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Black Music Research Newsletter

Southern Illinois University at Carbondale



Volume 1

Number 4

Spring, 1978

FROM THE EDITOR

*During the last decade, several important books on black American music have appeared, some newly published and others reissues of previously published works. But in spite of the availability of these volumes and in spite of increased opportunities for the publication and dissemination of the results of research in the field, the extent of the impact and influence of black musicians on the social and cultural history of the United States remains somewhat undetermined and undefined. Although there are many reasons for the situation, the most persistent one is the difficulty of carrying out the kind of research necessary to follow up the recent large-scope works of Eileen Southern (The Music of Black Americans, 1971) and John Storm Roberts (Black Music of Two Worlds, 1971). While topical works are appearing with increasing frequency (e.g. Raoul Abdul's Blacks in Classical Music, 1977; Dena Epstein's Sinful Tunes and Spirituals: Black Folk Music to the Civil War, 1977; and Ekkhard Jost's Free Jazz, 1974), the need remains for additional studies which are more focused and, perhaps, smaller in scope.

Take, for example, the case of Justin Holland. Alexander Bellow, in his The Illustrated History of the Guitar, writes, "The most important figures in the pioneering days of the guitar in the United States were native Americans. One of the pioneers was Justin Holland (1818-1887) from Virginia." This statement would seem to suggest that a systematic study of Holland's influence is needed to determine the validity of the statement as well as the actual extent of Holland's influence and contribution. Another example is the need for a study of the interaction among black musicians in New York City during the period 1900-1942, a time span which encompassed the Harlem Renaissance and the WPA projects (specifically, the Federal Music Project and the Federal Theater Project). During this period there were numerous opportunities for New York City's black musicians to work together; there was some degree of collaboration and cooperation among such diverse musicians as James Reese Europe, Harry T. Burleigh, Fletcher Henderson, Melville Charlton, J. Rosamund Johnson, Noble Sissle, William Grant Still, and many others. Although a number of the specific collaborative efforts and relationships are well known, the extent, nature, and ultimate implications of the interaction as a whole remain obscure. Of particular interest in this area is the WPA-sponsored Harlem Sinfionetta. Of whom did it consist? What was its role? Research might also be done on the All-Star Stock Company, of which William J. Accooe, Bob Cole, Will Marion Cook, Gussie Davis, and Billy D. Johnson, among others, were members.

Further, specific investigations might be conducted to locate musical scores by such persons as Newport Gardner (1746-1826?), who may have been the first black American to have his music published in the United States, and John Thomas Douglas, who "wrote and produced an opera in three acts" (see the Whittlesey file at the Library of Congress' Music Division). If Whittlesey's claim were shown to be true, Douglas would become known as the earliest black American to compose an opera. The claim should be investigated and the circumstances documented.

Then, there is an urgent necessity to debunk the many myths surrounding the evolution and nature of jazz. For example, the prevalent notion of jazz spreading across the country by first "moving up the river from New Orleans to Chicago" has long been eschewed by jazz pioneers and scholars alike. They make the point that evidence exists to support the contrary contention that jazz was in existence, around the turn of the century (much earlier, some claim), wherever there were black folks with the freedom and the necessary conditions to perform it. The notion that jazz was "born" in New Orleans has become nothing more than romantic fiction, based on its early commercialization in that city. Some "old timers" maintain that Mobile, Alabama, in the early years, was as important as New Orleans to the development of jazz. Yet the notion persists. The implications of debunking this popular myth, and providing evidence to the contrary, are significant.

Research of the type suggested here would represent important efforts in the quest for the full and accurate definition of the musical contributions of black Americans to the society in which they live.

*In Volume 1, Number 3 of this newsletter, the editorial raised an issue regarding funding sources in music and music education. Of the responses received, the following will be of interest to BMR NEWSLETTER readers: (1) the National Endowment for the Humanities' Division of Education Programs indicated that their program assigns low priority to "arts" projects; (2) information from NEH's Research Materials Program is included under Foundation News on pages 3 and 4 of this issue of BMR NEWSLETTER; (3) the Music Educators National Conference indicated that "Most major national arts and arts education organizations are opposed to the transfer of the endowments to the proposed Department of Education.... Both the National Endowment for the Arts and the various arts education organizations are in agreement that more funding would be given toward education in the arts if it were separated from the National Endowment [for the Arts], which does not have in its charge funding for education."

RESEARCH NEWS

*Carman L. Moore, New York author and composer, is completing work on his book, The Growth of Black Sound in America. Moore's work, to be published in 1978 by Doubleday, is an aesthetics-oriented history of Afro-American music written for average readers and college classes.

*Lawrence Gushee, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, has in progress a study entitled, "U.S. Vernacular Ensembles 1870-1940," with special focus on various types of dance orchestras.

*Robert L. Holmes of Doorway Music in Nashville, Tennessee is planning a television documentary on "The Cremona Strings," a young all-black string orchestra. Research for the film entails a study of the group from its beginnings to the present.

*Carolyn Irvin-Harris, of Indiana University, is working on a study entitled, "The Development of Art Songs: Three Black Composers." The project is an analytic-stylistic survey of compositions by Harry T. Burleigh, Hall Johnson, and Oscar Brown, Jr.

*Jeff Titon, who holds a joint music/English appointment at Tufts University, is doing a study on Reverend C. L. Franklin. The study will result in a book which will consist of Franklin's "oral autobiography, a performance model of his chanted sermons, text and tune transcriptions of several of those sermons, and an argument that they deserve to enter the canon of American literature." Titon's work is being supported by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Howard Foundation.

*Donald White, cellist with the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, and Dolores White of Cuyahoga Community College, are working on "Arrangements of Negro Spirituals and Slave Songs for Cello, Piano, and Violin Combinations in Concert Style." The two researchers are also planning to search out slave songs which will prove adaptable to arrangement for various solo string instrument/piano combinations.

*Peter Carr, of Coventry, England, is working on a book on the life of trombonist Jimmy Archey. For the future, he is planning biographical studies on Bill Dillard, Hayes Alvis, Jack Wilson (the trumpeter), Tommy Benford, Lester Boone, Bob Williams, Gene Mikell, Ikey Robinson, Teddy Buckner, and The Mills Blue Rhythm Band.

*Herman D. Taylor, of Dillard University, is currently preparing the complete organ works of J. S. Bach for performance from memory during the 1984-85 academic year.

*R. M. W. Dixon, of Campbell, Australia, is working on a third, fully revised edition of Blues and Gospel Records, 1902-1942.

FOUNDATION NEWS

*The National Endowment for the Humanities Research Materials Division announces the following changes in its deadline structure:

1. There will not be a June 1 deadline this year or hereafter;
2. The next deadline will be October 1, 1978 for projects beginning on or after June 15, 1979.

The agency points out that the "new schedule permits a shorter waiting period for applicants (about 8½ months as opposed to the previous 10-month wait) and more nearly conforms to the academic-year calendar."

For the information of newsletter readers, Mr. Gerald Tyson of the Endowment's Research Materials Division has provided the following list of "all current grants related to music and funded by that division":

Tino Ballo, University of Wisconsin-Madison, "The Marc Blitzstein Collection and Edition";

Rita Benton, University of Iowa, "Directory of Music Research Libraries";

Adrienne F. Block and Carol Neuls-Bates, Graduate School and University Center of CUNY, "Bibliography of Works By and About Women in American Music";

Barry F. Brook, American Musicological Society, "International Repertory of Music Literature";

Lenore Coral, Music Library Association, "A Bibliography of United States Music Imprints Sacred and Secular, 1826--: A Planning Study";

Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., Southern Illinois University, "The Music of Black American Composers: An Anthology";

Joseph H. Igo, unaffiliated, "The Ellington Chronicle";

Herbert Kellman and Charles Hamm, University of Illinois at Urbana, "Census Catalogue of Manuscript Sources of Polyphonic Music 1400-1550";

D. W. Krummel, University of Illinois at Urbana, "Directory and Source Materials of Early American Music";

Harry B. Lincoln, SUNY-Binghamton, "Indices of the Madrigal, 1530-1550";

Arthur Mendel, Princeton University, "Compilation and Evaluation of Data for the Recension of the Masses of Josquin Desprez (c. 1440-1521)";

William S. Newman, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, "Critical Scores of Early Musical Masterworks";

Claude Palisca, American Musicological Society, "Interdisciplinary Horizons in the Study of Musical Traditions, East and West: The Twelfth Congress of the International Musicological Society";

Carolyn Rabson and Kate V. Keller, Sonneck Society, "National Tune Index";

Victor Yellin, New York University, "Raynor Taylor's The Ethiop."

Mr. Tyson has indicated that the division would be very pleased to receive more applications, especially applications to its editing program. Anyone interested in making application to the Research Materials Program is urged to contact the staff by letter or telephone (202/724-1672).

*The John W. Work Memorial Foundation, Incorporated announces its fifth annual competition for the John Wesley Work, III award. The \$1,000.00 cash prize will be awarded to a "worthy and capable graduate student in the field of music." The 1977 winner was Robert Folk, of Garden City, New York, for his composition, Montage. Folk started doctoral work at Juilliard last fall. Applications should be submitted, by June 30, 1978, to the Foundation at 910 Seventeenth Avenue North, Nashville, Tennessee 37208.

*The Musical Assistance Fund is accepting applications for Orchestral Fellowship awards. The Fund was established in 1965 with the purpose of providing opportunities for advanced training and experience for black music students. The purpose of the program is "to give exceptionally talented and sufficiently advanced black musicians an opportunity to gain experience in orchestral playing, learn orchestral routine and orchestral discipline, and learn the orchestral repertoire." The Fund's Orchestral Fellowship Program is made possible through the cooperation and support of the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians (ICSOM), the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Exxon Corporation.

Requests for additional information and applications should be sent to:

The Musical Assistance Fund
c/o New York Philharmonic
Lincoln Center Plaza
Broadway at 65th Street
New York, New York 10023

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- *Lawrence Gushee, School of Music, the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Urbana, Illinois 61801 is seeking the records of the Blind Boone Concert Company (? - 1915). According to Mr. Gushee, the records were formerly in the possession of a Mrs. Fuell-Cuther.
- *Peter Carr, 62 Rothesay Avenue, Tile Hill, Coventry, England, would welcome help with historical references to the Mills Blue Rhythm Band. He would also like the address of trumpeter Wardell Jones.
- *James V. Hatch, Hatch-Billops Collection, Inc., 491 Broadway, 7th Floor, New York, New York 10012, writes, "In Liberty Minstrel by George W. Clark, New York: Leavitt & Alden, 1845, the song on page 140, 'Stolen We Were,' is attributed to a 'Colored Man.' Do you know his name? Who wrote the music?" Can anyone help?
- *Andrew Frierson, 112 East 19th Street, New York, New York 10003, would like to receive sheet music or information on songs by black composers who were popular during the first two decades of the twentieth century.
- *Wilfred Delphin, Department of Music, Alabama State University, Montgomery, Alabama 36101, would like to receive scores for two pianos or one piano/four hands. The Delphin-Romain duo, performing with steadily increasing regularity, would like to include such works by black composers in its repertoire.
- *Mr. Pat V. Conte, 89-39 114th Street, Richmond Hill, New York 11418, is seeking information and field recordings of or relating to "pan-pipe music (i.e. 'quills') in rural America, both folk styles and Afro-American examples, à la Big Boy Cleveland, Henry Thomas, Sid Hemphill, etc."
- *Jeff Titon, Music Department, Tufts University, Medford, Massachusetts 02155, would like to correspond with anyone interested in his research on Reverend C. L. Franklin. Titon welcomes suggestions.

*Carolyn Irvin-Harris, School of Music, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47401, would like any information or materials -- scores, recordings, research results -- on art music of black composers. She is especially interested in information and materials relating to H. T. Burleigh, Hall Johnson, William Grant Still, and Howard Swanson, although information on other black composers will be appreciated.

*The editor of this newsletter is seeking biographical data and any other information on J. W. Postlewaite. Any leads will be appreciated.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INFORMATION

*Willis Patterson's Anthology of Art Songs by Black American Composers is now available from Edward B. Marks Corporation. The work contains art songs by Leslie Adams, David Baker, Margaret Bonds, Charles Brown, Cecil Cohen, Noel Da Costa, Mark Fax, Adolphus Hailstork, Eugene W. Hancock, Thomas Kerr, Charles Lloyd, Jr., Wendell Logan, Maurice McCall, Dorothy Rudd Moore, Undine Moore, Robert Owens, Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson, Florence B. Price, Hale Smith, William Grant Still, Howard Swanson, George Walker, Olly Wilson, and John W. Work, Jr. The preface is written by George Shirley, the introduction by Wendell P. Whalum. The price is \$14.00.

*Carman Moore's Nexus, a concerto grosso for percussion ensemble and orchestra, will be premiered in May, 1978 by the Rochester (New York) Philharmonic Orchestra with Isaiah Jackson conducting. Moore's work was commissioned by the orchestra.

*James V. Hatch's Black Playwrights, 1823-1977: An Annotated Bibliography was published by Bowker in December, 1977. The work contains listings of a large number of musicals and operas by black composers. The price of the book is \$18.50.

*Stash Records has just released Jazz Women (ST 109), an anthology of performances by women instrumentalists during the first thirty years of jazz recording. The liner notes for the album were written by Mary Lou Williams.

*The Jazz Index, Volume 1, Number 1 is available from Norbert Ruecker, Kleistrasse 39, D-6000, Frankfurt, M1, West Germany. The Index aims for "a complete coverage of relevant articles and reviews published in jazz periodicals," the first issue containing "about 1,000 articles published between January and March, 1977." American libraries may place subscriptions through regular servicing companies (e.g. EBSCO, F. W. Faxon). The cost for institutions is \$34.00 per year for four issues. Individual subscriptions may be ordered directly from Mr. Ruecker at a cost of \$24.00.

*Homage to Martin Luther King received its American premiere on March 30, 1978 by percussionist Van Tony Free of Alabama State University. The work was first performed in Europe by its composer, New York Philharmonic percussionist Morris Lang.

*William Grant Still's opera Highway 1, U.S.A. was performed at Morris Brown College on April 20 and 21, 1978. The work was produced and directed by Nancy Bishop. James H. Patterson conducted.

*The Afro-American Music Opportunities Association has resumed publication of its newsletter, AAMOA Reports. The newsletter will carry information on seminars and symposia being held at colleges and universities, premiere performances by symphony orchestras, and other events of importance in black music. Information on auditions with symphony orchestras, teaching positions in colleges and universities, and other management or performance positions with these organizations, will be carried on a regular basis. Information on competitions, for composers and performers, will also be included. The newsletter will be sent to AAMOA's entire mailing list. Beginning next year, only those who have subscribed will receive the letter. Those who subscribed in 1976 and 1977 will receive the newsletter free of charge in 1978. The annual subscription rate is \$10.00.

*The Gospel Music Association apparently is "the only trade association" devoted to all types of gospel music. Founded in 1964, the Association "has become a viable voice of the various performing artists, stations and companies that are involved in gospel music." Black gospel groups who have won the Association's coveted Dove Awards are The Spirits of Memphis (1969) and Andre Crouch and the Disciples (1971). Among the Association's services are the publication of a monthly newsletter, Good News, and maintenance of a Speakers Bureau. For membership and other information, write The Gospel Music Association, P.O. Box 23201, Nashville, Tennessee 37202.

*The following statement is extracted from a Denver Post article by Arlynn Nellhaus which was later reprinted in the February/March, 1978 issue of the NAJE Educator under the caption "Schuller Says ... School Jazz -- A Disaster Area":

School jazz bands, numbering some 32,000 across the country, may make principals and parents beam, but they make Gunther Schuller furious. "They are one of the disaster areas in education," the composer-educator-historian charged.... "What has happened to jazz in school is the typical thing in American society," he began. "Jazz still is looked on as an aberrational activity in schools, but someone learned how to bottle and sell it. Stan Kenton and a few others took hold of jazz and sold it to the National Association of Jazz Educators. Most of these jazz educators aren't musicians. They own a sax and played 'Body and Soul' -- without swing -- in the local bistro. Hundreds of mediocre musicians have found jobs as 'jazz educators.' It takes a very talented kid to circumvent that kind of instruction.... The band creates an illusion that the kids are getting a jazz education. Jazz education has become an entrenched bureaucracy. And how should the kids know they're not really playing jazz?" [Reprinted by permission of the Denver Post.]

*The American Folklife Center has just completed two field research projects -- one in Chicago and one in South Georgia. For the future, researchers and scholars interested in contract work are invited to send letters of interest and curriculum vitae to the Center's Director at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540.

*A retrospective concert of the music of T. J. Anderson will be held in Chicago on June 11, 1978. Sculptor Richard Hunt, the concert's sponsor, commissioned the honoree to compose a work especially for the occasion. The piece, Re-Creation, based on a text by Leon Forrest, will be premiered during the concert.

EDITOR

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BMR NEWSLETTER is devoted to the encouragement and promotion of scholarship and cultural activity in black American music, and is intended to serve as a medium for the sharing of ideas and information regarding current and future research and musical activities in universities and research centers.

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