

# NEWSLETTER

INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN AMERICAN MUSIC

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

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## PLURALISM, DIFFERENCE, AND THE CRISIS OF COMPOSERS IN THE ACADEMY

by Martin Brody (Wellesley College)

*University Composer:* The title, once glorious (or at least respectable), now seems quaint. Its promises of institutional patronage and prestige, stable aesthetic values, and a bully pulpit in the arena of American arts and letters are long broken. The phrase retains only the palest aura of authority. Worse, to many scholars and critics—even composers—it now seems a contradiction in terms. In telling the sad tale of the academic composer's fate in recent years, territorial metaphors and militant imagery spring to mind. Battered by charges of pedantry from both within and without the academy, all but banished by previously amiable funding agencies (themselves increasingly susceptible to innuendoes of elitism), compulsively focused on arcane knowledge recorded in rarely read dissertations and scholarly articles, the university composer is an endangered species—an easy mark for predatory colleagues from the dominant fields (musicology and theory) that stalk their prey among less virulent subdisciplines in the academic landscape.

And thus, recently minted theory Ph.D.s are more likely these days to prosper in the academic marketplace than their compositional counterparts, even than those composers who somehow establish credentials as “composer-theorists.” (The emergence of this professional hybrid, in and of itself, suggests that composition on its own has insufficient status to garner respect in the academic community.) For reasons that I will discuss briefly here, I believe that both theorists and composers will, in the coming years, give way to new kinds of music academics—those bearing ideas currently emerging in the fields of cultural studies, anthropology, and ethnomusicology.

The social Darwinism of my formulation may seem glib. But by acknowledging the struggle of composers today for position within the academic community, we (whether composers or not) are compelled to confront the ideological issues at stake in these professional conflicts. Over the last half century, composers in the university have been engaged—whether consciously or not—in the contested field of American cultural politics. To be more specific, I propose that the changing fortunes of composers in the academy are closely linked to the shifting meanings of cultural pluralism in America. This claim cannot be fully developed or supported in a few paragraphs. But let me jump-start a brief discussion of it by considering the ideological

displacement between the following two pronouncements, published roughly forty years apart.

First, here is Arthur Schlesinger, writing in the *Partisan Review* in 1952: “The immediate problem is to conserve cultural pluralism in the face of the threat of the mass media.”

(continued on page 15)



Meredith Monk performing in *Atlas*, which has recently been released on CD. See page 2 for a review.

(Photo by Michael O'Neill.)

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# CARL RUGGLES

Composer, Painter, and Storyteller



Marilyn Ziffirin

Carl Ruggles (1876-1971) was a multitalented man determined to write modern music. He also had an important second career as a painter. Ruggles was dependent through much of his life on patrons, friends, and his wife, Charlotte, and devoted to telling raucous, off-color stories. In this biography of the late American composer-artist, Marilyn Ziffirin draws on interviews with those who knew him, on papers from his collection, and on her interviews and developing friendship with him in his final years. She creates a picture of a man who was proud, stubborn, insecure, irascible, prejudiced—and deeply human and lovable.

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## MONK'S ATLAS

With each new release of a **Meredith Monk** recording I find myself wondering: can the experience of performance art be translated into a medium of pure sound? The issue becomes particularly relevant with the appearance on CD of *Atlas*, Monk's recent opera (ECM New Series 1491/92). *Atlas* retells the life story of the explorer Alexandra Daniels and falls into three parts: the childhood yearnings of Daniels for the far-away, her travels in distant lands, and her ascension to mystic knowledge. Almost a latter-day *gesamtkunstwerk*, it combines stage action, projected film images, colorful set designs, music produced by a ten-piece orchestra, and, most importantly, vocals that are largely wordless. Each dimension is essential. Live presentations achieve this symbiosis effectively. The theater productions of *Atlas* that I saw in 1991 and 1992 belong to my most cherished experiences of opera, something that I am sure is true for many others who witnessed them. Monk's stage presence, the cult-like audiences, and the beauty of the spectacle formed a magical whole.

With a sum greater than its parts, can one component be convincing on its own? Take the wonderful scene titled "Forest Questions," in which Alexandra (played by Monk herself) must translate for her companions the words of an ancient sage, whose beard spreads out in all directions and covers the floor. The bright chattering of Monk as she interprets—here, words are transformed directly into untexted vocalization—combines with the scene's humor and sparkling stage design to provide a highlight of the evening. Yet on the recording, "Forest Questions" does not stand out as particularly notable. Hearing sound alone alters the work substantially and, I believe, harms it. The opera becomes something like a movie soundtrack.

But a recording offends against the nature of *Atlas* by its permanence as well as by its unidimensionality. In addition to integrating different, compartmentalized arts, Monk's compositions aspire to the status of an orally transmitted tradition. *Atlas* changes with each presentation; flux and process are emphasized over fixity. Moreover, because much of the music's interest rests on how simple patterns alter with each performance, the opera does not fit with an aesthetic that values complexity—one certainly promoted by recording technology.

Despite these caveats, the CD set is valuable for the exceptional vocal performances by Monk and her troupe. The only real lapse occurs in the third part, where harsh sound reproduction undermines some exceptionally sensuous and successful writing by Monk. The interdependence of parameters in *Atlas*, however, and the way the work mutates over several years of presentations are inextricably entangled with the opera's music itself, no matter how excellently executed it may be. Release of an *Atlas* video would be marvelous, but it would still provide a partial-view ticket. Monk's live performances, changing and interactive, are her art's essence, and the images or sounds taken from one of them provide only a pale reflection, even an embalming, of their vitality.

—Julian Treves  
(Columbia University)

## I.S.A.M. MATTERS

I.S.A.M.'s symposium, *Amy Beach's World*, took place on 23 February amidst the umpteenth blizzard of a seemingly endless winter. But in spite of a few cliff-hangers (one speaker spent four hours trying to get out of Logan Airport, and a singer plowed her way across New Jersey), there was a full rostrum of speakers and performers, together with a large and lively audience. The event included a keynote address by Adrienne Fried Block, exploring autobiographical resonances in Beach's Piano Concerto, as well as lectures by Erica E. Hirschler of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and Joseph Horowitz of the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra. It concluded with a rare treat: excerpts from Beach's *Cabildo*, performed by the Brooklyn College Opera Theater under the direction of Richard Barrett. The symposium took place several weeks after an exhilarating performance of Beach's *Gaelic Symphony* by Dennis Russell Davies and the Brooklyn Philharmonic.



Reverend Timothy Wright in concert (Photo by Jack Vartoogian).

*Sounds of Brooklyn II*, a series of concerts and workshops featuring local ethnic traditions, is off to a strong start. Cosponsored by I.S.A.M. and the World Music Institute, with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the series is part of an intense effort to join forces with musicians in the diverse neighborhoods surrounding Brooklyn College. In February, Reverend Timothy Wright of Brooklyn's Grace Tabernacle Christian Center Church headlined the third annual Brooklyn College Gospel Festival. Before the concert, Reverend Wright presented a spirited demonstration of gospel choral arranging for an audience that included more than one-hundred high school students. For the main event, two high school choirs and the Brooklyn College Gospel Chorale shared the concert stage with Reverend Wright's own choir. In March, the folkloric ensembles Patakin and Carambu presented traditional musics of Puerto Rico and Cuba. Master drummer Louis Bauzo joined Professor Anthony Nadal of Brooklyn College's Puerto Rican Studies Department for an engaging preconcert workshop focusing on Afro-Caribbean drumming and folk dancing. Both events were well attended by students and residents of surrounding neighborhoods.

**Congratulations!** We are delighted to announce that the winner of the first I.S.A.M. Composer Award is Arddin Herbert, a junior composition major in Brooklyn College's Conservatory of Music. He won for *Coersion* (a title merging "coercion" with "fusion") which is scored for an ensemble of steel pans. A pan virtuoso and native of Trinidad, Herbert directs the Brooklyn-based C.A.S.Y.M. Steel Orchestra. Here's hoping he goes on to a lifetime of prize-winning compositions!

**I.S.A.M.ers—Past and Present.** This semester, I.S.A.M.'s Founding Director, H. Wiley Hitchcock, conducted a graduate seminar in the Department of Music at Yale University on the music of Charles Ives. . . . Former I.S.A.M. Research Assistant, K. Robert Schwarz, has recently received a Dissertation Year Fellowship from the Graduate School of CUNY for work on "The Music and Music Criticism of Paul Bowles." He continues an active career as a free-lance journalist, writing regular feature

articles for the *New York Times*, among other publications. . . . Current I.S.A.M. Research Associate, Ray Allen, has been extending I.S.A.M.'s reach into the many communities surrounding Brooklyn College (see the description of *Sounds of Brooklyn II* above). He read a paper titled "Unifying the Disunity: Multiculturalism and the Teaching of American Music" at the Worcester meeting of the Sonneck Society. . . . Jeffrey Taylor, who joined the Brooklyn College faculty this past fall, has quickly become a valued member of the I.S.A.M. team. Besides contributing to this Newsletter, he is drafting plans for a major interdisciplinary conference on jazz. Stay tuned. . . . John Link, a composer and recent Ph.D. from CUNY, has diligently typeset this issue of the Newsletter. His composition

*Shadow Traffic*, for clarinet and piano, will be premiered as part of Friends & Enemies of New Music's fifth anniversary concert in June, and his study of Elliott Carter's sketches for *Night Fantasies* is forthcoming in SONUS. . . . And finally, Kevin Parks, I.S.A.M.'s student aide for the last several years, is moving on to other jobs. An undergraduate composition major, Parks has worked hard on production and distribution of this Newsletter, among an array of other tasks. We thank him for that and wish him the best in the years ahead!

*From the New World*, a handsome, amply annotated, 60-page program book that accompanied the Brooklyn Philharmonic's recent celebration of Dvorak's American experience, is available through I.S.A.M. In addition to program notes for the *New World Symphony*, as well as for MacDowell's *Indian Suite* and Beach's *Gaelic Symphony* (by Michael Beckerman, Joseph Horowitz, and Adrienne Fried Block), it includes essays by Block (exploring Dvorak's impact on American composers), John Mack Faragher (on Dvorak's knowledge of American Indians), and Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. (on Dvorak and African-American music). The booklet is free with the purchase of an I.S.A.M. Monograph or \$5 (handling charge) when ordered alone.



## CRAWFORD'S AMERICA by David Schiff (Reed College)

*The American Musical Landscape* by Richard Crawford (University of California Press, 1993; \$45) is a magisterial overview of American music by one of the most eminent scholars in the field. First presented as the Ernest Bloch lectures at the University of California at Berkeley, Crawford's book is obviously intended not only as a study in its own right but also as a model for future scholars. He begins with the subject of American music history itself, calling upon his colleagues to make better use of the work of past historians. He then lays out the broad picture of musical America with contrasting chapters on composition and performance. Narrowing his focus, Crawford devotes three chapters to composers—William Billings, George F. Root, and Duke Ellington—and finishes with a chapter on one song, Gershwin's "I Got Rhythm." Whether in his far-reaching assessments of the work of his predecessors or in his detailed inventory of the reworkings of "I Got Rhythm," Crawford demonstrates the craft of the music historian with confidence and flair. The best part of the book for me, however, was that I found something to argue with on virtually every page. Crawford's vision is provocative. Few books on American music raise so many fundamental questions.

I read the book as an outsider—I'm not a musicologist but an American composer—and from that point of view the landscape presented seemed virtually unrecognizable. Ives, Copland, Blitzstein, Hanson, Harris, Carter, Cage, Varèse, Rodgers, Porter, Bernstein, Sondheim, Glass, Reich, et. al. play a miniscule role here. As it turns out, Crawford early on dismisses studies of American music by John Tasker Howard and Wilfrid Mellers (my favorite, alas) that put composers, particularly those of "art" music, at center stage. He approves, instead, the work of historians, such as Charles Hamm, who have argued for the musically disenfranchised. The choice of composers in the final chapters is therefore deliberately, indeed radically, corrective. Billings, Root, Ellington, and Gershwin are composers for "the people" (a term that Crawford employs without irony) and represent, for him, the real essence of American music. In his essays on these figures, moreover, he demonstrates the many fascinating ways in which their works were transformed by performers to renew a vital link to the evolving public.

Once Crawford opens a populist perspective, however, I find myself wishing for even more. A historian of popular music would not stop with the familiar figures of Ellington and Gershwin (both of whom had serious high-art ambitions) but might analyze the jingles of Sid Woloshin, the TV scores of Mike Post, the odd appeal of Perry Como, the inexplicable popularity of "MacArthur Park." A populist would devote his or her *life* to country music and AM radio.

But of course music history is rarely the same as ordinary history. A reading of Lawrence Levine's *Highbrow/Lowbrow* reveals a very different perspective even with similar prejudices. Levine has no interest in the quality of art works or performances. He is interested in the audience. For better or worse, most music historians—including Crawford—interpret

musical objects. Their choice of materials and the way they study them also introduces nonhistorical elements of criticism. With Ellington, for example, Crawford gives plenty of social data, but he quite rightly (and perceptively) discusses Ellington as a great composer, not as a popular figure. But a historian of "the people's" music might instead have chosen Glenn Miller, who enjoyed much greater popularity. As Crawford points out, jazz (and later rock) criticism has often substituted an aesthetic of "authenticity" for one of popularity. Miller has virtually been banished from jazz history because of his "inauthenticity," but populist music history should not be limited by this view.

Crawford's nativist and populist themes raise further questions. The book often contrasts Europe and America as if they were separate planets. From a global perspective, however, Western Europe, the United States, and Canada are culturally continuous, sharing far more values with each other than with the rest of the world. Gershwin and Kern were as successful on London's West End as on Broadway, with little adjustment in style. It seems late in the day to be decrying European influences; doing so obscures the cultural tensions within American society that form so clearly along lines of class, race, and region.

In Crawford's America, however, the American people seem to form an unbroken unity held together by a popular music that is the property of performers more than composers. Yet how popular is popular? The assumption that the values of American popular music are universal may be as pernicious as the old view that similarly universalized the works of the German masters. It may hide voices of dissent and expressions of pluralism. To me, the most interesting fact about the American musical landscape is its protean and diverse character, of which Crawford gives many striking examples. Not only are there a large number of musical subcultures, but they are in a process of internal transformation and external negotiation. Our popular, commercial, ethnic, regional, and art musics interact with fascinating results. And the category of "art" music, although under near-constant assault, continues to attract composers and performers as diverse as David Byrne, Wynton Marsalis, and John Zorn.

Crawford's discussion of the transformation of "I Got Rhythm" touches briefly on more disturbing questions. A friend recently asked whether the intended singer of "I Got Rhythm" was white or black. That suddenly raised all sorts of submerged issues about racial relationships within the music. The creation by black musicians of new tunes over Gershwin's chord changes may be one response (Crawford cites Max Roach's political explanation for the use of "Rhythm" changes). But the rewriting of tunes is essential to jazz—all blues compositions exemplify this genre. The larger issue here is the mutual transformation that Tin Pan Alley and jazz achieved in the late twenties and thirties, a transformation that was as much political as musical. But that, as Crawford would say, is the challenge for future scholars. And the American Musical Landscape is nothing if not challenging.

## POST-MODERN PORGY

Like one of William Burroughs's dangerous shotgun paintings, a recording by the grunge group **When People Were Shorter And Lived Near The Water** literally explodes out of your speakers. Technically, of course, WPWSALNTW (let's just say WPWS) does not represent true grunge since it predates that young phenomenon and does not call Seattle home base. But the attitude is similar—in this case, doing Gershwin and Heyward's *Porgy and Bess* in Doc Martens, knee-less jeans, and flannel shirts.

The group's *Porgy* (JAF/Shimmy-Disc S044) is a mad mix of styles. On the surface, the recording smacks of similarity to previous reinterpretations, notably Miles Davis and Gil Evans's 1958 classic. The same in-depth treatment is here: not just the "hits" ("Summertime," et. al.) but also some of the story-bound numbers (the cries of street vendors and the funeral music). Unlike Davis and Evans, however, WPWS presents its material with text and in the original order.

While the disc is daring—even frightening—in its stylistic combinations, most striking is the band's quite literal interpretation of the text. Alongside wisps of psychedelia (from the Doors to Gin Blossoms), eclecticism (à la Zappa and Zorn), Bo Diddley's grind, and the horrifying screams of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, WPWS recasts this historic American musical tale in its own image. The "Intro" has all the raucousness of Gershwin's original and then some, replete with banging tin cans and overblown brasses. "Roll Dem Bones" uses Gershwin's famous xylophone in a new way, as if foreshadowing what is to come by rapping upon Robbins's ribcage. Bones as in death, not dice. When Sportin' Life offers his infamous "happy dust," there's no doubt he is talking about narcotics, since this huckster, amid scratches in the background, pleads like the most strungout of junkies. "I Got Plenty O' Nuttin'," played at double-time-plus, comes off as Porgy out-of-control, up and dancing with a banjo.

WPWS's *Porgy* is of *our* time, highly mindful of the past but not blindly respectful. At certain moments, fans of the original may be offended by the off-color (and out-of-tune) treatments of various numbers. More provocative, however, is the group's air of authenticity. In the packaging, the work is never referred to as "Porgy and Bess" (the 1935 opera), only as "Porgy" (the 1925 novel and 1927 play). Theodore Nadejen's serpent-bird-and-blossom woodcut from the front of the novel is reproduced within the liner booklet. But its "old south" style is in sharp contrast to the acid-bathed goat's head (recalling the Rolling Stones's *Goat's Head Soup*?) on the back and lipsticked stooge on the front.

I have no clear idea what the name of this group is supposed to mean. If the members are bent on recapturing primeval instincts, then they do that here. Porgy punked, if you will. A kick, yes, in the head!

—John Andrew Johnson  
(Harvard University)

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## BLACK GOSPEL CD EXPLOSION

Praise the Lord for the magic of digital remastering! Until recently, teaching African-American gospel music was a frustrating experience: vintage audio recordings of pre-1970 gospel singing were hard to come by. But no more. Thanks to the CD reissue revolution, outstanding recordings from the 1940s through the 1960s—gospel's "golden era"—are once again available.

A good place to start is with the **Spirit Feel** series, a subsidiary of Shanachie Records (37 East Clinton Street, Newton, NJ 07860). Amply annotated by gospel historian Anthony Heilbut, the series highlights the field's finest. The premiere release, *Father and Sons* (Spirit Feel 1001), features pre-WW II gospel quartet recordings by R.H. Harris and the Soul Stirrers, together with 1950s classics by the Blind Boys of Mississippi and the Sensational Nightingales. *Gospel Warriors* (Spirit Feel 1003) reaches back to the gospel blues of guitarist/singer Sister Rosetta Tharpe and includes stellar performances by Georgia Peach, Clara Ward, Marion Williams, and Frances Steadman. Where is Mahalia Jackson? Try *The Great Gospel Women* (Shanachie 6004) for some of her best offerings from the 1940s and 1950s. Also heard there are pioneering gospel sisters Willie Mae Ford and Roberta Martin. A companion disc, *The Great Gospel Men* (Shanachie 6005), features early performances by the "king" of Chicago gospel, Robert Anderson, as well as early 1950s tracks by two other major figures, Alex Bradford and James Cleveland.

The **Gospel Spirit** series, from Columbia Legacy (550 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10022-3211), is another outstanding source—especially the double CD release *The Gospel Sound* (Columbia/Legacy, C2K 57160), also produced by Heilbut. The first disc features early gospel and spiritual performances, with exquisite tracks by two influential Texans, guitarist Blind Willie Johnson and pianist Arizona Dranes. The swinging vocal arrangements of the Golden Gate Quartet and folksy harmonies of Mitchell's Christian Singers are also featured. A second disc focuses on recordings of Mahalia Jackson, Marion Williams, the Dixie Hummingbirds and the Staple Singers, with two hot tracks by the Abyssinian Baptist Choir and Alex Bradford that capture the joyful exuberance of a live gospel performance. A single CD, *The Essential Gospel Sampler* (Columbia/Legacy CK 57163), offers even more tracks by the above-mentioned singers and moving renditions of two spirituals by Paul Robeson. Gospel Spirit has also reissued compilations of performances by Mahalia Jackson (C2K 47083) and the Golden Gate Quartet (CK 47131), and the songs of Thomas Dorsey (CK 57164).

If budget limits you to a single purchase, try *Jubilation! Great Gospel Performances, Volume 1: Black Gospel* (Rhino R2 70288). Edited and annotated by Ray Funk and Stephen Peeples for Rhino Records (2225 Colorado Avenue, Santa Monica, CA 90404), this disc is the best single compilation from gospel's golden era. Beginning with Mahalia Jackson's classic, "Move on Up a Little Higher," and ending with the first contemporary gospel hit, the Edwin Hawkins' Singers's "Oh Happy Day," listeners are treated to gospel's best—Roberta Martin, the Ward Singers, Shirley Caesar, the Dixie Hummingbirds, the Swan

Silvertones, the Soul Stirrers, and even a sanctified Aretha Franklin. *Volume 2: More Black Gospel* (Rhino RT 70289) continues the story with compelling performances by Alex Bradford, James Cleveland, the Davis Sisters, the Harmonizing Four, the Caravans, and the Staple Singers.

One more CD to consider is *The Great 1955 Shrine Concert*, recorded live in Los Angeles and just rereleased on Specialty (SPCD-7045-2, distributed by Fantasy Inc., Tenth & Parker, Berkeley, CA 94710). The Pilgrim Travelers, the Caravans, the Soul Stirrers (with Sam Cooke), and the Original Gospel Harmonettes "have church" with a fervor impossible to capture in the studio.

As music historians continue to mine recording vaults, more sets of vintage gospel are sure to appear. But to date no reissue package in gospel rivals the comprehensive scope and in-depth annotations of the Smithsonian's *Classic Jazz* or *Classic Country Music*. After decades of scholarly neglect, African-American gospel deserves no less.

—R.A.

## VOICES OF ROBERT STARER

American choral music gained vitality in the late 1930s and early 1940s as many composers expanded on the grand choral tradition of the nineteenth century and earlier. Randall Thompson stood out among them, as did Howard Hanson, Leo Sowerby, Roy Harris, Virgil Thomson, William Schuman, and Norman Dello Joio. Within their varying styles, these men all contributed music accessible to amateur singers. Another composer intent on the same goal is Robert Starer, whose achievement is apparent in a new collection of scores, *Choral Music of Robert Starer* (MCA, \$12.95), which draws together a rich sampling of the composer's *a cappella* and accompanied choral music from the past thirty-five years.

Many of Starer's choral works were composed for specific groups, whose particular interests and abilities influenced his choices of texts and musical settings. These choices in turn reflect the composer's character and identity. For example *Ariel* (*Visions of Isaiah*), composed in 1959 for the amateur Interracial Fellowship Chorus, represents Starer's desire to reach the untrained singer who pursues music for enrichment. The commissions of *Joseph and His Brothers* (1966) by the Jewish Welfare Board and *Psalms of Woe and Joy* (1976) by the Zamir Chorale reflect Starer's identity as a Jewish composer. Likewise, two pieces with specifically American themes—*The People, Yes* (1976), commissioned for a Bicentennial celebration in Binghamton, New York, and *Voices of Brooklyn* (1980), commissioned by Brooklyn College—explore his connection to his adopted home. This is music ripe for performance in schools, synagogues, churches, and community centers.

—Kristin Wendland  
(Georgia State University Neighborhood Music Schools)

**BOLD NEW CDs**

**Landmarks Refurbished.** Sackbuts and sirens make strange bed partners. But as attention to historic performance practice moves into the twentieth century, the same principles of faithful restoration are being applied to both—or so a recorded recreation by conductor Maurice Peress of **George Antheil's** massively promoted 1927 Carnegie Hall concert proves. The event not only marked the American premiere of Antheil's infamous *Ballet mécanique*, but solidified his reputation as a kind of wild man among the young American modernists. Peress's recreation follows his earlier rendering of Paul Whiteman's "Experiment in Modern Music," at which Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* was unveiled. But with Antheil—especially with his *Ballet mécanique*—the result is staggering. While the work never recovered from its overwhelmingly negative New York reception, in Peress's version *Ballet mécanique* appears as the visionary statement Antheil always claimed it to be. Until now, we have known it only through the composer's own drastically reduced, de-radicalized 1953 revision (which has been used for previous recordings). But with reinstatement of scoring from the original, together with its audaciously long repetitions and bold interpolations of silence, Antheil emerges as a major pathbreaker—a precursor of Cage and Reich, among others. Peress's performance of Antheil's *Jazz Symphony* is also revealing, especially because this is one of the few jazz-based works by a white modernist that doesn't sound in the least like Gershwin (MusicMasters 01612-67094-2).

Similarly, Neeme Järvi conducts the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in a performance of **William Grant Still's** *Symphony No. 1, "Afro-American"* that revives a work of high historic value but low audience exposure. From the languorous lilt of the opening blues theme, Järvi grasps the work's rhythmic essence, avoiding the sprawl that has often marred interpretations of the symphony. In Järvi's hands, the *Afro-American Symphony* becomes a long, lucid story; its sectionalism is fully understood. Ellington's *Suite from "The River,"* as orchestrated by Ron Collier, fills out the disc (Chandos 9154).

**Experimenters Exalted.** Scanning the contents of **Alan Feinberg's** glorious new CD, *The American Innovator*, you might think it adds up to a motley batch of pieces, spanning most of this century and including figures of widely varying aesthetic stripes. The music of Leo Ornstein precedes that of John Adams, followed by Ruth Crawford Seeger, Henry Cowell, Mario Davidovsky, John Harbison, Charles T. Griffes, and on and on, ending with Thelonious Monk. But Feinberg's imaginative juxtapositions and stunning performances yield revelations from beginning to end. The tour de force, however, is his rendering of *Piano Study in Mixed Accents* by Ruth Crawford Seeger, which ripples by in one-and-a-half minutes of sparkling brilliance (Argo 436-925-2).

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## OLD FOLKS FAR FROM HOME: AMERICAN LEGACIES IN CHINA by Joanna C. Lee

*On a recent trip to China, Joanna C. Lee found further evidence of a phenomenon recorded by Charles Hamm five years ago in this Newsletter (May 1989): American music enjoys a strong following in the People's Republic of China. A recent Ph.D. from Columbia University, with a dissertation on György Ligeti, Lee has also conducted research on popular music in Hong Kong.*

In September and October 1992 I visited the Tibetan Autonomous Region of southern Gansu Province, People's Republic of China, accompanied by Robert Stuart Jamieson, his wife Gloria, and Alexander Beels, a graduate in East Asian Studies from Yale University. Most of the area had been closed to the outside world since 1949, and at the time of our trip it was still officially off-limits to foreigners. In spite of these restrictions, the town of Labrang, the seat of a major Tibetan lamasery, has attracted considerable tourism in recent years. While in Gansu, we came upon some unexpected Americana, uncovering not only the transmission of a Foster tune from the West to the East but its continuing vitality in a new culture.

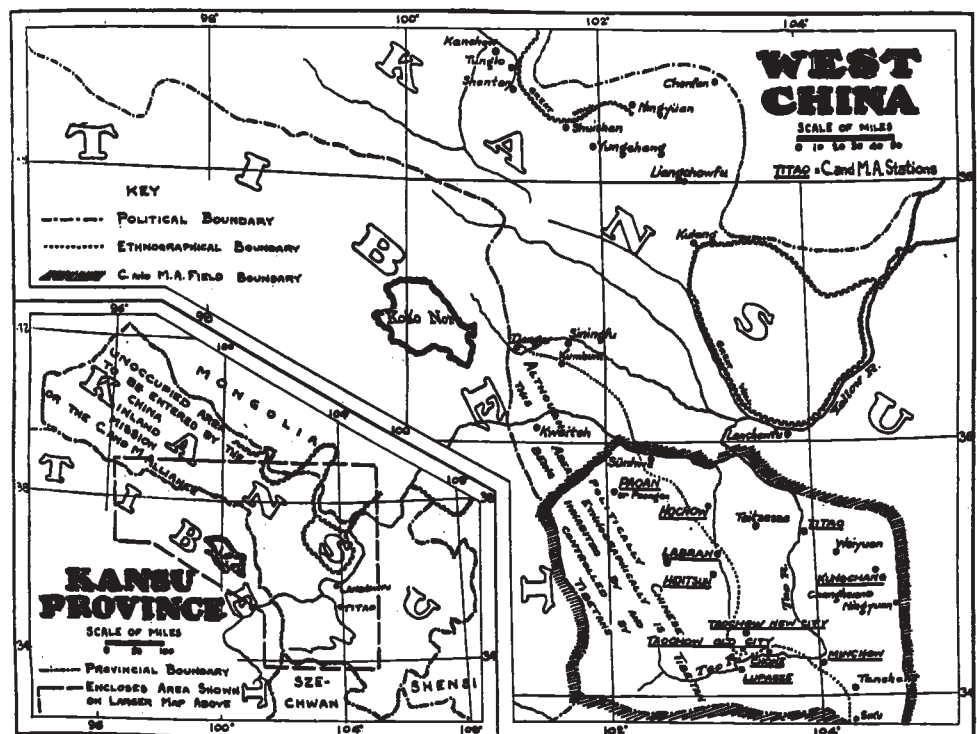
Our reason for taking the trip had nothing to do with Foster, however, but with researching family history. My travel companion, Robert Jamieson (b. 1922 in Gansu), is the maternal grandson of William Wallace Simpson (1869-1961), a missionary who first entered China in 1892. The Jamiesons had already visited the Tibetan Autonomous Region in 1987, when they recorded some hymns. On this return trip, however, they marked the hundredth anniversary of Simpson's arrival in China and invited me to accompany them as musicologist and interpreter. We planned to visit a few of the mission stations that Simpson had established along the Tao River (a tributary of the Yellow River), including Hezuo ("Hehtsuh" in the accompanying map), Lintan ("Taichow New City"), and Luba ("Lupasze"). We even followed Simpson's route from Shanghai by boat to Wuhan (along the Yangtze River), then by land via Xian, and Lanzhou ("Lanchowfu") to southern Gansu ("Kansu").

William Wallace Simpson was born right after the Civil War in White County, Tennessee, and he transported music from that place and time to his missionary outpost. Although coming from a strong Baptist background, he and his family joined the Christian and Missionary Alliance in 1882, when it was first founded. Ten years later, at 23, he arrived in China with his banjo and missionary zeal. Simpson was a musician as well as a proselytizer, and according to one of his missionary colleagues (Gwen Shaw), "he

played that banjo all the time except when he preached." In addition, Simpson always accompanied congregational hymn singing on his instrument.

Most of Simpson's evangelical odyssey unfolded in Gansu, a province in the heartland well-known as part of the Silk Road. It borders the provinces of Inner Mongolia to the north, Sichuan to the south, Qinghai (formerly part of Tibet) to the east, and Shaanxi to the west. Simpson did not remain in the provincial capitol Lanzhou, but instead traveled far into the rural areas to carry out his missionary work. According to his autobiography, *Contending for the Faith* (unpublished typescript, Assemblies of God Archives in Springfield, Missouri), it took twenty-five days to get there across treacherous mountains, even though Lanzhou and the villages of southern Gansu are only one hundred miles apart. Today, this same route requires twelve hours by bus.

The rise of Pentecostalism in America at the turn of the twentieth century resounded in far-away China. When Simpson first arrived in Taichow Old City in 1895, he began a seven-year residency, working with William Christie, another missionary from the Christian and Missionary Alliance. Taichow had been carefully chosen by the Alliance in order to evangelize the Chinese-Tibetan border area, which had been largely ignored by other missionary societies. Simpson and Christie had hoped to convert Tibet. In 1913, Simpson and his wife retired from the Christian and Missionary Alliance and sailed back to America. Soon afterward, they joined the newly founded Assemblies of God.



Map from the Atlas Showing Mission Fields, published by the Christian and Missionary Alliance in 1924.





William Wallace Simpson (center), with his banjo, at the Minxian ("Minchow") Assemblies of God convention in May 1949. To the left of him are two Canadian missionaries, David Schmidt and Gwen Shaw. Photo courtesy of Robert Stuart Jamieson.

In 1918, Simpson returned to China and set up missions for the Assemblies of God in Lintan, Luba, and Minxian ("Minchow"). By 1931, he had established fifty religious stations in southern Gansu. He also established schools for children (even a girls' school in Lintan) and Bible schools for adults. Despite his abrupt departure in 1949 on the eve of the Communist Revolution and even despite political turmoil in the ensuing decades, his converts continued to practice their religion. Estimates of the present Christian population in the area range from 2,000 to 3,000.

When we entered Lintan (population 30,000) on a cloudy September afternoon, the town literally stopped and stared at us. Lintan, like many other towns in the region, has a mixed population of Tibetans, Muslims, and Chinese. We headed straight for the church, built by Simpson in 1905, at the end of the main street. There we met some church elders, and within a half-hour about twenty Christians joined us. Although the church compound had been taken over by the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution, it was returned to the Christians in the mid-1980s. (The church bell was used by the Red Guards to announce public meetings.) This Christian church is a novelty in southern Gansu, because it publicly announces religious practice. Almost all other congregations in the area meet in house churches (i.e., people's homes). Later on that afternoon, when we ventured on foot to take video footage of the Lintan church and its environs, we attracted almost a hundred children and their curious parents. In the following days, our group also visited Luba, where the Simpsons built their family compound and mission cemetery, and also a nearby village, Yaoba, where the entire population of 162 was Christian. Part of Luba's church compound has now been transformed into a village school. At every stop, we were introduced to members of the local Christian community, and we asked them, in turn, to sing hymns for us.

I recorded 112 hymns (as well as some spirituals and psalms) that constitute the extant repertory of the southern Gansu Christians.

The Christians were using stencil reprints of a hymnal entitled *Shenzhaohui Shige* (*Assemblies of God Hymnal*), which was first compiled by Simpson in 1921 and contained a total of 387 hymn texts, without music. The stencil reprint, *Jiuen Shige* (*Salvation Songs*), was made in 1988. Since the hymn tunes had been passed down in oral tradition, few had survived because their transmission was disrupted during the Cultural Revolution. When religious activities resumed openly in the 1980s, various congregations in the area retrieved parts of their repertoires by learning tunes from elders in other towns. For example, over a period of four years the leading musician of the Lintan congregation collected hymn tunes from the older generation of Christians in Minxian while traveling between the two towns for his job.

Most of my field recordings were made in Lintan, because the congregation there is large and its leading musician (mentioned above) is expert. Over a period of two evenings, a group of eight adults (occasionally joined by a few children) sang for us the first verse of every hymn they knew, while our research group busily recorded them and followed the texts. We were intrigued by the tenacity of oral tradition even though the musical practice had been interrupted for so many years. As expected, we noted melodic and rhythmic deviations of otherwise "familiar" Anglo-American hymn tunes. This type constituted a major subgroup, totaling about sixty hymns, which are essentially variants of standard American hymns. The other large subgroup included secular tunes popular in the late nineteenth century, among them "The Girl I Left Behind Me" and "When You and I Were Young, Maggie." Other tunes in my field recordings have not yet been identified.

The style of singing by the Gansu Christians mixed the shape-note vocal timbres of the American South with the highly ornamented mountain-song tradition of the Chinese West. The group sang only in unison. During a Sunday service in Lintan,

(continued on next page)

## OLD FOLKS FAR FROM HOME (*continued*)

two musicians accompanied the hymn singing. One played a harmonium and the other an accordion, doubling the congregation in octaves. The cadences were especially drawn out, with irregular phrasings to fit the Chinese hymn texts, and the tempi were mostly very slow. However, the most notable characteristic was the prevalent pentatonicism. Some missionaries active in the field had provided me with accounts of how Chinese Christians could only sing in their indigenous modes, perhaps unwilling to master diatonicism. It was equally likely that Simpson had condoned the pentatonic adaptation of hymns among his converts or that the current pentatonic hymn tunes evolved through decades of isolation.

Among the secular tunes adapted by William Wallace Simpson was Stephen Foster's "Old Folks at Home," which was hymn number 207. The melody that we heard did not contain either a leading tone or a subdominant. However, the distinct octave leaps and the general melodic contour were clearly recognizable. Perhaps it is coincidental that among the six phrases of Foster's song (some of which are repetitive), only the fifth phrase, which begins the chorus, involves the leading tone and the subdominant. The other phrases utilize only *do-re-mi-sol-la*. The Gansu Christians' rendering of the tune, therefore, only differed in scalar material from the original in the phrase "All de world am sad and weary, eb'rywhere I roam" (try substituting the leading tone with the tonic, and the subdominant with the mediant). The cadences were extended by additional beats in order to accommodate grace notes and slides, reminiscent of the distinctive cadences found in Chinese folk songs.

The Chinese for Foster's tune translates as "Manifesto of the Assemblies of God." Not only does the text outline the life of Jesus, but it also provides the singers with essential information about the geographical location and temporal frame of the Christian story. Simpson wrote his own Chinese texts for this hymnal, and the chorus of Foster's tune calls upon the "five

aces" of China—Han (Chinese), Muslims, Tibetans, Mongols, and Manchus—to convert to Christianity. Simpson aimed to evangelize the entire Chinese population.

Later on during the trip, we located an original edition of the 1921 hymnal (printed in Shanghai) and found the corresponding English title, "Message to China," for the hymn set to "Old Folks at Home." According to the Gansu Christians, this hymn played a central role in Simpson's teachings. In May 1993, in a follow-up trip, Alexander Beels located a copy of the 1921 hymnal containing musical notation (in typical diatonic four-part piano score). This latter hymnal was unearthed by the congregation in Hezuo after we had recorded their musical repertory in 1992. The Christians in the entire area have since been learning new hymns because of this rediscovery.

The significance of Simpson's collection has less to do with musical novelty than how a tune could be grafted into a different culture and its context transformed. My recordings preserve a cultural legacy of the missionary movement, one that brought a cross-fertilization of East and West. It is not surprising that urbanites in present-day China recognize Foster's "Old Folks at Home," "Oh Susanna," and "Beautiful Dreamer," perhaps not by title but at least by their melodies (see Charles Hamm's perceptive article mentioned above). China's openness to western influence in the past two decades has resulted in a wave of "imported" music, especially along the coastal cities. However, the southern Gansu Christians learned the tune of "Old Folks at Home" at least as early as the 1920s, perhaps even earlier, before state radios or any other modern means of musical dissemination. Cut off from the rest of the world in a community whose only link to the West was the memory of William Wallace Simpson and fellow missionaries, generations of southern Gansu Christians have sung hymn 207 over and over again as part of their religious practice. To them, the tune to "Old Folks at Home" is part of Simpson's legacy in China.

### *Hymn 207: Message to China/Manifesto of the Assemblies of God*

Sung to the tune "Old Folks at Home"

English translation by Alexander Beels and Joanna Lee (the translation below aims to suggest text content rather than match tune rhythm)

*Verse* (music to "Old Folks" verse repeated twice):

Nineteen hundred years ago in Judah, in the west of Asia,  
Jesus revealed His love to save sinners.  
All the world was sinful and corrupt.  
Jesus took their sins upon Himself, and died for them.

*Chorus* (music repeated twice):

My brethren, take heed! Jesus died to save you.  
Buried for three days, He returned to life and redeemed man's sins.  
My countrymen of five races, Jesus is calling you now!  
The Holy Spirit marked the cross and spread the living water far and wide.

## IVES ON FLATBUSH AVENUE

We all know that Walt Whitman played a role in Brooklyn, but Charles Ives? Recently, we received the following communication from *Siegmund Levarie*, professor emeritus of music at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate School, who shared information about a little-known Ives memorial. I.S.A.M. Research Associate Ray Allen risked confrontation with the local police to obtain a photograph of it.



Levarie writes:

With all the recent attention given to Charles Ives and his father, I wonder how many readers of the *I.S.A.M. Newsletter* are aware of, let alone have seen, their monument in Bear's Community Garden in Brooklyn. The composer and his father, slightly larger than lifesize, are carved in wood and shown "do-si-do." The garden is a small triangular lot at the southwest corner of Flatbush and Pacific Avenues, one block south of the Long Island Railroad Terminal and two blocks south of the Brooklyn Academy of Music. It is surrounded by a wire fence. The gate is usually locked; a lucky coincidence is needed to find it open and a volunteer gardener at work. The monument, however, is easily visible from Flatbush Avenue.

The sculptor Scott Pfaffman is a resident of Brooklyn. Made under the auspices of the Public Art Fund, the Ives statues stood in Bryant Park, behind the New York Public Library, in 1983-84. They were shown in the Queens Museum in 1985. The New York City Operation GreenThumb selected Pfaffman in 1988 to participate in the project "Artists in the Gardens." He chose the Ives monument for placement in Bear's Community Garden. Exposed to the weather for the last five years, the wood has suffered in several places. Restoration and preservation would be a worthy task for Ives fans.

## THE MECHANICS OF MUSIC

In 1790, George Washington signed the "Act to Promote the Progress of Useful Arts," a law that recognized and protected new inventions in the United States. Each petitioner needed to demonstrate novelty and utility in clear language and to submit a drawing (sometimes also a model) to secure a legal claim to the invention. Through the years, many of these "useful arts" related to music, especially musical instruments.

Thanks to the work of Jean M. Bonin in *Piano-Beds & Music by Steam: An Index with Abstracts to Music-Related United States Patent Records, 1790-1874* (Fallen Leaf Press, 1993; \$69.50), abstracts of U.S. music patents are conveniently available in one volume. The *Index* is based on 1,100 patents that Bonin culled from the 1874 federal publication *Subject-Matter Index of Patents Issued by the U.S. Patent Office from 1790 to 1873, Inclusive* (reprinted by Arno Press, 1976). Bonin's excellent introduction summarizes the history of major U.S. Patent Laws (1790, 1793, 1836). It also describes the three categories of patents (utility or mechanical, from 1790 onwards; design, beginning in 1842; and trademark in 1870), the status of patent materials following disastrous fires in 1836 and 1877, and the current location of relevant resources (National Archives and an 8-reel microfilm publication by Research Publications of Woodbridge, Connecticut).

The bulk of the book (202 pages) is devoted to entries, listed chronologically, of 1,056 utility patents, followed by thirty-eight design patents and six trademark patents. Each entry includes: 1) the original specification title statements (such as "Melodeon"; or "Pianos, repeating-action for"), 2) Bonin's abstract of the specific contribution (using the patentee's words whenever possible), 3) the name and residence of the inventor-patentee and, where applicable, the name and address of an assignee; followed by 4) the date of the patent award, 5) the officially assigned patent number, and 6) Bonin's sequential number, in brackets. As valuable as the compilation is, the reader should be aware that in the process of abstracting, crucial information is sometimes left out (as in Babcock's 1825 patent for the piano iron frame, Bonin's No. 23) and that the *Index* should be used as a first step, with a check of the entire patent recommended for detailed technical research.

What can we learn from *Piano-Beds & Music by Steam*? Obviously, from the title, we discover that John McDonald of New York invented a combined bed and keyboard instrument in 1869. We can see that the number of patents increased from one in the 1790s to nearly sixty in the 1840s, and over four hundred in the 1860s. Although many patentees came from small towns, not surprisingly the major cities list the most: New York (251), Boston (126), and Philadelphia (64), with New Haven (32) and Brattleboro, Vermont (32, because of Estey reed organs) tied for fourth. Our gratitude to Jean Bonin and Fallen Leaf Press for making available this valuable new resource.

—Cynthia Adams Hoover  
(Smithsonian Institution)



## THE AVANT-GARDE TO THE RESCUE

Since 1992, Composers Recordings, Inc. (CRI)—long a leader in issuing music by American composers—has been producing an exciting new series titled **Emergency Music** as part of an effort to overhaul the company and its image. The brainchild of Joseph R. Dalton, managing director of CRI, Emergency Music has done much to bring the firm out of academic obscurity. Its target is the hip, young community of “downtown” New York artists. In addition to Emergency Music, CRI has also recently launched another series, Exchange: Music at the Crossroads, which aims for diverse cultural expression, and it is simultaneously repackaging and rereleasing its valuable older stock—canonizing it, really—within a new American Masters series.

So far, Emergency Music has leaned toward East Coast figures. Committed performers of avant-garde music are well-represented, with whole discs devoted to the accordionist Guy Klucevsek (CD-626) and the duo-piano team “Double Edge” (Edmund Niemann and Nurit Tilles, CD-637). Other recent additions include *Urban Diva*, with the soprano Dora Ohrenstein (CD-654), which features a daring although sometimes underpowered performance of five works commissioned by her. Also newly released is *Figure 88* (CD-653), on which the pianist Kathleen Supové delivers virtuoso readings of compositions by David Lang and Lukas Foss, among others.

Emergency Music also includes single-composer discs, mostly of music by figures who have made careers outside the academy. Included are Conrad Cummings (CD-627) and Aaron Jay Kernis (CD-635), who offer, respectively, music with a neo-Baroque and neo-Romantic bent. Their works stand in direct contrast to the driving post-minimalist rhythms of Michael Gordon (CD-636), David Lang (CD-625), and Evan Ziporyn (CD-645).

Finally, Emergency Music includes three hefty discs titled *Bang on a Can Live* (CD-628/646/672)—all recorded at New York’s anarchistic new-music festival. They constitute a major document of one of the most celebrated new-music extravaganzas in the country. Featuring the works of some fifteen composers, these releases capture Bang on a Can’s laid-back atmosphere, as well as its fundamental originality. As the critic Mark Swed has put it, they make a listener feel more like “hanging out with music than being trapped by it.”

(For a catalogue of CRI releases, write: Composers Recordings, Inc., 73 Spring Street, Suite 506, New York, NY 10012-5800.)

—Matthew Suttor  
(Center for Computer Music, Brooklyn College)

## CREAM OF THE CROP

Just when I was beginning to believe we had more anthologies about Cage than we needed (and said so recently in these pages), along comes *Writings about John Cage* (University of Michigan Press, 1993; \$59.50). Compiled and edited by Richard Kostelanetz, it is the most intelligently chosen book of writings about Cage that I’ve seen—and I’m tempted to say “including Cage’s own.” There is absolutely no fluff here, or drivel, or padding.

Kostelanetz is a practiced and gifted anthologist, with the discriminating eye of a litterateur, the sensibility of a poet, and the ear of a musician. And his ordering of these forty-seven disparate pieces about Cage has the split-second timing, if you will, of a radio star—such as Bob Edwards of National Public Radio’s “Morning Edition.” (My analogy is not wholly wacky: Kostelanetz has long been a scholar of radio—one of the few worthy of the name.) I’m thinking primarily of the sequence, the succession, of essays. For example, there are three in a row on Cage as something other than musician: an evocative essay by Ellsworth Snyder on Gertrude Stein and Cage the writer; “We Have Eyes as Well as Ears...” by Anne d’Harnoncourt, on Cage as someone who revealed to us “the profusion of graphic invention in experimental music”; and Kostelanetz’s own piece on “The Development of [Cage’s] Visual Art.” Or, for another example, the balancing of John Hollander’s surprisingly critical review of Cage’s *Silence* (1962) with two appreciative essays by Calvin Tomkins and Roger Maren on *A Year from Monday* (1967).

These connections are only implicit. Kostelanetz doesn’t impose topic headings or sectional boundaries; he leaves everything open, in a Cagey way. How we read the anthology is up to us. Want to know what major composer/authors have said about Cage? Turn to the Table of Contents and find, scattered here and there, Bowles, Cowell, Glanville-Hicks, Harrison, Tenney,

Opening excerpt from *Orpheus Over and Under* by David Lang, recorded as part of the Emergency Music Series (CRI CD-625). Reprinted with permission, Red Poppy, 87 Robinson Avenue, Glen Cove, NY 11547.

Thomson, and Wolff. Critics’ views? There are Jill Johnston, Edward Rothstein, Daniel Charles, Hans Helms, Peter Yates, and others. Polyartists make appearances now and then: William Brooks, Michael Nyman, Joseph Byrd, Eric Salzman. But, no matter how we read *Writings on Cage*, we learn—from intelligent and serious teachers whose writings are worth the effort.

—H.W.H.

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

The CD revolution of the last decade has meant a boom in the reissue of historical recordings, especially of classical music and jazz, in which large multi-disc sets have become almost commonplace. An especially impressive standard has been set by the mail-order jazz label Mosaic, which for some time has reissued sets containing the complete recorded works of artists on a particular label. An initial question faced by Mosaic must have been whether or not jazz fans would be willing to spend \$100 or more for a group of well-done CDs derived from original master tapes and presented with good annotations, discographies, and historic photos. The answer certainly seems to be "yes," and today most serious record stores have an entire section for such reissues.

With country music, however, the major labels have yet to take the reissue trend seriously. Recent sets by RCA Victor (BMG) of major figures like Eddy Arnold, Chet Atkins, and Dolly Parton have been disappointing: sloppy production, shoddy booklets, indifferent programming. Only the Patsy Cline discs done on MCA (and produced by the Country Music Foundation) can be compared to the standards set by Mosaic or the CBS/Sony Legacy series. At present, the only company that seems interested in treating country reissues seriously is a remarkable label from Bremen, Germany with the unlikely name of "Bear Family." Under the guidance of its owner, Richard Weize, the firm is doing for vintage country music what Mosaic achieves for jazz: leasing important masters and presenting them in comprehensive sets that constitute definitive portraits of most of the major country performers.

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At present, Bear Family has in print over forty sets, each containing from four to twelve CDs of important country figures. They range from the complete works of pioneer Jimmie Rodgers, the "blue yodeler" whose output dates from 1927 to 1933, to all the RCA recordings of folksinger Jimmie Driftwood. In between there are sets devoted to Johnny Cash, Don Gibson, Lefty Frizzell, Jim Reeves, Marty Robbins, Webb Pierce, Johnny Horton, Hank Snow, Kitty Wells, Chet Atkins, Ernest Tubb, The Louvin Brothers, Johnnie and Jack, Tommy Collins, Wanda Jackson, Porter Wagoner and other lesser lights. Since many of these artists recorded prolifically (at the height of the Nashville studio era in the 1960s, major singers were expected to average three LPs a year), their complete output can number well into the hundreds. To accommodate such bounty, Bear Family has often devoted three or more sets to key artists. They have three Johnny Cash boxes, for instance, which encompass Cash's entire recorded legacy for the years 1954-1962. Hank Snow, the important Canadian-American singer, ran up a discography of over eight-hundred recordings, and these are all chronicled by Bear Family. The influential Texas honky-tonk singer Ernest Tubb, whose issues from the 1940s and 1950s have been shamefully ignored by domestic labels, is similarly represented by his complete recorded output from 1947 to 1960.

When Bear Family was formally launched in 1975, it emphasized "classic" country music of the 1950s—the music that had been most neglected by other reissue projects. Gradually, the emphasis broadened. After some doubt as to whether bluegrass fans would support costly sets, for example, Weize tried one for Bill Monroe's recordings from the 1950s, and he was pleased with the result. This led to further Monroe rereleases (there are three now, encompassing all his Decca-MCA sides from 1950 to the end of the 1970s), as well as comprehensive packages for Flatt and Scruggs, Jim and Jesse, Hylo Brown, The Stanley Brothers, and others.

### §

A typical Bear Family package includes the CDs themselves, remastered digitally from original tapes. But equally important to historians and fans are the booklets. They contain detailed song notes and biographies, often drawn from first-hand interviews with the artists, and their 12-by-12 format makes it possible to reproduce historic photos impressively. Bear Family goes to considerable lengths to find such photos—sometimes to the point of delaying an entire package until a specific shot can be located. The Jimmie Rodgers set, for instance, contains rare images from the Rodgers family—some never before seen, in spite of years of research into Rodgers and his music.

Equally important are the accompanying detailed discographies. Since country music has no comprehensive discography like jazz or blues, these listings for individual artists represent a valuable database. They have been compiled from record company files, interviews with sidemen and producers, and exhaustive searches of union records and contracts. They include a session-by-session list of songs, complete personnel, composer credits, master numbers, and release numbers.

In sum, the Bear Family books reflect some of the best—if not *the* best—state-of-the-art research on country music today. Many of the authors are acknowledged experts in their field. For example, Nolan Porterfield, Rodgers's biographer, annotated the Rodgers box; Ronnie Pugh, currently at work on a Tubb biography, handled the Tubb notes; and Neil Rosenberg, author of *Bluegrass: A History*, chronicled the Flatt and Scruggs sets. Although the discs are produced for a European market, some are available through importers in the U.S. and in major stores such as Tower Records. The sets are expensive (a four-CD set with booklet runs approximately \$85), yet they should be in all major research libraries, as well as in the hands of serious students of American music.

(For a complete catalogue and information about Bear Family Records, write: P.O. Box 1154, D-27727 Hambergen, Germany; for selected imports, write: County Sales, Box 191, Floyd VA 24091.)

## CALYPSO—FROM TRINIDAD TO NEW YORK

As something more than a casual fan of calypso, with a taste for recordings by such colorful figures as Lord Invader, King Radio, and Attila the Hun, I've been waiting for a comprehensive history of this fascinating music. Scattered writings about calypso by John Cowley, Errol Hill, Keith Warner, and a handful of others have appeared in popular and scholarly journals over the past thirty years. But Don Hill's *Calypso Calaloo* (University Press of Florida, 1993; \$49.95) is the first book on the subject, and I am pleased to announce that his extended labors are well worth the wait.

Despite its subtitle, "Early Carnival Music in Trinidad," Don Hill's attractive volume holds much for scholars and fans of North American music. New York City, Miami, and Washington D.C. are home to several million residents whose Caribbean heritage has helped to shape the greater urban culture, cuisine, and music. Most moved northward from Cuba, Haiti, and Puerto Rico, but a sizable number of West Indians emigrated from the small island of Trinidad, which lies off the coast of Venezuela. Other more recent forms of Caribbean music—specifically reggae and soca—may be familiar to most people in the United States, but calypso first came to our attention before World War II.

Hill, in fact, devotes two chapters to the widespread dissemination of calypso in North America, which began in New York City with the 1939 engagement of Gerald Clark and his Caribbean Serenaders at the Village Vanguard. Clark opened the door for Duke of Iron, MacBeth the Great, and Sir Lancelot, all of whom performed in New York City and elsewhere throughout the 1940s. Thus began an era when Calypso artists recorded for American audiences, appeared in Hollywood feature films, and even broadcast their topical songs back to Trinidad.

Most of *Calypso Calaloo*, however, is devoted to the cultural history of this music in Trinidad. Beginning with "A Historical Sketch of Trinidad," Hill traces the development of calypso from its roots in the streets and the "yards" (courtyards in crowded cities such as Port of Spain, where stick fighting and various carnival activities took place) to contemporary government-operated "tents" that are popular during carnival season. It is a complicated, fascinating story about a performance art intrinsically linked to the politics and social development of this small nation, and it reaches from the turn of the century into the 1950s, when steel drum bands began to displace the classic calypsonians.

In addition, the book includes a lengthy appendix that discusses the texts of calypso songs, and a disappointingly short "Annotated Discography of Calypso Recordings." It is unfortunate that more material is not currently available on CD or cassette, but a more extensive discography from the teens to the present could have been included. Perhaps the handiest feature of

*Calypso Calaloo* is the glossary of terms, which I found myself using repeatedly. Finally, don't be put off by the high cost of the book; it includes a CD (packaged in a back sleeve), which serves as a solid introduction to the music.

—Kip Lornell  
(Smithsonian Institution)

## NEWS AND INFORMATION

Colloquia, concerts, and conferences galore, covering a wide range of topics in American music, are planned. Following are announcements of some that have been brought to our attention:

**Still Centenary.** The Department of Music of the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Arkansas plans a *William Grant Still Centennial Week: Concerts, Symposium, and Exhibit* for 8-12 March 1995. Proposals (maximum of 500 words) and an abstract (maximum of 100 words; submit six copies of each) for papers, lecture-recitals, and performances should be sent by 1 October 1994 to Gayle Murchison, Still Centennial Week Chair, MB 201, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701. Phone: (501) 575-3325.

**Sonneck in the Dairy State.** Proposals for the Sonneck Society's twenty-first national conference—scheduled for 6-9 April 1995 at the University of Wisconsin, Madison—should be submitted by 1 October to: Ron Pen, Program Chair, 7601 Grimes Mill Road, Lexington, KY 40515. For both papers and performances, submit 5 copies of a proposal (maximum 500 words) and 5 copies of an abstract (maximum 100 words). Performers should also send 5 copies of an audio cassette tape.

**Jazz Migrations.** On 7-9 April 1995, the Department of Music of the University of Missouri-Columbia will sponsor a conference titled *Jazz & the Germans: The Influence of "Hot" American Idioms in the Land of Bach & Beethoven*. The event will address the flow of American and African-American musical ideas to Central Europe during the twentieth century. Proposals (no more than 2 double-spaced pages) for papers, demonstrations, and performances should be received by 21 November 1994 by: Michael J. Budds, Program Chair, Department of Music, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211. Phone: (314) 882-0927.

**Ives and the Brooklyn Philharmonic.** On 11-13 November 1994, the Brooklyn Philharmonic plans a weekend festival, *American Transcendentalists*, to be conducted by John Adams. Including both lectures and performances, its focus will be on the relationship of New England Transcendentalists—especially Emerson and Thoreau—to music. The works performed will include Adams's *The Wound Dresser* (with text by Whitman), as well as Ives's *Three Places in New England* and *The Unanswered Question*.



## THE CRISIS OF COMPOSERS (continued from page one)

Cautiously but urgently, Schlesinger portrays pluralism as a positive force, and he fears that it is being undermined by a destabilizing populist threat. The way in which he expands his polemic is revealing. Schlesinger discusses Soviet prohibitions of free expression and the resulting repression of modernist artists—figures who, to Schlesinger, “reflect and incite anxieties which are incompatible with the monolithic character of the Soviet person.” His notion of pluralism was shared with a powerful group of Cold War intellectuals. Distinct from its commune-with-the-people connotations of the depression and war years, by the 1950s pluralism often stood for freedom of expression, especially when counterposed with Soviet intolerance of the day.

The perspective of Cornel West, in an essay published in *Keeping Faith*, a post-Iron-Curtain anthology of 1993, shifts the debate remarkably. West describes a new, subversive politics of difference, focused not on conservation of some cherished ideal but rather on “trashing” all “monolithic” cultural expression, whether emanating from above or below:

Distinctive features of the new cultural politics of difference are to trash the monolithic and homogeneous in the name of diversity, multiplicity and heterogeneity; to reject the abstract, general and universal in light of the concrete, specific and particular; and to historicize, contextualize and pluralize by highlighting the contingent, provisional, variable, tentative, shifting, and changing.

Schlesinger’s *pluralism*, West’s *difference*. Numerous repercussions ensue from this shift. I will comment briefly on only one. Within Schlesinger’s brand of pluralism, the exemplary cultural worker in music is the modernist (or avant-garde, or elite) composer—an autonomous artist who embodies individual expression. By contrast, within West’s advocacy of difference, the paradigm for a cultural worker in music becomes the ethnomusicologist—no longer a singular creator (who may

represent to West an anachronistic nostalgia for European cultural models) but rather an anthropologist of music, who is an exemplary witness and documenter of cultural traits. I believe that the decline of the university composer is, at least in part, a reflection of this shift.

Since the waning of the university composer is a complex phenomenon—far more so than these schematic connections suggest—why bother to speculate about its sources when its effect is so painful? Why throw salt on the wound? My reason is this: Academic composers who seek to perpetuate elements of the modernist tradition, yet at the same time endorse a cultural politics of difference such as West’s, need to acknowledge that the foundation of our particular subculture has shifted. Composers, then, need no longer see their work as continuing a singular, great European tradition, and they must not expect the academy to support such a project. At the same time, however, a greater effort is needed on the part of their colleagues in music theory, musicology, and ethnomusicology to acknowledge the deep involvement of composers in shaping the American musical environment.

Imagine, for example, that the kinds of innovative critical methods that have reinvigorated musicology and stimulated fresh interpretations of the European tradition were applied to contemporary American music; or that distinguished ethnomusicologists turned their attention to recent art music in this country; or that such serious, open-minded scholarly consideration of contemporary music “trickled down” to journalistic criticism. And so forth and so on. My point is simple for composers and their scholarly colleagues to comprehend but difficult to set in motion. The academic community has a good deal more to offer composers than employment, and the diversification of disciplinary specialties may benefit young composers if scholars will begin to take the work of their colleagues seriously. The need for interchange within the subdisciplines of music is becoming increasingly more urgent.

In any event, I believe academic composers must start examining what we mean by “diversity.” Only by acknowledging the anachronism of long-held models of cultural pluralism can we regenerate or reimagine *gemeinschaft*—or, at the very least, impede the current trajectory toward greater professional marginalization and even extinction.

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#### Works Cited

Arthur Schlesinger. Untitled contribution to “Our Country and Our Culture, Part III.” *Partisan Review* 19, no. 5 (1952): 590-93.

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Editor: Carol J. Oja

Associate Editor: Ray Allen

Contributing Editors: H. Wiley Hitchcock, K. Robert Schwarz, and Mark Tucker

Typesetter (via Aldus PageMaker): John Link

Computer Consultant: David Latulippe

Production Assistants: Kathleen Mason Krotman, Kevin Parks, and Jeffrey Taylor

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Tel: 718/951-5655 Fax: 718/951-4858

**Institute for Studies in American Music**  
Conservatory of Music  
Brooklyn College  
Brooklyn, NY 11210

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