

Institute for Studies in American Music

NEWSLETTER

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Almost obligatory in the first issue of any new periodical is a high-minded, visionary, virtually inspirational statement of the reasons why the publication is desperately needed and the ways in which it is going to meet brilliantly those needs. For once, though, let's put it simply: The I.S.A.M. Newsletter aims at communication . . . in the interest of inter-communication.

Communication: of all imaginable items of information about studies and other activities in American music that are going on, have gone on, or ought to go on in this country and elsewhere.

Inter-communication: among students, teachers, scholars, and performers interested in American music, whose work can be stimulated, broadened, focused, aided and abetted by a publication reporting on the aims and accomplishments, the work completed and the work-in-progress, of all who share those interests.

That such a newsletter may indeed be needed, or at least that it may be useful, is suggested by an experience of the past summer.

Our Institute for Studies in American Music was inaugurated, as such things often are, by a flyer announcing its establishment at Brooklyn College. The flyer began with this statement: "There exists nowhere in the U.S.A. an institution or center where scholarly studies as well as musical production are focused on American music in all its diversity. . . ." Response to the flyer, which was distributed widely, was extraordinary: everywhere in this land, it seems, and even abroad there are workers in the vineyards of American music eager to be in touch with others; full of reports on and ideas for research projects, performances, and editions; pleased to hear of such a focal center of communication as the I.S.A.M. hopes to become.

Two of the responses, however, were startling. One was a letter of congratulations from Professor Jack L. Ralston, of the Conservatory of Music at the University of Missouri in Kansas City . . . and director of its Institute for Studies in American Music! The other was a similarly congratulatory letter from Sister Mary Dominic, of Dominican College in San Rafael, California. . . and head of its American Music Research Center!

Our flyer's initial statement -- "There exists nowhere . . ." -- was inaccurate; we are pleased to retract it. But it was a statement made in good faith and sincere belief. That it could have been made at all suggests, not that the Missouri or California centers have been inactive or even that we at Brooklyn College are party to the fabled Eastern provinciality, but that there is a communications gap in our field. Good faith and sincere belief are not the only things needed: better communication is, too.

As our announcement flyer stated (and this time we believe with total accuracy!): "American studies in general are on the increase So too are American-music studies, for long the most neglected area of American musicology. It is time for the establishment of an academic institute to focus on and spearhead this growing subdiscipline and to serve as an information nerve center for it." The I.S.A.M. Newsletter will be the main instrument with which we shall try thus to serve.

H. Wiley Hitchcock

REPLIES TO THE I.S.A.M. QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM ONE

Replies to the questionnaire sent out last Spring by The Institute for Studies in American Music, are still coming in. At this time we can count a 10% return -- covering forty-four states, the District of Columbia, Canada, and Puerto Rico, and involving 210 separate colleges and universities -- a reasonable sampling to begin a survey of the state of American music in the institutions of higher learning. We now extend our thanks to many of you who must have spent considerable time and thought answering the questions fully, completely, and even offering further helpful information and suggestions.

The first question concerned the courses in the field of American music which are offered in the curriculum. Five categories were named: "Music of the United States"; "Music of the Americas"; "Music of Central and/or South America"; "Black Music of the U.S.A. or the Americas"; "Jazz History"; with a sixth category for "Other." While these categories are not mutually exclusive, they were meant to be convenient pigeonholes for describing the general thrust of the course content. Therefore "Music of the United States" can certainly include "Black Music" and "Jazz" just as "Music of the Americas" can include "Music in Central and/or South America." The difference must be one of focus and degree. Many people felt obliged to note these very

inclusions: i.e., "Music of the United States" may cover the topics of Colonial music and the main developments in concert music, with perhaps a chapter on Stephen Foster. In this connection, some respondents sent their course outlines, indicating their scope and relative content. The second category, "Music of the Americas," is a designation for the entire North and South American continents, intended to provide a niche for courses whose content includes Canada and the Caribbean islands in addition to the Latin-American category mentioned above.

The category "Other," has borne witness to an amazing diversity within the large category of "American" music. The most significant kind of course from a numerical standpoint has been in the urban, popular field, or "folk-rock." Various titles denote the differing emphases: "Comparative Popular Song," "Music of the New Generation," "Music of Modern America," "Popular Culture," "20th-Century Music and the Influence of Jazz, Rock and Non-Western Music." "Other" has also brought to our attention the fact that the category, "Music in Central and/or South America," has been interpreted to mean the history of Cathedral and Concert music only. Our respondents inform us that they offer courses in South American Indian music as well as in folk and popular developments. Special courses in specific Indian tribal music are found in the United States. Also, certain general categories have seen a proliferation of separate courses for styles or genres: i.e., Appalachian music, American musical theatre, American piano literature.

One further observation is the separation of the term "Afro-American" from "black" music in the thinking of some of our respondents. The term "black" generally seems to encompass any and all music made or performed by black people. The term "Afro-American" denotes a growing synthesis of style as it can be traced in social culture and popular usage; not music which, although composed or played by black

musicians, is founded basically on European models. This distinction is by no means certain, however.

To sum up the course statistics indicated so far, we note first of all, that 10% of the institutions replying offer no courses whatever in American music. Of these, the majority are junior colleges, seminaries, or newly-founded state colleges. Some indicate that courses are projected for the future. For those institutions that do offer courses, "Music of the United States" is most often found: about one-third the total number of courses. The other categories stand in the following proportions: "Jazz History," about one-fifth; "Black Music," about one-seventh; "Music of the Americas," about one-thirteenth; "Music of Central and/or South America," about one-sixteenth. "Other" comprises about one-eighth, a medium-sized category. While many institutions offered just the first category, the fifth was just as likely to be the sole offering. Colleges which offer a specialization in ethnomusicology were most likely to offer the courses in the second and third categories.

Finally, it should be mentioned that not all departments offering these courses are music departments, per se. Many are designated by the titles, "Fine Arts," "Humanities," "American Studies," "American Civilization," reflecting the present trend toward interdisciplinary studies and research, which some feel is the only feasible way to approach the subject of American music. But this is a topic for discussion in itself.

Our survey, as you have read it, is incomplete, and we welcome the continuing return of questionnaires. Should you wish to obtain one, please write to the Institute for Studies in American Music.

REPLIES TO THE I.S.A.M. QUESTIONNAIRE ITEM TWO

The second item on the I.S.A.M. ques-

tionnaire, requesting information from instructors on the lack of teaching and reference materials in their course areas, produced a flood of ideas. In sorting through the various replies, whose style ranged from terse, general comments to several paragraphs of detailed description, we noted that the suggestions fell into five general categories: basic reference materials, scores, recordings, textbooks, research and analysis projects. It should be noted that not all instructors replied to this question, and that many who are not teaching courses in this area at present replied from their previous experience. In general, those teaching an introductory survey course, such as "Music of the United States," were less likely to make suggestions, and when they did, were less likely to be specific, limiting themselves simply to "scores," "records," etc. Those instructors whose courses use an ethnomusicological or socio-historical approach sent the most detailed discussion of their needs, which therefore seem (numerically, at least) to be the greatest and most pressing.

From the newer colleges especially, and from the institutions that are just beginning to offer courses in American music came complaints about the lack of reference tools to use in setting up courses. Instructors want bibliographies on American music in general, Afro-American music, South American music, Church music, and in more specialized areas such as Music in the United States after 1825. The subject of Jazz produced the most articulate requests both for bibliography (arranged by performer, group and style), and for discography (with proper ordering information). Discographies are wanted also in the general field and in Afro-American and South American music. Both bibliographies and discographies are needed immediately to provide instructors and librarians with balanced overall choices of materials, at a time when budgets may be strained, or, in the case of newer institutions, where lump sums are awarded for starting library facilities, which must attempt to

provide the broadest basic coverage of the field.

Requests for scores and recordings were the most numerous, the latter slightly in the lead. Although the largest number of score requests was for Music of United States composers prior to the 20th century, other areas also desire more printed music: Latin-American music, Church music, Early "Classical" Black composers, minority groups other than black. Requests for recordings duplicated the ones for scores, bibliographies and discographies, but certain genres and styles were singled out for special notice: early opera, minstrel music, folk songs, early "rock." In a practical vein, one instructor suggested that the examples cited in Marshall Stearns' book, The Story of Jazz, be made into a record album. Another suggestion was to record the entire Marrocco and Gleason anthology, Music in America.

The book by Marrocco and Gleason has been used as a text by many instructors, and we wish to report that, contrary to rumor, it is still in print. There were, however, numerous suggestions for new anthologies, particularly as the reprints currently being issued were considered too expensive for use in class. In addition to new anthologies, instructors requested new textbooks, especially in the fields of Black music and Jazz.

While some courses need inexpensive paperbacks, others require books with relevant photographs and artwork reproductions. Still others need teaching materials such as filmstrips and movies, especially for the improvisatory styles.

At this point, readers may have noted that the description of the "lack" of materials, reported in the questionnaires, is not quite accurate. Materials are already available. The fact that their existence is not widely known is proof of the need for a central source of information and its dissemination. Hopefully the I.S.A.M. Newsletter will be able to provide assistance in this matter, and as one of the means to that end, we are still organizing the replies to item 3 on the questionnaire: finding out who is engaged in research, where they are, and what they are doing.

The basic aim of the Institute for Studies in American Music is to provide a suitable academic framework in which to encourage, support, evaluate, and propagate research projects in American music.

Inquiries, changes of address, and all correspondence should be sent to *The Institute for Studies in American Music, Department of Music, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, Brooklyn, New York 11210.*

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