

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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WORD UP ON RAP by David Sanjek

Rap has now been part of the American musical scene for more than thirteen years, time enough to accumulate a rich history of diverse styles of performance, composition, dress, and attitude. Time enough, too, to earn the ridicule of a significant and vociferous group who deride the genre as lacking in substance and replete with anti-social animosity.

Whatever one's views of rap, a great deal has been written about it. Here follows a brief account of the genre, notes on the best published discussions of it, and a survey of some of the issues surrounding it: the practice of *sampling*, which allows, with the help of a computer, the incorporation of prerecorded material in a new composition; the way sampling enables rappers to practice, in the words of Greg Tate, "ancestor worship"; the influence of producers and mixers on the compositional process; and the calls for censorship and social prohibition that some lyrics of rap recordings have evoked.

The origins of rap are varied, especially if one views it as a verbal practice, not a recorded phenomenon. Writers and scholars have traced it to various roots, everything from the rhyming taunts of "toasts" like the Signifying Monkey to contests of ritualized abuse like "the dozens" to the jivey speech-singing of Bo Diddley or the nonsense speech of Slim Gaillard or the between-recordings patter of inner-city disk jockeys. Any number of R&B performers, including Joe Tex, Millie Jackson, Isaac Hayes, and the godfather of much more than soul alone—James Brown—have featured rap-like monologues spoken over a continuous rhythmic pattern. However, as a recorded phenomenon, rap is a mainland importation of "toasting," as practiced in Jamaica by deejays such as Duke Reid, Sir Coxsone, Prince Buster, and Lee "Scratch" Perry. They assembled transportable sound systems and manipulated records on the turntable with their hands, while vocalists spontaneously created lyrics. The deejays took the practice into the recording studio but went one step further when King Tubby discovered that one could manipulate the components of a recording, deconstructing them through the use of reverb and echo and giving birth to "dub." Deejays could now take any record and, by boosting the bass, phasing elements of the vocal in and out of the mix, and adding extra-musical noise and "found sound," create an endless series of versions of a single piece of material.

What had begun as a spontaneous communal practice became more sophisticated and yet more standardized when it entered the studio. Also, the live performer was supplanted by the producer or mixer. The Jamaican practices of toasting and dub were imported to the United States by the Kingston-born Clive Campbell (a.k.a. Kool DJ

Herc), who emigrated in 1967, purchased his sound system in 1973, and first performed as a deejay in 1975 at a teen nightclub called the Hevalo at 180th Street and Jerome Avenue in the Bronx. Kool DJ Herc's techniques were appropriated by the pioneering deejays Afrika Bambaata and Grandmaster Flash and the rappers Kurtis Blow, Run D.M.C., Melle Mel, and the Fearless Four—the leading lights of rap's "old school." To the Jamaican techniques they added "scratching" (repeated hands-on manipulation of a single passage or beat on a record), "punch phasing" (the use of a memorable vocal, drum beat, or horn phrase as formal punctuation), and "break beats" (the isolation from a recording of a particularly vibrant rhythmic track that would induce an audience to dance.) Perhaps the most notable instance of the deejays' technique (and a prime example of what critic Chuck Eddy would later call "quilt pop") is "The Adventures of Grandmaster Flash on the Wheels of Steel" (1981). This threads together elements from various genres and ethnicities—including three rap tracks plus Chic's "Good Times," Queen's "Another One Bites the Dust," and Blondie's "Rapture"—into a seamless whole on which, as Dick Hebdige has written, "Flash is playing chicken with the stylus."



In 1984, Hollywood got its hands on rap, in such films as *Breakin' I*, *Breakin' II*, *Rappin'*, and *Beat Street* (all 1984) and *Krush Groove* (1985). As described by Akwansa Gleaves (in *The Source* of May 1991), few of these films were outstanding; most were

WORD UP ON RAP (continued)

merely quick-buck attempts to go with a trend. Charlie Ahearn's independent feature *Wild Style* (1982), despite its technical raggedness, may remain the best rap feature. It also effectively documents the music's intersection with the worlds of break dancing and spray paint graffiti, as does the book *Fresh Hip Hop Don't Stop* (Random House, 1985) by Nelson George, Sally Baner, Susan Flinker, and Patty Romanowski. But in general rap seemed, for the moment, moribund. A year later, though, the bleak prospect was brightened by the release of Run D.M.C.'s cover of Aerosmith's "Walk This Way," recorded along with the original band. Suddenly, not only was rap hot again but viable as a crossover phenomenon in the white community. The early rap records had been largely black-produced and released by black-owned labels. Now the majors pursued the genre with a vengeance, and a white "cover" band, the Beastie Boys, was the first to benefit from rap's ascendance. Their 1986 *Licensed to Ill* (on the Def Jam label) was the biggest-selling debut album in recorded history.

The Beastie Boys' appropriation of rap was answered in kind by the appearance in 1987 of the first album of Public Enemy, the group many consider preeminent in the field: *Yo, Bum Rush the Show*. Their debut was notable not only for its ethnocentric point of view but also its technological experimentation through the use of digital sampling. With this technology, any preexisting sound can be transformed by the computer into various derivatives, which can then be built into a "new" composition in various ways. To some, this augurs the eradication of the composer; to others, it opens new avenues of composition and performance. Some groups have used sampling for comic purposes; others have seen in it a means of hooking an audience with familiar material; the most inventive have filled their recordings with a dense, even at times oppressive wall of sound.

Sampling inaugurated the so-called "third generation" of rappers—that of today. But make no mistake: the term does not imply aesthetic or stylistic uniformity. Rap ranges from the hard-core gangster style of N.W.A. and Ice-T to the socially conscious work of KRS-One and his Boogie Down Productions, to the "Native Tongues" movement of A Tribe Called Quest and the Jungle Brothers, to the macho braggadocio of L.L. Cool J and Slick Rick, to the spacey psychedelia of PM Dawn and De La Soul, to the feminist Salt-n-Pepa and Queen Latifah. And rap's constituency includes social activists, B-Boy toughs, independent-minded women, and peace-loving hippies.

* * *

One of the first and still one of the best studies of rap is David Toop's *The Rap Attack: African Jive to New York Hip-Hop* (South End Press, 1984). A British music journalist, Toop has a keen grasp of African-American musical and social styles. He highlights the formal predecessors of rap and incorporates interviews with a number of producers, writers, deejays, and performers of the "first generation." Toop reveals in the manifold possibilities that sampling offers for postmodernist sensibilities and a democratization of creativity (for it implies that consumers may eventually "be able to rejig a track according to their own preference," thereby breaking down the barriers between creators and users). Serpent's Tail Press

has just published an update of Toop's work, newly titled *Rap Attack 2: African Rap to Global Hip Hop*.

The eradication of the creator-consumer barrier is also the subject of Dick Hebdige's *Cut 'n' Mix Culture, Identity, and Caribbean Music* (Methuen, 1987). He focuses on what he calls "versioning," the practice of taking a given recording and using its constituent elements to create new material. The democratic nature of sound thrills him, as it allows one to believe that "Nobody can own a sound. Nobody can pin down or put a copyright on it." While such a sentiment might alarm intellectual property attorneys, the practice of "versioning" is, for Hebdige, an implicitly democratic one.

One of the best histories of recent African-American popular music is Nelson George's *The Death of Rhythm and Blues* (Pantheon Books, 1988), a volume whose substance is not limited to its somewhat misleading title. As black-music editor at *Billboard* through much of the 1980s, George is intimately acquainted with the ascendance of rap, which he perceives as an expression of elements of the black community that mainstream R&B had passed by. His article "Buppies, B-Boys, Baps, and Bohos" (*Village Voice*, 17 March 1992) and its accompanying "Time Line to Postsoul Black Culture" provide an invaluable resource on the transformations of contemporary African-American culture.

Several other books focus on rap with varying degrees of success. *Rap! Portraits and Lyrics of a Generation of Black Rockers*, text by B. Adler and photographs by Janette Beckman (St. Martin's Press, 1991), while not an in-depth study, provides colorful images of major performers and sample lyrics. The photos are particularly valuable, since dress is an incontestably vital, signifying aspect of rap. Unlike most studies of rap, Steve Redhead's *The End-of-the-Century Party: Youth and Pop Towards 2000* (Manchester University Press, 1990) treats a variety of musicians of many races in the United Kingdom, and how they have utilized the opportunities for pastiche afforded by sampling. Redhead pays particular attention to the work of the producer/mixer Adrian Sherwood, whose On-U Sound recordings have featured diverse musicians from the disparate worlds of punk, funk, reggae, dub, and industrial music. Mark Costello and David Foster Wallace, however, in *Signifying Rappers: Rap and Race in the Urban Present* (Ecco Press, 1990), depict rap narrowly as a "closed show" to non-African-American audiences and focus on what they call "serious rap," defined as "a musical movement that seems to revile whites as a group or establishment and ignore their possibility as distinct individuals." They would have done well to perceive how, as David Toop writes, "Hip Hop was the new music by virtue of finding a way to absorb all other music." (Paradoxically, Costello and Wallace's inclusion of a transcription of "Seven Minutes of Madness," Cold Cut's remix of Eric B. and Rakim's "Paid in Full," lays out, and with proper annotation, what "versioning" is all about.)

The most valuable book on recent rap is *Bring the Noise: A Guide to Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture* (Harmony Books, 1991), by Havelock Nelson and Michael A. Gonzales. They offer capsule sketches of the major current performers and a list of twenty-five essential albums. Their language itself samples a number of discourses, ranging from "dope jams" and "fresh beats" to current

(continued on page 14)

I.S.A.M. MATTERS

On the brink of publication is Thomas L. Riis's *More Than Just Minstrel Shows: The Rise of Black Musical Theatre at the Turn of the Century*, I.S.A.M. Monograph No. 33 (!). Its title says it all—no, not all by a long shot.

Sadly, we call attention to the recent deaths of several persons identified in one way or another with I.S.A.M. Our very first Senior Research Fellow—appropriately given pride of place as such in 1971-72—was Gilbert Chase, who died in Chapel Hill on 22 February; he was eighty-five. A later Fellow (1981-82) was Martin Williams, who passed away unexpectedly at his home in Washington during the mid-April weekend. And composer William Schuman, a champion of I.S.A.M. from the beginning (and responsible for the Koussevitzky Foundation's commission that led to Carol Oja's prize-winning discography *American Music Recordings*), left us on 15 February, aged eighty-one.

Though uncertain where the money to support them will come from, the Brooklyn College administration has not discouraged I.S.A.M. from making plans for Senior Research Fellows for 1992-93. Scheduled to direct a seminar on Duke Ellington in the fall is Mark Tucker (whose *Ellington: The Early Years* is garnering rave reviews); and planning a spring-semester seminar on the ethnic musics of the borough of Brooklyn is Ray Allen. (His first book, *Singing in the Spirit: African-American Sacred Quartets in New York City*, is too recent to have had any reviews yet.)

IVESIANA

Shortly after you read this, a new biography of Ives will appear from Yale University Press: the eagerly awaited *Charles Ives: "My Father's Song"* by Stuart Feder. Dr. Feder, a practicing psychoanalyst with musicological training, has been publishing fascinating, unusual, and informed studies of Ives for years; his book on Ives, a massive and heavily documented work, is a full-scale rounded account enticingly subtitled "A Psychoanalytic Biography."

Pianists will welcome two new Ives publications, Peer International's *Set of Five Take-Offs for Piano* ("The Seen and Unseen? / Sweet and Tough," "Rough and Ready et al. and/or The Jumping Frog," "Song Without (good) Words," "Scene Episode," and "Bad Resolutions and Good WAN") and Merion Music's *Study No. 23*. Both works are Ives Society critical editions by the late John Kirkpatrick.

Speaking of the Ives Society, with the recent election of a new president/treasurer—J. Peter Burkholder—the Society's administrative base will shift to the School of Music at Indiana University. H. Wiley Hitchcock was elected chairman of the Society's Board of Directors.

And speaking of J. Peter Burkholder, he has almost completed a new book on Ives. This one will be mainly analytic and centered on Ives's varied uses of pre-existent music. Like his first book (*Charles Ives: The Ideas Behind the Music*), this one will be published by Yale University Press.

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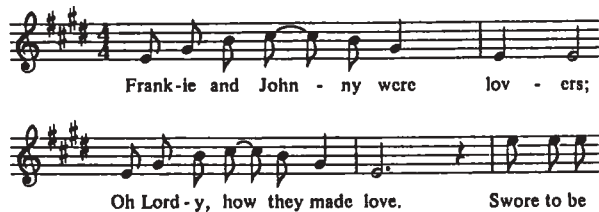
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BOOK NOOK I

ASHLEY'S *PERFECT LIVES*—NOW BOOKED

The felicitous phrases of Robert Ashley's seven-part, three-hour video opera *Perfect Lives* crop up in our conversational repertoire. For instance, "Happy she is, the traveling salesmen say, but boogie-woogie she is not"—every avid new-music fan knows that reference. The only problem is, on the work's latest incarnation as a three-CD Lovely Music set, the textures are so layered that the words are sometimes drowned out, and Ashley's Buddhist logic difficult to trace.

Burning Books and Archer Fields have come to the rescue by publishing the libretto to *Perfect Lives* (\$35) in a sleek, handsome edition whose typography clarifies the opera's rhythmic structure. Now you can follow in detail the story of the small midwestern town where Buddy (World's Greatest Piano Player) and his singer friend Raoul come to play at the Perfect Lives Lounge and get caught up in Isolde's and Don's plans to steal all the money from the Bank for one day, then return it. The situations we encounter are normal ones—the old couple in the supermarket, the bartender Rodney who takes a dislike to Buddy—but the perspectives are other-worldly. When the J.P. asks Ed if he will take Gwyn "Til death do you part," Ed blurts out, "There is no death, sir."

A cosmology and a psychology are buried in *Perfect Lives* for you to piece together. When Rodney barks at Buddy, "We don't serve fine wine in half-pints, buddy," Buddy recognizes that as the sound of God, and launches into a speech on the ages of the Self. The J.P. offers the meaning of marriage: "In tennis you're playing against yourself. The other person is a convenience." Among other things, *Perfect Lives* refers to the structure of the Tibetan *Book of the Dead*, intended to be read into the ear of a dead person on the theory that hearing is the last sense to die. Keeping that in mind lends special poignancy to the final words, spoken by Isolde: "Dear George, what's going on? I'm not the same person that I used to be." Perhaps most importantly, though, you can learn the lyrics to the pop tune that inspires Gwyn's elopement, "You Coo Coo You Coo Coo Too Yeah I Coo Coo for You Well I Coo Coo for You Too."

Not the least virtue of this engaging book is a brilliant, common-sense lecture on composing that Ashley presented at Mills College, printed as an afterword. Constantly reconsidering and improving what you've written down, Ashley claims, is musical Reaganism, conservatism, a lack of faith in inspiration. His advice is practical: ". . . it's obvious in thinking about American composers who make music for orchestra that they don't have any experience. . . . You can hear the *uncertainty*. . . . It's a totally fictitious activity." More pertinently, Ashley provides clues to *Perfect Lives*'s rhythmic structure. Each episode has its own metric layout: "The Park" is in 13-beat phrases, "The Supermarket" in 5, "The Bank" in 9, "The Bar" in 7, and so on. It's important information, for Ashley's operas are far more structurally detailed than you'd gather from listening to their suavely vernacular surface. *Perfect Lives* is a rare print picture of the mind of one of our most stupendously inventive composers.

—Kyle Gann
(*The Village Voice*)

BOOK NOOK I (continued)

A NEW GROVE FOR BAND MUSIC

The identities and works of American composers who write primarily for amateur concert bands—and there are tens of thousands of such bands across the country—have been consistently ignored in music dictionaries. A few sources, such as *Band Music Notes* by Norman E. Smith and Albert Stoutamire (Kjos West, 1979), have partially filled the void, but in general, information has been spotty, and searching for it a tedious and frustrating task. Now, though, with the publication of *The Heritage Encyclopedia of Band Music: Composers and Their Music*, authored by William H. Rehrig and meticulously edited by Paul Bierley, of Sousa-scholarship fame (Integrity Press [61 Massey Drive, Westerville, OH 43081]; \$110), American band music has its equivalent of *The New Grove*.

With more than a thousand densely printed pages, this two-volume encyclopedia is the most significant reference work ever published on composers for the concert or military band and their music. (Excluded are British-style brass-band music, which omits woodwinds, and football marching-band music.) The amount of brand-new (band-new?) information is overwhelming: more than 80 percent of the nearly nine thousand composers cited, and more than 99 percent of the compositions, are not to be found in *The New Grove*, the latest *Baker's*, or *AmeriGrove*.

Unlike most such works, the *Heritage Encyclopedia of Band Music* keeps biographical information on major composers to a minimum (one can find it elsewhere), preferring to profile in greater detail the less well-known ones. The most important resource in the work is the citation of their compositions, including transcriptions and arrangements from other media, with publishers' names and copyright data wherever possible. (The titles are accessible in both the composer entries and a 181-page, triple-column index.) For example, 135 compositions by Wagner are cited, some in as many as 14 different published versions; and for the now-forgotten George Southwell (1852-1916) more than 470 are listed, including marches, waltzes, overtures, polkas, schottisches, instrumental solos, serenades, funeral marches and dirges, cakewalks, and "miscellaneous"! Nine appendixes offer a treasure load of data, from enlightening essays such as "An Overview of Band Music in America" or "Using Foreign Music with American Bands" to more mundane but helpful items such as a list of publishers' addresses.

Many sources fed into this comprehensive—also well-organized, highly readable, and often entertaining—work: band journals, public and private band-music collections (notably that of the late Robert Hoe, Jr.), recordings, publishers' catalogues and advertisements, and correspondence with band historians. Given the scope of the encyclopedia, factual errors are minimal; errors of omission are mostly due to lack of cooperation from three significant band-music publishers. *The Heritage Encyclopedia of Band Music* deserves a place in every major music library.

—Craig B. Parker
(Kansas State University)

Singing for Survival

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Gila Flam

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NEW PAPERBACK

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DOWN HOME WITH THE RED CLAY RAMBLERS by Carol J. Oja and Mark Tucker

We've been fans of the Red Clay Ramblers ever since hearing their soulful and spirited rendition of Stephen Foster's "Hard Times," recorded ten years ago. Tracking down more of their recordings, we discovered a group that programmed Foster alongside Irish jigs and reels, old-time fiddle tunes, Tin Pan Alley novelty numbers, shape-note hymns, black spirituals, early jazz, songs associated with Uncle Dave Macon and Jimmie Rodgers, and their own originals. And we were impressed by a string band that stretches instrumental versatility so far, perhaps the most stunning example is Rambler Jack Herrick, who plays not just upright bass and guitar but trumpet, harmonium, pennywhistle, and bouzouki.

The Red Clay Ramblers combine a deep respect for America's musical past with irreverent parodies, wacky humor, and a wooly performing style. After two decades of travel on the club, concert, and festival circuits, they've gained greater visibility in recent years through both stage and film collaborations with playwright Sam Shepard. Curious to learn more about this iconoclastic ensemble, we dropped in on one of the original Ramblers, banjo-player and songwriter Tommy Thompson, at his home in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Aware that he'd be facing two historians, Thompson hauled down the band's archives from his attic. But appearances can be deceiving. The battered box, labeled George Dickel Tennessee Sour Mash Whiskey, turned out to contain only back issues of philosophy journals (Thompson once studied the subject in graduate school at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill). The case of mistaken identity pretty much sums up the group: five savvy, well-educated musicians who in performance style and stage bearing give every impression of having spent most of their days sipping sour mash and picking tunes on grandpa's back porch.

The Ramblers have undergone some musical changes since starting out in 1972, yet their Southern roots hold firm. Their first album, released on Folkways in 1974, revealed an old-time string band playing traditional repertory. But already they seemed a bit restless with the format, were altering instrumentalations and harmonies, and "combining originally divergent musical styles when they seemed to work together"—as Thompson confessed in the album's liner notes. This approach distinguished them from an ensemble like the New Lost City Ramblers (one of their models), which tried to recreate old playing styles faithfully from recordings. As Thompson has said about his group's view of historical authenticity, "We're not engaged in taxidermy."

The Red Clay Ramblers had their first big break in 1974-75 with *Diamond Studs*, a theatrical production based loosely on the life of Jesse James. In it, they performed both traditional tunes and originals by fellow North Carolinians Bland Simpson and Jim Wann. *Diamond Studs* opened in Chapel Hill, then moved to New York for a seven-month run. At the time, Thompson recalls, the group sounded like one that "might have existed in the thirties but didn't." While much of their repertory came from old recordings, the Ramblers also had sat at the feet of some great string-band musicians from the Tar Heel State, especially Tommy Jarrell, the legendary fiddler and banjo player from Mt. Airy in the Blue Ridge foothills. Thompson describes Jarrell as "an irascible old character,

but a truly great bearer of tradition and a noble man." Yet the *Diamond Studs* experience taught the Ramblers that bearing tradition did not necessarily pay the rent. As Thompson recalls, "Seeing all the royalties go to the guys who write the songs was a lesson in art." Soon after, Thompson began composing tunes, among them "Twisted Laurel" and "The Ace" (coauthored with pianist Mike Craver)—both of which became immediately popular on the group's tours. "From then on," says Thompson, "we kept a balance of new songs and traditional ones."

And so they have. Landmarks in their exploration of the past have included the discovery of Foster's "Hard Times," which Craver came upon in the famous *Heart Songs* anthology of 1909. Thompson himself has taken a long detour into the work of the nineteenth-century minstrel performer Dan Emmett. After reading about Emmett in Hans Nathan's biography, Thompson wrote a dramatic monologue titled *The Last Song of John Proffit*. (Fellow Rambler Clay Buckner appeared alongside Thompson in a production staged last year at the Repertory Theater of St. Louis.) In the show, Thompson portrays a fictitious character, John Proffit, who, according to Thompson, was "a minstrel man with some of the same aspirations of Emmett but overshadowed by him. I tried to imagine [Proffit] talking, and thought about the trips I'd made to see Tommy Jarrell, or one of those old characters. They'd just put their feet down on the linoleum floor and gab." Thompson also sought to make a statement about blackface. After Proffit spends the entire show reminiscing about his life as a minstrel, he tells the audience, "I know what you want. You want to see the Devil himself. Well, he's on the premises." With that, he goes backstage and returns with a burnt-corked face and a black wig. Accompanying himself on a gourd banjo, Proffit delivers "Bottled and Sold," a bitter song (Thompson's own) about the cynicism of blackface.

Songs like "Bottled and Sold"—which view America's past through a modern lens—form a key ingredient in the Ramblers' identity. That may be what attracted Sam Shepard to the group in the first place. In 1985, as the story goes (Thompson and other band members have turned this tale of discovery into folklore), Shepard was driving around northwest Iowa in his pickup truck, fiddling with the radio dial, when he tuned into the Ramblers doing live promotion for an upcoming concert. He wanted the band to provide music for his film *Country*, but when that didn't work out he invited them to New York in 1986 to appear in his play *A Lie of the Mind*. Later the Ramblers supplied the soundtrack for Shepard's film *Far North*, set in northern Minnesota. And this spring they traveled to New Mexico for another Shepard film project, *Silent Tongue*, in which they appear on-screen as an 1870s medicine-show band. Recently, Rambler Jack Herrick described their relationship with Shepard to a reporter for the Durham *Herald-Sun*: "Sam has a notion of what American music is and we fit that notion. He envisions us as a band driving around in a broken-down van playing in the Heartland, which is in fact what we do. We're kind of out of the musical system. We're not in the Nashville music scene or any other commercial category and neither is he, and I think he feels an affinity to us because of that."

Over the years some Ramblers have ambled off in different directions. Pianist Craver, who once contributed clever originals and a

lovely lyric tenor voice to the group, stayed in New York after *A Lie of the Mind* to pursue a career in theater. Former mandolinist and bass-player Jim Watson now gives solo performances around Chapel Hill and sometimes teams up with the folk duo Robin and Linda Williams. Currently, in addition to Thompson and Herrick, the band features Clay Buckner on fiddle and harmonica, Bland Simpson (from *Diamond Studs* days) on piano, and Chris Frank on guitar, accordion, and low brass. At a recent performance in Chapel Hill, the Ramblers added percussionist Ed Butler for some of their numbers. That evening they mixed together old favorites, such as a riotous cover of Homer and Jethro's "I Crept into the Crypt" and a church-rocking version of the spiritual "Valley of the Dry Bones," with originals from their new recording, *Rambler*. The originals included Thompson's "Hot Buttered Rum," a contemporary love song with a parlor-ballad flavor, and Bland Simpson's "BBQ," a paean to North Carolina's beloved "state plate" ("Forget about your chicken and your Brunswick stew; Don't get behind on your barbecue.")

Despite the new faces and instruments, the band's identity hasn't changed all that much—at once regional and cosmopolitan, old-fashioned and experimental, sacred and profane, sober and silly. The Red Clay Ramblers keep proudly declaring, in some typically American way, a refreshing musical independence.



The Red Clay Ramblers: Tommy Thompson, Chris Frank (front); Bland Simpson, Clay Buckner, Jack Herrick (rear)

* * *

RED CLAY RAMBLERS DISCOGRAPHY

(all LPs, unless otherwise noted)

The Red Clay Ramblers, with Fiddlin' Al McCanless (Folkways, 1974)

Stolen Love (Flying Fish, 1975)

Twisted Laurel (Flying Fish, 1976)

Merchant's Lunch (Flying Fish, 1977)

(*Twisted Laurel* and *Merchant's Lunch* were reissued as a double CD in 1992)

Chuckin' the Frizz (Flying Fish, 1978)

Meeting in the Air (Flying Fish, 1980)

Hard Times (Flying Fish, 1982)

It Ain't Right (Flying Fish, 1986; reissued on CD in 1992)

Music from Sam Shepard's A Lie of the Mind (Sugar Hill, 1986, CD and cassette)

Soundtrack from Sam Shepard's Far North (Sugar Hill, 1988, CD and cassette)

Music from The Merry Wives of Windsor, Texas (Snappy, 1989, cassette)

Rambler (Sugar Hill, April 1992, CD and cassette)

[For information on availability, phone Flying Fish (312/528-5455); Sugar Hill (919/489-4349); or Snappy (919/967-0343).]

BERNARD HERRMANN—REVIVED AND ARCHIVED

Bernard Herrmann's reputation took an upswing in the early 1970s. He had been rediscovered by the younger generation of filmmakers, who were hiring him to write scores for their new films—such as Brian De Palma, for *Obsession*, and Martin Scorsese, for *Taxi Driver*—and other interesting scripts awaited him. He also had been making recordings of his past film successes for Decca, and, for Unicorn, had recorded his *Symphony* (1940; rev. 1973).

All this ended on Christmas Eve 1975, when Herrmann died at sixty-four. But now a full-scale revival has begun in earnest. Steve C. Smith's biography, *A Heart at Fire's Center* (University of California Press, 1991), has had something to do with this. But perhaps the liveliest interest has come from Hollywood film buffs, who thanks to video cassettes and laser discs can seek out their favorites in enhanced versions. Good-quality digital sound restoration has been a great boost for *Citizen Kane* and *The Magnificent Ambersons*, as also for the Hitchcock films—such as *Psycho* and *Vertigo*—for which Herrmann wrote notable scores.

At the time of Herrmann's death there were only a handful of his soundtracks on recordings, and virtually none of his concert music. Now there are seven soundtracks on CDs, ten different collections of his film music, and several recordings of concert music. A new recording (by the Phoenix Symphony under James Sedares) of Herrmann's *Symphony* was just released on the Koch International Classics label (3-7135-2 H1); his *Sinfonietta* for strings is due for its first recording. Brand-new recordings of the scores for *Citizen Kane* and *The Magnificent Ambersons* (Preamble; rel. 1991) include music not used in the films. That music was provided by the Bernard Herrmann Archive of the Library Special Collections Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara—the principal repository of Herrmann's film scores, concert-music manuscripts, radio and television music, personal papers, and other memorabilia.

—Martin Silver

(Bernard Herrmann Archive, UCSB)

FRANCIS THORNE AT 70: *An Interview with K. Robert Schwarz*

Francis Thorne, who turns seventy on 23 June, has enjoyed an extraordinarily multi-faceted career. After studies with Hindemith at Yale (1939-42), Thorne entered the business world. He was coaxed back to music by Duke Ellington, who helped him land a two-year gig as a jazz pianist at Hickory House, a club on New York's "Swing Street" (West 52nd Street). Eventually, Thorne returned to classical music, studying composition in Florence with David Diamond (1959-61). Back in New York, he became renowned as an administrator, directing the Thorne Music Fund (1965-74), which gave grants to composers, and the American Composers Alliance (1975-85), and in 1976 co-founding (as "first among equals") the American Composers Orchestra. But he kept on composing symphonies, concertos, and chamber works, all colored by his long contact with jazz. In 1990, Composers Recordings Inc. (CRI) released two CDs that reflect Thorne's varied interests: one of his own compositions (CD 586) and one of tunes by Cole Porter (CD 585) on which Thorne both plays and sings. Recently, we met at his ACO office, and looked back at his distinguished career.

I gather that your experience with Hindemith was not altogether happy.

I was eighteen when I first went into his class, and the Second World War had started. I was in the naval ROTC and I knew I was going to be in the war, so I wasn't taking my studies as seriously as I should have. Also, I was having much more fun singing in the Whiffenpoofs and playing four-handed boogie-woogie with a friend of mine.

Did Hindemith disapprove?

Well that's the thing that fascinates me, because I would have thought from his own experience that he would have been interested in that. But he sort of sneered.

From 1946 until 1955, you were active in the business world. Did you engage in any musical activities in those years?

Nothing except playing jazz and popular music. My father, who was a stockbroker, had played a pretty mean ragtime piano, and as a child I simply taught myself to play in his style. That is the direct line from the age of five up until today. But it was a totally amateurish kind of thing. After I left Wall Street, I practiced for about a year, trying to become a concert pianist. But I was getting very discouraged. I'd done a couple of concerts and they were terrible because I was so uptight. I'm only relaxed at the keyboard if I'm improvising. If Duke Ellington hadn't heard me play at a party, I'm not sure I ever would have stayed in music.

How did the meeting with Ellington come about?

It was through a financial backer's audition for Ellington's Broadway show that took place in our living room. When the audition was over, around ten o'clock, we offered drinks, and the party went on till about two or three. During the course of those hours, I found myself playing on two pianos with Ellington and Strayhorn, and also sitting in the kitchen making Ellington a sandwich and chatting with him. Two days later he recommended me for the Hickory House solo piano job, which alternated with Marian McPartland, Billy Taylor, and so forth. I remember opening at Hickory House in the middle of September 1955.

Initially, you went to Italy to study with Dallapiccola, but he turned out to be in New York at that time. So you ended up with David Diamond. How did that happen?

I think it was January '59 when we went to a cocktail party and I suddenly found myself being introduced to David Diamond. He asked me for tea the next day, and then took me on as a student. The reason that he was so valuable and came to me in the nick of time,

before I went back into business, was that he was very interested in jazz. In fact he'd heard of me, strangely enough, through Sam Barber, who used to come in and hear me play when I was at Hickory House. I worked for David with such intensity—at the age of thirty-seven you are really going to give it everything—and I saw him about twice a week for two years. While I was working with him I began to write some pieces. At a certain moment I said to him, "David, do you think I ought to go to Nadia Boulanger?" He said, "No, what you need to do is to go to nobody and just go, just write." He was proven to be correct, because shortly thereafter Ormandy performed my *Elegy* in Philadelphia, which really turned me around. I realized then, finally, at the age of forty-two, that I was in the right business.

After you returned to New York, you established the Thorne Music Fund. Why did you feel the need for such an organization?

The Ormandy performance was in November 1964; we came back from Italy then. I was appalled to find out what a terrible time famous composers like Ben Weber and David Diamond were having. So I went and talked to two people: one was Henry Allen Moe of the Guggenheim Foundation, and the other was Virgil Thomson. Then I went to two wealthy cousins, and they put up some money, enough for the first three-year fellowship to Ben Weber. Five thousand dollars a year doesn't sound like very much, but in the sixties it was a fair amount to someone like Weber or John Cage or Lou Harrison. It freed up Lou from a job in an animal hospital that he wasn't very happy about. The Fund had a very interesting panel of judges—Copland and Bernstein and Thomson and Schuller and so forth—but the only person who really had interest in the project was Thomson. On the surface he seemed so unserious, almost bitchy, but he struck me as being humane and caring, and he did his homework. He would always come to a meeting with one person in mind—Ben Weber was his first, and Cage his second, and Harrison his third.

The Fund also gave commissions, in addition to its fellowship program.

With David Diamond, we gave three commissions. With Wolpe, it was sort of a combination of things; I think we supported Wolpe for five years. With Lou it was just a straight three-year fellowship. But eventually it just all petered out.

In 1975 you became executive director of the American Composers Alliance (ACA). Shortly thereafter you helped to found the American Composers Orchestra (ACO). How did that come about?

Almost the same day that I began work at the ACA, Dennis Russell



Francis Thorne (Photo: Ann Thorne)

Davies and I had lunch. He said to me "You know, we really ought to have a Cabrillo [Festival]-type orchestra in New York, full of people who play new music very well." Before we left the lunch table, I had this idea that it would be the perfect way to celebrate the ACA's fortieth anniversary. So I proposed this to the ACA board, and they liked the idea. It took from September of '75 to February of '77 to put on the first concert in Tully Hall. That concert came out right—we had a new work by Charles Dodge with advanced computer technology, a jazzy work by Yehudi Wyner, a fun piece by Harrison with Lou and Virgil as narrators, and a fine symphony from the past, [Wallingford] Riegger's Third.

Now you're entering your 16th season, consisting of 5 concerts.

The budget for the first concert year was \$85,000. Next year it's \$1.1 million, which is a little scary. But I have really been slaving all these years raising money. We've always considered our policy to be adventuresome artistically and conservative fiscally, and as far as operations go, we've never had a deficit.

What are you most proud of, in the ACO's record?

To have been able to commission sixty-seven works, and to activate careers that were perhaps not particularly active. Take Joan Tower, for example. She wrote her first orchestra piece for us, which Zubin Mehta and the Saint Louis orchestra picked up, and she got a major career going. Joan was not doing much more than writing for the Da Capo Players before that. Ellen Zwilich is another person: she wrote her First Symphony for us, which won the Pulitzer Prize. (Joe Schwantner's *Afertonos of Infinity* had been our first commission to win the Pulitzer Prize.)

And I'm proud of the very idea of ACO, too. I'm usually spoken of as being a co-founder, and that's certainly true: the official line is that the co-founders are myself, Nicolas Roussakis, Dennis, and Paul Dunkel. But I've been told by many people that one person

usually does most of the nitty-gritty, and the nitty-gritty was raising the money. For the first ten or twelve years, I pretty much did that, and it was I, too, who largely planned the programs.

Who have been the biggest influences on you as a composer?

Some people have said that my use of fourths gives me away as far as Hindemith is concerned. Although David Diamond must have had some influence because I really learned most of what I know from him, I don't think my music sounds like his at all. I think I've been more influenced by Stravinsky than Schoenberg, although David made me study Op. 31 [Schoenberg's *Variations for Orchestra*] very carefully.

What about jazz?

You know, jazz players are always trying to find chord substitutes, interesting chord progressions, and that may be an important part of my musical style. I found bebop very exciting in the fifties, when I was playing. Although when I played it was more in the swing style than the bop style, I was very excited by Parker and Gillespie, and I think my music shows that. And I've always felt that Wagner was an influence, because my grandfather, Gustav Kobbé, had such an influence on the family that all I heard—from the age of eight, when I first heard *Tannhäuser*, to the age of twenty or so—was Wagner. The family felt that everything else was second-rate.

When did you begin to explore serial technique?

With David. But I never really used it. My *Seven Set Pieces* have a row indicated on the score, but, come on, it isn't really a twelve-tone piece. My flirtation with that was like Copland's flirtation with jazz, or Stravinsky's. It wasn't really anything very serious.

But your music did change during the sixties.

When I came back to New York in '64, the "Musical Mafia" was in full cry. And I wanted to be played by the Group for Contemporary Music, and Da Capo, and so forth—and I was—but in order to get played by them, my style became a little bit more rigorous, shall we say. I don't think I ever lost the feeling for the long melodic line, but my music did undergo a mild change.

During the 1980s, your music seems to have changed back again.

I think I do have more respect for direct expression and a more simplified approach. I don't think the Third Piano Concerto is necessarily simple in the fast movements, but I think the slow movement is pretty straightforward and easily analyzed—tunes and chords and stuff.

What projects are you working on now?

I've finished the piano-vocal score of an opera based on Thomas Mann's *Mario and the Magician*. But that's the easy part; trying to get it put on somewhere is not coming so easily. And I just received a commission for my Symphony No. 6. I'm calling it Symphony No. 6 for Stringed Instruments; I'm planning to use string orchestra, guitar, harp, and banjo. I love the sound of the banjo, especially when it's going wild.

(continued on page 13)

MUSIC, CROWD, ABSURD etc. by Lewis Thomas

For years we have delighted in essays by Lewis Thomas, M.D., beginning with his first collection, *The Lives of a Cell: Notes of a Biology Watcher* (1974). In his second, *The Medusa and the Snail* (1979), we became abject devotees upon finding this sentence: "Any species capable of producing, at this earliest, juvenile stage of its development—almost instantly after emerging on the earth by any evolutionary standard—the music of Johann Sebastian Bach, cannot be all bad." Dr. Thomas's love and admiration for music is almost palpable. This physician/thinker/writer's recent collection *Et Cetera, Et Cetera: Notes of a Word Watcher* (Little, Brown and Company, 1990; reprinted in Penguin Books, 1991) is rooted (pardon the expression) in etymology. Among its essays, which range far and wide, back and forth, out and about, among the Indo-European roots and later cognates of our English words—one especially struck us. We asked Dr. Thomas's permission to reprint it, with tiny cuts. He most kindly consented—and moreover "with pleasure, of course." Here it is.

Music, the most enduring and influential of all our social activities, comes to us from the Indo-European root *men*, from which we derive most of the words for using our minds and thinking. One dictionary definition of the root *men* is "to think, with derivatives referring to various qualities and states of mind and thought," casting the widest of etymological nets. The root for MUSIC comes along in the Greek word *mousa*, a MUSE, in the intellectual company of Avestan *mazda*, all nine of the Greek goddesses of the arts and sciences, the Latin goddess of wisdom, MINERVA, the madwoman attendant of Bacchus, MAENAD, the Avestan spirit AHRIMAN, the German MINNESINGER and the Greek EUMENIDES, mind-users, thinkers all.

We have probably been making music for as long as we have been whole human beings, perhaps longer. For all we know, the Neanderthals may have possessed song of some sort, and an inbuilt sense of rhythm. But we do know that drums and various flute-like instruments first appeared in the earliest Cro-Magnon settlements, thirty thousand years ago, and it is likely that some sort of genuine music emerged along with some sort of language, and we can guess that the art was already well developed by the time of the Indo-Europeans, although there is no way to guess what the sounds were like.

The etymological connection of music to thinking is something to think about. Each activity of the mind is reminiscent of the other. Music at its best, I believe, even at its worst, is a way of telling us how minds are really working.

No other human social behavior, not even language itself, changes and grows into new complex forms as ungovernably and spontaneously as music. We have records of the details and composition of music for only the most recent period in our thirty-five thousand years of humanity, but what we have seen and heard in those centuries has been an astonishment of change. And although we can trace the influences of one style upon the next in academic ways, we know next to nothing about the changes in the emotional attitudes of our changing societies that made the growth in complexity and meanings of music inevitable. . . .

There is an Indo-European root that continues to perform a useful critical function for certain cranky types of music, some of them currently in fashion, signs of our times, aleatory, minimalist, and their expressionless successors. The root is *swer*, meaning to buzz, whisper, probably at the outset an imitative word. It was taken up in the Latin word *surdus*, deaf, mute, then in *absurdus*, with the literal meaning unmelodious, a wrong sound, centuries before

moving into English as our stately word ABSURD. We still use SURD for irrational roots of numbers in mathematics. In phonetics, any voiceless sound is a SURD.

It is likely that music has always come in two separate modes, one for participating, the other for listening, and these may have been quite different subjective experiences. Among the early cognates of MUSIC in several languages are words indicating joy and high pleasure, which may have come from the sheer rapture of singing, especially singing with others. Human song has become a branch of language itself. Or could it be the other way round after all, with the words taking on new meanings and messages because of the new tones attached to the words, and the rhythms?

Music made for listening is indeed something different. Whether instruments or human voices make the music, it needs close attention and a silent audience. Yet huge crowds can be assembled to listen to music, and the people will sit, even stand, for hours, concentrating on what they hear, and thinking. Whether they are listening to Bach's *Art of Fugue*, or Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, or the Beethoven late quartets, or Brahms or Bartók or Elliott Carter or whatever, the music catches and holds their close attention. What the listeners are doing is thinking about thinking. Music, when it works, is the sound of thought. The individual human brain is an immense living creature made of interacting, interconnected thoughts, moving about in a nonlinear, dynamical system at something near the speed of light, always vulnerable to huge rearrangements and changes in patterns when subjected to minor disturbances in the order of any part of any thought. It might be like the metaphor in the mathematicians' "butterfly effect": the slight disturbance of the air over Shanghai by a butterfly will cause, months later, sustained storms in New York. Music has the power to introduce any number of such disturbances, unpredictably and sequentially, and the result is something like chaos, but a chaos with its own, unpredicted form and order. The pleasure of music is, in part anyway, the unexpected, sustained sense of surprise that it induces in the mind. It is hard to imagine utter surprise as more than a momentary sensation, *on* then *off*, but what profound music does in the receptive, attentive mind is to produce a steady, unwavering high plateau of surprise, lasting as long as the music lasts.

But *chaos* and *unpredictable* and *surprise* are all the wrong words, I know, and we possess no vocabulary to account, even lamely, for the sensation of music. Perhaps this is because we haven't learned enough, or been here long enough, or grown up yet as a species. If this is true, a bright prospect for the millenia just ahead will be to keep on discovering new kinds of music, and comprehending, at the

same time, with language, what we are really doing inside our minds. . . .

For the moment, it remains a mystery. It should be noted that the old root giving rise to mystery was *mu*, with cognates MYSTICAL and MUTE. MYSTERY came from the Greek *muein*, with the meaning of closing the lips, closing the eyes. It has been proposed several times in the past century that mystery and music may be etymologically related; *mu* would have served nicely for both.

REGARDING RECORDINGS I

CARTER AND QUARTETS

Almost twenty years after their historic recording of Elliott Carter's second and third string quartets, the Juilliard String Quartet has returned to the studio to record all four of his quartets, together with a fine performance by Robert Mann and Christopher Oldfather of his *Duo for Violin and Piano* (Sony Classical S2K 47229; 2 CDs). These recordings are cause for celebration.

Carter is one of our finest composers, and his four quartets are often cited as the cornerstones of his music. That Carter is so well known as a quartet composer is due in no small part to the care and dedication that have been lavished on his work in this medium, not least by the Juilliard Quartet itself. Rarely has a twentieth-century composer had such persuasive advocates.

There is a lot to like about these recordings. The Juilliard's approach to the earlier Carter quartets has become more confident with the passage of time. The ensemble is tighter, and the textures

REGARDING RECORDINGS I (continued)

even more transparent, particularly in the climactic sections of the middle two quartets. Both the long-range dramatic shape and the dazzling contrapuntal details of the music are rendered with prodigious technical accomplishment and loving care.

When the *New York Times* dubbed the Juilliard's concert performance of all four Carter quartets last October the most "arcane" musical event of the year, it was not mentioned that the hall was packed, nor that the composer was given a rousing ovation by an audience that had sat completely mesmerized for almost four hours. With these remarkable performances, the Juilliard Quartet has given us a welcome reminder that Carter's music delights the ear as well as the mind.

There are now two recordings of the Carter quartets (the other is by the Arditti Quartet), and it is a pleasure to compare them. I prefer the Juilliard's clarity in the Second Quartet, and their Third is magnificent, while the Arditti's suffers from a relentlessness that often obscures the details of the contrapuntal dialogue. In the Fourth Quartet, on the other hand, the Juilliard's reading is decidedly slow (five minutes slower than Carter's suggested tempo and a full nine minutes less than that of the Arditti recording). The Arditti's Fourth is superb. Both recordings, though, document the emergence of a performance tradition that will continue to grow as long as Carter's music continues to attract new listeners. In that respect both are invaluable contributions to American music.

—John F. Link
(City University of New York)



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

The folk revival of the 1960s has often been a whipping boy for those who feel strongly about traditional music, to the point where the term "folk" has been all but abandoned by purists. (They prefer the word "traditional" to separate authentic performers from "interpreters"—performers from outside the culture who attempt to translate the traditional music to a wider audience.) But regardless of its exact dynamics or goals, the folk revival did have an impact on American music in the 1950s and 1960s. Not only did it generate Top Ten *Billboard* hits, but it affected attitudes toward how musicians use their heritage, how they present it, and how they relate it to social issues. And historians are starting to recognize the importance of the folk revival: at least one book-length study (by Neil Rosenberg) is nearing completion, and last fall saw the release of the first comprehensive set of retrospective recordings: the Smithsonian's *Folk Song America: A Twentieth Century Revival*.

Available on CD, cassette or LP, *Folk Song America* includes ninety-nine vintage recordings, dating from the 1919 version of Bently Ball's "Jesse James" to the 1987 cut from Lyn Hardy and the Rude Girls, "The Ballad of Francine Hughes." In between is a refreshing mixture of the well-known and the obscure. Indeed, the Kingston Trio's original 1958 "Tom Dooley" is here, as well as the Tokens' "The Lion Sleeps Tonight," The Tarriers' "Banana Boat Song," Harry Belafonte's "Jamaica Farewell," Tom Paxton's "Rambling Boy," Country Joes's "I Feel-Like-I'm-Fixin'-To-Die Rag," Judy Collins's "Amazing Grace," and Eric Weissberg's "Dueling Banjos." Even Bob Dylan's "Blowin' in the Wind" is here, a real testament to the Smithsonian's persistence in pursuing leasing arrangements. Several well-known songs are represented by an "original" version instead of the big hit version; "Goodnight, Irene," for instance, appears in a 1943 Leadbelly recording instead of the Weavers' version of 1950. Then there are such lesser-known tracks as a 1926 recording of the poet Carl Sandburg singing "All Night Long" from his *American Songbag*; the Almanac Singers' "C for Conscriptation" (1941) released on their own Almanac label; Sam Hinton's prescient talking blues from 1950, "Old Man Atom."

Fully half of the recordings come from the decade of 1956 to 1966, the high-water mark of the urban folk revival. Dylan, Baez, Seeger, Belafonte, the Kingston Trio, the Byrds, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Judy Collins—all the major figures are here. So too are members of the talented coterie of singer-songwriters of the era, "singers' singers" like Phil Ochs, Pat Sky, Tom Rush, Richard Farina, Tom Paxton, Jim Ringer, Hedy West. Yet other recordings are from older traditional musicians who were discovered by the revival, and whose careers were revitalized by appearances at places like the Newport Folk Festival: Doc Watson, Sara and Maybelle Carter, Mississippi John Hurt, Elizabeth Cotten ("Freight Train"), Rev. Gary Davis, even Flatt and Scruggs.

All these sides are put into a superb context through a 106-page book of liner notes by Norm Cohen, who also programmed the set. Cohen's overview is the best history of the folk revival movement in print, and his song notes (each song separately annotated in detail) are full of new research and unique song histories. Cohen uses the term *folk revival* to refer to "the 'discovery,' by sophisticated, culture-conscious urban artists, of traditional, generally American folk music, and its presentation by those artists to audiences of similar social background." Such a definition allows

Cohen to deal with the vexing problem of interpretation of traditional material, and even with its commercialization.

Every buyer of *Folk Song America* will find favorites as well as omissions. Large as it is, the set cannot encompass every aspect of the urban folk revival. This reviewer felt that the set slights the white blues tradition of Paul Butterfield and Z. Z. Top and Stevie Ray Vaughan; nor is the curious "folk-country" sound from Nashville, with Johnny Horton, Bobby Bare, George Hamilton, and others, adequately covered. One might complain, too, about a lack of index in the booklet, making it hard to locate specific titles. But overall, this is a wonderful collection that breaks important new ground.

SIGN OF THE (CHANGING) TIMES

From Kenneth Roberts, now a professor at Williams College but many years ago an M.Mus. student at the University of Michigan and, as such, author of the first major scholarly work on John Knowles Paine, comes the following:

Trying to pick up a copy of a limited-edition CD with the major song sets of Samuel Barber (*Hermit Songs, Dover Beach, Rounds, etc.*), I asked one of the stackrats at a Tower Records outlet in Boston if they had it. He asked, "What's on it?" I told him. He thought a minute, then muttered, "No, the only Beach we have around here is Amy." [. . . which reminds us that Da Capo Press has recently issued a volume of twenty-three songs by Beach, introduced by the pianist Mary Louise Boehm, a longtime Beach advocate (\$29.50 in hardcover). —Ed.]

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BOOK NOOK II

MIRROR, MIRROR, ON THE WALL . . .

Simple question for I.S.A.M.'s twenty-first anniversary: Which American composer born before Stephen Foster has received the most thorough musicological ventilation? Answer: William Billings, hands down. Karl Kroeger's *Catalog of the Musical Works of William Billings* (Greenwood Press; \$45)—a "supplement," he writes, to *The Complete Works of William Billings*, which he and Hans Nathan edited in four volumes (1977-90)—adds to the already formidable stock of what we know about the music of New England's premier eighteenth-century psalmist.

Kroeger's catalog, which I found clear in format and easy to use, organizes Billings's compositions into a numbered list ordered alphabetically by title: 288 "strophic pieces" and 50 anthems (arranged by text incipit, from "And I Saw a Mighty Angel" to "Who Is This That Cometh From Edom?"), for a grand total of 338. The entry for each piece gives its text source and meter, length in measures, key, tune type, and time signature; it also quotes the first line of its text and supplies its melodic incipit (in numbered scale degrees). Under the rubric "Literature," Kroeger cites scholarly references to pieces by Billings. He also cites recordings. And his long involvement with Billings—"Information for this catalog has been gathered over some 15 years from many sources"—bears fruit in two listings: one of significant manuscript sources; the other, with page references, of reprintings of Billings tunes in American tunebooks published between 1770 and 1820.

The handy format of Kroeger's entries helps to bring fresh statistical information to light. A quick count, for example, shows that, for all of Billings's vaunted popularity, most of his compositions (213 of 338, or 63 percent) were never reprinted in the period 1770-1820. Moreover, the music of Billings that we value today does not necessarily reflect earlier preferences: of the Billings compositions that modern performers have chosen to record, more than half (24 of 47) enjoyed no reprintings in his own day.

—Richard Crawford
(University of Michigan)

FRANCIS THORNE (continued)

With all your administrative work, how do you find the time to compose?

My wife feels that if I weren't doing administrative work I wouldn't be completely happy. I really enjoy it, and I like working with figures; I was the treasurer of the ACO along with everything else for about ten years. But I've managed to write a major work a year, in the summer. With three months of intensive work, you can get an awful lot done. I wrote my Fifth Symphony in ten weeks—composed it and orchestrated it. I feel very satisfied if I can write a symphony or a concerto or a string quartet a year. I don't think there's really that much more in me.

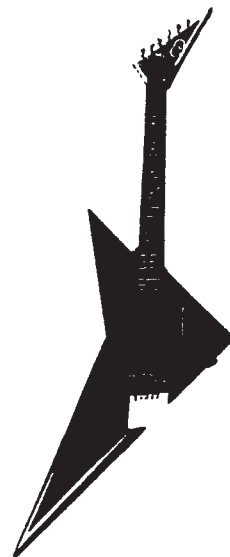
BOOK NOOK II (continued)

ROCK-AND-ROLL AND MUSICOLOGY

Ever been curious about the feel of the Chess releases, back during their 1950s experiments? Robert Palmer describes it like this: "Everything about the production amplified and focused that scarieness, the archetypal blues scariness of standing at a pitch-black Delta crossroads in the middle of the night, waiting for the Devil . . . and feeling your blood run cold with every whispered surruration of the roadside weeds. Get a little too drunk, punch up one of *those* records on the jukebox, and you've got The Fear."

Now you know. And this discussion—part of Palmer's contribution to *Present Tense: Rock & Roll and Culture* (Duke University Press; \$14.95)—reflects the technical understanding, historical awareness, and profound musicality that characterize this volume on rock-and-roll in culture. Edited by Anthony DeCurtis, an editor at *Rolling Stone*, it originally appeared as a special issue of *South Atlantic Quarterly* (90/4; Fall 1991). It offers an impressive array of both academic and mainstream writers, with topics that range from the censorship trials of rock in the late 1950s to sexual codes implicit in MTV. If only for its rich and informed accounts of aspects of popular music, the book will be valuable to scholars and students of American music. But it is soundly at the center of current debates in musicology with such threads as the massive power of music as a cultural medium, music's inextricability from the context that forms and consumes it, and the place of rock in the service of a cultural vision.

Rock-and-roll is superbly argued as being a complex vehicle whose real effect is understood only when its sexual, political, and economic messages are teased apart. DeCurtis's introduction sets the tenor for the collection as it recreates the points of ignition between music, culture, and meaning in the 1980s. The ensuing articles include Palmer's chronicle of the tradition of the electric guitar, Alan Light's musically trenchant sketch of rap's transformations, Martha Nell Smith's analysis of Springsteen's ambiguous sexual images, Michael Jarrett's discussion of popular music's consistent and vivifying re-use of musical materials (pop as "musical compost"), and Greil Marcus's pastiche on the consumption—literally—of rock-and-roll.



The volume synthesizes topics of scholarly interest—such as musical borrowing or the political underpinnings of style—with insight into rock as a form of expression that derives its nature from several factors. It is sometimes difficult to remember, as we lift from their original historical berths the various kinds of music that we study, that the music's self-containment—its neutrality—is only an illusion. And as we seek to understand its actual and impressive power, we can learn much by simply listening to the voices around us.

—Susan Richardson
(Indiana University)

WORD UP ON RAP (continued)

cultural theory. Also, they are judiciously critical of some of rap's sexism, homophobia, and worship of violence. Though their work is weak on earlier rap history, a better capsule portrait of the current scene is not to be found.

* * *

Among the best journalistic sources on rap are reviews of current releases that have appeared in *The Village Voice* and *The City Sun*. Many of their writers have contributed to the ongoing discussion of rap and hip-hop culture; one might single out Armond White in the *Sun* (his 12-18 February 1992 piece on Marly Marl is a lucid discussion of whether "white rapper" is an oxymoron) and Greg Tate in the *Voice*, some of whose rap-related articles appear in his splendid first collection of cultural criticism, *Flyboys in the Buttermilk* (Firestone/Simon & Schuster, 1992). Certain monthly music publications also offer useful coverage, especially *Spin*, with articles and "Singles" columns of John Leland (now the lead music writer for *Newsweek*) that are particularly astute. However, the single most valuable resource is *The Source* (594 Broadway, New York, NY 10012). Started in 1985 by two Harvard undergraduates, David Mays and Jon Shecter, this "Voice of the Rap Music Industry" is a magazine by insiders for insiders; few publications give such a sense of the ongoing development of the genre. A good starting point is the special issue titled *Special Collector's Edition: The Rap Music 1980 to 1990*.

Much of the mainstream press has addressed rap with condescension at best, outright rancor at worst. J.D. Considine's open-minded "Fear of a Rap Planet" (*The Musician*, February 1992) cannot, unfortunately, outweigh such wrongheaded accounts that preceded it as Tom Bethel's in *The National Review* (8 July 1991), David Samuels's "The Rap on Rap" (*The New Republic*, 11 November 1991), or Arthur Kempton's "Native Sons" (in, surprisingly, that bastion of informed criticism, *The New York Review of Books*, 11 April 1991). Most egregious of all—unfortunately so, since it was probably the most widely read, hence most influential—is *Newsweek*'s 19 March 1990 cover story, claiming virtually all rap to be "bombastic, self-aggrandizing and yet scary as sudden footsteps in the dark."

Rap's use of sampling has been persistently attacked as little more than simple-minded thievery. More serious considerations of the issue cover a wide range of opinions. Jon Pareles of the *New York Times* has written favorably of rap yet equates sampling with pilferage and rap as "appropriationist art" (*Sunday Times*, 27 August 1989). He takes issue with Greg Tate's view of sampling as "ancestor worship [—not a] copycat art but a form of reanimation" (*Village Voice*, 22 November 1988). Andrew Goodwin applies postmodern cultural theory to rap in "Sample and Hold: Pop Music in the Digital Age of Reproduction" (*Critical Quarterly*, Autumn 1988), concluding that the divisions between copies and originals, humans and machines, are crumbling. Steven R. Godon and Charles J. Sanders, in "The Rap on Sampling: Theft, Innovation, or What?" (*Entertainment, Publishing, and the Arts Handbook*, 1989), situate the issue in established case law and offer a set

of modest, sensible proposals for a rapprochement between samplers and copyright holders. My own article "Don't Have to DJ No More" (*Cardozo Studies in Law and Literature* 4:2, 1992) proposes that any discussion of sampling requires a reexamination of the nature of the creative process and copyright law itself.

One unarguable fact is that sampling has in some ways elevated the deejay, the mixer, and the producer above the performer. Producers and mixers like Hank Shocklee, Rick Rubin, Marly Marl, and Hurby "Love Bug" Azor are as well-known as rappers themselves. In many instances, performers take responsibility for the vocal rap alone and leave the backup tracks entirely to producers, who set the rhythm for the recording; they are clearly co-creators, auteurs in their own right. In "The Sons of Jellybean" (*The Musician*, August 1989) Rusty Cutchin discusses the many mixers who moved from the danceclub floor to the recording booth. Mark Dery's "Now Turning the Tables . . . the D.J. As Star" (*New York Times*, 14 April 1991) extends the discussion to include the avant-garde community. The ecumenical approach to sound taken by most mixers can be observed in "Ebony and Ivory" (*Spin*, January 1991), an unusual conversation between Hank Shocklee, Public Enemy's producer, and songwriter Paul Simon.



Public discussion of rap's deployment of obscenity has been widespread. *Newsweek*'s "Art and Obscenity" (2 July 1990) puts the controversy, particularly the prosecution of 2 Live Crew, in the context of prior obscenity trials. Henry Louis Gates, the African-American literary theorist, defends the group as lying within the tradition of carnivalesque speech, in "2 Live Crew, Decoded" (*New York Times*, 19 June 1990). Finally, a balanced feminist analysis of the issue is made by Kimberle Crenshaw in "Beyond Racism and Misogyny: Black Feminism and 2 Live Crew" (*Boston Review*, December 1991).

A number of issues in rap still remain open to further study: How does the genre enunciate gender? how do male and female rappers differ? (Tricia Rose, a graduate student at Brown University, has

WORD UP ON RAP (*continued*)

done fine work on this subject.) Do we listen to rap as we listen to other forms of music? (Simon Frith has written [*Village Voice*, 9 April 1991], "Rap is overheard music; it draws attention to itself; we don't listen to rap records, we can't avoid them.") Have the technological changes reflected in rap—the compact disc, the sampler, MIDI synthesizers, boom boxes, and oversize car stereos—changed the nature of sound itself and how we perceive it? (John Leland, in "Do You Hear What I Hear?" [*Newsweek*, 27 January 1992], inquires whether this generation "has used the technology's fascination with surfaces to define a contemporary moment." The oppressive density of sound on some rap recordings is meant to be felt as well as heard; the highest compliment one can pay to a rap record, Leland astutely observes, is that it is "slamming.")

Whether one considers rap "real" music or not, its history is substantial, its presence on the musical scene is assured, and it raises many important issues.

ITTY BITTY RECORD REVIEWS

Brawny Brass. The London Gabrieli Brass Ensemble, conducted by Christopher Larkin, offers a splendid sampler of American music for brass on a Hyperion disk (CDA66517). Two Ives pieces (*From the Steeples and the Mountains* and *Processional: Let There Be Light*) flank eight other works, four by Cowell plus singletons by Barber, Harris, Thomson, Glass, Ruggles, and Carter. The British group has a knack for making Cowell sound not just fluent but *important*, and the Ives works are marvelously raucous. That adjective is not quite right, however, for the basic sound of the ensemble, which is deep, smooth, rich, and round.

"A Land of Pure Delight." That's a phrase from Billings's charming and unusually "modern" tune JORDAN. It's also the title of an all-Billings CD sung by Anne Heider's Chicago-based early-music chorus (and not-so-early) His Majestie's Clerkes, here conducted by Paul Hillier (Harmonia Mundi HMU-90748). This a cappella group of almost thirty voices sings sixteen of Billings's plain tunes, fusing tunes, and anthems in a suave, polished, manner that underlines the artfulness of the Yankee composer's work. Richard Crawford's liner notes are engaging, authoritative . . . and all too brief.

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REGARDING RECORDINGS II

TERRE HAUTE MEETS MONTMARTRE

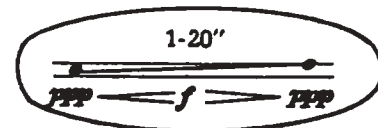
Fifty Million Frenchmen, which opened in New York on 27 November 1929 and ran for 254 performances, was Cole Porter's first hit musical comedy. Not that he was an unknown: his songs had perked up revues and shows at Yale, on Broadway, and in Paris through the twenties. But *Fifty Million Frenchmen* was Porter's breakthrough. A big show—twenty-three roles, a chorus of seventy-five, specialty acts, and a lode of Cole—but a show never revived. Tommy Krasker, music theater historian, writes in the booklet accompanying the new recording (New World 80417-2) that "possibly because of the size of the original production . . . the show was never acquired by a theatrical rental library [and] most of the original *Fifty Million Frenchmen* materials were thought lost—until the orchestrations surfaced in 1987 at the Tams-Witmark Library in New York City." This discovery prompted Krasker's adaptation of the work, and it was presented in concert version at the French Institute (spring 1991) and soon thereafter recorded by the same cast for New World.

The recording has a scrambled song-roster. Some numbers from opening night 1929 are not included ("Toast to Volstead," "Happy Heaven of Harlem"); some dropped in tryouts *are* included ("Please Don't Make Me Be Good," "The Queen of Terre Haute"); some added after opening night are also included ("Let's Step Out," "The Boy Friend Back Home"); and the original order of numbers has occasionally been changed. Such tinkering aside, there is some Porter for everyone: the classic—"You Do Something to Me"; the list song—"Where Would You Get Your Coat?" ("If the dear little rabbits/Weren't so bourgeois in their habits"); the naughty song—"Find Me a Primitive Man" ("I don't mean the kind that belongs to a club/But the kind that has a club that belongs to him"); the gentle parody—"The Queen of Terre Haute"; and on and on.

Good performances. Mostly good singing. The diction absolutely first-rate. Precise playing, and intonation on the money. And Evans Halle conducts Orchestra New England through the vintage orchestrations of Spialek, Miller, Klickmann, DePackh, and Bennett.

However, along with the recent revivals on records of *Girl Crazy* and *Babes in Arms*, this one threatens to become merely an archival artifact. We've heard of no plans to publish scores or librettos of these shows, nor to make scores and parts available on rental. True, the books and lyrics have topical references that the MTV generation won't get. And true, the stories are often silly. But more dated than *Hair*? sillier than *Starlight Express*? As for the Porter musical here revived, recorded, and now reviewed, *Fifty Million Frenchmen* can't be wrong: it's musical theater with a lot of great songs, from the era when songs—rather than special effects and dazzling stagecraft—counted most.

—Wayne Schneider
(Brown University)



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