

# Institute for Studies In American Music

Conservatory of Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York

**N E W S L E T T E R**

Volume XXXII, No. 1

Fall 2002

## Alan Lomax Citizen Activist by Ron Cohen

Alan Lomax's death in July 2002 marked the end of an illustrious seven-decade career that generated immense praise as well as occasional notes of discord. Jon Pareles led off in his *New York Times* obituary with numerous accolades, capturing the life of "a musicologist, author, disc jockey, singer, photographer, talent scout, filmmaker, concert and recording producer and television host," which summed up much, but not all, of the Lomax story. Mark Feeney in the *Boston Globe* also stressed Lomax's invaluable field collecting, as well as his role in documenting and promoting the careers of Lead Belly, Muddy Waters, Jelly Roll Morton, Woody



Alan Lomax with Georgia Sea Island Singers  
Photo copyright John Cohen. Used by Permission

Guthrie, and Burl Ives. A *New York Times* Op-Ed piece stressed that "[h]is gift to all of us was to capture voice after voice, song after song that would have vanished into thin air otherwise." The widely distributed Associated Press wire story remarked on his unparalleled collecting, but noted that "his abrasiveness alienated some of his contemporaries. His politics disgusted others and, in the 1950s, contributed to his seven-year trip to England. Others criticized him as they had his father for compiling 'composites' of folk songs—taking versions from several people and blending them into one." Rock critic Dave Marsh has issued the harshest assessment so far, faulting Lomax on many fronts, particularly his elitist views. And David Hinckley captioned his critical piece in the *New York Daily News*, "Patronage—or pillage? Folk song collectors like Alan Lomax greatly enriched American music—if not musicians." Lomax was indeed a fascinating provocateur, a highly influential and sometimes controversial cultural broker whose lifelong commitment to the wedding of people's music and political activism has yet to be fully understood and appreciated by scholars and pundits.<sup>1</sup>

Born on 15 January 1915 in Austin, Texas, Alan Lomax was the youngest son of the esteemed folk song collector John Avery Lomax. Alan entered the University of Texas in 1930, and the following year he briefly attended Harvard University. But he soon returned to the University of Texas, where he graduated in 1936. In 1933 he began accompanying his father on collecting trips throughout the South for the Archive of American Folk Song of the Library of Congress. The following year he published his first article, "Collecting Folk-Songs of the Southern Negro," in the *Southwest Review*. In 1937 the twenty-two year-old was appointed Director of the Archive of American Folk Song, and for the next two years he conducted recording trips in Haiti and Kentucky, Indiana, Ohio, Michigan, and Vermont. In the meantime he and John published *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (1934) and *Negro Folk Songs as Sung by Lead Belly* (1936), and eventually *Our Singing Country* (1941). In 1939 he recorded Jelly Roll Morton for the Library of Congress, followed the next year by Woody Guthrie and Lead Belly—all seminal interviews that captured not only the music, but also the lives and personalities of these highly influential artists. By the early 1940s he had relocated to New York City, where he

---

## Inside This Issue

- Afro-Asian Hip Hop  
by Ellie M.  
Hisama ..... 3
- Musical Topics in Hale  
Smith's *Evocation*  
by Horace Maxile . 6
- Eileen Jackson  
Southern by  
Guthrie Ramsey ... 8
- Country and Gospel  
Notes by  
Charles Wolfe ..... 9
- Gendering Jazz  
Narratives: Review  
by Susan Cook ... 10
- Rorem on Everything:  
Review by  
Eleonora Beck .... 11

## Citizen Activist (continued)

produced a series of folk music shows for CBS radio, and promoted the careers of Burl Ives, Josh White, and the Almanac Singers.

During World War II, working for the Office of War Information and the Army's Special Services section, Lomax continued his radio productions, promoting the war effort through exploring the lives of average Americans. Following the war he received a Guggenheim Fellowship and soon began working for Decca Records, issuing albums ranging from Carl Sandburg to square dance calling, as well as the two Brunswick compilations, *Listen To Our Story* (1947) and *Mountain Frolic* (1947). The Brunswick collections were reissues of earlier (1927-1931) country and blues recordings originally intended for white and black rural audiences, but now repackaged for city listeners.

Lomax usually tried to connect his left-wing politics with his various folk music activities. In May 1940 he persuaded Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie to assist in editing a collection of protest songs that was subsequently published as *Hard Hitting Songs for Hard-Hit People* (1967). He was not directly involved in forming the Almanac Singers in 1941, but convinced Seeger, Lee Hays, and Millard Lampell that their informal, improvised way of arranging folk music was the best way to introduce traditional country music to city audiences. Later the group included Guthrie, Alan's younger sister Bess, and Agnes "Sis" Cunningham. During World War II he organized the Priority Ramblers, a Washington-based musical group of unionized office workers. Workers rights and civil rights were always in the forefront of his activities.

Although Lomax possessed a modest singing voice and adequate guitar skills, he never viewed himself as a performer, but rather a chronicler of folk music and promoter of folk musicians. Radio, he quickly discovered, offered an ideal medium for the presentation of folk music. In a letter, he expressed the importance of his work on a CBS children's radio show called *School of the Air* (1939-1941): "Through [these shows] Burl Ives and the Golden Gate Quartet became staff artists on CBS, Woody Guthrie became a well-known figure in broadcasting, Lead Belly, Aunt Molly Jackson, as well as many others, lumberjacks, Virginia fiddlers, French Canadian broadcasts, sea captains had their time with a large public, singing and talking about their lives." His CBS nighttime show, *Back Where I Come From*, "wove together proverbs, sermons, folk tales, folk prose, and song in a poetic way, all performed by this same cast of genuine folk singers.... Because of the success

of these shows I was able to find a market for the first commercial albums of folk music." His show *Your Ballad Man*, on the Mutual network in 1948, featured recorded songs and displayed his wide-ranging knowledge of current country and folk performers, including Red Foley, Cousin Emmy, Josh White, Bradley Kincaid, Pearl Bailey, Bob Crosby and His Orchestra, Roy Acuff, Pete Seeger, Salty Holmes, Merle Travis, Uncle Dave Macon, and Robert Johnson. His radio work in England during the 1950s demonstrated a similar eclectic approach and interest. Lomax always stressed his radio work and publishing—his role as a musical interpreter, moderator, and promoter for a wider, general public—while his legacy as a field collector has dominated his popular biography.<sup>2</sup>

For the remainder of the decade, until his departure for England in 1950 because of political and other pressures, Lomax continued his crusade of popularizing folk music, connecting modern America with its musical roots within the context of his progressive politics. Following the war he became involved with People's Songs, a national organization initiated by Pete Seeger, Lee Hays, and others to promote singing in unions and peace organizations. He arranged a biweekly concert series, "The Midnight Special at Town Hall," for People's Songs beginning in November 1946. A wide variety of performers were introduced to Manhattan audiences at "Blues at Midnight," "Strings at Midnight," "Calypso at Midnight," "Spirituals at Midnight," "Honky Tonk Blues at Midnight," "Ballads at Midnight," and "Mountain Frolic at Midnight." "Late Saturday evening, Alan Lomax plans to start a monumental project," John Wilson reported in *PM*, the progressive daily. "He intends to bring America to New York. Fortunately for Mr. Lomax, he does not mean to move America into the city physically, tree by tree or mountain by mountain. He will do it culturally, folk song by folk song, folk singer by folk singer."<sup>3</sup>

In his Foreword to *The People's Song Book* (1948) Lomax wrote: "At first I did not understand how these songs related to the traditional folk songs.... Slowly I began to realize that here was an emerging tradition that represented a new kind of human being, a new folk community composed of progressives and anti-fascists and union members." And he over-optimistically concluded: "Recently the fire of this people's singing movement has begun to run across the country.... The singers have a national organization of their own with vigorous branches in many cities. This is their book and ours, a folio of freedom folklore, a weapon against war and reaction, and a singing testament to the future." He enlisted as musical director for Progressive Party candidate Henry Wallace's quixotic run for the White House in 1948, where he encouraged E.Y. "Yip" Harburg to write "I've Got A Ballot" for the campaign.<sup>4</sup>

Lomax's leftist politics were somewhat shielded from public scrutiny, although this did not prevent his being listed in 1950 in the notorious Red Channels, which promoted the blacklisting of numerous show business people. He was identified as a folk singer, composer, and author of *Mister Jelly Roll* (1950), his influential story of the "father" of jazz that has remained in print for over fifty years.<sup>5</sup>

*Continued on page 12*

ISAM Newsletter Vol. XXXI, No. 2 / ISSN: 0145-8396

Editors ..... Ellie M. Hisama and Ray Allen

Managing Editor ..... J. Graeme Fullerton

Contributing Editors ..... H. Wiley Hitchcock  
Carol J. Oja  
Jeff Taylor

Production Assistant ..... Kathleen Mason Krotman

The ISAM Newsletter is published in the Fall and Spring. Copyright 2002 by the Institute for Studies in American Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, 2900 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11210.

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

Email: <isam@brooklyn.cuny.edu>

Website: <http://dephome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/isam>

# Afro-Asian Crosscurrents in Contemporary Hip Hop

April 29th of this year marks the tenth anniversary of the day on which four white Los Angeles police officers were acquitted of using excessive force against black motorist Rodney King. The verdict set off an interethnic rebellion that rocked the city. Among the thousands of buildings that were destroyed or vandalized were over 1,800 Korean-owned stores, with an estimated \$300 million in property damage; many of the attacks on Asian American-owned properties were carried out by young African Americans.<sup>1</sup> The targeting of Korean-owned businesses was partly rooted in African Americans' anger over the previous year's sentence of a Korean grocer, Soon Ja Du, who fatally shot a black high school student, Latasha Harlins, but received no jail time. Because the media painted the relationship between blacks and Asian Americans as one of stark opposition and conflict, for many people, the soundtrack for the uprising in Los Angeles might be Ice Cube's "Black Korea" (1991): "So pay respect to the black fist/Or we'll burn your store/Right down to a crisp/And then we'll see ya/Cause you can't turn the ghetto/Into Black Korea."

Interactions between African Americans and Asian Americans are, however, multi-faceted, and involve much more than acts of bias, distrust, and violence. Vijay Prashad investigates the political and cultural connections between Blacks and Asians over five centuries, uncovering a history of anti-racist struggle fueled by activists such as Malcolm X and Yuri Kochiyama.<sup>2</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley has coined the term "polycultural"—derived from the term "polyrhythmic"—to describe products of different living cultures. In contrast to multiculturalism, which "implies that cultures are fixed, discrete entities that exist side by side—a kind of zoological approach to culture,"<sup>3</sup> polyculturalism acknowledges the *simultaneous* existence of different cultural lineages in a single person. It recognizes the past and present solidarity between people of color.

Hip hop provides brilliant opportunities for musical crosscurrents and affinities between ethnic communities of color. American hip hop since 1990 offers compelling examples of interaction and exchange between African and Asian diasporic communities, and demonstrates the overwhelming political and aesthetic power of the polycultural.

The black Brooklyn-based duo dead prez weaves elements of Asian martial arts, philosophy, and war strategy into their music and image.<sup>4</sup> Like Public Enemy, dead prez are activist rappers. M1 (Mutulu Olugbala, formerly Lavon Alfred) is originally from Jamaica and grew up in Brooklyn, and Stic.man, or Stic. (Knm Olugbala, formerly Clayton Gavin) hails from Florida. They met at Florida A. & M., where M1 was a student. After M1 joined the National People's Democratic Uhuru movement in Chicago, he and Stic. formed dead prez.<sup>5</sup> The name of the group can be understood as slang for paper money as well as a call for the end of a presidential system of government.

Both M1 and Stic. are members of the African People's Socialist Party and disciples of Chairman Omali Yeshitela, who leads the Uhuru Movement, a grassroots Afrocentric political organization; their CD *lets get free* (Loud 1867-2, 2000) employs samples from Yeshitela's speeches. M1 is also active in the National People's

Democratic Uhuru Movement, organizing clothing drives, community dinners, mass rallies, and political education classes in the community.<sup>6</sup> Many of dead prez's songs are critical of the state, the police, and politicians. "We're trying to build a movement besides music, as opposed to just a gimmick of Blackness on records," Stic. remarks. "[W]e're talking about building a revolution, we're not just talking about black awareness, or positivity, or changing the school curriculum. We're talking about building black power for black people, through our daily work, and ultimately through revolution."<sup>7</sup> dead prez's influences include musicians (Public Enemy, NWA, Bob Marley, Marvin Gaye), political figures (Malcolm X, the Black Panthers, Huey P. Newton, Mohammed Ali), and the martial artist and actor Bruce Lee.

As Prashad argues, karate has taken root in many African American communities because it is accessible by working class youth—one doesn't need expensive equipment, "just a small space, bare feet, and empty hands," a point that dead prez also makes in their song "Psychology" (from *lets get free*): "They say karate means empty hands/So then it's perfect for the poor man." Prashad further notes that kung fu "gives oppressed young people an immense sense of personal worth and the skills for collective struggle." (132)

*Continued on page 14*



dead prez: Stic. and M1  
Photo by Anthony Cutajar



## ISAM Matters

Ron Cohen's lead article in this issue serves as a prelude to a festival ISAM is currently organizing in honor of **Alan Lomax**, who passed away on 19 July 2002 at the age of eighty-seven. Folklorists, ethnomusicologists, social historians, and journalists will gather to assess Lomax's esteemed career as a folk music collector, promoter, and scholar. Emphasis will be on Lomax's efforts to foster public awareness and appreciation of American and world folk music, placing him in the broader discussion of the role of traditional arts in 20th-century American life.

The festival, scheduled for 9, 11-12 April 2003, will also include a special panel on folk music as poetry, produced in conjunction with Citylore's People's Poetry Gathering, and a tribute concert featuring **Arlo Guthrie**, **Pete Seeger**, and the **New Lost City Ramblers**. A book-launching party will mark the release of *Alan Lomax: Selected Writings 1934-1997* (Routledge), edited by Ron Cohen. See the preliminary festival schedule on the adjoining page.

ISAM's colloquium series continued this fall with a lecture/demonstration on Latin Jazz by Brooklyn College alumnus **Arturo O'Farrill**, who was recently named director of the Lincoln Center Afro-Latin Jazz Ensemble. The son of renowned Latin jazz composer Chico O'Farrill, Arturo led the Lincoln Center ensemble in a premiere performance at Brooklyn College this past October. Also featured in our series were ethnomusicologist **Mark Slobin** (Wesleyan University), who spoke on the latest transnational trends in klezmer music, and ISAM's own **Jeff Taylor**, who presented his recent research on early jazz pianists Lil Hardin Armstrong and Lovie Austin. Taylor also delivered a version of the same paper at the Society for Music Theory meeting in Columbus, Ohio.

ISAM director **Ellie Hisama**, currently on leave and working on a volume of popular music essays, presented a paper on Afro-Asian hip hop to the faculty and students of Columbia University in early December. A version of her paper is included in this issue of the Newsletter. Acting director **Ray Allen** read a paper on *Porgy and Bess* as "folk opera" at the fall meeting of the American Folklore Society. Over winter break, **Salim Washington** will be touring France and returning to New York for an engagement at the Jazz Gallery.

ISAM, in co-sponsorship with the Mannes College of Music, organized a symposium entitled **Music and New York's Gilded Age** on 5 October at the New School. Presentations included "Beach and the Brownings" by **Adrienne Fried Block**, "Dialogues in Sculpture and Architecture at the Turn of the Century" by **Mark Mennin** and **Hilary Lewis**, "Opera in New York's Gilded Age" by **John Graziano**, and "I Have a Dream: The Story of James Reese Europe" by **Wayne Alpern**. An evening concert included selections by Beach, Griffes, Ives, Mahler, Dvorák, and Joplin.

We thank those readers who have generously contributed to our **Mark Tucker Behind the Beat Fund**, and ask those who have yet to give to consider a donation. With your support we hope to have a volume of Mark's jazz columns, drawn from his writing for our Newsletter (1982-2000), in print by late 2003.

—R.A.

CLASSIC BLUEGRASS  
FROM SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS

Connecting people  
through music

THE BEST  
of BROADSIDE  
1962-1988

jazz

Smithsonian Folkways Recordings

Pete Seeger

TO RECEIVE 20% OFF  
ANY SMITHSONIAN FOLKWAYS  
RECORDINGS TITLE:  
MENTION PROMO CODE  
1201-ISAM

www.folkways.si.edu  
folkways@aol.com 800.410.9815

WOODY GUTHRIE

# FOLK MUSIC IN THE AMERICAN CENTURY AN ALAN LOMAX TRIBUTE

9, 11 & 12 April 2003

Brooklyn College/CUNY Graduate Center/Cooper Union, New York City

*The portable recording machine, which my father and I were the first to use, provided the first breakthrough...by making it possible to record and play back music in remote areas, away from electrical sources, it gave a voice to the voiceless... Thus the portable recorder put neglected cultures and silenced people into the communication chain.*

—Alan Lomax, *The Land Where the Blues Began*

## Preliminary Schedule

Wednesday 9 April ♦ Brooklyn College

**Prelude: The Seeger/Lomax Connection**

A Concert with Mike Seeger introduced by Ray Allen

Friday 11 April ♦ CUNY Graduate Center

**Documenting the Folk**

**Collecting Folk Music in the American South and the Caribbean**

Nolan Porterfield (Southeastern Missouri State University)

Gage Averill (New York University)

David Evans (University of Memphis)

Peggy Bulger (Director, American Folklife Center)

Matt Barton (Lomax Archive)

**Promoting the Folk**

**Alan Lomax and the Urban Folk Music Revival**

Kip Lornell (George Washington University)

Irwin Silber (*Sing Out*)

Ed Cray (Woody Guthrie biographer)

Elija Wald (Josh White biographer)

Henrietta Yurchenko (City College, *emerita*)

**Lomax Song Tribute**

with the New Lost City Ramblers and friends



Saturday 12 April ♦ Cooper Union

**American Roots**

**The Lomax Legacy on the Air**

with Nick Spitzer of Public Radio International

**Folk Music as Poetry**

**The Lomax Legacy**

Mike Seeger - on southern ballads

Hal Cannon- on cowboy songs

Worth Long - on Delta blues

Les Slater - on calypso

**Lomax Tribute**

**Concert with**

**Arlo Guthrie,**

**Pete Seeger,**

**the New Lost**

**City Ramblers,**

**and Honey Boy**

**Edwards**



An Alan Lomax Tribute is sponsored by the Institute for Studies in American Music and the Conservatory of Music at Brooklyn College, and the Ph.D./D.M.A Program in Music and Continuing Education & Public Programs at the CUNY Graduate Center, Citylore, and the Alan Lomax Archive/Association for Cultural Equity.

An Alan Lomax Tribute is made possible by grants from the Baisley Powell Elebash Endowment, The Folk Alliance, and the Cerf Foundation.

For further information and festival schedule updates visit <http://depthome.brooklyn.cuny.edu/isam> or call 718-951-5655

# Musical Topics in Hale Smith's *Evocation*

During a seminar I took years ago on the Beethoven string quartets, a realization rocked the foundation upon which my musical knowledge stood. I was a Ph.D. candidate in Music Theory at Louisiana State University who happened to be African American. Although I was advised to not think about my research agenda until after my comprehensive examination, I occasionally thought about future projects. Within my growing appreciation and analytical grasp of the Western musical canon sprouted complex issues of reception, self, and identity. I found that I was most intrigued by concert music written by African American composers and by jazz. I wondered if I pursued this line of research whether I would appear to be trying to validate the works of African American composers—whose works need no validation—by putting their works under the scrutiny of rigorous, objective analysis. Would I have to “prove” myself to my colleagues that I was fit for the field by denying my true interests and focusing my research on the European masters? Would my work on African American pieces be received in scholarly venues wherein the canon reigns?

The seminar that sparked these concerns involved an analysis of a Beethoven string quartet. While the class discussion migrated toward issues of harmony, voice-leading, and form, I focused on the idea of composers conveying expression through musical topics and of an analysis addressing issues of musical expression. While I enjoyed exploring traditional analytical concerns such as harmony and motive, my cultural experiences consistently begged questions about expressivity and musical meaning, or signification, beyond the printed page—after all, I never sang or played “Amazing Grace” just as it appeared in the hymnal. The seminar led me to ponder the possibility of expanding or modifying the scope of topical analysis to music of diverse cultures, particularly the culture of African Americans, and thus I began a search for African American cultural topics that would allow me to “speak” analytically to musical emblems that “spoke” to me.

Expressivity lies at the heart of the African American musical experience. The cultural history of African Americans is reflected in oral and written musical traditions. Social, religious, and other aspects of the culture are readily recognized in expressive devices unique to African American music. As Samuel Floyd contends, “a compelling cultural musical continuity exists between all musical genres of the African American musical experience.”<sup>1</sup> Therefore, using an analytical method designed to address musical expression to me seems essential.

Musical semiotics appears to offer promising results toward such an endeavor. In *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style*, Leonard Ratner addresses the issue of musical expression by proposing a theory of topics. Invoking precepts from eighteenth-century theorists, Ratner explores musical meaning and expression in terms of topics, or musical signs, which he defines as the “subjects of musical discourse.”<sup>2</sup> V. Kofi Agawu expands the theories of Ratner in *Playing With Signs*.<sup>3</sup> Agawu is concerned with how and why topics surface and how they convey musical expression, and insists on a theory that celebrates “the interaction of topical and structural signs.”<sup>4</sup> My search for African American topics does not only identify the attributes that define African

American musical culture, but examines how those attributes, or signs, interact with each other and with the structural elements in a given piece.

The topics I propose hardly represent the entire spectrum of expression in African American music, but rather provide a platform from which this type of inquiry can begin. They are: (1) call-and-response, (2) signifyin(g), (3) spiritual/supernatural, (4) blues, and (5) jazz.<sup>5</sup> A thorough account of these topics requires a much larger scope than is possible in this essay, but each possesses distinguishing attributes. These topics have broad connotations and overlapping interpretations may occur. For example, an instrumental passage that recalls the vocal nuance of the spiritual may use jazz harmony; call-and-response techniques often occur in blues performance practice. However, it is precisely the interaction of related emblems that create the most powerfully expressive utterances in African American music. The following analysis will utilize some of the aforementioned topics in an interpretation of a passage from *Evocation*, a 1966 piano piece, by Hale Smith (b. 1925).<sup>6</sup>

Smith's compositional aesthetic is shaped by a number of contemporary influences such as modernism and expressionism. Dense chromaticism and serial techniques are among his favored devices and his works make extensive use of motives and linear constructs. Coupled with European and modernist influences is Smith's longstanding affinity for jazz. Since Smith's early introduction to Duke Ellington, jazz has saturated his musical life.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, one might expect jazz influences—conscious or unconscious—to surface in his compositions. And indeed, harmonic, melodic, and rhythmic characteristics associated with the jazz genre faintly emanate from within Smith's chromatic contexts, particularly in this solo piano piece. He is somewhat reluctant to assign a measure of cultural allegiance to his music and is not celebrated for deliberate black associations in his works. In fact, he asserts that the fact that he is African American will be quite obvious when he stands to take his bow, after his compositions have made their own impact.<sup>8</sup> Yet the expressive emanations from *Evocation* demonstrate a consummate technique and a subtle sensitivity to African American vernacular traditions.

Smith's *Evocation*, a short twelve-tone piece for piano, reflects a sensitive interaction between the worlds of African American vernacular and European Classical traditions. I will focus my discussion on pre-compositional issues, such as the twelve-tone row, and on a selected motive that reflects the interaction of the referential and structural domains. Among the African American topics I identify in *Evocation* are jazz, call-and-response, blues, and the spiritual/supernatural. This analysis will highlight the jazz, call-and-response, and blues topics.

Smith uses only the illustrated prime form and three other forms of the row in the entire piece. These four row forms all feature successions of perfect fourths as are bracketed in the twelve-tone row example. Smith often presents these perfect fourth successions in jazzy melodic and chordal constructs. He frequently employs these highlighted pitches as successions of descending perfect fourths in gestures that summon the quartal harmonic and improvisational practices of bop and post-bop schools. One is



inclined to refer to the quartal and modal excursions of McCoy Tyner, Herbie Hancock, or Chick Corea for the detection of the jazz topic even within the pre-compositional process of row construction. The jazz topic also surfaces in the actual composition as it assists motive identification and interpretation.

The motive illustrated in the second example is the most clear and convincing African American symbol in the piece. Because of its flavor and function, I refer to it as the “blue tag”—blues flavor, tag function. This motive undergoes a number of transformations in the piece, but my focus will be on this particular realization. The motive is cadential in function as its realizations punctuate each section of the piece’s ternary design, but its expressivity is most pronounced in its blue flavor. The alias refers to a blues symbol as the melodic triplet figure suggests a stock blues lick in F, involving the inflected seventh scale degree (E<sup>b</sup>). Pitch inflection, a common vernacular performance practice of African Americans, has been documented in the works of a number of scholars, and are often referred to as “blue notes.” These inflections are so frequent and salient that a scale has been ascribed to them, the blues scale. The perception of the expressive practice of pitch inflection should not be confined to a few altered notes of a Western diatonic model. The five-line staff is our convention, or perhaps our crutch, for notating these cultural emblems, and encounters with lower inflected scale degrees are often regarded as blue. Thus, the “blue tag” features the blues topic. The motive’s syncopated, triplet rhythm also adds to the vernacular flavor.

The call-and-response topic is suggested in the later segment of the gesture as the last two pitches, E<sup>b</sup> and F, are repeated at a softer dynamic level. The varying levels of loudness between the two brief gestures evoke a conversational dynamic: an exchange between a call and a response. The interactive character of the call-and-response topic within this gesture and others within the piece lead toward an interpretation of something or someone being evoked through an expressive summoning. Each realization of the “tag” in the piece features a modified treatment of the call-and-response topic. The jazz topic is observed again in the open voiced sonority that accompanies the “blue tag.” Performance practices of bop and post-bop piano are recalled again as open fifth and fourth chord voicings abound.

Hence, African American cultural topics are pronounced even within the single motive isolated for this essay. The power of Smith’s compositional expression rests within its subtlety. African American signification is deeply embedded in the chromatic con-

text. However, the invocative vernacular gesture of the “blue tag” suggests more referential content than one might expect in a twelve-tone setting. Topical considerations complement the conventions of structural and motivic analysis and pose a potential challenge to the music scholar: to investigate interactions between the referential and the structural en route to thorough interpretation.

The implications for an expansion of topics theory provide fertile ground for music scholarship. In the case of Smith’s piece, topical analysis affords fruitful insights into pre-compositional processes and prompts intriguing vernacular references to motivic characters. While this essay focuses on African American composers and culture-specific emblems, topical analyses may be broadened to apply to musical manifestations of other cultures. Through this mode of inquiry, our analytical and pedagogical canon may well expand to include African American composers and other composers outside

the Western tradition. In turn, the academy is rewarded by way of challenges to and extensions of conventional inquiry.

—Horace J. Maxile, Jr.

University of North Carolina at Asheville

The image contains two musical staves. The top staff, titled "Twelve-tone Row", shows a single melodic line on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The notes are: Bb, C, D, Eb, E, F, G, Ab, A, Bb, C, D. The bottom staff, titled "Blue Tag", shows a more complex realization with two staves (treble and bass clef). It features a triplet of eighth notes in the treble staff (G, Ab, A) and various dynamics including *f* and *mf*. The rhythm is syncopated, with notes often starting on the off-beat.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., *The Power of Black Music: Interpreting Its History from Africa to the United States* (Oxford University Press, 1995), 10.

<sup>2</sup> Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (Schirmer, 1980).

<sup>3</sup> V. Kofi Agawu, *Playing With Signs: A Semiotic Interpretation of Classic Music* (Princeton University Press, 1991).

<sup>4</sup> Agawu, 23. Structural signs for Agawu involve components of form, contrapuntal relationships, and other structural bases for classic music.

<sup>5</sup> Floyd defines musical signifyin(g) as “troping: the transformation of preexisting musical material by trifling with it, teasing it, or censoring it” (8). This concept is directly linked to Henry Louis Gates’s theory of African American literary criticism. See Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of African American Literary Criticism* (Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>6</sup> Hale Smith is one of the African American composers discussed in my dissertation entitled “Say What?: Topics, Signs, and Signification in African American Music,” (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University, 2001). Other composers examined in the dissertation include William Grant Still, David Baker, and Charles Mingus.

<sup>7</sup> At the age of sixteen, Smith met Duke Ellington. Ellington critiqued one of Smith’s scores and offered some advice. A number of biographical accounts list Duke Ellington among Smith’s major influences. See Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. “Hale Smith,” *International Dictionary of Black Composers* (Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 1999) and Malcolm Breda, “Hale Smith: A Biographical Study of the Man and his Music” (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern Mississippi, 1975).

<sup>8</sup> Hale Smith, “Here I Stand,” in *Readings in Black American Music*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, ed. Eileen Southern (W. W. Norton, 1983), 323-26.

# Eileen Jackson Southern: A Tribute and a Mandate

Although I cannot claim to have known Eileen Southern personally, I speculate that this is probably not the kind of tribute she would have enthusiastically endorsed. In her professional writing—the mode through which others of my generation and I “knew” her—she rarely talked about “the personal” in the realm of her groundbreaking scholarship on African American music. But Southern’s passing on 13 October 2002 couldn’t be felt more personally for those of us who consider the field of black music research our scholarly home, and is certainly reason for reflection on her impact on the field.

I first met Professor Southern in the early 1990s when as a graduate student I served as a research assistant on what would become her final project on the National Association of Negro Musicians. As she was to so many others, Southern was a legend to me, the grand dame of black music research, the woman who had single-handedly turned the field into a legitimate scholarly specialty. I suspect I first spied her best-known publication, *The Music of Black Americans* (1971), on the bookshelf of one of my undergraduate professors, years before I even dreamed of becoming a music scholar myself. Her work would not have its fullest impact on me until later, when I would follow in her footsteps and pursue advanced degrees in music. Faced with doing research in the area of black music for the first time, I consulted the book as my usual first stop for any topic that interested me. While I recognized the value of her work—something about anything one would need to know about black music traditions in the U.S. seemed to be there—it would still be some time before I could fully comprehend the significance of this woman to our field.

By now her life’s story is well known. She was born in Minneapolis in 1920 and raised and educated primarily in Chicago. The city became, during her formative years, a hotbed of creative activity that many refer to as the “Chicago Renaissance.” Other black female musicians of the western art music ilk such as Florence Price and Margaret Bonds were also weaned in this dynamic artistic environment. What is not often emphasized is that Southern spent many years as a gigging musician. I was made aware of this fact as I poured over issues of the *Chicago Defender* during my brief stint as her research assistant. Her activities were reported on as she concertized locally and toured widely as a classical pianist. A capstone experience in her early performing career was playing a Mozart piano concerto with the symphony of the Chicago Musical College, an institution where she studied piano.

She was inspired to her ultimate life’s work in scholarship by her father, a Brown University-trained chemistry professor, who encouraged her to pursue the life of the mind. Like many of her generation, she spent her early college teaching years at historically black institutions, a familiar situation for educated African Americans during the era of Jim Crow segregation. When she moved to New York City and entered the Ph.D. program in musicology at New York University in 1951, Southern cut her musicological teeth on Renaissance Studies under the preeminent scholar Gustave Reese. She would later call the experience “real musicology.”

But “real musicology,” for all of its pleasures, had its drawbacks. In fact, Southern was angered when several of her fellow musicologists suggested she scrap her idea for a course she was developing on black music history. Like Rosa Parks before her, Southern showed the world how a single gesture could become a watershed event. The materials for the course became *The Music of Black Americans*, which was followed shortly thereafter by the appearance of the journal she and her husband Joseph Southern founded in 1973, *The Black Perspective in Music*. Taken together, both of these efforts represent, in my view, the dawn of contemporary black music research. A voluminous list of field-defining publications and achievements in the field has followed. Her work and tenacious spirit ultimately earned her an appointment at Harvard University in 1974, adding yet another accomplishment to her very long list of what might be called “the first/only” syndrome, in which minorities are allowed to break through the glass ceiling of racism and sexism.

As the first black woman to become a tenured full professor and chair of Afro-American studies at Harvard, I can only speculate on the difficulties and slights that Southern endured over the years. By the time my generation of scholars came on the scene, she had all but disappeared from the conference circuit where we could rub elbows with the venerables of her generation. All we knew was that the books and new editions kept flowing with the assistance of her faithful protégés Professors Josephine Wright and Doris McGinty. Although Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. has recently dubbed her a “quiet revolutionary,” one can sense the roar of a lioness behind the gentle smile we see in her photographs. (I certainly felt a hint of this when she returned my first efforts at research for her with some quiet but extremely firm instructions on how future work could better meet her specifications.) She remained a restless scholar in her later years: I was extremely impressed—better, blown away—when I read about rap music in the 1997 third edition of her somewhat conservative *The Music of Black Americans*.

I have learned recently that Floyd conducted a series of taped interviews with Southern that are now archived at the Center for Black Music Research at Columbia College in Chicago. Reportedly, she talks quite candidly about some of her experiences through the years as the first/only. Floyd was instructed that scholars could access them on the event of her passing. Although I haven’t heard the tapes yet, I suspect that we will learn as much from them about the unspoken history of musicology as we did about the unwritten history of African American music from Southern’s scholarship. We might learn, for example, why after all these years there still exists a paucity of black female scholars in the academic music disciplines. We might also learn why it’s time for us to become simply “revolutionary.”

—Guthrie P. Ramsey, Jr.  
University of Pennsylvania



# Country and Gospel Notes by Charles Wolfe

Like most folk song collectors in the 1920s and 1930s, Alan Lomax struggled with the problem of how commercial phonograph records were impacting the repertoires of his singers. As early as the late 1920s, recorded songs by popular figures like Vernon Dalhart, Jimmie Rodgers, and The Carter Family were starting to show up next to traditional American and British ballads in collections. Lomax himself, traveling into remote mining camps of eastern Kentucky in the fall of 1937, complained that songs from commercial sources had pretty well taken over the repertoires of miners, and that only a handful of them knew snatches of ballads. The trouble was that few collectors had much knowledge of the extent of the record industry catalogues. There was no available database of the various recordings, no discography or checklist to use as a reference. By 1938 jazz fans had such a tool in Charles Delaunay's *Hot Discography*, but nothing existed for blues, country, or gospel records. To partially remedy this, Lomax himself compiled a checklist of commercial records in 1940, but it was not widely circulated.

Lomax and his colleagues would have been delighted to see the publication of this generation's most important reference book, *Country Music Sources: A Biblio-discography of Commercially Recorded Traditional Music*, compiled by Guthrie T. Meade (University of North Carolina Press, 2002; \$95.00). In over one thousand pages of dense type, the book lists entries for hundreds of commercially recorded songs. Each entry starts with a paragraph of printed sources, composers (when known), dates of first appearance in print, and citations to major folk song collections. Next comes a list, in chronological order, of all the commercial recordings of the song, giving the record company, place of recording,

date of recording, catalogue release number, and date of release. Full indexes giving song titles (including alternate ones) and artists allow easy navigation through the data.

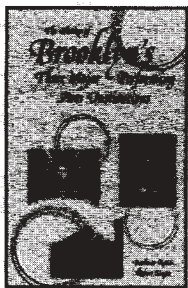
There are a few caveats, however, in using this reference. The reader must understand that there are certain parameters for the collection. First is the fact that the recorded citations cut off in the early 1940s—the years that correspond with the long recording ban in 1943 and 1944. It has become a convention in discography to use 1942 or 1943 as a watershed to separate classic and modern styles, and jazz and blues discographies generally follow suit. Thus *Country Music Sources* conforms well to this accepted system of classification. But as a result, one will not find the post-1943 records by Doc Watson, Flatt and Scruggs, Grandpa Jones, and others performers who continued to record traditional music well into the 1950s.

The second limitation involves the arbitrary criteria for selection of the traditional songs included in the work. Meade notes: "The definition of traditional song for the purpose of this discography includes all of the recorded songs that have appeared in published folk song collections, as well as those songs copyrighted or appearing in print prior to 1920." Admitting that this date is "somewhat artificial," Meade points out that there were occasions when he did violate it. Nevertheless, some songs written and performed by artists after this date—such as Jimmie Rodgers's "When It's Peach Picking Time in Georgia"—do not appear.

A third problem involves gospel songs—not the older nineteenth-century ones, but the newer ones published by companies

*Continued on page 11*

## THE STORIES BEHIND THE MUSIC



### THE HISTORY OF BROOKLYN'S THREE MAJOR PERFORMING ARTS INSTITUTIONS

**Barbara Parisi and Robert Singer**

December 2002, 192 pages

0-8108-3765-X \$45.00 cloth

This is the first book that investigates the history of Brooklyn's three best-known performing arts institutions: Brooklyn Academy of Music, Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn

College, and St. Ann's Center for Restoration and the Arts. Divided into three major sections, this work establishes the cultural history and social context in which these three institutions developed and thrived.

#### Highlights:

- ♪ Founding histories
- ♪ Programming, management, and architecture
- ♪ Construction and renovations
- ♪ Artistic visions throughout the years



Scarecrow Press 4720 Boston Way Lanham, MD 20706

Phone (800) 462-6420 fax (800)338-4550

[www.scarecrowpress.com](http://www.scarecrowpress.com)



### THE MODERN SINGING MASTER

Essays in Honor of Cornelius L. Reid

**Ariel Bybee and James E. Ford**

2002, 344 pages

0-8108-4241-6 \$45.00 cloth

This is a compilation of essays written by renowned singing teachers as their testament to their great singing instructor, who enabled them to really understand how to sing and how to teach singing to their students. His research and interpretations have given birth to a new era of voice and pedagogy known as "Functional Voice Training."



### BARTÓK AND THE PIANO

A Performer's View

**Barbara Nissman**

2002, 336 pages (CD included)

0-8108-4301-3 \$49.50 cloth

In the midst of recording Bartók's complete works, renowned pianist Barbara Nissman has explored the very roots of his creative processes.

"...Nissman's study and research translate into one of the most thorough examinations of one performer to another."—Leonard Slatkin, Music Director, National Symphony Orchestra and Chief Conductor, BBC Symphony Orchestra

PROMO 7W2BRO

# Gendering Jazz Narratives

Three recent books present underexplored and unexpected vantage points from which to re-encounter the jazz terrain, a landscape that all too often has been reproduced as a picture perfect postcard suitable for the jazz tourist: Angela Y. Davis's *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism: Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday* (Vintage, 1998; \$15); David Margolick's *Strange Fruit: Billie Holiday, Café Society, and an Early Cry for Civil Rights* (Running Press, 2000; \$12); and Sherrie Tucker's *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s* (Duke University Press, 2000; \$19). The three books play off each other in interesting ways. Billie Holiday's masterpiece "Strange Fruit" serves as the point of departure for David Margolick's musings while her life and career are central to Angela Y. Davis's interpretation of black feminism. Holiday's public embodiment of black glamour as well as her model of black female professionalism informs the public personas and activities of Tucker's "all-girl" bands. Margolick and Tucker both share journalist credentials, while Tucker's acknowledged graduate study with Davis is apparent in their shared commitment to the centrality of race and gender to jazz scholarship.

Angela Y. Davis's *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* is the oldest of the three books and calls attention to its refreshing point of view—black feminism—in its title. Davis spends much of the opening three chapters exploring the contextual realities of race and gender and what bringing them together means. Her writing in these early chapters can be thought-provoking: "Sexuality thus was one of the most tangible domains in which emancipation was acted upon and through which its meanings were expressed. Sovereignty in sexual matters marked an important divide between life during slavery and life after emancipation." After laying out her claims for taking seriously the socially-shaping roles of black women in popular culture, Davis proceeds to explore the public careers of Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday, presenting a kind of triumvirate of black feminist womanhood centered in the personal lives and working-class communities of these performers. Especially illuminating are Davis's explorations of the politics and power of post-slavery black sexuality, as suggested in the above quotation, and its problematic nature for Americans both black and white.

While there is much to celebrate about this work, the high promise of the opening chapters does not carry through, and the book quite literally fades away with a full 158 pages of transcribed lyrics. This transparent reliance on lyrics, admittedly many of which have not been transcribed, is problematic for many reasons, not the least of which is that it suggests that the celebrated musicking of these women can be reduced to lyrics shorn of their auralty. Worse, it suggests that these women somehow are their

texts, that their "real" autobiographical stories are the ones they shared in public, even when it is unclear what control they had over their material. This is another version of the "just singing their lives" trope that so often undercuts the agency of female performers. Overall Davis's analysis needs to be more nuanced in thinking through and challenging the time-worn dualities that have marked the "bad boy/victim girl" discourses of blues and jazz while ignoring race and gender politics.



Billie Holiday, early 1940s

Billie Holiday and her performance of "Strange Fruit," much beloved by Davis, acts as the frame for David Margolick's slim text. Expanded from an essay that first appeared in *Vanity Fair*, Margolick attempts a kind of thick description/reception history of Abel Meeropol's song and its multiple performances by Holiday. While drawing on recent jazz scholarship—he quotes from Davis's *Blues Legacies*, although it's unclear given other comments whether he's actually read her or not—Margolick probes what "Strange Fruit" and its atypical anti-lynching text meant to Holiday and to her listeners over the years. I can well imagine that readers of *Vanity Fair* aren't keen on footnotes. However, his choice to move to a book venue, with a forward by Hilton Als and other claims to credibility, demands review of his research methodology.

Margolick quotes from performers who remember a Holiday performance, for example, but he doesn't indicate whether he did the interview or took it from another source. To cite another instance, in Margolick's discussion of the radio censorship of "Strange Fruit," he mentions a photograph of a recording marked "not for airplay," but fails to attribute the picture to the *Ladyslipper Music Catalogue*, a source I steered him to. This sort of inadequate sourcing is pervasive throughout the work, calling into question the quality of the information and validity of Margolick's interpretations. Without bibliography or notes, how do we know where and how he came to his material? Of more concern, what other insights and information has he appropriated from the work of others without the expected acknowledgment?

The star here is Sherrie Tucker, and it would be hard to overpraise *Swing Shift: "All-Girl" Bands of the 1940s* for the way it opens up unexpected terrain and asks fresh new questions. Tucker takes her readers on a literal journey as we join the busloads of female musicians, from the The Prairie View Co-eds to the Sharon Rogers All-Girl Band, who attempted to make the daunting trip from girl musician to professional wage earner during the high times of the 1940s. Meticulously researched and sourced, cogently argued, and generally written with an ear and eye for the general public, it is without a doubt one of the best books on jazz or American music to come out in the last five years. Tucker relies

*Continued on page 13*



# Rorem on Everything

While music resounds in the heavens, Ned Rorem's autobiographical *Lies: A Diary 1986-1999* (Counterpoint, 2000; \$19) proves that composing it can be hell on earth. His accounts are filled with the ups and downs of living an artist's life in New York City, the capital of ambition. At times I read his diary as I would read notes for an obituary, the achievements and failures, the loves and disappointments carefully counted. "Why keep a journal?" Rorem asks. "To stop time. To make a point about the pointlessness of it all. To have company. To be remembered. For there is so much to be recalled, with no one to do the recalling." His recollections make for exceptionally good reading, and his *Lies* is so engaging that it was hard to put down.

*Lies* chronicles a transitional period in Rorem's life, when he loses his parents and longtime partner, Jim Holmes. Rorem's entries about Holmes's gradual decline from cancer and AIDS provoke new insights from the prolific writer. One of the most touching appears in 1995 when Holmes asks, "'Do we know anyone who could be called a Nice Person?' We search long, and in vain." Rorem asks, "'Am I a nice person?' ... 'Good heavens, no,' says JH." Perhaps this is what we care most about in the end and it is the end that most concerns Rorem in *Lies*. While an earlier collection was entitled *Knowing When to Stop*, this diary might be subtitled *Knowing How to Stop*.

In coming to some kind of conclusion, Rorem makes it clear that he is a product of his teachers, parents, books, students, music, lovers, and, to a surprising degree, television. "Documentary on Sistine Chapel ceiling's refurbishing. How breathtakingly great in detail, yet how slightly disappointing to draw back and view the whole. The whole, less than its parts." What matters most is whether something is good or not and why, and one of life's goals is to fine-tune the ability to judge. Elliott Carter's music is still a target of Rorem's disdain, while with the passage of time Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's music receives more favorable reviews: "I went alone to Zwilich's new and pretty good quartet." We read delectable quips: "Rereading *To the Lighthouse*. What marvelous melancholy flow. What a humorless bore. Rereading Beckett. What a fraud."

He is also the product of Holmes's illness. "Every day, mostly in the morning, I ponder dying. Living seems... uninteresting anymore. Noise here, in the streets, and Perlman's machine." (Itzhak Perlman's "goddam air conditioner" that whirs twelve months a year is one of the diary's most memorable inventions.) And he endures the hourly reminder of Holmes's sickness: "Jim lives in a self-contained hell, a bubble of pain that floats from room to room of the otherwise 'normal' house." Rorem's writing is as blunt and whimsical as ever, placing him squarely with great American composer/writers Virgil Thomson and Charles Ives. The diary ends with descriptions of his pets's mundane machinations after Holmes's death, testimony to the joys of living in the present.

*A Ned Rorem Reader* (Yale University Press, 2001; \$29.95) is long overdue, and it is thoroughly enjoyable. It combines diary entries and essays. Divided into three sections, it begins with pieces grouped under the heading "Diaries and Musings," followed by "Music Matters," portraits of musicians and music, and "Portraits and Memorials," pieces on musical and nonmusical personalities. These works have been previously published, though

where and when is not made clear by McClatchy, the compiler, and writer of its engaging foreword. In it McClatchy praises Rorem for his "exquisite honesty" and his "pungent opinions that are this book's glory." One wonders why an index was not included in the volume to quickly find dishy comments about celebrities especially since McClatchy, in an interview about the art and craft of writing a diary, asks Rorem, "The first three diaries have no index, where one could cruise for one's enemies and friends. It's maddening! Was it deliberate?" Also, it is not clear whether these are excerpts from essays or entire pieces. Rorem nurtures his favorite contrivances: the ingenious juxtaposition between German and French, the wistful longing to be as famous as, say, Liszt, the cheeky remarks "I never mean literally what I say, including this sentence," and the raucous namedropping. My favorite pieces are "Jackson Park," "P" and "Aaron Copland." The first two are from his youthful diaries and the final from a later rumination. I find these early reminiscences of first loves poetic and effervescent. The Aaron Copland essay contains the lyrical passage, "I was always a lone wolf and never became one of Aaron's regular flock anymore than I became one of Virgil's, except that I worked as a copyist for Virgil, so I knew him better. Aaron had an entourage, so did Virgil; you belonged to one or the other, like Avignon and Rome, take it or leave it. I left it. Or rather, I dipped my toe in both streams." This collection clearly highlights Rorem's gift for the bon mot and his vast knowledge of everything.

—Eleonora M. Beck  
Lewis and Clark College

---

## Country and Gospel Notes (continued)

like Stamps-Baxter, Vaughan, Trio, Teachers, Henson, and others. Since many of these regional publishers did not bother to copyright their books, the Library of Congress has only a spotty run of them. Furthermore, songs were traded back and forth by these publishers to the point where one song might appear in a dozen books. It is a bibliographical mare's nest that challenges even these skilled compilers, and some of the gospel printed entries are incomplete.

*Country Music Sources* is primarily the lifelong project of pioneer scholar and discographer Guthrie T. Meade. He was uniquely suited for the job. A native of Kentucky, he grew up listening to fiddle music and collecting old records. A brilliant computer programmer, he later took a job in Washington, D.C., working at the Library of Congress, the National Archive, and the Government Services Administration. In his spare time he learned to use the huge collections at the Library of Congress, the Copyright Office, and other repositories to do his research. For several years he circulated copies of his manuscript-in-progress and generously helped other researchers; even as a manuscript, the "Meade discography," as it came to be called, won an enviable reputation. Then Meade died suddenly in 1991, at age fifty-eight, and the fate of his work was unclear. It was only months from completion, and Meade's long-time friend and colleague Dick Spottswood, working with Meade's son Douglas, stepped forward to finish it and see it through to publication. The result is a handsome, definitive reference book that should be on every library shelf and in the hands of any serious student of American music.



## Citizen Activist (continued)

While McCarthyism and blacklisting held sway he went to England. Remaining in Europe for much of the fifties, Lomax pursued his developing interest in collecting and disseminating world music. He had been previously influenced by scholars such as George Herzog, Melville Herskovitz, Curt Sachs, and Charles Seeger, and before leaving for England he participated in the Midcentury International Folklore Conference at Indiana University, where many of the world's leading ethnomusicologists gathered. His eight years abroad proved most fruitful. His field recording and photographing in the British Isles, Spain, and Italy, in conjunction with the work of other collectors, initially resulted in the seventeen volumes of *The Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music*, released in 1955.

He produced a brief series of radio shows for the BBC on American folk music that featured songs performed by himself and Robin Roberts, a young American singer then assisting Lomax with his collecting in Ireland. For the remainder of his stay in England, until his return to the U.S. in mid-1958, he was involved in numerous radio shows and a television program that helped stimulate the British folk revival. He also welcomed a string of visiting American performers, including Jean Ritchie, Burl Ives, Peggy Seeger, and Guy Carawan, who helped connect the British and U.S. folk scenes.

In the midst of his media work and public promotion of folk music, he also began to develop a theoretical construct to understand world music, first articulated in a three-page article, "Folk Song Style," published in the *International Folk Music Journal* in 1956. This was the start of his cantometrics project that would become an increasing part of his life. Anxious to return to the U.S., he ended his productive career in England in 1958 when he arrived in New York.<sup>6</sup>

Lomax eagerly plunged into America's burgeoning contemporary folk scene. In early 1959 he organized "Folksong '59" at Carnegie Hall, a concert including Jimmy Driftwood, Muddy Waters, Memphis Slim, the bluegrass group the Stony Mountain Boys, Mike and Pete Seeger, and the Cadillacs. "The time has come for Americans not to be ashamed of what we go for, musically, from primitive ballads to rock 'n' roll songs," Lomax declared, defending his eclectic approach and acceptance of change. He appeared at Circle Pines summer camp in Michigan with Shirley Collins, was interviewed by Studs Terkel in Chicago for his radio show, and spoke at the Berkeley Folk Festival. A two-month southern recording trip resulted in the 1961 release of seven albums for Atlantic Records's *Southern Folk Heritage* series, with another twelve volumes issued by Prestige/International the following year. He continued to publish books, including *The Rainbow Sign* (1959), *The Folk Songs of North America* (1960), the long delayed *Hard-Hitting Songs for Hard-Hit People* (1967), and even the co-edited *3000 Years of Black Poetry* (1969).<sup>7</sup>

Always a strong advocate of racial equality, Lomax plunged into the civil rights movement, participating in a musical workshop in Mississippi in 1965, and in a subsequent gathering in Tennessee. A few years earlier he and Guy Carawan co-produced the album *Freedom in the Air*, documenting the Albany, Georgia civil

rights movement. "While I was squirreling round in the past, you were busy with the present, and how I envy you," Lomax wrote to Carawan, as quoted on the album cover. "It must be wonderful to be with those kids who are so courageously changing the South forever. I hope they feel proud of the cultural heritage of their forbears."<sup>8</sup>

Politics were never far from Lomax's consciousness. Indeed, he was directly involved in the Poor People's March on Washington in 1968. "Thousands of the black poor, many coming in mule-drawn wagons, converged on the Capitol to lobby for a better deal, meanwhile living in a village of tents in the parks adjoining the Washington Memorial," Lomax recalled in *The Land Where the Blues Began*. "I had been asked to organize culturally relevant entertainment for the encampment, and there ensued a mighty singing of black folk music along the Potomac, where the black delegates rested after their marches on the Capitol and the White House." He even arranged for Muddy Waters to perform. Here Lomax felt at home, with those who were "underemployed, badly housed, pushed toward despair and crime by poverty, sharing only crumbs from the rich table of America's boom economy."<sup>9</sup>

Through mid-decade he remained busy organizing and assisting in programming the Newport Folk Festival. In spite of his broad-reaching musical tastes, he still usually preferred the more traditional performers, whom he documented in three videos (now released by Vestapol): *Devil Got My Woman: Blues at Newport, 1966*; *Delta Blues Cajun Two-Step: Music From Mississippi & Louisiana, Newport Folk Festival, 1966*; and *Billy in the Lowground: Old Time Music From the Newport Folk Festival, 1966*. These films would foreshadow his five-part American Patchwork television series in 1990.

For the remaining years of his life Lomax focused on his ethnomusicological research and writings, with little obvious public political involvement. But there is no indication he ever abandoned his lifelong commitments to preserve and disseminate the music of the "people," to promote a just society, based on economic, political, and civil rights, and to shape a world music sensibility that became more complex over time. Beginning as a most confident teenager with numerous early successes, he developed a personal style that often ruffled feathers—but perhaps this aggressive persona was necessary to allow him to accomplish so much in promoting and popularizing folk music among an increasingly sophisticated urban audience. His creation of the Association for Cultural Equity in 1985, the development of the Global Jukebox, and the current Rounder Record reissue project to release 150 CDs of his field recordings are testimony to his vision of spanning the world's music cultures and his dedication to making folk music and dance accessible to all. Public appreciation and scholarly understanding of folk music in our modern world owe much to Alan Lomax's amazing seventy-year career and his tireless efforts as a citizen activist.

—Indiana University Northwest

The author wishes to thank Ray Allen, Matthew Barton, and Pete Seeger for their invaluable editorial assistance.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Jon Pareles, "Alan Lomax, Who Raised Voice of Folk Music in U.S., Dies at 87," *New York Times*, 20 July 2002; Mark Feeney, "Roots Music Loses a Champion," *Boston Globe*, 23 July 2002; "A Legendary Collector," Editorial/Op-Ed, *New York Times*, 23 July 2002; Associated Press, "Alan Lomax, Folk Music Compiler, Dead at 87," *Post-Tribune*, 20 July 2002; Dave Marsh, "Mr. Big Stuff: Alan Lomax: Great White Hunter or Thief, Plagiarist and Bigot?" *Counterpunch*, 21 July 2002, <[www.counterpunch.org/marsh0721.html](http://www.counterpunch.org/marsh0721.html)>; David Hinckley, "Patronage—or pillage? Folk song collectors like Alan Lomax greatly enriched American music—if not musicians," *N.Y. Daily News*, 28 July 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Lomax to Cohen, 6 December 1993, in author's possession; E. David Gregory, "Lomax in London: Alan Lomax, the BBC and the Folk-Song Revival in England, 1950-1958," *Folk Music Journal*, 8/2 (2002), 136-169.

<sup>3</sup> John S. Wilson, "Lomax Brings in the Roots," *PM*, 4 November 1946.

<sup>4</sup> Alan Lomax, Foreword, *The People's Song Book* (Boni and Gaer, 1948), 3. Lomax can be heard on Ronald D. Cohen and Dave Samuelson, *Songs For Political Action: Folk Music, Topical Songs, and the American Left, 1927-1953* (Bear Family Records BCD 15720), disc 9.

<sup>5</sup> *American Business Consultants, Red Channels: The Report of Communist Influence in Radio and Television* (Counterattack, 1950), 103.

<sup>6</sup> See Gregory, "Lomax in London," for a detailed discussion of his years abroad.

<sup>7</sup> "The Folksong Revival: A Symposium," *New York Folklore Quarterly*, vol. 19, June 1963, 135.

<sup>8</sup> "Freedom in the Air: A Documentary on Albany, Georgia, 1961/1962" (SNCC-1).

<sup>9</sup> Alan Lomax, *The Land Where the Blues Began* (Pantheon Books, 1993), 420-421.

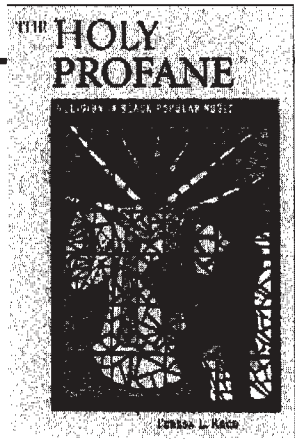
## Gendering Jazz (continued)

on oral histories, largely without access to recordings, to construct her jazz narrative, as the women at the center of her study rarely attained access to this racially and gender shaped technology of historical legitimacy. And yet her study invests the musicking of these often inaudible performers with more significance and subjects it to more critical scrutiny than does Davis's with her pages of lyrics as she makes her case for adding these women and their experiences to our accepted history of jazz.

After an opening chapter dealing head-on with the erasure of women from the dominant studies of jazz and the role of women workers and the wartime "swing shift," Tucker begins her case studies with Phil Spitalny and His Hour of Charm Orchestra. After cheering her brilliant critique of jazz scholarship, I wondered about the choice of Phil Spitalny and his ensemble. Here was a group I'd long heard about, but had never given much thought to, content to accept the dominant view that these musicians were irrelevant. Tucker's analysis brought me up short and forced me to face my own questionable presumptions about the musical activities of Spitalny's talented musicians, who undertook their work with the utmost seriousness of purpose. In her refusal to take anything for granted, especially the high-stakes of leisure time activities and entertainment, Tucker repeatedly immerses the reader in the multiple contradictions of "girl" musicians and working women, of sounding "black" and looking "white," of maintaining femininity and demanding equity, of going on the road and staying home, and of what wartime work meant for women and for men. This is a crucial book for anyone interested in the complicated workings of American popular musical life. No one should miss this bus ride.

—Susan C. Cook

*University of Wisconsin at Madison*



## THE HOLY PROFANE

Religion in Black  
Popular Music

Teresa L. Reed

"Full of intimate insight, critical analysis and rich research. . . . Highly recommended reading for those interested in Black popular music and culture and mandatory for anyone interested in uncovering the hidden essence of American popular music."

—Emmett G. Price III

\$40.00 cloth

## GOD BLESS AMERICA

Tin Pan Alley Goes to War

Kathleen E.R. Smith

"A well written book with absolutely none of the glossy enthusiasms that nearly always burden books about jazz, Swing, musicians, and the followers of popular music. . . . Pulls no punches in order to soft pedal the rather gritty history of the war years."—Frank F. Mathias

\$45.00 cloth

## MINSTREL OF THE APPALACHIANS

The Story of Bascom Lamar Lunsford

Loyal Jones

"While towns and cities were burgeoning musically, trying to promote classical and art-forms over the simple songs of their ancestors, Bascom was desperately throwing his net to catch and hold onto these old time treasures. Loyal Jones has given much insight into the life and times of this amazing man."

—Jean Ritchie

\$25.00 paper

## COUNTRY MUSIC ANNUAL 2002

Edited by Charles K. Wolfe and James E. Akinson

"A book that any true country music lover would want in their collection."—Silas House, *No Depression*

\$20.00 paper

## DULCIMER MAKER

The Craft of Homer Ledford

R. Gerald Alvey, with a new foreword by Ron Pen

"Portrays a master craftsman and the cultural influences that shaped him."—*Lexington Herald-Leader*

"Deals with its subject in such a broad context, musicologists, craftspersons, sociologists, and anthropologists, as well as general readers, could all find something of interest in it."

—*Choice*

\$19.95 paper

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS OF  
**KENTUCKY**  
At bookstores • 800/839-6855 • [www.kentuckypress.com](http://www.kentuckypress.com)

## Afro-Asian Hip Hop (continued)

dead prez's song "Assassination" refers to their practice of kung fu. They train in Jeet Kune Do ("The Way of the Intercepting Fist"), the classical wing chung style of kung fu practiced by Bruce Lee, and in Ile-Ijala, an African system of martial arts. Lee's influence on dead prez is evident on their website, which contains a quote from Lee's *Tao of Jeet Kune Do*: "Truth is living, and, therefore, changing."<sup>8</sup> dead prez notes: "We're about stopping the police from brutalising us every day. We're about tearing down the prison walls that hold us hostage and captive, and building programs that enable us to do that...[W]e're about training in Martial Arts, so that we have some self defence. We're about all our rights, our rights to bear arms, our right to pursue happiness, and our right to be free."<sup>9</sup>

Another critical connection dead prez makes to Asian culture is through the I Ching (the Book of Changes), the three-thousand-year-old manual of divination.<sup>10</sup> The sixty-four hexagrams of the I Ching signify universal principles upon which people can model their lives and conduct. Each hexagram comprises six lines, either broken or solid, which indicate the yin and the yang; each hexagram represents various states such as progress, weakness, and good fortune. The I Ching has been read by political leaders such as Mao Tse-Tung as a metaphorical guide to governing a country.<sup>11</sup> As Thomas Cleary argues, "[T]he I Ching... has an incalculable abstract reserve and metaphorical potential.... The political basis of military strength, or the social basis of the strength of any organization, is a teaching that is... rooted in the I Ching."<sup>12</sup> Sony's website for dead prez identifies the I Ching as "a system... used by the wise men and women of China some three thousand years ago as a means of analyzing reality and perfecting the art of foresight. That process of change is symbolized in [dead prez's] music and they believe there is a common link between all historically oppressed people."<sup>13</sup>

The cover of *lets get free* and M1's tank top in the illustration reproduces their logo, which is the seventh hexagram of the I Ching. This particular hexagram, *sze*, denotes "the conduct of military expeditions in a feudal kingdom.... the combination of lines in it is made out to suggest the idea of an army...."<sup>14</sup>

dead prez's commitment to I Ching in their vision of political revolution is also evident in their song "We Want Freedom." Over a lilting flute, guitar, and harp arpeggio, Stic. raps:

Yeah, our lives fucked up, no doubt  
All the shit we go through every day  
Sometime a nigga don't know what the fuck to do  
But see I got my niggaz  
And we gonna organize a people army  
And we gonna get control over our own lives  
And I mean that shit right there from the bottom of my shit  
I Ching I Ching I Ching

dead prez interprets the I Ching symbol as the "people's army" that will bring about "Black revolution in the real world, not just on record. Basically we want to see our people have power over their own lives, self determination, and we think that's a right every human being on the planet should have."<sup>15</sup>

For dead prez, the I Ching and martial arts are integral parts of a progressive politics.

Afro-Asian hip hop not only encompasses African American artists who are influenced by Asian culture and politics, but also embraces the reverse situation. A rapper and poet who wants to impact society with his music is the second-generation Korean American rapper and poet Jamez (James Chang). Born in the Bronx in 1972, Jamez grew up in a suburb of Los Angeles and graduated from Bard College with degrees in sociology and multiethnic studies. "Sometimes you feel stigmatized growing up as a minority," he remarks. He recalls that as an adolescent, he connected with other Asians, but "sometimes... I felt discriminated from whites or other groups."<sup>16</sup> When he was fifteen, he wrote his first song, "Black Man Singing in a White Man's World."

[I]t was a metaphor for the alienation that I, as a young Asian kid, felt but could never elegantly express—until that moment. Since Bruce Lee was dead and Margaret Cho wasn't big back then, I found my role models in the Black community. Chuck D [of Public Enemy], Run [of Run DMC], Malcolm X, and Alex Haley guided me through adolescence and later inspired me to delve into my own roots, my own musical heritage....<sup>17</sup> Those were my role models since there weren't any Asian American performers out there I could readily identify with. I identified with their feelings of alienation.<sup>18</sup>

Like many other children of immigrants, Jamez at first rejected the traditional culture of his parents, but after a visit to Korea, he became interested in traditional Asian music: "Fusing Korean folk music with Chinese music and hip hop provided the ideal social landscape I wanted to create."<sup>19</sup> At Bard, he learned about the exploitation of Filipino and Chinese laborers in the U.S., the internment of Japanese Americans, and other cases of anti-Asian discrimination. During a visit to Bard, Fred Ho, the Chinese American saxophonist, composer, and activist, convinced him to combine his interests in Asian American political issues with music.

Jamez calls his blend of traditional Asian folk music with contemporary hip hop a new genre, "Aziatic hip hop." A self-described "street musicologist," James wants to teach young Korean Americans to reclaim their cultural traditions and identity through music. He hopes that his music will "inspire the fate" of Asian Americans—that is, inspire and motivate them to develop "cultural literacy": "Once you can convince someone that they should be proud of their own music, then you can elevate the level of discussion to economics and politics and the military and sexism."<sup>20</sup> Noting that his "best response has been from the Black community," he wants many people to "'establish the sign,' meaning have a deep appreciation for cultures that are not yours....once that appreciation is there... I think that there would be parity, there would be equal footing."<sup>21</sup>

The title of Jamez's debut CD, *Z-Bonics* (F.O.B. Productions, 1998), is a play on the African American vernacular mode of speech, Ebonics. The "Z" in *Z-Bonics* is a reference to "Zipperhead," the racist term coined by American soldiers during the Korean War to refer to the supposed appearance of an Asian person's head after



it is shot with a high powered rifle or run over by a Jeep. The "F.O.B." in Jamez's label, F.O.B. Productions, stands for "Fresh Off the Boat," a derogatory name for new immigrants that he wants to reclaim.<sup>22</sup>

"7-Train" is part of the score for the 1999 documentary film of the same name.<sup>23</sup> The ridership of the number 7 is multiethnic and multiracial. It joins the borough of Queens to Times Square/42nd Street in midtown Manhattan, connecting Koreans and Chinese in Flushing ("New York's real K-town [Koreatown]"), according to Jamez; Indians, Pakistanis, and Bengalis in Jackson Heights; and Bukharan Jews in Rego Park.

[Vocal samples]

We are just looking for a place to survive  
Poverty and extreme unemployment  
April 29th

...

[Jamez]

Many others in a moment's time  
Sacrifice illuminate light  
Many others forgot they own name  
But I'm about ta use it  
Many others in a moment's time  
Sacrifice illuminate  
Many others forgot they own name  
Healing on the 7-train

The film chronicles the events in a typical workday for a Korean manager of a fish store, a gay Pakistani sari salesman, and two Otavalen Indian street vendors. Jamez notes that "[the 7-train] represents my Flushing experience... [my neighborhood is] unbelievably wonderful. You got Haitians, Jamaicans, Chinese, Koreans. We're just a melting fusion of voices, but there definitely is a feeling of unity, especially when I'm on the seven-train.... [The song is] an ode to all those hardworking people in Queens who happen to ride on that train, especially the immigrants. The train is like a microcosm of Queens."<sup>24</sup>

The song draws upon traditional Korean music called *p'ansori*, which is the singing of a long narrative with drum accompaniment. Jamez calls *p'ansori* "rap for Koreans. It tells a story, introduces characters and settings, and satirizes the ruling class."<sup>25</sup> His use of traditional Asian music creates what he calls a form of "anti-appropriation," or a way of reclaiming music that has been used in Western-produced kung fu films.

Jamez raps in a seamless, lyrical style that nimbly accommodates the 12/8 meter of the sampled *p'ansori*. Rather than trying to imitate the sound of KRS-One or Chuck D of Public Enemy, Jamez sounds Asian American. The song suggests that "Many forgot they own name" after the numbing commute concluding an eighteen-hour day, but are rejuvenated by the sight of a baby with her mother riding the train. The haunting, repetitive use of the refrain evokes the repeated rhythms of the train ride. The presence of the following vocal samples midway through the song, by Asian American, Latino, and African American speakers, reinforces the song's bringing together of disparate sonic and social worlds into a polycultural whole:

We're in search of something better  
Somos una nación de inmigrantes  
'Cause we all came from the same stock  
We all Negroes  
We all black

If we are all black, then our definition of blackness must be expanded to encompass polycultural musicians such as Jamez and dead prez. To be black, then, is to belong to a political, social, and cultural category rather than a biological one. What sets in motion the dynamic polycultural complexity of these musicians is their dreams of liberation, shared by those who are not just looking for a place to survive, but who are in search of something better.

—Ellie M. Hisama

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Manning Marable, *Beyond Black and White: Transforming African-American Politics* (Verso, 1995), 180.

<sup>2</sup> Vijay Prashad, *Everybody Was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity* (Beacon Press, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, "The People in Me," *ColorLines* 1/3 (Winter 1999); rpt. in *Utne Reader* (September-October 1999), 81.

<sup>4</sup> A fascination with east Asian culture that veers toward Orientalism is evident in the work of hip hop artists such as the Wu-Tang Clan, Jeru the Damaga, and Afu-Ra.

<sup>5</sup> Alexandra Phanor, "Dead Prez: Straight Revolution, No Chaser," <[www.loud.com/home/dead\\_prez\\_story\\_01.html](http://www.loud.com/home/dead_prez_story_01.html)>.

<sup>6</sup> Furqan, "Dead Prez and Their Thoughts on Revolution," <[www.nocziemi.most.org.pl/inenglish/deadprez.htm](http://www.nocziemi.most.org.pl/inenglish/deadprez.htm)>.

<sup>7</sup> Semtex, Interview with dead prez, New York City, 20 October 1999, <[www.djsemtex.net/interviews/deadprez.htm](http://www.djsemtex.net/interviews/deadprez.htm)>.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce Lee, *Tao of Jeet Kune Do* (Ohara Publications, 1975), 18; <[www.sonymusic.com/labels/loud/deadprez](http://www.sonymusic.com/labels/loud/deadprez)>.

<sup>9</sup> Semtex, Interview with dead prez.

<sup>10</sup> The I Ching is perhaps best known by musicians for its influence on the compositions of John Cage, who received a copy from Christian Wolff in 1951. Cage composed *Music of Changes* and *Imaginary Landscape No. 4 for 12 radios* based on I Ching-determined chance operations.

<sup>11</sup> Michael L. Clemons and Charles E. Jones believe that the most influential revolutionary thinker impacting Black Panther doctrine was Mao Tse-Tung. See their "Global Solidarity: The Black Panther Party in the International Arena," in *Liberation, Imagination, and the Black Panther Party*, ed. Kathleen Cleaver and George Katsiaficas (Routledge, 2001), 30.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Cleary, Translator's Introduction to Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (Shambala, 1988), 4, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Biography of dead prez, <[www.sonymusic.com/labels/loud/deadprez/right\\_bio.html](http://www.sonymusic.com/labels/loud/deadprez/right_bio.html)>.

<sup>14</sup> *The I Ching: The Book of Changes*, 2nd ed., trans. James Legge (Dover, 1963), 72.

<sup>15</sup> Semtex, Interview with dead prez.

<sup>16</sup> Merle English, "Artist Finds Voice in Hip-Hop Hybrid," *Newsday* (18 January 1998), G03.

<sup>17</sup> Jamez Chang, "Response," in *Yellow Light: The Flowering of Asian American Arts*, ed. Amy Ling (Temple University Press, 1999), 356. Other important musical influences on Jamez are KRS-One, Leonard Cohen, and Bob Dylan. Interview with Jamez by the author, New York City, 12 November 2002.

<sup>18</sup> English, "Artist Finds Voice," G03.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Abigail Baker, "Poongmul, Hip-Hop, and Politics: Interview with Jamez Chang," *Yisei* (Winter 1996), <[hcs.harvard.edu/~yisei/backissues/winter\\_96/poongmul.html](http://hcs.harvard.edu/~yisei/backissues/winter_96/poongmul.html)>.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Linda Sheridan, "East Meets West for a Brand-New Groove," *The Daily News* (10 January 1998).

<sup>23</sup> *The #7 Train*, dir. Hye-Jung Park and J. T. Takagi (Third World Newsreel, 1999).

<sup>24</sup> English, "Artist Finds Voice," G03.

<sup>25</sup> Chang, "Response," 356.



*Eileen Southern (1920-2002)*  
*Joe Wrinn/Harvard University News Office*

## Inside this issue:

**Alan Lomax**

**Afro-Asian Hip Hop**

**Hale Smith**

**Eileen Southern**

**Ned Rorem**

**Billie Holiday**

Enclosed is my contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.  
Suggested donation: \$25. Please make payable to:  
Brooklyn College Member Organization (memo ISAM)  
*All contributions are tax-deductible.*

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**City, State, Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

*f*

Are you among the 4,000 scholars,  
composers, and performers passionate about  
American music who receive the *ISAM*  
*Newsletter* twice a year and free of charge?

*Please become a voluntary subscriber.  
Your help is essential  
to continue issuing this publication.*

**Brooklyn College**  
**Institute for Studies in American Music**  
Conservatory of Music  
2900 Bedford Avenue  
Brooklyn, NY 11210

Address Correction Requested

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Brooklyn, NY  
Permit No. 671