occasions, even of gesture. Not so when you are singing for the remorseless recording machine.<sup>195</sup>

Performers did not always object to the added pressure, and in fact they sometimes credited it with improving their technique, as banjoist Vess Ossman did in 1903: “You have to pick hard and keep the same volume of tone all through a piece, combined with absolute accuracy. That makes a superb foundation on which to put light and shade for concert work and fairly kills nervousness.”<sup>196</sup> However, it did not make their work any easier.

The failure to observe phonogenic discipline could “spoil” a phonogram on numerous levels. In 1890, one recordist told a reporter:

“Sometimes when we have a gem of a comic song nearly through the singer will stop to cough or blow his nose. The effect is horrible. Think of sitting down in your parlor with your folks to listen to the family phonograph. The song is fine.

“With the truest intonation and the sweetest effect imaginable the singer sings ‘He’s Going to Marry Yum Yum,’ or some other gem. Just at the best point he pauses—a long drawn out pause. Then you hear the nose blowing, and can very well imagine that the pause was consumed in drawing from his coat tail pocket a red bandana.”<sup>197</sup>

In fact, the response of listeners to flubs of this kind was not invariably negative—such phonograms were prized as rare and humorous exceptions<sup>198</sup>—but newcomers to the recording laboratory still had to be coached in phonogenic discipline, something that did not always go smoothly:

[A] very pretty actress who wanted a trial was standing in front of four phonographs, receiving instructions.

“Now don’t sing as you do on the stage,” said Mr. Clarence [the recordist]. “Don’t let one note drop to the footlights and then throw the next one to the gallery. Sing with little feeling—almost none. All the notes should be equally loud.”

Mr. Clarence made the announcement and stepped back of the phonographs. While a short introduction was being played on the piano the young woman said, “I feel so funny.”

“Don’t say anything,” said Mr. Clarence. “Remember that you are in front of the phonograph.”

“Oh, of course,” she said, and laughed.<sup>199</sup>

The actress had been briefed on how to adapt her singing for phonogenic purposes, but she had failed to recognize that her incidental comments and laughter would also

be recorded. But phonogenic performers did not merely have to avoid such obvious faults as idle talk, sneezing, and forgetting their lines, as is apparent from some widely quoted comments on the recording process by Richard José:

You're locked all alone with the band in a big bare room. Your back is to the musicians and your face to a bleak, blank wall through which protrudes a solemn horn. Into this horn you sing. Not a soul is in sight.

A bell rings—one. That is to get ready, for the receiving instrument is so sensitive that if you moved your sleeves against your coat the sound would register. Somebody outside presses the button—two.

The band starts the prelude, then you sing, turning neither to the right nor left, always looking and singing into that protruding horn. And you can't even let out a breath after your last one; you must close your lips on it and wait for the little whirr within the horn to cease.<sup>200</sup>

The heightened sensitivity to “little defects” on the part of phonogenic performers thus extended to aspects of their behavior, such as quietly exhaling or allowing their clothes to rustle, that would have been not only excused by a live audience in a theater or concert hall, but wholly imperceptible to it. In the late 1880s, a phonogram taken of a performance had been liable to spoilage through, say, the machine being bumped in the middle of recording,<sup>201</sup> but sounds of audience approbation had only enhanced it and made it more impressive, as we will see in chapter four. Even mistakes on the part of the performer had not necessarily been felt to mar the result, as witnessed by the praise given to one phonogram of violin music: “It was an exact reproduction, even of a false note.”<sup>202</sup> However, an emerging aesthetics of commercial phonography almost immediately prescribed that sounds through which a performance could be relativized to a unique past event should be methodically avoided as distractions rather than prized as markers of authenticity and accuracy. In the 1910s and 1920s, we find performers telling stories about how their otherwise perfect takes had been ruined by bystanders shouting such phrases as “That’s fine!” or “Oh, you sang that beautifully!”<sup>203</sup>

The rules of phonogenic performance did not remain static throughout the acoustic recording era but changed and evolved over time as new techniques were discovered and refined. In the early 1890s, most vocalists were told to stand still in front of the recording horn because any sounds that were not directed straight into the horn were likely to go unrecorded. In terms of posture, articles from this period mentioned only that phonogenic performers had to learn “at what angle the voice

should strike the instrument,”<sup>204</sup> something that tenor Edward M. Favor is said to have monitored by cupping his hands behind his ears.<sup>205</sup> By the turn of the century, however, vocalists were being encouraged not to keep still while singing but to move in certain prescribed ways. One of the most common defects encountered in audicular phonograms of that period was “blasting,” distortion produced by sounds that overpowered the recording diaphragm. Recordists routinely substituted diaphragms of different thicknesses for taking different voices and musical instruments, each time tightening the screws just enough to ensure optimal sensitivity,<sup>206</sup> but switching to a less responsive diaphragm to avoid blasting also reduced overall volume and could “make the whole record weak.”<sup>207</sup> As an alternative strategy, recordists sometimes resorted to pulling performers away from the recording horn whenever they hit individual notes likely to cause blasting, a practice that was effective but could provoke resentment and hostile reactions, particularly when male recordists laid hands on female performers.<sup>208</sup> Rather than suffering themselves to be pushed and pulled around by recordists, full-time phonogenic performers eventually learned to lean back and forth as necessary on their own:

A singer while performing, keeps his head not at a fixed distance from the mouth of the recording horn, but moves closer to or farther away as the tone demands. If he lets his voice out with a high tone, he moves his head back away from the horn to prevent this tone from blasting; and if he has a low or soft tone he moves his head as close to the horn as possible.<sup>209</sup>

In singing certain notes they have to move close to the horns, and in singing other notes they move back. People who are singing these songs are constantly moving back and forth to produce the records.<sup>210</sup>

Vocalists had more than just the volume of their singing to consider when deciding when to move backwards or forwards. They also had to pay attention to timbre, since the overtones of certain vowel sounds were more likely to produce blasting, namely “open tones, the long ‘i’ sound, the ‘o’ as in ‘love’ [and the ‘ar’ as in] the word ‘heart.’”<sup>211</sup> Although vocalists regained the mobility they had lost in the early 1890s, their movements still differed greatly from the sort they would have adopted on the stage and were even considered visually unappealing, as one journalist observed:

[I]t is not beautiful nor edifying to see the singer at the Phonograph. A stranger’s wonder would likely be excited by his antics. The singer takes his stand at a certain distance from the mouth of the horn and begins.

Now he throws back his head, now thrusts it forward, now poises it this way and now that. All this would look ridiculous to an audience, but is necessary before the Phonograph.<sup>212</sup>

In general terms, the activity that went on in recording laboratories was governed by what I am calling the phonogenic frame, in which one's behavior is directed towards generating a phonogram for use in one or more future education events instead of being intended primarily for immediate apprehension. Recording artists had to "realize every moment that they are making records for the Phonograph, and not singing for an audience,"<sup>213</sup> it was said, and a phonogenic singer needed "the instinct (acquired only by practice) of being able to determine just what each sound he utters will do with the recorder."<sup>214</sup> A singer's bodily movements could not be seen through the phonographic medium, so those that detracted from the performance's phonogenicity were first eliminated, and then new and "unsightly" movements were introduced in their place to enhance audicular results.

By all accounts, performing for the phonograph in the 1890s was a grueling job, requiring not just the special adaptations described so far but also considerable stamina and endurance. A reporter who visited a New York City recording laboratory in 1897 described one singer's preparations on arrival: he "laid aside his cane and hat, stripped off his coat and vest, loosened his collar and necktie, took a last puff of his cigarette and announced that he was ready for work. You might have thought he was preparing to chop wood or move furniture." As he began to sing into a group of funnels a few moments later, his face

assumed an apoplectic appearance, big veins on his neck and forehead stood out in half relief, and he gave other evidences of severe physical exertion. By the time he had sung two verses and repeated the chorus twice the perspiration was trickling from the end of his nose and chin.

"Hard work," he said, "that's just what it is. Ever try to shout to a fellow half a mile away against a gale of wind? Well, that's what it seems like to sing into these horns. They throw your voice back at you, you know."

After a five-minute break, the singer was ready for another round.<sup>215</sup> The average singer's daily limit was estimated at twenty rounds of roughly three minutes each, or an hour's total work,<sup>216</sup> but some of the leading phonogenic performers of the 1890s reported numbers far in excess of that. Dan W. Quinn claimed once to have phonogenized seventy-four songs at a single session for Edison, working "without a stop from 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.," and explained that "the tradition is that this is the

best record ever accomplished in the game.”<sup>217</sup> George Washington Johnson’s record was reported as fifty-six and still considered impressive,<sup>218</sup> while the comic monologist Cal Stewart was credited with having phonogenized “eighty-six rounds in one day breaking all previous records which existed up to that time for talking selections,”<sup>219</sup> suggesting that delivering talking selections into a speaking tube may have been less draining than singing into a horn. Even these prodigious numbers of rounds failed to saturate the market; Quinn recalled Victor Emerson once telling him of *THE CAT CAME BACK*, “Dan, I wish it were possible for you to stand there and sing that song a thousand times.”<sup>220</sup>

For companies that sold only originals, the maximum total number of saleable phonograms they could procure was determined by the number of rounds a performer could complete multiplied by the number of phonographs used to record them. However, even companies that dealt in mechanical duplicates had to have their performers repeat selections on a regular basis to yield enough ephemeral masters for duplication. J. S. Macdonald, whose work was marketed under the pseudonym Harry Macdonough, recalled his experience performing for Edison’s National Phonograph Company in the late 1890s:

Each morning or afternoon session consisted of thirty “rounds”, consisting of five or six songs selected from the repertoire of the list in the proportion to their selling qualities; sometimes it would be “The Holy City” ten times, “Mid the Green Fields of Virginia” five times, with the other fifteen divided up among the songs of which they needed additional masters. At that time they made five masters at each performance of a song and from each master they could make from twenty-five to seventy-five duplicates before the master wore out. When the masters were worn out they had to have more made at once.<sup>221</sup>

During this period, phonogenic vocalists found themselves singing hit songs over and over again to satisfy the market, interspersing these during recording sessions with perennial favorites for which there was a regular but less intense demand:

Singers to the talking-machines occasionally tire of their work and at times it must seem monotonous. Over and over again the song must be rendered in order that the demand may be supplied. The relative popularity of the songs may be accurately gauged [sic] by the demand for records. As an instance it may be stated that George J. Gaskin, the popular Irish tenor has been singing, besides supplying the regular demand for his large repertoire, such songs as “Break the News to Mother” thirty-six times; “She was Bred in Old Kentucky” twenty times; “On the Banks of the Wabash” thirty times and “Sweet Savannah” (Paul Dresser’s latest) fifteen times each and every week.<sup>222</sup>

Full-time phonogenic performers were thus in for long hours of monotonous repetition. Meanwhile, not all rounds produced saleable results, and performers were not paid for rounds that yielded only rejects.<sup>223</sup> The progress of newcomers to the business was measured by the percentage of their phonograms that was accepted as commercially usable.<sup>224</sup>

The piano accompanists who played for early vocal and solo instrumental phonograms, perched up on their platforms, had to adapt to the needs of the medium just as much as did the performers they accompanied. Among other things, they were never supposed to use either pedal, since the loud one muddled the phonogram and the soft one reduced its volume,<sup>225</sup> and it was said that good results could be achieved only “if the instrument was old and had a tinny, shallow tone.”<sup>226</sup> These criteria were not unlike those by which phonogenic vocalists were evaluated: evenness of tone and “tinniness” of voice. One early phonogenic pianist was Frank P. Banta, who began working for the New York Phonograph Company sometime in the early 1890s, having taught himself to play while tuning instruments in a piano factory without the benefit of formal training—something that may ultimately have worked to his advantage, since he did not have to unlearn techniques taught with live performance in mind.<sup>227</sup> An anecdote published in 1893 illustrates his special aptitude for phonograph work:

One young lady, an actress, who wanted a trial, forgot to bring with her the music of the song she was to sing.

“That doesn’t matter,” said Mr. Frank Banta, who always plays the piano accompaniments, “just hum it over once and I’ll catch it.”

“Oh, no,” said the young lady, “I always play my own accompaniments. I guess I can get along without the music.”

The young lady had a good voice, and Mr. Clarence [the recordist], desiring to humor her a little, winked to Mr. Banta, who left the piano, and she took his place and sang to her own instrumental accompaniment. Any audience would have encored her, for the notes rolled out as fast as they do from a drum. When she finished Mr. Clarence started the phonograph for her benefit and let her hear her playing. There was a rumbling and jarring accompanied by some wild shrieks, and she confessed that she was a failure.

“Perhaps you will now be willing to receive instructions,” said Mr. Clarence. “It took Mr. Banta two months to get the knack of playing for a phonograph, and we haven’t time to instruct you.”<sup>228</sup>

Judging from this account, Banta must have performed many of his accompaniments by ear, adapting songs to the phonograph as he went. When sheet music for George Washington Johnson’s “Laughing Song” was published in 1894, a few years after it



had become popular in phonogram form, it was Banta to whom the piano arrangement was credited.<sup>229</sup> Banta was working for Edison's National Phonograph Company at the time of his death, and an obituary for him in the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* again emphasizes the medium-specific skills that had made him a valuable asset:

His were the hands that played the piano accompaniments to more than half of the Records in the Edison catalogue and his was the musical ability that re-arranged or re-wrote the music which has made the piano accompaniments to Edison Records so attractive. Accompaniments as ordinarily written cannot be used in Record making. Each selection requires a practically new arrangement of the music.<sup>230</sup>

House accompanists like these must have been among the most prolific of all phonogenic performers, even if most of their work went uncredited. Like the vocalists, they needed both patience and stamina in the time before permanent masters, when phonograms had to be phonogenized by the round to fill the demand. "Mr. Hylands, the popular heavy-weight piano artist [for the Columbia Phonograph Company], lost about three or four pounds the other day while playing 'The Will O' the Wisp' for J. W. Myers," the *Phonoscope* asserted in 1898.<sup>231</sup>

Certain subjects were notoriously difficult to record well no matter how expert the recordist or how obliging and adaptable the performer. One, which will serve as a good introduction to the rest, was violin music. "The fiddle, it may be remarked, is one of the most difficult, if not the most difficult instrument, to 'take off,' to use a reporting phrase," claimed the *Scientific American* in 1888, "and the sounds representing its music are certainly not pleasing."<sup>232</sup> In the middle of 1898, however, Reed and Dawson of Newark began promoting themselves as "the only successful Violin record makers,"<sup>233</sup> with Thomas Herbert Reed, one of the partners in the firm, as the violinist.<sup>234</sup> The competing minor recording firm Harms, Kaiser & Hagen simultaneously began promoting violin phonograms by its own artist, Frederick W. Hager, which were said to be big sellers.<sup>235</sup> That fall, the *Phonoscope* sponsored a contest to determine who was in fact producing the best violin phonograms, noting that this would be the first "prize" ever given within the industry,<sup>236</sup> and Hager won with a phonogram of TRÄUMEREI.<sup>237</sup> Although the prize formally went to Hager as a phonogenic performer, the company soon ran an advertisement capitalizing on it, implicitly taking at least partial credit as recordist:

The Violin Record THAT WON THE “PHONOSCOPE” GOLD MEDAL AT THE PITTSBURGH EXPOSITION, WAS MADE BY HARMS, KAISER & HAGEN<sup>238</sup>

The following year, Edison’s National Phonograph Company began offering selections by Hager and Columbia began recording another violinist, Charles D’Almaine,<sup>239</sup> but Edison’s own house publication continued to make wisecracks about violin phonograms sounding like yowling cats.<sup>240</sup> Finally, after recordists had been struggling to take the music of ordinary violins for a few years, someone hit on the idea of redesigning the instrument itself to fit the acoustic needs of the new medium. The British scientist and phonograph experimenter Augustus Stroh designed a special violin for recording purposes with the usual arrangement of strings and bridge but a diaphragm and horn in place of the familiar resonating chamber. His invention was first introduced to the American market as an “entirely new instrument” through a group of “Viol-Horn Solos” by D’Almaine released in 1904,<sup>241</sup> but soon the industry was substituting the “Stroh violin” tacitly in place of the ordinary violin for both solo and ensemble recording.<sup>242</sup> For the remainder of the acoustic recording era, most “violin” phonograms were actually recorded from performances on Stroh’s instrument.

Another problem subject was church chimes. First of all, chimes could not be brought into recording laboratories, so phonographs had instead to be taken into the acoustically uncontrolled environment of church belfries, inspiring the quip: “Len Spencer would astonish his friends by telling them how he attended church regularly—he did not explain it was to take chime records.”<sup>243</sup> Chimes actually had one advantage over other instruments as phonogenic subjects in that the resonance from brass horns used during education seemed to enhance their tone rather than distorting it.<sup>244</sup> However, there still seems to have been some uncertainty as to what the basic goals of the chime phonogram ought to be. One article describing the stock of phonograms kept by the Chicago Central Phonograph Company in the fall of 1890 stated:

Probably the most interesting of all these is a record of St. Thomas’ chimes. They played the hymn tune,

Hark! the sound of holy voices,  
In the jangling, crashing manner which is the exclusive property of church chimes. If ever there was a set of bells in complete tune nobody ever heard of such a thing. There is always a high note

which isn't within a mile of the key and a big booming bass bell which will keep rumbling on when it ought to have stopped. About three miles away on a clear summer evening there is nothing more beautiful than a church chime, but right near there is nothing which can excel its discords at times. The phonograph records that to the dot, a figure of speech literally correct in this case [in that the groove on a cylinder could be perceived as a sequence of "dots"].<sup>245</sup>

This reporter reacted positively to a chime phonogram on the grounds that it had accurately represented the discordant tones of chimes heard up close, just as they would have sounded in the belfry where the phonograph had captured them. However, recordists and other critics tended instead to judge chime phonograms by criteria such as evenness, harmony, musicality, and success at keeping notes from "running together."<sup>246</sup> That is, they sought not unflattering accuracy but an aesthetic effect closer to that of chimes heard at a distance, in a location from which a listener would ordinarily expect to hear chimes, despite their actual proximity during the recording event.

The Chimes of Grace Church, New York, is the most beautiful set of chimes in the world, and are worth traveling across the Continent to hear, but all who wish to hear them just as they sound from [*not "in"*] the church tower at midnight, can hear them and save their car fare, by going to the phonograph concert given in the south room of the Cincinnati Block, tonight.<sup>247</sup>

The peculiar characteristics of chime music must have forced recordists to choose more consciously than usual between the ideals of accuracy and fidelity, on the one hand, and the ideals of musicality and illusion on the other. It is little wonder chimes were considered a problematic phonogen. However, we also find analogous comments about other phonogenic subjects ordinarily heard from afar. The "blending power of distance" was thus said to contribute to the "enchantment" of band music in its usual environment, whereas "the listener at the phonograph was brought too near the band," giving the forte passages of band phonograms a "strident and metallic sound."<sup>248</sup> "The phonograph emphasizes defects and blemishes as the camera used to before photographers became artists," a *New York Times* critic complained in December 1890;<sup>249</sup> recordists had then still been working out the details of their analogous "art" of flattering illusion.

Another subject that was often characterized as difficult to record was the female voice. Far fewer women than men worked as phonogenic vocalists during the period I am discussing, and modern critics have understandably been eager to explain this fact in terms of broader issues of gender and voice. Unfortunately, such critics

rarely work from primary sources or distinguish between different periods in phonographic history, so their conclusions must be treated with caution. Jennifer Forrest comments in an article of 1999 that

phonographed recordings of female voice monologues were a catastrophic failure for record manufacturers. The public plainly refused to buy them, even though this refusal contradicted the immense popularity of the female monologue in vaudeville (McKay 199). One can infer that the monologue was acceptable only as long as it could be returned to the female body from which it originated. The second it became detached, it was perceived as disruptive and dangerous.<sup>250</sup>

Forrest's article as a whole focuses on the late nineteenth century, but in this case her endnote points to a summary by Anne McKay of a specific exchange of mid-1924 in *Radio Broadcast* magazine: a dealer reported that the recording industry had lost money manufacturing female spoken-word phonograms before discovering that the speaking voice of an unseen woman was "very undesirable, and to many, both men and women, displeasing."<sup>251</sup> Similar views were articulated elsewhere about that same time; thus, Theodor Adorno claimed in an article of 1927 that the female voice in general was less suitable than the male voice for phonography because it "requires the body as a complement."<sup>252</sup> This belief, to the extent that it can be documented, may well have influenced the phonographic culture of the 1920s. However, no equivalent comments appear in any of the phonograph-related literature I have surveyed from the 1890s or 1900s, suggesting that the issue did not arise, at least consciously, until somewhat later. Furthermore, despite what might be read metaphorically into the denial of a phonographic "voice" to women, there is little evidence that phonogenicity was linked to broader social enfranchisement, and some comments even suggest quite the opposite:

Negroes take better than white singers, because their voices have a certain sharpness or harshness about them that a white man's has not. A barking dog, squalling cat, neighing horse, and, in fact, almost any beast's or bird's voice is excellent for the good repetition on the phonograph.<sup>253</sup>

During this time, the female voice *was* supposed to be especially difficult to record satisfactorily, but only in the same sense that other subjects were problematic—for reasons of acoustics, not because concerns with the presence or absence of the female body were any greater than in the case of any other phonogen. "Women's voices and stringed instruments such as violins did not record well," recordist Fred Gaisberg reminisced years later, lumping the two into the same broad category.<sup>254</sup> A turn-of-

the-century guidebook issued by Edison's National Phonograph Company advised: "The amateur will do well to avoid the sorrow that is almost inevitable in attempting to make a record of a high tenor, a soprano or a violin,"<sup>255</sup> explaining a little later that "women's voices are the least satisfactory records for an amateur to attempt, on account of the great amplitude as well as the rapidity of the vibrations";<sup>256</sup> an actual recordist confirmed that the problem was that "the tones 'blast' when the upper register is reached."<sup>257</sup> Contemporary statements like these support a primarily technological explanation for the rarity of female phonogenic vocalists in the acoustic era. "It was not sexist attitudes of the day that prevented women from entering studios," concludes Tim Gracyk, instead laying the blame for their underrepresentation squarely on the primitive state of early recording equipment.<sup>258</sup>

Still, the fact that female voices were considered technically difficult to record did have cultural implications of its own. One was that much of the credit for the few successful phonograms of women's voices tended to go to men who had devised new techniques or equipment capable of recording them rather than to the women who phonogenized them. In 1892, songwriter C. J. Wilson invented a special horn mechanism that, it was said, "at last improved the Edison phonograph so that it will be able to transmit and record soprano tones on phonographical cylinders,"<sup>259</sup> and the next year Richard Townley Haines reportedly "secured a new diaphragm that catches and repeats the upper notes of a 'cantatrice' which have heretofore eluded the recording power."<sup>260</sup> Women did not acquire phonogenic technique; rather, equipment was redesigned so that it could "take" their voices. It is true that a female vocalist was sometimes given credit for having an unusually phonogenic voice,<sup>261</sup> but even in such cases the performer generally had to share the credit with the recordist who "took" particular phonograms, much as a painter or photographer "took" the image of a female model and was considered its author.<sup>262</sup> The basic acoustic problem was that female voices were more likely than male voices to cause "blasting," possibly due to their higher average fundamental tone. As we have seen, the industry's initial strategy for reducing blast was to substitute thicker, less responsive diaphragms, but these had the drawback of yielding "weaker" phonograms. Some recordists interpreted the "weak" results they obtained when

trying to record women as supporting widespread preconceptions about the relative feebleness of the female voice, as did Charles Marshall,<sup>263</sup> while others who pursued different strategies for reducing blast concluded that women's voices were *too* powerful for the recording apparatus at close range.<sup>264</sup> The practice of having performers move towards and away from the recording funnel to avoid blasting without "weakening" the phonogram overall was first reported in 1890 specifically with respect to the female voice:

It is a very difficult thing to get a good record of a female singer. The high, loud notes are liable to jar the delicate diaphragm too harshly, and in that case the reproduction of these notes is apt to be a discordant sound that is unpleasant to the ear and destroys the entire effect of the harmony. The only way to avoid this is for the singer to move further away from the instrument when these notes are reached, and it is very difficult to make the ordinary artist understand and act upon this. Miss [Lillian] Russell's first two attempts were partial failures on this account, but she learned the lesson quickly.<sup>265</sup>

Female performers were evidently being asked to move back and forth vis-à-vis the recording funnel to reduce the risk of blasting several years before their male counterparts were burdened with the same responsibility. In other words, they had to adapt more intensely to the needs of the technology at an early date than the men did. However, their agency in overcoming the technical challenges of the recording process rarely received comment. In 1898, for instance, the Kansas City Talking Machine Company advertised phonograms by May C. Hyers as "made by the use of a new process which we control exclusively" and possessing "the sweetness of voice which is so lacking in many records made by the female voice."<sup>266</sup> The *Phonoscope* described this "new process" as follows:

Mr. H. W. Schroeder, of Kansas City, has hit upon an idea, perfected it and made successful records of a woman's voice. May C. Hyers, known as the "Black Patti," sang several solos into the phonograph, which were afterwards reproduced with good results.

The method by which Mr. Schroeder has regulated the diaphragm to a woman's voice is very simple. Near the base of the horn, which conveys the voice into the machine, is a valve operated by an air bulb connected with it by a small hose. The bulb is held in the singer's hand and when she reaches particularly high notes in her song she presses the bulb, which opens the valve, allowing part of the volume of sound to escape. Thus the excessive vibration of the diaphragm is reduced and the needle properly records the tones.<sup>267</sup>

May C. Hyers, who was likely the first black female recording artist, used a handheld bulb to vary the sensitivity of the recorder on the fly, depending on how loud she was singing. Even though she was the one both phonogenizing and manipulating the controls, it was the inventor of the apparatus who, according to this article, had "made

successful records” of her voice. By distinguishing the female vocal phonogram from the male vocal phonogram as a major *technological* problem, the early recording industry drew attention away from the phonogenic skills of female vocal performers, denying them credit for aspects of their work that was routinely given to their male counterparts. During the 1890s, the one notable exception to this trend was Estella Louise Mann, who was said to have “one of the few feminine voices which have ever made a successful record for the talking machine,”<sup>268</sup> not to mention a “complete mastery of the art of record-making.”<sup>269</sup> However, Mann also owned and operated her own minor recording firm, the Lyric Phonograph Company, and so was probably in a better position to control publicity surrounding her work.<sup>270</sup>

It is difficult to pinpoint just when phonogenic performance first became a paying job. As early as June 25, 1888, Edison’s secretary sent cornetist Theodore Hoch a check for \$15 “to cover the expenses of yourself and your friends in connection with your recent visit to the Laboratory” and encouraged him to return soon to test a new model of phonograph, “which is a great improvement over the one you tried.”<sup>271</sup> The laboratory was willing to spend money on phonogenic talent, but the sum in this case was presented not as a payment but as a reimbursement, and it was combined with the suggestion that Hoch would want to return and try the improved machine simply to satisfy his own curiosity, not to earn money. It seems Wangemann’s recording program relied at first mainly on voluntary appearances by musicians curious about the new technology.<sup>272</sup> During early to mid-1889, some musicians continued to be coaxed into performing for Edison’s phonograph simply in return for the novel experience and sometimes the added prestige of having their cylinders sent to Europe, one of the most eager being vocalist Anna Lankow, whose phonograms were destined for Bayreuth.<sup>273</sup> Other performers were less enthusiastic. The banjo player William B. Lomas, whose stage name was Will Lyle, had once phonogenized some pieces under Wangemann’s supervision on the understanding that they would be sent overseas, but when Edison’s secretary invited him to come back in August 1889,<sup>274</sup> he expressed unhappiness with the outcome of his earlier visit:

I received an invitation to visit the Lab[o]ratory at Orange, to play a few solos in the Phonograph, which I must decline. I am obliged to you for the invitation, but as it will not benefit me in any

shape by an advertisement or financially, I think I will not come. Wougarman [sic] told me that it would advertise me when I was there last time, but it did'nt [sic], and I doubt if one of the tubes ever went to Europe at all.

Now, if there were to be a number of celebrities to perform in the Phonograph, I would most willingly and gladly accept, under the impression of getting an ad., however I am greatly obliged to you, for thinking of me.<sup>275</sup>

Lomas had a change of heart and phonogenized several times later that year, but now he received eighteen dollars a session for his work—and wrote to complain when one of the payments was late.<sup>276</sup> The cornetist Theodore Hoch also received two payments of twenty dollars each during the first half of 1889,<sup>277</sup> and although Effie Stewart is not listed as receiving any payment for a recording session of June 18, it seems she took the opportunity to hit Edison up for a \$175 loan.<sup>278</sup> The recording program obtained other phonogenic performers through an established network of New York City union musicians centered on Henry Giesemann and Max Franklin.<sup>279</sup>

It might have been feasible to bring soloists to West Orange from New York City to record, but when it came to larger ensembles, the practice was to rely on local groups that could be brought to the laboratory *en masse*. Two local bands appear in early entries in the recording ledger at Edison's laboratory: Duffy and Imgrund's Fifth Regiment Band of Orange on June 17, 1889 and Fred Voss' First Regiment Band and Orchestra of Newark on August 2. Fred Voss proposed terms for regular phonogenic work on August 12, ten days after his band's trial effort: "The Expenses for the Orchestra & Band of 8 pieces that includes 'Xylophone [sic] Solo' will be \$20.00 please let me hear by return mail, if all right, and then I will let you know, when I will come."<sup>280</sup> For its brass band phonograms, the laboratory instead opted to go with Duffy and Imgrund's Band, who now began phonogenizing on a regular basis for up to six and a half hours at a time,<sup>281</sup> being paid a total of \$427 over the next few months, or about seventeen dollars per session, plus a voluntary contribution to their uniform fund.<sup>282</sup> However, the laboratory also began to draw on Voss' First Regiment Band for individual musicians, starting with its xylophonist Asa Thomas Van Winkle.<sup>283</sup> Van Winkle was accompanied during his recording sessions at the end of August 1889 by two other Newark-based musicians, Edward Issler and George Schweinfest, receiving a payment of \$18.20.<sup>284</sup> Issler and Schweinfest returned on several occasions in September, with Issler on piano and Schweinfest playing flute,



and within a matter of weeks, Issler and his colleagues had displaced the earlier Gieseemann-Franklin circle of New York union musicians as the laboratory's regular instrumental performers. From October 1889 onwards, the standard instrumental repertoire was monopolized by Issler, Schweinfest, William Tuson on clarinet and David B. Dana on cornet, and the name "Issler's Orchestra" was given to ensembles made up of these and a few other musicians.<sup>285</sup> The fact that the Issler circle was centered in Newark, and so enjoyed more convenient access to West Orange than did musicians in New York City, likely played a part in the laboratory's decision to favor its members for phonograph work; on at least one occasion, Schweinfest appears to have gone in on short notice when a performer from New York had to cancel a session.<sup>286</sup> Issler's Orchestra was to become one of the most prolific and popular phonogenic ensembles of the early 1890s, and Tuson and Schweinfest were responsible for the vast majority of clarinet, flute, and piccolo phonograms recorded in the United States over the next dozen years. It is probable that they owed their later success to being in the right place at the right time to get a head start in developing phonogenic performance techniques.

Successful phonogenic performers were rare and so could demand a good wage from the recording companies for which they worked, but that "good wage" always had to be evaluated relative to what the same performers could earn elsewhere. A few musicians and speakers who were celebrities in the realm of live performance took well to the phonograph, according to newspaper reports from the winter of 1890-91,<sup>287</sup> but as long as there was no means of mass-duplicating cylinder phonograms, filling the demands of the industry required artists to devote an increasing percentage of their time to recording sessions, phonogenizing the same selections over and over again. In terms of pay and glamor, recording companies could not hope to compete with theatrical managers for the regular services of major celebrities, and so could not fill the demand from their work, regardless of whether their voices recorded well or not.<sup>288</sup> On the other hand, the companies could offer a competitive wage to lesser-known performers who might otherwise have been employed in less prestigious theaters or vaudeville but whose voices or techniques were especially well suited to phonography. The New York Phonograph Company

offered what it considered generous remuneration to the few performers it discovered who were able to master the art of phonogenic performance: “Although most of our applicants volunteer to sing for nothing, just to have their names repeated by the machine,” explained the manager, “we pay a good and suitable singer well.”<sup>289</sup> In 1894, Charles Marshall stated that he paid performers with phonogenic voices “from \$50 to \$75 per week for less than four hours work.”<sup>290</sup> By that point, a division was already forming between performers who had turned to phonography as a primary source of income and others who pursued it only as part-time or occasional work,<sup>291</sup> and this distinction had sharpened by the end of the decade:

In New York City there are over one hundred musicians and vocal specialists whose talents are devoted entirely to the phonograph in some one of its forms.... The makers of phonograph records are of two classes—the professionals referred to above and the occasional speakers and musicians who appear before the recording machine only because of their fame or importance. [As to the former:] Most of them have come to their vocation from the concert hall, the lecture platform, and other callings that have for their mission the entertainment of the public. They are coming to be a distinct class, like the artists and writers who make up the Bohemian section in the great composite of metropolitan existence.<sup>292</sup>

As this account suggests, a relatively small group of specialists, today known colloquially as “pioneer recording artists,” came over time to dominate the field of phonogenic performance, quite distinct from the leading *live* performers of the day. However, the typical “professional” of the acoustic recording era was not a performer who had been barred from conventional venues for some reason, as is sometimes implied—William Kenney cites Ada Jones’s epilepsy, Billy Murray’s affliction with tuberculosis and Bright’s Disease, and a facial scar Len Spencer is sometimes said (probably wrongly) to have had. It is true that Jones, Murray, and Spencer were not major theatrical celebrities, but at the same time they did have moderately successful careers as live performers and did not shy away from the stage because of medical conditions or visible disfigurements.<sup>293</sup> Rather, phonogenic performers had only to have experienced modest enough success as live performers for regular phonograph work to have remained economically attractive to them. Some might not otherwise have pursued performing careers at all. The Irish tenor George Gaskin, who had a remarkably “tinny” voice that recorded well but was probably not as highly esteemed in its unmediated form,<sup>294</sup> once stated that if it had not been for the invention of the phonograph he would have been a carpenter.<sup>295</sup> As it was, an 1896 article reported

that he “is now spending about one-third of his time in front of phone horns. Mr. G’s voice is a staple article and sells as fast as he can record it.”<sup>296</sup> Gaskin also performed in live Sunday concerts and in vaudeville,<sup>297</sup> but it was apparently the availability of phonograph work that had made his choice of a performing career economically viable. Because phonogenization was so time-consuming, performers had to choose strategically between it and other lines of work. In 1899, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* commented that banjoist Vess Ossman “is practically never at dances now, his entire time being given to the making of phonograph records,” a fact that created special interest in one of his rare live concerts;<sup>298</sup> he was, about that time, under contract to provide Columbia with one hundred phonograms per week.<sup>299</sup> Although some performers did manage to combine or alternate between phonogenic and live work, becoming a professional phonogenic performer in the late 1890s was a career choice distinct from becoming a professional “singer” or “actor” in the usual sense. The recording industry recruited new performers regularly during the 1890s and 1900s, but insofar as phonogenic performance was a learned skill, experienced persons had a significant advantage over untested and untrained newcomers to the field. Commercial phonography thus came to have its own big names who commanded a premium because of the consistent quality and reliability of their work.

Although the Columbia Phonograph Company had vigorously promoted its local Washington-area artists during the early 1890s, particularly the United States Marine Band, its increasing dominance during 1893-95 was due more to its control over key patents and techniques than to its access to skilled recordists and prominent phonogenic performers.<sup>300</sup> That began to change in the fall of 1896, when it hired the expert recordist Victor Emerson away from the United States Phonograph Company.<sup>301</sup> Soon afterwards, Columbia relocated its recording headquarters from Washington, D. C. to the geographic center of the industry, New York City,<sup>302</sup> where it arranged exclusive contracts with a couple of key performers who had done regular work under Emerson at his former place of employment: Len Spencer and George Schweinfest.<sup>303</sup> Then, in mid-1898, it followed this up with an even more aggressive effort to consolidate all recognized phonogenic talent:

During the last month this company has made exclusive contracts with the recognized “star” record makers, for their exclusive services for one year. This contract is a very expensive one for the

Columbia Co., but nevertheless a very valuable one as they practically command the standard record market of the world.... We know what it costs to command the services of this array of talent, and think our readers will be interested to know that the amount which will be paid for their services during the next year, will aggregate exactly Forty-eight Thousand Dollars. Four of the artists will be paid over \$100 per week.<sup>304</sup>

Recording companies had secured exclusive contracts with individual performers before,<sup>305</sup> but never on this scale, and Victor Emerson was credited with making the coup possible: “Aside from his skill Mr. Emerson is very popular with the ‘talent’ and it has been largely through his efforts that the company has been able to secure the exclusive services of the leading record-makers.” There were only so many skilled phonogenic performers in the United States, and if Columbia could control all of them, the competition would simply no longer have anyone to record. “In addition to having a patent monopoly,” the *Phonoscope* observed, the company has practically cornered the talent market.”<sup>306</sup>

But Columbia’s exclusive contract policy was extraordinarily expensive to maintain, and its immediate benefits lasted only as long as the terms of the individual contracts. The January 1899 *Phonoscope* announced that a small competitor had already arranged to record Len Spencer, George Gaskin, and Dan W. Quinn as soon as their Columbia contracts expired on April 1,<sup>307</sup> and although Columbia quickly managed to get Gaskin to sign up for another year, Spencer and Quinn—and most of the others—apparently went back to being free agents.<sup>308</sup> It was clear that retaining exclusive control over this prestigious roster of talent would, at best, be a constant struggle with no guarantee of continued success. Besides, in the meantime the competition had successfully recruited a new generation of unattached performers to fill the talent vacuum created by Columbia’s actions.<sup>309</sup> Consequently, Columbia switched to a new strategy. Starting with its catalog of July 1899, it removed all artists’ names from its listings, identifying them only by such categories as “whistling solo” and “baritone.”<sup>310</sup> In spite of objections,<sup>311</sup> Columbia continued a policy of downplaying its artists’ names for several years.<sup>312</sup> The object of this policy, I suspect, was to substitute the reputation of the Columbia brand name for that of individual performers and ensembles whose continued loyalty to the company could not be taken for granted—similar to the terms in which Richard deCordova explains the Biograph company’s later policy of withholding the names of its individual film

actors.<sup>313</sup>

### **The Drama of Education**

Thus far we have considered only the production of phonograms, but now I would like to take a look at what exactly was being done with them after they were manufactured. During the late 1880s and 1890s, phonographic education events involved three main variables: (1) whether phonograms were educed through ear tubes or through a horn; (2) whether there was a live exhibitor in charge of the education event or whether it was controlled by a coin-actuated “nickel-in-the-slot” machine; and (3) whether the education event occurred in a public place (a lecture hall, street corner, phonograph parlor) or a private home.

The distinction between horn and tube education in phonography is largely one of projection, equivalent to the distinction between individuals peering at moving pictures through peepholes and larger audiences gathering to see images projected onto screens. However, we should be aware of some additional characteristics of horn and tube education. First, tubes fell into two categories: they could be designed for use by single listeners or branched more than once so that several pairs of earpieces could be connected to a single phonograph, an arrangement known to the trade as the *way-tube*. Second, the quality of sound heard through tubes was found to be markedly superior to that heard from horns. When Jesse Lippincott held a phonograph and graphophone exhibition for “a few friends” in January 1889, a reporter commented in fairly typical fashion: “These bits of music when heard through the brass ear trumpet, as it might be called, were a little thin and distant, but heard through the small listening tubes, were as loud and distinct as they would be if the band had been playing beneath the windows in the street, or in the next room.”<sup>314</sup> The music of the United States Marine Band emerged from horns in what one writer described as “elfin clangs,”<sup>315</sup> whereas tubes reportedly gave listeners “a curious delusion almost as if the voice came from just behind the head.”<sup>316</sup> In the late 1890s, Columbia recommended the use of tubes whenever the size of the audience permitted, citing their acoustic superiority, and urged its dealers to make sure every prospective

customer heard at least one phonogram through them.<sup>317</sup> However, the tubes still proved unpopular. “The public object to them,” Edison stated in an 1895 deposition; “the demand is for a funnel.”<sup>318</sup> Sometimes the preference for horn education was justified purely with reference to the advantages of projection,<sup>319</sup> but it was also said that having to hold the tube to one’s ear “rather dispels the illusion,”<sup>320</sup> and there was some fear that incautious use of ear tubes might cause deafness or transmit disease.<sup>321</sup>

Different forms of education required different qualities in phonograms. Horn exhibitors needed phonograms of sufficient volume for an audience seated in a hall of reasonable size to be able to hear,<sup>322</sup> whereas exhibitors who used way-tubes did not need quite as much volume, and machines fitted with only single sets of ear-tubes could make do with even less. As a result, a phonogram that was perfectly satisfactory for one form of education could be too quiet for another. Just as some subjects were difficult to record *in general*, others were difficult to record *loud*, in which case the challenge for recordists was to produce phonograms that were suitable not only for tube use, but for horn use as well.<sup>323</sup> If someone could record a difficult phonogenic subject loud enough for horn use, that was taken as a sign of overall success—hence Reed, Dawson and Company’s boast that their violin phonograms could be heard through a horn from a hundred feet away.<sup>324</sup> Since the volume of commercial phonograms varied widely during the 1890s, advertisements sometimes commented on the suitability of different items for different forms of education: Dan W. Quinn’s vocal solos were supposed to be equally good “for single-tube, way-tube, or horn use,” whereas George Gaskin’s were recommended as the best for horn use, since they could “be heard in the remotest corner of a great theater,” although they were “not unpleasantly loud when heard through the tubes.”<sup>325</sup> But horn exhibitors were warned not to order titles by certain other performers: thus, soprano solos by Lilla Colman were “suitable only for use with the tubes—*Not adapted for horn reproduction*,” and selections by the Manhattan Quartette were likewise “good for tube use, but not loud enough for reproduction through the horn.”<sup>326</sup> Tenor solos by a Mr. Maxwell were euphemistically described as “specially adapted for tube work,”<sup>327</sup> which was to say, not loud enough for other kinds of work. Quite apart from the overall suitability of a performer’s output for horn or tube use, individual phonograms

also varied in loudness due to inconsistencies in the processes of recording by the round and mechanical duplication, so some companies asked customers to specify what sort of use they planned to make of the phonograms they had ordered.<sup>328</sup> One might assume that the policy was simply to give customers who specified tube use whatever phonograms had been rejected as too low in volume for horn use, but one company claimed that some of its phonograms were “so loud that they could *not* be used for tube use with satisfaction, as they can be heard with the horn several blocks away.”<sup>329</sup> Louder phonograms were also said to sound “scratchy” through tubes.<sup>330</sup> Thus, phonograms could be either too quiet for horn use or too loud for tube use.

The phonograph exhibitions of 1888 already featured all three methods of education (horns, single tubes, and way-tubes),<sup>331</sup> and during the following decade each came to be associated with a distinctive form of exhibition. One form of professional phonograph exhibition was the “concert” employing a projecting horn, held in an enclosed space with a fee charged for admission. Two recognized masters of this form were the brothers M. C. and M. J. Sullivan, who conducted over three hundred phonograph exhibitions in the New York area between 1889 and 1891 and were considered “a leading attraction on the concert stage.” Each brother appears to have taken responsibility for a different aspect of these concerts, as we read: “The quaint humor of Mr. M. J. and the expert manipulation of Mr. M. C. scarcely ever failed to win the warmest applause.”<sup>332</sup> Thus, M. J. presumably did more of the talking, while M. C. ran the machine. Both roles required considerable creativity and ingenuity, as M. C. asserted in a *Phonogram* article published in 1893, prefaced as follows:

Hitherto, there has existed a popular belief that to interest and entertain an audience by the help of this instrument, it was only necessary to set it going, and let the songs, dialogues and other matter recorded, roll out in regular succession. But in this, as well as in all other avocations, there is an art. What that art is, Mr. [M. C.] Sullivan tells the people very agreeably and generously.<sup>333</sup>

M. C. warned that the good exhibitor did not “rest content with simply ‘feeding’ cylinders to the machine as constituting his part of the entertainment,” but had to use all his “inventive powers” to ensure that the exhibition was “an animated, shifting kaleidoscope, presenting new features at every turn, as variety secures the powerful

effect of contrast.” The key to a good phonograph exhibition, he argued, lay in stage presence and dramatic structure:

Serious incidents should be of short duration and made powerful. Comic incidents should be numerous and carefully mingled with the serious. The transition from humor to pathos should not be too rapid, each cylinder should be made a separate element and every effort should be made by the exhibitor to cluster about it a single central animated idea.<sup>334</sup>

The art of dramatic education to which M. C. Sullivan alluded has been examined most thoroughly by Charles Musser through the example of Lyman Howe, who conducted phonograph exhibitions with a partner named Haddock in the territory of the Eastern Pennsylvania Phonograph Company beginning in March 1890 and left behind a conveniently rich trove of scrapbooks. “Though presenting a wide range of prerecorded material, some by well-known artists,” Musser argues, “these exhibitors rightfully claimed credit as the authors of their programs. Not only responsible for making many of their recordings, they also organized them into coherent form, with appropriate introductions and juxtapositions.”<sup>335</sup> Whether the recording laboratory or the exhibition hall should be considered the primary site of “authorship” in early phonography is ultimately a matter of perspective and opinion, but phonograph concerts, as live events, were undeniably more than just the sum of their constituent phonograms, and not only because of the sequential order the exhibitor imposed on them. They typically began with short introductory speeches, as a delegate to the 1893 convention of the National Phonograph Association observed:

In giving this public exhibition it is necessary to say a few words at the start regarding the phonograph, its construction, and various uses, the method of taking records and reproducing them. Although the phonograph has been before the public for a number of years, it is astonishing to note the number of people who are utterly ignorant as to its general construction and usefulness; but it would not do to stand up and simply fire at the audience a lot of songs and bands, without a preliminary talk, which should be short and to the point. The audience is always more anxious to hear the machine than to hear you.<sup>336</sup>

By explaining the workings of the equipment, the exhibitor could present the event as not just an entertainment but also an educational experience modeled on the scientific lecture and demonstration. Of course, too much lecturing could detract from the event’s status as a concert, and exhibitors sometimes avoided giving at least part of the standard lecture by educing spoken-word phonograms designed to make the machine “describe itself,” a practice I will treat more fully in chapter three.



Exhibitors also talked between phonograms, introducing them and commenting on them afterwards. M. C. Sullivan offered the following advice:

Suspense is one of the most important means of creating interest. Reproductions that are well known and have a special significance for the audience are best presented by alluding to them in some manner that will prepare for what is coming.... A timely allusion in every case pertaining to the subject of the cylinder heightens the effect. In most cases a bit of humor is twice as effective when it follows an instance of pathos, and the best way to apply this is to have some pithy word or phrase ready to “spring” the moment a cylinder is finished.<sup>337</sup>

The way in which an exhibitor introduced a phonogram could profoundly affect an audience’s perception of it. Consider the following newspaper account, quoted by Musser: “Prof. Howe announced that the next number would be a very common vocal selection which would doubtless be familiar to all. Many thought of Annie Rooney and Comrades, but when it proved to be the crying of a young child as though its heart would break the laughter of the audience knew no bounds.”<sup>338</sup> Without Howe’s introduction, or with some other kind of introduction, the phonogram of a baby’s crying would presumably not have had the same impact. Another exhibitor, George W. Hunt, was credited about the same time with “reproducing almost everything in the musical line from Trinity’s chimes to a cat concert in the backyard.”<sup>339</sup> Hunt may have introduced a phonogram of cats’ yowling in musical terms (a “cat concert”) to evoke laughter following the same comic strategy as Howe’s introduction of a baby’s crying as a “vocal selection,” but he also had other strategies for framing the same phonogram, or a very similar one, as we see in a report of another of his exhibitions:

As another cylinder was being placed in the machine Mr. Hunt said that when he had left the phonograph at the church that afternoon he had supposed it would be perfectly safe, but that the next selection would speak for itself. Immediately the sounds of a terrific family quarrel or of a contest between cats, it was not apparent which, issued from the funnel and brought shouts of laughter from the audience.<sup>340</sup>

This time, instead of presenting the cats’ yowling as music, Hunt identified it as something his phonograph had accidentally recorded in a church, creating a different but equally incongruous association. Although Hunt claimed that the phonogram “would speak for itself” on this occasion, its humor actually relied mainly on the way in which he had introduced it. In theory, even silence could be keyed as phonographically meaningful, as Robert Ganthony illustrates in a burlesque of the phonograph exhibition:

The first English “Record” will be a Scotch one, a Scotch gentleman playing a Scotch bagpipes on a Scotch mountain twenty Scotch miles off. If you think you would like to hear that I will get the apparatus in order. The Scotch bagpipes twenty miles off. (*Pause.*) Did you hear anything? No, I guess not; well, that shows you *the accuracy of the apparatus*.<sup>341</sup>

Still, phonograph exhibitors generally needed *something* to introduce and juxtapose and so took “infinite pains to obtain not only perfect records, but a well chosen programme of amusements, both musical, recitative, and of a mixed character,”<sup>342</sup> placing a premium on variety.<sup>343</sup> Exhibitors of the late 1880s and 1890s sometimes continued to record their own material, either as part of their exhibitions or at other times. Retrodution, while no longer as essential as it had been in the tinfoil era, was still useful for demonstrating the whole process of phonography rather than just its end result and allowing listeners to compare the phonogenization with its “reproduction,” an opportunity that did not arise in the case of prerecorded selections educed cold in the absence of their originary performers. It occasionally resulted in the discovery of new phonogenic talent for the commercial recording industry, one example being Dan W. Quinn,<sup>344</sup> and it allowed exhibitors to build up collections of locally recorded phonograms for use in their subsequent exhibitions, as one—a Professor T. F. Menefee—stated explicitly in his advertising: “in addition to the regular program will reproduce a few selections by ‘Home Talent[’] and will also show you how the music is taken and reproduced. Therefore I suggest you have your best musical talent present that I may procure a good Record for the purpose of exhibiting in future work.”<sup>345</sup> According to Charles Musser, Lyman Howe relied mostly on his own locally recorded selections during his first season as a phonograph exhibitor (1890-91) because few prerecorded cylinders were yet being offered for sale. By the following season (1891-92), he was better able to balance his own recordings of local talent with cylinders bought from various North American sub-companies, but even then his local-interest phonograms remained an important attraction in their own right: “Friendly rivalry and curiosity about their neighbors’ musical groups boosted attendance, attracting amateur musicians and their supporters.”<sup>346</sup> Meanwhile, Victor Emerson had first been active as an exhibitor but had gone on to focus on recording. It seems that a number of people entered the business as generalist phonograph operators, recording and exhibiting concurrently,

and only later came to specialize primarily in one or the other line of work depending on the nature of their unique personal skills and opportunities.

A second form of professional phonograph exhibition relied on way-tubes, allowing exhibitors to restrict access to the educed sounds while operating in a public setting rather than in an enclosed hall. Photographs of such exhibitions typically show groups of listeners clustered around single machines, each person connected via a separate tube with its ends dangling from his or her ears. The exhibitor collected the required price in return for each tube and was able by this means to keep people from listening who had not paid.<sup>347</sup> Way-tube exhibitors, like horn exhibitors, could guide auditors verbally through the listening experience if they chose, framing phonograms in particular ways to heighten their effect. For instance, one exhibitor reportedly convinced his listeners that the “thump” produced when the stylus ran over a crack in a cylinder had actually been a part of the originary performance:

A retired (not tired) graphophone exhibitor once told me the best money-making record he had was a cylinder which was cracked “way across.” He said it was an orchestra waltz selection and was cracked (I mean the record) in such a manner that the stylus passed over the crack in time with the music. He assured me that his patrons believed him when he explained to them the wonder of the machine—that would record the second violin played in the orchestra tapping his foot on the floor.<sup>348</sup>

Listeners had sometimes associated the strange noises educed from damaged cylinders with such familiar sounds as the “roar” of locomotives and the “snap” of torpedoes,<sup>349</sup> and this exhibitor turned the same impulse to his advantage by identifying the offending “thump” as something consistent with the subject being represented, a foot tapping in time with the music. Notwithstanding such examples, way-tube exhibition was not quite as conducive to creative juxtaposition, dramatic structure and elaborate verbal keying as horn exhibition was. Horn exhibitors enacted structured programs for large audiences all at once, whereas way-tube exhibitors presented individual selections *a la carte* to much smaller groups. There was no convenient opportunity for way-tube exhibitors to deliver the kind of formal preliminary talk by which horn exhibitors justified their programs as educational, although they may have pitched their offerings to passersby and answered questions on an individual basis. Exhibitions at fairs were considered more reputable than ones on street corners,<sup>350</sup> but neither setting enjoyed as much broader prestige as the

lecture hall. Way-tube exhibitors also had to contend with the popular aversion to ear tubes, which even led to them being banned from one Philadelphia park as a health hazard.<sup>351</sup>

A third form of professional phonograph exhibition centered on the coin-actuated machine and differed from the two forms already discussed mainly in that no live exhibitor was responsible for conducting it. In the latter half of the 1880s, the “nickel-in-the-slot” mechanism was just emerging as a major technological fad. Vending machines had begun dispensing such commodities as cigars, postage stamps and spritzes of perfume automatically at the drop of a coin, “thus avoiding the necessity of the services of a salesman.”<sup>352</sup> Other coin-actuated machines had been introduced for indicating one’s weight,<sup>353</sup> testing one’s strength,<sup>354</sup> administering a minor electrical shock as a novelty,<sup>355</sup> issuing life insurance policies,<sup>356</sup> and a host of other applications. Even automatic musical instruments had been fitted out in this way, judging from a scheme reported in early 1889 for placing nickel-in-the-slot musical boxes in train depots.<sup>357</sup> It was only natural that the same principle would be applied to phonographs, and experimental efforts in this direction had already begun by 1887.<sup>358</sup> The first well-documented commercial placement of a coin-actuated phonograph was made by the Pacific Phonograph Company, using a distinctive mechanism of local design, at the Palais Royal saloon in San Francisco on November 23, 1889.<sup>359</sup> During the first months of 1890, a New York corporation known as the Automatic Phonograph Exhibition Company was formed to exploit a set of patents pending on the adaptation of phonographs to coin-in-the-slot use; despite its efforts to establish a monopoly, however, no single interest ended up controlling the nickel-in-the-slot phonograph business.<sup>360</sup>

Each of these early coin-actuated phonographs contained only one cylinder at any given time, rather than offering a selection of several choices. They were also fitted with ear tubes; these were not “juke boxes” that projected sounds indiscriminately into their surroundings. The Pacific company’s instrument was designed to allow four people to listen to a phonogram at once, by analogy with the way-tube exhibition: the first nickel set the mechanism in motion and opened one tube, but the three remaining tubes remained pinched shut so that no sound could pass

through them unless additional nickels were inserted.<sup>361</sup> However, the vast majority of nickel-in-the-slot phonographs were equipped with only a single tube and pair of earpieces. At first, they tended to appear singly (or occasionally in pairs) in places such as saloons, ferry-ports,<sup>362</sup> “drug-stores, hotels, depots and other places where people gather,”<sup>363</sup> and their geographic dispersal led to a distinctive kind of social outing. In November 1890, the *New York Journal* reported that there were by then nearly a hundred machines scattered throughout the city. “Each instrument furnishes but one selection,” the writer admitted, “but as each hotel is provided with a new cylinder every day the interest is practically inexhaustible.” Hearing a representative sample of this material required mobility and a time commitment on the part of the listener:

The ruling fad now among this class of men [“blase men about town, who have squeezed all the juice out of the New York entertainment lemon”] is a phonograph party. Four or five men start out together from a given hotel to take in all the phonographs they can find. At the Albemarle Hotel they each in turn start the machine with a nickel and listen to a stanza of Fred Warren’s latest song. At the Hoffman House they hear Fanny Rice and Jefferson de Angelis. At the Fifth Avenue they are surprised to hear William Hoey say that everybody in town is “after him, he’s the individual they require,” and so on, until ten or fifteen hotels have been visited and the party have heard a little bit of the very latest things in town rendered with so startling and realistic effect that it seems almost impossible that the human voice can issue from wax and iron.<sup>364</sup>

One man referred to this habit as a “phonograph spree” and considered it necessary to get liquored up beforehand to enhance the experience.<sup>365</sup> The practice of phonograph-hopping suggested that some customers were eager to hear, and to pay for, more than one phonogram per occasion, a conclusion also supported by other evidence. When the Pacific Phonograph Company had followed up its first coin-in-the-slot phonograph at the Palais Royal by placing a second in the same saloon, the second machine had not led to a drop in proceeds from the first, as the company’s president Louis Glass reported: “if a man puts a nickel in once and hears a piece of band music, he almost invariably goes over and hears a second one.”<sup>366</sup> One response to this impulse was the phonograph *parlor*, a room in which multiple coin-actuated phonographs were concentrated together, each with a different selection. The earliest known phonograph parlors were situated in newly opened urban *arcades*, quasi-public spaces analogous in form and purpose to twentieth-century indoor

shopping malls. James Andem, president of the Ohio Phonograph Company, explained the innovation to his colleagues as follows:

The receipts at first were quite large [from coin-operated machines scattered about town], but the cost of inspection was very heavy, the cylinders were easily damaged and thrown out of adjustment, and people treated the machines in a pretty rough manner at times. We finally grouped them together in what we call a system of arcades. We have a place in Cincinnati called an arcade, and one in Cleveland of the same sort. We found there that by putting the machines in groups of ten, having an attendant present to make changes and keep the machines in the best adjustment in which they can be kept, the receipts were larger.<sup>367</sup>

The *Phonogram* later gave more details about the Ohio company's two parlors:

The Cleveland room was opened to the public September 15, 1890, and the one in Cincinnati in the early part of November, 1890.... On Saturdays and Sundays these exhibition parlors are crowded, and oftentimes quite an effort must be made before one can get possession of the coveted hearing-tubes when a cabinet contains a popular selection which all desire to hear. In each parlor are twelve automatic cabinets, containing phonographs, arranged around the sides of the room, the announcement card of each giving the name of the particular selection which can be heard for that day. Every morning a new series of cylinders are placed upon the machines, giving an entirely new programme, except that certain popular, much-called-for records are kept constantly on exhibition to answer the recurring demands of the patrons of the parlors.

Both parlors were designed to meet the aesthetic standards of the upscale arcades in which they were located. The same article reported that they were brightly illuminated with incandescent lights, their phonograph cabinets finely crafted from oak,<sup>368</sup> and Andem even took steps to dispel fears about hygiene: "Attached to the side of each machine is a napkin and holder to enable parties to cleanse the hearing tubes before listening, in case they desire to do so. These are changed and are always neat and clean."<sup>369</sup> A further innovation, in 1892, was the installation of coin-actuated phonographs aboard passenger steamships, another relatively upscale venue.<sup>370</sup> Two years later, plans were underway to place machines on passenger trains.<sup>371</sup>

Along with the distinctions between horn and tube education and between coin-actuated machines and events supervised by live exhibitors, there was also an important divide, already hinted at, between the respectable phonograph exhibition and the disreputable one. Lyman Howe's advertising emphasized the impeccable propriety of his presentations, many of which were endorsed by, and held in, local churches: "Clean, Scientific, Amusing and Elevating—nothing like the Ordinary Phonograph that is seen on the Streets, in Hotels and at the Fairs." In contrasting Howe's exhibitions with the nickel-in-the-slot business, Charles Musser

acknowledges that both featured “such recordings as comic songs, cornet solos, and band music,” but suggests that there were other types “unique to each situation.” The exhibitions could feature scriptural readings, for example, while coin-operated machines in saloons might contain obscene material.<sup>372</sup> Nineteenth-century writers had themselves taken for granted that material suited to one context would cause scandal in the other:

A wide field for the use of the little phonograph will be afforded in Sunday school exhibitions, but if the audience attentively listening for “Sweet By and By,” or “Hold the Fort,” should be suddenly horrified with the rollicking “Razzle Dazzle,” or the jovial “Drink Her Down,” the superintendent’s immediate resignation would be in order.<sup>373</sup>

However, reality was not so simple. As of August 1890, the Georgia Phonograph Company had placed four nickel-in-the-slot phonographs in Atlanta: one at Brietenbucher’s Beer Palace, one at Boggan’s saloon, one at Beermann & Silverman’s cigar store, and one at Jacobs’ drug store. The last of these, it stated, was “for the special benefit of ladies and children, and the musical selections placed on this instrument will be particularly adapted to their tastes”; and yet a comparison of the selections offered in each location shows it was actually the saloons that received such fare as MOTHER’S APPEAL by George Gaskin and ROCKED IN THE CRADLE OF THE DEEP by the Manhansett Quartette.<sup>374</sup> The next year, the Missouri Phonograph Company reported that the most successful phonogram selection in a seedy St. Louis saloon had proven, contrary to all expectations, to be the hymn NEARER, MY GOD, TO THEE. The company’s general manager, had “placed it in one saloon as an experiment,” and “when the man went around the next day to change it, the proprietor asked to have it left, and it was still in demand at the end of the week.”<sup>375</sup> The president of the company explained that the saloon clientele “had taken that cylinder in preference, and it was called for, to be placed back on the phonograph after having been taken away at the end of the first week.”<sup>376</sup> “Then,” said the manager, “I think we had on at one time fifteen or twenty pieces of sacred music in one of the worst saloons in St. Louis, and they had a regular run there and were exceedingly profitable.”<sup>377</sup> The president argued on the strength of this evidence that it was a mistake to think “that people desire to have vulgarity in the songs,”<sup>378</sup> claiming that the phonograph could instead serve as an “educational influence” welcomed by all

classes, so long as it was given a chance to do so. When he had educed “good old songs” such as NEARER, MY GOD, TO THEE and OLD OAKEN BUCKET by phonograph for his own houseguests, he claimed that they had responded with astonishment: “I never have heard any such songs; I have heard ‘Daddy wouldn’t buy me a bow-wow,’ and I have heard these other classes of jim-jam songs, but I did not know that the phonograph was capable of producing anything like these artistic results.”<sup>379</sup>

Meanwhile, the patrons of phonograph parlors actually showed a marked preference for the despised “jim-jam” class of songs. Charles Marshall gave the following explanation for why he did not bother to record much “classical” music:

In my parlors at Atlantic City, where are 120 phonographs, the classical selections are ignored almost entirely. The machines containing such songs as ‘The Bedouin’s Love Song’ and ‘Thou Art Like Unto a Flower’ yield only \$1, while songs such as ‘Throw Him Down, McCloskey,’ and ‘One of His Legs Is Longer Than It Really Ought to Be’ yield as much as \$15 per day.<sup>380</sup>

In short, we should not be too hasty to generalize about correspondences between the content and contexts of phonographic education during this period. Indeed, critics observed with amusement that people who would have considered it socially inappropriate to attend particular kinds of performance in person had no qualms about listening to equivalent material on the phonograph. “It was very odd,” wrote one in describing a phonograph exhibition, “to see ministers and people who never go in a theatre sit and applaud the reproduction of J. F. [sic, really John P.] Hogan’s Hot Corn song and sketch.”<sup>381</sup> “Refined-looking women who would be shocked to find themselves in the music halls where the songs are sung on the stage cloister around the phonograph with delight,” observed another of a nickel-in-the-slot machine.<sup>382</sup>

The phonograph has often been characterized as having an ability to recontextualize performances, creating new and sometimes unanticipated audiences for them and exposing individuals to genres they might otherwise have shunned. Such evidence as we possess suggests that early phonographic audiences too relished the opportunity to hear material from which they were ordinarily insulated, whether that happened to be church hymns or music-hall songs.

Nickel-in-the-slot phonographs existed in settings ranging from elegant shopping districts to disreputable saloons, in conditions ranging from the well attended to the unsanitary and malfunctioning, in groups or singly. What they all had



in common was the lack of a live educationist-exhibitor. In parlors, there were at least attendants on hand to make change and so forth,<sup>383</sup> and these sometimes took on certain aspects of the exhibitor's role,<sup>384</sup> but customers basically served themselves, deciding whether or not to listen to the selection on an isolated phonograph or, in parlors, choosing and moving between machines on an individual and unguided basis. Consequently, the *signs* on coin-actuated phonographs assumed special importance as an initial point of contact between individual phonograms and potential listeners. There was some effort to make these signs attractive. The Ohio company used cards "printed handsomely in script type occupying as much space as possible,"<sup>385</sup> while the State Phonograph Company of Illinois tried to make its signs "not artistic particularly, but plain, so that people can read them across the room."<sup>386</sup> Along with signs on individual machines, phonograph parlors also posted "programmes" of each day's selections in their display windows.<sup>387</sup> According to Charles Musser, nickel-in-the-slot phonograph patrons tended to be "attracted to a particular selection by its titillating title,"<sup>388</sup> but the signs were not limited to listing "titles" as such. They also functioned in part as substitutes for verbal introductions by a live exhibitor, framing each phonogram in certain ways rather than others, giving "some information in regard to it,"<sup>389</sup> enhancing its appeal, and ultimately shaping listeners' experience of it. James Andem gave his views on this subject in 1891, along with a specific example:

We have found that the receipts of the slot machines to a great extent depend upon the way the cylinder is announced [on the accompanying sign]. If you simply give a short announcement of it, which conveys no information except what the man may hear, it does not arouse his curiosity, and he looks at it and he does not think from the announcement that he would like to hear it. But if you will put on the full announcement, stating what it is, in as effectual away as the circumstances will warrant, you will observe an increase in the receipts. In our arcade system, I have, upon a wager, taken an inferior cylinder and increased the receipts of the day by putting on a very attractive announcement.

We hired a gentleman from an adjoining territory to sing a number of banjo songs, and that cylinder was put on a machine in our arcade, and it was announced as an-old-time-before-the-war banjo song sung by a plantation darkey. I think the receipts from that machine ran about \$4.75 to the day. It went away ahead of some of the Marine Band receipts.<sup>390</sup>

Andem's belief that the written "announcement" was responsible for the high receipts, rather than the content of the phonogram itself, was clarified in subsequent discussion:

Mr. Grant [manager of the Kentucky Phonograph Company]: The President of the Ohio Company has just made a statement here that he has taken from our territory an old Kentucky nigger to sing some for him. From that nigger[’s] songs he received a net profit of \$4.70 a day. I think we ought to claim a share.

Mr. Conyngton: Mr. Andem provided for that. He said it was not the song, it was just the label.

Mr. Andem: It was Kentucky music, and very poor.<sup>391</sup>

The phonogram contained what Andem regarded as “inferior” banjo songs performed by someone he had hired for the purpose from across the Ohio state border— apparently a black performer from Kentucky, although this is not entirely clear and, indeed, was supposed to be beside the point. By labeling it as he did, Andem transformed content he thought would ordinarily have been despised as “poor” music into a focus of enthusiastic attention, i.e., authentic sounds of the antebellum South. What Lyman Howe achieved in performance by introducing the crying of a baby to his lecture-hall audience as a “vocal selection,” Andem achieved with a written placard. It is true that live exhibitors, including Howe, occasionally issued printed lists of the phonograms they educed during their shows, either on posters or (much more rarely) in programs,<sup>392</sup> but these lists were only supplementary to the exhibitors’ verbal introductions and did not bear the same communicative burden as the signs on coin-actuated machines. The initial framing work for individual phonograms on nickel-in-the-slot machines was thus distinguished by being done visually rather than aurally.

Despite complaints about how easily the nickel-in-the-slot phonograph could be “beaten,”<sup>393</sup> many of North American’s local sub-companies quickly found it to be the most remunerative branch of their business. In May 1890, Louis Glass of the Pacific Phonograph Company told his colleagues that “all the money we have made in the phonograph business we have made out of the-nickel-in-the-slot machine.”<sup>394</sup> By June 1891, several more sub-companies were in the same position: “We are depending wholly upon coin slot machines for our support”; “we are paying the expenses of our company entirely from the receipts and profits on our automatic-slot machines”; “if it were not for the automatic-slot we could not pay expenses.”<sup>395</sup> A survey taken at that time suggests that roughly one in every three phonographs then in use had been put out in the form of a nickel-in-the-slot machine.<sup>396</sup> Not only was this aspect of the business more lucrative than the others, but it also required less effort to

exploit. “It was a much easier way of obtaining an income,” James Andem recalled years later, “than to endeavor to place commercial machines and face the opposition of the stenographer.”<sup>397</sup>

The leadership of North American disapproved of the turn the business was taking, and the discourse about the risks entertainment uses posed to the phonograph’s reputation as a “practical” machine entered a new phase. An anonymous editorial, for which the vice-president of North American later took credit,<sup>398</sup> appeared in the first issue of the *Phonogram*, dated January 1891, accusing certain sub-company managers of making a “fatal mistake” by neglecting the “legitimate side of the business,” i.e., leasing phonographs as stenographic tools, in favor of the “coin-in-the-slot” business, which was “calculated to injure the phonograph in the opinion of those seeing it only in that form, as it has the appearance of being nothing more than a mere toy.”<sup>399</sup> This editorial was so controversial that some of the sub-companies ended up boycotting the *Phonogram* in response; James Andem, who had just opened his phonograph parlors in Ohio, seems to have interpreted it as a personal attack.<sup>400</sup> The *Phonogram* subsequently published alternative opinions about the “musical” and “business” aspects of phonography, now asserting that “the success of one is not prejudicial to the interests of the other,”<sup>401</sup> but the North American leadership continued to portray the nickel-in-the-slot business as a perilous distraction during 1892: it was “the evil spirit that spread its wings and flew over all these companies and seemed to hypnotize them,” such that they “commenced to pick up the nickels and lost sight of the dollars.”<sup>402</sup>

As before, these statements should not be read as a total repudiation of entertainment uses of the phonograph. Rather, North American’s leaders felt that the sub-companies were becoming so preoccupied with nickel-in-the-slot machines that they were no longer giving the stenographic side of the enterprise an honest effort. Besides, the ultimate vision of the recording industry and its market, as first articulated in the tinfoil era, had never centered on nickel-in-the-slot machines or other forms of exhibition in public places. A few commentators had predicted that phonographic education events would occur in halls in lieu of live concerts and lectures, and some had also anticipated the appearance on the streets of phonographic

equivalents to organ-grinders,<sup>403</sup> but most writers of 1878 had expected the future recording industry to supply phonograms for private home listening. During the 1880s and 1890s, this so-called “social” market was evaluated separately from the nickel-in-the-slot and public exhibition markets and was thought to be much more promising in the long term. At the 1893 convention of the National Phonograph Association, Erastus Benson suggested in his presidential address that the “commercial interests” and “social Phonograph,” meaning the entertainment phonograph in private homes, were both destined to be major parts of the enterprise, while he dismissed public exhibitions and nickel-in-the-slot machines as “minor phases.”<sup>404</sup> Even nickel-in-the-slot pioneer Louis Glass had predicted in 1890 that this aspect of the business would only remain lucrative “for three or four years.”<sup>405</sup> Thus, we should not equate the industry’s wariness about the nickel-in-the-slot business with an overall bias against phonographic entertainment: it owed at least some of its inspiration to a broader goal of relocating phonography from public settings, where its attraction was credited rightly or wrongly to short-term novelty, to private ones, whether business offices or domestic parlors.

The use of phonographs for home entertainment dates back somewhat earlier than most previous writers have concluded, albeit on a relatively small scale. The Metropolitan Phonograph Company had begun offering to conduct private exhibitions for a fee by February 1889, a few months before any of the new Edison phonographs were officially available for rental.<sup>406</sup> The company’s secretary described this practice at the convention of sub-company representatives held the following summer:

We have one source of revenue which we hardly think any other company in the United States has; we give regular exhibition[s], in private houses. We receive \$25 for each exhibition. We have had as high as twelve or fifteen exhibitions in one week.... We have specially prepared cylinders which we call exhibition cylinders which we use for this special work.<sup>407</sup>

But phonographs were also finding their way into private residences on a more permanent basis. The president of the Metropolitan Phonograph Company stated: “We have many most enthusiastic users of the machine. One in particular might be called a crank on the subject. He sometimes has spent as high as a hundred dollars a week for musical cylinders.”<sup>408</sup> A newspaper article from that December remarked

that a private collector of phonograms in New York, perhaps the same one, could already “give a six-hours’ entertainment in his own house at any time, presenting the different artists, whose voices he has ‘bottled up,’ so to speak, in some of their most popular and successful rôles.”<sup>409</sup> This was doubtless an atypical case, but an anonymous representative at the 1890 conference suggested that “domestic use” was “one of the largest fields that we haven’t worked” and argued that “all well-to-do families” could afford the phonograph as both a source of music and a correspondence tool for sending and receiving spoken messages.<sup>410</sup> Even businessmen who leased phonographs mainly to record letters for their secretaries to transcribe sometimes worked from home,<sup>411</sup> where the machines would also have been available for recreational uses. By 1891-3, home phonograph entertainments were not uncommon, although they were limited to certain social strata:

The value of the machine for social purposes has been very generally recognized in the Eastern States, where the “social phonograph,” as it is called, is to be found in the houses of many wealthy people, especially suburban residences. The machine which can be used for dictating correspondence one evening can the following night be made to furnish music for a dancing or other social gathering.<sup>412</sup>

A story by William Dean Howells published during this period already treated the presence of a “family phonograph” as normal for an upper-class household,<sup>413</sup> and special parlors for “phonograph parties” were reportedly being incorporated into “well appointed” houses alongside ballrooms and billiard rooms.<sup>414</sup> By 1893, Edison was able to write to his associates in Europe:

Our experience here [in the United States] shows that a very large number of machines go into private homes for amusement purposes— ~~and that as soon as they learn that there is a that~~ such persons do not attempt to record nor desire it for that purpose they simply want to reproduce. It has always been my idea that <sup>one of</sup> the greatest fields for the phonograph was ~~th~~ in ~~perfect~~ the household for reproducing all that is best in oratory & music but I have never got any one to believe it until lately. You will have ere this received photog[rap]hs of a Cabinet for the phono for private use. It is designed to imitate an organ as it was found that any odd design did not have that familiar appearance as an upright piano or organ.<sup>415</sup>

Despite Edison’s optimism, and his willingness to offer machines that looked more like parlor organs, the phonographs of 1893 were still out of the price range of most American households due largely to the cost of their electric motors. The chemical batteries that supplied these motors with electricity were also troublesome. For one thing, they had to be regularly serviced, which was believed to constitute more of a nuisance in private homes than in business offices.<sup>416</sup> Furthermore, they were smelly

and leaky. One woman was said to have appreciated the phonograph's value as home entertainment enough not to complain "when she sniffs the malodorous fumes from the battery which supplies the motive power or finds a distressing stain on one of her beautiful rugs, due to the acid contained in the said battery,"<sup>417</sup> but others might have been less tolerant. North American's leadership conceded that phonograph batteries were "not suitable for putting in anybody's parlor."<sup>418</sup>

It was the introduction of spring-driven motors that really made the phonograph viable as a home entertainment device, both by lowering its price and by eliminating the mess, odor, and inconvenience of chemical batteries. This was a matter on which Edison was perceived to be dragging his feet,<sup>419</sup> but with the bankruptcy of North American in the fall of 1894, a number of parties began independently adapting Edison phonographs to use spring motors,<sup>420</sup> while a spring-driven "graphophone" was introduced as well.<sup>421</sup> Declaring in 1895 that he was "going in for households instead of nickel-in-the-slot machines,"<sup>422</sup> Edison finally announced a spring-motor model of his own in April 1896, shortly after founding the National Phonograph Company, touting it as an innovation that would make the new technology more generally affordable. "What good would my incandescent lamp have been if only a few millionaires could have enjoyed it?" he asked rhetorically, listing some of the musical and elocutionary performances he had been able to enjoy from his phonographs and commenting, "I would not be human if I didn't want everybody to share my pleasure with me." He showed a prototype machine to a *New York Times* reporter:

"There you are," said Edison, with a glance of diffident pride. "You see it is run by clockwork and a spring. I can put that on the market for thirty-five or forty dollars. It is intended for reproducing records of any kind. Another form is made for recording, and a little extra expense fits it for both purposes. Thus, you see, you can hear the best music in the world and the finest declamation for less than the price of your wash bill.

"It is wound up by this crank in ten seconds. It runs for 4½ minutes. Two of the ordinary record cylinders can be run through in that time, and all the present records of song, music, and recitation are available."<sup>423</sup>

The first important detail here was that the new machine would come by default with only a "reproducer" for the education of prerecorded phonograms; the recorder, so essential for dictation uses, was now an optional accessory. The second important detail was the price. The latter half of the 1890s witnessed a phonograph price war

culminating in the tiny \$7.50 Edison Gem of 1899,<sup>424</sup> along with plenty of other models to match a range of income brackets. Even Sears, Roebuck and Company began offering phonographs in its 1897 catalog, remarking:

The Graphophone or Talking Machine is a most wonderful invention, but until recently the prices were so high that their use has not become very general. All this is now changed and they are becoming so popular that thousands of private families are purchasing them for home entertainment.<sup>425</sup>

Although recording companies continued to use electric motors when taking commercial phonograms,<sup>426</sup> the spring-driven phonograph quickly became the norm for other purposes. As phonographs became increasingly commonplace, the demand for phonograms grew as well, intensifying efforts to mass-produce them.

### **Phonography Becomes a Mass Medium**

Edison's solid wax cylinder format had virtually monopolized the American recording industry of the early 1890s, but in the latter half of the decade it was beginning to meet with some competition from Emile Berliner's gramophone. As will be recalled, this instrument recorded a laterally modulated trace on a zinc disc covered with a thin layer of wax such that when the disc was submerged in an acid bath the exposed trace was etched into the zinc as a groove. The earliest commercial gramophone "plates" were recorded and sold between 1890 and 1893-4 not in America but in Europe, to accompany a hand-cranked toy gramophone manufactured by the German firm of Kämmer and Reinhardt. These five-inch discs, most of which were duplicates pressed from negative electrotype "stampers," contained unaccompanied recitations, songs, and instrumental solos, and Berliner himself is believed to have phonogenized some of them.<sup>427</sup> It was not until the fall of 1894 that gramophones and duplicate gramophone discs—now increased in diameter to seven inches—were finally offered for sale on a small scale in the United States. The first gramophones sold in the American market had to be turned by hand, like the Kämmer and Reinhardt toys, but by the end of 1896 a spring-driven model was available, vastly improving sound quality during education. Popular interest was drummed up through a vigorous advertising campaign conducted by Frank Seaman, who received

an exclusive sales agency covering most of the United States and has been called the “father of phonograph advertising.”<sup>428</sup> Recognizing a threat, those with a vested interest in the cylinder recording industry began trying to discredit Berliner’s system through creatively worded attacks. An 1898 editorial in the *Phonoscope* warned that the gramophone

sounds first like escaping steam. You listen more attentively hoping for better things and you are next reminded of the rumbling of a horseless carriage. Finally, when the attempt to reproduce a voice is begun, you are forcibly compelled to liken the noise from the Gramophone to the braying of a wild ass.... Its blasty, whang-doodle noises are not desired by citizens of culture.... Wax records are not intended to be so loud as to blow off the side of a man’s face; but wax records are pleasing to the ear.<sup>429</sup>

The National Phonograph Company’s publicity organ, the *Phonogram-2*, liked to refer to the gramophone as the “scratch-o-phone,”<sup>430</sup> or even as “an instrument of Satan,”<sup>431</sup> and the same company’s booklet *The Phonograph and How to Use It* (1900) questioned what the acid-etching process did to the recorded groove: “It is as if a child with a black blunt lead pencil should trace over the delicate strokes of a fine signature.”<sup>432</sup> In spite of such disparagement, the market for Berliner’s gramophones and gramophone discs continued to expand during the closing years of the nineteenth century.<sup>433</sup>

One of the gramophone’s chief attractions was its sheer volume. Although it might not have been able to “blow off the side of a man’s face,” it was at least loud enough to be heard under conditions in which a phonograph could not. One innovation of the late 1890s can be seen as an answer to the challenge: the Graphophone Grand, a new machine designed to accommodate a cylinder five inches in diameter as opposed to the standard two and one-eighth inches. The length (four inches), groove pitch (100 tpi [threads per inch]), and number of revolutions per minute remained the same as before, so the new cylinders did not have a longer playing time than usual, but the increased surface speed meant that a significantly greater volume of sound could be achieved during eduction, allowing phonograms to be used in new contexts and for new purposes. This oversized cylinder format was not entirely new, having already been used for some of the masters from which mechanical duplicates were made, but it was first introduced for public sale about the beginning of 1899 with such slogans as “Speak to it in undertones, it repeats in



THUNDERTONES.”<sup>434</sup> Edison’s National Phonograph Company quickly began producing its own larger blanks for commercial sale, introducing a new machine, the Edison Concert Phonograph, as its answer to the Graphophone Grand.<sup>435</sup> Overall, phonography had just become much louder than before.

Today, phonograph historians often point out that discs were easier to copy than cylinders and assert that this fact gave Berliner an immediate advantage by allowing him to engage in the mass duplication of individual phonograms. There is some truth to this observation, but in the 1890s, gramophone disc masters were still only *relatively* less ephemeral than the masters being used in mechanical cylinder duplication. As far as is known, Berliner was able to make one negative stamper from each master, which he used in turn to press copies for sale until it wore out. He sometimes obtained more copies from a stamper by producing a “secondary master” from it, a pressing in a special substance from which a new stamper could be created in turn, but this entailed an objectionable loss of quality.<sup>436</sup> Although reliable figures are hard to come by, it appears that about ten times as many copies could be made from each disc stamper as from each master cylinder used in mechanical duplication; a good yield was probably roughly a thousand in the one case as opposed to a hundred in the other.<sup>437</sup> Thus, Berliner was still obliged to have performers rephonogenize selections from time to time to fill the demand for popular titles as old stampers wore out and needed replacement. Because the masters could yield only limited numbers of duplicates, only so much attention could be lavished on each one in terms of quality control.<sup>438</sup> Berliner had predicted in 1888 that gramophone performers would earn royalties from their discs,<sup>439</sup> but he ended up paying them flat fees for phonogenizing comparable to what cylinder companies of the period were offering for equivalent work—for instance, a dollar or two for a standard vocal number.<sup>440</sup> With a few exceptions, Berliner tended to rely on the same well-known phonogenic performers employed by the cylinder recording companies, as his associate Fred Gaisberg recalled:

Professional phonograph vocalists of established reputation like George J. Gaskin, the Irish tenor, Johnny Meyers, the baritone, and Dan Quinn, the comedian, were expensive but they had loud, clear voices and provided us with effective records of “Down Went McGinty to the Bottom of the Sea,” “Anchored,” “Sweet Marie,” “Comrades” and so forth. We averaged up by employing lower-paid local talent secured from the beergardens and street corners of Washington.<sup>441</sup>

Berliner also recruited other veterans of the cylinder recording industry, including Gaisberg himself, who had done some work for Columbia, and the expert recordist Calvin Child.<sup>442</sup> In terms of its performers, its recordists, its payment of flat fees rather than royalties, and its need to stockpile multiple ephemeral masters of each selection, Berliner's recording program of the 1890s was far from revolutionary. The *format* was new, but most of the forces shaping the phonogram as a cultural form remained the same.

The graphophone interests must soon have grown concerned about the market share their products, including Columbia cylinders, were losing to Berliner's disc format, and they took steps towards gaining a partial interest in it. First they threw their support behind the efforts of one of Berliner's former employees, Joseph W. Jones, to patent a method of recording disc masters in wax. Next, Berliner's sales agent Frank Seaman grew dissatisfied with his cut of profits and created his own competing Zon-o-phone brand of machines and discs, and the graphophone interests supported him against Berliner, who was forced to quit the business in the United States and relocate to Canada in the summer of 1900. That fall, Eldridge Johnson, a former associate of Berliner's, put his own wax-mastered discs on the market, leading to the incorporation of the Victor Talking Machine Company in October 1901. Joseph W. Jones' patent was finally granted in December 1901 and assigned to the graphophone interests, which had reached some kind of distribution agreement with the independent Globe Record Company, producer of the new Climax Record (they accordingly ceased supporting Zon-o-phone, which had to restructure but did continue in the disc business). Eldridge Johnson, anticipating a lawsuit over his wax recording method, craftily bought the Globe Record Company, cutting off the graphophone interests' source of discs; he then agreed to sell the company to them (after which Climax Records became "Columbia Disc Records"), but only in return for their pledge to drop any plans to sue him. In 1903, Victor and Columbia concluded a formal cross-licensing agreement on the basis of which they were to seek a joint monopoly over the disc recording business for years to come. A variety of independent disc manufacturers did come into being during the mid-1900s: a couple

of cylinder recording companies, Hawthorne & Sheble and Leeds & Catlin, switched to the new medium, and when production of Zon-o-phone was taken over by Victor, a new International Record Company arose at its former pressing plant. However, the last of these minor concerns had been sued out of existence within a few years, leaving Victor and Columbia in full control of the gramophone disc format.<sup>443</sup>

The usual term for the early gramophone disc today is the “seventy-eight,” in reference to the 78 rpm speed commonly associated with it. In fact, disc speeds remained somewhat inconsistent throughout the 1890s and 1900s, though we can detect a gradual narrowing of the accepted range of speeds and an increase in the average speed from the lower to the upper 70s.<sup>444</sup> By contrast, cylinder recording speeds underwent more sudden and extreme changes. Cylinder technology had originally been optimized for recording four to five minutes’ worth of intelligible dictation at 80-100 rpm, but sound quality could be improved by running the machine at higher speeds. During the 1890s, recording speeds for commercial musical cylinders had gravitated towards a recommended 120-125 rpm range, yielding a little over three minutes of playing time.<sup>445</sup> Around the turn of the century, cylinder recording companies began raising their recording speeds in an effort further to increase volume and sound quality. A couple minor companies of that period ran their machines at speeds of up to 185 rpm,<sup>446</sup> but the major companies embraced less extreme increases: Columbia and Edison’s National Phonograph Company both switched to 144 rpm in mid-1900,<sup>447</sup> and in 1901-2 they jumped to 160 rpm,<sup>448</sup> a speed that was to remain the industry standard until commercial cylinder production came to an end in 1929. These increases in disc and cylinder recording speeds brought improved sound quality, but the trade-off—all other things being equal—was a reduction in available playing time, an issue to which I will return momentarily.

As we have seen, Edison had expected all along to duplicate cylinder phonograms for sale using moulds, but technical obstacles and the overall state of the industry had long made this impracticable. His National Phonograph Company had finally begun moulding duplicate cylinders for commercial use at the end of 1897, but these duplicate phonograms had not been sold directly to the public and were instead used, starting in June 1898, as masters for mechanical duplication,<sup>449</sup> a practice

Columbia adopted as well.<sup>450</sup> It was not until the beginning of 1902 that Edison finally began selling moulded cylinder phonograms directly to customers, and Columbia followed suit a few months later.<sup>451</sup> However, the first moulded cylinder phonograms actually offered for sale in the United States had been produced by neither Edison nor Columbia but by the Lambert Company of Chicago, incorporated in March 1900 and named for Thomas B. Lambert, an inventor who had then just received a patent on a method of producing moulded duplicate cylinders in celluloid, a material that had the advantage of being far less fragile than the usual metallic soap.<sup>452</sup> In August 1906, the celluloid cylinder patents were sold to the Indestructible Phonographic Record Company of Augusta, Maine, which had reorganized at Albany, New York by the time it introduced a second series of celluloid cylinders the following November, now known to collectors as the “Albany Indestructibles.”<sup>453</sup> No other cylinder recording companies operated on any scale in the United States during this period; meaningful entrepreneurship in the field was now limited to parties whose control of patents allowed them to manufacture moulded duplicates of one kind or another. Mechanical duplication was abandoned as a commercial process, and even small-scale cylinder record pirates had to use moulds if they hoped to create a saleable product.<sup>454</sup> As Edison had predicted years before, the sale of moulded duplicates had also eliminated the intense demand for “originals” and, with it, the specialist market that had been served by the small, independent cylinder recording companies of the late 1890s.<sup>455</sup>

Moulded cylinder phonograms had a number of advantages; for example, since they did not have to be “cut,” they could be cast from materials that would support a greater weight during education and so produce a greater volume of sound. Most of all, however, Edison advertising of 1902 stressed that moulding ensured a uniformity and perfection of manufacture that had been unattainable during the era of mechanical duplication.<sup>456</sup> Since manufacturing “originals” in quantity was no longer necessary, the venerable practice of grouping together multiple recording horns around a performer could now be phased out in favor of techniques aimed at obtaining a smaller number of flawless masters. In the summer of 1902, the *Phonogram-2* reported that the National Phonograph Company had formerly run

fifteen or twenty phonographs simultaneously to record its band phonograms but was then using only five,<sup>457</sup> and a year later the *American Machinist* stated that the number had been reduced to one.<sup>458</sup> The phonogram taken on that one machine was afterwards subjected to rigorous aesthetic critique and examination under a microscope before being approved as a master,<sup>459</sup> a level of attention that would have been inconceivable under the old circumstances.

Rather than being used directly to produce commercial duplicates, master cylinder moulds were used to make submasters from which new moulds were made in turn, and it was these secondary moulds from which duplicates were being manufactured for sale, a practice that further reduced wear and tear on masters and dramatically increased the number of copies each one could yield.<sup>460</sup> The mastering of gramophone discs underwent an analogous transition towards the end of 1902. Until that time, disc recording companies had been capable of deriving only a limited number of pressings from each master they recorded—for instance, the practice for Zon-o-phone discs had been to preserve original wax masters and take one or two additional stampers from them according to demand, by which point the wax master had invariably deteriorated beyond the point of rescue; then there was no alternative but to remake the selection from a new phonogenic performance, which was costly, inconvenient, and could yield a less attractive take.<sup>461</sup> The situation changed in late 1902 or early 1903, when Victor perfected a new system of disc duplication that vastly increased the number of copies it could make from each master, similar in principle to the moulding process recently introduced for cylinders. The “father,” a negative metal mould made directly from the wax master, was used not to stamp out copies for sale but to produce positive metal “mothers,” from which multiple negative metal stampers could be made in turn.<sup>462</sup>

It is important to recognize that the new “permanent” master phonograms of this period, whether for discs or cylinders, were still only “permanent” relative to their predecessors. They continued to suffer gradual degradation through their use in duplication and were eventually liable to wear out; it just took a lot longer for this to happen.<sup>463</sup> Furthermore, recording companies did not always wait for existing masters to wear out before remaking selections. As they developed new formats,

superior duplication methods, and improved techniques of recording and phonogenic performance, they also remade older selections simply to bring them up to what they considered current standards.<sup>464</sup> Thus, even in the era of the “permanent” master, old selections continued to be remade periodically from new phonogenizations. Still, it was now economically feasible to lavish far more effort on the recording of individual masters than before because the cost of each one could be spread out over many more copies, and that had implications for the form the phonograms themselves would take. Piano accompaniments had been standard for popular songs and instrumental solos throughout the industry’s early years, but in 1903-4 there was a general shift towards providing “orchestra” accompaniments instead, which until then had been uncommon.<sup>465</sup> As can be imagined, this move greatly increased the number of performers and the amount of technical hassle involved in producing each master phonogram, but the extra effort was offset by the greater number of copies that could be made from each take. From 1904 onward, recording companies generally avoided piano accompaniments as old-fashioned and unimpressive, and when older selections were remade, it was often in order to replace an outmoded piano accompaniment with something more up-to-date. The almost universal transition from piano to orchestra accompaniment in 1903-4 was one of the most audibly conspicuous changes in early commercial phonography, but it was apparently unique to that realm, neither reflecting a trend in live musical performance nor instigating one. Nor does it seem to have been primarily the result of advances in recording technology, since phonogenic vocalists had occasionally been accompanied by “orchestras” since the early 1890s, although recordists did grow more successful over time at keeping the orchestra from “drowning” the words of songs.<sup>466</sup> Rather, it had become economically feasible through new methods of duplication, and once it had become feasible, the intense competition within the industry had forced all participants to adopt it.

The phonogenic performer’s job had been so firmly associated with the repetition of material by the round to produce ephemeral “originals” or masters that, when the *Phonoscope* had announced the development of an indestructible cylinder in 1900, it predicted that the demise of the “professional Phonograph artist” would

necessarily follow.<sup>467</sup> Although technological improvements gradually reduced the value of certain characteristics in a phonogenic singing voice,<sup>468</sup> the introduction of the permanent master did not put phonogenic performers out of work, since the industry still relied on their medium-specific expertise.<sup>469</sup> Nevertheless, performers were still being paid a flat fee, by the take, rather than royalties based on the number of copies manufactured and sold. That soon began to change in the case of prestigious opera singers, but during the period we are concerned with here all “popular” performers were paid for the labor of phonogenizing, not for an abstract intellectual property right in the results like that accorded to the author of a book. Fewer takes ultimately meant less pay, and performers who had been earning a good living since the 1890s finally began to experience the disadvantageous relationship vis-à-vis phonography that critics had predicted for them back in the tinfoil era.<sup>470</sup> They were not all put out of work, but one was now less likely to see them, as in 1899, “lined up on pay day, wearing their sealskin coats and diamonds, with a four horse truck outside to carry off the coin.”<sup>471</sup>

As various interests struggled for control of the disc record industry at the start of the twentieth century, one tactic they employed was increasing the diameter of their discs to lengthen their playing time. Beginning in 1894, the Berliner discs sold in the United States were all roughly seven inches in diameter, as were the discs of Berliner’s early competitors and his successor, Eldridge Johnson, up through the end of 1900. The situation changed at the beginning of 1901, when Johnson introduced a line of ten-inch “Monarch” records to complement his seven-inch “Victors.”<sup>472</sup> Frank Seaman retaliated a few months later with a new Zon-o-phone line of nine-inch “Superba” discs,<sup>473</sup> and the Globe Record Company seems to have produced both seven and ten-inch Climax discs from the start of its operations that fall. In 1903, twelve and fourteen-inch discs followed, though the latter were short-lived;<sup>474</sup> and over the next few years, the original seven-inch size was gradually phased out across the industry as obsolete.<sup>475</sup> The main effects these developments had on phonography as a medium were an increase in the maximum available recording time and the emergence of a situation in which performers sometimes had to draw out the “same” selections to varying lengths to fit different formats: thus, a given piece of

music might now have to be adapted differently to yield satisfactory seven, eight, nine, ten, twelve, or fourteen-inch versions. Although some companies experimented with other sizes after 1908, the ten and twelve-inch sizes were to dominate the industry for the next four decades, the ten-inch size serving as the default for standard fare and the twelve-inch size as an alternative for material recordists felt would benefit from the extra duration.

As noted above, the turn of the century witnessed an increase in the speeds at which commercial phonograms were recorded—a gradual upwards drift in the case of discs, two abrupt jumps in the case of cylinders. With discs, any loss of available playing time occasioned by higher speeds was offset by simultaneous increases in diameter: a ten-inch disc recorded at 76 rpm still had a greater capacity than a seven-inch disc recorded at 70 rpm. However, cylinders continued to have the same physical specifications as before, so in their case the increases in recording speed led to a significant reduction in playing time—from just over three minutes at 125 rpm to just over two at 160 rpm. All selections offered on cylinder had accordingly to be cut in length by roughly one third between 1900 and 1902, a serious liability for that format. Eventually, cylinder recording companies resorted to a couple of different strategies for boosting cylinder playing times without retreating from the 160 rpm speed. First, in April 1905, Columbia introduced the Twentieth Century cylinder as an equivalent to its larger disc sizes. Six inches long rather than four, the new format had a capacity of nearly three and a half minutes, “capable of containing all of an ordinary composition without its being cut,” but it also required consumers to buy a special Twentieth Century graphophone with an extra-long mandrel.<sup>476</sup> This innovative format proved unpopular, but the issue became moot during the first half of 1908 when Columbia discontinued cylinder production altogether, opting instead to distribute the celluloid cylinders of the Indestructible Phonographic Record Company as “Columbia Indestructible Cylinder Records.”<sup>477</sup> Edison’s National Phonograph Company took a different and more successful approach to the duration issue in October 1908, when it introduced the wax Amberol cylinder. The Amberol was the same length and size as a standard cylinder, but its groove pitch was made twice as fine at 200 tpi, doubling its playing time. Instead of being forced to buy



entirely new machines to play the new records, customers could obtain conversion kits to adapt their existing Edison phonographs to the new specifications. The National Phonograph Company also continued to issue new standard “two-minute” cylinders for four years after 1908, in practice treating its two formats much as Columbia and Victor did their ten-inch and twelve-inch discs, assigning content to one or the other depending on the amount of time required to do it justice, although trade literature justified the continuation of the 100 tpi format as a temporary concession to consumers who had not yet bought new phonographs or conversion kits.<sup>478</sup> In October 1912, the National Phonograph Company abandoned both the 100 tpi cylinder and metallic soap as a material in favor of the rugged 200 tpi celluloid Blue Amberol.<sup>479</sup>

Domestic phonographic entertainments, which in the 1890s had been the prerogative of the very wealthy, were now becoming feasible for an increasing proportion of the middle class. The nature of these events in the private sphere is harder to document than that of the earlier public phonograph exhibitions. However, we do find the industry encouraging customers to continue thinking of education events as “concerts.” Some of Frank Seaman’s advertisements for the Berliner gramophone included sample programs, such as the following “Home Entertainment” of 1897, accompanied by a photograph of “one of the most varied entertainments ever given in a private parlor”:

PART FIRST.

|                                   |                                       |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| [253] PRINCESS BONNIE WALTZ       | Piano Solo                            |
| [157] TRAMP, TRAMP, TRAMP         | Song—Tenor Solo by Geo. J. Gaskin     |
| [452] TITUS MARCH                 | Banjo Solo                            |
| [953] STARLIGHT, STARBRIGHT       | Song—Baritone Solo by J. W. Myers     |
| [638] IMITATION OF A STREET FAKIR | Recitation by Geo. Graham             |
| [857] MARY ANN                    | Male Quartette—Medley                 |
| [727] BYE, BYE, MA HONEY          | Song—Plantation Shout by Billy Golden |
| [249] SHORT AND SWEET             | Cornet Duet                           |
| [901] LA MARSEILLAISE             | Song—Signor Giannini                  |

PART SECOND.

|                                |                                    |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| [453] MEDLEY OF JIGS AND REELS | Banjo Solo                         |
| [161] DOWN IN POVERTY ROW      | Song—Tenor Solo by Geo. J. Gaskin  |
| [851] BLIND TOM                | Male Quartette—Negro Shout         |
| [646] DEPARTURE                | Recitation—Poem by Eugene Field    |
| [190] I WANT YER, MA HONEY     | Song—Baritone Solo by Dan W. Quinn |
| [625] SIDE SHOW ORATOR         | Recitation by Geo. Graham          |
| [1302] FRENCH LAUGHING SONG    | Song—M. Farkoa’s Great Success     |

This gramophone program is modeled after a live concert with its implicit inclusion of an intermission between the first and second “parts,” and it also emulates the variety, contrast, and dramatic structure favored by exhibitors like the Sullivan brothers and Lyman Howe. In 1907, the National Phonograph Company issued an analogous advertisement illustrating a domestic phonograph entertainment held “toward dark, just after supper... a big party gathered on the porch and the lawn,” asserting that people who had not yet heard the latest Edison phonographs could “hardly imagine what a genuinely high class entertainment those people were having around that porch.” The writer gave the following as a sample program that might be used on such an occasion:

## A HOME ENTERTAINMENT

|      |                                    |  |
|------|------------------------------------|--|
| 2018 | HOLY CITY                          | Song [Irving Gillette]                   |
| 1559 | WHERE IS MY WANDERING BOY TONIGHT? | Song [Reed Miller]                       |
| 8891 | OVER THE WAVES, Waltz              | Military Band [Edison Military Band]     |
| 9387 | THE MOON HAS HIS EYES ON YOU       | Sentimental [Ada Jones]                  |
| 9031 | THE GLORY SONG                     | Famous Revival Song [Anthony + Harrison] |
| 93   | STARS AND STRIPES FOREVER          | Sousa March [Edison Concert Band]        |
| 9054 | DEARIE                             | Sentimental Ballad [Harry Macdonough]    |
| 504  | ANVIL CHORUS FROM “TROVATORE”      | Orchestra [Edison Symphony Orchestra]    |
| 9162 | SILVER THREADS AMONG THE GOLD      | Song [Marie Narelle]                     |
| 8632 | UNCLE SAMMY, March                 | Band [Edison Military Band]              |
| 7852 | HELLO, CENTRAL, GIVE ME HEAVEN     | Child’s Song [Byron G. Harlan]           |
| 8781 | OLD FOLKS AT HOME                  | Baritone Solo [William H. Thompson]      |

The selections in this case alternated among hymns, sentimental songs, patriotic airs and light classical music, but the same advertisement also listed a set of selections to be used for putting on “A Minstrel Show,” containing more comic and spoken-word material. It also observed: “These are only suggestions and the programmes are only two of hundreds of programmes which might be arranged.”<sup>481</sup> A tacit assumption remained that a phonographic education event should have some kind of coherent structure, a “program”; that some individual would necessarily be in charge of supervising it; and that this individual could take something akin to authorial credit for the overall “performance.” Even the language used to describe education events reflected ambivalence about where agency ought to be located. Although some

commentators wrote of the phonograph as a *self-playing* device that could “play any music ever played before,”<sup>482</sup> others imagined the educationist as doing the “playing,” claiming for instance that more phonographs “should be in general use than the violin, banjo, or other solo instrument because the latter require months of training to be able to use them satisfactorily, while the Phonograph requires no skill whatever—*anyone may play it.*”<sup>483</sup> When noncommercial social events in churches, schools, and private homes began incorporating locally owned phonographs on a regular basis during the late 1890s and early 1900s, the credit for such enactments in newspaper reports often went to the people who operated the machines, much as it had once gone to professional exhibitors. We find such listings as “Gramophone entertainment by George Wagstaff” and “24 selections on the gramophone by W. H. Travers” included alongside entries for live performances: “Vocal solo, Miss Davis,” “a reading by Miss Lena Humphreys,” “music by Serenade club,” and so forth.<sup>484</sup> One group in 1901 was “highly entertained by selections rendered by M. F. Boyd, on the phonograph,”<sup>485</sup> much as someone might have “rendered” pieces on the piano.

Still, not all private phonographic education events adhered to the model of the phonograph “concert,” with a designated exhibitor presenting a structured program to an audience of attentive listeners. It is true that informal occasions on which individuals or small groups of friends or relatives listened to phonograms were not ordinarily considered newsworthy and only received mention in newspapers and trade journals under exceptional circumstances. However, many cases that did warrant description for one reason or another did not quite conform to a “concert” model. We read, for instance, that some husbands kept their wives awake at night by playing the same phonograms over and over for their own personal entertainment, leading to divorce suits.<sup>486</sup> One woman committed suicide in New York City in 1907 by turning on the gas in her home and asphyxiating while her phonograph educated her favorite song, IN THE WILD WOODS, WHERE THE BLUE BELLS GROW.<sup>487</sup> That same year, an Indianapolis dealer reported that local couples had begun taking phonographs along on outings in canoes.<sup>488</sup> It appears that formal phonograph “concerts” must have coexisted with a variety of less structured solitary and dyadic uses of phonography during the first decade of the twentieth century. Even the structure of

“concerts” in the private sphere often appears to have been negotiated among participants, with guests requesting particular selections.<sup>489</sup>

Meanwhile, increased sales of phonographs for private use threatened the older forms of public exhibition because people were unwilling to go out and pay to listen to the same machines they could now hear in their own homes. James Andem finally closed his Ohio nickel-in-the-slot phonograph parlors in 1900, attributing a decline in their profitability to home ownership of phonographs and the rise of motion pictures.<sup>490</sup> Coin-actuated phonograph parlors did survive into the twentieth century, but they had to replace the nickel machines with “penny-in-the-slot” ones.<sup>491</sup> Other forms of public exhibition suffered as well. In 1898, the *Phonoscope* published a joke in which an old showman watching the crowds buying machines and cylinders at the Columbia headquarters in New York complained, “It’s too bad—say, do you know that graphophone is hurting us phonograph exhibitors?”<sup>492</sup> We can still find evidence of paid-admission phonograph exhibitions and professional exhibitors on a small scale for 1900 through 1902,<sup>493</sup> but not much later. Insofar as professional phonograph experts continued to conduct exhibitions after that time, these generally took the form of free concerts intended to promote the sale of machines and phonograms. During the 1900s, Edison’s National Phonograph Company treated its official release of each “monthly list” of new cylinders as a major publicity event, punishing retailers who exhibited new phonograms too early by delaying their future orders.<sup>494</sup> It offered the following advice in November 1906:

One of the most effective methods of advertising and selling Records by Dealers is to give public concerts once or twice each month. It is advisable to give two concerts, one upon the arrival of the new Records and the second about two weeks later. A formal invitation should be sent out in each instance. A few days before the arrival of the new Records a printed invitation should be sent to each Phonograph owner known to the Dealer, asking him or her to hear the latest additions to the Edison list. The invitation should state the hours of the concert and make it clear that during its progress no goods would be sold and no one solicited to buy. Copies of the *Phonogram*, containing brief descriptions of the new Records, make excellent programmes. After the new Records have been played over the guests should be asked to name selections they would like played. The second concert should be for the benefit of those not owning Phonographs and here again it should be clearly stated that no goods would be sold during the evening. At this concert the Dealer should make a little talk on the merits of the Phonograph as an amusement maker.<sup>495</sup>

The company advised its dealers to promise not to try to close any sales during these free concerts, but the goal was clearly to inspire visitors to make purchases, not just to educate and entertain them. Even the preliminary talk was now to be more of a sales

pitch than an explanation of how the machine worked. Period advertisements confirm that many dealers did use monthly “new record” concerts as a marketing ploy.<sup>496</sup> The company accordingly made an effort when preparing its monthly release lists to reach a proper balance of genres and of serious selections relative to comic ones, similar to the balance sought by the exhibitors of the early 1890s. Each list was supposed to be attractive as a coherent unit that customers could buy in whole as a basis for conducting home concerts, assured that it would “furnish a delightful evening’s entertainment and be sufficiently diversified to amuse any company, either large or small.”<sup>497</sup> The retailer’s monthly concert thus modeled a specific variety program that phonograph owners were encouraged to recreate in full at home. One Edison brochure drew an analogy with another mass medium celebrated for its diversity of content, claiming that the monthly list was “like the monthly magazine, except that you ‘read the stories’ over and over, finding each time some new delight.”<sup>498</sup> At the same time, the company acknowledged that most customers chose to buy only a few cylinders each month rather than the whole set. A diverse monthly list thus ensured not only that enthusiasts who bought it in its entirety would be capable of “entertaining a company of guests no matter how varied their tastes might be,”<sup>499</sup> but that customers more interested in satisfying their *own* tastes, perhaps through solitary listening, would generally find at least some selections to their liking.<sup>500</sup>

The gramophone discs discussed so far were all single-faced, each having a phonogram pressed on only one side while the other side was left ungrooved. The idea of placing phonograms on *both* sides of a disc may seem blatantly obvious in retrospect and had, indeed, been considered since the 1880s,<sup>501</sup> but it was not until the fall of 1908 that it was actually put into practice on a large scale in the United States. A variety of technological, legal and business factors may have helped delay its implementation, but there was also a cultural side to the issue. Pressing two phonograms on a single disc imposed a new, permanent, physical relationship on them, known as “coupling,” while also creating a new unit, the “double-faced” disc. The earliest uses of coupling suggest that companies at first considered it appropriate only for pairs of phonograms that already had some obvious connection with each

other or for units that would serve some specific, well-defined purpose. Both Emile Berliner and Eldridge Johnson had pressed double-faced discs experimentally by 1900,<sup>502</sup> but the first coupling to be put into commercial production was a special seven-inch disc Victor distributed with a three-dollar “toy” talking machine starting that year: A RECORD FOR THE CHILDREN, with three different nursery rhymes on each side.<sup>503</sup> In this case, the two sides had been made functionally interchangeable, presumably in an effort to provide some variation in content without forcing children to keep track of more than one disc. A second Victor double-faced disc of 1905, distributed to dealers, contained a set of “hints to Victor salesmen” on one side and a pair of messages addressed to boy and girl “juvenile customers” on the other.<sup>504</sup> This time, the disc was designed to be multifunctional: once it had given the dealer some helpful tips from the company, it could be flipped over for further use as a promotional tool. In 1901, when inventor Ademor Petit applied for a patent on a double-faced pressing technique, he mentioned several general ways in which he supposed the two sides of a double-faced disc might be made to complement each other:

Comparative renditions of the same musical or other composition may be conveniently associated for reproduction. Thus the same song—“Annie Laurie,” for instance—may be recorded when sung as a solo on one side of the disk and when sung as a quartet on the other. Hamlet’s soliloquy as spoken by an English actor might be recorded on one side of the disk, and the same soliloquy as spoken by a French actress might be stamped on the other. Also any composition too extensive to be recorded upon a single disk-face may be recorded in part upon one such face and in part upon the opposite face with certainty that there will be no disparity or objectionable difference between the renditions of the two parts of the same composition, with absolute certainty of phonetically-uniform results, which has been quite impossible heretofore where the successive renditions are from records successively produced under varying conditions. In this way I am enabled to produce sound-records of increased value as an agency for instruction, amusement, and the perpetuation of interesting comparisons.<sup>505</sup>

Columbia issued only a few selections in the double-faced format during this period, most of which were consistent with Petit’s expectations of complementarity: i.e., one side was a direct continuation of the other or offered “comparative” material drawn from a common larger work. Put another way, Columbia’s first double-faced discs were offered not just for the sake of economy, but because the content itself invited coupling: flipsides had to make technological *and* cultural sense.<sup>506</sup>

In the fall of 1908, what had previously been an occasional novelty suddenly became the norm. In an effort to cope with a nationwide economic depression,

Columbia converted its entire popular catalog to double-faced issues priced only slightly higher than its single-faced discs had been (65¢ instead of 60¢ for the ten-inch size), advertising: “Double quality, double wear, double everything except price!”<sup>507</sup> But the transition also required Columbia to develop a new policy for coupling phonograms. In the past, it had limited its double-faced pressings to a handful of especially appropriate cases, but now *every* selection had to be coupled with something else, whether there was an obvious match for it or not. Modern critics tend to feel the company handled this task poorly. Martin Bryan describes the first couplings as “hopelessly mismatched (although Columbia proclaimed the pairings had been done by experts!),”<sup>508</sup> while Allan Sutton writes that they “were sometimes wildly inappropriate, pairing comic songs with concert band selections or vaudeville routines with Victorian art songs.”<sup>509</sup> Despite these reactions, Columbia’s couplings of 1908 did follow a certain logic. First of all, both sides of each disc fell into the same broad category, such as large ensembles, instrumentals, sacred music, or vocals. There were good reasons to respect the boundaries between these particular categories. Customers who favored sacred music had a reputation for objecting to “profane” content, so such selections were better kept separate.<sup>510</sup> Selections targeting particular ethnic markets were likewise coupled with each other, especially foreign-language vocals.<sup>511</sup> Purely instrumental phonograms could be marketed across linguistic boundaries and so tended not to be coupled with sung or spoken selections. Within these broad categories, however, we often tend to find what appear to be intentionally contrastive pairings. For example, sixteen banjo solos were issued in double-disc format as part of the introductory list, but instead of issuing them back-to-back as eight banjo discs, Columbia coupled them with solos on cornet (A213, A226, A233), bagpipe (A217), cello (A222, A227), xylophone (A223, A224), violin (A228, A229), clarinet (A230), and bells (A232); with a band selection (A231); with pieces by a banjo, mandolin, and harp-guitar trio (A218, A220); and with a cornet and trombone duet (A221). Perhaps contrastive coupling was supposed to benefit Columbia at its customers’ expense: an aficionado of banjo music, for example, would still have had just as many banjo discs to buy as before, despite the attraction of the flip sides as added bonuses. Alternatively, Columbia may have

believed that what its customers wanted was variety (within certain limits) and that mildly contrastive couplings would help them build up well-rounded phonogram libraries suitable for concerts with broad appeal. Either way, the object was clearly not just to combine like with like. We are probably dealing not with bumbling “mismatches” on Columbia’s part but with the products of a conscious policy of valuing contrast as well as compatibility between coupled sides. To remain competitive, the Victor Talking Machine Company was forced to follow Columbia’s lead by issuing its own double-faced discs in late 1908,<sup>512</sup> distinguishing the two sides of each disc by the letters “A” and “B,” an innovation that was widely copied, although the “B-side” did not yet have the stigma it was later to develop. Unlike Columbia, Victor expressed serious reservations about the desirability of double-faced discs, as did its dealers, who reportedly feared “that good numbers would be called upon to carry duds.”<sup>513</sup> Perhaps because of these misgivings, Victor experimented with both mildly contrastive couplings, like Columbia’s, and couplings of similar content that Columbia had avoided—two comic songs by Billy Murray, two stories by Cal Stewart, and so forth. The presence of these competing couplings in the market seems to have encouraged Columbia to rethink its own policies, and by 1910 it had gone back to recouple some of its earlier “mismatched” selections, yielding among other things a double-disc with banjo solos on both sides (A877). Over the course of the next decade, the contrastive flipside was to recede in favor of couplings of two similar but usually nonconsecutive sides, most often by the same performers, but it was by no means obvious at first that this was the direction in which the double-faced disc was headed.

Because the playing time of phonographic media was strictly limited throughout this period (one reason phonographic “novels” had failed to materialize as expected), recordists and phonogenic performers were always under considerable time pressure, seeking to approach as close as possible to the maximum duration without exceeding it. A pocketwatch was a necessary piece of equipment in the recording laboratory,<sup>514</sup> and a variety of strategies were developed for compressing material to the desired length. One was to increase the tempo: “One of the first things that strikes a visitor to the record room,” wrote one such visitor in 1900, “is the



rapidity with which the artists sing, the speed being much greater than that to which one is accustomed in a music hall or opera house.”<sup>515</sup> Another strategy was to abridge material by cutting portions out, but this sometimes yielded unsatisfactory results. As a newspaper article of 1897 pointed out, the narrative structure of sentimental ballads was especially vulnerable to distortion through phonogenic abridgement:

As a cylinder is filled in two minutes, the singer is hardly ever able to sing an entire song from beginning to end. Sometimes this is a great disadvantage, and sometimes, on the other hand, it is quite a blessing. In the former instance it is always a disadvantage to hear only two verses of a song which the author originally intended should contain three. As the class of songs in greatest demand by the nickel-in-the-slot patrons seems to be of the “Annie Rooney” and the mushy, sentimental type, it is often most unsatisfactory, as in the case of the first two verses of “Daddy’s Gone to New York,” to have the weight on your conscience of leaving poor “daddy” starving in that wicked city while his unfortunate children are equally famished at home, in Squedunk Junction, whereas, if the third verse could have been contained on the cylinder the hearer might go home rejoicing in the thought that “daddy” at last got a job at munificent wages. In order to avoid, as much as possible, such unfortunate situations as these, the singer readjusts his song to the possibilities of the cylinder, singing the first and last verses only, or else all three verses, but with the inevitable chorus omitted until the last verse.<sup>516</sup>

There was no easy solution for handling such cases, and some performers appear to have handled them more successfully than others, judging from a plea made to George Gaskin that same year: “when you come back [from a visit to Ireland] to sing for us again *please, George*, sing *two* verses, and sometimes a ‘refrain,’ on each cylinder and the phonograph men all over this country will rise up and call you blessed!”<sup>517</sup> As home listeners came increasingly to replace “phonograph men” as the recording industry’s customer base, they too soon began complaining about song abridgements, as we see in a piece of fan mail sent to William F. Hooley in 1899:

First, let me say, that the choicest gems of our Gramophone records, are those rendered by your Quartet [i.e., the Haydn Quartet], particularly to me “Lead Kindly Light,” my favorite hymn, but why did you not sing it all? It is too beautiful to loose [sic] either a note or word and as the plates are everlasting every word of this hymn should be also. In some of our selections there is occasionally a false note, but your voices blend in such perfect harmony, that it is impossible to imagine a discord and so I say every song you sing should be fully recorded.<sup>518</sup>

During the congressional hearings that culminated in the Copyright Act of 1909, the recording industry’s lawyers confirmed that abridgement was then still standard practice. “The words of the songs are written in typewriting, because the talking machines are only capable of running for about three minutes, and therefore an entire song cannot be given,” stated one of them. “They usually give one verse and two

choruses. If the song is short, they give two verses with the chorus.”<sup>519</sup> Nor was this practice limited to songs. “Talking-machine records are limited by time,” another lawyer explained. “There is no record made of any kind that does not require special arrangement and special orchestration.”<sup>520</sup> When companies introduced media of longer duration in the 1900s, they frequently emphasized the opportunity the new formats gave them of presenting songs at fuller length—thus, trade literature promoted the Edison Amberol cylinder as follows:

Four Minutes

That is the running time of the new Edison Amberol Records.

It is twice as long as any Edison Standard Record. It is considerably longer than any Record of any kind.

This permits of entire selections rather than mere snatches—of music being played or sung as it should be instead of being marred by being hurried....

This means better music for you as well as more music without changing Records. Selections heretofore too long for any record are now possible on the Edison. Nothing is lost by being cut or hurried.<sup>521</sup>

During the late 1890s and very early 1900s, there had also been a few rare instances of songs being spread out over more than one cylinder or disc.<sup>522</sup> The timing of these cases suggests that they might have been experiments prompted by the shift from public exhibition to home listening. The typical nickel-in-the-slot machine had been able to hold only a single phonogram, and the education of a multi-phonogram selection during a formal phonograph “concert” had introduced a potentially awkward pause while the phonograms were being changed.<sup>523</sup> Recording companies may have supposed that amateur home educationists would be better able to accommodate sets of phonograms, or that the unpredictable contexts of private education might even require that certain songs be given in full. However, the norm was to abridge multiple-verse songs as necessary to fit them on single cylinders or discs. As we will see in later chapters, the phonogenic abridgement of certain other cultural forms posed even more daunting challenges.

\* \* \* \* \*

Between 1888 and 1908, a new art or science had developed around the recording of audicular phonograms, something that went on in acoustically optimized “studios” or “laboratories” under the supervision of expert recordists whose work consisted largely of selecting appropriate horns and diaphragms and “posing” subjects

in peculiar ways. This work involved as much illusion as “reproduction.” Bands and orchestras were reconstituted, and the violin itself physically redesigned, to yield phonograms that would give the desired effect during education. Phonogenic performers had to acquire a distinctive phonogenic technique, avoiding certain behaviors that were encouraged in live performance and eventually substituting new ones, such as moving back and forth relative to the horn to control blasting. Those who could handle these demanding and peculiar requirements came to constitute a new class of performers quite distinct from those famous in the realm of live performance. Early commercial phonography was not the “music industry,” but its own separate domain, as independent in its personnel and methods as is cinema from live theater.

The early recording industry was forced to deal in selections that could be presented acceptably within the space of two to four minutes and recorded repeatedly and reliably, each “round” or “take” being generated from a different phonogenization and differing more or less subtly from all others. At first, all items in a recording company’s catalog were necessarily in constant flux as phonograms hovered, in effect, midway between the ephemerality of live performance and the fixity of the written text. Only in 1902-3 did relatively “permanent” disc and cylinder masters come into being, but even then the “permanence” of these masters is easy to overstate.

The typical education event underwent some important qualitative changes between 1888 and 1908 as phonographic entertainment gradually developed from a novelty into a mass medium, from a minor branch of a struggling enterprise into a major industry in its own right. At first, phonographs had been expensive, high-maintenance machines, and most people had paid for the privilege of hearing them in public venues rather than leasing or buying instruments of their own. Just as there was a profession built on phonographic *recording*, so there was one built on phonographic *exhibition*. Most phonographic entertainments of the early 1890s fell into one of three categories: the lecture-hall “concert” using a horn, the wax-tube exhibition supervised by a live educationist, or the automatic nickel-in-the-slot machine. Each of these three forms of public exhibition had its own resources for

framing prerecorded content, such as the juxtapositions and introductions of exhibitors like Lyman Howe or the creative wording of signs in phonograph parlors. Then, starting in the mid-1890s, the introduction of less costly spring-motor phonographs enabled increasing numbers of people to purchase their own phonographs for home use. Exhibition ceased, in most cases, to be a commercial activity. Instead of paying for a single, professionally handled listening experience, individuals now invested in the hardware and software they needed to generate their own education events at will. Dealers did later conduct public exhibitions aimed at persuading listeners to buy phonograms and machines, but the contexts of private education grew ever more unpredictable, ranging from formal “concerts” put on for houseguests to romantic canoe excursions to late-night solitary listening. Overall, the domination of entertainment phonography by professionally structured public events and settings ended as the technology became increasingly integrated into the fabric of everyday life.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Edison’s Phonograph,” Sept. 7, 1877, Document 1039, TAEB 3:533; Edward Johnson, *Telephone Hand Book* (New York: Russell Brothers, 1877, reprinted in TAEM 162:1032ff), 11-2; Letter from Edward Johnson, in “A Wonderful Invention,” *Scientific American* 37 (Nov. 17, 1877), 304.

<sup>2</sup> “Phonography and Photo-Phonography,” *Scientific American* 16 (May 4, 1867), 285.

<sup>3</sup> “A Wonderful Invention,” *Scientific American* 37 (Nov. 17, 1877), 304.

<sup>4</sup> “The Phonograph,” *New York Times*, Nov. 7, 1877, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> “Possibilities of the Phonograph,” from *Cincinnati Commercial*, in *Indianapolis News*, Mar. 30, 1878, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> “Wonders of the Phonograph,” *Cincinnati Commercial*, Mar. 11, 1878 (TAEM 27:750). Similar arguments were made at the beginning of the wax cylinder era, when the graphophone and phonograph were touted as machines anybody could use to produce successful phonograms of any phonogenic subject; see e.g. Sim W. Cantrill to E. M. Conard, Oct. 7, 1889 (TAEM 128:89).

<sup>7</sup> “Wonders of the Phonograph,” *Cincinnati Commercial*, Mar. 11, 1878 (TAEM 27:750).

<sup>8</sup> “That Wonderful Edison,” *New York World*, Mar. 29, 1878 (TAEM 94:147).

<sup>9</sup> “By duplicating the tin-foil as stereotype plates for printing are duplicated,” wrote one commentator, “people will be enabled to buy the speeches or songs of celebrated persons at a cheap rate, and will be able to put them into their parlor phonographs as they now put photographs in a stereoscope” (“The Phonograph and Mr. Edison’s Other Inventions,” *New York Weekly Witness*, May 2, 1878 [TAEM 25:179]); “The matrixes can be copied the same as stereoscopic views, and millions sold to those owning the machine” (“Marvellous Discovery,” *New York Sun*, Feb. 22, 1878 [TAEM 94:115]).

<sup>10</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Harper’s Weekly*, Mar. 30, 1878, 250.

<sup>11</sup> “The Future of the Phonograph,” *New York Herald*, Apr. 28, 1878 (TAEM 25:174).

<sup>12</sup> “That Wonderful Edison,” *New York World*, Mar. 29, 1878 (TAEM 94:147). Sometimes Edison also implied that music might be performed specially for recording: “Say, for instance, that Adelina Patti sings the ‘Blue Danube’ into the phonograph. We will reproduce the perforated tin-foil on which her singing is impressed and sell it in sheets” (“National Academy of Sciences,” *Washington Evening Star*, Apr. 19, 1878 [TAEM 25:162]).

<sup>13</sup> The most explicit account of how such work would be compensated appeared in Edison, “Phonograph and its Future,” 533, but the assumption of payment also crops up elsewhere, e.g.

---

“suppose that a publisher *employs* one of the most famous elocutionists of the age to talk one of DICKENS’ best novels upon a phonograph plate” (“Mr. Edison’s Inventions,” *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 3, 1878 [TAEM 94:165], italics added); “Say I *hire* a good elocutionist to read David Copperfield or any other work” (“Marvellous Discovery,” *New York Sun*, Feb. 22, 1878 [TAEM 94:115], italics added).

<sup>14</sup> In the original: “Die kostspieligen Engagements von Primadonnen und Heldenentöne werden sich dem Impresario insofern glänzend rentieren, als er aus ihren Kehlen ganze Opern in den Sprechkasten conserviren lassen kann, um diese auf Bestellung nach irgend einer Stadt zur Reproduktion derselben Oper zu versenden” (“Eine geisterhafte Erfindung,” *Volkszeitung*, M[...] 12, 1878 [TAEM 25:165]).

<sup>15</sup> Edward Johnson wrote: “I have a plaster cast of some of Edisons speech—from which I can at any time take tin foil impressions by the Dozen—So if you want ‘a doz of Edison’ just send in your order & dont forget to say whether you want it dry or sour—The Times’ funny article [cited above in note 4] is realized within a fortnight—are facts stranger than fiction?” (Edward Johnson to Uriah Hunt Painter, Dec. 8, 1877, Document 1147, TAEB 3:666). This method continued to be mentioned into the following year (e.g., “Contributor’s Club,” *Atlantic Monthly* 41 [Apr.-May 1878], 544).

<sup>16</sup> An electrotyping method, invented by William Hollingshead, was yielding promising results; see TAEB 4:264, n. 2; Raymond R. Wile, “‘Jack Fell Down and Broke His Crown’: The Fate of the Edsion Phonograph Toy Manufacturing Company,” *ARSC Journal* 19:2/3 (1987), 6-7; Koenigsberg, *Patent History*, 25; Edison, “Phonograph and its Future,” 529, 534. There is an unidentified copper electrotype disc phonogram at the Smithsonian Institution, NMAH #312119, deposited Feb. 28, 1880, which could be a specimen of Hollingshead’s work, given the date and description.

<sup>17</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Harper’s Weekly*, Mar. 30, 1878, 250.

<sup>18</sup> “Edison’s Phonograph and Thermopile,” *New York Herald*, June 4, 1878 (TAEM 94:221).

<sup>19</sup> In the original: “Und welch’ großartiges Geschäft steht dem Impresario der Zukunft in Aussicht! Man wird sich in betreffenden Kreisen künftig bei Weitem nicht mehr darum streiten, eine gefeierte Künstlerin einem Lande in einem „Cyklus von so und so viel Vorstellungen“ vorzuführen, sondern es wird sich darum handeln, wer den höchsten Preis für das Monopol auf den Handel mit „selbstgesungene Arien von großen Sängern und Sängerinnen“ oder mit „selbstgesprochenen Monologen, Reden u.s.w. großer Redner, Schauspieler u.s.w.“ bezahlt. Das ist doch gewiß viel bequemer,—für den Impresario hauptsächlich,—als wie das ewige Herumreisen, den Aerger mit Theaterbesitzern und Theaterpersonal gar nicht gerechnet, der doch auch in Wegfall kommt. Eine Sängerin wird dann das Recht, ihre Originalarien auf Blech verkaufen zu dürfen, an den Meistbietenden versteigern. Sie wird kontraktlich feststellen, wie viel Arien sie dem Unternehmer per Woche, Monat oder Jahr zu liefern gesonnen ist. Extrablech zu erhöhten Preisen!” (G. W. Rachel, “Eine neue Sprechmaschine,” *N. Y. Belletristisches Journal*, Mar. 29, 1878 [TAEM 27:794]).

<sup>20</sup> “The Phonograph,” *The Public*, May 2, 1878 (TAEM 25:182).

<sup>21</sup> “Mr. Edison’s Inventions,” *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 3, 1878 (TAEM 94:165).

<sup>22</sup> “That Wonderful Edison,” *New York World*, Mar. 29, 1878 (TAEM 94:147). Other prices cited were three cents (Gath, “A Visit to Edison,” *Philadelphia Weekly Times*, Apr. 27, 1878 [TAEM 25:189]), twenty cents (“Edison the Magician,” *Cincinnati Commercial*, Apr. 3, 1878 [TAEM 27:790]), and about twenty-five cents (“That Wonderful Edison,” *New York World*, Mar. 29, 1878 [TAEM 94:147]).

<sup>23</sup> “Marvellous Discovery,” *New York Sun*, Feb. 22, 1878 (TAEM 94:115).

<sup>24</sup> “Tea-Table Talks,” *Evening Express*, undated clipping, ca. 1878 (TAEM 27:757).

<sup>25</sup> “Washington Notes,” *Dayton Democrat*, May 11, 1878 (TAEM 25:197).

<sup>26</sup> *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Apr. 7, 1878, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Agreement with Gardiner Hubbard, George Bradley, Charles Cheever, Hilborne Roosevelt, and Uriah Painter, Jan. 30, 1878, Document 1190, TAEB 4:51-7.

<sup>28</sup> Wile, “Rise and Fall,” 16.

<sup>29</sup> TAEB 3:687, 4:27-30, 75-6.

<sup>30</sup> As of Feb. 1878, the new recording medium was to be a sheet of tinfoil spanning a circle cut in the center of a piece of stiff paper with a hole punched in each corner; this sheet would be laid over a plate scored with a spiral groove for the stylus to follow when the plate was revolved from underneath by clockwork, the holes in the corners of the paper fitting over pins on the plate for easy realignment (Caveat executed Feb. 28 and filed Mar. 8, 1878, Document 1227, TAEB 4:121-2; see also Rondeau, *Tinfoil Phonographs*, 34-5, 116).

---

<sup>31</sup> Experimental work passed gradually into the hands of Edward Johnson, especially after Nov. 15, 1878, when Edison signed a contract with the Edison Electric Light Company promising to “prosecute with his utmost skill and diligence” his work on the electric light, and this agreement was extended on Jan. 12, 1881, for five more years, i.e., until Jan. 12, 1886 (Wile, “Rise and Fall,” 22, 24; “The Metropolitan Phonograph Company,” *ARSC Journal* 34 [Spring 2003], 2, 11 n. 8; Israel, “Unknown History,” 40). This meant spending less of his personal time on phonograph matters. Edward Johnson assured a reporter in August “that steady improvements are being made in the phonograph, and our company will certainly succeed in turning out a machine which will be widely demanded for its practical utility” (“The Machine That Speaks,” *Daily Graphic* Aug. 30, 1878 [TAEM 94:340]). Improvements were reported during this period (see e.g. “Edison’s Inventions,” *Boston Journal*, Mar. 8, 1879 [TAEM 94:463]), but Johnson too ceased his work in the summer of 1879, heading to England to represent Edison’s telephone interests there, and the Edison Speaking Phonograph Company, no longer expecting to handle anything but scientific toys whose novelty was fast wearing off, had stopped actively pursuing the business by the beginning of 1880 (Wile, “Rise and Fall,” 25-6).

<sup>32</sup> “The Trade in Phonographs,” *World*, Sept. 5, 1879 (TAEM 25:298).

<sup>33</sup> This group was known as the Volta Laboratory Association because its Washington, D. C. laboratory was financed by his receipt of the Volta Prize from the French government in 1880; see Raymond R. Wile, “The Development of Sound Recording at the Volta Laboratory,” *ARSC Journal* 21 (Fall 1990), 210-12.

<sup>34</sup> Franck Z. Maguire, “The Graphophone,” *Harper’s Weekly* 30 (July 17, 1886), 458-9.

<sup>35</sup> Edward Johnson later described it as “an instrument which, while it did not speak and was not intended to speak in the original voice, as the old tinfoil phonograph did, yet spoke with such distinctiveness that if you placed the tubes to your ear, while the voice was low, it was wonderfully clear and the utterance was easily comprehended” (Edward H. Johnson, “Edison’s Phonograph, Its History and Development,” *Scientific American Supplement* 743 [Mar. 29, 1890], 11873). Again, the graphophone was supposed to suffice “wherever the recognition of the voice is immaterial. In the graphophone the reproduced sound is as loud as that of an ordinary telephone message, but the distortion is sufficient to make it unrecognizable, save to a strained imagination added to a previous knowledge of the author of the sound. But it appears to be the best instrument to take down business letters or dictations of any kind in which the recognition matters little, so long as the words can be made out” (“Berliner’s Gramophone,” *Electrical World*, Nov. 12, 1887, 256 [TAEM 146:218]).

<sup>36</sup> Raymond R. Wile, “Edison and Growing Hostilities,” *ARSC Journal* 22 (Spring 1991), 9; Read and Welch, *Tin Foil to Stereo*, 37; Wile, “Development,” 220; “Washington Correspondents Have Begun to Carry Graphophones,” *Picayune* (New [...]), Apr. 7, 1894 (TAEM 146:905).

<sup>37</sup> Charles S. Tainter, “Apparatus for Recording and Reproducing Speech and Other Sounds,” U. S. Patent 375,579, filed July 7, 1887, granted Dec. 27, 1887.

<sup>38</sup> Wile, “Edison and Growing Hostilities,” 14-15; 21-22; “Metropolitan Phonograph Company,” 1.

<sup>39</sup> See graphophone pamphlets in North American Phonograph Company, Company Records, Box 1, at ENHS. The graphophone was used to record cornetist Jules Levy in 1887 (“Levy’s Only Rival,” from *Washington Post*, in *Atlanta Constitution*, Dec. 3, 1887, p. 4; and *Observer Journal* [Dunkirk, New York], Dec. 16, 1887, p. 4) and a spoken message “to the people of the 20th Century” for deposit in the National Museum at the start of 1888 (“Copied from one of the Laboratory Note Books of Alexander Graham Bell. Sunday, January 22d, 1888,” AGBFP), but I find no evidence that either phonogram was ever educed during any subsequent event.

<sup>40</sup> See e.g. Emile Berliner, “The Gramophone—Etching the Human Voice,” *Scientific American Supplement* 654 (July 14, 1888), 10447.

<sup>41</sup> Raymond R. Wile, “Etching the Human Voice: The Berliner Invention of the Gramophone,” *ARSC Journal* 21 (Spring 1990), 4-9.

<sup>42</sup> “Berliner’s Gramophone,” *Electrical World*, Nov. 12, 1887, 256 (TAEM 146:218).

<sup>43</sup> Alfred O. Tate, *Edison’s Open Door: The Life Story of Thomas A. Edison, a Great Individualist* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1938), 137.

<sup>44</sup> “In 1877 and 1878, I believed that an instrument which would give a loud reproduction, audible throughout a room, was essential to thorough success, and I still believe so [in 1894]. The limited extent to which the phonograph has been introduced is largely due to the adoption of the business idea that an instrument which would have to be listened to with ear-tube would have a certain extent of use.

---

Had I cared to take advantage of that limited field in 1878, some of the instruments I then had would have been quite as satisfactory as were the first phonographs and graphophones put upon the market in 1888” (Affidavit of Thomas Edison, Dec. 6, 1894, *New York Phonograph Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, transcript of record, 2:36); “In the old days I have worked on the wrong principle in striving for a loud tone, where distinctness of enunciation was of far more importance” (“Edison’s Greatest Wonder,” *Commercial News* [Charleston, South Carolina], Oct. 24, 1887 [TAEM 25:302]). He was probably also influenced by some nudging from his associate Ezra T. Gilliland (Wile, “Edison and Growing Hostilities,” 10-11; Israel, *Edison*, 234, 256).

<sup>45</sup> Among other things, he alluded to the success of a musical experiment (certainly exaggerated, and perhaps entirely fictional): “I have taken down the music of an orchestra, and the result is marvellous; each instrument can be perfectly distinguished, the strings are perfectly distinct, the violins from the cellos, the wind instruments and the wood are perfectly heard, and even in the notes of a violin the over-tones are distinct to a delicate ear” (“A Wonderful Workshop,” *New York Post*, Oct. 21, 1887 [TAEM 25:304]), also alluded to in “Mr. Edison’s Improved Phonograph,” *New York Post*, Oct. 21, 1887 (TAEM 25:301); and *London Evening Post*, Mar. 5, 1888 (TAEM 146:238).

<sup>46</sup> “The New Phonograph,” *Mail and Express*, Dec. 14, 1887 (TAEM 146:321). Edison repeatedly cited *Nicholas Nickleby* as an example of the kind of phonographic book he expected to offer in the future (“The New Phonograph,” *Scientific American* 57 [Dec. 31, 1887], 422; Edison, “Perfected Phonograph,” 646-7; Philip G. Hubert, Jr., “The New Talking-Machines,” *Atlantic Monthly* 63 [Feb. 1889], 259). The information most commonly given in the secondary literature as to the first truly audicular phonograms taken on Edison’s new equipment is derived from vague or incorrect accounts. Harriet Hadden, a local piano teacher, is often reported to have recorded some musical cylinders on Edison’s phonograph in 1887 (*New York Times*, Mar. 24, 1968, 56; Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, xv-xvi), but a closer examination of the sources for this claim reveals a great deal of uncertainty as to the date of her visit (FPRA Apr. and May 1970). Alfred Tate wrote in his memoirs that the boy pianist Josef Hofmann had been one of Edison’s many celebrity visitors and had performed for “a number of the earliest records of piano music...the first made by any recognized artist” (Tate, *Edison’s Open Door*, 163-4) but, although Hofmann did perform in the United States in 1887-88, it appears from surviving correspondence that the idea of recording his music only occurred to him after his return to Germany: “A few days ago, I was at the Urania, to assist to a performance of your new ‘Phonograf.’ There I heard an american [sic] singer and a solo for Clarinet. Involuntarily the idea took possession of me: that in this same way, I could also listen to my own playing!” (Josef Hofmann to Edison, Nov. 24, 1889 [TAEM 125:459]). Edison sent him a complimentary machine at the beginning of 1890, and the young pianist returned the favor towards the end of the year by sending back a few cylinders he had recorded of his music (Edison to Josef Hofmann, Feb. 21, 1890 [TAEM 140:623]; Josef Hofmann to Edison, July 4, 1890 [TAEM 130:197]; Nov. 11, 1890 [TAEM 130:227]; and Mar. 10, 1891 [TAEM 132:18]), which may be what Tate remembered. Perhaps the confusion over Hofmann’s status as one of the first phonogenic performers is also due in part to the fact that Edison acquired his Weber grand piano for his laboratory at the end of the concert tour (“A Chat With Edison,” *Herald* [Saginaw, Michigan], Jan. 4, 1889 [TAEM 146:372]; “Edison’s Talking Machine,” *New York Herald*, May 12, 1888 [TAEM 146:245]; Ezra Gilliland to Edison, June 27, 1888 [TAEM 124:374-5]; Edison’s Laboratory to Weber, May 18, 1889 [TAEM 139:182]).

<sup>47</sup> For instance: during a later court hearing, he displayed an example of his work, recorded in mid-Dec. 1888, observing: “I played the piano myself” (*American Graphophone Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, printed record, 189-90).

<sup>48</sup> As Wangemann later put it, his work consisted of “[e]xperimenting on phonograph recording with a view of making better musical records, vocal and instrumental” (*National Phonograph Company vs. American Graphophone Company*, transcript of Record, 59-60), or “Experimenting and recording of the human voice and music on the phonograph” (*American Graphophone Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, printed record, 188). His full name may be found in the signature on the drawing accompanying A. T. E. Wangemann, “Phonograph Horn,” U. S. Patent 913,930, filed Aug. 3, 1905, granted Mar. 2, 1909.

<sup>49</sup> Alfred A. Cowles to Edison, Apr. 23, 1888 (TAEM 124:1155); Tate to Alfred A. Cowles, Apr. 25, 1888 (TAEM 122:277).

- <sup>50</sup> “Edison’s Talking Machine,” *New York Herald*, May 12, 1888 (TAEM 146:245); “The Phonograph’s Music,” *New York Post*, May 12, 1888 (TAEM 146:247).
- <sup>51</sup> “Edison’s Perfected Phonograph,” from *Electrical Review in Invention*, June 16, 1888 (TAEM 146:262); “Phonograph at Electric Club,” *Herald* (Norristown Pa), May 19, 1888 (TAEM 146:249).
- <sup>52</sup> Ray Wile, “Etching,” 9-11. Berliner announced his presentation: “While the plate is being etched I will now let you listen to some phonautograms which I prepared in Washington within the last two weeks” (Emile Berliner, “The Gramophone—Etching the Human Voice,” *Scientific American Supplement* 654 [July 14, 1888], 10448).
- <sup>53</sup> “The Graphophone,” *Boston Journal*, June 20, 1888 (TAEM 146:265). In Chicago on July 19, 1888, a graphophone educed some phonograms recorded that morning by one of Theodore Thomas’ cornetists (“All Said ‘Marvelous!’ When They Heard the Voice of the Graphophone,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 21, 1888 [TAEM 146:283]). Over the next few years, the Bell-Tainter graphophone lagged far behind Edison’s phonograph as a reproducer of audicular sound. On Mar. 3, 1890, one was used to record and educe the music of Colt’s band at the First Regiment Armory in Hartford, Connecticut, and although the experiment was apparently successful, it was also presented as a first (“The Graphophone,” from *Hartford Courant*, Mar. 4, 1890, in *New York Times*, Mar. 9, 1890, p. 13). Charles Sumner Tainter and Fred Gaisberg are also supposed to have recorded audicular material for coin-in-the-slot graphophones in use at the Columbian World’s Exposition in 1893 (Gaisberg, *Music Goes Round*, 5-6).
- <sup>54</sup> “I am here in Boston in furtherance of an intention to secure for you the exclusive copyright-permits on certain musical compositions of mine which I intend to transfer exclusively to you for the use of your phonograph. I have succeeded today in securing one already” (Monroe Rosenfeld to Edison, May 24, 1888 [TAEM 124:128-9]). He had already phonogenized a four-minute piano rendition of KENTUCKY GALLOPADE at Edison’s laboratory (“The Phonograph,” *Albany Press*, May 28 [?], 1888 [TAEM 146:243]; Conot, *Streak of Luck*, 263 refers to him [as “H. H. Rosenfeld”] phonogenizing KENTUCKY GALLOPADE and KUTCHY, KUTCHY COO on May 23, 1888, citing as his source the *New York Sun* of May 25, 1888).
- <sup>55</sup> “Edison’s Talking Baby,” *New York World*, June 23, 1888 (TAEM 146:266).
- <sup>56</sup> Israel, *Edison*, 288; 506, n. 30; George Parsons Lathrop to Tate, June 12, 1888 (TAEM 124:354); June 27, 1888 (TAEM 124:371); July 19, 1888 (TAEM 124:385). Lathrop even arranged for a rare private phonograph demonstration to be held on June 2, 1888, at the home of Mary Hemenway, a potential investor who had expressed particular interest in musical recording: “Mrs. H. wishes to have a good violinist here, to try one solo on the spot & see how the record comes out” (George Parsons Lathrop to Edison, May 28, 1888 [TAEM 124:139-41]).
- <sup>57</sup> These details come from “Cradle’s Empty, Baby’s Gone,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 28, 1888, p. 1; the song had originally been published as Harry Kennedy, *Cradle’s Empty, Baby’s Gone* (Boston: Oliver Ditson & Co., 1880).
- <sup>58</sup> U. S. Constitution, Article I, § 8, clause 8, italics added.
- <sup>59</sup> *Burrow-Giles Lithographic Co. v. Sarony*, 111 U. S. 53 (Mar. 17, 1884).
- <sup>60</sup> “I cannot convince myself that these perforated sheets of paper are copies of sheet music within the meaning of the copyright law. They are not made to be addressed to the eye as sheet music, but they form a part of a machine. They are not designed to be used for such purposes as sheet music, nor do they in any sense occupy the same field as sheet music. They are a mechanical invention made for the sole purpose of performing tunes mechanically upon a musical instrument” (*Kennedy v. McTammany*, 33 Fed Rep. 584 [C.C.D. Mass. 1888]; quoted in *White-Smith Music Publishing Company v. Apollo Company*, 209 U.S. 1 [Feb. 24, 1908], 12); date from “Cradle’s Empty Baby’s Gone,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 28, 1888, p. 1.
- <sup>61</sup> See “Phonograph and Publisher,” from the *Sun* (Lewiston, Maine) in *Phonogram-2 3* (Aug. 1901), 59-60; *Stearn v. Rosey*, 17 App. D.C. 562, quoted in the Supreme Court decision in *White-Smith Music Publishing Company v. Apollo Company* 209 U.S. 1 (Feb. 24, 1908), 12-3; also an apparently unsuccessful suit on behalf of John Philip Sousa against the Columbia Phonograph Company in *Phonoscope* 3:1 (Jan. 1899), 14.
- <sup>62</sup> Raymond R. Wile, “The North American Phonograph Company: Part I (1888-1892),” *ARSC Journal* 35 (Spring 2004), 1-3.



---

<sup>63</sup> Thomas Lombard later recalled that Indiana had been the only state or territory “wherein the North American Phonograph Company did not dispose of the territorial right” (*New York Phonograph Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, transcript of record, 457-8). All other states and territories are accounted for, but in Jan. 1893 the North American Phonograph Company’s attorney J. Adriance Bush pointed out that, due to an oversight, Lake County, Illinois had never been officially assigned to either of the two companies in that state and was therefore still technically under the direct control of the parent company; see the minutes for the North American Phonograph Company board of directors meeting, Jan. 24, 1893 (TAEM 134:847-9). I have not found any reference to a company being assigned North Dakota, but perhaps it was purchased by a group that simply failed to work the franchise. Two of the original companies later merged—Metropolitan and New York (for documentation, see *New York Phonograph Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, transcript of record, 2:292-321)—whereas other territories were subdivided: Arkansas was purchased by a third party from the Missouri Company, and New Mexico from the Kansas Company (*Proceedings of Second Annual Convention of Local Phonograph Companies of the United States, Held at New York, June 16, 17 & 18, 1891* [New York: Linotype Reporting & Printing Co., (1891)], 42).

<sup>64</sup> *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of Phonograph Companies of the United States Held at Chicago, May 28 and 29, 1890* (Milwaukee: Phonograph Printing Co., [1890]), 83-5; *Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the National Phonograph Association of the United States, Held at Chicago, June 13, 14, 15, 1892* (N. p.: [1892]), 62; Tate, *Edison’s Open Door*, 175.

<sup>65</sup> For instance, the New Jersey Phonograph Company argued that, if machines were offered for sale, people would buy them in New York or Philadelphia for use in New Jersey, depriving the local company of its rightful income (*Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 79-99; *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 28-43).

<sup>66</sup> Wile, “North American: Part I,” especially 21, 27-30; Read and Welch, *Tin Foil to Stereo*, 55; *Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention*, 93-114.

<sup>67</sup> “The Phonograph Perfected,” *Philadelphia Ledger*, May 12, 1888 (TAEM 146:243).

<sup>68</sup> “Talks Back,” *Detroit Free Press*, Sept. 21, 1888 (TAEM 142:334).

<sup>69</sup> “The Wonderful Phonograph,” *Herald Despatch* (Decatur, Illinois), July 19, 1890, p. 1, italics added.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas Conyngton, in *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 201-2.

<sup>71</sup> J. C. Clarkson, in *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 34-5.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Conyngton, in *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 201-2.

<sup>73</sup> C. H. Chadbourne, in *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 203.

<sup>74</sup> Felix Gottschalk, *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 202.

<sup>75</sup> Thomas Conyngton, in *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 72.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Conyngton, in *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 201-2.

<sup>77</sup> Edward Howard Low of Albany in charge of introducing the phonograph and graphophone in some parts of upstate New York during the summer of 1889, a job that involved exhibiting the machines in public and recording local talent wherever it was available. The company journal shows a number of payments made to Low for his work as both recordist and exhibitor, including twenty-five dollars for “making records at Coney Island &c.” (New York Phonograph Company journal [1889-90; ENHS company records series], 5). Reports of his exhibitions at Albany and Saratoga in July and Aug. 1889 indicate he had acquired quite a varied collection of phonograms: “A Wonderful Exhibition,” *Albany Times*, July 24, 1889 (TAEM 146:467); “Edison’s Latest,” *Saratogan*, July 27, 1889 (TAEM 146:416); “A Machine That Talks,” *Albany Argus*, July 24, 1889 (TAEM 146:379); Stephen U. Caldwell, “Sunshine at Saratoga,” *Times* (Troy, New York), Aug. 2, 1889 (TAEM 146:531); *Philadelphia Times*, Aug. 17, 1889 (TAEM 146:387).

<sup>78</sup> Executive Committee meeting, Apr. 3 1889, Metropolitan Phonograph Company minute book (ENHS company records series; photostatic copy made Jan. 8, 1974 from original in possession of Allen Koenigsberg), 91-2.

<sup>79</sup> See “Wonders of the Phonograph,” *Yonkers Statesman*, Apr. 16, 1889 (TAEM 146:401), describing an exhibition Emerson had conducted at Temperance Hall the night before.

<sup>80</sup> Perhaps the best proof of Lippincott’s lack of enthusiasm for phonographic entertainment lies in his reaction to Berliner’s gramophone in Feb. 1890: “It will do very well for use in a hall to record musical sounds, but it is too unwieldy for ordinary commercial use. We were offered the American rights, but

---

could see no advantage in possessing them and declined” (“A New Syndicate,” *New York World*, Feb. 6, 1890 [TAEM 146:570]).

<sup>81</sup> The contract between Edison and the North American Phonograph Company specified that if Edison invented “any special extra for the phonograph, which is sold as an extra, such as the manufacture of duplicate records of music, novels, &c.,” the rights to this invention would “be assigned to the company, and the company shall pay to the said Edison a royalty of fifteen per cent., computed on the manufacturer’s price to the company, of...duplicate records.” Another contract between North American and the Edison Phonograph Works gave the latter “the sole and exclusive right to manufacture the phonograph and all the devices and apparatus used in conjunction therewith, and supplies therefore in perpetuity,” which North American would buy at twenty percent above the cost of manufacture (Draft of “Contract between Edison and the American Phonograph Company,” and actual agreement between Edison, North American and Lippincott dated Aug. 1, 1888, both reproduced in *New York Phonograph Co. vs. National Phonograph Company*, Transcript of Record, 2:187, 194-5; Agreement between North American and Edison Phonograph Works, Aug. 1, 1888, *New York Phonograph Co. vs. National Phonograph Company*, Transcript of Record, 2:197). In turn, the standard contract between the North American Phonograph Company and its sub-companies (starting with the Metropolitan Phonograph Company in Oct. 1888) read as follows: “The party of the first part [North American] will...furnish to the party of the second part [the sub-company], after requisition by it, all such extra cylinders for use on instruments leased and “special extras,” such as records of music, orations, novels or other appliances and parts of instruments applicable thereto, which shall be sold by the party of the second part at prices that shall be fixed from time to time by the party of the first part” (Contract between North American Phonograph Company and Metropolitan Phonograph Company, cited in *New York Phonograph Co. vs. National Phonograph Company*, Transcript of Record, 2:270-71).

<sup>82</sup> T. A. Edison, “Process of Duplicating Phonograms,” U. S. Patent 484,582., filed Jan. 5, 1888, granted Oct. 18, 1892.

<sup>83</sup> Up through the middle of 1888, Schulze-Berge used split moulds which resulted in a “knocking” sound at the seam. Maybe Edison had thought the seam would be no more objectionable than the slot that held down the tinfoil had been in the exhibition phonographs of late 1878, but by all accounts it was. By that fall, Schulze-Berge was instead using seamless moulds, relying on cooling the wax so that it would contract sufficiently for removal. Wangemann recalled having heard “a great many of these records,” which Schulze-Berge took to Room 13 for listening and evaluation (*National Phonograph Company vs. American Graphophone Company*, Transcript of Record, 62-63). As of November, he recalled, this process had produced “several duplicate records, made with a paraffin backing, which were at that time pronounced quite satisfactory, clear in sound and not [sic] disagreeable scratching” (*National Phonograph Company vs. American Graphophone Company*, Transcript of Record, 76). Walter Miller heard them too, noted that they were “brown on the outside and white inside,” and said: “as near as I can recollect they were instrumental selections and I thought they were excellent for that period of phonographic development” (*National Phonograph Company vs. American Graphophone Company*, Transcript of Record, 87). However, as a legal brief summarized things, “it is evident from an examination of his [Schulze-Berge’s] notes that these results were secured by him only in isolated instances” (*National Phonograph Company vs. American Graphophone Company*, Transcript of Record, 12).

<sup>84</sup> George S. Evans to Edison, Sept. 17, 1888 [TAEM 124:416]); Gaston & Marsh to Edison, Sept. 18, 1888 [TAEM 124:208] and Sept. 21, 1888 [TAEM 124:211]; Metropolitan Phonograph Company to Edison, Sept. 26, 1888 [TAEM 124:420]; Edison to Wangman [sic], Dec. 26, 1888 [TAEM 124:269]. George Gouraud, Edison’s phonograph agent in London, had started conducting regular exhibitions of speech and music recorded in America even earlier; see e.g. “Edison Talks in England,” *New York World*, June 28, 1888 [TAEM 146:248]; Munro, *Heroes of the Telegraph*; “Speech and Song Embalmed,” *Fireside News*, July 13, 1888 (146:276-7). Phonograms taken at recording sessions during this period were often earmarked for overseas use; for instance, it was stated of a session by Annie Hartdegen: “the wax cylinder was slipped off, properly marked, and the electrician in charge said that it was to be sent to England” (“No More Lost Chords,” *Oakland Times*, July 18, 1888 [TAEM 146:423]).

---

<sup>85</sup> Wangemann later testified that he had started supervising the production of phonograms “in the Edison Laboratory, which went to the North American Phonograph Company and the sub-companies... [d]uring the latter part of 1888; Mr. Edison wanted to find out the cost of making musical records, and we occasionally would run for two or three days” (*American Graphophone Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, printed record, 197).

<sup>86</sup> “Dixey and the Wizard,” *Orange Herald*, Sept. 15, 1888 (TAEM 146:274).

<sup>87</sup> One of Effie Stewart’s cylinders was educed at the Third Batallion Armory benefit fair in Orange, New Jersey on Oct. 25, 1888, so she must already have recorded by that date (“Exhibiting the Phonograph,” *Journal* (Newark), Oct. 26, 1888 [TAEM 146:245]), but she also visited the laboratory at the beginning of December (“Phonographed for London Ears,” *New York Times*, Dec. 9, 1888 [TAEM 146:293]).

<sup>88</sup> “Negro Melodies in Wax,” *New York Evening World*, Dec. 20, 1888 (TAEM 146:329).

<sup>89</sup> “Verestchagin and Edison,” *New York Graphic*, Dec. 1, 1888 (TAEM 146:267); “Kisses By Phonograph,” *New York Times*, Dec. 3, 1888, p. 8. After I mentioned these sources in a presentation at the ARSC conference in Santa Barbara, California in 2002, Steven Smolian took an interest in tracing them as the earliest known orchestral recordings. After some research assistance from Brenda Nelson-Strauss, Frank Vilella, and Alison Hinderliter, the conclusion was that these cylinders were probably recorded during a Nov. 22, 1888 concert at Orange Music Hall, at which Rafael Joseffy was the piano soloist in a performance of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto No. 4.

<sup>90</sup> “The Phonograph Played the Drum,” *New York Press*, Dec. 17, 1888 (TAEM 146:247).

<sup>91</sup> “Playing for Europeans,” *Orange Herald*, Sept. 29, 1888 (TAEM 146:341).

<sup>92</sup> Franck Z. Maguire, who was then busy promoting the new phonograph in Chicago, wrote to Tate complaining that he had not yet received “a box of new musical cylinders” Wangemann had promised him for an event to be held the next evening (F. Z. Maguire to Tate, Jan. 18, 1889 [TAEM 127:356]). Tate replied ten days later: “Mr. Wangemann will send you a supply of musical cylinders early this week. He was unavoidably delayed in getting these out for you owing to several musical people with whom he had made arrangements to visit the Laboratory (and upon whom he was depending for the necessary musical records to send you) having disappointed him” (Tate to F. Z. Maguire, Jan. 28, 1889 [TAEM 138:779]).

<sup>93</sup> The group was recorded on three phonographs by funnels suspended from the ceiling, respectively five, nine, and nineteen feet in length (“Kisses By Phonograph,” *New York Times*, Dec. 3, 1888, p. 8). By the time of the first entries in the *First Book* (see below), Wangemann was apparently getting as many as nine musical cylinders from a single performance.

<sup>94</sup> “Though this Company was organized in October, 1888, and the formation of some of the local Companies quickly followed, the first small installment of machines was not ready to be put upon the market until May, 1889” (Jesse Lippincott to Spencer Trask & Co., Jan. 20, 1890 [TAEM 130:316]).

<sup>95</sup> “The first book of Phonograph Records” (henceforth *First Book*), transcribed and published in 1969 as an appendix to Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, 109-33. The original was not microfilmed in facsimile as part of TAEM, but it can be found as notebook E-2531, Cat. 1410, in the West Orange Laboratory Records Series at ENHS; the original has been rebound and is now missing its title page. Because entries are ordered more or less chronologically and are easy to look up by date, I will not provide page citations unless referring to undated, unusual, or ambiguous entries.

<sup>96</sup> “North American Phonograph Company Price List of Supplies No. 1,” May 28, 1889 [TAEM 128:7]).

<sup>97</sup> As Wangemann later explained it, “The phonograph exhibit at the Paris Exhibition was reported to be poorly in comparison with the results shown in the Laboratory, and Mr. Edison sent me over there primarily to have the phonograph exhibit run as well as possible” (*American Graphophone Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, printed record, 191). Wangemann’s date of departure, June 15, 1889, is provided by a note in the *First Book* (plate 20); he did not return until the following year (Tate to Edison, Feb. 27, 1890 [TAEM 140:658]).

<sup>98</sup> Hagen must have been solely in charge for about a month, since Walter Miller was away consulting in Wisconsin at the time of Wangemann’s departure: letters place him in Milwaukee during May and June: “Extract of Letter from the Wisconsin Phonograph Company,” May 15, 1889 (TAEM 128:59); W. H. Miller to Edison, June 9, 1889 (TAEM 128:69); and June 20, 1889 (TAEM 128:77). At the beginning of Aug. 1889, word was sent overseas to Wangemann that all seemed to be going smoothly:

---

“Walter Miller has returned from the West, and at present he is working with Mr. Hagan [sic], manipulating the musical cylinders. They succeed in getting about 100 musical phonograms daily” (Thomas Maguire to Wangemann, Aug. 5, 1889 [TAEM 139:625]; see also Tate to Will Loomis [sic], Aug. 7 1889 [TAEM 139:630]). A note in the *First Book* for Aug. 16, 1889, reads: “Hagen left,” but it is unclear whether his departure was temporary or permanent.

<sup>99</sup> Thomas Lombard to Edison Phonograph Works, Dec. 12, 1889 (TAEM 128:37); Tate to Thomas Lombard, Dec. 21, 1889 (TAEM 140:85); Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, 134; also TAEM 147:361-2. The list had been “issued...a few days hence,” according to the North American Phonograph Company’s circular letter #16, dated Jan. 17, 1890, reprinted in *New York Phonograph Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, Transcript of Record, 1:602.

<sup>100</sup> *Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention*, 83.

<sup>101</sup> Edison to Edison Phonograph Works, Jan. 25, 1890 (TAEM 140:343-6 [handwritten] and 141:828ff [typewritten]; the date on the badly smudged typewritten copy has hitherto been misread as Jan. 23 but is clearly legible in the handwritten version); copy of letter from Alexander MacGruthar to North American, Jan. 27, 1890 (TAEM 141:827).

<sup>102</sup> Entries referring to phonograms bought from Marshall begin with Nov. 4, 1889 (Metropolitan Phonograph Company journal [ENHS company records series], 119); on the terms of his phonograph rental, see entries for Nov. 13, 1889 (p. 121); Jan. 31, 1890 (p. 139) and Mar. 15, 1890 (p. 149). By the spring of 1890, Marshall was said to be in charge of a “factory” in Jersey City at which “[t]he cylinders of the phonograph are ‘charged’ with instrumental or vocal music previous to their shipment to the New York warehouses.... It is one of his duties to secure the services of musicians and singers whose music should delight the ear of phonograph owners”; Felix Gottschalk testified that Marshall was “not an employe of the company, but on his own account makes contracts with the Metropolitan Phonograph Company to furnish songs and music for phonographs” (“Deaf to Their Songs,” *New York Journal*, June 1, 1890 [TAEM 146:600]). In the spring of 1891, Marshall was said to have produced over thirty thousand of these phonograms during the previous two years, including “all the musical records sold by the Metropolitan Phonograph Co.” for eighteen months. Among his phonograms were “the splendid records now in the possession of many well-known people, of the great singers of Mme. Patti’s Opera Co., when they were here last,” as well as 1,200 phonograms of the chimes of Grace Church and St. Thomas Church taken in the winter of 1889-90, including some recorded at midnight on New Year’s Eve. Marshall had also “made Cappa’s Seventh Regiment Band of New York very popular on the phonograph,” employing them for recording one day a week: “From three hours’ playing of the band Mr. Marshall has frequently taken three hundred records, making each announcement through the speaking tube himself: he used ten phonographs” (“Charles Marshall, New York City,” *Phonogram* 1 [Mar. 1891], 63).

<sup>103</sup> A “piece of band music, played by the Columbia band of New York city, composed of forty pieces” was educed at a phonograph and graphophone demonstration in Topeka, Kansas (“The Phonograph,” *Journal* (Topeka, Kansas), Feb. [?] 12, 1889 [TAEM 146:383]); this seems to refer to the same recording session described in “Mr. Metcalfe of Edison’s Company Makes Several Interesting Experiments,” *New York Evening Sun*, Jan. 9, 1889 (TAEM 146:369), the recordist in question presumably being James B. Metcalf, one of the Metropolitan Phonograph Company’s officers. Some journal entries from July 1889 also reflect dealings in musical phonograms: July 3: Supplies to Ohio Phonograph Company, allowance on 6 Musical Cylinders—11.10; July 16: New England Phonograph Company, 6 Musical Cyls. —3.60 (Metropolitan Phonograph Company journal, 88, 90). Cappa’s Seventh Regiment Band cylinders, probably recorded by Charles Marshall, are known to have circulated widely outside New York that fall: two Edison Phonograph Works representatives, Fred Browning and H. F. Fox, played a Seventh Regiment Band record “that had received the sound impressions in New York” for the Kentucky Phonograph Company in Louisville on Aug. 2, 1889 (*Louisville Post*, Aug. 3, 1889 [TAEM 146:369]), and on Aug. 23, a man named Kitt from the Edison laboratory played a prerecorded cylinder of “a cornet solo from a member of the New York Seventh Regiment band” for a demonstration at the South Dakota Phonograph Company’s offices in Sioux Falls (“The Phonograph,” *Sioux Falls Leader*, Aug. 24, 1889 [TAEM 146:374]).

<sup>104</sup> In later memoirs, Emerson recalled that the first subject he recorded for them, “seventeen years ago” in 1907, was a four-piece “mud gutter band” of Newark, which he paid \$3.50 for an afternoon’s work (Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 26; 534, n. 2). The New Jersey Phonograph Company appears already to

---

have been recording material on a small scale by May 15, 1889 (see “Testing the Phonograph,” *Newark Journal*, May 15, 1889 [TAEM 146:372]) and was probably supplying the national trade with offerings by the Fifth New Jersey Regiment Band as of the summer of 1890, when the Georgia Phonograph Company had “Father of Victory, March—Fifth New Jersey Regiment band” on hand (“The Edison Phonograph,” *Atlanta Constitution*, July 23, 1890, p. 7); this title had not appeared in the *First Book*.

<sup>105</sup> Frank Dorian, who had worked for the company in its early years, recalled many years later: “During the first few months of the industry, the local companies were dependent upon the head company for cylinders containing musical selections, but the variety as well as the supply was limited and the character of the recording was not wholly satisfactory. In addition the wonder and amazement of an instrument which reproduced speech, song and all kinds of instrumental music was such that the demand for records of local talent pointed the way to increased profits. Before the Columbia Company was six months old, it had begun to do a little recording on its own account” (Frank Dorian, “Reminiscences of the Columbia Cylinder Records,” *Phonograph Monthly Review* [Jan. 1930], 114). The six-month mark would have fallen in July, but it was not until September that Columbia began to order blank Edison-style phonograph cylinders in any quantity. A tally sheet of phonograph cylinder blanks sent to Columbia by the Edison Phonograph Works on different dates, starting in Feb. 1889, shows that a grand total of ninety-six cylinders had been delivered by the beginning of September. Shipments of phonograph cylinder blanks then began to pick up, in lots of 150 every week or two or occasionally 300 at a time (*American Graphophone Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, printed record, 244-45). In Nov. 1889 Columbia issued a brochure in which it advertised prerecorded cylinders for home use by its own subscribers, including some apparent local products: “The company keeps constantly in stock musical records of orchestras, of brass bands of eight pieces, cornet solos, flute, piccolo, violin, organ, piano, banjo, and other musical records which are sold at a reasonable price.... We also have whistling solos by artistic whistlers, which are very popular.” As Tim Brooks notes, no whistling records appear in the *First Book*, so these presumably came from some source other than the Edison Phonograph Works (Brooks, “Columbia Records in the 1890’s,” 6-7), although other sources of supply such as the New York and Metropolitan Phonograph Companies should not be ruled out. In Feb. 1890, it announced that it had arranged to record local musician Henry Jaeger, who played flute and piccolo for the United States Marine Band, again promoting these phonograms as “a great attraction to subscribers,” implying that they were intended strictly for local consumption (Brooks, “Columbia Records in the 1890’s,” 7). The same brochure also reprinted the list of selections North American had offered in its first catalog that January, suggesting that Columbia still expected to rely largely on the parent company for its prerecorded material at that time.

<sup>106</sup> “One of those accidents which happen in the best regulated families was partly responsible for Columbia going into the business of record making on a large scale. The records were kept in heavy paste board boxes.... The Company’s entire stock of musical records was contained in such boxes, fifteen or twenty of which were stacked on top of a small table in the show room. One morning while cleaning up the show room the negro porter upset the table, with the result that most of the records were broken. That was a real calamity! More than half of the Company’s entire stock in trade was destroyed in one fell swoop! At any rate it was shortly after that calamity occurred that record making on a wholesale scale became one of the important activities of Columbia” (Dorian, “Reminiscences,” 114). Judging from circumstantial evidence, the “catastrophe” probably happened in Aug. 1890 or shortly before. Towards the end of that month, the Georgia Phonograph Company announced that it had placed several United States Marine Band selections on nickel-in-the-slot machines in Atlanta: “The opening piece will be a most artistic production of music played by the celebrated United States Marine band at Washington, D. C., entitled ‘The Blending of the Blue and Gray’” (“The Edison Phonograph,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 20, 1890, p. 6); specific titles names later on were THE JOLLY COPPERSMITH and THE DUDE’S MARCH, with further mention of flute solos by “Professor Henry Jaegar, of Whashington, D. C. [sic]” (“The Edison Phonograph,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 28, 1890, p. 7; a list the previous month [“The Edison Phonograph,” *Atlanta Constitution*, July 23, 1890, p. 7] had not listed any items from Washington, D. C., but many from New York and elsewhere).

<sup>107</sup> “All the cylinders are tested before being sold, to make sure that they are perfect, about 10 per cent. of them being rejected as defective. Selling at from \$1 to \$2 each, there is a fair profit on them after the musical performers have been paid. They are hired just as for public playing and at the same rates.

---

The Marine band [playing to five phonographs recording simultaneously] makes \$10 worth of cylinders every ten minutes, which mounts up during an afternoon's playing" (Rene Bache, "Do Monkeys Have Speech?," *Times* [Brooklyn, New York], Sept. 21, 1890 [TAEM 146:608]). The number of blank cylinders the company ordered from the Edison Phonograph Works skyrocketed during the week after Bache's article. On Sept. 23, the Edison Phonograph Works sent Columbia three shipments of blanks totaling 1,200 cylinders, with 1,200 more coming within the next three days. In four days the company had been sent a number of blanks—2,400—equal to what they had obtained for the whole of 1890 up to that point (*American Graphophone Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, printed record, 244-45).

<sup>108</sup> Brooks, "Columbia Records in the 1890s," 7-8.

<sup>109</sup> This company responded for a roll-call of those producing musical records when a survey was taken at the convention of local companies in 1892 (*Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention*, 79). A Michigan Phonograph Company recording session featuring Schremser's Fourth Regiment Band was also described in an undated article, without citation, pasted on page 74 of the New Jersey Phonograph Company scrapbook at ENHS. The Georgia Phonograph Company also stocked some items by the "Fourth Regimental Band, Detroit": COLOR GUARD MARCH, FOR FAME AND FORTUNE, HELENA WALTZ, and JOLLY COPPERSMITH ("The Edison Phonograph," *Atlanta Constitution*, July 23, 1890, p. 7). Other material by the same band was mentioned in subsequent lists: "The Edison Phonograph," *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 20, 1890, p. 6; "The Edison Phonograph," *Atlanta Constitution*, Aug. 28, 1890, p. 7.

<sup>110</sup> See Thomas Lombard to the Phonograph Companies, Circular Letter #21, Feb. 24, 1890 (TAEM 130:324); *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 1, 1890, p. 18; Thomas Lombard to the Phonograph Companies, Circular Letter #28, May 31, 1890 (ENHS correspondence box 1890:20, folder D-90-58); Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, 134-35, panels dated June 18, 1890; Thomas Lombard to the Phonograph Companies, Circular Letter #30, June 19, 1890 (TAEM 130:331-2). In May 1891, following Lippincott's assignment for the benefit of his creditors, Lombard attempted to cut North American's operating costs and "moved the concern over to a loft in Jersey City, had our offices and a repair shop and a place to make musical records all in one place" (*New York Phonograph Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, Transcript of Record, 1:528, italics added).

<sup>111</sup> In Oct. 1890, Edison complained to his attorney that some of the sub-companies were buying "supplies in the form of musical records" from parties other than the Edison Phonograph Works and asked whether this was an actionable violation of his contracts (Edison to S. B. Eaton, Oct. 17, 1890 [TAEM 141:649-50]). Eaton initially replied that there was a violation (S. B. Eaton to Edison, Nov. 12, 1890 [TAEM 145:675ff]), but when he learned about Edison's formal announcement about the closing of his music room, he warned that it might have compromised Edison's legal position (S. B. Eaton to Edison, Dec. 9, 1890 [TAEM 130:127]). Edison responded that he had "made these cylinders [through Jan. 1890] 'personally' at Laboratory—no formal actions were ever taken by phono w[or]ks as they have never made them" (Edison to S. B. Eaton, Dec. 11, 1890 [TAEM 141:826]; see also marginalia on Tate to Edison, Feb. 19, 1892 [TAEM 133:410-2]; Edison to Tate, Feb. 20, 1892 [TAEM 143:109]).

<sup>112</sup> "I do not want to make *original duplica* cylinders—I have no objection to the local Co[mpanie]s making theirs what I want is the m[anu]f[acturin]g of *duplicates* Duplicates are far different things from music made without musicians direct The moment duplicates are to be had the direct production of records will cease as they will be better & cheaper" (marginalia on Eaton to Edison, Dec. 9, 1890 [TAEM 130:127], italics added).

<sup>113</sup> *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 33, 78, 97; pre-printed form to North American Phonograph Company, dated Dec. 30, 1890, as filled out by the New England Phonograph Company, which ordered eight dozen [TAEM 132:174]). A reference in the form to guests being *shown* the duplicating apparatus indicates that these must have been moulded duplicates, since mechanical duplication was regarded as a trade secret.

<sup>114</sup> R. L. Thomae to New England Phonograph Company, Jan. 6, 1891 (TAEM 132:175); for an outraged reaction, see Augustus Sampson to Edison, Jan. 8, 1891 (TAEM 132:173).

<sup>115</sup> "The Manufacture of Musical Cylinders," *Phonogram* 1 (Feb. 1891), 38-9.

<sup>116</sup> *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 89, 91-3.

---

<sup>117</sup> Raymond Wile claims that some moulded duplicates were probably being sold during this period and has published two matrix listings associating cylinder titles and artists with lettered and numbered matrices, copied from one of Charles Wurth's notebooks (Raymond R. Wile, "Duplicates of the Nineties and The National Phonograph Company's Bloc Numbered Series," *ARSC Journal* 32 [Fall 2001], 198-203; original is N-91-11-24, TAEM 103:427ff). However, Charles Wurth testified in Feb. 1901 that, as of that time, none of his moulded duplicates had ever been sold; see *National Phonograph Company vs. Lambert Company*, Complainant's Record on Final Hearing (reproduced in TAEM 117:270ff), 264-5.

<sup>118</sup> *Inspector's Handbook*, 62-3. This procedure had already been known during the tinfoil era; see "Edison and his Inventions," *Boston Journal*, May 25, 1878 (TAEM 94:213); "The Morning's News: Edison's Laboratory," *Boston Evening Transcript*, May 23, 1878 (TAEM 25:208); "The Phonograph, Etc.," *Daily Evening Traveller*, May 23, 1878 (TAEM 25:218).

<sup>119</sup> *American Graphophone Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, printed record, 169-70, 200.

<sup>120</sup> See comments by one of Edison's representatives in *National Phonograph Company vs. American Graphophone Company*, Brief for Complainant, 4.

<sup>121</sup> *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 88. North American had still not agreed to handle these duplicates, and Edison's laboratory was barred from selling cylinders directly to sub-companies, but a loophole was found: sub-companies were told to order blank cylinders through North American as usual, but with instructions to have them delivered to the Edison laboratory on their behalf, and then to send Edison a separate duplication service fee of 35¢ per phonogram, after which they would receive the results direct from the laboratory without any illicit sale of "phonograph supplies" having taken place. North American huffed that the arrangement was still irregular but agreed to acquiesce in it for the time being (Thomas Lombard to Tate, Aug. 31, 1891 [TAEM 142:810]).

<sup>122</sup> "Mr. Edison has two processes for duplicating phonographic records. With one [moulding] it is necessary that the originals should be taken on a special machine. With the other [mechanical] we can obtain from thirty to fifty duplicates, providing the original is good" (Tate to H. H. Thomas, Apr. 11, 1891 [TAEM 142:142]).

<sup>123</sup> *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention* 94-97, 103-4.

<sup>124</sup> The original documents I have seen support a date of Aug. 1 for the first sample shipment: Edison to New Jersey Phonograph Company, Aug. 1, 1891 (TAEM 142:469-70); Henry F. Gilg of the Western Pennsylvania Phonograph Company to Edison, Aug. 4, 1891 (TAEM 132:185); Statement of Expenses regarding Duplicating Musical Cylinders, Oct. 1, 1891 (TAEM 142:869). Wile, "Duplicates," 213 n. 5 cites documentation for a sample sent to the Kentucky Phonograph Company by July 2, 1891, but this seems too early: Ott and Tewksbury to Walter Miller, July 16, 1891 (TAEM 132:182), refers to promised samples that had not yet arrived and the reply (Tate to Ott and Tewksbury, July 25, 1891 [TAEM 142:448]) states "I beg to inform you that Mr. Edison is not quite ready yet to send out examples of duplicate records." An initial catalog of available titles was distributed later in August (Tate to Edison, Aug. 18, 1891 [TAEM 142:486]; no copy of this list appears to survive), but one local agent was told: "We have not gone very extensively into the making of records as yet, for the reason that we desire to obtain the views of the different Phonograph Companies, as to the kind of music which they require" (Tate to Hugh Conyngton, Louisiana Phonograph Company, Aug. 18, 1891 [TAEM 142:483]). It was presumed that what the sub-companies would require was "reproductions of local music" (Tate to J. W. Wilson, Aug. 19, 1891 [TAEM 142:496]). "We hope to receive suggestions from the various companies in regard to the selection of music," Tate wrote to Lombard the same day, "and some of them have promised to send us master cylinders for duplication" (Tate to Thomas Lombard, Aug. 18, 1891 [TAEM 142:480-1]).

<sup>125</sup> The first victim of this "piracy" was the Columbia Phonograph Company. Tate contacted Franck Z. Maguire, who lived in Washington, D. C., asking him to order a number of phonograms from Columbia's catalog, mainly selections by the United States Marine Band and John Yorke AtLee, adding: "I do not wish them to know for whom they are purchased" (Tate to Franck Z. Maguire, Oct. 20, 1891 [TAEM 142:601-2]). He went on to list marches (1, 3, 14, 16, 21, 25, 37, 41, 43), polkas (4, 9, 15, 21), waltzes (2, 3, 7, 20), "airs of all nations" (2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14), "artistic whistling" (1, 7, 12, 16), and "recitations" (1, 2, 3, 4). They were received within a few days (Thomas Maguire to Tate, Oct. 29, 1891 [TAEM 142:1000]; Tate to Thomas Maguire, Oct. 29, 1891 [TAEM 142:634]), and a couple weeks later, Edison issued a new "Musical Record Catalogue" offering freshly made duplicates

---

of the Columbia titles (Thomas Maguire to Orange Herald, Nov. 11, 1891 [TAEM 142:1036] refers to proofs of a catalogue including selections by the United States Marine Band being returned with comments, and an undated catalog, probably the one in question, contains eighteen United States Marine Band selections, four “artistic whistling” titles, and three “recitations”: *Catalogue of Musical Records*, Edison Phonograph Works [n.d.] [TAEM 147:313ff; this was James Andem’s copy, and he sent it in with an order on Feb. 22, 1892]). Although I have not compared all the Columbia catalog numbers ordered with the corresponding items offered in the Edison catalog, the John Yorke AtLee titles (listed in FPRA Dec. 1959, 35) do match up exactly: 1. THE MOCKING BIRD; 7. SWANEE RIVER; 12. CORNFLOWER WALTZ; and 16. HOME SWEET HOME. Similar measures were taken to obtain material from the New York and New Jersey companies (Tate to Henry B. Auchincloss, Oct. 20, 1891 [TAEM 142:598]; Tate to Joseph Hutchinson, Oct. 20, 1891 [TAEM 142:599]). A circular dated Dec. 18, 1891 offered duplicates of a number of Russell Hunting’s “Michael Casey” phonograms, drawing a sharp protest from Augustus Sampson of the New England Phonograph Company, which specialized in Hunting’s work (Augustus Sampson to Edison Phonograph Works, Dec. 21, 1891 [TAEM 133:393]).

<sup>126</sup> Tate to Samuel Insull, Jan. 12, 1892 (TAEM 133:394-6); “Proposed Letter to New England Phono Co.,” *circa* Jan., 1892 (TAEM 133:397-8). Edison’s laboratory continued to offer duplicate “Caseys” into the following year; two orders including various “Casey” titles are Montana Phonograph Company to Edison Phonograph Works, Jan. 5, 1892, and Iowa Phonograph Company to Edison Phonograph Works, Feb. 11, 1892 (ENHS document file 1892 [11] D-92-40).

<sup>127</sup> Chicago Central Phonograph Co. to Walter Mallory, Jan. 6, 189[2] (TAEM 160:328); Walter Mallory to Tate, Jan. 7, 1892 (TAEM 160:327); Thomas Maguire to Tate, Jan. 11, 1892 (TAEM 143:21).

<sup>128</sup> Edward Easton, Columbia Phonograph Company circular, June 1, 1892 [TAEM 133:607]; Koenigsberg, *Patent History*, 32; Raymond R. Wile, “Record Piracy: The Attempts of the Sound Recording Industry to Protect Itself Against Unauthorized Copying, 1890-1978,” *ARSC Journal* 16 (1984), 22; Leon F. Douglass, “Method of and Means for Duplicating or Transferring Phonographic Records,” U. S. Patent 475,490, filed Mar. 17, 1892, granted May 24, 1892.

<sup>129</sup> James Andem complained about Columbia’s duplication of the Ohio Phonograph Company’s Pat Brady phonograms in *Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention*, 82. These and Russell Hunting’s “Casey” series were both being advertised in Columbia’s official catalogue as of Apr. 1893 (Brooks, “Columbia Records in the 1890’s,” 15; “Directory,” 115-6), presumably in the form of unauthorized duplicates of dubious quality.

<sup>130</sup> Columbia managed to obtain a half interest in Bettini’s mechanical duplication patent in 1897, while the other half, which had first gone to the New York Phonograph Company in whose territory Bettini had done his work, was eventually acquired by Edison. Gianni Bettini, “Phonograph,” U. S. Patent 488,381, filed Mar. 14, 1892, granted Dec. 20, 1892; Koenigsberg, *Patent History*, 32-3; Wile, “Record Piracy: Attempts,” 23, 34 n. 12; Wile, “Duplicates,” 196.

<sup>131</sup> *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 51-2.

<sup>132</sup> Although Lippincott assigned his estate on May 2, 1891, the contract was still felt to be in force as of that June; see Payne’s answer to a question to this effect, *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 75. However, Easton retrospectively dated the period of competition between the two interests to Jan. 1891; see Timothy C. Fabrizio, “District of Columbia: The Graphophone in Washington, DC,” *ARSC Journal* 27 (Spring 1996), 9. The lines of conflict were clearly drawn by June 1892; see *Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention*, 49.

<sup>133</sup> Fabrizio, “District of Columbia,” 9.

<sup>134</sup> Wile, “Record Piracy: Attempts,” 22; Brooks, “Columbia Records in the 1890’s,” 17.

<sup>135</sup> Fabrizio, “District of Columbia,” 5; Fabrizio and Paul, *Talking Machine*, 33; Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, xix; possibly also alluded to in Read and Welch, *Tin Foil to Stereo*, 57. Edison’s motives do not seem to have been entirely clear to his contemporaries; see e.g. Tate, *Edison’s Open Door*, 294-5.

<sup>136</sup> See a notice of Oct. 31, 1894 reprinted in Fabrizio and Paul, *Talking Machine*, 34.

<sup>137</sup> *New York Phonograph Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, Transcript of Record, 1:217.

<sup>138</sup> In 1893-4, the United States Phonograph Company of Newark “superseded the New Jersey Phonograph Company—took over all its business,” according to Emerson, who had become the new



---

company's president (*American Graphophone Co. vs. National Phonograph Co.*, printed record, 436). According to Wile, "Record Piracy: Attempts," 24, the new company "was organized in 1893 and began business in January 1894." Wile, "Duplicates," 184-5 provides documentation for some intriguing negotiations of mid-1893 between this company and the American Graphophone Company, through which the former sought to license its recording program independently of North American.

<sup>139</sup> Fabrizio and Paul, *Talking Machine*, 37.

<sup>140</sup> "A Man Who Sees Sound," *Phonoscope*, 3:8 (Aug. 1899), 9.

<sup>141</sup> Letter from G. A., a Boston phonograph exhibitor, in *Phonoscope* 1:2 (Dec. 1896), 7.

<sup>142</sup> *Phonoscope* 3:2 (Feb. 1899), 12.

<sup>143</sup> When a *Phonoscope* correspondent asked in 1896 which company had the "best" phonograms, he received the following answer: "The various companies in the United States all keep a large stock of records. No company has the best. They all have good and bad records. Some make a specialty of some particular class of records to which they give their special attention, but no company has the best. They may have some of the best, but not all. Advise us what class of records you wish, and we may be able to help you out" (*Phonoscope* 1:2 [Dec. 1896], 10).

<sup>144</sup> See the discussion of Reed and Dawson's violin phonograms starting on page 169.

<sup>145</sup> In 1896, Russell Hunting was selling his own phonograms out of his own home, "originals only," at eighty cents apiece (advertisement, *Phonoscope* 1:1 [Nov. 1896], 3; and news item on page 9). Len Spencer and his brother Harry set up their own American Talking Machine Company (*Phonoscope* 1:3 [Jan.-Feb. 1897], 11). J. W. Myers, another phonogenic vocalist, made and sold his own phonograms under the names Globe Record Company and Standard Phonograph Record Company (for Globe, see *Phonoscope* 1:1 [Nov. 1896], 9; advertisement, *Phonoscope* 1:2 [Dec. 1896], 17; for Standard, see *Phonoscope*, 2:3 [Mar. 1898], 11; advertisement, *Phonoscope*, 2:7 [July 1898], 5). A group of several other well-known performers banded together in Newark to form the American Phonograph Company (*Phonoscope* 2:11 [Nov. 1898], 16; Quentin Riggs, "Steve Porter," *Talking Machine Review* [Dec. 1969], 3-5, quoted in Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 273). While most recording companies founded by performers were short-lived, two did enjoy some institutional longevity, associated respectively with Roger Harding and Estella Louise Mann. Roger Harding was a phonogenic tenor and songwriter who began marketing what he described as "high-class original records of celebrated artists" in 1897 (*Phonoscope* 1:8 [July 1897], 9; 1:9 [Aug.-Sept. 1897], 2, 9). His operation was bought out within a few months by a new enterprise known as the Excelsior Phonograph Company, which kept him on as general manager (*Phonoscope* 1:11 [Nov.-Dec. 1897], 9). In the summer of 1898 Excelsior merged with another minor company founded just a few months before (the Musical Phonograph Company) to become the Excelsior and Musical Phonograph Company (*Phonoscope* 2:3 [Mar. 1898], 11; *Phonoscope* 2:4 [Apr. 1898], 11); Harding subsequently severed his connection with the company and was replaced as manager by William F. Hooley (*Phonoscope* 2:8 [Aug. 1898], 11). Estella Mann founded the Lyric Phonograph Company, which specialized in her own vocal selections and in those produced by the "Lyric Trio" and "Lyric Quartette," both of which included her as a member (see e.g. *Phonoscope* 2:3 [Mar. 1898], 11).

<sup>146</sup> One example was the Universal Phonograph Company founded by Joseph W. Stern and Company in 1896-97 (Although contemporary evidence for this company does not seem to predate 1897, *Phonoscope* 3:2 [Feb. 1899], 12 states that it "began business not quite three years ago," which would suggest a date in 1896). The older company mainly hoped to use the new medium to "plug" its sheet music: "The recording of a number was considered something of a plug," recalled Stern's partner Edward B. Marks, "because ordinary human beings, who owned upright pianos but didn't go in for the new eccentricities, might hear your song [on a phonograph] and then buy the sheet music for their piano" (Edward B. Marks, *They All Sang: From Tony Pastor to Rudy Vallée*, as told to Abbott J. Liebling [New York: The Viking Press, 1935], 101-2). However, its status as a music publisher also gave it certain advantages in the phonograph field. Advertisements pointed out that Universal could supply records of hit songs even before they were available in print, for instance: "ALBERT CAMPBELL, tenor, sings all the latest hits from manuscript copy before they are published and therefore before any other dealer can possibly supply them" (*Phonoscope* 3:1 [Jan. 1899], 18). A press release in the *Phonoscope* informed the trade that all such material was "copyrighted by Messrs. Stern & Co., who may prevent any other establishment from using it for Phonograph purposes" (*Phonoscope* 3:2 [Feb. 1899], 13), even though there was actually no legal basis for such an assertion at the time.

Along with privileged access to unpublished musical scores, Stern and Company also had connections with the established artists who performed its material onstage. As Marks later recalled, “Any performer who came into our publishing house for professional copies was dragged down to the laboratory for a phonograph test” (Marks, *They All Sang*, 103). Universal was supposed to gain an advantage over the competition through these opportunities: “This concern will evidently do a large business, as they intend to work in a field that has been heretofore neglected. It proposes to manufacture high-class records by celebrated artists of the vaudeville and dramatic stage.... This departure is an excellent one as one of the serious drawbacks of the talking machine business has been the limited amount of talent employed. Records of popular successes would simply be more valuable if they were made by the authors themselves” (“New Corporations,” *Phonoscope*, 1:3 [Jan.-Feb. 1897], 9). The company does seem to have introduced two full-time “pioneer recording artists” to the field, Al Campbell and Steve Porter, and to have been the first to record the black Broadway star Bert Williams (Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 107). Universal even managed to hire Russell Hunting to direct its recording program for a while (“New Corporations,” *Phonoscope* 1:3 [Jan.-Feb. 1897], 9; Marks, *They All Sang*, 104; “Singing, for the Ears of the Future,” *New York Dramatic Mirror*, July 10, 1897, p. 13). A second sheet music publisher, the E. T. Paull Music Company, advertised its own original master phonograms for sale in 1899, including piano selections by Paull himself, although this enterprise was soon spun off as an independent entity called the Concert Phonograph Company, maker of the “Autocrat Concert Record” (Advertisement, *Phonoscope* 3:5 [May 1899], 8; “E. T. Paull Music Company,” *Phonoscope* 3:5 [May 1899], 10; *Phonoscope* 3:6 [June 1899], 13; *Phonoscope* 3:7 [July 1899], 11; *Phonoscope* 3:8 [Aug. 1899], 10; *Phonoscope* 3:10 [Oct. 1899], 11; *Phonoscope* 3:11 [Nov. 1899], 10, 11; advertisement, *Phonoscope* 3:12 [Dec. 1899] p. 13; *Phonoscope* 4:1 [Jan. 1900], 8; *Phonoscope* 4:4 [Apr. 1900], 13). A fairly equal partnership between music publishing and the phonograph business was Harms, Kaiser and Hagen, in which Henry Hagen and John Kaiser were established technical experts in the sound-recording field and T. B. Harms was a music publisher. Their first advertisement appears in *Phonoscope* 2:4 (Apr. 1898), 6, and their initial strategy was similar to that of the Universal Phonograph Company, as an early news item shows: “The T. B. Harms Co., having extensive interests in the theatrical business and being in touch with the popular and noted singers are in a position to place first-class talent upon their catalogue” (*Phonoscope* 2:5 [May 1898], 11). This partnership recorded extensively and lasted until Hagen withdrew in 1900 (*Phonoscope* 4:5 [May 1900], 8).

<sup>147</sup> Hawthorne & Sheble had entered the business in 1893 as Edison phonograph retailers in Philadelphia (Sutton and Nauck, *American Record Labels*, 288), and began selling their own phonograms in standard and concert sizes in 1899 (*Phonoscope* 3:7 [July 1899], 10).

<sup>148</sup> Peter Bacigalupi, an Edison dealer in San Francisco since at least 1895, also offered locally-made phonograms and around 1897 was the first to record the prominent phonogenic pioneer Billy Murray (Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 234); the publication of a Bacigalupi catalog was announced in *Phonoscope*, 2:10 (Oct. 1898), 15.

<sup>149</sup> The Kansas City Talking Machine Company began manufacturing its own cylinders for sale in 1898, announcing that it was “the only Company in the World Listing and Selling Original Records at Fifty Cents each” (Kansas City Talking Machine Company catalog reproduced in Gracyk, *Companion*; see also Tim Gracyk, “The Kansas City Talking Machine Company And Its ‘Original’ Recordings of 1898,” *Victrola and 78 Journal* 10 [Winter 1996], 40-9). The *Phonoscope* dismissed this advertisement as necessarily fraudulent: “We can say positively without fear or favor that any company who advertises original records of such talent as Spencer, Gaskin, Myers, Quinn, Favor, Hunting, etc., at 50 cents each, lie, and intend to swindle their patrons” (*Phonoscope* 1:7 [June 1897], 13).

<sup>150</sup> This company marketed “Spanish” phonograms (*Phonoscope* 1:2 [Dec. 1896], 9).

<sup>151</sup> “Mr. Marshall is a born phonographic artist. His ability to cope with this particular branch of the business is acknowledged, by those acquainted with him and his special work, to be the greatest expert or artist in the manufacture of musical records in the world. No one man has made as many records, or of such great variety. The quality of his ‘records’ was of the highest order—perfectly taken—which reflected great credit not only on the artist, but on the phonograph.... No set rules can be given as to how to take records; this is a matter of good judgment, and lies entirely with the operator. Making

---

musical records is like taking photographs. You get your results according to the skill employed” (“Charles Marshall, New York City,” *Phonogram* 1 [Mar. 1891], 63).

<sup>152</sup> “Improvements in Phonograph Records,” *Phonogram* 3:3-4 (Mar.-Apr. 1893), 374.

<sup>153</sup> “Gallery of Talent Employed for Making Records,” *Phonoscope* 2:7 (July 1898), 12.

<sup>154</sup> Sewell Ford, “The Phonograph Fakir,” *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel* (Fort Wayne, Indiana), Sept. 22, 1897, p. 5; and *Steubenville Herald* (Steubenville, Ohio), Sept. 17, 1897, p. 2. As for specific examples, consider “the New York laboratory of the Gramophone Company” (*Phonoscope* 1:3 [Jan.-Feb. 1897], 11); the “laboratory” of the Excelsior and Musical Phonograph Company (*Phonoscope* 2:4 [Apr. 1898], 11); of Reed and Dawson (*Phonoscope* 2:6 [June 1898], 8; 2:11 [Nov. 1898], 5); of the Lyric Phonograph Company (*Phonoscope* 2:7 [July 1898], 11; 2:10 [Oct. 1898], 15); of the United States Phonograph Company (*Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company, title page); “‘The Phonoscope’ Gold Medal Awarded to Frederick J. Hager,” *Phonoscope* 2:9 [Sept. 1898], 7); of Harms, Kaiser and Hagen (*Phonoscope* 2:11 [Nov. 1898], 11); and of the National Phonograph Company’s recording branch in New York City (*Phonoscope* 3:9 [Sept. 1899], 10; “Collins and Harlan at Milwaukee,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:4 [June 1905], 13).

<sup>155</sup> Two exceptions are the titles of E. W. Mayo, “A Phonographic Studio,” from *Quaker* (July 1899), in *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 6:6 (1980), 1, 3-7; and “A Phonograph Studio,” *Phonoscope* 1:2 (Dec. 1896), 5, the latter being about Bettini. Also: “A studio has been especially arranged for this purpose, and the mechanical detail carefully attended to. The ‘studio’ is not such a one as an artist would delight in, as it is merely a large room, of excellent acoustic properties, but otherwise most inartistic in appearance, being used partly as a storage room, and partly as an electrical workshop” (“Voice Pickling in Chicago,” *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, July 5, 1897 [TAEM 146:1107]).

<sup>156</sup> The Ohio Phonograph Company was typical in having “a music room on the third floor which, although in the heart of the city [Cincinnati], affords perfect quietness” (“Cincinnati Illustrated,” *Edison Phonographic News* 3:2 [July-Aug. 1896], 21). In the case of the Columbia Phonograph Company, we read that “the third floor is occupied by the musical department, from which records go to all parts of the United States, and the rooms above for storage, etc.” (“The Columbia Phonograph Co., Washington, D. C.,” *Phonogram* 1 [Apr. 1891], 89); “The record department of the Columbia Phonograph Company is located in the building, corner of 27th Street and Broadway, occupying the whole of the upper floor” (“Gallery of Talent Employed for Making Records,” *Phonoscope* 2:7 [July 1898], 12). The New York Phonograph Company’s offices were similarly configured: “Every day, also, a lot of people come into the office on the lower floor of this house and want to secure engagements to talk into the phonograph on the upper story” (“Loading the Phonograph,” *New York Journal*, Feb. 15, 1891 [TAEM 146:677]). A Jersey City laboratory, probably Charles Marshall’s, was on the top floor of a building, up six flights of stairs (“Phonographic Music,” from *New York News*, in *Mountain Democrat* [Placerville, California], Jan. 9, 1892, p. 3). The United States Phonograph Company was located upstairs from Swift’s meat house in Newark: “They had the hams and carcasses downstairs and the records upstairs,” remarked Fred Van Eps. “Of course some ‘hams’ went upstairs occasionally to make records!” (FPRA Jan. 1956, 32). Edison’s original “music room” was on the top floor of his laboratory building, and the New York studio substituted for it in 1904 was on the seventeenth floor of the Knickerbocker Building (“Our New York Recording Plant,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:9 [Nov. 1906], 6-8). Such examples could be extended indefinitely. These laboratories were also “protected by hangings at doors and windows and heavy carpeting on the floor, so that no extraneous noises can penetrate into the room” (“Charging the Phonograph,” *Phonogram* 1 [Sept. 1891], 197-8).

<sup>157</sup> One recordist explained in 1890 that it was necessary for the room to be “very small,” in his case fifteen by twenty feet, in order for the phonograph “to get every note.” Prior to recording, he was “careful to close the window, lest some of the strains be lost in the outside air,” although, as soon as a performance was over, he rushed red-faced to the window, “threw up the sash and inhaled the welcome breeze” (“Phonograph Loading,” from *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, in *Bismarck Daily Tribune* [Bismarck, North Dakota], Oct. 28, 1890, p. 2). A reporter described a laboratory in Jersey City as “shockingly suggestive of the hot air room in a Turkish bath” (“Phonographic Music,” from *New York News*, in *Mountain Democrat* [Placerville, California], Jan. 9, 1892, p. 3). On hot summer days, phonogenic performers fought to have electric fans set up where they were working. “The only way the Phonograph boys succeed in doing good work these hot days, is to have an electrical fan rigged up

---

near the record rack, and as there are five laboratories and ten or more singers, and only three fans, the competition for the mechanical ‘gently zephyrs’ [sic] is very keen” (*Phonoscope* 4:5 [May 1900], 8); “The other evening, when the temperature reached 107 degrees, a trio which consisted of Len Spencer, Billy Golden and Roger Harding were singing into these horns. There has been a great deal said about the enormous salary paid to these artists, but should you see them you would certainly admit that they deserve all they receive” (*Phonoscope* 2:8 [Aug. 1898], [11]). George Gaskin is rumored to have chewed tobacco during his phonograph work because the wax shavings in the stuffy air tickled his throat—and to have used the recording horn as a spittoon (FPRA Oct. 1944, 32). By the late 1890s, the pace of recording in the major laboratories was intense enough that multiple recording sessions had to be held concurrently: “It is not an unusual sight at the Columbia record making department nowadays, to hear Dan Quinn singing the Handicap Race with the accompaniment of horses hoofs, clanging of bells etc., while in an adjoining room, [Len] Spencer is reading the Ten Commandments, with Geo. Johnson across the hall in hysterics of laughter with his famous laughing song” (*Phonoscope* 2:1 [Jan. 1898], 11). As a result, individual rooms had to be soundproofed not only against noises external to the building but to the sounds of other phonogenizations. It was reported of Edison’s recording laboratory in 1902: “Passing now into the next room, we find a singer pouring forth melody into a sheaf of horns. In another room, a banjoist; in yet another, a quartet; for on the top floor of this building there are eight rooms which are used for making Master Records. These rooms are separated from each other by double partitions, filled in with seaweed. Seaweed, by the way, is the best material for deadening sound” (“Edison Gold Moulded Records. How Made,” *Phonogram*-2 5 [July 1902], 41-2).

<sup>158</sup> “Charging the Phonograph,” *Phonogram* 1 (Sept. 1891), 197-8.

<sup>159</sup> “Useful Information Regarding the Care and Operation of the Phonograph,” *Phonoscope* 2:1 (Jan. 1898), 7.

<sup>160</sup> Musser, *Emergence of Cinema*, 78.

<sup>161</sup> Edison had mentioned funnels in an interview:

“But how can you take an orchestra, when it is necessary, in talking to the phonograph, to apply your mouth close to the diaphragm?”

“The phonograph will be attached to a hole in one end of a barrel and from the other end will project a funnel like those used in ventilating steamships. This will receive the music from the entire orchestra, but of course not reproduce it with so great a volume. Piano music will be phonographed by a hood being placed over the instrument, and the volume of the reproduction will be one-fourth that of the piano.”

(“That Wonderful Edison,” *New York World*, Mar. 29, 1878 [TAEM 94:147]).

<sup>162</sup> During Edison’s demonstration of the phonograph for the press on May 11, a five-foot funnel was suspended over a grand piano (“The Phonograph’s Music,” *New York Post*, May 12, 1888 [TAEM 146:247]); a small ensemble was also “[s]eated close to a large funnel” (“A Wizard’s Workshop,” *New York Press*, May 12, 1888 [TAEM 146:246]). Monroe Rosenfeld’s first phonograms of May were made through a ten-foot tin funnel suspended over the wires of a grand piano (“The Phonograph,” *Albany Press*, May 28 [?], 1888 [TAEM 146:243]). A recording session in June involved an adjustable-length funnel that could be extended to at least thirty feet (“Catching the Breath of Song,” *Newark News*, June 13 1888 [TAEM 146:229]). The chorus members in Henry Dixey’s “Adonis” troupe “stationed themselves at the mouth of a monster funnel, near which was a piano” (“Dixey and the Wizard,” *Orange Herald*, Sept. 15, 1888 [TAEM 146:274]). The first Markwith’s Band recording session employed “a big tin funnel” that was “turned so as to bear upon the musicians” (“Playing for Europeans,” *Orange Herald*, Sept. 29, 1888 [TAEM 146:341]).

<sup>163</sup> Francis Arthur Jones, “Illustrated Interviews,” *Strand Magazine* 29 (Jan.-June 1905), 417.

Recordists also altered horns to alter their acoustic properties in desirable ways. “The outside is wrapped tightly round and round with twine, after the fashion of a ball bat handle, to deaden a metallic ring and imprison the sound waves,” reports one article (“Phonograph Loading,” from *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, in *Bismarck Daily Tribune* [Bismarck, North Dakota], Oct. 28, 1890, p. 2; see also “Phonographic Music,” from *New York News*, in *Mountain Democrat* [Placerville, California], Jan. 9, 1892, p. 3).

<sup>164</sup> *The Phonograph and How to Use It* (New York: National Phonograph Company, 1900; reprint, New York: A. Koenigsberg, 1971), 154, 156.

---

<sup>165</sup> One writer used a picture of vocalist Byron G. Harlan phonogenizing a vocal solo with piano accompaniment in a room at the Edison laboratory to illustrate the usual strategy for that particular combination: “The piano you will notice is raised off the floor and stands on a platform. This is in order that the keyboard of the piano be on a level with the horns of the machines and at the same time the singer is able to stand up while singing” (C. W. Noyes, “Points Pertaining to the Use and Care of the Edison Phonograph,” *Phonogram*-2 4 [Dec. 1901], 29). For another picture of an arrangement like this, see Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 45; other references to the technique include Mayo, “Phonographic Studio,” 5; Sewell Ford, “The Phonograph Fakir,” *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel* (Fort Wayne, Indiana), Sept. 22, 1897, p. 5; and *Steubenville Herald* (Steubenville, Ohio), Sept. 17, 1897, p. 2; “Voice Pickling in Chicago,” *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, July 5, 1897 (TAEM 146:1107); “Singing, for the Ears of the Future,” *New York Dramatic Mirror*, July 10, 1897, p. 13; “Edison Gold Moulded Records. How Made,” *Phonogram*-2 5 (July 1902), 42.

<sup>166</sup> “Science and Industry,” *Commercial*, Feb. 3, 1891 (TAEM 146:670); W. K. L. Dickson and Antonia Dickson, *The Life and Inventions of Thomas Alva Edison* (New York and Boston: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1892-4), 123-4; “In the World of Electricity,” *New York Times*, Oct. 27, 1895, p. 20. Like Wangemann, Victor Emerson was said to be skilled at “grouping musical instruments so as to produce the best results and in the many other details that go to making good records” (“Gallery of Talent Employed for Making Records,” *Phonoscope* 2:7 [July 1898], 12), a feat he once told an interviewer even required him to pay attention to the weather (“Men and Their Work,” *New York News*, date illegible, in file for 1893 [TAEM 146:837]). Sometimes changes in the configuration of ensembles were so extreme that special measures had to be taken to enable the musicians to communicate with each other: “In locating the instruments [of the Edison Concert Band] to gain the desired effect several of the men are faced in a direction rendering it impossible for them to see the leader, and in order that they may follow his direction intelligently the walls of the room have been provided with a series of large mirrors” (“Moulded Records for Phonographs,” from *American Machinist*, July 9, 1903, in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:6 [Aug. 1903], 11).

<sup>167</sup> Ulysses J. Walsh, “Reminiscences of ‘S. H. Dudley,’” *Phonograph Monthly Review* 6 (Jan. 1932), 63. The rule was that a vocal quartet “should stand with their heads as close together as possible, directly in front of the horn” (*Phonograph and How to Use It*, 157).

<sup>168</sup> *Phonograph and How to Use It*, 154.

<sup>169</sup> “Men and Their Work,” *New York News*, date illegible, in file for 1893 (TAEM 146:837).

<sup>170</sup> Dorian, “Reminiscences,” 114.

<sup>171</sup> *Phonogram* 1 (Oct. 1891), front.

<sup>172</sup> “Phonograph Records by the U. S. Marine Band,” *Phonogram* 1 (Oct. 1891), 226; for the full name of “Professor Bianchi,” who later designed a motion picture camera, see Charles Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 444.

<sup>173</sup> “Moulded Records for Phonographs,” from *American Machinist*, July 9, 1903, in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:6 (Aug. 1903), 11.

<sup>174</sup> “Loading the Phonograph,” *New York Journal*, Feb. 15, 1891 (TAEM 146:677).

<sup>175</sup> “Singing to the Cylinders,” *New York Sun*, date illegible but in unbound clippings file for 1893 (TAEM 146:855).

<sup>176</sup> “The best results are obtained by singers or performers not straining the voice or instrument. The natural tone produces the best result. Records may be spoiled, but cannot be made louder by forcing the tone” (“Men and Their Work,” *New York News*, date illegible, in file for 1893 [TAEM 146:837]); “Avoid singing with too much expression. That voice will record best that has an even quality throughout the entire register” (*Phonograph and How to Use It*, 156).

<sup>177</sup> Mayo, “Phonographic Studio,” 7.

<sup>178</sup> “Loading the Phonograph,” *New York Journal*, Feb. 15, 1891 (TAEM 146:677).

<sup>179</sup> *Phonogram* 1 (Jan. 1891), 23.

<sup>180</sup> “Phonograph Singing an Odd Occupation,” *Phonoscope* 4:4 (Apr. 1900), 6. Again: “It is an odd sensation to sing into a phonograph, and the Washington people who do it for the first time plainly manifest their surprise at the proceeding, when they sing without any one paying the least attention to them. There is no applause at the end, and no bowing right and left to respond to flowers; and, most blessed of all, there are no encores. If a singer has to repeat a song it is because he sang either too fast,

---

too slowly, too loudly, or too softly; and when he is told to sing the same thing over again the directions for the encore are given in a manner widely at variance with the way in which encores are demanded in a music hall" ("Sing to Phonographs," *Washington Post*, July 8, 1900, p. 25).

<sup>181</sup> "The Girl Who Sings into the Phonograph," *New York World*, reprinted in *Phonoscope* 2:2 (Feb. 1898), 10; and as "To an Unresponsive Audience," *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 6, 1898, p. 11. An article about Silas Leachman presented the phonogenic performer's situation as a kind of paradox or riddle: "No one ever goes out there [to Leachman's house on the outskirts of Chicago] to hear him sing, and yet he is getting rich at it. He earns something over \$50 every day, though he never sees one of his auditors" ("He Sings for the Phonographs," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Apr. 8, 1895, p. 5).

<sup>182</sup> "The Famous Record Maker of Chicago," from Exchange, in *Phonogram* 3 (Feb. 1893), 330-1.

<sup>183</sup> "Singing Into the Phonograph," from *Philadelphia Record*, in *New York Times*, Aug. 2, 1903, p. 17.

<sup>184</sup> Excerpt from Harry Lauder, *Between You and Me* (New York: James A. McCann, 1919), reprinted as "In Their Own Words," *New Amberola Graphic* 43 (Winter 1983), 14; see also FPRA Aug. 1950, 21. According to Brian Rust with Allen G. Debus, *The Complete Entertainment Discography from the mid-1890s to 1942* (New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1973), 399, Lauder's first recording session took place in Feb. 1902.

<sup>185</sup> "Seems More Natural," *Newark Daily Advocate* (Newark, Ohio), May 13, 1899, p. 8.

<sup>186</sup> "Before the Phonograph," *New York Times*, Dec. 14, 1890 (TAEM 146:645).

<sup>187</sup> Mayo, "Phonographic Studio," 7.

<sup>188</sup> "Singing to the Cylinders," *New York Sun*, date illegible but in unbound clippings file for 1893 (TAEM 146:855).

<sup>189</sup> "Sing to Phonographs," *Washington Post*, July 8, 1900, p. 25.

<sup>190</sup> "Voice Pickling in Chicago," *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, July 5, 1897 (TAEM 146:1107).

<sup>191</sup> Ada Jones, "Singing to the World," *Edison Amberola Monthly*, Feb. 1917, in FPRA July 1946, 17.

<sup>192</sup> G. E. Walsh, "With Edison in His Laboratory," *The Independent*, Sept. 4, 1913, quoted by Bryan, *Edison*, 101.

<sup>193</sup> "Although the musicians were not attired in regalia and would not even have stunned a London audience with the completeness of their attire, which was designed for work only, they seemed to realize that they were about playing before a foreign audience, though the audience did not happen to be present, and they tuned their instruments accordingly" ("Playing for Europeans," *Orange Herald*, Sept. 29, 1888 [TAEM 146:341]).

<sup>194</sup> Mayo, "Phonographic Studio," 5.

<sup>195</sup> Alma Gluck, from *Vanity Fair*, Oct. 1916, in FPRA Sept. 1962, 32.

<sup>196</sup> Interview with Vess Ossman in *B. M. G.* (Oct. 1903), in FPRA Oct. 1948, 38.

<sup>197</sup> "Phonograph Loading," from *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, in *Bismarck Daily Tribune* (Bismarck, North Dakota), Oct. 28, 1890, p. 2.

<sup>198</sup> According to Jim Walsh, once when J. W. Myers sneezed in the middle of a cylinder "he kept on singing and the record was issued, to the great glee of thousands of subsequent purchasers" (FPRA July 1944, 26). Dan W. Quinn recalled of his work for New York Phonograph Company: "I'll never forget one of the first records I made. It was 'Down Went McGinty.' I was singing from memory and when I reached the chorus I forgot my lines and exclaimed: 'Oh Lord, I forgot it!' This record was treasured by the Company for a long time" (FPRA Mar. 1945, 19).

<sup>199</sup> "Singing to the Cylinders," *New York Sun*, date illegible but in unbound clippings file for 1893 (TAEM 146:855).

<sup>200</sup> Richard José, in a 1907 interview for the *San Francisco Examiner*, quoted in FPRA Aug. 1962, 34.

<sup>201</sup> "The first trial [Markwith's Band] was not altogether a success on account of the table, on which the phonograph stood, being jarred, but the second trial was a great triumph, the song being produced perfectly" ("Playing for Europeans," *Orange Herald*, Sept. 29, 1888 [TAEM 146:341]).

<sup>202</sup> "The Phonograph is Here," *Nashville Banner*, Apr. 16, 1889 (TAEM 146:401).

<sup>203</sup> From anecdotes recounted respectively by Alma Gluck, from *Vanity Fair*, Oct. 1916, in FPRA Sept. 1962, 32; and Maria Jeritza, from *The Literary Digest*, May 10, 1924, in FPRA Aug. 1962, 34.

<sup>204</sup> "Famous Record-Makers and Their Work," *Phonogram* 2 (Dec. 1892), 278.

<sup>205</sup> Gracyk, *Favorite American Recording Pioneers*, 109.

<sup>206</sup> "The diaphragms offer the most perplexing problem. One may not do at all, it being either too thin, too thick, too soft, too absorbent, too responsive or unresponsive as the case may be. To judge of the

---

value of each diaphragm for the particular purpose, requires a keen intuition born doubtless of large experience and experiment” (“Men and Their Work,” *New York News*, date illegible, in file for 1893 [TAEM 146:837]); “Certain musical instruments and certain qualities of voice, will record with a squeak or blast when a glass diaphragm of a certain thinness is used, and yet will record perfectly if a thicker or thinner diaphra[g]m is substituted.... In changing washers or diaphragms the metal clamping ring should not be screwed in too tight, nor yet left too loose. If too tight, the diaphragm ceases to be sensitive. If too loose, the record will whistle or blast. There is a happy medium which you must discover for yourself” (*Phonograph and How to Use It*, 152-3).

<sup>207</sup> *Phonograph and How to Use It*, 156. In 1896, one critic judged performers’ output in terms of relative “blastiness” but supposed the credit or blame lay primarily with recordists: “I am getting fine records from [J. W.] Myers, but the last [George] Gaskin records that I got were too loud and blasty. I find that [Dan W.] Quinn records vary, some of them are good and clear and others blasty. I do not think that it is on account of the singer, but the way the records are taken” (*Phonoscope* 1:2 [Dec. 1896], 11).

<sup>208</sup> Gaisberg, *Music Goes Round*, 37-8, 63-4. Sometimes this task was delegated to assistants known in later years as “pushers,” for which see e.g. Katz, *Capturing Sound*, 38.

<sup>209</sup> C. W. Noyes, “Points Pertaining to the Use and Care of the Edison Phonograph,” *Phonogram*-2 3 (Sept. 1901), 68.

<sup>210</sup> Frank Dyer, in E. Fulton Brylawski and Abe Goldman, ed., *Legislative History of the 1909 Copyright Act* (South Hackensack, New Jersey: F. B. Rothman, 1976), 4:J:290.

<sup>211</sup> *Phonograph and How to Use It*, 156.

<sup>212</sup> “Phonograph Singing an Odd Occupation,” *Phonoscope* 4:4 (Apr. 1900), 6.

<sup>213</sup> *Phonograph and How to Use It*, 157.

<sup>214</sup> C. W. Noyes, “Points Pertaining to the Use and Care of the Edison Phonograph,” *Phonogram*-2 3 (Sept. 1901), 68.

<sup>215</sup> Sewell Ford, “The Phonograph Fakir,” *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel* (Fort Wayne, Indiana), Sept. 22, 1897, p. 5; and *Steubenville Herald* (Steubenville, Ohio), Sept. 17, 1897, p. 2.

<sup>216</sup> “Few singers care to make more than twenty records in an afternoon,” (“Voice Pickling in Chicago,” *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, July 5, 1897 [TAEM 146:1107]); “An hour a day is about as much as an ordinary voice can bear. The wear and tear of longer singing would soon mar the finest organ” (“Phonograph Singing an Odd Occupation,” *Phonoscope* 4:4 [Apr. 1900], 6).

<sup>217</sup> FPRA Apr. 1945, 16. Ordinarily, seventy-four “rounds” should have taken Quinn much longer than three and a half hours: “Making all allowances for change of cylinders, rehearsals between songs, and other necessary delays, ten different sets of records can be made in an hour” (“Voice Pickling in Chicago,” *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, July 5, 1897 [TAEM 146:1107]).

<sup>218</sup> “Laughing for a Living,” *Talking Machine News*, Dec. 1, 1906, cited in FPRA Sept. 1944, 27.

<sup>219</sup> *Phonoscope* 3:7 (July 1899), 11.

<sup>220</sup> FPRA Mar. 1945, 19.

<sup>221</sup> J. S. Macdonald [“Harry Macdonough”] to Ulysses J. Walsh, Feb. 9, 1931, reproduced in Tim Gracyk, *Companion to the Encyclopedia of Popular American Recording Pioneers, 1895-1925: Rare Items from the Recording Industry’s Early Decades* (Granite Bay, California: Tim Gracyk, [n.d.]).

<sup>222</sup> *Phonoscope* 2:10 (Oct. 1898), 14. Again: “Frequently an entire hour is devoted to the recording of one song, alone, which is doubly wearing on the singer. This is, of course, when the song is a ‘popular seller’ and the demand of the trade is great” (“Voice Pickling in Chicago,” *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, July 5, 1897 [TAEM 146:1107]).

<sup>223</sup> “When both records are rejected we don’t get paid for the song,” stated a phonogenic yodler (“A Man Who Sees Sound,” *Phonoscope* 3:8 [Aug. 1899], 9).

<sup>224</sup> “Frank C. Stanley, a new aspirant for laurels in the phonographic world, has made a good start. We understand that Mr. Norcross has secured forty-five master records out of seventy-five, and considering this is only his second effort, his work will not be in vain” (*Phonoscope* 2:8 [Aug. 1898], 11).

<sup>225</sup> “The piano player should be instructed not to use either pedal while playing; as if the soft pedal is used it deadens the tone and will not be loud when reproduced. If the loud pedal is used, it allows the tones of the piano to re-vibrate or in other words the tone hangs and is not softened by the back action of the key which cushions the strings, and this re-vibration makes the piano sound as if it were mixed

---

up” (C. W. Noyes, “Points Pertaining to the Use and Care of the Edison Phonograph,” *Phonogram*-2 4:2 [Dec. 1901], 27).

<sup>226</sup> Gaisberg, *Music Goes Round*, 8.

<sup>227</sup> Fred Van Eps recalled that Banta “got his preliminary musical training as a ‘rough tuner’ in a piano factory. That is, he would do the first part of the tuning, and somebody else would come along and put on the finishing touches. In that way he learned to play the piano and was finally good enough to go out and get engagements. I don’t think he had any formal musical training. He was just a ‘natural’” (FPRA Jan. 1956, 32).

<sup>228</sup> “Singing to the Cylinders,” *New York Sun*, date illegible but in unbound clippings file for 1893 (TAEM 146:855). The syllable “in-” in “instruct” was printed twice in the original. It is unclear when Banta first entered the business, but the company had been employing a house accompanist for at least a couple years: “We employ a man to do nothing but play the piano for the vocalists” (“Loading the Phonograph,” *New York Journal*, Feb. 15, 1891 [TAEM 146:677]).

<sup>229</sup> Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 41-3.

<sup>230</sup> “Frank P. Banta,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:11 (Jan. 1904), 4.

<sup>231</sup> *Phonoscope* 2:7 (July 1898), 10.

<sup>232</sup> “The Graphophone and Phonograph,” reprinted from *Engineering*, in *Scientific American Supplement* 669 (Oct. 27, 1888), 10681. A few years later, a correspondent to the *Phonogram* asked “why don’t they furnish violin solos?” and received the reply: “No call for them” (“Queries,” *Phonogram* 2 [Apr.-May 1892], 115).

<sup>233</sup> *Phonoscope* 2:7 (July 1898), 5.

<sup>234</sup> “Being a musician and playing three different instruments perfectly, he certainly understands the musical part of a record, and he will no doubt be successful” (*Phonoscope* 2:6 [June 1898], 8). His name is given as “T. Herbert Reed” in the *Phonoscope* 2:8 (Aug. 1898), 5, and as “Thos. H. Reed,” occupation “phonographs,” in the 1900 federal census for Newark, New Jersey.

<sup>235</sup> He was also a bandleader, and it was stated that “the large sale of his band and violin records prove that he will be in great demand this season” (“Frederic W. Hager,” *Phonoscope* 2:7 [July 1898], 8).

<sup>236</sup> “Prize Contest. A Gold Medal Awarded by ‘The Phonoscope,’” *Phonoscope* 2:8 (Aug. 1898), 10.

<sup>237</sup> “‘The Phonoscope’ Gold Medal Awarded to Frederick W. Hager,” *Phonoscope* 2:9 (Sept. 1898), 7.

<sup>238</sup> Advertisement, *Phonoscope* 2:9 (Sept. 1898), 6. When the same partners made a specialty of mandolin phonograms one month, they framed them as a technological breakthrough without even naming the performer (*Phonoscope* 3:8 [Aug. 1899], 10). Guidebooks for amateur recordists continued to warn that the mandolin would “not give satisfactory results” (*Phonograph and How to Use It*, 158).

<sup>239</sup> A block of violin cylinders by Hager (6700-6708) appeared in the Edison catalogue about May 1899. The Columbia Phonograph Company introduced violin records in 1899, probably by Charles D’Almaine, according to Lorenz, *Two Minute Records*, 25. However, Brooks, “Directory,” does not list him among artists who recorded in this period, so he was probably not listed by name in catalogs, consistent with that company’s policy at the time.

<sup>240</sup> For instance:

J is for Jerry  
Struck dumb with surprise  
He is looking for Kitty  
See his tail and his eyes.

Jer-ry has just spi-ed a Pho-no-graph. It is play-ing a vi-o-lin rec-ord, and he thinks it is Kit-ty calling to him. See his tail. It is a sure sign. See his eyes and his arched back. He don’t know just what to think. Some vi-o-lins sound nice-ly on a Pho-no-graph, like-wise some cats sing ver-y dole-ful-ly. I don’t know which it is in this case.

(“Jer-ry. An *Easy One* in plain words for the Children,” *Phonogram*-2 1 [Oct. 1900], 169, with illustration and rhyme on page 168).

<sup>241</sup> George Paul, “The Stroh Recording Violin,” *New Amberola Graphic* 79 (Jan. 1992), 6-7, with illustration.

<sup>242</sup> A reporter observed during a 1907 visit to the National Phonograph Company’s New York studio: “The violin is not the ordinary wooden-bellied instrument we are accustomed to seeing, but is a bar of wood with strings, keys and bridge, and an aluminum diaphragm and horn, the invention of a London musician” (“An Orchestra Which Plays Before a World-Wide Audience,” from *Musical America*, in



---

*Edison Phonograph Monthly* 5:4 [June 1907], 14). Another phonogenically adapted instrument was the aluminum-backed “recording banjo” of Fred Van Eps (FPRA Mar. 1956, 32; also alluded to in FPRA Jan. 1949, 31), although the unaltered banjo was actually considered one of the easiest instruments to record successfully.

<sup>243</sup> *Phonoscope* 3:9 (Sept. 1899), 13. Charles Musser cites church chimes as his example of a phonographic subject in an uncontrolled setting, as opposed to a laboratory (Musser, *Emergence of Cinema*, 78). Church administrators were also loath to authorize such recording sessions as violations of the Sabbath: “The famous chimes of old Trinity church in New York were recorded on a phonograph just before the morning service Sunday. It was an experiment that had been talked of for a long time, but it was not until last week that Rev. Morgan Dix gave his permission, he having objected to the work being done on a Sunday” (“Chimes Phonographed,” from *New York World*, in *Times Democrat* [Lima, Ohio], Oct. 27, 1896, p. 5).

<sup>244</sup> “This species of music revealed with more startling effect the recording qualities of the instrument than that of a harp or piano, because the funnels being of brass were resonant, and their trumpet-like shape added volume to the notes, while making no change in their accuracy or quality” (“Ring Out the Old, Ring in the New,” *Phonogram* 2 [Dec. 1892], 278).

<sup>245</sup> “Edison’s Phonograph,” *Journal* (Quincy, Illinois), Nov. 4, 1890 (TAEM 146:632).

<sup>246</sup> “C. D. Emerson has been taking some very good records of the Trinity Chimes. In order to obtain these records Mr. Emerson is compelled to go to the top of the Trinity Church and arrange the machine in such a manner that he can procure the chimes evenly” (*Phonoscope* 2:5 [May 1898], 11). The recordist Howard Pulsifer positioned his machine uncharacteristically on the lower floor of belfry:

A reporter who was present inquired why Mr. Pulsifer placed the machine so far away from the bells.

Mr. P.: “Because the vibrations or sound waves are too strong or heavy when the machine is placed nearer.”

Reporter: “What would be the result if you placed the machine closer?”

Mr. P.: “The heavy vibrations would cause this little needle, which is attached to the diaphragm, to jump up and down with an irregular motion, thus producing a grating sound, and one in which there would be no harmony nor music.”

(“Process of Catching and Retaining the Chimes of St. Paul’s Cathedral, Buffalo, N. Y.,” *Phonogram* 2 [Mar. 1892], 79-80). The comment: “We notice that the tones of the bells do not run together, a fault generally found in chime records” appears in a review of a Trinity Chime record made by George Emerson for the Columbia Phonograph Company (*Phonoscope* 3:10 [Oct. 1898], 13).

<sup>247</sup> “The Chimes of Grace Church,” *Lima Daily News* (Lima, Ohio), July 9, 1890, p. 3.

<sup>248</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Journal* (Sioux City, Iowa), Aug. 7, 1889 (TAEM 146:436).

<sup>249</sup> “Amusements: Twenty-Third Street Theatre,” *New York Times*, Dec. 3, 1890, p. 4.

<sup>250</sup> Jennifer Forrest, “Scripting the Female Voice: The Phonograph, the Cinematograph, and the Ideal Woman,” *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 27 (Fall-Winter 1998-9), 88.

<sup>251</sup> Anne McKay, “Speaking Up: Voice Amplification and Women’s Struggle for Public Expression,” in *Technology and Women’s Voices: Keeping in Touch*, ed. Cheri Kramer (New York and London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988), 199.

<sup>252</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, “The Curves of the Needle,” translated by Thomas Y. Levin, *October* 55 (Winter 1990), 54.

<sup>253</sup> *Phonogram* 1 (Jan. 1891), 23.

<sup>254</sup> Gaisberg, *Music Goes Round*, 8.

<sup>255</sup> *Phonograph and How to Use It*, 150.

<sup>256</sup> *Phonograph and How to Use It*, 156.

<sup>257</sup> His results varied: “Mrs. Lippincott’s brilliant voice was reproduced unsatisfactorily for this reason. But Mrs. Campbell’s songs were low enough to avoid the difficulty” (“Music at St. Paul’s,” *Nebraska State Journal* [Lincoln, Nebraska], Oct. 28, 1897, p. 6).

<sup>258</sup> Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 12.

<sup>259</sup> “Phonographs Improved,” *New York Herald*, Aug. 2, 1892 (TAEM 146:798).

<sup>260</sup> “Improvements in Phonograph Records,” *Phonogram* 3 (Mar.-Apr. 1893), 374. Bettini Micro-Phonograph Diaphragms were subsequently advertised as “the only diaphragms that successfully record and reproduce female voices” (Advertisement, *Phonoscope* 3:6 [June 1899], 8).

---

<sup>261</sup> For instance: “Miss Minnie S. Emmett is the most successful and the most popular woman engaged in record-making.... It has been the experience of talking-machine companies that records of soprano voices are usually failures, but in Miss Emmett’s case, the difficulties usually encountered seem to have been easily overcome, for her records are among the best that are now made” (“Gallery of Talent Employed for Making Records,” *Phonoscope* 2:7 [July 1898], 12).

<sup>262</sup> “With Harry Spencer’s new device it seems as though the Columbia Phonograph Company have at last solved the problem of recording the female voice. Our representative was asked to step in the parlor and listen to two records of the mezzo-soprano Miss Minnie Emmett.... They were very loud, clear and distinct, and free from blast or screech. With this appliance all trouble to record the female voice is obviated” (*Phonoscope* 2:7 [July 1898], 10).

<sup>263</sup> “It is almost impossible to secure a female voice which will produce an intelligible sound on the phonograph. The voices of women are too light and thin as a rule. For that reason when you place the little rubber tubes to your ears you will hear only men’s voices. The timbre of a man’s voice is necessarily heavier and more solid than that of a woman” (“Fun in a Phonograph,” *New York Morning Advertiser*, Apr. 8, 1894 [TAEM 146:907]; see also similar comments in “Loading the Phonograph,” *New York Journal*, Feb. 15, 1891 [TAEM 146:677], possibly also based on an interview with Marshall). On this preconception and its implications for sound media, see McKay, “Speaking Up.”

<sup>264</sup> “The vibrations of a lady’s voice are very apt to blast and it is therefore necessary to prevent any blast or over-vibration, by placing the singer at a greater distance from the horn than you would in the case of a male voice” (C. W. Noyes, “Points Pertaining to the Use and Care of the Edison Phonograph,” *Phonogram*-2 4:4 [Feb. 1902], 33).

<sup>265</sup> “Before the Phonograph,” *New York Times*, Dec. 14, 1890 (TAEM 146:645).

<sup>266</sup> Gracyk, “Kansas City,” 40.

<sup>267</sup> *Phonoscope* 2:5 (May 1898), 12.

<sup>268</sup> *Phonoscope* 2:4 (Apr. 1898), 11.

<sup>269</sup> *Phonoscope*, 2:7 (July 1898), 11.

<sup>270</sup> Another exception was Jessie Ollivier of Boston, said to have “a national reputation because of her ability to make a perfect record on the phonograph. The consequence is that her services are constantly in demand in that unique field of usefulness” (“Bessie [sic] Ollivier,” *Fort Wayne News* [Fort Wayne, Indiana], Apr. 10, 1896, p. 2, and *Steubenville Daily Herald* [Steubenville, Ohio], Apr. 11, 1896, p. 8). This may be the same person as Jessie *Oliver* on Climax discs.

<sup>271</sup> Tate to Theodore Hoch, June 25, 1888 (TAEM 122:394). The payment to “Thomas Hock” [sic] was officially recorded on June 30 as “Expenses of musician from New York playing for Phonograph” in “Journal. No. 5. Laboratory T. A. Edison. Orange, N.J.” (TAEM 111:333ff, henceforth *Journal* #5), 77. See also corresponding entry in “Ledger No. 5. Laboratory T. A. Edison Orange, N.J.” (TAEM 110:4 ff, henceforth *Ledger* #5), 80.

<sup>272</sup> On one such arrangement, see Tate to Edgar S. Kelley, May 22, 1888 (TAEM 122:317) and subsequent correspondence; “Catching the Breath of Song,” *Newark News*, June 13 1888 (TAEM 146:229); “No More Lost Chords,” *Oakland Times*, July 18, 1888 (TAEM 146:423).

<sup>273</sup> As a member of the Arion Singing Society (George Clinton Densmore Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1927-49], 14:90), Lankow had probably participated in that group’s heavily publicized recording session back in Dec. 1888, but her individual connection with the laboratory can be documented from mid-1889 (Anna Lankow to Wangemann, May 16, 1889 [TAEM 127:424], *First Book* entry of June 1, 1889). The phonograms taken for Bayreuth are referenced in Anna Lankow to Edison [conjectured], n.d. (TAEM 129:1228ff) and the *First Book* entry for July 2, 1889; see also further correspondence in TAEM through Feb. 1890. Lankow continued to use the phonograph with Wangemann’s assistance in later years (see *Phonoscope* 1:10 [Oct. 1897], 6), and Wangemann even contributed two essays to a book by Lankow on voice culture (Anna Lankow, *The Science of the Art of Singing* [New York, London, Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1902], 12-8, 38-9; see also “Does Away With Harsh Voices,” *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 22, 1900, p. 7).

<sup>274</sup> Tate to Will Loomis [sic], Aug. 7, 1889 (TAEM 139:630).

<sup>275</sup> William B. Lomas to Tate, Aug. 9, 1889 (TAEM 127:458).

<sup>276</sup> The *First Book* lists sessions with “Will Lyle” from Sept. through Dec. 1889, and the laboratory accounts list two payments to him of eighteen dollars, one at the end of Oct. 1889 and one at the end of

---

Dec. 1889 (*Ledger #5*, 90, 92; *Journal #5*, 251, 274). There seems to have been some delay with the second payment, since Lomas wrote to Tate on Feb. 10, 1890: "Will you kindly see why it is that I do not get the money that is due me for services rendered the Phonograph? It is now since December 19<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> since I have been looking for a check of \$18.00 not much I know, but I earned it." He wrote back again two days later to acknowledge receiving his money, enclosing a receipt (Will Lyle to Tate, Feb. 10, 1890; William B. Lomas to Tate, Feb. 12, 1890 [ENHS correspondence box 1890:18, folder D-90-51]).

<sup>277</sup> One payment to Hoch was made at the end of June, following three recording sessions listed in the *First Book: Ledger #5*, 87; *Journal #5*, 208, entry dated June 30, 1889. An earlier entry is in *Ledger #5*, 86, and *Journal #5*, 200, dated May 31, 1889 but connected in the ledger with an entry of Mar. 12.

<sup>278</sup> Effie Stewart's name appears in *Ledger #5*, 87, in connection with an amount of \$175.00 under the date June 18, 1889 (the same date her name first appears in the *First Book*); she later wrote to Edison: "Will you please be kind enough to inform me when my note given to you expires[?]" (Effie Stewart to Edison, Dec. 20, 1889 [TAEM 128:552]). I read this as implying that she had given Edison a promissory note or "IOU."

<sup>279</sup> The main figure to whom responsibility for supplying these performers was delegated was Henry Giesemann, the President of the Musical Mutual Protective Union, known in New York City at the time as one of "the principal leaders who furnish music for fashionable weddings, receptions, and private balls." ("Some of Our Music Makers," *New York Times*, June 15, 1890, p. 13). One of Giesemann's union colleagues was Max Franklin; for instance, Giesemann and Franklin served together as members of the Committee of Arrangements for the National League of Musicians conference in 1892 ("Musicians' National League," *New York Times*, Mar. 15, 1892, p. 2). Franklin's contact information was jotted down in the back of the *First Book* (*First Book*, unnumbered page facing page 318, not transcribed in Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*), and both men are listed frequently as pianists in early entries, sometimes apparently substituting for each other on short notice (as on June 25, 1889). When the laboratory needed basic instrumentalists such as cornetists or clarinetists for recording between May and September 1889, it contacted Giesemann or Franklin, who also supplied piano solos and accompaniments as needed. The first evidence of this arrangement is a telegram the laboratory sent to Franklin on May 11, 1889: "If possible come alone Monday [May 13] two singers will be here" (Edison to M. Franklin, May 11, 1889 [TAEM 127:420]); Franklin is also listed as having received a payment for fifty dollars on June 30 (*Ledger #5*, 86; *Journal #5*, 200), and a small but informative body of correspondence with Giesemann survives from later on in the summer; see TAEM. The last record in the *First Book* connected with the Giesemann-Franklin circle of musicians was entered on Sept. 21, but surviving correspondence suggests that the relationship continued in some form into October (Max Franklin to Edison, Oct. 7, 1889 [TAEM 127:469]).

<sup>280</sup> Fred Voss to W. H. Miller, Aug. 12, 1889 (TAEM 127:459).

<sup>281</sup> It is listed in the *First Book* as recording for two days on Aug. 16-17, four days between Aug. 29 and Sept. 3, five days between Sept. 23 and 27, seven days between Oct. 18 and 25, five days between Dec. 3 and 7, and finally Jan. 14 and 16, 1890.

<sup>282</sup> It was paid \$112 in Aug. 1889; \$80 in Sept.; \$112 in Oct.; \$85 in Dec.; and \$38 in Jan. 1890 (*Ledger #5*, 88-92; *Journal #5*, 227, 237, 250, 273); see also corresponding entries in the *First Book*; Wm. J. Farrell to Edison, Oct. 29, 1889 (TAEM 125:420-421); Tate to Wm. J. Farrell, Nov. 4, 1889 (TAEM 139:856).

<sup>283</sup> [Thomas] M[aguire] to Fred Voss, Aug. 14, 1889 (TAEM 139:644); A. T. Van Winkle to Edison Laboratory, Aug. 24, 1889 (TAEM 127:461). Asa T. Van Winkle is listed in the 1900 federal census as a musician living in Brooklyn, New York, born in New Jersey in Nov. 1846; data at [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org) further establishes his middle name as *Thomas*.

<sup>284</sup> Van Winkle phonogenized on Aug. 26, 27, and 28, 1889, according to the *First Book*, and received \$18.20 in payment (entries of Aug. 31, 1889 in *Ledger #5*, 89; *Journal #5*, 229). On Aug. 26, no accompanist for Van Winkle was listed; on Aug. 27, the pianist was Edward Issler; and on Aug. 28, it was George Schweinfest. Glenn Sage has been researching Edward Issler's career during visits to Newark; according to his findings, Issler worked for Fred Voss, and both were members of the local Masonic Lodge. The 1880 federal census also lists George Schweinfest, an eighteen-year-old musician, as resident in Newark, New Jersey.

---

<sup>285</sup> The group was initially made up of these core musicians: Issler on piano, Schweinfest or Schutz on flute, Dana on cornet, Van Winkle on xylophone, and Rothe on violin. Van Winkle is listed in plate 122 of the *First Book* as playing violin, but this may be a misreading; the other early lists include both Van Winkle and Rothe, and the later lineup on Dec. 6, 1890 (130, plate 177) suggests that Von der Heide on violin has been substituted in for Rothe. Schweinfest is sometimes replaced by “Schutz” in the first few Issler’s Orchestra listings. By Oct. 21, 1891 (131, plate 189) Schweinfest is playing violin and the xylophone and flute have been replaced by Young on clarinet.

<sup>286</sup> L. B. Schell to Edison, Nov. 1, 1889 (TAEM 128:372) and entry of that date in the *First Book*.

<sup>287</sup> For instance, DeWolf Hopper (“Before the Phonograph: A Unique Collection of Voices from the Stage,” *New York Times*, Dec. 14, 1890 [TAEM 146:645]; Edward D. Easton, “A Modern Talking Machine,” *Phonogram* 1 [June-July 1891], 144) and Lillian Russell (“Theaters and Music,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Nov. 2, 1890, p. 9).

<sup>288</sup> Richard T. Haines explained: “The New York Phonograph Co. has been able, from time to time, to make records of a high order in small quantities, and in some few cases we have made records of a high order in large quantities, celebrated singers, etc., and selling them to our customers at proportionate rates. We have never been able to make enough of these records, but the demand for records is so great that we have been obliged to employ cheaper talent to manufacture the records in greater abundance” (*Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention*, 114-5).

<sup>289</sup> “Loading the Phonograph,” *New York Journal*, Feb. 15, 1891 (TAEM 146:677). Recordist Edward Clarence stated: “The amount the singer receives does not depend altogether on his or her reputation, but upon ability to sing so that the phonograph will successfully emit the sounds” (“Singing to the Cylinders,” *New York Sun*, date illegible but in unbound clippings file for 1893 [TAEM 146:855]).

<sup>290</sup> “Fun in a Phonograph,” *New York Morning Advertiser*, April 8, 1894 (TAEM 146:907) .

<sup>291</sup> “It is a well-known fact that many excellent musicians have given up their normal profession to carry on this new art, as it is found to be more lucrative. Actors and actresses utilize their spare time in reciting and singing to the phonograph, and some very beautiful music is thus set before the public” (“How Musical Records Are Made,” *Phonogram* 3 [Mar.-Apr. 1893], 365).

<sup>292</sup> Mayo, “Phonographic Studio,” 3.

<sup>293</sup> Kenney acknowledges that Billy Murray had a successful stage career (*Recorded Music*, 40). Some aspects of Len Spencer’s stage career will be outlined in chapter six, but it is worth pointing out here that the claim that he had a facial scar, which first appeared in the memoirs of Fred Gaisberg (*Music Goes Round*, 8), is flatly contradicted by the testimony of his own daughter (FPRA July 1958, 30). Ada Jones had been pursuing a stage career in New York City since the 1890s; as Jim Walsh characterized it, she “often sang to the accompaniment of colored song slides and was considered one of the best ‘delineators’ of that type of work” (FPRA July 1958, 32). Billy Murray had reportedly “discovered” her for the recording industry while she was performing live at Huber’s Fourteenth Street Museum in 1904 (Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 187). “Previous to that time I had had an abundance of experience on the stage, both legitimate and variety,” she herself claimed (Ada Jones, “Singing to the World,” *Edison Amberola Monthly* [Feb. 1917], quoted in FPRA July 1946, 17). In 1922, she fell ill and died while touring with her “company” in North Carolina; newspaper reports surrounding her final tour and death acknowledged that she was known mainly from sound recordings, but noted that she was also “widely known as a concert artist” (FPRA Aug. 1958, 30). Judging from such accounts, Jones hardly seems to have shied away from live performance. Certainly she did suffer from epilepsy, but this was inconvenient in the recording studio as well. “Any number of times,” Billy Murray told Jim Walsh, “we’d be recording duets. I’d hear a ‘plop’ and look around, and there would be poor little Ada, writhing on the floor. We’d have to wait until she got over the spell, then try again to make a satisfactory record” (FPRA July 1946, 18). The argument that these early recording artists “were forced by circumstances into something—they could not have known what, at first—other than live onstage performance” (Kenney, *Recorded Music*, 40) is intellectually appealing but does not hold up to scrutiny.

<sup>294</sup> “George had one of the best reproducing voices in the old phonograph days—one of the tinniest voices in the world” (Marks, *They All Sang*, 103); “Some critics insist...that Gaskin’s voice was predominantly ‘tinny’ and was suited only for work with crude recording apparatus. When methods improved he naturally, they say, was relegated to the background and soon passed out of the picture” (FPRA Oct. 1944, 32).

---

<sup>295</sup> *Phonoscope* 2:10 (Oct. 1898), 16.

<sup>296</sup> *Phonoscope* 1:1 (Nov. 1896), 9.

<sup>297</sup> Although Gracyk, *Favorite American Recording Pioneers*, 141 notes that Gaskin “sang in churches and vaudeville,” I find little evidence of live concerts by Gaskin *prior* to his phonograph work—the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, Sept. 13, 1890, p. 7, identifies him as part of Grimes’ *Cellar Door* Company and *may* predate his first phonograms. He is listed as performing in Sunday concerts at the Grand Opera House (“Theatrical Gossip,” *New York Times*, Mar. 17, 1899, p. 6), the Queen of Chinatown (*New York Times*, Oct. 20, 1901, p. 9) at the Gotham (*New York Times*, Mar. 13, 1904, p. 8; Dec. 16, 1906, p. X3) and at the Dewey (*New York Times*, Dec. 9, 1906, p. X3); and in vaudeville at Keith’s (“The Week at the Theatres,” *New York Times*, May 22, 1904, p. 9). He also sang at meetings of the American Legion of Honor (“United Council’s Officers,” *New York Times*, Jan. 14, 1895, p. 5) and the Irish Nationalists and Irish Alliance (“In Memory of Robert Emmett,” *New York Times*, Feb. 26, 1899, p. 14) and gave vaudeville entertainments for a group of postal workers (“Games of the Letter Carriers,” *New York Times*, July 5, 1896, p. 8) and for a political organization (“Supper of the Osceola Club,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1906, p. 18). He also performed for benefit concerts during occasional visits to Ireland, by which time he was being referred to as “a well known professional tenor vocalist of Harlem” (“Harlem and the Bronx,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Sept. 25, 1901, p. 9).

<sup>298</sup> “Brooklyn Society,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Dec. 17, 1899, p. 19.

<sup>299</sup> Interview with Vess Ossman in *B. M. G.* (Oct. 1903), quoted in FPRA Oct. 1948, p. 38.

<sup>300</sup> In Mar. 1893, when Len Spencer and George Tewksbury went to Washington in an attempt to record the United States Marine Band, Columbia brought suit against them and obtained an injunction to stop them from doing so (Wile, “Record Piracy: Attempts,” 24; see also Brooks, “Columbia Records in the 1890’s,” 19). On the basis of these secondary accounts it is impossible to tell whether the injunction was due to Columbia’s exclusive *territorial* right as a North American sub-company to record in Washington or to something else.

<sup>301</sup> “His resignation will be a severe blow to the company,” remarked the *Phonoscope*, “as he had exclusive charge of the record department, and the wonderful records put out by that concern were the result of his theories and experiments” (*Phonoscope*, 1:3 [Jan.-Feb. 1897], 11). Columbia had hired away a recording expert from the competition before—Calvin Child from the New England Phonograph Company, in Jan. 1894 (Brooks, “Columbia Records in the 1890’s,” 19), but Emerson’s close ties to many of the leading phonogenic performers of the day placed him in a league of his own.

<sup>302</sup> Brooks, “Columbia Records in the 1890’s,” 24; Fabrizio and Paul, *Talking Machine*, 40.

Washington, D. C. nevertheless continued to sustain a significant recording program geared primarily towards local customers and markets in the South and West (“Sing to Phonographs,” *Washington Post*, July 8, 1900, p. 25).

<sup>303</sup> *Phonoscope* 1:4 (Mar. 1897), 9; *Phonoscope* 1:5 (Apr. 1897), 9. That spring, the United States Phonograph Company had accused Len Spencer and Victor Emerson’s brothers Clyde and George of stealing “several thousand dollars’ worth” of phonograms; the charges were dismissed at trial, but the accusation must have soured whatever had remained of a sense of community at the Newark recording plant after Emerson’s departure (“Robbed a Phonograph Company,” *Trenton Evening Times* [Trenton, New Jersey], Mar. 9, 1897, p. 4; “A Case of Larceny Dismissed,” *New York Times*, Mar. 25, 1897, p. 11).

<sup>304</sup> *Phonoscope*, 2:3 (Mar. 1898), 10. The performers named were “Len Spencer, Geo. J. Gaskin, Dan W. Quinn, Geo. Schweinfest, Geo. W. Johnson, Vess L. Ossman, Steve Porter, Chas. Lowe, Russell Hunting, and Miss Emmet.” That summer, a letter was published in an undated Columbia catalog confirming the existence of the new contract:

THE MOST FAMOUS RECORD MAKERS FOR TALKING MACHINES ARE NOW ENGAGED EXCLUSIVELY IN MAKING COLUMBIA RECORDS AS THE FOLLOWING WILL TESTIFY:

NEW YORK, May 1, 1898.

*To the Columbia Phonograph Co.:—*

We hereby accept the proposition you have made us, to give our EXCLUSIVE services as makers of talking machine records to the Columbia Phonograph Company during the ensuing year. There followed the signatures of most of the performers named in the *Phonoscope*, plus Will F. Denny and Tom Clark, the latter on behalf of the Columbia Orchestra and Gilmore’s Brass Quartette. By the time the catalog was printed, J. W. Myers, Billy Golden, J. J. Fisher and Roger Harding had made

---

similar contracts with Columbia and were included in a list printed on the front cover (*Columbia Records* catalog, with letter dated May 1, 1898 on page two, reproduced in Gracyk, *Companion*, front cover and [1]; see also announcements about J. W. Myers and Billy Golden in the *Phonoscope* 2:7 [July 1898], 10). The yodler Peter La Maire joined the team soon afterwards (*Phonoscope* 2:9 [Sept. 1898], 11).

<sup>305</sup> For instance, Dan W. Quinn was under an exclusive contract with the New Jersey or United States Phonograph Company from 1892-94 (FPRA Mar. 1945, 19; advertisement, *Phonoscope* 1:2 [Dec. 1896], 4). George J. Gaskin apparently signed an exclusive contract with Walcutt & Leeds in the mid-1890s but failed to abide by its terms, culminating in a lawsuit (Wile, "Duplicates," 187-8, *Phonoscope* 1:1 [Nov. 1896], 2, 11; *Albany Law Journal* 54 [Nov. 7, 1896], 291).

<sup>306</sup> "Gallery of Talent Employed for Making Records," *Phonoscope* 2:7 (July 1898), 12.

<sup>307</sup> The company was Harms, Kaiser and Hagen (*Phonoscope* 3:1 [Jan. 1899], 11).

<sup>308</sup> *Phonoscope* 3:2 (Feb. 1899), 12. According to Brooks, "Columbia Records in the 1890's," 27, most artists did not renew their contracts: "all except Clark were back busily making records for any and all companies by 1899."

<sup>309</sup> See e.g. the account of the origins of the Excelsior/Haydn/Edison Quartet in chapter four, note 216.

<sup>310</sup> Brooks, "Directory," 104, 137.

<sup>311</sup> "We note that the names of the various talent employed by the Columbia Phonograph Company have been omitted in a recent catalogue issued by them. In the case of one prominent artist whom we have interviewed he informs us that the adoption of their new policy is a flagrant violation of the company's contract. Much unfavorable comment has been expressed in general. Perhaps the Columbia people do not realize the fact that they employ the best talent available in this particular branch of their business. This change in the catalogue creates a vast amount of dissatisfaction among them" (*Phonoscope* 3:9 [Sept. 1899], 10).

<sup>312</sup> Jim Walsh gives the dates of omission for artists' names from catalogs as 1901-07 (FPRA Nov. 1961, 33), but the beginning year at least is too late.

<sup>313</sup> Richard deCordova, *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 79.

<sup>314</sup> "The Wonders of the Phonograph," from the *New York Commercial*, in *Union and Advertiser* (Rochester, New York) Jan. 29, 1889 (TAEM 146:408). For other similar comments, see *Engineer*, Nov. 9, 1888 (TAEM 146:344); *Weekly Scotsman*, Jan. 26, 1889 (TAEM 146:411); "An Hour With the Phonograph," *Freemans Journal* (Dublin), Nov. 7, 1888 (TAEM 146:350); "The Phonograph," *Standard*, Oct. 30, 1888 (TAEM 146:320).

<sup>315</sup> "As Heard by the Pupils of 'Mount du Chantail,'" *Phonogram* 2 (Apr.-May 1892), 100.

<sup>316</sup> "An Hour With the Phonograph," *Freemans Journal* (Dublin) Nov. 7, 1888 (TAEM 146:350-1) at 350.

<sup>317</sup> "The Columbia Phonograph Company advise the use of the rubber hearing tubes in listening to musical records on the graphophone where only two or three are to listen. Where a large company is to be entertained, of course a horn is necessary, but it is believed the music that is thrown out through the horn loses much of its sweetness. One who has listened to the horn reproductions and has never heard a reproduction through a hearing tube has no correct idea of the perfection with which all finer shades of music are now rendered" (*Phonoscope* 1:8 [July 1897], 9); "A quiet place should be selected for exhibiting to customers, and every inquirer should be requested to listen through ear tubes to at least one record. Many are fascinated with the beauty of a record heard in this way, who are not especially impressed by the use of the horn" (quoted from a Columbia leaflet in *Phonoscope* 2:11 [Nov. 1898], 9).

<sup>318</sup> *American Graphophone Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, printed record, 656.

<sup>319</sup> For instance: "although there is little doubt that the music sounds clearer and louder and more natural when heard through the ear tubes," commented the *Phonoscope*, "the horn throws the sound out into a room so that the music may be heard by a whole roomful of people" (*Phonoscope*, 2:8 [Aug. 1898], 10).

<sup>320</sup> "Speech and Song Embalmed," *Fireside News*, July 13, 1888 (TAEM 146:276).

<sup>321</sup> See note 351.

<sup>322</sup> "As everything in the nature of a concert entertainment must be produced from a stage or platform, with the large horn," explained one such exhibitor, "every cylinder should be so loud that it can be

---

heard” (M. C. Sullivan, “How to Give Concert Exhibitions of the Phonograph,” *Phonogram* 3 [Feb. 1893], 324).

<sup>323</sup> “A great many of our musical records, while admirable in the nickel-in-the-slot machines [which invariably used tubes], fail entirely when they are reproduced through the horn,” one agent stated (Conyngton, in *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 102); “There is a certain style of music of which you cannot get a loud reproduction. Of course you cannot get a fine quartette selection that will be loud enough to be thrown out in the hall” (A. W. Clancy, in *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 102).

<sup>324</sup> Advertisement, *Phonoscope* 2:7 (July 1898), 5; see also Edison’s claim in 1890 that he could “reproduce violin music so that ear pieces are unnecessary,” Edison to Julius Block, Oct. 7, 1890 (TAEM 141:611).

<sup>325</sup> FPRA Apr. 1955, 28, italics added.

<sup>326</sup> *Temporary Catalogue of the Columbia Phonograph Co.’s Musical Records for Use on Graphophones and Phonographs*, Jan. 1, 1895, 11-12.

<sup>327</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records* (United States Phonograph Company), 43.

<sup>328</sup> Of saxophone selections by Lefebre, the United States company commented: “Horn records, if desired” (*Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records* [United States Phonograph Company], 41), the implication being that some copies of each selection in stock were loud enough for horn use and others were not. In its catalogs of 1896-97, the Columbia Phonograph Company urged its customers to “STATE WHETHER THE RECORDS ARE TO BE USED WITH HORN OR WITH HEARING TUBES. This will enable us to give your order more intelligent attention than we could otherwise do, and will insure better results in the use of the records” (*List of the Famous “Columbia Records,”* Nov. 1896, [2], *List of the Famous “Columbia Records,”* June 1897, [2]).

<sup>329</sup> Gracyk, “Kansas City,” 40. A similar concern had been voiced in connection with the Hartdegens’ recording experiment of 1888 in Edison’s laboratory: “With the air tubes to the ears the sounds were even too strong, while with a small glass funnel they could be heard on the opposite side of the room” (“Catching the Breath of Song,” *Newark News*, June 13 1888 [TAEM 146:229]).

<sup>330</sup> “The demand now a days seems to be for loud records, so that with the tubes there is more scratch than with the old type of records, this, however, is not noticeable when you have the horn” (Walter S. Mallory to Maryland Phonograph Company, May 3, 1898 [TAEM 154:609]).

<sup>331</sup> Edison’s first formal exhibition of musical recording, on May 11, featured education through a horn: “With a funnel for magnifying the sound placed on the machine, the music sounded as the music of a piano might sound through a thick partition; every note could be heard, but much of the musical effect was lost” (“The Phonograph’s Music,” *New York Post*, May 12, 1888 [TAEM 146:247]). A single-tube exhibition was described a little later: “Then Mr. Edison attached to the phonograph a piece of rubber tubing. About two feet from where this tubing joined the instrument two pieces of tubing radiated like the forks of a country road. Upon the extremities of these two were pieces of hollow bone, bent so that they fitted into the human ear. A lady placed the pieces of hollow bone inside her ears, and immediately through the rubber tubing there came to her a duplicate of the ‘Kentucky Gallopade,’ reduced in volume about twenty per cent., but still retaining all its sweetness and its original brilliancy” (“The Phonograph,” *Albany Press*, May 28 [?], 1888 [TAEM 146:243]). Way-tubes for multiple listeners were already alluded to in 1887, when it was reported that “one of these instruments in a private circle or in a hospital could be made to read a book to a number of persons. The multiple earpiece by which this is accomplished is shown in one of our engravings” (“The New Phonograph,” *Scientific American* 57 [Dec. 31, 1887], 422; illustration on p. 415). They were clearly in use by the time Henry E. Dixey and his *Adonis* company visited Edison’s laboratory in Sept. 1888, when an assistant “brought forth a collection of rubber pipes, all connected together like a sea serpent and each young lady put the end of one of the pipes to her ear” (“Dixey and the Wizard,” *Herald* (Orange, New Jersey), Sept. 15, 1888 [TAEM 146:274]). Gouraud’s phonographic soirées in London alternated between ear tubes and horns: “The varied programme was carried out both by means of tubes fitted with glass ear pieces for the use of one or two persons at a time, and by means of a large funnel through which the phonograph’s speech could be distinctly heard by a room full of people” (“To Meet Mr. Edison,” no citation [TAEM 146:322]).

<sup>332</sup> “Successful Phonograph Exhibitors,” *Phonogram* 3 (Feb. 1893), 322.

<sup>333</sup> *Phonogram* 3 (Feb. 1893), 318.

- <sup>334</sup> M. C. Sullivan, "How to Give Concert Exhibitions of the Phonograph," *Phonogram* 3 (Feb. 1893), 324-6.
- <sup>335</sup> Howe's phonograph work is covered in "Photographers of Sound," chapter three of Charles Musser, *High Class Moving Pictures*, 22-46; quotation on page 25.
- <sup>336</sup> J. M. Parker, in *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention*, 112.
- <sup>337</sup> M. C. Sullivan, "How to Give Concert Exhibitions of the Phonograph," *Phonogram* 3 (Feb. 1893), 326. J. M. Parker commented similarly: "as suspense is one of the best methods of holding an audience, a few remarks about each record before reproducing it, draws the attention of the people to the principal points in each particular selection" (*Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention*, 112-3).
- <sup>338</sup> *Cortland Standard*, Mar. 29, 1893, quoted by Musser, *High Class Moving Pictures*, 35-36.
- <sup>339</sup> "Nathan Joins the Order," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Apr. 10, 1891, p. 1.
- <sup>340</sup> "Entertainment by Veterans," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Oct. 31, 1890, p. 1.
- <sup>341</sup> Ganthony, *Bunkum Entertainments*, 59.
- <sup>342</sup> "Famous Record-Makers and Their Work," *Phonogram* 2 (Dec. 1892), 278.
- <sup>343</sup> "As a rule, old familiar selections with which all are acquainted, take the best. Variety, however, is the prime factor of an entertainment of this kind; bands, songs, quartettes, cornet solos, etc., must be intermingled, so as to present to the audience an ever-changing programme" (J. M. Parker, in *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention*, 112).
- <sup>344</sup> FPRA Mar. 1945, 18-9.
- <sup>345</sup> Reproduced in facsimile, Fabrizio and Paul, *Antique Phonograph Advertising*, p. 20.
- <sup>346</sup> Musser, *High Class Moving Pictures*, 31.
- <sup>347</sup> In 1894, one typical exhibitor in New York "took care of the machines, placed the cylinders in position and collected 2 cents for each time the tubes were put to anyone's ears" ("Songs by Phonograph," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Aug. 27, 1894, p. 12). Fred Van Eps, later famous for his banjo phonograms, recalled defraying the cost of his first phonograph through exhibitions of this kind, "attaching 14 ear tubes, taking it to the Firemen's Fair and letting people listen at five cents a play" (FPRA Jan. 1956, 32). For another account by a way-tube exhibitor, see H. Biechling to editor, Oct. 31, 1891, in *Phonogram* 1 (Nov.-Dec. 1891), 261.
- <sup>348</sup> *Phonoscope* 1:3 (Jan.-Feb. 1897), 7. This account does not specify that the exhibitor used way-tubes, but the comment that a particular phonogram was his "best money-making record" suggests that form of exhibition rather than horn-based concerts.
- <sup>349</sup> "When a flaw was struck the sound was like the roar of a railroad train passing through a tunnel. The music from a faulty cylinder was not unlike a band playing on an excursion train, where an occasional plunge into a cut or a tunnel, or the opening of a door, drowns the sound of the horns" ("The Phonograph," *Journal* [Sioux City, Iowa], Aug. 7, 1889 [TAEM 146:436]); "Unfortunately, too, while the music is strengthened by the tube, so is the gentle brushing of the tiny point on the waxen cylinder, which is magnified into a roar with occasional snaps of torpedoes when the delicate point strikes a chunk of dust that one would just notice if it blew into one's eye" ("Edison's Phonograph," *Journal* [Quincy, Illinois], Nov. 4, 1890 [TAEM 146:632]).
- <sup>350</sup> A correspondent to the *Phonoscope* was told: "Street exhibiting ruins your records, machine and reputation. No respectable man or woman will stop on a street corner with a crowd and listen to a talking machine. A fair ground is different; people expect to see out-door exhibitions there, and make exceptions" (*Phonoscope* 1:6 [May 1897], 14). Fairs were indeed a common site for phonograph exhibitors; eight had reportedly shown up at the Danbury Fair in Connecticut about 1896, each hoping to have the place to himself (*Phonoscope* 1:3 [Jan-Feb 1897], 7).
- <sup>351</sup> In the summer of 1890, Philadelphia's board of park commissioners banned the exhibition of phonographs using tubes in Fairmount Park "on the ground that they were injurious to the public health, not only on account of the liability to cause deafness, but because there was an opportunity to transmit diseases of the ear by their indiscriminate use by the public. It was also claimed that the insertion of the hearing tube into the ear is conducive to the contraction of various diseases of the blood, owing to the contact of the tube with the membranes" ("Phonographs Ordered Out," *New York Times*, July 29, 1890, p. 2). Newspapers across the country sought out local expert opinions, with varying results; see "It Does Not Injure the Ear," *New York Times*, July 30, 1890, p. 8; *Chicago News*,



---

July 31, 1890 [TAEM 146:604]; “The Question of Contagion,” from *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette*, in *Davenport Morning Tribune* [Davenport, Iowa], Sept. 7, 1890, p. 1).

<sup>352</sup> Quotation from C. F. de Redon, “Vending Apparatus,” U. S. Patent 397,975, filed July 16, 1888, granted Feb. 19, 1889; for examples of the applications mentioned: “J. C. Moore sells cigars automatically now. You put your nickel in the slot and help yourself” (“The Talk of Two Towns,” *Courier* [Connellsville, Pennsylvania], Aug. 23, 1889, p. 5); “A company has been formed in New York which proposes to make machines for the delivery of postage stamps automatically by dropping a coin in the slot” (“Curious Things of Life,” *Newark Daily Advocate* [Newark, Ohio], Feb. 19, 1889, p. 3); “In one of the ferry-houses there is a drop-a-coin device which saturates your handkerchief with perfume for a cent” (“Brevities of Interest,” *Dunkirk Observer Journal* [Dunkirk, New York], Nov. 9, 1888, p. 3).

<sup>353</sup> “The country is full of weighing machines which invite you to ‘drop a nickel in the slot’ to discover your weight” (“Comical Cues,” *Daily Northwestern* [Oshkosh, Wisconsin], Oct. 6, 1887, p. 2).

<sup>354</sup> For example: Joseph G. Kearney, “Coin-Controlled Lifting Machine,” U. S. Patent 397,295, filed May 24, 1888, granted Feb. 5, 1889; Bernhard Fächter, “Coin-Controlled Lifting Machine,” U. S. Patent 397,229, filed Mar. 22, 1888, granted Feb. 5, 1889.

<sup>355</sup> N. W. Russ, “Coin Operated Electrical Apparatus,” U. S. Patent 382,734, filed Jan. 3, 1888, granted May 15, 1888.

<sup>356</sup> “You can now drop a nickel in the slot and get your life insured. An English accident insurance company has put machines for this purpose here and there all along Broadway” (“Brevities of Interest,” *Dunkirk Observer Journal* [Dunkirk, New York], Nov. 9, 1888, p. 3).

<sup>357</sup> “The latest device...is bound to make a fortune for the men who get the ‘rake off.’ The machine is set up in depots, and the ear of the man who drops a nickel in the slot is occupied for a few moments by a pleasing tune from a music box inside. Those who have ever been obliged to spend an hour or two in a depot waiting for a train will gladly give up a handful of nickels for something which will occupy their time and attention” (“The ‘Drop a Nickel’ Machines,” from *Chicago Herald*, in *Ohio Democrat* [New Philadelphia, Ohio], Jan. 24, 1889, p. 4). An even earlier account had stated that “the latest weighing machine *plays an operatic air* and prints your weight on a card, all for a nickel” (“Brevities of Interest,” *Dunkirk Observer Journal* [Dunkirk, New York], Nov. 9, 1888, p. 3, italics added). These early examples challenge the claim that “[t]he introduction of the coin phonographs was probably responsible for the development of coin-operated music boxes” (Read and Welch, *Tin Foil to Stereo*, 115). In fact, the phonograph reportedly hurt the market for nickel-in-the-slot musical boxes (see “Religious Music Boxes,” from *New York Sun*, in *Delphos Daily Herald* [Delphos, Ohio], Mar. 23, 1895, p. 3).

<sup>358</sup> Wile, Raymond R. “The Automatic Phonograph Exhibition Company and the Beginnings of the Nickel-in-the-Slot Phonograph,” *ARSC Journal* 33 (Spring 2002), 1-2; 17-8, n. 3; Koenigsberg, *Patent History*, 35.

<sup>359</sup> *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 164.

<sup>360</sup> Wile, “Automatic Phonograph Exhibition Company”; *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 167-85; *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 45-53.

<sup>361</sup> Louis Glass, in *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 163; Louis Glass and William S. Arnold, “Coin-Actuated Attachment for Phonographs,” U. S. Patent 428,750, filed Dec. 18, 1889, granted May 27, 1890.

<sup>362</sup> Louis Glass reported placing four of his first five coin-in-the-slot phonographs in saloons (the first two being in the same saloon) and one in the waiting-room of a San Francisco ferryport (*Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 163-4).

<sup>363</sup> Edward D. Easton, “A Modern Talking Machine,” *Phonogram* 1 (June-July 1891), 143.

<sup>364</sup> “Songs for a Nickel,” *New York Journal*, Nov. 9, 1890 (TAEM 146:634). By the following summer, the State Phonograph Company of Illinois likewise had “regular customers in certain towns who go around, and when records are changed they go from one machine to the other and listen to different selections” (*Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 62-3). The same year, Ohio Phonograph Company manager Arthur Smith remarked of the coin-in-the-slot machines that it was “pleasing to note with what delight the crowds rally round them, and with what eager expectancy they look for the time to come when the ‘phonograph man’ replaces the cylinder with new and popular airs” (*Phonogram* 1 [Sept. 1891], 202). Even if listeners were not inclined to “hop” about town from

---

phonograph to phonograph, they might still visit a single machine with regularity: “It is quite the fashion for ladies and gentlemen to go every evening to the nearest phonograph and hear the latest record” (Edward D. Easton, “A Modern Talking Machine,” *Phonogram* 1 [June-July 1891], 143). On the other hand, the New Jersey Phonograph Company reported that local residents eventually stopped patronizing its machines, and that most of the income came from “a large floating population—that is, people who come from other points” (*Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 58).

<sup>365</sup> “Phases of City Life,” *New York Times*, Jan. 11, 1891, p. 12.

<sup>366</sup> *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 164.

<sup>367</sup> *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 58-9.

<sup>368</sup> “The Exhibition Parlors of the Ohio Phonograph Company,” *Phonogram* 1 (Nov.-Dec. 1891), 248-9.

<sup>369</sup> James L. Andem, “The Automatic Machine in Ohio,” *Phonogram* 2 (Apr.-May 1892), 94.

<sup>370</sup> “Mr. Russell, President of the Automatic Phonograph Exhibition Co., and Mr. F. G. Pask, General Manager, have had phonographs on the North German line of steamers during the past season, also on the Old Dominion and Savannah lines. ... Next year this company intends to place phonographs on all outgoing steamers” (*Phonogram* 2 [Aug.-Sept. 1892], 203); see also Tate to Inman Line Steamship Company, in file for 1892 (TAEM 133:362-4).

<sup>371</sup> “After the Scalpers,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 9, 1894, p. 7.

<sup>372</sup> Musser, *High Class Moving Pictures*, 40. Similar claims were made of nickel-in-the-slot parlors, as in one announcement of a place under new management, and that was now “a strictly moral and refined place.... The very best class of people are becoming patrons, persons of unsavory reputation not being allowed on the premises. This will undoubtedly be glad tidings to those that desire to patronize a reputable place of its kind” (“Moral and Refined Phonograph Parlors,” *Oakland Tribune* [Oakland, California], July 23, 1904, p. 24).

<sup>373</sup> “Melody on Tap,” *Mountain Democrat* (Placerville, California), Sept. 26, 1891, p. 3.

<sup>374</sup> Quotation from “The Edison Phonograph,” *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, Georgia), Aug. 20, 1890, p. 6; list of machine locations and phonograms in “The Edison Phonograph,” *Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, Georgia), Aug. 28, 1890, p. 7.

<sup>375</sup> “The Automatic Phonograph in St. Louis,” *Phonogram* 1 (June-July 1891), 139. On another occasion he claimed on the subject of “sacred music in saloons”: “We first put on a ‘hymn’ cylinder and the parties refused to have it taken off for a week” (*Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 65).

<sup>376</sup> Clancy, in *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention*, 108-9

<sup>377</sup> Wood, in *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 65.

<sup>378</sup> Clancy, in *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 64.

<sup>379</sup> Clancy in *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention*, 108-9.

<sup>380</sup> “Fun in a Phonograph,” *New York Morning Advertiser*, Apr. 8, 1894 (TAEM 146:907).

<sup>381</sup> *Philadelphia Times*, Aug. 17, 1889 (TAEM 146:387).

<sup>382</sup> *Phonoscope* 1:2 (Dec. 1896), 9.

<sup>383</sup> According to comments by Ray Wile, “Automatic Phonograph Exhibition Company,” on photographs facing page 1: “the same individual in a bowler hat is giving change” in two images of multiple-machine “installations.”

<sup>384</sup> When a new parlor called the Edisona opened in Philadelphia in 1893, described as a “Novel and Instructive Entertainment,” a newspaper noted: “The conductor of this exhibition is Mr. Charles L. Marshall, who will take great pleasure in seeing that all patrons will be treated with respect and will be glad to explain anything in reference to these wonderful instruments” (“The Edisona,” *Press* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), Sept. 17, 1893 [TAEM 146:876]).

<sup>385</sup> James L. Andem, “The Automatic Machine in Ohio,” *Phonogram* 2 (Apr.-May 1892), 94.

<sup>386</sup> McClellan, in *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 63.

<sup>387</sup> “A large size printed programme of what selections can be heard to-day should be displayed in the window” (E. A. Ludwigs, “To the Operator,” *Phonogram* 3 [Feb. 1893], 336); “A large framed programme giving the names of the twelve selections to be heard that day occupies the center space” of the show windows (“The Exhibition Parlors of the Ohio Phonograph Company,” *Phonogram* 1 [Nov.-Dec. 1891], 250).

<sup>388</sup> Musser, *High Class Moving Pictures*, 38.

---

<sup>389</sup> McClellan, in *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 63.

<sup>390</sup> *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 62-3.

<sup>391</sup> *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 65.

<sup>392</sup> E. H. Low's exhibitions at Saratoga featured "a regular printed programme" (*Philadelphia Times*, Aug. 17, 1889 [TAEM 146:387]), and Gouraud probably issued a list of the phonograms used during his London exhibition of Aug. 14, 1888, since two different newspapers published remarkably similar listings of the selections he used ("To Meet Edison 'Eloquentem sed non Praesentem,'" *Pall Mall Gazette*, Aug. 15, 1888 [TAEM 146:295] and *Pall Mall Budget* [TAEM 146:296-7]; "To Meet Mr. Edison," no citation [TAEM 146:322]). Early exhibitors of projected cinema also experimented with printed film programs, which, as Lisa Gitelman observes, was "the way that live theater was framed" (Gitelman, *Scripts*, 155).

<sup>393</sup> The regulatory mechanism, as with other coin-in-the-slot devices, could be "beaten" in various ways. For instance, some customers inserted a nickel tied to a piece of string, listened to the selection, and then yanked the nickel back out ("The Machines Had to Go," *New York News*, Mar. 8, 1891 [TAEM 146:680]; "Automatic Music," *Times* [Buffalo, New York], May 7 (or 4?), 1892 [TAEM 146:791]); "Phases of City Life," *New York Times*, Oct. 25, 1891, p. 15). This was then already an old trick for beating coin-actuated devices of all kinds; see e.g. "How to Beat the Scales," *Morning Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), July 30, 1888, p. 4. In one presumably apocryphal story, a person even dropped a piece of ice down the coin slot, which supposedly started the phonograph running once it had melted down to the weight of a nickel ("Beat the Phonograph With Ice," from *Baptist Recorder*, in *Phonogram* 3 [Feb. 1893], 337). Sometimes listeners just got lucky, as happened in 1894 when a coin-operated phonograph at Coney island began repeating the TWENTY-SECOND REGIMENT MARCH after receiving a single nickel: "The crowd which formed around the machine were treated to this piece all afternoon, and it was not until the following morning, when the machine was regulated, that it ceased its tune" ("Gravesend Gossip," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 18, 1894, p. 10). For other techniques of "beating" machines at the level of the coin-slot and methods of counteracting them, see "Hear the Band Play," *Washington Post*, Nov. 23, 1890, p. 8; "About Town," *Washington Post*, Apr. 29, 1891, p. 4. One Norwalk saloon keeper was taken to court for counterfeiting when over four hundred leaden nickels turned up in a phonograph at his place of business in a single week ("City and Suburban News," *New York Times*, Mar. 5, 1892, p. 3; "He Defrauded the Slot Machine," *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 6, 1892, p. 1; "Defrauded the Phonograph," *Boston Daily Globe*, Mar. 2, 1892, p. 10; "Nickel in the Slot," *Boston Daily Globe*, Mar. 6, 1892, p. 6). Alternatively, the machine could be beaten on the level of the ear-tubes: sometimes listeners would share a single pair of binaural earpieces, each listening for half price (*Phonogram* 1 [Mar. 1891], 79; *Phonoscope* 2:8 [Aug. 1898], 13; "Missing Links," *Indiana County Gazette* [Indiana, Pennsylvania], May 25, 1891, p. 2). Customers in saloons might substitute a liquor funnel for the ear-tubes, projecting the sound so that the entire room could hear for a single nickel ("Automatic Music," *Times* [Buffalo, New York], May 7 (or 4?), 1892 [TAEM 146:791]). A similar danger existed if phonograms placed on coin-actuated machines were too loud, as James Andem observed: "The Ohio Company purchased of the New England Company some of the Levy cornet solos, and we have one now which I think we could reproduce in any public hall at any time. When we put one of them on a slot machine that particular machine will be surrounded by parties, and I have heard the remark made that there was no need of paying a nickel because they could hear enough of it on the outside of the machine. That shows how loud they are" (*Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 103). Such practices could add up to inflict a significant loss of revenue, and the manager of the Kentucky Phonograph Company groused that its net profits consisted of "about \$4,000 worth of plugs, gun-wads, etc." (Grant, in *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 62). Again: "The automatic-slot business is not profitable in our territory, due mainly to the ease with which the machines may be beaten," Cromelin said of the Columbia Phonograph Company's experiences through 1891. "If we had a machine that could not be beaten there is no doubt about its being profitable" (*Proceedings of Second Annual Convention* 54).

<sup>394</sup> *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 163.

<sup>395</sup> *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 53-60, *passim*.

<sup>396</sup> *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 51-3. My reading assumes that coin-actuated phonographs were included in the survey regarding "on how many machines rental is being paid" by

---

each company to North American, since rental *was* due on these machines just as on those used for business purposes.

<sup>397</sup> *New York Phonograph Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, Transcript of Record, 1:606.

<sup>398</sup> While reiterating the same point, Lombard stated in 1892: "I will now here take the responsibility of an editorial article that appeared in the first number of the 'Phonogram.' I wrote that article and expressed those views and Miss McRae [its editor and publisher] had to suffer for it. Some of the Companies complained very bitterly and withdrew their support on account of it" (*Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention*, 115). The piece was *not* written by Edison himself, contra Siefert, "Aesthetics," 428.

<sup>399</sup> "An Important Suggestion," *Phonogram* 1 (Jan. 1891), 6.

<sup>400</sup> Virginia McRae had herself written a letter to the convention the previous year objecting that the *Phonogram* "has had from some companies a certain degree of opposition, because it had the misfortune to publish some views that did not coincide with the ideas of those in control" (*Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 81), to which James Andem had responded: "Sometime since there was a violent article in the 'Phonogram' against an officer of the Ohio Company; in fact, it was myself, and we felt that we ought to, under the circumstances, withdraw our support from the magazine, and we have done so" (*Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 83). No article attacking Andem by name had appeared in the *Phonogram*, so his comment probably referred to Lombard's editorial.

<sup>401</sup> "The Phonographic Republic," *Phonogram* 1 (May 1891), 129; see also W. Conyngton, "The Nickel-in-the-Slot Machine Defended," *Phonogram* 1 (Mar. 1891), 61.

<sup>402</sup> Alfred Tate, in *Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention*, 70. Thomas Lombard assured the sub-companies that "doing away with anything that is money-making is as far from my idea and from the idea of the North American Company as it can be from yours," but he continued to warn them that allowing the nickel-in-the-slot business to monopolize their attention "would result in disaster" (*Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention*, 115).

<sup>403</sup> "THINK of the hand-organ of the future," marvelled one editor: "A prima donna of world-wide reputation grasps the phonograph, reels off a dozen arias and the fortune of hundreds of legless soldiers (not to mention the saloon-keepers) is made in a day" (*Rochester Democrat*, Mar. 14, 1878 [TAEM 27:752]). One cartoon of the period shows an organ grinder with a phonographic apparatus busy grinding away outside a house; the lady in the parlor exclaims, "Hark! That is surely Adelina Patti's voice!" ("Awful Possibilities of the New Speaking Phonograph," cartoon, *Daily Graphic*, Mar. 21, 1878 [TAEM 27:765]). It seems this development was thought to hinge on the recording not just of "good music," but of recognized celebrity talent: "Certainly, within a dozen years, some of the great singers will be induced to sing into the ear of the phonograph, and the electrotyped cylinders thence obtained will be put into the hand-organs of the streets, and we shall hear the actual voice of Christine Nilsson or Miss Cary ground out at every corner" (Prescott, "Telephone and Phonograph," 857). One pessimist mentioned this same proposal but added: "whether street music will be thereby improved, is at least doubtful" ("The Talking Machine," *New York Tribune*, Mar. 25, 1878 [TAEM 94:147]). Similar ideas appeared in the era of the wax cylinder phonograph, e.g. "We can fancy a phonograph brigade on the same principle as the organ brotherhood. 'Madame Patti's latest song, price 6d. Phonographs supplied, price 6d.' We wish the phonograph every success, but may we be spared the possibility of this new hawking trade to disturb our peace" ("An Hour With the Phonograph," *Freemans Journal* [Dublin] Nov. 7, 1888 [TAEM 146:351]); also a comic story presenting this as a fait accompli: "The Latest in Street Organs," from *Philadelphia Inquirer*, in *Washington Post*, Oct. 11, 1896, p. 22. In one case, the nickel-in-the-slot phonograph was even presented as a substitute for the organ-grinder: "The latest electrical toy has just appeared in New York in the shape of an automatic phonograph which works on the nickel in the slot principle. A large number of these little machines are to be placed in the principal hotels, restaurants and passenger stations, so that the general public will no longer have to depend on the itinerant organ grinder for popular music, but can have it, so to speak, on tap" ("Melody on Tap," *Mountain Democrat* (Placerville, California), Sept. 26, 1891, p. 3, italics added). For another interesting set of predictions concerning public phonograph use, see Uzanne, "End of Books," 227-8.

<sup>404</sup> *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention*, 16.

<sup>405</sup> *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 165.

---

<sup>406</sup> “There have been several private exhibitions given at various places at prices ranging from \$15 to \$20, according to distance, a little more than to cover the actual cost of giving the exhibition, and they have resulted in the best sort of an advertisement of the adaptability of the instrument, and have been exhibited at a net profit to the company” (Meeting of Feb. 6, 1889, Metropolitan Phonograph Company minute book, 66).

<sup>407</sup> *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 203. Three years later, J. M. Parker described the “social” phonograph entertainment as follows: “Your entertainment most likely takes place in the parlor or drawing room. Questions are asked and answers given in a social way; a great deal of time is spent in letting each one talk or sing to the machine, and reproducing these to the amusement or pleasure of all parties. In fact, you place yourself and your machine at the disposal of the host and his guest, and you must make every effort to entertain them. There can be no fixed set of rules for this class of entertainments, as you must be governed entirely by the wishes of those present” (*Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention*, 113).

<sup>408</sup> *Proceedings of First Annual Convention*, 195.

<sup>409</sup> “Before the Phonograph,” *New York Times*, Dec. 14, 1890 (TAEM 146:645).

<sup>410</sup> Anonymous speaker in *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 152-3.

<sup>411</sup> “We have several customers who use the machines both at their offices and at their homes, for business purposes, that is to say, gentlemen who have correspondence will take their time evenings to do it and have their cylinders transcribed at the office the next morning” (Cheever, in *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 191-2); “the editor of the Journal, a newspaper which has the largest circulation of any paper in the state, has rented a phonograph, which he keeps at his house and he uses it for editorial work” (Clarkson, in *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 196).

<sup>412</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Journal* (Ottawa, Canada), Oct. 19, 1891 (TAEM 146:724).

<sup>413</sup> In response to a ring at the doorbell, Mrs. Roberts instructs her husband and children: “Now let’s all look unconcerned, as if we were not expecting any one. Amy, you be turning over those photographic views of the White Mountains, in your pretty, careless way. Agnes, you be examining some object with the microscope. Here, Roberts, you sit down to your writing again. And I’ll be tuning up the family phonograph. That’ll give him an idea of a cultivated Boston family, at home with itself, and at peace with the whole *human* family” (William Dean Howells, “A Letter of Introduction. Farce,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 84 [Jan. 1892], 249).

<sup>414</sup> “Every well appointed house now has besides its ball room, music room and billard [sic] room, a phonograph parlor, used exclusively for phonograph exhibitions. So says a prominent architect” (*Phonogram* 2 [Dec. 1892], 287 [misnumbered “245”] and 3 [Jan. 1893], 311); “Mr. Charles Henri, of Brooklyn, is building an annex to his pretty home for exhibiting the phonograph. He will issue invitations to attend a phonograph party. The feature of the entertainment will consist of recitations, interspersed with music and songs. Leading elocutionists will recite favorite selections into the instrument, which will be repeated to the audience by means of large funnels. The guests will wind up the occasion by ‘tripping the light fantastic’ to strains of music heard through the phonograph. These functions will be very *récherché* and a pleasant innovation. In future ‘phonograph parties’ will be all the rage” (*Phonogram* 2 [Dec. 1892], 288); “This idea, which has now culminated into a reality, gave rise to ‘phonograph parties’ which have become a fad in the homes in the United States. A musicale at which the phonograph responds to the encores is not an uncommon event in society” (“Fact Stranger than Fiction,” *Phonogram* 3 [Mar.-Apr. 1893], 374).

<sup>415</sup> Edison to Edison United Phonograph Co., June 16, 1893 (TAEM 134:740-2).

<sup>416</sup> “I believe that the Convention, or its various members, have been considering the sale of instruments for the purposes of reproducing music. They are going to go into private houses, and I have no doubt at all that sales are going to be very large. Now, while you can have access to business offices during the day, I think you will find, if you come to invade private houses with such frequency as is now necessary with reference to business offices, that the objection will be very strong. You should, therefore, get a battery that will operate the Phonograph for at least five or six months, or longer, if you can get it” (Tate, in *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 132).

<sup>417</sup> “Crane’s Phonograph,” *Mountain Democrat* (Placerville, California), May 6, 1893, p. 2.

<sup>418</sup> Tate went on to advise: “If they go into a private house they should be placed in the cellar and wires run from the battery to the Phonograph. In an office the objection is not so great as they can be put in a cabinet and placed somewhere out of the way” (*Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention*, 20).

---

<sup>419</sup> In 1893, Edison promised Thomas Lombard to give North American a viable spring-driven phonograph, but he failed to follow through, actually prompting Lombard to resign from the business: “I fought for a long time for a machine to run by spring power and never had been able to get it considered, and at the time of the World’s Fair in Chicago he [Edison] came on there and we had a conference there, and he promised me faithfully that I should have that machine in the fall, and that was really the cause of my resignation” (*New York Phonograph Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, Transcript of Record, 1:475; see also 1:511-2).

<sup>420</sup> The Chicago Talking Machine Company marketed a motor designed by Edward H. Amet, while the United States Phonograph Company had one designed by Frank Capps (Koenigsberg, *Patent History*, 38-9; Fabrizio and Paul, *Talking Machine*, 33, 35). Other spring-motor phonographs were apparently cobbled together by the Pacific, Kansas, and Ohio Phonograph Companies (*New York Phonograph Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, Transcript of Record, 1:583-4, 667); see also “Who Made the First Spring-Wind Phonographs in America?,” *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 1:1 (Jan. 1973), 1-2.

<sup>421</sup> Brooks, “Columbia Records in the 1890’s,” 20; Fabrizio and Paul, *Talking Machine*, 32; Koenigsberg, *Patent History*, 38.

<sup>422</sup> “To Improve the Phonograph,” *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 1, 1895, p. 5.

<sup>423</sup> “Phonograph Improved,” *New York Times*, Apr. 5, 1896 (TAEM 146:1013); see also *New York Electrical Review*, Apr. 8, 1896, quoted in Read and Welch, *Tin Foil to Stereo*, 63.

<sup>424</sup> Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, xxi-xxii.

<sup>425</sup> Quoted from Sears, Roebuck & Co. Catalogue No. 104 (March 1897), in George F. Paul, “Sears, Roebuck & Company and the Early Cylinder Graphophone,” *In the Groove* 28:1 (Jan. 2003), 4.

<sup>426</sup> C. W. Noyes claimed that the National Phonograph Company did so “for convenience sake only. It requires time to wind up a machine and time must be considered in making records of Professionals” (C. W. Noyes, “Points Pertaining to the Use and Care of the Edison Phonograph,” installment in *Phonogram-2* 4 [Dec. 1901], 29); again, in an 1899 account of a recording laboratory: “All these machines are run by electricity,” Mayo, “Phonographic Studio,” 5; spring motors were ultimately “the only things used except by the professional record makers who made records to sell” (*New York Phonograph Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, Transcript of Record, 1:584).

<sup>427</sup> Ray Phillips, “Berliner’s Gramophone—The Beginnings,” *For the Record* 3 (Autumn 2002), 124-32; two follow-up letters on “Berliner’s Gramophone,” *For the Record* 4 (Winter 2002/3), 229-32; Paul Cleary and George Taylor, “12.5 cm./5-inch Berliner Discography—Progress Report,” *For the Record* 8 (Winter 2003/4), 441-2; Fabrizio and Paul, *Talking Machine*, 28; Sutton and Nauck, *American Record Labels*, 67; EMILE BERLINER’S GRAMOPHONE: THE EARLIEST DISCS, 1888-1901 (Symposium 1058); Rust, *American Record Label Book*, 29-30; Wile, “Etching,” 15-6.

<sup>428</sup> Fabrizio and Paul, *Antique Phonograph Advertising*, 9-11.

<sup>429</sup> “Fake Records,” *Phonoscope* 2:11 (Nov. 1898), 10.

<sup>430</sup> This term first appeared in a letter from C. Grant Davidson, *Phonogram-2* 4:6 (Apr. 1902) 83.

<sup>431</sup> “An Instrument of Satan,” *Phonogram-2* 2 (Jan. 1901), 99; 4 (Dec. 1901), 24-5.

<sup>432</sup> *Phonograph and How to Use It*, 179.

<sup>433</sup> For the growth of sales during 1894-1900, see Raymond R. Wile, “Berliner Sales Figures,” *ARSC Journal* 11 (1979), 139-43.

<sup>434</sup> Brooks, “Columbia Records in the 1890’s,” 28.

<sup>435</sup> “We understand that the Edison works have already started the manufacture of the large blanks for the new ‘Graphophone Grand’ and have made the first delivery of 100 to a Chicago firm. Thus do the American Graphophone Company meet competition at the start” (*Phonoscope* 2:11 [Nov. 1898], 11). See also Read and Welch, *From Tin Foil to Stereo*, 79-91 for a strongly pro-Edison account of these developments.

<sup>436</sup> Sherman, *Collector’s Guide*, 15.

<sup>437</sup> Edison’s laboratory had estimated it could produce 100 duplicates from each master cylinder (Tate to Edison, Jan. 13, 1892 [TAEM 133:400]), while J. S. Macdonald gave the range as 25-75 (J. S. Macdonald [“Harry Macdonough”] to Ulysses J. Walsh, Feb. 9, 1931, reproduced in Gracyk, *Companion*) and Walter Miller asserted that “you cannot get over two hundred” (*Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 89). I am not aware of any equivalent statistics for Berliner, except for a Feb. 1890 estimate by Louis Rosenthal that a proposed method would yield “about 400 or 500

---

plates...that would be hardly distinguishable from the original” (quoted in Wile, “Etching,” 15). However, a Zon-o-phone recording engineer later gave the number of copies per stamper as 1,000 or less (G. K. Cheney, “Process of Duplicating Matrices,” U. S. Patent 783,176, filed June 6, 1903, granted Feb. 21, 1905), and most listings in Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix* that cite the number of copies pressed from each stamper give figures in the 200-2,000 range. The figures cited for disc stampers (200-2,000) are about ten times that for master cylinders (25-200).

<sup>438</sup> Berliner responded to complaints about flawed masters by advising Seaman that “not every record can be made absolutely perfect. Talking machines are not music boxes and if we succeed in increasing the percentage of a good average with now and then an exceptionally perfect record we are doing well” (Emile Berliner to Frank Seaman, Dec. 12, 1896, quoted in Wile, “Gramophone,” 143).

<sup>439</sup> Emile Berliner, “The Gramophone: Etching the Human Voice,” marked in Berliner’s handwriting: “Copy from which I read the paper May 16/88” (EBBRI, under “addresses”), 20-1.

<sup>440</sup> As of 1898 or so, the regular rate Edison’s National Phonograph Company offered to experienced solo vocalists and instrumentalists is said to have been one dollar for each two-to-three-minute round (J. S. Macdonald [“Harry Macdonough”] to Ulysses J. Walsh, Feb. 9, 1931, reproduced in Gracyk, *Companion*; Fred Van Eps’ reminiscence in FPRA Jan. 1956, 32). In Mar. 1897, Russell Hunting was being paid a dollar a *minute* for gramophone work (*Phonoscope* 1:5 [Apr. 1897], 9), and billing information shows that in April 1900 a solo vocalist or instrumentalist was being paid two dollars per round, the rate increasing to three dollars for a trio and \$3.50 for a quartet. Piano accompanists received between one and four dollars per session. A Metropolitan Orchestra session of two and three quarter hours was compensated by six dollars to the leader and four to each of seven orchestra members (Wile, “Reconstructed Recording Listings,” 10). Figures from about 1898 cited in Charosh, *Berliner Gramophone Records*, xvi; xix, n. 26 are somewhat lower. In the spring of 1899, the National Gramophone Company was reported to have worked out a three thousand dollar contract for the services of Len Spencer (*Phonoscope* 3:4 [Apr. 1899], 15), which seems unusually high, but Spencer’s recent exclusive Columbia contract may have given him unusual bargaining power.

<sup>441</sup> Gaisberg, *Music Goes Round*, 10.

<sup>442</sup> *Phonoscope* 1:3 (Jan-Feb. 1897), 11; Gaisberg, *Music Goes Round*, 16.

<sup>443</sup> For details, see Sutton and Nauck, *American Record Labels*; Tim Brooks, “High Drama in the Record Industry: Columbia Records, 1901-1934,” *ARSC Journal* 33 (Spring 2002), 21-76; Sherman and Nauck, *Note the Notes*; Raymond R. Wile, “The American Graphophone Company and the Columbia Phonograph Company Enter the Disc Record Business, 1897-1903,” *ARSC Journal* 22 (Fall 1991); Benjamin L. Aldridge, *The Victor Talking Machine Company* (N.p.: RCA Sales Corporation: 1964, reprinted in facsimile in *The Encyclopedic Discography of Victor Recordings, Pre-Matrix Series*, by Ted Fagan and William R. Moran [Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983]); Bill Bryant, “The International Family,” *New Amberola Graphic* 12 [Winter 1975], 4-7, 14.

<sup>444</sup> Berliner’s exhibition discs of 1888 had reportedly been taken at 30 rpm (Wile, “Etching,” 10), while the five-inch discs sold in Europe in the early 1890s had played at various speeds between 90 and 110 rpm (Sherman, *Collector’s Guide*, 12; Fabrizio and Paul, *Talking Machine*, 28). The discs of 1894-1900 covered the gamut from 60 to 75 rpm. Sutton and Nauck, *American Record Labels*, 68 cites the range 60-71 rpm as “reported by several experts,” while Brooks, “High Drama,” 64, states that most specimens fall into the 70-72 rpm range, but I have a copy of George Graham, MARRIED LIFE (Berliner 692, undated but with a typeface used in 1897-8) § that sounds too slow played below about 75 rpm. A notice was attached to some early machines: “Don’t run turntable faster than 70 revolutions per minute when reproducing musical records. Run somewhat slower for talking records” (quoted in Sutton and Nauck, *American Record Labels*, 68). Although Sutton also states that a speed of 70 rpm was specified in Berliner’s “1895 patent,” I am unable to find any such reference in either of the patents issued to Berliner that year (534,543 and 548,623). During the 1900s, Victor and Columbia favored somewhat higher speeds of 74-76 rpm (Brooks, “High Drama,” 64-5; however, he notes that there are exceptions, and that Columbia’s multi-disc minstrel series—discussed in chapter six—was recorded “at about 72 rpm, perhaps in order to cram more in.” Another exception was that fourteen-inch discs were to be educed at a slow 60 rpm (Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix*, xxxi; Sherman and Nauck, *Note the Notes*, 21). By the 1910s, these same companies claimed to have fixed their recording speeds at 78 and 80 rpm, respectively, but even then they actually

---

continued to record their discs at inconsistent, somewhat slower speeds, and it was not until the 1920s that 78 rpm finally became a real industry standard (Brooks, "High Drama," 65).

<sup>445</sup> One description of Edison's recording demonstration of May 11, 1888, stated that musical phonograms were taken "at the rate of 100 revolutions a minute" ("Edison's Talking Machine," *New York Herald*, May 12, 1888 [TAEM 146:245]), but there was enough inconsistency in actual speeds used at Edison's laboratory to provoke an appeal from England: "In sending exhibitional records would you please order them made all at as near as possible the same revolutions. Our machine will not run less than 100 per minute & governs better where making about 150" (H. de Coursey Hamilton to Edison, Sept. 16, 1888 [TAEM 124:772]). The 150 rpm speed Hamilton advocated was evidently adopted as standard during the fall and spring, but on May 7, 1889, Edison instituted a policy change: "It has been the habit to run the cylinders at 150 [rpm] for music," he noted. "Hereafter, all music will be taken at not higher than 125 revolutions" (Edison, "Notes for Mr. Batchelor," May 7, 1889 [TAEM 138:120]). For the remainder of the nineteenth century, most commercial brown wax cylinders of music were recorded at within 10 rpm of 125, although some spoken-word selections were taken at lower speeds closer to those recommended for business dictation. In 1898, it was reported: "The standard speed adopted by most of the Phonograph companies in recording is one hundred and twenty-five revolutions per minute, and this speed is recommended as one likely to produce the best results, all things considered" ("Useful Information Regarding the Care and Operation of the Phonograph," *Phonoscope* 2:2 [Feb. 1898], 5), while C. W. Noyes, "Points Pertaining to the Use and Care of the Edison Phonograph," *Phonogram*-2 4 [Dec. 1901], 28), recommends "about 120 revolutions per minute."

<sup>446</sup> L. Brevoort Odell, "Whispering Cylinders: The Brown Wax Records That Started the Industry," from *Western Collector* (June 1970) in *New Amberola Graphic* 96 (Apr. 1996), 16; "Adventures in Collecting, Part II," *New Amberola Graphic* 87 (Jan. 1994), 6-7. The Talking Machine Company of Chicago had also produced a "Jumbo" cylinder two inches in diameter, recorded at 180 or 185 rpm ("The Fastest Cylinder?," *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 1 [Apr. 1973], 6; Koenigsberg, *Patent History*, 43).

<sup>447</sup> *Edison Cylinder Records*, xxii; Shambarger, "Cylinder Records," 145.

<sup>448</sup> The National Phonograph Company switched speeds simultaneously with its production of moulded duplicates for commercial sale, for which it began recording masters in 1901, and which it put on the market in 1902. Columbia made the switch in "late 1901," according to "More on Early Columbia Cylinders," *New Amberola Graphic* 51 (Winter 1985), 12.

<sup>449</sup> In the procedure then being used, an ordinary blank cylinder was inserted into a mould, expanded to take an impression, and then contracted for removal. Detailed plating ledgers survive from this project and have been microfilmed as part of the Edison papers project: notebook N-97-12-15 (TAEM 104:103ff) and a matrix notebook (TAEM 157:464ff). For a preliminary analysis and some transcribed data, see Wile, "Duplicates," 194-5, 203-211; also George A. Copeland and Ron Dethlefsen, *Edison, Lambert Concert Records & Columbia Grand Records and Related Phonographs or, "The 5-Inch Cylinder Book"* (Los Angeles, California: Mulholland Press, 2004), 42, 48-51.

<sup>450</sup> Columbia began moulding duplicate cylinders in 1899, of which the best were used as masters for dubbing starting in Nov. 1900. Duplicates that were rejected as masters but were still considered acceptable for use as records were reportedly added to the regular stock for sale (*National Phonograph Company vs. American Graphophone Company*, Brief for Complainant, 19-21).

<sup>451</sup> "Important Announcement (Confidential)," Feb. 15, 1902, in *National Phonograph Company vs. American Graphophone Company*, Transcript of Record, 358; Koenigsberg, *Patent History*, 56.

<sup>452</sup> Thomas B. Lambert, "Method of Reproducing Phonograph-Records," U. S. Patent 645,920, filed Aug. 14, 1899, granted Mar. 20, 1900; see also *Phonoscope* 3:12 (Dec. 1899), 8. Brooks, "High Drama," 24 states that Lambert quit the company in 1902, whereas Bill Klinger to Phonolist@yahoo.com, Jan. 28, 2004, cites a claim by Lambert that he was never personally involved in the company at all.

<sup>453</sup> Bill Klinger, "Celluloid Cylinders: 'Albany' Indestructible vs. U-S Everlasting," *Antique Phonograph News* (Sept.-Oct. 1994), 3-7; Koenigsberg, *Patent History*, 45, 54.

<sup>454</sup> For an example, see "Edison's Industrial Spy," *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 2:1 (Jan. 1974), 3.

<sup>455</sup> One curious exception was B&R Records, which offered a catalog of original brown wax cylinder phonograms by a variety of well-known artists around 1905 (FPRA Sept. 1947, 31; Gracyk, *Famous*



---

*Pioneer Recording Artists*, 96; a “B&R Records” catalog of late 1904 or early 1905 is reprinted in Gracyk, *Companion*).

<sup>456</sup> “These Records are made from a permanent MASTER, and no care or expense is spared to make it perfect; consequently, all Edison Records made from this MASTER are exactly alike, and are all exact copies of the PERFECT MASTER for loudness, clearness, naturalness and depth of cut. Flaws and imperfections are a thing of the past” (“Two Great Improvements in Edison Phonographs and Standard Records,” *Phonogram-2* 4: [Feb. 1902], 64).

<sup>457</sup> “By the old method of making Records, the Band played to fifteen or twenty Phonographs at one time.... But now-a-days, when a Master Record is made for the moulded process, the number of Phonographs is reduced to five, and of the five Records thus made, the most perfect one is selected, from which to make the Master Mould” (“Edison Gold Moulded Records. How Made,” *Phonogram-2* 5 [July 1902], 41). In 1900, a visitor to Edison’s recording laboratory had noted that sixteen phonographs were being used for bands and three for violin solos (“The Manufacture of Edison Phonograph Records,” *Scientific American* 83 [Dec. 22, 1900], 390).

<sup>458</sup> “It was formerly the practice to use in the band room a number of Phonographs, each making a master as the sound waves entered the horns.... Now but one Phonograph is employed for making master records” (“Moulded Records for Phonographs,” from *American Machinist*, July 9, 1903, in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:6 [Aug. 1903], 11).

<sup>459</sup> The process of aural and microscopic vetting is described in “Moulded Records for Phonographs,” from *American Machinist*, July 9, 1903, in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:6 (Aug. 1903), 11; “An Orchestra Which Plays Before a World-Wide Audience,” from *Musical America*, in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 5:4 (June 1907), 14.

<sup>460</sup> Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, xxii. Columbia must have done likewise, since it began listing secondary mould numbers following the catalog and take number (e.g. “27001-12-49”) shortly after it substituted black wax for brown, which took place in Aug. 1903 (Tim Gracyk, “How Late Did Columbia Use Brown Wax?,” *Victrola and 78 Journal* 11 [Spring 1997], 67).

<sup>461</sup> G. K. Cheney, “Process of Duplicating Matrices,” U. S. Patent 783,176, filed June 6, 1903, granted Feb. 21, 1905.

<sup>462</sup> Sherman, *Collector’s Guide*, 29; Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix*, xviii. Brooks, “High Drama,” 28, dates a similar change at Columbia to 1902, but the corresponding endnote (71, n. 20) states: “This scenario is based on parallel developments at Victor.... Presumably Columbia adopted the same technology.” The oldest examples of stamper differentiation in my collection are of label type II.A.1.a., which Sherman and Nauck, *Note the Notes*, 17 dates to “fall 1902.”

<sup>463</sup> So, for instance, the National Phonograph Company had to issue an announcement to the trade in 1908 about a selection that had then been in its catalog for four and a half years: “We have no more moulds or masters at present of Record No. 8591, “Come Ye Disconsolate,” mandolin solo, by Samuel Siegel. It is expected that we will be able to secure Mr. Siegel some time during the month to make over this selection, and that we will again be in a position to fill orders about the middle of June. In the meantime we ask the indulgence of Jobbers who have orders on file for this selection” (“Orders for No. 8591 Held Up,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:5 [May 1908], 1; a remake was announced in “5 Selections Made Over,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:8 [Aug. 1908], 17).

<sup>464</sup> The dynamic of “updating” existing selections had already been acknowledged in Edison sales literature of 1900-1, which had urged customers to try the company’s 144 rpm “new process” remakes of selections they had known only as 125 rpm cylinders of the old kind (*Phonogram-2* 2 [Apr. 1901], 220). When Edison converted from mechanical to moulded duplication in 1901-2, every selection again had to be remade in the new format if it was to be retained in the catalog. During the years that followed, the company continued to update its existing catalog on a regular basis, mostly without changing catalog numbers, as the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* explained: “The march of progress in the manufacture of Edison Gold Moulded Records renders it necessary from time to time to make over certain selections listed in the catalogues. When this is done, as much or even more care is taken by our Recording plant to make them up-to-date as is exercised with any monthly list of [newly introduced] Records. The talent is sometimes changed and all hands strive to see how much better they can make the new Record over the old” (“Made Over With Different Talent,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:7 [Sept. 1904], 7); see also “Edison Records Made Over,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 5:9 (Nov. 1907), 20. The Victor Talking Machine Company likewise announced from time to time that it

---

had remade large portions of its catalog in order to take advantage of improved techniques (see FPRA Dec. 1949, 24, 29; and a Victor bulletin of Aug. 14, 1905, quoted in Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Matrix*, xxiv).

<sup>465</sup> Columbia began making the switch in the fall of 1903, around disc matrix 1650 (Brooks, "High Drama," 61); Columbia cylinders issued in Feb. 1904 and thereafter also tended to have orchestra accompaniments, judging from Lorenz, *Two Minute Records*. Edison's National Phonograph Company announced a new policy with its list for Jan. 1904: "One of its features is the large number of Records made with orchestra and band accompaniment. The use of piano for accompanying songs has now become a thing of the past with the making of Edison Gold Moulded Records. Occasionally it may be found necessary on account of the peculiar composition of a song to have it sung with piano accompaniment, but such occasions will be rare. The use of an orchestra or band for accompaniments makes a Record of unusual richness and brilliancy, and adds greatly to its value. To have a full-sized orchestra or band play simply the accompaniment to a singer means much in the way of expense and trouble, but neither expense nor trouble will be allowed to stand in the way of more emphatically emphasizing the superiority of Edison Gold Moulded Records" ("Comments on January Records," *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:10 [Dec. 1903], 10). Victor discs underwent a roughly simultaneous shift either in 1903 (according to a Feb. 1906 Victor supplement quoted in FPRA Dec. 1957, 36, which explained that this was the reason behind the founding of the "Victor Orchestra" in 1904) or over the course of 1904 (Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 281). The minor companies also turned to "orchestra" accompaniments, a particularly noteworthy case being Leeds & Catlin, which created its "orchestra" simply by adding a couple of wind instruments alongside the piano, resulting in a distinctive sound reminiscent of that produced by Issler's Orchestra in the 1890s.

<sup>466</sup> Edison supporters had attacked Columbia's orchestra accompaniments on these grounds: "If the song was accompanied by orchestra the music drowned the words" ("A Dealer's Comparison of Two Kinds of Records," *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:9 [Nov. 1903], 14). It does tend to be hard to distinguish words on pre-1904 phonograms with "orchestra" accompaniment.

<sup>467</sup> *Phonoscope* 4:6 (June 1900), 6.

<sup>468</sup> According to S. H. Dudley, "in 1902...many new singers became available when recording improvements made it possible to use all kinds of voices" (Walsh, "Reminiscences," 63).

<sup>469</sup> In 1906, Edison's attorney told a congressional committee: "The records are made by what are known as 'the talent.' All told there are not more than twenty people who make it a business to go around and visit the three large talking-machine companies—the Columbia, at Bridgeport; the Edison Company, at Orange, and the Victor Company, at Philadelphia. Everyone can not sing into a phonograph. It requires a special talent to do it. You have to have a special kind of voice and a special technique" (Frank Dyer, in Brylawski and Goldman, *Legislative History*, 4:J:290). Arthur Collins stated: "There are not many people who make a success of it, owing to the fact that it requires an iron throat, powerful lungs and a peculiar singing voice" ("Collins and Harlan at Milwaukee," *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:4 [June 1905], 13). Again: "Professional singers do not seem to get the low and even pitch that makes a song for the phonograph a success. Not one man in fifty who applies for work in this line is fit for it" ("Singing for the Phonograph," *New York Times*, May 31, 1903, p. 35).

<sup>470</sup> "As you know," said baritone S. H. Dudley, "in 1902 the duplicating process spelled doom for big earnings" (FPRA May 1946, 20). Dudley claimed that moulded duplication "jumped the price of the singers' services, until it was fixed at \$40.00 for each number" (Walsh, "Reminiscences," 63), but Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 63, lists some figures for George Washington Johnson that suggest rates did not go up significantly.

<sup>471</sup> *Phonoscope* 3:11 (Nov. 1899), 10.

<sup>472</sup> The series began with serial number 3001, recorded on Jan. 3, 1901.

<sup>473</sup> The first nine-inch Zon-o-phone discs had been assigned numbers in the 9000s series without distinction (FPRA Jan. 1966, 37; Bayly and Kinnear, *Zon-o-phone Record*, 12) but subsequently received a special 500s series. There was a very short-lived ten-inch Zon-o-phone 100s series introduced ca. early 1902 (George Paul, "A Band of Sound: The Basic Types of American Zonophone Records," *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 7:6 (1983), 3; Bayly and Kinnear, *Zon-o-phone Record*, 133-4).

<sup>474</sup> In 1903, Victor introduced twelve and fourteen-inch "De Luxe" records (Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix*, xxvii-xxx); Columbia produced some fourteen-inch discs of

---

its own in 1904 (Sutton and Nauck, *Note the Notes*, 21), but Victor abandoned that unwieldy size at the end of that year (Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Matrix*, xxiv), and in July 1905, Columbia likewise reverted to twelve inches for its largest size (Brooks, "High Drama," 32).

<sup>475</sup> At the start of 1906, Victor began superseding its seven-inch disc line with a new "small" series of eight-inch discs; the following year, Victor and Columbia both deleted all remaining seven-inch discs from their catalogs, and in 1909 Victor jettisoned its eight-inchers as well (Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Matrix*, xxv; Sherman and Nauck, *Note the Notes*, 23).

<sup>476</sup> The equivalence between the six-inch cylinder and twelve-inch disc is reflected in Columbia's use of the same distinctive "banner" or "tri-color" motif on their respective boxes and labels. The American Graphophone Company had originally settled on a six-inch cylinder for the Bell-Tainter graphophone, and some of its business models had continued to be able to record and educe six-inch "E" graphophone cylinders, but no effort had been made to exploit this format in commercial phonography until 1905. The quotation is from the *Talking Machine World* of June 1905 (George F. Paul, "Opportunity Lost: The American Graphophone Company And Its Six Inch Cylinders," *ARSC Journal* 30 (Spring 1999), 7-19).

<sup>477</sup> Koenigsberg, *Patent History*, 54.

<sup>478</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 7:3 (Mar. 1909), 1.

<sup>479</sup> Four-minute celluloid Albany Indestructibles numbered in a 3000s series were also introduced in Jan. 1910, although the company continued producing two-minute cylinders through 1918. Another celluloid cylinder manufacturer that operated from 1910-14, the United States Phonograph Company of Cleveland, produced both two and four-minute U-S Everlasting cylinders for most of its history; see Bill Klinger, "U-S Phonograph Company" and "Celluloid Cylinders."

<sup>480</sup> National Gramophone Company advertisement, early 1897, reproduced in Fabrizio and Paul, *Antique Phonograph Advertising*, 11; catalog numbers interpolated. Another sample program from *Cosmopolitan* is transcribed in Charosh, *Berliner Gramophone Records*, xvi; xix, n. 27.

<sup>481</sup> Advertisement, *Collier's* 39 (July 27, 1907), 23.

<sup>482</sup> "Feats of the Phonograph," *Albany News*, May 2 or 21, 1888 (TAEM 146:251).

<sup>483</sup> "Phonograph Should Be in More Homes Than Any Other Musical Instrument," *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:7 (Sept. 1903), 10, italics added.

<sup>484</sup> "Normal School Closes for Holidays," *Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, Wisconsin), Dec. 24, 1898, p. 6; "Gardner," *Fitchburg Sentinel* (Fitchburg, Massachusetts), Oct. 28, 1899, p. 5.

<sup>485</sup> "Teachers Entertained by Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Graham," *Times Democrat* (Lima, Ohio), Dec. 26, 1901, p. 8.

<sup>486</sup> "Talked Out of a Wife," *Phonoscope* 4:5 (May 1900), 7; "Wants Divorce or Some New Music," *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:12 (Feb. 1905), 15; and, in a case with the genders reversed, "Phonograph By Her Bed," *New York Times*, July 8, 1908, p. 1.

<sup>487</sup> Her name was given as Mrs. Georgia Tittle; see "Woman Starts Phonograph and Then Turns on Gas," *Washington Post*, Nov. 29, 1907, p. 11; "Woman Dies By Gas as Phonograph Plays Tune," *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 29, 1907, p. 15.

<sup>488</sup> "Charles Craig, of the Indiana Phonograph Co., Edison Jobbers, Indianapolis, Ind., has noticed a marked increase in his retail trade this Summer. One of the reasons is said to be the fad for equipping canoes with Phonographs. Most of the canoes to be seen on the river about Broad Ripple have music at the prow, and the effect at night is very pleasing" ("Phonographs on Canoes," *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 5:7 [Sept. 1907], 9). An illustration of a phonograph in a canoe had already appeared in *Phonogram-2* 2 (Dec. 1900), 83, and Sousa had listed this scenario among his fears regarding mechanical music: "we shall see man and maiden in a light canoe under the summer moon upon an Adirondack lake with a gramophone caroling love songs from amidsthips" (Sousa, "Menace," 281-2); "Last summer and the summer before I was in one of the biggest yacht harbors of the world, and I did not hear a voice the whole summer. Every yacht had a gramophone, a phonograph, an æolian, or something of the kind" (Brylawski and Goldman, *Legislative History*, 4:H:24). The extension of phonography to canoes marked a significant shift away from some earlier assumed restrictions on the medium: "It is impossible to sell a machine of this kind when the weather is nice and warm, for the young people would rather be out and a phonograph is not an outdoor instrument" ("Cold Weather," *Daily Review* [Decatur, Illinois], Nov. 10, 1901, p. 7).

---

<sup>489</sup> For instance, Jim Walsh wrote: “My father took me one warm summer evening to a party given by some of our neighbors and a small disc phonograph was produced. A woman said, ‘Play “The Preacher and the Bear,”’ and for the first time I heard the Arthur Collins classic” (FPRA, Jan. 1980, 36). Again: “Sir Thomas Lipton, who is again a very prominent figure in the public eye, has two Phonographs on his steam yacht ‘Erin.’ He also has 400 master Records on board. His guests select their own pieces and make up the programmes” (“Sir Thomas Lipton and the Phonograph,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:6 [Aug. 1903], 6).

<sup>490</sup> “The public began purchasing machines of their own; the novelty had begun to wear off, and other attractions like the kinoscope, moving picture machines, &c., aided in reducing the receipts of the nickel-in-the-slot phonographs” (*New York Phonograph Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, Transcript of Record, 1:607).

<sup>491</sup> “In the Phonograph Palace,” from *New York Sun*, in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:12 (Feb. 1905), 10-1. When robbers were surprised after breaking open 34 slot machines at the Edisonia Concert Hall in New York City, one of them dropped a bag that turned out to contain 14,000 cents (“Robbers Got 14,000 Cents,” *New York Times*, May 10, 1904, p. 6).

<sup>492</sup> “A Joke,” *Phonoscope* 2:1 (Jan. 1898), 8.

<sup>493</sup> Some late examples: “There will be a phonograph concert in the Baptist Church on Friday evening [May 3, 1901] at 7:30 o’clock for the new carpet fund” (“Village Generalities,” *Post Standard* [Syracuse, New York], May 2, 1901, p. 11); “PHONOGRAPH, WITH ALL THE LATEST RECORDS, FURNISHED TO PARTIES, WEDDINGS, AND STAGGS, ETC. Terms reasonable. Address A. D. S., Eagle office” (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Feb. 14, 1900, p. 5); “The man with the phonograph with tube trumpets reaching in all directions like the tentacles of an octopus was to be seen on every street corner collecting the pennies of the boys and girls” (“East Side Sunday Fair Undisturbed,” *New York Times*, Apr. 28, 1902, p. 12).

<sup>494</sup> In 1904, Edison “jobbers” (major retailers who also functioned as intermediaries between the national company and minor “dealers”) began receiving free samples of upcoming cylinder releases a month in advance to help them decide how many copies of each to order (*Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:12 [Feb. 1904], 3). In mid-1906, the company moved to lower shipping costs by sending all cylinders by freight rather than by express. Samples were now to go out *two* months in advance, while shipments for sale would be scheduled to reach all jobbers by a designated day in the last week of the preceding month. Some jobbers might receive their shipments early, but they were prohibited from unveiling them until eight o’clock on the specified morning. “The plan,” remarked the *Edison Phonograph Monthly*, “puts every Jobber on his honor not to allow new Records and printed matter referring to same to leave his possession before the specified date” (“New Plans for Record Shipments,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:3 [May 1906], 3). When a few jobbers failed to comply with this condition, the National Phonograph Company punished them by arranging for their future shipments of new releases to arrive at least one day after the scheduled release date (“Offending Jobbers Punished,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:7 [Sept. 1906], 10). Jobbers were originally barred from forwarding orders to their dealers until 8 AM on the release date, but the policy was later modified to let them forward cylinders to dealers a few days early as long as they were not yet “exhibited, demonstrated or placed on sale” (see e.g. “Advance List of New Edison Records for August, 1908,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:6 [June 1908], 2).

<sup>495</sup> “Give Phonograph Concerts,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:9 (Nov. 1906), 2-3.

<sup>496</sup> For example: “Come in tomorrow and hear the New May [1908] Edison Records. They are exceptionally good. We will gladly play the entire list of 24 records for you” (advertisement for American Talking Machine Company, *Newark Advocate* [Newark, Ohio], Apr. 24, 1908, p. 2); “Hear the new Edison records for sale at Leete’s furniture store Saturday night [Feb. 2, 1907] at 8 p. m” (“Local News,” *Iowa Recorder* [Greene, Iowa], Jan. 30, 1907, p. 6).

<sup>497</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:12 (Feb. 1904), 8.

<sup>498</sup> “Our St. Louis Booklet,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:6 (Aug. 1904), 12.

<sup>499</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:2 (Apr. 1905), 8.

<sup>500</sup> “In arranging these monthly lists no effort is made to get out twenty-five Records that will please every individual. Cognizance is taken of the varying tastes of different persons and different sections and the lists made up so that every one will find from six to a dozen to suit him. Many Phonograph enthusiasts buy the entire twenty-five every month, but the large majority make selections from the list

---

according to personal preference” (“Comments on April Records,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:1 [Mar. 1904], 8); see also a similar statement in “Comments on Edison Gold Moulded Records for October, 1905,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:7 [Sept. 1905], 7).

<sup>501</sup> “A further advantage in a flat ‘Phonogram’ is that both sides might be made available for use! Thus halving at once their cost and space they could occupy” (George Gouraud to Edison, Oct. 29, 1887 [TAEM 120:281]). The idea is alluded to but not explored in J. E. Wassenich, “Tablet for Recording Sound Vibrations,” U. S. Patent 505,910, filed June 29, 1891, granted Oct. 3, 1893.

<sup>502</sup> Johnson’s first known test pressings were double-faced; see Tim Brooks, “Seeing Double! The First Two-Sided Records,” *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 3:6 (1975), 1, 3-4, 6-7, 16. One side of an experimental double-faced Berliner pressing (Grace McCulloch, PUNCHINELLO [Berliner 365]) is included in EBBRI.

<sup>503</sup> Victor V-490+V-491; see George Paul, “The Johnson ‘Toy’ Record: The First Commercial 2-Sided Discs,” *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 8:2 (1985), 1, 3-4, which includes a transcript.

<sup>504</sup> Len Spencer, TALKS TO JUVENILE CUSTOMERS (numbered 2035, dated Nov. 3, 1905) + HINTS TO VICTOR SALESMEN (numbered 2036); mentioned in Tim Brooks, “The Columbia Double-Disc Demonstration Record,” *New Amberola Graphic* 14 (Summer 1975), 3. The numbers 2035 and 2036 do not seem to correspond to regular serial or matrix numbers.

<sup>505</sup> Ademor Petit, “Double-Faced Sound Record,” U. S. Patent 749,092, filed Jan. 7, 1901, granted Jan. 5, 1904. For an account of the history (and an 1891 precursor) of this patent, see Frank Andrews, “More Thoughts on Early Double-Sided Discs,” *New Amberola Graphic* 99 (Jan. 1997), 5-7. When Petit received his patent in 1904, half of it went to Frederick M. Prescott, whose affiliate in the United States, the American Record Company, produced a few double-faced discs as a special line for customers who could choose any two selections for coupling as long as they ordered a minimum of twenty-five pressings (Sutton and Nauck, *American Record Labels*, 5).

<sup>506</sup> In 1904, Columbia introduced nine double-faced disc selections by the Columbia Orchestra priced at 25% less than the cost of two equivalent single-faced discs. Each of the nine discs paired two closely related sides, and usually one was a continuation of the other: for instance, one example embodied parts one and two of NATURE’S WARBLER’S WALTZ (1828+1829). Five more couplings were added over the following year, four being band arrangements of opera music coupled with vocal selections from the same operas (Martin Bryan, “Columbia’s First Double Records,” *New Amberola Graphic* 17 [Spring 1976]: 7-9).

<sup>507</sup> Advertisement reproduced in Brooks, “High Drama,” 37.

<sup>508</sup> Bryan, “Columbia’s First Double Records,” 9.

<sup>509</sup> Sutton and Nauck, *American Record Labels*, 48

<sup>510</sup> Indeed, Jim Walsh recalled once having seen an intoxicated farmer walk into a drug store that sold cylinder records: “‘I don’t,’ said the red-faced agriculturalist, ‘hold with these here ragtime reels. What I want is some good old-time pieces like the songs I learned at my mother’s knee.’” He chose several hymn recordings “and, after having insultingly spurned a proposal that he add ‘Uncle Josh Keeps House’ to his collection, vibrated out of the store” (FPRA July 1945, 18).

<sup>511</sup> English-language yodel recordings were similarly paired with each other, even featuring the same yodeler on both sides (e.g. A573), suggesting that their audience was felt to be distinct like that of foreign-language discs; likewise with early Scottish accordion selections (e.g. A702). At first, foreign-language recordings were strategically segregated from instrumental ones, which were expected to have an appeal (as discrete double-discs) across many different language groups. But then there was an abrupt change in strategy, permitting Columbia to spread out its ethnic matrices more thinly. A separate series of double-discs was inaugurated with numbers starting at E1, each title being earmarked for a specific ethnic audience. One side of the disc was typically a recording made especially for the group in question, whereas the other side was drawn from Columbia’s mainstream instrumental stock of band selections, bell solos, and so forth. A similar strategy seems to have governed the first manufacture of double-faced discs for regular commercial sale (i.e., not counting Eldridge Johnson’s “toy talking machine” disc), undertaken in 1902 by the International Zonophone Company for a retailer in Rio de Janeiro, the contract specifying that the company would “stamp the record with a Brazilian selection on one side and a foreign—an Italian song or band selection on the other side” (quoted in Bayly and Kinnear, *Zon-o-phone Record*, 17).

---

<sup>512</sup> There was also a double-faced Zon-o-phone series. Of the smaller independent recording companies, only Leeds & Catlin survived long enough to participate in the double-faced disc fad of late 1908, pressing specimens for the client labels D&R (“Direct and Reversible”), National, Peerless, and Busy Bee (Sutton and Nauck, *American Record Labels*, 61).

<sup>513</sup> Aldridge, *Victor*, 65.

<sup>514</sup> “Len Spencer may be considered to be one of the smart people of the metropolis, but he certainly was not up to his standard recently when he left his gold watch and chain (which he had been using while taking records) on the graphophone rack. He had been called down stairs suddenly, to see a lady friend, and when he returned, imagine his surprise when the above articles were missed” (*Phonoscope* 2:8 [Aug. 1898], [11]).

<sup>515</sup> “The Manufacture of Edison Phonograph Records,” *Scientific American* 83 (Dec. 22, 1900), 390.

<sup>516</sup> “Voice Pickling in Chicago,” *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, July 5, 1897 (TAEM 146:1107).

<sup>517</sup> *Phonoscope* 1:8 (July 1897), 13.

<sup>518</sup> E. G. H. to William Hooley, July 4, 1899, in *Phonoscope* 3:6 (June 1899), 13.

<sup>519</sup> Frank Dyer, in Brylawski and Goldman, *Legislative History*, 4:J:290.

<sup>520</sup> Paul Cromelin, in Brylawski and Goldman, *Legislative History*, 4:J:376.

<sup>521</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:10 (Oct. 1908), 14. Some older selections were accordingly updated in the new format: “Our new Amberol Record gives an extra verse, chorus and scene” (description of Arthur Collins, THE PREACHER AND THE BEAR [Edison Amberol 18], *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:9 [Sept. 1908], 24); “The present Record gives 18 verses, while the old-style Record gives only 8” (Description of Edward M. Favor, FOL-THE-ROL-LOL [Edison Amberol 14], *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:9 [Sept. 1908], 23); “The longer Record has made it possible to include more of the song and to add new features, which make it well worth the higher price of the Amberol Record” (description of Collins and Harlan, ARRAH WANNA [Edison Amberol 193], *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 7:6 [June 1909], 27).

<sup>522</sup> For example: Eugene Danton, LA MARSEILLAISE parts one and two (Berliner 901Y and 901X); J. W. Myers, I WANT TO SEE THEM MARCH AWAY verses one through three (Victor M-1463 A, B, and C; see Aug. 1902 Victor supplement, quoted in FPRA May 1968, 38); John Terrell, MY LITTLE SIGN IS GONE FROM O’ER THE DOOR parts one and two (7” shield Zon-o-phone 9663 and 9664).

<sup>523</sup> “It is true that when you were giving your audience, ‘Gone with a Handsomer Man,’ one of Will Carlton’s popular selections, it takes two cylinders. The one who gives that has studied the best place to divide it into first part and second part, and your audience simply rests for a moment while you are changing the cylinder” (A. W. Clancy, in *Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention*, 115).

## Chapter Three

### SPEECH CONVENTIONS OF EARLY SOUND MEDIA

We should now have a sufficient background in the workings of early commercial phonography to start examining phonograms themselves for signs of adaptation to the circumstances under which they came into being and the contexts of education in which they were to be used. Many of these adaptations will turn out to involve the spoken word, and I want to spend the present chapter introducing this concept by analyzing a few of the most basic speech conventions of early sound media, something previous research has tended to neglect in favor of synchronic studies of present-day practice. We have seen that the phonograph exhibitions of 1878 had foregrounded the amusing and disorienting effects “reproduction” could have on recorded speech, for instance through the relocation of indexical language to a new deictic center. The subsequent transformation of the phonograph into a technically practical instrument had done nothing to eliminate the potential for uncertainty as to whether, say, the “now” of a phonogram should refer to the moment of its recording or the moment of its education, but commercial phonography had raised the stakes by linking that “now” to a new kind of audicular experience, the cultural and financial success of which could depend on it being evaluated in a particular way. People today who listen to early phonograms for the first time are often struck by the fact that most of them begin with formulaic spoken announcements rather than launching straight into their content, and these announcements will be the focus of the second half of this chapter. However, I have chosen to start not with the phonograph but with the telephone, the speech conventions of which are probably more familiar to the reader than those of phonography itself and furnish a useful point of comparison for the practice of announcing phonograms, as we will see.

## “Don’t Hello to Me—I’m no Telephone”

The conversational use of telephony inaugurated a distinctive way of speaking that contemporary critics immediately recognized as new and worthy of comment. By 1879, a telephone exchange observer in Kansas was able to give a plausible transcription of “the ordinary conversation,” consisting mainly of conventionalized phrases swapped back and forth.<sup>1</sup> The following year, a two-year-old girl had “learned by heart the peculiar and one-sided formula of a telephone conversation” to the point that she could imitate it recognizably while “playing at telephone.”<sup>2</sup> One feature already found in these two examples, the use of the word “hello” as a telephone conversation opener, is probably still the most widely recognized speech convention associated with any sound medium in the United States today. Critics of the nineteenth century had already taken an interest in tracing its origins, and a Boston lecture of 1899 about locally coined words included a claim, which may or may not be true, that the “the telephone ‘hello’ went from here to all parts of the world.”<sup>3</sup> The notion that this word must have been consciously “invented” as a greeting for the telephone, much as the telephone itself had been invented, dates back to at least 1887, when a humor columnist wrote:

It is claimed now that the telephone was invented in 1685 [sic, probably a reference to Robert Hooke’s *Cosmographia* (1665)]. It did not come into general use, however, because the word “hello” was not invented until some years after. If you will just try it a few times you will understand why it was impossible to run the telephone by saying “Prithee, friend,” or “Odds boddikins, man,” or “Give thee good morrow, sirrah.” No wonder the telephone was a failure.<sup>4</sup>

The implication here, however facetiously expressed, is that the emergence of new ways of speaking, and especially of new conventions for initiating conversations, had been just as crucial to the success of telephony as the technological ability to transmit sounds over a wire. Whenever this “invention” has been ascribed to a particular individual, it has been Thomas Edison. At a dinner held in Edison’s honor on April 13, 1905, Frederick P. Fish, president of American Telephone and Telegraph, declared:

Mr. Edison’s greatest invention was never patented. I doubt if there are half a dozen people who know what it is. The fact that Mr. Edison is the inventor has never been disclosed to the world, even. You see, years ago, when the telephone first came into use, people used to ring a bell and then say ponderously over the wire: ‘Are you there? Are you ready to talk?’ Well Mr. Edison did away with that awkward, un-American way of doing things. He caught up a receiver one day and yelled into the transmitter one word, a most satisfactory, capable, soul satisfying word, ‘Hello!’ It has gone clear around the world. The Japs use it. It is heard in Turkey. Russia couldn’t do without it. Neither could Patagonia.<sup>5</sup>



A few years later, Edison jotted down some autobiographical notes, including the claim: “Invented Hello for teleph[o]n[e].”<sup>6</sup> More recently, Edison’s right to be considered the inventor of the word has been championed by Allen Koenigsberg, who discovered it in a letter Edison had written to a telephone colleague on August 15, 1877: “I do not think we shall need a call bell as Hello! can be heard 10 to 20 feet away. What [do] you think?”<sup>7</sup> At the time of Koenigsberg’s discovery, standard reference works such as the *Oxford English Dictionary* did not list any earlier appearances of the spelling “hello.” Prior to this time, Koenigsberg was led to believe, the word had only been written as “hallow,” or “hollo,” or any number of other ways, and he commented on the significance of the change in vowel: “It can only be that given the etiquette of the day, no one would use a word suggesting the Underworld. But the coincidental merging of the inventor’s name (*Bell*) and the device he constructed (*telephone*) must have had some effect on Edison, and perhaps even gave people an excuse to use a four-letter word in polite company.”<sup>8</sup> In fact, more recent etymological research demonstrates that “hello,” spelled that way, had already coexisted for some time prior to 1877 with older forms such as “halloo.” The question is, therefore, not why or when a distinctive new word was coined for telephony, but how Edison and other telephone users came to adopt a preexisting one and what effect this had subsequently on its meaning and use.

Trivia buffs like to point out that Alexander Graham Bell favored “hoy-hoy” or “ahoy” as a word for opening telephone communications, but that Edison’s “hello” won out instead. What tends to go unmentioned is that both words had already been firmly entrenched as distinctive shouts used to summon, chase, or incite at a distance. “Hoy” was associated mainly with driving hogs and hailing aloft on a ship, or from ship to ship across an expanse of sea (also “ahoy”). A few passages in Bell’s correspondence reveal that he and his friends used “hoy-hoy” under similar circumstances, as a means of announcing one’s presence or hailing others at a distance.<sup>9</sup> “Halloo” and its variants overlap confusingly in both spelling and meaning, but they were used much like “hoy” and “ahoy,” such that the *Oxford English Dictionary* even lists “to halloo” as a cross-reference for “to call ahoy.” The key etymological ingredients in this case seem to have been *halloo*, a shout used to incite hounds to the hunt; French *holà*, “stop!” or “ho there!”; and Old High German *halâ*, *holâ*, “fetch!” as a call to summon a ferry.<sup>10</sup> Such

calls had often invited an answering shout, as in one description of nautical language published in 1769: “If the master intends to give any order to the people in the main-top, he calls, Main-top, hoay! To which they answer, Holloa!”<sup>11</sup> Note that here, too, “hoay” (i.e., “hoy”) and “holloa” had been combined into a single call and response. A variant of “hello” had even been reported in 1871 as a means of summoning someone to a domestic speaking tube and initiating a conversation through it:

A few nights since, at a late hour...the speaking tube at the office door of one of our popular physicians (and which leads to near the pillow of his bed, in an upper chamber,) was used by some midnight wag to the following effect: The doctor was in a sound sleep, when he was partially awakened by a “halloo” through the tube, when the following dialogue took place: “Well, what do you want?” “Does Dr. Jones live here?” “Yes: what do you want?” “Are you Dr. Jones?” “Yes.”<sup>12</sup>

In short, Bell’s “hoy-hoy” and Edison’s “hello” were not two random choices of nonsense word but closely related and interchangeable calls used traditionally for the social business of catching a person’s attention at a distance—a convenient precedent for the unfamiliar task of initiating a conversation over a telephone line.

But the word “hello,” spelled that way, also had some other connotations that need to be taken into consideration. The earliest instance of this spelling I have been able to find in print dates from 1828 and appears in a fictional letter published in the *New York Enquirer* supposed to have been written by a Vermonter of limited education in a phonetic rendering of “rube” dialect: “so ses I hello, Jubelo—hello Jubelum ses he—hoo the divvle ar yew sis I.”<sup>13</sup> During the next few decades we continue to find “hello” most frequently in dialect literature alongside other nonstandard spellings intended to convey peculiarities of ethnic or colloquial speech. It often appears as a means of hailing someone, a usage that often carries the weight of a greeting,<sup>14</sup> although it is also used as an exclamation of surprise or dismay.<sup>15</sup> One “hello” is often answered with another,<sup>16</sup> and the word sometimes appears only as a response, for instance to hearing one’s name shouted.<sup>17</sup> There were certain situations in which this form of address was accepted as the norm; for instance, “hello” is recorded as a variant of the standard shout by which people hailed riverboats and stagecoaches.<sup>18</sup> As a general greeting, however, it seems to have been limited to particularly informal contexts, geographical peripheries, or lower social strata. In an overview of American verbal greeting customs, one writer of 1866 presents “hello” as a marker of close familiarity between social equals: “if you are very intimate, you say, ‘Hello, old stick-in-the-mud!’ and your friend replies, ‘Well, old slop-

pail!”<sup>19</sup> When this same form of greeting was used in other situations, it was considered incongruous enough to provide the basis for jokes. For instance, a few Civil War anecdotes describe soldiers who had mistaken high-ranking officers for their peers and, as a result, addressed them with a shout of “Hello, old fellow!”<sup>20</sup> Another story concerns an officer who, after the war, was addressed with decreasing formality during his journey home until the boys in his hometown finally met him with “Hello, Sam!”<sup>21</sup> The use of the word “hello” as a greeting rather than a long-distance summons appears to have been regarded by the 1860s as conspicuous for its connotations of intimacy and informality.

At first, the use of “hoy-hoy,” “hello,” and their variants in telephony was closely analogous to the customary use of these calls to catch a person’s attention at a distance, the context in which their use was considered acceptable across social strata. Alexander Graham Bell provided this description of the start of a telephone demonstration of early 1877:

I went on with my lecture till I was interrupted by “Hoy!—Hoy! Hoy!” from the Telephone. As I placed my mouth to the instrument it seemed as if an electric thrill went through the audience—and that they recognized for the first time—what was meant by the Telephone.<sup>22</sup>

Watson, experiencing the lexical indeterminacy common to early sound media, seems to have recognized the conventional call as “ahoy” rather than “hoy,” but he gave a similar account of its use as a summons and response in early telephony, in this case from the fall of 1876: “Plainly as one could wish came Bell’s ‘ahoy,’ ‘ahoy!’ I ahoyed back, and the first long distance telephone conversation began.”<sup>23</sup> Edison initially used the call “hello” and its variants in the same way. In his letter of August 1877, quoted earlier, he proposed that the word could serve as a substitute for the “call bell.” People were to be alerted to an incoming call not by hearing the telephone ring, but directly by hearing the word “hello” educed from its receiver, perhaps from across the room, or even from another room. A couple examples of how this idea worked in practice are found in an account of a telephone and phonograph concert conducted by Edison’s colleague Edward Johnson in 1878:

Mr. JOHNSON shouted “Halloo!” to the singers in Medina, and they responded “Well.” Mr. JOHNSON said “All ready.” [A cornet solo followed.] Some one at Medina asked “How was that?” Mr. JOHNSON replied, “Pretty good. Give us the next.” The singers then commenced on the programme.... In one or two of the pieces there were several breaks. Mr. JOHNSON remedied this very easily. He shouted “Halloo!” to the singers, and got the reply “Well.” Said he, “There is something the matter with the instrument at Medina, and the sound comes irregular.” [The concert was carried out and audience members permitted to converse over the line.] “Good night” was then exchanged.<sup>24</sup>

“Halloo” was used here as a summons, and “well” as an answer (following the pattern cited above in which a typical response to “Hello, old stick-in-the-mud!” was given as “Well, old slop-pail!”). In the second instance, Johnson did not use “halloo” to draw the performers to the telephone as such, since they were apparently in mid-performance at the time, but his purpose was still to catch their attention, to summon them to drop what they were doing and attend to his message. The same shout was used as a summons by other exhibitors of Edison telephones, including occasions on which the inventor was on one end of the line:

[W]hen Mr. Bentley opened the trial by shouting “halloo, halloo” into the transmitter the cheering and brisk response which came back from a voice which was readily recognized as that belonging to the great inventor himself [Edison] demonstrated the fact that the success of the experiment had exceeded the anticipations of the telephone’s warmest friends.<sup>25</sup>

“Hallo! hallo! Edison!” shouted Mr. Batchelor into the mouthpiece of the carbon telephone.... “Hallo! Batchelor,” returned Eddison [sic].<sup>26</sup>

When a newspaper reporter telephoned Menlo Park from Philadelphia for an interview with Edison at about the same time, he even transcribed his “salutation” as “Halloo! Halloo! Hal-lo-o!”<sup>27</sup> emphasizing its drawn out, call-like nature, its resemblance to the shouts used to hail distant persons under ordinary circumstances.

Once telephone call bells had been adopted as a standard feature, “hello” was no longer necessary or even acceptable as an initial summons,<sup>28</sup> but it nevertheless continued to play a role in telephony. In the era of manual telephone switching systems, a caller was not automatically connected to the party with whom he or she wanted to speak but first made contact with a live operator at the telephone company’s central office. “Hello” was retained as the switchboard operator’s normative response to the customer’s ring. It appears, for instance, in the opening of Mark Twain’s “A Telephonic Conversation” (1880), a pioneering example of a new fictional genre in which the reader or listener is supposed to be privy to one half of an “overheard” telephone conversation. In this case, the caller has asked Twain to place a call on her behalf, and he obliges:

So I touched the bell, and this talk ensued:—

*Central Office.* [Gruffly.] Hello!

*I.* Is it the Central Office?

*C. O.* Of course it is. What do you want?

*I.* Will you switch me on to the Bagleys, please?<sup>29</sup>

The caller's response to the operator's "hello" was quickly conventionalized as "hello, Central," generally coupled with a request to be connected with such-and-such a number. Alternatively, the order of these phrases could be reversed: once the telephone caught on in earnest, the operator in a short-handed busy central office was often unable to respond immediately and had to ring a caller back,<sup>30</sup> leading to an exchange like this:

"Hello, Central."  
"Hello."  
"Give me 900 Williamsburgh."<sup>31</sup>

After making initial contact with the operator and asking for a particular number, telephone users of this period often seem to have repeated "hello" over and over until the requested party answered, leading to what one writer described as the "clamoring echo of hello central, hello, hello, hell—oh, is that you, X, 58?"<sup>32</sup> At an early point in the 1880s, a few commentators began to reflect on this convention, but only to confirm its necessity:

Why the word "hello" is the invariable telephone salutation remains a great mystery. "You wouldn't exclaim 'hey there!' or 'say, you!' would you?" asked the Superintendent of the telephone company. "I'd like to know what else you'd say but 'hello.'"<sup>33</sup>

"Hello" is the universal cry. Man takes to it as naturally as a duck does to water. What else could be shouted? Nothing. "Hello" is convenient, simple and universal.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, the word "hello" had soon come to be associated with the telephone securely and exclusively enough to make possible such exchanges as these, from 1881 and 1890 respectively:

"Hello! Uncle Mose, hello!" cried Jim Webster as he hurried down Austin-avenue, trying to overtake the old man. "Be keerful, Jeames, be keerful how you undress yo'self to me; I ain't no telephone," replied the indignant deacon.<sup>35</sup>

"Hello, Doherty," said the good natured doctor, beaming out from behind his spectacles. "Don't hello to me," growled Doherty [an armed escapee from an insane asylum]. "I'm no telephone."<sup>36</sup>

Although the word "hello" was by then not only accepted but *expected* in the context of telephone calls, it seems that it was still regarded as conspicuously informal, and perhaps even insulting, when used as a greeting in a face-to-face encounter.

There was a sudden wave of conscious resistance to the use of "hello" as a telephonic greeting at the start of the twentieth century. Up until this time, we find only a few isolated expressions of discomfort with the convention. In 1891, the telephone company in Detroit had imposed several new rules, among other things requiring its

operators “to say ‘Number’ instead of ‘Hello,’” though no explanation had been offered for the change.<sup>37</sup> In 1895, an editorial in the *Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* had complained about the popularity of “hello” as a “form of salutation used by school girls and even by young ladies,” insisting: “No self-respecting young lady should be encouraged to use such a form of expression as ‘Hello!’ The only exception to this rule is when she is using the telephone, and even this exception is not well authorized.”<sup>38</sup> Dictionaries used the expression “not well authorized” to identify new usages and neologisms without officially sanctioning them. A year later, the *Chicago Tribune* had published a short comment headed “Style in Telephoning”: “In answering a telephone call it is much better to say ‘yes,’ with a rising inflection, than ‘hello.’ In fact, ‘hello’ is now tabooed in select circles.”<sup>39</sup> Whatever “select circles” may have banned the word, this was evidently still regarded by the Chicago press of 1896 as an isolated and fairly recent anomaly (“now tabooed”), not a mass movement. Four years later, on the other hand, the *Washington Star* published a comic rhyme poking fun at the idea that a person might be so hypersensitive about verbal etiquette as to fret over standard telephone answering practices:

The Boston girl was heard to moan,  
And tears were seen to flow;  
Because, when at the telephone,  
She had to say “Hello.”<sup>40</sup>

These sources suggest some nascent discomfort with the standard telephone greeting, but it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that resistance seems to have become at all widespread or subject to earnest debate. In the spring of 1902, the social elite in Evanston, Illinois began a movement to abolish the “vulgar” greeting in what was dubbed a “revolution in telephone conversation”:

If you want to move in good society in Evanston, you must not say “hello” when you take down the telephone receiver. That form of greeting has been stored away with the old furniture in the attic and is used only when the maid answers the ’phone. To announce your presence at the telephone say “good-morning,” “good-afternoon,” or “good-evening,” as the case may be, exactly as you would in ordinary conversation. “Howdy do” is a greeting that is sometimes used, but it is looked upon with suspicion in the most esthetic town and gown circles.<sup>41</sup>

Telephone operators were “apprised of the movement to make the word obsolescent and have been asked not to say ‘Hello’ when answering.”<sup>42</sup> Even though many subscribers reacted with confusion to the change,<sup>43</sup> the customary greeting was now “considered too

informal a word” for use in polite society. “In the homes and on the streets it was ostracized many years ago,” it was observed, “but when the telephone came its use seemed to be a necessity, and it was tolerated in long-distance communication.”<sup>44</sup> Those who now wanted to replace it presented their effort as an overdue step towards assimilating the new medium to broader norms of verbal etiquette. “We would not use it if we greeted a person on the street,” argued H. H. Kingsley, president of the local women’s club said to be responsible for initiating the reform. “Why can’t we be as courteous when talking by telephone?”<sup>45</sup> The women of Evanston were not alone in their feelings. Another movement to ban the word “hello” from telephony as “horrid and vulgar” arose in Appleton, Wisconsin, again initiated by “the most prominent women” of the city, their proposed substitute being “Yes?”<sup>46</sup> The telephone company in Ventura County, California followed suit in 1903, ordering its operators to substitute “soft” answers for the usual “hello”: “The word always sounded too harsh and abrupt to me, even in these busy days,” the manager explained.<sup>47</sup> That same year, a correspondent to *Harper’s Bazar* inquired: “What can one say in reply to a call by telephone? The word ‘hello!’ is vulgar and I dislike it very much but what else can I use?” The editor’s response was short and unequivocal: “There is no other phrase that can be used.” But a newspaper writer in Oshkosh, Wisconsin disagreed, asserting to the contrary:

There is no reason why coarse, vulgar or questionable phrases should be used at the telephone any more than such phrases should be used anywhere else.... There is no good reason why a person addressing another through the telephone or answering a call through that instrument should not use the same language as would be used if the conversation were face to face.

The word “hello” did, admittedly, have its proper uses:

Originally it was used to shout at a person at a distance and its use then was a matter of necessity. One could attract attention much more easily by singing out “Hallo—o!” than by the use of any other word, and thus it found a place in the vocabulary of the public.

According to this writer, the word “hello” had been adopted in telephony by people who wrongly assumed that speaking over the telephone should be more like shouting over a distance than like polite conversation:

When we first used the telephone every one supposed it was necessary to shout at the top of one’s voice in order to be heard. Then the word “hello!” or “hullo!” seemed natural and useful, just is [sic] if one was trying to speak to a person half a mile distant. But those who have learned to use the instrument properly speak in a low tone of voice, avoid the old word so necessary when shouting, and use only such words or phrases as would be used in ordinary conversation. Instead of “Hello,” such an expression as “What is it?” “Who is it,” “Well?” “What is wanted?” “All right!” “Who called?” “Who is that?” “I’m ready” and many others are equally efficient in opening up the conversation.<sup>48</sup>

Once more, the argument is that the sophisticated telephone user of 1903 should speak over the instrument exactly as he or she would speak during a face-to-face encounter: the telephone *call* as a speech genre has been disassociated from the call across a distance and linked instead to the social “call.” At the close of 1904, the *New York Times* itself identified “hello” as a “matter in which telephone manners could be improved,” once more stressing its objectionable familiarity and its divergence from face-to-face norms:

It is not a pretty word for indiscriminate use, but that is the sort of use it gets from most of us—over the telephone, though nowhere else. A name can commonly be substituted at the beginning of a telephonic conversation, and in case the connection is broken and then made again, as so often happens, it would be well to imitate the English custom, which is not to repeat the too familiar “Hello,” but to ask, “Are you there?”<sup>49</sup>

The issue arose yet again in 1912 when “hello” was banned from the Pere Marquette railroad’s telephone lines: “It is obviously true that that which is the correct thing to do in a face to face conversation also is correct in telephone conversation. Any one but has to apply the rules of courtesy prescribed long before the telephone was thought of to know the proper manners for telephone usage.”<sup>50</sup> The same standards of etiquette, and specifically the same politeness phenomena, were supposed to pertain to all conversation, regardless of whether a telephone was involved. However, as one critic lamented in 1911, children were still being intentionally socialized to associate “hello” with the telephone at a young age:

Even babies are taught the word. Placing the infant to the phone just as soon as he can peep, some fond parent or aunt will say, “Now say hello,” and then when at last the child can do it the family is as proud as can be. So the little one grows up connecting the two things, the word “hello” with the telephone, be it the real article of [sic, should be “or”] a picture of a telephone. Go into any household where there is a child of a year and a half or over, place him to the telephone, or give the toy instrument he may have, and the first thing he will say is “hello.”

So the habit is being developed in the younger generation today, and instead of helping to break a yoke that seems to bind the great phone-speaking public we are only encouraging it to a greater degree.

In place of the offending word, this last writer advocated “This is number ——, whom do you wish to speak to?” or “This is So-and-So’s residence” as “much more refined.”<sup>51</sup>

But not everyone agreed with the logic of these calls to reform, starting with the Evanston anti-hello campaign of 1902. A newspaper editor in Maine wondered why a telephonic greeting tacitly accepted by the élite of Boston should bother people in a mere Chicago suburb and observed that, although it was “no longer commonly used in polite circles” during face-to-face encounters, “its use has become so universal on the phone



that it will be hard to make any substitute popular.”<sup>52</sup> The *Boston Globe* commented testily: “Chicago ‘society’ has decided that it is vulgar to say ‘hello’ when using the telephone. What does Chicago ‘society’ prefer—‘Ah, there!’?”<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, the *Chicago Tribune* itself poked fun at the prospect of such communications as “Good afternoon, good afternoon, Central, I want Stock-Yards. Good afternoon, good afternoon. Good afternoon, is this Stock-Yards? Good afternoon, Stock-Yards, good afternoon.”<sup>54</sup> Here an alternative phrase was made to appear ridiculous and clunky, thereby revealing the advantages of the existing, terser practice: “Despite the associations of the word ‘hello,’” remarked the *Atlanta Constitution*, “it meets the demand of the age in which we live for aptness and brevity.”<sup>55</sup> An editor in Seattle agreed that the proposed substitutes were “too cumbersome” and argued that “hello” was uniquely suited to the new communicative circumstances of telephony:

Time was when “hello” belonged to the street and had nothing to recommend it. But with the growth of the telephone, its use has become universal; because it seems to fit exactly the requirements of the instrument, and like some other phrases of lowly origin, it is no longer a discourteous expression. As a special term, it has entered the vocabulary along with the word telephone, and as such has attained respectability and become firmly entrenched [sic] as a part of the language.<sup>56</sup>

A newspaper item of 1915, entitled “No Longer a Slang Phrase,” likewise suggested that the conventionalization of the word “hello” in telephony had overridden the social stigma formerly associated with it: “The word ‘hello’ has been saved to popular usage by the telephone, and by that alone. Thirty-five years ago [i.e., 1880] there was a real crusade against the so-called slang phrase, and the great conversational invention came to the rescue just in time.”<sup>57</sup> These commentators argued that telephonic speech and face-to-face speech were *not* the same thing. Calling someone on the telephone was different from meeting someone on the street, and new communicative circumstances justified—or perhaps even demanded—new norms of language use. The telephone industry did continue to promote “the same standards of courtesy that obtain in a face-to-face conversation” as a model for polite telephonic speech, as in an advertisement of 1913 that quoted a news article in which a company’s telephone switchboard operator had lost a \$3,500 order by answering a call with “Who are you?” rather than “May I have your name?” or “Who is speaking, please?”<sup>58</sup> In 1910, the winning entry in a *Telephone Engineer* essay contest similarly condemned a telephone answering formula as

inappropriate because it would not have been used in an analogous face-to-face encounter:

Would you rush into an office or up to the door of a residence and blurt out “Hello! Hello! Who am I talking to?” No, one should open conversations with phrases such as “Mr. Wood, of Curtis and Sons, wishes to talk with Mr. White...” without any unnecessary and undignified “Hello’s.”<sup>59</sup>

Another writer of the time criticized “people who will say ‘hello’ over the telephone who would be shocked to have anyone greet them with the salutation in public,”<sup>60</sup> again insinuating that if the latter were unacceptable, so, by analogy, was the former.

However, it is apparent that few speakers would have considered initiating a face-to-face conversation with “Mr. Wood, of Curtis and Sons, wishes to talk with Mr. White” or “Who is speaking, please?” either. By the 1910s, a sense had begun to emerge that the real problem was not one of a medium incompletely assimilated to preexisting standards of verbal etiquette but of one whose own standards of verbal etiquette had yet to be fully articulated. In 1913, the *New York Times* opined as follows:

IF some one could lay down a cut-and-dried code of telephone manners, fewer discourtesies would pass back and forth between friends and neighbors every day. But the telephone is as yet a fairly new convenience. When it is as old a social institution as afternoon teas or saddle horses, there may be definite rules regarding its use....

“Hello, who is this?” is the insistent call that comes over our wire day after day. The courteous thing to say, of course, is this: “Hello, is this 711 Main?”<sup>61</sup>

Nine years earlier, the same newspaper had considered “hello” itself discourteous. Now it was the blunt “who is this?” that was being censured, despite the fact that this phrase—nearly identical to the “who is it?” advocated in 1903 by the women of Oshkosh, Wisconsin—would have been far more likely to occur in a face-to-face encounter than the conspicuously telephonic “is this 711 Main?” Meanwhile, “hello” itself was presented as neutral, neither inherently polite nor impolite. To complicate matters even further, one 1910 history credits the talk of telephone operators with raising overall standards of verbal etiquette:

She [the operator] has shown us how to take the friction out of conversation, and taught us refinements of politeness which were rare even among the Beau Brummels [i.e., arbiters of fashion] of pre-telephonic days. Who, for instance, until the arrival of the telephone girl, appreciated the difference between “Who are you?” and “Who is this?” Or who else has so impressed upon us the value of the rising inflection, as a gentler habit of speech?<sup>62</sup>

According to this writer, polite telephone speech had not simply copied polite face-to-face speech, such as it was, but had come to embody and promote even higher standards

of politeness, perhaps because of the hypersensitivity to the aural channel it fostered. The common ground uniting all these different arguments was a belief that, although politeness still mattered when a person was speaking on the telephone, it could justifiably take new forms rather than adhering to old, established ones.

The early twentieth-century efforts to banish “hello” from all telephony were obviously unsuccessful. The word even survived a fundamental change in the procedure by which telephone subscribers placed their calls, eliminating the verbal exchange with the operator, who had herself taken to answering with the phrase “number please.”<sup>63</sup> Automatic switching, which began in some locales in the 1890s but only became widespread in the 1920s, was first described as a “new plan, which does away with ‘Hello Central,’”<sup>64</sup> but it did not do away with “hello” itself. New forms of opposition to the word did arise. By the 1910s, some critics were arguing that it bordered on profanity because it contained within it the word “hell.”<sup>65</sup> Others claimed that saying it was a waste of time, and that the person answering a telephone should simply announce his or her name or the name of the office or business,<sup>66</sup> an alternative that the business world had in fact embraced by the early 1920s.<sup>67</sup> However, “hello” has remained standard to the present day in non-institutional telephony, and the adoption of more “sophisticated” alternatives has continued to meet with lighthearted ridicule, as in one remark from 1914:

Bostonians who have been in England are using the inquiry “Are you there?” in place of “hello” as a telephone greeting. But suppose the other party said “No?”<sup>68</sup>

Although “hello” is often referred to as a telephonic “greeting,” closer examination suggests that it may actually fulfill a somewhat different communicative function. According to Robert Hopper’s analysis of telephone openings, a call begins with a nonverbal summons, such as the ring of a bell. Without knowing the purpose or origin of the call, the answerer or callee is required to speak first, and a stage of identification ensues during which the participants determine whether or not they recognize each other. The word “hello” occurs most predictably during the answer and identification/recognition stages of the encounter. The *greeting*, i.e., “the speech act by which we signal that we recognize an acquaintance,” comes only later.<sup>69</sup> Some of the

complaints registered by opponents of “hello” do suggest that it was treated as a necessary prerequisite for greeting rather than as a greeting in its own right, for instance:

When the phone rings it has been my habit to say, “This is number so-and-so,” giving the number of the phone. But invariably the person calling seems to be deaf or mute until I have yelled, “hello.” Again, if calling anyone it seems that it is impossible to make them understand who you are or whom you want unless first you prefix your conversation with that vulgar “hello.”<sup>70</sup>

Hopper’s interpretation seems to confirm the old pro-hello arguments, according to which the word had been legitimately adopted to occupy a new communicative niche unique to the telephone: it was, basically, a substitute for the initial visual identification of an acquaintance in a face-to-face encounter, without which people could not comfortably proceed to a greeting. However, the constant use of “hello” in telephony also seems to have had a reciprocal effect on its acceptability in face-to-face encounters, where it no longer has the connotation of extreme informality it seems to have had a century ago. I have not made any methodical study of this last point, but I can support it anecdotally: in my interpersonal communication classes, when face-to-face greeting formulae have come up, my students have repeatedly identified “hello” as *too* formal for certain contexts.

The debate I have summarized here centered on the social propriety of a medium-specific speech convention, the use of “hello” for opening telephone conversations, which ran contrary to the norms governing face-to-face encounters. After some two decades during which this convention was tacitly accepted (roughly 1880-1900), the first decade of the twentieth century witnessed an abrupt shift in many critics’ perceptions of it. Prior to this time, telephones had been new, exciting, sometimes legitimately disorienting for everyone involved. Users had welcomed special conventions such as “hello” that had helped them feel their way through the experience of the new technology, and they had been willing to waive the usual standards of verbal etiquette in the process. By 1901, the telephone had become—or was supposed to have become—fully assimilated into social life, leading to a reevaluation of what constituted proper telephonic speech. Some critics began to argue that persons who were fully accustomed to the use of the telephone should talk into it exactly as they talked during face-to-face encounters, making no modifications whatsoever in their speech or behavior. This reaction was by no means universal, and I do not mean to imply that the anti-hello campaign ever reflected the views of anything more than a vocal minority. What is

important for my purposes, however, is that the issue arose at all and that we can date the moment of crisis specifically to the first decade of the twentieth century. Claude Fischer alleges in *America Calling*, his social history of telephony, that “AT&T tried at first to suppress ‘hello’ as a vulgarity.”<sup>71</sup> However, he offers no evidence of any move towards such suppression at any point during the 1880s and 1890s. Fischer’s comment about what happened “at first” really refers to a controversy over mediated ways of speaking that arose in earnest only when the technology had been in use for nearly a quarter of a century. It was precisely the naturalization of telephony that had provoked a reconsideration of the speech conventions appropriate to it.

### **“Graphophone Says the Line is Busy”**

The first specific uses proposed for phonography involved educating prerecorded material for transmission over a telephone line,<sup>72</sup> and the development of the wax cylinder format finally made the practical use of prerecorded material in telephony a realistic goal.<sup>73</sup> On the evening of February 4, 1889, a combination phonograph and telephone exhibition linked two audiences located respectively at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia and in the operating room at the American Telephone and Telegraph Company office in New York City:

“Hello!”

“Hello, yourself.”

“Is this the long distance telephone office, New York?”

“Yes; what do you want?”

“Well, just listen to this:”

A soldier of the legion lay dying in Algiers,  
There was lack of woman’s nursing,  
There was dearth of woman’s tears—  
Sweet violets! Sweeter than all the roses—  
“Police!”

According to this article, the last segment was educed in Edison’s voice from a phonogram the inventor had phonogenized that morning at his laboratory and sent to Philadelphia with the exhibitor.<sup>74</sup> A prerecorded selection, structured much like demonstration pieces of the tinfoil era, was thus framed by and embedded into a conventional “live” telephonic interaction, complete with an exchange of “hellos” as a prerequisite to greeting. Next, cornetist Theodore Hoch and vocalist Effie Stewart

arrived on the New York end to supply audicular performances for recording and transmission. Newspaper reports disagree as to the exact sequence of events, but Hoch and Stewart apparently sang and played into both the telephone and phonograph; later, one of Hoch's cornet phonograms was educed and transmitted three times over the wire from New York to Philadelphia, rerecorded on a phonograph in Philadelphia, and educed there from the new phonogram while the audience in New York also listened.<sup>75</sup> The goal of this event was plainly to demonstrate the phonograph and telephone in a variety of mutually interactive combinations, showing that each was sensitive enough to handle sounds educed from the other. It was clear that phonograms could be transmitted successfully by telephone; the question now was how to make this technological feat practically useful.

One possibility was to educe prerecorded material as the stuff of audicular telephone "concerts," which constituted a more prevalent mode of dissemination for early phonograms than is generally recognized today.<sup>76</sup> Another possibility, which will be the focus of my attention here, was to use phonograms as a means of automating messages appropriate to situations that arose regularly in everyday conversational telephony. In 1885, Chauncey Smith of the Bell Telephone Company wrote to Edison asking him to supply "a brass wheel which would say 'Hello'" for use in telephone experiments and mentioning a rumor that a "Proffesor [sic] Bracket," probably Princeton University's Cyrus Fogg Brackett, already had a similar wheel capable of repeating his name: "Proffesor [sic] Bracket." Edison was not willing to cooperate, arguing that "it would take a big lot of my time to get a perfect record to make a wheel by,"<sup>77</sup> and nothing seems to have come from the order. But what had been the intended purpose for this "wheel"? Smith did not elaborate, but the specification of the word "hello" and the name of an individual subscriber as content suggest that the wheels were intended either to initiate calls or to greet callers by relaying a prerecorded message back to them over the wire.<sup>78</sup> It is unclear whether the "hello" wheel was supposed to be installed at Central or used by individual subscribers, but the "Professor Brackett" wheel must have been designed to automate a message in connection with calls placed to or from Brackett's own office or home. Whatever specific scenarios Smith or Brackett may have had in

mind, the basic goal was surely to trigger the eduction of a contextually appropriate utterance automatically in connection with the placement of a telephone call.

The idea of the prerecorded outgoing telephone message was elaborated over the next few years, its purpose now being explicitly to tell callers that a party was unavailable and when they should try calling again. Edison included this suggestion in his speculative article on the perfected phonograph in 1888: “A telephone subscriber can place at his telephone a phonogram which will announce to the exchange, whenever he is called up, that he has left the office and will return at a certain time.”<sup>79</sup> Two years later, Charles Batchelor jotted down a list of “inventions wanted” in a laboratory notebook, including: “Telephone signal. A device for letting a caller on tel. know that you are not in & that you will be at a certain time is desirable as it would save the ‘central’ much time ‘trying to get them.’”<sup>80</sup> To provide the kind of message described in these proposals, a businessman would have had to phonogenize a new statement with his expected time of return whenever he left his office. A wheel engraved with a single, permanent phrase might have been more convenient, but it could have conveyed only the information that a party was unavailable, not when the caller should try again. Otherwise, this task tended to fall on live telephone operators. “Another of the woes with which I have to contend is caused by the commissions and messages intrusted to me,” stated a Brooklyn operator in 1890. “‘If 43 calls me up, Central, please tell him I have gone to the ball game,’ and such things as that are given me to remember and attend to.”<sup>81</sup> Phonography seemed capable of freeing telephone operators from such tasks if subscribers were willing instead to make a habit of updating their recorded messages.

There was another situation in telephony for which permanent, invariable messages were perfectly satisfactory. By 1896, a telephone company is supposed to have prepared a cylinder containing the words “The wire is busy, please call off, the wire is busy, please call off,” and fitted it on a standard phonograph connected by rubber tubing to a telephone transmitter. Whenever a call could not be completed, the operator was supposed to insert the plug into the “busy” jack leading to the phonograph rather than explaining the situation to the caller in person.<sup>82</sup> The busy-signal phonogram not only automated the delivery of a routine message but also insulated operators from the frustration of subscribers who could not complete their calls. Operators were sometimes

suspected of reporting that numbers were “busy” purely out of spite, for example if they had been interrupted by a call in the middle of reading a romance novel or felt they had been spoken to discourteously.<sup>83</sup> As a result, they sometimes found themselves drawn into interactions like this one:

The reporter waited about five minutes this time and called Central again.

“Number 10,067 is busy,” was still the reply.

“Oh, say, Central, please give me some other excuse. I have been waiting fifteen minutes. Tell me that the wires are down or crossed, or that the switchboard is broken—anything at all except that they’re busy. You know they can’t be busy all the time.”

“I can’t help it. They are busy.”

“Now, isn’t that rather thin. Try them again. You can’t tell me that they have been busy all this time.”<sup>84</sup>

The busy-signal phonogram eliminated the opportunity subscribers had previously enjoyed of venting their frustrations at a live human being. Still, a telephone office in San Francisco found that callers grew even more hostile under the new system because they now felt they were being rudely ignored:

The difficulty developed in practice was that people who called up several times in a few minutes on a busy wire found the monotonous tone and form of the reply intensely irritating. They did not know that the answer was given by a machine. As often as they complained or demanded an explanation the answer came in the even, indifferent tone, and in precisely the same words. Abuse and threats had no effect. After the wildest reproaches the voice from the operators’ room merely said, “Busy now; call up later.” Subscribers became so angry that the managers were afraid to continue the use of the invention. One of them remarked to a visitor who had listened to blood-thirsty remarks over the wire: “That is one of the drawbacks of this invention. It excites profane men unduly, and it might lead to violence.”

The writer in this case supposed that subscribers would be less aggravated if they knew what was really going on: “it is a useful thing in itself, and if the public were once made to understand that it is not an insolent human being, but an innocent machine, just as passionless as it sounds, the whole difficulty might be removed.”<sup>85</sup> This was not necessarily so, however, judging from disgruntled comments published in 1895:

If the line is busy, as the girl seems to find it convenient to have it most of the time, it seems to me, instead of saying herself that “the line’s busy,” she sticks in a plug and the graphophone starts in with: “Graphophone says the line is busy; please call again.”

You try to interrupt with a word to “central,” but you can’t get in a word.

The infernal thing keeps right along until you hang up the receiver.

“Graphophone says—”

“Helloa!”

“the li—”

“Central!”

“line is busy;”

“I say, central!”

“please call—”

“Central!”

“again.”



“I say, cent—”

“Graph—”

“Confound it, central!”

And so the blamed thing goes on in its sing-song voice until it nearly drives a person insane.<sup>86</sup>

The “busy” phonogram did protect operators from the hostility of impatient and skeptical telephone subscribers, and in the case quoted above it was even worded so as to attribute its message explicitly to the graphophone—“*Graphophone says the line is busy*”—rather than to the live operator who had, for whatever reason, actually failed to place the requested call. However, it was evidently highly unpopular with customers. There was also a technological problem: constant eduction would quickly have worn out ordinary wax cylinder phonograms, requiring their frequent replacement. In Philadelphia, the “busy” phonogram was designed to convey the message “Busy, call again—busy, call again—busy, call again,” but a local newspaper editor is said to have misheard it, perhaps due to excessive wear, as “Lizzie, call again—Lizzie, call again,” much to his confusion.<sup>87</sup> Phonographic “busy-tests” appear to have continued in use at least into the 1910s,<sup>88</sup> but by the beginning of the twentieth century, operators in some places had instead resorted to non-phonographic automated signals to indicate busy lines, described as a “hateful buzzing” and transcribed, in one case, as “Br-r-r-r—uh—br-r-r—uh—br-r-r.”<sup>89</sup> The apparatus that generated these sounds was presumably more durable than a phonogram recorded on a wax cylinder, and, however “hateful” the sound may have been, it was also more abstract, more mechanical, and so perhaps less amenable to an angry verbal response than some variant on “busy, call again.” Besides, the message in this case did not require subtle distinctions. As long as subscribers were familiar with the concept of an automated “busy” response, an intermittent buzzing sound was just as suitable for conveying it efficiently and unambiguously as an equivalent verbal announcement would have been. Even today, the standard busy signal in the United States is a rapid intermittent tone rather than a prerecorded spoken message. However, this approach would not have been a viable substitute for other plans involving repeated messages with more complex content—for instance, having telephone operators use prerecorded reports of the latest baseball scores to avoid wearing out their voices disseminating this information on game nights,<sup>90</sup> or having a phonograph answer the telephone at a ping-pong ball factory that had fallen far behind on its orders.<sup>91</sup>

Meanwhile, the more familiar telephone answering machine concept still had promise. The answering machine became dialogic in its modern sense when instruments capable of automatically recording incoming messages were introduced in the last years of the nineteenth century. The first of these was the *telegraphone*, a magnetic wire recorder invented in 1898 by Valdemar Poulsen of Denmark.<sup>92</sup> The outgoing message was still envisioned as an integral part of the telegraphone system;<sup>93</sup> without it, a caller would have no means of knowing that his or her words were about to be recorded and might just hang up in confusion. As one report explained, the telegraphone was “arranged so that when some one calls up, should no one respond, the talker is at once made aware that at the other end there is only the Phonograph connection. He will, therefore, frame his message accordingly.”<sup>94</sup> A more elaborate account of a model telegraphone interaction was given as follows:

[T]he case will be considered of a telephone subscriber, *A*, who leaves his office, after having adjusted his instrument to receive messages during his absence, and also answer any inquiries concerning the time he will be back. *B*, another subscriber, rings him up. The telegraphone is put into action by the ringing up, and tells that *A* is not in, but that it will be pleased to receive the message for him. When this is received, *B* rings off and the telegraphone goes out of action. This can be repeated a number of times, and the messages then read by *A* when he returns.<sup>95</sup>

As in the earlier proposals for monologic answering machines, the outgoing message was expected to tell callers when the receiving party expected to return, although this information was less crucial now that the caller could also leave a message rather than calling back at a more opportune time. Another writer emphasized the “customized” outgoing message when describing the hypothetical case of John Smith, a businessman who has been called out of town:

He expects one of his clients to ring him up during the day on an important matter. So he talks into the telegraphone, using his ordinary telephone and switching it on the other instrument.

“Hello, Mr. Brown! This is Mr. Smith,” he says. “I am going out of town overnight, but just talk into the phone what you learned about that matter we were discussing, and I’ll attend to it the first thing in the morning.”

Then the client talks away, and the faithful telegraphone records all he has to say. Next morning Mr. Smith has Mr. Brown’s message bright and early by switching the telegraphone on to the telephone receiver.

In this case, Mr. Smith adapts his outgoing message to a specific incoming call he is expecting from a particular caller, since the telegraphone is capable of delivering “any message the absent telephone subscriber cares to leave.”<sup>96</sup> Poulsen did not have the field to himself for long; in 1900, J. E. O. Kumberg’s *telephonograph* was introduced as a

competing device that used wax phonograph cylinders instead of magnetic wire. Like the wire telegraphone, the cylinder telephonograph was expected to deliver an outgoing message before recording an incoming one: “Thus if the office is left without an attendant and a call is made the phonograph can be so set as to reply, ‘Mr. — is out. The instrument is fitted with a telephonograph which will automatically take down any message you may send and Mr. — will read it on his return.’”<sup>97</sup> This wording was consistent with the idea that Kumberg’s machine itself, and not the ordinary speaker, would be the agent of the educed speech: “it will reply courteously that its owner has just popped out, and that it will be glad to receive the message and hold it until its master returns.”<sup>98</sup>

I have already touched on the generic conventions of the outgoing telephone answering machine message, but this is our first encounter with it as a phenomenon that actually existed during the period under consideration here. To recapitulate from my introduction: according to Corazza et al., it is the conventions of a given utterance type that determine how speakers and listeners locate its deictic zero-points in terms of person, time, and place. For instance, in answering machine messages “now” conventionally refers to the time of eduction, whereas on postcards it conventionally refers to the time of writing. No conventions existed yet for answering machines during the 1900s, so we might expect to find a lot of variation and uncertainty in the outgoing messages proposed at that time—which we do. For the sake of clarity, we can assign numbers to the two verbatim examples we have had so far, plus three more extracted from other articles about similar devices, all published between 1900 and 1905:

1. Hello, Mr. Brown! This is Mr. Smith. I’m going out of town overnight, but just talk into the ’phone what you learned about that matter we were discussing, and I’ll attend to it the first thing in the morning.
2. Mr. Jones is not in. This is a phonographic receiver speaking. Kindly give me your message and I will repeat it to him on his return.<sup>99</sup>
3. Mr. — is out. The instrument is fitted with a telephonograph which will automatically take down any message you may send and Mr. — will read it on his return.
4. Mr. Linen is out. Please dictate your message.<sup>100</sup>
5. I am not at home; my phonograph will take the communication.<sup>101</sup>

In the first example, the speaker uses a verb tense that pertains at the time of recording (“I am going out of town overnight”) rather than the past tense (“I have gone out of town overnight”) that will pertain at the expected time of eduction, the time when the

anticipated call is to be received. It is possible that Mr. Smith has not “learned about that matter we were discussing” as of the time of recording, since he has not called yet, but that can be regarded as an unknown. The only unambiguous inversion is that “you” refers to Mr. Brown rather than to the machine:

|       | <b>Recording Event</b>   | <b>Eduction Event</b> |
|-------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| “I”   | <u>originary speaker</u> | answering machine     |
| “you” | answering machine        | <u>Mr. Brown</u>      |
| “now” | <u>time of recording</u> | time of eduction      |

This example forces Mr. Brown to puzzle out the historic relationship between the recording and eduction events when he hears the message: Mr. Smith is not *going* out of town, as the message states, but has *gone* out of town since he recorded it. It is probably no coincidence that this is also the example that shows the poorest grasp of the concept of the answering machine overall. Not only does Mr. Smith fail to explain what is happening, but he has tailored the outgoing message to answer a specific incoming call from Mr. Brown, making it inappropriate for any unanticipated calls that other callers might place. One suspects this writer had not thought the process through fully. On the other hand, the next example displays a high degree of phonogenic adaptation. Even the first person is inverted from the originary speaker to the machine, following the conventions of the speaking automaton. Whether Mr. Jones himself is phonogenizing the utterance or has delegated this task to someone else, the originary speaker explicitly denies his or her own status as agent—“This is a *phonographic receiver* speaking”—and works from a corresponding deictic zero-point—“give *me* your message and *I* will repeat it to *him*”:

|        | <b>Recording Event</b>         | <b>Eduction Event(s)</b> |
|--------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| “I”    | originary speaker              | <u>answering machine</u> |
| “you”  | answering machine              | <u>caller(s)</u>         |
| “here” | proximity to originary speaker | <u>“at home”</u>         |
| “now”  | time of recording              | <u>time of eduction</u>  |

The third example is similar, except that it contains no explicit first-person references and merely refers to the owner of the machine in the third person. The message is worded so as not only to sidestep the thorny question of who its agent is supposed to be, but even to downplay the orality of the medium (“Mr. — will *read* [not *listen to*] it [the message left by the caller] on his return”). The fourth example follows much the same pattern. Only

the fifth example adheres to the familiar approach that has since become conventionalized: "I am not at home." As we can see, commentators of the 1900s were inconsistent in their conclusions about how speakers ought to orient themselves to their telephone answering machines when phonogenizing outgoing messages. Even though they agreed more or less as to content (the intended recipient of a call was out, but the caller could still leave a message), the form it should take presented a puzzle with no single, obvious solution. Speakers had to decide whether the phonogenic enactment was more like writing a letter, like talking to someone directly over the telephone, or like serving as one's own secretary or office boy, and a case could be made for any of these three options. Few writers of the 1900s discuss the possibility of such communications causing actual confusion, perhaps from lack of practical experience with the technology, but the one who produced our fourth example does:

For instance, Mr. White of Times Square, wishes to speak to Mr. Linen of Broad Street. He calls Central, and asks for Linen's number. A moment later he hears what seems to be Linen's voice, saying: "Mr. Linen is out; please dictate your message." This statement is seemingly repeated by Linen several times. Now, it is rather perplexing for a man to be told that the individual with whom he wishes to converse is out, by a voice that he is willing to take oath is that of the man he seeks. Perhaps he says something to that effect, and then he receives no answer at all. Waiting a moment, Mr. White dictates his message with various criticisms of the process, not realizing that every word he says is recorded. Then he hangs up his receiver, and wonders what Linen was up to.

We can pinpoint several features of Mr. Linen's outgoing message that contribute to Mr. White's perplexity. Unlike our second, third and fifth examples, the message does not inform White about the phonographic arrangement, which in 1904 is still unfamiliar enough as a concept not to be apparent from context. Thus, although White complies with the request that he dictate a message, he is left in the dark as to the mechanism his call has triggered and tries in vain to initiate a conversation about it over the line. White recognizes the voice as Linen's, and yet it refers to Linen in the third person. Finally, Linen's voice asserts that "Mr. Linen is out," which seems self-contradictory. White's puzzlement is left unresolved until Linen returns his call with an explanation:

When Linen returns and puts his receiver to his ear to listen to the messages he thinks may await him, he gets all that Mr. White has said, without losing any of the expressive tones. Then, perhaps, he calls Mr. White up and explains to him that it was really Linen's voice he heard, just as his voice or some other voice is poured out by the phonograph. Linen's voice with the message White received was transmitted from a record, a part of the telephonograph apparatus, and intended to answer the same purpose as the sign which reads on the office door, "Back in 15 minutes."<sup>102</sup>

The analogy with the note on the door is only partially valid, since the note's deictic zero-point is defined by its context of encoding, not its context of decoding—that is, the writer will be “back in 15 minutes” relative to the time the message was left on the door, not the time it is read by a visitor. However, more recent critics have drawn on similar analogies with written notes as they have wrestled with Sidelle's “answering machine paradox,” starting with Sidelle himself, who sets forth a parallel with a note posted on a door: “I'm not here now. (Leave the package).”<sup>103</sup> Evidently it is still heuristically useful to liken oral answering machine messages to written messages, for which more firmly established interpretive conventions exist. But Sidelle's analogy is meant to help explain why “I'm not here now” makes sense to both speaker and caller as an answering machine message today, whereas according to the 1904 article quoted above it was then needed to disambiguate a message that the caller had, within an admittedly hypothetical situation, *failed* to understand. Mr. White must be told to treat Mr. Linen's oral message as equivalent to a certain kind of written note before he can comprehend it. Meanwhile, the act of leaving a message in this way seemed so different from ordinary telephoning as to invite the coinage of a new word. “What is the synonym for telephone [as a verb],” wondered the *St. James Gazette*, “when one speaks over the instrument to which a phonograph is attached?”<sup>104</sup>

The outgoing telephone answering machine message is only one example of a larger theme in early phonography, namely its application to utterances that were relevant to narrowly-defined contexts of eduction but not to their contexts of phonogenization—deferred utterances, to use Sidelle's term, although he did not mean it to encompass the inversion of the first person. True, phonogenization necessarily takes the form of “speaking” or “performing” and imposes its actual time base on eduction events, unlike the leisurely processes of writing a letter or pinning the barrel of a musical box, in which the rate of writing or pinning has no bearing on the rate of subsequent reading or playing. However, the operators who originally spoke such messages as “the wire is busy, please call off” did not mean that the wire was busy then, while they were speaking, but that it would be busy whenever they educed the resulting phonograms. Although the sounds were later “reproduced,” their social significance then lay not in the “reproduction” of prior events but in the enactment of new ones. Phonogenic speakers therefore had to

learn to adapt their use of language to yield desired effects at the point of education, just as phonogenic performers had to be specially “posed” around recording horns and to learn how to move and modulate their voices in unfamiliar ways.

### “My Mother Was a Phonograph”

The tinfoil-era gimmick of addressing the phonograph by name in the second person (e.g., “How do you do, Mister Phonograph?”) continued into the first years of the wax cylinder. During an exhibition in Europe in the fall of 1889, for instance, A. T. E. Wangemann phonogenized the following words: “Mr. Phonograph, this is the first time you have the honor of being spoken to by the Czar of Russia. Mr. Edison will be very much gratified. Three cheers for the Czar. Now a ‘tiger!’”<sup>105</sup> Again, it was reported that during the Electrical Club exhibition of May 12, 1888, “Col. Robert G. Ingersoll said to a phonograph in the parlor: ‘You are the most ingenious thing that was ever worked out of the human brain,’ and the compliment came back with the clearness of a bell echo.”<sup>106</sup> Robert Ganthony parodied such practices in a burlesque on the phonograph exhibition he authored about this same time:

A little imitation of laughing and crying may perhaps amuse you more. (*Into egg-cup*) Can you—(*to audience*) of course it can’t—I’m only asking it that to make a kind of conversation of it and get you interested. (*Into cup*) Can you laugh, Mr. Funnygraph? Ha! ha! ha! Can you cry, Mr. Funnygraph? Oh! oh! oh! (*Phonograph repeats.*)<sup>107</sup>

Ganthony’s mock exhibitor admits that he is simply trying to “make a kind of conversation of it and get you interested,” implying that he feels it will be amusing for his audience to observe him conversing with a phonograph and then (to borrow a phrase from the tinfoil era) to hear it “go into a conversation with itself” during education. However, the circumstances of phonography were changing. Cold education was in the process of superseding retroeducation as an exhibition format, decreasing the likelihood that exhibitors would end up talking into phonographs as part of the “show.” The more the recording event receded from the public eye and ear, the less cause there was for phonogenic speakers to relativize their utterances to it by addressing the phonograph in the second person.

By the same token, the isolation of recording and education events from each other made it easier to foster the illusion that a phonograph was speaking in the first person on its own behalf. The ordinary utterance of a phrase such as “I am the astounding Edison phonograph, I am!” could now occur routinely behind the scenes, so that audiences would first hear the words when they came from the machine. The best known nineteenth-century example of a first-person phonographic utterance, which actually predates Edison’s wax cylinder phonograph, displays even more phonogenic adaptation than has generally been realized. On October 23, 1881, Alexander Graham Bell and his associates deposited some specimens of their recent work at the Smithsonian Institution in a sealed container as proof of their results. The enclosed paperwork included a transcription of one phonogram:

The following words and sounds are recorded upon the cylinder of the enclosed Graphophone: T-r-r – T-r-r -. There are more things in heaven and earth Horatio, than are dreamed of in our philosophy – T-r-r – **I am a Graphophone and my mother was a Phonograph.**<sup>108</sup>

The mysterious “T-r-r” was given in other transcriptions of the same phonogram as “G-r-r” and “T-r-a,”<sup>109</sup> but whatever the original may have been, the goal was probably to indicate “trilled r’s,” which featured prominently in the group’s other tests of the period.<sup>110</sup> The closing line requires a little more explanation. Like many of their contemporaries, Bell and his associates recognized *phonograph* as referring generically to sound-recording instruments,<sup>111</sup> feeling that some other word was needed for the instrument that educated sound from the phonogram. In the tinfoil era, Edison’s own choice of *phonet* had vied for favor with such quirky alternatives as *phonomime*, *palingenophone*, and *phonographthephem*.<sup>112</sup> Bell and his associates instead chose *graphophone* as their name for phonogram-educing instruments in general, whether their own or Edison’s.<sup>113</sup> In this light, the closing words of the phonogram deposited at the Smithsonian—“I am a Graphophone and my mother was a Phonograph”—can be understood as a claim that the recording instrument was the “mother” of the educing instrument, i.e., the metaphorically ancestral origin of its sounds. Not only was this utterance phrased in the first person to make the machine appear to be speaking on its own behalf later on, but the machine itself was identified as a “graphophone,” an educing instrument, whereas at the time of recording, when the words were originally spoken, it had been a “phonograph,” a recording instrument. Since Edison had never called any of



his machines “graphophones,” this term was eventually adopted as a contrastive name for the Volta associates’ instruments, regardless of whether they were recording or educating, while Edison’s were called “phonographs.” As a result of this later shift in meaning, it was assumed when the box at the Smithsonian was finally unsealed in 1937 that the quip about the graphophone’s “mother” being a phonograph had been intended as “an acknowledgment on Bell’s part of Edison’s early work in voice-recording.”<sup>114</sup> To the contrary, it can better be understood as a clever reflexive commentary on the relationship between the recording of words and the education of phonograms.

The new phonographic media of the late 1880s offered an opportunity for speakers to compose much longer utterances on this model than had been possible in the tinfoil era. When George Gouraud educated a number of phonograms recorded in the United States for an audience of London press representatives on August 14, 1888, he opened the event with a phonogram he himself had just phonogenized for the purpose, taking the part of the machine and delegating to it his own role as Edison’s representative in England:

THE PHONOGRAM’S GREETING TO THE LONDON PRESS.

Gentlemen,—In the name of Edison, to whose rare genius, incomparable patience, and indefatigable industry I owe my being, I greet you. I thank you for the honor you do me by your presence here today. My only regret is that my great master is not here to meet you in the flesh, as he is in the voice. But in his absence I should be failing in my duty, as well as in my pleasure, did I not take this, my first opportunity, to thank you and all the press of the great city of London, both present and absent, for the generous and flattering reception with which my coming to the mother country has been heralded by you to the world.<sup>115</sup>

Only the part of the recorded speech quoted above appeared in the press during 1888. However, the cylinder itself survives at Edison National Historic Site, revealing an additional segment in which Gouraud switches out of the first person, perhaps reflecting his difficulty in sustaining the unfamiliar deictic configuration he had invoked for more than a few sentences:

This is the model used by Edison  
in making nearly all his experiments  
in perfecting the phonograph  
and on which he has worked six days and three nights a week  
for the past two months  
and personally promised to the speaker [“steekwer”?] to send it over here for this occasion.

These words are followed by a pause, a cough, and then a segment that is wholly unintelligible (to me).<sup>116</sup> It is impossible to know for sure why the whole phonogram

was not transcribed for the press, but Gouraud probably supplied the transcript himself, and he may have been self-conscious about his inconsistency in footing midway through.

The prerecorded first-person introductory speech had soon evolved into a popular vehicle for describing the merits of the new technology to potential customers or explaining how it worked to exhibition audiences in lieu of all or part of a live “talk.” Known examples varied somewhat in their discursive strategies. An article of late 1888 described the typical party at which the socialites of Washington, D. C. gathered “to meet Mr. Graphophone” as opening in this way:

An expert operator is on hand to present Mr. Graphophone to the guests, and bring out his strong points. But that worthy is generally allowed to introduce himself in a harsh voice, somewhat after the following manner:

“How are you? (whir). How are you, ladies? (irr), I hope I (snapp) see you well this evening (pop-pop-pop). Let me introduce myself (whirr). I’m um-m’raphophone, (pop), John G. Grrraphphone, Esq., etc., etc.”<sup>117</sup>

Some of the noises in the transcription (“snapp,” “pop,” and “pop-pop-pop”) would have resulted from scratches or dirt on the cylinder surface, but others (“whir,” “irr,” “whirr”) were apparently supposed to represent the background sound of the machinery as it penetrated to the foreground during pauses in speaking. The placement of two of these pauses suggests that their purpose was to leave time for listeners to respond in a conventional way to the greeting formulas “How are you?” and “How are you, ladies?” fostering a sense of interaction, as well as implying that the machine was sensible of its surroundings (“I hope I *see* you well this evening”). The phonograph promoter Erastus Benson educed another first-person phonogram for a reporter in Omaha, Nebraska, in January 1889, inviting him to “hear what the phonograph has to say in favor of itself”:

I am the wonder of the century, designed for the use and happiness of mankind. I can do what man cannot—can repeat word for word the speech of the statesman and the sermon of the theologian. I can sing with Patti or Neilson and reproduce the harmony of a hundred voices. The notes of the instrument touched by the hand of the master are heard from my lips, the message from the friend across the sea, and I can also repeat, long after the voice is hushed and the form of clay turned to dust, the last dying words of the dead. By my efforts can the prattle of your children be taken and preserved by them until their second childhood. I can act as your office boy and answer your telephone when you go out. Good by. Call and see me again.<sup>118</sup>

Benson’s phonogram was closer in style to Gouraud’s; this time there was no effort to simulate social interaction until, arguably, the parting formula in the closing lines. In 1891, Gianni Bettini demonstrated a new instrument of his own invention with the test phrase “My name is Micro-Graphophone, and my business is to record and reproduce the

human voice in its different sounds,”<sup>119</sup> and an exhibitor in Massachusetts had a phonograph give “a very interesting account of its history and construction.... It tells very plainly that it was invented by Thomas A. Edison, sometimes known as the Wizard of Menlo Park, in 1877.”<sup>120</sup> A similar approach was also used to make phonographs contest Edison’s status as “their” inventor, as in a speech phonogenized for Columbia by J. J. Fisher and educed during a demonstration of the Graphophone Grand at the Waldorf-Astoria in late 1898:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

As I entered this hall I overheard a conversation in relation to my origin, and as that is a point on which I am rather sensitive I ask your indulgence for a few explanatory remarks. A gentleman spoke of me as the latest invention of Edison. That is a mistake. In 1877 Mr. Edison did attempt to reduce to practice certain ideas in relation to recording and reproducing sounds, but that old tin-foil Phonograph was a mere toy of no practical value and was very soon dropped by himself, as well as by the public.

Apart from the polemical bent of this speech, it is notable for its reference to comments the machine has allegedly “overheard” from the audience, framing its statement about Edison and the tinfoil phonograph as a response to them. The machine goes on to describe the work of Bell and Tainter as the decisive step in “its” personal history:

In me, ladies and gentlemen, as I said at the beginning, the discovery of Bell and Taintor [sic] has received its highest development, and if you will permit me to say so, the results I give you approach so near to perfection that I do not expect to be surpassed very soon. The credit for the original discovery belongs to Bell and Taintor. The credit for carrying that discovery to its ultimate development in me is due to Mr. Thomas H. Macdonald, who stands now by my side.

The plan must have been for Macdonald to be standing next to the machine while this passage was being educed.<sup>121</sup> It is not always clear whether or not given phonograms in which the phonograph “described itself” used the first person. In Chicago, for instance, one of the phonograms kept in stock by the local phonograph agency as of late 1890 was said simply to be “a short lecture on the phonograph which modestly refers to the reasonable rental which the instrument commands,”<sup>122</sup> and a private concert at the start of 1898 reportedly opened with “an introductory speech by the phonograph, as to how it was called upon to sing and speak before large audiences, sometimes under embarrassing circumstances, yet never hesitated to do its best to entertain.”<sup>123</sup> However, every verbatim text of this kind I have found, save one, has been worded in the first person. The one counterexample was reported in April 1889 from Nashville, Tennessee, and is distinctive for having been produced as a retroductive demonstration rather than for cold education:

Mr. [W. T.] Ross spoke into its [the phonograph's] ear the following, which it repeated in the ear of the reporter exactly as spoken, even to the slight hesitation in speech, and the false pronunciation of a word or two.

“Man is an inveterate talker. He will even talk in his sleep, and it is proper, I think, to introduce this little machine to the citizens of Nashville as Mr. Phonograph. It is the invention of Thomas A. Edison. The machine, as you now see it, embraces all improvements up to this date, and the most marvelous feature is its simplicity. A child ten years old can operate it.... [*Then, after some more typical promotional talk:*]

“The phonograph rents for \$40 a year, and is coming into general use. Companies have been formed in every state in the union, Australia, South America, Canada and all Europe. All machines are made uniform and of the same size, and any cylinder produced on one can be reproduced on another wherever it is found. Come again. Ring off.”<sup>124</sup>

“I” in this speech clearly refers to the exhibitor, W. T. Ross, and “you” to the customer, despite a passing allusion to the practice of calling the machine “Mr. Phonograph.” Ross does invoke one speech convention associated with a sound medium, but it is the wrong one: “ring off,” borrowed from telephony. Just as in the case of the outgoing telephone answering machine message, it was not immediately clear how speakers should orient themselves towards the act of phonogenizing a sales pitch about the phonograph for the phonograph to educe. For purposes of cold education, however, most exhibitors gravitated towards the conventions of the speaking automaton, taking the “I am the astounding Edison phonograph, I am!” approach, while alternative approaches risked drawing criticism as “the phonograph telling itself how it operates.”<sup>125</sup>

Over the first few years of the twentieth century, sellers of Edison phonographs began to request that the National Phonograph Company issue a mass-duplicated phonogram made especially to allow the phonograph to “introduce itself” at the start of exhibitions. One salesperson who found that free Friday night concerts were drawing large crowds to his store wrote to the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* in June 1903: “An idea struck me that if I had a Moulded Record (Standard size), telling about the different styles [of] Phonographs and Records all through, the Record would be something new and would attract the attention of hearers so that they would buy. I am willing to pay a fair price for such a Record.”<sup>126</sup> The same week, another salesperson reported on the success he had achieved with a public phonograph entertainment, observed that the phonograph did a good job of advertising itself if given the floor, and suggested: “Would it not be a nice idea to have a Record made especially for the opening of such an entertainment?”<sup>127</sup> Letters continued to come in on the subject, including one from a

dealer in Connecticut which appeared in the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* for October 1904:

While exhibiting at the —— county fair two weeks ago I felt the need of a good talking record that would dilate upon the merits of your Phonographs and Records. While a crowd would soon disperse if I talked to them personally, it seemed as though a good loud argumentative Record would hold their attention because of the very novelty of being addressed in this manner. Why do you not get out something of this kind?

This time the company apologized for its slow response by explaining that it had been focusing on more urgent demands of the business and that “there has been a wide difference of opinion among Dealers as to what matter should be given on a Record of this kind.” Suggestions were now invited from them “as to what such a Record should say to a crowd of listeners.”<sup>128</sup> One, writing in time for the next issue, replied that dealers ought to follow the example he had set at a recent county fair in Ohio and make their own:

I...provided myself with a good recorder and several blanks, and said the things to the machine which I wished to say to the people, and let it repeat it to them, and I did not fail to have a large crowd about me at all times. I even heard some of them say: “Oh, that was already made on the record,” but I took that idea out of their heads by inviting them to tell me what to say. I think this method better than to use a regular stock Record for the purpose, as you will be able to secure more interest in that way and incidentally do a little private advertising that would be impossible with a stock Record.

The editor agreed. Suggestions as to appropriate advertising records had “shown the widest variance,” and there was no need to settle on a single, uniform phonogram anyway: “any Dealer who finds the need of an advertising Record can easily make one himself and have it make an announcement unlike that of anyone else.”<sup>129</sup> This practice also had the added benefit of drawing attention to the buyer’s ability to record homemade phonograms. In the fall of 1905, a dealer in South McAlisterville, Indian Territory, submitted a transcript of an advertising phonogram used during nightly free concerts which had “induced many people to buy, who had not before considered the Phonograph as of any special utility”:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:—I, the Phonograph, child of the brain of the great wizard, Thomas A. Edison, of Menlo Park, desire to call your attention to one great blessing that I can confer upon you all if you will take me to your homes.

I can record the beloved voices of your parents, your children, your lover or sweetheart; and when perhaps they are thousands of miles away—or gone forever—I can bring them back to your fireside by reproducing their voices in the same old beloved tones and warm your hearts anew with sweet recollections.... [*Then, after a lengthy sales pitch:*]

Now, hoping that you will “Keep a Little Cosey Corner in Your Heart for Me,” I remain

Yours faithfully and clearly,

THE EDISON PHONOGRAPH.

The phonogram included an introduction “showing who made it, and where and when made,” drawing attention to its homemade status, and closed with the spoken rendition of a written letter-closing formula, subtly alluding to the attractions of phonographic correspondence. Finally, “Keep a Little Cosey Corner in Your Heart for Me,” the title lyric of a popular song of the day, was sung rather than spoken, which “made a great sensation every night.”<sup>130</sup> It is impossible to know how many dealers recorded similar phonograms for their own use, but surviving specimens fit the same general pattern as the descriptions found in the *Edison Phonograph Monthly*. A seller who recently auctioned one on eBay wrote that the speaker, in explaining how to work the machine, “talks like he is the phono, saying things like ‘Take off my lid and put the record on my mandrel’ and ‘You would really enjoy me if you took me home with you.’” This same phonogram also reportedly concludes with “a little demonstration music.”<sup>131</sup> Although moulded mass-duplication had come to dominate the recording industry by now, the first-person advertising cylinder remained an individually recorded local product through 1905, allowing dealers to customize their prerecorded sales pitches and use the results to stir up interest in home recording.

Home recording was not an option for the gramophone, however, and Emile Berliner had long since offered discs for sale containing first-person speeches and songs in which his machine enumerated its own selling points. The first known example, MY NAME IS THE GRAMOPHONE, had appeared as a song on a five-inch disc made for the British market, dating to about 1890 and reminiscent of the tinfoil-era song, “My Name is Mister Phonograph”:

My name is the Gramophone, I’ve no teeth or tongue,  
 If you ask me my age, I’m still very young;  
 Yet I sing any song that ever was sung,  
 And speak every language under the sun....<sup>132</sup>

Once Berliner had begun serious commercial production of seven-inch gramophone discs in the United States, this song was superseded by a spoken selection recorded under catalog number 617, ON THE GRAMOPHONE:

Friends,  
 allow me to introduce myself.  
 I am the gramophone.  
 I can talk longer, talk louder, and talk

upon more different subjects  
 than any other instrument that has ever been invented.  
 Now, friends,  
 whatever you talk into me I talk back to you.  
 Whatever you talk here on these plates  
 it stays there for years and years.  
 You can talk into me and talk a letter  
 and send it off to your mother, your father, or your sweetheart,  
 and they can hear your own beloved voice  
 many miles away.

After this point, the speaker begins referring to the gramophone as “it,”<sup>133</sup> again probably reflecting difficulty in sustaining the unfamiliar deictic configuration. An alternative ON THE GRAMOPHONE (alias WHAT IS A GRAMOPHONE?) was offered under catalog number 637 in the form of rhymed couplets, but with similar content:

I am known far and wide as the “Berliner Gramophone,”  
 And as a talking machine, I am standing quite alone.  
 I talk all kinds of talk, about both the old and new,  
 And whatever you talk into me I can talk back to you....<sup>134</sup>

After 1896 there seems to have been a protracted lull in the recording of new material of this kind for the gramophone. In 1905, however, the Victor Talking Machine Company sent each of its dealers a promotional double-faced disc, both sides of which had been phonogenized by Len Spencer in the phonographic first person. The TALKS TO JUVENILE CUSTOMERS side was designed to ask boys “Why don’t you coax your father to buy me?” and inform girls “You can’t see me? Well, I can see you!” while the other side, HINTS TO VICTOR SALESMEN, told dealers: “I believe I can sell myself better than you can sell me.”<sup>135</sup>

At the beginning of 1906, Edison’s National Phonograph Company finally issued a mass-duplicated “advertising Record,” sent free to dealers along with their January orders “with the express understanding that it shall not be sold or given away to the public.” In fact, the official line was that the company was only “loaning” these cylinders to dealers, not making a gift of them. The text, again phonogenized by Len Spencer, was published in the *Edison Phonograph Monthly*:

I am the Edison Phonograph, created by the great Wizard of the new world to delight those who would have melody or be amused. I can sing you tender songs of love. I can give you merry tales and joyous laughter. I can transport you to the realms of music. I can cause you to join in the rhythmic dance. I can lull the babe to sweet repose, or waken in the aged heart soft memories of youthful days....  
 [Then, after more promotional talk:]

The name of my famous master is on my body and tells you that I am a genuine Edison Phonograph.

The more you become acquainted with me the better you will like me. Ask the Dealer.<sup>136</sup>

Two details stand out: in referring to the trademark decal on its cabinet, the phonograph is made to say “the name of my famous master is on my *body*,” an unusual anthropomorphic gesture; and the talk concludes with an appeal to “ask the Dealer” for more information on the assumption that the phonogram would be educed only in places where an Edison dealer would be ready on hand to field inquiries. This phonogram was so popular, according to the *Monthly*, that “many Dealers report having been offered fancy prices if they would sell the one they had,” and the company gave some thought to offering a version of the talk commercially: “we may make it over, eliminating the last sentence ‘Ask the Dealer,’ give it a number and title and put it into the regular catalogue as a talking Record.”<sup>137</sup> They did not, with the result that the original ADVERTISING RECORD is highly coveted as a collector’s item today. Excerpts from it often appear in documentaries about sound recording, and it is now probably one of the best-known phonograms of its period. What is less often appreciated is that it was one of many first-person promotional talks designed for use during phonograph exhibitions, the culmination of a widespread tradition dating back to the late 1880s by which the phonograph had been made to “promote itself.” In the 1910s, a demonstration disc for the American branch of Pathé relocated the first person from phonograph to phonogram: “I am a Pathé record, guaranteed to play 1000 times—and, with care, I will live to speak to your grandchildren when they are as old as you are.”<sup>138</sup> Even so, the principle was the same: the object being described was made to speak in the first person on its own behalf.

In these cases, phonographs and phonograms were assigned a first-person subjectivity that is tempting to label as anthropomorphism but may often reflect real puzzlement over the deictic configuration appropriate to such novel situations. When a phonograph advertised itself in the third person, for instance, listeners sometimes experienced cognitive dissonance, perceiving it as “telling itself how it operates”; consequently, “I am the Edison phonograph” was not necessarily just a clever play at personification but also a choice of what appeared to be the less confusing of two problematic alternatives. Again, “this is a phonographic receiver speaking” was a reasonable way to identify a telephone answering machine’s eduction of prerecorded speech, and once this deictic configuration had been chosen it had to be maintained for



consistency—“Kindly give me your message and I will repeat it to him on his return”—even if the speaker did not otherwise intend to create an illusion of sentience. These scenarios all involved putting the spoken word to very unconventional uses, so it is hardly surprising that phonogenic speakers would have experimented with all the familiar methods of anchoring spoken language to its contexts of utterance, including the use of the first person, in their effort to find solutions that worked.

The use of the first person in sound media to refer to the *originary speaker* has conventionally been more circumscribed than its use to refer to the instrument itself, at least during the initial stages of an encounter during which participants orient themselves towards one another. In telephony, we tend to find demonstrative pronouns in place of the personal pronouns “I” and “you,” as in the following report of a pair of long-distance telephone conversation openings from 1895:

Pretty soon he heard a feminine voice at the other end of the line call, “Hello!”  
“Hello! Who is **that**?” answered Gaston. “Who? Oh, Miss Bishop? Well, **this** is Mr. Gaston, Miss Bishop.” [And, later:]  
“Hello! Is **that** you, Mr. Gaston? **This** is Miss Bishop.”<sup>139</sup>

Although speakers typically proceeded to the use of the first and second person after the initial greeting, they avoided opening with “*I am X*,” “*who are you*,” “*are you X*,” and other such phrases. In an essay on the formula “This is X,” Joachim Knuf attributes the choice of “this” over “I” in this context partly to the fact that it “refers not only to a social identity, but also to a voice on the telephone, to an instrument,” to a voice that “is only a token of the individual.”<sup>140</sup> If Knuf is correct, the development of this convention in early telephony might reflect an effort to come to terms with the still-unfamiliar split between self and voice, an expedient by which mediated speech (“this”) could be linked back to its ultimate origin (“I”); or it could have been understood as identifying the speaker (or the speaker’s voice) with the instrument he or she was using to speak, a metonymy that was occasionally made explicit: “Hello, Central—yes, this is A357 the PRESCOTT MUSIC CO.’s telephone.”<sup>141</sup> As we saw earlier in this chapter, the telephonic query “who are you” was perceived as objectionably blunt; the use of the second person in this context, as opposed to a demonstrative pronoun, was considered bad form.<sup>142</sup> The cognitive shift of telephony from a “call” across a distance to a social “call” further encouraged an identification of the addressee not with “that” (something

*there*, at the other end of the line) but with “this” (something *here*). Both alternatives can be found in fictional telephone dialogs of the late nineteenth century, but I already detect an association of “this” with a greater and “that” with a lesser degree of telephonic competence in this fictional exchange from 1893:

He—Hullo.  
She—Hullo.  
He—Is **that** you, Miss Barker?  
She—Yes. I’m me. Who is **this**?  
He—Shall you be at home this evening?  
She—That depends on who you are. Who are you?  
He—Don’t you recognize my voice?  
She—I don’t know. It sounds like Charlie Higgins’ voice. Are you Charlie Higgins?<sup>143</sup>

By the early twentieth century, “this” had superseded “that” as the conventional pronoun for the addressee in the initial stages of a telephone conversation, such that the same pronoun could now refer alternately to both speaker *and* addressee:

“Is **this** the Weatherholt Piano Club Dept.? **This** is \_\_\_\_\_.”<sup>144</sup>

“Hello, hello! who is **this**, please?” the man at the phone impatiently hurled at the mouthpiece.  
“**This** is— Whom did you want?” came back a feminine voice...[*and, after some amusing miscommunication:*]  
“**This** is George, your husband!”<sup>145</sup>

Insofar as cyberspace has been defined as “the place you are when you are on the telephone,”<sup>146</sup> the substitution of “this” for “that” in referring to the addressee of a telephonic utterance might well index an early manifestation of that concept, tacitly acknowledging the existence of a shared “here,” a virtual conversational space.<sup>147</sup> Alternatively, Knuf explains the choice of “this” in terms of an identification of the addressee with the medium, treating it as a reference to the voice educed from the receiver (here, where I’m listening) and metonymically to the speaker at the other end of the line, who would otherwise be “that.”<sup>148</sup> Whichever explanation we accept (and the two are not, I believe, mutually exclusive), the evaluation of “this” as referring to speaker or addressee now had to rely purely on context, inviting playful misinterpretations:

Excitable party (at telephone)—Hello! Who is this? Who is this, I say?  
Man at Other End—Haven’t got time to guess riddles. Tell me yourself who you are.<sup>149</sup>

Perhaps because “this” could be identified with either the speaker or the addressee, optional conventions arose for disambiguating it:

Hello, lieutenant? Yes. This is John Cavendish of the Waldron apartments **speaking**.<sup>150</sup>

Hello—is this the office **calling**? This is Tessie Thompson—<sup>151</sup>

Hello, mayor, how are you today? This is ..... **speaking**.<sup>152</sup>

When critics imagined interposing an answering machine into the chain of communication, they had to decide not only on an underlying deictic configuration, but also between “I” and “this” for introducing the first person, and further between “this is X” and “this is X speaking,” as some of our earlier examples show:

I am not at home; **my** phonograph will take the communication.

Hello, Mr. Brown! **This** is Mr. Smith. **I**’m going out of town overnight....

Mr. Jones is not in. **This** is a phonographic receiver **speaking**. Kindly give **me** your message....

Non-telephonic phonography has occasionally taken the “This is X” approach as well—in the 1910s and 1920s, Thomas Edison prefaced some phonograms of his voice with “This is Edison speaking” and “This is Thomas A. Edison speaking.”<sup>153</sup>

The distinction here between “I am X” and “This is X” does not correspond to that between inverted and uninverted deixis from the perspective of the originary speaker, since otherwise we would not expect to find “This is a phonographic receiver speaking.” However, “This is X” does always seem to introduce utterances in which the first-person referent is to be identified by the listener not with the instrument educating the voice, but with someone or something speaking through that instrument—thus, Edison speaks through the phonograph, but the phonograph itself does not speak; the live interlocutor or the answering machine speaks over the line and through the addressee’s telephone, but the telephone is not speaking. To clarify the distinction, we might represent the deictic configuration of “Mr. Jones is not in. This is a phonograph receiver speaking. Kindly give me your message” as follows, this time distinguishing between the education of the phonogram and the education of words from the receiving telephone:

|       | <b>Recording Event</b> | <b>Phonographic Education</b> | <b>Telephonic Education</b> |
|-------|------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| “I”   | originary speaker      | <i>answering machine</i>      | telephone receiver          |
| “you” | answering machine      | telephone transmitter         | <i>caller(s)</i>            |
| “now” | time of recording      | <i>time of education</i>      |                             |

With a few exceptions, “I am X” tends instead to mark cases in which the listener *is* to identify the first person with the instrument from which he or she actually hears the voice

being educed (in the above case, that would be “I am your telephone,” a rare formulation I have found used only in print advertisements for telephone companies).<sup>154</sup> Insofar as “I am the Edison phonograph” and its variants exploited an impulse people initially felt to associate the “reproduced” voice with its immediate point of origin, I suggest that “This is X” in early telephony can be understood in turn as a convention for counteracting that impulse, prompting the listener to treat the educing instrument not as a speaking automaton but as a medium for the voice of someone or something else.

There do not appear to have been any standard speech conventions for personal spoken messages sent via phonogram through the mail during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, probably because the practice itself was never common enough for norms to develop. Rather, speakers seem in this case to have drawn their own analogies between phonography and more familiar forms of communication on an individual basis. The varied approaches we find illustrated in the specimens available for listening today suggest that the main dilemma speakers faced was whether the phonogenization of a “spoken letter” ought to be more like talking on the telephone, because of its mediated oral character, or more like writing a letter, because of its relative permanence and tangibility. Some examples borrow conventions from written correspondence as though the speaker were reading a letter aloud as it appeared on the page with its address, date, salutation, signature, and other familiar framing devices:

Little Menlo,  
October the—fifth, eighteen hundred and eighty eight.  
Phonogram—Gouraud to Edison.  
Dear Edison, I propose....<sup>155</sup>

This kind of opening invokes the deictic configuration associated with the written letter, in which, for instance, “I” conventionally refers to the writer, not the piece of paper (or the phonograph); and “now” and “here” to the context of writing (or phonogenization), not the context of receipt (or eduction). On the other hand, some specimens favor telephone-like speech conventions such as “hello.” One such example, a transcription of which has been published by Bert Pasley, begins with a “young male voice” reciting the date, “June 1st, 1902,” and then proceeding to address his uncle, cousin, and aunt in turn: “Hello, Uncle Sammy,” “Hello, Walter,” and “Aunt Rosie,” with a short message for

each, closing with “Goodbye Uncle Sammy, Aunt Rosie, and goodbye Cousin Walter.”

The message to Uncle Sammy runs as follows:

Can you guess who is talking? I can. I think it is Myrtle. How are you this morning? Have you got your Graphophone yet? If you have, put this on and let it talk. After you have heard it, let the people in Clinton hear it too. Then, if you can, send it back or not, as you like.

Next comes a “female voice with strong Southern accent,” which Pasley speculates must be the mother of the family. She begins: “Hello. Hello, Aunt Ruth darling. Hello, Walter. Do you know who this is talking? If you can guess, why I’ll send you something pretty. Now think a minute and see if you can guess. [*Pause.*] Now you’ve had time to guess.” She reveals that she has sent Walter a book (but not who she is), and then she closes with: “Goodbye now. Papa says I don’t have time to talk anymore”; apparently “Papa” has cut her off with a gesture or in some other inaudible way, since his voice is not heard. This cylinder was found in California in a box furnished by Bacigalupi, Edison’s leading dealer in that state, while references in it to Clinton and St. Louis imply that the addressees lived in Clinton, Missouri.<sup>156</sup> Some of its features have parallels in phonographic “letters” of the 1910s, which are marginally easier to find than those from the 1890s and 1900s. Then, too, speakers sometimes challenged listeners to identify them by voice:

We are each going to say Merry Christmas to you.  
See if you can guess who it is.  
Write the names down in order,  
so that we can see if you guessed right.<sup>157</sup>

These challenges may have been inspired by descriptions of voice-guessing games in the promotional literature about “phonograph parties,”<sup>158</sup> but they presumably also reflect a real fascination on the part of participants with the recognizability of their own recorded voices. Another interesting detail of the 1902 “letter” lies in the boy’s instructions to Uncle Sammy: “Have you got your Graphophone yet? If you have, put this on and let it talk.” For Uncle Sammy to hear these instructions about how to play the cylinder, he would already need to have begun playing it—thus, if the message was necessary he would not receive it, and if he did receive it, then it would be unnecessary. We encounter the same paradox again in a phonogram addressed by Albanus Harris Mendenhall of Pomeroy, Washington to his friend Guy Willebrand in nearby Clarkston, recorded on a black wax cylinder blank of a type introduced in 1912:

Friend Guy,  
I am making you a record,  
but after I get it made and all done  
I don't very well like to send it for fear it won't be all right and right up to snuff.  
However, if you will promise not to go around the country  
and try to give shows and exhibitions with it,  
and in that way go broke and lose all your money,  
I will send it anyway.  
And if you have no machine of your own,  
you can take this over to Mister Löffler's,  
and he will kindly play it on *his* phonograph until such time as you get one yourself.<sup>159</sup>

If Willebrand has not already found some way to educe Mendenhall's message, then, of course, these instructions will not do him any good. We know that contemporary critics were aware of this amusing paradox, since an equivalent blunder had formed the basis of a comic anecdote back in 1898:

A gentleman having heard that messages are frequently sent on wax cylinders to be reproduced by recipient on a Graphophone thought he would surprise his wife in St. Louis by a message of this kind. He dictated a fine letter, and he then remembered that he had left his Graphophone at his club after a recent exhibition and added this dictation to the cylinders: "If you cannot find the Graphophone on which to reproduce this look under the billiard table: if it is not there send John to the club, perhaps I left it there, and he will bring it home for your use."

Mr. B is still wondering why Mrs. B does not reply to the contents of that message on the wax cylinder.<sup>160</sup>

Other parts of Pasley's 1902 "phonographic letter" are modeled after forms of interaction that the medium does not technically permit, as for example: "Do you know who this is talking? If you can guess, why I'll send you something pretty. Now think a minute and see if you can guess. [*Pause*] Now you've had time to guess." The stipulation that the listener "guess" has no real bearing on the outcome, since the gift will already have been sent regardless of what happens during the pause in eduction. A similar situation arises when Mendenhall states he will not send the cylinder he is making unless Willebrand promises not to "go around the country giving shows and exhibitions with it," since by the time Willebrand learns what is being asked of him, he will already have the cylinder whether he agrees to the precondition or not. The logical lapses in these two surviving "letters" may represent unintentional slips on the part of speakers who are struggling to sustain an appropriate phonogenic frame and not quite succeeding. However, they need not have been mistakes. In both cases, the speakers approach the phonograph in a playful spirit, relishing the opportunities for humor it affords them. When the boy who speaks first in the 1902 "letter" challenges his uncle to guess who he is, he volunteers that *he*

thinks he is Myrtle—probably the name of another relative, but obviously not the right answer when his voice is recognizably male, exposing this as a transparent and mischievous effort to mislead the listener into guessing wrong. Mendenhall’s fear that Willebrand might bankrupt himself using his “letter” as a basis for phonograph exhibitions is, one assumes, not to be taken seriously in its literal sense, although we might interpret it as a playful disclaimer of performance in which Mendenhall is really asking Willebrand not to judge his homemade phonogram by commercial standards. The impression we get from these “letters” is ultimately one not of naïveté about the phonogenic frame but of an eagerness to exploit its possibilities and contradictions as a source of humor and rhetorical effect. On these grounds, we might suppose that the speakers, far from being ignorant of the limitations of phonography, were consciously trying to exceed them—for instance, to make the recording and education events feel more like a two-way conversation through simulated turn-taking. “Now think a minute and see if you can guess [*Pause*],” at least, does not seem to have been a “mistake.” If this is so, then the speakers we hear in these examples would not have been fumbling their way through the use of an unfamiliar new medium but experimenting creatively with it, commenting wittily upon it, even burlesquing it. The problem is that it can be hard to tell the difference. When the boy in the 1902 “letter” asks Uncle Sammy how he is “this morning,” when he can have no way of knowing what time of day it will be when Uncle Sammy listens to the message, it seems like an unintentional slip—but over a hundred years after the fact we can do little more than try to second-guess what his intentions may have been. To complicate matters, it is by no means clear that these “letters” were ever actually sent. The example from 1902 is addressed to a group of relatives in Missouri, but it was discovered back in California, the state in which it had been made. Mendenhall’s “letter” to Guy Willebrand turned up on eBay alongside two of Mendenhall’s other home-recorded cylinders, implying that it must have ended up in his possession, not Willebrand’s.<sup>161</sup> The addressees of these “letters” may have returned them to their makers after listening to them, a possibility that the 1902 example explicitly suggests (“if you can, send it back or not, as you like”), but they might also have been retained by their makers as rehearsals or rejected takes—we now have no way of

knowing. Home-mode phonograms are unusually rich in reflexive gestures, but their actual contexts of use can be frustratingly opaque, making analysis difficult.

### **The Spoken Phonogram Announcement**

Less uncertainty surrounds the circumstances under which early commercial phonograms were recorded and educed, so I believe we can draw conclusions about the spoken language found on them more confidently than we can in the case of home-mode phonograms. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the formulaic announcements with which many early commercial phonograms open, presenting such information as the selection title, performer, and manufacturing company. Virtually all commercial cylinders of the 1890s are announced, as are some Berliner gramophone discs and other early brands of disc. Then, midway through the first decade of the twentieth century, the convention of the spoken announcement was suddenly phased out across the industry. The Victor Talking Machine Company had never been very serious about announcing its discs, but it abandoned the practice altogether during 1903.<sup>162</sup> Columbia, which had been more consistent in its announcements all along, dropped them from discs in mid-1904.<sup>163</sup> Most other disc companies quickly followed the lead of Victor and Columbia, the last to use spoken announcements on a regular basis being the minor American Record Company.<sup>164</sup> Cylinders continued to be announced somewhat later than discs, both by Edison's National Phonograph Company, which only terminated the practice at the end of 1908,<sup>165</sup> and by Columbia for vocal (but not instrumental) cylinders until it ceased production in the cylinder format that same year.<sup>166</sup> The abandonment of the spoken announcement was relatively abrupt in the grand scheme of things: a convention that had been generally observed for fifteen years (1888-1903) was universally dropped within the space of five years (1903-1908). At the same time, there had also been a more gradual qualitative development in phonogram announcements over the course of their history, moving from longer, more elaborate formulae to a terser, minimalist approach. There is little consensus as to why any of this happened. Although various hypotheses have been advanced to explain the presence, decline, and disappearance of spoken announcements, none of them does a satisfactory job of accounting for all cases.



First, I should stress that announcing a phonogram was not just a matter of someone casually identifying its contents, but rather an integral part of the phonogenic enactment that entailed serious work and planning. “When the performers are ready,” recordists were advised in 1898, “drop the recording-arm levers, announce the selection in a loud, clear tone of voice and let the performers begin immediately, so that no space is left on the record between the announcement and the selection.”<sup>167</sup> Unless the performer and announcer were the same person, the transition between announcement and performance required that the announcer quickly and quietly switch places in front of the recording horn with the performer who was about to play or sing into it.<sup>168</sup> The timing of this step had to be perfect, since there would be no opportunity for postproduction editing, and this was not always an easy task. One extreme example was reported in connection with Edward Clarence’s efforts to record the Grace Church chimes for the New York Phonograph Company in 1893. To obtain the best results, Clarence had to position his phonographs up in the belfry of the church, eight feet from the chimes, but the keyboard that controlled the chimes was located downstairs. The performer could neither see Clarence starting the phonographs nor hear him reciting the announcements, so some system was needed for her to know when to begin playing.

When the phonographs were in their proper position a messenger informed Miss Thomas, who was seated at the keyboard below. The bells are rung by electricity, and when she received word that he was ready, she touched a key which rang the cue bell and was an announcement that she was about to play. When Mr. Clarence heard the cue bell he pressed a button and an electric current was carried from a number of batteries to the phonographs. After Miss Thomas rang the cue bell she counted very slowly to five. While she was counting, Mr. Clarence shouted the announcement of what was to follow.... When Miss Thomas had finished counting, Mr. Clarence had finished talking, and she began playing.... When she finished she waited exactly two minutes, during which time Mr. Clarence placed new cylinders in the phonographs. When the time had expired, she counted to five again. When the hand of Mr. Clarence’s watch showed that the two minutes had passed, he made another announcement, and another selection was played. By this arrangement there was no delay between the announcement and the playing.<sup>169</sup>

This was clearly an awkward arrangement. A couple years later, when the United States Phonograph Company offered phonograms of the Trinity Church chimes (at \$2.25 each these were the most expensive regular items in the catalog), they issued an apology: “They are made singly, in the church steeple high above the bells, under difficult conditions.... No announcement precedes the ringing, as the circumstances under which the records are taken preclude this.”<sup>170</sup> The industry had finally given up on trying to

announce chime phonograms, but it also felt the need to offer an explanation for this policy to customers, who were clearly expected to notice and care about the omission.

Announcing phonograms of brass bands and other particularly loud subjects was challenging for another reason. The ideal conditions for recording the spoken word were different from those for larger ensembles. Far more phonographs could be used to record a brass band at one time than would pick up the voice of the average speaker satisfactorily, and speech was best recorded through a tube or shorter horn rather than the longer horns recommended for bands.<sup>171</sup> At first, a common solution was to record a separate spoken announcement on each of several phonographs beforehand and then to restart the machines all at once for the main performance. In 1890, the practice of the Columbia Phonograph Company when recording the United States Marine Band was described as follows:

Each phonograph being supplied with a smooth and fresh cylinder of wax, the expert in charge shouts into each horn separately the title of the piece to be played. When he has done this the electric motor is turned on again, the cylinders revolve beneath the recording needles, the band starts up at a signal and the music pours into the big trumpets until each cylinder is as full of sound impressions as it can hold.... The five full cylinders are taken off the instruments and put aside in pasteboard boxes, and five more fresh ones are put on. After the title of the next piece has been shouted into each horn, the band starts up again at the signal and the process is repeated.<sup>172</sup>

Charles Marshall, the early New York recordist, was even more fastidious. When taking Cappa's Seventh Regiment Band on ten different phonographs, he personally made a separate announcement for each one through a speaking tube before switching to recording funnels for the body of the performance. "The various companies who make their announcements through the horns when taking records should profit by this," commented the *Phonogram*.<sup>173</sup> Whether the announcements were shouted individually into horns or spoken individually into speaking-tubes, this was the only situation in which the recording instrument had to be stopped and restarted during the production of commercial phonograms, and it tended to inscribe a distinctive and potentially objectionable "bump" sound where the pause occurred. It also appears to have led to occasional mistakes, as in this complaint from 1892:

We...received two records which are imperfect and would indicate that your inspector did not use proper precaution in setting aside the cylinders for sale. The music commences on the extreme left end of the cylinder, and about a quarter or three eighths of an inch from the end is the announcement, "La Cigale," and the name of the band &c. is made on top of the music.<sup>174</sup>

These were two of Edison's early mechanical duplicate phonograms, and the master from which they were made must have been defective, the cutter having somehow shifted back to the start of the cylinder after the announcement had been recorded. A similar error occurred during the announcement of one of Columbia's early United States Marine Band phonograms:

The following record  
taken for the Columbia Phonograph Company  
of Washington, D. C. entitled  
Yorktown Centennial March,  
as played by the U— [“*bump*” sound; “—nited Sta—” *skipped*]  
—tes Marine Band [*first note played over word “Band”*]<sup>175</sup>

Here the recorder had apparently been backed up over the end of the announcement, drowning out the final word and causing a skip. The practice of recording announcements separately may have increased their clarity, but it also invited technical glitches of this sort. Eventually, cylinder recording companies came to rely on specialists whose voices were strong enough to deliver intelligible announcements to a large number of phonographs all at once,<sup>176</sup> or on the use of megaphones to amplify the announcer's voice to a sufficient volume.<sup>177</sup> In the case of the gramophone, only one master disc was produced from any given phonogenization, but the logistics of the recording situation and the use of diaphragms with different sensitivities for different phonogenic subjects must still have made spoken announcements problematic for certain kinds of material. This is presumably why Berliner and Victor discs are far more likely to be announced when they contain vocal or solo instrumental pieces than they are when they contain the music of louder studio orchestras and brass bands.<sup>178</sup> In general, it would have been easier for recordists and performers not to include announcements on *any* phonograms, but they did include them for a number of years. The spoken announcement was not a convention adopted casually, something that recordists felt “might as well” be included as not; on the contrary, it was a feature in which serious energy and ingenuity had to be invested. The sheer amount of extra effort lavished on announcements during recording sessions is a good clue that something significant must have been at stake. But what was it?

The most common explanation for the spoken announcement is that it allowed listeners to identify the contents of cylinder phonograms at a time when there were usually no visually intelligible markings on the cylinders themselves. Early cylinder

phonograms were often accompanied by written “title slips” or stored in boxes on inscribed pegs, but there was no guarantee that cylinders and their documentation would remain together, and the spoken announcement provided an alternative means of identification as a backup. One writer thus observed in 1893 that announcements enabled the educationist “to make recognition of the cylinder easy if the written title be lost,” and hence to avoid mistakenly educating a phonogram in an inappropriate context:

For instance, suppose the lessee of a phonograph—some rich man on the boulevard—wanted to treat his friends to a “phonograph concert” and desired that they should hear, among other things, some popular solo from a standard opera. And suppose that the record cylinders became mixed; that, instead of the operatic air, the nauseating “Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay” found its way to the machine. Then and in that case the lessee and operator of the phonograph would not have to hear more than “‘Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay’ as sung by Lottie Col——” before he could choke off the abomination and shift the cylinders.<sup>179</sup>

One element of the spoken announcement that supported this use particularly well was the genre designation, which, when included, usually came first:

**Comic song** entitled He’s Got Feathers in His Hat,  
as sung by Mister Dan W. Quinn.<sup>180</sup>

Already by the words “comic song,” an educationist would have been able to recognize that the cylinder in question was not—say—a sacred hymn, and could have stopped the machine before it reached anything potentially offensive, such as a risqué selection title. However, genre designations are far from universal and appear only in a minority of cases.<sup>181</sup>

A corollary of the foregoing argument is that spoken announcements lost their *raison d’être* as soon as phonograms began to bear permanent, visibly legible labels. It is true that Berliner discs of the 1890s, which had title information etched visibly on their surfaces, dispensed with spoken announcements more frequently than did the visually unlabeled cylinders of the same period. It is also true that some correlation exists between the appearance of visibly legible information on cylinders and the abandonment of spoken announcements, although not as much of one as past researchers have implied. Columbia first began inscribing the title and genre of selections on the circumference of its moulded cylinders sometime around late 1903;<sup>182</sup> then, in July 1904, Edison started moulding catalog numbers, titles, and genres in white on the cylinder rim,<sup>183</sup> and Columbia soon reverted to a nearly identical format.<sup>184</sup> Throughout this period, Edison and Columbia continued to have their cylinders announced. About the same time spoken

Edison cylinders finally ceased being announced, however, they did undergo a transition in visual labeling from a format that gave only the selection title and genre, e.g.:

COON SONG. SO LONG, SO LONG. 9618.

to one that also listed the names of the performers, e.g.:

10049 RAINBOW JONES & MURRAY.

This transition has been cited as the reason behind Edison's discontinuation of spoken announcements, which had contained the performers' names all along:

While the artists' names were seldom marked [visually on cylinder rims], their identity could be ascertained from the spoken announcement. By 1909, Edison began to credit the "talent" on the title end of the cylinder. At that point, the need for announcements diminished, because all of the essential information was now clearly marked on the title end, and announcements were soon dispensed with.<sup>185</sup>

However, the causality may just as well have run in the other direction, such that artists began to be named on cylinder rims *because* it had been decided, for other reasons, to phase out spoken announcements; after all, there had been no technical obstacle keeping the names off the rims prior to this time.<sup>186</sup> An attempt to link the timing of Columbia's abandonment of spoken announcements to its introduction of legible title inscriptions on cylinders is even more problematic. Announcements, states one authority, "were redundant on discs, and they were no longer needed on cylinders once titles began to be marked on the ends in September 1904."<sup>187</sup> Although Columbia did drop spoken announcements from its discs in 1904, many of its cylinders continued to be announced through 1908, and it seems counterintuitive that a labeling change unique to cylinders should have prompted a change in announcement practices unique to discs. In general, efforts to connect the presence or absence of spoken phonogram announcements to specific visual labeling practices do not hold up well to close scrutiny: discs and cylinders were routinely supplied with both spoken announcements *and* visually legible inscriptions. Since spoken announcements are found in so many cases where they no longer seem to have been necessary as a means of identification, it is sometimes argued that the later examples were mere survivals, a "vestige of the 1890s,"<sup>188</sup> the residue of a convention that had outlived its original purpose but still exerted some influence over the way things were done thanks to the inertia of habit. However, it seems unlikely that so much extra effort would have been expended during the 1900s on a convention that no longer served any purpose at all, and seemingly redundant pairings of visual and aural

identification can already be found in the late 1880s and early 1890s, when there had hardly been time yet for precedents to become firmly established.<sup>189</sup>

An alternative explanation for the spoken announcement centers on its value as a proof of the phonograph's success as a transducer of sound. In the laboratory, experimenters had valued the ability of mechanical recording devices to produce "self-evidencing" inscriptions as proof that the technologies worked, an obvious example being the phonographic reproduction of "Mary had a little lamb." According to Lisa Gitelman, the practice of making phonograms "self-identifying" through spoken announcements reflected the same preoccupation with getting automatic inscriptions to speak for themselves in the broadest possible sense.<sup>190</sup> Whatever their similarities, the two phenomena are also somewhat different. The phonograph's repetition of "Mary had a little lamb" conveyed the message *I work*. In the case of musical phonograms, the music itself was capable of conveying this same message—*I work*—whether it was announced or not. Nevertheless, the spoken announcement did initially have greater weight as proof of the phonograph's ability to transduce sound than did, say, an unannounced piece of instrumental music. In 1892, James Andem was asked, "Is it not true that the person who wishes to see the machine from curiosity would prefer good plain talk on them to almost any music?" He replied:

It is true in our experience that to a person who has never heard a Phonograph the hearing of the reproduction of speech is a much greater marvel than the reproduction of music, for the reason that they have heard musical boxes and organettes and different kinds of instruments that have imitated music, whereas they have never heard anything before that would imitate the human voice. Therefore they always express greater surprise and gratification at hearing a talking cylinder than they do at hearing a musical cylinder.<sup>191</sup>

Here Andem was referring to phonograms that contained *only* spoken-word selections, but a reasonable interpolation would be that the spoken part of an otherwise "musical" phonogram was, for many listeners, its most impressive part. People had often heard music from machines before, but having a machine *tell* them what it was about to play—well, that was a new and exciting experience. The idea that a good announcement was "gratifying" in and of itself was explicitly voiced by Charles Marshall:

Mr. Marshall always took great care to make his announcements on each record very plain, so that the reproduction would be an advertisement of the phonograph, and could be plainly and readily understood by the hearer. He has a wonderfully clear voice for that purpose. He says a musical record is half made by a perfect announcement.... Nothing is more gratifying to a listener to a phonograph than a clear and distinct announcement at the beginning of a record.<sup>192</sup>

Meanwhile, as we have seen, some promoters of the phonograph were worried that the public would dismiss it as a mere musical entertainment device—a “toy”—rather than recognizing it as a practical speech-recording technology. Artemas Ward, who was using three phonographs in his work at the time, argued in 1891: “In my, perhaps biased, opinion, the phonograph has been sadly hampered by territorial limitations and toy-store ideas. There are countless musical machines—only one which reproduces human speech. I doubt whether the ‘nickel-in-the-slot’ system has made one convert to practical phonographing.”<sup>193</sup> The presence of announcements ensured that even a person listening to a piece of instrumental music on a nickel-in-the-slot phonograph in a saloon would receive proof of the machine’s ability to transduce the spoken word. Furthermore, in nineteenth-century speculative fiction, the supersession of written “titles” by phonographic ones was envisioned as part of the imminent supersession of print by phonography in general, as we find in Edward Bellamy’s short story “With the Eyes Shut” (1889), set in a fictional world in which phonographs have become commonplace:

“But,” I said, “I notice that you still use printed phrases, as superscriptions, titles, and so forth.”  
“So we do,” replied Hamage, “but phonographic substitutes could be easily devised in these cases, and no doubt will soon have to be supplied in deference to the growing number of those who cannot read.”<sup>194</sup>

From this point of view, the spoken phonogram announcement could have been perceived as redolent with futuristic implications—not as a second-best substitute for a visually legible label, but as a bold step towards rendering literacy obsolete. In at least one case from the early 1890s, the spoken announcement was itself listed on a title slip accompanying its cylinder,<sup>195</sup> further suggesting that the purpose of this element was not mere identification—it was, rather, an impressive part of the content that needed to *be* identified. But the value of such announcements as proof that the phonograph could handle the human voice must only have been short-lived, limited to the early period during which the technology was still on trial, and so would not explain their persistence into the mid-1900s.

Sometimes value might have lain not in the mere fact that spoken announcements existed, but in the aural nuances of their delivery. As Charles Marshall’s comments suggest, the usual ideal was for the phonogram announcement to be clear, distinct, flawless, capable of passing for the work of a trained elocutionist. However, other

aesthetic considerations sometimes played a role in shaping the forms of announcements. During the tinfoil era, exhibitors had intentionally introduced coughs, laughter, and other idiosyncratic features into their phonogenic speeches in order to give the machine something impressive to repeat or “mimic.” This practice had continued into the wax cylinder period. Take, for instance, a demonstration conducted by H. S. Wicks of the Missouri Phonograph Company in January 1889: “remarking to the phonograph that a representative of THE TIMES was present with some friends, urged it to put forward its best efforts. He suggested that if he should cough (here Mr. Wicks coughed) or laugh (and he laughed), it would be well to reproduce those sounds also.” The result: “Clearly and distinctly came back the words, the cough and the laugh, a perfect reproduction of Mr. Wicks’ voice.”<sup>196</sup> Similar sounds were occasionally included at random to enhance the interest of early “musical” phonograms—thus, some prerecorded songs by C. W. Pyke educed in Fresno, California in January 1890 “wound up with cat calls, the crowing of cocks, sighing, coughing, sneezing, whistling and all kinds of ejaculations reproduced with wonderful fidelity.”<sup>197</sup> Keeping these practices in mind, consider the announcement on the earliest known surviving American musical phonogram, delivered by A. T. E. Wangemann at Edison’s laboratory in the spring of 1889:

The Pattison Waltz,  
 sung by Miss Effie Stewart of New York City the  
 [cough]  
 uh,  
 Orange, *New Jersey*,  
 uh, February twenty-fifth, one thousand eight hundred and eighty nine.

At first hearing, it sounds as though Wangemann is being careless, bungling this announcement at several points. However, the cough during the announcement seems intentional and exaggerated—a loud “*ahem! hem! hem!*”—suggesting that Wangemann actually meant to demonstrate the phonograph’s capacity for mimicking such sounds. “*New Jersey*” sounds more like “*Nugiary*,” and although Wangemann had a noticeable German accent, it seems improbable that he would ordinarily have misaccentuated the name of the state in which he lived (although I am willing to accept that there may be other valid “hearings” of this part of the announcement, I am not aware of any having been suggested). Thus, Wangemann seems to have treated this early announcement not just as a pragmatic “label” for Effie Stewart’s phonogram but as a full-fledged specimen



of recorded talk, furnished with conspicuous idiosyncrasies for the machine to “mimic” at a time when the novelty of such displays had not yet worn off. When phonograms were self-announced in a performer’s own voice, the announcement assumed yet another kind of documentary significance. “Miss [Agnes] Huntington made a preliminary announcement of her songs on the cylinder,” it was reported of one case, “so that her records have the double advantage of being vocal autographs as well as song photographs.”<sup>198</sup> Occasionally a self-announcement not only constituted a “vocal autograph” but also incorporated some additional element characteristic of the artist or of the performance to follow. This is true, for instance, of many phonograms phonogenized by Silas Leachman and Cal Stewart, who often made their announcements with the same exaggerated intonations, dialect, and laughter they used in the bodies of their performances—in other words, both artists appear already to have been “in character” when announcing their phonograms. Similarly, the whistler John Yorke AtLee threw preliminary chirps into some of his self-announcements.<sup>199</sup> Nevertheless, the norm was for the spoken announcement to be delivered as a detached specimen of straight phonogenic elocution, particularly when it was spoken by a designated house announcer rather than the performer. It is likely that these bits of talk were aesthetically valued, but it seems improbable that announcements would have been included simply for their own sake and not for *any* purpose they served in connection with the content they announced.

Along with the factors already mentioned, there was an eminently practical reason for placing the spoken announcement as a specimen of recorded speech at the beginning of each commercial phonogram. Recording speeds were far from uniform in the 1890s and early 1900s, and so properly educing any given phonogram often meant adjusting the playback speed. Listeners tend to be more sensitive to incorrect playback speeds when listening to human speech than to instrumental music. The spoken announcement thus provided something like a test pattern which eductionists could use to make the necessary speed adjustment. This technique was described in 1898:

The method usually adopted for determining the correct speed of a given reproduction, in the case of musical records, is to listen to the words of the announcement at the beginning of the cylinder, and when the tones of voice seem to be in a natural key, and neither too high and shrill nor too low and heavy, to assume that the proper speed has been reached. This is not, however, an absolutely correct test, as it is a matter of judgment merely on the part of the listener as to the naturalness of the tone of language used by the announcer, and that can only be guessed at, unless his voice is known to the

listener. However, it serves all practical purposes in such cases, and this rule may be followed with good success and favorable results.<sup>200</sup>

I can vouch personally for the value of this technique: when “pitching” early phonograms, I routinely adjust the speed until the announcer’s voice sounds right and then, in the case of musical selections, zero in on the nearest speed that matches a standard key. By the time spoken announcements were being phased out in 1903-8, recording speeds had become relatively more stable than they had been in the 1890s. Cylinders were standardized at 160 rpm, and Edison’s National Phonograph Company even relocated the speed controls on its phonographs to the bottom of the machine on the assumption that owners would no longer need to use them on a regular basis.<sup>201</sup> Under these circumstances, the spoken announcement lost its function as a test pattern for speed adjustment. Still, the correlation of the elimination of spoken announcements with the relative standardization of recording speeds is no greater than with the introduction of permanent, visually legible labels. Most notably, disc speeds remained inconsistent for some years after 160 rpm had become a universal standard for cylinders, and yet announcements continued to appear on cylinders significantly later than they did on discs.<sup>202</sup>

The structure and content of phonogram announcements offer some clues as to their rationale in particular cases. The title of the recorded selection nearly always appears, and it is sometimes the *only* element, as on most American Record Company discs and the occasional Lambert cylinder,<sup>203</sup> but the vast majority of announcements also contain the performer’s name. The most common type consisted simply of a selection title followed by the name of a performer, as exemplified by the earliest musical phonogram announcement for which a verbatim transcription is available: “‘The Song That Reached My Heart,’ by Markwith’s Band,” spoken by Osgood Wiley in September 1888.<sup>204</sup> At first, announcing the performer’s name was understood as serving an advertising function for artists who hoped the phonograph-listening public would like what they heard and hire them for live events. The manager of the New York Phonograph Company stated that “most of our applicants volunteer to sing for nothing, just to have their names repeated by the machine,”<sup>205</sup> their motive being that “it furnishes an excellent means of advertising. Each selection is prefaced on the phonograph with a

few explanatory words as to who the singer or reader is.”<sup>206</sup> Another writer explained that one of the reasons for spoken announcements was “to give the original singer his dues,” citing by way of example the announcement “‘Going Back to Dixie,’ a sentimental ballad, as sung with great success by Chas. A. Asbury, with banjo accompaniment, for the New Jersey Phonograph Co.”<sup>207</sup> Here the announcement not only names the performer but asserts that he has achieved “great success” singing the piece in question, further enhancing its value as an advertisement for his services. These comments describe the situation in the very early 1890s, before the field had become dominated by a smaller group of full-time phonogenic performers. Towards the end of the 1890s, the announcement of the performer’s name was instead being cast as a marker of quality and authenticity, an indicator that a given phonogram had been phonogenized by a particular individual with a reputation in the industry. In an 1898 catalog, for instance, Columbia prefaced its list of “Michael Casey” sketches as follows: “Our patrons are warned against purchasing imitations of these famous records. The original Casey records are made by Mr. Russell Hunting and are so announced.”<sup>208</sup> Three years earlier, the same company had announced of Dan W. Quinn that his “reputation as a vocalist is so well established that the mere announcement of his name is a guarantee of the record.”<sup>209</sup> Nevertheless, the practice also continued to benefit performers by helping to sustain their reputations in phonograph work. In an account of how George Washington Johnson’s first recording session probably unfolded in the summer of 1890, Tim Brooks offers another complementary explanation for the practice of announcing performers’ names:

Johnson himself had to announce each selection at the start, giving the title followed by his name. After all, the people hearing these disembodied songs on a machine in some distant place, at some future time, would not be able to see him.<sup>210</sup>

According to this view, performers were named on phonograms to compensate for listeners’ inability to identify them by sight as they were able to do during live performances. This may well have been so, although I cannot provide any explicit contemporary statements to that effect.

Unlike the names of performers, the names of recordists hardly ever appeared in phonogram announcements. Only once do we read about a recordist who supposedly made a policy of naming himself:

FEW persons there are in phonograph circles who have not heard the familiar announcement, “record taken by Charles Marshall, New York City.” This announcement has been made personally by Mr. Marshall on upwards of thirty thousand musical phonograms during the past two years [as of 1891].<sup>211</sup>

To the best of my knowledge, no actual announcement featuring Marshall’s name is now known to exist, and as an independent contractor in his recording work he can probably be regarded as a special case. Wangemann’s early phonograms also seem to have contained a distinctive “trade mark,” which drew a complaint from one of their recipients at the start of 1889:

I wish to mention to you privately that I notice on the end of all Wangemann’s cylinders a peculiar musical trade mark—like this:



I think that on the end of an operatic selection particularly this musical trade mark is a little out of place.<sup>212</sup>

We can hear this “trade mark” on piano at the conclusion of Effie Stewart’s PATTISON WALTZ phonogram, recorded the following month.<sup>213</sup> However, it is unclear whether Wangemann was consciously “marking” his work as the recordist (or, perhaps, as the accompanist),<sup>214</sup> or whether he simply had peculiar ideas about the appropriate way to close a phonogenic piano performance. For all the emphasis placed on the recordist’s art in the construction of the recording “profession,” no convention arose of crediting recordists in announcements.

Another element we do encounter frequently in announcements, however, is a company name. In the United States, the company name was hardly ever the *only* element included in an announcement, although this became standard practice elsewhere, for instance in the Arabic-speaking Middle East;<sup>215</sup> and it was rarely accompanied only by a title, although early Lambert cylinders were often so announced.<sup>216</sup> Still, it was unquestionably the third most common element after the selection title and name of the performer. Company designations were capable of serving a variety of purposes. First, there was some attempt to present them as guarantees of quality and authenticity. The Kansas City Talking Machine Company thus promised: “All records with *our announcement on* and bought direct from us are fully warranted to be originals and not duplicates.”<sup>217</sup> Columbia included a notice on the lids of its cylinder boxes: “Every

Genuine Columbia Record bears the announcement: ‘made for the Columbia Phonograph Company of New York and Paris.’ Insist on getting Columbia Records.’”<sup>218</sup> The announcement of company names was also valued as a means of advertising in its own right. One Columbia executive shared Charles Marshall’s belief in the attractiveness of a good announcement and linked it to the establishment of brand-name recognition:

The oral announcement at the beginning of each cylinder—such as “Washington Post March, played by the United States Marine Band, recorded by the Columbia Phonograph Company of Washington, D. C.” (the identification of “New York and Paris” being a later substitution)—had much to do with popularizing Columbia records; the sound of a human voice issuing from a machine being just as attractive to listeners as the music itself.<sup>219</sup>

Listeners were supposedly delighted at hearing the sound of the mechanically educed voice, and Columbia’s policy led them to associate this pleasurable experience with its company name. “These ‘little advertisements’ had helped establish the Columbia name in the days when cylinders were mostly heard on coin-slot phonographs in public places,” states Tim Brooks.<sup>220</sup> To enhance the advertising potential of its announcements, Columbia periodically reworded them to draw attention to the expanding national and global scope of its business. At first, announcements had named “the Columbia Phonograph Company of Washington, D. C.,” but as soon as the company had relocated its central offices to New York at the start of 1897, or possibly even before, it began referring to itself as “the Columbia Phonograph Company of New York City.” After the company’s first foreign office in Paris opened late that year, the announcements changed again to credit “Columbia Phonograph Company of New York and Paris,” and when a London office opened in 1900, the company briefly became “Columbia Phonograph Company of New York and London,” after which the string of place names was finally dropped from announcements.<sup>221</sup> Maybe the point that Columbia was a global enterprise had finally been made to the company’s satisfaction, but listeners had also begun to complain about the commercial messages to which they found themselves subjected every time they listened to the phonograph. Around the beginning of 1898, one editorial groused about Columbia’s practice of “making their own advertisement a spoken part of the cylinders which they require the public to pay for, and with each production of a piece to patiently listen to.”<sup>222</sup> Another article published that year presented a fictional example of a spoken announcement:

L-a-d-i-e-s and g e n t l e m e n:—Mlle. Le Scala, whom I have the honor to introduce to your critical attention, will now give a representation of Mme. Patti before ten thousand people at the Crystal Palace in London. Ladies and gentlemen, I take pleasure in calling your attention to the wonderful distinctness of her vocalization and the indescribable sweetness of her voice as reproduced on the Gravesend phonograph, of which we hold the exclusive patent. Mr. Edison admits its unapproachable excellence.<sup>223</sup>

By exaggerating certain elements, this caricature of the phonogram announcement exposes its capacity for serving as a crass advertising ploy. Meanwhile, the United States Phonograph Company felt that its avoidance of such tactics was a good selling point, and it drew attention to the fact in its catalog: “No advertising announcements on any of our records. We announce only the title of the piece and name of the performer.”<sup>224</sup> Most smaller companies specializing in “original” phonograms followed a similar policy of anonymity. Among other considerations, this policy allowed such companies to market their “original” phonograms to other parties as masters for duplication and resale under different brand names. A duplicate of an unannounced United States Phonograph Company cylinder was easy to repackage as a “Columbia Record” or an “Edison Record,” whereas company-specific announcements would have complicated these arrangements. Similarly, when Columbia produced phonograms for outside parties, it intentionally omitted the spoken announcement with its company name, a practice it had apparently inaugurated by the late 1890s, when it furnished a supply of phonograms “devoid of the usual announcement” to the Polyphone Company of Chicago.<sup>225</sup> Around 1903, when Columbia began producing discs for client labels such as Harvard (sold by Sears, Roebuck, and Company), these lacked spoken announcements of any kind, and in some cases the announcements had even been tooled physically off existing stampers.<sup>226</sup>

In addition to their value as advertisements, company announcements were also supposed to help curb record piracy. Jim Walsh, for one, understands this as their primary purpose; he writes that the spoken announcement in general was “originally used to prevent unscrupulous persons from duplicating and re-selling standard brands of records.”<sup>227</sup> Over time, the status of the company designation as an anti-piracy device altered the overall structure of the phonogram announcement. In some early cases, the company designation came first, perhaps because it seemed likely to attract the most attention in that position. One example, which could date to the fall of 1890, runs as follows:

The following record  
taken for the Columbia Phonograph Company  
of Washington, D. C. entitled  
Yorktown Centennial March,  
as played by the United States Marine Band.<sup>228</sup>

Within a year or so, Columbia seems to have shifted the position of the company name to the end of the announcement, immediately preceding the performance proper:

The following Mexican dance entitled  
La Media Noche  
as played by the United States Marine Band.  
Record taken for the Columbia Phonograph Company  
of Washington, D. C.<sup>229</sup>

From the mid-1890s onward, it was standard practice throughout the industry for company designations to come at the very end of spoken announcements.<sup>230</sup> This preference was consistent with, and probably dictated by, the conception of the announcement as an anti-piracy measure. I speculate that the shift in Columbia's practice is likely to have occurred in late 1891 when that company suddenly found both Edison's laboratory and Chicago Central duplicating its United States Marine Band selections without permission. Placing the company designation at the beginning of an announcement would have made it relatively easy for a record pirate to skip past during duplication, e.g.:

~~The following record  
taken for the Columbia Phonograph Company  
of Washington, D. C. entitled~~ [*begin mechanical duplication here*]  
Yorktown Centennial March,  
as played by the United States Marine Band.

Placing the company designation after the selection title and performer rather than before would have made it more challenging to remove, forcing unauthorized duplicators either to engage in complicated on-the-fly editing work or to leave off the original announcements altogether. This was not a hypothetical situation: we know that record pirates did sometimes eliminate proprietary announcements from master phonograms in order to disguise their origin. Edison's industrial spy, Joseph McCoy, infiltrated a ring of unauthorized cylinder phonogram duplicators several years later, through which—according to one of his reports—he had been directed to have Isaac W. Norcross of the Norcross Phonograph Company show him “how to obliterate announcements for any masters we might buy.”<sup>231</sup> Eldridge Johnson seems to have experimented briefly with a

more draconian policy of marking his disc masters, arranging for the company designation to overlap the beginning of the recorded music. Through May 1900, Berliner discs had never contained company designations in their announcements, perhaps because there had been no practical need to distinguish them from other brands. However, Tim Brooks describes two rare Eldridge Johnson test pressings dating from later that summer:

The announcements for these two sides are quite strange. On A18, we hear the announcer say “Nancy, sung by S. H. Dudley”. Then *after* the piano has begun its introduction, someone mumbles *over* the music, “Berliner Gramophone Record”! Selection A23 is even stranger, with some sort of background chatter audible after the piano begins, ending with “...for the Berliner Gramophone Company”.

During a court case later in 1900, Eldridge Johnson testified that [Frank] Seaman and others were pirating Berliner records—buying copies and making duplicates from them—and that he (Johnson) was asked by Berliner to devise ways to incorporate spoken announcements into the records which would prevent this. Perhaps this test represents his first attempt to do this, in such a way that the identification couldn’t possibly be removed.<sup>232</sup>

In order to remove the company designation, a record pirate would also have had to remove the opening segment of the music itself. Johnson did not actually adopt such overlapping announcements as a regular policy. In fact, the technique seems to have backfired on him: forced by legal circumstances to stop using the “Berliner Gramophone” brand name, he ended up having to scrap his existing masters and record new ones without the offending words.<sup>233</sup> Even then, it was some time before Johnson finally settled on “Victor” as an alternative company and brand name, and in the meantime his company simply reverted to the earlier Berliner practice of recording announcements without company designations. However, in his experimental work Johnson had taken the strategy of placing the company designation as close as possible to the “core” of the phonogram to its logical extreme as a means of thwarting would-be pirates. This practice would have required phonogenic speakers to focus to an unusual degree on the materiality of their recorded utterances, keeping in mind not only their chronological patterning but also their physical arrangement on the surface of the phonogram.

The wording of the company designations on phonograms did not remain constant either. When Edison’s National Phonograph Company had begun marketing phonograms in 1897-98, these had not initially been announced with any company designation, although a few announcements had ended with an acknowledgment that they had been



performed for recording “at Edison’s laboratory.”<sup>234</sup> At some point, however, its announcements began to conclude with the words “Edison Record,” a phrase that had also appeared at the beginning of announcements on duplicates marketed through North American in 1892-94,<sup>235</sup> and which the company came to consider a kind of aural trademark.<sup>236</sup> This form of announcement either initiated or reflected an industry-wide transition about the turn of the century. Until then, an announcer had typically claimed that the phonogenic performance had been undertaken “for” such-and-such a company or machine, e.g.:

The Jolly Cadets,  
played by Gilmore’s Band **for Columbia Phonograph Company.**<sup>237</sup>

The Mocking Bird,  
whistled by Mister H. S. Wright **for the Lambert Company of Chicago.**<sup>238</sup>

Once Again,  
sung by Mister Edward M. Favor  
**for the Zon-o-phone.**<sup>239</sup>

This same formula was even used in a journalistic parody of a phonogram announcement published in 1897: “Mr. Hamfatt Howler, the popular young baritone, will now sing ‘Sweet Rosie O’Grady’ for the Blankety Blank Phonograph company.”<sup>240</sup> These wordings were consistent with a view that the essence of the industry lay in the constant *process* of recording by the round. After the transition, the announcer identified the phonogram not in terms of a recording process undertaken on a company’s behalf but as a particular brand of “record,” an item in the spirit of the permanent master.<sup>241</sup>

My Drowsy Babe,  
sung by Miss Minnie Emmett, **Columbia Record.**<sup>242</sup>

An Armful of Kittens and a Cat, sung by Steve Porter,  
**Lambert Indestructible Record.**<sup>243</sup>

Ben Bolt,  
sung by Mister George J. Gaskin,  
**Zon-o-phone Record.**<sup>244</sup>

We often find the new formula dropped altogether when an announcement names a company-specific ensemble such as the Columbia Orchestra, Edison Grand Concert Band, or Climax Quartette, suggesting that these phrases were felt to serve an equivalent function in establishing brand-name recognition.

The advertising and anti-piracy functions of the spoken announcement are both important to consider when evaluating how the convention developed as a whole. Indeed, during the National Phonograph Company's internal debate of 1908 over whether to abandon spoken phonogram announcements altogether, the main arguments put forward in favor of retaining them centered squarely on the value of the company designation, "Edison Record": "1st. For legal reasons, in order to give us a stronger position in case of unlawful duplication; 2nd. For advertising purposes."<sup>245</sup> However, Edison's competitors seem not to have shared this viewpoint. The other two companies that continued to have their phonograms announced after 1905 were motivated to do so by other considerations, as is apparent from the forms their announcements took in that period. Columbia's cylinder announcements stopped including the phrase "Columbia Record," leaving only the selection title and name of performer,<sup>246</sup> and the American Record Company's announcements gave only the selection title, which would have been of no use in deterring record pirates. The spoken announcement's status as an advertising gimmick and anti-piracy measure cannot account for its overall existence and disappearance any more neatly than the other factors we have considered.

Along with identifying characteristics that were always or frequently present in spoken announcements of all periods (selection titles, performer names, company designations), we can identify some broader changes in content over time. Some pieces of information were occasionally included in early announcements but routinely omitted later on because they drew attention to something the industry had decided, on second thought, that it was preferable to downplay or conceal. One was the word "duplicate," incorporated into the announcements of some of the first duplicate phonograms offered by Edison's laboratory in 1891.<sup>247</sup> Responding to a letter from the Spokane Phonograph Company concerning the initial sample batch of cylinders that had been sent out, Edison's secretary Alfred Tate wrote:

We note what you say in regard to putting the word "duplicate" on the cylinder. We will omit this from any records which you order from us.\*

\* I find this cannot be omitted from the records made from our present masters. It is on all of them. Can correct it in the future tho'.<sup>248</sup>

Tate then wrote to Edison about the objection:

Some of the Phonograph Companies object to the word “DUPLICATE”, which is on all the musical cylinders that we are sending out. Of course we can[']t eliminate this on duplicates made from the present masters, but it could be left out in future if there is no particular objection. They state that the people think that there [sic] being sold and not getting music from original cylinders. One or two of the Companies have objected very seriously to it and if it is really unimportant I would like to have it left off in all future masters that we make. Please let me hear from you.<sup>249</sup>

When Edison’s laboratory first began recording master phonograms for mechanical duplication, it was evidently felt that the announcements on them should be phrased so as to identify the resulting duplicates as duplicates, particularly in the case of introductory samples sent out to sub-companies for evaluation; however, there was such a stigma against duplication that the practice was soon dropped. Also during the very early 1890s, the spoken announcements preceding songs sometimes acknowledged that a phonogram featured only a single verse rather than the song in its entirety:

The following selection is one verse  
of the song You Can Always Explain Things Away in the opera of Castles in the Air,  
sung by DeWolf Hopper.<sup>250</sup>

The following selection  
the third verse—of Mary and John—or the Lovers’ Quarrel,  
sung by Mister Will White.<sup>251</sup>

Still, the practice of identifying such abridgements in announcements was never universal, and within a couple years it seems to have been abandoned altogether. Songs still had to be abridged for recording, but announcers must have concluded that it was inadvisable to draw special attention to the fact; instead, the content of a phonogram, whatever it was, was represented as *the song*, not as an excerpt from the song.

The stigma against “duplicate” phonograms and the abridgement of songs is easy enough to understand, but another case in which a piece of information was dropped from announcements is, I believe, more revealing. The first audicular phonogram announcements often gave the date and/or place of recording, as we find in Wangemann’s announcement on Effie Stewart’s PATTISON WALTZ: “Orange, *New Jersey*, uh, February twenty-fifth, one thousand eight hundred and eighty nine.”<sup>252</sup> A few other examples may be cited:

Vienna Dudes March, **played at Orange, New Jersey**, by the Fifth Regiment Band,  
**July thirtieth, eighteen ninety-one.**<sup>253</sup>

“Down Upon the Suwanee River,” rendered by Professor Baton’s Brass and String Military Band **on the 20th of September, 1890.**<sup>254</sup>

The Night Alarm, a descriptive piece **played November eleventh, eighteen ninety.**<sup>255</sup>

Five Minutes With the Minstrels,  
played by the First Regiment Band  
**at Orange, New Jersey.**<sup>256</sup>

Listeners would have found both details impressive at a time when the shifting of sounds in time and space was still a novel occurrence and the possibility of preserving sounds for posterity was new and exciting. Witness the emphasis in the following account from 1890, describing an exhibition in China: “I was favored with some bottled up American music eighteen months old. I listened to the manager’s introduction of the band, which was playing in New Jersey at the time, and then heard the music.”<sup>257</sup> In this case, knowledge of the date and place of recording had contributed substantially enough to the writer’s experience of the phonogram to make it worthy of mention later on. After 1891 or so, however, dates and recording locations cease to appear in the spoken announcements of commercial phonograms. One reason for the change was probably that such information was no longer considered particularly valuable, interesting, or appropriate; the phonograph’s ability to shift sounds in time and space was no longer the novelty it had once been. Jokes had also begun appearing in print during 1891 about “rubes” who mistook announcements of recording locations as evidence that the sounds they were hearing were being transmitted over a wire. In one story, a couple of rural customers have been pondering how some band music had been “loaded” into a nickel-in-the-slot machine when this exchange takes place:

“They don’t load them. The music comes over the Western Union wires,” volunteered a wise bystander, in reply.

“No!”

“Yes, it does. Didn’t you hear him say that piece was played by the United States Marine Band, of Washington, D. C.?”

Then they both peered around the case to see where the wires came in.<sup>258</sup>

Another “rube” is portrayed as consistently treating the phonograph as a telephone, even attempting to enter into a dialog with it, and the reference to the place where the band “is playing” helps sustain his error:

A gentleman from the rural districts, being anxious to hear the phonograph in a hotel in this city, asked an obliging person standing near to operate it for him. After placing the requisite nickle in the slot and having the tubes in his ears he sang out: “Hello, there! I just put 5 cents in the slot.” At this moment the machine started and the countryman began to dance and sing. He was told that the band of a New-Jersey regiment was playing, and after the machine stopped he expressed himself in this wise: “Where in tarnation is that, anyway. I never thought a telephone could send from New-Jersey.”<sup>259</sup>

Such jokes imply that the announcement of the *place* of recording could potentially exacerbate certain misperceptions about the technology, however ridiculous or unlikely the scenarios might seem. But an even more decisive factor may have been that the omission of the date and place of recording from an announcement enhanced a phonogram’s conceptual flexibility. “The Night Alarm, a descriptive piece played November eleventh, eighteen ninety” is explicitly grounded in the past, and “Five Minutes With the Minstrels, played by the First Regiment Band at Orange, New Jersey” is, for phonographic audiences anywhere else, tied to another place. When both details were left out of announcements, phonograms became capable of representing generalized, idealized musical performances rather than (or in addition to) historically specific ones.

The omission of dates and places, by itself, might not constitute sufficient evidence for us to conclude that there was an effort during the early 1890s to make audicular phonograms more generalizable and less historically specific, but certain other changes point to the same conclusion. In chapter one, I noted that deictic inversion could affect not just such words as “here” and “now,” but also tense morphology. Thus, a phonogenic speaker who privileges the recording event will refer to the creation of the phonogram as ongoing, either in the present or future tense, while one who privileges the education event will refer to it as already completed, in the past tense. With these variables in mind, consider the form of the texts used to preface sample “colloquies” recorded on the Bell-Tainter graphophone in the spring of 1887 for transcription and publication in order to illustrate its viability as a substitute for manual stenography:

The following colloquy, between

MR. JAMES O. CLEPHANE, *Stenographer*,

AND

MR. STILSON HUTCHINS, *Editor and Proprietor of the Washington Post*,

was recorded on the Graphophone, as spoken, and subsequently reproduced by a lady type-writer operator from the record so made April 7, 1887.<sup>260</sup>

It is possible that these words were composed in writing in at the top of the typescript after it was completed but before it was submitted to the printer; after all, the “reproduction” of the colloquy for transcription is identified in the past tense as something that has already happened. However, I consider it more likely that these

prefatory statements had been dictated as announcements on the cylinders themselves, and that the “subsequent” transcription had been announced orally in anticipation of what the speaker assumed would have been done with the phonograms by the time anyone would be reading them in their intended form. One clue that we are dealing with spoken announcements rather than introductions composed in writing is that, in one case, the prefatory statement includes an m-dash:

The following colloquy between  
MR. JAMES O. CLEPHANE, *Stenographer*,  
AND  
HON. R. R. HITT, OF ILLINOIS,  
was recorded on the Graphophone as rapidly as the words were spoken, and immediately reproduced by a lady typewriter—April 19, 1887.<sup>261</sup>

This m-dash was most likely inserted to mark an unusually long pause in speaking, since it is not otherwise the punctuation one would expect to find bracketing off the date from the rest of the sentence. The only other example of an m-dash in any of the graphophone colloquies appears where an interviewee was interrupted at the end of a one-minute test reading.<sup>262</sup> A second clue that we are dealing here with spoken announcements is that many of the first commercial phonograms were announced using a virtually identical formula, framing them as products of prior events:

The following record was taken for the Columbia Phonograph Company of Washington D. C. entitled  
The National Fencibles March,  
as played by the United States Marine Band.<sup>263</sup>

The following record  
was made  
for the Columbia Phonograph Company  
by W. O. Beckenbaugh—auctioneer of Baltimore City, Maryland:  
Sale—of the New York  
Dime Museum  
by Order of the Sheriff.<sup>264</sup>

The following selection from Erminie was played by the Fifth Regiment Band of Orange, New Jersey.<sup>265</sup>

These announcements state who “made” or “played” the phonogram, or for whom it was “taken,” and places this activity explicitly in the past tense, even though it was in the process of being made, or about to be played or taken, when the words were actually spoken as part of the recording event, a fact that the opening deictic, “the following,” emphasizes by making explicit the announcement’s anteriority to the “record” or

“selection.” The understanding here, as I suspect was also true in the case of the graphophone colloquies, was that the creation of the phonogram would necessarily be a completed act by the time the announcement was apprehended by its intended audience, in this case an audience of phonographic listeners rather than of readers. “Now” was thus relativized to the time of eduction, not the time of recording. Another variant, reported in a newspaper article of February 1891, went as follows:

“The following selection is ‘Annie Rooney.’ It was sung on Feb. — by the —— Quartet.”<sup>266</sup>

This announcement identifies both what the phonogram “is,” i.e., a particular selection that it was at the time of recording and will continue to be during future eduction events, and the circumstance of its having been recorded on a given date that, for listeners, will be in the past. On the other hand, some other commercial phonogram announcements were made using the future tense, a practice that seems to have been followed on a regular basis by one or more recording companies in New York City about 1894-96:

Greater New York Band will play the Semper Fidelis March.<sup>267</sup>

Battery Band of New York will play the Hallelujah Chorus from the Messiah.<sup>268</sup>

Mister Press Eldridge,  
the popular comedian, will sing a parody  
on that beautiful ballad entitled I Love Her Just the Same.<sup>269</sup>

Such announcements were appropriate when originally spoken during recording events, since the performers were then just about to perform (into the phonograph). During eduction events, they could also help to sustain the illusion that a musical performance was underway: a voice would announce that a band was about to play, and then listeners would hear its music. Nevertheless, an announcement in the future tense was at odds with the phonogram’s status as a “record” of a performance that had already taken place: listeners would be informed that “Banta’s Orchestra *will* play such-and-such” long after Banta’s Orchestra had in fact played it. Instead of choosing between the past tense or the future tense, most announcers came to omit any wording that would have committed them to one tense or the other. The pattern beginning with the performer’s name actually alternated between the future tense (“will sing”) and a more equivocal present tense (“sings”), somewhat resembling a newspaper headline:

George J. Gaskin sings J. W. Scanlan’s successful Irish ballad entitled Mavourneen.<sup>270</sup>

Omitting tense markers from the pattern beginning “the following selection” led to such oddly verbless constructions as these:

The following selection the McMahon Grenadiers with orchestra accompaniment sung by Mr. Edward Clarence of New York.<sup>271</sup>

The following selection with orchestra accompaniment, parody on Down on the Farm, sung by—Johnnie Carroll.<sup>272</sup>

The following piece recited by Mrs. McCormick, entitled The Irishman’s Perplexity.<sup>273</sup>

Announcements phrased in this way permitted both the interpretation that the selection *was about to be* sung or recited and the interpretation that it *had been* sung or recited, depending on whether the phonographic listener wanted to perceive it as a record of a past event or as an ongoing audicular event valid in its own right. All that is left is “the following,” identifying an undisputable temporal relationship between the announcement and the body of the phonogram. In this way, announcers sidestepped the part of the announcement most vulnerable to deictic inversion and allowed listeners to draw their own conclusions about what they were hearing.

Over time, phonogram announcers also began to avoid certain wordings that had initially been common in announcements but were liable to be regarded as redundant. One of the first words to go was “following,” since, on second thought, all spoken announcements could be assumed by their very nature to refer to the material that followed them. By 1893, the opening phrase “the following record” or “the following selection,” often encountered on early Columbia and New York Phonograph Company phonograms, had been largely abandoned, leaving behind a structure something like this:

“‘If I Were Only Just Behind Her’, sung by George H. Diamond, record taken for the Columbia Phonograph Company of Washington, D. C.”<sup>274</sup>

The stock expression “record taken for,” common in the early 1890s,<sup>275</sup> was dropped next. For anyone who cared, it was self-evident that the announcement referred to a “record” that had been “taken,” but announcers now preferred to downplay their phonograms’ status as records of specific prior events, making it easier for listeners and educationists to reframe them as generalized, idealized performances whose principal reality lay in their moments of education rather than as ones anchored to a specific date or



place of phonogenization. Omitting these words left only the preposition “for,” as in this example:

Selection from Mikado,  
played by Baldwin’s Cadet Band of Boston  
for the New England Phonograph Company.<sup>276</sup>

The verb specifying the kind of performance (“sung,” “played,” “whistled,” etc.) could also be left out if it was not needed to clarify that a performer was being named rather than a composer:

Trip on the Cable Car  
by the Columbia Orchestra  
for the Columbia Phonograph Company of New York City.<sup>277</sup>

Initial phrases that contained genre designations, such as “the following *sentimental song entitled*” and “the following *Mexican dance entitled*,” appeared in shortened form once the adjective “following” had fallen into disfavor:

Popular waltz song entitled I Love My Love in the Springtime, as sung by Mister Dan W. Quinn.<sup>278</sup>

Song entitled, It Don’t Seem Like the Same Old Smile  
as sung by Mister George J. Gaskin for the Columbia Phonograph Company of New York City.<sup>279</sup>

The word “entitled” too was soon phased out, since it was generally clear from context and convention which section of the announcement corresponded to the selection title.

This left only the genre designation itself:

A comic song, How’d You Like to Be the Iceman,  
sung by Mister Will F. Denny  
for the Columbia Phonograph Company of New York and Paris.<sup>280</sup>

Overall, the trend was for announcers to omit extraneous words and thereby to shorten phonogram announcements down to their bare essentials. One factor in this development may have been a desire to free up more room for the “content” of phonograms. This was apparently one of the reasons why announcements were omitted altogether from Edison cylinders: Jim Walsh asserts that they “were finally done away with because customers complained, with little justification, that they took up too much space which might be devoted to music,”<sup>281</sup> and internal correspondence confirms that this issue was indeed among those considered in 1908.<sup>282</sup> The first commercial cylinders routinely issued without announcements had been the celluloid Albany Indestructibles, introduced in November 1907, among the “exclusive advantages” of which advertisements listed: “*Play Longest*. A very marked improvement obtained by omitting announcements and

recording music on the full length of the record, since the metal ends centre the records in the same spot every time, hot or cold.”<sup>283</sup> This reason for eliminating the spoken announcement would also have favored making it as short as possible, although only a few seconds could have been gained at most by the abridgements we have covered.

And yet we still find comments that do not seem to be explained by any of the factors considered thus far. During the 1908 debate over whether spoken announcements should be dropped from Edison cylinders, Frank Dyer mentioned that customers had begun to “object to the announcement preceding the selection as detracting from the selection.” On this point, Lisa Gitelman comments: “Something seems to have changed in the way people considered and listened to records, which made the announcements intrusive.”<sup>284</sup> If the spoken announcement had become not just superfluous or wasteful but downright *intrusive*, a feature that *detracted* from the following selection, we might ask what change in sensibilities could have provoked such a reaction. It is true that spoken announcements made phonograms less suitable, or less easy to use, in certain situations. So, for instance, when a man entertained guests at a party with a phonographic name-that-tune game in 1902, he was described as “being careful to just avoid the announcement which precedes the record.”<sup>285</sup> In this case, the announcements would have spoiled the game and defeated its purpose. As commercial phonograms came to be used in an ever wider variety of contexts, the convention of the spoken announcement became more likely to cause unanticipated problems of this kind. A more pressing concern than name-that-tune games was the fact that a phonogram announced in one language seemed to be unsuitable for customers and audiences who spoke other languages. Thus, when the recording program in Room 13 at Edison’s laboratory was preparing material for the Paris Exposition of 1889, it had to record different phonograms announced in French, Italian, and German for different European audiences, even when the subject matter was itself strictly instrumental.<sup>286</sup> The “most important” reason Frank Dyer cited for why the National Phonograph Company should abandon spoken announcements at the end of 1908 was that doing so would remove a language barrier in the case of imported phonograms.<sup>287</sup> It may be no coincidence that the abandonment of spoken announcements on discs in 1903-4 corresponds to the first large-scale

international exchange of masters between Europe and the United States, itself made feasible through the introduction of multi-stamper systems of disc duplication.<sup>288</sup>

Apart from giving away the titles in name-that-tune contests or creating barriers against the international exchange of master phonograms, however, the spoken announcement sometimes keyed a particular frame during education events, potentially restricting the ways in which a phonogram could be used. One story about a husband who had recorded his wife's snoring gives the spoken announcement on the cylinder as "A nocturnal serenade by Mrs. Mary — taken by her husband on the night of July 22, 1898."<sup>289</sup> Another similar story, with the genders reversed, specifically reports the wife's recording of the announcement:

[S]he took the machine into the next room, where she started it going, and then, in a loud voice, announced into the horn, "Snoring Solo, rendered by Mr. Simpkins at three o'clock in the morning for the edification and amusement of his wife." She did not hesitate to make her announcement as emphatic as need be, reflecting bitterly, as she did so, that no amount of noise she might make was likely to disturb the slumbering Mr. Simpkins.<sup>290</sup>

In both cases, the announcements presented the snoring as though it were a piece of recorded music ("nocturnal serenade," "snoring solo"), a humorous gesture analogous to the presentation by live exhibitors of a baby's crying as a "vocal selection" and feline yowlings as a "cat concert." In the second example, the fact that the wife had been able to announce the phonogram in a loud voice was itself significant: her husband had slept right through it, snoring all the while. But in both cases the spoken announcement also made the resulting phonogram less suitable for alternative uses. Announced as they were, these phonograms would have resisted rekeying as "serious" specimens of snoring for, say, a group of medical students being trained in the audile diagnosis of sleeping disorders.

The spoken announcements on commercial phonograms likewise served to key certain frames rather than other ones. We have already considered some ways in which their choice of verb tense and inclusion or exclusion of dates and place-names could restrict or expand the range of interpretive possibilities available for a given phonogram. However, they also established a relationship between the announcer and the listener which itself had ramifications for the nature of the event as a whole. The question we need to ask is what kind of speech event the phonogram announcement was supposed to enact or represent, and what sort of context its presence implied. According to one

contemporary source, it was meant to simulate the type of announcement typically heard during a live concert:

One of the superintendent's assistants took up an enormous megaphone and aiming it at the horns he called out:

“A descriptive selection, ‘On the Road,’ played by the So-and-So Orchestra.”

His words could be heard for blocks around, but in their final form as they were to be reproduced by thousands of Phonographs they were supposed to be the announcement of “the next number” by the presiding genius of a concert.<sup>291</sup>

From this point of view, the announcement was not just a spoken label for the phonogram but an integral part of the overall representation of a live concert performance, introduction and all. But these announcements were rarely worded so as to resemble the ones preceding live concert performances. Even the following examples, which include a great deal of conventionalized announcerly language, diverge from the norms of such announcements in their closing lines, which refer back to the phonographic medium:

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to call your attention to the following sentimental song entitled  
A Curl from Baby's Head  
as sung by Garry Allen with orchestra accompaniment.  
Record taken for the Columbia Phonograph Company  
of Washington, D. C.<sup>292</sup>

For the benefit of the audience,  
the United States Marine Band will play the following march  
entitled  
Farewell to Dresden.  
Record taken for the Columbia Phonograph Company  
of Washington, D. C.<sup>293</sup>

Ladies and gentlemen,  
we take pleasure in introducing a standard quartette  
of the Still Alarm company,  
who will sing the following solo—and quartet  
entitled  
“Baby's Lullaby,”  
sung for Nebraska Phonograph Company of Omaha.<sup>294</sup>

We take pleasure in introducing to you  
Mister Jesse Vandeman  
of the Barrow Opera company,  
who will sing the following popular ballad entitled  
“Let All Obey,”  
sung for Nebraska Phonograph Company  
of Omaha.<sup>295</sup>

Especially rare were announcements modeled after a performer's own introduction of himself or herself to a live audience, the only exception of which I am aware appearing on a Berliner disc recorded in England in 1898:

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
I will now sing you "My Old Dutch."<sup>296</sup>

Since the phonographic audience was unable to see the performer and, hence, might not know who "I" was (or might even identify it with the phonograph itself, like the editors of the *Scientific American* in 1877), phonogenic performers who did their own announcements instead named themselves in the third person, producing the "voice autographs" mentioned earlier, more closely analogous to the telephonic convention "This is X," or perhaps to a *written* title, since in some cases the wording of a spoken announcement is actually identical in form to the wording printed on the label:

| <b>Label</b>  | <b>Announcement</b>  |
|---|--|
| Cindy I Dreams About You<br>Sung by<br>Arthur Collins | <b>COLLINS:</b> Cindy, I Dreams About You,<br>Sung by Arthur Collins. <sup>297</sup> |

Although some listeners may have interpreted phonogram announcements as representations of the speech conventions by which live stage performances were introduced and, to some extent, keyed as performances, most announcements are formally worded in ways that discourage such an interpretation.

On the other hand, live verbal announcements were also associated with the practice of phonograph *exhibition*. As we have seen, concert exhibitors like Lyman Howe and the Sullivan brothers routinely introduced their phonograms before educating them and considered this to be one of the most important things they did, helping to create dramatic structure and mold their audience's perceptions. None of the guidelines I have seen for concert exhibitors even mentions *prerecorded* announcements, but unless the exhibitors skipped over them or avoided making "live" introductions when using commercial cylinders, any pre-announced phonograms must have ended up being introduced twice, possibly leading to some redundancy.<sup>298</sup> But identical phonograms were also supplied for use in nickel-in-the-slot machines, and one set of tips for phonograph parlor managers specified: "By all means use nothing but first-class records, *with distinct announcements*, and selections not too short."<sup>299</sup> The fact that the

prerecorded announcement was emphasized in this case and not the other suggests that it was perceived as a substitute for a verbal introduction by a live phonograph exhibitor, not as a representation of the live announcement of a live performance. Furthermore, the announcements quoted above are more formally consistent with what we might expect a phonograph exhibitor to have said, particularly with regard to their range of verb tenses (e.g. “the *following* song *was* performed by so-and-so” or “a band *will* play such-and-such”), than they are with the announcements of live stage performances. As we saw in the last chapter, the structured phonograph “concert” was losing ground to less structured forms of education event (solitary home listening, outings in canoes) at roughly the same time spoken announcements disappeared. Spoken announcements may have fallen out of favor in the mid-1900s largely because the exhibitor’s role they were meant to simulate was in decline and because people no longer expected to be guided through the experience of phonographic listening.

This last point bears further consideration. It had taken time for people to learn to make sense of audicular phonograms by developing cognitive frameworks appropriate to the new kinds of aural experience they offered. When the wax cylinder phonograph first appeared on the scene in the late 1880s and early 1890s, many listeners expressed a sense of disorientation and discomfort:

It is a most weird, uncanny, strange thing. Your first impressions of it are bewildering. It seems to paralyse your intellect. One can imagine that with weird surroundings it might be calculated to drive a weak man crazy.<sup>300</sup>

As one listens to its reproduction of living voices and tones it seems a thing invested with life.... The effect at first is strange, almost startling. There is something eerie and uncanny about it. For you hear the very person singing or talking or playing.<sup>301</sup>

Before long, critics began distancing themselves from such extreme reactions, attributing them instead to other, less enlightened people whom we might call the *phonographically ignorant*. This was, at first, supposed to be a large category, perhaps a majority of the population. “Many visitors really believe the phonograph runs by steam,” claimed one writer in 1892; “others think a man is concealed in the cabinet, and not a few apprehend that touching the tubes will result in an electric shock.” In the absence of specific ideas about how the machine worked, crowds tended to assume there was “something rather uncanny in it, a species of sorcery, as it were,” and the writer predicted that it would “probably take a generation” for the public to get over this misconception.<sup>302</sup> Within a

few years, however, the new technology had become familiar enough for phonographic ignorance to be considered unusual and treated as a mark of broader ignorance about the modern world. This transition manifested itself in a number of ways, one of the clearest being a shift in the types of characters associated with comic anecdotes about the phonograph.

One story encountered frequently during the early years of the phonograph concerns a man who overhears band music reproduced by a phonograph, assumes it to be a real band approaching down the street, and hurries out to hold his skittish horse (or mule) before discovering his mistake. Some early variants of this story was attached to local persons from a variety of backgrounds, often identified by name. The phonograph must still have been new and unfamiliar enough at this point for such misunderstandings to be plausible regardless of the character type to which they were attributed. The earliest version of this anecdote I have found appears in the Edison papers as a clipping from the *St. Paul Dispatch* dated November 15, 1888:

While Prof. Clarkson was exhibiting the Edison phonograph to a number of St. Paul gentlemen yesterday afternoon an amusing incident occurred in which Dr. Eastman, of St. Paul, played the leading role. When the sounding funnel is not attached to the machine only a faint sound can be distinguished, and as Prof. Clarkson was adjusting the points for a piece of band music, previous to putting in the funnel, Dr. Eastman caught the indistinct notes of the base [sic] horn and cornet. He suddenly remembered that his horse was tied to a post on the street below, and, not knowing that Prof. Clarkson was adjusting the instrument for a brass band production, he exclaimed: "Oh, pshaw! I've got to go down stairs and hold my horse while that band goes by." Dr. Eastman did not discover the cause of the laughter of the party until he was forcibly prevented from rushing down stairs and his ear placed to the phonographic tubes, which were filled with the notes of a full band of twenty-five pieces.<sup>503</sup>

If the handwritten date is correct, this anecdote would have been published within half a year of the first significant use of prerecorded music for demonstration purposes and within two months of the first documented phonogenizations by a brass band. It is unlikely many of the listeners would ever have heard a wax cylinder phonograph before, but even so, the rest of the group is described as immediately recognizing and laughing at the doctor's error. There is an extenuating circumstance: the mistake happens during the exhibitor's preliminary adjustment of the phonograph, in which its sounds are faint and indistinct enough to pass for a band just approaching in the distance. The doctor has not misinterpreted "normal" education, but a special case in which the sound is distorted in such a way as to encourage misframing. In 1895, another version of the story appeared in

James Andem's *Edison Phonographic News*, probably clipped from an earlier, unspecified source:

They were telling a pretty good story on Lew Daniels, the grain man on 'Change. He is in the habit of going the rounds of his business in a buggy drawn by a horse in which he reposes the utmost confidence, except at times when there is something in the nature of a brass band coming down the street. On such occasions he thinks that his presence is absolutely essential in order to prevent his faithful animal from turning the valuable buggy into refuse for the junk shop. The other day he was visited by a friend from the country, and in order to show the visitor some of the marvelous sides of metropolitan existence, he took him around with him in his buggy. When they were passing the Phonograph office on Vine street, it occurred to Lew that as he had never had much experience with that sort of a machine himself, it would be a good thing to extend his own experience and at the same time initiate his friend into some of the wonders of which he had been telling. They alighted, and had soon deposited their nickels. Lew had hardly placed the transmitter in his ear, when, to his dismay, he heard the sound of an approaching band playing a tune, which was dead certain to set his unhitched horse crazy with fear. Without stopping to think, he is said to have pulled the instruments out of his ears, and with a few long strides was at the side of the dozing horse, at the same time complaining that it was his luck for some old street band to come along just when he did not want it. As soon as the truth of the situation dawned on his companion and the keeper of the machines, there was a laugh which it will take a long time for Mr. Daniels to forget. He had heard the phonograph music, and took it for a street band.<sup>304</sup>

This time, the plausibility of the story rests on two premises: that Daniels is inexperienced when it comes to the phonograph, and that he considers it vitally important to restrain his horse whenever a street band passes by. Even then, he reacts “without stopping to think,” the implication being that he would otherwise have reasoned out the situation correctly. The humor of the story is enhanced by the detail that Daniels, assuming the role of sophisticated urbanite, is showing his “friend from the country” the ways of the city—which, as it turns out, he himself does not quite grasp. A Hamilton, Ohio newspaper published a third variant of the story in 1892:

A good joke is told on a prominent coal dealer who went into Howald's the other night with a party of friends. The coal dealer walked up to the phonograph and saw that the piece on the cylinder was a vocal solo by some famous celebrity, with guitar accompaniment. Dropping a nickel in the slot, the coal man placed the tubes in in [sic] his ears and listened intently. Presently he withdrew the tubes and turning to Charlie Howald, who was standing near by, said:

“Charlie, hold these tubes a moment please, while I go outside and hitch my horse. A band is coming down the street and I'm afraid it will scare the horse.”

With this the coal dealer hurried out doors and Howald, placing the tubes to his ears, was astonished to here [sic] a band selection coming from the phonograph. Then the truth dawned upon the party. Howald had put in a cylinder containing a band piece, and had placed by mistake a placard announcing a vocal solo. The coal man had paid a nickle to hear the vocal solo, and while waiting had heard a part of the band tune, but thought it was a band on the street. It cost the coal man the profit on a big load of anthracite to square himself by treating the crowd.<sup>305</sup>

The coal dealer's misidentification of the sounds he is hearing as a live band is still embarrassing, but the mistake is not entirely his fault. The sign on the machine has wrongly led him to expect a “reproduced” vocal solo, so the sounds of the band are



unexpected and fall outside the framework he has constructed for making sense of the experience as a mediated one.

The stooges in the three examples cited so far have been Dr. Eastman, who can perhaps be identified with a well-known St. Paul physician of that name;<sup>306</sup> Lew Daniels, a city grain merchant; and a “prominent” local coal dealer of Hamilton, Ohio. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the same story had come instead to be associated with the anonymous “rube” from the country, who was by then apparently regarded as the only character type susceptible to such misinterpretation. This transformation reflects a pattern found more generally in urban legends based on the misunderstanding of new technologies: “as the invention becomes increasingly familiar,” observes Erika Brady, “the misuser is ascribed an increasingly marginal social status in the accounts.”<sup>307</sup> In fact, accounts involving “rubes” can be found dating back just about as far as those attributed to other character types; what happened was that the other variants disappeared from circulation while the “rube” variant survived. In 1894, the following version appeared in which a farmer has entered a city hotel and, on pointing to an unfamiliar object and asking what it is, has been told that it is a “phonograph” and that for five cents he can “hear a speech from Chauncey Depew, President Cleveland,” or something of that kind:

The explorer seemed incredulous, but at last drew forth a 5 cent piece and reluctantly handed it to the man in charge. The ends of the small rubber tubes were placed in his ears and the machinery set in motion. It so happened that the cylinder bore a piece of music caught from Gilmore’s band instead of a speech from Depew or the president, as the countryman had expected. The phonograph began to grind out the music.

The man at once looked worried and impatiently pulled the tubes from his ear.

“Jus’ my luck!” he exclaimed. “There comes a brass band down the street, an my mules ain’t hitched.” He darted out the front door and did not return to “get his money back.”<sup>308</sup>

In this case, the reaction of the “rube” is due, like that of the coal dealer three years before, to the fact that he has been misinformed as to what he should anticipate hearing. He has been told that the “phonograph” will deliver a speech, but instead it unexpectedly educes a piece of band music, so he understandably interprets the sound in terms of a live band rather than as something coming from the machine. By the end of 1895, the story was apparently well enough known in this form to spawn a joke *about* it:

They were talking of phonographs.

“I heard an amusing story about an old farmer the other day,” said the commercial traveler.

“Interest always attaches to the doings of the agricultural classes,” commented the Englishman, hitching up his chair with a look of interest.

“He had just driven into town with his mules to sell a load of pumpkins, and he stopped in front of the phonograph store.

“‘What air them fellows doin in there with spouts in their ears?’ he asked.

“‘Those are talking machines,’ answered a man in the doorway.

“The farmer was a little incredulous, but he finally left his mules and went into the store. The tubes were placed in his ears, he dropped the nickel in the slot and a brass band began to play.

“‘Whoa there!’ shouted the rustic, darting out of the store. ‘Them mules o’ mine won’t stand no brass band.’”

At first the Englishman looked anxious, as if he expected to hear the rest of the story. Then suddenly he burst out laughing.

“Great joke on the mules, eh?” he shouted.<sup>309</sup>

Once again, the “rube” is misled about what he should expect to hear: all he knows is that the instruments are “talking machines,” so he has no reason to anticipate music.

However, other variants omitted this detail, eliminating the extenuating circumstance and leaving the “rube” no excuse apart from sheer ignorance, as in these examples from 1892 and 1895:

A farmer went into the Hoffman House the other day to listen to the phonograph. He placed the tubes to his ears and the operator started a selection from Gilmore’s band. As the cylinder commenced to revolve and the music of the band was heard the farmer dropped the tubes and ran for the door, saying that a band was coming down street and he wanted to see if his horses were tied all right.<sup>310</sup>

A STORY is going the rounds of the press about a farmer who went into a drug store and for the first time saw a phonograph. He was told to drop a nickel in the slot and hear the music. Farmer, doubting, dropped in a nickle [sic], put the tubes to his ears, and, after listening a second, started for the door with the hasty exclamation: “Gosh all fish hooks! Here comes a brass band and I left them mules unhitched.”<sup>311</sup>

The identity of the ignorant visitor was also subject to adaptation depending on the nature of the local peripheries, as we see in another variant of the story from 1895 set in Harry Silverman’s store in Atlanta, Georgia, the characters in this case hailing from the Cumberland Mountains:

Two men from the mountains drove up in front of the place day before yesterday, stopped their team outside and walked in. One of them wanted to know what the curious machine was.

“That?” asked Harry. “That’s a phonograph. You drop a nickel in the slot and hear the music.”

The man dropped his nickel in. He put the tubes to his ears. In a moment the cylinder commenced to revolve. The man threw it down instantly and started to dash out of the room.

“Hold the mules, Jim,” he shouted, “they’re durn fools when they hear a band play!”<sup>312</sup>

In 1899, the *Phonoscope* referred to “the somewhat aged story of the suburban gentleman who dropped a nickel in the Phonograph and upon hearing the preliminary crash of the cymbals in the band selection, rushed out to hold his horses,”<sup>313</sup> implying that the story was so widely known in this form as to have become tiresome. Nevertheless, localized

versions of the story did continue to appear in print, as we find in these examples from 1899, 1900, and 1902:

Speaking of graphophones, a funny thing happened in an Eagle street [*localized for a North Adams, Massachusetts newspaper*] store some time ago. There was one of the nickle in the slot variety on exhibition, and when a farmer entered, leaving his horses outside unhitched, he caught sight of it and decided to investigate. With some show of nervousness he dropped in his nickle, put the tubes to his ears, and a smile broke over his face as he heard the preliminary rasping. Suddenly he dropped the tube with a shout, and running for the door cried, "Gol darn the luck, here I've just got the thing started, and here comes a band up the street. My horses'll run away sure. Just my luck to forget to hitch 'em." And the loafers who glanced at the phonograph saw that it was loaded with Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever."<sup>314</sup>

A countryman dropped into the bar at the village hotel and called for a drink. Just as he was about to stow it beneath his vest the Phonograph began to play one of the popular cake walks. A look akin to terror came over his face. He set his glass down on the bar and making a bolt for the door exclaimed: "Gee Willikins! there comes the Warren band [*localized for a Warren, Pennsylvania newspaper*] down the street and I forgot to tie my horses."<sup>315</sup>

It is said of a farmer living near Eldora [*i.e., Eldora, Iowa, localized for a newspaper in Greene, Iowa, some thirty miles to the northeast*] that he was given an invitation while in town the other day, to listen to a phonograph. He was shown how to adjust the ear piece and the machine started. Suddenly he dropped the whole thing and started for the street exclaiming: "Gosh! there comes a brass band up the street and I left my mules untied."<sup>316</sup>

Some versions of the story were copied verbatim from newspaper to newspaper, but the existence of so many variants, as well as the joke about the traveling salesman telling it to the Englishman, suggests that it most likely circulated orally as well as in print. In fact, the misperception described here would have been highly unlikely to occur during this period because most commercial band phonograms then opened not with music but with spoken announcements identifying what the listener was about to hear, often presenting it explicitly as a phonographic representation. However, the misperception could conceivably have occurred *if the spoken announcement had not existed as a convention*. Curiously enough, the story appears to have stopped circulating just as spoken announcements began to be phased out, as though the potential for such mistakes were no longer of sufficient interest to sustain it.

The same individuals who made the phonographically ignorant the butt of jokes presumably considered themselves, by contrast, to be phonographically sophisticated. Indeed, as the phonograph developed from a rare novelty into a common household object, we might expect such people to have reacted with increasing hostility to anything that suggested they might be uncomfortable with it or needed guidance to make sense of the listening experiences it offered, however urgently they might once have required such

help. There is some evidence that the spoken phonogram announcement was perceived—and ultimately resented—as an example of such guidance.

One window onto the reception of spoken announcements is provided by later accounts in which writers, working from memory, misreported certain aspects of them. These sources reveal what individual listeners had considered memorable about the announcements and, conversely, what they had found to be inessential and forgettable details. For instance, although spoken announcements actually appear at the beginning of commercial phonograms, a retrospective newspaper article of 1937 refers to “the closing words of each disc: ‘This is an Edison record.’”<sup>317</sup> This statement suggests that the writer had understood the announcement as functioning primarily to identify the company that had produced a given phonogram and that it was not so important whether it came at the beginning or the end so long as it marked one of the boundaries, bracketing the whole as the raising or lowering of a curtain brackets a theatrical performance. Another article of the mid-1940s describes the announcement as follows: “An announcer would recite the name of the piece, gave the name of the composer, lyric writer and songster and then warn the listener that the music would follow immediately.”<sup>318</sup> The composer and lyricist were rarely named in spoken announcements, suggesting that the specific content of the announcements had not been all that memorable. What is more interesting is the statement that the announcement had “warned” the listener about what was going to happen. No phonogram announcements were formally worded as warnings, but this comment implies that their function (or, at least, one of their functions) was to induce listeners to prepare themselves mentally for the unfamiliar listening experience to follow. We do find occasional references in articles of the 1890s to listeners perceiving the sounds they heard at the start of phonograms as “warnings,” for example: “A humming sound with a rising inflection *warned* the listeners that the machine was getting into action. Then came the introduction, in which a voice announces that the piece would be a dialogue.”<sup>319</sup> The spoken announcement was also sometimes portrayed as a kind of phonographic ice-breaker:

The operator started the machinery, and a small voice announced that a cornet solo from “Il Trovatore” would be rendered.

The crowd looked incredulous, but from the moment the first note was struck until the solo was finished not a sound beyond that of the music was heard. The first effort of the phonograph was a decided success.<sup>320</sup>

In the incunabular years of commercial phonography, the spoken announcement or “warning” may have carried listeners past their initial shock, bracing them so that by the time they reached the body of the recorded performance the experience could be comfortable and entertaining rather than numinous or confusing. However, few writers of the 1890s or later presented this as a universal phenomenon: a sophisticated phonograph user presumably did not need to be warned before listening to something as commonplace as a prerecorded song. Instead, startled reactions to spoken announcements were attributed to the socially marginalized and technologically ignorant.

Examples of stories in which “rubes” or other marginal types react specifically to spoken phonogram announcements are not easy to find, other than those from 1891 that focus specifically on the announcement of recording locations; but they do exist. In 1901, a poem appeared in the *Phonogram-2* purporting to describe a farmer’s reaction to hearing an Edison phonograph for the first time:

I sot right down an’ heerd it—gee!  
A gol derved whole brass band!  
Th’ man in thet machine sez he  
“It’s the best in all the land.”

Then he hollers out, “The next ’ll be  
“A savage bull-dog fight”  
I c’ d almost see them dorgs, b’ gee!  
An’ hear the dern pups bite!<sup>321</sup>

Here the “rube” is supposed to have conceptualized the announcer as a person “in” the phonograph, commenting on the merits of the program and introducing each selection in turn so that the listener would know what to expect, much as a live exhibitor might have done. A few of Joel Chandler Harris’ stories about “Uncle Remus” center similarly on the lead character’s first exposures to and misperceptions of new technologies of communication. A short conversation between Remus and some of his peers about the phonograph or “fonygraf—dish yer inst’ument w’at kin holler ’roun’ like little chillun in de back yard” appears in *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (1880), but is limited to hearsay and speculation because none of the characters has yet experienced the technology at first hand.<sup>322</sup> A sequel, *Uncle Remus and His Friends* (1892), contains several “sketches of negro character” that place Remus more directly in contact with new media. In “Uncle Remus at the Telephone,” the mistress of the household in which

Remus is employed calls her husband and places Remus on the line in order to observe his discomfiture and bewilderment—he assumes the person with whom he is speaking is somehow trapped inside the apparatus.<sup>323</sup> More importantly for our purposes, in “A Queer Experience with the Phonograph,” the household has just obtained a talking machine for home entertainment and, as with the telephone, Miss Sally introduces Uncle Remus to the new technology as a lark. He initially misidentifies the earpieces as a harness, something like blinders on a horse, but is finally persuaded to put them on:

Uncle Remus adjusted the tubes to his ears, and his Miss Sally started the machine. First came the announcement of the piece in a voice that sounded like it had been dug out of a tin mine and hardened by the Bessemer process. It was so startlingly near, that Uncle Remus, whose politeness is a part of his nature, dodged his head, and exclaimed “Suh!” rolling his eyes at Miss Sally.

Then the band struck up, and the old man seemed to enjoy it immensely. He shut his eyes, and then suddenly opened them, as if to make sure that he was still in the neighborhood. Presently the band concluded with the usual crash, and Uncle Remus drew a long breath of relief, as his Miss Sally stopped the phonograph.<sup>324</sup>

This passage describes Uncle Remus’ initial disorientation at hearing the voice of the announcer followed by his relatively relaxed enjoyment of the subsequent musical selection. The spoken announcement thus appears to have eased him into the experience of listening to the body of the recorded performance; If there had been no announcement, Uncle Remus would instead presumably have “dodged his head” at hearing the opening strains of the music. At the same time, Harris implies that other listeners, such as Miss Sally, would have handled the entire situation with more aplomb.

Previous speculation into the social implications of the spoken phonogram announcement has associated it with politeness and sophistication rather than with vulgarity and ignorance. “Polite, stodgy and rhetorical, the announcement gave the phonograph...a pious note of respectability,” writes Tim Fabrizio. “Like disguising the automobile as a buggy, the announcement was a typically Victorian reaction to science which gave the otherwise rude and unnerving chatterbox some semblance of grace and propriety.” On the basis of this view, he reads the stylistic choices adopted by phonogram announcers as reflections of broader social change. As an example of “the announcement at its height, when it was integrally relevant to the society which spawned it,” he advances this elaborate formula from the late 1890s: “‘All he would do was whistle,’ comic song, as sung by Mister Dan W. Quinn, Edison record.” On the words *as* and *Mister*, Fabrizio comments: “They are small, fragile, the first to disappear when the

twentieth century began to weed out the extraneous.” With the start of the moulded cylinder period, even the recitation of the company name strikes him as half-hearted: “It seems hurried, clipped and strident, like one’s manners when one grows up and realizes that people no longer expect you to use them.” Fabrizio thus presents the spoken announcement as one among many casualties of the accelerated pace of twentieth-century life and of a corresponding decline in etiquette. Phonograms ceased to be formally introduced, it seems, because society no longer expected such “polite” gestures in *any* context.<sup>325</sup>

Fabrizio’s nostalgic interpretation of the spoken announcement as an index of waning politeness throughout American society is appealing for its attempt to seek cultural rather than coldly technological reasons for its existence and disappearance. However, I find that his interpretation also clashes with other developments in sound media during the same period which suggest that a very different dynamic was at work. The spoken announcement disappeared from phonograms almost simultaneously with a push by the industry to make the phonograph look more like a respectable piece of household furniture rather than something that belonged in a laboratory or a machine shop. The harbinger of this trend was the Victrola, introduced in 1906, its horn inverted and concealed from view inside the case, where “it did not remind people about how the sounds came out,” as had the earlier external-horn machines.<sup>326</sup> The spoken announcement also disappeared within a few years of the backlash against “hello” as a word for opening telephone conversations on the grounds of its supposed vulgarity. I surmise that the first decade of the twentieth century marked not a general relaxation of etiquette with regard to telephones and phonographs, as Fabrizio would have it, but rather just the opposite: a sudden obsession with assimilating sound media to social and aesthetic norms from which, until then, they had been considered exempt because of their newness and unfamiliarity. The spoken announcement on a commercial phonogram was just as formally and functionally distinct from the “live” introduction of a performance or a person as the telephonic “hello” was from a face-to-face greeting. It was not a transparently mediated gesture of politeness but a conspicuously medium-specific speech convention that “stuck out” aurally just as much as an external phonograph horn did visually. As “hello” came to be perceived as an embarrassing reminder of the early years

of telephony in which users had shouted into the receiver out of ignorance, so I believe the spoken phonogram announcement became associated with a lack of sophistication and savvy, a bygone time when listeners had felt a need to be talked through the listening experience, informed of what was going on, assured that their senses were not deceiving them and that their horses, however skittish, were not liable to be frightened by bands passing by on the street. Furthermore, the parodies quoted earlier suggest that the spoken announcement was associated stylistically less with the formal introduction of persons in polite society than with the bombastic advertising pitch. Insofar as middle-class ideals of politeness and respectability factored into the debate over spoken phonogram announcements, I conclude that they would have worked in favor of, rather than against, their curtailment and eventual elimination.

It might be argued that “hello” survived in telephony, whereas the spoken announcement did not survive in phonography, and that this difference in outcome suggests that the two phenomena may not be as closely related as I am implying. In fact, the distinction between the two cases is not as sharp as it might at first seem. It must be remembered that some telephone companies did bow to pressure from the anti-hello campaign and order their operators to stop answering in the customary way. Businesses and other institutions were also capable of enforcing executive decisions about how their employees should and should not answer the telephone (even today it is common for businesses to supply their employees with “scripts” for answering calls). These efforts failed to unseat “hello” from its use in home-mode telephony because of popular resistance, whether conscious or due to the inertia of habit. The vast majority of telephone users, we must assume, simply continued to answer “hello,” as they still do. The decision by recording companies to jettison spoken announcements on commercial phonograms was, like decisions about how to answer telephones in the business world, easy to implement by fiat; once employees were told to drop the offending convention, that was that. However, *amateur* recordists continued to announce many of their homemade, home-mode phonograms years after the practice had been eliminated from commercial phonography.<sup>327</sup> Even earlier, home-mode and commercial phonogram announcements had begun to diverge. In 1900, one set of guidelines had advised amateurs to announce their musical phonograms following something like then-current



professional protocols, but with a subtle difference: “The singer should make an announcement of the title of the song he sings, also his full name, and it is well to announce also the date the record was made.”<sup>328</sup> The suggested inclusion of the date ran contrary to commercial norms, but in the home mode, contextualizing information that helped listeners recall the circumstances under which a phonogram had been taken could sometimes overshadow all other details, including the phonogram’s “content.” A 1984 oral history publication quotes ninety-year-old Lennie Hern of Decatur County, Indiana, whose father had brought an Edison phonograph back from a trip to Greensburg for jury duty eighty-two years before:

And he bought a recorder, and we even recorded our own songs. January 12, 1902. My father announced that and that was when it was—January 12, 19 and 2—that we did the recording of the songs. One Sunday afternoon when it was so snowy that we couldn’t go to church or anything, and we stayed home and recorded the songs.<sup>329</sup>

Hern did not volunteer the names of the songs his family had sung while snowed in; instead, the detail that remained most vivid in his mind was his father’s spoken announcement of the date—January 12, 1902—which, according to the calendar, was indeed a Sunday. For Hern, it was the memorability and personal significance of the event, and not the songs per se, that had made the phonogram interesting. The speaking of an announcement addressed to an “imaginary” audience may also have helped to invoke or reinforce the phonogenic frame for performers otherwise inexperienced at sustaining it. For whatever reason, spoken announcements were to remain common on home-mode phonograms at least into the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>330</sup> On closer examination, then, it seems that the spoken announcement and the telephonic “hello” actually shared the same ultimate fate, surviving in the home mode even as they were consciously banished from the commercial mode.

\* \* \* \* \*

The introduction of sound media created strange new relationships between speakers and addressees, and between performers and audiences, to which it took time for users to accustom themselves. Persons involved in early telephony and commercial phonography initially adopted distinctive models for speaking to help them conceptualize what the new media were doing by analogy with other cultural forms, telephony suggesting a shout across a distance (“hallo-o-o!”) and commercial phonography

suggesting a public exhibition with an announcer who would introduce each piece of content in order to prepare the audience to receive it with an appropriate mindset. Over time, these analogies ceased to reflect prevailing orientations towards the media they had once helped to make comprehensible: telephones were for conversation, not shouting, and commercial phonograms were no longer used primarily for formal “exhibitions.” Some critics even came to resent medium-specific speech conventions as unnecessarily foregrounding the fact of mediation, reflecting a lack of sophistication and etiquette, and impeding a desired illusion of transparency or immediacy. These concerns, I believe, can account for both the presence and abandonment of spoken announcements on commercial phonograms better than any of the more “technical” explanations that have been offered, providing one of the most widespread and conspicuous linkages between the changing culture and aesthetics of early phonography and the form and structure of the phonograms themselves.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Telephone Exchange,” *Globe* (Atchison, Kansas), Oct. 6, 1879, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Reprinted from the *Electrician*, quoting the *Concord Monitor*, in *Nature* 22 (Sept. 9, 1880), 442. In 1899, an ability to mimic telephone conversations with deceptive accuracy was attributed to a drug-store parrot (“Polly at the ‘Phone,” from the *Chicago News*, in the *Portsmouth Herald* [Portsmouth, New Hampshire], July 26, 1899, p. 4).

<sup>3</sup> “Words Coined in Boston,” based on a talk given by C. W. Ernst, from *Boston Transcript*, in *New York Times*, May 21, 1899, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> “Burdette,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 3, 1887, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> “Edison Eulogies in Song,” from *New York Sun*, Apr. 14, 1905, in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:3 (May 1905), 10; see also “Edison the Inventor of Telephone Hello,” *New York Times*, Apr. 14, 1905, p. 3. Despite the lack of a patent, it had formerly been suggested that the telephonic greeting might be subject to intellectual property rights of a different kind: “The telephone connects the newspaper office with the City Hall and police headquarters and introduces a new formula of address. The remark ‘Hillo-Hillo,’ has probably been copy righted [sic] with the instrument” (“Hints to Inventors,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 9, 1878, p. 2).

<sup>6</sup> “Edison’s Autobiographical Notes,” TAEB 3:693.

<sup>7</sup> Edison to Thomas B. A. David, Aug. 15, 1877 (TAED X012EH).

<sup>8</sup> “Did Thomas Alva Edison Invent the Word ‘Hello?’” *Antique Phonograph News* 6 (July-Aug. 1992), 5-6. This item consists of a rejection of the theory by Robertson Cochrane reprinted from the Toronto *Globe and Mail* of Mar. 28, 1992, followed by Allen Koenigsberg’s rebuttal. For the original argument in favor of Edison’s “invention” of the word, see Allen Koenigsberg and Robert Feinstein, “The First ‘Hello!’ Thomas Edison, the Phonograph and the Telephone,” *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 8:6 (1987), 1, 3-9. On page nine, the authors suggest that Edison’s “hello” may have been “a misspelling of a word he heard with difficulty,” i.e., the result of his partial deafness.

<sup>9</sup> “In about half-an-hour sister’s train made its appearance & I startled them all with a ‘Hoy-Hoy’ as a call to supper—which I had brought with me” (Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, Aug. 3, 1883, AGBFP); “After breakfast Friday morning I was just going downstairs when the words ‘Hoy hoy’ attracted my attention and there was Dr. Ker of Winnipeg with Laurie” (Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, Aug. 31, 1884, AGBFP); “I thought that Mr. Mitchell was up to some of his tricks—making a rather poor imitation of cat’s mewing. It was too loud to be natural. Mr. Ferguson and I flew outside to catch him at it—but he was nowhere in sight. I hoy-hoyed for him—and he replied from a great distance—showing

---

that he was not the author of the disturbance” (Alexander Graham Bell to Mabel Hubbard Bell, Nov. 20, 1904, AGBFP).

<sup>10</sup> See entries for “hallow” (v. 2), “halloo,” “hollo(w),” “holla,” “hallo(a),” “hoy,” and “ahoy” in Simpson and Weiner, *Oxford English Dictionary*, 1:272, 6:1045-6, 7:308, 310, 457.

<sup>11</sup> Falconer *Dict. Marine* s.v. *Holloa*, 1769, cited under “hoy” in Simpson and Weiner, *Oxford English Dictionary*, 7:310. Another example of this combination of call and response: “The skipper hailed at random: / ‘Schooner ahoy!’ / ‘Hello!’ answered a voice through the fog” (W. V. Wells, “Fishing On the Newfoundland Banks,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 22 [Mar. 1861], 459).

<sup>12</sup> From *New Haven Register*, in *Hornellsville Tribune* (Hornellsville, New York), July 28, 1871, p. 3; also in *Weekly Citizen* (Centerville, Iowa), July 29, 1871, p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Fictional letter from Joe Strickland, “Konstanty Nople, Jennywerry, 1828,” from *New York Enquirer*, in *Delaware Patriot and American Watchman* (Wilmington, Delaware), May 2, 1828, p. 2; in Masonic mythology, Jubela, Jubelo and Jubelum are the “three ruffians” who killed the master mason Hiram Abiff. The earliest instances of the spelling “hello” previously reported date from 1834; see Barry Popik to ADS-L, Aug. 8, 2003 (archived at <http://listserv.linguistlist.org/archives/ads-l.html>), and a string his e-mail instigated on the “Wordorigins” list during the following week (archived at <http://p066.ezboard.com/bwordoriginsorg>). In this string, two instances from 1834 were cited by “Imran” from Literature Online: one from William Gilmore Simms, “Guy Rivers: A Tale of Georgia,” and one from William Alexander Caruthers, “The Kentuckian in New York.” Another appearance I have found independently also dates from 1834: “He screamed out, ‘Hello! Mister, I wonder you’re so mighty wise considerin you know so little’” (“Lazy Sam,” from the *Lexington Intelligencer*, in *Huron Reflector* [Norwalk, Ohio], Mar. 11, 1834, p. 1). Popik’s original example was drawn from a Cincinnati newspaper, but I have been unable to obtain a more exact citation.

<sup>14</sup> “‘Hello, yeu! Dinner aint’t night ready, nor nauthin?’” (“Morbid Liver,” from the *Philadelphia City Item*, in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 3, 1851, p. 1); “No, Judge, I didn’t see a soul in the stage. I raly can’t inform you. Why don’t you ask the kurnel? Hello! look here, Kurnel! Step this way—the Judge wants to ask you who—” (“Stage-Coach Stories,” *Putnam’s Monthly Magazine* 3 [May 1854], 510); “Old Mr. Townly rid up, an’ he sez, sez he, / ‘Hello, boys! what’s the fite about?’” (“Editor’s Drawer,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 16 [Jan. 1858], 283); “‘Hello, Colonel! how ar’ ye?’ cried the red-faced liquor-vender” (“Among the Pines,” *Continental Monthly* 2 [July 1862], 35); “Hello, Cap’n! you don’t want a pilot nor nothin’ about this ’ere craft, do ye?” (“Editor’s Drawer,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 26 [Dec. 1862], at 140); “HELLO! hello! which way now, Mrs. Walker? It’ll rain afore you git there, if you ’ve got fur to go” (Alice Cary, “The Great Doctor. I.,” *Atlantic Monthly* 18 [July 1866], 12); “I s’pose people that knew my mother, seem’ me a little shaver toddlin’ about, ’d say, ‘Hello, little Meggar!’ and it come that way” (William M. Baker, “The New Timothy,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 36 [Mar. 1868], 446); Cartoon caption: “*Young Man*. ‘HELLO! MRS. CRUMBLETY, WHAT ARE YER DOIN’ ALONG ER THAT NEWFOUNDLING DORG?’” (“Very Appropriate,” *Punchinello* 2 [Nov. 5, 1870], 94); “Hello, Jimmy Finn! What yez doin’ here?” (Edward Crapsey, “The Nether Side of New York,” *The Galaxy* 12 [Aug. 1871], 171).

<sup>15</sup> As part of a fictional African-American “corn song”: “‘Water! Water!’—hear him bellow, / ‘Just from the spring so fresh and cold;’ / But none did he git, for all he cried ‘hello!’ / FIRE’s what’s for him—that rarscal old!” (“Everstone,” *The American Whig Review* 11 [Apr. 1850], 383); “‘Hello!’ he exclaimed, rushing forward and joining the press—‘taint no euse o’ your scrouging—’taint” (“Morbid Liver,” from the *Philadelphia City Item*, reprinted in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 3, 1851, p. 1); “But hello! what onder the sun is she about!” (“Editor’s Drawer,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 8 [May 1854], 852); “‘Hello! there’s a feller I’ve got tu speak tu about some oats,’ he continued” (“Stage-Coach Stories,” 510); “‘Jest call ’em back!’ cried the Deacon, imploringly—‘or stay; I will—hello there!—Cap’n Brown, I say—Leftenant Jones and a lot on ye—here—hello!—come back!’” (“Twice Married,” *Putnam’s Monthly Magazine* 6 [Aug. 1855], 187-8); “Hello! what’s that? By gracious if ’tain’t green corn” (“Nancy Blynn’s Lovers,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 16 [May 1858], 765); “Hello! git out’n the track here!” (A. H. Guernsey, “Surry County, North Carolina,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 25 [July 1862], 184); “What? That poster? No, hain’t looked at it partickler. Let’s see. ‘Thousan’ dollars reward.’ Hello! Guess I hev seen it” (James T. McKay, “Kit Grale,” *The Galaxy* 6 [Sept. 1868], 294); “I didn’t recognize ye at fust, but I swan when ye began a-talkin’, that was enuff fer me. Hello! fetched yer woman ’long tew, hey?” (W. H. Gibson, “Snug Hamlet and Hometown,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 59 [Aug. 1879], 386).

<sup>16</sup> “‘Hello, stranger!’ said he to a man walking by the side of the wagon. / ‘Hello, yourself!’ exclaimed the wagoner” (“The Ugly Family,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 23, 1852, p. 1); “‘Nobody was in sight, and the darkey went boldly to a gangway and shouted out, ‘hello Bill?’ / ‘Hello it is!’ came a response” (“The Uses of Ventriloquism,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 13, 1857, p. 2); “‘Hello!’ said I. / ‘Hello! yourself,’ said he” (H. P. L. in “Editor’s Table,” *Continental Monthly* 1 [Apr. 1862], 482).

<sup>17</sup> “‘Jim!’ / ‘Hello.’ / ‘I’ve got a conundrum for you’” (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Dec. 18, 1848, p. 2); “[H]e encountered the Squire, quietly at work. / ‘I say Squire!’ / ‘Hello!’ / ‘What are you doin’?” (“Farmer Thorow,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 22, 1850, p. 4).

<sup>18</sup> As used to hail a riverboat: “One day I think it was the day after we left Pittsburgh, we saw a white man with a black boy beside him, evidently designing to take passage, as the boy was waving with might and main a large handkerchief on the end of a stick. Impatient that the steamboat by her movements indicated no notice on the part of her officers, of the signal aforesaid, the white man took the stick, which proved to be a ram rod, from the hand of the negro, and leaning upon a rifle which he held in his hand, waved it, with a good deal of emphasis in his manner, while we could hear his stentorian voice (it was indeed stentorian to reach us at that distance,) exclaiming— / ‘Hello!’ / ‘Hello!’ replied a voice from the upper deck of our steamer, the Fort Adams” (“Old Kentuck.—A True Story,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Nov. 22, 1853, p. 1); and as used to hail a stagecoach: “‘Whist! Hello, stage!’ And Mr. Jones the next moment was climbing into the writhing mass of morning-paper-reading business-men who, through much tribulation to ribs and toes, were jolting down town” (Fitz Hugh Ludlow, “Little Brother,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 20 [Mar. 1860], 492).

<sup>19</sup> George Wakeman, “Live Metaphors,” *The Galaxy* 2 (Oct. 1, 1866), 274.

<sup>20</sup> “Reining up his horse some little distance from the General, he shouted: / ‘Hello, old fellow! can you tell me where General Richardson’s head-quarters are?’” (“Editor’s Drawer,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 33 [Sept. 1866], 543); “While the troops were marching through the streets a tall, strapping Kentucky volunteer stepped up to General Taylor . . . , and, ignorant of his rank, accosted him with: ‘Hello, old fellow! can you tell me where I can get any whisky?’” (“Editor’s Drawer,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 35 [Nov. 1867], 813). The combination of “hello” with “fellow” as a term of address had appeared regularly during the late 1850s, possibly due to the same considerations of assonance that Koenigsberg uses to argue for a connection with the word “telephone” and the name “Bell,” e.g. “I have come to take a hand at cards with you, old fellow. But, hello! what ails you?” (“Three Crows; or, the Man Who Had Like to Have Been Married in Spite of Himself,” *United States Democratic Review* 38 [Nov. 1856], 286); “A rough fellow passed the Worcester establishment, noticed an old acquaintance, and bawled out at him, ‘Hello, old fellow’” (“Varieties,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 12, 1857, p. 3); “Hello, Jonce! Why, how are you, old fellow?” (“Editor’s Drawer,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 16 [Jan. 1858], 283). The taboo Koenigsberg assumes for the first syllable of the word (“hell-o”) does not appear to have been the subject of much comment, but the hello/fellow combination does appear in one story based on the license provided by the place name “Heltonville” to utter the offending syllable: “‘Hello!’ I yelled to a fellow away off in a field, ‘is this the road to Hel-tonville?’ letting my voice considerably down on the last two syllables” (“Editor’s Drawer,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 32 [Apr. 1866], 677).

<sup>21</sup> “Editor’s Drawer,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 32 (Apr. 1866), 679.

<sup>22</sup> Alexander Graham Bell to Gardiner Greene Hubbard, Feb. 13, 1877, AGBFP.

<sup>23</sup> Watson, *Birth and Babyhood*, 21. He includes a footnote: “‘Ahoy!’ was the first telephone shout, and was used during the experiments, but ‘hello!’ superseded it when the telephone got into practical use.”

<sup>24</sup> “The Telephone and Phonograph,” undated clipping (Lockport, New York), (TAEM 27:743).

<sup>25</sup> “Talking Through Space,” *Philadelphia Record*, Apr. 20, 1878 (TAEM 25:165).

<sup>26</sup> “Long-Range Chatting,” *Philadelphia Times*, Apr. 3, 1878 (TAEM 94:156).

<sup>27</sup> “Edison ‘At Home,’” *Philadelphia Record*, June 6, 1878 (TAEM 94:222).

<sup>28</sup> A humorous piece in the *Electrical Review* begins: “Mrs. Wary (at the telephone)—‘Hello, hello, Exchange.’ After waiting some time without a reply, Mrs. Wary, in more vigorous tones, pipes out ‘hello.’ Still no reply, whereupon Mrs. Wary softly murmurs so that the telephone will not hear her, ‘Well, I declare, if I don’t believe I forgot to ring. How stupid’” (*Electrical Review*, June 16, 1888, quoted in Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* [New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988], 23).

<sup>29</sup> Mark Twain, “A Telephonic Conversation,” *Atlantic Monthly* 45 (June 1880), 841-2.

---

<sup>30</sup> The *Electrical Review* thus offered the facetious advice: “If you have a telephone in your office or store, ring up Central and then go and wait on a customer. Pay no attention to the bell when Central rings back, but go to the telephone in about fifteen minutes, ring up again and make a kick if the operator is not there waiting on you” (quoted in “A Talk Over the ’Phone. Brooklyn Central Lectures on ‘Cranks I Have Met,’” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Nov. 30, 1890, p. 9).

<sup>31</sup> The operator’s response is “I’ve only got one” (“Very Lively Talk Over the East New York Wire,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Mar. 16, 1888, p. 3).

<sup>32</sup> “What There Isn’t On the Moon,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Nov. 2, 1897, p. 6. Another, more elaborate example of the transition was presented as follows: “Hello, central—hello! Please gimme fo’ hund’ an’ sebenty-three on three sixt’-fo’— fo’ hund’ an’ seben’-three on three sixt’-fo’. Hello! Suh? Yes, suh; fo’ hund’ an’ seben’-three on three sixt’-fo’. *Street-car stables* on three sixt’-fo’. Hello! hello! Hello! Dat you, street-car stables? Hello! Yes. Who dat? Oh! Dat you, Mis’ Mellerdin? Yes, suh; yes, suh; Jim; Jim; dis Jim; JIM. G-i-m, Jim” (Thomas Nelson Page, untitled short story in “Editor’s Drawer,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 85 [June 1892], 158).

<sup>33</sup> “Through the Telephone,” *New York Times*, Nov. 12, 1882, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> “Telephone Talk,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 20, 1883, p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> *Washington Post*, July 31, 1881, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup> “Took a Pistol,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Sept. 27, 1890, p. 6.

<sup>37</sup> “The Telephone Girl is Mad,” *New York Times*, May 5, 1891, p. 5. A decade later, telephone operators in Denver were similarly told to substitute the word “waiting” when handling a subscriber’s call, although they objected that they would run the risk of being called “waitresses” (“Sweat Shop Contamination,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Feb. 17, 1901, p. 20).

<sup>38</sup> *Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, Wisconsin), May 11, 1895, p. 5.

<sup>39</sup> “Note and Comment: Style in Telephoning,” *Chicago Tribune*, Apr. 16, 1896, p. 12.

<sup>40</sup> “Refined Boston Girls Say ‘Hullo!,’” from *Washington Star*, in *Boston Daily Globe*, Jan. 23, 1900, p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> “Brand Hello as Vulgar,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar. 25, 1902, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> “Considers ‘Hello’ Impolite,” from *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, in *Mansfield News* (Mansfield, Ohio), Apr. 2, 1902, p. 2. According to another source, the operators had been “instructed not to use the word” (“Wanted, a New Word,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Apr. 13, 1902, p. 4, transcription at <http://www.uta.fi/FAST/US8/PC/heaveno.html>, accessed June 15, 2004).

<sup>43</sup> “At first it was so extraordinary that the uninitiated person who waited for the ‘hello’ signal before beginning the conversation became confused when the person at the other end of the wire said ‘good afternoon,’ and an awkward pause followed. . . . ‘Some people seemed to have been stricken dumb, when the person whom they called up said “good morning,”’ said one of the operators. ‘I remember one instance where a woman who had been greeted with “good morning,” after an embarrassing pause, said: “why don’t you say “hello?”’” (“Brand Hello as Vulgar,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar. 25, 1902, p. 1). Similar confusion was reported in Oshkosh: “It is quite a common occurrence when using a telephone to have some one keep shouting ‘Hello! Hello!’ until he hears the answering ‘hello!’ You may begin talking but he will take nothing for an answer until he hears the silly echo of his own voice, ‘Hello!’” (“Don’t ‘Holler’ or ‘Hello,’” *Daily Northwestern* [Oshkosh, Wisconsin], May 30, 1903, p. 8).

<sup>44</sup> “Brand Hello as Vulgar,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Mar. 25, 1902, p. 1. Again: “The proposed innovation is supported by the argument that the term ‘hello’ has long since been eliminated from ordinary conversation in refined circles and that having suffered this fate it is not in proper taste to empl[o]y it in conversation over the telephone” (“Hello, Central!,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Apr. 2, 1902, p. 6).

<sup>45</sup> “Considers ‘Hello’ Impolite,” from *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, in *Mansfield News* (Mansfield, Ohio), Apr. 2, 1902, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> “‘Hello’ is Also Barred at Appleton,” *Grand Rapids Tribune* (Grand Rapids, Wisconsin), Apr. 5, 1902, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> “Soft Answers Will Supplant Harsh ‘Hello,’” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 18, 1903, p. A6.

<sup>48</sup> “Don’t ‘Holler’ or ‘Hello,’” *Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, Wisconsin), May 30, 1903, p. 8.

<sup>49</sup> “Topics of the Times,” *New York Times*, Dec. 30, 1904, p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> *Pere Marquette Monthly Magazine*, quoted in “Taboo on the Word ‘Hello,’” *Coshocton Daily Times* (Coshocton, Ohio), Feb. 19, 1912, p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> “The Telephone ‘Hello,’” from *Rehoboth Sunday Herald*, in *Boston Daily Globe*, May 7, 1911, p. SM7.

<sup>52</sup> *Daily Kennebec Journal* (Augusta, Maine), Apr. 7, 1902, p. 4.

- <sup>53</sup> “Editorial Points,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Mar. 30, 1902, p. 32.
- <sup>54</sup> “Campaign Against the ‘Hello,’” *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 26, 1902, p. 4.
- <sup>55</sup> “Hello, Central!,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Apr. 2, 1902, p. 6.
- <sup>56</sup> “Wanted, a New Word,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, Apr. 13, 1902, p. 4, transcription at <http://www.uta.fi/FAST/US8/PC/heaveno.html>, accessed June 15, 2004. Again: “It may be said that it took the telephone to make ‘hello’ what it is today. It never amounted to much before wire transmission came into general use. One used it as a salutation on meeting a neighbor in the street, but it did not become a real, dynamic force in the vocabulary of men until an idiosyncratic telephone transmitter took it up and made it one of the busiest little words in the English language” (“Hello,” *Christian Science Monitor*, May 8, 1930, p. 18).
- <sup>57</sup> “No Longer a Slang Phrase,” *Star and Sentinel* (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania), Nov. 27, 1915, p. 7.
- <sup>58</sup> “Telephone Courtesy—A Business Asset,” advertisement for the New York Telephone Company, *New York Times*, Nov. 12, 1913, p. 11.
- <sup>59</sup> Quoted in Claude S. Fischer, *America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone to 1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 70.
- <sup>60</sup> “The Telephone ‘Hello,’” from *Rehoboth Sunday Herald*, in *Boston Daily Globe*, May 7, 1911, p. SM7.
- <sup>61</sup> “Why Are Our Telephone Manners Bad?” *New York Times*, Oct. 26, 1913, p. X12.
- <sup>62</sup> Herbert N. Casson, *The History of the Telephone* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1910), 159. “Beau Brummel” was the nickname of George Bryan Brummel (1778-1840).
- <sup>63</sup> This was described as the phrase replaced by the dial tone of automatic switching in “James Exchange Adds Thousands of Dial Phones,” *Syracuse Herald* (Syracuse, New York), Feb. 28, 1926, p. 20.
- <sup>64</sup> “No More Hello, Central,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Apr. 11, 1894, p. 2. New York City did not convert over to automatic dialing until the 1920s; see e.g. “Automatic Phones Soon to Work Here,” *New York Times*, Mar. 12, 1922, p. 16, which stated that the system would still be a “hybrid” for the next ten years.
- <sup>65</sup> See e.g. “Start Crusade Against the Use of ‘Hello’ and ‘Dam,’” *Coshocton Daily Tribune* (Coshocton, Ohio), Feb. 10, 1911, p. 8). The reversal of “hello” to “oh hell” had long been the subject of jokes, as for example “She—Why don’t they have some other telephone call besides this eternal ‘Hello?’ He—They do, my dear; they frequently say the syllables reversed” (“The Telephone,” from *New York Press*, in *Washington Post*, Jan. 19, 1905, p. 6); “Green—‘I wonder who first started the word hello when talking through the telephone.’ Teller—‘It must have been some one who saw how easily the syllables could be reversed’” (From exchange, in “Notes by the Funny Men,” *Daily Northwestern* [Oshkosh, Wisconsin], Dec. 28, 1895, p. 4); “The choice of the word was certainly very apt, especially considering its availability with the syllables reversed when the operator tells you that the line is busy” (“Editorial Points,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Apr. 15, 1905, p. 6); and, in a response to the claim that “prayer is the heavenly telephone”: “Just imagine a prayer beginning with ‘Hello!’ and closing the same word transposed” (quoted from the *Minneapolis Tribune* in “Contemporary Humor,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 31, 1887, p. 13); for other variants see “Campaign Against the ‘Hello,’” *Chicago Tribune*, Mar. 26, 1902, p. 4; “At the Telephone,” from *Harper’s Weekly*, in *Washington Post*, Apr. 16, 1905, p. E2; and “A Pertinent Question,” from *Chicago Times-Herald*, in *Washington Post*, Dec. 1, 1900, p. 6. For a satirical response to this variety of anti-hello crusade, see “Hurrah for Reform,” *Lima News* (Lima, Ohio), July 30, 1912, p. 11, which observed that the words *healthy*, *Helicon*, *hellebore*, *damask*, *Damascus*, and *damages* would have to be replaced on the same grounds. More recently, the commissioners of Kleberg County, Texas voted to replace the word “hello” with “heaven-o” (see e.g. “Heavenly Way to Say Hello,” *Toronto Star*, Jan. 16, 1997, p. A4).
- <sup>66</sup> “Secretary of the Navy Meyer has prohibited the word ‘Hello’ on naval telephone wires. Mr. Meyer believes that much time is lost by using the ‘Hello’ every time a telephone connection is made. Instead he has directed that the person receiving the call shall answer with the name of the office in which the call is received” (“Bars ‘Hellos’ on Naval Phones,” *Gettysburg Times* [Gettysburg, Pennsylvania], Mar. 29, 1911, p. 3); “Among the suggestions for expediting telephone business is the elimination of the general form of greeting of making use of the word ‘Hello.’ It is estimated that if the habit of saying ‘Hello’ were eliminated, approximately one second would be saved at each of the 5,000,000 calls handled daily by the New York City Telephone Company. Five million seconds, reduced to days, makes about 58, or nearly two months” (“Time Wasted on One Superfluous Word,” *Bridgeport Telegram* [Bridgeport, Connecticut], Nov. 2, 1923, p. 5); see also Walter Mendenhall, “News-Graphs,” *Van Nuys News* (Van Nuys, California), Sept. 19, 1949, p. 1.

---

<sup>67</sup> “IN THE business world it is no longer considered good form when you telephone to use the word ‘Hello’—designated by one of the telephone directors as ‘an ungraceful and rude little word.’ Much less then ought it to be used in social telephoning and the telephoning that takes place after business hours and in the home” (Mary Marshall Duffee, “The Right Thing at the Right Time,” *Kingsport Times* [Kingsport, Tennessee], Nov. 4, 1921, p. 6).

<sup>68</sup> “Editorial Points,” from *Pittsburg Gazette Times*, in *Boston Daily Globe*, May 29, 1914, p. 12. I have not made any methodical study of early British telephone speech habits, but it seems “hello” was introduced there somewhat later than in the United States: “The English are manifesting signs of public sorrow at the spread of the brusque salutation ‘Hello,’ which has been introduced in the telephone service in the name of efficiency just as we on this side are eliminating it for a similar end. They say it indicates the decline of good manners” (“Vanishing of ‘Mister,’” *Boston Daily Globe*, Sept. 13, 1918, p. 4).

<sup>69</sup> Robert Hopper, *Telephone Conversation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 56-61.

<sup>70</sup> “The Telephone ‘Hello,’” from *Rehoboth Sunday Herald*, in *Boston Daily Globe*, May 7, 1911, p. SM7; for other similar observations, see note 43 above.

<sup>71</sup> Fischer, *America Calling*, 71, citing evidence from no earlier than 1909-10. In fact, there are earlier *retrospective* comments that imply an early debate over the use of “hello” in telephony, e.g.: “The advent of the telephone in St. Louis brought with it a regular telephone fad. The propriety of using the word ‘Hello’ was discussed pro and con. The emancipation of women had, so to speak, just begun, and some of the old moss-backs shook their heads and wondered what this sinful world was coming to when the young lady operators at central allowed themselves to be thus familiarly addressed by men who were perfect strangers to them. They wanted to start their conversation with ‘Good morning’ or ‘I beg your pardon,’ but after a time, when it dawned on them that this was entirely too slow for conversation that cost so much per week [sic—clause ends abruptly in original]” (“Just What to Do When the Telephone Gets Out of Order,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 31, 1904, p. B1). What is missing, as far as I can tell, is any confirmation of this trend actually dating from the late 1870s or early 1880s.

<sup>72</sup> Laboratory notebook entry, July 17, 1877, Document 969, TAEB 3:440-1; laboratory notebook entry, Aug. 17, 1877, Document 1013, TAEB 3:502-3; Johnson, *Telephone Hand Book*, 11-2; “A Wonderful Invention,” *Scientific American* 37 (Nov. 17, 1877), 304. The following spring, Edison reported specific plans to transmit a phonogram in this way: “Professor Bartlett, of the University of Pennsylvania, is going to deliver a lecture soon, and half of it is to be talked to the phonograph. Then I’ll attach the instrument to the telephone and send the lecture to Philadelphia” (“That Wonderful Edison,” *New York World*, Mar. 29, 1878 [TAEM 94:147]). In fact, the tinfoil phonograph of that period was not capable of intelligibly recording and educing a full half of a lecture, much less of doing so over the telephone, although some demonstrations of transmitting prerecorded speech by telephone and recording music sent over a line are supposed to have taken place in France (“Varieties,” *Indiana Progress* [Pennsylvania, Indiana], Aug. 29, 1878, p. 2).

<sup>73</sup> “Then, speaking of practical uses,” Edison said, “we are now able to put a phonograph cylinder at the telephone and make it talk to some one in New York by wire. This we have done repeatedly” (“The Phonograph Perfected,” *Public Ledger*, Philadelphia, May 12, 1888 [TAEM 146:243]). For an illustration of a device for connecting a Bell-Tainter graphophone with a telephone, from British patent 12860 (Sept. 5, 1888), see “Curiosity Corner: At the Sound of the Tone,” *New Amberola Graphic* 70 (Oct. 1989), 5.

<sup>74</sup> “Phonographic Telephony,” *Advertiser* (Portland, Maine), Feb. 7, 1889 (TAEM 146:415). “Long Distance Music,” *News* (Newark, New Jersey), Feb. 5, 1889 (TAEM 146:377) mentions Edison’s phonogram of BINGEN ON THE RHINE at the *end* of the article, although it does not specifically identify its position in the experiment. This demonstration was billed as “unquestionably the first practical example of speech transmitted telephonically over an actual line wire” (“Recording Telephonic Conversation,” from *Electrical World*, Feb. 16, 1889, in *Morning Oregonian* [Portland, Oregon], Feb. 24, 1889, p. 8).

<sup>75</sup> In addition to the previous citations, see “Sending Songs by Telephone,” *New York Advertiser*, Feb. 5, 1889 (TAEM 146:377); “Telephone and Phonograph,” *Journal* (Syracuse, New York), Feb. 6, 1889 (TAEM 146:378); Bryan, *Edison*, 96-7.

<sup>76</sup> On the evening of July 26, 1889, W. T. Ross of the Tennessee Phonograph Company conducted such a concert for hundreds of telephone listeners in Nashville and surrounding areas, consisting of “the orchestra music, the singing and the whistling of the phonograph,” his goal apparently being to gain local publicity (“Phonographic Serenade,” *American* [Nashville, Tennessee], July 27, 1889 [TAEM 146:455]). Another very early concert by telephone is described in “A Great Musicale,” *Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh,

Wisconsin), Apr. 9, 1890, p. 1. Other agents likewise handled such concerts as promotional events, since there was no convenient way to charge a connection fee for them, but the emphasis shifted from the technology itself to the advertisement of phonograms for sale. In 1891, E. R. Magie transmitted several phonograms from Indianapolis to the Shelbyville, Indiana telephone exchange and supposed that once he had “the state organized and a number of phonographs out” it would “be practicable as well as novel to send samples of his musical records by telephone” (“Musical Records Sampled by Telephone,” *Phonogram* 1 [Aug. 1891], 178-9). A similar experiment was conducted about the same time by a Mr. Cook out of Cedar Rapids, Iowa; see *Phonogram* 1 (Aug. 1891), 182. Some phonograph dealers of the 1900s did end up educating phonograms over the telephone for evaluation by potential customers as an extension of the in-store promotional concert (“Playing Records by Telephone,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:12 [Feb. 1904], 10; “Selling Records by Telephone,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 5:4 [June 1907], 11). Others used telephone wires to transmit them from point to point inside their own shops; see “Novel Phonograph Arrangement,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:2 (Apr. 1906), 7. Yet other businesses tapped the advertising potential of this novel combination of media in a move more analogous to the commercial sponsorship of shows on radio and television. In 1902, a phonograph concert-by-telephone was conducted from F. I. Graham’s drug store in Cortland, New York, which had the effect of publicizing the store not just in the local newspaper, but even in the nationally circulating *Phonogram-2*, which copied the story (“Phonograph Concert by Telephone,” from the *Standard* [Cortland, New York], in *Phonogram-2* 5:2 [June 1902], 27). Eventually, there were also efforts to make money directly from telephonic phonograph concerts. An enterprise called the Tel-musici Company, with headquarters in Baltimore, was organized around the scheme of transmitting phonograms by telephone for a fee to specially designed receivers with projecting horns, which reportedly took “some years of time and patient study to develop.” By late 1909, it had eighty home subscribers in Wilmington, Delaware, as well as forty coin-actuated pay-stations in restaurants, cafés, and hotels. Users could request specific material from a directory of available phonograms, but there was also a standard “regular program” for subscribers who were less particular about what they would hear. The company claimed that its system not only spared subscribers from the expense of buying phonographs of their own but also yielded higher volume and superior sound quality (“Distributing Music Over Telephone Lines,” *Telephony* 18 [Dec. 18, 1909], in *New Amberola Graphic* 79 [Jan. 1902], 7-10). Meanwhile, there also seem to have been plenty of private, noncommercial phonograph-concerts-by-telephone, drawing occasional complaints when they tied up party lines needed for other purposes (“Letters from Advocate Readers: Ask the Manager,” *Newark Advocate* [Newark, Ohio], Sept. 27, 1907, p. 4). A farmer in Otsego County, New York who had bought an Edison phonograph in the summer of 1903 used it to entertain his neighbors by wire when the area was snowed in during the following winter (“More Phonograph Music by Telephone,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:1 [Mar. 1904], 6). Similar phonograph concerts were provided informally as a treat for telephone company employees who worked boring night shifts from 5:00 PM to 1:00 AM (“Wires Bring Music,” *Phonoscope* 3:2 [Feb. 1899], 16), although operators could get in trouble for listening in and neglecting their work: “Before her marriage Mrs. Webb was employed as an operator in the Bedford Telephone Exchange. Mr. Webb had a phonograph in his restaurant, and in order that the girls at the Exchange might enjoy the music it ground out he left open the telephone receiver in the restaurant. Because she listened to the music the present Mrs. Webb was suspended” (“His Wife or His Auto?,” *New York Times*, Apr. 19, 1907, p. 18).

<sup>77</sup> Chauncey Smith to Edison, Apr. 24, 1885 (TAED X012F2H); and May 5, 1885, with marginalia (TAED X012F2J). My reading of “Bracket” is uncertain, given Smith’s difficult handwriting, but the TAED editors do not offer any interpretation and the name seems not to end in Y, ruling out “Brady” or “Bradley.” Koenigsberg and Feinstein, “First Hello,” 6 transcribes it as “Bradget.”

<sup>78</sup> The wheel could also have been intended as a substitute for the incoming call bell, perhaps in place of the telegraph-like signals (e.g. three “shorts”) used to distinguish calls for individual subscribers on party lines, but that seems far less likely.

<sup>79</sup> Edison, “Perfected Phonograph,” 649.

<sup>80</sup> Batchelor notebook entry, Jan. 30, 1890, p. 117 (TAEM 90:517).

<sup>81</sup> “A Talk Over the ’Phone. Brooklyn Central Lectures on ‘Cranks I Have Met,’” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Nov. 30, 1890, p. 9.

<sup>82</sup> “Novel Application of the ’Phone,” citing *New Ideas*, in *Phonoscope* 1:2 (Dec. 1896), 6.

<sup>83</sup> “When she is engaged in reading Lollah Blue Jeans’ latest and greatest novel, in which she recognizes as an exact likeness of herself the heroine.... for an odious woman to come along and want the butcher shop!



---

Can any one blame Central for telling her the butcher shop's 'busy'?" Then, after a discussion of early morning "test" calls: "Another mode of punishment is, 'Busy!' People who are guilty of answering Central pertly when she scolds them or delays them get to know the word 'Busy' very well. Everybody is busy at all times. Greenpoint, New York, South Brooklyn, all are busy, always busy" ("Hello There, Central," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 15, 1894, p. 13).

<sup>84</sup> An operator later told the reporter during an interview: "There are many people who don't understand the meaning of the word 'busy' as used in a telephone office. It means that the line is in use. Many people say to me, 'That excuse about their being busy is too flimsy altogether. I called for them yesterday and you said they were busy then'" ("A Talk Over the 'Phone. Brooklyn Central Lectures on 'Cranks I Have Met,'" *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Nov. 30, 1890, p. 9).

<sup>85</sup> "A Promoter of Profanity," from *Hartford Times*, in *Lima News* (Lima, Ohio), May 31, 1898, p. 6.

<sup>86</sup> "Wicked Invention," *Davenport Daily Tribune* (Davenport, Iowa), June 11, 1895, p. 2.

<sup>87</sup> "The Man in the Street," *New York Times*, Nov. 24, 1901, p. SM1-2; also reprinted as "Mr. Bailey Was Puzzled," *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 30, 1901, p. 12.

<sup>88</sup> A later patent text noted: "I am aware that it is old to connect a phonograph-record with a telephone-circuit at central in order to convey a message to a given subscriber that a given line is 'busy;' but in such devices with which I am familiar the operator is required to insert by one movement what is called the 'busy-plug' in order to connect the phonograph with the subscriber, which remains in position until the operator is informed that the line desired is not busy, whereupon he is required to remove the said plug and then connect the two subscribers together by means of the usual plugs or switches." These comments suggest that this was still a well-known practice, though perhaps one that had been abandoned (Allan B. Clark, "Phonograph Attachment for Telephone-Circuits," U. S. Patent 667,503, filed July 10 1900, granted Feb. 5, 1901). Over a decade later, it was reported: "At present an application of such device [phonograph and telephone in combination] is found in some systems of telephone exchanges. A continuously operating phonograph is used as a 'busy-test.' If the subscriber calls a busy line he is automatically connected at the central station with this phonograph, which continuously repeats the well-known ditty, 'the line is busy, please call again'" ("What the Dictograph Really Is," *Washington Post*, Apr. 7, 1912, p. M2).

<sup>89</sup> Found respectively in Duncan M. Smith, "We've All Been There," *Fitchburg Sentinel* (Fitchburg, Massachusetts), Jan. 12, 1905, p. 3; and R. A. Ellis, "The Evening Story—Crossed Wires," *Reno Evening Gazette* (Reno, Nevada), Mar. 27, 1913, p. 2, the latter being very hard to read. Although these signals were sometimes associated with automatic switching systems, they were also used in manual systems; see e.g. "Telephone Busy Signal," *Mansfield News* (Mansfield, Ohio), May 24, 1921, p. 2, which introduced it as a step towards the eventual phasing in of automatic switching, but something that would still be handled manually: "The signal consists of a high-pitched, humming tone, interrupted at frequent intervals. Please remember that when the line you call for is busy the operator will not report 'The line is busy,' but will establish the proper connection to enable you to hear the 'Busy Signal.'" The phonographic busy signal had also been envisioned as a part of early automated or semi-automated telephone systems; see "A New Telephone," *The Broad Ax* (Salt Lake City, Utah), Sept. 10, 1898, p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> A *New York Times* article describes an operator who lost her voice reporting on a baseball game and concludes: "It is suggested that this form of cruelty could easily be avoided by adopting the practice now followed in many telephone exchanges of speaking the word 'busy,' or any other piece of information which may have to be constantly repeated, to a phonograph, and adjusting the cylinder so that it will reproduce the sound for the benefit of the subscriber, instead of taxing the voice and attention of the operator. The score of the game could be spoken once into the instrument and the cylinder would do the rest" ("In the World of Electricity," *New York Times*, Sept. 1, 1895, p. 16).

<sup>91</sup> "We're thinking of loading a phonograph to answer the 'phone. It would save the salary of a man" ("Got a Ping-Pong Ball?," *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 31, 1902, p. 1). Again, in 1909 an employer was said to have grown tired of the newlywed wife of one of his clerks constantly repeatedly calling him on the telephone during the busiest times of the day and ordered a phonogram made with the words "He's not here" for use on these occasions ("The Invaluable Talking Machine," from *Talking Machine World*, in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 7:3 [Mar. 1909], 28).

<sup>92</sup> Date from Read and Welch, *Tin Foil to Stereo*, 241. Earlier comments in anticipation of the telephone answering machine are found in "Washington Notes," *Dayton Democrat*, May 11, 1878 (TAEM 25:197); "The Talking Machine," *New York Tribune*, Mar. 25, 1878 (TAEM 94:147); and *Umpire*, Sept. 9, 1888 (TAEM 146:330). It is unclear when the first successful phonogram was made from a telephone

---

transmission. Edward Johnson claimed in late 1877 that Edison had “already applied the principle of his speaking telephone, using an electro-magnet to set the diaphragm in vibration, and thus make the indentations” (Johnson, *Telephone Hand Book*, 12); and an article from the spring of 1879 reported that Johnson himself had just “accomplished what no other one has ever yet been able to do—in the recording by means of the phonograph of words transmitted by telephone with such success that they could be repeated by the speaking machine with sufficient distinctness to be understood” (“A New Phonograph,” unidentified clipping dated “Apr [18]79” [TAEM 25:294]). However, Edison claimed in 1887 that he had not yet tried to do this: “In the future some method may be found of combining the phonograph and the telephone—that is to say, the phonograph may be made so delicate as to take down the sound from a telephone and give it out again when wanted. As yet I have not attempted any such thing. The vibrations of the telephone diaphragm are too delicate for use in the phonograph” (“Wizard Edison Talks,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Nov. 6, 1887 [TAEM 25:306]). The practice of recording and educing a telephone transmission was demonstrated publicly during the New York-Philadelphia telephone and phonograph exhibition of Feb. 4, 1889, as discussed earlier, though—it should be noted—only with a very loud cornet phonogram.

<sup>93</sup> This despite David Morton’s perplexing claim that the telegraphone worked “somewhat like today’s answering machines,” but that its “main difference was the lack of an ‘outgoing’ message” (Morton, *Off the Record*, 109-10).

<sup>94</sup> “Phonographic Telephones,” *Phonoscope* 3:10 (Oct. 1899), 9.

<sup>95</sup> “An Electric Phonograph,” quoting article by T. C. Steenberg in the *Electrical World and Engineer* (Apr. 21, 1900), in *Literary Digest* 20 (May 19, 1900), 607.

<sup>96</sup> “Electric Phonograph,” *Marion Star* (Marion, Ohio), May 1, 1901, p. 7; also printed as “Phone Hellos for Itself,” *News* (Frederick, Maryland), May 1, 1901, p. 4; “The Telegraphone,” from *New York World*, in *Phonogram*-2 4 (Jan. 1902), 38. Except in the last version, the story also quotes an incoming message, to the best of my knowledge unique for this period: “Hello, New York! This is Boston. How are you all in New York, and how’s my old friend Mr. Rosenbaum? Hope you’re having better weather there than we are having here. Been raining three weeks. Well, good-by.”

<sup>97</sup> “The Telephonograph,” *London Times*, Oct. 27, 1900, p. 14; see also Jules E. O. Kumberg, “Telephonograph,” U. S. Patent 636,209, filed Aug. 14, 1899, granted Oct. 31, 1899.

<sup>98</sup> “New Device for a Telephone,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 30, 1900, p. 9.

<sup>99</sup> “Telephoning to a Phonograph,” *Telephony* 9 (June 1905), 514; also from *The World’s Work in Atlanta Constitution* (Atlanta, Georgia), May 23, 1905, p. 22. I am indebted to Jake Smith for this example, which relates to an unspecified “instrument of foreign made [sic].”

<sup>100</sup> “Telephonograph Storehouse for Telephone Messages,” *New York Times*, Dec. 4, 1904, p. SM4. This article concerns a magnetic wire recorder designed by Elia E. Ries of New York City.

<sup>101</sup> “What Next?,” *Marion Daily Star* (Marion, Ohio), Apr. 17, 1901, p. 1; *Daily Advocate* (Newark, Ohio), Apr. 17, 1901, p. 7. This article concerns a device invented by a Dr. Roeder of Vienna.

<sup>102</sup> “Telephonograph Storehouse for Telephone Messages,” *New York Times*, Dec. 4, 1904, p. SM4.

<sup>103</sup> Sidelle, “Answering Machine Paradox,” 531.

<sup>104</sup> Quoted in “New Scientific Verbs Wanted,” *New York Times*, Jan. 24, 1904, p. 6.

<sup>105</sup> “Czar and Phonograph,” *New York Herald*, Oct. 19, 1889 (TAEM 146:528). A German newspaper of the same time commented that Edison and his assistants habitually addressed their machine as “‘Herr Phonograph’—so spricht sowohl Edison wie sein wissenschaftlicher Stab zu dem Wunderdinge, das halbwegs wie ein Mensch behandelt wird, da ihm die Sprache gegeben, schweigt aber jetzt noch” (“Edison in Berlin,” *National Zeitung*, Sept. 7, 1889 [TAEM 146:518]).

<sup>106</sup> “Testing the Phonograph,” *New York Times*, May 13, 1888, p. 5.

<sup>107</sup> Ganthony, *Bunkum Entertainments*, 61.

<sup>108</sup> The documentation is reprinted in full by Wile, “Development,” 213-4.

<sup>109</sup> “G-r-r” in Read and Welch, *Tin Foil to Stereo*, 28-31; and Israel, “Unknown History,” 42; “T-r-a” in “First Wax Disc is Played First Time Since ’81,” *Herald Tribune*, Oct. 28, 1937 (AGBFP).

<sup>110</sup> See an example quoted from Tainter’s notes in Sterne, *Audible Past*, 254.

<sup>111</sup> Another example: “We now come to purely mechanical means of registering sound, to which class belong the Edison and other phonographs” (“Machines That Hear and Write,” *Scientific American* 37 [Dec. 15, 1877], 376, italics added).

<sup>112</sup> For *phonet*, see Thomas Alva Edison, “Recording and Reproducing Sounds,” British patent 1644, issued Apr. 24, 1878, reproduced in facsimile by Read and Welch, *From Tin Foil to Stereo*, 28(A-T); his abandoned U. S. patent application S. N. 4209, filed Dec. 15, 1879, and listed on page three of a set of patent application abstracts prepared by W. H. Meadowcroft (TAEM 8:526ff); and “Edison’s Phonograph,” *The Universal Engineer*, Jan. 17, 1879, 38 (TAEM 25:287); for *phonomime*, P. C. B., “Phonomime, Autophone, and Kosmophone,” *New York Times*, June 11, 1878 (TAEM 94:231); for *palingenophone*, *Evening Telegram*, Feb. 26, 1879, quoted in F. E. F., “Phonograph and Phonophone,” clipping labeled “April [18]79” (TAEM 25:294); for *phonographthephem*, *Evening Journal*, June 15, 1878 (TAEM 94:237).

<sup>113</sup> For definitions of *phonograph*, *phonogram*, and *graphophone*, see Alexander Graham Bell, *Home Notes*, entry for June 1, 1881, 4:63, quoted in Wile, “Development,” 212.

<sup>114</sup> “First Wax Disc is Played First Time Since ’81,” *Herald Tribune*, Oct. 28, 1937 (AGBFP); also published as “Original Wax Record of 1881 Played First Time,” *San Diego Union*, Oct. 28, 1937, reprinted in Rondeau, *Tinfoil Phonographs*, 43.

<sup>115</sup> Gouraud is identified as the maker of this phonogram in “To Meet Mr. Edison,” no citation (TAEM 146:322); see also “To Meet Edison ‘Eloquentem sed non Praesentem,’” *Pall Mall Gazette*, Aug. 15, 1888 (TAEM 146:295); *Pall Mall Budget* (TAEM 146:296-7); Dickson and Dickson, *Life and Inventions*, 134-5. (TAEM 146:322).

<sup>116</sup> THE PHONOGRAPH’S WELCOME TO THE LONDON PRESS, AUGUST 14, 1888, AT LITTLE MENLO, E-2440, post 2 (ENHS) §.

<sup>117</sup> “John G. Graphophone, Esq.,” Washington correspondent of *New York Tribune*, in *Bismarck Daily Tribune* (Bismarck, North Dakota), Dec. 5, 1888, p. 4. About the same time, the persons charged with demonstrating the graphophone in New York City are supposed to have done so using a formula beginning “I am the graphophone, the invention of Mr. Chichester Bell and Mr. Charles Sumner Tainter &c.” (Tate, *Edison’s Open Door*, 139). However, a report from Atlanta, Georgia, quotes a text framed somewhat differently: “After the gentlemen had been introduced, Mr. Bailey sat in front of the machine, with the tube to his lips, and said, as he revolved the pedal: ‘Gentlemen, I am happy to meet you. This is the phonograph-graphophone; one of the greatest inventions of the age’” (“The Living Voice Which Lingers After the Speaker is Gone,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Sept. 2, 1888, p. 2, italics added). The “I” in this case is open to multiple interpretations.

<sup>118</sup> “Rival Talking Machines,” *Omaha Herald*, Jan. 5, 1889 (TAEM has two copies, 146:376 and 377).

<sup>119</sup> “Doctors and the Phonograph,” *New York Times*, Apr. 21, 1891, p. 2.

<sup>120</sup> “Edison’s Phonograph,” *Gazette* (Cornwall [?], Connecticut), Apr. 10, 1891 (TAEM 146:683).

<sup>121</sup> *Phonoscope*, 2:12 (Dec. 1898), 10.

<sup>122</sup> “Edison’s Phonograph,” *Journal* (Quincy, Illinois), Nov. 4, 1890 (TAEM 146:632).

<sup>123</sup> *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln, Nebraska), Jan. 9, 1898, p. 4.

<sup>124</sup> “The Phonograph is Here,” *Nashville Banner*, Apr. 16, 1889 (TAEM 146:401).

<sup>125</sup> *Philadelphia Times*, Aug. 17, 1889 (TAEM 146:387).

<sup>126</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:5 (July 1903), 11.

<sup>127</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:5 (July 1903), 10.

<sup>128</sup> “An Advertising Record,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:8 (Oct. 1904), 13.

<sup>129</sup> “About an Advertising Record,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:9 (Nov. 1904), 8.

<sup>130</sup> “This Will Interest All Dealers,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:12 (Feb. 1906), 12.

<sup>131</sup> This was eBay item 2234047949, offered by “phonofool,” closed Mar. 27, 2004, sold for \$220.26.

<sup>132</sup> Transcription in Nauck, “Ad Lib,” 14.

<sup>133</sup> Transcribed from David Bangs, ON THE GRAMOPHONE (Berliner 619Z, dated Feb. 15, 1896) §. An alternative transcription, without pause breaks, appears in Charosh, *Berliner Gramophone Records*, xii.

<sup>134</sup> George Graham, ON THE GRAMOPHONE (Berliner 637W, dated Dec. 2, 1896), transcribed in Fabrizio and Paul, *Talking Machine*, 39. Charosh, *Berliner Gramophone Records*, xviii, n. 8 gives a partial transcription that differs in some particulars: “I talk all kinds of talk, talk both old and new / And whatever you’re talking to me, I talk back to you.” For the alternative title WHAT IS A GRAMOPHONE?, see “Supplement List of New Gramophone Records, June 1896” (EBBRI, under “catalogs”), 3.

<sup>135</sup> Quoted in Nauck’s *Vintage Record Auction* #29 (closed May 12, 2001), 11.

<sup>136</sup> “An Advertising Record for the Trade,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:11 (Jan. 1906), 7. According to Christian Zwarg’s cylinderography for Edison Bell (a British cylinder manufacturer) in the Truesound Online Discographies, <http://www.truesoundtransfers.de/disco.htm>, Edison Bell had long since offered THE

---

PHONOGRAPH'S DESCRIPTION OF ITSELF (Edison-Bell 4000; renumbered 5819 in 1903). A five-stanza poem by this name also appeared in the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:9 (Nov. 1903), 9, beginning: "I am the Phonograph, without teeth or tongue, / I am not very old nor yet very young, / Still I sing any song that ever was sung, / And I speak every language under the sun."

<sup>137</sup> "The Advertising Record," *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:12 (Feb. 1906), 3.

<sup>138</sup> Quoted in Fabrizio and Paul, *Antique Phonograph Advertising*, 54.

<sup>139</sup> "Cupid's Long Shot," *Marion Star* (Marion, Ohio), Dec. 17, 1895, p. 3.

<sup>140</sup> Joachim Knuf, "This and that, here and there: Deictic elements in telephone openings," *Semiotica* 145 (July 2003), 190.

<sup>141</sup> Advertisement for Prescott Music Company, *Lincoln Evening News* (Lincoln, Nebraska), June 30, 1903, p. 8. Other examples, quoted earlier in this chapter, identify the speaker with a telephone number ("This is number —") or a place ("This is So-and-So's residence").

<sup>142</sup> Opposition also arose to "who is this" as an initial query by the caller, who was properly supposed to identify him or herself first and then ask for a specific party; see "Manners By Telephone," *Post Standard* (Syracuse, New York), July 31, 1905, p. 4; "Cut Out the 'Who is This?,'" *Colorado Springs Gazette* (Colorado Springs, Colorado), Sept. 29, 1912, p. 27. It was less objectionable as a query by the callee when the caller initially failed to identify him or herself, but less peremptory forms such as "who is calling, please" and "may I ask who is calling, please" were later recommended (see e.g. "Mind Your Manners," *Sheboygan Press* [Sheboygan, Michigan], Sept. 9, 1939, p. 7; "You and Your Telephone: Asking a Question Tactfully," *Middletown Times Herald* [Middletown, New York], Oct. 26, 1949, p. 18).

<sup>143</sup> "Over the Telephone," *Daily Advocate* (Newark, Ohio), Apr. 14, 1893, p. 2.

<sup>144</sup> Advertisement for Weatherholt Piano Company, *Atlanta Constitution*, Jan. 15, 1913, p. 11.

<sup>145</sup> "Over the Telephone," *Boston Daily Globe*, Feb. 14, 1911, p. 12.

<sup>146</sup> Mitch Kapor and John Barlow interview by David Gans with Ken Goffman, Aug. 5, 1990, [http://www.eff.org/Misc/Publications/John\\_Perry\\_Barlow/HTML/barlow\\_and\\_kapor\\_in\\_wired\\_interview.html](http://www.eff.org/Misc/Publications/John_Perry_Barlow/HTML/barlow_and_kapor_in_wired_interview.html), accessed Mar. 11, 2006; Kapor volunteers this as "John's one-sentence definition of cyberspace." They had already explained cyberspace as "the 'place' in which a long-distance telephone conversation takes place" (Mitchell Kapor and John Perry Barlow, "Across the Electronic Frontier," July 10, 1990, [http://www.eff.org/Misc/Publications/John\\_Perry\\_Barlow/HTML/eff.html](http://www.eff.org/Misc/Publications/John_Perry_Barlow/HTML/eff.html), accessed Mar. 11, 2006). The definition is most often quoted as "where you are when you're talking on the telephone," though I have been unable to trace the source for this version, which is typically credited to Barlow or presented without citation.

<sup>147</sup> The counterexamples of which I am aware tend to involve specific references to one or the other end of the line ("how's the weather **there**?") or cases in which the contact between speakers is not yet established ("is X **there**?") or has become uncertain ("are you still **there**?"). But the same distinction between "here" and "there" also exists in such bastions of cyberspace as internet relay chatrooms. The definitive criterion, I believe, is the existence of a common "here," not the absence of multiple "theres."

<sup>148</sup> Knuf concludes from the form of the query "who is this" (presented not as a convention but as an anomalous utterance recorded from a "disoriented" speaker) that "identity attaches to the medium, for had C [the addressee] been conceived of as separate from it and as situated at the other end of the line, the distal form 'Who is that' would have suggested itself" (Knuf, "This and that," 190). However, we sometimes find "this" identified explicitly with the *location* of the addressee, as in "Hello. Is this —'s store?" ("Local and Other Good Stories: He Held Bundle Up to 'Phone For Identification," *Decatur Herald* [Decatur, Illinois], May 17, 1905, p. 4). Although Knuf does acknowledge the "virtual space of telephony," he imagines it as a space with a distinct "this" and "that" or "here" and "there" (191), not as a shared space in which both parties and both places are "here." In fact, the telephonic convention of referring to both oneself *and* one's addressee as "this" appears to undermine Knuf's argument that, in "this is X," "this" functions to assert the precedence of the speaker (caller) over an implied "that" (callee).

<sup>149</sup> From *Boston Transcript*, in "A Smile or Two," *Lincoln Daily Star* (Lincoln, Nebraska), May 18, 1914, p. 6.

<sup>150</sup> Randall Parrish, "The Strange Case of Cavendish," *Courier* (Connellsville, Pennsylvania), Apr. 22, 1920, p. 9.

<sup>151</sup> "Terrible Tessie," *Lima Daily News* (Lima, Ohio), June 4, 1919, p. 5.

<sup>152</sup> "Hay Fever Addicts Ask Weed Ban," *Nevada State Journal* (Reno, Nevada), July 21, 1937, p. 14.

---

<sup>153</sup> The former from LET US NOT FORGET (Edison Blue Amberol 3756) as transcribed in FPRA Jan. 1972, 38; and the latter from HOLIDAY GREETINGS FROM THE BUNCH AT ORANGE as transcribed in FPRA Feb. 1972, 53.

<sup>154</sup> See e.g. “Your Telephone Speaks,” *Ruthven Free Press* (Ruthven, Iowa), Jan. 19, 1944, p. 4.

<sup>155</sup> MR. RAIKES, POSTMASTER GENERAL TO MR. EDISON, E-2439, post 8 (ENHS) §. A transcription was also sent; see TAEM 124:795.

<sup>156</sup> Gilbert (Bert) Pasley, “A Phonographic Letter,” *In the Groove* 27:1 (Jan. 2002): 6, 21; his transcription has “(hesitation)” in place of “[Pause].”

<sup>157</sup> Transcribed from track 13 on a CD-R provided by Peter Frazer of a collection of cylinders recorded by the Reed family in the 1910s §.

<sup>158</sup> For a description of a “Voice Guessing party,” see *Phonograph and How to Use It*, 140-1. Similar attractions were included in public phonograph exhibitions: “One of our citizens will give a short talk to the phonograph before the entertainment and the audience will have the pleasure of guessing his identity when the machine reproduces it” (*Wyoming County Times*, Mar. 15, 1894, quoted in Musser, *High Class Moving Pictures*, 44).

<sup>159</sup> From original cylinder in author’s collection. The speaker identifies himself as “A. H. Mendenhall of Pomeroy, Washington;” his full name and birthdate (Oct. 10, 1853) appear at <http://www.gendex.com/users/RayMaris/maris/d0048/g0004884.html#124532>, accessed Aug. 2001. Guy Willebrand is listed in the 1900 federal census as the son of Henry Willebrand, a gardener of Austin County, Washington, born in 1895.

<sup>160</sup> “A Thoughtless Husband,” *Phonoscope* 2:11 (Nov. 1898), 13.

<sup>161</sup> Two more cylinders contained vocal solos by A. H. Mendenhall (accompanied on melodeon) and Doris Mendenhall (unaccompanied); I was outbid on these by a collector who intended to shave them down for blanks but kindly loaned them to me for dubbing beforehand; the originals, I assume, no longer exist. I have also heard of other Mendenhall cylinders purchased on eBay about the same time by other collectors.

<sup>162</sup> Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix* and *Encyclopedic Discography: Matrix* indicate announced takes whenever the authors were able to verify their existence from listening to actual specimens. The latest announced matrices they cite, based on a quick perusal, are A-6-1 and B-7-1 (Apr. 29, 1903); V-1466-6, V-1466-7 (May 4, 1903); B-22-1 (May 18, 1903); B-29-1, B-30-1 and B-31-1 (May 21, 1903); B-37-1 and B-38-1 (May 22, 1903); B-191-2 (July 21, 1903); A-285-4 and B-285-4 (Sept. 11, 1903); B-564-1 and C-574-3 (Oct. 20, 1903).

<sup>163</sup> Spoken announcements were abandoned around disc matrix 1850 (Brooks, “High Drama,” 61).

<sup>164</sup> Sutton and Nauck, *American Record Labels*, 5.

<sup>165</sup> Gitelman, *Scripts*, 157; only the first fifty wax Amberols were announced (FPRA Mar. 1980, 36).

<sup>166</sup> Brooks, “High Drama,” 16 implies that announcements were dropped from cylinders at the same time as discs, i.e., in mid-1904, and it is true that Columbia *instrumental* cylinders issued from that time forward tend not to be announced (judging from a survey of UCSB examples). However, most *vocal* cylinders continued to have announcements up through the end of production, one rare exception being Billy Murray, AIN’T IT FUNNY WHAT A DIFFERENCE JUST A FEW HOURS MAKE? (Columbia 32489, UCSB 4746) §. It is not true that “Columbia dropped announcements altogether around 1905,” contra Shambarger, “Cylinder Records,” 149.

<sup>167</sup> “Useful Information Regarding the Care and Operation of the Phonograph,” *Phonoscope* 2:1 (Jan. 1898), 7.

<sup>168</sup> “The ‘favorite baritone’ stands just behind the announcer, and takes his place as that individual steps deftly aside at the conclusion of his speech” (Mayo, “Phonographic Studio,” 6); “Mr. Howler, who had stood at his elbow while the announcement was being made, stepped into the place which the manager vacated, the ‘professor’ began to pound the keys viciously, and the song was on” (Sewell Ford, “The Phonograph Fakir,” *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel* [Fort Wayne, Indiana], Sept. 22, 1897, p. 5; and *Steubenville Herald* [Steubenville, Ohio], Sept. 17, 1897, p. 2).

<sup>169</sup> “Singing to the Cylinders,” *New York Sun*, date illegible but in unbound clippings file for 1893 (TAEM 146:855).

<sup>170</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 67.

<sup>171</sup> “To make ‘talking records’ which will give the clearest, loudest tones, the speaking-tube or fourteen-inch horn should be used, and single records only should be taken—a separate dictation for each cylinder. In making musical records, however, it is customary for the record companies to place from six to ten

---

Phonographs upon a raised platform and attach to each a twenty-six-inch tin horn, pointing the horns toward a common center, at which point the band, orchestra, quartette, or other performers are standing” (“A Man Who Sees Sound,” *Phonoscope* 2:8 [Aug. 1899], 9). On the other hand, Joseph Gannon advertised that he phonogenized *two* spoken records at a time; see his advertisement in the *Phonoscope* 2:3 (Mar. 1899), 6.

<sup>172</sup> Rene Bache, “Do Monkeys Have Speech?” *Brooklyn Times*, Sept. 21, 1890 (TAEM 146:608).

<sup>173</sup> “Charles Marshall, New York City,” *Phonogram* 1 (Mar. 1891), 63.

<sup>174</sup> Henry F. Gilg to Edison Phonograph Works, Jan. 19, 1892 (TAEM 133:402).

<sup>175</sup> *THE BICENTENNIAL COLLECTION: CELEBRATING THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PRESIDENT’S OWN UNITED STATES MARINE BAND* (Washington, D. C.: United States Marine Band, 1998), 1:4 §.

<sup>176</sup> Edward Clarence was a frequent announcer of the early period: “Many other people talk, sing, and play musical instruments in the same room,” a reporter wrote of the New York Phonograph Company’s recording laboratory, “but he always makes the announcements in the drop-a-nickel-in-the-slot phonographs, and the man who is heard saying, ‘Mr. So and So will now sing this or that,’ is Mr. Clarence.” Clarence owed this monopoly to “a voice so loud that any skipper might be proud of it” (“Singing to the Cylinders,” *New York Sun*, date illegible but in unbound clippings file for 1893 [TAEM 146:855]). It was similarly reported of Len Spencer in 1896: “Gifted with a powerful voice he utilizes it to great advantage in announcing for band and other records where a number of machines are used, necessitating great vocal power to fill the horns of the several machines which are running at the same time” (“Mr. Leonard Spencer,” *Phonoscope* 1:1 [Nov. 1896], 14). His abilities were even mentioned in trade literature as a selling point: “The announcements are as loud and distinct as only Mr. Spencer can make them,” one catalog boasted of Columbia Orchestra offerings (*List of the Famous “Columbia Records,”* June 1897, 4). The singer Arthur Collins was also a frequent announcer for Edison’s National Phonograph Company, and another individual who went on to enjoy a significant career as a phonogenic performer got his start as Collins’ substitute: “Ed Meeker was a workman at the Edison plant. One day he was painting window casings near the recording room and carrying on a conversation with another workman in a very loud voice. They needed someone for an announcer, as Collins wasn’t always available, so they brought Meeker in, gave him a few tests and his laborious days were over” (FPRA Jan. 1946, 19; interpolation omitted).

<sup>177</sup> “A Man Who Sees Sound,” *Phonoscope* 3:8 (Aug. 1899), 9. Another example: “the man behind the megaphone announces “‘Hapbsurg March” played by the Edison Concert Band” (“Moulded Records for Phonographs,” from *American Machinist*, July 9, 1903, in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:6 [Aug. 1903], 11).

<sup>178</sup> One of Berliner’s detractors wrote: “he has to have a separate diaphragm for everything he takes, one for tenor another for soprano another for brass band etc.” (E. L. Wilson to Dyer and Seely, Oct. 2, 1894 [TAEM 135:460-1]).

<sup>179</sup> “Credit Given,” *Phonogram* 3 (Feb. 1893), 323. In 1900, the *Phonogram-2* presented the spectacle of a country rube attempting to use his phonograph: “Si-las has lost the tick-et of the next piece, and is try-ing to de-ci-pher the in-dent-a-tions. Look out Sil-as or you will a-stig-ma-tise your eyes. Put the rec-ord a-way Si-las. It may be Grandpa’s Teeth Are On the Bum, which might not please your friends” (“The Farmer—An *Easy One* in plain words for the Children,” *Phonogram-2* 1 [Aug. 1900], 121).

<sup>180</sup> *AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* (Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless), 2:2 §. However, there were exceptions; for instance, it could come after the title:

The Best in the House is None Too Good for Reilly, **comic Irish song**

sung by Mister George J. Gaskin for Columbia Phonograph Company of New York and Paris.

(*24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1899* [Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001], 21 §).

<sup>181</sup> Genre designations could also be adapted to emphasize the currency or popularity of recorded musical compositions. Some examples already quoted identify their subjects as a “popular waltz song,” a “beautiful waltz song,” and “the latest comic Irish song,” but a particularly interesting case is this one, found on a Berliner disc of 1899:

The **latest Negro success**, You Don’t Stop the World From Going Round,  
sung by Mister Len Spencer.

(Len Spencer, YOU DON’T STOP THE WORLD FROM GOING ROUND [Berliner 0142, dated Apr. 28, 1899] §.) Spencer had good reason to introduce the song in a favorable light, since he was a partner in the music publishing company that owned the rights to it: “Len. Spencer and Harry Yeager have joined forces of the

---

Knickerbocker Music Publishing Co., and the firm hereafter will be known as Hylands, Spencer & Yeager. Their new song successes are meeting with an enormous sale. The new coon song 'You Don't Stop the World From Going 'Round' is being sung and whistled everywhere and is a big winner. The office is open day and evening and all professional singers and music dealers are invited to call" (*Phonoscope* 3:4 [Apr. 1899], 13).

<sup>182</sup> Shambarger, "Cylinder Records," 151, states: "From mid-1903-on, Columbia added the selection title" to the brand name and record number; however, a copy in my collection of cylinder 32260 (black wax, released Oct. 1903) does not show the title, so "mid-1903" is too early for this development.

<sup>183</sup> The change was announced in C. H. Wilson, "Important Notice to the Trade," letter dated June 28, 1904, in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:5 (July 1904), 3.

<sup>184</sup> "From 1904-on, Columbia cylinders have flat-end rims with the moulded brand name, record number, title, and selection category on the right-hand end rim" (Shambarger, "Cylinder Records," 151). Brooks, "High Drama," 61 dates the inclusion of titles "marked on the ends," presumably referring to the same change, to Sept. 1904, citing that month's *Columbia Record*.

<sup>185</sup> Shambarger, "Cylinder Records," 151.

<sup>186</sup> Gitelman, *Scripts*, 157 examines the correspondence generated in 1908 during the National Phonograph Company's internal debate over whether to retain or abandon spoken announcements on phonograms. None of the material she *quotes* indicates that the transition in visual labeling practices was a factor in the decision, although she acknowledges: "Some of the information provided by the announcement was provided in no other way *on* the record itself, only on its packaging and attendant sales literature, even though by 1908 the National Phonograph Company was engraving the title of each recording around the rim of the cylindrical record." It is unclear whether this is Gitelman's own interpolation or a paraphrase of issues actually brought up during the debate.

<sup>187</sup> Brooks, "High Drama," 61.

<sup>188</sup> Brooks, "High Drama," 61.

<sup>189</sup> The brown wax cylinders of early 1889 had thread cores that allowed the recordist to write notations around their inner rims to identify their contents, but Wangemann still felt the need to announce them, even when doing so was problematic: "It contains an announcement...saying Hans von Buelow, Music Hall, Boston, 17th of April, 1889," he later said of one. "The announcement is made in a very low voice as Mr. von Buelow was playing at the time" (*American Graphophone Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, printed record, 213). When duplicate cylinders were sold in the early 1890s with printed ring-shaped title slips fitted into their rims, the benefit of this innovation was said to be that "there is no danger of mixing up records" (*Phonogram* 2 [Nov. 1892], 260), and yet these cylinders had continued to feature spoken announcements. Lambert cylinders too are identified both visually on their rims and aurally through spoken announcements.

<sup>190</sup> Gitelman, *Scripts*, 161-2.

<sup>191</sup> *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 66.

<sup>192</sup> "Charles Marshall, New York City," *Phonogram* 1 (Mar. 1891), 63.

<sup>193</sup> Artemas Ward to editor, Oct. 22, 1891, in *Phonogram* 1 (Nov.-Dec. 1891), 251.

<sup>194</sup> Edward Bellamy, "With the Eyes Shut," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 79 (Oct. 1889), 744.

<sup>195</sup> The one example known to me is a cylinder notation first transcribed by Mike Loughlin for the 78-L@topica.com discussion list on July 1, 2001, which can be corrected on the basis of other documentation to read: "[Henry] Hagen voice announcing / Ge. Schweinfest / at the Phono Works / Piccolo Solo / St. Clare [?] Dance."

<sup>196</sup> "It Speaks for Itself," *Kansas City Times*, Jan. 8, 1889 (TAEM 146:380).

<sup>197</sup> "The Phonograph," *Fresno Weekly Republican* (Fresno, California), Jan. 3, 1890, p. 4.

<sup>198</sup> "Before the Phonograph," *New York Times*, Dec. 14, 1890 (TAEM 146:645). Several years later, a joke was told involving the name of the famous vocalist Yvette Guilbert: "'Here y'are!' shouted the faker. 'Wivat Gilbert's latest songs, ripperduced true as life by the wonderful Edison phonograph for only 10 cents!' 'I don't care particular for the songs,' said the man with a worried face, 'but I would be willin' to give a whole dollar if it had her name pronounced by herself'" (from *Cincinnati Enquirer*, in "Current Notes," *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 8, 1896, p. 12).

<sup>199</sup> "So popular is his work that there are few users of the phonograph who have not heard or do not possess an AtLee record, a prominent feature of which is the clear and unmistakable announcement at the beginning of each, in Mr. AtLee's own voice.... The best-known of Mr. AtLee's selections is the

---

‘Mocking Bird,’ in the execution of which he is believed to have no equal. The spoken announcement is preceded by several mocking-bird notes so true to nature as to be positively startling” (“A Famous and Artistic Whistler,” *Phonogram* 1 [Aug. 1891], 168). “With his pompous announcements he introduced each performance in tones which made the listener visualize a giant,” Fred Gaisberg recalled in his memoirs years later. “But in reality he was a mere shrimp of a man, about five feet in his socks, that little Government clerk with a deep, powerful voice” (Gaisberg, *Music Goes Round*, 7). Particular performers have also been associated with personally idiosyncratic styles of announcement: J. W. Myers announcements for Columbia: “He had a characteristic way of slightly emphasizing the name of the song, then allowing his voice to drop when he gave his name, almost as if he were overcome by a sudden accession of modesty” (FPRA July 1944, 27).

<sup>200</sup> Some companies reportedly felt that this function of the announcement was important enough to shape its spoken content as well: “The better and more exact method, which is now being adopted by many of the Phonograph companies, is to ascertain the number of revolutions per minute at which the mandrel is revolving before beginning to record, and announcing the speed at which the record is to be taken upon the cylinder, so that when the reproduction is about to be made the hearer is informed by the words at the beginning of the record as to the taking speed, which, of course, is the proper reproducing speed, and the governor can be adjusted accordingly, giving in the reproduction the exact speed of the original recording” (“Useful Information Regarding the Care and Operation of the Phonograph,” *Phonoscope* 2:2 [Feb. 1898], 5). However, I am unaware of any actual commercial cylinders announced in this way.

<sup>201</sup> “The speed-adjusting screw when on top of the machine was constantly being turned by inexperienced players, changing the speed of the machine and causing an unsatisfactory playing of Records. With the speed-adjusting screw on the underside, it is quite accessible when it is desired to change the speed for some good reason, and it is out of the way of idle or mischievous hands” (“Not a Mistake,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:10 [Dec. 1905], 3). Similar statements appeared in Victor catalogs starting in 1912: “All records should be played at a speed of 78. Every record is recorded at this speed and requires a speed of seventy-eight to reproduce it properly. Set the regulator so that the turntable of your Victor revolves at 78 times per minute and never change it.... You will of course meet the man who insists on turning the regulator of his Victor up and down, thus changing the speed of each record he plays. Don’t imitate him—He is wrong” (quoted in Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Matrix*, xxxiv).

<sup>202</sup> However, the need of users to adjust the speed of their machines may sometimes explain the presence of announcements where they would not otherwise be expected. Judging from a quick survey of examples in my collection, the American Record Company seems to have favored a range of recording speeds somewhat slower than Victor and Columbia during the mid-1900s. Gramophone owners would thus have routinely needed to make speed adjustments when educating American Record Company discs, which might account for that firm’s unusually late use of spoken announcements.

<sup>203</sup> For example, the announcement “Sympathy” on Arthur Collins, SMYPATHY [sic] (American Record Company 10” disc 031270) §, which appears to be typical of that company’s practice (see also Sutton and Nauck, *American Record Labels*, 5; however, T. C. Fabrizio, “The Disc Records of Turn-of-the-Century Chicago and the Companies Which Sold Them,” *ARSC Journal* 12 (1980), 25 mentions having heard an “American Record” announcement on a Busy Bee disc); also “Lead Kindly Light” on American Quartet, LEAD KINDLY LIGHT (Lambert 622) §.

<sup>204</sup> “Playing for Europeans,” *Orange Herald*, Sept. 29, 1888 (TAEM 146:341).

<sup>205</sup> “Loading the Phonograph,” *New York Journal*, Feb. 15, 1891 (TAEM 146:677).

<sup>206</sup> “Songs for a Nickel,” *New York Journal*, Nov. 9, 1890 (TAEM 146:634).

<sup>207</sup> “Credit Given,” *Phonogram* 3 (Feb. 1893), 323.

<sup>208</sup> *Columbia Records* catalog, with letter dated May 1, 1898 on page two, 30.

<sup>209</sup> *Temporary Catalogue of the Columbia Phonograph Co.’s Musical Records for Use on Graphophones and Phonographs*, Jan. 1, 1895, 8-9.

<sup>210</sup> Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 27; for his explanation of the sources for this “scene,” see 534, n. 2.

<sup>211</sup> “Charles Marshall, New York City,” *Phonogram* 1 (Mar. 1891), 63. This statement referred to phonograms he had produced for the Metropolitan Phonograph Company. Later, the name of the recordist occasionally appeared on title slips (see an example naming George Emerson in Copeland and Dethlefsen, *5-Inch Cylinder Book*, 7).

<sup>212</sup> F. Z. Maguire to Tate, Jan. 18, 1889 (TAEM 127:356-7).



---

<sup>213</sup> To key this observation to the published sheet music (J. N. Pattison, *Pattison Waltz Song* [New York: J. N. Pattison, 1877]), Wangemann added his “trade mark” to the chord at the end of page eight rather than continuing on to the extended solo piano segment on page nine.

<sup>214</sup> Accompanists, like recordists, were rarely named in announcements, although there were a few exceptions, e.g. “‘The Bowery’, from ‘A Trip to Chinatown’, as sung by Mr. John Yorke AtLee for the Columbia Phonograph Company of Washington, D. C., accompanied on piano by Professor Gaisberg” (Brooks, “Columbia Records,” 16; see also Gaisberg, *Music Goes Round*, 7); “All Coons Look Alike to Me, Sung by Arthur Collins, with banjo accompaniment by Mr. Vess L. Ossman. Edison Record” (FPRA Oct. 1948, 36). The fact that phonograms were accompanied by studio “orchestras” rather than pianos was sometimes also mentioned in announcements until this became standard practice in 1903-4. Some early examples have already been quoted, but later examples are “No Cake Comes Too High for Me, sung by Arthur Collins with orchestra accompaniment, Edison Record” (Edison 7428, originally released in early 1900; APH, Apr. 10, 2001 §); and

Where the Mississippi Flows,  
sung by Joseph Natus with orchestra accompaniment,  
Zonophone Record

(Joseph Natus, WHERE THE MISSISSIPPI FLOWS [7” shield Zonophone 9774-1] §). However, accompanists were not meant to occupy the center of the listener’s attention, so announcements generally focused on other things.

<sup>215</sup> Acoustic-era Baidaphon discs are generally announced “Baidaphon Compagnie,” and Odeon discs from the region as “Uštūwānāt Odeon” [“Odeon Records”]. This practice extended through the end of the 78 rpm era. A few of Columbia’s early German discs have the announcement “Original-Columbia-Aufnahme” [“original Columbia recording”], e.g. Kapelle des Infanterie Reg. No. 24, Wien [sic, should be Berlin], ZAPFENSTREICH (mx. 40163-1) and PREUSSENMARSCHE (mx. 40144-1), coupled as Columbia E1360 §. The only American acoustic-era example I know of an equivalent announcement appears on William Hooley, RAVINGS OF JOHN MCCULLOUGH (Edison brown wax cylinder 3825, APH, Apr. 10, 2001) §.

<sup>216</sup> For instance:

Sing Me a Song of the South,  
sung for the Lambert Company of Chicago.

Joseph Natus, SONG OF THE SOUTH (Lambert 502) §. This announcement was typical of early Lamberts; see Manzo, “Lambert Sampler,” 4. Another announcement reportedly contains the phrase “sung by a tenor for...” (Ray Phillips, “How Lambert Cylinders Were Made,” in Copeland and Dethlefsen, *5-Inch Cylinder Book*, 128).

<sup>217</sup> Gracyk, “Kansas City,” 40.

<sup>218</sup> Lid accompanying a copy of Columbia 14029, sold on eBay in the spring of 2004. A similarly-worded notice appeared in a 1900 Columbia catalog reproduced in Copeland and Dethlefsen, *5-Inch Cylinder Book*, 21. This particular form of Columbia announcement apparently became quite well-known, judging from passing references to it published several years after its discontinuation: the “Columbia Phonograph Company of Noo York a-a-and Paris-s-s” (“Small Bits of Sporting Salad,” *Nevada State Journal* [Reno, Nevada], Aug. 16, 1905, p. 3); “burr—rr—gurr—umpty ump tum. The Stars and Stripes Forever played for the gurr-gurr pany of New Yawk and a-and-and Paris” (William T. Nordica, “He Kicks on Canned Music,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 17, 1908, p. D3).

<sup>219</sup> Dorian, “Reminiscences,” 115.

<sup>220</sup> Brooks, “High Drama,” 61.

<sup>221</sup> This overview is based on personal observations, Rick Wilkins’ research summarized in Shambarger, “Cylinder Records,” 149 (but see also “More on Early Columbia Cylinders,” *New Amberola Graphic* 51 [Winter 1985], 12); Brooks, “Columbia Records in the 1890’s,” 24, 28; and the “Tinfoil Resource Center,” <http://www.tinfoil.com/trc-do.htm>, accessed June 16, 2004. However, Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 99 states more recently that “Columbia substituted the phrase ‘of New York City’ in its announcements after it established offices there in late 1895,” reflecting some uncertainty over just how early the transition occurred.

<sup>222</sup> From *Illustrated Phonographic World*, in *Phonoscope* 2:2 (Feb. 1898), 8.

<sup>223</sup> “The Faked Records,” *Massillon Independent* (Massillon, Ohio), Dec. 12, 1898, p. 12. Columbia’s early Graphophone Grand cylinders, issued about this time, are supposed to have “contained actual references to the quality of their products” (T. C. Fabrizio, “The Spoken Announcement as a Social Convention,” *Talking Machine Review* 3 [1970], 89), although I cannot provide any specific examples of the practice. It

---

was probably such company announcements that led to a remark years later: “It was the custom on earlier records to slip commercials in between musical selections, forcing the listeners who bought the ‘So So Polka,’ for instance, to listen to a sales pitch on overcoats” (Dorothy Richter, “Cylinder Records Echo Sounds of Past,” *Post Crescent* [Appleton, Wisconsin], May 22, 1966, p. 21).

<sup>224</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records* (United States Phonograph Company), p. [3].

<sup>225</sup> *Phonoscope* 2:12 (Dec. 1898), 11.

<sup>226</sup> Of Harvard discs, Allan Sutton writes: “As with most Columbia client brands, the spoken announcements were neatly tooled off the stampers to prevent identification of performers and manufacturer” (Sutton and Nauck, *American Record Labels*, 98). Some altered disc stampers were later put back into use for Columbia’s own pressings, further complicating the issue, but the goal seems to have been to doctor stampers as needed to yield announcement-free client label discs, not to eliminate existing announcements indiscriminately from all Columbia products. The correlation between client label production and the omission of spoken announcements was not limited to Columbia. Leeds & Catlin also ceased placing announcements on their Leeds Record masters about the same time they began pressing discs from those same masters for sale under other label names, such as Imperial, Concert, Nassau, and Banner.

<sup>227</sup> FPRA Feb. 1946, 19.

<sup>228</sup> Reconstructed from “botched” announcement cited in note 175 above. This item, and 1:3, NATIONAL FENCIBLES, with a very similar announcement, were both listed in the Columbia catalog of Oct. 1, 1890, according to the booklet accompanying the CD set. The typical duplicate phonogram marketed through the North American Phonograph Company in 1892-94 also begins with the words “Edison Record,” often followed by the selection catalog number:

Edison Record.

Song.

Take Your Time, Gentlemen,

by—William Jerome,

rendered by Press Eldridge with pianoforte accompaniment.

(24 *POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1888-1894* [Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001], 18 §).

Edison Record six—eighty-eight.

March—From the Works—of Wagner,

played by the Twenty-Third Regiment Band.

(24 *POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1888-1894* [Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001], 19 §).

Edison Record number ten hundred and fifty-eight,

beautiful waltz song entitled Daisy Bell,

sung by Mister Edward M. Favor of Rice’s 1492 Company.

(24 *POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1888-1894* [Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001], 23 §).

<sup>229</sup> 24 *POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1888-1894* (Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001), 3 §.

<sup>230</sup> I am aware of only rare exceptions, e.g.: “Polyphone Record” in initial position in George Schweinfest, ROBIN ADAIR (UCSB 5266) §.

<sup>231</sup> Ray Wile, “Record Piracy and Ivory Soap,” *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 6:4 (1980), 8. The International Indestructible Record Company, Ltd. of Liverpool, England was also notorious for removing the announcements from Edison cylinders and replacing them with its own. I owe my knowledge of this company to comments volunteered by Allen Koenigsberg and Mike Khanchalian during a discussion on Phonolist@yahoo.com in Mar. 2003. For another British case involving Percy Henry Levy and Imperial Records, see Gitelman, *Scripts*, 175.

<sup>232</sup> Brooks, “Seeing Double,” 6-7.

<sup>233</sup> As Brooks observes, Johnson rarely released his early takes from May-July, but instead relied later ones from Oct.-Dec.: “Perhaps he had to re-record them in order to eliminate the spoken ‘Berliner’ announcements at the beginning.” This seems a safe assumption. There were, however, occasional mistakes: “At least one case of an *Improved* record which is announced as a Berliner has turned up. Apparently this was one of the early takes which slipped through and was issued on Johnson’s ‘new’ label, in the fall of 1900” (Brooks, “Seeing Double,” 6-7, 16 n. 2).

<sup>234</sup> For example:

Marching Home from the War, march,

played by the Seventy-First Regiment Band at Edison’s laboratory.

---

(24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1899 [Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001], 10 §). One reason for the lack of a company designation was that National was sourcing some of its cylinders from the United States Phonograph Company and Walcutt & Leeds.

<sup>235</sup> See note 228 above.

<sup>236</sup> I base this conclusion on later testimony:

Q327. What is an Edison record manufactured by the National Phonograph Company; why is it called an Edison record?

A. Principally because the name of Edison is an important factor in connection with the sale of genuine Edison apparatus; and, further, the fact that his signature is copyrighted and attached to all records issued by the National Phonograph Company; and the further fact that all records manufactured by the National Phonograph Company indicate by their announcement that they are Edison records.

(Deposition of William Gilmore in *New York Phonograph Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, Transcript of Record, 1:411-2).

<sup>237</sup> *AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* (Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless), 1:22 §.

<sup>238</sup> H. S. Wright, *MOCKING BIRD* (Lambert 609) §.

<sup>239</sup> Edward M. Favor, *ONCE AGAIN* (7" shield Zon-o-phone 19431-1) §.

<sup>240</sup> Sewell Ford, "The Phonograph Fakir," *Fort Wayne Weekly Sentinel* (Fort Wayne, Indiana), Sept. 22, 1897, p. 5; and *Steubenville Herald* (Steubenville, Ohio), Sept. 17, 1897, p. 2.

<sup>241</sup> New disc recording companies that began business after the transition, such as Globe (Climax) and Leeds, followed the second pattern. Sample announcements run as follows:

Absence Makes the Heart Grow Fonder, sung by Harry Macdonough, **Climax Record**.

(Harry Macdonough, *ABSENCE MAKES THE HEART GROW FONDER* [Climax 7" 221] §);

Scissors to Grind,

sung by Arthur Collins, **Leeds Record**.

(Arthur Collins, *SCISSORS TO GRIND* [Leeds 4175] §). Eldridge Johnson's first disc masters of mid-1900, produced during the transitional period, fluctuated between "for the Berliner Gramophone Company" and "Berliner Gramophone Record." Only A72 bears no company announcement, and "Berliner Gramophone Record" seems to have been the form taken in all cases but A23, announced "for the Berliner Gramophone Company" (Brooks, "Seeing Double," 6-7). See also Michael W. Sherman, "The First Victor... or the Last Berliner?," *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 10:4 (1992), 11, which implies that the usual announcement on these early pressings was "Berliner Gramophone Record."

<sup>242</sup> Minnie Emmett, *MY DROWSY BABE* (Columbia cylinder 31707-5) §. According to Rick Wilkin's study, summarized in Shambarger, "Cylinder Records," 149, the shift to "Columbia Record" occurred in Apr. 1902, with the commercial introduction of moulded duplicates.

<sup>243</sup> Steve Porter, *KITTENS AND CATS* (Lambert 789) §.

<sup>244</sup> George J. Gaskin, *BEN BOLT* (7" shield Zon-o-phone 9811-1) §.

<sup>245</sup> Quoted in Gitelman, *Scripts*, 157.

<sup>246</sup> Judging from examples at UCSB, the shift seems to have taken place by the end of 1904; the latest "Columbia Record" announcement there is on Bob Roberts, *ALEXANDER* (Columbia 32563, UCSB 4749) §, issued in October 1904.

<sup>247</sup> Michael Khanchalian reports two copies of "Cujus Animam" with announcements of this sort; Tim Fabrizio has also heard examples of cylinders from this period with the word "duplicate" in the announcement.

<sup>248</sup> Tate to J. W. Wilson, Aug. 19, 1891 (TAEM 142:498).

<sup>249</sup> Tate to Edison, Aug. 24, 1891 (TAEM 142:727). Ray Wile's interpretation of these two letters is that the word "duplicate" had been written or printed on the master cylinders used to produce moulds, such that the words could not be removed afterwards, consistent with his view that Edison was marketing moulded duplicates in this period rather than mechanical ones (Wile, "Duplicates," 178). However, since the word "duplicate" appears to have been *recorded* on master cylinders used for duplication, it would have been equally impossible to remove in the case of mechanical duplication.

<sup>250</sup> 3" brown wax cylinder in *MUSIC FROM THE NEW YORK STAGE, VOLUME ONE: 1890-1920* (GEMM CD 9050-2), 1:3 §.

<sup>251</sup> *24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1888-1894* (Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001), 2 §.

- <sup>252</sup> Other evidence suggests that Wangemann himself had made this a regular practice: “I have here a record which was made on December 16th of 1888. It is announced in my own voice, cut with a round knife on a brown wax composition. The announcement is made that I was playing a record on December 15th [sic], 1888, for Mr. John Ott, Superintendent of the Laboratory, and after the announcement, there is playing on the piano of this record. I played the piano myself” (*American Graphophone Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, printed record, 189-90).
- <sup>253</sup> *24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1888-1894* (Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001), 7 §. Note that the *First Book* lists this selection under the date July 29, 1891, rather than July 30.
- <sup>254</sup> “Phonograph Loading,” from *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, in *Bismarck Daily Tribune* (Bismarck, North Dakota), Oct. 28, 1890, p. 2.
- <sup>255</sup> *AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* (Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless), 1:10 §.
- <sup>256</sup> *24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1888-1894* (Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001), 14 §, corresponding to a *First Book* entry of Oct. 2, 1891.
- <sup>257</sup> “The Phonograph in China,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Nov. 2, 1890, p. 16.
- <sup>258</sup> “The Phonograph in Country Towns,” *Phonogram* 1:10 (Oct. 1891), 221.
- <sup>259</sup> “Small Talk,” from *Bangor Commercial*, in *New York Times*, Aug. 10, 1891, p. 4.
- <sup>260</sup> “The Graphophone as Applicable to Newspaper Reporters and the National Typographic Company’s Machines,” North American Phonograph Company, Company Records, Box 1 (ENHS), 1.
- <sup>261</sup> “The Graphophone for Business Purposes,” North American Phonograph Company, Company Records, Box 1 (ENHS), 1.
- <sup>262</sup> “The Graphophone for Deposition Purposes,” North American Phonograph Company, Company Records, Box 1 (ENHS), 4.
- <sup>263</sup> *THE BICENTENNIAL COLLECTION: CELEBRATING THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PRESIDENT’S OWN UNITED STATES MARINE BAND* (Washington, D. C.: United States Marine Band, 1998), 1:3 §.
- <sup>264</sup> W. O. Beckenbaugh, SALE OF THE NEW YORK DIME MUSEUM (Columbia brown wax cylinder) §.
- <sup>265</sup> *AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* (Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless), 1:8 §.
- <sup>266</sup> “Loading the Phonograph,” *New York Journal*, Feb. 15, 1891 (TAEM 146:677).
- <sup>267</sup> *24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1899* (Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001), 6 §, attributed to Walcutt & Leeds.
- <sup>268</sup> Cylinder of the Month for Dec. 2002 at [www.tinfoil.com](http://www.tinfoil.com), attributed to “Metropolitan Phonograph Company (?)” and dated to “circa 1894” §.
- <sup>269</sup> Press Eldridge, I LOVE HER JUST THE SAME, sound file accompanying eBay auction 6515204138, closed Mar. 13, 2005 §.
- <sup>270</sup> George J. Gaskin, MAVOURNEEN (UCSB 5284) §.
- <sup>271</sup> *AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* (Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless), 1:19 §.
- <sup>272</sup> *AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* (Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless), 1:20 §.
- <sup>273</sup> *24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1888-1894* (Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001), 10 §.
- <sup>274</sup> Cited in Brooks, “Columbia Records in the 1890’s,” 24. Brooks, “Directory,” 110, indicates that Diamond’s cylinders only appeared in Columbia catalogs of Feb. and Apr. 1893.
- <sup>275</sup> In addition to the Columbia announcements quoted earlier, the phrase was used by Silas Leachman for some of the phonograms he recorded at Chicago in or around 1893, such as this pseudonymous example:  
The Old Kentucky Home,  
as sung by the old Kentuckian,  
Charles Field, record taken for the North American Phonograph Company, Chicago.  
(*AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* [Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless], 1:11) §.
- <sup>276</sup> *AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* (Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless), 1:5 §.
- <sup>277</sup> Columbia Orchestra, TRIP ON THE CABLE CAR (Columbia cylinder 15080) §.
- <sup>278</sup> *AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* (Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless), 2:23 §.

- <sup>279</sup> *24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1895-1897* (Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001), 3 §.
- <sup>280</sup> *24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1899* (Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001), 17 §.
- <sup>281</sup> FPRA Feb. 1946, 20.
- <sup>282</sup> Gitelman, *Scripts*, 157.
- <sup>283</sup> “Indestructible Records” advertisement reproduced on the front page of *In the Groove* 30:5 (May 2005).
- <sup>284</sup> Gitelman, *Scripts*, 158.
- <sup>285</sup> Samuel Warsawer, “A Twentieth Century Game,” *Phonogram*-2 4 (Feb. 1902), 60-1. Another contest was to award a prize “to the person who can distinguish the greatest number of tunes when all the phonographs are playing at the same time” (“Phonographic Con[t]est,” *Coshocton Age* [Coshocton, Ohio], Sept. 4, 1903, p. 1).
- <sup>286</sup> On Aug. 16, Walter Miller telegraphed a special request to Giesemann: “Can you come out tomorrow? Want to make clarinet & piano cylinders for Paris with French, German & Italian announcement. Bring man that can do such” (W. H. Miller to Henry Gieseman [sic], Aug. 16, 1889 [TAEM 127:460]). Apparently the session could not be arranged in time, and the overseas shipment that went out on Aug. 17 contained only blank cylinders. “Clarionet piano go forward Saturday [Aug. 24],” Batchelor promised (Charles Batchelor to Edison, Aug. 20, 1889 [TAEM 139:648]), and that same day an otherwise unknown clarinetist and pianist (N. Vogel and Miss Hangs) went in to record. But Giesemann did bring another clarinetist to the laboratory on Aug. 21, named Belucci, and on Aug. 24 a package duly went out to Paris containing “8 Band cylinders, and 92 Clarionet and Piano, with French, German and Italian announcements” (Edison Laboratory, [Thomas] M[aguire] to W. J. Hammer, Aug. 26, 1889 [TAEM 139:658]; Edison Laboratory, [Thomas] M[aguire] to Edison, Aug. 26, 1889 [TAEM 139:659]).
- <sup>287</sup> Gitelman, *Scripts*, 157.
- <sup>288</sup> Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix*, xxvi.
- <sup>289</sup> *Phonoscope* 2:9 (Sept. 1898), 9.
- <sup>290</sup> O. Nelvil, “Mr. Simpkins’ Snoring Record,” *Phonogram*-2 1 (Oct. 1900), 170-6.
- <sup>291</sup> “A Man Who Sees Sound,” *Phonoscope* 3:8 (Aug. 1899), 9.
- <sup>292</sup> *24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1888-1894* (Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001), 13 §. Garry Allen was reportedly a pseudonym used by Len Spencer; this phonogram presumably dates from before he left Washington to work for the New Jersey Phonograph Company, which had taken place by 1892 (see FPRA Oct. 1958, 32).
- <sup>293</sup> *THE BICENTENNIAL COLLECTION: CELEBRATING THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PRESIDENT’S OWN UNITED STATES MARINE BAND* (Washington, D. C.: United States Marine Band, 1998), 1:1 §.
- <sup>294</sup> *24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1888-1894* (Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001), 15 §.
- <sup>295</sup> *24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1895-1897* (Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001), 10 §.
- <sup>296</sup> Albert Chevalier, MY OLD DUTCH (U. K. Berliner 2236, dated London, Dec. 30, 1898); *EMILE BERLINER’S GRAMOPHONE: THE EARLIEST DISCS, 1888-1901* (Symposium 1058), 13 §.
- <sup>297</sup> Arthur Collins, CINDY, I DREAMS ABOUT YOU (Victor Monarch 3071-[1]) §.
- <sup>298</sup> This would seem to have happened later on in private, domestic concerts, as when one home phonograph owner told a guest “We will now have a laughable skit called ‘Fishing,’” but the dealer turned out to have sent the wrong cylinder by mistake: “Then came the stentorian tones of Mr. Edison’s robust announcer ‘Pass Me not, O Do not Pass Me By’” (C. D. Boynton, “A Missouri Breeze,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:3 [May 1906], 11).
- <sup>299</sup> E. A. Ludwigs, “To the Operator,” *Phonogram* 3 (Feb. 1893), 336, italics added.
- <sup>300</sup> *Umpire*, Sept. 9, 1888 (TAEM 146:330).
- <sup>301</sup> “Edison’s Latest,” *Saratoga* (Saratoga, New York) July 27, 1889 (TAEM 146:416).
- <sup>302</sup> “The Phonograph Reproduces a Living Panorama,” *Phonogram* 2 (June 1892), 125.
- <sup>303</sup> *St. Paul Dispatch*, Nov. 15, 1888 (TAEM 146:247).
- <sup>304</sup> *Edison Phonographic News* 1:6 (Mar.-Apr. 1895), 79.
- <sup>305</sup> Item attributed to “The Saunterer” in *Hamilton Daily Republican* (Hamilton, Ohio), Dec. 10, 1892, p. 2.
- <sup>306</sup> The only “Dr. Eastman of St. Paul” I can identify was Charles Alexander Eastman (1858-1939), a native Sioux physician and author also known as Ohiyesa, but the 1888 date of this article assigned by the Edison Papers Project predates both his medical degree (1890) and his settlement in St. Paul (1892). The handwritten year on the clipping itself is unclear, though consistent with how “1888” was designated in other cases.
- <sup>307</sup> Brady, *Spiral Way*, 30.

- <sup>308</sup> “He Had to Go,” from *Louisville Courier-Journal*, in *Daily Advocate* (Newark, Ohio), Oct. 28, 1894, p. 7.
- <sup>309</sup> “Thought He Saw the Joke,” from *Chicago Record*, in *Marion Star* (Marion, Ohio), Dec. 12, 1895, p. 3.
- <sup>310</sup> *Lima Daily Times* (Lima, Ohio), July 11, 1892, p. 5.
- <sup>311</sup> *Fort Wayne Sentinel* (Fort Wayne, Indiana), Apr. 5, 1895, p. 2.
- <sup>312</sup> “Talk of the Town,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Mar. 30, 1895, p. 4.
- <sup>313</sup> *Phonoscope* 3:2 (Feb. 1899), 11.
- <sup>314</sup> “Seen and Heard,” *North Adams Transcript* (North Adams, Massachusetts), July 1, 1899, p. 4.
- <sup>315</sup> “It’s [sic] Naturalness Deceived Him,” from *Democrat* (Warren, Pennsylvania), in *Phonogram-2* 1 (May 1900), 9.
- <sup>316</sup> *Iowa Recorder* (Greene, Iowa), July 4, 1902, p. 4.
- <sup>317</sup> Obituary of Edward Meeker, published in an unidentified New York newspaper “on the day after his death” on Apr. 19, 1937, quoted in *FPRA* Feb. 1946, 20.
- <sup>318</sup> “Ada Jones Recalled in WABC Broadcast,” *Suffolk County Watchman* (Huntington Station, New York), Aug. 3, 1946 [?], quoted in *FPRA* Jan. 1947, 22.
- <sup>319</sup> “Brother, be careful....,” *Phonoscope* 2:11 (Nov. 1898), 13, italics added.
- <sup>320</sup> “A Sale by Phonograph,” *New York Press*, Aug. 31, 1890 (TAEM 146:625).
- <sup>321</sup> George S. Thomas, “The Edison Phonograph As Heard By a Farmer,” *Phonogram-2* 3 (Aug. 1901), 52.
- <sup>322</sup> “I kinder geddered in dat it wuz one er deze ’ere w’atzisnames w’at you hollers inter one year an’ it comes out er de udder,” Remus states. “Hit’s mighty funny unter me how dese folks kin go an’ prognosticate der eckoes inter one er deze yere i’ on boxes, an’ dar hit’ll stay on twel de man comes ’long an’ tu’ns de handle an’ let’s de fuss come pilin’ out” (Joel Chandler Harris, *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings: The Folk-Lore of the Old Plantation* [New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1890], 201-2).
- <sup>323</sup> Joel Chandler Harris, *Uncle Remus and His Friends: Old Plantation Stories, Songs and Ballads with Sketches of Negro Character* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1892), 222-3.
- <sup>324</sup> Harris, *Uncle Remus and His Friends*, 294-5.
- <sup>325</sup> Fabrizio, “Spoken Announcement.” An abridged version of his argument is presented in Fabrizio and Paul, *Antique Phonograph Accessories*, 70.
- <sup>326</sup> Fabrizio and Paul, *Talking Machine*, 156. For other discussions of the significance of the move towards internal-horn furniture-like machines, see Kenney, *Recorded Music*, 50-2; Millard, *America on Record*, 129-31.
- <sup>327</sup> Here are three random examples from home-recorded “musical” cylinders, with approximate dates:
- Annie Laurie, sung by the Top Floor Quartet.  
(Brown wax cylinder in the possession of the author §, with handwritten label “About 1910 [?].”) Old Black Joe,  
as sung on Sunday morning  
by Mister—and *Master* Reed,  
uh, December the first.
- (Cylinder in the possession of Peter Fraser §, part of a larger collection the contents of which appear to span roughly 1912-15, after which the machine continued to be used but was in relative disrepair judging from the “late” examples. Dec. 1 fell on a Sunday in 1912, and not again until 1918.)
- Song,  
God and I,  
sung by A. H. Mendenhall of Pomeroy.
- (Black wax cylinder [a style of blank introduced in 1912] in the possession of Richard Schnabel §).
- <sup>328</sup> C. W. Noyes, “Points Pertaining to the Use and Care of the Edison Phonograph,” *Phonogram-2* 4 (Dec. 1901), 28.
- <sup>329</sup> Eleanor Arnold, ed. *Party Lines, Pumps and Privies* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984), 157.
- <sup>330</sup> This is a general impression based on preliminary listening to the hundreds of amateur disc phonograms of the 1940s and 1950s I have collected as source material for a future project.

## Chapter Four

### PHONOGRAPHIC DEPICTION

The prerecorded spoken announcement facilitated the work the early commercial phonogram was expected to do, guiding listeners comfortably through the start of the listening experience, but it was—literally—only the beginning. Beyond the announcement, each subject of commercial phonography could pose unique problems of representation for which solutions had to be found, and the solutions performers and recordists chose can shed light in turn on what their priorities were and what they were trying to accomplish. I have already touched on the difficulty presented by songs with multiple verses, which had to be cut down to fit the available time even if doing so meant sacrificing integrity of narrative structure, but in that case the adaptation still does not reveal much about how listeners were expected to conceptualize the representation more broadly or what kind of work the phonogram was expected to do. There are, for instance, no obvious clues to tell us whether the phonogram was supposed to depict the performance of a song in the way that a painting might depict a man working in a field or a novel might describe one, or whether it was supposed to substitute for the performance of a song as a scarecrow or harvesting machine might substitute for the same man working in the same field. Insofar as the norm for attending a live song performance is passive listening, this distinction may not even seem meaningful—listening to a song would still just be listening to a song either way, right? But it is precisely through exploring such distinctions that we stand to gain real insight into the evolution of the commercial phonogram as a cultural form rather than regarding its “commodification” of musical performance and other subjects as straightforward and self-explanatory.

The distinction I am drawing here between depiction and substitution forms part of the analytical model developed by John Minton in his dissertation on pre-World War Two “race” and “hillbilly” records, *Phonograph Blues* (1990), based on four “modes” of phonographic representation which he identifies with the four so-called master tropes (synecdoche, metonymy, metaphor, and irony):

- In the *synecdochic* mode, a phonogram “is presented as a depiction—but only a depiction—of folk music,” most often in the form of “a dramatic rendering of a few of the personal interactions that comprise such performances.”<sup>1</sup>
- In the *metonymic* mode, a phonogram “is framed as the functional or semantic equivalent of live folksong.... [T]he performers explicitly enjoin the listeners themselves to participate directly in the performance as an unfolding, eminently accessible event.”<sup>2</sup>
- In the *metaphoric* mode, the phonogram “is conceived as a cultural event unto itself,” a form parallel to but distinct from live performance, with self-referential gestures and intertextual allusions to other phonograms.<sup>3</sup>
- In the *ironic* mode, phonogenic performers foreground the “paradox” of phonography itself, for instance through such self-contradictory phonogenizations as “Now, [I] got to do some recording, an’ I ought to be recording right now.”<sup>4</sup>

Minton further acknowledges that these modes are not mutually exclusive, and that they can occur simultaneously or alternate in a single phonogram.<sup>5</sup> Although he proposes this model only as a tool for analyzing the “race” and “hillbilly” records that form the immediate subject of his study, all four of his modes can also be tentatively identified in the earlier practices with which we are concerned here. His ironic mode is easiest to detect in the retroductive demonstrations of the tinfoil era that consciously exploited the effects of deictic inversion, while his metaphoric mode is readily apparent in spoken announcements framed in terms of “the following record.” However, it is primarily Minton’s distinction between the synecdochic and metonymic modes which I want to borrow for use here. At the same time, I find that the identification of these two modes with synecdoche and metonymy obscures what is truly distinctive about them, whatever insights it may offer and however neatly it may divide up the territory into broadly recognized categories of representation. In practice, Minton distinguishes his “synecdochic” mode more fundamentally by the ability it offers listeners to eavesdrop on a scene without otherwise participating in it than by its use of parts of events to represent whole events, two characteristics that need not always overlap. Borrowing the term that the recording industry itself used most often to categorize material in what Minton calls the synecdochic mode, I will instead refer to this approach as the *descriptive* mode, emphasizing its goal of depiction; this mode corresponds to the description or portrait of the man working in the field. The other mode, which Minton calls metonymic, I will call *substitutive*, the



clearest term that comes to mind for indicating that it involves a phonogram taking the place of its subject, doing what its subject would ordinarily do, corresponding to the scarecrow or harvesting machine. In my terminology, then, a phonogram operating in the descriptive mode will seek to depict an event as it might be passively overheard, whereas a phonogram operating in the substitutive mode will seek to replace an event as its functional equivalent, inviting an identical response from its listeners. The choice between these two modes was not the only one the recording industry had to make when settling on a strategy for representing a given performance genre, but I find that it was the most fundamental, with the greatest overall impact on the form phonograms would take.

The most satisfactory way I have found of identifying early commercial phonograms with the descriptive or substitutive mode is to look and listen for traces of the *effects* normally elicited by the genres they seek to represent. If such effects are represented for listeners within a phonogram, that suggests it is intended to depict its subject in the descriptive mode: the listener is eavesdropping on a performance, capable of imagining and being in sympathy with the “real” audience, but not of being a true or complete member of it. If such effects are instead anticipated from listeners during the phonogram’s education, that suggests that it is intended to replace its subject in the substitutive mode: the education *is* the performance, the listener *is* the audience. To demonstrate how this approach works, I will begin with the treatment of one particularly obvious “effect” elicited by performance—applause.

### **The Simulated Ovation**

Nineteenth-century listeners were impressed by the ability of sound media to convey not just the sounds of the speaker or performer who was the center of attention, but also the response of an audience. During the telephone exhibitions of early 1877, this point had been deemed worthy of special mention: “Not only was the voice of the reporter clearly recognized, but the receivers of the message also heard the applause of the audience which attended the lecture.”<sup>6</sup> In 1889-90, the phonographic “reproduction” of musical performances drew similar comments.

Listeners wrote about hearing, for example, “a drum and fife corps playing at the Twenty-third regiment armory, with the applause of about two hundred people who were in the armory at the time,”<sup>7</sup> “recitals of music by Gilmore’s band at Manhattan Beach, with applause accompaniment,”<sup>8</sup> “music by a full band, and a fife and drum corps, accompanied by cheers from a crowd,”<sup>9</sup> and “the ‘hoorays’ and applause of the crowd” at the end of a medley of tunes by a German band.<sup>10</sup> Such comments were not restricted to ovations heard at the ends of performances; we also read about the “yells of the street Arabs” in a phonogram of a street band,<sup>11</sup> the conductor’s introductory cue-words “ein, zwei, drei” during the 1888 recording of the Arion Singing Society,<sup>12</sup> and the interruption of a husband’s story by his wife’s laughter.<sup>13</sup> However, the majority of cases that received comment did refer to concluding ovations rather than audience reactions interspersed at random throughout recorded performances. Indeed, the famous phonograph exhibitor Lyman Howe drew special attention to this detail in his advertising:

A SCIENTIFIC TEST.

The Warren [Pennsylvania] K. O. T. M. band will be present and play a selection before the audience to the phonograph. The phonograph will reproduce the same *even to the applause of the audience*.<sup>14</sup>

A few other allusions suggest that listeners did not value the sounds of applause only for the evidence they provided of accurate “reproduction.” Some musical phonograms sent from the East to Kentucky in 1889 were said to have been “made even more realistic by the applause which was also reproduced by the phonograph.”<sup>15</sup> That same year, a reporter remarked that “the applause, cat-calls and whistling of the crowd” at the end of John P. Hogan’s comic song-and-sketch routine HOT CORN were “heard as though they were before the listener.”<sup>16</sup> In 1892, a guest at one of Josef Hofmann’s phonographic soirées found reproduced applause to be “very amusing, following as it did, the musical programme.”<sup>17</sup> Judging from these comments, prerecorded applause was considered noteworthy because it helped to represent subjects “realistically” and contribute to an illusion of co-presence, although it was also “amusing,” presumably because of its comic incongruity with listeners’ ordinary experience of such sounds. At the same time, there was also a tradition of representing fictional audience reactions *within* certain performance genres, and those

too necessarily appeared on the corresponding phonograms. In March 1889, for instance, the New York Phonograph Company was said to be exhibiting a phonogram “which reproduced the T[o]reador song from ‘Carmen,’ followed the music with the applause of the audience *and* the mimic roar of the imaginary multitude upon the stage,” simulating the spectators at a bullfight.<sup>18</sup> As this example shows, audience response could be represented through artifice as well as merely “reproduced.” The “blind” conditions of phonography, unlike live performances of *Carmen*, would have made the two difficult for auditors to distinguish.

Recordists and phonogenic performers soon began to introduce applause into their phonograms artificially as a conventionalized element in the representation of certain kinds of musical performance. When Markwith’s Band of Orange, New Jersey undertook its first recording session that September, held in a downtown practice room with a group of newsmen present, a reporter had noted: “Even the applause of the small audience which followed the rendition, was reproduced at the end.”<sup>19</sup> In that case, the applause was probably spontaneous, the result of audience members responding to the band’s performance just as they would have responded to a concert in the park. Two months later, however, a newspaper mentioned another Markwith’s Band phonogram taken at Edison’s laboratory itself. The description of this cylinder went as follows:

Two weeks ago [i. e., before December 2, 1888] Markwith’s band of Orange played to the phonograph in the lecture room of the laboratory. One by one the spectators placed the tubes to their ears and listened delightedly to the stirring strains of “On to Petersburg.” The high notes of the cornets rang out shrill and clear. The big bass drum came in at the proper place not less distinctly. Silence followed the playing, and then arose the shout: “He’s all right.” “Who’s all right?” “Johnny.” “Who’s Johnny?” “Why, Johnny Markwith!”<sup>20</sup>

During this second recording session, there had probably been no live audience of reporters and spectators in attendance; at least, no journalistic report of the originary event has surfaced. Instead, the band members are likely to have supplied the words at the end themselves; they certainly sound like the kind of formulaic shout a group of musicians might have developed in their band-leader’s honor. When the National Fife and Drum Corps of Newark produced some phonograms that December, the performers themselves were explicitly reported as having supplied their own ovation: “The corps gave a rousing cheer at the phonograph, and immediately the cheer was

echoed back when the crank was turned.”<sup>21</sup> The earliest band phonogram known to survive—the FIFTH REGIMENT MARCH taken by Walter Miller in March 1889—likewise concludes with what sounds like simulated cheering, although that part of the cylinder is unfortunately damaged. The best surviving example of which I am aware appears at the conclusion of a Columbia cylinder of THE LIBERTY BELL MARCH performed by the United States Marine Band reissued on CD in 1998, although the modern sound editor chose to fade out in the middle of it, evidently assuming that the “spontaneous cheering” was extraneous to the body of the phonogram and that this was the appropriate way to deal with it.<sup>22</sup>

Simulated ovations were often mentioned in connection with standard musical phonograms during the first years of the industry, although they never became as universal a practice as the spoken announcement and seem to have been largely abandoned within a few years. The rationale behind them was explained in an 1890 account of a United States Marine Band recording session for Columbia: “Now and then, if there is a little space left at the end of the cylinders, the band indulges in a wild burst of applause, stamping and shouting in approbation of its own performance. This passes for demonstration by a suppositious audience, of course, when one hears the phonograph reproduce it.” According to this explanation, the simulated ovation was being used in part to compensate for timing problems: if a musical performance ended before the cylinder ran out, this practice offered a standardized means for handling the situation. The same article notes that some performances also threatened to run too long, in which case “the expert holds up his finger and the band comes to a full stop at the end of the next musical phrase.”<sup>23</sup> An account of a Jersey City recording laboratory, probably Charles Marshall’s, confirms that there was a practical side to these conventions: “Where a cylinder is not quite filled with music, the performers applauded themselves energetically until the expert yells ‘enough.’”<sup>24</sup> If the use of simulated applause had become a strategy for compensating for timing problems, this does explain why it appears only occasionally on surviving examples. Furthermore, we might expect such a practice to have been abandoned as unnecessary once recordists and performers became more adept at timing performances to fit the

duration of a cylinder. However, the simulated ovation would never have been adopted for this technical purpose if it had not also made cultural sense.

Up until 1888, military band music had not been an abstract, detachable commodity but something linked specifically to the marching of soldiers and, secondarily, to civilian parades and large-scale public concerts. In fact, some effort was made to use prerecorded music as a substitute for military bands in their original function of synchronizing and enlivening maneuvers. In 1891, there was a proposal to try using United States Marine Band phonograms to drill companies at the Washington Light Infantry Armory as an economic measure.<sup>25</sup> Lyman Howe and his partner Haddock had already used prerecorded commands to drill a Pennsylvania state militia company, the Bethlehem Rifles, the previous spring,<sup>26</sup> and employers and sympathetic bystanders occasionally used prerecorded music to lighten the burden of labor and improve productivity.<sup>27</sup> Teachers even used phonographs to accompany penmanship drills.<sup>28</sup> In short, the translation of drill music into phonography did not necessarily mean detaching it from its literal drill function. However, commercial phonograms of the 1890s also had to be capable of “working” in a variety of exhibition contexts unrelated to drilling, including horn concerts and nickel-in-the-slot machines. Audiences at horn phonograph and gramophone exhibitions routinely supplied their own applause after each selection was educed and must have joined in if prerecorded applause was also present (perhaps the prerecorded applause was even infectious),<sup>29</sup> but for ear-tube listeners at coin-actuated phonographs the experience was a solitary one, framed only by external signage and whatever sounds were recorded on the phonogram itself, such as the spoken announcement. Under these latter circumstances, the conclusion of a military band phonogram without cheering and applause might have been regarded as uncomfortably abrupt. In ordinary experience, performances by military bands concluded with ovations; it was, therefore, reasonable for recordists and performers to suppose that a phonographic representation of such a performance should also incorporate one for educative contexts in which no live applause could be expected.

Prerecorded applause, which I am proposing as a hallmark of the descriptive mode, might not seem absolutely to rule out the substitutive mode. Listeners to such

phonograms could and probably often did treat the experience as functionally equivalent to that of being immersed in an audience at a live concert (much as the “descriptive mode” in literature is supposed to use sensory language to make readers feel as though they are really “there,” experiencing the scene being described). However, the performer-audience circuit of the fictional arena in which the represented event takes place is complete in these cases regardless of what happens during the education event itself: the musical performance is applauded whether its education is well-received or not. The imaginary audience of the performance is, therefore, distinct from the “real” audience of the phonogram, so that the two are not fully equivalent as they would be in the substitutive mode as I define it. This distinction may seem a little arbitrary now, but its heuristic value will become more apparent as we cover increasingly complex cases.

The simulation of audience response in commercial phonograms of band music was short-lived;<sup>30</sup> instead of seeking to represent the sounds of a band performance as a whole, professional recordists soon resolved to represent the sounds of the performers only. The elimination of simulated ovations took place at more or less the same time as did the identification of recording dates and use of the past tense (“the following selection *was* played”) in spoken announcements, apparently as part of a broader move towards treating musical phonograms as embodying performances that could be plugged into any situation rather than as “records” anchored to particular times and places. However, it can also be understood as a shift from depicting band performances in the descriptive mode, in which case applause was arguably part of the subject being represented, to replacing the band itself in the substitutive mode, in which case it was not (although the phonogram itself might invite applause of its own). Indeed, the substitutive mode quickly appears to have become the recording industry’s default mode. Starting in the early 1890s, most audicular phonograms would seek to represent only the sounds of performers—singers, instrumentalists, orators, accompanists, announcers—and not the “overheard” sounds of performances in their participatory totality, including audience response. The descriptive mode was instead reserved for certain special cases. Its successful development hinged on the broader ability of the phonograph to depict complex

fictional “scenes” through the aural channel, a task for which early recordists and phonogenic performers borrowed and combined techniques from a variety of existing audicular forms.

### **Roots of Audio Theater**

During the 1890s and 1900s, the phonogenization of music and spoken announcements involved a great deal of artifice and adaptation, as we have seen. However, in the simulated ovation we cross over into material that is even easier to conceptualize as fiction. It seems intuitively apparent that the cheers at the end of an early United States Marine Band cylinder cannot be regarded as “real” cheers, and that they only represent cheers within a fictional world not unlike that associated with theater or cinema. By the same token, we might also regard the musical portion of such a phonogram as a fictional musical performance (in the sense that a few specially posed instrumentalists from the United States Marine Band “produced a very good imitation of a full band,” or a vocalist leaned towards and away from the horn in the recording laboratory to create the illusion of a dynamically “normal” vocal performance), but for whatever reason the fiction in this case seems less obvious than in the case of the cheers and applause, perhaps because we tacitly accept that musicians are really “playing music” when they phonogenize (or at least find it difficult to identify what it is they *are* doing if not that). The fiction can exist on two different levels—that of the performance being represented, as in the “mimic roar of the imaginary multitude” in *Carmen*, or that of the phonogram itself, as in simulated applause at the end of band selections—and although the former type furnished some models for the latter, and the two can sometimes be hard to tell apart, the latter did eventually come to constitute a distinctively phonographic idiom.

A term already exists for the representation of fictional scenes through sound alone: *audio theater*, which Richard Fish defines as a “theatrical presentation intended solely for the audio medium, using voices, music and other sounds.” Fish distinguishes this phenomenon from the “audiobook” or “talking book,” claiming: “Merely reading a story aloud does not make it a piece of theatre; even if the reader

gives a stirring, emotional performance, it still remains a piece which was created for the printed page.”<sup>31</sup> Himself a modern-day practitioner of audio theater, Fish is eager to establish his specialty as an independently valid art form; the oral interpretation of a literary text is, for him, insufficiently distinct from the written text itself to count. At the same time, he seeks to separate audio theater from any one medium, in part to combat the exclusive association of the genre with “old time radio.” (The term commonly applied to this genre in German is the equally neutral *Hörspiel*, which might be translated as “play for hearing.”) To be an indisputable example of audio theater, Fish proposes that a presentation must incorporate four elements: speech, music, sound effects and structured silence (i.e., timing). Beyond that, he argues that the genre transcends individual media, being equally at home on the radio or on phonograms. However, he finds that the very nature of audio theater appears to require *some* kind of mediation, and his account of its early history is accordingly rooted in the development of new technologies of communication. People have always told stories using sound, Fish observes: “But all earlier uses of sound in performance were combined with some kind of visual presentation, even if only the facial expression and body language of the storyteller. Until about a hundred and twenty years ago, nobody thought of telling a story—much less bringing it to full life in the imagination—through the medium of sound alone.”<sup>32</sup> The turning-point was, specifically, the introduction of telephony and phonography. Fish begins his history with the Parisian telephone transmissions of 1881, but he points out that the performers did not adapt their presentation to the medium; telephones were simply set up at the opera and theater to capture ordinary performances. In his view, the real birth of the genre occurred not with telephony, but with phonography:

In the 1890s, when the vendors of recordings looked for products that would attract the most buyers, they looked to the performers who were best known.... Musical acts were obvious first choices, and the non-musical acts weren't far behind. But “sight-gags” which got a big laugh in a theatre were unintelligible when only the sound was recorded. Speech was added to the recorded performance to describe scenes, and set up sight-, now sound-gags.... By the 1890s, recorded vaudeville sketches, and soon original material created for recordings, pioneered the use of all four...basic elements [speech, music, sound effects and silence] in a single presentation created expressly for the ear, and audio theatre was born.<sup>33</sup>

While it is true that performance genres familiar to the late nineteenth-century public were translated into phonographic form, Fish's chronology of the emergence of audio



theater in telephony and phonography is mostly speculative, based on what he believes must have happened rather than on empirical evidence.<sup>34</sup> In fact, a closer examination of the roots of the phonographic form suggests that several preexisting performance genres served as influential precursors for audio theater in the absence of what would normally be considered “technological” mediation: the musical “descriptive” piece, ventriloquism and mimicry on the stage, and elaborate vocal “imitations” by barbershop-style quartets. Let us consider each of these precursors in turn.

The “descriptive” piece was an especially popular form of live band and orchestra music in the late 1880s and early 1890s, loosely defined by the presence of mimetic sound effects. “Men, women and children, who will listen unmoved while a masterpiece of classical music is being performed, will go simply wild when the same band plays some light descriptive composition with fire bells, boat whistles, wind storms and sounds of that sort copiously permeating it,” observed one commentator of the time.<sup>35</sup> Fire bells featured prominently in one of the best-known of these compositions, David Wallis Reeves’ “The Night Alarm,” which also included the sounds of horses’ hooves, the winding of a hose reel, and the whistle of a fire engine. Self-published by Reeves in 1888,<sup>36</sup> this composition was already being recorded on the phonograph as of December 1889,<sup>37</sup> presumably including the special sound effects—fire bells, horses’ hooves, and so on. Since these happened to be part of the composition itself, they were not a phonographic innovation on the part of the phonogenic performers or recordists. Nevertheless, listeners appear to have perceived the experience of hearing the effects through a phonograph as qualitatively different from that of hearing them live:

A number of descriptive pieces have been reproduced on the phonograph, but none were so popular as “The Night Alarm,” which was original with Mr. John B. Holding, a musician and bandmaster. The piece drew many nickels, and people in the large cities as well as those in the smaller ones listened to it in wonder and astonishment. The listener heard the music of a band which was interrupted by loud cries of “Fire!” “Fire!” There were loud shouts, a rush of people, and a buzz of voices. Then the fire bells rang and a hose reel came lashing down the street, the gong ringing, the iron-shod hoofs clattering, and the heavy wheels rattling over the stones. The sounds were faint at first, but grew louder and louder as the machine approached, and when it arrived the driver yelled to his horses and they stopped. A fireman was heard giving commands, and when he yelled, “Unwind that hose!” the horses again started down the street, the hose was unwound, and there were more shouts and commands. Then a man said, “Come on; it’s all out.” Another asked, “Where was it?” The reply was, “I don’t know; but it didn’t amount to anything,” and the piece came to an end. The thing was so clever that people imagined they heard more than they did, and

many persons insisted that they heard the engine working, the steam escaping, and the noise of the water as it went through the nozzle of the hose.<sup>38</sup>

This particular phonographic adaptation was credited to John B. Holding, the leader of Holding's Military Band, which suggests that a comparison with early concert performances of Reeves' composition might reveal some minor differences in content. The main change, however, was that in the concert setting the audience was encouraged to watch everything the band was doing in their eye-catching uniforms: there was clearly no actual steam engine involved. When the same piece was heard "blind" through the phonograph, listeners could not be so sure. The popularity of this selection in recorded form is confirmed by other sources. It made a hit during horn concerts, as evidenced in 1890 by an account of "a selection played by a band, which represented a fire alarm, the horses running from their stalls and galloping off to the supposed fire and the firemen returning singing, which drew forth hearty enthusiasm."<sup>39</sup> It was equally successful in nickel-in-the-slot machines. The Ohio Phonograph Company made a point of changing the selections available in its phonograph parlors on a regular basis, but it reported making a few exceptions: "For instance, the 'Night Alarm,' a band record descriptive of a fire, with calls of the firemen, ringing of the bells, the clattering of horses' hoofs and the unwinding of the hose-carriage reel, though it has been continuously exhibited since the opening of these parlors, is as popular as ever, and the receipts show that the public are not tired of it."<sup>40</sup> It is not surprising that a musical genre known to have been so popular in live concerts at the time should also have been received enthusiastically when educed by the phonograph. By eliminating visuals, however, phonographic mediation also enhanced the illusory potential of the sound effects that defined the genre: listeners "imagined they heard more than they did." The popularity of the musical descriptive specialty on the phonograph was due not just to the vogue enjoyed by the genre itself during the 1880s and 1890s, but also to the fact that the phonograph helped it achieve the mimetic effect that was the source of its appeal.

The fact that the phonographic audience could not see the performance, as the live concert audience could, had created a new "backstage" for performers—the recording laboratory—in which the untidy makings of the illusion were visible. In

1893, a reporter published the following account of an actual phonogenic performance of *THE NIGHT ALARM* by Holding's Military Band:

Mr. Holding's method of producing the night alarm was simple. While his band was playing four or five men cried "Fire!" "Fire!" The musicians stopped playing and ran wildly about the room, which was the rush of the people. All of them talked, making the buzz of the voices heard in the phonograph. A small bell served as the fire bell. The sound of the horses' hoofs was made by a man who struck a stone with two mallets, the sound being faint at first but louder as the horses were supposed to be approaching the scene. While this man was striking the stone another was striking a gong. A third man was whirling a policeman's rattle, which made the rumbling of the wheels of the machine. At first he stood ten or twelve feet from the phonograph, but he approached it as the man with the mallets struck harder. These three men worked together, the noise growing louder in uniformity, and they ceased when the noise was loudest, as it was then supposed that the machine had arrived at the fire. One of the men assumed the part of the fireman, who gave commands, and others took the part of the spectators, who said that it was all out and didn't amount to anything. Of course, everything was done in regular order, and the apparent confusion was systematic. A person standing in the room would have imagined that he was in the midst of a crowd of lunatics. The effect was much the same as that observed behind the scenes of a stage.<sup>41</sup>

The reporter was a privileged spectator, let in on the occult knowledge of the record-making industry, just like a person allowed backstage in a theater. Some of the specific techniques used were, in fact, ones also used behind the scenes in "live" stage productions—for instance, the striking of a stone with mallets to simulate the sound of horses' hooves.<sup>42</sup> In this case, however, the basic division between frontstage and backstage was not spatial but sensory, founded on different channels of perception: whatever was audible was frontstage, and whatever was not was backstage. Even the visual appearance of the recording laboratory was appropriately described as "something between the rear of a theater stage and a machine shop."<sup>43</sup> Like the conventional backstage area, it was not meant to be seen, and so was left messy and unfinished; but, like a machine shop, it was also fitted out with a bewildering array of tools and gadgetry. Meanwhile, the performers responsible for *THE NIGHT ALARM* seemed to be behaving like "a crowd of lunatics" when judged without reference to the phonogenic frame that, for them, governed the event. The phonogenization of music for recording was at least recognizably similar to live musical performance, even if performers stood oddly still or moved back and forth in strange ways. Having musicians run around the room to simulate "the rush of the people" was another matter.

The phonographic renditions of *THE NIGHT ALARM* as a musical descriptive sketch were so popular that they inspired at least one effort to record the sounds of a

*real* fire department in action, entitled RECEIVING AN ALARM FROM BOX 35 AT FIRE HEADQUARTERS, ATLANTA, GA.:

This instrument [a firehouse phonograph] was put to work a few days ago, when an alarm from box 35 was received and the wax roll caught and retained every sound heard in the engine house. The alarm was turned in for the benefit of the phonograph, and when the firemen are at a loss to know what to do, they take out this instrument and hear the reception of the alarm....

When the phonograph is started up Chief Joyner's voice is heard announcing the nature of the selection to be reproduced. As the words die out the gong is heard and then the sound of the horses' hoofs as they rush from their stalls and the snap of the harness as they are made ready to leave are heard. The gong continues to strike, and as the first round ends Chief Joyner is heard to announce the number, some one yells to open the doors and the apparatuses leave. As they go out the door the sound of the gongs can be heard and then the clatter of the horses' hoofs as they strike the pavement.

After the apparatuses leave the men left at the station are heard to discuss the supposed nature of the fire and are interrupted by four taps from the gong. This calls for another wagon, and the sound of it leaving the house is faithfully reproduced by the phonograph. Then comes the out tap and the return of the horses to the stalls and the placing of the apparatuses in their usual positions.

One gets the impression that real fire department gongs, horses' hooves, and firemen's voices were used as phonogens here and that the phonogram was taken in an actual firehouse. Like the phonogenic performances that generated commercial copies of *THE NIGHT ALARM*, however, the subject was still contrived for recording in the sense that it had not been a response to an actual fire; it was only a drill carried out "for the benefit of the phonograph." The fire chief's utterance of the spoken announcement at the beginning would have keyed a self-consciously phonogenic frame among the participants, who must have spoken straight into the recording horn to make their subsequent shouts and discussion intelligible during education. The duration of the event must also have been condensed to allow for the representation of everything from the initial alarm to the "out tap" and return of the fire engines within roughly three minutes. Even this phonogram of a "real" fire drill necessarily entailed a great deal of phonogenic adaptation; its artifice differed more in degree than in kind from that of *THE NIGHT ALARM*. However, the results were still supposed to be authentically informative:

Persons who have never seen the Atlanta fire department receive an alarm of fire and who do not know what occurs in the engine houses when the large gongs begin to strike can now very easily familiarize themselves with these quick and mysterious doings. In order to hear just what goes on in the engine houses at this most exciting of all moments with the firemen without having to sit and wait for an alarm the inquisitive one can go to fire headquarters and listen to the department phonograph.<sup>44</sup>

In fact, it seems that this phonogram was contrived not only to give listeners an opportunity to hear a “typical” response to a fire alarm, but also to convey a specific political message, as we learn from an account of the mayor’s experience listening to it—or, perhaps, from a second phonogram, since a different box number is cited:

When the instrument began to work Mayor Collier heard a deep bass voice yell out, “An alarm of fire received at headquarters of the Atlanta fire department, Atlanta, Ga.” Following this came the sound of the gong and a count of the strokes told that it was box 31. As the last stroke sounds the gongs of the fire apparatuses are heard mingled with the shouts of the drivers and the noise made by the horse’s hoofs as they strike on the floor. Quiet then reigns in the station until a fireman begins to talk and says that great volumes of smoke are seen in the direction of one of the largest buildings at the corner of Alabama and Pryor streets, where box 31 is located. This monologue is interrupted by the sound of the gong and nine strokes are heard. This calls the entire department, and again the noise of apparatuses is heard as they leave the house. Chief Joyner’s little red wagon with its lively noise is heard. Again all is quiet and the voice is heard to announce that the fire is in a tall building, and in tones of sadness the voice says: “Here is where we need our water tower. Council has turned us down long enough.” When Mayor Collier heard this announcement he is said to have looked startled. However, he laughed. “I think I’ll have to take my phonograph before the council,” said the chief.

*The Atlanta Constitution* gave this article the title “Some Stray Symptoms,”<sup>45</sup> implying that the message about the urgent need for a water tower had been an unintended byproduct of the phonogram. However, it is reasonable to suppose that the Atlanta fire chief, inspired by THE NIGHT ALARM, might have turned to phonography as a disarmingly novel vehicle for issuing just such an appeal.

Although live descriptive specialties were supposed by definition to rely on overt mimesis, it turned out that listeners were not always able to make sense of them without extra guidance. Margaret and Robert Hazen note that audiences often received explanatory print material to guide them through the experience of listening to such pieces during live band concerts: “As suggestive as musical tones might be, there was always the possibility that the composer’s interpretation might elude the audience. Hence, printed programs often supplied verbal explanations of the ‘true’ meaning of the music played.”<sup>46</sup> In 1890, for instance, the program of one live band concert supplied the following explanation for Reeves’ “Night Alarm”:

#### SYNOPSIS

A calm and peaceful night. Ten o’clock. Lights out. All in bed. Choral. The alarm fire, fire. Box 32. Horses rush out. Hitch up and off. The gallop to the fire. Engines at work, etc. Fire out. Recall. March home. Chorous [sic]. Home again.<sup>47</sup>

This practice had an analog in phonography. In 1893, a *Phonogram* correspondent urged that record-makers send out similar printed descriptions along with their

phonograms so that these could be displayed next to the nickel-in-the-slot machines in phonograph parlors. One of his suggested examples was:

“The Night Alarm.”—Performed by Holding’s Military Band. This is a piece descriptive of a fire. The band plays slowly; the firemen are asleep. Then the sudden alarm—the fire bells ring box “32.” The engines start—the clattering of horses’ hoofs—the whistle of engines—the unwinding of the hose-reel—the fire subdued; firemen sing as they return to their quarters.

In the correspondent’s experience, visitors to a parlor would read a description of this sort and reason: “If I can hear all that, I will surely invest.”<sup>48</sup> Listeners were expected to choose THE NIGHT ALARM over other selections on the basis of its sheer quantity of effects—it was, literally, full of bells and whistles. At the same time, their listening experience would be guided by advance knowledge of what the bells and whistles were intended to represent, on the chance that they might not actually be able to infer this from the sounds alone. Customers of the mid-1890s who consulted the United States Phonograph Company’s record catalog found not only a written description of THE NIGHT ALARM (“Introducing Fire Bells, Cries, Horse’s Hoofs, Winding of Hose Reel, Whistle of Engine, etc.”), but also a line drawing of a horse-drawn fire engine charging forward, steam gushing from its boiler,<sup>49</sup> supplying yet another external source of information about what was supposed to be going on.

But the bulk of the communicative burden fell on the recorded sounds themselves, and the musical descriptive sketch took advantage of several key techniques that phonogenic performers afterwards borrowed and adapted to new purposes. Our basic aural perception of space and movement is made possible by an equation of loud sounds with nearby events and quiet sounds with far-away events. In soundscape studies, this phenomenon is known as *projicience*, the sense of depth in acoustic space.<sup>50</sup> For radio drama, Erving Goffman observes, “the impression of distance from the center of the stage is attained by a combination of volume control and angle and distance of speaker to microphone.”<sup>51</sup> But this same principle had been exploited long before radio in musical descriptive sketches, and it was adopted into phonography at an early date. In 1886, for example, Patrick Gilmore’s band presented a piece in St. Louis known as “The Passing Regiment,” using changes in dynamics to create the illusion of a group of musicians marching up to and then past the listener.<sup>52</sup> This was probably Robert Coverley’s march by that name, published

in 1884, the score of which marks the following correspondences between dynamics and proximity:

*ppp* in the distance  
gradually approaching  
approaching near  
passing by (*ff*, *fff*), passing away  
passed away.<sup>53</sup>

A fife and drum corps phonogram was reportedly educed at an exhibition in Atlanta, Georgia on May 29, 1889, using changes in dynamics to obtain the same effect:

You could almost see a troop of cavalry wheeling in sight, as the martial cornet sounded the bugle call. Then the tramp, tramp of infantry, as the shriek and rattle of the fife and drum came on, first faintly and far away, then nearer and nearer, till their noisy roar seemed to come directly from the street below. It was almost impossible not to believe that the phonograph had caught a part of the centennial parade in New York, and reproduced it in Atlanta.<sup>54</sup>

This account describes a phonogram in which the impression of an approaching fife and drum corps was produced by a gradual increase in volume. The same aural illusion was enacted for the gramophone in 1894, when the Berliner disc SPIRIT OF '76 featured a fife and drum corps apparently marching towards and then away from the listener, supplemented with shouts and cheering throughout.<sup>55</sup> Synthetic changes in volume, like synthetic applause, were found to contribute to an illusion of presence: the band seemed not only to be performing nearby but also to be moving around in space relative to the listener. Composers had also produced descriptive pieces for brass band intended to convey the impression of two bands playing at once, with their music overlapping inharmoniously,<sup>56</sup> and a similar effect was described as part of an 1889 exhibition on behalf of the New York Phonograph Company: “Again a German band was heard on Avenue A, with an opposition band approaching in the distance.”<sup>57</sup> It is unclear whether these effects in phonography were actually produced using the performance techniques of the musical descriptive sketch or in some other way—by actually having two bands play at once, say, or by marching a band past a stationary phonograph. In either case, however, the musical descriptive sketch had set a precedent for the kind of listening experience such phonograms were designed to provide.

Meanwhile, ventriloquists had developed some analogous techniques of aural representation. Stage ventriloquism is associated nowadays with the convention of

the “dummy,” a visual focus to which the ventriloquial voice can be readily reassigned, but this is actually a relatively recent introduction to the ventriloquial art. In the late eighteenth century, when ventriloquism began to establish itself as a popular entertainment, performers who worked out of doors, and hence under unpredictable acoustic conditions, sometimes used dummies to enhance the illusion, but ventriloquists who appeared on stage indoors did not. Instead, they took advantage of the relatively predictable acoustic environment to construct fictional scenes through sound alone. Fitz James, a French ventriloquist who appeared on the London stage in 1803, put on an act in which he appeared to hold conversations with unseen interlocutors at various distances offstage, behind doors, above the ceiling, or under the floor. One of his illusions was that of the “retreating watchman,” in which a drop in volume was used to create an illusion of increased distance,<sup>58</sup> just as in descriptive specialties like “The Passing Regiment” and SPIRIT OF ’76. However, another of Fitz James’s illusions is even more remarkable as a form of audio theater:

Other scenes which were to follow required the imagination to be too completely misled to admit of the actor being seen. He went behind a folding screen in one corner of the room, when he counterfeited the knocking at a door. One person called from within, and was answered by a different person from without, who was admitted; and we found, from the conversation of the parties, that the latter was in pain, and desirous of having a tooth extracted. The dialogue, and all the particulars of the operation that followed, would require a long discourse, if I were to attempt to describe them to the reader. The imitation of the natural and modulated voices of the operator, encouraging, soothing, and talking with his patient, the confusion, terror, and apprehension of the sufferer, the inarticulate noise produced by the chairs and apparatus, upon the whole, constituted a mass of sounds which produced a strange but comic effect. Loose observers would not have hesitated to assert that they heard more than one voice at a time; and although this certainly could not be the case, and it did not appear so to me, yet the transitions were so instantaneous, without the least pause between, that the notion might be very easily generated. The removal of the screen satisfied the spectators that one performer had effected the whole.<sup>59</sup>

Here was a performance deliberately conducted through sound alone: in order to create the illusion of the “dentist scene,” Fitz James concealed himself behind a screen from whence his actions could be heard but not seen. In his history of ventriloquism, Steven Connor rightly sees in cases of this kind “the cultural invention, decades before it was technologically actualized, of something like radio,”<sup>60</sup> i.e., audio theater. Technological mediation by telephone, phonograph, or radio was, therefore, not a necessary precondition of the desire to convey a “scene” purely through sound. There was no *pragmatic* reason for early ventriloquial performances to rely on sound alone, or on the production of multiple voices by a



single person, since a dramatically equivalent “dentist scene” could have been produced, complete with visuals, by a company of actors. However, Fitz James’s performance was impressive precisely because it functioned successfully within its artificially-imposed limitations. Although audio theater did not originate to fit the possibilities and limitations of modern sound media, phonographic mediation did facilitate the kind of illusion on which it was based, blocking out distracting and disillusioning visuals just as effectively as had Fitz James’s retreat behind a screen.

Despite the similarities between ventriloquial acts like Fitz James’s and later forms of audio theater, there are few direct connections linking the two traditions. Of the many individuals employed as phonogenic performers in the United States during the years covered by this thesis, I am aware of only one who is known to have had any specific ventriloquial experience: Gilbert Girard, who was responsible for producing the animal sounds heard in many early phonograms.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, unlike the musical term “descriptive specialty,” “ventriloquism” was not borrowed into early phonography as a generic classification. Ventriloquists and mimics were sometimes reported as performing imitations of phonographs,<sup>62</sup> but to the best of my knowledge no American commercial phonograms of the 1890s or 1900s were identified in turn as containing representations of “ventriloquism.”<sup>63</sup> It is true that the phonograph was widely perceived as being *like* a ventriloquist in its effects,<sup>64</sup> but ventriloquism was also understood as a contrasting method of achieving those effects, defined by its production in the mouth and throat rather than by its outward form or its representational conventions. What was impressive about the phonograph in the 1870s and 1880s was precisely that it was *not* ventriloquism; when detractors claimed that it *was* ventriloquism, they meant to dismiss it as a hoax.<sup>65</sup> Phonography and ventriloquism were thus generally considered mutually exclusive: a band might perform a “descriptive specialty” through the phonograph, but a phonogenic performer could not perform “ventriloquism” through one. There were some alternative terms used to refer to ventriloquial acts like Fitz James’s, such as *monopolylogue* and *biloquism*, but these were probably too obscure to be used as generic classifications for phonograms—we do find the term *duo-logue* in commercial phonography, but its usage is unclear and it did not catch on.<sup>66</sup>

The term “mimicry” was not used as a genre designation in early phonography either. In one sense, the phonograph was itself perceived as a “mimic” in everything it did, but “mimicry” was simultaneously understood as a subjective human act of which the phonograph, as a “reproducer” of sounds, was incapable. The tension between these two standards of evaluation becomes apparent in some intriguing sources unearthed by Susan A. Glenn in her work on stage mimicry in vaudeville, particularly in regard to Cissie Loftus, known in the 1890s and 1900s as the “queen of mimics.” Some contemporary critics praised Loftus as “The Cissie Loftus Talking Machine,” stating with approval that she “reproduced the tones of those she sought to mimic with the fidelity of a phonograph.” Others branded such reviews “unkind and needlessly cruel,” declaring that Loftus was “better than a Phonograph” in that her mimicry was “finished and artistic.” To complicate matters, Loftus herself used phonograms of her subjects as references while working up impressions of them, and in 1908 we even find her educating Enrico Caruso’s discs onstage before imitating his voice live, for purposes of comparison and contrast.<sup>67</sup> Phonography thus established a reference point for Loftus’ mimicry, a standard of “reproduction” to which she might aspire, but it was simultaneously treated as its antithesis. What was impressive about Loftus’ work was precisely that it was *not* phonography. To the best of my knowledge, no commercial phonogram was marketed explicitly as “mimicry” until Orren and Drew’s *A STUDY IN MIMICRY* (1918), and even that had to be prefaced by these remarks:

I take pleasure in introducing to you  
Orren and Drew,  
Vaudeville’s favorite mimics.  
The imitations produced in this record  
are made by the human voice alone  
without the aid of any mechanical device whatsoever.<sup>68</sup>

Given the increasingly contrastive relationship between mimicry and “reproduction,” there was reason to doubt whether the phonographic “reproduction” of recorded mimicry would still be acceptable as mimicry unless considerable extra effort were made to justify it as skilled performance (as in this spoken introduction, very rare for its period). The closest term used at all widely in phonography was “imitation,” but

this tends to appear only in titles or descriptions of phonograms rather than as a genre classification—that is, “imitations” were categorized primarily as other things.

One genre within which recorded vocal “imitations” appeared at an early date was the phonogram of vocal quartet music. Early commercial phonograms by vocal quartets were dominated by the harmonizations and repertoire later associated with the term “barbershop.” Recent work on the history of this performance tradition has centered on the thesis, persuasively argued by Lynn Abbott, that African-American quartets, rather than white quartets, were responsible for originating what became known as “barbershop” harmony, and that this singing style remained popularly associated with its black origins well into the twentieth century.<sup>69</sup> Although the proto-barbershop tradition of the 1880s and 1890s has been the subject of painstaking research drawing on scattered and varied sources, it remains difficult to assess how it was adapted to the medium of the phonograph because early phonograms are themselves often taken as providing rare insight into the live tradition and feature prominently as evidence in Abbott’s writing on the subject. Nevertheless, one aspect of this tradition that had broader implications for phonography was the practice of combining barbershop-style close harmonization with vocal “imitations” of various sounds (including, incidentally, the distinctive sound of the phonograph).<sup>70</sup> Abbott suggests that this practice, like the barbershop tradition in general, had African-American roots: “Banjo imitations were among the many onomatopoeic effects—including boat whistles, church bells, locomotives, brass bands, and steam calliopes—employed by early black recreational singers and community-based quartets.” She cites two early examples drawn from newspapers: one from 1894 describing a black quartet in Indianapolis performing an “Imitation of Band” and “Imitation of Calliope,” and one from 1887 regarding a group of black prison inmates in Virginia overheard singing harmony “absolutely startling in its likeness to a full brass band.”<sup>71</sup> A number of early quartet phonograms contain material in a similar vein: among others, an IMITATION MEDLEY performed by the white Diamond Quartette for the Universal Phonograph Company in 1897 with “imitations of the nightingales, pigs, baby cry, crows, etc., concluding with a most amusing cat fight”;<sup>72</sup> imitations of steam calliopes, pealing bells, and church organs by the Brilliant Quartette;<sup>73</sup> and a

frequently-recorded FARMYARD MEDLEY in which sung lines alternate with imitations of animal noises, concluding with the vocal imitation of a banjo.<sup>74</sup> The existence of such “imitations” within the proto-barbershop tradition allowed them to be recorded and presented within the framework of vocal quartet music, much as the musical “descriptive sketch” had provided an established vehicle for the presentation of mechanical sound effects.

Still, early phonograms of at least one quartet piece containing “imitations” appear to have diverged significantly from live renditions of the same piece. One of the phonograms the Georgia Phonograph Company used for its exhibitions in Atlanta during November 1889 was WAY DOWN IN THE CORNFIELD by the Manhattan Quartette of New York City, “with imitation of steamboat.”<sup>75</sup> The first specific vocal quartet item ever listed in a commercial catalog, a “List of Musical Cylinders” issued by the New York Phonograph Company sometime in early 1890, was IN THE CORNFIELD by the Manhansett Quartette, described as containing a “Steamboat Imitation.”<sup>76</sup> Both the Manhattan and Manhansett Quartettes were white, but the “cornfield” piece was also one of the selections cited in the first known print reference to phonograms phonogenized by a specific black vocal ensemble: a phonograph exhibition of May 1890 featured “‘Down on the Cornfield’ as sung by the Georgia Colored Quartet,” who were apparently members of a touring company specializing in church concerts.<sup>77</sup> A surviving specimen of this piece recorded sometime in the early to mid-1890s runs as follows:

**ANNOUNCER:** “Way Down Yonder in the Cornfield,” sung by the Manhansett Quartet.

**SOLOIST:** Some folks say that a nigger won’t steal.

**GROUP:** Way down yonder in the cornfield.

**SOLOIST:** But I’ve caught a couple in my cornfield.

**GROUP:** Way down yonder in the cornfield.

**SOLOIST:** One had a shovel and the other had a hoe.

**GROUP:** Way down yonder in the cornfield.

**SOLOIST:** If that ain’t stealin’, why, I don’t know.

**GROUP:** Way down yonder in the cornfield.

**SOLOIST:** See them boats coming around the bend,  
Hear those big bells ring.

[*Bell rings.*]

**GROUP:** Way down yonder in the cornfield.

Wake up, Hannah, so early in the morn,

I’se gwine down to hoe that corn,

I’ll be back when the roll am called,

Way down yonder in the cornfield.

**SOLOIST:** See them boats a-landin’ now,

Hear dem banjos ring.  
[Vocal imitation of the plunking of a banjo]  
**GROUP:** Way down yonder in the cornfield.<sup>78</sup>

Subsequent versions sometimes begin with portions of “Rain, My Good Lord, Rain” and Stephen Foster’s “Hard Times Come Again No More,” either in that order or vice-versa, but the consistent core, as it was being phonogenized by the late 1890s, ran as follows:

**SOLOIST:** Some folks say dat a nigger won’t steal.  
**GROUP:** Way down yonder in the cornfield.  
**SOLOIST:** But I’ve caught a couple in my cornfield.  
**GROUP:** Way down yonder in the cornfield.  
**SOLOIST:** One had a shovel and the other had a hoe.  
**GROUP:** Way down yonder in the cornfield.  
And if that ain’t stealin’, I don’t know.  
Way down yonder in the cornfield.  
**SOLOIST:** There’s a steamboat’s a-comin’ around the bend,  
Don’t you hear dat whistle blow?  
[*Steamboat whistle.*]  
**GROUP:** Down on the O-hi-o.  
**SOLOIST:** Now dat boat am landin’,  
Don’t you hear dat big bell ring?  
[*Bell rings.*]  
Now dem coons am happy,  
Don’t you hear dem banjos playin’?

The rest of the group proceeds with a vocal imitation of the plunking of a banjo while the soloist sings part of Steven Foster’s “Massa’s in de Cold, Cold Ground,”<sup>79</sup> which replaces the earlier, unidentified tune in which the Manhansett Quartet soloist had sung “plunk” in place of lyrics. The refrain “Way down yonder in the cornfield,” which had once appeared throughout the routine, is now excluded from the second half with its bells, whistles, and banjo imitations, perhaps to add variety to the piece. The effect was to make the whole resemble a “medley” rather than a single, coherent song, and by the latter half of the 1890s it was sometimes called CORNFIELD MEDLEY, even when it contained nothing besides the core segments transcribed above.<sup>80</sup> Thus, although Abbott distinguishes WAY DOWN YONDER IN THE CORNFIELD, “the ultimate early barbershopping vehicle” supposedly derived from a slave worksong, from CORNFIELD MEDLEY, “a full-blown barbershop sampler,”<sup>81</sup> the two names were actually used interchangeably on phonograms to refer to the same loose combination of elements. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, I suspect that the whole of

the consistent core found on phonograms was also part of “Way Down Yonder in the Cornfield” as performed live in the same period.

What is primarily of interest here is, however, the means used on phonograms of *WAY DOWN YONDER IN THE CORNFIELD / CORNFIELD MEDLEY* to represent the bell and steam whistle. The pealing of bells and the piping of steam calliopes were common subjects for vocal imitation in the proto-barbershop tradition, but on only one of the dozen or so phonograms of the piece I have heard does the quartet imitate these sounds vocally—and that one was recorded by a quartet in England, not the United States.<sup>82</sup> Instead, a real bell and whistle (or perhaps a person blowing across the mouth of a bottle; the distinction is not particularly important here) are usually heard at the appropriate points in the piece, while only the concluding banjo imitation is handled orally. The former sounds are still “imitations” in a sense, a bell and whistle in the studio representing the bell and whistle of a steamboat, but they are not the vocal imitations associated with the live tradition, impressive as the work of virtuosic mimics. The use of a real bell and whistle raised the question of whether the piece itself should be evaluated as a “reproduction” or an “imitation” of its subject, and exhibitors took this into account, as we see in Charles Musser’s account of one of Lyman Howe’s concerts of the early 1890s:

The phonograph was sometimes ascribed a power it did not deserve, as when Howe conjured up appealing if bogus recording circumstances. Although recordings had to be made under carefully controlled conditions, he informed one audience that a quartet of Negro vocalists was caught singing “Down in the Cornfield” on a Mississippi riverboat. The ringing of steamer bells in the background was called upon to authenticate this claim. But the recording was almost certainly made in the studio.<sup>83</sup>

Whether Howe’s framing of this phonogram was “bogus” or an acceptable means of creating a pleasant illusion really depends on what representational strategies one considers legitimate or illegitimate in phonography. The judgment call is necessarily culture-dependent, not absolute, and we must be open to the possibility that standards for denouncing phonographic fraud have changed over time—an issue space does not permit me to explore in the present work. For now, the point I want to make is this: when a performance genre traditionally associated with vocal mimicry was translated into phonography, the “imitations” were phonogenically superseded in some cases by the things themselves—real bells instead of imitations of bells, real whistles instead

of imitations of whistles. The phonograph replaced the members of the quartet both as singers, by “reproducing” their voices in their absence; and as mimics, by accurately “reproducing” the sounds of bells and whistles in place of the usual imitations. Granted, the supersession of vocal imitation by “reproduction” as a representative strategy in phonography was by no means universal. The banjo-plunking conclusion of *WAY DOWN YONDER IN THE CORNFIELD / CORNFIELD MEDLEY* was still phonogenized vocally rather than played on a real banjo, and such pieces as the *IMITATION MEDLEY* and *IMITATIONS OF A STEAM CALLIOPE* were still thoroughly imitative. But phonography had evidently given rise to some slippage between genres, allowing the mechanisms of stage sound effects and the musical descriptive sketch to interpenetrate forms previously distinguished by and valued for their production in the human mouth.<sup>84</sup>

### **Ethnic Caricature and Early Phonographic Comedy**

Mrs. O’Flaherty.—(*Contemplating the nickel-in-the-slot phonograph.*)—Arrah, murtha Patrick, phwat the divil’s that?

Mr. O’Flaherty.—Sure, Bridget, that’s the phoneygraph.

Mrs. O’Flaherty.—Pho-nay-graph is it? And phwat do it do standing there wid a rubber hose and a glass case loike an ay-quay-rium?

Mr. O’Flaherty.—Faith and its the woonder av the age. It’s the talkin machine.

— *The Phonogram* (1892)<sup>85</sup>

Another important element in phonographic representation was the imitation and caricature of distinctive speech styles, something that had precursors in both performance (as a subset of vocal mimicry) and writing. Before the phonogram was established as a new form of inscription, the most widespread and consistent effort to inscribe nuances of speaking in ways that conventional writing did not had centered on the artful representation of ethnic speech in the form of “eye dialect.” Gilded Age America witnessed a veritable dialect literature craze, in which Gavin Jones sees a new fascination with linguistic difference as an index of broader social and cultural difference. Whether this fascination manifested itself as a celebration of diversity or as a fear of fragmentation and contamination, it intersected with a long-term project of developing more holistic methods for transcribing spoken language. Philologists intensified their efforts to record American regional speech scientifically, “just as it

was spoken,” using increasingly sophisticated phonetic alphabets. On the literary side, as Jones writes, “the search for more radical and thorough depictions of sound led to widespread orthographic innovation.... The language of American literature was forced to carry a remarkable amount of extra-lexical information.”<sup>86</sup> A vast number of speech types were treated in this way, including “Dutch” (German), Irish, Yiddish, Italian, Chinese, French-English creole, Gullah, and Hoosier.

Before continuing, I should clarify my use of the word “ethnic.” Elliott Oring defines ethnic groups as groups based primarily on descent who “share and identify with a historically derived cultural tradition or style, which may be composed of both explicit behavioral features as well as implicit ideas, values, and attitudes.”<sup>87</sup> In turn, Paul Distler describes the fundamental strategy of ethnic humor as “exaggeration of such recognizable traits as mode of dress, style of head and facial hair, usual occupations, generalized qualities of character or demeanor, and, of course, dialect.”<sup>88</sup> If ethnic groups are to some extent imagined communities to begin with, the ethnic caricature is one step further removed from reality, yet still based on the same sort of romantic abstraction. In contrast to popular usage, “ethnic” in this analytical sense can be taken to include such stylized types as the stereotyped black and the “rube” or rural bumpkin. Ethnic caricature in this sense formed the basis for nineteenth-century American popular culture to a degree that can hardly be overstated. Humorous entertainment relied heavily upon certain stock types—such as blacks, Irish, Jews, Italians, and “Dutch” (understood as a blanket term for Germans)—each with its own unique set of assumed immanent characteristics. This practice provided a highly efficient means of communication: introducing such a character type instantly invoked a store of culturally assigned assumptions, obviating the need for individualistic character development. In such venues as vaudeville, with its numerous short, independent acts; or newspapers, which relished pithy dialect stories for filling up empty columns, such economic vehicles for tapping reservoirs of metonymic meaning must have been especially appreciated. Indeed, it can be argued that these conventions are a large part of what made such compact forms of entertainment viable at all. Of course, these stylized expectations about ethnic behavior in fiction also taught and sustained ethnic and racial stereotypes that



audiences could apply all too easily to the stock characters' real-life counterparts. We are now painfully aware of the insidious role such forms played in justifying social stratification and contributing to the marginalization of particular groups, especially African-Americans. However, I am less concerned here with the content and social effects of ethnic stereotyping, or how much it mirrored or distorted reality—important as those questions are—than I am with the signals by which it was invoked and how phonography fit into existing cultural practice.

Nineteenth-century ethnic caricature was already profoundly intertextual by the time the phonograph appeared on the scene. Each stock ethnic type was linked to a complex of conventions which were never present all at once within any single cultural form, such as written literature or theater, but which emerged out of participants' collective experience of a variety of cultural forms that mutually complemented and reinforced one another. First, "dialect" itself was associated with a variety of other conventionalized markers of ethnicity. Some involved a character's visual appearance, as in the stylized depiction of ethnic types on sheet music covers or in advertisements. Stage performers made similar use of costuming and makeup. The blackface minstrel not only blacked his face with burnt cork but also adopted distinctive forms of dress; thus, a catalog of theatrical supplies issued shortly before World War One offers not only burnt cork in a can but also a special kind of collar worn by end-men, three varieties of minstrel wigs, and a garishly-colored dickey that the advertisement claims "never fails to 'get a laugh'" in its own right.<sup>89</sup> The "Dutch" comic was instantly recognizable onstage by his peaked cap, wooden shoes, and short pants.<sup>90</sup> Music too could cue associations of ethnicity by invoking, say, the Irishness of the button accordion, the Italianness of the street organ-grinder, the Germanness of the yodel song, or the blackness of the banjo.<sup>91</sup> Kinesic elements, such as dance steps and postures, played an important role as well.<sup>92</sup> However, stylized dialects enjoyed a privileged position relative to the other conventionalized markers of ethnicity. When signals conflicted onstage in live performances of ethnicity, it was the verbal element that was accepted as definitive. Thus, Robert Toll observes: "The use of Negro dialect was what indicated to the audience that minstrels were portraying Negroes.... The absence of dialect, on the other hand, permitted

blackface characters to sing of their blue-eyed, blond-haired lovers without provoking any protests or to use Irish and German dialects to portray immigrant groups.”<sup>93</sup> In such cases, “blackface” became merely a general, ethnically nonspecific marker of comedic license, while the audience’s ability to recognize conventionalized ethnic ways of speaking by ear was crucial to understanding what was going on.

Dialect could manifest itself either orally or in writing, and the oral performance of dialect onstage had semiotic resources that eye dialect did not (and vice versa), allowing the two forms to complement each other. On the one hand, writers of dialect fiction adopted some practices that had no justification in terms of fidelity to sound as such, including the use of spellings such as *wuz* for *was*, which does not reflect a divergence from “standard” American English pronunciation. This practice was probably influenced by a convention related to but distinct from dialect fiction, in which authors created fictitious letters and other writings ostensibly written by semiliterate characters who did not know how to spell “properly” and were therefore supposed to have been guided by their own speech habits. However, dialect fiction also used nonstandard English spellings to portray given ethnic types as poorly educated even when there was no implication that they had written the texts themselves, for instance in cases of reported speech. In fact, this convention was so intimately associated with the genre of dialect fiction that it became the subject of jokes in its own right—thus, an editor supposedly declared a fourteen-year-old girl’s badly misspelled manuscript, “Redd Hed Gim,” to be “the best dialect story we’ve accepted in a year”;<sup>94</sup> the genre was said to have “originated from the effort of an author to do his own typewriting”;<sup>95</sup> and one proposed method of composition was to take an ordinary story, pin it up on the side of a barn, and fire at it with a shotgun to obliterate vowels at random.<sup>96</sup> Stage enactments of ethnic caricature were unable to draw directly on this particular convention; it was a marker of ethnic register with no oral counterpart, except in contrived instances where a character might be asked to (mis)spell a word out loud. Although Ingrid Monson writes about a “*dis-and-dat* style of [orthographic] representation found pervasively in nineteenth-century minstrel shows,”<sup>97</sup> in fact such spellings were never encountered during live blackface minstrel shows at all, where the stylized dialect was delivered orally. They

appeared only in the written librettos associated with minstrelsy, or in other related print genres. This convention as such does and did have pejorative connotations, but it has always been a written convention, not an oral one. However, the oral and written forms did not exist in isolation from each other, and the distorted orthography of eye dialect must have helped confirm the nonstandard, deviant status of oral stage dialect relative to “correct” pronunciation.

Meanwhile, oral performances provided a model in turn for what texts written in eye dialect should “sound” like as readers contemporary to the tradition mentally revoiced them. The tacit assumption was that hearing someone speaking in a given dialect affected the listener in a certain way, and that texts could be written such that reading them, aloud or silently, would produce roughly the same result. Authors pursued the goal of recording distinctive “ethnic” ways of speaking with a relentlessness that modern critics tend to find absurd, wearisome, and offensive. The introduction to one anthology of dialect humor provides several examples of passages the editors consider “much too wearing for most moderns to read,” despite their simultaneous acknowledgment that the authors they are quoting were revered by such figures as Mark Twain and Abraham Lincoln.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, some pieces of dialect literature are now also recognized as blatantly racist, giving critics another reason to avoid appreciating them in an aesthetic sense. It has been stated, for instance, that it is our good fortune that we are unable to “read ‘Negro’ humor in the spirit in which it was written.”<sup>99</sup> Still, even the most racially derogatory brands of nineteenth century popular culture presumably owed some part of their rhetorical power to their perceived aesthetic merits rather than to the raw appeal of their messages. I suggest that dialect literature appealed to readers in large part because of its special connection to the aural experience of language. More than other written genres, dialect literature was designed specifically to give readers a rich experience of “hearing,” even if only through silent internal revoicing. Most of us lack the background necessary for revoicing these texts in our minds’ ears as readers probably revoiced them in the nineteenth century, even if we were inclined to do so—which, as I have suggested, we often are not. But it was not so much that readers of the late

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries found written dialect literature *easier* to read than we do, as reflections on the process from that period attest, for instance:

“Children,” said their mother, “you must go out of doors if you want to play. You will disturb your father in the next room.”

“What is he doin’?”

“He is deeply engaged in literary work, my child, and he needs absolute quiet.”

“Writin’ a book?”

“More difficult than that, my dear,” answered the mother, in a hushed tone. “He is trying to read a dialect story in one of the magazines.”<sup>100</sup>

It is, rather, the relative *reward* of such reading, the rare experience of artfully mediated “hearing,” that I believe would have been greater then than today. Now that we are surrounded by media such as television and radio, we may no longer have as acute a desire for this kind of experience.

Much of what eye dialect was prized for doing in terms of capturing the nuances of vernacular speech could be done better through phonography. The first example Gavin Jones cites in his study of American dialect literature is a passage drawn from George Washington Cable’s *The Creoles of Louisiana* (1884), in which a sentence in standard English is translated into French-English creole:

“I am going to do my utmost to take my uncle there, but he is slightly paralyzed and I do not think he will feel like going.”—He would say—

“I goin’ do my possib’ fedge ma hunc’ yond’, bud, ’owevva, ’e’s a lit’ bit pa’alyze an’ I thing ’e don’ goin’ fill *ligue*.”

Jones comments that Cable “sought to encode the delivery conditions of vernacular discourse: its tonality and stress in addition to its grammar.”<sup>101</sup> Technically, all Cable encoded here beyond his “phonetic” transcription of the words was stress, indicated by italics (pa’alyze, *ligue*). He was aware that his efforts still left a great many aspects of dialect speech unrecorded, and he expresses his frustration in another Creole story of the same period:

ALAS! the phonograph was invented three-quarters of a century too late. If type could entrap one-half the pretty oddities of Aurora’s speech,—the arch, the pathetic, the grave, the earnest, the matter-of-fact, the ecstatic tones of her voice,—nay, could it but reproduce the movement of her hands, the eloquence of her eyes, or the shapings of her mouth,—ah! but type—even the phonograph—is such an inadequate thing!<sup>102</sup>

The phonograph might still be inadequate to the task of recording the whole of verbal communication, but Cable presents it as somewhat *less* inadequate than type, acknowledging its uniquely rich capacity for the inscription and mediation of the

distinctive qualities of spoken language. Phonography stood to benefit in turn from the communicative efficiency of ethnic caricature, which could help compensate for the relatively short duration of early phonograms and allow listeners to visualize and interpret what they were hearing with reference to established stereotypes. Furthermore, engaging in ethnic caricature, verbal or otherwise, meant staking a claim to competence in its traditions and inviting critical evaluation on their terms; skill in the art was valued, whereas the experience of hearing the average person trying to read a dialect story out loud was supposed to be dreadful.<sup>103</sup> The phonograph could “reproduce” skilful performances of ethnic dialect just as it could “reproduce” skilful musical performances, and there would be a similar demand for them as audicular commodities. Dialect fiction also suited the acoustic strengths and weaknesses of early phonography: although some phonemes might be difficult to distinguish from one another, leaving audiences unable to make out all the words as easily as they could when reading a printed page, phonography easily captured other traditionally ephemeral aspects of speaking that earlier systems of inscription had struggled to record with only partial success. It should therefore come as no surprise that phonography was applied early and often to caricatures of ethnic speech types.

Imitations of various dialects had already been retroduced during the tinfoil phonograph exhibitions of 1878 along with other eccentric utterances designed to test and show off the machine’s inscriptive capabilities, as we saw in chapter one. However, the earliest specimen of phonographic dialect humor known to survive today is PHONOGRAPH TALKS WITH MR. EDISON, a cylinder phonogenized in 1888 by George Gouraud, Edison’s phonograph agent in England, and now preserved at Edison National Historic Site. The opening is damaged and hard to decipher, as the dotted underlining shows, but the body of the performance is framed as a message in which the phonograph itself reports back to Edison in the first person on the experience of being made to “speak” with an English accent:

The following record  
is humor  
by the phonograph—it—self  
prepared without having been spoken into.  
 And this is something I heard it say to Edison the other day.  
 [*Adopting exaggerated accent*] Uh, buh—my dear Edison,  
 Uh, by Jove, my dear boy,

you know it's the most extraordinary thing  
 but you know ever since I've been over here,  
 blasted British country, don't you know,  
 why, do you know I've, I know, I, I've quite forgotten how to speak the old language, by Jove.  
 It's really quite distressing.  
 When I left America,  
 I thought I knew how to talk English, I did.  
 Or—at any rate I thought I knew how to talk American.  
 But by Jove you know now over here,  
 dining at eight o'clock, warming up the trousers in dry weather,  
 and always carrying an umbrella,  
 and hearing all these ladida  
 all jealous of all the fellows all around me  
 talking to me in this extraordinary language, by Jove, you know I not only can't speak in the old  
 native talk but I can't talk the old native tongue.  
 I drop the H's, don't you know,  
 where I oughta keep 'em up,  
 and I pick 'em up, don't you know,  
 where I ought to drop 'em, and then I can't sound the R's,  
 the good American rrrrrrr [trilling] R's, don't you know, any more.  
 When I want to say "very,"  
 why, I say "werry,"  
 werry nice, don't you know,  
 and werry pretty.  
 And then all about those confounded H's, don't you know, there's 'exylene, and there's 'Arry and  
 'Arriet,  
 and all those nice little things and they've all got H's in 'em and I can't say one of 'em don't you  
 know.  
 By Jove, you know, old boy, a most extraordinary thing, there was a fellow down here the other  
 day, he was a Lord, he was,  
 he was a born legislator, he was, and he stood here looking at me,  
 and ahuh by and by he began to laugh, he did, ha ha ha ha yes, ah dear, ah dear me,  
 you know,  
 and  
 finally he reached over and he patted Hamilton, you know Hamilton, yes, Hamilton's all right,  
 he finally reached over and he patted Hamilton on the head  
 and, uh, he didn't drop any H's, he didn't, but uh  
 he said, awww, no, Mister Hamilton, aw no, none o' that, Mister Hamilton.  
 You can't fool me, I'm a born legislator.  
 I am, I was born a Lord, and I know a thing or two, ha-a-a-a, m' boy.  
 I know what it is, it's all humbug.  
 It's a regular Yankee trick, y' know.  
 Hahaha, I saw him, I saw him.  
 Hahahahahaha,  
 I saw Mr. Edison himself there under that table,  
 doing the whole thing himself.  
 Hahahahahaha.  
 Oh, you can't fool me, ta-ta, ta-ta.<sup>104</sup>

Two notes on the transcription: Gouraud, himself an American, caricatures the accent  
 which his phonograph has ostensibly acquired in England more intensely than I have  
 attempted to show, and "Hamilton" was H. De Coursey Hamilton, Gouraud's  
 technical assistant in charge of operating the machine. This phonogram most likely

dates from a demonstration Gouraud conducted for a gathering of London reporters at his home on August 14, 1888, of which one of his guests wrote:

Not the least interesting part of the demonstration was the performance, so to say, of Col. Gouraud with the phonograph.... He has thoroughly studied the manner in which to bring into relief the capacities of the phonograph, and the effect of his singing of "John Brown's Body," with a strong accent, was only surpassed by his mimicking the mincing talk of a heavy swell, in which the r's and w's play so prominent a part.<sup>105</sup>

However, Gouraud continued to phonogenize similar material during subsequent exhibitions, including one on August 29 which featured his retroduction of "the humorous address and mimicry of the English 'swell's' elocutionary efforts and the ambitious French Anglomaniac's wondrous displays of English,"<sup>106</sup> so it is possible that the cylinder we have is from some other occasion. In general, one wonders how English audiences felt about Gouraud's imitations of English speech habits and character types, such as the depiction of the pompous lord who ignorantly dismisses the phonograph as a "Yankee trick"; he was, after all, a foreigner parodying elements of their own society. There was already a domestic tradition of caricaturing the same speech styles—for example, the speech of Sam Weller in Charles Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* is notable not just for the inverted riddles now known as Wellerisms but also for its eye dialect, which includes the same substitution of "werry" for "very" mimicked by Gouraud—so some listeners may have taken such displays in good humor. However, a skit scripted in this period by the English ventriloquist and author Robert Ganthony does lampoon an American phonograph exhibitor carrying out a virtually identical demonstration in terms that suggest some touchiness about it:

I shall now make a Record, and let you hear for yourselves how faithfully the apparatus repeats any sound submitted to it. To select a familiar illustration, I shall imitate two English swells asking each other the way about London. You might notice how well I imitate the English swell. Of course, I don't want to offend anyone present, you quite understand this is *science*, it is not *impertinence*—there's not much difference, but it *is science* really. (*Speaking with American accent into egg-cup*) "Well, Guss, are you going up Pall Mall or are you going up Piccadilly? Yah! Yah! Yah!"] (*Pause and phonograph repeats.*)<sup>107</sup>

Ganthony's exhibitor tries to justify a caricature that might otherwise have been considered impudent and offensive by claiming it is done in the interests of science, to give his machine something suitably complex to "reproduce"; but he admits that there is ultimately "not much difference" between impertinence and what he is doing. The performer is supposed to assume a "Yankee accent" for the routine as a whole,<sup>108</sup>

but Ganthony specifies that the imitation of the English swell in particular should be done “with American accent,” showing that the exhibitor is not really the skilled mimic he fancies himself to be—when imitating the English, he still sounds like an American. Given this piece’s origin as a “skit, which the author has given as a ventriloquial sketch since the [wax cylinder] phonograph was first introduced into England,”<sup>109</sup> the portion quoted above was almost certainly inspired by Gouraud’s exhibition practices of 1888. If so, Ganthony’s burlesque was challenging both the social propriety of Gouraud’s imitations and his claim to competence as a mimic of dialect.

Gouraud’s maladroit imitations of the British swell may have been little esteemed, but plenty of other mimics stood in high enough regard that their work, in recorded form, could become a thing of value. President Grover Cleveland had a private secretary named Henry T. Thurber whose virtuosic imitations of ethnic speech he appreciated so much that his requests for them became a nuisance until phonography came to the rescue:

Thurber’s skill as a raconteur is an accomplishment for which the private secretary gets very little credit outside the White House. Thurber is a master of Hebrew and Irish dialect, which he uses with such skill that his stories can rarely be repeated by anybody else without spoiling.

The president takes great delight in his secretary’s accomplishment, and for awhile he made life a burden by calling it out at all hours of the day and night. Finally Thurber, in desperation, hit upon an expedient.

He bought a phonograph and filled a dozen cylinders with the choicest numbers of his repertory. Every night before going home he places this on the president’s desk, and whenever Grover feels the need of a change from the dreary routine of pardons and diplomacy he deftly turns the crank and gets the benefit of one of Thurber’s side splitters.<sup>110</sup>

This particular case was a private arrangement between President and secretary, but in the principle behind it there lay the makings of a promising marketable commodity. The first dialect humor offered commercially on phonogram appears to have been the “Pat Brady” series created for the Ohio Phonograph Company by a retired actor and minstrel named Dan Kelly. According to an article of 1893, Kelly had begun by phonogenizing “Shakesperian recitations and songs without accompaniment” about three years before, which would have been 1890, but had soon progressed to more innovative work:

The idea occurred to him that an imitation of a scene in court which he witnessed when a boy would be the thing for the phonograph. He immediately reproduced and recorded it on a cylinder, under the title: “Pat Brady’s Plea in His Own Defense: a scene in the Police Court in Hartford,



Conn., between Pat Brady, Mrs. Callahan and Judge Collier.” The record took well with the public, which encouraged Mr. Kelly to try other subjects, and he soon succeeded in placing before the patrons of the phonograph the celebrated “Pat Brady” series which has been welcomed and enjoyed by the English speaking people of North America during the past three years [i.e., 1890-93].... Mr. Kelly not only was the originator of these humorous phonographic records, but, notwithstanding his many imitators, stands today the acknowledged head of all humorous talkers for the phonograph.<sup>111</sup>

Kelly must have inaugurated the Pat Brady series shortly before the Ohio Phonograph Company opened its pioneering phonograph parlors, in which each of several coin-operated machines was equipped with a different prerecorded cylinder and patrons were free to choose between machines depending on the selections they wanted to hear. Because of this innovation, the Ohio company was uniquely well positioned to test-market phonograms and to assess customer feedback, as expressed in nickels. Pat Brady had evidently fared better than Shakespeare, leading the company to cultivate and expand a series that had gone on to prove equally successful outside of Cincinnati and Cleveland. A delegate to the National Phonograph Association convention in June 1891, representing companies in Louisiana and Texas, declared that the Ohio company “makes some Brady’s that we can afford to pay him five dollars a piece for, because we make money out of them,” and the series was also the first example that came to mind when the delegates considered the economic implications of record piracy.<sup>112</sup> Although the appeal of Kelly’s phonograms clearly centered on his virtuosity as a mimic of Irish-American speech styles, promotional material sometimes downplayed their imitative origin in an effort to portray them as, in some sense, authentic representations of their subject matter, perhaps because of uncertainty over how to package “reproduced” mimicry. “The Irishmen that talk are real Irishmen, with the rich brogue and their Celtic way of saying things, and not an imitation of the genuine article,” claimed the *Phonogram*, while in turn belittling the “many imitators of Mr. Kelly in his Pat Brady records” as invariably unsuccessful in *their* imitations of *him*.<sup>113</sup>

The type of courtroom episode Dan Kelly imitated in PAT BRADY’S PLEA IN HIS OWN DEFENSE, in which an Irishman ineptly tried to plead on his own behalf, was perceived as humorous in its own right, quite apart from whatever element of intentional caricature Kelly introduced. When an Irish-American named James Madden was tried for disturbing the peace in Los Angeles on March 26, 1896, for

example, he gave a speech that bystanders appreciated as intensely funny: “When asked...what he had to say for himself, Madden burst forth in a flood of explanation and excuse. The man’s talk was so unconsciously and unintentionally comic, that the courtroom crowd laughed and laughed till the room rang.”<sup>114</sup> In November 1898, after Madden had become drunk and disorderly on election night, his eloquence managed to persuade a judge to give him a suspended sentence rather than fifty days in jail,<sup>115</sup> but on December 14 he was back before the court on a charge of public intoxication. As before, the newspaper report of his trial dwelt at length upon the value of his speech as entertainment:

As an Irish comedian James Madden is a howling success. Madden gave a matinee performance in the Police Court yesterday. Unfortunately he had no advance notice, but the small audience present was appreciative. Madden was repeatedly encored, and he responded every time.... The part that Madden played yesterday was that of an inebriated gentleman who denied that he had been under the influence of potheen the previous night.... At 2 o’clock this afternoon Comedian Madden will repeat his performance of yesterday. Persons desiring reserved seats should apply early, as standing room will no doubt be at a premium soon after the doors are opened.<sup>116</sup>

When Madden returned the next day, a crowd had indeed gathered to hear him, but with an unexpected twist:

The fame of Mr. Madden’s ability as an Irish comedian having gone abroad, there was a large audience for yesterday’s matinee performance in Justice Morrison’s court. But the auditors were subjected to a long and tedious wait, because an enterprising phonograph man asked permission of the court to install a talking machine to record Mr. Madden’s words.

The case was accordingly postponed until the end of the day. Although the newspaper report playfully presented this scheme as “[t]he first practical test of recording testimony in a criminal prosecution in Los Angeles by means of a phonograph,” the court plainly had no interest in using the results for any serious purpose; Madden’s words were to be captured purely for their value entertainment. Finally, at the end of the day, the accused was called upon to speak (note the use of eye dialect even in the absence of a direct quotation):

Mr. Madden was not in the least disconcerted when confronted by the phonograph and informed that he must tell his troubles into it. He talked right into the machine and informed it that he had not been dr-r-r-r-unk. In fact, Mr. Madden told the machine he had dr-r-r-r-unk only two ’alf and ’alfs, one glass of Old Tom gin and two medium beer-r-r-s before Constable Mugnemi ar-r-r-rested him. He was sure a scheme had been concocted by the police to make life a burden to him. He excepted officer 45, however (Officer Fowler,) whom he had personally commended to Chief Gass as an officer who always did his duty.

Half a dozen policemen and all the witnesses that Madden himself had summoned testified that he was drunk, so the long denial that he made to the phonograph was of no account except for the entertainment of the patrons of the phonograph gallery.<sup>117</sup>

Madden received a suspended sentence of three more days but was arrested again within a week, now known to the public as the “victim of the phonograph,”<sup>118</sup> “the talking Irishman, who talked a phonograph to a standstill”—and sent to jail for the full fifty-three days his sprees had accrued.<sup>119</sup> This type of scenario, perceived as attractive stuff for phonograph parlors even in the form of the “real thing” and, on a more sinister note, as illustrating the Irish immigrant’s incompetence to participate seriously in legal proceedings, must have been the subject of Dan Kelly’s initial parody.

Dan Kelly’s phonograms are so rare today that it is hard to arrive at a clear understanding of their content and structure. However, he appears to have stuck to a consistent set of twelve Pat Brady titles during the height of his career rather than regularly adding new selections to his list or dropping old ones. The following brief descriptions of each of the twelve titles are drawn from an Ohio Phonograph Company advertisement of 1891:

No. 1. Pat Brady as a Police Justice.—Having been elected to office, he administers the law in a very novel manner, and renders some very original decisions.

No. 2. Pat Brady on a Spree.—An important event having taken place in his household, he celebrates it in a noisy way with his friends. (Chorus.)

No. 3. Pat Brady in the Patrol Wagon.—Having come home at an unseasonable hour, he becomes demonstrative, quarrels with his landlord, and the patrol wagon takes the party away. (Chorus.)

No. 4. Pat Brady Before the Election.—He addresses his followers, and makes them extravagant promises if they will elect him to office. (Chorus.)

No. 5. Pat Brady After the Election.—He explains how it was that he beat Murphy “by a small majority.” (Chorus.)

No. 6. Pat Brady and the Doctor.—Brady sends for a physician, asks some strange questions, and receives some good advice.

No. 7. Pat Brady in the Police Court.—He meets a friend on the street, an altercation takes place, and he explains the causes to the judge.

No. 8. Pat Brady and the World’s Fair.—He gives his opinion as to what countries should send representatives to Chicago and who should stay away. (Chorus.)

No. 9. Pat Brady as President.—He states what his policy would be towards the Indians, and other reforms he would make if he were elected President. (Chorus.)

No. 10. Paddy’s Wedding.—Pat Brady tells a funny Irish story about McGuffin, and concludes with an Irish song.

No. 11. Pat Brady and His Wife in Court.—He seeks a divorce from his wife, and tells the story of his domestic troubles.

No. 12. St. Patrick’s Day Speech.—He addresses his countrymen on St. Patrick’s Day, gives them some original English history, and makes some predictions. (Chorus.)<sup>120</sup>

I have managed to hear a specimen of only one of these twelve selections, PADDY’S WEDDING, in which Kelly assumes the role of Pat Brady to deliver a comic monolog,

beginning and ending with unaccompanied singing.<sup>121</sup> However, some of the other selections were “scenes” in which Kelly must have played multiple parts, alternating between contrastive voices representing Pat Brady, a judge, a doctor, and other characters. In other cases, a “chorus” of additional performers provided a variety of effects that Kelly could not produce with his own voice. An article about the Ohio Phonograph Company’s exhibition parlors from late 1891 remarks that “our friend Mr. Patrick Brady daily tells, in his famous election speech, how he ‘bete Murphy by a small majority,’ or ‘what he would do if he were President of the United States,’ and the applause which follows is so realistic that the hearer looks about him to see whether other patrons have not dropped their hearing-tubes to join in with the multitude.”<sup>122</sup> Although this account refers specifically to PAT BRADY AFTER THE ELECTION and PAT BRADY AS PRESIDENT, the role of the “chorus” was probably identical in PAT BRADY BEFORE THE ELECTION, PAT BRADY AND THE WORLD’S FAIR and ST. PATRICK’S DAY SPEECH, all mock representations of public speaking to which applause would have been a sensible addition. In PAT BRADY ON A SPREE and PAT BRADY IN THE PATROL WAGON, however, the “chorus” must have been involved in simulating the sounds of noisy celebration and quarreling. It is unclear how much responsibility for directing these performances Kelly himself took and how much was delegated to the recordists who “took” his phonograms, such as George H. Dunham;<sup>123</sup> in any case, Kelly received sole credit for them.

Kelly’s principal rival in Irish phonographic comedy was Russell Hunting, who expanded the genre in a number of innovative ways. Hunting, the son of a Massachusetts sign painter,<sup>124</sup> brought a varied theatrical background to his work for the phonograph, having joined the Boston Theater Company about 1886 and become its acting assistant stage manager about 1890.<sup>125</sup> He seems first to have taken an interest in the new technology as a tool for producing novel effects on the stage, expecting to introduce phonography into the theater rather than theater into phonography:

Mr. Hunting was an early enthusiast on the subject of the phonograph, and leased one for his own private amusement long before he conceived of the idea of making records for sale. He tried a large number of experiments with the machine, in the way of reproducing the human voice in large auditoriums. It was probably in this way that he became aware of his own wonderful voice for phonographic reproduction. He at one time made a *whisper record* which was reproduced on the

stage of the Boston Theater and was distinctly audible in the gallery of that large house, thereby winning a wager from a fellow actor.<sup>126</sup>

Hunting may already have begun experimenting with phonography in 1890,<sup>127</sup> but the first reference I have found to his work in this line was made by Augustus Sampson, president of the New England Phonograph Company, at the convention of the local phonograph companies in June 1891:

I had a story by Mr. Russel Huntington [sic] on a cylinder, which was produced at the Hollis Street Theatre two weeks ago Sunday night at a benefit. It was thrown out through the hall so perfectly that everyone heard it. Mr. Huntington was well known, and he put this talk on a cylinder for the express purpose of a beneficiary entertainment.<sup>128</sup>

Hunting was then occupied with the Boston Theater's production of *The Soudan*, which had opened locally on September 16, 1890,<sup>129</sup> and later went on tour around the country. In September 1891, the troupe began a two-month engagement at the Academy of Music in New York City,<sup>130</sup> during which Hunting phonogenized some cylinders for the New York Phonograph Company "to pay for the lease of his Phonograph which he used in his family for their own amusement."<sup>131</sup> When the New York company began advertising these for sale in the *Phonogram*,<sup>132</sup> the New England company quickly negotiated to secure a monopoly on Hunting's phonogenic services through September 1892.<sup>133</sup> In the meantime, Edison's laboratory obtained some of Hunting's New York phonograms and began openly pirating them as part of its duplication program.<sup>134</sup> Augustus Sampson wrote Edison an angry letter of protest,<sup>135</sup> but Hunting himself visited West Orange, sent Edison some more samples of his work, and invited discussion about what he would do when his current contract ran out.<sup>136</sup> Nothing seems to have come of this parley, and Hunting instead went on to contract with the New Jersey Phonograph Company of Newark to produce Casey phonograms in the mornings while continuing his stage career by night as Zamiel the Arch-Fiend in performances of *The Black Crook*.<sup>137</sup>

As of 1895, Russell Hunting's Michael Casey series and Dan Kelly's Pat Brady series were both enjoying considerable success, as the *Edison Phonographic News* observed:

There are but two classes of standard talking records on the market, the "Pat Brady" and the "Michael Casey" humorous records, and each have their champions as to which is really *the* best. "Brady" confines himself to certain well-known lines, while "Casey" is more versatile. Either one will make a Scotchman laugh, which is all that can be expected from any record.<sup>138</sup>

These remarks tell us, first of all, that comedy in Irish dialect dominated the spoken-word phonogram market of the early 1890s; Kelly and Hunting were not just the leading Irish phonograph comedians but the leading makers of “standard talking records” in general. This is not surprising, given the extreme popularity caricatures of Irish-American speech styles enjoyed in other manifestations, such as orthographically embellished eye dialect and representations on the stage. At the same time, the writer—probably James Andem—also alludes to the greater *versatility* of the Casey series. In part, he may have had in mind the fact that Kelly’s repertoire was limited to twelve standard Brady titles, whereas Hunting regularly added to and subtracted from his Casey list. However, Hunting also worked a number of features into his phonograms that Kelly had not.

To be sure, some of Hunting’s routines did rely on much the same techniques as Kelly’s. He too phonogenized simulated dialogs in which he performed both parts in contrastive voices, as in the following excerpt depicting Casey in the role of a doctor seeing a patient who is complaining of severe headaches, recorded on March 20, 1897:

**CASEY:** Let me ask you, do you feel tired when you’re asleep?

**PATIENT:** Why, no.

**CASEY:** Do you close your eyes when you’re sleeping?

**PATIENT:** Why, certainly.

**CASEY:** Does your face pain you when you talk?

**PATIENT:** Why, no.

**CASEY:** Uh, does water taste wet in your mouth when you drink it?

**PATIENT:** Why, yes.

**CASEY:** Ah-h-h, you have nervous prosperity, and cholery morabis and, uh,

hen-flew-endways and—I think—open your mouth—

you have brown kittens in your throat.

My boy, you’ll have to get a little Paris green and resolve it in cold water

and take a teaspoonful in the morning, if you haven’t a teaspoon take a basin full of it and soak your head in

ice water about, uh,

sixty minutes durin’ every hour in the day, and come around on next Thursday.

**PATIENT:** Is that all, doctor?

**CASEY:** Seven dollars.

**PATIENT:** Why, seven dollars, why, doctor, it isn’t worth seven dollars!

**CASEY:** I know ’t ain’t worth it, but I need the money [*laughs*] since McKinley was elected.<sup>139</sup>

Along with their mimicry of dialect per se, Hunting’s routines often seek to reveal Casey’s gross incompetence at the roles he is trying to assume, in this case the role of

physician. Here he asks his patient a series of patently ridiculous questions and then presents a diagnosis consisting of a string of garbled medical terminology: “nervous prosperity” for nervous prostration, “cholery morabis” for cholera morbis, “hen-flew-endways” for influenza and “brown kittens” for bronchitis. As a cure he prescribes the lethal poison Paris green, to be “resolved” rather than dissolved in water and administered in any quantity from a teaspoon to a basin full, a nonsensically broad range of doses. Finally, he acknowledges that his only justification for charging a fee of seven dollars is that he “needs the money,” a line on which Hunting puts a topical spin in this version by associating it with the election of President William McKinley the previous fall. Like Kelly, Hunting also phonogenized specimens of mock oratory, with applause and cheers contributed by a “chorus” of extras, under such titles as CASEY’S POLITICAL SPEECH, said to be “full of hurrah, humor and originality,”<sup>140</sup> and CASEY’S PLAN FOR FREEING IRELAND, which begins, after the opening announcement, as follows:

**INTRODUCTORY SPEAKER:** Ladies and gentlemen,  
it now gives me great pleasure to interproduce  
Michael J. Casey from the New York City  
Greater New York, New York, Brooklyn, Jersey City and Long Island. [*cheers and applause*]  
**CASEY:** Men and ladies—  
I put the ladies after the men because they’re always after—the men. [*laughter*]  
I am here,  
I am here now tonight  
as a representative of the I. O. O. I. I.  
**AUDIENCE MEMBER:** What’s that, Casey?  
**CASEY:** That’s the Independent Order Of Invincible Irishmen. [*cheers*]<sup>141</sup>

Hunting himself plays all three major spoken parts in the above segment, but the “chorus” supplies the cheering, applause and laughter, which he would have been unable to phonogenize on his own. Some of Hunting’s specific scenarios also paralleled those worked by Dan Kelly. For example, he too placed his character in multiple roles within the courtroom, producing both CASEY IN COURT (“Mr. Casey appears as complainant in an amusing suit, and wants damages. Introduces a rough-and-tumble fight”)<sup>142</sup> and CASEY AS JUDGE (“He is elected” to the Judgeship of the Criminal Court, and administers the law in a novel manner”).<sup>143</sup>

However, Hunting also drew on his background as a stage manager to incorporate a variety of additional sound effects into his sketches, and this is really

what made the Casey series distinctive. By the end of 1892, he had already gained a reputation for offering “highly dramatic representations, in which all phases of actual life are manifested, with the addition of imitations of railway whistles, bells, galloping of horses, and other sounds, brought to a wonderful degree of perfection.”<sup>144</sup> A catalog issued by the United States Phonograph Company in the mid-1890s characterized the Casey series as “enlivened by the introduction of mechanical and other realistic effects, suggested by the author’s great knowledge of stagecraft.”<sup>145</sup> To give some sense of the breadth of effects Hunting employed, some of his individual selections included CASEY AND THE DUDE IN A STREET CAR (“Bell punch and other mechanical effects introduced”);<sup>146</sup> CASEY AS A DOCTOR (“Reproduction of bell ringing, opening door, coming down stairs, etc.”);<sup>147</sup> CASEY DEPARTING BY RAILROAD (“Exact representation of train leaving the station”);<sup>148</sup> and CASEY AND HIS GANG OF IRISH LABORERS (“Reproduction of the sounds of laying brick, hammering, sawing, etc.”).<sup>149</sup> In general, Hunting’s Caseys relied for their effect not just on his mimicry of ethnic dialect but also on his skill in other areas of phonogenic stagecraft, making them doubly attractive.

While Hunting’s work displayed certain innovations relative to Kelly’s Pat Brady series, even its most innovative aspects were not wholly without precedent. One sketch, CASEY JOINS COXEY’S ARMY (“Faithful representation of passing parade and prancing horses”),<sup>150</sup> must have been based on the same illusion of projicience created through changes in volume in descriptive sketches such as “The Passing Regiment.” CASEY AT THE DENTIST centers on Casey’s misunderstanding of the advertisement “teeth extracted without pain” as “teeth extracted without payin’,” i.e., for free,<sup>151</sup> a pun that was already circulating in print as Irish dialect humor in the 1860s;<sup>152</sup> but the dentist extracting a patient’s tooth was also a common choice of subject for ventriloquial acts dating back to the early nineteenth century, such as the one by Fitz James described earlier.<sup>153</sup> Some of Hunting’s other Caseys had precursors specifically in phonography, although of such early date that they can be hard to document due to the lack of record catalogs or trade journals. In the summer of 1889, a phonograph on exhibition at the Battle of Gettysburg panorama in New York City had given, among other things, “an amusing imitation of a man talking



with the telephone over crossed wires.”<sup>154</sup> One of Hunting’s most popular Casey phonograms was

CASEY AT THE TELEPHONE. The lines are crossed and he has the usual difficulties. Gets into a dispute with a number of people. This is one of the greatest records ever made, if its uninterrupted popularity may be taken as an index.<sup>155</sup>

A phonogram educed in Albany, New York in July 1889 had featured a scene centered on the performance of an Italian organ-grinder: “The player said he thought it was calla the Chimpanzee-a, but the audience knew it as ‘St. Patrick’s Day.’”<sup>156</sup>

Another of Hunting’s selections was

CASEY LISTENING TO A HAND-ORGAN IN THE STREET. Scene between Casey, Murphy, a Yankee, an Italian, a policeman, and the spectators. Music by the hand-organ; chattering of the monkey; Casey sings; Casey gets his head smashed. Policeman moves ’em all on.<sup>157</sup>

Hunting had evidently not been the first to attempt the bungled telephone conversation and hand-organ “scene” as subject matter for phonography, but at the same time he clearly developed them in new ways, popularized them, and helped inspire their recurrence in the decades to come.<sup>158</sup> His are certainly the earliest phonographic treatments of these subjects available to us today.

A third early exponent of Irish humor on phonogram was Len Spencer, who, as Columbia executive Frank Dorian later recalled, had first been exposed to the stenographic side of phonography working at his family’s Spencerian Business College in Washington, D. C.:

As a junior instructor in the college Len sometimes had to run errands for his father or mother, and in that capacity he visited our office quite frequently to get information, service parts, cylinders, or on similar errands. It was during one of those visits that he expressed a desire to do a record of his own voice and was accommodated, with the result that we discovered he had a rich baritone voice, a good style and the ability to put his character into a song. (That was either late in 1889 or early in 1890.)

It did not take long to reach a bargain with Len, especially as he wanted to supplement his meager income and whatever money he could pick up in his spare time was additional pocket change. We set Spencer down in front of a piano (he could play his own accompaniments), set three or four phonographs on top of the piano with the horns directed as nearly as possible on a level with his mouth, and Spencer would sing or play until he was tired—or until he had made as many records as we could afford to buy at one time.<sup>159</sup>

At first, Spencer was known to the trade primarily as a singer, but he also had experience “in private theatricals and minstrel entertainments,”<sup>160</sup> and once Victor Emerson had recruited him for the New Jersey Phonograph Company, a catalog of 1892 introduced “the O’Grady Records, By Mr. Larry Leonard [one of Len Spencer’s

early pseudonyms], with choruses of shouts, cheers, etc.,” doubtless seeking to capitalize on the popularity of similar work by Dan Kelly and Russell Hunting:

- 579 O’GRADY’S ADDRESS TO THE MONTGOMERY GUARDS
- 580 O’GRADY’S SPEECH ON LOVE (with chorus)
- 581 O’GRADY’S SPEECH ON TEMPERANCE (with chorus)
- 582 O’GRADY ON THE LABOR QUESTION (with chorus, drum and fife corps, applause, etc.)
- 583 O’GRADY’S SPEECH ON FREE TRADE (with chorus)
- 584 O’GRADY AT THE GUTTENBURG RACE TRACK (the arrival—the book-maker—“they’re off”—the finish—O’Grady “broke.”)<sup>161</sup>

The specific sketches listed here may have been original to Spencer, but the one O’Grady cylinder I have actually heard is simply a rendition of Hunting’s CASEY AS JUDGE routine with O’Grady substituted for Casey.<sup>162</sup> As we will see, Spencer was later to develop an extraordinarily varied phonogenic repertoire including impersonations of many different ethnic and character types, but the short-lived O’Grady series of 1892 seems to have been his first foray into audio theater. Spencer probably abandoned this series when the New Jersey company for which he was working hired Hunting himself to produce Caseys later that year.

Although impersonations of Irish immigrants were most successful, other ethnic speech styles were also mimicked in the phonography of the early 1890s. About 1891, the Louisiana Phonograph Company of New Orleans began offering “Brudder Rasmus sermons” by a local black vaudeville performer named Louis Vasnier. Billed as “faithful reproductions of a dusky style of pulpit oratory that is rapidly passing away,” Vasnier’s phonograms did not contain only Brudder Rasmus speaking, but also the “characteristic participation of his congregation.”<sup>163</sup> A well-known phonogenic performer of the following year was John C. Leach, who “imitates the Chinese, the Yankee, the English dude.”<sup>164</sup> Next came David C. Bangs, a white performer known in Washington as a reciter of Shakespeare and character delineator, who was recruited by Berliner and the Columbia Phonograph Company to supply both serious and comic recitations. In 1895, he introduced the “Rastus Series” of phonograms through Columbia, including monologs (’RASTUS’ LECTURE ON APPLES—“A unique and amusing talk on this popular fruit and its resemblance to the human race”), dialogs (’RASTUS ON STEAMBOAT EXPLOSIONS—“’Rastus and Luce have an entertaining conversation on what *might* happen, which leads ’Rastus to the expression of a very decided opinion”), and possibly scenes involving a “chorus” of

multiple audience members ('RASTUS AT THE RAZOR SOCIAL—“He relates his experience with his best girl at an evening party, much to the enjoyment of his hearers”). Bangs also performed these same stories before live audiences in Washington. However, he relocated to Kansas City in 1896 and, although he later did some work for the minor Kansas City Talking Machine Company, he never regained the status he had enjoyed within the industry during the mid-1890s.<sup>165</sup> None of these performers appears to have developed anything like the nationwide popularity achieved by Kelly and Hunting. Meanwhile, Kelly's own career lasted for only about five years: in September 1893, he declined an invitation to address the fourth annual convention of local phonograph companies on the subject of “talking records,” claiming ill health,<sup>166</sup> and his Brady series vanished from the market after 1895.<sup>167</sup> This left Russell Hunting's Casey series unrivaled as the most successful line of spoken-word phonograms in the United States. Its prominence within the industry as a whole during this period would be hard to overstate. An Edison catalog of early 1898 called Hunting's cylinders “perhaps the best known and most popular of all records made for the Phonograph,”<sup>168</sup> and the trade press quoted phrases from the Casey routines in passing as elements of the industry's shared insider culture.<sup>169</sup>

Hunting did not confine himself exclusively to Irish comedy. An article of 1892 attested to his versatility in the recording laboratory: “in making his records, Mr. Hunting can make his ‘Bureau’ [a story in Yankee dialect] which always convulses one with the heartiest laughter, and the next moment make a record with such beautiful pathos, as ‘The Dying Soldier.’”<sup>170</sup> However, one of Hunting's most significant innovations was phonographic “smut,” for which he was arrested by agents of Anthony Comstock in the summer of 1896 and sentenced to three months in prison for violating obscenity laws.<sup>171</sup> While he was presumably serving out this sentence and unavailable for phonogenic work, some new Casey selections by other performers began appearing on the market. Walter Miller and Henry Hagen's Phonograph Record and Supply Company advertised that it carried Russell Hunting's own Caseys, but around the middle of August 1896 it also listed two new topical items connected with the political campaign then underway, both phonogenized by John Kaiser, who until then had worked primarily as a recording technician:

1583 CASEY ON THE FINANCIAL QUESTION. He explains to his friends the meaning of the doctrine of 16 to 1.

1584 CASEY ON THE TARIFF. He gets somewhat over his head in the discussion, but sticks to his point that a duty should be levied on all Italians.

Both of the above orations are delivered before very enthusiastic audiences who manifest their presence by vociferous applause at frequent intervals.<sup>172</sup>

On his release from prison, Hunting took steps to recover his monopoly over the Casey series. The next supplementary bulletin of the United States Phonograph Company listed three new titles by him and asserted: "These are the only new Caseys that he has made for several months. Caseys advertised as 'Gold Bug,' etc., are not genuine."<sup>173</sup> Hunting also assumed the editorship of the *Phonoscope*, a new trade journal dedicated to phonographs, kinoscopes and kindred technologies, the first issue of which he used to launch a campaign against parties he felt were stealing his intellectual property. On the one hand, he announced that "certain unprincipled individuals and corporations are duplicating my work, thereby deceiving the public by furnishing a record about one-third as loud as the original." This statement referred to the same threat of unauthorized mechanical duplication Hunting had faced since the first piracy of his Casey cylinders by Edison's laboratory in the fall of 1891. However, he also complained that "there are 'Casey' Records on the market which are not manufactured by me, but are made by others, using my subjects, in order to deceive the public." In this case, the problem was not the mechanical duplication of his phonograms but their rephonogenization by other performers. Although Hunting acknowledged that imitation was the highest form of flattery,<sup>174</sup> he was still not pleased, warning the public that he had "no business connections whatever, in any capacity, directly or indirectly with FRANK N. HUNTING, or any other Hunting, who advertises Records with similar titles to those I have made in the past."<sup>175</sup> There was still no legal precedent by which Hunting could protect his creations from either unauthorized mechanical duplication or rephonogenization, so his only recourse was to appeal to the trade's sense of justice and desire for a "genuine" article.

Two years later, in its September 1898 issue, the *Phonoscope* published an editorial called "Pirates and Parrots" in reference to two kinds of offender it intended to expose. The writer—likely Hunting himself—asserted that the Casey series was its "author's legitimate stock in trade," "the bona-fide product of the brain of a man and

a recognized asset of merit in the record-making art.” The “pirates” named in the title were thieves who stole property by any means, but “parrots,” in the terms of this editorial, were specifically people who rephonogenized other performers’ established routines:

A parrot repeats as he hears. Without brains, without a conscience and without originality the prattling green bird swears, sings or laughs as he has heard others swear, sing or laugh. The parrot uses the product of others['] brains in such a silly and ludicrous manner that it has long been a laughing-stock in its capacity as a bird and a disgusting chatter-box in the eyes of men.... Over and over again the senseless bird repeats in a senseless manner its stolen story. It is then sold to the public for private gain. In this trickery is the record buyer deceived.

The “pirate-parrot,” according to this editorial, “not only pilfers the titles of the ‘Casey’ records but the matter contained therein word for word” and then markets them “as ‘the Celebrated Casey Records,’ with the intention to defraud the public.” The writer warned the culprit to desist on pain of being identified by name in the *Phonoscope*, but he seems to have doubted the effectiveness of this threat, since he also urged: “if you must steal, give some credit to the man you rob, at least, let the public know that he originated the matter you stole.”<sup>176</sup> The rights of authorship in the new medium were hard to defend because they were hard to define. In defending his monopoly over the Casey series, Hunting strove to brand three different activities as illicit in the field of commercial phonography: unauthorized mechanical duplication, unauthorized rephonogenization, and plagiarism—i.e., issuing Casey stories without properly crediting Hunting as their originator.

Hunting personally produced his Casey series in the United States for seven straight years, working for a variety of companies during that time,<sup>177</sup> but he moved to England in the fall of 1898 and remained away for over a decade.<sup>178</sup> His departure effectively eliminated him as a source for the Casey series in the United States, inviting other performers to step in openly and fill the demand. The *Phonoscope* for December 1898 was already announcing Casey cylinders phonogenized for the Greater New York Phonograph Company by another performer, Joseph Gannon, simultaneously identified as “originator” of a new “Michael Murphy” series.<sup>179</sup> The next month, the company announced that it was “now prepared to fill all orders for Casey records” and advertised a list of “Original Casey Records” comprising twenty-one of Hunting’s titles (“original” in the sense that they were not mechanical

duplicates), along with the new Michael Murphys.<sup>180</sup> Within a couple more months, Gannon was independently marketing his own work from an address in Cincinnati.<sup>181</sup> Gannon's qualification to produce Caseys was linked to his consummate skill as a mimic, which may have blurred the distinction between his imitation of ethnic speech styles and his imitation of the performances of Russell Hunting:

He stands before a Phonograph or Graphophone horn and sings or talks in a series of voices all abstractly different in dialect, in idiom and inflection of vocal register. For instance, he will sing or imitate the voices of two Irishmen in controversy, a Teuton struggling with a Chinaman, or an Englishman at word-war with a Yankee. Besides this, while he is impersonating his character he is also imitating their brogue, their euphonism of voice, their style of melody. He tells you a story in one line, denies it in the next, satirizes it in the third and glorifies it in the fourth.<sup>182</sup>

John Kaiser too was back to performing as Casey by late 1898, supplying Edison's National Phonograph Company with the set of titles Hunting had formerly made for it,<sup>183</sup> as well as phonogenizing some of the same selections for Zon-o-phone.<sup>184</sup> James H. White, better known for his work in connection with Edison's early film enterprise,<sup>185</sup> took over Hunting's titles for the National Phonograph Company between late 1899 and 1903 and even made a few "improper" cylinders in a Huntingesque vein for private use,<sup>186</sup> but Kaiser was called back again to produce remakes of the Edison Casey cylinders in 1905.<sup>187</sup> Meanwhile, Hunting continued phonogenizing Casey sketches in England, and the Victor Talking Machine Company began importing his masters for pressing in the United States in 1903, once it had adopted a multiple-stamper system of duplication that made the international exchange of matrices feasible.<sup>188</sup> When Hunting finally returned to the United States to establish an American branch for Pathé in 1914,<sup>189</sup> he issued a number of domestically recorded Casey titles through that company. Some Caseys phonogenized by an unknown performer in London in 1915 were also released on Columbia in the United States the following year, credited on the labels simply to "Michael Casey" with the selections credited as "Original," a term that in this context ordinarily implied a performer had authored his or her own routines.<sup>190</sup> As late as the 1920s, a performer named John Riley continued the series for Okeh, brazenly taking authorial credit for such Russell Hunting classics as CASEY AS A DOCTOR.<sup>191</sup>

During the 1890s and early 1900s, critics repeatedly cited one of Russell Hunting's Caseys that depicted a departing steamboat with numerous sound effects as

especially remarkable for its technical ingenuity. The piece dated back to the very beginning of Hunting's career in phonography, and the *Phonogram* had already singled it out for praise in the fall of 1892:

Many of these records [the "Casey series"] are really wonderful in their composition; in the "steam boat," for instance, he assumes ten different voices and produces eight mechanical effects, and all without the assistance of a single person. This record was pronounced by no less a personage than Mr. Edison himself, to be the most remarkable record ever made on a phonograph. All Mr. Hunting's records, except where he employs a chorus of voices or a quartette effect, are made entirely without assistance.<sup>192</sup>

Emphasis was placed here on Hunting's phonogenization of his steamboat routine *without assistance*, framing it as a virtuosic feat analogous to ventriloquistic performances like the "dentist scene" contrived by Fitz James onstage from behind a screen. Whether or not Edison had really called Hunting's steamboat sketch "the most remarkable record ever made," we know that he did keep a copy of it on exhibition at his laboratory, where a *New York Times* reporter described hearing it that October:

One of the machines gave me the departure of two Irishmen on a river steamboat, one hurrying the other along, and their jokes and laughter on the landing, the ringing of the boat's big bell, the cry of "All ashore that's going!" the scraping of the gangplank as it was drawn ashore, the tinkle of the bell in the engine room, the "Chew, chew" of the engine, and more jokes and laughter by the Irishmen, mingled with the Captain's shout of "Let go that line!" It was all so natural and so plain that I stood for the moment on the wharf and saw the boat drawing away, and was astonished the next minute to find myself in Edison's laboratory.<sup>193</sup>

This time the writer enthused about the steamboat sketch's ability to transport auditors into the scene it represented, making them imagine, at least for a while, that they were really there, and even that they could "see" the departing boat. The same routine was described yet again by the *Talking Machine News* in May 1903, after Hunting had relocated to England, now offering some insight into how the sound effects were produced in the laboratory:

As to his mimetic ability, Edison himself declared that the Casey steamboat record was the best he had ever heard. There were no less than ten different characters in this record and eight mechanical effects, all of them produced by Mr. Hunting. First the bell on the forward deck clangs loudly, then the little bell on the look-out-house puts in its turn. "Get in that gangplank there; hurrah now; pull her in, boys; pull her out!" shouts the mate in a voice which drowns even the snorts of the engine at work. Thump, thump go the bales of cotton and boxes of merchandise on deck. "Look heah, honey, doan you fergit to send me a letter so I gets it at St. Louis," shouts a Negro deck hand to his dusky sweetheart, waving him a last adieu from the land. Puff, puff, puff goes the engine, and sh-sh-sh sings the escape valve. The heavy chain rattles against the capstan, and as the sound dies away a dozen of the deck hands strike up the melody: "Farewell, my love, farewell."

And Mr. Hunting would tell you—for he makes no secret about it—that all that went to make that record was his own voice, a bell, a couple of bottles, and a piece of sandpaper.<sup>194</sup>

The sketch was listed among the Caseys in the United States Phonograph Company catalog as CASEY DEPARTING FROM NEW YORK BY STEAMBOAT: “Scene at the wharf. Incidents of departure faithfully reproduced. Introduces many realistic mechanical effects, such as pulling in gang-plank, whistles, bell, etc.”<sup>195</sup> The steamboat sketch was not among the Caseys perpetuated in their native country by Gannon, Kaiser and White, but Hunting revised the sketch to fit local interests after his departure for England in 1898, producing a Casey called LEAVING DOVER FOR PARIS, later retitled CASEY CROSSING THE ENGLISH CHANNEL, in both cases with “steamboat effects.”<sup>196</sup> It also survived in the United States in somewhat altered form, as we will see momentarily.

Although the Casey series did continue into the twentieth century, it no longer enjoyed the extreme popularity in the United States that it had during its heyday in the 1890s as new performers had come to fill a similar niche. At the close of the nineteenth century, other important dialect humor series were Frank Kennedy’s Dutch “Schultz” series,<sup>197</sup> Will N. Steele’s Jewish “Einstein” series,<sup>198</sup> and Cal Stewart’s “Uncle Josh Weathersby” series, the most popular and enduring of them all. There had also been Irish comedy series besides the Caseys in this period, including Jack Simonds’ “Mulcahey” stories for the Lyric Phonograph Company, which sometimes incorporated a Dutch sidekick named Dinglebender played by Joseph Weber;<sup>199</sup> and the “Rolling Mill Kelly” stories, phonogenized (ostensibly) by their originator John W. Kelly for Walcutt & Leeds in 1896,<sup>200</sup> by Harry B. Norman for Edison and the Lyric Phonograph Company in 1898-99,<sup>201</sup> and by Will N. Steele for Edison and Victor in 1900.<sup>202</sup> Except for Cal Stewart’s “Uncle Josh,” however, these earlier dialect humor series receded after the turn of the century in favor of work by more broadly based performers—people renowned less as dialecticians than as all-around phonogenic artists who employed dialect along with their other tricks of the trade.



## The Quartet Descriptive

The meanest man has been found. He is a Phonograph fiend, too. Employees of Lightner's had noticed that he always asks for quartette selections. The clerks tried to sell him other pieces, but without success. Finally he explained. He said, "Do you suppose I'm going to pay thirty-five cents to hear one voice alone when I can hear four for the same money?"  
— Unidentified Ohio newspaper (1903)<sup>203</sup>

As we have seen, early phonographic dialect humor often employed a "chorus" of voices to simulate the audience for a public speech or other background effects. Early "choruses" seem to have been limited to cheering, catcalls, shouts, and so forth, while the few cases of "incidental music" found in early Casey phonograms were evidently instrumental.<sup>204</sup> Meanwhile, vocal quartets were also known for interjecting descriptive elements into their music, a phenomenon we have already encountered in *WAY DOWN YONDER IN THE CORNFIELD / CORNFIELD MEDLEY*. By the mid-1890s we find a convergence of these two traditions in what I will call the *quartet descriptive*. Male vocal quartets had several advantages over single performers such as Russell Hunting when it came to enacting elaborate descriptive sketches. A quartet could alternate between speech and singing, thereby increasing the audicular richness and variety of its phonograms. Because quartets already consisted of four men with different vocal ranges (first tenor, second tenor, baritone, and bass), it was also easier for them to supply contrastive voices for different fictional characters than it was for a single performer to do so. Furthermore, parts could be assigned as needed to individual members of a quartet based on the distribution of skills among them rather than relying on the abilities of one versatile mimic: for instance, one member might be better at "rube" dialect, another at Irish caricatures, and yet another at imitating the voices of women. While selections such as the *CORNFIELD MEDLEY* also existed in slightly different form as live performance traditions, later quartet descriptives frequently seem to have been created solely for the phonographic medium—at least, nothing corresponding identifiably to them appears in accounts of contemporaneous live quartet concerts. As with Hunting's Caseys, such phonograms did not simply record, represent or recontextualize a performance tradition whose primary reality lay elsewhere; rather, they themselves constituted the tradition.

It would be hard to pinpoint with certainty when the quartet descriptive began to diverge from more traditional forms of quartet “imitation.” The substitution of real bells and whistles in the CORNFIELD MEDLEY might already be regarded as a step in this direction, but it is unclear just when this substitution took place, and the scarcity of evidence makes other early “descriptive” pieces by quartets hard to evaluate too. We can identify one intriguing transitional piece: in a catalog issued around 1895, the United States Phonograph Company offered several phonograms by the otherwise unknown Dixie Quartette, including a STEAMBOAT SCENE glossed as “Descriptive of a Mississippi Steamboat Leaving the Levee.”<sup>205</sup> After the announcement “Steamboat Scene, by the Dixie Quartet,” a bell begins ringing (*ding-ding, ding-ding, ding-ding*) and a voice repeatedly shouts “All ashore going ashore!” over unintelligible murmuring. Next we hear a ratchet sound followed by a shout of “hoay!” repeated four times, and then a crashing sound—collectively representing the raising of the gangplank. A short verbal exchange follows which I cannot make out, and then a whistle blows (*toot tooot toot-toot*, repeated twice) with a bell jangling in the background. After this introduction, which comprises the first third of the phonogram, the quartet proceeds to sing a medley of songs in four-part harmony, punctuated every now and then by a blast on the whistle. Much as CORNFIELD MEDLEY finishes with a virtuosic banjo imitation, the Dixie Quartet’s STEAMBOAT SCENE ends with a vocal imitation of a steam calliope.<sup>206</sup> While the opening segment of STEAMBOAT SCENE does establish a particular type of “scene,” the phonogram as a whole operates as a traditional proto-barbershop quartet piece with imitations—including one, the imitation of the steam calliope, that does not really fit the supposed scene.

I believe we can identify a turning-point in the emergence of the quartet descriptive genre in early 1897, when Russell Hunting went to work for the Universal Phonograph Company as both a phonogenic performer and a recordist. Like other early recordists, Hunting coached and “posed” his subjects, and he pursued this side of his work so proactively that he was referred to, a few years later, as a phonographic “stage manager,”<sup>207</sup> assigning him a role roughly analogous to that of the director of a film. One of the first groups the Universal Phonograph Company recruited for

phonographic work was the Diamond Comedy Four, whose consistent core members were tenor Al Campbell, baritone Steve Porter, and bass Will C. Jones.<sup>208</sup> Since this group was new to phonography, Hunting would have had the responsibility of training its members in phonogenic performance.<sup>209</sup> A Universal Phonograph Company catalog of early 1897 shows the new quartet phonogenizing some of the typical imitative fare of the period, including THE CORNFIELD MEDLEY “with steamboat imitation, bells, whistles, banjos, etc.” In a separate section devoted to Hunting’s own “talking records,” however, we find an innovative collaboration: ON THE MISSISSIPPI, a “new descriptive record” representing “a Mississippi steamboat departing from the wharf at New Orleans with vocal selections by the Diamond Comedy Four.”<sup>210</sup> This routine was modeled in part on the Casey steamboat sketch, and Hunting himself presumably contributed spoken segments and sound effects, but it relocated the action from the wharfs of New York City to the upper Mississippi. ON THE MISSISSIPPI is the earliest definite example I can identify of a convergence between the vocal quartet phonogram and the Huntingesque comic sketch, and it was consciously presented as a *collaboration*.<sup>211</sup> However, when a new group formed in the fall of 1897 known as the Greater New York Quartette, its personnel overlapping with that of the Diamond Comedy Four,<sup>212</sup> one of the first items it contributed to the Columbia catalog was a piece called the STEAMBOAT MEDLEY. This was essentially the same piece as ON THE MISSISSIPPI, but it was now listed as a regular quartet selection and renamed by analogy with the CORNFIELD MEDLEY, IMITATION MEDLEY, and other imitative “medleys” which it somewhat resembled.<sup>213</sup> The quartet had evidently decided it could phonogenize the routine on its own, without Hunting’s assistance. This routine subsequently became a standard piece in the repertoire of nearly every phonogenic quartet in the business, known sometimes as STEAMBOAT MEDLEY,<sup>214</sup> and sometimes as STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS.<sup>215</sup>

Early phonogenic quartets often worked under multiple names and constantly reshuffled and shared their personnel, making their continuities and interconnections challenging to trace. When Columbia’s exclusive contracts tied up a number of the leading vocal performers in mid-1898, for instance, a new quartet

formed to fill the vacuum; centered at first on tenor Roger Harding, baritone S. H. Dudley, and bass William F. Hooley;<sup>216</sup> it was known as the “Excelsior Quartette” when working for the Excelsior Phonograph Company,<sup>217</sup> as the “Edison Quartette” when working for the National Phonograph Company,<sup>218</sup> and as the “Haydn Quartet” when working for Berliner.<sup>219</sup> When Harding too became exclusive to Columbia,<sup>220</sup> he was replaced as a tenor in the new group by John Bieling, a veteran of the old Manhansett Quartet.<sup>221</sup> Towards the end of 1898, the quartet organized its own American Phonograph Company in Newark,<sup>222</sup> and sometimes it accordingly called itself the “American Quartet,”<sup>223</sup> but by the turn of the century, “Haydn” or “Hayden” had come to be the preferred name for the quartet built around Dudley, Hooley and Bieling,<sup>224</sup> while the “American Quartet” name was reserved for successive combinations of at least two of these vocalists with other performers such as Al Campbell, Steve Porter, and Billy Murray—and one “American Quartet” formed in 1909 was also known as the “Premier Quartet” on Edison.<sup>225</sup> In 1902, the Haydn Quartet became exclusive for a number of years to Victor and Edison,<sup>226</sup> once more creating an opening for such unaffiliated entities as the Invincible Quartette, a new group featuring Arthur Collins and Byron G. Harlan.<sup>227</sup> Columbia maintained its own inchoate “Columbia Quartette” for a while, but once this group had stabilized its lineup as Al Campbell, Henry Burr, Steve Porter (later Arthur Collins) and Frank C. Stanley in 1906, it staked out an independent identity working for multiple companies as the “Peerless Quartet.”<sup>228</sup> Sorting out the various permutations of these quartets is one of the most frustrating and complicated tasks faced by biographers and historians of the “pioneer recording artists.” The important thing to keep in mind here is that each of these quartets performed descriptive pieces, both inventing new ones and putting its own spin on existing ones. As with all other content in early phonography, these selections had to be “remade” on a regular basis—by the same quartet or another one, for the same company or its competitors, and at the same length or in abridged or expanded form. Sometimes a given quartet may have learned descriptive routines by listening to other quartets’ phonograms, but the quartets were themselves fluid entities that frequently shared or exchanged personnel, providing another vector for the transmission of such material.

With these processes of transmission, adaptation, and rephonogenization in mind, let us take a closer look at the quartet descriptive STEAMBOAT MEDLEY / STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS. One take runs as follows:

**ANNOUNCER:** “Steamboat Leaving the Wharf at New Orleans,” sung by the Haydn Quartet. Zon-o-phone Record.  
**MATE:** C’mon there, you Alabama loafers,  
get up those bales of cotton, now, get a move on, here!  
**NEWSBOY:** Evening papers—papers, boss?  
**SHOESHINE BOY:** Shine, sir? Shine? Shine?  
**IRISHMAN:** Shure, what do I want of a shine?  
Don’t you see I’ve rrrrrubbers [*with heavily rolled “r”*] on me? [*Group laughter.*]  
**SWEETHEART:** Good-bye, Rastus!  
Don’t forget to write to me when you get to St. Louie!  
**DECKHAND:** Baby, I’s gwine to write to ya.  
**SWEETHEART:** Say, Rast!  
Don’t forget to play them numbers I was tellin’ you ’bout.  
**DECKHAND:** Gwine to put those two cents on four ’leven forty-four as soon as I get off the boat.  
[*Group laughter.*]  
**MATE:** All ashore that’s goin’ ashore!  
[*Mingled voices: “Good-bye,” etc.*]  
C’mon there, niggers!  
Get in that gangplank, now—go on!  
[*Voices: “Heave-ho!”—ratchet sound—*  
*“Heave-ho!”— ratchet sound—*  
*“Heave-ho!” — ratchet sound—*  
*thump—whistle blows twice—bell rings: ding-ding, ding-ding, ding-ding.*]  
Well, we’re off now, say, boys, sing us a song, will ya?  
[*Mingled voices, “All right, boss,” etc.*  
*Quartet sings “Sailing, Sailing, Over the Bounding Main.”*  
*Whistling; voices: “bravo!,” “that’s great!”*]  
Good boys, great! Say, sing another one, will ya?  
[*Mingled voices, “All right, boss, sure,” etc.*  
*Quartet sings “Down Mobile.”*  
*Applause and cheering, “Great, boys, fine, that’s good!”*]  
**IRISHMAN:** Well, begorry, I’d like to see the Sandow that handles that pick.  
**PASSENGER:** Why, say, Pat,  
that’s no pick.  
**IRISHMAN:** Well, if it isn’t a pick,  
what is it?  
**PASSENGER:** Why, that’s the anchor! [*Laughter.*]  
**IRISHMAN:** Well, begorry, after that I think I’ll go to bed, now.<sup>229</sup>

The model version of the quartet STEAMBOAT MEDLEY transcribed above, from Zon-o-phone 1621-2, is fairly representative of the tradition as a whole. The sound effects and the order of elements remain consistent from take to take, the ethnic speech styles are similarly caricatured, and the same objects are held up for ridicule. Still, as a unique take this phonogram does differ subtly from all other versions of the STEAMBOAT MEDLEY, whether phonogenized by the same quartet or by other ones,

and in analyzing the routine as a whole we should take its variability into account. Consider, for instance, the use of denigrating epithets, which to modern ears will generally be the most conspicuous (and galling) feature of the entire phonogram:

C'mon there, you Alabama loafers,  
get up those bales of cotton, now, get a move on, here! //  
C'mon there, niggers!  
Get in that gangplank, now—go on!

In another version, the deckhands are addressed both times as “niggers,” which can be regarded as the default for this routine:

C'mon there, you niggers, get up those bales o' cotton, now, get a move on, here! //  
C'mon there, niggers, haul in that gangplank, get a hustle on here.<sup>230</sup>

However, it was not uncommon for the captain to substitute a more elaborate epithet into one or the other of his commands, like the “Alabama loafers” encountered in the model version. Victor 2767, matrix B-998-1, has:

C'mon there, you niggers, get up those bales o' cotton, now, get a move on, here! //  
C'mon there, you Senegambian loafers and haul in that gangplank, go on now, get a hustle on here.<sup>231</sup>

Unlike “Alabama loafers,” “Senegambian loafers” refers explicitly to the deckhands’ African origin. Wordings of this kind display an effort by the performers to treat racial slurs as a locus of creative expression in their own right, to draw attention to them as an element meant to be appreciated as witty and artful and not, say, intended merely to help listeners identify the deckhands as black when visualizing the scene. In another case, the captain instead varies the routine by addressing a deckhand by name:

C'mon there, you niggers, get those bales of cotton on board, go on, get a move on, there, hurry up there, Bill! //  
C'mon there, you niggers, haul in that gangplank!<sup>232</sup>

On the other hand, Columbia disc 454-10 omits all explicit references to the race of the deckhands in both of the captain’s commands:

C'mon thar, you, get them bales o' cotton on board, get a hustle on there! //  
C'mon thar, you, haul in that gangplank!<sup>233</sup>

The omission of racial and ethnic epithets appears to have been a conscious adaptation on the part of the performers on Columbia disc 454-10, which is also the

only version among those surveyed in which the Irishman at the end is not addressed as “Pat”:

**IRISHMAN:** Well, sir, I’d like to see the strong young feller that handles that pick.  
**PASSENGER:** Why, that’s no pick.  
**IRISHMEN:** Well, if it ain’t a pick, what is it, then?  
**PASSENGER:** Why, that’s the anchor! [*Laughter.*]  
**IRISHMAN:** Well, after that I think I’ll go to bed.<sup>234</sup>

All versions surveyed have the passengers laugh at the Irishman’s mistake, but some involve more explicit ridicule than others:

**IRISHMAN:** Well, sir,  
I’d like to see the strong young feller that handles that pick.  
**PASSENGER:** Now look here, Pat,  
you oughtn’t to leave home.  
That isn’t a pick.  
**IRISHMAN:** Well, if it isn’t a pick, what is it?  
**PASSENGER:** Why, you foolish chump!  
That’s the anchor! [*Laughter*]  
**IRISHMAN:** Well, after that I guess I’ll go to bed.<sup>235</sup>

In this variant, “Pat” is called a “foolish chump” who “oughtn’t to leave home.”

Again, in Victor 2767, the version that also contains the phrase “Senegambian loafers,” we find:

**IRISHMAN:** Well, sir,  
I’d like to see the strong young man that handles that pick.  
**PASSENGER:** Now, look here, Pat,  
you oughta know better than that.  
That isn’t a pick.  
**IRISHMAN:** Well, if it isn’t a pick,  
what is it?  
**PASSENGER:** Why, you Hibernian chump!  
That’s the anchor! [*Laughter. Whistle blows.*]<sup>236</sup>

This time “Pat” is addressed as a “*Hibernian* chump,” linking his ignorance to his identity as an Irishman, and he no longer has the token last word (“Well, after that I guess I’ll go to bed”); instead, the routine concludes with another blast on the steamboat whistle, an alternate ending also found in other examples.<sup>237</sup> The model version quoted above in full differs in having the Irishman twice use the stereotypically Irish exclamation “begorry” and refer to the hypothetical man who could wield the riverboat’s anchor as a pick as “the Sandow,” an allusion to the famous body-builder Eugen Sandow, another effort to vary the routine by substituting an artful epithet for the standard wording. By examining how these two segments are

treated in multiple versions of the STEAMBOAT MEDLEY, we are able to identify both the general defaults for the routine as a whole and the characteristics distinctive to each take. Victor 2767, matrix B-998-1, is shown to be unusually rich in ornamental ethnic slurs, while Columbia disc 454-10 is revealed as equally unusual for omitting ethnic epithets altogether. For the routine as a whole, explicit ethnic epithets seem to have been optional embellishments. Quartets could add them or drop them at will in the act of phonogenic performance, since without their aid the characters' ethnic identities would still be established through the use of conventionalized dialect.

A number of further differences can be identified among the same five renditions of the STEAMBOAT MEDLEY we have been examining, some of which are more substantial than others. Columbia disc 454-10 displays a number of unusual features besides its omission of ethnic epithets. First, it presents “Evening papers? Shine, sir? Shine, boss?” in the same voice rather than in two contrastive voices, suggesting that a single boy is supposed to be both selling newspapers and shining shoes. “All ashore that’s goin’ ashore!” is then sung in a protracted monotone rather than shouted, and the “good-byes” of the passengers and their friends on the wharf are left out. Meanwhile, other versions display idiosyncrasies of their own. Take, for instance, the segment preceding the first song. In the model version, someone invites the “boys” to sing: “Well, we’re off now, say, boys, sing us a song, will ya?,” while other versions have “Say, boys, sing us a song, will ya?”<sup>238</sup> The “boys” generally comply with “Sailing, Sailing, Over the Bounding Main,” a song associated with and suggestive of travel by water; then, unless time pressures required abridgment,<sup>239</sup> they follow up with “Down Mobile” as an encore. In two cases, however, the songs receive more explicit framing, specifying just who the “boys” are supposed to be within the fictional setting. Victor 2767, the version that contains the phrases “Senegambian loafers” and “Hibernian chump” treats this segment as follows:

**PASSENGER:** Well, we’re off for St. Louie—say, cap’n,  
can’t the niggers give us a little music?

**CAPTAIN:** Why, certainly. Say, boys, strike up a song, full at ease.<sup>240</sup>

Here the two songs are presented as sung by black deckhands resting after the arduous work of loading and launching the boat. Such singing was then closely associated with the romance and nostalgia of riverboat travel,<sup>241</sup> and this was



undoubtedly the default interpretation listeners were expected to put on the quartet music in the absence of explicit cues. In another case, however, a voice exclaims: “By Jove, here’s the Climax Quartet on board, say, boys, sing a song for us, will ya?” Here the singers, who may or may not be deckhands, become a recognized quartet fortuitously discovered aboard the riverboat and coaxed into giving a short concert.<sup>242</sup> On the basis of this variation, we can conclude that the two songs were included in the STEAMBOAT MEDLEY primarily to make the piece more audicularly attractive in their own right, and that quartets were therefore free to experiment with more than one pretext for incorporating them into the fictional scene.

Quartets who performed the STEAMBOAT MEDLEY assumed that their listeners would share certain kinds of background knowledge they would need in order to make sense of what they were hearing. To cite only a few examples, listeners would have needed the ability to recognize conventionalized ethnic speech styles and associate them with broader stereotypes, some familiarity with the distinctive sounds of riverboats, an awareness of the respective shapes, sizes and functions of anchors and pickaxes, and an understanding of how shoeshine boys solicited customers and why “rubbers” did not have to be shined. Some allusions of this kind are still readily intelligible to twenty-first century listeners, but others can require more explanation, such as the exchange about gambling. In the model version, as in some of the others,<sup>243</sup> “Rastus” promises his sweetheart to put money on “four ’leven forty-four” when he arrives in St. Louis. The numbers 4-11-44 were the best-known *gig* or three-number combination in a notorious form of underclass lottery called the *policy game*. Known as the “washerwoman’s gig,” “nigger gig,” “coon gig,” “coon row,” “white mice row,” or any of a host of other names, 4-11-44 had been identified as the standard choice of numbers among black policy-players since at least the 1850s.<sup>244</sup> Such established combinations were known generically as *cue-rows*, and each one was associated with a word or concept that allowed people to choose numbers based on significant events, especially the subjects of vivid dreams, whether their own or those of other people. In some versions of the STEAMBOAT MEDLEY we find an alternate wording:

**SWEETHEART:** Good-bye, Rastus!  
Don’t forget to write to me when you get to St. Louie!

**DECKHAND:** Oh, I'll write to you all right, honey.

**SWEETHEART:** Say, Rast!

Don't forget to play them numbers I told you 'bout.

**DECKHAND:** No indeed, I'se gwine to put your ten cents on the baby row the first thing I get off the boat in the mornin'.<sup>245</sup>

The “baby row,” the cue-row cited most frequently in newspaper accounts of policy playing apart from 4-11-44, was simply 1-2-3.<sup>246</sup> The STEAMBOAT MEDLEY assumed listeners would be sufficiently familiar with gambling lore to understand what is supposed to be going on here: i.e., Rastus' sweetheart has dreamed about a baby, or encountered a baby in some other seemingly significant way, and has passed this information along to him as a gambling tip. The laughter that follows can probably be read as mocking the black couple's earnest acceptance of a “superstition” popularly assigned to the same category as the number thirteen and the lucky “left hind foot of a rabbit caught in a graveyard in the dark of the moon.”<sup>247</sup> The short duration of early phonograms encouraged performers to rely heavily on such allusions to broader reservoirs of common knowledge. Recovering the meaning behind such allusions today can be challenging, particularly because the words are themselves often unclear. One has not only to track down the significance of the phrase “baby row,” for instance, but also to rule out alternate hearings such as “baby road,” making transcription itself dependent in large measure on comprehension.

The STEAMBOAT MEDLEY shares its structure and some of its sound effects in common not just with the Casey steamboat sketch, but also with orchestral descriptive pieces that portray similar subjects. One popular orchestral descriptive specialty of the late 1890s and early 1900s was THE SUWANEE RIVER or DOWN ON THE SUWANEE RIVER. It was described in record catalogs as containing a variety of mimetic elements: “Pulling in the Gang Plank, Steamboat Bells, Whistle, Dance on Board, with Negro Shouts and Clog,”<sup>248</sup> a description that several later commentators, following Roland Gelatt, have used as their key example of the phonographic descriptive sketch in general.<sup>249</sup> One rendition by the Columbia Orchestra runs as follows:

Haul in that gangplank!

[Ratchet sound—“Heave-ho!”

ratchet sound—“Heave-ho!”

ratchet sound—“Heave-ho!”

Bell rings three times: dong, dong, dong.

*Whistle blows twice.*  
*Orchestra plays Stephen Foster's "Old Folks at Home (Way Down Upon the Suwanee River)."*  
 Now, you niggers, your work's all done,  
 c'mon—let's have a dance—strike up "Tapioca"  
 [*Orchestra plays "Tapioca" with simulated clogs, sung refrain and laughter*]<sup>250</sup>

This routine may have originated with Issler's Orchestra, but its provenance is difficult to pin down; in the absence of actual phonograms or explicit descriptions, we cannot know for sure whether listings for DOWN ON THE SUWANEE RIVER and similar titles in record catalogs or discographies refer to the distinctive combination of music, speech, and sound effects in which we are interested here or to more straightforward arrangements of Stephen Foster's "Old Folks at Home."<sup>251</sup> Even composer credit for the descriptive version, when given, simply goes to Foster,<sup>252</sup> ignoring Edward Warden as composer of the 1860s blackface minstrel song "Tapioca,"<sup>253</sup> and nobody is ever identified as arranger. Mimetic representations of the sounds of departing steamboats had already appeared in descriptive specialties composed for band or orchestra before there had been a phonographic recording industry,<sup>254</sup> but it remains unclear whether the descriptive medley of "Old Folks at Home" and "Tapioca" was original to phonography, when it was first phonogenized if so, and how much it may have varied from version to version, since at least one example I have heard omits the steamboat whistle.<sup>255</sup> A similar but more elaborate descriptive selection was a LEVEE SCENE introduced in 1902-3. Credit for the underlying composition was sometimes given on labels and in catalogs to Len Spencer and Charles Prince, the latter being Columbia's resident musical director, so this time the piece does seem to have been original to the phonographic medium. One representative version runs as follows:

Levee Scene, Columbia Record.  
 [Bell rings: ding-ding, ding-ding, ding-ding. Whistle blows three times.]  
 Haul that cotton, niggers, boat's a-waitin.'  
 [Band plays opening tune including "Heave dat Cotton."  
 Laughter and murmurs.]  
 All ashore that's going ashore.  
 [Ratchet sound—"Heave-ho!"  
 ratchet sound—"Heave-ho!"  
 ratchet sound—"Heave-ho!"  
 Bell rings: ding-ding, ding-ding, ding-ding. Whistle blows once.]  
 C'mon here, niggers, cotton's in the boat.  
 You niggers all got yo' money in yo' pockets.  
 'Fore you go for your chicken feast with watermelon trimmings, I want to give you all a piece o'  
 advice.  
 I just want to ask you  
 what you all gwine to do in the winter, huh?

[Chorus sings “What You Gwine to Do in the Winter” with orchestra accompaniment.]  
C’mon, here comes the pickaninny band, coons, fall in, fall in!  
[Spencer and chorus sing the first verse of “Tapioca” and the refrain of “Roll on de Ground” with orchestra accompaniment, and the phonogram concludes with a reprise of the opening tune.]<sup>256</sup>

Both DOWN ON THE SUWANEE RIVER and LEVEE SCENE begin by simulating the sounds of a departing steamboat, including the bell, whistle, and drawing in of the gangplank, and conclude with representations of music-making on deck, the same sequence of events depicted in the STEAMBOAT MEDLEY. As far as can be determined from listening, the sound effects were produced in the same way for each of these phonograms, including the use of what sounds like a ratchet of some kind for the gangplank segment. Even one example of the CORNFIELD MEDLEY, a ten-inch version recorded by Victor sometime in 1901, extends that piece by inserting the following material, this time depicting the *landing* of a steamboat:

**SOLOIST:** Now dat boat am landing,  
Don’t you hear dat big bell ring?  
[Bell rings]  
**MATE:** C’mon here, niggers.  
Get up that gangplank, now, hurry up and let these passengers off.  
[Voices: “Heave-ho!”—ratchet sound—  
“Heave-ho!” —ratchet sound—  
“Heave-ho!” — ratchet sound—thump.]  
**SOLOIST:** Now dem coons am happy,  
Don’t you hear those banjos playing?<sup>257</sup>

Other examples of the steamboat bell/whistle/gangplank motif exist in early phonography as well;<sup>258</sup> for now, the point I want to make is that this cluster of elements was not unique to the Casey steamboat sketch and the STEAMBOAT MEDLEY but appeared in a variety of other descriptive selections, suggesting once again that ideas and techniques connected with aural mimesis were being borrowed across traditional generic boundaries in early phonography, blurring distinctions between dialect humor, quartet “imitations” and instrumental “descriptive specialties.”

The STEAMBOAT MEDLEY continued to evolve into the 1910s, when Edison and Victor both issued extended four-minute versions by the American/Peerless Quartet under the title DOWN ON THE MISSISSIPPI, now with composer credit to Steve Porter, although it is unclear whether he is being credited for the piece as a whole or only for the latest arrangement of it. Much of the sketch remains the same, but some changes have taken place: the Irishman goes to buy tobacco and nearly misses the

boat, running up during the gangplank sequence; Rastus promises to play the “chicken row” when he gets to St. Louis; the quartet sings “Down Mobile” and “Down on the Mississippi”; and the piece closes with the Irishman starting to sing his own mangled version of “Down on the Mississippi” (the quartet, having gone to bed, takes over from the background) rather than mistaking the anchor for a pick.<sup>259</sup> In England, Russell Hunting adapted his steamboat routine even more radically, not just to the local geography as in *CASEY CROSSING THE ENGLISH CHANNEL* but also to current events in *DEPARTURE OF A TROOPSHIP*, of which Fred Gaisberg recalled:

[T]he star turn during the Boer War period was a descriptive record entitled “The Departure of the Troopship,” with crowds at the quayside, bands playing the troops up the gangplank, bugles sounding “All ashore,” farewell cries of “Don’t forget to write,” troops singing “Home Sweet Home,” which gradually receded in the distance, and the far away mournful hoot of the steamer whistle. The record became enormously popular and eventually historic. It brought tears to the eyes of thousands, among them those of Melba, who declared in my presence that this record influenced her to make gramophone records more than anything else.<sup>260</sup>

Hunting’s *DEPARTURE OF A TROOPSHIP* marks a shift in the mood of the steamboat routine from lighthearted humor to wistful melancholy. The scene is more deceptively realistic than the *STEAMBOAT MEDLEY*, with considerable overlap of sounds and voices. Instead of lines about playing 4-11-44 or the “baby row,” we hear such intelligible phrases emerging from the background murmuring of the crowd as “Oh, you’ll be all right, pluck up, old man.” The musical selections now include the topically appropriate “God Save the Queen” and “The Girl I Left Behind Me.” The core of the piece remains the shouts of “All ashore going ashore,” the ratchetlike sounds and thump of the gangplank, and the bells and whistles signifying the ship’s departure, but this time the listener does not follow the ship on its journey, and the band on board can instead be heard fading away into silence accompanied by “swishing” sounds, finally vanishing with another blow on the whistle; the departure is thus depicted from the vantage point of the home front rather than that of the soldiers going off to war.<sup>261</sup> In 1917, when Hunting was managing the United States branch of Pathé, he produced a similar sketch customized for American participation in the First World War, *DEPARTURE OF THE FIRST U. S. TROOPS FOR FRANCE*, once more including the familiar sound effects: “Then down to the dock they and you proceed. The transport vessel’s bell rings, hurrying the embarkation, and finally the gangplanks are hoisted. The ship’s band bursts forth with ‘The Star Spangled

Banner’—the whistles blow, the engines start, and the huge ship departs while wild cheers and enthusiasm of the multitude prevail.”<sup>262</sup> By this point, Hunting and other performers had been simulating the sounds of departing steamboats in phonography using much the same techniques for at least a quarter of a century, albeit framed in a variety of different ways.

Modes of transportation in general were popular as subject matter for quartet descriptives, and not just steamboats. SLEIGH RIDE PARTY, first offered by Columbia in late 1897,<sup>263</sup> was another classic selection phonogenized regularly around the turn of the century:

**ANNOUNCER:** Descriptive selection, the Sleigh Ride Party  
by the Edison Quartet. [*bells jingle*]

**CHARLEY:** Hello, there, there comes the sleigh!

**DRIVER:** Whoa, *whoa* dar, Bonaparte.

**IRISHMAN:** Shure, he’s nothin’ but bony parts, you could hang your hat anyplace on ’im. [*group laughter*]

**CHARLEY:** Say, Mabel,  
where is that lunch basket?

**MABEL:** Why, I think I’m sittin’ on it.

**CHARLEY:** Oh, you *think* you’re sittin’ on it, do you, well, you *know* you’re sittin’ on it!

**MABEL:** Say, Maggie Murphy,  
you put that lunch basket under the seat, will you?

**CHARLEY:** Now, driver, I want you to stop at the very first roadhouse you come to, understand?

**DRIVER:** All right, boss. Giddyup!

[*Soloist sings first verse of “Jingle Bells” with piano accompaniment, quartet sings the refrain with bells jingling.*]

**DRIVER:** *Whoa* dar. Here’s the roadhouse, boss.

**CHARLEY:** Ah, here’s the roadhouse.

Now say, boys and girls,  
what’re you going to have to drink on me?

**MABEL:** Give me a sherry flip.

**MALE #2:** I’ll have a whiskey, straight.

**IRISHMAN:** Say, waiter, bring me a mixed ale with some mulligan in it.

[*Overlapping voices, including “Ah, Patsy, that’s the good stuff, let ’er go now”; then simultaneous “ahhh” of contentment.*]

**CHARLEY:** Say, Mabel,  
you hold the lines now, will ya?

**MABEL:** Not on your life!

**DRIVER:** Giddyup!

[*Quartet sings refrain of “Jingle Bells”; laughter and good-nights; then “Good Night Ladies,” “Merrily We Roll Along”; laughter.*]

**MABEL:** Good night, Charley.  
I’ve had a lovely time!

**CHARLEY:** Oh, I’m so glad of that, my darling. [*Repeated “smooching” sound.*]

**DRIVER:** Oh, g’wan, break away. Giddyup! [*Bells jingle.*]<sup>264</sup>

Like the STEAMBOAT MEDLEY, SLEIGH RIDE PARTY had parallels in orchestral descriptive selections, including A COACHING PARTY by the Peerless Orchestra,

advertised as “Desc. Selection, with coach horn, stop for refreshments, dialogue and effects.”<sup>265</sup> The two quartet descriptives are also similar in that they display many minor variations from take to take. In *SLEIGH RIDE PARTY*, the kissing segment is sometimes omitted or expanded on,<sup>266</sup> Charley usually does not indicate the drinks will be “on him,” and portions of the dialog occasionally change:

**CHARLEY:** Say, Mabel, where is that lunch basket?

**MABEL:** Why, I think I’ve got my feet in it!

**CHARLEY:** Well, I should think you have.<sup>267</sup>

We also find some lines swapped between different characters; for instance, Charley is sometimes the one who announces the coming of the sleigh and instructs its driver to stop at the first roadhouse they come to, as in the model example, but sometimes these lines are given in voices that contrast with Charley’s.<sup>268</sup> Some versions assign the characters different names, as in one take by the Greater New York Quartette that probably originated the piece, recorded about 1898:

**MABEL:** Here, Molly Hooley, put that basket on the seat, will ya? //

Good night, Chauncey, I had a lovely time.<sup>269</sup>

These two differences in name may be more significant than they at first appear. The second name is hard to make out clearly—it is definitely not “Charley” but could be “Georgie” or any number of other alternatives—and it is likely that other quartets who borrowed the sketch into their repertoires later on may initially have substituted “Charley” because they could not understand the name used in a model phonogram from which they were working, suggesting in turn that the routine as a whole was disseminated from quartet to quartet through phonography rather than through overlap in personnel. In place of “Maggie Murphy,” a stock Irish name, we find the far less common “Molly Hooley.” Phonogenic performers occasionally used each others’ names for characters in comic routines,<sup>270</sup> so this may have been a playful allusion to William F. Hooley, then singing bass in the rival Haydn Quartet.<sup>271</sup> The differentiation of characters in the *SLEIGH RIDE PARTY* is itself sometimes less clear than in the version transcribed, particularly in the case of falsetto representations of women’s voices. After the Irishman asks for mixed ale with mulligan (i.e., meat and vegetable stew) in it, a “female” voice sometimes exclaims “Oh, say, I’m gonna try one o’ them too!” or something to that effect,<sup>272</sup> but it is hard to tell aurally whether

the speaker is meant to be Mabel, who has in most versions already ordered a sherry flip but could be adding to her order, or another woman in the party. I assume this problem of interpretation must have existed equally for listeners a century ago, which may explain the decision of some quartets to omit the line—perhaps they themselves could not tell from listening which character was supposed to say it. Finally, Jim Walsh reports having heard a copy of A SLEIGH RIDE PARTY by the Haydn Quartet on Victor 658 in which S. H. Dudley substitutes the line: “And, waiter, bring me a package of *Sweet Caporal* cigarettes—THE ONLY KIND WORTH SMOKING.” Walsh speculates that the recording company had included this “commercial” in return for a payment from the makers of Sweet Caporal.<sup>273</sup>

The characteristic sounds of the railway train had already been simulated in Russell Hunting’s CASEY DEPARTING BY RAILROAD and in a descriptive selection for band or orchestra called A TRIP ON THE LIMITED EXPRESS,<sup>274</sup> but the first quartet descriptive to depict travel by rail was probably A TRIP TO THE COUNTY FAIR. This title was introduced in early 1897 as a selection by Russell Hunting,<sup>275</sup> but it was most likely a collaboration with the Diamond Comedy Four, like ON THE MISSISSIPPI, since Columbia placed the same title in its list of quartet selections later the same year, along with the STEAMBOAT MEDLEY.<sup>276</sup> A number of phonogenic vocal quartets added the same sketch to their repertoires over the next decade.<sup>277</sup> The majority of the piece takes place at the fair itself, but its opening segment depicts the journey there:

**ANNOUNCER:** A Trip to the County Fair,  
by the Haydn Quartet.

**CONDUCTOR:** All aboard for the county fair, all aboard, step lively now, step lively.

[*Overlapping voices: “Good bye,” etc.*]

**KITTY:** Good bye, Maggie, I’ll see you when I come back.

**MAGGIE:** All right, Kitty.

**IRISHMAN:** Hey, McCarthy, don’t go near the monkey’s cage when you get there,  
or a begorry they’ll, uh, put you in it! [*group laughter*]

**CONDUCTOR:** All aboard, now, all aboard. Let ’er go, Jim.

[*Bell and sound of train engine picking up speed (probably produced by shaking a maraca with increasing rapidity); fades out. Quartet sings “I Went to the County Fair” (i.e., “The Animal Fair”).*]

**CONDUCTOR:** [*over whistling sound, falling in pitch, simulating the noise made by air brakes*] All out for the county fair, all out!<sup>278</sup>

As in the STEAMBOAT MEDLEY, the listener “travels along” with the moving subject rather than remaining stationary while it approaches and passes by, the strategy



pursued in SPIRIT OF '76 and, presumably, in the phonogram of sound effects Lyman Howe had obtained to accompany his 1897 exhibitions of the film THE BLACK DIAMOND EXPRESS, depicting the approach of a locomotive.<sup>279</sup> Instead of the hauling in of the gangplank, we hear the train engine and brakes, the shouts of “all aboard” replace the shouts of “all ashore,” and the song and introductory dialog are made to fit the new scenario. In 1900, the departure, journey and arrival of a passenger train were expanded upon to occupy the entire phonogram NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO, a routine pioneered by the Haydn Quartet and later picked up by other groups.<sup>280</sup> One of the Haydn Quartet versions, Victor matrix B1243-6, runs as follows:

**CONDUCTOR:** Buffalo Night Express, now ready on track number seven, step lively.  
**MANDY:** C'mon, Hiram,  
 I guess that be our train.  
**HIRAM:** Guess 'tis, Mandy, I'll ask the conductor.  
 Say, conductor, be this my train?  
**CONDUCTOR:** Why no, whiskers, it belongs to the railroad. [*Group laughter*]  
 All aboard, now. All aboard.  
 Let 'er go, Jim. [*Intermittent “chuffing” sound starts, picks up speed, and recedes into background; bell rings.*]  
**PORTER:** You'll have to step inside, gen'lemen, it's against the rules to stand on the platform.  
**FINNEGAN:** I say, porter, I'm dead tired tonight.  
 Will you tell me where I sleep?  
**PORTER:** Yes, sir, your berth, sir, is upper seven, sir.  
**FINNEGAN:** Holy smoke, Mac, do you mind where the nagur's puttin' me,  
 on the top shelf there, well, begorry, here goes anyway, good night.  
**MAC:** Good night, Finnegan, good night.  
**CHORUS:** Y-A-L-E, Yale! [*Quartet sings the Yale version of “Drink it Down.”*]  
**PASSENGER:** Say, porter, who are those howling maniacs?  
**PORTER:** Why, dat's the Yale football team, sir, they just won a game from the Harvard boys.  
**MANDY:** Say, Hiram.  
 Will you get me a glass of water?  
**HIRAM:** No, Mandy, you don't want no glass o' water.  
**MANDY:** Oh, Hiram, *please* get me a glass of water  
 and I'll go right to sleep.  
**MAC:** For heaven's sake, get her a glass of water and we'll *all* go to sleep! [*laughter; snoring*]  
**PASSENGER:** Well, porter, what's *that* horrible noise?  
**PORTER:** Why, that's that Irishman, sir, in upper seven, he's got the nightmare. [*snoring resumes*]  
**MAC:** What's the matter, Finnegan?  
 Finnegan, are ye dyin'? [*snoring ceases; loud crash, laughing*]  
**PORTER:** Oh, that Irishman fell out of bed! [*laughing*]  
**MAC:** Finnegan, man, speak to me, speak to me! What's the matter?  
**FINNEGAN:** [*moans; then, in high-pitched voice:*] I dreamt that I was an A. P. A.! [*Laughter*]  
**CONDUCTOR:** All out for Buffalo!  
**SOLOIST:** [*sung, to tune of “Put Me Off at Buffalo”*] After many a hard bump on the crooked B &  
 O—  
**QUARTET:** [*sung*] Here we are at Buffalo!  
**FINNEGAN:** Well, thank heavens for that!<sup>281</sup>

Two references may require clarification today: the initials A. P. A. stood for the

American Protestant Association, a nativist organization anathema to Catholic Irish-Americans,<sup>282</sup> and “Put Me Off at Buffalo” (1895) was a popular song with lyrics about a train trip to Buffalo.<sup>283</sup> More or less the same sound effects and even a couple of the spoken lines are used here to depict the departure of the train as in A TRIP TO THE COUNTY FAIR, although this time there is no squeal of air brakes to announce its arrival at its destination. As before, dialect functions as an index of characters’ ethnic identities, in this case Irishmen, black porters and “rubes” as contrasted with the normative speech of the conductor and the passenger who inquires about disturbing noises. Listeners are left to recognize the simulated train sounds mainly on the basis of their aural characteristics, but a verbal cue is supplied to help them make sense of the loud crash at the climax of the Irishman’s nightmare, which would otherwise have been hard to interpret: “Oh, that Irishman fell out of bed!” Most variations between different takes are relatively minor; for instance, the numbers of the platform and the Irishman’s assigned berth alternate between seven and four;<sup>284</sup> the piece ends sometimes with the shout of “All out for Buffalo!,”<sup>285</sup> sometimes with the closing song;<sup>286</sup> and the passenger hearing “Drink it Down” asks the porter variously about “that terrible racket,”<sup>287</sup> “that awful racket,”<sup>288</sup> “that horrible noise,”<sup>289</sup> and “those long-haired lobsters.”<sup>290</sup> Sometimes, however, the denouement of a given segment changes significantly, as on Columbia ten-inch disc 458-7:

**MANDY:** C’mon, Hiram, I guess this be our train.

**HIRAM:** Just wait a minute and I’ll ask the conductor.

Say, conductor,  
be this my train?

**CONDUCTOR:** Why no, rube, it belongs to the railroad company.

**HIRAM:** I thought it belonged to you, you got so many gold buttons on. [*Group laughter*]<sup>291</sup>

In most versions, the bystanders laugh after the conductor tells Hiram the train is not “his” because it belongs to the railroad, but this time a second joke is interjected and the laughter is deferred for an extra line. Juxtaposing these two particular jokes was nothing new; they had also appeared together in HOW I GOT TO MORROW, a monolog phonogenized by both George Graham and Burt Shepard and dating back to at least 1899.<sup>292</sup> Although HOW I GOT TO MORROW centers on a man’s frustrated efforts to

clarify that he wants to take a train “to Morrow” rather than “tomorrow,”<sup>293</sup> a 1902 take by Shepard also contains the following passage:

So I rushed into the station, and there was a train there  
just about to start, and I asked the man who owned the railroad—  
I suppose he owned it, he  
looked very important and had brass buttons all over him—  
I said, “Is that my train?”  
He said, “No, it belongs to the railroad company.”<sup>294</sup>

The jokes are the same in the two cases, but they are deployed in very different ways. In *HOW I GOT TO MORROW*, the fictional narrator is presented as naïve: he ostensibly does think the gold buttons indicate the person wearing them is the owner of the railroad, inviting the listener to recognize the error and find humor in it at his (though not the performer’s) expense. In the variant of *NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO* found on Columbia ten-inch disc 458-7, however, Hiram clearly knows who the person wearing the uniform really is, having already addressed him as “conductor.” His response can be understood as a parry in a verbal duel, a deprecatory remark about the pomposity of the conductor’s uniform rather than a naïve misinterpretation of it, although it simultaneously plays on the expectation that, as a “rube,” he might make such blunders. Ultimately, Hiram wins the encounter instead of losing as in other versions; the bystanders laugh with him rather than at him. Meanwhile, the train conductor has been deprived of some of his own customary wit, being made to address Hiram simply as “rube” rather than using the more creative epithet “whiskers,” which appears in most other versions consulted.<sup>295</sup> In 1910, the *NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO* routine was reworked and expanded to fill the four-minute capacity of a wax Amberol cylinder. Most conspicuous is a lengthy scene added at the beginning in which Finnegan, now identified as an alderman and delegate to the Democratic state convention, gives a comically inept speech to a crowd gathered to see him off; as a result, Finnegan becomes for the remainder of the routine not merely a bumbling Irishman but a bumbling Irish-American politician. However, the dialog between Hiram and the conductor has also undergone another subtle change:

**HIRAM:** Say, conductor,  
be this my train?  
**CONDUCTOR:** Why, no, whiskers, it belongs to the railroad.  
**HIRAM:** I thought it might belong to *you*, you got so many brass buttons on! [*Group laughter*]  
**CONDUCTOR:** [*over laughter*] That’ll do you, whiskers—all aboard!<sup>296</sup>

Although Hiram still wins, the balance has shifted back subtly in favor of the conductor: Hiram is again called “whiskers,” not just once but twice, and the conductor reasserts his authority in dictating an end to the exchange: “that’ll do you.”

Quartet descriptives such as the STEAMBOAT MEDLEY, SLEIGH RIDE PARTY and NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO were among the most ambitious examples of fin-de-siècle audio theater and might arguably be regarded as phonographic equivalents to the canonical landmarks of early cinema. At the same time, they constitute more elusive subjects for research because of their constant variability in rephonogenization. Only one definitive shot or group of shots comprises an early film, even when alternative “cuts” exist. By contrast, quartet descriptives were remade from scratch again and again, every detail being subject to constant revision; there is, thus, no definitive version of the SLEIGH RIDE PARTY, or of any part of it. Quartet descriptives were built on consistent frameworks, to a point, but it is impossible to state with certainty what those were without comparing multiple versions, and moreover it is often the areas in which takes differ that are likely to be of most interest to cultural critics—for instance, whether the “rube” or the ethnically unmarked conductor wins the verbal duel in NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO, whether racial slurs are conspicuously absent or artfully embellished, or whether the quartet sneaks in a plug for Sweet Caporal cigarettes. As I have already argued, the fixity of individual early commercial phonograms is deceptive; it is more accurate to conceive of an item in an early record catalog as a performance tradition with many instantiations, each subtly different, of which researchers can hope to obtain only examples, never the whole thing. While this observation applies to all early phonograms, it has special significance for genres like the quartet descriptive that have no clear existence outside of phonography: there are no dramatic scripts or musical scores for the SLEIGH RIDE PARTY on which we can fall back if we have questions about the nature of what we are hearing. By the same token, it can be hard to distinguish quartet descriptives from phonograms of other types based on discographies or record catalogs that are geared primarily towards referencing published musical compositions as subject matter. Based on the title, for instance,

one might assume that the Haydn Quartet's *THE SIDEWALKS OF NEW YORK* embodies a straightforward performance of the well-known song "The Sidewalks of New York (East Side, West Side)."<sup>297</sup> Instead, it turns out upon listening to be a quartet descriptive beginning with the chorus of that song but proceeding to represent a characteristic urban soundscape with its street criers, organ grinders, children's songs, and sometimes even a fire engine complete with bell and the clip-clop of hooves.<sup>298</sup> *WAY DOWN YONDER IN THE CORNFIELD*, as the title of a quartet phonogram, can itself refer either to the *CORNFIELD MEDLEY* examined earlier or to the unrelated song "Way Down Yonder in the Cornfield" published in 1901.<sup>299</sup> Furthermore, some items seem to have been phonogenized only for single, relatively obscure companies (e.g., *A MEETING OF THE LIME KILN CLUB*, *FINNEGAN'S BIRTHDAY SURPRISE PARTY*, *A VIRGINIA CHRISTENING*).<sup>300</sup> Only by finding written descriptions or tracking down and listening to copies can we conclusively identify such titles with quartet descriptives or straightforward songs, and that is not always possible to do. A complete list even of *titles* in the quartet descriptive genre would be extraordinarily challenging to compile. Still, I believe we can safely summarize the broad characteristics of the genre as follows:

- Speech and quartet singing are juxtaposed to sustain an unfolding fictional "scene," often in conjunction with mechanical sound effects. Quartet descriptives thus exploit phonography as a medium of both music and spoken language.
- Either there is a rationale for songs to be sung within the fictional scene (black deckhands singing while they relax aboard a riverboat, collegiate football players singing a drinking song on a train after winning a game); or the lyrics express what the characters are doing or experiencing, sometimes in adapted form ("I went to the *county* fair" instead of "I went to the *animal* fair"; "*here we are* at Buffalo" rather than "*put me off* at Buffalo"); or both.
- Ethnic dialect is often used as an efficient means of distinguishing and "typing" characters. As a corollary, quartet descriptives generally contain and frequently center on ethnic caricature.

Although my examples have tended to fall in the category of phonographic comedy, it should be noted that some quartet descriptives were primarily sentimental or dramatic rather than humorous in character. A good example of a sentimental quartet descriptive is *CHURCH SCENE FROM THE OLD HOMESTEAD*,<sup>301</sup> based loosely on a scene in Denman Thompson's highly successful play *The Old Homestead*. In the

“church scene,” Uncle Josh Whitcomb has come to New York City from his home in rural New Hampshire in search of his wayward son and vainly looks for him in a city church during a service, providing an opportunity for the quartet to get in three hymns:

**ANNOUNCEMENT:** Church Scene from the play of “The Old Homestead” by the Invincible Quartet, Columbia Record.

[Chimes play “Nearer My God to Thee”; quartet begins to sing the same hymn a capella.]

**UNCLE JOSH WHITCOMB:** Well, I hear all the folks a-singin’ in the church.

I’m a-goin’ in to see if I can find my boy there.

[Quartet stops during preceding line. Soloist then sings “The Holy City” with piano accompaniment; quartet joins in at end.]

No. He ain’t in there.

Oh, where is my wandering boy tonight?

[Quartet sings “Where is My Wandering Boy Tonight?”; then reprise of “Nearer My God to Thee” on chimes.]<sup>302</sup>

Variants on this routine include accompaniment by melodeon rather than piano on “The Holy City,” alternate wordings of Uncle Josh’s lines,<sup>303</sup> and—for shorter media—the omission of the concluding chimes.<sup>304</sup> An example of a dramatic quartet descriptive is FIREMAN’S DUTY by the Invincible Quartette, immediately recognizable from its description in print as an adaptation to the new genre of the motifs found in THE NIGHT ALARM, with quartet singing in place of instrumental music:

Firemen in their engine house are heard singing “Aint dat a shame” which is interrupted by an alarm of fire. At once the firemen think only of their duty. There is a rush of horses to places, sharp commands, the clang of the gong, and they’re off; making the pavement ring with the clatter of horses’ hoofs. A gallant rescue from a top-story window is the Record’s climax.<sup>305</sup>

Most quartet descriptives were not designed to be taken so seriously, and the form was instead developed primarily as an instrument of comedy, but the representative conventions we are examining here were not limited at first to phonographic humor.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the beginning of this chapter, I defined two distinctive modes of phonographic representation: the descriptive mode and the substitutive mode. Here I should repeat that the methods of “audio theater” with which the remainder of the chapter has dealt cannot simply be identified with one or the other mode. A phonogram of an instrumental “descriptive specialty,” for instance, can be understood either as a descriptive-mode representation of the *subject* of the piece (say, a fire

engine rushing to put out a fire) or as a substitutive-mode representation of a *performance* of the piece (David Wallis Reeves’ “The Night Alarm”). Therefore, the presence of “descriptive” techniques, such as the use of mallets to simulate the sound of a horse’s hooves, need not always correspond to the descriptive mode in phonography. These techniques *were*, however, the ones to which early recordists and phonogenic performers turned when they *did* seek to represent subjects in the descriptive mode, as “scenes” upon which the listener was invited to eavesdrop. In the process, they sometimes used phonography to do more than merely “reproduce” preexisting forms of aural depiction, even if it may sometimes be hard to pinpoint just where live traditions of aural mimesis end and where a distinctively phonographic idiom begins.

---

<sup>1</sup> Minton, *Phonograph Blues*, 92-3.

<sup>2</sup> Minton, *Phonograph Blues*, 123-4.

<sup>3</sup> Minton, *Phonograph Blues*, 135ff.

<sup>4</sup> Minton, *Phonograph Blues*, 150ff; quotation on page 151 from Sleepy John Estes, SPECIAL AGENT (RAILROAD POLICE BLUES) (Decca 7491).

<sup>5</sup> Minton, *Phonograph Blues*, 90-1.

<sup>6</sup> “More Telephone Triumphs,” *Scientific American* 36 (Mar. 3, 1877), 133.

<sup>7</sup> “Entertainment by Veterans,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Oct. 31, 1890, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen U. Caldwell, “Sunshine at Saratoga,” *Times* (Troy, New York), Aug. 2, 1889 (TAEM 146:531).

<sup>9</sup> “Wonders of the Phonograph,” *Yonkers Statesman*, Apr. 16, 1889 (TAEM 146:401).

<sup>10</sup> “The Phonograph,” *Fresno Weekly Republican* (Fresno, California), Jan. 3, 1890, p. 4.

<sup>11</sup> “The Phonograph is Here,” *Nashville Banner*, Apr. 16, 1889 (TAEM 146:401).

<sup>12</sup> “Funnels Full of Songs,” *New York Herald*, Dec. 3, 1888 (TAEM 146:298).

<sup>13</sup> “John Drew then told a story.... Mr. Drew was interrupted with laughter by Mrs. Drew. The phonograph faithfully reproduced the merry tones of Mrs. Drew and her husband’s comments” (“A Phonograph Studio,” *Phonoscope* 1:2 [Dec. 1896], 5).

<sup>14</sup> Advertisement, *Evening Democrat* (Warren, Pennsylvania), May 22, 1894, p. 4, italics added.

<sup>15</sup> *Louisville Commercial*, June 3, 1889 (TAEM 146:531).

<sup>16</sup> “Edison’s Latest,” *Saratoga* (Saratoga, New York) July 27, 1889 (TAEM 146:416). Hogan’s piece was also described as “cleverly introduced, even to the scratching of his tin can and the shouts of the gallery gods and the applause” (*Philadelphia Times*, Aug. 17, 1889 [TAEM 146:387]); “Even the applause of the original audience was faithfully reproduced” (“A Wonderful Exhibition,” *Albany Times*, July 24, 1889 [TAEM 146:467]).

<sup>17</sup> E. H., “Hofmann’s Phonograph,” from the *Musical Herald*, in *Phonogram* 2 (Apr.-May 1892), 100.

<sup>18</sup> *Philadelphia Times*, Mar. 17, 1889 (TAEM 146:416), italics added.

<sup>19</sup> “Playing for Europeans,” *Orange Herald*, Sept. 29, 1888 (TAEM 146:341).

<sup>20</sup> “Singing into Funnels,” *New York Morning Sun*, Dec. 3, 1888 (TAEM 146:298).

<sup>21</sup> “The Phonograph Played the Drum,” *New York Press*, Dec. 17, 1888 (TAEM 146:247).

<sup>22</sup> United States Marine Band, LIBERTY BELL MARCH (*THE BICENTENNIAL COLLECTION: CELEBRATING THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE PRESIDENT’S OWN UNITED STATES MARINE BAND* [Washington, D. C.: United States Marine Band, 1998], 1:7) §. The reference to “spontaneous cheering” appears on page 24 of the accompanying booklet.

- <sup>23</sup> Rene Bache, "Do Monkeys Have Speech?," *Brooklyn Times*, Sept. 21, 1890 (TAEM 146:608). Roland Gelatt appears to have grafted this phrase onto his description of a New York City recording by Charles Marshall (Gelatt, *Fabulous Phonograph*, 47-8).
- <sup>24</sup> "Phonographic Music," from *New York News*, in *Mountain Democrat* (Placerville, California), Jan. 9, 1892, p. 3.
- <sup>25</sup> "Drilling by Phonograph," *Phonogram* 1 [Feb. 1891], 36; also summarized in "The Columbia Phonograph Co., Washington, D. C.," *Phonogram* 1 [Apr. 1891], 90, with a clarification that this was only "a proposed trial" in "A Correction," *Phonogram* 1 [May 1891], 105).
- <sup>26</sup> Musser, *High Class Moving Pictures*, 28-9.
- <sup>27</sup> Franklin L. Payne, "Phonograph Music Lightens Labor," *Phonogram-2* 4:2 (Dec. 1901), 23-4; letter from Joseph Justus, in *Phonogram-2* 5:1 (May 1902), 3; "Phonographs in Factories," *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 5:4 (June 1907), 18.
- <sup>28</sup> "The Use of the Phonograph in Teaching Penmanship," *Phonogram-2* 3:5 (Sept. 1901), 70-71, 74.
- <sup>29</sup> "It need hardly be added that this performance of the phonograph was rewarded by a unanimous outburst of cheering" ("The Phonograph and Graphophone in England," no citation, ca. fall 1888 [TAEM 146:319]); "When the selections from Markwith's band were rendered the audience heartily applauded" ("The Phonograph in Europe," *Orange Herald*, Oct. 20, 1888 [TAEM 146:341]); "The audience was a large one, and applauded the singers who had sung into the gramophone as heartily as though they had been present" ("The Gramophone Exhibited," *New York Times*, Dec. 17, 1890 [TAEM 146:629]); "Mr. James H. Mason gave a very successful exhibition of the the phonograph, reproducing both vocal and instrumental music, each example being followed with a volley of hearty applause" ("A Deferred Christmas Entertainment," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Mar. 2, 1894, p. 10); "applause followed every number, shaking the very roof" (*Phonoscope* 3:11 [Nov. 1899], 11).
- <sup>30</sup> Like the spoken announcement, the simulation of audience response appears to have survived longer in home-mode phonography; cf. UCSB 5300, an unidentified "home recording" of a band §. It also appeared in a few later commercial phonograms, but when it did it was specially foregrounded and justified, as in the catalog description of A COON BAND CONTEST by Sousa's Band on Berliner 01170: "Mr. Pryor's new Cake-Walk has scored a remarkable hit, and is received with instantaneous applause at every concert. The record has the applause too" (*Berliner Gramophone Company Complete Catalog* [1900], EBBRI under "catalogs," 4).
- <sup>31</sup> Richard L. Fish, "Audio Theatre: The Next Stage in Audio Publishing," in National Audio Theatre Festivals Resources (<http://www.natf.org/resource.html>, accessed June 11, 2003), 2. The same wording appears in Richard L. Fish, "Genesis and Renaissance: A Brief History of Audio Theatre," in National Audio Theatre Festivals Resources (<http://www.natf.org/resource.html>, accessed June 11, 2003), 1.
- <sup>32</sup> Fish, "Audio Theatre," 3.
- <sup>33</sup> Fish, "Audio Theatre," 3-4.
- <sup>34</sup> However, he is aware of the existence of phonograms recorded by Cal Stewart (although his cited example, UNCLE JOSH AT THE STATUE OF LIBERTY, is a monolog unadorned by music or special effects) and Harlan and Stanley (Fish, "Genesis and Renaissance," 7).
- <sup>35</sup> *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Sept. 5, 1890, p. 3. For a good general introduction to the genre, see Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 46-51.
- <sup>36</sup> William H. Rehrig, *The Heritage Encyclopedia of Band Music: Composers and their Music*, Volume 3 (Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1996), lists three known imprints in its third volume: Reeves (1888), Fischer (1892), and Bovaco (n.d.).
- <sup>37</sup> The *First Book* lists performances of it by Duffy and Imgrund's Band Koenigsberg on Dec. 7, 1889; see *Edison Cylinder Records*, 126, panel 141.
- <sup>38</sup> "Singing to the Cylinders," *New York Sun*, date illegible but in folder for 1893 (TAEM 146:855).
- <sup>39</sup> "Entertainment by Veterans," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Oct. 31, 1890, p. 1.
- <sup>40</sup> "The Exhibition Parlors of the Ohio Phonograph Company," *Phonogram* 1 (Nov.-Dec. 1891), 249.
- <sup>41</sup> "Singing to the Cylinders," *New York Sun*, date illegible but in folder for 1893 (TAEM 146:855).
- <sup>42</sup> See e.g. William Gillette, "Method of Producing Stage Effects," U. S. Patent 389,294, filed June 12, 1888, granted Sept. 11, 1888.
- <sup>43</sup> Mayo, "Phonographic Studio," 5. A similar comment was later made of the Edison recording laboratory in New York City: "This recording-room is equipped with devices, hangings, etc., that



---

remind one of the rear of a theatre stage” (“Our New York Recording Plant,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:9 [Nov. 1906], 7).

<sup>44</sup> “Fire Alarm by Phonograph,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Jan. 6, 1898, p. 9.

<sup>45</sup> “Some Stray Symptoms,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Jan. 26, 1898, p. 9.

<sup>46</sup> Hazen and Hazen, *Music Men*, 115-6. They quote an example from a program explaining a performance of “An Alpine Storm” by Gilmore’s Band in Cincinnati in May 1889.

<sup>47</sup> “The Great Eastern Band Concert,” *Ohio Democrat* (New Philadelphia, Ohio), Dec. 18, 1890, p. 1.

<sup>48</sup> E. A. Ludwigs, “To the Operator” and “To the Record Maker,” *Phonogram* 3 (Feb. 1893), 336.

Another written “plug” for the piece, actually used as a newspaper advertisement, was as follows: “‘The Night Alarm’ is the title of a very beautiful descriptive instrumental and vocal song produced on the Edison Phonograph at Shannon’s art store. Every fireman should hear it” (*Middletown Daily Times* [Middletown, New York], May 6, 1891, 3).

<sup>49</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 12.

<sup>50</sup> Truax, *World Soundscape Project’s Handbook*, 98.

<sup>51</sup> Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, 146.

<sup>52</sup> Hazen and Hazen, *Music Men*, 115.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Coverley, *March of the Passing Regiment* (New York: C. H. Ditson, 1884).

<sup>54</sup> “The Improved Edison Phonograph,” *Atlanta Constitution*, May 29, 1889 (TAEM 146:391). The other cylinders played on the same occasion contained recordings by band, cornet, xylophone, and a French female operatic singer.

<sup>55</sup> THE SPIRIT OF ’76 (Berliner 705, dated Oct. 30, 1894, *EMILE BERLINER’S GRAMOPHONE: THE EARLIEST DISCS, 1888-1901* [Symposium CD 1058], 5) §.

<sup>56</sup> Hazen and Hazen, *Music Men*, 115.

<sup>57</sup> “A Wonderful Exhibition,” *Albany Times*, July 24, 1889 (TAEM 146:467).

<sup>58</sup> Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 252-4.

<sup>59</sup> “Account of the Performances of Different Ventriloquists, with Observations on the Act of Ventriloquism,” *Edinburgh Journal of Science* 9 (1828), 257-8, quoted in Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 255.

<sup>60</sup> Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 295.

<sup>61</sup> “Once I was riding with him in a bus,” recalled Harry Hunting, the son of Russell Hunting. “By ventriloquism, he had a dog yelping under the bus, as though it had been run over, and we were both amused, watching everyone (including Gil and myself) looking under the bus for the unfortunate canine” (FPRA Feb. 1948, 35). This anecdote closely resembles those told about the escapades of more famous ventriloquists; one about Savile Carey was cited in chapter one, and for others, see Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 258 *et passim*. However, while Girard is reported to have worked as an actor, a trapeze artist, and a clown, and was highly regarded as a mimic (FPRA Feb. 1948, 33), there is no mention of him ever being billed explicitly as a “ventriloquist.”

<sup>62</sup> “Mr. Devoe, a talented ventriloquist, entertained the young men with the usual things and a few new ones, in addition to which he gave an imitation of the phonograph” (“Brooklyn Bicycle Club,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Dec. 11, 1890, p. 1); Mr. Dunn’s “imitation of what he is pleased to call ‘The Human Brass Band,’ and also Edison’s phonograph, have proved attractive” (“Will Appear at Donovan’s Benefit,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Feb. 5, 1895, p. 4); “After the exercises by the children Archie Leon French, the impersonator and ventriloquist, made his appearance and delighted the little folk, as well as their elders, with his clever imitations, among which that of an Edison phonograph was especially good” (“Santa Claus in Flatbush,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Dec. 26, 1896, p. 4). See also an extended anecdote about a mimic imitating the sounds of a phonograph aboard a train, fooling the other passengers: “Who Did It?,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3 (July 1905), 10.

<sup>63</sup> One possible exception is Marshall P. Wilder, VENTRILLOQUISM, issued by the United States Phonograph Company (Joseph Martel, “Marshall P. Wilder: Monologist and Raconteur,” *New Amberola Graphic* 90 [Oct. 1994], 4). Given the nature of Wilder’s other work, however, I suspect this was a monolog *about* ventriloquism. Edward Clarence put on a vaudeville act called “phonographic ventriloquism” in June 1894 (Odell, *Annals*, 15:647), but it is unclear what it entailed; another item from roughly the same period refers to “Ed Clarence, with his orchestra on the Edison phonograph” at Proctor’s Theatre (“Notes of the Stage,” *New York Times*, Jan 28, 1894, p. 10), so this was probably an effort to liken phonography to ventriloquism. My comments here are restricted to English-language phonography in the United States, since one does occasionally find “ventriloquism”

---

phonograms elsewhere and in other languages, e.g. Francisco Sanz, EL BORRACHO MITINGUERO, (Victor 45439-A), categorized as “escena de ventriloquía.”

<sup>64</sup>As for instance in the comment that its “effect upon the listener is most surprising. It appears to him like ventriloquism, for the notes and words are repeated clearly and strongly as though the operator himself were doing the singing” (“The Phonograph,” *Fresno Weekly Republican* [Fresno, California], Jan. 3, 1890, p. 4).

<sup>65</sup> See e.g. “The Phonograph,” letter to the editor, *Chicago Tribune*, May 12, 1878, p. 3; “Not a Thinking Machine,” *Nature* 18 (Oct. 10, 1878), 630.

<sup>66</sup> The heading “DUO-LOGUES” was used for three phonograms (Edison 8034, 8061, 8077) in which Len Spencer performed multiple voices while another person contributed mimetic sound effects: “Records Made Over Under New Conditions,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:5 (July 1905), 7. The same category was named in “Talent Statistics,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:7 (Sept. 1904), 6, with the note that there were then eight such selections in the Edison catalog. However, “duologue” was also used to identify a dialog between Len Spencer and Billy Murray (Edison 9279, described in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:2 [Apr. 1906], 9), and a general class of phonograms suggested as one category in home-recorded cylinder contests: “the Dealer should broaden the field by offering a prize for the best humorous original monologue and for the best duologue, (like Ada Jones and Len Spencer for example)” (“A Competition Scheme for Dealers,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 5:4 [June 1907], 16). Thus, it is unclear exactly how the term was being applied—perhaps it meant any nonmusical selection by two performers.

<sup>67</sup> Susan A. Glenn, “‘Give an Imitation of Me’: Vaudeville Mimics and the Play of the Self,” *American Quarterly* 50 (Mar. 1998), 57.

<sup>68</sup> Orren and Drew, A STUDY IN MIMICRY (Edison Diamond Disc 5522-A-6-103) §.

<sup>69</sup> Lynn Abbott, “‘Play that Barbershop Chord’: A Case for the African-American Origin of Barbershop Harmony,” *American Music* 10 (1992), 289-325.

<sup>70</sup> “The [Moody Male] quartet’s ingenious interpretation of the phonograph was quite amusing” (“The Moody Quartet,” *Elyria Republican* [Elyria, Ohio], Jan. 24, 1895, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> Abbott, “Play that Barbershop Chord,” 303.

<sup>72</sup> Marks, *They All Sang*, 102.

<sup>73</sup> The *Temporary Catalogue of the Columbia Phonograph Co.’s Musical Records for Use on Graphophones and Phonographs*, Jan. 1, 1895, 12, lists among selections by the Brilliant Quartette:

3 THE SONG OF THE STEEPLE (With marvelous imitation of church organ)

5 HEAR DEM BELLS (With imitation of pealing bells)

6 THE STEAM CALLIOPE (Introducing German melody and yodling)

Their IMITATIONS OF A STEAM CALLIOPE (Berliner 0653, dated Oct. 24, 1899) can be heard on *AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* (Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless), 3:9 §.

<sup>74</sup> For instance, Haydn Quartet, FARMYARD MEDLEY (Victor V-124-4) §. Another example, in which the quartet breaks into an extended series of animal noise imitations during the refrain, is American Quartet, DANCING ON THE OLD BARN FLOOR (Victor B-1307-[1], 911) §; the Oct. 1901 Victor catalog identified this selection as “With imitations of different animals” (FPRA Apr. 1968, 38). In Feb. 1891, Lyman H. Howe educed a selection entitled SONGS FAMILIAR ON THE FARM which consisted of “roosters crowing, ducks quacking, turkeys gobbling and a colored girl laughing at it” (*Lancaster Daily Examiner*, Feb. 13, 1891, quoted in Musser, *High Class Motion Pictures*, 35); this was probably a similar production.

<sup>75</sup> “Society Gossip,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 21, 1889, p. 5; see also “A Brilliant Reception,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 22, 1889, p. 5; “Society Gossip,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Nov. 27, 1889, p. 3. Other selections by the Manhattan Quartet were RECEPTION MEDLEY, GOLDEN WINGS, and HER BOY JACK.

<sup>76</sup> “List of Musical Cylinders kept in stock by The New York Phonograph Co.,” n. d. (ENHS Primary Printed Series, Box 28, “New York Phonograph Company” folder). On this quartet in general, see Tim Gracyk, “Barbershop Quartets, the First Quartet Named on Records, and the Most Popular Quartet of the Acoustic Era,” *Antique Phonograph News* (Nov.-Dec. 2002), 7; however, it had been recorded well before the Sept. 27, 1891 date given by Gracyk. Along with the evidence provided by the New York Phonograph Company cylinder list, the Georgia Phonograph Company stocked “Manhansett and

---

Mendelssohn vocal quartettes of all late and popular songs,” probably both from New York, as of the summer of 1890 (“The Edison Phonograph,” *Atlanta Constitution* [Atlanta, Georgia], July 23, 1890, p. 7). Whether the group was originally formed for phonograph work or not, it did also perform live; for instance, an 1894 rifle club match in Jersey City featured a performance by “the Manhasset Quartette of Brooklyn, the echo of whose songs are so popular in the Edison Phonograph at the present time” (“Greenville vs. Excelsior,” *Forest and Stream*, Mar. 31, 1894, p. 282). As for the earliest phonogenic quartet to be identified by name: “Aurora Grata Club. Entertained by a Phonograph at Its Reception,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Oct. 20, 1889, p. 2, mentions prerecorded “music by the Brunswick Quartet,” which other sources (e.g. “Insurance Men Dining,” *New York Times*, Feb. 22, 1888, p. 5) confirm was a vocal quartet local to Brooklyn.

<sup>77</sup> An article refers to “‘Down on the Cornfield’ as sung by the Georgia Colored Quartet” and “‘Keep to the Middle of the Road,’ by the Georgia Colored Quartet” being educed (“For the New Uniform Fund,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 15, 1890, p. 5). This may be the same group referenced in other accounts of phonograph exhibitions: “The Georgia colored concert company was then heard singing ‘Keep in the Middle of the Road’” (“Entertainment by Veterans,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Oct. 31, 1890, p. 1); “Colored Jubilee Singers” (“Art Loan Collection,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 16, 1890, p. 4). These examples predate any known recording sessions by the black quartets mentioned in Brooks, *Lost Sounds*. Accounts of live performances by this group include “Georgia Colored Concert Company,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Dec. 17, 1889, p. 1; “Goshen,” *Middletown Daily Times* (Middletown, New York), May 6, 1891, 3; “Coming Entertainments,” *Middletown Daily Times* (Middletown, New York), May 6, 1891, 3; “A Business View of It,” *Middletown Daily Times* (Middletown, New York), May 14, 1891, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Manhasset Quartet, WAY DOWN YONDER IN THE CORNFIELD (APH, Apr. 15, 2003) §.

<sup>79</sup> This transcription (including inconsistency in the use of blackface dialect) is based on Vocal Quartette, WAY DOWN YONDER IN THE CORNFIELD (Columbia A473, mx. 714-16) §. Comparison with three other examples reveals some minor variations: The Diamond Four, DOWN YONDER IN THE CORN FIELD (Berliner 869W, marked 10 7 97) §; the Tally-ho Trio, CORNFIELD MEDLEY (Edison-Bell disc 45, mx. 2176) §; and the Haydn Quartet, A CORNFIELD MEDLEY (Canadian 7” Berliner 28, VG) §. Columbia A473 begins immediately with “Some folks say that a nigger won’t steal” and concludes with an extended version of “Massa’s in de Cold, Cold Ground.” The Diamond Four rendition begins with “Hard Times Come Again No More,” followed by “Rain, My Good Lord, Rain,” while the Tally-ho Trio opens with these two selections in reverse order. The Haydn Quartet rendition retains the verse “Wake up, Hannah, so early in the morn” and substitutes the line “Now dem roustabouts am happy” before the concluding banjo imitation.

<sup>80</sup> Of the examples cited above, A CORNFIELD MEDLEY on Canadian 7” Berliner 28 contains only the “core.”

<sup>81</sup> Abbott, “Play that Barbershop Chord,” 303-4.

<sup>82</sup> The Tally-ho Trio CORNFIELD MEDLEY cited above.

<sup>83</sup> Musser, *High Class Moving Pictures*, 36. Unfortunately, the date of this exhibition is not given; the corresponding footnote cites only a loosely-related passage in the 1891 convention of local phonograph companies.

<sup>84</sup> There was, it is true, a parallel tradition in early blackface minstrel shows by which tambourine solos had imitated such subjects as “railroad trains, cannon, bugle calls, a French drummer, a grist mill, and a cotton mill” and bones solos had given “imitations of drums and horses” (Robert B. Winans, “Early Minstrel Show Music, 1843-1852,” in *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*, ed. Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch and Brooks McNamara [Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1996], 145). In 1880, the black minstrel Alex Hunter “imitated bagpipes, bass viols, Barnum’s street calliope, a saw and planing mill, tugboats, freight trains, and riverboats” (Robert C. Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1974], 254). Perhaps there had in fact been some minstrel-show precedent for combining vocal and instrumental mimetic sound in live performance. However, the use of real bells and whistles was not a part of the specific proto-barbershop quartet tradition of “Way Down Yonder in the Cornfield,” at least as that tradition is presently understood.

<sup>85</sup> “A Mistaken Conception,” *Phonogram* 2 (Dec. 1892), 286.

- <sup>86</sup> Gavin Jones, *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999), 4.
- <sup>87</sup> Elliott Oring, *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1986), 24.
- <sup>88</sup> Paul Antonie Distler, "Ethnic Comedy in Vaudeville and Burlesque," in *American Popular Entertainment: Papers and Proceedings of the Conference on the History of American Popular Entertainment*, ed. Myron Matlaw (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979), 33-42.
- <sup>89</sup> *Will Rossiter's Catalog of Theatrical Supplies for Amateurs and Professionals* (Chicago: Will Rossiter [n.d.]).
- <sup>90</sup> Douglas Gilbert, *American Vaudeville: Its Life and Times* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1940), 61.
- <sup>91</sup> The banjo, as the definitive musical instrument of the blackface minstrel show, was associated with Southern black men "[f]rom the banjo's first appearance on the popular stage in the 1830s and well into the twentieth century" (Karen Linn, *That Half Barbaric Twang: The Banjo in American Popular Culture* [Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991], 42). To give phonographic examples of the others: for the button accordion, listen to Steve Porter, FINNEGAN'S FLAT (Columbia A585, mx. 3890-4) §; for the organ-grinder, Steve Porter and Byron G. Harlan, ORGAN GRINDER'S TROUBLES (Victor 17263-B, B-12670-[?]) §; for the yodel song, Frank Wilson, THE GERMAN'S ARRIVAL (Victor 2561, B-776-[1]) §.
- <sup>92</sup> Kinesic elements are sometimes now but little-understood on the basis of pictorial representations and impressionistic descriptions. For example, there is little consensus as to what really constituted "Jump Jim Crow," the minstrel routine that gave its name to the infamous "Jim Crow" laws, and which evidently owed its extreme popularity to its dance (cf. Toll, *Blackening Up*, 43-4; Sam Dennison, *Scandalize My Name: Black Imagery in American Popular Music* [New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1982], 45ff.).
- <sup>93</sup> Toll, *Blackening Up*, 161-2.
- <sup>94</sup> From *Puck*, in *Stevens Point Gazette* (Stevens Point, Wisconsin), Apr. 28, 1888, p. 3.
- <sup>95</sup> *Lima Daily News* (Lima, Ohio), Aug. 19, 1889, p. 3.
- <sup>96</sup> "To Write a Dialect Story," *Dunkirk Observer Journal* (Dunkirk, New York), Sept. 6, 1888, p. 3.
- <sup>97</sup> Ingrid Monson, *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 22.
- <sup>98</sup> Walter Blair and Raven I. McDavid, Jr., ed., *The Mirth of a Nation: America's Great Dialect Humor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), xxv.
- <sup>99</sup> Quoted from the introduction, credited to "F. C. S.," in Julius Caesar Hannibal, *Black Diamonds* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Literature House, [1969]).
- <sup>100</sup> "Hard Job," from *Chicago Tribune*, in *Mansfield News* (Mansfield, Ohio), Jan. 3, 1891, p. 3. Thanks to Ronda Sewald for drawing my attention to this story.
- <sup>101</sup> Jones, *Strange Talk*, 4.
- <sup>102</sup> George W. Cable, "The Grandissimes: A Story of Creole Life," *Scribner's Monthly* 19 (Mar. 1880), 698.
- <sup>103</sup> "'Why do you say he is a man of no judgment?' 'Because, when he finds a dialect story that amuses him he tries to read it aloud to his friends'" ("Few Can Do It Successfully," from *Chicago Post*, in *Sioux Valley News* [Correctionville, Iowa], Dec. 12, 1901, p. 7); "'Come, Willie, papa's going to read you a dialect story before you go to bed.' 'I say, mamma, I haven't done nothin' today'" ("Begging Off," from *Yonkers Statesman*, in *Bucks County Gazette* [Bristol, Pennsylvania], Feb. 25, 1897, p. 2).
- <sup>104</sup> VERY LOUD WITH FUNNEL—PHONOGRAPH TALKS WITH MR. EDISON, E-2440, post 13 (ENHS) §. The beginning of this phonogram is damaged, so the 1995 transfer contains some mistracking and repetition. A second transfer appears to have been made in place of the cylinder on post 16 (LOUD—LETTER FROM COL. GOURAUD TO MR. EDISON), but that title does not appear to match the content as well as the title on post 13.
- <sup>105</sup> "To Meet Mr. [Edison]," no citation, late 1888 (TAEM 146:322).
- <sup>106</sup> "Mr. Edison's Phonograph," *Daily News*, Aug. 30, 1888 (TAEM 146:321).
- <sup>107</sup> Ganthony, *Bunkum Entertainments*, 60-1.
- <sup>108</sup> Ganthony, *Bunkum Entertainments*, 56.
- <sup>109</sup> Ganthony, *Bunkum Entertainments*, 56.

- <sup>110</sup> “Thurber Tells Stories,” from *New York Recorder*, in *Evening News* (Lincoln, Nebraska), Apr. 15, 1895, p. 8.
- <sup>111</sup> “A Noted Record Maker, Dan Kelly, of Cincinnati, O.,” *Phonogram* 3 (Mar.-Apr. 1893), 363-4.
- <sup>112</sup> *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 93 ff.
- <sup>113</sup> “Famous Record-Makers and Their Work,” *Phonogram* 2 (Dec. 1892), 280.
- <sup>114</sup> “Police Court,” *Los Angeles Times*, Mar. 27, 1896, p. 13.
- <sup>115</sup> “Election Night Jags,” *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 10, 1898, p. 12.
- <sup>116</sup> “The Police Court,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 14, 1898, p. 9.
- <sup>117</sup> “Canned Brogue,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 15, 1898, p. 11.
- <sup>118</sup> “In Trouble Again,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 20, 1898, p. 10.
- <sup>119</sup> “Police Court Notes,” *Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 21, 1898, p. 13.
- <sup>120</sup> Ohio Phonograph Company advertisement, *Phonogram* 1 (Oct. 1891), back. Kelly sent a letter to the 1893 convention of local phonograph companies into which he worked each of the same twelve titles (*Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention*, 54-5).
- <sup>121</sup> Dan Kelly, PADDY’S WEDDING (WFMU *Antique Phonograph Hour*, Apr. 15, 2003) §.
- <sup>122</sup> “The Exhibition Parlors of the Ohio Phonograph Company,” *Phonogram* 1 (Nov.-Dec. 1891), 249.
- <sup>123</sup> “Mr. George H. Dunham, a graduate of the Edison Laboratory, who has served as ‘expert’ with some of the prominent local phonograph companies, is now permanently employed by the Ohio Phonograph Co., at Cincinnati, taking musical and talking records—especially the ‘Pat Brady’s’” (*Phonogram* 2 [Nov. 1892], 259). Dunham was already established in Ohio as of 1889: see George H. Dunham to Edison, Mar. 6, 1889 (TAEM 128:46-7), written from Cincinnati, in which he responds to a summons back east to learn how to operate a new model of phonograph.
- <sup>124</sup> Russell Hunting’s parents are listed as Henry A. Hunting and Julia E. W. Whittemon in his marriage record (in Manhattan on Mar. 19, 1888, at [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org)); the entry for Henry A. Hunting of Cambridge, Massachusetts in the 1880 federal census gives his occupation as “painter” and that of one of his other sons, James M. Hunting, as “landscape painter.” Russell himself is not listed, but his known sibling Clifford Hunting is, about whom see also “A Phonograph Exhibition Where ‘Casey’s’ Brother Got Twisted,” *Phonogram* 1 (Nov. 1896), 9. Earlier censuses specify that Henry A. Hunting was a “sign painter”: 1860 (in the Second Ward of Boston, Massachusetts, household of William Pray) and 1870 (resident in Malden, Massachusetts; although several of his other children were then living in the same household, Russell Hunting, age 6, was enumerated as “attending school” and resident in the household of James M. Davis of West Roxbury, Massachusetts).
- <sup>125</sup> FPRA Nov. 1944, 27; “A Noted Record Maker,” *Phonogram* 2 (Aug.-Sept. 1892), 191. The first reference I find to Hunting’s work for the Boston Theatre is an advertisement for the show “A Run of Luck,” in *Boston Daily Globe*, Sept. 11, 1887, p. 11.
- <sup>126</sup> “A Noted Record Maker,” *Phonogram* 2 (Aug.-Sept. 1892), 191. For another account of Hunting’s “whisper record,” see FPRA Nov. 1944, 27-8; and for an autobiographical account by Hunting of some of his early experiments with diaphragms and recording horns, Russell Hunting, “Horns,” *Phonoscope* 1:2 (Dec. 1896), 15.
- <sup>127</sup> In an advertisement of late 1896, he claimed to have “over six years’ experience and experiment” (*Phonoscope* 1:1 [Nov. 1896], 3).
- <sup>128</sup> *Proceedings of Second Annual Convention*, 102-3.
- <sup>129</sup> “‘The Soudan’ in Boston,” *New York Times*, Sept. 17, 1890, p. 1.
- <sup>130</sup> *The Soudan* opened there Sept. 3, 1891 and was replaced in the last week of November; see “Notes of the Stage,” *New York Times*, Aug. 16, 1891, p. 13; “Amusements,” *New York Times*, Sept. 4, 1891, p. 4; “Amusements,” *New York Times*, Nov. 25, 1891, p. 5.
- <sup>131</sup> Augustus N. Sampson to Edison Phonograph Works, Dec. 21, 1891 (TAEM 133:393).
- <sup>132</sup> Advertisements, *Phonogram* 1 (Sept. 1891), front, and 1 (Oct. 1891), front.
- <sup>133</sup> “He made his first records for the New England Phonograph Co., and they, seeing at once the remarkable quality of the same, made immediate arrangements with Mr. Hunting to become sole proprietors of what is now the famous ‘Casey Series’” (“A Noted Record Maker,” *Phonogram* 2 [Aug.-Sept. 1892], 191); during this period, the New England company claimed to be “Sole Proprietors Of the Celebrated ‘CASEY SERIES,’ and the wonderful Talking Records made by Mr. RUSSELL HUNTING, of the BOSTON THEATRE CO.” (advertisement, *Phonogram* 2 [June 1892], vii).

---

<sup>134</sup> These included including CASEY AND THE DUDE, CASEY AS DOCTOR, CASEY AS A JUDGE, CASEY AT THE TELEPHONE, CASEY AND THE STEAMBOAT, CASEY AS MUGWUMP, CASEY TO BOSTON, CASEY WITH PANORAMA, CASEY ‘WHY SHE WAITED,’ and CASEY AT THE BAT. Although no official list of these titles exists they were all listed in orders placed for duplicate phonograms: Montana Phonograph Company to Edison Phonograph Works, Jan. 5, 1892; Western Pennsylvania Phonograph Company to Edison Phonograph Works, Feb. 6, 1892; and Iowa Phonograph Company to Edison Phonograph Works, Feb. 11, 1892, all in D-92-40, ENHS.

<sup>135</sup> Augustus N. Sampson to Edison Phonograph Works, Dec. 21, 1891 (TAEM 133:393).

<sup>136</sup> Russell Hunting to Edison, Mar. 9, 1892 (TAEM 133:318-19).

<sup>137</sup> “Mr. Russell Hunting is delighting the audiences at the Black Crook Co., by his demoniacal antics during the evenings, and giving as much pleasure in the mornings to the New Jersey Phonograph Co., Newark, N. J., by his magnificent records on the phonograph” (*Phonogram* 2 [Nov. 1892], 260). A reporter later commented on Hunting wearing a “bicycle costume, vastly different from the attire in which he used to inspire terror as Zamiel, the arch-fiend, in *The Black Crook*” (“Singing, for the Ears of the Future,” *New York Dramatic Mirror*, July 10, 1897, p. 13).

<sup>138</sup> *Edison Phonographic News* 1:6 (Mar.-Apr. 1895), 92.

<sup>139</sup> Russell Hunting, CASEY AS DOCTOR (Berliner 629Y, dated Mar. 20, 1897) §; “hen-flew-endways” by comparison with “Michael Casey,” CASEY AS A DOCTOR (Columbia A1886, mx. 29835-2) §.

<sup>140</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 81.

<sup>141</sup> Russell Hunting, CASEY’S PLANS FOR FREEING IRELAND (brown wax cylinder, digital file at <http://www.edisonnj.org/menlopark/vintage/brownwax.asp>) §.

<sup>142</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 88.

<sup>143</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 85.

<sup>144</sup> “Famous Record-Makers and Their Work,” *Phonogram* (Dec. 1892), 280.

<sup>145</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 80-1.

<sup>146</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 88.

<sup>147</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 88. These elements were omitted from Russell Hunting, CASEY AS DOCTOR (Berliner 629Y, dated Mar. 20, 1897) §, a Berliner disc of relatively short duration, but they do appear on the later “Michael Casey,” CASEY AS A DOCTOR (Columbia A1826, mx. 29835-2) §.

<sup>148</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 87.

<sup>149</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 82.

<sup>150</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 84.

<sup>151</sup> Russell Hunting, CASEY AT THE DENTIST (His Master’s Voice [Canada] 216238-A) §; the same joke appears in “Michael Casey,” CASEY AT THE DENTIST’S (Columbia A1886, mx. 29900-2) §.

<sup>152</sup> “Editor’s Drawer,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* 29 (Sept. 1864), 549.

<sup>153</sup> Alexandre Vattemare, a ventriloquist of the 1820s, likewise enacted a “dentist scene” in both his early shows and a later drama into which his various routines were incorporated, although he remained visible onstage in one of the several roles; see Connor, *Dumbstruck*, 260, 262.

<sup>154</sup> “Amusements,” *New York Times*, June 16, 1889, p. 3.

<sup>155</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 87.

<sup>156</sup> “A Wonderful Exhibition,” *Albany Times*, July 24, 1889 (TAEM 146:467).

<sup>157</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 84.

<sup>158</sup> The best-known later telephone sketch was the Jewish dialect COHEN ON [or AT] THE TELEPHONE, first phonogenized by Joe Hayman in England in 1913 (Columbia mx. 28564-1, released in the United States on A1516) and later copied by many other performers; for rudimentary information on the piece and its sequels, see Corenthal, *Cohen on the Telephone*. Later phonograms that centered on “scenes” with organ grinders are Steve Porter and Byron G. Harlan, ORGAN GRINDER’S TROUBLES (Victor 17263, B-12670) § and Ada Jones and Len Spencer, PEDRO, THE HAND-ORGAN MAN (Edison 9487, UCSB 3189) §.

<sup>159</sup> FPRA Apr. 1947, 20-1.

<sup>160</sup> “Gallery of Talent Employed for Making Records,” *Phonoscope* 2:7 (July 1898), 12.

<sup>161</sup> FPRA Oct. 1958, 34.

<sup>162</sup> Digital file at <http://www.crosswinds.net/~magicnotes/brownwax/North.ram>, accessed Sept. 5, 2001 §. The website disappeared almost immediately afterwards. The phonogram is hard to decipher, and

---

its owner believed it was simply a North American Phonograph Company version of Russell Hunting's CASEY AS JUDGE, but its spoken announcement seems to run:

O'Grady's efforts  
to preside  
as judge  
by Larry Leonard.

The routine itself follows the pattern of Hunting's CASEY AS JUDGE, portraying the same blunders: O'Grady mistakes the words "petty larceny" and "bigamy" as personal names, sympathetically discharges a man with seven wives because he has enough trouble with just one, etc.; compare Jim White, MICHAEL CASEY AS JUDGE IN A CRIMINAL COURT (Edison 3810, 2 *MINUTE CYLINDERS* [P&L Antiques], 5:4) §.

<sup>163</sup> Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 83-91.

<sup>164</sup> "Famous Record-Makers and Their Work," *Phonogram* 2 (Dec. 1892), 280. As a live stage actor, Leach specialized in Chinese roles: "'Sing High,' a Chinese attendant, personated by John C. Leach [in *The Pearl of Peking*]...received great applause for his entirely comical rendering. In dress, make-up, voice and action he was the drollest chinaman ever seen on the stage, and his command...of a lingo that sounds like Chinese, is altogether unique" ("Amusements," *Los Angeles Times*, Jan. 29, 1890, p. 4); "John C. Leach gives a unique and amusing character impersonation in his presentation of the part of the Chinaman" in *Just Landed*, described as "a satire on immigration" ("Fisher's Comedians in 'Just Landed' at Harris'," *Washington Post*, Nov. 19, 1893, p. 14); he also appeared as Hop Lee in *A Race for Life* ("A Race for Life," *Washington Post*, Apr. 25, 1903, p. C1).

<sup>165</sup> *Temporary Catalogue of the Columbia Phonograph Co.'s Musical Records for Use on Graphophones and Phonographs*, Jan. 1, 1895, 14-6. David C. Bangs was referred to as "Washington's well-known Shakespearean reader and humorist" ("David C. Bangs' Entertainment," *Washington Post*, Apr. 7, 1901, p. 10). For one live appearance it was said he would "range from the dramatic 'Dream of Eugene Aram' to the comical recitation of 'Rastus and the Watermelon'" ("Benefit for David C. Bangs," *Washington Post*, Apr. 19, 1896, p. 14); the latter doubtless corresponded to 'RASTUS AND THE WATERMILLION. Another report read: "Mr. David C. Bangs recited 'Rastus at the Razor Social' and 'The Champion Snorer.' There are few recitationists who surpass Mr. Bangs in a negro recitation, and there are very few who imitate his original creation of the 'champion snorer in the sleepless sleeping-car'" ("Departmental League Benefit," *Washington Post*, May 1, 1895, p. 4); 'RASTUS AND THE RAZOR SOCIAL and THE CHAMPION SNORER were also listed among Bangs' Columbia titles. Bangs also phonogenized other standard spoken-word pieces such as HAMLET'S SOLILOQUY ON DEATH and A STUMP SPEECH ON LOVE for Columbia and Berliner. He taught elocution classes in Washington (see e.g. his classified advertisement in the *Washington Post*, May 13, 1895, p. 3), and his disc of MARC ANTONY'S CURSE (Berliner 602) was advertised as a "lesson in elocution" (Charosh, *Berliner Gramophone Records*, 36). Bangs went through a messy divorce in 1896, in the aftermath of which he managed to get the Treasury Department—with which he apparently had a day job—to transfer him from Washington to Kansas City; he was accused of trying to evade alimony payments and his ex-wife's visitation privileges for their daughter ("Actor Bangs Sued for Divorce," *Washington Post*, May 24, 1896, p. 7; "Both Claim the Children," *Washington Post*, May 26, 1896, p. 2; "Wife of Actor Bangs Gets Divorce," *Washington Post*, Sept. 5, 1896, p. 2; "Ex-Husband Must Show Cause," *Washington Post*, Dec. 10, 1896, p. 2; "Actor Bangs Denies Allegations," *Washington Post*, Dec. 12, 1896, p. 2). In 1898, Bangs was advertised as an exclusive performer for the Kansas City Talking Machine Company, but by that point he had abandoned the 'Rastus series (Gracyk, "Kansas City," 45). By the 1910s, he had settled in Chicago (see federal census records for 1910 [Franklin Park, Illinois] and 1920 [Oak Park, Illinois], which identify him as a customs inspector; and his sister's obituary, "Miss Laura Bangs Dead," *Washington Post*, Apr. 6, 1917, p. 12).

<sup>166</sup> Kelly could not appear "as my present physical condition will not permit me to travel, especially by rail" (*Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention*, 54).

<sup>167</sup> The Brady cylinders are still described as "on the market" in *Edison Phonographic News* 1:6 (Mar.-Apr. 1895), 92.

<sup>168</sup> *Musical Records for the Edison Phonograph and Other Talking Machines* (Orange, New Jersey: National Phonograph Company, 1898), 7.

<sup>169</sup> The following items all appeared in the *Phonoscope* between 1896 and 1898: “The way things are being run now in the business, your [sic] going to get ‘done’ anyway, so we might as well take it easy and ‘let nature take its course,’ as Casey says” (*Phonoscope* 1:2 [Dec. 1896], 7); “As ‘Casey’ says, ‘May the Lord bless yees all entirely’” (*Phonoscope* 1:3 [Jan.-Feb. 1897], 7); “‘Begorra business is bad in Portland,’ as ‘Casey’ says in ‘The Auctioneer,’ and that don’t half tell the story for the past month” (*Phonoscope* 1:3 [Jan.-Feb. 1897], 14); “Mr. John Kaiser intends to spend his vacation on the shores of Maine and says wherever he hears the sound of a phonograph he will (as Casey says) run like the Devil” (*Phonoscope* 2:6 [June 1898], 8).

<sup>170</sup> “A Noted Record Maker,” *Phonogram* 2 (Aug.-Sept. 1892), 192; for the description of THE BUREAU, see *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 51.

<sup>171</sup> “Cost of Making Money Vilely,” *New York Times*, July 1, 1896, p. 9. See also “Trapped by His Voice,” *New York Morning Herald*, June 26, 1896, p. 9; “Comstock Arrests an Actor,” *New York Times*, June 26, 1896, p. 3; “Arrests by Comstock,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 25, 1896, p. 1; Robert Feinstein, “Phonograph Arrests in Old New York,” *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 5:10 (1979), 4-5.

<sup>172</sup> *Supplementary List of the “Best and Nothing But the Best” Phonograph Records Manufactured by the Phonograph Record and Supply Co.*, reproduced in Gracyk, *Companion*, with letter from George Gaskin dated Aug. 6, 1896 and a listing for Bryan’s speech of acceptance, the original of which was delivered on Aug. 12. These dates suggest that the catalog was likely issued not much later than mid-Aug. 1896, but the earliest Hunting would have been released from jail would have been towards the end of Sept. 1896.

<sup>173</sup> United States Phonograph Company, Fifth Supplemental Record Bulletin (TAEM 147:527).

<sup>174</sup> Advertisement, *Phonoscope* 1:1 (Nov. 1896), 3.

<sup>175</sup> Advertisement, *Phonoscope* 1:1 (Nov. 1896), 17. Russell did have an older brother named Frank N. Hunting; see the entry for the household of Henry A. Hunting of Malden, Massachusetts in the 1870 federal census.

<sup>176</sup> “Pirates and Parrots,” *Phonoscope* 2:9 (Sept. 1898), 10. The next issue continued the attack: “Pirates in the business not only steal ideas but they steal entire records also. In no other business is it so difficult to reap the reward deserved. Inventive genius and hard work should bring fame and wealth but the man who discovered the machine for duplicating records from the original had neither, for his invention was bodily stolen from him” (*Phonoscope* 2:10 [Oct. 1898], 16).

<sup>177</sup> Hunting had first introduced Casey through the New England Phonograph Company in 1891-92; then, from the fall of 1892, he performed under contract to the New Jersey Phonograph Company, later superseded by the United States Phonograph Company, although he also worked sporadically for Berliner in 1895-97. The entries in Charosh, *Berliner Gramophone Records*, span the period from “pre-Jun [18]95” to Mar. 20, 1897; as to the one exception, I can state from a specimen in my own collection that CASEY PUTTING HIS BABY TO SLEEP (Berliner 672) bears the handwritten date Mar. 20, 1897, not Nov. 20, 1897 as listed. However, Hunting did participate in public demonstrations of gramophone recording in late 1897; see e.g. *Phonoscope* 1:10 (Oct. 1897), 9; 1:11 (Nov.-Dec. 1897), 7. As of 1896 he was offering “originals” for sale out of his own home. In 1897, he became “exclusive” to the Universal Phonograph Company as a maker of cylinders: “The company has been formed by Jos. W. Stern & Co., who have secured the exclusive services of Mr. Russell Hunting, a gentleman whose record-making ability is known throughout the talking machine world” (“New Corporations,” 1:3 [Jan.-Feb. 1897], 9). He was again performing for other interests by the start of 1898, including the Excelsior Phonograph Company (advertisement in *Phonoscope* 1:11 [Nov.-Dec. 1897], 16). Edison’s National Phonograph Company also added some of Hunting’s titles to its catalog in a 3801-3824 block as of Mar. 1898, according to Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, xxxvii, although the masters may have come from an external source, such as the United States Phonograph Company, since Hunting’s name does not appear in the company’s ledger entries under “talent” (see Wile, “Duplicates,” 190-1). That May, he was one of the many prominent artists who signed an exclusive contract with the Columbia Phonograph Company, which began warning its customers “against purchasing imitations of these famous records” (*Columbia Records* catalog, with letter dated May 1, 1898, 30).

<sup>178</sup> Jim Walsh later wrote, with frustrating vagueness: “Near the end of the 19th century, Hunting got into trouble which caused him to leave America hurriedly and take up residence in England” (FPRA



---

Nov. 1981, quoted in Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 181). In an earlier article, Walsh had stated: "For a time in the late 1890s [Steve Porter] and Russell Hunting were turning out the crude type of motion pictures made in those days. Both soon afterward went to England" (FPRA Jan. 1975, quoted in Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 273). The only contemporary references I have found to work by either person in an even vaguely related field involve Steve Porter's participation in the Empire Picture Machine Company, manufacturer of the Vivoscope (*Phonoscope* 3:5 [May 1899], 13; *Phonoscope* 3:6 [June 1899], 6; *Phonoscope* 3:7 [July 1899], 7). As the dates of these items show, Porter and Hunting did not leave for England at the same time, suggesting that Porter was not implicated in Hunting's "trouble," whatever it was. He may simply have gone overseas to pursue business opportunities: in the spring of 1897, he had advertised his services as a general sales agent specializing in "Purchasing Records and Machines (in New York) for Individuals and Dealers in Foreign Countries" (advertisement, *Phonoscope* 2:3 [Mar. 1898], 3) and had even developed a special telegraphic code in this connection that he had since published for use by the phonograph industry more broadly (*Phonoscope* 2:2 [Feb. 1898], 9; *Phonoscope* 2:10 [Oct. 1898], 12). In any case, he did indeed give up his editorship of the *Phonoscope* after the Oct. 1898 issue to travel to England, where a correspondent found him busy at work the following spring: "I had the pleasure of meeting Russell Hunting in London, where he has been since last October. He has been employing his time to advantage in starting a record plant for the Edison Bell Company and others. He also told me he had kept his pencil busy getting material for new Casey records, and he had some fine ones to put on the market on his return to New York with titles such as 'Casey in London,' 'Casey crossing the English Channel,' 'Casey in Paris,' etc." (Letter from F. M. Prescott, Paris, France, Apr. 8, 1899, *Phonoscope* 3:3 [Mar. 1899], 14).

<sup>179</sup> *Phonoscope* 2:12 (Dec. 1898), 11.

<sup>180</sup> *Phonoscope* 3:1 (Jan. 1899), 11; advertisement and list on page 16.

<sup>181</sup> The address was 614 Race Street (advertisement, *Phonoscope* 3:3 [Mar. 1899], 6).

<sup>182</sup> "Mr. Joseph Gannon," *Phonoscope* 3:1 (Jan. 1899), 9.

<sup>183</sup> Commenting on the situation at the time of his arrival in New York in Oct. 1898, J. S. Macdonald (alias Harry Macdonough) referred to "John Kaiser...who at the time was making 'Casey' records for the Edison Company" (J. S. Macdonald to Ulysses J. Walsh, Feb. 9, 1931, reproduced in Gracyk, *Companion*).

<sup>184</sup> John Kaiser's Zon-o-phone discs included CASEY TAKING THE CENSUS (10003; 1624; 5270-P), CASEY COURTING HIS GIRL (1622), CASEY'S EXPERIENCE IN USING THE TELEPHONE (1625), CASEY'S ADDRESS ON LOVE (1626), CASEY AS A PHYSICIAN (1627), CASEY AS AN AUCTIONEER (1628), CASEY AS A HOTEL CLERK (1629); plus Hunting's HIRAM WILKINS DESCRIPTION OF HIS GIRL HANNAH (1630).

<sup>185</sup> See references to James Henry White in Musser, *Before the Nickelodeon, passim*. Along with White's executive role in film production, it is noteworthy that he also appeared as an actor in LIFE OF AN AMERICAN FIREMAN. Musser writes: "White cast himself for the lead in this picture. When W. E. Gilmore, general manager for Edison, screened the picture he ordered retakes to eliminate White on the grounds that it was subversive of corporate policy for an executive to be an actor" (213); but: "In fact, James White seems to have remained in the film" (520, n. 2). One wonders whether White's phonogenic performances as "Casey" were equally controversial.

<sup>186</sup> I have no information on when White first remade older "Casey" selections, but new items added to the catalog under his name began with CASEY AT DINNY MURPHY'S WAKE (Edison 7255, issued in Nov.-Dec. 1899) and ended with CASEY AND HIS GANG OF IRISH LABORERS (Edison 8360, issued in Mar. 1903). I have also seen (on eBay) a title slip accompanying a brown wax cylinder of Edison 3818, HIRAM WILKINS'S VIEWS ON SUPERSTITION "by Mr. John Kaiser" with that name crossed out and "White" written in. As to "improper" cylinders, two of the title slips in box E-5684 at Edison National Historic Site, which also contains the GROVER CLEVELAND phonogram, read "Sim Hadley on a Racket (Smut) J. H. White" and "Maggie ~~Murphy~~ Murphy's Home on Sunday Night - J. H. White."

<sup>187</sup> 8069, 8075, 8101 and 8360 were "made over by John Kaiser instead of James H. White" ("Records Made Over Under New Conditions," *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:5 [July 1905], 6-7).

<sup>188</sup> "Real Casey records at last! Imitations have occasionally been put on sale in America, but no genuine Casey records have been made here since Mr. Hunting's departure for Europe in 1898. These records were made in London by Gramophone and Typewriter, Ltd, specially for us and are certainly the most mirth provoking series we have catalogued. Mr. Hunting's inimitable character of Casey is

---

unapproachable and never fails to provoke shouts of laughter” (Victor catalog of June 1903, quoted in FPRA Dec. 1949, 24).

<sup>189</sup> Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 182.

<sup>190</sup> “Michael Casey,” CASEY AS A DOCTOR (mx. 29835) + CASEY AT THE DENTIST (mx. 29900) as Columbia A1886 and 33035-F (the latter in the Irish ethnic series; other couplings may also have been issued in this way); CASEY’S DESCRIPTION OF HIS FIGHT (mx. 29833) + CASEY TAKES THE CENSUS (mx. 29824) as Columbia A1908; CASEY AS JUDGE (mx. 29832) on Columbia A1940; and CASEY AT HOME (mx. 29834) on Columbia A1971. Presumably these were not phonogenized by Hunting himself, given that he was working for Pathé in the United States at the time these matrices must have been recorded. In 1909, Columbia had also recorded a talking selection by William Rochester, CASEY’S BIRTHDAY PARTY, giving authorial credit to Rochester (Columbia A797, mx. 4321), but I have not heard this phonogram and so do not know whether the title character is supposed to be Hunting’s Michael Casey or not.

<sup>191</sup> John Riley, CASEY AS A DOCTOR (OKeh 4539-B, S-70337-a).

<sup>192</sup> “A Noted Record Maker,” *Phonogram* 2 (Aug.-Sept. 1892), 191.

<sup>193</sup> “A House Full of Wonders,” *New York Times*, Oct. 23, 1892, p. 17 (TAEM 146:824).

<sup>194</sup> Quoted in FPRA Nov. 1944, 27-8.

<sup>195</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 89. Also: CASEY CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY: “Introducing mechanical effects of familiar sounds on the water-front. He drives a load of coal on the boat.... A worthy companion to the famous steamboat record” (*Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 84). CASEY DEPARTING BY STEAMBOAT was also issued as Columbia cylinder 9648 and Edison 3813.

<sup>196</sup> Sydney H. Carter, compiler, *Edison Bell Cylinders: A Listing* (Bournemouth, Dorset: Talking Machine Review, n.d.). Catalog numbers were not assigned while the first title was in use, but CASEY CROSSING THE ENGLISH CHANNEL was originally Edison Bell cylinder 4009, renumbered 5809 in 1903.

<sup>197</sup> Frank Kennedy phonogenized a great many “Schultz” selections for Edison, Zon-o-phone, Columbia (on cylinder), and Leeds & Catlin between 1898 and 1902; see the relevant discographies and cylinderographies for details. Written representations of Schultz’s dialect speech appeared in *Phonogram-2* 1 (June 1900), 62; “Shultz Has an Attack of Nervous Ability,” *Phonogram-2* 1 (Oct. 1900), 177-8; *Phonogram-2* 2 (Nov. 1900), 12-3; “Shultz on Earth-Cakes,” *Phonogram-2* 3 (June 1901), 20. Harry Spencer took over the character for Columbia discs in 1902 (see Brooks and Rust, *Columbia Master Book Discography*, 1:58), but Kennedy later did work for Victor and the Indestructible Phonographic Record Company (e.g. SCHULTZ ON WOMAN’S SUFFRAGE, Victor 16294-B, B-6861, recorded Mar. 5, 1909; IRISH-DUTCH ARGUMENT with Steve Porter, Victor 16322, B-6859; Albany Indestructible 1040) and for Gennett (e.g. 5010-A: SCHULTZ DICTATES A LETTER [mx. 8117] + B: SCHULTZ HAS HIS LIFE INSURED [mx. 8118]). He also adapted some comic-strip characters to the phonographic medium, as in two collaborations with Steve Porter for which he received composer credit (Gennett 4672-A: MUTT AND JEFF (AT THE SHOOTING GALLERY) [mx. 7425a] + B: BRINGING UP FATHER (IN THE LEAGUE OF WIVES) [mx. 7462B]).

<sup>198</sup> “Will N. Steele,” *Phonogram-2* 2 (Nov. 1900), 20-21. For Edison, Steele performed EINSTEIN ON THE WAR (7464), EINSTEIN ON FIRE (7482), EINSTEIN ON THE OCEAN (7538), EINSTEIN AT A PRIZE FIGHT (7573), EINSTEIN TALKS ABOUT IKE (7702, advertised as a “stuttering story” [*Phonogram-2* 2 (Feb. 1901), 159]), EINSTEIN ON RAPID TRANSIT (7780), EINSTEIN AT THE VAUDEVILLE (7939), EINSTEIN AT THE RACE TRACK (8243), and EINSTEIN AT THE DENTIST’S (8359); and for Victor EIKENSTEIN ON WAR (V-410), EIKENSTEIN ON THE OCEAN (V-411), and EIKENSTEIN ON THE PRIZE FIGHTS (V-412), according to the recording ledgers and labels; however, Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix*, 213 note that Steele says “Einstein” in the phonograms themselves.

<sup>199</sup> “Talent Employed for Making Records,” *Phonoscope* 2:9 (Sept. 1898), 13. Titles included MULCAHEY’S BIRTHDAY PARTY, NEGRO FUNERAL SERMON and WANT TO BE WHERE MOTHER IS RILEY’S POEM, and as “Simonds & Weber,” DINGLEBENDER & MULCAHEY IN A MUSEUM and DINGLEBENDER & MULCAHEY GERMAN PICNIC (“New Records,” *Phonoscope* 2:10 [Oct. 1898], 17). “Weber” was Joseph Weber, who also sang German songs for the Lyric Phonograph Company (“Talent Employed for Making Records,” *Phonoscope* 2:9 [Sept. 1898], 13). On the stage career of

---

Jack Simonds or Symonds, who was reportedly born John P. Salmonde in Portland, Maine on May 3, 1860, see Edward Le Roy Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy, from "Daddy" Rice to Date* (New York: Kenny Publishing Company, 1911), 303.

<sup>200</sup> Walcutt & Leeds offered THE IRISH AND THE GERMANS, THE A. P. A. STORY, THE TIPSY IRISHMAN, THE ROLLING MILL STORY ("New Records for Talking Machines," *Phonoscope* 1:1 [Nov. 1896], 18); AMERICAN PACKING ASSOCIATION, AN IRISHMAN AT THE HOFFMAN HOUSE, CLANCY'S MISTAKE, THE COUNTRY'S WELFARE, and THE IRISH AND THE GERMANS ("New Records," *Phonoscope* 1:2 [Dec. 1896], 18), all credited to "J. W. Kelly."

<sup>201</sup> "Harry B. Norman has been connected with some of the leading opera companies of the country for a number of years, notably the 'Emma Abbott,' the 'Chicago Church Choir Company,' the 'Boston Ideals,' etc., as well as some of the best farce comedy companies. He has for the past two years appeared in the leading vaudeville houses of the west in imitations of the late John Kelly, better known as 'The Rolling Mill Kelly.' . . . So great has been his success that at the solicitation of his friends interested in the record-making business he has decided to devote his talents to the making of a series of stories to be known as the 'Rolling Mill Kelly' series. After several trials he has proved very successful in his undertakings" (*Phonoscope*, 2:11 [Nov. 1898], 11). His titles included KELLY'S TALK 'THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE DUTCH AND IRISH,' KELLY'S TALK ON SONGS OF THE DAY, KELLY'S DESSERTATION [sic] ON MARRIAGE, KELLY'S TRIP TO PARIS ("New Records," *Phonoscope* 2:11 [Nov. 1898], 15); KELLY'S ADDRESS TO THE WOMEN'S BRANCH OF THE CLAN-NA-GAEL, KELLY'S BROOKLYN HANDICAP, KELLY'S FRIEND CASEY, and KELLY'S RECOLLECTIONS OF HIS FAMILY ("New Records," *Phonoscope* 2:12 [Dec. 1898], 15). It was reported that Norman's "first trial was with the Lyric Phonograph Company; since then he has made records for several other Phonograph companies, among them the National Phonograph Company" (*Phonoscope* 2:12 [Dec. 1898], 11). I do not find listings of phonograms by Norman in any National Phonograph Company catalogs or discographies, but three titles were listed by "James Bernard": A. P. A. (3861), TIPSY MAN (3862) and GERMAN AND THE IRISH RACES (3863), all corresponding to names of J. W. Kelly stories and (judging from specimens seen on eBay) accompanied by title slips labeled "Original Story Told By The Late J. W. Kelly the 'Rolling Mill Man.'" Although no precise dates are available for these numbers, they were apparently not assigned until early 1899 (see Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, xxxvii). I speculate that "James Bernard" may have been a pseudonym for Harry B. Norman.

<sup>202</sup> "In 1899, the attention of the Edison Phonograph management was directed to my dialectic ability, and, possessing a voice peculiarly adapted for Phonograph work, I made my initial appearance at the Edison laboratory, recording stories originated by that late eminent wit Mr. J. W. Kelly. These talks have been carefully prepared and contain the funniest extracts from that famous humorist's vast collection of mirth. In the 'Irish on Parade', describing a St. Patrick's day celebration, it is remarked that 'a black eye is no disgrace to an Irishman, because it always turns green at the finish' and also that 'if the men in line seem a little unsteady on their horses it's not because they're drunk, but that an Irishman always picks out a green horse to ride on'" ("Will N. Steele," *Phonogram-2 2* [Nov. 1900], 20). Steele introduced IRISH ON PARADE (Edison 7470, released June 1900) and, in Oct. 1901, made masters of both that and the three selections initially performed by "James Bernard," as shown in the cylinder plating books (see 160 rpm moulds 604, 604B, 605, 608 and 614). For Victor, Steele phonogenized JOHN W. KELLY'S STORY A. P. A. (V-413) and JOHN W. KELLY'S STORY: THE IRISH ON PARADE (V-414).

<sup>203</sup> "The Meanest Man," from an Ohio newspaper, in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:2 (Apr. 1906), 13.

<sup>204</sup> See descriptions of CASEY AS AN ACTOR and CASEY'S VISIT TO THE PRESIDENT in *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 83.

<sup>205</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 27. Their other selections, on pages 27-8, were SWEET MARIE, HEAR DEM BELLS, THE OLD ARK, and MAMIE, COME KISS YOUR HONEY BOY.

<sup>206</sup> Dixie Quartet, STEAMBOAT SCENE (UCSB 5288) §; accessed online in Dec. 2005, misidentified as follows: "Home recording, or recording by unknown independent recording company. Urban scene—newsboys yelling 'Extra, extra,' car horns; and other sounds of the city; sometimes in non-English language."

<sup>207</sup> "As to the records which he has assisted in making they must be long past counting. For he is concerned, on behalf of the Edison Bell Co., in making records not only all day long, but every day.

---

He is their stage manager, and as our readers by this time know, there is a good deal of stage management in getting out a really successful record" (Leonard W. Lillingston, "The Career of 'Casey' (Mr. Russell Hunting)," *Talking Machine News*, May, 1903; quoted in FPRA Nov. 1944, 28).

<sup>208</sup> These personnel for the "Diamond Quartette," plus tenor James Kent Reynard, are listed in Marks, *They All Sang*, p. 102, cited from a Mar. 1897 Universal catalog; Reynard is indicated as "mgr" on Berliner 850Y. The group's first known cylinders are listed in the *Phonoscope* 1:3 (Jan.-Feb. 1897), 16; the group is then listed in a Universal advertisement in the *Phonoscope* 1:4 (Mar. 1897), 2. A biographical note about Porter published in late 1898 refers to "the two years he has been engaged in making talking-machine records" ("Gallery of Talent Employed for Making Records," *Phonoscope* 2:7 [July 1898], 12), suggesting late 1896 for his entry into the business, but later Victor catalogs confirm he had "been engaged in this work since 1897" (quoted in Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 272); for Jones' part in the quartet see *Phonoscope* 3 (Apr. 1899), 12. In late 1898, the group consisted of this same lineup with Fred Rose in place of Reynard (*New York Dramatic Mirror*, Nov. 19, 1898, p. 21). The quartet's previous history is unclear. There was a "Diamond Quartet" that performed at Republican political rallies in the fall of 1896, but it was led by one William A. Powers ("Commercial Men In Line," *New York Times*, Sept. 20, 1896, p. 3). Other accounts indicate that a "Diamond Comedy Four" was appearing in live venues simultaneously with the early phonogenic work for Universal: see, for instance, a report of an appearance at Koster & Bial's alongside Williams and Walker ("Notes of the Week," *New York Times*, Mar. 7, 1897, p. 21); a later account has them performing at Proctor's Theatre on the same bill with Cal Stewart and "trick pianist" Joe Linder, later phonogenic accompanist for accordion-player John Kimmel ("Theatres and Music Halls," *New York Times*, Mar. 22, 1898, p. 7; on Linder see FPRA Feb. 1958, 31). According to Allen Koenigsberg, Porter and Reynard were the only phonogenic singers who managed to obtain their own phonograph-related patents (Koenigsberg, *Patent History*, 7). The history of quartets by these names from mid-1898 onward is rather murky. Allan Sutton, *Pseudonyms on American Records, 1892-1942: A Guide to False Names and Label Errors* (Denver, Colorado: Mainspring Press, 2001), 273 lists a "Diamond Comedy Four" consisting of Len Spencer, Steve Porter, Billy Golden, and Vess L. Ossman as appearing on discs and cylinders from 1898-1900, information he informs me was derived from personal correspondence with Jim Walsh in 1972. Then we read: "The Diamond Quartette, composed of Len Spencer, Steve Porter, Roger Harding and George Hargreaves are creating quite a furore at the Republican campaign meetings in Greater New York and vicinity singing their up-to-date campaign songs" (*Phonoscope* 4:5 [May 1900], 8). The next month's issue notes: "Among the most enthusiastically received numbers on the programme at the reception of Theodore Roosevelt in Madison Square Garden was the celebrated Columbia Quartette of Phonograph fame, who rendered stirring campaign songs with megaphones which carried the 15,000 listeners away by storm" (*Phonoscope* 4:6 [June 1900], 6), raising the possibility that the names "Diamond Quartette" and "Columbia Quartette" were then being used interchangeably.

<sup>209</sup> He may have developed a fairly close professional relationship with them, since when he paid a visit to do some work for Berliner in the spring of 1897, he reportedly took them along: "Russell Hunting went to Washington, D.C., last month to talk to the Gramophone. He received one dollar per minute while talking to the machine. He was accompanied by the Diamond Comedy Four, who made a number of records on the same day" (*Phonoscope* 1:5 [Apr. 1897], 9). However, an examination of Charosh, *Berliner Gramophone Records* fails to show any date on which both Hunting and the Diamond Comedy Four are both known to have phonogenized.

<sup>210</sup> Marks, *They All Sang*, 102.

<sup>211</sup> To complicate matters, the 1903 description of the Casey steamboat sketch quoted above from the *Talking Machine News* also states that, at the end, "a dozen of the deck hands strike up the melody: 'Farewell, my love, farewell.'" Perhaps the writer was conflating several of Hunting's steamboat phonograms, or perhaps Hunting had by then begun working vocal quartets into the Casey series itself.

<sup>212</sup> Personnel of the Greater New York Quartette were Harding, Porter, Spencer, Depew (Nov. 1897), Harding, Porter, Jones, Hargrave (Sept. 1898), and Harding, Porter, Jones, Campbell (1899); see Brooks, "Directory," 112. Thus, by 1899 all three core members of the Diamond Comedy Four were also members of the Greater New York Quartette. Meanwhile, the name "Diamond Quartette" also came to be used for other groups containing Spencer and Harding; see note 208 above.

---

<sup>213</sup> STEAMBOAT MEDLEY (Columbia cylinder 9041). *List of the Famous "Columbia Records,"* June 1897, 11, runs up to cylinder 9033, but 9041 is listed in the *Columbia Records* catalog with letter dated May 1, 1898, 28.

<sup>214</sup> On Columbia cylinder 9041, disc 454, double-faced A374; and the Haydn Quartet on Victor 2767, B-988.

<sup>215</sup> By the Edison Male Quartet on Edison 2233; by the Haydn Quartet on Berliner 4273, Zon-o-phone 1621 and Victor 3093; by the American Quartet on Lambert 568; and in England by the Mozart Quartet for Edison Bell 9054, renumbered 5527 in 1903 (see Christian Zwarg's cylinderography for Edison Bell in the Truesound Online Discographies, <http://www.truesoundtransfers.de/disco.htm>).

<sup>216</sup> Excelsior had been advertising "vocal quartettes" since it was founded at the end of 1897, and although it is unclear who the personnel may have been, the other vocalists listed in the company's early advertisements were Steve Porter, Dan W. Quinn, Russell Hunting, George J. Gaskin, and George W. Johnson (*Phonoscope* 1:11 [Nov.-Dec. 1897], 9, 16). On May 1, 1898, all of these performers signed an exclusive contract with Columbia, presumably leaving Harding in the lurch: the same issue of the *Phonoscope* that announced the contract included an advertisement for Excelsior that now listed only Harding by name as a vocalist (*Phonoscope* 2:3 [Mar. 1898], 5). Harding responded by introducing a roster of new talent, including S. H. Dudley and William F. Hooley, and the company's advertisements now introduced the "Excelsior Quartet," all of which were first named in an advertisement in the *Phonoscope* 2:4 (Apr. 1898), 5. Harding, Dudley and Hooley were individually highlighted in a subsequent advertisement (*Phonoscope* 2:6 [June 1898], 3).

<sup>217</sup> See an untitled article about them in *Phonoscope* 2:9 [Sept. 1898], 12). An accompanying photograph shows, from right to left, Hooley, Harding, Dudley, and a fourth member (possibly James Kent Reynard, of whom I have been unable to find a picture for comparison).

<sup>218</sup> Also the "Edison Male Quartette." According to Jim Walsh, the "Edison Male Quartet" originally consisted of Harding and James Kent Reynard as tenors, Dudley as baritone, and Hooley as bass, but Harding was shortly replaced by John Bieling and Reynard by Jere Mahoney. Walsh also dates the formation of the "Edison Male Quartet" to 1894 and the replacement of Harding and Reynard to 1896 (FPRA Oct. 1962, 33), perhaps influenced by a photograph of Bieling, Mahoney, Dudley and Hooley which Bieling at some point had inscribed "'Edison Quartet' 1896" (reproduced in FPRA Sept. 1979, 36), but both dates are too early, since they predate the establishment of the National Phonograph Company's recording program and its "Edison Records" in late 1897. Furthermore, that company's ledger entries for late 1897 and early 1898 show only payments to the "Diamond Quartet" on Oct. 9, 1897, to the "Unique Quartette" on Dec. 28, 1897, and to Roger Harding on Jan. 17, 1898 (Wile, "Duplicates," 190-1); the "Diamond Quartet" titles were presumably 2200-9 and the "Unique Quartette" titles numbers 2210-15 (for which see Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 80; judging from the ledger entry, the Edison Male Quartette must later have remade titles the Unique Quartette had originally phonogenized for the National Phonograph Company). There was, in short, no "Edison Male Quartet" as such in evidence prior to 1898. It is an open question whether the quartet originally organized for Excelsior or Edison. Dudley later recalled that Steve Porter had recruited him "to sing second tenor in a male quartet job," i.e., "making male quartet records for Mr. Thomas Edison in West Orange" (Walsh, "Reminiscences," 63) and implies—in the same source—that Walter Miller had first discovered him as a solo phonogenic artist. However, Dudley's first solo Edison cylinders, in an 1150s block, were issued in the period Sept. 1, 1898-Feb. 1, 1899, according to Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, 2nd ed., xxvii, whereas the Excelsior Phonograph Company had first advertised solos by Dudley in the *Phonoscope* 2:4 (Apr. 1898), 5. A year later, the *Phonoscope* was running two months behind its nominal publication date (see *Phonoscope* 3:3 [Mar. 1899], 18), but even with an appropriate date adjustment Dudley's Excelsior cylinders would seem to have predated the Edisons unless Koenigsberg's date estimate for the 1150s block is off by at least three months or the National Phonograph Company had delayed issuing Dudley's work for some reason.

<sup>219</sup> On June 27, 1898, Emile Berliner recorded two duets by Dudley and Harding (3006, 3014) as well as the first discs by a new group known as the "Haydn Quartet" (870Z, 871X); a number of other undated discs in the same group were probably recorded at the same time. In one case, according to Charosh, *Berliner Gramophone Records*, the disc bore a different name: 874X, RECEPTION MEDLEY by the "Excelsior Quartet," even though the catalog listed this selection as by the "Haydn Quartet." Thus,

---

it appears that Berliner's initial "Haydn Quartet" was simply the Excelsior Quartet presented (except in the one case) under a different name.

<sup>220</sup> *Columbia Records* catalog with letter dated May 1, 1898, front cover and [1]; Hooley replaced him as manager of Excelsior (*Phonoscope* 2:8 [Aug. 1898], 11).

<sup>221</sup> The group's lineup is given as [George] Gaskin, Girard, Riley and Evans in an 1892 New Jersey Phonograph Company catalog (FPRA Oct. 1958, 33), but John Bieling recalled having been a member in 1894 (Gracyk, "Barbershop Quartets," 7; FPRA Oct. 1958, 34).

<sup>222</sup> Dudley and Hooley "offered to have the Haydn Quartet make records of any songs that the customers wanted, regardless of whether or not they were listed in the catalog" (Quentin Riggs, "Steve Porter," *Talking Machine Review* [Dec. 1969], 3-5, quoted in Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 273; see also chapter two, note 145).

<sup>223</sup> Personnel were Hooley, basso; Dudley, baritone; Bieling and Jere Mahoney, tenors (*Phonoscope* 3:3 [Mar. 1899], 12). Another item about Reed and Dawson also mentioned the "Original American Quartette" among the company's artists (*Phonoscope* 3:7 [July 1899], 11).

<sup>224</sup> Within a few months, the members of the "Hayden Quartet" were "receiving more engagements than they can possibly attend to," particularly in making gramophone discs, and Hooley was even receiving fan mail, although it was Dudley who signed discs as the group's "manager." The lineup then consisted of "Messrs. Fred Rycroft [sic, Rycroft], First Tenor; Charles Belling, Second Tenor; S. H. Dudley, Baritone and Wm. F. Hooley, Basso" (*Phonoscope* 3:6 [June 1899], 13). Dudley and Hooley remained the consistent core of the quartet, supplying the baritone and bass parts, while the two tenor parts were shuffled between John Bieling, Fred Rycroft, Jere Mahoney and Harry Macdonough as circumstances and subject matter required. By the turn of the century, the group had coalesced around Bieling, Macdonough, Dudley and Hooley, who phonogenized together on disc for Zon-o-phone and Victor as the "Haydn Quartet" and on cylinder as the "Edison Male Quartet" (Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 179-80). Personnel apparently varied according to the genre being phonogenized: "Since our last catalogue issue two new tenors have been added to the Haydn Quartet. The comedy and lighter records are still sung by the old Quartet, but the sacred and standard quartets are sung by Messrs. Rycroft and Belling, tenors of Trinity Church Choir, and Messrs. Dudley and Hooley, basses" (Berliner catalog of Apr. 1899, 25; reproduced Gracyk, *Companion*).

<sup>225</sup> The usual tenors for Victor's "American Quartet" were Albert Campbell and W. T. Leahy (Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix*, 345; FPRA Oct. 1962, 32). The only other "Leahy" I can identify in the commercial phonography of this period is *Edward Leahy*, who had joined Excelsior at the same time as Dudley and Hooley as a performer of Irish songs (*Phonogram* 2:4 [Apr. 1898], 5) and so may well have been an occasional member of the Excelsior Quartet. The later American/Premier Quartet formed in 1909 consisted of Bieling and Hooley plus Steve Porter and Billy Murray (Gracyk, *Pioneer American Recording Pioneers*, 27, 268; FPRA Dec. 1969).

<sup>226</sup> Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 179-80.

<sup>227</sup> According to FPRA Oct. 1962, 34, the Invincible Quartette consisted of Arthur Collins, Byron G. Harlan, Frank C. Stanley, and a fourth member (George Seymour Lenox for Edison, Al Campbell for Columbia); it also appeared on Zon-o-phone, e.g. A VIRGINIA CHRISTENING (Zon-o-phone P5587, mx. 133).

<sup>228</sup> Notes 208 and 212 above suggest that the name "Columbia Quartette" may originally have been used about 1900 interchangeably with "Diamond Quartette" and "Greater New York Quartette." However, Jim Walsh writes of it: "When this group was formed in the 1890's it consisted of Albert Campbell, first tenor; James Kent Reynard, second tenor; Joe Belmont, baritone; and Joe Majors, bass"; then, in 1902-3, Henry Burr replaced Reynard. In 1904 the personnel were Albert Campbell, Henry Burr, Steve Porter, and "Big Tom" Daniels; Daniels was replaced in 1906 by Frank C. Stanley; the name "Universal Quartet" may have been used for this group on Zon-o-phone, but the name "Peerless Quartet" began appearing sporadically in 1907 (Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 267-8; FPRA Oct. 1962, 32, 36; FPRA Dec. 1969, 38). Tim Gracyk also notes that the "Climax Quartette" on Climax discs of 1901-2 can be either the Haydn Quartet or a version of the Columbia Quartette, presumably based on aural evidence ("Columbia Male Quartette," <http://www.garlic.com/~tgracyk/columbiaquartet.html>, accessed Feb. 28, 2005).

<sup>229</sup> Haydn Quartette, STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS (7" shield Zon-o-phone 1621-2) §.

---

<sup>230</sup> Haydn Quartet, STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS (Canadian 7" Berliner 1431, VG) §.

<sup>231</sup> Haydn Quartet, STEAMBOAT MEDLEY (Victor 2767, matrix B-998-[1]) §. Columbia Quartet, STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS (Columbia 9041, UCSB 4900) §, has "C'mon there, you Senegambian loafers and get up those bales o' cotton, now, get a move on, here" and omits the second line.

<sup>232</sup> American Quartet, STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS (Lambert 568) §.

<sup>233</sup> Vocal Quartette, STEAMBOAT MEDLEY (Columbia 10" disc 454-10) §.

<sup>234</sup> Vocal Quartette, STEAMBOAT MEDLEY (Columbia 10" disc 454-10) §.

<sup>235</sup> American Quartet, STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS (Lambert 568) §.

<sup>236</sup> Haydn Quartet, STEAMBOAT MEDLEY (Victor 2767, matrix B-998-[1]) §. The passage in Columbia Quartet, STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS (Columbia 9041, UCSB 4900) § is nearly identical.

<sup>237</sup> For instance, Haydn Quartet, STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS (Canadian 7" Berliner 1431, VG) §:

**IRISHMAN:** Well, sir, I'd like to see the strong young man that handles that pick.

**PASSENGER:** Why, say, Pat,  
that isn't a pick.

**IRISHMAN:** Well, if it isn't a pick,  
what is it?

**PASSENGER:** Why, that's the anchor! [*Laughter. Whistle blows.*]

<sup>238</sup> Vocal Quartette, STEAMBOAT MEDLEY (Columbia 10" disc 454-10) §; Haydn Quartet, STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS (Canadian 7" Berliner 1431, VG) §.

<sup>239</sup> Of the examples surveyed, Haydn Quartet, STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS (Canadian 7" Berliner 1431, VG) § does not contain "Down Mobile."

<sup>240</sup> Haydn Quartet, STEAMBOAT MEDLEY (Victor 2767, matrix B-998-[1]) §. Again, the passage in Columbia Quartet, STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS (Columbia 9041, UCSB 4900) § is nearly identical.

<sup>241</sup> In a nostalgic account of a traditional riverboat departure, for instance, one writer specified that after the departure "the negro roustabouts scattered around on the coffee sacks and hemp bales started their evening musicale," described in some detail ("Dago Deckhands Now," *Washington Post*, Apr. 25, 1909, p. N4).

<sup>242</sup> American Quartet, STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS (Lambert 568) §. The four-minute remake, American Quartet, DOWN ON THE MISSISSIPPI (Victor 35143-B, unknown take) §, expands on this version, establishing that the quartet is still supposed to be black:

**BILLY MURRAY** [*in "black" speech*]: Hm, well, here's the rest of the quartet now—howdy, boys.  
[*Voices murmuring "howdy" in response.*]

**IRISHMAN:** By golly, here's a quartet on the boat, say boys, will you sing a song for us?

**MURRAY:** You niggers all feel like singin'?  
[*"I does" – "So does I"*]

Here goes, then.

<sup>243</sup> Haydn Quartet, STEAMBOAT MEDLEY (Victor 2767, matrix B-998-[1]) §; Columbia Quartet, STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS (Columbia 9041, UCSB 4900) §; also Haydn Quartet, STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS (Canadian 7" Berliner 1431, VG); although the digital file contains a skip at this point in the phonogram) §.

<sup>244</sup> "The little children bringing in as pay for their policies rolls of new pennies which had probably just come from the pawnbroker's—negro whitewashers, who all seemed to put their money on 4, 11, 44, which I discovered was nicknamed the 'Washerwoman's Gig;' and even rag-pickers were buying policies" (Phil., "Policy Dealing," *New York Times*, Apr. 26, 1856, p. 2); "'4-11-44' is the gig on which many negro policy-players generally stake their money. Some one dreamed one night that it was the prize number, and so it turned out to be" ("Established Fraud," *Washington Post*, Sept. 28, 1878, p. 2). For the term "nigger gig," see "Policy Swindling Scheme Unmasked," *New York Times*, Feb. 4, 1900, p. 7; for "coon gig," see "Four—Eleven—Forty-Four," *New York Times*, Dec. 24, 1886, p. 2; for "coon row," see "The 'Coon Row' Came Out," *Washington Post*, Dec. 25, 1886, p. 1; for "white mice row," see "Hunts Policy Fiends," *Washington Post*, Dec. 8, 1901, p. 22.

---

<sup>245</sup> Vocal Quartette, STEAMBOAT MEDLEY (Columbia 10" disc 454-10) §. American Quartet, STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS (Lambert 568) § handles this segment similarly:

**SWEETHEART:** Good-bye, Rastus!

Don't forget to write to me when you get to St. Louie!

**DECKHAND:** I'se done gwine to write to ya, honey.

**SWEETHEART:** Say, Rast!

Don't forget to play them numbers I was tellin' you 'bout.

**DECKHAND:** I'se a gwine to play that baby row the first thing in the mornin'.

<sup>246</sup> "If you understand anything about policy playing," an expert stated, "you know that the confirmed policy player always plays what is termed 'cue-rows.' A 'cue-row' is a recognized combination of numbers, generally three, which has been given a distinctive name—for instance, 1, 2, 3 is termed 'baby row,' 6, 7, 8, 'hat row,' 10, 18, 45, 'blood row,' and so on, every conceivable name being given to some combination. Some cues are favorites and are played more than others. A common guide to all policy players is their dreams. If they have a particularly vivid dream of any object or action they immediately impart their precious information to their closest and dearest friends, and all hurry to the nearest policy shop to place their dimes or dollars, as the case may be, on that particular row for the day's play" ("Froze Out a New Firm," *Washington Post*, Feb. 8, 1894, p. 8); "There is a policy row for everything under the sun—1-2-3 is baby row.... [I]f there is not an established row for the object you want, the writers can make one for you in a minute. They know all the established rows, and there are books, which find a ready sale among the negroes, giving the numbers to fit anything, with explanations for the interpretation of dreams and the right policy number to play for each dream" ("Kings of Policy Gigs," *Washington Post*, Sept. 11, 1899, p. 4). One example of such a book is *Aunt Sally's Policy Players Dream Book: New Key to Find Your Own Numbers Based on Systems of Harmony in Numbers* (Chicago: Stein Publishing House, 1926), supposed to have been originally published in the 1890s. The terminology connected with numbers games appears to have varied widely across place and time; thus, on the basis of fieldwork in Detroit in the 1940s, one sociologist reports "fancy" instead of "cue-row," "fancy gal roll" for 4-11-44, and "clearwater roll" for 1-2-3 (Gustav G. Carlson, "The Argot of Number Gambling," *American Speech* 24 [Oct. 1949], 189-93).

<sup>247</sup> These "superstitions" are juxtaposed in "Nothing in a Number," *Washington Post*, Apr. 29, 1905, p. 2, reporting a fire at 1313 Thirteenth Street.

<sup>248</sup> Description from listing for Columbia 15064 as DOWN ON THE SUWANEE RIVER, *Columbia Records* catalog with letter dated May 1, 1898, 8. The selection had previously been listed under that number by the Columbia Orchestra as THE SUWANEE RIVER with "bells, whistle, and lively dance"; see *List of the Famous "Columbia Records,"* June 1897, 4.

<sup>249</sup> Gelatt, *Fabulous Phonograph*, 72; Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 38-9; Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 51; Doyle, *Echo & Reverb*, 49.

<sup>250</sup> Columbia Orchestra, DOWN ON THE SUWANEE RIVER (Columbia disc A155, mx. 602-8) §.

<sup>251</sup> Before the creation of the Columbia Orchestra, the company had instead offered THE SUWANEE RIVER by Issler's Orchestra as Columbia cylinder 2523 (*List of the Famous "Columbia Records,"* Nov. 1896, 4), which I strongly suspect was the same descriptive routine. The Metropolitan Orchestra's S[U]WANEE RIVER (Victor V-285) definitely was, as shown by catalog descriptions: "Pulling in the gang-plank, steamboat bells and whistles, darkies' shuffle with clogs, negro shouts, etc. A happy reminder of 'Dixie Land'" (Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix*, 340). The Edison Symphony Orchestra's DOWN ON THE SUWANEE RIVER (Edison 523, UCSB 4273, 4274) was as well §, but the same ensemble's later SUWANEE RIVER (Edison 9741) was a standard instrumental theme and variations arrangement, judging from the description in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 5:9 (Nov. 1907), 4.

<sup>252</sup> See e.g. *Complete Catalog of Columbia Double-Disc Records* [to Nov. 1914], 160, listing Columbia disc A155.

<sup>253</sup> Edward Warden, *Tapioca: A Minstrel Melody* (Boston: Oliver Ditson & Co., n. d. [ca. 1860-1]); several imprints are available through the Library of Congress American Memory website.

<sup>254</sup> Tobani's "A Trip to Coney Island" (1888) is one example; see Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 48-9.

<sup>255</sup> Columbia Orchestra, DOWN ON THE SUWANEE RIVER (Columbia 10" disc 602-4) §.



- <sup>256</sup> Columbia Orchestra, *LEVEE SCENE* (Columbia disc 1551-2) §; also released in Dec. 1903 on Columbia cylinder 32303. As we will see in chapter six, this selection seems to have originated as the eighth unit in the Victor *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS* series of late 1902.
- <sup>257</sup> Haydn Quartet, *A CORNFIELD MEDLEY* (Canadian 10" Berliner 5023, VG) §. Peerless Quartet, *THE CORNFIELD MEDLEY* (Canadian Berliner 216183-B, VG) § instead extends the piece with a mock conversation in the opening segment using "black" dialect in which one speaker accuses two others of stealing from his cornfield and they deny it.
- <sup>258</sup> The *SLAVERY DAYS* segment of *OLD PLANTATION SCENES*, discussed in chapter six; Cal Stewart, *UNCLE JOSH ON THE OHIO*, "descriptive with bells and steamboat imitations" (description taken from a Sears, Roebuck & Co. brochure promoting the "New Harvard J. Talking Machine, Latest 1907 Model," in the collection of the author); and Len Spencer and the Haydn Quartet, *REUBEN HASKIN'S DEPARTURE FOR EUROPE* (Victor 4076, B-1698; and Canadian 10" Berliner 5934, VG §), in which the gangplank effect is subtle but can be heard just before the quartet begins singing. I suspect this is the same sketch as Columbia Orchestra, *DEPARTURE OF A HAMBURG-AMERICAN LINER* (Columbia disc 1563, cylinder 32304), credited to Len Spencer and bandleader Charles Prince (see Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 278).
- <sup>259</sup> Description based on American Quartet, *DOWN ON THE MISSISSIPPI* (Victor 35143-B, unknown take) §; and Premier Quartet, *DOWN ON THE MISSISSIPPI* (Edison Amberol 626, UCSB 1959) §; also Blue Amberol 1944, Diamond Disc mx. 835 [recorded Oct. 24, 1911, apparently unissued].
- <sup>260</sup> Gaisberg, *Music Goes Round*, 42. For an earlier account of the impact of this phonogram, see Leonard W. Lillingston, "The Career of 'Casey' (Mr. Russell Hunting)," *Talking Machine News*, May, 1903; quoted in *FPRA* Nov. 1944, 28.
- <sup>261</sup> Description based on Russell Hunting assisted by the Gramophone Band, *DEPARTURE OF A TROOPSHIP* (Gramophone Concert Record G.C.-2-108, mx. 1780e) §.
- <sup>262</sup> American Pathé record supplement, Sept. 1917, quoted in *FPRA* Feb. 1945, 27; the catalog number was 20125. A similar First World War phonogram, with composer credit to Fred Hager, is Peerless Male Quartet with Emerson Military Band, *DEPARTURE OF AMERICAN TROOPS FOR FRANCE* (Emerson 9" 999, mx. 3295-2) §, which uses a drum roll in place of the ratchetlike gangplank effect. An even later instance of the whistle-and-gangplank motif appears at the beginning of Oreste and His Queenland Orchestra, *SAILIN' ON* (Edison Diamond Disc mx. 11898-A, TEA, Jan. 25, 2005) §.
- <sup>263</sup> By the Haydn Quartet (Victor V-658, 3088, B-985), the Edison Male Quartet (Edison 2218) and various personnel (Columbia cylinder 9040, disc 450, double-faced A365).
- <sup>264</sup> Edison Male Quartet, *SLEIGH RIDE PARTY* (Edison 2218 on brown wax, digital file at [http://www.dawnofsound.com/index\\_files/soundarchive.htm](http://www.dawnofsound.com/index_files/soundarchive.htm)), accessed Mar. 9, 2005 §.
- <sup>265</sup> Edison cylinder 7873, as described in *Phonogram-2 3* (July 1901), 47.
- <sup>266</sup> It does not appear in Greater New York Quartette, *THE SLEIGH RIDE PARTY* (Columbia 9040, New York and Paris; *24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1898* [Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001], 24) § or Haydn Quartet, *A SLEIGH RIDE PARTY* (Canadian 7" Berliner 1047 [V-658-1], VG) §, and it is expanded on ("Oh, I'm so glad, my darling, now just one—sweet—kiss") in Invincible Quartet, *THE SLEIGH RIDE PARTY* (Columbia disc 450-4) §.
- <sup>267</sup> Haydn Quartet, *A SLEIGH RIDE PARTY* (Canadian 7" Berliner 1047 [V-658-1], VG) §.
- <sup>268</sup> "Oh-h, gimme a whiskey straight" on Greater New York Quartette, *THE SLEIGH RIDE PARTY* (Columbia 9040, New York and Paris; *24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1898* [Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001], 24) §; "Ah, girls—here comes the sleigh!" on Haydn Quartet, *A SLEIGH RIDE PARTY* (Canadian 7" Berliner 1047 [V-658-1], VG) §; "Now, driver, stop at the very first roadhouse you come to—see?" on Invincible Quartet, *THE SLEIGH RIDE PARTY* (Columbia disc 450-4) §.
- <sup>269</sup> Greater New York Quartette, *THE SLEIGH RIDE PARTY* (Columbia 9040, New York and Paris; *24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1898* [Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001], 24) §.
- <sup>270</sup> For example:
- HENRY:** Can't you see I'm in love?  
**LUCY:** Love? With who?  
**HENRY:** Why, you!  
**LUCY:** Me? Oh, g'wan away, *Henry Burr!*
- (Ada Jones and Len Spencer, *BASHFUL HENRY AND LOVIN' LUCY* [Victor 35013-B, from single-faced 31531, take 3] §, emphasis added); on the phonogenic performer Henry Burr, see e.g. Gracyk, *Popular*

---

*American Recording Pioneers*, 52-65. A better-known example is the frequent use of the name “George Washington Johnson” for the groom in the frequently recorded NEGRO [or COON] WEDDING IN SOUTHERN GEORGIA. This piece is first documented as “Negro Wedding in Southern Georgia—Excelsior Quartette” in the list of “New Records,” *Phonoscope* 2:10 (Oct. 1898), 17, but other versions include Haydn Quartet, A NEGRO WEDDING IN SOUTHERN GEORGIA (Victor V-42); American Quartet, A NEGRO WEDDING IN SOUTHERN GEORGIA (Victor M-3514); Peerless Quartet, NEGRO WEDDING IN SOUTHERN GEORGIA (Victor 16526, B8727) and Columbia Male Quartette, A COON WEDDING IN SOUTHERN GEORGIA (Columbia cylinder 32242, single-faced disc 456, double-faced disc A370). For a sample transcription and consideration of the connection to the phonogenic performer George Washington Johnson, see Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 59.

<sup>271</sup> It is possible that “Molly Hooley” was the name of one of William F. Hooley’s relatives, although none of the relatives I have thus far been able to identify seems to have gone by that name. The secondary literature identifies only his son by name, William F. Hooley, Jr. (e.g., FPRA May 1952, 23), but the 1900 census record for William F. Hooley Sr., “singer” of Mount Vernon, New York, also lists Margaret M. (wife) and Anna M. and Lilian G. (daughters).

<sup>272</sup> As quoted, in Greater New York Quartette, THE SLEIGH RIDE PARTY (Columbia 9040, New York and Paris; 24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1898 [Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001], 24) §; as “Oh, say, give me one of those too!” on Invincible Quartet, THE SLEIGH RIDE PARTY (Columbia disc 450-4) §.

<sup>273</sup> FPRA Sept. 1979, 36.

<sup>274</sup> A TRIP ON THE LIMITED EXPRESS was described as “Introducing Bell, Whistle, Sound of Moving Train, etc.” under item 12 in the “miscellaneous” U. S. Marine Band section of the *Temporary Catalogue of the Columbia Phonograph Co.’s Musical Records for Use on Graphophones and Phonographs*, Jan. 1, 1895, 5. After Columbia adopted a permanent catalog numbering system, the title appeared as Issler’s Orchestra, A TRIP ON THE LIMITED EXPRESS (Columbia cylinder 2534) and Columbia Orchestra, THE LIMITED EXPRESS (Columbia cylinder 15139).

<sup>275</sup> “New Records,” *Phonoscope* 1:3 (Jan.-Feb. 1897), 16.

<sup>276</sup> A TRIP TO THE COUNTY FAIR (Columbia cylinder 9038).

<sup>277</sup> The Haydn Quartet on Victor V-127, M-3089; the Edison Male Quartette on Edison 2219, 8100; an unknown group on Busy Bee 1323 = Imperial 44716 mx. 6710D; the Columbia Quartet on Columbia disc 457, double-faced A505.

<sup>278</sup> Haydn Quartet, TRIP TO THE COUNTY FAIR (Canadian 10” Berliner 127 [M-127-3], VG) §.

<sup>279</sup> “Prior to the Kingston screening, Howe recorded an approaching train with his phonograph,” states Charles Musser, and contemporary reports commented on “the warning whistle,” the “roar and rumble,” “the rushing of steam, the ringing of the bells and the roar of the wheels” (Musser, *High-Class Moving Pictures*, 65-6). Howe may have recorded a real passing train, but doing so would have been a challenge during the era of acoustic phonography, as shown by the artifice to which a home recordist had to resort to achieve the same effect a few years later: “I turned my machine around and let the horn project out of the window and sat down and waited for trains. As fast as they came along, I took possession of each train, so to speak, using only a small portion of the blank for each train. In that manner I got a complete record of a passing railroad train; the whistle, the bells, the blowing off of steam; also the peculiar whistling sound that the air brakes make with which everyone is familiar, together with the rattle and rumble of the wheels, and even the sharp click as they passed over the rail joints. It is all loud and clear and perfect in every detail” (*Phonogram-2* 2 [Feb. 1901], 158-9).

<sup>280</sup> The earliest appearance of the title I can find is by the Haydn Quartet on Victor V-43-1, recorded May 25, 1900; see also their Victor M-3513, B-1243, and double-faced 16524. The piece was also phonogenized by the older American Quartet on Lambert 522; by the Imperial Quartet on original takes of Edison 8056; by the Premier/American Quartet on Victor 16524, B-8698, the 1910 remake of Edison 8056, Edison Amberol 492, and unissued Edison Diamond Disc mx. 834-B and C; by the Columbia Quartet on Columbia disc 458, double-faced A448; and by a “male quartet” on Albany Indestructible 872. The original catalog description for Edison 8056 reads: “The action takes place in a sleeping car, between the Irishman who dreams that he is an A. P. A., the countryman Hiram and his wife Samantha, and the porter. The fun is kept up fast and furious. College students are heard with their songs and yells; and when, at the finish, you hear the chorus ‘Put me off at Buffalo,’ you want to hear the whole Record right over again” (*Phonogram-2* 5 [Oct. 1902], 94). Despite the reference to

---

“Samantha,” all takes I have consulted clearly give the name as *Mandy*. The Oct. 1901 Victor catalog advertised M-3513: “The train starts; humorous conversation between two Irishmen, one of them gets to sleep and disturbs the passengers with loud snoring, falls out of his berth in a troubled dream, believing that he is an A. P. A.” (quoted in FPRA Apr. 1968, 38).

<sup>281</sup> Haydn Quartet, A NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO (Victor 43, B-1243-6) §. The voices assigned to Mac, Finnegan, and the porter are performed inconsistently in this version (e.g., at first “Finnegan” has a high-pitched voice and “Mac” a contrastive high-pitched one, but the voices are reversed during the nightmare segment). However, the content and a comparison with other renditions of the piece suggest that the lines are to be understood as spoken by the characters indicated.

<sup>282</sup> “A. P. A.” was also presented as a serious insult in Irish comic songs and sketches; cf. Charles B. Lawlor and William Cahill Davies, *The Mick Who Threw the Brick* (New York: Independent Publishing Co., 1899) and Len Spencer, CON CLANCY’S CHRISTENING (Victor M-1104-4) §.

<sup>283</sup> Harry Dillon and John Dillon, *Put Me Off at Buffalo* (New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1895).

<sup>284</sup> Both “four” on Vocal Quartette, NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO (Columbia 10” disc 458-7) §; A NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO (Busy Bee A-34 = Imperial 44687, mx. 6696D), which omits the initial assignment of the berth but identifies it in the snoring segment §; Invincible Quartet, NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO (Edison 8056 mould 4, digital file at <http://cylindersontheweb.angelcities.com>) §; and American Quartet, A NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO (Edison Amberol 492, UCSB 1873) §; track “four” and berth “seven” on American Quartet, NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO (Lambert 522) §.

<sup>285</sup> American Quartet, NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO (Lambert 522) §.

<sup>286</sup> The song itself can vary as well, as these cases show: “After many a hard bump on the crooked B & O / Put me off at Buffalo” in Vocal Quartette, NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO (Columbia 10” disc 458-7) §; and “After many a hard bump on the crooked B & O / Put me off at Buffalo / Oh, that’s where we’ve started for and where we want to go / Here we are at Buffalo” in A NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO (Busy Bee A-34 = Imperial 44687, mx. 6696D) §.

<sup>287</sup> Vocal Quartette, NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO (Columbia 10” disc 458-7) §.

<sup>288</sup> A NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO (Busy Bee A-34 = Imperial 44687, mx. 6696D) §.

<sup>289</sup> American Quartet, NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO (Lambert 522) §.

<sup>290</sup> American Quartet, NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO (Lambert 522) §.

<sup>291</sup> Vocal Quartette, NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO (Columbia 10” disc 458-7) §.

<sup>292</sup> HOW I GOT TO MORROW was phonogenized by George Graham on Berliner 0584 (dated Oct. 11, 1899) and by Burt Shepard for Victor V-899 (first recorded July 9, 1901) and B-1649.

<sup>293</sup> This premise was also covered in a popular song of the same era, Lew Sully: *I Want to Go to Morrow: Comic Patter Song* (New York: Howley, Haviland & Co., 1898).

<sup>294</sup> Burt Shepard, HOW I GOT TO MORROW (Victor V-899-3, recorded July 28, 1902) §.

<sup>295</sup> An exception is A NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO (Busy Bee A-34 = Imperial 44687, mx. 6696D) §, in which Hiram is addressed as “rube” without making his witty comeback.

<sup>296</sup> American Quartet, A NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO (Edison Amberol 492, UCSB 1873) §. Some of the later lines are also assigned to different characters; thus, it is Finnegan who asks the porter about the Yale football team (“that mixed ale party that’s just gone through the car”), and the line concluding the segment about Mandy’s request for a glass of water is not spoken in Irish dialect.

<sup>297</sup> Charles B. Lawlor and James W. Blake, *The Sidewalks of New York* (New York: Howley, Haviland & Co., 1894).

<sup>298</sup> Haydn Quartet, THE SIDEWALKS OF NEW YORK (Canadian 10” Berliner 5140 [M-3518-3] §; and Canadian 10” Berliner 48 [B770-1] §, both VG) . The latter take contains the fire engine; the former take does not.

<sup>299</sup> [Will] Cobb and [Gus] Edwards, *Way Down Yonder in the Cornfield* (New York: F. A. Mills, 1901).

<sup>300</sup> American Quartet, A MEETING OF THE LIME KILN CLUB (Lambert 590) §; American Quartet, FINNEGAN’S BIRTHDAY SURPRISE PARTY (Lambert 591; so announced but also listed as FINNEGAN’S SURPRISE BIRTHDAY PARTY) §; Invincible Quartet, A VIRGINIA CHRISTENING (Zon-o-phone P5587, mx. 133) §. I am not aware of any other versions of these three sketches, though of course they could potentially exist.

<sup>301</sup> The earliest listing of the title I can find is CHURCH SCENE FROM THE OLD HOMESTEAD (Columbia cylinder 9039), issued in 1898. About this same time, the *Phonoscope* editor reported that Reed and

---

Dawson had issued a quartet selection called THE OLD HOMESTEAD (*Phonoscope* 2:11 [Nov. 1898], 11), and three months later announced that it had “heard a record of the Excelsior Quartet entitled ‘Church Scene from Old Homestead’ which was without a blemish” (*Phonoscope* 3:2 [Feb. 1899], 12). Other examples are Victor V-1792, M-3085; Zon-o-phone 1655; Columbia disc 449; and Edison 2224.

<sup>302</sup> Invincible Quartet, CHURCH SCENE FROM THE OLD HOMESTEAD (Columbia disc 449-3) §. All spoken segments and the vocal solo are by Arthur Collins.

<sup>303</sup> “I’ve tramped around this big city all day looking for my boy. I hear the folks a-singin’ in the church. I’ll just go inside and see if my boy is—in there.” // “No. He ain’t in the church. Oh, where is my wandering boy tonight?” (Haydn Quartet, CHURCH SCENE FROM THE OLD HOMESTEAD [Canadian 10” Berliner 5007 [M-3085-(?)] § and Canadian 7” Berliner 977 [V-1792-2] §, both VG).

<sup>304</sup> American Quartet, CHURCH SCENE FROM THE OLD HOMESTEAD (Lambert 514, 2 *MINUTE CYLINDERS* [P&L Antiques], 4:1) §; Haydn Quartet, CHURCH SCENE (Canadian 7” Berliner 977 [V-1792-2], VG) §.

<sup>305</sup> Description of Edison cylinder 8048 in *Phonogram-2* 5 (Sept. 1902), 69; cf. Invincible Quartet, FIREMAN’S DUTY (Edison 8048, UCSB 2636) §.

## Chapter Five

### DANCE CALLS AND SALES PITCHES

Now that we have surveyed some of the techniques phonogenic performers used to depict “scenes” in general, I would like to consider their treatment of two specific subjects—dance calling and sales pitches—which they tackled with enough frequency to allow us to trace the emergence and abandonment over time of particular representational strategies. The calling of dances and the delivery of sales pitches were both esteemed as audicular performance arts, so both invited representation in early commercial phonography on the same grounds that music did. However, both also required very specific kinds of response from their audiences in order to be regarded as successful. A dance caller’s audience was expected to dance, while that of a pitchman would ideally end up buying something. These two subjects therefore allow us to detect with unusual clarity whether the usual audience response is being represented within the phonogram, as something to be imagined by the listener in the descriptive mode, or whether it is being anticipated from the listener in the substitutive mode. As before, there is also a third possibility—that the phonogram is substituting for a “descriptive” performance, such as the acting out on the stage of a dance with calls or a sales pitch—but only rarely does this appear likely in the cases we will be considering. Like Russell Hunting’s Casey sketches and the quartet piece *STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS*, most of the “descriptive” routines discussed here do not have exact analogs in live performance and seem instead to have been uniquely phonographic.

#### Dances with Calls

The *quadrille* was a popular social dance of the nineteenth century, danced by four couples in a square, and one of its subcategories was known as the *lanciers* (or *lancers*). Quadrilles and lanciers consisted of multiple *figures*: separate units occurring in a conventionalized order and danced to different musical selections, each

separated by a pause. Each figure was comprised in turn of smaller units known as *changes*, such as “forward and back” or “turn corners” (although “figure” was sometimes also used to refer to these changes, as in present-day square dance terminology). A figure often involved repeating a sequence of changes with accompanying music two or four times so that each of the four couples, or both pairs of couples (“heads” and “sides”), would have a turn at each role within it. In the late nineteenth-century United States, the original five-figure structure borrowed from French practice was in the process of giving way to a leaner four-figure structure. Music composed or arranged specially for quadrilles and lancers generally provided for the full five figures, but when only four were danced, one of the middle figures was omitted. The tension between the two norms can be seen in a callbook of 1892 in which the figures for various four-part quadrille arrangements are perplexingly numbered one, two, three, and five.<sup>1</sup>

When music began to be sold separately for automatic musical instruments such as organettes and disc musical boxes, the quadrille was the most elaborate and structurally complex form regularly adapted to the new media. Quadrilles were among the very first selections offered for use on John McTammany’s perforated-sheet organette in 1877, and the only ones offered as a multi-part set:

| QUADRILLES   |      |
|--|------|
| Caledonian, (complete),  | 1.30 |
| Lancers No. 1,   | .40  |
| Lancers No. 2,   | .40  |
| Lancers No. 3,   | .50  |
| Lancers No. 4,   | .45  |
| Lancers No. 5,   | 1.00 |
| Music for Quadrilles can be joined<br>together and repeated if desired. <sup>2</sup> |      |

The \$1.00 and \$1.30 selections were the most expensive in the whole catalog and, since organette sheets were priced at so much per foot, this also made them the longest—about twice as long as a typical song. Since the catalog alluded to the possibility of connecting the ends of these sheets together to form continuous loops, it is probable that each one contained only a single run through the music for its figure and might have needed to be repeated several times to complete the usual dance cycle; however, complete quadrilles and lancers with all the customary repetitions

programmed out were offered on especially long sheets for later makes of organette.<sup>3</sup> The typical social context in which quadrille sheets for organettes were intended to be educated is described in a story published in the fall of 1879:

Last night there was a little social party—a *soiree dansante*, as we say in Paris—at the residence of a Gold Hill gentleman, and a new orguINETTE was produced. It had just been purchased by the host, who told the guests that he intended to have dancing at his house three times a week hereafter. A quadrille was the first thing announced, and a roll of music ninety-eight feet long was inserted in the machine for a starter. The host seized the crank and began to turn and call: “Salute partners.”<sup>4</sup>

While perforated sheets could be extended to any length desired, other media such as discs and cylinders had a fixed, uniform capacity to which dance tunes, like all other pieces of music, had to be made to conform. For instance, the standard twenty-note roller organ cob invariably completed its program in three revolutions totaling about forty seconds. Quadrille sets were offered consisting of five such cobs, each one representing a separate figure—presumably a single run through the music for it, which could be repeated for dancing as necessary. Customers who wanted to dance four-figure quadrilles could simply choose not to buy one of the five cobs. Meanwhile, the thirty-two note “grand” roller organ accommodated a larger cob that revolved eight times to complete its program, covering roughly two minutes. Each quadrille or lanciers set marketed for this instrument consisted of two cobs, one marked “Nos. I and II” and one marked “Nos. IV and V.”<sup>5</sup> The company had apparently taken advantage of the longer capacity of these cobs to present two figures on each one, opting to offer four-figure quadrilles rather than five-figure ones that would have required an inconvenient two and a half cobs. At the same time, however, these two-figure cobs could not have been used to accompany actual full-length quadrilles. The duration of the cob would have permitted only a single run through the music for each of the two figures *in succession*, eliminating the possibility of repeating either one independently as needed for dancing. The “quadrilles” and “lanciers” offered by automatophone companies thus ranged from real efforts to provide music as an accompaniment for dancing to abridged representations of such music, the latter often dictated by limitations inherent in the technology.

Quadrilles and lancers were often accompanied by prompts or calls, somewhat like the American square dances of today, and the idea of producing dance music by automatophone was coupled with efforts to automate dance-calling as well. In 1879, George Kelly and Mason Matthews patented an organette actuated by a continuous sheet not only perforated with the notes of dance music but also “having marked or printed thereon the calls or figures belonging to said quadrille, lancers, &c., at the proper places for the same to be called when said strip of paper has a mark or line, &c., in combination with an indicator...located on a mechanical musical instrument.” As the organette played the dance, the written calls would simultaneously pass by a pointer where the educationist could read them. “[B]y this simple means of indicating when the call is to be called,” the inventors claimed, “any person, however ignorant of such matters can easily and properly give the right call at the proper time in the dance.”<sup>6</sup> Although this arrangement did not automate the calling itself, it instructed the caller in what calls should be given and when, substituting a mechanism for knowledge of the dance-calling tradition. Still, knowing what calls to give and when was useless if the caller could not be clearly understood by the dancers. A guidebook of 1893 asserted that intelligible calling took effort and practice and that callers needed to study elocution just as assiduously as public speakers.<sup>7</sup> There was a belief in some circles that dance-calling was becoming obsolete and that cultured persons ought to know what to do without being told. One authority wrote in 1895: “Dancing quadrilles without a ‘prompter,’ is the only correct style of dancing, and will, in the near future, be the only way that society will entertain them.”<sup>8</sup> Despite such prescriptive statements, however, calling was a standard part of the tradition in the late 1880s and 1890s, when the phonograph finally allowed both music by professional musicians and calls by skilled prompters to be recorded and “reproduced” automatically.

Phonograms of dance music “with calls” date back to at least September 27, 1889, when Duffy and Imgrund’s Fifth Regiment Band phonogenized a selection entitled *QUADRILLE—TAKE YOUR PARTNERS, W/ CALLING*, and Issler’s Orchestra followed on November 15 with a *QUADRILLE WITH FIGURES CALLED*.<sup>9</sup> Over the next few years, lancers and quadrille phonograms were recorded on a regular basis,



sometimes performed by bands but more often by parlor orchestras, and they soon began to be identified in terms of the larger works from which their music was taken, usually comic operas, rather than being given titles based solely on the kind of dance involved, as at first.<sup>10</sup> But how were these phonograms actually intended to be used? There are a few reports of people dancing to phonograph music as early as 1888,<sup>11</sup> but such episodes were not common, certainly not common enough to account for the large number of lanciers and quadrille phonograms surviving today. The conditions of sound “reproduction” in the 1890s were not conducive to actual dancing, most obviously when ear tubes were being employed; in fact, the act of dancing around while listening through ear tubes was subject to ridicule, associated pejoratively with blacks and “rubes.”<sup>12</sup> In 1901, the invention was announced of a “phonographic knapsack” with two pairs of ear tubes, designed to allow individual couples to dance to prerecorded music of their own choosing, but even this arrangement would not have worked for lanciers or quadrilles because it would have fragmented the common aural environment within which couples had traditionally interacted with each other, leaving each to dance to its own tune.<sup>13</sup> Music educed through phonograph horns was loud enough for lecture-hall phonograph exhibitions in which attendees sat quietly in rows, but it would have been difficult to hear clearly over the incidental noises of a full-scale social dance. A more realistic pair of uses for a phonograph during a dance was reported from Carson City, Nevada:

Tuesday evening [December 31, 1889] the Carson wheelmen gave a phonograph ball in this city, at Armory hall. Between each dance Edison’s perfected phonograph played delightful melodies.... A receiver was arranged over the orchestra, and the music of the dance, including the shout of the caller and the shuffling of feet, was all faithfully recorded.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the identification of this event in headlines as a “phonograph dance,” the phonograph was not used to provide music as an accompaniment to dancing but as a novel entertainment *between* dances, when it stood a chance of being clearly heard. At least one phonogram was also taken of the live dancing, capturing its calls and other incidental sounds and, presumably, giving the participants an opportunity to hear a phonographic “reproduction” of themselves dancing after the fact. It was representations of the latter kind, overheard “scenes,” that provided the conceptual model for laboratory-made dance phonograms with calls during this period.

Issler's Orchestra was the ensemble most closely associated with lanciers and quadrille phonograms in the early to mid-1890s, enjoying a nationwide reputation for this genre nearly equivalent to that of the United States Marine Band's reputation for marches.<sup>15</sup> Although it did perform music live to accompany dances in New Jersey during the same period,<sup>16</sup> its phonograms were prized as ideal for "good general 'all round' work, tubes and horn," durably recorded and capable of long use without wearing out;<sup>17</sup> in short, they were viewed as standard fare for all the typical exhibition contexts covered in chapter two.<sup>18</sup> The structure and content of lanciers and quadrille phonograms by Issler's Orchestra supports a conclusion that they, like the group's other phonograms, were intended for passive listening rather than as accompaniments for actual dances. In a catalog of the mid-1890s, the United States Phonograph Company advertised its "Lancers and Quadrilles with Figures Called" phonograms as follows:

These are dances that set the feet a-tripping. The cornet sounds, and the dancers are up. Then the music and the fun, through several lively numbers. The prompting is loud and distinct. In nearly all there is an announcement between the figures, of a dinner to be served, the date of the next hop, or some similar subject. The general excellence of the whole performance may be covered by the statement that Issler's Orchestra furnishes the music. The records are an immediate hit whenever put upon the machine, appealing strongly to the popular fancy on account of their agreeable combination of speech and music, giving all the sounds and effects heard in a ball room.<sup>19</sup>

An examination of six surviving Issler's Orchestra lanciers phonograms of the same period, transcriptions of which appear below, confirms many of these details. A few notes on the transcriptions are in order. I have given one term as *sashay* to reflect actual pronunciation, although the preferred spelling in callbooks at the time was *chassé* or *chassez*. *Fo'ard* is meant to indicate an idiosyncratic, monosyllabic pronunciation of *forward*. I have counted bars on the assumption that the music is in 2/4 or 6/8 time, which corresponds to the number of bars assigned to each segment in dance-calling literature of the time.<sup>20</sup> Finally, two contrastive voices can be heard in these phonograms. One, which I identify as the "announcer," is lower-pitched and used for the opening announcement and the internal announcement; this is the same voice ordinarily found announcing other Issler's Orchestra phonograms. The other, which I designate "caller," is higher-pitched and somewhat more nasal and is used for calls and instructions to the dancers.<sup>21</sup>

**ANNOUNCER:** Lanciers with Figures Called

from Reilly and the Four Hundred, played by—Issler’s Orchestra. [*cornet sounds*]

**CALLER:** All the Reillies up for the lancers!

Are you all ready?

**CROWD:** We are!

**CALLER:** Well, all together! [*music starts*] (8)

All fo’ard! (16)

All—turn. (8)

**ANNOUNCER:** Ladies and gentlemen,

after this dance,

Mister Dan W. Quinn will sing his popular Irish song,

“Nothing’s Too Good for the Irish.” [*cheer*]

**CALLER:** Right hands to your partners. [*chord*]

Right and left all around. [*music starts*] (16)

First couple promenade! (16)

All march! (8)

All hands round! (8)

All sashay! (8)<sup>22</sup>

**ANNOUNCER:** Lanciers with Figures Called

from the Devil’s Deputy, played by Issler’s Orchestra. [*cornet sounds*]

**CALLER:** Are you little devils up for this lancers?

Are you ready?

**CROWD:** Yeah!

**CALLER:** Let ’er go! [*music starts*] (8)

Heads fo’ard! (16)

All swing corners! (8) [*music finishes*]

**ANNOUNCER:** Ladies and gentlemen,

after this dance Mister Dan W. Quinn will sing

Francis Wilson’s Stuttering Song.

All are invited to give quiet attention. [*cheer*]

**CALLER:** Right hands to your partners. [*chord*]

Right and left all around. [*music starts*] (16)

First couple! (16)

All march! (16)

All promenade! (8)

All sashay! (8) [*music ends*]<sup>23</sup>

**ANNOUNCER:** Lanciers with Figures Called

from the Comic Opera Princess Nicotine, played by Issler’s Orchestra. [*cornet sounds*]

**CALLER:** Everybody up for the lancers!

Are you all ready?

**CROWD:** We are!

**CALLER:** Well, let ’er go! [*music starts*] (8)

Heads fo’ard! (8)

Cross over! (8)

All swing corners! (8) [*music ends*]

**ANNOUNCER:** Ladies and gentlemen, I take pleasure in announcing

that we have with us this evening Mister Dan W. Quinn,

who has very kindly consented to sing

“Swim Out, O’Grady.” [*cheer*]

**CALLER:** Right hands to your partners! [*chord*]

Right and left all around! [*music starts*] (16)

First couple promenade! (16)

All march! (16)

All promenade! (8)

All sashay! (8) [*music ends*]<sup>24</sup>

**ANNOUNCER:** Lancers from the comic opera Doctor Syntax,  
played by Issler's Orchestra. [*cornet sounds*]

**CALLER:** Are all the sets ready for this lancers?

**CROWD:** We are!

**CALLER:** Well, all together! [*music starts*] (8)

Heads fo'ard! (16)

All promenade! (8) [*music ends*]

**ANNOUNCER:** Ladies and gentlemen,  
I would like your attention for a few moments.

I am requested to announce  
that Madame Zamona  
will give an acrobatic exhibition tomorrow morning  
on a tight rope  
straight across the street.

Come all and bring the little ones. [*cheer*]

**CALLER:** Right hands to your partners. [*chord*]

Right and left all around. [*music starts*] (16)

First couple promenade! (16)

All march! (16)

All promenade! (8)

All sashay! (8) [*music ends*]<sup>25</sup>

**ANNOUNCER:** Lancers with figures called,  
from Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera The Gondoliers,  
played by Issler's Orchestra. [*cornet sounds*]

**CALLER:** Everybody up for the lancers, are you all ready?

**CROWD:** We are!

**CALLER:** Well, let 'er go, Mister Leader. [*music starts*] (8)

Heads fo'ard! (4)

Turn the opposite lady. (12)

All cross over! (8) [*music ends*]

**ANNOUNCER:** Ladies and gentlemen, after this dance ice cream and cake will be served in the hall  
below.

**CROWD:** Yea!

**ANNOUNCER:** Tickets one dollar.

**CROWD:** Ahh.

**CALLER:** Right hands to your partners. [*introductory music*]

Right and left all around. [*music starts*] (16)

First couple promenade! (16)

All march! (16)

All hands round! (8)

All sashay! (8) [*music ends*]<sup>26</sup>

**ANNOUNCER:** Lancers with figures called, from the comic opera Erminie, played by Issler's  
Popular Orchestra. [*cornet sounds*]

**CALLER:** Everybody up for the lancers, are you all ready?

**CROWD:** Yeah!

**CALLER:** Let 'er go. [*music starts*] (8)

Heads fo'ard! (8)

Cross over! (8)

All turn! (8) [*music ends*]

**ANNOUNCER:** Well, gentlemen of the orchestra, what are you going to have to drink?

**CALLER:** Beer!

**ANNOUNCER:** Beer.

**FAINT VOICE:** I'll have sauerkraut.

**ANNOUNCER:** Sauerkraut. Well, let 'er go, boys.  
**CALLER:** Right hands to your partners. [*chord*]  
 Right and left all around. [*music starts*] (16)  
 First couple promenade! (16)  
All march! (16)  
 All promenade! (8)  
 All sashay! (8) [*music ends*]<sup>27</sup>

The United States Phonograph Company catalog claimed that each lanciers phonogram featured “several lively numbers,” and the sheet music would have contained five, but each of the examples transcribed here includes only two, corresponding to the first and fifth figures. The verbal exchange beginning each phonogram (“Everybody up for the lanciers!” etc.) represents the start of the set, and the opening dance that follows adheres roughly to the norms of a standard lanciers first figure. A typical version of this figure would have gone as follows, according to several dance authorities of the late nineteenth century, with A, B, and C representing different segments of the accompanying music:

- A (8) Couples wait (8)
- B (8) Call: “Heads forward.”  
 Head couples move forward and back (4)  
 Head couples move forward, gentlemen turn opposite ladies, return to place (4)
- C (8) Call: “Cross over.”  
 Head couples join hands, cross or promenade between side couples (4)  
 Side couples return to their places between the head couples (4)
- A (8) Call: “Balance to corners.”  
 All address corners (4)  
 All turn corners (4)

This sequence of changes—except for the initial wait—would have been repeated four times for dancing purposes, with the head and side couples alternating roles,<sup>28</sup> but on the phonograms these repetitions are omitted. The calls accompanying the opening dances on the PRINCESS NICOTINE, ERMINIE, and DEVIL’S DEPUTY phonograms closely resemble those of the typical first figure: an initial wait (8 bars), “heads forward” (8 bars), “cross over” (8 bars), and “all turn” or “turn corners” (8 bars). THE GONDOLIERS diverges from this pattern by including an appropriate call, “turn the opposite lady,” midway through segment B, and also by shifting the call of “cross over” to the final eight bars, where we would ordinarily expect “all turn” or something equivalent. The call of “all promenade” rather than “all turn” during the first figure in DOCTOR SYNTAX is nonstandard,<sup>29</sup> as is the call of “all forward” rather

than “heads forward” in REILLY AND THE FOUR HUNDRED. These cases may simply represent slips on the part of the “caller,” although they might conceivably have some other significance (or, of course, I may simply have misheard them). In any case, the lack of repetition in music and calls resulted in a lopsided dance sequence without the symmetry of the full-length lanciers first figure: there might be a “heads forward,” but never a corresponding “sides forward.”

The fifth or concluding figure of the lanciers was the longest and most elaborate of the five, a kind of grand finale. It customarily began with the call to “address” or “salute” one’s partner, followed by a preparatory chord or “hold” played by the orchestra, a convention dictated by the fact that there was no eight-bar wait leading into the dance as there was in the earlier figures.<sup>30</sup> The preliminary “right hands to your partners” heard on the phonograms differs from the prescribed “salute partners” or “address partners,” but it embodies the same injunction. A typical set of calls associated with this figure would have gone as follows, again with A, B, and C standing for different parts of the accompanying music:

- A (16) “Right and left all around” (16)
- B (16) “First couple promenade” (8)  
“Chasse” (8)
- C (16) “March” (8)  
“All forward and back” (8)<sup>31</sup>

This 48-bar unit was repeated four times for dancing purposes, with a different couple promenading each time, but on the phonograms Issler’s Orchestra once more omits the repetitions, playing only A, B, C, A. The calls heard on the phonograms during the first run through A, B, and C are standard for the lanciers fifth figure: “right and left all around,” “first couple promenade,” and “march.” However, there was little consensus within the tradition itself as to how the fifth figure was to conclude—that is, what the dancers should do when the musicians repeated the initial segment of the music (A) for the final time. Some versions found in callbooks gave no special instructions,<sup>32</sup> one ended with a waltz,<sup>33</sup> and others prescribed a “right and left half around” followed by a promenade.<sup>34</sup> The specific combinations of “all promenade” or “all hands round” with “all sashay” found at the end of the fifth figure on Issler’s Orchestra phonograms does not appear in any of the callbooks I have consulted, but it seems to fall within the tradition’s own margin of variability. As with the first figure,

the fifth figure of the phonograms lacks the symmetrical structure of a full-length dance: “first couple promenade” is not followed by similar calls for the second, third, and fourth couples.

The Issler’s Orchestra “quadrille” phonograms were structured similarly to the “lanciers” phonograms, as this example shows:

**ANNOUNCER:** Electric Light Quadrille,  
with figures called,  
played by Issler’s Orchestra. [*cornet sounds*]  
**CALLER:** Everybody up for this quadrille!  
Are you all ready?  
**CROWD:** Yeah!  
**CALLER:** All right, Mister Leader! [*music starts*] (8)  
Heads, right and left! (8)  
Balance! (8)  
Ladies’ chain! (8)  
Balance! (8) [*music ends*]  
**ANNOUNCER:** Ladies and gentlemen,  
I have the pleasure of announcing  
that Issler’s Orchestra  
will give a free concert in Keystone Hall  
tomorrow evening.  
Electric lights  
will be used for the first time.  
Tell all your neighbors. [*cheer; music starts*] (2 introductory bars on piano + 8)  
**CALLER:** All promenade! (8)  
Heads fo’ard! (16)  
All swing corners! (8)  
All promenade! (8)  
Sides! (16)  
All swing corners! (8)  
All sashay! (8) [*music ends*]<sup>35</sup>

The basic quadrille was less elaborate than the lanciers, so in this case Issler’s Orchestra managed to include two repetitions of each figure rather than just one, allowing for a symmetrical final figure in which both head and side couples take the lead in turn. Nevertheless, the overall framework is familiar: two figures separated by a spoken segment.

In making these phonograms, Issler’s Orchestra had pared the dance forms down to their barest essentials: a distinctive beginning (the call to dance, followed by the opening figure), a distinctive conclusion in the case of the lanciers (the elaborate fifth figure), and an overall structure characterized by multiple figures between which the dancers paused. The results were designed to be received as stylized representations of dance forms, as overheard scenes from a fictional ballroom, not as

accompaniments for actual dancing with calls, a use for which they were too heavily abridged. Accordingly, the “caller” and “announcer” on the phonograms do not address the listener but an imaginary group of dancers whose voices can sometimes also be heard, for instance in answering “Yeah!” or “We are!” to the question “Are you all ready?” The between-the-figures announcements are similarly addressed to a fictional audience: it, and not the listener, is being invited to partake in ice cream and cake or informed of Madame Zamona’s upcoming tightrope act “across the street.” It is true that some of these segments sound suspiciously like advertising ploys on the part of the recording company. In three cases, we hear an announcement that phonogenic artist Dan W. Quinn has agreed to sing a particular song at the conclusion of the dance set, and phonograms by Quinn of all three of the songs in question were conveniently available for purchase.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, the between-the-figures segment on the quadrille phonogram plugs Issler’s Orchestra itself with a mock announcement of a free concert. However, the listener was still not meant to take even these segments literally as announcements of real events, regardless of whether they named real performers.

Other phonogenic ensembles seem to have emulated the pattern established by Issler’s Orchestra, sometimes focusing so much on developing dramatic fictional scenes between the figures that the dance music seems to have become a secondary concern. Banta’s Parlor Orchestra produced one intriguing selection for the North American Phonograph Company in 1893: THE OOLAH LANCIERS, WITH CALLS, described as “introducing quarrel between two of the dancers, and shouts of the spectators urging the fighters on.”<sup>37</sup> After Victor Emerson defected from the United States Phonograph Company to Columbia, the newly-formed “Columbia Orchestra” too produced several “Lancers and Quadrilles, WITH FIGURES CALLED.” These selections were listed in the catalog using a format identical to that of “Plantation Medleys, WITH CLOGS, SHOUTS, ETC,” placing their “calls” in the same category with the sound effects and shouts found in musical descriptive sketches;<sup>38</sup> presumably these phonograms followed the familiar pattern. About the same time, Edison’s National Phonograph Company offered two phonograms by the Peerless Orchestra: YANKEE DOODLE DANDY LANCIERS (688) and CHILDREN’S GAMES LANCERS (702).<sup>39</sup>



The first of these turns out to be not a straightforward lancers phonogram but a topical parody that pairs the usual structure with unexpected content. Inspired by the Spanish-American War, YANKEE DOODLE DANDY LANCERS substitutes battle cries in place of dance calls and transforms the between-the-figures segment into an anti-Spanish message:

**CALLER:** Yankee Doodle Dandy lancers, with figures called played by the Peerless Orchestra, Edison Record.  
[*Fife and drum play Yankee Doodle*]  
Are you all ready?  
**CROWD:** We are!=  
**CALLER:** Then let 'er go! [*music starts*] (8)  
All fo'ard. (8)  
Take your Spaniard! (8)  
Shoot your victim. (8)  
Everybody shoot. (8)  
All shoot and shoot. (8)  
Everybody shoot. (8) [*music ends*]  
Ladies and gentlemen, after this dance a Spaniard with a heart will be exhibited in the hall below, the greatest curiosity of the present time.  
A reward of five hundred dollars will be paid for the capture of anyone found shaking hands with him. [*cheer*]  
Right hands on your muskets! [*chord*]  
Dead Spaniards all around! [*music starts*]....

During the final figure, the caller urges the first couple to “charge” instead of “promenade,” although I cannot understand most of the remaining words (there seems to be a reference to a “flank”).<sup>40</sup> The use of the conventionalized structure of the lancers phonogram to sustain a parody of this kind implies that phonographic listeners of the time were expected to recognize it; otherwise, they would have been unable to appreciate the incongruity and humor of its reappropriation.

Around the turn of the century, the structure of lancers and quadrille phonograms underwent a series of changes as machines with greater eductive volume reopened the possibility of using prerecorded sound as an accompaniment for live dancing. In early 1899, just after Columbia had introduced the Graphophone Grand, the *Phonoscope* editorialized:

The dream of the dancing master is about to be realized in the mammoth instrument just put upon the market. It is powerful enough to fill any theatre or church for a concert but its special use as a money-saver for dancing clubs is not as yet fully appreciated. Musicians are no longer necessary. Turn on the machine and the waltz may start—music of absolutely fine quality and perfection itself as regards time being furnished. Every dancing teacher in the world who can afford it will shortly possess this machine and if he doesn't get one he will be behind the times. Some one person or club in every city will have one and his services will be hired for all occasions where orchestras of

men are now utilized. A man who will invest \$500 for a suitable outfit can make an easy professional living from this machine.<sup>41</sup>

The contexts of phonography were becoming less predictable. People might now want to use their phonographs to accompany live dancing, a purpose for which lancers and quadrille phonograms of the old variety were unsuitable. In the past, lancers and quadrilles had been abridged to fit on single cylinders, omitting all but two of the figures as well as the repetitions that made these dance forms symmetrical and gave each couple a turn at each role. Now that actual danceability was a concern, the methods Issler's Orchestra had conventionalized ten years before for representing lancers and quadrilles in phonography had to be reevaluated.

The "dance with calls" genre was a latecomer to the gramophone and did not appear on disc until 1900. This delay may have been due to technical challenges posed by the peculiarities of Berliner's system: after all, few early gramophone discs of any sort had featured both human voices and larger instrumental ensembles, even though such combinations had not been uncommon on cylinders. In any case, the gramophone of 1900 was much louder than the standard cylinder phonograph, a selling point which cylinder advocates had been trying in vain to dismiss. Gramophones were thus more likely than standard cylinder phonographs to generate enough volume to accompany live dancing. Eldridge Johnson's first effort to issue a dance selection with calls was ECHOES OF 1900—MEDLEY OVERTURE—LANCERS by the Metropolitan Orchestra, recorded in October 1900:

**ANNOUNCER:** Echoes of Nineteen Hundred, Lancers. [*cornet sounds*]  
Are you all ready?  
**CROWD:** Yeah!  
**ANNOUNCER:** Then let 'er go. [*music begins*] (8)  
Heads forward! (8)  
Swing your opposite! (8)  
Swing corners! (8)  
Sides forward! (8)  
Swing your opposite gent! (8)  
Swing corners! (8) [*music ends*]  
Right hands to your partners! [*chord*]  
Right and left! [*music begins*] (16)  
First couple! (8)  
Sashay! (8)  
March! (16)  
All promenade! (8)  
All sashay! (8) [*music ends*]<sup>42</sup>

The calls of the first figure are somewhat puzzling, but what most distinguishes this phonogram from the ones produced by Issler's Orchestra is the repetition in the final figure with the side couples taking the place of the head couples and the omission of the fictional between-the-figures scene. Although ECHOES OF 1900 follows the conventionalized two-figure structure, a MEDLEY QUADRILLE the Metropolitan Orchestra had phonogenized for Berliner earlier that year contains only a single figure, expanded to its full length:

**ANNOUNCER:** Medley Quadrille. [*cornet sounds*]  
Are you all ready?  
**CROWD:** Yeah!  
**ANNOUNCER:** Then let 'er go. [*music begins*]  
Heads fo'ard! (8)  
Sides! (8)  
Ladies' chain! (8)  
Forward! (8)  
All hands around! (8)  
All promenade! (8)  
Heads forward! (16)  
Swing corners! (16)  
All hands around! (16)  
Sides forward! (16)  
All promenade! (16)  
All sashay! (16) [*music ends*]<sup>43</sup>

Both of these discs remain framed as descriptive scenes, preserving the characteristic opening with the response by the imaginary dancers: "Are you all ready?"—"Yeah!"—"Then let 'er go!" However, the most conspicuously fictional element found in the Issler's Orchestra model, the between-the-figures scene, is absent. Meanwhile, although neither of these discs contains a full complement of figures, more concessions are made to danceability than we find in equivalent phonograms by Issler's Orchestra.

When Columbia began choosing standard cylinder selections to offer in the Grand format, with its louder volume of education, its introductory lists of 1898 and 1899 did not include any lanciers or quadrille selections. It was not until 1900, when it made its whole catalog available in both formats, that it finally did so, apparently still following the familiar representational pattern established years before by Issler's Orchestra—the selections were identical to those offered in standard format.<sup>44</sup> However, Edison's National Phonograph Company proceeded rather differently. In late 1899, it inaugurated a special "B" series of Concert cylinders, distinct from the

standard list, allowing it to offer selections unique to the new, louder format. Among the first selections offered exclusively in the Concert size were the following by the Peerless Orchestra:

- B146 MEDLEY LANCERS, 1ST FIGURE
- B147 MEDLEY LANCERS, 2ND AND 3RD FIGURES
- B148 MEDLEY LANCERS, LAST FIGURE<sup>45</sup>

Subsequent catalogs included detailed descriptions of this series, showing that it was designed to present all the repetitions necessary to accompany an actual dance:

This set of "Saratoga Lanciers" is arranged from the popular opera, "The Little Corporal." B146 opens with the usual announcement, followed by "Are You Ready?" After a short overture, the first figure is called, as follows:

- Hands to the right; cross over; swing corners.
- Hands to the left; cross over; swing corners.
- Hands to the right; cross over; swing corners.
- Hands to the left; cross over; swing corners.

B147 contains the second and third figures. In order to get both figures on this record, the speed was lowered; so in reproducing, run this record just a little slower, in order to have the correct time.

The second figure is called as follows:

All forward; ladies in center; balance. Repeat four times.

The third figure is called as follows,

- All forward; forward and salute; ladies chain.
- All forward; forward and salute; ladies chain.
- All forward; forward and salute; gentlemen cross right hands.
- All forward; forward and salute; gentlemen cross left hands.

B148 contains the fourth figure, the last one. The following are the calls.

- First couple; chasse; march; right and left.
- Second couple; chasse; march; right and left.
- Third couple; chasse; march; right and left.
- Fourth couple; chasse; march; right and left.<sup>46</sup>

In June 1900, the *Phonogram-2* published an account of a phonographic dance supposedly written by the fictional phonograph crank, Mr. Openeer. In this piece, entitled "Dancing to Phonograph Music," Openeer describes the actions of the educationist and comments on the relationship between the sounds educed from the phonograms and the actions of the dancers:

He had a suit case filled with records, all labelled and ticketed; and when the floor manager clapped his hands, he picked out a record in a jiffy, slipped it on the mandrel, and had her going inside of twenty seconds. First came the announcement and then the machine said "are you ready" followed by an overture. Of course no one was ready, but the Phonograph went right on, calling figures and playing music at the same time. Pretty soon the floor manager had things all arranged, and he gave another signal. Mr. Youngman set the machine back to the overture, and immediately the first figure was in full swing.

I tell you it was slick. He used three records during the quadrille; but the time it took to change, taking one off and putting on the next was so slight that no one noticed it.

The waltzes, two-steps and polkas went off just as successfully. There was an attachment on the Phonograph by which it would play the same piece over and over with just a moment's interruption between. Not enough of a pause to amount to anything; we just danced right through the pause, and when the record began again, we glided into the game as nicely as you please.<sup>47</sup>

Openeer notes that the educationist had used three separate cylinders during the course of the opening quadrille, clearly alluding to Edison Concert cylinders B146, B147, and B148, the only such combination then available for sale. The fact that B147 had been recorded at a lower speed, and would have required an adjustment of the motor between figures, goes unmentioned. The selection used to begin the dance starts with the usual call of "are you ready?" As long as such phonograms had been treated as scenes from life intended for passive listening, the stylized opening sequence leading into the dance music had posed no problems. The "dancers" were not real, so for purposes of sustaining the fiction their readiness for the dance could be assumed. Now that the phonogram was expected to accompany live dancing, however, the query "are you ready?" was no longer just a part of a prerecorded fictional exchange with a predictable denouement. In the case described by Openeer, the live dancers attending the education event were *not* ready, in contrast with the "we are!" normally recorded on the phonogram, and so the machine—which had gone ahead with the dance in the meantime—had to be stopped and started over to accommodate them. An opening sequence for dance phonograms which had become conventionalized over the course of the previous decade now threatened to make them less suitable for use within a new context. It was modified, however, to reflect changed circumstances, as one surviving cylinder from the series attests. In place of the conventional spoken announcement, the selection begins with a simulation of a live introduction: "Ladies and Gentlemen, the Peerless Orchestra will entertain the guests presented by playing a medley composed of popular songs of the day, Edison Record." Except for the closing company identification, this speech diverges markedly from the announcements on most other cylinders of the period by explicitly addressing the auditors and placing the performance of the medley in the future tense. After a short musical introduction, the announcer asks: "Are you all ready?," but now there is a pause in place of the "Yeah!" or "We are!" conventionalized by Issler's

Orchestra.<sup>48</sup> The response was no longer phonogenically simulated; instead, the phonographic listeners themselves were evidently expected to supply it.

The multi-part lancers and quadrille phonogram set soon became the norm for all recording formats. In mid-1900, Columbia introduced the SINGING GIRL LANCERS (“The full dance, with figures called, is given in three records,” 15231-A, B and C) and THE FORTUNE TELLER QUADRILLE (15232-A, B and C), both by the Columbia Orchestra.<sup>49</sup> A man who gave a graphophone as a Christmas present about this time furnished it with a prerecorded “presentation speech,” now in the collection of the Library of Congress, in which he refers to what must have been one or the other of these sets:

I have made you a fairly good selection of records  
and the very best machine made for household purposes.  
You will notice—that there are two or three  
dancing records—marked—A—B—and C,  
to be played—in their, in that order,  
and to which you can adjust a small cotillion party at any time  
and have a dance of your own.<sup>50</sup>

Edison’s National Phonograph Company abandoned its separate “B” series of Concert cylinders in March 1901, opting instead to offer the same selections in both standard and Concert sizes, and the MEDLEY LANCERS series was reintroduced in May with regular catalog numbers 7809-7811.<sup>51</sup> In 1901, other companies began offering multi-part dance sets: the Victor Talking Machine Company,<sup>52</sup> the Globe Record Company,<sup>53</sup> and probably others as well. Although these sets varied in terms of the number of figures included and how those figures were divided up between individual cylinders or discs, they were all designed with the practical needs of live dancing in mind. For instance, the Globe Record Company’s LANCERS FIGURE 5 (seven-inch Climax 234D) has embossed in its title area the instruction “TO BE PLAYED TWICE.” The music for the lancers fifth figure was typically played through four times, once for each couple; this disc presumably contains *two* repetitions, and so had to be educed twice to generate a full complement of repetitions for dancing.<sup>54</sup> Again, the Metropolitan Band phonogenized one set of dance discs for Victor on February 12, 1902:

M-1252-A-1 QUADRILLE: ON WITH THE DANCE (1ST & 2ND FIGURES)  
M-1252-B-1 QUADRILLE: ON WITH THE DANCE (3RD FIGURE)  
M-1252-C-1 QUADRILLE: ON WITH THE DANCE (4TH FIGURE)

The company's catalog stated that this set had been recorded "in strict dance time without figures called. Loud enough for dancing." It noted further: "In some cities five figures are used in a Quadrille, but as a rule the first three and last are danced and the fourth is omitted. Where only four figures are required order A, B, & D."<sup>55</sup> From these instructions, it is clear that purchasers were really expected to put these discs to use as accompaniments for live dancing. The recording of a quadrille *without* calls was itself a significant innovation. Live quadrilles were not always called, but in the past calls had invariably been included on quadrille phonograms, presumably because the presence of calls had seemed to enhance the realism of the depiction, whereas their omission would have deprived listeners of valuable clues about what was supposed to be going on. Now that phonograms were being designed to coordinate real dancing, recording companies had to take popular preferences for called and uncalled quadrilles more seriously into consideration.

Nevertheless, the older understanding of dance phonograms as complex "scenes" was not immediately abandoned, and in some cases we continue to find concessions being made to the earlier model. In December 1902, the Peerless Orchestra supplied Edison's National Phonograph Company with a new set of dance phonograms, the first to be offered in the moulded black wax format.<sup>56</sup>

- 8247. U. S. ARMY LANCERS, FIRST FIGURE.
- 8248. U. S. ARMY LANCERS, SECOND FIGURE.
- 8249. U. S. ARMY LANCERS, THIRD FIGURE.
- 8250. U. S. ARMY LANCERS, 1ST HALF OF LAST FIGURE.
- 8251. U. S. ARMY LANCERS, 2ND HALF OF LAST FIGURE.

The prompting is given and the music is played in the regular dancing *tempo*. 8248, introduces Mr. Nightingale in his whistling specialty. 8249, introduces Squire Hawkins in a Rube monologue. 8250, introduces Mr. Nightingale and Mr. Hightone in their singing and whistling duet. 8251, concludes with a two-step *finale*.<sup>57</sup>

This series seems to mark an intermediary stage in the transformation of the dance phonogram from fictional scene to prerecorded accompaniment. The extension of the program over multiple units and the assurance that the pieces had been performed "in the regular dancing *tempo*" indicate a desire to cater to customers who wanted to use the set for actual dancing, as was reportedly done on Christmas Day in 1903 at a family gathering in New Haven, Connecticut: "The Military Lanciers [i.e., U. S.

ARMY LANCERS] was...played for a good old-fashioned square dance, the music and prompting being very distinct.”<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, the inclusion of whistling and monologues suggest that the same set was also supposed to be capable of serving as a descriptive-mode representation of an evening at a ball, complete with its auxiliary entertainments, or at least of substituting for a multiplicity of entertainments. At the end of 1904, however, the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* announced a special new list of dance phonograms, this time fully committed to the practical task of substituting for live dance calling:

This dance supplement was made under the direction of William Pitt Rivers, of the Knapp Mansion, Brooklyn’s most fashionable dancing academy, and one of the foremost instructors of dancing in this country. When Mr. Rivers entered upon his task he would accept only five Records from our regular catalogue as being suitable for dancing [all of which were single-cylinder waltzes and two-steps].... The other twenty-seven were made anew. The United States Lancers, Nos. 8247 to 8251 inclusive, listed in the regular catalogue and made by the Edison Symphony Orchestra, were made over by the Edison Military Band. This set of Records is made with calls. As the lancers is more frequently danced without being called off, another set, the Hedge Roses Lancers, Nos. 8881 to 8885 inclusive, was made without calls. The entire supplement is made in perfect dancing time and according to the most approved terpsichorean methods.<sup>59</sup>

When the five Records, Nos. 8247 to 8251, “U. S. Army Lancers,” were made over by the Edison Military Band, “Mr. Nightingale’s” whistling specialty was omitted from No. 8248; “Squire Hawkins” Rube monologue was omitted from No. 8249, and the singing and whistling duet by “Mr. Nightingale” and “Mr. Hightone” was omitted from No. 8250. All orders for this set of Records are now being filled with the new series. These Records still include the calls.<sup>60</sup>

Only the first cylinder in each set contains a conventional spoken phonogram announcement; 8248, for instance, begins only with the words “Second figure” and then enters directly into the music with calls, including all four repetitions.<sup>61</sup> The opening exchange of the Issler phonograms (“Are you all ready?”—“Yeah!”—“Then let ’er go!”) has finally been abandoned altogether, replaced by the more versatile, title-like announcement “first figure”:

**ANNOUNCER:** Good Humor Quadrille, played by the Edison Military Band. [*music plays for 8 bars, then pauses*]  
First figure. [*music resumes*] (72 bars without calls)<sup>62</sup>

John Philip Sousa cast these developments in a negative light in his 1903 essay on the “Menace of Mechanical Music.” “The country dance orchestra of violin, guitar and melodeon had to rest at times, and the resultant interruption afforded the opportunity for general sociability and rest among the entire company,” he wrote. “Now a tireless mechanism can keep everlastingly at it, and much of what made the dance a



wholesome recreation is eliminated.”<sup>63</sup> On the other hand, promotional literature stressed “the fun of having a rich band or sweet orchestra to dance to at home, instead of hopping around to an amateur pianist’s efforts, while you regret the necessity that keeps the prettiest girl in the room tied to the piano stool, or prevents your hostess from sharing your pleasure.”<sup>64</sup> For single-cylinder dances, automatic repeating attachments made the phonograph even more convenient as a source of accompaniment.<sup>65</sup> By 1907-8, Edison’s National Phonograph Company was running magazine advertisements with such captions as “Everybody Dances When the PHONOGRAPH Plays”<sup>66</sup> and “DANCE TO THE EDISON PHONOGRAPH.”<sup>67</sup> “The Phonograph as an orchestra furnishing music in ballrooms for dancers is an old story now,” Edison told an interviewer about the same time.<sup>68</sup> As formats of longer duration became available, dance sets could be offered in fewer individual units without sacrificing completeness and danceability. In the case of the lanciers, this generally meant three-unit sets: one for figures one and two, one for figures three and four, and one for the longer fifth figure. This was the format used in 1906 for Columbia’s six-inch Twentieth Century cylinders and twelve-inch discs,<sup>69</sup> and again in 1909 for Edison four-minute Amberol cylinders.<sup>70</sup>

During the years between 1889 and 1909, phonograms of lanciers and quadrilles had undergone a transition from depicting music and calls in the descriptive mode to furnishing music and calls as an accompaniment and set of instructions for actual dancing in the substitutive mode. Their education was no longer supposed to simulate the experience of listening in on a dance-calling event but to *be* that event, functionally equivalent to live dance calling. The transition began to occur when phonographs capable of supplying a sufficient volume of sound to accompany real dances became available. Until that point, it would simply not have made practical sense for companies to manufacture dance phonograms of the substitutive type. Even once the transition was underway, the conventions that had developed around the representation of lanciers and quadrilles on single phonograms still exerted an influence on multi-phonogram sets, some of which continued to feature the simulated opening dialog between caller and dancers (“Are you ready?” etc.) and amusing interludes (“rube” monologs, singing and whistling duets) corresponding to

the between-the-figures segments of the 1890s. By 1904, however, the transition was complete and the last vestiges of the old conventions were gone.

Meanwhile, certain other kinds of social dance did continue to be depicted in phonography for passive listening in 1900 and afterwards. The public that participated in lancers and quadrilles and now owned phonographs was apparently no longer inclined to listen in on abridged simulations of its own familiar practices, but it was eager to eavesdrop on the dancing of a wide variety of “others.”

Phonograms in this vein date back to at least September 1890, when Rene Bache wrote that the Kentucky Phonograph Company had a recording program that went in “almost exclusively for negro business—plantation dialogues, with banjo solos interspersed, and scenes on the levees.” His article elaborated on these subjects as follows:

The darkey scene cylinders are rather a new thing and are very entertaining, many of them. There is one called “Row at a Negro Ball,” in which you hear the fiddle and the banjo, listen to the conversation of the guests, witness the progress of a quarrel over a dusky belle, and finally hear threats, accompanied by the drawing of “razzers,” and a pistol shot, with the subsequent flight from the police. Another scene represents a banjo concert, interrupted by cries of “Fire!” You hear the engine pulled out, excited conversation and the sound of horses’ hoofs on the pavement. “Git up thar!” shouts the driver, the bell rings louder and louder, the whistle toots, a stream is thrown on the fire, and confusion reigns for a space until the flames are extinguished and the peaceful plunk, plunk of the banjo is once more heard as an accompaniment to the song, “Don’t You Hear Dem Bells?” The vividness with which all this is rendered is positively wonderful. Real darkies are used for the darkey scenes.<sup>71</sup>

The first of these selections appears to follow the pattern of the dance phonogram with calls, which as we have seen was flexible enough in the early 1890s to include the breaking out of fights on the dance floor. The second closely resembles THE NIGHT ALARM except in its substitution of banjos and minstrel music for the usual band accompaniment and firemen’s chorus. However, the Kentucky phonograms described by Bache introduce the further element of ethnic caricature, and the emphasis is squarely on the “scene,” not the music. In fact, Bache may have been misinformed as to the state of origin of these phonograms, since another article instead attributes them to a black quartet that worked for a recording program in Jersey City, probably Charles Marshall’s:

The very latest things are the cylinders, which contain negro business—consisting of plantation dialogues, banjo solos, negro melodies, and in fact, anything in which the rich voices of a negro quartet can be put to good use. A negro quartet is used in Jersey City, the members of which formerly made their living by playing and singing in saloons. One member of the quartette is a

phenomenal whistler, who is a familiar figure on the Jersey City ferry boats. “Don’t You Hear Dem Bells,” “Golden Slippers,” “By by, by, Honey, I’m a-gone,” and a hundred other melodies are sung in a manner that would make the average negro minstrel blush for shame at his own incompetency. One of the best scenes represents a banjo concert interrupted by a fire. First comes the excitement and noise, next horses’ hoofs are heard, then the rattle of the engine, the shouts of the driver, ringing of the bells, blowing of the whistles, and a confusion of sounds, after which the banjo music is heard again.

All this is produced through the wonderful power of mimicry possessed by one of the negroes. This same darky produces what he calls “Trouble at the Cullud Ball.” The banjo and violin are first heard, mingling with the conversation of the guests. Next a quarrel is in progress, there are angry words over a “cullud lady,” “razzers” are drawn, and there is a pistol shot, followed by a scampering to get away from the police.<sup>72</sup>

The reference to the “phenomenal whistler” known for performing on ferries in the New York City area matches what we know of the early career of George Washington Johnson, the first prominent black phonogenic performer, who soon became famous for his renditions of Sam Devere’s WHISTLING COON and his own LAUGHING SONG, although nothing else is known of any live or phonogenic work Johnson may have done in the early 1890s as part of a vocal quartet.<sup>73</sup> I am hesitant to take this article at face value, since it is contradicted in some details by Bache’s, but if its identification of the phonographic “negro business” with a black *quartet* is correct, that would push the date of origin for the quartet descriptive back to at least the fall of 1890 and support a stronger connection between it and the African-American proto-barbershop traditions of aural mimesis.

I am unaware of any surviving specimens of ROW AT A NEGRO BALL / TROUBLE AT THE CULLUD BALL or even any confirmation beyond these two articles that such a piece existed during the 1890s, but similar representations were made of the dances of Irish immigrants. Russell Hunting briefly offered a new “Casey” in the fall of 1896 entitled CASEY’S WOODEN WEDDING, in which “Casey thanks his friends for their wooden presents, made of wood. He called the figures to a dance. Music by full orchestra. All full.”<sup>74</sup> A more enduring routine introduced at the close of the 1890s was DOWN AT FINNEGAN’S JAMBOREE, with fiddling by violinist Charles D’Almaine:

**ANNOUNCER:** Descriptive selection, Down at Finnegan’s Jamboree, made for Columbia Phonograph Company of New York and Paris.  
Ladies and gentlemen, before we begin to dance I wish to call your attention to the notice upon the platform which says  
Please throw nothin’ at the musicians as they are doin’ the best they can!  
Up we go now! [*laugh, fiddle starts*]. . . .

The announcer shouts out hard-to-decipher comments while the fiddler is playing—not dance calls, however—and occasionally halts the dancing in response to something that has happened on the floor, for instance:

....Stop right where you are [*fiddle stops*], stop right where you are!  
Will the party who threw that soda water bottle at the fiddle player  
please to leave the room  
so as to save funeral expenses.<sup>75</sup>

Meanwhile, announcers were unsure what generic category *DOWN AT FINNEGAN'S JAMBOREE* best fit—was it a “descriptive selection,” as in the example quoted above, or something else?

**ANNOUNCER:** Violin Solo, Down at Finnegan's Jamboree,  
played by Mister Charles D'Almaine, Edison Record.<sup>76</sup>

Len Spencer and his brother Harry subsequently collaborated with D'Almaine and other violinists in a number of further ethnic “scenes” featuring fiddling and dialog, the best-known being *ARKANSAS TRAVELER*.<sup>77</sup> *DOWN AT FINNEGAN'S JAMBOREE* itself was remade as a moulded Edison cylinder in 1902,<sup>78</sup> and when the piece was converted into the four-minute Amberol format in 1911, it was identified on the lid of the box as a “Descriptive Scene,” now incorporating explicit dance calls, a fight between two Irishwomen during a “rest,” and multiple attacks on the musicians as the cornet player and pianist are picked off in turn, leaving only the fiddler conscious to accompany a concluding dance contest.<sup>79</sup> The structure and representational strategy of *DOWN AT FINNEGAN'S JAMBOREE* closely resemble those of the Issler's Orchestra lancers and quadrille phonograms, but now the spoken segments are delivered in stage Irish dialect, the aural analog of written Irish dialect humor, and the fictional dancers are made to display the stereotypical Irish trait of pugnacity. The music itself is represented as aesthetically wanting: the musicians “are doin' the best they can,” says the announcer, pleading for the dancers' indulgence (remember, too, that the orchestra in *CASEY'S WOODEN WEDDING* was “full,” i.e., drunk). Although D'Almaine certainly does not seem to be trying to play poorly, the phonogram is to be evaluated primarily for its realism, not for its musicality.

Much as *DOWN AT FINNEGAN'S JAMBOREE* lampooned Irish immigrants, other descriptive-mode dance phonograms caricatured country “rubes.” One such selection, listed under the Columbia Orchestra's “descriptive” heading along with

THE NIGHT ALARM, was HUSKING BEE, “introducing rural characters and scenes, with country dance and calls in dialect.”<sup>80</sup> Another was UNCLE JOSH’S HUSKING BEE DANCE, described as “giving a correct imitation of a New England dance on the barn floor, with the fiddler playing appropriate music and Uncle Josh calling the figures. The joyous laughter of the merry boys and girls participating is clearly heard, and at the end of the dance Uncle Josh offers a reward to the first who finds a red ear of corn.”<sup>81</sup> The latter selection features accompaniment on fiddle and piano and opens as follows, with Harry Spencer taking the part of Uncle Josh:

**UNCLE JOSH:** Now all you boys and gals get out thar on the barn floor, be ready to kick yourselves, be you all ready?

**CROWD MEMBER** [*over other responses in background*]: You bet we be! [*laughter*]

**UNCLE JOSH:** Well, let ’er go, mister fiddler! [*Fiddle and piano start “Uncle Josh’s Huskin Bee”*]  
(4)

Honor your partners! (4)

Right and left (8)

All join hands and circle to the center [*laugh; crowd cheers*] (4)....

Dance calls continue throughout the phonogram together with cheering, laughter and, at one point, a woman’s voice: “Now, Hiram, you be careful.” When the fiddling is through, the phonogram concludes:

**UNCLE JOSH:** Well now, I’ll be gosh darned if that war’n’t pretty good.

Now then, you gals get dishin’ up cider,

you boys get shuckin’ corn,

first boy finds a red ear o’ corn

can kiss the prettiest gal on the barn floor, by gum. [*Cheer and laughter, one voice: “That’s me!”*]<sup>82</sup>

The musical composition played here on fiddle and piano is “Uncle Josh’s Huskin’ Dance,” published by E. T. Paull and written for use onstage in Denman Thompson’s play *The Old Homestead*,<sup>83</sup> so it was already designed to function as a stylized depiction of a social dance rather than as an accompaniment for a real one. However, the spoken elements of the phonogram were not borrowed from that same play,<sup>84</sup> so they were presumably original to the phonographic medium. Once again, the goal was to depict a scene linked to a recognizable and conventionalized type, in this case not the Irish immigrant but the “hayseed.”

The development of the dance phonogram with calls provides us with an especially clear illustration of an industry-wide shift in representational strategy. During the 1890s, recordists and performers had little choice but to approach all

dances in the descriptive mode because phonographs were not yet loud enough to coordinate the real events satisfactorily. The social interactions that were necessary to make the performance of dance-calling complete had to be simulated or implied within the phonograms themselves. Furthermore, since the goal was to depict these dances rather than to enact them, their structure could be abridged for convenience to fit the duration of a single cylinder or disc without a catastrophic loss of functionality. After the turn of the century, once phonographs had finally become loud enough to coordinate real dances, dance phonograms evolved in two different directions. Recording companies extended their lancers and quadrilles selections out over multiple cylinders and discs and otherwise restructured them to make them suitable as actual dance accompaniments. The descriptive-mode conventions that had emerged around these dance forms during the 1890s were now reserved instead for ethnic caricature, a case in which the ability to eavesdrop without participating was still expected to appeal to consumers.

### **The Verbal Art of the Marketplace**

Like the dance with calls, another subject that invited both phonographic depiction and phonographic substitution was what Amanda Zeitlin calls the “verbal artistry and rhetoric of the marketplace,”<sup>85</sup> the performances of such virtuosic talkers as the carnival shouter, the medicine pitchman, and the auctioneer:

Talkers may well be the last oral poets to hold the attention of American audiences. The pitchman’s spiel, handed down from one generation of showmen to another, combines rhythm, alliteration, metaphors, similes, and repetition as well as storytelling; in addition to figurative language and techniques of versification, it also includes a number of rhetorical devices, most notably, hyperbole.<sup>86</sup>

Phonograms were sometimes used to solicit customers in place of live pitchmen, operating in the substitutive mode as precursors of the later radio or television commercial. However, the artfully delivered verbal pitch was also supposed to be engaging, entertaining and impressive in its own right, worth attending even if one initially had no interest in the product being offered. After all, the pitchman’s object was to attract an audience through the promise of an enjoyable performance and then, in giving one, to render the assertions embodied in it more agreeable and persuasive.

Because the sales pitch was recognized as a form of entertainment as well as a means of soliciting customers, we find efforts to represent it in the descriptive mode as well as in the substitutive mode. Descriptive sales-pitch phonograms invited listeners to enjoy fictional “scenes” in which pitches were being made but not to participate in them as potential customers whom the pitches might actually induce to buy something.

We have already touched on a few cases in which phonography was treated as a form of advertisement without involving explicit sales pitches. First, we know that some phonogenic artists viewed their phonograms as a means of advertising their skills as live performers, and that this was one of the reasons given for naming them in spoken announcements. Sometimes they also took a more proactive role in using phonography to promote themselves. A few singers and musicians, and even a rabbi, are supposed to have auditioned for positions by phonogram,<sup>87</sup> and entire theatrical troupes also used phonography to stir up interest and allow the public to hear a sample of what they could experience live with a paid admission to a show. In early 1891, for instance, a musical called *Ship Ahoy* ran at the Park Theatre in Boston for considerably longer than originally planned,<sup>88</sup> and the management hit upon an innovative publicity scheme to maintain interest in later weeks:

Mr. Prescott, manager of the “Ship Ahoy” Company, playing a very successful engagement at the Park Theatre in Boston, of over three months’ duration, conceived the happy idea of having the principal songs and choruses sung to the phonograph, and then the machine placed in the lobby of the theatre during the daytime, and free exhibitions of these songs given to the public.<sup>89</sup>

On February 20, the board of the New England Phonograph Company “voted to let a Phonograph for Exhibition purposes to the Ship Ahoy Co. at the rate of \$25. per week to exhibit the music of the Ship Ahoy Opera in the lobby of the Park Theatre for such times as may be deemed necessary.”<sup>90</sup> The troupe, which included the future professional phonogenic performer Edward M. Favor,<sup>91</sup> visited the New England company’s offices sometime during the following week to phonogenize selections from the musical, and the results were then used to advertise the show:

For the past two or three days the outer lobby of the Park Theatre has been thronged with a more or less extensive crowd of curious individuals who have listened with attentive ear to the utterances of a healthy and well developed Edison phonograph which has been set up there.... Its cylinders are filled with music and at stated intervals revolve, and give forth, through a flaring foghorn attachment, astonishingly lifelike reproductions of the current airs from “Ship Ahoy,” as sung by the leading male principals and the vivacious chorus.<sup>92</sup>

The *Phonogram* noticed that this scheme had caused “a great deal of attraction and much newspaper comment,” and that attendance had increased as a result.<sup>93</sup> “A phonographic hearing of Mr. Miller’s melodious score invariably induces the wish to hear the opera in the theatre, and the box office, fortunately, is conveniently at hand,” concurred the *Boston Daily Globe*.<sup>94</sup> The Park Theatre tried the same ploy again in the fall of 1892 for advertising the musical *1492*, which likewise featured Edward M. Favor.<sup>95</sup> About the same time, a theatrical manager running a T. H. French *Fauntleroy* company in the South noticed the popularity of wax-tube phonograph exhibitions there and began dispatching prerecorded scenes from the play for local exhibitors to use in advance of engagements by his troupe.<sup>96</sup> In 1894, the even more ambitious plan was announced of sending out synchronized phonograph and kinoscope previews of a farce comedy, *The Flams*.<sup>97</sup> In later years, as we have seen, many phonograph dealers held free promotional concerts to advertise machines and phonograms for sale. Sometimes machines were set up in stores or on the street with their horns abutting in the mouths of mannequins representing women, making them appear to “sing” to passersby as a means of plugging either phonograph products or sheet music.<sup>98</sup> Free “concerts” of ordinary commercial phonograms were used to advertise goods and services with no apparent connection to phonography or to its recorded content—to promote new brands of soap,<sup>99</sup> to hold an audience between iterations of a patent medicine pitch,<sup>100</sup> or even to make one bootblack’s outfit more attractive than another.<sup>101</sup> All these cases might reasonably be regarded as uses of phonography in advertising.

However, I would like to narrow the focus here to phonograms containing explicit oral sales pitches. During the tinfoil era, Edison predicted that the phonograph was destined to be used as a substitute for live street barkers: “It will be sitting in the windows of stores on Broadway and other streets singing out, ‘Babbitt’s best soap,’ ‘NEW YORK SUN—price two cents,’ ‘Brandreth’s Pills,’ ‘Longfellow’s Poems,’ ‘Ten cents for a shave!’ and so on.”<sup>102</sup> One reporter was told in 1879 that there had been an offer of two or three hundred thousand dollars for the patent rights to this application.<sup>103</sup> Once phonography had become a “practical” technology, a



wide variety of goods and services were indeed promoted in this way. In 1900, a restaurant on Ninth Street in Philadelphia was said to have installed a phonograph with a megaphone to announce its bill of fare to passersby: “Ham and eggs, fifteen cents! Calves’ liver and bacon, twenty cents! Corned beef and cab-b-b-b-b—zip—zip—zip!!!”<sup>104</sup> While many nickelodeon proprietors seem to have used prerecorded music to lure in customers,<sup>105</sup> some also educed spoken sales pitches, of which one specimen surviving from 1900 or 1901 opens and closes with several toots on a pennywhistle, lists the current film program, and concludes:

Remember we give an entire change of program,  
every week—all new pictures.  
This is an excellent program,  
and no one should miss it.  
Step in now.  
Everything is first class  
and high grade, for ladies—children, and gentlemen.  
No smoking allowed inside.  
No intoxicated persons admitted.  
And we guarantee satisfaction.  
Your money refunded at the door if you are not satisfied after seeing the whole program.<sup>106</sup>

While these phonograms were amplified indiscriminately into the surrounding neighborhood, other arrangements forced people to enter or linger around the store itself in order to listen to a phonographic entertainment. An 1891 article in a footwear industry trade journal suggested “announcing that the phonograph may be heard by any one who may enter the store” as a ploy for luring in potential customers. The author asserted that a “phonograph placed in the window, surrounded by an eager group of listeners, would draw a crowd,” and advised that, if the selection were a well-played minstrel song with banjo accompaniment, “every listener will wait until it is finished, no matter what the words are.” Under the circumstances, the words might as well be made to constitute an advertising pitch, perhaps even formulated in the phonographic first person:

Here is your opportunity. Have the minstrel sing the glory of your boots and shoes. You get in your little advertisement right here, and every visitor will listen. When the song is ended, the phonograph will add: “Ladies and gentlemen, I am only a machine. I do not wear boots or shoes, and I can not tell you all the good points of the shoes sold here by Mr. Dash. He has a fine stock, and he can fit your feet, and can suit your taste and your pocket-book. Hadn’t you better look at his goods now that you are in his store?”<sup>107</sup>

In 1899, a *Phonoscope* correspondent reported success using such “free concerts” as an advertising gimmick and likewise advocated customizing the phonograms themselves for an even greater impact, either by having them specially made or adapting existing ones:

You can...have special records made with music and announcements of your goods and prices.

I have noticed that there is a short space on the end of each cylinder, and it can be easily used to great advantage by putting a record on the machine and moving the recorder to the right end of the cylinder to the space that is left. Then record anything you wish. Make mention of any line of goods you wish, or call attention to your different departments. For example, “Notice Our Stylish Headwear for Men,” or “Do You Need a Pair of Shoes? If so, You Can Buy Them Here,” etc.<sup>108</sup>

One regular Edison brown wax cylinder has in fact been discovered with an advertisement added in the space left over at the end: “The place to buy records is at Benfield’s (?) Music Store, 33 North 8th Street, Lebanon, P-A.”<sup>109</sup> Sometime in the early 1890s, the Columbia Phonograph Company also notified prospective clients that an ear-tube machine like the coin-actuated ones, but operated freely by the push of a button, could be positioned inside or in front of a store, interspersing commercial messages between standard audicular selections, for example: “You like that music, I am sure. Well, you will be just as much delighted with Mr. Smith’s overcoats.”<sup>110</sup>

Once the customer had been lured safely inside, the interior of a store offered further opportunities for phonographic sales pitches. “The customer going into a large store will not need to find a shopman at each counter to describe the merits of a line of goods,” an Australian newspaper predicted in 1904. “He will touch a button near at hand, and a mechanical talker will tell him all he wants to know,” including “that enticing speech by which you are induced to buy the latest thing in bootware, hatware, or backware, as the case may be.”<sup>111</sup> In fact, this idea is already supposed to have been tried in the United States as early as 1898. “In Binghamton,” the *Phonoscope* reported that year, “a clothing dealer has one arranged in his separate departments and they quote prices for customers when a button is pushed.”<sup>112</sup> Cigars were a favorite subject for in-store phonographic advertising:

As one enters the store he is greeted by a cheery voice, apparently coming from no particular spot, which invites him to have a cigar. He glances around and finally se[er]s the tiny apparatus upon the cigar case. Meanwhile the voice tells of the merits of La Coralina cigars, makes proffer of a match and boldly announces that it is Mr. Whiting’s latest addition to his force of salesmen.<sup>113</sup>

Sometimes the advertising phonogram came with visual accouterments, as when a spring-powered repeating phonograph was installed in a “stuffed crow, or a representation of a crow” to advertise a medicine for curing corns.<sup>114</sup> Meanwhile, since spring-powered phonographs would eventually wind down if left unattended, another inventor patented a pair of phonographic advertising devices powered directly by customers’ actions: “the opening or closing of a door, pulling out of a handle,”<sup>115</sup> or “the movements of the blade in a cigar-cutter.”<sup>116</sup> During the tinfoil era, the Ansonia Clock Company had announced plans to market “an ‘advertising clock,’ which shall announce any kind of goods which may be offered for sale” as part of its prospective speaking clock line,<sup>117</sup> an idea for which a German-American journalist suggested one use: “For public houses, clocks could be built which could perhaps call out phrases such as ‘Come boys, take a drink!’ ‘I am awful dry!’ etc.”<sup>118</sup> When nickel-on-the-slot phonographs were first placed in San Francisco saloons in 1889, they were similarly customized for advertising purposes, according to Louis Glass: “We generally tell him at the end of the cylinder, to go over to the bar and get a drink.”<sup>119</sup> In 1892, a patent was even issued on a cash register with a phonographic attachment that could be programmed to ask, “Have you purchased ‘Sapolio’?”<sup>120</sup> Customers who had entered a place of business might thus find themselves exposed to a variety of automated voices urging them to buy drinks, cigars, clothing, or anything else being offered there for sale.

Phonographic advertising was not to be limited to the immediate premises on which a business was conducted. The public phonograph exhibition was another potential site for prerecorded sales pitches, as suggested in 1891:

Exhibitions could be given at the district school-houses, near town, during the winter, which would undoubtedly prove profitable; and incidentally, the phonograph could advise the country-people who would gather in large numbers where to trade in town—for a consideration, of course, from the merchants.<sup>121</sup>

In this case, the advantage of the phonographic “commercial” was presumably supposed to be its sheer novelty; it was not a matter of economy or convenience. However, most proposals for phonographic advertising involved fully automatic arrangements that could also exploit the machine’s potential as a labor-saving device.

Automatic advertising phonographs were installed in areas with heavy pedestrian traffic, the same places where coin-in-the-slot phonographs were typically found:

In a prominent position in the immediate vicinity of the Staten Island ferry an ingenious person has placed one of the Edison phonographs, and on it there is a legend which states that any one may hear a verse of a popular ballad, free of cost, by simply turning a crank. This invitation is accepted with enthusiasm by the people at large, and about once a minute a victim steps up with a smile and starts the machine.

The following gem is a sample of what he hears:

“Oh, the minstrel boy to the war has gone,  
And when at night he sets  
In the camp-fire light, he don't feel right  
Without Mulligan's cigarettes.”

Thus the phonograph becomes an advertising medium of no small calibre, for it attracts and amuses.<sup>122</sup>

Although the first installations of this kind probably relied on ear-tubes and public curiosity, examples from later in the decade used horns to project their advertising pitches throughout the surrounding area, automatically repeating them at fixed intervals. In 1898, a *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* writer described a typical encounter with such an instrument as follows: “you stop in a ferry house and a phonograph with a brass horn on it begins: ‘K-r-r-NO-OW, leddies and gents, I want to kr-r-r-all your kr-rtension to Professor Gummidge's Great 'n' Only Tooth Wash—’ and you leave it maundering and clicking and quavering.”<sup>123</sup> An entrepreneur in Birmingham, England, worked up a scheme in 1901 to set up phonographic advertising kiosks along busy streets: “The Phonograph is set and proceeds to describe a dinner at Smith's for so much or mentions that the invisible and imprisoned speaker is wearing a suit of Brown's clothes, which are really startling value for a small sum.”<sup>124</sup> In the late 1890s, a new device was introduced that would flip through a series of advertising cards while a concealed phonograph commented on them and educed music through a brass horn, the idea being to install one in “every possible place where people congregate; ferry-houses, railroad stations, seaside resorts, etc.”<sup>125</sup> This arrangement followed in an established inventive tradition of using musical boxes, bells rung automatically at intervals, and other similar ploys to draw attention to visual advertisements,<sup>126</sup> but now the sound would not only draw attention to the advertisement but also contribute substantially to its content. Advertising phonographs were installed in ferry-houses, railroad stations, and so forth mainly because these were the places where the largest number of people was expected to be

exposed to them. Unless they were situated in front of or inside stores, their messages rarely coincided in any specific way with their locations. However, it was once suggested that they could be “placed in the street cars to call out the various shops along the leading thoroughfares,”<sup>127</sup> suggesting nearby shopping opportunities based on each vehicle’s current location.

Prerecorded advertising pitches were also delivered at public fairs. In 1891, the New England Phonograph Company arranged to operate a phonograph as part of an exhibit set up by the spice merchants D. L. Slade & Co. at a health food exposition. The machine was equipped with a set of hearing tubes capable of accommodating fourteen listeners at once, and the phonograms contained a specially prepared advertising pitch: “We relate on cylinders the advantages of using their celebrated spices.”<sup>128</sup> John B. Ralston, the New York Phonograph Company’s agent in Utica, New York, invented “an unique combination of the Edison phonograph with the mechanical principle of the automaton,” first shown during an unspecified exposition about the beginning of 1892,<sup>129</sup> but better known for its appearance at the fair in Chicago the following year, where it advertised Hub Gore shoes in the form of an Uncle Sam automaton holding a shoe in the air. Its advertising pitch, as printed on a surviving souvenir card, begins: “Hello! Here I am again. Do you want me to tell you something about Congress Shoes?” The speech focuses on urging listeners to look for the Hub Gore name and heart trademark stamped inside the company’s shoes as a sign of quality: “You see the shoemaker has his heart set on the shoe. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! JOKE, see it?” Along with its efforts to provoke laughter, the Uncle Sam automaton also leads listeners in repeating the company’s name in different voices to foster brand-name recognition: “Now don’t forget those words, HUB GORE. Say it once more—HUB GORE. Now repeat it—HUB GORE. Whisper it please—HUB GORE. Now shout it—HUB GORE. Yes, that’s right, you won’t forget those words, will you?” After coaxing listeners to shout the company’s name a few more times, the script concludes with “That’s all. Good-bye.” The card then indicates: “Rest about 10 seconds between speeches.”<sup>130</sup> In this way, the Uncle Sam automaton guided its listeners through a programmed sequence of activities, inviting

them to participate actively in the pitch and so to experience it more intensely than might have been the case with passive listening.

Another group of plans centered on exposing people to prerecorded advertisements in the comfort of their own homes and offices. In 1900, inventor Allan B. Clark applied for a patent on a phonographic system by which telephone subscribers would hear prerecorded “messages—such as advertising matter, news matter, &c.” educed over the line from the moment they picked up their receivers and rang up Central until such time as the operator responded.<sup>131</sup> However, the idea was usually to distribute the phonograms themselves rather than to educe them over a telephone line. A short story of 1878 describes a book agent taking advantage of phonography in this way:

In order to reach the ears of certain combative persons, he had purchased a speaking phonograph, which, when properly primed and left with these unsuspecting individuals, would expound the advantages to be derived from subscribing to his books in a way there was no resisting. Besides its novelty, the machine could not be talked down, driven away, or kicked, to advantage.<sup>132</sup>

Consumers might also have *ignored* the free talking machines, but commentaries of the tinfoil era assumed that they would voluntarily audition such advertisements “when they have a moment’s leisure and the phonograph is not busy,”<sup>133</sup> or could perhaps be tricked into believing a free phonograph provided by a mutual association contained music rather than a dull insurance prospectus, and so would be enticed to listen against their will.<sup>134</sup> Later proposals suggested the pitches would be more effective, and more likely to be played, if they were intermingled with some kind of audicular program or worked into the fabric of songs or comic talks themselves. In 1902, the *Boston Post* predicted:

Where talking machines are now installed in so many households it will not be long before big concerns begin to give away records advertising their business. A comic song singing the praises of Dr. Blank’s corn plasters, or a monologue in “Rube” dialect, telling of Uncle Ebenezer’s wonderful recovery from rheumatism by the use of some mineral water, might prove very popular.<sup>135</sup>

In the meantime, some of the smaller cylinder recording companies of the 1890s had offered to make customized advertising phonograms, including the Lyric Phonograph Company and the Norcross Phonograph Company, of which Jim Walsh wrote:

They would begin something like: “Good morning, Madam. Have you had your Quaker Oats? Mr. Albert C. Campbell will entertain you with a song, ‘Sweet Rosie O’Grady.’” At the conclusion of

the song the announcer, who perhaps was Campbell himself, would say: "Thank you, madam. Remember, Quaker Oats are good for your children."<sup>136</sup>

One tongue-in-cheek proposal, published in 1899, even called for companies to send out a full-fledged speaking android, an "automated drummer" capable of enacting all the key functions of the live salesman:

It is made of papiermache, and represents a drummer sitting on a sample trunk. The whole thing is about eight inches high, and is boxed up and sent to the retail merchant by express. When it arrives the business man sets it on his desk and touches a spring which releases a phonograph cylinder inside the trunk and the drummer begins to talk. "Good day, sir," he says: "the following are our list prices on so and so," and with that the machine reels off the latest quotations of whatever trust it happens to represent. At the other end of the trunk is a hole connecting with a receiving cylinder, and the merchant speaks his order into it. "Thank you" says the manikin, when he gets through and sing[s] you a selection from the latest opera. If the merchant doesn't care for that part of it all he has to do is turn the switch.<sup>137</sup>

Again, the expectation here was that the recipient would voluntarily set the phonogram in motion, perhaps motivated by the novelty of the scheme or the promise of an opera selection at the end of the deal. Provision was made for recording an order in response to the sales pitch by analogy with the taking of an order by a live drummer, and the "sample trunk" might have contained real samples of the wares being offered, although it may simply have been contrived to house the phonograph mechanism and the two cylinders. The "automated drummer" proposal was probably not meant to be taken seriously, but it did take the idea of the mechanized sales pitch to a logical extreme.

The examples discussed so far involved cylinders, but Emile Berliner also tried to interest prospective clients in having their products promoted through the distribution of free gramophone discs:

We will make for you any special plate, containing, besides an interesting musical piece, etc., a bit of advertising such as you may suggest; manufacture as many hard rubber copies as you may order at regular wholesale rates; and distribute [sic] them gratis to people buying Gramophones.... Nobody will refuse to listen to a fine song or concert piece, or an oration—even if interrupted by the modest remark: "Tartar's Baking Powder is the Best," or "Wash the Baby with Orange Soap," etc.<sup>138</sup>

We have already encountered a possible example of this strategy in the plug for Sweet Caporal cigarettes the Haydn Quartet once interjected into the roadhouse segment of A SLEIGH RIDE PARTY on a Victor disc. However, one disc Berliner offered for sale appears to have been conceived as a sample of another kind of

advertising disc he envisioned: ADVERTISING PLANTS BAKING POWDER (Berliner 641), phonogenized by George Graham:

Now there, friends,  
a few words to you about baking powder.  
I wish to say something about Doctor Plant's Cream of Tartar  
Baking Powder.  
This is absolutely the purest and best baking powder  
on the market today.  
Now the public are cautioned against  
buying these cheap powders  
which contain alum  
and ammonia.  
Now, you all know that ammonia is made  
from the hoofs—of—dead and decayed animals.  
And friends,  
think of that.  
Think of that, think of that, a preparation like that  
being used in a baking powder.  
Now this baking powder, Doctor Plant's baking powder,  
is a pure cream of tartar—baking powder....<sup>139</sup>

As far as can be determined from surviving print advertisements, there was no such product as Doctor Plant's Baking Powder on the market in 1896, so what we have here is evidently a fictional sales pitch, not a real one. Nevertheless, Graham also delivers it as a "straight" sales pitch; these *are* the terms on which cream of tartar baking sodas were being promoted at the time.<sup>140</sup> Even though the specified product does not actually exist, the phonogram proceeds as though it were in fact advertising it to gramophone listeners, encouraging people with real products to sell to consider taking advantage of its innovative promotional technique. The status of this disc as a sample of true phonographic advertisement becomes even clearer when we compare it with other items in Graham's phonogenic repertoire that were, by contrast, conceived as fictional scenes.

George Graham is one of the most intriguing phonogenic performers of the late 1890s and early 1900s but, at the same time, one of the least thoroughly documented by past researchers. In assessing his background, writers have hitherto relied almost exclusively on Fred Gaisberg's account of him as

a character of Washington life, a type of happy-go-lucky vagabond met with in the saloons, mostly near the free lunch counter, dodging the eyes of the bartender and cadging for drinks. He steered the easiest course through life, sometimes as a member of an Indian Medicine Troupe doing one-night stands in the spring and summer and in the winter selling quack medicines on the street corners. His tall, lanky figure, draped in a threadbare Prince Albert coat and adorned with a flowing tie, his wide-brimmed Stetson hat and his ready stream of wit combined to extract the



dimes and nickels from his simple audience in exchange for a bottle of colored water. I discovered him one day on the corner of Seventh and Pennsylvania Avenue selling a liver cure to a crowd of spellbound negroes. He was assisted by John O'Terrell, who strummed the banjo and sang songs to draw the crowd.<sup>141</sup>

Gaisberg's memoir, if it can be trusted (which it often cannot),<sup>142</sup> suggests that Graham had really earned his living at one time using the same kind of sales pitch he was later to phonogenize, and he has typically been represented as, in the words of Jim Walsh, "a patent medicine salesman who made records as a sideline."<sup>143</sup> However, further research shows that medicine sales represented only one aspect of Graham's varied career as a live verbal artist. We encounter another aspect of Graham's work in a *Washington Post* report of the inaugural meeting of the local Hotfoot Club, "a benevolent association organized for the purpose of feeding hungry actors at unholy hours of the night," on September 14, 1894:

On this occasion Washington's own black-face comedian, George Graham, carried off the honors for fun-making, and succeeded so well in pleasing those veteran minstrel men, Primrose and West, that before the evening was over they offered him an engagement, which was promptly accepted. Graham commenced his career as a comedian at Kolb's Garden [a beer garden hosting nightly concerts], in this city, and from constant study of the peculiarities of our colored fellow citizens, he has acquired the darkey dialect to a degree of perfection that few actors can boast. He has played with several minstrel companies, but his present engagement is the best he has yet had, for which he may thank the Hotfoot Club.<sup>144</sup>

In fact, Graham had already signed on with the Hopkins Trans-Oceanic Star Specialty Company for the 1894-95 season as a "monologue artist" alongside such other attractions as a transfigurator, a clay modeler and a trio of acrobats,<sup>145</sup> but he did join Primrose and West's Minstrels in the summer of 1895.<sup>146</sup> Unfortunately, he suffered from severe rheumatism and had become so seriously ill by October that his friends among the entertainers of Washington—including acrobats, a nine-year-old skirt dancer, a club swinger and a contortionist—held a benefit concert for him.<sup>147</sup> He appears again in vaudeville listings between 1896 and 1902 as a parodist, dialectician and "monologist,"<sup>148</sup> but the quality of his performances seems to have been uneven: once he "had evidently been 'on the town' a little too much during the day, and consequently his turn was not such a decided 'go' as it might have been,"<sup>149</sup> while another time he was "a trifle shy at first, owing to his appearance in white face before a strange audience."<sup>150</sup> In August 1903, he had to cancel his engagements for the upcoming season and go to Silver City, New Mexico for his health.<sup>151</sup> He never

seems to have performed on stage or for the phonograph again, and Jim Walsh mentions in passing that he was no longer alive in 1908.<sup>152</sup> Walsh further identifies him as the brother of Charles Graham, the British-born composer of “Two Little Girls in Blue.”<sup>153</sup> This is still far from a complete picture of George Graham’s life outside of phonography, but it is at least evident that he was better known in Washington during the 1890s as a blackface comedian than as a medicine pitchman.

George Graham’s work defies easy categorization. He was known onstage in Washington as “the man of ‘minstrelisms,’” a term that evidently spanned a wide variety of genres: “He spun a yarn, sang a song, and told his tale of love, much to the merriment of his hearers.”<sup>154</sup> His known phonograms, recorded between 1895 and 1903, likewise vary greatly in framing and content. His phonogenic repertoire included variously-titled comic stump speeches on the subjects of love, drinking, money, woman and married life,<sup>155</sup> specimens of mock political oratory,<sup>156</sup> humorous “scenes” ranging from courtroom proceedings to census-taking to football games,<sup>157</sup> parodies of African-American public speaking and religious practice,<sup>158</sup> a spoof of stage melodrama called *DRAMA IN ONE ACT*,<sup>159</sup> comic narratives,<sup>160</sup> a piece of Irish comedy entitled *CASEY’S ADDRESS TO THE G. A. R.*,<sup>161</sup> and even one serious recitation, Eugene Field’s poem “Departure.”<sup>162</sup> Berliner first categorized Graham’s selections as the “Fakir Series,”<sup>163</sup> and later as “Talking Records.”<sup>164</sup> The etched inscriptions and printed labels on the discs themselves tend simply to identify their subject matter without elaboration: *MARRIED LIFE*, *PROCEEDINGS IN A POLICE COURT*, *COLORED FUNERAL*, *ANARCHIST MEETING*, and so forth. However, Graham’s spoken announcements are often more specific. His comic stump speeches, for instance, generally open according to this formula:

A few words in regard to married life  
by George Graham.<sup>165</sup>

Comic narratives begin with their titles:

Forty-seven dollars  
by George Graham.<sup>166</sup>

The genre identification in these cases is unproblematic: Graham *is* telling a story or performing as a comic stump speaker. Meanwhile, Graham identifies many of his

other phonogenizations, in which he cannot fully assume the roles of the speakers he is representing, as “imitations,” following another consistent formula:

Imitation of the proceedings  
in the police court in Washington, D. C.  
by George Graham.<sup>167</sup>

Imitation of an old-time colored preacher down South  
buryin’ one of the brothers  
by George Graham.<sup>168</sup>

Imitation  
of a socialist meeting  
at Nitroglycerine Park  
by George Graham.<sup>169</sup>

Now let us consider how Graham’s sales-pitch phonograms fit into the patterns found in the rest of his recorded repertoire. ADVERTISING PLANTS BAKING POWDER contains no spoken announcement in the usual sense; Graham instead launches directly into his pitch with “Now there, friends, a few words to you about baking powder.” This disc contains no framing to suggest that it is a specimen of detached rhetoric intended not to be taken literally but to be appreciated as part of an audicular “concert.” The first-person ON THE GRAMOPHONE discs Berliner prepared as advertisements for the gramophone itself, described in chapter nine, likewise omit conventional spoken announcements, instead launching directly into a pitch which addresses phonographic listeners directly in the second person: “Friends, allow me to introduce myself. I am the gramophone”; “I am known far and wide as the ‘Berliner Gramophone’.... Whatever you talk into me I can talk back to you.” Formally speaking, Graham treats ADVERTISING PLANTS BAKING POWDER and ON THE GRAMOPHONE alike as genuine sales pitches by which the gramophone could actually advertise products to its listeners with the intention of persuading them to take real action. Meanwhile, however, Graham also phonogenized self-proclaimed “imitations” of sales pitches and related verbal forms under the titles THE STREET FAKIR, FAKIR SELLING CORN CURE, SIDE SHOW ORATOR, THE AUCTIONEER, and PIANO SALE,<sup>170</sup> in which he represents his subjects in the descriptive rather than the substitutive mode. These phonograms differ from ADVERTISING PLANTS BAKING POWDER in a number of formal respects apart from being announced as “imitations.” In phonogenizing them, Graham had simultaneously to conceive of two very different

“imaginary” audiences: the people who would eventually be listening to him through the gramophone and a fictional group of prospective customers to whom the pitches were ostensibly addressed.

First of all, there is the matter of the pitch itself. *STREET FAKIR* (Berliner 638Y), phonogenized on May 23, 1896, begins with a typically devious attempt to engage the attention of passersby. First the pitchman implies that he is about to perform a magic trick, then he denies that he is there to sell anything, and it is not until after he has cited two hyperbolic testimonials for his liniment that he gets down to soliciting quarters:

Imitation of a street fakir  
by George Graham.

Now, friends, if you'll gather 'round and give me your kind and undivided attention for a few moments,

I will endeavor to entertain and amuse you  
by the performance of several feats of legerdemain  
commonly known as magic.

Now a good many people ~~seeing me appear~~ upon the public thoroughfare  
imagine that I have got something to sell.

Such, I assure you, is not the case.

I am here simply to advertise,  
to advertise and introduce a preparation  
that has a reputation extending from ocean to ocean.

I refer to Doctor Bocaccio's  
Celebrated Egyptian Liniment,  
one of the grandest preparations ever invented.

It cures coughs, colds, sore throats,  
rheumatism, neuralgia, in fact all aches and pains.

Now, I have in my possession  
testimonials from some o' the most wealthy and influential citizens  
of this city.

There was Grover Cleveland,  
was laid up with the rheumatism so that he could not move,  
couldn't walk.

He used one quarter of a bottle of this preparation,  
and today he is as well as ever  
and is in good shape to walk out o' town  
the next fourth o' March.

There was an old lady down in South Washington,  
a hundred and seventy-five years old,  
had been bedridden for seventeen years.

She used one half a bottle of this preparation  
and today she is earning a good living for herself  
dancing in the valley in *The Black Crook*.

Now, people,  
the regular price of this preparation  
is one dollar per bottle.

But today in order to advertise it  
I shall pass it out at the phenomenally low price  
of twenty-five cents a bottle.<sup>171</sup>

A few topical references bear explanation. *The Black Crook* was a song-and-dance extravaganza notable mainly for its reliance on a troupe of scantily-clad actresses who first appeared onstage in a “garland dance” set in a valley in the Hartz mountains;<sup>172</sup> hence the humor in the pitchman’s claim that an ailing 175-year-old woman treated with his medicine had afterwards been able to join this troupe. Grover Cleveland was to “walk out o’ town” on March 4, 1897 because that was when his term as president was due to expire, and he was not seeking reelection. Graham’s pitchman alludes to his audience “seeing him appear upon the public thoroughfare” and anchors his spiel deictically to Washington, D. C. (“this city”), which is where the handwritten inscription etched on the disc indicates Graham actually phonogenized it. Phonographic listeners could obviously not see Graham, and a majority of them would not be hearing the disc in Washington, so these references in themselves necessarily place STREET FAKIR in the descriptive mode *as a representation of a sales pitch*, inviting eavesdropping but not full participation—although, in light of the title and absence of the sounds of audience response, the phonogram might better be interpreted as a *substitutive*-mode representation of an *imitation* of a sales pitch, such as might have been witnessed on a vaudeville stage. FAKIR SELLING CORN CURE (Berliner 639), which Graham phonogenized on the same day as the preceding take of STREET FAKIR and may have conceived as a sequel to it, starts with the pitchman’s announcement that he has just *returned* to Washington, where he has made sales in the past, a detail that becomes important later on. He then proceeds to explain what corns are, assert that his product can cure them, and cite a humorously implausible testimonial about its efficacy.

Imitation of a street fakir  
 selling corn medicine,  
 by George Graham.  
 Now, friends, I’m amongst you once more  
 and since leaving the city I have traveled extensively  
 advertising and introducing  
 Doctor Simpson’s Asiatic  
 Corn Cure.  
 Now there’s a good many people do not know exactly  
 what a corn is.  
 Well, I’ll tell you.  
 A corn is a hardening of the flesh caused by friction,  
 and when you get something to eat away that dead, hard skin and at the same time cause no pain,

you have something that will cure your corn.  
 Now, here's a preparation  
 that will actually do the work,  
 and I have testimonials in my possession  
 from some o' the most wealthy citizens of the city.  
 Now, there's a—man over in Georgetown [*a part of Washington, D. C.*],  
 his whole family was troubled with corns.  
 He just took one box o' this preparation,  
 and put it up on the mantelpiece,  
 and the corns all popped out of their own accord.  
 I tell you, it's a wonderful preparation,  
 is this corn medicine.  
 There's nothin' like it.<sup>173</sup>

It is difficult to evaluate how closely Graham's fictional medicine pitches may have resembled the ones he and his peers actually delivered on the streets of Washington in the mid-1890s. Hyperbole was recognized as a staple of the pitchman's art, and if the testimonials Graham cites can be dismissed out of hand as incredible, they surely differ in degree rather than in quality from the claims actually made of quack medicines in that era. Unlike ADVERTISING PLANTS BAKING POWDER or ON THE GRAMOPHONE, however, these pitches are worded in such a way as to exclude phonographic listeners from participation as literal addressees.

Graham also distinguishes STREET FAKIR and FAKIR SELLING CORN CURE from his "real" advertising phonograms by simulating fictional outcomes for the fictional sales pitches. In FAKIR SELLING CORN CURE, Graham's "fakir" is accosted by a disgruntled former customer, a risk foreshadowed by the fact, established in the opening lines of the disc, that he had been in Washington before. Graham shifts between several contrastive voices to enact the scene and its denouement, although the contrast between them is not always great enough to avoid confusion about who is supposed to be saying what, particularly when he speaks for the "crowd" as a whole:

**DISSATISFIED CUSTOMER:** Say, look here.  
 I got a box o' that corn medicine from you before,  
 and didn't do me no good.  
**FAKIR:** Why, certainly not  
 Why, my friend, this medicine only acts on human beings.  
**CROWD** [*though only one voice*]: Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha.  
**FAKIR:** That's right,  
 give it to 'im.  
 I know that that preparation is all right.  
 B'g I even use it myself.  
 Certainly.  
 Everybody.  
**SATISFIED CUSTOMER:** Why, certainly, it cured me of the rheumatism.

**FAKIR:** Hear that? Hear that testimonial?  
 Why, I tell you, friends, it can't be beat.  
 Why yes, sir, you take a box of it, the price of it is ten cents.  
 Yes sir, thank you sir.  
 And thank you very kindly, sir, too.  
 And thank you, I tell you, you see you can't stand around this crowd and run down this corn  
 medicine  
 'cause people know what this corn medicine is.  
 And thank you sir.  
 And you too sir.  
 And you too sir, thank you, sir.  
 Why, I'll cure all the corns in Washington.  
 After I get through, there'll be no corns left.  
 Thank you, sir.  
 Why, I save more soles in a day  
 than the Salvation Army saves in a year,  
 but I save not your immortal soul,  
 I save the soles of your feet.<sup>174</sup>

Graham's repeated "thank you sir, you too sir," implies a series of sales to customers, although we hear only the pitchman's voice; there is no "chorus" of spectators like that found in the Pat Brady or Michael Casey sketches. In *STREET FAKIR*, Graham's pitchman finds his audience more compliant but leaves hastily when he spots an approaching policeman:

Anyone wish a bottle? Yes, sir.  
 Thank you, sir.  
 And thank you, sir.  
 Thank you, sir, and I guarantee you'll derive more benefit from this quarter  
 than many a quarter you have invested. Thank you, sir.  
 You too, sir.  
 Thank you very kindly, sir.  
 Well, as I see the blue-coated guardian of the peace  
 comin' around the corner,  
 I will now leave for fields and pastures new.<sup>175</sup>

*STREET FAKIR* thus culminates in the pitchman's successful disengagement, timed so as to maximize sales while avoiding a brush with the law. The denouement of "real" advertisements like *ADVERTISING PLANTS BAKING POWDER* and *ON THE GRAMOPHONE* is necessarily external to the phonograms, left unresolved during recording, its success or failure contingent on whether a phonographic listener will or will not be persuaded later on to buy a Berliner gramophone or (more hypothetically) switch to Plant's Cream of Tartar Baking Powder. The "imitations," on the other hand, are self-contained units. Graham lends drama to each fictional episode by placing obstacles in the pitchman's path for him either to overcome through ready

wit, like heckling from a dissatisfied customer, or to avoid, like the approach of a policeman, but the outcome of each sales pitch—whatever it may be—is predetermined and simulated to make the scene gratifyingly complete. While Graham himself identifies these routines as “imitations,” others found different ways of conceptualizing them. IMITATION OF A STREET FAKIR was thus categorized as a “recitation” in a sample home entertainment program using a Berliner gramophone in late 1896,<sup>176</sup> a term broadly associated with scripted verbal art indulged in for its own sake.

Graham was neither the first nor the only performer to phonogenize “imitations” of sales pitches, and other instances fall more clearly into the descriptive mode of phonography. In CASEY AT THE CIRCUS, Russell Hunting had already exposed his main character to side-show shouters whose spieling he must have mimicked: “With his friend Slattery, the redoubtable Michael takes in the great aggregation, visiting the side-show and the menagerie. Sees the fat woman, the elephant, giraffe, etc., and resists the intrusions of fakirs and concert-ticket fiends.”<sup>177</sup> Hunting had also cast Casey himself as a quack medicine pitchman in CASEY’S GREAT MEDICAL DISCOVERY: “He offers his wonderful cure-all for sale, and reads an assortment of testimonials that surpass anything heretofore heard of in that line.”<sup>178</sup> The quartet descriptive A TRIP TO THE COUNTY FAIR follows its depiction of the railroad journey with the intermingled cries of fair vendors (“‘A large glass of pink lemonade for five cents!’—‘Here you are, three balls for five cents, every time you hit the nigger you get a cigar!’”)<sup>179</sup> and then a sequence of lengthier pitches for various attractions:

**SHOUTER:** Now, then, ladies and gentlemen, step right this way and see some of the greatest living curiosities of the day!

We have here in this small tent on the right Signior Skinnerini, the elastic skin man, the only living wonder who is known to have four million, four hundred and forty-four thousand four hundred and one yards of skin on his neck! Pinch his neck there, Bill. [*Catlike “rowr.”*]

**CROWD:** Ahhh! [*murmuring, unintelligible speech*]

**RUBE:** And here we have a genuine Nubian cow, right from Nubia.

Sam, give her a kick on the leg. [*“Kick” sound; vocal imitation of cow mooing.*]

**SPECTATOR:** Oh, look at ’im, oh mymymymymymy!<sup>180</sup>



In the fall of 1896, David C. Bangs, whose repertoire overlapped Graham's at points,<sup>181</sup> phonogenized P. T. BARNUM'S SIDE SHOW SHOUTER for the Chicago Talking Machine Company.<sup>182</sup> John P. Hogan's HOT CORN sketch, which had featured in phonograph exhibitions since 1889, depicted the song of a street vendor in its usual social context: "Illustrating a characteristic scene of New York street life. The colored hot-corn woman. With song, dance, interruptions and disputes."<sup>183</sup> ON THE MIDWAY, an orchestral descriptive selection, was advertised as "introducing the Fakirs and it's [sic] theatre. 'One-eyed men half price.'"<sup>184</sup>

But it was Len Spencer who developed the theme most fully, starting with the "Fakir Series" he introduced through the United States Phonograph Company about 1895. The first item listed was a variant on O'GRADY AT THE GUTTENBURG RACE TRACK, a selection that had formed part of his short-lived O'Grady series of 1892 but which was now reframed as a depiction of the bookmaker's art rather than of the Irishman's plight in losing his money:

BOOKMAKER AT THE RACES. Scene at Guttenburg racetrack. Around the bookmaker's stand. Buying and selling pools. Bell rings. "They 're off." Running horses. Progress of the race. "At the quarter." "At the half." "At the three-quarters." "Winner—Cabbage, by a head." Broke. Chorus.<sup>185</sup>

The idea of depicting the movement of horses by simulating the clip-clop of their hooves was already quite old, of course, but Spencer's technique of representing a horse race from start to finish in this way seems to have been new, at least to phonography, and was to reappear from time to time in later years,<sup>186</sup> so it is not surprising that he chose to revive the innovative routine in a new form. Perhaps it was the adaptation of his old O'Grady piece that had suggested the broader Fakir Series to him:

These records deal with popular characters familiar to all. Who, for example, is more interesting than the patent medicine vender on the street corner, he who cometh forth not to sell but to advertise, he of the dripping gasolene lamp, with the crowd of small boys disturbing his peace? His speech and his manners are here. Or the dime museum lecturer in the guise of a popular educator? Or the circus man? Or the prize package swindler? It is with such types as these that Mr. Spencer deals, and his touch is true to life. Original mechanical effects are introduced. Much study has been put upon the accessories of distance and chorus. You will recognize them all as old friends, and they will get your money again, just as they have done many times before.<sup>187</sup>

The final sentence toyed with the distinction between the substitutive and descriptive modes, playfully claiming that the pitchmen represented on the phonograms would

“get your money” when this was precisely what they could not do, and what most clearly distinguished the listening experience they offered from presence at a “real” sales pitch. The claim was presumably not meant to be taken literally, but rather to imply that the pitches were as affectively powerful as “real” ones and would have an equivalent impact: listeners would feel an impulse to “buy” just as other kinds of recorded performance might inspire them to applaud, even if they could not act on the urge in this case.<sup>188</sup> Catalog descriptions give some sense for the range of “chorus” and sound effects Spencer incorporated into his original Fakir Series:

**PATENT MEDICINE MAN.** Scene on the street corner. He extols the virtues of his remedy. The gamins are troublesome, but the medicine can never fail. Amusing reference to the Keeley cure. Chorus and cat calls. Very characteristic.<sup>189</sup>

**PRIZE PACKAGE MAN.** Scene on the street corner. Prize package man describes his new stem-winding-and-setting magnetic watch. Throws in diamonds, bracelets, etc., offering \$100 worth down to \$10. Funny speech, interrupted by peddler’s cries, “Oh’s” of admiration and wonder, etc. Makes sales. Fire! Engine coming down the street. Realistic imitation of sounding gong, horses’ hoofs, as the engine rushes by. Purchasers discover they have been cheated. Fakir escapes in the confusion.<sup>190</sup>

Although I have not managed to hear any examples of Spencer’s cylinders from the original Fakir Series of 1895, he continued to phonogenize similar material for several years, including a version of **PATENT MEDICINE MAN** recorded by Victor on March 6, 1903 that incorporates elements from both his earlier **PATENT MEDICINE MAN** and **PRIZE PACKAGE MAN** routines. It begins:

**ANNOUNCEMENT:** Descriptive scene from life, the Patent Medicine Man by Len Spencer.

[*Clip-clopping of horse’s hooves, starting softly but growing steadily louder*]

**PITCHMAN:** Whoa, whoa, whoa! [*Clip-clopping stops*]

Hey, boy, hold that horse there, and I’ll show you a quarter.

**BOY:** All right, boss.

**PITCHMAN:** Here, hold that light a little higher, *don’t* spill that oil in my neck.

Now then, people—get off that buggy wheel there, boy.

Get off there!

Here Spencer establishes a fictional setting for what ensues through sound effects representing the approach of the fakir’s horse and buggy and through allusions to characteristic objects that did not make recognizable sounds: the “dripping gasolene lamp” conventionally associated with the fakir and the wheel of his buggy, onto which a local boy is supposed to have climbed. Next comes the pitch itself, which starts with the fakir’s deceptive claim that he does not aim to sell anything, much like the opening to George Graham’s **STREET FAKIR**, and then concludes with a rhyme:

Now then, people,  
 when you see me standing here on the public thoroughfare of your beautiful city,  
 you at once think I am here to sell, but such is not the case, I am here to advertise, *advertise*, that's  
 the word,  
 Doctor Quack Nostrum's Compound Extract of Live-Forever,  
 sure cure for corns, bunions, colds [*cough*], coughs, [*coughing fit*]—  
 influenza, whooping cough and the measles,  
 truly—a most wonderful panacea for all the ills that mankind is heir to.  
 A medicine indeed of wonderful skill,  
 it can cleanse and purge and cure every ill,  
 cut a man's arm off, his leg or his head,  
 kill off the living and raise up the dead! [*Laughter from audience*]

Next the fakir engages in dialog with members of his audience, beginning with a  
 segment about the “Keeley cure,” a well-known quack remedy for alcoholism:

**DRUNK:** Say, [*hiccup*] uh, sport.  
**PITCHMAN:** Well, sir?  
**DRUNK:** Say, [*hiccup*] have you, you got any K- Keeley cure?  
**PITCHMAN:** Keeley cure? Ah, my inebriated friend, that just reminds me.  
 This is the only known sure cure  
 for the liquor habit and the horrors of delirium tremens. [*Laughter from audience*]  
 It holds up the system and braces the nerve.  
**DRUNK:** [*Hiccup*] Well, say [*hiccup*],  
 Y-, y-, *your* nerve is all right. [*Laughter from audience*]  
**PITCHMAN:** Well now, uh,  
 if you're getting very nervous, my friend, you just take a bottle of this home and it'll *relieve* you of  
 that tired feeling.

The obstacles George Graham had thrown in his pitchmen's paths had served only as  
 opportunities for them to display their art more impressively, but here Spencer allows  
 an audience member a joke at the pitchman's expense from which the latter does not  
 recover very adroitly (“Well now, uh...”). Spencer's aim is evidently to depict not  
 just the triumph of a virtuosic medicine vendor but an interaction between pitchman  
 and audience in which both sides “score.” However, the patent medicine man fields  
 the next two points more successfully:

**RUBE:** Say,  
 Say, boss, my wife Mirandy got rheumatism powerful bad.  
**PITCHMAN:** Aha, well, rheumatism? We-ell, ha, I've got just the thing, *just* the thing.  
 You take her home a bottle of this wonderful elixir,  
 and say, if it don't cure her—  
**RUBE:** Well?  
**PITCHMAN:** It'll *kill* her, that's all. [*Laughter*]  
**TOUGH:** Say, look here, sport.  
**PITCHMAN:** Well, sir?  
**TOUGH:** I rubbed some o' that stuff on me dog and say it killed him dead.  
**PITCHMAN:** Why, certainly it did! Certainly it did! Read the label.  
 A perfect exterminator of roaches, bedbugs, rats, fleas and small dogs. [*Laughter*]

It is noteworthy that Spencer identifies each of his pitchman's audience members with an identifiable "type"—the stammering drunk, the rube, the street tough—through conventionalized representations of distinctive speech styles, whereas the pitchman himself speaks in the same relatively unmarked or normative voice with which Spencer announces the phonogram itself. Finally we come to the simulated sales:

**PITCHMAN:** Now then, who wants it?  
The regular price of this wonderful remedy is one dollar, anybody want it?  
Ah, there you are, sir, anybody else? Thank you, two bottles, *thank you*—five dollars.  
**CUSTOMER:** The change?  
**PITCHMAN:** Change? You don't get any change here, anybody else?  
Anybody else want it? Here you are, sir.  
There you are, sir—eh— [*Bell starts ringing in background, clip-clop of hooves*]  
Five bottles, thank you, thank you. [*Shouts of "fire, fire"*]  
Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!  
A fire, eh?  
Well, I just sold thirty bottles of old kill-'em-off, well, well, fire? I've got money to burn, I think  
I'll have a little fire myself [*laughs*].  
Giddyup.<sup>191</sup>

Here Spencer grafts the conclusion of his earlier PRIZE PACKAGE MAN routine onto the end of the PATENT MEDICINE MAN,<sup>192</sup> allowing his pitchman to escape while the locals rush to attend to a fire alarm and yielding another opportunity to enact a conventionalized complex of mechanical sound effects. This time the pitchman still emerges triumphant from the encounter, despite occasional setbacks, so we still witness a *successful* pitch, i.e., one that succeeds, within the fictional setting, in bilking people out of their money. However, in a similar piece phonogenized by Steve Porter and Byron G. Harlan in 1911, THE OLD TIME STREET FAKIR, the pitchman insists his auditors listen to a piece of music before he will make any sales and so, when a fire alarm again causes everyone to rush off, he ends up selling nothing whatsoever, provoking his concluding exclamation: "Well, can you beat that—stung by a lot o' rubes!" His failure to sell is due to external factors rather than to any formal shortcomings in the pitch itself: until the fire alarm, the fictional audience is clamoring to buy.<sup>193</sup> Still, the fact that a *failed* pitch can form the subject matter for a *successful* representation of the pitchman's art in this case further underscores the difference in goals that separates descriptive-mode sales pitches from substitutive-mode ones.

We can also associate the specific descriptive-mode approaches we have seen here with performers' deeper subjective relationships to the forms of verbal art they are seeking to represent. According to Fred Gaisberg, George Graham had once actually earned his living as a patent medicine pitchman, so we might expect him to have identified with the pitchmen he subsequently represented in phonography, viewing the encounters from their perspective. For him, the best representation of a pitch would then have been the one in which his pitchman exerted the most skilful control over potential customers, the model for how a pitch might ideally unfold in response to certain situations, including adverse and challenging ones. This is, indeed, exactly the approach we find in his phonograms. On the other hand, there is no evidence that the other performers who phonogenized representations of sales pitches had any professional experience as live pitchmen. We might expect them to have lacked George Graham's habitual investment in the success or failure of sales pitches and so to have approached such subjects more even-handedly as "scenes" in which virtuosity in the art should be displayed but flubs and setbacks might also occur. Again, this is what we do in fact find in Len Spencer's PATENT MEDICINE MAN and to an even greater degree in Porter and Harlan's THE OLD TIME STREET FAKIR.

One important subcategory of the verbal art of the marketplace was (and is) the art of the auctioneer. Early phonography intersected with auctioneering in a variety of ways that parallel the scenarios we have already examined with regard to the sales pitch in general and can be grouped analytically into much the same categories. First of all, the auction too invited both substitutive-mode and descriptive-mode applications of phonography, as we can see in the experiences of two prominent auctioneers of the late nineteenth century: Jere Johnson, Jr., based in New York, and W. O. Beckenbaugh, based in Baltimore, both of whom involved the phonograph in their work, but in very different ways. Jere Johnson, Jr. had been inducing the public to attend his real estate auctions on the periphery of New York City by offering concurrent entertainments of various kinds since the early 1870s. One of his advertisements of 1873 had promised:

GRAFULLA'S FAMOUS SEVENTH REGIMENT BAND will give one of their charming MUSICAL RECITALS in the Delightful Grove.

WEEKS MANAGES the hospitality in one of his APPETIZING COLLATIONS, and the inexpressibly funny man, HARRISON, will entertain you with his humorous improvisations.<sup>194</sup>

The following year, Johnson had enticed the public with a similar program: “March to the music of the Seventh Regiment Band, and buy these splendid lots. Harrison, the great singer, and Weeks, the world renowned caterer, will both be there.”<sup>195</sup> Another of Johnson’s auctions, held on September 21, 1886, had featured the Twenty-Third Regiment Band,<sup>196</sup> and a newsman who attended reported that “the neighborhood presented more the appearance of a county fair than the scene of an auction sale.”<sup>197</sup> Having long employed brass bands, singers, and comedians to boost attendance at his sales, Johnson first used the phonograph for a similar purpose on August 28, 1889. Two days beforehand, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* had announced: “Jere Johnson, Jr., the real estate auctioneer, has arranged an excursion for next Wednesday at Lefferts Park. On that day, he says, ‘Edison’s phonograph will exhibit its powers as a salesman, an orator, a vocalist and a musician, in the disposal of home sites.’”<sup>198</sup> The day after the sale, the same newspaper reported: “The phonograph sang as divinely as Patti, preached like Talmage, ranted like Othello, simulated Gilmore’s full band and auctioneered like Jere Johnson himself. A great many people who listened to its sage advice about owning homes acted, and when the talking machine ceased over one hundred lots were announced as having been sold.”<sup>199</sup> Johnson had attracted customers to his auction with a free phonograph concert, but he had apparently also educated some prerecorded sales pitches—“sage advice about owning homes”—that he would ordinarily have delivered in person; the machine “auctioneered” in his place. A year later, in August 1890, Johnson held another sale of lots using the phonograph on Broadway in Flushing, New York, although this time the machine seems to have served strictly as a means of attracting and entertainment customers and not to have been used to deliver any part of the sales pitch proper:

The instrument was arranged in one of the windows of Mr. Johnson’s office, with the large funnel shaped sound distributor projecting out of doors. The audience were invited to arrange themselves before the funnel and listen to an open air concert from the phonograph.... Other vocal and instrumental pieces were rendered in succession, after which the sale of lots took place. Evidently the phonograph concert had a genial influence on the buyers, for 140 lots were sold during the afternoon at prices ranging from \$20 to \$200.<sup>200</sup>

A few days later, Johnson again appealed: “Spend your half holiday Saturday at Lefferts Park, where the phonograph will render the following brilliant programme,” and then gave a list of selections—including, incidentally, the MIDNIGHT ALARM, with “the alarm, rush of horses and voices of firemen plainly heard.”<sup>201</sup> Later that month, he announced that he would offer “a series of lectures of especial interest to people in search of homes without much money to secure one,” and that these too would feature “a concert, vocal and instrumental, by the aid of a phonograph.”<sup>202</sup> The same tactic was later taken up by other real estate auctioneers, such as William E. Taylor of Hackensack, New Jersey, who in 1901 drew crowds to his sales by exhibiting both a phonograph and motion pictures.<sup>203</sup> In such cases, the phonograph was being put to use within the context of actual auctions, sometimes replacing the auctioneer in his role as a pitchman but more often substituting for the live entertainers publicity-minded auctioneers had traditionally hired to draw crowds to their sales.

Another auctioneer, W. O. Beckenbaugh, found a very different way of working phonography into his professional career. Born in Maryland in 1850, William Oscar Beckenbaugh was listed in the federal censuses of 1880 and 1900 as a resident of Baltimore and an auctioneer by profession.<sup>204</sup> A *Chicago Tribune* article of 1893 gives the following overview of his career up to that time:

In 1867, at the age of 17, he was auctioneering in Baltimore. Then he went with the big New York auction house of Walsh & Dugan. He was at this time 18 years of age and a musical celebrity. Prof. Nicholas Crouch, the author of “Kathleen Mavourneen,” and the man who first introduced English opera in America, offered to star the young singer, but Beckenbaugh preferred to use his wonderful voice for purely commercial purposes. Over the South he is still known as a singer, actor, and speaker of no mediocre ability.

Before the Chicago fire Beckenbaugh was with William A. Butters & Co., who did an annual business of over \$3,000,000. In 1883 he went to New York and organized the big auction house of Foley, Beckenbaugh & Co., which was continued with lucrative success for ten years. Returning to his old home in Baltimore Beckenbaugh organized the auction firm of Schwab, Beckenbaugh & Co., in which he sold his interest in 1890 to engage as a special real estate auctioneer for many big land improvement syndicates. Beckenbaugh sold at a suburb near Baltimore \$740,000 worth of lots in one day.<sup>205</sup>

Notwithstanding Beckenbaugh’s decision to use his voice for the “purely commercial purposes” of auctioneering rather than in opera or theater, he had also begun working by this time as a professional phonogenic performer specializing in virtuosic auctioneering chants. The Columbia Phonograph Company first listed his work in its

catalog of June 1891,<sup>206</sup> and he did most of his work for that company over the next several years, although he also phonogenized some titles for Berliner in 1897.<sup>207</sup> His name was dropped from the Columbia catalog at the start of 1898, and although Columbia continued to list anonymous “auctioneer records,” the latest explicit evidence of phonogenic work by Beckenbaugh himself is a Berliner disc reported (perhaps incorrectly) with a date in January 1899.<sup>208</sup>

In the meantime, Beckenbaugh’s vocal skills had begun drawing him into the realm of politics, a journey that may already have begun on some scale by November 1889, when the “strong-lunged Wm. Beckenbaugh, au[c]tioneer and local politician” was reported announcing election results from a local newspaper office for the benefit of the milling crowds.<sup>209</sup> In 1896, he was reading clerk for the Maryland legislature under Governor Lloyd Lowndes in Annapolis.<sup>210</sup> By the beginning of 1901, we find him serving as President of the Anti-Civil Service League of Maryland, which advocated a return to the spoils system of the early Gilded Age,<sup>211</sup> and seeking an appointment as United States Senate reading clerk, as the *Washington Post* reported:

A big man, with the biggest voice in Maryland, is making a hot fight to be reading clerk to the United States Senate.

Nearly every one in Maryland knows W. O. Beckinbaugh [sic] as a Republican stump speaker, campaign singer, and auctioneer. He says Senator [Louis E.] McComas will land him in the position, and though he is an anti-civil service Republican, he hopes to make this place on merit, for his voice is said to be unequalled.

Mr. Beckinbaugh was reading clerk of the Maryland senate during the last term, and some of the members say his reading of the numerous bills that came before that body in the old house at Annapolis, could almost be heard in Baltimore.<sup>212</sup>

In spite of the extraordinary projecting power of Beckenbaugh’s voice, his application met with resistance from a Maryland congressman who recalled him mispronouncing and stumbling over words in some of his readings before the State Senate:

For some days past the lobbies of the Capitol have been haunted by an applicant for the position of reading clerk of the Senate. He had filled a similar position in the legislature of his State, and thought, as he is the possessor of a clear and penetrating voice, that he would have no difficulty in securing a place in the Senate. Some inquiry was made of a member of Congress from his State as to his capacity.

“Well,” said the member, “I don’t believe you want him. I heard him read once. It wasn’t so bad when, in a tax bill, he pronounced ‘levy’ as if it were written ‘lee-vy,’ with the accent on the ‘y,’ but when, in an appropriation bill he mentioned a home for indignant women, instead of indigent women, I had to join in the laugh.”<sup>213</sup>

Beckenbaugh instead spent the last few years of his life working as a Capitol policeman, although he did occasionally fill in as a substitute reading clerk:



Mr. Beckenbaugh had a voice of remarkable volume, and during the rush of the closing days of the Fifty-seventh Congress [1901-3], when the reading clerks of the House of Representatives were exhausted by their labors, he was pressed into service, and attracted much attention by the manner in which he read and by his seeming tirelessness.<sup>214</sup>

Family tradition states further that Beckenbaugh “called the roll call in congress and was noted as the fastest person to ever do so,” implying that he was also recognized as having an unusual talent for rapid articulation, perhaps even among auctioneers.<sup>215</sup> “He would have been appointed reading clerk,” his son George claimed some years later, “but died before the appointment could be made.”<sup>216</sup> Specifically, Beckenbaugh died of a cerebral hemorrhage on November 22, 1903, said to have been the result of overwork as a Republican stump speaker in a recent political campaign in Maryland.<sup>217</sup> He was then still working as a Capitol policeman, which entitled his widow to six months’ pay and funeral expenses.<sup>218</sup>

Beckenbaugh’s repertoire of “auction records” or “auctioneer records” was fairly extensive. By the time Columbia adopted a permanent catalog numbering system in 1896, it consisted of this appealing range of titles:

- 10001 SALE OF PAWNBROKER’S GOODS
- 10002 SALE OF SUBURBAN LOTS
- 10003 SALE OF CHRISTMAS DOLLS, TOYS, ETC.
- 10004 SALE OF RED-HAIRED GIRL
- 10005 SALE OF DENTIST’S EFFECTS
- 10006 SALE OF HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE
- 10007 SALE OF WINES AND LIQUORS
- 10008 SALE OF GOODS AT CLOSE OF FAIR
- 10009 SALE OF DIME MUSEUM
- 10010 SALE OF HORSES AND CATTLE
- 10011 SALE OF UNCLAIMED FREIGHT
- 10012 THE LAUGHING AUCTIONEER
- 10013 SALE OF ORIENTAL ART GOODS
- 10014 SALE OF OIL PAINTINGS
- 10015 SALE OF MIDWAY PLAISANCE AT CLOSE OF WORLD’S FAIR
- 10016 SALE OF SLAVES “BEFO’ DE WAH”

Columbia’s advertising copy proclaimed the merits of these phonograms as follows:

“Beckenbaugh, The Leather-Lunged Auctioneer,” has become famous through his records, which we have sold throughout the world. These novel cylinders are exceedingly popular for exhibition work, especially in displaying the marvelous capacity of the Talking Machine to reproduce rapid speech.

We have recently made an entirely new lot of these popular subjects, introducing many novel features, sparkling with wit and racy with humor.<sup>219</sup>

Columbia's first announcement of this line of phonograms had been: "We have arranged with a well known auctioneer to keep us supplied with auction records covering very many varieties of sales and interspersed in a humorous way with bids of mock purchasers."<sup>220</sup> As these comments suggest, Beckenbaugh's "auction records" were conceived not as accessories to or functional substitutes for the social activity they represented—in this case, selling lots at auction—but as scenes from life, i.e., "truthful records of what goes on at a pawnbroker's or auctioneer's sale."<sup>221</sup> They were designed for use not in real auctions, as Jere Johnson's prerecorded advice to prospective homeowners had been, but in the usual contexts of commercial phonography: phonograph exhibitions, nickel-in-the-slot machines, and so forth. Even Lyman Howe had procured one for his exhibition work by December 1891, when one of his concert programs listed the AUCTION SALE OF HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE, classified as a "recitation."<sup>222</sup> Beckenbaugh's verbal skills as an auctioneer ordinarily unfolded through his interaction with a group of potential customers, and he simulates this dynamic on his phonograms. A representative example of the genre, Beckenbaugh's AUCTION SALE OF PAWN BROKER'S SHOP as recorded by Berliner in 1897, opens as follows (note that stock phrases such as "what am I bid for" are routinely slurred on these phonograms, making it even harder than usual to distinguish between such words as "bid" and "give"; at these points, my transcriptions routinely represent educated guesses):

Pawnbroker's Sale

of unredeemed pledges,  
made by W. O. Beckenbaugh,  
auctioneer.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, I want your attention, please.

We're about to start the sale.

Now we're ready to go on, first lot I will offer you will be a solid gold ring.

Yes, sir, guaranteed solid gold or no sale.

And I'll thank you for the bid, what shall I have for it, how much?

[*Chant*] I have one dollar bid, one dollar, one dollar, one dollar, one dollar, one dollar, one dollar, one dollar, two dollars for the bid now, going at two dollars, two dollars for the bid now, going at two dollars, two dollars for the bid now, going at two dollars, two dollars, two dollars, two dollars and a quarter, and a quarter now, two and a quarter now, two and half for the bid now, all done?

Two dollars and a half, going, going *going!*

Seventy-five, thank you.

[*Chant resumes*] Going at two dollars and seventy-five, three dollars for the bid now, going at three dollars and a quarter, and a quarter now, three dollars and a quarter bid now, three and a quarter, all done at three dollars and a quarter?

Sold at three dollars and a quarter.

The voices of the “mock purchasers” are implied here rather than actually heard. Beckenbaugh simulates answering their questions about the lot at hand, accepting a sequence of bids on it, responding to a dramatic lull in the bidding, and concluding the sale. The next lot is a “suit o’ clothes, yes sir, pants, coat, and vest,” which Beckenbaugh promotes with a creative description, concluding:

Hey golly, buy that suit—  
go down Pennsylvania Avenue and your best girl won’t know you.  
I tell you all, the dude of New York will not be in it along aside of you; what’ll you give me for it?  
Sir, all wool, yes, all wool except the buttons, what’ll you give me for the suit?

Beckenbaugh thus alternates between extolling the lots he has for sale and responding to imaginary interjections from bidders, such as the implied question “Is that suit all wool?” between the second and third lines. The second lot sells for \$1.25, and with that the phonogram comes to an end.<sup>223</sup> According to Zeitlin, “old-style” auctioneering is characterized by the frequent interruption of the rhythmic chant with jokes, whereas the style favored by modern auction schools is to keep up a steady rhythm once bidding is underway.<sup>224</sup> On this phonogram, Beckenbaugh actually follows the “modern” practice; once he catches his rhythm, he stays with it and ceases his joking until the fictional item has sold. Nevertheless, humor is a key element here. Although the Columbia catalog stressed the phonograms’ “rapid speech,” presumably in reference to the fast pace of Beckenbaugh’s chant, the appeal of AUCTION SALE OF PAWN BROKER’S SHOP comes equally from the auctioneer’s witty bantering with potential customers. As in real auctioneering, the entertainment value of Beckenbaugh’s performance lies in a combination of humor and the virtuosity of the chant.

Some of Beckenbaugh’s auction routines involved far less mundane items than unredeemed watches or clothing at a pawn shop, a case in point being his infamous SALE OF RED-HAIRED GIRL:

The following record was made for the Columbia Phonograph Company, Washington, D. C., by W. O. Beckenbaugh,  
Auctioneer, Baltimore City, Maryland.  
This is a sale, ladies and gentlemen, that took place at the Masonic fair  
of a beautiful red-headed girl.

At this point, Beckenbaugh shifts from the past-tense announcement (the record “was made,” the sale “took place”) to the present tense of an ongoing descriptive scene in which he sets forth the characteristics of the property and the terms of the sale:

Yes, sir, red hair, genuine red hair, all her own hair, too,  
No artificial about it, the finest head of hair in Baltimore.  
She’s consented to put herself up at auction and be sold to the highest bidder and take her chances.  
The proceeds of the—sale are to go for the benefit of the fair.  
Now, there are certain conditions  
upon which we sell this young lady, no one will be permitted to bid  
under twenty-one years of age or over sixty-five.  
You must have an income of five thousand dollars a year.  
Sign the contract that you have this income, and the highest bidder gets her.

Beckenbaugh proceeds to establish the presence of two opposing camps of wealthy bidders—older men and young “dudes”—that will prove central to the way in which the auction unfolds:

All you old bald-headed bachelors come to the front, take your seats there, please, on the front row.  
Don’t be at all bashful.  
And all you good-looking dudes—step this way, please.  
Now, gentlemen, there’s the lady.  
We are ready to go on with the sale.

The bidding starts at \$1000, and this time Beckenbaugh fields questions that interrupt the bidding rather than occurring beforehand, though again we do not hear the questions themselves:

Now, sir, what did you say about her age?  
Now look here, my friend, you mustn’t, uh, ask a young lady her age, I draw the line, sir, at that.  
Take my advice and never ask a young lady her age, you’ll make a mortal enemy of her every time.  
I—I can’t tell you her age, sir.  
Yes, sir, the white horse goes with her.  
Always the white horse goes with the red-headed girl.  
She’s got a magnificent white horse—fiery, untamed steed.

This last segment alludes to a widely-known and widely-burlesqued folk belief of the time that whenever one saw a red-haired girl, one would soon also see a white horse. Towards the end of the phonogram, Beckenbaugh adopts a pair of contrastive voices to enact the drama of a bidding war between an old bachelor (lower-pitched, growly voice) and a young dude (higher-pitched, squeaky voice):

**AUCTIONEER:** I have four thousand five hundred.  
**OLD BACHELOR:** I’ll give you, uh, five thousand, mister auctioneer.  
**AUCTIONEER:** All right, sir, all right.  
Five thousand dollars.  
I have five thousand dollar bid.  
**YOUNG DUDE:** I’ll give you seven—*six* thousand dollars, mister B, six thousand’s my bid.  
**AUCTIONEER:** All right, six thousand is your bid.

The old bachelor finally counters with “I’ll give you *seven* thousand dollars, that young dude can’t have her at any price,” and this proves to be the winning bid: “The old gentleman gets her for seven thousand dollars,” Beckenbaugh proclaims.<sup>225</sup>

While Beckenbaugh’s *SALE OF RED-HAIRED GIRL* derives its interest mainly from its unusual scenario, its witty banter, and the drama of the bidding war, some of his other selections draw on attractions of greater aural richness. His *SALE OF CHRISTMAS DOLLS, TOYS, ETC.*, which depicts an auction held on Christmas Eve, incorporates sound effects representing a doll that says “mama” and “papa,” a set of ten pins, a toy train, horns, and rattles. The piece closes at midnight with an announcement that Christmas morning has arrived, prompting a lengthy cacophony of horns, whistles, shouts, and banging on a piano.<sup>226</sup> *THE LAUGHING AUCTIONEER* involves a sale of pawnbroker’s goods in which auctioneer and crowd burst into uncontrolled peals of laughter, Beckenbaugh being accompanied in this by a second performer with a higher-pitched voice. The effect is much like that achieved by the infectious “laughing records” of the 1920s.<sup>227</sup>

Rather than enacting a set script every time he recorded a particular title, Beckenbaugh is supposed to have varied his routines noticeably from take to take. Columbia’s Frank Dorian recalled years later that this variability had been a key selling point in the 1890s:

Beckenbaugh was a professional auctioneer with a ready wit and stentorian voice. All records in those days were “originals” the art of duplicating from a “master” not then having been developed; and as no two of Beckenbaugh’s records were exactly alike, it was not long before they were in great demand all over the country, especially for use in “nickel-in-the-slot” phonographs, when that type of instrument became regular equipment of the corner drug store, the bar rooms (on the other three corners), and similar public places.<sup>228</sup>

The fact that commercial phonograms of the 1890s were either originals or produced from any given master in severely limited numbers has generally been interpreted as a drawback impeding mass production. However, Dorian’s statement reveals that it also had an advantage: phonograms could be more valuable for nickel-in-the-slot purposes if they were *not* uniform, so long as they maintained a consistent quality. Because of Beckenbaugh’s reputation for never phonogenizing two fully identical cylinders, prospective customers who saw one of his routines advertised on a coin-operated phonograph may have been more likely to invest a nickel and listen

regardless of whether they had heard the “same” routine on another occasion, since they expected the new version to differ in some unpredictable way. For comparison, here are the opening halves of two different renditions of his SALE OF NEW YORK DIME MUSEUM, the first from a Columbia cylinder of the early to mid-1890s and the second from a Berliner disc of 1897 (note that an auction “by order of the sheriff” was typically conducted to satisfy a party’s creditors after a financial failure, implying that the dime museum had fallen on hard times):

The following record  
was made  
for the Columbia Phonograph Company  
by W. O. Beckenbaugh—auctioneer of Baltimore City, Maryland:  
Sale—of the New York  
Dime Museum  
by Order of the Sheriff.  
Now, ladies and gentlemen,  
there is a sale that takes place only once in a lifetime,  
and if you have never been to a New York dime museum,  
you’ve missed lots of fun,  
and half of your life is gone.  
There are the greatest of curiosities you ever saw.  
We have the living live lion,  
stuffed with straw,  
and we have  
the Jersey mosquito  
as he buzzes round the floor [*Buzzing starts*]  
I hear one a-buzzin’ now.  
I got ’im, I see that fellow right on my jaw. [*Buzzing stops*]  
Then we have all kinds of wax figures.  
All the curiosities usually found at a dime museum will be sold to the highest bidder for cash.  
But the greatest of all the curiosities  
is the celebrated talking Australian poll parrot.  
[*Parrot begins chattering*]  
She is a talker from Talkersville.  
Now, Polly, let me do a little talking today.  
She wants me to let up!  
You’re a naughty poll parrot.....<sup>229</sup>

Auction Sale  
of the New York—Dime Museum,  
made by W.  
O.  
Beckenbaugh,  
auctioneer.  
Now, ladies—and gentlemen,  
this is a sale that takes place only once in a lifetime.  
There is an opportunity  
that you may never have again.  
We have all kinds of curiosities here to sell you today.  
We have the living live lion,  
stuffed with straw,

and the Jersey mosquito [*Buzzing starts*]  
as he buzzes round the floor—I think I hear a buzzin',  
yes, that's the mosquitoes already. [*Buzzing stops*]  
Then we have a—Circassian lady,  
white hair and pink eyes.  
We have every kind of curiosity known to a dime museum,  
but the greatest of all the curiosities  
is the celebrated talking Australian poll parrot.  
[*Parrot begins chattering*]  
She's a talker from Talkersville.  
Now, look, Polly, you bad bird!  
Well, we've got to sell the poll parrot first.  
Then we'll go on with the sale.  
If we don't get through the poll parrot, why, we'll not be in it.  
We'll have the whole darn museum in an uproar.  
Wants me to let up, well I'll let up on you in about two minutes, I'll have you thrown out o'  
here....<sup>230</sup>

The “parrot imitations,” singled out for special mention in the Columbia catalog, are contributed by a second, unnamed performer, as is the buzz of the mosquito.<sup>231</sup> The remainder of the routine unfolds around the auctioneer's efforts to sell the parrot, which continually interrupts him and gives him an opportunity for witty responses, e.g.:

Now she's trying to imitate the auctioneer.  
I think I'll buy that bird myself and make an auctioneer of her.  
Oh, hold on there, you're not a pretty bird, you're an ugly bird.  
Let me do the talking if you please.<sup>232</sup>

The course of the bidding and the final bid price differ from version to version, but so do the humorous remarks and the accounts of specific lots for sale: thus, the “Circassian lady,” i.e., albino,<sup>233</sup> is mentioned on the Berliner disc but not the Columbia cylinder, and the reference to the Jersey mosquito is followed by a different comment in each of the two examples. The responses to interruptions by the parrot also vary considerably. It appears that the same “ready wit” that served Beckenbaugh well during real auctions must also have manifested itself in his extemporaneous modification of his routines while standing before the recording horn. This, in turn, made his phonograms delightfully unpredictable. During the early years, Beckenbaugh was apparently even willing to record “custom” auctions by special request,<sup>234</sup> just as he accepted engagements to auction off unfamiliar items for real.

For Beckenbaugh did pursue opportunities to conduct actual auctions of unusual and exotic properties. One of the titles he was recording by the mid-1890s

was SALE OF MIDWAY PLAISANCE AT CLOSE OF WORLD'S FAIR (Columbia 10015), the reference being to the midway of the Columbian Exposition held at Chicago in 1893. In fact, it turns out that Beckenbaugh *was* involved in auctioning properties along the midway at the close of the Columbian Exposition. He had reportedly arrived in Chicago just as the directors were considering how to dispose of the leftover buildings, and he had proposed to offer them for sale at public auction. He first made formal arrangements to sell the Java Village, consisting of a number of Javanese bamboo huts, and the *Chicago Tribune* had anticipated how the scene would play itself out:

People who go out to see this unique sale will see Mr. Beckenbaugh mount a box and, while he holds a hammer in one of his hands and a catalogue in the other, they will hear him say something like this:

“How much am I bid for this bamboo house? It is complete and just the thing for a summer lounging place. It can be easily and readily moved, and it is going to be sold to the highest bidder. How much do I hear?”<sup>235</sup>

The Java Village auction was set for November 1, 1893, under the auspices of Elison, Flersheim, & Co., and it was advertised in terms that suggest the *Tribune* had done a good job of guessing Beckenbaugh's strategy: “The houses are various sizes, can be easily removed at small expense. Well adapted for private lawns, summer resorts, etc.... A grand chance to secure useful, ornamental, and valuable mementos of the great Exposition.”<sup>236</sup> However, the fair officials put a stop to the sale at the last minute without explanation, a move that led the auctioneers to threaten a lawsuit.<sup>237</sup> When Beckenbaugh defied the officials and attempted to auction off the South Sea Island Village two days later, he was refused admission to the grounds and, when he finally managed to sneak in through a private gate, he “was told that the Exposition company would allow no auctions under any circumstances, as they were not dignified, and if the company let one auctioneer in it would have to let others.”<sup>238</sup> He boldly announced rescheduled dates for the auctions,<sup>239</sup> but the president of the fair merely reiterated “that auctions would not be permitted on the Midway Plaisance.”<sup>240</sup> Beckenbaugh did manage to auction off the Ceylon Building in nearby Jackson Park on November 10, together with a corresponding booth in the Women's Building, but these lots realized low prices that “so disgusted the Singhalese that all further sales were declared off.”<sup>241</sup> The fair officials seem eventually to have relented, permitting



the auction of properties on the Midway itself, but a sale of the Wisconsin Building scheduled for November 23 apparently fell through,<sup>242</sup> judging from a follow-up item published on December 5:

The sale of the Java Village at auction yesterday was a failure. It was adjourned to Dec. 11. Today Auctioneer Beckenbaugh expects to sell the Wisconsin, Arkansas, New York, Colombia, Turkish, Swedish, perhaps the Brazil, and the Venezuela Buildings. He has already been engaged to sell the furniture of the United States Building and he goes to Washington the latter part of this week to complete negotiations for selling at auction the building itself. Some of the buildings to be sold have been disposed of once to house-wrecking companies.<sup>243</sup>

Nor was this the end of Beckenbaugh's tribulations. Still in Chicago at the end of January 1894, he found himself assaulted on a city street by an armed "crank" named Cutter: "The assailant fired one shot at Mr., Beckenbaugh, he says, before he could wrench the revolver from his grasp. Then he opened fire upon Cutter with the weapon as he fled across a vacant lot."<sup>244</sup> On the whole, this particular venture must have been a frustrating and disappointing experience for Beckenbaugh, but he was at least able to turn whatever amusing rhetorical strategies he had devised for the Midway properties into a successful commercial phonogram.<sup>245</sup>

The popularity of Beckenbaugh's phonograms helped in turn to enhance his national reputation as an effective auctioneer of unusual and exotic properties. When W. B. Moses & Sons of Washington, D. C. hired him to auction off a collection of Oriental rugs in 1896, their publicity listed his phonograph work among the other credentials that qualified him to do the job:

Mr. W. O. Beckenbaugh, of Baltimore, who has made himself famous as an auctioneer, has been specially engaged to conduct this sale. At the close of the World's Fair at Chicago Mr. Beckenbaugh sold most of the buildings there at auction. His records, made for the Columbia Phonograph Company, have been heard in this city and throughout the entire globe. He is well known throughout the South, having sold in one sale over a million dollars' worth of town lots in five hours.<sup>246</sup>

A few days after the rug sale, he traveled to Georgia to conduct an auction on behalf of the East Atlanta Land Company, of which it was reported:

It is a unique story back of Mr. W. O. Beckenbaugh's coming to Atlanta to auction off property. He is famed for his voice, and when he received a letter from Mr. Litt Bloodworth, asking for his terms, he decided upon a novel plan. He secured a phonograph and gave a number of his choicest and most entertaining recitations into the machine. He took out the cylinders and expressed them to Atlanta. Mr. Bloodworth attached them to a phonograph and, lo, the ringing voice of the jolly auctioneer was in his ears. He telegraphed Beckenbaugh at once, "Terms accepted." Mr. Beckenbaugh was so pleased that yesterday he recited into several phonographs and these were placed on public exhibition. Great crowds gathered around to hear his stories.<sup>247</sup>

During the very early 1890s, professional musicians often viewed commercial phonography less as a source of income than as a means of getting their names before a broader public and advertising their skills in live performance to prospective employers, as we have seen. Beckenbaugh's phonograms served an analogous function by encouraging listeners to consider hiring him to auction their properties or attending sales advertised with him as auctioneer. He therefore had reason to treat them as model specimens of his work, using them to demonstrate that he had mastered effective and entertaining techniques for handling all the problems that might arise during the course of an auction, following the same strategy pursued by the drummer in a joke published in 1899 under the title "His Reference":

Chief (to commercial traveler seeking a place)—Do you know how to talk up goods to customers?

Applicant—Allow me to turn on this phonograph with a conversation between a customer and myself.<sup>248</sup>

Like George Graham's "imitations" of patent medicine pitches, Beckenbaugh's auction phonograms accordingly aim to depict a professional talker who knows his art and deploys it with consistent success, even when confronted with daunting obstacles.

Beckenbaugh apparently pioneered the "auction record" by drawing on and adapting the skills he used as a real auctioneer, but other performers who did not share his professional background also began phonogenizing "imitations" of auctions. Although Beckenbaugh's name disappeared from the Columbia catalog in 1898, a few of his auctioneer titles continued to be offered anonymously or as by the "Leather-Lunged Auctioneer,"<sup>249</sup> having been taken over by Len Spencer, who was to be the leading phonogenic auctioneer of the next decade.<sup>250</sup> One of the titles Spencer inherited from Beckenbaugh's repertoire, and the one he phonogenized most frequently, was the AUCTION SALE OF HOUSEHOLD GOODS, which runs as follows in a take from 1899:

Auction Sale of Household Goods, by Len Spencer.

Now, the first we've got here

is an adjustable walnut baby's high chair—madam, kindly remove that baby from the chair so we can all see it.

[*Imitation of baby crying*]

Oh, don't cry, baby, maybe mom'll buy the chair for ya, now, what'll you bid for it? One dollar!

[*Chant:*] One dollar, one dollar, one dollar, one dollar, 'n a quarter, 'n a quarter, 'n a quarter, 'n a quarter, 'n a half, a half, a half, one dollar half for the bid now, one dollar half, you all done, *one* dollar and a half,

one dollar and a half, sold that lady over there with the baby for a dollar and a half—there you are, baby.

Now the next we've got here is an imported—Swiss—cuckoo clock.

Ladies, here's a chance for ya.

You put that clock at the head o' the stairs, you can tell just what time it is when your hubby comes home from the club.

What's that? Oh, no,

no *no*, you can't turn the hands back without waking the cuckoo, I'll show ya.

[*Cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cuck-oo, cock-a-doodle-doo*]

There, you can't beat that, come, what'll you bid for it? Five dollars.

[*Chant:*] At five for the bid now going at five for the bid now going at five, at five for the bid now going at five and a half, at six dollar bid, now going at six dollars, six—*ten* dollars, well, you must want a clock bad, madam.

At ten dollar bid now going at ten dollars,

ten dollars for the bid now going at ten dollars, you all done, *ten* dollars—

sold that lady over there with the green bonnet for ten dollars; name, please.

Finnegan? Mrs. Finnegan,

Mrs. Finnegan, that clock will keep Paddy home nights sure! [*Laughter from crowd*]

Now then,

here we've got next is a family Bible, Oxford edition, full Morocco binding, large, clear prints.

What'll you give for it?

Now, this Bible is new, it's never been read, never been used—what'll you bid for it?

[*Long pause.*]

Nobody want it?

Well, I suppose you've all got Bibles. [*Laughter from crowd*]

Now, then, we'll pass right along to this beautiful upright mahogany piano, now a lady's selling this piano, what'll you bid for it, can anybody play it? Ah, thank you, miss.

[*Piano begins "Streets of Cairo"*]

**FALSETTO:** Oh, my, isn't it lovely—sounds just like a piano [*Piano stops*]=

**AUCTIONEER:** What'll you bid for it? Twenty dollars! Thank you!

[*Chant:*] At twenty dollar bid now, going at twenty dollar bid now, going at twenty-two and a half dollar bid now, going at twenty-two and a half,

Twenty-two and a half dollar bid now, going at twenty-two twenty-five, thank you, madam, I have twenty-five dollars,

twenty-five dollars, you all done, twenty-five dollars—

twenty-five dollars—

going—

twenty-five dollars, sold that lady over there with the pretty blonde hair for twenty-five dollars, your address, please, miss. [*Piano begins "And Her Golden Hair Was Hanging Down Her Back"*]

**FALSETTO:** Five Three Two West Twenty-Seventh Street.

**AUCTIONEER:** [*over laughter from crowd*] I'll bring it up tonight.<sup>251</sup>

Although Spencer does vary this routine slightly from take to take, the differences are not as substantial as those found between the two versions of Beckenbaugh's SALE OF NEW YORK DIME MUSEUM. The only additional comic remark found in any of the several variants I have consulted is a comment after the test of the cuckoo-clock: "There, that'll wake up your mother-in-law."<sup>252</sup> Judging from available evidence, then, Spencer's fictional auctions seem to have been more rigidly scripted than Beckenbaugh's. Another feature distinguishing Spencer's AUCTION SALE OF

HOUSEHOLD GOODS from the Beckenbaugh phonograms we examined earlier is the somewhat increased presence of the audience—we hear its laughter at the auctioneer’s jokes and the voice of the “lady over there with the pretty blonde hair” who buys the piano. Without hearing one of Beckenbaugh’s own renditions of this title it is impossible for us to know for sure whether this specific case was an innovation on Spencer’s part or not; however, Spencer did simulate audience interjections in a contrastive voice in other instances where Beckenbaugh had not.<sup>253</sup> The difference in approach may reflect the fact that Beckenbaugh saw himself as a virtuosic *auctioneer*, whereas Spencer saw himself as a virtuosic *mimic* who could imitate both auctioneering and other speech styles.

Len Spencer also created at least three new auction sketches in collaboration either with the musician William Parke Hunter or with Gilbert Girard, best known as a mimic of animal noises. The first of these seems to have been Spencer and Girard’s AUCTION SALE OF A BIRD AND ANIMAL STORE, introduced in 1901.<sup>254</sup> One take from 1902 opens:

Auction Sale of a Bird and Animal Store, by Len Spencer and Gilbert Girard.  
Now, ladies and gentlemen, we’ll start our sale this morning with this beautiful pair of Angora cats.  
[*Meowing*]  
Although they’re Angoras, they never show anger. [*Laughter*]  
Now, William,  
hold the cage a little higher so we can all see. [*More meowing*]

So far the routine adheres to a familiar pattern: we have the announcement of the beginning of the auction, the identification of the first lot up for sale, a humorous remark about it, mimetic sound effects associated with it, and an aside in which the auctioneer arranges to give the fictional audience a better look at it. However, the ensuing action unfolds somewhat differently. In Beckenbaugh’s routines, as far as I have heard, the auctioneer is always the master of the situation; he gives us an idealized representation of his profession as a verbal artist, inviting listeners to admire his virtuosity and, perhaps, to hire him to sell properties of their own. Spencer, who is not a professional auctioneer, instead treats participants in the scene more even-handedly, often allowing audience members to get in a joke at the auctioneer’s expense:

**AUCTIONEER:** Now, these cats are noted for their gentle disposition, why, they’ll actually eat off your hand.

**CUSTOMER:** Say, they won't eat off *my* hand.  
**AUCTIONEER:** Well, they will if you don't take your hand away. [*Laughter*]  
Now, they are very loving and affectionate. [*Sounds of cats fighting*]  
Come now, what'll you bid for them?  
What'll you bid for them, the pair, they're peaches.  
**CUSTOMER:** Thought they were cats. [*Laughter*]

The simulated sounds of the cats fighting bely the auctioneer's claim that they are "very loving and affectionate," just as the coughing fit in which Spencer's medicine pitchman engages demonstrates the falsity of the claim that his medicine can cure coughs. Even though nobody within the fictional scene explicitly calls the bluff in either case, the listener is clearly expected to recognize and appreciate the irony. In Beckenbaugh's *SALE OF NEW YORK DIME MUSEUM*, the auctioneer is placed in an awkward position when the parrot threatens to drown him out, but this ultimately gives him an opportunity to demonstrate his mastery of a difficult situation and to treat the interruptions as a source of humor, getting his audience to laugh with him. Spencer's auctioneer in *AUCTION SALE OF A BIRD AND ANIMAL STORE* is not so consistently fortunate, although he does ultimately make a satisfactory sale:

**AUCTIONEER:** Now, then, we'll sell this beautiful poll parrot.  
There, Polly. [*Sounds of parrot*]  
**CUSTOMER:** Say, can it sing?  
**AUCTIONEER:** Why, sing? Like a bird!  
**CUSTOMER:** Say, can it fly?  
**AUCTIONEER:** Why, certainly, can't you see its wings?  
**CUSTOMER:** Well say, anything with wings and what can fly and wouldn't leave this joint I don't want for mine! [*Laughter*]  
**AUCTIONEER:** Well, now, what'll you bid for it?  
**STUTTERING CUSTOMER:** C-c-c-c-c, ca, can it t-t-t, t-t-t-t-t-t-talk?  
**AUCTIONEER:** Well, if it couldn't talk any better than you, I'd wring its neck! [*Laughter*]<sup>255</sup>

In general, we find the *AUCTION SALE OF A BIRD AND ANIMAL STORE* differing from Beckenbaugh's *SALE OF NEW YORK DIME MUSEUM* much as Len Spencer's "imitations" of patent medicine pitches differ from George Graham's—that is, in treating the subject more as a "descriptive scene from life" than as an idealized sample of the salesman's art.

Other examples diverged even further from Beckenbaugh's approach by treating the auctioneer primarily as an object of ridicule. Fred Gaisberg recalled:

One day when things were slack [Emile] Berliner and I improvised a record called "Auction Sale of a Piano." He did the auctioneering and called out to me: "Professor, show dem vat a peautiful tone dis instrument has." When no bids were forthcoming, with anguish in his voice he would

complain: “Why, ladies and gentlemen, on *dis* piano Wagner composed *Die Götterdämmerung*. Still no bids? I see you know nothing about music. Johnny, hand me down dat perambulator!”<sup>256</sup>

Gaisberg represents the auctioneer’s speech in “Dutch” eye dialect, perhaps reflecting Berliner’s own German accent but also marking the auctioneer as a subject of ethnic caricature. In fact, all known versions of AUCTION SALE OF A PIANO were phonogenized by George Graham, Burt Shepard, or Harry Spencer, not by Berliner himself. Listening to one of Shepard’s takes, we hear a piano horribly out of tune together with the auctioneer’s desperate but ignorant efforts to present it in an appealing light:

Why, this is the very piano  
on which Richard Wagner got his first inspiration  
to write Gotterdammerung. [*“Wagner” and “Gotterdammerung” both with Anglicized  
pronunciations.*]  
I don’t know what it is, but anyhow he wrote it from this piano....<sup>257</sup>

Here the listener may be amazed at the fictional auctioneer’s gall but is unlikely to come away from the phonogram impressed with his professional skill. In a parallel case, Russell Hunting introduced a new Casey routine in the fall of 1896, identified by number as though he anticipated it would be the first in a series:

CASEY AS AN AUCTIONEER (NO. 1)  
Casey tries to sell a pug dog. Pair of gentleman’s pants and a photograph picture of Napoleon Boneypart. Exciting bidding.<sup>258</sup>

Hunting offered this selection only very briefly while he was selling cylinders out of his own home, and I have not heard any version of the phonogram itself. However, given that analogous routines derived their humor from Casey’s woeful lack of competence in the occupational skills required of doctors, judges, census-takers, baseball umpires,<sup>259</sup> and so forth, it is safe to assume Casey was depicted as similarly bungling his job as an auctioneer—he “tries to sell a pug dog,” suggesting an amusingly unsuccessful effort.

We might assume that phonograms in which bids for commodities can be heard rising or falling, as in an auction, must always have functioned in the descriptive mode on the grounds that they could not have referred to anything really transpiring at the point of education. In December 1890, however, a “public stock exchange” was incorporated in San Francisco in which participants actually gained or lost on their purchases of junk stock based on arbitrary bids deduced from prerecorded

phonograms. The state attempted to shut this exchange down the following April for violating anti-gambling laws, and also because it was “alleged that no one but the operator knows what the prices are fixed at, and that in many instances the man who dictates to the phonograph is the owner of certain stocks himself, and can therefore benefit himself, to the detriment of the public,”<sup>260</sup> but the operatives apparently had friends in high places whose intervention allowed them to keep the game running.<sup>261</sup> A new city ordinance was eventually passed prohibiting “the operation of any machine or apparatus that causes the rise and fall of stocks genuine or suppositious,” and a couple arrests were made at the start of 1893 to test its validity,<sup>262</sup> but it is unclear that these had much of an effect.<sup>263</sup> Meanwhile, a man named George W. Rumble, who was already well versed in mail fraud and shady stock brokering schemes,<sup>264</sup> had begun a similar operation in New York City in the spring of 1892. Participants were invited to buy shares in any of four California gold and silver mining companies that existed only on paper, having been invented purely for the purposes of the game. A phonograph then “croaked out” two or three quotations for these stocks per minute, its operator repeated them live for clarity, and another employee made updates on a chalkboard. Each of the stocks fluctuated between three and four dollars a share and tended to go up or down in increments of a couple cents. As in California, the course of the “market” was arbitrarily predetermined:

“How does the phonograph get the quotations?” he [Rumble] was asked.  
“Well, we have our bids, &c., and we put them on the cylinders.”  
“That has to be done beforehand?”  
“Of course.”<sup>265</sup>

In June 1892, a client who had lost \$200 on Maple Mining stock took Rumble to court, claiming the phonograph’s bids had been “fixed.”<sup>266</sup> The case was appealed to the New York Supreme Court, which determined in November 1892 that Rumble’s scheme was technically legal, and he resumed business in May 1893, scattering circulars containing the court’s decision around the office.<sup>267</sup> However, he and his cohorts were arrested again a couple weeks later for “violating the gambling law” and “making fraudulent quotations on alleged mining stocks,”<sup>268</sup> and the exchange’s real status as a gambling operation was now thoroughly exposed:

The method of procedure was to talk the quotations into the phonograph on the previous evening, and after the customers had made their bets, the quotations were ground out on the instrument, and the gambler won or lost, much as he would in any game of chance.

But this scheme soon came to grief, for the police swooped down upon it one day and Proprietor Rumble and a man named Matthews were arrested and placed under \$1,000 bail each. It is stated, though the fact cannot be verified, that when the big policeman was removing the phonograph in his arms, the thing blurted out: "What are you pulling me for? I haven't done anything." It may be that Rumble had a sense of humor and charged the instrument in advance.<sup>269</sup>

Rumble appears to have given up on the phonograph scheme at this point, although he was convicted of mail fraud again in 1904, once more in connection with the sale of spurious California mining stock.<sup>270</sup> Like Beckenbaugh's auction records, the phonographic stock exchanges of the early 1890s relied on the phonograph's ability to educe a sequence of utterances identifiable with price fluctuations in a simulated marketplace, but the significance of the "bids" was very different in the latter case, both for the listeners and for the phonogenic speakers, who now really stood to gain or lose financially depending on the recorded outcome:

The proprietors compile a fictitious market, with quick rises and falls to take place every few seconds in the various stocks. These they place in the phonograph, and know exactly how they will come out. Consequently, they know precisely how much money they can take in, long or short, without making much of a loss. Thus they have a sure advantage against the public.<sup>271</sup>

At the same time, the education of bids in phonographic stock exchanges was not construed as an audicular experience, as Beckenbaugh's routines were. All that was required was that they be "croaked out" intelligibly enough for the operators to understand them, repeat them live, and chalk them down on the board for reference.

In the realm of gambling, other events on which people customarily wagered money were represented phonographically in the descriptive mode, in which case suspense over the outcome tended to be subordinated to the audicular enjoyment of a "scene." In 1896, Columbia inaugurated its "Tough Series,"<sup>272</sup> which often took as its subject matter underclass—and sometimes illegal—sporting events in which the staking of money was a key component. Departing briefly from his usual auctioneer records, W. O. Beckenbaugh phonogenized a piece for this series called *THE COCK FIGHT*.<sup>273</sup> The series absorbed some parts of the earlier "Fakir Series," including *THE BOOKMAKER*, but Len Spencer also devised some new routines for it. In his *MIKE THE BIKE* or *THE PRIZE FIGHT*, we hear the opening of a match between the title character and the "Belfast Spider" with the shouts of bystanders and irregular



percussive noises presumably meant to represent punches, but the proceedings are interrupted as “agin the law” by the local sheriff and called off without a decision despite angry murmurs from the crowd.<sup>274</sup> The episode is a failure as a prize fight, since no prize is awarded, but it is still a success as a descriptive phonogram, giving listeners the illusion of eavesdropping on a forbidden form of entertainment.

Spencer’s *THE DOG FIGHT*, which proved to be the most enduring title of the lot, does run its course, replete with virtuosic mimicry of dogs barking, snarling, and yelping, but the winner’s identity is still impossible to determine. The two dogs are named during the sketch—a bulldog named “Tramp” and a spindle dog named “Baloney”—but the listener has no way of knowing for sure which dog’s owner is heard crowing at the end of the fight:

Aw, look at 'im!  
Look at 'im runnin'!  
Ah, my dog wins the fight, c'mon fellas, downstairs everybody and have a drink on my dog,  
c'mon!<sup>275</sup>

Again, the appeal of this selection came mainly from its ability to expose middle-class listeners to a scene that would normally have been off-limits to them, not from interest in the competition as such. One commentator wrote in 1905:

A dozen times a day a dog fight in its most realistic form is performed, apparently to the unalloyed delight of my neighbors. A hoarse-voiced “tough” announces the terms of the fight in tones only possessed by the variety of mankind of which he is a representative. “Stop that dog, please!” he calls out again and again, as his eloquence is interrupted by the barking and yelping of the dogs, and the crowd he is addressing yells its impatience for the fight to begin. At last the fight is on, and if you were actually assisting at it, in defiance of the penal code, you could hardly get a more realistic sense of the elevating amusement. The talking machine tells the whole story. If the dog fight was actually taking place on the lawn, and the refuse of humanity had gathered there to see it, the proceedings would hardly be more real than they seem in this machine reproduction. I have never had the privilege of watching a dog fight, but from repeated hearings of that phonograph I feel as if I had now subjected myself to criminal arrest for violating the law by sneaking into that sort of thing.<sup>276</sup>

The writer’s neighbors clearly knew the outcome of *THE DOG FIGHT* in advance if they listened to it “a dozen times a day,” so the uncertainty and anticipation that normally attends a competition (and that existed in the phonographic stock exchanges) was not present here. The same dog would win every time, even if it was unclear which dog it was. Thus, *THE DOG FIGHT* was to be prized for its “realistic” mimicry of the dogs and the speech of Bowery toughs, not judged according to the criteria by which participants typically evaluated real dog fights as contests. Indeed,

the writer alludes to the imaginary spectators as “the refuse of humanity” and, despite sarcastic references to the referee’s “eloquence” and the fight’s status as “an elevating amusement,” is plainly not inclined to embrace the represented event on its own terms. Like *ROW AT A NEGRO BALL* and *DOWN AT FINNEGAN’S JAMBOREE*, *THE PRIZE FIGHT* and *THE DOG FIGHT* primarily offered listeners a safe opportunity to eavesdrop on how others amused themselves, not to participate in what was going on in the ordinary way.

Pitchmen and auctioneers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century could be construed both positively as sources of entertainment and negatively as potential scam artists, and early phonograms representing sales pitches and auctions in the descriptive mode accordingly reflect a variety of orientations towards and value judgments on their subjects. Sometimes listeners are invited to admire the salesman’s skill and success, while at other times they are expected to relish the salesman’s flubs and resulting discomfiture, with a spectrum of intermediate possibilities existing between these two poles (or we might instead plot our examples against two axes, one representing the formal virtuosity of the pitch, the other representing its outcome, since these do not necessarily coincide). In each case, the phonogenic performer contrives an imaginary context, distinct from the real contexts of recording and education, within which the fictional pitchman or auctioneer exercises his art or displays his ineptitude and succeeds or fails in making sales. We find a variety of “audio theater” techniques used to reveal salient features of the fictional scene. Sometimes we actually hear simulated interjections by individuals besides the salesman, typically phonogenized in contrastive voices by the same performer:

**AUCTIONEER:** Now, then, we’ll sell this beautiful poll parrot.

There, Polly. [*Sounds of parrot*]

**CUSTOMER:** Say, can it sing?

**AUCTIONEER:** Why, sing? Like a bird!

**PITCHMAN:** Thank you, two bottles, *thank* you—five dollars.

**CUSTOMER:** The change?

**PITCHMAN:** Change? You don’t get any change here, anybody else?

At other times, performers imply the actions of other participants through the salesman’s own words, leaving it for listeners to infer missing visual and aural elements (shown here with double underlining):

Two dollars and a half, going, going *going!* [*Someone bids \$2.75.*]  
Seventy-five, thank you.  
[*Chant resumes*] Going at two dollars and seventy-five....

You put that clock at the head o' the stairs, you can tell just what time it is when your hubby comes home from the club.

[*"Couldn't my husband just turn back the hands on the clock when he comes home late?"*]  
What's that? [*"I said, couldn't my husband just turn back the hands on the clock?"*] Oh, no, no *no*, you can't turn the hands back without waking the cuckoo, I'll show ya.

Anyone wish a bottle? [*First customer approaches.*] Yes, sir. [*Customer hands over money.*]  
Thank you, sir.  
[*Pitchman accepts money, hands over bottle; another customer approaches with money.*]  
And thank you, sir.

Phonogenic performers occasionally also exploit an assumption on the part of listeners that the salesman's injunctions are actually carried out within the fictional scene unless there is some indication to the contrary. This technique is particularly useful for establishing details that cannot be represented directly within the aural channel:

Now, William,  
hold the cage a little higher so we can all see.  
[*Injunction fulfilled: "William" holds the cage higher; the audience can see it.*]

Here, hold that light a little higher, *don't* spill that oil in my neck.  
[*Injunction fulfilled: boy holds light higher.*]  
Now then, people—get off that buggy wheel there, boy.  
Get off there! [*Injunction fulfilled: boy was on buggy wheel but now gets off it.*]

Sometimes performers add extra cues to confirm inferences of this kind, further facilitating comprehension of the scene as a whole:

Now, the first we've got here  
is an adjustable walnut baby's high chair—madam, kindly remove that baby from the chair so we  
can all see it. [*Injunction fulfilled: woman removes baby, giving the audience a better  
look at the chair.*]  
[*Imitation of baby crying; inference: the baby is upset at having been removed from the chair.*]  
Oh, don't cry, baby, maybe mom'll buy the chair for ya....

And here we have a genuine Nubian cow, right from Nubia.  
Sam, give her a kick on the leg.  
[*"Kick" sound; injunction fulfilled: "Sam" has kicked the cow on the leg.*]  
[*Vocal imitation of cow mooing; inference: the cow is mooing in response to having been kicked.*]  
**Spectator:** Oh, look at 'im, oh mymymymymymymy! [*Inference: spectator has seen and been  
impressed by the same cow.*]

In such cases, the action itself often appears to be dictated by the availability of representational techniques. There is no clear reason within the fictional world of the phonogram for the exhibitor to have the Nubian cow kicked on the leg, but it is

gratifyingly easy for the listener to follow this injunction and its implied fulfillment and so to locate the simulated “moo” within a tightly-woven web of cause and effect. These observations by no means exhaust the techniques found in these phonograms; I simply want to draw attention to the complexity of the methods by which early phonogenic representations of pitches and auctions were relativized to simulated settings in which these forms of verbal art could unfold more or less as they did in their usual contexts.

Having established that phonographic representations of pitches and auctions involved considerable artifice, it is worth stressing that these sources do still have value as windows onto the cultural practices they describe. Granted, they are not transparent “records” of real pitches or auctions but consciously contrived, openly subjective representations of their subject matter. Nevertheless, there is no cause to regard them as inherently *more* subjective, stylized or distorted than, say, paintings or written descriptions. Much as paintings and written descriptions can complement each other as documentation, each accommodating certain details for which the other is less well suited, so early commercial phonograms can preserve the aural nuances of their subjects in a way other contemporaneous forms of representation could not.

Consider the following item in Len Spencer’s “Fakir Series”:

SIDE SHOW SHOUTER. Scene outside the circus. All the familiar sights and sounds, and the most wonderful oration of the man who describes the show. Music, shouts, cries of animals, calls ’round the tent, peddlers, gamins, countrymen, sharpers, etc. Must be heard to be appreciated. “They’re Alive! Alive! Alive!”<sup>277</sup>

In this routine, Spencer repeatedly utters the words “They’re alive! alive! alive!” with a distinctive rhythm and intonation, taking advantage of the medium’s unique capacity for representing the aural patterning of spoken language.<sup>278</sup> Regardless of the status of these utterances as “imitations,” they were still voiced by someone who was presumably an earwitness to the real thing and so constitute evidence of a kind that is necessarily missing from documentation in other media. Furthermore, W. O. Beckenbaugh and (probably) George Graham engaged professionally in the very performance traditions they sought to represent in their phonograms. What they did in front of the recording horn was, to be sure, very different from what they did in live performance. However, their phonograms offer us a compensatory advantage:

we hear what Beckenbaugh and Graham subjectively felt was essential to the representation in phonography of forms of verbal art with which they were intimately familiar. If Spencer's "imitations" are those of an earwitness to sales pitches and auctions, those of Beckenbaugh and Graham provide an insider's perspective. Meanwhile, substitutive-mode phonograms of dance calls and sales pitches involved an equally high degree of phonogenic adaptation, but they were designed to achieve the actual social ends ordinarily sought by dance callers and pitchmen and so can offer yet another kind of insight into the workings of these two cultural forms. All such sources must be assessed intelligently and cautiously with respect to the contexts in which they were generated, but of course the same could be said of sources of all kinds and in all media.

---

<sup>1</sup> L. H. Elmswell, *Prompter's Pocket Instruction Book* (Boston, New York and Chicago: White-Smith Music Publishing Company, 1892), 7 ff.

<sup>2</sup> 1879 reissue of first McTammany Organette catalog of 1877, reproduced in facsimile in Q. David Bowers, *Encyclopedia of Automatic Musical Instruments* (Vestal, New York: Vestal Press, 1972), 762.

<sup>3</sup> Music for the Clariona perforated-sheet organette was sold at four cents per foot. Most selections were between 17 and 38 feet, containing a waltz, quickstep, three to six songs or two to four stanzas of a single song. The only selections over this length were dances, mostly quadrilles: WALTZ, QUADRILLE (2026, 66 feet); MONEY MUSK (2052, 66 feet); OPERA BOUFFE QUADRILLE (2053, 68 feet), and ROBINSON SCHOTTISCHE QUADRILLE (2033, 69 feet), and LANCERS QUADRILLE (2054 A and B, 121 feet). The last of these would have been long enough to accommodate nearly twenty stanzas of a song, enough for a complete lanciers with all the repetitions. See "Retail Price List of Music for Prof. M. Gally's Clariona," reproduced in facsimile in *Musical Box Society International News Bulletin* 125 (July-Aug. 1995), 24-5.

<sup>4</sup> "Another Fireside Joy," *Decatur Daily Review* (Decatur, Illinois), Sept. 13, 1879, p. 3. In this case, the dance was not a success because the host had put the sheet in backwards.

<sup>5</sup> The standard twenty-note rollers: "LA MASCOTTE" QUADRILLES I-V (168-172), "GAY LIFE" QUADRILLES I-V (200-204), "CHIMES OF NORMANDY" QUADRILLES I-V (556-560); but there was also a single cob RAZZLE DAZZLE, LANCIERS (299). The thirty-two note rollers were MARDI GRAS QUADRILLE Nos. I and II (2047) and IV and V (2048); PALERMO QUADRILLES Nos. I and II (2050) and IV and V (2051); and GONDOLIERS LANCIERS Nos. I and II (2065) and IV and V (2066). See "Todd Augsburg's Roller Organ Roller (Cob) List," [http://www.rollerorgans.com/Roller\\_Organ\\_List.htm](http://www.rollerorgans.com/Roller_Organ_List.htm), accessed July 28, 2004. The specifications of the grand concert roller are 13 inches long, 2.5 inches diameter, with eight revolutions per cob lasting from about one and a half to two and a half minutes, while those of the standard cob are 6 3/8 inches long by 1 3/4 inches in diameter, with three revolutions lasting from thirty to fifty seconds total ("Arranging for the Gem," [http://www.honorrolls.com/arranging\\_music\\_for\\_the\\_gem\\_roll.htm](http://www.honorrolls.com/arranging_music_for_the_gem_roll.htm), accessed July 29, 2004). Disc automatophones had similar constraints. An interview Ellis Parr granted about his Symphonion disc music box, quoted in Arthur W. J. G. Ord-Hume, *Clockwork Music: An Illustrated History of Mechanical Musical Instruments* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1973), 115, contains the following passage:

"I suppose you could not reproduce any longer pieces on the Symphonion? For instance, parts of an oratorio or a whole quadrille?"

"Not with one disc, but with a series of discs without difficulty. There are, in every musical composition, intervals of longer or shorter duration, and as the changing of the discs requires only

---

about one quarter of a minute, no objectionable break need occur. In dance music it is even easier, as between each part of, say, a quadrille, there is necessarily a pause.”

An Ariston disc organette music catalog listed two multi-part offerings, both of which were quadrilles: HIGH LIFE QUADRILLE in six parts (98) and another QUADRILLE in five parts (831); see “Partial List of Music for the Ariston,” reproduced in facsimile in Bowers, *Encyclopedia*, 746.

<sup>6</sup> George Kelly and Mason Matthews, “Mechanical Musical Instrument,” U. S. Patent 217,798, filed Jan. 10, 1879, granted July 22, 1879; reissued as U. S. Patent 9532, Jan. 11, 1881.

<sup>7</sup> “It is as important that a prompter should study elocution as for a public speaker. A pleasant-toned emphatic voice is a great desideratum for any person whose success depends upon its use in public places. Carefully avoid speaking through the nose, thick utterance, and an unpleasant pitch of voice. A study of elocution would be of great advantage and really is as much of a necessity to the professional prompter as to an orator” (J. A. French, *The Prompter’s Hand Book* [Boston: O. Ditson Co., 1893], 8).

<sup>8</sup> [F. L. Clenenden], *Fashionable Quadrille Call Book and Guide to Etiquette* (Davenport, Iowa: F. L. Clenenden, 1895), 3.

<sup>9</sup> Entries for both of the sessions mentioned appear in the *First Book*.

<sup>10</sup> The first North American Phonograph Company record catalog of early 1890 contains QUADRILLE—CALLING OUT among its parlor orchestra selections (see Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, 134), and Dodsworth’s Orchestra of New York had performed this same piece for the New York Phonograph Company by that summer, judging from a selection then available on a nickel-in-the-slot machine: “Quadrille, Calling Out—Dodsworth’s Orchestra, New York” (“The Edison Phonograph,” *Atlanta Constitution*, July 23, 1890, p. 7). North American’s new lists of June 18, 1890 include SARATOGA LANCIERS & CALLS by band and QUADRILLE & CALLS by parlor orchestra, and the replacement list of Oct. 13, 1890 includes QUADRILLE WITH CALLS by orchestra (57) and LANCIERS WITH CALLS by band (69). On Mar. 18, 1892, Holding’s Parlor Orchestra phonogenized two rounds of QUADRILLE WITH CALLING FIGURES, one of LANCIERS WANG WITH CALLING FIGURES, and one of LANCIERS—THE LAST OF THE HOGANS—WITH CALLING OF FIGURES (the date is given as Mar. 18, 1891, but the year seems to be a typographical error, as noted by Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, 131, panel 193). The “Saratoga lancers” was a technical description of a particular dance type (see e.g. “Saratoga Lancers,” in Elmwel, *Prompter’s Pocket Instruction Book*, 29-30), whereas *Wang* and *The Last of the Hogans* were both stage musicals that had opened on Broadway in 1891.

<sup>11</sup> Referring to the shipment of cylinders Osgood Wiley delivered to England in Sept. 1888: “At the first reception the music employed by Markwith’s 5th Regiment Band, played into the phonograph in Orange, was reproduced with such distinctness that the ladies and gentlemen present danced to the strains” (“Dance to Phonograph Music,” *New York Evening Sun*, Mar. 6, 1889 [TAEM 146:406]). Again, it was predicted that the phonograph would “furnish music for dances, as in New York a short time ago twenty-five couples ‘tripped the fantastic’ to the orchestra transmitted by the phonograph” (“A Marvel of the Age,” *St. Paul Globe*, Jan. 13, 1889 [TAEM 146:392]); when the Sullivan brothers gave a phonograph entertainment at a banquet or reception in 1889-91, “more than once the little instrument was made to furnish music for the dance” (“Successful Phonograph Exhibitors,” *Phonogram* 3 [Feb. 1893], 322); “Dancing-schools need no longer regret the high cost of musicians. Indeed, they may give through the phonograph music of orchestras and bands that could never be brought personally within their reach, because of the great expense” (Edward D. Easton, “A Modern Talking Machine,” *Phonogram* 1 [June-July 1891], 144.)

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. “Dropped a Nickle in the Slot,” *Washington Post*, May 17, 1894, p. 7; item beginning “As in many public places,” *Phonoscope* 1:6 (May 1897), 7.

<sup>13</sup> “Now, instead of sixty or seventy couples dancing to a waltz which only four or five people in the whole ballroom especially like, each pair of dancers can consult their individual preferences in the matter. Some dancers will be stepping gayly to the merry notes of ‘The Duchess of Central Park,’ while others will trip to the music of ‘Rufus on Parade,’ and dignified elderly couples will revolve stiffly by to the ancient air of ‘The Beautiful Blue Danube.’ Young people can romp around with the merry notes of the ‘Caddies’ Two-Step’ ringing in their ears, and the young man who wishes to properly prepare the mind of his partner for what he is going to say to her a few minutes later in the conservatory can have his phonograph play ‘Call Me Thine Own’ and ‘Only You’ and other stuff of that nature.” The technical details of the invention were given as follows: “The phonographic

---

knapsack is the invention of an Iowa genius. His idea is to place an ordinary phonograph that has been fixed to play waltz music in a knapsack that can be carried on a man's back. The phonograph has two sets of receivers to be placed at the ears. These receivers are fitted into an arrangement so that they can be retained at the ears without being held by the hands. The phonograph knapsack has been designed for use at dances. The young men carry them on their backs. In beginning a waltz a man places one set of the receivers at his own ears and the other at the ears of his fair partner. By pulling a cord dangling from the phonographic knapsack the machine is set in motion, and a waltz is played to which the young man and his partner merrily dance" ("Phonographic Knapsack for Dancers," *Chicago Tribune*, May 12, 1901, p. 58).

<sup>14</sup> "Phonograph Ball," *Salem Daily News* (Salem, Ohio), Jan. 2, 1890, p. 1; subsequently printed as "A Phonograph Dance," a "Carson [Nev.] Special to Globe-Democrat," in *Lima Daily News* (Lima, Ohio), Jan. 23, 1890, p. 1; *Newark Daily Advocate* (Newark, Ohio), Jan. 28, 1890, p. 3; and *News* (Frederick, Maryland), Feb. 5, 1890, p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> "The next most popular band [after U. S. Marine] is Issler's, of Newark, N. J. The 'Gondolier's Lancers' has the greatest success for phonographic dance-music" ("The Automatic Phonograph in St. Louis," *Phonogram* 1 [June-July 1891], 139).

<sup>16</sup> For example: "Issler's Orchestra furnished music for dancing" at a ball at the Essex County Country Club's Historical House on Oct. 14, 1892 ("Orange Social Season Opened," *New York Times*, Oct. 15, 1892, p. 2).

<sup>17</sup> "For good general 'all round' work, tubes and horn, nothing is superior to the Issler orchestra records. They easily take the lead in their line and we recommend new operators and beginners in exhibition work to obtain a large proportion of them with their selections" ("Practical Phonograph Points," *Edison Phonographic News* 1:6 [Mar.-Apr. 1895], 91); "Long use does not dim the record, the cylinders being deeply engraved for hard wear" (1894 United States Phonograph Company catalog quoted in *FPRA* Apr. 1955, 29).

<sup>18</sup> Accounts of these phonograms in actual use are unfortunately rare, but the program of a mixed live and phonographic concert held at the Atlanta Business University included "Quadrille with calls, 'Right In It'—Richardson's Phonograph" ("University Literary Exercises," *Atlanta Constitution*, Feb. 18, 1894, p. 24).

<sup>19</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 20, italics added.

<sup>20</sup> Occasionally music in other time signatures was used, such as 4/4, in which case each bar counted as two 2/4 bars for dancing purposes; see, for example, the final segment of the fifth figure in A. S. Hardy, *Lancers Wild Gazelle*, arr. W. S. Milton (Philadelphia: T. A. Bacher, 1882), 7.

<sup>21</sup> I suspect that these voices were actually contributed by two different speakers rather than by a single speaker varying his tone, since the crowd's response to the "caller" generally does not include the high-pitched voice, whereas the cheer following the internal announcement does.

<sup>22</sup> Issler's Orchestra, LANCIERS WITH FIGURES CALLED FROM REILLY AND THE FOUR HUNDRED, brown wax cylinder §.

<sup>23</sup> Issler's Orchestra, LANCIERS WITH FIGURES CALLED FROM THE DEVIL'S DEPUTY (*AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* [Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless]), 2:16 §.

<sup>24</sup> Issler's Orchestra, LANCIERS WITH FIGURES CALLED FROM PRINCESS NICOTINE (*AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* [Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless]), 2:21 §; there is a skip on the cylinder at the beginning of the first figure and only six bars are audible; I presume there were originally eight.

<sup>25</sup> Issler's Orchestra, LANCIERS WITH FIGURES CALLED FROM DOCTOR SYNTAX (*AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* [Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless]), 4:1 §.

<sup>26</sup> Issler's Orchestra, LANCIERS WITH FIGURES CALLED FROM THE GONDOLIERS, channel-rim cylinder (WFMU *Thomas Edison's Attic*, May 30, 2006) §.

<sup>27</sup> Issler's Orchestra, LANCIERS WITH FIGURES CALLED—ERMIN[I]E (*24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1888-1894: THE NORTH AMERICAN PHONOGRAPH COMPANY ERA* [Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001], 17) §. The voices of announcer and caller are somewhat harder to distinguish in this phonogram than in the others and should be regarded as more tentative.

---

<sup>28</sup> This account is based on *How to dance. A complete ball-room and party guide. Containing all the latest figures, together with old-fashioned and contra dances now in general use. Also, a guide to ballroom etiquette, toilets, and general useful information for dancers* (New York: Tousey & Small, 1878), 15; E. H. Kopp, compiler, *The American Prompter and Guide to Etiquette* (Cincinnati, Ohio: John Church Co., 1896), 42; Charles T. French, *Jersey Lily Lancers* (New York: Spear and Dehnhoff, 1882); and Charles Link, *Unique Dancing Call Book* (Rochester, New York: C. Link, 1893), under “lancers quadrille.” Link specifies eight bars in two cases where we would expect four, which may be a typographical error.

<sup>29</sup> One idiosyncratic version of a *second* figure found in a callbook ends with a promenade (Kopp, *American Prompter*, 44), but this is atypical even for that figure, which is the only one besides the first figure with the same number of bars.

<sup>30</sup> “This figure commences with the music, only one preparatory chord being sounded, so each gentleman should stand with his right hand in that of his partner ready to start” (*How to Dance*, 15).

<sup>31</sup> French, *Jersey Lily*.

<sup>32</sup> One version specifies “end with first strain” without telling what call(s) to give (Kopp, *American Prompter*, 45).

<sup>33</sup> Kopp, *American Prompter*, 47.

<sup>34</sup> Elmwel, *Prompter’s Pocket Instruction Book*, 27-9; French, *Prompter’s Hand Book*, 39.

<sup>35</sup> Issler’s Orchestra, ELECTRIC LIGHT QUADRILLE (*AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* [Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless]), 1:1.

<sup>36</sup> SWIM OUT, O’GRADY is listed by Quinn in *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 30; both SWIM OUT, O’GRADY and NOTHING’S TOO GOOD FOR THE IRISH in *Temporary Catalogue of the Columbia Phonograph Co.’s Musical Records for Use on Graphophones and Phonographs*, Jan. 1, 1895, 9-10; and BABBETTE (FRANCIS WILSON’S STUTTERING SONG) as Columbia cylinder 5078 in *List of the Famous “Columbia Records,”* Nov. 1896, 6.

<sup>37</sup> Dec. 1, 1893 record catalog, North American Phonograph Company (TAEM 147:403ff).

<sup>38</sup> *Columbia Records* catalog with letter dated May 1, 1898, 7.

<sup>39</sup> There were also several “lancers” and “quadrille” titles among offerings by the Edison Symphony Orchestra—DR. SYNTAX LANCERS (Edison 526), ELECTRIC LIGHT QUADRILLE (Edison 530), GONDOLIER LANCERS (Edison 540), HALF A KING LANCERS (Edison 543), ISLE OF CHAMPAGNE LANCERS (Edison 556), NOTORIETY LANCERS (Edison 591), RIGHT IN IT QUADRILLE (Edison 602), and TRIP TO CHINATOWN LANCERS (Edison 627)—but these titles are likely to have been “borrowed” from Issler’s Orchestra pieces in the United States Phonograph Company catalog.

<sup>40</sup> UCSB 5243 §. The phonogenic caller in this case is Arthur Collins, based on aural identification.

<sup>41</sup> *Phonoscope* 3:1 (Jan. 1899), 10.

<sup>42</sup> Metropolitan Orchestra, ECHOES OF 1900 MEDLEY—LANCIERS (Victor V-280-1, recorded Oct. 10, 1900) §. This title was remade in seven and ten-inch format on Oct. 4, 1902, when the title “Echoes of 1900” would have been out of date. A ten-inch copy of this selection instead has the title MEDLEY LANCIERS—PING PONG (Nauck’s *Vintage Record Auction* #24, closed Nov. 28, 1998, lot 350). Even the 1900 version gives the title as simply MEDLEY LANCIERS on the label.

<sup>43</sup> Metropolitan Orchestra, MEDLEY QUADRILLE, WITH FIGURES CALLED (Berliner 0913, EBBRI) §.

<sup>44</sup> See the pages from a 1900 Columbia catalog reproduced in Copeland and Dethlefsen, *5-Inch Cylinder Book*, 17, including four selections under the heading “Lanciers and Quadrilles, with Figures Called.”

<sup>45</sup> These were listed already in the first “B” series list, reproduced in Copeland and Dethlefsen, *5-Inch Cylinder Book*, 66.

<sup>46</sup> “B” series list, reproduced in Copeland and Dethlefsen, *5-Inch Cylinder Book*, 67.

<sup>47</sup> Mr. Openeer, “Dancing to Phonograph Music,” *Phonogram-2* 1 (June 1900), 38.

<sup>48</sup> The Peerless Orchestra, selection identified as FOUR POPULAR SONGS OF THE DAY; actually MEDLEY LANCIERS, 1ST FIGURE (Edison 7809, brown wax cylinder, digital file at <http://www.edisonnj.org/menlopark/vintage/brownwax.asp>) §. The website wrongly dates the cylinder to 1896, a year when there were no “Edison Records” as such, and states: “This recording may have been made for a demonstration for the public of Edison’s phonograph. The introduction on the cylinder goes as follows: ‘Ladies and gentlemen. The Peerless Orchestra will entertain the guests again by playing a medley of four of the popular songs of the day (on) Edison record.’” The music for



---

the first figure heard on this particular cylinder consists exclusively of the song “Just One Girl.” Because of the supposed 1896 date, I assume the sound file represents a standard rather than a Concert cylinder, so it would be a copy of the 1901 “reissue” as Edison 7809 (see below) rather than B146.

<sup>49</sup> See the Aug. 1, 1900 leaflet of “Latest Columbia Records,” reproduced in Fabrizio and Paul, *Phonographica*, 51. These titles were not indicated in boldface as “entirely new” at that time, but the highest number listed in this block the 1900 catalog reproduced in Copeland and Dethlefsen, *5-Inch Cylinder Book*, 16-21, is 15229.

<sup>50</sup> CHRISTMAS PRESENTATION OF A PHONOGRAPH (tinfoil.com cylinder of the month for Dec. 2005) §.

<sup>51</sup> Peerless Orchestra, MEDLEY LANCERS, FIRST FIGURE (7809), MEDLEY LANCERS, SECOND & THIRD FIGURES (7810), MEDLEY LANCERS, LAST FIGURE (7811), released May 1901.

<sup>52</sup> On Oct. 19, 1901, Victor recorded the Metropolitan Orchestra’s multi-part renditions of QUADRILLE FROM “THE FORTUNE TELLER” (serial numbers 1048 and 1049) and LANCERS FROM “THE SINGING GIRL” (serial numbers 1050 and 1051), spanning both seven and ten-inch discs.

<sup>53</sup> Hager’s Orchestra, UNIVERSITY CLUB LANCIERS, FIGURE 1 (Climax 234A), UNIVERSITY CLUB LANCIERS, FIGURE 2 (Climax 234B), UNIVERSITY CLUB LANCIERS, FIGURE 3 (Climax 234C), UNIVERSITY CLUB LANCIERS, FIGURE 4 (Climax 234D).

<sup>54</sup> Nauck’s *Vintage Record Auction* #38 (closed Nov. 5, 2005), lot 114, depicted on inside front cover. The description of the lot notes that “there is some distortion in the vocal dance calls,” indicating that the series was in fact “called.” It would be interesting to know how the calls were phrased so as to be appropriate for both repetitions in terms of which couples were instructed to do what, as well as how the initial “hold” was handled, since it would ordinarily have been sounded only at the beginning of the dance.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix*, 340. The company also claimed elsewhere to sell the “talking machine that plays loud enough for dancing” (see advertisement in Fabrizio and Paul, *Antique Phonograph Advertising*, 52).

<sup>56</sup> No moulds for Edison Concert cylinders B146-8 or standard cylinders 7809-11 appear in the plating books, suggesting that demand for the older MEDLEY LANCIERS set must have been low and that it was not carried over into the black wax catalog.

<sup>57</sup> *Phonogram-2* 6 (Dec. 1902), 35.

<sup>58</sup> “A Novel Way of Using the Phonograph for a Christmas Entertainment,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:12 (Feb. 1904), 5.

<sup>59</sup> “The Dance Supplement,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:10 (Dec. 1904), 5.

<sup>60</sup> “The Dance Records,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:12 (Feb. 1905), 5.

<sup>61</sup> Edison Military Band, U. S. ARMY LANCERS, 2ND FIGURE (Edison 8248, UCSB 2914) §. Other similar introductory announcements include “Third Figure” (Edison Military Band, U. S. ARMY LANCERS, 3RD FIGURE [Edison 8249, UCSB 2915]) §; “First Half of Last Figure [*hold*] Right and Left” (Edison Military Band, U. S. ARMY LANCERS, 1ST HALF OF LAST FIGURE [Edison 8250, UCSB 2916]) §; “Second Half of Last Figure, Right and Left” (Edison Military Band, U. S. ARMY LANCERS, 2ND HALF OF LAST FIGURE [Edison 8251, UCSB 2917]) §.

<sup>62</sup> Edison Military Band, GOOD HUMOR QUADRILLE (Edison 8886, 2 *MINUTE CYLINDERS* [P&L Antiques], 3:27) §.

<sup>63</sup> Sousa, “Menace,” 281.

<sup>64</sup> “Our St. Louis Booklet,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:6 (Aug. 1904), 13.

<sup>65</sup> The repeating attachment was ideal “for dance music, when everybody wants to dance and nobody wants to operate the Phonograph, this device keeps the waltz or two-step going indefinitely” (“Repeating Profits on Repeating Attachments,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:8 [Aug. 1908], 7).

<sup>66</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 5:6 (Aug. 1907), 16.

<sup>67</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:2 (Feb. 1908), 19.

<sup>68</sup> “The Phonograph—My Pet Invention and the Possibilities I See In It,” interview with Thomas Edison in *Music Trades*, reprinted in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:12 (Feb. 1907), 15.

<sup>69</sup> The Twentieth Century cylinders, released in Mar. 1906, were LANCIERS FROM “MISS DOLLY DOLLARS” (Columbia cylinders 85049-85051). The equivalent twelve-inch discs, released around the same time, were 30007, 30008, and 30009, and these were eventually coupled as A5064 (30007 + 30008) and A5063 (30009 + GOLDEN SUNSET WALTZES [30012]). In 1904, Victor had already issued

---

a similar set alternating between twelve-inch and ten-inch discs (Victor [twelve-inch] 31243, [ten-inch] 2873, [twelve-inch] 31244, matrices all numbered 1333).

<sup>70</sup> “The lancers are given complete on these three Records, made with calls. No one need now be without the facility for dancing the lancers on any and all occasions.” These were phonogenized by the New York Military Band, as a three-part SUPERBA LANCIERS, catalog numbers 265-7 (“18 Records Made Especially for Dancing,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 7:8 [Aug. 1909], 22).

<sup>71</sup> Rene Bache, “Do Monkeys Have Speech?” *Brooklyn Times*, Sept. 21, 1890 (TAEM 146:608). The “Row at a Negro Ball” cylinder is mentioned by Conot, *A Streak of Luck*, 310, and copied from there into Dave Laing, “A voice without a face: popular music and the phonograph in the 1890s,” *Popular Music* 10 (1991), 2, by which point it is being described incorrectly as the work of “Edison’s team.”

<sup>72</sup> “Phonographic Music,” from *New York News*, in *Mountain Democrat* (Placerville, California), Jan. 9, 1892, p. 3. Other portions of the article closely match comments published in late 1890 and early 1891, so the piece likely dates from that time rather than from the period of its republication in California in early 1892.

<sup>73</sup> The definitive account of Johnson’s life and career is Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 15-71; see also his “George W. Johnson: An Annotated Discography,” *ARSC Journal* 35 (Spring 2004), 67-89. According to an early biography, he “first attracted public notice as a whistler on excursion boats and ferries” (“The Only and Original Laughing and Whistling Coon,” *Phonogram-2* 2:1 [Nov. 1900], 14).

<sup>74</sup> Advertisement, *Phonoscope* 1:1 (Nov. 1896), 3. I do not find this selection listed in any later catalog.

<sup>75</sup> DOWN AT FINNEGAN’S JAMBOREE (*AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* [Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless]), 4:18 §, probably corresponding to catalog listings for Charles D’Almaine, MR. FINNIAGIN’S CONVERSATZIONE (Columbia cylinder 27009, ca. 1900).

<sup>76</sup> Charles D’Almaine, DOWN AT FINNEGAN’S JAMBOREE (Edison 7423, released Jan.-May 1900), brown wax cylinder §. This cylinder is in poor condition and largely indecipherable, but after a nearly identical opening, it is clear that the spoken interjections vary considerably from those found in the Columbia version reissued by American Gramophone and Wireless.

<sup>77</sup> ARKANSAS [OR ARKANSAW] TRAVELER (Edison 8202; Columbia cylinder 11098; Columbia disc 21, double-faced A406; Zon-o-phone 907; Victor 1101; Lambert 806); MARTY MALONEY’S WAKE (Edison 8190, Victor 1103, Lambert 805); CON CLANCY’S CHRISTENING (Edison 8279, Victor 1104, Lambert 807), THE STUTTERING MONOLOGIST (Zon-o-phone 1901, 905; Victor 1102); MAKING THE FIDDLE TALK (Edison 8361, Lambert 809).

<sup>78</sup> Charles D’Almaine, DOWN AT FINNEGAN’S JAMBOREE (Edison 8146, released Sept. 1902).

<sup>79</sup> Charles D’Almaine and Company, DOWN AT FINNEGAN’S JAMBOREE (Edison Amberol 718, released July 1911) §.

<sup>80</sup> Description of cylinder 15142 in *Columbia Records* catalog with letter dated May 1, 1898, 8; and in 1900 Columbia cylinder catalog, reprinted in facsimile in Copeland and Dethlefsen, *5-Inch Cylinder Book*, 17. An earlier selection by the Columbia Orchestra was HICKORY CORNERS (cylinder 15072), described as “Rube dance with figures called” (*List of the Famous “Columbia Records,”* June 1897, 4).

<sup>81</sup> Description of cylinder number 14031 in 1900 Columbia cylinder catalog, reprinted in facsimile in Copeland and Dethlefsen, *5-Inch Cylinder Book*, 20. Some if not all of this wording was also used to describe Columbia disc 19 in the Dec. 1904 Columbia catalog, quoted in Brooks and Rust, *Columbia Master Book Discography*, 1:57. Even earlier, we find a reference to a minister “shaking his sides with laughter at the fiddling and calling at a country dance, as reproduced by a phonograph” (“The Teachers’ Whist Club,” *Woodland Daily Democrat* [Woodland, California], Jan. 24, 1894, p. 3). Other selections of this sort, introduced in 1909, were Len Spencer and Ada Jones, SI PERKINS’ BARN DANCE (Edison Amberol 133; Albany Indestructible 1043; Zon-o-phone 5492-A); Collins and Harlan, DOWN AT THE HUSKIN’ BEE (Victor 16365, B-8116; Zon-o-phone 5528-A; Edison 10234); and Cal Stewart and Company, UNCLE JOSH’S HUSKING BEE (Edison Amberol 83, etc.).

<sup>82</sup> Transcribed from [Harry Spencer and George Schweinfest], HUSKING BEE DANCE, misattributed to Cal Stewart on label (Columbia A405, mx. 19-10) §.

<sup>83</sup> Len O’De Witt, *Uncle Josh’s Huskin’ Dance* (New York: E. T. Paull, 1898).

<sup>84</sup> The dance occurs at the very end of *The Old Homestead*. A surviving promptbook has Uncle Josh say: “Come take partners and let us have a dance (form for dance) hold on, I want to say a few words

---

to our neighbors.” He then proceeds to moralize about the themes of the play, ending with: “...dont [sic] let this be your last visit to the old Homestead. (Len plays fiddle --- and dance till Curtain.)” See Dennon [sic] Thompson and George W. Ryar [sic], *The Old Homestead*, typescript [1887] in *English and American Drama of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Readex Microprint, 1969).

<sup>85</sup> Amanda Dargan Zeitlin, *American Talkers: The Art of the Sideshow Carnival Pitchman and Other Itinerant Showmen and Vendors* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1992), vi.

<sup>86</sup> Zeitlin, *American Talkers*, 63.

<sup>87</sup> “A singer in Detroit who wanted an engagement in an opera company sent a sample of his voice to the manager on a phonograph cylinder” (“Theaters and Music,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Feb. 8, 1891, p. 13); a Denver soprano allegedly convinced a New York stage manager to hire her solely on the basis of “a phonograph cylinder, upon which was recorded a very good rendering of a well known test piece for the voice” (“To Displace Writing,” from *New York Mail and Express*, in *Standard* [Ogden, Utah], Dec. 9, 1892, p. 2); vocal instructor Anna Lankow, through Theo Wangemann’s assistance, is supposed to have taken “phonographic samples” of the voices of some of her pupils with her to Berlin, where she managed to secure engagements for two of them (*Phonoscope* 1:10 [Oct. 1897], 6; “New Use for the Phonograph,” *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 28, 1897, p. 38); a woman in Australia won a London singing scholarship largely on the basis of an audition by “record” (“Scholarship by Phonograph,” *Stevens Point Daily Journal* [Stevens Point, Wisconsin], July 5, 1906, p. 3); and a tenor was similarly hired from England for an American engagement (“New Merry Widow Tenor,” *New York Times*, July 10, 1908, p. 7). Nor was this practice limited to demonstrating the abilities of vocalists, according to a representative at the 1893 convention of local phonograph companies: “The leader of one of the principal orchestras in New York has secured engagements to a large extent during the past two years by showing his patrons,—the Vanderbilts and a good many of our rich people—many of the novelties which he has been able to present at their houses, by having them listen to the reproduction of the music first at his business office, so to speak, sampling and making selections in that way” (*Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention*, 32; original has “showinhg” and “reroduction”). A case was also reported of a man auditioning by a combination of phonograph and moving picture, although the technical details are skewed—both sound and image are supposed to have been on cylinders. “By Jove, sir,” said the manager, “the actor might have been present personally. There he was on the screen, walking up and down the stage and gesticulating and there was his voice issuing in sonorous notes from the big phonograph horn. I got from it as satisfactory an idea of the man’s talent as I could have gotten if he had visited me” (“Samples of Voice and Acting,” *Washington Post*, July 31, 1904, p. 33); “A curious use of the phonograph was recently found by the Hungarian Jews in Chicago, who wrote to the chief rabbi of Presburg, in Hungary, asking him to send over a good rabbi able to preach in the Magyar tongue. Since Chicago is too far away for a trial trip, the chosen candidate preached some of his best discourses in Magyar and in German into a phonograph, and when the records reached Chicago he was promptly elected” (*Humeston New Era* [Humeston, Iowa], Aug. 12, 1903, p. 8).

<sup>88</sup> *New York Dramatic Mirror*, Jan. 24, 1891, p. 9; Feb. 7, 1891, p. 9; Feb. 21, 1891, p. 9; Feb. 28, 1891, p. 9.

<sup>89</sup> *Phonogram* 1 (Apr. 1891), 104.

<sup>90</sup> New England Phonograph Company minutes, p. 139 (handwritten copy), p. 129 (typewritten copy), and p. 82 of the version printed in *New England Phonograph Co. vs. National Phonograph Company*, all in ENHS company records series.

<sup>91</sup> These reports provide concrete details for a statement made in publicity for much later Edison cylinder releases: “Mr. Favor was the first professional to sing in a Phonograph, his record was put on exhibition in the lobby of the Park Theatre, Boston, during the long run there of ‘Ship Ahoy’! and attracted wide-spread attention” (Ronald Dethlefsen, *Edison Blue Amberol Recordings* [Brooklyn, New York: APM Press, 1980—], 1:176). A recorded rendition of the piece Favor sang on this occasion survives with the announcement “Edison Record 772, ‘The Commodore Song’ from *Ship Ahoy* as sung by the original commodore Mr. Edward M. Favor, now of Rice’s 1492 Company,” in *MUSIC FROM THE NEW YORK STAGE, VOLUME ONE: 1890-1920* (GEMM CD 9050-2), 1:4 §.

<sup>92</sup> “Crystallized Music,” *Record* (Boston?), Feb. 28, 1891 (TAEM 146:662); for another account of the recording session, see “List to the Phonograph,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Feb. 26, 1891, p. 3.

<sup>93</sup> *Phonogram* 1 (Apr. 1891), 104.

---

<sup>94</sup> “Comet-Like Flashes,” *Boston Daily Globe*, Mar. 1, 1891, p. 18.

<sup>95</sup> “The novel experiment tried by the New England Phonograph Co. a year ago is being repeated in the foyer of the Park Theatre, Boston, that is, several automatic instruments are placed there, which reproduce the music of the Opera ‘1492,’ now being played by Rice’s Prize Co. Several members of the company have sung to the phonographs and these songs are reproduced for the benefit of the public. This creates a desire on the part of some who have not heard the opera to see it and to criticise the reproductions” (*Phonogram* 2:10 [Oct. 1892], 230-1). A surviving rendition is Edward M. Favor, THE KING’S SONG (*MUSIC FROM THE NEW YORK STAGE, VOLUME ONE: 1890-1920* [GEMM CD 9050-2], 1:8) §. The liner notes identify the cylinder as Columbia 6544, recorded in “1893(?)” The question mark is well-advised because (1) Favor did not appear in Columbia catalogs until 1895, (2) the catalog number 6544 was assigned in 1896, and (3) the cylinder is announced with the later “Columbia Phonograph Company of New York City” formula.

<sup>96</sup> “To Displace Writing,” from *New York Mail and Express*, in *Standard* [Ogden, Utah], Dec. 9, 1892, p. 2. For another similar case, see “Theatrical Gossip,” *New York Times*, Mar. 8, 1892, p. 8).

<sup>97</sup> “The phonograph has already been put into requisition for a similar purpose,” it was noted, “but this will be the first union of a view of the stage and the doings there with the music and the speeches” (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 24, 1894, p. 21); see also “Theatrical Gossip: A New Advertising Device,” *New York Times*, June 21, 1894, p. 8.

<sup>98</sup> One example was called the “talking and singing girl,” a mannequin costumed as a widow or a ballerina. A phonograph was concealed at the back with an aluminum horn leading to the figure’s mouth. “Listeners seem quite puzzled at first wondering where the music comes from,” asserted an article describing the scheme, the implication being that they would stop to try to find out and so be drawn more effectively into the presentation (“Talking and Singing Girl,” *Phonoscope* 2:1 [Jan. 1898], 8). See also a description of a similar scheme in “Another Phonograph Novelty,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:2 (Apr. 1904), 12.

<sup>99</sup> “To introduce the new Manhattan soap to the people of Cambridge, Mass., Arthur H. Smith of the Manhattan market has been giving Gramophone concerts in his big store. October first he presented a Gramophone to the person who turned in the largest number of Manhattan soap wrappers. One corner of the great market was arranged for the instrument and the towering piles of white-wrapped soap, and a pretty picture was presented as a charming young lady handed out the bars, tuned up the machine and dilated on the merits of the goods” (*Phonoscope* 2:10 [Oct. 1898], 16).

<sup>100</sup> “When the man grew tired talking a large phonograph was set to work and the crowd was held and additions to the audience attracted until the next talk came” (“Patent Medicine Men Are Again in Atlanta,” *Atlanta Constitution* [Atlanta, Georgia], Apr. 24, 1900, p. 8).

<sup>101</sup> A Toledo bootblack reportedly adjusted to increased competition by equipping his stand with a phonograph “with which customers are entertained if they so will” (“Enterprising Bootblack,” from *Journal* [Boston, Massachusetts] in *Phonogram*-2 3 [July 1901], 42).

<sup>102</sup> “Marvellous Discovery,” *New York Sun*, Feb. 22, 1878 (TAEM 94:115). The response was not wholeheartedly favorable: “We can only hope that his prophecy will be falsified by a benevolent Board of Works as far as London is concerned, for the babel is loud enough there as it is” (Munro, “Phonograph,” 443).

<sup>103</sup> “The Trade in Phonographs,” *New York World*, Sept. 5, 1879 (TAEM 25:298; clipping badly damaged).

<sup>104</sup> *Phonoscope* 4:5 (May 1900), 7.

<sup>105</sup> Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 130.

<sup>106</sup> Digital file at [http://cylindersontheweb.angelcities.com/rare\\_recordings.htm](http://cylindersontheweb.angelcities.com/rare_recordings.htm), accessed Jan. 22, 2005 §; see full transcription without pause breaks in Copeland and Dethlefsen, *5-Inch Cylinder Book*, 60-1.

<sup>107</sup> George E. B. Putnam, article from the *Boot and Shoe Recorder*, in “A New Scheme,” *Phonogram* 1 (Oct. 1891), 216-7.

<sup>108</sup> Letter from J. J. H., Columbus, Ohio, in *Phonoscope* 3:7 (July 1899), 13.

<sup>109</sup> Brian Towne, “‘Commercial’ Discovered on Brown Wax Cylinder,” *New Amberola Graphic* 71 (Jan. 1990), 17. The cylinder is Arthur Collins, TURKEY IN THE STRAW (Edison 4011). Towne speculates that the store owner added this sales pitch to every cylinder he sold. It is not uncommon to find brief “home recordings” at the ends of commercial brown wax cylinders.

---

<sup>110</sup> Gelatt, *Fabulous Phonograph*, 50, quotes what appears to be a Columbia brochure promoting custom cylinders with advertising announcements. Jim Walsh commented that this “must have sounded like present-day radio” (FPRA Dec. 1959, 35).

<sup>111</sup> “Testimony and Prophecy from Australia,” *Times* (Sydney), Oct. 9, [1904], in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:10 (Dec. 1904), 11.

<sup>112</sup> “Novel Uses of the Talking Machine,” *Phonoscope* 2:12 (Dec. 1898), 13. By 1906, the managers of a shop in Belfast, Ireland, had “placed Genuine ‘Standard’ Edison Phonographs on their counters, which call attention, clearly and unmistakably, to their seasonable goods by means of Records that announce the specialties in each of their departments” (“The Phonograph as an Assistant Salesman!” from *Ulster Echo* [Belfast, Ireland], in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:12 [Feb. 1906], 16).

<sup>113</sup> *Phonoscope* 2:1 (Jan. 1898), 8. This account concerns R. T. Whiting, a grocer of Bridgeport, Connecticut. Later that year, it was reported: “The talking-machines have been used to advantage by cigar manufacturers to advertise their brands. A talking-machine placed in retail cigar stands will be set going for the amusement of customers. A part of the discourse of the machine lauds a particular brand of cigars. A New York firm claims to have sold 2,000,000 extra cigars by introducing talking-machines. Other cigar men are beginning to adopt the instrument” (*Phonoscope* 2:8 [Aug. 1898], 11). Another item stated that cigar dealers were using phonographs for “reciting extracts from ‘Lady Nicotine’ [a popular musical of the era] when one buys a cigar” and observing: “A large number of these machines were installed in...cigar stores in Portland, Ore., not long ago” (*Phonoscope* 3:4 [Apr. 1899], 10).

<sup>114</sup> Francis M. Criswell and James A. E. Criswell, “Phonograph,” U. S. Patent 470,477, filed June 16, 1891, issued Mar. 8, 1892.

<sup>115</sup> Thomas B. Lambert, “Phonograph,” U. S. Patent 643,418, filed May 8, 1899, granted Feb. 13, 1900. A similar device was credited to an unnamed German inventor in “Advertise by Phonograph,” *Elyria Reporter*, July 7, 1905, p. 3, which envisions their further use in department store elevators, where they could “enunciate distinctly the various attractions on each floor, giving the conductor his full time to answer questions and handle the crowds,” and as “house machines designed to give speeches of welcome to the arriving guest.” This latter idea provided the basis for a short story in which a man hears his wife’s voice every time he opens the door even though she is out of town—“Good evening, dear. I hope you had an easy day. Did you?” and “Goodby, dear. I hope you have luck today”—and thinks he is going mad until he is apprised of the secret (William F. Bryan, “Surprising Semple,” *Elyria Chronicle* [Elyria, Ohio], Oct. 14, 1907, p. 4).

<sup>116</sup> Thomas B. Lambert, “Phonograph,” U. S. Patent 643, 419, filed Oct. 5, 1899, granted Feb. 13, 1900.

<sup>117</sup> “Edison’s Latest,” *Commercial Advertiser*, May 16, 1878 (TAEM 94:198). Edison appears to have thought of the advertising phonograph as closely related to the phonographic clock: “Advertising, etc.—This class of phonographic work is so akin to the foregoing [clocks] that it is only necessary to draw attention to it” (Edison, “Phonograph and its Future,” 534).

<sup>118</sup> In the original: “Für Wirthschaften könnten Uhren gebaut werden, welche etwa Sätze ausrufen konnten wie: „Come boys, take a drink!“ „I am awful dry!“ &c.” (“Telephonie,” from the *Philadelphia Demokrat*, in *New Yorker Staats-Zeitung*, Apr. 4, 1878 [TAEM 94:155]).

<sup>119</sup> *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention*, 164. Later on, it was stated: “Phonographs or talking-machines have become so cheap now that...liquor dealers can afford to keep them to amuse their customers by singing ‘For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow’ every time a man treats” (*Phonoscope* 3:4 [Apr. 1899], 10). Conversely: “If some enterprising saloon keeper should introduce one of these machines and agree to throw in a song with every drink custom would soon vanish if the phonograph were to sing ‘Pure Cold Water is the Drink for Me,’ or to appeal to the conscience of a wayward husband with ‘I Am Waiting and Watching for Thee’” (“Melody on Tap,” *Mountain Democrat* [Placerville, California], Sept. 26, 1891, p. 3).

<sup>120</sup> Edward F. Roberts, “Cash Register and Indicator,” U. S. Patent 481,824, filed July 16, 1889, granted Aug. 30, 1892.

<sup>121</sup> “The Phonograph in Country Towns,” *Phonogram* 1 (Oct. 1891), 223.

<sup>122</sup> “The Phonograph Becomes the Great American Advertiser,” *Phonogram* 2 (June 1892), 130-1; for another example, see “Art in Advertising,” *Phonogram* 2 (June 1892), 136-7.

---

<sup>123</sup> “Gallery and Studio,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Aug. 14, 1898, p. 16. The last two letters of the word “Great” are obscured.

<sup>124</sup> “Advertising by Phonograph,” *Phonogram*-2 3 (July 1901), 36.

<sup>125</sup> *Phonoscope* 2:10 (Oct. 1898), 15. According to the patent: “My invention relates to that class of display apparatus in which a series of panels are successively exhibited, with sound-producing means for attracting attention to the panels.... The oral or musical accompaniments to the exhibition of the panels may be effected through the medium of well-known devices—for instance, a phonograph or other talking-machine or a ‘regina’ or other music-box. I prefer to make use of a phonograph for either or both purposes, the cylinder upon the phonograph being provided with the proper oral announcements, each followed by a piece of instrumental or vocal music, and I provide the case with means whereby such announcements and music may be transmitted so as to be readily heard from the outside of the case” (Elmer Fletcher, U. S. Patent 583,679, “Advertising Device,” filed June 20, 1896, granted June 1, 1897).

<sup>126</sup> See, for example, Cyrus Peabody and Patrick H. Delaney, “Improvement in Advertising-Devices,” U. S. Patent 84,707, granted Dec. 8, 1868; and William H. Reiff, “Improvement in Advertising Show-Cases,” U. S. Patent 121,196, granted Nov. 21, 1871.

<sup>127</sup> William Addison Clarke, “Phonographic Possibilities,” *Phonogram* 1 (Apr. 1891), 87.

<sup>128</sup> Correspondence from New England Phonograph Company, *Phonogram* 1 (Oct. 1891), 234; “An alluring free phonograph pours into listening ears the story of the wickedness of other manufacturers and the probity of the spice manufacturers” (“It May Bring Dyspepsia,” *New York Times*, Oct. 11, 1891, p. 17).

<sup>129</sup> “Phonograph and Talking Automaton,” *Phonogram* 2 (Jan. 1892), 25. On Ralston’s identity, see Allen Koenigsberg, “So Long at the Fair: A Lost Chapter in Phonographic History,” *The Sound Box* 22 (Mar. 2004), 27-8.

<sup>130</sup> The text of the sales pitch is reprinted in full in Koenigsberg, “So Long at the Fair,” 29. A bicycle exhibit at the fair also featured a phonographic sales pitch; see “Bicycle Briefs,” *Daily Advocate* (Newark, Ohio), June 6, 1893, p. 7.

<sup>131</sup> Allan B. Clark, “Phonograph Attachment for Telephone-Circuits,” U. S. Patent 667,503, filed July 10 1900, granted Feb. 5, 1901.

<sup>132</sup> “Miss Sniffens’ Spirit Lover,” *Fitchburg Sentinel* (Fitchburg, Massachusetts), July 22, 1878, p. 1.

<sup>133</sup> “The Phonograph,” *The Public*, May 2, 1878 (TAEM 25:182).

<sup>134</sup> “Or, suppose an insurance company were to purchase a thousand or so, and store them up with facts and figures regarding annuities and risks and policies and premiums and surreptitiously introduce them into houses under the guise of music boxes. Then, when the innocent victims wanted the ‘Sweet Bye-and-bye’ he would be regaled by a table of dry statistics, and an injunction that, as life is uncertain, he should insure in the Blow-up Mutual” (“Marvellous Mechanism,” *Philadelphia Press*, Mar. 9, 1878 [TAEM 94:121]).

<sup>135</sup> “The Phonograph in the Advertising Field,” from the *Boston Post*, reprinted in *Phonogram*-2 6 (Nov. 1902), 18-9.

<sup>136</sup> This was in reference to a Norcross “Extra Long” cylinder (FPRA Sept. 1979, 35-6). Again: “The Lyric Phonograph Company intend to make a specialty of furnishing records to order for those wishing special records for advertising purposes. Those desiring same will do well to write for prices, etc.” (*Phonoscope*, 3:5 [May 1899], 13).

<sup>137</sup> “Automatic Drummer,” *Davenport Daily Leader* (Davenport, Iowa), Aug. 28, 1899, p. 1. The punctuation is hard to decipher in the original and may not be given quite correctly here.

<sup>138</sup> Wile, “Launching,” 180.

<sup>139</sup> George Graham, ADVERTISING PLANTS BAKING POWDER (Berliner 641, dated May 26, 1896, *EMILE BERLINER’S GRAMOPHONE: THE EARLIEST DISCS, 1888-1901* [Symposium 1058], 7) §. My transcription differs somewhat from that given in Fabrizio and Paul, *Antique Phonograph Advertising*, 9; the title is also *not* OVEN RISING PLANT’S BAKING POWDER, as stated by the authors, who were understandably baffled by Berliner’s handwriting. It is possible that George Gaskin, BAKING POWDER SONG (Berliner 418, ca. spring 1897) may have been similarly conceived, but I have no information on its content.

<sup>140</sup> See, for instance, “Dangerous Drugs Introduced into Food Articles,” *Washington Post*, Oct. 22, 1887, p. 4, advertising Dr. Price’s Cream Baking Powder as a cream of tartar baking powder without the unhealthful ingredients alum or ammonia. Meanwhile, other parties felt a need to counter such

---

arguments: “All this talk about ammonia in baking powder and its filthy origin is the veriest rubbish.... Ammonia exists in the very air we breath[e]” (“A Baking Powder Matter,” *Newark Daily Advocate* [Newark, Ohio], Dec. 31, 1886, p. 6).

<sup>141</sup> Gaisberg, *Music Goes Round*, 11.

<sup>142</sup> Gaisberg’s comments have proven unreliable in other cases; for instance, he asserts that George Washington Johnson was “hanged for throwing his wife out of a window when in a drunken frenzy” (Gaisberg, *Music Goes Round*, 42), which is untrue (see Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 49-58 for the definitive account of Johnson’s trial and acquittal). On Gaisberg’s statements regarding Len Spencer’s supposed facial scar, see chapter two, note 293.

<sup>143</sup> FPRA June 1944, 26. Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 145, similarly refers to Graham as a “patent medicine salesman,” and Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 140 uses him as an example of a phonogenic performer drawn “from the lowest ranks of show business” who had been discovered “hawking a liver cure on a Washington street corner as a member of an Indian Medicine Troupe.”

<sup>144</sup> “Local Color Comedy,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 23, 1894, p. 14. This source confirms the conclusion in Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 520, based on a photograph, that Graham was not black. On Kolb’s Garden, see an advertisement in the *Washington Post*, Aug. 13, 1891, p. 6, which establishes its owner as Edward Kolb and its location as 811 E Street northwest. “Laboring for the 400,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 4, 1891, p. 6 indicates that Kolb had applied for a liquor license at that address, and “Against High License,” *Washington Post*, Dec. 24, 1890, p. 8, that he was a “retail liquor dealer.” A retrospective article on bygone Washington beer gardens listed Kolb’s among them and observed that it had been known for “a vaudeville show, with George Graham in command” (John J. Daly, “Beer Gardens of Old Capitol Added Froth to Life,” *Washington Post*, Oct. 22, 1933, p. SM4).

<sup>145</sup> Meigs Parham wrote to the editor: “Mr. Graham...had, previous to the banquet in question, signed with the Hopkins Trans-Atlantic Vaudevilles, and is at present with his company in New York” (“A Theatrical Outlook,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 30, 1894, p. 14); see also “Hopkins’ Vaudevilles at the Lyceum,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 15, 1894, p. 9; “At the Play Houses,” *Washington Post*, May 28, 1895, p. 6. References in New York entertainment listings for that year include “George Graham, monologist” in an advertisement for the Imperial Music Hall, “home of high-class vaudeville” (*New York Times*, Feb. 11, 1894, p. 10) and “George Graham in monologue” at Tony Pastor’s (“Notes of the Stage,” *New York Times*, Oct. 21, 1894, p. 10); see also references to Graham’s appearances at Huber’s Palace Museum (Jan. 1-6, 1894), the Imperial Music Hall (Feb. 12-17, 1894), Proctor’s 23rd Street Theatre (Mar. 5-10, 1894), and the London Theatre (Apr. 6-21, 1894) in Odell, *Annals*, 15:692, 698, 716, 726.

<sup>146</sup> The editor responded to Parham’s letter, quoted in the previous note, by noting that “at the banquet of the Hotfoot club, referred to, Mr. Graham received and accepted an engagement with the minstrels for next season” (“A Theatrical Outlook,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 30, 1894, p. 14); he was also identified as “George Graham, of Primrose & West’s minstrels” in “Knights Templar Sports,” *Washington Post*, July 25, 1895, p. 3).

<sup>147</sup> “George Graham’s Benefit,” *Washington Post*, Oct. 25, 1895, p. 3.

<sup>148</sup> “George Graham, Washington’s favorite comedian” at Allen’s Grand Opera House (“Summer Season at the Grand,” *Washington Post*, May 24, 1896, p. 7); “George Graham, monologist and parodist” at Bergen Beach casino (“Midsummer Music,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Aug. 16, 1896, p. 21); “George Graham, humorist, monologist” at the Royal in Chicago (“The Royal,” *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 30, 1896, p. 29); an appearance together with Lew Dockstader at a benefit for disabled minstrel Billy Birch (“Theatrical Bills for This Week,” *New York Times*, Jan. 17, 1897, p. 11); “George Graham, a Washington boy, who has been in several local shows” now at the Grand Opera House (“At the Theaters,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 23, 1897, p. 7); “George Graham, monologist” at Keith’s Union Square (“Notes of the Week,” *New York Times*, Mar. 28, 1897, p. 23); “Theatres and Music Halls,” *New York Times*, Mar. 30, 1897, p. 6); “George Graham” at a benefit for blind sports writer Harry Felter Watson (“Benefit for Harry Watson,” *New York Times*, June 6, 1897, p. 16); “George Graham, monologue artist” at the twenty-fifth anniversary celebration for the Workingmen’s Club of the Church of the Holy Communion (“Workingmen’s Club Celebrates,” *New York Times*, Nov. 10, 1898, p. 12); “George Graham, a Washingtonian, delivered a witty monologue” at the Bijou (“At the Theaters,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 4, 1899, p. 3); “George Graham in one of his inimitable monologues” in a

---

benefit for vaudeville manager John Grieves (“Benefit to Mr. Grieves,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 7, 1899, p. 7); “George Graham, monologist” on the pier at Bergen Beach (“With the Players,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 2, 1899, p. 21); “George Graham, Merry Monologist” (advertisement for Glen Echo Park, *Washington Post*, Aug. 1, 1900, p. 9); “George Graham will exhibit his monologues” at Glen Echo Amphitheater (“At Glen Echo Park,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 26, 1900, p. 24); “George Graham’s monologue is the final feature and does him much credit in that the same old jokes and imitations that he has given since many, many moons roused the same old laughs and sent the audience away in a high state of good nature” at the same place (“Vaudeville at Glen Echo Park,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 28, 1900, p. 8); “George Graham, dialectician” at Al Reeves’ Music Hall (“Plays and Players,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Oct. 14, 1900, p. 12); “George Graham, monologist” at Proctor’s Fifth Avenue (“Variety Theatre Offerings,” *New York Times*, Feb. 9, 1902, p. 11); “George Graham, who is popular here, relates some rather funny stor[i]es, while his comic songs are likewise amusing” at the Empire (“At the Theaters,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 15, 1902, p. 3).

<sup>149</sup> “At the Theaters,” *Washington Post*, May 12, 1896, p. 4

<sup>150</sup> “At the Theaters,” *Washington Post*, June 6, 1896, p. 3.

<sup>151</sup> “Theatrical Chat,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 23, 1903, p. TP6.

<sup>152</sup> FPRA Jan. 1968, 38.

<sup>153</sup> FPRA May 1968, 38. This information probably appeared in the May 1903 Victor supplement Walsh is discussing here. Despite his song’s success, Charles Graham had died in poverty in 1899; an obituary noted that he had been “born in Boston, Eng., in 1863. He inherited his musical gifts from his father, who was a musician and a composer” (“Charles Graham Dead,” *Daily Northwestern* [Oshkosh, Wisconsin], July 10, 1899, p. 1; also reported in “Writes Our Songs,” *Stevens Point Gazette* [Stevens Point, Wisconsin], Mar. 13, 1895, p. 11). A “George Graham” also composed several popular songs of the period: “Jerry Murphy is a Friend of Mine” (credited in Brooks and Rust, *Columbia Master Book Discography*, 1:166); Theodore A. Metz and George Graham, *Give Cinda the Cake* (New York and London: Edward Schuberth & Co., 1898); *I Can’t Give Up My Rough and Rowdy Ways* (New York: Spaulding & Gray, 1896); and *A Hot Coon from Klondike* (New York: Metz Music Company, 1898).

<sup>154</sup> “Among the Amateurs,” *Washington Post*, July 28, 1895, p. 16.

<sup>155</sup> Discographic examples for each can be given as follows: love (Columbia cylinder 10501; Berliner 623, 0583; Zon-o-phone 9297; Victor V-981, M-3601, 1861), drinking (Berliner 648, 0644; Zon-o-phone 9303), stealing (Berliner 0706), money (Berliner 645; Zon-o-phone 9299), woman (Berliner 0716; Victor 2165; Zon-o-phone 9298) and married life (Berliner 692, 0710; Victor 2168). Some of these talks were later phonogenized by other performers, e.g. Robert Price, STUMP SPEECH ON LOVE (7” Canadian Berliner 1305); Harry Spencer, STUMP SPEECH ON LOVE (Columbia 10” disc 34-10). A STUMP SPEECH ON LOVE had already appeared in *Temporary Catalogue of the Columbia Phonograph Co.’s Musical Records for Use on Graphophones and Phonographs*, Jan. 1, 1895, 16, by David C. Bangs, before Graham is known to have begun his phonograph work.

<sup>156</sup> FREE SILVER ORATOR (Berliner 660); THE TRUSTS (Victor 2067); ANARCHIST MEETING (Berliner 622); PROGRESS OF OUR COUNTRY (Zon-o-phone C-5510, Nauck’s *Vintage Record Auction* #38 [closed Nov. 5, 2005], lot 170); GEORGE WASHINGTON (“a patriotic soliloquy,” Victor 2119, description from the May 1903 Victor supplement, quoted in FPRA May 1968, 52).

<sup>157</sup> A scene in a Washington, D. C. police court, variously titled (Columbia cylinder 10502, 31694; Berliner 624, 0643; Zon-o-phone 9301; Victor V-983, M-3604, 1860); PUMPERNICKEL AS JUDGE (Berliner 640); TAKING THE CENSUS (Berliner 649); A DAY IN A COUNTRY SCHOOL (Berliner 669, 0730); INTERNATIONAL DEBATING CLUB (Berliner 642); A FOOT BALL GAME (Berliner 691, 0711).

<sup>158</sup> COLORED PREACHER / NEGRO SERMON (Columbia cylinder 10503; Berliner 620, 0709; Zon-o-phone 9302; Victor V-2; M-3603, 1863); NEGRO FUNERAL SERMON (Berliner 689, 0587; Zon-o-phone 9300, 1040 [the latter cited in Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 146]; Victor V-982); NEGRO STUMP SPEECH (Berliner 621).

<sup>159</sup> DRAMA IN ONE ACT (Berliner 627).

<sup>160</sup> FORTY-SEVEN DOLLARS (Victor 2164), HOW I GOT TO MORROW (Berliner 0584; also phonogenized by Burt Shepard for Victor V-899, B-1649) and LIMBURGER CHEESE (Zon-o-phone 9380, 604; also phonogenized under this title and THE BOY AND THE CHEESE by George Broderick and Burt Shepard for Victor V-7, V-882, and B-882) are definitely examples of this type. Judging from titles, possibly also PECULIAR EXPERIENCES (Berliner 01287; Zon-o-phone 9377; Victor 2120); GIRLS (Zon-o-phone



9381); MY MOTHER-IN-LAW (Zon-o-phone 817); THE SALVATION ARMY (Zon-o-phone 820); A DAY'S WALK ("an eventful stroll"; Victor 2121); FUNNY BITS ("just nonsense"; Victor 2166; Zon-o-phone 9305); A LITTLE GIRL'S COMPOSITION ON EGGS (Berliner 0705) and STORY OF A TRAMP (Zon-o-phone 9376; Berliner 628); however, some of these may involve Graham taking the role of the title character, such as the "tramp" appealing for food or money. Descriptions are from the May 1903 Victor supplement, quoted in FPRA May 1968, 52.

<sup>161</sup> Berliner 0717. John Terrell had previously phonogenized CASEY'S ADDRESS TO THE G. A. R. for Berliner 608 and did so again for Zon-o-phone 9669. Russell Hunting did also phonogenize this piece as part of his "Casey" series (e.g. Columbia cylinder 9641), but I suspect he borrowed it into his repertoire, as he did with CASEY AT THE BAT, rather than originating it himself, since Graham and Terrell did not "copy" any of Hunting's other Casey stories. However, Bayly and Kinnear, *Zon-o-phone Record*, 68, give authorial credit for the piece to Hunting.

<sup>162</sup> DEPARTURE (Berliner 646, 0704); on this selection of poetry, as phonogenized by another performer (George Broderick), see Tim Gracyk, "Eldridge R. Johnson's First Numbered Record," *Victrola and 78 Journal* 10 (Winter 1996), 34-7.

<sup>163</sup> Berliner 619-24 in a "Supplementary List of Records, June 10, 1895" (EBBRI, under "catalogs"). To the best of my knowledge, this is the earliest known reference to Graham's phonographic work.

<sup>164</sup> "Supplement List of New Gramophone Records, June 1896" (EBBRI, under "catalogs"), 3.

<sup>165</sup> George Graham, MARRIED LIFE (Berliner 692, late 1897 or early 1898) §.

<sup>166</sup> George Graham, FORTY-SEVEN DOLLARS (Victor M-2164-2) §.

<sup>167</sup> George Graham, PROCEEDINGS IN A POLICE COURT (Victor V-983-1, recorded Oct. 9, 1901), transcribed from a sound file posted by "lutonium" on eBay in Jan. 2005 §. A transcription of this routine appears in "Here and There," *Washington Post*, Dec. 21, 1896, p. 10, in an account of a visit by the *real* Judge Miller of the Police Court of the District of Columbia to the parlors of the Columbia Phonograph Company. On hearing Graham's imitation of the police court proceedings, the Judge was reportedly "highly pleased with the capabilities of the instrument." Graham appears to have performed this piece live as well, judging from a listing of "George Graham, in a very amusing imitation of a police court scene" at Glen Echo ("Outing for Railroad Men," *Washington Post*, Aug. 3, 1900, p. 8).

<sup>168</sup> George Graham, COLORED FUNERAL (Victor M-1862-1, recorded Oct. 9, 1901) §; also: "Imitation of an old-time colored preacher preaching before his Congregation on Sunday morning by George Graham" (George Graham, THE COLORED PREACHER [Victor V-1863], no take specified, quoted in Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix*, 215).

<sup>169</sup> George Graham, ANARCHIST MEETING (Berliner 622X, dated Mar. 3, 1899) §; note the discrepancy between spoken announcement ("Socialist") and printed title ("Anarchist").

<sup>170</sup> George Graham, [THE] STREET FAKIR (Columbia cylinder 10504; Berliner 638, 0585; Zon-o-phone 9304; Victor V-984, 2167); FAKIR SELLING CORN CURE (Berliner 639); SIDE SHOW ORATOR (Berliner 625); THE AUCTIONEER (Berliner 626); PIANO SALE (Berliner 644).

<sup>171</sup> George Graham, STREET FAKIR (Berliner 638Y, dated May 23, 1896, EBBRI) §.

<sup>172</sup> See script and commentary in Myron Matlaw, ed. *The Black Crook and Other Nineteenth-Century American Plays* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1967), 317-74.

<sup>173</sup> George Graham, FAKIR SELLING CORN CURE (Berliner 639, dated May 23, 1896) §.

<sup>174</sup> George Graham, FAKIR SELLING CORN CURE (Berliner 639, dated May 23, 1896) §.

<sup>175</sup> George Graham, STREET FAKIR (Berliner 638Y, dated May 23, 1896, EBBRI) §.

<sup>176</sup> So was Graham's SIDE SHOW ORATOR; see advertisement reproduced in facsimile in Fabrizio and Paul, *Talking Machine*, 57.

<sup>177</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 85. This title had also appeared in *Temporary Catalogue of the Columbia Phonograph Co.'s Musical Records for Use on Graphophones and Phonographs*, Jan. 1, 1895, 13, and so must date back to 1894 or earlier.

<sup>178</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 88. I do not find this title listed in earlier catalogs, so it was probably introduced during 1895.

<sup>179</sup> Haydn Quartet, TRIP TO THE COUNTY FAIR (Canadian 10" Berliner 127 [M-127-3], VG) §.

<sup>180</sup> A TRIP TO THE COUNTY FAIR (Busy Bee 1323 = Imperial 44716 mx. 6710D) §. The next pitch for an attraction is harder to decipher but goes something like this:

Now, here we have Baron Juggler de Seitzky, he's the only marvel who was ever known to successfully juggle

---

a cannon ball, an ostrich feather and a balogna sausage at one and the same time without striking the air.

This line appears to have been borrowed from Len Spencer, DIME MUSEUM LECTURER, the catalog description for which mentions “Professor Bum-bum, the only living man who can juggle a cannon ball, an ostrich feather, and a balogna sausage, at one and the same time” (*Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 26).

<sup>181</sup> See note 155 above on STUMP SPEECH ON LOVE. Bangs and Graham were both also associated with ON THE GRAMOPHONE (Berliner 619).

<sup>182</sup> “New Records for Talking Machines,” *Phonoscope* 1:1 (Nov. 1896), 18. Other items listed by Bangs were OLD JED PROUTY CROSSING THE TRACK, SOCCERY SETTING A HEN, THE FUNNY STORY, THE CHAMPION SNORER and THE SMACK IN SCHOOL. THE CHAMPION SNORER had already been listed in *Temporary Catalogue of the Columbia Phonograph Co.’s Musical Records for Use on Graphophones and Phonographs*, Jan. 1, 1895, 16, along with seven other “humorous” selections.

<sup>183</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 37. For references to Hogan’s HOT CORN phonograms of 1889, see chapter four, note 16.

<sup>184</sup> Description of Columbia Orchestra, ON THE MIDWAY (Columbia cylinder 15143), *Columbia Records* catalog with letter dated May 1, 1898, 8; previously listed as Issler’s Orchestra, ON THE MIDWAY (Columbia cylinder 2509).

<sup>185</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 24.

<sup>186</sup> Some later examples are Leonard G. Spencer, UNCLE JIM’S RACETRACK STORY (Victor 2790, B-1246-4) §; Arthur Collins and Byron G. Harlan, THE ’MANCIPATION HANDICAP (Columbia A1825, mx. 45918-3) §; and Arthur Collins, SAY NO, THAT’S ALL (Albany Indestructible 1038, mx. 537xx) §.

<sup>187</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 24.

<sup>188</sup> A similar reflex was attributed to a phonogram taken less formally of a similar subject: “A record of the famous side show speech of R. J. Diegle has been made for Flocken’s phonograph, and so natural is it that whenever Flocken hears it he reaches in his pocket for a dime to purchase a ticket for the mammoth show that Diegle talks about” (“The City in Brief,” *Marion Daily Star* [Marion, Ohio], Apr. 20, 1895, p. 11).

<sup>189</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 25.

<sup>190</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 25.

<sup>191</sup> Len Spencer, THE PATENT MEDICINE MAN (Victor M-2065-1) §.

<sup>192</sup> Both pieces had still been in Spencer’s repertoire as of Aug. 4, 1899, when he phonogenized both QUACK MEDICINE MAN (Berliner 0789) and PRIZE PACKAGE MAN (Berliner 0790).

<sup>193</sup> Byron G. Harlan and Steve Porter, THE OLD TIME STREET FAKIR (Columbia A1036, mx. 19303-[?]) § and Victor 16903-A, B-10399-[?]) §).

<sup>194</sup> Advertisement, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, May 29, 1873, p. 1. Another advertisement promised that “a bounteous collation, Grafulla’s Band, Harrison’s musical improvisations will enliven the day of sale” (Sept. 21, 1872, p. 1).

<sup>195</sup> Advertisement, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 24, 1874, p. 1.

<sup>196</sup> Advertisement, *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Sept 12 1886 p. 13.

<sup>197</sup> “Many Sold. Building Lots on the Hegeman Farm,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Sept. 22, 1886, p. 4.

<sup>198</sup> “The Phonograph at Lefferts Park,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Aug. 26, 1889, p. 2.

<sup>199</sup> “The Phonograph as an Auctioneer,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Aug. 29, 1889, p. 1.

<sup>200</sup> “A Sale by Phonograph,” *New York Press*, Aug. 31, 1890 (TAEM 146:625).

<sup>201</sup> *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Sept. 5, 1890, p. 3.

<sup>202</sup> “How to Own a Home,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Sept. 12, 1890, p. 6.

<sup>203</sup> “Wm. E. Taylor, the energetic auctioneer, is busy again with one of his cheap land booms. He had a new feature this time to draw the crowds, having engaged a moving picture machine and a Phonograph. The entertainment was given Saturday evenings on the property he was selling, on Washington Avenue, near Geo. Seiss’ hotel, a portion of the First Ward, where events of this nature invariably draw largely” (“How A Phonograph Helped the Auctioneer,” from the *Hackensack Record*, in *Phonogram-2* 4 [Nov. 1901], 11).

<sup>204</sup> He was the son of William Washington and Margaret Ann (Stewart) Beckenbaugh. His wife’s name was Maggie Louisa Herring, and they were married in Baltimore on Nov. 26, 1873. The 1880 United States census, online at [www.familysearch.org](http://www.familysearch.org), gives his name as William Beckenbaugh,

---

identifies him as a thirty-year-old auctioneer living in the twelfth ward, third precinct in Baltimore, Maryland, and lists the other members of his household as his wife Maggie, a five-year-old son William O., a two-year-old daughter, Maggie, a four-month-old daughter, Ella L., and a fifteen-year old black nurse named Irene Collins. The 1900 census reports the family living at 1720 Druid Hill Avenue, a rented property: William O., born in Jan. 1850, still an auctioneer; wife Margarete C., born in Jan. 1849; daughter Margarete B., born in Dec. 1877; and two sons who were employed as clerks, George M[ilton], born in Apr. 1881, and Walter S[tewart], born in Aug. 1883. The census also notes that William and Margarete had had a total of seven children, of whom only three were still living (photocopy of 1900 United States census and other genealogical details provided by Deborah Beckenbaugh-Kligora). Although an obituary states that W. O. Beckenbaugh worked as an auctioneer “until the early 90s” (“The Work of Death: W. O. Beckenbaugh,” *News* [Frederick, Maryland], Nov. 24, 1903, p. 5), he was still active in this line as late as 1899-1900, judging from the statement: “A year ago, while auctioning lots at Lincoln Heights, Cementon, Pa., Mr. Beckenbaugh was distinctly understood a distance of a mile from the stand from which he shouted the merits of the properties” (“Bases Claim On His Voice,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 8, 1901, p. 9).

<sup>205</sup> “Auction at the Fair,” *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 25, 1893, p. 1.

<sup>206</sup> Brooks, “Columbia Records,” 12-3. He was engaged about this same time to auction lots outside Washington; see “Fostoria Public Sale of Lots,” *Washington Post*, June 24, 1891, p. 3. Beckenbaugh was not identified by name in the company’s catalogs until 1895, but exhibition programs reveal that the earlier phonograms were already his work (Brooks, “Directory,” 106; Musser, *High Class Moving Pictures*, 32).

<sup>207</sup> Charosh lists AUCTION SALE OF NEW YORK DIME MUSEUM (685, dated May 6, 1897), and AUCTION SALE OF PAWN BROKER’S SHOP (686, also dated May 6, 1897). THE LAUGHING AUCTIONEER (688) may also be Beckenbaugh’s.

<sup>208</sup> In Dec. 2001, a copy of Berliner disc 671 appeared on eBay, its etched information transcribed by the seller from the handwritten information as “Tale of bays W. A. Beckenbaugh Jan 12 99,” i.e., Jan. 12, 1899. Paul Charosh’s Berliner discography clarifies the title as AUCTION SALE OF CHRISTMAS TOYS, but this was the first time a copy of the disc itself had surfaced. This was eBay item 1400388241, “9 e berliner's records 1 talking machine,” closed Dec. 31, 2001. It must be pointed out that Jan. 12, 1899 is unusually late for a block-numbered Berliner without a letter suffix, not to mention a title inscribed by hand; and, given the mistranscription of other parts of the title, the “99” may be incorrect.

<sup>209</sup> “Victory We Certainly Have,” *Denton Journal* (Denton, Maryland), Nov. 9, 1889, p. 3.

<sup>210</sup> “During the administration of Gov. Lowndes he was reading clerk of the Maryland legislature” (“Had a Powerful Voice,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 24, 1903, p. 11); “He was reading clerk at Annapolis under Governor Founds [sic] in 1896” (statement by George Milton Beckenbaugh dated Dec. 13, 1918, in the *Scranton Times*, Dec. 7, 1918, shared with me by Harvey Kligora).

<sup>211</sup> “Attack Civil Service,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 26, 1901, p. 8.

<sup>212</sup> “Bases Claim On His Voice,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 8, 1901, p. 9.

<sup>213</sup> “Capitol Chat,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 25, 1901, p. 6.

<sup>214</sup> “Had a Powerful Voice,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 24, 1903, p. 11.

<sup>215</sup> It is also said that he ran a hotel on the Maryland seacoast and that he “owned a Circus (do not know where) and that is where he lost all his money” (personal correspondence with Deborah Beckenbaugh-Kligora, Sept. 2002).

<sup>216</sup> Statement by George Milton Beckenbaugh dated Dec. 13, 1918, in the *Scranton Times*, Dec. 7, 1918, shared with me by Harvey Kligora.

<sup>217</sup> “Had a Powerful Voice,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 24, 1903, p. 11; “The Work of Death: W. O. Beckenbaugh,” *News* (Frederick, Maryland), Nov. 24, 1903, p. 5.

<sup>218</sup> On Jan. 18, 1904, the Committee on Accounts presented a recommendation before the House of Representatives: “Resolved, That the Clerk of the House is hereby authorized and directed to pay to the widow of William O. Beckenbaugh, late a member of the police force of the United States Capitol, a sum equal to six months’ pay at the rate of compensation received by him at the time of his death, and a further sum, not exceeding \$250, on account of the expenses of his last illness and his burial; said amounts to be paid out of the contingent fund” (*Congressional Record*, Jan. 18, 1904, 841; see also the

---

House of Representatives 58<sup>th</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, Report No. 388, in response to House Resolution No. 128).

<sup>219</sup> *List of the Famous "Columbia Records,"* June, 1897, 11.

<sup>220</sup> Brooks, "Columbia Records," 12-3. Beckenbaugh was not identified by name in the company's catalogs until 1895, but exhibition programs reveal that the earlier phonograms were already his work (Brooks, "Directory," 106; Musser, *High Class Moving Pictures*, 32).

<sup>221</sup> Mayo, "Phonographic Studio," 4.

<sup>222</sup> Musser, *High Class Moving Pictures*, 32, citing the *Scranton Truth*, Dec. 10, 1891.

<sup>223</sup> W. O. Beckenbaugh, AUCTION SALE OF PAWN BROKER'S SHOP (Berliner 686, dated May 6, 1897) §.

<sup>224</sup> Zeitlin, *American Talkers*, 196-200.

<sup>225</sup> W. O. Beckenbaugh, SALE OF RED-HAIRED GIRL (Columbia brown wax cylinder) §.

<sup>226</sup> W. O. Beckenbaugh, SALE OF CHRISTMAS DOLLS, TOYS, ETC. (Columbia brown wax cylinder, announced Washington, D. C.) §.

<sup>227</sup> W. O. Beckenbaugh, THE LAUGHING AUCTIONEER (Columbia brown wax cylinder, announced Washington, D. C.) §. On "laughing records," see Jacob Smith, "The Frenzy of the Audible: Pleasure, Authenticity, and Recorded Laughter," *Television & New Media* 6 (Feb. 2005), 23-47; Abigail Cooke, "Humorous Reflections on Laughing Records," *ARSC Journal* 32 (Fall 2001), 232-42.

<sup>228</sup> Dorian, "Reminiscences," 114.

<sup>229</sup> W. O. Beckenbaugh, SALE OF THE NEW YORK DIME MUSEUM (Columbia brown wax cylinder) §. Thanks to Cornelia Fales and David R. Lewis for suggesting the wording "usually found at a dime museum," which I had otherwise heard as "will be impounded at our museum."

<sup>230</sup> W. O. Beckenbaugh, AUCTION SALE OF NEW YORK DIME MUSEUM (Berliner 685, dated May 6, 1897) §.

<sup>231</sup> Gelatt, *Fabulous Phonograph*, 49.

<sup>232</sup> W. O. Beckenbaugh, AUCTION SALE OF NEW YORK DIME MUSEUM (Berliner 685, dated May 6, 1897) §.

<sup>233</sup> "Circassian" was a synonym for "albino" in New York dime museum terminology; see, for example, the reference to the "typical Circassian girl, or Albino, of the familiar show" at a New York dime museum ("New York's Artificial Blondes," from *New York Sun*, in *Ohio Democrat* [New Philadelphia, Ohio], Feb. 7, 1889, p. 4).

<sup>234</sup> "Columbia would even custom-record the 'auction' of your choice," states Marc Kirkeby, "Artistic Whistlers and Auctioneers,"

<http://www.sonymusic.com/artists/SoundtrackForACentury/ie/story/story6.html>, accessed Aug. 30, 2004. I presume this statement is based on a surviving Columbia catalog, but have not been able to verify this.

<sup>235</sup> "Java Village to Go at Auction," *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 26, 1893, p. 1; for other anticipated sales strategies, see "Auction at the Fair," *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 25, 1893, p. 1.

<sup>236</sup> Advertisement, *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 29, 1893, p. 7.

<sup>237</sup> "When President Higinbotham was asked why he would not permit the auction he replied: 'Because I say so,' and that, they [the officers of the Java Village] say, is all the satisfaction they have been able to get" ("Midway is Fenced In," *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 2, 1893, p. 4). See also "Auctioneers to Sue for Damages," *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 3, 1893, p. 2.

<sup>238</sup> Advertisement, *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 31, 1893, p. 8; "Going! Going! Gone! Auctioneer Beckenbaugh's Job Selling Fair Buildings," *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 4, 1893, p. 2.

<sup>239</sup> "World's Fair Notes," *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 7, 1893, p. 3.

<sup>240</sup> "World's Fair Notes," *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 9, 1893, p. 3.

<sup>241</sup> "Buys Ceylon Building for \$2,800," *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 11, 1893, p. 1. Probably in reference to this auction, it was later stated: "The Chicago papers declared that Mr. Beckenbaugh's voice was distinctly heard a mile and a half from the point where he spoke" ("Bases Claim On His Voice," *Washington Post*, Jan. 8, 1901, p. 9).

<sup>242</sup> See advertisements, *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 19, 1893, p. 7; Nov. 23, 1893, p. 8.

<sup>243</sup> "Auction Sales of Fair Buildings," *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 5, 1893, p. 10; see also "Will Go To Highest Bidder," *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 3, 1893, p. 14.

<sup>244</sup> "Beckenbaugh's Narrow Escape," *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 25, 1894, p. 8.

<sup>245</sup> This is admittedly speculation on my part, because I have not yet had an opportunity to hear an actual Beckenbaugh phonogram of this selection. The only specimens of the title I have heard were phonogenized by Len Spencer as the “Leather-Lunged Auctioneer” and begin with a sale of wax figures, which may also have been true of the Beckenbaughs.

<sup>246</sup> “Collection of Oriental Art,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 2, 1896, p. 7.

<sup>247</sup> “The Passing Throng,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Apr. 8, 1896, p. 8; see also “He Stands at the Top,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Apr. 4, 1896, p. 10; “This is the Day,” *Atlanta Constitution*, Apr. 8, 1896, p. 9.

<sup>248</sup> “His Reference,” from *Fliegende Blätter*, in *Democratic Standard* (Coshocton, Ohio), Aug. 18, 1899, p. 7.

<sup>249</sup> SALE OF PAWNBROKER’S GOODS (10001) and SALE OF HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE (10006) are listed anonymously in the *Columbia Records* catalog with letter dated May 1, 1898, 31, and again in the 1900 catalog reproduced in Copeland and Dethlefsen, *5-Inch Cylinder Book*, 20. One cylinder of this period, audibly in Spencer’s voice, is announced without specific performer attribution:

Auction Sale of the Midway Plaisance,

World’s Fair, Chicago,

by the Leather-Lunged Auctioneer

for the Columbia Phonograph Company of New York and Paris

(sound file accompanying eBay auction 270022258373, closed Sept. 3, 2006) §. I have not heard any phonogram by Beckenbaugh himself that is announced with the “Leather-Lunged Auctioneer” phrase.

<sup>250</sup> AUCTION SALE OF HOUSEHOLD GOODS [or FURNITURE] (Berliner 097; Lambert 987, 5056; Columbia disc 885, double-faced A285; Victor V-857, M-3460, B-1428, double-faced 16107; Edison 8089); AUCTION SALE PAWNBROKER’S GOODS [or UNREDEEMED PLEDGES] (Berliner 098, Lambert 992, 5054; Zon-o-phone 1882, 884); AUCTION SALE OF A MIDWAY PLAISANCE (Berliner 0435); and possibly AUCTION SALE OF CHRISTMAS TOYS (Victor V-1107), though Spencer is given credit as author in Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix*, 92.

<sup>251</sup> Len Spencer, AUCTION SALE—HOUSEHOLD GOODS (Berliner 097, dated Apr. 28, 1899, EBBRI) §. It is hard to tell whether Spencer is saying “bid” or “give” in the places indicated.

<sup>252</sup> [Len Spencer], SALE OF HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE (Columbia 7” disc 885-1) §.

<sup>253</sup> As we have seen, Beckenbaugh’s AUCTION SALE OF PAWN BROKER’S SHOP contains the lines:

I tell you all, the dude of New York will not be in it along aside of you; what’ll you give me for it?

Sir, all wool, yes, all wool except the buttons, what’ll you give me for the suit?

By contrast, Len Spencer’s version of this routine has:

**AUCTIONEER:** What’ll you bid for it?

**BIDDER:** Say, is it all wool?

**AUCTIONEER:** Yes, sir, it’s all wool except the buttons, five dollars, thank you....

(Len Spencer, AUCTION SALE OF PAWNBROKER’S GOODS [Columbia 10001, UCSB 4936]) §. Harry Spencer, AUCTION SALE OF PAWNBROKER’S UNREDEEMED PLEDGES (Columbia 1001, UCSB 4935) § contains the same claim by the auctioneer, but it is not phrased as a response to a question; still, there are other audience interjections elsewhere in that version of the sketch.

<sup>254</sup> Len Spencer and Gilbert Girard, AUCTION SALE OF A BIRD AND ANIMAL STORE (Victor V-1148, first recorded Dec. 14, 1901; Edison 8077; Columbia cylinder 31836, disc 889). Two other “original” auction sketches were Len Spencer and Parke Hunter, AUCTION SALE OF A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT STORE (Edison 8635; Columbia cylinder 32220; Victor 2543, B-533; Spencer with Alf Holt on Leeds 4027) and Len Spencer and Gilbert Girard, SHERIFF’S SALE OF A STRANDED CIRCUS (Victor B-4847, 5338, double-faced 16147-A; Columbia cylinder 33217, disc 3759, double-faced A431; Edison 9779).

<sup>255</sup> Len Spencer and Gilbert Girard, AUCTION SALE OF A BIRD AND ANIMAL STORE (Victor M-1148-5, recorded May 8, 1902) §.

<sup>256</sup> Gaisberg, *Music Goes Round*, 18.

<sup>257</sup> Burt Shepard, THE AUCTION SALE OF A PIANO (U. K. Berliner J601, dated London, May 8, 1900, *EMILE BERLINER’S GRAMOPHONE: THE EARLIEST DISCS, 1888-1901* [Symposium 1058], 30) §. All versions of PIANO SALE (Berliner 644) reported by Charosh are credited to George Graham, who also phonogenized another piece called simply THE AUCTIONEER (Berliner 626). Harry Spencer phonogenized AUCTION SALE OF A PIANO for Columbia disc 852, along with something called BIRD SALE (Columbia disc 853).

<sup>258</sup> Advertisement, *Phonoscope* 1:1 (Nov. 1896), 3.

---

<sup>259</sup> For this case, listen to Russell Hunting, CASEY AS UMPIRE AT A BALL GAME (Columbia 9606, New York and Paris, 24 *Popular Selections from 1898* [Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001], 20) §.

<sup>260</sup> Quotation from “Against Gambling,” *Arizona Republican* (Phoenix, Arizona), Apr. 18, 1891, p. 1; see also “Against the ‘Main Phonograph,’” *New York Sun*, Apr. 19, 1891 (TAEM 146:684); “A New Way to Speculate in Stocks,” *Phonogram* 1:5 (May 1891) 116.

<sup>261</sup> “When the pool rooms were shut down in San Francisco in 1891, these same people [Rumble & Co.], if I mistake not, opened up this phonographic stock exchange. It was almost immediately raided by the police, as being simply an alteration of the old and suppressed clock game. A prominent local politician, however, was behind the parties, and his influence and the springing upon the local police justice of the legal decision, used now by Rumble in advertising his business, caused the charges to be dismissed. The game was then allowed to run” (“Says It’s the Old ‘Clock Game,’” *New York Times*, May 8, 1893, p. 10). The legal decision in question was the one in Rumble’s favor in the New York Supreme Court in Nov. 1892. I cannot confirm that the San Francisco and New York operations were run by the same people, as this source alleged.

<sup>262</sup> “California: San Francisco County,” *Mountain Democrat* (Placerville, California), Jan. 14, 1893, p. 2.

<sup>263</sup> According to comments made by George Rumble in 1893, “the system has been used in California for a couple of years. It’s a great go there. Why, they have a room four times as big as this [the Rumble & Co. room in the Edison Building]” (“Phonograph’s Siren Song,” *New York Times*, May 3, 1893, p. 8). However, a Californian claimed a few days later: “The game has long since ceased to exist in San Francisco, because all its patrons became either tired or bankrupt” (“Says It’s the Old ‘Clock Game,’” *New York Times*, May 8, 1893, p. 10).

<sup>264</sup> “George W. Rumble has been arrested in New York for carrying on a swindling business through the mails” (“Latest Foreign News,” *Kingston Daily Gleaner* [Kingston, Jamaica], Dec. 26, 1883, p. 2); “‘Constant Reader’ is informed that the ‘Western Cattle and Grain Association,’ No. 160 Fulton-street, whose circular he sends to THE TIMES, was George W. Rumble, who was arrested on Dec. 15 at that address by Inspector Ray, of the Chicago Post Office. He was taken to Chicago for trial on an indictment charging him with sending that class of swindling circulars through the mails in violation of the postal laws” (“city and Suburban News,” *New York Times*, Dec. 29, 1883, p. 3. Six and a half years later, Rumble was acting as president of the questionable “Pacific Mining Stock Exchange”; see “Raided by the Police,” *New York Times*, July 10, 1890, p. 8; “How is This, Col. Fellows?,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1890, p. 3.

<sup>265</sup> Quotation from “Phonograph’s Siren Song,” *New York Times*, May 3, 1893, p. 8; on the imaginary status of the mining companies, see “Says It’s the Old ‘Clock Game,’” *New York Times*, May 8, 1893, p. 10.

<sup>266</sup> “A Speculating Phonograph,” *New York Tribune*, June 10, 1892 (TAEM 146:791); “Phono Chat,” *Phonogram* 2 (June 1892), 141; “Two Brokers at Odds,” *New York Times*, June 10, 1892, p. 8.

<sup>267</sup> “Phonograph’s Siren Song,” *New York Times*, May 3, 1893, p. 8.

<sup>268</sup> “City and Suburban News,” *New York Times*, May 16, 1893, p. 6.

<sup>269</sup> “Bait for Gudgeons,” *Advertiser*, Nov. 22, 1893 [?] (TAEM 146:845).

<sup>270</sup> “\$250,000 in Mine Swindle,” *New York Times*, May 21, 1904, p. 2.

<sup>271</sup> “Says It’s the Old ‘Clock Game,’” *New York Times*, May 8, 1893, p. 10.

<sup>272</sup> The “Tough Series” encompassed THE DOG FIGHT (11021), THE COCK FIGHT (11022), MIKE THE BIKE (11023), THE BLAZING RAG (11024), THE BOOKMAKER (11025), THE MEDICINE FAKIR (11026), and possibly DIME MUSEUM LECTURER (11027); see *List of the Famous “Columbia Records,”* Nov. 1896, 8. According to one source, the Tough Series “definitely contained some profanity. One of the cylinders, entitled *The Patent Medicine Fakir*, has turned up in the APM Archives, and the voice has been identified as Hunting’s” (Feinstein, “Phonograph Arrests,” 5). A possible spin-off was announced a couple years later: “Roger Harding is placing some new specialties on the market, among them a ‘Tough Girl’ series which will be very popular” (*Phonoscope* 2:11 [Nov. 1898], 10).

<sup>273</sup> Beckenbaugh is identified by name with this sketch in the list of new cylinders in the *Phonoscope* 1:1 (Nov. 1896), 18.

<sup>274</sup> Based on Len Spencer, THE PRIZE FIGHT (Victor V-2066-[1]) §; a contemporary catalog description also appears in Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix*, 342. Columbia cylinder

---

11023 is listed as THE PRIZE FIGHT in the *Columbia Records* catalog with letter dated May 1, 1898, 32; but as MIKE THE BIKE in *List of the Famous "Columbia Records,"* Nov. 1896, 8.

<sup>275</sup> Len Spencer and Alf Holt, SCENE AT A DOG FIGHT (Zon-o-phone 872, mx. 5444-A/E) §. A winner is explicitly named, however, in a later version by other performers: Steve Porter and Gilbert Girard, A SCENE AT A DOG FIGHT (Edison Blue Amberol 2760, Diamond Disc 50306-L, mx. 4148), recorded in Sept. 1915, posted by Mike Loughlin at mp3.com in 2001 §.

<sup>276</sup> Newspaper item from 1905, quoted in the *Talking Machine News*, and again from there in FPRA Feb. 1948, 34.

<sup>277</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 26.

<sup>278</sup> Len Spencer, THE CIRCUS SIDE SHOW SHOUTER (Victor M-2064-1) §.

## Chapter Six

### COMPLEX ENTERTAINMENTS

One of the most structurally elaborate subjects treated in early commercial phonography was the complex theatrical show consisting of thematically independent “acts” performed sequentially onstage. Two major genres dominated this kind of presentation in late nineteenth-century America: *minstrelsy*, a form that had arisen around “blackface” performance in the 1840s, and *vaudeville*, a scrupulously clean entertainment spun off in the 1880s from the earlier, comparatively vulgar *variety* show. The content associated with minstrelsy and vaudeville overlapped at points—for instance, “blackface” acts appeared in both—but the overall formats differed considerably, so the two forms *as complex wholes* were formally quite distinct. Phonographic representations of minstrelsy and vaudeville have much to offer the cultural historian; for example, I know of no other source that would allow twenty-first century researchers equivalent access to the conventionalized phonetic features, intonation, and vocal grain of nineteenth-century caricatures of ethnic speech styles. However, my treatment of these phonograms here will be limited to exploring how such representations were structured and framed. I should mention at the outset that minstrelsy and vaudeville could incorporate many of the expressive forms we have already considered in isolation, such as ethnic dance “scenes” and comic monologs, so that we will sometimes be concerned with reframings of such material rather than with new and unfamiliar content.

#### Minstrelsy

The nineteenth-century American minstrel show can be characterized not just by the presence of blackface makeup and stylized dialect for which it is most often remembered today, but also by a conventionalized format well-known to audiences of its time. The curtain typically rose for the *first part* with the troupe members standing in front of chairs arranged in a semicircle. At this point, events could unfold in two



different ways. The *interlocutor* or *middle man*, who stood at the center of the semicircle and was often not in blackface, might begin the proceedings by calling out, “Gentlemen, be seated.” Once the troupe members had sat down, he would then continue with an announcement such as “We will now commence the performance with the overture.” The secondary literature on blackface minstrelsy rarely mentions this style of opening,<sup>1</sup> but towards the end of the nineteenth century it was recognized as the more conservative approach, associated with the “old time” minstrel shows of the late 1870s and early 1880s.<sup>2</sup> Alternatively, the company might begin by singing an opening chorus from a standing position as the curtain rose, in which case the interlocutor’s “gentlemen, be seated” necessarily came afterwards. This latter style of opening is the one described in most secondary literature and recommended in early twentieth-century guidebooks aimed at amateur minstrel-show organizers.<sup>3</sup> In either case, the *end-men*, so called because they sat at either end of the semicircle, next engaged in witty repartee with the interlocutor, who acted as the dignified straight man. After a few minutes of comic dialog, the interlocutor introduced a solo act, often a sentimental ballad sung by a tenor. The bulk of the first part, which could last for up to an hour,<sup>4</sup> consisted of songs or other acts between which the end-men interjected more banter with the interlocutor or with each other. The curtain then dropped on the first part after a song and dance number or “walk-around” by the entire troupe. While stage properties were being shifted about behind the curtain, the *olio* was performed in front of it. Although less structured than the first part, the olio often featured a monolog called the *stump speech*, either a humorous exposition on some topic or an ostensibly serious address filled with malapropisms; quartets, clog dances, and “wench” impersonations were also common here. The curtain was then raised again on a one-act play, the *afterpiece* which closed the show.<sup>5</sup>

Efforts to capture material from the minstrel tradition on phonogram took place as early as 1888. These were limited at first to the recording of excerpted songs and dialogs,<sup>6</sup> but the idea soon arose of translating the minstrel show itself into a marketable audicular phonogram, and recordists immediately settled on the first part as the most promising segment for adaptation. Unlike the olio and afterpiece, the first part had an immediately recognizable structure: the summons for the “gentlemen” to

“be seated,” the overture or opening chorus, the repartee between interlocutor and end-men that separated the musical acts, and the final chorus. The earliest known evidence of this approach is found in a cylinder list issued by the North American Phonograph Company on December 1, 1893, which contains two “Minstrel 1st parts, introducing Middle and End Men, Gags and Songs, accompanied by Banta’s Parlor Orchestra”: Edison numerical cylinders 848, MINSTREL, 1ST PART, NO. 1; and 883, MINSTREL, 1ST PART, NO. 2.<sup>7</sup> Although the phonograms themselves are not known to have survived, we can infer that they must have mimicked the structure of the minstrel first part through a combination of comic dialog, singing, and orchestral accompaniment.

We know considerably more about a series of minstrel cylinders introduced at the start of 1894 by the United States Phonograph Company, this time identified explicitly with a particular group of performers:

These gentlemen have together produced a most decided novelty in their new minstrel records. [Len] Spencer & [Dan W.] Quinn are well known to all users of the Phonograph... They are ably assisted by Mr. Billy Williams, the aged-negro delineator and comedian, as well as by Geo. W. Johnson in his inimitable laughing specialty. Each record contains a complete minstrel first part, embracing overture with bones and tambourine accompaniment, several jokes and witty sayings, interspersed with laughter and applause by the audience, and finishing either with some comic negro song or story by Spencer, or a pathetic song by Quinn or Williams. Wherever reproduced these records have made an instantaneous hit. They have been arranged in a series of six records....<sup>8</sup>

Billy Williams was a well-established minstrel whose career dated back to the 1860s and who had been doing some phonogenizing for the New Jersey company since 1892.<sup>9</sup> The other performers were known principally for their phonograph work: Len Spencer, Dan W. Quinn, and George Washington Johnson. As before, the individual phonograms were distinguished by numbers, this time running from one through six, and numbers seven through eleven were added soon after.<sup>10</sup> A subsequent catalog boasted that the series had been well-received:

The success of our first minstrel records has induced us to extend the series. All the old favorites are engaged—Spencer, Williams, Quinn, Johnson—and more besides, who were not cast for the first performance; some honestly black men, some black for revenue only, some yellow, some white, and all funny. These Ethiopian carnivals are arranged in nine numbers. Each record contains a complete minstrel first part, embracing overture with bones and tambourine accompaniment, new and old jokes and witty sayings, interspersed with laughter and applause by the audience, and finishing with some comic negro song or ballad. Each introduces a specialty by one of the artists engaged. This is no amateur entertainment. Gentlemen, be seated.<sup>11</sup>

Someone seems to have miscounted: there are not nine titles listed but eight, three of the initial eleven numbered items having been dropped (4, 9, and 10). Perhaps to avoid confusion over which item was which, the company had now begun referring to its minstrel selections not by arbitrarily assigned numbers but by the titles of their concluding songs. The first item, A HIGH OLD TIME, is described in detail as a “sample record”:

Introductory overture, “The Black Serenaders,” followed by applause. The interlocutor ventures to ask Bones how he finds things, to which Bones replies, “Oh, I look for ’em.” This strikes the audience as being a witty sally, and they applaud and laugh vociferously, Mr. Geo. Johnson’s hearty laugh particularly being heard above the din and confusion. “How is business down at the tailor shop, Billy?” “Oh, sew-sew,” which reply also evokes the risibilities of the audience. “How do you feel tonight, Dan?” “Kind o’ Chicago.” “Why, how is that?” “Oh, fair.” The interlocutor then announces that Mr. Spencer will sing “A High Old Time,” all joining heartily in the chorus. At the conclusion the audience show their approval by round after round of applause, laughter, whistling, etc.<sup>12</sup>

Dan W. Quinn was soon dropped from the cast of the United States Phonograph Company’s minstrel first parts,<sup>13</sup> and his role in each one was either omitted or assigned to one of the other artists, leaving only one end-man of the original two. A surviving example recorded after Quinn’s departure reveals the following content and structure:

**SPENCER:** The Imperial Minstrels, introducing their original minstrel first part. Be seated, gentlemen. [*chord*]  
Introductory overture, “The Black Serenaders.” [*instrumental overture*]  
Well, Billy.  
**WILLIAMS:** Hello, Len.  
**SPENCER:** Uh, how do you find things?  
**WILLIAMS:** Oh, I look for ’em, Len.  
**SPENCER:** Well, uh, how are things [*group laughter and applause overlaps here*] down at the, uh, tailor shop?  
**WILLIAMS:** Oh, sew-sew. [*group laughter and applause*]  
**SPENCER:** How—how do you feel tonight, Billy?  
**WILLIAMS:** I feel sort o’ Chicago.  
**SPENCER:** Chicago?  
**WILLIAMS:** Mm-hmm.  
**SPENCER:** Well, how’s that?  
**WILLIAMS:** Fair. [*group laughter and applause*]  
**SPENCER:** Mister Spencer sings “A High Old Time.”  
[*Spencer sings “A High Old Time” with orchestra accompaniment; chorus joins in at points; during closing instrumental segment, Spencer urges: “Pick’em up, everybody! Uh-huh! Everybody dance!”; after music ends, applause and clapping.*]<sup>14</sup>

Note that Len Spencer assumes three distinct roles within this production. First, he announces the phonogram itself, serving as a surrogate for the live phonograph exhibitor addressing the phonographic listener, explaining what is about to be heard.

Next, as “Len,” he assumes the role of interlocutor vis-à-vis Billy Williams (“Billy”) as end-man. Still acting as interlocutor, he then introduces a song by “Mister Spencer” in the third person: “The interlocutor then announces that Mr. Spencer will sing ‘A High Old Time,’” states the catalog. But of course he also *is* Mister Spencer, so he proceeds to sing the song himself, switching from interlocutor to vocal soloist. The other phonograms in the series follow the same basic pattern, but with occasional minor deviations. Spencer sometimes assumes the role of second end-man rather than interlocutor in his dialogs with Williams, in which case both speakers use “black” dialect and take turns making jokes. Applause and whistling sometimes follow the introductory overture, and the concluding ovation is sometimes omitted. The vocalist on the closing song varies. In general, the structure of the minstrel first part phonogram as of 1896 can be summed up as follows:

1. Spoken announcement: “The Imperial Minstrels, introducing their original minstrel first part.”
2. “Be seated, gentlemen,” followed by chord.
3. “Introductory overture,” followed by instrumental overture by orchestra; in one case, a vocal trio appears in this position instead.
4. Two or three jokes, either made by a single end-man with the interlocutor acting as straight man or exchanged between two end-men; simulated applause, laughing, cheers, and whistles follows each punch line.
5. Announcement of song to be sung.
6. Soloist sings song; a chorus may join in on the refrain, and applause, cheers, and whistling are often introduced at the conclusion.<sup>15</sup>

As this summary shows, the phonograms simulate the “old time” practice of beginning the show with the interlocutor’s command to sit rather than the “modern” practice of starting with the opening chorus. Thus, while the opening of the phonograms is at odds with the minstrel-show structure described in most secondary literature, it actually adheres to the more conservative of the two main approaches known during the 1890s. Another noteworthy detail is the form of the interlocutor’s command: “Be seated, gentlemen.” “Gentlemen, be seated,” invariably in that order, was later to become entrenched as the single most recognizable catchphrase for old-time minstrel nostalgia, used as the title of books, LPs, and even an opera.<sup>16</sup> The phrase does already appear in that more familiar form in some writings of the 1890s and 1900s,<sup>17</sup> including the United States Phonograph Company’s own catalog

description of its minstrel series, quoted above. However, we also find print examples of the alternative wording heard on the phonograms, as in a *New York Times* review of 1898:

The long-expected, loudly heralded “star gambol” of the Lambs, the famous theatrical club, began about 8:15 o’clock last night, at the Metropolitan Opera House, when De Wolf Hopper, majestic and solemn in the burnt cork and evening dress of the Middle Man of the dark semi-circle, which included the greatest aggregation of “talent” ever seen in any negro minstrel show uttered the time-honored formula: “Be seated, gentlemen. The opening chorus, if you please.”<sup>18</sup>

At this point, the word order of the “time-honored formula” was evidently still flexible enough to accommodate such variants. Furthermore, it seems some late nineteenth-century minstrel shows began with the troupe *sitting* as the curtain rose, in which case the interlocutor had to say something entirely different to begin the performance:

There is the first part with its rows of marionette-like figures, *seated* one above the other, the bass drum and bass fiddle capping the pyramid. Then the deep voiced interlocutor says, “Overture, gentlemen,” and they are off. The rattling of the bones, the sounding of the tambourine, the blending of the voices harmoniously in the opening chorus....<sup>19</sup>

The phrase “be seated, gentlemen” is thus another detail in which minstrel phonograms deviate from the model presented in the secondary literature but turn out, on closer examination, to fall well within the tradition’s own margin of variability.

The minstrel first part cylinder adopted key structural features from the minstrel first part in live performance, but the individual components still had to be drastically abridged so that the whole would still fit within the three-minute capacity of a single cylinder, leaving perhaps twenty seconds for the introductory overture and a minute and a half for the concluding song.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the minstrel first part in live performance consisted of several songs and acts with banter interjected between them, not just two. Its structure was condensed following the same strategy Issler’s Orchestra had been using to represent social dances that ordinarily consisted of four or five figures:

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Announcement of phonogram</b>                          | <b>Dance with calls</b><br>“Lancers with figures called from the Comic Opera Princess Nicotine, played by Issler’s Orchestra.” | <b>Minstrel first part</b><br>“The Imperial Minstrels, introducing their original minstrel first part.” |
| <b>BEGINNING OF FICTIONAL SCENE: Introductory segment</b> | [ <i>Cornet sounds.</i> ]<br>“Everybody up for the lancers. Are you all ready?”—“We are!”—“Let ’er go!”                        | “Be seated, gentlemen.”— [ <i>chord</i> ] — “Introductory overture.”                                    |
| <b>First musical number</b>                               | First figure.  | Overture.   |
| <b>Intermediary speech</b>                                | Between-the-figures announcement.  | Comic dialog.   |
| <b>Introduction to concluding segment</b>                 | “Right hands to your partners!” [ <i>chord</i> ]   | Announcement of song.   |
| <b>Final musical number</b>                               | Final figure.  | Song and chorus.  |

In both cases, the phonogram lacked the customary number of segments, but it still included at least one example of each major type: a characteristic introductory announcement, an opening musical number, an example of what typically occurred between musical numbers, and a concluding musical number. Minstrel first part phonograms were also challenging to “take” because of their acoustic complexity, and at first recordists seem to have settled on thicker diaphragms that reduced the risk of blast but yielded quieter overall results. Prospective customers were accordingly cautioned: “The Minstrel First Parts are made for tube use. Though all are loud and clear, it has been found impossible to preserve the various shades of comedy if made loud enough to carry through a horn. We have preferred to keep the merit in the records, and therefore do not recommend them for horn.”<sup>21</sup> At least one horn phonograph concert of 1895 did incorporate “The Imperial Minstrels” into its program,<sup>22</sup> but the series was primarily conceived for individual rather than group listening.

The United States Phonograph Company’s minstrel first part cylinders include sporadic sounds of applause, laughter, and whistling, and one member of the cast, George Washington Johnson, was often present solely to contribute phonogenic

laughter, although one of the selections does feature him as a solo vocalist in his LAUGHING SONG. These sounds invite two interpretations. Some minstrel ensembles punctuated their own jokes onstage by laughing and sounding the tambo and bones,<sup>23</sup> so the laughter and the clacking “applause” heard on minstrel phonograms could arguably be understood as part of the *performers’* usual contribution to the events being represented. However, the catalog description of A HIGH OLD TIME explicitly states that these sounds are to be identified with the *audience*: “At the conclusion the audience show their approval by round after round of applause, laughter, whistling, etc.” Phonographic listeners were clearly not part of this “audience” because their response could not be so confidently predicted. To the extent that we can trust the authority of the catalog description, minstrel shows were being represented in phonography much as Issler’s Orchestra depicted lanciers and quadrilles, as George Graham “imitated” sales pitches, and as W. O. Beckenbaugh phonogenized idealized specimens of the art of the auctioneer—that is, by simulating the existence of a fictional audience that was capable of full participation in the represented event and accordingly distinct from the phonographic audience that was limited to eavesdropping on it.

Columbia is known to have been purchasing original cylinders from the United States Phonograph Company in this period, including Len Spencer’s work, so it is not surprising to find the same group of eight “minstrel record” titles listed in that company’s catalog as of 1896.<sup>24</sup> Columbia moved its offices to New York City soon after and lured away Victor Emerson, the chief recordist that the United States Phonograph Company had been using up to that point, along with much of the performing talent, including Spencer. The Columbia catalog of June 1897 proclaimed:

SPENCER AND WILLIAMS’ MINSTRELS have been reorganized and engaged exclusively to entertain Columbia patrons. They bring their entire orchestra and a full complement of end-men, comedians, and vocalists. The records embrace bone and tambourine overtures, jokes, negro shouts, and songs, interspersed with the hearty laughter and tumultuous applause of the delighted audience.<sup>25</sup>

The eight titles listed remained identical to the ones the United States Phonograph Company had been advertising—the series had simply switched companies. The “delighted audience” of the fictive minstrel show, with its “hearty laughter and

tumultuous applause,” was again implicitly distinguished from the phonographic audience, in this case the “Columbia patrons” whom the ensemble had now been “engaged exclusively to entertain.”

About the same time Columbia acquired the minstrel first part series, Len Spencer also helped organize a second ensemble drawing on the traditions of blackface performance in collaboration with another prominent phonogenic artist who brought a unique background of his own to the medium. William B. Shires had been born in Cincinnati in 1858,<sup>26</sup> but he was “raised in St. Louis, where he became a butcher boy in the Union Market,” according to later publicity.<sup>27</sup> He began his career as an entertainer in 1874, of which he later wrote:

At an early age I left my home to go upon the stage, and with a companion made ten trips from St. Louis to New Orleans on the Mississippi, as singing and dancing comedians. During my stay in the South I secured a situation picking cotton which enabled me to be among the southern darkies and acquire the quaint dialect of that section known as Rich Mississippi Twang.<sup>28</sup>

Rather than participating in regular minstrel shows, Shires appeared mainly in venues devoted to variety or vaudeville, and at some point he adopted the stage name “Billy Golden,” which he also used in his phonograph work later on. His first known partner was a man named Merritt, in whose company he is supposed to have originated the “cane pat” in buck and wing dancing;<sup>29</sup> but he later teamed up with another partner named Billy Drayton.<sup>30</sup> Golden and Drayton were billed as “plantation darky impersonators, vocalists, dancers and comedians,”<sup>31</sup> and they were said to “take off the plantation darky to the life.”<sup>32</sup> In October and November 1883 we find them performing a routine called “Rabbit Hash” as part of the Four Spades, consisting of the two of them plus Frank Gibson and Bob Lee,<sup>33</sup> and from December 1883 through the fall of 1885 they put on the same routine by themselves together with other plantation sketches, including “At Their Home on the Old Muskingum River.” For some of that time they toured with Baylies & Kennedy’s Bright Lights, an itinerant vaudeville company,<sup>34</sup> in connection with which Golden is supposed to have introduced the song “Turkey in the Straw.”<sup>35</sup> He was also known for mimicking women, birds, and animals, as one review shows:

Golden and Drayton do a nice nigger sketch, the wench business of Mr. Golden being more like the genuine plantation “aunty” in dialect and make-up than anything we have seen for a long time on the stage. His bird and animal imitations by aid of a “cuckoo” whistle are good.<sup>36</sup>



In April 1886, Golden married Mary Johnson in Washington, D. C.,<sup>37</sup> and the two formed a new husband-and-wife team in vaudeville as “Billy and May Golden” or “the Golden.”<sup>38</sup> Their act was described in general as consisting of “Negro melodies,”<sup>39</sup> and one listing in the winter of 1891-2, cited in Odell’s *Annals of the New York Stage*, has them appearing more specifically “in Domestic Felicity, with Little Willie Golden’s Mocking Bird whistle.”<sup>40</sup> Billy himself is known to have imitated both mockingbirds and children, so I suspect “Little Willie Golden” was a role Billy assumed onstage, not a son as has been suggested.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, a third family member did soon enter show business: May’s daughter Jewell May Johnson, born in 1878, who was appearing as a separate act in vaudeville under the name “Daisy Golden” by 1894.<sup>42</sup>

Billy Golden began his career as a phonogenic performer in time to appear in a Columbia catalog of January 1892,<sup>43</sup> working at first as a solo artist, perhaps because his current stage partner, his wife May, did not have an equally phonogenic voice (given the rarity of female voices that recordists could “take” satisfactorily under the conditions of the early 1890s, it would have been a remarkable coincidence if May had been one of the few found to be suitable for such work). At the same time, Billy Golden’s phonogenic repertoire was drawn largely from material he had presented in partnership with either Billy Drayton or May since the early 1880s, including THE MOCKING BIRD as a whistling solo, the “negro shouts” TURKEY IN THE STRAW and RABBIT HASH, and a selection called ON THE OLD MUSKINGUM RIVER.<sup>44</sup> These pieces must have required at least minor adaptation for presentation in solo performance, quite apart from the special requirements of phonography *per se*. Judging from later phonograms in which Golden had access to a “chorus,” the Four Spades had likely performed the refrain of “Rabbit Hash” onstage in 1883 as a call and response:

**GOLDEN:** Did you *e:::ver* see such a rabbit?

**CHORUS:** We *ne:::ver* did.<sup>45</sup>

It is unclear how this refrain was handled when Golden appeared onstage with a single partner rather than with a “chorus,”<sup>46</sup> but in performing RABBIT HASH alone before the recording horn, he had no choice but to supply both parts himself: “Did

you ever see such a rabbit, I never did.”<sup>47</sup> Golden’s whistling solos and “negro shouts” were also framed according to the same conventions used for standard musical selections, which is to say they were separated in phonogenization from the larger plantation sketches, costumes, makeup, and dancing with which they had been connected in live performance. Golden’s *MOCKING BIRD* was sometimes listed in catalogs under the same numbers used for the piece as whistled by other performers including John Yorke AtLee and George Washington Johnson, indicating that their respective renditions were all expected to be interchangeable.<sup>48</sup>

When Billy Golden was a few years into his career as a phonogenic performer, his stage act took a new turn: in 1895, he joined his stepdaughter Daisy and a third partner, a man named Chalfant, to form a performing group known as the “Golden Trio.”<sup>49</sup> When the trio filled an engagement at the Orpheum in Los Angeles in May 1896, it received the following comments in the local press:

Golden, Chalfant and Golden are simply great. The lady of the trio is a dainty bit of femininity, dancing with airy grace and the suppleness of a “boneless wonder.” One of the men makes up as a schoolboy, and the third as a negro wench of expansive mouth and tremendous embonpoint. The latter’s simulation of the plantation darkey is true to nature, and his whistling and yodling simply immense. His imitation of the mocking-bird is a rarely-artistic performance, and the work of the three as a whole quite equals that of any team ever seen on these boards.<sup>50</sup>

Reviews from later in the week refer to the “yodling and whistling of Mr. Golden” and to “Miss Golden’s dancing, Mr. Golden’s quaint darkyisms and Mr. Chalfant’s beautiful singing of ‘Sally in Our Alley.’”<sup>51</sup> Collectively, these accounts establish that Billy Golden whistled and yodeled while impersonating a fat black woman onstage, that Chalfant played a “schoolboy” and sang, and that Daisy participated mainly as a dancer.

Starting in early 1897, we find a couple of different efforts to translate Golden’s new stage partnership into phonography. The Columbia catalog for that April listed phonograms by an ensemble made up of Golden, Chalfant, and Len Spencer—in other words, the Golden Trio with Spencer instead of Daisy Golden, who, like her mother, is unlikely to have had a voice suitable for recording. The June 1897 catalog replaced this group with the “Spencer Trio,” now substituting Billy Williams for Chalfant (he would later be replaced by Roger Harding and Steve Porter in turn).<sup>52</sup> Through this group, Len Spencer sought not only to replicate the Golden

Trio as a three-person performing ensemble but also to simulate the structure and audience response associated with its live performances, analogous to what he had done with the minstrel first part:

**SPENCER:** The Spencer Trio in their Mocking Bird Medley, Columbia Record.

[Soloist sings “Listen to the Mocking Bird” accompanied by mockingbird imitation and piano; then applause, whistling.]

Bravo, encore!

[Soloist sings yodel song beginning “When the moon he climbs up the mountains high”; bird imitation added on line “When the little bird he begins to chirp”; yodeling chorus by trio with piano accompaniment.]<sup>53</sup>

The formal influence of the minstrel first part phonograms on this piece extends beyond its representation of audience response to its atypically inverted spoken announcement, in which the name of the ensemble comes before the name of the selection rather than afterwards:

“The Spencer Trio                      in                      their Mocking Bird Medley.”  
[Cf. “The Imperial Minstrels    introducing    their original minstrel first part.”]

Its juxtaposition of singing, yodeling, whistling, and mockingbird imitations closely matches what we know of the Golden Trio’s live vaudeville performances of the 1895-6 theatrical season and was almost certainly suggested by them. Vaudeville did not offer as recognizable a structure for phonographic simulation as the minstrel show had in the case of the minstrel first parts, but the Spencer Trio still seeks to represent the two constituent songs as parts of a unit that makes cultural sense. Most noticeably, the songs are bridged by applause and a cry of “Bravo, encore!,” establishing a fictional scene in which the second song is performed because the first one has been so well received by an imaginary audience. The title of the piece as a whole is also significant: originally listed in the Columbia catalog in 1897 as THE MOCKING BIRD,<sup>54</sup> by 1898 it was being distinguished from Golden’s whistling solo of the same name as THE MOCKING BIRD MEDLEY.<sup>55</sup> Although it is not a medley in the musical sense of sequential songs “connected by a few measures of introduction or modulation,”<sup>56</sup> cases such as the STEAMBOAT MEDLEY were simultaneously broadening the semantic field of this term to encompass any phonogram containing multiple songs so long as these were linked in *some* way, such as through intervening dialog, that seemed to justify their treatment as a unit. The Spencer Trio’s ALPINE SPECIALTY resembles the MOCKING BIRD MEDLEY in content and structure, but this

time the vaudeville act itself represents a fictional scene in which a group of “Dutch” characters engage in recreational singing. Since the surrounding venue is itself a fiction contrived through simulated shouts and applause, we end up with two distinct layers of representation, one nested within the other like a “play within a play”:

*[Soloist sings yodel song “Roll on, Silver Moon” with piano accompaniment; then applause, shouts of “bravo!”]*

**SPENCER:** *[in stylized “Dutch” dialect]* Wilhelm—Anton, Fritz—Carl,  
Come, sit here by the table round  
und sing one of them good ol’ yodel songs like Fritz Emmett used to sing.  
The Cuckoo.

*[Soloist sings Fritz Emmett’s “Cuckoo Song,” with yodeling chorus by trio; applause and “bravo!” at conclusion.]*

Ah, Brüder, Brüder, that was fine, fine.<sup>57</sup>

The Spencer Trio’s other three selections were plantation sketches and did not attempt to simulate the response of a vaudeville audience, probably because the phonogenic trio was kept too busy doing other things. One of them, OUR SUNNY SOUTHERN HOME (“old man returns home from work with possum, chorus by trio”),<sup>58</sup> was apparently derived from a live stage routine in which Len Spencer had recently collaborated:

He [Spencer] has lately [as of late 1896] formed a co-partnership with the popular artist, Mr. John P. Hogan, for the production of a sketch called “Our Sunny Southern Home,” a true character delineation of the Southern Negro, with all his wit, humor and pathos. This sketch has been produced at a number of the leading theatres in and around New York, meeting with the approval of critical audiences.<sup>59</sup>

John P. Hogan was a teacher of stage-dancing and veteran of the minstrel shows of the 1860s who had himself been phonogenizing “records...full of music, action and originality, with lively clog dancing, funny sayings and droll effects” sporadically since 1889.<sup>60</sup> The two remaining original Spencer Trio titles are IN FRONT OF THE OLD CABIN DOOR, featuring an “old man character by Spencer, clog dance to Golden’s whistling, chorus by trio,”<sup>61</sup> and CAMP MEETING, which “opens with chorus by trio followed by a Negro sermon by Golden, ends with song by trio.”<sup>62</sup> Other performers soon began producing their own versions of the Spencer Trio’s routines: OUR SUNNY SOUTHERN HOME and CAMP MEETING were absorbed into the quartet descriptive repertoire, the latter under the title CAMP MEETING JUBILEE,<sup>63</sup> while ALPINE SPECIALTY also appears in the form of a solo performance by yodeler George P. Watson, who supplies all the voices in the singing and dialog by himself.<sup>64</sup>

Along with his solo and trio work, Billy Golden also phonogenized a few whistling, yodeling, and “blackface” sketches with single partners during the years 1897-9: Chalfant,<sup>65</sup> George Graham,<sup>66</sup> and possibly Arthur Collins.<sup>67</sup> His pairing with Chalfant can be recognized as another effort to adapt the live Golden Trio for recording purposes, this time by simply leaving Daisy Golden out rather than replacing her with a male vocalist. Golden’s phonogenic “duets” of the late 1890s were all short-lived, and examples of the phonograms themselves are accordingly hard to find. However, one disc by Golden and Graham, entitled LAUGHING and recorded by Emile Berliner on March 6, 1897, runs as follows:

**GRAHAM:** These are different kinds of laughs  
done by George Graham  
and Billy Golden.  
Now this is the way the dude laughs. [Imitation.]  
This is the way the old maids laugh. [Imitation.]  
Next is the way  
the Bowery tough laughs. [Imitation.]  
Next is an Irishman  
with a cryin’ laugh. [Imitation.]  
**GOLDEN:** The next laugh is a society woman’s laugh. [Imitation.]  
The next laugh is an old man’s laugh. [Imitation.]  
The next laugh is a negro wench laugh. [Imitation.]  
The next laugh  
is a little kid’s laugh. [Imitation.]<sup>68</sup>

The structure of this piece was dictated in part by technical considerations. Berliner drew the outline of a mouthpiece accompanied by the word “tube” at three o’clock in the title area at the center of the disc, a space sometimes devoted to esoteric technical data, in this case apparently indicating that the phonogram had been taken through a speaking tube rather than a recording funnel. In general, early recording sessions for the gramophone relied extensively on tubes instead of funnels directed at the open atmosphere, judging from Fred Gaisberg’s description of one such event: “Berliner placed a muzzle over [Billy] Golden’s mouth and connected this up by a rubber hose to a diaphragm. I was at the piano, the sounding-board of which was also boxed up and connected to the diaphragm by a hose resembling an elephant’s trunk.”<sup>69</sup> Berliner even patented his “muzzle,” which had a special notch to accommodate the performer’s nose.<sup>70</sup> Graham would thus have performed the first half of the selection and then handed the speaking tube over to Golden for the second half, avoiding the constant awkward exchanges that would have been necessary if they had alternated

between individual “laughs.” More interesting, however, is the treatment of the phonogram as a kind of mimetic sampler. A sequence of imitations of the laughs associated with different character types would not necessarily have been out of place on the vaudeville stage, but Golden’s “negro wench” impersonations, at least, had ordinarily been embedded in larger performances by the Golden Trio. The structure of LAUGHING provided a minimal context in which he and Graham could perform such imitations without having to construct a complete fictional scene around them. On the other hand, another collaboration by the same pair, NEGRO ODDITIES, received the following catalog description: “A Street conversation by Graham and Golden. Golden’s great coon laugh is frequently heard in this record.”<sup>71</sup> In this case, the goal was clearly to represent a fictional scene, a type of simulated social encounter known onstage as the *sidewalk conversation* or *sidewalk skit* and frequently incorporated into both minstrel show olio and vaudeville shows.<sup>72</sup> Paul Charosh reports that the pair’s third collaboration, VIRGINIA CAMP MEETING, is a “dialogue followed by the song, ‘Hear Dem Bells.’”<sup>73</sup> Billy Golden thus experimented with (or was persuaded to participate in) a variety of new presentational formats for his “blackface” specialties between 1897 and 1899, although only the Spencer Trio endured for any length of time.

In the fall of 1897, Billy Williams dropped out of the cast of both Spencer and Williams’ Minstrels and the Spencer Trio, abruptly giving up minstrelsy to pursue a new calling as an evangelist and temperance lecturer.<sup>74</sup> Columbia’s minstrel ensemble was reconfigured accordingly and now began appearing in catalogs under the name “Imperial Minstrels,” a name formerly used only in spoken announcements:

The Imperial Minstrels have been engaged exclusively to entertain Columbia patrons. A veritable carnival of mirth and melody. These records embrace the combined efforts of the Columbia Orchestra and The Greater New York Quartette, together with Len Spencer’s humorisms, and Geo. W. Johnson’s hearty laughter.<sup>75</sup>

The personnel of the Greater New York Quartette fluctuated over time, and so, accordingly, did the personnel of these phonograms. Although the musical selections remained the same as before, fresh spoken segments were eventually substituted for the old ones. These new dialogs were invariably acted out between the interlocutor and an end-man rather than between two end-men, setting the pattern for several

years to come, and the use of “black” dialect was curtailed, perhaps in an effort to improve intelligibility.<sup>76</sup> DESE BONES SHALL RISE AGAIN, which had formerly contained “matrimonial jokes,”<sup>77</sup> now ran as follows:

**LEN SPENCER:** The Imperial Minstrels, introducing their original minstrel first part, for Columbia Phonograph Company.

**STEVE PORTER:** Gentlemen, be seated. [*chord, bones rattle*]  
Introductory overture. [*instrumental with bones, followed by applause*]

**SPENCER:** Porter, I’m in a new business now.

**PORTER:** New business, Len? What kind of business?

**SPENCER:** Rag business.

**PORTER:** Well, how is the rag business?

**SPENCER:** Oh, pickin’ up. [*group laughter and applause*]  
You know, last year I was goin’ over Niagara Falls in a barrel.

**PORTER:** Well, how was business then?

**SPENCER:** Was fallin’ off. [*group laughter and applause*]

Porter, did you hear that story about the empty box?

**PORTER:** Why no, what about the empty box?

**SPENCER:** There’s nothin’ in it! [*group laughter and applause*]

Tell me, why did Patsy Finnegan build his pig-pen under the kitchen window?

**PORTER:** I haven’t the least idea, Len, now why did Patsy Finnegan build his pig-pen under the kitchen window?

**SPENCER:** Ha, why, to keep his pigs in! [*group laughter and applause*]

**PORTER:** Mister Spencer will sing “Dese Bones Shall [sic] Rise Again.”

[*Spencer sings “Dese Bones Will Rise Again,” with orchestra accompaniment; chorus joins in at points.*]<sup>78</sup>

The structure is identical to the earlier one except for the obligatory reference to the Columbia Phonograph Company in the announcement and the switch from “be seated, gentlemen” to the standard “gentlemen, be seated.” By now, minstrel first parts were also becoming increasingly suitable for education through a horn for concert audiences rather than through tubes for individual listeners, and when Columbia’s new Graphophone Grand was first officially exhibited in Frederick, Maryland, one of the selections used was “Minstrel and Song, A High Old Time, The Imperial Minstrels.”<sup>79</sup>

Although Len Spencer is remembered today mainly for his phonograms, he also had a significant career as a live performer. As we have seen, he had participated in “private theatricals and minstrel entertainments” before beginning his phonograph work and had collaborated with John P. Hogan on “Our Sunny Southern Home,” performed at New York theaters in 1896; that same year, a *New York Times* report of a local entertainment included Spencer’s name in a list of people “all of whom are well-known vaudeville performers.”<sup>80</sup> In the fall of 1898, Spencer sought to merge

his two spheres of professional activity by forming a new live performing troupe, the Greater New York Minstrels, comprised mainly of persons and ensembles attached to the recording industry: the Spencer Trio, the Diamond Comedy Four, the Greater New York Quartette, George Graham, John P. Hogan, Russell Hunting, Cal Stewart, Vess Ossman, and Tom Clarke's Gilmore Brass Quartette.<sup>81</sup> George Washington Johnson's "Laughing Song" was part of the program, but sources are not explicit as to whether Johnson himself was the one performing it,<sup>82</sup> and his name is conspicuously absent from the company's letterhead. It is likely that Johnson, as a black man, was barred from the Greater New York Minstrels on account of his race,<sup>83</sup> demonstrating that phonography was more open to racially mixed casts in late nineteenth-century America than was live theater. Other members who seem not to have had any connection with phonography were Horace Goldin, a stage magician who was soon to become internationally famous; the Three Murray Brothers, a musical comedy trio notorious for indulging in "fat" jokes at one of the brothers' expense;<sup>84</sup> the team of Crawford and Corrigan, who did buck and wing dancing;<sup>85</sup> a comedian named Frank Somers;<sup>86</sup> and possibly Mort Cheshire on the bones.<sup>87</sup> Spencer's troupe remained active from November 1898 through March 1899, alternating between time spent in New York City and week-long tours of outlying venues in New Jersey, Connecticut, and New York state.<sup>88</sup> As far as can be determined, its performances adhered to the familiar structure of the late nineteenth-century minstrel show. Its official letterhead depicts Spencer as interlocutor seated at the middle of a semicircle of performers,<sup>89</sup> the definitive stage layout of the minstrel first part which must have opened the proceedings. Next came "an excellent olio, in which George Graham and the Diamond Comedy Four seemed to please best."<sup>90</sup> Finally, the show concluded with its afterpiece, a "new plantation act" by the Spencer Trio entitled "In Front of the Old Cabin Door,"<sup>91</sup> presumably an expanded version of that group's phonographic sketch by the same name. Overall, one reviewer described Spencer's troupe as "a genuine treat old-time minstrel company," recommending the show to "lovers of burnt cork performances."<sup>92</sup> The *New York Dramatic Mirror* discussed the company with no reference to the phonograph; from the descriptions given there, it is indistinguishable from other minstrel troupes except for the fact that news items about it appeared in



the “vaudeville jottings” section. The company’s own advertising in the *Mirror*, aimed at theatrical managers, did not mention the phonograph either:

The New Amusement Pace Maker, LEN SPENCER’S GREATER NEW YORK Minstrels, THAT created a furore [sic] among the Managers and Amusement Patrons of the East by the perfection of its performance and the size of its business (testing capacity everywhere) HAS TWO WEEKS OPEN (JAN 30th and FEB. 20th, ’99) TO OFFER HOUSE MANAGERS who are after A TRIED STAGE SUCCESS AND A SURE BOX OFFICE WINNER.<sup>93</sup>

Still, the shows did sometimes work in a phonograph demonstration:

One of the most interesting features of the big bill was the introduction of the Graphophone Grand, which was personally conducted by Mr. Len Spencer. At the close of the entertainment a blank cylinder was placed on the machine and the band started to play a popular air, the audience being invited to join in. The whistling in the gallery was plainly audible.<sup>94</sup>

The company’s performances also included other nontraditional content such as Goldin’s magic act and Steve Porter’s appearance “in illustrated songs,”<sup>95</sup> which would have entailed singing to the accompaniment of projected slides. None of these attractions would necessarily have seemed out of place in a minstrel show this late in the nineteenth century, when the genre had long been absorbing content from other forms of entertainment to remain competitive.<sup>96</sup> However, the demonstration of the Graphophone Grand in particular gave Spencer’s troupe an opportunity to exploit its connections to the recording industry. The minstrel shows provided a forum in which Spencer could plug the Columbia Phonograph Company’s latest new machine, and the demonstration added in turn to the appeal and novelty of the minstrel shows.

The Greater New York Minstrels seem to have folded in the spring of 1899, but the production of minstrel first part phonograms continued unabated. Columbia had begun sporadically issuing new “Imperial Minstrels” titles in 1898 and had added eight more of them to its catalog by March 1902.<sup>97</sup> The personnel continued to fluctuate; for instance, Steve Porter became temporarily unavailable in late 1901, when he left the United States to work for a recording company in England known as Nicole Frères,<sup>98</sup> but Len Spencer had an alternative interlocutor in his own brother, Harry, addressed on phonograms as “Mister Henry.”<sup>99</sup> Meanwhile, other recording companies and other performers had begun producing “minstrel records” of their own, many following Len Spencer’s model. Edison’s National Phonograph Company introduced a block of minstrel cylinders by Billy Heins and the Ancient City

Quartette and Orchestra in early 1898.<sup>100</sup> Emile Berliner issued his first minstrel gramophone discs soon afterwards, featuring George Graham, John Terrell, and “Parkham,”<sup>101</sup> who I believe can be identified with Meigs Parham, the “hackman poet,” a Washington city guide and topical songwriter for vaudeville who also performed as “a professional singer, dialect comedian... negro character and stump-speaker.”<sup>102</sup> The Globe Record Company issued its own series of eight “Climax Minstrels” titles prior to its acquisition by Columbia in 1902, apparently featuring George Gaskin and Albert Campbell,<sup>103</sup> and during the transition from Climax to Columbia Disc Records, Len Spencer and his colleagues prepared disc equivalents for several of their existing Columbia cylinder minstrel offerings.<sup>104</sup> The Lyric Trio also dabbled in the minstrel record genre in the late 1890s,<sup>105</sup> and there is some evidence of phonogenic work by the well-known minstrel stump-speakers Billy Rice and Billy Arlington.<sup>106</sup>

Apart from Len Spencer’s group, the most prolific producer of “minstrel records” in this period was the Haydn Quartet. The phonographic minstrel show required much the same skills and resources as the quartet descriptive, so the participation of this group in the genre should come as no great surprise. The Haydn Quartet’s minstrel offerings, like other items in its repertoire, were issued under a variety of names and by a variety of different companies. The Excelsior Phonograph Company first advertised “Minstrel First Parts by the Excelsior Minstrel Company” in the April 1898 *Phonoscope*,<sup>107</sup> and other cylinder companies that relied on the Haydn Quartet likewise introduced “minstrels” selections towards the end of that year.<sup>108</sup> The quartet’s minstrel discs are better known and better documented than its minstrel cylinders: on Berliner, a series of IMPERIAL MINSTRELS 1ST PARTS credited to the “Imperial Minstrels” and a set of five MINSTREL 1ST PARTS by the “Gramophone Minstrels”;<sup>109</sup> probably some poorly documented selections credited to the “Zonophone Minstrels”;<sup>110</sup> and finally, for Victor, series of seven-inch MINSTREL FIRST PARTS and ten-inch MONARCH MINSTREL FIRST PARTS by the “Georgia Minstrels.”<sup>111</sup> Individual items in the series were distinguished from each other, if at all, only by numbers, e.g. MINSTREL 1ST PART, NO. 2. “Gramophone Minstrels” discs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 feature the same musical selections as seven-inch “Georgia Minstrels”

discs 4, 1, 5, 2 and 3,<sup>112</sup> but otherwise there seems to have been little continuity between the different series. A typical example of the Haydn Quartet's minstrel work, MONARCH MINSTREL FIRST PART, No. 5, runs as follows:

**WILLIAM HOOLEY:** Minstrel first part, by the Georgia Minstrels.  
Gentlemen,  
be seated. [*chord with bones rattling*]  
Introductory overture. [*Instrumental piece with bones, followed by cheers, whistling and applause.*]  
Grand opening chorus by entire company,  
"In the Evening by the Moonlight."  
[*Chorus with orchestra introduction, then a capella, followed by whistling and applause.*]  
Say, Sam, let me have ten dollars, will you, I'm broke.  
**S. H. DUDLEY:** Well, if you 'spect me to lend you ten dollars, you're not broke.  
You're only cracked. [*Group laughter, applause, whistling*]  
**HOOLEY:** By the way, Sam, that dollar you gave me last week  
was counterfeit.  
**DUDLEY:** Well, didn't you tell me you wanted it bad? [*Group laughter, applause, whistling*]  
**HOOLEY:** Mister Macdonough will sing,  
"The Blue and the Gray."  
[*Harry Macdonough sings "The Blue and the Gray" with orchestra accompaniment; chorus joins  
in refrain; whistling, cheering and applause at end.*]<sup>113</sup>

This example contains both an instrumental overture and a grand opening chorus prior to the repartee between interlocutor and end-man, as is common in Haydn Quartet minstrel records, although in some cases we find only one or the other.<sup>114</sup> Dudley and Hooley typically address each other by their real names, "Sam" in the first case and "Bill" or "Mister Hooley" in the second, although on at least one disc Dudley addresses Hooley as "Mister Johnson," a default name conventionally associated with minstrel show interlocutors.<sup>115</sup> The Haydn Quartet had to prepare new masters for its Victor minstrel discs as old ones wore out, and in order to keep the selections acceptably consistent with their published catalog descriptions, certain elements had to be kept the same from take to take, but others allowed for some variation. The selection transcribed above was described in the catalog as follows:

3039 MONARCH MINSTREL, NO. 5. Opening chorus by the entire company. "In the Evening by the Moonlight" followed by some more jokes. The announcement that Mr. Macdonough will sing "The Blue and the Gray," is hailed with tumultuous applause.<sup>116</sup>

The catalog identified some of the musical content of MONARCH MINSTREL NO. 5 by name, obliging the quartet to retain those elements in remakes. However, the title of the instrumental overture was unspecified and the verbal content was characterized merely as "some more jokes," so in those areas the quartet felt free to substitute entirely different material for remakes.<sup>117</sup> We sometimes also find other patterns of

continuity and change between different takes, as in the next numbered item in the same series:

3040. MONARCH MINSTREL, NO. 6. Opening Overture, Metropolitan Orchestra, “My Old Cabin Home,” by the soloists and chorus. “Tambo” has something to say, and Mr. Dudley sings the popular song “Fly, Fly, Fly,” with full chorus and orchestra.<sup>118</sup>

At least one take of MONARCH MINSTREL NO. 6 contains the song “My Old Cabin Home” as advertised,<sup>119</sup> but the song on take three, while announced “Grand opening chorus by entire company, ‘My Old Cabin Home,’” is actually the topically similar “The Old Log Cabin in the Dell,” by C. H. White, which had previously appeared on two of the quartet’s seven-inch minstrel discs.<sup>120</sup> Perhaps the two song titles resembled each other closely enough in this case that customers were expected not to notice the discrepancy—but this time, the *spoken* segment remains the same in both takes despite the change in song. As we can see, the Haydn Quartet followed a policy of changing and reshuffling the content of its minstrel phonograms in unpredictable ways rather than letting them coalesce into relatively set programs like Len Spencer’s. To complicate matters, in mid-1899, S. H. Dudley had also joined Arthur Collins and the Ancient City Quartette and Orchestra in revamping and expanding on the Edison minstrel selections,<sup>121</sup> switching roles from end-man to interlocutor. A surviving example of MINSTREL POTPOURRI contains the same musical elements as the Haydn Quartet’s MONARCH MINSTREL NO. 6 take 3—“The Old Log Cabin in the Dell” by the entire company and “Fly Fly Fly” by a soloist—but with a different spoken segment.<sup>122</sup> The individual combinations of jokes and music in these series were in constant flux, and documenting them all would be a daunting task, perhaps even impossible. However, the Victor and Edison minstrel phonograms of this period still display a consistent *structure* and follow the same basic conventions Len Spencer and his colleagues had established for representing the minstrel show first part several years before.

The first major innovation in minstrel phonograms since the mid-1890s came in 1902-3 with an effort to represent a show not through a single disc or cylinder as usual but through sets of discs or cylinders designed to be heard in sequence. On December 11, 12 and 13, 1902, the Victor Talking Machine Company made the first move in this direction by recording the first takes of an eight-disc series:

AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS

A Genuine Old Time Minstrel Show

An absolute Novelty in Minstrel records—a complete performance of old-fashioned minstrelsy, a form of entertainment of which the public never tires.

This series consists of eight Monarch [i.e., ten-inch] Records and lasts from twenty-five to thirty minutes, with not one dull moment. Bright jokes, brilliant orchestra bits, plantation songs and novel effects come in rapid succession.

In the making of these records we have enlisted the largest company of Comedians, Singers and Musicians which have ever been used for Talking Machine Records, and no expense has been spared in their production.

Although primarily intended for use in a series, each record is complete in itself, as the description indicates.<sup>123</sup>

Len Spencer and the Haydn Quartet, who had been the two leading makers of minstrel first part phonograms over the past few years, collaborated in providing the cast for this production. Disc one begins with William Hooley giving a spoken announcement for the series as a whole and then assuming his usual role as interlocutor:

**HOOLEY:** An Evening With the Minstrels. [*bugle call*]  
Gentlemen, be seated! [*chord with rattling of bones*]

The remainder of the disc is devoted to the opening musical medley and concludes with applause, whistling, and cheering.<sup>124</sup> Disc two then proceeds, in one version, with the interlocutor's introduction of a vocal solo by "Frank Kernell":

**HOOLEY:** Ladies and Gentlemen,  
I take pleasure  
in introducing Mister Frank Kernell,  
who will sing "My Creole Sue."  
[*Orchestra begins playing, but is interrupted:*]  
**SPENCER:** Oh, oh, say, say, don't, one moment please, *please* don't sing that song.  
**DUDLEY:** Well, sir, why not?  
**SPENCER:** Well, I'll tell ya.  
You see, I had an old mule once on the farm=  
**DUDLEY:** [*interrupts*] Well, what's that got to do with my song? Go on, mister leader!  
[*Orchestra begins playing again, but is again interrupted:*]  
**SPENCER:** Oh, oh, oh, don't, don't, for pity's sake *don't* sing that song!  
**DUDLEY:** But *why*, sir?  
**SPENCER:** Well, I'll tell you, you see I worked this old mule on the farm, a-raisin'=  
**DUDLEY:** [*interrupts*] Enough of this, go on and play my song!  
[*Orchestra begins playing again, but is interrupted yet again:*]  
**SPENCER:** Gentlemen, for goodness' sake don't, you'll kill me, sure.  
**DUDLEY:** But why, *will* you explain?  
**SPENCER:** Yes, it recalls unpleasant memories.  
**DUDLEY:** Unpleasant memories?  
**SPENCER:** Yes, whenever you open your mouth to sing, you remind me o' that poor old jackass!  
[*group laughter*]  
**HOOLEY:** Very well, then,  
we will ask Mister Macdonough to sing the song. [*cheers and whistling; orchestra begins again; Macdonough solo, "My Creole Sue," chorus joins in on refrain.*]<sup>125</sup>

“Frank Kernell” was a secondary pseudonym for S. H. Dudley (whose real name was Samuel Holland Rous) which he used in certain situations, mainly when performing as a whistler.<sup>126</sup> Here Len Spencer, in the role of end-man, interrupts Dudley’s “Kernell” each time he tries to sing “My Creole Sue” as announced and then skewers him with a witty insult; Hooley, as interlocutor, ultimately asks Harry Macdonough to sing the song instead. Sometimes the scene plays itself out somewhat differently. In another take, the interlocutor begins by introducing “the sweet-voiced tenor, Mister Harry Macdonough, who will sing ‘My Creole Sue,’” and Macdonough himself serves as the butt of Spencer’s “jackass” joke before singing the song as announced.<sup>127</sup> Meanwhile, the description printed in the Victor catalog claims that it is actually the interlocutor, Hooley, who is the intended target of the “jackass” remark:

The Interlocutor announces that the Sweet Voiced Tenor will sing a favorite minstrel ballad. The End Man, pretending that his traditional enemy, the Interlocutor, is about to sing, interrupts the orchestra and insists that this song brings back sad memories. After several interruptions he states that whenever the Interlocutor opens his mouth it reminds him of an old mule he once had. Amid the laughter at the expense of the Interlocutor, the Tenor proceeds with the songs followed by Quartet Chorus.

The participants in the “jackass” dialog and its relationship to the song performance that actually follows vary from version to version, but in each case the segment effectively simulates the comic repartee that characteristically bridged the minstrel show’s musical numbers. Disc three continues the pattern by starting with a dialog, again varying slightly from take to take:

**DAN W. QUINN** [*singing*]: That’s a picture—no artist—can paint.

**SPENCER**: I say, Mister Quinn,  
speakin’ of paint and painters,  
I called on Miss Katerine last night.

**QUINN**: I know Katerine, a charming young lady.

**SPENCER**: Yes, I call her Kitty, because she gets her back up so often....<sup>128</sup>

**SPENCER**: I say, Mister Dudley, I called on my girl, Miss Katerine, last night.

**S. H. DUDLEY**: Why, I know her—a charming girl, Katerine.

**SPENCER**: Yes, I—I call her Kitty,  
because she gets her back up so often....<sup>129</sup>

Spencer, whom the catalog description identifies here as “Mr. Bones,” proceeds to tell a pun-filled story about courting Katerine and being kicked out of the house by her father, with occasional interjections from his partner in the dialog. After

applause, laughter, and whistling from the audience, Spencer's dialog partner announces the next musical number (Quinn says "Mister Len Spencer will sing 'The Chimes of the Golden Bells,'" whereas Dudley gives only the title), which occupies the remainder of the disc and is accompanied by chimes and chorus. So far the series has followed a recognizable minstrel-show structure: the command "gentlemen, be seated," the opening chorus, patter, a sentimental "minstrel ballad" by a tenor, more patter, and an "end song" (i.e., a song sung by an end-man).<sup>130</sup> The only notable inconsistency is that the role of interlocutor has shifted away from Hooley by disc three,<sup>131</sup> since it is Quinn or Dudley who announces "The Chimes of the Golden Bells," but perhaps listeners were not expected to notice the change in voice. The rest of the series is a little harder to identify with the usual patterns of the live minstrel show because it consists largely of fictional scenes enacted as parts of the imaginary performance, "plays within the play," in which most cues aim at sustaining the inner rather than the outer lamination. The catalog describes disc four as follows:

Musical Act—"The Ebony Emperors of Melody." No Old-Time Minstrel Show was ever complete without the "Musical Act" with the Professor and the "Tramp Musician." The Professor, after hearing his Brass Instrument class play a brilliant selection, bows them out and laments his lack of an assistant. A knock is heard and a disreputable looking tramp enters in search of a job. He is given a trombone, which he blows with comical effect, almost driving the Professor mad. He is finally engaged and proves a fine musician, playing a duet with the Professor as the curtain falls.

This disc nests one fiction, the sketch set in the musical professor's classroom, within another, the implied theatrical setting of *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS* as a whole. The reference to the curtain falling suggests that this unit is also supposed to conclude the first part, although nothing on the discs themselves indicates that the curtain has dropped—one of the surveyed takes ends cold with the closing music,<sup>132</sup> another with applause and cheering.<sup>133</sup> Presuming the curtain is indeed supposed to have fallen, as the catalog states, disc five would mark the beginning of the olio, performed in front of the curtain:

"Having Fun with the Orchestra." The Tough Comedian of the Minstrel Troupe comes on the stage rather puffed-up with his own importance and decides to guy the German Orchestra. The musicians, however, prove to be up-to-date, and when he finally decides to sing, they drown his efforts with a series of very funny comedy bits and finally drive him from the stage in confusion followed by the jeers of the audience.

The interaction here is supposed to take place between the comedian onstage and the orchestra in the pit below, as confirmed by the comedian's opening line, "What's the

matter with you pinochle players *down there?*”<sup>134</sup> Next, disc six, entitled CAKEWALK IN COONTOWN, features what the catalog calls a “genuine Darky Cakewalk,” alluding prominently to the stereotypical “coon” weapon, the razor:

[*Murmuring*]

**SPENCER:** Now, uh, coons, this am to be the cream event of the season and nobody but the blue-blooded aristocracy of Darktown’s four hundred will be allowed on the floor.

Now, I don’t suppose for a minute that any of you coons has got a razor. [*murmurs of confirmation*]

Yeah, well, that’s right, you won’t need ’em where I’m at.

I’m just as good as a regiment o’ razors, and when I step in the middle o’ the floor that means gimme room.

Now, you all know me,

and you know you can’t walk on a floor all covered with blood. [*murmurs of agreement*]

Now, uh, I’m the judge and the jury,

and if any of you bad coons tries to butt in an’ pester me I’ll cut you down in the flower of your youth, do you hear me? [*murmurs of agreement*]

Take your partners—for the cakewalk.

[*Music begins*] First—couple—promenade!

Cross over.

Uh-huh. Come down. [*Chorus sings lyrics about cakewalk contest; then music stops; applause and cheering.*]

Se—cond—couple promenade!

[*Music begins*] Uh-huh—hold your head up, lady.

Ain’t no cake on the floor.

Tip your hat, coon.

Hold your face ’fore your head falls in. [*Chorus sings song about “happy days in Dixieland”; then music stops; applause and cheering.*]

Couple number three, promenade!

[*Music begins*] Ah, ah, look at number three, walks like a winner!

Mm-hm.

Show your feet, lady—gentlemen, give ’em room to walk in right into that cake. Uh-huh, uh-huh.

[*Chorus sings lyrics about judging a cakewalk contest; then music stops; applause and cheering.*]

I, uh, have the honor to announce

that couple number three wins the cake.

[*Cheering and applause; voice in background: “I told you she’d win it!”*]<sup>135</sup>

Taken in isolation, disc six could be considered a descriptive-mode representation of an “ethnic” social dance with calls, like DOWN AT FINNEGAN’S JAMBOREE or UNCLE JOSH’S HUSKING BEE DANCE, with the added element of simulated competition, as in THE DOG FIGHT. As part of AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS, however, it instead becomes a phonographic representation of the way in which a cakewalk is supposed to have been depicted on the stage, another double lamination of fictional frames. It is hard to envision a full social dance scene being enacted in front of the curtain as part of the olio, but clog dancing, at least, was a frequent feature of this part of the show, and as long as the implied action was limited to individual couples dancing in



sequence it need not have occupied more room than would theoretically have been available. Disc seven represents a typical olio specialty, a “sidewalk conversation” between Spencer and Dudley:

Sidewalk Conversation. “Funny Things you see in the Papers.” The two blackfaced Comedians open with a patter song about the newspapers of to-day, and then pretend to read the items, not failing to “get back” at each other as often as possible.

The act begins and ends with a sung duet accompanied by orchestra, both accompanied by simulated applause, whistling and cheering.<sup>136</sup> Finally, disc eight represents the minstrel afterpiece, for which the curtain typically rose to reveal an elaborate set assembled during the olio—in this case, a depiction of a southern levee:

Grand Finale, “Scenes on the Levee.” The Darkies are busily engaged in loading a river steamboat with cotton, amid the clang of bells, the tooting of whistles, shouts of the overseer and other characteristic levee sounds. Quartet sings “Heave dat Cotton.” The boat moves out and the roustabouts give themselves up to revelry, winding up with “Roll on de Ground,” accompanied by the Pickaninny Band.

This is the same steamboat sketch Columbia issued separately a year later under the title *LEVEE SCENE*,<sup>137</sup> the only significant difference here being that the piece ends with simulated “negro” laughter.<sup>138</sup> This whole eight-piece set was added to the Victor catalog at the beginning of 1903.

Columbia immediately reacted by preparing a similar set of its own, also called *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS*. On Valentine’s Day, one of its dealers issued a card informing customers: “We are now making a full set of records, 12 in number, covering an entire Minstrel Show.”<sup>139</sup> This production would outdo Victor’s eight-disc series by four parts. Ordinarily, each individual disc or cylinder in the Columbia catalog was assigned a different number, but in this case the whole set received a single number (1109 for seven-inch and ten-inch discs and 32045 for cylinders), and the individual parts were distinguished by letters running from A through L:

**Minstrels First Part**

- A INTRODUCTORY OVERTURE BY ENTIRE COMPANY (“Anvil Chorus”)
- B OUR LAND OF DREAMS, ballad
- C END MAN STORIES
- D I’M A NIGGER THAT’S LIVING HIGH, end man song
- E JOKES BETWEEN INTERLOCUTOR AND END MEN
- F I’M WEARING MY HEART AWAY FOR YOU
- G JOKES BETWEEN INTERLOCUTOR AND END MEN
- H MY FRIEND FROM HOME, coon song
- I THE BLACK HUSSARS MARCH, finale

### Minstrels Olio

J MUSICAL SPECIALTY (trumpet solo, “original air”)

K MONOLOGUE

L BANJO SOLO: YANKEE DOODLE

Len Spencer again features prominently in this series, but the other known cast members are Harry Spencer, Arthur Collins, George Graham, Billy Golden, J. W. Myers, George Gaskin, Bob Roberts, Henry Burr, Albert Bode, and Vess Ossman<sup>140</sup>—the Haydn Quartet, which was by now exclusive to Victor and Edison, did not participate. As in the Victor series, the first part alternates between musical numbers and dialog, but this time the spoken and musical elements are kept separate rather than being combined on single discs or cylinders, and occasionally the content of individual spoken units (such as E and G) is switched around. The first unit does not contain an announcement of the series as a whole, or even the usual “gentlemen, be seated,” but starts in with the interlocutor’s introduction of the overture itself:

Grand introductory overture,  
Operatic airs by the entire company.<sup>141</sup>

The dialogs have no formal spoken announcements of any kind,<sup>142</sup> but the musical units are prefaced by introductory speech, as we hear on parts D and F:

Billy Golden sings—“I’m a Nigger That’s Living High.”<sup>143</sup>

Mister George Gaskin sings,  
“I’m Wearing My Heart Away for You.”<sup>144</sup>

The wording here bears some scrutiny. Had these been ordinary commercial phonograms of the same period, we would have expected to hear something more like “‘I’m Wearing My Heart Away for You,’ sung by George Gaskin, Columbia Record,” the formula customarily used to inform phonograph listeners of what they were about to hear in lieu of an introduction spoken by a live exhibitor. However, the song announcements that had been made in the *middle* of earlier minstrel records, intended to represent words uttered onstage during the course of a live minstrel show, had gravitated towards a different pattern:

Mister Spencer will sing “Dese Bones Shall Rise Again.”

Mister Macdonough will sing,  
“The Blue and the Gray.”

Mister Collins will sing “Fly, Fly, Fly.”<sup>145</sup>

The present tense is sometimes found here instead of the future tense, as in “Mr. Dudley sings, ‘Just One Girl,’”<sup>146</sup> giving the same pattern we hear on cylinder F. Based on these formal parallels, I believe we can identify the words “Mister George Gaskin sings, ‘I’m Wearing My Heart Away For You’” at the beginning of cylinder F as a simulation of an announcement by the interlocutor of a live minstrel show rather than a phonogram announcement in the usual sense. Parts J, K, and L of the series represent the olio, which, as noted earlier, was traditionally performed in front of the lowered curtain between the first part and the afterpiece and dominated by a stump speech. Part K, the MONOLOGUE, corresponds to the stump speech itself and contains some elaborate verbal framing in which the monologist orients himself to his “audience”:

Ah—good evening, audience.  
 I’m glad to see so many present this evening,  
 and before proceeding with my portion of the entertainment  
 would like to make a few remarks.  
 I know there’s a great many people  
 see me dash out here on the stage  
 think I’m goin’ to sing  
 some tender or sentimental song.  
 Such, I assure you,  
 is not the case.  
 I am supposed to be funny.  
 Therefore—I will request the audience  
 to kindly laugh  
 whether it is funny or not.  
 I was in the city—of Washington last summer....<sup>147</sup>

Meanwhile, parts J and L also provide this speech with suitable *musical* framing. Columbia’s *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS*, unlike Victor’s, does not include anything equivalent to the customary afterpiece.

Both the Victor and Columbia versions of *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS* were designed to overcome the time constraints that had previously forced recording companies to represent minstrel shows in drastically abridged form. Rather than being condensed into the space of two or three minutes, a minstrel program spread out over several cylinders or discs could elapse at something closer to its usual duration in live performance. As we have seen, a similar change had taken place in the phonographic representation of lanciers and quadrilles around the turn of the century when multi-part dance sets had superseded single discs and cylinders. The

goal then had been to make the phonograms viable as accompaniments for live dancing in a shift from the descriptive mode to the substitutive mode. It is not clear that *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS* has necessarily undergone an analogous shift in mode, i.e., from depicting a minstrel show to substituting for one. There are some clues that we are still supposed to be “eavesdropping” on the performance rather than fully participating in it, as when the Victor catalog description refers to the simulated “jeers of the audience” in part five. Although the Columbia series does not incorporate any simulated audience response such as applause or whistling (as far as I have heard), the monologist in Part K still explicitly addresses his “audience” as an entity that he can see and that is able to see him, which is clearly not true of the phonographic listenership, implying the existence of a descriptive-mode distinction between the two audiences. Furthermore, both minstrel sets still involved significant abridgement, lasting only about half an hour each when the typical live minstrel show would have devoted a full hour to its first part alone. Nevertheless, *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS* does resemble the earlier lancers and quadrille sets in its use of multiple discs and cylinders to represent a subject at greater length than commercial phonography normally allowed, even if not at *full* length.

Victor and Columbia each enthusiastically promoted its version of *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS* as a complete minstrel show in eight or twelve parts and clearly hoped that customers would purchase the complete set. At the same time, the companies must have been uncertain how many people would actually be willing to buy up to a dozen phonograms at once—the project was ultimately something of a gamble. To reduce their risk, they designed each disc or cylinder to be suitable for purchase either as part of the set or separately, so that they might be able to sell the individual units even if the set as a whole proved unpopular. “Although primarily intended for use in a series,” the Victor catalog stated, “each record is complete in itself.” In confirmation of this claim, Columbia even remade some of the parts of Victor’s set in 1903-4 for individual issue: the LEVEE SCENE (based on part eight, as has already been noted), THE EBONY EMPERORS OF MELODY (part four), and HAVING FUN WITH THE ORCHESTRA (part five).<sup>148</sup> In the years that followed, Victor and Columbia both came increasingly to treat the parts of *AN EVENING WITH THE*

*MINSTRELS* as independent items, keeping some “in print” and up-to-date while discontinuing others, and thereby undermining each set’s integrity as a coherent whole. Victor added twelve-inch versions of parts 1-6 of *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS* to its catalog in 1903-4 but did not bother with parts 7 or 8.<sup>149</sup> It rerecorded some matrices belonging to the series as late as 1909,<sup>150</sup> and between then and 1911 it issued double-faced discs coupling 1+4, 3+6 and 8 in the ten-inch size and 1+4, 6+8, and 3 in the twelve-inch size,<sup>151</sup> but it failed to carry all eight parts over into the newer formats. Columbia similarly allowed its minstrel set to lapse. About 1907, Sears, Roebuck & Company offered its customers only parts A, D, E, F, G, and L as moulded brown wax cylinders,<sup>152</sup> and only isolated segments appeared on client label discs—for instance, parts D, F, and H on Star. Unlike Victor, Columbia did not carry any parts of *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS* over into its own double-faced disc series, pressing only a single coupling of parts F and H for the double-faced Climax and D&R client labels.<sup>153</sup> In general, Victor and Columbia seem to have given up on the original concept of *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS* within a few years, salvaging what they could from the individual parts but making no effort to preserve the sets in their entirety.

Edison’s National Phonograph Company waited until May 1906 to put out an equivalent set of six minstrel cylinders, to which it assigned the title *AT THE MINSTREL SHOW*:

In the six following numbers we have made a departure in presenting six Records that at a glance may seem to be similar in character. Such is not the case, however, for each Record is complete in itself and fully as attractive played alone as when made one of the series. The entire six present a most attractive minstrel performance in miniature. The first Record gives an opening overture; the second introduces one set of end men with jokes and songs; the third introduces another set of end men with other jokes and songs; the fourth is a monologue; the fifth is a dialogue specialty, and the sixth is a sketch quite similar to those with which the average minstrel performance comes to a close.<sup>154</sup>

Units two through five begin with spoken segments and conclude with musical numbers, so that when educed in sequence the series simulates the alternation between speech and music characteristic of the minstrel first part. Although the description printed in the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* again asserts that “each Record is complete in itself,” this time the pieces are designed to interlock more tightly than in *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS* and even to reference each other. We

hear an example of this phenomenon in part four, which is immediately preceded in the series by Harry Macdonough singing “The Lighthouse by the Sea” at the end of part three:

**ANNOUNCER:** At the Minstrel Show, Number Four, Edison Record.  
 A Matrimonial Chat by Will F. Denny.  
 [Short orchestral piece with whistling and applause.]  
**WILL F. DENNY:** Well, I’m next. [*he laughs*]  
 Wasn’t that pretty, that last song?  
 Oh, I tell you, music is a good thing.  
 And I always like to get next to a good thing.  
 And now I’m here, just a few words to the girls....<sup>155</sup>

When the whole six-part set is educed in sequence, the remarks with which Denny opens part four appear to refer to Macdonough’s vocal solo on the preceding cylinder: Denny is “next” on the program after “that last song” by Macdonough, and he can appropriately confer with the audience about how they liked the song. Still, the National Phonograph Company was no more insistent about promoting *AT THE MINSTREL SHOW* as a set than Victor and Columbia were with their respective versions of *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS*. About a year after *AT THE MINSTREL SHOW* was released, one of the company’s advertisements suggested a couple of sample programs for home phonograph entertainments, including this one:

A MINSTREL SHOW

|  |                                    |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 9277 AT THE MINSTREL SHOW, No. 3                         | By Minstrels [Edison Minstrels]    |
| 8293 TURKEY IN THE STRAW                                 | Humorous [Billy Golden]            |
| 9084 NOBODY  | Comic Coon Song [Arthur Collins]   |
| 8823 OLD BLACK JOE                                       | Quartette [Edison Male Quartette]  |
| 4005 LAUGHING COON                                       | Comic Song [George W. Johnson]     |
| 9280 AT THE MINSTREL SHOW, No. 6                         | By Minstrels [Edison Minstrels]    |
| 9111 WHAT YOU GOIN’ TO DO WHEN THE<br>RENT COMES ’ROUND? | Song [Arthur Collins]              |
| 8841 I’VE GOT A FEELING FOR YOU                          | Banjo Trio [Ossman Banjo Trio]     |
| 8389 I WONDER WHY BILL BAILY DON’T<br>COME HOME?         | Song [Arthur Collins]              |
| 8202 ARKANSAS TRAVELER                                   | Musical Monologue [Len Spencer]    |
| 9000 PREACHER AND THE BEAR                               | Coon Song [Arthur Collins]         |
| 9317 ST. LOUIS TICKLE                                    | Banjo [Vess Ossman] <sup>156</sup> |

Rather than recommending that users simulate a minstrel show at home by educing *AT THE MINSTREL SHOW* from start to finish, the writer of this advertisement suggests an entirely different grouping of selections. Two parts of *AT THE MINSTREL SHOW* are included, but not in the positions for which they had originally been created: part three, designed to fit in the middle, is used here to open the program, while part six,

intended as a grand finale, appears midway through. In fact, the individual parts of *AT THE MINSTREL SHOW* were designed to allow for some flexibility of this kind in their arrangement. Although Will F. Denny's remark in part four, "Wasn't that pretty, that last song?," was ideally supposed to follow Harry Macdonough's rendition of "The Lighthouse by the Sea" in part three, it would still have made sense as long as it was preceded by a cylinder containing a song of some kind. Denny's comment would have posed a problem only if part four had been used to *begin* a program or to follow a spoken-word selection—that is, if there had been no viable referent for "that last song." There were, therefore, some constraints on how the cylinders comprising *AT THE MINSTREL SHOW* could be appropriately used, but purchasers were by no means locked into educating them strictly in their intended order. The Indestructible Phonographic Record Company even remade one of the parts for individual issue: *THE JOKESMITHS*, with content identical to *AT THE MINSTREL SHOW*, No. 5.<sup>157</sup> The six parts of *AT THE MINSTREL SHOW* were designed to fit together especially well, but their specific arrangement within the series was still treated only as a recommendation, just as when customers were encouraged to buy the whole Edison monthly new release list for use as a ready-made home entertainment program. The publicity for *AT THE MINSTREL SHOW* stressed that each cylinder in the set was "fully as attractive played alone," which was not to say that it could necessarily be educated satisfactorily in isolation (the phrase "that last song," at least, would then have been problematic) but that it could be used as an independent building-block in the construction of one's own home concerts, like any other Edison cylinder.

The Victor and Columbia versions of *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS* and Edison's *AT THE MINSTREL SHOW* sought to represent a performance of minstrelsy at greater length than was ordinarily possible in phonography by spreading it over multiple discs or cylinders, ranging from six to twelve. However, all three companies also tried to keep each cylinder or disc in the series viable on its own as a single item. For this reason, no individual segment of the minstrel show was allowed to extend beyond one cylinder or disc, even though some elements such as the afterpiece lasted considerably longer in live performance than these media could accommodate.

Consider how much material still had to be condensed into a single cylinder for the grand finale of *AT THE MINSTREL SHOW*:

No. 9280, "At the Minstrel Show, No. 6," by the Edison Minstrels, is a plantation sketch by the entire ensemble, entitled "A Darktown Serenade." The arrival at Parson Punkney's; the light in Evalyne's window; Jim's jealous rival; the serenade by quartette with banjo accompaniment; Evalyne appears; birthday osculations; the parson, as the boys depart singing, soliloquizes: "Those boys sing like birds. Speaking of birds, I guess I had better count my chickens."<sup>158</sup>

During the period covered by this thesis, there seems to have been only one experiment at extending an individual segment of this kind across multiple discs and cylinders. In February 1904, when Len Spencer and the Haydn Quartet came together to remake several parts of the Victor *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS* series, they also produced a new three-part set called *OLD PLANTATION SCENES*, the goal being to present a plantation sketch with a single, continuous plot spanning three entire discs. Part one, entitled *SLAVERY DAYS*, incorporates the familiar steamboat effects into a dramatic opening scene:

[Whistle blows]

**GRIMSLEY:** C'mon there, you niggers, get that wood aboard.

[Voices: "Heave-ho!"—ratchet sound—

"Heave-ho!"—ratchet sound—

"Heave-ho!"—ratchet sound—

Quartet sings "In Florida," concludes with laughter.

Whip sound.]

**GRIMSLEY:** Shut up there, you black devils! [whip sound]

Hear that? [whip sound]

**CAPTAIN:** All ashore that's goin' ashore!

[Bell rings: ding-ding, ding-ding]

**GRIMSLEY:** Here, wait a minute, captain, why, one of my niggers is missin'.

Search the boat there and if you catch 'im, why, kill 'im! [murmuring]

**ETHAN:** Here I is, boss, I wasn't tryin' to run away, deed and double deed I wasn't, boss.

**GRIMSLEY:** I'll teach you to run away! Curses on you, I'll kill you! [murmuring]

**JASPER:** Here, stop, I say, stop, that's my boy, don't you dare to touch 'im, Bill Grimsley!

The master done sent him aboard the boat hisself, and as for you, here's a letter from the master dischargin' you! [cheering, murmuring]

**GRIMSLEY:** Curses on you, Jasper Johnson, this is your work!

And as for that boy o' yours, I'll kill him yet! [murmuring]

**JASPER:** That'll do out o' you, Bill.

That's enough now.

Come on, here, Ethie, that man ain't a-gwine to hurt you, son, here,

you run down to the village with this fifteen cents and get some fish heads for mammy's breakfast.

Boys,

the master done all say you can have a holiday. [cheering]

And Mammy told me t' tell you all she's done spread a possum feast, c'mon. [murmuring—;

chorus sings "Carve dat Possum," laughter.]

**JASPER:** We'll cut that ol' possum wide open and grease ourselves all over with the gravy!

[Laughter]<sup>159</sup>



Part two, THE OLD CABIN HOME, begins in the aftermath of the possum feast, with Jasper singing “You’ve Been a Good Old Wagon But You Done Broke Down,” relishing Grimsley’s dismissal, and dancing to “Turkey in the Straw” played on the banjo. The following dialog ensues:

**JASPER:** Say, Alec, I wonder where your brother Ethie is.

**ALEC:** I don’t know, pappy.

I ’spec’ he run away, you know that overseer say he gwine to beat ’im.

**JASPER:** Oh, no, that boy ain’t run away.

Oh, now I ’member.

I sent him down yonder to the village with fifteen cents for to get fish heads for breakfast, oh no, he ain’t run away, no.

He’ll come back directly.

The participants in the possum feast serenade Mammy with “Come Along Chillun,” which fades into the background as Jasper wonders aloud to himself where Ethie is.<sup>160</sup> Part three, THE WANDERER’S RETURN, is set far in the future, opening with Jasper worrying about Ethie “that runned away fifteen years ago.” After Jasper joins Mammy and Alec in singing “Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight,” a whistle blows to announce the arrival of a boat at the wharf. Soon a stranger approaches the cabin:

**JASPER:** Hello, who’s this a-comin’?

**STRANGER:** Why, how do you do, sir?

**JASPER:** How d’e do?

**STRANGER:** I beg pardon, but I’m lookin’ for an old colored gentleman by the name of Jasper Johnson who used to live here.

Do you know of such an individual?

**JASPER:** Colored gentleman?

No.

But if you’re lookin’ for an old *nigger* o’ that name, why, that’s me.

**STRANGER:** I see—tell me, didn’t you have a boy named Ethan?

**JASPER:** Yes, I did have a son o’ that name, but fifteen years ago this very day I sent him down to the village with fifteen cents and=

**STRANGER:** And the boy never returned.

**JASPER:** Why, how did you know that?

**STRANGER:** Why, don’t you know me, pappy, I’m=

**JASPER:** *Ethan*, my boy!

Come to me, my son!

Ethan has become a rich man in the meantime and, having bought his parents out of slavery, now presents them with their freedom papers. Part three ends with a chorus of “Hard Times Come Again No More” that fades into the background as Jasper speaks his closing lines:

Just as the black clouds o' trouble was gettin' blacker an' blacker,  
the good Lord sent me back my boy—  
my Ethan—  
back to his sunny Southern home.  
Thank God.<sup>161</sup>

Under the name “Edison Quintette,” Len Spencer and the Haydn Quartet also phonogenized the same three selections for Edison’s National Phonograph Company, which issued one a month for three months starting in June 1904. As with the multi-part minstrel series, customers were assured that they could enjoy each part of *OLD PLANTATION SCENES* individually even if they opted not to buy the whole set. “The series will comprise three Records,” the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* stated in its description of the first installment, “which together will tell an interesting story of slavery life in the South, although each Record will be complete in itself.”<sup>162</sup> In fact, an excerpt of the same basic storyline had already been recorded in the past for individual issue under the title OUR SUNNY SOUTHERN HOME. In a 1901 version of this piece by the Haydn Quartet, an old man has just finished a dance accompanied by whistling when the following dialog occurs:

**OLD WOMAN:** Come, come, come, nigger.  
Stop them capers.  
Ain't you done forgot what day this is?  
**OLD MAN:** Why no, Martha Jane.  
I ain't done forgot.  
It's just fifteen years ago today  
since I sent that boy o' mine,  
sent Alec  
down to the butcher shop  
for six cents' worth o' fish heads  
and since that day  
I ain't seen hide nor hair o' that boy  
or the fish heads  
or the six cents....

The phonogram ends with the old man inviting his remaining son, Ephraim, to sit in his lap while a group of bystanders sings “In the Evening by the Moonlight.”<sup>163</sup> The central premise here is the same as in *OLD PLANTATION SCENES*: one of the sons of an old plantation slave is missing, having vanished fifteen years before while on an errand to buy fish heads. Furthermore, although the name of the runaway in *OLD PLANTATION SCENES* appears as “Ethie” or “Ethan” on the phonograms themselves,<sup>164</sup> the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* gives his name as “Ephraim,”<sup>165</sup> which would make

the names of the brothers in *OLD PLANTATION SCENES* and *OUR SUNNY SOUTHERN HOME* identical—Alec and Ephraim—even if the roles of the son who has run away and the one who has remained behind are reversed. Unlike the three-part *OLD PLANTATION SCENES*, however, the much shorter *OUR SUNNY SOUTHERN HOME* does not depict the original circumstances of the runaway’s flight or his eventual return home, even if the live sketch on which it seems to have been based, “Our Sunny Southern Home” as produced onstage in 1896 by Len Spencer and John P. Hogan, may have developed the story more fully. Meanwhile, part two of *OLD PLANTATION SCENES* series appears in the Victor ledgers not under the name by which it was eventually released, *THE OLD CABIN HOME*, but as *IN FRONT OF THE OLD CABIN DOOR*,<sup>166</sup> a name that had then already been given to another phonogram by the Spencer Trio with similar content—feasting, dancing, serenading Mammy<sup>167</sup>—as well as to the afterpiece with which the Spencer Trio had ended Greater New York Minstrels shows in 1898-99, and which again may have involved more plot development than the phonogram had allowed. When heard individually, each disc or cylinder in the *OLD PLANTATION SCENES* series is “complete in itself” in the same sense as *OUR SUNNY SOUTHERN HOME*, *IN FRONT OF THE OLD CABIN DOOR*, or any other phonographic “excerpt” or “scene” from a larger stage production.<sup>168</sup> As a set, however, *OLD PLANTATION SCENES* permits the storyline of a typical melodramatic plantation sketch to be laid out more fully than had been feasible in the space of a single disc or cylinder.

In presenting multi-part series designed to be heard in sequence, the recording industry was essentially experimenting with taking over a task that ordinarily fell on the educationist—that of organizing and juxtaposing individual phonograms to create entertaining programs. About the same time, the motion picture industry took an analogous step by starting to issue groups of cinematic “shots” already formed into coherent sequences, such as *THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY* (1903). As I noted in my introduction, Charles Musser views this transition, when “film editing” became the responsibility of studios rather than individual exhibitors, as a crucial turning-point in the history of cinema. In phonography, by contrast, the grouping and sequencing of phonograms continued to be left mostly up to buyers, at least for the moment. Even

in terms of physical organization, it was buyers who grouped individual phonograms together into containers for storage, much as they lined up their books on bookshelves. The first multi-phonogram containers were boxes equipped with numbered pegs to hold cylinders or with slots or index cards to keep discs in order, but the boxes for storing discs were gradually replaced by *albums*, multiple record sleeves bound together into books.<sup>169</sup> Recording companies eventually used these albums to package specific sets of discs for distribution and sale,<sup>170</sup> such that the term “record album” came to refer to the sets themselves and then, by extension, to single long-playing discs containing the same amount of material. But this was a much later development, and during the period with which we are concerned the recording industry was still built overwhelmingly on the marketing of individual phonograms, not sets. Exceptions existed, but only when there was a very good reason for them—for instance, it had become common practice to extend lancers and quadrilles with calls over multiple cylinders or discs, but only because doing so was necessary to make them satisfactory accompaniments for live dancing. The advantages of an official multi-part minstrel show were apparently not as compelling, since instead of issuing more sets like *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS* or *AT THE MINSTREL SHOW*, Victor, Columbia and Edison each quietly gave up on the experiment and reverted back to the single-unit minstrel record, leaving consumers to their own devices when it came to assembling larger programs. Phonograms with tightly interlocking storylines, like *OLD PLANTATION SCENES*, were to remain extremely rare.<sup>171</sup>

In early 1904, Len Spencer and the Haydn Quartet inaugurated a new series of single-unit minstrel first part cylinders for Edison’s National Phonograph Company with Spencer and S. H. Dudley as interlocutors. Each of these cylinders was named after a different state, such as the *ALABAMA MINSTRELS* and *GEORGIA MINSTRELS*.<sup>172</sup> That fall, the same personnel collaborated on an equivalent series of Victor discs, the *OLDEN TIME MINSTRELS*, each unit distinguished by a letter starting with “A.”<sup>173</sup> The Haydn Quartet remained exclusive to Victor and Edison, but in the meantime Spencer worked with other performers to remake Columbia’s existing minstrel first part selections on disc and cylinder,<sup>174</sup> and about 1903-4 he began producing minstrel first parts for Zon-o-phone and Leeds and Catlin as well.<sup>175</sup> At first, Spencer’s new

minstrel series adhered closely to the model established in the 1890s, but at the start of 1905 a subtle change occurred. In place of the usual dialog between the interlocutor and end-man, a new batch of OLDEN TIME MINSTRELS discs and Edison “state” minstrel cylinders substituted banter between two end-men played by Len Spencer and a new cast member, Billy Murray,<sup>176</sup> an approach that seems otherwise not to have been tried since Billy Williams’ retirement in 1897. A representative example is OLDEN TIME MINSTRELS “F”:

**DUDLEY:** Gentlemen, be seated. [*chord*]  
 Grand operatic overture. [*instrumental overture based on “Carmen” with bones, followed by applause, whistling, cheers.*]  
 The famous end-men, Spencer and Murray. [*applause, whistling, “bravo!”*]  
**MURRAY:** You look kinda uncomfortable over there, Len.  
**SPENCER:** Uncomfortable? Well, I should say I am, Billy.  
**MURRAY:** Well, what seems to be de trouble?  
**SPENCER:** Trouble enough. You see, I bought one o’ those combination suits o’ flannel underwear.  
**MURRAY:** You bought a combination suit o’ flannel underwear?  
 Why, *that’s* funny.  
**SPENCER:** Funny?  
 No, sir, quite serious for me.  
**MURRAY:** Then the combination suit doesn’t suit, it seems.  
**SPENCER:** Oh, yes, the suit suits and the seams seem all right, and the flannel just tickles me to death, but I’m in that suit to stay.  
**MURRAY:** Why, I don’t unnerstand, wha’d’ya mean?  
**SPENCER:** I mean I’ve lost the combination to the suit and I can’t get out! [*Group laughter, applause, whistling*]  
**DUDLEY:** Mister Macdonough will sing,  
 “My Love Remains the Same.”  
 [*Harry Macdonough vocal solo with orchestra accompaniment, chorus joins in on refrain; applause, whistling at end.*]<sup>177</sup>

Dudley, as interlocutor, had acted strictly as the straight man in his dialogs with Spencer, using dignified, normative, “white” speech. Murray, as end-man, instead speaks in “black” dialect and interjects a few humorous remarks of his own. The “famous end-men” are not always explicitly introduced, as they are in this example, but a listener familiar with the minstrel-show tradition would still have been able to identify the speakers’ roles successfully based on their conventionalized speech patterns and to visualize them in the appropriate positions on the imagined minstrel stage: “Len Spencer at one end of the semi-circle tells Billy Murray at the other end how he got two glasses of beer without buying them,” states the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* in describing one of the new releases.<sup>178</sup> It is hard to pinpoint a single reason for the shift—the goal may have been to take advantage of Murray’s skill at

“black” dialect once he had joined the cast, to create more variety among minstrel selections, or to accommodate a higher concentration of jokes in the short time available—but it is clear that performers had begun to reevaluate and deviate from the set formula which single-unit minstrel records had followed consistently since the late 1890s.

Another change was soon to follow, this one centered on the opening sequence. From the mid-1890s through 1905, the rule had been for minstrel first part phonograms to have the interlocutor say “gentlemen, be seated” before the first musical number rather than beginning with the introductory music and then inviting the company to sit. Both variants existed in the live minstrel show tradition, as we have seen, so we might ask why phonogenic performers had opted so consistently to follow the one pattern rather than the other. I believe the answer lies in their conception of the phrase “gentlemen, be seated” as an extension of the spoken announcement, a part of the initial verbal framing that would help listeners comprehend what they were about to hear. Unlike a live audience, the phonographic audience did not have the ability to see the raising of the curtain or the minstrel semicircle on the stage; it had only aural cues to guide it in making sense of the program. By placing the phrase “gentlemen, be seated” first, phonogenic performers invited their audiences to envision the conventional minstrel show stage configuration from the start and accordingly to adopt an appropriate cognitive framework sooner rather than later. We find support for this interpretation in the earliest Columbia (not Climax) minstrel discs of 1902, i.e., those designated in the wax as take one, which open like this:

Gentlemen, be seated!  
[*Instrumental overture with bones, followed by whistling and applause*].<sup>179</sup>

Virtually all other Columbia discs of this period open with formal spoken announcements of the kind we examined in chapter three, naming the selection title, performer, and company. The fact that minstrel discs were exempted from this rule suggests that the phrase “gentlemen, be seated” must have been expected to serve a function analogous to that of the spoken announcement, providing some reassuring verbal guidance to ease listeners into the body of the phonogram. Still, the exemption

was short-lived; as of 1903 or so, minstrel discs issued under the Columbia label adhere more closely to the old “Imperial Minstrels” pattern, containing inverted announcements with the name of the ensemble preceding the title as well as the initial chord and secondary announcement of the “introductory overture”:

Columbia Minstrels, Dese Bones Shall Rise Again [*or other title*].  
Gentlemen, be seated! [*chord with bones rattling*]  
Introductory overture! [*Instrumental overture with bones, followed by whistling and applause*].<sup>180</sup>

The minstrel phonograms Len Spencer produced simultaneously for other companies such as Edison, Zon-o-phone, and Leeds open following the same pattern, albeit with more conventionally structured spoken announcements in which the title precedes the name of the performing ensemble and company.<sup>181</sup> The other alternative available in live performance—opening the show directly with a chorus as the curtain rose, with no preliminary speech—would have meant not only deferring the phrase “gentlemen, be seated” to a later point in the phonogram but also losing the opportunity to have the interlocutor announce the “introductory overture” or “grand opening chorus.” In fact, such announcements were not invariably included; they are missing from the first Columbia minstrel discs, as seen in the example transcribed earlier. When they are present, however, they do serve a useful function in encouraging listeners to accept the brief musical snippet that follows as a representation of the opening number of a minstrel show. In general, the structure of minstrel phonograms produced through the year 1905 seems to reflect a belief that listeners needed to be guided verbally through what they were hearing and that performers ought to take advantage of any opportunity that arose for offering such guidance.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, as will be recalled, the major recording companies each in turn eliminated spoken announcements from all their phonograms. In chapter three, I argued that this trend was part of a wider backlash against distinctive speech conventions that had arisen to help inexperienced listeners make sense of their initial encounters with new sound media but which critics had later come to perceive as vulgar, intrusive, and condescending. Columbia first omitted announcements from the masters it used to press client labels and then, by mid-1904, from all its disc masters, while Victor had already dropped spoken announcements by the time it began its OLDEN TIME MINSTRELS series. As of 1905,

the elimination of the spoken announcement had temporarily left Columbia and Victor minstrel discs with the following opening structure:

Gentlemen, be seated! [*chord*]  
Introductory overture! [*Instrumental overture with bones, followed by whistling and applause*].<sup>182</sup>

However, this style of opening seems to have remained unsatisfactory. The outmoded phonogram announcement was gone, but minstrel records still began with a spoken segment that somewhat resembled it and could be understood as serving a similar purpose. At the beginning of 1906, the existing Victor and Columbia minstrel series were abruptly discontinued and superseded by new ones. The change coincided with a shift in personnel as Arthur Collins replaced Len Spencer, but it also marked the introduction of a new opening structure more in line with current sensibilities. Now that a phonogram was expected to begin with music rather than prefatory speech, performers turned, apparently for the first time, to the alternative model for opening a minstrel show in which the program began immediately with an opening chorus and the phrase “gentlemen, be seated” came afterwards. Columbia called its new series the RAMBLER MINSTRELS and distinguished each disc or cylinder by a letter, starting with “A”:

[*Opening chorus with orchestral accompaniment, followed by whistling, applause, cheering*].  
**PORTER:** Gentlemen, be seated! [*chord*]  
Well, Arthur, how do you find yourself?  
**COLLINS:** Why, I-I-I didn't know that I was lost. [*he gives a brief laugh*]  
**PORTER:** I must say you're *looking* well.  
**COLLINS:** Yes, I-I-I'm *lookin'* for a feller that owes me five dollars.  
**PORTER:** By the way, I saw you coming out of a saloon last night.  
**COLLINS:** Well, I had to come out sometime. [*Group laughter, whistling and applause*]  
**PORTER:** Say, Arthur, what drove you to drink?  
**COLLINS:** A cabman drove me to the last one.  
**PORTER:** Y'know I heard that you came home drunk the other night?  
**COLLINS:** Well, a man is liable to go anyplace when he's drunk. [*Group laughter, whistling and applause*]  
**PORTER:** Arthur, you shouldn't drink so much whiskey, when you see that you're drunk, why don't you order sarsaparilla?  
**COLLINS:** 'Cause [*laughs*]  
when I'se drunk I-I-I can't *say* sarsaparilla. [*Group laughter, whistling, and applause*]  
**MURRAY:** Ain't it funny how some people can make such pigs of themselves?  
**PORTER:** See here, Billy, are you addressing me?  
**MURRAY:** No, sir, I wasn' 'dressin' you, I was talkin' about the other pig on the end there.  
**COLLINS:** See here, Billy, you shouldn't slander me, I always took your part.  
Only the other day a man was a-knockin' you an' I stood up for you.  
**MURRAY:** Well, uh, what did he say?  
**COLLINS:** He said you wasn't fit to eat with pigs.  
**MURRAY:** And, uh, what did *you* say?  
**COLLINS:** Why, I said that you was. [*audience laughter, whistling and applause*]



**PORTER:** Mister Murray sings “I Kind o’ Like to Have You Fussin’ Round.”  
[*Billy Murray solo with orchestra accompaniment, chorus joins in on refrain; cheers, whistling, and applause at end*]<sup>183</sup>

Along with its revised opening sequence, RAMBLER MINSTRELS “A” contains an unusually elaborate repartee involving three participants rather than two as had been the norm since the 1890s. Once again, conventionalized speech patterns would have allowed listeners familiar with the minstrel tradition to recognize Porter as the interlocutor and Collins and Murray as end-men, visualizing them in the appropriate places on the imagined stage. Indeed, the listener must be familiar with the conventions of the minstrel semicircle to comprehend Murray’s statement that he “was talkin’ about the other pig on the end there”: as an end-man, Collins would have been “on the end there” in contradistinction to Porter, the interlocutor, who would have been seated in the middle. In subsequent RAMBLER MINSTRELS installments, Collins and Murray banter in turn with Porter rather than going after each other,<sup>184</sup> but the presence of an interlocutor and *two* end-men still marks a significant departure from established practice. Victor’s first equivalent series was the CHRISTY MINSTRELS of early 1907, in which S. H. Dudley appears in place of Steve Porter, but otherwise the structure, the personnel, and sometimes also the jokes,<sup>185</sup> are the same. At the end of 1907, Victor began a new VICTOR MINSTRELS series, starting at number nine where *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS* had left off, this time featuring Steve Porter as interlocutor and, in most cases, not two but *three* end-men: Byron G. Harlan, Arthur Collins, and Billy Murray.<sup>186</sup> Edison’s National Phonograph Company picked up on the new trends about the same time, adopting the new opening sequence—“The curtain rises on ‘College Life,’ sung in real ‘rah! rah!’ style by the entire company”<sup>187</sup>—and featuring the same interlocutor and three end-men as the Victor series. However, Edison cylinders still retained spoken announcements in this period, so each phonogram ended up beginning in this way:

**ANNOUNCER:** The Jubilee Minstrels, Edison Record.  
[*Opening chorus with orchestral accompaniment, followed by whistling and applause*].  
Gentlemen, be seated. [*chord*]<sup>188</sup>

If my hypothesis as to why Victor and Columbia had initiated the change in the opening structure of their minstrel records is correct, then the National Phonograph Company, in adopting the same formula without also abandoning spoken

announcements, would ironically have defeated the purpose of the innovation. On the other hand, there would have been no reason for the company *not* to conform to the latest fashion in its competitors' minstrel records. The American Record Company, Zon-o-phone, and the Indestructible Phonographic Record Company also issued similar minstrel series about this time.<sup>189</sup>

The final stage in the evolution of the minstrel record in early phonography was its adaptation to the new formats of the late 1900s. Victor had experimented with twelve-inch minstrel first parts by the Haydn Quartet as early as 1902, but the earliest example actually issued seems to have been the MATINEE MINSTRELS of 1905.<sup>190</sup> In 1906-7, Columbia began issuing some RAMBLER MINSTRELS selections on twelve-inch discs and six-inch Twentieth Century cylinders,<sup>191</sup> and the National Phonograph Company produced its first four-minute Amberol minstrel cylinder in 1908. These new formats offered extra time for the minstrel program; the question was what to do with it. The ELKS MINSTRELS, the first Edison Amberol minstrel release, simulates an interruption of the show by a member of the audience,<sup>192</sup> but usually the phonogenic performers chose to elaborate on the structure of the minstrel show itself. The group most active in producing minstrel records of this kind, and in this period, was the Columbia or Peerless Quartet. Its first minstrel selection had been a ten-inch Columbia disc called PEERLESS MINSTRELS, with Steve Porter as interlocutor and Frank Stanley and Henry Burr as end-men,<sup>193</sup> but when Arthur Collins replaced Porter in the quartet, Stanley took over as interlocutor and the group began to do work for other companies including the Victor Talking Machine.<sup>194</sup> On the group's twelve-inch minstrel discs, Stanley typically engages in dialog with each of the other three members of the quartet, who play the end-men: Arthur Collins, Henry Burr (who cultivated a simulated stutter), and Al Campbell. The group's first twelve-inch discs resembled the most recent ten-inch minstrel records in their structure, containing an opening chorus, a longer-than-usual repartee between interlocutor and end-men, and then a closing song.<sup>195</sup> However, the performers soon began taking advantage of the increase in available time to insert another song in the middle of the program, splitting the repartee between interlocutor and end-man into two parts:

[*Opening chorus: "Carrie from Carolina," concluding with applause, cheers, whistling.*]  
STANLEY: Gentlemen, be seated! [*chord with bones*]

Arthur, how did you get that awful scar?  
**COLLINS:** Oh, that's a birthmark.  
**STANLEY:** Well, it wasn't there when I saw you last.  
**COLLINS:** Mm, well, it's a birthmark all the same.  
**STANLEY:** How is that?  
**COLLINS:** Oh, you see I was a-comin' home from the west a-ridin' on a sleepin' car, an' I tried to get in the wrong berth. [*group laughter and applause*]  
**STANLEY:** Albert, why don't you comb your hair before coming here?  
**CAMPBELL:** I ain't got no comb.  
**STANLEY:** Borrow your father's.  
**CAMPBELL:** He ain't got no comb neither.  
**STANLEY:** How does he comb his hair?  
**CAMPBELL:** He ain't got no hair! [*group laughter and applause*]  
**STANLEY:** Mister Collins sings, "Happy Days in Dixie."  
[*Collins solo with orchestra accompaniment, chorus joins in at points, whistling and applause at end.*]  
**STANLEY:** Arthur, can you tell me where all the flies come from?  
**COLLINS:** Mm-hmm, that's easy, I'll tell you where they all come from, Mister Stanley. The cyclone makes the house fly, the blacksmith makes the fire fly, the carpenter makes the saw fly, the driver makes the horse fly, the grocer makes the sand fly, the boarders make the butter fly, and *you* make the gin bottle fly.  
**STANLEY:** What's that, what's that?  
**COLLINS:** Uh, uh, yes, and you bet I'll make you flip up an' fly! [*group laughter, whistling, applause*]  
**STANLEY:** Harry, do you know you're like the prodigal son?  
**BURR:** Uh, uh, who-who-who was he?  
**STANLEY:** Well, he is mentioned in early times as a son who took his father's money, went out in the world, met bad companions, and when the money was gone, his friends left him. Then he returned to his father, who met him and said, "Come to my arms," and he killed the fatted calf for him.  
**BURR:** M, m, th-, th-th-th, that ain't the prodigal son nowadays. The p-, p-p-p-prodigal son n-nowadays takes his f-f-father's money, goes to the be-be-beach in the s-summertime, and with a big sp-, spy, spyglass he looks for the fatted calf hisself! [*group laughter, whistling, applause*]  
**STANLEY:** Closing chorus.  
[*Closing chorus by quartet, "Balmoral."*]<sup>196</sup>

By adding another song to the program, the performers were able to represent the minstrel first part's characteristic pattern of alternating speech and music more fully than had previously been possible in a single phonogram. In December 1910, Frank Stanley died and was replaced by John H. Meyer as bass in the Peerless Quartet and also, by default, as interlocutor. With this change in personnel, the group temporarily reduced the interlocutor's part in its minstrel phonograms to the phrase "gentlemen, be seated" and the announcements of songs, while the end-men took over responsibility for the dialog by bantering among themselves.<sup>197</sup> By 1913, Meyer had apparently grown more adept as interlocutor and began to participate in the dialogs as

well.<sup>198</sup> This development falls outside the chronological scope of my thesis, but it does provide persuasive evidence that the structure of minstrel records could depend in part on what kinds of phonogenic talent were available—in this case, whether the bass vocalist was comfortable assuming a major speaking role.

## Vaudeville

In contrast to the minstrel show, the vaudeville show *as a composite event* did not have a structure that lent itself well to representation in phonography. In essence, it consisted of independent acts or “turns” arranged so as to build steadily in interest and excitement, except for points such as the closing slot at which audience members were likely to be moving noisily about, which were allotted to “dumb acts”—e.g. magicians, acrobats, animal acts, moving pictures—that did not rely on sound and so were not at risk of being drowned out.<sup>199</sup> The dumb acts had little to offer phonography, and the other acts were organized more by prestige than by form. There were no genre-specific conventions analogous to the minstrel semicircle, the set roles of interlocutor and end-man, or the temporal organization of the minstrel first part to which phonogenic performers could conveniently allude. Nevertheless, the Spencer Trio’s *MOCKING BIRD MEDLEY* and *ALPINE SPECIALTY* had set a precedent for representing *individual* vaudeville-type acts in the descriptive mode, complete with simulated audience response and the invocation of interactive theatrical conventions such as the encore. In 1900, all the major American recording companies suddenly began producing groups of similar phonograms identified explicitly with vaudeville, the most extensive of which was a “Vaudeville Series” offered by Columbia. The catalog description for this series gives some sense of its scope and diversity:

This series of records deals with a popular form of entertainment. Here will be found all of the well known vaudeville characters—German, Irish, Negro, Soubrette, Musical Mokes, etc., as well as an enthusiastic audience applauding their work.

30400 German Dialect—Comic Monologue, finishing with Emmet’s “Swell Song.” Yodle chorus and clog effect.

30401 Comic Irish Monologue, finishing with comic Irish song “Jolly Sports.”

30402 “Musical Moke.” Explains that a Xylophone is a string instrument because it is tied together with pieces of string, etc. Plays a xylophone solo with piano accompaniment; plays

- solo on a piccolo from a pickle factory; ends turn with drum and fife corps effect.
- 30403 “You May Forget the Singer, But the Song Will Never Die.” A reminiscent poem, including sketches in song of Emmet, Scanlon and J. W. Kelly.
- 30404 Clever imitations of well known actors, such as John T. Raymond in “Col. Sellers,” Joseph Jefferson in “Rip Van Winkle,” and Lawrence Barrett in “Shakespeare.”
- 30405 Irish comedy talk, with Irish song, “King Gilhooley.” Tells more stories, and ends turn with Irish song and dance, with clogs.
- 30406 Stuttering Specialty. Uses the violin to make himself understood. A new act and a very clever performance.
- 30407 Comic Dialogue between Black-faced Comedian and Musical Director. Sings up-to-date coon song and closes the act with a bone solo with piano accompaniment.
- 30408 Imitation of a Backyard Serenade, Rooster, Hen, Duck, Turkey Gobbler, Jew’s-harp, Calf, Cow, Donkey and Yelling Dog. Closes singing Chinese song, with Chinese fiddle imitation.
- 30409 Chinese Song in Pigeon English (With imitations of Chinese orchestra.)
- 30410 Comic Repartee and Singing, introducing May Irwin’s Celebrated Song, “My Bed is Like a Little Boat.”<sup>200</sup>

Groups of similar phonograms, mostly entitled VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY and sometimes distinguished from each other by letters or numbers, appeared simultaneously in the Edison,<sup>201</sup> Zon-o-phone,<sup>202</sup> and Victor catalogs.<sup>203</sup> As the Columbia descriptions reveal, each of these early “vaudeville” phonograms was supposed to represent a single act from beginning to end, together with the simulated reactions of an “enthusiastic audience.” A typical example, Edison’s VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY NO. 5, runs as follows:

**DENNY:** Vaudeville Specialty introducing Mister Will F. Denny, Edison Record.  
*[Applause, whistling and piano solo.]*  
 I thank you very kindly, ladies and gentlemen, for this grand reception.  
 I’ve been away spending my vacation over in Jersey.  
 The hotel where I was stopping had some very funny rules.  
 If you will permit me, I will just read a few of them to you.  
 If you are thirsty, you will find a spring in the bed, ah that’s pretty good.  
*[Applause, laughing by both Denny and group. Continues in this vein for eight more “rules”; then:]*  
 Well, boys, I’ll tell you about my Lulu.  
*[Piano starts; song by Denny, “Ain’t You My Lulu.” Over final applause:]*  
 Good bye everybody, thanking you one and all for your kind attention, good bye.<sup>204</sup>

Like the MOCKING BIRD MEDLEY and ALPINE SPECIALTY, Denny’s VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY NO. 5 combines two selections that would ordinarily have been assigned to separate phonograms, in this case a comic monolog and a song, anchoring both of them in a simulated live performance context such that the result becomes not a random combination of items but a representation of a single formally complex but coherent “turn.” The descriptive mode is evident not just in Denny’s response to the “grand reception” of his audience, in which the phonographic listener could not fully

participate, but also in the routine's establishment of a geographically specific deictic center. Denny has been "over in Jersey," implying that the represented event is not occurring in New Jersey but in a place "over" from it, the most obvious such place being New York City. For phonographic listeners anywhere not adjacent to New Jersey, Denny's VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY NO. 5 necessarily "took place" somewhere else (and, incidentally, since the Edison Records of this period were recorded at West Orange, New Jersey, it also "took place" somewhere other than the location of the ordinary recording event).<sup>205</sup> A second example of a "vaudeville specialty" from this period displays some similar characteristics:

**COLLINS:** Vaudeville ~~Sketch~~ introducing Arthur Collins.

[*"Dixie" on piano; Collins laughs at end.*]

Come seven, come eleven, but don't come together, well— [*he laughs*]

Well, I see we're good friends already, and we'll try to hold you down.

So speaking of craps, pick up that dice-box thar, professor!

[*Collins sings "Crappy Dan" with piano accompaniment; followed by applause and cheering*]

**FEMALE:** Say, Crappy, what kind of a hen lays the longest?

**MALE:** I dunno, what kind?

**FEMALE:** A dead hen, you old fool! [*She laughs.*]

**MALE:** You're so smart, wench—

Who was the first woman to swear in this world?

**FEMALE:** I dunno, who?

**MALE:** Why, Eve.

**FEMALE:** How so?

**MALE:** Cause when Adam asked her if he might take a kiss,

she says, I don't care a-dam if you do! [*Group laughter, applause.*]

**COLLINS:** Well, speakin' of women I'll sing a little about that housekeeper of mine what cooks my beans for me, so let 'er go!

[*Collins sings "My Babe from Boston Town" with piano accompaniment. Cheering and applause over opening bars; also at end.*]<sup>206</sup>

Collins assumes all the speaking and singing parts in this routine, including both halves of the mid-phonogram repartee, for which he alternates contrastive pitches higher and lower than his normal speaking voice to produce the effect of a male and female vaudeville team. This segment resembles the minstrel dialog between interlocutor and end man, but one of the speakers is presented as female, whereas the traditional minstrel cast was all-male; the fact that the female voice was "done" by a male recording artist does not lessen the significance of Collins' attempt to simulate a mixed-gender act. Collins makes some effort to tie the disparate elements of the routine together: the female character addresses the male character as "Crappy," anchoring the repartee to the preceding song, and the final joke provides a *segué* into

“My Babe from Boston Town” (“well, speakin’ of women”) even if the connection is rather stretched. Another point worthy of note is that Collins addresses his accompanist as “professor,” cues him to play the first accompaniment with a nonliteral command related to the topic of the routine (“pick up that dice-box thar”; we encounter similarly formulated cues later on, suggesting this was a familiar convention), and instructs him to “let ’er go” before his final song. Although there is some evidence that phonogenic pianists in the recording laboratory were also addressed as “professor,”<sup>207</sup> Collins’ goal here appears to be to simulate the cues a vaudeville performer typically gave to the house pianist or musical director in live performance, and in fact such instructions to the “professor” routinely appeared in early phonographic representations of vaudeville turns.<sup>208</sup> Finally, to round out our coverage of the first “vaudeville” phonograms, here is a third example:

**DUDLEY:** Amateur Night at the Vaudeville

by S. H. Dudley.

Zon-o-phone Record.

The next number is Mister Frank Kernell  
in imitations. [*Cheering and whistling over piano*]

Ladies and gentlemen,

I thank you for this—kind reception.

As I look out on your bright and happy faces  
young and old

married and single

and by the way, girls,

I can tell the married from the single ladies every time.

You see, those married ladies, well, they  
they kind of slouch around in their seats  
as though they had no backbone.

But the single ladies

sit up so nice and straight

and look so pretty—

Look at all those married women straighten up out there! Rubber! Rubber! [*Cheering, applause, whistling.*]

But say, girls,

did you ever go to one of those amateur vaudeville shows?

Oh, they certainly are the real thing.

Why, say,

there was a girl,

uh, she always comes out

and sings some of those

[*mockingly*] old songs.

[*Dudley starts caricature of “Ben Bolt” with piano accompaniment*]

Oh, notice that kick on that word “hair.” [*Concludes. Cheering, whistling, applause.*]

Then there’s always a girl with a whistle.

[*Whistling solo with piano, followed by cheering, whistling, applause.*]

Then there’s generally a low bass singer, oh, he’s a bird.

When he comes to a note too low for him,

he just leaves it out, like this.  
 [Imitates bass singer leaving out bass notes, with piano; Dudley begins to speak at end:]  
 And the audience, they thought [drowned out by cheering, whistling, applause over piano  
 conclusion.]  
 And the audience, they thought he'd sung it, all right.  
 Well, you know that song-and-dance team.  
 They come out with ruffled shirt-waists  
 and throw down a handful of sand  
 and say "Let 'er go, professor!"  
 [Piano solo, followed by cheering, applause]  
 Then when they get through this little boy comes out  
 and sweeps off the stage in quick-time, like this.  
 [Piano music ("The Mosquito Parade"), over which:] Aw, Jimmy, get off there, what's with the  
 broom? Aw, get off it, you!  
 [Applause, whistling, cheering over piano closing]<sup>209</sup>

This phonogram opens by establishing several layers of representation. First comes the spoken announcement covering the phonogram itself, identifying the title, AMATEUR NIGHT AT THE VAUDEVILLE, the performer, "S. H. Dudley," and the recording company's brand name, Zon-o-phone. The simulated event opens with an announcer's introduction of the "next number" in an ongoing vaudeville bill: "Mister Frank Kernell in imitations." Next comes the vaudeville performer's self-introduction, in which he thanks his imaginary audience for a "kind reception" that has been simulated through cheering and whistling. In fact, all three of these nested introductions were spoken in phonogenization by the same performer, S. H. Dudley (born Samuel Holland Rous), who later used "Frank Kernell" as a secondary pseudonym on whistling records and in some versions of *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS*, as we have seen. This selection seems to mark his first use of that name, evidently to distinguish himself as phonogenic performer ("S. H. Dudley") from the fictional vaudeville performer he is portraying ("Frank Kernell").<sup>210</sup> The opening segment of Kernell's act foregrounds the imaginary audience when his monolog ostensibly tricks some of its members into sitting up straight. One slang term requires explanation: Kernell's cry of "rubber! rubber!" was derived from *rubberneck*, a word used at the turn of the century to refer pejoratively to unsophisticated tourists who seemed to have "rubber necks" as they turned their heads to take in city sights. The related verb "to rubber" is usually defined as "to turn the head round in order to look at something."<sup>211</sup> However, in a less well documented usage, a person could also be *rubbered*, i.e., fooled into gawking at something without cause, such that



“rubberneck!” or “rubber! rubber!” became roughly equivalent to “fooled you, made you look.”<sup>212</sup> Here Kernell seems to be using “rubber! rubber!” to mock his imaginary audience members for twisting their necks to see the married women “straightening up” in response to his comments. Up to this point in the phonogram, we might assume that the simulated event is itself supposed to be “amateur night at the vaudeville,” but now Kernell asks his audience if they have ever seen such a show (implying that they are not *now* seeing one) and, for the remainder of the phonogram, lampoons various amateur vaudeville acts. In fact, other companies issued this same routine as a regular VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY, described as “Dudley—Impersonating Frank Kernell in imitations of Amateur Vaudeville Artists.”<sup>213</sup> What we have here is, thus, a descriptive-mode simulation of a *professional* vaudeville act, complete with audience reactions, which is in turn a parody of *amateur* vaudeville.

Some similarities in representational strategy can be identified among the first “vaudeville” phonograms of 1900 and 1901, judging from the examples we have surveyed: they supply the sounds of an imaginary audience; juxtapose multiple performance genres such as monologs and songs, often with little or no intrinsic connection to one another; and simulate the performer’s interactions with both an audience and an accompanist. At the same time, we do not find the consistency of patterning we have been able to document in the “minstrel first parts.” Just as live vaudeville acts differed widely from one another in content and structure, so did their representations in phonography. After 1901, recording companies ceased for the most part to use VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY as a title for commercial phonograms, probably because it had proven too vague to serve as a useful guide to content,<sup>214</sup> but the phrase soon resurfaced as a genre designation for similarly conceived phonograms with more specific titles. One of the first performers to have his work designated in this way was Len Spencer, whose POMPERNICKLE’S SILVER WEDDING was issued by Edison in August 1904. The *Edison Phonograph Monthly* identified this piece as “Len Spencer's vaudeville specialty for the month. It is a German dialect recitation with incidental music. Pompermickle [sic] is supposed to be addressing an audience in a vaudeville theatre and telling them about his silver wedding.”<sup>215</sup> The genre

printed on the cylinder rim is “VAUDEVILLE,” and the phonogram itself opens as follows:

**ANNOUNCER:** Vaudeville Specialty, Pompernickle’s Silver Wedding, by Len Spencer, Edison Record.

*[Introductory music by orchestra, followed by applause, continuing over the following speech:]*

**SPENCER:** Heh.

Heh—hello, audience! *[applause stops]* Say, we had a silver weddin’ down to my house last night....

POMPERNICKLE’S SILVER WEDDING follows the model established in 1900 for a “vaudeville specialty,” consisting of a comic monolog followed by a song, with audience responses simulated through recorded group laughter and applause.<sup>216</sup> The framing encountered here is typical of the other “vaudeville specialties” Spencer produced as a solo performer during the mid-1900s.<sup>217</sup> He also sustained the same descriptive mode for some phonograms in which he paired up with other performers, such as THE HAPPY GERMAN TWINS, identified on Columbia labels as a “VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY,” in which he takes the role of “Carl” while yodeler George P. Watson plays “Fritz.” This piece begins with an opening duet, moves on into a comic dialog about yodeling, and concludes:

**CARL:** Come, the music men—are waiting.

**FRITZ:** Oh, how foolish you are. How could they be waiters when they are musicianers? That’s an interponsibility.

**INTERJECTION:** Say, ain’t you two fellers gonna dance?

**CARL AND FRITZ:** Sure!

*[Yodel duet with orchestra and “clogs,” followed by applause and whistling].*<sup>218</sup>

The sounds of the audience are represented here along with those of the performers, and the interjection “Say, ain’t you two fellers gonna dance?” can be interpreted as a show of impatience either by one of the “music men” (perhaps by prior arrangement, as part of the vaudeville script) or by an audience member. The “clogging” sounds, framed by the interjection, imply that the vaudeville team is dancing onstage, such that the applause and cheering that follow represent an imaginary audience’s response to the sights of the dance as well as the sounds of the song. This part of the act is pure illusion—we can assume that no actual dancing occurred in the recording laboratory, and that the “clog effect” was generated as a mechanical sound effect—further underscoring the distinction between the participants in the backstage phonogenic performance, the fictional audience which supposedly receives the full

benefit of seeing the dance, and the phonographic listener who can only imagine it. Spencer also produced a vaudeville equivalent to part four of the Victor *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS* series, *EBONY EMPERORS OF MELODY*, which the catalog had described as “the ‘Musical Act’ with the Professor and the ‘Tramp Musician.’” The new piece features a greater diversity of instruments and is supposed to take place in a vaudeville theater rather than during a minstrel show:

No. 8984, “Professor and the Musical Tramp,” by Spencer and Hunter, is a vaudeville musical specialty of a unique character. It introduces an ocarina duet, a mandolin and banjo duet and concludes with a cornet and trombone duet, all accompanied by the orchestra. The scene is laid in a vaudeville theatre. The orchestra plays the opening to the act. The professor’s partner has disappointed him. A musical tramp arrives on the scene and helps out the professor in the duets as above. A humorous dialogue between the professor and the tramp adds to the attractiveness of the Record.<sup>219</sup>

“Hunter” in this sketch was William Parke Hunter, a famous American banjo performer and composer who provided miscellaneous instrumental accompaniments for many of Len Spencer’s comic routines.<sup>220</sup> Like the clog dance in *THE HAPPY GERMAN TWINS*, the vaudeville act represented in *PROFESSOR AND THE MUSICAL TRAMP* depends on an aural illusion fostered by the removal of visual cues: in the recording laboratory, Spencer would have voiced at least one (and likely both) of the major speaking roles while Hunter performed on a variety of musical instruments,<sup>221</sup> but at the point of education the phonographic listener instead attributes the musical performances to the two characters established by the dialog. The principle that unites all the “vaudeville” records I have mentioned so far is their use of the techniques and illusions of audio theater to portray the characteristic features of vaudeville performances in the descriptive mode; they are just as concerned with artfully sustaining an imaginary theatrical context as they are with the content of the act itself. Overall, I conclude that the “vaudeville” genre in phonography was initially defined by its explicit and recognizable simulation of a vaudeville setting.

During this same period, Spencer was steadily diversifying his activities in the entertainment world, particularly as a manager and talent broker, which intensified his existing ties to live vaudeville. As of 1906, he had organized a company known as the “Elite Vaudevilles, who toured the principal eastern towns,” and opened a business suite called “The Home of Mirth, Melody and Ideas” in New York’s theatrical district.<sup>222</sup> By 1908, this latter enterprise had expanded into a booking

agency known as “Len Spencer’s Lyceum,” which specialized in supplying live talent and magic lantern slides to augment moving picture shows. One of Spencer’s advertisements in the *New York Dramatic Mirror* reads:

Attention

Moving Picture Managers

We furnish everything in the Moving Picture field (except film)—Vocalists, Pianists, Trap, Drummers and Instrumentalists in all lines. Dramatic Pictorial Demonstrators, Lecturers and Vaudeville Acts of merit at salaries commensurate with their ability. Also *the Best Song Slide Service* obtainable anywhere. Write for terms and particulars.<sup>223</sup>

By “dramatic pictorial demonstrators,” Spencer meant the live performers who stood behind moving picture screens to supply characters’ voices. Complaints about “talking pictures” of this kind had centered not so much on the principle behind them as on the performers’ lack of expertise, and Spencer was reportedly trying to place the art on a solid basis, although he delegated the actual direction of this department to an underling, Homer W. Sibley:

All applicants for work of this character are first thoroughly tried out as to their ability to mimic different voices. They are then carefully trained in the business of speaking appropriate lines to properly interpret the pictures as they appear on the curtains. Particularly they are cautioned not to interpolate too many speeches. The moving picture story is not constructed with the idea in view of spoken lines, and judgment must be used as to the proper places where words may be used, without having them sound ridiculous.<sup>224</sup>

As of 1910, Len Spencer’s Lyceum was said to be “unique in its way...one of the most important businesses in the New York moving picture field,”<sup>225</sup> and Spencer himself was prominent enough within cinema circles to serve, according to his daughter Ethel, as “master of ceremonies at the annual Motion Picture Exhibitors Balls.”<sup>226</sup> He also took an interest in managing his fellow phonogenic performers and reportedly offered to act as Billy Murray’s booking agent in return for 15% of his earnings. Murray turned him down,<sup>227</sup> but it is likely that the talent pool he managed through his Lyceum sometimes did work for recording companies as well as for moving picture managers. In general, more research is needed on Len Spencer’s career outside of phonogenic performance. The interconnections between his innovations in commercial phonography and his work as a “theatrical employment agent,”<sup>228</sup> a manager of live minstrel and vaudeville troupes, a designer of phonographic androids,<sup>229</sup> a trainer of behind-the-screen “talking picture” performers and a preparer of magic lantern slides are, at present, still hard to assess.

It is, however, safe to say that Len Spencer's status as a New York talent broker placed him in an especially good position to recruit new performers and establish new and innovative phonogenic partnerships, of which one he formed with female vocalist Ada Jones was to provoke a reconfiguration and broadening of the "vaudeville" genre itself. Up through the year 1904, male performers had routinely impersonated women in recorded comic routines and often in comic vocal duets as well. Baritone Steve Porter frequently assumed female Irish parts in comic sketches, delivering the lines in an exaggerated falsetto, most notably in his *BACKYARD CONVERSATION BETWEEN TWO IRISH WASHERWOMEN*, first recorded in 1901.<sup>230</sup> All the female parts in the quartet descriptives discussed in chapter four, such as "Mabel" in *A SLEIGH RIDE PARTY* and "Mandy" in *NIGHT TRIP TO BUFFALO*, were voiced by members of male quartets. Other comic sketches depicting dialog between courting couples had likewise been produced by all-male casts, one example being *AN INTERRUPTED COURTSHIP ON THE ELEVATED RAILWAY* by Albert Campbell and Bob Roberts.<sup>231</sup> Arthur Collins voiced both male and female characters in his *VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY*, as we have seen, a practice he also followed for spoken interludes in some of his vocal solos, such as the dialogs between a woman and a rag-picker in *ANY RAGS*,<sup>232</sup> although when he paired up for duets with tenor Byron G. Harlan he often assumed a male role vis-à-vis a female character voiced by Harlan.<sup>233</sup> Tenor Billy Murray also took the female part in some duet recordings, including one issued by Edison in February 1905 and built around the song "Dan, Dan, Dan-u-el":<sup>234</sup>

No. 8913, "Dan, Dan, Dan-u-el" is a fine Record by Murray and [Bob] Roberts.... It cleverly illustrates a dialogue between a dusky belle and her lover, Mr. Roberts representing the latter and Mr. Murray making the responses for the girl. The voices of both singers are admirably adapted to selections of this kind, and we know that this Record will be a big seller.<sup>235</sup>

Columbia issued the same selection in May 1905, again by Billy Murray and Bob Roberts,<sup>236</sup> but Murray had also phonogenized it with Len Spencer for Victor on November 10, 1904. In the Victor version, Murray and Spencer alternate between singing "Dan, Dan, Dan-u-el" as a conversational duet with piano accompaniment and exchanging spoken lines, of which the following gives a representative sample:

**SPENCER:** Come on back in here, gal, you knows I love you.  
But say, if you pester me for any more presents, I'll forget my love for you and I'll soak you good!

**MURRAY:** Aw, Dan!=

**SPENCER:** Go 'way from me, now, go 'way from me or I'll knock you so high the bluebirds'll make a nest in your kinky pompadour, you hear me?

**MURRAY:** Aw, Dan!

**SPENCER:** Oh, come to me, babe, I was only a-foolin'.

Why, my goodness, gal, you is all wet. [*Rumbling sound in background, possibly a simulation of thunder.*]

Say, honey, do you love me?

**MURRAY:** Mm-hmm.

**SPENCER:** Well, uh, [*laughs*] kiss me. [*Repeated "smooching" sound, then resumption of the refrain of "Dan, Dan, Dan-u-el" with piano.*]<sup>237</sup>

About this time, either DAN, DAN, DANUEL or another routine involving similar cross-gender impersonation elicited a negative reaction from a recording laboratory supervisor, as Billy Murray later told Jim Walsh, who paraphrased the story:

[H]e and Len Spencer were doing what used to be known as a "coon sketch." Len was saying something like, "Does you love me, honey bunch?" and Billy was replying, "You knows I does, sugar chile!" when Victor Emerson, the manager of the Columbia studios, in which they were filling a recording engagement, came in.

"Oh, for Pete's sake!" Emerson snorted in disgust. "If you've got to do that sort of thing, why don't you get a woman for the woman's part, Len, instead of having another man try to do it?"<sup>238</sup>

Murray recommended Ada Jones, a vocalist known for performing "illustrated songs" accompanied by projected slides,<sup>239</sup> whom he had recently heard performing at Huber's Fourteenth Street Museum. According to Murray's own account, he brought Jones in to the laboratory for a test, with highly promising results. The coup of recruiting Jones for phonograph work apparently came down to a race between Len Spencer and his colleague Dan W. Quinn, who had likewise established a theatrical booking agency.<sup>240</sup> Based on information from Quinn, Jim Walsh reports that Spencer "'hot-footed it down to Huber's museum' and obtained Miss Jones' services just a day before Quinn made her a similar offer."<sup>241</sup> By the close of 1904, Jones and Spencer had begun phonogenizing routines together in the same vein as DAN, DAN, DAN-U-EL,<sup>242</sup> with the difference that the female parts were now voiced by a real woman rather than by a man impersonating one—something virtually unprecedented in a phonogram incorporating spoken dialog prior to that year.<sup>243</sup>

Like DAN, DAN, DAN-U-EL, Jones and Spencer routines typically center on a popular song with instrumental accompaniment, embedding it in a dialog enhanced through conventionalized stage dialect and mimetic sound effects. One of the earliest examples, which typifies their work in its content and structure, runs as follows:

[Introduction to "Heinie" by orchestra. Blast on postman's whistle, knocking.]

**POSTMAN (SPENCER):** Good morning.

Here's a letter for Miss Katrina Schweineknöchel.

**KATRINA (JONES):** Ach, that's me.

It's a letter from mein fella Heinie Schneider.

Is any answer?

**POSTMAN:** No, your pretty smile's the answer. [Blast on postman's whistle, receding in volume.]

**KATRINA:** Ach, my, it's a valentine! [Orchestra starts "Du, Du Liegst Mir Im Herzen" in background:]

What a pretty smell!

Und here is something written on it.

What is this?

"If you love you like I love me, no knife can cut our love together.

I'll be up to the house tonight."

Ach, that's just like Heinie. I'm so happy I could sing. [Orchestra finishes "Du, Du Liegst Mir im Herzen" and begins playing "Heinie," to which Katrina sings:]

My Heinie is a sailor, und he sails the sea across.

He is captain of a whaler, und of ev'rything he is boss.

I know my Heinie loves me when he is far away,

Und I love Heinie also, und to him I do say— [orchestra stops].

**HEINIE (SPENCER):** Huh!

And what do you say, Katrina, huh?

**KATRINA:** Ach, Heinie, you frightened me so I am afraid!

**HEINIE:** Afraid you will lose *me*, ja?

**KATRINA:** Ja?

**HEINIE:** Ja?

**KATRINA:** Ach, nein, nein.

Oh, Heinie, why you didn't answer my letter?

**HEINIE:** Your letter? Why, where did you send it to, huh?

**KATRINA:** Captain Heinie Schneider, Atlantic Ocean.

**HEINIE:** Atlantic Ocean! Huh, by jiminy! I'll get that letter next time I go in swimmin'.

Katrina,

say, tell me once what was—in the letter, huh?

**KATRINA:** I said— [orchestra resumes "Heinie," to which Katrina sings:]

Heinie, ach Heinie, I love but you,

No-one can cut our love half in two.

Heinie, ach Heinie, if you will be meinie,

I promise to stick to you just like glue.

Heinie, I'm tiny 'longside of you,

But I've a heart that is big und true.

Heinie, ach Heinie, if you should decline me,

I'll jump in the ocean and swim out to you [orchestra concludes].

**HEINIE:** I didn't know that you *could* swim.

I know that you can *dance*, though.

Come,

put your chubby arms around me and we *dance* together.

[Orchestra begins "Oh Where, Oh Where Has My Little Dog Gone" with clogs.]

**KATRINA:** Ach, Heinie, don't *squeeze* me so!

[Orchestra finishes; then two "smooching" sounds.]

Ach, Heinie!

[Two more "smooching sounds," then two concluding notes by orchestra.]<sup>244</sup>

Different recording companies presented this selection in different ways. The Victor Talking Machine Company, whose version is transcribed above, called it KATRINA'S

VALENTINE, foregrounding its storyline, and categorized it on labels as a “GERMAN SPECIALTY” or, later, as a “German Dialect Song” and “Descriptive Specialty with orchestra,” with no explicit reference to vaudeville.<sup>245</sup> Columbia and Edison instead issued the routine under the title HEINIE, the name of the song around which it is built, and identified it as a “vaudeville specialty.”<sup>246</sup>

On one level, the fictional interaction of HEINIE (alias KATRINA’S VALENTINE) plainly takes place at Katrina’s house, a setting the listener must recognize in order properly to evaluate the postman’s knocking on the door to deliver the valentine and Heinie’s fulfillment of his written promise to “be up to the house tonight.” However, the instrumental music is extradiegetic with respect to this fictional world, which is to say that the orchestra’s “Du, Du Liegst Mir Im Herzen” and accompaniment to the song “Heinie” are not supposed to be audible to the characters. This is an important point. Extradiegetic background “mood” music had been extremely rare in phonography before late 1904, limited to a handful of cases such as Len Spencer’s FLOGGING SCENE FROM UNCLE TOM’S CABIN, which seems to have been conceived not as a direct representation of the underlying flogging scene but as a representation of that scene as represented in a stage dramatization of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* with orchestral accompaniment.<sup>247</sup> It also appears in another very early Jones and Spencer collaboration, THE HAND OF FATE (A BURLESQUE MELODRAMA), in which it and other background effects are treated as theatrical conventions not to be naïvely borrowed but to be consciously represented and parodied, as when the sound-effects personnel “miss” one of their cues:

**VILLAIN:** How it thunders. [*Pause—silence.*]  
[*Louder:*] How it *thunders!* [*“Thunder” effect.*]

The imaginary theatrical setting of THE HAND OF FATE is foregrounded at the phonogram’s conclusion, where we hear simulated cheering and applause and a shout of “Aw, say, gee, Jimmie, that was a great show!”<sup>248</sup> No equally self-referential gestures appear in HEINIE, but its description in the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* still identifies the vaudeville theater, and not Katrina’s house, as its true setting: “The scene is in the theatre with orchestra, and all the incidental effects are introduced realistically.”<sup>249</sup> From this perspective, HEINIE is a “realistic” phonographic



representation of a theatrical vaudeville performance that, in turn, represents a sequence of events at Katrina's house through a combination of speech, song, orchestral music, sound effects, and dance. The Edison version also includes applause and whistling over the opening and concluding music,<sup>250</sup> although this simulation of audience response is absent from the Victor and Columbia versions. Still, nobody explicitly addresses the audience, or an accompanist as "professor," or otherwise invokes the usual concomitants of a live vaudeville setting. Thus, notwithstanding its structure and orchestra accompaniment, HEINIE actually offers few aural clues to mark it specifically as vaudeville, and indeed Victor did not classify it in that way on labels, opting instead for the terms "GERMAN SPECIALTY" and "Descriptive Specialty with orchestra." What was at issue here was whether phonograms of this kind were to be perceived as representations of vaudeville acts or as constituting a new phonographic genre parallel to the vaudeville act, sharing such characteristics with it as the use of extradiegetic background "mood" music, but distinct from it, valid as an expressive form in its own right.

The first Jones and Spencer sketches sold exceptionally well, encouraging recording companies to try to identify and replicate the successful formula. One of the first advertisements for a follow-up selection dwells primarily on the team's "realistic" simulation of vaudeville rather than on the characters or storyline presented within the vaudeville act itself:

No. 9016, "Ev'ry Little Bit Helps," by Ada Jones and Len Spencer, is a realistic portrayal of a vaudeville act, introducing theatre surroundings, audience, orchestra and everything incidental to as bright and amusing [a] little act with a story to it as one would see or hear in a first-class vaudeville house. The Record in the May [1905] list made by these artists [i.e., HEINIE] broke all records for the sale of a single selection, and this one will probably be quite as popular. Fred Fischer wrote the music of this composition and George Whiting, the words.<sup>251</sup>

Jim Walsh classifies EV'RY LITTLE BIT HELPS as a "coon skit,"<sup>252</sup> i.e., a sketch drawing on "black" dialect and stereotypes just as KATRINA'S VALENTINE had drawn on "Dutch" ones, but Edison's advertising department chose not even to mention this aspect when describing it. What was supposed to be new and exciting, at this point, was the "realism" with which it captured the experience of vaudeville, even unto its rarely authentic representation of the female speaking voice; like the Edison version of HEINIE, it also includes whistling and applause during the opening and closing

music.<sup>253</sup> However, the simulated response of the vaudeville audience was ultimately excluded from Jones and Spencer phonograms, and Edison publicity shifted its emphasis back to the content of the act itself even as it retained the term “vaudeville sketch” as a generic classification.<sup>254</sup>

No. 9431, “Down on the Farm,” by Ada Jones and Len Spencer, is a vaudeville sketch depicting a scene on the old farm at Christmas time. Numerous incidental effects which add realism to the scene are introduced, such as the shaking and winding of the old clock, sleigh-bells, children’s voices, Christmas horns, etc. Miss Jones also sings very appropriately, “I’ve Grown so Used to You,” accompanied by the orchestra. Joy, sadness, pathos and mirth are intermingled, climaxing with the return of the old people’s son Zeke in time to save the old farm by taking up old Skinner’s mortgage—Dad’s Christmas present from Zeke.<sup>255</sup>

In this case, the effects said to “add realism to the scene” also helped to sustain the fictional world of the vaudeville act itself, making it unclear just what subject was being represented “realistically”: an enactment onstage in a vaudeville theater, the events “on the old farm at Christmas time,” or both? The orchestral music alone would have existed in the vaudeville theater but not “on the old farm” itself. In fact, some Jones and Spencer sketches contain no audible traces of a theatrical setting at all, such as MAGGIE CLANCY’S NEW PIANO, classified by Columbia as an “IRISH VAUDEVILLE SKETCH,” in which the instrumental accompaniment is provided not by an orchestra but by a piano supposed to be in the Clancy family parlor, played by Maggie Clancy within the story and plainly audible to the characters themselves. In this phonogram, we hear nothing that we would not theoretically have heard by eavesdropping directly on the Clancy household rather than attending a vaudeville show.<sup>256</sup> That is, it is a specimen of “vaudeville” only in the sense that the sketch it embodies *could* hypothetically have been presented in vaudeville.

Meanwhile, Len Spencer, who authored the Jones and Spencer sketches and eventually began receiving extra payments for the “recording rights” to them,<sup>257</sup> sometimes exploited representational techniques specific to the phonographic medium that would not have worked well, or perhaps at all, in a vaudeville theater.

Consider MUGGSY’S DREAM:

Muggsy (Mr. Spencer) is selling his papers on a cold night. He finds a warm corner in which to take a quiet sleep. At this point in the Record, effects to imitate a runaway horse, a dog’s bark and a girl’s scream are introduced. The girl [played by Ada Jones] is crying for some one to save her dog. Muggsy is right “on the job,” and after restoring the “mut” [sic] to its owner is invited to ride with her to her home. After experiencing pleasures almost unheard of [in the role of the girl, Ada

Jones sings, “Won’t You Be My Baby Boy”], he is rudely awakened by a policeman, and feels rather forlorn when he finds out that it was but a dream.<sup>258</sup>

Here the sounds heard on the phonogram (except for the extradiegetic orchestral accompaniment) correspond to Muggsy’s subjective aural experience as he drops off to sleep, has an imaginary adventure, and is woken up in the middle of it—transitions that could not have been represented as easily in a live act onstage, where corresponding visuals would have been expected but hard to contrive. Sometimes the characters played by Jones and Spencer themselves attend elaborate performances as audience members, commenting on what they “see” as corresponding diegetic sounds are artfully simulated for the listener, as in *JIMMIE AND MAGGIE AT THE HIPPODROME*.<sup>259</sup> In *COMING HOME FROM CONEY ISLE*, the same Jimmie and Maggie board a crowded trolley car that proceeds around corners and has its lights go out, and Jones and Spencer both voice the parts of other passengers, including an Irishwoman with a baby and a drunken man with a hiccup.<sup>260</sup> While such scenes could perhaps have been played out on a vaudeville stage with some effort and ingenuity, they were really drawing on the distinctive techniques of audio theater that had emerged over the course of the 1890s, not on conventions specific to vaudeville or, in some cases, even possible in vaudeville.

The fact that Jones and Spencer sketches did not all fit a vaudeville model equally well nudged the generic landscape of early phonography in two opposing directions. On one hand, Victor avoided “vaudeville” in its categorization of all Jones and Spencer sketches, tending instead to identify them as “descriptive specialties,”<sup>261</sup> or occasionally as something more specific, such as a “Hebrew specialty” or “‘coon’ specialty,”<sup>262</sup> and Edison and Columbia also avoided referencing vaudeville in some of the more problematic cases.<sup>263</sup> On the other hand, the initial association of Jones and Spencer sketches with vaudeville also encouraged a broadening of the “vaudeville” genre in phonography to encompass the team’s other work and, by extension, nearly all forms of audio theater developed up to that time. In effect, Jones and Spencer had set a precedent by which the designation “vaudeville” could be applied to any kind of phonographic “scene,” regardless of whether or not it sought to represent or exploit any actual conventions specific to the

vaudeville theater. One telling manifestation of the new, broader view of phonographic “vaudeville” was the formation in 1907 of a group known as the “Victor Vaudeville Company” or “Edison Vaudeville Company” to phonogenize comic routines under such titles as *MRS. CLANCY AND THE STREET MUSICIANS*, *AT THE VILLAGE POST OFFICE*, and *AN EVENING AT MRS. CLANCEY’S BOARDING HOUSE*. In these routines, we hear nothing but the sounds we would theoretically have heard on a New York City street, at a post office, or in a boarding house: conversation, diegetic music and sound effects.<sup>264</sup> The phonograms themselves do not differ formally from earlier cases of audio theater that had not been explicitly linked to vaudeville, such as quartet descriptives or a popular series of “rube” sketches by Byron G. Harlan and Frank Stanley.<sup>265</sup> By this time, then, vaudeville had ceased to be merely a subject of audio theater and had instead become a point of reference for conceptualizing phonographic audio theater itself. Apart from the precedent set by Jones and Spencer, another factor contributing to this trend was, I presume, that vaudeville “playlets” were relatively short in comparison to full-length plays and so provided an attractive analog in live performance for the even shorter two-to-four-minute sketches offered in phonography.<sup>266</sup> Vaudeville also had a reputation as an impeccably clean form of entertainment suitable for women and children, another association recording companies may have hoped to invoke. The juxtaposition of phonograms during a home “concert” may itself have invited an analogy with the construction of a varied vaudeville bill. Whatever the cause (something about which I will speculate further in my conclusion), one result of this change was that “vaudeville” lost its former specificity as a generic designation in phonography during the latter half of the 1900s. By 1914, the Columbia catalog had combined most of its comic spoken-word and audio theater offerings (including older classics such as *THE DOG FIGHT*, *CAMP MEETING*, and *BACKYARD CONVERSATION BETWEEN TWO JEALOUS IRISH WASHERWOMEN*) into a section headed “Vaudeville Specialties, etc.”<sup>267</sup> While the “etc.” acknowledges that some of the items in the list might not correspond to vaudeville acts, the implication is that the vaudeville act is still to be understood as the best exemplar of the audio theater category as a whole.

It should be apparent that the formal connection of many “vaudeville” records of the late 1900s to live vaudeville will be tenuous at best, and that we would seek among them in vain for even such common features and techniques as we found in the first “vaudeville specialties” of 1900. However, some later phonograms displayed a closer connection to the specific practices of vaudeville than others, and we do continue to find new efforts to represent vaudeville acts *recognizably as vaudeville acts*, i.e., with aural cues anchoring them to a vaudeville setting. As noted earlier, VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY was mostly abandoned as a phonogram title after 1901, but an important exception was a series of Edison cylinders introduced in 1903 by Julian Rose, a “Hebrew” dialect comedian, each of which was entitled HEBREW VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY and consisted of a comic monolog followed by a topically unrelated parody on a popular song.<sup>268</sup> In the first of these phonograms, Rose makes little effort to establish a context for his act, merely bridging its two halves with the announcement: “Hey, I’m gonna tell you ’bout Mrs. Rosenstein.”<sup>269</sup> When Rose returned to the recording laboratory in 1905 after a hiatus from phonography, however, the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* announced that, in place of the earlier piano accompaniments, Rose’s latest work was “accompanied by orchestra, which enhances the realism of the vaudeville specialty greatly and makes of the Record, ‘A regular little theatre.’”<sup>270</sup> The National Phonograph Company had by this time made a policy of replacing piano accompaniments *in general* with orchestra accompaniments, but in this case it associated the change specifically with greater “realism,” apparently on the grounds that real vaudeville theaters featured orchestra rather than piano accompaniment. Rose also interjects directions to an accompanist into his later phonograms, such as “Stop the moosic, Mister Professor, stop the moosic!” after an initial melody and “Say, Mister Professor, will you fiddle me up a few notes, please?” before a song parody.<sup>271</sup> Collectively, this evidence suggests that Rose and his associates in the recording laboratory were actively attempting to make their phonograms “realistic” as representations of performances in vaudeville theaters. Unlike the “vaudeville specialties” of 1900, however, none of the Julian Rose cylinders I have surveyed contains any simulated applause or laughter. The HEBREW VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY, like the standard musical phonogram and like most

Jones and Spencer sketches, seeks to represent only the sounds made by the performers in the front of the theater, not the sounds of the performance event as an interactive whole. This formal change exposes a deeper shift in mode relative to the earlier “vaudeville specialties.” According to the catalog description quoted above, the HEBREW VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY was not supposed to facilitate eavesdropping on a vaudeville performance, as before, but to *be* a “regular little theatre” in its own right, one occupied not by an imaginary audience whose response could be simulated, but by a real one comprised of phonographic listeners. At the same time, the vaudeville act retained much of its original contextual baggage; we cannot say that it was simply “relocated” to its context of education—say, a domestic parlor. Rather, the parlor was supposed to *become*, temporarily, the vaudeville theater, and its occupants the vaudeville audience.

The same approach to the phonographic representation of vaudeville was later taken up and developed further by Steve Porter. Porter had been out of the United States for much of the 1900s working as a recordist in England and India, but by 1906 he was back again,<sup>272</sup> collaborating with his wife Emma Forbes and Len Spencer on a few phonograms of audio theater without any audible traces of a vaudeville setting, although some of them were still categorized as “vaudeville sketches.”<sup>273</sup> That September, Edison released another Porter and Spencer selection, this one structured recognizably as a vaudeville song-and-dance act. TWO JOLLY IRISHMEN opens with a song addressed to the audience (“Sure we’re Pat and Mike McGee, two jolly Irishmen, you see”) accompanied by orchestra and “clogs” to imply dancing, continues with a “witty dialogue between two Irishmen,” and closes with another song with orchestra accompaniment. Like Julian Rose’s phonograms, it also lacks any simulated audience response such as applause, laughter, or cheering.<sup>274</sup> Building on the format of TWO JOLLY IRISHMEN, Porter went on to produce a series of phonograms that referenced and engaged an assumed vaudeville setting even more intensely, beginning roughly where Julian Rose had left off. The first was FLANAGAN’S TROUBLES IN A RESTAURANT, described in the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* as “an Irish monologue, with a vaudeville stage for a setting”<sup>275</sup> and on the cylinder rim as a “VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY”:

**ANNOUNCER:** Flanagan’s Troubles in a Restaurant,  
by Steve Porter, Edison Record.  
[*Orchestra begins playing musical accompaniment.*]  
**PORTER:** [*singing*] If you’ll listen for a week or two I won’t detain you long.  
[*Orchestra “flubs” and cuts off.*]  
Here, here, here, professor, don’t do it if it hurts ya.  
After that, I’ll not sing it, I’ll tell it—well, sir,  
I went into a restaurant the other day, the waiter brought me in a plate o’ soup....//  
All right, professor, pass the condensed milk.  
[*Orchestra plays accompaniment for Porter’s concluding song.*]<sup>276</sup>

Flanagan begins to sing about his experiences in a restaurant but, when the orchestra accompanying him pretends to run into difficulties, he informs the “professor” he will tell the story as a monolog instead. Later, he cues the “professor” to begin the music for his concluding song with a nonliteral command related to the topic of his talk, much like Arthur Collins’ earlier “pick up that dice-box thar, professor.” In some of Porter’s subsequent routines, the “professor” becomes an actual speaking part:<sup>277</sup>

**ANNOUNCER:** Flanagan’s Mother-in-Law, by Steve Porter, Edison Record.  
[*Orchestra begins, repeats first bar of song several times:*]  
**PROFESSOR:** Well, c’mon, Flanagan, what’s the matter?  
**FLANAGAN:** Hello, professor!  
Excuse me, audience. [*Sings song about moving house to orchestra accompaniment.*]  
**PROFESSOR:** What’s the matter, are you gonna move?  
**FLANAGAN:** Yes, the neighbors complained that I’m maintainin’ a nuisance.  
**PROFESSOR:** What is it, a dog?  
**FLANAGAN:** Worse ’n that, it’s me mother-in-law! Oh, say, professor, you ought t’ see ’er....//  
All right, professor, hand me the boxin’ gloves.  
[*Orchestra plays accompaniment for Porter’s concluding song.*]<sup>278</sup>

This time “Flanagan” misses his cue for the opening song, so the “professor” has to prompt him, another contrived mistake that was presumably felt to add to the realism and humor of the piece as a representation of the happenings in a vaudeville theater. Next, the “professor” initiates a brief dialog with “Flanagan,” providing a smooth transition into the comic monolog that forms the majority of the phonogram.

In FLANAGAN’S TROUBLES IN A RESTAURANT and FLANAGAN’S MOTHER-IN-LAW, Porter’s comic monologs “work” independently of the vaudeville framework—thus, beginning with the line “I went into a restaurant the other day, the waiter brought me in a plate o’ soup,” the monolog in FLANAGAN’S TROUBLES IN A RESTAURANT does not refer back to the vaudeville setting or require it in order to make sense. Although Porter must have believed the framing enhanced the monolog in some way, the monolog would also have been comprehensible on its own,

delivered in isolation. In some of Porter's other phonograms, however, the body of the "act" relies more heavily for its effect on the vaudeville framework constructed around it. A couple of examples will illustrate this point. From the very beginnings of phonography, single performers had phonogenized "dialogs" or "conversations" by alternating between two or more contrastive voices, a practice that, as we have seen, can already be documented in the tinfoil phonograph exhibitions of 1878 and had been employed in commercial phonography by the early 1890s in the work of Dan Kelly and Russell Hunting. Steve Porter was likewise a master of this technique, which he used extensively in phonographic audio theater. Descriptions of his phonograms sometimes pointed out his virtuosity in this art while simultaneously acknowledging that the phonographic medium concealed the illusion: "His imitation of three voices is so clever that it is hard to believe three different persons are not carrying on the dialogue."<sup>279</sup> Indeed, the more successful Porter was in effecting the illusion, the less likely casual listeners were to detect it or appreciate its ingenuity. In a couple of cases, however, Porter uses a simulated vaudeville setting to present feats of this kind as live acts by a single performer, foregrounding rather than hiding the impressive detail that one person is voicing multiple parts. The first of these was Porter's SIDEWALK CONVERSATION:

In this Record Mr. Porter gives a clever imitation of the vaudeville artist whose partner has gone back on him and he is left to talk the parts of both Mac and Reilly. Mac has a high voice and Reilly a low one. They indulge in one of those exchanges of pleasantries at each other's expense so familiar on the vaudeville stage, and which must be followed every second to catch all the funny things said.<sup>280</sup>

The premise here is that a vaudeville performer, "Mac," needs to speak both parts of a comic dialog onstage because his partner, "Reilly," has failed to show up. Within this artfully contrived scenario, the fictional "Mac" is supposed to be displaying the very skill that Porter himself actually displayed in the recording laboratory—thus, a performance technique that had ordinarily been relegated to the phonogenic backstage is instead represented openly as a live stage act. Some listeners may have evaluated Porter's other phonograms similarly, as products of a skill akin to ventriloquism, but SIDEWALK CONVERSATION broke new ground in that it was designed to invite such evaluation in terms of the fictional world of the phonogram itself. A follow-up



selection, *THE LAUGHING SPECTATOR*, starts with the same premise but adds a new twist:

Did you ever go to a vaudeville performance when the jokes of the “sidewalk conversationalists” were greeted by one of those billy goat laughs from a spectator that in five minutes had the remainder of the house in an uproar? This Record is a life-like duplication of such a scene. Mr. Porter again talks the dual part of Mac and Reilly, Mr. Meeker does the laughing spectator and various members of our Recording Department staff add to the realism.<sup>281</sup>

This time, because the humor depends in part on an audience member’s peculiar laugh, the phonogram has to shift back into the descriptive mode so that we can once more hear the responses of an imaginary audience as in the first “vaudeville specialties” of 1900-1:

*[Introductory music by orchestra.]*

**PROFESSOR:** Say, Mac, where’s your partner?

**MAC:** Why, uh, he’s not here, but say, professor, after I get through you’ll never miss ’im, listen.

**REILLY:** Hello, Mac!

**MAC:** How are ya, Reilly?

**REILLY:** I’m on time, ain’t I?

**MAC:** Yes, you’re early of late, you used to be behind before, but I see you’re first at last. *[group laughter]=*

**REILLY:** Say, what’s the matter, Mac, you look upset!

**MAC:** I *am* upset, my bank busted and I lost me balance! *[group laughter]=*

**REILLY:** Say, Mac, where’re you goin’ for the summer?

**MAC:** I’m not *goin’* for it, I’m gonna wait till it comes here. *[group laughter, including “billy goat” laugh]=*

**REILLY:** What’s that, what’s that?

**MAC:** Where were you last week?

**REILLY:** I was down at Coney Island.

**MAC:** How did you find the water?

**REILLY:** I found it easy, it was all around the island. *[group laughter, including “billy goat” laugh]=*

What is that, a man or a goat? *[roars of group laughter]....*<sup>282</sup>

In *SIDEWALK CONVERSATION* and *THE LAUGHING SPECTATOR*, Porter does not simply insert a random “act” into the context of vaudeville. Rather, the “act” plays off and builds upon specific exigencies of its imaginary setting: the failure of the performer’s partner to show up, the presence of an audience member with a peculiar laugh.

These last two selections also strike an interesting balance between illusion and phonogenic authenticity—i.e., the principle that a phonogram is really a “record” of the subject it purports to represent. The dialog between “Reilly” and “Mac” is impressive mainly for the unusual and challenging way in which it is supposed to have been produced, and yet the phonographic listener has no means of verifying aurally that the two parts had not simply been voiced by two different performers in

the recording laboratory. Although the vaudeville “scene” itself is an illusion not meant to correspond in a literal way to what actually took place in front of the recording horn, the appeal of both phonograms still depends in part on the listener accepting the claim that the voices of “Reilly” and “Mac” are truly the work of a virtuosic solo performer, and that *this* aspect of the scene, at least, is *not* an illusion but a product of real mimetic skill.

A similar set of issues arose in connection with another audicular stunt that, like Porter’s “dialogs,” was valued not so much for the sounds it produced as for the fact that a single person was producing them. One of the performers Len Spencer recruited for the recording industry was the Great Mozarto, “the only instrumental duettist,”<sup>283</sup> known in vaudeville for performing on combinations of two instruments at once. The appeal of Mozarto’s act ordinarily depended on an audience’s ability to see him onstage and thereby to recognize that the “duets” were the work of a single person. In recorded form, of course, it was impossible to distinguish a “duet” played by a single performer from one played by two performers, so translating Mozarto’s art meaningfully into the phonographic medium posed an interesting challenge. He was first called upon to contribute the musical effects in *SI AND SIS, THE MUSICAL SPOONS*, a sketch of early 1908 in which Len Spencer and Ada Jones provide the dialog:

Si and Sis are typical down East lovers. They engage in a series of “swops,” or exchange of compliments, and Si convinces Sis that he is a musical prodigy. He plays on two clarinets at one time, giving an imitation of bagpipes; on a violin with one string, and on two ocarinas at one time. The musical features are played by Mozart[o], the playing of two clarinets at one time and of two ocarinas in unison being an unusual “stunt.” This vaudeville sketch is original and not published.<sup>284</sup>

Here the sketch serves as a kind of substitute for the vaudeville audience’s ability to see Mozarto in the act of performance. “Si” (Len Spencer) is represented as playing on pairs of clarinets and ocarinas to impress “Sis” (Ada Jones), so the fictional world of the phonogram and Mozarto’s unusual performance techniques coincide. The music is framed as the work of a virtuosic “instrumental duettist,” which it in fact is, although the listener attributes the performances to a character voiced by Spencer, or perhaps to a corresponding actor on an imagined vaudeville stage, rather than to Mozarto himself. Still, apart from the catalog description, the listener has no way of

verifying that the “duets” were really enacted by a single performer in phonogenization and are not merely illusions contrived to sustain the fictional scene, artful reframings of music actually phonogenized by two different performers.

Indeed, Jim Walsh expressed skepticism about the origin of these “duets” years later:

Len introduced a new partner, one “Mozarto,” who had, or was represented to have, the unusual ability to play two musical instruments at once. “Mozarto” might easily have been a figment of Len’s imagination—[former Columbia executive] Frank Dorian could not recall him and said he suspected that he was—but he was represented by Victor and Edison to be a noted European music hall performer, so perhaps he actually existed.<sup>285</sup>

When the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* introduced a follow-up piece credited to Spencer and Mozarto, KRAUSMEYER’S BIRTHDAY PARTY, it again emphasized the ingenious ways in which the musical selections had been performed in the recording laboratory while at the same time acknowledging that these details could not be ascertained from listening alone:

Although humorous in itself this vaudeville sketch is more noteworthy for the clever instrumental selections by Mozarto, a well known vaudeville artist. These include a one-string violin playing an Hungarian Rhapsody, a one-string violin and an ocarina playing a selection from “Faust,” and a clarinet duet. Mozarto actually plays all the instrumental features. In the violin and ocarina duet the ocarina is played by means of a rubber tube leading from his mouth to the ocarina, which is fastened to the violin. He plays the two clarinets at the same time, one in each side of his mouth. *These facts will give added interest to the Record.*<sup>286</sup>

Later in 1908, Spencer and Mozarto collaborated on a third and final phonogram, SIM AND SAM, THE MUSICAL COONS, which the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* described as follows:

A racy vaudeville sketch. Sim and Sam are a pair of vivacious coons who get back at one another with a lot of witty ragtime repartee leading up to some clever musical stunts. The latter are done by Mozarto, the European vaudeville performer, who was tempted to visit America by the large salaries paid here to artists in his line. He plays about every type of instrument, his strong point being taking them two-at-a-time. We are treated to a saxophone [sic] duet, “Sycamore Tree”; to “Suwanee River” on a one-string violin and ocarina, and to a clarinet duet, “Jamaica Two-Step,” Mozarto being the sole performer in all three duets. As good as it’s novel. Not published.<sup>287</sup>

Victor called the same piece SIM AND SAM, A COMEDY MUSICAL ACT and identified it generically on the label as a “musical specialty” without explicitly drawing any connections with vaudeville, but both Victor and Edison simulated applause and other forms of audience response as part of the program, marking it as a descriptive-mode representation of a stage performance:

**ANNOUNCER:** Sim and Sam, the Musical Coons,  
by Len Spencer and Mozarto, Edison Record.  
[Introductory instrumental by orchestra with trombone slide.]

**SAM:** Say, Sim, what's the matter with the orchestra, it sounds loose.  
**SIM:** The orchestra's all right, you goin' to work, nigger?  
**SAM:** No, I'm gonna *play*.  
**SIM:** What can *you* play?  
**SAM:** Nothin', but I'm willin' to try.  
**SIM:** Well, try this saxophone.  
**SAM:** Which end do you talk in?  
**SIM:** You don't talk in it, Sam, you blow.  
**SAM:** Good-bye.  
**SIM:** Where you goin'?  
**SAM:** You told me to blow and I'm on my way, I'm goin'.  
**SIM:** Aw, wait a minute, I want you to help me play "The Sycamore Tree."  
**SAM:** Sycamore?  
 Sic 'em!  
 [*Saxophone duet, "By the Sycamore Tree," with orchestra accompaniment. The Edison version transcribed here ends cold; the Victor version has applause and cheering.*]  
**SIM:** Play on this.  
**SAM:** What's that?  
**SIM:** It's an ocarina, a little instrument made of clay.  
**SAM:** I ain't no clay eater.  
**SIM:** G'wan, I'll play with you on the fiddle.  
**SAM:** Say, that fiddle ain't got but one string.  
**SIM:** Well don't you know, nigger, a smart man never has but one string to his bow?  
**SAM:** All right, *beau*. Let 'er go.  
 [*"Old Folks at Home" on violin and ocarina with orchestra accompaniment, applause and whistling at end in the Edison version, applause and cheering on Victor, overlapping the following dialog:*]  
**SAM:** They seem to like it, let's play again.  
**SIM:** No! [*On Victor, Sim instead says "I don't know 'Again.'"*]  
 Let's play—Jamaica Two-Step, that's hot stuff!  
 [*Clarinet duet, "Jamaica Two-Step," with orchestra accompaniment. Edison version ends cold; Victor version with applause and cheering.*]<sup>288</sup>

Len Spencer recognizably speaks the part of "Sim," while "Sam" is voiced either by Mozarto or by Spencer himself at a contrastive higher pitch—I suspect the latter, unless the "European" Mozarto had acquired or was adept at mimicking an American accent. Either way, Mozarto's "duets" are explicitly represented in the sketch as performances by *two* people: Sim plays on the fiddle while Sam plays the ocarina; Sam plays only "this saxophone," not two saxophones; and the two characters play together ("*let's play*") on the concluding song. The fact that the circumstances of the musical performance in the recording laboratory did not coincide with those of the fictional scene was, in itself, not particularly unusual. Consider a parallel case, a Columbia ten-inch disc take of THE ARKANSAW TRAVELER announced as "by Spencer and Schweinfest," i.e., Harry Spencer as a spoken-word artist and George Schweinfest as a musician. This phonogram embodies a well-known routine in which an Arkansas squatter responds to each of a traveler's questions by giving a witty but

uninformative reply and repeating the first part of the fiddle tune “Arkansas Traveler.” After presenting a number of these exchanges, the phonogram concludes as follows:

**TRAVELER:** Say, I noticed a hole in the roof of your house.

Why don't you get it fixed?

**SQUATTER:** 'Cause it's been a-rainin' lately.

**TRAVELER:** Yes, but why don't you get it fixed when it's *not* raining?

**SQUATTER:** 'Cause when it don't rain, it don't leak, aw haw-haw-haw! [*Fiddling resumes with first segment of “Arkansas Traveler,” interrupted:*]

**TRAVELER:** Well, for pity's sake, play the rest of that tune!

**SQUATTER:** Well I just reckon there's no man livin' smart enough to do that!

**TRAVELER:** Oh, yes there is, I can if you'll let me.

Ah, thank ya. [*Conclusion of “Arkansas Traveler” on fiddle.*]

**SQUATTER:** By gowder, stranger, you're the smartest man a-livin', come right in, aw haw-haw-haw-haw!<sup>289</sup>

In the recording laboratory, Harry Spencer would have phonogenized both spoken parts in contrastive voices while Schweinfest played the fiddle,<sup>290</sup> but during education the listener instead interprets the two voices as belonging to two different people and accepts that the fiddle has changed hands within the fictional setting in response to the traveler's request. A similar illusion occurs in SIM AND SAM: through artifice, a performance by a single musician becomes a performance by two characters in a fictional sketch. In that case, however, the imaginary scene sustained by the phonogram actually serves to *contradict* the most impressive aspect of Mozarto's “duet” performances in the recording laboratory, the fact that he is playing on pairs of two instruments at once. For each of the three phonograms in which Mozarto participated, the published description stressed his quirky performance techniques on the expectation that this information would “give added interest to the Record,” just as descriptions of Porter's phonograms sometimes commented on the fact that he had voiced multiple characters. Sometimes the fictional world of a Mozarto phonogram reinforces this message, as in SI AND SIS, THE MUSICAL SPOONS, which represents “Si” as performing the same feats of “instrumental duettism” that had made Mozarto's act so impressive in vaudeville, just as the framework of SIDEWALK CONVERSATION and THE LAUGHING SPECTATOR is contrived to draw attention to the virtuosity of Steve Porter's solo “dialogs.” In SIM AND SAM, however, Mozarto's “instrumental duettism” is outwardly concealed, relegated to the phonogenic backstage, exploited simply as a convenient means of producing the effect of two

musicians in the recording laboratory, much as when Porter voiced two or three of the parts for a standard piece of audio theater like *BACKYARD CONVERSATION BETWEEN TWO JEALOUS IRISH WASHERWOMEN*. Mozarto's case nicely illustrates the complexity of the relationships that could emerge in phonography between virtuosic performance practices, skilful phonogenic techniques, and the audicular "performances" represented in phonograms.

We have still not exhausted the full diversity of framings that can be identified in early phonography around minstrelsy and vaudeville. In 1902, Byron G. Harlan and Frank Stanley produced *TWO RUBES AT THE VAUDEVILLE*, an elaborate sketch in which two "rubes" attend a vaudeville show, disrupt it with their loud talking, and finally take the stage themselves. This was advertised as a "descriptive selection introducing a scene at a vaudeville theatre,"<sup>291</sup> not as a "vaudeville specialty," probably on the grounds that its subject has a vaudeville act for a backdrop but is not delimited by it in the ordinary way. In 1904, Len Spencer and Parke Hunter phonogenized a routine called *THE SQUASHTOWN AMATEUR MINSTRELS*,<sup>292</sup> a representation of a minstrel show meant to be relished for its bungling amateurism. Three years later, the Edison Vaudeville Company produced a phonogram entitled *AN AMATEUR MINSTREL REHEARSAL*—that is, a representation of a *vaudeville* act depicting a *rehearsal* for an amateur minstrel show.<sup>293</sup> Even if we exclude these cases from consideration as atypical, it is apparent that the translation of minstrelsy and vaudeville into the phonographic medium was no simple affair.

\* \* \* \* \*

The routines of Len Spencer, Ada Jones, Julian Rose, Steve Porter and Mozarto have received little scholarly attention in the past,<sup>294</sup> but the same is not true of the later phonograms of Billy Golden, which are the earliest corpus of material (1908-22) analyzed by Robert Cogswell in his important dissertation, *Jokes in Blackface*. Cogswell rightly identifies Golden's work of this period as the first major body of comic "black" dialect dialogs in a coherent tradition of mediated audio theater most often associated today with "Amos 'n' Andy." *Jokes in Blackface* does an admirable job of identifying traditional elements in Golden's routines and also

acknowledges their debt to precedents minstrelsy and vaudeville had set for simulating the social contexts of informal joking in a theatrical setting.<sup>295</sup> Because this corpus has already received some serious interest and scrutiny, it will be particularly worthwhile for us to assess its place within the developments I have been treating here—that is, to consider how it compares specifically with other efforts to represent minstrelsy and vaudeville in early phonography. This examination is intended to complement rather than challenge Cogswell’s insights, which center primarily on the ways in which informal jocular traditions were represented *through* minstrelsy and vaudeville in phonography, and not on the transition from live to phonographic representation as such. However, I do believe both issues must be addressed before we can feel confident about our understanding of this important body of material.

I have already described Billy Golden’s career in both vaudeville and phonography up through the late 1890s, so let us pick up his story at the turn of the century. A new “Golden Trio” consisting of Billy, his wife May, and his daughter-in-law Daisy performed a live blackface routine in vaudeville as late as August 1900,<sup>296</sup> but about that time Billy left the stage to open the Hotel Golden, “a fine corner hotel and restaurant in Washington, D. C., opposite the U. S. Money Order Department” at Eighth and E Streets Northwest in which it was said “guests will receive a hearty welcome from the genial ‘Bill,’ his wife and daughter ‘Daisy,’ all of whom are well known to patrons of the stage.”<sup>297</sup> However, his retirement did not end up running smoothly.<sup>298</sup> In October 1902, just after Daisy had married a local baseball player and moved out of the hotel,<sup>299</sup> Billy petitioned to dissolve the partnership he and May had as the hotel’s joint proprietors, claiming she had “several times interfered in the proper management of the place,”<sup>300</sup> and three days later he sued her for divorce on grounds of infidelity.<sup>301</sup> A month after that, the couple’s differences erupted in a scandalous episode which the *Washington Post* reported in sensational detail. May and Daisy were out riding in a carriage when May spotted Billy in a coupe “engaged in an earnest conversation” with a younger woman. When May instigated a chase, the woman jumped out of the coupe and tried to flee on foot, but Mary pursued her through a stableyard, over a fence and into a restaurant, finally dragging her from a

hiding place under a table into the street, where she attacked her with a horsewhip until Billy physically restrained her and the police intervened, arresting both women for disorderly conduct.<sup>302</sup> Over the next week, Mary trailed Billy and the same woman—whose name turned out to be Blanche Parker—from Washington to Alexandria and back,<sup>303</sup> and the following April she filed her own suit for divorce, again on grounds of infidelity.<sup>304</sup> The exact details of what followed are unclear, but the Hotel Golden was sold off,<sup>305</sup> and Billy eventually ended up marrying Blanche.<sup>306</sup> The upshot of all this was that Billy was forced to come out of retirement, resuming his career as a live entertainer and phonogenic performer. His first wife and daughter-in-law were no longer available as partners, of course, so in the fall of 1904 he instead teamed up with the established “blackface” performer Joe Hughes (born Joseph C. Sovey).<sup>307</sup> This was the first time since the mid-1880s that Billy Golden had appeared onstage as one half of a male “blackface” team, and it was also the first of his stage partnerships to be capable of entering the recording laboratory without needing to shed or replace phonogenically unsuitable female members.

Before inviting Hughes to join him in front of the recording horn, Golden first reintroduced himself in 1906 with a new solo selection entitled *SISSERETTA’S VISIT TO THE NORTH*, described by Edison’s National Phonograph Company as “the first Record that Mr. Golden has made for our catalogue in some time. He comes back with renewed vigor and makes this vaudeville specialty perhaps better than anything he has previously done. This Record is a combination of talking, laughing and singing.”<sup>308</sup> Structurally, this piece resembles Julian Rose’s vaudeville sketches and Steve Porter’s Flanagan routines:

*[Opening orchestra music with clogs and laughter by Golden]*  
Now, white folks, that we’re all here bunched together,  
I’m gwine to tell you about Sisseretta’s visit to the North.  
~~That~~ Sisseretta was so doggoned big that she looked like a round-house. *[laughs]*  
Sis, did you have any trouble gettin’ here?  
**SISSERETTA:** Trouble? Mm-hmm.  
I come here b’ rail....

Golden begins by assuming the persona of a blackface performer addressing a vaudeville audience of “white folks” and then, after introducing what he is going to “tell” them about, switches into a simulated conversation mode in which he speaks both parts, that of Sisseretta and that of her straight interlocutor, albeit with no clear



contrast between the two voices. He closes the dialog with a shout of “Let ’er go professor,” and the selection concludes with him singing “Scandalize My Name” to an orchestral accompaniment with clogs and laughter, implying a dance onstage. There is no synthetic applause from an imaginary audience.<sup>309</sup> Along with being the most extensive “wench” impersonation in Golden’s recorded repertoire, *SISSERETTA’S VISIT TO THE NORTH* thus shows an effort to conform to the latest conventions for representing vaudeville in phonography.

Golden and Hughes began their joint phonographic career in late 1908 with a piece called *THE SHIPMATES*, recorded in rapid succession by Columbia, Edison, and Victor. The *Edison Phonograph Monthly* promoted the selection as follows: “An original sketch in which this well-known team have made a great success on the vaudeville stage. With it they have entertained thousands from the Atlantic to the Pacific.... The first half of the Record is taken up with a dialogue, in which nautical terms are used in a most original manner. Then follows the singing of a series of funny verses, with some good yodling by Mr. Hughes.”<sup>310</sup> Subsequent Edison releases were likewise described as adaptations of specific sketches Golden and Hughes had introduced on the vaudeville stage:

A screaming vaudeville sketch, given on our Record just as it is presented nightly on the stage by these vaudeville artists.<sup>311</sup>

Another of the sketches with which Golden and Hughes are making such a hit in vaudeville.<sup>312</sup>

A vaudeville sketch that is a scream. It is one of several that Golden & Hughes are using in vaudeville, and it is even more funny on our Record than on the stage.<sup>313</sup>

Hardly any information is available on Golden and Hughes’ live appearances, and the only title I have found cited for one of their song-and-dance sketches is “Siseretta’s [sic] Visit to the North,”<sup>314</sup> corresponding to a routine Golden had performed *solo* for the phonograph. It is unclear at present whether each of the Golden and Hughes phonograms contains an abridged version of an entire vaudeville “turn” or whether their “turn” was instead a composite of shorter segments like the ones found on the phonograms. Either way, the phonograms are plainly conceived as representations of material introduced within the framework of a vaudeville show rather than a minstrel show; they are “vaudeville” records, not “minstrel” records. As we have seen, however, “vaudeville” records varied greatly in structure, mode, and framing, so we

must still ask which, if any, of the several existing models the work of Golden and Hughes follows. Since SHIPMATES appears to have been the first Golden and Hughes routine recorded, and one of perhaps two recorded before the end of my 1908 cut-off year, I will focus my attention here on that one selection, which I find to be sufficiently representative of their work as a whole for my purposes (for further examples, I refer the reader to Cogswell's exhaustive survey of their whole repertoire, including transcriptions).<sup>315</sup> The following is taken from a twelve-inch Columbia disc:

[*"Sailor's Hornpipe" as whistling duet with piano accompaniment.*]

**HUGHES:** So you're the man wants to work on my boat?

**GOLDEN:** Yes indeed, I used to work on a boat.

**HUGHES:** What did you do on a boat?

**GOLDEN:** Why, I was a *janitor* on a boat.

**HUGHES:** *Janitor* on a boat?

I've never heard of a janitor on a boat, I've heard of janitors in flats.

**GOLDEN:** Well, this here was a *flat boat*. [*laughs*]

**HUGHES:** Now here, s'pose you was away out in the ocean,

you was on board a man-o'-war,

a great big storm was to come up,

if you should lose your midmast,

how would you go to wind up the larboard watch?

**GOLDEN:** [*laughs*] I never had nothin' but an Ingersoll watch in my life! [*laughs*], Lord!

**HUGHES:** You don't know nothing about a ship.

**GOLDEN:** Who don't?

**HUGHES:** *You* don't.

**GOLDEN:** Say, look here, captain.

S'posin' you was way out in the river,

and the—water was wet,

and the boat was a-pitchin',

and the captain was itchin',

and the second mate was three sheets in the wind,

and she was to lose her mainstay,

how would you go to work to find out which way her course sets [=corsets]?

**HUGHES:** Who ever heard of a ship wearin' corsets?

**GOLDEN:** Well, this here was a female boat. [*laughs*], Lord!

**HUGHES:** S'pose it's a dark, calm, moonlight night—

**GOLDEN:** Who ever heard of a dark, calm, moonlight night?

**HUGHES:** And the wind was a-blowin'—

**GOLDEN:** Oooo!

**HUGHES:** And the snow it was snowin'—

**GOLDEN:** [*shivery*] Oooooo!

**HUGHES:** And she was running around the curve mighty fast.

**GOLDEN:** Oh, Lord [*laugh*].

**HUGHES:** All of a sudden her flagstaff got avast the binnacle.

**GOLDEN:** Yes.

**HUGHES:** The wind blew the forty-gallon tar apart up in the jib-boom.

**GOLDEN:** Oo, Lord.

**HUGHES:** The cook jumped overboard.

**GOLDEN:** Mm.

**HUGHES:** She ran up into a cornfield.  
How would you go to unhitch her rudder  
without interferin' with her skyscraper?  
**GOLDEN:** Why, I'd let the wind blow through her hobengegen. [*laughs*]  
**HUGHES:** What's a hobengegen on a steamboat?  
**GOLDEN:** That's a pimple on an anchor. [*laughs*], Lord!  
Say, s'posin' you were out on the river,  
and you was on the deck of a boat,  
and her bulwark was washed overboard,  
how would you go to work to get beefsteak for breakfast in the mornin', huh?  
**HUGHES:** I'd go down, get a slice off the steerage.  
**GOLDEN:** Mm-hmm.  
**HUGHES:** S'posin' you want eggs for breakfast in the mornin',  
'n the captain orders the ship to lay to [=two].  
How would you get 'em without running up an egg harbor?  
**GOLDEN:** I'd go down in the hatchway! [*laugh*], Lord!  
**HUGHES:** You talk like an old woman!  
**GOLDEN:** Who, Hetty Green?  
**HUGHES:** Well, she's a *smart* woman—but we have other smart women.  
Why, we have women lawyers—women doctors—women dentists—women detectives—women  
stenographers, bookkeepers, politicians,  
in fact the women can do everything—and anything.  
**GOLDEN:** And anybody. [*laugh*] Say, look here, captain.  
You may have women lawyers,  
women doctors,  
women dentists,  
women stenographers, women detectives, women reporters, women policemen,  
and women this and women that and women presidents,  
but there's one thing in this wide world  
that a woman never kin be.  
**HUGHES:** What's that?  
**GOLDEN:** The father of a large family. [*Laughs over piano introduction for closing yodel song with  
lyrics in German.*]<sup>316</sup>

Let us begin by considering Cogswell's approach to this particular sketch. For the most part, its core fits his observation about the Golden and Hughes routines in general: "Rather than action, most of the skits consisted of conversation.... Most of the dialogues supposedly took place during chance encounters between the characters, and they commenced with some sort of greeting which identified the speakers and moved quickly into the conversation."<sup>317</sup> In *SHIPMATES*, the opening lines establish that Hughes' character is the captain of a boat on which Golden's character is applying for work, so this is not entirely a chance encounter, but in form it still resembles the "sidewalk conversation" of the minstrel show olio and vaudeville. In *Jokes in Blackface*, Cogswell uses *SHIPMATES* mainly as an example of conversational punning, excerpting a segment that starts with the association of beefsteak with *bulwark* (bull) and *steerage* (steer) and ends with the exchange about

the ship “laying to,” i.e., t[w]o eggs. Although Cogswell emphasizes punning as a creative jocular genre rather than one reliant on traditional content, he points out that the specific pun about “laying to” had firm ties to the minstrel show, citing a remark by Mark Twain that it had “achieved disfavor by long service” in that context;<sup>318</sup> in fact, the old-time minstrel Isaac Odell went even further, identifying it in 1907 as “the oldest minstrel joke on record” in preference to “Why does a chicken cross the street?”<sup>319</sup> Cogswell also comments on the nontraditional form of the concluding riddle (which might ordinarily have been posed as “What one thing in this wide world can a woman never be?”), something he sees as a product of scripting that “reflect[s] the artificiality of the stage context.”<sup>320</sup> In general, he uses SHIPMATES to confirm the value of “blackface” dialog phonograms as a source for both specimens of folk humor (as refracted through the lens of vaudeville) and evidence of its formal fluidity (as seen in the restructured riddle). However, little if any of this analysis treats the specific transition from vaudeville to phonography that bridged the gulf between “live” and technologically mediated forms.

What else can we say about SHIPMATES? First, some parts of the dialog itself require clarification because, as in many of the other phonographic routines we have examined, certain references widely understood at the time of recording will be obscure to most listeners today. The watchmaker Robert H. Ingersoll was famous in the 1900s for marketing a reliable one-dollar pocketwatch,<sup>321</sup> so the “Ingersoll watch” as a timepiece would have been readily differentiated from the “larboard watch” as a nautical term. Hetty Green was a wealthy financier, identified by a recent biographer as “America’s first female tycoon,”<sup>322</sup> something we need to recognize in order to follow the logic by which the subject of the dialog changes from nautical expertise to the expanding professional opportunities available to women. When Hughes’ character tells Golden’s character that he talks “like an old woman,” this is plainly meant as an insult, drawing a pejorative connection between the speech style he has been displaying and that of the stereotypical “negro wench”; in fact, Golden’s laughter during the nautical part of SHIPMATES does closely resemble his explicit imitation of the laughter of a “negro wench” in his 1897 collaboration with George Graham, LAUGHING (Berliner 423), as well as his impersonation of Sisseretta in

SISSERETTA'S VISIT TO THE NORTH. Golden's character counters the attack by interpreting "old woman" as an allusion not to the "negro wench" type but to Hetty Green, a woman renowned for her shrewdness and success in the business world. This retort leads in turn into the topical discussion of other "smart women" who, like Hetty Green, were filling roles that had conventionally been reserved for men. As usual, the transcription of such phrases itself depends in part on comprehension. Cogswell, whose interests lie in other aspects of the sketch, quite excusably transcribes "Ingersoll" as "Ingersol" and "Hetty Green" as "Hattie Green"; only after we have identified the most likely contemporary referents, which can often be a frustrating and time-consuming process all out of proportion to the insight it offers, do the "correct" spellings become clear. Nor does the task of transcribing phonograms depend only on our ability to recapture common knowledge that was assumed of audiences contemporaneous with their inscription. I presume many listeners of 1908 would themselves have been ignorant of such terms as *binnacle* and *jib-boom*, capable only of recognizing that they are misused here in nonsensical ways with impossible consequences, such as a boat running into a cornfield like a derailed locomotive. The term *hobengegen*, which Golden's character defines variously as a "pimple" or a "bunion" on an anchor, seems to have been entirely made up. But then, the passages in which these words appear were not *supposed* to make sense; the point was merely to rattle off a string of words resembling sailors' jargon. Thus, although I am fairly confident that I have identified most of the words Golden and Hughes meant to phonogenize in the recording laboratory, based on multiple listenings to three different takes with a nautical vocabulary sheet in hand, Cogswell's transcriptions "pinnacle," "jibry," and "hobengeben" may just as accurately reflect the hearings of a typical listener in 1908. As the dotted underlining in my own transcription shows, I am still unsure of certain words myself, and of course I may have misheard others. In general, the "text" of SHIPMATES must itself be considered partially unresolved, and its further reconstruction may eventually lead to additional insights, even though the parts that remain a mystery do not seem likely to prove particularly significant. But we must concede that even listeners of 1908 would not have been able to catch every word.

There were, of course, important advantages which compensated for this lexical indeterminacy in the “text” of the phonogram. Like other Golden and Hughes dialogs, SHIPMATES exploits phonography’s unique capacity for representing the aural nuances of spoken language. Some of these features have equivalents in “eye dialect,” which Cogswell uses in his transcriptions more heavily than I have—e.g., “dis hyere was a flat boat” for “this here was a flat boat.” However, some other features Cogswell mentions in connection with Golden’s delivery have no satisfactory analogs in print: “Rhythmic cadences, stuttering, and boisterous exclamations accentuated his bizarre speech. The lines of his partners often induced strange outcries such as a bark-like ‘wo-wo!’ or a guttural ‘aw, gwon!’”<sup>323</sup> In capturing these details, Golden and Hughes’ phonograms appealed to the ear in a way that printed dialect humor could not, embodying the semiotic resources and performance skills of the team’s live acts as far as these were carried in the aural channel. The recording of the grain of the voice, of paralinguistic and prosodic features, of speech “exactly as spoken,” is what makes the dialogs distinctively phonographic, as well as contributing substantially to their affective power. This point cannot be stressed too heavily, if only because neglect of the aural richness of verbal art has encouraged commentators on phonography to assume the technology is and was inherently better suited to music than to speech.

Granted, SHIPMATES does contain music as well as speech, so its appeal was not wholly limited to the dialog. Cogswell does not comment on the musical content of SHIPMATES in particular, but he does state of Golden’s routines more generally that the music “most often appeared as introductory and closing frames” and was a “holdover from minstrelsy.”<sup>324</sup> Its closest analogs can be found in phonographic representations of olio “sidewalk conversations,” including part seven of the Victor *AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS* series, and of certain other vaudeville acts, such as FLANAGAN’S TROUBLES IN A RESTAURANT, which also open and close with music framing a spoken core that occupies a majority of the phonogram. The deployment of music in SHIPMATES is less similar to that encountered in minstrel first part records, which tend to weight their music as heavily as or more heavily than their dialogs in terms of time, titles, and overall emphasis. This structural detail, in itself, further

supports our identification of SHIPMATES as a “vaudeville” record rather than a “minstrel” record. But we should also consider the nature of the music itself. On this point, Cogswell writes of the corpus in general: “In a few cases the songs had a direct connection with the content of the dialogues.... But most of the songs were wholly unrelated to the topics of the spoken routines themselves, and different songs were sometimes used in various recorded versions of the same dialogue.”<sup>325</sup> SHIPMATES provides an example of each of these phenomena. The Columbia version, transcribed above, begins with “Sailor’s Hornpipe” as a whistling duet with piano accompaniment, a piece with an obvious connection to the nautical subject matter of the routine. The Edison and Victor versions contain orchestra rather than piano accompaniment, and while the Edison version likewise uses “Sailor’s Hornpipe” with whistling for its opening music, the Victor version substitutes “Sailing, Sailing, Over the Bounding Main,” another piece with an obvious nautical theme, this time without whistling. Conversely, the concluding yodel song not only breaks with the routine’s subject matter but also drops its “black” dialect in favor of “Dutch” dialect. The song’s lyrics are sung in a mixture of German and English typical of “Dutch” caricature (“Über Berg und Tal runs the Wasserfall...”), and although the Columbia version provides no dialog to signal the transition from “black” to German material, the others do, making the intended “Dutchness” of the yodeling explicit. The Victor version introduces the yodel song as follows:

**HUGHES:** Was you ever in Germany?  
**GOLDEN:** No.  
**HUGHES:** Let’s take a trip through Fatherland.

On the Edison cylinder, the song is likewise framed in terms of a “trip” to Germany:

**HUGHES:** So you like to travel.  
**GOLDEN:** Yes, indeed.  
**HUGHES:** Well, let’s take a trip through Germany.

The Edison version also contains a brief “Dutch” dialog inserted into the yodel song itself, during which Golden says something like “Schlapp’m an d’ Kopf with a Brickstein.”<sup>326</sup> Billy Golden had been incorporating yodeling into his live “blackface” acts since at least the 1890s, as we have seen, and we also know that the use of “Dutch” dialect could override “blackface” as a definitive marker of ethnicity

on the stage. SHIPMATES can thus be recognized as a representation of a “blackface” vaudeville act that does not limit itself to “black” caricature but abruptly switches ethnicities partway through. As in many earlier “vaudeville specialties,” its elements cohere not because of any intrinsic connection they have with each other but because they are conceived as constituent parts of a single, complex “turn” in vaudeville. In a practical sense, the same factors dictated the coincidence of these performance genres in both vaudeville and phonography: Golden and Hughes necessarily built their stage act and their phonograms alike on the finite set of skills they commanded—whistling, repartee in “black” dialect, and yodeling. But it was the live vaudeville act that provided a conceptual model for the phonograms, justifying their combination of otherwise unrelated content into a single unit. On the other hand, Golden and Hughes never explicitly refer in their phonograms to a vaudeville setting; for instance, nobody in SHIPMATES cues the “professor” to strike up a musical accompaniment, the convention Golden follows in SISSERETTA’S VISIT TO THE NORTH. The reason for this omission may be simply that the live acts on which their phonograms were modeled did not include interactions of this kind either, but it nevertheless sets their work apart from phonographic representations of vaudeville that contain more explicit contextual cues. Of course, the instrumental accompaniment does arguably remain as an aural trace of the vaudeville context, diegetic with respect to the theater but extradiegetic with respect to the “scene” in which Golden’s character is applying for a job on a boat.

One of the most aurally distinctive features of Golden’s vocal performances is his laughter, which was singled out for mention in the Victor catalog: “the hearer forgets all about Golden and hears only a jolly old darky with an infectious laugh.”<sup>327</sup> Indeed, his 1897 collaboration with George Graham on LAUGHING shows that the imitation of distinctive “laughs” was considered sufficiently entertaining to provide the basis for an entire phonogram in its own right. Cogswell finds the presence of laughter atypical of “blackface” dialogs more broadly and associates it with the traditions of minstrelsy: “In contrast to the deadpan delivery of later blackface teams, each punchline in Golden’s dialogues brought loud guffaws in the manner of the minstrel first part.”<sup>328</sup> In SHIPMATES, Golden’s character laughs at his own jokes, and



in some other routines Hughes joins in the laughter. As we have seen, many minstrel troupes did laugh at their members' jokes onstage, although the practice was not universal, and laughter also featured prominently in "minstrel first part" records. Unlike those records, however, neither SHIPMATES nor any other Golden and Hughes phonogram contains any simulation of the laughter or applause of a vaudeville audience. This characteristic distinguishes Golden and Hughes' work from "vaudeville specialties" of the original descriptive-mode type introduced in 1900 and aligns them more closely with the new model that arose a few years later, in which the simulation of audience response was omitted—e.g., Julian Rose's HEBREW VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY phonograms, Steve Porter's SIDEWALK CONVERSATION and FLANAGAN'S TROUBLES IN A RESTAURANT, Golden's own SISSERETTA'S VISIT TO THE NORTH. Overall we can conclude that, in making their phonograms, Golden and Hughes drew not only on the live traditions of joking, minstrelsy, and vaudeville they sought to represent but also on the emerging conventions of phonographic representation itself.

---

<sup>1</sup> My account is based on the opening sequence described in Dailey Paskman, "*Gentlemen, Be Seated!*" *A Parade of the American Minstrels* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1976), 23-4; on pages 89-91, he mentions both of the variants I am discussing. Another late reference to this style of opening appears in Claude Bragdon, "Variety, Old Style," *New York Times*, July 17, 1932, p. X1: "The upfurled curtain revealed a serried hemicycle of brilliant costumes and blackened faces, the interlocutor as its centre and focus, and, at either end of its periphery, Mr. Tambo and Mr. Bones. After the announcement of the canonical formula, 'Gentlemen, be seated!' the elaborate ritual, made up of 'songs, dances, funny sayings,' ran its course."

<sup>2</sup> In 1895, for instance, the minstrel Billy Van wrote nostalgically: "The 'old time' minstrel performance commenced with the usual first part, which consisted of about 40 men sitting in a semicircle. At each end there were three men who were called bones and tambo, according to the 'instruments' they played. At the rise of the curtain the interlocutor would say, 'Gentlemen, be seated,' then the orchestra would play a galop, which the end men would accompany with bones and tambourine" (Billy Van, "Minstrelsy of Today. It Is Very Different From the Old Time Entertainment," *Fort Wayne News* [Fort Wayne, Indiana], May 3, 1895, p. 3). The forty-member minstrel company was pioneered by J. H. Haverly with his United Mastodon Minstrels in 1877 (Toll, *Blacking Up*, 146), prior to which time troupes had been considerably smaller. Van's comments must therefore refer to the period after this innovation in terms of scale but before other transformations of the mid-1880s, such as the widespread abandonment of blackface and "negro dialect" which he decries in his editorial.

<sup>3</sup> This is the style of opening described in Frank Costello Davidson, *The Rise, Development, Decline and Influence of the American Minstrel Show* (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1952), 106, 236; and in Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 116; and also the style recommended in guidebooks: "Always remember at the rise of the curtain everyone in the company should be standing and at the close of the opening chorus the middle man will instruct you with the remark, 'Gentlemen, be seated'" (Jack Haverly, *Negro Minstrels* [Chicago: Frederick J. Drake & Company, 1902; reprint: Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Literature House, 1969], 6). Jeff Branen and Frederick G. Johnson, *How to Stage a Minstrel Show: A Manual for the Amateur Burnt Cork Director* (Chicago: T. S. Denison & Company,

---

1921), 20-1 suggests that the company should already be singing the opening chorus while the curtain is slowly raised, and some reviews of late nineteenth century minstrel shows indicate that this was then already being done, e.g. “Additional Local,” *Steubenville Daily Herald* (Steubenville, Ohio), Dec. 1, 1888, p. 1; “Were You There?,” *Daily Advocate* (Newark, Ohio), Jan. 28, 1899, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> “Under no circumstances let your first-part run over an hour, and forty-five or fifty minutes will be even better” (Branen and Johnson, *How to Stage a Minstrel Show*, 33). This is a late source, from 1921, but is the only explicit time recommendation I have found.

<sup>5</sup> Toll, *Blacking Up*, 52-6; Paskman, *Gentlemen, Be Seated*, 21-8, 83-8; Davidson, *Rise*, 106-8.

<sup>6</sup> On Sept. 4, 1888, tenor Frederick Oakland of Thatcher, Primrose, and West’s Minstrels visited Edison’s laboratory and phonogenized a number of songs, including “Annie Laurie,” “That Melody Divine,” “Maggie Dear I’m Called Away,” and “When You’ll Remember Me” (“At Edison’s Laboratory,” *Orange Herald*, Sept. 8, 1888 [TAEM 146:329]). A biography for Fred Oakland (Wright) appears in Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 252, noting that he had been “one of the leading tenors of minstrelsy about twenty years ago,” i.e., about 1891, based on a 1911 publication date. Then, on Dec. 19, Lew Dockstader visited in the company of Monroe Rosenfeld to pursue the possibility of creating a “phonograph minstrel show,” and while there he sang “If I Were a Millionaire” and “The Sunday School Scholar” for the phonograph. He and recordist Theo Wangemann even engaged in some minstrel-show dialog: “A new cylinder was adjusted to the phonograph and Mr. Edison’s superintendent, Prof. Wangeman[n], assuming the part of interlocutor, with Dockstader at his old place on the tambo end, they ploughed the shavings off the wax with a lot of bad jokes.” Edison was reported as turning down Dockstader’s proposal for a phonographic minstrel show but “agreeing to come to New York some evening and bottling his whole show with his machine” (“Negro Melodies in Wax,” *New York Evening World*, Dec. 20, 1888 [TAEM 146:329]). A little while earlier, a newspaper had announced a plan by Edison to record tenor Richard José singing “With All Her Faults I Love Her Still,” a Rosenfeld composition, at Dockstader’s Theatre (*New York World*, Dec. 6, 1888 [TAEM 146:248]); six years later, a group identified as “The Manhattan Quartette (Of Dockstader’s Minstrels)” phonogenized five selections for Columbia (*Temporary Catalogue of the Columbia Phonograph Co.’s Musical Records for Use on Graphophones and Phonographs*, Jan. 1, 1895, 12), and after another decade Columbia recorded Dockstader himself (for a list of selections, see Rust with Debus, *Complete Entertainment Discography*, 222-3). In the summer of 1889, Edward H. Low represented blackface minstrelsy in his New York state exhibitions with a phonogram of “a number of Ethiopian gentlemen who sang the southern songs that the minstrel stage has made traditional” (“A Machine That Talks,” *Albany Argus*, July 24, 1889 [TAEM 146:379]) and “a solo on the bones that caused the darkey waiters in the hall to laugh all over” (“A Wonderful Exhibition,” *Albany Times*, July 24, 1889 [TAEM 146:467]).

<sup>7</sup> *New Records Made by the North American Phonograph Company*, Dec. 1, 1893 (TAEM 147:403-4). Circumstantial evidence suggests that Edward Clarence may have been the principal vocalist. He was the only person known to have sung to the accompaniment of Banta’s Parlor Orchestra as part of North American’s numerical series, and the four known instances of this were cylinders 878, 879, 881, and 882, with the second minstrel record following immediately as number 883. Allen Koenigsberg has reproduced in facsimile an early cylinder title slip bearing the pre-printed genre heading “Minstrel First Part,” with “N<sup>o</sup> 1” handwritten at the top and “High Old Time” underneath, which almost certainly refers to this item rather than to the title recorded by the Manhansett Quartette on Sept. 27, 1891 as stated (Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, 151). This is, however, the source of occasional statements by myself and others that minstrel records were being made in 1891 (Patrick Feaster, “Framing the Mechanical Voice: Generic Conventions of Early Phonograph Recording,” *Folklore Forum* 32 [2001], 87; 96, n. 27; Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 536, n. 27).

<sup>8</sup> FPRA Apr. 1955, 28-29.

<sup>9</sup> Brooks, “Directory,” 128; Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 256, which gives his real name as Carmody; and “Billy Williams Talks of Stagedom,” *Daily Review* (Decatur, Illinois), Jan. 30, 1910, p. 22, which differs considerably from Rice’s biography but does seem to concern the same performer.

<sup>10</sup> See Brooks, “George W. Johnson: Discography,” 70 for a list of numbers and titles. Brooks suggests that New Jersey and Columbia minstrel records were first accompanied by tambo, bones, and piano and only later received orchestra accompaniments. This may be so, but catalogs are not explicit and surviving specimens fail to display a clear pattern, so more research on this point is needed.

---

<sup>11</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company, 63.

<sup>12</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company, 63-4; almost exactly the same wording had appeared in the earlier catalog of 1894, except that it began with a “Be seated, gentlemen” and concluded with a second “etc.” (quoted in Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 38).

<sup>13</sup> However, Quinn does still appear sporadically in later minstrel phonograms—in addition to cases I will be discussing, he appears on at least one take of Imperial Minstrels, HELLO MA BABY (Columbia cylinder 13009, Nauck’s *Vintage Record Auction* #39, closed Apr. 15, 2006, lot 10198), and takes of SADIE RAY (Columbia disc 646, cited in Brooks, “George W. Johnson: Discography,” 75).

<sup>14</sup> *AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* (Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless), 2:11.

<sup>15</sup> See a list with brief descriptions in *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company, 64-5. The other phonograms did include the same units as A HIGH OLD TIME, as illustrated by a transcript of the LAUGHING SONG sketch in Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 38-9 (on which George W. Johnson sings the title song; Brooks’ transcript does not identify the “Announcer”); and a copy of the UPON THE GOLDEN SHORE sketch in *AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* (Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless), 2:15—from which the “lawyer gag” by Dan W. Quinn mentioned in the catalog description is missing. Both UPON THE GOLDEN SHORE and LAUGHING SONG also contain the inverted phrase “be seated, gentlemen” rather than “gentlemen, be seated.” There is no concluding applause or cheering in UPON THE GOLDEN SHORE, nor is any mentioned in Brooks’ transcription of LAUGHING SONG, but both do contain whistling and clapping after the introductory overture. In UPON THE GOLDEN SHORE and LAUGHING SONG, both Spencer and Williams speak in “black” dialect during the dialog, and both make jokes, so neither one fits the “interlocutor” role.

<sup>16</sup> Paskman, *Gentlemen, Be Seated*; Preston Powell, *Gentlemen, Be Seated: A Complete Minstrel, With Notes on Production* (New York: Samuel French, 1934); GENTLEMEN, BE SEATED! (A COMPLETE MINSTREL SHOW) (Epic Records LN 3238); and a sequel, GENTLEMEN, BE SEATED! (AGAIN) (Epic LN 3596). Jerome Moross’ opera *Gentlemen, Be Seated!* was reviewed by Harold C. Schonberg, “Mister Tambo, Mister Bones,” *New York Times*, Oct. 20, 1963, p. 133; see also Jerome Moross, *Three Songs from Gentlemen, Be Seated!* (New York: Chappell, 1962).

<sup>17</sup> The phrase was given in this form in 1895 by Billy Van, as quoted earlier on the structure of the “old time” minstrel show. Another article refers to “William H. West, the old-time negro minstrel whose ‘Gentlemen be seated’ has been the preliminary to more evenings of mirth than he can remember” (*Nebraska State Journal* [Lincoln, Nebraska], Aug. 21, 1901, p. 4). For other early appearances of the phrase in its usual form, see “George Primrose Returns,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 18, 1906, p. 4; and a burlesque of the minstrel show, “Turns in Grease Paint,” *New York Times*, Mar. 3, 1903, p. 9.

<sup>18</sup> “Musical and Dramatic,” *New York Times*, May 24, 1898, p. 6. Another writer notes of a modernized minstrel show that “the middleman has not said ‘be seated, gentlemen,’ and no tambourine has been thwacked nor any bones clapped” (Franklin Fyles, “Minstrelsy, Music and Melodrama Open New York’s Theatrical Season of 1908-09,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 9, 1908, p. SM5).

<sup>19</sup> “A Splendid Attraction,” *Centralia Enterprise and Tribune* (Centralia, Wisconsin), Aug. 14, 1897, p. 1, italics added. Again: “With commendable promptness for an amateur performance the curtain went up last evening showing the customary circle.... In the interlocutor’s seat sat Joseph P. Conner.... As the curtain rolled up the company was singing ‘Fondest Memories’ and immediately the overture was started” (“Merry Minstrels of P. A. C.,” *Portsmouth Herald* [Portsmouth, New Hampshire], Feb. 15, 1898, p. 1, italics added).

<sup>20</sup> Recording speeds are uncertain, but I estimate times of 0:22 and 1:40 in A HIGH OLD TIME (*AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* [Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless], 2:11) § and 0:21 and 1:07 in UPON THE GOLDEN SHORE, (*AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* [Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless], 2:15) §.

<sup>21</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company, 65.

<sup>22</sup> See item beginning “An entertainment will be given at the Opera House, Thursday evening,” *Edwardsville Intelligencer* (Edwardsville, Illinois), Dec. 3, 1895, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Later sample minstrel dialogs include such directions as “All laugh” and “Tambo laughs aloud above all others” (Paskman, *Gentlemen, Be Seated*, 92), or “Interlocutor and company laugh” (Davidson, *Rise*, 237). We even find this detail in a minstrel show described in a piece of children’s literature as

---

performed by a row of crabs: “Then [after the punchline of a joke] all the crabs laughed, and Tommy [the end-man] seemed to laugh louder than the rest” (L. Frank Baum, *The Sea Fairies* [Chicago: Reilly & Britton, 1911], 19). However, the practice was not universal; minstrel Isaac Odell later recalled that Ed Christy enforced a rule “that no member of the troupe could laugh at a joke cracked on the stage. So when a joke was cracked we all appeared surprised and puzzled about the matter, and this added to the success of the show, for it amused the audience” (“The Lay of the Last of the Old Minstrels,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1907, p. SM11). An early twentieth-century burlesque of the minstrel show mimicked the convention of following jokes with tambo and bones: “The bones rattle and the tambo is noisy while the audience applauds, just by way of encouragement for the next one” (“Turns in Grease Paint,” *New York Times*, Mar. 3, 1903, p. 9).

<sup>24</sup> See Brooks, “George W. Johnson: Discography,” 71-2 for details on when these items were first added to the Columbia catalog; however, the eight core selections had been assigned these numbers by late 1896: DESE BONES SHALL RISE AGAIN (13000), A HIGH OLD TIME (13001), THE OLD LOG CABIN (13002), TWO LITTLE GIRLS IN BLUE (13003), THE LAUGHING SONG (13004), HEAR DEM BELLS (13005), UPON DE GOLDEN SHORE (13006), THE GOLDEN HARP (13007).

<sup>25</sup> *List of the Famous “Columbia Records,”* June 1897, 11.

<sup>26</sup> Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 288, states that “Billy Golden was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, June 9, 1858,” a date that is repeated elsewhere (e.g. FPRA Dec. 1961, 32; Grayck, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 143). However, Shires’ death certificate, dated Jan. 29, 1926 and reproduced in Gracyk, *Companion*, gives no date of birth but lists his age as 63, suggesting a birthdate of 1862-3; his parents’ names are given as John Shires and Elizabeth Rust, and he is noted as having been a resident of New York for 40 years (i.e., since 1885-6).

<sup>27</sup> Sleeve accompanying Edison Diamond Disc 50054, quoted in Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 143.

<sup>28</sup> “Billy Golden,” *Phonogram-2 2* (Nov. 1900), 8. In the same piece, he states: “I have been on the stage 26 years as a professional,” confirming the 1874 date found in other sources.

<sup>29</sup> One authority states that he “started theatrically in 1874 with Frank Merritt as a partner, remaining with him one year” (Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 288), but the sleeve accompanying Edison Diamond Disc 50054, quoted in Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 143-4, states that his act had been successful “for four years [after 1874], at which time he joined John Merritt, the team being known as Merritt and Golden. About this time he originated the famous ‘cane pat,’ now so popular with all buck dancers.”

<sup>30</sup> We read: “In 1875 he joined Billy Draiton [sic], and for ten years they appeared in all parts of the United States as Golden and Draiton” (Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 288); however, depending on when Golden and Merritt were partners, Golden and Drayton may have teamed up somewhat later than 1875. Stephen Nunn, “‘Rabbit Hash’: Billy Golden, a Critical Biography,” *Musical Quarterly* 79 (Winter 1995), 593, mentions a “Cooper and Golden” team, listed in Odell, which might have been another Billy Golden partnership.

<sup>31</sup> Advertisement for “Holmes’ Standard Museum,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Feb. 17, 1884, p. 5.

<sup>32</sup> “Standard Museum,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Feb. 19, 1884, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> In Oct. 1883 in “Rabbit Hash” at Miner’s Theatre (Odell, *Annals*, 12:324) and in Nov. 1883 at the National Theatre (Odell, *Annals*, 12:314).

<sup>34</sup> In Dec. 1883 as “Plantation Darkeys, in Rabbit Hash” at the Grand Central Theatre (Odell, *Annals*, 12:308); from Jan. 18-23, 1884 at the Standard Museum in Brooklyn (Odell, *Annals*, 12:377); in Mar. 1884 at the London Theatre in “Rabbit Hash” (Odell, *Annals*, 12:321); in Sept. 1884 at the Academy in Fort Wayne (“The Bright Lights,” *Daily Gazette* [Fort Wayne, Indiana], Sept. 9, 1884, p. 7); from Oct. 6-11, 1884 at Harry Miner’s Theatre (Odell, *Annals*, 12:526); later in Oct. 1884 in “plantation sketches” at Hyde and Behman’s Theatre (Odell, *Annals*, 12:576); from Jan. 26-31, 1885 in “At Their Home on the Old Muskingum River” at Harry Miner’s Theatre (Odell, *Annals*, 12:528); in late March as “The Eminent Black-faced Comedians” at Smith’s Opera House in Decatur, Illinois with Baylies & Kennedy’s Bright Lights (advertisement, *Decatur Daily Republican* [Decatur, Illinois], Mar. 27, 1885, p. 2); again at Decatur “in negro minstrel sketches” in late July (“Local Paragraphs,” *Review* [Decatur, Illinois], July 28, 1885, p. 3), and from Nov. 9-14, 1885 at the London Theatre in “Rabbit Hash” (Odell, *Annals* 13:95).

---

<sup>35</sup> “Golden next became a member of Bailess and Kennedy’s ‘Brightlights’ vaudeville act, and here he introduced ‘Turkey in the Straw’ to the public, starting the song on its career of fame” (sleeve accompanying Edison Diamond Disc 50054, quoted in Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 144).

<sup>36</sup> “The Bright Lights,” *Daily Gazette* (Fort Wayne, Indiana), Sept. 9, 1884, p. 7.

<sup>37</sup> A marriage license was issued in Washington, D. C. for “William B. Shires and Mary E. Johnson” on Apr. 17, 1886 (“Marriage Licenses,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 18, 1886, p. 2), and a marriage date of Apr. 1886 was cited in later divorce proceedings, although Mary’s name was then given as “Mary M. Shires” (“City Bulletin,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 24, 1903, p. 12). Her middle initial is usually “M,” but her obituary identifies her as “Mary Daly Shires” (“Died,” *Washington Post*, Mar. 8, 1949, p. B2).

<sup>38</sup> “In 1885 with his wife, May Golden, played for several seasons as The Golden’s” (Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 288); however, the date is clearly too early.

<sup>39</sup> “Notes of the Stage,” *New York Times*, Aug. 26, 1894, p. 10.

<sup>40</sup> From Dec. 28, 1891-Jan. 2, 1892 at the London Theatre (Odell, *Annals*, 15:137). Odell first lists “Billy and May Golden” as appearing together the week of Oct. 27-Nov. 1, 1890 (Odell, *Annals*, 14:662), and cites numerous appearances by “the Golden’s,” though it is not clear these are all Billy and May. An “acrobatic Chinese specialty” of this name appeared at Worth’s Museum in Sept. 1893 (Odell, *Annals*, 15:730), which Nunn, “Rabbit Hash,” 595 cites as evidence that Billy “experimented with different material during this period,” but I suspect this was a different team altogether.

<sup>41</sup> The assumption that “Little Willie” was the Golden’s son appears in Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 162, and in Nunn, “Rabbit Hash,” 595. The 1900 census (see following note) does indicate that May had been the mother of *two* children, of which only one was still living—one was Jewell/Daisy, but the other could potentially have been “Little Willie.”

<sup>42</sup> For the week of Jan. 22-27, 1894, “Daisy Golden” was in “Theatre 2” of Huber’s Palace Museum while “the Golden’s” were in “Theatre 1” (Odell, *Annals*, 15:727). I am not aware of any source that explicitly identifies “Daisy Golden” with Jewell May Johnson, but the *Phonoscope* 4:6 (June 1900), 6 refers to Golden’s “wife and daughter ‘Daisy,’” while Jewell is identified elsewhere as “the only daughter of Mrs. Mary M. Shires of Washington, D. C.” (“Mrs. Jewell May Lee,” *Altoona Mirror* [Altoona, Pennsylvania], Sept. 5, 1906, p. 12). The full name “Jewell May Johnson” appears in “Pitcher Lee a Benedict,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 25, 1902, p. 8, and her age is given as 27 at the time of her death on Sept. 4, 1906 (“Mrs. Jewell May Lee,” *Altoona Mirror* [Altoona, Pennsylvania], Sept. 5, 1906, p. 12); the 1900 census lists William, May and Daisy Golden living in Manhattan with a birthdate of Nov. 1878 given for Daisy (“actress”), identified as William Golden’s daughter. Billy Golden is occasionally identified as her father elsewhere (e.g. “Supper [after her wedding] was served in the banquet hall of Hotel Golden, of which the bride’s father is proprietor” [“Pitcher Lee a Benedict,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 25, 1902, p. 8]), but usually only her mother is named, so her paternity should be regarded as uncertain.

<sup>43</sup> Brooks, “Columbia Records in the 1890’s,” 14, “Directory,” 112; a biographical sketch later claimed that “Mr. Golden, with George Diamond, were the first two professionals to sing for the Phonograph” (“Billy Golden,” *Phonogram*-2 2 [Nov. 1900], 8). Diamond was already listed as a well-known phonogenic performer “who introduces a variety” in “Famous Record-Makers and Their Work,” *Phonogram* 2 (Dec. 1892), 280; see also Brooks, “Columbia Records in the 1890’s,” 14, “Directory,” 110.

<sup>44</sup> As of 1896, the first three were listed as Columbia 7701, 7703 and 7704, while ON THE OLD MUSKINGUM RIVER was issued in late 1897 or early 1898 as Edison 4008. I do not have sufficient data to determine when he began phonogenizing each of these pieces. However, Brooks, “Columbia Records in the 1890’s,” 14, notes that TURKEY IN THE STRAW was among Golden’s first Columbia offerings of Jan. 1892, and he phonogenized RABBIT HASH for Berliner 635, dated Aug. 24, 1895; note that Silas Leachman had also been described as imitating “Billy Golden’s ‘Rabbit Hash’” two and a half years before (“The Famous Record Maker of Chicago,” quoted from Exchange in *Phonogram* 3 [Feb. 1893], 330-1).

<sup>45</sup> Billy Golden and Empire Vaudeville Co., A SCENE ON THE OLD PLANTATION (Edison Diamond Disc 50747-L, mx. 7804-C-4-1) §.

<sup>46</sup> According to Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, Golden and Arthur Collins teamed up on an 1899 “remake” of RABBIT HASH (Edison 4014), initially offered as a solo by Golden, so some

---

arrangement of this piece for *two* performers would seem to have existed (although at least one of the reported Golden-Collins remakes has been reported as a Collins solo—see Towne, “Commercial”—so perhaps these were not “duets” after all). The piece also appears as a *solo* routine by Golden at the end of one of his later blackface dialogs (Golden and Hughes, DARKTOWN POETS [Victor 17020-B]) §, but in this case it is embedded in a competitive exchange of comic rhymes between the two characters, which may have precluded their collaboration on “Rabbit Hash.”

<sup>47</sup> Billy Golden, RABBIT HASH (Victor 16199-B, B-381-5) §.

<sup>48</sup> Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, lists Edison 4009 as originally assigned to Golden’s MOCKING BIRD; plating records show three moulds prepared of this same title and number as whistled by John Yorke AtLee: 95 (Dec. 2, 1898), 95B and 95C (both Nov. 30, 1898). Charosh, *Berliner Gramophone Records*, lists Berliner 403Z by George W. Johnson, 403ZZ by Billy Golden, and 403WW and 403V by Milton M. Clark, again all THE MOCKING BIRD.

<sup>49</sup> The first reference I find to this name is: “The Golden Trio (Golden, Chalfant [sic] and Golden) presented a taking little sketch in which there was some good singing and dancing” (*New York Dramatic Mirror*, Dec. 14, 1895, p. 19); however, “Golden, Chalfant, and Golden” appear in advertisements somewhat earlier, e.g. for the Tennis Theater, *Chicago Tribune*, Aug. 25, 1895, p. 36. According to Edward Le Roy Rice, May and Billy Golden “added Dick Schalpan to their act” at some unspecified time after their marriage (Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 288). This statement turns out to be mistaken on two counts: the outside partner’s name was spelled *Chalfant* (sometimes “Chalfont”), not Schalpan, and—as is clear from later reviews—the two Goldenes who appeared onstage with him were Billy and *Daisy*, not Billy and May. Judging from Rice’s identification of the name *Dick* Schalpan, I suspect “Chalfant” may have been the 52-year-old E. A. (“Dick”) Chalfant, “at one time a well known performer,” whose obituary appears in *Variety*, Sept. 27, 1912. E. A. Chalfant had been a member of an “Electric Quartette” between 1882 and 1884 (Odell, *Annals*, 11:565, 571; 12:314, 333), as was Dick Chalfant a decade later, the group this time also including Roger Harding (“About the Theaters,” *Los Angeles Times*, Apr. 28, 1895, p. 21). In the early 1890s a “Dick Chalfant” also played the part of Billy Simpkins, a “foolish boy” in the play *Little Nugget* (“Coming Tonight,” *Frederick News* [Frederick, Maryland], May 3, 1890, p. 5; “‘Little Nugget’ at Harris’ Bijou Theater Last Night,” *Washington Post*, May 19, 1891, p. 4).

<sup>50</sup> “At the Playhouses,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 1896, p. 6.

<sup>51</sup> Quotations respectively from “About the Theaters,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 17, 1896, p. 22 and “At the Playhouses,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 19, 1896, p. 6.

<sup>52</sup> Harding succeeded Williams around the fall of 1897, and Porter succeeded Harding around the fall of 1898 (Brooks, “Directory,” 107, 124; note that Chalfant was known in the Golden Trio as a singer rather than a whistler as listed). One account exists of the group at work: “The other evening, when the temperature reached 107 degrees, a trio which consisted of Len Spencer, Billy Golden and Roger Harding were singing into these horns. There has been a great deal said about the enormous salary paid to these artists, but should you see them you would certainly admit that they deserve all they receive” (*Phonoscope* 2:8 [Aug. 1898], 11). The trio’s makeup after 1898 is hard to trace. Berliner 0364 was advertised as “Introducing old yodle songs by Harding and Golden” (Charosh, *Berliner Gramophone Records*, 122), but an 1899 Berliner catalog reportedly lists personnel as Harding, Porter, and Spencer, and Victor documentation from 1902-3 as Golden, Porter, and Spencer; other performers, including yodlers George P. Watson and Pete LeMaire, are also rumored to have participated (Sutton, *Pseudonyms*, 281). Brooks and Rust, *Columbia Master Book Discography* 1:137 lists two specific combinations on Columbia discs: (1) Spencer, Henry Burr, and LeMaire and (2) Spencer, Golden, and Watson. Columbia catalogs of the early twentieth century refer to the group as the “Columbia Male Trio” rather than the “Spencer Trio.”

<sup>53</sup> Spencer Trio, MOCKING BIRD MEDLEY (Columbia early “untitled” black wax cylinder 7705-9) §; also found on Columbia disc 653, double-faced A392; and Victor 1946, B-1705.

<sup>54</sup> *List of the Famous “Columbia Records,”* June 1897, 9.

<sup>55</sup> *Columbia Records* catalog with letter dated May 1, 1898, 15.

<sup>56</sup> Don Michael Randel, *Harvard Concise Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1978), 399.

<sup>57</sup> Spencer Trio, ALPINE SPECIALTY (Victor 1947, B1706-5) §. Also found on Columbia cylinder 7708, disc 648; Berliner 0364.

- <sup>58</sup> Description of cylinder 7712, *Columbia Records* catalog with letter dated May 1, 1898, 16.
- <sup>59</sup> “Mr. Leonard Spencer,” *Phonoscope* 1:1 (Nov. 1896), 14. Hogan had already participated in a piece with a similar name nearly two decades before: “Among the specialty artists who will perform here this week are Hogan and Griffin in their sketch, the ‘Sunny Southern Home’” (“The Olympic,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, Apr. 29, 1877, p. 3).
- <sup>60</sup> Quotation from *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 36, under the heading “RE-APPEARANCE OF JOHN P. HOGAN,” with the note: “The Hogan records have not been on the market for nearly two years [as of about 1895].... Old phonograph users call for them continually.” Hogan’s HOT CORN sketch had appeared in phonograph exhibitions as early as 1889, as we have seen. The announcements on his phonograms identify him as a teacher: “His records announce him as ‘instructor of dancing, New York City’” (Odell, “Whispering Records,” 16), and a cylinder announced “Hot Corn, done by J. P. Hogan, Teacher of Stage-Handling” was also reported in the *Hillandale News* 41 (Feb. 1968), 216, but I suspect the word was *dancing*, not *handling*. For details on Hogan’s stage career of the 1860s and 1860s, see his biography in Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 190-1, which also notes that he was born in Montreal, Québec, on Mar. 14, 1847.
- <sup>61</sup> Description of cylinder 7706, *Columbia Records* catalog with letter dated May 1, 1898, 15; also on Columbia disc 652; Victor 1948, B-1707; Berliner 0367.
- <sup>62</sup> Description of cylinder 7707, *Columbia Records* catalog with letter dated May 1, 1898, 15; also on Columbia disc 649. A later addition to the trio’s repertoire was AMATEUR NIGHT ON THE BOWERY (Victor 4093, mx. B-1711), with composer credit given to Len Spencer.
- <sup>63</sup> CAMP MEETING JUBILEE by the Edison Quartet (Edison 2226), the Haydn Quartet (Zon-o-phone 1619, 559; Victor M-3094, B-987), and the Columbia Quartette (Columbia cylinder 9067; 2 *Minute Cylinders* [P&L Antiques], 5:28 §); OUR SUNNY SOUTHERN HOME by the Edison Quartet (Edison 2225) and the Haydn Quartet, OUR SUNNY SOUTHERN HOME (Victor M-3343-[?], *EARLY VICTOR RECORDINGS, 1901-1903* [P&L Antiques], 9) §; B-986).
- <sup>64</sup> George P. Watson, ALPINE SPECIALTY (Edison 4031, UCSB 21); and ALPINE SPECIALTY—POPULAR YODELS (Victor 16968-B, B-10860-2) §.
- <sup>65</sup> YODEL DUET (Berliner 419), MINSTREL SCENE (Edison 4016), ROLL ON, SILVER MOON (Edison 4017), THREE MINUTES WITH THE MINSTRELS (Edison 4018), and WHISTLING MEDLEY (Edison 4019); the Edison titles all appear in the oldest known National Phonograph Company record catalog of early 1898.
- <sup>66</sup> NEGRO ODDITIES (Berliner 732, dated June 22, 1897); VIRGINIA CAMP MEETING (Berliner 670); and LAUGHING (Berliner 423, various takes all dated Mar. 6, 1897).
- <sup>67</sup> According to Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, Golden and Collins together remade eight of Golden’s Edison solo routines in 1899 under the same catalog numbers, including TURKEY IN DE STRAW (Edison 4011) and RABBIT HASH (Edison 4014), although Towne, “Commercial,” reports Edison 4011 as a solo by Collins. The cylinder plating notebooks establish that these selections soon reverted to solos by Golden: see for instance the late “regular” mould listings for 4011 (Apr. 24, 1900), 4011B (May 7, 1900), and 4014 (June 4, 1900).
- <sup>68</sup> George Graham and Billy Golden, LAUGHING (Berliner 423, dated Mar. 6, 1897) §.
- <sup>69</sup> Gaisberg, *Music Goes Round*, 9. The use of two separate horns attached to a single phonograph, one for the vocalist and one for the piano, was described in *Phonoscope* 2:5 (May 1898), 12.
- <sup>70</sup> Emile Berliner, “Gramophone,” U. S. Patent 534,543, filed Mar. 30, 1892, granted Feb. 19, 1895.
- <sup>71</sup> Quoted in Charosh, *Berliner Gramophone Records*, 44.
- <sup>72</sup> “Following the first part there were several ‘stunts,’ usually a monologue, a sidewalk skit and some ballads” (Branen and Johnson, *How to Stage a Minstrel Show*, 9). “Sidewalk conversation” appears in the following book title: Jimmy Lyons, *Encyclopedia of stage material for professional entertainers, clubs, lodges, comedians, or any one else who desires to laugh; containing witty jokes, recitations, sidewalk conversation, monologues, after dinner stories, playlets, minstrel show, and other miscellaneous comedy matter* (Boston, Walter H. Baker Company: 1925).
- <sup>73</sup> Charosh, *Berliner Gramophone Records*, 40. The Spencer Trio’s CAMP MEETING instead closes with “Who Built the Ark” (e.g. CAMP MEETING [Columbia 7” disc 649-1] §).
- <sup>74</sup> For an account of his conversion to evangelical work, see “Billy Williams in a New Role,” *Steubenville Herald* (Steubenville, Ohio), Sept. 8, 1897, p. 6. He is referred to later on as a “minstrel-evangelist” (“‘Billy’ Williams Found,” *Nebraska State Journal* [Lincoln, Nebraska], July 24, 1908, p.

---

4), “formerly a minstrel and lately a temperance lecturer” (“‘Billy’ Williams Missing, *Edwardsville Intelligencer* [Edwardsville, Illinois], Jan. 10, 1908, p. 5), and “the old-time minstrel, subsequent evangelist and present-day fraud” (*Correctionville News* [Correctionville, Iowa], Jan. 20, 1910, p. 11).

<sup>75</sup> *Columbia Records* catalog with letter dated May 1, 1898, 28.

<sup>76</sup> It is not clear when this happened, or whether it varied from selection to selection. Imperial Minstrels, UPON THE GOLDEN SHORE (Columbia 13006, UCSB 5340) §, features the same “content” as the earlier UPON THE GOLDEN SHORE (*AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* [Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless], 2:15) §, but is announced “Columbia Phonograph Company of New York and Paris” and features Roger Harding (addressed as “Roger”) as end-man and vocal soloist, still with some effort at “black” dialect. Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 38-9 contrasts the United States Phonograph Company and Columbia variants of the Laughing Song minstrel selection, which have *different* spoken segments, and notes that the Columbia is “more mainstream than the comparable New Jersey cylinder, less raucous and definitely less ‘black,’” employing “proper English.” The transcription Brooks gives of the “new” version contains a “New York City” announcement, suggesting a date earlier than the version of UPON THE GOLDEN SHORE described above; however, page 536, n. 31 establishes that the transcription is a composite of multiple phonograms, so I am unsure whether the “New York City” announcement is taken from an actual specimen.

<sup>77</sup> *Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company, 65.

<sup>78</sup> Columbia cylinder 13000 ([www.tinfoil.com](http://www.tinfoil.com) cylinder of the month for Nov. 2000).

<sup>79</sup> “The Graphophone Grand,” *News* (Frederick, Maryland), Apr. 17, 1899, p. 3. Four minstrel selections were listed in the first catalog of Graphophone Grand cylinders; see Copeland and Dethlefsen, *5-Inch Cylinder Book*, 15.

<sup>80</sup> “Annual Reception and Ball,” *New York Times*, Mar. 6, 1896, p. 2. Edward Marks identified Spencer in his memoirs as a “minstrel” (Marks, *They All Sang*, 103).

<sup>81</sup> *New York Dramatic Mirror*, Nov. 5, 1898, p. 20; *Phonoscope* 2:9 (Sept. 1898), 13; and the company letterhead described in FPRA Oct. 1958, 34, the only source for Hunting’s name—he left for England before the company began appearing in public.

<sup>82</sup> “The laughing song of George W. Johnson, while an old trick, was well worked out and caused a great amount of merriment” (“Jacques Opera House,” *Naugatuck Daily News* [Naugatuck, Connecticut], Jan. 13, 1899, p. 3). Of the known members of Spencer’s live minstrel troupe, Cal Stewart also phonogenized this particular song (Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 60).

<sup>83</sup> There were plenty of black minstrel *companies* in this period, but black and white companies appear, as a rule, to have remained segregated and distinct; see Toll, *Blacking Up*, especially 195-233. There was apparently at least one mixed-cast minstrel company (Primrose and West’s “40 Whites and 30 Blacks Troupe” of 1893, mentioned in Davidson, *Rise*, 171), but racially mixed stage productions of all kinds were to remain controversial in the United States well into the following century.

<sup>84</sup> Both Goldin and the Three Murray Brothers are listed on Spencer’s letterhead (FPRA Oct. 1958, 34) and in the *New York Dramatic Mirror*, Nov. 5, 1898, p. 20. Goldin is identified in these respective sources only as “Wizard Goldin” and “Goldin,” but the Three Murray Brothers did appear elsewhere on bills with the well-known Horace Goldin (see e.g. “Cissie Loftus Feature of Vaudeville Bill at at [sic] the New Grand,” *Washington Post*, Mar. 27, 1900, p. 3, which also comments that the Three Murray Brothers’ “ideas of humor are funereal, and consist entirely of remarks about the amount of flesh owned by one of the brothers”), and no other “Goldin” seems to have been active in the business at this time.

<sup>85</sup> “Billy Crawford” is listed in “Jacques Opera House,” *Naugatuck Daily News* (Naugatuck, Connecticut), Jan. 12, 1899, p. 3; “The buck and wing dancing of Crawford and Corrigan is alone worth the price of admission” (“Jacques Opera House,” *Naugatuck Daily News* [Naugatuck, Connecticut], Jan. 13, 1899, p. 3).

<sup>86</sup> Somers’ name appears under the “comedians” heading in the list of performers on the company’s letterhead, FPRA Oct. 1958, 34.

<sup>87</sup> At the age of 101, Mort Cheshire recalled part of his career: “Thence, he said, to Len Spencer’s Minstrels with billing as ‘World Champion Bones Soloist’” (“Old Trouper on Social Security Circuit,” *New York Times*, Feb. 3, 1975, p. 54).

<sup>88</sup> “Len Spencer’s Minstrels opened at Lakewood N. J., on Nov. 19, and made a decided hit. The house was crowded and many were turned away” (*New York Dramatic Mirror*, Nov. 26, 1898, p. 19). The



---

new troupe had its week-long itinerary listed among the other minstrel shows on the same page; showing that it was scheduled for one night each at various points in New Jersey: Orange (Nov. 21), Montclair (Nov. 22), Bloomfield (Nov. 23), Morristown (Nov. 24), Dover (Nov. 25), and Summerville (Nov. 26). The *New York Dramatic Mirror* subsequently lists appearances in New York City (Dec. 19-23), New Brunswick, New Jersey (Dec. 24), Asbury Park (Dec. 26), Long Branch (Dec. 27), Lakewood (Dec. 28), Freehold (Dec. 29), Bound Brook (Dec. 30), Elizabeth (Dec. 31), Orange (Jan. 2), New York City (Jan. 3-14, 16-28), New Rochelle NY (Jan. 31), Fishkill (Feb. 1), Wappingers Falls (Feb. 2), Philmont (Feb. 3), White Plains (Feb. 4), New York City (Feb. 6-18), Hackensack NJ (Feb. 20), Montclair (Feb. 21), Morristown (Feb. 22), Paterson (Feb. 23-25), New York City (Feb. 27-March 4); see *New York Dramatic Mirror* Dec. 17, 1898, p. 11; Jan. 7, 1899, p. 21; Jan. 14, 1899, p. 11; Feb. 4, 1899, p. 11; Feb. 18, 1899, p. 11; Feb. 25, 1899, p. 11. Curiously, Spencer's Minstrels were also reported filling a three-day engagement in Naugatuck, Connecticut starting Jan. 12, 1899 ("Jacques Opera House," *Naugatuck Daily News* [Naugatuck, Connecticut], Jan. 12, 1899, p. 3), dates that conflict with those given in the *New York Dramatic Mirror*. Another report states of the group's success: "Owing to bad weather and the conflicting festivities of the holidays the minstrel troupe managed by Len Spencer did not coin money on their first trip. On subsequent trips, however, the story is different. Recently they played to crowded houses at Waterbury and Stamford, Conn. They will soon go out for another trip of one week, three of the nights being billed for Paterson. The troupe did themselves great credit at the recent performance in Bridgeport. It is composed largely of Phonograph talent and the entertainment referred to was given as a benefit for the fire department of the American Graphophone Company's factory. The house was crowded and the very laughable and entertaining programme was carried through without a hitch greatly to the credit of Mr. Will C. Jones, the stage manager" (*Phonoscope* 2 [Dec. 1898], 13).

<sup>89</sup> FPRA Oct. 1958, 34.

<sup>90</sup> "Jacques Opera House," *Naugatuck Daily News* (Naugatuck, Connecticut), Jan. 13, 1899, p. 3.

<sup>91</sup> "Leu [sic] Spencer, Billy Golden, and Roger Harding will put on a new plantation act, entitled In Front of the Old Cabin Door, opening Thanksgiving week with Len Spencer's Greater New York Minstrels" (*New York Dramatic Mirror*, Nov. 19, 1898, p. 21); "and in conclusion Golden, Spencer and Harding in their great plantation act entitled: 'In Front of the Old Cabin Door'" (*Phonoscope* 2:9 [Sept. 1898], 13).

<sup>92</sup> "Jacques Opera House," *Naugatuck Daily News* (Naugatuck, Connecticut), Jan. 13, 1899, p. 3.

<sup>93</sup> *New York Dramatic Mirror*, Dec. 17, 1898, p. 19.

<sup>94</sup> *Phonoscope* 3 (Jan. 1899), 10. This may have been what was meant by the statement "Mr. Spencer first introduced the graphophone into minstrel work" (*Talking Machine News*, Oct. 1906, quoted in FPRA June 1947, 23).

<sup>95</sup> *Phonoscope* 2 (Sept. 1898), 13.

<sup>96</sup> Some of the genre's "transformations" are covered in Toll, *Blacking Up*, 134-59 and Davidson, *Rise*, 180-210.

<sup>97</sup> MAMIE REILLY (13008) begins to appear in catalogs in early 1898 with the first listings of the "Imperial Minstrels." HELLO, MY BABY (13009) and OLD FOLKS AT HOME (13010) had been added by 1900 and were specially marked as "with Quartette chorus" (Copeland and Dethlefsen, *5-Inch Cylinder Book*, 19). GOOD-BYE, DOLLY GRAY (31608), COON, COON, COON (31609), and SADIE RAY (31610) were issued in Oct. 1901 and I'D LEAVE MY HAPPY HOME FOR YOU (31691) and MY CREOLE SUE (31692) in Mar. 1902.

<sup>98</sup> Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 273. As to the date of his departure, the last phonograms he produced beforehand were Columbia 31575 through 31579 (issued ca. Aug. 1901) and Victor V-1069 and M-1069 (Oct. 26, 1901).

<sup>99</sup> Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 39, includes a transcription of the Imperial Minstrels, LAUGHING SONG, announced "Columbia Phonograph Company of New York City" (hence datable to circa 1897), with Harry Spencer as interlocutor; however, see note 76 above on this transcription.

<sup>100</sup> HOW I LOVE MY LOU (4700), ELSIE FROM CHELSEA (4701), LAUGHING SONG (4702), REMUS TAKE THE CAKE (4703), MINSTREL SCENE (4704), and THREE MINUTES WITH THE MINSTRELS (4705). The last two titles may have borrowed material from the identically titled MINSTREL SCENE (4016) and THREE MINUTES WITH THE MINSTRELS (4018) by Billy Golden and Chalfant, issued previously, but the content of all these cylinders remains something of a mystery to me.

---

<sup>101</sup> MINSTREL RECORD (Berliner 6004), MINSTREL SHOW (Berliner 6009), and MINSTREL SHOW (Berliner 6010).

<sup>102</sup> "Writes Catchy Songs," *Washington Post*, May 1, 1892, p. 16; for a colorful anecdote about him and a rival tour guide, see also "Profanity Flowing in the Court Room," *Washington Post*, Aug. 9, 1893, p. 3. Parham can be linked both to Fred Gaisberg (who once appeared as a pianist on the same bill as him, although they were identified as Mr. *Meg* Parham and Prof. *Fred Garsbirg*: "Will Entertain at Buena Vista," *Washington Post*, Aug. 17, 1895, p. 5); and to George Graham, at whose benefit concert he performed ("George Graham's Benefit," *Washington Post*, Oct. 25, 1895, p. 3), about whom he wrote a letter to the editor of the *Washington Post* (see "A Theatrical Outlook," *Washington Post*, Sept. 30, 1894, p. 14, which gives Parham's "hackman poet" epithet), and together with whom he performed in vaudeville, e.g. "George Graham and Meigs Parham, presenting their bright comedy skit" at the Bijou ("Coming to the Theaters," *Washington Post*, May 18, 1899, p. 4; also "Kreig [sic] Parham, and George Graham" at the "Paperhangers' Assembly's Smoker," *Washington Post*, Jan. 11, 1900, p. 10).

<sup>103</sup> I'VE A LONGING IN MY HEART FOR YOU, LOUISE (798); MY HEART LOVES YOU, TOO (799); MANDY LEE (800); MY WILD IRISH ROSE (801); TELL ME (802); WHEN THE AUTUMN LEAVES ARE FALLING (803); OLD FOLKS AT HOME (804); and MY OLD KENTUCKY HOME (805). Each of these titles has been reported in both seven and ten-inch form on Climax. However, the Brooks and Rust discography lists personnel for only two of the Climax pressings, both featuring George Gaskin and Albert Campbell as vocalists: a ten-inch copy of number 799 and a ten-inch copy of 803 reported as announced by John Kaiser. Later takes featured a variety of other performers.

<sup>104</sup> The new discs were DESE BONES SHALL RISE AGAIN (33), and then an alphabetical run: COON, COON, COON (641), HEAR DEM BELLS (642), A HIGH OLD TIME (643), THE LAUGHING SONG (644), THE OLD LOG CABIN (645), and SADIE RAY (646). Only a seven-inch version of number 643 has been reported on Climax, probably pressed during the transitional period. These are among the numbers I believe were "recycled" after having originally been assigned to masters rejected or abandoned during the early Climax period. This "recycling" becomes apparent when catalog numbers reported on Climax and ones that appear only with "Columbia" labels are listed in two separate columns. The most striking cases of patterns in the second column are a group of eighty Columbia Band titles (in the range 284-580) and thirty-eight by the Columbia Orchestra (in the range 581-634), each in nearly perfect alphabetical order. These alphabetically-arranged additions extend up through 653, MOCKING BIRD MEDLEY by the Spencer Trio. If my hypothesis is correct, this mass recycling of numbers would have effectively masked the order in which items had originally been added. For example, number "1" was a relatively late addition, IN A CLOCK STORE by the Columbia Orchestra, whereas number "2" had been assigned early on to BOHEMIAN GIRL by baritone Edward Franklin (or any subsequent baritone who happened to sing the same piece). This is why I feel comfortable assigning an earlier date of introduction to Columbia discs 798-805 than to Columbia discs 33 and 641-6. However, for an alternative interpretation of Climax "skipped" catalog numbers, see Brooks, "High Drama," 62.

<sup>105</sup> NEW SOCIETY MINSTRELS by the Lyric Trio appears in the list of "New Records," *Phonoscope* 2:11 (Nov. 1898), 15.

<sup>106</sup> "Billy Rice, the minstrel, has spent many hours reviving the antiquities of the past for the benefit of his European cousins through the medium of the phonograph" ("Voice Pickling in Chicago," *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, July 5, 1897 [TAEM 146:1108]). Rice was most famous as a stump speaker (see e.g. Paskman, *Gentlemen, Be Seated*, 152, 160), so these may have been spoken-word cylinders. The titles MINSTREL REMINISCENCES and TALK ON LABOR VS. CAPITAL are listed as having been phonogenized by Billy Arlington in "New Records," *Phonoscope* 2:11 (Nov. 1898), 15. Arlington had been with Christy's Minstrels as early as 1858; see his obituary, which gives his age as 76: "Billy' Arlington Dead," *New York Times*, May 25, 1913, p. C7, and a biographical sketch in Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, which gives his real name as Valentine Burnell. Davidson, *Rise*, 110 notes that one of Arlington's programs from 1893 lists "His Funny Lecture on Labor vs. Capital."

<sup>107</sup> Excelsior advertisement, *Phonoscope* 4:3 (Apr. 1898), 5,

<sup>108</sup> *Phonoscope* 2:11 (Nov. 1898), 5 [Reed and Dawson] and 16 [American Record Company].

<sup>109</sup> Respectively Berliner 6021-4, probably recorded in late 1898; and Berliner 01134-8, recorded on Mar. 28, 1900.

---

<sup>110</sup> Bayly and Kinnear, *Zon-o-phone Record*, 104 list SWEET ANNIE MOORE (586) and another “featuring S. H. Dudley singing” JUST BECAUSE SHE MADE DEM GOO-GOO EYES (587), but these are the only listings they give for the entire 581-601 range, so there were probably other titles as well. The Haydn Quartet also phonogenized for Zon-o-phone in this period, so I suspect they were the “Zonophone Minstrels”; however, Billy Heins, originator of the Edison minstrel series, was also a Zon-o-phone regular at the time.

<sup>111</sup> Victor V-506 through V-510; M-3035 through M-3040.

<sup>112</sup> Comparing Berliner descriptions from Charosh, *Berliner Gramophone Records*, 159-60 with Victor descriptions from FPRA Feb. 1968, 36, shows that Berliner 00134 = Victor V-509, Berliner 00135 = Victor V-506, Berliner 00136 = Victor V-510, Berliner 00137 = Victor V-507, and Berliner 00138 = Victor V-508. The wording of the descriptions is nearly identical in each case, the only obvious change being the substitution of S. H. Dudley for Harry Macdonough as the vocalist on Victor V-506.

<sup>113</sup> Georgia Minstrels, MONARCH MINSTREL FIRST PART, NO. 5 (Victor M-3039-4) §.

<sup>114</sup> Only the grand opening chorus appears on Georgia Minstrels, MINSTREL FIRST PART, NO. 4 (Victor V-509-3, MW) § and MONARCH MINSTREL FIRST PART, NO. 3 (Victor M-3037-[1?]) §; and only an introductory overture appears on MONARCH MINSTREL FIRST PART, NO. 4 (Victor M-3038-2) §.

<sup>115</sup> Georgia Minstrels, MONARCH MINSTREL FIRST PART, NO. 2 (Victor M-3036-4) §; see also a transcription in Feaster, “Framing,” 38-9. “Mister Johnson” or “Mister Johnsing” appears as a conventionalized name for interlocutors in published sketches (e.g. *Minstrel Gags*, 135, in which “Bones” addresses an otherwise unnamed interlocutor as “Mr. Johnsing”), in sets of instructions (e.g. “When Bones or Tambo desire to speak of tell a conundrum they will address the middle man: ‘Mr. Johnson [or any name] can you tell me the difference, etc.,’” in Haverly, *Negro Minstrels*, 6, parentheses changed to square brackets), and in passing allusions (“the middle-man—the grand and dignified ‘Mr. Johnsing,’ who propounds conundrums—and the two ‘end-men’ who make the jokes,” in “Clerical Minstrels,” *New York Times*, Nov. 13, 1877, p. 4). It also appears in a mock minstrel show performed by crabs: “The clown crabs had now formed a row in front of them. ‘Mr. Johnsing,’ asked one, ‘why is a mermaid like an automobile?’ ‘I don’t know, Tommy Blimken,’ answered a big crab in the middle of the row [i.e., in the interlocutor’s position]” (Baum, *Sea Fairies*, 19).

<sup>116</sup> FPRA Mar. 1968, 38, italics added.

<sup>117</sup> Georgia Minstrels, MONARCH MINSTRELS, FIRST PART, NO. 5 (Canadian 10” Berliner 5026, VG) §.

<sup>118</sup> FPRA Mar. 1968, 38.

<sup>119</sup> The same song also appears in Haydn Quartet, MEDLEY OF PLANTATION SONGS (Canadian 10” Berliner 5039, B-1306-[?], VG) §, but I have been unable to confirm title or composer. Its lyrics are:

The old home ain’t what it used to be,  
The change makes me sad and forlorn.  
I’ll sigh night and day,  
I long to see again  
My old cabin home upon the hill.

It is not one of the following songs: T. Paine, *The Old Cabin Home* (Boston: Henry Tolman, 1857); C. A. White, *The Old Home Ain’t What It Used to Be* (Boston: White, Smith & Perry, 1872); Frank Dumont, *That Old Cabin Home Upon the Hill* (Boston: Ditson & Co., Oliver, 1880).

<sup>120</sup> Georgia Minstrels, MONARCH MINSTREL FIRST PART, NO. 6 (Victor M-3040-3) §. The composition is C. A. White, *The Old Log Cabin in the Dell* (Boston: White, Smith & Co, 1875), which had been the opening chorus for “Gramophone Minstrels” disc number one and “Georgia Minstrels” seven-inch disc number four as well as the title song for one of the standard New Jersey/Columbia minstrel records.

<sup>121</sup> In May 1899, the numbers previously associated with Billy Heins were relisted as by Arthur Collins, S. H. Dudley and the Ancient City Quartette and Orchestra, except that two were assigned different titles: JUST ONE GIRL (4701) and MY ANN ELIZER (4703). In the latter half of 1899, once block numbering had been abandoned, the same performers added MINSTREL POTPOURRI (7164, B204), PLANTATION MINSTRELS (7293, B237), and ECHOES OF MINSTRELSY (7376); in 1900, CHRISTY MINSTREL, 1ST PART (B370), MINSTREL SCENE (B371), and MINSTREL, 1ST PART (B460); and in Apr. 1901, CALIFORNIA MINSTRELS (4700), ALABAMA TROUBADOURS (4701) and REMINISCENCES OF BLACKFACE (4703). The concert cylinders were identified as by the “Edison Minstrels.” It is unclear whether or not the various changes in title for 4700-5 reflect major changes in content. Overall, more research is sorely needed on these early Edison minstrel series.

---

<sup>122</sup> MINSTREL POTPOURRI (Edison Concert cylinder B204, corresponding to standard cylinder 7164, ENHSS) §. On Edison's minstrel cylinders of this period, the interlocutor is addressed as "Sam," consistent with the assumption of this role by S. H. Dudley, but the end-man is addressed as "William" or "Billy" even when the part is phonogenized by Arthur Collins, perhaps as a survival from Billy Heins' role in Edison's first minstrel cylinders of 1898. For another possible example of this series, listen to the cylinder Glenn Sage identifies as S. H. Dudley and Billy Williams, MINSTREL FIRST PART—JUST ONE GIRL, recorded for the United States Phonograph Company, dated as "ca. 1899" (24 POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1899 [Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001], 5. This may actually be JUST ONE GIRL (Edison 4701) with S. H. Dudley and Arthur Collins; the voice certainly sounds like Collins', and Billy Williams had by then retired from the business. Still, the United States Phonograph Company's own minstrel records of the late 1890s require more research. In 1899-1900, the Consolidated Phonograph Company, the United States company's budget line, was still offering the same eight standard minstrel titles Len Spencer had carried over with him to Columbia, assigned numbers 1501-8 (Brooks, "George W. Johnson: Discography," 73, 81), but the United States Phonograph Company does seem to have developed a new minstrel series after Spencer's departure. Jerry Fabris played one verifiable United States Phonograph Company brown wax cylinder, announced "The Alabama Troubadours—original minstrel first part," TEA, Jan. 25, 2005, in which the interlocutor "Samuel" sounds like S. H. Dudley, and the end-man "Daniel" like Dan W. Quinn §; perhaps this cylinder represents yet another series of minstrel records in which Dudley participated at the turn of the century.

<sup>123</sup> This and subsequent catalog descriptions for AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS are quoted in Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix*, 340-1.

<sup>124</sup> AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS NO. 1 "ETHIOPIAN CARNIVAL OF MELODY" (Victor M-1834-[?]) §.

<sup>125</sup> AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS NO. 2 MINSTREL BALLAD, "MY CREOLE SUE" (Victor 1824, B-206-[1], recorded July 28, 1903) §. The same approach is taken in the twelve-inch version (Victor 31076, C206-3, MW) §.

<sup>126</sup> For instance on "Frank Kernell," THE WHISTLING COON (Victor V-1982), first recorded Feb. 18, 1903.

<sup>127</sup> AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS NO. 2: MY CREOLE SUE (Canadian 10" Berliner 5287, VG) §. The interlocutor's voice in this case sounds as though it was phonogenized by S. H. Dudley rather than William Hooley.

<sup>128</sup> AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS NO. 3: CHIMES OF THE GOLDEN BELLS (Canadian 10" Berliner 5288, VG) §.

<sup>129</sup> AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS NO. 3: END SONG—"CHIMES OF DE GOLDEN BELLS" (Victor 1825, B-1021-[1]) §. A similar opening with "Sam" in place of "Mister Dudley" appears in AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS NO. 3 END SONG—"CHIMES OF DE GOLDEN BELLS" (Victor 16762-A, B-1021-4) §.

<sup>130</sup> The genres "minstrel ballad" and "end song" appear both on labels and in the catalog descriptions.

<sup>131</sup> And in some cases by disc two; see note 127 above.

<sup>132</sup> AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS NO. 3 END SONG—"CHIMES OF DE GOLDEN BELLS" (Victor 16762-A, B-1021-4) §.

<sup>133</sup> AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS NO. 4: MUSICAL ACT: EBONY EMPERORS OF MELODY (Canadian 10" Berliner 1826, B-2585-2, VG) §.

<sup>134</sup> AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS NO. 5 "HAVING FUN WITH THE ORCHESTRA" (Victor 1827, [B1071-3(?)]) §, emphasis added.

<sup>135</sup> AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS NO. 6 "CAKEWALK IN COONTOWN" (Victor 16762-B, B1024-3) §.

<sup>136</sup> AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS NO. 7 SIDEWALK CONVERSATION—"FUNNY THINGS YOU SEE IN THE PAPERS" (Victor M-1829-3) §.

<sup>137</sup> AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS NO. 8: SCENES ON THE LEVEE (Canadian 10" Berliner 5328, M-1803-3, VG) § once includes the lyric "heave dat cotton," as in the catalog description, while all other versions I have heard have "haul dat cotton." The bell also rings while the gangplank is being hauled in rather than afterwards. Later takes (e.g. AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS NO. 8 GRAND AFTERPIECE—"SCENES ON THE LEVEE" [Victor 1803, B-1023-(1)] §) give only the first four lines of

---

the first verse of “Tapioca.” The Victor versions also consistently conclude with cheering and laughter, which are missing from the Columbia LEVEE SCENE.

<sup>138</sup> Judging from AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS NO. 8: SCENES ON THE LEVEE (Canadian 10” Berliner 5328, M-1803-3, recorded Dec. 13, 1902, VG) § and AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS NO. 8 GRAND AFTERPIECE—“SCENES ON THE LEVEE” (Victor 1803, B-1023-[1]) §.

<sup>139</sup> Valentine’s Day advertising card reproduced in Fabrizio and Paul, *Antique Phonograph Advertising*, 66. The authors date the card to 1902, which is too early both because of the reference to the minstrel series and because the “XP” cylinders in question were not even announced confidentially to the trade until Feb. 15, 1902; see chapter two, note 451.

<sup>140</sup> B was consistently by J. W. Myers; C was initially announced as by Len Spencer and George Graham but later discs (7” disc 1109C-8, 10” disc 1108C-2) and cylinders (32045C, 2 *MINUTE CYLINDERS* [P&L Antiques], 1:10 §) feature Len and Harry Spencer; D was consistently by Billy Golden on cylinder, but on disc by Arthur Collins (10” 1109D-4) and Len Spencer (10” 1109D-6); E was listed in cylinder catalogs as by Spencer, Golden and Graham but reported discs are by Len and Harry Spencer with Bob Roberts (10” 1109E-1, 4, and 5) or Arthur Collins (10” 109E-2); F was consistently by George Gaskin except for a late disc take (10” 1109F-7) by Henry Burr; G in cylinder catalogs as by Spencer, Golden and Graham but reported discs are by Spencer and Collins (10” 1109G-6, 8) with one take, 10” 1109G-9 by Len and Harry Spencer with Bob Roberts, containing the text usually associated with E; I was consistently by J. W. Myers; J by Albert Bode; K in cylinderography as by Len Spencer, 10” 1109K-1 by George Graham; L consistently by Vess Ossman. See Lorenz, *Two Minute Records*, 44; Brooks and Rust, *Columbia Master Book Discography*, 1:180-1.

<sup>141</sup> INTRODUCTORY OVERTURE BY THE ENTIRE COMPANY (7” Columbia disc 1109A-2) §.

<sup>142</sup> Judging from Columbia Minstrels, END MAN STORIES (Columbia cylinder 32045C, 2 *MINUTE CYLINDERS* [P & L Antiques], 1:10); also, none of the discs are listed as announced in Brooks and Rust, *Columbia Master Book Discography*.

<sup>143</sup> Billy Golden, I’M A NIGGER THAT’S LIVING HIGH (Columbia cylinder 32045D, UCSB 4704) §.

<sup>144</sup> George Gaskin, I’M WEARING MY HEART AWAY FOR YOU (Columbia cylinder 32045F, 2 *MINUTE CYLINDERS* [P & L Antiques], 2:9) §.

<sup>145</sup> These three “internal” song announcements come from phonograms transcribed above. It is worth noting that announcements following a similar structure appear in minstrel show texts from the 1870s: “Sims Reeves will now sing—THERE’S A SPOT IN MY HEART THAT IS VACANT” (*Minstrel Gags*, 8); “Our operatic singer, Mr. Fitzgibbon Fitzallen Zabriskie will now sing THE CHESTNUT TREE” (*Minstrel Gags*, 45).

<sup>146</sup> Transcribed from MINSTREL FIRST PART—JUST ONE GIRL (24 *POPULAR SELECTIONS FROM 1899*. Compact disc. Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001), 5 §, on the provenance of which see note 122 above. The United States Phonograph Company’s early minstrel cylinders show more variation in their internal announcements, including some that resemble ordinary cylinder announcements (e.g. “‘Upon the Golden Shore,’ sung by Mister Len Spencer” [*AMONG THE OLDEST RECORDINGS IN THE WORLD* (Orting, Washington: American Gramophone and Wireless), 2:15] §) and others that resemble the inverted announcements of Imperial Minstrel and Spencer Trio phonograms (e.g., “Mr. George W. Johnson in his great ‘Laughing Song’” [quoted in Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 39]).

<sup>147</sup> Len Spencer, AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS: MONOLOGUE (Columbia cylinder 32045K, UCSB 4703) §. Note the similarity in wording to George Graham’s STREET FAKIR as transcribed in chapter five, page 500; since Graham is also identified with Part K, I suspect he may have originated the text.

<sup>148</sup> The LEVEE SCENE has already been mentioned; the other two were issued as Len Spencer with Orchestra, HAVING FUN WITH THE ORCHESTRA (Columbia cylinder 32425); Len Spencer and Parke Hunter, THE EBONY EMPERORS OF MELODY (Columbia cylinder 32426).

<sup>149</sup> Part 1 (31129, mx. C-1022); Part 2 (31076, mx. C-302, C-206); Part 3 (31193, mx. C-1021); Part 4 (31130, mx. C-2585); Part 5 (31131, mx. C-301, C-1071); Part 6 (31132, mx. C-299, C-1024).

<sup>150</sup> Victor B-206-5; C-206-5; B-1022-4; C-1022-4; B-2585-4, 5; B-2961-4, 5; and C-2961-1, 2 were all recorded on Feb. 26, 1909.

<sup>151</sup> The couplings were 16553 (Part 1 [B-1022] + Part 4 [B-2585]); 16762 (Part 3 [B-1021] + Part 6 [B-1024]); 16763 (Part 8 [B-1023] + AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS, NO. 9 [see note 186 below]); 35072 (Part 1 [C-1022] + Part 4 [C-2585]); 35073 (Part 6 [C-1024] + Part 8 [C-2961]); and 35149

---

(Part 3 [C-1021] + Harry Macdonough, WHEN THE MOCKING BIRDS ARE SINGING IN THE WILDWOOD). By 1919 only 16553 and 35149 remained in the Victor catalog.

<sup>152</sup> Sears, Roebuck & Co. brochure promoting the “New Harvard J. Talking Machine, Latest 1907 Model,” in the collection of the author.

<sup>153</sup> D (Star 4001); E (Silver Tongued 263); F (Star 4002); H (Star 4007); J (Silver Tongued 359), and a double-faced coupling of F+H (Climax K151, D&R 3566).

<sup>154</sup> The series was assigned catalog numbers 9275 through 9280 and introduced in the *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:2 (April 1906) 8.

<sup>155</sup> Edison Minstrels, AT THE MINSTREL SHOW, NO. 4 (Edison 9278, UCSB 4569; *TWO MINUTE WAX CYLINDER PHONOGRAPH RECORDINGS: VAUDEVILLE AND MINSTRELSY* [Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001], 26 §. Similarly, the dialog in part two begins with Arthur Collins asking Byron G. Harlan, “Well, Byron, how’d you enjoy the trip around the world?” (Edison Minstrels, AT THE MINSTREL SHOW, NO. 2 [Edison 9276, UCSB 3065] §), in reference to the musical “trip around the world” in part one.

<sup>156</sup> Advertisement, *Collier’s* 39 (July 27, 1907), 23.

<sup>157</sup> Jack Raymond, *A List of American Minstrel Records* (Washington, D. C.: Jack Raymond, 2003), 15 observes that Murray and Spencer, THE JOKESMITHS (Albany Indestructible 747) contains the “same minstrel routine” as Edison Minstrels, AT THE MINSTREL SHOW, NO. 5 (Edison 9279). The spoken segment in Edison Minstrels, AT THE MINSTREL SHOW NO. 3 (Edison 9277, UCSB 3064) § is also very close to that in OLDEN TIME MINSTRELS “G” (Victor 4599, B-2962-2) §.

<sup>158</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:2 (Apr. 1906), 9.

<sup>159</sup> Haydn Quartet, OLD PLANTATION SCENES NO. 1—SLAVERY DAYS (Victor 2671, B-1020-7) §; also issued as Edison Quintette, SLAVERY DAYS (Edison 8710, June 1904).

<sup>160</sup> Haydn Quartet, OLD PLANTATION SCENES NO. 2—THE OLD CABIN HOME (Victor 2672, B-1035-1) §; also issued as Edison Quintette, OLD CABIN HOME (Edison 8744, July 1904).

<sup>161</sup> Haydn Quartet, OLD PLANTATION SCENES NO. 3—THE WANDERER’S RETURN (Victor 2673, B-1041-[?]) §; also issued as Edison Quintette, WANDERER’S RETURN (Edison 8772, Aug. 1904).

<sup>162</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:3 (May 1904), 8-9.

<sup>163</sup> Haydn Quartet, OUR SUNNY SOUTHERN HOME (Victor M-3343-[?], *EARLY VICTOR RECORDINGS, 1901-1903* [P&L Antiques], 9) §.

<sup>164</sup> Based on Edison Quintette, SLAVERY DAYS (Edison 8710) §, the only part of the series I have heard on cylinder.

<sup>165</sup> See descriptions of parts two and three in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:4 (June 1904), 9 and 2:5 (July 1904), 10.

<sup>166</sup> See Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Matrix*, under B-1035.

<sup>167</sup> The Spencer Trio’s IN FRONT OF THE OLD CABIN DOOR opens with a crowd persuading an old man to perform a clog dance, accompanied by whistling and piano; in return, he asks his audience to go down to his cabin and serenade Mammy with “In the Evening by the Moonlight,” after which he invites them inside to eat and drink (Spencer Trio, IN FRONT OF THE OLD CABIN DOOR [Columbia 10” disc 652-4] §).

<sup>168</sup> Other examples are the quartet descriptive CHURCH SCENE FROM THE OLD HOMESTEAD, Len Spencer, FLOGGING SCENE FROM “UNCLE TOM’S CABIN” (Columbia cylinder 32494, released July 1904; issued as UNCLE TOM’S CABIN on Edison 8656; see also an announcement of a new record: “Scenes from ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’—Hunting & Spencer” [*Phonoscope* 2:10 (Oct. 1898), 17]); and Len Spencer, TRANSFORMATION SCENE FROM “DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE” (Columbia cylinder 32604, released Dec. 1904, issued as DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE on Edison 8879).

<sup>169</sup> I have no solid information on the origins of the record album in this sense; however, see pictures of two early examples in Fabrizio and Paul, *Antique Phonograph Accessories and Contraptions*, 198 (172-219 cover disc and cylinder storage accessories more generally). Some albums manufactured by the Victor Talking Machine Company bear a notice that they were patented Dec. 17, 1917, but with no patent number listed.

<sup>170</sup> I have no firm date on this development either. One older source claims that the “album set” was introduced in the United States by the Victor Talking Machine Company in 1924 with its “Music Arts Library of Victor Records” (Read and Welch, *Tin Foil to Stereo*, 257, 267-8; see also advertisement, *New York Times*, Oct. 10, 1924, p. 20), but Columbia was offering “the ‘M10’ Series of Records (12

---

Double-Discs, 24 Selections) and Record Album” considerably earlier (see advertisement, *New York Times*, May 6, 1912, p. 5).

<sup>171</sup> One other example, from 1911, links Byron G. Harlan, CONGRESSMAN FILKIN’S HOMECOMING with Steve Porter and Byron G. Harlan, THE OLD TIME STREET FAKIR, coupled together by Columbia (A1036, mx. 19236 + 19303-[?] §) but separately by Victor (16866, B10006; 16903-A, B10399-[?] §). At the beginning of THE OLD TIME STREET FAKIR, one character says to another: “Ain’t seen you since the night o’ Congressman Filkin’s reception.”

<sup>172</sup> ALABAMA MINSTRELS (Edison 8631, Mar. 1904), GEORGIA MINSTRELS (Edison 8672, Apr. 1904), CALIFORNIA MINSTRELS (Edison 8690, May 1904). Edison 8631 was advertised as “the first of a new series of minstrel Records” (*Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:12 [Feb. 1904], 8); see note 175 below regarding the earlier Edison Minstrels series of 1903. Some of the state-based titles had a vague connection with the subject matter of the phonogram; for instance, ALABAMA MINSTRELS (Edison 8631, *TWO MINUTE WAX CYLINDER PHONOGRAPH RECORDINGS: VAUDEVILLE AND MINSTRELSY* [Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001], 22 §) concludes with the song “Down in Mobile Long Ago.”

<sup>173</sup> OLDEN TIME MINSTRELS “A” (Victor 4081, B-1723); “B” (Victor 4082, B-1721); “C” (Victor 4083, B-1722); all recorded Sept. 29, 1904.

<sup>174</sup> DESE BONES SHALL RISE AGAIN (Columbia 10” disc 33-2) § contains the same sequence of jokes as the brown wax cylinder version quoted above (with “Mister Henry,” i.e., Harry Spencer, in place of Porter), but the same selection on Star 4000 §, presumably sourced from a later Columbia take, instead features an extended comic dialog about an amount of money the interlocutor has allegedly borrowed from the end-man and failed to return. A similar change occurred in OLD LOG CABIN: Columbia 7” disc 645-1 § and 10” disc 645-3 § both contain a sequence of puns in which the end-man claims to have buried various dead animals on his farm and had various crops spring up: horseradish from a horse, “cow-cumbers” from a cow, “piggles” from a pig. Columbia A480, mx. 645-4 § instead contains a gambling story (transcribed in *FPRA* Aug. 1958, 33) and a pun about a “temperance barber” not wanting to “dye a drunkard.”

<sup>175</sup> Bayly and Kinnear, *Zon-o-phone Record*, 124-5 list the following by the Imperial Minstrels: DESE BONES SHALL RISE AGAIN (5072), UPON THE GOLDEN SHORE (5073), HEAR DEM BELLS (5074), WHEN THE AUTUMN LEAVES ARE FALLING (5076), OLD FOLKS AT HOME (5077), illegible title (5078), MY OLD KENTUCKY HOME (5079), and LAUGHING SONG (5081). Later issues, often of the same titles, were DOLLY GRAY (5469), DESE BONES SHALL RISE AGAIN (5470), HEAR DEM BELLS (5471), LAUGHING SONG (5473), MY OLD KENTUCKY HOME (5474), UPON THE GOLDEN SHORE (5476); from Raymond, *American Minstrel Records*, 25, except for 5469 and 5474, lots 129 and 130 in Nauck’s *Vintage Record Auction #29*, closed May 12, 2001). The start of the dialog on one of the Zon-o-phone Imperial Minstrels discs runs: “Well, Mister Spencer, what are you doing now?” / “Why, Arthur, I’m an editor” (Imperial Minstrels, UPON THE GOLDEN SHORE [Zon-o-phone C5476] §). I cannot identify the end-man’s voice, but it is definitely neither Arthur Collins nor any of the better-known participants in minstrel phonograms. One candidate might be Arthur Clifford, since the Edison Modern Minstrels, UP-TO-DATE MINSTRELSY, NO. 1 (Edison 8454) was advertised as “Introducing song ‘My Love I Dare Not Tell,’ by Arthur Clifford” (*Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:5 [July 1903], 2), but I have no further information on this cylinder or the earlier Edison Minstrels selections REMINISCENCES OF MINSTRELSY (Edison 8325) and ECHOES OF MINSTRELSY (Edison 8326), both released at the start of 1903. As for Leeds and Catlin, one example in the author’s collection is Spencer Minstrels, MY DINAH (Leeds 4180, mx. 5278) §, with Bob Roberts as end-man and solo vocalist. The only other reported specimen of which I am aware is “Second” [= Spencer?] Minstrels, I KINDA LIKE TO HAVE YOU FUSSIN’ ’ROUND (Concert 71164); reported in Raymond, *Minstrel Records*, 28.

<sup>176</sup> LOUISIANA MINSTRELS (Edison 8920, Feb. 1905), TENNESSEE MINSTRELS (Edison 8951, Mar. 1905), SOUTH CAROLINA MINSTRELS (Edison 9024, June 1905), MISSISSIPPI MINSTRELS (Edison 9072, Aug. 1905); OLDEN TIME MINSTRELS “D” (Victor 4245, B-2113); OLDEN TIME MINSTRELS “E” (Victor 4244, B-2114); OLDEN TIME MINSTRELS “F” (Victor 4262, B-2115), all recorded Jan. 5, 1905; and OLDEN TIME MINSTRELS “G” (Victor 4599, B-2960 according to Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Matrix*; however, a pressing in my collection featuring “Get Happy,” the song associated with part “G,” is clearly marked B-2962-2, which Fagan and Moran list as a part “I” not issued in the United States), recorded Dec. 19, 1905.

<sup>177</sup> OLDEN TIME MINSTRELS “F” (Victor 4262, B-2115-3) §.

<sup>178</sup> Description of Louisiana Minstrels (Edison 8920), in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:11 (Jan. 1905), 9; the two are announced after the overture: “Introducing Mister Spencer and Mister Murray” (Edison Modern Minstrels, LOUISIANA MINSTRELS [Edison 8920, UCSB 2998]) §.

<sup>179</sup> SADIE RAY (Columbia 10” disc 646-1) §; OLD LOG CABIN (Columbia 7” disc 645-1) §.

<sup>180</sup> DESE BONES SHALL RISE AGAIN (Columbia 10” disc 33-2) §; OLD LOG CABIN (Columbia 10” disc 645-3) §.

<sup>181</sup> For instance:

The California Minstrels,  
Edison Record.

Gentlemen, be seated! [*chord with bones rattling*]

Introductory overture! [*instrumental overture with bones, followed by whistling and applause*].

(CALIFORNIA MINSTRELS [Edison 8690, *TWO MINUTE WAX CYLINDER PHONOGRAPH RECORDINGS: VAUDEVILLE AND MINSTRELSY* (Portland, Oregon: Glenn Sage, 1999-2001), 23]) §;

Upon the Golden Shore,  
sung to the Zon-o-phone  
by the Imperial Minstrels.

Gentlemen, be seated! [*chord*]

Introductory overture! [*instrumental overture with bones, followed by whistling and applause*].

(Imperial Minstrels, UPON THE GOLDEN SHORE [Zon-o-phone C5476]) §;

My Dinah,  
by Len Spencer’s Minstrels, Leeds Record.

Gentlemen, be seated! [*chord*]

Introductory overture! [*instrumental overture with bones, followed by whistling and applause*].

(Spencer Minstrels, MY DINAH [Leeds 4180, mx. 5278]) §.

<sup>182</sup> OLD LOG CABIN (Columbia 10” A480, mx. 645-4) §, OLDEN TIME MINSTRELS “B” (Victor 4082, B-1721-4) §, OLDEN TIME MINSTRELS “F” (Victor 4262, B-2115-3) §; OLDEN TIME MINSTRELS “G” (Victor 4599, B-2962-2) §. THE LAUGHING SONG (Harvard pressing of Columbia 7” disc 644-[?]) § follows the same general pattern but omits the chord.

<sup>183</sup> THE RAMBLER MINSTREL COMPANY (RECORD A) (Columbia 10” disc 3448-1, M-890-1) §.

<sup>184</sup> This is the pattern heard on THE RAMBLER MINSTREL COMPANY (RECORD B) (Columbia 10” disc 3449-2) §; MINSTREL RECORD “C” (Star 4005 = Columbia mx. 3478-[?]) §; THE RAMBLER MINSTREL COMPANY (RECORD D) (Columbia A466, mx. 3479-1) §; MINSTREL RECORD “E” (Star 5114 = Columbia mx. 3531-[?]) §; MINSTREL RECORD “F” (Star 5115 = Columbia mx. 3554-[?]) §. One exception is MINSTREL RECORD “G” (Busy-Bee [Star] 5414 = Columbia mx. 3608-[?], issued as MINSTREL RECORD “H”) §, on which only Murray appears as end-man.

<sup>185</sup> The same spoken segments appear in THE CHRISTY MINSTRELS—NO. 1. INTRODUCING “COLLEGE LIFE” AND “MY KICKAPOO QUEEN” (Victor 5097, take 3) § and THE RAMBLING MINSTREL COMPANY (RECORD B) INTRODUCING “GOOD-BYE MR. GREENBACK” (Standard [Columbia] 3449-2) §.

<sup>186</sup> VICTOR MINSTRELS NO. 9 (Victor 5363, B-4981, also issued as double-faced 16763, recorded Dec. 27, 1907); VICTOR MINSTRELS NO. 10 (Victor 5380, B-4982-3, MW §; also issued as double-faced 16149; recorded Dec. 27, 1907); VICTOR MINSTRELS NO. 11 (Victor 5449, B-6081, also issued as double-faced 16189, 16925, probably recorded on the same day as B-6082); VICTOR MINSTRELS NO. 12 (Victor 5530, B-6082, also issued as double-faced 16415, recorded Apr. 6, 1908); VICTOR MINSTRELS NO. 13 (Victor 5544, B-6296-[?]) §; also issued as double-faced 16415, recorded July 9, 1908); VICTOR MINSTRELS NO. 14 (Victor B-6297, double-faced 16042, 16914, recorded July 9, 1908); VICTOR MINSTRELS NO. 15 (Victor B-6751, double-faced 16263, 16914, recorded Jan. 7, 1909); VICTOR MINSTRELS NO. 16 (Victor 16311-A, B-6752-[?]) §, recorded Jan. 7, 1909). I have not been able to audition all parts of this series, but all three end-men do appear on numbers 10 and 13, while only Collins and Murray appear on number 16.

<sup>187</sup> Description of JUBILEE MINSTRELS (Edison 9953) in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:8 (Aug. 1908), 15.

<sup>188</sup> Edison Minstrels, JUBILEE MINSTRELS (Edison 9953, UCSB 3373) §; the same opening structure appears in Edison Minstrels, MODEL MINSTRELS (Edison 10135, UCSB 3589) §. In fact, the National Phonograph Company may have pioneered the three-end-man minstrel record with a slightly different lineup in DIXIE MINSTRELS (Edison 9672), which “starts with an opening chorus” and contains



---

“contributions by Byron G. Harlan, Steve Porter, Edward Meeker and Billy Murray” (*Edison Phonograph Monthly* 5:6 [Aug. 1907], 5). I have not heard this cylinder, and so cannot vouch for how it was actually structured; however, in JUBILEE MINSTRELS and MODEL MINSTRELS Steve Porter is verifiably the interlocutor and engages in dialog with Byron G. Harlan, Arthur Collins, and Billy Murray in turn.

<sup>189</sup> MINSTREL RECORD “C” (Busy Bee 1361 = American Record Company 031361) § is equivalent to the Columbia RAMBLER MINSTRELS “C,” suggesting that other parts of that series may have been issued through this company as well. For the Zon-o-phone RAMBLER MINSTRELS series, see Raymond, *American Minstrel Records*, 26-7. Its early numbers appear to duplicate Columbia RAMBLER MINSTRELS and Victor CHRISTY MINSTRELS selections, at least in their musical content, but I am not yet in a position to identify their precise relationship to other series of the period. The Indestructible minstrel series of this period adheres the same structure and personnel as the three-end-man Victor discs; cf. Peerless Quartet, DIXIE MINSTRELS NO. 3 (Albany Indestructible 807, UCSB 3940) §.

<sup>190</sup> Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix*, lists twelve-inch takes of the Haydn Quartet’s “Georgia Minstrels” series, recorded in June 1902 (R-506 through R-510), but there is no indication that these were ever issued. The first *issued* twelve-inch minstrel first part appears to have been MATINEE MINSTRELS (Victor 31488, C-2960), recorded Dec. 19, 1905, described in Raymond, *American Minstrel Records*, 24 as “Dialogue on Poets, ‘Eileen Alanna;’” on the corresponding ten-inch B-2960, see note 176 above.

<sup>191</sup> The first twelve-inch minstrel first part issued by Columbia appears to have been Rambler Minstrel Company, MY KICKAPOO QUEEN (Columbia 30062, issued in May 1907, also issued as double-faced A-5027); identified as RAMBLER MINSTREL COMPANY RECORD “G” in Raymond, *Minstrel Records*, 8. With this issue, the lettering used on standard Columbia disc issues and some of the company’s client labels diverges: MINSTREL RECORD “G” on Star 5414 was pressed from Columbia mx. 3608, ordinarily issued as RAMBLER MINSTREL COMPANY RECORD “H,” whereas MINSTREL RECORD “H” on Star 5814 was pressed from Columbia mx. 3710, ordinarily issued as PEERLESS MINSTRELS. Columbia’s cylinder RAMBLER MINSTRELS selections do not correspond exactly to the discs. In terms of concluding song, “A” (cylinder 32952) corresponds to disc “B,” “B” (cylinder 32986) to disc “C,” “C” (cylinder 33031) to disc “F,” and “D” (cylinder 33161) has no Columbia disc equivalent; in the Twentieth Century format, “A” (cylinder 85065, issued in 1906) corresponds to disc “A,” “B” (cylinder 85110) to disc “G,” and “C” (cylinder 85144) has no Columbia disc equivalent.

<sup>192</sup> This atypical phonogram reverts to the older practice of opening with “Gentlemen, be seated,” followed by an overture by orchestra and chorus; the interlocutor and end men address each other not by name but as “Mister Middle Man,” “Mister Tambo,” and “Mister Bones”; they briefly greet each other before a sentimental ballad and afterwards engage in a repartee which the “old man in box” interrupts with uncontrolled laughter at one of the jokes, finally explaining: “when I was a boy, I used to laugh every time grandfather told it”; the phonogram ends with a closing chorus (ELKS MINSTRELS (Edison Amberol 64, UCSB 1610) §. See also the written description in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:11 (Nov. 1908), 19.

<sup>193</sup> PEERLESS MINSTRELS (Columbia 10” disc 3710-1, M-1829-1) §, also issued as MINSTREL RECORD “H” (Star 5814) §.

<sup>194</sup> Its routines also appear on Edison and Albany Indestructible. Thus, the same basic content spans the untitled minstrel record Columbia A5138, mx. 30303, the Victor Minstrel Company, VIRGINIA MINSTRELS (Victor 35095-B), the PEERLESS MINSTRELS (Edison Special K), and CAROLINA MINSTRELS NO. 1 (Albany Indestructible 4M-3012).

<sup>195</sup> RAMBLER MINSTRELS (Columbia A5123, mx. 30277-3) §; RAMBLER MINSTRELS (Columbia A5123, mx. 30278-2) §.

<sup>196</sup> MINSTREL (Columbia A5251, mx. 30600-2) §. The same pattern is found in [MINSTRELS] (Columbia A5173, mx 30385-1) §; and [MINSTRELS] (Columbia A5138 mx. 30303-2) §, the latter identical in content to Victor Minstrel Company, VIRGINIA MINSTRELS (Victor 35095-B take 2) §.

<sup>197</sup> FIRESIDE MINSTRELS, PART 1 (Columbia-Rena 334 = Columbia mx. 30782-[?]) §, FIRESIDE MINSTRELS, PART 2 (Columbia-Rena 334 = Columbia mx. 30872-[?]) §, the latter identical in content to Victor Minstrel Company, CAROLINA MINSTRELS (Victor 35202-B, take 3, issued in 1911) §.

---

<sup>198</sup> In Victor Minstrel Company, NORTH CAROLINA MINSTRELS (Victor 35307-A take 2, issued in 1913) §, Meyer does participate in some of the dialog, although the end-men also banter with each other.

<sup>199</sup> Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 95-102; Robert C. Allen, *Vaudeville and Film 1895-1915: A Study in Media Interaction* (New York: Arno Press, 1980), 46 ff.

<sup>200</sup> “Latest Columbia Records” list, dated Aug. 1, 1900, reproduced in facsimile in Fabrizio and Paul, *Phonographica*, 51. Cylinders 30409 and 30410 were first introduced with this list. Three subsequent additions to the catalog were Will F. Denny, IMITATION OF A FRENCH SINGER DOING STUNTS, Vaudeville Specialty (Columbia cylinder 31349), Arthur Collins, A COON TURN, Vaudeville Specialty (Columbia cylinder 31469) and Joe Belmont, BIRD IMITATIONS, Vaudeville (Columbia cylinder 31783), listed in Lorenz, *Two Minute Records*.

<sup>201</sup> The first block of titles was introduced in the *Phonogram-2* 1 (Sept. 1900), 159-60:

7543 VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (No. 1) Steele—Imitations of John Kernell, also Mr. Dan Daly in short scene from ‘Lady Slavey,’ and Hebrew Monologues.

7544 VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (No. 2) Quinn—With Irish Stories, ending with comic song and dance, telling of the family next door.

7548 VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (No. 3) Dudley—Impersonating Frank Kernell in imitations of Amateur Vaudeville Artists.

7549 VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (No. 4) Collins—Introducing funny sayings, song choruses, dances, etc.

7556 VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (No. 5) Denny—Naming rules of Country Hotel, and ending with song, “Aint you my Lulu.”

Two more selections were added in the *Phonogram-2* 1:6 (Oct. 1900), 163-4:

7565 VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (No. 6) Natus—“You may forget the singer.” Impersonating Emmet, Scanlan and J. W. Kelley.

7584 VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (No. 7) Favor—Comic Irish dialogue and comic song.

Finally, Edison 7957 was a VAUDEVILLE WHISTLING AND MONOLOGUE SPECIALTY by Joe Belmont. Some corresponding selections were offered in the Concert format, receiving letters rather than numbers, starting with two introduced in the *Phonogram-2* 2 (Dec. 1900), 96:

B516, VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY “A” – Dudley – Imitation of Amateur Vaudeville Artists

B523, VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY “B” – Collins – Introducing funny sayings, song choruses, dances, etc.

<sup>202</sup> S. H. Dudley, AMATEUR NIGHT AT THE VAUDEVILLE (Zon-o-phone 500); George J. Gaskin, VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY NO. 1 (Zon-o-phone 568); Edward M. Favor, VAUDEVILLE SKETCH (Zon-o-phone 9530); George J. Gaskin, A VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (Zon-o-phone 9813). The available listing is incomplete, so there may have been others.

<sup>203</sup> Will Steele, A VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (V-415, Sept. 15, 1900); Dan W. Quinn, A VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY, intro: The Family Living Next Door (M-3154, Feb. 27, 1901); S. H. Dudley, A VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (V-505, Nov. 13, 1900; M-3205-1, 2, Mar. 13, 1901); Arthur Collins and Metropolitan Orchestra, A VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (V-170, July 21, 1900); Dan W. Quinn, VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY NO. 2 (M-3290, recorded Apr. 26, 1901); Charles P. Lowe and Miss Jottie, VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (V-963 and M-3581, recorded Sept. 12, 1901).

<sup>204</sup> Will F. Denny, VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY NO. 5 (Edison Concert cylinder 7556, TEA, May 20, 2003) §.

<sup>205</sup> Edison 7556, originally issued as a brown wax cylinder in Sept. 1900, was later remade as a moulded black wax cylinder, with moulds 174 through 174D plated from masters by Denny on May 11-12, 1901. The selection was discontinued at the end of 1905 (“74 Records To Be Deleted From List,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:10 [Dec. 1905], 5), roughly when we might expect the four moulds produced in 1901 to have worn out. The National Phonograph Company had not begun recording in New York City until 1904 (“To Also Make Masters in New York,” *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:2 [Apr. 1904], 7).

<sup>206</sup> Arthur Collins, VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (Victor V-170-2, MW) §.

<sup>207</sup> “‘All ready there, professor,’ said the manager to a long haired, spectacled young man who had climbed up on the piano platform” (Sewell Ford, “The Phonograph Fakir,” *Fort Wayne Weekly*

---

*Sentinel* [Fort Wayne, Indiana], Sept. 22, 1897, p. 5; and *Steubenville Herald* [Steubenville, Ohio], Sept. 17, 1897, p. 2).

<sup>208</sup> Two more examples can be cited from a cylinder announced “Vaudeville Specialty, introducing Mister Dan W. Quinn, record made for Columbia Phonograph Company of New York and London,” from a sound file of uncertain provenance circulating on the Internet, corresponding to Columbia cylinder 30405 §: “Well, while I’m here I’ll just sing youse a verse of a song, let ’er go there, professor” and “Say, professor, play me a few bars o’ ‘Pretty Peggy.’” Cf. also George P. Watson, THE GERMAN MINSTREL (Edison 7819, UCSB 5215) §, in which the “professor” becomes an actual speaking role, performed by Watson in a contrastive voice.

<sup>209</sup> S. H. Dudley, AMATEUR NIGHT AT THE VAUDEVILLE (9” shield Zon-o-phone 500) §.

<sup>210</sup> I find no evidence of any real “Frank Kernell” active in vaudeville at this time, although *John Kernell*, imitated by Will Steele in Edison 7543, was an actual well-known performer. The performer’s choice between pseudonyms later on may have depended on whether phonograms were conceived as “songs” or “specialties.” Victor 4885, THE MERRY WHISTLING DARKY, is classified on the label as a “WHISTLING SONG” and credits “S. H. Dudley,” whereas Victor 4103, THE WHISTLING COON, is classified as a “WHISTLING SPECIALTY” and credits “Frank Kernell.”

<sup>211</sup> Simpson and Weiner, *Oxford English Dictionary*, 14:194-5.

<sup>212</sup> I was unable to find this usage in any of half a dozen slang dictionaries consulted; however, for instances of it in print see “Police On Fool Errand,” *New York Times*, July 20, 1903, p. 10; “Little Stories of the Streets: Fun on Wall Street,” *New York Times*, June 23, 1901, p. SM7; “Parrot’s Fun With Police,” *New York Times*, July 15, 1900, p. 5.

<sup>213</sup> See note 201 above; for yet another variant, listen to S. H. Dudley, VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (Victor M-3205-2, BEFORE RADIO: COMEDY, DRAMA & SOUND SKETCHES, 1897-1923 [St. Joseph, Illinois: Archeophone 1002], 16) §. A similar sketch of later date is Steve Porter, IMITATION OF AMATEUR NIGHT AT THE VAUDEVILLE (Edison 9764, Albany Indestructible 688).

<sup>214</sup> Some exceptions were the Julian Rose phonograms discussed below, Dan W. Quinn, VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY NO. 1 (Victor 4000, B-921), recorded Jan. 14, 1904, and Len Spencer, VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (Leeds 4083, offered in Nauck’s *Vintage Record Auction* #36 [closed Nov. 6, 2004] as lot 516).

<sup>215</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:5 (July 1904), 9. This cylinder had been preceded the month before by a similar selection, “No. 8693, ‘What I Heard at the Vaudeville,’ by Len Spencer, introduces Gus Williams’ German dialect recitation ‘Only a Lock of Hair.’ It is accompanied by what is theatrically known as ‘shiver’ music by the orchestra. This recitation is apparently pathetic, but it becomes extremely funny with the last line. This Record again shows Mr. Spencer’s versatility in making records” (*Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:4 [June 1904], 9). Like POMPERNICKLE’S SILVER WEDDING, this selection simulates the applause and laughter of the audience, but it also contains some verbal framing that suggests it may seek to represent a stage imitation of Gus Williams:

What I Heard at the Vaudeville, by Len Spencer, Edison Record.

The Cardinal,

America’s popular dialect comedian, Mister Gus Williams. [*Band plays snippet of ‘Du, Du Liegst Mir Im Herzen, with applause*]

He steps to the footlights and says [*Spencer then switches to “Dutch” dialect*].

At one point, Spencer also addresses the conductor: “A little shiver dere, Professor” (Len Spencer, WHAT I HEARD AT THE VAUDEVILLE [Edison 8693, UCSB 2745]) §.

<sup>216</sup> Len Spencer, POMPERNICKLE’S SILVER WEDDING (Edison 8766, TEA, Nov. 30, 2004) §.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. Len Spencer, THE MUSICAL YANKEE (Edison 9119, UCSB 2723) §; MEISTER’S MUSICAL MASTERPIECE (Edison 9416, UCSB 3143) §.

<sup>218</sup> Len Spencer and George P. Watson, THE HAPPY GERMAN TWINS (Columbia A460, mx. 3433-2) §; also issued as Victor 4695, E-3192 and 31525, C-3192.

<sup>219</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:2 (Apr. 1905), 8; cf. Len Spencer and Parke Hunter, THE PROFESSOR AND THE MUSICAL TRAMP (Edison 8984, UCSB 3018) §. Spencer and Hunter first phonogenized this piece for Victor B-2586 on May 31, 1905, the same day Spencer remade part four of AN EVENING WITH THE MINSTRELS (B-2585). It was also issued as Columbia cylinder 32667, disc 3106, and double-faced disc A274.

<sup>220</sup> For a brief biographical sketch of William Parke Hunter (1876-1912), see Uli Heier and Rainer E. Lotz, *The Banjo on Record: A Bio-Discography* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994), 198. Heier and Lotz give a comprehensive list of Hunter's collaborations with Len Spencer but wrongly assume Hunter always plays the banjo on them. For instance, he is listed on pages 200-1 playing banjo on several selections with Spencer that do not even include a banjo part, but do feature other instruments such as ocarina and fiddle (e.g. CON CLANCY AND THE WHISTLING NEWSBOY, REUBEN HASKINS' TRIP IN HIS AIRSHIP, ARKANSAW TRAVELER). Thus, on page 200, when they list personnel on AUCTION SALE OF A MUSIC STORE as "Len Spencer (vocal), William Parke Hunter (banjo), unknown (violin), (piano), (ocarina)," Hunter almost certainly played the violin and ocarina as well.

<sup>221</sup> I cannot conclusively rule out the possibility that Hunter sometimes took a speaking part in his collaborations with Spencer. Catalog descriptions are somewhat equivocal on this point, as for instance: "No. 8704, 'Rube Haskins' Trip on His Airship,' is another of Len Spencer's clever talking Records in which he is assisted by Parke Hunter, as *Ezra*. The Record is a two-and-a-half-minute trip around the world by the airship, passing over Ireland, Germany, Turkey, Port Arthur, the Philippines, and over the Rocky Mountains back home. The whistling of the wind which might naturally accompany so rapid a trip is distinctly heard. *Rube Haskins* has funny things to say about each country passed over and *Ezra* enlivens the trip with his whistling" (*Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:3 [May 1904], 8). Although we know that Hunter "assisted" by performing *Ezra's whistling*, it does not necessarily follow that he also spoke *Ezra's* lines, and REUBEN HASKIN'S TRIP 'ROUND THE WORLD IN HIS AIRSHIP LUNA was sometimes labeled as "Descriptive Talking By Len Spencer" (as on an Oxford pressing of Columbia 10" disc mx. 1730-3) without crediting Hunter, suggesting the latter was limited to providing music and sound effects.

<sup>222</sup> *Talking Machine News*, Oct. 1906, quoted in FPRA June 1947, 23.

<sup>223</sup> Advertisement, *New York Dramatic Mirror*, Aug. 15, 1908, p. 7.

<sup>224</sup> "Good Talking Pictures," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, June 13, 1908, p. 10.

<sup>225</sup> "The Len Spencer Lyceum—Its Scope and its Future," *Motion Picture World*, Apr. 30, 1910, p. 693.

<sup>226</sup> FPRA Aug. 1958, 31-2.

<sup>227</sup> FPRA Aug. 1947, 31. There is also an intriguing reference to the husband of Mrs. Eva Tascher Sibley, "who is connected with the Len Spencer phonograph record bureau" ("South Side and Railroad," *Gazette* [Stevens Point, Wisconsin], Sept. 1, 1909, p. 7).

<sup>228</sup> Spencer is so identified in "Labor Agents Meet to Enter Protest," *New York Times*, June 6, 1914, p. 7.

<sup>229</sup> See e.g. FPRA Aug. 1958, 32; Oct. 1958, 34.

<sup>230</sup> Victor V-862-1 and M-3465-1, both recorded June 12, 1901.

<sup>231</sup> Albert Campbell and Bob Roberts, AN INTERRUPTED COURTSHIP ON THE ELEVATED RAILWAY (Edison 8731, UCSB 6142) §.

<sup>232</sup> Collins typically interjects simulated dialogs before both renditions of the verse, which mimics the rag-picker's cry, "Any rags?" In one version (Arthur Collins, ANY RAGS [Victor 16215-B, B-592-5] §), the segments are:

**RAG-PICKER:** [*rattles bell*] Any rags, lady?

**LADY:** No, no rags today [*laughs*].

**RAG-PICKER:** All right, lady. //

**RAG-PICKER:** [*rattles bell*] Any rags or bottles today, lady?

**LADY:** Do you give trading stamps with your bottles [*laughs*]?

**RAG-PICKER:** No, lady.

**LADY:** Well, you get out o' here, you big black rascal, you!

**RAG-PICKER:** All right, lady.

<sup>233</sup> For instance, Collins and Harlan, MANY'S THE TIME (Standard pressing of Columbia 3679-2) §; WOULD YOU LEAVE YOUR HAPPY HOME FOR ME? (Columbia cylinder 33018-1, M-902-1) §. They also made their own version of BACKYARD CONVERSATION BETWEEN TWO IRISH WASHERWOMEN on Apr. 3, 1903 (Victor V-2159), for which both Collins and Harlan must have assumed female parts.

<sup>234</sup> Ed Rogers, *Dan, Dan, Dan-u-el* (New York: F. B. Haviland Publishing Co., Inc., 1904).

<sup>235</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:11 (Jan. 1905), 8-9.

---

<sup>236</sup> Columbia cylinder 32708.

<sup>237</sup> Len Spencer and Billy Murray, DAN DAN DANUEL (Victor 4179, B-1923-2) §.

<sup>238</sup> FPRA July 1946, 17; see also Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 186-7. In another version of the story, Murray suggested that the problem was that the part had been out of his vocal range, not that his impersonation had “disgusted” the recording director.

<sup>239</sup> Ada Jones had also phonogenized a few selections in the North American numerical series in 1893-94, but had not otherwise pursued a career in phonography; for a summary of what is known of her early career, see Gracyk, *Famous American Recording Pioneers*, 183-6.

<sup>240</sup> FPRA May 1945, 16.

<sup>241</sup> FPRA June 1947, 22.

<sup>242</sup> The earliest documented recording session by Ada Jones and Len Spencer took place on Dec. 29, 1904, when they phonogenized REUBEN AND CYNTHIA (Victor 4304, B-2101) and THE HAND OF FATE—BURLESQUE MELODRAMA (Victor 4242, B-2103), both with authorial credit to Spencer.

<sup>243</sup> As far as I can determine, “Mrs. Cal Stewart” first takes a speaking role in Cal Stewart, EVENING TIME AT PUMPKIN CENTER (Columbia disc 1757-2 [A376] §, matrix originally issued May 1904; and cylinder 32483, issued July 1904), while Harlan and Stanley, TWO RUBES AT THE VAUDEVILLE, features a speaking and singing part by Daisy Boulais, an otherwise unknown “serio-comic artist” (see the description of Edison 8736 in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:4 [June 1904], 8). Before this time, to the best of my knowledge, female characters in commercial descriptive specialties had invariably been voiced by male phonogenic performers in falsetto.

<sup>244</sup> Ada Jones and Len Spencer, KATRINA’S VALENTINE (Victor 4474, B-2676-3) §; Ada Jones and Len Spencer, HEINIE (Standard pressing of Columbia A287, mx. 3206-1) § differs only in a few minor points, for instance omitting the postman’s lines at the beginning.

<sup>245</sup> On a single-sided pressing of Victor 4474, B-2676-3 and a double-sided pressing of Victor 16528-B, B-2676-5, respectively.

<sup>246</sup> The *Edison Phonograph Monthly* identifies it as “a Dutch vaudeville specialty” (*Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:2 [Apr. 1905], 8), and a Standard pressing of Columbia A287, mx. 3206-1 gives the genre as “VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY.”

<sup>247</sup> Len Spencer, FLOGGING SCENE FROM UNCLE TOM’S CABIN (Edison 8656) §.

<sup>248</sup> Ada Jones and Len Spencer, THE HAND OF FATE (A BURLESQUE MELODRAMA) (Zon-o-phone 5110-B, formerly single-faced 316, mx. 5412-E) §.

<sup>249</sup> Description of cylinder 8982, *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:2 (Apr. 1905), 8.

<sup>250</sup> Ada Jones and Len Spencer, HEINIE (Edison 8982, UCSB 3017) §.

<sup>251</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:3 (May 1905) 9. Also issued as Victor 4491 (B-2678, E-2678), and listed in the ledgers as EVERY LITTLE BIT HELPS—VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY, one of the only times Victor explicitly identified work by Spencer and Jones as “vaudeville.”

<sup>252</sup> FPRA Sept. 1946, 24.

<sup>253</sup> Ada Jones and Len Spencer, EV’RY LITTLE BIT HELPS (Edison 9016, UCSB 2830) §.

<sup>254</sup> The term was sometimes used not only to refer to individual Jones and Spencer selections but to the corpus as a whole: “No feature of the monthly list of Edison Records is more eagerly looked for than these vaudeville sketches by Miss Jones and Mr. Spencer” (*Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:10 [Dec. 1906], 9); “These vaudeville sketches are arranged by Mr. Spencer, and the Phonograph public will agree with us that he has made a great success with them” (*Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:5 [July 1906], 9).

<sup>255</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:8 (Oct. 1906), 9; Ada Jones and Len Spencer, DOWN ON THE FARM (Edison 9431, UCSB 3153) §.

<sup>256</sup> Ada Jones and Len Spencer, MAGGIE CLANCY’S NEW PIANO (Columbia 10” disc 3403-2, M-686-2 §; and Edison 3089, UCSB 3089 §).

<sup>257</sup> Spencer received an extra ten dollars when Edison recorded one of these sketches by an agreement of Apr. 1907 (Ray Wile, “Random Notes Concerning Edison Recording Artists,” *New Amberola Graphic* 79 [Jan. 1992], 5). However, the ideas for the sketches sometimes came from other people. According to Jim Walsh, Ada Jones’s husband Hughie Flaherty “suggested some of the songs and skit situations that appeared in records by Ada and Len Spencer. The Jones-Spencer ‘Jimmy and Maggie at the Hippodrome’ was his idea” (FPRA Nov. 1961, 42). Secondary accounts contradict each other as to whether Spencer wrote sketches for live vaudeville in this period as well as for phonography. Jim

---

Walsh writes: “Spencer concentrated on being a booking agent and sketch writer for other vaudeville and recording artists after his own popularity had waned” (FPRA July 1947, 22). Tim Gracyk states, to the contrary: “He was influenced by others’ vaudeville routines, but his skits were not performed in vaudeville” (Gracyk, *Favorite American Recording Pioneers*, 188). I am not aware of any primary evidence in support of either view.

<sup>258</sup> Description of Ada Jones and Len Spencer, MUGGSY’S DREAM (Edison 9787), in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:1 (Jan. 1908), 4.

<sup>259</sup> Ada Jones and Len Spencer, JIMMIE AND MAGGIE AT THE HIPPODROME (Victor 35013A, C-2959-2) §.

<sup>260</sup> Ada Jones and Len Spencer, COMING HOME FROM CONEY ISLE (Victor 4788, B-3442-[?] §; and Columbia cylinder 32981, UCSB 4813 §).

<sup>261</sup> As on copies of JIMMIE AND MAGGIE AT THE BALL GAME (Victor 4864), FLANNIGAN’S NIGHT OFF (Victor 4789), COMING HOME FROM CONEY ISLE (Victor 4788), MANDY AND HER MAN (Victor 4670), THE GOLDEN WEDDING (Victor 4549), and ROSIE AND RUDOLPH AT THE SKATING RINK (Victor 4973).

<sup>262</sup> Respectively on copies of THE ORIGINAL COHENS (Victor 4605) and JIM JACKSON’S AFFINITY (Victor 5606).

<sup>263</sup> Cf. e.g. the description of CHIMMIE AND MAGGIE AT THE HIPPODROME (Edison 9079) in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:6 (Aug. 1905), 9, or the announcement “Dance Hall Scene [not ‘Vaudeville Sketch’], Blondy and Johnny, by Ada Jones and Len Spencer, Edison Record” (Ada Jones and Len Spencer, BLONDY AND JOHNNY [Edison 9599, 2 MINUTE CYLINDERS (P & L Antiques), 3:18]) §.

<sup>264</sup> Edison Vaudeville Company, MRS. CLANCY AND THE STREET MUSICIANS (Edison 9571) §, AN AMATEUR MINSTREL REHEARSAL (Edison 9635, UCSB 3434) §, AT THE VILLAGE POST OFFICE (Edison 9687, UCSB 32) §, THREE RUBES SEEING NEW YORK (Edison 9707, UCSB 3259, 3260) §, THE COUNTRY CONSTABLE (Edison 9839), AUNT DINAH’S GOLDEN WEDDING (Edison Amberol 63, UCSB 1602, 1603) §; Victor Vaudeville Company, AN EVENING AT MRS. CLANCEY’S BOARDING HOUSE (Victor 5401; 16656-B, B-5094-? §), AT THE VILLAGE POST OFFICE (Victor 16036, B-5093), and COURT SCENE IN CAROLINA + DARKTOWN CAMPMEETIN’ EXPERIENCES (Victor 35609) §. Columbia did not have a “Vaudeville Company” and identified the performers on routines of this sort in other ways, e.g., Columbia Trio, AT THE VILLAGE POST OFFICE (Columbia A472 and A863, mx. 3704) or by “Comedy Trio” on Climax X760, mx. 3704-? §; Steve Porter and Billy Murray, EVENING AT MRS. CLANCY’S BOARDING HOUSE (Columbia A608, mx. 3526).

<sup>265</sup> Harlan and Stanley, A SCENE IN A COUNTRY STORE (Edison 8457; Victor 31499, C-3022); TWO RUBES IN AN EATING HOUSE (Edison 8484; Victor 31512, C-3021); SCENE IN A COUNTRY BLACKSMITH’S SHOP (Edison 8557, Victor 4106, B-1749); AN EVENING CALL IN JAYVILLE CENTER (Edison 8585, Victor 4475, B-2579), etc.

<sup>266</sup> The “playlet” in vaudeville was “a stage narrative taking usually about twenty minutes to act, having a single chief character, and a single problem which predominates, and is developed by means of a plot so compressed and so organized that every speech and every action of the characters move it forward to a finish which presents the most striking features; while the whole is so organized as to produce a single impression” (Allen, *Vaudeville and Film*, 54, citing Brett Page, *Writing for Vaudeville* [Springfield, Massachusetts: The Home Correspondence School, 1915], 155-6).

<sup>267</sup> *Complete Catalog of Columbia Double-Disc Records* [to Nov. 1914], 393.

<sup>268</sup> See a list of Rose’s phonograms in Rust with Debus, *Complete Entertainment Discography*, 567-8.

<sup>269</sup> Julian Rose, HEBREW VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (Edison 8383, UCSB 4335, 4337) §.

<sup>270</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:10 (December 1905) 8.

<sup>271</sup> Julian Rose, HEBREW VAUDEVILLE SPECIALTY (Edison 9223, UCSB 36) §.

<sup>272</sup> Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 273.

<sup>273</sup> Steve Porter and Emma Forbes, MRS. HIRAM OFFEN ENGAGING BRIDGET O’SULLIVAN (Columbia cylinder 32948, etc.); MRS. HIRAM OFFEN DISCHARGES BRIDGET O’SULLIVAN (Standard pressing of Columbia A379, mx. 3469-2) §, also issued as Columbia cylinder 33014. The Standard pressing of Columbia A379 gives its genre as “VAUDEVILLE SKETCH.” In these routines, Forbes plays the ethnically unmarked mistress of a household while Porter plays an Irish maid and a postman. On Porter’s collaborations with Len Spencer, see descriptions for FLANNIGAN’S NIGHT OFF (Edison 9244) in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:1 (Mar. 1906), 8, and THE MORNING AFTER (Edison 9326) in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:4 (June 1906), 8-9; Spencer plays Flanagan while Porter plays Mary Ann. Len

---

Spencer remade the Flanagan sketches for Victor and Zon-o-phone with Ada Jones taking Porter's place as Mary Ann (Ada Jones and Len Spencer, FLANNIGAN'S NIGHT OFF [Victor 4789, B-3384-2, recorded May 11, 1906] §; [Ada Jones and Len Spencer], MORNING AFTER FLANNIGAN'S NIGHT OFF [Oxford pressing of Zon-o-phone 5441-B, formerly single-faced 574, mx. 6309] §), while Porter remade one of them for Columbia, voicing both parts of the dialog himself (Steve Porter, FLANNIGAN'S NIGHT OFF [Columbia cylinder 32949, disc 3434, double-faced A383]).

<sup>274</sup> Len Spencer and Steve Porter, TWO JOLLY IRISHMEN (Edison 9349, 2 *MINUTE CYLINDERS* [P & L Antiques], 5:19) §; *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:5 (July 1906), 9. Both Spencer and Porter phonogenized similar routines later on with Billy Murray, e.g. Len Spencer and Billy Murray, THE LIARS (Albany Indestructible 723, UCSB 6105) §; Steve Porter and Billy Murray, IRISH REPARTEE (Victor 16017-B, B-6098-?) §.

<sup>275</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:11 (Jan. 1907), 11.

<sup>276</sup> Steve Porter, FLANNIGAN'S TROUBLES IN A RESTAURANT (Edison 9495, UCSB 37) §. Another version, Steve Porter, FLANNIGAN'S TROUBLES IN A RESTAURANT (Busy Bee 1435 = American Record Company 031435) §, omits the final line addressed to the "professor."

<sup>277</sup> This was not an innovation of the "Flanagan" series, however: an earlier example is found in George P. Watson, THE GERMAN MINSTREL (Edison 7819, UCSB 5215) §.

<sup>278</sup> Steve Porter, FLANNIGAN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW (Edison 9810, UCSB 3312) §.

<sup>279</sup> Description of Steve Porter, FLANNIGAN'S NEW YEAR'S CALL (Edison 10054) in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:11 (Nov. 1908), 18.

<sup>280</sup> Description of Steve Porter, SIDEWALK CONVERSATION (Edison 9840) in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:3 (Mar. 1908), 5; also issued as Albany Indestructible 817.

<sup>281</sup> Description of Steve Porter, THE LAUGHING SPECTATOR (Edison 9864) in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:4 (Apr. 1908), 4.

<sup>282</sup> Steve Porter, THE LAUGHING SPECTATOR (United pressing of Columbia A432, mx. 3773-3) §; also issued on Edison 9864 and Victor 5454, 16519, B-6100.

<sup>283</sup> "This Week's Play Bills," *Washington Post*, Feb. 12, 1905, p. 37.

<sup>284</sup> Description of Edison cylinder 9815 in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:2 (Feb. 1908), 4; also issued as Victor 16016, B-5001.

<sup>285</sup> FPRA July 1947, 22.

<sup>286</sup> Description of Edison cylinder 9853 in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:4 (Apr. 1908), 3, italics added.

<sup>287</sup> Description of Edison cylinder 9929 in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:7 (July 1908) 2-3.

<sup>288</sup> Len Spencer and Mozarto, SIM AND SAM, THE MUSICAL COONS (Edison 9929, UCSB 44) §, with some differences noted from Spencer and Mozarto, SIM AND SAM, A COMEDY MUSICAL ACT (Victor 5367, no take indicated) §.

<sup>289</sup> [Harry] Spencer and [George] Schweinfest, THE ARKANSAW TRAVELER (Columbia 10" disc 21-3) §; identification of Harry as opposed to Len Spencer based on aural evidence and Brooks and Rust, *Columbia Master Book Discography*.

<sup>290</sup> This is made explicit in a later version by Len Spencer: "Mr. Spencer carries on the dialogue in two different voices and has the assistance on the violin of a member of our Symphony Orchestra" (*Edison Phonograph Monthly* 7:6 [June 1909], 26).

<sup>291</sup> Description of Harlan and Stanley, TWO RUBES AT THE VAUDEVILLE (Edison 8736, ENHSS §), in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:4 (June 1904) 8. Cf. also the similar Harlan and Stanley, TWO RUBES AT THE CIRCUS (Edison 8773), described in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:5 (July 1904), 10.

<sup>292</sup> Len Spencer and Parke Hunter, THE SQUASHTOWN AMATEUR MINSTRELS (Columbia cylinder 32392).

<sup>293</sup> Edison Vaudeville Company, AN AMATEUR MINSTREL REHEARSAL (Edison 9635, UCSB 3434) §; see also description in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 5:5 (July 1907), 8. Phonograms depicting "rehearsals" date back to at least the mid-1890s, when John P. Hogan phonogenized "OH, MY GAL! Trials of a colored performer with the orchestra at rehearsal. Song, dance, arguments and disputes with the musical director" (*Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.], 37). Other examples include Len Spencer, REHEARSING THE SQUASHTOWN ORCHESTRA (Columbia cylinder 32415) and Edison Military Band, THE DIXIE RUBE (Edison 9241), described in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:12 (Feb. 1906), 9.

---

<sup>294</sup> Kenney, *Recorded Music*, 33-7 addresses the work of Jones and Spencer but deals primarily with their overt treatment of class and ethnicity without explicitly probing questions of form, genre, or phonographic mediation. His account also credits Jones with more creative control over the “message” of the sketches than she probably had, given that it was Spencer who authored them.

<sup>295</sup> Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 137-208.

<sup>296</sup> “Billy, May, and Daisy Golden is a trio that supply unlimited merriment of the popular order” (“At the Theaters,” *Washington Post*, Jan. 18, 1900, p. 7); “The Golden Trio, consisting of Billy, May, and Daisey [sic], will open the performance” (“Vaudeville at Cabin John,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 12, 1900, p. 24); described as a “Black Face Sketch” in advertisement for Palm Garden, *Washington Post*, Aug. 13, 1900, p. 9. Billy and Daisy continued to perform together into 1902: “Other features of the program consisted of....a vocal solo by Miss Daisy Golden, monologue and comic songs by Mr. William Golden” (“Jolly Fat Men Entertain,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 5, 1902, p. 2).

<sup>297</sup> *Phonoscope* 4:6 (June 1900), 6; the street address and name “Hotel Golden” (as opposed to “The Golden” as reported in the *Phonoscope*) are given in various *Washington Post* articles cited below. He did pay sporadic visits to recording laboratories over the next couple of years—Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix* list recording sessions on Jan. 9, 1901, Oct. 31, 1901, and May 2, 1902—but his phonographic work seems to have slackened off as well: “Many people have asked me lately, ‘Where’s Billy Golden?’” (*Phonogram-2* [Mar. 1902], 71).

<sup>298</sup> First Billy Golden had his prized collie dog stolen, although it was quickly recovered from a nearby stableyard (“Charges Theft of Dog,” *Washington Post*, July 31, 1901, p. 2); then he was fined \$200 for selling liquor on Sunday (“Fined for Sunday Selling,” *Washington Post*, June 10, 1902, p. 10).

<sup>299</sup> Jewell May Johnson married Wyatt Arnold Lee, identified as “pitcher and outfielder of the Washington American League team,” on Sept. 24, 1902, and then left for Lee’s home in Missouri (“Pitcher Lee a Benedict,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 25, 1902, p. 8; see also “Pitcher Wyatt Lee to Wed,” *Washington Post*, Aug. 29, 1902, p. 9). The couple had a daughter christened on their first wedding anniversary, celebrated at the Hotel Golden (“Wyatt Lee’s Anniversary Party,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 27, 1903, p. 8). Jewell died at Altoona, Pennsylvania on Sept. 4, 1906, at the age of 27, survived by her husband and children Mildred and Jewell Frances (“Mrs. Jewell May Lee,” *Altoona Mirror* [Altoona, Pennsylvania], Sept. 5, 1906, p. 12; “Died,” *Washington Post*, Sept. 7, 1906, p. 3).

<sup>300</sup> “Husband and Wife Disagree,” *Washington Post*, Oct. 2, 1902, p. 9.

<sup>301</sup> “Husband Sues for Divorce,” *Washington Post*, Oct. 5, 1902, p. 11.

<sup>302</sup> “Woman With a Whip,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 7, 1902, p. 2; see also “End of Horsewhipping Case,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 8, 1902, p. 2; the woman gave her name as “Miss Bessie Adams.”

<sup>303</sup> “Wronged Wife in Pursuit,” *Washington Post*, Nov. 13, 1902, p. 2; here the woman is identified as “Blanch Parker, alias Bessie Adams.”

<sup>304</sup> “City Bulletin,” *Washington Post*, Apr. 24, 1903, p. 12.

<sup>305</sup> The Hotel Golden was sold in 1910 for \$26,000 on behalf of Colen [or Colin] M. Ingersoll, who had apparently acquired it in the meantime (“Sales in Chevy Chase,” *Washington Post*, Feb. 27, 1910, p. R2).

<sup>306</sup> William B. Shires and wife Blanche H. (age 38) are listed in the 1920 census in Bergen County, New Jersey. Blanche died in Washington, D. C. on Dec. 19, 1969, identified in her obituary as “wife of the late William B. Shires” (*Washington Post*, Dec. 21, 1969, p. 70; Dec. 22, 1969, p. B6); earlier obituaries for her brothers establish that her maiden name was Parker (for James A. Parker, *Washington Post*, July 15, 1951, p. M12; for Frank D. Parker, *Washington Post*, Aug. 4, 1964, p. B4). I assume this was the same “Blanch Parker” May Golden was trailing in 1902. Her Social Security death record gives her birthdate as Aug. 31, 1881, making her twenty-one at the time of the horsewhipping incident.

<sup>307</sup> “September 25, 1904, he [Billy Golden] joined Joe Hughes as the team of Golden and Hughes, and as such they are now playing” (Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 288). That their partnership dates back to this period is confirmed by records of specific engagements: “At the West End Theatre to-night will be....Golden and Hughes” (“Sunday Concerts,” *New York Times*, Oct. 23, 1904, p. SMA7); at Pastor’s in New York, Nov. 7-12 (*New York Dramatic Mirror*, Nov. 12, 1904, p. 21); at the Howard in Boston, Nov. 14-19 (*New York Dramatic Mirror*, Nov. 19, 1904, p. 21); etc. Rice’s biography of Joe Hughes gives another date, which Gracyk, *Popular American Recording Pioneers*, 144-5, considers more likely but in fact appears to be a misprint: “in 1896 he joined Frank Riley, an excellent old darky



---

impersonator; as Riley and Hughes they remained a team for seven years [i.e., 1896-1903]; then one year with Jack Hallen [i.e. 1903-4], and on September 24, 1907 [sic], and ever since the firm has been known as Golden and Hughes” (Rice, *Monarchs of Minstrelsy*, 315). The year 1904 better fits the sequence given here as well as the other evidence. According to Rice, Hughes had formerly partnered with Jack Simonds or Symonds (creator of the “Mulcahey” series on the phonograph) from 1887-95; see also his obituary: “Joseph C. Sovey,” *New York Times*, Apr. 25, 1930, p. 18.

<sup>308</sup> Description of Billy Golden, SISSERETTA’S VISIT TO THE NORTH (Edison 9369) in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:6 (Aug. 1906), 20.

<sup>309</sup> Billy Golden, SISSERET[T]A’S VISIT TO THE NORTH (Victor 4887, B-3834-3) §. The label has “Sissereta,” but every other source I can find has “Sisseretta.”

<sup>310</sup> Description of Golden and Hughes, THE SHIPMATES (Edison Amberol 72), in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:12 (Dec. 1908), 19

<sup>311</sup> Description of Golden and Hughes, DARKEY SCHOOL DAYS (Edison Amberol 151) in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 7:4 (Apr. 1909), 21.

<sup>312</sup> Description of Golden and Hughes, TURKEY IN THE STRAW SKETCH (Edison Amberol 219), in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 7:8 (Aug. 1909), 17.

<sup>313</sup> Description of Golden and Hughes, BEAR’S OIL (Edison Amberol 178), in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 7:6 (June 1909), 25.

<sup>314</sup> “Golden and Hughes have a laugh-provoking farce comedy creation, ‘Siseretta’s Visit to the North.’ They do the act in black face and they make a pleasing impression. They sing, they dance and they have a bunch of sidewalk talk that goes with gusto” (*Fort Wayne News* [Fort Wayne, Indiana], Feb. 12, 1907, p. 16). See also an illustration of Golden (apparently costumed as “Siseretta”) and Hughes in the *New York Clipper*, May 12, 1906, p. 327, discovered by Ryan Barna. Golden and Hughes were still performing a sketch by this name six years later; see advertisement for the Empress Theatre in *Daily Review* (Decatur, Illinois), Aug. 31, 1913, p. 7.

<sup>315</sup> For the transcriptions, see Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 837-966 for Billy Golden’s dialogs in general, 861-944 for his dialogs with Joe Hughes in particular.

<sup>316</sup> Billy Golden and Joe Hughes, SHIPMATES (Columbia A5080, mx. 30183-4) §; compare the transcription in Cogswell, *Joking in Blackface*, 861-5, from an unspecified take of Edison Diamond Disc 50056-L. The phrase I give as “tar apart,” while unclear, is clearly not “flower pot” (as Cogswell states) in any of the takes I have heard.

<sup>317</sup> Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 168, 170.

<sup>318</sup> Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 188-9; he cites the example again on 578.

<sup>319</sup> Odell’s version runs as follows: “George Christy told the story about his trip across the ocean in a clipper ship. He declared that, although the ship was six weeks crossing, still he had a fresh laid egg every morning for breakfast. ‘And no chickens aboard?’ one of the end men would ask. ‘Not a chicken,’ replied George. And then when the crowd of minstrels would ask in chorus how he got a fresh laid egg every morning for six weeks on an ocean ship with no chickens aboard George would explain by saying: ‘Waal, yer see, I’d go to de hatchway every morning and wait until the ship ’ud lay to. And when the ship ’ud lay to I’d take one and give the other to the Captain’” (“The Lay of the Last of the Old Minstrels,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1907, p. SM11).

<sup>320</sup> Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 559-60.

<sup>321</sup> See e.g. “Robert Ingersoll, Watchmaker, Dies,” *New York Times*, Sept. 6, 1928, p. 18.

<sup>322</sup> Charles Slack, *Hetty: The Genius and Madness of America’s First Female Tycoon* (New York: Ecco, 2004).

<sup>323</sup> Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 166.

<sup>324</sup> Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 166.

<sup>325</sup> Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 167.

<sup>326</sup> My conclusions about the Victor version are drawn from Golden and Hughes, SHIPMATES (A NAUTICAL ABSURDITY) (Victor 16141-A B-6615-2 [?]) §; and for the Edison version, from Golden and Hughes, THE SHIPMATES (VAUDEVILLE SKETCH) (Edison Amberol 72, UCSB 1613) §. It is possible that further variants exist in other takes.

<sup>327</sup> *Victor Records* catalog (1919), alphabetically under GOLDEN, Billy.

<sup>328</sup> Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 166.

## CONCLUSION

Let us return briefly to postproduction sound editing, the technique some critics have advanced as the *sine qua non* of a phonographic “art.” In 1878, phonograms had often been superimposed over each other as a means of synthesizing complex scenes, a phenomenon to which I gave the name “phonographic montage” in chapter one. This technique was scarcely used at all after the abandonment of tinfoil as a medium, and the vast majority of the phonograms of the 1890s and 1900s were recorded all at once from single phonogenic performances. However, it was still possible to record multiple times over the same groove on a wax cylinder, superimposing the sounds, and we do find a few stories in which phonograph users had done this by mistake, either recording serious business dictations over entertainment phonograms or vice versa and rendering both unusable in the process.<sup>1</sup> Others, by way of experiment, successively recorded themselves singing tenor, baritone, and bass parts to produce composite “quartet” phonograms as an amusing novelty.<sup>2</sup> Still, each recutting of the groove on a wax cylinder severely degraded the earlier traces. There was one device in the late 1890s, the multiplex cylinder graphophone, designed to record and reduce multiple grooves simultaneously using different styli, and phonogenic performer Silas Leachman reportedly used it to create “quartet” phonograms all by himself without harming the earlier parts in the process,<sup>3</sup> but this technique was not adopted for commercial recording of “quartet” phonograms on any scale: the instrument itself received only very limited exposure, and apart from sheer novelty this method had no compelling advantage over the recording of a live quartet. The only hint that tinfoil-style montage *might* have been used as a commercial phonographic technique comes from the following report:

The famous recorder, Russell Hunting, whose deep bass voice comes out so clearly in his popular records, “The Casey Series,” has talked into a waxen cylinder upon which a band record has been placed, and the tones of the speaker as well as the notes of the music were each perfectly distinct, the latter coming out as a kind of refrain or accompaniment to the voice.<sup>4</sup>

It is just possible that Hunting may have used this technique to yield commercial talking phonograms with band music “in the background,” an effect that would have been challenging to produce all at once through a single phonogenic performance while still

maintaining an appropriate balance. However, I am not aware of any specific Casey phonograms that are likely to have been engineered in this way.

As an alternative to superimposing sounds using a single machine, it was possible to combine the education of one phonogram on one machine with additional live sounds to create a new composite phonogram on another machine. This technique was used to make a few masters for commercial sale in the early acoustic era, one of which is Len Spencer and Gilbert Girard's *A TRIP TO THE CIRCUS: A STORY FOR LITTLE FOLKS*, on which discographers Fagan and Moran comment: "Accompaniment supplied by a dubbing of a band recording of 'The Stars and Stripes Forever'."<sup>5</sup> It is unclear whether they obtained this information from listening to a copy of the disc or from some written documentation; however, the one take I have heard does audibly feature a very "tinny" band accompaniment that cuts off more abruptly at the end than a live band could plausibly have managed.<sup>6</sup> Presumably a disc of band music was educed in the studio to provide the "background" while Spencer and Girard were performing, and the needle was lifted when the music was supposed to stop. Some versions of the quartet descriptive *A TRIP TO THE COUNTY FAIR* use a similarly "tinny" band phonogram to represent music in the background of the fictional scene, although others instead use a hand-organ.<sup>7</sup> The multiple-machine technique of superimposition may have given better results than the overlaying of multiple sounds on a single groove, but the generation loss resulting from "dubbing" one phonogram onto another under such circumstances probably resulted in a loss of audio quality too severe for the commercial industry to accept on a regular basis. On the other hand, the "tinny" quality could be advantageous if the goal was to represent a *phonograph* being played within the fictional world of the phonogram; thus, *CHIMMIE AND MAGGIE IN NICKEL LAND*, a comic sketch by Len Spencer and Ada Jones, uses prerecorded band music at the beginning to represent the "ballyhoo" phonograph typically kept running outside a nickelodeon to attract attention, but it switches to "live" phonogenic music for depicting the act inside.<sup>8</sup>

Another form of phonographic montage involved educing multiple phonograms simultaneously to produce individual audicular events rather than a phonogenic basis for new phonograms as in *A TRIP TO THE CIRCUS*. The effect of educing multiple phonograms at once was rarely sought intentionally and most often construed as a

cacophonous annoyance.<sup>9</sup> In 1903, however, an Edison dealer in New Albany, Indiana, attempted a publicity stunt by playing seven different commercial cylinders simultaneously, ostensibly creating the impression of a midway scene. None of the individual phonograms in the playlist had any explicit connection with the street fair or midway, but when combined they may have created a similarly overwhelming soundscape. The dealer had also recorded the result on an eighth cylinder, but he was not offering copies of it: the emphasis was on the live juxtaposition of the seven individual phonograms, without generation loss, and—incidentally—with the sounds coming from different directions to produce a stereophonic effect.<sup>10</sup> Three years later, it was reported that the members of a Chicago women’s club had recorded the barking of their pet dogs on cylinder and then, during a meeting, “set half a dozen machines going at once, making a tremendous racket,” producing the effect of several dogs barking at once from different directions;<sup>11</sup> perhaps we can interpret this as a “dogfight” simulated through montage.

Finally, a 1905 *Scientific American* article recommended a few other technological tricks by which home cylinder phonograph owners could create novel effects. As a third technique for producing a phonographic montage, they could juxtapose pieces cut from different commercial phonograms: “By taking two records of entirely different character, cutting each in two, and putting on a half of one and a half of the other, we can often jump from the sublime to the ridiculous by quickly flipping the reproducer across the gap, from one to the other,” creating a phonographic *splice* decades before those are generally supposed to have been possible. Or they could take advantage of the mass-production of spoken-word records by purchasing two and making alterations to one:

One of these is “doctored” by cleaning off [i.e., erasing] the latter half, the rest being protected by a piece of writing paper wrapped around and secured by an elastic band. On this blank space various remarks should be recorded, which should be very different from those originally there. The good record is to be played through first. While saying that you will repeat it, the second one is quickly substituted in the machine, and of course starts off exactly like the first one. When the “doctored” portion is reached, however, a change will be noticed, but cannot be accounted for by the hearers.

Another trick relied on the artful manipulation of recording and playback speeds:

“Speech by Tom Thumb.” The machine must be speeded up as high as possible, and the above announcement recorded on a blank in a deep, loud voice. The machine should be quickly slowed down to about eighty revolutions per minute, and the speech or monologue recorded at that speed, care being taken to articulate distinctly. When the blank is full, the reproducer may be substituted for the recorder, and the machine be brought up again to high speed at which the announcement was made.

When the record is reproduced at this speed, the result will be the loud voice of the announcement followed by a rapid, pinched-up little voice making the speech.<sup>12</sup>

Phonograms had been educed at “incorrect” speeds for comic effect since the tinfoil era, but the combination here of different recording speeds within a single phonogram seems to have been a new departure. Granted, none of the techniques described in this section had a particularly significant impact on the phonography of the 1890s and 1900s, but nearly all secondary accounts assert that they did not yet even exist. They did.

That said, most phonography of the 1890s and 1900s did *not* employ any kind of postproduction tinkering, sustaining itself instead through creative adaptations and concessions to what I have been calling the phonogenic frame. As we have seen, the drive for phonogenicity manifested itself in a wide variety of ways—structural, acoustic, and linguistic—but all of these were necessarily grounded in real-time enactments, not in manipulations and juxtapositions after the fact. Perhaps this complex of adaptations has been overlooked as a distinctive “media” art because its innovations have seemed to lie more properly within the domain of performance than of “media,” but it does not fall neatly into the bailiwick of students of live performance either. Rather, it can be understood as constituting a distinctively new mode of behavior, one coupling certain attributes of live performance with a different, medium-specific set of demands and priorities. Scholars such as Jonathan Sterne have now begun to acknowledge the “distinct practice of sound production” I call phonogenic performance as a promising area of inquiry.<sup>13</sup> My goal here has been to identify, describe, and account for some of the formal characteristics of this “distinct practice” in order that we might move beyond a general awareness of its existence to a deeper understanding of what it entailed and a corresponding ability to “read” surviving phonograms in an informed way. I hope that students of media history will one day listen to such phonograms as STEAMBOAT LEAVING THE WHARF AT NEW ORLEANS as attentively and insightfully as they watch such films as THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY, and I offer the present work as an example of one direction (and certainly not the only one) in which I believe this kind of close listening can lead us.

The subjects I have chosen to cover in the last three chapters may strike some readers as marginal cases, exceptions with little significance in the broader development

of the phonographic medium. Early progress in commercial phonography has typically been defined by the increasing “fidelity” of its “reproduction” of music and culturally by its gradual acceptance as an automated source of prerecorded music in the home. From this perspective, phonograms representing vaudeville acts, minstrel shows, social dances, auctions, and sales pitches may seem to be mere curiosities, experimental dead-ends, interesting to know about but easy to bracket off from the central narrative. But such a conclusion is specious. It fails to take into account the nature of phonography itself as a system of representation—one of which music happens to be a very common and important subject, but which has also embraced plenty of other subjects. The fact that musical phonograms appear to show relatively few formal traces of that system of representation (we have considered spoken announcements, the presence or absence of applause, and abridgement) does not mean that they are not implicated in it just as much as any other category of phonogram. If we consider the fundamental object of investigation here to be the system or systems of representation that encompassed *all* of early commercial phonography, musical and otherwise, then it behooves us to examine those cases in which phonographic representation was stretched to its limits, exposing its underlying characteristics to view, rather than just those in which its application was relatively straightforward and unproblematic.

One concept that assumes special importance in this approach is audio theater. As we have seen, Richard Fish defines audio theater as a “theatrical presentation intended solely for the audio medium, using voices, music and other sounds.”<sup>14</sup> Another modern practitioner instead identifies it simply as “the art form that was known as radio drama,”<sup>15</sup> and Fish’s definition is clearly written to embrace that same tradition. One of its parts may require clarification: by “theatrical presentation,” Fish apparently means a dramatic performance analogous to the stage play, a representation of a fictional sequence of events unfolding for the benefit of an audience (listeners, in the case of phonography). Many of the cases I have covered seem easily to fit this category, including the Spencer and Jones sketches and—except for the frequent absence of music—Russell Hunting’s Casey routines. These are, I believe, clear-cut cases of phonographic audio theater because of their close resemblance to stage drama, and when I use the term it is cases of this sort I have in mind. It is harder to locate audio theater’s

outer limits. If the form is defined by its playlike representation of a fictional sequence of events, then it would be hard to exclude cases in which the setting for those events happens to constitute a performance arena, such as FLANAGAN'S TROUBLES IN A RESTAURANT by Steve Porter, the Spencer Trio's MOCKING BIRD MEDLEY, a United States Marine Band phonogram in which a musical performance is followed by simulated applause, or perhaps even any musical phonogram whatsoever. Phonographic audio theater often does not invite analysis as music, but early commercial musical phonograms can be approached as audio theater insofar as they are arguably "fictional" representations of performance events. Thus, if one had to pick between music or audio theater as a paradigm for understanding early commercial phonography as a whole, I suggest that audio theater would be the more analytically rewarding choice.

Even in its narrower sense, audio theater was not a mere novelty but a key commodity for the early recording industry, judging from contemporary comments and the relative quantities of phonograms surviving today. Furthermore, some of the most popular "musical" phonograms also incorporated pieces of nonmusical audio theater, just as many selections centered on establishing fictional "scenes" also incorporated music, and this hybridization has the effect of masking the full extent of audio theater as a phonographic technique. Arthur Collins' THE PREACHER AND THE BEAR was described as follows in the 1906 Victor catalog:

The adventures of the colored clergyman and the bear in a tree are told by Mr. Collins in an amusing manner, and the bear's voice can be heard very plainly as he requests the preacher to move on to a lower limb so that he (the bear) can have his dinner.<sup>16</sup>

This "dialog" is transcribed from an early Victor take, interjected after the song has described a scene in which a black preacher is treed by a grizzly bear while out hunting:

**PREACHER:** Now, Mister Bear, let's you and I reason this thing out together, eh?

**BEAR:** [*angry growl*]

**PREACHER:** Nice bear.

**BEAR:** [*angry growl*]

**PREACHER:** Good ol' bear.

**BEAR:** [*angry growl*]

**PREACHER:** Mister Bear, will you *please* go 'way from there?

**BEAR:** [*angry growl*]

**PREACHER:** If I should give you just one good, nice, sweet, juicy bite, would you go 'way?

**BEAR:** [*protracted growl that rises and then falls in pitch*]

**PREACHER:** Oh, you *would*, eh?

Well, I'll stay right here. [*laugh; resumes song*]<sup>17</sup>

This is about as mainstream an example of early recorded popular music as it is possible to find. Jim Walsh identifies Arthur Collins' *THE PREACHER IN THE BEAR* as "the premier 'popular' recording of the acoustic era,"<sup>18</sup> commenting in 1980 that

when a conversation turns to recorded music and somebody says: "There was one old record I'll never forget. I used to hear it on my grandpa's cylinder graphophone on the farm. Maybe you've heard it" I feel morally certain he's going to add: "It was called 'The Preacher and the Bear.'"<sup>19</sup>

However, it would be hard to determine whether the extraordinary popularity of *THE PREACHER IN THE BEAR* was due more to the song itself, to the comic "dialog" with its bear imitations, or to the overall effect produced by the two in juxtaposition. "To hear the grizzly growl is alone worth the price," one advertisement for the Victor disc proclaimed.<sup>20</sup> This was by no means an isolated case: many other highly popular "song" phonograms of the same period included spoken segments, dialogs, and mimetic sound effects.

Quite apart from its importance within commercial phonography as such, phonographic audio theater has broader significance as a missing link in the mutual history of some other, more intensely studied forms of expression, not limited to modern audio theater. Jonathan Sterne hints at its importance in *The Audible Past*: "Descriptive specialties [a term he uses in a very broad sense, but basically equivalent to audio theater] were the predecessor of more enduring audio arts, such as Foley effects in film and the use of sound effects in radio drama.... Many of the techniques of 'imitative' art later standardized for sound film and radio drama were first developed for descriptive specialties."<sup>21</sup> In fact, early phonographic audio theater was a fairly "enduring" form in its own right—after all, it flourished without a major break in continuity from the late 1880s until the early 1930s,<sup>22</sup> a period of over forty years (for comparison, radio drama began experimentally in the early 1920s and wound down in the late 1950s, giving it a heyday of less than thirty years). But until the techniques of phonographic audio theater are thoroughly documented, the origin of sound practices in radio drama, cinema, and modern audio theater will also remain partially obscured.

Past critics of phonography have given short shrift to audio theater, most likely because it is neither musical nor a record of an authentic, untransformed reality, and so does not neatly fit the paradigms ordinarily used to conceptualize the medium and its history. Even Sterne limits himself to concluding that the "descriptive specialty" was an



illusion in which an artistic effect during education was valued over authenticity at the point of recording: “the goal was not necessarily mimetic art [by which he seems to mean ‘deceptively realistic,’ a *trompe l’oreille*]; it was about crafting a particular kind of listening experience.... It is almost irrelevant whether listeners often thought that they were hearing the real thing. Early recordings offered a kind of ‘sample’ of experience in three-minute doses.”<sup>23</sup> If this concept is at all surprising or hard to grasp, it is only because most critics today are not used to thinking of phonography as a legitimate medium of fiction. In the case of fictional narrative film, Victor F. Perkins writes, “a fictional ‘reality’ is *created* in order to be *recorded*.... The fiction movie exploits the possibilities of synthesis between photographic realism and dramatic illusion.”<sup>24</sup> Adapting Perkins’ statement to phonography, we might say that audio theater exploits the possibilities of synthesis between phonographic realism and dramatic illusion, which is really just another way of expressing Sterne’s conclusion. We get a “reproduction” of something that is partly “imitation,” a mix of index (originary sound waves *cause* the groove to assume a particular shape) and icon (the sound of mallets striking a surface *resembles* that of the sound of horses’ hooves).

Let us carry the comparison a little further. In the case of early cinema, “acting” was undertaken not for a live audience but to produce visual effects that could be recorded and reproduced in a motion-picture equivalent to the phonogenic frame. One early book on sound film characterizes the silent era as dependent on “pantomime,” or “the conveying of effects through the visible motions of hands and feet, of arms and legs, of faces and bodies,” exclusive of all aural cues: “The geniuses of the silent screen have all been people who could see and tell stories through the medium of such motions.”<sup>25</sup> Despite the comparison to “pantomime,” what transpired in the studio was formally unlike any live performance genre—the generation of sound was not avoided, as in pantomime; it just could not be relied on to communicate anything to the anticipated viewership towards whom the originary event was directed. Some film scholars now analyze early film actors’ use of gesture, posture, and movement, which modern viewers tend to perceive as comically melodramatic, but which nevertheless reflected a coherent and reconstructible set of aesthetic values and conventions.<sup>26</sup> Phonography had to convey the impression of its fictional world solely through the aural channel, just as early

film acting had to rely solely on the visual channel, and so it required a similar kind of adaptation to compensate for the missing sense.

Other sound media have posed similar challenges which have been similarly met. Researchers once hypothesized that telephone conversation was less efficient than face-to-face conversation in terms of such factors as turn-taking because of its lack of visual cues, but Robert Hopper's empirical study of tape-recorded telephone conversations revealed otherwise:

To be sure, visual cues are absent, but what those cues accomplish in face-to-face encounters does not go undone. For example, in face-to-face conversation we used visual cues to recognize our acquaintances. In telephone conversation, identification work must be accomplished in speaking. But the functions of mutual identification remain similar in both environments.<sup>27</sup>

Telephone conversation, the argument goes, is not just face-to-face conversation stripped of visuals. Rather, participants in telephony understand that they cannot rely on visual cues and so have developed conventionalized aural equivalents for them. Analogous observations have been made about audio theater. Under the rubric of the "radio drama frame" or "radio frame," Erving Goffman discusses the conventions by which real-life models are "transcribed" into their representations in radio drama with the intention of producing a desired illusionary effect:

A protagonist in a radio drama will be in a realm in which things are presumably seen, and in which things that are heard, felt, and smelled can be located by sight; yet obviously the audience can only hear.

As might be expected, conventions became established in radio to provide functional equivalents of what could not otherwise be transmitted. Sound substitutes become conventionalized for what would ordinarily be conveyed visually.<sup>28</sup>

The same could be said without modification of phonographic audio theater. Where early film acting relied on gesture, posture, and movement, early phonographic audio theater drew on spoken language, music, and aural mimicry, often deploying these elements in ways that differed markedly from those found in any live performance context. In an interview of 1903, the editor of the *Talking Machine News* related an interview with Russell Hunting:

"Until you come to record for the phonograph," said he to me, "you fail to realize how much hearing depends upon the eyes, as well as the ears. You watch a man's face, and you know what he has said, though he has spoken ever so indistinctly. That is the secret of the oral instruction of the deaf and dumb—teaching them to see speech instead of hear it. Some wonderful results have been obtained that way, as you know. When you talk into a phono, the first thing to realize is that you must talk as though you were speaking to a blind man, who depends entirely upon sound, unaided by sight."<sup>29</sup>

The complementarity of phonography as a “blind” medium and cinema as a “deaf” one was reflected in a quip from 1895: “Some one says that our exhibition parlors entertain equally well the blind and the deaf; the former listen to the phonographs, while the latter look at the kinetoscopes.”<sup>30</sup> In a revealing slip of 1899, the *Phonoscope* described the phonographic recording artist Joseph Gannon—one of Russell Hunting’s successors in making Casey phonograms—as “a young man who is one of our silent actors. By this we mean a fellow who can act with his voice.”<sup>31</sup> In one sense, Gannon was the antithesis of a “silent actor,” since his phonogenic acting relied exclusively on sound. At the same time, as a performer who had to limit himself to a single sensory channel, he was faced with a situation closely analogous to that faced by the early film actor.

One of the highest acclamations given to early audicular phonograms was that they allowed the listener “almost” to see their subjects, or to imagine seeing them: “To hear this Record is to see him [the vaudeville comedian Nat Wills] standing before the curtain in his tramp makeup and with his coat decorated with medals”;<sup>32</sup> “One can almost see the tents in the woods surrounding an improvised pulpit, from which the parson is exhorting his flock to mend their ways”;<sup>33</sup> “one can all but see Krausmeyer carrying on the soliloquy with his dog and the latter wagging its tail and barking in reply.”<sup>34</sup> Listeners could heighten this effect by removing any visuals that might conflict with the illusion. Writing of a story phonogenized by Marshall P. Wilder in 1889, a reporter commented: “A person familiar with his voice and manner, blindfolded, would have found it difficult to believe that the little humorist was not present in person and telling the story.”<sup>35</sup> Victor boasted of Silas Leachman’s WHOA DAR MULE: “Close your eyes and listen and you can see it all. The old nigger and his colored lady in the sleigh, with the dog barking excited encouragement at the driver’s efforts to start the balky mule.”<sup>36</sup> The *Edison Phonograph Monthly* stated of a Jones and Spencer vaudeville sketch that used a clog effect to represent Spencer’s character performing a “Dutch wooden shoe dance” onstage: “This dance is so realistic that if you shut your eyes you can almost see his feet.”<sup>37</sup> “Almost seeing” was the most common means of expressing a listener’s immersion within a fictional world sustained by the phonograph. At the same time, critics routinely acknowledged that “blind” phonography could not *really* convey

anything that happened in the visual realm, while emphasizing that its representation of various subjects was still satisfactory in many ways:

Everybody can have a prima donna, or a great tragedian, or a fine comedian, *barring presence and gesture*, in his own house, and whenever he requires them.<sup>38</sup>

The latter air [“Auld Lang Syne,” played by Gilmore’s Band] which has been reproduced by Edison’s skill was listened to by a great number yesterday by means of the phonograph, and *although one misses the magnetic leader and his baton* yet the song was a success otherwise.<sup>39</sup>

Much of Mr. [Harry] Lauder’s great success depends upon his ludicrous make ups, his mannerisms and his inimitable impersonations. *These features are lacking in his Records*, and yet the latter are brimful of jovial laugh-impelling humor.<sup>40</sup>

Much of the rhetoric about visualization really seems to reflect not a preoccupation with *seeing* but a sense of immersion phonographic listeners could feel in the scene whose sounds they seemed to be hearing, something like what we would today call virtual reality, for which seeing was only a convenient metaphor:

Alas, you can not see Sig. Cappa in all his glory, but shut your eyes and in fancy you are in the midst of the crowd in Central Park, and only a little way down the walk are the hideous statues of Walter Scott and Shakespeare and a little way beyond you is the beautiful lake with its swan-like pleasure-boats. The full band is playing, and think of it, every twang of the cornet, every thump of the drum, every trill and bit of floriture of the clarinet has been caught by a film of glass 1-3,000 of an inch thick and of the diameter of a fifty-cent piece.<sup>41</sup>

The listener’s seeming presence within a phonographically represented scene was sometimes expressed in terms of senses other than sight, as when a tinfoil-era simulation of drunken revelry was proclaimed to be “so natural that we could smell its breath,”<sup>42</sup> and sometimes the illusion was not linked to any particular sense at all, as in a claim Edison made during the fall of 1887: “A mimic quarrel of several persons given out on my test phonographs makes one almost believe that the dispute is going on in the next room.”<sup>43</sup> Despite their differences, each of these comments made essentially the same point, praising phonograms for their success in fostering the illusion that the listener was actually experiencing whatever they were designed to represent. The effect was so realistic that it could almost be seen, smelt, believed.

Phonogenic performers went about accomplishing this feat in a variety of ways. Generally speaking, the trick was to take full advantage of the semiotic resources available in the aural channel while supplying aural equivalents for meaningful cues normally perceived through other sensory channels in order to provide the listener with sufficient information about what was going on in the “scene” to make sense of it. For

example, let us survey what listeners to HEINIE were led to infer about fictional objects, actions, and details they could not directly perceive through the aural channel:

[*Blast on whistle, knocking.*]

[**LEN SPENCER**]: Good morning.

Here's a letter for Miss Katrina Schweineknöchel. [*Inference: it is morning; the whistle was a postman's whistle, the speaker is a postman, a door has opened in response to his knock, and he has a letter addressed to a woman living here with a German name.*]

[**ADA JONES**]: Ach, that's me.

It's a letter from mein fella Heinie Schneider. [*Inference: Katrina's dialect confirms that she is German; she has taken the envelope from the postman and identified its sender from the writing on it.*]

Is any answer?

[**SPENCER**]: No, your pretty smile's the answer. [*Blast on whistle, receding in volume. Inference: Katrina was smiling prettily in response to receiving the envelope, and the postman has now left to continue on his route, blowing his whistle as he departed.*]

[**JONES**]: Ach, my, it's a valentine! [*Inference: Katrina has opened the envelope and identified its contents.*]

What a pretty smell! [*Inference: The valentine is scented; if the listeners were present, they would be able to smell it.*]

HEINIE does not necessarily include anything that would have been out of place in live vaudeville, and Katrina's soliloquy upon opening the valentine in particular bears the stamp of stage convention. However, the script is densely packed with aural cues designed to fill in a great deal of information from missing sensory channels—not just visual, but also olfactory—and parts of the dialog are elaborated in ways that would have been redundant if visuals had been available, such as Heinie's invitation to Katrina towards the end of the phonogram to put her “chubby arms” around him, language seemingly crafted to convey an otherwise inaudible detail about Katrina's physical appearance (note that Billy Golden accomplishes the same end by prefacing the simulated dialog in *SISSERETTA'S VISIT TO THE NORTH* with the remark: “Sisseretta was so doggoned big that she looked like a round-house”). The routine also makes extensive use of “Dutch” dialect, the principal aural marker of Germanness in ethnic caricature, and the postman's whistle invokes a now obsolete sound practice associated with mail delivery.

An important variant of this strategy centers on invoking the conventions of performance genres with strong multisensory associations. Minstrel records are a prime example, relying for much of their impact on the listener's familiarity with the stage layout of the minstrel show:

[**STEVE PORTER**]: Gentlemen, be seated. [*Chord, bones rattle. Inference: This is a minstrel show. The performers had been standing in a semicircle onstage; they now sit down.*]

Introductory overture. [*Inference: The piece of music that follows will represent a minstrel show's*

introductory overture. Instrumental with bones, followed by applause. Inference: The minstrel show audience has applauded in approbation of the introductory overture.

**SPENCER:** Porter, I'm in a new business now.

**PORTER:** New business, Len? What kind of business?

**SPENCER:** Rag business.

**PORTER:** Well, how is the rag business?

**SPENCER:** Oh, pickin' up. [*group laughter and applause*. Inference: From the form of this dialog, "Len" can be identified as an end-man, standing at one end of the semicircle, probably in blackface; and "Porter" as the interlocutor, standing in the center of the semicircle, probably in whiteface.]

Much as when Berliner's gramophone "reproduced" the words of the Lord's Prayer or tinfoil phonographs "reproduced" nursery rhymes, the audience knew from prior experience what to expect of a minstrel show and so was less likely to be thrown into confusion by shortcomings in the representation or the strangeness of the illusion.

The "Dutch" dialect in HEINIE taps a similarly rich complex of associations conventionally linked to German ethnic caricature, some of which—such as the conventions for costuming "Dutch" characters and performing "Dutch" dances—would have helped listeners visualize the scene on Katrina's doorstep (or, depending on one's perspective, on the vaudeville stage). Once one of these performance traditions was invoked, listeners could fill in missing pieces of the representation based on a variety of past experiences, just as they could when they saw an illustration of the minstrel semicircle on a poster or read a joke in "eye dialect." Some recent critics have hypothesized that the translation of ethnic caricature into phonography had the potential to alter its significance in certain ways because of its lack of visuals. William Kenney states:

The automatic phonographs and inexpensive early domestic models took minstrel stereotypes out of their theatrical context, removing their visual signals, and intermixed their sounds more pervasively in a variety of public social context and more deeply into collective popular sensibilities. Without the visual cues that indicated that racial humor was just a stage act, coin-op and home listeners might have more easily concluded that they were listening to actual African Americans.<sup>44</sup>

Lisa Gitelman sees phonography as a party to the displacement of an earlier "visual orientation of minstrelsy" and a broader problematization of the nature of "blackness": "There was," she writes, "no single, uncomplicated sound for skin color."<sup>45</sup> In fact, I find no clear evidence of either dynamic at work. Based on the examples surveyed in chapter six, ethnic caricature in phonography seems to have remained securely anchored to the intertextual complexes of conventions that had made it so efficient as a vehicle of comedy in general.<sup>46</sup>

Even straightforward musical phonograms show signs of compensation for the loss of visuals through an increased emphasis on the communicative resources of the aural channel. As we saw in chapter two, one reason given for the emphasis on flawlessness in phonogenic musical performance was that the performer could not cover for mistakes as he or she could on the stage by “calling in the assistance, if need be, of facial expression, or pose, or, on occasions, even of gesture.”<sup>47</sup> Mark Katz has argued that violinists’ increased use of vibrato over the course of the twentieth century originated in part to “help compensate for the loss of the visual element in recordings,” conveying emotion in lieu of gesture and facial expression and, because vibrato was perceived as a key distinguishing feature of personal playing styles, also by allowing the listener to identify individual performers without seeing them.<sup>48</sup> These compensatory factors are subtler and, I believe, less readily apparent to the listener than the ones I have identified in other phonographic genres. Nevertheless, their existence supports my belief that musical phonograms were as deeply implicated in the complexities and dilemmas of phonographic representation as any of the other types of commercial phonogram we have examined.

The phonograms we have examined have displayed a wide range of approaches to their subjects, and we should acknowledge their diversity when seeking to draw conclusions about them. The industry never settled on any single mode of representation for all purposes. However, consistent conventions did emerge for representing *individual* performance genres in early commercial phonography, such as dance calling, the minstrel show, and the vaudeville act. These conventions changed over time, sometimes very abruptly. Such changes generally do not correspond to simultaneous changes within the performance traditions themselves, although they may exploit different possibilities within those traditions’ own margins of variability (e.g. “Be seated, gentlemen” versus “Gentlemen, be seated”). Instead, they appear to reflect shifts in eductive function (e.g., phonograms had begun to be used to accompany live dancing) or in the general aesthetics of phonography (e.g., a reaction against phonograms opening with speech). When evaluating any early phonogram, we should therefore keep in mind the traditions surrounding both its subject *and* that subject’s representation in phonography.

Over the period we have been considering, the descriptive mode and overt phonogenic “imitation,” initially applied to a variety of subjects, came to be associated with comedy and vaudeville, while the substitutive mode simultaneously rose in prestige, linked to increasingly ambitious assertions about the “fidelity” of phonographic “reproduction.” Given the amount of primary evidence required to sustain inductive arguments of this kind, I have had room here to trace the transition fully only in the case of phonograms representing social dances with calls, but we can detect its influence upon other phonographic genres as well. For instance, nearly all commercial phonograms of political speeches made by presidential candidates during the campaigns of 1896 and 1900 were descriptive-mode “imitations” by professional phonogenic elocutionists, complete with simulated applause and cheering. On the other hand, equivalent phonograms made during the campaigns of 1908 and 1912 were phonogenized by the candidates themselves in the substitutive mode, whereas descriptive-mode “imitations” were by then limited to parody.<sup>49</sup> This shift was linked in turn to shifting expectations of phonographic authenticity and a heightened sensitivity to phonographic “fakes,” an issue whose implications for the medium and its social uses are so complex and wide-ranging that it will require another, separate work to do it justice. For now, I want only to emphasize that this fundamental transition, so evident in the aural record, has largely escaped the attention of researchers who have built their work primarily on a written source base.

An awareness of the conventions of particular early phonographic genres can suggest new analytical approaches to the phonograms of later periods as well. Take the dance record with calls. After 1900, two different norms had emerged for representing dance music phonographically, one for accompanying dances that phonograph owners were themselves actually likely to want to dance and another—in the descriptive mode—for depicting the characteristic dancing of various “others.” Some phonograms of rural and black dance music recorded in later decades take a descriptive-mode approach to their subjects, and researchers who have engaged with these phonograms have often commented on their “descriptive” qualities. Phil Jamison, who has taken on the project of transcribing Southern square-dance calls heard on 78s of the 1920s and early 1930s, speculates that the practice of including calls on dance-music phonograms may have been



borrowed from the format of “barn dance” radio shows established in the mid-1920s, since they do not seem to function literally as instructions for actual dancing:

Usually under three minutes in length, the early 78s are too short for real square dances and in most cases, the timing of the calls is off. Even for an experienced caller, correct timing would be hard to achieve in a recording studio without dancers to watch. And even if the calls on these recordings had been clear and well-timed, it is questionable whether dancers would be able to follow calls from outside their own community, since square-dance figures and calls were not formally standardized as they are today. Therefore, it doesn't appear that the calls were intended for people to dance to, but rather to enhance the rustic image of an “old-time barn dance” that the record companies were marketing.<sup>50</sup>

While “barn dance” radio shows may have influenced the form these phonograms took, the pattern Jamison describes is also consistent with the conventions that had been developed decades before for depicting social dances in phonography itself. John Minton finds that similar depictions of dances with calls are common on “hillbilly” and “race” records of the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>51</sup> The persistence of these representational strategies is noteworthy in itself, but even more significant is the possibility that they may have retained some of the value judgments attached to them in the 1900s. Social dances had then been represented in the descriptive mode only when they had depicted the activities of “others” relative to the typical phonograph owner—blacks, Irish immigrants, “rubes.” Minton equates this distinctive mode of representation, as it manifested itself in the 1920s and 1930s, with the real efforts of “hillbilly” and “race” musicians to orient themselves to the phonographic medium which, for them and perhaps for a rural target audience, may still have been somewhat unfamiliar. However, the mode itself had long been associated with the phonographic *caricature* of ethnic dances, so we should also consider the possibility that “hillbilly” and “race” musicians were knowingly invoking an existing convention of mainstream American phonography and so engaging in a kind of self-caricature, whether on their own initiative or at the behest of the recording companies. We also have grounds for reassessing the significance of conspicuous framing devices found on early “hillbilly” records more generally. To some extent, the spoken announcements on these phonograms may well reflect the gradual process by which rural southern artists acclimatized themselves to the medium of phonography, as Minton argues. However, the performers may also have been intentionally cultivating an air of naïveté in order to associate themselves with the broader “hillbilly” stereotype on which some of their popularity rested. This was Jim Walsh's interpretation of the

announcement found on BYE AND BYE (1928) by Smilin' Ed McConnell and his wife Grace:

Before the singing starts Ed says: "All right, Mama, step up here and let's sing another little song for Mister Columbia!" "Hill-billy" artists sometimes used this sort of "gag" to make themselves appear unsophisticated. I remember one—I believe it was by Buell Kazee, but can't recall the title—in which he told of his experiences making a record "for Mister Brunswick."<sup>52</sup>

As with the apparent logical "mistakes" heard on early home-mode phonographic letters, we are currently in a position to do little more than second-guess the intentions of performers and recordists in cases of this kind. However, I do find that spoken announcements and the descriptive mode had come to connote naïveté and parody in the phonographic practice of the early twentieth century. Rather than taking such announcements at face value, we should be open to the possibility that they reflect broader currents in the mainstream American phonographic culture of their era.

I have limited my study almost exclusively to the United States, but there is also plenty of room in this area for further cross-cultural comparison and contrast. For instance, we might ask why commercial phonograms in the Arabic-speaking Middle East retained spoken announcements for so much longer than they did in the United States. I have hypothesized that announcements were abandoned in the United States partly in response to the increasingly unpredictable contexts of private education. The retention of announcements in Egypt and the Levant might accordingly have resulted from the fact that—judging from the few accounts known to me—phonography in that part of the world seems to have remained linked largely to professional exhibitions in the public sphere.<sup>53</sup> In fact, I suspect the truth will turn out to be more complicated; my point is that such questions are there to be asked.

Let me reiterate that I have found the *language* we commonly use to discuss phonography to be one of the greatest obstacles to writing and thinking analytically about it. As Rick Altman observes in the preface to *Silent Film Sound*, the birth of any new medium is attended by a period of crisis in which it has yet to be defined, such that in making sense of its formative period we need to recognize that its identity was once up for grabs (or, perhaps, temporarily aligned in one or more now-unfamiliar directions) and to avoid imposing anachronistic norms and definitions upon it.<sup>54</sup> Phonography is no exception, and its "naming" was less natural and straightforward than critics tend to

assume. Although “record” was already the preferred term for a phonogram during the period covered by this thesis—we do encounter it far more frequently than “phonogram”—I also detect a feeling on the part of contemporaries that its application to phonography was not always a perfect fit and that the gap required acknowledgment. In a number of instances, writers placed the word in quotation marks just as I have done here, marking it as a piece of special terminology self-consciously employed:

The interrogatory is often made to us, “What is a musical record.” To which we reply, in technical language, it is the cylinder used upon the phonograph after it has received the almost imperceptible undulations of the recording needle as it catches and transfers the sounds played from the instruments into it. The theory and operation of the phonograph are now well known to the public, but in order to define clearly the term “record,” we will state that any cylinder upon which a succession of sounds has its intaglio representation is a “record.”<sup>55</sup>

Sometimes the quotation marks even seem to carry an implication of irony, as when the writer of an exposé of “faked” phonograms of the voices of famous persons (a staple of the early recording industry) remarks that a laboratory was “making ‘records.’”<sup>56</sup> The reasons for the original choice of the word “record” are not hard to find. In the experimental period, it had made sense to conceptualize the phonogram as a “record” of sound, much as a seismograph produces a “record” of an earthquake, plotting the amplitude of its vibrations on the *y* axis against time on the *x* axis. The early emphasis on business dictation doubtless reinforced this usage by analogy with the stenographic “record” the phonogram was supposed to supersede. To be sure, a phonogram is no more inherently a “record” of anything than is a photograph or kinetogram, both of which have also been referred to as “records” at various times.<sup>57</sup> But photographs and kinetograms were rapidly assimilated to existing categories of visual media and recognized as “portraits,” “pictures,” “moving pictures,” and so forth, whereas phonograms were so unlike anything else that the only colloquially accepted alternatives to “record” referenced their shapes: “cylinder” and “disc.” However, the suitability of the “record” metaphor became less obvious when it was applied to phonograms artfully contrived for purposes of audicular exhibition rather than documentation. Consider one passing remark in a *New York Times* article of 1894: “Large amounts must have been derived from...the sales of machines and ‘records,’ or slides, but no approximation of the sums has been arrived at.”<sup>58</sup> The writer puts the word “records” in quotation marks, acknowledging it as a still-unfamiliar piece of technical jargon, but then provides an

additional gloss that, at first glance, may seem bizarrely incongruous: *slides*, i.e., magic lantern slides. In fact, this gloss is remarkably observant. The commercial phonogram of 1894 might have been created by means of a recording process, but it did not function socially or culturally as a “record” of anything; rather, like the magic lantern slide, its value lay in the effect produced by its mechanical education—not the projection of an image on a screen, in this case, but the generation of audicular sound.

But it is the word “record” that won out and has remained with us ever since. A “record,” without qualification, is now widely understood to mean a “sound record”—not a stenographic, photographic, moving-picture, or other kind of record, but specifically a phonogram. The Modern Language Association’s subject heading for phonograms is simply “recording.” Far from being an inconsequential move, the persistent identification of phonograms with “records” has had serious implications for the way we use and think about them, predisposing us to apply certain interpretive frames to them while rejecting others. An artfully contrived “phonogram” might be a creative work, like a trick photograph or a fiction film; but an artfully contrived “record” can mean only fraud. Remember: the phonograph fakir does not “make records,” according to the exposé of 1898—he “makes ‘records,’” meaning spurious ones. For about twenty years (1877-1897), phonograms had been celebrated with equal enthusiasm as faithful “records,” virtuosic “imitations,” or clever “illusions.” Afterwards, the phonogram became more and more exclusively a “record” and lost much of its erstwhile conceptual flexibility. Much has been made of the construction during this time of “fidelity” as the principal aesthetic criterion for phonography,<sup>59</sup> meaning technologically achieved fidelity to an authentic originary event, the apotheosis of the phonogram as a transparent “record” of something else. Granted, this ideal had been articulated in various ways since the tinfoil era. What happened in the last years of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth was not so much the formulation of the ideal of fidelity as the repudiation of the alternatives. Even the ingenious aural illusions that had taken advantage of the unique possibilities of the phonographic medium during the early 1890s were now repackaged as faithful “records” of vaudeville acts, as we have seen.

Since then, our phonographic terminology has become more rather than less opaque. In a secondary development, people have now come to apply the verb “record”

to both the activity of recording—i.e., operating sound recording equipment as a photographer operates a camera—and the very different activity to which I have been referring, for want of another word, as phonogenization. This does not appear to be a carry-over from an experimental or business model in which the experimenter or dictator did both the recording and the phonogenizing, leading to the terminological subsumption of the one under the other. In fact, one very rarely encounters the verb “record” being used to refer to what a phonogenic performer was doing in the recording laboratory during the period covered by this thesis.<sup>60</sup> Instead, we find either a verb borrowed from live performance, such as *sing* or *play*, or the word *make*, as in references to “record-makers” or phonogram announcements on the pattern “made by Mister Cal Stewart.” This was true of vernacular speech as well as print, judging from a woman’s recollection in 1967 about singing during wax-cylinder home recording sessions: “We recorded (we called it ‘made’) our own voices a number of times.”<sup>61</sup> The very term “recording artist,” as opposed to “record-maker” or “artist who makes records,”<sup>62</sup> thus turns out to be something of an anachronism as applied to pioneer phonogenic performers. But recordists of this period also “made” records more often than they “recorded” them. (Photography provided a useful analogy for what they did as well: as we have seen, “records,” like photographs, were often “taken,” and subjects could be “phonographed” as well as photographed. Sometimes we find even more conspicuous borrowings from photographic terminology, as for instance: “Twenty six records were *exposed*, of which ten were clear enough for use.”<sup>63</sup>) In terms of actual “recording,” agency must have been hard to pin down in a situation where, depending on one’s perspective, the machine itself could be perceived as doing the “recording” rather than as a tool one used *to* record things; a person’s voice, as a disembodied acoustic phenomenon, could even be thought of as “recording itself” through its action on the diaphragm and stylus. However, recordists and performers alike could safely represent themselves as *making* phonograms, meaning that they contributed some action necessary for them to exist, and it was at this level that recording and phonogenization came to be conflated into a single semantic domain. The crucial step from “record-making” to “recording” as the principal label for this domain had not yet occurred as of 1908. It falls outside the period I have surveyed, so I cannot yet state when or in what context it finally occurred. Perhaps it reflected a

conflation of performance and authorship in which acts of phonogenization came to be considered acts of inscription, just like using a pen or a typewriter to record one's thoughts. Or it might have followed a logic like this: if the person responsible for making a "painting" "paints" it, and the person responsible for making a "building" "builds" it, then the person responsible for making a "recording" must "record" it. Whatever the correct explanation may be, this development, like that of calling phonograms "records," has impacted how we think and write about phonography in that it blurs the contributions of machine, recordist, and phonogen to the recording event, masking their distinctions behind a single word.

To identify phonogenizing as "recording" rather than as "being recorded" is implicitly to stake an ambitious claim for the transparency and objectivity of the medium. It encourages an equation of the phonogenization as act and the phonogram as created object, according to which the phonogram simply *is* the performance it embodies rather than a subjectively transduced "record" of it. This equation gains credibility from the trouble critics seem otherwise to have had in articulating the relationship between sounds and the visually mysterious patternings found on analog phonograms. We are assured that the advent of phonography marked "the moment at which sound itself, rather than its representation, could be sold and moved,"<sup>64</sup> and that analog phonograms "contain physical traces of the music," so that if "we buy a record we buy music," not just data representing music.<sup>65</sup> Insofar as such statements purport to describe objective reality, they are deceptive. Nobody would seriously claim that a seismographic record *is* an earthquake, but the relationship in that case is technically identical to the one between phonographic "records" and their subjects. On the other hand, such statements do accurately reflect a real *cultural* tendency to conflate phonograms with their subjects. I find that this conflation has impeded critics' ability to formulate useful questions about the relationship between the two, trapping them within the very discourse they are seeking to examine. I hope that the alternative terminology I have introduced here, centered on *eduction*, will help expose the biases present in the rhetoric of phonographic "reproduction," encouraging interested scholars to overcome its limitations and begin treating phonography with the same degree of analytical rigor they accord to other media.

Granted, commentators have been fascinated by phonographic “reproduction” and its implications since 1877. It *was* an important element in the early discursive construction of the medium, particularly in speculative writings. But an examination of the actual *practices* of early phonography reveals considerable debt to the preexisting arts of imitation and illusion which had, at first, also furnished it with an alternative terminology (recall that the tinfoil phonograph had sometimes “mimicked sounds” or been a “perfect mockery”). This continuity should come as no surprise. Marshall McLuhan has claimed that

the “content” of any medium is always another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph. If it is asked, “What is the content of speech?,” it is necessary to say, “It is an actual process of thought, which is in itself nonverbal.”<sup>66</sup>

More recently, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin have advanced the term *remediation* to describe the relationship of new media to old media. A new medium, they assert, is always conceptualized in terms of preexisting ones: it necessarily “appropriates the techniques, forms, and social significance of other media and attempts to rival or refashion them in the name of the real.”<sup>67</sup> What, then, did early phonography remediate—what other media provided it with its “content,” in McLuhan’s terms? As a business dictation device, the phonograph remediated manual stenography.<sup>68</sup> In its audicular applications, it remediated the musical box, organette, and barrel organ as a source of automated music, improving upon them by embodying otherwise unprogrammable nuances of live performance. It further remediated the parlor piano, and all other musical instruments, in that it was “every instrument and every voice in one” and required no skill or lengthy training to “play.”<sup>69</sup> But it also remediated performance itself, and this was the source of the dilemmas and crises on which I have focused in this thesis. When phonography sought to represent *only* the performer’s contribution to the performance event in the substitutive mode, this already required considerable adaptation and reorientation due to such factors as time restrictions, acoustic limitations, the absence of visuals, and the lack of a co-present audience; but there was at least some clear “content” for remediation in the art of performance. When phonography sought to represent the *whole* of an event in the descriptive mode, however, the “content” was not untransformed aural reality. It was, rather, the art of aural mimesis, rooted in

ventriloquism, musical descriptive specialties, oral mimicry, and dialect caricature. Phonography was supposed to be an *improvement* on the art of aural mimesis by virtue of its actual “reproduction” of sounds, but at the same time it appropriated—to borrow phrasing from Bolter and Grusin—the “techniques, forms, and social significance” of that art. We can no more understand the practices of early phonography without reference to preexisting norms and techniques of aural representation than we can understand the practices of early photography without reference to older visual arts. At the same time, phonography did not leave preexisting norms and techniques any more untouched and unaltered than photography did, as our examination of the phonographic descriptive specialty in chapter four revealed.

In general, I find that the relationship between early commercial phonograms and performance can be approached more fruitfully as one of creative reworking, restructuring, and reorganization than as one of straightforward “reproduction,” recontextualization, and reappropriation (much less *decontextualization* and *misappropriation*). The culture of early phonography turns out to have been richer and more nuanced than most of its students have suspected, and it is high time for us to begin taking its artifacts seriously, and to learn to “read” them intelligently. There is much there yet to be discovered, if we are only prepared to listen for it.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Sad Phonographic Story,” *Phonogram-2* 1 (June 1900), 45, 47; “Try Your Records First,” *Phonogram* 3 (Feb. 1893), 336; “The Phonograph Party,” from *New York Herald*, in *Boston Daily Globe*, Feb. 23, 1893, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> “It is a Wonder,” *Phonogram* 1 (Aug. 1891), 171; Dexter W. Allis, “Fun With a Phonograph,” *Scientific American* 93 (Nov. 25, 1905), 415; T. Frederick Krey to Editor, *Phonogram-2* 2 (Mar. 1901), 189-90; C. W. Hansen to Editor, *Phonogram-2* 3 (May 1901), 14-15.

<sup>3</sup> “Quartet Produced by One Voice,” *Phonoscope* 2:3 (Mar. 1898), 12.

<sup>4</sup> “Sounds Commingle, Yet Are Clear,” *Phonogram* 2 (Nov. 1892), 248.

<sup>5</sup> Fagan and Moran, *Encyclopedic Discography: Pre-Matrix*, 217.

<sup>6</sup> Len Spencer and Gilbert Girard, A TRIP TO THE CIRCUS—STORY FOR LITTLE FOLKS (Victor M-3461-[?], MW) §.

<sup>7</sup> The phonographic background music appears in A TRIP TO THE COUNTY FAIR (Busy Bee 1323 = Imperial 44716 mx. 6710D) §; and Haydn Quartet, A TRIP TO THE COUNTY FAIR (Canadian 7” Berliner 435 [V-127-4], VG) §. On Haydn Quartet, TRIP TO THE COUNTY FAIR (Canadian 10” Berliner 127 [M-127-3], VG) §, and American Quartet, TRIP TO THE COUNTY FAIR (Edison Amberol 538, UCSB 1908) §, the background music is instead provided by a hand-organ.

<sup>8</sup> Ada Jones and Len Spencer, CHIMMIE AND MAGGIE IN NICKEL LAND (Edison 9671, UCSB 3450) §.

<sup>9</sup> For instance: “In Washington several machines are set about a room and started. The result according to the *Washington Post* is just what is heard when the Capitol City Sewing Circle has a meeting” (“Novel Uses of the Talking Machine,” *Phonoscope* 2:12 [Dec. 1898], 13). The story was also related of a “phonograph fiend” who annoyed the other people in a ferry house by alternating between two poorly maintained penny-in-the-slot phonographs, keeping one or the other of them playing for ten minutes



---

straight; finally, one of his victims got him to desist by starting the second machine just as he started the first ("Phonograph Fiend Baffled," *New York Times*, Aug. 29, 1904, p. 7).

<sup>10</sup> O. C. Thompson, "A Novel Suggestion," *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:6 (Aug. 1903), 6.

<sup>11</sup> "Phonograph Dinners," *Massillon Independent* (Massillon, Ohio), Nov. 5, 1906, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Dexter W. Allis, "Fun With a Phonograph," *Scientific American*, 93 (Nov. 25, 1905), 415.

<sup>13</sup> Sterne, *Audible Past*, 241.

<sup>14</sup> Fish, "Audio Theatre," 2.

<sup>15</sup> "What is Audio Theater?," <http://www.audiotheater.com>, accessed May 11, 2005.

<sup>16</sup> Jan. 1906 Victor catalog, quoted in FPRA Mar. 1980, 56.

<sup>17</sup> Arthur Collins, THE PREACHER AND THE BEAR (Victor 4431, B-2335-2) §.

<sup>18</sup> FPRA Jan. 1980, 35.

<sup>19</sup> FPRA Mar. 1980, 98.

<sup>20</sup> Victor advertisement, *Ladies' Home Journal* 23 (Mar. 1906), 49.

<sup>21</sup> Sterne, *Audible Past*, 245.

<sup>22</sup> I have not made a methodical study of later examples of phonographic audio theater, and for my end date I am relying on Robert Cogswell's observation that "blackface dialogues continued to be issued in number through the first years of electrical recording until 1932" (Cogswell, *Jokes in Blackface*, 51). The form was certainly alive and well with the release of Moran and Mack's TWO BLACK CROWS, PARTS 1 AND 2 (Columbia 935-D) in June 1927, which Tim Brooks identifies as the "biggest single hit record of the era...eventually selling more than one million copies—one of only a handful of recordings to do so prior to the 1940s. Subsequent installments were also huge sellers" (Brooks, "High Drama," 54-5).

<sup>23</sup> Sterne, *Audible Past*, 242-3.

<sup>24</sup> Perkins, *Film as Film*, 61.

<sup>25</sup> Walter B. Pitkin and William M. Marston, *The Art of Sound Pictures* (New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1930), 11-12.

<sup>26</sup> Pearson has approached the question in terms of two contrasting aesthetic standards to which she refers as histrionic and verisimilar codes, with the former yielding to the latter about 1910-11 (Roberta E. Pearson, *Eloquent Gestures: The Transformation of Performance Style in the Griffith Biograph Films* [Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1992]).

<sup>27</sup> Hopper, *Telephone Conversation*, 10.

<sup>28</sup> Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, 146.

<sup>29</sup> Leonard W. Lillingston, "The Career of 'Casey' (Mr. Russell Hunting)," *Talking Machine News*, May, 1903; quoted in FPRA Nov. 1944, 28.

<sup>30</sup> *Edison Phonographic News*, March-April 1895, 83.

<sup>31</sup> "Mr. Joseph Gannon," *Phonoscope* 3:1 (Jan. 1899), 9.

<sup>32</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 7:6 (June 1909) 25.

<sup>33</sup> Collins and Harlan, CAMP MEETING TIME (Edison cylinder 9415), described in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 4:8 (Oct. 1906), 8.

<sup>34</sup> Len Spencer and Alf Holt, HANS KRAUSMEYER AND HIS DOG SCHNEIDER (Edison cylinder 8941), described in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 2:12 (Feb. 1905), 9.

<sup>35</sup> "Wonders of the Phonograph," *Yonkers Statesman*, Apr. 16, 1889 (TAEM 146:401).

<sup>36</sup> Quoted from the Feb. 1902 Victor catalogue in FPRA Aug. 1955, 24.

<sup>37</sup> Description of Ada Jones and Len Spencer, AUGUST AND KATRINA (Edison 9767) in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 5:10 (Dec. 1907), 5.

<sup>38</sup> "Wonders of the Phonograph," *Cincinnati Commercial*, Mar. 11, 1878 (TAEM 27:750), emphasis added.

<sup>39</sup> Clipping from a Kansas City newspaper, citation illegible, in folder for 1892 (TAEM 146:764).

<sup>40</sup> *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 6:1 (Jan. 1908), 9.

<sup>41</sup> "Edison's Phonograph," *Journal* (Quincy, Illinois), Nov. 4, 1890 (TAEM 146:632).

<sup>42</sup> *Globe* (Atchison, Kansas), June 27, 1878, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> "Edison's Greatest Wonder," *Commercial News* (Charleston, South Carolina), Oct. 24, 1887 (TAEM 25:302).

<sup>44</sup> Kenney, *Recorded Music*, 39.

<sup>45</sup> Gitelman, *Scripts*, 134-6. Her principal source connected with phonography is a short article entitled "Mr. Collins is Not a Negro," *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 3:5 (July 1905), 10; but, as she acknowledges,

---

ambiguities about the whiteness or blackness of the performers of “black” caricature had existed in the case of live stage performers—this was not a uniquely phonographic phenomenon.

<sup>46</sup> Even Uncle Remus, for all his naïveté about the phonographic medium, readily associated a phonogram of “black” caricature with its analog in live performance: “Dar wuz a man pickin’ de banjo, en doin’ like he hear folks say de niggers does. I kin shet my eyes en see ’im right now. He got blackin’ on his face, en his eyes is mo’ blood-shotten dan what niggers’ eyes is. He got on a high stove-pipe hat, en he showin’ de bottom er his shoe wid chalk marks on it. He ain’t no mo’ like a nigger dan a bumble-bee is like a roan mule. Yit dar he sets en plunks on de banjer” (Harris, *Uncle Remus and His Friends*, 297-8).

<sup>47</sup> Alma Gluck, from *Vanity Fair*, Oct. 1916, in FPRA Sept. 1962, 32.

<sup>48</sup> Katz, *Capturing Sound*, 85-98.

<sup>49</sup> Richard Bauman and Patrick Feaster, “‘Fellow Townsmen and My Noble Constituents!’: Representations of Oratory on Early Commercial Recordings,” *Oral Tradition* 20 (2005), 35-57; and “Oratorical Footing in a New Medium: Recordings of Presidential Campaign Speeches, 1896-1912,” *Texas Linguistics Forum* 46 (2003), <http://studentorgs.utexas.edu/salsa/salsaproceedings/salsa11/SALSA11papers/bauman&feaster.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> Phil Jamison, “Barn Dances with Calls: Old-Time Southern Square-Dance Calls on 78s: 1920s—early 1930s,” *The Old-Time Herald* 7:8 (Spring 2001), 14.

<sup>51</sup> Minton, *Phonograph Blues*, 92ff.

<sup>52</sup> FPRA Oct. 1979, 36.

<sup>53</sup> For allusions to public phonography in Egypt and Lebanon during the 1920s, see Ali Jihad Racy, *Musical Change and Commercial Recording in Egypt, 1904-1932* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1977), 169; and “Words and Music in Beirut: A Study of Attitudes,” *Ethnomusicology* 30 (Fall 1986), 420.

<sup>54</sup> Altman, *Silent Film Sound*, 16.

<sup>55</sup> “How Musical Records Are Made,” *Phonogram* 3 (Mar.-Apr. 1893), 364-5. Again: “The making of records for talking machines has grown to be a business of large proportions. What is known as a ‘record’ in the trade, is a cylinder on which has been engraved the record of a musical or other performance intended for reproduction” (*Phonoscope* 1:10 [Oct. 1897], 9). Other instances of the word appearing in quotation marks include: “Instead of the ‘records’ being taken on wax in the usual manner” (“A Shouting Phonograph,” citing *London Mail*, in *Literary Digest* 21 [Aug. 18, 1900], 194); “THERE is a man in the phonograph business who is so expert that he can talk to a pine board, and make a ‘record’” (“Phonograph Chat,” *Phonogram* 1 [Jan. 1891], 23); “The quality of his ‘records’ was of the highest order—perfectly taken—which reflected great credit not only on the artist, but on the phonograph” (“Charles Marshall, New York City,” *Phonogram* 1 [Mar. 1891], 63); “At a fair given in Brooklyn last month Mr. C. H. Oxenham, with a phonograph exhibition, added much to the amusement of those who attended, and succeeded in getting a ‘record’ for his mysterious little machine that he considers one of the most novel ever taken. The ‘record’ included a chorus by young folks, the screams of a fainting woman, and a song by three Windsor Terrace Chinamen” (“Doings Among the Phonograph and Graphophone Exhibitors,” *Phonoscope* 1:2 [Dec. 1896], 9); “Let us follow the making of a ‘record’ from the time the wax cylinder, made at the factory, is received at the laboratory” (“An Orchestra Which Plays Before a World-Wide Audience,” from *Musical America*, in *Edison Phonograph Monthly* 5:4 [June 1907], 14); “The entertaining agent had given them a choice assortment of popular songs, funny speeches and instrumental pieces on the machine, and had gone so far as to put on a fresh ‘record’ and receiving apparatus for the purpose of illustrating the value of the invention as a preserver and perpetrator of family associations” (Frank R. Welch, “A Misplaced Record,” from *Farmer’s Review*, in *Elyria Reporter* [Elyria, Ohio], May 26, 1904, p. 2); “So he had several cylinders loaded up with whistles, puffs, bell-ringing and other Illinois Central noises, and every night after he retired his hired man would put these ‘records’ into the phonograph and he would fall asleep with the old loved sounds in his ears” (“Helped by the Phonograph,” from *Chicago Record*, in *Daily Herald* [Delphos, Ohio], Feb. 22, 1902, p. 3); “A Middletown, N. Y., pastor has bought a phonograph, with ‘records’ containing good advice, which he grinds out for the benefit of every happy couple he may have the luck to marry” (*Mansfield News* [Mansfield, Ohio], Dec. 30, 1899, p. 2). Occasionally some other device was used to qualify the term, as: “I want you to pull that record, *as you call it*, off from that machine and give it to me” (“As Others Heard Him,” *Phonogram* 1 [Oct. 1891], 217, italics added).

<sup>56</sup> “They were making ‘records’ inside, those wax cylinders sold by the crate to country Barnums for their nickel-in-the-slot machines” (“The Faked Records,” *Massillon Independent* [Massillon, Ohio], Dec. 12, 1898, p. 12).

---

<sup>57</sup> The title of the first motion picture to receive a copyright was EDISON KINETOSCOPIC RECORD OF A SNEEZE (1894), and editorials also referred to the film of the Corbett-Fitzimmons prize fight as a “kinescope record” (e.g., “The Blot on the Escutcheon,” *Congregationalist* 82 [Mar. 25, 1897], 405; “In Brief,” *Congregationalist* 82 [Apr. 15, 1897], 517). The term “photographic record” was used mostly in reference to subjects of general historic interest (e.g., “Historical Photography,” *New York Times*, Mar. 29, 1867, p. 8) or scientific data (e.g., “Preparations to Photograph the Great Eclipse,” *New York Times*, Apr. 26, 1868, p. 10), but not exclusively, one exception being a commercial photographer’s advertising claim: “No pic-nic is complete without a Photographic record” (“To Pic-nic Parties,” *Chester Daily Times* [Chester, Pennsylvania], June 26, 1877, p. 4).

<sup>58</sup> “Fate of a Scientific Fad,” *New York Times*, Sept. 11, 1894, p. 1.

<sup>59</sup> Siefert, “Aesthetics”; Thompson, “Machines.”

<sup>60</sup> I am aware of only one exception, although others may certainly exist: “In 1899, the attention of the Edison Phonograph management was directed to my dialectic ability, and, possessing a voice peculiarly adapted for Phonograph work, I made my initial appearance at the Edison laboratory, *recording* stories originated by that late eminent wit Mr. J. W. Kelly” (“Will N. Steele,” *Phonogram-2* 2:1 [Nov. 1900], 20, italics added). In an example from 1910, it is stated that Frank C. Stanley “did much recording” (quoted in *FPRA* Apr. 1949, 29).

<sup>61</sup> Emily Estey, “Along the Post Road,” *Post Standard* (Syracuse, New York), Nov. 10, 1967, p. 20.

<sup>62</sup> For the latter phrase, cf. “the artists who make Records for the Edison Phonograph” (“Pictures and Sketches of the ‘Talent’” (*Edison Phonograph Monthly* 1:6 [Aug. 1903], 13).

<sup>63</sup> “Phonographs in Politics,” *Evening Telegram* (Elyria, Ohio), Nov. 27, 1908, p. 6, italics added.

<sup>64</sup> Paraphrase of Tim Taylor in Paul D. Greene, “Introduction: Wired Sound and Sonic Cultures,” in *Wired for Sound: Engineering and Technologies in Sonic Cultures*, edited by Paul D. Greene and Thomas Porcello (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>65</sup> Rothenbuhler and Peters, “Defining Phonography,” 246.

<sup>66</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: MIT Press, 1994), 8.

<sup>67</sup> Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: MIT Press, 2000), 65.

<sup>68</sup> See especially Gitelman, “Scripts,” 21-61, although she does not use this terminology.

<sup>69</sup> Quotation from Victor advertisement, *New York Times*, June 27, 1908, p. 4; “The Talking Machine and Art,” *Chicago Tribune*, June 10, 1906, p. B4.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbott, Lynn. "‘Play that Barbershop Chord’: A Case for the African-American Origin of Barbershop Harmony." *American Music* 10 (1992): 289-325.
- Adorno, Theodore W. "The Curves of the Needle." Translated by Thomas Y. Levin. *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 49-55.
- Aldridge, Benjamin L. *The Victor Talking Machine Company*. N.p.: RCA Sales Corporation: 1964. Reprinted in facsimile in *The Encyclopedic Discography of Victor Recordings, Pre-Matrix Series*, by Ted Fagan and William R. Moran, xxxiii-lxiii. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983.
- Allen, Robert C. *Vaudeville and Film 1895-1915: A Study in Media Interaction*. New York: Arno Press, 1980.
- Alvarez-Caccamo, Celso and Hubert Knoblauch. "‘I was calling you’: Communicative patterns in leaving a message on an answering machine." *Text* 12 (1992): 473-505.
- Altman, Rick. "The Material Heterogeneity of Recorded Sound." In *Sound Theory Sound Practice*, edited by Rick Altman, 15-31. New York and London: Routledge, 1992.
- Altman, Rick. *Silent Film Sound*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Andrews, Frank. "More Thoughts on Early Double-Sided Discs." *New Amberola Graphic* 99 (Jan. 1997): 5-7.
- Armstrong, Robert Plant. *The Affecting Presence: An Essay in Humanistic Anthropology*. Urbana, Chicago, London: University of Illinois Press, 1971.
- Arnold, Eleanor, ed. *Party Lines, Pumps and Privies*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- "Arranging for the Gem."  
[http://www.honorrolls.com/arranging\\_music\\_for\\_the\\_gem\\_roll.htm](http://www.honorrolls.com/arranging_music_for_the_gem_roll.htm), accessed July 29, 2004
- [Augsburger, Todd.] "Todd Augsburger’s Roller Organ Roller (Cob) List."  
[http://www.rollerorgans.com/Roller\\_Organ\\_List.htm](http://www.rollerorgans.com/Roller_Organ_List.htm), accessed July 28, 2004.
- Aunt Sally’s Policy Players Dream Book: New Key to Find Your Own Numbers Based on Systems of Harmony in Numbers*. Chicago: Stein Publishing House, 1926.

Banks, David A. "Texts for Early Speech Recordings," *Victrola & 78 Journal* 2 (Fall 1994): 14-5.

Baum, L. Frank. *The Sea Fairies*. Chicago: Reilly & Britton, 1911.

Bauman, Richard. "American Folklore Studies and Social Transformation: A Performance-Centered Perspective." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 9 (July 1989): 175-84.

Bauman, Richard. *Verbal Art as Performance*. Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1984.

Bauman, Richard, and Patrick Feaster. "'Fellow Townsmen and My Noble Constituents!': Representations of Oratory on Early Commercial Recordings." *Oral Tradition* 20 (2005): 35-57.

Bauman, Richard, and Patrick Feaster. "Oratorical Footing in a New Medium: Recordings of Presidential Campaign Speeches, 1896-1912." *Texas Linguistics Forum* 46 (2003).  
<http://studentorgs.utexas.edu/salsa/salsaproceedings/salsa11/SALSA11papers/bauman&feaster.pdf>.

Bayly, Ernie and Michael Kinnear. *The Zon-o-phone Record: A discography of recordings produced by the International Zonophone Company and associated companies in Europe and the Americas, 1901-1903*. Heidelberg, Victoria, Australia: Michael S. Kinnear, 2001.

Bellamy, Edward. "With the Eyes Shut." *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* 79 (Oct. 1889): 736-45.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn, 217-51. New York: Schocken Books, 1969.

Bishop, William H. "A Night With Edison." *Scribner's Monthly* 17 (Nov. 1878): 88-99.

Blair, Walter, and Raven I. McDavid, Jr., ed. *The Mirth of a Nation: America's Great Dialect Humor*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.

Bolter, Jay David and Richard Grusin. *Remediation: Understanding New Media*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: MIT Press, 2000.

Bowers, Q. David. *Encyclopedia of Automatic Musical Instruments*. Vestal, New York: Vestal Press, 1972.

- Brady, Erika. *The Box That Got the Flourishes: The Cylinder Phonograph in Folklore Fieldwork, 1890-1937*. Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1985.
- Brady, Erika. *A Spiral Way: How the Phonograph Changed Ethnography*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999.
- Branen, Jeff and Frederick G. Johnson. *How to Stage a Minstrel Show: A Manual for the Amateur Burnt Cork Director*. Chicago: T. S. Denison & Company, 1921.
- Brooks, Tim. "The Artifacts of Recording History: Creators, Users, Losers, Keepers," *ARSC Journal* 11 (1979): 18-29.
- Brooks, Tim. "The Columbia Double-Disc Demonstration Record." *New Amberola Graphic* 14 (Summer 1975): 3.
- Brooks, Tim. "Columbia Records in the 1890's: Founding the Record Industry." *ARSC Journal* 10 (1978): 5-36.
- Brooks, Tim. "A Directory to Columbia Recording Artists of the 1890's." *ARSC Journal* 11 (1979): 102-143.
- Brooks, Tim. "George W. Johnson: An Annotated Discography," *ARSC Journal* 35 (Spring 2004): 67-89.
- Brooks, Tim. "High Drama in the Record Industry: Columbia Records, 1901-1934." *ARSC Journal* 33 (Spring 2002): 21-76.
- Brooks, Tim. "How Copyright Law Affects Reissues of Historic Recordings: A New Study." *ARSC Journal* 36 (Fall 2005): 183-203.
- Brooks, Tim. *Lost Sounds: Blacks and the Birth of the Recording Industry, 1890-1919*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004.
- Brooks, Tim. Review of *Recorded Music in American Life*, by William Kenney. *ARSC Journal* 31 (Fall 2001): 308-11.
- Brooks, Tim. "Seeing Double! The First Two-Sided Records." *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 3:6 (1975): 1, 3-4, 6-7, 16.
- Brooks, Tim, and Brian Rust. *Columbia Master Book Discography*. 4 vols. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999.
- Bruce, Robert V. *Bell: Alexander Graham Bell and the Conquest of Solitude*. Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1973.

- Bryan, George S. *Edison: The Man and His Work*. London and New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926.
- Bryan, Martin. "Columbia's First Double Records." *New Amberola Graphic* 17 (Spring 1976): 7-9.
- Bryan, Martin. "Songs of the 1900 Election." *New Amberola Graphic* 50 (Autumn 1984): 12-3.
- Bryant, Bill. "The International Family." *New Amberola Graphic* 12 (Winter 1975): 4-7, 14.
- Brylawski, E. Fulton and Abe Goldman, ed. *Legislative History of the 1909 Copyright Act*. 6 vols. South Hackensack, New Jersey: F. B. Rothman, 1976.
- Cameron, Deborah. *Working with Spoken Discourse*. London, Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2001.
- Camlot, Jason. "Early Talking Books: Spoken Recordings and Recitation Anthologies, 1880-1920." *Book History* 6 (2003): 147-173.
- Carlson, Gustav C. "The Argot of Number Gambling." *American Speech* 24 (Oct. 1949): 189-93.
- Carter, Sydney H., compiler. *Edison Bell Cylinders: A Listing*. Bournemouth, Dorset: Talking Machine Review, n.d.
- Casson, Herbert N. *The History of the Telephone*. Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1910.
- Chalfen, Richard. *Snapshot Versions of Life*. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987.
- Chanan, Michael. *Repeated Takes: A Short History of Recording and its Effects on Music*. London and New York: Verso, 1995.
- Charosh, Paul. *Berliner Gramophone Records, American Issues 1892-1900*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1995.
- Chion, Michel. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. Translated and edited by Claudia Gorbman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- [Clenenden, F. L.] *Fashionable Quadrille Call Book and Guide to Etiquette*. Davenport, Iowa: F. L. Clenenden, 1895.
- Cobb, [Will] and [Gus] Edwards. *Way Down Yonder in the Cornfield*. New York: F. A. Mills, 1901.

Cogswell, Robert Gireud. *Jokes in Blackface: A Discographic Folklore Study*. Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, Bloomington, 1984.

Connor, Steven. *Dumbstruck: A Cultural History of Ventriloquism*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Conot, Robert. *A Streak of Luck*. New York: Seaview Books, 1979.

Cooke, Abigail. "Humorous Reflections on Laughing Records." *ARSC Journal* 32 (Fall 2001): 232-42.

Copeland, George A. and Ron Dethlefsen. *Edison, Lambert Concert Records & Columbia Grand Records and Related Phonographs or, "The 5-Inch Cylinder Book."* Los Angeles, California: Mulholland Press, 2004.

Corazza, Eros, William Fish and Jonathan Gorvett. "Who is I?" *Philosophical Studies* 107 (2002): 1-21.

Corenthal, Michael G. *Cohen on the Telephone: A History of Jewish Recorded Humor and Popular Music, 1892-1942*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Yesterday's Memories, 1984.

Coverley, Robert. *March of the Passing Regiment*. New York: C. H. Ditson, 1884.

Cros, Charles. *Inédits & Documents*, edited by Pierre E. Richard. Villelongue d'Aude: Atelier du Gué; Remoulins, Gard: Editions J. Brémond, 1992.

Davidson, Frank Costellow. *The Rise, Development, Decline and Influence of the American Minstrel Show*. Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1952.

Day, Timothy. *A Century of Recorded Music: Listening to Musical History*. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2000.

Deakins, Duane D. *Cylinder Records*. Second edition. Stockton, California: Duane D. Deakins, 1958.

deCordova, Richard. *Picture Personalities: The Emergence of the Star System in America*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001.

Dennison, Sam. *Scandalize My Name: Black Imagery in American Popular Music*. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1982.

Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins university Press, 1976.



- Dethlefsen, Ronald. *Edison Blue Amberol Recordings*. 2 vols. Brooklyn, New York: APM Press, 1980—.
- Dethlefsen, Ron. Review of *America on Record*, by Andre Millard. *In the Groove* 21:6 (June 1996): 7.
- Dickson, W. K. L. and Antonia Dickson. *The Life and Inventions of Thomas Alva Edison*. New York and Boston: Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 1892-4.
- Dillon, Harry and John Dillon, *Put Me Off at Buffalo* (New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1895).
- Dingwall, Silvia. “‘Hello. This is Sally’s answering machine.’ Deixis in answerphone messages.” *Bulletin suisse de linguistique appliquée* 62 (1995): 129-153.
- Dingwall, Silvia. “Leaving telephone answering messages: Who’s afraid of speaking to machines?” *Text* 12 (1992): 81-101.
- Distler, Paul Antonie. “Ethnic Comedy in Vaudeville and Burlesque.” In *American Popular Entertainment: Papers and Proceedings of the Conference on the History of American Popular Entertainment*, ed. Myron Matlaw, 33-42. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1979.
- Dorian, Frank. “Reminiscences of the Columbia Cylinder Records.” *Phonograph Monthly Review* (Jan. 1930): 114-5.
- Doyle, Peter. *Echo & Reverb: Fabricating Space in Popular Music Recording, 1900-1960*. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2005.
- Dumiel, Yitzchak (Isaac Sterling). “What is Phonography?” <http://www.phonography.org/whatis.html>, accessed Feb. 27, 2004.
- Dumont, Frank. *That Old Cabin Home Upon the Hill*. Boston: Ditson & Co., Oliver, 1880.
- Durant, Alan. “The Concept of Secondary Orality: Observations About Speech and Text in Modern Communications Media.” *Dalhousie Review* 64 (1984), 332-53.
- Dyer, Frank Lewis and Thomas Commerford Martin. *Edison: His Life and Inventions*. 2 vols. New York and London: Harper and Brothers, 1929.
- Edison, Thomas. “The Perfected Phonograph.” *North American Review* 379 (June 1888): 641-50.

- Edison, Thomas. "The Phonograph and its Future." *North American Review* 262 (May-June 1878): 527-36.
- Eisenberg, Evan. *The Recording Angel: Explorations in Phonography*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1987.
- Eisenstein, Sergei. *The Film Sense*. New York: Meridian Books, 1957.
- Elmwell, L. H. *Prompter's Pocket Instruction Book*. Boston, New York and Chicago: White-Smith Music Publishing Company, 1892.
- Fabian, Bernhard, ed. *Deutsches biographisches Archiv: eine Kumulation aus 254 der wichtigsten Nachschlagewerke für den deutschen Bereich bis zum Ausgang des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*. 1431 microfiches. München and New York: K. G. Saur, 1982.
- Fabrizio, T. C. "The Disc Records of Turn-of-the-Century Chicago and the Companies Which Sold Them." *ARSC Journal* 12 (1980): 18-25.
- Fabrizio, Timothy C. "District of Columbia: The Graphophone in Washington, DC." *ARSC Journal* 27 (Spring 1996): 1-10.
- Fabrizio, Tim. Review of *The Audible Past*, by Jonathan Sterne. *ARSC Journal* 34 (Fall, 2003): 225-6.
- Fabrizio, T. C. "The Spoken Announcement as a Social Convention." *Talking Machine Review* 3 (1970): 89-90.
- Fabrizio, Timothy C. and George F. Paul. *Antique Phonograph Accessories & Contraptions*. Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Co., 2003.
- Fabrizio, Timothy C. and George F. Paul. *Antique Phonograph Advertising: An Illustrated History*. Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Co., 2002.
- Fabrizio, Timothy C. and George F. Paul. *Antique Phonograph Gadgets, Gizmos, and Gimmicks*. Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Co., 1999.
- Fabrizio, Timothy C. and George F. Paul. *Discovering Antique Phonographs*. Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Co., 2000.
- Fabrizio, Timothy C. and George F. Paul. *Phonographica: The Early History of Recorded Sound Observed*. Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Co., 2004.
- Fabrizio, Timothy C. and George F. Paul. *Phonographs With Flair: A Century of Style in Sound Reproduction*. Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Co., 2001.

- Fabrizio, Timothy C. and George F. Paul. *The Talking Machine: An Illustrated Compendium, 1877-1929*. Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Publishing Co., 1997.
- Fagan, Ted and William R. Moran. *The Encyclopedic Discography of Victor Recordings, Matrix Series 1 through 4999*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1986.
- Fagan, Ted and William R. Moran. *The Encyclopedic Discography of Victor Recordings, Pre-Matrix Series*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983.
- Feaster, Patrick. "Framing the Mechanical Voice: Generic Conventions of Early Phonograph Recording." *Folklore Forum* 32 (2001): 57-102.
- Figuiet, Louis. "Causerie Scientifique." *Grande Revue* 5 (Dec. 25 [?], 1890): 561-76. Reproduced in TAEM 146:636-44.
- Finnegan, Ruth. *Literacy and Orality: Studies in the Technology of Communication*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1988, 176.
- Fischer, Claude S. *America Calling: A Social History of the Telephone to 1940*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Fish, Richard L. "Audio Theatre: The Next Stage in Audio Publishing." In National Audio Theatre Festivals Resources, <http://www.natf.org/resource.html>, accessed June 11, 2003.
- Fish, Richard L. "Genesis and Renaissance: A Brief History of Audio Theatre." In National Audio Theatre Festivals Resources, <http://www.natf.org/resource.html>, accessed June 11, 2003.
- Flanagan, Cathleen C. "The Use of Commercial Sound Recordings in Scholarly Research," *ARSC Journal* 11 (1979): 3-17.
- Forrest, Jennifer. "Scripting the Female Voice: The Phonograph, the Cinematograph, and the Ideal Woman." *Nineteenth-Century French Studies* 27 (Fall-Winter 1998-9): 71-95.
- Frangos, Steve. "Large Record Collectors: The Unrecognized Authorities." *Resound: A Quarterly of the Archives of Traditional Music* 10 (Apr. 1991).
- French, Charles T. *Jersey Lily Lancers*. New York: Spear and Dehnhoff, 1882.
- French, J. A. *The Prompter's Hand Book*. Boston: O. Ditson Co., 1893.
- Gaisberg, F. W. *The Music Goes Round*. New York: Macmillan, 1942.

- Galo, Gary A. "Did He Have a Highball? The Caruso-Farrar *Butterfly* Duet." *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 9:1 (1989): 13-14.
- Gandy, James. "Oberlin Smith and the First Phonograph." *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 3:2 (Feb. 1975): 3-6.
- Ganthonny, Robert. *Bunkum Entertainments: being a collection of original laughable skits on conjuring, physiognomy, juggling, performing fleas, waxworks, panorama, phrenology, phonograph, second sight, lightning calculators, ventriloquism, spiritualism, etc., to which are added humorous sketches, whimsical recitals, and drawing-room comedies.* London: L. Upcott Gill, n.d.
- Gelatt, Roland. *The Fabulous Phonograph: 1877-1977.* Second revised edition. New York: Collier Books; London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1977.
- Gilbert, Douglas. *American Vaudeville: Its Life and Times.* New York: McGraw Hill, 1940.
- Gitelman, Lisa. *Scripts, Grooves, and Writing Machines: Representing Technology in the Edison Era.* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Gitelman, Lisa. "Souvenir Foils: On the Status of Print at the Origin of Recorded Sound." In *New Media, 1740-1915*, eds. Lisa Gitelman and Geoffrey B. Pingree, 157-73. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: MIT Press, 2003.
- Glenn, Susan A. "'Give an Imitation of Me': Vaudeville Mimics and the Play of the Self." *American Quarterly* 50 (Mar. 1998): 47-76.
- Goffman, Erving. *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (New York, Hagerstown, San Francisco, London: Harper Colophon Books, 1974.
- Gold, Ruby. "Answering Machine Talk." *Discourse Processes* 14 (1991): 243-60.
- Gracyk, Tim. "Barbershop Quartets, the First Quartet Named on Records, and the Most Popular Quartet of the Acoustic Era." *Antique Phonograph News* (Nov.-Dec. 2002): 6-8.
- Gracyk, Tim. "Columbia Male Quartette." <http://www.garlic.com/~tgracyk/columbiaquartet.html>, accessed Feb. 28, 2005.
- Gracyk, Tim. *Companion to the Encyclopedia of Popular American Recording Pioneers, 1895-1925: Rare Items from the Recording Industry's Early Decades.* Granite Bay, California: Tim Gracyk, [n.d.].
- Gracyk, Tim. "Eldridge R. Johnson's First Numbered Record." *Victrola and 78 Journal* 10 (Winter 1996): 34-7.

Gracyk, Tim. "How Late Did Columbia Use Brown Wax?" *Victrola and 78 Journal* 11 (Spring 1997): 67.

Gracyk, Tim. "The Kansas City Talking Machine Company And Its 'Original' Recordings of 1898." *Victrola and 78 Journal* 10 (Winter 1996): 40-9.

Gracyk, Tim. "The Life and Writing Career of Ulysses 'Jim' Walsh." *Victrola and 78 Journal* 13 (Autumn 1998): 44-59.

Gracyk, Tim. *Popular American Recording Pioneers, 1895-1925*. New York, London, Oxford: Haworth Press, 2000.

Green, Archie. "Sound Recordings, Use and Challenge." In *Handbook of American Folklore*, edited by Richard M. Dorson, 434-40. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983.

Greene, Paul D. "Introduction: Wired Sound and Sonic Cultures." In *Wired for Sound: Engineering and Technologies in Sonic Cultures*, edited by Paul D. Greene and Thomas Porcello, 1-22. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 2005.

Gronow, Pekka. "The record industry: the growth of a mass medium." *Popular Music* 3 (1983): 53-75.

Gunning, Tom. "Doing for the Eye What the Phonograph Does for the Ear." In *The Sounds of Early Cinema*, edited by Richard Abel and Rick Altman, 13-21. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001.

Hannibal, Julius Caesar. *Black Diamonds*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Literature House, [1969].

Hardy, A. S. *Lancers Wild Gazelle*, arr. W. S. Milton. Philadelphia: T. A. Bacher, 1882.

Harris, Joel Chandler. *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings: The Folk-Lore of the Old Plantation*. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1890.

Harris, Joel Chandler. *Uncle Remus and His Friends: Old Plantation Stories, Songs and Ballads with Sketches of Negro Character*. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1892.

Haverly, Jack. *Negro Minstrels*. Chicago: Frederick J. Drake & Company, 1902. Reprint: Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Literature House, 1969.

- Hazen, Margaret Hindle and Robert M. Hazen. *The Music Men: An Illustrated History of Brass Bands in America, 1800-1920*. Washington DC and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1987.
- Heier, Uli and Rainer E. Lotz. *The Banjo on Record: A Bio-Discography*. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1994.
- Hoffmann, Frank. *Billy Murray: The Phonograph Company's First Great Recording Artist*. Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 1997.
- Hopper, Robert. *Telephone Conversation*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992.
- How to dance. A complete ball-room and party guide. Containing all the latest figures, together with old-fashioned and contra dances now in general use. Also, a guide to ballroom etiquette, toilets, and general useful information for dancers*. New York: Tousey & Small, 1878.
- Hubert, Philip G., Jr. "The New Talking-Machines." *Atlantic Monthly* 63 (Feb. 1889): 256-261.
- Inspector's Handbook of the Phonograph, Issued by the Edison Phonograph Works, Orange, N. J., August 1889*. Newark, New Jersey: Ward and Tichenor, 1889. Reproduced in TAEM 147:274ff.
- Instructions for the Management and Operation of Edison's Speaking Phonograph*. Philadelphia: Burk & McFetridge, 1878. Reproduced in TAEM 96:509-15.
- Israel, Paul. *Edison: A Life of Invention*. New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1998.
- Israel, Paul. "The Unknown History of the Tinfoil Phonograph." *NARAS Journal* 8 (Winter/Spring 1997/98): 29-42.
- Jackson, Bruce. *Fieldwork*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987.
- Jamison, Phil. "Barn Dances with Calls: Old-Time Southern Square-Dance Calls on 78s: 1920s—early 1930s." *The Old-Time Herald* 7:8 (Spring 2001): 14-6.
- Jones, Francis Arthur. "Illustrated Interviews." *Strand Magazine* 29 (Jan.-June 1905): 415-24.
- Jones, Gavin. *Strange Talk: The Politics of Dialect Literature in Gilded Age America*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999.

- Kahn, Douglas. "Audio Art in the Deaf Century." Online version, [http://www.soundculture.org/words/kahn\\_deaf\\_century.html](http://www.soundculture.org/words/kahn_deaf_century.html), accessed Aug. 14, 2002.
- Kahn, Douglas. *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1999.
- Kahn, Ed. "Will Roy Hearne: Peripheral Folklore Scholar." *Western Folklore* 23:3 (July 1964) 173-9. Reprinted in *JEMF Quarterly* 14:51 (Autumn 1978): 113-117.
- Katz, Mark. *Capturing Sound: How Technology Has Changed Music*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2004.
- Katz, Mark. *The Phonograph Effect: The Influence of Recording on Listener, Performer, Composer*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1999.
- Kennedy, Harry. *Cradle's Empty, Baby's Gone*. Boston: Oliver Ditson & Co., 1880.
- Kenney, William Howland. *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890-1945*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Kirkeby, Marc. "Artistic Whistlers and Auctioneers." <http://www.sonymusic.com/artists/SoundtrackForACentury/ie/story/story6.html>, accessed Aug. 30, 2004.
- Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Barbara. "Folklore's Crisis." *Journal of American Folklore* 111 (1998): 281-327.
- Kittler, Friedrich A. *Discourse Networks, 1800/1900*. Translated by Michael Metteer, with Chris Cullens. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990.
- Kittler, Friedrich A. *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*. Translated by Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1999.
- Klinger, Bill. "Celluloid Cylinders: 'Albany' Indestructible vs. U-S Everlasting." *Antique Phonograph News* (Sept.-Oct. 1994): 3-10.
- Knuf, Joachim. "This and that, here and there: Deictic elements in telephone openings." *Semiotica* 145 (July 2003): 175-200.
- Koenigsberg, Allen. *Edison Cylinder Records, 1889-1912, with an Illustrated History of the Phonograph*. First edition. New York: Stellar Productions, 1969.
- Koenigsberg, Allen. *Edison Cylinder Records, 1889-1912, with an Illustrated History of the Phonograph*. Second edition. Brooklyn: APM Press, 1988.

Koenigsberg, Allen. "In the Pink: A Lambert Discography," *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 6:8 (1981): 4-10; part two (five-inch concert cylinders), *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 6:9 (1981): 8-9.

Koenigsberg, Allen. *The Patent History of the Phonograph, 1877-1912*. U. S. Patent Bi-Centennial Edition. Brooklyn, New York: APM Press, 1991.

Koenigsberg, Allen. "So Long at the Fair: A Lost Chapter in Phonographic History." *The Sound Box* 22 (Mar. 2004): 27-29.

Koenigsberg, Allen and Robert Feinstein. "The First 'Hello!' Thomas Edison, the Phonograph and the Telephone." *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 8:6 (1987), 1, 3-9.

Kopp, E. H., compiler. *The American Prompter and Guide to Etiquette*. Cincinnati, Ohio: John Church Co., 1896.

Kreilkamp, Ivan. "A Voice Without a Body: The Phonographic Logic of *Heart of Darkness*." *Victorian Studies* 40 (Winter 1997): 211-44.

Kunst, Jaap. *Ethnomusicology: A study of its nature, its problems, methods and representative personalities to which is added a bibliography*. Reprint of 3rd Edition. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974.

Laing, Dave. "A voice without a face: popular music and the phonograph in the 1890s." *Popular Music* 10 (1991): 1-9.

Lankow, Anna. *The Science of the Art of Singing*. New York, London, Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1902.

Lastra, James. *Sound Technology and the American Cinema: Perception, Representation, Modernity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

Lawlor, Charles B. and James W. Blake. *The Sidewalks of New York*. New York: Howley, Haviland & Co., 1894.

Lawlor, Charles B. and William Cahill Davies. *The Mick Who Threw the Brick*. New York: Independent Publishing Co., 1899.

Lindsay, David. *Madness in the Making: The Triumphant Rise and Untimely Fall of America's Show Inventors*. New York, Tokyo and London: Kodansha International, 1997.

Link, Charles. *Unique Dancing Call Book*. Rochester, New York: C. Link, 1893.



Linn, Karen. *That Half-Barbaric Twang: The Banjo in American Popular Culture*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991.

Lokhorst, Gert-Jan C. "Johannes Brahms' 1889 Wax-Cylinder Recording." <http://www.eur.nl/fw/staff/lokhorst/brahms.html>, accessed Feb. 18, 2004.

Loomis, C. Grant. "Mary Had a Parody: A Rhyme of Childhood in Folk Tradition." *Western Folklore* 17 (1958): 45-51.

Lord, Albert B. *The Singer of Tales*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964.

Lorenz, Kenneth M. *Two Minute Brown Wax and XP Cylinder Records of the Columbia Phonograph Company*. Wilmington, Delaware: Kastlemusick, 1981.

Lyons, Jimmy. *Encyclopedia of stage material for professional entertainers, clubs, lodges, comedians, or any one else who desires to laugh; containing witty jokes, recitations, sidewalk conversation, monologues, after dinner stories, playlets, minstrel show, and other miscellaneous comedy matter*. Boston, Walter H. Baker Company: 1925.

Maguire, Franck Z. "The Graphophone." *Harper's Weekly* 30 (July 17, 1886): 458-9.

Marco, Guy, ed. *Encyclopedia of Recorded Sound in the United States*. New York: Garland, 1993.

Marks, Edward B. *They All Sang: From Tony Pastor to Rudy Vallée*. As told to Abbott J. Liebling. New York: The Viking Press, 1935.

Martel, Joseph. "Marshall P. Wilder: Monologist and Raconteur." *New Amberola Graphic* 90 (Oct. 1994), 3-4.

Marvin, Carolyn. *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking About Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Mayer, Alfred M. "On Edison's Talking Machine." *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (Apr. 1878): 719-724.

Mayo, E. W. "A Phonographic Studio." From *Quaker* (July 1899), in *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 6:6 (1980): 1, 3-7.

McKay, Anne. "Speaking Up: Voice Amplification and Women's Struggle for Public Expression." In *Technology and Women's Voices: Keeping in Touch*, edited

by Cheris Kramerae, 187-206. New York and London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1988.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: MIT Press, 1994.

McNutt, Randy. *Cal Stewart: Your Uncle Josh*. Fairfield, Ohio: Weathervane Books, 1981.

Millard, Andre. *America on Record: A History of Recorded Sound*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Miller, Kristyan Spelman. "A new mode of spoken interaction? The case of the telephone answer-machine." In *Writing vs Speaking: Language, Text, Discourse, Communication*, edited by Světlá Čmejrková, František Daneš, and Eva Havlová, 267-73. Tübingen: Gunter Narr Verlag, 1994.

Minton, John Stephen. *Phonograph Blues: Folksong and Media in the Southern United States Before the Second World War*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 1990.

Minton, John. "The Reverend Lamar Roberts and the Mediation of Oral Tradition," *Journal of American Folklore* 108 (Winter 1995): 3-37.

Moncel, Count du. *The Telephone, the Microphone, and the Phonograph*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1879.

Monson, Ingrid. *Saying Something: Jazz Improvisation and Interaction*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Moross, Jerome. *Three Songs from Gentlemen, Be Seated!* New York: Chappell, 1962.

Morton, David. *Off the Record: The Technology and Culture of Sound Recording in America*. New Brunswick, New Jersey, and London: Rutgers University Press, 2000.

Munro, J. "The Phonograph." *Cassell's Family Magazine* (June 1878): 441-4. Reproduced in TAEM 94:278-80.

Musser, Charles. *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Musser, Charles. *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1990.

Musser, Charles. *High Class Moving Pictures: Lyman H. Howe and the Forgotten Era of Traveling Exhibition, 1880-1920*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Nasaw, David. *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements*. New York: Basic Books, 1993.

Nauck, Kurt. "Ad Lib: A Look at 'Commercial' Recordings from the First Half of the Century." *New Amberola Graphic* 78 (Oct. 1991): 14.

Odell, George Clinton Densmore. *Annals of the New York Stage*. 15 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1927-49.

Odell, L. Brevoort. "Adventures in Collecting, Part II." *New Amberola Graphic* 87 (Jan. 1994), 6-7.

Odell, L. Brevoort. "Whispering Cylinders: The Brown Wax Records That Started the Industry." From *Western Collector* (June 1970) in *New Amberola Graphic* 96 (Apr. 1996): 14-16.

O'De Witt, Len. *Uncle Josh's Huskin' Dance*. New York: E. T. Paull, 1898.

Olcott, Henry Steel. *Old Diary Leaves: The True Story of the Theosophical Society. First Series: America, 1874-1878*. Adyar, Madras, India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1941.

Ong, Walter J. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*. London and New York: Routledge, 1988.

Ord-Hume, Arthur W. J. G. *Clockwork Music: An Illustrated History of Mechanical Musical Instruments*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1973.

Oring, Elliott. *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction*. Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1986.

Paine, T. *The Old Cabin Home*. Boston: Henry Tolman, 1857.

Paskman, Dailey. "Gentlemen, Be Seated!" *A Parade of the American Minstrels*. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1976.

Pasley, Gilbert (Bert). "A Phonographic Letter." *In the Groove* 27:1 (Jan. 2002): 6, 21.

Pattison, J. N. *Pattison Waltz Song*. New York: J. N. Pattison, 1877.

- Paul, George. "A Band of Sound: The Basic Types of American Zonophone Records." *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 7:6 (1983): 1-5.
- Paul, George. "The Johnson 'Toy' Record: The First Commercial 2-Sided Discs," *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 8:2 (1985): 1, 3-4.
- Paul, George F. "Opportunity Lost: The American Graphophone Company And Its Six Inch Cylinders." *ARSC Journal* 30 (Spring 1999): 7-19.
- Paul, George F. "Sears, Roebuck & Company and the Early Cylinder Graphophone." *In the Groove* 28:1 (Jan. 2003) 4-5, 16-17, 22.
- Paul, George. "The Stroh Recording Violin." *New Amberola Graphic* 79 (Jan. 1992): 6-7.
- Pearson, Roberta E. *Eloquent Gestures: The Transformation of Performance Style in the Griffith Biograph Films*. Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1992.
- Pennanen, Risto Pekka. "Commercial Recordings and Music Research." *East European Meetings in Ethnomusicology* 7 (2000): 101-4.
- Pennanen, Risto Pekka. "The Nationalization of Ottoman Popular Music in Greece." *Ethnomusicology* 48 (Winter 2004): 1-25.
- Perkins, V. F. *Film as Film: Understanding and Judging Movies* (New York: Penguin Books, 1972).
- Phillips, Ray. "Berliner's Gramophone—The Beginnings." *For the Record* 3 (Autumn 2002): 124-32.
- "The Phonograph," *Journal of the Society of Telegraph Engineers* 7 (1878): 68-73. Reproduced in *TAEM* 25:281-5.
- The Phonograph and How to Use It*. New York: National Phonograph Company, 1900. Reprint, New York: A. Koenigsberg, 1971.
- Picker, John M. *Victorian Soundscapes*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Pietz, William. "The phonograph in Africa: international phonocentrism from Stanley to Sarnoff." In *Post-structuralism and the question of history*, edited by Derek Attridge, Geoff Bennington and Robert Young, 263-85. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- "Piracy on Records." *Stanford Law Review* 5 (Apr. 1953): 433-58.

- Pitkin, Walter B. and William M. Marston. *The Art of Sound Pictures*. New York and London: D. Appleton and Company, 1930.
- Powell, Preston. *Gentlemen, Be Seated: A Complete Minstrel, With Notes on Production*. New York: Samuel French, 1934.
- Predelli, Stefano. "I Am Not Here Now." *Analysis* 58 (Apr. 1998): 107-115.
- Predelli, Stefano. "Utterance, Interpretation and the Logic of Indexicals." *Mind & Language* 13 (Sept. 1998): 400-14.
- Preece, W. H. "The Phonograph," *Journal of the Society of Arts*, May 10, 1878, 534-538. Reproduced in *TAEM* 25:204-6.
- Prescott, George B. "The Telephone and the Phonograph." *Scribner's Monthly* 15 (Apr. 1878): 848-58.
- Prescott, George B. *History, Theory, and Practice of the Electric Telegraph*. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866.
- Proceedings of Second Annual Convention of Local Phonograph Companies of the United States, Held at New York, June 16, 17 & 18, 1891*. New York: Linotype Reporting & Printing Co., [1891].
- Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of Phonograph Companies of the United States Held at Chicago, May 28 and 29, 1890*. Milwaukee: Phonograph Printing Co., [1890].
- Proceedings of the Fourth Annual Convention of the National Phonograph Association of the United States, Held at Chicago, Sept. 20, 21, and 22, 1893*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Houtkamp & Cannon, [1893].
- Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the National Phonograph Association of the United States, Held at Chicago, June 13, 14, 15, 1892*. (N. p.: [1892]).
- Racy, Ali Jihad. *Musical Change and Commercial Recording in Egypt, 1904-1932*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1977.
- Racy, Ali Jihad. "Words and Music in Beirut: A Study of Attitudes." *Ethnomusicology* 30 (Fall 1986): 413-27.
- Randel, Don Michael. *Harvard Concise Dictionary of Music*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1978.

- Raymond, Jack. *A List of American Minstrel Records*. Washington, D. C.: Jack Raymond, 2003.
- Read, Oliver and Walter L. Welch. *From Tin Foil to Stereo: Evolution of the Phonograph*. Second edition. Indianapolis: Howard W. Sams & Co., 1959.
- Rehrig, William H. *The Heritage Encyclopedia of Band Music: Composers and their Music*. 3 vols. Westerville, Ohio: Integrity Press, 1996.
- Rhodes, Frederick Leland. *Beginnings of Telephony*. New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1929.
- Rice, Edward Le Roy. *Monarchs of Minstrelsy, from "Daddy" Rice to Date*. New York: Kenny Publishing Company, 1911.
- Rodgers, Susan. "Batak tape cassette kinship: constructing kinship through the Indonesian national mass media." *American Ethnologist* 13 (1986): 23-42.
- Rogers, Ed. *Dan, Dan, Dan-u-el*. New York: F. B. Haviland Publishing Co., Inc., 1904.
- Rondeau, René. *Tinfoil Phonographs: The Dawn of Recorded Sound*. Corte Madera, California: René Rondeau, 2001.
- Rothenbuhler, Eric W. and John Durham Peters. "Defining Phonography: An Experiment in Theory." *Musical Quarterly* 81 (1997): 242-264.
- Rust, Brian. *The American Record Label Book*. New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1978.
- Rust, Brian with Allen G. Debus. *The Complete Entertainment Discography from the mid-1890s to 1942*. New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1973.
- Saunders, D. A. "Social Ideas in McGuffey Readers." *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 5 (Winter 1941): 579-89.
- Schafer, R. Murray. *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester, Vermont: Destiny Books, 1994.
- Schwartz, H. W. *Bands of America*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1951.
- Shambarger, Peter. "Cylinder Records: An Overview." *ARSC Journal* 26 (Fall 1995): 133-61.

Sherman, Michael W. *Collector's Guide to Victor Records*. Dallas: Monarch Record Enterprises, 1992.

Sherman, Michael W. "The First Victor... or the Last Berliner?" *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 10:4 (1992):10-15.

Sherman, Michael W. and Kurt R. Nauck III. *Note the Notes: An Illustrated History of the Columbia 78 rpm Record Label, 1901-1958*. New Orleans: Monarch Record Enterprises, 1998.

Sidelle, Alan. "The Answering Machine Paradox." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 21 (1991): 525-39.

Siefert, Marsha. "Aesthetics, Technology, and the Capitalization of Culture: How the Talking Machine Became a Musical Instrument." *Science in Context* 8 (1995): 417-449.

Simpson, J. A. and E. S. C. Weiner, ed. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 20 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

Slack, Charles. *Hetty: The Genius and Madness of America's First Female Tycoon*. New York: Ecco, 2004.

Smith, Jacob. "The Frenzy of the Audible: Pleasure, Authenticity, and Recorded Laughter." *Television & New Media* 6 (Feb. 2005): 23-47.

Sousa, John Philip. "The Menace of Mechanical Music." *Appleton's Magazine* 8 (1906): 278-84.

Sterne, Jonathan. *The Audible Past: Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2003.

Sully, Lew. *I Want to Go to Morrow: Comic Patter Song* (New York: Howley, Haviland & Co., 1898).

Sutton, Allan. *Pseudonyms on American Records, 1892-1942: A Guide to False Names and Label Errors*. Denver, Colorado: Mainspring Press, 2001.

Sutton, Allan and Kurt Nauck. *American Record Labels and Companies: An Encyclopedia (1891-1943)*. Denver, Colorado: Mainspring Press, 2000.

Tate, Alfred O. *Edison's Open Door: The Life Story of Thomas A. Edison, a Great Individualist*. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1938.

Tedlock, Dennis. *Finding the Center: Narrative Poetry of the Zuni Indians*. New York: The Dial Press, 1972.

Thompson, Dennan [sic] and George W. Ryar [sic]. *The Old Homestead*. Typescript [1887]. In *English and American Drama of the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Readex Microprint, 1969.

Thompson, Emily. "Machines, Music, and the Quest for Fidelity: Marketing the Edison Phonograph in America, 1877-1925." *The Musical Quarterly* 79 (Spring, 1995): 131-171.

Toll, Robert C. *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Towne, Brian. "'Commercial' Discovered on Brown Wax Cylinder." *New Amberola Graphic* 71 (Jan. 1990): 17.

Truax, Barry, ed. *The World Soundscape Project's Handbook for Acoustic Ecology*. Vancouver, Canada: A. R. C. Publications, 1978.

Uzanne, Octave. "The End of Books." *Scribner's Magazine* 16 (Aug. 1894): 221-232.

Waites, Aline and Robin Hunter. *The Illustrated Victorian Songbook*. London: Michael Joseph, 1984.

Walker, Robert Matthew. "The Recording of Johannes Brahms." *International Classical Record Collector* 2 (Summer 1997): 24-7.

Walsh, Ulysses J. "Reminiscences of 'S. H. Dudley.'" *Phonograph Monthly Review* 6 (Jan. 1932): 62-4.

Warden, Edward. *Tapioca: A Minstrel Melody*. Boston: Oliver Ditson & Co., n. d. [ca. 1860-1].

Watson, Thomas A. *The Birth and Babyhood of the Telephone*. N. p.: American Telephone and Telegraph Company Information Department, 1937.

Welch, Walter L. and Leah Brodbeck Stenzel Burt. *From Tinfoil to Stereo, 1877-1929*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1994.

Wellman, Anthony. "From Tinfoil to Digital." *In the Groove* 26:2 (Feb. 2001): 4-5, 16.

Wellman, Anthony. "Tinfoil Mystery Solved." *In the Groove* 26:5 (May 2001): 6.

White, C. A. *The Old Home Ain't What It Used to Be*. Boston: White, Smith & Perry, 1872.



- White, C. A. *The Old Log Cabin in the Dell*. Boston: White, Smith & Co, 1875.
- Wile, Raymond R. "The American Graphophone Company and the Columbia Phonograph Company Enter the Disc Record Business, 1897-1903." *ARSC Journal* 22 (Fall 1991): 207-221.
- Wile, Raymond R. "The Automatic Phonograph Exhibition Company and the Beginnings of the Nickel-in-the-Slot Phonograph." *ARSC Journal* 33 (Spring 2002): 1-20.
- Wile, Raymond R. "Berliner Sales Figures." *ARSC Journal* 11 (1979): 139-43.
- Wile, Raymond R. "The Development of Sound Recording at the Volta Laboratory." *ARSC Journal* 21 (Fall 1990): 208-225.
- Wile, Raymond R. "Duplicates of the Nineties and The National Phonograph Company's Bloc Numbered Series," *ARSC Journal* 32 (Fall 2001): 175-216.
- Wile, Raymond R. "Edison and Growing Hostilities." *ARSC Journal* 22 (Spring 1991): 8-34.
- Wile, Raymond R. "Etching the Human Voice: The Berliner Invention of the Gramophone." *ARSC Journal* 21 (Spring 1990): 2-23.
- Wile, Raymond R. "'Jack Fell Down and Broke His Crown': The Fate of the Edison Phonograph Toy Manufacturing Company," *ARSC Journal* 19:2/3 (1987): 5-37.
- Wile, Raymond R. "The Metropolitan Phonograph Company." *ARSC Journal* 34 (Spring 2003): 1-13.
- Wile, Raymond R. "The North American Phonograph Company: Part I (1888-1892)." *ARSC Journal* 35 (Spring 2004): 1-36.
- Wile, Ray. "Random Notes Concerning Edison Recording Artists." *New Amberola Graphic* 79 (Jan. 1992): 4-5.
- Wile, Ray. "Record Piracy and Ivory Soap." *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 6:4 (1980), 7-9.
- Wile, Raymond R. "Record Piracy: The Attempts of the Sound Recording Industry to Protect Itself Against Unauthorized Copying, 1890-1978." *ARSC Journal* 16 (1984):18-40.
- Wile, Ray. Review of *The Encyclopedia of Victor Recordings, Vol. I*, by Ted Fagan and Wm. R. Moran. *Antique Phonograph Monthly* 7:7 (1984): 6, 7-9.

Wile, Raymond R. "The Rise and Fall of the Edison Speaking Phonograph Company, 1877-1880." *ARSC Journal* 7:3 (1976): 4-31.

Williams, Alan. "Is Sound Recording Like a Language?" *Yale French Studies* 60 (1980): 51-66.

Winans, Robert B. "Early Minstrel Show Music, 1843-1852." In *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*, ed. Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch and Brooks McNamara, 141-62. Hanover and London: Wesleyan University Press, 1996.

Winston, Brian. *Misunderstanding Media*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986.

Wojcik, Daniel. "'At the Sound of the Beep': An Analysis of the Structure and Traditional Speech Forms of Answering Machine Greetings." *Folklore and Mythology Studies* 11/12 (1987-88): 80-103.

Zeitlin, Amanda Dargan. *American Talkers: The Art of the Sideshow Carnival Pitchman and Other Itinerant Showmen and Vendors*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1992.

### Newspapers

Note: an asterisk (\*) indicates a title consulted via <http://www.newspaperarchive.com>.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>Altoona Mirror</i> (Altoona, Pennsylvania)*  | <i>Christian Science Monitor</i> (APS)                        |
| <i>Arizona Republican</i> (Phoenix, Arizona)*   | <i>Cincinnati Commercial</i>                                  |
| <i>Atlanta Constitution</i> (PQH)   | <i>Colorado Springs Gazette</i> (Colorado Springs, Colorado)* |
| <i>Bismarck Daily Tribune</i> (Bismarck, North Dakota)*   | <i>Coshocton Age</i> (Coshocton, Ohio)*                       |
| <i>Boston Daily Globe</i> (PQH)   | <i>Coshocton Daily Times</i> (Coshocton, Ohio)*               |
| <i>Bridgeport Telegram</i> (Bridgeport, Connecticut)*   | <i>Coshocton Daily Tribune</i> (Coshocton, Ohio)*             |
| <i>The Broad Ax</i> (Salt Lake City, Utah)*   | <i>Courier</i> (Connellsville, Pennsylvania)*                 |
| <i>Brooklyn Daily Eagle</i> ( <a href="http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/eagle">http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/eagle</a> ) | <i>Daily Advocate</i> (Newark, Ohio)*                         |
| <i>Bucks County Gazette</i> (Bristol, Pennsylvania)*  | <i>Daily Kennebec Journal</i> (Augusta, Maine)*               |
| <i>Burlington Hawkeye</i> (Burlington, Ohio)*   | <i>Daily Northwestern</i> (Oshkosh, Wisconsin)*               |
| <i>Centralia Enterprise and Tribune</i> (Centralia, Wisconsin)*   | <i>Daily Star</i> (Marion, Ohio)*                             |
| <i>Chester Daily Times</i> (Chester, Pennsylvania)*   | <i>Davenport Morning Tribune</i> (Davenport, Iowa)*           |
| <i>Chicago Tribune</i> (PQH)  | <i>Decatur Herald</i> (Decatur, Illinois)*                    |

*Decatur Weekly Republican* (Decatur, Illinois)\*  
*Delaware Patriot and American Watchman* (Wilmington, Delaware) (EAN)  
*Delphos Daily Herald* (Delphos, Ohio)\*  
*Denton Journal* (Denton, Maryland)\*  
*Dunkirk Observer Journal* (Dunkirk, New York)\*  
*Edwardsville Intelligencer* (Edwardsville, Illinois)\*  
*Elyria Chronicle* (Elyria, Ohio)\*  
*Elyria Republican* (Elyria, Ohio)\*  
*Evening Democrat* (Warren, Pennsylvania)\*  
*Evening News* (Lincoln, Nebraska)\*  
*Fitchburg Sentinel* (Fitchburg, Massachusetts)\*  
*Fort Wayne News* (Fort Wayne, Indiana)\*  
*Fort Wayne Sentinel* (Fort Wayne, Indiana)\*  
*Fresno Weekly Republican* (Fresno, California)\*  
*Gettysburg Times* (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania)\*  
*Globe* (Atchison, Kansas)\*  
*Hornellsville Tribune* (Hornellsville, New York)\*  
*Huron Reflector* (Norwalk, Ohio)\*  
*Indiana County Gazette* (Indiana, Pennsylvania)\*  
*Indiana Messenger* (Indiana, Pennsylvania)\*  
*Indiana Progress* (Pennsylvania, Indiana)\*  
*Indianapolis News*  
*Iowa Recorder* (Greene, Iowa)\*  
*Journal* (Ottawa, Canada)\*  
*Kingsport Times* (Kingsport, Tennessee)\*  
*Kingston Daily Gleaner* (Kingston, Jamaica)\*  
*Lima Daily News* (Lima, Ohio)\*  
*Lima Daily Times* (Lima, Ohio)\*  
*Lincoln Daily Star* (Lincoln, Nebraska)\*  
*Lincoln Evening News* (Lincoln, Nebraska)\*  
*Los Angeles Times* (PQH)  
*Manitoba Daily Free Press* (Winnipeg, Manitoba)\*  
*Mansfield News* (Mansfield, Ohio)\*  
*Marion Star* (Marion, Ohio)\*  
*Massillon Independent* (Massillon, Ohio)\*  
*Middletown Daily Times* (Middletown, New York)\*  
*Middletown Times Herald* (Middletown, New York)\*  
*Morning Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon)\*  
*Mountain Democrat* (Placerville, California)\*  
*Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln, Nebraska)\*  
*Nevada State Journal* (Reno, Nevada)\*  
*New York Times*  
*News* (Frederick, Maryland)\*  
*North Adams Transcript* (North Adams, Massachusetts)\*  
*Ohio Democrat* (New Philadelphia, Ohio)\*  
*Oshkosh Daily Northwestern* (Oshkosh, Wisconsin)\*  
*Petersburg Index* (Petersburg, Virginia)\*  
*Portsmouth Herald* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire)\*  
*Post Crescent* (Appleton, Wisconsin)\*  
*Post Standard* (Syracuse, New York)\*  
*Reno Evening Gazette* (Reno, Nevada)\*  
*Ruthven Free Press* (Ruthven, Iowa)\*  
*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*  
*Sheboygan Press* (Sheboygan, Michigan)\*  
*Sioux Valley News* (Correctionville, Iowa)\*  
*Standard* (Ogden, Utah)\*  
*Star and Sentinel* (Gettysburg, Pennsylvania)\*  
*Stevens Point Gazette* (Stevens Point, Wisconsin)\*

*Steubenville Daily Herald* (Steubenville, Ohio)\*  
*Syracuse Herald* (Syracuse, New York)\*  
*Times Democrat* (Lima, Ohio)\*  
*Toronto Star*  
*Trenton Evening Times* (Trenton, New Jersey)\*  
*Van Nuys News* (Van Nuys, California)\*  
*Wall Street Journal*  
*Washington Post* (PQH)  
*Weekly Citizen* (Centerville, Iowa)\*

### Journals

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <i>Albany Law Journal</i> (APS)                     | <i>Musical Box Society International News Bulletin</i>        |
| <i>The American Whig Review</i> (APS, MOA)          | <i>Nature</i>   |
| <i>Antique Phonograph Monthly</i>                   | <i>New Amberola Graphic</i>                                   |
| <i>Atlantic Monthly</i> (MOA)                       | <i>New York Dramatic Mirror</i>                               |
| <i>The Century</i> (APS)                            | <i>Manufacturer and Builder</i> (MOA)                         |
| <i>Colliers</i>                                     | <i>Philadelphia Medical Times</i> (APS)                       |
| <i>Congregationalist</i> (APS)                      | <i>Phonogram</i> (1891-93) <sup>2</sup>                       |
| <i>Congressional Record</i>                         | <i>Phonogram-2</i> (1900-02) <sup>3</sup>                     |
| <i>Continental Monthly</i> (APS, MOA)               | <i>Phonoscope</i> <sup>4</sup>                                |
| <i>Edison Phonograph Monthly</i> (TAEM)             | <i>Popular Science Monthly</i>                                |
| <i>Edison Phonographic News</i> (ENHS) <sup>1</sup> | <i>Punchinello</i> (APS, MOA)                                 |
| <i>Forest and Stream</i> (APS)                      | <i>Putnam's Monthly Magazine</i> (APS)                        |
| <i>The Galaxy</i> (APS)                             | <i>Scientific American and Scientific American Supplement</i> |
| <i>Harper's New Monthly Magazine</i> (MOA)          | <i>Scribner's Monthly</i> (APS)                               |
| <i>In the Groove</i>                                | <i>Telephony</i>  |
| <i>Ladies' Home Journal</i> (APS)                   | <i>United States Democratic Review</i> (APS, MOA)             |
| <i>Literary Digest</i>                              |   |
| <i>Motion Picture World</i>                         |   |

<sup>1</sup> Edison National Historic Site, Primary Printed Series, Edison Companies, Box 28 contains issues 1:6 (Mar.-Apr. 1895) and 3:2 (July-Aug. 1896).

<sup>2</sup> A complete run is available from the New York Public Library, microfilm negative shelf number ZZAN-48. A partial run is also available from the Library of Congress, shelf number 14263.

<sup>3</sup> A complete run is available from the Library of Congress on the same microfilm reel as their partial run of the earlier *Phonogram*, shelf number 14263.

<sup>4</sup> A nearly complete run of the *Phonoscope*, missing only a few pages, is available on microfilm from Norman Ross Publishing, Incorporated.

## Court Records

*American Graphophone Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, printed record (TAEM 116:540ff).

*American Graphophone Company vs. United States Phonograph Company*, printed record.(partially reproduced in TAEM 116:319ff.; the whole record is at ENHS).

*Burrow-Giles Lithographic Co. v. Sarony*, 111 U. S. 53 (Mar. 17, 1884).

*National Phonograph Company vs. Lambert Company*, Complainant's Record on Final Hearing (TAEM 117:270ff).

*New York Phonograph Company vs. National Phonograph Company*, Transcript of Record. Vol. 1 (TAEM 117:617ff); Vol. 2 (TAEM 118:2ff).

## Catalogs

(Note: only those catalogs reproduced in secondary sources are listed here. Full citations for other catalogs appear only in the endnotes).

*Catalogue of Musical and Talking Records*, United States Phonograph Company [n.d.]. (TAEM 147:455ff).

*Columbia Records* catalog, with letter dated May 1, 1898 on page two, reproduced in Gracyk, *Companion*.

*List of the Famous "Columbia Records,"* Nov. 1896, reproduced in Gracyk, *Companion*.

*List of the Famous "Columbia Records,"* June 1897, reproduced in Gracyk, *Companion*.

*Supplementary List of the "Best and Nothing But the Best" Phonograph Records Manufactured by the Phonograph Record and Supply Co.*, reproduced in Gracyk, *Companion*.

*Temporary Catalogue of the Columbia Phonograph Co.'s Musical Records for Use on Graphophones and Phonographs*, Jan. 1, 1895. Microfiche at Cleveland (Ohio) Public Library, call number HF581 .T72x 2937.

## Abbreviations

**AGBFP:** *Alexander Graham Bell Family Papers*,  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/bellhtml/>

**APH:** *Antique Phonograph Hour* (WFMU); radio show archived at  
<http://wfmu.org/playlists/AP>

**APS:** ProQuest American Periodicals Series Online

**EAN:** Readex Archive of Americana: Early American Newspapers, Series I, 1690-1876.

**EBBRI:** *Emile Berliner and the Birth of the Recording Industry*,  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/berlhtml/>

**ENHS:** Archives, Edison National Historic Site, West Orange, New Jersey

**ENHSS:** “Sounds” section of the Edison National Historic Site website,  
<http://www.nps.gov/edis/edisonia/sounds.html>

**First Book** “The first book of Phonograph Records,” transcribed and published as an appendix to Koenigsberg, *Edison Cylinder Records*, 109-33.

**FPRA:** *Favorite Pioneer Recording Artists*, column by Ulysses “Jim” Walsh in *Hobbies* magazine.

**MOA:** *Making of America*, Cornell University, <http://cdl.library.cornell.edu/moa>

**MW:** *Meloware*, <http://www.meloware.com>

**PQH:** ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

**TAEB:** *The Papers of Thomas A. Edison*, edited by Reese Jenkins, Robert A. Rosenberg, Paul Israel, et al. 5 vols. to date. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989—.

**TAED:** *The Edison Papers* (digital edition), <http://edison.rutgers.edu>

**TAEM:** *Thomas A. Edison Papers: A Selective Microfilm Edition*, edited by Thomas E. Jeffrey. 3 series to date. Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, 1985—.

**TEA:** *Thomas Edison’s Attic* (WFMU); radio show archived at  
<http://wfmu.org/playlists/te>

**UCSB:** *Cylinder Preservation and Digitization Project*, University of California at Santa Barbara, <http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu>

**VG:** *Virtual Gramophone*, National Library of Canada  
<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/gramophone>

## **PATRICK DAVID FEASTER**

315 East Southern Drive  
Bloomington, Indiana 47401  
Telephone: (812)-331-0047  
E-mail: pfeaster@indiana.edu

### **Education**

- ❖ Ph.D. (Folklore and Ethnomusicology), Indiana University, Bloomington: dissertation successfully defended April 6, 2007.
- ❖ M.A. (History), Indiana University, Bloomington, 1995. Specialization: Early Modern Eastern Europe.
- ❖ B.A. (History, German), Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana, *summa cum laude*, 1993; year-long exchange program at Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, Germany (1991-92).
- ❖ **Fellowships and Awards:** Summer Dissertation Fellowship, Indiana University (2004); Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship in Hungarian, Indiana University (1995-96, 1996-97); Max Kade Fellowship in German Studies, Indiana University (1994-95); Denis Sinor Prize in Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University (1993-94).

### **Work Experience and Positions Held**

- ❖ Courses taught as Associate Instructor: C122, Interpersonal Communication (Dept. of Communication and Culture, Indiana University, Bloomington, Fall 2004, Fall 2006); C121, Public Speaking (Dept. of Communication and Culture, Indiana University, Bloomington, Fall 2005, Spring 2006).
- ❖ Second Vice President / Program Chair, Association for Recorded Sound Collections, 2005-7.
- ❖ Instructor, School of Continuing Studies, Indiana University. Correspondence courses: C122 (Interpersonal Communication, 2005-present); H103 (European History from the Renaissance to Napoleon, 1996-present); H104 (European History from Napoleon to the Present, 1996-present).
- ❖ Researcher and sound technician, "Representation of Dialect on Early Commercial Sound Recordings," New Frontiers in the Arts and Humanities grant project at Indiana University, Bloomington, 2006-7.
- ❖ Student assistant, Archives of Traditional Music, Indiana University, Bloomington, 2003-4 (Fall 2003-Spring 2004, content evaluator for Cultures in Conflict Digital Archive; Summer 2003, preservation survey).
- ❖ Audio restoration technician, Center for the Documentation of Endangered Languages (American Indian Studies Research Institute), Indiana University, Bloomington, 2001-6.
- ❖ Graduate Assistant, Sound and Video Analysis and Instruction Laboratory at Indiana University, Bloomington (SAVAIL), 1999-2001.
- ❖ Librarian and Archivist, Institute for Hungarian Studies at Indiana University, 1997-99.



## Publications

- ❖ “Speech Acoustics and the Keyboard Telephone: Rethinking Edison’s Discovery of the Phonograph Principle,” *ARSC Journal* 38:1 (forthcoming Spring 2007).
- ❖ “Framing the Mechanical Voice: Generic Conventions of Early Phonograph Recording,” *Folklore Forum* 32:1/2 (2001):57-102.
- ❖ “‘Fellow Townsmen and My Noble Constituents!’: Representations of Oratory on Early Commercial Recordings,” with Richard Bauman, *Oral Tradition* 20:1 (2005):35-57.
- ❖ “Oratorical Footing in a New Medium: Recordings of Presidential Campaign Speeches, 1896-1912,” with Richard Bauman, *Texas Linguistic Forum* 46 (2003): Texas Linguistic Society Proceedings, <http://studentorgs.utexas.edu/salsa/proceedings/2003/bauman&feaster.pdf>
- ❖ “The Origins of Ethnographic Sound Recording, 1877-1892,” *Resound: A Quarterly of the Archives of Traditional Music* 20:1/2 (January-April 2001):1, 3-8.
- ❖ “Columbia Records” entry in *The Encyclopedia of New England*, edited by Burt Feintuch and David H. Watters (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005):844.
- ❖ “In Search of the Real John Yorke AtLee,” *In the Groove* 28:5 (May 2003):4-5.
- ❖ Book reviews: *Antique Phonograph Accessories & Contraptions* by Timothy C. Fabrizio and George F. Paul, *ARSC Journal* 34:2 (Fall 2003):221-3; *Wired For Sound*, ed. by Paul D. Greene and Thomas Porcello, *ARSC Journal* 36:2 (Fall 2005):272-4; *From Edison to Marconi*, by David Steffen, *ARSC Journal* 37:1 (Spring 2006):95-6.

## Presentations and Conference Papers

- ❖ “Listening for Context in American Dance-Call Records, 1889-1909,” Society for Ethnomusicology conference, Atlanta, Georgia, November 20, 2005.
- ❖ “James Andem and the Ohio Phonograph Company,” with David N. Lewis, Association for Recorded Sound Collections and Society for American Music joint conference, Cleveland, Ohio, March 14, 2004.
- ❖ “Wax Cylinder Phonograph Recording: Demonstration and Discussion,” with Martin Fisher, Archives of Traditional Music Noon Concert and Lecture Series, November 7, 2003.
- ❖ “The Dawn of the Recording Industry, 1888-1892,” Archives of Traditional Music Noon Lecture Series, Indiana University, Bloomington, September 13, 2002.
- ❖ “American ‘Exhibition’ Recordings, 1888-89: Prologue to the Recording Industry,” Association for Recorded Sound Collections annual conference, Santa Barbara, California, May 11, 2002.
- ❖ “Phonographic Heirlooms: Sound Recordings of the American Family,” Great Lakes American Studies Association conference, Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana, March 16, 2001.

- ❖ “Gypsy Musicians in Ottoman Hungary,” Annual Conference on Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University, February 8, 1996.

### **Other Media (CDs, Radio, Podcasts)**

- ❖ *Actionable Offenses: Indecent Phonograph Recordings from the 1890s*, text (coauthored with David Giovannoni) and transcriptions (Archeophone Records 1007, forthcoming May 2007).
- ❖ “Researching Cal Stewart and ‘Uncle Josh’: Patrick Feaster Interview” with Jerry Fabris, *Thomas Edison’s Attic*, WFMU, January 9 and 27, 2007.
- ❖ Interview in Laura Sydell, “Early Reenactment Captured Horror of 1906 Quake,” NPR Morning Edition, April 20, 2006.
- ❖ Curator, “Pioneers of Audio Theater” and “Advance List for December, 1908” programs for the *Cylinder Radio* podcast series of the Cylinder Preservation and Digitization Project, University of California, Santa Barbara, <http://cylinders.library.ucsb.edu/radio.php>
- ❖ Interview in Alan Dein, “The Howling Terror Mystery,” first broadcast on BBC Radio 4, August 8, 2005.