



(LYRCD 6017)

*Lyrichord Presents*

## **Dinner and Dance Music in the 1920s & 30s**

*Popular Tunes Performed by the Era's Top Pianists on the Ampico Reproducing Piano*

*Performed by:*

**J. Milton Delcamp  
Adam Carroll  
Paul Rickenbach  
Ferde Grofe  
Victor Lane (Adam Carroll) &  
Edgar Fairchild**

**Henry Lange  
Victor Arden & Adam Carroll  
Murial Pollock  
Frank Milne  
Zez Confrey**

Ampico, which stood for American Piano Company, was one of the leading manufacturers of reproducing pianos in the early 20th century. Numerous musical luminaries, including composers Sergei Rachmaninoff and Fritz Kreisler and legendary pianists Arthur Rubinstein and Artur Schnabel, recorded for this musical marvel.

Emil Welte patented the first true reproducing piano that used a perforated paper roll in 1883. Early interest in the Welte-Mignon reproducing piano, combined with the longstanding popularity of standard player pianos, led several firms to take note. Ampico bought the invention and hired engineer Charles Fuller Stoddard, who had patented his

own reproducing piano design in 1908. When he joined Ampico, the company began manufacturing reproducing instruments as well as an add-on reproducing roll-playing mechanism capable of retrofitting some standard pianos.

There is a fundamental difference between the player piano and the reproducing piano. Although both use perforated paper rolls to convey the notes and tempo of the piece being played, the reproducing piano's rolls also contain all of the expressive dynamics. This means that the roll plays the exact performance recorded by the pianist. A piano capable of reproducing an existing performance on a paper roll soon came to be the high-end, technological/musical device that any affluent music lover wanted in his or her parlor.

By 1916, Stoddard's Ampico instrument had reached such a high level of sophistication in design and manufacture that the company decided to hold a live recital at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City. During the concert, pianist Leopold Godowsky performed a series of pieces live, and then let the Ampico piano perform the same works so the audience could compare the performances. The presentation proved both an extremely effective marketing tool and a dramatic means of converting skeptics by allowing them to hear the reproducing piano's fidelity to the original performance. The company later repeated this concert at Carnegie Hall for a larger audience. Perhaps the instrument's appeal to consumers lay in its ability to store—and reproduce on demand—music that recalled happy memories of the past at a time when technology and communications were advancing at a dizzying speed.

For a time, the Ampico and its direct competitor, Aeolian's Duo-Art, vied to sign the most well known pianists of the day to perform every kind of music. Both firms produced thousands of rolls in every musical genre during the first two decades of the 20th century, played by the most famous artists. Ampico went into receivership at the end of the 1920s, a victim not only of the Great Depression, but also of radio's rapid transformation into the preferred means of home entertainment. Even the thrill of having Rachmaninoff or Gershwin perform live by proxy in one's home could not compete with the immediacy and affordability of radio's airwaves, which provided a continuous stream of concerts, events, and information.

### **THOMAS VENTURELLA**

When Thomas Venturella was a young child, his first encounter with an automatic musical instrument took place at a county fair where he became mesmerized by the sight and sound of a player piano with violin. It was an experience he would never forget.

When Venturella was in high school, his uncle purchased an old Wurlitzer upright player piano and a box of 50 musical rolls for \$50.00. The uncle lived across the street from his family, and young Thomas made frequent visits to the magical machine. On many summer nights, the sound of the piano and the fabulous songs on the old rolls could be heard up and down the streets of his otherwise quiet neighborhood. After attending college and moving to Manhattan, owning a piano became a priority for him. The first

piano he bought was a gutted player, and it rekindled his desire to own the real thing. His second piano was another upright whose player mechanism was intact, although not in working order. Venturella saw that the piano's spool box read "Ampico." After conducting intensive research, he discovered that the Ampico was actually a complex and sophisticated recording/player system by which the performances of original artists could be faithfully reproduced. Armed with this new information, he decided to waste no more time on the second piano and set out to find a real reproducing piano. He achieved his dream of owning one of these magnificent machines with the purchase of a 1929 Haines Brothers 5-foot-4-inch grand piano containing a late Ampico A reproducing system.

### **THE HAINES BROTHERS AMPICO**

In 1980, Venturella purchased this piano from a family in Conway, New Hampshire, who had acquired it from the original owner, a former neighbor. (The piano was initially purchased by a man in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, as a wedding gift for his bride-to-be.) With the collapse of the stock market in 1929 and the subsequent Depression and World War II, the piano was not used much. It spent many years in the closed position with rugs stacked on top. Fortunately, it did not suffer the dismal fate of so many other reproducing pianos during the 1940s and 1950s. These two decades were particularly hard on reproducing pianos because the "player piano" had by then fallen completely out of favor with the public. Piano technicians were repeatedly asked to "take out that stuff" from player pianos when tuning them, and as a result, many pianos were gutted and great reproducing systems scrapped.

Even though the player mechanism in Venturella's Haines Brothers piano no longer worked, all the parts were there, which was the most important issue. With a little more homework, Venturella found a master rebuilder of Ampico pianos. Fred Streicher of Brooklyn, New York, lovingly and faithfully rebuilt the reproducing system—when finished, it played as perfectly as if it had just come from Ampico. Unfortunately, Mr. Streicher is no longer with us, but his memory and exquisite craftsmanship live on.

### **THE TRIUMPH OF DANCE AND POPULAR MUSIC IN THE 1920s**

The 1920s saw the emergence of the dance club. The music played in dance clubs became the dominant influence on all forms of popular music by the end of the decade. Compositions written in every musical form were arranged into popular dance melodies during this era. Classical works, folk songs, ballads, and even arias from major operas, were all ripe for conversion into dance club hits. Large numbers of sheet music copies, piano rolls and recordings labeled foxtrot, waltz and tango were produced; they spawned a generation of performers who became famous as bandleaders, dance club pianists, and recording and radio artists. Dance orchestra leaders included Ted Lewis, Harry Horlick, Louis Katzman, Bob Haring, Leo Reisman, Victor Arden, Phil Ohman, Fred Waring, and Paul Whiteman.

While the foxtrot, waltz, and tango still reigned as the most popular dances; the start of the decade witnessed the rise of a new kind of novelty dance. The first were the Breakaway and Charleston; both were influenced by African-American musical styles and rhythms, including the blues. Two Broadway shows in 1922 featured the Charleston,

which quickly soared to national fame. The next dance craze to sweep the country was the Black Bottom, which originated at Harlem's Apollo Theater in 1926 and quickly exceeded the Charleston's popularity. The Lindy Hop, born at the Savoy Ballroom in 1927, soon became the country's next dance obsession. The Lindy Hop would later evolve into what became known as Swing. Predictably, each new dance craze burned brightly for a short time, only to be superseded and replaced by the next, more popular, fad. The established ballroom dances like the foxtrot, waltz, and tango, however, remained consistently popular and were considered the gold standard of social dance during the 1920s and afterward.

Perhaps the most extreme and infamous craze, representing a melding of popular music and dance, was the physically punishing dance marathon that flourished throughout the United States in the 1920s and continued well into the 1930s. During these rigorous events, couples danced almost nonstop for hundreds of hours. The marathons sometimes lasted as long as one or two months, and contestants competed for significant monetary prizes. Whether or not the draw of cash awards was the reason for dance marathons' continuing popularity in the economically depressed 1930s is not entirely clear, but they—unlike 1920s frivolities such as flagpole sitting or goldfish swallowing—persisted well into the next decade.

Speakeasies, which emerged at the same time as the dance clubs, supplied an illicit but steady flow of socially lubricating liquor. They also became centers of popular dance and social activity, and were especially successful in urban areas. Big-city speakeasies were often elaborate enterprises, offering food, gambling, live dance bands, and floorshows. Police, frequently bribed by speakeasy owners, either left these establishments alone or provided advance notice of impending raids.

In the late 19th century, ragtime had become an enormously popular musical form. By the 1920s, ragtime's influence on popular songwriting and arranging was dramatic; this was especially true of piano music and piano rolls. Highly syncopated rag treatments found their way into practically all-piano arrangements of up-tempo popular music. A chorus or bridge of almost any popular tune could be heated up and switched into high gear if it was played in rag style. With its perfectly controlled but freewheeling and syncopated meter, rag's most effective vehicle became the piano's percussive keyboard. Player piano and reproducing piano rolls featuring ragtime or rag arrangements were widely distributed. Most popular were the novelty rags, such as Ampico artist Zez Confrey's "Kitten on the Keys" (1921), followed by his other huge rag seller, "Dizzy Fingers" (1923).

The technological advances that gave rise to the player and reproducing pianos as well as the mass production and distribution of piano rolls—and their influence on popular music—cannot be overstated. These musical innovations allowed anyone, anywhere to enjoy popular songs regardless of whether or not the person could play an instrument. This widespread consumption quickly moved popular music to a central position in the daily lives of millions. Almost overnight, the songwriters of Tin Pan Alley became hard-pressed to keep up with the demand, even as they wrote and sold an ever-flowing stream

of popular tunes. It was the ultimate fulfillment of a vision initiated by Stephen Collins Foster, the prolific but perpetually penniless songwriter who, some 70 years earlier, had been the first composer to make a living exclusively as a writer of popular songs.

The tunes and performances selected for *Dinner and Dance* are primarily rooted in the 1920s, and the art of popular song and piano arrangement was refined during that decade. Many of the form's most appealing and catchy numbers, however (particularly those written for Broadway shows by legendary names such as Irving Berlin and Rodgers and Hart), were written and arranged for the piano during the 1930s. The chronology of any musical form rarely fits neatly into a specific time period, and some of popular music's most glorious flowers are only able to bloom in succeeding decades—even if the culture, economy and values of the larger world have undergone profound shifts and alterations in the meantime. Such was the case of the division between the 1920s and the 1930s, when the stock market crash of 1929 precipitously dropped a curtain on the previous fast-paced ten years.

However, by the end of the 1920s, songwriting and arranging had become so sophisticated and powerful—along with the Tin Pan Alley system designed to perpetuate them—that the world's external forces, both mundane and monumental, would take several more years to completely reshape popular music. A listener encounters a form of musical expression in these performances that is so completely realized with such dexterous facility that it truly rivals the achievements of any previous musical epoch. Unless one is fortunate enough to hear the great Peter Mintun's performances—he is one of the few modern practitioners of the styles represented in this album—one is unlikely to encounter live piano performances and arrangements resembling the pyrotechnic tapestries of syncopation and flourish, tightly packed with interwoven melody lines tossed off with flamboyantly rolled arpeggios, that characterize the piano performances of 80 years ago. The virtuosity of these Ampico piano stars—locked for close to a century in faded, dusty paper rolls—embodies popular song's defining moment. We are impelled to return to one of history's most vibrant, creative, and carefree times: the eternally glittering world of the 1920s.

*Notes by Nick Fritsch and Lesley Doyel and Tom Venturella*

#### **THE TRACKS**

01	Dinner Music #3 Medley	7:52	11	There's a Small Hotel	3:51
02	Can't We Be Friends?	4:23	12	The Love Nest	2:44
03	A Cottage for Sale	5:16	13	Just A Gigolo	3:06
04	Time on My Hands	3:47	14	Ho Hum!	2:57
05	Selections from Sunny	4:16	15	I Found a Million Dollar Baby	3:29
06	Soft Light and Sweet Music	3:55	16	Bye, Bye, Blackbird	3:28
07	Tea for Two	4:48	17	Isn't It Romantic?	3:20
08	Do the New York	3:35	18	Doin' the Raccoon	3:07
09	Wedding of the Painted Doll	3:19	19	The Charleston	3:03
10	Singin' in the Rain	4:01			

*Total Running Time 1 hour 14 minutes*

## ANNOTATED LINER NOTES

### 1. Dinner Music #3 Medley

1. *High Jinks* 2. *Will You Remember?* 3. *I've a Garden in Sweden* 4. *I Would Like to Have a Girl Like You, Like Me* 5. *Lady of the Evening* 6. *When You're Away* 7. *Melody Land*

Performed by J. Milton Delcamp

Roll # 63983

Combining snippets from popular tunes in medley form was already the standard practice of lounge and dinner pianists by the 1920s, and was a form ideally suited to the piano roll, as they could fit numerous hit songs into the limited time on the roll. In addition to being a featured Ampico artist, Pennsylvania-born pianist J. Milton Delcamp also became the head of the company's popular music department in 1925.

### 2. Can't We Be Friends?

Music by Kay Swift; lyrics by Paul James (1929)

Performed by Victor Lane (Adam Carroll)

Roll # 212123

Kay Swift contributed "Can't We Be Friends?" to the 1929 musical review *The Little Show* by Howard Dietz and Arthur Schwartz. Swift was a composer and arranger. She frequently collaborated with George Gershwin, with whom she had a long affair that resulted in the breakup of her marriage. The song has become a jazz and torch song standard.

### 3. A Cottage for Sale

Music by Willard Robison; lyrics by Larry Conley (1929)

Performed by Harry Shipman (Adam Carroll)

Roll # 212641 - F

The poignant melancholy of this song, in which an empty cottage becomes the metaphor for a failed relationship, has made "A Cottage for Sale" a jazz and pop standard since it first appeared. Harry Shipman's rippling arpeggios and deftly positioned dynamic contrasts squeeze every ounce of emotion from this sad tale.

### 4. Time on My Hands

Music by Vincent Youmans; lyrics by Harold Adamson and Mack Gordon (1930)

Performed by Paul Rickenbach

Roll # 213791

"Time on My Hands" was first performed in the musical *Smiles* by its stars, Marilyn Miller and Paul Gregory.

### 5. Selections from Sunny

Music by Jerome Kern; lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II and Otto Harbach (1925)

Performed by Ferde Grofe

Roll # 65843

A bouncy medley of tunes from the musical *Sunny*: selections include "Sunny"; "D'ye Love Me?"; "Two Little Bluebirds"; "Sunshine"; and "Who?" Ferde Grofe was a composer, pianist, and Paul Whiteman's chief arranger from 1920 to 1932. He performed on more than 70 Ampico rolls as a featured pianist.

### 6. Soft Lights and Sweet Music

Music and lyrics by Irving Berlin

From the musical *Face the Music* (1931)

Performed by Victor Lane (Adam Carroll) with Edgar Fairchild

Roll # 214001

These artists performed many wonderful four-handed arrangements for Ampico as well as playing in Broadway musicals. Adam Carroll sometimes performed under the pseudonyms Victor Lane and Harry Shipman. He made nearly 500 recordings for Ampico, including recordings with Victor Lopez and duets with Victor Arden and others, and he also assisted on other rolls. Carroll died in 1974 at the age of 76.

### **7. Tea for Two**

Music by Vincent Youmans; lyrics by Irving Caesar (1925)

From the musical *No, No, Nanette* (1925)

Performed by Adam Carroll

Roll # 205521

*The Catalogue of Music for the Ampico* (Ampico Corporation, 1925), said of Adam Carroll, "...his personal playing is justly renowned. He brings to his recordings made exclusively for Ampico, an individual touch that enhances the effect of the original work in bringing out all its charm of rhythm and accent."

### **8. Do the New York**

Music and lyrics by Ben Oakland, J.P. Murray, and Barry Trivers (1931)

From the Broadway review *Ziegfeld Follies of 1931*

Performed by Victor Arden & Adam Carroll

Roll # 213611

*"Get the view of stone and steel  
Add a little sex appeal  
And do the New York"*

Although perhaps a perfect example of the Tin Pan Alley lyricist's desperate need to imbue almost any image with a provocative sizzle ("stone and steel" and "sex appeal"), "Do the New York" was a very popular tune throughout the 1930s, and would certainly have also been a hit in the 1920s. Its infectious, bouncy rhythm can be conveyed either in the slightly frantic up-tempo of the Victor Arden and Phil Ohman Orchestra version or in the more leisurely, medium-tempo shuffle perfectly expressed here by Victor Arden playing with Adam Carroll.

### **9. Wedding of the Painted Doll**

Music by Nacio Herb Brown; lyrics by Arthur Freed (1929)

From the film *The Hollywood Revue of 1929* (1929)

Performed by Victor Arden and Adam Carroll

Roll # 211971 - 721

"Wedding of the Painted Doll" is on the same roll as "Singin' in the Rain" (track 10), and both were featured in the film *The Hollywood Revue of 1929*. The rich four-handed arrangement by Ampico star pianists Victor Arden and Adam Carroll perfectly conveys the dance-band feel of the music.

### **10. Singin' in the Rain**

Music by Nacio Herb Brown; lyrics by Arthur Freed (1929)

From the film *The Hollywood Revue of 1929* (1929)

Performed by Victor Arden and Adam Carroll

Roll # 211971 - 721

The song "Singin' in the Rain" was originally written for the Los Angeles stage revue *Hollywood Music Box Revue*. It was later featured in the film *The Hollywood Revue of 1929*, where it was sung by the Brox Sisters and used as the show-stopping color finale of the film. Both "Wedding of the Painted Doll" and "Singin' in the Rain" are well-known by film buffs today as signature numbers in the Arthur Freed-produced film *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) starring Gene Kelly, Debbie Reynolds, Donald O'Connor, and Jean Hagen.

### **11. There's a Small Hotel**

Music by Richard Rodgers; lyrics by Lorenz Hart (1936)

Performed by Adam Carroll

Roll # 215791

From the Broadway musical *On Your Toes* (1936), the show that also introduced "Slaughter On Tenth Avenue," and "Glad To Be Unhappy."

### **12. The Love Nest**

Music by Louis Hirsch; lyrics by Otto Harbach (1920)

Performed by Murial Pollock

Roll # 201983F

From the musical *Mary* (1920), produced by George M. Cohan

Originally sung by the show's stars, Jack McGowan and Janet Velie, this song had many lives. For more than 30 years it was the musical theme for George Burns and Gracie Allen's long-running radio and television shows.

### **13. Just a Gigolo**

Adapted in 1929 by American composer and lyricist Irving Caesar from the original Austrian song "Schöner Gigolo, armer Gigolo" with music by Leonello Casucci and lyrics by Julius Brammer (1928)

Performed by Frank Milne

Roll # 213381

Caesar's adaptation of the lyrics transforms the song's original social message about the collapse of Austria after World War I into a wistful torch song of regret for a misspent, squandered life of hollow romances exploiting the generosity of older, well-to-do-women.

### **14. Ho Hum!**

Music by Edward Heyman and Dana Suesse

Performed by Victor Arden

Roll # 213551

The songwriting team of Edward Heyman and Dana Suesse wrote "Ho Hum!" in 1931, shortly before Suesse began writing songs with impresario and lyricist Billy Rose. Suesse was such an accomplished musician and composer of both popular and classical music that she was commonly referred to as "The Girl Gershwin." She cut several piano rolls for the Aeolian Company.

### **15. I Found a Million Dollar Baby**

Performed by Victor Arden

Roll # 213691

Another song called "I Found a Million Dollar Baby (in a Five and Ten Cent Store)" was originally written by Billy Rose and Fred Fisher in 1926. In 1931 Rose teamed with Mort Dixon to rewrite the words, and Harry Warren rewrote the music. Fred Waring, Bing Crosby, and the Boswell Sisters all recorded hit versions in short order. It was also featured in the revue Billy Rose's *Crazy Quilt* (1931) as well as the film *Million Dollar Baby* (1934).

### **16. Bye, Bye, Blackbird**

Music by Ray Henderson and Mort Dixon

Performed by Henry Lange

Roll # 207541

Bye, Bye, Blackbird, music composed by Ray Henderson with lyrics by Mort Dixon, was published in 1926, and first recorded the same year by Gene Austin. The introduction to this arrangement opens with a lively phrase from *Listen to the Mockingbird*, another upbeat song favored during the Great Depression. Pianist Henry Lange, at one time the pianist for Paul Whiteman's orchestra, took over Marion McKay's band, calling it the Lange-McKay Orchestra. Known for both composing and brilliantly interpreting



popular hits of the era, Lange, often billed as “Monarch of the Ivories,” recorded numerous roles for AMPICO. The high-spirited song *Bye, Bye Blackbird*, has been performed and recorded steadily since publication, and In 1982, famed saxophonist John Coltrane’s album titled *Bye, Bye, Blackbird*, was posthumously awarded a Grammy Award for “Best Jazz Solo Performance.”

### 17. Isn't It Romantic?

Music by Richard Rodgers; lyrics by Lorenz Hart  
Performed by Victor Arden  
Roll # 214191

Published in 1932 and featured in the film *Love Me Tonight* with Jeanette Macdonald and Maurice Chevalier that same year, “*Isn't It Romantic?*” has become a staple of jazz and pop performers’ repertoires, and has been featured in numerous films.

### 18. Doin' The Raccoon

Music by J. Fred Coots; lyrics by Raymond Klages (1928)  
Performed by Adam Carroll  
Roll # 211181 - E

Composer J. Fred Coots began his career in Tin Pan Alley working as a stock clerk and piano demonstrator until he wrote his first big hit, “*Doin' the Raccoon*” with lyrics by Raymond Klages. The song became an immediate hit after being recorded by George Olsen and His Music.

### 19. The Charleston

Music by James P. Johnson (1923)  
Performed by Zez Confrey  
Roll # 206191

Composer and legendary stride pianist James P. Johnson wrote the signature tune of the 1920s’ most famous dance mania for the Broadway show *Runnin' Wild* (1923). The unrestrained freedom embodied in the Charleston’s unmistakably African and jazz-influenced rhythm and steps—a freedom in perfect sync with its time—catapulted the dance to enormous popularity.

### CREDITS

Recorded, edited and produced by Nick Fritsch  
24 bit mastering  
Research and notes by Lesley Doyel, Nick Fritsch, edited by Laura Handlin

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We gratefully acknowledge important material found in the following sources:

Elaine Obenchain’s *The Complete Catalog of AMPICO REPRODUCING PIANO ROLLS*, 1977, William H. Edgerton Pub., Rochester, NY

*A Catalog of Music for the AMPICO*  
Copyright 1925, the AMPICO Corp., NYC

*The Piano: The Complete Illustrated Guide to the World's Most Popular Musical Instrument*

By Jeremy Siepmann, Published 1999, Hal Leonard Corporation, Milwaukee, WI

*Only Yesterday: An Informal History of the 1920's*  
Frederick Lewis Allen, 1931, Harper & Row Publishers,

**INTERNET SITES:**

The Player Piano Ring  
[www.player-care.com/the\\_ring.html](http://www.player-care.com/the_ring.html)

The Pianola Institute  
<http://www.pianola.org>

Preserving the music of yesterday  
<http://www.pianola.co.nz/index.asp>

Music For Pianos  
<http://musicforpianos.com>

AMICA – The Automatic Musical  
Instrument Collectors' Association  
<http://www.amica.org>

Player Piano Group  
[www.playerpianogroup.org.uk](http://www.playerpianogroup.org.uk)

The Mechanical Music Digest (MMD)  
<http://www.mmdigest.com>

**Other Interesting Links:**

The Peter Mintun Website  
<http://www.mintun.com/>

Michael Arenella & His Dreamland  
Orchestra  
<http://www.dreamlandorchestra.com>



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## A Piano Christmas in the 1920s

Lyrichord takes you back in time to a holiday spent around the piano, when the most popular Christmas music of the 1920s came on paper rolls played on the family AMPICO. Stylish medleys of Christmas carols and nostalgic holiday tunes were performed by the likes of **Adam Carroll, Fritz Kreisler, John T. Howard** and other celebrated pianists of the time. More brand new digital recordings of a classic 1929 Haines Bros. Ampico reproducing piano owned by collector Thomas Venturella. Features many familiar tunes such as "Good King Wenceslas," "The First Noel," "Oh Come All ye Faithful," as well as all but forgotten musical gems, popular in the exciting and transitional decade of the 1920s. Share in a holiday celebration exactly as it might have been heard some 85 years ago! AMPICO Piano Stars on this release include **Andrei Kmita, Adam Carroll, Clair & Fairchild, John T. Howard, Fritz Kreisler, Pietro Yon, and L. Leslie Loth.** (Click here to see product listing at [Lyrichord.com](http://Lyrichord.com))



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