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Black Music Research Newsletter

Fisk University



Volume 2

Number 3

Winter, 1979

FROM THE EDITOR

*As more and more research is conducted in the field of black American music, the need for access to primary-source materials becomes increasingly apparent. While several archives hold large and significant collections, many important materials remain inaccessible to researchers. However, as the output of research studies increases, individuals who hold pertinent materials are making available to scholars, through donations to university libraries, useful primary source documents. For example, "The W. C. Handy Papers" were presented to Fisk University on November 20, 1978. The papers, presented to Fisk by Handy's brother, Charles C. Handy, are a gift of the Handy family. The collection includes sheet music, letters, and other documents related to the life and contributions of "The Father of the Blues." On December 28, 1978, Howard J. Angel gave to Fisk University a collection in the form of a number of 78 RPM sound recordings, with other installments of records, books, papers, and sheet music to follow over the next few years. The first installment of the Angel collection includes recordings by Earl Hines, Meade Lux Lewis, Teddy Wilson, Errol Garner, "Fats" Waller, The King Cole Trio, and other important musicians and groups; also included are Americana collector's items. Fisk is looking forward to developing these collections over the coming years. Already holding materials such as "The Scott Joplin Collection," "The John Work Collection," "The Jubilee Singers Collection," "The George Gershwin Collection," and several others, Fisk University's Archives are significantly enhanced by the addition of "The W. C. Handy Papers" and "The Angel Collection."

Scholars are hoping that other individuals, as well as families of important figures in the history of black American music, will see fit to make similar donations. There exist several appropriate and reputable libraries which have genuine interest and commitment to the black American musical heritage.

RESEARCH NEWS

*Howard Johnson, of State University College of New York, New Paltz, New York, is engaged in research entitled "New Themes." The research is a comparison study of the many versions of jazz tunes under new titles. Examples of his comparisons are: Duke Ellington -- "Tiger Rag," "Braggin' in Brass," "Never No Lament," "Cooties Concerto"; Charlie Parker -- "How High the Moon," "Ornithology"; Dizzy Gillespie -- "Whispering."

*Thomas Riis, of the University of Michigan, is currently researching "Early 20th Century Black Musical Theater in New York."

*Edward Brake, of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, is collecting records, photos, and other materials related to "Black Blues and R & B."

*Jack Bradley, of the Cape Cod Jazz Society, Inc. in Harwich Port, Massachusetts, is putting together "A Pictorial History of Louis Armstrong."

- *Franklin S. Driggs, of Brooklyn, New York, is working on a study titled "Kansas City Jazz: 1900-1950." Contracted by the Oxford University Press, the study will result in a book to be completed later this year.
- *H. Alvin Green, of Edward Waters College in Jacksonville, Florida, is working on a book to be published in June, 1980. The study is titled, "Favorite Hymns of Bishops of the African Methodist Episcopal Church."
- *Robert D. Rusch, of Cadence, Jazz, and Blues Review, is conducting oral history interviews with blues and jazz artists. The study is supported, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts.
- *Dominique-René de Lerma, of Morgan State University, has compiled an extensive classified bibliography (ca. 20,000 titles) on all aspects of black music. Entitled "The Legacy of Black Music," the work is scheduled for publication later this year. Dr. de Lerma is also working on a comprehensive discography (of all concert music and spirituals involving black composers, arrangers, or solo performers), and a bibliography of music by black composers.
- *Kip Lornell, of Newport News, Virginia, is conducting "A Survey of Traditional Culture in Tidewater, Virginia." While the study requires attention to crafts, storytellers, and all folk music, its emphasis is on blues and non-blues secular musicians. The project is funded by the Recreation and Parks Department of the City of Newport News, Virginia.
- *Jimmy Gray, of Black Fire Distribution, is researching "black music recorded between 1922 and 1944." He is also planning research, for a series of radio productions, which will "trace the genetic flow of Afro-American music."
- *Melva W. Costen, of the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia, has planned a study of "Church Music Curricula in Black Theological Education." The study is designed to determine "the present status of academic training for seminarians."
- *Paul Berliner, of Northwestern University, is working on two research projects: "Improvisation in Jazz" and "African Music (Roots of Jazz in African Music)."
- *Lewis Porter, of Tufts University, is working on three studies: "The Recorded Music of Lester Young," "Women in Jazz," and "Jazz Drummers." The latter two studies will be published early this year.
- *William Burren Garcia, of Talladega College, has underway a historical study on "The Tradition of the Arranged Spiritual," and two biographical studies: "The Work Family" (that of Fisk University's John W. Work) and "Edward H. Margetson (1891-1962)."
- *Phyllis M. May, a doctoral student at Indiana University, is working on three research projects: "Civil Rights Music of the 1960's," "Black Musical Theatre," and "Black American Children's and Adolescent Traditional Music."
- *William S. Crowder, of Barber-Scotia College, is working on "A Study of Lined Hymn-Singing in Selected Black Churches of Piedmont North and South Carolina." This doctoral dissertation project is funded in part by the United Negro College Fund's Faculty Fellowship Program and the Lilly Foundation.
- *Jason Berry and Jonathan Foose are conducting a project in which they are researching two musical families in New Orleans. The final product will be a one-hour documentary focusing on the home lives, street lives, church and neighborhood influences, and musical performances of the two New Orleans performing families -- the Lasties (a traditional-modern "fusion" jazz group) and the Nevilles (rhythm & blues performers). The study is supported by a \$36,000 grant from the Louisiana Committee for the Humanities.

- *Charles Wolfe, of Middle Tennessee State University, is assembling an anthology of early field and commercial recordings which illustrate black string band (non-blues) traditions in the upland South.
- *David Evans has completed two blues studies: a book, Big Road Blues: Tradition and Creativity in the Folk Blues, and Atlanta Blues: 1933, a 12" LP. Big Road Blues is in press at the University of California Press. The album, containing a booklet which the author co-edited with Bruce Bastin, is to be published by the John Edwards Memorial Foundation in Los Angeles. Mr. Evans has in progress "Fieldwork in Black Folk Music in the Southern United States" and "Folk Music in a Black Community." The latter work, to be published by the University of Illinois Press, was partially funded by a 1978 summer stipend from the National Endowment for the Humanities.
- *Vernon H. Edwards is currently working on a biography of Clarence Cameron White (1879-1960), and an analysis of his works.
- *Lawrence Gushee, of the University of Illinois, is engaged in research on "The Creole Band, 1914."
- *Clifford J. Safane, of the Metropolitan Music School in New York City, has completed a manuscript of transcriptions of musical performances by the pianist Bud Powell. The work is to be published by Consolidated Music Co., New York, New York.
- *Robert Javors, of Brooklyn, New York, is currently editing a new edition of Blues Records. The edition will include "all original issues and reissues of country and urban blues recorded from 1943-1976."
- *Bruce Bastin, of Sussex, England, is writing a book on the history of the blues in the Southeastern United States.
- *Sheldon Harris, of Brooklyn, New York, is working on a book to be titled, Blues Who's Who, a biographical dictionary of blues singers to be published by Arlington House in late 1979.
- *Eileen Southern and Josephine Wright, of Harvard University, are about to commence research entitled, "The Integration of the Afro-American Folk Arts Through Music: An Annotated, Classified Bibliography." The project is funded by a grant of \$77,333.00 from the National Endowment for the Humanities.
- *Frank J. Gillis and John Hasse, of Indiana University, are directing the "Indianapolis Ragtime Project," the purpose of which is to provide documentation concerning the Indianapolis ragtime composers and their music. The project, having as its final aim a book and a documentary phonograph recording, is funded by a grant made by the Lilly Endowment to the Indiana University Archives of Traditional Music.
- *John Hasse, of Indiana University, is completing a documentary video tape about black gospel music in an urban setting. Entitled "Gospel in Gary," the production is being shot on location in Gary, Indiana.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- *Carlton W. Molette would like information which will lead him to copies of the scripts of Shuffle Along, Blackbirds of 1928, Clorindy: The Origin of the Cakewalk, and other early black musical shows. Send correspondence to Dr. Molette at the School of Communications, Texas Southern University, Houston, Texas 77004.
- *Robert D. Rusch, Rte. 1, Box 345, Redwood, New York 13679, would like to know where to locate Lucky Thompson.

*Jason Berry and Jonathan Foote, New Orleans Access Center, 2010 Magazine Street, New Orleans, Louisiana 70118, would appreciate correspondence from scholars in the New Orleans, Louisiana area who have written or researched the family ties of jazz or rhythm & blues musicians.

*Joan R. Hillsman would appreciate information leading to clear distinctions between (1) "jubilee songs" and "Negro spirituals" and (2) "white spirituals" and "black spirituals." Ms. Hillsman may be contacted at 3706 Stonecliff Road, Suitland, Maryland 20023.

*Jack Bradley, of the Cape Cod Jazz Society, Inc., is seeking documentary source material on Louis Armstrong, especially photographs. Scholars who can be of assistance are invited to write Mr. Bradley at P.O. Box 33, Harwich Port, Massachusetts 02646.

*Robert F. Thomas, Jr., of Claflin College, Orangeburg, South Carolina 29115, would like to know where scores by 18th century black musicians can be found for purchase by a college or university music department.

*Darryl Stolper will welcome information on the following persons: King Davis, Sonny Boy Johnson, Beverly Scott, Louis Jackson, Ernest Lewis, and Ernest McClay. Information on the record labels Murray, Courtney, and W. W. will also be appreciated. Please mail any correspondence to Mr. Stolper at 950 Kagawa St., Pacific Palisades, California 90272.

*Howard Johnson would like information on "tune variants" (as described in his entry on page 1 of this newsletter) sent to him at Box 407, Woodstock, New York 12498.

*Robert Javors would like to know: (1) "the real identity of Bluesboy Bill"; and (2) where to find biographical details on Sonny Boy Johnson, who recorded on the Murray label. Mr. Javors also would like suggestions for additions to the new edition (forthcoming) of his Blues Records 1943-1966. Corrections of errors in the present edition will be appreciated. Mr. Javors would also like to hear from holders of post-World War II blues collections who will correspond with him regarding the new edition of his Blues Records (see page 3). He would like information on collections which would be useful and available for his research.

*Theophilus David Fisher, USN (Ret.), 130 Woodruff Lane, Staten Island, New York 10310, is seeking a photograph of the 1943 graduating class of the Great Lakes Naval Station's Camp Moffett, Company 1291, 14th Regiment, 16th Battalion.

*John Hasse is seeking information, scores, photographs, and other documents pertinent to his research on Russell Smith, a black Indianapolis pianist who composed ragtime music in the early part of the twentieth century and moved on to New York City, where he was associated with Noble Sissle. Information on the whereabouts of Smith's relatives is also desired. Mr. Hasse may be reached at: Archives of Traditional Music, 057 Maxwell Hall, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana 47405.

*Bruce Bastin, 5, The Mount, Ifield, Crawley, Sussex RH11 0LF, England, would like to receive information on Edgar Rogie Clark. Mr. Bastin would be glad to hear from scholars who can share correspondence and leads on archival holdings pertaining to the subject. Addresses of the subject's relatives will also be appreciated.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INFORMATION

*Paul Berliner's book, The Soul of Mbira: Music and Traditions of the Shona People of Zimbabwe, was recently published by the University of California Press.

*Memphis State University is offering master's and doctoral programs in musicology (regional studies). "These are essentially ethnomusicology programs with a specialization in southern regional folk and popular music. The programs provide many opportunities for coursework and research in such areas as Afro-American folk music, blues, gospel music, jazz, rhythm & blues, etc., as well as in Anglo-American folk music, country & western, and gospel music of the region." For more information, write: Professor David Evans, Music Department, Memphis State University, Memphis, Tennessee 38152.

*Will Marion Cook's In Dahomey will be performed as the second program of a new series, entitled SONORITIES IN BLACK MUSIC, at Morgan State University. The first program in the series will include works by Leslie Adams, John Work, Joseph Boulogne Chevalier de St. Georges, Oswald Russell, Mark Fax, Felipe Gutiérrez y Espinosa (American première), and Talib Rasul Hakim (world première). Recordings of some of the programs eventually may be available, and tours are possible.

*Dominique-René de Lerma's speaking engagements are now managed by George Neely, Artist Representative, 711 Stoney Springs Drive, Baltimore, Maryland 21210.

*The Edward Waters College (Jacksonville, Florida) Concert Chorale, in March, 1979, will tour Georgia, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, and Missouri. In May, the group will tour South Carolina, North Carolina, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. For additional information, write: Professor H. Alvin Green, Edward Waters College, 1658 Kings Road, Jacksonville, Florida 32209.

*Paul Quinn College will send a group on a tour of mid-Southern, mid-Western, and Eastern cities during the summer of 1979. Featuring music by black composers, the group will perform in Little Rock, Knoxville, Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Flushing, Boston, Wilberforce, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, Tulsa, and Oklahoma City. For details, write: Professor Wilber Lee Northington, Paul Quinn College, 1020 Elm Avenue, Waco, Texas 76704.

*Jack Bradley is organizing a regional tour with "Black Music on Film," featuring such performers as Bessie Smith, Ethel Waters, Duke Ellington, Eubie Blake, Louis Armstrong, and Count Basie. For additional information, write Mr. Bradley at P.O. Box 333, Harwich Port, Massachusetts 02646.

*Joan R. Hillsman is available for lectures on the topic, "The History of Black Gospel Music." For further information, write Dr. Hillsman at 3706 Stonecliff Road, Suitland, Maryland 20023.

*The Creative Music Studio is now accepting applications for its ten-week spring, 1979 session. Confirmed artist-teachers for the session are: Don Cherry, Karl Berger, Jack DeJohnette, The Raymond Johnson Dancers, Collin Walcott, Nana Vasconcelos, and Don Moye. For additional information, write or call: Creative Music Studio, P.O. Box 671, Woodstock, New York 12498; (914) 338-7640.

*Lemuel Berry's book, Biographical Dictionary of Black Musicians and Educators, is available from Educational Book Publishers, P.O. Box 1219, Guthrie, Oklahoma 73044. The publisher describes the book as including "approximately 1900 musicians and educators dating from the late 1800's to the present. A biography on each entry is provided discussing such areas as date and place of birth, death, educational background, compositions, publications, achievements, honors, awards, noted events, etc." \$12.95 paper; \$16.95 cloth.

EDITOR

Samuel A. Floyd, Jr.

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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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