

# 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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## HENRY COWELL: A CALL FOR RESTITUTION by David Nicholls, Keele University

Henry Cowell might almost be called the forgotten man of American music. Today he is usually remembered as the inventor of the tone cluster or the composer of such experimental piano pieces as *The Aeolian Harp* (ca. 1923) and *The Banshee* (1925). His many other accomplishments are either taken for granted or — worse — ignored. Yet Cowell's total musical output, as catalogued by William Lichtenwanger (I.S.A.M., 1986), comprises around a thousand separate compositions, ranging from tiny solo works to six- and seven-movement symphonies. Tone clusters are found in only a handful of pieces, mostly written for the piano. Furthermore, Cowell's achievements as a composer are of far greater magnitude than historians would have us believe. Later on, I will turn to the large-scale issue of how such a situation could have arisen. But before doing so, it is worth detailing his accomplishments, which are known to many American-music specialists but unacknowledged within our greater musical culture. They fall into two main categories.

First, Cowell is a key figure in the American experimental tradition. By 1940, he had produced a body of work which, in retrospect, could be considered an inventory of virtually all the major experimental techniques found in twentieth-century composition. If this claim seems fanciful, scan the pages of Cowell's *Rhythm-Harmony Quartets* (1916-19), examine his works in elastic and mosaic forms, or listen to any of his music for piano or string piano. If you prefer books, read the path-breaking *New Musical Resources* (New York, 1930/1969), which discusses a myriad of compositional possibilities. One example of the impact of Cowell's words appears in the following aside, which helped to shape Conlon Nancarrow's entire mature output:



In the first and third staves the piano strings may be played by pressing the strings of the indicated notes ~~and~~ ~~pressing~~ the keys. The resulting sound is the sound of an Iranian drum.

Henry Cowell, *Homage to Iran* (1957), holograph, Music Division, Library of Congress

Some of the rhythms developed through the present acoustical investigation could not be played by any living performer; but these highly engrossing rhythmical complexes could easily be cut on a player-piano roll. This would give a real reason for writing music specially for player-piano (*New Musical Resources*, 64-65).

Cowell's second major achievement as a composer was his pioneering use of trans-ethnic materials. This tendency had been apparent from fairly early on and, at an embryonic level, is most obvious in the series of Irish mythological pieces that includes *The Tides of Manaunaun* (1917). From the 1930s on, however, Cowell's approach to such materials matured considerably, probably reflecting the year he had spent in Berlin studying comparative musicology with Erich von Hornbostel. The range of trans-ethnic sources subsequently tapped by Cowell included American fusing tunes, popular dance forms, fiddle music, Persian modes, and Japanese court music. Innovations such as these are nowadays considered

(continued on page 2)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:	page
Classicizing "Show Boat"? by Larry Stempel .....	6
Assessing the NEA .....	7
Scholars Head for the Country by Charles Wolfe .....	8
Recent Books:	
Ragtime and Jazz .....	5, 13
Heavy Metal .....	4
Rap .....	11

COWELL (*continued*)

somewhat passé. But had it not been for Cowell's influential example, a whole generation of composers—from Cage and Harrison to Reich, Riley, and Glass—might have produced music of a rather different kind.

This leads to my next point. Cowell was not only an important and extremely innovative composer in his own right but also an extraordinary advocate for what, in the interwar years, was termed "ultramodern" music. Despite the efforts of Varèse and his International Composers' Guild, by the mid-1920s the opportunities for composers of the newest music were virtually nonexistent. Cowell's activities—as pianist, promoter, publisher, pedagogue, and protagonist—profoundly altered this situation. His *New Music Quarterly* had, by 1936, published music by composers from George Antheil to Adolph Weiss. On the performance front, Cowell was involved in the promotion of concerts in places as far apart as California, New York, and Budapest. The repertory for these concerts included pieces by Ives, Ruggles, Ruth Crawford, Varèse, and Cowell himself.

The scores and performances were matched by words. In addition to *New Musical Resources*, Cowell edited the 1933 symposium *American Composers on American Music* (Stanford, 1933/New York, 1962), coauthored *Charles Ives and his Music* with his wife Sidney Cowell (New York, 1955), wrote hundreds of reviews and articles, and gave countless interviews. Cowell was also a remarkable ambassador for American music: his European tours of the 1920s and 1930s were followed in the 1950s and 1960s by extended visits to the Middle and Far East.

Finally, Cowell's music and teaching had a pedagogical impact. John Cage often spoke of his indebtedness to Schoenberg, but his music and aesthetic stance belie Cowell's rather greater influence. Lou Harrison, who also studied with both Schoenberg and Cowell, has been more overt in admitting his gratitude:

He spoke of marvels & taught by allure.  
He said "as you remember" & then told  
Some wondrous thing you'd never heard 'till then.  
Thus flattery disposed receptive minds.  
He befriended pupils & was to me  
Of all mentors most marvelous, & whose  
Steps part grass before me across the years.<sup>1</sup>

It would be possible to continue this litany ad infinitum. But if Cowell and his music are as important as has been suggested, then why are they not acknowledged more resoundingly in the literature? Why has acclaim been lavished on Ives and Cage (to name only two) but not on Cowell? Cowell's marginalization cannot have arisen from considered critical evaluation of his work, for, as will be demonstrated later, such an evaluation would be impossible given the meager extent of the materials available. Rather, the slightly convoluted explanation lies in the outdated but resolute set of cultural values that continue to shape our view of music history, particularly that of recent times.

These include attaching a disproportionate degree of importance to musical artifacts and their creators, as opposed to the cultural environments that nurture them, and embracing the canonical view of composition as a kind of artistic brinkmanship. Most crucial of all is the fact that from the mid-1930s onwards, Cowell eschewed the Eurocentrism that otherwise so influenced American music. His employment of trans-ethnic materials and the attitude of seriousness he adopted toward cultures lying beyond Eurocentrism's zone of tolerance, effectively condemned his music to rejection by the art-music establishment.

When this scenario is placed in its proper historical context, Cowell's fate becomes more understandable still. In the forties and fifties, the main battle for center stage in American musical life was being fought between proponents of serialism, indeterminacy, and traditional tonality. Compared with the mainly Eurocentric flavors of these three *grands vins*, Cowell's trans-ethnically inspired music must have seemed rather small beer. Now, in the 1990s, the futility of that earlier battle is beginning to be acknowledged, and the alternative claims of trans-ethnic and other user-friendly musics are starting to be recognized. Yet Cowell's musical voice, weak through disuse, has to struggle to be heard above the confabulation of its contemporary competitors.



*Henry Cowell and his cat Pepper at work on Symphony #14*  
Photograph by Sidney Cowell

Cowell's music has much to offer; his example ought to inspire us. As his centenary approaches, we should grasp the opportunity to reacquaint ourselves with Cowell's work and celebrate his achievements. But before such reassessment—let alone restitution—is possible, there is much that needs to be done. It is sobering to compare Cowell's position with that of the two composers with whom he shares the greatest affinity—Ives and Cage. Born twenty-three years after the former and fifteen before the latter, Cowell was instrumental in helping each of them attain their present cult status. Yet when we examine the statistics associated with the dissemination of their work, the true scale of Cowell's comparative neglect becomes apparent.

(continued on page 15)

## I.S.A.M. MATTERS

**Symposia—Past and Future.** On 9 November 1994, I.S.A.M.'s *Remaking American Opera* took place before a large and lively audience at the CUNY Graduate Center. Composers John Adams, Anthony Davis, Tania León, and Meredith Monk discussed topics ranging from their conflicted relationship to opera's historic icons to their distinctive approaches to the voice and their use of contemporary subject matter. Brilliantly moderated by former I.S.A.M. Research Assistant K. Robert Schwarz, the evening built up a certain postmodern kinesis, interspersed as it was with video and audio clips from each composer's work. Look for excerpts from the discussion in the spring issue of the I.S.A.M. Newsletter. Thanks go to the Ethyle R. Wolfe Institute for the Humanities at Brooklyn College and the Ph.D. Program in Music at the CUNY Graduate School for crucial support.

Our next symposium will take place at Brooklyn College on 28 and 29 April 1995. Titled *Island Sounds in the Global City* and funded by the New York Council on the Humanities, it will focus on New York City's current position as an international crossroad of Caribbean cultures, exploring the transformations of diverse musical styles in an urban environment. This is a topic close to home, for Brooklyn College sits amid rapidly growing neighborhoods of Caribbean immigrants; beef patties vie with knishes at local delis. The conference will open on Friday evening with a keynote address by Juan Flores, director of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College. This will be followed by a dance featuring one of New York's most influential Latin jazz and salsa ensembles, Conjunto Libre. Saturday's symposium will place leading scholars of Caribbean musics alongside record producers, radio deejays, community arts presenters, and the musicians themselves. Plan to attend!

Yet another mini-conference is planned for 18 November 1995, in conjunction with a series of concerts by the Brooklyn Philharmonic honoring the centenary of William Grant Still's birth. Titled *Composing Black* and funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the event will feature an array of musicians probing the ongoing legacy of Still and the issues facing contemporary African-American composers.

**Community Connections.** Other I.S.A.M. activities will also draw upon Brooklyn's extraordinarily diverse musical traditions. A series of workshops for elementary school students, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, will feature presentations by locally based Puerto Rican, Irish, West Indian, and Andean performers. And on 18 March 1995, West Indian steel pan virtuoso Robert Greenidge will visit I.S.A.M. to present a workshop and concert—this under funding from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Arts Partners Program and in conjunction with the World Music Institute. In addition Greenidge will meet with local Brooklyn musicians to plan both a series of residencies on steel orchestra arranging and a steel pan festival.



**Team Reports.** I.S.A.M.'s founding director, H. Wiley Hitchcock, received richly deserved kudos at the Minneapolis meeting of the American Musicological Society when he was named an honorary member of AMS. We send him the warmest congratulations. . . . Meanwhile, former I.S.A.M. Senior Research Fellows keep boosting the bibliography of American music. Adrienne Fried Block's scrupulously annotated edition of the Quartet for Strings (in One Movement), Opus 89, by Amy Beach just appeared in the AMS's MUSA series (Music of the United States of America), published by A-R editions of Madison, Wisconsin. . . . Edward A. Berlin's *King of Ragtime: Scott Joplin and his Era* (Oxford University Press; see "Behind the Beat" in this issue) has received notice in *Time* and the *New York Times*, to name only two nationally distributed rags. . . . And William Osborne's *American Singing Societies and their Partsongs*, drawn from his lectures at I.S.A.M., has been published by the American Choral Directors Association.

This spring Arddin Herbert, a Brooklyn College undergraduate composer and native of Trinidad, will be working at I.S.A.M. on an oral-history project focusing on musicians in Brooklyn's Trinidadian immigrant community. Scholarship support comes from the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation. . . . Undergraduate flutist David Patterson and graduate vocalist Larry Picard are new to I.S.A.M. Picard, when not pursuing his passion for twentieth-century American song, performs the computer wizardry that produces this newsletter.

**Minority Initiative.** Anyone interested in recruiting talented minority music majors for graduate work in musicology should write to I.S.A.M. for copies of a recently published brochure and poster, *Exploring Career Options: Musicology Offers a Sound Track*. Produced by the Committee on Cultural Diversity of the American Musicological Society, both documents are currently being distributed to historically black colleges and urban institutions with large minority populations.





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## THE DEVIL'S MUSIC

At one point in *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* (Wesleyan University Press, 1993; \$15.95), Robert Walser reports that a young heavy metal fan "told me that she starts feeling paranoid when she hears the 'easy listening' music favored by her mother, because it so obviously seems to lie about the world." Heavy metal counters the pleasant lie with a brutal, unsanitized vision of America: "Welcome to the jungle, it gets worse here every day." Walser aims to give heavy metal a fair and unbiased hearing, without uninformed clichés and castigation, so as to understand the music's message. *Running with the Devil* is divided into chapters with a sociological slant, concentrating on gender and social disorientation, and ones with a specifically musical bent, dealing with heavy metal borrowings from classical music by guitarists such as Randy Rhoads and Yngwie Malmsteen and the significance of guitar solos, with special emphasis on Eddie Van Halen, among others. Walser covers a wide variety of topics, most often with balance and intelligence. He is to be commended for tackling a subject that despite its popularity is usually outside the pale of conventional musicology and for treating the music in a respectful and competent manner—most compellingly Van Halen's "Eruption" solo. Walser's nonanalytic sections can also be illuminating and lucidly written, especially his account of the censorship efforts of Tipper Gore and others, although he too often slips into the jargon-filled boilerplate that constitutes a pandemic in today's academy.

Though a fan and practicing metal guitarist, Walser's status as an academic and white-collar professional deeply conditions his assessment of the music's significance. The white working class from which metal springs has been hammered by harsh economic adjustments over the last twenty years, and these hard times are frequently alluded to in metal music and its marketing videos. Clearly this is the preeminent social influence on heavy metal. Yet without completely neglecting economic factors, Walser slights them. Writing that "popular music's politics are most effective in the realm of gender and sexuality," he reveals more about an academic community currently preoccupied with gender issues than about the real-world struggles of ordinary people. Walser's perspective perhaps also explains his puzzling insistence on berating both academic music historians and classical music fans. Heavy metal is a big, powerful business. Its glitz and popularity are hardly threatened by a beleaguered classical music world, much less by the tiny musicological community.

When defending metal's morally questionable attitudes, Walser resorts to out-and-out relativism, castigating the upper classes relentlessly for their faults while forgiving subordinate classes on the grounds of oppression. In line with this, Walser everywhere emphasizes the positive in heavy metal at the expense of the negative. Surely, metal does promote feelings of community and empowerment, as he claims, but these are not always

(continued on page 15)

## BEHIND THE BEAT with Mark Tucker

Pianist Teddy Wilson compared him to "a golfer who can hit a hole in one every time he picks up the iron." Clarinetist Buddy DeFranco said playing with him "was like chasing a train and never catching it." Fats Waller simply noted, "When that man turns on the powerhouse, don't no one play him down."

"That man" was Art Tatum, whose keyboard artistry dazzled listeners and left fellow musicians shaking their heads in wonder. The quotes are from James Lester's *Too Marvelous for Words: The Life and Genius of Art Tatum* (Oxford University Press, 1994; \$25), the first full-length biography of the pianist. Lester, a retired psychologist and longtime Tatum admirer, began the book in 1988 when he "wanted to learn something about where such a giant had come from, who his own idols had been, what experiences had made him the figure I knew, what sort of a person he was, what sort of life he had when he wasn't playing." Curiously, the search turns up few satisfying answers. Although Lester fills in the picture of the pianist's family background and boyhood in Toledo, Ohio, the young Tatum seems much like the adult—consumed with playing the piano and better at it than anyone else around. Occasional clues to his musical education surface, as when reed-player Eddie Barefield claims that Tatum used to collect Earl Hines's records and improvise "over what Earl was doing." But such anecdotes, rather than fleshing out the real Tatum, merely deepen the mystery of a man whose tastes were average (sports, Pabst's Blue Ribbon) and talent out of this world. As trumpeter Harry "Sweets" Edison observed, "He was such a magnificent piano player, gee whiz, words can't express his genius on the piano." Lester's biography proves the point all too well.

**Ragtime Royalty.** Edward A. Berlin, ragtime scholar nonpareil, has performed a miraculous literary feat in *King of Ragtime: Scott Joplin and his Era* (Oxford University Press, 1994; \$25). In this long-awaited study of ragtime's most famous figure, Berlin manages to weave together biographical narrative, critical commentary on the music, local history of the places Joplin lived and worked, and all manner of fascinating lore, from discussion of rag tempos and Joplin imitators to accounts of touring black entertainers and theater segregation in New York. One attractive feature is the way Berlin reveals not only what he learned about Joplin and his world but how he managed to do so, sharing leads, hunches, suspicions, discoveries. For students, in fact, the book could serve as a methodological model for exploring vernacular music, especially earlier African-American traditions. Despite its high level of detail—Berlin is a tenacious and tireless researcher—*King of Ragtime* is eminently readable, written in lucid prose and graced with many illustrations. Moreover, Berlin brings to the assignment something more than his sovereign knowledge of ragtime: unbridled passion for the scholarly enterprise. This is musicology with heart, a testament not just to the genius of Joplin and the spirit of ragtime but to that elusive, ineluctable force that drove Berlin to recover a major part of America's musical past.

**Gospel Queen, Jazz Giants.** Those searching for out-of-body experiences can always turn to Mahalia Jackson, whose voice could lift listeners off the ground and send them skyward. Proof of the singer's transporting power is everywhere on *Mahalia Jackson: Gospels, Spirituals, & Hymns* (Columbia/Legacy C2K 47083), a set that includes a rapturous version of Thomas A. Dorsey's "Take My Hand, Precious Lord," a soul-stirring rendition of the spiritual "Elijah Rock," and more than thirty other selections recorded for Columbia between 1954 and 1969. For this release in Columbia/Legacy's "Gospel Spirit" series, producer Nedra-Olds Neal programmed both studio and concert performances and enlisted the help of gospel authority (and former I.S.A.M. Senior Research Fellow) Horace Clarence Boyer, who provides erudite annotations.

Among recent jazz offerings in Columbia/Legacy's ambitious reissue program are *A Study in Frustration: The Fletcher Henderson Story* (57596) and *Louis Armstrong: Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, 1923-1934* (57176). The contrasts between the two are telling. For the lower-profile Henderson, Legacy simply repackaged a 1961 set of LPs into a 3-CD format, reprinting Frank Driggs's original notes and John Hammond's statement ostensibly explaining the bandleader's career-long "frustration." While the remastering is decent, the booklet is marred by typos and (in one place) missing text. Not so for Satchmo, who gets the full red-carpet treatment in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: sparkling clean transfers courtesy of Mark Wilder and a handsome 77-page booklet with enlightening text by Institute of Jazz Studies director Dan Morgenstern (assisted by saxophonist/bandleader Loren Schoenberg). Why such different approaches to these two artists? The Armstrong set, as it turns out, is part of a ten-year project called "America's Jazz Heritage" undertaken by the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund and the Smithsonian Institution, with the latter providing crucial production and editorial assistance. That's great for Armstrong, of course, but frustrating for Henderson fans.

**Morton's Moment.** Meanwhile Jelly Roll Morton is proving to be hot property in the 1990s. After George C. Wolfe produced the hit show "Jelly's Last Jam," Da Capo put out a new reprint edition of Alan Lomax's *Mister Jelly Roll*, and Vernell Bagneris and Morten Gunnar Larsen mounted their revue "Jelly Roll!" Now Rounder has reissued *Jelly Roll Morton: The Library of Congress Recordings* (4 CDs, Rounder 1091-1094), edited and annotated by leading Mortonologist James Dapogny (whose Chicago Jazz Band recently recorded—what else?—an all-Morton disc, *Original Jelly Roll Blues*, on the Discovery label). Morton's 1938 interview sessions with Alan Lomax are essential to the history of recorded jazz, and Rounder's compilation is welcome even though it includes only musical performances and cuts out much of Morton's commentary (the company promises a complete version of the material at some future date). Some previously unissued bawdy lyrics on the set have drawn

(continued on page 15)



## CLASSICIZING "SHOW BOAT"? by Larry Stempel, Fordham University

When *Show Boat* pulled into New York's Gershwin Theatre at the end of September after nearly a year's run in Toronto, many New York papers highlighted what was most tangible about the undertaking: a production worth \$8.5 million, a wardrobe of 500 costumes, an orchestra of 31, a cast of 71—and a top ticket price of \$75! Largely overlooked in this dazzle of data was a less tangible but no less significant item: *Show Boat* was being heralded as "A Classic Musical Tale." *Show Boat*, to be sure, is hardly the first Broadway product to be marketed with its own seal of approval—what is that exclamation point doing in *Oklahoma!*?—but it may well be the first to do so in precisely these terms. "Classic" is the key word here, and it raises important issues about both *Show Boat* and its new production. For, if nothing else, *Show Boat* has survived as a first-rate piece of entertainment while most comparable works of its vintage have not. Beyond this, a sense of grandness of purpose has clung to *Show Boat* from the start, repeatedly inviting hyperbole.

There are many reasons for this. The tale, for example, has often been called "epic," although *Show Boat* is perhaps more aptly characterized as "crammed with plot" (to quote the *New York Times* critic who reviewed its Broadway premiere). Adapted in 1927 by librettist Oscar Hammerstein II from the best-selling novel by Edna Ferber, *Show Boat* is a sprawling melodrama that encompasses three generations of theater folk on and off a Mississippi floating theater from the 1880s to what was then the present, all set in the contemporaneous social context of relations between blacks and whites. *Show Boat* is also crammed with music. It uses its plot, in fact, to justify mixing music that is expressive of character (as in operetta) with music that diverts in separate moments of song and dance (as in vaudeville). Moreover, the score by composer Jerome Kern is a blend of forms, genres, and styles that freely embraces the sweep of America's popular music from Reconstruction to Prohibition. Thus much of this musical tale's characteristic heft results from sheer blessed overabundance—a bounty that warrants the material extravagance lavished on the current production.

Yet earning the status of a classic requires something more. For classicism resides less in a work itself than in the cultural position it gains over time. How, then, has *Show Boat* come to be perceived? For one thing, it is seen as a turning point in the history of the Broadway musical. As a musical play, *Show Boat* influenced the content, tone, and form of some of the most distinguished achievements in later decades, from *Carousel* to *Fiddler on the Roof*. For another, *Show Boat* lives on as a thriving artifact of American popular culture. It is the earliest work of its kind to hold its own regularly amid the trendy comings and goings of Broadway, where it has been produced anew nearly every decade since its premiere. Indeed, as the oldest such artifact whose meaning derives substantially from breaking with the past, *Show Boat* takes its place at the head of any attempt to establish a canon of Broadway musicals.

The idea of *Show Boat* as in some sense classic, then, is by now deeply rooted in Broadway culture, from its historiography to its folklore. Yet the new production, under director Harold Prince, so differs from the original presentation by Florenz Ziegfeld that it can hardly be called classic—at least not in the sense of wholeheartedly embracing historic authenticity.

So how does Prince's production match with Ziegfeld's? The same book is there, though some of Hammerstein's dialogue and lyrics are considerably edited by Prince and some scenes even replaced. Kern's score is also there, though some old songs give way to new ones and, on occasion, are assigned to different characters. Where "Why Do I Love You?" was once sunnily sung by a married hero and heroine to each other, it now is assigned to the heroine's mother, who performs it in a thunderstorm to her newborn granddaughter. Prince explains in the playbill that with these changes he aims "to restore serious incidents and clarify plot and character motivations." Thus restored, for example, is "Mis'ry's Comin' Aroun'," cut in 1927 during tryouts; and thus excised is the Chicago World's Fair scene, with its racially objectionable "In Dahomey," deemed by Prince an "irrelevant second-act opener." Perhaps Prince aims to see how far *Show Boat* can move toward contemporary sensibility, from a cinematic fluidity in staging to a heightened social awareness about race, as he grafts onto the narrative structure of the piece the very qualities now associated with his own development of an overtly conceptual and thematically dark musical theater. If so, this production derives its considerable power from a vision of *Show Boat* which in many respects does not coincide with that of its original creators.

Yet can Prince's production be faulted for this—for failing to live up to an ideal of the show based upon whatever its shape was at the Ziegfeld Theatre in 1927? Doing so would overlook the very real success of the current production on its own terms, and it would judge *Show Boat* by its most recent marketing ploy, inhibiting the work in ways that Kern and Hammerstein never intended. For there is no indication that the two regarded their book and score as a fixed "text" with a life of its own apart from imminent production. On the contrary, they changed *Show Boat* themselves on several occasions, sometimes substantially, in order to suit new performance conditions.

There is thus a *Show Boat* legacy of not one but several musical tales that can be considered authoritative: the known repertoire of possible choices for the piece sanctioned by the authors before, during, and after its Broadway premiere. This means that nowadays even a responsible revival of *Show Boat*—one, that is, whose function is more than purely archival—has license to be, in part, an original recreation. The Prince production takes just such an approach. Neither irresponsible nor archival, it adheres to the established repertoire of choices, drawing from it to further

(continued on page 12)

## YEA NEA

In a time of political turmoil, with congressional sea changes underway and budgetary axes poised ominously, it seems appropriate to pause over the achievements of a major force in our cultural life: the National Endowment for the Arts. Through its twenty-nine-year existence, the NEA has provided the kind of patronage essential for the artistic growth of any nation, yet it does so at levels far below other major industrialized countries, and its future is uncertain. Ask almost any creative artist, and you will hear testimony about the NEA's impact. There are always quibbles about individual grant decisions, yet the overall contribution of the endowment is far-reaching. Interested in knowing where your tax dollars go, artistically speaking? Here are some facts and figures:

★The NEA's total budget for fiscal year 1994 was \$170.2 million—less than two one-hundredths of 1 percent (.0002 percent) of the total federal budget. In 1995 it will decrease to \$167.4 million.

★The NEA's allocation breaks down to approximately 65 cents per capita, compared to a total of \$1,100 per person on defense and \$2,000 for the savings-and-loan bailout. At current prices, the cost of one B2 bomber is the same as that of five NEAs. By contrast, Canada and France invest \$32 per person in the arts; Germany spends \$27.

★Since its inception in 1965, the NEA has awarded over 100,000 grants to both individuals and organizations as well as to state agencies for redistribution within each state.

★During that same period, the number of symphony orchestras in the United States has grown from 110 to 220, dance companies have increased from 37 to over 250, and opera companies from 56 to 420.

★At a time when arts education is being eliminated in the public schools, the NEA supports valuable artist-in-residence programs. During 1990-91, for example, it funded more than 13,000 school residencies, reaching some 4 million children and teachers.

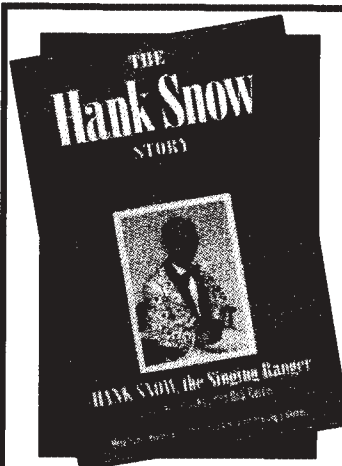
★With all the recent hoopla about obscenity, the following statistic is striking: ninety-five percent of the NEA's funds are awarded to arts organizations, not individual artists.

★By requiring all organizations to match NEA dollars at least one-to-one, the NEA generates substantial additional revenue for arts support. In 1992, the matching funds totaled an estimated \$1.376 billion.

★Since its budget has not kept pace with inflation, the NEA has lost 47 percent of its purchasing power since 1979.

(The information above was obtained through the NEA's Office of Public Affairs. Anyone interested in working to bolster the NEA's support should contact the American Arts Alliance: 202-737-1727.)

—CJO and RA



### The Hank Snow Story

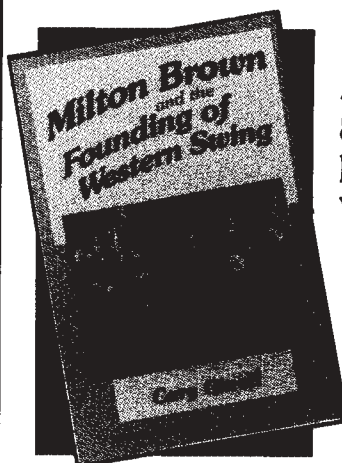
Hank Snow,  
the Singing Ranger,  
with Jack Ownbey  
and Bob Burris

A Note on the Recordings  
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## SCHOLARS HEAD FOR THE COUNTRY by Charles Wolfe, Middle Tennessee State University

"Strange days have found us," wrote the poet, and as country music enters its eighth decade, publishers have decided that country fans can read. There has been a spate of autobiographies in recent years, ranging from that of the Nashville Network talk show host Ralph Emery to another by country diva Reba McEntire (both of which reached the *New York Times* best-seller list). Such popular "as-told-to" accounts need a lot of winnowing for students of country music. Fortunately, the general renaissance in country publishing has also stimulated more serious books, including collections of essays and full-length studies. Three new publications reflect both formats for presenting country scholarship and chart interesting new directions.

In spite of recent changes in Nashville, the heart of the music business is still a 24-square-block area west of downtown called Music Row. Most of the record company headquarters, publishers' offices, and booking and talent agencies are located there, as well as the Country Music Hall of Fame, union offices, and huge new buildings for ASCAP, BMI, and SESAC. Almost adjoining this area, barely six blocks away, is the sprawling campus of Vanderbilt University. For years Vanderbilt seemed ideally positioned to become a center for serious study of country music. But such has not been the case. In the 1960s, when the trustees of the John Edwards Archives sought a university home for what was then the world's largest collection of country music material, they approached Vanderbilt, only to be rather rudely rebuffed. Since then, the university has shown little serious interest in encouraging country scholarship. The Edwards collection went first to UCLA and then to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. More recently, though, a fresh cadre of scholars at Vanderbilt has turned to country music research, and two of the best new books are products of their work. Interestingly, however, all these scholars come from disciplines outside of musicology.

For the last two decades Richard A. Peterson, a Vanderbilt sociologist, has been quietly publishing important work in journals such as *Social Forces* and *Sage Annual Reviews of Communication Research*. Peterson describes himself as an industrial sociologist, and he has devoted much of his talent to examining just how the Nashville music industry developed and how it works. He can read a corporate report, and he has bought enough drinks to hear first-hand stories about the Nashville music business. Along with Melton A. McLaurin, another sociologist, he has recently edited a rich collection of essays titled *You Wrote My Life: Lyrical Themes in Country Music* (Gordon and Breach; 1992, \$45/\$18). The book is part of the series "Cultural Perspectives on the American South," and it features six essays on general themes, as well as one spotlighting Johnny Cash. The essays explore country music in relation to the image it projects of the South, as well as to class consciousness, the economic transformation of the South, representations of women, and images of death. Though the writers seem aware of the risk in assuming that country fans pay much attention to

lyrics, most are unable to resist the temptation to parse them like the poems of Robert Frost. Ironically, some use the basic approach of the so-called New Critics, many of whom were based at Vanderbilt in the 1930s. Not much is said about the backgrounds or histories of the songs or about the artists who produced them.

The most provocative and well-done essays are those of the editors. McLaurin's piece on images of the South seeks to explain "the continued southern consciousness" in the music, while Peterson's on class suggests that the lyrics "both evoke working class consciousness and also diffuse it." Drawing on his own earlier studies, such as an influential one on the "fertile crescent" of country music's geography, Peterson addresses forthrightly how a popular art form can both reflect and reinforce a sense of class—a subject all too rarely discussed. Most of the essays tend to range across country music history, and some very risky generalizations are made. James C. Cobb, for instance, makes a great deal out of a 1931 protest song by Dave McCarn called "Serves Them Fine." It is true that McCarn's quirky songs were great favorites of the northern folksong movement of the 1960s and 1970s and that they were reissued repeatedly on LP anthologies. But in August 1931, when "Serves Them Fine" first appeared on Victor, it managed to sell slightly over 900 copies—hardly enough to have made an impact on either the culture or songwriters of the time.

One of Peterson's colleagues at Vanderbilt is Cecelia Tichi (English Department) who takes quite a different approach to country lyrics in *High Lonesome: The American Culture of Country Music* (University of North Carolina Press, 1994; \$39.95). Her book should not be confused with the recent, identically titled documentary about Bill Monroe. Tichi argues that the basic themes of country music are very similar to those found in the greater American culture, and her definition of "culture" includes everything from Emerson to the "Little House on the Prairie" series, from western author Zane Grey to Currier and Ives prints. Two decades ago Greil Marcus tried something similar with his now-classic *Mystery Train: Images of America in Rock 'n' Roll Music*, in which he related rock and rockabilly to major themes in American culture. Such studies require an almost impossibly broad-based knowledge of formal literature, popular culture, and the music itself. While Marcus knew the music well enough but was weak in cultural history, Tichi's problem is somewhat the opposite.

*High Lonesome* is essentially a study of country song texts and the songwriters who produced them. Individual chapters focus on themes such as "home," "the road," "the West," loneliness, and the idea of the natural. Two concluding chapters deal with the art of songwriting and with what the author calls "bilingual" country artists—those who crossed into country from other musical worlds. All these elements are marshaled to support Tichi's thesis that country music is a national art form, "one that





Bobbie and Bill Malone  
Photograph by Al Kennedy

belongs to all Americans and one that is strongly linked to our nation's literature and art." The book comes with a mini-compact disc containing samples of the songs discussed.

In the opening pages of *High Lonesome*, Tichi explains that three artists "have emerged as mainstays of this project: Rodney Crowell, Emmylou Harris, and Dolly Parton." No one can argue that these are pivotal and important figures and that the long interview with Crowell is an important piece of fresh research. However, the first-hand material in the remainder of the book comes from artists who can hardly be considered hard-core country "stars" (as the dust jacket describes them) but are better known in northern folk-music and bluegrass circles. These include Robin and Linda Williamson, Barry and Holly Tashian, and instrumentalist Laurie Lewis. All this then raises the problem of just how selective Tichi's examples are. The kind of country songwriters who actually pen million-selling records and get annual awards from BMI and ASCAP are not well-represented here. Pat Alger, whose songs have made Garth Brooks a household name, is not mentioned once in the book. Nor are such key songwriters as Bill Anderson, Don Schlitz, Ira Louvin, Billy Joe Shaver, or Bobby Braddock. Cited only once or twice are K.T. Oslin, who certainly revolutionized the writing of country songs for women; Curly Putnam; Danny Dill; Bob Nolan (in spite of a chapter on western themes); Tom T. Hall; and Bob McDill. The last two slights are especially curious. McDill is an extremely literate man known for his huge collection of books by southern writers such as Robert Penn Warren, William Styron, and Thomas Wolfe and for his often-stated determination to link songwriting with the themes of classic southern literature. Hall is himself an influential writer in the mid-Tennessee area who has published several books of stories and a novel. (In fact, Tichi seems unaware that numerous Nashville songwriters, from Jim Anglin to Alton Delmore to Ernest Tubb, harbored aspirations to write fiction.)

The problem in selectivity extends beyond the songwriters interviewed and discussed. Nowhere can I find any rationale for selecting the songs to include. Unlike *The Country Music Message* by Jimmie Rodgers (1983), where the songs chosen were simply taken from the top of the *Billboard* charts, Tichi routinely mixes obscure pieces, such as Laurie Lewis's "Cowgirl's Song," with more famous ones, such as Tex Ritter's theme from "High Noon," seeming to give them equal weight. At times it almost appears as though the author cannot really decide if country music is formal culture or pop culture—and, indeed, as the Nashville scene becomes more sophisticated, it is an understandable confusion.

It is interesting to contrast Tichi's themes of country with those of McLaurin and Peterson. Tichi's are more broadly defined and poetically couched, and she mercifully takes things less literally than the sociologists. Her wide-ranging interests and background—her general cultural literacy—allow her to spot unsuspected and unlikely connections. (One such occurs when she juxtaposes a rose-filled cover shot from a George Jones LP with a stained glass window from the Cathedral of Notre Dame.) Her writing is free from cant and jargon—it is almost as if she has been influenced by her own subjects—and the book as a whole is wonderfully readable. Though *High Lonesome* doesn't succeed in being a definitive survey of Nashville songs or songwriting, it is a landmark study. It will be accused of pretentiousness (early reviews already have done so), but this is a charge that almost any theoretical work on country music will attract. *High Lonesome* takes its subject seriously and sympathetically, and as such is an important model for future work.

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The dean of country music scholars, though, comes not from Vanderbilt or even Nashville, but from Tulane. He is Bill C. Malone, whose *Country Music, U.S.A.* (1968) was the first scholarly history of the genre and, in a recent update, is still considered the standard work on the subject. Having laid the groundwork for studying country music's history, Malone has moved on to more theoretical studies. His *Southern Music, American Music* (1979) advanced the idea that most forms of American popular music have their roots in vernacular idioms of the South, and in subsequent papers he has continued to explore the southernness of country. Malone had a huge head start in researching the subject—he was busy interviewing veteran stars in the mid-1960s, long before other scholars were in the field—and he brings impressive skills to his job. He is a fine writer, with a true historian's sense of narrative and an ability to explain tricky concepts. No one has a better knowledge of country's secondary literature; his footnotes are often as revealing as his text. Best of all, though, he has a genuine passion for the music. He grew up listening to it in Texas, he knows its repertory by heart, and he even enjoys performing it himself. His is a passion so deep that it cannot be duplicated by people who look upon country as a "topic."

(continued on page 10)

## COUNTRY (continued)

Yet Malone is what fiction editors call a "slow bleeder": he is not prolific, and his books are too far between. That is why a new Malone book deserves special attention—even if it is the kind of slim volume represented by *Singing Cowboys and Musical Mountaineers* (University of Georgia Press, 1994; \$12.95). Subtitled "Southern Culture and the Roots of Country Music," the book contains texts of the Lamar Memorial Lectures delivered by Malone at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia in the fall of 1990. In his introduction Malone explains: "The first two essays . . . attempt to suggest the breadth of sources on which early country music drew, while the third explores some of the mythology that contributed to the shaping of the music once its development as an industry began."

"Southern Rural Music in the Nineteenth Century" and "Popular Culture and the Music of the South" deal with subjects that Malone did not have time to explore in much detail in *Country Music, U.S.A.* The latter is especially important in light of the new discography and bibliography that reveal just how many old-time country and "traditional" songs have their roots in popular tunes by nineteenth-century composers. Malone writes at length about William Shakespeare Hays, the former Louisville riverman who wrote "The Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane," among other tunes. He notes that such composers are generally ignored by historians of popular music, who do not realize how influential these songs were to country and traditional singers. Hays's "Jimmie Brown the Paper Boy" of 1875 might be classified as sentimental drivel—in Sigmund Spaeth's phrase, one of the "songs we forgot to remember"—unless one knows something about how Flatt and Scruggs revived the tune in the 1940s and made it a bluegrass standard. Malone's comments on vaudeville performers like Polk Miller are likewise revealing.

The third essay, "Mountaineers and Cowboys: Country Music's Search for Identity," deals with the central problem of country as it became commercialized: its image. This kind of revisionism is essential. During the 1960s, when early country first came to national attention, many students and fans tended to overemphasize its folk or ideological aspects, often romanticizing it and positing a dialectic between the working class southern musician, on the one hand, and the callous, monocultural record and radio companies, on the other. Malone suggests that this separation might never have been so pronounced and that many early country singers were eager to publicize their music and willing to participate in building an image often rooted in stereotypes and nostalgia.

As always, Malone's new book is challenging and provocative, based on research that could serve as a model for anyone seeking to deal with this tricky subject. Ironically, it has not received the wide attention it deserves—submerged in part by the flood of more popular books that Malone's own work has made possible. Such is the fate of prophets.

## NEWS OF NOTE

**LC Made EZ.** The Library of Congress has recently produced two sumptuous and informative "guides" to its collections. *The African-American Mosaic: A Library of Congress Resource Guide for the Study of Black History & Culture* includes sections about music by Dena J. Epstein that are woven into a chronological overview of the whole span of the African-American experience. Fusing easy reading with hard-core information retrieval, the volume is especially valuable in hinting at the rich source materials about African-American music that are housed outside of the Music Division (300 pp., \$24, for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15230-7954). *Library of Congress/Music, Theater, Dance/An Illustrated Guide* is another readable finding aid with an accessible gloss that gives nutshell descriptions of important collections and makes archival research seem downright appealing (80 pp., \$13, for sale by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP, Washington, D.C. 20402-9328).

**USCP for the USA.** The University of South Carolina Press plans a series of books about jazz, popular music, and musical theater in twentieth-century America. For more information, contact Joyce Harrison, Acquisitions Editor, University of South Carolina Press, 1716 College Street, Columbia, SC 29208 <joyce@uscpress.sc.edu>.

**RISMHELP.** As e-mail moves from being a novel toy to an essential tool, it increasingly can bring library catalogues and collections to your desktop screen. A recent case is the RISM-US Music Manuscripts Database, which by July 1995 is expected to contain more than 30,000 bibliographic records for music manuscripts from fifty American libraries covering the period ca. 1580-1825. For detailed instructions about how to log on, contact <rismhelp@rism.harvard.edu> or write John B. Howard, Director, U.S. RISM Office, Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138.

**Ivesville.** Planning to visit Danbury, Connecticut in the near future? The Housatonic Valley Tourism Commission has prepared a brochure about Ivesiana in the area, including a map for a self-guided walking tour that covers twenty local spots of significance in the life of Charles Ives. For a copy, write the commission at Box 406, Danbury, CT 06813.

**Mother from Another Planet.** Frank Zappa may have been considered weird during his lifetime, but now he's truly "out there." The December 1994 issue of *CompuServe Magazine* tells how an international group of Zappa fans lobbied (via fax and e-mail) to have a Czech-discovered asteroid named after the iconoclastic American musician. Their efforts paid off and now it's official: somewhere between Mars and Jupiter there's a five-mile-long rock called "Zappafrank" hurtling through the cosmos.

## READING RAP

Love it or hate it, few critics dispute the controversial nature of contemporary rap. More than any genre in recent history, rap has ignited a national debate over popular music and cultural values, raising nagging questions about race, gender, and violence in our society. The myriad social issues surrounding rap are the subject of Tricia Rose's provocative new work, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America* (Wesleyan University Press, 1994; \$35/\$14.95). Armed with the tools of critical theory and mass-culture analysis, Rose aims to deconstruct the complex and often contradictory messages encoded in the sounds and lyrics of rap.

Rose situates the origins of rap and related forms of hip hop culture (break dancing and graffiti) with marginalized black and Latino youths from a postindustrial, media-driven urban environment. Only by considering the interplay between street life, the recording industry, broadcast media, and marketing, she argues, can we begin to fathom rap's meaning. She deftly explores the tensions inherent in a hybrid expression of folk orality and advanced technology, as well as the contradictions of a pop genre that unabashedly sounds the call for racial justice while continuing to reinforce the hegemony of capitalist materialism and the male domination of women. Her discussion of gender dynamics is particularly insightful, as she reveals how female rappers, in dialogue with their male counterparts, simultaneously affirm aspects of traditional gender roles while challenging the subordinate status of black women.

While filled with insights, *Black Noise* is not without flaws. In her zeal to defend rap as serious social commentary, Rose focuses too narrowly on message rappers such as Public Enemy, KRS-One, Salt 'N' Pepa, L.L. Cool J., and Ice Cube. In reality much commercial rap, like most popular music, is concerned less with political dissent and more with love, sex, and partying. The meanings of politically loaded raps such as "Who Protects Us From You?" and "Illegal Search" are obvious, but the degree to which these compositions are representative of a larger pattern is not. A broader lyrical sample would have bolstered Rose's claims for the counterhegemonic status of rap.

Rose's ardent defense of rap is a laudable response to vitriolic attacks by media critics and politicians. Yet too often she excuses rap-related violence and sexism as either a hyperbolic media construction or the inevitable result of oppressive social conditions. While there is certainly truth to this view, her unwavering victimization stance is overly rhetorical and at odds with the current call by civil rights leaders for a renewed sense of personal responsibility. Moreover, her criticism of Nelson George's "Stop the Violence" campaign—an effort to urge rappers to condemn black on black crime and raise money to fight inner city illiteracy and crime—seems misguided.

These criticisms notwithstanding, Rose provides a sophisticated framework for analyzing the race, class, and gender dimensions of hip hop culture, thus outlining the crucial issues that will shape rap scholarship for some time to come.

-Ray Allen

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## COMPOSERS IN CRISIS: ANOTHER VIEW

*Martin Brody's "Pluralism, Difference, and the Crisis of Composers in the Academy" (I.S.A.M. Newsletter, Spring 1994) generated lots of informal comments to our office. We even heard rumors that it inspired heated e-mail exchanges. Edward Harsh—composer, writer, and managing editor of the Kurt Weill Edition—submitted a formal rejoinder, printed here in full:*

I would like to thank Professor Brody for his succinct exposition of an issue that is of singular importance for all members (academic and otherwise) of the music profession. I agree that concepts such as Cornel West's "difference" (when not taken to cynical or radical extremes) help level categories by offering a tool to weed the creeping overgrowth of modernism that initially appeared so promising but now has gone to seed. I would not be so quick, however, to identify "anthropologists of music" as the new preferred custodians of art in the academy. Doing so plays directly into the very ideology that has made the status of the academic composer so precarious.

Brody's reference to "social Darwinism" provides an excellent illustration of a key issue: the tenacity of the nineteenth-century predilection for couching cultural phenomena in terms of the science of origins. Music gained admission to the university under the pretense that it could be studied in the same way that Marie Curie might examine a lump of radium. This formulation served its purpose at the time. However, it also set in motion an unnatural selection process, which eventually led to a point where composers gained tenure on the basis of their perceived ability to discover the mu-mesons of dodecaphony. Such discoveries were thought to represent an evolutionary advance and to herald a day (centuries hence, no doubt) when the free and happy peoples of the world would be sufficiently enlightened to exit concert halls whistling their favorite z-related pitch-class sets.

As much as new attitudes toward hierarchy and pluralism have altered the surface of academia, assumptions holding cultural practices as analogous to scientific processes remain a fundamental stratum in its bedrock. Musicologists and theorists—members of Brody's "dominant fields"—can usually reposition themselves according to the caprices of intellectual fashion while still fulfilling the baseline requirements of empirical validation. Composers (for a wide variety of reasons, including perhaps a greater sensitivity to ideas like West's "difference") now find themselves unable or unwilling to justify their existence before the tribunal of scientific values. This refusal only hastens the erosion of their position in the academy—"composer-theorists" excluded, of course.

Composers must liberate themselves from a siege mentality that would have them defend their position in the university on the basis of an outmoded model of composer-as-laboratory-scientist. Such a liberation effort will be little-served by an institutional coronation of Brody's anthropologist of music. Shifting

emphasis to such an "exemplary witness and documenter of cultural traits" merely validates the academy as a place of clinical techniques. One need not experience great "anachronistic nostalgia for European cultural models" to feel queasy about a system that continues to refuse credence to those who, in the less self-conscious language of a more certain age, might simply be called creative.

I would argue that university composers gain most from the emergence of ideas allied with "difference" by having a whole world—literally—of previously forbidden opportunity open up to them. In this regard Brody's use of the imagery of war is apt. Composers in academia have too often regarded the university as their Alamo, protecting them from the barbarians of multiplicity and difference massing at the gate. A decisive step will have been taken when the besieged academic composer comes to realize that what looked like a haven is actually a prison.

And then it's Bastille Day.

— Edward Harsh

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## SHOW BOAT (continued)

the dramatic, if not always the musical, progress of the show. Thus Prince bows to the principle of authorial intention, though such a position is difficult to maintain in a popular art that depends substantially on collaborative input and audience reception. But he does so only up to a point, beyond which (as in the case of "Why Do I Love You?") this musical tale becomes boldly iconoclastic and very much his own.

That makes Prince the principal coauthor—together with Hammerstein and Kern—of *Show Boat* 1994. His position is an emblem of both the central role the director has come to play in musical theater and the degree to which the work and production are inextricably, yet flexibly, intertwined—which raises the question of how meaningful it is to speak of *Show Boat* at all apart from productions of it. Calling it a "classic musical tale" implies that the idea of *Show Boat* is more powerful than the reality. But this can hardly have been intended in promoting this new production. Was advertising *Show Boat* as a classic, then, just so much puffery? Or was it a symptom of something more disturbing—a tendency to idealize Broadway's past in the face of a problematic present, viewing its prospects (unlike its retrospects) as dim? Neither really reflects the thrust of what Prince has actually done. Alive to the sensibilities of contemporary theatergoers in everything from stagecraft and dramaturgy to sentiment and social mores, he has fashioned a *Show Boat* that respects its material without classicizing it. That puts it in a longstanding Broadway tradition.

## ENCOUNTERS WITH JAZZ

**An American Original.** By the early 1970s, saxophonist and composer Anthony Braxton (b. 1945) was widely considered one of the freshest voices in jazz, a virtuoso whose imaginative synthesis of bebop with the aesthetics of "free" jazz heralded a bold new artistic direction for the music. Yet a decade later, Braxton's wide-ranging musical and philosophical interests and his refusal to abide by established artistic categories had left him largely marginalized by both critics and audiences. In his fascinating book, *New Musical Figurations: Anthony Braxton's Cultural Critique* (University of Chicago Press, 1993; \$49.95/\$16.95), Ronald M. Radano reevaluates Braxton's life and work, affirming his stature as one of the most original and gifted musicians of recent decades.

As is clear by the title, this is not a typical jazz biography. Most of the details of Braxton's life are here, but Radano also shows that his importance cannot be grasped without examining the musical and intellectual context in which he developed. Through a deft interweaving of cultural theory and primary sources (including twelve interviews with Braxton), expressed with a dense but accessible prose style, Radano shows how Braxton's life and work are deeply imbedded in the post-war African-American cultural experience. By doing so, he calls existing aesthetic standards into question and provides a provocative new lens for viewing Braxton's art. Perhaps most impressive is the graceful way in which Radano folds detailed discussions of specific pieces into his study. Through his imaginative analyses, he brings us inside the music as well as the surrounding context. We are left not only with a strong sense of Braxton as an emblem of postmodern culture but with an appreciation for a brilliant and innovative musical mind.



Wynton Marsalis and James Lincoln Collier at Lincoln Center  
Photograph by Frank Stewart

**Showdown at Lincoln Center.** Readers of the *New York Times Book Review* this past winter were witness to a vitriolic war of words between two of jazz's most visible personalities: Wynton Marsalis, virtuoso trumpeter and artistic director of Lincoln Center's jazz program, and James Lincoln Collier, a widely published author, critic, and historian. Responding to a complimentary review of Collier's recent book, *Jazz: The American Theme Song* (Oxford University Press, 1993), Marsalis called the author "a pompous social scientist who for too long has passed as a serious scholar of music" and issued a challenge to debate him in public. Some weeks later Collier responded,

calling Marsalis's charges "scurrilous" and eagerly picking up the gauntlet that had been tossed.

The debate took place on 7 August 1994, in Lincoln Center's Kaplan Penthouse. There, in front of a standing-room-only crowd that included some of New York's best-known jazz critics, Collier and Marsalis met face-to-face for the first time. The exceedingly testy audience, clearly in Marsalis's camp, was out for blood, loudly cheering the trumpeter's comments and rudely interrupting Collier in mid-sentence. During the ensuing debate, which lasted well over two hours, the sparks flew, but each participant made valid points. Marsalis, drawing upon his prodigious talents as a working musician and his eloquence as a speaker, severely undermined Collier's analyses of recordings by Ellington and Armstrong; he clearly illustrated, for example, that Collier had misinterpreted the rhythmic structure of Armstrong's 1923 "Chimes Blues" solo. Yet Collier managed to

show the breadth of his own work which, although often accused of inaccuracies, is based on years of studying primary sources.

Marsalis began by criticizing specific passages of Collier's books, but the discussion soon drifted to other topics, including the volatile issues of class and education among black jazz

musicians. Perhaps the tensest moments came when Collier openly questioned Marsalis's motives in his role at Lincoln Center, noting that the trumpeter has been criticized for refusing to acknowledge the historic importance of white jazz musicians in shaping the center's programs and for supposedly giving himself commissions. Marsalis eloquently refuted these accusations, as the air of belligerence rose to a fever pitch, fed once again by the audience's indignation.

On leaving I overheard one critic ask another, "Well, who won?" As I walked toward the subway I couldn't help thinking that such a spectacle leaves us all losers, including the participants. Despite differences in background and training, each speaker had valuable insights into the music. Working together they could have told much about this rich and complex tradition. But such a public display of hostility benefits no one. Rather it does an injustice to the great American art form to which both Collier and Marsalis have devoted the better part of their lives.

—Jeff Taylor

## VIEWING AMERICAN-MUSIC COLLECTIONS

... in Colorado. The primary purpose of the American Music Research Center (part of the University of Colorado-Boulder's music library) is to serve the students and faculty at the university, as well as visiting fellows engaged in research or performance. We especially welcome research topics addressing musical traditions from throughout the western states. In addition to recently hosting a one-day summer ragtime symposium in conjunction with the Rocky Mountain Ragtime Festival, we have welcomed public lectures by Vivian Perlis and H. Wiley Hitchcock. Meanwhile, we are nearing completion of a fourth volume of our annual journal and preparing for visits in the upcoming months from Bess Lomax Hawes (to discuss cowboy poetry and songs) and Philip Brett (on musicality and sexuality).

As exciting as these activities have been, recent acquisitions and additions to the collection promise an even more energetic program in the future. Copies of the Virgil Thomson papers have been sent from the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and Susan Porter's extensive holdings of folk-music materials (especially dulcimer recordings) were donated to us just before her death. A recent University of Colorado masters' thesis by Mark Davenport examines the early life of Erich Katz, a pioneer among American early-music teachers and performers whose papers are in our archive. The works of Charles Eakin and Arthur Olaf Anderson, two western states' composers, have also been added to our collection.

The Alvin G. Layton Theater Music Collection, also part of our center, is becoming better known among silent movie buffs in the Boulder-Denver area, and several ensembles are drawing from among its 2400 early twentieth-century theater and salon orchestra arrangements to provide live background music for local film series.

On the horizon for 1995 is a summer symposium, *American Music—American Women*, scheduled for August 3-6. One-page abstracts of paper and performance proposals should be submitted by 15 January 1995 to: T. Riis, Women's Music Symposium, University of Colorado, College of Music CB 301, Boulder, CO 80309. Travel grants to work with the Center's collections are also available. Application forms will be sent on request.

—Thomas L. Riis, Director  
American Music Research Center



*Louis Armstrong with neighborhood children  
in front of his home in Corona, Queens.  
Courtesy Louis Armstrong Archives, Queens College, CUNY*

... in Queens. Queens College recently completed a three-year project to catalogue and preserve materials in the Louis Armstrong Archives, including Armstrong's personal collection of photographs, papers, scrapbooks, commercial recordings, private recordings, memorabilia, and musical instruments. The collection provides an intensely personal view of Armstrong's life off-stage. Highlights include: 350 pages of autobiographical manuscript in Armstrong's own hand, dozens of candid tape recordings of Armstrong telling jokes and stories, thousands of previously unpublished photographs of Armstrong and his contemporaries,

and more than 500 reel-to-reel tape boxes that Armstrong lovingly decorated by hand. Queens College also administers the house in which Louis and Lucille Armstrong lived from 1943 on. Located in Corona, Queens, it was designated a national historic landmark in 1977. Queens College is renovating it to meet building codes and hopes to open the house as a public museum. For more information about the Louis Armstrong House and Archives, phone (718) 997-3670 or e-mail <mcsqc@cunyvm.cuny.edu>.

—Michael Cogswell, Director  
Louis Armstrong Archives

... in England. The American Music Collection at the Exeter University Library is one of the foremost repositories of its type in Europe, with around 10,000 recordings in various formats covering every conceivable genre of American music, from traditional Native American music to gospel, from film soundtracks to rock. The collection is particularly strong in jazz and blues. There are over 70,000 separate blues tracks, for example. Other materials of special interest include clippings donated by the musicologist Paul Oliver. Also based at the University of Exeter is the ongoing *Encyclopaedia of Popular Music of the World (EPMOW)*. Initiated by the University's Centre for American and Commonwealth Arts and Studies, in association with research centers at Carleton University in Ottawa and the University of Liverpool, this project aims to produce a multivolume encyclopedia and data base devoted to all aspects of the world's popular musics, covering not just performers and composers, but genres, record industries, technologies, cultural and political contexts, and other features. For further information write to: Julie Crawley, Exeter University Library, Stocker Road, Exeter EX4 4QA, England.

—Julie Crawley  
Exeter University Library



**DEVIL'S MUSIC (continued)**

positive feelings. Somber brooding, extending sometimes into outright nihilism, forms part of metal's essence. Walser's emphasis on the up side of metal represents a covert apology, denying the rage that gives the music its emotional power. Behind the big words and a left-wing intellectual's sympathy for the downtrodden lies embarrassed condescension. Walser's euphemisms serve to dilute heavy metal's strong passions into the ambiguous rationalizations preferred by academics. The heavy metal fan wants (among other things) to vent anger and escape a degrading world. Walser, the symbolic analyst and information worker, wishes to "problematize" and "historicize."

— Julian Treves  
Columbia University

**BEHIND THE BEAT (continued)**

notice in the press. Yet it is Morton's multifaceted musicianship that leaves the listener awestruck—the glittering keyboard technique, expressive singing, perfect timing, and irresistible rhythmic zest add up to one of the most impressive one-man shows ever captured on disc.

**Wilder On-Line.** A new Alec Wilder e-mail list started up this fall, aiming to "serve as a forum for the discussion of the life and work of the composer." Moderator is Ronald Prather of Trinity University, who coauthored (with David Demsey) a Wilder bibliography published by Greenwood. Interested subscribers should drop a note to Prather at <awilder@cressida.cs.trinity.edu>. Friends of Alec, log on and be counted!

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**COWELL (continued)**

Virtually all of Cage's music is available through his publisher. Ives's situation is more complex, but the majority of his finished pieces have been published; he also has the Charles Ives Society on his side. Of Cowell's 1000 or so compositions, however, only around twenty percent have been made commercially available (and some of these are out-of-print). True, lost pieces, juvenilia, and trivia all nibble into the unpublished portion; but there is an awful lot of good music there too, including three of Cowell's twenty symphonies. On the recordings front, things are even worse. According to the Spring 1993 edition of the *Schwann Opus* catalogue, only twenty-six of Cowell's works are commercially available—approximately three percent of his output.

Cowell, Cage, and Ives all wrote words as well as music. Cage's writings have been published in abundance, while Ives's have been collected and edited; all these books are still in print. Cowell was the author (or coauthor) of three important volumes; yet of these, only one is currently available (although *New Musical Resources* is to be reprinted by Cambridge University Press, probably in 1996). The chances of seeing a collected edition of his published articles, let alone his unpublished book-length study, *The Nature of Melody*, are remote. Finally, there is the degree of scholarly attention each of the three composers has received. The literature on Ives is voluminous, while for Cage scholars' business is booming; journal articles on both composers appear with increasing frequency. Cowell, on the other hand, has been poorly served by historians and musicologists alike, although a biography and a collection of essays on his work are both underway. Despite the availability of relatively generous amounts of documentary material—including three I.S.A.M. monographs and Rita Mead's *Henry Cowell's New Music* (Ann Arbor, 1981)—we can point to only a few substantial journal articles.

Henry Cowell may not have been as outwardly successful a composer as Charles Ives or John Cage. But the sum of his activities as a musician played a crucial role in establishing American music as an important force in twentieth-century culture. Cowell once stated that he wanted "to live in the whole world of music." I fervently hope that the approach of his centenary in 1997 will provide us with the opportunity to celebrate the whole world of Cowell's *own* music.

**Note**

<sup>1</sup> Excerpted from Lou Harrison, "Teas on Remembering Henry Cowell," *A Lou Harrison Reader*, ed. Peter Garland (Santa Fe: Soundings Press, 1987), 37-38.

**Principal Writings about Cowell**

Michael Hicks, "Cowell's Clustem," *Musical Quarterly* 77/3 (Fall 1993): 428-458.

Steven Johnson, "Henry Cowell, John Varian, and Halcyon," *American Music* 11/1 (Spring 1993): 1-27.

Michael Hicks, "The Imprisonment of Henry Cowell," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 44/1 (Spring 1991): 92-119.

William Lichtenwanger. *The Music of Henry Cowell: A Descriptive Catalogue*. Brooklyn: Institute for Studies in American Music, 1986.

H. Wiley Hitchcock, "Henry Cowell's *Ostinato Pianissimo*," *Musical Quarterly* 70/1 (Winter 1984): 23-44.

Martha L. Manion. *Writings about Henry Cowell: An Annotated Bibliography*. Brooklyn: I.S.A.M., 1982.

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### *I.S.A.M. CALENDAR 1994-1995 Events*

#### November 1994

- 9 ***Remaking American Opera***  
Symposium on contemporary American opera with composers John Adams, Anthony Davis, Meredith Monk, and Tania Leon; moderated by K. Robert Schwarz.

#### February 1995

- 18 ***4th Annual Brooklyn College Gospel Festival***  
Workshop and performance by Brooklyn's acclaimed young gospel ensemble, Hezekiah Walker & The Love Fellowship Crusade Choir. Also featuring Brooklyn's best high school gospel choirs.

#### March 1995

- 18 ***2nd Annual Brooklyn College West Indian Steel Pan Festival***  
Workshop and performance by Robert Greenidge, internationally renowned steel band arranger and jazz pan virtuoso. Also the C.A.S.Y.M. Steel Pan Orchestra with Arddin Herbert.

#### April 1995

##### *Island Sounds in the Global City:*

- Conference on Caribbean Music in New York City***  
28 Keynote address "Caribbean Music and Identity in New York" by Juan Flores, Director of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies at Hunter College; dance and reception with Conjunto Libre, New York's celebrated Latin jazz ensemble.  
29 Day-long conference on the history and significance of Caribbean musical traditions in New York.

#### October 1995

- TBA ***Caribbean Jazz Festival***  
As a sequel to the *Island Sounds* conference, four evenings of Caribbean jazz from Puerto Rico, Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic.

#### November 1995

- 18 ***Composing Black: Contemporary African-American Composers and the Legacy of William Grant Still***  
A day-long symposium in honor of the centenary of Still's birth featuring conversations with contemporary composers.

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