

Ethnic Piano Rolls in the United States

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Edited by

Darius Kučinskas

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PREFACE

DARIUS KUČINSKAS

Ethnic piano rolls in the United States is dedicated to the unique but relatively unknown artifacts of music-recording history – piano rolls. Issued mostly in the United States in the first part of twentieth century, ethnic piano rolls encapsulate the musical life of various US ethnic communities, and are now a valuable source for the research of US music history as a whole. Though classical music recordings made by internationally known musicians for player piano have received the attention of music historians¹, a huge amount of traditional/ethnic music has remained outside the scope of researchers' interests. There are, for instance, only a few studies available of Greek², Italian³, Spanish⁴, or Jewish⁵ music for player piano. The most valuable thing about these recordings is their uniqueness, making them the only documentation of these recordings, not found on other recorded media such as phonograph cylinders or gramophone discs. Another striking aspect is the conscious effort to preserve a national identity among the international and multicultural immigrant communities of the United States. Ethnic piano rolls are unique cultural artifacts that expand our knowledge of musical history and technological and sociological

¹ Some well-known publications among numerous books, articles and CDs could be mentioned: A. Leikin, *The Performing Style of Alexander Scriabin* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2016); H. Sachs, *Rubinstein: A Life* (New York: Grove Press, 1995); G. Gershwin, *Gershwin Plays Gershwin: The Piano Rolls* (Nonesuch Records, 1993); N. P. da Costa, *Off the Record: Performing Practices in Romantic Piano Playing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

² Meletios Pouliopoulos, 'Greek music piano rolls in the United States', in *Greek Music in America*, ed. Tina Bucuvalas (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2018), 301-311.

³ Giuliana Fugazzotto, *Ethnic Italian Records* (Milan: Editoriale Documenta, 2015).

⁴ Esther Bordonau Burgos, *Rollos Españoles en Tierras Americanas: La colección 'Casado García-Sampedro'*, (Madrid: IdeaMúsica, 2020).

⁵ Eleonore Weill, 'Les Jewish Piano Rolls', Master's thesis (Université de Paris IV Sorbonne, 2011).

developments, revealing intensive musical communication, musical migration, influences, and contaminations between local ethnic societies, countries, and even continents.

Some explanation is needed for the main concept – “ethnic piano rolls”. On the one hand, it is very simple to say that they are all piano rolls that record folk music. On the other hand, however, the answer is more complicated, because we have many piano rolls classified as “ethnic” but which contain recordings of classical or pop music tunes. More specifically we can identify three types of recorded/punched music on these rolls: a) traditional folk music; b) art music composed by national composers; c) “borrowed” music from other ethnic groups or from popular repertoires. Using this definition we could identify all piano rolls issued in various European countries, South America, or Asia (Japan, for example) as “ethnic” piano rolls too. The main criterion for understanding what are the “ethnic piano rolls” and what are not should be the level of relations/ties with national music, including both folk and art music. The situation is slightly different in the United States. Here all piano rolls with information in a non-English language were titled “foreign”. This stigma given by ORS company in about 1920 to all rolls issued for the local ethnic communities is still alive and in use by music collectors and even librarians...

Ethnic piano rolls in the United States aims to present recent research on ethnic piano rolls. Focused only on the “foreign” piano rolls issued in the United States this book aims to fill in the gap of our knowledge in music recordings of immigrant communities mostly from Central and Eastern Europe. Four ethnic groups – Polish, Czech, Jewish, and Lithuanian – are presented in the book as separate chapters. Each chapter is followed by a list of piano rolls, assembled and published for the first time.

We hope this book will be useful for music researchers and practitioners involved in player piano music and in the world of mechanical music too. It will be a new source of practical guidance for music librarians and archivists working with special collections and music archives. The book will satisfy the demands of music educators and students keen to enlarge their knowledge in a less often heard “parallel” (mechanical) music history. Ultimately this book will be useful for all music collectors and lovers of mechanical music.

Though it was impossible to describe and to present music from all the US ethnic groups in this book, we expect new authors to appear in the field. New volumes on this topic will surely emerge in the future.

CHAPTER ONE

THE POLISH PIANO ROLLS

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Piano rolls are particularly unique musical sound recordings of the early 20th century. They should be considered to have a place of special significance in the history of recorded music. Nowadays, they are a rather forgotten historical resource, and little about them is known or recognized in academia. For many years, the piano roll was not considered an important source of research, especially in the history of music interpretation. This tendency lasted until the end of the 20th century and was down to the fact that during the production of the mechanical recordings, the notations on the roll were not always an accurate copy of the musical notation. So, it was considered that the recording was not a reliable interpretation of the composer's intentions. However, the changes noticeable on these recordings are minor, and concern such issues as the ornamentation of the main melodic line or double chords. Another reason for ignoring piano rolls was a generally held opinion that the shellac discs, produced at the same time as piano rolls, are a more valuable media for studying recorded music or the history of performance practice and music.

Currently, there is an increasing interest in piano rolls, and recognition of them as valuable artifacts that say a lot about the music of their time. They had originality as sound recordings utilizing special recording methods and played on a pianola or a special piano which is called a “player piano”. These also include recordings not available on other sound media and contain important information on aspects of early 20th century musical life such as the performance practice of well-known pianists who learned to play piano in the mid-nineteenth century. As documents, piano rolls tell us also about the practice of private musical enjoyment in the

home and the beginning of important practices in public libraries¹. Moreover, piano rolls and their special properties also influenced the development of musical works at the turn of the century. Therefore, these documents are a very important collection of artifacts that may reveal new and unknown aspects of musical culture.

Piano rolls were a very popular type of sound recording in the early 20th century United States. Often described as the cradle of recorded music (Thomas Alva Edison, 1877), it was here that piano rolls were used for the first time. Their popularity lasted from the final decade of the 19th century to the mid-20th century, peaking in 1900–1927. Their main development was in the “acoustic era” – the early phase of the history of recorded music – 1887–1925. One of the reasons was the popularity of the music that these documents contain.

For example, ragtime was developing intensively in the United States at that time. This genre became well developed over the years 1896–1917. Ragtime, as piano music, was a gorgeous musical. Moved from the sheet to a roll, it achieved incredible commercial success². Another type of musical repertoire that developed with the piano roll were classical music recordings. A third genre was ethnic music of communities residing in the United States. One of these was Polish, which, along with the Jews, Czechs, Italians, Lithuanians, and Germans, were amongst the leading cultural communities in the multicultural U.S.

One disadvantage of the piano roll, when compared with other sound recordings at that time (e.g. wax cylinders, shellac discs), was that the paper tape of a roll could contain only about 3 to 4 minutes of a recording so they were only for short pieces. The sound quality of these recordings

¹ *Music Roll Library*, “The Music Trade Review” (hereafter MTR) 1907, Vol. 44, No. 21, p. 35; *Music Rolls in Libraries*. MTR 1911, Vol. 53, No. 4, p. 11; *Libraries Add Music Rolls*. MTR 1912, Vol. 54, No. 26, p. 15; *Music Roll Departments in Public Libraries*. MTR 1914, Vol. 58 No. 5, p. 27; *Library and Rolls*. MTR 1914, Vol. 58, No. 9, p. 11, and others.

² Ragtime was very popular in the last decade of the 19th century. This music began to be released in music editions, and on the covers and labels of the piano rolls bearing the inscriptions: *ragtime*, *cake walk*, *two-step*. Piano ragtime was heard in salons, ballrooms, private homes, or publishing companies of the time that used pianists to promote the music they prepared. Piano rolls are considered to be the earliest sound documents that recorded ragtime (since 1897). Ingeborg Harer, *Defining ragtime music: historical and typological research*. Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae 38 / 3–4, 1997, pp. 409–415.

was also a little unsatisfactory. However, the piano roll was better than other sound recordings even though the inability to put a whole piece of music on a roll limited their popularity. It was very important to record a variety of piano music in an inviolable form. Until about 1907, the trade in piano rolls was only for the upper class. This was because of the expense of pianolas and piano rolls. Even when divided into installments, payments were still too high for the average person. For this reason, piano roll publishers kept to classical music, popular in this social group. Piano, religious, dance, and popular music existed on piano rolls, as well as transcriptions, piano accompaniments, and instrumental works.

The variety of repertoire recorded was fueled by many of the marketing strategies of record companies. This also created the need to circulate rolls with other audiences. One method invented by the rolls' producers was to search for new sales areas. Public libraries became places for this, as well as for contacting clients and selling piano rolls³. Another approach was to search for undeveloped areas of repertoire and music genres and so create a demand with specific audiences. Because of this dance and popular music recordings were widely released. Ethnic groups in the United States also quickly proved to be a fruitful area for musical exploration. One of the largest collections of piano rolls is the collection in the Library of the Polish Museum of America which reflects the Polish repertoire produced by American recording companies of the 20th century.

This collection was published in the form of a catalog (*Katalog nagrań dźwiękowych Biblioteki Muzeum Polskiego w Ameryce*, compiled by Karolina Skalska, National Library of Poland, 2018).⁴ This collection of

³ The first mentions of organized collections of piano rolls in public libraries appeared in 1907. The practice of collecting piano rolls was then started by the American public library Evanston Public Library. This library included a large music collection called Sadie Knowl and Coe Music Collection. In addition to music prints, this collection also included piano rolls. See more: *Encyclopedia of Recorded Sound*, ed. by F. Hoffmann. New York–London 2005, vol. 2, pp. 1020–1021; S.G. Almquist, *Sound Records in Library*. Urbana–Champaign, 1986, p. 10; F.W. Hoffmann, *The development of Library Collections of Sound Recordings*. New York–Basel, 1979; *Catalog of the Sadie Knowland Coe Music Collection and Other Musical Literature in the Evanston Public Library*, compiled by Gertrude L. Brown. Evanston, Illinois, 1916.

⁴ *Katalog nagrań dźwiękowych Biblioteki Muzeum Polskiego w Ameryce*, compiled by Karolina Skalska. Biblioteka Narodowa, Warszawa, 2018 (hereafter KNDŻ). This catalog includes recording materials (piano rolls, shellac discs, vinyl discs) collected in this library until 2007. The general number of musical items is 5385.

piano rolls has found a prominent place and includes 213 rolls⁵. These artifacts represent Polish music culture preserved in America because of its diverse repertoire. The immigration of—Poles, mainly from rural populations, arrived in Chicago and New York, and brought a living tradition with them. The new situation in which Polish immigrants found themselves caused a search for ways to enrich their sense of patriotism while maintaining an attachment to their homeland. Practicing and listening to native music was a preferred way to do that. Musicians—and publishers from the Polish community of that time distributed recordings widely.

The collection of piano rolls discussed here is not widely known about⁶. It includes an interesting list of record companies producing Polish piano rolls at the beginning of the 20th century in the United States. The vast majority of these rolls are Polonica. These documents complement the still little known history of Polish music culture that developed on this continent. Particularly noteworthy are very popular companies such as the Connorized Music Co., QRS, De Luxe, Victor Music Roll, Monoroll, United States Music Co. and Vocalstyle Music Co. These are the most represented companies in this collection although there are other well-known in Europe in the early 20th century. Mainly, they are known for publishing classical music but also published Polish music. These include the Aeolian Company Duo—Art, Ampico Corporation, Arto Roll, Country Best, Kimball Co., Roll of Honor, and Welte—Mignon.

The recorded music collection as well as printed music collected in the Library of the Polish Museum in America had its origins in the publishing activity of Władysław Sajewski (1872–1948), who owned his own publishing house in Chicago and specialized in publishing notes for the Polish repertoire.

⁵ This is chapter 1 of the catalog: *Dział I. Rolki pianolowe*, pp. 41–61.

⁶ This collection is mentioned in the publication Katarzyna Janczewska—Sołomko and Maria Wróblewska, *Zbiór poloników fonograficznych w Muzeum Polskim w Chicago*. [In:] *Chrońmy dziedzictwo fonograficzne : materiały z Ogólnopolskich Konferencji Radom 14–15 listopada 2008 r., Gdańsk 5 listopada 2009 r.* Warszawa, 2011, pp. 162–172.

Table 1. Polish piano rolls in The Polish Museum of America by publisher.

No.	Publisher	Number of rolls	Year of issue
1.	U.S. Music Company ⁷	90	ca1916–1920
2.	QRS Music Co.	60	1914–1926
3.	Victor Roll Company	18	ca1924–1927
4.	Connorized Music Co.	14	1920–1922
5.	Monoroll	6	1918–1927



Fig. 1–1. The labels of Polish piano rolls of various phonographic companies.

Władysław Sajewski was the first person realize the business potential in selling piano rolls. He combined it with a peculiar repertoire – Polish popular music recorded on piano rolls with musical creativity inspired by

⁷ In KNDź this company is known as the US The Best Player Music Rolls, US Player Music Rolls, US Music Rolls, U Word Roll S.

tradition, Polish culture, and folklore. These types of recordings we call “Polish piano rolls” which distinguishes them from piano rolls of professional or highly artistic music (e.g. pieces by Fryderyk Chopin). In Chicago, where Sajewski lived, he developed a lively business and music culture. The repertoire published by him fell on fertile ground. Alvin Sajewski, his son, said:

“When player pianos came out, they didn't have any rolls [of Polish music]. There were just classical things. So what we had to do, we supplied them with the music, and by that time we had quite a good catalog”.⁸



Fig. 1–2. Władysław H. Sajewski. Source: *Presto*, December 4, 1920, p. 15.

The beginning of the 20th century, especially the twenties, was a period in the history of the recording industry that was characterized by an intensive search for new sales. Recording specialty products for ethnic groups present in the United States at the time would prove to be attractive and financially profitable. Authentic music for ethnic groups on music rolls

⁸ *Ethnic Recordings in America...*, op. cit., p. 138.

was popular as that on shellac discs with a similar repertoire.⁹ Music for ethnic customers had a special function. It became the main area for demonstrating their individuality while emphasizing their new found national identity. An ethnic community needed a repertoire in their own language, with the music, dance and national heroes to form the basic elements of a collective identity. Each group wanted to hear the music of their homeland in the home, and they were very loyal customers. Recordings were made of native, national, traditional, patriotic, and military music that were needed at that time. Creating and publishing such music required connecting with traditional cultures as a source. To fulfill its function, the music had to contain components evoking appropriate associations, musically, socially and historically.

Such recordings allowed the music to go far beyond local and well-known audiences. Capturing an unknown repertoire allowed for the circulation of new recordings among new listeners. Sajewski decided to publish music with references to Polish folklore and began by selling the first Polish piano rolls in 1916–1917¹⁰ which became an extremely profitable operation.

United States Music Company

Sajewski's company couldn't produce the rolls as it specialized only in editing and publishing the musical scores. It was common practice at the time for every retailer to avoid investing in this type of recording.¹¹ This was the domain of large companies based in industrial centers. Because of this, Władysław Sajewski established direct cooperation with the United States Roll Company¹², one of the largest corporations producing piano rolls in the United States at the time. This company agreed to prepare rolls

⁹ Recordings with Polish music were already included in the catalogs of companies producing gramophone records. Among them were: Columbia, Victor, Emerson Phonograph Company, OKeh, Odeon. See more: KNDŻ; D. Brackett, *Categorizing Sound: Genre and Twentieth-Century Popular Music*. Oakland, University of California Press, 2016, pp. 41–68.

¹⁰ *Ethnic Recordings in America...*, op. cit, p. 139.

¹¹ The reason for this was the belief in the poor social status of people from ethnic groups living in the United States. The sales policy of large phonographic companies was based on their belief in their diligence and the need to relax after hard work.

¹² United States Music Company – a company founded in 1906 by Arthur A. Friedstedt. It operated until 1926, when it was bought by another phonographic tycoon, QRS.

for him with the music he requested. As a result, the U. S. Roll Company had become the first American company to produce Polish piano rolls.

His business intuition did not let Władysław Sajewski down. His recordings had gained great popularity among Poles. Sajewski acquired many customers because the low prices of his recordings made Polish music in the home affordable.

The repertoire published by this company included folk songs, dances, and music composed by Polish musicians from the Polish community living in the USA. It included *krakowiaks*, *obereks*, *mazurkas*, and other folk dances strongly rooted in traditional Polish music. These short dance forms (country dances) was an important step in Sajewski's business strategy. Recordings of such music were particularly desirable for Polish emigrants from peasant families. The demand for this music was so great that Franciszek Przybylski (1875–1953) was employed to prepare musical arrangements of Polish music melodies. He prepared piano arrangements of Polish dances for the publishing needs of Sajewski. He created printed music¹³, followed by the preparation of piano roll material.

Polish piano rolls include many little-known or unknown Polish composers who were active in the United States and prepared songs inspired by Polish folk music. These composers were: Antoni Jax (1850–1926), Edward Krotchwil, Walenty Bonk (1879–?), Wojciech Osmański (1834–1908), T. Twardowski, Adam Wroński (1850–1915), A. Omelczuk, and A. Wolski. Although the work of these composers has been preserved best in the Polish Museum in the form of musical prints, Polish piano rolls testify to its great popularity.

Patriotic songs were also an important repertoire for the Polish community. Many musicians were born in Poland under partition or remembered the period without Polish statehood. Therefore, they wanted to meet the expectations of the Polish community by using such a repertoire. This constituted an important element for the Polish community. An example of piano music preserved in the Chicago collection includes: Antoni Jax's waltz *Powrót do wolnej Polski* (*Return to free Poland*)¹⁴, *Jeszcze Polska*

¹³ The size of work that Franciszek Przybylski put into the enterprise W.H. Sajewski is illustrated by a database posted on the National Library of Poland website: mak.bn.org.pl “Catalog of musical prints from the Library of the Polish Museum in Chicago”, which includes over 120 compositions, arrangements, and studies prepared for Sajewski in 1910–1941.

¹⁴ KNDż, op. cit, item 113.

*nie zginęła (Poland is not yet lost)*¹⁵, Walenty J. Bonk's march *Wolna Polska (Free Poland)*¹⁶ or *Polskie Orły (Polish Eagles)*¹⁷, *Cześć!! Jenerale Pulaski cześć!! (Glory!! General Pulaski glory)*¹⁸ or *Polski weteran (Polish veteran)*¹⁹ – both pieces are by A. J. Okulski²⁰.



Fig. 1–3. *Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła (Poland is not yet lost)*, arr. by Wincenty Baluta, Chicago, W.H. Sajewski, 1925. *Mazurek Dąbrowskiego* (“Dąbrowski's mazurka”) officially became the national anthem of Poland in 1927 (*Dziennik Urzędowy Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych* z 26 lutego 1927 r.), it was initially a popular soldier's song, later it obtained the status of a Polish patriotic song. The text, composed of a folk melody based on *mazur* motifs, was deep in the consciousness of American Polonia. The catalog notes the roll released in 1925 with changed words. On the roll tape, the text of the song is given – incipit: *Jeszcze Polska nie zginęła bo żyją jej dzieci (Poland is not yet lost because its children are alive)*. Source: Polona.

¹⁵ Ibidem, item 132.

¹⁶ Ibidem, item 160.

¹⁷ Ibidem, item 203.

¹⁸ Ibidem, item 137.

¹⁹ Ibidem, item 138.

²⁰ A.J. Okulski – previously unknown Polish song composer.

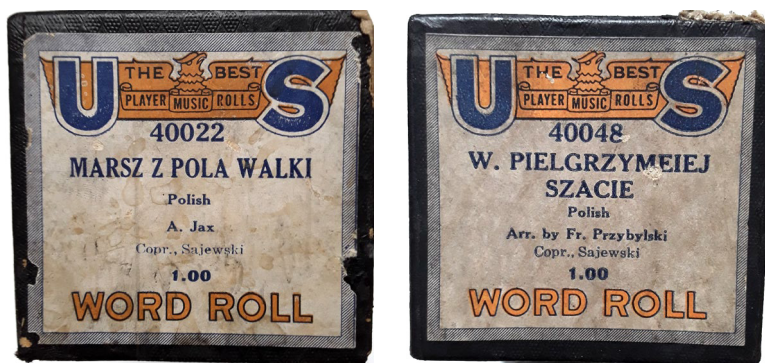


Fig. 1–4. Roll labels of the US Roll Company.

The music on the rolls that Sajewski sold was very emotional for his customers. It was common practice at the time to publish rolls with classical music on them. The Chicago collection of piano roll recordings of the classical repertoire have been preserved²¹. Polish piano rolls were a novelty among the Polish community in Chicago and a huge commercial risk for Sajewski himself.

The release of Polish piano rolls was preceded by a long production period, during which it was necessary to deliver properly prepared musical prints to play piano notes to create perforations on the roll paper. Later, music editors checked the correctness of perforations. It is known that Polish piano rolls for Władysław Sajewski were prepared by a subcontractor of the US Roll Company – the Music Roll Company, and specifically by a Miss Mary E. Brown working there.²² She was a pianist, an organist and composer, and head of the arrangement and recording of

²¹ Among them were works by well-known composers: Franz Schubert, Johannes Brahms, and paraphrases and piano transcriptions by Franz Liszt. An important place was also Polish artists, mainly Fryderyk Chopin (1810–1849), Maurycy Moszkowski (1854–1925), Karol Szymanowski (1882–1937), and Józef Wieniawski (1837–1912). A characteristic of these recordings was that on the majority of the preserved rolls with classical music repertoire there are noted, musical performers. Some of them are names of the best pianists of the world, such as Ignacy Jan Paderewski (1860–1941), Sergei Rachmaninov (1873–1943), Franz Xaver Scharwenka (1850–1924), Harold Bauer (1873–1951).

²² This is confirmed by the accounts of Alvin Sajewski. See more: R. K. Spottswood, *The Sajewski Story*. [In:] *Ethnic Recordings in America...*, op. cit.

piano rolls, the only woman in this position at the company.²³ That she prepared rolls for Mr Sajewski at the Music Roll Company is evidenced by the roll *Polish review No. 2* according to the piano arrangement of M. E. Brown, which has been preserved in the Chicago collection.²⁴ Since the company was afraid to produce rolls with Polish music at its own expense, it was quite a risky venture for her; Sajewski invested his own money to develop this venture. He created his own line called “Sajewski Special Rolls”. The roll perforations were cut at the headquarters of the Music Roll Co. in Chicago, 2934–38 West Lake Street²⁵, and Sajewski’s provided the music – music prints – which they published themselves.

Around 1924, the U.S. Music Roll catalogs showed the prices of the rolls for the first time, plus an index that divided the rolls into the music of individual ethnic groups. Also, an interesting publishing practice began, based on the production of *word rolls* – piano rolls with printed song words on paper next to the perforations. These were mainly folk songs and songs from the popular repertoire (e.g. songs well known to the Polish community). In Chicago, QRS began placing word texts on a roll. Under its influence other companies also published this type of roll. Since then, publishing catalogs have divided the catalog of piano rolls into *instrumental rolls* and *word rolls*.

The idea of a Polish music repertoire rooted in native tradition was a huge success. Mrs. Brown herself, contributing to this success, was promoted to the position of director of the United States Music Co. in August 1924.²⁶ Władysław Sajewski and his store became very popular among the Polish community and gained many music lovers as customers. Sajewski's activities in the field of roll production gave other companies an opportunity to follow similar practices. The trend began in the early 1920s when the other companies announced production of piano rolls with traditional music performed by native musicians in America. When Sajewski released his rolls from the contract, the most popular songs of Polish music were published throughout the United States. This practice

²³*United States Music Co. holds its annual election*. “Talking Machine World” (TMW), September 15, 1924, p. 27; *Men and women who are responsible for the United States Music Co. Rolls*. “Music Trade Review” (MTR), April 4, 1925, p. 7.

²⁴ KNDŻ, item 65. Preparation of the so-called *medleys* or *potpourris* – popular music at that time was very fashionable and such musical arrangements achieved spectacular sales successes. Alone Mrs. Mary E. Brown has prepared a *Polish review, No. 1*, and the series “*States*” *Polish Medley* usually consisting of four songs.

²⁵ *United States Music Co.*, p. 27.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

was undertaken by the QRS Music Co., Columbia Music Co., Kimball Co., Connorized Music Roll, Pianostyle, and many others.

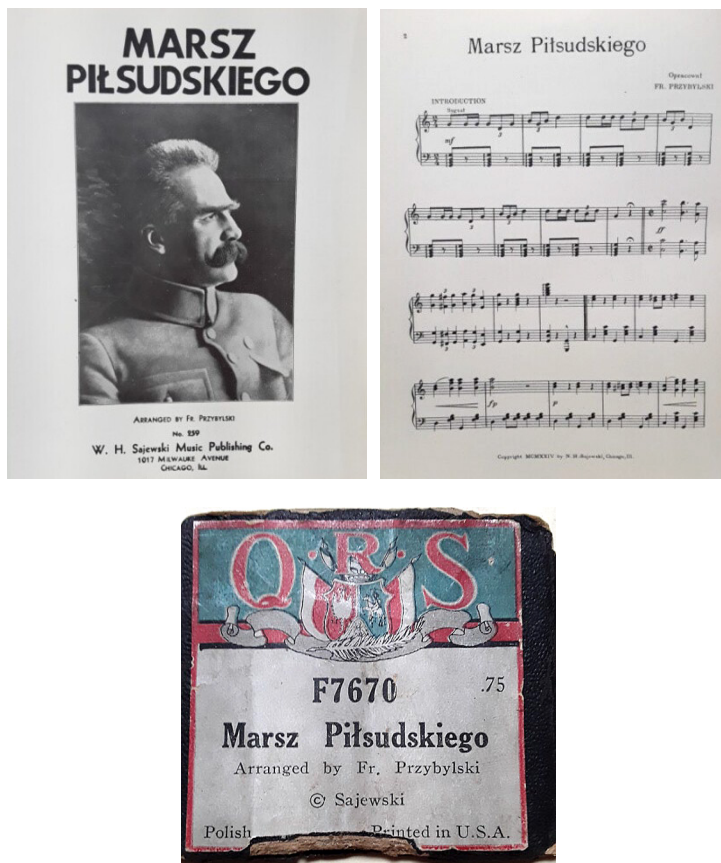


Fig. 1–5. Title page, *Marsz Piłsudskiego* (*Piłsudski's march*), edited by Franciszek Przybylski, published by W.H. Sajewski Music Publishing Co. This song not only referred to the national hero but was also widely known among the Polish community and desired in every catalog with Polish repertoire at the beginning of the 20th century. Here in the repertoire of QRS—F 7670.

U. S. Music Co.	
WORD ROLLS	
Title	
Hawaiian Moon of Mine	
In a Wonderful World of Our Own	
Louise	
My Dream Girl	
Put Away a Little Ray of Golden Sunshine	
The Pal That I Loved Stole the Gal That I Loved	
Sally Lou	
Where the Rainbow Ends	
If I Had a Sweetheart, Too	
Caroline	
Love Legend of Haddon Hall	
Tears of Happiness	
Dreamer of Dreams	
Follow the Swallow	
I'm Someone Who's No One to You	
Hush-a-bye-BAY	
Little Old Clock on the Mantel	
That's Georgia	
In a Little Rendezvous	
Knock at the Door	
Dear One	
Eliza	
Officer of the Day	
Oh, My, Yes	
	REGULAR ROLLS
	(Music Only)
Charley, My Boy	
Don't Mind the Rain	
Doodle Doo Doo	
Gypsy Love Song	
June Night	
Mandalay	
Song of Love	
	FOREIGN WORD ROLLS
Tyrolczyk i jego dziecię—Polish	
Bernazeli nes volcik—Bohemian	
	FOREIGN REGULAR ROLLS
	(Music Only)
Tu Mano Mielhause—Lithuanian	
Jacek Figlarz—Polish	
Marole—Lithuanian	
Na Wsi Za Kominiem—Polish	
Helena Polka—Lithuanian	
Helen Polka—German	
(This is only a partial advance list of the very complete release of the U. S. Music Rolls.)	

U. S. Music Co.	
AUTO-ART	
(These Rolls for Standardized Reproducing Tracker Bar)	
INSTRUMENTAL ROLLS—MUSIC ONLY	
Title	Composer
Golden Buttercups—Idyll.....	McNair Ilgenfritz
Les Sylphes—Impromptu Valse.....	McNair Ilgenfritz
Liebesfreud.....	McNair Ilgenfritz
Love Song (From "Chant d' Amour") (Paderewski),	
	Walter Fihelski
Moon Magic (Billings).....	Earl Billings
LIBRARY EDITION—WORD ROLLS	
A Dream—Song.....	Robert Billings
Because—Song.....	Robert Billings
The Heart Bowed Down—Song.....	Roger Le Mar
The Kaddish of My Ancestry—English Lyrics,	
	Robert Billings
Lonesome, That's All.....	Roger Le Mar
Love, Here Is My Heart—Song.....	Robert Billings
Macushla—Song.....	Robert Billings
O Lovely Night (From "Summertime")—Song,	
	Robert Billings
O Moon Upon the Water—Song.....	Robert Billings
Sorter Miss You—Song.....	Robert Billings
LIBRARY EDITION—MUSIC ONLY	
Carnations—Novelette.....	Cora Mel Hatton
Love Song (From "Chant d' Amour") (Paderewski),	
	Walter Fihelski
Madame Butterfly (Favorite Strains) (Puccini),	
	Robert Billings
Mennet—A 1' Antique (J. Paderewski).....	Ivan Petrikoff
Moon Magic (Billings).....	Earl Billings
Souvenir.....	McNair Ilgenfritz
Valse Supreme (McNair Ilgenfritz).....	McNair Ilgenfritz
FOREIGN WORD ROLLS	
POLISH	
Kunegunda i Kuha—Polka.....	Ed Krotochwil
Walanty, od ucha—Mazur.....	Ed Krotochwil
SWEDISH	
Skapp Som Motas.....	Dalquist-Winter
FOREIGN ROLLS—MUSIC ONLY	
GERMAN	
Aus Der Jagenzeit—Polka	
Das Boese Weib—Polka, Arr. by H. Hopp	
Mit Schwung—Polka	
Verliebte Augen—Polka, Arr. by H. Hopp	
Wein und Tanze—Polka	

Fig. 1–6. Part of the catalog of the current production of U.S. Music Co. Source: *Talking Machine World*, October 15, 1924 and *Talking Machine World*, May 15, 1925.

QRS Music Company

Another company whose Polish piano rolls were preserved in the collection of the Polish Museum in America was the QRS Music Company. This company was founded in 1900 by Melville Clark. Since 1916, it gradually expanded its range to include piano rolls manufactured for individual ethnic groups. Soon, it became one of the most important companies producing the rolls, progressively absorbing the publishing production of other companies. The QRS Company was the largest producer of this medium in the world. It produced over 10 million rolls during its most prolific period between 1926–1927²⁷. It is important to note that this

²⁷ Craig H. Roell, *Musical instrument manufacturing*. [In:] *Encyclopedia of Chicago*. Chicago 2004, p. 554.

company had its representative offices not only in the United States (Chicago, New York, San Francisco), Canada (Toronto), and Australia (Sydney) but also in Europe, especially the Netherlands (Utrecht).

In 1926, QRS Co. bought out a publishing line established by the United States Music Roll Co. The acquisition and continuation of the publishing line in practice meant the acquisition of patents, trademarks, machines, and all the equipment needed for the production of the piano rolls. QRS had also taken over the entire repertoire of rolls prepared by US Music Roll including the Polish rolls, which were still profitable. The total annual roll production of both companies at the time of the merger was 8,700,000.²⁸

QRS continued the trends initiated by the U.S. Music Roll Co. to the repertoire and Polish artists already mentioned several names can be added, they include: John Wyskowski, J. Wiśniewski, Ignacy Podgórski (1886–1957), Wincenty Baluta²⁹, and Marian S. Różycki (?–1943). Little is known about many of these composers.

It is important to add that piano rolls for individual ethnic groups in the United States were sold with special practices aimed at bringing profit to the company. One of them categorized the music. Some QRS piano rolls were grouped within publishing categories as so-called *foreign music*. In this way, they created separate sections in catalogs or for publishing announcements in trade magazines. Besides this ethnic groups music piano rolls were denoted by adding a capital “F” to the recording number on the roll box or the acronym of a record company name, for example, QRS F 8993³⁰. Similarly, the designation “WF” stands for Foreign Words rolls with lyrics, for example, QRS WF 6043³¹. This practice was well known in the recording industry of the early 20th century in the United States.³²

²⁸ *QRS Music Co. purchases the U.S. Music Roll Co.* TMW, November 15, 1926, p. 128.

²⁹ Lithuanian name – Vincas Baluta / Balutis.

³⁰ KNDŻ, item 8, *Hej z góry! mazury* – mazurka.

³¹ KNDŻ, item 129, *Walecznych tysięcy*, Arr. by M.S. Różycki, with incipit: *Walecznych tysięcy opuszcza Warszawę przysięga klęcząc, świadkiem naszym Bóg.*

³² One of the two largest potentates in the phonographic industry of the time – the Columbia company – which began to mean a collection of music recordings of individual ethnic groups, e.g. Columbia 18402–F. Another was the release of recordings according to subsequent number series. However, these practices, as indicated by several phonography researchers, have led to the isolation of music recording production within a given ethnic group and have been abandoned over

In this way, a simple method of searching for ethnic rolls was created by providing the most important information about the content of the recording and distinguishing this repertoire from the other recordings. The listener could quickly and accurately find the music of interest.



Fig. 1–7. Polish piano rolls with F (foreign) markings: a) QRS F–8176, b) Mono–Roll Foreign Selections No. F 5050.

Connorized Music Co.

Connorized Music Co. is one of the largest record companies that began publishing ethnic piano rolls in the United States. It was a repertoire of accompaniments to popular songs, among which were folk, patriotic, love, and playful songs. Noteworthy but unknown composers with Polish names were Stanisław Peritzki or J. Powiadowski.³³ The published production of this company in the collection of the Polish Museum of America dates back to 1920–1922. In 1926 the Connorized Music Co. sold part of its assets to QRS Music Rolls.

time. See more: *Ethnic Recordings in America*; Pekka Gronow, *Recording for the "Foreign series"*, JEMF Quarterly 12, no. 41 (Spring 1976), pp. 15–20.

³³ It could probably be Władysław Powiadowski (1865–1947), a Polish conductor and composer.



Fig. 1–8. *Przyjciolka: polka mazurka* (Friend: polka–mazurka), J. Powiadowski. Connorized 3706.

Monoroll

The Chicago collection also includes a dozen Monoroll piano rolls. This label had already been publishing rolls with traditional and popular Polish music since 1918. The rolls manufacturer was the Rose Valley Co. from Philadelphia. It is known that the producer strove for recordings to be made from original scores and prepared by Polish performers. This was probably done to ensure the accuracy and correctness of the score. A characteristic of Polish piano rolls was the practice of not providing information about the musicians performing. This is confirmed by documents without notes about musical performers, but there is information about the *copyright* of the prints.³⁴ It was a common practice to include labels on the rolls of annotations regarding the copyright of music editions for prepared recordings. The arrangements of folk music or popular music were copyrighted³⁵. The historical value of such records is very important because they are crucial for researchers of music history, music editing, and music culture. They are a confirmation of who prepared music prints, worked on publishing music, and who owned the *copyright*

³⁴ *Foreign Music Rolls The Latest*. TMW, July, 1920, p. 189.

³⁵ Songs contained comments such as: Cop. W. H. Sajewski, Cop. Jos. Dombrowski, Copyright John Wyskowski, Cop. Henry Schunke, Copyright Jordan, Copr. Krygier, Copr. Krotchwil, Cop. A. Małek, Cop. Win Baluta, Cop. F.C. Schunke, Buffalo NY, Copr. Johnson, Cop. Shapiro, Bernstein, Cop. A.J. Okulski, Cop. Vitak–Elsnic, Copyright F. Przybylski, Cop. Southern Music etc.

Foreign Music Rolls

for Your Foreign Record Customers

ITALIAN MUSIC ROLLS	JEWISH MUSIC ROLLS	POLISH MUSIC ROLLS
MUSICA ITALIANA Sonata da pianisti Italiani	אָרײַנעם מוזיק געשפּעלעט בײַ אַרײַנעם פּיאַניסטן	POLSKA MUZYKA Przez Polskich Pianistów

AUTHENTIC IN EVERY DETAIL
 From the Original Scores and with all the characteristics of their respective nationalities

MUSIC AS IT SHOULD BE PLAYED
 OPEN CUT ROLLS ON BEST PAPER

THE MONOROLL

Jewish, Italian and Polish Rolls now ready.

Four Sizes: 75 cents to \$1.25 Retail

In preparation: Hungarian, Bohemian and Lithuanian Rolls

Made by THE ROSE VALLEY CO., 55th St. and Hunter Ave., Philadelphia

Among the recordings preserved in the Polish Museum of America, *Faworytka* (*The favorite woman*)³⁷ deserves attention. This music was arranged by Władysław Grigaitis a musician, conductor, and composer, who was associated with both Polish and Lithuanian music culture. Also noteworthy is *Wesele u Witosy* (*Wedding at Witos'*)³⁸ – a set of Polish dances collected and prepared by Franciszek Przybylski, and Polish Christmas songs, *Dzisiaj w Betlejem* (*Today in Bethlehem*)³⁹.

³⁹ KNDŻ, item 194.



Fig. 1–10. *Żegnal góral swa góralke* (*Highlander's lost farewell to his beloved one*), edited by Franciszek Przybylski. Mono-Roll F 9061.

Victor Roll Company

Victor Music Roll is a label that is still relatively unknown⁴⁰. It was probably a company founded by Franciszek Przybylski, who together with other Polish musicians founded a factory making piano rolls in the years 1924–1925. The collection of rolls preserved in the Library of the Polish Museum in America proves that musicians published with a folk provenance had the potential to preserve the regional features of Polish folk music. This is evidenced not only by recorded Polish national dances, such as oberek *Maciej w korycie* (*Maciej in the trough*)⁴¹, *Na lewo od Borzęcina* (*On the left from Borzęcin*)⁴², *Wojciech w zalotach* (*Wojciech in courtship*)⁴³, mazurka *Mazury weselne* (*Wedding mazurkas*)⁴⁴, *Legionista mazur* (*Legionary: mazurka*)⁴⁵, *Przepióreczka* (*Partridge*)⁴⁶, and *krakowiak Miała mama córki dwie* (*A mother had two daughters*)⁴⁷, *Chłopski krakowiak* (*Peasant's krakowiak*)⁴⁸, but also the local color is preserved in

⁴⁰ This company is mentioned in: Dariusz Kučinskas, *Lietuviška muzika pianolai = Lithuanian music for pianola: complete catalogue*. Kaunas, 2014, p. 65.

⁴¹ KNDż, item 78.

⁴² KNDż, item 79.

⁴³ KNDż, item 83.

⁴⁴ KNDż, item 81.

⁴⁵ KNDż, item 82.

⁴⁶ KNDż, item 97.

⁴⁷ KNDż, item 100.

⁴⁸ KNDż, item 186.

the verbal incipit printed on the rolls. An example might be: *A jak ci jo bede na wesele prosiuł* (What if I invite you to a wedding?) from the song *Wesele krakowskie: zaprosiny* (Cracow wedding: invitation)⁴⁹, or *Kaj się działy one lata* (What had happened then?) from the roll *Oj, jody, jody*⁵⁰. Noteworthy arrangements of well-known folk songs are: *Na Na Podolu siwy kamień* (Gray stone in Podole)⁵¹, *Nad wodą w wieczornej porze* (In the evening by the water)⁵², *Na około ciemny las* (Dark forest is around)⁵³ or the polka-mazurka *Kaziutka*⁵⁴. Just as Monoroll, on the Victor Music Roll, there is not any information about music performers.

Conclusions

Interest in rolls in the United States dropped around 1925 when gramophone records were launched in the “electrical era”. They had a much better quality of sound. In 1930, the piano roll industry withered because of the stock market crash in 1929 and the Great Depression in America. The development of the radio was also important as after 1927 radio grew to be widespread. The transfer of Polish musical heritage carried out through music recorded on rolls, has become invaluable over time. This music has undoubtedly become a part of the contemporary musical culture and at the same time a part of the Polish national culture.

The foundation of this belief is the awareness that the rolls pass on a part of the culture adopted from Polish ancestors. An inspired effort to consolidate the Polish character on the American continent is therefore recorded here. It references traditional and popular Polish music protected and preserved on piano rolls. It entered it into the memory of those times and helped to create an identity. It lived in the memories of the Polish musicians involved in the production of the Polish piano rolls. Most of all, it was developed extremely dynamically as evidenced by the number of recordings that ended up on shellac and vinyl discs. They are preserved in the Library of the Polish Museum in America and are testimony to the developing Polish diaspora's repertoire and Polish recording production of companies in the United States.

⁴⁹ KNDż, item 136.

⁵⁰ KNDż, item 34.

⁵¹ KNDż, item 120.

⁵² KNDż, item 174.

⁵³ KNDż, item 177.

⁵⁴ KNDż, item 189.

The contemporary Polish diaspora lived through this time with everything contained in the repertoire recorded on piano rolls. These documents with music recorded on them became important elements of the Polish music culture that developed in the United States.

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Journals

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <i>Billboard</i> (1894–) | <i>Presto Magazine</i> (1884–ca1945) |
| <i>Music Trade Review</i> (1880–) | <i>Talking Machine World</i> (1905–1928) |

A LIST OF POLISH PIANO ROLLS⁵⁵

88

7364 C. Ach! Te oczy – mazurka. Music by T. Bałuciński.

Arto Word Rolls (Standard Music Roll Company)

263. Pasteka–siedm kolend [Pasterka – Siedem Kolęd] – Christmas songs.

Arr. by W. K. Grigaitis, performed by J. Rapacki and M. Wroncki, 1920.

Atlas Player Roll Company

Marsz Generała Pułaskiego [Marsz Generała Pułaskiego]. Music by Z. Moczyński.

Polskie Orły [Polskie Orły] – song to honour of mayor Idzikow Skiegei Kubala. Arr. by A. Omelczuk.

Automatic Music Roll Company

A-1201.

1. Kochanka – polka. Music by L. Vitak.
2. Cnotliwa Zuzanna – waltz. Lyrics by L. Śliwiński, music by J. Gilbert from operetta „Cnotliwa Zuzanna”.
3. Gorące serce [Gorące serce] – polka No. 2. Music by W. Osmański.
4. Ostatni uścisk [Ostatni uścisk] – waltz. Music by H. Schunke.
5. Samochód [Samochód] – polka.
6. Tesknota [Tęsknota] – waltz. Music by A. Krajski.
7. Kanarek – polka. Music by W. Baluta.
8. Gorące serce [Gorące serce] – polka No. 1. Music by W. Osmański.
9. Setka – polka. Arr. by A. Omelczuk.
10. Kuku – polka. Music by L. Vitak.

A-1265–G-841.

1. Dawniej a dzisiaj – song. Lyrics by I. Ulatowski, music by A. Omelczuk.
2. Gwiazdka – polka. Music by L. Lewandowski.
3. Uśmiechem powitaj mnie [Uśmiechem powitaj mnie] – waltz. Lyrics by Czyżewski, arr. by W. Baluta.
4. Hej idzie – polka. Music by J. Skitz.
5. Wielka niedza byo dziewczyna [Wielka nędza było dziewczyna] – song.

⁵⁵ In brackets () – another title. In brackets [] – correct title.