

NEWSLETTER

INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN AMERICAN MUSIC

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

Volume XXV, Number 2

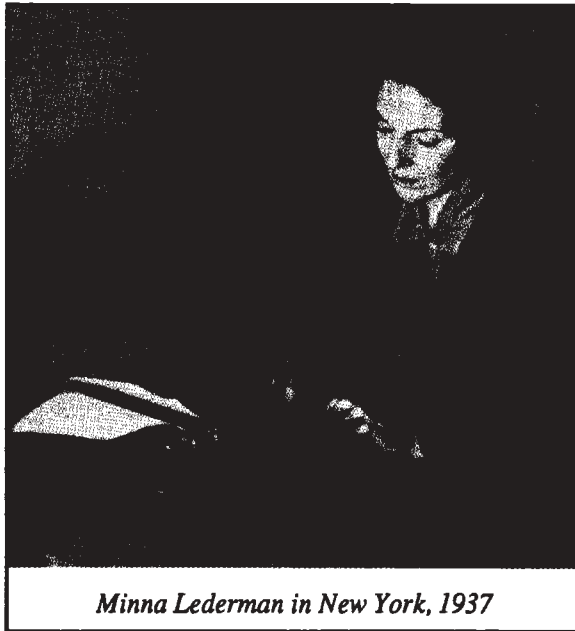
Spring 1996

THE MOTHER OF THEM ALL: REMEMBERING MINNA LEDERMAN by Carol J. Oja

Minna Lederman, editor of *Modern Music*, the influential "little magazine" published by the League of Composers from 1924 to 1946, died last fall in New York City after an uncommonly long and distinguished life. Lederman nurtured several generations of American composers into adulthood, helping them find a voice as writers and giving them the skills needed to promote the modernist cause in New York. Her impact at the helm of "The Magazine," as she liked to call her journal, was epoch-defining. With a keen nose for news, a brilliant capacity for discovering young talent, and an abiding determination to place American modernism within an international context, Lederman became a kind of Maxwell Perkins to twentieth-century American composers. Never ideologically doctrinaire, she supported Aaron Copland as vigorously as John Cage, Lou Harrison as much as Elliott Carter.

A self-proclaimed "child of Manhattan," Lederman was born into a family of comfortable means in 1896. Her parents were both Jewish immigrants, although "wildly atheist" according to their daughter. Her father came from the eastern border of Austria and had a successful career first with the Lilly Pharmaceutical Company, later in real estate. Her mother was from Riga, Latvia. They spoke German in their New York home and gave abundant opportunities to their only daughter. Lederman studied piano at the Institute of Musical Arts (later The Juilliard School) and set off for Vassar College, aiming toward a career in dance. She stayed one year—later dismissing the experience as "boring"—and transferred to Barnard College, graduating in 1917. Soon she turned to journalism, getting a job as reporter on the *Evening Mail*. There she developed a respect for the power of the press, learning the importance of "promotion" in advancing any idea or cause ("promotion" became one of her favorite words). In 1921 Lederman moved on to a job as publicist for the newly formed International Composers' Guild. There she joined with another gifted and assertive woman, Claire Raphael Reis, in organizing the modernist composers' movement in New York.

She and Reis were among the splinter group that left the Guild in 1923 to form the League of Composers—one of the most illustrious breaches in the history of American music—and together they played a crucial role in establishing new music in America. One year after the League was founded, Lederman launched the magazine that made her famous. All this work was done behind-the-scenes and as a volunteer, following the unwritten rules for women of her generation and class. Her parents even provided a free room in their apartment for the office of *Modern Music*.



Minna Lederman in New York, 1937

Lederman outlived most of the composers and writers who honed their writing skills under her guidance, but they gave considerable testimony to her talent. Virgil Thomson's tribute, published in the *New York Herald Tribune* on 12 January 1947, just weeks after *Modern Music* folded, is the most generous. I quote him in part:

In the atmosphere of sharp esthetic controversy that pervaded the magazine and with its constant confrontation of authoritative statement and analysis (for there is practically no living composer of any

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MINNA LEDERMAN (*continued*)

prestige at all whose works have not been discussed in it and who has not written for it himself) wits became more keen and critical powers came to maturity. It is not the least of many debts that America owes Minna Lederman that she discovered, formed and basically trained such distinguished contributors to musical letters as Edwin Denby, Aaron Copland, Roger Sessions, Theodore Chanler, Paul Bowles, Marc Blitzstein, Samuel Barlow, Henry Cowell, Colin McPhee, Arthur Berger and Lou Harrison. My own debt to her is enormous. Her magazine was a forum of all the most distinguished world figures of creation and of criticism; and the unknown bright young were given their right to speak up among these, trained to do so without stammering and without fear.

Another perspective on Lederman's special editorial touch came from the poet and dance critic Edwin Denby, who declared her "an impeccable trainer." Denby's reactions to Lederman are summarized by Robert Cornfield and William MacKay in their introduction to *Edwin Denby: Dance Writings* (1986):

'I was a writer; I never supposed readers,' [said Denby]. Others offered vague praise; . . . Minna edited, interrogating every phrase, plucking out poetic gauze with blue pencil or question. 'At first,' Edwin joked, 'it seemed very impolite: she insisted on understanding.' Their marathon sessions could be painful. . . . But Minna's gentleness matched her persistence, and she shared Edwin's concern with blending sound with sense. 'Gradually, I learned,' he said. 'Consonants are part of it, and vowels are part of it, ways of saying what you finally wanted said, not obtrusively, but with some general meaning. . . . Minna made me intelligible.'

Denby's penultimate comments are especially interesting, for in later years Lederman often marveled at how his pristine sentences were uncluttered by internal punctuation. She continued to relish a technical detail that once preoccupied them both.

Testimonies to Lederman the editor are far more frequent, however, than to Lederman the writer. But she deserves credit for a lifetime of vivid articles, mostly about contemporary composers and dance. When *Modern Music* first began, she remained in the background, taking a polite, perhaps even proper, pose of nurturing editor. But by the magazine's second decade she increasingly asserted herself as author and continued to do so in other publications after *Modern Music* ended. Most of these articles focused on personalities—Marc Blitzstein, Igor Stravinsky, Aaron Copland, to name a few—and most unfolded with colorful description, using prose packed with volatile images. Her special gift lay in analyzing creative and personal character, also in storytelling. With her 1983 book, *The Life and Death of a Small Magazine*, Lederman finally put her own story forward, although it was the story of her work on *Modern Music* rather than of her personal achievements. In the last several years of her life she had been writing a book provisionally titled *Then and Now* that was to include essays about composers and artists who had crossed her path.



Scholars rarely share a friendship with key figures in the historical periods they explore, but I had that privilege with Minna Lederman. As a graduate student, I first encountered her name while leafing through *Modern Music* and noted with surprise and pleasure that a woman had been at the helm of such an important publication. Then in January 1978, while writing about the Copland-Sessions Concerts, I met her for the first time. I started my research by interviewing Aaron Copland, who sent me immediately to Minna. "She remembers everything," he said. And he was right. A few days later I found myself ringing the buzzer at Apartment 18-O of a highrise on 47th Street, across from the U.N., where Minna had recently moved after the unexpected death of her husband Mell Daniel. She generously shared with me impressive details about individual concerts in the Copland-Sessions series, especially one in Paris in 1929, which she attended while touring Europe with her mother. She and I connected immediately, and as the years passed she assumed different roles with me, depending on her mood or the issue of the moment: mentor, staunch supporter, scathing critic. At her urging, in 1983 I published *Stravinsky in "Modern Music,"* a compilation of articles from her magazine that charts the reception of Stravinsky's music in America, and it was she who suggested that Copland write an introduction to the volume. Looking back, I realize that she imagined this book as a counterpart to her own anthology, *Stravinsky in the Theatre* (1949).

Dinners at Minna's apartment became regular events for me, and they always seemed aglitter with sparkling objects, from gold hors d'oeuvres plates to spangly evening necklaces to the glimmer of lights across the East River. She often beckoned me to drink sherry from "Aaron's glass" and while perched in her spare Art Deco chairs regaled me with stories about the golden days of American modernism. These gatherings often involved one or more of the various folks with whom she constructed a family. Given her tendency toward imperious behavior, the roster was by no means stable. In the years I knew her, it began with Copland's longtime secretary David Walker, the musicologist Vivian Perlis, the composer and writer David Schiff, and the scholar R. Allen Lott, who worked closely with her on *Life and Death of a Small Magazine* and played an enormous role in bringing the book to completion. As the years passed she added theater director Tazewell Thompson, record producer Karl Hereim, Cage scholar Laura Kuhn, and Virgil Thomson's last secretary, Jay Sullivan, among others. These people, in varying degrees, became her surrogate children. At the same time a group of illustrious composers, writers, and painters was central to her world, including John Ashberry, John Cage, Elliott Carter, Aaron Copland, Merce Cunningham, Elaine and Willem De Kooning, Edwin Denby, and Jasper Johns.

Through it all Minna fought stubbornly to remain current: to know the most recent art and music and to defy the natural
(*continued on page 14*)

I.S.A.M. MATTERS

Cowell Centennial Conference. Thanks to grants from the New York State Council for the Humanities and the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, I.S.A.M. will be presenting a conference on 14-15 March 1997 celebrating the centennial of Henry Cowell's birth. A diverse and distinguished group of scholars, composers, performers, and music industry representatives will gather in New York City to explore Cowell's visionary innovations and the ongoing impact of his work. The conference will be accompanied by an exhibit of materials from the Cowell Collection at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts—a major cache of archival materials that has never before been viewed by the public. A concert of Cowell's music by CONTINUUM will take place at NYPL and another by Musicians' Accord and Essential Music will be heard at The New School. Other concerts are also being planned.

CUNY Budget Chaos. Last spring in these pages we outlined the threat posed by New York governor George Pataki's proposed cuts to the CUNY budget. The result then was an overall loss to Brooklyn College of \$8.2 million and 110 positions, and this painful saga continues. Even more draconian cuts are proposed for 1996-97, translating into a potential \$10.8 million decrease (15% of Brooklyn College's remaining budget). In these uncertain times, with a state of financial exigency declared at CUNY and retrenchment committees in place, I.S.A.M.'s future is once again threatened. We ask all our New York State readers to write the governor and their state legislators demanding restoration of CUNY funding. Make sure you, your family, your friends, and your students are registered to vote in the fall election. We must remind our elected officials that public education is not a handout, but rather a pillar of a democratic society.

The traditional roots of contemporary Caribbean jazz were explored in *Caribbean Jazz '96*, a workshop/concert series co-produced by I.S.A.M. and the World Music Institute and funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. On 9 March, Brooklyn-based guitarist and arranger Dernst Emile led an eight-piece "vodou jazz" ensemble that blended traditional Haitian melodies and rhythms with contemporary jazz improvisations. Two weeks later West Indian steel pan virtuoso Rudy Smith teamed up with the renowned pianist George Cables for a program of calypso-tinged modern jazz. The final concert on 18 May with Jerry Gonzalez and the Fort Apache Band featured innovative saxophone and trumpet work over a hot Afro-Cuban rhythm section. The concerts were attended by enthusiastic audiences, including students and members of Brooklyn's Haitian, West Indian, and Latino communities.

Publication of this issue of the *I.S.A.M. Newsletter* is made possible in part by a grant from the Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Inc. We are grateful for this support.

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REFLECTIONS ON COMPOSING BLACK by *Dwight Andrews*

Following are excerpts from opening remarks delivered at *Composing Black*, an I.S.A.M. conference in November 1995 marking the centennial of William Grant Still's birth. Andrews is professor of music at Emory University and composer of scores for theatrical works by August Wilson, including *The Piano Player* and *Seven Guitars*.

Several important questions come to mind with a conference titled *Composing Black*. The most obvious is: What does "composing black" mean? It implies its counterpart, "composing white." But where the latter sounds absurd and meaningless, the former resonates with composers, critics, and listeners alike. Is there something different for an African American in the act of composing? Many of us have validated such a concept by assuming that one will or should hear something black in the compositions of black composers, and some African-American composers have elected to incorporate in their work features specific to black culture. Is this simply a personal aesthetic issue, or are there cultural aspects involved? What are the racial implications? These are but a few of the questions to be considered today.

As we celebrate the centennial of William Grant Still's birth, it seems appropriate to revisit the point at which race meets composition in American society. A prolific composer and provocative essayist, Still came from a generation of creative artists who attempted to reconstitute African-American folk culture through art, aiming to project the "New Negro" onto a world stage. Like W.E.B. Du Bois, Still struggled with the meaning of the folk past. His true calling, as he once put it, was "to elevate Negro musical idioms to a position of dignity and effectiveness in the fields of symphonic and operatic music."¹ The "double-consciousness" that Du Bois pinpointed in *The Souls of Black Folk* surely played itself out in the musical works of Still and his contemporaries, and it defined the difficult issues they faced. On the one hand they were encouraged to draw on their African-American roots, but on the other they felt compelled to do so in a way that would be intelligible and acceptable to a white concert-going public. Du Bois's double-consciousness appeared to be more like a double bind.

This situation becomes clearer when we consider the complicated history of African-American folk music. The slave songs of the nineteenth century first came to the attention of the general public through traveling black college groups such as the Fisk Jubilee Singers and the Hampton Institute Singers. The songs they performed were Europeanized arrangements, fashioned with an eye toward the new audiences they sought to impress. These formal musical settings contributed to a persistent confu-

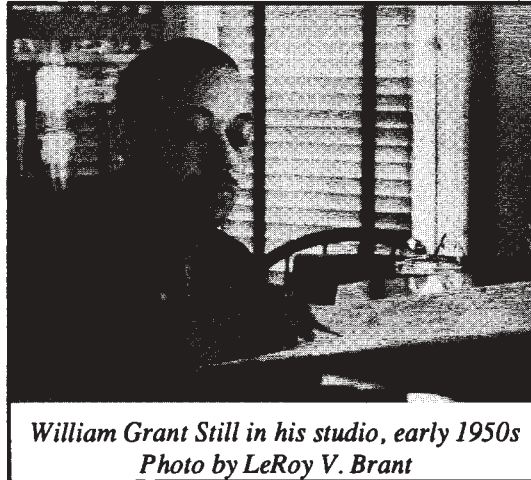
sion over the very nature of African-American slave song traditions. They served both as propaganda and proof that former slaves were fully capable of performing in the European art music tradition. But simultaneously they also represented an acknowledgment that this music was in need of arrangement; in other words, it needed fixing.

These early presentations of African-American folk materials set the stage for H.T. Burleigh, J. Rosamond Johnson, R. Nathaniel Dett, and others, who turned to folk repertoires not only as source materials but also as an opportunity to elevate what some perceived as raw or crude musical traits to a standard acceptable to both white audiences and to the changing sensibilities of a nascent black middle class. This generation of composers sought to reconstruct the past in light of a promising present and future. Yet their efforts should not be construed as apologetic. Rather, they revealed optimistic hope that the unique pathos and power of black folk culture would serve as the wellspring for great art when placed in the hands of gifted, classically trained black composers.

In the midst of this optimism there were also strong calls for corrective criticism and for a careful assessment of African-American traditions. Alain Locke, among many others, maintained specific notions about what would ultimately constitute great black musical art. In an essay titled *Toward a Critique*

of Negro Music (1934), Locke suggested that "our [African-American] creativeness and originality on the folk level has not been matched on the level of instrumental mastery or that of creative composition. . . . With a few exceptions, the masters of Negro musical idioms so far are not Negro."² Ironically, Locke thought the most creative uses of Negro materials had been achieved by white composers such as Carpenter, Copland, Dvorak, Gershwin, and Whiteman. His aesthetic model was essentially a European one, and he tacitly accepted a classical model for himself and his race. Equally ironic, neither Locke nor many of his peers saw jazz as the answer. He regarded Still as "the white hope of the formal musicians," yet Locke was also cautious: "There are dangers in self-conscious academic racialism: it is no more desirable than self-conscious nationalism, of which we in America have also had too much."

And now to "Composing Black." In writing art music, does "composing black" mean that vernacular forms must be incorporated? To what extent are African-American composers tied to their ethnic heritage? To what extent are any composers obligated to include aspects of their culture beyond what they *elect* to include? Obviously these are political as well as artistic issues. We do not, for example, require someone from Great Britain to explicitly state their "Britishness" in their composi-



William Grant Still in his studio, early 1950s
Photo by LeRoy V. Brant

tions. Yet the same is not true for African-American composers—not even in the waning years of the twentieth century. Voicing his frustration at this double standard, composer Hale Smith rejects racial classifications and reminds us of the implications of the labels that go with them: “We *must* be a part of the mainstream in this country or all of the black programs are a sham. . . . We don’t even have to be called black. When we stand for our bows, that fact will become clear when it should—*after* the work has made its own impact.”³ In other words, he knows who he is but sees no value in placing any labels on his compositions.

One of the damnable aspects of racism is how it limits our expectations of both art and artist. While many composers from the so-called majority culture choose not to express their ethnicity, it is often difficult for their African-American colleagues to transcend their color. Increasing numbers of African Americans receive conservatory training both here and abroad, and they are as entitled to Western European traditions as any of their non-African-American counterparts. But too often they are regarded first and foremost as blacks. Ultimately, any art form is trivialized by categories such as black or white, which can, at best, be only a description of the artist and not the art. Culturally it means many things rather than one to be an African American. Moreover, there is unlimited variety in how composers choose to use that background. It is neither race nor a single aesthetic viewpoint that binds all African-American composers together: rather it is racism that provides the link, whether they acknowledge it or not.

However, since being black or white—or male or female—continues to have meaning in American society, one can counter that the concept of “composing black” still has relevance. These markers partly determine one’s access to education, housing, economic security, and the very experiences that help shape artistic potential. They continue to affect access to professional instrumental ensembles and to funding from organizations such as the National Endowment for the Arts. In addition, many artistic directors of major American orchestras only program works by African Americans during Black History Month. And all too often, if African Americans have both a jazz and classical background, they will be seen as primarily jazz musicians because of the narrow expectations that derive from racial stereotypes. As I have suggested, such stereotypes bear little relation to the actual work being produced by today’s eclectic generation of artists. Yet they often do define the circumstances in which many of our most gifted composers continue to work.

As listeners, composers, scholars, and players, we must liberate ourselves from such limiting notions of ethnicity and race. Composers have been borrowing from other cultures for centuries. To our great benefit, many have refused to be inhibited by geographic borders, and, in so doing, few have lost the integrity of their individual expression. Stravinsky remained Stravinsky
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A PORTRAIT BY VIRGIL THOMSON: Report by the Sitter

I saw Virgil Thomson often during his last years, and regularly every summer, when I was in Florence and he came to nearby Montecatini Terme for a few weeks, to take the baths, drink the water, and lose some weight. (He claimed their salutary effect held him through the "silly season"—Christmas and New Year's.) We had lunches or dinners together; I remember two memorable ones, one at his very grand and tranquil hotel—in fact called the Hotel Grand e la Pace—when he introduced me to Betty Freeman, the other when my wife and I took him to Da Delfina in the hill town of Artimino, overlooking a great sixteenth-century Medici villa, and he brought along David and Karen Waltuck, just beginning their rise to fame as chef and hostess of the restaurant Chanterelle in SoHo. And often, when Virgil's stay at Montecatini ended, I drove him to the airport at Pisa, to catch a plane for London or wherever he was headed next.

During one of those drives, in the summer of 1986, Virgil murmured, "I'd like to do your portrait." Nothing could have surprised or pleased me more. To join such earlier sitters as Picasso, Gertrude Stein, Paul Bowles, Dorothy Thompson, Lou Harrison, Dennis Russell Davies!

Those were the last frantic days of AmeriGrove's preparation. I happened to tell Susan Feder, linchpin of the dictionary's editorial overseers, about Virgil's offer. "Wonderful!" she said. "Let's get him to do it right away and have it premiered at the AmeriGrove launch party in November." Some Macmillan executive urged the idea on Virgil, who—a famously practical man—struck a deal: OK, a portrait of Hitchcock in return for a free set of the four-volume dictionary and a featured appearance at its launch party.

Back in New York that fall, he called me, and we made a date to meet in his apartment in the Chelsea Hotel on a Saturday afternoon. I arrived on the dot at 2:00 and rang . . . and rang . . . and rang. Finally the door opened. There was Virgil, in a bathrobe, looking exceedingly sleepy. "Oh, damn," he said. "My secretary is off today, and I didn't notice our date in my book, and I took a nap, and I can't possibly work just now. But come in and we'll have a chat." We did—but no portrait.

On a spring day about a year and a half later, Virgil called again about a portrait date, to my surprise (I thought he'd forgotten all about the matter), and we made another appointment. No bathrobe this time, but a similar invitation to sit down in the living room and chat. We must have chatted for a good half hour—I was beginning to think he had forgotten why I was there—when suddenly he said, "Well, let's get to work. Come on." He led me to the dining room. There on his long, plain dining table was a sheaf of blank music paper, a jar full of sharp

pencils, an eraser or two. He beckoned me to a chair and sat down opposite me, inquiring if I had anything to read. Yes, I did: bound galleys of Tim and Vanessa Page's book of selected letters of Virgil Thomson. And he went to work, with total immersion in the task, never looking up at me or at anything else except the music paper, occasionally erasing and rewriting, totally silent.

About forty-five minutes later he paused and asked, "Are you getting tired?" No, I wasn't. Back to work he went. After about another hour, he gave a little cry of pleasure. "Look at this! The end of the page . . . and the end of the piece! Here, you can look at it—but you can't ask me any questions about it. And excuse me, I have to pee."

What I looked at was a one-page, untitled piece of piano music, basically in two-voice contrapuntal texture but with some octaves, a key signature of G major, no tempo indication but the warnings "senza espressione" and "senza pedale." My portrait!

A few days later a package came, addressed, as was Virgil's practice, to "H. Wiley Hitchcock, Esquire." It bore the manuscript—now titled—and a note dated 1 June 1988: "Dear Wiley, This is the original made on May 28. It has been tampered with a little,

such as making the notes larger than mere dots and the adding of lots of slurs and other dots. It has also been sprayed with fixative so that it will not smear. I hope you like it. I enjoyed doing it. Happy times in Europe. Yours, Virgil."

I responded with my own note. "Dear Virgil: I'm pleased and proud to have been a subject for a portrait. The MS arrived yesterday. I can't play it yet: it looks simple but isn't, rhythmically. It also looks 100% G-major diatonic—not one accidental on the whole page—but it's surprisingly acrid. I assume you didn't necessarily intend me to identify ♯ with 'Wiley' but I do, and there's nothing you can do about it. Sincerely, Wiley."

Virgil didn't rise to the bait—so cunningly couched, I thought, not as a question but a provocative comment. Nor did I ever learn what sparked the subtitle "Two Birds." Only later did I discover the piece printed as a contribution to a festschrift for me, published as *A Celebration of American Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990) two years later. By then Virgil was gone. My portrait had been his last completed composition.

—H.W.H.

"Wiley Hitchcock: Two Birds" was premiered on 21 November 1988 at Brooklyn College in a performance by Jacquelyn Helin. More recently, it was performed by Kenneth Bowen of the Brooklyn Philharmonic, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (29 and 30 March 1996).

*Excerpt from the manuscript
for "Wiley Hitchcock: Two Birds"*
Reproduced with permission of the Virgil Thomson Foundation, Ltd.

COUNTRY AND GOSPEL NOTES by Charles Wolfe

The last two years have seen a remarkable continuation of the boom in country music books, though the emphasis has shifted somewhat from trade publishers to university presses. In recent months, Vanderbilt and The University of Mississippi have announced new series emphasizing southern music, and both will include new country titles. Other presses such as Duke, Oxford, and Tennessee have made plans to beef up their music catalogues. While there is still no fully academic journal devoted to articles on country music, meetings such as the International Country Music Conference, held annually during Jimmie Rodgers Days in Meridian, Mississippi, are attracting dozens of scholarly papers. This year's presentations range from a musicological analysis of country music to a discussion of the pioneering all-girl string band, The Coon Creek Girls. Thirteen years of such conferences have yielded well over a hundred papers, and ICMC directors Jim Akenson (Tennessee Tech University) and W.K. McNeil (Ozark Folk Center) are preparing a selection of the best ones for publication as a book.

Another sign of the times is a sudden plethora of country encyclopedias, two of which I have been personally involved with on the production end. *Definitive Country* (Berkley/Perigree, 1995; \$40, paper \$20), edited by British rockabilly fan and aspiring songwriter Barry McCloud, contains over 1,200 entries and 1,132 pages, and it lives up to its claim as the largest country encyclopedia to date. *The Comprehensive Country Music Encyclopedia* (Times Books/Random House, 1995; \$25), produced by the editors of *Country Music*, the oldest and most respected of the popular fan magazines, includes some 600 entries. Most are much shorter than those in McCloud, but they are mainly done by the magazine's veteran writers and journalists, who are as knowledgeable as anyone in the field.

Another important reference book, *The Big Book of Country Music* (Penguin, 1995; \$16.95), is the work of a single writer, Richard Carlin. The author of *Classical Music: An Informal Guide* (A Cappella Books, 1992) and the *Worlds of Music* series (Facts on File), Carlin is among the few of these encyclopedia compilers with a broad knowledge of music in general. In his 600-plus entries, he proves more sympathetic to older, more classic country styles and performers. It is refreshing, for instance, to see the great gospel stylist Martha Carson given the same space as Carlene Carter and to see an entry on *This Ole House* composer Stuart Hamblen as extensive as that on Emmylou Harris. Bluegrass banjoists and old-time string bands get their fair share, right next to Travis Tritt, Billy Ray Cyrus, and Reba. Still, with only one author to do the fact-checking, there are bound to be oversights. Artists' names are misspelled throughout (undermining one of the very reasons to consult such a directory) and several odd Freudian slips appear, such as insisting that Charlie Louvin did duets with Melba Moore instead of Melba Montgomery and that Grandpa Jones's theme song is *I'm My Own Grandpa*—when any Grand Ole Opry fan can tell you that it's *Eight More Miles to Louisville*. Opry pioneer Dr. Humphrey Bate is listed as starting in Nashville radio in

1924, a full year before any station existed there. The important early singer and guitarist Henry Whitter is identified as a "pioneering country fiddler" and the author erroneously claims that Arthur Smith made his influential Dixieliners recordings with the McGee Brothers instead of the Delmore Brothers.

Similar flaws, far less understandable, are found in the third edition of *The Harmony Illustrated Encyclopedia of Country Music* (Crown, 1994; \$20). The first edition of this large, heavily illustrated paperback came out in 1977 and was primarily the work of two other British country music enthusiasts, Fred Dellar and Roy Thompson. Thanks to special consultant Doug Green, then oral historian for the Country Music Foundation, the book had a decent amount of historical material. Unfortunately, Green's hand is not part of the new edition, prepared by British journalist Alan Cackett. Though the 700-odd entries include most of the new faces on the scene since 1977, they treat historical figures less well. Cackett has dropped many figures who were there in 1977: honky-tonk pioneer Rex Griffin, the music's first black star DeFord Baily, influential guitarist and session man Norman Blake, important cowboy singer Jack Guthrie, and the man who practically invented the modern Nashville music business, Fred Rose. Topics like "Grand Ole Opry" and "Louisiana Hayride" are also gone. In short, many of the historical and influential figures for whom one would consult an encyclopedia have disappeared. Such is the danger of turning over a project like this to journalists and free-lance writers; one might gain slick, colorful writing but at the expense of perspective and accuracy. Sometimes the trade-off is worth it; here it is not.

I.S.A.M. MATTERS (continued)

The Virgil Thomson Centenary, a handsomely illustrated seventy-page book that accompanied a recent Thomson festival by the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra, is available through I.S.A.M. Edited by Joseph Horowitz, it includes informative essays by Ned Rorem, Anthony Tommasini, Richard Leacock, Jack Larson, and Horowitz. Over the last several years, the BPO has set a high standard for substantial, sumptuously produced volumes. The Thomson book, as well as the BPO's *From the New World* of 1994, can be obtained free with the purchase of any I.S.A.M. monograph or with a contribution of \$25 or more to I.S.A.M.

Congratulations to Cho Won Hang, winner of the 1996 I.S.A.M. Composer Award. His work, *The Cloud*, is scored for flute, violin, piano, and xangu (a Korean percussion instrument). We wish him well as he works toward a Master's degree from the Brooklyn College Conservatory of Music.

KOTO NO TANKYU (Koto Explorations) by Miya Masaoka

Captivated by the serene beauty and stunning originality of music by San Francisco composer Miya Masaoka—especially on her CD Compositions/Improvisations—I.S.A.M. invited her to share some thoughts about her cross-cultural odyssey.

I am a kotoist and composer, simultaneously navigating the varied worlds of gagaku (Japanese court orchestral music), new music, improvisation, and electronic music. Classically trained and holding degrees in both Western and Eastern traditions, I have been informed and inspired by performances with a wide variety of musicians, including Pharoah Sanders, whose music resonates with a sense of spirituality; L. Subramanian, virtuoso Indian violinist; the Cecil Taylor Orchestra, led by the pianist with his brilliant deconstructionist style; saxophonist Francis Wong and bassist Mark Izu, leaders in Asian-American jazz; George Lewis, innovative trombonist, composer, and programmer; Roham de Saram of the Arditti String Quartet, who taught me bowing techniques; and my esteemed gagaku teacher, Suenobu Togi.

Over the years I have moved gradually from playing traditional koto, under my first teacher, Seiko Shimaoka, to developing my own approach to technique and vocabulary. The transition was at first tenuous, and I often feared that Shimaoka would attend one of my concerts of music outside the traditional koto sphere. While she never did so, at one lesson she mentioned that any disobedient students could be expelled from the school and have their costly koto certificates revoked if the teacher so requested. Feeling vaguely guilty, I immediately apologized for any potential problem I might be creating. Yet at the next lesson she spoke proudly of an article she had read about me in the local Japanese newspaper, and over the years she has come to support my efforts.

The koto is a Japanese zither-like instrument with an ancient history. Koto is an abbreviation of "kami no nori koto"—the oracles of the gods. It has deep roots in the spiritual practice of Shintoism and, to a lesser extent, Buddhism. In gagaku and Shintoism the instruments are sacred; they are gods embodying spirits, just as trees, stones, and air do. To pluck the string of a koto is to release its spirit/soul, its sound. In studying koto, the student becomes the koto, as the drummer becomes the drum. ("Become the fourteenth bridge," my teacher used to say.) To lose a sense of self, to become one with the instrument—these are the main ideals.

The koto finds its natural place in gagaku, an ensemble of string, wind, and percussion instruments. Notated gagaku scores date back to the seventh- and eighth-century Tang Dynasty in China,

a vital period when musicians from Persia, India, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and China performed and improvised together. My gagaku teacher, Sensei Togi, traces his lineage through more than one thousand years of Imperial Court musicians. Studying with him was both fascinating and startling. He conducted the orchestra sitting on the floor, his left arm guiding the strings, his right arm the winds, his right leg signaling the taiko (a barrel drum with heads on both ends), and his left leg bringing in the reeds—all four limbs moving in the most graceful method of conducting I have experienced. Nevertheless he wouldn't hesitate to hit my koto or my hand with his baton if I made a mistake.

My odyssey with the koto has led me to break venerable cultural traditions, touching points of controversy musically, aesthetically, and politically, from both inside and outside my culture. In "Playing Other People's Music" (*Sounding Off, Music as Subversion/Resistance/Revolution*, edited by Ron Sakolsky and Fred Wei-Han Ho, Autonomedia and Contributors, 1995), European-American ethnomusicologist and percussionist Royal Hartigan states, "It's disrespectful and wrong to play traditional instruments in a nontraditional context," summarizing an ongoing debate about cultural imperialism and appropriation. Hartigan's position, placed as it is within the context of postcolonialism by a performer of traditional music, has certain justification. But for me, being of Japanese heritage and born in America, biculturalism and transcultural identity have always been basic to my existence; it is this hybridity that engenders and perhaps necessitates a new cultural expression for me.

As a composer concerned with new sounds, contexts, structures, and realities, I have

no choice but to construct my own musical reality. In traditional Japanese music the emphasis is on refinement rather than creativity, emulation of one's teacher rather than developing a personal style. As such, traditional music represents a way of life of a collective people emanating from a particular historic and geographic location. A contemporary composer, however, is required to grapple with both tradition and innovation, Western or otherwise, and the finished work is primarily that of an individual. Musical configurations using collective improvisation by individual performers, such as I have experienced in the Cecil Taylor Orchestra and in performing works of Pauline Oliveros, Christian Wolff, and George Lewis, reduce the singular control of the composer, relegating more responsibility—and hence individuality—to the performer. I have composed a series of ten pieces fusing gagaku with Western instrumentation and have been fortunate in coaxing members of the gagaku ensemble to perform my pieces. Frequently there are sections



Composer and Kotoist Miya Masaoka

that call for some aspect of improvisation, as well as nontraditional techniques.

My Trilogy for Sho, Bassoon and Koto (1994) employs extended techniques for the sho (a seventeen-bamboo mouth organ), harmonics on the bassoon, and tremolo and bowing on the koto. As in gagaku, there are no harmonic progressions but rather harmonic structures of relative dissonance and consonance. In this piece, the sho—a fixed-pitch instrument capable of only nine tones and tuned approximately a quarter-tone below Western concert pitch—bends notes in an uncharacteristic manner, while executing sets of three rhythmic cells.

The Wanderers and the Firefly (1994) is scored for three hichirikis and snare drum. The shrieking quality of the hichirikis, wide double-reed instruments, is especially effective as they play first in unison, and then canonically, eventually moving into improvisation. The gagaku performers, even those who read Western notation, had difficulty performing without the familiar archaic calligraphy. After trying many notational formats, the best results were obtained through cutting and pasting gagaku notation in original calligraphy onto the score and combining it with verbal instructions. Throughout much of this piece, the snare drum provides an annoying buzz—like a pestering insect—and gradually develops into a virtuoso expression of rhythms, accents, and quickly changing timbres.

The search for new techniques, timbres, and contexts for my own instrument, the koto, has comprised much of my research and activities. Exposure to Cage's prepared piano pieces, as well as performing with improvisers who have developed a repertory of prepared sounds on their instruments, inspired me to do the same with the koto. As a result, the koto began taking on a new personality for me as unusual sounds emerged from the strings. An alternate persona seemed to be revealing itself. Excitedly, I documented more than two-hundred new techniques and tunings, such as using different materials for the bridges and strings, changing location of the bridges, exploring alternate tuning possibilities, inserting metal, wood, and rubber between the strings, trying different finger-picking techniques, and using a plectrum rather than a pick. Over the years, I have developed some of these ideas and discarded others, based on the success of their application in performance. Bowing the koto has been especially successful. In the Cecil Taylor Orchestra, I sat in the string section and bowed the violin lines on my instrument. The other violinists were tolerant of such an odd addition to their section and watched with great curiosity and amusement as I set up my koto

next to them.

How to Construct a Tar Paper Barrack (1993) is a piece for tape and koto that refers to the structures in American internment camps where my parents and relatives lived for four years during World War II. I recorded samples of koto, bowed koto, and piano that had been stretched and digitally mutated by computer. In performing the work I enter three sound spheres that are defined by both the prerecorded material and my improvisation.

I have also been active in developing computer interfaces for the koto. *The Not Quite Random Koto* (1995), which employs MAX (interactive object-oriented software) and digital sound processing, explores some of these possibilities while continuing to assert the physicality of the instrument. Though not entirely interactive, the combined use of software and internal programming allows me to respond in new ways to my environment and could be more accurately described as transformative in design.

This year I will be attending STEIM, an institute in Amsterdam where a team of hardware and software specialists are developing advanced technology for musical and performance application. A digital interface will be built by the technicians there for my koto, extending the possibilities for interacting with digital video images and various digital sound sources.

My own feeling is that art is an inescapable expression of the social values and aesthetics of a culture and its historical location. Gagaku embodied the ideals of the Heian Era, and now we, as artists struggling to create art at the cusp of the twenty-first

century, are contributing our individual musical voices to the vast repertory of music that has preceded us. How to cope with such a daunting proposition? I think of the words of Cecil Taylor: "Living out the quintessential contemporary experience, you don't have anything but your music. You worked all your life developing your music, your voice. So guard it, and don't give it to anyone who doesn't appreciate it."

Selected Discography:

Compositions/Improvisations (*solo koto*, Asian Improv Records); Trio with Masaoka, Nunn, Robair (*Rastascan Records*); Asian American Music (*compilation*, *Innocent Eyes and Lenses*); Tribute to Sun Ra (*Rastascan Records*); Steve Coleman and the Mystic Rhythm Society (*RCA*); Duets: George Lewis and Miya Masaoka (*forthcoming*, *Ryokan*).

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"The Wanderers and the Firefly"
by Miya Masaoka

BEHIND THE BEAT *with Mark Tucker*

Not your typical jazz journalist, Roger Pryor Dodge (1898-1974) studied ballet with Michel Fokine, avidly collected photos of Nijinsky, toured as a dancer with the Marx Brothers, and performed in a duo act with Ellingtonian brass-player Bubber Miley (whom Dodge considered "the greatest trumpeter in jazz history"). Dodge published his first jazz article in 1929; a decade later his learned essay on jazz historiography, "Consider the Critics," appeared in the landmark publication *Jazzmen*; in the 1940s he contributed to such jazz aficionado magazines as *H.R.S. Society Rag* and *The Record Changer*; in the late 1950s he mused about Elvis and the mambo craze in *The Jazz Review*.

A collection of Dodge's major writings is now available in *Hot Jazz and Jazz Dance* (Oxford University Press, 1995; \$30), expertly selected by his son Pryor Dodge and gracefully introduced by Dan Morgenstern. This volume should make the name Roger Pryor Dodge far better known than it was during his lifetime. Although not a polished prose stylist, Dodge turned out a series of fascinating articles on jazz and dance, bringing to these subjects a degree of erudition seldom found in the popular press of the day. (Who else back in 1934 was comparing Louis Armstrong's improvising skills to Frescobaldi's?) Reading through Dodge's work made me nostalgic for a day when small magazines served a literate public with time to read such essays as "The Deceptive Nature of Sensuousness in Ensemble Playing" and "The Psychology of the Hot Solo." *Hot Jazz and Jazz Dance* reveals Dodge as a thoughtful connoisseur and a critic—rare then as now—more interested in humbly exploring the creative process than in passing down judgments from on high.

The Nearness of Bloom. Soprano saxophonist Jane Ira Bloom feels the breeze of distant planets. She receives commissions from NASA, blends other-worldly electronic sounds with acoustic jazz, and gives her pieces cosmic titles, like *Coleman Hawkins's Parallel Universe* (on her CD *Art and Aviation*). On the cover of *The Nearness* (Arabesque Jazz AJO120) Bloom stands in a desert with sax pointing skyward, as though sending her notes into the blue ether above. But far from astral meditations, the music on this disc is intimate and earthy, an exploration of familiar—if unmapped—regions of mind and heart.

The Nearness marks Bloom's arrival at a new height of artistry as performer and composer. Her sound on soprano saxophone is one of the glories of contemporary music, by turns plaintive and whimsical, always richly expressive. Several selections pair her own pieces with jazz standards. *Midnight Round/Round Midnight* opens with a long, winding line that becomes a snaky undercurrent for Monk's tune. A somber chorale called *Monk's Tale* leads into *The Nearness of You*, in which Bloom and trombonist Julian Priester lovingly embrace Hoagy Carmichael's melody. Some of Bloom's originals ride atop fat, funky bass lines; others float free over the weightless rhythm section of pianist Fred Hersch, bassist Rufus Reid, and drummer Bobby Previte. A strain of sadness runs through the disc: Bloom and

Hersch turn *In the Wee Small Hours of the Morning* into a late-night epiphany both clarifying and painful, while the halting rhythm and obsessive melodic figure of *White Tower* suggest someone imprisoned by stark emotions. The mood lightens toward the end, though, and in the soaring, spiraling lines of the envoi *Yonder*, Bloom leaves the listener positively airborne.

In the Zone of MLW. As part of its extensive Folkways reissue program the Smithsonian has brought out two recordings by pianist and composer Mary Lou Williams. *Zodiac Suite* (Smithsonian Folkways SF CD 40810) contains Williams's first extended composition, recorded by her with bass and drums in 1945. It's a peculiar piece—brooding, mercurial, rambling, a mishmash of styles (jazz, blues, lite classical, pop), with startling originality giving way to aimless interludes. As annotator Dan Morgenstern observes, Williams's music is difficult to "pigeon-hole . . . in the fashion dear to musicologists." But I hear *Zodiac Suite* as part of a larger stream of American composition that includes the octets of Alec Wilder, the concert-hall jazz of Peter DeRose, Ferde Grofé, and Paul Whiteman, and the impressionistic keyboard miniatures of Bix Beiderbecke and Willard Robison. That said, this reissue of *Zodiac Suite* spotlights Williams not just as composer but as improviser, since the inclusion of five previously unissued takes shows her radically recasting individual movements. . . . Compared to *Zodiac Suite*, *Zoning* (Smithsonian Folkways SF CD 40811) is a more conventional jazz trio date recorded by Williams in 1974, when she was in her mid-sixties. Yet there's nothing routine about this set, which features Williams's inventive pianism, a program of fresh and unusual pieces (including the remarkable *Zoning Fungus II*, which sounds as "out there" as its title), and solid grooves laid down by bassist Bob Cranshaw and drummer Mickey Roker. The trio's playing is soulful and saturated with blues spirit. Next time I teach a jazz survey course, *Zoning* will certainly be on the syllabus.

Composer Envy? It was gratifying to see ten jazz musicians on commemorative postage stamps issued last fall as part of the "Legends of American Music Series." I wish the Post Office had included at least one woman in the group, and putting Eubie Blake as a "jazz" figure next to Mingus, Coltrane, and Monk seemed odd. Odder yet was the fine print in the left-hand margin of each stamp, identifying all of them as *composers* first—as in Louis Armstrong, "Jazz Composer and Trumpeter," and Coleman Hawkins, "Jazz Composer and Saxophonist." I'd never thought of Armstrong and Hawkins that way, rather as brilliant instrumentalists and improvisers. Was someone at the Post Office suggesting that these musicians belonged on stamps because they were serious creators, America's version of Europe's Great Composers? Duke Ellington had something to say on this subject long ago: "To attempt to elevate the status of the jazz musician by forcing the level of his best work into comparisons with classical music is to deny him his rightful share of originality." Recognizing jazz is a good thing. Understanding it would be even better.

THE FOLK BEHIND FOLK MUSIC

Katherine D. Newman's *Never Without a Song: The Years and Songs of Jennie Devlin, 1865-1952* (University of Illinois Press, 1995; \$39.95, paper \$16.95) is a fascinating portrait of a remarkable woman for whom traditional song provided comfort, guidance, history, and personal expression. It is also a marker of how far folk music scholarship has come during the past sixty years.

The great field collections of North American folksong were made in the early decades of this century by John Lomax, Cecil Sharp, Dorothy Scarborough, and others. These scholars hunted in out-of-the-way rural places, gleaning from the repositories of working-class people who had learned and passed on their songs through oral tradition. Hurrying to capture a supposedly dying art, they rarely lingered long enough to learn much about the singers whose songs they treasured.

In 1936, as a twenty-five-year-old graduate student, Katherine D. Newman (then Kay Dealy) began collecting the songs of Jennie Devlin, a friend's seventy-one-year-old grandmother. In 1938 she enlisted the help of Alan Lomax of the Library of Congress's Archive of Folk Song to make sound recordings of Devlin. Later Lomax told Dealy that, as good as the songs were, it was Devlin's story that was the real treasure. The project eventually languished in the face of wartime, career, and family priorities. About a decade ago she was encouraged by family and friends to complete the book.

It opens with Devlin's story, described in Lomax's foreword as

a tale with a "Dickensian flavor." Born an unwanted child, effectively an orphan, Devlin grew up as a servant, working for fourteen years as a "bound-out girl" along the New York-Pennsylvania border. After marrying, she continued at various jobs while raising a family, which she kept together in spite of an alcoholic husband. Newman follows Devlin's story with eighty-four songs, most supplying text and music, the others consisting of texts alone or titles of songs once known but forgotten by the late 1930s.

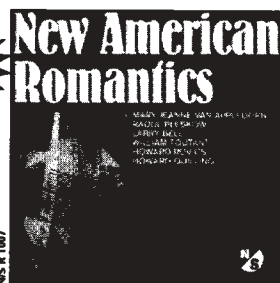
The two parts of the book complement each other, for particular songs are associated with certain events in Devlin's life. The variety of the repertory is impressive: Child ballads, broadsides, local historical ballads, comic dialect pieces, bawdy songs (rarely collected from women), and children's game songs jostle together with sentimental and religious pieces. Newman's annotation for each piece tells both its history as documented by other researchers and its place in Devlin's life. This is a key work for understanding how these songs, many of them familiar to us, fit into the life of a woman of the same generation and background as many of the shadowy informants of earlier published folksong collections. Newman shows how Devlin's songs were powerful personal expressions of life, history, and morality. She also gives a unique biography of a working-class woman who grew up tough and loving, practical and sentimental.

—Neil V. Rosenberg
St. John's, Newfoundland

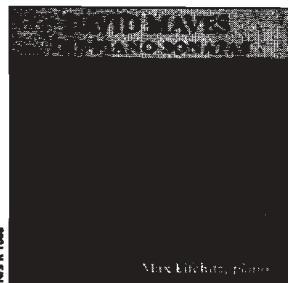
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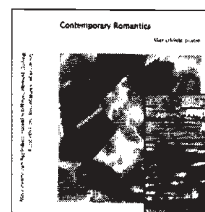


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COMPOSING BLACK (*continued*)

even when he incorporated elements of jazz or Russian folk music into his works. The same is true for composers such as Debussy and Milhaud. And we know that Charlie Parker was interested in studying with Varèse and Hindemith. It is no accident that many of the scales and harmonies used by European modernists in the first part of this century were also those drawn upon by the beboppers. The symmetrical octatonic scale and other linear constructs associated with Stravinsky are also found in Bird. All this suggests that musicians are constantly exploring new ways to transcend national, ethnic, and temporal boundaries, as well as ones of genre.

As we approach the beginning of a new century, we must continue to free ourselves from concepts of race that have a negative impact on the creative process and disproportionately affect African-American artists. Many of the challenges faced by William Grant Still persist today. A crucial question remains: When will black composers of concert music simply be viewed as "composers"? The concept of "composing black" might actually be working against the very creative process we want to affirm. African Americans, like all Americans, are heirs to multiple legacies and traditions. I feel as much entitled to the music of Beethoven, Bach, and Schoenberg as to that of Parker, Coltrane, and Mingus. I am drawn to these artists because of their music, not their cultural background, and I would like to feel free to use these resources in any way I choose. Such a seemingly small desire might appear easy in today's so-called multicultural society, yet once again racism continues to fracture the creative process. When Anthony Davis wrote the opera *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, some critics thought it was not black enough and lacked the jazz elements expected from a composer of Davis's background. Others felt it had too many vestiges of the black vernacular to be considered serious opera. You see the dilemma. At what point does an Anthony Davis or a Don Byron or any other African-American artist receive the same latitude as their white contemporaries? Steve Reich and Philip Glass have been using the musics of traditional cultures for some time, and critics see their borrowings as an innocent expression of the eclecticism of our age. All too often their black counterparts find themselves facing two choices: either limiting themselves to accepted African-American idioms or disavowing their black heritage in order to be validated as serious composers of art music. It is a no-win situation, but it must constantly be challenged. Perhaps by returning to examine the notion of "composing black" we will help undermine its relevance.

SEMI-SIMPLE INTRODUCTION

For both performers and listeners, Milton Babbitt's music is famously, controversially complex. "I want a piece of music to be literally as much as possible," he has said, and however esoteric—and, yes, inaccessible—his works have remained for some concert audiences, Babbitt's influence on post-war American musical thought has been vast. Complexity is not necessarily a bad thing, though, and, as Andrew Mead argues in *An Introduction to the Music of Milton Babbitt* (Princeton University Press, 1994; \$29.95), if one is willing to "try out new ways to listen," hearing Babbitt's music can be an experience of variety, richness, and sheer excitement. Mead's crisp, intelligent, and well-organized analytical survey places the three main phases of Babbitt's compositional career to date (if anything, at nearly eighty he is increasingly prolific) within an overarching account of his musical language.

Mead cares not only that we listen, but that we listen in detail. For it is through the particularities of moment-to-moment gesture, and the multifaceted and ever evolving relationship to an infinitely mutable aural landscape, that Babbitt's works generate their exquisitely logical yet fundamentally dramatic impression. In a series of analytical vignettes, Mead stresses the palpable relationship between a work's sounding "surface" and the underlying patterning of its chosen materials, embodied in the *array*, a compositionally uninterpreted arrangement of the twelve-tone pitch universe. It is this uniquely intricate resonance between local and global—creating, as Mead says, "a series of echoes and associations in the listener's mind"—that marks the glittering trajectory of all Babbitt's pieces.

Basic to the progress of each score is the idea of maximum diversity—the animation of all possibilities within a defined realm of possibility. *Composition for Four Instruments* of 1948 (to the opening of which Mead devotes twenty pages) typically exhausts all fifteen possible instrumental groupings during its course, beginning with 1+3 (clarinet solo+flute/violin/cello trio) and projecting related partition schemes simultaneously in other dimensions. In later chapters, comments on specific works are briefer, appearing as illustrations for a well-paced narrative view of Babbitt's technical development, from the crystalline trichordal works of the 1940s and 1950s to the elaborate superarray designs of the last fifteen years. Impressive throughout is Mead's way of relating the abstract, systematic part of Babbitt's music (the rhythmic possibilities of a given hexachord, say) to the unique expressive profile of a specific gesture (the "majestic rocking of the dyads that sweep [Quartet No. 2] to its close"). Welcome too are those points when we step back to compare overall compositional strategies (historians of musical style will note Mead's remarks on Babbitt's works of the early 1950s), or to reflect on pressing questions of performance practice (e.g., his sensible comments on dynamic markings in *Post-Partitions*). In all of this, Mead's knowledge of the scores is extensive, but he has not lost sight of the larger continuities in Babbitt's staggeringly inventive exploration of twelve-tone music.

(continued on page 14)

¹ William Grant Still, "A Composer's Viewpoint," in Robert Bartlett Haas, ed., *William Grant Still and the Fusion of Cultures in American Music* (Los Angeles: Black Sparrow Press, 1975), 134.

² Alain Locke, "Toward a Critique of Negro Music," *Journal of Negro Life* (November 1934), 328.

³ Hale Smith, "Here I Stand," in Eileen Southern, ed., *Readings in Black American Music* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1983), 325.

MULTIPLE MODERNISMS

American experimentalist composers—or “ultra-moderns” as they fancied themselves early in the century—have inspired a flurry of publications in recent years. Just out from Cambridge University Press is a reprint of Henry Cowell’s imaginative and influential treatise, *New Musical Resources* (1996; \$49.95, paper \$16.95) which became something of an underground classic after its first publication in New York in 1930. The reprint includes an introduction by David Nicholls, probing diverse contexts for Cowell’s innovations and raising questions about the sources for his inspiration. . . . The reappearance of *New Musical Resources* occurs soon after the first publication ever of a text nearly as mythic, Charles Seeger’s “Tradition and Experiment in (the New) Music,” completed around 1930 but known by only a few insiders. It is the central work in Charles Seeger, *Studies in Musicology II, 1929-1979*, meticulously edited by Ann M. Pescatello (University of California Press, 1995; \$75). From Cowell’s studies with Seeger in Berkeley during the 1910s through their mutual involvement in the New York avant-garde during the 1920s, the two men shared sonic discoveries and nurtured one another’s imaginations. With their two tracts now easily accessible, it will be possible to explore symbiosis, as well as to understand the nature of their much-trumpeted individualism.

Important studies of American experimentalist composers and their music are also appearing. *The Music of Ruth Crawford Seeger* by Joseph N. Straus (Cambridge University Press, 1995; \$59.95) stands out among them. Drawing on analytic tools of set theory, Straus gives close analyses of Crawford’s compositions. His book is engagingly readable, conveying complex observations with utter clarity. Non-theorists might want to begin at the end, with the final chapter on “Crawford’s Music in Its Contexts” for an exceptionally coherent guide through the chaotic tangle of ideas and idioms that converged in American ultra-modern composition. Straus confronts gender-related issues squarely, providing even-handed insights and posing a series of intriguing questions.

As Crawford rose to prominence, a reigning guru among the ultra-moderns was Carl Ruggles, an irascible character, revered for his compactly chiseled essays in dissonant counterpoint. Marilyn Ziffrin’s *Carl Ruggles: Composer, Painter, and Storyteller* (University of Illinois Press, 1994; \$37.50) is the first full-length biography of this enigmatic figure. The product of decades of archival research, as well as personal contact with the composer, Ziffrin’s book follows a traditional format, interweaving descriptions of Ruggles’s music with an account of his life. Ziffrin looks benevolently on Ruggles’s dark side, especially given his anti-Semitic outbursts; she clearly is writing about a beloved friend.

In 1876, the year of Ruggles’s birth, the Chicago-based composer John Alden Carpenter appeared as well, and he too has inspired a recent biography, *Skyscraper Lullaby: The Life and Music of John Alden Carpenter* by Howard Pollack

(Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994; \$59). Far from the fraternity of experimentalists, Carpenter instead exemplified a swing generation—a well-bred, well-educated gentleman whose best works followed the avant-garde rather than shaping it. But they gained considerable notice during his lifetime and were ably crafted, especially *Krazy Kat* (1921), *Skyscrapers* (1923-24), and *Sea Drift* (1933). Pollack’s book offers abundant detail, soaring most in the contextual richness it provides about the avant-garde artistic community in Chicago early in the century. Pollack also gives lucid expositions of Carpenter’s scores.

A modernist of the next generation—Otto Luening—recently reported to I.S.A.M. of his adventures at ninety-five. “I still write music every day,” he declares. Over the past year, Luening has been the focus of many birthday celebrations, but he singles out one honor extended in his home state, where he was given the Indian name “Bem Set,” meaning “He Who Walks,” by Billy Daniels, spiritual and cultural leader of Wisconsin’s Forest County Potawatomi Tribe. Luening’s *Potawatomi Legends* (1980) was recently revived by the Milwaukee Ballet Company. “It was especially important for me,” writes Luening, “because it closes a circle that began with my great grandfather who built a log cabin near Milwaukee with the help of Potawatomis.”

—C.J.O.

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MINNA LEDERMAN (*continued*)

tendencies of aging. Sometimes there were comical results. I remember going with her in the early 1980s to see a production of Philip Glass's opera *Satyagraha* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. The place was packed. But that didn't seem to affect Minna when she turned to me, just as the lights dimmed and Glass's incantatory melodic patterns began to unfold, and shouted, "CHOPSTICKS!" I stared straight ahead, hoping my silence would send a signal. But no. She assumed I couldn't hear her and screamed out the same thing several more times, to the amusement of the downtown hipsters sitting around us. Finally she settled down and took in the show. Afterward she gave a balanced and typically brilliant assessment of the work.

Minna Lederman consistently made high demands on the people around her, whether her authors or friends. During the years of *Modern Music* those rigorous standards brought an unprecedented literary grace and intellectual edge to the writing about America's newest music. The journalistic model she set will loom as a challenge for generations to come.

Minna Lederman's The Life and Death of a Small Magazine (Modern Music, 1924-1946) was published by I.S.A.M. in 1983 and can be purchased by writing to us.

MILTON BABBIT (*continued*)

As an authoritative and readable technical survey of Babbitt's contribution to the post-war repertory, Mead's *Introduction* will be of special interest to composers and theorists, not least because it incorporates a generous number of score excerpts and analytic charts. But one hopes too that it will steer more players toward an underperformed body of bracingly energetic music. Mead's writing assumes a basic familiarity with post-tonal theory; one needs, for example, to be able to recognize trichords and their inversions. Beyond that, however, the first chapter quickly introduces and defines theoretic concepts necessary to what follows. More advanced readers will appreciate the scrupulous footnote references and bibliography that document a substantial journal literature. Concluding a short but revealing account of the song cycle *Du*, Mead reminds the reader that authorial "brevity can only hint and entice, but then again that is the point of this volume." Reading Mead's analyses sent me back to Babbitt's work with keener ears. What more could one want from a volume of words about music?

—Philip Rupprecht
Brooklyn College

AMY FAY

America's Notable Woman of Music

Margaret William McCarthy

As a performer, educator, lecturer, writer, and clubwoman, Amy Fay was an important part of the cultural life of turn of the century America. Her six-year sojourn in Germany, studying with Liszt and others, formed the basis for the development of her aesthetic sensibilities. Correspondence, writing and programs, as well as the testimony of contemporaries and scholars are used to enhance this biography which will be of particular interest to those interested in women's studies and American music history.

DETROIT MONOGRAPHS IN MUSICOLOGY/STUDIES IN MUSIC, No. 17

1995 xviii, 197pp ISBN 0-89990-074-7 \$35.00

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RE-MERGING ECHOES

Echoes from the Gorge: Music by Chou Wen-chung (Albany Records/Troy 155) is the second commercial recording devoted to the music of this Chinese-American composer. The first was released by CRI in 1970 and is now available on CD (CRI CD 691). Chou has been an influential figure in the world of composition, especially in the advocacy of *re-merger*: his concept of a genuine fusion of Eastern and Western musical traditions. His music, though placed within the technical boundaries of contemporary Western composition, expresses aesthetic qualities essential to Asian music in general and ancient Chinese music in particular.

This CD features five works from several stages of Chou's career, effectively summarizing his changes in compositional style and technique. *Suite for Harp and Wind Quintet* (1951) recaptures the colors and moods characteristic of Chinese folk music. Chou's penchant for the minute timbral changes and subtle pitch inflections in music for the qin (an ancient Chinese zither) is shown in *Yü Ko* (1965), a transcription of an original qin composition for Western chamber ensemble. *Yün* (1969) couples the Daoist metaphysical concept of *qiyun* (reverberations in nature) with yin/yang principles derived from *Yijing* (Book of Changes). Scored for percussion quartet, *Echoes from the Gorge* (1989) shows the influence of Varèse's *Ionisation*, especially in its timbral transformations. In *Windswept Peaks* (1990), Webern-like treatments of motivic material are cast against the background of yin/yang opposition, represented by the dialogue between two instrumental pairs (violin/cello and clarinet/piano). Performers featured in the recording include Boston Musica Viva, New Music Consort, and Speculum Musicae. The excellent program notes are by David Tsang.

—Eric Lai

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

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The *I.S.A.M. Newsletter* is published in the Fall and Spring. Copyright © 1996 by the Institute for Studies in American Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, Brooklyn, NY 11210.

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