

Gotham Early Music Scene (GEMS) presents



Thursday, December 14, 2023 1:15 pm  
St. Malachy's Church – The Actors' Chapel in New York City  
Live Streamed to [midtownconcerts.org](http://midtownconcerts.org) and [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/)

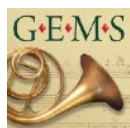
**Artis Wodehouse**  
*Music in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century American Parlor:*  
*The Melodeon and Cottage Organ*  
*Artis Wodehouse ~ melodeon & cottage organ*

- Constantinople Quadrille (1856)** Charles d'Albert (1809–1886)  
The Dardanelles ~ Besika Bay (été) ~ Adrianopole (poule) ~  
Shumla (trenise) ~ Constantinople (finale)
- Pastorale for the Reed Organ (1896)** George Chadwick (1862–1932)
- From the Indian Carnival (1849) for Piano or Organ** Anthony Philip Heinrich (1781–1861)  
3. The Festival of the Dead ~ 4. The Cries of the Souls
- Communion for harmonium (published 1907)** Arthur Foote (1853–1937)
- Fugue in F Major for Organ (ca.1830–40)** Charles Zeuner (1795–1857)
- Douce Pensée Polka Mazurka (1863–1866?)** Charles d'Albert

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[www.gemsny.org](http://www.gemsny.org)

## ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Before the 1880s, the most widely acquired keyboard instrument for home use in the United States was not the piano, but either the melodeon or the reed organ. The melodeon entered the American marketplace in the late 1830s. The generally larger-cased reed organ — built along the same principle of design (bellows activated by foot pumping delivering airflow to sound brass reeds) — developed quickly as well, starting in the late 1840s.

The melodeon (with a case that looked like a square piano) was a simple but effective keyboard instrument. It was intended for amateur performance of song accompaniments, hymn-playing and dance music. Music published for the melodeon was adapted from piano scores or formulated as simplified arrangements of popular songs and classical symphonic or opera music.

While the reed organ in the home setting continued to be used for typically melodeon-oriented repertoire, it evolved into a more complex instrument so that it could also function as a substitute for a church pipe organ. Different sets of brass reeds — fashioned to mimic the variety of sounds produced by the pipe organ — came to be installed into the reed organ's interior. In some of the most highly developed of American 19th-century reed organs, the number of reed sets in fact contained several hundred individual small brass reeds!

As today's program illustrates, the melodeon and the more complex reed organ blurred the line between strictly entertainment music and aspirational religious or art music in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Notably, Artis's compact but versatile 1871 Estey Cottage Organ has performance capabilities such that it can function both as a home entertainment instrument and as a church "organ".

The program opens with an example of characteristic dance music that could have been played on Artis's 1863 Treat & Davis Melodeon. A British-based composer, Charles d'Albert's popular quadrilles, waltzes, polkas and galops were re-published and widely sold in the United States. His *Constantinople* is a musical commemoration of the 1807 war that broke out between the Ottoman State and Britain. His *Douce Pensée* shows the influence of Chopin.

Boston-based composers George Chadwick and Arthur Foote — both organists — have left us with two lovely pieces for either home or church use that aspire to the status of art music. Foote's near-modal "Communion" appears in Joseph Joubert's massive 1907 French anthology of original harmonium music gathered from countries around the world. Chadwick's 1896 *Pastorale* appeared in an expansive 3-volume United States collection of reed organ music called *Laus Organi*. The terms "harmonium", "reed organ", or simply "organ" were used rather freely in 19th-century America to describe foot-pump instruments whose tone was generated by brass reeds. The nomenclature for its published repertoire was similarly varied.

*The Festival of the Dead* and *Cries of the Souls* are taken from an extraordinary 1849 work, *The Indian Carnival* by Anthony Philip Heinrich and carry the following description: "The most singular religious Ceremony of the savages, which is renewed every eight Years among some Indian nations, and every ten Years among the Hurons and Iroquois". Heinrich — who immigrated to the young US from Bohemia — was drawn to the music and cultures of Native and African Americans and created several lengthy musical depictions of these peoples designated as either for piano or organ. Heinrich was not clear which of the two instruments he might have preferred for this music. However, Artis's 1871 Estey Cottage Organ is an apt choice, for since — with its different sets of reeds, tremolo fan and fine control of airflow — the compact but surprisingly powerful Estey can realize the many small-scale expressive shadings notated in Heinrich's score.

Charles Zeuner was also an immigrant to the United States. Through his original compositions and virtuoso organ performances in Boston and Philadelphia, Zeuner was an important artist, introducing the young America to European art music. Once he had established himself in his adopted country, Zeuner was appointed in 1838 as president of the influential Boston-based Handel and Haydn Society. His *Fugue in F Major* demonstrates the thorough training he received in his native Germany, both as an organist and as composer.

## **ABOUT THE ARTIST**

**Artis Wodehouse**, 1863 Treat & Davis Melodeon and 1871 Estey Cottage Organ, has devoted her career to preserving and disseminating neglected but valuable music and instruments, with an emphasis on American music. In 2000, she began performing on her personal collection of representative restored antique reed organs and harmoniums. These include several significant American instruments built by Estey and Mason & Hamlin, a number of portable 19th-century preacher's "organs" and also two European harmoniums, a 1903 Mustel Art Harmonium and a 1909 Viennese-built harmonium by Kotykiewicz. Artis has performed as harmoniumist with the Mostly Mozart Orchestra, the Riverside Symphony, the Princeton Chamber Players and numerous New York-based chamber music ensembles. Her recording *Arthur Bird Music for the American Harmonium* on the Raven label is available from Amazon. She founded the chamber group MELODEON to present little known but valuable music from 19th and early 20th-century America, using her antique instrument collection as the basis for repertoire choice. Many of MELODEON'S live performances of often never-recorded 19th-century American music were captured on video and can be seen on Artis's [YouTube MELODEON playlist](#). Cited by *The New York Times* as "savior of the old and neglected" — Artis is perhaps best-known for her piano roll work. Her piano roll realization, *Gershwin Plays Gershwin*, on the Nonesuch label has sold over 500,000 copies. A published author of musical essays and piano score transcriptions, Artis holds three degrees in piano performance and piano performance practice: a Bachelor of Music from the Manhattan School of Music, a Master of Music from Yale, and a Doctorate of Musical Arts from Stanford.

**Next Week: Concordian Dawn**  
*Veni, Redemptor Gencium*