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John Mullen

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Music in the home in Britain, 1900 to 1925: initial pointers for research.
Dr. John Mullen, Université Paris-Est

Contribution to Expert Workshop *From Parlour Sing-songs to Iplayers: Experiencing culture in the 20th and 21st century homes*, University of Lincoln, 22-23 May 2014

Introduction

“Experiencing culture in the home” seems to be me to be a very strong choice of research theme, and a little explored area; I hope this project will go further. My own specialist subject – popular music in the first quarter of the twentieth century and particularly in the war years- offers particular challenges which I would like to sketch out in this paper. This is more in the nature of a framework for future work than an account of completed research.

Clearly one of the reasons that the study of culture, including popular culture, in the twentieth century, has concentrated on public spaces (theatres, concert halls, music festivals, gentleman’s clubs and so on) is the availability of archives: such places sometimes have extant records: programme notes, contemporary press reviews, end of year reports for shareholders and so on. The most valuable resource for my period is no doubt the specialist press, which was rich and varied, and much of it has survived. Here are a few examples:

The Encore : a weekly for professionals of the music halls

The Era dealing with theatre in general including music halls,

The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular 1844-1903, which changes its name to *The Musical Times* from 1903.

The Performer, a weekly from the artistes trade union.

1 Considerations about homes

Musical experience in the home was bound to be trickier than that in public spaces. Working on the home will involve us in working up a precise idea of whose home we are referring to and when. To study the fascinating social phenomenon of parlour music, for example, it is necessary to know what section of the population might have a parlour; the cultural activities of all classes of the population are worthy of study, yet it is important to know which classes we are talking of.

Culture has changed over the last century, but so has home, to such an extent that one might reasonably question whether it is the same thing. A home without IKEA, without electronic or communication devices, with very few

labour-saving devices, no frozen food or detergents, in the same street if not the same house as extended families. Homes were often cramped: a century ago, for millions of people, home was one or two rooms for five or six people, who might be extended family or lodgers. Poverty was very common: a quarter of the people who died in London in 1901 were buried at the expense of the parish (Pearsall 1973:20). Poor children wore no shoes, working hours were long, and unemployment frequent. All these social conditions are bound to affect leisure in the home.

For millions of Britons, especially teens and young adults, home was the servants' quarters, either of a large household of the type become so famous with *Downton Abbey*, or, more commonly, as a "live-in maid" for far less wealthy families, since a maid was far more common than today in the houses of accountants, lawyers, headmasters or shop managers. Some of the servants would be considered, and might consider themselves, to be "part of the family". Since it was common for young women to become domestic servants at the age of twelve, and leave domestic service when they got married, twelve or fifteen years later, servants' accommodation as home cannot be considered marginal.

If framing music in the home a century ago involves examining class criteria, in order to be able, in particular, to move away from an "ideal type" of imagined (bourgeois) home, it will also benefit from a consideration of the differing experiences of men and women. These are often oversimplified. The existence of an "ideal" of the woman remaining at home while the man went out to work did not correspond to the reality. The hard work involved in housework, cooking and shopping in these times of large families, few or no appliances, no modern detergents, no fridges or supermarkets, certainly helps explain the pressure for women not to go out to work; nevertheless the picture across the country could be very varied.

In 1911, in the port of Barrow, (population 64 000), only 6.9% of the category "married women and widows" were in full-time paid employment, but in Lancaster, a similar town, (population 42 000), 11% were, and in the textile town of Preston, (Population : 120 000) as many as 35% of this category worked fulltime jobs. Domestic servants alone accounted for 34% of women workers in Barrow and 25% in Lancaster. In Preston, the availability of work in the textile mills reduced this proportion to only 9 % (Roberts,1995:143). Women's lives were varied.

Within the home too, the position of women and men will need to be understood. Everywhere, versions of the "separate spheres" ideology reigned. In bourgeois families, women were generally not supposed to be active, even as mother and housewife, but might be suitably engaged in domestic cultural activities including music making; in working class families, the woman was, in the first quarter of the twentieth century, meant to have her sphere as houseworker, and head of finances (men would almost always hand over their wages to their wife who would then give them pocket money). What effect

might such role divisions have on the experience of music in the home? Who decided to buy a piano, for example, and who was most likely to play it?

More privileged classes would have homes with far more space for cultural activities; parlour music and the drawing room piano – a grand if possible - were important parts of bourgeois life. No doubt information will be easier to find concerning elite families' experience of music in the home, simply because elite groups leave more records. Etiquette books, guides for the perfect hostess and so on, as well as letters, diaries and memoirs might be hoped to provide substantial amounts of information.

2 Reproducing music in the home

In these very varied homes, then, what music was experienced? Let us first look at reproduction within the home of music produced elsewhere. When we think of enjoying music today, we have in mind electronically reproduced music and broadcast music which was not available at the beginning of the twentieth century. To analyse with any precision the experience of music in the home, we will need to be able to date the extension to differing social milieu of equipment for reproducing music. Naturally, the date of invention is not the most important marker, but the date at which the apparatus became available in different milieu.

a) The player piano

The first machine we might look at could be the player piano, which reproduced from punched rolls of card or wood favourite tunes, or a similar machine, the pianola, which could be attached to any piano in order to play a series of tunes. *The Times* from Dec 14 1914 advertised such a machine (available for a one pound deposit and “small monthly instalments”).

With a “Pianola” you can play all the good old Yuletide carols and hymns, as well as all the national or martial music ever written. Special Christmas Sale- of Second-hand and slightly used “Pianolas” (Cabinet model, for use on any piano.)

The pianola never became as popular in Britain as it was in the United States, where two and a half million were sold over a period of thirty years (Pearsall 1975:125), but it was nevertheless a well-known piece of musical culture. In 1900, one cost £65, perhaps three months wages for a factory foreman (Pearsall 1975:126). The pianola became more and more sophisticated, and one could, later, buy piano rolls which would reproduce particular interpretations of classical piano pieces, by the most reputed pianists of the age. These piano rolls remained serious competition to gramophone records for a

number of years, since the sound quality produced was infinitely better than that of the gramophones of the 1910s and 1920s.



From around 1910 self-playing violins could also be bought, but these were far less popular.

b) The gramophone

This brings us to the gramophone, invented at the end of the nineteenth century, which remained a luxury item in this period (in 1916, for the price of the cheapest machine, one could buy 200 tickets for a music hall evening). At the very beginning the gramophone was mostly found among technical enthusiasts rather than a moneyed elite.

In 1900, ordinary people might mostly hear a gramophone in a meeting hall : temperance society meetings in particular often put on a programme of “selections from the gramophone” after the temperance sermon. Over the following years, shops, especially at seaside resorts, which were selling sheet music, allowed customers to listen on the shop gramophone to recordings of the latest hits. Fortunately for the researcher, the monthly magazine, the *Phono Record*, begun in 1912, gives abundant details of records produced and technical innovations, as well as of political and ideological debates around popular music.



Graphophone 1901, playing cylinders

During Edwardian times, the unseemly old-style apparatus with its large external horn was enclosed in a cabinet and sold as an elegant piece of furniture. In this way it found its way into the homes of many better off families. In 1913 Edison's "disc phonograph" became the best on the market, and the spread of the machine led to more and more records being produced, mostly by the producers of gramophones. European companies began to concentrate on classical music, which had been neglected by Edison (Pearsall 1976: 93). The portable gramophones available on the front line or in hospitals during the Great War would very much help to popularize the device.



Gramophone 1907, playing disks

The gramophone boom accelerated in the twenties: “After the war Columbia signed up the principals of every successful revue in London”. They also produced chamber music (by conviction, it seems, since it was the popular music that made the money) “By the early twenties there were few fields of music untouched” by the gramophone (Pearsall 1976:95). Many record companies had their own orchestras to accompany the invited stars, since live recordings in theatres were not possible.

The trade magazine, *The Gramophone*, was only one of a spate of journals which appeared in the twenties, which no doubt would be an invaluable resource for the historian. In 1923 alone, the following journals were launched or relaunched:

The Gramophone
Sound Wave, the Gramophone Journal and Wireless Times,
Gramophone, Wireless and Talking Machine News
The Wireless Trader
The Radio Times


As their titles show, several of them incorporated both gramophone and radio information.

From 1925 electrically recorded records began to be produced in Britain. These were far superior to previous recording methods, not least because the orchestra did not have to crowd round the recording horn while producing the record.




An early 1920s model, made in Sheffield


Records were still expensive products at this time, and Elgar's second symphony on six discs cost two pounds – more than the cost of the cheapest gramophone, in the mid twenties. Among prestigious music lovers there remained much opposition to the gramophone, since it was seen as likely to kill off live music (Pearsall 1976:102). Nevertheless in many bourgeois and middle class homes, the musical evening was being slowly replaced with the “gramophone recital” (Pearsall 1976:104).



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An advertisement from 1924 for an early form of the home radio

c) The Radio

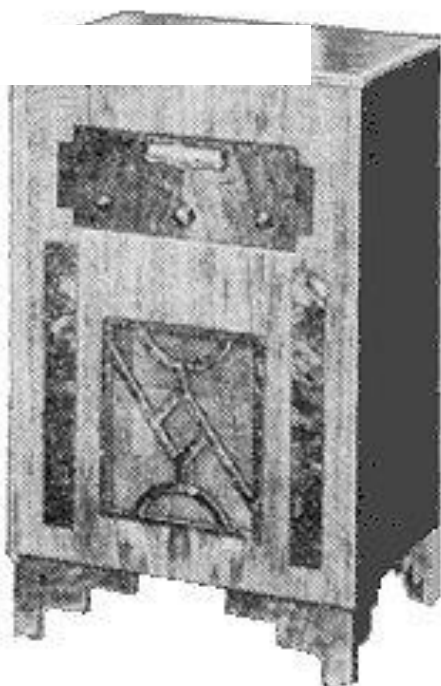
The generalization of radio broadcasting lies at the very end of the time period I have chosen to deal with. Its arrival is fairly rapid: BBC radio began broadcasting in November 1922. During 1923 the number of radio receiving



licences (which cost ten shillings) rose to 500 000. The radios themselves were very expensive, and might require considerable time saving up to purchase; a somewhat cheaper option was to build one from parts. The most common type to build at home was the crystal set; it was not, however, powerful enough to run a loudspeaker, so headphones had to be worn, and listening could only be individual.

From the beginning, concerts of popular dance bands and classical music were broadcast by the BBC in addition to news (this last only after 7pm so as to protect newspapers). In addition there were talk shows, radio plays (after 1924), sports commentary (a new invention) and documentaries.

The generalization of radio transformed music in the home. By 1933, half the households in Britain had a radio. Home music was massively influenced by the BBC, which had a monopoly on radio transmission, and which, under the leadership of John Reith, incarnated a very specific ideology of paternalism and “improving leisure”. Popular music remained rare on the airwaves – reserved to a few spots each week - until the Second World War. Classical music was believed to be more appropriate for a national institution which believed itself a force for education. From 1927, the BBC took over the Promenade season of concerts, which have been a long-term success.¹



All in all, the radio and the gramophone transformed forever the experience of the listening public. As Pearsall pointed out

Unquestionably, more music was heard in the 1920s, music of all kinds, high low and middle brow, than had been heard throughout all the previous history of mankind. (1976:103)

3. Playing musical instruments in the home

Before or alongside the equipment for reproducing music there were the musical instruments allowing to play music of one's own choice, providing one had the training; the piano is the most important of these. By 1910, seventy five to a hundred thousand English pianos were produced every year, and perhaps twenty five thousand were imported. Quality had much improved since the 1860s, and the spreading of hire purchase, cheap sheet music and very cheap piano lessons encouraged popularization. By 1914 there were three million pianos in Britain, and in 1916 alone, 40,000 pianos were sold. Before the First World War, writes Ehrlich, excellent German overstrung instruments cost about £30 and good English pianos upwards of £20. As it was not unusual to be able to pay for such pianos on hire purchase over three or more years (Ehrlich 1976:107), piano owners were common in every class of society except the very poorest. There was of course the "lower middle class":

a particularly important new group of consumers were the rapidly expanding white collar workers – schoolteachers, clerks, commercial travellers and low level managers, earning between 150 and 300 pounds a year (Ehrlich 1985 :71).

But we know that in the 1860s, colliers in South Wales were taking lessons. And a social survey of Sheffield in 1917 shows that many in this working class town owned and played pianos, including shop girls, housewives and a grinder, dying of dust, who played "excellently" despite a "useless school education" and had attended the opera three times in the previous week. Most of those without pianos, said the survey, wanted them. Piano owners included several without books in the house... a shop assistant, daughter of a blacksmith, played "extremely well" revered Beethoven and was "indifferent to everything else" (Ehrlich 1976:102).



1892 "cottage" piano

Instrument possession and musical appreciation and practice have always had social meanings much wider than the immediate pleasure that playing and listening can afford. The piano was thus also a sign of respectability². In a society which had little time for praising the value of ordinary people, having an elegant piece of furniture which both produced beautiful sounds and seemed to give one a taste of elite dignity was important. The *Daily Mail* in 1915 claimed, of working class families enjoying rising wages because of wartime full employment, “Obtainable at last is that coveted proof of respectability, the piano”. While the *Manchester Guardian*, in November 1915, said “In this purely working class town the sellers of pianos on the hire system are doing the trade of their lives. The piano, of course, is the token of respectability in every artisan household” (Ehrlich 1976:171).

It was not surprising that pianos were popular. They were attractive pieces of furniture, and “a rudimentary technique on a piano was more likely to win family approval than would an elementary skill on certain other instruments” such as the violin (Scott 2002:49). The banjo and the accordion were two cheaper alternatives which were very common in working class families. The banjo would often be used for comic songs – indeed the major music publisher

² I attempt an analysis of respectability in the music industry in Mullen 2014

Francis and Day published a “Comic banjo annual” every year from 1892 to 1910, with a collection of comic songs arranged for the banjo.



A five-string banjo made in London in 1910



A concertina made in London by Wheatstone & Co, circa 1910

There were also available in the home large numbers of instruments belonging to members of brass bands, organizations we shall examine below.

4. Musical activities in the home

a) Rehearsing, practising and lessons

Music in the home before electronic and broadcasting equipment must have been very varied. The well-known mass public musical activities – in particular the choral society and the brass band, both immensely popular, must have had very frequent counterpart activities in the home, rehearsing and practising³³. Any town with more than 20 000 inhabitants would have at least one choral society: in 1900, there were, in Bradford alone, thirty of them. These societies involved both men and women, could be from twenty singers to six hundred singers in size, and were frequently involved in choral competitions where Handel's *Messiah* and works by Elgar or Dvorak were favourites. Some regional variation is apparent, with Wales and Cornwall in particular also organizing large numbers of male voice choirs, with somewhat different repertoires. The pieces sung by the choral societies became technically more challenging towards the turn of the century; the repertoire included classical song, hymns and opera, but also some music hall hits. The competitions raised the standard of the singing, and it is impossible to imagine such activities flourishing without many thousands of people across Britain practising regularly at home, with or without a musical instrument to accompany them.

³³ Photographs of thousands of brass bands from the period are available online at <http://www.ibew.org.uk/vbbp-uk.htm>



Littleport Town Band 1923



Blackburn Valley Brass Band 1909



Peterborough choral society 1914

The brass bands, organized by groups of men from the same mine or factory, by the Salvation Army, or by secular or military organizations, had hundreds of thousands of members : there were more than thirty thousand brass bands in the country. In 1900, in the one town of Bradford, there were twenty. The bands had developed in towns with the help of specialist music shops and hire purchase agreements which allowed even poorer workers to buy an instrument. The phenomenon, an all male preserve, gradually developed ever bigger band contests, and the activity was not as sedate as we might think : in the 1890s there was a real danger of the brass band competition system collapsing due to riotous behaviour, judges being beaten up, and so on (Hailstone 1987:18). Often attached to the factory, mine or other workplace, brass bands were clearly a working class activity, which, again, could hardly survive without regular practice in the home. The standard instrumentation includes cornets, flugelhorns, tenor horns (tenor and baritone), trombones (tenor and bass), euphoniums, bass tubas and percussion.

Pearsall notes that the number of brass bands slowly declined after the turn of the century .

The receding enthusiasm was partly due to new ways of passing time, and the cinema habit cut into practising time. Some of the enthusiasm of amateurs was dampened by the wide sale of brass band records; previously run-of-the-mill brass bands had had little to compare themselves with except other local bands of a similar standard, but when bandsmen heard the virtuosos of their own instruments on record many realized that they would never approach that standard of performance ... (Pearsall 1976:137-8)

We know little about rehearsing and practising at home. The specialist press of the time might give us some clues. They would also be the place to trace information about music or singing lessons which may have been given in the home for keen enthusiasts of choral societies and brass bands. Other forms of home rehearsing would be common for operatic societies, which were popular in suburban areas (Pearsall 1973:85)

b) Musical evenings and singalongs

Moving away from activities intended to prepare events outside the home, we can look at musical evenings in better-off households. These would also be preceded by much practising, rehearsing, and music lessons in the home.

The development of musical evenings in the bourgeois home goes back several decades before 1900. The growing popularity of the piano, and the emphasis on individual virtuosity which went along with other Victorian values such as thrift, duty and self-help,⁴ were two of the vectors of this. The piano was central. Other musical instruments such as the flute might be seen, whereas some instruments would be considered inappropriate. The banjo had, with the arrival of ragtime, enjoyed a revival at the very beginning of the 20th century, but was considered too “lowbrow” for a musical evening (Pearsall 1975:127).

Derek Scott’s study, “The Singing Bourgeois” traces the growth of the market for domestic music through the nineteenth century:

In the early part of the nineteenth century, it was taken for granted that a song published with piano accompaniment was intended for home music making...since songs at public concerts were normally performed with an orchestral accompaniment until the 1840s (Scott 2002:45).

Women were most frequently the performers on these pianos, where bourgeois men would be more likely to choose a flute or clarinet. Girls of the bourgeois classes would generally find that piano lessons were a compulsory part of their education, whereas men would be allowed to choose whether they were interested in music or not.

By the 1870s, the Reverend Haweis waxed lyrical about the piano

that domestic and long suffering instrument, the cottage piano, has probably done more to sweeten existence and bring peace and happiness

⁴ Influential Victorian moralist Samuel Smiles wrote a book about each of these values: *Self-Help*, 1859, *Thrift*, 1875 and *Duty*, 1880.

to families in general , and to young women in particular, than all the homilies on the domestic virtues ever penned (cite Scott 2002:51).

Ever more manuals to learn piano playing, and ever more piano teachers catered to this demand.

If the formally organized musical evening was generally a preserve of elite families, the singalong and the party piece would be present in much more modest homes, at Christmas and New year for example. Family carol singing around the piano at Christmas, or a New year's party where each person present was expected to perform would not be unusual occurrences (Roberts 1978:29). Speaking of the period of the Great War, Maloney expresses the view that in working class circles a "party piece" for each person was "almost obligatory" (Maloney 2003:198). The title of the 1909 music-hall song "When Uncle sings the only song he knows" might serve to remind us that there is no reason to idealize working class participatory music making from the past. The music would have sounded, as music-hall recordings from a century ago do, to modern ears, somewhat basic.

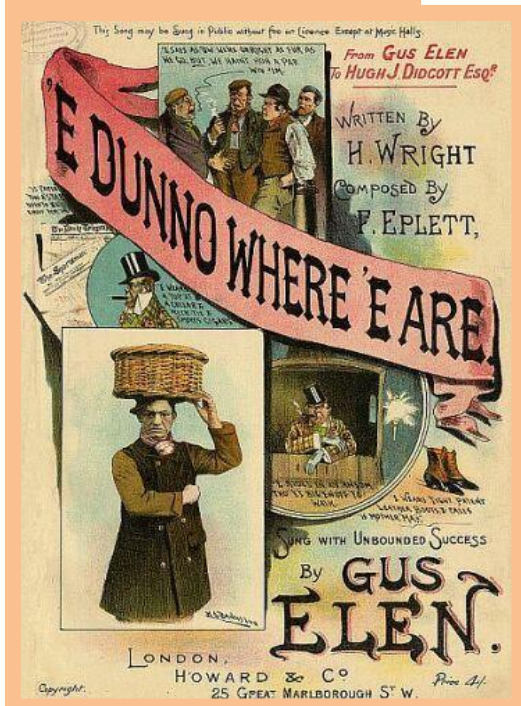
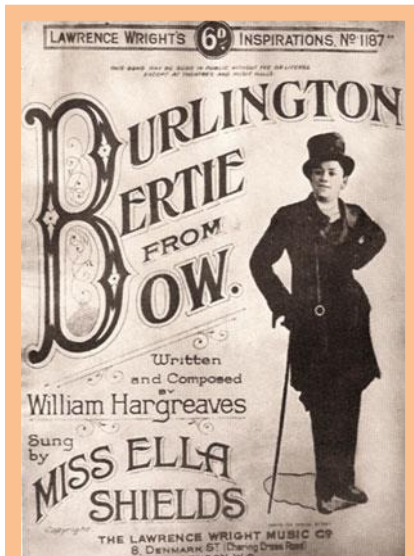
5 Questions of repertoire

a) Diversity

What type of song would people sing around the piano? Derek Scott points out that different genres of music – from opera to music hall – include social meanings which make them more popular in certain social groups, and many other writers on culture, such as Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1979), have underlined this crucial aspect. Nevertheless, one should not exaggerate the precision of social segmentation in the consumption of music. Orchestral concerts, in particular cheap municipal concerts ("penny concerts") held in purpose-built halls such as St George's Hall in Liverpool, drew mass audiences from all classes, and we have very reason to imagine there would be considerable mixing in the music appreciated in the home, even in a society as obsessed with respectability as British society was a century ago.

Scott's *The Singing Bourgeois* specifically challenges the idea that "Victorian parlour song" constituted a clear musical genre. He underlines the borrowings and hybrid forms involving Celtic and Afro-American musical traditions, which songwriters borrowed from. Towards the end of the nineteenth century there seems to have been a rise in forms of sacred song performed in the home. The repertoire of music evenings certainly continued to broaden in Edwardian times and afterwards. Music hall gradually won respectability (generally symbolized by the first Royal Variety performance presented in 1912 in the presence of King George and Queen Mary. Pearsall notes (1975: 120) that in Edwardian times, hosts of musical evenings were divided on whether or not

music hall songs might be sung. The social, ideological and emotional meanings attached to different genres remained, then as now, extremely powerful determinants of who chose to sing, or indeed listen to, what type of music.



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E.W. ROGERS.

Sung by
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It may not be easy to identify in great detail what music was sung in the home in the period 1900-1925. The policy of the British Library of stocking copies of all sheet music published, from the middle of the 1880s does however provide us with an extremely valuable archive. A brief look at the British library scores catalogue for the one year of 1910 allows us to glimpse the repertoires

involved. For the year 1910, the British Library stocks 15 309 scores. 5 955 were published in London, 142 in Glasgow, 235 in Chicago, 2 759 in New York, 45 in Cape Town, 6 in Melbourne, 82 in Toronto, 17 in Manchester ... It can be seen then that there is a certain internationalization of the production of sheet music of all genres, and in particular an exchange of music with the United States. This is in a period where domination of the music industry in general by the United States Industry was not possible, because of the centrality of live shows (music halls, pantomimes, musical comedies and so on). Almost all the live shows were performed by touring British artistes.

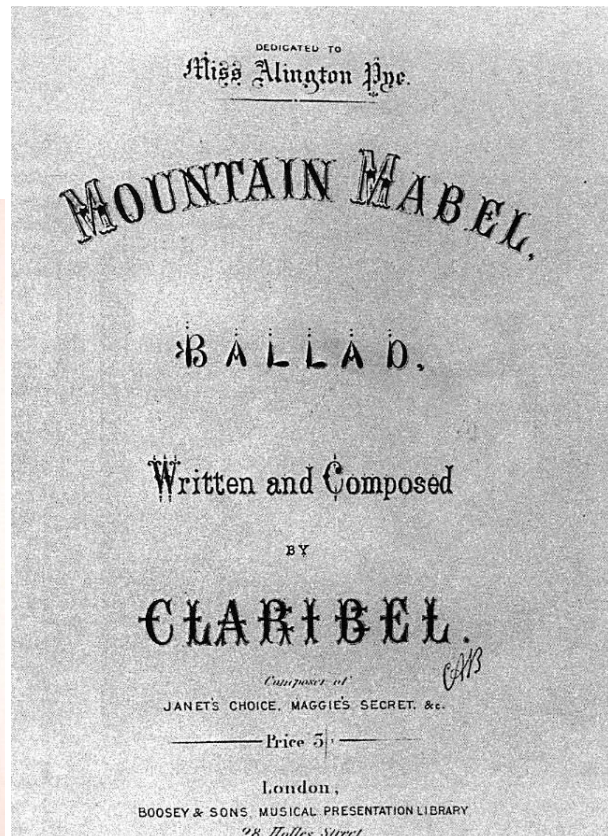
The first hundred songs which appear in the 1910 catalogue as published in London include a wide variety of genres: a large number of religious pieces make up the biggest category, followed by music hall songs, waltzes, school songs ("for massed school singing"). If one filters the results by the appearance of the word "piano", instrumental pieces dominate. Pieces including the note "in tonic sol fa" (and therefore suitable for readers with little formal musical training) are massively likely to be hymns.

b) Ballads

Ballads became a genre of their own in the late nineteenth century, and were often at the centre of the upper middle class musical evening. They are sometimes referred to as "drawing room ballads". The sale of ballads in sheet music was big business. The rise of "ballad concerts" from the 1850s meant that people could attend a concert and decide which pieces they wished to purchase to play at home. Ballads were deliberately written so as to be accessible to those with no more than moderate skill in piano playing and in singing.

Changes in the ballad industry led to changes in the way people treated their sheet music : until the 1890s "it was a common practice to build a collection of ballads suited to one's individual taste and technique and have them privately stitched together and leather bound . This practice declined in the 1890s when ballads could only be guaranteed to be in vogue for one concert season, rather than for several years."

Very large numbers of ballads were written specifically for this market, and there was some internationalization of the ballad repertoire, ballads being, in particular, imported from America and exported to America. They would sometimes be published in bound collections, such as 'Household melodies' published in the 1850s (Scott 2002:59). The title of the collection underlines its domestic aspect.



Sheet music for singing in the home, published in the US in the 1850s, an 1865 ballad published in London

c) Music publishers

The sheet music industry produced much more than ballads. Half a dozen large publishing companies such as Star, Feldman or Francis, Day and Hunter, employed popular music composers and lyricists; they published scores to comic songs, "blackface minstrelsy" songs, and songs from revues and musical comedies. In the case of music hall, they generally owned the rights to the songs, which they sold to the singers. They also bought songs from freelance authors, and organized competitions in the hope of finding the next smash hit.

The publishing houses took out regular advertisements in the trade press ("Buy Feldman's new songs, by the world's greatest writers" *The Encore*, Feb 11 1915) and issued warnings about pirating their pieces. A full-page advertisement in 1916 warned that the Feldman song "A Little Bit of Paradise" must not be parodied, and threatened legal action against theatres and artistes who did so (*The Encore*, 20 January 1916). Firms were always on the look-out for new ways to sell songs : for example, Lawrence Wright sold slide shows, illustrating their hit songs, to cinema managers.

Songs & Ballads

-- OF --

'98.

"The Best Collection of '98 Songs yet published."
—Vide Report of '98 Executive.

SEVERAL · IN · IRISH.

Original Song by Dr. Douglas Hyde.

ONE PENNY · POST FREE, 1½d.

Special terms to Societies, Clubs, &c.

DUBLIN: "THE UNITED IRISHMAN" OFFICE,
9 UPPER ORMOND QUAY.

Wholesale Agents—**MESSRS. EASON & SON,**
DUBLIN AND BELFAST.

Ballads about the Irish revolt of 1798, sold around 1900

Once a year, at the beginning of the pantomime season, publishers sold temporary "pantomime rights" to their songs, valid for the two or three months of the pantomime season. This was a crucial moment in the industry year: a pantomime hit might be sung in dozens of shows and sell hundreds of thousands of copies in sheet music, as well as a few thousand records. During the winter of 1916-1917, for example, Star publishers launched two major hits: "Take me Back to Dear Old Blighty" and "What a night! What a Waltz! What a Girl!". Each was performed by around fifty different artistes in pantos around the country. For the remainder of the year, only one artiste, as a rule, had the exclusive rights to perform a given song.

Music publishing was big money. Between 1900 and 1910, one of the main companies, Francis, Day and Hunter, released forty to fifty songs every month. Print runs were rarely under 25 000, and a hit song could sell hundreds of thousands of copies at sixpence apiece. In 1919, the number of people who bought the sheet music of the hit "That Old fashioned Mother of Mine" was greater than the combined membership of the Church of England and the Church of Scotland, whereas the sheet music of a waltz from "The Merry Widow" sold 200 000 copies (Pearsall 1973:238).

The commercial music publishers were proud of their reactivity. In 1875, when Captain Webb became the first man to swim the Channel, "a commemorative song was written, printed, and on sale, within 24 hours". From the hour war was declared in 1914, a feverish search for new hits broke out. Francis and Day organized a competition for a wartime song, and first prize was

taken by “Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag”. Abbott, who worked in the industry, describes his pride and pleasure in his work, “Bringing into being some catchy tune or song and watching its growth until it was being sung or whistled by half the adult population in the country”(Abbott 1952:11).

Who were the songwriters? Only a few were regularly employed as such; many lived a hand to mouth existence selling their songs (in pubs) to music hall singers for a few pounds. For the music hall genres, it is interesting to see that although a third of music hall performers, and perhaps an even higher proportion of the highest earners, were women, there were almost no women songwriters of music hall material. This was not the case for the more respectable ballad genre. Scott notes how the popularity of songs written for home performance and musical evenings opened up opportunities for women songwriters.

d) Non-commercial repertoires

Sheet music or song words could also be published for non-commercial purposes. The folksong revivalists or religious groups were the main examples, but there was also a trend for political organizations to print songs about their cause, either written and composed by activists from the movement or simply “put to well-known tunes”. Irish nationalist magazines and newspapers in particular had a strong tradition of using singing, and every issue of their newspapers would include new topical songs. These might be sung at clubs and meetings, but must often have been sung at home around a piano and/or accompanied by a “tin whistle”.

The movement for women’s suffrage also produced songbooks.. A “Votes for Women” pamphlet published by the direct-action oriented Women’s Social and Political Union contained seven songs, including “Arise! Oppressed of the Earth!” “There’s a Tramp of Many Feet”, “Rise Up Women!” and “See, We Come with Banners Flying”. The WSPU held concerts where suffragette songs were sung, but of course the songs must have been also present in the homes of activists and sympathizers.

The Socialist movement had its songbooks, such as “Songs for Socialists”, published by the Fabian Society in 1912. These songbooks included many songs by such figures as Robert Burns or William Morris, as well as some songs written by anonymous activists. The tone was very much one of looking forward to inevitable victory.

Participants in major strikes would sometimes sell songs in support of the strike as sheet music to raise awareness and to raise money for the cause. The majority of these songs have been lost, but we do have, for example, a song from the strike in 1910 at Cranston Heath in Wales, which proposed new lyrics to the classic rousing song “Men of Harlech”. Some working class songsters became well known for social and political ballads, such as Tom Armstrong,

who died in 1919. Roy Palmer's collection of "Songs of Social Change 1770 to 1914" (Palmer 1974) presents a few pieces from the period we are studying.

Conclusions

The aim of this contribution was to sketch initial parameters for research. The study of music in the home at this period could contribute to understanding the texture of home life and cultural experience in a way which studying show business cannot. The variety of home situations needs to be taken into account, and clearly working-class homes will have left fewer written accounts of musical activity. Indirect reflections of such activity in publishing and in the press, in sales of sheet music and so on will no doubt be the main sources for research.

It seems likely that the rising availability and sophistication of other forms of leisure such as the cinema, and the rising quality of available music in record form, reduced somewhat participatory forms of music in the home, whether rehearsing, organizing musical evenings or parties where everyone was expected to sing. It would be useful to be able to place music within the economy of leisure at home. Other activities, including reading (now that the majority in all classes are literate), playing cards, conversation, decorating, billiards in the bourgeois home etc. Certainly some observers have remarked upon the links between different leisure activities. Pearsall writes of bridge evenings:

the power of bridge was such that it all but killed fashionable "at homes" and nearly finished musical evenings (Pearsall 1973 : 166)

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