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Pianos, Ivory, and Empire

by Sean Murray

Musical instruments are material objects. Material objects have social lives. The recognition that objects have agency drives much of the recent scholarship in anthropology, sociology, museum studies, and art history that falls under the umbrella “material culture studies.” Because of the complex relationship between people and the objects they use to create music and the robustness of the new discipline, material culture studies offers useful new ways for scholars to think about musical instruments. My intention here is to offer a sketch of the social life of perhaps the most culturally important modern musical instrument, the piano. I rely on nineteenth-century American source materials, and am therefore most interested in what the materiality of the piano can tell us about American musical and social life of this era. However, the piano’s particular history, its important involvement in the construction and maintenance of ideas about civilization, and the profound impact that America’s romance with the instrument had on the lives of people in other parts of the world require us to resituate the piano within a conflicted global economic and cultural context. In addition to its status as a technological marvel, the nineteenth-century piano depended on a colonial system that procured materials from around the world for assembly in Western metropolises. In turn, colonial ideology influenced the piano’s social world. Ivory was the most important of the piano’s materials extracted under colonialism, and the piano’s modern maturity was enabled by colonial exploitation.¹

Existing literature on the piano deals mainly with issues such as taxonomy, the corporate histories of piano makers, the evolution of musical technology, and the relationship between technological changes and the musical developments they enabled. Additionally, much attention has been paid to the social role of the piano. Domestic music making in the Victorian parlor—typified by the image of a woman or girl at the piano—has long interested social commentators, historians, and music scholars. Indeed, images of girls and women demonstrating their accomplishments at the piano saturate archives, and excellent scholarship explores the intersection of performances of music, class, and gender at the piano bench. The materiality of the piano, including the biographies of its component parts and their relationship to the social life of the instrument, has been largely overlooked. Moreover, the relationships between pianos and the people who play them are usually considered uncomplicated and self-evident. These lacunae obscure ways pianos can “provide an embodiment of social structures reflecting back the nature and form of our social world.”² Of course pianos and ivory do not have agency or sociality in the same way that people do, but musical instruments shape their players in deep and subtle ways, and attending to the relationship of pianos and their players sheds light on the subjective experience of musicians.

For most of the piano’s history, ebony and ivory have been the instrument’s defining materials. Ivory is also the most costly, culturally rich, and conflicted material of the piano’s many constituent parts. Elephant ivory’s complex relationship with Western consumers was



Figure 1. Ivory Goods Catalog Cover, circa 1865. Pratt-Read Corporate Records (320) Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

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Institute News

Despite ominous storm clouds on the economic horizon, this has proved a particularly exciting term for the Institute. A high point was our second collaboration with the **Central Brooklyn Jazz Consortium**, as we were delighted to join once again a variety of Brooklyn institutions in a month-long celebration of jazz in the borough, now in its tenth year. On 4 April the Institute hosted a day-long symposium. University of Southern California Professor **Robin D. G. Kelley**, whose monumental study of Thelonious Monk is now in press, offered a fascinating look at Monk's close relationship with the Brooklyn jazz scene of the 1940s and 50s, and then held a live interview with an important figure who was *there*: pianist and composer **Randy Weston**. Institute Director **Jeffrey Taylor** presented a brief survey of the high points in Brooklyn's jazz history, and Institute Advisory Board member and Brooklyn resident **Guthrie P. Ramsey** hosted a panel discussion with young Brooklyn-based musicians including pianist **Andrew Wonsey**, saxophonist **Curtis Loftis**, and violinist (and co-founder of the Brooklyn Jazz Underground) **Tanya Kalmanovitch**. The climax of the event was a performance by Weston with his trio, featuring bassist **Alex Blake** and percussionist **Neil Clarke**. The passionate playing of this now 83-year-old master (and Brooklyn College Honorary Doctor), along with Blake's distinctive percussive bass playing and Clarke's mastery of a variety of African and Afro-Cuban instruments, brought the audience to its feet. And we were especially pleased to see among the crowd not just Brooklyn College students and faculty, but other members of Brooklyn's diverse community. The Institute looks forward to a long and fruitful collaboration with the CBJC as well as other Brooklyn institutions, as we continue to reach out into the vibrant community in our own backyard. Our continued thanks to **Bob Myers** and **Jitu Weusi** of the CBJC for their welcoming of Brooklyn College into their ambitious and important project.

Our own **Stephanie Jensen-Moulton** gave us a fascinating look at the marriage of film and music in her talk "Sounds of the Sweatshop: Pauline Oliveros and the music of *Maquilapolis*," in which she examined the potent relationship between Vicki Funari and Sergio De La Torre's 2006 film about Tijuana factory workers and Oliveros's score. Our speaker series was rounded out by two lecture/performances. In February, soprano **Helene Williams**, accompanied by composer/pianist **Leonard Lehrman**, honored the centenary year of composer (and former Brooklyn College faculty member) **Elie Siegmeister** with a program of his songs, interspersed with commentary about his compositional career. Lehrman also offered several of Siegmeister's solo piano works, including "Prospect Park" from his 1946 *Sunday in Brooklyn* suite. And in April Brooklyn College Distinguished Professor **Ursula Oppens** joined celebrated composer **Tobias Picker** for a two-piano rendition of his *Keys to the City*, written for the centenary of the Brooklyn Bridge. Picker also performed some of his own solo piano works, and joined Oppens in a question and answer session with the audience. Our thanks to Brooklyn College's Wolfe Institute for the Humanities and Conservatory of Music for their support of these events.

This year brings about some changes in our Institute staff. After nearly 40 years at Brooklyn College, our Administrative Assistant **Kathleen Krotman** will be retiring this summer. Her dedication, humor, and stories about the early years of the Institute will be missed

Institute News (continued)

by all. And after five years, our Graduate Fellow and Managing Editor **Carl Clements**, who is largely responsible for the elegant appearance of this *Review*, will be leaving to finish his dissertation on the North Indian flutist, Pannalal Ghosh. We wish Kathleen and Carl well, and will introduce the new members of our staff in our fall issue.

The current staff of the Institute has, as always, been busy with activities outside of the walls of Whitehead Hall. Institute Director **Jeffrey Taylor** continues work on a variety of writing projects, among them contributions to the second edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music* and the liner notes for *Jazz: The Smithsonian Anthology*, a 6-CD jazz compilation. **Ray Allen** has completed an essay and track annotations for *The New Lost City Ramblers: 50 Years—Where Do You Come From, Where Do You Go?* The three-CD box set will be available from Smithsonian Folkways (SFW-40180) later this summer. On 29 May, **Stephanie Jensen-Moulton** presented a lecture-recital at Feminist Theory and Music 10, held at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, entitled “Performing ‘Bodily Confessions’: Envoicing Miriam Gideon’s Unpublished Opera, *Fortunato*.” She will be taking a semester of leave in Fall 2009 to work on her study of opera and disability in twentieth century America. As noted in our last issue, **Michael Salim Washington** is on a Fulbright fellowship as an artist/scholar in South Africa this term. He is performing throughout the country and conducting workshops for young people and musicians of all ages in townships and at arts centers in Kwa Mashu, Soweto, Thembisa, and other towns. His research there has focused on the social valences of jazz in post-apartheid South Africa. He has just released a new CD in the States titled *Salim Washington—Strings* on the Cadence label. This January, **Carl Clements** performed at Blue Frog in Mumbai, India and at the Bangalore International Jazz and Blues Festival; his 17 March performance with his group Sundar Shor at Elebash Hall at the CUNY Graduate Center drew rave reviews. His article “John Coltrane and the Integration of Indian Concepts in Jazz Improvisation” is scheduled for publication in *Jazz Research Journal* in November.

* * *

Finally, we regretfully note the passing of visionary musicologist, biographer, and feminist scholar **Adrienne Fried Block** in April 2009. Many readers of this *Review* no doubt knew Adrienne personally, and feel acutely, as we do, the loss of her integrity, humor, and dedication to both her chosen field and her devoted students. A moving memorial gathering was held on 16 April at Riverside Funeral Home, which naturally featured, besides spoken tributes, *music*, including a song by her beloved Amy Beach. There was also a session and an informal luncheon in her honor at the Feminist Theory and Music conference in Greensboro, NC in late May. Finally, we are pleased to inform readers that, in her honor, our fall issue will be devoted to the role of women in American music. In the meantime, contributions can be sent to Adrienne Fried Block Fellowship, Society for American Music, Stephen Foster Memorial, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA 15260.

Support the H. Wiley Hitchcock Fellowship Fund!

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The H. Wiley Hitchcock Institute for Studies in American Music is proud to announce the establishment of a fund in memory of H. Wiley Hitchcock (1923-2007), Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center, CUNY, and founding Director of I.S.A.M. The fund will support fellowships at Brooklyn College for established experts in American music and junior scholars of exceptional promise.

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Pianos, Ivory, and Empire (continued)

freighted with cultural baggage associated with its origins: the ideological construction Patrick Brantlinger calls the “Myth of the Dark Continent.” At the same time, once ivory had been extracted, bleached, and transformed by human or machine, it embodied whiteness, purity, and opulence. David Shayt writes, “Even the untrained eye may appreciate the creamy, light-diffusing beauty and silky coolness of finished elephant ivory. For Europeans and Asians, its resemblance to skin is perhaps its greatest subliminal attribute—one that found limitless associations in the Victorian world, where whiteness of skin was an absolute measure of class and status.” Radano and Bohlman theorize in their introduction to *Music and the Racial Imagination* that race is constructed in part around the instruments people play. Selfness coalesces in interactions between people and musical instruments as well as through the consumption of print culture associated with particular instruments and bodies.³ The metonymic relationship between skin and piano keys makes racialization at the piano more apparent than most other musical instruments; it also led to the everyday use of “ebony and ivory” as racial shorthand. The connection between human player and ivory key is tactile, social, and ideological. It is also aesthetic: one need only point to the current fetishization of the creamy smoothness of ivory keys in our age of cold, hard plastic. Each time a musician sits at an ivory keyboard, she situates herself, consciously or not, in relation to the exotic material she touches to sound the notes. Ivory is the material that literally stands between the music we hear and the pianist.

Ivory, too, serves as a bridge between the West and its Other. A Civil War-era catalog cover from America’s most prominent ivory manufacturer, Julius Pratt & Company, illustrates the piano’s positioning at the nexus of the Victorian parlor and darkest Africa. The image of a scantily clad African man with a predatory gaze and phallic tusk is juxtaposed to an extravagantly dressed Victorian woman serenely making lace next to her piano (Figure 1). This “savage” black man is menacing; his body and gaze provoke familiar social anxieties surrounding the threat of black male sexuality to the purity of white womanhood. The man with his spear and elephant tusk was Pratt Read’s corporate signature until about 1880. And while American consumers shopping for pianos were unlikely to have seen the catalog, owners and employees of virtually every American piano-making company would likely be familiar with the logo and its message: playing the piano was a *civilized* and culturally uplifting activity. The tusk’s savage and the piano’s lady lay bare the entwined nature of Western constructions of savagery and civilization, and how dependent these constructions are on the

contextualization and fetishization of a material object: ivory is the material that connects the two icons.

The nature and form of the social world presented by this image is colonialist and suggests new ways to contextualize nineteenth-century American domestic musical life.⁴ At the piano, ideologies of domesticity and empire converged. Figure 2, an advertisement created for the 1893 Columbian World’s Fair in which a Victorian woman mesmerizes exoticized people from around the world, demonstrates the durability of the juxtaposition of the Victorian woman at the piano and her Others. This is a concocted vision of the Columbian Exposition’s Midway in reverse: instead of performing for the enjoyment of “sophisticated” Americans, the “exotics” gather around the white woman at her piano. It is widely recognized that representations that juxtapose white and nonwhite, civilized and savage, and the unmarked and exotic are locations where race is constructed. Figures 1 and 2 suggest that the construction of whiteness went hand in hand with the conception of civility in the endlessly reproduced images of exclusively white Victorian girls and women seated at the piano demonstrating musical *accomplishments*.



Figure 2. Magazine Advertisement, Sohmer Piano Co., 1892. Sohmer & Co. Records (349) Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

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The piano was vital to the cult of domesticity, as it was a place where the attributes of True Womanhood—“piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity”—were cultivated. Scholars outside of music have begun to particularize “true womanhood” as “white womanhood,” insisting that race be added to gender and class as useful categories of cultural analysis. Even though the piano is widely recognized as central to nineteenth-century constructions of middle-class femininity, its role in the construction of race remains virtually unexplored despite the turn in American studies to question a monolithic womanhood.⁵

For music scholars, fiction has proven a useful resource for probing the social world of the piano. Literary representations that luxuriate in depictions of Victorian women’s skin, particularly their white hands at the keyboard, underscore the usually unacknowledged presence of race in the parlor. A typical Victorian courtship scene in Charles Bellamy’s 1888 novel *The Breton Mills* takes place at the piano:

Would she be angry, proud and reserved as she was! Philip shot a furtive glance at Bertha as she sat at the piano idly turning over the music sheets. But the girl might not have heard, not a shade of expression changed her face. It might as well have been the source of the Nile they were discussing so far as she was concerned. . . . but as she pressed her white hand on the music sheet to keep it open, her lover’s eyes softened at the flash of their betrothal diamond. . . . He met Bertha’s

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blue wide eyes open in a new interest. She had half turned from the piano, but her sleeve was caught back on the edge of the keyboard, revealing that fair full contour of her arm, which glistened whiter than the ivory beneath it.”⁶

The quest to verify the source of the Nile inspired early Western explorers. In fact, explorers such as Livingstone and Stanley traveled frequently with ivory and slave traders, as they knew Africa’s interior areas the explorers were trying to map. Like Bertha’s sleeve catching at the edge of the keyboard, Bellamy’s prose reveals connections between whiteness, the piano, ivory, and Victorian constructions of Africa. Moreover, Bertha’s total lack of interest in the “source of the Nile” exposes the gendered division between two of ivory’s Western worlds: the “Darkest Africa” of male explorers and the feminine domain of the Victorian parlor. We might productively rethink of the piano in domestic fiction along the lines of Amy Kaplan, who writes, “While critics . . . have taught us how domestic novels represent women as model bourgeois subjects, my remapping would explore how domestic novels produce the racialized national subjectivity of the white middle-class woman in contested international spaces.”⁷

In his widely read travel writings, the explorer and missionary David Livingstone helped the West imagine Africa, describing the conjoined ivory and slave trades in East and Central Africa and the bloody massacres perpetrated by ivory traders against both elephants and people. Human porters or slaves carried elephant tusks to the coast, sometimes over a thousand miles, a practice which kept costs low. Livingstone sought to free the ivory trade from its connection to slavery by bringing modern transportation along with “civilization” to Africa—steamships and railroads, he believed, would make slave portage obsolete. Livingstone claimed an average seventy pound elephant tusk (which would yield about fifty full-size piano keyboards) could be exchanged in the interior for a musket worth a tiny fraction of the amount the tooth would fetch on the coastal market. The guns expedited the slaughter of more elephants, and people. Livingstone’s “object was to open up the path whereby they might, by getting merchandise for ivory, avoid the guilt of selling their children.”⁸ He dreamed of creating a viable economy where Africans could avoid the exigency of selling their own. Perhaps Livingstone’s most influential legacy was his success in tying the eradication of the interior slave trade in Africa (mainly blamed on Arab traders) to the advocacy of European colonization and missionary work. The famous explorer died in 1874, but Western acceptance of his argument paved the way for the massive European colonization known as the “Race for Africa” just a few years later.

The association with exploitation and brutality was probably not what the Steinway Company had in mind when it referred to

its pianos as, “A civilizing treasure within the reach of the modest income . . . [it] is a thrilling bit of civilization that will develop your children’s talents; but it is also a distinguished decoration that will cast the glamour of its history and its associations over your living room.” The purported civilizing effects of the piano are structured by colonial ideology. “If the exotic objects that filled American households could speak, the rooms would reverberate with stories of empire.” Piano manufacturers clearly understood the appeal of the instrument’s material presence and its relationship to an ideology that placed Western classical music at the top of a global hierarchy. Well into the twentieth century, the piano was understood to be the “universal” musical instrument, and was therefore marketed as “completely suitable for any type of music—music of all lands and of all ages.” The piano had become for Americans, in the words of historian Cynthia Adams Hoover, “more than a household object. It took on the aura of an icon, an altar to respectability and culture, a treasured possession that was given a place of honor in the parlor—the Victorian era’s domestic chapel. The acquisition of such an important household necessity was not to be taken lightly, and most piano manufacturers promoted their instruments as symbols of a morally superior lifestyle.” Hoover assumes the parlor to be a separate sphere; what I mean to show is how “the Victorian era’s domestic chapel” was intimately tied to colonialism. As Figure 3 demonstrates, pianos were not for everyone. This cheeky advertisement depicts a stereotyped Native American wildly banging his fists on a Sohmer piano acquired in a recent train heist. The image displays what Amy Kaplan calls “the imperial reach of domesticity and its relation to the foreign.”⁹

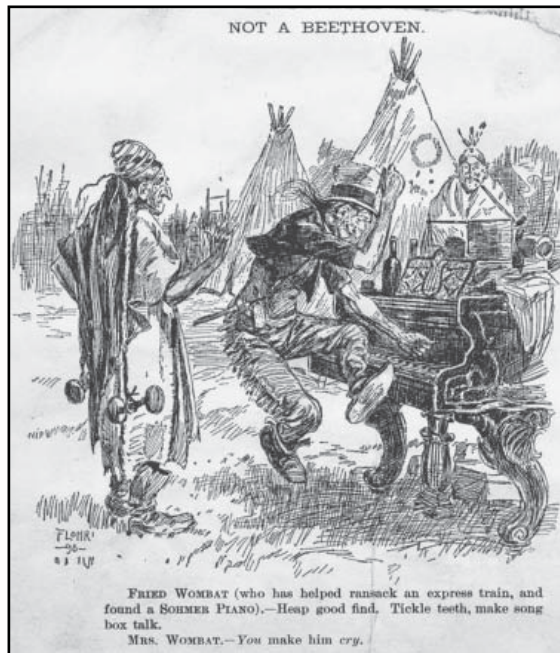


Figure 3 Advertising Card, Behr Piano Co., 1893. Warsaw Collection of Business Americana (60) Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

Unlike most other musical instruments, the piano was an important actor on the world stage. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, craftsmen manufactured ivory mainly into relatively small luxury items such as combs and other toiletries, but by the end of the century the Western ivory trade was dominated by mass produced piano keys. As the piano exploded in popularity, it became an increasingly important driver of the ivory market. Yet Westerners for the most part failed to recognize this fact and instead imagined ivory’s material history along with “Darkest Africa.” In 1856, the New Hampshire newspaper *The Farmer’s Cabinet* reported,

Few of our lady readers, while they peep so bewitchingly over the tips of their ivory fans, or play their fingers so nimbly and gracefully over the white keys of the piano, are wont to cast a thought towards the manner in which this material is procured, the quantities of which are annually needed, and the number of noble animals which are yearly slain for the purpose of supplying the constantly increasing demand.¹⁰

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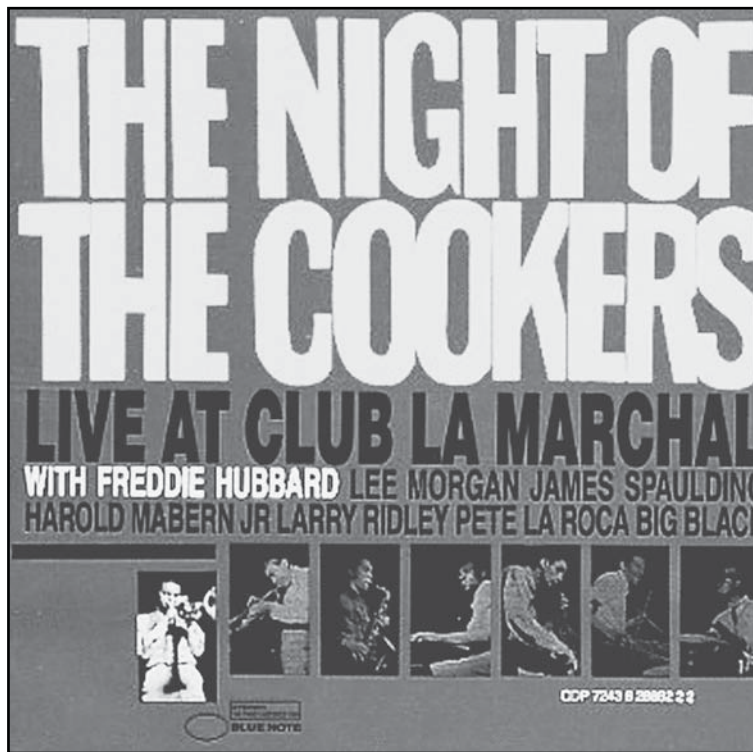
Across the East River: Searching for Brooklyn's Jazz History

On 9 and 10 April 1965, a series of musical performances took place at Brooklyn's Club La Marchal, located at Nostrand Avenue and President Street. The event was sponsored by "Jest Us," an enterprising group of women who happened to be the wives of trumpeter Freddie Hubbard, pianists and composers Cedar Walton, Bobby Timmons, and several other of the era's best-known jazz performers. Hubbard, who had replaced Lee Morgan in Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers three years earlier, was the headliner (his name is highlighted on the original album cover) but he is joined by a unique gathering of jazz individuals, most from his own band at the time: reed and wind player James Spaulding, pianist Harold Mabern, bass player Larry Ridley, Pete La Roca on drums, Big Black (Daniel Ray) on congas, and, perhaps most importantly, Morgan himself. The performances were recorded by Blue Note and issued as *The Night of the Cookers*.

The Night of the Cookers is a remarkable aural document. Each tune lasts twenty minutes or more, which forced Blue Note to issue the recording in two volumes (it is now available on a 2-CD reissue, Blue Note/EMI 7243 5 94323 2 8), and it shows, better than most live recordings, the potent relationship between audience and performer. As the original liner notes by Alfred Davis observes: "Throughout this album you will become more and more aware of the total freedom, almost to the point where the artists and audience become one in their appreciation of each other." But most jazz fans relish the two cuts that feature both Morgan and Hubbard in cordial exchanges. In the opening track, Clare Fischer's Latin-tinged "Pensativa," (an Art Blakey standard) a muted solo by Morgan gives way to an open-horn improvisation by Hubbard; after a solo by Mabern, Morgan removes his mute and engages in a lengthy conversation with Hubbard, the two throwing ideas back and forth ("Camptown Races" makes several appearances, for some reason). The performance gives listeners a rare opportunity to hear these two great artists, born the same year, play side by side, with Hubbard's famous warm tone making a perfect foil for Morgan's slightly edgy, bluesier sound. Though the tune builds in intensity until brought to a close by James Spaulding's return on flute, there is less a sense of competition here than of friendly exchange and the occasional humorous tweak. And throughout the audience is a partner in the proceedings, yelling out encouragement and laughing at the witty jibes.

Night of the Cookers is undoubtedly the most famous jazz album recorded in Brooklyn, but few know about the musical setting in which the events of that evening took place. Hubbard, whom we sadly lost last December, had immortalized that scene—especially in the mostly African-American neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant—three years earlier with "Nostrand and Fulton," a catchy tune deftly combining hard bop motives and a lilting waltz. The trumpeter, who lived in the borough during the 1960s, was only one of dozens of jazz artists who were fixtures in Brooklyn jazz during what some call the "glory days" of jazz in the borough, from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s. But scan the "Nightclubs and Other Venues" section of *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, and one finds only three references to Brooklyn among the dozens of Manhattan clubs listed (and all three are out of business). There is not even an entry for the

Blue Coronet, a long-running club on Fulton Street that hosted John Coltrane in the 1950s while he was playing at Manhattan's Five Spot with Thelonious Monk, and Miles Davis in the late 1960s just as he was embarking on his controversial "Bitches Brew" period (a bootleg recording of the latter's performance there has circulated for years). Nor is there mention of Putnam Central, a men's social club that featured Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, J.J. Johnson, and many others. Then again, much of what made Brooklyn's jazz community special were not the performance venues, but the musicians' homes, where innumerable jam sessions took place, or the long-gone Bickford's Coffee Shop, where players would meet after gigs to socialize and discuss music.



The Night of the Cookers (Blue Note Records, 1965)

It is hardly surprising that Manhattan's jazz history has overshadowed that of Brooklyn, for the latter borough had nothing like the organized entertainment industry that took root on Broadway or 52nd Street. But just ask those who lived in Brooklyn during those glory days—most notably pianist, composer and bandleader Randy Weston—and you will get an earful: not just about the clubs, though there were many, but about community, about a social network that existed among jazz musicians of which most historians are completely unaware. Weston is a walking dictionary of Brooklyn jazz history, and his autobiography, due out next year, will no doubt begin to give the borough a privileged place in the story of this music. Yet, a conversation with this famous Brooklyn son, still inexhaustibly robust at 83, only confirms that there is much more to be discovered about Brooklyn's role in jazz's development.

Brooklyn's Jazz History (continued)

In our Spring 2004 issue,¹ Robin D. G. Kelley discussed Brooklyn's recent "jazz renaissance," focusing primarily on organizations such as the Central Brooklyn Jazz Consortium as he framed the revitalization of the scene as largely a local community project. And just this spring, during our Brooklyn jazz symposium, (see p. 2), Kelley showed how Thelonious Monk was influenced by the time he spent immersed in Brooklyn's jazz community, though he lived in Manhattan. Weston, in turn, was of course influenced by Monk's idiosyncratic approach to the piano. Yet though the lively community remembered by Monk and Weston is only beginning to be fully appreciated, the history of jazz in Brooklyn goes back much further, to the early years of the twentieth century.

One might begin before jazz even arrives, with the work of ragtime pianists and composers who made Brooklyn their home. Of particular importance is Joseph F. Lamb who, along with Scott Joplin and James Scott, is considered one of the greatest composers of advanced "classical" ragtime. Though Lamb was born in New Jersey, he moved to Brooklyn after his marriage in 1911, and remained there until his death in 1960. I often walk by his modest house in Sheepshead Bay, built when much of Brooklyn was still farmland, and the local elementary school has been renamed in his honor.

Another ragtime and popular song composer with ties to Brooklyn is James Hubert "Eubie" Blake (1887-1983). Blake was born in Baltimore and spent much of his career in Manhattan, where he had an immense impact on the New York entertainment scene, particularly with his all-black show "Shuffle Along" of 1921, co-written with his partner Noble Sissle. Blake moved to Brooklyn around 1940 after his wife Avis died, and the borough can lay claim to many of his later works, including "Rhapsody in Ragtime" and the hauntingly beautiful "Eubie's Classical Rag." He boasts a plaque on the Brooklyn Botanic Garden's "Walk of Fame," alongside the likes of Aaron Copland, Barbra Streisand, and George Gershwin.

The story of jazz in Brooklyn seems to begin in earnest at Coney Island, a thriving amusement park and beach getaway in the 1910s and 20s. The area boasted a vigorous nightlife, much of it built up by Frankie Yale, an infamous Brooklyn underworld figure and associate of Al Capone. The best-known of Yale's clubs was the College Inn (not to be confused with the famous Chicago club of the same name), where the Original Dixieland Jazz Band played after their famous gig at Reisenweber's in 1917. Throughout the late 1910s and 1920s, a variety of performers that often featured jazz held forth at Coney Island, including Eddie Cantor and Jimmy Durante. Further research will be needed to learn more about this club scene, though we do know that not all the performers were white: we have learned from Lawrence Gushee's research that the Creole Band played at Coney Island in 1915.² One can't help wondering, too, if any of the famous early jazz musicians who were active in Manhattan in the 1920s made it down to this popular playground on a hot summer day. Did Louis Armstrong take the train out there in 1924, perhaps, with his cornet tucked under his arm?

During the swing-crazed 1930s and 40s, the greatest big bands of the day worked at the Brooklyn Paramount (called that to distinguish it from the Paramount in Manhattan). Built in 1928, the Paramount was located in downtown Brooklyn, at the current site of Long Island University at DeKalb and Flatbush Avenues (part of the ballroom—and the organ—still exist, though most of the building was absorbed by LIU's gymnasium). Duke Ellington and Cab Calloway were among the stars who brought their orchestras into this imposing structure in the 1930s, and later Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald, and Miles Davis appeared there as well. In the 1950s, the Paramount became famous for Alan Freed's broadcast live rock 'n roll shows, which featured Chuck Berry, Fats Domino, and others—making it something of an epicenter for the development of modern popular music. But during the Swing Era, one can't help wonder if the publicity given the Brooklyn Paramount obscured other Brooklyn venues that might have provided music and dancing space to Depression-weary audiences. It's not difficult to imagine that other perhaps less prestigious venues offered music for dancers and listeners, perhaps performed by local musicians.

Which brings us to the previously-mentioned glory days of the late 1940s through the 1960s discussed by Robin Kelley, the world experienced by Weston, Monk, Hubbard, Max Roach, and others. This musical scene is, of course, still vividly remembered by many, though their numbers are quickly disappearing. Interviews with musicians, club owners, and audiences, as well as examination of advertisements and reviews await the ambitious researcher. But time is pressing; in the next decade most of the first-hand accounts of this time will no longer be available to us. Luckily, the Brooklyn Historical Society, as well as some other institutions, are working to preserve the living legacy of Brooklyn's jazz history. We hope these efforts, combined with a careful look at how jazz arose and flourished in this borough, will help us better understand a story that has long been overlooked to the detriment of jazz scholarship everywhere.

As this project, now obviously in its early stages, moves forward, I invite readers who may be able to shed light on Brooklyn's jazz scene to contact us. For too long it has been assumed that Manhattan remained the only borough worth investigating by jazz historians. But it is now clear that just across the river there is a vital part of the music's story waiting to be discovered.

—Jeffrey Taylor

Notes

¹ Robin D. G. Kelly, "Brooklyn's Jazz Renaissance," *I.S.A.M. Newsletter* 23, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 4-5; 14.

² Lawrence Gushee, *Pioneers of Jazz: the Story of The Creole Band* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 180-181.

Celebrating Carter

2008 saw a wealth of events and releases related to Elliott Carter's centenary. The composer's music was featured at several summer festivals and in major concert halls in New York, Paris, and London, to name only a few; he also made several public appearances, notably on Charlie Rose with Daniel Barenboim and James Levine. Birthday tributes also took the form of commercial recordings, master classes featuring expert Carter performers, conferences in American universities and abroad, and a variety of special events, including an exhibit of autograph documents at the Boston Symphony Hall. Carter himself kept busy with several premieres and new commissions, including a long-awaited *Flute Concerto* and *Interventions* for piano and orchestra (commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra for James Levine and Daniel Barenboim, and premiered in Boston a few days before the composer's birthday). More premieres are scheduled for 2009, including a new song cycle on poems by Ezra Pound, *On Conversing with Paradise* for baritone and chamber orchestra. Although the last decade or so has seen the publication of several books devoted to the composer, Felix Meyer and Anne C. Shreffler's *Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Paul Sacher Foundation and Boydell Press, 2008) is an invaluable addition to this scholarship and is likely to find a place of choice in the personal library of many Carter enthusiasts.¹

Since Paul Sacher secured all of Carter's music manuscripts and other working materials in 1986 (the year of the official opening of the Sacher Foundation), scholars have had to travel to Basel to gain access to Carter's more recent autograph materials. Little of this information has been reproduced in print, and a catalog of the Carter holdings, probably the Sacher Foundation's largest collection, is yet to be published. According to Meyer and Shreffler, the main purpose of this volume is "to present an overall picture of Carter as a composer, of his artistic impact and his position in the music of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries" (4). The authors also aimed to give a wide overview of the music manuscripts and show "various forms of notation that Carter has used in his works" and "some typical features of his working methods" (3). Overall, the reader will find that these goals have been impressively met, although the lack of a descriptive list of the music manuscripts reproduced will be disappointing to many readers. Such a wide scope necessarily imposed certain restrictions: the analytical commentaries are limited in depth and there are also too few items relating to a single work to be used as a basis for an analysis. But taken as a whole, the carefully selected materials—which are not limited to the Sacher Foundation's holdings but also include relevant materials from other institutions—and the commentaries that accompany them provide much insight into the composer's working methods. Interested students are offered a rare opportunity to familiarize themselves with Carter's compositional language before embarking on more in-depth study.

Elliott Carter: A Centennial Portrait in Letters and Documents is organized chronologically, spanning from 1908 to 2008, and offering what is probably the most extensive collection of biographical information to date. Each chapter is conveniently subdivided in sub-sections by themes or work titles. For example, Chapter 1,

"Rather an Exceptional Boy" 1908-1935, includes six sub-sections: Childhood and Youth (1908-26), Support from Charles Ives (1926), *My Love is in a Light Attire* (1928), Student at Harvard University (1926-1932), Incidental Music for *Philoctetes* (1932), and The Paris Years (1932-35). However, the sub-sections are not included in the table of contents, and there is no catalog of the reproduced materials. These shortcomings make the volume somewhat less user-friendly, especially since it is more likely to be used as a reference than read cover to cover. Instead, most of the items are indexed under "Carter, Elliott Cook" by format type, i.e., "Photos," "Letters to," "Articles/Lectures/Interviews," and "Works."

Apart from the introduction, the book reads as a series of vignettes that might be most easily enjoyed by casually flipping through pages. The materials are organized in small topically related groups of different types of materials, each accompanied by a brief commentary. The analytical comments at times seem to retread the territory of Carter scholar David Schiff, insofar as they are rather descriptive and focus on a few distinctive features, but they also often include more details about the geneses of the works, enriched by relevant biographical information and quotations from letters. Thus, many analysts will find them illuminating and will be inspired to explore various aspects of Carter's musical discourse. Finally, the book does not include a bibliography, but does offer generous footnotes referring to primary and secondary literature. It also includes two appendices: (1) English translations of letters in Carter's French, German, and Italian, and (2) a list of published works from *Tarantella* (1936) to *On Conversing with Paradise* (2008). The letters in the text and appendix are cross-referenced and thus easily compared. The list of works is organized chronologically and entries typically include the piece's instrumentation, composition and publication dates, and information on the premiere. This is sufficient for quick reference and to gain a more general perspective of the works discussed within Carter's oeuvre; more inquisitive readers will want to consult John Link's *Elliott Carter: A Guide to Research* for more detailed entries.

Despite its necessarily fragmented contents, *A Centennial Portrait* is very successful in conveying a sense of Carter's development as a composer and active participant in American and European cultural history, a success that is unquestionably indebted to Meyer and Shreffler's skillful integration of relevant information. The authors describe Carter's fruitful involvement with musical institutions such as the League of Composers, the ISCM's Forum Group for young composers, and *Modern Music*.

The most critical contribution made by the authors is a brief re-examination of claims about Carter's oeuvre as Eurocentric, with Carter's international activities interpreted in light of the influence of the New York Intellectuals' vision of an "aesthetic of cosmopolitan modernism" on the young composer and the "transnational spirit" of pre-WWII America (6). Instead, the authors propose a perspective of Carter as a "radical traditionalist" who "channeled his drive towards innovation primarily in the direction of maximum sophistication and a systematic employment of the traditional twelve-tone chromatic material, combined with a corresponding range and variety in the shaping of musical time" (13).

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Reenacting *The Passing Show of 1914*

When Ph.D. candidate Jonas Westover began his doctoral work in musicology at the CUNY Graduate Center, he did not envision spending hours unpacking the socio-cultural meanings behind lines such as these: *Leonora*: "Hello. What have you there?" *Queen of the Movies*: "The Seven Keys to Baldpate. We're working on a great film now. It's called 'Footsteps in the Navy Yard or They Used Him for an Anchor.' It ought to be better than 'The Mystery of the Poached Egg' and 'The Traffic on Heels.'" Yet, with a specialization in American musical theater works, Westover's dissertation focuses on the source of these lines: Sigmund Romberg and Harry Atteridge's *Passing Show of 1914*, a revue that premiered in its title year at the Winter Garden in New York City, starring a very young Mary Pickford.

The "Passing Shows" of the early 1910s targeted a particular population of theater-goers, who "attended nearly every theatrical event on the early Broadway stage."² Thus, although the revue's plot (a word I employ very loosely here) and dialogue seem impossibly opaque at times, to the average audience member of 1914 the cultural references reinforced the centrality of theater to early twentieth-century New Yorkers. While many theater productions and early films contain contemporary references and language, allusions to theater and film productions saturate the *Passing Show*, enabling audience members to feel as though they were "insiders" with the capacity to comprehend a kind of complex code that outsiders—those who may have missed an evening of theater—could not.

On 7 February 2009, an excitable group of American music devotees gathered in the large music classroom at the Graduate Center to celebrate a momentous moment in musical theater research: Westover's completion of the reconstruction of the show's musical numbers. While scripts and musical scores were distributed around the room, Westover projected slides of original photographs and sheet music covers from his ongoing *Passing Show* research. With approximately thirty willing participants and Joshua Feltman at the piano, the myriad roles could be filled leaving only a handful of attendees without a line or a song.

Not only was this event significant for its celebration of the *Passing Show of 1914*, but to Westover's knowledge, the edition on which he is working is the first early revue to be fully reconstructed with both music and dialogue, as originally performed. With many



Poster for "The Passing Show"

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Reenvisioning a Critical Chapter in American Music

Musicologists have been trying to define the parameters of American music since Anton Dvořák arrived on our shores more than a century ago. And in today's increasingly pluralistic, transnational, and digitally-driven world the task has become only more daunting. Charles Hiroshi Garrett's collection of essays, boasting the provocative title *Struggling to Define a Nation: American Music and the Twentieth Century* (University of California Press, 2008), does not provide definitive boundaries, but it certainly maps out fresh directions for exploring the terrain.

Rather than dividing and analyzing American music along traditional lines of genre, geographic region, high/low class hierarchy, or race and ethnicity, Garrett proposes a broader model that views musical practice through the lens of cultural production and power relations. Borrowing from such critical theorists as Theodore Adorno, Stuart Hall, and Mikhail Bakhtin, he envisions a messy collision of sundry music cultures that collectively negate any national consensus. American music, Garrett tells us, "can be understood best as a series of conflicts or clashes between diverse and often opposing musical identities" (216). Such a perspective, he hopes, will help us move beyond the overly-reductive Anglo-Afro paradigm that has dominated our thinking over the past half century to focus on the more complex, trans-cultural nature of American music-making.

The book's subtitle is a bit misleading, as its scope is limited primarily to the early decades of the twentieth century. But this was a wise choice, as the years between 1900 and 1930 were marked by turbulent waves of urbanization, immigration, and migration that reconfigured the American landscape in ways that would reverberate throughout the century and into the new millennium. Equally important for producers and consumers of music was the advent of mass media and the modern entertainment industry. During this period Americans experienced the golden years of Tin Pan Alley, the birth of Broadway musical theater, the popularizing of ragtime, vaudeville blues, and jazz, and stepped-up efforts to infuse American concert music with indigenous vernacular sounds. From this rich milieu Garrett has chosen a sampling of musical practices that, for him, personify the contested nature of American life and music.

The initial chapter is centered on *Four Ragtime Dances*, Charles Ives's turn-of-the-century work for theater orchestra that melded syncopated ragtime phrasing with melodic motifs drawn from Protestant gospel hymns. Reviewing Ives's ambivalent writings on black American vernacular music and analyzing his ragtime dance score (as reconstructed by James Sinclair), Garrett concludes the composer gave more precedent to the white hymn than the black ragtime material. Yet his very decision to experiment with what was at the time a very new form of black popular music, Garrett contends, reflected Ives's willingness to grapple with difficult issues of race and cultural hierarchy that were just beginning to appear on the radar of American composers and critics. Ives's dabbling with ragtime may have been fraught with contradiction, but it was a harbinger of a broader national dialogue that would soon unfold around the progressive urge toward bi-racial understanding and the regressive perpetuation of old cultural inequities.

The second and third chapters explore two towering figures, Jelly Roll Morton and Louis Armstrong, from the perspective of

jazz's multicultural origins and inherent class tensions. Garrett turns to Morton's "Spanish-tinged" compositions to demonstrate the deep influence of Latin *tresillo* and *habanera* rhythms and occasional melodic motifs on a number of the pianist's best-known compositions. By intermingling Afro-Caribbean rhythms and African-American blues forms in pieces like "New Orleans Blues," Morton celebrates his own French/Spanish/African ancestry and the Creole culture of his native city. But Garrett's music analysis leads him to conclude that Latin and blues elements do not always act in concert, and such songs can be read as "sonic metaphor(s) for difference and conflict" (62). This is not a cultural or aesthetic liability, for Garrett argues it is exactly this dialectic tension between Latin and blues sensibilities that creates such compelling music.

With Louis Armstrong's 1927 recording of "Gully Low Blues" Garrett explores the relationship of music, region, and class in the context of the first great migration of southern African Americans following WWI. The piece descends from a grand, theatrical trumpet fanfare and urbane opening chorus to a low-down southern blues where Armstrong's gritty vocal promises his high-brow lady he "won't be Gully no mo'" if she will just take him back. Armstrong's final triumphant solo, Garrett suggests, signals his musical and social deliverance from the gully blues. This and other Hot Five recordings provided sonic sites where musical gestures of the modern urban north and the traditional rural south could meet and mingle, creating exciting new forms that helped ease the transition of southern migrants in cities like Chicago.

The final two chapters broaden the query by addressing the dialogue between Asian-American culture and American popular music. This is ground that few musicologists have trod and certainly represents the book's most original contribution. First Garrett examines the production of Tin Pan Alley songs like Jean Schwartz and William Jerome's 1910 "Chinatown, My Chinatown" as pop culture responses to the proliferation of Asian immigration. More than innocent novelty songs, these works consistently portrayed Chinese Americans as racialized exotics who spent most of their time smoking opium and strumming shamisens (Asian lutes). Here Garrett's analysis seems more dependent on lyrics, iconography, and yellow-face theatrical productions than vocal or instrumental style, as Tin Pan Alley songwriters stuck to their conventional musical vocabulary and only on occasion employed stereotypical oriental forms like pentatonic scales and repeated parallel fourths.

Garrett closes with a fascinating look at the Hawaiian-themed music that swept mainland America in the 1910s. Once again Broadway and Tin Pan Alley played pivotal roles in constructing exotic and erotic images of Asian culture through shows like the 1911 stage production *The Bird of Paradise* and songs like Arthur Holt and William Pierson's 1916 "My Honolulu Lulu." But the Hawaiian craze was more complex than its Chinatown counterpart, because Hawaiian song writers and musicians like Sonny Cunha and Frank Ferera were directly involved in the production and dissemination of Hawaiian-themed music in the States. Thus American audiences were treated not only to Tin Pan Alley fantasies of tropical culture, but the actual sounds of twangy steel guitars, strumming ukuleles, and falsetto swooping *hapa haole* vocalizations performed by actual Hawaiian musicians. The construction of ethnic imagery, the commoditization and subsequent appropriation of native

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Ashley's Operas

More than a quarter of a century separates Robert Ashley's two operas, *Perfect Lives* (1978-1980) and *Concrete* (2007). The new DVD of *Perfect Lives* (Lovely Music LDVD 4917) contains the 1983 realization of Ashley's first television opera, made in collaboration with director John Sanborn, which premiered on Great Britain's Channel Four. A recently released CD of *Concrete* (Lovely Music LCD 1010) recapitulates Ashley's most recent work.

Robert Ashley once told critic Kyle Gann, "It'd be delightful if the Metropolitan asked me to do an opera. I'd do it, but I wouldn't deceive myself for one minute that I was doing a piece that had any meaning compared to Verdi. That guy went to the opera every night of his life. If you're going to play baseball, you have to play baseball every day for your whole life. You can't go to a baseball game once, then play baseball. You can't go to the opera ten times and then write an opera."¹ Hence in the late 1970s Ashley settled on a medium of which he had extensive knowledge for his compositions of text and music: the opera for television. This production of the seven-act, 175-minute *Perfect Lives* is his most thorough realization of the form.

Much has been made of the narrative complexity of *Perfect Lives*—especially in retrospect, given that a number of its characters (Don, Linda, Eleanor, Junior Jr.) reappear in half a dozen of Ashley's subsequent operas (first in the trilogy that includes *Perfect Lives*, and then in the tetralogy entitled *Now Eleanor's Idea*). But to experience *Perfect Lives* is to be held in thrall to the deeply committed, idiosyncratic performances of Ashley (as "R," the narrator) and "Blue" Gene Tyranny (as "Buddy, the World's Greatest Piano Player"). R and Buddy are a performing duo that has arrived in an unnamed Midwestern town—much of the television production was shot in Galesburg, Illinois—to perform at the Perfect Lives Lounge. There are few moments in the three-hour production in which Ashley's dry but spry, near-to-singing speaking voice rests. Jill Kroesen and David Van Tieghem appear onscreen as a number of different characters, occasionally adding their unison voices to underscore passages in the libretto. R digresses to poetic effect, to the point that when he finally locks into the back story of two of the characters, he sees reason to apologize: "This is not very interesting, I know."

The predominant musical palette in *Perfect Lives* consists of Ashley's voice, neutral washes of synthesizer, pointillistic electronic percussion, and "Blue" Gene Tyranny's delirious piano playing, which reaches its apotheosis in a feverish marathon of boogie woogie variations throughout the act entitled "The Bar (Differences)." The hypnotizing series of close-up shots of Tyranny's hands at the keyboard—sometimes dotted with rhinestones, sometimes elaborately painted, always with a shade of fingernail polish unique to each act—are alone worth the price of admission.

Theodor Adorno argued that the virtue of opera on record is that it spares audiences the embarrassment of unintentionally comic stagings. As Adorno sees it, Mozart in period costume and Mozart performed in sweatpants can be equally painful: "One cannot avoid asking, What's the point? Why even bother doing it on stage? One wants to spare Mozart from this."² Ashley's opera for television avoids this impasse. The mise-en-scène of the television production shares a matching time stamp with the musical and textual composition. And yet, one's first impression of watching *Perfect Lives* 25

years later is the datedness of its visual design. It's marked by the doubly garish colors of video and Eighties fashions (blue neon lights, lime-green futuristic unisex clothing, severe lipstick and rouge) and period video effects (chunky shading for on-screen text, multiple images rendered as a spinning cube, and so on). *Perfect Lives* is as sturdily representative of its time as music videos by Devo or David Lynch's *Blue Velvet*. (Judging by *Perfect Lives*, the thing that seems to have changed least in the intervening quarter-century is the look of the grocery store.) The difference between the televisual realization of *Perfect Lives* and opera's quandary as described by Adorno is that *Perfect Lives* exists in period visual style without the need for reenactment. It has been captured in 1983-vintage amber, and the relevant category is less that of "datedness" than "dating"—as in "carbon dating." It has come to pass that the dating of the work is one of the strengths of its realization in the medium of television. That, and Ashley and "Blue" Gene Tyranny; it's a joy to see these two performers hit and sustain their stride.

Concrete is a comparatively brief 95-minute work for four vocalists (Sam Ashley, Thomas Buckner, Jacqueline Humbert, and Joan La Barbara) and two individuals charged with the task of the live processing and mixing of orchestra samples (Robert Ashley and Tom Hamilton). Its nine sections alternate between five rapid-fire "discussions" among the four vocalists (representing thoughts flitting about the consciousness of an old man) and four longer, autobiographical stories from the man's life. Gambling and brushes with death figure prominently. The stories become increasingly mystical—a tug-of-war with a poltergeist occurs at the same moment as a friend's death; a rug appears to levitate—but the mystical is less a cause for meditation than it is the occasion for storytelling. The component narratives of *Concrete* take a front seat in the proceedings.

Given the intervening years and intervening operas, there is a degree of arbitrariness in making comparisons between *Concrete* and *Perfect Lives*. Still, one can't help but be struck by the unambiguous foreground-background relations in *Concrete* that are, by contrast, so strange, so mercurial, and so compelling in *Perfect Lives*. In *Concrete*, Ashley and Hamilton have at their fingertips, to

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Joan La Barbara in Robert Ashley's opera *Concrete*
Photo by Stephanie Berger, used by permission of
Performing Artservices, Inc.

Charles Ives and His Tunes

Clayton Henderson has revised, updated, and improved his indispensable *The Charles Ives Tunebook* in its handsome second edition (University of Indiana Press, 2008). Since it was published by J. Bunker Clark's Harmonie Park Press in 1990, *The Charles Ives Tunebook* has served a vital function for students of Ives's music, documenting the two hundred or so tunes that Ives quoted or paraphrased. Henderson focuses on the first full appearances of borrowed tunes in Ives's works including the unfinished pieces. By presenting the borrowed melodies in categories—hymns, patriotic songs, popular songs, etc.—the *Tunebook* provides both a general reference of the source material to which Ives so often turned, and a window on Ives's musical mind in terms of the number and style of tunes in each category. Henderson augments this second function by using sources for the tunes that date from Ives's time, thus showing how the tunes as he knew them differ in some cases from the versions known today. An irony of the collection is the way that perusing it underlines the aural and experiential nature of Ives's music. Many of these tunes, particularly the ones Ives used repeatedly, clearly had a deep significance for him, but when one looks at the tunes themselves, outside the context of a given work by Ives, there are few distinctive musical reasons for the use of one tune over another. As Henderson notes, they are largely stepwise and mostly in major keys.

Henderson sees Ives's use of tunes as a way of encoding personal meaning. He elaborates on this idea via Ives's own prose descriptions of the way borrowed tunes function in works such as *The "St. Gaudens" in Boston Common*, and *Decoration Day*. He also notes the use of quotation as a sort of musical punning in works such as the second movement of the *Trio for Violin, Violoncello, and Piano*. Thus, tunes have memorial, comic, and philosophical functions, and like the tunes themselves, these roles are often interwoven. The Ives of the *Concord Sonata* and its accompanying *Essays* informs Henderson's general understanding of quotation's function and of the seeming contradiction between the simple borrowed material and its highly complex presentation: "Ives's transcendentalist views held that the music of the common man also contained the true substance of life, a unity underlying all diversity, a simplicity behind the complexities of existence. In using homely tunes, Ives attempted to represent this substance, this unity and simplicity, albeit clothed in complicated accompanying sound fabrics" (xv).

Many of the changes in this second edition stem from important Ives scholarship completed after its first publication. James Sinclair's *Descriptive Catalogue of the Music of Charles Ives* (Yale University Press, 1999) replaces John Kirkpatrick's Temporary Mimeographed *Catalogue* (Library of the Yale School of Music, 1960) as the source for the numbering and dating of Ives's works and serves as a principal source for information on borrowed material. Peter Burkholder's *All Made of Tunes* (Yale University Press, 1995) also informs Henderson's choices in this edition; indeed the two books function as a kind of conversation on borrowing in Ives's music. Where Burkholder focuses on the way borrowed material shapes whole pieces and movements and is particularly interested in the fragmentation and development of the material, Henderson hears the allusions in Ives's works as whole events, and he tends to

refer to phrase-length segments of tunes. He states that for Ives, "the melody of the source was a sacred thing" (13). Thus, the *Tunebook* is an attempt to preserve these melodies not so much as an investigation of Ives's music but of its constitutive materials, the musical experience of the mind behind it.

The *Tunebook* has grown in ways that match our maturing understanding of Ives, particularly the increased awareness of his ties with the European "classical" music tradition: almost twice as many tunes now appear in this category, with additional and new entries by Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Debussy, Dvořák, Franck, Handel, Tchaikovsky, and Wagner. Here is yet further refutation of the myth that Ives stood apart from, and was mostly uninfluenced by, the European tradition of the nineteenth century. Almost every category has seen some change. The most stable are "Popular Instrumental Tunes," with no additions, and "Patriotic Songs and Military Music," with only one. "Popular Songs" and "Hymns" have both seen substantial additions, as has the section on "College Tunes," which is particularly valuable in view of the increasing obscurity of its subject matter. The fraternity songs Ives uses were known to only a select audience even in Ives's day.

A few pieces have also been removed from the *Tunebook*, and an examination of one of these cases provokes thought and a few questions about Henderson's criteria for determining the use of borrowed material in a given work. The first edition lists Stephen Foster's "Nelly Bly" (tune 124) as the source of the flute line in measure 41 of *Decoration Day*, and indeed the contours of the tunes closely match. The second edition states, without comment or elaboration, that Ives does not borrow from "Nelly Bly." In *All Made of Tunes*, Burkholder discusses this potential borrowing but concludes that the passage is in fact related to "Marching through Georgia," which Ives has already used in the movement, and which is more topically relevant. It seems likely that Henderson has accepted this argument, especially in view of his discussion of Ives's use of patriotic songs, which points out the way that Ives often takes the meaning or association of a particular tune into account when placing it into a musical context. Although Henderson's basic methodology is clear, a bit more explanation in such cases would be helpful.

Henderson is more overt in his discussion of potential overlap and ambiguity between similar tunes, such as the famous motive from Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and Charles Zeuner's "Missionary Chant," which are identical apart from the number of times the first note is repeated. The Hymn tunes "Azmon" and "Shining Shore" form another almost indistinguishable pair. In such cases, Henderson emphasizes that Ives uses quotation contextually and thematically, so when a fragment that could be from the tune "Eli Yale" appears in the transcendent finale of the Fourth Symphony (m. 65, oboe), he relates it instead to Lowell Mason's "There Is a Happy Land," which Ives also uses in the symphony's second movement. These borderline calls point out the interpretive nature of the book and of listening to Ives's music. They also demonstrate the richness that comes from applying a contextual knowledge of the source material to the music. Ives's mind was associative; his music and prose comprise networks of inter-referential meaning.

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Pianos, Ivory, and Empire (continued)

Literate westerners in the nineteenth century surely knew of the insatiable slaughter of elephants required to supply their ivory, as it was the subject of both news commentary and popular travel literature. Killing elephants was a necessary byproduct of harvesting their precious teeth; misgivings about the practice were exacerbated by elephants' exceptional nobility, intelligence, ferocity, and elusive cunning. Anxiety sparked myths. Legends of troves of stockpiled ivory coexisted with the idea that ivory was so abundant it was lying on the ground for the taking. The story went like this: Africans, in their ignorance, were unaware of ivory's value, so the tusks were simply there for the taking. Part of the cultural work of the myths that grew up around ivory was to cover up the human and environmental devastation associated with the ivory trade. Just as the violence surrounding ivory extraction was escalating in the 1880s, images of African people disappeared from the print material produced by American ivory companies, who from then on mainly focused on images of elephants. Perhaps Westerners displaced their anxiety about the human cost of the ivory trade onto elephants.

The methods used to extract ivory from Africa in the nineteenth and early twentieth century included forced labor, slavery, theft, warfare, rape, and mass murder. To be sure, estimating the scope of the trade, both in tusks and slaves, is treacherous ground. Western travelers' estimates of the death toll varied widely, ranging from a human life lost for each tusk extracted to a likely exaggerated one human lives lost for each pound of ivory brought to the Western market. Historian Edward Alpers argues that Westerners, most famously Livingstone, exaggerated the extent of the slave trade in East and Central Africa.¹¹

Regardless of its scope, by the 1890s, much of the central African ivory trade had shifted west after Stanley mapped the Congo River and Belgium's King Leopold instituted his brutal reign of terror in his Congo Free State. It is unlikely that scholars will ever agree on a reliable estimate of the human cost of its mania for the piano, but the horrors that occurred in the Belgian Congo under King Leopold's rule are better documented and less contested than those that occurred earlier in the century. Adam Hochschild estimates that between 1880 and 1920 (roughly coterminous with the commodification and extensive mass marketing of the piano in the West) about ten million people were slaughtered or worked to death extracting rubber and ivory from the Congo (the majority of these deaths were probably associated with rubber extraction).¹² Given that Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* was about a trip up the Congo River for ivory, most of which would have been cut for piano keys, it is remarkable that the connection between the human cost of ivory extraction and the piano was not explicitly made, particularly by activists such as Mark Twain who worked to expose the routine atrocities committed in the Congo. However, economic data

links the Congo with the production of the piano. Documents filed by American ivory companies with the United States government reveal that by 1913, virtually all of the ivory imported to the United States from Africa was manufactured into pianos, and two thirds of that ivory came from the Congo.¹³ It is not clear whether the relationship between the American piano industry and the Congo is representative of the piano industry worldwide, nor is it possible to extrapolate this data forward or back. However, American companies dominated the world piano market, and in an era when United States manufacturers churned out as many as a few hundred thousand instruments a year, it is safe to conclude that the American demand for pianos was devastating.

Maintaining traditional geographic and disciplinary boundaries enforces a tidy separation between the piano, Western musical culture, colonialism, and atrocity, and one could argue that the historical record largely supports the maintenance of such boundaries. But the cost is high, as they obscure ways Western musical culture was influenced by colonialism and how Western cultural practices shaped other parts of the world. Because nineteenth-century commentators did not directly link the West's insatiable urge for pianos with the widely known situation in Africa, connecting the slave and ivory trade in Africa to the piano industry is considered by some a proactive presentist move. This view is too narrow. Ivory's well-known biography, both romantic and bloody, structured its relationship to Western piano players. It is the responsibility of scholars to consider the full range of ivory's materiality. Besides, the ideological veneer of the historical record occasionally cracks. Figure 4 is an advertisement from 1890 for an ivory substitute. This image explicitly connects the plight of the slaves at the bottom of the image with finding a manufactured substitute for ivory. What is

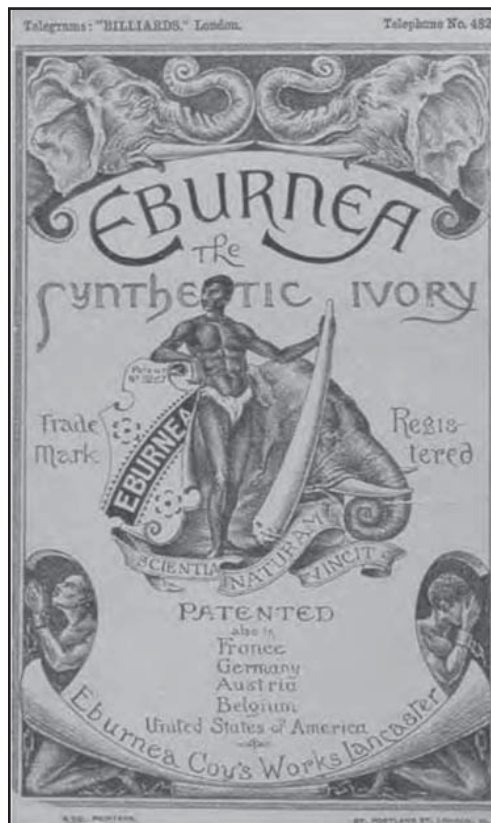


Figure 4. Magazine Advertisement, Sohmer Piano Co., 1890.

Sohmer & Co. Records (349) Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution

remarkable about the piano is its stark connection to exploitation in other parts of the world. Edward Said writes, "Most professional humanists . . . are unable to make the connection between the prolonged and sordid cruelty of practices such as slavery, colonialist and racial oppression, and imperial subjection on the one hand, and the poetry, fiction, and philosophy of the society that engages in these practices on the other." Acknowledging ties between the piano, musical culture, and the appalling history of the ivory trade challenges what Philip Bohlman calls "musicology's insistence on maintaining music as its value-free object of study." In his preface to Arthur Loesser's influential *Men, Women, and Pianos*, Jacques Barzun calls the piano "a perfect symbol of Western civilization in modern times."¹⁴ Barzun was right, even if he did not acknowledge that it was the piano's multifaceted role as Western cultural icon, agent of colonial oppression, and sustainer of racial hierarchies

continued on page 14

Pianos, Ivory, and Empire (continued)

that makes it a perfect symbol. Only by looking at the material relationship between pianists and ivory in a global context can we begin to comprehend how colonial ideology so thoroughly penetrated Western life.

—CUNY Graduate Center

Notes

¹ For an overview of recent work, see Christopher Tilley, ed., the *Handbook of Material Culture*, (Sage, 2006). Arjun Appadurai edited an important early anthology, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986). In music, see Allen Roda, “Toward a New Organology,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Columbus, Ohio, 2007.

² Tim Dant, *Material Culture in the Social World: Values, Activities, Lifestyles* (Open University Press, 1999), 2.

³ See Patrick Brantlinger, “Victorians and Africans: The Genealogy of the Myth of the Dark Continent,” in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed., “Race,” *Writing, and Difference* (University of Chicago Press, 1985), 185-222. David Shayt, “The Material Culture of Ivory Outside of Africa,” in *Elephant: The Animal and its Ivory in African Culture*, ed. Doran Ross (Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA, 1992), 367. While our readings are different, I open and close this essay with the same images as does Shayt (Figures 1 and 4). Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman, “Introduction, The Occlusion of Race in Music Studies,” in Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman, eds., *Music and the Racial Imagination* (University of Chicago Press, 2000), 6.

⁴ My analysis of the piano is informed by scholarship that explores the relationship between Western domestic culture and colonial and imperial ideologies such as Anne McClintock, “Soft-Soaping the Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising” in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (Routledge, 1995), 207-231; Kristen Hoganson, “Cosmopolitan Domesticity: Importing the American Dream, 1865-1920,” *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 1 (February 2002): 55-83; and Amy Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity,” *American Literature* 70, no. 3 (September 1998): 581-606.

⁵ Drawing on the work of Angela Davis and Hazel Carby, Sherrie Tucker recognizes how the whiteness implicit in demonstrations of musical accomplishments could exclude African American women in *Swing Shift: “All-Girl” Bands of the 1940s* (Duke University Press, 2001), 89-90. For a classic essay on cult of true womanhood, see Barbara Welter, “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860” in *The American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1966): 151-174.

⁶ Charles J. Bellamy, “The Breton Mills,” serialized in the *San Jose Mercury News*, 14 April, 1888.

⁷ Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity,” 600.

⁸ David Livingstone, *Livingstone’s Africa: Perilous Adventures and Extensive Discoveries in the Interior of Africa* (Hubbard Brothers. 1872), 349.

⁹ Steinway advertisement, 2 February 1930, *New York Times*. Hoganson, “Cosmopolitan Domesticity,” 69. WWII era advertisement, Gulbransen Company, Sohmer & Co. Records (349), Archives Center, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. Cynthia Adams Hoover, “The Great Piano War of the 1870s,” in *A Celebration of American Music: Words and Music in Honor of H. Wiley Hitchcock*, eds. Richard Crawford, R. Allen Lott, and Carol Oja (University Of Michigan Press 1990), 133. Kaplan, “Manifest Domesticity,” 600.

¹⁰ “Ivory,” *The Farmer’s Cabinet* (Amherst, New Hampshire) 54, no. 40, 8 May, 1856.

¹¹ For engaging essays on the American ivory industry and the piano, including the human cost, see Anne Farrow, “Plunder for Pianos,” in *Complicity: How the North Promoted, Prolonged, and Profited from Slavery* (Ballantine, 2005), 193-214; and Richard Conniff, “When the Music in Our Parlors Brought Death to Darkest Africa,” *Audubon Magazine* (July 1987): 76-93. Edward Alpers, “The Ivory Trade in Africa,” in *Elephant: The Animal and its Ivory in African Culture*, 356.

¹² Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa* (Houghton Mifflin, 1999), 233.

¹³ Arnold Cheney & Co. to Senator F. M. Simmons, Chairman Finance Committee, U.S. Senate, 8 May 1913, in U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Finance. “Tariff Schedules: Briefs and Statements Filed with the Committee on Finance, United States Senate” (U.S. GPO: 1913), 1673.

¹⁴ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (Knopf, 1993), xiv. Philip Bohlman, “Musicology as a Political Act,” *The Journal of Musicology* 11 (1993): 424. Jacques Barzun, “Preface” in Arthur Loesser, *Men, Women, and Pianos: a Social History* (Simon & Schuster, 1954), vii.

Celebrating Carter (continued)

Considering the wealth of Carter-related materials available at the Paul Sacher Foundation and the difficult task of keeping up with a century-old composer who is more active than ever, this volume is a considerable achievement. Its publication will certainly make Carter’s autograph materials more accessible as well as provide scholars a valuable resource for the study of archival materials. Libraries will find it to be an essential addition to their collection, as will many Carter and American music scholars. The richly illustrated volume will also be attractive to a wider audience of musicians, concert goers, and cultural history enthusiasts.

—Ève Poudrier,
Yale University

Note

¹ These include William T. Doering, *Elliott Carter: A Bio-Bibliography*, (Greenwood, 1993); Jonathan W. Bernard, *Elliott Carter: Collected Essays and Lectures, 1937-1995* (University of Rochester Press, 1997); David Schiff, *The Music of Elliott Carter*, 2nd. ed. (Cornell University Press, 1998); Max Noubel, *Elliott Carter, ou Le temps fertile* (Geneva, Switzerland: Contrechamps, 2000), and John F. Link, *Elliott Carter: A Guide to Research* (Garland Publishing, 2000).

Passing Show (continued)

American music scholars present (John Graziano gave a significant performance as the scheming “Baron Von Criquet”, while Institute Director Jeff Taylor performed a tour-de-force “Joe the Mechanic”), Westover hopes that others may soon take up studies concerning early musical revues, of which few scholarly editions are currently available. In 2009, the relevance and humor of much of the dialogue held fast, though all were rather stunned by the opening chorus of Act II, entitled “Eugenic Girls.” Nevertheless, Westover’s project brings to life a historical moment in theater that will certainly aid historians in understanding and further researching the idiosyncratic theatrical and musical culture that revolved around the New York passing shows.

—Stephanie Jensen-Moulton

Notes

¹ Harold Atteridge and Sigmund Romberg, *The Passing Show of 1914*, unpublished. Housed in the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

² Jonas Westover, “Reviewing the Revue: Unpacking the Textual and Musical References in *The Passing Show of 1914*.” Paper given at the 35th Annual Meeting of the Society for American Music, Denver, 2009.

Reenvisioning American Music (continued)

culture, and the intersection of tourism and colonialism became key issues that surrounded the music making on both sides of the Pacific.

The strength of *Struggling to Define a Nation* lies in Garrett's close reading of exemplary musical texts. Too often cultural studies scholars spin wild speculations couched in impenetrable jargon that leave readers wondering what happened to the original subject(s) of investigation. Garrett avoids this trap, weaving together convincing music and lyric analysis with deep historical contextualization all conveyed through lucid and engaging prose. That said, his focus on musical collisions and cultural struggles inevitably leads to interpretations that are a bit fuzzy around the edges: Ives was at once fascinated and ambivalent about ragtime; Morton's Spanish tinge was multifaceted and not easily reducible to a simple set of characteristics; Armstrong could lampoon and celebrate his southern roots in a single performance; Chinese Americans musical gestures and imagery were regularly reconfigured, thereby offering new sets of meaning to new audiences; the Hawaiian music craze introduced mainland Americans to both damaging stereotypes and authentic sounds of island culture, and so forth. Those seeking a neat model based on definitive textual readings will undoubtedly be disappointed, but Garrett rightly understands that cultural miscegenation is messy, hegemony is slippery, and the struggle for human agency is rarely complete.

While Garrett does move us beyond a simple black/white dyad with his Latin and Asian examples, his push toward greater inclusion might be extended to additional ethnic musics that occasionally spilled into the national spotlight during the early twentieth century. Working from a cultural insider's perspective (a position Garrett only assumes in passing as part of his discussion of the Hawaiian music craze), one might investigate how Jewish, Irish, Puerto Rican, and/or West Indian-American immigrants (to name but a few) developed their own vibrant, community-based music scenes that made significant contributions to popular vaudeville, Tin Pan Alley, and jazz. This sort of approach would encourage the integration of the fields of traditional musicology, ethnomusicology, and popular music studies.

Can Garrett's vision of American music as a series of clashes between diverse, creolized musical forms be more widely applied to other historical periods and genres not covered in his present work? It seems plausible, and he certainly will be afforded ample opportunity to do so in his current position as Editor-in-Chief of the forthcoming second edition of *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*. For the moment, *Struggling to Define a Nation* points the way for reenvisioning at least one critical chapter in American music making.

—Ray Allen

Ashley (continued)

be manipulated via Ableton Live software, an arsenal of hundreds of samples of orchestral fragments composed specifically for this project. Ashley has stressed the improvisatory quality of this approach, but it is not altogether evident from this recorded version. Rippling echoes of delay and the buzzes of lowered bit rates predominate. The instrumental component is most successful in the brief "discussion" sections, in which the four vocalists' rapid interjections render the electroacoustic interventions similarly discursive. But during the individual vocalists' stories, voice and text dominate, and the

Ashley (continued)

manipulated samples stay resolutely in the background. Despite the numerous pleasures of *Concrete*—the libretto, the vocalists' performances—the ear and the mind are given less of a challenge to decipher and less of an invitation to stray.

—David Grubbs
Brooklyn College

Notes

¹ Quoted in Kyle Gann, "Shouting at the Dead: Robert Ashley's Neoplatonist TV Operas" (1991) in *Music Downtown: Writings from the Village Voice* (University of California Press, 2006), 20-21.

² Theodor W. Adorno, "Opera and the Long-Playing Record" (1969), trans. Thomas Y. Levin, in Richard Leppert, ed., *Essays on Music* (University of California Press, 2002), 284.

Ives (continued)

And, while Henderson is correct to point out that one does not suddenly understand Ives "because one has ferreted out borrowings from every nook and cranny of his music," (7) knowing the content and context of this musical "substance" enhances the interpretive and aesthetic experience of the music.

Although Ives wrote most of his music without the prospect of a specific performance, he wrote for an audience with aural and musical experiences similar to his own. In 1940, Ives's brother-in-law, Joseph Twichell, described the effect of hearing a recital featuring excerpts from the *Concord* Sonata and selected songs in a letter to the Charles and Harmony Ives:

. . . I don't know a single thing about music—not a single thing, except that I like it or I don't like it; except how it makes me *feel*. . . So much of it was to me so amazingly familiar; something I hadn't at all expected. . . As to the *songs* I did really and truly enjoy them all very much. . . But one or two of the accompaniments . . . had me licked. Just what they had to do with the song I couldn't figure. It sounded to me sometimes as if Charlie was trying to put one over on the singer; as if he had said to the good lady, "I'll bet you can't sing 'Nearer My God to Thee' while I play 'Marching through Georgia'." . . . It was for me a never-to-be-forgotten afternoon. It was simply great (*Charles Ives Papers*, Gilmore Music Library, Yale University, Mss. 14, Box 32, Folder 10).

Twichell recognizes the allusions in the songs, and while they puzzle him, they also create a sense of community and familiarity. The music functions on multiple levels with layered meanings—musical, textual, comic, profound, personal. The great value of *The Ives Tunebook* is that it preserves the music, some of it quite ephemeral, that Ives transformed to create such musical depth and this rich sense of community.

—Tom C. Owens
George Mason University

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