

The Arrival of the Piano in the Estonian Home

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Abstract

In this article the arrival of the piano and of piano playing in Estonia will be examined. The author concentrates on the role of the piano in a domestic context during the period of developing Estonian self awareness among the more educated and prosperous social groups in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The sources are mostly historical: memoirs, biographies, newspaper advertisements, novels.

The piano has been used by amateur musicians for playing popular and folk music for the most part, and particularly for dancing. So it could be considered not only a concert instrument but also a folk instrument; the boundaries between the two traditions are often blurred.

The piano arrived in Estonia in the late 18th century and was found increasingly in the Estonian home as the Estonian middle class grew, especially in (1) teachers' and kösters' homes; (2) wealthier farms; (3) the families of higher ranking servants in manors; (4) the more prosperous homes in towns. Links between the local Baltic-German culture and the Estonian middle class, but also the piano repertoire and the gender issue of piano playing will be examined.