

Song Title: **CHOPSTICKS**

Rating: **YES: Note**

### **REVIEWERS' NOTE**

There is anecdotal concern about the title "Chopstix" and possible allusions to anti-Asian rhetoric.

The song was originally written as *The Celebrated Chop Waltz*, and the original song and sheet music had no racial or ethnic references at all.\* ([reference](#)) However, the publisher did use stereotypical Asian illustrations for at least [one early sheet music cover](#) ([reference](#)).

In later years, the song was re-titled "Chopsticks," and stereotyped imagery was used on newly published versions of the sheet music. However, most current sheet music does not contain the problematic imagery.

**The song's origin is innocuous, and the song is Admissible.**

\*Please see the research below for further details on how the song got its name (*not* Asian-related) and song history.

\* \* \*

What year was this song written? 1877

Who wrote the lyrics? instrumental (for piano)

Who is the composer of this song? Euphemia Allen (under pseudonym, Arthur de Lulli)

What did your research tell you about the composer?

**Euphemia Amelia Nightingale Allen** (1861–1948) was a Scottish composer. She composed the song "The Celebrated Chop Waltz" or now known as "[Chopsticks](#)" in 1877, at the age of 16, under the pseudonym Arthur de Lulli. She was the sister of music publisher Mozart Allen.

Allen was the daughter of William Elder Allen, a well-known dancing instructor in Glasgow, and Agnes Allen (née Letham). The 1901 Scotland Census states her occupation as 'teacher of the piano forte'. At the time of the census she was living with her brother E. J. Mozart Allen, his wife Christina, and their father William along with Mozart and Christina's three children.

According to her death certificate, Allen was a retired music publisher. She never married.

What other material has been written by this composer?

Chopsticks was her only published piece.

Who and what is this song about, as originally intended by the composer and earlier performers?

The song has no lyrics and does not tell a story.

What did you learn about the history OF THE SONG?

"Chopsticks" (original name "The Celebrated Chop Waltz") is a simple, widely known waltz for the piano by Euphemia Allen (under the pseudonym Arthur de Lulli). Allen—whose brother, Mozart Allan, was a music publisher—was sixteen when she composed the piece, with arrangements for solo and duet

The title "Chop Waltz" comes from the composer's specification in the original sheet music: "Play both hands turned sideways, little fingers lowest, so that the movement of the hands imitates the chopping from which this waltz gets its name."

The 'Chopsticks' melody has been used and built on by several artists, from Liberace in his characteristically elaborate 'Chopsticks' Variations, to post-punk group The Bolshoi in the coda of their 1986 song 'Sunday Morning'.

In 2009, songwriter Margo Guryan reimagined the waltz as a Round, an Andante movement and a piece of Ragtime music in her Chopsticks Variations, while the Manfred Mann's Earth Band used the melody in their 1976 rock track 'Blinded By the Light'.

Although it originated as a 19th-century waltz, it seems 'Chopsticks' has become so famous that its title has been used to describe any 'playable' piano music. In the 2004 film *The Notebook*, Rachel McAdams' character Allie plays the first few bars of Chopin's Prelude in E minor (Op. 28 No. 4) but refers to the piece as 'Chopsticks'. There's even a Christmas version, which follows the same tune with the text 'Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house...'.

Share a link to the earliest performance of this song that you can find.

Can't find earliest, but here's one of the most celebrated--Liberace: <https://youtu.be/jruN-ZTIdak>

Does any illustration or other characteristic of the original sheet music reflect an inappropriate theme?

Some early versions (not all) do. Recent versions do not. the publisher did use stereotypical Asian illustrations for at least [one early sheet music cover](#), but not others, [such as this one](#).

Did this song, originally or subsequently, demean a marginalized racial/cultural group (a group considered at a social disadvantage) through idiomatic expressions, metaphors, jargon, or message? And/or does the song present a sanitized/idyllic or false narrative regarding the American South and the life of the enslaved or newly freed? No.

Please explain your reasoning for the answer above and indicate if your group feels the song should not be performed by Sweet Adelines.

There is anecdotal concern about the title "Chopstix" and possible allusions to anti-Asian rhetoric. The song was originally written as *The Celebrated Chop Waltz*, and the original song and sheet music had no racial or ethnic references at all. As noted above, some versions of the early sheet music carried stereotypical Asian illustrations. However, the source of the "chop" in the original song was due to the instructions provided by the composer as to how the music should be played with a chopping motion (see song history above).

Please supply the links to any sources you used for this section of research.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26385828>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chopsticks\\_\(waltz\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chopsticks_(waltz))

<https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/instruments/piano/history-of-chopsticks-music-euphonia-allen/>

### Additional Questions to Consider (do not pertain to Admissibility)

The remaining questions pertain to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion issues other than those of race. As such, **THESE QUESTIONS DO NOT AFFECT A SONG'S ADMISSIBILITY**. They are provided to encourage your group to consider factors that may affect members of your audience and/or your performers with regard to religion, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, and more. ***Please refer to the Music Choices section of [Chapter Choices to Address Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#) (in the [Chorus Toolkit](#)) for details and strategies related to these factors.***

Could the message/lyrics of the song, original or subsequent, limit any singer or audience member's ability to engage related to the following? A YES answer does not imply that the song is demeaning or exclusionary. [Please see instructions here](#).

Age: No

Disability: No

Gender: No

Religion: No

Sexual Orientation: No

Visible Physical Differences: No

Other? No

Are there any adjustments to the lyric that would make it more inclusive or current to our chorus culture or societal norms?

No ... There are no lyrics.