

New World Accents – American Piano Repertoire composed during the lifetime of Claude Debussy

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An active repertoire base is the lifeblood of our profession. Unless this precious resource is constantly being re-evaluated, we as practitioners run the risk of becoming complacent and our students' and audiences' experience will be compromised. Of the vast body of repertoire composed across many centuries, it should be admitted that only a proportion of it will be truly active at any one time – fashions and curriculum trends, as well as the vagaries of the marketplace will largely determine what is disseminated and widely heard. Thankfully, there will always be pianists who are in the vanguard of new directions, but unfortunately they tend to be in the minority. Thus while the pianist is indeed fortunate to have a huge resource upon which one can draw for teaching and performance activities, a permanently valid question is: how much of this resource are we really accessing to the full?

In two of my papers presented at previous APPC conferences, I demonstrated that while our potential repertoire has grown immensely over the past hundred years, there is evidence to suggest that we as a body are nevertheless becoming less catholic and more conservative in our tastes. Our examination syllabuses have indeed diversified, but an underlying preference for a rather restricted group of major composers is still evident. The degree to which recently- or locally-composed repertoire is being accessed remains a concern, particularly as research demonstrated that many students' attitudes make them less inclined to explore such territory. A similar pattern can be seen in the public recital repertoire.¹ The topic of this paper continues this line of enquiry, namely how can we expand the active repertoire base.

The two decades either side of 1900 comprise a fascinating period for piano repertoire. During a period of major stylistic change, the piano was at its height as a medium of both private and public music-making, and was thus an obvious vehicle for composers to employ. Fortunately for pianists, the full range of styles and composers, from the most experimental to the most traditional are more than adequately represented. In some ways, the works of Debussy form a representative microcosm from this era, and pianists have certainly never lost their fascination for his skill with colours, ideas and structures. But as is often the case with musical icons, certain of his pieces have become over-exposed, in proportion to both composer's own oeuvre, and that of his contemporaries. While not wishing to discount the various continental schools of piano composition c.1900 (and indeed there is much to choose from), have we yet fully explored the contributions of other 'schools' such as the Americans from this seminal period? While Debussy et al were experiencing their own *fin de siècle* and concurrently ushering in a new era, these same years saw a preoccupation with the search for and emergence of an American musical identity. Some of those composers were still heavily indebted to European precedents, but others were becoming defiantly original in their search for a local dialect. Allied to this, the way in which Americans were dealing with their own form of 'cultural cringe' posits some intriguing points of reference for us in the Australian or New Zealand context. Due to restrictions of time and space, that line of investigation cannot be covered within this paper, but will be the topic of a future paper.

¹ Peter Roennfeldt, "But how far have we come – the role of the pianist-teacher in the 1990s," *Proceedings of the 4th Australasian Piano Pedagogy Conference, Perth 1999* (Perth: CIRCME, 2000); and "Too much music and too little time? – The problem of choice for the 21st century pianist-teacher," *Proceedings of the 6th Australasian Piano Pedagogy Conference, Melbourne 2003* (Melbourne: APPC, 2003).

An initial census from the turn of the century (broadly understood in this paper as comprising the years 1880-1920), American piano repertoire includes some household names. A small group of familiar names represent a good range of stylistic possibilities – the ‘romantic’ Edward MacDowell (1868-1908), the ‘popularist’ Scott Joplin (1868-1917), the ‘experimental’ Charles Ives (1874-1954), and the ‘impressionist’ Charles Tomlinson Griffes (1884-1920). Each of these composers made a substantial contribution to piano repertoire, achieving currency and notoriety either during their own lifetime, or have come into their own in the latter decades of the 20th century. It would be rather unfair however, to characterise any one of them by the qualities to be found in their most familiar works. There is definitely much more to MacDowell than *To a wild rose*, and Griffes’ output is not as consistently francophone in outlook as those who only know *The White Peacock* might at first think. The works of Ives are problematic in the sense that many are missing or incomplete, and recent attempts to collect together all of the smaller pieces have not yet resulted in a conveniently accessible single complete edition – even so, there is much more to his piano output than the formidable *Concord Sonata*. Nevertheless, at least one does not have to rediscover these composers, and make the case for their inclusion in our repertoire lists as options to their European contemporaries.

As this paper will demonstrate, there are many additional worthwhile choices available. Also, resources including scores, recordings and reference materials are becoming more widely accessible all the time. But this was not always the case, and hence much of the repertoire has faded from view until only recently. The American musicians themselves are part of the problem, given that their views are rather divided as to the worth of their own pre-WWI music. For example, in his influential 1965 text *Five Centuries of Keyboard Music*, after fairly extensive discussions of Gottschalk and MacDowell, John Gillespie writes:

“Nothing further can be said about American piano music of the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. The only keyboard music from that time is purely salon music. It was the era of composers like Arthur Foote (1853-1937) and Ethelbert Nevin (1862-1901), author of such saccharine works as *Narcissus*”. ... There were other keyboard composers, like George Chadwick (1854-1931), Edgar Stillman Kelley (1857-1944), Horatio Parker (1863-1919) and Mrs., H. H. A. Beach (1867-1944) – composers whose music enjoyed a certain initial popularity and then faded away. The United States was sadly in need of a musical renaissance; unfortunately, it made a belated appearance several decades after the beginning of the twentieth century.”²

In contrast, the eminent musician Gunther Schuller, has recently argued:

“The neglect of our earlier American music has long been an unfortunate blemish on our musical life. Ignored by performers, orchestras and conductors, the first century or so of American musical culture has for too many years been the private reserve of a few historians and musicologists (even far too few of these), leaving the impression that American music somehow began with Aaron Copland in the 1920s, and that anything created before was unworthy or irrelevant.”³

As a passing observation, the above statements could also be applied to Australia’s music, though a different period and keynote composer would be selected as a notional starting point for what might be demonstrated as our truly local identity.

² John Gillespie, *Five centuries of keyboard music: an historical survey of music for harpsichord and piano* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1965; reprint ed. Dover, 1978), 314.

³ Gunther Schuller, CD liner notes for John Knowles Paine ‘St Peter’, GM Recordings 1994, cited at <http://clem.mscedu/~worster/sonneck/NASMWeb.html>, accessed July 7, 2005.

It is certainly worth re-evaluating not only the household names of c.1900 American piano music mentioned earlier, but also the many other figures who collectively made up a rich and diverse pianistic landscape. In so doing, we may well discover that the group including Amy Cheney Beach (1867-1944), John Alden Carpenter, George Chadwick (1854-1931), Robert Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943), Arthur Farwell (1872-1952), Arthur Foote (1872-1952), Daniel Mason (1873-1953), William Mason (1820-1908), Ethelbert Nevin (1862-1901), John Knowles Paine (1839-1906), and John Powell (1882-1963) have something of interest for the 21st century pianist. Others who might be considered include Edward Burlingame Hill (1872-1960), Arthur Shepherd (1880-1958), Harvey Worthington Loomis (1865-1930), Carlos Troyer (1837-1920), Horatio Parker (1863-1919), George Templeton Strong (1856-1948).⁴ Through the objective process of research, a hopefully more comprehensive appreciation of the American school will emerge, as Schuller would advocate we do. Such awareness will also more completely inform our understanding of later piano composers from Copland, Cowell, Cage, Barber, and Carter onwards.

The question of resources has already been referred to earlier. Scores and recordings are an essential part of the process, and thankfully these are becoming increasingly available. Some of the original publishers such as Schirmer (in the case of Griffes) are still in operation, and so continue to be the first point of reference. Others are actively engaged in the production of newly created editions, such as Summy-Birchard (eg. works by Dett), Masters Music Publications (several of the ‘Boston classicists’ and some of the ‘Indianists’), Merion Music (Ives and others) and Hildegard Publishing (female composers). The availability of inexpensive reprint editions has also considerably broadened the accessibility of certain composers, for example Dover Publications (Beach, Joplin, MacDowell), and Da Capo Press (Beach, MacDowell and Paine). Unfortunately the Arno Press edition of the highly significant Wa-Wan Press (in operation from 1901 to 1911) appears to be out of print – five volumes are devoted to piano composers from this era.⁵ However Dover, IMC and Alfred have produced some excellent representative anthologies of late 19th and early 20th century American piano music which are readily available.⁶

Recordings are also being produced in larger quantities by both specialist labels such as New World Records and budget labels such as Naxos. Both companies have extensive and growing catalogues of American piano works, with user-friendly internet sites. New World Records, whose mission is “to record the music of American composers that would not otherwise be represented in the catalogues of the commercial recording companies,”⁷ offers comprehensive liner notes, available for downloading, which are informative for any category of reader. Naxos now has an ‘American Classics’ series and its offshoot label Marco Polo has produced some important collections of this repertoire.⁸

The internet is also a burgeoning resource for specialist interests, with much previously inaccessible information now available online. Recording companies and publishers enhance their websites with background material, particularly those with a clear research profile, such as Hildegard Publishing. Scholarly organisations such as the Centre for Black Music Research and general sites such as the American Music Resource and the website of ASCAP (American Society for Composers, Authors and Publishers) also offer databases and other resources. Music libraries are increasingly offering a digital sheet music service via the internet, at little or no cost. Excellent examples of these services are the

⁴ See Table 1 – Selected list of American composers of piano music c.1880-1920

⁵ For a full listing of works published in the Wa-Wan Press and other anthologies, see Rita M. Fuszek, *Piano Music in Collections: An Index* (Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1982).

⁶ See Table 2 - Selected list of score anthologies of American piano works

⁷ <http://www.newworldrecords.org/>, accessed July 7, 2005

⁸ See Table 3 - Recordings of representative works of American composers composed c.1880-1920

websites of the Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music, the Sheet Music Consortium, and The Library of Congress project “Music published in America from 1870 – 1885.” The customary caveat regarding reliability of such editions applies, but this is not normally an issue for composers who were not prone to multiple revisions and subsequent editions.⁹ Finally, various bibliographic reference sources and monographs provide an important resource. Such publications are usually found only to be found in university or state libraries, but nevertheless are worth investigating as opportunity permits.¹⁰

The task of amassing scores, recordings and related material can appear rather daunting - where does one begin? This brief paper cannot replace what only many hours of listening and score study can accomplish. However, some brief comments will hopefully be tantalising enough to inspire further investigations by those interested in pursuing new repertoire choices.

The ‘Boston Classicists’ were an important group of New England based composers active in the years under consideration. MacDowell is the best known of these today, but chiefly due to his many sets of short pieces rather than his four substantial sonatas. He forms an interesting reference point for the premise of this paper, since he is an almost exact contemporary of Debussy, who in fact was his classmate at the Paris Conservatoire under Marmontel. Most of his output has programmatic titles, including the sonatas, and the set of *12 Studies* Op.39 composed in 1894 during his Boston years. As a set, they are surprisingly diverse in mood as well as technical requirements, and despite their imposing title, could thus form an interesting studio class project whereby students of varying levels could participate via an appropriate work.

SCORE EXAMPLE 1 – Edward MacDowell, from *Twelve Studies* Op.39: No.1 ‘Hunting Song’, No.4 ‘Arabesque,’ No.6 ‘Dance of the Gnomes,’ No.8 ‘Shadow Dance,’ No.12 ‘Hungarian’ in *MacDowell – His Greatest Piano Solos*, ed. Robert Kall (pub. Copia Publishing).

A contemporary, and later in life a colleague, of MacDowell is Ethelbert Nevin. After the customary European sojourn (he studied in Berlin), he settled in Boston and was a favourite of elite society, even performing for President Cleveland at the White House in 1895. Of his approximately forty short piano works, *Narcissus* (from *Water Scenes* Op.13) was the best known in his lifetime and as a much-performed favourite until about the 1930s. The 2 *Études* Op.18 (No.1 ‘in the form of a Romance’ and No.2 ‘in the form of a Scherzo’), published in Paris in 1891-92, are among his more interesting creations, and demonstrate a keen sense of keyboard mastery.¹¹

EXAMPLE 2 – Ethelbert Nevin, *Two Etudes* Op.18: No.1 ‘In the Form of a Romance,’ No.2 ‘In the Form of a Scherzo’ in *Nineteenth-Century American Piano Music*, ed. John Gillespie (pub. Dover).

John Knowles Paine taught at Harvard University for forty-four years, and through his large-scale orchestral and choral compositions, developed a reputation as a ‘serious’ composer of some standing. Overlooked subsequently, several recent performances and recordings demonstrate his reputation was well deserved, but only in the piano works does a sense of humour show through. The ‘Fuga giocoso’, the final piece from *Three Piano Pieces* Op.41, published in 1884, show a solid understanding of the piano’s capabilities, despite the fact he was generally more closely associated with the organ. The

⁹ See Table 4 - Selected internet resources relevant to American piano music

¹⁰ See Table 5 – Selected list of monographs, bibliographies, and other reference material for American piano music

¹¹ CD liner notes for *Edward MacDowell and company*, New World Records 80206, pp.3-4, available at www.newworldrecords.org, accessed July 7, 2005.

fugue's subject is based on a popular baseball song (thus identifying the nationality of its composer), and became rather well-known, as noted by the theorist Walter Spalding."¹²

EXAMPLE 3 – John Knowles Paine, from *Three Piano Pieces* Op.41: No.3 'Fuga Giocososo' in *Nineteenth-Century American Piano Music*, ed. John Gillespie (pub. Dover).

The association with Charles Ives has tended to thwart any positive reputation that Horatio Parker might have had during the late 20th century. The often quoted derogatory comments by his maverick student at Yale are usually not balanced by Ives' later comments to the effect "I had and have great respect and admiration for Parker and most of his music."¹³ After early studies in Boston, Parker worked under Rheinberger in Munich, later becoming only the second professor of music at Yale University, a position he held from the young age of thirty-one until his death. His *Three Pieces* Op.49 which were published in 1899 exhibit a fair degree of musical and textural interest.

EXAMPLE 4 – Horatio Parker, from *Three Pieces* Op.49: No.1 'Conte Sérieux,' and No.2 'La Sauterelle,' in *Nineteenth-Century American Piano Music*, ed. John Gillespie (pub. Dover).

Amy Cheney, later know as Mrs H.H.A. Beach, was the first American female composer to write in larger forms, her extensive contribution to the repertoire for piano, including a concerto, demonstrates her other interests ranging from teacher to virtuoso soloist. Of the 27 opus numbers for piano, several of which are sets of shorter works, one could devise many randomly selected complete programs, all of which would demonstrate a remarkable level of invention and affinity with the keyboard. The *Ballad* Op.6 from 1894 shows an arch-romantic virtuosity for which her playing was also known, while the *Variations on Balkan Themes* Op.60 is her largest solo work. In addition to some impressive contrapuntal works from 1914-17, the *Prelude and Fugue* Op.81 and *Fantasia Fugato* Op.87, the *Nocturne* Op.107 of 1924 is a finely wrought example of the genre with some interesting harmonic twists.¹⁴

EXAMPLE 5 – Amy Beach, *Ballad* Op.6, *Variations on Balkan Themes* Op.60, *Prelude and Fugue* Op.81, *Nocturne* Op.107, in *Amy Beach – Piano Music*, ed. Sylvia Glickman (pub. Da Capo Press).

The list of distinguished Bostonians continues with George Chadwick. Well known as one of the early directors of the New England Conservatory of Music, he was better known for vocal works including songs and a verismo style opera. The *Five Piano Pieces* of 1905 is a charming set of miniatures which use the full range of pianism. The concluding piece *Les Grenouilles* (The Frogs) is full of humour and clever use of the keyboard.

EXAMPLE 6 – George Chadwick, *Five Pieces*: No.5 'Les Grenouilles,' in *George Whitfield Chadwick – Five Pieces (1905)* (pub. Master Music Publications).

Arthur Foote is the only one of the Boston group surveyed in this paper who undertook all his training in his home country. Of his more than thirty works, the *Twenty Preludes* Op.52 are interesting in their use of at times unconventional voicings and figurations – their brevity and concise writing style, together with their technical challenges, recommend them as excellent teaching pieces. On a grander

¹² Walter Raymond Spalding, *Music at Harvard: A historical review of men and events* (New York: Da Capo, 1977), 155.

¹³ Henry Cowell and Sydney Cowell, *Charles Ives and his music* (New York: Da Capo, 1983), 33.

¹⁴ Sylvia Glickman, *Amy Beach: Piano Music* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1982), Introduction.

scale is the *Five poems after Omar Khayyam* Op.41, with their atmospheric mood painting and seemingly incomplete endings.

EXAMPLE 7 – Arthur Foote, *Twenty Preludes* Op.52: No.2 for right hand alone, No.17 in *Arthur Foote - Twenty Preludes for solo piano Op.52* (pub. Masters Music Publications) and *Five Poems after Omar Khayyam* Op.41: No.2 in *Arthur Foote - Five Poems after Omar Khayyam Op.41* (pub. Masters Music Publications).

In addition to those who were treading familiar stylistic pathways, there arose in the early 1900s an energetic group of individualists who seemed to congregate around the activities of Arthur Farwell. The so-called ‘Indianists’ took up the challenge laid down by Dvorak, who had lived and worked in the USA during the mid 1890s, to draw upon the great variety of local musics to create a truly American identity.¹⁵ Drawing reference to the full range of idioms which held potential inspiration for composers, from songs from the plantations or the cowboys, folksongs of Mexico, and also that of the American Indians, Farwell asserted: “We can not continuously live on importations and imitations, we must have significant original productions. We must live our own lives.”¹⁶ However, he insisted he was “engaged in national work, work for the nation, in its musical development, and not in injecting ‘nationalism’ into its music.”¹⁷ He was often critical of the “appalling quantity ... and quality” of smaller piano compositions and songs which appeared regularly from contemporary composers.¹⁸

Such forthright expressions of an individual’s vision cannot be dismissed lightly. Farwell himself was quite an accomplished composer and from 1901 the driving force behind the Wa-Wan Press which functioned for ten years. This invaluable cultural resource sponsored the publication of 37 lesser-known composers, including 10 women,¹⁹ but despite its deliberate appropriation of an Omaha Indian term for its title, it was not exclusively devoted to the ‘Indianist’ movement. Nevertheless, it is his own eight movement work, *Impressions of the Wa-Wan ceremony of the Omahas* Op.21, published in 1906, which encapsulates Farwell’s ideas best. Certain freedoms are taken with time signatures and harmonic progressions which provide a distinctly non-European flavour, alongside some rather quaint instrumental imitations.

EXAMPLE 8 – Arthur Farwell, *Impressions of the Wa-Wan Ceremony of the Omahas* Op.21: No.3 ‘Song of the Approach,’ No.4 ‘Laying Down the Pipes,’ No.5 ‘Invocation,’ No.6 ‘Song of Peace’ in *Nineteenth-Century American Piano Music*, ed. John Gillespie (pub. Dover).

Harvey Worthington Loomis was a slightly older colleague of Farwell, and also an active contributor to the Wa-Wan Press – between themselves they contributed nearly 30% of the piano works it published. He was also an enthusiastic Indianist, asserting that he carefully adhered to original melodies and their intonation in his works. His *Lyrics of the Red Man* Op.76 from 1903 adheres to a similar aesthetic as the above-mentioned work by Farwell, but in its quoting of the melodies and persistent percussion effects, a quite compelling impact is made on the listener. The performer is invited to step outside of

¹⁵ Arthur Farwell, ‘Evolution of new forms foreseen for America’s music’ in *Wanderjahre of a revolutionist’ and other essays on American music*, ed. Thomas Stoner (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1995), 237.

¹⁶ Arthur Farwell, ‘Toward American music’ in *Wanderjahre of a revolutionist’ and other essays on American music*, ed. Thomas Stoner (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1995), 188.

¹⁷ Arthur Farwell, ‘National work vs. Nationalism’ in *Wanderjahre of a revolutionist’ and other essays on American music*, ed. Thomas Stoner (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1995), 200.

¹⁸ Arthur Farwell, ‘Society and American music’ in *Wanderjahre of a revolutionist’ and other essays on American music*, ed. Thomas Stoner (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 1995), 192.

¹⁹ John Gillespie, *Nineteenth-Century American Piano Music* (New York: Dover, 1978), xvi.

conventional pianism and experiment with an alternative sound world, a journey that listeners might also enjoy.

EXAMPLE 9 – Harvey Worthington Loomis, *Lyrics of the Red Man* Op.76 Book 1: No.2 ‘A Song of Sorrow,’ No.3 ‘Around the Wigwam,’ No.5 ‘Warriors’ Dance’ in *Nineteenth-Century American Piano Music*, ed. John Gillespie (pub. Dover).

One of several American composers who came to maturity by c.1900 and then lived until World War II, John Alden Carpenter studied with Paine, and briefly with Elgar. In addition to some early neoclassic works including a sonata, he is sometimes inspired by Hispanic influences and the emerging styles of early jazz. His *Polonaise Américaine* (1912) and *Tango Américaine* (1920) are most successful impersonations of a Latin American feel, while the *Impromptu* (1913) uses non-tonal scales and harmonic figurations. He was also something of an Indianist, composing a few short pieces in that style during WWI.²⁰

EXAMPLE 10 – John Alden Carpenter, *Tango Américaine* in *John Alden Carpenter- Tango Américaine* (pub. Masters Music Publishers).

R. Nathaniel Dett is one of the earliest black American composers of concert music, having been inspired in this direction by Dvorak and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. After initial studies at the Oberlin Conservatory, one of his early successes was *In the bottoms*, a piano suite composed in 1913. The titles are a mixture of local and continental references, the most well-known being *Juba dance* which was popularized by Percy Grainger and others during the early 20th century. His earlier works *Magnolia Suite* and *After the cakewalk* evince even more of his Afro-American cultural origins.²¹

EXAMPLE 11 – R. Nathaniel Dett, *Juba Dance from the Suite ‘In the Bottoms’* (pub. Allan & Co.) available via the National Library of Australia Digital Music Collection (URL address: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.mus-an5878540>)

Of the group of four more familiar names listed at the opening of this paper, Charles Tomlinson Griffes is probably the least well known today. His European sojourn lasted about four years (1903-7), followed by a teaching position in a school just outside New York City, which provided an opportunity to concertise in the city during his rather brief career. *The White Peacock* and *The Fountain of Acqua Paola* from *Roman Sketches* Op.7 (published 1917), which have remained popular recital items, are redolent of the French styles then becoming more popular in North America. Both these works are masterpieces of the so-called impressionist idiom, but others also deserve our attention. Striking yet subtle harmonic experiments can be seen in *The Vale of dreams* and *The Night Winds* from *Three Tone-Pictures* Op.5 of 1915, which use Scriabinesque chromaticisms and whole-tone scales respectively.

The most intense harmonic language is however seen in Giraffes’ rather taut *Sonata* of 1919 – the synthetic scales in evidence here pre-empt an atonal approach which the composer might have explored further, had he not died unexpectedly in 1920 at the age of 34. In addition to the several sets of character pieces, a number of short pieces and pedagogical works should be also of interest to teachers

²⁰ CD liner notes for *John Alden Carpenter: Collected piano works*, New World Records, 1986, pp.1-2, available at www.newworldrecords.org, accessed 7 July, 2005.

²¹ CD liner notes for *R.Nathaniel Dett: Piano works*, New World Records, 1988, pp.1-2, available at www.newworldrecords.org, accessed 7 July, 2005.

today. These include a series of pieces for treble clef alone, published under his pseudonym Arthur Tomlinson during 1918-20. Griffes can all too easily be characterized as an American impressionist – his small output is extremely refined in terms of details, mood and texture, and it is not surprising his complete works have now been recorded several times, particularly with a resurgence of interest in earlier generations of American music in the years following the bicentennial celebrations of 1976.²²

EXAMPLE 12 – Charles Tomlinson Griffes, from *Three Tone Pictures* Op.5: No.2 ‘The Vale of Dreams,’ No.3 ‘The Night Winds’, from *Four Roman Sketches* Op.7: No.1 ‘The White Peacock,’ No.3 ‘The Fountain of the Acqua Paola,’ No.4 ‘Clouds,’ and *Sonata in Griffes – Piano Album* (pub. Schirmer).

Charles Ives’ reputation for rhythmic and textural complexity has daunted many a pianist who knows him primarily through the *Concord Sonata* (1909-1915). The rather incomplete catalogue of the shorter piano works, whose provenance was compromised by the composer’s own failing eyesight and incorrect recollections of dates of composition, has also produced the impression of a rather haphazard approach. In fact, the somewhat incomplete nature of many of these works would have appealed to Ives’ transcendentalist aesthetic, and so one would be well served by not attempting to interpret every detail on the score literally. The acidic sense of humour, balanced by the homely qualities of his quotations of hymn tunes and popular march idioms, should instead entice pianists to free themselves of the usual constraints and ‘have a go’. The state of the editions is gradually improving, and recordings of the lesser-known Studies, Marches and other works are on the increase. The *Varied Air and Variations* (1922), *Some South-Paw Pitching Study No.22* and several of the marches from the 1890s would repay the patience required to overcome some of the challenges found in the score.

EXAMPLE 13 – Charles Ives, *Varied Air and Variations*, *Study No.22*, *Three-Page Sonata*, in *Charles Ives – Five Piano Pieces* (pub. Merion Music).

This paper has endeavoured to demonstrate that we need not restrict ourselves to the familiar stalwarts of the repertoire when selecting works from the turn of the 20th century. Debussy need not be the first and only option. In addition to his continental contemporaries, there is a vast resource of American piano music from this era. One will never tire of Debussy’s unique voice, but it will be appreciated much more when it is contextualised within a range of other voices that grew out of the same historical, if not the same cultural, contexts.

When selecting a late romantic work, several Americans such as Edward MacDowell, Amy Beach and their peers from the so-called group of Boston classicists offer many choices. If a more rugged outdoor accent is being sought, then Farwell and some of his Indianist colleagues are able to offer some interesting selections. Similarly, it is possible to investigate Latin American or black American idioms very close to the sources of these styles through works by Carpenter and Dett. If one is seeking an alternative to Scriabin’s or Schoenberg’s chromatic experimentation or Debussy’s water imagery, then Griffes’ various sets of short pieces abound with fascinating colours and textures. And this is not to mention the popularly entertaining works of Scott Joplin, which fit well within the period, or others by Gottschalk, who just predates the period studied here.

Of the sum total of these composers’ works, only a glimpse of which could be mentioned here, but hopefully this exposé has provided a broader view of American music from before World War I than

²² Donna K. Anderson, *Charles T. Griffes: A life in music* (Washington: Smithsonian, 1993), 183.

one normally gains from repertoire guides. The revisionist aims of some musicologists are slowly redressing the uninformed impression that an authentic American style only emerged with Copland in the 1920s. The American musical accent was distinctive, with many original contributions being made by adventurous creators, and those who at the very least were highly accomplished composers.

Various parallels exist between this era of American music and similar stages in Australia's own musical development during the 20th century, particularly in relation to issues of identity and authenticity. Both countries are examples of a predominantly western European culture transplanted to another hemisphere, when then made halting attempts to rationalise its relationship with indigenous musics and the new local context. This is something worthy of investigation within a future study, which might well elicit some interesting comparisons and observations in relation to Australian piano repertoire. In the meantime, I hope that this paper has demonstrated that we are clearly missing out on something useful if we completely ignore our American pianistic cousins from the time of Debussy.

Table 1. Selected list of American composers of piano music c.1880-1920

Name	Dates	Selected piano works
Beach, Amy	1867-1944	27 opus numbers including <i>Ballade</i> Op.6, <i>Sketches</i> Op.18, <i>Variations on Balkan Themes</i> Op.60, <i>Prelude and Fugue</i> Op.81, <i>Nocturne</i> Op.107
Carpenter, John Alden	1876-1951	<i>Diversions</i> , <i>Polonaise Americaine</i> , <i>Tango Americanaien</i> , <i>Little Dancer</i> , <i>Little Indian</i> , <i>Twilight Reverie</i> , <i>Danza</i>
Chadwick, George Whitfield	1854-1931	<i>6 Characteristic Pieces</i> Op.7, <i>Nocturne</i> , <i>5 Piano Pieces</i> , <i>3 Children's Pieces</i> , <i>Chanson Orientale</i>
Dett, Robert Nathaniel	1882-1943	<i>Magnolia Suite</i> , <i>In the Bottoms</i> (incl. <i>Juba Dance</i>), <i>Eight Bible Vignettes</i>
Farwell, Arthur	1872-1952	<i>American Indian Melodies</i> Op.11, <i>Toward the Dream</i> Op.16, <i>The Domain of Hurakan</i> Op.15, <i>Impressions of the Wa-Wan Ceremony of the Omahas</i> Op.21, <i>From Mesa and Plain</i>
Foote, Arthur	1853-1937	<i>Suite in D minor</i> Op.15, <i>Suite in C minor</i> Op.30, <i>Five Poems after Omar Khayyam</i> Op.41, <i>Twenty Preludes</i> Op.52
Griffes, Charles Tomlinson	1884-1920	<i>Three Tone Pictures</i> Op.5, <i>Fantasy Pieces</i> Op.6, <i>Four Roman Sketches</i> Op.7, <i>Three Preludes</i> , <i>De Profundis</i> , <i>Sonata (1918)</i> and <i>Six Bugle-Call Pieces</i> , <i>Six Patriotic Songs</i> etc. - teaching pieces under pseudonym Arthur Tomlinson
Ives, Charles	1874-1954	<i>Six Marches</i> , various <i>Studies</i> , <i>Varied Air and Variations</i> , <i>Three-Page Sonata</i> , <i>'Concord' Sonata</i> , <i>Waltz-Rondo</i>
Joplin, Scott	1868-1917	Many ragtime works, waltzes, other works
Loomis, Harvey Worthington	1865-1930	<i>After the lesson</i> Op.75, <i>Lyrics of the Red Man</i> Op.76
MacDowell, Edward	1860-1908	<i>Marionettes</i> Op.18, <i>Twelve Etudes</i> Op.39, <i>Twelve Virtuoso Etudes</i> Op.46, <i>Woodland Sketches</i> Op.51, <i>Sea Pieces</i> Op.55, <i>Fireside tales</i> Op.61, <i>New England Idylls</i> Op.62, <i>Sonatas No.1 Tragica</i> Op.45, <i>No.2 Eroica</i> Op.50, <i>No.3 Norse</i> Op.57, <i>No.4 Keltic</i> Op.59
Nevin, Ethelbert	1862-1901	<i>Water Scenes</i> Op.13, <i>Two Etudes</i> Op.18, <i>Un giorno in Venezia</i> Op.25
Paine, John Knowles	1839-1906	<i>Romance</i> Op.39, <i>Three Pieces</i> Op.41
Parker, Horatio	1863-1919	<i>Three Pieces</i> Op.49

Table 2. Selected list of score anthologies of American piano works
(single composer publications can be sourced easily from publishers' websites – some of these are listed in Tables 1 or 3)

Editor	Composer / Title	Publisher, score details or year	No. of Composers active 1880-1920
Deguire, William	The American Book for Piano	Galaxy, 1975	8
Dubal, David	American Piano Music from the Civil War to World War I	International Music Company, 13367	12
Gillespie, John	Nineteenth-century American piano music	Dover, 1978	18
Glickman, Sylvia	American Women Composers: Piano Music from 1865-1915	Hildegard Publishing, score 09004	16
Glickman, Sylvia	Three Centuries of American Music - Vol.4 - Keyboard Music 1866-1910	G.K.Hall, 1990	18
Gold, Edward	The Bicentennial Collection of American Keyboard Music	McAfee Music Corp, 1975	7
Lawrence, Vera	The Wa-Wan Press 1901-1911 – 5 vols.	Reprint edition – Arno Press, 1970	14
Smith, Joseph	Four Early 20th-Century Piano Suites by Black Composers	Schirmer's Library of Musical Classics Vol. 2031 (HL50482960)	3
Walker-Hill, Helen	Black Women Composers: A Century of Piano Music (1893-1990)	Hildegard Publishing, score 09109	4

Table 3. Recordings of representative works of American composers composed c.1880-1920

Recording details / Artist(s)	Composer(s) / Work(s)
Naxos – catalogue available at: www.naxos.com	Click on ‘Series/Sets’ then ‘American Classics’ or ‘CD Catalogue by Composer’ – audio excerpts available via webstreaming
8.223715 & 8.223738 / Dario Muller (Marco Polo series)	American Indianists Vol.1 & Vol.2 – ‘Indianist’ piano works by Farwell, Cadman, MacDowell, Loomis, Skilton, Gilbert, Fairchild and others
8.559010 & 8.559011 & 8.559019 & 8.559030 / James Barbagello	Edward MacDowell – Pianos Works Vols. 1-4
8.559023 & 8.559046 / Michael Lewin	Charles Griffes Piano Works Vol.1 & Vol.2
8.559114 / Alexander Peskanov	Joplin – Piano Rags
8.559127 / Stephen Mayer	Charles Ives Piano Works - Concord Sonata; Celestial Railroad, Varied Air & Variations
8.559142 / Kenneth Boulton	William Mason – Piano Music
8.559194 / Joel Sachs	Charles Ives Piano Works - Five Take-Offs
New World Records - Catalogue available at: www.newworldrecords.org	Mission ‘to record the music of American composers that would not otherwise be represented in the catalogues of the commercial recording companies’ Comprehensive drop-down menu of composer names, liner notes, webstreaming service available
80206 / Malcolm Frager	Edward MacDowell and Company - Piano works by Edward MacDowell, John Knowles Paine, Horatio Parker, Ethelbert Nevin, Henry Holden Huss, Henry F. Gilbert, Adolph Martin Foerster
80257 / Ivan Davis	‘The Wind Demon’ and other 19th-Century Piano Works by Homer N. Bartlett, George F. Bristow, William Henry Fry, Louis Moreau Gottschalk, Charles Grobe, Anthony Philip Heinrich, Richard Hoffman, C. Jerome Hopkins, William Mason, George William Warren
80310 / Denver Oldham	Griffes – Piano works
80328 / Denver Oldham	Carpenter – Collected piano works
80424 / Denver Oldham	John Knowles Paine – selected piano works
80542 / Peter Basquin	Chamber works by Amy Beach, Arthur Foote, Preston Ware Orem’s ‘American Indian Rhapsody’, and Arthur Farwell’s ‘Navajo War Dance’ and ‘Pawnee Horses’
80618 / Donald Berman	The Unknown Ives – Volume 2 – about twenty shorter pieces including most of the Studies and Marches
80367 / Denver Oldham	R. Nathaniel Dett Piano Works ‘Magnolia Suite’, ‘In the Bottoms’, ‘8 Bible Vignettes’
Altarus – Catalogue available at: http://www.altarusrecords.com/AltarusMainCatalogue.html	
Altarus 9013 / Denver Oldham	William Grant Still, Nathaniel Dett: Piano Music
Altarus 9024 / Donna Amato	Ethelbert Nevin – Piano works
Composers Recordings 629 / Natalie Hinderas	Piano Music by African American Composers – works by Dett, Still and others
Northeastern NR 223-CD / Virginia Eskin	Foote – Five Poems after Omar Khayyám

Table 4. Selected internet resources relevant to American piano music

URL Hyperlink	Organisational details	Comments
http://www.hildegard.com/	Hildegard Publishing Company	Exclusively dedicated to publication of female composers – score excerpts available online
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/smhtml/smessay5.html	The Library of Congress	Includes various sections: American Memory; Music for the Nation; Music published in America from 1870 – 1885 - various copyright-free works available for free downloading
http://digital.nypl.org/lpa/nypl/about/about_index.cfm	The New York Public Library	Digital Collection: Performing Arts in America 1875 – 1923 – very limited piano music resources available as yet, could increase over time
http://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/	Lester S. Levy Collection of Sheet Music	Large collection of popular sheet music piano works - available for free downloading
http://www.amrhome.net/	American Music Resource	Extensive resource – go to ‘Subject Index’ which lists various hyperlinks for composers, which then link to lists of works / discographies / other resources for Beach, Griffes (including works under his pseudonym Tomlinson), Ives, Joplin
http://digital.library.ucla.edu/sheetmusic/	Sheet Music Consortium	Extensive resource for works originally published as sheet music – search by composer, scores available for free downloading
http://www.cbmr.org/index.php	Centre for Black Music Research	Various resources and links to bibliographies, catalogues, recordings
http://www.musicnotes.com/	Music Notes	‘The World’s Largest Selection of Digital Sheet Music ‘ – score / publication search by composer, includes several works viewable on screen and/or webstreaming audio preview – composer searches for Griffes, Ives, Joplin, MacDowell produced many hits, less numerous for Beach and other composers
http://www.patelson.com	Joseph Patelson Music House, New York City	Large music store with extensive stocklist – website is currently under reconstruction but if the full extent of their catalogue becomes available, this would be a significant online retail resource
http://www.schirmer.com/	G. Schirmer / Associated Music Publishers	Extensive catalogue – major publisher for Griffes, Ives, Joplin, MacDowell, a few other composers represented by single works
http://www.oclc.org/worldcat	WorldCat – Window to the World’s Libraries	One-stop search engine enabling access to multiple library catalogues
http://www.ascap.com/index.html	American Society for Composers, Authors and Publishers	Publication / Recording details for works / composers represented by this organisation – not all composers listed, but references for Beach, Farwell, Griffes

Table 5. Selected list of monographs, bibliographies, and other reference material for American piano music
 (NB: this list does not include single composer studies, which are numerous – some of these are cited as references to this paper)

Author / Editor	Title	Publisher / Date	Comments
Fuszek, Rita M.	Piano music in collections; An index	Detroit, Michigan: Information Coordinators, Inc., 1982	Includes title listing of piano anthologies / collections including reprints of Wa-Wan Press
Gillespie, J	A Bibliography of Nineteenth-Century American Piano Music With Location Sources and Composer Biography-Index.	Westport: Greenwood, 1984.	
Horowitz, J	Classical music in America; A history of its rise and fall.	New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005	Focus on concert music
Hinson. Maurice	Guide to the pianist's repertoire (3rd. ed.)	Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2000	Includes alphabetical list of American Composers in Index / List of American Anthologies/Collections
Hitchcock, H. Wiley	Music in the United States: a historical introduction.	Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1969	Broadly based overview
Sadie, Stanley and Hitchcock, H. Wiley	The New Grove dictionary of American music	London: Macmillan, 1986	4 volume reference resource
Tischler, Barbara L.	An American Music: The Search for an American musical identity.	New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.	Socio-cultural as well as artistic issues