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The Classical Reproducing Piano Roll: A Catalogue - Index (2 Volume Set)

Larry Sitsky

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In the history of the piano, the brief appearance of the mechanical piano's most sophisticated manifestation, the reproducing piano (not to be confused with the pianola) is of special interest and importance. Unique among mechanical musical instruments, the reproducing piano had an incredibly refined capacity to reproduce the playing of the great pianists who recorded on it. The turn of the century to 1930 was a period of high activity during which thousands of performances were produced on the reproducing piano roll and this groundbreaking two-volume study surveys the work accomplished by the pianists who recorded their playing for reproducing pianos during this time. Though only 60 years have elapsed since the overnight disappearance of the reproducing piano, some performances by major artists of the time remain merely as lists in catalogs. Larry Sitsky has made a very thorough compilation of this rare material producing for the first time, in as complete a form as possible, the entire repertoire of classical music available on the reproducing piano roll.

The introduction contains a real treasure-trove of background information on this rare musical art form and details the technical aspects of the reproducing piano and of piano roll production as well as types of pianos and their restoration. Fact filled discussions of the various companies, their catalogs and their problems, and of the types of music recorded are also included here. With the aid of Volume I--Composers, the researcher can get a very clear idea of the type and scope of the repertoire played by the pianists of the time; Volume II--Pianists, gives the very first complete rollography of all the major (and minor) performers of the reproducing piano era--a period that was known as the Golden Age of Pianists.Two separate appendices address Arto rolls and Gershwin's 88-note rolls. The bibliography lists catalogs and the extent of the reference sources indicates the mountain of primary material consulted in an effort to make these volumes as complete as possible. This work is sure to be welcomed not only by scholars and collectors but also by pianists, lecturers, students, and serious music-lovers, as complete as possible. The two-volume set is a must for every library containing a music reference section: university, college, or conservatorium and is sure to become a standard resource for future researchers into this up-to-now neglected field.

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