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Pushing past the confines of femininity: Music for women in Dunedin 1907-1950: A vehicle for agency, recognition and social connections

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I would like to thank my supervisor, Erik Olssen and the friendly and helpful staff at the Hocken Library. I am also grateful of the willingness of Norine McNab, Betty Anderson, Olive Nieper, Ellice Irvine, Valda McCracken and Sister Kathleen Halpin to tell me their stories and for sharing their love of music with me. Without all of these people, this research essay would not have been possible.
Music is a form of self-expression, community or national culture, political voice and ethnic identity, among many other things. This dissertation examines the way that music can be a central influence to life for women, in a social structure encompassing the factors of gender and femininity, socio-economics and to a lesser extent, ethnicity. Music can provide a livelihood, form of (small) income and a way of making social connections in a sphere that can function both in and out of the home. It is also an activity where people often cross social boundaries. I have chosen to examine the extent to which music gave women agency, social acceptance and enjoyment in the Otago district from 1907 to 1950.
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European music in New Zealand was present from the very first stages of contact. When Abel Tasman first entered Golden Bay in 1642, the sailors, using the baroque trumpet, exchanged notes with the wood flute and horn of the Maori. James Cook, in awe of the Maori canoe songs, wrote in 1770, "I have often heard above one hundred paddles struck against the sides of their boats at once, so as to produce a single note."¹ Music as a vehicle for crossing social and cultural boundaries is not a twentieth-century phenomenon, as boundaries were crossed both unwittingly and wittingly from early settlement. John Mansfield wrote of the Bay of Islands: "the efficacy of music in the ritual of conversion was as well known to Pacific missionaries...the Maori began to familiarise themselves with Western music, principally from psalms and hymn tunes."² Maori music has been seen (by Philip Hayward, Tony Mitchell and Roy Shuker, for example), as a tool in the process of gaining recognition, and power.³ Agency has been given to Maori through cultural self-assertion, but cultural self-assertion (on a lesser scale) was also used by different groups of Europeans, for example, the Irish, in their jigs and fiddles, or the Scottish, in some areas, with psalms.

Music was an integral part of life for Maori women, although I have not discussed this in detail. Music was more accessible to them and unlike European musical culture, male and female positions were more equal in devising songs (which was a source of mana).⁴ Women predominantly composed waiata, especially waiata aroha (love songs) and waiata tangi (laments). Popular songs sung for amusement or work, such as waiata poi (action songs) or rangi (tunes), were also traditionally androgynous.⁵

European Music in New Zealand is a tradition based on a combination of cultures. Emigrants to New Zealand brought with them the music of home and the

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² Ibid.
music of their class, race and gender. Whalers and sailors from America arrived with fiddles, flutes, harpsichords and guitars. There were traders with music boxes, harps and piano accordions, vaudeville performers and missionaries with barrel organs and hymnbooks. Music was also influenced by the influx of settlers from the Australian goldfields. Even before the differences between the wealthy or aspiring with their pianos and parlour evenings, and the pioneer drifters with their folklore began to diminish, music had suffused into New Zealand.

Like Maori music, early European music in New Zealand was a response to New Zealand society, life and landscape and its substance was performative. Music in early nineteenth century Dunedin, however, was more pious and performances were rather slow to take off in comparison to the other main centres, chiefly because of the predominance of the lowland Scots who embarked to New Zealand in 1848, following their break from the established church of Scotland. The Presbyterian Church favoured psalmody, which was often unaccompanied in the early nineteenth century. Musical life in Dunedin was therefore church orientated and less sophisticated than the light classical concert programmes being offered in Auckland or Wellington.

Musical activity was also slow to take off in Canterbury, as most of the early settlers were musically illiterate. There were some professional musicians who sought to promote music in the colony however, as much for its ideology of being a good moral pastime than the music itself. Church music was important in Christchurch and the Wesleyan music festivals in the later nineteenth century had a strong level of participation. The church was also a gathering point in rural areas for organised singing. Miscellaneous concerts were another popular form of musical entertainment in the countryside in Canterbury, paralleling the rise of the band movement in rural and urban areas. In contrast to public concerts of popular

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5 Ibid., p. 2.
6 Spittle, Counting the Beat, p. 1.
8 Ibid., pp. 33-34.
10 Ibid., p. 442.
music, the gentry often made music privately, at musical evenings in the drawing room of their homes.\(^{11}\)

It was Miss Catherine (Kate) Redmayne, an English concert pianist, who, determined to broaden Dunedin's musical repertoire, promoted instrumental and vocal concerts and helped to establish the Dunedin Harmonic Society in 1856.\(^{12}\) Redmayne taught the piano and voice and began giving concerts in Canterbury and Southland as well as Otago. The refinement of Dunedin’s musical taste was not changed overnight, however. In 1858 an advertisement for 'a grand sacred miscellaneous concert' by Redmayne proclaimed that “we have no doubt that such an evening's entertainment, so novel and rare in this place, will be fully appreciated by the good in Otago, but [sic] a few good old scotch songs in the programme would have been an appropriate addition to the evening’s amusement.”\(^{13}\)

The arrival of gold prospectors to Central Otago dramatically changed the nature of nineteenth century Dunedin music. Prosperity and people flowed into the city and in 1862, the Princess and the Royal Theatres were built. Touring companies began to visit Dunedin, and orchestral and chamber concerts flourished.\(^{14}\) Musical life also became more spirited as the audience diversified. This had an effect on the Calvinist doctrine that was entrenched in Dunedin society, and Thomson writes, "Dunedin’s pious musical and social fabric was...under threat from the time that modest discoveries of gold were reported from the hinterland."\(^{15}\) Minstrel shows and vaudeville performances were especially popular. The San Francisco Minstrels were the first touring company to arrive in Dunedin in 1861, and they received much less criticism for the lack of respectability of their performance than they had in Australia, and drew a large and rowdy Dunedin crowd.\(^{16}\) Tension emerged between secular music and religious psalm singing that was to continue into the twentieth century.

\(^{11}\) Ibid., pp. 444-447.
\(^{12}\) Thomson, p. 35.
\(^{13}\) Peter McIntosh, ‘Research Notes Relating to Miss Redmayne’, Hocken Library, MS 1556.
\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 36.
\(^{15}\) Thomson, Oxford history of Music in New Zealand, p. 22.
\(^{16}\) Peter Downes, Shadows on the Stage: Theatre in New Zealand – the First 70 Years. Dunedin, 1975, pp. 43-44.
In rural areas, music was important for building communities, as well as having entertainment value. More popular forms of music such as jigs and folksongs were especially common. Folk music has a sense of orality and of history being passed down. The goldfields helped to establish a New Zealand, and local tradition, as folksongs were created that described gold diggings, but they also described colonial society, physical hardship, bush clearing and farming. J.G.S Grant complained, “in these colonies a squeaking minstrel is more honored than a philosopher.” Dance halls and hotel entertainment (and ‘dancing girls’), “a dancing hall...[being] part of every hotel in the glorious digging days.” Richard Hay goes on to describe the rough nights had by many, recalling a young woman whose night had been “just beautiful. I have only missed one dance...my partner was outside having a fight.”

Choral groups were popular in the colonial life of New Zealand. The popularity of choral societies in Britain was rising at the time people began emigrating to New Zealand, and this had an effect on the early development of choral groups in the colony and the subsequent late development of instrumental music. The Dunedin Harmonic Society was founded in 1858, and like other early musical groups in New Zealand, had an educative aim. In smaller communities however, choral groups developed a sense of solidarity. Socially, the piano, harmonium, concertina and the violin were instruments used to entertain and enliven colonial life. The band movement was also far-reaching, influenced by English military regiments and volunteers during the New Zealand Wars in the 1860s.

In the major towns, trade in instruments and sheet music grew. By 1854, businesses in Dunedin were importing instruments, and in 1865 Charles Begg constructed the first pianos made in New Zealand. The New Zealand and South

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20 Ibid., p. 8.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., pp. 213-214.
Seas Exhibition in Dunedin in 1890 was a turning point in the musical life of Dunedin. Overseas musicians poured into the city and some, for example Signor Raffaello Squarise, settled and took up leading music-teaching positions. By the beginning of the twentieth century music teachers were abundant, and the piano was the most popular instrument.

Musical evenings or soirees became popular in middle-class homes, as relief from the often unrefined, drunken behaviour pioneering life brought to the city. For those aspiring towards upward mobility, it was important to establish some visible form of social respectability. Charles F. Hursthens wrote in *The New Zealand Emigrant’s Bradshaw* (1861), “we do not go to New Zealand to live in a tree or eat from a tub.” The middle-class ideology of self improvement also coalesced with church going, resulting in the improvement of church music through the umbra of social respectability.

The piano was an important possession carried over to New Zealand from the Old World. It was a product of the Industrial Revolution in Europe and in its construction, performance and place in the home, it reflected social aspirations of style and mobility. As well as being a symbol of middle-class etiquette and Western civilisation, it was a tool women used for seducing men. For those hoping to make a new start and aspiring for social mobility, it was an essential part of the middle-class Victorian home. In the environment of musical evenings, either a single instrument or the piano was used, and it was common for daughters to give recitals. Hursthens also encouraged “any fair emigrant to take a piano with her as part of her battery of charms.”

Victorian notions of music as a femininity-enhancing tool were central in England, and having musical knowledge (in singing or piano) for entertainment in the home was thought to improve any

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24 Ibid., 214-217.
30 Ibid., pp. 72-73.
young woman's marriage prospects. The photograph on the following page shows the Black family of Næsby in 1900 dressed in their finery, with musical instruments. The women are at the piano and violins.

Nineteenth century New Zealand colonial life shared many aspects with colonial Australia and America. The concept of music for gifted women as a social attainment was also prevalent in the United States. Concerts and art music were common by the mid nineteenth century and by the last third of the century; many amateur performers took on a new seriousness, encouraged by the success of a few woman concert artists and gains for women in education in general. Women began to enter the music profession as music teachers, an acceptable avenue of employment. By 1900 music teaching in America was the fifth largest vocation for women, and it steadily increased, so that by 1910, 66 percent of women who had employment were music teachers, usually of piano or voice. By 1900 American 'lady' orchestras were formed, and groups of women were performing light and classical works. Women were also active in nineteenth century America as composers. While composing popular music for parlours and dances was deemed acceptable, there was strong opposition to women composing art music. Critics were disturbed at what they thought was the 'feminisation' of music, and argued that proof of women being unable to write music lay in the absence of great women musicians in the past.

Colonial Australia was both similar to, and different from colonial New Zealand. The culture of Australia's colonial roots lay in its establishment as a penal colony and the majority of women were hard-worked, rarely literate, and their lives centered on child rearing. Only a small number of elite landowners, merchants, officials, ministers of religion, or professionals educated their daughters. Those who were educated were constrained by the boundaries of Victorian social behavior.

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34 Ibid., p. 184.
36 Ibid., p. 206.
An example of middle-class refinement, connected to music and of women playing the piano and stringed instruments.
and were taught all that was thought necessary; reading, writing, and the ability to look after household accounts, sew, and play the piano or sketch.\textsuperscript{38} Australian colonial roots were different to the more affluent immigrants who made their homes in Dunedin. Even so, there were similarities in the unpaid contribution women made to the arts in both colonial Australia and New Zealand and the practice of middle class women making music as drawing room entertainment in a “rude and hostile land” in Australia parallels Dunedin during the gold rush.\textsuperscript{39} Thousands of pianos were shipped to Australia and New Zealand during the colonial years and numbers far exceeded European norms. Pianos gave an appearance of respectability to the middle class. It was difficult for Australian musical women to be noted, and musical standards were not high. Vocalists such as Dame Nellie Melba, or Ada Crossley, were initially the only women musicians to receive acclaim, but by the 1890s, gifted instrumentalists began to emerge from drawing rooms into the public light.\textsuperscript{40} Nonetheless, the majority of women musicians remained amateurs.

A fairly patriarchal, elitist attitude towards art music was evident in Dunedin in the early 1900s. Charles Baeyertz, a rather outspoken critic of music in Dunedin and New Zealand, “saw the piano and proper speech as bulwarks of civilisation.”\textsuperscript{41} Baeyertz established the Triad, a journal dedicated to the arts, literature, science and music and the first issue was printed and published in Dunedin in 1893. It was perhaps the most eminent journal of the time, promoting the arts on such a high level, although some tension was evident between the effort to raise New Zealand’s musical consciousness and popular appeal.\textsuperscript{42} Journal contributors constantly compared New Zealand culture to Europe (and Australia) and journals such as the Triad continuously tried to improve the arts, music and literature. Art music was a pretext for social and cultural respectability, especially for the middle class. This was a trend carried through to the 1920s, despite advances in music in general education.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 32.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p. 227.
\textsuperscript{41} Olssen, \textit{A History of Otago}, pp.156-157.
This cartoon was published in the Triad in 1914 and it shows the patriarchal nature of 'musical criticism.'
This portrait by Richard Wallwork was exhibited in the Christchurch Art Society's Exhibition and published in the Triad in 1914. It reflects the perception of the serious (male) music performer.
Musical societies such as the Dunedin Choral Society, the Philharmonic Orchestra, the Society of Women Musicians, or the music circle of the Otago Women’s Club were all patronised by those in the upper circles of society, particularly unmarried young women. The activities of women’s musical groups were often printed in the Otago Daily Times, in the ‘Notes for Women’ pages, resembling a window of social announcement of the cultural élite. Adjectives used to describe women in musical performance, such as “charming”, “tasteful”, and “attractive” befitted the popular ideology of women conforming to femininity, and those who succeeded were seen to approach “dangerously near perfection.” The advertisement on the following page portraying a woman at a piano reflects the image of femininity that was connected to women and music.

Women musicians of Dunedin were given relatively little national recognition, although this was beginning to change by the end of the period. In any case, Beryl Hughes argues that “exceptional people in careers in the arts...are...of limited interest and assistance to other women; they are guided by their own abilities and ambitions rather than by fixed methods of training or by accepted rules.” For women involved in music over the first half of the twentieth century, there were often no precedents or rules to follow. Professionals were an anomaly, given the accepted roles of women as, first and foremost, wives and mothers. Music within the home was encouraged, however, and gave rise to the large number of women who became music teachers in Dunedin. Hughes argues that “teaching is an occupation which is considered well-suited to women, since it can be seen as an extension of their child-rearing functions.”

Music teaching was an acceptable avenue of employment and livelihood for women and it could remain within the (respectable) private sphere of the home. It became such a popular phenomenon, especially for unmarried women that it began to challenge the level of seriousness and professionalism that many of the cultural elite in Dunedin aspired to. Sir Thomas Sidey caused quite a stir when, in 1907, he

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43 Otago Daily Times, 3 August, 1909.
H. COLLIER & CO.
Are offering a large number of

High-class Pianos

TERMS OF OFFERED PAYMENT ARRANGED FROM 20s. MONTHLY

By JNO. BRINSMEAD & SONS,
EANESTAFF & SONS,
CHAPPELL & CO.
METZLER & CO.
GORS & KALLMANN, &c., &c.

At English Cost Price, PLUS THE DUTY.

Old Instruments taken as Part Payment.
PIANOS TUNED in Town and Country by Certified Tuners. All Districts visited between New Plymouth and Dannevirke.

H. COLLIER & CO.
An advertisement for pianos in the Triad, 1902 reflects the image of an elegant woman at the piano.
tried to introduce the Musicians’ Bill into Parliament, to “draw a line of demarcation between trained and untrained teachers...[that] would be a guide and protection to the public.” Sidey had high ideals for the Registration Bill (among the numerous causes for registration he was involved in). He devised the bill to provide music teachers with status, a common voice and training, not to mention expelling incompetence and raising the level of musical education, but the Music Teachers’ Registration Bill did not come into effect until 1929.

Technological developments, especially the gramophone and the radio challenged musical performance in Dunedin, and a paradox was manifest between musical outlets such as the church, the Triad, and in the theatres and dance halls. Despite this tension, art music was still frequented and enjoyed and the number of music teachers continued to steadily increase over the 1920s, fifteen percent higher than the population increased. The piano remained an important part of family life. For women who had less access to music and musical instruments, the church choir offered musical opportunity. Women (coalescing with the puritan ideology that saw women in New Zealand as the most frequent churchgoers), mostly dominated choirs. The choir not only offered music, but a social outlet as well, through practices and outings. Organists in the city churches such as Knox or First Church were usually male, but in the suburbs, there was also some opportunity for women to use their skills. Port Chalmers was one such church with women organists from the late 1890s until 1931. This was unusual considering the church had a pipe organ, which required more skill than the pedal organs that were common in more remote areas.

Through the Depression and the war years, music remained an important morale booster, and activities such as community sings helped to raise public confidence and enthusiasm. The need for unity also brought popular and classical music

closer together in aid of soldier entertainment. However, community stress was evident in the smaller numbers of concerts and dances during the war.\textsuperscript{50}

Through the testimony of various women who have been involved with music over this period, the importance of music to their lives seems central, even paramount. Music has provided an outlet for expression, an income, and a common ground for many acquaintances, friendships, relationships, and community involvement. This dissertation examines the role of music in the lives of women over the first half of the twentieth century. It aims to examine the extent to which music provided a subsidiary income, but more importantly, a livelihood and sense of community for women, away from the isolation of their roles within the home. While giving women these avenues music also functioned to conform, to a degree, with ideas of femininity and this is examined through popular perceptions of women through reviews, records of involvement and interviews. Over time however, women gained agency through music and were able to take on more serious roles as musicians.

This introduction has established the background of music in New Zealand and Dunedin. Chapter one focuses on classical music and public perceptions of women involved in this genre, through music reviews and journal articles. It deals with music teachers and classical performers, both choral and instrumental. Chapter two considers music as a social function more closely. The role of the church choir and other choral groups for women are examined, which perhaps functioned as a more accessible form of involvement with music, along with the rise of music in education, which gave women greater opportunities. Chapter three provides a profile of women who have been involved with music on different levels, in the community, as piano theory and singing teachers, in performance (both classical and popular dance music) and music within the home environment.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., pp. 25-27.
This chapter discusses women's involvement with classical music in Dunedin beginning in the early twentieth century, through to the 1950s. It focuses on the popularity of teaching music (especially the piano) for women and responses to those who performed publicly. In the early twentieth century, the cultural elite controlled art music in Dunedin to a considerable degree. Most people who were musically inclined sought the development of classical music in a relatively new country and looked back to England and Europe to set standards. Men held the more prominent musical roles of city organist, or conductors of orchestras and choirs. It was also mostly men who expounded the aspirations for cultural development in newspapers and journals like the *Triad*, which upheld social respectability and notions of civilization. The Victorian image of young women learning the piano or perhaps the violin for drawing-room entertainment, and to enhance their marriage prospects, was a lasting representation that lingered through to the twentieth century. Married women were expected to remain within the private sphere, taking on the role of wife and mother. Yet despite restrictions on women entering the music profession, music teachers reached a considerable number in Dunedin, enough to cause concern to those who wanted to control the vocation. Musical societies also provided (mostly unmarried) women with community involvement, solidarity, and a livelihood outside of the home. The degree of agency that music gave to women grew over the period and women gradually gained more prominent roles and more positive local reviews. Two World Wars and the Depression influenced musical activity in Dunedin, through the impetus of boosting morale and entertaining soldiers. The dynamics of music in Dunedin was also influenced by the rise of the movies, radio and popular youth culture in the form of dances. Live performances of classical music declined, although the number of women music teachers remained consistently high on an overall scale.
The tension between popular and classical music that became distinct in Dunedin during the nineteenth century was present in the next. Vaudeville performances and theatre were popular in Dunedin at the turn of the century, as we will see in the next chapter, but most musical concerts, especially from individual performers, functioned as a fundraising device. There were lots of variety concerts for women to get involved in, especially through the Dunedin Amateur Variety Company. For example, a ‘Grand Concert’ by the Dunedin Choral Society was held in June 1901, where various women performed vocal solos. The concert was in aid of a man who had recently lost both his arms.¹ Music demanded community involvement for such causes, but on a less popular level, classical music was a criterion for the level of cultural advancement, compared to that in both Australia and Europe. For example Thomas Johnstone, Pharmaceutical Chemist, published a ‘music and pictorial album’ of the Otago jubilee in 1898 that showed the advancement and development of Otago from 1860 till 1898. As well as photographs depicting ‘then’ and ‘now’, the musical programme included a number of venerable pieces by Schumann, Chopin and Kuchen. People were very much connected to their Old World roots, and this was also evident in the musical selection. The verses for Fesca’s ‘The Wanderer’ easily describes emigration:

As far I wander, lonely to roam, no more for me the comforts of home
...as on the ocean’s wild surging breast...tilo to the end of the world I am led...further and further onward I go, wander o’er mountains, through valleys below, still e’er remaining where e’er I be, true to my country and faithful to thee.²

The cultural elite pushed strongly for the advancement of music in New Zealand, none more so than Charles Baeyertz, who published the first issue of the Triad, a monthly magazine dedicated to the arts, from Dunedin in April 1893. Baeyertz’s son wrote that his father thought of his subscribers as “the intelligentsia, the cognoscente the upper stratum of society and the crème de la crème.”³ Baeyertz

¹ ‘Dunedin Choral Society Cutting Book’, Otago Early Settlers Museum, B35B.
² Thomas Johnstone, Music and Pictorial Album, Otago Jubilee, Dunedin, 1898.
was rather arrogant in his ideals for his magazine and in his often-shattering
criticism in literary or musical reviews. This reveals the extent to which he sought
cultural advancement in New Zealand. The Triad often contained international
music news, such as recent deaths or appointments and constant reference to great
international musicians, such as Mozart, Brahms, Beethoven, Liszt and Bach.
Couched in the lofty language of Baeyertz’s articles and reviews was his
underlying ideology, a belief in the great principles of civilisation: “the progress of
civilisation and the spread of education have undoubtedly tended to the elimination
of the illiterate, or at least the non-lettered, musician.” The motto of the Triad was
“didicisse fideliter artem emollit mores”, or “to devote oneself faithfully to the arts
softens the manners.” The portrait on the following page shows a man playing a
grand piano in a formal manner, which associates high classical music with men.

Sometimes the Triad gave praising reviews, but it could be equally scathing.
The Dunedin Orchestral Society, for example, was at one time “deserving of the
liberal support its concerts always receive”5, but another time Baeyertz said: “there
are about fifty-six players…and probably not more than ten…have sufficient
virtuosity on their instruments to enable them to do more than merely play the
notes…”‘wi’ deefeeculty.”6 Women did not often feature in the Triad and when
they did they were not exempt from Baeyertz’s criticism. Travelling performers (in
most cases travelling women were piano performers or singers), were perhaps
better received. This reveals that critics held a sense of cultural inferiority of a
relatively new country without an established tradition, that the mark of a decent
musician was overseas training. For example, when Miss E. H. Mills of Sydney
performed at the Dresden Piano Company’s salon in 1907, “the salon thronged on
the occasion with a large and fashionable audience, most of the musical profession
being present.”7

The Triad encouraged the development of music and articles often reflected the
desire for music in education. A scientific influence was present, residing from

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5 Ibid., vol. 11, no. 1, January 1903, p.32.
6 Ibid., vol. 15, no. 3, June 1907, p. 35.
7 Ibid., vol. 14, no. 12, March 1907, p.37.
Enlightenment ideologies of progress, that "mentally, music has an appreciable value on the stimulation and development of concentration, discipline, [and] observation."\(^8\) Despite this, there was also concern about the proliferation of music teachers in Dunedin, most of them young women. Baeyertz wrote "at every turn there are signs of a great increase in the study of piano music." While he conceded that music teachers were doing a "certain amount of good", he was worried that "there are some serious aesthetic dangers attending the process."\(^9\) Underlying his concern was the fact that young women were making household income through music teaching, which was frowned upon by more than one member of the Dunedin elite. Out of 109 people listed in Stones’ Directory in 1907 as being employed as a musician, music teacher, tuner, or instrument maker, 68 percent were unmarried women.\(^10\) Baeyertz argued that "even with the humblest amateur the practice of music should be a labour of love."\(^11\) An obvious concern to Baeyertz was that some young music teachers were "unqualified". The Triad also reflected a view that many pianists were learning and teaching music merely to follow fashion and culture. An advertisement for pupils (in which qualifications were not stated), in 1909 highlights Baeyertz’s concerns: "wanted, (by capable teacher), few pupils for pianoforte: beginners preferred: 15s per term of 12 lessons."\(^12\)

Baeyertz was not the only Dunedin man to feel strongly about the development of music in Dunedin and New Zealand. In 1907 T. K. Sidey, Member of Parliament for Caversham, asked the House of Representatives to refer his proposed Musicians’ Bill to a select committee. According to Sidey it was of vital importance for music teachers to be registered, in order to provide uniformity, and a general body to represent the interests of music teachers. The most important reason was to guide the general public, as to which teachers were qualified and

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\(^10\) Stones’ Otago and Southland Directory, Dunedin, 1907. The teachers were determined as married or unmarried by their title of Miss or Mrs. I assumed that music teacher or teacher of music meant teacher of the piano, as other instruments or harmony and theory were usually specified. Some teachers were listed twice if they taught outside the home, but they were only counted once.


\(^12\) Otago Daily Times, 3 July, 1909, p. 1.
those who were not. Evidence suggests that Sidey and his supporters may have been looking to Britain for similar patterns, as a Teachers of Music Registration Bill had been introduced to the House of Commons in 1906 for similar reasons. The debate that followed in the New Zealand Parliament reflected ideals to regulate the standard of not only music in New Zealand, but also the type of people who could be involved in teaching (in other words, the respectable). Clause thirty-four of the proposed Bill stated, “no person could enter the society...unless he was a person of good character and reputation.”

The Bill directly threatened women teachers as they formed the majority of the profession and this was used to argue against the Bill. W. H. P Barber, Member for Newton, said “music, they all knew, provided a respectable and honest way of earning a livelihood for many a mother with a family to support, and he did not think any restrictions should be placed on this.” One member was concerned that the Bill tended to support high-class music, and it would overshadow the less renowned (or qualified) teachers. In particular, opposition was created in response to proposals in the Bill for a benevolent fund, and the fact that music teachers would have to have been teaching for three years or more and sit an examination.

Although Sidey had high ideals for the Musicians Bill, in reality it did not seem feasible, and considering the poorly paid nature of the music teaching profession, it created substantial dissent. F. M. B Fisher, of Wellington Central, said, “imagine these unfortunate professionals having to make provision for a benevolent fund! It was satire of the highest order.” T. Mackenzie, of Waikouaiti, thought there were far too many women engaged in music, and opposed any encouragement towards the Bill at all. He thought that:

While it was desirable to encourage music in the highest sense, he thought there was too much music taught in the colony and too little instruction given in practical household economy. One could get lots of women who knew enough music to destroy a tune, but very few who could cook a chop.

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14 Ibid., p. 496.
15 Ibid., p. 495.
16 Ibid., p. 496.
If people had more instruction in practical domestic economy and less in so-called music it would be better for the lives of the people of New Zealand. Patriarchy dominated, and music was seen as a leisurely pastime for women. Their role was defined first and foremost by their position as wives and mothers. Olive Nieper recalled that in the 1930s the Registered Music Teachers’ Association “wasn’t easy to get in” and a teaching diploma was necessary.

Sidey’s Bill was unsupported by the general public of Dunedin and it received rather sarcastic support from the Otago Daily Times, which reported that “professional music teachers of repute shall be permitted to write after their names the awe-inspiring symbols Reg. Mus, or the equally graceful and cabalistic emblem I. S. M...” The Bill was also described as “formidable” and the article reflected public sentiment that the Bill was not necessary. Sidey brought it back into Parliament in 1909, under the amended name of the ‘New Zealand Society of Musicians’ Bill’, and was once again ridiculed for its high standards. One member said “the child Mozart could have passed any examination set by the musical geniuses of Europe, yet under this wretched Bill of Mr. Sidey’s he would be kept out of the New Zealand Society of Musicians were he heard.”

Te Rangi Hiroa (Sir Peter Buck), asked: “if a Maori has been professionally engaged in playing the nose flute for a period of five years...is he entitled to register, and if not, why not?” Music, it seems, was a sphere which the public thought should be kept away from politics: “it would be a decided blunder for this colony, at the instigation of any section of teachers, to pass legislation that is not absolutely necessary into the sacred domain of music.”

Sidey abandoned the issue until in 1927, the ‘Music Teachers’ Registration Bill’ had its first reading in the House of Representatives. It was passed on the 6 October 1928 and was to come into force on the 1 January 1929. The Registration was to set up a Board of Trustees to control and administer the registration of music.

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17 Ibid., p. 495.
18 Interview with Olive Nieper, Dunedin, 19 April, 2001.
21 Ibid.
teachers, but unlike Sidey's original intentions, board members had no power to conduct their own examinations before entry.23 The nine members of the board were split into four districts (Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin) and to held office for two years. Their principle function was to receive and authorize applicants for registration within their authority.24 The conditions of membership were not as strict as the first presentation of the Bill in 1907. Each applicant had to pay a fee of 10s/6d to enter and either have been living in New Zealand as a music teacher for one year, hold a degree, diploma, certificate or license to teach from a recognizable source, or simply be competent to teach music. The payment of an annual fee by music teachers was in part to be used to establish a fund to assist teachers "who are in necessitous circumstances."25

Just as music was to be kept away from politics, women's involvement with music was often kept away from the public sphere. The Victorian image of young women playing the piano to enhance their femininity was a lasting image and it was reflected in a number of novels, journals and advertisements through to the 1930s. The novel *Heather of the South*, written by Rosemary Rees in 1924, for example, was published in London, but set in New Zealand (in Wairiri) and portrayed the protagonist as being embarrassed by having to run the family farm after the death of her father. Yet music was seen as important, "even if professionally she could never hope to do anything with her music, the talent and the joy of expression in this one way remained to her."26 Her beauty softened public opinion and the fact that she played the piano proved her femininity.27 For example, the character Stephen was attracted by her piano playing, which provoked "a sort of sensuous longing stirred by the well-known syncopated music...this nocturne brought...something nobler, something deeper, not so much a stirring of the senses as of the heart."28 The relationship of women to music was seen as decorative and music was an added enhancement. When Miss Amy Murphy, a young Dunedin

23 Jennings, p. 15.
soprano, first ventured to Melbourne to perform in a musical comedy, the *Otago Daily Times* reported that “the audience regard her as merely ornamental.”

Music provided opportunity for women, but once they were married, their place within the home was more entrenched and there were fewer prospects for music outside the home. Music for women was to a large degree confined to playing the piano or singing, within the home environment, but by the early twentieth century women were increasingly playing the violin. The structure of the Dunedin Philharmonic Society elucidates the place of women in music. Raffaello Squarise, who came to New Zealand to lead the New Zealand and South Seas International Exhibition Orchestra in 1889, founded the society in 1904. The programme for the first concert for the first season in December 1904 shows that 92 percent of its performers were women. Further, 88 percent of women in the Philharmonic Society were unmarried. While men played all of the instruments involved, including the flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, cornet, French horn, trombone, euphonium, tympani and drums, women only played the violin, viola, cello, or harp. The second concert of the second season, in June 1906, followed a similar pattern. Eighty-five percent of the performers were female, and 93 percent of those women were unmarried. Women seemed to be restricted to playing certain instruments, and up to a certain point in their lives.

A cultural consciousness of inferiority was pervasive in early New Zealand and Australia, and the mark of a good musician in Dunedin seemed to be overseas training, or travel. This made it hard for women to be taken seriously at the top level, because few were able to travel abroad. The high ideals and values for women involved in classical music is reflected in the fact that the first woman was not elected to the Board of Trustees of the Music Teachers’ Registration until 1950. It was a prominent local musician, Miss Mary Martin, who was elected. Martin had spent twenty years teaching music at the University of Otago, as well as teaching at

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28 *Rees, Heather of the South*, p. 61.
31 ‘Dunedin Philharmonic Society records’, Hocken, MS-1012.
This photograph of musicians in Roxburgh was taken in 1900 and shows women with violins. It also reflects a relationship with music to the environment in rural areas.
Auckland and Victoria Universities and had studied abroad during the 1920s.\textsuperscript{32} It seems that women were only seriously considered for such positions once they had reached a very high level. Martin had remained unmarried, which presumably allowed her to follow her profession to such a point. Other music teachers and performers, such as Olive Nieper (piano) and Valda McCracken (voice), also remained unmarried. Music gave these women a way to gain independence and income, make social connections and to travel, "it made life much more exciting."\textsuperscript{33} Those who did train overseas were regarded highly and were publicly praised. Miss Mary Donaldson, a Dunedin violinist who managed to train at the conservatorium in Brussels, was deemed "Dunedin’s most popular artist" on return.\textsuperscript{34} Stage presence was still judged critically, despite her level of achievement: "there would seem to be a tendency to swing the bow too much, but the result shows this to be rather a mannerism than a blemish." Rather paradoxically to Donaldson’s acclaim, her faultless performance was described as approaching "dangerously near perfection."\textsuperscript{35} Perhaps such a display of local talent by a woman was unprecedented. Valda performed as a soprano at various concerts in Dunedin and around New Zealand and agreed that stage appearance was important. She remembered keeping records of each performance and the gowns she wore, so as not to wear them twice.\textsuperscript{36}

Piano teaching continued to be a popular avenue of employment and pastime for women, but during World War One various other forms of musical entertainment gained importance. While musical comedies and war pictures dominated theatres, combined musical concerts brought together the top level of the musical community in Dunedin. The Belgian Relief Fund Concert in February 1915 brought together the National Reserve Band, Dunedin Orchestral Society, the Liedertafel Society and the Orphan’s Club, along with two female and five male soloists.\textsuperscript{37} Women were received positively over this period and played a

\textsuperscript{32} Jennings, p. 24.
\textsuperscript{33} Interview with Valda McCracken, Dunedin, 20 August, 2001.
\textsuperscript{34} Otago Daily Times, 26 July, 1909, p. 6.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 3 August, 1909, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{36} Interview with Valda McCracken.
prominent role in boosting morale. Involvement in community concerts also provided a way for women to contribute to the war effort at home. The Trinity Methodist Church anniversary concert in July 1915 featured women soloists who “sang with so much satisfaction that they were heartily recalled.”

The *Triad* developed a heightened seriousness building up to, and during, World War One. Its articles became more newsworthy and war articles and comics dominated it. Baeyertz, however disapproved of the large scale musical concerts put together for the war effort, undoubtedly because they closed the gap, to an extent, between classical art music and popular appeal, challenging the level of cultural advancement through music. In response to ‘A Grand Concert’, held in Dunedin in 1916, he wrote,

...aren’t there enough horrors already connected with warfare? Can’t these well-intentioned people realise that their vain imprudence in asking the public to pay two shillings individually to hear such miserable efforts is likely to prejudice the patriotic concert cause in the long run?

Women continued to be active in classical music over the 1920s and 1930s in Dunedin although the flamboyance of the 1920s in music was fashionable only for those with the leisure time and income to support involvement. Opportunities were present for involvement in the Dunedin Orchestral Society, the Philharmonic Society, the Red Cross Choir, Dunedin Choral Society, Dunedin Dramatic and Operatic Society, as well as the smaller groups and choirs formed by prominent local music teachers. The music circle of the Otago Women’s Club held monthly meetings at which they were entertained by visiting singers or musicians, or created their own concerts at afternoon tea parties. The average monthly attendance in 1925 was forty-eight, and the minutes reported that “the year’s programmes have been both varied and interesting and have minus one or two exceptions been given chiefly by members of the circle.”

For some women in the upper levels of society, especially unmarried women without children to care for, clubs and

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41 Ibid., p. 8.
societies such as the Women’s Club provided a musical outlet and an educational and social stimulus. By 1927 the average monthly attendance had risen to sixty.\(^4\) During the 1920s the *Otago Daily Times* began publishing ‘Notes for Women’, where “items of social interest and topics relating to the home are invited.”\(^4\) The column reported in detail the social activities of women around the city, and the music circle advertised its entertainment. The Dunedin Orchestral Society was another outlet for the participation of unmarried women. The programme for the first concert in 1927 shows that 90 percent of women who performed were unmarried, predominantly playing the violin, viola or cello.\(^4\)

Solo women performers, although well received, were still seen by local reviewers in relation to their femininity and choice of repertoire, rather than their abilities as musicians. Miss Maggie Foster gave a violin concert in October 1921, and the *Otago Daily Times* reported: “the young violinist has a charming stage presence, and played her several selections – from classical music to the tuneful ‘swanee’ – in a manner which won the entire approval of the audience.”\(^4\) The approval of the audience was therefore in relation to her style and appearance. A ‘Women Musicians Debate’ was held at the Dome Festival Exhibition in Dunedin sometime over 1925-1926. The judge’s summing up of the negative side further elucidates the picture of femininity that women in music were supposed to resemble: “the purity of her intonation and of her voice with its musical cadences, her unhurried and deliberate phrases, her graceful diction and her earnestness gave her a distinction that admitted no rivalry...high ideals...she holds of her art.\(^4\) The judge elevated her by describing purity, grace, earnestness and high ideals, but within feminine ideals.

The New Zealand and South Seas International Exhibition in Dunedin over 1925-1926 provided an excellent opportunity for Dunedin musicians to participate, although there were many overseas performers as well as those from elsewhere in

\(^{42}\) ‘Otago Women’s Club, Music Circle minutes’, 21 October, 1925, Hocken Library, AG-642-10/01.
\(^{43}\) Ibid., 28 October, 1927, AG-642-10/02.
\(^{44}\) *Otago Daily Times*, 3 February, 1925, p. 12.
\(^{45}\) ‘Florence Sumner records’, Dunedin Orchestral Society Programme, 1927, Hocken Library, MS 1232.
\(^{46}\) *Otago Daily Times*, 11 October, 1921, p. 7.
\(^{47}\) ‘Women Musicians Debate’, Otago Early Settlers Museum, 1988/357/
New Zealand. The grand opening of the exhibition combined 400 voices of the exhibition choir with over forty-five instruments in the orchestra. There were daily musical entertainments as well as a cabaret at night, which was mostly played for by male bands.

A favorite of the Dunedin public was Miss Dorothea Vincent. Miss Vincent was an English pianist who wooed audiences in 1925 with her “magnificent performances of everything she played, and she was most enthusiastically applauded.”48 Dunedin had seldom entertained such a serious woman musician and the public was inspired and impressed. Her pieces “stamped her as a highly-motivated and artistic musician and as belonging to a class rarely heard.”49 Miss Vincent was also a member of the Society of Women Musicians in London, and women musicians of Dunedin rallied to hear her both play and speak. Miss Beatrice Barth, a prominent music teacher, held a recital for Miss Vincent in the city and nearly seventy women attended. The possibility of establishing a Society of Women Musicians in Dunedin was discussed. Its objectives were to be a forum for discussion and ideas, recitals, to entertain visiting artists, and to encourage “friendly discourse among members.”50 There was some debate over the qualifications necessary for membership. A committee was set up to decide whether teachers’ only could join, or amateur musicians could join as well. But by 1929, when the Society was well established, the President advised members to make sure there was “no lonely outsider.”51 The inclusive nature of the society ensured that music provided a common ground for social contact, although it maintained a level of seriousness that was dedicated to the musical development of its members.

As in England, most women gave up their public musical involvement on marriage, and never turned professional. Ethel Smyth, an English feminist musician, spoke out about the prejudice towards women in music during the 1920s and 1930s, and she was criticised strongly for doing so. She wrote a number of

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49 Ibid.
essays exposing the issues relating to women and professionalism, and the problems facing orchestral musicians. Smyth was determined to be a role model for future women musicians and composers, and she challenged discriminatory views on women in music. For example, she reacted against articles published by the Royal Music Association like J. Swinburne’s article on women and music, in which he argued that a woman’s mind is not biologically creative, and any woman who went beyond the accepted sphere “insults her own sex.”

Despite the escalation in popularity of radio, movie theatres, and dances in the thirties, women were still actively involved in music. Charity concerts in aid of the unemployment fund, for example, gave more of an impetus to musical performance, and the celebration of music. A farewell concert for Miss Meda Paine, a prominent chorister, in December 1930, included well-known women pianists on two pianos, and a cantata for a chorus of women’s voices with soprano, tenor and baritone solos. Performances on two pianos were popular at this time, as they gave a fuller sound and a more exhilarating atmosphere. The Depression sparked a need for a boost in community morale, and music was an ideal vehicle. Live performance provoked a different response from the radio, which was reflected in the “excellent public response” to community sings. Leading vocalists performed special items.

Wages for musicians were not high, especially if performances lasted for only a few nights. An arbitration award in 1930 set wages for musical performers to play at skating rinks, public and private dancing assemblies, in hotels, cabarets, cafes, refreshment rooms, and in connection with dramatic performances, variety and picture entertainments, shows, circuses, operatic, comedy and opera companies, orchestra and other concerts and engagements at outdoor amusements. The wages varied according to the type of entertainment, the number of performances and the hours in which they performed. Theatre performances generated the most income.

51 Ibid., pp. 15-18.
53 Ibid.
54 Otago Daily Times, 3 December, 1930, p. 3.
at £4 per week for six performances, while vaudeville performances could make £3 / 15s for seven performances. Entertainment for concerts, dances and assemblies depended on the hour that the entertainment finished and ranged from £1 to £2 / 12s / 6d.56 Teaching could often be more profitable, especially if the teacher had qualifications and reputation. In 1926, teaching terms could range from £1 to £5 (for prominent musicians), for one lesson.57

Besides well-known local women musicians performing and being better received by the musical public, the idea of women and music as a parlour-room pastime lingered. ‘Notes for Women’ (which was biased towards articles reflecting women in the home environment), wrote about the importance of music in cultural life. People were still looking back to England where, “at receptions, at homes, at dinner parties and the like, instrumental and vocal music plays a prominent role in the entertainment offered to guests by the society hostess, and an endeavor is made by her to secure the attendance of some prominent musical or local artist.”58 This ideal was reflected in the popularity of teaching music to young girls. The Every Girls’ Club often had musical entertainment at their social events. They were mostly vocal or violin solos.

People in Dunedin seemed determined to retain the level of local musical development, even on the brink of economic depression. ‘Music Notes’ reflected on the drop in piano sales in England in December 1930: “in these times of financial difficulties the drop is not abnormal and does not suggest...that the art of piano playing is dying out.”59 Rather, it was popularly believed that there was an increase in children learning the piano in New Zealand. As the table and graph below demonstrate, unmarried women music teachers peaked in 1930 and remained high through to the mid 1930s, before dropping again in the 1940s.60

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58 Otago Daily Times, 5 December, 1930, p. 16.
59 Ibid.
60 Because of the large time span from 1907-1950, I looked at the Stones’ Directory every five years only, but began in 1907. The discrepancies in the years 1909, 1921 and 1936, were due to the availability of information at the Hocken Library.
Table 1 Source: Stone’s Directories, 1907-1950

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<th>Year</th>
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<th>Unmarried women</th>
<th>Men</th>
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<tr>
<td>1950</td>
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<td>46</td>
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</table>

Figure 1 Source: Stone’s Directories

Trends for violin and singing teachers were also similar, although there was a more dramatic decline in the 1940s, unlike music teachers, who remained abundant into
the 1950s. The graphs indicate that singing lessons were more popular than violin lessons. It is also interesting to note that married women taught singing but rarely taught the violin.

Figure 2 Source: Stone’s Directories

Figure 3 Source: Stone’s Directories
Piano teachers remained abundant, and the concern that many teachers were only amateurs was still being discussed. Mary Martin thought music was “the worst taught subject” and promoted its development in general education, to foster a more discriminatory public.  

Music teachers taught from the home, but some had studios in the city, especially better-known teachers. These were concentrated around the Octagon, Moray Place, Stuart Street and Princess Street. One prominent music teacher with a school of music in the city was Beatrice Barth. Born in 1877 into a musical family in London, Beatrice’s father, Arthur J. Barth was a professor of music and immigrated to New Zealand in 1881. He then became the organist and All Saints’ Church, followed by First Church and Knox Church. Beatrice was educated by tutors and was taught music privately. When her father died in 1905 she took over his music rooms in Princess Street to contribute to the family income. Her two sisters also began teaching and they established the Barth School of Music in 1921 and “under Beatrice’s firm direction, the Barth sisters built a thriving music-teaching practice, which had a positive influence on Dunedin’s musical community and cultural life for several generations.” The three sisters were also active in the Society of Women Musicians of Otago (Beatrice being a founding member in 1925) and were involved with the administration of the Trinity College of Music in Dunedin. The school was well known for its high academic standards and for the rare praise Beatrice gave to her pupils.

_Music in New Zealand: An Independent Journal_ began appearing monthly from Wellington in 1931 until 1937. Its intention was “to weld the interests of the musical profession generally and keep amateurs in touch with musical effort throughout the Dominion.” It was also established at a time when radio was becoming increasingly popular. A concern over this was evident in articles written over the rise of popular music and the programmes broadcast by 2YA, which primarily functioned for their entertainment value. Classical music was evidently

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61 _Music in New Zealand: An Independent Journal_, vol. 6, 1936-37, Wellington, unpaginated.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
still tied to cultural refinement as contributors promoted musical growth, which they thought of as being nationally important. For example, the journal reported on the passing away of the singing teacher Mrs. E. M. Wilkie of Dunedin, “she was a woman of culture and attractive personality.”

Musicians were therefore given cultural respect. The journal shows it was a time of dislocation and strain: “times of material stress are those in which we turn instinctively to the expression of spirit, beauty, and light in music…” People were searching for a sense of commonality and community spirit. Those in the musical community of Dunedin were also looking for musical solidarity, as technological developments and popular waves in dance, fragmented the demand for live art music: “we still lack that vital factor in all national artistic life – cohesion.” Coordination between music makers and listeners was advocated, and between the professional and amateur musicians, and popular or folk music. The gap that had once been decidedly pronounced was now becoming closer in the imagination of musicians under relative strain.

By the 1930s prominent women musicians were taking a more evident leadership role. For example, Meda Paine established her own choir and Mary Martin conducted the Women Musicians’ String Orchestra. Recitals on two pianos continued to be popular and were often performed by women, such as Mrs H. C Campbell and Miss Mary Fraser. The Society of Women Musicians of Otago had a strong membership, and reflected growth since its first establishment. In 1934 and 1935, there were 144 members 72 percent of whom were unmarried.

Contrary to evidence that music in Dunedin was relatively strong over the 1930s, Nancy M. Taylor argues that musicians in New Zealand had experienced a slow decade by the start of World War Two and teaching was the stronghold of the profession. She argues that an increase in learning music during the war (or in the case of Dunedin, a continuation of the increase in the 1930s), was the result of increased affluence in New Zealand. Along with pianos and music teachers, piano

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65 *Music in New Zealand*, vol. 1, no. 1, April 1931, p. 2.
66 Ibid., vol. 1, no. 2, May 1931, p. 44.
67 Ibid., vol. 2, no. 12, March 1932.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., vol. 4, no. 6, September 1934, p. 10.
70 ‘Florence Sumner records’, Hocken Library, MS 1232.
accordions, guitars, ukuleles, clarinets, trumpets and saxophones were in high demand. Choirs were more popular than orchestras and according to Taylor, by 1943 women still mostly only played string instruments. She quotes Colin Muston, the conductor of the Auckland Orchestra, on women playing brass instruments, that "the physical strain is too great on a woman." During the 1940s dances in the Town Hall and other venues operated at full swing. A few women vocalists performed along with the band, but dance hall entertainment was mostly male dominated. Women were therefore listeners of popular music and they also dominated the dance floor, especially over the war years because of the absence of men. Advertisements in the Otago Daily Times suggest that over this period the sales of radios outnumbered the sale of pianos, showing that a variety of music was more accessible and in demand. Despite this, the number of female music teachers remained high. In February 1945, there were forty-one advertisements for women resuming music teaching for the year, compared with eight advertisements for male music teachers.

Women were also playing more varied instruments by this time and Dunedin hosted a Ladies Brass Band, and the Dunedin Ladies Scottish Pipe Band. These bands were requested to play at various sports events and soldier farewells or memorials. The majority of the pipe band was made up of women in their teens or twenties, which was most likely encouraged by the development of music in schools since the 1920s. They were received well after their first public appearance in 1948:

The fourteen kilted lassies who led the march past of women hockey players at Logan Park on Saturday were making history for Dunedin, for they are claimed to be the first solely female pipe band the city has had. Although other pipe bands have included women pipers, this band is unique in that all members, even the drum major, Miss Helen Mackenzie, are girls.

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72 Ibid., pp. 1206-1207.
73 Ibid., p. 1207.
74 *Otago Daily Times*, 3 February, 1945, p. 2.
76 *Evening Star*, 30 August, 1948.
The bands also held social evenings, as well as having weekly practices.

World War Two had an effect on music in the community. At the annual meeting of the music circle of the Womens’ Club in 1941, the chairwoman “stressed the uplifting influence of music when one’s thoughts were clouded by wartime conditions.” Ellice Irvine (nee Nieper) often gave piano performances during the war and she recollected that a patriotic influence was needed, as “everybody was sort of depressed during the war.” There was a decline in demand for classical music during the war years, but a renewal of interest seems to have occurred after the war. Mary Martin addressed the issue in Landfall in 1947. She reflected that broadcasting had also had a devastating effect on music during the Depression, and there had been a pessimistic attitude held by musicians: “the general standard of taste is underestimated by those organizations, not excluding the National Broadcasting Service, which are responsible for our musical fare...they are blind to the upward trend of taste that is so obvious to those with power to interpret the signs.” Classical musicians were therefore threatened, and were still espousing the notion that cultural development needed to be addressed. While still looking back to England and Europe, the sense of cultural inferiority had diminished, and New Zealand talent was defended: “we are too often made to feel by visiting artists that we are an uncultivated people without knowledge or taste for whom anything is good enough.”

Overseas performances declined with the increase in war movies that generated popular appeal. The radio also provided more intimacy than public concerts and recitals. Even so, it was a time of “collective stress” and fund-raising required mass participation entertainment. The escalation of involvement in the Pacific during 1942 also brought more soldiers to Dunedin, requiring more soldier

77 ‘Otago Womens’ Club records, Music Circle Minutes, 1940-1948’, 14 March, 1941, Hocken Library, AG-642-10/04.
78 Interview with Ellice Irvine, Dunedin, 19 April, 2001.
80 Ibid., p. 212.
entertainment. A “spirit of collective unity” was felt, and new groups bonded together to form new social identities in response to pressure.  

By looking at women’s involvement with classical music from the early twentieth century until 1950, we see the growth of agency and involvement for women in music over a time that spanned two world wars and a Depression. In 1907, men dominated classical music circles in Dunedin. Their music dominated orchestras and their voices dominated editorials, reviews and journals. Music was a central part of the notion of civilization, with respect to cultural refinement and respectability. Yet within this ideology, women were seen in relation to music in terms of femininity. The Victorian image of a young lady at the piano prevailed. Women had some access to music and performance around the city, but it was more acceptable for women to teach. There were a number of unmarried women music teachers around the city, which caused concern, shown by the attempted implementation of Sidey’s Musicians’ Bill. This supports the commonly held ideal of women as wives and mothers. Despite this, women’s musical involvement, especially teaching, steadily increased and peaked in the 1930s. While those who performed publicly gained prestige and social acceptance (as well as fairly critical reviews, which were especially concerned with stage manners and appearance), women also patronised musical societies, which had a strong social element. The need to boost public morale during the Depression was achieved through music and women were especially active. During the 1940s and 1950s however, women’s involvement declined. This was certainly the result of war, but also the escalation of popular culture through the radio, cinema and dances.

82 Ibid., pp. 100-109.
This chapter focuses on musical involvement as a social activity, rather than an individual achievement or means of income. Music as a social activity was a form of self-expression on a more base level than classical music and provided a common ground for shared needs, among times of stress such as wartime or simply as a type of enjoyment. On a popular level, however, there are few records besides those left by organised groups and institutions such as the church. The church was one avenue where it was acceptable, even perhaps expected of women to take up an active role, and this included membership to the choir. It would be safe to say that all churches in Dunedin over the first half of the twentieth century had a choir, fairly well dominated by women. Valda McCracken often performed as a soloist in church choirs, “every Sunday, every church, no matter what denomination, always had a soloist and sometimes I’d have three on one Sunday and I’d be rushing from the Caversham Presbyterian Church down to the Church of Christ and to Central Mission, all over the place.” Valda recalled that all churches had a good choir and music was “very alive” within the churches. 1 Through the church choir women had an avenue of social involvement and entertainment, which was especially valued. For example, Sister Kathleen Halpin described having “lots of enjoyment and fun” from involvement in the Royal School of Church Music festivals. 2 Choral groups besides the church choir, such as the Dunedin Choral Society, were also a popular avenue of musical performance and social activity and as the period progressed, choirs were formed by some of the larger businesses around Dunedin. The Dunedin Competitions Society encouraged a great deal of musical activity around the city and many groups were formed for the purpose of entering. Children often competed in the Dunedin Competitions, through private tuition and through schools groups. Music in education was formalised in the 1920s. This affected the growth in the number of music teachers and pupils as well as the rise in musical performance in the 1930s. It also provided an increased opportunity for young women to learn music, especially if private tuition was unaffordable. This chapter also takes into consideration the theatre, which had always been a popular form of entertainment in New Zealand, but also the rise of overseas popular styles in cinema and radio, which competed with live musical performance.

1 Interview with Valda McCracken, Dunedin, 20 August 2001.
Presbyterian church music emphasised psalm singing in the nineteenth century and a conservative view was held, that rejected the use of instruments in the service. For example, in January 1886, the North East Valley congregation held a meeting where it was decided that the introduction of instrumental music to the church was premature. This emphasis on the Calvinist doctrine created a significant tension between religious and secular music. But by the early 1900s, Presbyterian churches began to change, and had become more liberal in their views on instrumental music in services. William Paget Gale began his position of organist and choirmaster at Knox in 1905, and he infused a new seriousness into the choir, formalising regular practises, and including anthems at Sunday services, which were previously only sung on special occasions. A performative element in the church was strengthened, despite the Presbyterian emphasis on worship.

In 1888 the North East Valley church voted for instrumental music in the church and Miss Ness was appointed as church organist. She left in 1891 when she married, which highlights two important points about women and music within the church. It was significant that a woman was appointed organist, but it was perhaps more acceptable in a smaller suburban church, than in the larger inner city congregations. Miss Ness’ retirement reinforces the point that women only took up music seriously before marriage.

The choir was an important part of church life, not only religiously, but in a cultural and social way. Social contact was an important element of the Knox church choir and must have been especially attractive to the women who formed its majority. In March 1906, an outing at Puketeraki for the choir and friends gathered eighty people and it became an annual event. Weekly practises also became a social element and supper was provided. Knox Church began to form a social relationship with other congregations in the early 1900s, becoming less exclusionist and denominational. Contact with other churches ensured that musical people in Dunedin knew of each other in a social circle and combined services were held regularly. For example, in 1905 an open-air concert was held at the Botanical gardens with the Moray Place

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2 Interview with Sister Kathleen Halpin, Dunedin, 9 July 2001.
3 'Presbyterians in North East Valley, 1882-1982', Knox Archives, 94/24/55.
5 Ibid., pp. 40-41.
6 ‘Presbyterians in North East Valley’.
7 Andrews, p. 41.
Congregational Church, and in 1907, the choir performed a Cantata at the East Taieri Presbyterian Church.⁸

H. R. Jackson argues that Sunday church services were less well attended after World War One, as other social activities (such as sport) took precedence on a Sunday. Census statistics show that churchgoing in New Zealand peaked by 1900 and slowly declined thereafter, especially in the four main cities.⁹ Statistics also highlight women as the majority of churchgoers in New Zealand.¹⁰

Interaction between churches in the first decade of the twentieth century was carried through to the next, and a cooperative environment was enhanced by the outbreak of World War One. The war was an incentive for choir activity and combined concerts, in aid of specific charities, such as the Belgian Relief Fund, or morale-boosting concerts.¹¹ Women continued to be prominent in church choirs and men away at war further exacerbated the imbalance.

Victorian notions of respectability of both church going and music were carried through to the 1920s, and in a decade of much musical activity, Bruorton argues the drive for social status saw an expansion of the Knox church choir.¹² The popularity of the piano also had an effect on the number of musically literate by the 1920s and children who were raised with piano lessons continued established ideals of music as a vehicle to social respectability. Children had been introduced to music in schools during the 1920s, and were also becoming more active in the church musical life. By 1927 there was a junior choir at Knox. A young women’s bible class choir was also established, which perhaps reflected the fact that women tended to dominate congregations.¹³

Largely female choirs also dominated smaller Presbyterian churches around Dunedin. This was a trend that intensified as time passed. The Roslyn Presbyterian Church choir, for example, constituted 60 percent of women in 1908, and 68 percent in 1926.¹⁴ The Roslyn Church choir was founded in 1901 and its objectives were twofold, to lead the church service, and to provide public entertainment for events in connection with the

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⁸ Ibid., pp. 41-42.
¹⁰ Ibid., p. 124.
¹¹ Andrews, p. 42.
¹² Ibid., p. 43.
¹³ Ibid., p. 48.
¹⁴ Photograph of the Roslyn Church Choir, Roslyn Jubilee Publication of the Presbyterian Church, 1901-1926, Knox Archives, 19/17 BH 3/3.
church. Women could therefore be active both inside the church and in the public sphere. The first woman organist, Miss E. Williamson, was appointed in 1927. A pipe organ had been installed in 1906, and would have required more skill to play than the pedal organ. Miss Williamson gave service to the church for sixteen years.\(^{16}\)

The choir travelled around Dunedin regularly to give concerts at other church functions and at various institutions. In later years, social events were widened to incorporate broader aspects of music, such as, evenings dedicated to composers’ lives and works, or folk song evenings that encompassed history, musical solos, and often recitals by quartets. These gatherings not only had educational value but were a significant social network for women: “these evenings have been greatly enjoyed and all hope that many more will be held.”\(^{17}\)

Women took their role in church life very seriously. This is reflected in the records of the North East Valley Presbyterian Church choir. The minute book of 1937-1938 showed that the choir thought of itself as an “important part of the church’s work.”\(^{18}\) Choir membership declined, which caused concern to its women members, because of the importance they placed on the choir as part of the church service: “we feel that we must give our best in leading the service of prayer and not do our part in a lackadaisical manner.”\(^{19}\) The choir was earnest in its drive for contribution to religious dedication. This is further elucidated in the annual report of 1940: “great is our opportunity, greater still is our responsibility.”\(^{20}\) Weekly practises and an additional monthly ‘ladies’ practise’ were held in the homes of choir members and congregationalists, and the secretary recorded that “we thoroughly enjoy and benefit by this contact in a social way.”\(^{21}\) In 1940 there was a general feeling that monthly practises “are a help in creating a friendly spirit among choir members but we feel that more could be made of these opportunities.”\(^{22}\) Perhaps these evenings were more highly valued in a time of stress created by war.

Organ recitals were commonly held, organised by the choirmaster. Men, especially in the larger city churches, most often performed the recitals but various solos were


\(^{16}\) Ibid.

\(^{17}\) Roslyn Choir Annual Reports 1905-1908, 1933-1949, Knox, 19/17 BH 3/3.

\(^{18}\) North East Valley Presbyterian Church Choir Minute Book, 1926-45, Annual Report 1937-1938, Knox, 19/14/3

\(^{19}\) Ibid.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., Annual Report, 1940.

\(^{21}\) Ibid., 1926-45.

\(^{22}\) Ibid., Annual Report, 1940.
Town Hall, Sunday, 26th April, 1942, at 8 p.m.

MUNICIPAL
ORGAN RECITAL
— By —
V. E. GALWAY, Mus.Do
CITY ORGANIST

Assisted by
MISS DORA DRAKE

Programme
"God Save the King"

1. At a Solemn Festival - - - Rheinberger
2. Arioso - - - - - Bach
3. Postlude in D - - - - - Smart
4. Ave Maria - - - - - Arcadelt
   (16th Century)
5. Aria—"Let the Bright Seraphim" - - Handel
   Miss Dora Drake
6. Lamentation - - - - - Guilmant
   "The beauty of Israel is slain upon Thy high places,
   How are the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle."
7. Andante from a String Quartet - - Tchaikovsky
8. Vocal Solos—
   "Songs my Mother Taught Me" - - Dvorak
   "The Rose Enslaves the Nightingale"
   Rimsky-Korsakov
   Miss Dora Drake
9. Pavane - - - - - Johnson
10. Recitative and Finale - - Mendelssohn

Patrons are asked not to leave their seats while the Organ is being played. After 8 p.m., the internal door will be opened only between items.

CROWN PRINT LIMITED

An example of a woman accompanying an organ recital
given by women to relieve the organist. The Port Chalmers Presbyterian Church had women organists, but their salaries were significantly lower than those of men. Aside from the financial position of the church being a determinant for salaries, it was assumed that men had families to support and they were therefore paid in accordance. In 1906 Miss Johnson received an annual salary of £20 for her position as organist. This rose to £30 by 1918. In 1924 Miss Thomson was receiving a relatively large salary of £54 per annum, but in 1928, Miss Taylor received only £30. In a significant jump, Mr. G. F. Mirams was paid £70 in 1931. The difference in pay rates between men and women is especially noticeable from 1937, when T. F. Savage received £60, to 1941, when Miss Farquharson was paid only £17. Competence and performance also most likely determined pay rates. In 1915, for example, the position of organist was offered to Mr. Searle on a six-month probation.

In contrast to early Presbyterian worship where singing would be led by a precentor armed with a tuning fork, vocal and instrumental music were an important factor of Anglican worship in Dunedin, "to the bewilderment and consternation of the Presbyterians." St Paul’s Choir was more gender balanced than the Presbyterian Church choirs of Dunedin, which perhaps was influenced by the continuation of choirboys to the musical life of the church, as they grew older. Attendance rolls from 1905-1909 show the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR:</th>
<th>NO. OF MEN:</th>
<th>NO. OF UNMARRIED WOMEN:</th>
<th>NO. OF MARRIED WOMEN:</th>
<th>TOTAL NO. OF WOMEN:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>1909</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
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Table 2 Source: St. Paul’s Choir, Dunedin, Choir Roll Book 1886-1944.

There was a relatively even number of men to women compared to most Presbyterian churches, but it seems that in all cases, membership of the church choir was a more

23 Annual Reports of the Presbyterian Church in Port Chalmers, Knox, 19/16/2.
24 Ibid.
popular activity for unmarried women. Membership of St. Paul's choir would possibly have required more skill than smaller, suburban church choirs, as their repertoire was more demanding. In 1926 for example, a music recital of St. Paul's choir was held and the choir sang "Gaul's Passion", in six parts, with additional solos.  

St. Paul's was active in performing concerts around the city and participated in the Dunedin Competitions Society 'Contest of Choirs' from 1902. Social functions were held separate from practises. For example, in May 1913 "the choirmaster invited the adult members of the choir to a social evening at his residence on Tuesday evening." Musical items were popular in other aspects of church life besides the choir, especially in women's groups such as the Mothers' Union of the Ladies Guild, at St. Peter's Anglican Church in Caversham.

Women also had greater musical opportunities through the advancement of music in schools. Leading singers of Dunedin had been pushing for specialist music teachers in schools since the first decade of the twentieth century. Maitland Gard'ner wrote a letter to the editor of the Otago Daily Times in 1909, in which he expressed concern with the standard of singing in schools, which he connected with refinement and cultural advancement. He wrote "this is the root of the system in teaching in schools at present in vogue, numbers getting through the examination without the faintest chance of even becoming efficient." He thought that by placing little importance on singing in schools "we help to perpetuate the notorious colonial twang." Music in general education was not formalised by the government until 1926, with the appointment of Douglas Tayler as the supervisor of school music. The syllabus included songs, voice management, ear training, rhythm training and music reading. Optional activities included movement to music, percussion, appreciative listening and the invention of tunes. Initially, there was some concern over the lack of musical ability of many teachers in schools, but some musicians from England arrived at training colleges,

26 St. Paul's Cathedral Choir, Annual Reports 1914-1944, Hocken, AG-147-0/2.
27 St. Paul's Choir, Minute Book, 1890-1913, Hocken, AG-147-0/1.
28 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Dr. V. E. Galway, Dunedin city organist also argued for the instillation of music in schools, to the Minister of Education (Sir James Par). See Jennings, The Music Teaching Profession in New Zealand, p. 11.
which Thomson argues “infused new life into choral music, not only in schools but throughout the community.”

King Edward Technical High School was a public school in Dunedin that offered classes in music. It was a strong element in the school compared to many others in Dunedin, especially the public schools. Vernon Griffiths, a Cambridge graduate, came to New Zealand in 1933 to take up a position as a lecturer at Teachers’ College. Soon after, he became a teacher at King Edward Technical High School, and introduced singing into the classroom. By 1936 the school choir had a membership of over 100 and performed operettas in four parts. It took part in the Dunedin Competitions Society (which thrived over the period) and performed in the music festival at the Town Hall Concert Chamber during the 1925-1926 Exhibition. In 1939 a massed choir was formed at King Edward that combined 700 voices with the school military band, orchestra and string orchestra for their jubilee celebrations. A new school song was sung in six parts and was performed with the Royal Dunedin Male Choir. Music in schools not only gave the wider public more access to music, but also gave women an increased opportunity to stand out. The high school magazine reported in 1936 that “it is not our policy to give undue prominence to solo voices, but mention must be made of the pleasing unforced singing of Jean Calder and M. Kerr.” Women were also given more opportunity to learn instruments besides the piano and violin, although the violin remained a popular choice. Also in 1936, 200 pupils were enrolled in music classes that ranged from violin, viola, cello, clarinet, brass, piano, orchestra and the military band. The high school also had an evening orchestra that combined with the day-school orchestra for public performances. Music was increasingly encouraged at Otago Girls High School in the 1920s. In 1925 the principal established a music and drama club, and in 1926, Roy Spackman (prominent music teacher, choirmaster and city organist), joined the staff as a part-time music specialist, conducted the orchestra and took violin lessons.

34 Thomson, Oxford History of New Zealand Music, p. 94.
37 Dunedin Technical High School Magazine and Jubilee Supplement, vol. 1, no. 6, December 1939, p. 43.
38 DTHS Magazine, p. 23.
39 Ibid.
40 Eileen Wallis, A Most Rare Vision, Otago Girls’ High School, the first 125 Years, Dunedin, 1995, pp 90-113.
The Otago Girls High School Orchestra in the 1920s
In the private schools, music had been included as part of the curriculum from an earlier stage, in liturgy, but also private tuition. St Philomena’s College, a convent school in South Dunedin held concerts from 1901 that included drama, vocal and instrumental music (on violins, pianos and cellos). Pupils of St. Philomena’s also competed in the Dunedin Competitions, where their voices were described in the *Otago Daily Times* review as being “full of promise.” Adjectives used in review of performances such as ‘simple’ and ‘natural’ reflect their role and image as girls in a convent school. Trinity College examination results, published in the *Otago Daily Time*, show that a large number of pupils sat Trinity College examinations in music. Bathia Howie Stuart was an actor, singer, journalist, lecturer, filmmaker and tourism promoter but can be seen as an example of a woman who continued a musical career after receiving training at St. Philomena’s. When she was fourteen years old she joined Tom Pollard’s Juvenile Opera Co. and performed around New Zealand and Australia. In 1920 she returned to Dunedin and performed in operatic productions and competitions. Sister Kathleen also learnt music at St. Philomena’s after learning the piano as a child. She described performing in choirs at school and competing in singing competitions because “there wasn’t a lot of entertainment as there is now.” Sister Kathleen went on to gain her A.T.C.L and L.T.C.L (Associate and Licentiate of the Trinity College of Music, London, respectively), Degree in Theology and a Diploma in Singing.

University women musicians were viewed with respect and encouragement in musical reviews. In 1906 the *Otago University Review* reported “the members of the cloakroom have to offer their heartiest congratulations to Miss May Newman, who made a most successful debut at the Philharmonic Society’s concert on September twenty first. We are extremely fortunate in having a musician of Miss Newman’s calibre in our midst.”

Music at the University also had a strong social element. For example, in 1915 the University Musical Society reported, “the society has entered upon its third year of existence. The membership has surpassed that of previous years, which is a clear

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41 ‘Clippings from the *New Zealand Tablet*’ 26 December, 1901, p. 19, in ‘St. Philomena’s College Centennial Committee Scrapbooks’, Hocsen, 98-046.
44 Interview with Sister Kathleen, Dunedin, 9 July 2001.
45 Ibid.
An all male College Orchestra
The Collegians Dance Band in the 1930s, with an American style.
indication of the popularity of the institution.”47 First and foremost, “the object of the musical society is primarily the promotion of social life in the University... without such aids the coyness of the men is well-nigh insuperable.” There was, of course, a high degree of music and drama associated with the capping show. Of secondary importance was “the study and performance of good choir music.”48

By the 1940s music reviews from the University of Otago reflect growing trends of young people who turned to dance, radio and popular waves of music, and away from instrumental art music. Sam Elworthy argues that students were quick to follow the latest music trends as early as the 1920s, when jazz fitted the “bohemian student image” and weekly socials were held in Allens Hall.49 There was a lack of interest in the activities of the musical society, especially the orchestra. In 1947 an English conductor arrived at the university, to conduct the orchestra, but “we could not... expect a man of Mr. Collins’ standing to continue the work when an average of three strings turned up to rehearsals. The funeral took place early in term one.”50 The choir, however, was well supported: “practises are attended by a large number of enthusiasts.”51

As at the University, other choral groups were well patronised in Dunedin, and remained a popular activity as interest in instrumental music declined. The Choral Society in Dunedin was established early, in 1856 and remained popular for a century, until the effects of radio, popular music and television saw its decline. Thomson writes that choral societies “at their best can generate an energy that transforms a musical occasion into one of deep abiding ritual... bound together by friendships forged in weekly rehearsals.”52 Thomson was mostly referring to the sense of decorum amongst colonial choirs, but the choral tradition was carried well into the twentieth century. Both church and secular choirs had opportunities for live broadcast, especially by the late 1930s and into the 1940s. An article on the broadcasting of church music that appeared in the Otago Daily Times in 1940 shows that choral music not only provided a ‘deep abiding ritual’ for its members, but significant passion from listeners as well: “the combination of familiar words with familiar music, plus the enormous weight of associations that clings to every well-known hymn, has a peculiar and often

48 Ibid., vol. Xxix, October 1915, p. 58.
49 Sam Elworthy, Ritual Song of Defiance: A Social History of Students at the University of Otago, Dunedin, 1990, pp. 45-46.
51 Ibid.
overpowering emotional value, not only for the members of practically every religious denomination.\textsuperscript{53}

Members of Dunedin’s choral community, both in societies and church choirs, had a degree of community responsibility for fundraising, boosting morale, and entertaining. It was popular for women to give solos at charity events, especially during the war years. For example, members of the Otago Benevolent Concert Party held a concert in 1940 for Seacliff and Waitati inmates, where women performed solos, duets, and violin and piano solos, as well as a recital by the Ladies Mouth Organ Band.\textsuperscript{54} Choirs were also an important outlet for cultural pursuit and a web of social connections. Bruorton, in her thesis on music in Dunedin during the 1920s, argues that musical societies in Dunedin over this period were patronised by those in the four top categories of occupations. She deduces that membership of the Dunedin Choral Society was a leisurely pastime for the cultural elite in Dunedin. Not only was choral membership an elitist pastime, but also concert attendance, which according to Bruorton, showed the cultural pretensions of those wanting social respectability.\textsuperscript{55} Perhaps this was true of the choral society, which may have had more social standing than other choral groups, but the smaller choirs of Dunedin would have had a more dynamic membership.

Handel was a favourite for the choral society, especially the \textit{Messiah} at their December concerts, when the Town Hall would be crowded with listeners. For example, in 1907, the choral society performed Handel’s oratorio \textit{Samson} at Knox church, conducted by William Paget Gale. The packed audience thought the performance was “splendid”.\textsuperscript{56} In 1930, the choral society performed with an orchestra and individual solos, and their performance of the \textit{Messiah} was described in the \textit{Otago Daily Times} as “a performance of outstanding brilliance.” Dr. V. E. Galway conducted the choir, which “gave evidence of thorough preparation and in big climaxes showed a superb vocal efficiency.”\textsuperscript{57} In 1940, following a long tradition, the choral society performed the \textit{Messiah}, which was conducted by Mr. Alex Walmsley and combined with the Oamaru choral society, the Royal Male and Returned Services choirs, and the Leech Lyric Choir, and was “the climax of the musical year.”\textsuperscript{58} In these annual performances that seemed to be increasingly grand, women were given opportunities of

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Otago Daily Times} 9 January, 1940, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 16 July, 1940, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{55} Bruorton, pp. 23-24.
\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Otago Daily Times}, 31 July, 1907, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 20 February, 1930, p. 7.
solos, in front of a packed out Town Hall. Valda McCracken agreed that it was "great fun" being part of the choral society. She recalled, "one of the most exciting things I've ever sung in was the Beethoven Ninth with the Choral Society." Instead of sitting in front of the orchestra, the soloists sat in between the orchestra and choir. During the third movement ('Ode to Joy'), "it gave me a fright the first time...they went full tilt, the choir was going for its life and the orchestra and then us [the soloists]." Although the choral society was more popularly accessible than musical groups such as orchestras, a degree of musical knowledge was required. In 1915, a notice appeared in the Otago Daily Times advertising for singers for the choral society's performance in the Queen Carnival Ceremony that read, "none but good readers of music need attend the test." Women were also presented with opportunities for accompanying the choir. In 1935, for example, the choral society held a 'Mozart Concert' and the Otago Daily Times anticipated that "Miss Winifred Gardener and Mrs B. R. Nees in the charming two piano Mozart concerto will on this occasion surpass previous performances. Both are fine pianists." During the war years Walmsley conducted regular performances with the 4YA orchestra for radio broadcasts.

By the 1930s women were conducting their own choirs, in contrast to the early twentieth century where such positions were the prerogative of men. The 'Oriana Singers', conducted by Ida White, and 'Miss Meda Paine's Choir' performed at a recital at the Town Hall in celebration of music week in 1930. A new string orchestra, formed in 1930, also had a woman conductor.

On a more common level, there were lots of choirs formed by staff in the larger workplaces, such as Arthur Barnett's, or the Mosgiel Woollen Mills. Employees at Charles Begg and Co. formed a choir and orchestra, which held concert parties at a variety of events, with a programme of popular, tunes entitled 'Fighting Mac', 'Sergent-Major on Parade' and 'Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes'. The choir was

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58 Ibid., 5 December, 1940, p. 11.
59 Interview with Valda McCracken, Dunedin, 20 August 2001.
60 Ibid.
63 Thomson, Oxford History of New Zealand Music, p. 11.
64 'Epherema Collection of Programmes: Music – Instrumental and Vocal', Dunedin Public Library.
65 Ibid.
66 Instrument importers, tuners and sellers of pianos and music scores, established in Dunedin in 1861.
Complimentary Dinner

to the Conductor and
Members of

CHAS. BEGG & CO.’S CHOIR

BEGG’S CHOIR

Conductor - Mr. James Dixon

On the occasion of their
winning the

.. FIRMS’ CHOIR CONTEST ..

DUNEDIN COMPETITIONS

September, 1927

The Charles Begg and Co. Choir after winning the Firms’ Choir Contest in the Dunedin Competitions, 1927.
formed in 1927 with an initial membership of fourteen men and thirteen women (eleven of whom were unmarried), and was established to enter the Dunedin Competitions. The choir and orchestra also provided musical entertainment for a diverse range of socials and meetings, such as, the Rowing Club, St. Kilda Bowling Club, Dunedin Horticultural Society, Otago Art Society, Druids Lodge, and the Returned Services Association. In 1928 they performed in the Octagon Hall at the interval of the pictures. Charles Begg also established a ‘Musical Army’ in 1939 that followed popular trends and the latest styles of music and instruments. The twenty-first annual festival programme in 1959 shows the instruments taught as the Hawaiian and Spanish guitars, banjo, mandolin, ukulele, as well as the recorder, harmonica and piano accordion. By the 1930s, Hawaiian and country music had become popular in New Zealand, and Gordon Spittle describes the Depression era with cowboys, migrants and ‘seasonal hobos’ with their ukuleles. Touring from overseas performers stopped during world war two, with the rise of the intimacy of the radio and the beginning of war movies. However, musical groups were active in the drive to fundraise and provide soldier entertainment, and employees and staff interacted together socially for this purpose.

Although I have not examined radio, theatre and cinema in detail, mention must be made of them. The first official radio transmission in New Zealand was broadcast from Dunedin, at the opening of the 1925 Exhibition. The Dunedin Choral Society combined with the Wellington Choral Society, and the exhibition cabaret performed, as well as band items, lectures and recitals. The Radio Record began in 1927, and was mostly aimed at a female audience with recipes and music scores of light classical music. It reported the sports broadcasts and afternoon broadcasts on 4YA. During the Depression the overseas radio and broadcasting industry rapidly expanded, and its popularity in New Zealand saw the rise of radio to the primary form of mass communication and entertainment. British and American music also influenced New Zealand.
Zealand radio, especially overseas pop music post World War Two.\textsuperscript{76} Gordon Spittle writes that by the 1940s (encouraged by radio broadcasts), Dunedin was the opening to rural Southland, which was the hub of “country singers and steel guitars.”\textsuperscript{77} Increasing numbers of advertisements for radios in the \textit{Otago Daily Times} suggest that the radio became the centre of family life, taking over from the piano, and preceding the television. \textit{Music in New Zealand} reflected concern from its readers that popular broadcasts by 2YA were degenerative to cultural growth.\textsuperscript{78}

Theatre remained a popular entertainment up until the mid twentieth century and theatres also hosted a variety of vaudeville and musical performances. Peter Harcourt goes as far as to say that theatre was New Zealand's primary source of entertainment for half a century, until the radio and the cinema began to compete.\textsuperscript{79} Eight theatres were built in Dunedin in the nineteenth century, for touring companies and local artists performing drama, comedy, vaudeville, pantomime and musical comedy.\textsuperscript{80} Women were popular in vaudeville entertainment and musical comedies. For example, in 1915 Miss Florence Young and Co. “fully justified their reputation as creators of mirth and dispensers of good music and high comedy.”\textsuperscript{81} Women were also active in providing music, either through the piano or orchestra, for early silent films. By 1930 the \textit{Otago Daily Times} devoted an entire page to amusements, such as theatre and the pictures. As well as local personalities, touring musicians were extremely popular. For example, in 1946, three artists were in Dunedin as part of a three-week tour of the South Island. Mr. Jan Rubini was an American violinist, Miss Terry Walker, an American stage and screen entertainer, and Mr. Vassili Ilster, a Russian pianist.

But perceptions of women in the entertainment industry, especially unmarried women, were not always favourable. They were commonly thought of as living a life of relative freedom and often, scandal. An article on the Boyd Neel Orchestra, which toured New Zealand under the British Council for Cultural Relations between 1930 and 1960 elucidates this point clearly. There were nine women musicians in the group, which was apparently unusual, although “women musicians and music lovers make up

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{76} Hayward, \textit{North Meets South}, p.1.
\bibitem{77} Spittle, p. 17.
\bibitem{78} \textit{Music in New Zealand: An Independent Journal}, vol. 1, no. 1, April 1931, p. 2.
\bibitem{80} Ibid., p. 15.
\bibitem{81} \textit{Otago Daily Times}, 6 January, 1915, p. 2.
\end{thebibliography}
The Regent Operatic Orchestra in 1928, with three women violinists.
a large proportion of the devotees to this aspect of culture in the Dominion." The report shows that speculation followed the group:

the fact that there are nine women and nine men in this musical combination is ‘just coincidence’, according to the women…many people have assumed that the equality of the members must inevitably mean romance, but this has been denied…none of the women, except Violet Palmer, is married…none drink or smoke and they do not go out much because constant rehearsals and performances leave them tired.  

Opera in New Zealand was also very popular in the early twentieth century. As with lighter theatre entertainment, it became popular in Dunedin as early as the 1860s, with the arrival of the goldrush in Central Otago. William Samin Lyster was a pioneer of opera in New Zealand, which he established in Dunedin. He also encouraged touring companies from around New Zealand and Australia. Two prominent women opera singers to reach fame in New Zealand were Frances Alda and Rosina Buckman. Adrienne Simpson writes that “during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when women found it difficult to be taken seriously as composers, and when many orchestras refused to employ female instrumentalists, the operatic stage provided a very real opportunity for a gifted woman to reach the highest ranks of the musical profession.” There were advantages to stardom however, including financial rewards, adoration and social acceptance, but women could also be subject to gossip columnists, exploitation, jealousy and the sacrifice of family life.  

Dancing was on the rise in the city from the 1920s, and advertisements for dancing lessons at the Early Settlers Hall were a common appearance in the Otago Daily Times. Although the Saturday night dance tradition was well established in Otago, the dance hall era boomed from 1945-1955. Britain, and a post-war American influence was present in popular music in New Zealand. Swing music was introduced during World War Two. Joe Brown ran the Saturday night dance at the Dunedin Town Hall from 1936-1966, and he took advantage of the new youth market for popular music,
changing with the times, for example, the rise of rock and roll in the 1950s and 1960s. Joe Brown's dance hall entertainment had beginnings in rural communities, where he found that morale was low, and dances were an ideal meeting place for young people. As he brought them to Dunedin and their popularity grew, the dances became referred to as 'Joe Brown's matrimonial bureau.' Olive Nieper can remember sneaking out with their sisters to go to the Town Hall Dance, as their mother disapproved. Some condemnation was evident towards the dances, but those who disapproved, such as, church groups, established alternative dances under the respectable name of 'bible class dances.' Less emphasis was placed on the music at Joe Brown's Saturday night dances, with more focus on competitions, quizzes, dance demonstrations, talent quests and publicity stunts, as the latest fashions were followed. There were numerous advertisements for dances in the *Otago Daily Times* over the dance hall era, and "the orchestra, of course, is always a vital factor in the success of a dance," but most of the bands were all male, with perhaps an occasional woman vocalist.

Music as a social activity was an important way of making connections outside the home environment for women. The church and choral groups were especially valuable to women, as they were more accessible than instrumental or orchestral groups. Women dominated church choirs and took their role in the church service seriously, as well as enjoying the social aspect. Combined events around the city (especially during the Depression) also introduced them into wider social circles. Choral groups, ranging from the more prestigious Dunedin Choral Society to the smaller workplace choirs, were popular. Through the introduction of music in schools during the 1920s, more people gained musical knowledge and this contributed to the increase in musical activity over the 1930s. Women gained more access to music, including instrumental music. Over time, women gained agency through music and by the 1940s women were conducting their own choirs and orchestras. Through choral music and music in schools therefore, women gained a degree of social involvement and participation.

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88 Joe Brown, New Zealand Film Archive, Otago Early Settlers Museum, 1996-3911.
89 Interview with Olive Nieper, Dunedin, 19 April, 2001.
91 Ibid., p. 16.
This chapter examines music in the home and community life, while continuing the themes of music as an agent of social acceptance and connections, opportunity and income for women. Oral history was almost the only way to investigate this. Chapter three therefore relies almost entirely on the comments of the interviewees.¹ The five central people interviewed provide different personal experiences of music within the home, the church, teaching, performing and travelling. Norine McNab (nee McNamara) grew up in the small town of Cromwell and music was prevalent in her family life. In her teens, she formed a dance band with her father and three of her five sisters, through which she travelled widely around Otago and Southland. Dances were a popular form of entertainment, becoming frequent during the 1930s and following the latest dance crazes as popular youth culture gained momentum. In smaller country areas they also raised community spirit during a time of many soldier farewells. Women were mostly seen on the dance floor rather than playing on the stage. McNamara’s Dance Band were somewhat of an anomaly but an example of the family-based musical tradition, connected to an Irish Catholic heritage, which gained recognition and publicity, despite their gender. While music did not provide a common ground and sense of solidarity for musicians in Central Otago for Norine, it did provide a way of meeting new people. Betty Anderson was one person that Norine befriended through music. Betty’s parents were both musical and like all of the interviewees, she experienced music within the home. Her parents also had an instrument repairing and tuning business and were members of orchestras and church choirs. Betty’s own musical involvement has mostly been connected with the church. As I have illustrated in the previous chapter, music within the church was central and provided a strong social element for women. Olive Nieper and Ellice Irvine (nee Nieper) were also involved in music in the church, especially on Sunday nights when (like Betty’s experience), the church choir would gather in their house for singing. Both Nieper sisters learnt music through private piano teachers and at King Edward Technical College and later, frequently performed in concerts and

¹ The interviewees do not necessarily represent whole groups of people, but are used to elucidate earlier points in my argument.
broadcasts. Like McNamara’s Band, Olive and Ellice played often during the World War Two. Valda McCracken was also prominent as a musical performer, especially in singing as the soloist in concerts, for example the Choral Society. Valda was extremely fortunate, however, as she received a scholarship to travel and train overseas, through which she gained opportunities not available to most young women.

NORINE MCNAB and MCNAMARA’S DANCE BAND²:

On 15 March 1951, the Central Otago News reported that the retirement of the McNamara’s Dance band “marks the close of a useful contribution to the social life of many towns.”³ Comprising four young sisters and their father, the band was something of an anomaly in Otago, as most other popular dance bands had male members only (for example, newspaper advertisements for bands such as ‘Dick Colvin and his nine-piece band’ or ‘Jim Murray’s Swing Stars’ were common). In rural areas and small towns, music played an important part in maintaining community spirit, providing social connections and added a sense of solidarity or cohesion. The availability of live music for social occasions was an important concern and this was reflected in the article: “the need to support all that is local is obviously the first requirement to obtain a progressive community, otherwise we will progress only as individuals.”⁴ Although it was “essential that the value of this form of entertainment as a social outlet be supported”⁵, dances were also an important fundraising event.

Norine McNamara was born on 28 December 1925 and music began very early in her life. Her father, Septimus, grew up in Alexandra, and began learning “a lovely red rosewood violin” at the early age of five. As his learning progressed, his father handed down to him a very high quality violin, given to him on his wedding night, “so Dad played with that one violin and it had a magnificent tone, right throughout his life.” Septimus’ music background was strongly connected to his Irish background, for “his parents had come from Ireland, and I think because of that, the encouragement was there. The Irish

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² Interview with Norine McNab, Wanaka, 26/6/01
³ Central Otago News, March 15, 1951.
⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Ibid.
love their music and that was bred into him. He just excelled at what he did...he was a champion at playing all those Irish jigs, and his fingering...it was absolutely mind-boggling.” The McNamara’s Dance Band was connected to an Irish heritage and this was symbolised in the song they adopted as their theme song:

Oh, me name is McNamara, I’m the leader of the band.
Although we’re small in numbers we’re the finest in the land.
Hennessy Tennessy tootles the fute, the music’s something grand,
A credit to old Ireland is McNamara’s band.

Septimus learnt from an Italian teacher and played jigs to improve his fingering, until his learning surpassed that of his teacher and he began to drift to dance music. Music was prevalent in the home when Norine and her five sisters were growing up in Cromwell. Her mother, Rebecca, also sang and played the piano, which she brought into their home when they married. Norine “can still see her stubby wee fingers playing...her and Dad used to sing together (the old numbers), the harmony was just beautiful.” Saturday nights were a treat for the girls in the McNamara household as “it would be bath night in our home and we’d all be bathed in an old tin bath by the fire, and the youngest ones would be wrapped in a cuddling cloth and the older ones would sit around and our father would play to us for hours, until it was time for ...bed.”

Music in the home was fairly common, according to Norine, but “I think we were gifted in...that we were able to pick up an instrument and play it. I felt among children of our age at that time that people would be jealous of us, because we had that musical ability and we didn’t have to learn to read music to play it.” Being able to play music was something that was aspired to, “very much so. In those days you had lots of social concerts and people came along with their talent and performed items.” A heritage of folk music was strong in rural areas, especially Central Otago, where folk music was to a large degree, coloured by the history of gold diggers. Instrumental music was lacking, however, (along with a lack of protest/political songs in New Zealand folk music) and the McNamara’s Band was in high demand.

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5 Ibid.
6 Harkness, ‘History in Song’, p. 5.
Norine’s parents encouraged their children to learn music, and her father’s dance band would play with them when they came around to practise. “We were encouraged to learn to vamp and play chords, and later on I learnt the tunes just by ear.” Norine had more formal lessons from an elderly friend of her mother’s, but she had such a sharp ear that she would pick up the music and quickly become bored. Norine stepped out publicly at the early age of fourteen, when the pianist from her father’s band became ill. “I went to Arrowtown and at two in the morning when the dance would normally close down, the music was so good, they said, that they took the hat around and made a collection, and I played on till five o’clock in the morning!” From then on Norine began to play with the band regularly, even when her mother became ill and Norine had to leave school to help in the home, “my father said I could carry on [playing with the band] providing I kept practising.” Dance Halls had a tradition in the area, stemming from the goldfields era, but by the latter half of the period, dances were not as crude. They increasingly functioned as a fundraising tool, especially for sporting events. Advertisements that read ‘combined cricket and tennis club – a dance at Cromwell, lucky spot waltz, good supper, McNamara’s Dance Band’\(^7\), and ‘Lowburn Cricket Club, euchre party and a dance – McNamara’s Band’\(^8\), were common in the *Cromwell Argus*. Septimus was “keen on the Labour Party” and when they used to have socials, Norine, her older sister Sylvia and Septimus used to play three-part violin. That was something Norine “really treasured and something [she] was sorry that [she] never ever kept up.”

The outbreak of war became a turning point in the family’s musical life. Norine’s sister, who “was a better pianist than I was”, also left school and began practising the piano often. There was a demand for someone in the area to play for soldier farewells, and although the family had been asked, “we were practising because of the love of music within the home.” Septimus eventually gave in to persistent requests and said they would play only once, “but we made such a good fist of it that we were called back lots of times. We were only a three piece band then.” Norine played the drums while her sister Flo joined with the piano. As demand grew, Norine taught her sister Gwen the drums and

\(^7\) *The Cromwell Argus*, 16 January, 1939.
moved on to the banjo. Sylvia taught herself the saxophone and Septimus played the violin. The family used to practise in the evenings, and crowds would collect outside the house and ask for requests. The band provided a livelihood for the McNamara family, providing their sole family income: "in those days there wasn't a lot of money in it, but [it] came into the home to keep a car running, to keep the music up and pay for banjo and violin repairs."

The band also provided an unusual way (for the times) for the young women to travel and make social connections. Norine agreed that the travel and social aspect "was tremendous." The McNamara's Family Dance Band "played every Saturday night" in either Cromwell, Lowburn, Bannockburn or Ripponvale.

There was a high demand for entertainment over the war years and Norine recollects that "it was nearly every night of the week, with soldiers going to the war and coming home", along with debutante balls, or wedding receptions. The list of places that the band were asked to play "were seen as being big distances in those days." Norine met her future husband when he was holidaying in Queenstown (from Owaka) and heard the band play, "so then we were off to Owaka to play for the footballer's ball. It sparked off to other areas from there – Clinton people had come to the ball. We then went to Clinton, Balclutha, Heriot and West Otago." Norine explained:

We started off being engaged here in Wanaka, Luggate, Hawea Flat, then we would go away to Kurow and Omarama. Then we had the circuit from Arrowtown, Queenstown, and there used to be balls at the Shotover. We went to Lumsden, Dunern, Limehills, we’ve played at Gore and we always meant to play at Invercargill, but we never ever got there.

The highlight of the band’s career was playing in the Dunedin Town Hall in March 1947. "That was a tremendous night." Three bands all joined onstage and played together for one of Joe Brown’s dances. National broadcasts were made weekly at the Town Hall Dance, but there was often animosity between Joe Brown and the dance band players. Comments in the local papers show that musicians were frustrated at the lack of sound quality provided for recordings.⁹

The New Zealand Broadcasting Service Recording Unit asked McNamara’s

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⁹ Ibid., 23 January, 1939.
Band for a recording suitable for a tour programme. A date was set but the amount to be paid (£5 / 5s) was seen as offensive by Septimus, who felt it would cheapen their music. He refused to sign the contract.

Music was a way to make social connections and to cross social divides. For example, the McNamara's lived next door to a Maori man at one stage, who her mother would invite in for meals and they would sing and make music together. But despite the girls’ gaining a livelihood, social connections and a way to travel around Otago and Southland, Norine did not feel a strong sense of community between musicians in the district. She feels this was partly because “we were so involved in our [own] world.” Occasionally a visiting band from another district would “call and have a tune with us.”

There were very few women musicians around the area besides an occasional piano teacher, (such as Miss Kane, L.T.C.L, teacher of piano and harmony),\(^9\) but “I think mothers played to their children in the home, very definitely. Children were encouraged to dance and that sort of thing.” Norine believes women were reluctant to come forward and play in the public sphere because “it was looked upon as being a man’s world.” Septimus was very strict and protective of his daughters at the dances, and often “they did get very unruly and my father felt that wasn’t the place for girls…many a young exuberant male would be told to leave the stage with a flea in his ear.” In later years, dances at Queenstown became disorderly, “particularly the rowing regattas and I remember one night somebody threw an apple from the audience and it bounced on the piano and finally landed on my father’s head. He got up so angry that night that he was ready to put that violin in his case and walk out.” Reflecting back, Norine realised how unique the band was, especially in playing for so many years. She recalled “they were the vital years of soldiers going away to war…I remember playing sixteen weeks on end, with only one Sunday break.” Once they played “seventeen nights in a row.”

Dances declined after the war and music “seemed to revolve around electronics…the piano accordion came into vogue and the guitar. That seemed to spoil the atmosphere of the old dances.”

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McNamara's Dance Band en route to play for a dance
McNamara's Dance Band on stage
BETTY (STEPHANIE RABETTA) ANDERSON: Betty met the McNamara’s through her father’s music shop in Dunedin, when Septimus would go in to get instruments tuned. Betty’s mother and father would “take them out the back for a cup of tea.” After Norine married and moved to Owaka, she asked Betty’s father to travel down to tune her piano and Betty and her husband would drive him down and spend the day on the farm.

Betty was born on 2 November 1920. Both her parents had musical ability. Her father John played the flute and she thinks he was self-taught, unlike her Dutch born mother, Jeanne, who was taught music by a private tutor in Belgium. Her mother’s parents owned a linen factory in Belgium, and Betty’s mother met her New Zealand born father during World War One, when Betty’s father was playing in the orchestra. After they married and came to live in Dunedin they both “really got into musical circles”, her father playing in Mr. Wallace’s orchestra and her mother conducting the church choir for twenty-five years. Betty recollected, “when I was quite small they were both in the Exhibition Choir, in 1925.” Her father was also regularly asked to play during the signing of marriage registers. He worked for Beggs before he went to war, as a piano tuner, and on return “he set up business and mum was working with him in the shop, we’ve always been mixed up with music...it’s been our family life.”

Besides her parents being publicly involved in music, it was also prevalent within the home. “We grew up with music...we were all put to bed at night...mum and dad sat down with the piano and the flute and they played music, and we went to sleep...music was always around us.” Betty’s mother taught her the piano, but her brothers and sisters were taught outside the home when her parents could afford sending them to a music teacher. “Marcel played the violin, Marie-Louise learnt the piano and the cello and Rene, my youngest sister, learnt the violin.” Lots of entertainment in New Zealand was provided by music within the home and Betty says that in the community “quite a few people aspired to a piano.” Sister Kathleen Halpin believes that although many

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people desired to learn the piano, “the home had to be big enough to house a piano.” Betty believes however, that pianos were more accessible in New Zealand: “when mum left Belgium, they were taxed for having a piano, they had to register a piano like we register a car.”

As Betty and her brothers and sisters were growing up, they also enjoyed popular music through dances. “That was our form of entertainment, dances three times a week.” Betty spent her early years living in Ravensbourne, before moving closer to the town, and she began going to dances when she was “in the basketball team and they had a dance, I was about seventeen.” Her father was also possessive of the four girls in the family and Betty says “I was only allowed to go to a dance if my brother came and he was a year younger than me.” They used to go to dances put on by St. John’s, or at the Early Settlers’ Association and later on, dances at the Town Hall on a Saturday night. Betty cannot remember any women playing music for the dances, “nearly all the dances we went to were played for by men. They’d have a saxophone, a double bass, perhaps and piano and drums. Women didn’t play those instruments.” Betty believes it was seen as more feminine to play the piano. She said the McNamara’s Band were “quite a thing up Central.”

The church has also been a big part of Betty’s musical life. They lived close to the Congregational Church in Ravensbourne, growing up and “on a Sunday night...there was crowds that used to come to our place and we used to have sing-songs around the piano. Not just religious songs, but any sort of songs.” Betty has met a large number of people and made many friendships through the church choir. “I’ve had a bond through music and the choir.”

OLIVE NIEPER AND ELLICE IRVINE:

When Olive and Ellice (nee Nieper) grew up in Caversham, music also permeated the home on Sunday evenings. Olive says “every Sunday night after church everybody landed on us and we sang hymns at the piano. It was wonderful because the whole choir used to come from the Caversham Baptist Church...it was lovely.” Sunday was hymn day, but Ellice says, “we used to

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1 Interview with Betty Anderson, Dunedin, 12/5/01
2 Interview with Sister Kathleen Halpin, Dunedin, 9 July 2001.
3 Interview with Olive Nieper and Ellice Irvine, Dunedin, 13/3/01
sing all sorts of songs. We had a songbook that we sung out of on Sunday afternoons.”

Olive and Ellice were born on 12 October 1916 and 17 May 1918, respectively. Their father Frank Nieper, an express-man, died when his five children were very young. The family was very close after that and Olive said, “I always felt that the family...were my stronghold.” They grew up in a working class community with strong values based on respectability and their mother “encouraged us with our music, very much so...our music has been the most important thing in our lives.”

Despite being aspired to, music within the home was something that was perhaps more privileged in the Caversham community because “nobody had a piano. They couldn’t afford them in our day.” When the girls were very young, their Aunt put a piano in their front room and Olive described it as “a momentous occasion.” Olive and her sister Mavis had lessons from Miss Gardener in Baker St, but she insisted, “it wasn’t common. We were very very lucky.” Miss Gardener was a cousin of John Leech, “the most important singing teacher we have ever had in Dunedin [and conductor of the Leech Lyric Choir], and one day he got me playing for him. And then Ellice and I both played for him for about ten years at his big concerts in the Town Hall. I was as nervous as could be and she was as calm as [could] be.” Ellice interjected: “I’d be doing all the bowing and she’d have cleared out and left me standing on the stage alone!”

The Nieper girls were singled out at their primary school for having musical ability, and it continued being important through their education at King Edward Technical College and in their adult lives. The headmaster of Caversham Primary School heard Olive practising the piano from their house opposite the school, on Main South Road, and asked her to play for the school choir. King Edward Technical College was chosen because of its musical orientation. Later, Olive went to the Barth School of Music and completed her teaching diplomas under Beatrice Barth. Olive was particularly prominent as a pianist, playing publicly and for live broadcasts on the concert programme 4YC. “Mrs. Westland and myself played two pianos and we got quite famous through that. It was really wonderful...a wonderful time.”
Ellice (left) and Olive Nieper, photographed on leaving the 4YC broadcasting studio
During World War Two, music was important and both Olive and Ellice participated in fundraising concerts. Ellice remembered that “we played at every army camp and every RNZAF camp that there could possibly be...the boys used to come up behind us in uniform and they’d sing...the William Tell, [Rossini] da da da, da da da, da da dee dum dum, da da da, da da da, da da dee dum dum pom! It was good fun.” Patriotic, rousing music was popular. Olive recalled, “they liked two people playing at the piano.” The highlight of Olive’s musical career was during the war years, when Begg’s imported ten grand pianos (Steinways), “and of course, there had been no pianos in during the war, so Begg’s went mad and bought these pianos and they put two of us from the Barth School at each of them and oh! We thought we were Christmas!”

Dances were also a prominent form of entertainment during the war but Ellice said “we weren’t allowed to go to the Town Hall Dances that was for sure, but we were allowed to go to the Early Settlers’ Dances...they [the Town Hall Dances] didn’t have a very good reputation...I think there was a lot of matching that went on.” Olive admitted “but if we were playing, that was another story.” Olive and Ellice would sometimes play for the Early Settlers’ Dances. Olive believes her mother was protective because they did not have a father and “we truly didn’t have a lot of boyfriends. During the war there were no boys, they were all overseas.” She says of her sisters, “we were never separated.”

Music has definitely provided a livelihood for Olive and Ellice and “that was the big factor, really.” They both agree that there was a sense of community between musicians in the city and Ellice said “we mixed with them all.” Both sisters were the Secretary of the Trinity College at different stages and got to know all of the music teachers around Dunedin. Sister Kathleen agreed that music provided a sense of musical community, “I knew a lot of music teachers in Dunedin.”

Through her involvement in the New Zealand Association of Singing Teachers’, Sister Kathleen met a lot of people at meetings, competitions, the Cleveland Scholarship, having speakers and entertaining examiners.

Music was also an important factor in meeting new people, especially for Olive, who was extremely shy. Music encouraged her to be more outgoing. For

example, after Olive and Ellice began teaching the piano and theory, “there were few teachers and we got the lot, they just queued up.” They began teaching after they moved from Caversham into St. Clair and it was through music that “we seemed to always be able to make friends.” Olive felt that St. Clair was perhaps “a bit more snobby...but the people have been wonderful...it was alright because we had music. The music helped more than I can ever tell you”, which supports the idea of music being a way to cross social divides. People took an interest in their status as musicians and music teachers. “If we had a recital, everybody came.” Music was more accessible by that stage. Ellice agreed, “it was the money that kept people away from learning...because we came through the Depression.”

It was necessary for Olive and Ellice to have a teaching diploma, and become a member of the Music Teachers’ Registration Board and Ellice recollects, “it wasn’t easy to get in.” They describe the income as “miserable...it always had to be an extra. You couldn’t live off it.” But although they described themselves as poor, they agreed that they were always happy.

**VALDA McCRAKEN**¹⁶:

Valda was born on 6 March 1922 and also began teaching music later in her adult life, after pursuing a career in singing. Like Olive and Ellice, she grew up in Caversham and music was enjoyed within the home from an early age. “I’m told that my father wouldn’t allow my mother to go and wake me up when I was a baby, he would go and play – he had a little harp and he would play this music to wake me up.” Music was also enjoyed with other families in the neighbourhood. “We had a family that lived opposite us called the Maslens...and the mother played the piano and we used to have musical evenings, singing around the piano. One day, old Mrs. Maslen said “Valda, you ought to get your voice trained”, so that was the start of it.”

Singing has given Valda huge opportunities in her life. She learnt off Ernest Drake and completed her L.R.S.M (Licentiate to the Royal School of Music), and went next door to Max Scherek for theory lessons, until she won a Melba...

¹⁵ Ibid.
Scholarship to train in London for eighteen months. Before World War Two the Melba scholarship (named after Nellie Melba) was a source of trans-Tasman rivalry between Australians and New Zealanders and was held in Melbourne, with the winner travelling to England, but post war, it was an internal competition funded by the Competitions Society. Valda was twenty-four years old when she won and travelled on the 'SS Rimutaka' to England "with several friends, including one of my accompanists." Music gave Valda a way to travel overseas in her youth, something few people could do. "I was lucky." In London Valda shared a room with a young woman from Spain and when she went back to Madrid, "I got invited for a holiday. Her father got me an audition with Lola Rodriguez They Aragon, so I went back to London and packed up and moved to Madrid." Valda lived in Madrid with Consuello's (her roommate's) family. "They had a big house and lots of maids, I'm very fond of Spain" (7)

After three and one half years in Spain, Valda returned to Dunedin and performed around the city at various events and broadcasts. "I also did a lot of oratorio, St. Mathews Passion, Messiah, as the contralto soloist [for the Choral Society and broadcasts]." Valda described it as being "great fun" as a part of the Choral Society, which was mostly dominated by women, "they were always a bit short on tenors." As a soloist, Valda was also paid, although "it wasn't much, you'd get something like £3 for broadcasting over 4YC and things like the Messiah." Valda was also asked to sing as a soloist in other cities, such as Invercargill, Christchurch and Wellington.

Although through the Choral Society's social functions "you'd always have supper afterwards and you'd meet them all and they'd come and chat to you", Valda never felt a strong sense of solidarity and community between musicians in Dunedin. "I'm sad to say, that especially singers, I'm not sure about instrumentalists, but there can be quite a few that are horribly jealous and really quite nasty." Because of Valda's opportunities, others "perhaps felt threatened", especially older singers, "who because they were older, the opportunities weren't there."

Valda believed that receiving overseas training did not necessarily mean the public were more receptive. She reflected: "they probably expected more of...

16 Interview with Valda McCracken, Dunedin, 20/8/01
you, but it didn’t mean to say that just because you’d had training overseas...that you could be singing beside someone that could be a marvellous singer...in fact, they could perhaps be more critical of someone that had been away and had more opportunities.”

Like Olive, Valda never married and this perhaps allowed her to take a music career further. She explained, “there were various people overseas, New Zealanders and English men and even a Spanish bank manager that Consuello thought I ought to take seriously, but I didn’t. I got so involved with music that there wasn’t time. Other things would have interrupted.” It was not seen as acceptable that a woman should have a career and a place within the home, “the done thing was to have the mother there when you arrived home from school. I think it’s good that women can do that [now], instead of vegetating at home.” Valda was able to have a great deal more of independence through music, “it made life much more exciting.”

When Valda grew up in Dunedin, most of the singing teachers were male. “There was Ernest Drake and Mr. Leech, Alex Waimsley, but there was a woman called Meda Paine.” Women were most often the accompanists for concerts and exams. Valda recalled her lessons with John Leech: “he made you feel so good that I just used to float down High St. afterwards.”

Norine, Betty, Olive, Ellice, Valda and Sister Kathleen all experienced music within the home while growing up and they agree that music (and owning a piano) was something people aspired to. Olive, Ellice and Sister Kathleen gained a sense of musical community through teaching music in Dunedin, as most music teachers knew each other, however Norine and Valda did not feel the same connection with other performers. While all of the interviewees had different experiences with music, they all made social connections outside the home. On a popular level, McNamara’s Dance Band was an exception in the extent to which it provided the sisters with opportunities for travel, social acceptance and recognition, as women did not often participate in the musical genre of dance bands. Another exception was Valda McCracken’s experience, as although by the 1940s, women gained more opportunities through music, few were able to travel to the extent that Valda did. Betty, Olive and Ellice all experienced a strong social involvement through music in the church.
Involvement in the church choir was a more accepted way of continuing music after marriage, as opposed to taking up music as a career. Olive and Valda never married, and although music was not the sole determinant of this, the fact that Norine and Ellice stopped performing and teaching (respectively) upon marriage shows that it was both more accepted and easier to be more involved as an unmarried woman. Music was a form of self-expression and a form of relief, especially in times of stress such as the Depression or the war. Olive and Ellice were also able to a degree, to cross social barriers and to make further connections through teaching music. The interviewees in this chapter therefore place prominence on music in their lives, stressing it as being almost paramount in determining their personal histories.
CONCLUSION

The first half of the twentieth century was a time of growth and change for music in Dunedin and for women in music. Music functioned as an avenue for gaining income for women, an opportunity to meet people and a way of crossing social divides. In the early years of the century music was not so accessible for women. It was more accepted for unmarried women to teach the piano, or perhaps perform but this was judged within the confines of the feminine image. It was not conventional for women to play other instruments, except perhaps string instruments. As time progressed women gained agency through music, although by the 1950s, popular culture replaced the demand for classical and performance music.

In Dunedin at the turn of the twentieth century music was based on two conflicting influences. A conservative element, generated from both a religious and genteel influence and a more popular aspect built on the diversity of people that came with the discovery of gold in Central Otago. While popular forms of entertainment such as touring vaudeville companies and theatre prospered, the aim of Dunedin's prominent musical men to educate people in classical music, was aided by the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition in 1890, which attracted national and international musicians and encouraged local musicians.

The piano was a symbol of genteel respectability and was an essential possession for those aspiring for upward social mobility. Music in the home was fairly prevalent and the piano played a central role in entertainment, whether for musical evenings for the middle-class or church group sings. It was popular for women to play the piano, which was an ideal continued from the Victorian image of music as a symbol of femininity and refinement for women.

Men dominated classical music in Dunedin, through musical journals, editorials, reviews and also orchestras. Baeyertz was especially outspoken in promoting musical advancement and education in Dunedin and New Zealand. Yet women were accepted into the music sphere within the ideology of civilisation and respectability, through piano playing. Women were therefore accepted to learn music within the home.
Women also performed in the public sphere however, through teaching the piano, much to the trepidation of the musical elite who wrote against the proliferation of music teachers in the city. Prominent male musicians were so concerned about advancing music that in 1907, T. K. Sidey even took up the matter of creating a registered body of musicians, to Parliament. The Bill was not well supported and both politicians and the general public spoke against such a measure of control over musicians. Sidey was not deterred, nevertheless and the bill was passed in 1928. Sidey’s determination, along with the number of letters in the Triad and the Otago Daily Times from prominent musical men on cultural advancement in Dunedin, shows the extent that classical music was elevated as a civilising influence.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, women performers were judged critically against the contemporary standard of femininity and through local reviews they were portrayed as ornamental. orchestras in the city were predominantly male, although women played the violin, viola or cello, which were seen as more feminine than wind instruments. Over time however, women gained more recognition and agency through music, both on the stage and through teaching. Music was one avenue of contributing to the World War One effort at home by providing morale-boosting concerts.

During the 1920s women’s involvement with music was promoted. The Society of Women Musicians was established in 1925, under the guidance of the English pianist, Dorothea Vincent. There were also opportunities for involvement through societies such as the music circle of the Otago Women’s Club. Evidence such as the ‘Notes for Women’ pages in the Otago Daily Times, suggests that during the 1920s, musical involvement around Dunedin was fashionable, as the social details of musical concerts, recitals and societies were published.

The number of piano teachers peaked in the 1930s, along with the escalation of choral societies, community sings and piano concerts. This can be attributed to the effects of increased music in education, although music concerts were also an important morale-booster during the Depression. Women were prominent during this time in concerts on two pianos. The popularity of piano teaching for women continued to generate concern, particularly about the
varying abilities of teachers and prominent musical men and women spoke against amateur teaching.

The demand for classical music declined during the 1940s, although by this time women were playing a variety of instruments and Dunedin was home to a Ladies Brass Band and a Ladies Scottish Pipe Band. The effects of broadcasting had already been felt in Dunedin in the previous two decades, but it continued to influence musical activity. War movies and dances also generated popular appeal and through these, an overseas influence from America and England replaced the role of live music in providing relief during a time of stress.

Socially, choral music was an important way for women to make connections outside the home. For musically minded women, the church was an acceptable and accessible place to meet and participate. Choirs were an integral part of most churches and were dominated by women, who appreciated it for both its place in the service, self expression and the social element gained through meetings, practises, socials and combined services.

Music in schools encouraged young women to learn at an early age and gave them increased opportunities to learn instrumental music. It was a contributing factor to the increase of musical activity around the city in the 1930s and several Dunedin notables, such as Dr V. E. Galway and Maitland Gard’ner, were involved in promoting it on a national level. The desire for cultural advancement was still strong. There was strong participation in the Dunedin Competitions’ Society from privately tutored individuals, choirs and school groups. At University level, music was important socially to students, although the influences of popular styles such as jazz music lessened its appeal.

Several secular choral groups flourished in Dunedin, from the more prestigious Dunedin Choral Society to smaller workplace choirs. Women were active within all these groups, which performed for charity events, public concerts, competitions and broadcast. There were also opportunities for accompanists. Again, women gained agency over time and by the 1930s women conducted their own choirs and orchestras.

The personal histories of Norine McNab, Betty Anderson, Ellice Irvine and Olive Nieper, Valda McCracken and Sister Kathleen Halpin all confirm that music was prevalent within the home and they all extended it into the public
sphere. Through music teaching, performing and music within the church, the women had some degree of agency insofar as music provided them with an outlet for expression, a source of income, a way of crossing social divides and of making social connections. The oral histories give depth to my argument that for some women, music was a hugely influencing factor on their lives.

From 1907 until the 1950s, music was increasingly an avenue through which women gained recognition, income and were able to make social connections. In the first two decades, women were mostly involved in music through teaching the piano or for entertainment within the home, however through the 1920s and 1930s, more social freedom was available for women to be active in musical societies, groups and concerts as well as teaching. By the 1950s it was acceptable for women to play instruments other than the piano or string instruments but popular bands that were increasing in style were mostly male dominated. From 1907 to 1950, women challenged their accepted roles through music and crossed social boundaries as they pushed past the confines of femininity.
Music Teachers as listed in Stone's Directory, 1907

Number

- Married women
- Unmarried women
- Men

- Music teachers
- Violin teachers
- Singing teachers
- Piano tuners
- Musicians
Music teachers
Violin teachers
Singing teachers
Piano tuners
Musicians
Piano makers
1915

Number

Married women

Unmarried women

Men

Music teachers

Violin teachers

Singing teachers

Piano tuners

Musicians
1925

Number

Married Women Unmarried Women Men

Music teacher Violin teacher Singing teacher Piano tuner Musician

0 10 20 30 40 50 60
Number

1940

Music Teachers
Violin Teachers
Singing Teachers
Piano Tuners
Musicians
Music Lecturers
Violincello Teachers

Married Women
Unmarried Women
Men
1950

Number

- Music Teachers
- Violin Teachers
- Singing Teachers
- Piano Tuners
- Musicians
- Piano Accordion Teachers

Married Women
Unmarried Women
Men
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