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The Art of the New Woman: The Arts as
Professionalism and Mobilization in
Twentieth-Century Memphis

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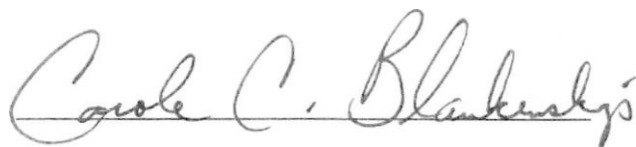
2016

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Bachelor of Arts degree with Honors in Music

This Honors paper by Sarah Catanzaro has been read and approved for Honors in Music.

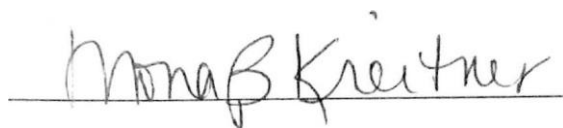
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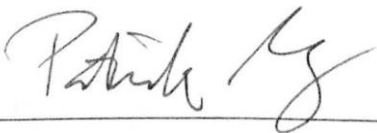
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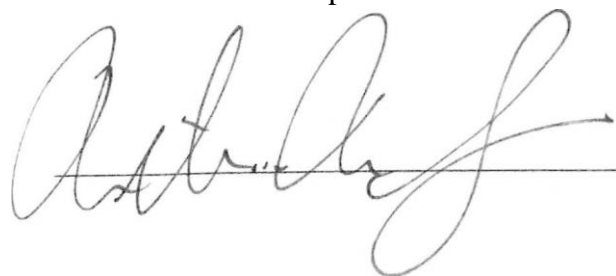
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CONTENTS

Signature page	2
Acknowledgements	3
Contents	4
List of Illustrations	5-6
Abstract	7-8
Introduction	9
Chapter 1	16
“Highbee, Home Study, and High Society: Art and White Femininity in Elite Twentieth-Century Memphis”	
Chapter 2	31
“All you girls ever talk about are the three C’s—cooks, cotton, and children!”: Memphis Women’s Clubs and the “Promotion of the Female Intellect”	
Chapter 3	45
Julia Raine, Sara Beaumont Kennedy and the Musical Protest of the Memphis New Woman	
Conclusion	76
“The Pride of Memphis:” Ethel Taylor Maxwell and the Rise of the Mid-South Female Musical Professional	
Bibliography	82-89

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1	
Cover of the Trezevant Scrapbook	17
Figure 2	17
Sketch of a young woman, Trezevant Scrapbook	
Figure 3	18
Sulette bra top slip advertisement, Trezevant Scrapbook	
Figure 4	18
“Queen Louise” by Richbert, Trezevant Scapbook	
Figure 5	19
“Home Study Circle” Drawing Instruction, Trezevant Scrapbook	
Figure 6	27
“Secret of a Pretty Face” Trezevant Scrapbook	
Figure 7	28
“Popular Orchestral Concerts,” Trezevant Scrapbook	
Figure 8	30
Highbee Commencement Program 1888, Trezevant Scrapbook	
Figure 9	43
Dilettante Club Program 1923-1924	
Figure 10	44
Dilettante Club Program 1923-1924, excerpt	
Figure 11	55
“The Apron Flag” by Boyle, Trezevant Scrapbook	
Figure 12	55
“The Apron Flag” continued, Trezevant Scapbook	
Figure 13	56
Julia Raine portrait on marriage certificate on inside cover of “In Nineteen-Ten”	

Figure 14	56
Portrait of Sara Beaumont Kennedy	
Figure 15	66
Copy of Julia Raine’s marriage license on the inside cover of “In Nineteen-Ten”	
Figure 16	
“In Tennessee,” verse	67
Figure 17	67
“In Tennessee,” Chorus	
Figure 18	
“In Tennessee,” front cover	68
Figure 19	69
Contract between Julia Raine and Knickerbocker Studios	

ABSTRACT

The Art of the New Woman: The Arts as
Professionalism and Mobilization in Twentieth-
Century Memphis
by

Sarah Catanzaro

Women in early twentieth-century Memphis stood on precarious ground, forging new paths with social reform efforts and progressivist ideals while prudently abiding antiquated notions of southern womanhood institutionalized in southern society long before the Civil War. Rich, white women of Memphis closely interacted with this convergence of traditionalism and liberalism in their club activity and social reform efforts, which began as early as the 1890s when the Nineteenth Century Club and the Beethoven Club were founded and elements of New Womanhood began to disseminate from northeastern, metropolitan areas into southern urban centers.

An investigation of women's social reform and political mobilization thus requires not only an understanding of the precedents set by New Womanhood and traditional southern womanhood, but a careful analysis of intersections of progressivism and southern convention that recurred in elite Memphis women's daily routines and social activity. Women's communal and individual music making in Memphis provides the most compelling example of subtle and socially-conscious twentieth-century southern feminine liberalism. Individual efforts by Memphis composer Julia Raine, Beethoven Club founder Martha Trudeau, and influential club women like Fannie Trezevant to instill a love of classical music into the larger Memphis community and to use music making to cultivate for themselves a position of political, professional, and even social autonomy in a highly stratified Memphis illuminate how music was a popular past-time, a common field for women with professional ambitions, a common

language among the powerful white women in Memphis, and a vehicle for women's critiques of southern patriarchal culture.

Introduction

Women in early twentieth-century Memphis stood on precarious ground, forging new paths with social reform efforts and progressivist ideals while prudently abiding by antiquated notions of southern womanhood institutionalized in southern society long before the Civil War. Wealthy, white women of Memphis closely interacted with this convergence of traditionalism and liberalism in their club activity and social reform efforts, which began as early as the 1890s when the Nineteenth Century Club and the Beethoven Club were founded, and elements of New Womanhood—a movement among middle- and upper-class women who “watched their mothers struggle for public access and came into adulthood” and emphasized the emancipation of women “from the social expectations and conventions forced upon themselves by tradition¹—began to disseminate from metropolitan and northeastern areas into southern urban centers like Memphis. Women’s club activity and political mobilization would blossom in Memphis from 1915 to 1925, when ideals of suffrage, women’s professionalism, and women’s political autonomy entered the rhetoric of social clubs and women’s organizations nationwide.² And while Memphis women espoused and upheld fundamental elements of new womanhood and female independence, the way in which they mobilized, communicated, and campaigned remained somewhat reverent to

¹ Susan M. Cruca, "Changing Ideals of Womanhood During the Nineteenth-Century Woman Movement" (2005). General Studies Writing Faculty Publications. Paper 1. http://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/gsw_pub/1.

² Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, Volume 1, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1994), 270.

what Memphis novelist and newspaper editorialist Sara Beaumont Kennedy characterized as “the old Southern notion of women courting publicity was deemed [sic] improper.”³

An investigation into women’s social reform and political mobilization thus requires not only an understanding of the precedents set by New Womanhood and traditional southern womanhood, but a careful analysis of intersections of progressivism and southern convention that recurred in influential and affluent Memphis women’s daily routines and social activity; such intersections—Bible study groups, book clubs, and luncheons to name a few—all present fascinating and compelling, if not varied, opportunities for subversive southern expression of feminine autonomy in Memphis, though the often sparse documentation of such events and the veiled, understated liberal language in existing documentation requires the scholar to use a myriad of sources and an array of materials to piece together how and when these opportunities for subversion were pursued and used as vehicles for women to subtly adopt and express progressive ideology in Memphis. Women’s communal and individual music making in Memphis, however, provides the most compelling, pervasive, and characteristic example of subtle and socially-conscious twentieth-century southern feminine liberalism. Individual efforts by Memphis composer Julia Raine, Beethoven Club founder Martha Trudeau, and influential club women like Fannie Trezevant to instill a love of classical music into the larger Memphis community offered an opening to cultivate a position of political, professional, and even social autonomy in a highly stratified Memphis society for themselves and to illustrate trends in Memphis business directories and census data that suggest that music was a popular past-time, a common field for women with professional ambitions, a familiar language among educated and

³ Qtd in “Biographical Sketch,” Finding Aid, The Sara Beaumont Kennedy Literacy Collection with Papers from Walter Kennedy, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

well-off white women in Memphis, and a vehicle for women's indirect critiques of southern patriarchal culture.

Music experienced or discussed collectively among the women of one or more social clubs—in musicales, benefits, public concerts, classes, meetings, and correspondence—proves that music was integral to club meetings as it provided a familiar and comfortable method of discourse among club women and also offered an area of mutual interest for women in Memphis's upper and middle class. Thus, Music making and interest in music, thus, generated a method by which women—individually and collectively—could mobilize, engage in professional activities and circles, and gain social prominence while utilizing a traditional feminine southern education that emphasized musical proficiency within the confines of the domestic domain.⁴

To analyze these instances of unique compromise between reform and preservation of tradition in Memphis, it is necessary to understand and clearly define the parameters of our analysis and to properly characterize the influences on and ideals of Memphis female activism and social club activity. Definitions of New Womanhood and traditional southern womanhood in particular complicate this research in that these concepts are, naturally, nebulous, locally and personally specific, and often anecdotally explained. However, Candace Bailey, Marsha Wedell, Sylvia Hoffert, and Nancy Woloch, among others, have identified collections of social expectations of women in the antebellum and post-bellum south as well as common behaviors and ideals of the New Woman. To acknowledge the different sort of empowerment and liberalism that occurred in the American South also frees this narrative from diametric ideals that

⁴ Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 271.

attribute progressive and intellectual ideals to northern superiority and backwardness and oppression to southern ideals. While New Womanhood was first established in larger northern metropolitan areas, progressive goals for women's suffrage and social reform as well as conflict between tradition and liberalism emerged on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line in the early twentieth century. In part, New Womanhood and proto-feminism were fostered in urban areas in which women were often allowed to insert themselves in prominent social roles as club presidents and organization heads.⁵

Indeed, the initial establishment and adoption of New Womanhood by upper-class northern women in the twentieth century by nature challenged established and antiquated conceptions of white womanhood by encouraging women to abandon domesticity and “[venture] beyond the street door” into public life.⁶ And while women had challenged traditional patriarchal authority long before the advent of New Womanhood, the term refers to a specific movement of wealthy women who saw their mothers' influence as club members and event organizers, and sought to expand women's increasingly visible role in society in a radical way.⁷ Most scholars agree that the term emerged from an article by Sarah Grand, “The New Aspect of the Woman Question,” which appeared in the *North American Review* in 1894.⁸ The article, a condemnation of Victorian standards for women's sexual purity and innocence, and reflected

⁵ Susan M. Cruea, "Changing Ideals of Womanhood During the Nineteenth-Century Woman Movement" (2005). General Studies Writing Faculty Publications. Paper 1. http://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/gsw_pub/1.

⁶ Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 270.

⁷ Susan M. Cruea, "Changing Ideals of Womanhood During the Nineteenth-Century Woman Movement" (2005). General Studies Writing Faculty Publications. Paper 1. http://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/gsw_pub/1.

⁸ Sarah Grand. 1894. “The New Aspect of the Woman Question.” *The North American Review* 158 (448). University of Northern Iowa: 270–76. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25103291>.

late-nineteenth-century portrayals in literature and art of privileged women as socially autonomous beings.

This ideal permeated social consciousness and foundations of women's activism at the turn of the century, as women's clubs and political organizations and women's colleges and institutions of higher learning emerged in the American public sphere as new domains in which accomplished women could best exercise their skills.⁹ Northern activists like Florence Bascom, Mary Heaton Vorse, and Alice Paul used their positions of privilege, education, their connections to campaign for women's suffrage and professional autonomy, thus expanded the meaning of New Womanhood to include political reform and women's organizational affiliation while rejecting of Victorian standards for sexuality. The New Woman can be defined as an urban dweller and reformer who worked to expand the "woman's sphere visibly" by advocating for women's college education and lobbying for suffrage, city beautification, and women's right to work while maintaining close social and political affiliations with various women's social clubs.¹⁰ And while Memphis women never directly mentioned or fully embraced the lifestyle of the New Woman, recognizable elements of New Womanhood can be seen in elite female circles in Memphis.

But these conspicuous elements of New Womanhood in Memphis society nevertheless had to reconcile with uniquely southern standards for womanhood that had emerged and evolved from antebellum convention. Sylvia Hoffert's *A History of Gender in America* provides the clearest framework for understanding traditional southern womanhood as a variation of Victorian womanhood, adjusted to accommodate the more isolated and stratified plantation culture of elite

⁹ Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 270-275.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 275.

southern families. Hoffert identifies the complication of elite Southern womanhood in the plantation era, characterizing them as creatures of decoration whose “womanliness was derived from the degree to which they appeared to be helpless” while simultaneously “they were supposed to be highly responsible and competent household managers and childrearers who were capable of making independent decisions about domestic matters.”¹¹ Though not entirely at odds with the northern conception of womanhood, the southern cult of true womanhood placed distinct definitions on “female submission” and “sexual purity” to isolate the pure and innocent white woman from the lascivious black man or the hypersexualized black woman.¹²

Proficiency in piano, guitar, and voice, as Candace Bailey has explored in her *Music and the Southern Belle*, was certainly a fundamental element of southern womanhood in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and was a foundational element of southern women’s educations, domestic duties, and courtship. An entry in the *Southern Literary Messenger*, in which the author describes a “blonde beauty” and her “overly-affected” performance at the piano, is emblematic of the importance of musical performance and good musical taste in southern women’s lives derived from the heavy stratification of southern society and the expectations of domesticity, accomplishment, and refinement among elite southern plantation women.¹³ The *Messenger* describes this beauty’s performance as though it were in poor taste: the dramatic and arguably modern sound of the piece—complete with “convulsive clutchings and spasmodic poundings” on the keyboard and “screams and whispers” that constituted a vocal

¹¹ Sylvia D. Hoffert, “Femininity in the Nineteenth-Century South (1820-1890),” in *A History of Gender in America: Essays, Documents, and Articles* ed. Sylvia D. Hoffert (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.), 209.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Candace Bailey, *Music and the Southern Belle* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), 13, 20.

line—offended southern propriety and proclivity for pleasing, light musical entertainment.¹⁴ Though this beauty was forgiven—as she was “a finished specimen of a fashionable young lady, of the real boarding-school, theorem-painting, worsted-working, Italianised and French stamp in tone, manner, and dress”—she did not display proper taste as she “ostentatiously” and vulgarly delivered an inappropriate musical selection.¹⁵ Though this young woman played in poor taste, her training and her accomplishments nevertheless allowed her to be “wreathed in smiles” and admired by male suitors in her audience as her musical ability characterized her as a member of the elite in southern society and a promising future wife. Clearly, she was adequately prepared to fulfill her future duties as a southern wife, domestic entertainer, and hostess.¹⁶

This expectation of refined and delicate music making certainly did not disappear from the definition of southern womanhood post-Civil War, although Bailey indicates that southern women began to compose music and capitalize on their musical skills during and after the war, as women gained greater autonomy in southern society. One of the oldest women’s organizations in Memphis, the Beethoven Club, was founded to instill a love of classical music among local women and the Memphis community at large. What characterizes women’s music making as progressive, and possibly activist, in early twentieth-century Memphis is that it encountered ideals and practices of New Womanhood that had diffused into southern society as early as the 1890s. The founding of Memphis social clubs, the release of Memphis composer and club woman Julia Raine’s compositions, concerts sponsored by social clubs with female performers, music education within women’s organizations, and musical interaction between women’s clubs combine to illustrate that music provided a middle ground for southern feminine

¹⁴ Candace Bailey, *Music and the Southern Belle*, 18-19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

activists as music was both a socially acceptable activity and a common interest of many affluent white women within Memphis society. Using a musical language or participating in musical activity allowed women to engage in progressive women's organizations, activist discourses, and professional environments without disturbing carefully constructed Memphis social infrastructure and southern convention.

The goal of this research is to insert music and art into the discourse of female activism and reform in early-twentieth century Memphis and to identify performative arts—particularly music—as a means of social currency, commonality, and honest expression within the framework of women's organizations and clubs. In order to do so, I aim first to trace the trajectory of music's and art's integral role in elite Memphis's definition of an accomplished and eligible young woman. Next, I will explore how music's characterization as a feminine and elite art provided women with a language for appropriate activism within a conservative Memphis community. And finally, I will elaborate on how individual compositions and campaigns contributed to foundational principles of women's organizations and clubs.

Highbee, Home Study, and High Society: Art and White Femininity in Elite Twentieth-Century Memphis

Victorian standards, plantation culture, industrialism, and racial science converged in Memphis and stratified the city's culture along discrete and distinct classes and demographics. While black men were demonized, delineated as strong creatures consumed by lascivious desires, white women were defined by their idleness, their innocence and their sexual purity. While Memphis embraced industry and industrialization, housing major manufacturers of cotton and textiles, the presence of large plantations in proximity of the city, major slave trading centers, and sites of Confederate victories characterized Memphis as a southern urban center

with often conservative sensibilities. Recurring epidemics of yellow fever escalated in 1873, 1878, and 1879 ravaged the city's population—particularly the city's white population—drove many affluent families from their homes, destroyed city infrastructure, and even forced the city to briefly give up its charter. White flight, the burgeoning of the city's black population encouraged Memphis's elite upper classes to become more entrenched in traditional beliefs and social convention as a new black majority enjoyed ephemeral, although monumental influence in political office and business. Robert Church, one of the wealthiest black men in the South in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, capitalized on the flight of Memphis citizens, consolidated his real estate empire, and became one of the most influential businessmen in Memphis. Memphis's white population, threatened by the success of African-Americans in Memphis began erecting Confederate monuments, memorializing Confederate culture, and redefining plantation culture's sharp contrast between the white female and the black male.

Accounts of such Victorian standards and advice for women fill the *Commercial Appeal*, and numerous articles call for women to study domestic arts, craft furniture, cook, maintain their beauty, and to remain active within society. Newspaper clippings describing elite social events across the Mid-South, fine women's appearance, and even Queen Victoria's daily routine fill the pages of the Trezevant family scrapbook, presumably glued to the pages of the scrapbook as articles of reference. Preoccupation with standards of dress and beauty—as presented by nationally-known and local society women—are imbued in these clippings, most of which seem to have been published in the society pages and columns in the *Commercial Appeal*, often idealizing, objectifying, and occasionally infantilizing the helpless, pure, and lovely creatures of society. A description of Fannie and Nellie Trezevant in the society pages, which commented on

their presence at a “German” dance in Kentucky’s Philo Hall, describes the girls as “beautiful and entertaining brunettes,” whose presence was quite anticipated by the guests of the party.



Figure 1

Cover of the Trezevant Scrapbook



Figure 2

Sketch of a young woman

Trezevant Scrapbook



Figure 3

Sulette bra top slip advertisement

Trezevant Scrapbook

“To slim your figure with fitting perfection under the newest silhouettes. Our wonderful whisk-wash-dry nylon tricot with lace lavished front bodice, stay-put elastic back and four-gore skirt. By Aristocrats in white, pink, black, 32 to 40.

Figure 4¹⁷

“Queen Louise” by Richbert

Lithograph of Queen Louise

Trezevant Scrapbook

¹⁷ Lithograph, “Queen Louise by Richbert” box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL'S HOME STUDY CIRCLE
 (Copyright, 1909, by The Commercial Appeal and Chicago Record.)
 DIRECTED BY PROF. SKYMOOR EATON.

DRAWING, DESIGNING AND ILLUSTRATING.
 BY ELIZABETH MOORE HALLOWELL
 (Philadelphia School of Industrial Art.)

IV.—LIGHT AND SHADE, COLOR VALUES, ETC.

These papers, owing to limited space, can touch in only the briefest and most general way upon the important subjects which head them. It is particularly desired, therefore, that the student will aid his own progress in every possible way by

shadow nearest the object is darker than the dark side of that object. Shadow differs from shade in having a form resembling in some degree the body which causes it. (See Fig. 2.)

From these brief distinctions the student will see how needful is the firm foundation of good outline drawing, upon which the knowledge of light and shade is to stand. There is much careful drawing of the shapes and forms of all shade tints and also of all cast shadows, and without considerable facility in outline drawing it will be found impossible to see and represent the true forms of lights and shades and they will become only mon-




FIG. 1. STUDY OF LIGHT, HALF-TONE AND SHADE—ADVANCED WORK.

Figure 5

“Home Study Circle” Drawing Instruction

Trezevant Scrapbook

Fannie, the article continued, “wore a soft clinging gown of yellow China silk, with black gloves and slippers, corsage bouquet of yellow chrysanthemums, diamonds,” while Nellie “was gracefully attired in a Grecian gown of pale blue *crepe de Chine*, with ornaments of dead gold and pearls.”¹⁸ The detail with which society girls are described is stunning, and every element of a woman’s toilette is dutifully and intricately laid out for interested female readers hoping to emulate the fashion of the most elite girls in Memphis. “Lovely,” “beautiful,” “blonde,” “brunette,” and “entertaining” seem to be common epithets of these society girls, as they are objectified and idealized as objects of pristine beauty.¹⁹

Beauty routines and regimens of elite and attractive women in the South and across the nation were also fairly common topics in the society pages of Memphis newspapers, often branded as secrets to their success in courting and marrying rich men, and acting as pleasing hostesses. Diet and maintaining a slim figure contributed quite frequently to these beauty advice articles and columns. Ads for garments like the “sulette bra top slip,” which helped women “slim [their] figure[s] under the newest silhouettes,” featured images of long and slim women, extravagantly dressed in white ball gowns—possibly debutante gowns—bedecked in lavish jewelry and with elegant hairstyles.²⁰ These women had slim figures, long necks, large eyes, and

¹⁸ Newspaper article, n.d., n.p., “Complimentary German,” box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN. While it is unclear when this event took place or in which publication this article appeared, given the dates of the clippings and other materials surrounding this clipping, it is fairly likely that this article was in the society pages of the *Commercial Appeal* in the 1880s or 1890s.

¹⁹ *Ibid* et Newspaper article, n.d., n.p., “Secret of a Pretty Face: Beautiful Women Advise Their Sex not to Use Water” box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

²⁰ Newspaper advertisement, n.d., n.p., “Sulette bra top slip,” box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

perfect posture, closely resembling the society pages' idealized descriptions of Memphis's finest young women from the most prominent and affluent Memphis families.

Memphis periodicals also discussed at length the cosmetic advice of actresses, royalty, and famous society girls, who were lauded for their beauty, poise, and ability to entertain. The secrets to their success as sources of entertainment and objects of beauty were divulged almost as a how-to guide for aspiring young society girls. These how-to columns were plastered on the pages of the Trezevant scrapbooks, and held obvious meaning to Fannie and Nellie, the young darlings of Memphis high society. One such column in the *Commercial Appeal*, "Secret of a Pretty Face: Beautiful Women Advise Their Sex not to Use Water," warns its readers almost hyperbolically about the dangers of using water to wash one's face and quotes "a pretty actress" who asserts that women who use water and soap in their skincare regimen "drown their beauty" and are "harassed by a complexion like a ham or masked with a facial drapery as coarsely woven as a nutmeg grater."²¹ This "pretty actress," though she may not be southern, refers to the consummate importance and the inherent preciousness of women's physical qualities as she urges her peers to guard their "gifts of nature," particularly their "satiny skin delicately stamped with the tints of the sea shell" from damage that might diminish their value as members of Memphis society. Physical attractions, to this actress and to many young debutantes, were an inheritance and a lifeblood to women were expected to marry well, act as pleasing hostesses, and produce beautiful children.

²¹ Newspaper article, n.d., n.p., "Secret of a Pretty Face: Beautiful Women Advise Their Sex not to Use Water" box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

In addition to maintaining physical attractiveness, women were also meant to be sources of beauty and producers of beautiful, though domesticated, artwork. Many of the artistic endeavors of Memphis women seem to have been domestic projects, or art that was associated with the domestic duties of hostessing. Several pages of the “The Commercial Appeal’s Home Study Circle,” a series in the newspaper that instructed women in domestic crafts and procedures, are also found in the Trezevant scrapbook, glued to its withered pages presumably as instructional aides to the young Trezevant girls. This particular series of the “Home Study Circle” addresses “Drawing, Designing, and Illustrating,” and provides women illustrators instruction in linear perspective, color values, and proper light and shade. The sample illustrations pictured in the series are simple, innocuous drawings of mostly domestic objects: a table, vases, a sculpture, a basket, a feather, and a serene landscape are all presented as not only proper illustrations for study, but also acceptable subjects for women’s artwork.

These modest and simple drawings are characteristic of the art and the music produced and admired by Memphis women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, embracing traditional domestic values and carefully abiding by the stringent code of conduct to which Memphis women were subject. Drawing, designing, dancing, and naturally music making were all arts in which women were expected to be proficient and pleasing but not overwrought or dramatic, especially in the late nineteenth century. Women’s schools, study circles, and debutante balls all taught the young and affluent women of Memphis to be artistic and elegant and to reject art that is creative and bold. While this precedent for women’s artistic endeavors remained prevalent in the twentieth century, minute changes in musical style in the last years of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century Memphis women’s art as a means of progressivism and activism within an insulated and traditional society.

Education was the underpinning for the expectations for the conservative and antiquated art and music that pervaded female society at the turn of the century in Memphis. Annie Christine Reudelhuber's Smith School, Jenny Highbee's Highbee School, Clara Conway's private school for girls in her home, St. Agnes Academy, the Female High School at Court, and several other schools operated in the established traditions of southern boarding schools, and taught their pupils the domestic arts—including music—which were essential skills for young women hoping to become accomplished and suitable young wives in the households of Memphis's high society.²² While other, coed schools like the Bohlmann School of Music²³—where Gladys Cauthen, a Memphis music patron and musician attended—these women's schools produced a number of graduates who would act both as major supporters of the arts, women's club leaders, and members of prominent and affluent families in Memphis.²⁴ The Highbee School, established in 1875 and run by longtime educator Jenny Highbee, was perhaps the most elite girls' school in Memphis by graduating some of the most elite, elegant, and most accomplished women in the Memphis area. Susan Trezevant Little, the daughter of one of the most prominent lawyers in Memphis and a member of one of the oldest families in Memphis,

²² "Pioneers of Education in Memphis," *Memphis Tech High School Alumni*, <http://www.memphistechhigh.com/earlyeducators.html>.

²³ The Bohlmann School of Music graduated many of the most prominent Memphis musicians. Though little is known of the date of school's opening, its success was proved by the school's opening of a second location on Union Avenue in 1922 according to the *Musical Courier*, which is cited below along with two other sources concerning the school of music and its founder, Theodor Bohlmann. Bohlmann, who taught at the Cincinnati Conservatory, was also active in women's club musical events and competitions, as many of his students were closely affiliated with the Beethoven Club and other regional music clubs. The music professor, who was a pianist himself, often judged regional competitions and hosted masterclasses by world-class musicians like Sergei Klíbanky.

²⁴ "Theodor Bohlmann School of Music in New Home," *Musical Courier* 85, no 1, (1922): 14. Et "Report of President, Tennessee Federation of Music Clubs—November 1920," *The Musical Monitor* 10 (1920):152. Et "Highest Tribute for Klíbanky Master Classes," *Musical News* 14, no. 27 (1922):29.

Fannie Trezevant, Nellie Trezevant, and Martha Trudeau, the founder of Memphis's oldest social clubs and Memphis's premiere music club, the Beethoven Club were some of the school's most celebrated graduates.²⁵

While poetry, dance, and other gendered arts were indeed vital elements of the curriculum of girls' schools, music was at the center of female's education, as music was a foundational element of a house party or a social event. The Highbee School's commencement program of June 18 1888 involved a number of recitations and musical performances given by some of the finest musicians in the school. Fannie Trezevant delivered a recitation of "A Legend of Elsinore;" Martha Trudeau, along with Carrie Warinner, played Mendelssohn's *Rondo Brillante*; other girls sang songs and played piano duets; and a Miss Kennedy accompanied Theodore Carroll's violin solo of Gounod's *Ave Maria*.²⁶ Conforming to longstanding and deeply-rooted tradition, the Highbee girls used gendered instruments—piano and voice—and no girl played the violin solo, which might have been considered improper or ostentatious for a young woman to play.²⁷ "Music" was also discussed as a part of the "Composite Composition: Topics of the Times" portion of the program, along with other topics like "Put Yourself in His Place" and "Woman as a Business Man," and was presented by Estelle Hull.²⁸

This commencement, naturally, served as an opportunity for Highbee's young women to display their accomplishments and to establish themselves as competent and sophisticated

²⁵ Program, "Highbee School Commencement," June 18[?], 1888, box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Candace Bailey, *Music and the Southern Belle*, 13-20.

²⁸ Program, "Highbee School Commencement," June 18[?], 1888, box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

graduates of an elite women's school in Memphis. The program consisted of decidedly elegant, uncomplicated, and most importantly uncontroversial music by fairly established and reputable composers like Gounod and Mendelssohn, and all pieces sung by the girls were songs, not arias, written and sung in English and composed in a style similar to folk tunes, popular songs, and parlor songs. No compositions written by the graduates appeared on the program and it is unknown whether these young women were allowed to study compositional technique at The Highbee School, though Miss Highbee herself composed the "Class Song" that was sung by her graduating pupils at the end of the program.²⁹ The prevalence student musical performance in the program illustrates music's centrality in the school's curriculum as well as elite social gatherings in Memphis; the young women's ability to entertain and to play appropriate repertoire signaled to their audience that the graduates of The Highbee School were prepared to become successful society women, housewives, and hostesses. The ability to select and perform soft, sophisticated, stable, and familiar music, helped portray the status of the elite women of Memphis as educated and accomplished women. At the same time, the selection and performance of approved repertoire provided young women with a means of expression and communication among their peers in elite society.

The sophisticated education received at elite institutions like The Highbee School also instilled in young elite women a refined taste for music and an enjoyment of high art, which they applied not only to their performances at social gatherings, but to their attendance at events centered around the performance of art music. The Trezevants' scrapbooks hold a myriad of

²⁹ Program, "Highbee School Commencement," June 18[?], 1888, box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN. A song by Ella M. Wheatley was also featured on the program, though it is unclear whether she was a pupil at The Highbee School.

clippings from the society pages that announce opera seasons and popular concert repertoire. Several clippings concern the announcement that The Emma Juch Grand English Opera Company, which performed “Grand Opera”—*Il Travatore and Lohengrin* for instance—“sung in the English Language,” would perform in Memphis for “Inaugural Week” beginning September 22, 1890.³⁰ These performances, given with the “approval of the patrons of the lyric opera of America,” were given for a week in Memphis, and were, no doubt, an elaborate affair in which some of the wealthiest families in town attended. A program for the “Popular Orchestral Concerts” by the Exposition Orchestra of 100, performed from the World’s Columbian [sic] Exposition, also was glued into the scrapbook of the prominent Trezevants. To be performed at eleven o’clock on Thursday, August 24, this concert was clearly for the idle and wealthy elite of Memphis, who could both appreciate works of Wagner, Gounod, Beethoven, and Schubert and spend a weekday morning listening to art music.³¹

These programs and announcements in the scrapbooks of the Trezevants obviously hold a fair amount of significance to the family and the presumed involvement with, or at least attendance of the Highbee-educated Trezevant daughters at such large-scale musical events suggest that the young women in the prominent family enjoyed not only exposure to fine art, and the opportunity to demonstrate their interest in and knowledge of fine art. If Nellie and Fannie did in fact attend such musical occasions, they were showcasing their good taste, good breeding, and power within their community. The Trezevants’ involvement, interest, and possible

³⁰ Program, “Popular Orchestral Concerts World’s Columbian [sic] Exposition,” box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

³¹ *Ibid.*

patronage of music certainly characterizes music as powerful social currency in elite Memphis—especially among well-educated society women.

This precedent for feminine music making, based on antebellum tradition and cultural constriction, began to evolve, however, as Memphis moved toward the twentieth century, largely due to the establishment of women’s social clubs like the Nineteenth Century Club, the Beethoven Club, and the Dilettante Club. While elite women continued to keep company with other elite women and, for the most part, maintain a restrained elegance in their artistic expression, women’s organizations provided opportunities for women to take even more active roles in organizing events, mobilizing community interest, and educating their members. Women’s clubs allowed for elite women to meet free from male influence and expectations, communicate more readily, and to discuss issues of importance to their sex and to their city. Art and music were essential to club activity as they were common interests among elite women, irreproachable pastimes, and means of communication that accommodated social interaction and a means of cooperation among women in Memphis and across the Mid-South.

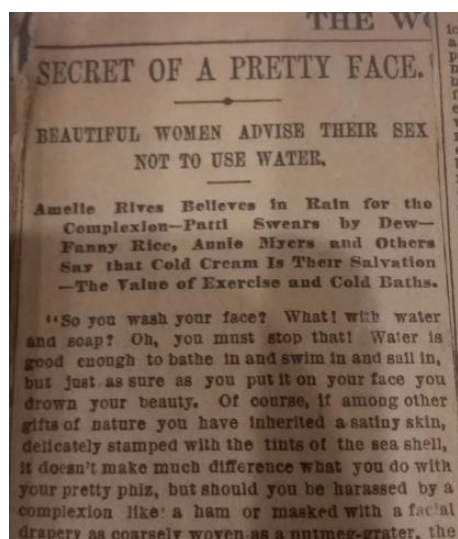


Figure 6
 "Secret of a Pretty Face"
 Trezevant Scapbook

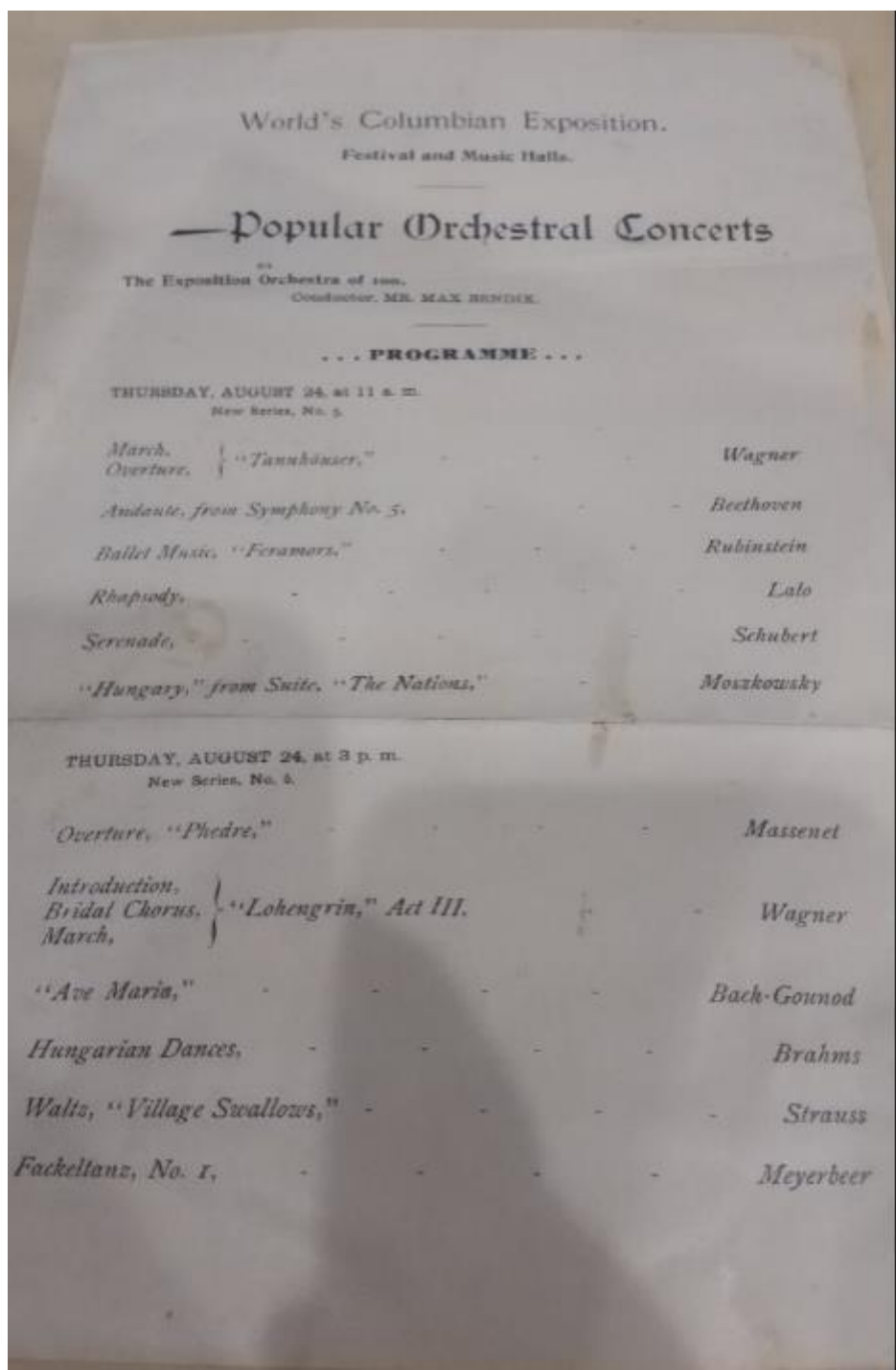


Figure 7
 "Popular Orchestral Concerts"
 Trezevant Scrapbook

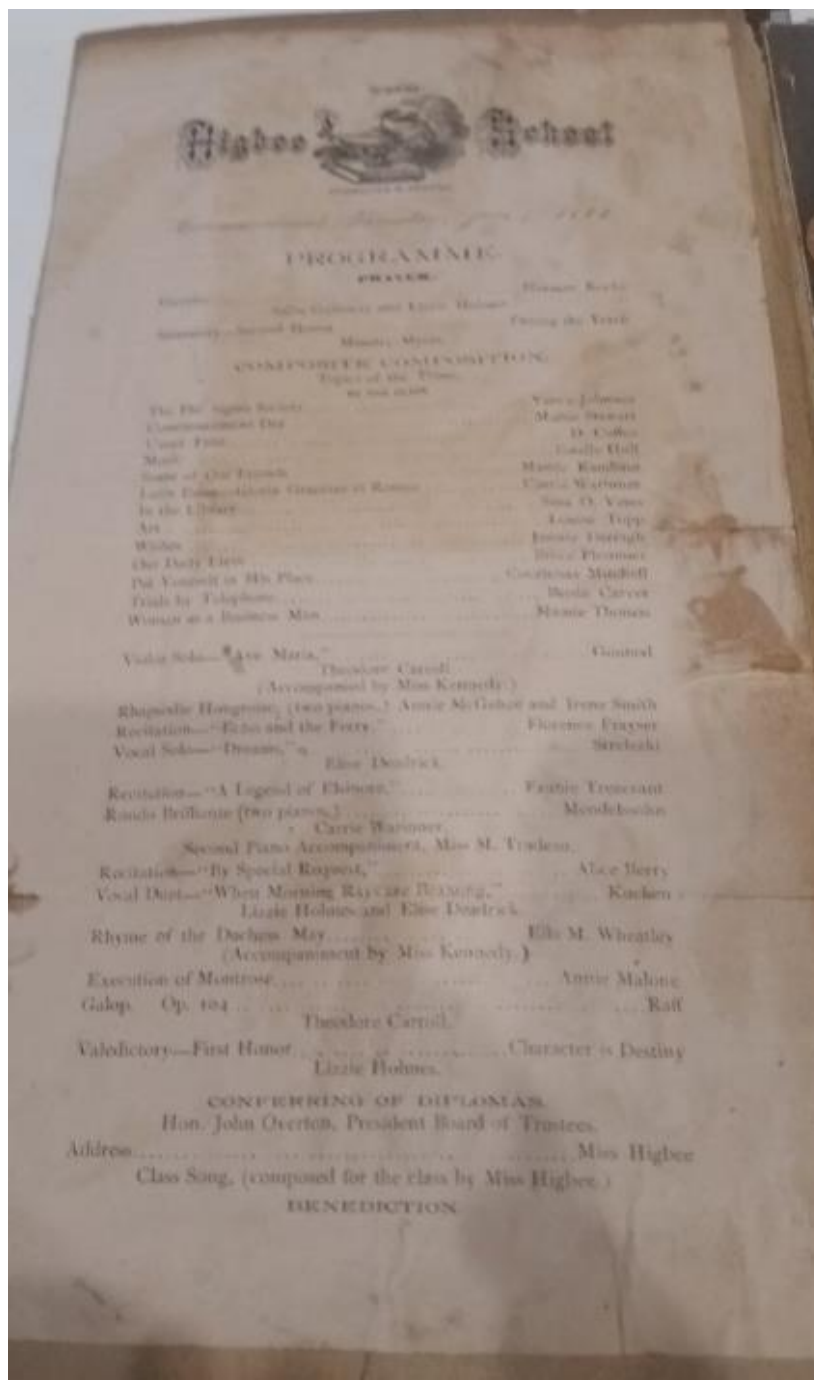


Figure 8
 Highbee Commencement Program 1888
 Trezevant Scrapbook

**“All you girls ever talk about are the three C’s—cooks, cotton, and children!”: Memphis
Women’s Clubs and the “Promotion of the Female Intellect”**

On October 27, 1888, Martha Trudeau, a graduate of the distinguished Highbee School, and five other music lovers gathered in her home and decided to establish a club whose mission would be to “to develop the talent of its members and to stimulate musical interest in Memphis.”³² The four founding members of the group, Trudeau, Norma Duke, Annie Dwyer and Isabelle Getz, were all accomplished accustomed to gathering together to play advanced piano quartets and duets. Their strong desire to make music and share music with other women served as the impetus for forming one of the oldest women’s social clubs and music organizations in Memphis.³³ These four original founders soon asked Elizabeth Cowan and Mrs. Edward Tobey to join their music group, and the six women officially established the Beethoven Club of Memphis.

In its first few years the group met in Trudeau’s house, in churches, members’ houses, and the Women’s Society Building. The club nevertheless expanded rapidly, acquiring sixty new members and incorporating by 1891.³⁴ A Junior Club for younger female pianists—and potential future Beethoven Club members—was established by Mrs. Napoleon Hill, president of the Beethoven Club from 1895 to 1903 and wife of an eminent cotton merchant; she led the group to substantial prominence in the first years of the twentieth century. The popularity of the club in the early years is evident mostly in its survival and its prominence in modern Memphis,

³² 90th anniversary yearbook, 1978, Beethoven Club archives, Beethoven Club, Memphis, Tennessee.

³³ Barbara Mashburn, “History,” *Beethoven Club*, 2008.

<http://www.beethovenclubmemphis.org/history.html>.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

as the oldest items in the club's archives are from the late 1920s and early 1930s. Organizations like Opera Memphis and the Memphis Symphony Orchestra relied heavily on the club's patronage in their fledgling years, Joan Sutherland was brought to Memphis by the Beethoven Club, and the Mid-South Regional Metropolitan Opera Auditions were established in Memphis in 1962.

The women of the Beethoven Club, among the many other women of various Memphis women's clubs like the Nineteenth Century Club, founded in 1890; the Dilettante Club, founded in 1919; and the Memphis Press and authors' Club³⁵ belonged to a new, progressive, and reformist group of elite women, who were inspired by the increasing political autonomy and professional ambitions of the New Women in the Northeast.³⁶ Reform efforts, though they took many forms among elite women in Memphis, often concerned arts education or patronage of music, dance, literature. The goal of many of these groups was women's self-improvement and intellectual stimulation, which is best represented in the original mission statement of the Nineteenth Century Club, whose purpose was "to promote the female intellect by encouraging a spirit of research in literary fields and provide an intellectual center for the women of Memphis."³⁷ These clubs certainly emulated the cerebral pursuits of the women's clubs elsewhere and often were focused on instilling similar progressive ideals about women's suffrage city beautification, and women's education; however, the arts-centric missions of many women's clubs and the lack of any violent or massive demonstration in Memphis suggests that the elite

³⁵ The exact date at which the Press and authors' Club was founded is uncertain for now. More research is necessary to determine its founding, but the existence of the club's "Sketch Book" from 1907 suggests the group was founded at least at that time.

³⁶ Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience*, 339.

³⁷ Qtd. in Marsha Wedell, "Nineteenth Century Club," *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, Last Updated January 01, 2010, <http://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=998>. Accessed November 23, 2014.

ladies of Memphis chose subtle, artistic—and very often musical—forms of protest and subversion in order to advocate for civic change through their clubs. Clubs that focused on, or simply included the arts as a part of their agendas could manipulate progressive language to sound appropriate, southern, and feminine; arts clubs therefore, occupied an innovative and a carefully-constructed semi-political space in Memphis’s culture, and its members—who ascribed to both traditional southern expectation and the progressive standards of the New Woman—established a somewhat indistinct, ill-defined network of women in Memphis who participated in what could be called a movement of southern New Womanhood.

The closed and close-knit communities cultivated in these arts-centric women’s clubs allowed for women to express activist leanings without betraying their mostly elite and prudent reputations in Memphis society, as music, poetry, and drawing were appropriate means of female communication and signs of good breeding; prominent social clubs like the Beethoven Club capitalized on the arts’ reputation as feminine domain to promote a proto-feminist and progressive agenda within their ranks of affluent, influential, and ambitious members. While little remains of early Beethoven Club minutes, financial records, and yearbooks, collections of Beethoven Club programs—kept from some of the earliest recitals held at the club—reveal the organization’s subtle, yet powerful endorsement of feminine music making. The first chronological listings for performances sponsored by the Beethoven Club or performed by Beethoven club members include the following:

“Jan 12, 1912. Goodwyn Institute. Violin Recital by Maude Powell. Assisted by Waldemar Liachowsky, Piano; December 11, 1919. Goodwyn Institute. Program of Frieda Hempel, Soprano; Jan 20, 1920. Lyric Theater (afternoon). Minneapolis Symphony

Orchestra. Solo: Henry J. Williams, Harp...Loverne De Shazo, Piano.”³⁸

In most programs are fairly established female performers, and often these women’s repertoire or instruments were unusual in the sense that women rarely performed dramatic or long concert repertoire in public, and women rarely chose instruments other than the voice, piano, or guitar.

Major female stars like former Metropolitan Opera soprano Helen Jepson were also brought in to perform for Memphis due to the Beethoven Club’s efforts illustrating the wealth and political influence of the group as well as the Beethoven Club’s larger commitment to city improvement. The members’ ability to display their influence and their knowledge of art music—without necessarily having to perform concert repertoire themselves—certainly established The Beethoven Club as a foundation of southern New Womanhood in Memphis. As the “line between amateur and professional was a highly defined one,” in the South and in Memphis, The Beethoven Club and other arts-centric organizations carefully and gently bolstered professionalism in female performers without directly participating in what might be considered overly ostentatious or impertinent performances.³⁹ Amateur and professional female performers for the Beethoven Club, on the whole, indeed mostly gave concerts on pianos or solo voice, and women were often either ancillary performers to men or “assisted” by men. Women were active, visible participants in competent and even dramatic performance, though their participation in such performance was limited to a respectable degree.

While the Beethoven Club was one of the few music-centric women’s organizations in Memphis in the early twentieth century, the presence of art and music in the missions and the

³⁸ Programs, 1912-1920, Beethoven Club Programs Collection: 1911-1991, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

³⁹ Candace Bailey, *Music and the Southern Belle*, 34.

activities of a myriad of women's civic clubs suggests that music and art were employed to court new members and engage women in civic work with appropriately feminine means. The very origins of the Nineteenth Century Club was rooted in feminine arts like literature, music, and drawing. The organization's original mission was "to promote the female intellect by encouraging a spirit of research in literary fields and provide an intellectual center for the women of Memphis."⁴⁰ The early curriculum of the club focused on arts competency and, to an extent, feminine empowerment through revisionist history, as curricula specifically addressed the presence of "women in literature, music, art, education, [and] domestic life" in addition to "reform activities."⁴¹ As suffrage, women's social autonomy, and women's professionalism emerged as topics of sociopolitical relevance and importance in early-twentieth-century Memphis, performative arts like music were often included in displays of female professionalism put on by the clubs, almost as buffers against—or as nods to—cultural convention. Most notably, public benefits, exhibitions for art, or presentations of papers were often accompanied by brief musical interludes and poetry recitations from members of the women's organizations who sponsored the events. At one such event, the art committee of the Nineteenth Century club, headed by Mrs. Morgan, organized an exhibition in which "paintings from New York had been secured."⁴² The collection of oil paintings and posters procured and curated by the art committee was available for viewing by the public, a visible symbol of female competency and savvy. The opening of the art show was accompanied by academic papers given by two of the most

⁴⁰ Qtd. in Marsha Wedell, "Nineteenth Century Club," *The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture*, Last Updated January 01, 2010, <http://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=998>. Accessed November 23, 2014.

⁴¹ Marsha Wedell, *Elite Women and the Reform Impulse in Memphis, 1875-1915* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 78.

⁴² Newspaper article, untitled, n.d., n.p., box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

influential club members, Nellie Trezevant and Mrs. Morgan, that did not simply welcome guests, but educated visitors about the artistic merit and the historical value of the pieces in the collection. Mrs. Morgan's paper, "Artists of the Countries on the Baltic Sea," was, according to the periodical, a fine example of research "too fine to be 'cut'" and that would be published in the next issue. Opening what might be otherwise considered a progressive program was, however, a traditional element of plantation-era entertainment—a "piano solo by Miss Bayliss Beecher."⁴³ Though we may only speculate what this piano solo was, the nature of the event and the solo's place in the program suggest the music's purpose was to serve as a pleasing greeting and a familiar welcome to attendees of the exhibition. Though riotous outrage or grievous concern probably would not have resulted from the public's viewing of the show, the presence of a musical invocation immediately rooted the event in a non-threatening traditionalism and presumably primed visitors to enjoy the exhibition's opening and accept that women had solely sought and curated the collection as well as organized the afternoon's activities.

Displays of competency, confidence, savvy, and education among female club members were more regularly integrated into club activity and Memphis civic life as the twentieth century progressed. As clubs garnered more influence in the community, their causes became bolder, and their stances slightly more political; and established women's organizations extended patronage to sister organizations run by their members—Nineteenth Century Club member Clara Conway, for instance promoted female literacy among the poor with the Women's Christian Association. As women's organizations blossomed and thrived, more women's interest groups proliferated; they addressed the new and increasing demands of their members while remaining

⁴³ Newspaper article, untitled, n.d., n.p., box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

rooted in tradition, mainly in their interest in the arts. As suffrage, women's literacy, women's education, and women's professionalism increasingly occupied central positions in club agendas, interest in and support for the arts among Memphis women's clubs characterized them as proto-feminist, but characteristically southern and proto-feminist.

This proto-feminist, empowered point of view espoused in long-established clubs in Memphis was transferred to the missions of newly established clubs, which often pushed the boundaries of appropriateness and professionalism expected of and traditionally espoused by southern women. The Dilettante Club, founded later than most of Memphis's women's clubs and arts clubs, was one such social club to wholly embrace an agenda of women's education and female intellectualism. "All you girls ever talk about are the three C's—cooks, cotton, and children," a comment made by the aunt of Merle "Mink" Lawrence, prompted Lawrence, Mrs. Giles Bond, Mrs. Willis Campbell, Mrs. Simpson Tate, and Mrs. Lewis Haskell to establish the Dilettante Club in 1919.⁴⁴ A Dilettante or "Dil" was—and still is—required to write a research paper on the year's topic every two years, and she was often asked to host annual meetings at her house, in which club members would present their intensive and original research.

The Dilettante Club, like the Beethoven Club, enjoyed success in the Memphis area and still holds meetings in the city today. Though membership was never and has never been as extensive as the Beethoven Club, Memphis press coverage of the clubs' membership and research with articles like "New Members Take Bows" from the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Reagan Adolph, "Biographical Sketch," Dilettante Club Collection, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁴⁵ Newspaper articles, "New Members Take Bows" (*Commercial Appeal*) n.d. and "Dilettantes' Theme: The 7 Lively Arts" n.d., n.p., Box 1 Folder 7, Dilettante Club Collection, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, Tennessee.

and “Dilettantes’ Theme: The 7 Lively Arts” suggests the club’s longstanding relationship with Memphis’s social and intellectual community. Small meetings of women, original research requirements, and year-long periods to conduct such research produced a cerebral and progressive, but not necessarily activist, culture among the Dilettantes that perpetuated the call for female competency in the arts initially made by the Beethoven Club and the Nineteenth Century Club as well as the impetus for female professionalism occurring nation-wide led by women like Alice Paul and Carrie Chapman Catt.

Substantial papers and discussions about philosophy, literature, art, and music saturated the meetings of the Dilettantes and rejected existing expectation for female amateurism and submission while remaining in the domain of the arts, which was still considered feminine. Papers on “Operas and Orchestra” and “Music is the universal language of mankind” spurred what the club’s minutes often describe as “good discussions” and promoted the idea of an active and intellectual female rather than the idle and delicate antebellum woman.⁴⁶ The minutes also note that such presented papers were “approved,” and thus were up to the standards for arts scholarship that the club upheld. Membership’s likely education in the arts, thus, provided the Dilettantes with a rich understanding of music, drawing, and literature with which they could develop expertise in a field and conduct substantial and significant research. The arts, within the close-knit and elite circles of women’s social clubs, provided a common language for women in Memphis to initiate progressive discourse and establish themselves as competent, professional administrators and organizers. Common interest in social arts like poetry reading and music among the majority of women’s club members across Memphis and the Mid-South provided for

⁴⁶ Dilettante Club minutes 1920s, Box 2 Folder 5-8, Dilettante Club Collection, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, Tennessee.

inter-club events and gatherings, such as musicales or study circles, that promoted the sharing of ideas among women and mobilization among women's club members and women throughout the Mid-South to promote arts in their communities, visibility of women in social and professional circles, and women's autonomy.

The Women's Society Building in downtown Memphis housed much of this collaborative activity, and was an independent space in which the Beethoven Club, The Dilettante Club, and other Memphis women's arts clubs occasionally held meetings or events. Memphis Business directories from 1890 and 1910 list the Woman's Society Building as a location for clubs and as a site of women's publications—for instance, *The Southern Musical Journal* vol. 3, published in 1931 in Memphis's "Woman's Building."⁴⁷ The journal contains a myriad of ads and features few articles, likely because this was a monthly publication, and most of the articles gave brief reviews of music events in the area. One such article advertises for a "delightful musical program" that "will include numbers by Miss Martin, by Mildred Mitchell Eileen, Beethoven String Quartete, which includes Sarah Elizabeth Gemmill, Margaret Duncan, Hope Brewster, and Harlan Myrick."⁴⁸

While little is known about this publication, and even less is known about the social activity of the women involved in the concert, *The Southern Musical Journal's* potential to reach women and to involve women in some form of scholarly review communicated the commitment of those involved with the Woman's Society Building to support women's aspirations for education and professionalism. Rather than publish a column in the society pages, organizers in

⁴⁷ Periodical, *Southern Musical Journal* vol. 3 1931, Beethoven Club archives, Beethoven Club, Memphis, Tennessee.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

the Woman's Society Building chose to produce their own independent publication that showcased the influence of the southern New Women in Memphis. The scholarly, official title of the publication, *The Southern Musical Journal*, also gave evidence of the intellectual legitimacy of the education received from southern women's clubs and the musical knowledge and prowess of those involved in women's organizations, particularly music organizations like the Beethoven Club.

The Beethoven Club's possession of the *Southern Musical Journal* is a testament to the commitment of its members to reach and interact with a broader community of women and men interested in the arts. The Beethoven Club not only (presumably) subscribed to periodicals like the *Southern Musical Journal*, but also appeared in a number of major, nationally-recognized music periodicals like the *Musical Courier*, *The Musical Monitor*, and *Musical News*. The organization's outreach also was extended to young women, in whom they wished to instill an appreciation for classical music and, more significantly, an understanding of club women's importance and visibility in Memphis. Soon after its founding, the Beethoven Club began hosting a number of student competitions and young artist concerts at their club meetings, which provided the club members with a means of fostering a love of and talent for art music in Memphis's youth, particularly young females and potential future members. Interactions between some of Memphis largest female arts clubs fostered a longstanding cooperative relationship between women's organizations in the Mid-South, and instigated some of the most compelling, and progressive efforts to vitalize within Memphis a community dedicated to nurturing the art of music.

The Beethoven Club in particular was successful at developing and maintaining a network of women's music clubs and inter-club musical gatherings in the Memphis area and the

Mid-South. The club held a number of musicales with the Nineteenth Century Club and with clubs in smaller cities in close proximity to Memphis, among others, in the 1920s and 1930s, consisting mostly of light piano pieces, duets, and four-hand duets; and many clubs reciprocated by extending similar invitations to the Beethoven Club.⁴⁹ A plethora of newspaper clippings from the Beethoven Club archives—“The Nineteenth Century Club Presents a Twelve Piano Ensemble directed by Mrs. Hal Holt Peel”⁵⁰ and “Humboldt Hears Musicians’ Group: Student Musicians Group of the Beethoven Club presented a program for the Humboldt, Humboldt, Tennessee” for example—attest to the diverse and extensive networks built by the Beethoven Club to advocate for the propagation of art music and women’s involvement in art music.

The club’s connections even extended beyond the Mid-South region, in their efforts to found the Tennessee Federation of Music Clubs and to proliferate literature about the art music performances in the South. Despite the sparseness of the Beethoven Club’s archives, it is clear that the Beethoven Club helped “organize” the Tennessee Federation of Music Clubs and “provided the organization with its first two presidents.”⁵¹ More significantly, the Beethoven Club formed meaningful and important connections with nationally-recognized music clubs by supporting both the Tennessee and National Federation of Music Clubs with the sponsoring the first Junior Club in the country in 1903.⁵² The Beethoven Club’s ability to market itself as an

⁴⁹ The oldest newspaper clippings found in the Beethoven Club archive are from this date. While the Beethoven Club is mentioned in earlier business directories and occasionally in the *Commercial Appeal*, there is not much information about the concerts given prior to 1920.

⁵⁰ Newspaper article, n.d. “The Nineteenth Century Club Presents a Twelve Piano Ensemble directed by Mrs. Hal Holt Peel,” (*Commercial Appeal*) Beethoven Club archives, Memphis, Tennessee.

⁵¹ Barbara Mashburn, “History,” *Beethoven Club*, 2008.

<http://www.beethovenclubmemphis.org/history.html>.

⁵² “Important Events in the History of the Federation,” *National Federation of Music Clubs*, http://www.nfmc-music.org/clientuploads/directory/publications/Administrative_Division/AD-9-1.pdf.

influential club by connecting with regional and national organizations and to maximize its community value by involving young adults in its proceedings legitimized the operation while it was still in its infancy. While “the woman question” was being debated and club women were characterized as bored, idle, and silly creatures looking for frivolous fun outside of the house, the Beethoven Club defined itself as a legitimate, powerful club full of capable, intellectual, and progressive women.

Memphis women’s clubs like the Nineteenth Century Club, the Beethoven Club, organized an extensive and close network of progressive and professional women. While these clubs were careful not to defy accepted conventions of southern culture, they did push the boundaries of respectability for Memphis women, and projected an image of feminine competence and professionalism. Collaboration among regional and national arts organizations, the marketing of club events, and the publication of scholarly works concerning the arts allowed for women to establish themselves as capable, contributing, and legitimate members of elite and professional society. Women’s thorough education in the arts and the social nature of music allowed women to navigate stringent community standards and conventions to initiate calls for social change and women’s rights without severely disturbing the rich traditions of the most affluent and influential circles of Memphis society. And while these clubs promoted collective change and activism—and housed active members like the Nineteenth Century Club’s Sara Beaumont Kennedy—progressive programs and community issues were often introduced to the clubs by their more prominent, activist members. As women’s clubs became more established in Memphis, they quickly espoused and supported the causes of their members with financial support and the provision of volunteers. While outspoken activists like composer Julia Raine and author Sara Beaumont Kennedy were indeed affiliated with Memphis clubs, their club affiliation

seems to have been derived from their personal penchants for professional occupations, political freedoms, and social independence.

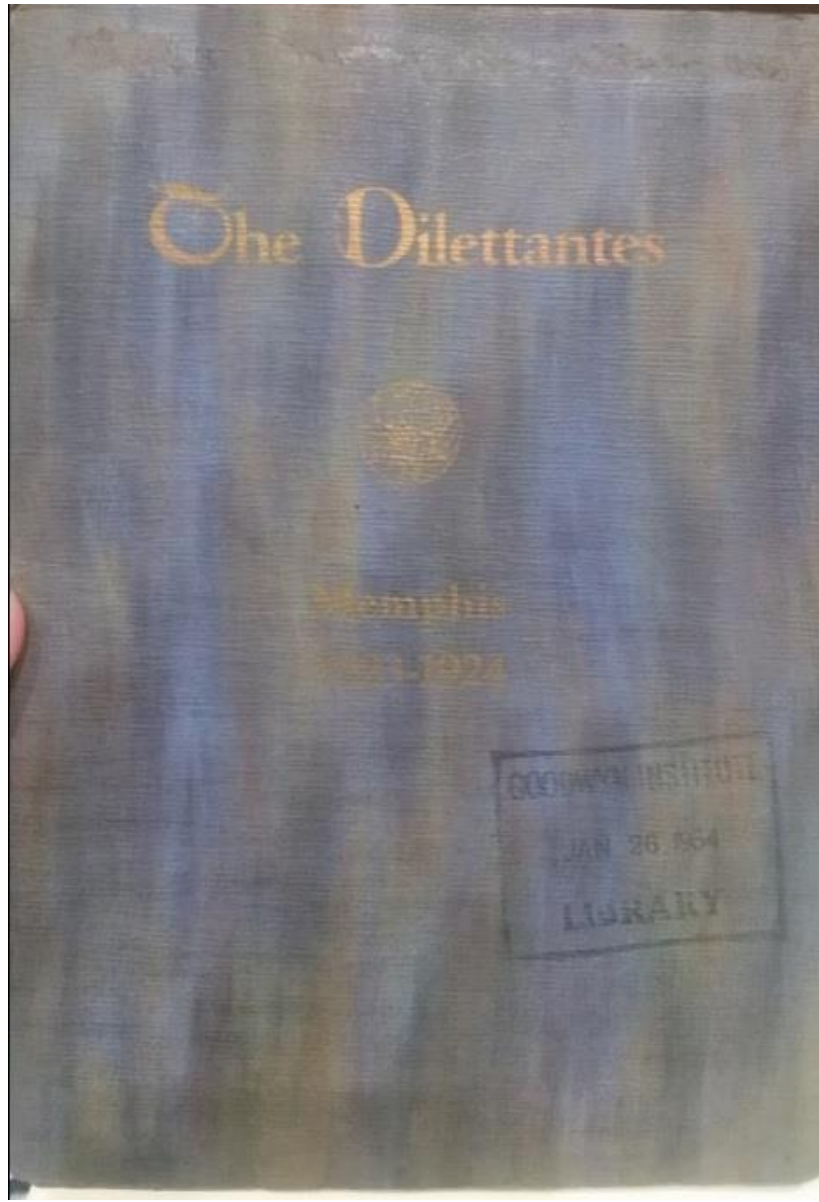


Figure 9
Dilettante Club Program 1923-1924
Dilettante Club Collection

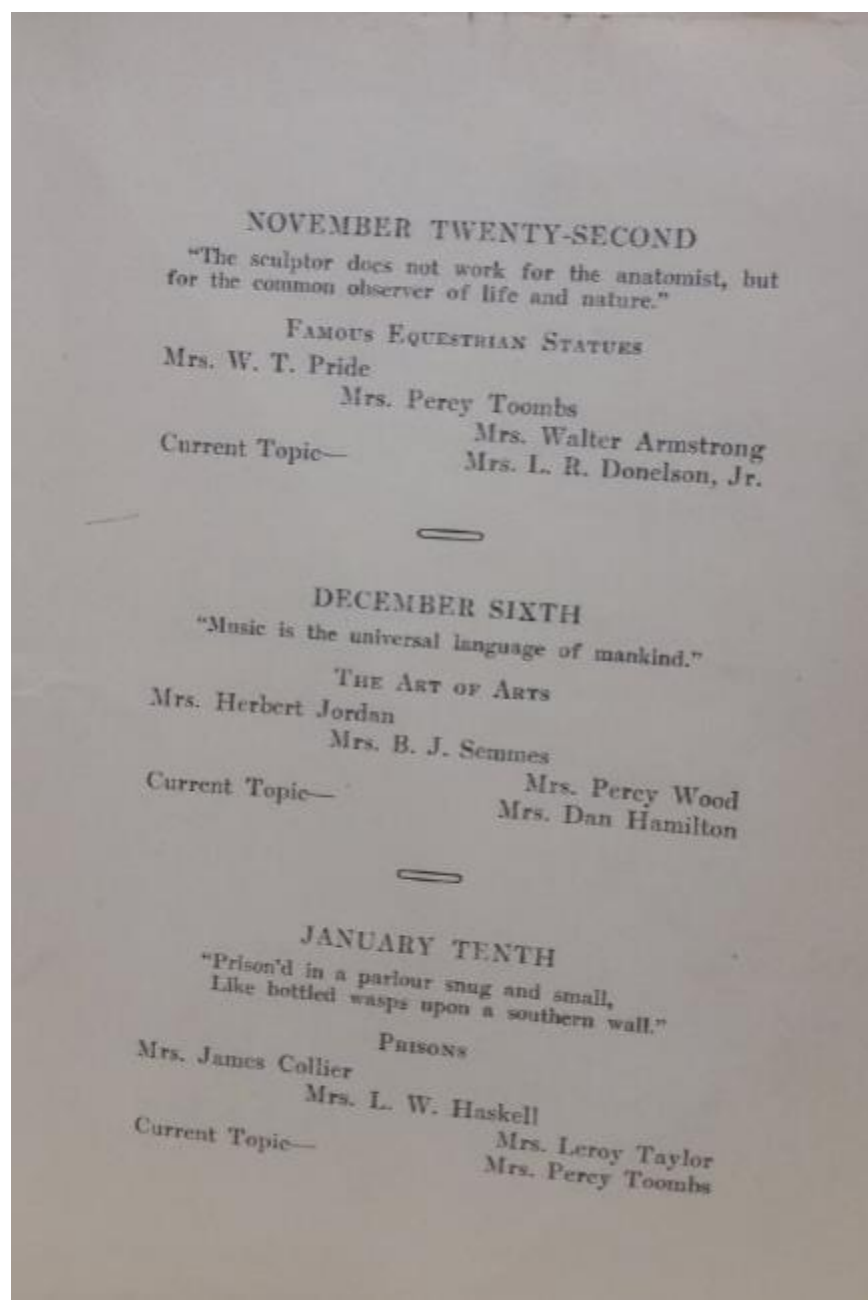


Figure 10

Dilettante Club Program 1923-1924, excerpt

Dilettante Club Collection

**Julia Raine, Sara Beaumont Kennedy and the Musical Protest of the Memphis New
Woman**

While Memphis high society often stood in opposition to women's professional, political, and social autonomy, women's clubs—in their efforts to stimulate community music and art, implement religious education and literacy in Memphis with the establishment of organizations such as Clara Conway's Women's Christian Association, and educate young Memphis women in their support of members' private girls schools like Highbee School—espoused what Marsha Wedell has described as a “reform impulse.”⁵³ From 1875 to the late 1920s, women began to redefine their roles in Memphis society and recast their personas within social and political spheres of influence. And while women's clubs in Memphis acted as the epicenter from which Southern New Womanhood and progressive ideals concerning women's social and political rights radiated, efforts organized within or with the support of women's organizations often began as individual interest.

Clara Conway, a founding member of Memphis's Nineteenth Century Club, for instance called for financial and community support for an address to be given in Memphis by Henry George on the “Sphere of Women in Politics and the Issues She Takes in Social Problems” and for the convention of the Association for the advancement of women to take place in Memphis in 1892.⁵⁴ Women's clubs sponsored and promoted dozens of campaigns for community support of city beautification, women's education, women's suffrage, and civic engagement in the arts, but ultimately these efforts were spearheaded and championed by members themselves. The grassroots campaigns of Memphis club women thus illustrate both how women's clubs sought

⁵³ Marsha Wedell, *Elite Women and the Reform Impulse in Memphis*, 16-21.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 18-19.

and exploited opportunities to participate increasingly in Memphis's civic life by espousing the causes of their members and how club members and administrators navigated and promoted their own social and political movements within the various women's organizations of Memphis. This approach works particularly well when examining the activist and progressive expression in women's music, as music is a subjective experience and expression, defined by place, time, style, performer, and most notably, composer. Musicales, concerts, and other musical collectives put on by women's organizations certainly generated membership for clubs, stimulated public interest in women's organizations, brought elite and influential women in the same space, and promoted interclub cooperation and communication, but members' solo musical composition and performance provide insight into how the values and principles of women's organizations were manifested in individual creative endeavors and how such endeavors were presented and received in club meetings and in the Mid-South region.

The intersection of clubs' activism and women's musical language is most evident in the compositions and poetry of Memphis composer, Julia Raine (1857-1937), and the poetry of Sara Beaumont Kennedy (1859-1920): novelist, poet, and the "“only woman paragrapher (newspaper contributor)”" at a major newspaper in the South.⁵⁵ While these women inhabited different circles in Memphis society and followed entirely different trajectories personally and professionally. Raine was married twice and lived in several cities while Kennedy was married to an editor of Memphis's *Commercial Appeal* and remained in Memphis, but both women embraced musical language as a method of subversive critique of southern tradition, self-actualization, and a projection of female empowerment. Raine, a Memphis composer, pianist,

⁵⁵ Barbara D. Flanary, Finding Aid to The Sara Beaumont Kennedy Literacy Collection with Papers from Walter Kennedy, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

organist used her music and her poetry to promote her skill as a professional and to mobilize Memphis club women against antiquated Tennessee law.⁵⁶ Kennedy similarly used poetry to advocate for suffrage and women's rights in Memphis periodicals as well as promote women's education and women's literacy as an active member of the Nineteenth Century Club.⁵⁷ Musical language of artistic activists like Kennedy and Raine legitimized and mitigated the progressive—and what might even be considered radical—ideals embedded in women's poetry and song, and provided a means for activist rhetoric to be distributed within the Memphis community without disturbing social order and convention.

I use “musical language” here broadly, as a term encompassing both the traditional elements shared by musical and poetic composition—harmony, meter, melody, tempo, rhythm, and rhetorical gesture. Though I risk diluting the power of musical expression and the importance of music in its ability to mobilize women's efforts by including poetry in my examination of activist musical communication, my reasons for broadening my definition of music in this study are twofold: music and poetry often shared similar sources and performance spaces and, as in the case of some of Sara Beaumont Kennedy's work, women's poetry was commonly intended for or set to well-known music. Julia Raine, the most prolific and notable of a handful of women who composed in Memphis in the twentieth century, often wrote poetry to accompany her music and read her poetry aloud in performance to condemn patriarchal and antiquated Tennessee law at the Memphis Press and authors' Club in 1910. As evidenced by the

⁵⁶ Craig Moore, “Biographical Sketch,” *The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music 1856-1937*. Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁵⁷ Barbara D. Flanary, “Biographical Sketch,” *Finding Aid to The Sara Beaumont Kennedy Literacy Collection with Papers from Walter Kennedy*, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

Highbee School's commencement program—which showcased the skill of the school's students in performance and education in the arts—addresses by class leaders were followed by musical performances and poetry recitations, and the piano and vocal preludes performed before Beethoven Club meetings at the Goodwyn Institute, demonstrating a precedent of affiliation between music and poetry as performative arts, markers of female accomplishment, and means of appropriate public feminine expression.

There is also a longstanding precedent for the interaction and intersection between music and poetry in southern culture among marginalized groups like women and African Americans, who used performative arts to criticize and trivialize dominant southern culture and express self-empowerment.⁵⁸ Twentieth-century poetry of such underrepresented groups, as Mencken argues, diametrically opposes the patriarchal and even racist canonized poetry of Penn Warren, Dickey, and Tate and challenges the narrow standards that have characterized the canon of southern poetry. James Weldon Johnson, Margaret Walker, George Pope Morris, and other lesser-known poets produced work that challenged southern social organization and advocated for underrepresented groups with their poems like “Southern Song,” “King Cotton,” and “Lift Every Voice and Sing” among others. The prevalence of musical theme within such poems—some of the best of which are collected meticulously and expertly in Rigsbee and Brown's anthology, *Invited Guest: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Southern Poetry*—is unmistakable, and in some cases, these poems were set to music and fashioned as anthems of oppressed southern groups.⁵⁹ Most notably, Johnson's “Lift Every Voice and Sing” was set to music by his brother, John Rosamund Johnson, adopted as the official song of the NAACP, and eventually

⁵⁸ *Invited Guest: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Southern Poetry*, ed. David Rigsbee and Steven Ford Brown (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2001).

⁵⁹ *Ibid*

characterized as the “Black National Anthem.”⁶⁰ Inclusion of subversive poetic language into music and musical language into subversive poetry thus establishes a precedent for a musical language of activism that marginalized groups embraced as a way to abide by the “veiled language of southern culture” while challenging the carefully-delineated social infrastructure of the American South.⁶¹

In Memphis, musical language manifested most frequently in women’s poetry, which addressed topical political and social events in Memphis while employing clean, delicate, and highly-structured verse. This politically-aware poetry came into vogue in the late nineteenth century, fueled by fear of empowered African Americans entering local government and respected professions—for instance the first black millionaire in Memphis, Robert Church. This fear sparked extreme fervor for the “Lost Cause” of the South and incited white Memphians’ call for the erection and maintenance of Confederate monuments and the memorialization of Memphis natives’ Confederate heritage.⁶² By 1905, a massive bronze statue of a mounted Nathan Bedford Forrest, Confederate general and first Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, stood atop his marble grave in the middle of Forrest Park, which had been dedicated to his monumental legacy as a Confederate general and a prominent Memphis slave trader and businessman. Several other Confederate-themed monuments and city spaces such as Confederate Park and Jefferson Davis Park—all designed by George Kessler—were soon after established within Memphis’s city limits and tangibly recognizing heroes of the Confederacy, who still lingered prominently in public memory and in southern identity. White southerners’ desire to immortalize

⁶⁰ “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” *Black Culture Connection*, <http://www.pbs.org/black-culture/explore/black-authors-spoken-word-poetry/lift-every-voice-and-sing/>.

⁶¹ Candace Bailey, *Music and the Southern Belle*, 16.

⁶² Court Carney, “The Contested Image of Nathan Bedford Forrest,” *The Journal of Southern History*, 67, no. 3 (2001), 603-604.

and abide by Confederate leaders and heritage spurred many women and some men to develop a Confederate folklore of sorts in poetry that was often published in popular Memphis periodicals such as the *Commercial Appeal*.

Writers of Confederate poetry in the *Commercial Appeal* seemed to have been fairly affluent and were included in elite social circles within the Memphis community. Dozens of newspaper clippings containing mostly poetry and excerpts from the society pages are found in the scrapbooks of Memphis's most prominent family, the Trezevants. Newspaper poems from the nineteenth and early twentieth century, written by Harry S. Trezevant and Mayre Trezevant, Trezevant family friends, and other, more anonymous authors are glued to the thick pages of the scrapbooks; drafts of poems by Suzanne Trezevant and sketches of Confederate soldiers, horses, knights, and flowers decorate the pages.⁶³ Many of these poems, naturally, are pastoral and innocuous, announcing the coming of spring or the beauty of "The Rain."⁶⁴ Many others however, espouse Memphians' Confederate cause and ideals of a "New South" that is empowered by its heritage, a strong economy, and social sophistication; these long, rhyming, and often strictly-structured poems aim to commemorate or generate excitement about contemporaneous celebrations of Confederate victories or tragedies in the Memphis area. A "Dr. A.M. West," for instance, published a poem in the *Commerical Appeal* in 1886 called "A Confederate Button," which described a ceremony carried out at Elmwood Cemetery that

⁶³ Sketches in pages of Trezevant family scrapbook, box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁶⁴ Poem, Mary E. Pope, "The Rain" n.d., n.p., box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

commemorated the “boys who wore the gray...still occupying a warm place in the hearts of the people in this section.”⁶⁵

Similar to events such as Decoration Day, a day to honor Confederate soldiers in which young women would sing anthems and lay wreaths—the author of the article calls upon feminized imagery to characterize Dr. West’s memorial of fallen Confederate soldiers; his brief blurb describing the scene at Elmwood is titled “In Memoriam: The White Hands of Women Pay Tribute to the Dead Heroes Who Sleep their Last Sleep on a Sunny Hillside in Elmwood,” though West’s poem, which follows the brief description of the commemorative ceremony, does not gender the participants at Elmwood, merely referring to them as “we.”⁶⁶ These Confederate events were gendered as feminine, characterized as events sponsored and attended by females, and intent on juxtaposing the harsh realities of war with pristine and gentle femininity. And while the observation that organizations of women like the United Daughters of the Confederacy certainly sponsored and attended a large proportion of Confederate memorials in the city, in much of the poetry and even in some of the prose concerning the “Lost Cause” of the South, there appears an obsession with female purity and southern domestic society.

Dr. A.M. West, in his verses, poignantly and almost saccharinely delineates the “woe in southern homes” and “Rachels on bended knees,” recalling this preoccupation in Memphis poetry and prose with the disruption of domesticity and a violation of feminine innocence during the Civil War and a return to normalcy in the southern home in the years following

⁶⁵ Poem, Dr. A.M. West, “A Confederate Button,” 1886, n.p., box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁶⁶ Poem and article, “In Memoriam: The White Hands of Women Pay Tribute to the Dead Heroes Who Sleep their Last Sleep on a Sunny Hillside in Elmwood,” n.d. n.p. box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

Reconstruction. Images of the delicate and pale Confederate housewife and southern female mourner suffuses the *Commercial Appeal*, appearing in articles such as “The Confederate Women: What They Did During the Times of the Terrible War” and poems such as “A Confederate Ditty,” which addressed returning Confederate soldiers and encouraged them to “kiss all the southern ladies.” This predilection for describing the fracturing of southern domestic life and the subtle bravery and quiet toleration of war among women, however, seem to have been explored most frequently and thoroughly in poems produced by women.

Women’s Confederate poems were often told from the female perspective or described female heroes in acts of defiance of the North or maintaining the southern home. And while these poems often characterized women in the south as domestic, innocent, and delicate we see in many women’s poems the inherent strength of Confederate housewives’ tolerance of the Civil War, insubordination against the Union, and preservation of the southern household. Many women chose to exploit imagery of the silent and resigned Confederate housewife who lived in turmoil not only to emphasize women’s strength, but also to subtly chip away at social expectations of women in Memphis. Most commonly, women created vignettes in their Confederate poetry, espousing light activism either by calling for action to commemorate Confederate history or by describing women’s acts of defiance in the Confederate South. Mrs. C. A. Warfield of Kentucky achieved the former in her poem, “A Pledge to Lee,” which was published with a group of poems to honor Jefferson Davis’s death in 1889. With simple, forceful language Warfield presents an intense oath and thus an empowered call to action to remember the history of the South and General Lee’s perceived commitment to the South. And while her poetry is not as feminine-centric and well-crafted. A proto-feminist poem, as some other women’s verse published at the time, Warfield’s work nevertheless adopts an unapologetic and

unusually direct tone often missing in women's poems: "Hand to hand—knee to knee / With a wild three times three / We pledge thee, Lee!"⁶⁷

Though less unwavering and frank than Warfield, many southern female poets not only supported popular southern causes, but almost subliminally argued for feminine liberation and female empowerment. "The Apron Flag" by Virginia Frazier Boyle, for instance, captures an incident when a young girl of fourteen fastened a Confederate flag around her dress like an apron as defeated Confederate soldiers marched through her town. Boyle characterizes the girl as a source of strength and an empowering force throughout her stanzas, as she incites a resurgence of Confederate pride among southern soldiers: "and the strong men dashed their tear drops / that would come, and cheered once more/ For the maid who dared to wear it / and the apron that she wore."⁶⁸ The apron itself, an image of the southern home and southern domestic expectation, is transformed into a symbol of hardy resilience just as the girl who wears it becomes a strong Confederate advocate: "it is just a little apron / And its simple tale is told / There're battle marks upon its belt / And blood stains in its fold!"⁶⁹

While it is arguable whether this language is progressive on the whole and in line with Southern New Women's agenda, this kind of poetic language set a precedent for direct, subversive, and activist feminine musical language that took up the mantle of women's rights and women's autonomy in the South. A poem by Ella Wheeler Wilcox from her collection

⁶⁷ Newspaper article, Mrs. C. A. Warfield, "A Pledge to Lee" n.d., n.p., box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁶⁸ Poem, Virginia Frazier Boyle, "The Apron Flag," Trezevant Scapbooks, No pub, nd. Probably *Commercial Appeal* 1889 based on the surrounding articles, box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

America, “It Ever Has Been,” (Memphis ca. 1895) found in the Trezevant Family scrapbook and published in the *Commercial Appeal* encapsulates societal double standards that allow men to express their anguish while women are forced to remain silent. In the poem’s third stanza, Wilcox dismantles and discredits southern expectations in careful, strict rhyme and meter: “Whatever a man may think or feel / He can tell the world and he feels aright / But it bids the woman conceal, conceal / And woe for the thoughts that at last ignite.”⁷⁰ Wilcox’s activism in her poetry, though fairly restrained, did entangle her in a newspaper feud with Miss Highbee, the head of Highbee School for Young Ladies in Memphis, who suggested that Wilcox denigrated the south in her poem, “The South,” which described its subject as a “Queen of indolence...indifferent to the world’s swift race.”⁷¹ Highbee accused Wilcox of “maligning” the South, and called for her students to disavow Wilcox’s perception of the South, her accusations leveled against the former Confederate States, and her critical language and tone.⁷² Southern ladies, Highbee insinuated, did not speak as Wilcox had in her poetry.

Sara Beaumont Kennedy and Julia Raine certainly emulate Wilcox’s criticisms of the South’s expectations of women, but apply their criticisms more directly to issues plaguing

⁷⁰ Poem, Emma Wheeler Wilcox, “It Has Ever Been,” from *America*, Poem, Virginia Frazier Boyle, “The Apron Flag,” n.d., n.p., though probably *Commercial Appeal* 1889 based on the surrounding articles, box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁷¹Newspaper article, “Highbee’s response to Wilcox,” n.d., n.p., though probably *Commercial Appeal* 1889 based on the surrounding articles, box III, Scrapbook 1, Trezevant Family Papers, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁷² *Ibid.*

THE APRON FLAG.

It is just a little apron,
That a tiny maiden might wear,
When childhood dimpled on her cheek,
And sunlight kissed her hair.

Just a quaint old-fashioned trifle,
Bleat with stripes of White and Red,
Wrought tenderly with careful hands,
And earnest, bended head.

But the dust of years sleeps on it,
It is faded, rent and old,
There're battle marks upon its belt,
And blood stains in its fold;

Yet a dainty maiden wore it,
As she watched way up the hill,
Standing in the ancient doorway,
Of the busy old stonemill.

And she saw the soldiers coming,
Dispirited and slow,
A sad, retreating army,
In the country of the foe.

Then a shout that woke the woodland,
Stirred her heart and filled her ear,
Down the line it flashed and echoed,
And re-echoed, cheer on cheer.

Figure 11

“The Apron Flag” by Boyle
Trezevant Scrapbook

And the strong men dashed the tear drops
That would come, and cheered once more
For the maid who dared to wear it,
And the apron that she wore!

It had thrilled the listless legion,
And from heart to heart it swept,
Striking deep the languid pulses,
Where their truth and valor slept.

And they paused, these men of battle,
Paused with grave, uncovered head,
Just to beg a piece, a token,
Of the apron, White and Red.

Then the blue eyes drooped their fringes,
On the modest blushing face,
Then the proud breast swelled with ardor,
As she tore it from its place;

As they fixed it to the flag-staff,
Bound it firmly for the strife,
And the noble youth who bore it,
Pledged his valor with his life.

Far away across the morning,
Through the vale and down the hill,
And the flashing wheel had vanished,
With the Blossom of the mill.

On and on! where raged the battle!
On! where hearts must needs be true—
Where the scythe of Death was heaping
High, the mounds of gray and blue!

On and on! with steady marching—
On and on! they could not lag—
For in front the gallant Watkins,
Bravely bore the apron flag.

And above the black smoke, trailing,
Like a star, it beckoned on—
Then the little apron fluttered,
Then the beacon light was gone.

They lifted him so softly—
Smoothed the clustered curls apart—
Found the tiny battle apron,
Closely pillowed on his heart;

And they bent to catch the whisper,
Through the storm of din and strife—
“Take my pledge, 'tis not dishonored;
I have kept it with my life!”

It is just a little apron,
And its simple tale is told—
There're battle marks upon its belt,
And blood stains in its fold!

May 7, 1887. VIRGINIA FRAZER BOYLE.
The incident upon which the poem is

Figure 12

“The Apron Flag” continued



Figure 13

Julia Raine (née Woodward) on her marriage certificate
on the inside cover of "In Nineteen-Ten"

The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music



Figure 14

Portrait of Sara Beaumont Kennedy

The Sara Beaumont Kennedy Literacy Collection

Memphis and employ poetry and music to establish organized dissent of women's lack of personal freedom within Memphis's fairly strict Victorian expectations for its women. Kennedy and Raine's poetry emulates the grace and the delicacy expected of boarding school-educated, plantation-owning society women, largely glossing its undercutting tone with light wit, refined language, and what Bailey refers to as the "veiled language of southern culture."⁷³ The art of the Memphis woman, though thought-provoking, often took simple structures, chose accessible language, and was, like the poetry and music of antebellum society girls, "not difficult or beautiful."⁷⁴ This genre of non-offensive, yet subversive, poetry established a new application of rhetoric and provided a voice for women's rights in Memphis that proved popular and effective.

Kennedy, whose husband was on the editorial staff of Memphis's *Commercial Appeal*, wrote extensively on southern life and politics, penning prose about "Mr. Loeb as Candidate" and "Mr. Taft's Record with Congress." She wrote in verse, however, when she advocated for women's rights, specifically suffrage, in popular periodicals like the *Commercial Appeal*. Kennedy's poems, though many channel an incisive earnestness, employ a clever, witty, tongue-in-cheek language to moderate the severity of her accusations and to preserve her reputation as a wealthy and respected society woman in Memphis. "A Woman's Ballot," for instance, which was published in an unknown periodical in the early 1900s, employs the rhetoric of those in opposition to women's suffrage, sarcastically borrowing from their propaganda that claimed women were frail, emotional, and inconsequential voters because they would not be able to choose among acquaintances or vote as their husbands did. While maintaining a simple and

⁷³ Candace Bailey, *Music and the Southern Belle*, 16.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

traditionally-structured verse that incorporates a largely ABAB rhyme scheme and a metrical scheme that alternates four and three Iambs, Kennedy trivializes the dissent of women's suffrage:

“She can't? Why not? They are her friends,
 How can she pick and choose?
 And then she'd promise every one,
 Pray, how could she refuse?
 She could not 'scratch' a single one,
 'Twould be indelicate;
 She'll vote just like her husband does,
 And that, he said was 'straight.'
 And 'straight for her is down the line
 With ne'er a party pause,
 With a violet scented ballot,
 And a woman's 'just because;'
 She pats the ribbon with a smile
 (Which sends your heart to bat)
 And says her 'ballot's ready,'—and
 Let it go at that!”⁷⁵

The simple structure and the ease of the language thinly disguises what might be considered a vehement condemnation of male rhetoric that ascribes to the variation of the cult of true womanhood that flourished in the South, which particularly encouraged sexual purity, feminine delicacy, and the “notion of women courting publicity” or operating in professional circles was ostentatious and thus improper.

Stripped of their rhyme and meter, Kennedy's works reveal the absurdity of anti-suffrage rhetoric and traditional conceptions of womanhood. With hyperbole and satirical language, she parodies the plight of the Memphis society woman, who “cannot choose” between “her friends”—connections more than likely forged because of her husband's position—and is emotionally overwhelmed with the freedom of choice and the fear of seeming “indelicate.” At

⁷⁵ Poem, Sara Beaumont Kennedy, “A Woman's Ballot,” (Memphis, nd.), Box 1, The Sara Beaumont Kennedy Literacy Collection with Papers from Walter Kennedy, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

the forefront of her verse is a harsh condemnation of the anti-suffrage rhetoric that emphasizes women's reliance on men. The female voter, overwhelmed with guilt and fear of offending a connection, will "vote just like her husband does," and thus produce no net change in an already-functioning political system.

Kennedy produced and published many additional poems that betrayed her progressive ideals, namely "Influence is Responsibility"—which was written for the Ninth Annual Announcement of the Nineteenth Century Club and an ode to the club's newly adopted mission statement⁷⁶—and "When Women Voted First"—which described the euphoric and frenetic responses of the first women voters, after the "long-drawn fight / Waged without shot or shell or brand / was theirs" left "hairpins and mute chewing gum" or "recipes and samples such a dole" with their "correctly marked" ballots.⁷⁷ Almost without exception these poems have similar text emphasis, rhyme scheme, and meter, and they employ light, yet pointed sarcasm to deride traditional criticism of suffragist ideals. A caricature of anti-suffragist rhetoric and traditional southern womanhood, Kennedy's fictional voter is incessantly comic, often pathetic, and serves as an indictment of traditional conceptions of womanhood's infirmity and hysteria; Kennedy, as a female paragrapher and novelist, embodies these criticisms well, though her reputation as a prominent society woman is carefully guarded by delicate verse and wit.

Julia Raine similarly manipulated poetic language in her pamphlet, "In Nineteen-Ten: A Protest against Conditions in Tennessee" which she presented to the Memphis Press and authors'

⁷⁶ Sara Beaumont Kennedy, "Influence is Responsibility," (Memphis, nd.), Box 1, The Sara Beaumont Kennedy Literacy Collection with Papers from Walter Kennedy, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁷⁷ Sara Beaumont Kennedy, "When Women Voted First," (Memphis, nd.), Box 1, The Sara Beaumont Kennedy Literacy Collection with Papers from Walter Kennedy, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

Club in the fall of 1910. In anticipation of a discussion concerning state law's failure to punish men who abandoned their wives and children, Raine's work aimed to mobilize women's support to lobby for laws to incarcerate husbands who perpetrated abandonment. Her plea for change is deeply personal and her emotional investment in women's welfare is evident; she had long felt trapped in her first marriage to Gilbert Raine, from whom she had separated in 1909, moving out of Raine Mansion. Printed on the inside cover of Raine's pamphlet is a copy of her marriage license, a tangible reminder of her difficult and tumultuous marriage and her rejection of the taboos against divorce.⁷⁸ She opens her treatise with a Bible verse, followed by a poem, "In Nineteen-Ten," which was "written in response to the roll call of the Memphis Press and authors' Club" and called upon her "sisters" to aid her in her lobby of state legislature and protest "conditions so unsound" of abandoned wives.⁷⁹

Raine's poem is placed at the front of the pamphlet, strategically set to prime the audience to be accepting of her rather progressive proposal. Raine's choice to use poetry, however, seems to have been meant to please her audience rather than to protect her reputation. Though scarce details emerge from the archives regarding Raine's social and financial situation in Memphis, it is obvious that she possessed neither the affluence nor the connections Kennedy had. The inclusion of her marriage license in her pamphlet showed that she had less concern about maintaining a reputation that abided by strict southern convention. Factual evidence comprising Raine's involvement with the established Press and authors' Club, numerous published compositions, a song royalties contract, and census data place her within a

⁷⁸ Pamphlet, Julia Raine, "In Nineteen Ten: A Protest Against Conditions in Tennessee," (Memphis, 1910), Box 1, Folder C, The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music 1856-1937, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

comfortable, middle-class lifestyle, in which she actively pursued her professional and social ambitions in relative comfort. Though Raine was married to a wealthy man, her divorce in 1909 forced her into a smaller house in a middle-class neighborhood on Madison Avenue.⁸⁰ She published a few compositions in addition “In Nineteen Ten” in this house, though her work never reached the prestige of Kennedy’s editorials, poems, or novels.

Though Raine was a prolific composer and experienced poet who could have merely wanted to express herself in a familiar medium, it seems more likely that Raine uses musical language as a form of social currency, adding legitimacy to her rather harsh, unfeminine language among her peers at the Memphis Press and authors’ Club. Raine, an educated and determined southern New Woman, knew how to incite mobilization with fierce rhetoric while maintaining civility with elegant and simple poetry and forging credibility with the wealthy and influential women who were to be potential partners in her lobby of the state legislature. Anti-patriotic language that might be considered overly dogmatic if expressed in expressive prose is mitigated with light verse interestingly similar to Kennedy’s:

“‘The pen IS mightier than the sword.’
If each one wield it well;
And what the vic’try it may win,
The coming years must tell.

So, sisters, lay aside your wit,
And consecrate your lives,
To battle hard through ‘nineteen-ten’
For God, and homes, and wives.”⁸¹

⁸⁰ 1910 US Census on microfilm, Shelby County, Memphis, TN, dist. 136. pg. 17-21 and 45-48. Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁸¹ Pamphlet, Julia Raine, “In Nineteen Ten: A Protest Against Conditions in Tennessee,” (Memphis, 1910), Box 1 Folder C, The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music 1856-1937, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

Raine's ABAC rhyme scheme and alternating three and four Iambs and the alliterative quality of her language produce lulling, temperate sounds that could feasibly negate the vehemence of Raine's accusations and thus negate the indecency of Raine's activism. Not to mention, the religious imagery that suffuses Raine's stanza is not only reminiscent of traditional southern values, but also is referential to the Bible study that often contributed greatly to women's events and women's club activity in Memphis.⁸²

Raine follows her poem with an earnest letter "To the Public," which calls for the repeal of "antiquated laws" in Tennessee to "save helpless women and children from their merciless destroyers."⁸³ She follows with a report of "A Kansas Seed Thought," in which activists wrote to a Senator Travis to encourage his outspokenness against the abandonment of wives in his state. Raine also includes clippings from the *Memphis News-Scimitar* that address debates about the appropriate legal response to husbands' unruliness: "Would put a stop to Soul-Mating: State Senator Harte Introduces a Bill in the State Legislature Which, If Accepted, Will Settle the Popularity of Affinities in the State of New York" and "Would Shoot Wife Deserters: Cincinnati Women Stirred by 2,700 Cases in Three Months Appeal to Mr. Taft."⁸⁴ Raine presents an acerbic and impeaching case against antiquated and patriarchal law, and unabashedly addresses the public with less reserved, tactful language than Kennedy's. Raine's forcefulness in her speech is not due to her audience and her circumstances: she spoke to her likeminded, progressive "sisters" in the Memphis Press and authors' Club, and her status as a middle-class working composer and poet positioned her just outside of the elite and scrutinizing circles of

⁸² Marsha Wedell, *Elite Women and the Reform Impulse in Memphis*, 215.

⁸³ Pamphlet, Julia Raine, "In Nineteen Ten: A Protest Against Conditions in Tennessee," (Memphis, 1910), Box 1 Folder C, The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music 1856-1937, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

Sara Beaumont Kennedy. Raine in some ways had more freedom of language, so she chose poetry for a more compelling reason than maintaining her position as a proper southern woman.

Raine, it seems, used poetry both as a medium for rhetorical effect and to characterize her argument and as appropriately feminine, a form of social currency among women's groups. Poetry, as a genre that was cultivated and exploited by marginalized groups in the South, resonated with her audience as both an expected and familiar form of address in a women's club. Raine's choice to open "In Nineteen-Ten" with a poem lends a legitimacy to her presentation not only by moderating the fierceness of the content of the pamphlet, but conforms to women's tradition in Memphis, acting as an invocation to Raine's presentation and the following Memphis Press and authors' Club meeting. Raine's and Kennedy's careful tailoring of their language and precise verse, thus encourages the notion that subversive feminine rhetoric in Memphis found traction in specific "feminine" media and genres. Poetry had long been a key component of boarding school educations,⁸⁵ as well as a familiar medium for marginalized groups and dissenters in southern society, and thus musical language was an accepted model for what might be considered unseemly or even radical feminine expression.⁸⁶

Women's fluency in empowered poetic language in Memphis lent itself well to musical setting, and women across Memphis cultivated a tradition of songwriting. Juanita Butler and Bonita Crowe wrote many published compositions in Memphis during early twentieth century, though the purpose of such works is unknown. Julia Raine had the most established reputation for producing vocal music in Memphis, even non-composers like Sara Beaumont Kennedy offered their poems to be set to music. Kennedy's "One Wish" and "A-Gypsy into the Sun,"

⁸⁵ Candace Bailey, *Music and the Southern Belle*, 20.

⁸⁶ *Invited Guest: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Southern Poetry*, ed. David Rigsbee and Steven Ford Brown (Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2001).

published in a collection of Kennedy's poetry in 1915, were set to diatonic, melodic, homophonic music by A. Louis Scarmolin and published by Boosey & Co. in New York in 1916.⁸⁷ The musical settings of Kennedy's texts complement her themes of innocent love and contentment, though her words hardly incite activism or respond to societal injustice. Though Kennedy did not initially intend these poems for musical setting, these simple ternary songs, scored for voice and piano, are representative of southern women's music making. Rather than directly bearing activist perspectives in their music, female musicians and composers in Memphis used their musical skills as a foundation for professionalism and self-promotion. While "the woman question" was being debated and women were struggling to break into professional spheres across the United States, Memphis women chose to maintain an "old South" precedent: composing or performing semi-professionally, performing and producing music within certain respectable groups in the city of Memphis.

Julia Raine's music certainly represents the most cohesive and commercial collection of musical compositions by a Memphis woman around the turn of the century. Raine's works premiered at large social events in Memphis—the Convention of Lakes to the Gulf Deep Waterway—were published by major companies like Knickerbocker Studios, were transcribed for orchestra, and provided the composer with substantial royalties and eminence throughout the South.⁸⁸ Raine's compositions rarely, if ever, betray her activist proclivities outwardly, however, their presence throughout the Mid-South and their use in major political and social occasions

⁸⁷ Music, A. Louis Scarmolin, set to poetry by Sara Beaumont Kennedy, "One Wish" and "A-Gypsy in the Sun;" (Memphis, 1916), Box 1 The Sara Beaumont Kennedy Literacy Collection with Papers from Walter Kennedy, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁸⁸ Composition, Julia Raine, "A Peerless Rose" and "Song for the Convention of Lakes to the Gulf Deep Waterway," (Memphis 1895), Box 1 Folder D The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music 1856-1937.

suggests that Raine used her music to assert herself as a competent, professional musician and composer as opposed to the highly skilled amateur southern lady who conformed to antebellum convention.⁸⁹

Raine's "In Tennessee," Tennessee's Centennial Hymn, was published by the E. Witzmann & Co. in 1897 in Memphis in anticipation of centennial celebrations in Nashville. Though it is unclear how widely her composition was distributed throughout the state, the surviving number of copies could suggest that the hymn enjoyed a wide distribution. Raine authored the text and the music, penning an accessible, lyrical, strophic hymn with a brief coda quoting "My Country 'Tis of Thee." On initial inspection, "In Tennessee" seems a commonplace parlor song, a quaint and charming piece written by a southern lady. Raine's text in particular, though poetic and patriotic, is nonetheless reminiscent of glib, saccharine language of nineteenth-century American songs, describing romanticized, bucolic images of Tennessee's "mines of wealth," "proud mountains," and "fertile vales."⁹⁰ Surprisingly, Raine's text, though pleasant, exudes neither the force of conviction nor the powerful rhetorical quality of her "In Nineteen-Ten" and even conforms to traditions of amateurism, pastoralism in southern women's music.⁹¹

⁸⁹ Candace Bailey, *Music and the Southern Belle*, 13.

⁹⁰ Composition, Julia Raine, "In Tennessee," (Memphis 1897), Box 1 Folder FThe Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music 1856-1937, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁹¹ Candace Bailey, *Music and the Southern Belle*, 13-20.



Figure 15

Copy of Julia Raine's marriage license
on the inside cover of "In Nineteen-Ten"

The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music

see; In Ten-nes-see, then let us plan, To stand u-nit-ed,
 man to man, And sing in chor-us, all who can: May God bless Ten-nes-

rall.

rall.

The image shows a musical score for the verse of the song "In Tennessee." It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The first system includes the lyrics "see; In Ten-nes-see, then let us plan, To stand u-nit-ed,". The second system includes the lyrics "man to man, And sing in chor-us, all who can: May God bless Ten-nes-". There are two "rall." markings above the piano accompaniment in the second system.

Figure 16

"In Tennessee," verse

The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music

CHORUS in unison. "America- My Country 'tis of Thee!"
 God bless dear Ten-nes-see, This year of Ju-bi-lee, We pray to

The image shows the musical score for the chorus of the song "In Tennessee." It features a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is one sharp (F#). The lyrics are: "CHORUS in unison. 'America- My Country 'tis of Thee!' God bless dear Ten-nes-see, This year of Ju-bi-lee, We pray to".

Figure 17

"In Tennessee," Chorus

The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music

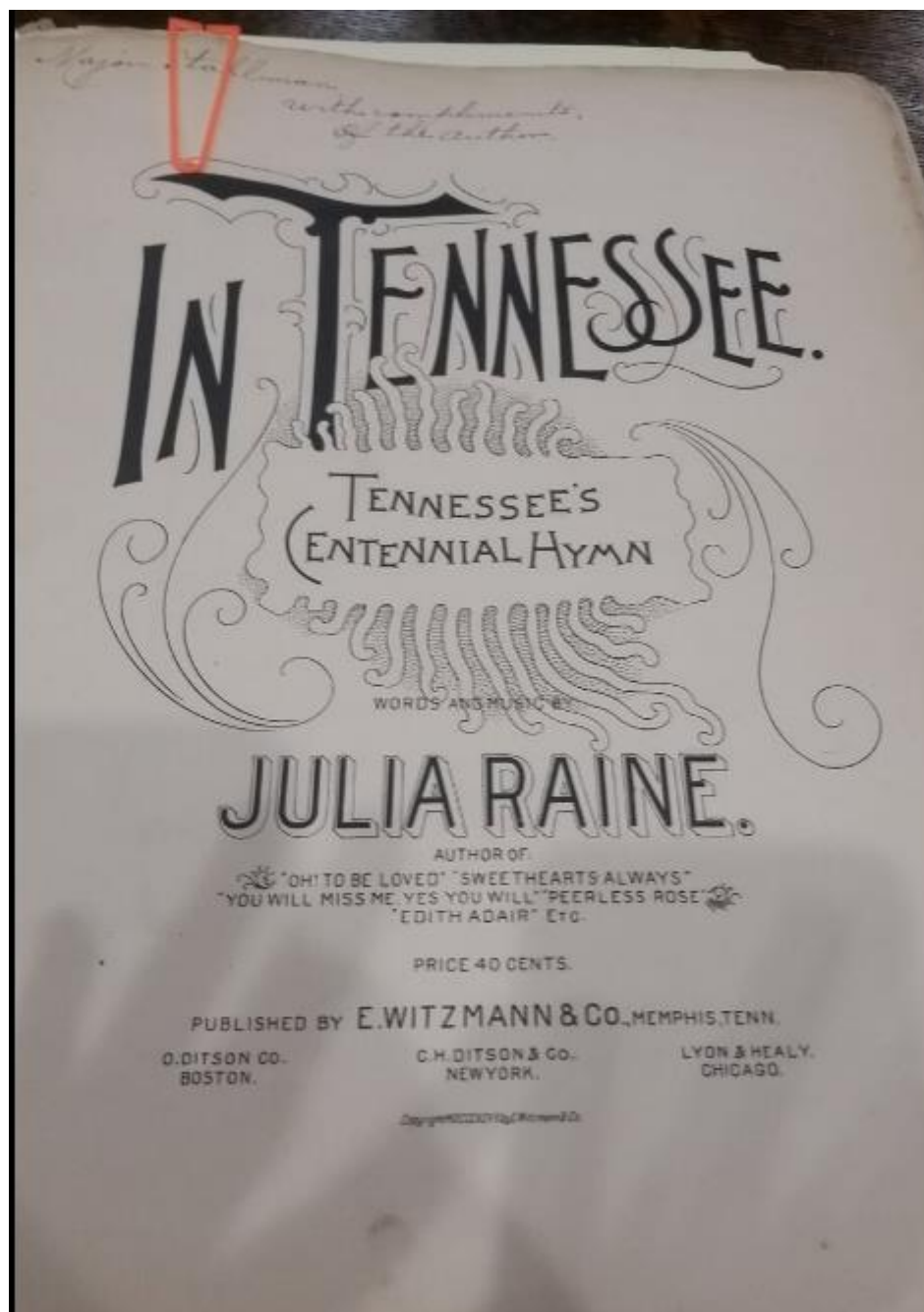


Figure 18

"In Tennessee," front cover

Copy signed by the composer for Major Stahlman

The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music

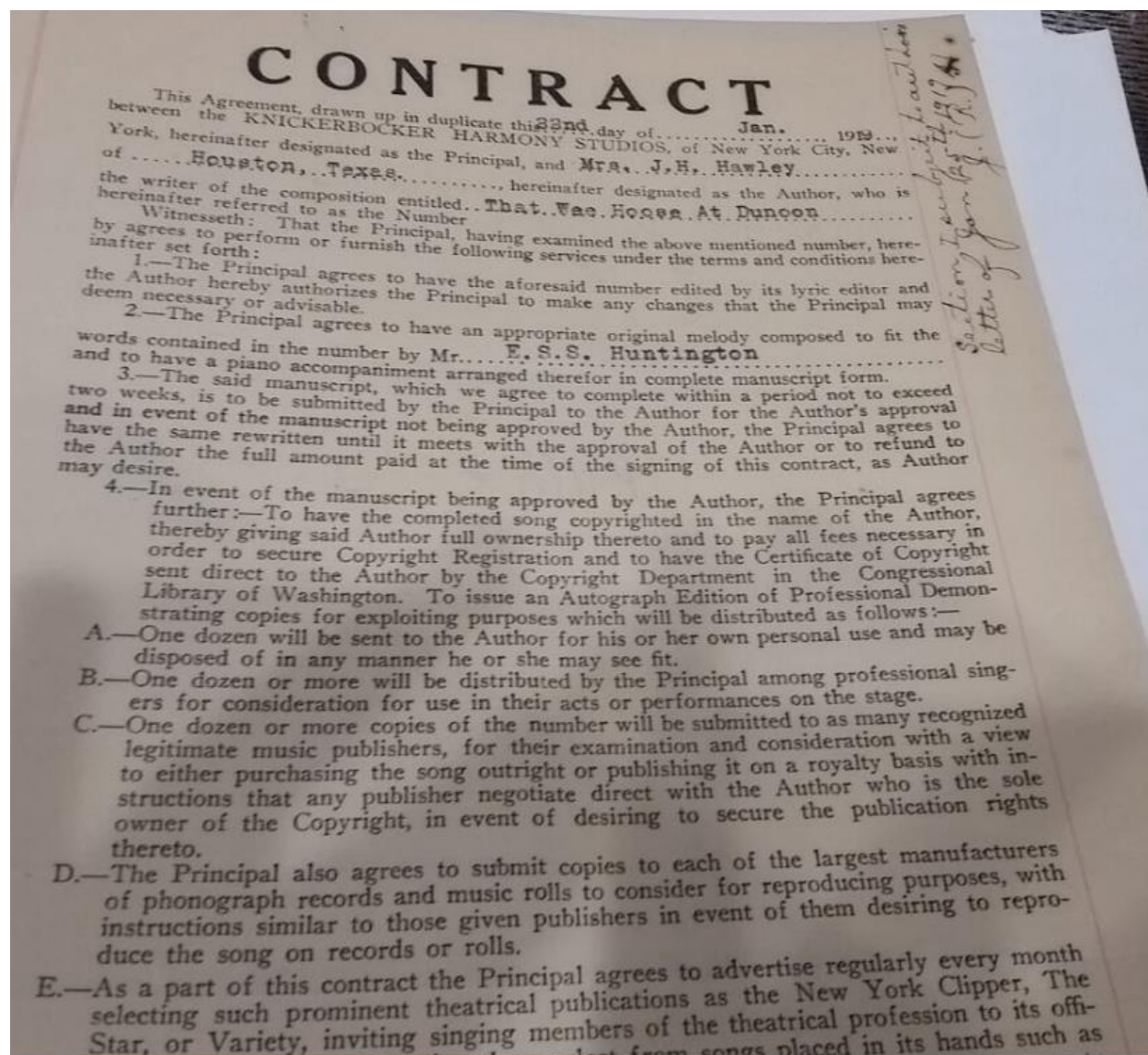


Figure 19

Contract between Julia Raine and Knickerbocker Studios

The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music

Raine's music, particularly her piano accompaniment, presents slightly more of a challenge to the performer and the listener than the text, though barely. Formally, her hymn is quite accessible, as it is written in typical song form—strophic with a brief and familiar coda. Raine's vocal line also is quite simple, as dotted eighth and sixteenth neighbor note figures are strung together with eighth notes and longer, cadential chord tones to complete the line. Range, language, and, text setting also present little challenge to the vocalist. "In Tennessee" never reaches above a D on the staff nor sinks below a D under the staff, and thus fits comfortably in the range of practically any performer. Raine's text setting is, however, quite good, as the lilt in her poem's title "In Tennessee," synchronizes perfectly with the neighbor note gestures that she sprinkles throughout the vocal line. The piano accompaniment, though homophonic and condensed in the left hand as well as the final coda, the "Chorus" is in some ways more virtuosic than a typical hymn accompaniment, as it requires consistent hand stretches, offers numerous passing tones to elaborate the melodic line, and very specific demands for articulation. Though far removed from the extravagance of Romantic piano accompaniment, Raine's somewhat demanding accompaniment and showcases her ability as a pianist. This accompaniment in many ways resembles the musical style of Foster and the American parlor song, and thus demonstrates Raine's education as a musician and study of composition. Her possession of the *Songwriters' Manual and Guide*—given to her by E.S.S. Huntington—and her regular correspondence with *Melody Magazine*, in which she evaluated various compositions also demonstrate her knowledge of compositional technique and her willingness to assert her expertise to male authorities.⁹² Her

⁹² Letter, E.S.S. Huntington, Managing Dir. Of Knickerbocker Harmony Studios, to Hawley (Raine) (Memphis 9/19/1918) The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music 1856-1937 Box 1 Folder A, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN. Et Letter, Julia Hawley to George L. Cobb (Memphis 1/2/1919) The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music 1856-1937 Box 1 Folder A, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

compositions are not necessarily unusual, but are studied, refined, and require a good deal of skill that perhaps not all amateur or semi-professional musicians possessed.

This kind of musical self-promotion—and even slight self-aggrandizement—appears in a large percentage of Raine’s works, as she consistently displayed competent and varied skills in writing for different instruments and in different styles. Raine’s 1895 piano sonatina, “A Peerless Rose,” for instance, borrows from Romantic short-form piano works and is in a hybridized binary and compact sonata form. “A Peerless Rose” also includes a simple, yet lyrical violin obbligato, which certainly distinguishes Raine’s work as sophisticated, tasteful, and among the ranks of the most skilled and well-known female composers of the time, for instance Carrie Jacob Bonds. By showcasing her knowledge of musical terminology, form, and instrumentation, Raine asserts herself as a competent and skilled musician, and displays a professionalism that might not be expected from a woman in twentieth-century Memphis. Her progressive attitude is subtly imbued into her music, but nevertheless acts as a form self-promotion and proto-feminist activism, and showcases her thorough education and professional skill. Thus, while Raine’s text—and even occasionally her music—sometimes seem trite or derivative, her uncanny ability to market her music in her scores and in the professional sphere of Memphis life suggest that music empowered her. Raine’s compositions afforded her the opportunity to participate in Memphis’s professional life.

Though it is unknown why Raine wrote her centennial hymn—whether she was asked or she simply thought to contribute to centennial events—she shrewdly inserted herself into centennial celebrations and used the opportunity to market her work. Among Raine’s personal papers are several copies of her centennial hymn, including a copy inscribed to “Major

Stahlman,” a prominent Nashville publisher and philanthropist, “with the compliments of the author.”⁹³ The nature of the connection between Raine and Stahlman has been lost, and might not ever be recovered, though it is fairly certain that Raine and Stahlman interacted during centennial events, and Stahlman encountered Raine’s hymn at those events. Regardless of the quality of the connection, however, Raine shrewdly placed a copy of her composition into the hands of one of the most influential men in Tennessee. Throughout her career, Raine’s music remained politically relevant as it was both distributed widely throughout Tennessee and produced for different occasions. In 1898, only one year after “In Tennessee” was published, Raine finished “The American Volunteer March,” which was “dedicated to the volunteer soldiers of Tennessee” and once again, a copy was mailed to a prominent Tennessee businessman “with compliments from the author.”⁹⁴

Music, thus, was a means of professionalism for an ambitious and progressive woman in a somewhat traditionalist Memphis society. Most of the women in Raine’s and Beaumont Kennedy’s neighborhoods as well and a majority of active and prominent women in social clubs (Suzanne Trezevant, Martha Trudeau, and Sara Beaumont Kennedy for instance) were married to important men and belonged to stately, wealthy families.⁹⁵ The Memphis business directories and census data of 1880 list only two single, full-time professional women from upper-class homes: one was a nurse and the other a lawyer. Several women advertised their services as part-time music teachers or piano teachers in the business directories, though none of these women,

⁹³ Candace Bailey, *Music and the Southern Belle*, 13-20.

⁹⁴ Composition, Julia Raine, “The American Volunteer March,” (Memphis 1897), Box 1 Folder I, The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music 1856-1937 Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁹⁵ 1880 US Census on microfilm, Shelby County, Memphis, TN, dist. 136. pg. 17-21, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

and not even Julia Raine, indicated any professional occupation other than “keeping house” on the 1880 or 1910 census.⁹⁶ Much like the elite women who sought leadership in women’s clubs as pseudo-employment, Raine to a certain extent seems to have shied from labeling herself as a professional musician. Her hesitance makes sense, as women who were professional musicians often toured with men, came from the lower classes, and in some cases were personal courtesans of male musicians with whom they associated. In addition to the indecent connotations of the title of professional musician, it could be surmised that Raine also avoided the title in order to preserve her integrity as a southern woman of relative means and status, as professional titles were often attributed to lower-class women who worked as household servants and laundresses. And while the majority of Raine’s time may not have been consumed with composing, she certainly conducted her business affairs independently and competently, as evidenced by her correspondence and her various contracts with publishers.

Raine’s 1920 contract and correspondence with Knickerbocker” Studios on the sale of her song, “That Wee House of Dunoon,” particularly illustrate Raine’s fluency in legal language and the capable management of her business affairs. Raine corresponded with the poet of “That Wee House of Dunoon” to receive the rights for setting the text to music,⁹⁷ wrote Knickerbocker Studios expressing interest in having the corporation critique and publish her work, and finalized a contract with the organization which gave her full control over the royalties of the sales of her sheet music:⁹⁸

⁹⁶ *Ibid.* Et 1910 US Census on microfilm, Shelby County, Memphis, TN, dist. 136. pg. 17-21 and 45-48. Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁹⁷ Letter, Julia Hawley to Harry Lauder, 9/22/1920, Box 1 Folder A, The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music 1856-1937, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

⁹⁸ Letter, E.S.S. Huntington to Julia Hawley (Raine), “Information on company. Please send music for approval,” 9/19/1918, Box 1 Folder A, The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music 1856-1937, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

The fee required under this contract is positively the only amount the Principal require or expect the Author to burden under any circumstances, and it is understood and agreed herein that neither the Principal nor any of its staff will retain any ownership whatsoever to this completed number...making the Author entitled to the full amount of any purchase price the doing may bring or royalties which may accrue from the sale of the publication copies thereof, phonograph records or music rolls.⁹⁹

Raine's name is signed to both the contract and all correspondence to E.S.S. Huntington, Knickerbocker Studios' lawyer, concerning her rights to her song. Though she asks a few questions concerning her future relationship with the publishing company and how she will be compensated, Raine seems quite self-possessed and composed in her dealings with Knickerbocker Studios.

Throughout her correspondence, Raine demonstrates intimate knowledge of the music publishing industry and the recording industry, and is quite comfortable marketing her work to numerous publishers and record executives across Tennessee. When she learned that RCA was sending representatives to Memphis to make recordings of Memphis artists in 1930, Raine wrote the "attendants of Mr. Loring Watson," requesting their audience for an audition. The Memphis composer courageously advocated for her talents, referring to an April 6th article in the *Memphis Commercial Appeal* that would give the impression of her "ability in the musical line" and to her piano playing as a unique and marketable experience, what Raine describes as "a line of playing [that] is something, that I have not yet heard over the radio."¹⁰⁰ Raine also was experienced in

⁹⁹ Contract between Mrs. J.H. Hawley and Knickerbocker Studios for rights to "That Wee House at Dunoon," 1/22,25/1919, Box 1 Folder A, The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music 1856-1937, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

¹⁰⁰ Letter, Julia Hawley to the attendants of Mr. Loring Watson, 4/8/1930, The Julia Raine Collection of Correspondence and Music 1856-1937, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, TN.

gaining the rights to set texts to music and acquiring means to publish her own works, as evidenced by her correspondence with the English poet, Sir Sidney Low. She secured the rights to use Low's poem with little trouble, as he indicates that his verses are "quite at [her] disposal for the purpose," though she must undertake "the liability for the expense of publication" herself. At this time, Raine had remarried and had moved to Galveston, Texas, where she would remain for close to a decade. She continued to publish her work and to conduct her business with acumen and knowledge of the musical profession, and returned to Memphis in the 1920s.

Music acted as activism, professionalization, and mobilization in Memphis at the turn of the twentieth century. Musical language allowed marginalized and oppressed groups, especially women, to condemn southern convention while maintaining a surface of cordiality and decorum. Involvement in music making also afforded women opportunities to market their work and begin to enter into semi-professional occupations while upholding their statuses as proper southern ladies. Though music was not the sole tool in helping women gain social and political autonomy, it certainly acted as a common language and a social currency among wealthy and middle-class women who had been "properly" educated, and allowed women to communicate freely with each other and also to expand and market their skills in an area in which they had gained proficiency from a young age. Music was comfortable, accessible, and important to women in Memphis and women in the South; and music forged the path for many Memphis women to begin emulating the larger and more tumultuous political demonstration and rhetoric appearing in Boston or New York without losing their identity as genteel Memphis women.

“The Pride of Memphis:” Ethel Taylor Maxwell and the Rise of the Mid-South Female

Musical Professional

Ethel Taylor Maxwell was born in Memphis, Tennessee on January 8, 1915, in the midst of the “reform impulse” and at the precipice of change for Memphis women. She was musically gifted, and her parents encouraged her to hone her skills as a pianist and vocalist. Maxwell gained a performance certificate from the Theodore Bohlmann School of Music in 1931, graduated from the Hutchinson School in 1932, earned a degree in piano performance at Southwestern Presbyterian University (now Rhodes College) in 1934, trained with Estelle Liebling and Arthur Wrege, and studied at the Alvine School of Speech and Drama and the Rossini Opera School in New York. Even before her debut as an opera star, Maxwell’s smiling face and loose curls were plastered across the pages of Memphis periodicals, accompanied by headlines that lauded her talent and broadcast her ambitions: “Southwestern Co-Ed, a Singing Pianist, Has Eyes on Opera—and Year in France,”¹⁰¹ “Wins Piano Certificate,”¹⁰² among others. Maxwell’s name was featured in a number of Beethoven Club Programs, and she gave numerous well-publicized student recitals in Memphis. Maxwell’s career as a music student and Memphis *Wunderkind*, the acceptance of her professional ambitions, and the support for her music making marks a departure from the quasi-amateur approach to performing taken by active club women and elite Memphis female musicians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. And while Maxwell certainly was not born into the prominence or the wealth of women like Fannie

¹⁰¹Newspaper Article, “Southwestern Co-Ed, a Singing Pianist, Has Eyes on Opera—and Year in France,” *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, September 9, 1932, Box 1 Folder 1, Ethel Taylor Maxwell Collection, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, Tennessee.

¹⁰² Newspaper Article, “Wins Piano Certificate” *Commercial Appeal*, n.d., Box 1 Folder 1, Ethel Taylor Maxwell Collection: A Life in Music and Art, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, Tennessee.

and Nellie Trezevant, Sara Beaumont Kennedy, or Martha Trudeau, Maxwell's association with, and standing within, organizations like the Beethoven Club bolstered her professional experience and increased her connections with professional music circles in Memphis and beyond.

Maxwell launched her long and fruitful professional career in 1938, when she starred in the operetta *The Desert Song* at the Memphis Open Air Theatre. She went on to star in thirteen seasons of the Open Air Theatre, sing with the Chattanooga Opera, teach at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga's Cadek Conservatory, and place as a finalist in the Metropolitan Opera Auditions on the air in December of 1940. After her solo career ended, Maxwell took up teaching voice at Memphis State College in 1956 (which became Memphis State University in 1956), where she earned a Master's in speech and drama. Maxwell taught as an assistant professor at Memphis State in the 1970s, and served as a choral director and music teacher for numerous organizations in the Memphis area like the Lausanne School for Girls and St. Elisabeth's Episcopal Church.¹⁰³

Maxwell's enormous talent and career immortalized her within the Memphis community, and while the space dedicated to her accomplishments in this paper is far too small, the most significant element of Maxwell's career is her professional association with women's clubs and music organizations throughout her lifetime. In addition to her career as a professional singer, Maxwell continued to give concerts at the Beethoven Club, where she served as president for several years; gave a graduate recital at the Bohlmann School of Music;¹⁰⁴ and received a full-time position at a major university's music school. Even more telling of Maxwell's

¹⁰³ Patricia LaPointe, "Biographical Sketch," Ethel Taylor Maxwell Collection: A Life in Music and Art, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, Tennessee.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, Et. "Memorabilia and Programs," Box 1 Folder 1, Ethel Taylor Maxwell Collection: A Life in Music and Art, Memphis and Shelby County Room, Benjamin L. Hooks Library, Memphis, Tennessee.

unmistakably southern upbringing was the regional scope of her career and her involvement as a music and drama instructor with the Lausanne School for Girls, an institution that was founded on the tradition of private girls's schools begun by schools like The Highbee School or Clara Conway's private institution for girls. Thus Maxwell's professional experience—though it did not openly embrace the semi-political, semi-professional activities of the southern New Women of the early twentieth century—was bolstered by the same proto-feminist ideals and built upon the foundation of the Memphis musical club women.

Ethel Maxwell exemplified a level of proficiency in making music, fostering connections, and exerting autonomy in social landscapes that women's clubs and southern New Women encouraged in younger generations of Memphis women. She used these tools not merely to organize events, stimulate sociopolitical discourse, or garner publicity for a social club and its causes but to insert herself into professional circles that many Southern women dared not enter. While Maxwell's connection to clubs and networks of female support certainly embraced the musical conventions of previous decades, her professional ambitions and the cultivation of her full-time career do not characterize her as a Southern New Woman, but as an empowered modern woman. Maxwell's career thus is the culmination of the efforts of southern New Women. Her advancement in her professional music career are nevertheless a testament to the increasing autonomy and visibility of women in Memphis's public sphere made possible by Memphis club women.

Maxwell's story, though it speaks to the powerful influence that women's clubs exerted in the Memphis community, is only one of many examples of the lasting legacy of women's clubs and arts-based organizations. Two of the largest and most prominent clubs of the twentieth century, the Beethoven Club and the Dilettante Club, are still active organizations and continue

to hold meetings. The Renaissance Music Club, Etude, and other arts-centric clubs were founded later in the twentieth century, modeled after turn-of-the-century women's clubs, and are still active as well. Today, women's groups serve a much different function in the community, but their patronage of the arts and encouragement of civic engagement in art continues. Even more significantly, clubs' historical influence in Memphis and creative manipulation of convention illustrates how stringently southern convention even today restricts feminine independence and confines feminine ambition in the Mid-South.

It is equally counter-productive in this context to apologize for the atrocities and denial of human rights in the South as it is to implicate the American South as the sole perpetrator of backward, destructive prejudice and bigotry. We can reflect on the restrictive standards that Southern women had to overcome, but it is important to remember that these challenges were not unique to women living in the post-bellum South. Women across the nation had to struggle for equality in the form of suffrage, employment opportunity, and access to education. The violence displayed in the Northeast on behalf of women activists is a testament to the chauvinism deeply rooted in national sentiment and federal institutions. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge that the American South did foster rigid categorization of its people by class, race, and sex; the innovative methods by which Memphis women circumvented societal stratification illustrates the severity with which such stratification was enforced and the creativity and courage of southern New Women.

While interest in the arts was instilled in Memphis women (particularly those who were among the white elite, to equip them to be pleasing and obliging hosts) the performance of music was utilized as a means for women to convene without violating propriety, and musical language offered a common, veiled means of communication among women through which they could

spark serious political discourse. Music's presence in club meetings, women's gatherings, and club-sponsored events reinforces the understanding that the transmittance of what might be perceived as progressive and maybe even radical ideology in women's club meetings was an admittedly somewhat controversial display of social and political autonomy. Strict social pressure and tradition of harsh condemnation of outsiders certainly plagues southern history, and the hesitation among Memphis women to campaign in a forthright or abrasive manner would have violated the Southern social contract and ostracize them from the most elite and proper circles of Memphis society. The innovation displayed by Memphis women is a testament to the powerful pervasiveness of southern tradition in Memphis. The strict procedures and prescriptions for behavior that carefully delineated southern cultural practice still influenced women's organizations and their members—and in many ways they remain engrained in the way southerners perceive white femininity and masculinity as well as black femininity and masculinity.

Despite the negative impact of staunch traditionalism in the American South, the gendering of music and music performance in Memphis, though it began as bigoted convention, provided an opportunity for enterprising and progressive women to challenge southern standards of gentility and to implement empowered women's perspectives into the social, political, and professional spheres of Memphis life. In the same way that music made African Americans more visible, contributing members of Memphis's cultural life, music allowed women to take up activism in their community and to redefine themselves on their own terms. Music and art, it would appear, mitigated fear of women's total autonomy in civic life. The music and musical language of Julia Raine, Sara Beaumont Kennedy, Ethel Taylor Maxwell, and prominent women's club members is therefore invaluable in understanding how marginalized groups

functioned in the American South. Investigating marginalized groups' musical language allows us to construct a new narrative of Memphis and southern history that imbues autonomy, ingenuity, and agency into the stories of those who have previously been characterized as simply subordinate or oppressed. It is imperative to continue to recognize subtle, nuanced networks of resistance and progressivism within Memphis's cultural history to produce a more inclusive and a more accurate picture of the intricate and complicated methods in which women asserted themselves as active members of their community.

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