# Magic Music from the Telharmonium



The Story of the First Music Synthesizer

A Color Documentary with Stereo Sound Duration 28:51 Storyboard Script

Reynold Weidenaar

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# Synopsis

It was 1906. "Get Music on Tap Like Gas or Water" promised the headlines, and soon the public was enchanted with inventor Thaddeus Cahill's (1867-1934) electrical music by wire. The Telharmonium was a 200-ton behemoth that created numerous musical timbres and could flood many rooms with sound. Beginning with the first instrument, constructed in the 1890's, and continuing with the installation of the second instrument at Telharmonic Hall in New York, the rise and fall of commercial service, the attempted comeback of the third Telharmonium, and ending with efforts to find a home for the only surviving instrument in 1951, this documentary provides a definitive account of the first comprehensive music synthesizer.

## **Production Notes**

All visual sources are historically authentic still images. There are no live-action images, visual recreations, or mock-ups. The stills were photographed on transparencies and transferred to computer. Image processing and animation were created with Photoshop and Director on a PowerMac 8500 (144mb RAM). Most of the footage was generated in segments of 14 seconds or less. This was the upper limit of full-sized uncompressed PICT frames that the computer could fit into RAM and output at 30 frames per second. Custom 8-bit color palettes were produced for each segment. The segments were transferred from computer to 3/4-inch video, and from that to D2 video.

The dialogue is also authentic, taken from descriptions in newspapers and magazines of the day. Most of the music selections are known to have been performed on the instrument. However, no recordings of the Telharmonium have been located, so the music was recreated on a Yamaha TX802 Tone Generator, which permitted the use of just intonation where appropriate. The sound effects are generally from recorded libraries; some sounds of antique machinery and automobiles were also incorporated. The audio processing was accomplished primarily with SoundHack and Hyperprism; editing and mixing were achieved using Sound Designer, Deck, and Peak, on a Macintosh IIci.

A history of the Telharmonium in print may be found in Weidenaar's book, Magic Music from the Telharmonium, Scarecrow Press, 1995, ISBN 0-8108-2692-5.

#### About the Producer

Reynold Weidenaar was born in East Grand Rapids, Mich., in 1945. He studied composition with Donald Erb and Brian Fennelly, and began creating works for moving visuals and music in 1978 on 16mm film. His films and concert videos have received over 80 honors and awards. He has received Guggenheim and Fulbright fellowships in video and an N.E.A. composer fellowship. He is Assistant Professor of Communication at William Paterson University, Wayne, N.J.

## Credits

Script, Production, Direction, Still Camera, Image Processing, Computer Animation, Audio Recording, Music Arrangement, Digital Sound Design, Editing:

Reynold Weidenaar

#### Narration:

Brian Lehrer

# Keyboard Performances:

Barbara Blegen

Additional Performance by Reynold Weidenaar

#### Voices:

Lisa Brenner

Elliott Crown

Dennis Heaphy

Roseanne Limoncelli

James Edward Pierce

Julia Pennington

Reynold Weidenaar

# MIDI Music Production Engineers:

Alex Noyes, Harvestworks Inc. / Studio PASS Mark Ramsey, Center for Electronic Music

# Online Editing Engineers:

Nils Nichols and Topher Dune, through the Standby Program at Unitel Post 38

# Music (in order of presentation):

1. Scott Joplin	Palm Leaf Rag
2. George Frideric Handel	Largo from Xerxes
3. Felix Mendelssohn	Frühlingslied, Op. 62, No. 6
4. Georges Bizet	March and Chorus from Carmen
5. Ethelbert Nevin	Narcissus, Op. 13, No. 4
6. Alphonse Czibulka	Songe d'amour après le bal (Intermezzo), Op. 356
7. John H. Flynn	Yip-I-Addy-I-Ay!
8. Robert Planquette	Legend of the Bells from Chimes of Normandy
9. Gustave Kerker	As She Played on the Cal-li-o-pay! from The Social Whirl
10. J. L. Molloy	The Kerry Dance
11. Georg Goltermann	Andante from Concerto No. 5 for Violoncello
12. G. A. Spink	I've Got to Dance Till the Band Gits Through (Bill Simmons) from The Social Whirl

13. Richard Wagner	Prelude from Lohengrin
14. Alfred G. Robyn	The Rook and the Robin from Princess Beggar
15. Victor Herbert	Absinthe Frappè from It Happened in Nordland
16. Karl L. Hoschna	Every Little Movement Has a Meaning All Its
	Own from Madame Sherry
<ol><li>17. Charles de Bériot</li></ol>	Concerto No. 1 for Violin, Op. 16
18. Lowell Mason	Nearer My God to Thee
19. Giacomo Rossini	Andantino from William Tell
20. Johann Strauss	Du und du, Op. 367
21. Ludwig van Beethoven	Polonaise, Op. 8
22. Ben M. Jerome	Kiss Me Good-bye and Go, Jack
23. Gustave Kerker	It's Nice to Have a Sweetheart from The
	Tourists
<ol><li>Pietro Mascagni</li></ol>	Intermezzo from Cavalleria Rusticana
25. Thomas Thompson	Serenade
26. Franz Lehár	I Love You So (The Merry Widow Waltz)
<ol><li>Richard Wagner</li></ol>	To the Evening Star from Tannhäuser
28. Reynold Weidenaar	Telharmania
29. Scott Joplin	Maple Leaf Rag
30. Scottish Folk Song	Auld Lang Syne

# With the Support of:

The National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, Inc., Hollywood, CA The Center for Electronic Music, New York, NY Harvestworks, Inc. / Studio PASS, New York, NY William Paterson University, Wayne, NJ

# Picture Sources:

American Telephone and Telegraph Co. Corporate Archives

AT&T Bell Laboratories

Carnegie Hall Archives

David Sarnoff Research Center

Ella Merkel DiCarlo

Holyoke Public Library

The Maryland Club

Robert A. Moog

Museum of the City of New York

New Jersey Secretary of State, Corporate Information and Records Section

New York City Board of Estimate and Apportionment, Bureau of Franchises

New York City Municipal Archives

The New-York Historical Society

The New York Public Library, Mid-Manhattan Branch, Picture Collection

The New York Public Library, Performing Arts Research Center, Billy Rose Theatre Collection

The New York Public Library, Performing Arts Research Center, Music Division

The New York Public Library, The Research Libraries, U. S. History, Local History & Genealogy Department Office for Metropolitan History Thomas L. Rhea Margaret Cahill Schwartz

## Sound Effects Sources:

Harvestworks Inc. / Studio PASS Marilyn Reese

#### Technical Information

## Sound Software:

SoundHack, Sound Designer, Hyperprism, Time Bandit, Reverb, Peak, Deck

# Image Software:

Photoshop, Director

#### Hardware:

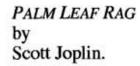
PowerMac 8500, Macintosh IIci, Yamaha TX802 Tone Generator

# Master Format:

NTSC Color D2 Digital Video

## Release Formats:

NTSC (USA) System: VHS HiFi, 3/4-inch U-matic, BetacamSP PAL (European) System: VHS HiFi





001 Ballroom Dancers



002 Title



Caption: Baltimore, 1900

A select group of affluent bankers and investors gathered for dinner at an exclusive private



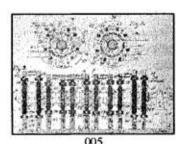
Dynamo Cross-Section

club to hear a business proposition for a revolutionary new invention.



004 Telephone Receiver and Horn

A telephone receiver



Caption: Plan of Dynamos

fitted to a horn stood ready on the dining room table.



Top & Side of Dynamo Assembly

From this horn, the sound of the future would flood the room—the pure,



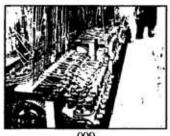
7007
Top Rear of Dynamo Assembly

rounded tones of electrical music. A single pair of telephone wires transmitted



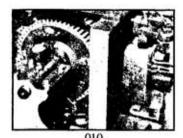
"Largo" Sheet Music

Handel's "Largo" as it was being performed on



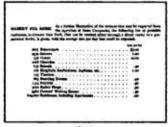
Caption: The Telharmonium

the Telharmonium, 35 miles away.



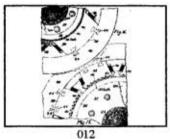
End Rotor and Shaft

LARGO from XERXES by George Frideric Handel.



011 Outlets for Wired Music

Before leaving the table, the awestruck businessmen would commit more than \$100,000.



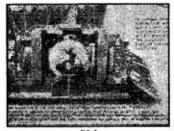
Dynamo Teeth

"Sweet and clear over the wires."



013 Broadside

It was only a down payment to finance a second, larger Telharmonium and purchase a license



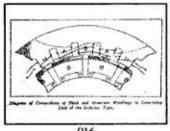
to operate the instrument in New York. Twenty years before the advent of radio,

Caption: End View of Dynamo



cable broadcasting

015 Pamphlet



016 Dynamo Wiring had become a reality.

SFX: Cork pops, champagne...

...pours, crystal glasses clink.



4 Men Toasting at Fireplace

"It was pure music and itit seemed to spring from nothingness-just a pair of wires.

# Scene 2: Thaddeus Cahill Conceives and Builds the First Telharmonium



Caption: Thaddeus Cahill

Thaddeus Cahill was a young FRÜHLINGSLIED, lawyer and an inventor of Op. 62, No. 6, mechanisms for pianos and typewriters

Felix Mendelssohn. SFX: Old typewriter.



019 Cahill Typewriter

living in Washington, D.C.

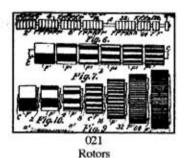
SFX up.

He was one of many who had experimented

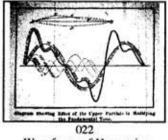


Trumpeter Plays into Telephone

with transmitting music over SFX: Thin, weak the telephone system, but the trumpet. sound had proven too thin and weak to fill a room.



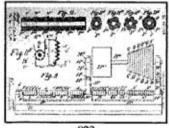
Electrical amplification was unknown. Then, in 1893, he was struck by a grand and radical idea. Why not build up



Waveforms of Harmonics

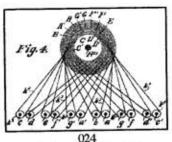
complex musical tones directly from a set of electrical generators?

SFX: L ch. - sweep of harmonic series. R ch. - electrical generator static.



023 Side View of Mainframe

It would be the perfect music machine. It would possess all the strengths of every instrument



Caption: A Drive Belt for Every Pitch Shaft

with the defects of none.

Cahill envisioned transmitting music

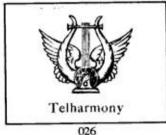


Telephone Receiver and Horn Suspended in Trees above Outdoor Café

from what he called a central station to tens of thousands of places at once, over a net- SFX: Buzz of conwork of telephone lines. Dur- versation, women ing the late 1890's, he slowly built, by hand, a small version of this astounding instrument.

talking.

MARCH AND CHORUS from CARMEN by Georges Bizet.



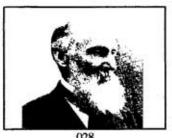
Winged Lyre

Completed, it was to weigh 14,000 pounds. Nothing like it had ever been seen or heard before.



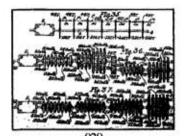
027 Caption: George Westinghouse, Lord Kelvin

He showed the Telharmonium to George Westinghouse and the Scottish scientist Lord Kelvin,



028 Lord Kelvin

who was delighted: "One of the greatest accomplishments of the brain



<u>Caption</u>: The Teeth on the Dynamos

of man."

Cahill began to look for money to build a larger version. He demonstrated it for Oscar T.



030
Caption: Oscar T. Crosby

Crosby, a prominent Washington capitalist and a well-known world explorer.

MUSIC up.



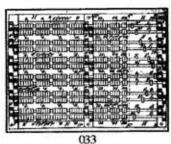
Telephone Operator at Globe

Crosby hungrily predicted enormous profits, on the scale of the telephone's.



Top of Dynamo Assembly

He decided to back Cahill financially and take control of the enterprise. When the two of



Caption: Overhead Sketch of Dynamo Shafts

them succeeded in transmitting electrical music to the Maryland Club, potential investors



Wall St. Lambs Selling Stocks

plainly saw the fortune to be made in sending longdistance music



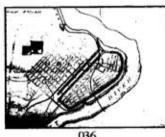
<u>Caption</u>:
The Music Room of the Future

everywhere—to hotels and SFX: Restaurant clubs, to restaurants and ambience. theatres.

"Of an exceedingly high class."

"Positively hair-raising because of its novelty."

# Scene 3: Holyoke



Map of Holyoke Canals

In the summer of 1902, NARCISSUS, Crosby sent Cahill to Op. 13, No. 4, by Ethelbert Nevin.



Holyoke Skyline at Night

Massachusetts, to build the second Telharmonium. The busy mill town



Mills on the Second-Level Canal

scores of machine had factories.

SFX: factory roar.



George F. Cahill

Cahill, with his



Arthur T. Cahill

brothers, George and Arthur, set up a workshop in the Cabot Street mill.

# Scene 4: Edwin Hall Pierce and the Completion of the Second Telharmonium



Caption: Edwin Hall Pierce

As the second Telharmonium SONGE D'AMOUR nearing completion, was Thaddeus Cahill hired

APRÈS LE BAL (INTERMEZZO), Op. 356, by Alphonse Czibulka



<u>Caption</u>: Pierce at the Telharmonium

Edwin Hall Pierce and two other local musicians to play the new instrument. They began to develop various sound qualities,



043 Musical Instruments

boldly hoping to duplicate the instruments of the orchestra. Pierce's son



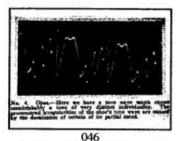
Caption: James Pierce in 1906--Age 10

James was ten years old when the great machine was completed in 1906. He could remember listening



Caption: James Pierce in 1974

to the Telharmonium: "Just what the sound of it was, as I recall it was something resembling an organ, a pipe organ,



Caption: Oboe Oscillograph

course they could sound like various different instruments. It was, it



Caption: Mill Worker with Dynamo Rotor

must have been at least 40 or 50 feet long. Cutting the SFX: milling and gears, heh-heh, cutting the grinding. teeth in these wheels and things like that, I can remember seeing 'em do that in the shop there where they were working."

## Scene 5: The First Performances



Workman with Dynamos

The mainframe of the instru- YIP-I-ADDY-I-AY! ment was 60 feet long, and by the

John H. Flynn



Switchboards

mighty giant weighed 200 tons. Ten switchboard panels were jammed with nearly 2,000

SFX: switches....



Caption: Thaddeus Cahill

switches. (PAUSE)

Thaddeus Cahill had spent \$200,000 to build his central station full size.

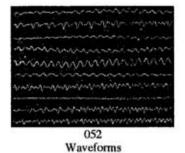
The first performances were given

...relay clicks, transformer hum.



Caption: Hotel Hamilton

at the Cabot Street Mill in Holyoke and transmitted to the grand ballroom of the Hotel Hamilton, half a mile away.



The entire ballroom was filled with sound, despite the absence of electronic amplification,



O53
Captions: Tone Mixer,
Arthur Cahill

because the output of a single generator on the central station was as great as 14,000 watts.

(PAUSE)

The guests were enthralled.

"Extraordinary—and delightful."



Woman with Cigarette





Sometimes, however, the wires delivered a distorted annoying sound—the and tones



Woman Wearing Straw Hat



Newspaper Story



Caption: Switchboard

would start with a click, as though a metal hammer were striking a string.



2 Performers at Keyboard

# "All the notes were inaugurated with little explosive puffs."

## Scene 6: Off to New York

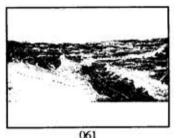


Caption: New York

In the summer of 1906, the

LEGEND OF THE BELLS from CHIMES OF NORMANDY by

Robert Planquette.



Aerial View of New York

Telharmonium was dismantled and transported to New York. The instrument was reassembled and installed

> SFX: machine assembly.



Captions: Times Tower, **Broadway Building** 

a few blocks south of Times the Broadway Square in Building. (PAUSE)

SFX up.

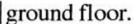


**Broadway Building** 

The alternators and switchboards were set up in the keyboards The basement. were housed in a new auditorium constructed on the



064 Metropolitan Opera House



The Broadway Building stood opposite the Metropolitan Opera House and the glittering Casino Theatre. This





Caption: "The Rialto"

expensive stretch of Broadway was known as "The Rialto," the heart of the theater district and a mecca for the



Caption: Leaving the Opera

cream of fashionable high society.

# Scene 7: Playing the Infernal Contraption



Console with Sign

The Telharmonium was a performer's nightmare come true. It was the most hair-raisingly complicated instrument to play in all the

a AS SHE PLAYED ON

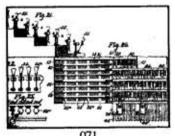
THE CAL-LI-O-PAY!
from
THE SOCIAL WHIRL
by
Gustave Kerker.



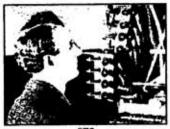
Caption: Dynamos



070 2 Performers at Keyboard

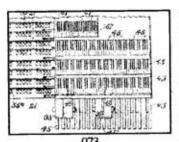


Caption: Timbre-Control Switches

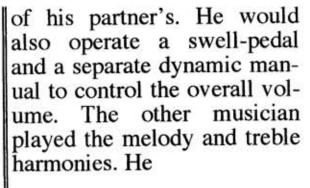


072 Performer and Switches

history of music. Usually, two musicians played at one time. One would play the bass line and accompanying chords, set his own timbrecontrol switches, and set some



Keyboard and Pedalboard



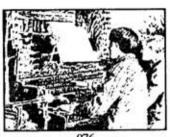


Performer at Keyboard

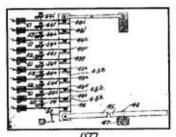
constantly stretched his reach to create just-intonation intervals and to span four



2 Performers at Keyboard

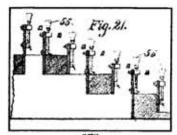


2 Performers at Keyboard

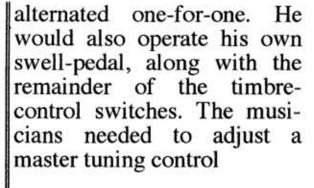


Caption: Key Switches

keyboard banks. It was a torment to move around the keyboard, since black and white keys

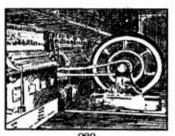


078 Timbre-Control Switches





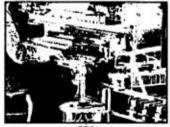
2 Performers at Keyboard



Caption: Drive Motor & Belt

when the drive motor began to slow down and the pitch drifted.

MUSIC up. Pitch drifts down a perfect fifth.



081 Console with Telephone

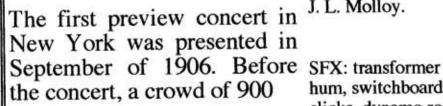
They could always phone for help.

SFX: antique telephone rings.

# Scene 8: The First Preview Concert in New York



Caption: N.Y. Riverfront

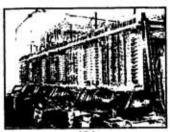


THE KERRY DANCE by J. L. Molloy.

hum, switchboard clicks, dynamo roar.



Caption: Telharmonic Hall



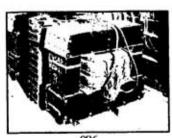
Switchboards



Transformers

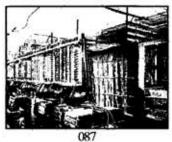
guests filed into the machinery rooms in the basement, to marvel at the transformers, switchboards, and dynamos. (PAUSE)

SFX up.

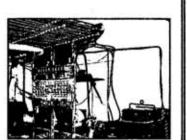


086 Big Transformer

During the concert, technical inadequacies were evident. The bass was thin and the treble had a dull sound. It was ironic-the massive instrument seemed best suited to small



Switchboards, Wires on Ceiling



Knife Switchboard

pieces of a gentle and unassuming character.

"Like a church organ, much softer and sweeter."

## Scene 9: Music in Fashionable Restaurants



Ritz-Carlton Roof Garden



"A Cozy Nook"

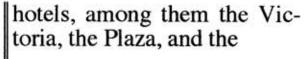


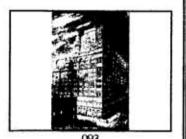
Hotel St. Regis Dining Room

Fashionable restaurants were ANDANTE Springing up all over New from CONCERTO NO. 5
York, a diversion for the new FOR VIOLONCELLO industrial rich. Many of the by finest restaurants were in Georg Goltermann. prominent



092 Caption: The Plaza





Caption: Waldorf-Astoria

Waldorf-Astoria.

SFX: restaurant ambience.



094 Plaza Hotel Dining Room

Huge menus would come to feature more than 500 items. Some establishments



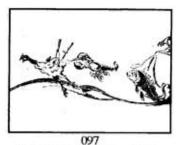
"At a Fashionable Hostelry"

boasted four orchestras, each with 30 musicians. Restaurant performers ranked among the best and highest-paid players Europe could offer. The combined salaries



"The Orpheus of the Restaurant"

of New York restaurant musicians exceeded a million dollars in one year.



"Orpheus" -- Chicken, Lobster

Replacing them with his new service was the goal of Oscar T. Crosby and his



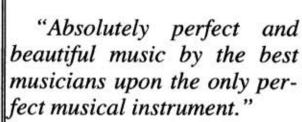
"Orpheus" -- Fish, Diner

New York Electric Music Company.

MUSIC up.



Hotel St. Regis Dining Room





100 "Private Party Cellar"

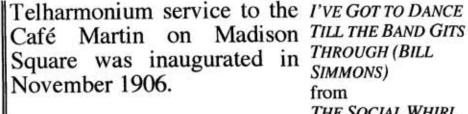


American Theatre Roof Garden

#### The Café Martin and the Singing Arc Scene 10:



102 "All Roads Lead to Café Martin"



THROUGH (BILL SIMMONS) from THE SOCIAL WHIRL G. A. Spink.



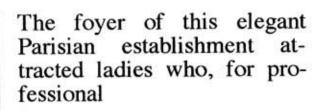
Café Martin, Table d'Hote Dining Room

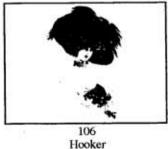


104 Café Martin Building



105 Café Martin Display Advertisement







Couple Outside Flatiron Building

seldom disdained reasons. invitations to an evening's diversion.

SFX: L ch. - male "ho-ho-ho." R ch. female giggle.

# At first the



"Talking It Over Quietly"

F-sharps from the Telharmonium blared shrilly. A defec- MUSIC: distorted f#. tive diaphragm was quickly replaced,



Enraptured Lady Diner near Horn on Wall

and it seemed to the delighted patrons that, clearly, here was an instrument that would purvey "music to the million."



Happy Woman Raising Sherry Glass

After the Café's inaugural dinner, the honored guests repaired to Telharmonic Hall. Here



Gathering at Telharmonic Hall with 2 Arc Lamps [DRAWING]

they treated were to demonstration of the "singing arc"-two arc lamps connected directly to the Telharmonium. As they glowed with light,



Gathering at Telharmonic Hall with 2 Arc Lamps [PHOTO]

the lamps acted as small loudspeakers, oscillating with music.

MUSIC up.



Caption: Tungsten Arc Lamp

"A strange reality of this golden age of electricity."

#### Scene 11: Mark Twain



Hands on Keyboard

PRELUDE from LOHENGRIN by Richard Wagner.



115 Mark Twain

Early in December, Mark Twain visited Telharmonic Hall: "Every time I see or hear a new wonder



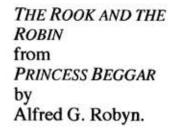
Mark Twain Writing in Bed

like this, I have to postpone my death right off. I couldn't possibly leave the world until I have heard this again and again."

## Scene 12: The Casino Theatre



117 Casino Theatre





118 Casino Theatre Auditorium

Just after New Year's Day, the New York Electric Music Company connected the Telharmonium to the massive, ornate, and



119 Casino Theatre Program

ostentatious Casino Theatre. The Casino was a luxurious temple for fluffy and



120 Casino Theatre Audience

frolicsome musical productions.

SFX: audience ambience.



121 Casino Theatre Program

It was the primary gathering place where privileged young men could survey a showcase of feminine bloom.



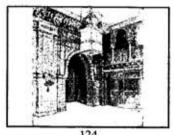
"The Social Whirl" Five Girls on Railing

For an hour before the curtain rose



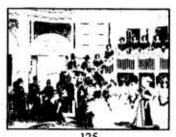
"The Social Whirt" Display Advertisement

on the huge chorus, the pretty and shapely women, and the bubbling



A Corridor of the Casino Theatre

gaiety, audiences were delighted with the Telharmonium. The electrical music was piped into



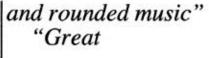
Full Cast of "The Social Whirl"

the gilded lobby, before the musical comedies and during intermissions.

"Sweet



"The Social Whirl" The Manicurists





"The Social Whirt" The Manicure Ballet



"The Social Whirl" The Shoeshine Girls

penetrating power."

# Scene 13: The Gala Reception



Display Advertisement

In January 1907,

ABSINTHE FRAPPÈ from IT HAPPENED IN NORDLAND by Victor Herbert.



130 Invitation to First Public Recital

Telharmonic Hall finally announced that concerts would be open to the public. A long list of distinguished guests attended the gala formal reception.



131 Caption: Victor Herbert

Present were composer Victor Herbert,



132 Caption: Spencer Trask

banker Spencer Trask,



Caption: George Foster Peabody

financier George Foster Peabody,



134 Caption: Walter Damrosch

conductor Walter Damrosch,



Caption: Clyde Fitch

playwright Clyde Fitch,



Caption: Peter Cooper Hewitt

and inventor Peter Cooper Hewitt. (PAUSE)

MUSIC up.

Crosby



137
Caption: Hotel Normandie

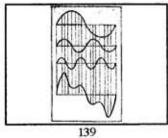
grandly announced that the Hotel Normandie, on Broadway and Thirty-eighth Street, and the magnificent Waldorf-Astoria, on Fifth Avenue



Caption: Waldorf-Astoria Bedroom of Royal Suite

and Thirty-third, had just subscribed to his Telharmonic service.

MUSIC up.



Waveforms of Additive Harmonics

"Clear, sweet, perfect tones."

"Long, sustained, perfect tones."

#### Concerts at Telharmonic Hall Scene 14:



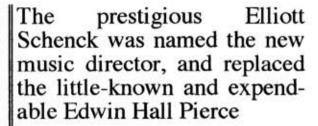
140 Auditorium of Telharmonic Hall

Inside Telharmonic Hall, mu- EVERY LITTLE MOVEsic played from horns hidden MENT HAS A MEANin the circular divan, the ceiling, ferns and shrubs, columns, and urns.

ING ALL ITS OWN from MADAME SHERRY Karl L. Hoschna.

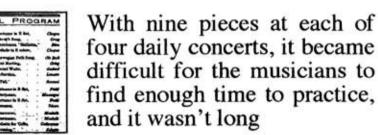


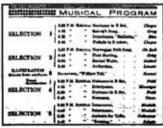
141 Sheet Music Cover



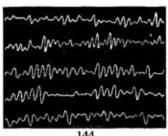


Elliott Schenck



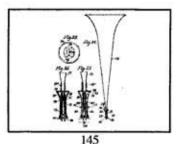


Program: List of Music



Waveforms

before the quality of performances became inconsistent.



Meanwhile, Thaddeus Cahill plodded on in Holyoke, working on improvements.

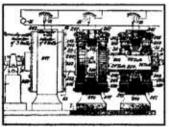
Receivers and Horn

Scene 15: The Heyday of the Telharmonium



February 1907 was the heyday of the Telharmonium. At the unveiling, critics had not- CONCERTO NO. 1 ed that Telharmonic music FOR VIOLIN,

CONCERTO NO. 1 FOR VIOLIN, Op. 16, by Charles de Bériot.



147 Side View of Alternators was deficient: "Rather crude and lacking in variety. Also, certain tones are overaccented."



Display Advertisement

Yet, in the space of a few weeks, it had become a popular novelty, and hundreds filled Telharmonic

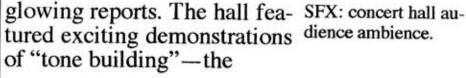


Program No. 1

Hall for each concert. The New York newspapers daily carried



French Horn Oscillograph





Audience at Telharmonic Hall [PHOTO]

sounds of the different acoustic instruments as they were built up



Audience at Telharmonic Hall [DRAWING]



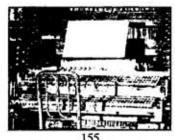
Elliott Schenck at Keyboard

from scratch. Vocalists sang and a violinist played along with the instrument in the hall, but at first, only the keyboard music was transmitted



Woman Sings into Telephone

over the wires. After a few weeks, Broadway singer Isabelle Winlocke was hired to record gramophone records for the telephone transmission of vocals along with the Telharmonium.



"A blend of woodwind and brass, with a peculiar twang of its own."

Telharmonium Console

Scene 16: The Lenten Gospel Service



Many of the new hotels purchased the service-the Victoria, on Broadway

Hotel Victoria



Hotel Imperial

and Twenty-seventh, and the Imperial, on Broadway and Thirty-first, among them.

The latter was the site of NEARER MY GOD TO the great Telharmonic

THEE by Lowell Mason.

Newspaper Story

Lenten revival service led by the Reverend Henry Marsh Warren. As the good preacher announced the hymns in the hotel meeting room, the performer at Telharmonic Hall was cued to begin by



Gospel Service at Hotel Imperial

telephone. At a simultaneous service at Telharmonic Hall, the hymns were sung and transmitted to the subscribing hotels.



160 Rev. Henry Marsh Warren

L ch:	"When the musical Redeem-	
R ch: "Our Fa	ther,	
Lch: er come	s, he will be	
R ch:	who art in heaven,	
L ch: able,	by means of	
R ch: has	llowed be thy name,	
	armonic system,	
R ch:	thy kingdom	
L ch: to	draw unimagined harmonies	
R ch: come,	thy will be done, on earth	
L ch: from the	caves of sound."	
R ch: as it is in		

#### Scene 17: Radio Broadcasts by Lee de Forest



Caption: Lee de Forest

Lee de Forest was an ambitious young

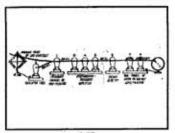
ANDANTINO from WILLIAM TELL by Giacomo Rossini.



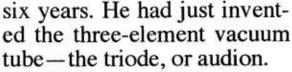
De Forest Wireless Apparatus

inventor who had been exper- SFX: antique radio imenting with radio transmis- tuning, static, pops, sions for

whines.



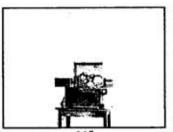
163 Radio Signal Path



In February 1907, he persuaded a skeptical Oscar T. Crosby to let him broadcast



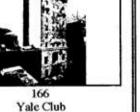
The Audion

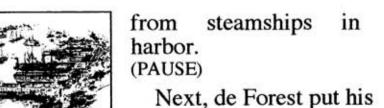


De Forest Receiver

the Telharmonium. He set up his radio receiver on the roof of the Yale Club, an elevenstory building on Forty-fourth Street. The electrical music would come through the air, but so would interference in SFX: Morse code. the form of Morse code







SFX: steamship horn, bell.

the

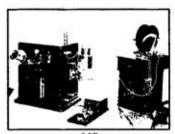
167 Brooklyn Navy Yard



Broadway and Times Tower

apparatus on the top floor of the Times Tower, a skyscraper on Forty-third Street. But the accompanying were

music SFX: several telegraphs.



De Forest Radio Apparatus

radio telegraph signals from the Brooklyn Navy Yard and as far away as Bridgeport, Connecticut.

De Forest continued broadcasting from Telharmonic Hall for months, but static, dropouts, frying noises made and reception

several SFX: add static.



De Forest Transmitter

undependable. De Forest nevertheless tried to peddle his system to the New York Electric Music Company, but Crosby declined.

SFX up.

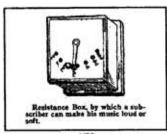
#### The Close of the First Season Scene 18:



Display Advertisement

In April the Hall announced DU UND DU, the end of its first season. The Op. 367, final program was a multichannel extravaganza featuring different sounds from various locations

Johann Strauss.



172 Resistance Box

in the auditorium. Portable volume controls were carried through the audience, and the enchanted patrons were invited to operate them.

"As sensitive to moods and emotions



173 Woman on Telephone

as a living thing."

Motion pictures demonstrated to potential subscribers how to request musical selections by telephone.

After the



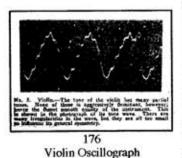
174 Report

Hall closed, the New York City Board of Estimate offered a cable franchise to Crosby for a hefty \$675,000.

## Scene 19: The Panic of 1907



3 Muses with Lute



By the Fall of 1907, it had become obvious to Oscar T. Crosby that the Telharmonium would never eliminate traditional instruments and

POLONAISE, Op. 8, by Ludwig van Beethoven.



Gamblers at Roulette, Monte Carlo

the salaries of those who played them. Rather than throw any more money or time at this white elephant of music, he decided to take his losses,



178 Receiver and Horn in Hydrangea Bush

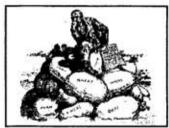
and abandoned the Telharmonium.

MUSIC up.



179 Fear

Meanwhile, economic troubles were beginning to fester nationwide. Stock prices fell when the rigid money supply



180 Man on Grain Bags

didn't grow with the roaring economy. Soon commodity prices collapsed. In October, the Knickerbocker



181 Knickerbocker Trust Co.

Trust Company failed when it was discovered that its directors were loaning the bank's money to themselves. Other



Teddy Roosevelt Grasps Credit Pillars

banks tumbled in rapid succession, and the panic of 1907



183 Panic in Wall St., October 23, 1907

was on.

SFX: angry crowd.

The stock market lost most of



184 Man Swamped in Ticker Tape

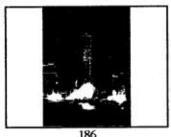
its value, and currency was being sold at a premium. Businesses went bankrupt



Maelstrom of Stock Gambling

and 80% of the Broadway shows closed.

During the panic, Crosby's junior partner, Frederick C. Todd, took the helm of the New York Electric Music Company. While depositors



The Great White Way at Night

were withdrawing their money from banks, he formed a new corporation to lure fresh investors, and



Woman with Japanese Lanterns

prepared to supply electrical music along Broadway once again.

Scene 20: A Manhole Spouts Electrical Music in Broadway

#### MUSIC EXCITES BROADWAY.

sterious Strains lesuing from Manhole a 18th Street Attract Quite a Crowd and Muci

My evening at the corner of Brondway and Chirty-sixth street by strains of music issuing from a manhole in the middle of the street. Yapi-

188 Magazine Article

Todd got front-page publicity KISS ME GOOD-BYE with a clever publicity stunt AND GO, JACK -electrical music spouting by Ben M. Jerome. from a manhole during rush SFX: antique auto hour in the intersection of traffic. Broadway and 25th



**Broadway Looking** North Towards 26th St.

Street. While musicians were practicing at Telharmonic Hall, large crowds gathered to throw coins in the manhole, and the police had to shoo people away.



2 Performers at Keyboard



Fifth Ave. at Rush Hour

The company

SFX: antique auto horns, whistles.

# MUSIC FROM THE GROUND. Music Goes Astray and Growds Enjoy a Free Concert.

monic electricians at quitting time had "accidentally" left a receiver attached to the

later claimed that Telhar-

192 Magazine Article



Broadway and 25th St. at Night

Broadway cable. Long into the night, heavenly electrical music flowed out of the street.

"The notes are clear and vibrant."

"Absolute faithfulness."

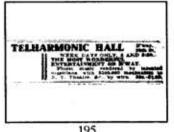
Scene 21: Freak Shows at Telharmonic Hall



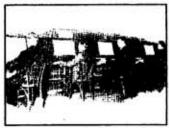
194 Sheet Music Cover

By this time, the Telharmo- IT'S NICE TO HAVE A nium had lost its novelty. To SWEETHEART expand the audience, programs became increasingly by light and frothy, featuring Gustave Kerker marches and show tunes. In a

from THE TOURISTS

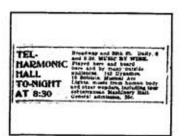


Display Advertisement



196 4 Performers at 4 Keyboards

desperate move to stimulate interest, Telharmonic Hall had become the host of a low-grade musical freak show. Melodies were sent from new keyboards into

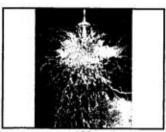


197 Display Advertisement

lily pads and doorknobs. A soundboard was put under a man's coat to represent the "musical human body." Another stunt involved

Dynamos with Coiled Wires

wiring people directly.



Tesla Electrical Discharge

(PAUSE) Noses tingled and fingers vi- buzzes, arcing, brated as several thousand sparks.

volts through ran their systems.

(PAUSE) The press called it the "Liver Gavotte."

SFX: high-voltage

SFX up.



Display Advertisement

(PAUSE)

Ironically, as classical music disappeared from Telharmonic Hall, Todd managed to wangle testimonials from stars at the Metropolitan Opera.

SFX: zap!



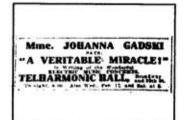
Display Advertisement

Next he touted a literary endorsement. And



202 Johanna Gadski

finally, one from Johanna Gadski, a German soprano whose career



203 Display Advertisement

would later flounder after her husband, a German Naval officer, tried to blow up the Welland Canal



Captain Hame Tauscher, O'Rose of German Havy, Head of Arms Campday and Agent of Krupo San' Works. Charged With Hawing Conspired With Others to Wreck Welland Compl.

Newspaper Headline

in Canada during World War I.

# Scene 22: Telharmonic Hall Closes



Big Stick Hits Stock Exchange

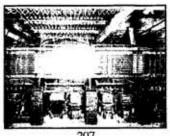
Unfortunately,

INTERMEZZO from CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA by Pietro Mascagni.



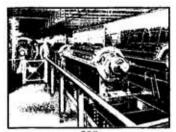
Sunday Newspaper Feature Story

business did not pick up and capital could no longer be squeezed out of investors. The expenses of



Overhead Wires, Transformers

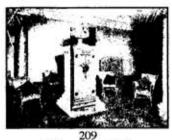
operating the central station, paying for the franchise, and wiring the city had been staggering. With less than



208 Workman with Dynamos

two miles of wires having been placed in the streets, there was virtually no income.

Telharmonic Hall gave its



Telharmonic Hall, Urn on Pedestal

last concert in February 1908. Frederick C. Todd closed the doors and

TELHARMONIC CO. IN TROUBLE.

One of the companion interested in the Cabilliticharmonic system, a device for dispensing elecirio-made music, is in termine, an execution for plot against the New York Electric Music Co, in favor of Jacob P. Nuller & Co., advertising agents of 1853 Devices was furned as the Act.

210 Magazine Article

disappeared. In May, an unpaid advertising bill was turned over for collection to the sheriff. A deputy visited Telharmonic



Plaza Hotel



Main Corridor, Palm Room



Drawing Room and Dining Room, State Apartments

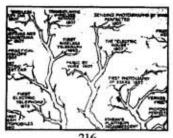


214 Ball and Banqueting Room



215 Mantels in State Apartments

Hall in June to find it deserted. From the Plaza Hotel, which had just opened a few months earlier, came another lawsuit. The builders had wired every room for Telharmonic service. Now the New York Electric Music Company was



Branches on Tree of Science

unable to fulfill its contract. It seemed that the newest branch on the tree of science had become gnarled and twisted, and would be left to

wither away.



Tree of Science

#### Thaddeus Cahill and the Third Telharmonium Scene 23:



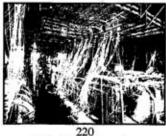
Drive Belt, New Dynamos



Thaddeus Cahill refused to accept defeat. He was still hard at work in Holyoke, and was



Aerial View of Holyoke



Switchboard Erection

valiantly starting to build the SFX: machinery, third Telharmonium.

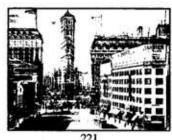
(PAUSE) Cahill hammering.

SERENADE

Thomas Thompson.

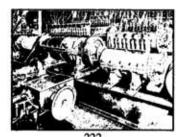
by

SFX up.



Times Square, Looking South from 45th St.

resolved to get a franchise from New York City to operate the Telharmonium himself. He completed the new instrument



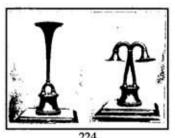
Third Telharmonium, Dynamos

two years later, in April of 1910. Like the second machine, it weighed 200 tons.



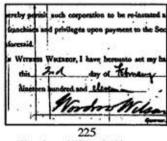
2 Performers at New Keyboard

This time, music was produced on standard keyboards and there was just intonation in a few keys.



Ornamental Tone Outlets

By 1911, Cahill gained control of the corporations set up by Crosby and Todd. For one hundred and seventy-



Woodrow Wilson's Signature

five dollars, New Jersey's Governor Woodrow Wilson approved the reinstatement of the New York Electric Music



Company, formally a New Jersey corporation.

The Last New York Debut Scene 24:



Contract

After much delay, Cahill fi- I LOVE YOU SO nally negotiated a franchise (THE MERRY WIDOW with New York

WALTZ) by Franz Lehár.



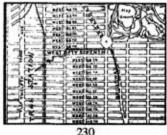
Fashionable People near Madison Square

City. New Yorkers would soon have their beloved electrical music back. Cahill and brothers immediately his transported the third



Central Station on West 56th St.

Telharmonium. The new central station was housed in a shabby little building on West 56th Street.



Cable Map, 1913

The Cahills ran a cable to Columbus Circle and Carnegie Hall, and then down Broadway.

In February 1912,

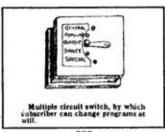


Carnegie Hall



The Chapter Room, Carnegie Hall

the final debut of a Telharmonium took place in the Chapter Room of Carnegie Hall, a small concert room on the fifth floor. Neither the press nor the public was especially interested in the revival of a six-year-old failure.



233 Multiple Circuit Switch

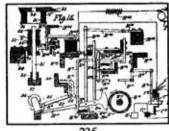
"There are still many improvements to be made in the tone and carrying power of the Telharmonium."

"The absence of



Receiver and Horn in Floral Vase

brilliancy, mordancy, incisiveness, makes the Telharmonium but a sorry substitute for an orchestra—even a small



Caption: Key Mechanism

one."

"Rather crude and the operation not as rapid as an organ."

# Scene 25: Experimental Transmissions, No Investors, No Subscribers



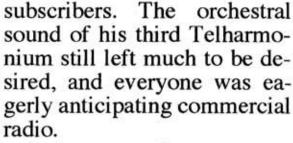
"Bank of Good Fortune" Check

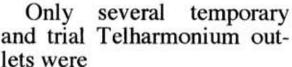
Later that year, Thaddeus Ca- TO THE EVENING hill convinced the city to re- STAR duce the franchise fee. But no from one was willing to invest by money in the enterprise, and Richard Wagner. this time there would be no

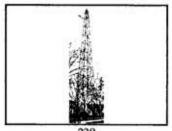
**TANNHÄUSER** 



Telephone Receiver with Horn







Radio Transmission Antenna



Pabst Grand Circle Hotel

installed. One was in the Pabst Grand Circle Hotel on Columbus Circle. Another was at the magnificent



Hotel Astor

Hotel Astor Times near Square. For the Astor program, which featured 16 numbers, the Cahill brothers



Program

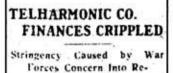
changed the name of the instrument to the Electrophone, but to no avail.

(PAUSE)

MUSIC up.

"As a matter of fact, only the usual organ tones are perceptible to the musically informed."

#### Scene 26: **Epilogue**



ceiver's Hands.

in an equity sale brought he Clift

242 Newspaper Headline Just before Christmas, 1914, with a debt of

CAHILL TELHARMONIC CO. FAILS.

eravy and Unrepected Expense of Installing Music Producing Equipment and Laying Conducts for Distributing Wire, Forces Con-corn Into Hands of Receiver.

The New York Cabill Telharmonic Co., orga ned to furnish music by wire from a contro lycing station to hotels, restaurants and p

> 243 Magazine Article

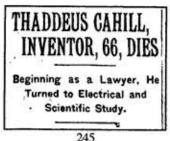
\$145,000, the Cahill brothers' corporation finally declared bankruptcy.

The



Cahill Brothers Floodlights

improved family fortunes several years later when brother George invented the Cahill glareless duplex arc floodlight projector, which made night sporting events possible for the first time.



Newspaper Headline

Thaddeus Cahill died of a heart attack in 1934.

Two years later, a clock maker named Laurens Hammond introduced a miniaturized Telharmonium he called the Hammond



246 Hammond Organ

Organ. His patented rotating TELHARMANIA tone wheels were extremely similar to Thaddeus

Reynold Weidenaar.



Performer at Hammond Organ

Cahill's patented rotating dynamos. However, by then three



Mother and Children at Hammond Organ

of the Cahill brothers and sisters had died, and the elderly survivors were too old to undertake a patent lawsuit.

Although the second and Telharmoniums third had been



Arthur T. Cahill, 1906

scrapped when taken out of service, brother Arthur devotedly preserved the first one in New Jersey for almost



Arthur T. Cahill, Late 1950's

50 years. He circulated a let- MUSIC out. ter in Nineteen-fifty-

CAHILL INVENTIONS

IF HUDBON FLACE

METHABRISH W J

G

CHAL AND ECLEVITIFICALLY PRICEISES CARILL

FIRST INTERLANT THAT CHEATER MOSIC FECA

IND COMMENT OPERFATORS.

251 Letter from Arthur T. Cahill

one: The five great and im- MAPLE LEAF RAG
mortal patents of my late by
Scott Joplin.



252 Letter from Arthur T. Cahill

brother, Dr. Thaddeus Cahill, reveal everything that has been done, or that can ever be done, in electrical music."

There was no interest.



Caption: RCA Synthesizer, 1958

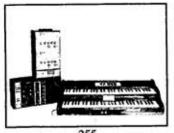
In 1959 he wrote David Sarnoff, the head of RCA, and offered to help build and install a new Telharmonium as an improvement over the RCA Synthesizer. RCA politely declined. Upon Arthur's death in Nineteen-



Performer at Telharmonium, Holyoke, 1906

sixty-two, the last remaining Telharmonium was sold for scrap.

Yet, Thaddeus Cahill's revolutionary idea of electrical music did prevail. Over



255 <u>Caption</u>: Moog Synthesizer, 1965

the years, many inventors took up the challenge. By Nineteen-eighty-



Caption: Robert A. Moog, 1972

five, more electronic keyboard instruments were being sold than any other



Caption: Kurzweil Midiboard, 1986

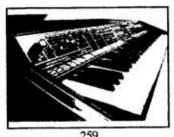
musical instrument.

One company, Kurzweil Music Systems, happened to



Maryland Club

give a fundraising presentation at the Maryland Club, just where the Telharmonium was first demonstrated in 1900. Unfortunately, Kurzweil followed the steps of the New York Electric Music Company into bankruptcy.



PolyMoog Synthesizer, 1974

Nevertheless, most film and TV soundtracks today use electronically



# generated music. Thaddeus Cahill's extraordinary

260 PolyMoog Synthesizer, 1976



261 Thaddeus Cahill

vision laid the foundation stones, changing forever the music we listen to.

## Scene 27: Screen Credits

Magic Music from the Telharmonium AULD LANG SYNE Scottish Folk Song.

Written, Produced, and Directed by Reynold Weidenaar

> Narrated by Brian Lehrer

Keyboard Performances by Barbara Blegen

# With the Support of

The National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences The Center for Electronic Music Harvestworks, Inc. / Studio PASS William Paterson University

> Online Editors Nils Nichols Topher Dune

Through the Standby Program at Unitel Post 38

## **Picture Sources**

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"It was like invisible hands at the close of summer day

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New Jersey Secretary of State
New York City Board of
Estimate and Apportionment

striking from unseen harp strings unspeakable music, to comfort, to solace,

New York City
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The New-York
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Thomas L. Rhea
Margaret Cahill Schwartz

and to cheer."

BLACK	"Subtle and entrancing beyond any harmony yet heard."	
Copyright © 1998 Magnetic Music Publishing Co. (ASCAP)		
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Absolutely perfect music.	"Absolutely perfect music."	
For Joyce		

## Bibliography

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Abbreviations used in page-number field: c = cover, fp = facing page, fr = frontispiece, mag = magazine section, p = page, pt = part, s = sheet.

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Magic Music from the Telharmonium

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Magic Music from the Telharmonium

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Names and addresses of organizations are given as they existed when the research was actually done, which may be as early as 1981.

ATT

American Telephone and Telegraph Co. Corporate Archives, 195 Broadway, 5th Floor, New York, NY 10007.

BEA

Board of Estimate and Apportionment, Bureau of Franchises, Room 1037, Municipal Building, New York, NY 10007.

BELL

AT&T Bell Laboratories, 5 Reinman Rd., Warren, NJ 07060.

CHA

Carnegie Hall Archives, 881 Seventh Ave., New York, NY 10019.

DSRC

David Sarnoff Research Center, CN-5300, Princeton, NJ 08543.

**EMD** 

Ella Merkel DiCarlo, Main Poland Rd., Conway, MA 01341.

HPL

Holyoke Public Library, 335 Maple St., Holyoke, MA 01040.

MACNY

Municipal Archives, The City of New York, Department of Records and Information Services, 31 Chambers St., Suite 103, New York, NY 10007.

MC

The Maryland Club, 1 E. Eager St., Baltimore, MD 21202.

MCNY

Museum of the City of New York, 1220 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10029.

MCS

Margaret Cahill Schwartz. Address is confidential.

NJSS

New Jersey Secretary of State, Corporate Information and Records Section, CN-450, Trenton, NJ 08625.

NYHS

The New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., New York, NY 10024.

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**NYPL-Mus** 

The New York Public Library, Performing Arts Research Center, Music Division, 111 Amsterdam Ave., New York, NY 10023.

**NYPL-Thea** 

The New York Public Library, Performing Arts Research Center, Billy Rose Theatre Collection, 111 Amsterdam Ave., New York, NY 10023.

**OMH** 

Office for Metropolitan History, 246 W. 80th St., 3rd Floor, Room 8, New York, NY 10024.

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