

Basic Detail Report



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Title

'Surf Girls' sheet music cover

Date

1921

Primary Maker

Rick Dahr

Medium

Ink on paper

Dimensions

Overall: 296 x 219 mm Display Dimensions: 292 x 218 mm

Name

Sheet music

History

'Surf Girls' is a light-hearted song written to be danced as a foxtrot, a form that gained momentum throughout the 1920s. In the lyrics, the speaker describes the 'Surf Girls'

of the 'Sandy beaches' as carefree and provocative, alluding to their scantily clad bodies. At the heart of the lyrics and the front cover of this piece there is one enigmatic motif that seems to dominate references to these 'Surf Girls'. The mystery of the female body is a consistent theme and is articulated through references to their swimming costumes. The long-held fascination with the swimming costume and its ability to shock viewers centres around its ambiguous nature. As a garment that toes the line between swimsuit and underwear, the speaker describes how their 'tall and slender' bodies cause a 'new sensation on the beaches' and more explicitly, how their costumes 'make old Father Neptune's Leaves begin to fall'. By the 1920s, swimsuits had ventured beyond functional purposes to include fashionable patterns and cuts designed to emphasise and therefore draw attention to the female form. This song articulates the way that women's swimwear was responded to during a time when more revealing swimsuits began to dominate beach culture. As the speaker says in the second verse and opening chorus line: 'I'm going back to sell my home And settle down beside the foam This is just a paradise for me each Summer Surf girls they've got a fascination for me....'