

# NEWSLETTER

INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN AMERICAN MUSIC

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

Volume XIX, Number 2: May 1990

## STEVE REICH ON HIS RECENT AND FUTURE WORKS: An Interview with K. Robert Schwarz

*The following is an edited transcript of "A Conversation with Steve Reich," presented on 4 April at Columbia University by the Center for American Culture Studies, as part of its "Music in America" series organized by Mark Tucker. Reich needs no introduction to readers of this Newsletter. As one of the founding fathers of so-called minimalism, Reich has come a long way since his radically pared-down phase pieces of the 1960s. During the 1970s his once-austere musical language began to blossom (as in *Music for 18 Musicians* of 1976); during the 1980s he concentrated on the setting of texts and on writing for the orchestra (as in *The Desert Music* of 1984). Now, in the 1990s, he is about to enter the realm of music theater. It was about his recent projects—orchestral, chamber, and dramatic—that we spoke on 4 April. This transcript is printed with the kind permission of Jack Salzman, director of the Center for American Culture Studies.*

KRS: Let's start by talking about your most recent orchestral piece, *The Four Sections* (1987). Tell us about the structure of the piece, and what the title indicates.

SR: The piece began with a discussion between myself and Michael Tilson Thomas, who was a good friend to me when I was not befriended by other members of the musical establishment. . . . I had been commissioned by the San Francisco Symphony to write a piece for its seventy-fifth anniversary, and he was chosen to be the conductor. Michael said to me, "Why don't you write a concerto for orchestra?" I said, "Give me a break! I don't do that sort of thing. And besides, there's only one concerto for orchestra, as far as I'm concerned." "No, no," he said; "divide up the string section so that you've got fiddles against fiddles and violas against violas; divide up the woodwinds so that you've got clarinets against clarinets, oboes against oboes; take the percussion section separately." And I said, "Michael, when do we do it?"

The title, and the solution that it implies, was a way of not making the piece a concerto for orchestra in the sense of Bartók's, which has solo virtuosic parts for various members of the orchestra. Mine is more showing off the sections. The first movement is for strings, very slow, with a little support from the brass and the woodwinds. The second movement is for percussion, just six people; it can be, and has often been, played by my own ensemble. The third movement is for winds and brass, getting a little bit faster by metric modulation (not à la Carter but more à la Africa). And the last movement gets up to full steam

again by metric modulation; it's for full orchestra. And each movement is divided up into four harmonic sections.

KRS: The fact that each movement is divided into these four harmonic sections results in an almost chaconne-like recurring harmonic pattern. You've used this structure before, in *The Desert Music* and *Sextet*. What is it about that way of working that appeals to you?

SR: Well, it's a way of shifting harmony and yet keeping a constant. It's like a jazz tune. You're going through a series of chord changes, like a chaconne, whereby the harmony is moving, but it's moving in a cycle. It takes ten minutes to go through the cycle in the first movement—it's very spread out, very Bruckner!—but only about fifteen seconds to go through the cycle at the beginning of the percussion movement.

KRS: I feel that *The Four Sections* has the most idiomatic handling of the orchestra of anything that you've written. And yet when I interviewed you last year for *Ear* magazine you called the piece a "hail and farewell to the orchestra, to a kind of conventional music-making, to the very conservative 1980s. . . ." So, after spending most of the eighties writing for the orchestra, you now seem disillusioned. Why the change of heart?

SR: Well, I'm not disillusioned with the pieces: I think I learned a great deal by taking up the challenge of the orchestra, and when I started writing for it at the beginning of the eighties I was very interested in



Steve Reich

Photo: Nevin Shalit

REICH ON RECENT AND FUTURE WORKS (*continued*)

how to make it my own. I wish my orchestral pieces a good life in the milieu in which they live. But that milieu is not one in which I wish to continue living. I do think the eighties were an incredibly conservative period of time, which I for one am glad to see over. And I think that Neo-Romanticism is a very backward-looking, conservative trend, with a few exceptions (like *Harmonium* of John Adams and *Final Alice* by David Del Tredici) — it's basically been an unfortunate period.

KRS: Do you think that the orchestral setting, with its overtones of nineteenth-century ritual, is exhausted as far as progressive new music is concerned?

SR: Well, I don't have any anger against the orchestra. I like to go to the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and see the Rembrandts, and I think they should be maintained, and kept in good order. And I think that Beethoven and Brahms and the rest of the orchestral literature should be maintained by a few crackerjack orchestras well placed throughout the world, and well subsidized and well maintained by the dedicated *alte Musik* community. We should allow conductors who really want to play Brahms to play Brahms, and not saddle them with having to play me or Adams or Del Tredici or anybody else. That would fulfill with a great deal of honesty the purpose for which the orchestra was intended.

But I feel that the orchestra is not my vehicle of choice. I wrote for it because it was there, and it was part of the milieu in which I was living and I therefore fulfilled a challenge. But to continue doing it would have been rather depressing for me, sort of writing music with one hand tied behind my back. *The Four Sections* is a good piece, because I wrote it thinking, "Well, four rehearsals would be great, but there'll probably be only two or three, so the counterpoint in the strings better go slow" — and I did a lot of very simple things to make sure it was a *can-do* proposition. If you're going to write for the orchestra, you have to face the realities of the limitations — a large group of people playing with a limited amount of rehearsal time. It's better in Europe, for various reasons, but still I would rather write for, besides my own ensemble, the Ensemble Intercontemporain in Paris, or the Ensemble Modern in Germany, the Schoenberg Ensemble in Holland, the London Sinfonietta, the Group 180 in Budapest. Sad to say, I don't know such a group in this country — a group in the neighborhood of thirty players, with a steady income and devotion . . .

KRS: . . . and subsidies . . .

SR: . . . and subsidies! You know, we're living in another universe: we're the only country in the West that doesn't have a national radio paid for by tax money.

KRS: We're also the only country in the West without national health care.

SR: That's right! And everywhere else in the West that's normal: socialized medicine, socialized music. They have their drawbacks, but I think we would do well at least to realize what we're lacking.

KRS: After *The Four Sections*, you returned to writing for unconventional forces in *Different Trains* (1988), which is scored for up to four overdubbed string quartets, taped speech samples, train whistles, and air-raid sirens. Tell us a bit about the historical premise behind the piece, and the different voices that you chose to use.

SR: It all began when Betty Freeman called me up in 1985 — I was working on a not-too-successful orchestral piece for the Saint Louis Symphony, basically cannibalizing my own, much better *Sextet* — and she asked me to write a piece for the Kronos Quartet, who were then on their upward route. I really didn't want to write for string quartet: the basic thinking that was daily bread for Beethoven ~~and Bartók~~ is not for me, because there are two vacant chairs. (Where's the other viola, and where's the other cello?) I need pairs right down the line. So I thought, how about if I multiply the quartet? What about three string quartets, which gives lots of multiples to work with. So I thought, OK, I'll write a triple quartet. Then I forgot about it. (Later, while I was working on *The Four Sections*, I also had in the back of my mind doing a music-theater work involving getting back into the media as I had in the 1960s with tape. And it would be a very big piece and I didn't know what; it was all very vague.)

Then the video artist Beryl Korot (who is also my wife) said to me, "Why don't you use the sampling keyboard?" — which she knew I had fallen in love with. She said, "Why don't you use it with Kronos? They'll love it, and it will completely change the thing, and then you won't have to [dread it]." And then the question was, "Well, OK, what?" So I thought, "Well, Bartók's voice — I'll do battle with him that way." (There are recordings of Bartók speaking about his music.) But then I began to think, "What if I don't measure up to the great man's quartets? I'll have the weight of his six quartets on my back." So then I thought, "Forget about that. I'll use the voice of Ludwig Wittgenstein." Well, I looked, and I wrote letters, and I made inquiries, and, so far as anybody knew, there *were* no recordings of Ludwig Wittgenstein; he was a recluse.

So then I began thinking, "Now, wait a minute, there must be something" — you know the story about the man who goes all over the world looking for the treasure and it turns out to be under his bed — and I began to get introspective and think about my childhood. As a child, the trips that I made across the country were especially significant for me. My parents had split up; my father was living in New York City and my mother was in Los Angeles. I used to go back and forth between them on the train, which back in 1939 to 1942 took four full days to traverse this large country. You can imagine what an indelible impression it made on a young child to take trips like that. I was accompanied on those trips by my governess Virginia, who was really my functional mother throughout my childhood. So these [memories] stayed with me — romantic, impressive, a little sad.

As I got older I began to think: "Well, 1939 to 1942, what else was going on then?" Well, we all know what was going on then. And I began thinking of other little boys. You know the famous picture of the kid in the Polish ghetto with his hands up in the air and his little hat on? Well, I had a little hat just like that and,

(*continued on page 14*)

## I.S.A.M. MATTERS

**Beach Treated Fairly.** Adrienne Fried Block, Senior Research Fellow at I.S.A.M. this past semester, delivered a pair of public lectures in April in the institute's series American Music at Brooklyn College. Drawing on her research towards a critical study of Amy Beach's life and music, she gave them the genial collective title "Amy Beach Goes to the Fair" — referring to Beach's participation in the music at the world's fairs of 1893 (Chicago), and 1915 and 1916 (California). Edited for publication, the lectures will take their place in I.S.A.M.'s monograph series.

**Something Old but New.** James R. Heintze, music librarian at The American University in Washington, DC, and formidable bibliographer, has completely revised, expanded, and updated the earlier I.S.A.M. monograph *American Music before 1865 in Print and on Records: a biblio-discography* (1976). His new version — with 1310 entries compared to the original's 741 — ought to be off the press (as I.S.A.M. Monograph No. 30) by the time you read this. . . . This monograph was beaten into print — but by only a few months — by another bibliographical work compiled by Heintze: his *Early American Music: A Research and Information Guide* (Garland Publishing, Inc.; \$56), which, with more than 1,950 entries, is a major contribution and complements nicely his I.S.A.M. monograph.

**And Something Brand-New.** Production has begun at I.S.A.M. on Thomas McGeary's completed catalogue of *The Music of Harry Partch*, his second major effort on behalf of Partch; the first, soon to appear from the University of Illinois Press, is *Bitter Music: Collected Journals, Essays, Introductions, and Librettos*.



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## BOOK NOOK I

## THE OLD MESMERIZER AND HIS MESOSTICS

John Cage delivered the Charles Eliot Norton Lectures at Harvard last year, and the university's press has wasted no time in publishing them, in a handsome big volume with two accompanying audiocassettes (\$34.95). The book is titled *I-VI* (representing Cage's six lectures, each of which was followed by a question-and-answer seminar a week later, and transcriptions of *them* are also included). The subtitle, representing "Fifteen aspects of [Cage's] work in musical composition," is "MethodStructureIntentionDisciplineNotationIndeterminacy-InterpenetrationDevotionCircumstancesVariableStructureNonunderstandingContingencyInconsistencyPerformance"—which string of words, each arranged vertically and repeated a number of times, is the basis of the mesostics in which every lecture is cast.

If mesostics are new to you, the following—from Cage's *X* (1983)—may be helpful in suggesting their METHOD (if you follow me):

My  
mE mory  
of whaT  
Happened  
is nOt  
what happeneD'  
i aM struck  
by tH  
facT  
tH at what happened  
is mOre conventional  
than what I remembereD

Cage's explanation, in his introduction to *I-VI*: "Like acrostics, mesostics are written in the conventional way horizontally, but at the same time they follow a vertical rule, down the middle not down the edge as in an acrostic, a string which spells a word or name, . . . and in my practice the letters are capitalized. . . . In the writing of the wing words, the horizontal text, the letters of the vertical string help me out of sentimentality."

The "wing words" in *I-VI*, and their order, were obtained by chance methods too complicated to go into here. The result is, well, chancy—rather like stream-of-consciousness expression (but whose consciousness)? Hearing Cage read (one of the cassettes includes all of Lecture IV) is more satisfying than reading the lectures in print: he is mesmerizing, and in his mouth the texts are almost poetic and possess a strange near-coherence. As one of Cage's seminar questioners remarks, "one of the things that struck me was . . . little clusters of ideas that would sort of crop up and then disappear throughout the lecture . . . little pockets and i sort of went from pocket to pocket in some way." The seminar discussions—taped, transcribed, and printed in three or four lines along the bottoms of the pages of *I-VI*—amount to a second set of "instant lectures," as Cage calls them—a kind of contrapuntal gloss on Cage's prepared texts.

More than 450 pages long, generously sized at 11-1/2" X 8", beautifully produced, and offered at a remarkably low price, *I-VI* is a major work of Cageiana.

Another mesostic-based work by Cage, *Anarchy*, is the centerpiece of the collectively titled *John Cage at Seventy-Five*, a book-length issue of the occasional *Bucknell Review* (Bucknell University Press, 1989; \$18). Richard Fleming and William Duckworth are the editors, presiding over some fifteen contributions, mostly essays but also photographs, reproductions of paintings, and interviews. Especially notable are an interview with Cage conducted by Duckworth ("Anything I Say Will Be Misunderstood") and an essay by the pianist Margaret Leng Tan ("Taking a Nap, I Pound the Rice": Eastern Influences on John Cage). Norman O. Brown, classical scholar and close friend of Cage, offers a learned, and poetic ramble in his "J. C." The most exquisitely written and revelatory piece in the book, if also one of the briefest (and most clumsily titled), is "Intentionality and Nonintentionality in the Performance of Music by John Cage," an exploration by composer Tom Johnson of "the most important single word" in Cage's aesthetic, *nonintentionality*. Together with the other contributions, these add up to a book that rivals in usefulness and interest the similar compilation (by Peter Gena, Jonathan Brent, and Don Gillespie) *A John Cage Reader: In Celebration of his 70th Birthday* (C. F. Peters, 1982; \$25.25). —H.W.H.



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## BEHIND THE BEAT *with Mark Tucker*

Who was Robert Johnson? A brilliant musician who sold his soul to the devil in exchange for talent. An illiterate who had beautiful handwriting. A man poisoned by a jealous husband—or stabbed, or struck down by magic. A man who before dying crawled on his knees and barked like a dog.

Strange tales, rumors, and unresolved contradictions float through Peter Guralnick's *Searching for Robert Johnson* (E. P. Dutton; \$14.95), a profile of the legendary Delta blues artist who recorded twenty-nine sides in 1936 and '37 and was murdered the next year at age twenty-seven. By the end of this little book—based on an essay published in *Living Blues* in 1981—the reader is left with “pieces of a puzzle, tantalizing clues” to a life that seems to defy documentation. Even so, Guralnick illuminates his elusive subject more than anyone to date, drawing upon unpublished research by Mack McCormick and interviews with Johnson's acquaintances. The resulting portrait shows a solitary performer who criss-crossed the Deep South entertaining at juke-joint dances and rent parties, formed few lasting personal connections, and left behind little besides memories of his musicianship.

While Guralnick fails to answer many questions about the enigmatic bluesman, he successfully conveys the haunting power of Johnson's music and—with the help of stark Depression-era photographs by Dorothea Lange and Marion Post Wolcott—vividly evokes a southern landscape long since vanished.

\* \* \*

The bleak title of Nelson George's *The Death of Rhythm and Blues* (E. P. Dutton paperback; \$8.95) is a bit misleading. To some it might suggest a eulogy for the postwar black musical idiom that helped spawn a host of later styles, from rock 'n' roll to rap. The book delivers that, but also much more. George, a journalist and author of books on Michael Jackson, New Edition, and hip hop, has constructed a provocative, sweeping interpretation of twentieth-century black popular music, placing special emphasis on economic issues that have shaped its history.

Beginning with Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois—the former viewed primarily as an advocate of black economic self-sufficiency, the latter of assimilation into white society—George traces the legacy of their contrasting philosophies within the American music industry, arguing that efforts to “mainstream” black music have often led to loss of black artistic control and profits. To support his thesis he draws extensively on trade publications for information on sales figures, marketing strategies, and business deals. Such an approach might have yielded only a dry research report, but George's lively prose and keen journalistic skills propel the story along—sometimes even too briskly—and keep the main issues in focus. As George considers the break between rock'n'roll and its original black audience, the emergence of powerhouse performers like Aretha Franklin and James Brown, and the complicated “crossover” phenomenon, his skillful synthesis of fact and opinion unfolds to powerful effect.

Especially valuable is George's detailed coverage of black radio and its personalities, among them important record promoters (Dave Clark, Vernon Slaughter) and influential deejays (Vernon

“Dr. Daddy-O” Winslow, Dyanna Williams, Frankie Crocker, D. J. Hollywood). While George documents how programming changes, corporate takeovers, and the advent of FM helped to damage black radio and the music it broadcast, somehow his story ends up more as affirmation than lament. The past decade has seen the rise of rap and its accompanying black independent labels, the triumph of self-sufficient mega-stars like Michael Jackson and Prince, and the success of “retronuevo” artists like Anita Baker and Frankie Beverly with Maze. If *The Death of Rhythm and Blues* documents the painful history of an era almost ended, it also acknowledges that a new one has already begun.

\* \* \*

Since 1973, when *The Smithsonian Collection of Classic Jazz* first appeared, the critic Martin Williams has demonstrated his uncanny ear for exceptional jazz in a series of reissue projects emanating from the Smithsonian. The latest of these is *Jazz Piano* (Smithsonian Collection RC 039 P4T 21010; \$54.96), a set containing sixty-eight performances ranging from Jelly Roll Morton and James P. Johnson to Keith Jarrett and Herbie Hancock. In a preface Williams acknowledges the difficulty of assembling such an anthology—especially having to omit deserving artists and personal favorites—but affirms his intent to make “a statement about the excellence of jazz piano.” That excellence is demonstrated in a number of ways, most notably in the sheer beauty of sounds that jazz pianists have created: the range and variety of tone colors, expressive articulation, nuances of touch and pedaling, and gorgeous chord voicings.

A seventy-one page booklet contains annotations by both Williams and pianist Dick Katz that provide historical context and insights into technique and improvisation. The pairing of a critic with a practitioner makes sense, and Katz is one of those rare players willing and able to engage in detailed musical analysis.

Although there are plenty of up-tempo romps on this set—Tommy Flanagan's whirlwind reading of *Relaxin' at Camarillo* is a stand-out—the ballads and slow blues make the strongest impact. Williams has chosen performances that beautifully capture the ultra-suave legato of Ellis Larkins (*Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea*), the singing tone of Dave McKenna (*I Wished on the Moon*), the harmonic imagination of Hank Jones (*It's Me, Oh Lord*), the haiku-like phrasing of Jimmy Rowles (*The Peacocks*), and the emotional intensity of Bill Evans (*I Loves You Porgy*). One of the happiest discoveries is Count Basie's *Trio Blues*, recorded at a 1977 Zurich concert, in which a group of fellow musicians goads the pianist on, calling out their approval and eventually inspiring Basie to burst out with some serious Harlem stride. It's a magical performance, and a reminder that excellence in jazz often resides as much in the process as the product. Or, to borrow Trummy Young's old formulation for the Jimmie Lunceford band: “T'ain't whatcha do/It's the way thatcha do it/That's what gets results.”

And if that's not enough jazz piano . . . on the album *Poet and Peasant* (Sacramento Jazz SJS-32) Jim Turner dusts off pieces seldom touched these days: stride compositions by Johnny Guarnieri and Willie “The Lion” Smith, rare Ellington (*Black Beauty, Lots O' Fingers*), and that old chestnut, Suppé's *Poet*

New from

# ILLINOIS

## Voices of the Jazz Age Profiles of Eight Vintage Jazzmen

Chip Deffaa

Eight musicians who rose to popularity during the 1920s are profiled in this vivid slice of jazz history. "Fills voids in jazz literature. . . . Deffaa offers well-written and lively accounts of the musical lives of such figures as Freddie Moore, Jabbo Smith, Joe Tarto, Sam Wooding, and Benny Waters. — Nathan W. Pearson, Jr., author of *Goin' to Kansas City*. \$25.95 \*

## Crazeology The Autobiography of a Chicago Jazzman

Bud Freeman, as told to Robert Wolf  
With a foreword by Studs Terkel

Here is the breezy life story of the saxophonist who began with the Austin High Gang in 1925, performed and recorded with almost all the jazz greats, and is still active. "A fascinating, highly readable memoir." — Jerry Kline, *Mississippi Rag*. Illus. \$15.95 \*

## Mormonism and Music A History

Michael Hicks

"A work that should be of interest to students of Mormon history, American popular culture, and the large theme of the inter-relationship between religion and culture." — Davis Bitton, co-author of *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints*. Illus. \$24.95 \*

## Theodore Thomas America's Conductor and Builder of Orchestras, 1835-1905

Ezra Schabas

With a foreword by Valerie Solti

Here is a vivid portrait of the man who almost singlehandedly set programming and disciplinary standards for today's 1,500 American orchestras. Schabas examines the glorious successes (and much-publicized disasters) in the life and career of this remarkable conductor. "Ought to revive the reputation of the almost forgotten musician most responsible for the birth of the Chicago Symphony and the building of Orchestra Hall in 1904." — Henry Kisor, *Chicago Sun-Times*. Illus. \$24.95 \*

## Discoursing Sweet Music Brass Bands and Community Life in Turn-of-the-Century Pennsylvania

Kenneth Kreitner

The "sweet music" of the title was offered to communities across the nation when the weather was sultry and people headed for the local park or town square for a bit of fresh air and a concert. "An important contribution to our understanding of a major movement in American music." — Margaret H. Hazen, co-author of *The Music Men*. Illus. \$22.50 \*

## "The Whorehouse Bells Were Ringing" and Other Songs Cowboys Sing

Collected and edited by Guy Logsdon

Sentimental, bawdy, and often deeply personal—these were the songs working cowboys sang for fun or for night herding. "The book is filled with lore, along with songs containing lyrics that may make musicologists want to keep it under lock and key so the kids can't get at it." — *Tulsa Tribune*. Illus. \$24.95 \*

## REGARDING RECORDINGS I

In 1988, Nicolas Collins curated a two-week festival of electronic, multimedia, and environmental music at The Kitchen in New York City. Elektra/Nonesuch has issued a compact disc (9 79325-2) entitled *Imaginary Landscapes*—the festival's title, inspired by Cage's—with thirteen works (or excerpts) that originated in or developed from the festival.

More than a dozen composers are represented on the seventy-minute disc. The shortest selection is just under three minutes, the longest just over ten; the majority log in at around four minutes. Whether you love a piece or hate it, you will certainly not hear it for very long.

Since the 1988 festival presented works in concert form, its choice of them was appropriately influenced by visual and spatial considerations. Maryanne Amacher, for example, is well known for her ability to create visceral bonds between live audiences and the architecture, sound, and visual elements that surround them. But, as represented here by an excerpt from *Stain—The Music Room*, Amacher commands a sonic vocabulary that is eminently engaging by itself.

Most of the other environmental and performance artists also survive the reduction from several media to one, though vocalists/composers/performing artists Shelley Hirsch and Laetitia deCompiegne Sonami project so much quirky vitality in their multipersonality incarnations that many listeners may seek to experience them live.

On the other hand, Alvin Lucier's *Music for Alpha Waves, Assorted Percussion, and Automated Coded Relays*, in which his brain waves are encoded to activate percussion instruments, loses almost everything in its translation from live adventure to disk. Lucier is not only an important composer, he is a very good composer; but where is the thrill of psychokinesis and levitation without the visual image? ("Look Ma, no hands" is not much of an event without mother gasp.) Lucier has a lifetime of better pieces for home listening.

Christian Marclay's *Black Stucco* for one performer, records, and turntables consists of a huge compendium of exceptionally diverse and unrelated sounds. Though a curious frugality remains a central feature of much contemporary music, the sounds of all things and the music of all times are available at the flick of a switch in today's electronic music studios, and Marclay celebrates that bounty, instead of making do with little. There is no hint, in *Black Stucco*, of a tiny motive run ragged; yet Marclay's zany juxtaposition of almost everything is deftly shaped and enormously satisfying.

Partly as a result of the cultivated trashiness of punk music, and partly as a result of the proliferation of electronic gadgetry at ever-descending prices, *Imaginary Landscapes* reveals a new willingness to integrate every available resource, from nickel-and-dime-effects boxes to costly and sophisticated technologies. Naturally, a bad pianist will not make good music at even the grandest Steinway, and a good composer will come through even when banging a stick against a tree. It is encouraging to see how many kinds of trees coexist in today's musical world. There is no bad music on this disk. There is a great deal to enjoy and more than a little to be learned.

—Noah Creshevsky  
(Brooklyn College)

## BOOK NOOK II

Miles smiles (to borrow a phrase from a superb Miles Davis album of 1966): "[A] lot of critics didn't like me back then—still don't today—because they saw me as an arrogant little nigger." Miles on music education: "I could learn more in one session at Minton's [Harlem club] than it would take me two years to learn at Juilliard. . . . We was [*sic*] all trying to get our master's degrees and Ph.D.'s from Minton's University of Bebop under the tutelage of Professors Bird and Diz. Man, they was playing so much incredible shit."

That's the style of writing—or talking into a tape recorder—in *Miles: The Autobiography*, by Davis with Quincy Troupe (Simon & Schuster; \$22.95). Miles needs no introduction; Troupe is identified as a poet, journalist, and teacher who won an American Book Award for poetry in 1980. Together, they seem to have set out to *épater les bourgeois* in this book—the white bourgeoisie in particular. But whether or not the writing is more Troupe than Davis, it's "jive" enough to jibe with what is generally known about Miles the man.

Miles the artist indisputably belongs in the pantheon of jazz musicians (who are, of course, spontaneous composers). Having made his first significant recording with Charlie Parker at age twenty (November 1945), he is still out there working. Though a good deal of controversy surrounds his electronic, more commercially successful fusion music of the past twenty years, his recorded repertory boasts a large number of undisputed masterpieces.

The "autobiography," however, tells us more about his personal life than about the music. And it is marred by sloppy editing: "When school started at Juilliard [in September 1944] I would take the subway to 66th Street where the school was located" (not back then, Miles: it was still up on Claremont Avenue above 116th Street). But anyone interested in the subject will learn something from the book—though in some areas frustratingly less than one would wish for, and, in others, perhaps more.

Do read the book with other biographies at hand (Ian Carr's *Miles Davis* of 1982 or Jack Chambers's two-volume *Milestones* of 1983 and 1985, for example) to help pin down dates and facts. If time is at a premium, there's always the music: the 1945–48 early recordings with Parker, the nonet recordings of 1949–50, and those of the great (and still influential) bands of 1956, 1959, and 1964–68.

—Howard Brofsky  
(Queens College, C.U.N.Y.)

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**MAPPING THE FUTURE OF BLACK-MUSIC RESEARCH:****A TALK WITH SAMUEL A. FLOYD, JR. by Carol J. Oja and Mark Tucker**

*We were struck by an editorial in the Black Music Research Bulletin of Fall 1989, in which Samuel Floyd called for immediate action in recruiting black musicians and scholars into doctoral programs across the country. So we chatted with him at some length about this matter, as well as about recent projects and future prospects of his Center for Black Music Research (CBMR), located at Columbia College in Chicago. Professor Floyd is highly visible in the academic press these days. An introduction to the activities of his Center can be found in the Spring 1990 issue of the Sonneck Society Bulletin, and an article by him titled "The Black Presence in Music in Higher Education: An Opinion" appeared this spring in the Chronicle of Higher Education. (Excerpts from it are interpolated here.)*

CJO/MT: How did your work in black music begin?

SF: Back in the mid-1970s I was putting together an anthology of music by black composers, and in the process I found myself having to make all kinds of contacts and going to many repositories. Information was hard to find. I also noticed that other people were making similar efforts. So to assist my own project and those of others I started the *Black Music Research Newsletter*.

As the response to that grew, and more and more people became interested, I felt that something else needed to be done to foster research on black topics. At Fisk University, where I taught from 1978 to 1983, I started the Institute for Black Music Research. In 1980 we began publishing the *Black Music Research Journal*, and we also started commissioning works by black composers and having conferences. (The first commission went to Hale Smith for a piece called *Meditations in Passage*, the second to George Walker for a song cycle.)

The present Center for Black Music Research was founded in 1983, when I came to Columbia College. We started to expand, adding publications, forming the Black Music Repertory Ensemble, and things like that.

CJO/MT: Is the Center primarily concerned with black American music?

SF: So far that's been the main focus, but we're beginning to look toward black music in other parts of the world. For example, the fall issue of the *Journal* will be devoted to black composers in Europe. And the issue following that will be on Latin-African-U.S. connections.

Recently I edited a book (*Black Music and the Harlem Renaissance* [Greenwood Press, forthcoming]) that includes a piece by Jeffrey Green called the "The Harlem Renaissance and England." Green talks about the enormous amount of black-music activity going on in England during the 1920s. I'm thinking of following that collection up with one treating the Negro Renaissance outside of Harlem—in France, England, Scandinavia, also Washington DC, Atlanta, and Chicago.

CJO/MT: We know you're personally concerned with increasing the number of blacks involved in the research and teaching of black music. How can this be done?

SF: I'm convinced that the only way is for higher education to look beyond itself and start paying attention to pre-college education—to interest students from an early age in music as a profession. We have a double whammy on us already: on the one hand, the tremendous drop-out rate, and, on the other, the tremendous attraction of the business world and technological

fields for black kids pursuing advanced degrees. We have to reach people early enough to help overcome the drop-out problem and at the same time let them know there are attractive alternatives to the technological fields.

This coming summer, for example, we're sponsoring an Institute for the Teaching and Research of Black Music (28 June–3 July). It's intended for scholars and college teachers, high school teachers, elementary teachers, and music administrators in higher education. We'd been getting a lot of inquiries from people wanting to know more about the subject, so I decided we needed to take action.

CJO/MT: How large is the current pool of black music scholars?

SF: The CBMR has made an effort to identify and keep track of black scholars in the field of music. We have discovered no more than seven or eight active black musicologists in all of American higher education and only five Afro-Americans trained as music librarians.

In the seventies, as black-studies programs sprang up, a few members of the academic community recognized that the need for black scholars and archivists would grow. But, for a variety of reasons, steps to address such needs were not seriously investigated or implemented. In the first place, many in the profession considered the then-current interest in black culture nothing more than a fad. In the second, many black students continued to think of musical scholarship as a "white" pursuit. Third, many white scholars still refused to grant black-music research the status of a proper, "respectable" endeavor. Moreover, many professors at historically black institutions failed to encourage or prepare their charges to pursue either musical scholarship (as opposed to performance and music-teaching) or black-music endeavors. In addition, hostility of black and white professors persisted—hostility born of ignorance of the black-music tradition and how it relates to the European tradition, and protectiveness of curriculum time for already established courses and pursuits. Finally, there was the liberal but ultimately patronizing, condescending, and presumptuous notion that black students should not ghettoize themselves by studying black subjects.

CJO/MT: What can the professional societies do to change this situation?

SF: They can help provide the leadership. What we usually hear is that the Center should be doing this. Sure it should, but there's a higher level of leadership that could be given by the professional societies. They could add encouragement and credibility to the efforts other institutions are making. Instead of looking at themselves as organizations to stay fixed in their traditional roles, the societies ought to start serving more actively the



## MAPPING THE FUTURE OF BLACK-MUSIC RESEARCH (continued)



Samuel A. Floyd, Jr.

changing needs of the profession. Deliberations are necessary in the appropriate committees to devise plans for involving black academics.

Today many schools are trying to hire one of the seven or eight musicologists I mentioned earlier. But there is something insincere, even cynical, about the current scramble for black candidates if it is not based on a serious effort to increase the supply of scholars for the future. If black students can be identified, nurtured, and recruited by the hundreds to staff football and basketball teams in colleges and universities across the nation, they surely can also be identified, nurtured, and recruited by the dozen (or at least half-dozen) as students and faculty members in the departments and schools of music in those same institutions. Efforts must be made to boost the numbers of potential black-music scholars in undergraduate schools and departments. The country's inexorable movement toward a minorities-based culture and the impending national shortage of Ph.D.'s demand it.

At our institute this summer, the well-known senior scholar Howard Mayer Brown is going to offer two sessions for college and high school teachers devoted to musicology as an option in the field of music. Perhaps the professional societies can look at this as one approach.

CJO/MT: What new directions do you foresee for the CBMR *Journal*?

SF: We've been focusing on local and regional history—St. Louis, New Orleans, California—and in the coming years we're going to shift our focus to a series of individual works that we feel are a major contribution to music. For example, we're going to devote one issue to William Grant Still's *Afro-American Symphony*, with six articles giving various perspectives on the work. I'm considering taking the same approach to José White's Violin

Concerto, Duke Ellington's *East St. Louis Toodle-oo*, and Jelly Roll Morton's *King Porter Stomp*.

CJO/MT: What about your own interests as a teacher and scholar of black music?

SF: I teach one course at Columbia College in black-music history. I don't ever want to get away from teaching entirely, because I find it highly stimulating.

I find that I'm able to do two to four articles a year. When I get an interest in a particular subject that I can focus my energies on, I do so. Over the years, I've also been working on a book about the continuity of black American music. I hope to spend more time with it next year while I'm on sabbatical leave.

Recently I've become interested in how literary critical theory might apply to the study of black music. This stepped up when I was at the University of Michigan's Institute for the Humanities this past year. I'd already read Houston Baker, Jr.'s *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory*, and at Michigan I read his *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s *The Signifying Monkey*. That and other things stimulated me to do some work in that area. In fact, an upcoming issue of the *Journal*, edited by Bruce Tucker, will be devoted to literary and critical approaches to black music. We've got a lot of people looking at this from a variety of disciplines, among them Gates, Amiri Baraka, Gary Tomlinson, Greil Marcus, and Hazel Carby.

I'm really in a period of gestation with all these new ideas, trying to determine where we'll take things. The articles we're getting are providing a focus for new directions. It just keeps growing.

## BEHIND THE BEAT (continued)

and *Peasant Overture*, which gets a high-impact aerobic workout. Turner seems slightly stiff improvising on pop songs but utterly at ease with ragtime and stride vehicles that call for speedy fingers and steel nerves.

Keyboard exhibitionism is hardly the point of *How Could We Be Blue?* (Stomp Off S.O.S. 1183), an album of duets by James Dapogny and Butch Thompson. These two early-jazz specialists favor medium tempos as a means for exploring pretty melodies and developing subtle rhythmic conversations. They also balance familiar works by Jelly Roll Morton and Fats Waller with more unusual fare: a ballad by Sidney Bechet (*I Want You Tonight*) and a piece associated with King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band (*Mabel's Dream*). A highlight is their lovely, restrained version of William H. Tyers's *Panama*, which, although composed in 1911, sounds as though Louis Moreau Gottschalk had dreamed it up one night under a tropical moon.

Addresses: Smithsonian Recordings, Department JP, P.O. Box 23345, Washington, DC 20026; Sacramento Jazz, P.O. Box 255424, Sacramento, CA 95865; Stomp Off Records, P.O. Box 342, York, PA 17405.

## REGARDING RECORDINGS II

One never steps into the same river twice. Even if there were a complete original-cast album of Cole Porter's 1934 musical comedy *Anything Goes*, modern ears couldn't hear it in the same way as Depression-era listeners would. So, to suggest that the new EMI recording (CDC-7-49848-2) of Porter's farcical hit has a wonderful 1930s flavor is an exercise in both nostalgia and imagination.

As he did with the definitive *Show Boat* recording (EMI CDC-7-49108-2), conductor/musicologist John McGlinn has chosen a cast (including Cris Groenendaal, Jack Gilford, and Frederica Von Stade) that is very well suited to recreating songs originally written with specific voices in mind. Kim Criswell, as Reno Sweeney, may not be the equal of the young Ethel Merman, but she projects a dynamic brassy quality, especially in "Blow, Gabriel, Blow." William Gaxton's limited range became an asset in the 1934 Broadway production, thanks to Porter's melodic ingenuity—here handsomely revealed by Groenendaal. Victor Moore, as a quintessential baggy-pants comedian, was even more limited as the Reverend Dr. Moon, but Porter showed his talents to charming advantage, and on the recording they are engagingly evoked by Gilford.

The Smithsonian Institution's archival reconstructions of American musicals are invaluable, but they cannot provide the same kind of experience as McGlinn's recordings. Of course his version of *Anything Goes* (performed by the London Symphony Orchestra and Ambrosian Chorus) is played on "authentic instruments," but, more to the point, it's an intelligent, meticulous reconstruction of the original Robert Russell Bennett and Hans

Spialek orchestrations—a reconstruction in which Spialek, shortly before his death, was able to participate. As he did with *Show Boat*, McGlinn has included an appendix of songs that did not survive in the Broadway version of the musical.

For the archivally minded, the accompanying program book is a treasury of fascinating details about the show's evolution, including reproductions of photos, program pages, and other materials from 1934. Lively essays by McGlinn on problems of restoration, by Robert Kimball on Porter and the show, and by Miles Monroe Kreuger on the period in general are aids to greater enjoyment. Kreuger even provides a plot summary that makes for entertaining reading.

To hear Joan Morris interpret some of Porter's songs from *Anything Goes*—for instance "You're the Top" or "I Get a Kick Out of You"—makes a most interesting contrast. In *Night and Day: The Cole Porter Album* (Omega OCD-3002), Morris and pianist William Bolcom bring a wide range of Porter's most compelling melodies and ingenious lyrics to pulsating life. Morris isn't Merman any more than Criswell is, but her cultivated voice, her musical intelligence, and her lively sense of mood and character make these songs something very special. Bolcom's accompaniments reinforce Morris's discoveries about the rhythms and lyrics; they also reveal delightful complexities in seemingly simple tunes. There was nothing simple about Cole Porter, as this CD reminds us. Even in spoofing the socially superficial, both his words and his music bite deep.

—Glenn Loney  
(Brooklyn College)

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## REGARDING RECORDINGS II (continued)

## MINIMALLY MINIMALIST

Terry Riley and John Adams. Our response to their names is automatic and instantaneous: minimalists. It seems strange that the label has stuck when, for at least ten years, neither Riley's nor Adams's music even vaguely resembles the music that the term minimalism was called up to describe. Two recent recordings, *Salome Dances for Peace* (1985–86) by Riley (Elektra Nonesuch 9 79217-2) and two new works by Adams, *The Wound Dresser* (1989) and *Fearful Symmetries* (1988) (Elektra Nonesuch 79218-2), do even more to shatter the conventional nomenclature.

At one time, categorizing **Terry Riley** in the minimalist camp had a certain validity. His *In C* (1964), more than any other piece, gave minimalism its vocabulary and remains to this day the quintessential minimalist work. But *In C* is more than twenty-five years old, and since its completion Riley has traversed many paths. He has written music for acoustic instruments and tape, scored music for film, studied North Indian vocal music with Pandit Pran Nath, and, during the 1970s, devoted himself completely to solo keyboard improvisations.

In *Salome*, Riley shows that these diverse influences have not gone unheeded. He has constructed a work which binds together a myriad of styles—jazz (Coltrane was an early influence) and Indian raga, blues and Middle Eastern scales, minimalism and Bartókian counterpoint. The outcome could very well have been a post-modern fiasco along the line of William Bolcom's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. But Riley succeeds (and in a virtuosic manner) in making these diverse styles exist convincingly within the same work. The styles never call attention to themselves; they function only on behalf of the music itself, which, monumental in scope (it is 115 minutes long), unrelenting in power, and subtle in construction, is some of the finest string quartet music of the century. The Kronos Quartet's playing of the new work is astonishing: it was written for them, and they perform it as if it were theirs.

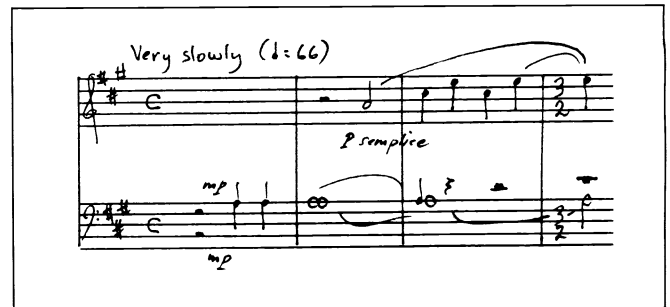
**John Adams** is one of the now-popular category of "second-generation minimalists." In his early works, such as *Phrygian Gates* and *Shaker Loops*, Adams made use of minimalist processes to a considerable degree—only "considerable" because his harmonic vocabulary was always too varied and his harmonic and rhythmic rates of change always a little too rapid to be truly minimalist. Also, there was always an eclectic tendency present, which in 1985 surfaced with full force in *Harmonielehre*. Thereafter, Romanticism, silent-film music, jazz, rock, minimalism, and expressionism all coexist in his works. And Adams, like Riley, is able to reconcile these diverse styles.

*Fearful Symmetries*, however, comes very close to going over the edge into the realm of perverse eclecticism, with its combination of jazz and minimalism and grand Tchaikovskian gestures. But Adams calls it one of his "trickster" pieces, and that is its saving grace: like its earlier counterparts (*Grand Pianola Music*, *The Chairman Dances*), it is humorous, sly, and thoroughly unpretentious.

*The Wound Dresser* offers a dark contrast to *Fearful Symmetries*. The text, a poem by Walt Whitman which relates the

poet's experiences nursing injured young soldiers during the Civil War, is immaculately set amidst a subtly pulsating background that makes use of a chromaticism bordering on the expressionistic. A solo violin and a solo trumpet, both lyrically scored in their upper registers, revolve with and around the voice. The pertinence of this piece to our time's AIDS epidemic has already been noted but is, nonetheless, too striking not to mention again. The Orchestra of St. Luke's plays spectacularly under Adams's direction, and Sanford Sylvan, the baritone who portrayed Chou En-lai in *Nixon in China*, sings *The Wound Dresser* the way the Kronos plays *Salome*: as if it were his.

—Jason Stanyek  
(Brooklyn College)



**A First!** One of Philadelphia's leading musicians in the antebellum era was an Afro-American: **Frank Johnson**, keyed bugle virtuoso and leader of a celebrated dance and parade band. Johnson also composed, mainly dances and marches, from 1818 until his death in 1844. The Chestnut Brass Company and Friends, conducted by Tamara Brooks (and playing 19th-century instruments, mostly American), romp through some 32 miniatures by Johnson and a few of his contemporaries, in arrangements by Jay Krush (Musicmasters MMD6-0236). Don't expect any epiphanies: this is serviceable workaday music, and the polkas, waltzes, marches, and cotillions average only about one minute each. But the performances are spirited, it's good to hear so much music by the legendary Johnson, and there are some surprises, notably a pair of waltzes "à cinq temps"—five-step, 5/4 lurchers—and a fine grand march, "Honor to the Brave," which was among the music Johnson composed for General Lafayette's triumphal return to Philadelphia in 1824.

**Painefully . . . and painlessly!** Composer Gunther Schuller calls him "our first great American composer, a musical trailblazer." Musicologist Steven Ledbetter calls his Symphony No. 1 "a milestone in the development of American music." *New York Times* critic Donal Henahan demurs but admits grudgingly that the Symphony No. 2 is "second-rate stuff [but] good second-rate stuff." Another *Times* critic (Barrymore Scherer) calls attention to "glorious expressions of pure melody [in] beautiful works." They are all speaking of **John Knowles Paine**, now enjoying a modest revival, after many decades of neglect and disdain. . . . Schuller—well known as a Paine enthusiast from his own trailblazer of a recording of the early *Mass in D* (New World NW 262-63; rel. 1978)—speaks as conductor of the first modern performance (21 May 1989) of Paine's monumental oratorio *St. Peter* (1872). An astonishingly clean and clear recording of that very performance (appropriately in Harvard

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

Even the most casual students of country and gospel music are likely to recognize the name of Albert E. Brumley. Working from a base in the tiny Ozark town of Powell, Missouri, Brumley (1905–1977) produced an amazingly potent body of work which has made him the most influential single songwriter in white gospel music. His masterpiece “I’ll Fly Away” has been recorded more than five hundred times by artists in virtually every field of music, and a dozen of his other songs have become standards with both white and black gospel singers.

In many ways, Brumley was to white gospel what Thomas A. Dorsey was to black gospel: both began as performers thoroughly in touch with their folk roots, both did their best work in the 1930s, both worked out innovative ways to publicize their songs, and both gained popular renown as composers—an unusual status (songwriter-as-star), given the cavalier attitude accorded most gospel songwriters in the 1930s and 1940s.

Brumley’s star began to rise in the late 1920s, when he left his eastern Oklahoma farm home to study at the Hartford Music Company in nearby Hartford, Arkansas—just south of Ft. Smith on the Oklahoma-Arkansas line. Hartford Music, headed by E. M. Bartlett, was a “convention”-book publisher in the manner of James D. Vaughan or Stamps-Baxter, publishing annual or twice-annual paperback songbooks using seven-shape notation. Brumley studied with some of the best gospel composers at Hartford during the five years he was there, including Homer Rodeheaver, James Rowe, and W. H. Reubush. Soon he was writing songs for Hartford, though often getting only fifty or one hundred copies of the current songbook for his efforts. After he married and moved to Powell, in the depths of the Depression, his talent suddenly bloomed. In an incredible burst of creative energy, he composed most of his greatest songs in one dozen-year period. These include “I’ll Fly Away” (1932), “Jesus Hold My Hand” (1933), “I’d Rather Be An Old-Time Christian” (1934), “I’ll Meet You in the Morning” (1936), “Camping in Canaan’s Land” (1937), “There’s a Little Pine Log Cabin” (1937), “Turn Your Radio On” (1938), “Did You Ever Go Sailing?” (1938), “I’ve Found a Hiding Place” (1939), “Rank Strangers to Me” (1942), and “If We Never Meet Again” (1945).

What is remarkable is how these songs became “hits”—not by commercial recordings, only by their use at singing conventions and contests, and on radio broadcasts. By 1937 Brumley’s fame was great enough that Bartlett was able to issue an entire songbook specifically devoted to his work, *Albert E. Brumley’s Book of Radio Favorites*. Graced with a photo of Brumley on the cover (over the caption “The Boy from the Ozarks, The Land of a Million Smiles”) and containing fourteen Brumley hits (along with about sixty other gospel songs), the book seems to have been the first convention book to spotlight a single composer. (In the early 1940s, when Brumley joined up with Stamps-Baxter, he issued other books built around his fame as a composer.) Like Dorsey, Brumley eventually took control of his own publishing, forming his own company and buying out Hartford Music, which had published most of his early 1930s songs. This won him even more fame as a composer, and an even more secure niche in gospel history.

All of which makes the publication of an “authorized” Brumley biography a welcome event. This is *I’ll Fly Away*, co-authored

by Brumley’s son, Albert E. Brumley, Jr., and an Ozark writer, Kay Hively (Mountaineer Books, HCR 3 Box 868, Branson, MO 65616; \$9.95, postpaid). A richly illustrated and heavily anecdotal account of Brumley’s life, much of it is based on a series of interviews Albert Jr. did with his father in 1977, a few months before the latter’s death. In these, Brumley recalls how he came to write some of his best songs. “I’ll Fly Away,” for instance, came to him while working in an Oklahoma cotton field, and was derived from the old Vernon Dalhart hit “The Prisoner’s Song” (“If I had the wings of an angel . . .”).

We learn details of the strange world of gospel-song publishing in the 1930s, and how the convention-book publishing system worked to create the foundation for modern gospel music. We learn something of Brumley’s sense of aesthetics; he eschewed the label “country music” in his work (though his songs were favorites with country and bluegrass bands) but often used the word “folk” or “cowboy” in discussing his influences. We get a sense of how Brumley survived economically, far from the centers of the music publishing industry and with no steady venue for performing. Thus, though the book is short on the precise dates and details a more scholarly effort would provide, it is one of the most revealing sources for southern gospel history around, and offers a wealth of raw information about the genre’s finest composer.

[Brumley’s music company is still very much alive, still in Powell, and still selling shape-note books. One such book is a 1966 collection, *The Best of Albert E. Brumley*, featuring 160 of the composer’s songs—more than six hundred in all—as well as photos, press clippings, and biographical bits. It can be had for \$5.50 postpaid, from Brumley and Sons Music Company, Powell, MO 65370. It is a splendid companion piece to the new biography.]



Albert E. Brumley, 10 September 1960. Photo: Charles Allonby.

## BOOK NOOK III

For eleven years, from December 1971 through December 1982, composer **Tom Johnson** wrote regular music criticism for *The Village Voice*. Anyone who read the *Voice* during those years will remember that era as one in which lower Manhattan was blessed with a particularly vital new-music scene. Johnson turned out to be its unofficial chronicler, and his columns played an indispensable role in defining the “downtown” aesthetic and bringing the music itself to the attention of a larger public.

Johnson has been living in Paris since 1983, concentrating on composition rather than criticism. But now eighty-two of his reviews have been collected in *The Voice of New Music: New York City 1972-1982* (Eindhoven, Netherlands: Het Apollohuis, 1989; available for \$20 from Lovely Music, 105 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10013, or Deep Listening, 156 Hunter Street, Kingston, NY 12401). And what a joy they are to read! Devoid of **condescending superiority** or caustic judgments, Johnson’s criticism—unfailingly lucid, deceptively simple, and immensely patient—allows the music, rather than the reviewer, to occupy center stage.

Johnson’s years at the *Voice* coincided with the rise of one of the most important of recent musical movements—minimalism. He was in the enviable position to trace its rise from obscure galleries and lofts to sold-out concert halls. In December 1971, Johnson’s review of Steve Reich’s *Drumming* marked the first time that any of the minimalists were taken seriously by the New York press. By March 1972, Johnson was using the word “minimal” to refer to the music of Alvin Lucier, perhaps the first time that the label had been applied in a critical context. By September 1972, Johnson was describing a “New York Hypnotic School,” consisting of Young, Reich, Riley, and Glass—years before the existence of such a minimal “school” was generally acknowledged.

In fact, Johnson’s consistent prescience is astonishing, considering how hard it is to perceive trends when you’re actually living them. By April 1973, he is already talking about a return to tonality, by July 1973 he is able to sort out Young’s influence on the other minimalists, by June 1975 he states (in reference to **Reich**) that “the decline of minimalism has become more and more clear,” and by January 1976 he has proclaimed the death of the avant-garde.

Despite his reluctance to denounce, Johnson does have his bones to pick. He prefers the rigorous austerity of early minimalism to the lushness of post-minimalism; he laments the gradual decline of radical experimentalism; he favors the downtown composers (especially Cage, Feldman, and Reich) over the uptown academicians. But his quick ear allows him to analyze both the music he loves and that which he does not in terms intelligible to all readers. And he never abandons the critical creed he states in his farewell article, one that other music journalists would be wise to follow:

Write honestly in the first person. But emphasize the description of what happened. Keep the interpretation secondary. And try to leave the evaluation up to the reader.

—K.R.S.

**Oh Brimstone! . . . Oh Popcock and Hoboken!** Those are among the exclamations in *EXCELSIOR: Journals of the Hutchinson Family Singers, 1842-1846* (Pendragon Press; \$68), edited and generously annotated by Dale Cockrell. More than one member of the family quartet wrote journal entries, and Cockrell has stitched them together as intelligently as possible, adding paragraphs of his own here and there as well as four complete “interchapters” to fill in the historical holes, plus several documentary appendices, a bibliography, and a good index. The journals themselves are disappointingly slight in musical interest, though they cannot fail to serve social, economic, and even political historians. (The book is in fact No. 5 in Pendragon’s Sociology of Music series.) And the entries are not nearly so colorful as the above-quoted epithets might seem to promise: Asa Hutchinson, in Cockrell’s phrase “the primary journal-keeper,” got it just right when, writing in Philadelphia on 4 January 1844, he admitted that “the truth is that the Hutchinsons cannot talk as well as they sing”; elsewhere he hinted at the morally dutiful tone of the journals in saying, “It is a good work for the mind and body to pen the everyday transactions as we wander through this world” and, elsewhere, “Oh, for advancement and improvement.” Perhaps the most interesting passages are those entered in the journals during the Hutchinsons’ visit to the British Isles (1845-46): they had been preceded, as American musicians abroad, only by Frank Johnson (in 1838), the Virginia Minstrels (1844), and the Ethiopian Serenaders (earlier in 1845), and their reactions to the British— and vice versa—are fresh and fascinating.



**No censorship here!** Do not resist the temptation to peek into “*The Whorehouse Bells Were Ringing*” and *Other Songs Cowboys Sing*, collected and edited by Guy Logsdon (University of Illinois Press; \$24.95): it’s *wonderful!* Logsdon has been collecting cowboy songs for more than twenty years; here he publishes more than sixty of the kind that he has concluded are the cowboy’s “favorite [sort:] robust bawdy songs that range (as do “dirty” jokes and stories) from gross to clever humor.” A few suggestive titles: “School Ma’am on the Flat,” “Oh! My! You’re a Dandy for Nineteen Years Old,” “Old Horny Kebri-O,” and “The Buttons on His Pants.” Besides giving the music of each song (in an unadorned single-line melody) and a text of it as complete as possible, Logsdon writes about its history and context, and cites (where possible) field collections and manuscripts that contain it, references to it in print, and recordings of it. A special bonus of the book is its inclusion of about fifty photographs from the Old West, most of high artistic and technical quality. Logsdon dedicates his fine compilation to the memory of two of his favorite cowboy-song informants, Lewis R. Pyle and Riley Neal, about whom (and some others) he writes an appreciative prelude. And he adds, as a kind of lengthy postlude, a hundred-page account of famous singing cowboys, collectors and recorders of their songs, and the bawdy cowboy song as a genre, topping that off with a glossary, a bibliography and an index.

## REICH ON RECENT AND FUTURE WORKS (continued)

really, I looked a lot like him. So there the different trains were: I was going back and forth on trains between New York and Los Angeles, very sheltered and very fortunate, and other Jews were going on other trains from Denmark or Hungary to Poland, and they weren't coming back.

So that was the idea behind *Different Trains*. What I did then was to take a little portable tape recorder out on a visit to Virginia, who lives in Queens now. I said, "Virginia, I want to use your voice in a piece of music." She said, "Oh, that's nice." So we just talked about the old days. Then, after a lot of phone calls I located a man by the name of Lawrence Davis, who is a retired Pullman porter, eighty-five years old, and lives in Washington, DC. He's a kind of living archive: he has spoken to the Smithsonian; he likes to talk about the train life that he led in 1939, 1940, 1941. He rode the very lines I did—between New York and Chicago, and then on from Chicago to Los Angeles. I interviewed and taped Mr. Davis.

For the second part of the piece I went up to Yale, where they have a videotape archive of Holocaust survivors now living in this country. I sat in that archive for a number of days, listening and looking. And I also listened to audiotapes at the American Jewish Committee here in New York City. I dubbed bits of speech of the people with the most musical voices: a woman from Rotterdam who is now living in Oregon, a man from Budapest now living in Boston, a woman from Brussels now living in Florida.

I brought all these cassettes home, and I listened to them, and, when I found something that seemed to be what the French call *le mot juste*, I put it into the sampling keyboard. For me, the *mots justes* were, in the first part of the piece, dates and place names that connoted the general feeling of being in America in 1939–42 and a certain attitude that went with it, one that was, I guess, naive in the best sense of that word, very positive, very expansive. In the second part of the piece, again I chose place names, dates, and bits of stories. And in the third movement what happens is basically that the Holocaust survivors come to America. In a sense they come together with the Americans of the first movement. But it isn't really a happy ending, because by the time they get here—as Mr. Davis says, talking about the trains—"But today, they're all gone." And indeed, much else is gone as well. At the very end of the piece, Rachella, the woman from Rotterdam, tells a story about "one girl who had a beautiful voice, and they loved to listen to the singing, the Germans. And when she stopped singing, they said, 'More, more,' and they applauded." And the next day she was gassed. This seemed like a fitting way to end the piece.

All the melodies in the piece were basically taken just the way you take melodic dictation, only I was taking them from people's voices. As they spoke, so I wrote; they gave me the notes, they gave me timbre, they gave me tempo, and they gave me meaning. I must say that, having dealt with the live people in the first movement, having visited them and recorded them, and then having spent a lot of time in the archives, and having actually spoken with those people on the telephone to get permission to use their voices, it was like a process of feeding oneself, of building up emotional fact and fantasy which went into the

piece. So the piece for me is really an homage to those people—a memorial for those no longer around and an homage to those living.

KRS: You've said that *Different Trains* was in a sense a study for a larger music-theater piece, one now on the horizon. It's going to be a full-evening work entitled *The Cave*, a collaboration with Beryl Korot, premiering at the Stuttgart Opera in 1992 and at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1993. What's the relationship, in terms of technique, between *Different Trains* and *The Cave*?

SR: Well, *Different Trains* is like a starting point. In it, I have musicians doubling the voices, the simple rule being that every time a woman speaks she's doubled by the viola and every time a man speaks he's doubled by the cello. That technique will be used in *The Cave*, but with totally different subject matter, and you will see the people as well as hear them. I don't like opera, and therefore I'd never really thought about music theater. But *Different Trains* suggested a new kind of music theater. *The Cave* will have *Different Trains's* technique, and there will be many other techniques, as befits a major piece of full-evening length. It will be scored for about twenty musicians and singers who will be members of my own ensemble.

KRS: The cave that's referred to in the title is the Cave of Machpelah, in Hebron on the West Bank. Tell us a bit about the historical premise behind the piece.

SR: The formal idea for the theater piece pre-existed its content. For years now I have been thinking about something that would use videotape, audiotape, and live musicians, but I didn't know what. My wife Beryl Korot has done multi-monitor video installations which—as opposed to most multi-media works, which tend to be fast-moving, associative, surrealistic—are absolutely riveted in focus, and the timing between the channels is basically musical timing. So it was natural that we thought of working together.

~~The subject matter came later. There's a cave in Hebron (called~~ Khalil in Arabic) which, in the Judaic tradition (in Genesis), is the burial place of Abraham and Sarah. Abraham's two sons were of course Isaac and Ishmael. Now, Isaac was the son of Abraham's wife Sarah; Ishmael was the son of her maidservant Hagar, who's an Egyptian. So it is fairly common knowledge that Isaac is the father of the Jewish people, and Ishmael is the father of the Arab people. Now, we're living in a world where the Middle East is a very hot and dangerous place, and I think many people think that's something that began in 1947 with the partition of Palestine. But in fact that was very much the tip of the iceberg: if you really want to understand what's going on in the Middle East in its totality, you have to have the perspective of the Bible on the one hand and the Koran on the other.

So the starting point for this piece was this basic idea—that there is a place where a man is buried who had two sons who are the beginning of a situation that has led to a very real and dangerous conflict in the world today. Then things began to metamorphose, because we started wondering, "Well, what are we going to do here: are we going to cover the entire history of

## REICH ON RECENT AND FUTURE WORKS (continued)

the Middle East? are we going to deal with the Balfour Declaration? are we going to get old newsreel footage?" I suddenly felt as if the Atlantic Ocean were closing over my head! The more we thought about it the more we felt on comfortable ground with just Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac. So we thought we might just restrict the work to those personages. But they are dead; and I didn't want a piece with actors, in which I would be saying "Oh, that one's Abraham, and the tenor over there is singing the Isaac part tonight!" So how to deal with that? Well, those people *do* live today; and they live in the minds of Jews living in Israel and Arabs living all over the Middle East—even in the minds of very rational and well-educated persons who wish to deny the figures' historical authenticity—deny it, but with great vehemence and great scholarly passion. So we decided that the first part of the piece is basically going to be Abraham and Isaac, the Jewish perspective on the story and its beginning in *Genesis*. The second part of the piece is then to be Ibrahim and Ismail, as in the Koranic tradition. And in both parts we ask some very basic, simple questions: "Who for you is Abraham? Who for you is Sarah? Who for you is Hagar? Who for you is Ishmael? Who for you is Isaac?"

We finally decided that in the third movement we would turn our cameras on the West and ask those same questions all over again. Now, if we were to really let you answer these questions—which we will in the third part of the piece—the answers would be very personal and maybe totally ill-informed or hostile: "Man, I'm a Buddhist, don't give me that shit!" or "You mean *Lincoln*?" or "You're not serious; give me a break!" So, the first two parts of the piece basically ask these questions of people who are well-informed and concerned. And the last part of the piece will show, I think, a lack of information and a lack of concern.

KRS: You've called *The Cave* "a new kind of documentary music-video theater." You've got a lot of components there. What is the dominant component in this mix?

SR: Music and video. . . . I couldn't write any of the real music of the piece until I had the documentary material; I had to get my cast of characters who would tell me what my musical starting point was going to be. Give me my pitches, give me my rhythms, give me my timbres—and give me my emotional subject matter! For instance, when we asked the questions of three

different people in Israel, the first was a settler in Kiryat Arba, which is a settlement just outside of Hebron built by very right-wing, very religious types: "Who for you is Abraham?" "To tell you the truth, he is for me my father." Great! The second answer was from a curatorial type at a museum, someone involved in manuscripts: "A legendary figure! We know nothing about Abraham!" The third answer was from a woman from Tunis, a Kabbalist, in a bright red dress with black polka-dots: "A complete break. An unknown future." (Aaah . . . that's my gall! She meant that he was a revolutionary.) In other words, the questions—over there, and I think over here, too—are kind of Rorschachs for the people you're asking them of. And the responses, while they may tell you a bit about Abraham, will really tell you more about who you're asking them of. That's what makes the piece alive, because our cast of characters is really Abraham and the others—but as living in the souls and minds of people who love them, hate them, reject them, think it's all a bunch of foolishness, what have you. And that brings these characters very much to life.

The musical snippets dotted throughout this issue are all, of course, by **Aaron Copland**. They are our way of wishing him (somewhat prematurely) a happy ninetieth birthday next November 14th. They come, respectively, from *Piano Variations* (© 1932), *Piano Fantasy* (© 1957), *Appalachian Spring* (© 1945), and "*Happy Birthday*" Parody (© 1971). All are © Copyright by Aaron Copland; Copyright Renewed. Reprinted by permission of Aaron Copland, Copyright Owner, and Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., Sole Licensee.

## PAINEFULLY (continued)

University's Sanders Theatre) finds Schuller leading the hundred-voice Back Bay Chorale, the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra of Boston, and four exceptionally strong soloists—Jeanne Ommerlé (soprano), D'Anna Fortunato (mezzo-soprano), Paul Austin Kelly (tenor), and David Evitts (baritone)—in a two-disk release (GM Recordings GM2027CD-2; rel. 1989). . . . Both of Paine's symphonies, the First (1876) and the Second (1880), have now been recorded by the New York Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta on New World: respectively NW 374-2 (rel. 1989) and NW 350-2 (rel. 1987), in bright, brawny readings on DDD disks of superb technical quality. . . . And three of Paine's chamber works—the Sonata for Violin and Piano (1875; rev. 1905), the Romanza and Humoreske for Piano, Violin, and Cello (1877)—were issued a few years back by Northeastern Records (NR 219-CD; rel. 1986); the vigorous performers are the Boston-based trio Joseph Silverstein (violin) and the Eskins, Jules (cello) and Virginia (piano).

All these warmly sympathetic recordings confirm Paine's status as our first composer of large-scale works—of "pleasing, well-crafted, warmly accessible music [that] will go a long way toward establishing the verity that 20th-century American composition didn't spring from an abject musical wasteland" (to close this note, as it was opened, with a quote, this one from John Rockwell, in the *Times* of 15 January 1989).

I.S.A.M. Newsletter, Vol. XIX, No. 2/ISSN: 0145-8396

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The I.S.A.M. Newsletter is published in November and May. Copyright © 1990 by the Institute for Studies in American Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, Brooklyn, New York 11210. 718/780-5655.