

NEWSLETTER

INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN AMERICAN MUSIC

Conservatory of Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York - H. Wiley Hitchcock, Director

Volume XXI, Number 1

November 1991

ROSS LEE FINNEY: A PERSONAL RECOLLECTION *by Gilbert Ross*

Ross Lee Finney, eminent composer and master teacher, celebrates his eighty-fifth birthday on December 23rd. Gilbert Ross, Professor of Music Emeritus of the University of Michigan and founding first violinist of the university's Stanley Quartet, has written his own celebration of a longtime colleague and friend. We are grateful to Professors Ross and Finney for allowing us to join in the celebration--and to Don C. Gillespie of C. F. Peters Corp. (publisher not only of Finney's music but very soon his autobiography) for suggesting that we do so.

Ross Lee Finney is my best friend. He is also my closest friend and friend of longest standing: our friendship dates from the early 1930s. My relationship with Ross has from the beginning been inexorably entwined with our professional association, Ross as composer and I as performer. Any thought that this complex duality might be disentangled and its two strands separated would be a hopeless delusion. Certainly my own career as a violinist would have been different, and the poorer, had it not been for Ross's music and the influence it exerted on my development as a musician.

My friendship with Ross took root among the rolling hills, icy freshets, and stands of pine and birch that form the woodsy ambience of Yaddo, a retreat in upper New York State for composers, writers, and artists. It was in the early years of Ross's long tenure on the faculty of Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. He had turned up at Yaddo to hear his colleague John Duke play a Finney piano sonata on one of the Yaddo Festival programs, and I, a couple of years into a faculty appointment at Cornell University, had driven over from Ithaca to see what might be going on behind the gates of the Yaddo estate.

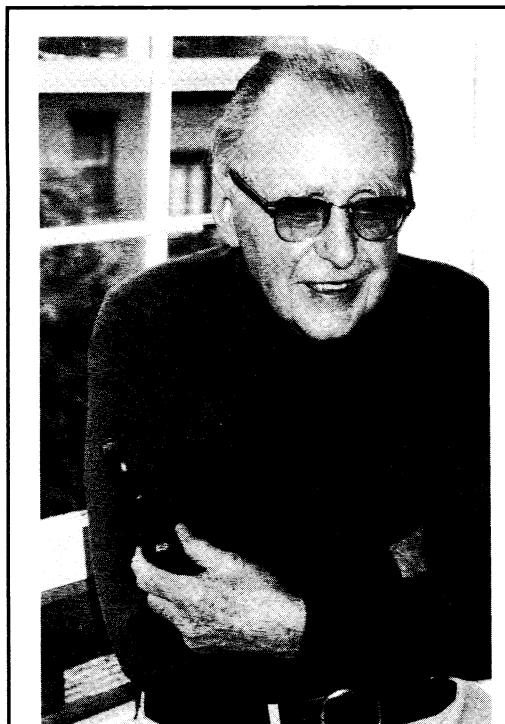
I met Ross and John just before the performance and spent time with both after it. I was much impressed by Ross's music: its explosive energy, driving rhythms, and expressive power. Amid the music's frenetic urgency there was discernible, sometimes just beneath the surface, a thread of soaring lyricism. (This has remained characteristic of Ross's music even as his methods of composition and facets of his style have changed.)

In the mid-1930s a violin job opened up at Smith. Ross called it to my attention and urged me to apply. I did and got the job. (I

suspect that Ross had a hand in the maneuvering and the ultimate decision to make me the offer.) I never regretted my acceptance of the appointment, since I stepped into an exceedingly lively and productive musical environment. My arrival in Northampton with my wife Gertrude signaled an expansion of my growing friendship with Ross, and also, of course, his wife Gretchen. This seemingly uncomplicated development set off, in fact, an incredible mix-up of names, some uproariously funny and others mildly embarrassing, between Gretchen and Gertrude, on the one hand, and Gilbert Ross and Ross Finney, on the other. Ross sang folksongs to his own guitar accompaniment; I got praise for my beautiful singing. I was warmly congratulated on the birth of the Finneys' new baby. Ross and Gretchen were discomfited to discover that their safety-deposit box at the bank was listed in the name of Ross and Gertrude Finney.

This confusion spilled over into Ross's and my professional activities. We had collaborated in editing a violin concerto by Tartini. The publishers identified us on the publication's cover as co-editors, using only our last names: "Edited by Ross-Finney." We speculated on how it would appear with our first names only: "Edited by Gilbert-Ross." That little hyphen suddenly acquired unsuspected powers. The farcical confusion of our names persists to this day.

(In fact, there is a curious parallelism between the Finney and Ross families. His father and mine were both sociologists who pursued academic careers. Each had three sons, and one or more of each threesome chose music as a career. Ross and I both served major portions of our careers at the same institutions, Smith College and the University of Michigan. We have been



Ross Lee Finney (1989). Photo: Sabine Matthes

ROSS ON FINNEY (continued)

friends for fifty-five years and professional colleagues for more than half of them.)

The Smith College days were memorable in many ways, not least for a number of informal string-quartet evenings. Ross played the cello, Gretchen the violin; I was the other half of the violin duo, and we relied on recruitment to fill the viola chair. As performers, Ross and Gretchen were inordinately modest—unnecessarily so, since both were adept at scurrying about their respective fingerboards, even in the upper reaches and into the field of eternal rosin. The Finneys were building a house on Ward Avenue, only a block or so from the former Northampton residence of Calvin Coolidge. While it was under construction, they occupied a place on Massasoit Street—cool, light, airy. Good acoustics, too. How gratifying it was to wend our way through the quartets of Haydn and Mozart, and Beethoven's Op. 18, in an atmosphere of unforced congeniality, free of pressure or pretense.

When Gertrude and I were new to Northampton, Ross and Gretchen did many things to ease our adjustment. I recall one night when they affirmed their friendship beyond the call of reason or loyalty: they actually skied through a fierce blizzard to attend a recital of mine.

I was beginning to come to grips with Ross's music and to recognize different facets of his style. He was fond of linear writing, often lean, with well-ventilated lines free of clotted sound-masses. He eschewed treating the piano as a percussion instrument, preferring to exploit its lyric potential. Yet he refused to sacrifice sharply defined rhythms and other devices that gave his music its thrust and momentum. He liked to create a rhythmic motor to propel the sounds—get it going for a few bars and then fling a bold musical idea into the roiling pot.

Ross's First Sonata for Violin and Piano of 1934 had been accepted for performance at a concert of the League of Composers in New York. Ross recruited Bianca del Vecchio, a Smith College colleague and a remarkable virtuoso, for the keyboard part. He invited me to assume the violin role. I was happy to accept, since it afforded me the opportunity to immerse myself in his music, get the feel of it, scratch beneath the surface and probe its inner depths, solve its technical problems. My participation in that performance initiated a long series of involvements with Ross's works, including playing a dozen or more premieres and about fifty public performances of some fifteen works.

A few years ago a friend said, "Ross, you've had a fascinating life and a major career. You really ought to write your autobiography." "I've already written one," replied Ross. "It's in my music." For, although most of Finney's compo-

sitions—at least the chamber music, which I know best—are non-programmatic and free of descriptive, pictorial, or literary allusions, they are not without autobiographical connotations. They often find their source and inspiration in the times and events of his childhood. Ross was born in Minnesota, but his family moved to Valley City, North Dakota, when he was seven. When they left North Dakota six years later, young Ross had already grown to love its great open sky, its endless prairies, and its protected valleys, and such natural wonders left an indelible imprint on his memory.

He had also enjoyed a close-knit family life, and one that abounded in music-making. He himself played the cello and the piano (and later, the guitar as well), his brother Theodore the violin, and his other brother Nat the cornet. The Finney ménage had the makings of a small orchestra and the enthusiasm to compensate for technical deficiencies; no inhibitions deterred them. And the entire family sang, especially folksongs and popular songs of the day. Small wonder that Ross, as an adult and a serious composer, often turned to folksong for inspiration and usable material. He used a medley of folksongs in his early Violin Concerto and a cowboy song, *Oh, Bury Me Not on the Lone Prairie*, in his Third String Quartet. He incorporated folk material in orchestral and choral works. In 1945 he published *Fiddle-Doodle-ad* (shades of Anthony Philip Heinrich's *Yankee Doodle* of 1820!). This consists of skillful arrangements for violin and piano of eight of his favorite folksongs; they are harmonized with great care and sensitivity, and beautifully chosen for contrasts of mood, ranging all the way from *Rye Whiskey* to *Oh, Lovely Appearance of Death*.

Ross has a great fondness for the string quartet as a medium, and, before his interests took him in other directions, he composed eight quartets. Written over a span of twenty-five years (1935-60), these are an important contribution to the quartet literature. The three earliest quartets, products of the Smith College years, are full of spirit, passion, and song. The five later ones are more introspective—works of emotional power and stress, often anguished, and richly expressive. I was privileged to participate in performances of all eight, the first three with the Smith College Faculty Quartet, the other five with the University of Michigan's Stanley Quartet.

At Smith College, Ross was a dynamo, his surplus energy finding outlets in several directions. His high-powered vitality and youthful enthusiasm were contagious and rubbed off on other members of the music faculty. Beside his remarkable fecundity as a composer, he was into all sorts of other musical activities. He conducted a small orchestra in Baroque-era music; he edited early Italian instrumental music; he founded and served as general editor of

2

To Gilbert Ross
Fiddle-Doodle-ad

Ross Lee Finney
Violin part edited by
Gilbert Ross

Violin

Piano

Slow

Rosin the Bow

ppp

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I.S.A.M. MATTERS

Thirty-two in Twenty-one. As I.S.A.M. began its twenty-first year, I.S.A.M. Monograph No. 32 rolled off the press. It's titled *Elliott Carter: In Conversation with Enzo Restagno for Settembre Musica 1989*. Restagno is an Italian music historian, critic, and dynamic impresario of new-music festivals--especially the annual Settembre Musica festival in Turin. In 1989, that centered on Elliott Carter and his music, and, as a kind of come-on for festival visitors, Restagno published a substantial book titled simply *Carter*. Its lead piece was a long series of conversations that the composer and the critic had had, in New York, the previous spring--conversations of unusual depth and intellectual penetration. The new I.S.A.M. monograph publishes them for the first time in English, in a graceful translation by Katherine Silberblatt Wolfthal.

Gann Doubles Up with Lectures. Senior Research Fellow at I.S.A.M. this semester is Kyle Gann, who is both a composer and the feisty new-music critic of *The Village Voice*. His split personality --or, better, double perspective--was put to good use in a pair of public lectures he delivered for us recently, **New Music Inside and Out**, the first lecture titled "Outside: How to Criticize Composing," the second "Inside: Great Ideas in Music of the '90s."

On Deck . . . We Hope! Our fingers are crossed, hoping that New York's fiscal mess will not force a cancellation of the seminar planned by next semester's I.S.A.M. Senior Research Fellow. He is **Horace Clarence Boyer**, of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst; a longtime gospel-music practitioner and scholar, he plans a seminar on **Black Gospel Music: History, Development, and Influences**, to be tied in with a gospel-music festival co-sponsored by Brooklyn College's Department of Africana Studies, the Wolfe Institute for the Humanities, and the Conservatory of Music.

Welcome Visitors. I.S.A.M. was treated late last winter to a visit by two prominent East European music scholars, Givani Mikhailov and Boris Avramets. Both are exceptionally knowledgeable about, and involved in, American music. Professor Mikhailov, now head of the Department for World Music Culture Studies in the Moscow State Conservatory, pursued American-music studies, and directed them, during many years when they were totally unsupported by the Soviet officialdom; he is the leading scholar of American music in Russia. Professor Avramets, who teaches in the Latvian Music Academy and the Latvian University, is busy helping to prepare a Festival of American Culture, to take place in Riga next year. Hats off, gentlemen (and women), to two fellow-workers in our musical vineyards!



Elliott Carter, Vivian Perlis, H. Wiley Hitchcock, and John Kirkpatrick at the Charles Ives Centennial Festival-Conference, October 1974, New York

IVESIANA

A Loss. The preeminent performer, editor, and scholar of the music of Charles Ives, **John Kirkpatrick**, died peacefully at his home in Ithaca, New York, on Friday, 8 November, after a brief illness. He was 86. An early highlight of his career as an Ivesian was his presentation in 1939 at Town Hall, New York, of the first complete public performance of Ives's massive Piano Sonata No. 2 ("Concord, Mass., 1840-1860"); his last finished project was a critical edition of the "Concord" Sonata's earliest state--"not as I played it," he said, "but as I wish I had played it." In press, planned for publication in 1992, is his edition of *Forty Early Songs* by Ives, previously unpublished. A deeply religious man, Kirkpatrick thrilled to Ives's spirituality. He closed a 1963 talk, "What Music Meant to Charles Ives," by quoting Ives: "Music is one of the many ways God has of beating in on man . . . -- an inner something, a spiritual storm. . . ." Earlier he had cited Ives on his never-completed Universe Symphony: ". . . Of life and death, and future life -- the only known is the unknown, the only hope for humanity is the unseen Spirit." These words of Ives bespoke, in part, John Kirkpatrick's own convictions.



Two new critical editions of major works by Ives, sponsored by the Charles Ives Society, are nearing publication. Both are movements from Ives's four-movement symphony *Holidays*. (Or non-symphony; he wrote of it: "These four pieces together were [first] called a symphony, [but] later just a set of pieces, because I was getting somewhat tired of hearing the lily boys say, 'This is a symphony?--Mercy!--Where is the first theme of 12 measures in C major? . . . --the nice German recipe, etc. . . . --to hell with it! --Symphony = 'with sounds' = my Symphony!") Peer-Southern will publish (for the first time) *Thanksgiving or Forefathers' Day* in an edition by **Jonathan Elkus**; a brand-new edition by **Wayne Shirley** of *The Fourth of July* will appear from G. Schirmer.

Elkus is also editor of a new critical edition of the **Robert Browning Overture** of Ives, recently performed for the first time in New York by the stellar American Composers Orchestra, fifteen years old and still growing.

William Osborne, completing his edition of Ives's organ works, reports with glee: "Some student summer drones [at the Yale Music Library] were assigned the task of sorting through boxes of student papers from the early years of the century and, although looking for material by Sessions and the like, unearthed a few pre-1900 items, including a "new" final version of Ives's E-flat organ fugue. A real treasure, since it answers some nagging questions posed by the previously known version." (That's the fugue Ives titled *Organ Fugue for Prof. H. W. Parker July '97* and wrote above its first measures, "a stupid fugue and a stupid subject"!)

ILLINOIS

New from

Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History

Edited by Stephen Blum, Philip V. Bohlman, and Daniel M. Neuman

"A unique and major contribution to the continuing emergence of historical consciousness and reflexive inquiry in ethnomusicology." — Charlotte J. Frisbie, editor of *Explorations In Ethnomusicology*. \$34.95

That Half-Barbaric Twang The Banjo in American Popular Culture

Karen Linn

"Exemplifies the movement of American cultural history in a most telling way, drawing its evidence from traditional sources, popular fiction, theatrical trade papers, and advertisements. Will fascinate banjo fans, and holds great interest for folk music, popular music and culture, American studies, black studies, and American music generally." — Dena J. Epstein, author of *Sinful Tunes and Spirituals*. Illus. \$29.95

Nowhere in America

The Big Rock Candy Mountain and Other Comic Utopias

Hal Rammel

Rammel traces the imagery of the familiar song "The Big Rock Candy Mountain" through the literature and folklore of the Land of Cockaigne, Schlaraffenland, the world turned upside down, and other "lands of nowhere," back to its earliest appearances in Greek Attic comedy. "A stroll through the literature of nonsense theme by theme. It is a popular book in the best sense, inviting the reader to share the pleasure that the author has experienced." — Roger D. Abrahams, author of *Stories from Black Traditions in the New World*. Illus. \$25.95

For Democracy, Workers, and God

Labor Song-Poems and Labor Protest, 1865-95

Clark D. Halker

Musician, songwriter, and historian Clark D. Halker examines song-poems as both musical artifacts and historical documents that offer unique insights into the labor movement and labor protest in the Gilded Age. He suggests the long-term decline of the song-poem was due to the rise of popular culture and to changes in working-class culture and consciousness that were brought about by managerial and technological revolutions. \$29.95

BOOK NOOK I

HURLY-BURLEIGH

Anne Key Simpson's *Hard Trials: the Life and Music of Harry T. Burleigh* (Scarecrow Press; \$49.50) is the first full-length biography of the celebrated African-American composer of more than 250 vocal compositions and choral arranger of some 180 spirituals. Burleigh was the first black composer to win critical acclaim for his art songs, though his spiritual arrangements are considered his most important contribution.

In his day, Burleigh was equally well known as a singer. In 1894 he became the first black soloist at the prominent St. George's Protestant Episcopal Church in New York; he remained there for fifty-two years. In 1900 he also began a quarter-century's tenure at the wealthy Temple Emanu-El, as its first black soloist. He toured extensively in the United States and Europe.

Simpson's attempt to chronicle Burleigh's life (in Part One of her book) and works (Part Two) is laudable in many ways. She documents the life using archival sources and interviews as well as secondary sources, and she includes numerous photographs and programs of interest. Her book's most valuable contribution is its extensive catalogue of Burleigh's music. For each work she provides complete bibliographical information, citing also libraries where score and/or manuscript can be found, and a well-documented discography.

Simpson misses the mark, however, in her attempts to place Burleigh and his music "in the context of the artistic thought and musical world of his time." The biographical essay is marred by anachronistic language and an outdated frame of reference for the music of African-American composers. For example, Simpson describes Burleigh as "a dignified, courtly gentleman, a stellar representative of his race"; and of spirituals she writes, "Part of the spiritual's charm was its whimsical, sometimes garbled language, a result of the groping black's heartbreaks experienced in a white man's world." The musical analyses in Part Two (which occupies one-third of the book) are unsophisticated, even naive.

Sometimes Simpson's efforts to place Burleigh in a proper historical and cultural context mislead readers, or leave them to interpret her remarks as best they can. Can the prestigious--but *white*--St. George's Church really have been the "first northern church to use spirituals in its services"? And one editorial oversight throws an entire section into confusion: in discussing the evolving American nationalist movement, Simpson mentions Dvorak and his followers as "naturalistic" composers.

Ultimately, though interesting, Simpson's account of Burleigh leaves us convinced that a truly critical study of his life and music is yet to be written.

--Rae Linda Brown
(University of California, Irvine)

BOOK NOOK I (continued)

GOING INTO THE GERSHWINS

The proofs for Deena Rosenberg's *Fascinating Rhythm: The Collaboration of George and Ira Gershwin* (Dutton; \$29.95) promise much. She had access to Ira's personal archives and maintained a relationship of conversations and correspondence with him during his last decade (1974-83). Indeed, her book enjoys a "sanctioned" tone: everywhere, discussion is punctuated with passages from unpublished diaries, letters, and reminiscences of Gershwin family members and friends.

Rosenberg makes best use of this trove of material in tracing Ira from his early efforts at light verse and one-liners for New York newspapers to his emergence as one of America's great lyricists. And she writes authoritatively about the literary and theatrical milieu. Moreover, her comments on the social themes of Ira's song lyrics as America chugs from the post-World War I era into the roaring '20s and depressed '30s are insightful and provocative--the book's best bits.

Rosenberg's discussion of the music, however, is disappointing. She analyzes forty songs from eight shows (and *Rhapsody in Blue!*). But, except for passing remarks on "The Real American Folk Song," "Swanee," and "I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise," her survey begins in 1924, thus dismissing some 125 published early songs. Such a narrow approach perpetuates a "greatest hits" bias and a two-dimensional Gershwin; and it limits discussion to style full-blown rather than one evolving under influences of Berlin, Kern, Cohan, ragtime (a topic barely mentioned), and blues and nascent jazz (not discussed).

The musical analyses are unsophisticated ("songs are miniatures and must not be weighed down with too much analysis"), and the musical examples usually give tunes only ("visualizations of specially selected song moments"). The analytic language is thin and there are many mistakes. Also, having identified certain gestures in Gershwin's music, Rosenberg assigns them specific--and dubious--meanings. Thus, concerning the last line of the refrain of "Shall We Dance" ("Dance whenever you can!"): "The command of the lyric is made stronger and more poignant by following the blue note with the sixth note of the scale . . . which leaps straight down to the tonic with no intervening notes. The implication is that life has severe travails, but we need not be passive receptors."

One hopes the book will sport clear documentation (especially for the new material brought to light) and provide a list of the "close to one thousand" songs Rosenberg states the brothers Gershwin wrote.

--Wayne Schneider
(Brown University)

ILLINOIS

New from



Chicago Soul

Robert Pruter

"An amazing piece of work that reveals just how vital a soul scene there was in the Windy City." — Miles Jordan, *Jazztimes*. "A splendid and essential compendium of information and comment upon the Chicago 'soul' industry, which grew out of the R&B and doo-wop of the late Fifties." — Neil Slaven, *Blues & Rhythm*. *Partially funded by a grant from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, Inc.* Illus. \$39.95

Downhome Blues Lyrics

An Anthology from the Post-World War II Era
SECOND EDITION

Edited by Jeff Todd Titon

"Deserves to find its way into the hands of blues aficionados and students of literature, folklore, music, and Afro-American studies. Titon is among the best writers on the blues, and his choices are informed by his obvious expertise and love of his subject." — Steven C. Tracy, author of *Langston Hughes and the Blues*. Cloth, \$34.95; paper, \$14.95

Pickin' on Peachtree

A History of Country Music in Atlanta, Georgia

Wayne W. Daniel

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BEACH'S "GAELIC" SYMPHONY RE-VIEWED

(The following is extracted, with permission, from an article in the *New York Times* of 27 October 1991.)

The New York Philharmonic's eagerly awaited premiere performance of Dvořák's "New World" Symphony, at Carnegie Hall on 16 December 1893, was an American milestone. The audience burst into applause halfway through, after the Largo. From the podium, Anton Seidl motioned repeatedly toward a box. Finally, a swarthy, bearded man came forward. The name "Dvořák!" swept the hall, and the ovation increased. "With hands trembling with emotion, Dr. Dvořák waves an acknowledgement of his indebtedness to Anton Seidl, to the orchestra, to the audience," the *New York Herald* reported. Of the symphony itself, the *Herald's* critic wrote: "The work is a great one."

The premiere of the "New World" encapsulates a moment, a century ago, when audience and composer were one--a moment long preceding today's marginalization of classical music. America's composers--a concentrated community--took notice of Dvořák's symphony no less than the musical public did. For them, as well, its impact was formidable. Amy Beach's impressive "Gaelic" Symphony, revived in an important, vibrant new recording by the Detroit Symphony under Neeme Järvi (Chandos CHAN 8958), was one result.

Beach enthusiastically adopted Dvořák's technique of weaving vernacular (or vernacular-sounding) tunes into the fabric of a Central European-style symphony. Though later she would appropriate Indian music, for her only symphony Beach opted for source material closer at hand to New Englanders such as herself: a set of old Irish melodies. The resulting "Gaelic" Symphony was completed in early 1896, and first performed the following October by Emil Paur and the Boston Symphony--which repeated it four times during the next two years.

Like the "New World," the "Gaelic" is a four-movement, forty-minute symphony in E minor. Like the "New World," it strives for an American national style. These resemblances are both significant and misleading: Beach goes her own way.

The big first movement successfully meshes the ebb-and-flow of its stormy Gaelic landscape--foaming sea, looming sky--with the dictates of sonata form. Of its three principal themes, two derive from Beach's song "Dark is the Night"; a third is a Gaelic folksong. In place of a scherzo, there is an "Alla Siciliana" whose contrasting sections are variants of a second Gaelic tune. The slow movement superimposes two more Gaelic songs. The finale contains original themes only and, in the composer's words, "tries to express the rough, primitive character of the Celtic people."

Ironically, Beach is often at her best in the outer movements, whose splendid developmental turbulence precludes quotation from her source-book. But this is merely to suggest the presence of a charming yet faded beauty, amid others knowingly constructed and teeming with life. Like her fellow New England symphonists George Chadwick and John Knowles Paine, Beach seizes the genre whole and makes it matter. No European country would ignore a

native symphony as tuneful, skilled, and picturesque; its American neglect betrays the insecurities of a borrowed "high culture" fixated on pedigreed "greatness."

The new recording, incidentally, couples the "Gaelic" Symphony with the First Symphony of Samuel Barber, a work whose sophisticated craftsmanship is undone by its portentous rhetoric and heroic clichés. The Beach symphony, forty years older, is fresher, truer music.

--Joseph Horowitz

REGARDING RECORDINGS I

Still on New World. In the color-coding that is basic to most discussions of American music, William Grant Still gets dubbed an "African-American composer" or even "Dean of African-American composers," placing him in a league with Harry T. Burleigh, Robert Nathaniel Dett, and their successors. While he rightly belongs there, he might also be viewed alongside John Alden Carpenter, Howard Hanson, Edward Burlingame Hill, and others whose music represented an extension of nineteenth-century traditions. *Works of William Grant Still*, a release of New World Records (NW 80399-2), points up both aspects of Still's identity. African-American images and idioms surface throughout, whether traits of the blues as found in the Suite for Violin and Piano (1943), settings of texts by black poets as in *Songs of Separation* (1949), or arrangements of spirituals as in *Here's One* (1941). Yet the music also harks back to continental features of bygone decades. Still's language is unabashedly lush, with broad-sweeping melodies and cascades of extended harmonies. By the 1940s and '50s, when he composed most of the chamber works and songs recorded here, Still had abandoned the modernism of his earlier studies with Edgard Varèse and turned to a more accessible style. The performances by the Boston-based group Videmus are compelling.

--C.J.O.

David and Ginger Hildebrand have put out a novel, admirable recording of music from 18th-century Annapolis in *Over the Hills and Far Away* (Albany TROY042). The disc is intelligently organized by divisions reflecting "The Scottish Vogue," "The Theatre," "The Tuesday Club," "Local Music," "The Tavern," and "The Church," with two to five pieces in each. Extensive and well-documented notes locate the music invitingly in its Chesapeake Bay context. The performances by the versatile Hildebrands (both are singers and players) and assorted others are friendly and fetching. . . . (That little write-up got bumped from the last issue of this Newsletter, for lack of space. Now the Hildebrands, and friends, have released another similar CD, equally fresh and frolicsome. This is *Music of the Charles Carroll Family from 1785 to 1832* (Albany TROY056), with more vocal and instrumental works from post-Revolutionary Annapolis. The Carrolls were a prominent, wealthy Annapolis family and enjoyed music-making; their library and journal records of music they ordered were the sources for this entrancing collection of songs, ballad-opera airs and dances, and keyboard and chamber pieces.)

--H.W.H.

REGARDING RECORDINGS I (continued)

MUSIC FROM FORT SUMTER TO APPOMATTOX

As Charles Hamm has said (in his *Yesterdays*), the Civil War “left a heritage of music that reflects those times in the most vivid way. Indeed, this music was so intimately involved with events of the time that it became part of them.” Hamm’s perception emerges “in the most vivid way” from a splendid new set of recordings: *The Civil War Music Collector’s Edition* (3 CDs or cassettes; Time-Life Music; \$44.97). Intelligently, tastefully, and stylishly produced by the Center for Popular Music (Middle Tennessee State University at Murfreesboro), this collection of Civil War music is an overflowing cornucopia of more than fifty pieces of astonishing diversity--pro-war songs, anti-war songs, rallying songs, songs of heroes and songs of grunts, white shape-note hymns and black spirituals, fiddle tunes, banjo tunes, music for guitars and melodeons, tambourines and bones, minstrel-show walk-arounds, funny songs, heartrending songs, brass-band marches and dances, fife-and-drum tunes, bugle calls, *Home, Sweet Home* and *The Yellow Rose of Texas*, *Old Dan Tucker* and *Beautiful Dreamer* . . . what else?!

The performers are as diverse as the music. They range from the suave professionalism of the Hutchinson Family Singers (of household songs) to the enthusiastic amateurism of the Morning Sun Singers (of shape-note hymns); from the slightly ragged 1st Brigade Band (42 strong, playing period instruments) to the cultured crooning of Doug Green (“Ranger Doug” with Riders in the Sky); from the stylistic perfection and dazzling brio of old-time fiddler James Bryan to the slightly uncertain pianism of Jerry Perkins. For me, the peak performance is that of the Princely Players, a nine-member a cappella group based at Cameron High School in Nashville, swinging their way through the spiritual marching song “Go in the Wilderness,” but there are other memorable moments, too.

Putting all this material into some kind of comprehensible order cannot have been easy. The substantial brochure accompanying the recording mentions “hundreds of artists, scholars and engineers” who collaborated in the project, but the principal producers were Paul F. Wells and Bruce Nemerov, respectively director and archivist/project director of the Middle Tennessee State center. (They both make cameo appearances as performers--on fiddle and guitar, respectively.) They organize the set in six divisions, each headed by a song-title: “In Happy Moments”--America on the Eve of War; “The First Gun is Fired”--Fanning the Flames of War; “Hard Crackers Come Again No More”--Music of the Union Camp; “Richmond Is A Hard Road to Travel”--Music of the Confederate Camp; “When This Cruel War is Over”--The Fighting Drags On; and “O, I’m a Good Old Rebel”--The Musical Legacy of the War. And Charles K. Wolfe (also from Middle Tennessee State and no stranger to readers of this newsletter) does magic tricks of continuity and coherence in his generous, smooth, and informed notes on the music. Artistic control over the product was clearly in the hands of the experts from Murfreesboro; for once, Time-Life got it right!

--H.W.H.

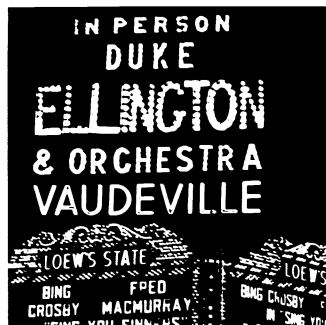
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BEHIND THE BEAT *with Mark Tucker*

Building a library of recorded jazz in the compact-disc era can be daunting. With many old LP reissues long gone from the bins and in their place a bewildering array of newly packaged CDs, the novice jazz collector tends to make a lot of hit-or-miss purchases.

The Blackwell Guide to Recorded Jazz (Basil Blackwell; \$24.95) aims to dispel confusion by providing a selective, annotated list of roughly 125 important jazz recordings, and citing issues of the same material in other formats (CD, LP, cassette). Here's how it works: Say you'd like to get something by Erroll Garner. The *Guide* has one entry for the pianist, recommending the well-known album *Concert by the Sea*, recorded in 1955. A two-page introduction by Barry Kernfeld, the *Guide's* editor, describes the salient features of Garner's style, provides detailed critical commentary on selections (parts of *Autumn Leaves* are "mawkish" and "bombastic," while *Red Top* "shows impeccable taste"), then warns the listener about the fidelity of the album, recorded in "an echoic building that had formerly been a church." Next comes a discography of *Concert by the Sea*, giving first the American CD reissue and its contents, followed by two European CDs, eleven LPs, and two cassettes.

The *Guide's* coverage is broad, spanning seven decades from the Original Dixieland Jazz Band (1917) to Pat Metheny (1987) and including such lesser-known musicians as Billy Banks, Peter Brötzman, and Michael Portal. Together with Kernfeld, six other writers contributed individual chapters, among them James Lincoln Collier and Ekkehard Jost. One subject the *Guide* passes over is the sound quality of the various reissues available. The Columbia Jazz Masterpieces CD of Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue*, for example, is to be avoided; I'd have advised the consumer to hunt long and hard for the original, out-of-print microgroove release. Still, this volume is a worthy idea and joins others from Blackwell (on recorded blues and musical theater).

Rex Redux

The cornetist Rex Stewart (1907-1967) was a rarity: someone who excelled in both playing jazz and writing about it. His literary career took off in the 1960s (some years after his stints with the orchestras of Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington), when he began contributing articles and musical memoirs to *Down Beat*, *Melody Maker*, and other periodicals. (Many of his pieces were collected in *Jazz Masters of the Thirties*, published posthumously in 1972.)

Now, nearly twenty-five years after Stewart's death, Claire P. Gordon has edited his autobiography, *Boy Meets Horn* (University of Michigan Press; \$22.95), titled after one of the cornetist's featured numbers with the Ellington orchestra. Stewart had drafted a fairly complete account of his career until 1948, but it was up to Gordon--a friend who earlier had assisted Stewart with most of his writing projects--to pull together the mass of materials into book form. She has done this skillfully, producing a brand-new collection of vintage Stewart prose, as perceptive, rib-tickling, warm, and wise as ever.

Stewart tells stories with a poet's economy and a comic's sense of timing--qualities absent in some recent jazz autobiographies. No other writer, to my mind, matches Stewart's ability to portray jazz

musicians as vivid, complex, flesh-and-blood human beings. A single sentence, for example, can summon up Jelly Roll Morton with startling immediacy: "Morton was a rather tall, well-built, apricot-colored person with features that reminded me of a Spanish grandee who had become a bit jaded with life." And who but a friend and fellow band-member could get away with describing the Puerto Rican Juan Tizol, trombonist in the Ellington orchestra, as someone "whose pure white countenance made him stand out like a blob of sour cream in the middle of a bowl of black caviar." There's much about music, too, from speculation on why Henderson's band didn't sound better on recordings to reflections on the avant-garde.

It's a pity that Stewart never completed a sequel to this volume, as planned. But, thanks to Claire Gordon, *Boy Meets Horn* is an unexpected gift from one of the jazz world's greatest writers.

Small-Group Duke, Solo Jelly Roll

Two pieces by a Rex Stewart-led band kick off *The Duke's Men: Small Groups, Volume I* (Columbia/Legacy C2K 46995), a set featuring various Ellington units assembled for record dates between 1934 and '38. Nearly all the sessions were supervised by Helen Oakley, a young Canadian jazz enthusiast working for Irving Mills, Ellington's manager. (During this time Oakley also became the first woman to gain prominence as a jazz journalist; she later married the English critic Stanley Dance, and in 1987 came out with *Stormy Monday: The T-Bone Walker Story*.) In notes for this set, Oakley Dance offers a fascinating glimpse of Ellington and his musicians in the studio, collectively working out one piece after another under constant deadline pressure. She also puts a revisionist spin on Mills, stating that he was not the "Great White Father," as some have claimed, but rather a creative, risk-taking businessman greatly respected by his employees. Mills apparently gave Oakley the freedom to experiment with the small-group format, and the results were often magical: inventive arrangements, inspired solos, and harmonious ensemble interplay... *The Blackwell Guide to Recorded Jazz* lists over a dozen reissue sources for Jelly Roll Morton's earliest piano solos, recorded mostly for Gennett in 1923-24. A compilation too new, however, for inclusion in the *Guide* is *Jelly Roll Morton: Volume I: The Pianist and Composer* (Smithsonian RD 043). The performances, selected by Martin Williams, are uniformly superb, showing off Morton's keyboard skills and compositional savvy with equal measure. But don't expect gorgeous digital sound on the CD: surface noise from the old 78s provides plenty of hiss and crackle. (I miss the deft touch of Jack Towers, responsible for remastering so many Smithsonian discs in the past.)

San Marco Shout

If you find yourself in Venice next summer with a sudden yearning for Harlem stride, head for the Gran Caffè Chioggia in St Mark's Square. That's where pianist Riccardo Scivales has been performing in recent years, and though I can't vouch for his keyboard abilities, I can say that he's assembled an impressive folio, *Harlem Stride Piano Solos* (Ekay Music, 233 Katonah Ave., Katonah, NY 10536; \$19.95), containing transcriptions of more than two-dozen pieces by James P. Johnson, Fats Waller, Willie "The Lion" Smith, Donald Lambert, and seven others. The collection includes not just

BEHIND THE BEAT (*continued*)

familiar classics--Johnson's *Carolina Shout* and Waller's *Numb Fumblin'*--but such unusual items as Cliff Jackson's *Crazy Rhythm*, Dick Wellstood's witty send-up of *Jingle Bells*, and the first published version (according to Scivales) of Jesse Pickett's legendary composition *The Dream*, as played by both James P. Johnson and Eubie Blake. The transcriptions feel right under the hands and sound good to the ear. Scivales, a University of Venice graduate who wrote a thesis on stride piano, also provides informative notes on the music and artists. In this young man from Venezia Mestre, the Harlem stride school has found a valuable friend and ally.

FELDMAN: FINALLY FOUND, AND FINE

So you've got this guy Morton Feldman, from the borough of Queens, and from 1970 to 1987 he writes some of the best music anywhere, of any time, and he's relatively unnoticed; and then he ups and dies and within four years of his death his music becomes available in profusion on CDs: eleven or twelve or thirteen recordings; I've lost count. Gives you an eerie feeling, doesn't it? Some jokes are going around now, probably old ones that could have been used with regard to Webern--about how you have to die if you want good performances of your music, good recordings of your music, etc. Like Feldman's own anecdote about Pollock: by dying he wrapped up the whole era of American Abstract Expressionism and walked away with it.

I've been poring over Feldman's writings and scores and recordings for weeks and weeks now, and for me as a young composer it's been one monumental discovery after another. His music has given many of my ideas regarding composition a context in which to dwell: in Feldman's lingo, he's given me a "non-system" with which I can align myself and my music.

So, to the recordings (some of them):

For Samuel Beckett: The San Francisco Contemporary Players, Steven Mosko, conductor (Newport Classics NPD 85506). Probably one of the greatest orchestral pieces written in this half of the century. Varèse told Feldman that "orchestrators are born." Feldman clarifies that for us: "He didn't say composers are born, he used the word orchestrators." Feldman was born an orchestrator; no piece epitomizes this more than *For Samuel Beckett*. The disc is worth getting just for the two times when the relentless interplay of textures subsides, leaving only the strings, exposed, naked; you feel relieved that the torture of the textures is over until you realize that you've dropped into an abyss.

For John Cage: Paul Zukofsky, violin; Marianne Schroeder, piano (Musical Observations CP²101). A nice piece, but it doesn't sound like Zukofsky is playing the violin; it sounds like he's sawing a trumpet in half. If you want to hear what Marianne Schroeder can do with Feldman's music when the conditions are right, get her disc of piano music by him (hat Art CD 6035), flip to *Palais de Mari*, and you'll see what I mean.

FELDMAN (*continued*)

Morton Feldman. Photo: Gene Bagnato

Rothko Chapel: UC Berkeley Chamber Chorus, Philip Brett, director; *Why Patterns?*: the California EAR Unit (New Albion NA 039). *Rothko Chapel*, a luscious, quirky piece for chorus, viola, celesta, and percussion, gets a spirited but imperfect performance, though the lustrous New Albion sheen works well for it. If you are interested in *Why Patterns?* go right to the recording by Eberhard Blum, Nils Vigeland, and Jan Williams (all ex-Feldman cohorts), together with *Crippled Symmetry* (hat Art CD 2-6080).

Triadic Memories: Jean-Luc Fafchamps, piano (Sub Rosa SUBCD 012-35); Roger Woodward, piano (Etcetera KTC 2015); Aki Takashi (ALM ALCD-033); Herbert Henck, piano (Edition Michael F. Bauer MFB 2CD 023-024). That's right, four recordings of *Triadic Memories*, and it's not the *Chopin Ballades*. It's a sprawling, eleven-hundred measure work (not including repeats) in which the "inharmonic" decay of the piano becomes a departing landscape. I've heard only the first two recordings; of the two (I can say this with surety) buy the Fafchamps. He takes great pains in negotiating the subtly difficult rhythms and in listening to how the overtones dance. His tempo feels right, his touch is right, his phrasing is right, and, since the piece calls for the sostenuto pedal to be depressed nearly all of the time, the great resonance of his Bösendorfer piano is welcome. Woodward's performance, though, is the most irreverent rendition of *any* piece I have ever heard. He pays no attention to Feldman's rhythm (even taking interpretive nuances into consideration, he plays only about one of every four measures acceptably). His tempo is so fast that any subtlety of resonance seems to emerge only through a stroke of luck. How come, if his tempo is three times faster than Fafchamps', his performance is thirteen minutes *longer*? Well, as a matter of whim, he decided that measures to be repeated *once* may be repeated two or three, or even ten times. Feldman said, "Sound is very much like people. And if you push it, it pushes you back." Woodward pushes sound around.

--Jason Stanyek

BOOK NOOK II

DUELING BANJOS, DOWN THE YEARS

Karen Linn's insightful book *That Half-Barbaric Twang: The Banjo in American Popular Culture* (University of Illinois Press; \$29.95) is a kind of semiotic study of the banjo. It takes the instrument as a sign and interprets the meanings of that sign in four different ideas of the banjo that "overlap and intertwine" in American popular culture from the 1880s through the 1960s. Linn claims that, because of the "romanticized blackness" of the early history of the banjo, including its African origins, it began life in the American popular mind attached to the sentimental side of our culture, which valued "pastoralism, primitivism or antimodernism, emotionalism and nostalgia." Her thesis is that, throughout its varied life, the banjo has been used to express sentimental values that are "ambivalently complementary" to official values.

In her first chapter, "The 'Elevation' of the Banjo in the Late Nineteenth Century," Linn tells the story of those banjo players and makers who wanted to make the instrument conform to "official" Victorian culture. She details how this movement partially succeeded but was undermined by the underlying persistence of the sentimental idea of the banjo as something more primitive, natural, and wild, symbolizing a rejection of the restraints of the "official" culture.

In "The Southern Black Banjo," Linn explores the myth of the Old South with its stereotypes of aristocratic white plantation owners and happy black slaves, showing that the Southern black banjo player became a central symbol of this myth. She suggests that the myth and its black banjo-player symbol provided an imaginative escape from the "official" capitalist-bourgeois culture.

"The Modernization of the Banjo in the Early Twentieth Century" describes the development of the new four-string, resonated forms of the banjo which became an established feature of the jazz band, an association which conferred modernity on the banjo. The tenor banjo became a symbol of the jazz age and its encouragement of the loosening of social restraint, so that once again the banjo stood in opposition to "official" culture.

Linn's fourth chapter, "The Southern White Banjo," describes how the banjo came to be associated with a sentimental idea of the "otherness" of Appalachian mountain life, creating yet another image of the banjo antagonistic to officially progressive, technological, capitalist society. This leads to interesting discussions of the banjo in early country music, bluegrass, and the folk-music revival, all involving a sentimental longing for the past.

Linn makes effective use of analyses by cultural historians as backdrop for her arguments about the banjo, which are well supported by visual and textual materials ferreted out from a variety of sources, including popular literature, advertisements, popular magazines, films, music journals, sheet-music covers, song lyrics, performance practices, and instrument construction and decoration. The banjo is a rich subject for cultural investigation, and Linn's

excellent book is a model of this kind of study, reminding us that music is intimately intertwined with other aspects of culture.

--Robert B. Winans
(Gettysburg College)

LOWELL MASON ABROAD

After a long period of benign neglect, scholars of American music are finally cultivating the fertile ground of the mid-nineteenth century. Plow and harrow in hand, Michael Broyles is at the very head of this group. Of two recent book-length studies on the period by him, his *A Yankee Musician in Europe: The 1837 Journals of Lowell Mason* (University of Rochester Press; \$49.95) is the first to be published. (The other, in production at Yale University, is *From Psalmody to Symphony: The Origins of Musical Idealism in America*.)

Broyles has taken a straightforward approach to editing the journals kept by Mason during a six-month trip through England, Germany, Switzerland, and France. He has transcribed them carefully, added elucidatory footnotes, fronted them with an intelligent introductory essay, and backed them with supporting appendices and an index. What emerges is sometimes surprising.

For example, Mason heard a lot of music during his tour and was ever ready to voice critiques, comparisons, and confidences in his diary. One surprise is that, in his view, contemporaneous standards of American musical performance, especially choral, do not pale in the face of European--and this the judgment of a man often thought to have led in fostering an American sense of insufficiency in matters musical.

On the other hand, the journals generally confirm prior assumptions about Mason the person: thorough, highly energetic, arrogant, loyal, God-fearing, family-loving, rather dull, and completely humorless. The composite is of a compelling figure seeking out meanings for his life and music without acknowledging the new secular age then a-birthing. Folk and popular music he believed "calculated to disgust any man of taste"; serendipitous happenings were always "God's Providence"; time away from home was counted in Sundays. One understands better the passions he engendered pro and con among the "Boston Classicists" that followed him: creeds were at friction.

My quibbles with the book are minor, and mainly centered on the index. Journals are generally only as useful as their indexes. This one's is better than many, but there are mistakes and, given the value of Mason's diary as social history, index entries are regrettably absent in such areas as personal finances, health and hygiene (important to Mason), foodways, transportation, entrepreneurship, and class consciousness. But small beans, these. A most welcome publication of an important primary source, anchored by an insightful, illuminating essay by an excellent scholar.

--Dale Cockrell
(College of William and Mary)

BOOK NOOK II (continued)

Dover does it again. To Dover publications we owe votes of thanks for their many inexpensive, well printed, and sturdy paperback scores. In American music, they have concentrated on nineteenth- and turn-of-the-century collections, from *The Civil War Songbook* (ed. Richard Crawford) and *Stephen Foster Song Book* (ed. Richard Jackson) to "*The St. Louis Blues*" and *Other Song Hits of 1914* (ed. Sandy Marrone). Most recently, they have published a collection of forty-two *American Art Songs of the Turn of the Century* (\$11.95), compiled by Paul Sperry (whose championing of American music was recognized not long ago by election to the presidency of the American Music Center). Twenty-two composers are represented, and they appear in the volume democratically, in alphabetical order from Frederic Ayres to Charles Gilbert Spross. In a brief introduction, Sperry reminds us that at the turn of the century "there was no great difference between 'art songs' and popular songs," and that most American songs were written to be performed at home--which is perhaps where most of those he includes would be most comfortable. So try them out--especially such forgotten gems as George Chadwick's *Adversity*, Amy Beach's *Three Browning Songs*, and Henry F. Gilbert's *The Owl*. And by no means skip over the cute homilies of Carrie Jacobs-Bond's *Half-Minute Songs*, here reproduced in facsimile from the charming original edition of 1911. . . . Sperry, a well-known tenor, has recorded many of the songs in the Dover collection (plus others), with his longtime accompanist Irma Vallecillo, on a CD titled *Songs of an Innocent Age* (Albany TROY034). For the record (so to speak), his reading of Jacobs-Bond's twelve miniatures (mostly occupying but a single line of score) clocks in at 2:54 and thus the *Half-Minute Songs* might be retitled *Quarter-Minute Songs*. . . . Sperry offers more substantial and serious fare on another Albany CD (TROY043): *Paul Sperry Sings Romantic American Songs* (and, again, Vallecillo plays for him). The songs number thirty-seven; whether by chance or design, three composers get five songs apiece (Paul Bowles, Virgil Thomson, and Theodore Chanler) and two eleven each--Arthur Farwell (all eleven to poems by Emily Dickinson) and Richard Hundley (a singer's composer if there ever was one). The recording is notable for its unhackneyed contents and splendid musicianship.

And Gratis, Too. Few composers have as loyal a bunch of friends as the late Alec Wilder (1907-1980). They meet annually in fellowship and song; they publish a newsletter; they help the Eastman School of Music in maintaining and enlarging an Alec Wilder archive; and recently they were behind the publication of a neat and tidy, helpful and generous little book, *Alec Wilder: An Introduction to the Man and His Music* (vi, 95 pp.; Margun Music, Inc.). Wilder's friends Gunther Schuller, Loonis McGlohon, and Robert Levy introduce the collection with "A Short Biography." Judith Bell (of the Richmond Organization, along with Margun the chief publishers of Wilder's music) dresses a complete "List of Works" and a "Discography." There are friendly essays by Whitney Balliett, McCandlish Phillips, Marian McPartland, and others; selected letters from Wilder's *Letters I Never Mailed: Clues to a Life* plus two previously unpublished ones (to Schuller) that he did mail; and little bonuses of various sorts--prose, poetry, photographs. Also, it's free!--from Margun Music, Inc., 167 Dudley Road, Newton Centre, MA 02159.

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COUNTRY AND GOSPEL NOTES by Charles Wolfe (Middle Tennessee State University)

During the last two decades, many important pioneers of pre-World War II country music have passed on. Some died without really telling their stories, but many were interviewed, and through the 1970s and '80s an impressive amount of information from these interviews appeared in a small circle of magazines and journals. Many of these are not widely available in libraries, and I am not sure that all are available on microfilm. This can be problematic for younger scholars of early country music (or what is often called "old-time music"); a study may be rendered almost useless because its author did not know about this body of literature, or did not have access to it. Recently a number of these periodicals have either terminated or reached milestones of one sort or another, and it seems an appropriate time to survey the field of past and present journal outlets for serious research in early country music.

One of the most respected journals was *JEMF Quarterly*, which began in 1965 as a newsletter published by folklorists at UCLA and their students. (The name referred to the Australian record collector John Edwards, whose collection was the basis for the John Edward Memorial Foundation, the parent organization of the *Quarterly*.) The newsletter soon became a thick journal full of interview transcripts, discographies, historical graphics, biographical sketches, song histories, and reviews; over the years, some seventy-eight issues appeared, in twenty-one volumes. The chief editor was the distinguished scholar Norm Cohen, and most of the major figures in country-music research published in its pages. In the last few years, after the foundation moved to Chapel Hill, the *Quarterly* was taken over by the Center for Popular Music at Middle Tennessee State University. From there the final issue of *JEMFQ* was recently published (and from there its successor, *American Vernacular Music*, will emerge next year.) Though *JEMFQ* ran occasional pieces on ethnic music, modern country, and even rock, most of its best work focused on pre-War country music and related traditional music.

Two other periodicals ran parallel to *JEMFQ*. One was the British *Old Time Music*, which began in 1971 and saw some forty-five issues. (Since no issue has appeared for two years, its present status is uncertain). Edited by a leading discographer, Tony Russell, *OTM* had fewer articles per issue than *JEMFQ* but did a better job with design, layout, and reproduction of old photos. Its thrust was biographical and discographical, and it seldom included song histories or material outside of early country music. Even more narrowly defined is *The Devil's Box*, a quarterly that recently celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary and is still going strong. Though published by the Tennessee Folklore Society, its geographic focus is more than statewide. Its subject is fiddling and fiddle music, and its pages have a huge amount of history and information. The tone is informal, and readers conduct a lively interchange about issues and topics in fiddling. Recent issues, for instance, have included articles on tunes such as "Marmaduke's Hornpipe" and "Grey Eagle," portraits of older fiddlers, record reviews (including many releases sold by the artists themselves), tune transcriptions and tablatures,

and listings of upcoming contests.

Another well-known outlet for research on all forms of country music is the Country Music Foundation's *Journal of Country Music*. Started about 1970, *JCM* began life as an austere little lithographed affair with few graphics and tiny type; after several changes of editor and format, it has emerged as a handsome, almost elegant product that is aimed at a general more than an academic readership. Almost every issue contains at least one or two pieces of solid scholarship (most recently, a comprehensive Flatt and Scruggs discography by Neil Rosenberg), if also dated feature articles by country-music journalists. Perhaps *JCM*'s best feature is its superb book-review section--about the only place where books about such people as Barbara Mandrell and Ronnie Milsap will get a serious hearing.

Bluegrass Unlimited, now past its twenty-fifth year, is the definitive monthly of bluegrass music. Its publisher Pete Kuykendall also recognizes the importance of the *roots* of bluegrass, and in the last five years has accepted a number of historical pieces on pre-War country music in general, helping to fill the gap created by the demise of *JEMFQ* and the torpidity of *OTM*.

Three new publications have sought to gain credibility as outlets for country-music scholarship. The only one affiliated with a university is *Old Time Country*, issued by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi. This quarterly began as the "Jimmie Rodgers Newsletter" but in the last two years or so has acquired a new format and a scope that reaches beyond Rodgers's life to all pre-war country music. A recent issue contains pieces on Carolina Cotton (a Hollywood singing cowgirl who once worked with Bob Wills), Pee Wee King, and the seventh annual Country Music Conference held in Meridian, Mississippi. Edited by W. K. McNeil, a recognized song scholar and historian, *Old Time Country* seeks to mix scholarly and pop articles, tilting a bit toward the former. *The Old Time Herald* is a slick, handsome quarterly devoted not only to the history of old-time music but to its current status as a living art. Many columns are aimed at musicians and fans, as well as a large record review section. Published in North Carolina, the magazine has tended to overemphasize musicians from the southeastern Appalachian area, but in its three years it has published some important new research as well as discussions about "issues in old-time music."

The third of these new periodicals began only in 1991 and appears bimonthly. *The Journal of the American Academy for the Preservation of Old-Time Country Music* (known in short as *The Journal*) is an offshoot of *Country Music*, the largest and most venerable commercial magazine on modern country. Among the huge readership of *Country Music* were many people who wanted stories on earlier performers, and to answer their needs editor Russell Bernard began *The Journal*. Though its articles eschew footnotes and lengthy discographies, senior editor Rich Kienzle checks each for accuracy and welcomes fresh research. Issue Number 3, for instance, included a piece on the 1950s honky-tonk

COUNTRY AND GOSPEL (continued)

singer Webb Pierce, an account of Texas singer Charlene Arthur, and a piece about 1920s recordings in Atlanta. Though defining "old-time country music" more broadly than any publication before it, *The Journal* also appears to be headed toward amassing a body of significant research on early country.

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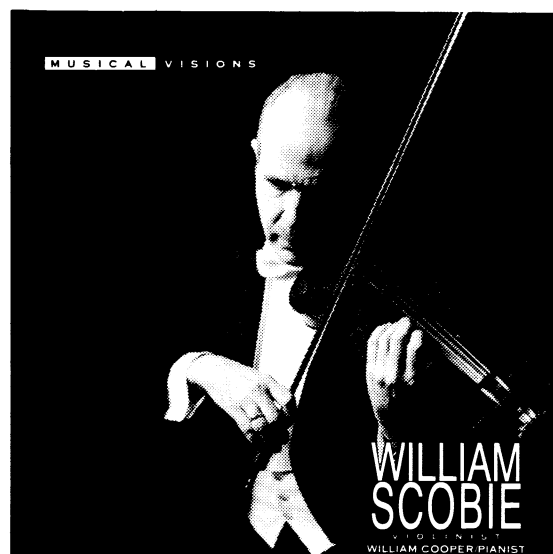
Information about subscriptions, back issues, or contributions: *JEMFQ* back issues available from The Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, TN 37132 (microfilms available through University Microfilms, Ann Arbor). *Old Time Music* information from the editor at 22 Cranburne Road, London N10 2BT, England (certain back issues available). *The Devil's Box* subscriptions (\$11 per year) are from Bill Harrison, 305 Stella Drive, Madison, AL 35758; editorial inquiries and back-issue information from Steve Davis, 1524 Washington, Emporia, KS 66801. For the *Journal of Country Music*, direct inquiries to the Country Music Foundation, 4 Music Square East, Nashville, TN 37203-9891; current rates are \$15 (individuals), \$25 (libraries). *Bluegrass Unlimited* is \$20 a year from Box 111, Broad Run, VA 22014. *Old Time Country* is \$10 a year from the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University, MS 38677. *The Old Time Herald* is \$15 a year from 1812 House Avenue, Durham, NC 27707. *The Journal*... comes from Silver Eagle Publishers, 329 Riverside Avenue, Westport, CT 06880, for \$15.98 (Academy membership).

NEWS OF THE NEW

Here comes a new American-music research periodical: *The American Music Research Center Journal*. Edited by William Kearns, this yearbook emanates from the American Music Research Center of the College of Music at the University of Colorado at Boulder. That center was the creation of Sister Mary Dominic Ray at Dominican College in San Rafael, California; it was transferred to Boulder almost two years ago. Sparked by Kearns (former editor of the *Sonneck Society Bulletin*) as director, and Karl Kroeger (frequent writer on American-music topics and principal editor of the *Complete Works of William Billings*) as archivist, the AMRC has taken on new vitality and a broader range of activities. Volume 1 (1991) of *TAMRCJ* is mainly valuable for its reflection of that development, with reports of a symposium on the center's opening, a doctoral seminar directed by Kroeger, and special collections of the center; it also includes essays by Constance Primus, Deane Root, and Thurston Dox. Subscriptions are \$10/year; address inquiries to William Kearns, Director, AMRC, Campus Box 301, College of Music, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309.

And here comes a first publication: *Five Songs* by Ruth Crawford (dating from 1929, thus prior to her becoming Ruth Crawford Seeger), edited by Judith Tick and published elegantly by C. F. Peters. All five songs are to poems by Carl Sandburg, a friend of Crawford's in her Chicago years, and the music of all of them shares Sandburg's ever-surprising mix of burliness and poetic sensibility. A major new addition to the American modernists' canon! (An enigmatic reference in the Editorial Note to "the catalogue" refers not to a Crawford catalogue--nonexistent--but to a checklist of her works in the Music Division of the Library of Congress.)

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ROSS ON FINNEY (*continued*)

the Smith College Music Archives (a series of early-music publications) and another publishing enterprise (for new music) called the Valley Music Press; he sang publicly, including the tenor solo part in his *Bleheris* for tenor, contralto, and orchestra . . .

. . . and he was heavily involved in a do-it-yourself recording enterprise. In the 1930s, when the contemporary-music recording business was still in its infancy, performers were showing interest in amateur recording projects. A few of us at Smith, led by Finney and John Duke, persuaded the college to invest in some recording equipment for the music department. We were all strictly amateurs in the field, and it was soon evident that we didn't know a damn thing about it. When the equipment was delivered from the Fairchild Corporation, it was as heavy as lead and awkward to handle. We had trouble finding a suitable location for it but finally occupied an unused storage room, not much larger than a medium-sized closet, in the music building. We limped along for a year or two without perceptible success, and the project finally suffered a merciful demise. Later, after Ross and I had transferred to the University of Michigan, he did better: he set about finding money for the purchase of high-quality, modern electronic equipment and the establishment of an electronic-music studio. That resource eventually became a valuable asset to Ross himself and to other composers on the School of Music faculty.

In the early 1940s, Gertrude and I acquired a modest cottage on Cape Pogue, Chappaquiddick Island, overlooking Vineyard Sound. Cape Pogue is a small area of sand, beach grass, bayberry and cranberry bogs, and acres of rolling moors. It stands in lonely isolation, open to wind and sea. Fogs often enshroud it and cast an aura of mystery over the moors.

We soon proposed that the Finneys drop down from Northampton and join us for a weekend. They came and were promptly captivated by the cape. Wandering the moors and the beaches, they came upon a slightly dilapidated, unoccupied cottage nestled in a small sand dune adjacent to the beach. Inquiries produced a real-estate agent, and a deal was cut on the spot. That weekend led to more than twenty years of on-and-off, often overlapping visits to the cape by the Finneys and the Rosses—and to the cementing of our already solid friendship.

The Finney cottage promised the solitude and freedom from distraction that any composer must have. With the help of his two sons and a little professional guidance, Ross set about making the place habitable and, by partitioning off a small section of the garage, constructed a miniature studio for himself. He composes most comfortably with a piano at his elbow; on Chappaquiddick, he was faced with the problem of finding a substitute for one, since the lack of passable roads and the persistently high humidity precluded bringing in a piano. An ordinary commercial electronic keyboard, of the sort often used by touring pianists for warmups, was not possible—the cottage lacked electricity—but Ross finally rigged up a battery-powered electronic keyboard. He seemed poised on the brink of a highly productive period. But it didn't work out. Nothing happened. The creative juices quit. The culprit turned out to be the cape's incessant winds. Ross finally bowed to the inevitable, abandoned the little studio, never again attempted to compose under the implacable resistance of Cape Pogue's natural forces, and in due course the Finneys sold their property. (It's still untenanted.)

I left Smith College in 1943 to accept a post at the University of Michigan's School of Music. Soon after my arrival I was able to plant in the dean's mind the idea of trying to attract Ross Finney to Ann Arbor. These were the war years, however, and it was sometime before the university was able to consider making Ross an offer of an appointment, as Professor of Composition. I argued that that title would recognize only half of Ross's strength and potential value to the university—that of teacher. I argued that his eminence as a composer should also be recognized—as Professor of Composition *and* Composer-in-Residence. This was approved, and Ross accepted the offer.

I had also proposed that the university establish a string quartet-in-residence, an ensemble of professional stature with special dedication to contemporary music, especially American. As a cognate proposal I suggested that the university commission a series of chamber compositions, one a year. Both projects were eventually approved: the Stanley Quartet—named after the university's first professor of music—was founded in 1949 and was active until 1972, and the commissioning project resulted in commissions of fourteen works, ten by American composers.

The members of the Stanley Quartet were genuinely enthusiastic about contemporary music, and they warmly welcomed Ross Finney's arrival on campus. The players were eager to attack his Fourth Quartet, recently introduced by the Kroll Quartet, and with it they ushered in a long series of performances of music by Finney involving string instruments; these included five quartets, *Slow Piece* for string orchestra, a duo for violin and piano, two violin sonatas, a viola sonata, a cello sonata, and a violin concerto. At the first rehearsal of the Fourth Quartet, the players nearly jumped out of their chairs at the sheer vitality and driving energy of the opening movement. The other movements reaffirmed the music's emotional power and inner intensity. The work's closing measures—with their mixture of major and minor, of C and C# (sometimes juxtaposed, sometimes one atop the other), and of ascending broken thirds which fall away into diatonic progressions only to rise again—were achingly moving. I still, nearly forty years later, find those final bars among the most beautiful that Ross has ever conceived.

The Stanley Quartet performed Finney's quartets nos. 5 through 8 as each came from the copyists's desk. They happily accepted the dedication of the Fifth and Seventh; they performed the latter in Brazil (and elsewhere); they recorded the Sixth. Ross conceived the idea of composing a sonata for each member of the quartet, matching his music to each player. Each of these beautiful works, dating from the early Fifties, was presented as the ink dried: the Cello Sonata No. 2 (1950), written for Oliver Edel; the Violin Sonata No. 2 (1951), for Gilbert Ross; the Viola Sonata No. 2 (1953), for Robert Courte; and the Violin Sonata No. 3 (1955), for Emil Raab. All were composed when Ross was enjoying a period of high productivity, particularly in chamber music. His musical ideas bubbled to the surface easily, free of prodding or of the torment that often gnaws at a composer. He was fast approaching the height of his creative powers. From this period also dates his superb Piano Quintet No. 1, first performed by the Stanley Quartet with Marion Owen, pianist (subsequently recorded with Beveridge Webster).

ROSS ON FINNEY (*continued*)

Ross has always displayed a wonderful command of instrumental textures, timbres, and sonorities. Yet he has not at all times been confident that he can achieve the soloistic brilliance he seeks. I recall a meeting in my studio when he had nearly finished composing the *Fantasy in Two Movements for Solo Violin*, commissioned by Yehudi Menuhin for performance at the 1958 World's Fair in Brussels. Ross could not conceive of turning over to the celebrated violinist a work that ended with a thud. The *Fantasy's* conclusion hardly ended that way, but Ross was not convinced and wanted my opinion. Spreading the score on top of the piano, we went to work, both tossing ideas into the pot but discarding one after the other. Two hours later, though, Ross had found what he wanted, and the conclusion of the *Fantasy* now stands as a wonderfully realized tour de force of violinistic sonorities.

In its entirety, the *Fantasy* is a monumental exploration of the violin's technical and expressive resources. Although the performer is confronted at every turn by a multiplicity of technical obstacles, the work is by no means simply a compendium of knotty instrumental problems. It is rather a composition of immense emotional power. Its eloquence is the complete opposite of the humor and sentiment of *Fiddle-Doodle-ad*. In the *Fantasy*, the player must rise above the intimidations of the score and cut his way through its thorny thickets if he is to join the company of true virtuosos.

Ross Finney is my best friend—not because he is a member of prestigious institutes and academies and has been the recipient of a Pulitzer fellowship, two Guggenheim fellowships, and a Distinguished Faculty Achievement Award from the University of Michigan, and not because he is a noted composer, nor even because his music has brought me countless satisfactions through the greater part of my life. Ross is my best friend because he is a generous, warm-hearted human being who possesses the rare combination of qualities that engenders the highest esteem and affection.

* * *

I.S.A.M. Newsletter, Vol. XXI, No. 1 / ISSN: 0145-8396

Editor: H. Wiley Hitchcock

Assistant Editor: K. Robert Schwarz

Contributing Editor: Carol J. Oja

Typesetter (via Aldus PageMaker): K. Robert Schwarz

Production assistants: Kathleen Mason Krotman, Nancy Pardo, Kevin Parks

The *I.S.A.M. Newsletter* is published in November and May. Copyright © 1991 by the Institute for Studies in American Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, Brooklyn, NY 11210. Tel: 718/780-5655. Fax: 718/951-6140.

REGARDING RECORDINGS II

BOLCOM AND MORRIS AT ASPEN

That's the subtitle of a new CD (*Let's Do It*; Omega OCD 3004) on which Joan Morris and William Bolcom, recorded live at the Aspen Festival on 22 July 1989, romp through eighteen American popular songs (and Bolcom plays two piano solos). The songs are marvelously varied ("From Rodgers to Moross, from Harry von Tilzer to Hank Williams," writes Morris in her compellingly readable and informative notes). Listening through them, you laugh a little, cry a little, thrill a little, shiver some: the *presence* of the two artists is extraordinary, due probably to their live-concert vitality and spontaneity, in response to a warmly appreciative audience. One recalls Andrew Porter's encomiums in *The New Yorker* of 21 March 1977:

Joan Morris is just about my favorite American singer--the one whose records I play and play and play again. . . . she has the true lieder singer's genius for creating scene, character, and emotion with small, vivid, perfectly scaled strokes. . . . Mr. Bolcom, with his rare command of rhythm, of textures, and of wide dynamics that support yet never drown the singer, is her ideal partner; his playing is at once witty, buoyant, and poetic.

That applies--and in spades!--to the new album (the fourteenth recorded by the Morris-Bolcom team). Putting it in a critical nutshell: "Hear, hear!" (And take that in every sense!)

Each more melodious note I hear
Brings this reproach to me,
That I alone afford the ear,
Who would the music be.

--Henry Thoreau

What? You haven't heard any music by Emerson Whithorne?? Well, neither had we, until there arrived a recent CD of piano works, brilliantly played by John Kozar--Volume 3 in a series titled *American Piano Music* (Preamble PRCD 1786; distributed by Albany Records). (Vols. 1 and 2 are yet to arrive.) A Middle Westerner, Whithorne (1884-1958) may be considered together with such composers as Charles Griffes and John Alden Carpenter as a highly trained, Europeanized, post-Romantic American composer--not quite as rarefied, perhaps, as the former, and more versatile, it would seem, than the latter. Kozar takes us through ten compositions from 1907 (the Lisztian *Valse de concert*, Op. 9) to 1937 (*El camino real*, Op. 52, a suite of three California tone-pictures), including the set of five *New York Days and Nights* (Op. 40; 1923) which was Whithorne's best-known work during his lifetime, as well as *The Aeroplane* (Op. 38), a virtuosic example of "machine music" prefiguring by about a year Antheil's *Airplane Sonata* (1921). Judging from this recording, Whithorne is due for a revival.

--H.W.H.

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