

NEWSLETTER

INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN AMERICAN MUSIC

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

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WAY DOWN UPON THE YANGTSE RIVER; OR, AMERICAN MUSIC IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA by Charles Hamm

Charles Hamm spent September and October 1988 in China as a participant in the Visiting Scholar Exchange Program of the Committee on Scholarly Communication with the People's Republic of China. He lectured on American music at conservatories in Beijing, Tianjin, Xian, Chengdu, and Shanghai and also conducted research on contemporary popular music in China.

Stephen Foster was a constant companion during my recent visit to the People's Republic of China. The day after my arrival in Beijing I heard "Beautiful Dreamer," arranged for string orchestra, on one of the ubiquitous "light music" programs aired by the Central People's Broadcasting Station (CPBS). During a train trip from Tianjin to Xian, "Jeanie with the Light Brown Hair" floated like a vapor from the public loudspeaker system installed in an earlier era to inspire travelers with martial music and quotations from Chairman Mao. At Chengdu's School for Traditional Sichuan Opera, a pianist pounded out "Old Folks at Home" to accompany a drill in the stylized stage movement of Chinese opera. On a trip down the Yangtse River from Chongqin to Shanghai, I heard Foster songs every day over the ship's loudspeakers. "Jeanie" was among the taped examples for my lecture on American popular music, and audiences everywhere smiled and nodded to indicate that they knew the piece.

Foster's omnipresence in today's China is symptomatic of more general enthusiasm for American music and culture. Make no mistake about it: even though the People's Republic is a Communist state, and despite growing worldwide perception of a steady weakening in America's economic, cultural, and moral leadership, the vast majority of the Chinese people regard the United States as the country they would most like to visit or emigrate to, and the model for what they would like their

own country to become. Not since my first visit to Poland in the 1960s have I been in a situation where so many barriers dropped and so many doors opened once it was established that I was an American.

This is a recent phenomenon. Direct contact with the United States and its culture became problematic, politically, after China's Liberation in 1949. Chinese conservatories of music were reorganized along the lines of Russian ideology, curriculum, and pedagogy. As a result, knowledge of American music and musicians during the 1950s and '60s was largely limited to what was acceptable in the Soviet Union: Pete Seeger, Paul Robeson, and Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, for instance. The decade of the Cultural Revolution, 1966-76, was even more catastrophic. Conservatories were closed, and the performance or teaching of Western music in general, and American music in particular, was punishable by exile to the countryside for "re-education" or even torture and death at the hands of the Red Guard. By 1978, when the first stages of reform and liberalization followed the overthrow of the Gang of Four, American music had become little more than a rumor to several generations of Chinese musicians and audiences.

But in recent years, with the country's new policies of democratization and openness, it has become possible for the Chinese to look outward to the rest of the



中国文联出版社

Cover of A Dictionary of American Popular Music,
published in Shanghai.

WAY DOWN UPON THE YANGTSE RIVER (continued)

world. As one of my interpreters, who recently earned an M.A. in English and American literature, put it in a recent letter:

Young people are trying to take a new attitude toward our civilization in this age of reform and open policy. We are not satisfied with what the old people have pride in, and their sense of value and honor. Perhaps we need more truth, not lies or deception. We no longer think that we Chinese are the only remarkable ones in the world, and that China is the center of all. Now we know that the world is so large that we have already fallen behind others, and the times. We should involve ourselves in the developing torrent of the world, and open ourselves to the outside world in order to develop and make much more progress.

And involvement with American culture and music has become particularly prized.

There is an overriding problem — for Chinese scholars, students, and audiences alike — in learning about American music: lack of materials and difficulty of access. Libraries' budgets are severely limited, even for materials published within the country, and it is almost impossible for them to purchase books, journals, scores, and recordings requiring "hard currency." Some conservatory libraries have managed to acquire a sampling of American journals and books (often in the form of xerox copies, as China does not yet subscribe to the international copyright agreement). There are also some books and scores dating from pre-Liberation days, and the handful of Chinese scholars who have visited the United States in recent years have brought materials back with them. But the collections of even the leading conservatory libraries — in Shanghai, Beijing, and Tianjin — are meager by our standards and are particularly weak in materials published between the late 1950s and the last several years.

Despite these problems, Chinese musicologists have begun to write on American music. *An Outline History of American Art Music* by Cai Liang-yu, of the Research Institute of Music in Beijing, was brought out by the People's Music Press in 1987, and a dictionary of American popular music was recently published in Shanghai. Articles on American music have begun to appear in China's numerous music periodicals; for example, Cai Liang-yu has published "Charles Ives and his Works" in *People's Music* (1984), "The Development and Characteristics of American Music" in *Musicology in China* (1986), and "Blessing from a Distance — on Copland's 85th Birthday" in *People's Music* (1986). Zhong Zi-lin has written an article on American popular music for the latest issue of the journal of the Central Conservatory of Music (Beijing), and *Music Study and Research* (the journal of the Tianjin Conservatory) recently devoted an entire double issue (1-2 [1987]) to American music, with articles by Chinese scholars on Elliott Carter, the blues, *Porgy and Bess*, Leonard Bernstein, and Ives, as well as translations from the work of Richard Crawford, Charles Schwartz, Max Harrison, and myself.

The first Chinese course in American music, taught by Cai Liang-yu and focused on the "cultivated" traditions, has been offered every year since 1984 at the Central Conservatory of Music. The Shanghai Conservatory subsequently introduced a

course in the more general music culture of the United States, and now Wang Pu offers a third course, at the Tianjin Conservatory, which deals with both classical and popular music.

The determination of Chinese scholars to study American music resulted in a nationwide conference held at Tianjin in May 1986. Xu Yong-san, a composer and musicologist of the Tianjin Conservatory whose education included a year of study at the University of Michigan's School of Music, opened the meeting with a lengthy poem in praise of American music, concluding with these lines:

History has repeatedly taught us:

However different the nature of the arts of different nations may be,

Cultural exchange is absolutely necessary for the advancement of one's own.

The historical significance of the first conference of American music ever held in China is great!

Its impact will soon be felt not only in China but in the USA as well!

I heartily bless Musical Art, and the friendship of our two nations will flourish!

Some fifty papers were read (many of them later published in *People's Music*), and a Society for Research in American Music was founded, with Professor Xu named as President of the Board of Directors and Cai Liang-yu as Secretary General. Several American scholars were invited to become Honorary Advisors: Gilbert Chase, H. Wiley Hitchcock, Richard Crawford, Martin Williams, and myself. The approximately 130 members of the Society include not only musicologists but also composers, eager to learn more about recent American compositional techniques. The Society will publish a newsletter in both Chinese and English and hold annual meetings, the next scheduled for the fall of 1989 in Shandong Province.

As elsewhere in Asia, Chinese audiences are turning to Western-style classical music with great enthusiasm. The first scientific survey of musical taste ever conducted in China, just completed by Yang Xiao-xun of the Tianjin Conservatory, reveals that ~~44% of the surveyed population~~ (chiefly in Beijing) enjoys listening to "symphonic music." There are Western-style orchestras at each of the country's twelve conservatories of music, and professional orchestras in many Chinese cities, but they play little American music since it is almost impossible to obtain scores and parts, and most of the musicians (including the conductors) have limited knowledge of the American classical repertory beyond Gershwin, Ives, and Copland. American performers such as Isaac Stern who have found their way to China have not seen fit to feature American music on their programs. Commercial cassettes and discs of American music are almost impossible to find, and in any event would be too expensive. Access comes chiefly through the radio: the CPBS often plays pieces obtained from the National Public Radio, the Voice of America, and the American Embassy; more enterprising stations, such as Radio Shanghai, have been able to obtain material directly from American record companies.

Yang's survey shows that 78% of the Chinese population enjoys popular music. Much of this is home-produced, by China's more than two hundred commercial record companies, and

(continued on page 7)

I.S.A.M. MATTERS

We'll use this space this time to report on the **results of a questionnaire** we sent out last fall, to more than two thousand music-department chairs (based on CMS and NASM lists). Some 650 responses have come in — a return rate of about 30%, which our market-survey specialist colleagues tell us is a good one for a single mailing with no dunning follow-ups.

We wanted to get a picture of the college, university, and conservatory courses in American music across the country. Our questionnaire was a simple one; essentially, **it asked what, if any, American-music courses the institution offered, how often, and whether to music majors, non-majors, or both.**

Some raw statistics derived from the 648 questionnaires that were returned are given in the table below.

One cannot draw too many conclusions from these figures. We can make some gross comparisons, however, with the picture as of almost twenty years ago, when I.S.A.M. — newly founded — sent out a similar questionnaire (though to many fewer institutions, and with only a 10% return). Back then, general courses in "American music" amounted to one-third of the total courses offered in the field; that's true today, too. But back then, courses in jazz added up to only about one-fifth of the total;

today, it's one-third. Offerings in African-American music today, on the other hand, are slightly fewer, in relation to the total courses available, than they were in 1971; but the slack seems to have been taken up with new courses that necessarily have a large black-music component (popular music, rock, folk music, and such — not to mention jazz).

We have omitted, in the table below, the figures on the incidence of these courses, as not being particularly indicative. Again, however, jazz courses stand out: of the 292 jazz courses cited, 182 are offered annually, 73 biennially (the 37 others irregularly). Compare these figures to those for general "American music" courses: of 281, only 84 are offered annually, 102 biennially (and 95 irregularly).

We'll leave to you any further interpretations. We will say, however — and again, recalling the earlier round of questionnaires — that American music as an academic field seems in remarkably good health today. This is said not in any chauvinistic glee; rather, in appreciation of a new *balance* — between American-music studies and those of other areas — that seems to be righter today than in the past, when academic attention to our nation's music was the exception rather than the rule.

Courses	Subjects	Major	Nonmajor	Both	Required	Elective
292	Jazz	40	140	112	28	264
281	American music	81	93	107	27	254
104	Popular music	5	59	40	10	94
65	African-American music	6	32	27	7	58
64	Musical theater	16	30	18	7	57
41	Rock	1	31	9	1	40
24	Folk music	3	15	6	3	21
21	(others)	7	7	7	1	20

IVESIANA

Documentary projects in Ivesiana seem to be flourishing: With support from the Charles Ives Society, Paul Echols not only proceeds with his preparation of a catalogue raisonné but has completed, for Broadcast Music, Inc., a thorough revision of **BMI's brochure on Ives**, which is now the most up-to-date and detailed catalogue of the published music by Ives. For free copies (including multiple ones if needed for class use), write to Dr. Barbara Petersen at BMI, 320 West 57th Street, New York, NY 10019. . . . Another sort of catalogue, now nearing completion, is an "**Ives Tunebook**" by Clayton Henderson of St. Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana — a compilation of more than two hundred pre-existent melodies found lurking, or alluded to, in Ives's music. This is to be published by Harmonie Park Press for the College Music Society's series of Bibliographies in American Music. . . . And Geoffrey Block, of the University of Puget Sound, has enthusiastically put together a book of more than four hundred pages, **Charles Ives: A Bio-Bibliography** (Greenwood Press; \$49.95). Much more bibliography than biography (only seven and one-half pages of the latter), the work has no fewer than 1,169 generously annotated entries plus six

appendices and two indexes. (That's enthusiasm!) Block is a bibliographical bear and includes citations not only of the most obscure items but of some not yet even in print. His book, though marred by skimpy editing and sketchy proofreading, is an invaluable guide to the literature on Ives.

By the time you read this, **Michael Tilson Thomas** will have followed up his widely acclaimed CBS recording (MK-42381) of Ives's *Holidays*, *The Unanswered Question* (in both 1906 original and later revised versions) and *Central Park in the Dark* with one of the First and Fourth symphonies. Again he conducts the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in critical editions prepared with Ives Society support — the First Symphony in an edition by Frank Samarotto (City University of New York), the Fourth in a joint edition prepared, movement by movement, by William Brooks (University of Illinois), James B. Sinclair (Yale University), Kenneth Singleton (University of Colorado), and Wayne Shirley (Library of Congress) — all reviewed by Gunther Schuller as senior consulting editor.

BOOK NOOK I

AMERICAN CULTURE, FROM MID TO HIGH AND LOW

To us, "high" and "popular" culture represent opposite, mutually exclusive categories, yet during much of the nineteenth century, opera, orchestra concert, Shakespearean drama, and other expressive art forms enjoyed dual status simultaneously. In *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Harvard University Press; \$25), Lawrence Levine treats us to a fascinating and scrupulously annotated account of the appropriation of these genres by a pretentious elite, willing to share them only on their own terms.

Democratic sharing was possible when public performance spaces were the common property of all economic classes. Seating arrangements were socially hierarchical, but performances were patronized by heterogeneous audiences. Opera was attended "by large numbers of people who . . . experienced it in the context of their everyday culture and by smaller socially and economically elite groups who derived both pleasure and social confirmation from it." Ideas regarding what such events should offer varied. Thus, concerts mixed light and serious music. Some opera patrons demanded interpolations of minstrel and parlor songs. They did not observe the performance in respectful silence; they talked, ate, and moved about. They hissed and booed, and demanded encores when and as they pleased. Sometimes they threw things.

Levine—a professor of history at UC, Berkeley—shows that a *savant* elite (editor John Sullivan Dwight and conductor Theodore Thomas are among those he often cites) spent decades attempting to redefine the conditions of performance and dictate the behavior of the audience. The concert hall and opera house became genteel havens of decorum. Operas were purged of interpolations, and performance practice became "sacralized." These genres became associated with "culture" in the hierarchical sense defined by Matthew Arnold: "the best that has been thought and known in the world. . . ."

Levine suggests that this movement represented "a drive for cultural order," analogous to the concern with political order in a country redefining relationships between races and welcoming large numbers of low-status immigrants who were viewed, stereotypically, as uncouth; it was an attempt to establish "a set of symbolic ritual practices that [would] function to inculcate values and behavior patterns signifying continuity with the past." Such concerns also spawned controversy over the purposes of other public-access areas (parks, museums, libraries) and the manner of deportment appropriate to them. But "in our own day the perimeters of culture have altered again, becoming more expansive, more all-embracing."

Levine successfully illustrates "the process by which a familiar cultural syndrome was invented, and institutions designed to maintain and perpetuate it." I read the book twice, a second time to linger over his footnotes. I will read the primary sources he cites. The book is so engaging, I want more.

—Paul Charosh
(Department of Sociology, Brooklyn College)

More is More. J. Bunker Clark of the University of Kansas began research into early American keyboard music almost twenty years ago. That research first bloomed in Vols. 1/2 of *Recent Researches in American Music*, Clark's *Anthology of Early American Keyboard Music*. Later blossoms emerged in seventeen entries on pianist-composers in *AmeriGrove*, with supplementary material appearing in the Sonneck Society's newsletter-become-bulletin. Now, in full flower, comes a book of more than 400 pages: *The Dawning of American Keyboard Music* (Greenwood Press, \$39.95). Clark opted for this title as "more stylish" (in its paraphrase of Anthony Philip Heinrich's *The Dawning of Music in Kentucky*) than his original one—which is, however, more helpful: "Early American Keyboard Music, 1787-1830: A Descriptive and Critical Survey." One amendment to *that* is needed: change "A" to "An Exhaustive." Clark has here produced a basic reference work that is also full of analysis and assessment, supplemented by no fewer than 213 music examples, some extensive. The book approaches its subject in chapters devoted to genres: (1) sonatas; (2) rondos; (3) variations; (4) medleys; (5) battle pieces; (6) organ pieces; and (7) pianoforte tutors. It ends with an eighth chapter on "The First Americanist" (Heinrich), plus a substantial bibliography and indexes of persons, titles, and subjects. Believe us, if you want to know anything about this repertory, you'll find it here—although, as with most Greenwood books, to do so you'll have to plow through a lot of unedited, or poorly edited, prose.

The guests go in to supper.

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B U R N I N G B O O K S

NEWS AND INFORMATION

Carnegie Hall's centennial will not be observed until 5 May 1991, but the hall's management is planning a celebration that will stretch from August 1990 through the following May. Of particular interest is the Centennial Commissioning Project, which has requested ten composers (both American and foreign) to write works for ten specifically selected artists or ensembles. William Bolcom will write a song cycle for Marilyn Horne, Terry Riley a composition for the St. Louis Symphony, Ned Rorem a work for the Beaux Arts Trio, and Joan Tower a fanfare for the New York Philharmonic. Those whose tastes run to more conservative fare will delight in the special attention paid to Tchaikovsky, both in concert programs and in a display of manuscripts loaned by the Soviet Union. (It was no less than Tchaikovsky, as some may recall, who conducted the hall's opening concert.)

Celebrating its tenth anniversary in 1989 is the **Blues Foundation**, a national non-profit group "dedicated to the preservation and perpetuation of the blues — America's original indigenous musical art form." Ongoing activities of the Foundation include a National Blues Music Awards Show, presented annually in Memphis; the National Blues Music Amateur Talent Contest, a series of local talent searches; and the *Blues Express*, the Foundation's newsletter. But newly instituted is a toll-free National Blues Music Hotline, billed as the place to call "for everything you ever wanted to know about the blues, but didn't know who to ask." Attempts to stump the hotline should be directed to 1-800-727-0641.

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In 1987, the legendary **Folkways Records**, brainchild of the late Moses Asch, was acquired by the Smithsonian Institution. Now, the Smithsonian has reached an agreement with Rounder Records to distribute both a substantial portion of Folkways' back catalogue and future releases. (The Smithsonian's Office of Folklife Programs will provide cassettes of the rest of the catalogue by special order.) Those who have been concerned about the continuing health of the Folkways label will be gratified to learn that 1989 releases include Hawaiian, French-American, Soviet, Caribbean, and Native American music.

From conductor Hobart Earle comes word of an innovative **American / Austrian musical exchange program**. Earle's American Music Ensemble, based in Vienna, is dedicated to presenting American works that are rarely heard in the Austrian capital. The first season, neatly blending new and old, included music by Gershwin, Griffes, Dello Joio, Copland, Alvin Singleton, and Lelia McFarlane Molthrop. And now comes the second season, combining Bernstein, Chadwick, Ives, Singleton, Henry Gilbert, and Miguel del Aguila. (Earle's enthusiastic letter notes that the November 1988 concert was a hit "even with several elderly Viennese whose tastes are usually confined to the realm of Mozart and Schubert!") Meanwhile, the American Music Ensemble's sister organization, Ensemble for Viennese Music—New York, introduces us to a similar mixture of unfamiliar Austrian works. For more information, contact Hobart Earle at 11 E. 52 St., New York, NY 10022.

REGARDING RECORDINGS I

A HEARTSTOPPER

That's one word for Steve Reich's *Different Trains* (1988), recently released together with his *Electric Counterpoint* (Nonesuch 79176-2). Commissioned by Betty Freeman for the Kronos Quartet, the work reflects a return to Reich's roots — the taped-speech pieces of the mid-sixties (*It's Gonna Rain; Come Out*) based on "classic" technology (overdubbing; tape-looping) — and a stunning mastery of newer technology (live/tape synchrony; computer-aided sound-sampling). Reich's sovereign control over such technology is here put in the service of a startling and potent plan: to evoke the sounds, surroundings, and symbolism of, on the one hand, the great transcontinental American railroad trains of the thirties and forties and, on the other, the European trains of the same era that bore Holocaust victims to their deaths. As a youth, Reich rode the former, in company with a governess, from New York to Los Angeles, to visit his mother; those trips were "exciting and romantic at the time," but now he looks back and thinks that "if [he] had been in Europe during this period, as a Jew [he] would have had to ride very different trains." This is the dichotomy his piece explores, in three sections, each about nine minutes long: 'America — Before the war'; "Europe — During the war"; "After the war."

The sound-sources of *Different Trains*, besides string quartet (three layers pre-recorded, one live), are: tiny bits of speech, chosen with exquisite sensitivity for both their musicality and their atmospheric/emotional evocations from the taped voices of the governess (now in her seventies) and a retired Pullman-car porter (now in his eighties), reminiscing about their trains; similar bits of speech chosen from reminiscences of *theirs* by several Holocaust survivors (all about Reich's age); and train whistles of the period — complex, throaty roars from mighty American steam engines, higher-pitched squeals and screams from the smaller European ones. The "musical ideas"—themes, if you will — for the string-quartet music of *Different Trains* derive directly from the speech samples, which Reich transcribes literally, transforming them into motivic modules which he then builds, in post-minimalist repetitive and canonic fashion, into long expressive clauses. And the sampled train sounds are composed into background punctuation, occasionally submerged, in Part 2, beneath terrifying glissandos of sirens.

Different Trains is a heartstopper, not just because of the human themes it so boldly juxtaposes and so powerfully evokes, but because the *music* is so consummately realized — by which I mean that Reich subordinates every bit of his craft and art to the goal of communicating profoundly musical impulses and evoking profoundly musical responses (more conventionally expressed as communication and evocation of "feeling"). Baroque-era listeners would say that such a work not only offers delectation to the ear but "moves the affect of the soul." Indeed, maybe a better word for *Different Trains* than "heartstopper" is "masterpiece."

— H.W.H.



MODERNISM, LOST AND FOUND

There is something sensible about what initially seems to be the odd pairing of Tobias Picker's *Keys to the City* (really his *Piano Concerto No. 2*; 1983) with Marc Blitzstein's *Piano Concerto* (1931) [CRI CD-554]. Picker (b. 1954), once a student (and serialist disciple) of Charles Wuorinen, has allowed his musical language to open up to an extraordinary degree, so much so that *Keys to the City* sounds like a one-time modernist gone stark, raving populist. Blitzstein's *Piano Concerto*, by contrast, is the work of an imminent populist caught at his most uncompromisingly modernist. Such are the seemingly inexplicable shifts of musical style.

Picker's *Keys to the City*, commissioned to honor the centennial of the Brooklyn Bridge, is as deliciously eclectic and unceasingly energetic as the city it celebrates. A festive amalgam of dissonance and consonance, vernacular and cultivated, *Keys to the City* parades its varied ancestry — Gershwin, Copland, Bernstein, Rachmaninoff, tied together with bluesy inflections and jazzy syncopations — with impudence and pride. Blitzstein's *Piano Concerto*, however, finds the composer uncharacteristically removed from the vernacular. Anyone expecting a work in the language of *The Cradle Will Rock* will be surprised by the concerto's dissonant, hard-edged austerity. Its motoric ostinatos and syncopations may be related to the Copland of the early 1930s, but Blitzstein possessed a ruminative, almost Romantic, melodic gift that the older composer never chose to cultivate.

The Brooklyn Philharmonic, under Lukas Foss, offers biting, strident performances that burst with vitality (if not always accuracy). Picker tears through the sassy, exhibitionistic piano part of his own concerto; Michael Barrett negotiates the Blitzstein with a nice mixture of craggy precision and melancholy lyricism. And CRI itself should be complimented on the vastly improved sound, graphics, and packaging of this new recording.

— K.R.S.

Sounds of the Civil War. Ever wonder what those old Civil War brass bands really sounded like? Or what kinds of music they played for the troops? The regimental band of the 11th North Carolina Troops (1st N.C. Vols), reconstituted in 1982, has produced three stereo cassettes that answer such questions (11th N.C. Band, Box 53513, Fayetteville, NC; \$8 each). The band performs authentic music from the 26th N.C. Band Books and arrangements made from Confederate sheet music. Selections include patriotic ceremonial pieces (*The Star-Spangled Banner, God Save the South, My Maryland*), hymns (*Amazing Grace, Rock of Ages, Nearer My God to Thee*), sentimental songs (*Cheer, Boys, Cheer!, Tenting on the Old Camp Ground, Just Before the Battle, Mother*), grand marches (March from *Norma*), and rousing quicksteps (*Dixie & The Bonnie Blue Flag, Garry Owen, Yankee Doodle*). The cassettes, made in 1984, 1986, and 1987, have some overlapping of repertory, but all are interesting, and it is fascinating to hear how the band has improved over the years. Let's hope they can keep going, for they are recapturing in sound a valuable part of America's history.

— Raoul Camus
(Queensborough Community College, C.U.N.Y.)

WAY DOWN UPON THE YANGTSE RIVER (*continued*)

some is imported from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Japan, but the greatest enthusiasm is reserved for American popular music. This popularity has been gained in the face of obstacles. Since the People's Republic is theoretically a classless state, without social distinctions based on age, sex, education, or occupation, state-controlled institutions emphasize music with potential appeal to the widest possible audience, and thus the CPBS plays little "hard rock" because of its specific association with youth culture. Commercial recordings of American pop and rock are not easy to find — only Michael Jackson's "Bad" seemed to be generally available in record shops when I was there — and American pop/rock performers have yet to be invited to the country. Even so, Feng Bingyou, Senior Editor of the Art & Literature Programs of Radio Shanghai, insisted that Michael Jackson, Paul Simon, Dolly Parton, Madonna, and Randy Travis are "household names" among the thirty-five million listeners reached by his station, and last August Michael Jackson was voted Shanghai's favorite singer in a radio poll attracting thirty thousand ballots.

In today's China, as elsewhere, the dissemination and consumption of music takes place largely through the medium of the cassette tape. Yang Xiao-xun's survey reveals that 80% of the Chinese population owns such tapes, but fewer than a third are "original"; that is, most music, especially popular music, is circulated in the form of tapes recorded from the radio or from other tapes. Some radio programs are, in fact, designed specif-

ically to be taped at home by listeners who have no other access to this music. Twice a week Radio Shanghai airs hour-long programs of American and British popular music selected by Feng Bingyou from recordings (including CDs) obtained from abroad. Another widely home-taped show is "The American Music Program," produced in California by the China America Corporation especially for countrywide broadcast on the CPBS every Thursday night and Sunday morning; and Radio Shanghai has established ties with the Dallas-based Satellite Music Company to obtain similar American-produced programs. These shows tend to combine older soft-rock and pop classics with selections from the current Top Forty, Motown and more recent black pop, and country-western music. The Chinese fondness for the latter genre is striking and deep. In the words of Xu Yong-san, "I love country music for its realness to life, its simplicity and directness of musical expression and its penetrative power right down into one's heart. Hail Country Music, how I love you so! May your radiance shine brighter and brighter as the days go by!"

In short, despite continuing problems of access, the New China is enjoying an increasingly wider range of American music, chiefly through the mass media, and is clamoring for more. Unless there is a radical change of political direction in the People's Republic, it seems certain that both classical and popular Chinese music of the next decade will incorporate more and more elements of American style.

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ONCE MORE THROUGH *THE UNANSWERED QUESTION* by Wayne D. Shirley

Wayne D. Shirley is Reference Librarian in the Music Division of the Library of Congress. He has just been named editor of the *Sonneck Society's* journal *American Music*. Relevant to this article is his recent completion of critical editions of Ives's Fourth of July and the last movement of the Fourth Symphony.

As far as I can find, nobody has ever mentioned in print that the phrase "the unanswered question"—the title of one of Charles Ives's best-known pieces—appears prominently in "The Sphinx," a poem by Ralph Waldo Emerson.¹ The main purpose of this paper is to point this out. But since I believe that *The Unanswered Question* does stand in some relationship to "The Sphinx," and since I believe that an aspect of *The Unanswered Question* which has recently been much discussed is explained by this relationship, I shall comment further.

A brief synopsis of "The Sphinx" will help those who dislike wrestling with Emerson's verse on their own. Two voices speak in the poem: first, the Sphinx herself, who complains that her riddle (whose answer, you'll remember, is "Man"), remains unsolved:²

Who'll tell me my secret,
The ages have kept? —
I awaited the seer
While they slumbered and slept: —

The fate of the man-child,
The meaning of man;
Known fruit of the unknown³
Daedalian plan; . . .

Her speech laments the fragmented life of man. At its end the Sphinx imagines the "great mother" asking who it is that has caused man's misery:

'Who has drugged my boy's cup?
Who has mixed my boy's bread?
Who, with sadness and madness,
Has turned my child's head?'

The Sphinx (and, by extension, the "great mother") is answered by "a poet," who argues, "aloud and cheerfully," that behind this chaos is unity:

Love works at the centre,
Heart-heaving away;
Forth speed the strong pulses
To the borders of day.

The poet ends (as the meter of the poem changes) by mocking the "dull Sphinx" who cannot see this. The Sphinx then reveals herself as something like the Spirit of Philosophy:

I am thy spirit, yoke-fellow;
Of thine eye I am eyebeam.

Thou art the unanswered question,
Couldst see thy proper eye;⁴
Always it asketh, asketh;



Final measures of copyist's ink fair copy of *The Unanswered Question* (1930s?) with last note of trumpet part marked, in Ives's hand, for correction.

And each answer is a lie.
So take thy way through nature,
It through thousand natures ply;
Ask on, thou clothed eternity;
Time is the false reply.

The Sphinx dissolves into nature (including "Monadnoc's head": this is a New England Sphinx) as the poem ends.

Emerson commented:

I have often been asked the meaning of the 'Sphinx.' It is this, — The perception of identity unites all things and explains one by another, and the most rare and strange is equally facile as the most common. But if the mind live only in particulars, and see only differences (wanting the power to see the whole — all in each), then the world addresses to this mind a question it cannot answer, and each new fact tears it in pieces, and it is vanquished by the distracting variety.⁵

Would Ives have known this poem? It is seldom anthologized now. But Emerson chose it to be the opening poem of his first book of verse, and it has a prominent place in the Centenary Edition, which was the standard edition of Emerson's works at the turn of the century. In that edition "The Sphinx" is the eighth poem, coming considerably before such currently well-known poems as "The Rhodora" ("Beauty is its own excuse for being") and the Ode for W. H. Channing ("Things are in the saddle, / And ride mankind"). Moreover, our line, "Thou art the unanswered question," seems to have been regarded as the poem's principal gem (as indeed it is the kernel of the poem). The Riverside Edition of Emerson's poems explains the crucial line of "Brahma" ("I am the doubter and the doubt") in terms of this line. And Benjamin Paul Blood (he of *The Anaesthetic Revelation and the Gist of Philosophy*) quotes our line and the

THROUGH THE UNANSWERED QUESTION (continued)

line following—without bothering to identify them (as we might quote “Do nothin’ till you hear from me”)—as the clincher to his argument that “the ultimate, ineffaceable distinction is self-distinction, self-consciousness.”⁶

Ives certainly doesn’t mention Emerson in his note to the music of *The Unanswered Question*. Nor does Ives’s program particularly suggest Emerson’s ideas. So if Emerson did inspire Ives’s music, then the music had taken on independent life by the time Ives commented on it.

One thing is certain: no amount of ingenuity can torture *The Unanswered Question* into a “tone poem on ‘The Sphinx’.” The fatalism of Ives’s piece is completely irreconcilable with the onward-still-and-upward tone of Emerson’s poem. (And the “tone poem” in the Straussian sense is foreign to Ives: it is impossible, for example, to regard *The Celestial Railroad* as a literal tonal transfer of Hawthorne’s story of the same name.) Yet it’s hard to dismiss the title as a coincidence. Look at the titles of other pieces by Ives: *Central Park in the Dark*, *The Gong on the Hook and Ladder*, *Over the Pavements*, *Some Southpaw Pitching*, *The Fourth of July*, *The Anti-Abolitionist Riots*, *In the Inn*, “*Concord, Mass., 1840–60*”, *The St. Gaudens in Boston Common*. A title as metaphysical as *The Unanswered Question* (or *The Celestial Railroad*, also taken from literature) rings oddly among these down-to-earth titles, which reflect Ives’s general procedure of looking for the transcendent in the everyday. (I’ll grant the reader *Universe Symphony*.)

I suspect that Ives’s piece was suggested by Emerson—by the single line about the unanswered question rather than “The Sphinx” as a whole. But I believe that Ives’s knowledge of the context of the line influenced his music. In particular, Ives’s association of the unanswered question with the sphinx helps to explain an aspect of *The Unanswered Question* which has been considered in two recent articles. This is the original form of the trumpet’s “question” (which from now on we’ll call simply the Question), and Ives’s later alteration of it [Solomon, Hitchcock-Zahler]. I have assumed that readers of this journal know *The Unanswered Question*: however I shall give a brief, oversimplified summary of this aspect of its history.

Very briefly: when Ives wrote *The Unanswered Question* in 1906, the Question ran as follows:



Sometime in the 1930’s, however, Ives altered the Question so that the last note would not be the same as the first. The new version of the Question alternates between two forms, one ending on C, one on B \sharp , as follows:



Hitchcock and Zahler, in their discussion of this change, suggest that Ives did this because, in the 1930s, he wanted a “strikingly more chromatic (even atonal)” version of the Question. Solomon cites this change as an example of Ives’s practice of “silent modernization.” But to my ears this change was made not to make the Question more “atonal” or “modern” but to make it sound like a question. A question doesn’t return to its starting point: it ends on a different spot than it begins, usually slightly higher in pitch (eh what?). Ives’s change made a real question out of what was, before, merely an enigma—an enigma which hermetically circles round itself, protecting its own secret. As a “question,” Example 1 is a miscalculation.

But if we assume that Ives had Emerson in mind when he first wrote *The Unanswered Question*, Example 1 is no longer a miscalculation. If Ives first thought of the Question as the riddle of the Sphinx, then its gnomic form, ending where it begins, suggests the self-centered world of the riddle which defies you to answer it—“each answer is a lie”—rather than of the question which seeks to be answered. Admittedly this is the riddle of the classical Sphinx rather than of Emerson’s liberal New England Sphinx, who wants her riddle answered; but Ives was tackling only the quotation, not the whole poem. (Perhaps the quiet strings were “the Silences of the Desert” [which also “know, see, and hear nothing”] before they were “the Silences of the Druids.”)

When Ives came to get *The Unanswered Question* ready for distribution, he realized that his work had transcended its initial program, and he repaired the Question to make it more of a true question and less an enigma. (I suspect that he had, in fact, forgotten all about Emerson by the time he revised the piece. The typewritten note that goes along with the photostats which Ives gave out as the first means of circulating *The Unanswered Question* says that it was “first entitled . . . ‘A Contemplation of a Serious Matter’ or ‘The Unanswered Perennial Question.’” One doesn’t mangle a quotation that way.) The new form of *The Unanswered Question* is certainly an improvement on the old—either as abstract music or as music with a program. But if we think of *The Unanswered Question* as having been suggested by Emerson’s line, then the original form of the “question” ceases to be a miscalculation.

In 1908 Henry James revised his novel *The Portrait of a Lady* for the New York Edition of his works, making slight changes which he felt improved the work. (In the first edition, Isabel Archer first meets Madame Merle while the latter is playing Beethoven; in the New York Edition, she’s playing Schubert.) Sometime in the 1930s, Ives made a slight but important set of alterations in *The Unanswered Question*. But the date of *The Portrait of a Lady* remains 1881. And the date of Ives’s prophetic miniature remains 1906.

BOSTON TALKS BACK TO DVOŘÁK by Adrienne Fried Block

Adrienne Fried Block is co-director of the Project for the Study of Women in Music at the C.U.N.Y. Graduate Center. Currently she is working on a full-length biography of Amy Beach.

The *New York Herald* of 21 May 1893 included the first of Antonín Dvořák's several prescriptions to American composers to turn to the music of black Americans as the basis of a national style. (Later, he broadened his recommendations to include the music of native Americans and, ultimately, *any* folk music.) The editor of another *Herald* to the northeast — the *Boston Herald* — immediately asked a number of local musicians for their reactions, and on 28 May the Boston paper reprinted Dvořák's article together with the opinions of ten of the Bostonians.

The heart of Dvořák's article, as reprinted in Boston, is contained in the following excerpts:

I am now satisfied that the future music of this country must be founded upon what are called the negro melodies. This must be the real foundation of any serious and original school of composition to be developed in the United States. . . . These are the folk songs of America, and your composers must turn to them. . . . They are pathetic, tender, passionate, melancholy, solemn, religious, bold, merry, gay, or what you will. . . . The American musician understands these tunes and they move sentiment in him . . . because of their associations. . . .

When I was in England one of the ablest music critics in London complained to me that there was no distinctively English school of music. . . . I replied to him that the composers of England had turned their backs upon the fine melodies of Ireland and Scotland. . . . It is a great pity that English musicians have not profited out of this rich store. I hope [this sort of rejection] will not be so in this country, and I intend to do all in my power to call attention to this splendid treasure of [negro] melody which you have.

Having reprinted Dvořák's recommendation, the *Boston Herald* editor then presented the Boston musicians' reactions to it, identifying each composer's "position in the musical world." The identifications below are the editor's; the musicians' statements, diverse in both opinion and length, are here cut to their core (except for George Chadwick's two-sentence retort, given in full).

John Knowles Paine ("head of the musical department of Harvard University"):

If Dr. Dvořák has been correctly reported, he greatly overestimates the influence that the national melodies and folk-songs have exercised on the higher forms of musical art. . . . But even if it be granted that musical style is formed to some degree on popular melodies, the time is past when composers are to be classed according to geographical limits. It is not a question of nationality. . . . Dr. Dvořák is probably unacquainted with what has already been accomplished in the higher forms of music by composers in America. In my estimation, it is a preposterous idea to say that in [the] future American music will rest upon such a shaky foundation as the melodies of a yet largely undeveloped race. . . .

George E. Whiting ("organist at the Immaculate Conception Church [and] a composer of great prominence"):

I should be likely, in any event, to agree with the views expressed by Dr. Dvořák [since] more than eight years ago in a paper read before the American Music Teachers' National Association I advocated the same thing: that is, that failing to find anything in the shape of American folk songs the native composer would do well to avail himself of these negro melodies for hint of local color. . . .

J. B. Claus ("for over 20 years bandmaster in the English army, and more recently instructor in . . . the New England Conservatory [and] a leading arranger of all classes of composition for military band"):

Mr. Dvořák must be excused for the mistake he makes[:] he must think the "Negro" is the original American instead of the imported slave, [but] if they sung any other melodies than those composed by white men, it must have been music from Africa. . . ."

B. J. Lang ("conductor of the Cecilia and Apollo clubs, and as a musician and pianist [one who] takes first rank in local musical circles"):

. . . When [Dvořák] says that "the American musician understand these tunes . . ." etc., I am inclined to disagree with him. The American musician . . . often has been musically nurtured in much the same manner as a Frankfort or Leipzig musician. If he knows anything of American music . . . it is either of a sort of psalmody, of which [Oliver Holden's] old "Coronation" is a fine example, or of a class of songs of which "Old Folks at Home" may be a proper type. . . . I wish that Dr. Dvořák would write something himself, using themes from these [negro] plantation songs. Such an act would set an example for our American composers. . . .

E. N. Catlin ("director of the Tremont Theatre orchestra [and] arranger of orchestral and vocal compositions [with] widely varied opportunities to become acquainted with the music of the southern plantation"):

It gives me pleasure to indorse the ideas advanced by Antonin Dvořák. . . . As it is the treatment of a simple melody which evinces true musicianship, why should not our composers select such airs, instead of going abroad for their ideas?

George L. Osgood ("old-time organizer and conductor of the Boylston Singers' club [who] had remarkable educational opportunities in his earlier years abroad"):

Folk-songs play a part in the history of music whose importance cannot be overestimated. . . . Often I have heard my dear old master Robert Franz [say]: "No national music is possible without study of the national folk-song." . . . [But] I would qualify [Dvořák's] assertion that to negro melodies alone must we look for our source of inspiration. Many of the so-called negro melodies were written by native song composers. "Way Down Upon the Swanee River," if I mistake not, was written by Stephen Foster . . . and there is a very large number of other popular melodies purely American. They are pathetic, humorous, stirring, and of a peculiarly marked rhythmical character, essentially American.

BOSTON TALKS BACK TO DVOŘÁK (*continued*)

Antonín Dvořák



Drawing (1934) by James Hadley from unidentified source (p. 258), courtesy of Music Division, The New York Public Library.

Napier Lothian (“conductor of the Boston Theatre orchestra”):

. . . I do not understand what Mr. Dvořák means by negro melodies. If he means the songs that are sung by the negro minstrel companies, they are for the most part parlor ballads and comic songs from the London music halls. . . . If he means the plantation melodies as sung by the negroes [in the] South, there is certainly originality in them, but they are very much alike, and I am afraid if they were adopted as the foundation of a school of composition, there would be just as much sameness as is found in Hungarian, Bohemian, Russian and other schools formed on native folk songs. . . .

G. W. Chadwick (“among the few American composers who have gained recognition on both sides of the Atlantic”):

I am not sufficiently familiar with the real negro melodies to be able to offer any opinion on the subject. Such negro melodies as I have heard, however, I should be sorry to see become the basis of an American school of musical composition.

Mrs. H. H. A. Beach (“composer of the mass brought out by the Handel and Haydn Society last year”):

. . . Without the slightest desire to question the beauty of the negro melodies of which [Dvořák] speaks so

highly, . . . I cannot help feeling justified in the belief that they are not fully typical of our country. The African population of the United States . . . represents only one factor in the composition of our nation. Moreover, it is not native American[;] the Africans are no more native than the Italians, Swedes or Russians.

Dr. Dvořák says: “The American musician understands these [negro] tunes . . . because of their associations.” This might be true of a musician born and brought up in the South. . . . But to those of us of the North and West there can be little, if any, “association” connected with negro melodies. . . . We [are] more likely to be influenced by old English, Scotch or Irish songs . . . than by the songs of a portion of our people who were kept so long in bondage. . . . It seems to me that, in order to make the best use of folk-songs . . . , the writer should be one of the people whose songs he chooses. . . . If a negro, the possessor of talent for musical composition, should perfect himself in its expression, then we might have the melodies which are his folk-songs employed with fullest sympathy, for he would be working with the inherited feelings of his race. Of truly American songs, . . . the war songs and ballads of the North and South more fully represent the feeling of our entire country than those of any one of its component nationalities, . . . whether African, German or Chinese. . . .

Bernhard Listemann (“holds a well recognized position as an orchestral conductor”):

. . . Why should the necessity arise for the creation of a specific American school at all, so long as the really gifted composers are so few, and the nation as a musical people has to learn so much yet . . . ?

. . . I, for one, am fully gratified with the intellectual and technical mastership [of] our foremost American composers in their principal works, and I cannot really believe that the composer of “Hamlet” [MacDowell], or of the “Spring Symphony” [Paine], or of the “Columbia Ode” [Chadwick] should turn to the negro melody as the only salvation for further musical progress.

A number of ironies lie behind both Dvořák’s challenge and the Bostonians’ reaction. The first is that Dvořák had been in this country for only eight months before he issued his statement. He may not have known a note of music by composers of the Second New England School — including Chadwick’s, which fused vernacular musical idioms with the prevailing Germanic style to create a distinctly “American” sound. Nor, probably, was he aware that Whiting (as we have seen) had earlier encouraged American composers to turn to black-music sources — naming, in the speech he cites, Louis Moreau Gottschalk as a model. (Dvořák might, in fact, have discovered that Gottschalk’s early “Creole” music fit his prescription to a T.)

Arthur Foote was asked by the *Boston Herald* to comment on Dvořák’s article but did not: he was on his way to Bayreuth to drink deep from the Pierian spring of German music — as had in the past his teacher Paine and others of the Boston group. If Paine and some others dismissed Dvořák’s ideas outright, it was

(*continued on page 15*)

COUNTRY AND GOSPEL NOTES *by Charles Wolfe*

While major new country albums by stars like Ricky Skaggs and Randy Travis appear readily in CD format, country music has not fared well with digital reissues, compared to the unprecedented reissue movement in jazz, classical, and baby-boomer rock. Nevertheless, independent companies like Rounder and Rhino are starting to explore leasing older material from major labels; Time-Life Music has started a "Country USA" reissue series of the biggest country hits of 1957-72; and Capitol Records has announced a series of country reissues for release on its Bug Music line (to be compiled by pop-music figure Marshall Crenshaw).

All of which makes two recent CD-only releases from RCA the more interesting: *Ragged But Right: Great Country String Bands of the 1930's* (RCA 8416-2-R) and *Are You from Dixie: Great Country Brother Teams of the 1930's* (RCA 8417-2-R). These are the opening shots in the RCA Heritage Series, described by producer Billy Altman as being devoted to "America's pre-World War II musical past — in particular the country and blues music that has been at the root of so much of our modern popular music." Altman plans other volumes, to include black gospel music, the music of Leadbelly and other bluesmen, western swing, and early country ballads. If the two first discs are models, each set will include some eighteen songs representing three to five artists, a thick booklet of notes and photographs, and full discographical information, selling at a "midline" price for CDs. RCA's earlier reissue programs that involved country music — the old Vintage and the later Bluebird series — set high standards for Altman to measure up to; how well does he do?

Surprisingly well. Consider first the repertoire. The discs are odd mixtures of the familiar and the obscure. The string-band set contains "Soldier's Joy" by Gid Tanner and his Skillet Lickers, "Maple on the Hill" by J. E. Mainer's Mountaineers, and "Mitchell Blues" by J. E.'s brother Wade Mainer; each has been reissued numerous times on LPs and even 45s. On the other hand, we get to hear most of a 1933 session by the Kentucky string band The Prairie Ramblers, with titles that have never been reissued before and have been so rare that only the most dedicated collectors possess them. This band later turned into a slick, smooth, and rather bland radio group that resembled The Sons of the Pioneers, but in 1933 they were a lean, hungry, hard-edged bunch of farm boys from western Kentucky; their music was a wonderful mixture of traditional string-band fare, jazz, ragtime, and what would be called western swing. Pieces like "Shady Grove" and "Tex's Dance" anticipate bluegrass by twenty years and are revelations to those who think that string-band music was synonymous with square-dance music.

The brother-duets package includes samples from the 1920s ragtime of the Allen Brothers, the jazzy nouveau-cowboy songs of the Shelton Brothers (here called The Lone Star Cowboys), the soft skittering harmony of the Delmore Brothers, and the lonesome, plaintive sound of the Blue Sky Boys. The rarities here are the sides by The Lone Star Cowboys, and the kazoo and banjo-mandolin of the Allen brothers. Even more interesting, though, is what the new, remastered sound tells us about these recordings — which in many respects defined country harmony for decades to come. The harmony by two of the groups, the



*Charlie and Bill Monroe, 1930s.
Courtesy of RCA Records.*

Monroe Brothers (Bill and Charlie) and the Dixon Brothers, sounds especially casual and improvised when contrasted with the clean precision of the Delmores and Blue Sky Boys, and the cleaner sound of the reissue highlights such infelicities. Perhaps producer Altman should have noted the conditions under which these recordings were made: mostly in temporary field studios, under adverse conditions (one in New Orleans next to a railroad track), and by people who in most cases were not sympathetic to the music. Eli Oberstein, for instance, who supervised almost all the country Bluebird sessions in the 1930s, often cut twenty-five to thirty masters a day, each in one take only; if mistakes were made, they stayed in, and digital remastering reveals them with distressing clarity.

The programming of these sets seems based on three principles: "classic" performances that are well-known, performances for which RCA still had the metal masters, and performances which appeal to modern ears, either musically or as sources for modern artists. (The Delmore Brothers' "Big River Blues," for instance, is a favorite of Doc Watson.) These seem to be sound principles for CD reissues, and hopefully Altman will continue to follow them. The liner notes for both sets are surprisingly good, though they tend to offer biographical information to the exclusion of notes on the songs, and some of the accounts seem drawn from out-of-date sources. These errors of omission do not, however, seriously blemish an otherwise auspicious start for a potentially fine series.



REGARDING RECORDINGS II

A COPLAND CORNUCOPIA

For most of his career, Aaron Copland has been plagued by the public's perception that he writes two kinds of works, "difficult" and "popular." Despite his insistence that the supposed schism merely represents opposite sides of the same coin, the perception persists. Simply compare the number of recordings of the *Short Symphony* (1933) with those of *El Salón México* (1936) and the disparity becomes obvious.

In recent years, however, Copland's entire output has begun to be re-examined, and this has led to recordings of lesser-known gems from both sides of the coin. Nonesuch's 1987 release (79168) of the *Piano Variations* (1930), *Sextet* (1937), and *Piano Quartet* (1950) heralded this trend. Now we have an embarrassment of riches: no less than *two* new recordings combining *Music for the Theatre* (1925), the *Clarinet Concerto* (1948), and *Quiet City* (1940). Both are superb, despite strongly divergent interpretive profiles. Gerard Schwarz leads the New York Chamber Symphony and clarinetist David Shifrin (EMI CDC 7-49095-2) in performances that emphasize Copland's tender, yearning lyricism, whereas Dennis Russell Davies directs the Orchestra of St. Luke's and clarinetist William Blount (Musicmasters MMD 60162L) in readings of lean-textured, sharply articulated, propulsive intensity.

Both discs include a rarity, Schwarz's the much-neglected *Dance Panels* (1959), Davies's the *Music for Movies* (1942). In *Music for Movies*, Copland alternates his pastoral vein with his urban one, the open-air depictions seeming more evocative than the motoric ones. *Dance Panels* looks simultaneously backward and forward: it embraces both the white-note diatonicism of Copland's nationalist period and the acerbic dissonance of his twelve-tone one. But both works bear the Copland trademark in registral spacings, melodic shapes, and rhythmic twists.

And so does *Connotations* (1962). The unity of Copland's output comes clearer than ever in New World's recording of this late masterpiece (NW-368, combined with Schuman's *In Praise of Shahn* and Sessions's *Black Maskers Suite*). Here are the stripped-down textures, the wide spacings, the open chordal parallelisms, the leaping melodic lines, the rhythmic syncopations—now all re-cast within a percussive, consistently dissonant framework. In an impassioned performance by the Juilliard Orchestra under Sixten Ehrling, *Connotations* explodes with harrowing force. No less force, in fact, than *Music for the Theatre*, from nearly four decades earlier.

—K.R.S

Move over, Gioachino and Giuseppe! When reading about the third alternate aria that Rossini wrote for a recalcitrant soprano or the various Italian and French versions of a Verdi opera, do you ever wish that such investigative energy could be applied to an American stage masterpiece? Well, now it has. Over sixty years after it opened in 1927, Jerome Kern's *Show Boat* has been recorded essentially as it was first performed (Angel AI-49108). This landmark recording is primarily the result of the scholarly care of John McGlinn, the recording's conductor. His attempt

to restore the work was greatly aided by the miraculous discovery of the original full score in the now famous Secaucus warehouse. There are many things to admire about this issue, including the excellent cast, the original orchestrations of Robert Russell Bennett (especially engaging in the extensive dance music so often sacrificed in recordings), and the informative and substantial notes. Material that was cut from the original production for practical rather than artistic reasons has been restored, and an appendix (most of the third disc) contains material that was perhaps wisely cut from the show as well as songs written for the 1936 film version and the 1946 revival. Listeners with programmable multiple-disc CD players will be able to mix and match their own version of Kern's masterpiece!

— R. Allen Lott
(Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary)

THE UNANSWERED QUESTION (continued)

NOTES

¹I have not examined the post-1940 literature on Emerson in detail. There are several discussions of "The Sphinx," most of which quote the line about the unanswered question, but none that I have seen mentions Ives in connection with the line.

²In the context of this poem, "solving the riddle" means explaining the reason for man's miserable condition. Oedipus, after all, got the mere answer right, and what did it get him?

³Standard editions of Emerson have a semicolon after "unknown". But it seems clear that "unknown" modifies "plan."

⁴Standard editions punctuate: "Thou art the unanswered question; Couldst see thy proper eye,"—more defensible than "unknown;/Daedalian" but still suspect. (The "it" that "asketh, asketh" is surely the question, not the eye. The two lines mean: "If you could look at yourself, you'd see that you are the unanswered question.")

⁵Note-book of 1859. Quoted in Emerson, 412.

⁶I quote from William James's quote of Blood in his article "A Pluralistic Mystic" [James, p. 1300]. (Ives would certainly not have read Blood. James's article was published in 1910, and thus postdates *The Unanswered Question*.) Blood, whose style owes a great deal to Emerson, agrees with my punctuation of the two lines.

⁷There are two versions of the new Question because Ives wants the last note, whenever possible, to be dissonant with the string background. (The old version's B^b was automatically dissonant to the diatonic-G-major-with-an-occasional-F[#] string parts.)

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REGARDING RECORDINGS (continued)

MORE FROM "OUR MUSICAL PAST"

The Library of Congress's admirable series *Our Musical Past*, Vols. 1 and 2 of which were reviewed in this Newsletter in November 1976 and May 1987, has taken a new tack. The library has fallen heir to the rights to the fifty-five long-playing recordings in the series *Music in America*, sponsored by the late Society for the Preservation of the American Musical Heritage between 1958 and 1970; Volumes 3 and 4 of OMP, released on CDs (OMP-104 and OMP-105; \$14.95 each), are digital reprocessings of some orchestral music in the SPAMH series. Karl Krueger conducts the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in symphonic poems by Edward MacDowell on OMP-104 (*Hamlet/Ophelia*, *Lancelot and Elaine*, *Lamia*, and *Two Fragments after the Song of Roland*) and in Amy Cheney Beach's *Symphony in E Minor* ("Gaelic") and Arthur Foote's *Four Character Pieces after the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* on OMP-105. Both discs have new notes, the former anonymous ones, the latter authoritative ones from Adrienne Fried Block (for the Beach) and Wayne Shirley (for the Foote). Those familiar with Krueger's SPAMH recordings will recall the performances as earnest if slightly soggy; the reprocessing has, however, greatly improved the sound quality. Order from Library of Congress, Public Services Office, Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division, Washington, DC 20540 Incidentally, the library plans to reissue only some of the SPAMH series ("works not currently represented on commercial recordings and in which there is enough interest to justify reissue"): soon to come are re-releases of Still's *Afro-American Symphony* (with new notes by Rae Linda Brown) and Hadley's *Salome* (with new notes by Wayne Shirley). Tape copies of any other SPAMH recordings may be obtained on request to the Recorded Sound Section of the library, for the standard fee; permission to tape works protected by copyright must be obtained by the applicant. A complete list of the works originally issued in the *Music in America* series (not, however, the performers) is given in Charles Hamm's *Music in the New World*, pp. 704-6.

— H. W. H.

Among **William Bolcom's** many accomplishments was his seminal role in the ragtime revival of the 1970s. He brought the music to the attention of many who became instrumental in the revival, performed rags himself in concert and on records, composed them, and wrote one of the orchestrations of Scott Joplin's *Tremonisha*. His enthusiasm was infectious.

He now returns as a pianist to Joplin, with a recording of sixteen pieces (*Euphonic Sounds*; Omega OCD-3001.) The performances remain constant to Bolcom's personality, but they also suggest a rethinking about Joplin. Bolcom continues to embellish the scores lightly and tastefully and is not afraid of some Romantic rubato. But he is also noticeably more subdued than in the past, playing with a restraint that probably would have gained Joplin's approval. There are occasional rhythmic lapses, but these do not prevent Bolcom from making his new statement about Joplin.

— Edward A. Berlin
(Queensborough Community College, C.U.N.Y.)

RETURN OF THE REAL ROMANTIC

While **Samuel Barber** can hardly be called a *new* Romantic — his permanent place in the repertoire confirms the continued viability of melody — four CDs released within the past year suggest a revitalized role for him in the light of current trends.

Leonard Slatkin and the Saint Louis Symphony's *Adagio for Strings*, three *Essays* for orchestra, *Medea's Dance of Vengeance*, and the Overture to *The School for Scandal* (EMI CDC-7-49463-2) present early, middle and late works by Barber. The Overture and *Medea's Dance* gain fresh vigor with Slatkin's perfectly paced performances.

The Stradivari Classics label, which released the First Symphony last year with the Ljubljana Symphony Orchestra under Carter Nice (SCD-6048), plans to record the complete works. Their latest disk offers the New Zealand Symphony Orchestra under Andrew Schenck in other readings of *Adagio for Strings*, Overture to *The School for Scandal*, and *Essay No. 1*. With these is the early *Music for a Scene from Shelley*, a rarely performed tone poem and one of Barber's most translucent one-movement works (Stradivari Classics SCD-8012). But the big news of this disk is the withdrawn Second Symphony, commissioned by the Army Air Force in 1943 when Barber was a corporal in the U.S. Army. At an air base near Fort Worth, he accompanied pilots on training flights simulating battle conditions so that he might convey "the sensations . . . the unrelieved tension, the crescendo of descent rather than mounting, and the discovery of a new dimension." First performed by the Boston Symphony under Serge Koussevitzky, the symphony was well received, and Barber recorded it in 1950 on British Decca. But it never achieved a strong place in the repertoire, and in 1964 he withdrew it. (That he never quite made peace with his decision is reflected in his recasting the second movement as *Night Flight* and incorporating themes from the first in *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Fadograph of A Yestern Scene*.) Twenty years later, orchestral parts for the symphony were discovered in England. The new release, with Schenck's dynamic interpretation of a score in the grand symphonic tradition, offers a compelling case for its contemporary relevance and revival.

Serge Koussevitzky conducted the premiere of Barber's Cello Concerto and predicted it would be to the twentieth century what Brahms's Violin Concerto was to the nineteenth. If the number of performances in the past year is any indication (last spring I heard three in one month), it would seem his prescience was on the mark. Yo-Yo Ma's impeccable reading with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra under David Zinman (CBS MK-44900, including also Britten's *Symphony for Cello and Orchestra*) stresses poetry and rhythmic elasticity rather than brilliance. Ma meets the challenges with ease, but his performance lacks the momentum of the electrifying interpretation Zara Nelsova brought to her 1950 recording, conducted by the composer.

— Barbara B. Heyman
(Brooklyn College)



BOOK NOOK II

If you're looking for copies of specific compositions that might have been performed in the colony of Virginia in, say, 1757—or if you simply want an idea of the type of music played by our colonial (or Federal-period) ancestors—then a little book by Cynthia Z. Stiverson, *Colonial Williamsburg Music* (189 pages; \$25 cloth), is just the reference work for you. Divided into two sections (eighteenth- and nineteenth-century imprints, the latter to about mid-century), it is a thorough catalogue of the 500-odd volumes of music and books about music in the collection of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Each entry, which is assigned a number, includes full title, bibliographic data, and descriptive information. The book also has a complete index and two short introductory essays (by Arthur Rhea and James Darling) about the genesis of the collection and the importance of music and musical performance at the Colonial Williamsburg of today.

— Katherine Preston
(The College of William and Mary)

* * *

Lights! Camera!! Action!!! . . . and MUSIC!!!! A fine collaboration of the Library of Congress Music Division and the Museum of Modern Art in New York—microfilming their rapidly deteriorating collections (complementary, as it happens) of scores and cue sheets for music for silent films—has been neatly rounded off by a useful book: Gillian B. Anderson's *Music for Silent Films 1894-1929: A Guide*. Its core is a 1047-item listing by title (with all necessary vital statistics) of the films whose music materials are now on deposit at the library. Anderson, a staff member of the Music Division, offers a generous introductory essay on silent-film music matters, several helpful appendixes, and a good bibliography and comprehensive index. Best of all, she includes almost sixty illustrations—mostly film production photos but also stills, sheet-music covers, cue sheets, and the like—that warm the pages of an otherwise necessarily coldly factual guide. Available @ \$27 (for Stock No. 030-000-00199-1) from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402.

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BOSTON TALKS BACK TO DVOŘÁK (*continued*)

because they had for some time been hoping to purify their music of the very American provincialisms now being urged on them by Dvořák.

Still another irony was the uncommonly held belief, reflected in Dvořák's remarks, that, unlike the Scots and the Irish, the English were an unmusical people. (Francis James Child and later Cecil Sharp demonstrated otherwise.) Even more ironic, in those early days when investigation into folk music had hardly begun, was the fact that in the eyes of music researchers—not to mention nationalists like Dvořák—the main reason for preserving folk music was not because of its intrinsic musical or cultural values but its potential for composers of art music, who would in effect turn its dross into gold.

The 1890s were a time when American national pride was on the upsurge, making Dvořák's advice especially timely. It was also long-lasting: it defined the limits of the debate over a national musical style for decades. But it is hard to escape the impression that his urgings carried extra weight precisely because they came from a European master. That too is ironic.



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