

NEWSLETTER

INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES IN AMERICAN MUSIC

Conservatory of Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York - H. Wiley Hitchcock, Director

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GERSHWIN — FROM PIANO ROLL TO SCORE, VIA COMPUTER

Pianist Artis Wodehouse, known for her transcriptions of piano music by George Gershwin from performances recorded by him, has moved on to his piano rolls. Here she tells of her experience in trying to harness computer technology to assist in the transcription process; she leaves it to an associate, George Litterst, to fill in some details of the technology involved — which we find fascinating, and believe you will, too.

George Gershwin left high school at the age of fifteen to become a song-plugger for the Tin Pan Alley publisher Jerome Remick, playing Remick's tunes for performers in search of new music for their acts. Simultaneously, he marketed his pianistic skills to the thriving piano-roll industry: at about age seventeen, he began to make piano rolls, mostly arrangements of tunes by others. Gershwin free-lanced this way for ten years, during which time he made about 120 rolls. After 1926, when his fame as a songwriter was thoroughly established, he went on to more remunerative and musically satisfying activities and made no more rolls.

I got interested in transcribing Gershwin recordings some years ago, and in 1987 Warner Bros. published a collection of eight improvisations by Gershwin that I'd taken off discs. Piano rolls were another matter, but I believed their music could somehow be transformed, using computer technology, into scores. The Gershwin rolls had become fairly obscure, but the noted roll collector Michael Montgomery made available to me his cache of Gershwin items (thought to be the most inclusive in the world), and I applied for — and got — an NEH grant to go to work with them. I believed that, if I could find the proper technologies, computers could save me time and, more important, increase my accuracy in transcribing the Gershwin piano rolls.

The first step was to get the rolls into MIDI data. (MIDI — Musical Instrument Digital Interface — is the common language spoken by computers and synthesizers.) I learned that Micro-W Distributing, Inc., of Butler, New Jersey, had an electric roll-reader designed by David L. Quinlan capable of converting any type of paper roll to MIDI informa-

tion. Micro-W processed the Gershwin rolls and gave me a set which could be played on a Yamaha Disklavier. The Disklavier is a computerized counterpart of the player piano which also has live recording and playback options. (You can play the keyboard manually and the Disklavier — as “player piano” — will play back what you've inputted.) Yamaha kindly provided me with a Disklavier enabling me to study the computer-formatted Gershwin rolls both aurally and visually (as the keys went down and up).

I asked Carter Scholz (who writes for *Keyboard*, a journal that reviews new computer music equipment) to assess a Micro-W disk by running it through some notational software programs. As a result of Carter's tests (which I also used to verify the accu-

KICKIN' THE CLOUDS AWAY

Words by IRA GERSHWIN
and B.G. DeSYLVA

Music by GEORGE GERSHWIN
Edited by ARTIS WODEHOUSE
Transcribed by FINALE™

GERSHWIN VIA COMPUTER *(continued)*

racy of the Micro-W process against my aural transcriptions) and with further help from David Frocton, an experienced tester of notational programs, I concluded that a software program called Finale was the one that could best transform the rolls into notation.

Finale is a music notation and transcription program developed by Coda Music, a firm in Bloomington, Minnesota. Coda understood the historic significance of getting the Gershwin rolls into music notation but also knew that I had no experience in using software such as theirs. Thus, they agreed to help me prepare seven of the late Gershwin rolls, slated for publication by Warner Bros. George Litterst, a consultant to Coda, designed a procedure for transcribing the Micro-W disks with great accuracy.

— Artis Wodehouse

* * *

The problem of converting George Gershwin's piano-roll performances into scores was, first, one of translating the perforations on the piano rolls into a computer-readable form. Once in MIDI data, Gershwin's performances could be played back by most of the popular personal computers running most of the currently available music-sequencer programs. (A sequencer program is a program which is capable of recording, editing, and playing back MIDI data.)

Transforming Gershwin's performances from MIDI data into musical notation posed a three-fold problem: (1) transcribing the pitch of each note accurately, (2) splitting the notes between the left and right hands in an intelligent manner, and (3) transcribing the rhythms in a notationally correct way.

Transcribing the pitches accurately was a relatively straightforward matter, though spelling the pitches correctly was a bit tricky. (Is this note a C-sharp or a D-flat?) Fortunately, Finale has built-in algorithms for interpreting pitches in their musical context, and it was able to spell nearly all the pitches in the rolls correctly.

Splitting the notes of these complex piano performances between two staves — for the left and right hands — was a much harder problem. (For one thing, there is no single split point that works for an entire piece.) Finale has built-in routines for

handling the problem if one knows the hand-breadths of the performer in question. In this case, however, the matter was complicated by the fact that the original editors of the piano rolls lengthened many of the notes on them and added notes to Gershwin's performances. We decided to use a sequencer program for the Macintosh called Vision (from Opcode Systems), to split off the notes of the left hand into their own track, which we then transcribed separately. This was an easy process, since Vision can show the MIDI information on a monitor screen with a graphic display that actually combines the way a piano-roll looks — with horizontal blips, like the perforations of a roll, moving left to right — and staff-like lines accurately positioned so that one can read the blips as pitches (see illustration).

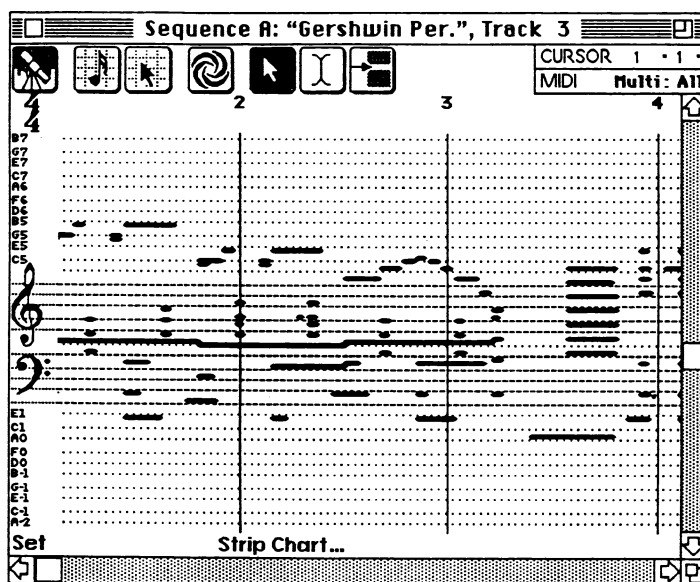
The last problem to conquer, that of notating the rhythm, was the hardest one, as far as the technology was concerned. We had to do three things: (1) adjust Gershwin's performances so that

notes he played slightly early or slightly late were lined up "properly," from the notational stand point; (2) show Finale where the beat was throughout each piece; and (3) quantize or round off the durations of Gershwin's notes so that they were notated with rhythmic clarity. Of these three tasks, the second one is the most challenging for a computer. Since Gershwin did not play the pieces with metronomic exactitude, we had a potentially difficult problem to solve: how to tell Finale (or any other computer program) when Gershwin is speeding up and when he is slowing down. We solved it by "teaching" Finale where the beat was, by tapping it, along with the performance, right into the computer.

Once the music was notated, Finale was able to scroll the music display on the computer screen simultaneously with its "performance" — in sound — of the music. We even had a choice of listening to Finale play the original performance or play back the notation on the screen. Thus, by comparing Gershwin's performance to the computer's performance of its own notation, we were able to determine how accurate Finale was in transcribing the music — and extraordinarily accurate it was!

Once the music was transcribed, we used Finale to make small edits such as separating out grace notes from chord clusters. And we will use Finale to produce the final, camera-ready copy for publication.

— George Litterst



The beginning of Gershwin's piano-roll performance of "Kickin' the Clouds Away," as displayed by the Macintosh Sequencer program Vision. Vision's display of the MIDI data resembles the perforations on the piano roll, superimposed on a simulated grand staff.

I.S.A.M. MATTERS

Publications. Soon to appear from I.S.A.M. is Jon Appleton's *21st-Century Musical Instruments: Hardware and Software*, a monograph developed from two lectures he gave while Senior Research Fellow in 1988-89 — "Composing for New Musical Instruments" and "Creating New Musical Instruments." Naturally, he deals at some length with the development of the Synclavier, with which he was profoundly involved. . . . Almost ready to go to the printer is James Heintze's thoroughgoing revision of Rita H. Mead's *American Music before 1865 in Print and on Records: A Biblio-discography* (1974). . . . Final editorial work is underway on Thomas McGeary's catalogue of the music of Harry Partch. Like Ives, Partch kept revising and reusing his works, to make for a complex and confused, not to say messy, *oeuvre* — which McGeary has neatly clarified.

Thesis. From Olivier Delaigue, a young French musicologist who was Junior Research Fellow of I.S.A.M. in 1984-85, has come a 341-page *thèse de musicologie*, accepted by the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris, on the subject of his fellowship year's research and interviews: "Les nouvelles musiques américaines et la France: (1945-1985)."

Lecture and lecture-recital. William Osborne — organist, choral director, and musicologist of Denison University — ended his tenure as Senior Research Fellow last spring with a lecture on "Charles Ives as Organist" — as performer of organ music by others as well as himself. It was fascinating. This fall he turned the musical substance of the lecture into a recital with commentary, which he first gave at Central Presbyterian Church in Manhattan. (Ives's last professional stint as organist was at that church, though at a different site.) The *New York Times* of 26 October spoke of "Mr. Osborne's crisp, secure rendering" and his "eloquent accounts" of Ives's organ music and that of such contemporaries as Dudley Buck, Arthur Foote, and Horatio Parker. *The American Organist* will publish the lecture. Another project of Osborne's fellowship year, to be published as an I.S.A.M. monograph, is a survey of American post-Civil War *part-songs*; its contents are summarized in the working title *American Part-songs 1865-1930: Content, Context, Composers, Checklist*.

Fellowship of Song. This semester's Senior Research Fellow is Paul Sperry, internationally acclaimed tenor and president of the American Music Center. He is directing a seminar on American song and is delivering two public lecture-recitals, one titled provocatively ("Song Recitals — Who Needs Them?"), the other oxymoronically ("Yankee Lieder").

IVESIANA

Just published: A critical edition by James B. Sinclair of Ives's orchestral "holiday," *Decoration Day* (Peer-Southern; \$27.50).

Just recorded: Arrangements for soprano and chamber orchestra by composer John Adams of five Ives songs — *Thoreau*, *At the River*, *Down East*, *Cradle Song*, and *Serenity* — in performances by Dawn Upshaw with the St. Louis Symphony (for Nonesuch Records).

Just contracted for: a French translation of H. Wiley Hitchcock's *Ives: A Survey of the Music* (by the publishers Actes Sud).

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BOOK NOOK I

MARC THE MAN

Let there be no question about it: Eric A. Gordon's *Mark the Music: The Life and Work of Marc Blitzstein* (St. Martin's Press, \$29.95) is a monumental achievement. Ten years in the making, some six hundred pages strong, *Mark the Music* is a model of untiring research and exhaustive documentation. There has never been a biography this thorough of an American composer, and I doubt there will be another anytime soon.

Gordon's investigative zeal has left no stone unturned. Blitzstein's letters, journals, poems, and criticism find their place in this narrative alongside the diaries of his wife Eva Goldbeck, the reminiscences of his sister Josephine, the writings of contemporary journalists, and the often spicy anecdotes of David Diamond, Leonard Bernstein, and countless other friends.

Yet it is precisely this compulsive attention to detail that is one of the book's biggest flaws. Over-burdened by the inclusion of every conceivable incident, the narrative slows to a crawl. Surely some of this vast store of material should have been eliminated, or at least relegated to end-note status.

A more serious flaw is this book's emphasis, which is so skewed that one often forgets that Blitzstein was a composer of *music*. Gordon asks in the preface: "Should this be a musicological treatise, an examination of the sociology of his works, an intimate biography, a life and times? I have leaned toward the latter definitions." Indeed he has. No attempt is made to define Blitzstein's compositional style, and the few music-related comments that do emerge are simplistic and overly generalized.

Yet if *Mark the Music* is short on music, it is long on cultural context. One of Gordon's major achievements is his ability to place Blitzstein's output within the larger social sphere. Gordon enlivens his narrative with perceptive discussions ranging from the rise of the labor movement and American leftism in the 1930s to the demise of progressive politics under the weight of the Cold War.

And Gordon has performed an inestimable service to a still fledgling discipline — gay studies. Instead of dealing with the composer's sexuality in lurid, tabloid-like terms — as does a recent biographer of Bernstein — or presenting the composer as an asexual being — as do recent writers on Copland and Thomson — Gordon embraces Blitzstein's hard-won gay identity as merely one strand in the fabric of his life. There is a refreshing clarity, simplicity, and avoidance of sensation in Gordon's account of Blitzstein's sexuality, one bolstered by the candor of the composer's own writings and the reminiscences of his friends. Perhaps the real achievement of *Mark the Music* lies not in its portrait of Blitzstein the musician but in its resurrection of Blitzstein the man — a combative, contradictory, immensely political, multi-faceted genius who was cruelly buffeted by the unpredictable winds of twentieth-century American culture.

— K.R.S.

MARK THE MUSICALS

In his important new book *Black Musical Theatre from Coontown to Dreamgirls* (Louisiana State University Press; \$29.95), Allen Woll has set himself the task of making sense out of largely ignored strands of American musical-theatre history and demonstrating not only an African-American presence therein but an assimilation of every genre from opera to minstrel show. His scope is broad indeed, though his discussion of the music as such is lacking in detail.

Woll's thesis is that "the history of the black musical has either been forgotten or mangled beyond recognition," and he tells a fascinating tale of dozens of works and decades of effort that most histories have neglected or misrepresented. (Even well-intentioned commentators have mistakenly credited Eubie Blake with inventing—with *Shuffle Along* (1921)—a tradition that he only helped to revive.)

Woll's history makes us aware of the challenges and prejudices that black shows faced. (Fears of race war were raised in 1903 when the black musical *In Dahomey* opened on Broadway and when its black composer, Will Marion Cook, raised his baton to conduct it.) Woll does not skim over the problems of black shows even in their heyday, the 1920s, and does not ignore the fact that stereotypical stage behavior was still expected as late as the 1940s.

That a black-musical tradition could even arise, let alone survive, is miraculous, given the very thin line that black casts playing for mainly white audiences had to tread. The black musical was to be neither too "white" nor too ambitious, neither too "black" (obscure in humor) nor too serious to contradict the stereotype of happy dancing darkies. A "Negro spirit" had to be precisely calculated, from the earliest black-composed musical, *A Trip to Coontown* (1898), up to and beyond the triumph of *Shuffle Along*. And the constraints placed on plot development—as well as, it must be said, blacks' resistance to taking utterly farcical roles—led, almost inevitably, to black shows favoring a revue format in the late 1920s and 1930s. Woll's perspective on *Porgy and Bess*, the best-known black-cast show of the 1930s, is that, ironically, it contained not only a small number of genuine black components but symbolized "the end of tradition and experimentation in black musical theatre on Broadway."

Woll's is a clearly written, revealing, and much-needed review which continues through the works of the Federal Theatre Project and the post-World War II integrated shows, up to the mid-1980s.

— Thomas L. Riis
(University of Georgia)

Professor Riis's book on a similar topic — *Just Jazz: Black Musical Theater in New York, 1890-1915* — has recently been published by Smithsonian Institution Press.



NEWS AND INFORMATION

The Library of Congress, in association with Mrs. Ira Gershwin and Elektra/Nonesuch Records, has announced plans to record all of **George and Ira Gershwin's musical-theater works**. The recordings — which aim to be “authentic, complete, and faithful to the style of the era in which the works were created” — will use the original scores and parts that were once in the Warner Bros. warehouse in Secaucus, New Jersey, and are now in the George and Ira Gershwin Collection of the Library of Congress. *Girl Crazy* (1930) will be the first to be recorded, followed by *Pardon My English* (1933), *Strike Up the Band* (1927 and 1930 versions), *Primrose* (1924), and others.

Search through those attics, closets, and drawers! **Carnegie Hall**, which is gearing up for its centennial season in 1990–91, is engaged in a nationwide hunt for memorabilia and archival material related to the hall. It's hard to believe, but the Hall had neither an archive nor an archivist until 1986, when Gino Francesconi was hired. Francesconi was shocked to discover just how many posters, programs, photographs, and manuscripts had disappeared during decades of disorder. Now, however, with a Carnegie Hall museum being planned, Francesconi is especially eager to collect as much of the missing material as he can. So, if you find anything, send it to Carnegie Hall Corporation Archives, 881 Seventh Ave., New York, NY 10019, or call Gino Francesconi at (212) 903-9629.

Thanks to a three-year grant from the Lila Wallace/Reader's Digest Fund and the NEA, **Meet the Composer** has been able to commission major works from 32 American composers. It's hard to choose just a few projects from so intriguing a bunch, but the following may give some idea of the range and variety of this program: Steve Reich's first theater work, a two-hour music-video documentary titled *The Cave*; an operatic treatment of the Tower of Babel by Glenn Branca; a brass quintet by Ned Rorem; a jazz ensemble piece by Cecil Taylor; a vocal composition by Joan La Barbara; a sixty-minute string quartet by La Monte Young; a concerto for violin “hyperinstrument” and chamber orchestra by Tod Machover; *Genesis*, a choral/orchestral work by Charles Wuorinen; and *Long Tongues: A Saxophone Opera* by Julius Hemphill. The deadline for the 1990 awards is 15 March; applications may be requested from Meet The Composer, 2112 Broadway, Suite 505, New York, NY 10023.

From the University of Oregon comes word of the extraordinary success of their **Gospel Ensemble**. Together with an accredited course titled “The Gospel Experience,” UO's gospel program reflects the school's increasing emphasis on American-music studies. “We can't limit ourselves to romantic images of European classical music,” says the music school's dean, Bernard J. Dobroski. (Don't we agree!) And John Gainer, a black minister who directs the gospel program, concurs, although he sees dangers in the academization of gospel studies. “I tell my students to remember that gospel music is spontaneous. It becomes white-washed when it's interpreted by standards.” With or without standards, the ensemble — which is more than 90 percent white — appears to be a joy for all concerned. “Just singing in it is sort of a therapy,” says Dr. Gainer. “Students tell me they look forward to my class even when they are down.”



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REGARDING RECORDINGS I

The first compact disc devoted to music by **Morton Feldman** (1926-1987), a composer whose work distinctly benefits from the new medium, has appeared from New Albion (NA 018CD): *Three Voices* for Joan La Barbara, who is the singer — live and prerecorded — on the recording. Stillness and soft dynamics are hallmarks of this American original's work, and these qualities were very poorly suited to vinyl records. Those of us who admired Feldman's music awaited new pieces and took ourselves to halls to hear them without clicks, pops, and scratches. Now we can experience the eerie beauty of his musical vision in our own space — a not inconsiderable advantage, in part because of Feldman's predilection in his later works for durational amplitude.

Three Voices contains a setting of fragments from Frank O'Hara's poem "Wind" that hauntingly emerges from a vocalise midway through the work. The piece consists of three superimposed vocal lines, each line using subtly delineated repeated patterns.

The connection between Feldman's language and the so-called minimalist music of Reich et al. is both apparent and elusive. Like theirs, his repetitions evoke either a hypnotic, meditative state — the composer asks that the piece be heard very softly — or an uneasy restlessness and irritation, depending on the listener's taste and temperament. Also, the melodic and harmonic vocabulary tends toward the familiar. What seems most distinctive is that Feldman's patterns are not perpetual motions, and they possess a genuine delicacy. In creating the sonic ambience of the poem's snowfall imagery, Feldman and La Barbara produce a crystalline and radiantly elegant musical landscape.

Feldman originally conceived *Three Voices* for concert performance, with a live voice and two prerecorded ones:

One of my closest friends, the painter Philip Guston, had just died. Frank O'Hara had died several years before. I saw the piece with Joan in front and these two loudspeakers behind her. There is something kind of tombstone about the look of loudspeakers. I thought of the piece as an exchange of the live voice with the dead ones — a mixture of the living and the dead.

La Barbara's realization on this superbly engineered disc is every bit as beautiful and thrilling as in her live performances. Her tiny anxious breaths suggest airlessness hovering on the edge of danger — a different but equally riveting "mixture of the living and the dead," and a fine stand-in for the necessarily missing tombstone speakers.

A strong work by a very significant composer.

— *Noah Creshevsky*
(*Brooklyn College*)

Nothing could be more indicative of America's reappraisal of both tonality and of Romanticism than the **Howard Hanson** revival. While the works of latter-day converts to neo-Romanticism gain public acclaim, the music of earlier generations of similarly inclined composers is now also receiving belated (and in most cases posthumous) recognition. Few have been more

neglected in recent decades than Hanson, who was once viewed — in his multiple capacities as composer, administrator, teacher, and conductor — as a central figure on the American music scene. So it is a special pleasure to receive a superb new recording of his Symphony No. 1 ("Nordic;" 1922), Symphony No. 2 ("Romantic;" 1930), and *Elegy in Memory of Serge Koussevitzky* (1956) [all on Delos D/CD 3073].

Hanson may not have been an innovator, but neither was he the arch-conservative that he is often portrayed as. A coloristic flow of modal triads and seventh chords, a quirky, unpredictable rhythmic sense, and a fluid contrapuntal interplay combine to make these symphonies fascinating examples of post-Romantic style. If occasionally one finds patches of murky orchestration or cloying sentiment, these are few and far between. And I hardly care that Hanson was enamored of the best Romantics of his era — Sibelius, Grieg, Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky, Dvorák, and (surprisingly) early Debussy. For the results are nearly as good as many of his models — so good, in fact, that if these symphonies weren't American they would probably be standard repertory items.

The Seattle Symphony, under Gerard Schwarz, offers sweeping, impassioned, and brilliantly recorded performances, although the thin, dry strings are not sensuous enough to balance the crisp, pungent winds and brass. But the project that this release initiates is a promising one indeed: an all-American series that will include not only the complete Hanson cycle, but symphonies by Diamond and Piston. I look forward with excitement to these future Schwarz/Seattle/Delos collaborations.

— K. R. S.

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BEHIND THE BEAT *with Mark Tucker*

Jazz literature has been a growth industry in the 1980s and shows no sign of slowing down. Publishers have feverishly filled shelves with new jazz biographies, memoirs, criticism, textbooks, and photo volumes. Herewith three valuable additions to the ever-expanding field.

* * *

Gunther Schuller's *The Swing Era: The Development of Jazz, 1930–1945* (Oxford University Press; \$30) is a literary feat of heroic proportions, in the tradition of Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* or Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Like their authors, Schuller brings great breadth of learning and force of character to an impossibly ambitious task. He also emerges triumphant. Consider the statistics: to write the nearly 900-page book, Schuller spent more than 20 years listening to over 30,000 recordings and transcribing over 500 musical examples; then for good measure he produced an index of over 4,000 entries. He undertook these labors, by the way, not with a MacArthur grant or an extended sabbatical but while maintaining his usual superhuman schedule as composer, conductor, editor, and music publisher.

While acknowledging the magnitude of this project, Schuller calls his approach "essentially simple": "I imagined myself coming to jazz without any prior knowledge or preconceptions and beginning, *tabula rasa*, to listen to the recordings — systematically and comprehensively." The end result of Schuller's method resembles more a critical guide to jazz records than a history of jazz; above all he is interested in the music, not the surrounding social, economic, and cultural issues.

This single-minded focus is the book's greatest strength. No one has written about the recordings of the Swing Era with such intensity, sympathy, and consummate musicianship. Nowhere else can one find such insights into Lester Young's sound, Duke Ellington's orchestration, Chick Webb's drumming, Roy Eldridge's improvising strategies, and Jack Teagarden's trombone technique. The reader virtually takes a tutorial with Schuller as he explains the foundations of bebop harmony or re-evaluates contributions of arrangers such as John Nesbitt and Horace Henderson.

As for Schuller's becoming a *tabula rasa* — well, that hardly seems to have happened. Rigorous aesthetic criteria and the expectations of a seasoned listener pervade his book. Among the qualities he prizes are order, cohesion, logic, clarity, and above all, innovation. When jazz strays from this agenda — especially when it begins to show any taint of commercialism — Schuller loses his cool. This makes for a paradox: Schuller has taken the most popular, audience-pleasing period in jazz history and written about it as though it were a laboratory for new music. Yet, viewed either way — as modernist manifesto, or as a comprehensive, critically informed response to jazz on records — Schuller's *The Swing Era* is a towering achievement, one of the literary marvels of our time.

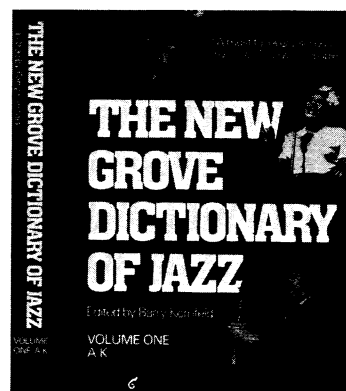
* * *

The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz, edited by Barry Kernfeld (Macmillan; 2 vols., \$295), is the largest work of its kind and represents the first concrete effort to bring this sprawling subject

under scholarly control. As such, it is neither flawless nor definitive, as members of the jazz community have been quick to point out: some of the 4,500 entries have factual errors; certain important figures are missing; judgments are at times ill-informed.

Nevertheless, Jazz Grove is a big step forward. Its biographical coverage is vast and admirably international in scope. It contains clear definitions of terms (e.g., *doit*, *du wah*, *flare*, *ham-fat*) and generous bibliographies. One remarkable section, "Night clubs and other venues," gives annotated entries for over 900 listening rooms world-wide, from the Fat Black Pussycat (Melbourne, Australia) to the Harlem Uproar House. Then there are major, meaty articles on such subjects as arrangement (Gunther Schuller), forms (Thomas Owens), harmony (Steven Strunk), notation (Robert Witmer), and recordings (Gordon Mumma, Chris Sheridan, Barry Kernfeld).

If the premiere edition of Jazz Grove fails to live up to every expectation, perhaps constructive criticism will help make the next edition better. In the meantime, anyone seriously interested in jazz will consult this work often and find much value therein.



For some reason, England excels at producing jazz musicians who moonlight as writers (or vice versa). One thinks of John Chilton, Humphrey Lyttelton, Leonard Feather, Alyn Shipton, Ian Carr, and Brian Priestley. These last two teamed up with cornetist Digby Fairweather to compile a handbook "which gives the facts [about jazz], which clarifies, demystifies and defines, and which gives answers to fundamental questions about artistic value." The result is *Jazz: The Essential Companion* (Prentice Hall Press; \$24.95), an attractive option for someone not ready to invest in Jazz Grove. Most of the 1,600-plus entries are biographical sketches, including ones for musicians both young (saxophonist Courtney Pine, b. 1964) and less familiar (koto player Aki Takase). Critical assessments tend to be harder-hitting than those in Jazz Grove: in the latter, for example, Mark Gridley notes Maynard Ferguson's "exceptional command of the trumpet's highest register" and "dazzling instrumental proficiency," whereas Carr in the *Essential Companion* is dismissive ("Ferguson's music often has more to do with athletics than with aesthetics").

For the well-stocked jazz library, *Jazz: the Essential Companion* is a compact and convenient reference tool; *The Swing Era* and Jazz Grove are *really* essential companions.

SCOTT JOPLIN AND THE JEFFERSON DAVIS MONUMENT FUND by Edward A. Berlin

Edward Berlin is the author of the acclaimed book Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History (available in paperback from University of California Press) and is completing a biography of Scott Joplin for Smithsonian Institution Press.

In the summer of 1891, Scott Joplin, then twenty-three years old, drew the anger and rebuke of the black citizens of his hometown of Texarkana. He and eight other young men, appearing as the Texarkana Minstrel Company, played Ghio's Opera House in an event advertised to raise funds for a monument to Jefferson Davis, president of the Southern Confederacy, who had died two years earlier. Notice of the event was printed in the *Times Democrat* of July 21. A Mrs. Alice E. Albert responded to the notice with an angry letter which was published in the July 30 issue of the New Orleans-based *Southern Christian Advocate*:

This is an outrageous shame! What has Jefferson Davis done for the colored people that they should want to help raise funds to help build a monument for him? The cause for which he fought and spent his life, I should say, left enough monuments on the backs of our poor fathers and mothers, to satisfy any people. . . . Why not devise plans to erect monuments to Abraham Lincoln, U. S. Grant, Wm. T. Sherman, Sumner and Sheridan instead? Such are the ones we should honor with monuments. The charitable thing for our people to do is to try to forget such men as Jeff. Davis. The white people of the South would respect us more for it. They know as well as we, that no people honestly feel like building monuments for anybody that fought to keep them in slavery, under the lash, and that sold their children, parents, and husbands and wives from each other. The thing is unnatural.

Whether or not the young men saw Mrs. Albert's letter, it is clear that they had received criticism, for they wrote a response to it that was summarized in the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* of August 13. They said that when they had agreed to the booking they did not know it would be advertised as a benefit for the monument fund. They were displeased upon learning of the show's linkage to the fund, but felt that what the contractor did with his share of the proceeds was not their concern. Their share was 40 percent of the gate; since they did not contribute to the fund they felt the charges against them were unjustified.

The newspaper writer thought otherwise:

This, to say the least, smells rather suspicious and makes it appear as if somebody was quite willing to go into partnership, into any kind of co-operation, so long as "our 40 percent" was not at all diminished. Smooth it over as you will or may, the thing looks worse the more the young troupers seek to explain it. Under the circumstances, we are not at all surprised to learn that "the colored people of Texarkana were raging mad with them," for they profited from the use of Jeff Davis' name equally with the contractor and were accessories to the fact, in that they performed and shared the profits under that representation.

The troupe is composed of Dave Jackson, Will Dyson, Isaac Mingo, James Benson, Cary Daughtry, Scott Soplin [*sic*], John Adams, Pleasant Jackson and Hugh Garner. Their action dishonors their race and curses the memories of John Brown, Abraham Lincoln, Wm. Lloyd Garrison, Calvin Fairbank and the host of abolitionists that fought and bled that they might enjoy the privilege of organizing such a troupe.

It is easy to imagine how Joplin and his colleagues got into this unpleasant situation. They were starting out in their careers and were relatively unknown but apparently quite capable. They were booked for a full evening's entertainment and were to receive 40 percent of the receipts. It was a good gig. Then they must have seen the playbills advertising the show as a benefit for the Jefferson Davis Memorial Fund. What to do — opt for integrity and break their contract, or go on with the show? They were young men, and they made the wrong choice.

These are the earliest newspaper items yet uncovered that relate to Joplin. Along with yielding new information, they raise new questions.

The accounts of Joplin's early career have been drawn from half-remembered, frequently conflicting stories told by aged individuals more than a half-century later. Based on them, assertions and hypotheses have had Joplin leaving Texarkana at various times in the 1880s. By 1891, he is supposed to have been living in St. Louis. His touring during this period, we had thought, was either as a pianist or as a singer in the Texas Medley Quartette. Now we learn that he was in Texarkana in 1891, working as a minstrel with individuals in a group we had never heard of. How should we read this new evidence?

One reading would propose that the young minstrels were all of Texarkana and that it was still their home. Support for this hypothesis is that they called themselves "The Texarkana Minstrel Company," that "the colored people of Texarkana were raging mad with them," and that they felt obliged to respond to the anger. Otherwise, their participation probably would not have evoked such anger, and they could have sneaked out of town and forgotten about the whole event. Perhaps it was this embarrassing incident that precipitated Joplin's departure from Texarkana.

In another reading, Joplin could have been in Texarkana on a family visit, and — an opportunity for a performance having arisen — as a professional performer joined with some local young men to form an *ad hoc* minstrel company.

Which of these two scenarios is the more accurate will have to await further discoveries.

[The two remarkable news items were discovered by Mr. Lynn Abbott. They were brought to my attention by Doug Seroff. On my request, Texarkana resident Jerry Atkins did research in an effort to trace additional information about the benefit event.]

MEMORIES OF MACDOWELL by Upton Sinclair

Most Americans know Upton Sinclair as author of The Jungle, a muckracking novel of 1906 that exposed widespread corruption in Chicago's meat-packing industry. Few, however, may have read Sinclair's warm reminiscence of Edward MacDowell, published during 1925 and '26 in at least three journals: the Sackbut, a London music periodical; the Musical Leader, Chicago's counterpart to Musical America; and H.L. Mencken's American Mercury. While social outrage inspired much of Sinclair's writing, all his books—even the angriest ones—have an undercurrent of tender lyricism. That quality suffuses his MacDowell portrait.

After graduating from City College in 1897, Sinclair went on to Columbia University for graduate study and there encountered MacDowell. In American Outpost, a memoir of 1932, Sinclair wrote that MacDowell was "the one authentic genius I met at Columbia." And in My Lifetime in Letters (1960), he reproduced H.L. Mencken's 1923 invitation to contribute a "roaring article" to the recently founded American Mercury. Sinclair commented: "During [the magazine's] long career I was able to write only one article that its editors considered 'safe.' That was my memories of Edward MacDowell."

With pleasure we reprint the "safe" Sinclair, in an article that gives a rare view of MacDowell in the classroom and at the keyboard. It also provides a clue to why music figures so prominently in Sinclair's fiction. (The following is published with permission from the estate of Upton Sinclair.)

—C.J.O.

Yesterday the postman brought a letter from the widow of Edward MacDowell, telling me about the progress of the MacDowell colony, and asking for help at the task of raising an endowment for this enterprise. Enclosed in the letter was a photograph of the little cabin in the New Hampshire forest where the loveliest of MacDowell's compositions had their birth. Some twenty-seven years have passed since I last saw that picture, held in the composer's own hands. Memory is a tricky thing; we can never tell what slight detail may serve as a key to open its vaults. All day I found myself thinking about MacDowell, and in the evening, instead of falling asleep, I was talking with him. I was surprised to find how many of his words came back to me, as vivid and as fresh as if he were just uttering them. So many others have come to love MacDowell in the course of those twenty-seven years that it seemed to me it would be worth while to set down these words and phrases. Many of them may seem trivial, but they are authentic, they are his own words, and each gives a different facet, and contributes to that roundness of outline which distinguishes an actual object from a drawing.

When I first heard of Edward MacDowell, I was a poor student, sixteen years of age, living in a top-story lodging-house room in New York. There were two other students in the house, one the son of the widow who kept it. He was a musician, a poet, a religious mystic, and sad to relate, something of a sloven. I recall the windowless cubby-hole in which we sat and laughed at the poetic eccentricities of Stephen Crane, and listened while the young piano genius played his music, and explained what he thought it meant.

This youth wrote to Edward MacDowell, and was invited to call, and came home with rapturous tidings that the great composer considered him to have remarkable talent, and had offered him free instruction. Thereafter, as you may believe, there was a great deal of MacDowell in our conversation, and a great deal of MacDowell music from the elderly piano. One of the first reports I remember vividly; the great composer had instructed his new pupil to get his hair cut and to wash his neck. "The day of long haired and greasy musicians is past, Mr.—." Since the young man was soon to become a successful church organist, we may believe that this lesson was in order!

A year or two later I was graduated from the College of the City of New York, and went up to Columbia University and registered as a special student, with the intention of acquiring all the culture there was in sight. There were two courses in general music, one elementary and the other advanced, given by MacDowell and an assistant. I took them both in successive years; so during these two years I spent one or two hours each week in the presence of the composer. There were, I think, not more than a dozen students in the class. I remember times when there were only six or eight of us present — which gives you an idea how much Columbia University valued genius.

Edward MacDowell was the first man of genius I had ever met. I was going in for that business myself, or thought I was, so I lost nothing about him; I watched his appearance, his mannerisms, his every gesture. I listened to every word he said and thought it over and pondered it.

He was a man of striking appearance, in spite of his best efforts to avoid it. He was robust and solidly built, and his moustache did its best to make him look like a Viking or a Berserker. His eyebrows also wanted to stand out — he could easily have been an old-style musician with a mop of wild hair, slightly tinged with red; but he kept it carefully trimmed, and was extremely neat in his dress, trying in every way to look like an American banker. He had an expressive face, and his lips, I remember, were especially sensitive. He had some difficulty in restraining his gestures, and he could not help making faces at things he did not like—musical sounds, and also words. There were words that affected him as physical pain, he said, and cited the word "nostrils," and showed with a face how much it hurt him!

He differed from most musicians whom I have since met, in being a man of wide general culture. He had read good literature and talked wisely about books. I got the impression that he was a good deal of a rebel in his political thinking, but I cannot recall a single saying upon this subject. But he was certainly a friend of every freedom, and of every beautiful and generous impulse. He hated pretense and formalism, and all things which repress the free creative spirit.

I recall just two of his literary judgments. I had been reading Balzac, and got tired of him. I said that when you once got to know that world of sordid avarice and corruption, you had had enough of it. And MacDowell said, "You are right. I cannot read Balzac." The other judgment was upon a novel of Hamlin Garland, the title of which I have forgotten. I have the impression that MacDowell knew Garland personally, and spoke with

(continued on page 14)

BOOK NOOK II

American players and builders have been in the vanguard of the harpsichord revival ever since Frank Hubbard and William Dowd launched their "Boston revolution" in the late 1940s. Larry Palmer's *Harpsichord in America: A Twentieth-Century Revival* (Indiana University Press; \$25) reminds us that the story began long before their landmark partnership. He rightly credits Arnold Dolmetsch and Wanda Landowska with making the instrument fashionable in the United States, as much by their larger-than-life personalities as by their musicianship. Yet the harpsichord attracted many home-grown champions as well, and it is this motley group of zealous pioneers whom this book chiefly celebrates.

Palmer's biographical vignettes, though laced rather too liberally with anecdotes and press clippings, abound in lively detail. There is Florence Pelton-Jones, who carefully planned the color schemes at her recitals lest the audience "suffer artistic indisposition"; Philip Manuel and Gavin Williamson, who were drawn to Baroque music because it made them feel "spiritually spic & span"; Ralph Kirkpatrick, who assaulted the husband of a hostile critic in South Africa; Sylvia Marlowe, who played Bach, boogie, and Elliott Carter with equal facility; and Fernando Valenti, who complained that his record company treated him like "a small-town supermarket with double-keyboards where you could order Scarlatti sonatas by the dozen as if they were Grade-A eggs."

Of such colorful figures is the modern harpsichord movement made. Palmer brings his account up to about 1960, by when he

claims the revival was a fait accompli. The next three eventful decades would be another story, another book.

—Harry Haskell
(Yale University Press)

Surprises of the Season: a slim volume of pleasant poems by Bruce Bond, *The Ivory Hours* (Heatherstone Press, 39 Old Town Road, Amherst, MA 01002; \$6). Every one of the thirteen single-page poems is a on a twentieth-century composer — Mahler the earliest, Messiaen the latest, Ives the only native-born American but most of the others Americans-by-adoption (Stravinsky, Bartók, Varèse, et al.) A thoughtful long essay by Ethan Mordden titled "‘Show Boat’ Crosses Over," in *The New Yorker* of 3 July (pp. 79–94). Its excuse is to discuss the big recent recording of the Kern-Hammerstein *Show Boat* (Angel A1-49108) — "the richest of all musicals," writes Mordden, "[which] has recently been fed into the crossover system so completely that it gives us the opportunity to consider not only what a musical is but what crossover recording is for." . . . And a co-authored autobiography of a famous musician with a difference: *The Real Frank Zappa Book*, by Zappa "with Peter Occhiogrosso" (Poseidon Press of Simon & Schuster; \$19.45). For once, the "author" — here the iconoclastic, off-the-wall (but also on-target) rock star Zappa — is indeed the author. And his publishers have measured up, too, with fearless preservation of Zappa's colorful lingo — he's the Henry Miller of pop culture — and novel typography that underlines Zappa's flickering ideas and his humor, intelligence, and — say what you will — integrity.

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BOOK NOOK II (continued)

OF SINGERS IN THE SYNAGOGUE

The Hebrew alphabet contains only consonants. The Hebrew language has vowel sounds, of course, but these are supplied by the reader. Those who remember "if u cn rd ths u cn gt a gd jb" will see that this poses no problem for a fluent speaker; and yet a significant part of the language is unscripted and therefore invisible. Judaism itself contains scripted and unscripted elements, a significant distinction in a religious culture so intensely centered on texts. So while the study of the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud and the interpretation of both law (*halakha*) and lore (*midrash*) are central to Judaism's view of itself, the unscripted regions of the religion — including the role of women, the importance of mysticism, and the function of music in worship — are largely invisible. Are they therefore peripheral to the religious culture, or are they, like the vowel sounds in the Hebrew language, the invisible bond that holds the scripted elements together? Mark Slobin's fascinating new book *Chosen Voices: The Story of the American Cantorate* (University of Illinois Press; \$36.95, including a tape cassette) attempts to answer that question for Jewish music in America.

As an ethnomusicologist, Slobin brings to the subject of Jewish music a refreshing tone of affectionate objectivity. His method is to let the subject speak for itself; he offers a minimum of commentary but a great deal of evidence from documents, interviews, and music. At first the book seems to have a split personality. Because it was commissioned by the Cantors Assembly, much of the text resembles an official account of the profession. In his footnotes, however, Slobin's approach is more anthropological; here he can point out how official accounts of careers and problems fall into recurring patterns. Because Slobin believes that the point of view of the "insider" best reveals cultural values, the dual approach works very well. "Outsiders," however, will have to get used to certain "inside" terms such as *minhag* (customary practices) and *davening* (the orthodox style of praying): their use is essential to Slobin's method of allowing his subject to speak in its own language.

Slobin calls *Chosen Voices* a "story" rather than a "history," even though it contains a historical account of the evolution of the American cantorate, for in addition to history he explores the working conditions of cantors and discusses the various types of music they perform. The story that emerges lies between the lines; in fact, Slobin suggests several stories, each of which could be studied in greater depth. On one side the subject of the book is not specifically Jewish at all; it is about the fate of religious music and musicians in a secular society. The fact that the book was commissioned by a professional organization is symptomatic, for part of the story is the rise of professionalism, and its price. The need of clergy to organize as professionals points to a loss of religious authority that must be offset by secular means. Slobin makes clear that the growing institutionalization of the cantorate, exemplified by the establishment of schools and professional standards, parallels a growing anxiety about the loss of tradition. The more secure cantors are in their jobs, the less certain they are of their spiritual role.

The controversial nature of cantorial singing within Jewish history also points to more general concerns, as Slobin points

out. The cantors have always been under attack both from the side of rationalism and from the opposing demand for emotional involvement in individual prayer. The rabbis, like the bishops at the Council of Trent, have always worried about the way music obscures the text, and have forbidden (or tried to forbid) florid lines, purposeless text repetitions, and distortions of Hebrew stress. At the same time, cantors — like many church musicians — are constantly reminded that religious music must not be perceived as a "performance." Judaism has no place for surrogate prayer, and the cantor is supposed to enhance and encourage individual worship, not replace it. The difficulty of achieving this balance is a source of continual concern among Slobin's "insiders."

Two more specifically Jewish stories also emerge from the book. Unlike many other religious communities in America, Jews did not settle here to establish their own theocracy; they embraced American secularity as a guarantee against persecution. As a result, religious traditions rapidly withered and many practices became Americanized in ways that would be unrecognizable to traditional Jews. Jewish music has been particularly subject to outside influences, whether Protestant hymns, Sousa marches, or jazz and rock. Slobin is not judgmental about this tendency; indeed, he compares the almost anarchic stylistic evolution of cantorial music to the development of Talmudic commentary in its open-ended didactic elaboration of text. The irony here is that while the cultural paradigm of Talmudic study may inform all aspects of Jewish culture, as Slobin claims, much of the stigma attached to the cantorate by that culture stems from the fact that cantors, unlike rabbis, are not trained in the Talmud. The old saying that Slobin quotes — *ale khazonim zaynen naronim* (all cantors are fools) — is not just the traditional charge of rational souls against singers; it points to the peripheral role cantors and music play in relation to Judaism's central intellectual traditions.

As one who is married to the mob — my wife is the cantor of a large Reform congregation — and as a former teacher at a cantorial school, I feared that Slobin would have little new to say. But *Chosen Voices* is full of new insights into the problems of Jewish music in secular America. Even though many of Slobin's "chosen voices" are old friends and students of mine, the collective ensemble sings a new song.

— David Schiff
(Reed College)



SOS!

For a forthcoming bibliography, *Emily Dickinson and Music*, would composers who have set her poems and letters write to Carlton Lowenberg, 737 St. Mary's Road, Lafayette, CA 94549.

COUNTRY AND GOSPEL NOTES by Charles Wolfe

In matters of discography, country music has generally languished far behind research in jazz and blues. For twenty years, authorities like Rust and Godrich-Dixon have provided basic reference data for students of those musics; but nothing even resembling them has existed for country music. Scattered discographies of individual artists and groups have appeared in periodicals like *JEMF Quarterly*, *Old Time Music*, *The Devil's Box* and *The Journal of Country Music*, and good song discographies (listing recordings of specific songs) have appeared in articles as well as such books as Norm Cohen's *Long Steel Rail* and Archie Green's *Only a Miner*. However, these discographies can be hard to find, since some of the periodicals containing them are obscure and casually circulated, and there exists no basic bibliography of them.

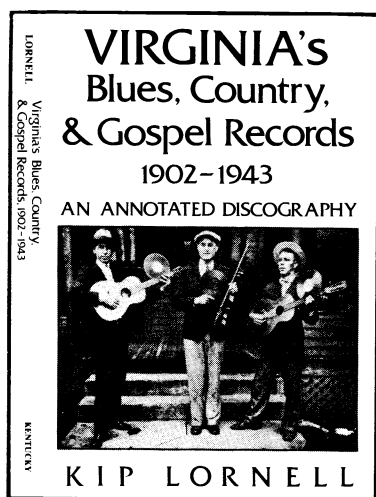
To remedy this, two leading country-music discographers have been working for ten years on a comprehensive discography for the years 1922-1942 (the first two decades of the commercial music, from the earliest recordings by the Texas fiddler Eck Robertson to the recording ban of 1943). Tony Russell, the editor of *Old Time Music* in London, and Bob Pinson, Acquisitions Director of the Country Music Foundation in Nashville, have just about completed this task; they plan on publishing the results (in about 1,500 pages) some time in 1992. One of the sticking points in completing the work has been the complex entries on various "citybilly" singers, who generally worked in New York studios but were adept at performing in rural styles, such as Vernon Dalhart, Carson Robison, Frank Luther, and Frankie Marvin. Not only did they record prolifically with various pick-up bands almost impossible to document, they also recorded for many labels under dozens of pseudonyms. To complete these entries, Russell and Pinson have enlisted the aid of various specialized discographers such as David Crisp and Bob Olson.

In the meantime, two books have appeared that offer intriguing new methods for dealing with country-music discography. Kip Lornell's *Virginia's Blues, Country, and Gospel Records 1902-1943* (University Press of Kentucky) suggests a regional approach, encompassing all forms of vernacular music in a given period. *Sun Records: The Discography* (Bear Family Pub-

lications, Achtern Dahl 30, 2864 Vollersode, West Germany) is basically an artist discography — of performers on the legendary Memphis label in the 1950s and 1960s. Each book organizes vital discographic data in a different way, and neither will be duplicated by the Pinson-Russell discography.

Lornell's hypothesis is that, during the "golden age" of old-time and blues recordings prior to 1943, *regionality* was very much a factor in the music of most southern grassroots musicians. Many of these were semi-professional, worked and lived near their homes, knew others (black and white) in their local communities, and tended to similar repertoires and even performing styles. Thus it makes sense to take a regional approach to their recordings. Lornell presents lists of these, gives as many details of personnel as possible, and offers for each artist a biographical sketch. The sketches are impressive, and reveal the kind of fresh fieldwork at which Lornell excels. Dozens of obscure or unknown groups are brought to light, and even familiar ones such as The Carter Family, the Golden Gate Quartet, The Norfolk Jazz Quartet, and the Stoneman Family are presented in new lights.

The compilers of *Sun Records: The Discography* are Colin Escott and Martin Hawkins, the leading scholars of the label, whose work has appeared in many earlier books, monographs, and liner notes. In fact, the present book is a new edition of a Sun Records discography published by them more than fifteen years ago; it was made necessary by several factors. First, the original discography was based on AFM session logs in Memphis, each now revealed to be "a work of fiction designed to clear a single for release." Second, in 1979 Shelby Singleton, the owner of Sun Records, revealed that in his basement were 1,260 boxes of tapes containing Sun master outtakes. Third, during the last decade many Sun artists have been located and interviewed. Thus we have an essentially new, 240-page compilation, sumptuously illustrated, of the country, gospel, blues, and rockabilly sides that helped change the face of American pop music. It has, however, no biographical headnotes — which is a shame, since there are many obscure names nestled in among the Elvis and Jerry Lee entries. Escott and Hawkins have published many biographical accounts of these artists elsewhere; we can hope they will bring them all together in a truly comprehensive directory of the Sun Records music.



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REGARDING RECORDINGS II

SEMPRE ESPRESSIVO

It is very odd. For nearly three decades Elliott Carter, a composer to whom expressivity is an aesthetic *sine qua non*, maintained a mature style without once writing for that most expressive of media, the human voice. But when he did come back to vocal composition, in 1975, he produced within a few years no fewer than three large-scale vocal works and orchestrated a fourth. This body of music has been newly recorded under Carter's supervision (Bridge BCD-9014). The five singers — Christine Schadeberg, Katherine Ciesinski, Jon Garrison, Patrick Mason and Jan Opalach — are generally strong and secure; the four works — *A Mirror on Which to Dwell* (1975); *In Sleep, In Thunder* (1981); *Syringa* (1978); *Three Poems of Robert Frost* (1943; orchestrated 1975) — are performed with neat and clean virtuosity by them with Speculum Musicae, veterans of Carter's "auditory scenarios."

In the three later works, Carter's vocal writing is idiosyncratic: it resembles not so much orchestral song as operatic declamation, from which it was derived, I suspect, for expressive and dramatic potential. The resemblance is very apparent when, as often, the voice is accorded the status of an ensemble member and, in Carter's musical design, assumes the part of a character

in the drama played out in the score. It is even more apparent when an ensemble member joins the voice, in an obbligato role (as does the oboe in Elizabeth Bishop's "Sandpiper," the trumpet in Robert Lowell's "Across the Yard," and the trombone in his "Dies Irae"). (The effect is of two characters sharing the stage.) And it is above all apparent in the most powerful of these works, *Syringa*.

To John Ashbery's poem Carter added his own selection of excerpts from ancient Greek texts relating and commenting on the myth of Orpheus. These excerpts, sung by a bass, are juxtaposed with Ashbery's poem, sung by a mezzo-soprano. The result — simultaneous narratives of and commentaries on the same story but in two time frames, one modern (and in modern English), the other in contemporaneous Greek — inevitably invites comparison with Carter's most famous work, the *Double Concerto* of 1961. But here the effect is more that of operatic ensemble *a 2*, in which the characters independently address their thoughts, feelings, and voices to the same central issue. In this work, and indeed in this entire collection, one delights in Carter's return to lyric composition, with a hand both deft and sure.

— John Holzaepfel
(C.U.N.Y. Graduate Center)

JOHN CAGE AT SEVENTY-FIVE

Edited by RICHARD FLEMING and WILLIAM DUCKWORTH

The present issue of the *Bucknell Review* is a seventy-fifth birthday tribute to the American composer John Cage. Composer and teacher William Duckworth, a member of the Bucknell University faculty and a special guest editor for this volume of the *Review*, and regular editor, philosopher, and teacher Richard Fleming, also a member of the Bucknell faculty, have created a provocative and imaginative publication in celebration of Cage. A network of friendships, centered on Fleming's with Duckworth and Duckworth's with Cage, has informed the "Cage project" and made this remarkable work possible.

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MEMORIES OF MACDOWELL (*continued*)

sympathy of his single-tax activities, and of his courageous realism. The novel in question had to do with a man of the Rocky Mountain trails, and how he went to England and defied the aristocracy in their lairs. I said that the first part of the book was interesting, but the latter part was unreal. MacDowell said, "I can't see how he could write such stuff; and when I see him, I shall tell him so. If a man like that went to England, and was introduced into social life, he would be so scared he wouldn't know which way to turn."

I would not say that Edward MacDowell was a successful teacher after the university pattern. He was lacking in that pedagogical technique which can now be acquired through correspondence courses. I think he was new at the game, and didn't know quite how to set about it. We began obediently with primitive music and ancient music, and we got down to Palestrina, and it was all entirely dull and respectable. Then MacDowell would find himself trying to tell us about music, and what it meant, and he would grope around for words, and conclude with a gesture of despair. I had developed a habit of staying after the class, and talking with him, and I said, "You are not a man of words. So why do you try to lecture in words? You ought to play us the music and talk about it before and afterwards."

Being a really great man, he was willing to take good advice, even from a boy. He began hesitatingly to try it, and in a very short time his class in general musical culture had come to consist of listening to MacDowell play some music, and then asking him questions about it. That, of course, was horribly unorthodox and unacademic, and it should be obvious why a professor pursuing such a method should get into trouble with Nicholas Murray Butler [then president of Columbia]. There was only one other professor in the whole university doing anything so presumptuous, and that was George Edward Woodberry, in a room over at the opposite end of the campus, reading us poetry out of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*. So, of course, Woodberry was also fired by Nicholas Murray Butler, and the spirit of Columbia University died. These were the two men in the place who did most for me. They helped me to understand the true spirit of beauty, and to assert and defend through my whole life the free creative attitude. Of the two men, MacDowell was the more dynamic, for Woodberry was a little pessimistic and very sad. But MacDowell was a fighting man.

He believed in America. He believed that things could be done by America. He believed that students came to him in order to go out into the world and make beautiful and inspiring and human art. That is why I watched him, why I listened to every word, and stayed over after the classes, and stole every minute of this great man's time that I could beguile from him. And now, as I remember and write down what he said, please understand that I am not making it up, nor writing vague impressions. I am using MacDowell's own words, and I am able to do that after a lapse of twenty-six or twenty-seven years, in spite of the fact that I never made a single note. I have a curious memory for vital words—not especially for dates or names or anything of that sort, but for the things which feed my nature. It is my habit to compose what I am writing complete in my mind before I touch a pencil or a typewriter, and if something

happens to delay the setting down of it, I find that after a lapse of days, or even of months, I have lost very little of it.

I begin with MacDowell's musical judgments which I can recall. He was a worshipper of Beethoven, a spirit in every way akin to his own. Of the "Moonlight Sonata," he said that it was one of those cases where a foolish title had been given by a music publisher. He played the first movement for us and said, "It is an expression of the most profound and poignant grief." Someone referred to the later sonatas, having opus numbers up in the hundreds. He said, in substance, that they were a matter for despair, penetrating to such subtleties and intricacies of the spirit that it was difficult to follow them. Concerning the "Ninth Symphony" he said that he disliked to express his opinion of it, because Beethoven was such a great composer and a noble spirit that one wanted to approve everything of which he himself approved. Nevertheless, it was MacDowell's opinion that the main theme of the chorus, the "Hymn to Joy," was essentially obvious and commonplace, so that nothing could be done with it.

Concerning Wagner, he said that the operas were overlong, and that many of the dialogues were tiresome and loaded down with details not properly musical; but that when Wagner came to his great moments, especially his portrayal of the powers of nature, the music became sublime beyond description. He was not an admirer of grand opera as an art form. He did not have to see things on the stage. I remember asking if he went to the Metropolitan Opera House, and he said that he had been there once, and they had given him a seat directly over the big bass tuba, and the first time the man had let it off it had blown him out of the building.

MacDowell was an eager and tireless champion of the idea of program music. He used to insist that music could give you definite ideas of realities, and we would have amusing controversies in the class. He played for us his "Wild Rose." What could be more obvious? How could anyone possibly think that it referred to anything else? Said I (impertinent youngster): "It seems to me it could refer to many other things." "What?" demanded the composer, with some excitement, and I answered, "Well, it might be a pretty girl coming down a lane!"

Sometimes he would prepare unhappiness for himself, by playing us this or that bit of his own music and expecting us to guess what it was about. He played us a Scotch bit—I don't recall the title, but its theme had something to do with a maiden looking out of a window while her lover was at war, or in a storm, or something violent. It was easy for him to explain why this was Scotch, and the storm, or the war, was there all right; but it was more difficult to show the maiden looking out of the windowl . . .

MacDowell played us many of his own compositions, because we wanted them, and were bold enough to clamor for them, and to point out that this was the music he could tell us most about. He played the "Hexentanz," and told us this was another case of a foolish title given by a publisher. It had been written as a "Schattentanz," and you could see firelight flickering on a wall; there is no suggestion of witchcraft in it, but the publisher

MEMORIES OF MACDOWELL (*continued*)

had thought that a witch's dance would sell. He played the "Deserted Farm," and told us about the New Hampshire place where he worked in the summers. He played "To a Water Lily," and quoted to us Geibel's poem about the white swan floating by. He played for us his great "Eroica" sonata, and I am embarrassed to recall what I said about this in class. I didn't understand it, and confessed the fact, and asked, in substance, what was the basis of its form. Suppose it had stopped half way through, could one have told the difference? I don't recall the composer's answer, but I do recall his patient willingness to explain. If I feel ashamed now at this recollection, it is not because of any word of his, but simply because I realize how crude my question was, and how little equipped was this whole class to profit by the intellectual treat spread before it.

But MacDowell was always willing to teach, and at the same time to learn. He went traveling, as missionary of beautiful music; he met crowds of people and played for them, and when an old farmer came up and told him that the crashing chords at then end of "From an Indian Lodge" made him see the old chief tramping along, MacDowell was interested. Also, he had to admit that the old farmer was right about the eagle which stands upon his high rocky perch —

The Wrinkled sea beneath him crawls,
He watches from his mountain walls.
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

MacDowell had to admit that the thunderbolt hit twice on its way down!

He spoke of the concert tours which he had to take — one spent all one earned in New York City. They were very wearing; few people realized the nervous and physical strain involved in giving a pianoforte concert — it was a giant's labor, and one was bathed with perspiration at the end. MacDowell had powerful arms — I never heard him in a concert hall, but I heard him in the Columbia classroom, in an old building in a far corner of the campus. When he wrote *forte-fortissimo* he meant all that and more, and he made the walls of the building shake; it has seemed to me ever since that nobody else knows how to play MacDowell.

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And yet he could be infinitely tender, caressing each beautiful note. He would show us how these gentle nuances were obtained upon the piano. He showed this delicacy in everything — his appearance, his tastes, and his conversation. . . .

MacDowell was rigidly insistent upon subordination of technique to the vital spirit of art. He spoke of some virtuoso — I think it was Rosenthal — and said that this kind of playing was akin to gymnastics or a trapeze performance. On the other hand, he said of Paderewski that this man used his marvelous proficiency to produce beauty and splendor more than one could find words to appreciate. MacDowell told how, leaving the concert hall after a Paderewski performance, he had met a world-famous piano manufacturer — he named him, but I shall not do so. This gentleman remarked to MacDowell that he, MacDowell, liked his instrument tuned — I forget the technical detail, but the point was that it was a tiny bit sharper or flatter. MacDowell pointed out that that was all a piano meant to this manufacturer; he was interested in the details of producing tones, and in exchanging this kind of shop talk, but he had really got nothing of Paderewski's vital message.

I saw MacDowell a few times after I had completed the two years' courses. I met him once in the Columbia classroom, after he had his dispute with the great "Nicholas Miraculous," and had resigned. He told me a little about the trouble, but without going into personalities. The point was that the university did not esteem music, and would not give the necessary credits for musical study. He had hoped to build up a great department, a center of vital culture, but he had failed.

The next time I saw him was at his home, an apartment on upper Eighth Avenue, or Central Park West, as it has since been named. I had written my first novel, a boyish effort, but it was full of a fine frenzy, and I thought it was marvelous, and asked MacDowell to read the manuscript. He did so, and I went to get his verdict, and I remember the apartment house, and the elevator, and the large room looking over the park, and the piano, and MacDowell. He was very generous and kind, and wrote me a few words about the book, which I quoted. I don't remember them, and I shall not look them up, because they might be the means of causing someone to read this boyish literary effort!

I never saw the composer again. I read in the papers that his mind had failed from overwork and nervous strain. There was nothing I could do; I had never met his wife, and he needed medical attention, not the admiration of a young student. He died; but he lived on in my memory, as you can see from this brief record. His personality was to me as a bit of radium, which continues to give out energy, and yet is undiminished and imperishable. He was a vital artist, and one does not meet so many in one lifetime.



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