

# Institute for Studies in American Music

## NEWSLETTER

### JAZZ ARCHIVES, INSTITUTES, COLLECTIONS

Americans can claim at least one music to be uniquely of their origin: jazz. By now, its influence has spread throughout the world and into other contemporary musics. Understandably, a flood of literature about it has been published, and in ever-increasing amounts. Up to now, the quality of jazz history and criticism has been extremely varied, due in part to a lack of rigorous research techniques, in greater part to the fragmented and diffused state of the source materials and the unreliability of available information about them. The latter situation is now changing with the proliferation of jazz archives, institutes, and collections. They provide accessibility to source materials once presumed lost, and to some whose existence was unsuspected. They also serve as forums for exchange of bibliographic, iconographic and discographic information, and they perform other related functions. One of the most venerable is the Institute of Jazz Studies at Rutgers University (Dana Library, Newark, N.J. 07102; Christopher White, Director). Founded in the early 1950s by the late Marshall Stearns and other jazz enthusiasts, its holdings were transferred in 1965 from Professor Stearns's New York apartment to Rutgers, where the Institute enjoys an autonomous status within the university. Its archives are considerable and are available to scholars in the field. In addition to its archival and curatorial functions, the Institute sponsors conferences and concerts—both local and large-scale—and is actively involved in jazz as a living art. The results of one of the Institute's conferences have been published as *Studies in Jazz Discography I* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University, 1971). . . . In 1958 the Archive of New Orleans Jazz was founded at Tulane University (Tulane University Library, New Orleans, Louisiana; Richard B. Allen, Curator). Originally conceived as an oral history project, the Archive has over 600 taped interviews, but it also houses sheet music, over 18,000 recordings, and many iconographic items. All this material is available at the Archive to students, scholars, researchers, and musicians; however, study and playback facilities are limited, due to budgetary limitations. . . .

Other centers for jazz studies exist—in fact, all across the country. Among collections of recordings, we might cite the John D. Reed Collection of American Jazz (Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, Ark.), the Music Division of the Library of Congress (Washington, D. C.), the archive of North Texas State University (Denton, Texas), and the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archive of Recorded Sound (New York Public Library at Lincoln Center, New York, N. Y.). Other archives and collections of related materials are at Emory University (Atlanta, Ga.), the music division of the Detroit Public Library, the John Edwards Memorial Foundation (University of California at Los Angeles), the Indiana University Archives of Traditional Music (Bloomington, Ind.), the New Orleans Jazz Museum (340 Bourbon Street, New Orleans, La.; Miss Helen M. Arlt, President), and the Division of Performing Arts of the Smithsonian Institution (Washington, D. C.). Williams College (Williamstown, Mass.) has a Paul Whiteman collection, and a Harlem branch of the New York Public Library (103 West 135th Street) houses the rich Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature and History.

This listing is by no means complete. In fact, the I.S.A.M. learns almost every day of other such collections and is actively seeking information on which to base a comprehensive survey of all of them. Such a survey might help to articulate the work of the many jazz archives, institutes, and collections which seem to be popping up all over.

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## I.S.A.M. MATTERS

*First I.S.A.M. Research Fellowships.* With the help of a matching grant from The Rockefeller Foundation, the I.S.A.M. has named, for 1972-73, its first research fellows. Named as Senior Research Fellow is Gilbert Chase, author of *America's Music, The American Composer Speaks, A Guide to the Music of Latin America*, and other books and articles; he is also founder-editor of the *Yearbook for Inter-American Musical Research* (sponsored by the Institute for Latin-American Studies and the Department of Music of the University of Texas at Austin). In residence at Brooklyn College for the academic year, Professor Chase is at work on research in the phenomenon of the avant-garde in American music. In outlining his project, Professor Chase has said he will be concerned "with the theory as well as the history of the musical avant-garde in the U.S., and its relation to the periodical and historical development of an avant-garde in Europe." He considers the avant-garde "an aesthetic subculture" and plans to investigate its relationship to the mainstream culture. In conjunction with his research, Professor Chase is directing a seminar in the graduate division of Brooklyn College's Department of Music. Titled "Music in American Culture," the seminar takes an interdisciplinary approach to the subject, emphasizing America's cultural history. . . . The Rockefeller grant has also enabled the I.S.A.M. to name as Junior Research Fellows for 1972-73 five graduate students: William Boswell, Angelo Corbo, Marjorie Freilich, Judith Steinberg, and Robin Warren. The fellowships are lending support to these students in graduate work concentrating in American-music studies; in turn, the Fellows are contributing to ongoing research projects of the Institute.

*First I.S.A.M. Colloquium.* Noting the upsurge of interest in ragtime music, the I.S.A.M. began a projected series of colloquia on topics in American music with a Ragtime Jamboree, on May 19, 1972. A concert of piano rags, played by Eubie Blake, William Bolcom, David Jasen, Bob Seeley, Trebor Tichenor, and Dick Wellstood, was preceded by a colloquium on ragtime, discussing its roots,

development, and unique characteristics, I.S.A.M. Director H. Wiley Hitchcock was moderator of a panel consisting of pianists William Bolcom and David Jasen, both of whom illustrated their points effectively at the keyboard; well-known historian of ragtime Rudi Blesh; and Dr. Eileen Southern, author of two books on black music (noted in the *I.S.A.M. Newsletter*, 1/2.) It was the concert itself, played to a standing-room-only crowd, that proved the more illuminating. Each pianist played at least one of Scott Joplin's rags (*Maple Leaf* was heard three times in three completely different interpretations), plus a number of others in his own style, from the grass-roots folkish manner of Tichenor (a St. Louis pianist) to the newly-composed, jazzy *Brooklyn Dodge* of Bolcom; Blake was, as usual, his unique self. Demonstrating the variety and individualism possible within what has been considered a restricted style, the concert may also have opened up a new area of exploration: the music of Zez Confrey and others who wrote rag-derived "novelties" in the 1920's. Three of Confrey's works were offered by Wellstood, among them a performance of *Kitten on the Keys* that was described by John Wilson, critic of THE NEW YORK TIMES, as a "revelation [that] might throw some light on a neglected area of American popular music much as the interest in Joplin has stirred a ragtime revival."

*First I.S.A.M. monograph.* Nearing publication is the first in the I.S.A.M.'s projected series of monographs and other publications on American music. This is *United States Music: Sources of Bibliography and Collective Biography*. Its author is Richard Jackson, Head of the Americana Collection of the Music Division, The New York Public Library at Lincoln Center. Mr. Jackson, who writes in his introduction that he has "compiled this list of books as a practical aid to students engaged in American-music studies," has selected and classified a list of 90 sources—and added extensive (and very lively) annotations—in the following categories: reference works, historical studies, regional studies, and topical studies (folk music; black music; blues, ragtime, and jazz; pop music; church music; opera; women in music; and 20th-

century music). *United States Music* will be available from the I.S.A.M. sometime during this winter.

*Second Thoughts on Scott Joplin's Collected Works.* We would like to elaborate on an overly casual remark we made (in the *I.S.A.M. Newsletter*, 1/2) about the two-volume *Collected Works of Scott Joplin*, edited by Vera Brodsky Lawrence (New York: New York Public Library, 1971). We said it was a "complete, if not critical and scholarly, edition." (We also called it a "historic venture," which does not need elaboration.) On reflection, we would say that the Joplin edition is both critical and scholarly, but in a way that has not been particularly conventional. The conventional "critical, scholarly" edition is a fresh one, based on a thorough comparison and collation of all known variants of the music; their vagaries are usually listed in a caboose, often fully-loaded, trailing after the edition proper. The Joplin edition, on the other hand, is a *reprint* edition: it consists of photoreproductions of the early printed editions of Joplin's works. But Ms. Lawrence (aided by ragtime composer/pianist/scholar William Bolcom) has taken the "best" early print of many works and corrected any typographical or other errors that she has found. To this degree, at least, even if such corrections are not cited specifically, her method is critical and a labor of scholarship. And, although ideally we should be told what corrections were made where, to our way of thinking her method is wholly appropriate for material like Joplin's, which was initially published within his lifetime and (presumably) in a form approved by him (although it would not work, obviously, with unpublished material or with music printed in a notation not easily readable by today's musicians). So, far from carping about the Joplin edition, we laud it.

#### NEWS AND INFORMATION

Following are some items of news and information (also of opinion) that have come across our desk in recent months and that may be of interest to students of American music.

*Two new journals.* Two new music journals are worthy

of note: *Musical Newsletter* and *Popular Music and Society*. . . . The former, a handsomely designed quarterly tabloid whose vol. I, no. 1 appeared in January 1971, is edited by Patrick J. Smith. Not limited to material on American music, it has nevertheless carried a number of articles of Americanist interest, notably "Some Thoughts on Rock . . ." by Arthur Satz and thoughtful brief essays on contemporary composers by David Hamilton and Bruce Archibald. *Musical Newsletter* seeks to reach a broad, intelligent audience through writing pitched halfway between the dryly scholarly and the merely journalistic; the result so far has been a series of issues of solid content and grateful readability. For information or subscriptions, write to the magazine at Box 250, Lenox Hill Station, New York, N.Y. 10021. . . . *Popular Music and Society*, also a quarterly (*its* vol. I, no. 1 was in Fall, 1971), is the most recent rocket fired from that active launching-pad of popular-culture publications, Bowling Green State University. Edited (rather sloppily, we're afraid) in the Department of Sociology by R. Serge Denisoff, the journal has so far emphasized the music and lyrics of pop, rock, and blues. It also has regular columns reviewing new books and records in the popular-music field. For information or subscriptions, write to Editor, *Popular Music and Society*, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, Ohio 43403.

*Smithsonian Institution projects.* The Division of Musical Instruments at the Smithsonian Institution, continuing its studies of American music, is planning concerts, recordings, and radio broadcasts using instruments from the national collection. These will include programs of band music of various eras (possibly with appropriate dances), 18th-century music composed or performed in America, and American Christmas and winter music. . . . The Division staff would appreciate learning of music, manuscripts, and instruments discovered by American-music scholars and performers that could be used in such programs. Of immediate concern are original band arrangements from 1830 to 1860, and Christmas or winter music from the earliest settlements to the present. Please address suggestions or communications to Ms. Cynthia A. Hoover,

Division of Musical Instruments, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D. C. 20560.

*An opinion on jazz criticism.* "The Critical Evaluation of Jazz: Whom Can We Trust?" was the title of a provocative paper delivered by Richard Wang (Lecturer in Music and Fine Arts, The University of Chicago) at the Music Library Association's summer meetings at Chicago in June. Wang remarked that jazz criticism has suffered in the past from an emphasis on the mystique of the performer, rather than concentrating on the music. He called instead for criticism based on understanding how the music is put together, a sophisticated approach best accomplished by a musician-critic. As an illustration of what does, and what does not, constitute good criticism, Wang played a recording by John Coltrane of *Nature Boy*, then read reviews of it by five different critics. Noting that the review which most closely approached his ideal was written by a jazz trumpeter, Wang concluded that "the articulate jazzman who takes his art seriously is potentially the best critic."

*The Perlis project.* Having completed the bulk of the basic research for an oral history of Charles Ives (see her fascinating article, "Ives and Oral History" in *Notes*, XXVIII/4 [June 1972], for a foretaste of the immensely valuable potential results), Vivian Perlis has broadened her sights. A two-year grant from The Rockefeller Foundation has enabled her to extend her tape-interview project to a number of other American composers and musicians of the earlier 20th century. As she did for Ives, Ms. Perlis will seek out associates, relatives, and friends of significant musical figures (both deceased and living), and interview them as among the "most primary" of primary sources of information otherwise likely to be lost. Ms. Perlis is a Fellow of Morse College at Yale University.

*An all-American issue of Current Musicology.*

Planned for 1974 by *Current Musicology* is an entire issue devoted to American music, with articles and bibliographies on American composers early and late, and on folk, denominational, urban, and Indian music—in short, on any aspect of music in the United States past and present. Those interested in contributing are asked to send an abstract or résumé of their proposed work to the Editor, Margaret R. Griffel, Department of Music, Columbia University, New York, N.Y. 10027, no later than January 1, 1973. Deadline for all materials to be included in this special issue of *Current Musicology* is October 1, 1973.

*New program at Yale.* Recently inaugurated at Yale University to preserve and encourage the Afro-American musical heritage is the Duke Ellington Fellowship Program. The Program will attempt to capture the essence of the oral tradition of this heritage—"the conservatory without walls"—through discussion groups and concerts by musicians named Ellington Fellows. Thirty-five fellows were announced initially, among them Eubie Blake, Benny Carter, Dizzy Gillespie, Elvin Jones, Odetta, Clark Terry, and Mary Lou Williams. In addition, an expansion of the Yale film archive to include the black music tradition has been undertaken; there are plans for curriculum development in Afro-American music; and a scholarship fund for students is abuilding.

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