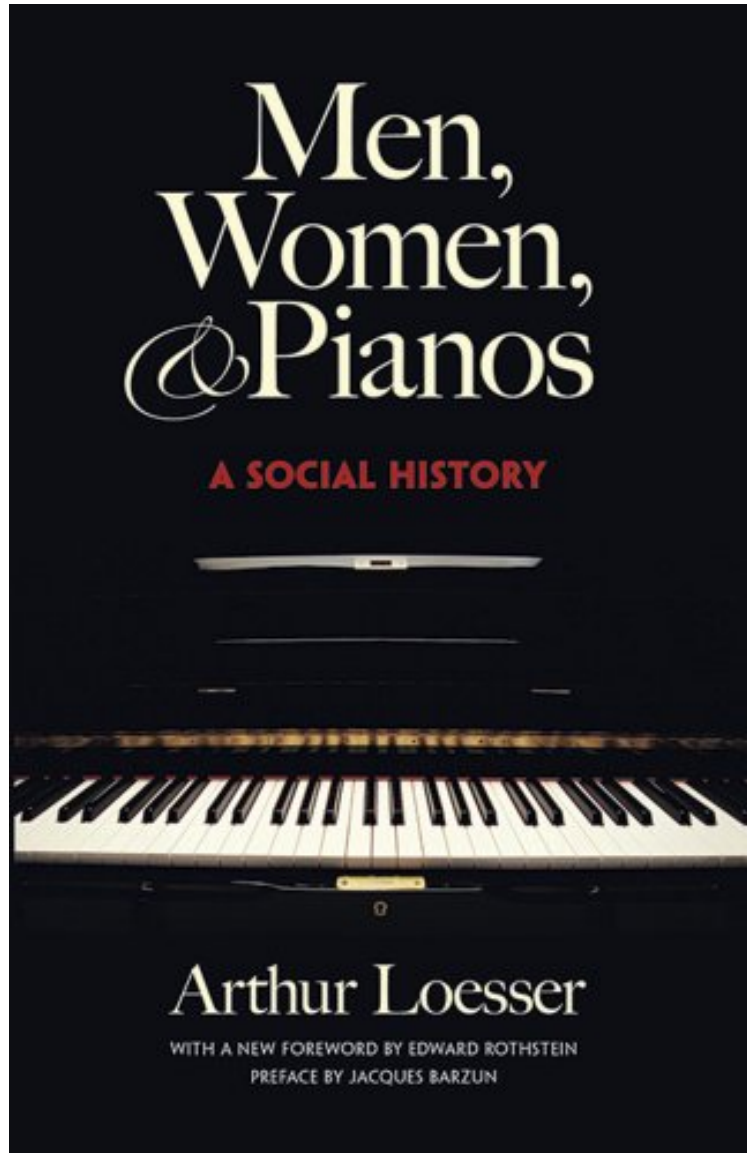


[Mobile book] Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History (Dover Books on Music)

## Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History (Dover Books on Music)

*Arthur Loesser, Edward Rothstein, Jacques Barzun*  
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#537669 in Books Dover Publications 2011-03-17 2011-02-17 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.47 x 1.27 x 5.441, 1.50 #File Name: 0486265439672 pages Men Women and Pianos A Social History | File size: 70.Mb

**Arthur Loesser, Edward Rothstein, Jacques Barzun : Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History (Dover Books on Music)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Men, Women and Pianos: A Social History (Dover Books on Music):

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. My favorite book on pianos By Richard H. "Men, Women, Pianos : A Social History" is my favorite book on pianos, and I read many of them while researching for my own music book.

The full title says it well; it's a history of the development of the instrument, but it also scrupulously documents the ongoing role of pianos through decades of Western music and culture. I'm sure some would find this tedious--one review said that--but I couldn't wait to pick up the book each day to read stories of yet one more pianist's performance of the tired concert warhorse *The Battle of Prague*, how many thalers it cost to purchase everyday items in various countries of Europe long ago, or how many people used to be employed in the onetime major industry of manufacturing and selling pianos. This book is great for many of the same reasons any art is great, it puts one inside the experience of someone else, even if that person lived 300 years ago. More relevant today is the recent role of pianos in our daily home entertainment, and how there is a long history of piano playing being expected of young girls, along with their sewing, cooking, and other everyday activities known as accomplishments. As one who has performed a great deal of research for my book project, as a professional researcher, and while employed by the Library of Congress, I am well aware that this book is all the more a stunning achievement because its author, Arthur Loesser, had helpful librarians working with him to gain access to the majority of his extensive research materials via interlibrary loans. My success rate with getting materials through ILLs is spotty at best. Kudos to Mr. Loesser's resourceful, professional librarians who managed to call in deeply arcane items published in many languages from around the world, to Cleveland in the early 1950s, a time when state-of-the-art searching was performed with 3x5" cards in long drawers.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Charming scenes featuring pianos  
By M. Heiss  
This book is well and lovingly written. A pleasure to read. This book is perfect for dipping into, reading one or two cheerful stories, and then putting down again. A story might be two pages long, or it might be eight. But they won't bog you down and you'll put the book down energized and just a bit more knowledgeable and impressed with pianos.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Brilliant.  
By Steve Schwartz, Austin  
Exactly what the title says -- a social history of the piano, pianists, and publishers. Loesser (a superior Beethoven pianist, teacher, and half-brother to songwriter Frank Loesser) had a revelatory insight and linked the rise and fall of the piano to the fortunes and circumstances of the middle class in Germany, Austria, England, France, and the United States. He also traces the technical development of the piano from the virginal through the harpsichord to Cristofori through Steinway and even reproducing pianos. He demonstrates over and over that the piano was more than a mere instrument; it also conferred upon the middle-class status and respectability. The prose is witty, and it's often a mean wit. Loesser is particularly hard on women who "took" lessons in order to acquire "accomplishments" that increased their value in the marriage market. Nevertheless, this book is a model of what an intellectual or cultural history should be and a tale well told and compulsively page-turning. P.S. I read the Kindle edition. I strongly suspect the publishers put the printed book through an optical character reader, because the electronic object annoyed me with many "typos" that made no sense at all from the viewpoint of manual QWERTY keyboard input. Still, this did not quash my enthusiasm for Loesser's work.

As the "social anchor" in middle-class homes of the nineteenth century, the piano was simultaneously an elegant piece of drawing-room furniture, a sign of bourgeois prosperity, and a means of introducing the young to music. In this admirably balanced and leisurely account of the popular instrument, the late, internationally known concert pianist Arthur Loesser takes a "piano's-eye view" of the recent social history of Western Europe and the United States. Drawing on newspapers, music manuscripts, popular accounts, and other sources, Loesser traces the history of the piano from its predecessors, the clavichord and the harpsichord, to the modern spinet and concert grand. Chapter headings such as "Clavichords Make Weeping Easier," "The Harpsichord Grows Feet," "The More Pianos the Merrier," and "The Keyboards Go West" suggest the author's lighthearted approach to topics ranging from the piano's European origins and its introduction in the United States to the decline of piano manufacturing in the early twentieth century and the "victory of airborne music" by mid-century. A preface by historian Jacques Barzun and a new foreword by music critic Edward Rothstein enhance a volume rich in wit and knowledge one that will delight any reader with an interest in the piano and on Western cultural history.

About the Author  
American classical pianist and author Arthur Loesser (1894-1969) served on the faculty of the Cleveland Institute of Music from 1926 to 1969. He wrote program notes for the Cleveland Orchestra and liner notes for Vladimir Horowitz and other internationally famed musicians.