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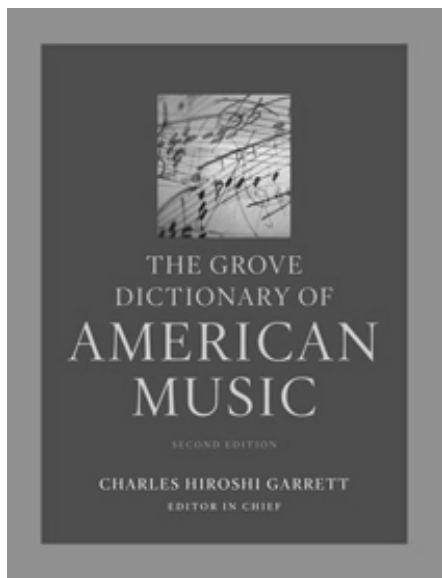
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***AmeriGrove II* and American Music Studies in the Twenty-First Century**

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In a brief inset published in the November 1981 issue of the *Institute for Studies in American Music Newsletter*, Stanley Sadie, editor of the recently issued *New Grove Dictionary of Music (NG)*, announced the development of “an American Grove” to be published “by the end of 1984.”¹ Four years later (and a few months after the initial projected publication date), co-editor H. Wiley Hitchcock offered the first public progress report on what was then called *The New Grove Dictionary of Music in the United States*, unveiling a vision for a “national dictionary” that articulated a “wholly ecumenical and comprehensive” vision of American music and American music studies that is quite familiar to Americanist musicologists today.² With editorial input from such notable scholars as Richard Crawford, Carol Oja, Judith Tick, Horace Boyer, and Bill Malone, among many others, the editorial board developed twenty-six projected subject areas that revealed the editors’ deliberate efforts to balance coverage of art music (one-quarter of the total projected content) and the rich array of American vernacular musics, including jazz, rock, country, ragtime, blues/gospel, and “ethnic” music, while also attending to the uniquely American issues of immigrant musicians, music industry infrastructures, and multiculturalism.³ Moreover, Hitchcock indicated that the new dictionary would not simply express a decidedly American view of the nation’s musical life, but that it would strike another nationalistic chord in its use of “American orthography and usage.”⁴ When *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music* was finally published in 1986, it had ballooned to four volumes from the one volume that was initially planned and included more than 5000 entries encompassing both the breadth and depth of American music as it was known at the time.



The Grove Dictionary of American Music

Early reviews of the four-volume *AmeriGrove* were generally laudatory and celebrated the project’s efforts to publish high-quality scholarship on a wide array of American music topics. Mary Wallace Davidson, for example, suggested that “[t]he edition succeeds brilliantly in its intention,”⁵ while Keith Potter described *AmeriGrove* as “without doubt another strikingly successful juggernaut from the Macmillan/Grove assembly line.”⁶ Richard Crawford, who served on the *AmeriGrove* editorial team, also noted “the work’s symbolic importance,” observing in the preface to his extensive historiographic review essay that “[t]here is something deeply satisfying in seeing the facts of this nation’s musical history recast into the Grove format, edited crisply and meticulously, and hence seeming to endorse the significance of a fiddle of study that traditionally has stood outside the academic establishment.”⁷ Yet, these early reviews also pointed to several issues that have been of central concern to Americanist musicology in the decades since *AmeriGrove*’s publication. For instance, both Potter and Allen Britton problematized its use of “American” to refer almost exclusively to the United States while excluding other nations that also see themselves as American;⁸ this subject has recently been addressed by the Society for American Music, which revised its mission statement in 2012 to note its dedication “to the study, teaching, creation and dissemination of *all musics in the Americas*.”⁹ Similarly, many reviewers noted that, while *AmeriGrove* was the most comprehensive resource on the subject to date, it was clear that editorial decisions led to the omission of many significant figures and space limitations limited opportunities to provide nuance to several significant articles.¹⁰ Yet, as Peter Dickinson noted in a review pub-

AmeriGrove II (cont.)

lished in *Music & Letters*, *AmeriGrove* offered a level of depth and nuance that was not present in many of the American topics covered in *NG*, published only five years earlier.¹¹

The decade immediately following the publication of *AmeriGrove* witnessed the publication of an endless array of exciting new monographs and journal articles that expanded the scope of musicology, generally, and American music studies, specifically, to include serious study of an even wider array of vernacular musical practices, popular musics, and contemporary art musics than had been represented in the four-volume work. Thus, by the beginning of the new millennium, a strong case could be made for a revision that not only reflected the current state of scholarship on the topics that concerned its original editors but that also embraced the increasing diversity of methodologies and subjects that “American music” comprised. At the same time, as the field of American studies had begun to suggest in the wake of the September 11th attacks and the subsequent “Global War on Terror,” such nationalistic projects raised serious concerns about American chauvinism in an increasingly global and transnational era.¹² As a consequence of these developments, it had become clear by the beginning of the new millennium that *AmeriGrove* was in need of a significant expansion and revision, much as *NG* itself had gone through in the last decade of the twentieth century.

The first public discussion about *AmeriGrove II* was moderated by then-*Grove Music Online* editor-in-chief Laura Macy at a joint meeting of the Society for American Music and the Center for Black Music Research in Chicago in March 2006.¹³ As a doctoral candidate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill who was in the midst of writing a dissertation on country music in 1970s Texas, I was overjoyed that this once-in-a-generation opportunity to contribute to such an important scholarly monument was in the works, and I immediately began to bombard Charles Hiroshi Garrett, who had been appointed *AmeriGrove II*'s editor-in-chief in 2004,¹⁴ with ideas for new country music-related entries (hoping, of course, that I would be commissioned to write at least a few of them). It would take a couple of years before I received my first commission to write or revise a handful of entries related to my dissertation topic, and, when I submitted those entries to the online “contributor’s portal,” I imagined that my work with *AmeriGrove II* was complete (at least until copyediting).

Needless to say, I was quite surprised when Garrett invited me to serve as a Contributing Editor (and later, a Senior Editor) for *AmeriGrove II* in the fall of 2010. I accepted the offer to edit approximately three hundred entries on country music without hesitation but with great trepidation, for I knew that I was following in the footsteps of many of the leading scholars in American musicology and, in country music studies, those of the prolific country music historians Bill Malone (who had overseen the country music entries for *AmeriGrove*) and the late Charles Wolfe. Yet, the list of country music entries that the Advisory Board passed along to me also revealed an opportunity to document ongoing developments in our knowledge of country music artists, music industry executives, and styles as well as to capture new critical perspectives on the genre’s place in domestic and transatlantic life. As Garrett notes in the preface to *AmeriGrove II*, country music coverage was increased by nearly fifty percent and a new subject entry was commissioned “[i]n response to the sustained impact of and scholarly interest in country music.”¹⁵

Following the spirit of inclusivity and diversity that guided the development of *AmeriGrove*, I followed a few guiding principles as I commissioned and, later, edited entries in my subject area. First, in recognition of the interdisciplinary nature of country music studies, I actively sought to commission articles from scholars working in a variety of fields—from musicology and ethnomusicology to American history, folklore, and journal-



Dolly-Parton, 1975
Michael Ochs Archives, Getty Images

AmeriGrove II (cont.)

ism—and deploying a variety of research methodologies and critical frameworks through which to understand this music and its cultural contexts. Second, because country music has been the product of countless cross-cultural exchanges in the United States and abroad, I encouraged contributing authors to highlight the genre’s multicultural and global histories, when possible. Finally, I urged contributors to consider issues of musical style in their discussions of individual artists. While this seems like a fairly obvious subject for a music dictionary to discuss, many of the country music entries in *AmeriGrove* did not adequately address issues of sound and style, reflecting the disciplinary biases of the first generation of country music scholars.

A number of entries reveal the influence of these three editorial principles, but one needs not look further than Jocelyn Neal’s excellent (and more than 8000-word) entry on “country music” to see these principles in action. The entry not only offers a detailed treatment of the key styles of country music from the first recordings in the 1920s to the present, but it also guides readers to dozens of significant country artists. Furthermore, Neal offers a substantial discussion of the genre’s cultural history, its roots in the culture of the rural white working class, and the institutionalization of country music through recordings and radio. A music theorist by training, Neal also brings a musically sensitive approach to her writing on the subject, pointing readers to specific songwriting techniques and performance practices. A lengthy section addressing “global country” addresses recent scholarship demonstrating country music cultures outside of North America, while a section on “fan culture” points to an often unheralded but culturally significant contributor to country music life. Finally, Neal concludes her essay with an analysis of key themes and trends in country music scholarship to demonstrate the depth and breadth of scholarly engagement with the genre.

Serving in a senior editorial role on a project of this size and scope is an object lesson in cooperation and compromise. For instance, the “country music” area overlapped significantly with several other areas, especially the “folk music” area; consequently, it was absolutely essential to work with Paul Wells, the editor responsible for the folk music entries, to ensure the best possible outcome for the entries in both areas. Furthermore, I spent at least an hour every morning for more than a year corresponding with potential contributors, responding to inquiries from commissioned authors, and managing submissions in the online editorial interface. The sometimes lengthy revision process for each entry required that all parties approach the work with a willingness to listen to one another and a desire to create exceptional scholarship. These conversations introduced me to new information and ideas and challenged me to reconsider my own preconceived notions. Perhaps more importantly, though, was the opportunity to build relationships with new colleagues and to deepen relationships with long-time collaborators. My work as a scholar of country music has been immeasurably strengthened as a consequence of this work.

Although several entries were added to the Grove Music Online system beginning in 2010, the eight-volume print version of *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 2nd Edition, made its official public debut at the 2013 American Musicological Society meeting in Pittsburgh. Flipping through its pages on the first day of the conference, it was humbling to note the sheer number of contributors who offered their expertise to this expansive resource. Over the course of the weekend, I walked past the Oxford University Press table regularly just to watch contributors walk up to the imposing volumes and seek out their entries, and it was there that I truly began to understand *AmeriGrove II*’s true value. It is not only a snapshot of our current understanding of American music (broadly defined) and a springboard for future research projects, recital programs, recordings, and lesson plans. Rather, with a team of more than seventy editors, nearly two thousand contributors, and the work of the vast team at Oxford University Press working for nearly a decade,¹⁶ *AmeriGrove II* represents the ongoing commitment of a massive community to telling the stories of American music with clarity, precision, and depth and demonstrates the continuing strength of our field.

Notes

¹ Stanley Sadie, “An American Grove in the Making,” *Institute for Studies in American Music Newsletter* 11/1 (November 1981): 3.

AmeriGrove II (cont.)

- ² H. Wiley Hitchcock, "On the Path to the U.S. Grove," *Notes: The Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association, Second Series*, 41/3 (March 1985): 467.
- ³ Hitchcock, "On the Path to the U.S. Grove," 469. Editorial assistant Susan Feder later noted that "the vast panorama of American music would be inadequately covered unless we gave generous treatment to what Wiley Hitchcock had elsewhere termed vernacular traditions" (Susan Feder, "The American Grove: An Insider's Account," *Institute for Studies in American Music Newsletter* 16/1 [November 1986]: 2).
- ⁴ Hitchcock, "On the Path to the U.S. Grove," 470. Richard Evidon has argued that NG was also indelibly influenced by developments in American musicology during the 1970s (Richard Evidon, "The New Grove: A Personal View," *19th-Century Music* 5, no. 2 [Autumn 1981], 155-156).
- ⁵ Mary Wallace Davidson, review of *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music, Notes: The Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association, Second Series*, 44/1 (September 1987): 43.
- ⁶ Keith Potter, "Amerigrove," *The Musical Times* 128/1732 (June 1987): 329.
- ⁷ Richard Crawford, "Amerigrove's Pedigree: On The New Grove Dictionary of American Music," *College Music Symposium* 27 (1987), 172.
- ⁸ Potter, "Amerigrove," 329; Allen Britton, review of *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music, American Music* 5/2 (Summer 1987): 195-196. For further context regarding the name change, consult Crawford, "Amerigrove's Pedigree," 172n1.
- ⁹ "SAM: What Is SAM?" <<http://american-music.org/sam/WhatIsSAM.php>> (accessed 26 January 2014), emphasis added. Thanks to Mariana Whitmer for providing background information on the revision process (e-mail communication to author, 15 February 2014).
- ¹⁰ Consider, for instance, Britton's extensive discussion of the various biases evident in column space devoted to various composers and performers (Britton, review of *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 196-200). See also Stephen Banfield, "Review Essay: From Harry Partch to Dolly Parton," *Journal of American Studies* 22/2 (1988), 282-283; Leonard Burkat, "Letter to the Editor," *American Music* 7/4 (Winter 1989): 461-464; Stanley Sadie, "The New Grove Dictionary of American Music," *American Music* 8/2 (Summer 1990): 227-229; Leonard Burkat, "Leonard Burkat Replies," *American Music* 8/2 (Summer 1990): 229-230.
- ¹¹ Peter Dickinson, review of *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music, Music & Letters* 70/2 (May 1989), 232-235.
- ¹² See, for instance, the discussion of transnationalism and American Studies in Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Crossroads of Cultures: The Transnational Turn in American Studies: Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, November 12, 2004," *American Quarterly* 57/1 (March 2005): 17-57; Mae M. Ngai, "Transnationalism and the Transformation of the 'Other': Response to the Presidential Address," *American Quarterly* 57/1 (March 2005): 59-65; and Alfred Hornung, "Transnational American Studies: Response to the Presidential Address," *American Quarterly* 57/1 (March 2005): 67-73.
- ¹³ *Conference on Black Music Research sponsored by the Center for Black Music Research, Columbia College Chicago, and the Thirty-Second Annual Conference of the Society for American Music, 15-19 March 2006*, <<http://american-music.org/conferences/Chicago/ChicagoConferenceProgram.pdf>> (accessed 7 February 2014), 27.
- ¹⁴ "Grove Conversations: Charles Hiroshi Garrett," <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/page/Contributor_interview> (accessed 7 February 2014).
- ¹⁵ Charles Hiroshi Garrett, "Preface," in *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Hiroshi Garrett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), vii-viii.
- ¹⁶ These numbers are taken from "Grove Conversations: Charles Hiroshi Garrett," <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/page/Contributor_interview> (accessed 7 February 2014).