

Institute for Studies in American Music

NEWSLETTER

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of the
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of
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Department
of
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ON PERFORMING AMERICAN MUSIC

Can the public performance of earlier American music—especially parlor music of the 19th century—be justified? Can it hold its own in the concert hall, other than as a curiosity? Can it be meaningful to a public nurtured on “masterpieces”?

These questions were confronted in an I.S.A.M. colloquium on *Extravagance in American Music, 1820-1910*, held May 23, 1973, at Brooklyn College, preceding a concert of American 19th-century parlor and concert music by members of The American Music Group of Urbana, Illinois. Moderator of the discussion was Gilbert Chase (1972-73 Senior Research Fellow of I.S.A.M.); panelists were Neely Bruce and William Brooks (of the Group), Judith Steinberg (Junior Research Fellow of I.S.A.M.), and Victor Yellin (of N.Y.U.'s Department of Music).

Defining “extravagant” as the excessive and the unnecessary, panelists pointed to the difficulty of justifying the performance of music which, in Brooks's words, arose in a culture that “made no claim that music was a necessary part of society.” Excessive in emotionality and/or technique, harmonically trite, extravagantly virtuosic at times, this is music composed unabashedly for entertainment alone. As such, claimed Brooks and Bruce, there is no real necessity for its having been composed; it lacks an ingredient ordinarily assumed to be essential—a *raison d'être*!

Is it not, then, Yellin asked, a “kind of masochism” to spend time and effort performing such music—or listening to it? But he went on to disagree about its lacking a reason for existence: “I think that it *does* have a *raison d'être*. I think that it is *extremely* meaningful. I don't laugh at it. . . . [But] I think that it should be approached from a more sensitive point of view—in the same way that an ethnomusicologist would approach the music of New Guinea stone-age natives.” Brooks disagreed in turn: he performs and experiences this music for no such “ethnomusicological” reasons. He might not be able to define the reasons; in fact, sometimes he finds himself uncertain as to whether the music is worth performing at all. He may find that it *is* worthwhile, but acknowledges that there is no aesthetic today that justifies it. This music, he said, “calls into question our traditional system of judgments; like some of the music of Ives or Cage, the function it serves is compositional, not musicological. . . .” For listeners, this very lack of *raison d'être* can contribute to its delight. Chase, for example, quoted a French poet who spoke of “le plaisir toujours renouvelé d'une chose inutile”—the ever-renewed pleasure of a useless object.

Most of the panelists agreed that historical perspective was needed to understand these pieces, reflecting, as they do, uniquely American traits. Bruce observed that the expression of the songs tends to be social and outgoing rather than self-indulgent and introspective—characteristics found in European romantic songs. Judith Steinberg remarked that parlor collections sometimes juxtapose Mozart arias and eighteenth-century dance tunes, “leveling the distinction between elite and parlor music”—something which class-conscious European society would never have tolerated. Finally, Yellin, borrowing a description of American furniture from *Antiques* magazine, discussed nineteenth-century musical style as “the work of regional craftsmen that combined quality, utility, and beauty in a style we could call ‘artisan mannerism’—a style of simultaneous imitation and distortion, slavishly aping European high style yet deliberately exaggerating it.”

IVESIANA

The expected groundswell of projects relating to Charles Ives, as the Ives centennial year approaches, is rising fast. Last May, the Charles Ives Society was activated; its principal aim is the sponsorship of critical editions (and re-editions) of the works of Ives. The Society has been assured a grant from the National Institute of Arts and Letters for this purpose. Editor-in-chief, and Chairman of the Society's Board of Directors, is John Kirkpatrick, recently retired from his post as Curator of Yale University's Ives Collection. Other officers of the Society are H. Wiley Hitchcock, I.S.A.M./Brooklyn College (President), Vivian Perlis, Yale University (Vice-President), Oliver Daniel, Broadcast Music, Inc. (Vice-President), and Ellis J. Freedman, counsel to the Society (Secretary-Treasurer). Other Board members are Leonard Bernstein, Aaron Copland, L. Brewster Ives, John McClure, Harold Samuel, and William Schuman. The first two Society-sponsored Ives editions have just come off the press: *Study No. 22* for piano and *Turn Ye, Turn Ye* for SATB chorus and organ (both are Merion Music, Inc. publications). John Kirkpatrick is editor; complete critical commentary by him is included with each work.

Never in long supply (only 114 copies were originally made) and in fact generally unavailable has been John Kirkpatrick's *Temporary Mimeographed Catalogue of the Music Manuscripts and Related Materials of Charles Edwards Ives* (1960). Yale University is now issuing an unaltered reprint (unbound), at a price of \$6.50. . . . Also published by Yale (in 1972) is *Charles E. Ives: Discography*, by the Curator of the university library's Historical Sound Recordings archive, Richard Warren Jr. The discography reflects the holdings, in Yale's Charles Ives Collection, of virtually "every known commercially issued recording by professional musicians of a work by Ives" and includes also citations of many air-checks and private recordings. Invaluable for, among other things, its precise listings of recording dates and places, the book includes several bonuses: an annotated list of documentary

broadcasts and films on Ives, a list of recorded interviews (on file at Yale) with persons who knew Ives, and an index of performers. Price: \$7.00. Both the Kirkpatrick *Catalogue* and the Warren *Discography* may be ordered from the Yale Library Publication office, Box 1603A Yale Station, New Haven, CT 06520.

Some twenty musical organizations in Miami, Florida, will be cooperating in a seven-month-long celebration of Ives, during the 1974-75 concert season. Each will perform one or more of Ives's works in what is surely the longest "festival" ever planned; its official title is the Charles Ives Centennial Festival. Miami music critic F. Warren O'Reilly (on the *Miami News*) is coordinator.

Proposals for papers, demonstrations, or colloquia for the Charles Ives Centennial Festival-Conference, to be co-sponsored by I.S.A.M. and Yale University just a year from now (October 17-21, 1974), will be welcomed. Scholars or performers wishing to offer such proposals should provide detailed abstracts. The themes of the Festival-Conference are: Ives and American Culture, Performance Problems of Ives's Music, Editorial Problems of Ives's Music, and Ives and Contemporary Musical Thought. Proposals may be sent to either of the co-directors of the Festival-Conference, Vivian Perlis (Morse College, Yale University, New Haven, CT 06520) and H. Wiley Hitchcock (I.S.A.M.).

I.S.A.M. MATTERS

Richard Crawford is I.S.A.M. Senior Research Fellow for 1973-74. Author of the books *Andrew Law*, *American Psalmist* and *William Billings of Boston* (with co-author David McKay; to be published by Princeton), new introductions to reprints of Oscar Sonneck's *Francis Hopkinson . . .* and James Lyon's *Urania*, and many articles and reviews, Professor Crawford is on leave from the University of Michigan School of Music. During his term as I.S.A.M. Fellow he will complete a bibliography of early American sacred music and, with co-author Cynthia Hoover, will work on a new history, *Music in Eighteenth-Century American Life*. In the Spring 1974 semester he will lead a seminar on "Psalmody and Hymnody in the United States to 1900."

A Rockefeller Foundation grant supports the I.S.A.M. Senior Fellowship, and also Junior Research Fellowships; Junior Fellows for 1973-74 are William Boswell, Angelo Corbo, Laurie Spiegel, Judith Steinberg, and M. Robin Warren. Ms. Steinberg will present a paper, "Women as Professional Musicians in the United States 1870-1900," at the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society, November 8, 1973.

Under a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, work has begun on an I.S.A.M. project titled *Early American Music in Print and on Records: A Biblio-Discography*. Its goal is to produce by late 1974 a practical guide to available

pre-Civil War music. Serving as researchers are graduate students Susan Ashenafi, Marjorie Freilich Den, Barbara Hampton, Genevieve Libin, and Stephen Powitz.

Richard Jackson's *United States Music: Sources of Bibliography and Collective Biography* (I.S.A.M. Monograph No. 1), published last spring, has received enthusiastic reviews in *Library Journal* and *School Library Journal*. In production now is I.S.A.M. Monograph No. 2, *Two Lectures in the Form of a Pair* by Gilbert Chase. Besides the lectures ("Music, Culture, and History" and "Structuralism and Music") delivered by Professor Chase during his term as Senior Research Fellow, 1972-73, the monograph will include a complete bibliography of his writings.

I.S.A.M. Director Hitchcock will give a *Louis Charles Elson Lecture* at the Library of Congress on November 15, 1973. In honor of the centenary of the birth of Oscar Sonneck, first scholarly chief of the library's Music Division and founding editor of *The Musical Quarterly*, the lecture—titled "After One Hundred [!] Years: The Editorial Side of Sonneck"—will be published by the Library of Congress.

Newly appointed as Research Assistant to I.S.A.M. is Rita H. Mead. Ms. Mead is a candidate for the doctorate in the C.U.N.Y. Ph.D. Program in Music.

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IRRELEVANCE UNLIMITED

We nominate for the Faux-Pas of the Century award the Chicago Lyric Opera—for having commissioned from Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki an opera in honor of the U.S. Bicentennial. In spite of our Institute's name and aims, we defend the universality of music and assert that chauvinism has no place in it (nor in politics or sex). But we thought the Bicentennial had something to do with Americans and the American heritage, and we fail to see the relevance of Chicago's commission. We are particularly in agreement with Ezra Laderman, President of the American Music Center, who described the Lyric Opera's action as a "regrettably all-too-typical example of reverse chauvinism," and with *New York Times* critic Donal Henahan's characterization of it as "essentially misguided and gratuitously humiliating to American artists."

BOOKS RECENTLY PUBLISHED

David Horn is compiler and annotator of an informative and useful bibliography of books on American music, including popular and folk song collections, in the Exeter University Library (England). Horn's 178-page *Literature of American Music* (Exeter: The American Arts Documentation Centre [and] The University Library, 1972) cites over 500 volumes, in a classified listing (plus index), with detailed and often penetrating commentary on each. The book is an offshoot of a project recently (1970) begun, aiming "to build a library collection for the study of American music of all styles." The books listed by Horn are thus virtually all in-print, available items, and one useful purpose the bibliography can serve is as an acquisitions-list in the field of American-music literature.

The New York Times Gershwin Years in Song, recently published by Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., bears certainly the most cumbersome and uninformative title of the year. The book is, in fact, an anthology of sheet music (56 of Gershwin's songs), plus some facsimiles of manuscript pages and photographs. Moreover (and *nota bene*, since the fact is hardly mentioned in ads for the book), it includes the composer's improvisatory "variations" for piano solo of 18 songs, originally published in *The Gershwin Song Book* of 1932. The latter has long been out of print.

The Lure of the Striped Pig: The Illustration of Popular Music in America (1820-1870) can be purchased for \$40.00 from the Imprint Society, Barre, MA 01005. Containing many rare pictorial title pages, the sixty illustrations—six in full color—include works by noted American artists such as Winslow Homer and James A. McN. Whistler.

Professors William J. Schafer and Johannes Riedel are co-authors of *The Art of Ragtime: Form and Meaning of an Original Black American Art* (Louisiana State University Press). The book aims, in part, to complement Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis's durable *They All Played Ragtime*, in that it offers considerable musical analysis and attempts also to deal with larger matters, mainly historical and sociological. However, despite some good points (especially the inclusion of a number of complete piano pieces and illustrations of cover-art), the book is a disappointment. It is patchily organized; the analyses tend to be either tautological or incredible (16th-note left-hand figures in contrary motion to the right hand are likened to coitus [*sic!*]); and the authors seem ultimately uncertain as to their real aims. Scholarly apparatus—footnotes, appendices, bibliography—is much in evidence, but in both method and attitude there is much that is unscholarly. In sum, we still lack a thoroughgoing *musical* study of ragtime.

NEWS AND INFORMATION

Research fellowship opportunities. The Smithsonian Institution offers a limited number of research training fellowships and scholarships, especially in the areas of American music, musical instruments or iconography, ethnomusicology, and performance practices. Fellowships—with stipends of \$10,000 for post-doctoral research, \$5,000 for pre-doctoral—are granted to investigators working in residence at the Smithsonian and with Smithsonian staff members. The deadline for fellowship applications is January 15. Scholarships—with stipends of \$800 to \$1,000 for a period of 10 to 12 weeks—are available to both undergraduate and graduate students, for work on research projects proposed by them or by Smithsonian staff members. Scholarship periods may be scheduled at any time during the year; however, the deadline for application for summertime scholarships is March 1. For details, write the Office of Academic Studies, R. 356, SI Building, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560. . . . Phi Mu Alpha-Sinfonia announces the availability of a Research Assistance grant, with a stipend up to \$1,000 for scholarly research in American music. For details, contact Phi Mu Alpha-Sinfonia, 10600 Old State Road, Evansville, IN 47711.

Old Sturbridge Conference. A conference titled "Joyful Sounds: Early American Music in its Social Setting" was held at Old Sturbridge Village, Massachusetts, May 5-6, 1973. Organizers were Arthur Schrader (Music Associate at Sturbridge), Alan Buechner (Queens College), and Nicholas Tawa (University of Massachusetts). A keynote address by Irving Lowens, "Early American Music: What's Left to Be Done?", preceded a panel discussion, several papers and workshops, and, intermittently, some music-making. Besides the organizers, participants included Cynthia Hoover (Smithsonian Institution), Raoul Camus (Queensborough Community College), Richard Crawford (University of Michigan), Daniel Patterson (University of North Carolina), and Victor Yellin (New York University). The spring weather, the picturesque setting, and the warmth of the hosts infused the event with a sense of well-being; all agreed the conference was a success.

Wanted! An article titled "The Early Boston Piano Makers," presumably by Thomas Appleton and published in the New York periodical *The American Musician*, July 2, 1887 (and perhaps earlier in another publication). The Smithsonian Institution's Division of Musical Instruments is seeking a copy. Anyone able to locate the article, in either version, is asked to notify Cynthia A. Hoover, at the Division (Washington, DC 20560).

Blake honored. At its commencement exercises in June, 1973, Brooklyn College conferred upon James Hubert Blake—better known as Eubie Blake—the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, "in recognition of more than three-quarters of a century of happy music-making as pianist and composer of that typically American music, ragtime, [and] in gratitude for the glorious affirmation of life in his music. . . ."

Jazz at/from the Smithsonian. Predictably, the appointment not so long ago of jazz critic Martin Williams to the Division of Performing Arts of the Smithsonian Institution has led to expanded activities in the area of jazz within the Division. Besides offering an imaginative series of jazz concerts, it is involved in both publication and recording projects. In progress now is a bio-discographical study, by Vladimir Simosko and Barry Tepperman, of the late saxophonist Eric Dolphy. An even larger project, near completion, is the *Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz*, a 6-LP set (with a 48-page essay by Williams) based on original recordings by jazz virtuosos from Jelly Roll Morton to Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane. Releases from no less than 17 recording companies are utilized. The set will be available in November, at \$20.00 plus \$1.50 for postage and handling, from Classic Jazz, P.O. Box 14196, Washington, DC 20044.

Federal Appropriations. The compromise House-Senate bill authorizing funds for the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities has been sent to the President for his signature. Unfortunately, the bill has reduced the Senate proposal of \$160-\$400 million which we reported in our Newsletter last spring. Maximum appropriations are now set for \$145 million this fiscal year, with \$200 million and \$252 million authorized for the next two years.

News from Mexico. The Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes of Mexico is preparing a complete catalogue of works by twentieth-century Mexican composers as well as a discography on Mexican ethnic music. For information, contact Carmen Sordo Sodi, Departamento de Musica, Seccion de Investigaciones Musicales Dolores 2-4° Piso, Mexico 1, D.F.

Black Music Calendar. The Black Music Center at the Indiana University School of Music announces publication of their first annual Black Music Calendar. Educational as well as functional, this wall or desk item records historical facts, lists names of individuals and performing groups, and includes a selected bibliography. To order, send \$2.00 to the center in Bloomington, IN 47401.

TWO NEW RECORDINGS

Neely Bruce, increasingly well-known for his work as director of The American Music Group associated with the University of Illinois, is the performer in a three-disc album titled *The Piano in America: Volume I, Nineteenth Century Popular Concert and Parlor Music* (Vox SVBX 5302). Composer-critic Eric Salzman reviewed the set in the October 1973 issue of *Stereo Review*; here are some of his interesting comments: "The good and the bad, the brilliant, the mediocre, the amusing, the dull, the witty, the trite, the popular and the learned, the quaint and the cultured are here mixed in such profusion that one's first impression in that parlor music, too, was being industrialized . . . like so much Victorian furniture. . . . These recordings are both valuable and a lot of fun. All of this music is extremely well played. . . . The struggle between the popular and the genteel—still very much a part of our cultural life!—is everywhere evident in these performances, but there is no anguished European introspection here. . . . Mr. Bruce deserves a great deal of praise." Amen, we say.

Another sparkler of American music has been issued by Nonesuch Records: **Piano Music** by **George Gershwin**, played by pianist-composer William Bolcom (Nonesuch H-71284). The performance is utterly stylish, the technical quality of the recording first-rate. The only completely familiar material on the record is the set of *Three Preludes* of 1926. The "variations" on eighteen songs from *The Gershwin Song Book* (1932) were recorded years ago by Leo Smit, but the recording is long out-of-press and, besides, Bolcom's immersion in, and feeling for, the Gershwin style is unmatched. A baker's half-dozen of little-known and never-recorded Gershwin miniatures fill out the disc, which we are willing to wager will be the sleeper surprise of the year. Knowledgeable, accurate, and literate jacket notes—always worth noting, since so seldom found!—are provided by David Hamilton, music critic of *The Nation*.

Just as this issue of the I.S.A.M. Newsletter went to press, negotiations were concluded between I.S.A.M. and A-R Editions, Inc., of Madison, Wisconsin, to establish a series of musical editions called **RECENT RESEARCHES IN AMERICAN MUSIC**. Each volume will contain about 100 pages of music newly edited from the original sources, with an introductory essay by the editor. Among the volumes initially contemplated for publication are an anthology of pre-Civil War keyboard music, one of the "core repertory" (approximately 100 works) of the 18th-century New England singing schools, one of vocal music by Anthony Philip Heinrich, and one of jazz solos transcribed from recordings.

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I.S.A.M. will sponsor a concert by the 40-member American Music Group of Urbana, Illinois, on November 26, 1973, at 8:00 p.m. in Gershwin Theater at Brooklyn College. The program will include songs and arias, anthems and revival hymns, Sacred Harp singing, and a miniature operetta on "Little Red Riding Hood"—all from 19th-century America.