



“Very Good  
for an American”

*Essays on Edward MacDowell*

Edited by E. Douglas Bomberger

AMERICAN MUSIC AND MUSICIANS SERIES NO. 5

# **“Very Good for an American”**

**Essays on Edward MacDowell**



Edward MacDowell, Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions, accessed April 20, 2017, <https://cul.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/music-centennial/item/6843>

# **“Very Good for an American”**

## **Essays on Edward MacDowell**

**Edited by E. Douglas Bomberger**

AMERICAN MUSIC AND MUSICIANS SERIES NO. 5

PENDRAGON PRESS

Hillsdale, NY

## Other Titles in the American Music and Musicians Series

John Graziano, General Editor

- No. 1. *George Whitefield Chadwick: An American Composer Revealed and Reflected* by Marianne Betz 2015 ISBN 978-157647-213-2
- No. 2. *With Trumpet and Bible: The Illustrated Life of James Hembray Wilson* by Frank Tirro 2015 ISBN 978-157647-222-4
- No.3 *Singing Sedition: Piety and Politics in the Music of William Billings* by Charles E. Brewer 2017 ISBN 978-1-57647-254-5
- No. 4 *Building Bridges With Music: Stories from a Composer's Life* by Samuel Adler 2017 ISBN 978-1-57647-303-0

### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Bomberger, E. Douglas, 1958-

Title: Very good for an American : essays on Edward MacDowell / edited by E. Douglas Bomberger.

Description: Hillsdale, NY : Pendragon Press, [2017] | Series: American music and musicians ; No. 5 | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2017021560 | ISBN 9781576473054 (alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: MacDowell, Edward, 1860-1908--Criticism and interpretation. | Music--United States--19th century--History and criticism.

Classification: LCC ML410.M12 V47 2017 | DDC 780.92 [B] --dc23 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017021560>

Copyright 2017 Pendragon Press

# Table of Contents

Illustrations	vii
Contributors	x
Acknowledgments	xiii
Introduction: MacDowell at 150 E. DOUGLAS BOMBERGER	1
Edward MacDowell and the Society of Friends E. DOUGLAS BOMBERGER	13
Historical Concerts in New York City, 1860-1876: An Approximation F. JAVIER ALBO	31
“No MacDowell, No Carreño”: Teresa Carreño’s Contributions to the Dissemination of Edward MacDowell’s Piano Music LAURA PITA	53
MacDowell, Liszt, and the Symphonic Tone Poem JOHN GRAZIANO	83
Wagnerian Influence and Motives in the Works of Edward MacDowell FRANCIS BRANCALEONE	105

“On Sundays there was the music ...” George Whitefield Chadwick between symphony and organ MARIANNE BETZ	129
MacDowell vs. Butler: The “Idealist” Professor and the Administrator of “Materialism” MICHAEL JOINER	143
Chou Wen-chung at Columbia University MARK A. RADICE	163
American Bayreuth: The 1910 Peterborough Pageant and the Genesis of the MacDowell Colony ROBIN RAUSCH	195
Selective Bibliography	215
Index	227

# Illustrations

---

## **E. Douglas Bomberger**

- Figure 1 — Thomas and Fanny MacDowell. 17

## **Francisco Javier Albo**

- Table 1 — Historical Piano Recitals in New York, 1865–1876. 46
- Table 2 — Piano recitals that might qualify as “Historical,” 1856–1875. 47
- Table 3 — Programs of Mills/Ritter Historical Recitals, March–April, 1869. 47
- Table 4 — Historical Recital, Chopin. Anton Rubinstein, May 19, 1873. 50
- Table 5 — Historical Recital, Chopin. Hans von Bülow, March 27, 1876. 51

## **Laura Pita**

- Table 1 — Teresa Carreño’s Early Performances of MacDowell’s Piano Pieces (1883–1889). 77
- Table 2 — Teresa Carreño’s Performances of the MacDowell Piano Concerto No. 1 in A minor, op. 15. 79
- Table 3 — Teresa Carreño’s Performances of the MacDowell Piano Concerto No. 2 in D minor, op. 23. 79

## **John Graziano**

- Example 1a — Joachim Raff, Sonata no. 4 for violin and piano, op. 129, mm. 184–98. 86
- Example 1b — sketch of mm. 184–89. 87
- Example 2a — Lamia motive. 93
- Example 2b — Lycius motive. 93
- Figure 1 — Analysis of Lamia formal structure. 95
- Example 3 — Edward MacDowell, Lamia, harmonic reduction of mm. 276–94. 96
- Example 4 — Lamia, mm. 26–67, score and reductional sketch. 98

Appendix — Performances of Liszt's orchestral music by Carl Bergmann and Theodore Thomas, 1869–1876.	104
---	-----

### Francis Brancalone

Example 1a — Richard Wagner, Prelude to <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> , mm. 17–19.	109
Example 1b — Edward MacDowell, “Erzählung,” op. 17, no. 1, mm. 19–21, 27–43.	110
Example 2a — Wagner, “Walther's Song” from <i>Die Meister- singer</i> , mm. 1–2.	113
Example 2b — MacDowell, “Träumerei,” op. 19, no. 3, mm. 1–15.	113
Example 3 — MacDowell, “Füllest wieder Busch und Thal,” op. 28, no. 3, mm. 15–17, 40–45.	115
Example 4 — Wagner, Prelude to <i>Tristan und Isolde</i> , mm. 84–88	115
Example 5a — Wagner, “Sleep Motive” from <i>Die Walküre</i> .	118
Example 5b — Wagner, “Annunciation of Death Motive” from <i>Götterdämmerung</i> .	118
Example 5c — MacDowell, “Mondschein,” op. 33, no. 3, mm. 41–50.	118
Example 6a — Wagner, “Immortal Beloved Motive” from Siegfried.	121
Example 6b — MacDowell, “Liebhaberin” from <i>Marionetten</i> , op. 38, no. 4, mm. 1–4.	121
Example 7 — MacDowell, “From a German Forest,” op. 61, no. 3, mm. 11–20.	122
Example 8 — MacDowell, “Of Salamanders,” op. 61, no. 4, mm. 1–3.	124

### Marianne Betz

Figure 1 — Program of Chadwick's “debut” as organist.	132
Figure 2 — Sketch from Chadwick's scrapbook, depicting the anecdote of his “short-distinct-impressive” organ playing.	134

**Michael Joiner**

Appendix — Select bibliography of articles relating to MacDowell's resignation.	160
---	-----

**Robin Rausch**

Table 1 — The 1910 Peterborough Pageant: Scene Outline with Musical Selections.	201
Figure 1 — The muses preside over the pageant of Peterborough.	208
Figure 2 — An Indian maid awaits her bridegroom in a scene depicting Indian life before the settlers came.	209
Figure 3 — Gwendolyn Valentine as the Devil.	210
Figure 4 — A pantomime depicting workers at hand-loom.	211
Figure 5 — Peterborough becomes cosmopolitan, a refuge to many nations.	212
Figure 6 — The assembled cast of the Peterborough pageant on the outdoor pageant stage.	213

# Contributors

---

FRANCISCO JAVIER ALBO is a Principal Senior Lecturer at the School of Music of Georgia State University in Atlanta. He holds a Master's degree in piano performance (Real Conservatorio of Madrid) and a Ph.D. in musicology (City University of New York and Universidad Complutense, Madrid). He is a member of various associations in the United States and Spain, and has published and presented at conferences in both countries. His areas of specialization include musical reception (Chopin, Wagner, Enrique Granados), film music, nineteenth-and-twentieth-century Spanish music, and music in New York City in the nineteenth century. He works as an advisor to the Orquesta Nacional de España.

MARIANNE BETZ is Professor of Musicology at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater “Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy” Leipzig. Her research explores transatlantic relations, focussing on American music of the 19th and 20th century, as well as on Early Music. Her publications include articles for the *Handwörterbuch der musikalischen Terminologie*, *Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, *Die Musikforschung*, *Musical Quarterly*, *Zibaldone*, the *Yearbook of the American Music Research Center* (Boulder, CO), and the *Oxford Handbook of Opera*. She is editor of Chadwick's *String Quartets* and his opera *The Padrone*, as well as author of a monograph on Chadwick.

E. DOUGLAS BOMBERGER is a professor at Elizabethtown College, where he teaches music history and piano. A specialist in nineteenth-century American music, his books include *Brainard's Biographies of American Music* (1999), *A Tidal Wave of Encouragement: American Composers' Concerts in the Gilded Age* (2002), *An Index to Music Published in The Etude Magazine* (2004), and *MacDowell* (2013). He served as senior editor for nineteenth-century music for the *Grove Dictionary of American*

*Music* (2013). An active member of the Society for American Music, he served as treasurer from 2009 to 2013. He holds degrees from the University of Maryland, the University of North Carolina, and Goshen College.

FRANCIS BRANCALEONE, pianist, is Professor Emeritus at Manhattanville College. His degrees include a Ph.D. and M.Phil. from CUNY, an M.M. from the Manhattan School of Music, an M.A. from Queens College, a B.M. from Eastman and a Diploma from the Palestrina Institute of Ecclesiastical Music. Recipient of various scholarships, research grants and a prize from the International Bach Society, he has taught at Baruch College, the University of Bridgeport, Westchester Community College, Manhattan School of Music, and the pre-college divisions of MSM and the Juilliard School. Publications include: *American Music*, *NOTES*, *American National Biography*, Da Capo Press, *Sacred Music*, and 550 reviews for Gannett Newspapers. Dr. Brancalone performed piano recitals at Town Hall, Tully Hall and concertos with orchestras, including the Detroit Symphony.

JOHN GRAZIANO is Professor Emeritus of Music at the City College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York. He is the Series Editor for A-R Editions *Recent Researches in American Music*, the Series Editor for *American Music and Musicians* for Pendragon Press, and is Director of an NEH-funded “We the People” project, Music in Gotham, which is documenting every traceable event with music in New York City from September 1862 through August 1875. The results for the first four years are available as a free internet database. He served as President of the Society for American Music from 2007 to 2009.

MICHAEL JOINER received his Ph.D. from University of California, Santa Barbara in 2013. His dissertation, *Courses in Culture: The Acceptance of Music in the Late-Nineteenth Century American University*, looks at how composers and art music found a home and validation in academia as part of the liberal culture movement in the United States. Michael has presented papers on Edward MacDowell, John Knowles Paine, gender, and the American academy at the American Musicological Society and the Society for American Music. After finishing up his Ph.D., Michael taught writing at UCSB before finding a career in software training.

LAURA PITA is a doctoral candidate in Musicology at the University of Kentucky. She has researched extensively on Teresa Carreño. She is co-editor of Teresa Carreño's complete works for piano (Caracas: Fondo Editorial de la Facultad de Humanidades y Educación, U.C.V., 2006) and *Serenade for String Orchestra* (in preparation). She has taught at Universidad Central de Venezuela and Conservatorio Nacional de Música Juan José Landaeta in Caracas, and at the University of Kentucky and Truman State University.

MARK A. RADICE is a musicologist, composer, and performer (organ and harpsichord). His books include *Opera in Context: Essays on Historical Staging from the Late Renaissance to the Time of Puccini* (1998), *Writing about Music*; 3d ed. (1999), *Karel Husa: A Composer's Life in Essays and Documents* (2002), *Concert Music of the Twentieth Century: Its Personalities, Institutions, and Techniques* (2003), *Chamber Music: An Essential History* (2012), and *Polycultural Synthesis in the Music of Chou Wen-chung* (2017). His music is published by Warner Brothers, Lawson Gould, and MorningStar Music Publishers. Radice taught at San Francisco State University until 1987 and has taught since then at Ithaca College.

ROBIN RAUSCH has published on the history of the MacDowell Colony in *A Place for the Arts: The MacDowell Colony, 1907-2007* (Distributed by University Press of New England, 2006), *The Grove Dictionary of American Music* (Oxford University Press, 2013), *Women in the Arts: Eccentric Essays in Music, Visual Arts, and Literature* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), and *American Women: A Library of Congress Guide for the Study of Women's History and Culture in the United States* (Distributed by University Press of New England, 2001). She is currently writing a biography of Marian MacDowell. Robin is the head of Reader Services in the Music Division at the Library of Congress.

# Acknowledgments

---

In December 2010, Elizabethtown College hosted the MacDowell Festival and Symposium, a weekend of concerts and scholarly papers honoring the 150th birthday of a composer who a century earlier was generally acknowledged to be the greatest that America had yet produced. The essays in this collection were delivered by a group of scholars who valued MacDowell and his music enough to gather at the busiest time of year to celebrate and discuss the contributions of this remarkable composer. We owe a debt of gratitude to Elizabethtown College, whose faculty and students were crucial to the Festival's success in offering performances and logistical support. Department assistant Amy Reynolds and student assistant Julia Steinsberger deserve special recognition for their efforts. The Elizabethtown College administration, in addition to providing the facilities for meeting, gave a generous grant through its Collaborative Interdisciplinary Scholarship Program (CISP), designed to support projects that allow students, faculty, and guests to transcend disciplinary boundaries in creative ways. Without this institutional support, the Festival and Symposium could not have taken place.

I am also grateful to John Graziano, who urged me to submit this volume to Pendragon Press for consideration; to the external reader, whose suggestions helped many of the authors refine their essays; and to Bob Kessler, whose publication of significant musicological research continues to enhance the field.

E. Douglas Bomberger  
Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania



# E. Douglas Bomberger

---

## Introduction: MacDowell at 150

A composer's reputation is dependent on much more than his talent and inspiration. After his death, when he can no longer influence public perception directly, his critics and admirers shape that perception for him. In the introduction to his magisterial biography of Felix Mendelssohn, R. Larry Todd illustrates how such factors as anti-Semitism and anti-Victorianism can change perceptions of a composer's music in subtle and not-so-subtle ways.<sup>1</sup> Kate Hevner Mueller's study of the changing repertoires of American symphony orchestras demonstrates that popularity with conductors and audiences is by no means stable over time.<sup>2</sup> Few composers vacillated more strongly between adulation and excoriation than MacDowell, and his meteoric rise and subsequent fall shed light on American musical aspirations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To set the stage for the essays in this collection, it will be useful to consider the reception history of his works from his period of greatest fame to his 150<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2010.

Born in 1860 in New York City, MacDowell grew up in a Quaker family and pursued his early music studies with teachers from Latin America. MacDowell moved to Europe as a fifteen-year-old to further his musical training, spending the next twelve years in France and Germany first as a student and then as a young profes-

---

<sup>1</sup> R. Larry Todd, *Mendelssohn: A Life in Music* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. xix-xxix.

<sup>2</sup> Kate Hevner Mueller, *Twenty-seven major American symphony orchestras: a history and analysis of their repertoires, seasons 1842-43 through 1969-70* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973).

sional. Initially he pursued a career as a concert pianist, but during his last four years in Germany, his time was devoted almost entirely to composition. In addition to numerous piano works, he published his first orchestral works at this time. In the summer of 1888, he and his wife Marian moved to Boston, where he reactivated his performing career, accepted students in piano and composition, and pursued his dream of achieving fame as a composer.

The timing of his return home could not have been better. MacDowell had published a substantial number of piano, vocal, and orchestral works with major German publishing firms, and his music had been played by European orchestras.<sup>3</sup> MacDowell's family friend Teresa Carreño was also influential in bringing his music before the public. To American concert promoters, MacDowell was ideal—a native-born American whose works had already been given the stamp of European approval.

But MacDowell did not rest on his laurels. A man of tireless energy and restless intellect, he produced a prodigious amount of new music during his first decade back in the United States. Emblematic of the success he achieved was the Second Piano Concerto, op. 23. This work had been mostly written in Germany but was completed in the months after his return. In spring 1889 it was played by two of America's leading orchestras with the composer as soloist: Theodore Thomas played it in New York in March, and Wilhelm Gericke played it in Boston in April. This was followed by a performance at the Paris Exposition in July. When New York critic James Huneker told Thomas after the first performance that he thought the work was "very good for an 'American,'" Thomas replied indignantly "or for a German either"<sup>4</sup>—high praise from America's most powerful conductor.

Over the following decade, MacDowell's reputation grew with the publication of a series of major works, including four piano sonatas, two orchestral suites, and numerous sets of songs and

---

<sup>3</sup> For information on his European publications and performances, see E. Douglas Bomberger, "The Kindness of Strangers: Edward MacDowell and Breslau," *American Music* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2014): 24–45.

<sup>4</sup> Letter, James G. Huneker to Edward A. MacDowell, March 20, 1889, Edward and Marian MacDowell Collection, Library of Congress Music Division (hereafter EMMC) Box 30/61.

shorter piano works. He earned the reputation of a daring harmonic innovator in the Liszt/Wagner tradition, while his “Indian” Suite, premiered in 1896, was a model of art music based on Native-American thematic elements. In addition to his major concert works, however, MacDowell wrote in another idiom: the piano character piece. Like Mendelssohn and Schumann, he was able to achieve the rarest of compositional successes by writing short, evocative works of the highest artistic integrity playable by amateur pianists. His famous “To a Wild Rose” from *Woodland Sketches*, op. 51, published in 1896, illustrates the melodic charm of his best works in this genre. The set sold over 650,000 copies before the copyright expired in the early 1950s.<sup>5</sup> By 1900, his reputation was firmly established. Music critic Rupert Hughes summarized his position that year in his book on contemporary American composers: “The matter of precedence in creative art is as hopeless of solution as it is unimportant. And yet it seems appropriate to say, in writing of E. A. MacDowell, that an almost unanimous vote would grant him rank as the greatest of American composers, while not a few ballots would indicate him as the best of living music writers.”<sup>6</sup>

In the midst of nearly universal acclaim, there were only a few detractors. The piano teacher and critic W. S. B. Mathews of Chicago found his Third Piano Sonata too harmonically advanced in a 1901 review: “That any person still retaining a ghost of a love for the music of Beethoven, Bach, Brahms, Liszt, Wagner, Schumann (to mention only the most original of all composers), can still have a love for this sonata, and an enjoyment in playing it, is in the last degree unlikely.” He went on to call it a pity that MacDowell was capable of writing respectable salon music but chose instead to indulge in “the quest for the profound and the intensely new and deep.”<sup>7</sup> To summarize his reputation at the turn of the twentieth century, MacDowell was one of a handful of progressive composers

---

<sup>5</sup> The Arthur P. Schmidt Collection in the Library of Congress Music Division contains files devoted to royalties of its biggest sellers, including the *Woodland Sketches* (Box 149 folders 1-4). EMMC Box 48/87 also contains royalty statements.

<sup>6</sup> Rupert Hughes, *Contemporary American Composers* (Boston: L. C. Page, 1900), pp. 34-35.

<sup>7</sup> [W. S. B. Mathews], “Editorial Bric-A-Brac,” *Music* 19, no. 4 (February 1901): 412.

admired on both sides of the Atlantic, and he had also written lighter piano music that was immensely popular with amateurs.

Still in the prime of life, MacDowell did not enjoy the privilege of a long career. Perhaps unwisely, he poured his best energies into his work as chair of the Music Department of Columbia University before resigning in 1904 in a dispute over the administrative structure of the university's arts programs. Within a year, he suffered what was described as a nervous breakdown, declining rapidly to his death in January 1908. The music world was stunned that this young, vital composer was gone. The headline in *Musical America* read, "America Mourns the Loss of Its Greatest Composer."<sup>8</sup> *The Boston Journal* noted: "With the death of Edward A. MacDowell closes the first great chapter in the history of American music. Wherever the beauty and the power that mark true musical art are appreciated, there his works have made a lasting impression. He was the soul of honor and of poetry."<sup>9</sup> Such eulogies echoed around the world, and European papers showered him with praise never before accorded an American musician.<sup>10</sup>

Defenders and detractors alike acknowledged that MacDowell's works had achieved a level of artistic and commercial success unseen in American art music. His rapid rise to fame is reflected in the pages of Riemann's *Musiklexikon*, a leading German reference book that appeared frequently in new editions. From a brief mention as "pianist and composer" in 1887, he was promoted to "noteworthy pianist with success as composer" in 1894, which was upgraded to "decided success as composer" in 1900. Upon his death he was promoted to "very noteworthy composer, bold and with strong expression but also tender and sensitive in detail."<sup>11</sup>

The sales of his works remained strong for nearly a decade after his death in 1908. His widow Marian reported that royalties

<sup>8</sup> "America Mourns the Loss of Its Greatest Composer," *Musical America* 7, no. 12 (February 1, 1908): 5–6.

<sup>9</sup> "MacDowell," *The Boston Journal*, January 24, 1908, obituary file, EMMC Box 1.

<sup>10</sup> See for instance the laudatory obituary by H. R. A. in the *Neue Musik-Zeitung* 29, no. 10 (February 20, 1908): 228.

<sup>11</sup> Hugo Riemann, "MacDowell, Edward A." in *Musik-Lexikon*, 3<sup>rd</sup> thoroughly revised edition (Leipzig: Max Hesse, 1887) is only nine lines long; the entry in the 1909 edition is fifty-two lines long.

were especially robust in England, where MacDowell was highly esteemed by performers and audiences alike. Public interest in MacDowell and his music was reinforced by extensive coverage in the press, particularly magazines devoted to music. The entire March 1908 issue of *The Musician* was devoted to MacDowell. *The Musical Quarterly*, a new journal founded in 1915, featured a thirty-five-page article on the composer in its first issue. A British journal, *The Music Student*, devoted its entire August 1915 issue to MacDowell, including the first of twelve serialized articles of recollections by his friend Templeton Strong that ran monthly for the next year. The head of the music division of the Library of Congress, Oscar Sonneck, published a scholarly catalog of MacDowell's first editions in 1917. Also that year an article in *Musical America* was entitled, "America Gradually Coming Into a True Appreciation of its Greatest Composer."<sup>12</sup> Throughout the 1920s, sales of the *Woodland Sketches* averaged 20,000 per year.

Despite MacDowell's public acclaim, there were enemies working in private. MacDowell had never been an easy person to deal with, and there were those whom he had offended who were eager for a chance to get even. A 1908 biography by Lawrence Gilman had effusively praised the composer's originality at the expense of all other American composers, contributing in Marian's opinion to a backlash of resentment. Indeed the canny publisher Arthur P. Schmidt told Marian nine months after his death, "There are still people in existence to whom the very name of MacDowell acts like a red rag on a bull."<sup>13</sup> After the publication of the MacDowell issue of *The Music Student* in Britain in 1915, the Boston organist H. C. MacDougall (a former student of B. J. Lang) chided editor Percy Scholes for honoring MacDowell:

It will seem ungracious in me to suggest that, valuable, interesting and delightful to an American's sense of national pride as your MacDowell number is I miss the note of discrimination.

---

<sup>12</sup> H. F. P., "America Gradually Coming into a True Appreciation of its Greatest Composer," *Musical America* 25, no. 12 (January 20, 1917): 3-4.

<sup>13</sup> General Letter Book, 1906-1909, October 29, 1908, Schmidt Collection, Library of Congress Music Division.

Americans almost never find the English praising one of our artists so freely and generously as you have praised MacDowell. We nearly always find (as Lowell put it) “a certain note of condescension” when an Englishman speaks to the American. There is little doubt that MacDowell was a genius; and in my mind there is little doubt that we are overdoing our new-found respect and admiration. He had his distinct limitations. . . . MacD is in truth a sort of Mrs. Grieg and will live as the Northern composer will live as a poet of small pieces.<sup>14</sup>

In the 1920s, this view of MacDowell as an effete composer of small piano pieces gained currency among the young modernist composers and critics. In a March 31, 1922 lecture on American music, Carl Ruggles claimed, “I have never been able to see in MacDowell more than a talent . . . Fat-Heads always imitate the surface things . . . It is all a reflection of the black-walnut marble top period, Venus de Melos with a clock in her belly. Tiddies, the gilding of everything from False teeth to coal hods.”<sup>15</sup> Proving that there are no penalties for “piling on” in music criticism, commentator Paul Rosenfeld wrote in 1929:

The feelings entertained about life by him seem to have remained uncertain; and while fumbling for them he seems regularly to have succumbed to “nice” and “respectable” emotions, conventional, accepted by and welcome to, the best people. It is shocking to find how full of vague poesy he is. Where his great romantic brethren, Brahms, Wagner, and Debussy, are direct and sensitive, clearly and tellingly expressive, MacDowell minces and simpers, maidenly and ruffled. He is nothing if not a daughter of the American Revolution.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Letter to Percy Scholes, October 10, 1915, Scholes Fonds, Library and Archives of Canada, Ottawa.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Marilyn Ziffrin, *Carl Ruggles: Composer, Painter, Storyteller* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 75. I am grateful to Jacob Cohen for making me aware of this citation.

<sup>16</sup> Paul Rosenfeld, *An Hour with American Music* (Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1929), p. 46; quoted in William S. Newman, *The Sonata Since Beethoven* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1969), p. 760.

This sort of criticism was a strategic ploy by a group of young modernists trying to establish their place in the canon of art music, and Rosenfeld's campaign to feminize previous generations of American composers was a linchpin of the strategy.<sup>17</sup>

This modernist critique of MacDowell came primarily from critics. Those who were most thoroughly acquainted with his music were not so quick to criticize. The futurist Leo Ornstein, who had a career as a concert pianist before he became known as a composer, played MacDowell's Second Piano Concerto often in the late 1910s and early 1920s.<sup>18</sup> He wrote a gracious letter to Marian MacDowell in 1924, stating, "I have played your husband's concerto many times and consider it a great contribution not only to American music but to piano literature."<sup>19</sup> The composer Aaron Copland joined his friends in deriding MacDowell in the 1920s but later acknowledged that the critiques were excessive. In a 1960 interview he stated, "We were rather tough on Edward MacDowell. Whenever I meet some 20-year-old composer nowadays who seems less than admiring, I think 'Well, *we* were pretty tough on Edward MacDowell. I suppose it's *our* turn now!"<sup>20</sup>

The modernist critique of MacDowell is partly attributable to the music that was being played during and after the war. Seldom heard were his major orchestral works and challenging piano sonatas—the most harmonically and formally advanced portion of his worklist. Instead the works that were ubiquitous were the accessible short piano works. These were the works that the now-elderly Marian MacDowell played on her concert tours to promote the artist colony founded on the couple's New Hampshire farm. These were the works that piano teachers assigned to their young students. And these were the works that were played at meetings of MacDowell

---

<sup>17</sup> For an extensive discussion of this strategy, see Kara Anne Gardner, "Living by the ladies' smiles: the feminization of American music and the modernist reaction" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> Michael Broyles and Denise Von Glahn, *Leo Ornstein: Modernist Dilemmas, Personal Choices* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), pp. 153–55.

<sup>19</sup> Letter from Leo Ornstein to Marian MacDowell, November 29, 1924, EMMC Box 48/1.

<sup>20</sup> Aaron Copland, "Making Music in the Star-Spangled Manner," *Music and Musicians* 8 (August 1960): 8–9.

Clubs across the country, which numbered around 400 at their peak in 1945.<sup>21</sup> The great irony is that W. S. B. Mathews had criticized MacDowell for excessively modern compositional techniques in 1901 but that critics like Rosenfeld claimed that MacDowell's music was too "nice" and "respectable" to be taken seriously in the 1920s.

Meanwhile, a curious phenomenon reinforced the child-like image of the composer. In the post-war years he became a staple of juvenile literature. Starting in 1915, MacDowell appeared in numerous children's books. The genre flourished in the 1930s and 1940s with books designed to inspire boys to practice piano by showing that our most famous composer had been just like them as a child.<sup>22</sup> In most cases a female author presented a fictional picture of a dreamy boy whose latent personality predicted his future greatness, as in this excerpt from Mary Rosetta Parkman's *High Adventurers* of 1931. In the opening scene of the story, the boy Edward is practicing dutifully but mindlessly when his fingers stumble on a magical sound that his teacher overhears:

"What is that you're playing?" demanded his teacher sternly. The boy had been so absorbed in his dream that he had not heard any one come into the room. Now he started guiltily. "I have been practicing my lesson, truly," he apologized, "but just now I was playing something that I made up. It's great fun to make up things," he added eagerly, as he caught a kindly gleam in the look his music-master bent upon him. . . . "[T]he music made me think of the place where we were last summer; I felt

---

<sup>21</sup> Elizabeth A. Yackley, "Marian MacDowell and the MacDowell Clubs" (M.A. thesis, University of Maryland at College Park, 2008).

<sup>22</sup> Among the most widely read examples of this genre are: Mary Stoyell Stimpson, *The Child's Book of American Biography* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1915); Eugénie M. Fryer, *A Book of Boyhoods: Chaucer to MacDowell* (New York: Dutton, 1920); Harriette Brower, *The World's Great Men of Music: Story-Lives of Master Musicians* (New York: Stokes, 1922); Carroll Everett and Charles Francis Reed, *When they were Boys* (Dansville, NY: Owen, 1922); Abbie Farwell Brown, *The Boyhood of Edward MacDowell* (New York: Stokes, 1924); Ethel Glenn Hier, *The Boyhood and Youth of Edward MacDowell* (Peterborough, NH: Nubanusit, 1926); Thomas Tapper, *Child's Own Book of Great Musicians: MacDowell* (Philadelphia: Theodore Presser, 1938); Gladys Burch and John Wolcott, *Famous Composers for Young People* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1939); Opal Wheeler and Sybil Deucher, *Edward MacDowell and his Cabin in the Pines* (New York: Dutton, 1940); Katherine Bakeless, *Story-Lives of American Composers* (New York: Stokes, 1941; Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1953).

the way I used to out under the trees. Don't you see?—Doesn't music ever make you feel things?"

"Of course I understand," said the kindly musician, putting his hand on the boy's shoulder. "That's why I am giving you these lessons. I had seen your eyes as you watched me play; I knew you had the music in you. But the getting it out—ah, that's the trouble! Scales, scales, my boy; that is the only way. You cannot *fly* to success, you will have to *scale* the heights." And rubbing his hands together in silent enjoyment of his little joke, the good man forgot to scold.<sup>23</sup>

The net result of the modernist critique of MacDowell's lighter works and the retelling of MacDowell's story in juvenile literature was an implicit emasculation. Neither the prepubescent boy nor the effeminate composer of piano pieces about woodland flowers was a threatening figure. The memory of the real MacDowell—a strong, stubborn, outspoken man who played with breathtaking virtuosity—was veiled in growing layers of legend. He was still revered in the 1940s, but more as a symbol than as an innovator. In 1940, when the United States Postal Service issued the first series of stamps portraying American composers, MacDowell was one of the five chosen. He was elected to the Hall of Fame for Great Americans in 1960, one of only two musicians (with Stephen Foster) to be so honored. Though his shorter piano works were still part of every student's piano lessons, and the Second Concerto enjoyed a new heyday after being adopted by Van Cliburn and André Watts, his other works slipped into obscurity.

Returning to *Riemann's Musiklexikon*, the 1909 assessment remained untouched (except for the deletion of the phrase "very noteworthy composer" in 1916) through the 1929 edition. After a long hiatus because of World War II, the MacDowell entry was overhauled for the 1961 edition, which now couched his music as the product of a bygone era: "MacDowell was one of the most prominent American composers in Romantic style, who was willingly influenced by literary models. He repeatedly used melodies of Indians

---

<sup>23</sup> Mary R. Parkman, "A New-World Poet of Sound: Edward MacDowell," in *High Adventurers* (New York and London: Century, 1931), pp. 153–54.

or negro slaves and thereby allied himself with the folkloristic tendencies of the time.”<sup>24</sup> The reference to “folkloristic tendencies” was removed from the 1979 edition.

MacDowell’s reputation suffered further indignities after Marian’s death. In 1979, author Doris Grumbach published a novel entitled *Chamber Music* that was conceived during a residency at the MacDowell Colony. In this thinly veiled account, the heroine Caroline is trapped in a loveless marriage with composer Robert MacLaren. After he dies of syphilis contracted through a relationship with Churchill Weeks, she finds an artists’ colony in upstate New York and finds true love in a relationship with Robert’s former nurse Anna. Though Grumbach repeatedly verified that the plot was entirely her own fabrication, its subsequent fame as a major work of feminist and gay literature raised questions about MacDowell’s sexuality. A 2006 article by Arnold Schwab speculated on scanty evidence that the cause of the composer’s death was syphilis, further altering the public perception of this formerly iconic composer.<sup>25</sup>

If MacDowell the man has been the subject of repeated falsehoods and innuendo, his music continues to speak for itself. His best works—and the list is much more extensive than commonly acknowledged—continue to appeal to new generations of musicians. MacDowell remains the most-recorded American classical composer of the nineteenth century, with several significant new recordings in recent years. MacDowell has also enjoyed a Renaissance among writers of dissertations, who have expanded the literature on his music and provided new insights into the intricacies of his style. A quick search turned up thirty-three dissertations devoted partly or entirely to the composer and his music, including twenty-one completed since 1990. Despite a curious posthumous reception history, MacDowell’s reputation is surprisingly resilient.

The work in the present volume reflects the breadth of scholarship being produced on this composer. These essays approach the legacy of MacDowell from a variety of vantage points,

---

<sup>24</sup> “MacDowell (mækd’auəl), Edward Alexander,” in *Riemann Musiklexikon*, 12<sup>th</sup> fully revised edition, ed. Willibald Gurlitt (Mainz: Schott, 1961), 2:121.

<sup>25</sup> Arnold T. Schwab, “Edward MacDowell’s Mysterious Malady,” *Musical Quarterly* 89, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 136–51.