

NEWSLETTER

INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN AMERICAN MUSIC

Conservatory of Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York - Carol J. Oja, Director

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ONWARD, I.S.A.M. by Carol J. Oja

Times and personnel have changed here at the Institute for Studies in American Music—enough so to warrant a report to our readers. In 1971 a fledgling research center appeared at Brooklyn College under the leadership of H. Wiley Hitchcock, then in his late forties and only two years past the first edition of his now-standard historical survey, *Music in the United States*. The *I.S.A.M. Newsletter* began to be published immediately, growing within a decade from a four-page leaflet to the sixteen-page format familiar today. From its first call to action on behalf of American music, the *Newsletter* resonated with “that vision thing,” conveying an infectious sense of energy and commitment. Today, its early issues give a clear—even startling—view of how nascent American music was then as a field of study. Scholars seemed to know little about one another’s work—so little that the first *Newsletter* included the word “communication” seven times on its front page as a kind of refrain.

But the Good Ship Americana soon set sail, and favorable winds began to blow. The same year that I.S.A.M. opened its doors, Eileen Southern published *The Music of Black Americans*, and the next year the University of Illinois Press began its “Music in American Life” series. In 1975, the Sonneck Society for American Music was founded. Eventually, many resources appeared that we now take for granted, whether New World Records or *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, to name only two.

Thus the scene today for Ray Allen, I.S.A.M.’s new Research Associate, and me is radically different from twenty-two years ago, and the striking change is due in no small part to the gentle but persistent prodding of H. Wiley Hitchcock through his directorship of I.S.A.M. Since Ray and I were graduating from high school when the Institute began operating, we had the good fortune to grow up as scholars in an ever-expanding world of American-music research, and we are keenly aware of the strong record of accomplishments that we have inherited here at I.S.A.M.

Yet major changes at Brooklyn College, both financially and demographically, have brought new challenges for the future. I.S.A.M.’s fundamental mission will remain the same: to encourage publication, research, and performance in all kinds of music from all parts of the Americas. The *I.S.A.M. Newsletter* will continue as a forum for sharing the latest work in our field. But we will also emphasize public programming, which was a major initiative at I.S.A.M. early on, in an effort to capitalize on New York City’s extraordinary musical life, to forge connections with other educa-



William Bolcom, Max Morath, and Joan Morris performing in "Yesterdays: An Afternoon of American Popular Song and Ragtime Piano," a benefit concert for I.S.A.M. (Photo by Randy Feder-Smith; see page 3 for details.)

tional institutions, and to reach out to the city’s many communities. Over the next few years, concerts, symposia, and events for public school children are being planned to make the most of two current strengths at Brooklyn College: its long commitment to contemporary music and its rapidly shifting mix of new immigrants. We are also exploring links with the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the World Music Institute, and other local cultural institutions, as well as opportunities for urban fieldwork. The I.S.A.M. Monograph Series and Senior Research Fellowships—two mainstays in the past—will by necessity become occasional parts of our program. Titles will be published and appointments made as funding permits. (Please note, however, that existing books in the series can still be purchased through I.S.A.M.).

None of these plans would be possible, however, without the support of our readers. You have contributed to us faithfully over the years, and you did so again for our recent benefit concert, as described inside this issue. We thank you for that. America’s musical culture is in a state of almost dizzying flux, and we hope that the *I.S.A.M. Newsletter* will remain a place where its most recent developments can be chronicled and debated. If you are interested in contributing to these pages or discussing new projects in American music, please be sure to contact us.

Traveling the High Way Home

Ralph Stanley and the World of
Traditional Bluegrass Music

JOHN WRIGHT

Wright's portrait of the man he characterizes as "a national treasure" goes beyond oral history. Twenty-three pictures illustrate Stanley's world, and an appendix covers his prolific recording activity, including 45 albums—more than 550 songs and tunes—over a twenty-year period.

"Ralph Stanley has been a crucial force in keeping old traditions alive in contemporary bluegrass. John Wright's work gives many insights into Stanley's music and the vision he brings to it." — Dick Sportswood, a founder of *Bluegrass Unlimited*. Illus. Cl: \$27.50

The Stonemans

An Appalachian Family and the
Music That Shaped Their Lives

IVAN M. TRIBE

The Stonemans is a trip through nearly seventy years of country music history following a single family from their native Blue Ridge Mountains to the slums of Washington, D.C., and the glitter of Nashville. "This is no rags to riches story. . . . That the Stonemans allowed their history to be presented so candidly is a testament to their integrity and respect for historical truth." — Norm Cohen, editor of the abridged edition of Vance Randolph's *Ozark Folksongs*. Illus. Cl: \$44.95; Pb: \$16.95

Going to Cincinnati

A History of the Blues in the Queen City

STEVEN C. TRACY

Pigmeat Jarrett, Big Joe Duskin, H-Bomb Ferguson—these and other blues figures are brought to life in this history of the blues as a musical form and a lifestyle. Here is the story of Cincinnati's urban blues from its earliest recordings in the 1920s through the triumph of King Records in the 1950s to the current blues resurgence. Steven Tracy shows how the strong tradition of Cincinnati blues emerged from the experiences of African-Americans in neighborhoods like Rat Row and the West End, providing relief, release, and entertainment for all who performed or listened. Illus. Cl: \$29.95

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This project was supported by a grant from the Alaska Humanities Forum and the National Endowment for the Humanities, an independent federal agency.

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RAGTIME REVISITED

Most ragtime enthusiasts regard James Scott as second only to Scott Joplin in perfecting the so-called "classic rag"—a genre in which ragtime's infectious rhythms and characteristic structures were developed into sophisticated and enduring works of art. In *The Music of James Scott* (Smithsonian Institution Press; \$49.95) editors Scott DeVeaux and William Howland Kenney have gathered together all of Scott's published works, which include thirty rags, four waltzes, and four songs. Although many of these compositions have remained in print since the ragtime revival of the early 1970s, they have been scattered throughout various anthologies (most notably Rudi Blesh's *Classic Piano Rags* [Dover]) and marred by typographical errors. Here, finally, they appear in a format that does them justice.

In playing through these rags, many of which I have not visited since high school, I am struck once again by Scott's unforgiving pianism, which requires the performer to negotiate rapid octaves, precarious right-hand leaps, and dense left-hand lines—all with a clarity of touch essential to their overall effect. I also note the attention to fine detail—the subtle intertwining of inner voices, the remarkable counterpoint set up between the two hands, and the flashes of brilliance derived from the simplest harmonic and melodic materials. Perhaps more than anything I am reminded of the irresistible joy in nearly every measure, a feature that contrasts with the subtle melancholy in much of Joplin's music.

Like the Smithsonian's recent Stephen Foster edition, the works appear here in facsimile with the original sheet-music covers. Corrections made on each reproduction are noted only in the critical commentary, leaving a clean and readable score. Although the original type is idiosyncratic and occasionally challenging to read, it says much about the culture and tastes of the early twentieth century. For example, the declining fortunes of Scott's publisher, John Stark, which paralleled the public's flagging interest in classic ragtime, are poignantly mirrored in his reuse of music covers and his practice of cramming an entire four-strain rag onto two pages.

Kenney's detailed biographical essay is as meticulously researched as his recent book, *Chicago Jazz: A Cultural History, 1904-1930* (Oxford University Press, 1993). With frequent reference to the *Carthage Evening Press*, among other sources, he fills in many long-standing gaps in Scott's life story. DeVeaux's imaginative analyses of Scott's music go far beyond the cursory introductions usual in anthologies, doing much to illuminate the music's power and uniqueness. I would be perhaps less charitable than DeVeaux regarding Scott's frequent reuse of melodic and rhythmic ideas. For example, I have always found that the somewhat tedious final strains of *Paramount Rag* and *Rag Sentimental* do not fulfill the promise of their imaginative early sections. Yet works such as *Efficiency Rag* and *Modesty Rag* are masterpieces through and through, and DeVeaux's essay helps both performer and scholar appreciate why. Michael Montgomery's exhaustive rollography provides a valuable tool for examining how the pieces were interpreted by Scott's contemporaries, and it also illuminates their place in the popular music business of the time.

—Jeffrey Taylor
(Brooklyn College)

I.S.A.M. MATTERS

Successful Gala. Some events seem charmed, and the October benefit concert for I.S.A.M. by William Bolcom, Joan Morris, and Max Morath turned out to be just such an occasion. Its intent was to celebrate the past—the twentieth anniversary of Bolcom and Morris's first performance of American popular song and the retirement of H. Wiley Hitchcock as director of I.S.A.M.—and it accomplished both with verve and misty-eyed nostalgia. But the concert also had much to do with the future—that is, with I.S.A.M.'s fiscal future as well as its morale. The recently refurbished Sylvia and Danny Kaye Playhouse at Hunter College was nearly full; two Brooklyn College presidents, John Kneller and Vernon E. Lattin, attended (the former was president at the time of I.S.A.M.'s founding and the latter currently holds the position); and friends of I.S.A.M.—old and new—gathered afterwards for a champagne salute.

We are enormously grateful to the performers, to the benefit committee, to the Brooklyn College Foundation (which gave substantial support), to Nancy Gunn (a composer and recently minted CUNY Ph.D., who helped produce the event), and to all those who contributed time and money. The proceeds exceeded our expectations, giving a much-needed boost to our coffers. A list of donors appears on the last page of this issue.

Wiley's World. The Hitchcock festivities continued on 9 October 1993 with a stimulating day-long symposium sponsored by the Greater New York Chapter of the American Musicological Society. Honoring Hitchcock's multifaceted scholarship, the papers focused on the French and Italian Baroque periods, as well as American music (the latter with contributions by Richard Crawford and Charles Hamm).

* * *

Beach in Brooklyn. On 23 February 1994, I.S.A.M. will be presenting a symposium, Amy Beach's World, from 1 to 4 P.M. in Levenson Recital Hall at Brooklyn College. The event will place Beach at the center of a wide-ranging inquiry about women as composers, painters, patrons, and organizers at the turn of the century. As keynote speaker, Beach's biographer Adrienne Fried Block will explore connections between Beach's personal life and music. Also participating are Erica E. Hirshler from the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, examining opportunities for women visual artists in Boston during Beach's day, and Joseph Horowitz, music journalist and artistic advisor of the Brooklyn Philharmonic, discussing Laura Langford, a contemporary of Beach who organized Wagner concerts in Coney Island. The afternoon will conclude with excerpts from Beach's opera *Cabildo*, performed by the Brooklyn College Opera Theater, conducted by Richard Barrett. Plan to join us!

I.S.A.M.'s Beach symposium will coincide with an unusual flurry of performances of her music in the New York area:

¶ *Cabildo* in a rare full production by the Brooklyn College Opera Theater on 29 January (8 P.M.) and 30 January (3 P.M.).

¶ The Brooklyn Philharmonic's weekend festival, *From the New World*, featuring Beach's *Gaelic Symphony*, together with MacDowell's *Indian Suite* and Dvorak's *Symphony*, "From the

New World" (the last with an accompanying slide show exploring correlations with Longfellow's *Song of Hiawatha*)—all on 28 and 29 January, conducted by Dennis Russell Davies. On Sunday, 30 January, the weekend will wind up with a six-hour extravaganza, including a recital by pianist Alan Feinberg and lectures by noted scholars exploring implications of Dvorak's American experience.



H. Wiley Hitchcock giving closing remarks at the I.S.A.M. benefit concert (photo by Randy Feder-Smith)

Second Season of Brooklyn Traditions. This spring I.S.A.M. will cosponsor Sounds of Brooklyn II, a series of concerts and workshops exploring Brooklyn's rich ethnic music traditions. Produced in collaboration with the World Music Institute, through funding from the Folk Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, the series will feature African-American gospel music with the Timothy Wright Concert Choir (February 4); Afro-Cuban and Puerto Rican drumming and dance with Louis Bauzo and Patakin (March 26); North Indian music and dance with the Kadar Khan Ensemble (April 16); West Indian carnival traditions with the C.A.S.Y.M. Steel Orchestra (May 21); and Yiddish theater with the Original Klezmer Jazz Band (May 22). Special preconcert workshops will feature demonstrations and dialogue with the musicians. Performances are at Brooklyn College and open to the public.

For all these events, call 718/951-5655 to obtain further information.

* * *

I.S.A.M. Composer Award. Thanks to the inspiration of an anonymous donor, I.S.A.M. will begin awarding an annual prize of \$250 to a Brooklyn College composition student for a work showing imaginative cross-cultural exploration. We are grateful for the idea and the gift.

BEHIND THE BEAT *with Mark Tucker*

No Commercial Potential

Frank Zappa once made me do something violent. In 1967 I was a thirteen-year-old suburban kid who played—what else?—electric guitar in a rock band, “The New Rotics” (my parents suggested the name). Looking for material our group could feature, I started buying albums with strange covers that were arriving at the local Woolworth’s—*Are You Experienced?* by the Jimi Hendrix Experience and the first LPs by the Doors and the Grateful Dead. This was “underground” music, as it was called then (now “classic rock,” of course).

Strangest by far was a record titled *Freak Out!* by Frank Zappa and the Mothers of Invention. The jacket photo showed hairy guys in beads and weird clothing, their features highlighted with magenta fire. Inside the double album were sardonic descriptions of the music (*Wowie Wowie* was “carefully designed to suck the 12 year old listener into our camp”) and heraldic quotes like “No commercial potential” and “The present-day composer refuses to die!” (attributed to one “Edgar Varese”). The songs were as odd as the packaging. They used heavy backbeats and basic-sounding chords but unfolded in quirky and unpredictable ways. On *You’re Probably Wondering Why I’m Here* a kazoo played an intricate melody line doubled by xylophone (the Mothers used more xylophone than any rock band I’d heard). The lyrics—with references to hungry freaks, brain police, and a character named Suzy Creamcheese—conjured up a world remote from my own. Listening to Zappa and the Mothers was like getting a signal from outer space: it proved that bizarre, intelligent beings lived out there beyond the tidy lawns and station wagons of suburbia.

But one piece on side four of *Freak Out!* drove me up the wall: *The Return of the Son of Monster Magnet*. Described in the liner notes as “what freaks sound like when you turn them loose in a recording studio at one o’clock in the morning on \$500 worth of rented percussion equipment,” it was a noisy collage of blips and bleeps, primal screams and Vareseian sirens, atonal smears and chord clusters—much of it over a relentless, mechanical backbeat. This wasn’t underground rock any more, but something more arty and experimental, even pretentious. I hated it. So I took a fingernail file and gouged the grooves all around the record (rap historians take note: *this* was the birth of “scratching”). From then on I played only the songs that spoke to me: “Mr. America walk on by, your schools that do not teach, / Mr. America walk on by, the minds that won’t be reached.”

* * *

The memory of this juvenile reaction to Zappa resurfaced at a concert of his music held this past February at Lincoln Center. The composer wasn’t there, but some of his leading interpreters joined forces for the event: Joel Thome conducting The Music Today Ensemble and Orchestra of Our Time; ex-Zappa guitarist Mike Keneally and bassist Scott Thunes; and two Zappaphiles from Sweden, keyboard whiz Mats Oberg and drummer Morgan Agren.

It wasn’t your typical evening at Lincoln Center. Cops filled the outer lobby. The crowd, scruffy in leather and denim, looked out of

place in Avery Fisher Hall’s plush interior. Sweet smoke floated down from the balcony. When Keneally stepped onstage in a bright green suit carrying a green guitar, followed by the long-haired Thunes in shades, the audience roared and shook fists in the air. Everyone, it was clear, hungered for the same thing: ROCK ‘N’ ROLL!



And rock they got . . . well, at least part of the time. For the music came in three varieties: compositions and arrangements featuring rock band and orchestra together; pieces for orchestra alone (including the only non-Zappa item, Varese’s *Déserts*); and on tape, several Synclavier pieces from *The Perfect Stranger*, the 1984 recording by Pierre Boulez and the Ensemble InterContemporain. The audience sat politely through the orchestral offerings. *Déserts*, with its rude tape noises and heavy percussion onslaught, drew appreciative applause and reinforced the Varese-Zappa connection glossed so earnestly in the program notes. But whenever the rock band started to play—especially guitarist Keneally, with his stinging, razor-sharp lines—the energy level in the hall shot through the roof. Volume alone wasn’t responsible. It was the crowd reacting to the two Zappas I’d heard long ago on *Freak Out!*: the serious composer with avant-garde pretensions vs. the mocking rock genius who saw through everything.

The set-up onstage symbolized this split personality, with the rock unit on one side, the orchestra on the other. The partnership didn’t quite work. When the band played you couldn’t hear the orchestra; when the orchestra took over you missed the amplified instruments. To my ears it sounded like a contest. I found myself cheering for the rock band as though it were my high school basketball team playing an away game on rival turf.

Other orchestral and chamber music by Zappa I’ve heard has left me similarly divided. While I admire some of the works performed by these ensembles—*Bogus Pomp*, say, on the second London Symphony Orchestra disc (Barking Pumpkin 4XJ 74207) or *Dupree’s Paradise* on *The Perfect Stranger* (Barking Pumpkin D2 74242)—I’m much more taken with songs and instrumentals presented by Zappa and his own ensembles, like the 1988 touring group captured on *The Best Band You Never Heard In Your Life* (Barking Pumpkin D2 74233). Something fundamental changes when Zappa trades in electric guitars and drums for strings and woodwinds: the dog still growls but no longer bites.

All of which may explain my ambivalence in approaching *The Yellow Shark* (Barking Pumpkin R2 71600), Zappa’s latest recording. The disc contains nineteen works performed by the Ensemble Modern, an eighteen-piece new-music group (here expanded to twenty-six) based in Frankfurt. The sound is stunning, the level of virtuosity staggering. But overall the collection is uneven. Under conductor Peter Rundel, the Ensemble Modern delivers the com-

(continued on page 15)

IN LOVE WITH DVORAK

Yes, you can mix apples and oranges—as a recent multi-author anthology (like most) proves: *Dvorak in America: 1892-1895* (Amadeus Press; \$32.95)—ideated, produced, presided over, contributed to, edited, and decorated by John C. Tibbetts, who teaches in the Theater and Film Department at the University of Kansas. Tibbetts, obviously a passionate devotee of Dvorak, has here marshaled no fewer than twenty-three enthusiasts in a bursting cornucopia (455 pages, many illustrations) that honors and ruminates on the Czech composer's years as director of Jeannette Thurber's National Conservatory of Music in New York City.

The book is organized in three main parts. Part One, "Dvorak's New World," has some ten essays on aspects of the American musical, ethnic, and geographic scene as background for Dvorak in America: on his Bohemian predecessor Heinrich (essay by J. Bunker Clark), on New York in his time (Tibbetts), and on Dvorak's relationship to the American Indian (John Clapham), the African-American spiritual (Jane E. Snyder), and Stephen Foster (Charles Hamm). Part Two, "The 'American' Compositions," includes ten essays on music by Dvorak composed either for the U.S.A. or in it, among them two choral works (essay by Nick Strimple), the Scherzo of the Symphony "From the New World" (Michael Beckerman), the String Quartet, Op. 96 (Alan Houtchens), the piano works (Tibbetts), and the Sonata for Violin and Piano, Op. 100 (Tibbetts again). Part Three, "Dvorak Today," has four essays on later twentieth-century reception of Dvorak and his music, including a brief account (by Tibbetts) of the Dvorak Sesquicentennial Festival and Conference in America (New Orleans, 1991). Rounding out the book are several appendixes (articles, letters, and memoirs by Dvorak, a discography of his American works), a bibliography, and two indexes (one general, one on compositions by Dvorak cited).

I would single out for special mention only a few of the contributions: Beckerman's stimulating suggestions about the relation of the "New World" scherzo to *The Song of Hiawatha*; David Beveridge's "social, political, and aesthetic odyssey" through "The Reception of Dvorak's Operas in America"; Deane Root's small-scale but finely honed piece on Dvorak vs. Foster's "Old Folks at Home"; and "How I Wrote *Dvorak in Love*," by the author of that sleeper-success novel of 1987, Josef Skvorecky. There is not space here to dilate on the other contributions—except to note the extent of Tibbetts's. His hand is everywhere: eight of the text essays, the appendixes, photographs, introductory paragraphs to others' essays, interviews (Hamm's article is one), even line drawings and paintings of persons discussed. A kind of homespun, affectionate amateurism pervades the anthology—or perhaps, considering its subject, "folkishness" is the more appropriate term.

—H.W.H.

NO ZAPPA YET. The first volume of the score series, "Music of the United States," published by A-R Editions and sponsored by the American Musicological Society, has just appeared. It includes two compositions by the young Ruth Crawford: *Music for Small Orchestra* (1926) and *Suite No. 2 for Four Strings and Piano* (1929), coedited by Judith Tick and Wayne Schneider. Stunningly introduced, edited, and produced, it promises much for the series as a whole. Besides, it's a bargain: \$28.95, with a 25% discount for members of the American Musicological Society.

Transforming Tradition Folk Music Revivals Examined

Edited by NEIL V. ROSENBERG

Foreword by Alan Jabbour

Best remembered for such songs as "Tom Dooley" and for performers like the Kingston Trio and Joan Baez, the folksong revival of the 1950s and 1960s gave rise to hootenannies, coffeehouses, and blues and bluegrass festivals, sowing a legacy of popular interest that lives today. Many of the contributors to this volume were themselves performers in folksong revivals; today they are scholars. As both insiders and analysts they bring unique perspectives and new insights to the study of revivals. Cl: \$29.95

Philosopher, Teacher, Musician Perspectives on Music Education

Edited by ESTELLE R. JORGENSEN

Fifteen influential thinkers in aesthetics, music, and art education explore the confluence of the philosophy of music and music education. Originally gathered in print as the fall 1991 issue of the *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, these essays point to a rich future in the philosophy of music and music education and provide a much-needed addition to the scholarly literature in this area. Pb: \$10.95

Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History

Edited by STEPHEN BLUM, PHILIP V. BOHLMAN,
and DANIEL M. NEUMAN

"This exciting volume represents a unique and major contribution to the continuing emergence of historical consciousness and reflexive inquiry in ethnomusicology. Reading it is like contemplating a rich tapestry. . . . The work will undoubtedly stimulate not only significant discussions about the ramifications of reflexive, critical historical consciousness in many disciplines but also many new directions of inquiry." —Charlotte J. Frisbie, editor of *Explorations in Ethnomusicology*. Pb: \$18.95

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"It is rare to encounter a music so rapid in development and clear in documentation as bluegrass, and even rarer an author as well equipped or a book so skillfully fashioned as *Bluegrass: A History*." —Alan Ward, *Old Time Music*

"The definitive history of bluegrass is here. Noted bluegrass historian Neil Rosenberg has written a book so rich in detail and so thoughtful in its analysis it is almost misleading to label it a 'history.' . . . A must-read for anyone with the slightest interest in bluegrass." —Jon Hartley Fox, *Bluegrass Unlimited*. Illus. Now in paperback, \$18.95 (Cloth \$29.95)

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CROSSING THE TRACKS IN CUTHBERT by Jeffrey Magee

You're not likely to pass through Cuthbert, Georgia, on the way to somewhere else. To see the town and its modest memorials to a famous native son you must decide to go there. Traveling to Florida a year ago last summer, my wife Anne and I did just that. We followed Interstate 75 from Michigan through Atlanta, then took a long detour south through Columbus to Cuthbert, which lies just thirty miles east of the Georgia-Alabama border formed by the Chattahoochee River.

Route 27, the two-laner leading down to Cuthbert, is a dream of a road on a bright summer day. Its surface is dark, smooth, and sparkling, its broad shoulders orange-red with rich Georgia clay, and the foliage beyond thick and green. Along the way we passed a sign that said "Westville--Where it's Always 1850." We also crossed many creeks—the Upatoi, the Hodchodkee, the Hitchitee, the Pataula, and other tributaries of the Chattahoochee. Each one seemed like a layer of time and culture to pass through on the way to the quiet town where Fletcher Henderson was born almost a century ago.

Having devoted the past four years of my life to a dissertation on Henderson and his jazz ensemble of the 1920s—a group that became a prototype for the big bands of the swing era—I can hardly recapture the feeling of finally arriving in Cuthbert that morning. After countless hours of listening, transcribing, analyzing, reading, and writing in my cluttered Ann Arbor study, I was now able to ground my perspective in a sense of place I had been lacking. It occurred to me that the resonance I felt in that town might begin to match the experience of my peers in places like Eisenach, Salzburg, and Bonn. Yet even those hallowed grounds lack one particular dynamic that strikes a visitor to Cuthbert.

Like many small southern towns, Cuthbert is divided literally and symbolically by railroad tracks. On one side lies the downtown area, anchored by the town square with its tall statue of a Confederate soldier and by Andrew College, a two-year Methodist school, founded in 1854, with about 300 students. On the other side lies Cuthbert's black community, which used to be called "Andrewville" after its main street, Andrew Street. As one resident avows, the neighborhood "suffers from benign neglect." Walking down Andrew Street on a searing August afternoon, one feels an eerie calm in the neighborhood. Hardly any cars drive the streets. A few residents sit on their front porches or on metal chairs in their yards of hard clay. They stare silently at me, a white passerby. A couple of youngsters chatter something (of which I discern only the words "beat you up"), and I walk on with the sharp impression that Cuthbert's whites do not, as a rule, cross the tracks.

At 1016 Andrew Street stands Fletcher Henderson's boyhood home. It is a white, one-story Victorian cottage with an air of faded distinction. An awning-shaded porch stretches across the front. Tall, arched windows framed by green shutters line the facade. Behind one of the windows is the room where young Fletcher's parents locked him up and enforced regular piano practice. A red Lawn Chief riding mower and plastic chairs clutter the porch. A big, rusty 1970s-model car rests on cinder blocks in the dirt yard. Closed to the public, the house is still occupied.



*Fletcher Henderson's boyhood home, with memorial plaque, at 1016 Andrew Street, Cuthbert, Georgia.
(Photo by Anne Kolaczowski Magee)*

More accessible than the house itself is a plaque, set on a post a few feet from the street, that describes its historical importance. It reads:

HENDERSON HOME

Fletcher H. Henderson (1857-1943), pioneer Georgia educator, built this home in 1888 and lived here until his death. Principal of nearby Howard Normal-Randolph School 1880-1942, his contributions to education won professional recognition and enriched the lives of a multitude of students. Fletcher Henderson, Jr. (1897-1952), born here, developed one of the earliest "Big Bands." A pianist and composer, he was a pioneer in "swing" music. He was Down Beat Magazine Arranger of the Year in 1938 and 1940. The Hendersons are buried near here in Greenwood Cemetery.

Erected by the Historic Chattahoochee Commission
and Friends of the Henderson Family
1988

For a jazz aficionado the sign is a minor revelation. Apparently, Cuthbert values the contributions of the founder and principal of its black school more than those of his more famous and widely influential musical son.

A clerk at the post office had referred me to a Mr. Muse as a source of information on the Henderson family. Muse played a large role in getting the plaque erected. A retired U. S. State Department employee, former Randolph County commissioner, and self-described "minority historical preservationist," he has been ineluctably linked since birth to the two Henderson men by his Christian name: Fletcher Henderson. Born in 1920, the year young Fletcher went to New York City to seek his musical fortune, Muse was named after Fletcher, Sr., the pillar of Cuthbert's Negro community for over half a century.

Fletcher Henderson Muse is a loquacious man with a notable girth and a shock of white hair. Although I hadn't called in advance, he welcomed me when I showed up at his home at 316 Andrew Street claiming an interest in Fletcher Henderson. He led me to an overstuffed chair in his living room and promptly asked what I was "about." I told him a little about my dissertation research.

Muse produced a file of clippings he had compiled over the years, including programs of the now-defunct "Annual Fletcher Henderson, Jr., Jazz Festival" held at Andrew College in 1987, 1988, and 1989. He also offered his memories of the Henderson family, particularly of Henderson, Sr., his former teacher.

In the black community, Henderson was known as "Fess," for professor. "Anybody who thought Latin was a dead language changed their minds when Fess walked into the classroom speaking it fluently," said Muse. Henderson's model of learning and discipline inspired generations of students, many of whom went on to college and became teachers themselves. According to Muse, at any state college or university in Georgia, "when you told them you graduated from Randolph they knew you could cut it, and you were exempted from certain courses." Henderson Sr. had also served as superintendent of Sunday school at the African Methodist Episcopal Church for many years. Every Sunday he walked the ten blocks down Andrew Street past Muse's house to the A.M.E. Church near the railroad tracks. He always wore a crisp suit. "I never saw him in what people would call 'work clothes'—never ever," said Muse.

These glimpses of the jazz musician's upright father fascinated me. Most of what I knew about Henderson's family had been gleaned from secondary sources. His father had been a remarkable man. Throughout his life, education had been an almost sacred mission. As a youth he had reportedly walked with his mother from Columbia, South Carolina, to Atlanta (nearly 200 miles) to continue his education when the University of South Carolina preparatory school closed its doors to blacks in 1877, after a brief period of integration during Reconstruction. I tried to imagine his dismay upon learning that his son had abandoned chemistry—the subject in which he had received an undergraduate degree at Atlanta University—for a career playing the kind of music that was not even allowed in the Henderson home.

Muse had few memories of Fletcher, Jr. He did recall a time in the early 1930s (around New Year's 1933, according to Walter C. Allen's *Hendersonia*) when Henderson's orchestra—by then nationally known from records, airplay, and touring—came to Cuthbert and performed at the high school and the local white hotel. His other memory was from the early 1940s, when he saw the band in Wilmington, Delaware. Muse had walked up to the bandstand and whimsically introduced himself to his namesake as "Fletcher Henderson . . . Muse." The bandleader had reacted with his usual reserve.

I didn't learn much more about Fletcher Henderson, Jr., that day, but it didn't matter. Anne and I drank the atmosphere of his home

town, walked the streets he knew as a boy, and I spoke for an hour with a man who had known his family. (I even tasted some local culture in the form of a boiled peanut—a rubbery, salty snack.) I also walked in Greenwood Cemetery where, except for Fletcher's younger brother Horace, the entire family now rests. (Horace, a fine arranger and bandleader in his own right, died in 1989 and is buried in Denver.) Henderson's headstone, known to jazz historians from a photograph in Allen's exemplary and exhaustive *Hendersonia*, refers only to his modest military service, not to his major musical contributions:

FLETCHER H.
HENDERSON
JR
GEORGIA PVT
STU ARMY
TNG CORPS
WORLD WAR I
DECEMBER 18, 1897
DECEMBER 29, 1952

To the right are the graves of his mother and father respectively. And several feet beyond them is the stone of Charlotte Boozer, the mother who supposedly covered some 200 miles on foot with her son, Fletcher, Sr., to ensure his education. The ashes of Leora, Fletcher, Jr.'s wife, are also buried in the family plot, according to Muse, though their presence is unmarked.

The cemetery lies, obscurely, along an alley off Andrew Street. Leaving it, I noticed across the alley a bungalow whose yellow cinderblock exterior bears the words "Mozambique Lounge" in black paint. Two warnings had been painted next to the door: "No Drugs Allowed" and "No Loitering." It occurred to me that "Fess" would have approved of the rules, if not the venue.

Muse drove me in his pickup back across the tracks to the campus of Andrew College, where I had left Anne and the car. As I got out he gave me his business card. It read, in part: "Fletcher Henderson Muse, Sr. 'The Commish'—Culinary Consultant, Political Analyst, and 'sociation Member." I introduced him to Anne. "Next time you're in town, stop in," he told us. Then with a twinkle in his eye, he added, "We even sleep on white sheets," which reminded me that in walking across the railroad tracks and down Andrew Street I had covered a good distance that day.

Jeffrey Magee is currently revising his dissertation, Fletcher Henderson and his Orchestra in the 1920s (University of Michigan, 1992), for publication by Oxford University Press. Magee is executive editor of the score series "Music of the United States of America (MUSA)," sponsored by the American Musicological Society, and adjunct assistant professor of music at the University of Michigan. His Jazz Standards on Record, 1900-1942: A Core Repertory, coauthored with Richard Crawford, was published last year by the Center for Black Music Research in Chicago.

"AMERICANIZING THE AMERICAN ORCHESTRA": MUSICIANS SPEAK OUT

Will American symphony orchestras survive in the twenty-first century? Can they remain wedded to a canon of European masterworks and speak to the experiences and aspirations of tomorrow's diverse, media-savvy young audiences? These are among the tough questions addressed in "Americanizing the American Orchestra," a report issued by the American Symphony Orchestra League this past June.

The report is a provocative blueprint for reshaping the nature of American symphonies and the concert-going experience. Noting that today's orchestras face increasing financial woes, aging audiences, and charges of institutional racism, the report warns that "without significant change, orchestras could easily become both culturally and socially irrelevant, and the orchestra field would have missed an opportunity to evolve into a revitalized musical and cultural force in this country."

What to do? The report offers a number of practical suggestions. The "new American orchestra" will, for example, feature a repertory shaped by a renewed commitment to nineteenth- and twentieth-century American compositions, while also stressing cultural breadth in programming and personnel. By downplaying traditional hierarchy, orchestras will encourage musicians to participate in the artistic decision-making process at the same time as they become more responsive to the social and educational needs of their local communities. Preconcert lectures, discussions, and visual displays might be incorporated, while more sophisticated lighting and visual media effects (such as video screens and electronic subtitles) could enhance stage presentations.

As might be expected, the report drew mixed reviews from the press. Writing for the *Chicago Tribune*, John von Rhein concluded that the

"eminently practical suggestions outlined therein make required reading for orchestra staff, trustees, volunteers, musicians—and everyone who cares about the future of the American symphony orchestra." Others disagreed. *New York Times* critic Edward Rothstein interpreted the report's emphasis on diversity as a thinly veiled mandate for affirmative action that could seriously compromise the symphony's artistic integrity. Branding the report a "disgrace," Rothstein concluded: "In bringing the racial politics of the streets into the concert halls, [the report] may very well Americanize the orchestra into extinction." *New Criterion* critic Samuel Lipman castigated the report's authors for using "the orchestra and music itself as a weapon in the politically correct transformation of society" and called for the dissolution of the ASOL.

While journalists have had their say about the report, they have been far more outspoken than those who actually make the music. So we asked composers, conductors, and a music publisher for their opinions. These folks are quite literally in the trenches, daily confronting the myriad of problems outlined above. They, not the critics, must finally choose to embrace or reject the report's recommendations. Here's what a few are thinking:

DAVID SCHIFF - Composer, author of *The Music of Elliott Carter*, music journalist, and professor at Reed College in Portland, Oregon

1. It is sad (and pointless) to see two of our country's great cultural achievements, our symphony orchestras and the rich variety of our musical expression, placed in opposition. This fake conflict depends on the notion that culture is a zero-sum game where one side's gain automatically means the other's loss. But in art we can have it all, as long as we don't confuse tradition with bad habits.



Calls to modernize American orchestras have occurred throughout our century, as the above illustrates. Captioned "Two Types of Symphony Orchestras—Ancient and the Modern," these caricatures by the Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias appeared in Vanity Fair (March 1927).

2. Both the cultural conservatives and the multicultural diversifiers perpetuate the mystique of the symphony orchestra—but that mystique died with Toscanini, Furtwängler, Stokowski, and Bernstein. Everyone knows this.

3. The numbers indicate that the orchestra industry is overextended and needs to be restructured. This restructuring (like that of the airlines) will follow no political or artistic agenda save that of the bottom line.

4. The resident year-round orchestra is an informational anachronism. There is no longer a reason for one venue in each city to be the official cultural mainframe for all types of music. We don't need to hear an eighty-player symphony perform Machaut or Monteverdi or Bach or Ellington or Coltrane or Prince. Others do it better. But only a great orchestra can do justice to Tchaikovsky's Fourth or *The Rite of Spring* or *Billy the Kid* or John Adams's *Harmonielehre*.

5. I can imagine a new system where instead of resident orchestras who either try to play everything or refuse to budge from the standard repertory, we have many touring orchestras, each with a particular specialty. These already exist for early music and big-band jazz. But there could also be orchestras specializing in downtown contemporary (a Kronos orchestra) or jazz/pop crossover (like Marin Alsop's Concordia) or just Beethoven or Mahler/Strauss (like Solti's Chicago Symphony) or Debussy/Ravel (like Munch's Boston Symphony Orchestra) or American classics (like Bernstein's New York Philharmonic) or even hardcore modernism (like Boulez's Ensemble InterContemporain). New orchestras could champion African-American music or Latino music or Asian music. An orchestra might be led by a performer, or a composer, or even an old-fashioned maestro. New compositions, instead of being an unwelcome intrusion, would be an essential part of an orchestra's identity, just as they are for dance companies. Each orchestra would be free to create its own audience based on its distinctive repertory, as the Kronos Quartet has done so well. This will take some creative economic thinking by both management and musicians, but it will allow us to have it all—great orchestras and diversity.

RALPH SHAPEY - Composer and conductor, professor at the University of Chicago and founder of its Contemporary Chamber Players

American orchestras are going down the drain. They're already museum pieces and should be put in a glass case. Unfortunately, they only perform the things that the conductors and players learned in school, and those are the old masters. If our orchestras don't bring in serious, contemporary American composers, they are in deep trouble.

When a European orchestra comes over here on tour, they play the old masters, since that is their tradition. And they also incorporate some composer of their own country as well. Now, when our orchestras go to Europe, what do they play? Oh, Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart—who by the way are my gods, my first love above all else. Do they take along any music of an American composer? God forbid! Of course not!

There are many problems with orchestras today. First, success is measured by how much money you make, not by how magnificently you play. Then there is the star system, which the budget can never fully support. Money and materialism are the false gods of our society. Furthermore, the union—of which I have always been a member and firmly believe is needed to protect musicians—sometimes, unfortunately, supports old and weak players, and the players, in turn, are often frustrated soloists who end up hating the conductors and eventually the music. The regulations about rehearsal time are based strictly on money, although players will sometimes try to hide behind false union rules, making it difficult to program new music. The union's only interest is that players get paid accordingly. But imaginative solutions are possible. If a new composition needs fifty hours of rehearsal, then why not start working on it one or two months ahead of time, taking an extra half hour of each rehearsal to focus on individual sections? By the time the week of the performance arrives, the orchestra will simply have to pull the work together.

We must find ways to make what has become a factory into what I call "The Holy of Holies." Conductors could specialize—focusing on romantic, baroque, or modern repertory—and several conductors of equal rank could share the podium for a concert. Most of all, we need to focus on education. I once witnessed a thousand inner-city kids visit a Stravinsky rehearsal, and it was a great experience. If you want new audiences, why not educate our young people? I've done it for years, and believe me, they're open to it. It's the adults who are close-minded.

To me, as a composer, the orchestra is the greatest instrument I could write for. Art music is a miracle. I don't write down to my audiences; I write up to them so they can follow me someplace else. Serious art equals transcendence, not entertainment.

TANIA LEON - Composer and conductor, professor of music at Brooklyn College, composer-in-residence with the New York Philharmonic, and artistic advisor for *Sonidos de las Americas* with the American Composers Orchestra

The real challenge for orchestras in America relates to education. We Americans need to expand our knowledge about our own musical traditions. Consider what would happen, for example, if we approached students in our music schools and asked them to name ten American composers; most would have trouble reaching five! Copland, Ives, Gershwin . . . well? They know even less about living composers. The curriculum simply needs to be rethought. Students should be encouraged to study and perform more contemporary music of all styles and origins.

Why are we so afraid of contemporary composition? Most of us know more about the literature, painting, dance, and theater of our time than we do about music. There needs to be a broader discussion about it, the kind of debate that is common in other artistic disciplines. We should encourage the schools, the critics, the media, and our audiences to pursue this agenda and foster more appreciation for new music.

"AMERICANIZING THE AMERICAN ORCHESTRA" (continued)

The ASOL report talks about community outreach. This is essential. An orchestra, for me, is an educational institution, and each orchestra member is a specialist, as well as a teacher. It is terribly important that we walk constantly into schools and community centers to offer master classes that expose our youngsters to the art of music. If all of us—players, conductors, administrators—reassess our priorities and devote some time to community work, we will take important steps toward rebuilding our image and our audiences.

Of course, many of the issues addressed in the report have been with us for years. But an official statement about them—about confronting the loss of audiences and mapping the future of the symphony—can only help focus our goals. With a broad, united effort, perhaps we can achieve substantive change.

MICHAEL MORGAN - Conductor, Oakland East Bay Symphony

To my mind, most of the objections to the ASOL report have been the result of a fundamental misreading coupled with the American penchant for reducing every argument to a simple choice between two exclusive alternatives. Personally, I found no news in the report. It is obvious to most of us in the orchestra business that flexibility, within reason, is going to be the saving grace of the art form. It always has been. As the populations of major cities change, so too must their orchestras.

There has been a great public outcry against elitism which one would like to think, despite currently popular forms of intolerance, will eventually lead to greater equality and understanding. Granted, there is a down side. We live in a society with little patience for sustained, concentrated thought. All our choices seem to reflect this search for the easy way out. However, with the right combination of political and artistic leadership, America's orchestras and other artistic institutions can play a small but important role in bringing people together and leading society forward. "Forward," however, must be the operative word.

I do not see the ASOL report as a call to discard the past—whether the past audience, the past repertoire, or all of the past formats. I see rather a call to expand and build outward. Take the repertoire. Surely we can play a wider range of music *even* by male, European composers. And there are certainly others from other groups who are worth hearing from time to time.

Then there is the false dichotomy between following and leading local tastes. By carefully balancing programs and giving the audience a variety of experiences, both can be achieved. However, this does require establishing an element of trust between orchestra and audience. The audience should neither feel that they are being taken for granted nor that their intelligence is being insulted. Which brings me to the concert ritual. Finally there are moves afoot to experiment with the stifling, repressive, response-discouraging atmosphere we have imposed upon the concert hall.

Let's stop taking every suggestion of change as some great threat to a now-perfect institution. The ASOL report and other ideas should be seen as a chance to extend and enrich the lives of our beloved symphony orchestras. And that is the point.

ARTHUR BERGER - Composer, music critic, and L. G. Fine Professor Emeritus at Brandeis University

The failure of American orchestras to fulfill their obligation to American music is part of a wider syndrome: the stagnation of repertory, the stubborn adherence to the "fifty pieces," according to Virgil Thomson, beyond which symphony conductors rarely venture. That certain European masterpieces of this century are still not staples is just as deplorable as the neglect of American music. Since a conductor is the unchallenged dictator of programs and the conductor is appointed by the orchestra's board, it should be obvious where responsibility lies. Boards, in hiring, must be urged to be more attentive to the kinds of programs a conductor assembles, and it would seem logical in these matters to seek input from professional musicians—especially from composers, who are shockingly absent from orchestra boards.

Ideally, conductors should be sought who have a broad and differentiated repertory, one that is *balanced*. Thus, the slogan *Americanizing the American Orchestra* sends the wrong signal. At the same time composers on the board—who, I assume, would be American—would select conductors catholic enough in their tastes to embrace American music at least as much as any other kind. This would mean that contrary to current practice more American conductors would be chosen than foreign ones. After all, foreign champions of American music, like Koussevitzky or Mitropoulos, are rare. The ease of transportation today enables "permanent" conductors to report to work here like visiting ones, returning home after their stint and never identifying with the country or even the community. There is no bias here. In my proposal, foreign conductors would be rejected not because they are foreign, but because they do not meet the requirements. There is, however, bias—unwarranted bias—in the current procedure in which, in a contest between a European conductor and an American one, the former is almost invariably the winner.

SUSAN FEDER - Vice President of G. Schirmer, Inc.

I was encouraged to read in the ASOL report that "The Music Comes First"—or so the title of chapter one states. But as publisher of seven of the "top ten" American composers listed in another recent ASOL document—a survey of the programming of American orchestras—I find it sobering to contemplate the reality that none of these composers appeared on more than three percent of concert programs last year. (Worse still would be to calculate the total percentage of minutes devoted to American music on these same programs.)

American orchestras have commissioned a vast repertory of music. Their eagerness has been crucial in enabling many young composers to consider working full time at their careers without the financial security formerly provided by academic positions. Yet, beyond the premiere, there is usually still a black hole—unless the composition is a short, crowd-pleasing, concert opener. How many orchestras are willing to make a commitment to a composer (outside of the Meet-the-Composer Orchestra Residency Program of the 1980s), either by reprogramming in a subsequent season the piece they commissioned (and recording it), or by surveying a composer's entire symphonic repertory so that audiences and musicians alike

can come to appreciate a unique musical style and make it part of their musical aesthetic? And what hope does a contemporary European composer have in this equation? (About as much as an American in Europe, I fear.) Ideally, "modernizing the American orchestra" should be the ultimate goal. Until that is possible, I applaud the ASOL's willingness to take a close, hard look at an institution under duress. While we publishers will continue to work closely and flexibly with orchestras to ensure their health and survival, we harbor no illusions about how far they have to go in order to "Americanize."

ALVIN SINGLETON - Composer

The fundamental question is this: why would anyone want to preserve the orchestra as it presently exists, with its narrow focus on the European classics? Music, as culture, must reflect a people's time and place. As a twentieth-century American composer I could not write in the style of Brahms; I did not live in his day and I could never comprehend his experiences. So today's American orchestras should reflect our time, which is now; our place, which is the United States; and of course the diversity of the American people, which is unparalleled in history.

Part of the problem is that people are just not aware of American composers, and orchestra leaders don't know where to turn. The Meet-the-Composer programs are visionary, but sadly many orchestras refuse to incorporate them. The point is, there is a body of American composition that is one-hundred years old, and orchestras should be playing this material. But they refuse to recognize it. The other arts—whether theater, dance, or painting—are much more open to the new.

All this goes directly back to the way musicians are taught. When I was at Yale, the faculty encouraged students to compose new pieces for degree recitals. This was impressive—you had to create a serious piece if you wanted to graduate. Such an attitude needs to project into the real world. But unfortunately it is rare even in conservatories today.

I'm not suggesting that orchestras should change their basic orientation or simply add more programs of pop, jazz, or ethnic music. Orchestras should do what they do best, which is to perform art music! But they need to work with composers who are drawing upon diverse musical sources. We have so many talented composers who are not only conversant with the classical tradition but also with jazz, our national treasure, as well as Latin, African, Indian and other world musics. It is time that people running orchestras recognize this and begin emphasizing compositions that reflect those diverse traditions. We have a lot to be proud of, and we need to get it out of the closet and flaunt it.

A final thought: American composers will survive, with or without orchestras. We composers write music because we can't help ourselves—it is a creative need. If orchestras won't play our music, we will find other formats. This of course is already happening to some extent. And if American orchestras die, the composers may or may not be at the funeral. But let us hope this does not come to pass. We have so much potential here in the United States that we just need to come together to realize it.

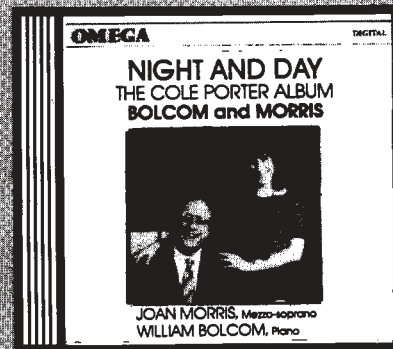
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FOLK TRADITIONS REVIVED

Anyone acquainted with the field of folk music knows that many specialists (this reviewer included) were drawn to it through personal participation in some aspect of the post-War folk music revival. Surprisingly, we folkies-turned-scholars have shown little research interest in this important chapter of American musical history.

Until now, *Transforming Tradition: Folk Music Revivals Examined* (University of Illinois Press, \$29.95), edited by Neil Rosenberg, presents a fascinating overview of the subject. In his introduction, Rosenberg reviews the history of folksong revivals in twentieth-century America, pondering the various social and political forces that motivated middle-class urbanites to embrace older styles of rural folk music. He chronicles the academic polemics concerning authenticity of folk music—especially regarding text, performance style, and social context—that tended to place revivalists and their music outside the scope of folkloristic inquiry. And he shows how ethnographic, interpretive, and reflexive approaches to cultural studies have finally prompted folklorists to give serious attention to this previously taboo area.

The volume is divided into three sections. "The Great Boom" focuses on the commercial popularization of folk music from the late 1950s through the mid 1960s. Robert Cantwell's well-crafted essay recounts the social milieu of the era and the role of folk music in the emergent youth counterculture. Four eminent folklorists—Archie Green, Kenneth Goldstein, Bruce Jackson, and Ellen Stekert—recall their personal involvement with the revival, offering brilliant insights into its commercial and political dimensions.

The second part, "The New Aesthetic," investigates the music cultures of "post-boom" singer-songwriters. Pauline Greenhill examines the folk process of oral transmission and variation for a popular revival composition, "Barrett's Privateers," while Sheldon Posen and Anne Lederman consider the new contexts and aesthetic sensibilities of staged folk festival and coffee-house performance.

Finally, "Named-System Revivals" explores the revival of specific folk styles including old-time fiddling, bluegrass, and country blues. Bert Feintuch's thoughtful essay on southern old-time fiddling and Northumberland piping suggests that modern revivalists selectively transform past traditions to create their own repertoires, styles, and standards of authenticity. Richard Blaustein interprets the old-time fiddle revival as a revitalization movement that rejects modernity in favor of a romanticized rural past. And insightful essays by Jeff Titon and Peter Narvaez consider how white journalists, collectors, and listening enthusiasts constructed a highly romantic and antiquated view of African-American blues culture.

Transforming Tradition is timely. For too long folklorists have dismissed the folk music revival as "fakelore." But the study of folk revivals brings into focus issues crucial to understanding the role of tradition in the modern, urban world—the bourgeois idealization of folk culture, the invention of tradition, the politics of cultural revitalization, to name a few. This volume may raise more questions than it answers, but doing so is part of any pioneering effort.

—R.A.

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

The fall of 1993 has seen a plethora of books on country music: a half-dozen biographies or autobiographies, a *cinema verité*-styled account of current promotion and marketing methods, and a couple of essay collections about country lyrics. Still to come are two guides to country CDs and at least four encyclopedias of country music. Many of these tomes are issuing from commercial presses, stimulated not only by country music's renewed popularity, but by the best-seller status of *Memories*, the autobiography of the Nashville Television Network's personality Ralph Emery. After a dearth of secondary literature, such plentitude is both welcome and surprising. But it also reveals one of the dangers popular journalists face in trying to deal accurately with the complex nature of this genre. A sharp journalist can no longer simply spend a few weeks at Nashville's Hall of Fame Motor Inn, putting together an oral history as background for his or her subject. The story has gotten too complex, and good books of the future must go far beyond casual oral history, far beyond the Nashville scene, far beyond earlier fan magazines and fan biographies.

Fortunately, some of this new crop does just that, and some reflect years, not months, of careful research and lengthy interviews. One is Ivan Tribe's *The Stonemans: An Appalachian Family and the Music that Shaped their Lives* (University of Illinois Press, \$44.95 [cloth] and \$16.95 [paper]). A second is Mary A. Bufwack and Robert K. Oermann's *Finding her Voice: The Saga of Women in Country Music* (Crown, \$32.50).

Ivan Tribe, a history professor at the University of Rio Grande in Ohio, spent ten years researching his subject, the extended family of Ernest "Pop" Stoneman. Before then Tribe had established an enviable reputation as perhaps the nation's leading expert on country music of the 1940s and 1950s—a neglected but vital era when the music shed its "hillbilly" image and reached out to a national audience. His credentials include a book on West Virginia music and dozens of articles in journals and popular magazines. *The Stonemans* is probably his masterpiece, a brilliant synthesis drawing upon his years of experience to tell the complicated story of one of country music's first families.

The Stoneman saga began at the dawn of country music and continues to the present, with daughters like Roni Stoneman becoming a television regular and Donna Stoneman a superb instrumentalist and grass-roots evangelist. Their father Ernest Stoneman began recording folk songs from his native southwest Virginia in 1924, just months after John Carson's "first" country vocal record. During the next five years, he became one of the most prolific and successful of the early country artists, recording for almost all the major companies and even acting as an A&R man. His fame and presence lured the Carter family and Jimmie Rodgers to their famous tryout in Bristol, Tennessee in 1927. He was one of the first musicians to see the potential in commercial country music, and for a time he made a good living at it. Then the Depression hit, and he eventually moved his family to Washington, D.C., where they lived a life of poverty rivaling the hardships described in *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Stoneman was determined, though, that the music would rise again, and it did in the 1950s and 1960s, with the folk-music revival. By then Pop's children had matured, soon becoming stars in their own right. Scott pioneered a new hot bluegrass fiddle style that impressed a generation; Roni blazed the trail for women banjo players; Donna did elaborate cross-picking styles on the mandolin. The family soon had a popular television show, new record contracts, and a string of hits. Ironically, Pop's death in 1968 came at the height of their popularity. The surviving members, led by the family griot Patsy, decided to cooperate fully with Tribe, and the result is an amazingly frank account of the group's troubles and triumphs. It is a rare collaboration between a first-rate scholar and subject.

The husband-and-wife team of Mary Bufwack and Robert Oermann have spent even a longer time researching their account of women in country music. Bufwack, an experienced cultural anthropologist, and Oermann, originally a trained librarian and professional researcher, began their project in 1978. Over the years, they wound up moving to Nashville, where Oermann became a researcher for the Country Music Foundation's library and later the leading music writer for the Nashville newspaper, *The Tennessean*. Bufwack became involved in local social causes, including direction of the YWCA women's shelter.

Finding Her Voice is a rich 593-page compendium that will become a standard reference in popular culture, women's studies, and country music. The obvious subjects are there: singers like Patsy Montana, the "cowboy's sweetheart" of the 1930s; Loretta Lynn, the coal miner's daughter, whose fame cast her into roles she neither understood nor sought; Patsy Cline, who pushed country forward in the 1950s; even more recent figures like k. d. lang, Emmylou Harris, and Mary-Chapin Carpenter. Oermann's years as a leading country journalist gave him all kinds of access to recent stars, and the first-hand research shows at every turn. (Unlike most commercial writers, Bufwack and Oermann carefully give notes with sources for their material, as well as a good discography.)

But beyond the high-profile Dollys and Tammys, the authors explore dozens of figures scarcely known today: early folksong collectors and chroniclers like Emma Bell Miles, obscure pioneers like Roba Stanley (the Georgia teenager who made the first country solo record), and dozens of bluegrass and folk artists whose music helped pave the way for better-known singers. Especially valuable are sidebars that give lists of women studio players, "female trucking songs," and women singers who were graduates of the Opryland amusement park shows. There are also stories of women who gave up on Nashville, unable to handle the pressure of "being treated like country merchandise." In fact, there is a lot here about just how the country music industry developed and how it works today—told by two experts who have paid their dues in Nashville. Seldom has any book on country broken so much new ground and done so with such style, grace, and compassion.

MQ REDUX

There's a new *Musical Quarterly*, and its first two issues (Spring and Summer 1993) promise a distinctive voice in the somewhat crowded field of academic music journals. But then MQ's most recent incarnation aims to transcend the academic. Its editor, Leon Botstein, envisions the journal as a means to "forge a community of readers that includes scholars and teachers in the university, audiences at concert halls, and listeners at home"—an extension of his concurrent work as president of Bard College and conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra. Botstein has radically reshaped MQ according to a set of subject areas, each with its own associate editor: Thomas Y. Levin for "Institutions, Industries, and Technologies," Michael P. Steinberg for "Music and Culture," Judith Tick for "American Musics," Mark Swed for "The Twentieth Century," and Paul Witke—the one constant presence during the journal's recent turbulent history—for "Primary Sources." While on first glance these seem an odd mix, so far they have yielded unhackneyed results. Bearing only occasional traces of the sober, neutral tone common to scholars, the writing is strong and limber, occasionally with a sassy edge, and American music has been well-served, with articles on it appearing under several rubrics. Highlights include Charles Hamm on autobiographical revelations in Irving Berlin's early songs (Spring 1993), Martin Brody on Milton Babbitt's connection to Cold War ideology, and Robert Walser on Miles Davis (both Summer 1993). Subscriptions are available through Oxford University Press.

—C. J. O.

FELDMAN EMERGING

Morton Feldman's *Piano and String Quartet*, as recorded by the Kronos Quartet and Aki Takahashi (Elektra/Nonesuch 79320), clocks in at 79' 33", and listening to it is an amazing experience. This is classic Feldman, but at the same time it is different from all the other pieces by him that I know. The quartet starts suddenly, as if someone put the needle down in the middle of a record, and its use of repetition, of the expanded scale, of a low dynamic range, and of tiny gradations in rhythm, color, articulation, and even pitch (check out the unison starting at 38:04) add up to a beautiful, even erotic celebration of the physical aspects of sound. At times the Kronos's playing is too sugary sweet, not anonymous enough. But on the whole it serves the work wonderfully, and the performance of Aki Takahashi is extraordinary.

For many composers in our postmodern era, Feldman is emerging as a major musical force. He is finally breaking free of Cage's shadow. As a young composer, I can attest to Feldman's impact. Because of him, I no longer hear Webern or the descending chromatic scale the way I used to. Feldman has caused a revolution in my own musical discourse, and I don't think I will get over him for a long time. This recording shows why this is the case.

—Kevin Parks
(I.S.A.M.)

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ZAPPA (continued)

pulsive perfectionism Zappa has always demanded of his own groups. As on the earlier *Boulez* disc, you can hear everything—even on Ali N. Askin's scarifying transcription of *The Girl in the Magnesium Dress*, one of the Synclavier pieces from *The Perfect Stranger*. The Ensemble Modern does best with the dark side of Zappa, as on the somber-hued *Outrage at Valdez* and the gorgeously scored *Get Whitey*, with its shimmering cimbalom and mandolin tremolos. When broad satire is required, though, the performances fall flat (as on the heavy-handed *Welcome to the United States* and lightweight *Food Gathering in Post-Industrial America*). And when Zappa gets really serious, as on *Ruth Is Sleeping* or *None of the Above* (a Kronos Quartet commission), you'd never believe this was the guy who wrote *Duke of Prunes* and *Penguin in Bondage*.

Oh sure, there's a visceral thrill in hearing a chamber orchestra get down on a tune like *G-Spot Tornado*, a hypnotic *perpetuum mobile* based on pentatonic figures. But compare the Ensemble Modern's rendition of the piece with Zappa's wild Synclavier version on *Jazz from Hell* (Barking Pumpkin 4XT-74205) and you realize what's missing from the picture: the snarling bass lines, goofy vocalise, nerve-jangling texture, and sheer wacked-out exuberance that owe nothing to European high modernism and everything to good old American rock 'n' roll.

(I had originally concluded by saying I would stay tuned for whatever future musical projects Zappa had in store for us. But just as this issue went to press, news came of Zappa's death on 4 December 1993 from prostate cancer. He was fifty-two.)

For information on the recordings cited above, call the Zappa Hotline: 1-818-PUMPKIN. The Barking Pumpkin address: Box 5265, North Hollywood, CA 91616.

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