

Columbia College Chicago

Digital Commons @ Columbia College Chicago

Center for Black Music Research: Black Music
Research Newsletter

Publications

Fall 9-1-1979

Black Music Research Newsletter, Fall 1979

Samuel Floyd
Columbia College Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.colum.edu/cbmrnews>



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#), and the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Floyd, Samuel, "Black Music Research Newsletter, Fall 1979" (1979). *Center for Black Music Research: Black Music Research Newsletter*. 11.
<https://digitalcommons.colum.edu/cbmrnews/11>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Publications at Digital Commons @ Columbia College Chicago. It has been accepted for inclusion in Center for Black Music Research: Black Music Research Newsletter by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Columbia College Chicago. For more information, please contact drossetti@colum.edu.

The National Advisory Board

INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN BLACK AMERICAN MUSIC

- T. B. Boyd III, Executive Director of the National Baptist Publishing Board, Nashville, Tennessee
- Jean C. Broeren, Executive Director, Wisconsin Housing Finance Authority, Madison, Wisconsin; jazz devotee, collector
- Jerome Clair, Attorney-at-Law, Washington, D.C.
- William A. Collier II, Assistant Vice President of the First American National Bank, Nashville, Tennessee
- Dominique-René de Lerma, Director of Graduate Studies, Morgan State University, Baltimore, Maryland; scholar, author
- Michael R. Dingerson, Associate Dean, Graduate School and Director, Research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois
- Marie D. Gadsden, Vice President and Director, Phelps-Stokes Fund, Washington, D.C.; scholar
- Wendell M. Logan, Professor of Afro-American Music, Oberlin Conservatory, Oberlin, Ohio; composer, scholar
- Joseph T. McMillan, Jr., Executive Secretary, Council for Higher Education of the United Church of Christ, New York, New York
- Norman Ross, Vice President, First National Bank of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois; classical music radio show host
- Georgia A. Ryder, Dean of the School of Arts and Letters, Norfolk State University, Norfolk, Virginia; scholar
- Erwin A. Salk, President, Salk, Ward and Salk Mortgage Bankers, Chicago, Illinois; scholar, author
- Russell Sanjek, Vice President of Broadcast Music, Inc., New York, New York
- John F. Sawyer, Director, Blair School of Music, Nashville, Tennessee; Chairman, Nashville Music Consortium
- Arnold Shaw, Las Vegas, Nevada; author, composer, scholar
- Geneva Southall, Professor and Chairman, Department of Afro-American and African Studies, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota; scholar and author
- Eileen Southern, Professor of Afro-American Studies and of Music, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; scholar, author, and editor
- Clark Terry, New York, New York; free-lance musician, band leader, author, businessman

Leon Thompson, Director of Educational Activities for the New York Philharmonic, New York, New York; conductor, composer

Justin P. Wilson, Attorney-at-Law, Nashville, Tennessee

Coinciding with the Board meeting was Fisk University's Jubilee Day Celebration, an annual event during which tribute is paid to the "original nine," the singers who toured parts of America and Europe in 1873. Board members attended the Jubilee Day convocation, where they heard speeches about the historic occasion as well as musical performances by guest singer Robert McFerrin and the current Fisk Jubilee Singers. The Board was introduced to the Fisk Family by President Walter J. Leonard. On Jubilee Day at Fisk, the logic and appropriateness of a Fisk University Institute for Research in Black American Music was clearly evident and warmly appreciated. The Board meeting was financed by the Board with assistance from the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP).

*Since we began planning for the publication of Black Music Research Newsletter, scores of letters have reached us. Carrying inquiries and comments of many kinds, they all remark on the importance of the newsletter to the field of black music research. Of the several which we received during the planning stage, prior to the release of the first issue, the following letter is a sample.

Dear Mr. Floyd,

I have just received today your letter concerning your proposed newsletter "Black Music Research." I hope and trust that I am not too late in returning your forms duly completed.

Please allow me to say that I feel, like yourself, that there is "an important need" for such a newsletter. The biggest problem being, at present, that those of us who are engaged in various black music research do not always know what other researchers are working on. If you can set up a permanent department and then advise us all on "who is doing what," then I am certain we would find quite a number of us actually doing similar research work. At present, I have interviewed quite a number of New York black musicians, who have given me information which may be of use to some other researcher. I am quite willing to exchange my findings with other bona fide researchers. To date, the British jazz magazine Storyville has published two of my Musicians' Life Stories, and I am willing to donate copies of these to your Black Music Research section if required. I have also written a number of articles/reviews for The Mississippi Rag.

I trust that this letter will give you some idea of how a researcher like myself would welcome the kind of newsletter that you propose. Being a white researcher, I sincerely would like to see your project attract as many black researchers as possible to it. This music is a most important part of the black people's culture and it would be great if more black researchers join the project in order to document the black music history.

Thank you again for writing to me. I'd be most grateful if you will send me a copy of your newsletter, when it becomes available.

David Griffiths
Wales, Great Britain

After Volume 1, Number 1 was published, several notes of appreciation and many letters of inquiry were received weekly. An example of the kind of assistance sought by readers outside the field follows:

Dear Mr. Floyd,

Last week I tried reaching you by phone but was told that you'd not be back until a time when I was away from New York; hence, this letter in place of a telephone chat.

Don Butler, executive director of the Gospel Music Association, has sent me a copy of your Black Music Research Newsletter. It's excellent and I do appreciate your reference to the Gospel Music Association therein.

This year I've been asked to chair the screening committee for the Gospel Music Association Dove Awards. This means careful research into the area of all phases of gospel music. As you know, balloting and awards take place in specific categories: best performances by gospel people both male and female, television programs, composition and albums, among others. In the album category, we have it broken down into traditional, inspirational, contemporary, gospel done by non-gospel artists, and black.

It's in the black area that my committee and I are most concerned. We want to be certain precisely what is considered black/black music and what is considered black/white music. Black writers and performers who perform and write for white audiences will have to compete with white people in that area. However, it's my committee's opinion that people who are in the black tradition and who perform and write for black audiences should not have to compete with white people for an award.

I'm picking brains all along the way so that when our screening is done this year, we'll be fair in our judgements. Are there any guidelines which you can send along which will be helpful? If you can, believe me, my committee and I will be most grateful.

W. F. Myers
Vice President, SESAC
New York City

(Note: Since the above letter was written nearly two years ago, the contents do not necessarily reflect the current thinking of its writer, or that of the screening committee.)

The following letter is an example of the kind of exchange and referral which takes place following each issue of the newsletter.

Dear Dr. Molette:

I note in Black Music Research Newsletter that you have raised inquiries about four (4) musical works. I would direct you to Dr. Helen Armstead-Johnson at the Armstead-Johnson Foundation for Theatre Research. The address is:

Hotel Chelsea
222 West 23rd Street
New York, New York 10036

I am sure that Dr. Johnson will be able to give you some concrete answers.

Wendell P. Whalum
Department of Music
Morehouse College
Atlanta, Georgia

We are confident that the communication thus far generated will continue, and are hopeful that all persons who receive information through these columns directly or indirectly, will acknowledge such assistance by writing letters to the persons who have supplied them with help.

RESEARCH NEWS; QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*John Chilton, of London, England, is engaged in research on the Jenkins Orphanage Bank of Charleston, South Carolina, one of America's most important producers of black musicians in the 1920's and 1930's. Mr. Chilton, author of The Louis Armstrong Story, Billie's Blues, Teach Yourself Jazz, and Who's Who of Jazz, may be contacted at Bloomsbury Book Co., 31-35 Great Ormond Street, London, WC1N 3H2, England.

FOUNDATION NEWS

- *The John W. Work III Memorial Foundation has announced the 1978 winner of the John W. Work III memorial award of \$1,000. The recipient is Steven R. Swayne of Altadena, California, a graduate of Occidental College. The Foundation's panel of judges--Jay Dawson, assistant conductor of the Nashville Symphony, Hal Hobson, composer and director of music for the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Nashville, and Ralph Simpson, professor and coordinator of music theory at Tennessee State University--selected Swayne's Sonata for Violin and Piano as the winning composition.
- *Reginald T. Buckner of the University of Minnesota has completed a project, Creative Teacher Training: An Experience in Aural Learning, in which five undergraduate music education majors studied privately with a jazz pianist. The study was undertaken to investigate what effects this particular creative teaching experience would have on the students' aural perception and what resulting experiences could be incorporated into teacher training

in music. The project was funded by the Small Grants Program, All-University of Minnesota Council on Liberal Education.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND INFORMATION

- *Geneva Southall's Blind Tom: The Post-Civil War Enslavement of a Black Musical Genius is now available. The first in a series of four monographs on the life and career of Thomas Greene Wiggins Bethune, it covers the period from "Tom's childhood to his legal re-enslavement in 1865." The remaining monographs in the series will cover portions of the period between 1865 and Tom's death in 1908. The book is published by Challenge Productions, Inc., P. O. Box 9624, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55440. The cost is \$7.95 for hardback copies, \$3.95 for paperback.
- *Sheldon Harris' Blues Who's Who was published in August. The 571 biographies are contained in 775 pages which also include six indices, a bibliography, and 450 photographs. The book is published by Arlington House Publishers, 165 Huguenot Street, New Rochelle, New York 10801. The cost is \$35.00.
- *Books on black music captured three of ASCAP's 1978 Deems Taylor Awards: Duke Ellington in Person by Stanley Dance and Mercer Ellington (5th place); Honkers and Shouters: The Golden Years of Rhythm and Blues by Arnold Shaw (6th place); and Scott Joplin: The Man Who Made Ragtime by James Haskins (7th place).
- *A monograph titled A Tale of Two Cities: Memphis Rock and New Orleans Roll, by Robert Palmer, has just been published by the Institute for Studies in American Music. The piece is based on lectures given by Palmer during his tenure as Senior Research Fellow of the Institute in the spring of 1978. The monograph "focuses on the contribution of the two most important Southern recording centers during the transition from rhythm-and-blues and country-and-western music to rock-and-roll." It is available from I.S.A.M., Department of Music, School of Performing Arts, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, New York 11210.
- *John W. English, William Van Derkloot, and Rob Williams have produced a 38 minute, 16mm color documentary film on one of America's last street singers. Titled It's a Mean Old World, the film features the Reverend Pearly Brown of Americus, Georgia, performing eleven traditional gospel, slave, and folk songs. The producers contend that "his inspirational singing and bottleneck guitar playing represent the best in native American music." The film's production was made possible by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the University of Georgia. It is available for sale or rental from EVW Films, Inc., P. O. Box 7761, Atlanta, Georgia 30357.
- *John Chilton has produced the first detailed study of McKinney's Cotton Pickers, one of the most important big bands of the 1920's. McKinney's Music: A Bio-Discography of McKinney's Cotton Pickers, contains many facts and photographs which are reaching print for the first time; the book has not been published in the United States, but can be obtained from Bloomsbury Book Shop, 31-35 Great Ormond Street, London, WC1N 3H2, England. The price is \$5.00 (post free).

*Edwin Hawkins and the twelve-member Hawkins Family performed with the National Symphony in that orchestra's first concert of gospel music on Thursday, September 6, 1979, at the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. "Gospel at the Symphony" featured Edwin, Walter, and Tramaine Hawkins. The group was joined by twenty singers from two Washington, D.C. choirs: the Richard Smallwood Singers and the Wesley Boyd Workshop Choir. William Henry Curry made his National Symphony conducting debut with this concert.

The program opened with three symphonic works: Celebration by Adolphus Hailstork, followed by Roy Harris' Symphony No. 3 and George Walker's Spirituals for Orchestra. The second half was a celebration of gospel music featuring the Edwin Hawkins family singing "O Happy Day," "Jesus Christ Is the Way" and other gospel selections.

*A catalog titled Music by Black Composers was released by Belwin-Mills' Publishing Corporation. "Designed to be helpful to musicians who plan programs of black music, to educators . . . and to libraries," the pamphlet lists choral compositions, art songs, popular songs, piano and organ solos, duets and collections, orchestral and band works, instrumental solos, ensemble music, and other types of compositions. Included are titles which are "publications of Belwin-Mills and four of its divisions," including those of Harry T. Burleigh, John W. Work, J. Rosamund Johnson, Scott Joplin, William Grant Still, Howard Swanson, Oliver Nelson, Hale Smith, and several other composers, both well-known and little-known. Also listed are works which the company has available for rental. The catalog is available from the publisher in Melville, New York 11746.

*The Fisk University Library's Special Collections Division has among its holdings a collection of folk music on 119 audio-discs. The collection includes vocal and instrumental music, interviews, folk tales, information concerning rural and urban life, and recorded documentaries of black music and black history. The informants are persons from all walks of life: former slaves, workers, field hands, musicians, and composers. Interviewers include Alan Lomax, John W. Work, and Charles Johnson. The historical period covered is from about 1860 to 1945, with the majority of material covering a timespan from ca. 1925 to 1945. The significance of the collection lies in its breadth and scope, which include many genres--the spiritual, the gospel song, long-meter tunes, ring shouts, sacred harp, and other religious song types; worksong, field holler, street cries and other folksong types; African music, blues, instrumental music, folklore, and folk tales. A large number of the recordings are unique or only-surviving copies, and are recorded on aluminum or glass-based discs. Field recordings are included.

Sources for the collection include the U. S. Library of Congress, the Walter Garwick Collection of Negro Songs and Folklore, private recordings made at Fisk, commercial recordings by various composers, and a CBS documentary done during World War II on Afro-American life and history. The collection has been dubbed onto six tapes and re-recorded at 3 3/4 i.p.s. for archival purposes; a shelf-list gives titles and notes for the entire collection. For study purposes, only the tapes will be available to play back. In addition, all are breakable, and the glass-based recordings, which comprise a major portion of the collection, are extremely fragile. The tapes and shelf-list were prepared by Professor Darius Thieme of the Fisk Music Department. Scholars are invited to explore and utilize the collection.

*Clark College will host the Ninth Annual Afro-American Music workshop of the Atlanta University Center on January 24-26, 1980. The workshop will open with a piano recital on Thursday evening, January 27, which will be followed on Friday and Saturday by sessions on a variety of topics on black music. Mme. Micheline Denis, of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, will be featured on Friday, and Edward Boatner will be honored at the closing event on Saturday. Registration will be \$10.00 including the cost of the luncheon. Hotel accommodations are available at Paschal's Motor Hotel, 830 Martin Luther King Drive, Atlanta, Georgia 30316. Out-of-town visitors should place their reservations directly with the hotel. Pre-registration may be completed by sending checks to CAAS, Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia 30314. Checks should be made payable to CAAS Workshop. On-site registration will be held at Clark College's Humanities Division offices.

*The National Research Council has announced its 1980 program for Postdoctoral Fellowships in the Humanities. Awarded for the conduct of "research at any appropriate nonprofit institution in the United States," the stipends range from \$13,000 to \$25,000 for twelve months. Address all inquiries to: The Fellowship Office, National Research Council, 2101 Constitution Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20418

*After this issue, Black Music Research Newsletter will be available only through paid subscription at a rate of \$2.00 per year; it will be issued twice yearly--in November and May. Members of BMR Associates will continue to receive the newsletter as part of their membership benefits. For the convenience of readers, a subscription form is included at the end of this issue; BMR Associates membership information is included in the enclosed materials.

EDITOR

Samuel A. Floyd, Jr.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Cynthia Burks

Lynne Davis

Anita Pulcher

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.

BMR NEWSLETTER is published by the Fisk University Institute for Research in Black American Music. Information submitted for inclusion should be mailed to the editor at the Institute for Research in Black American Music, Box 3, Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee 37203.