



THE

SONNECK SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

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Editor: William Kearns

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

"THE SOCIETY AT THE CROSSROADS"

Some perceptive comments made by our membership chairman, Deane Root, prompted our editor to suggest the theme of "The Society at the Crossroads" for this column. We are about to embark on the publication of our new Journal, and this raises questions about the function of the NEWSLETTER, which has served us so well in the past. In order to cover the costs of the JOURNAL, we must increase our membership quickly and effectively, but this would conflict with our desire to retain the special camaraderie and informal friendly nature of the Society. We have great plans striving for other goals set for the Society, but we find we have not sufficiently involved the membership to achieve them, and the number of non-renewals, while apparently typical of most societies in these times of financial strain, indicates that we are not able to meet the needs of some of our members. It would seem we are approaching an important intersection.

But crossroads usually implies that there are two or more clear paths ahead, and that a single choice must be made. Has the Society really reached such a crucial point? Might we not use another analogy, possibly more appropriate? As a Society, are we not, at the advanced age of eight, in the "sub-teen" stage of development? It is a period of rapid change, at times bewildering, at times frustrating, but at all times exciting. It is a period of searching, for new knowledge, for new friends, for new skills and understanding. It is a period of putting aside the ways of one's childhood, and taking up the ways of adulthood.

It is a period of introspection, of searching for identity. Some have raised questions about our logo, and even about the

name of the Society. Isn't it typical of sub-teens to be dissatisfied with their own name and identity? Some very important questions were raised by our membership chairman in the letter that was recently sent to you, and the first addresses itself to this problem: what does the Society mean to you?

It is a period of experimentation, to see what does and what doesn't work, in new and unfamiliar situations. We have tried direct mailings, journal advertisements, and the distribution of membership invitations at the conventions of other societies. We have tried to remain a meeting ground for the serious scholar, the performer, the collector, the specialist and the generalist, the musician and the non-musician. Is it possible to be all things to all people? Some say we are too scholarly, others that we are not scholarly enough. Some say we put too much emphasis on our annual meetings, and others say that the special camaraderie we enjoy develops directly from those meetings. The second of Deane's questions addresses itself to this problem: what would you like to see the Society be and do?

It is a period of developing interpersonal relationships, some resulting in strong friendships, others in indifference or toleration. When we approached the American Council of Learned Societies, we were told to come back when we were older. Our hesitant step with the Music Library Association in New Orleans in 1979 was so successful that we are doing it again in Philadelphia in 1983. Our venture with the Theatre Library Association and American Society for Theatre Research last year in Greenvale will produce another first for the Society, the publication in book form of the proceedings of that meeting. From the reports of the 1982 committees, the joining of the Society with the Midwest American Musicological Society chapter is working very well, but we can't forget that our first attempt with the AMS itself almost resulted in a cause celebre. (Learning from our experiences, we hope that our next attempt will be more successful.) The third question relates to this problem: what should be the Society's role in the community of professional associations?

Finally, it is a period of developing skills and techniques, and of sharing work and responsibilities. The listing of

A heterogeneous session called Music in America includes papers on late 18th-century New England music life by Thomas Warner, Moravian music by Jeannine Ingram, the white-black spiritual controversy by Dena Epstein, and "Musical Learning in 19th-Century America," by Richard Crawford.

CINCINNATI CMS MEETING

Several papers read at the Cincinnati meeting of the College Music Society, Oct. 15-18, are of interest to Sonneck Society members. Among them are a jazz session with papers by Milton Stewart on the "Neo-Bop Era," and Alfred Cochran on jazz education; a paper on the Black Art Song by Carlesta Henderson, on Ernest Bloch as a music educator by David Kushner, and on 19th-century music criticism by Beverly Clark and John Polnak. A Neglected Americans series includes papers by Henry Woodward on Cincinnati's Margaret McClure Stitt, by John Gillespie on New England "classical" piano music, and by Marshall Bialosky on George Antheil. Finally, an informal concert and discussion of ballads and banjo tunes from North Carolina will be presented by Sheila Rice.

SONNECK SOCIETY SPRING CONFERENCE 1982 LAWRENCE, KANSAS

As reported in some detail in the spring issue of this newsletter (pp. 10-11), plans for the spring meeting of the Society, April 1-4, held in conjunction with the Midwest Chapter of the American Musicological Society and the Midcontinent American Studies Association, are well under way. The program will include Virgil Thomson as honored guest and an evening of his music, a premiere performance of Amy Beach's chamber opera CABILDO, and a performance of the 19th-century melodrama THE DRUNKARD. Program chair Jean Geil reports that the response to the call for papers has been quite brisk. Lawrence promises to match both the high level and the conviviality of previous Society meetings. The program will appear in the spring issue of this newsletter.

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Susan Porter writes:

"At last spring's Sonneck Society meeting, a group of the faithful turned to bewailing the financial situation at universities in general and particularly the worsening status of university travel budgets. Bunker Clark, our host for the 1982 meeting, was a most sympathetic listener. The following suggestions were made:

1. Since hotels often offer cheaper rates for rooms with double occupancy, it might be possible for members to indicate their willingness to share accommodations. Members of the local arrangements committee could then pair reservations on a first come-first served basis.
2. The local arrangements committee might arrange for an airport "hot line" so members arriving at similar times could share rides to the hotel. (Since the Lawrence, KS people have a unique set of transportation problems that are unlike any other meeting

we've had or will have, we have no suggestions, just sympathy.)

3. Banquets are for conviviality and entertainment. We wouldn't miss them for the world, but we really don't attend for the food. More laughter and less cost is better. The same could be said for other meals arranged in advance by the committee.
4. Things we liked about meetings past included the detailed instructions for transportation from airport to meeting with projected costs (last year at Greenvale), the lists of local restaurants arranged by location, type of food, and cost (New Orleans), the group tour with box lunch (Baltimore), and the use of reasonably priced university housing (Ann Arbor).

This is certainly not a new problem (someone should do a scholarly paper on the financial plight of the American music professor since 1620), but it shows no prospect of improvement in the near future. Do you have ideas to share?"

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PCA CALL FOR PAPERS

Papers/presentations are welcomed on Music at the 1982 meeting of the Popular Culture Association (to be held conjointly with the American Culture Association) on April 14-18 in Louisville, Kentucky. Papers or presentations may cover any aspect of popular music--history, personalities, performance--or any subject related to popular music. Demonstrations and use of recordings are particularly welcomed. Please send proposals (with 150-word abstracts and/or descriptions) by 1 November, 1981 or as soon after as possible, to Gregory S. Sojka, American Studies Department, Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67208, (316) 689-3148.

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NEA AND THE FEDERAL BUDGET

Below are copies of a letter written by President Raoul Camus at the request made by the Society at its spring meeting and the reply from Charlton Heston, co-chairman of the Presidential Task Force on the Arts and Humanities.

27 May 1981

Dear Mr. Heston:

The recent Bicentennial did much to encourage the performance of music by American composers, both living and from the past, but as time slips by, old habits return. The Sonneck Society is still working very hard to promote music in America and American music, and, as such, is the only organization of its kind in America.

At its recent annual meeting, devoted to the theme of "Musical Theatre in America," the membership voted unanimously to object to the proposed cuts in funding for the National Endowment on the Arts.

As the elected representative of the Society, whose members represent a broad spectrum of studies and activities in American music, may I urge you most respectfully but also firmly to do all in your power to prevent this most devastating action from coming to pass!

No less a personality as Arnold Schoenberg suggested that a law be passed compelling American symphony orchestras to devote 50% of their programs to American music. He indicated that such a law was in force in Italy. Perhaps 50% is too much for the moment, but certainly some music by American composers should be included. The NEA in the past has encouraged such activities, and American music is beginning to come into its own, after suffering for so long from an inferiority complex in relation to European music.

Please do not permit this backward step to happen!

Sincerely,
Raoul F. Camus

Dear Mr. Camus: 25 June 1981

I have your letter protesting the budget cuts proposed by the OMB in the NEA and NEH programs for fiscal '81. As you may have heard by this time, I was fortunately involved in a series of meetings with the Administration on planning the Task Force when these rescissions were first proposed. I was able to point out the practical difficulties of administering such rescissions and the unfairness of imposing them on funds that were in effect already in the pipeline. Accordingly, almost all the rescissions were cancelled.

Since then, the Task Force has had its first series of meetings, and established a rough schedule for the weeks ahead. The task is formidable. Congress will unquestionably make cuts in the funds allotted both Endowments for fiscal '82, we must find ways to make do with less.

We have some extraordinarily able men and women enlisted on the task. I'm confident we'll be able to come up with some useful advice for the President in these areas. The arts and humanities are vital national resources. They must be nourished.

I'm most grateful for your interest. Please wish us well.

Cordially,
Charlton Heston

Craig Short, executive secretary of the College Music Society and a Sonneck Society member, has been monitoring the Federal Government-arts and humanities situation closely and makes the following current report:

"Cautious monitoring of federal activity in the arts is clearly a continuing need in the autumn of 1981. While the Congress allotted \$119.3 million each to NEA and NEH during the budget resolutions at the end of summer (that amount is a 25% reduction, compared to President Reagan's proposed 50% cut), there is still some danger that these recommended amounts will be further reduced. This danger results from the fact the federal budget for fiscal 1982 (which began October 1st) is not yet approved; continuing resolutions in Congress offer only temporary funding levels until the final budget is passed. Thus, continued monitoring remains necessary.

"Our concern must also continue since the President will probably announce further budget cuts for the endowments for

fiscal 1982 (this would mean a rescinding of previously announced budgets--a tact that did not work for fiscal 1981) to a decreased total of \$72 million for NEA in the new fiscal year, despite Congressional wishes to fund NEA for \$119.3 million.

"Another concern to supporters of the arts and humanities is the new 'block grants' approach of funding. In this decentralization of the federal bureaucracy, Washington will give money to the states in blocks of large amounts of grant money. We will need to focus our attention to the state and local levels in future years to continually voice our support of the arts in our communities, rather than addressing and blaming Washington and Congress for all of our problems.

"President Reagan's Special Task Force on the Arts and Humanities held its last meeting in Washington on September 16th; its report has been delayed until October 15th. A preliminary draft of the report identifies three primary recommendations: (1) the President should become a leader in promoting private support of the arts; (2) the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities be strengthened and given a greater role; (3) tax incentives be explored to encourage philanthropy in general, including gifts to the arts and humanities. Other items likely to be mentioned in the Task Force's report are these ideas: Presidential Fellowships for young artists and humanists; corporate matching gifts; employee deduction plans for the arts; and in-kind business services for the arts. The Task Force will not recommend any organizational changes in the structure of NEA/NEH."

ACTIVITIES AT SMITHSONIAN

A concert and lectures series with the theme "Music from the Age of George Washington" is the theme of the year at the Division of Musical Instruments, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. A series of four programs is planned one each for concert life in London, Vienna, Paris, and Philadelphia. A lecture by Neal Zaslaw on October 26 will be followed by the recreation of a Sunday concert at the home of Charles Burney; on November 30, a lecture by H. C. Robbins Landon followed by a Viennese chamber concert; on February 8, a lecture by David Fuller followed by a Parisian concert spirituel; and on April 26, a lecture by William Brooks followed by a Philadelphia City concert after Alexander Reinagle. The music will be performed by the Smithsonian Chamber Players using 18th-century instruments from the Smithsonian collections. The series will conclude with a symposium on April 29-30 in which the lecturers will join other participants in discussing the cultural and musical life of their city and its influence on Americans during the time of Washington.

QUERIES

Ellen Knight has two for the Society:

"I am working on a biography and catalog of works for Charles Martin Loeffler. I would appreciate hearing from anyone about the whereabouts of any manuscripts--music or correspondence--or any other pertinent material." And:

"Does anyone have any information on the location of the score to Dudley Buck's opera, DESERET? I have a copy of the libretto and seven published selections, but I have no idea where the manuscript score is. I started a search a couple of years ago when I did a paper based primarily on the opera libretto for the Association for Mormon Letters. Now that I am doing an entry for the Dictionary of Opera in the United States, I have reopened the search for the score." Dr. Ellen Knight, 17 Paul Revere Road, Arlington, MA 02174

Bunker asks:

"Do any readers know how the spelling "Raynor" Taylor originated? I have found only "Rayner" in early sources. One is his publication DIVERTIMENTI (1797), a second is the list of subscribers and in the preface to Benjamin Carr's MASSES, VESPER, LITANIES (1805), and the third is John R. Parker's MUSICAL BIOGRAPHY (1825)." J. Bunker Clark, Dept. of Music History, 344 Murphy Hall, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS 66045

Patricia H. Virga writes:

"I am engaged in a study of a little-known entertainment entitled "The modern Contest, a musical entertainment." It exists in manuscript at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The work appears to be a fragment, however, consisting of only the first sixteen pages. I am searching for the remainder, if it exists at all. To help describe the work, here is some pertinent information:

"Pages 1-12 are numbered; a separate unnumbered quarto follows. The work is unsigned and undated, but it appears to be from the early Federal period probably in Philadelphia or its vicinity. The Dramatis Personae include Venus, Cupid, Hymen, Colin, Miranda, Laura, Lucinda and Sylvia. The plot centers around a contest among four women who vie for the affections of Colin.

"If anyone recognizes this description and knows any information regarding the missing part, please contact me at 411 Grand Avenue, Leonia, NJ 07605."

THE WATCH FOR PERFORMANCES OF AMERICAN MUSIC

In examining programs of American orchestras playing in Carnegie Hall this winter (New York Times)--fifteen of them--there will be six compositions by American composers, four of them played by one ensemble, The American Symphony Orchestra. Only two new works by American composers will be heard: Kirchner and Bolling. Samuel Barber (d. 1980) and Charles Griffes (d. 1921) are being revived.

The Metropolitan Museum will offer about seventy concerts, some of them by specialized groups dedicated to periods; composers,

or genres. But not one work by an American, dead or alive, will be heard during the winter of 1981-82.

Among the hundreds of operas being produced in U. S. centers this year are a few premieres of operas by American composers: the New York premiere of Glass's SATYAGRAHA at the Brooklyn Academy, Nov. 6; Ward's ABELARD AND HELOISE in Charlotte, Feb. 19; Paulus's THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE, St. Louis, June 17; and Rochberg's THE CONFIDENCE MAN, at Santa Fe next summer. Some revivals include REGINA in Kansas City, Sept. 19, and in Chicago, Mar. 27; FOUR SAINTS IN THREE ACTS in Carnegie Hall (Orchestra of Our Times), Nov. 13; PORGY AND BESS in Michigan, Jan. 29; SUSANNAH in Memphis, Nov. 14, and at the NY City Opera, Mar. 21; TREEMONISHA in Houston, Mar. 20; Pasatieri's THE SEAGULL, in Fort Worth, Jan. 15; and RAKE'S PROGRESS in San Francisco, June 24.

On the brighter side, the Friends of American Music presented the fourth season of the New Mexico Festival at Taos from July 17 to August 16. Forty per cent of the repertory each year consists of American compositions, and twentieth-century music is featured, including works this year by Christopher Berg, Bacon, Barger, Rorem, Schuller, and Schuman.

The 1981 Aspen Conference on Contemporary Music featured works by Varese, Earle Brown, Philip Glass, Alvin Lucier, Riegger, Cowell, Edward Barnes, Charles Eakin, Pia Gilbert and Robert Starer.

The Tanglewood Contemporary Festival included works by Walter Mays, Samuel Adler, Husa, Donald Sur, Davidovsky, David Koblit, Thomas Lee, Foss, Marlos Nobre, Oliver Knussen and Ramon Zupko.

ON THE "MEDIOCRITY" OF AMERICAN MUSIC

One notes with some chagrin how the arguments about the artlessness of Americans remain very much the same generation after generation. A recent spate of these could just as well be taken from the pages of HARPER'S WEEKLY in the 1890s instead of the present-day HARPERS. BRUCE WILSON has provided the following thoughtful assessment of the situation.

"As the Sonneck Society moves self-assuredly toward the debut of AMERICAN MUSIC, many members engaged in the continuing Reagonomics debate are acutely aware of how much our new journal is needed for understanding music in America and American music. Public discussions of threats to the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities have aired some silly characterizations of American Music which we may have thought were no longer used in enlightened discourse. Beware! Here are two samples for which NEWSLETTER readers may wish to have ready answers.

"The first commentator, Lewis Lapham, argues in the WASHINGTON POST (21 March 1981, p. A-15) that 'Americans have a talent for brilliant interpretation and performance, but they haven't got the knack for making works of art.' Lapham's essays as editor of HARPERS (he has since resigned) have earned him a reputation for pretentious overstatement.

For example, he translates the old saw that you can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear thus: 'Certainly, the government tried hard enough, but no matter how earnest its intentions, or how munificent its expenditure of money and sentiment, it couldn't change a corn field into an Italian garden.' How quaint for Lapham to compare American arts to their European counterparts in that terminology. We are all familiar with the inferiority complex which Americans of cultivated taste adopted towards indigenous music in the 19th century. Lapham simply echoes that sentiment when he specifically condemns American musical composition by saying that 'the country lacks practitioners of the first rank.' He concludes his criticism with this assessment of America's creative potential in the arts:

The failure of the national speculation in the arts need not be interpreted as a fall from grace. At various points in time, various peoples invest their energy and imagination in literature, painting, poetry, music, dance and the drama. Throughout most of its history, the United States has pursued other interests. The Nobel prizes awarded every year to American physicists, biologists and economists suggest that the play of the American mind takes place in the theater of the sciences. Art remains an expensive entertainment, and in times of trouble the country cheerfully dismisses the dance band.

"Consider finally the title of Lapham's essay, 'Why Patronize America's Mediocre Arts?' One is tempted to dismiss Lapham by observing that the only way to arrive at his erroneous conclusion is to follow his leading question. The trouble is that he is not alone.

"Tom Bethell, Washington editor of HARPERS, is a second commentator whose argument for cutting the Endowments appeared in the WASHINGTON POST (22 March 1981, pp. L-1, 4-5). Bethell, who came to American culture as a foreigner in 1962, finds creative genius in America's indigenous music--jazz, blues, ragtime, and movies--from the early twentieth century. He feels that 'the principal instrument for eliciting creativity in people of artistic disposition is the marketplace itself,' and consequently 'that arts funding, far from encouraging creativity, actually ends up stifling it.' This view is his chief argument for abolishing the National Endowment for the Arts, which he accuses of protecting arts institutions from change, failing to increase audiences, and harming individual creators by removing them from the 'marketplace' with 'up-front' grants.

"Bethell fantasizes the effect of the NEA, had it existed in the early twentieth century, on the burst of indigenous American musical culture. He imagines the government money men hemming and hawing over the relative merits of Arnold Schoenberg and King Oliver. Then, as reinforcement of his marketplace theory, he has the grant going to King Oliver 'by some miracle' but squelching his creativity in the process. The moral of his fantasy is: 'It doesn't do people any good to pay them to be creative.' If that were the motto on a coin,

the flip side would be Bethell's other declaration: 'Unpublished masterpieces don't exist.' Oh.

"Make no mistake, it is fascinating to read these two HARPERS editors' explanations that government funding for American arts (think music) should cease because (1) we 'lack practitioners of the first rank' and always will and (2) we are a creative people whose potential contributions cannot be called forth with up-front money. But their statements regarding the Endowment are less interesting than the way they characterize American music. Each judges American music according to what he thinks it ought to be, more than on the basis of what it is and has been.

"Could it be that Lapham and Bethell are legion? If that question smacks of rhetoric, could it not be addressed, nevertheless, to Mr. Davidson, whose letter was printed in the Spring 1981 NEWSLETTER (p. 4), suggesting that the upcoming journal AMERICAN MUSIC would be an absurd effort if it were limited to 'just' American music. One might say to Mr. Davidson, 'At last!' a journal will be devoted to the enormous subject of American music. Perhaps its contribution to understanding music as it exists in American culture will dispell erroneous notions of what it ought to be." Bruce D. Wilson, Curator, Special Collections in Music, University of Maryland Libraries, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742

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Sonneck Society member STEVEN LED-BETTER, who is Director of Publications for the Boston Symphony Orchestra, offers some words of encouragement with regard to BSO performances of American music:

"As everyone in Boston is certainly aware, this year marks the 100th anniversary of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, which played its first concert on 22 October 1881. The centennial celebration is being spread out over a period of about five years (largely for fund-raising purposes, which, of course, are becoming more crucial than ever these days. But there are two special features that may be of interest to Sonneck Society members: commissioning of new music, and the re-examination of the orchestra's past. Twelve new works have been commissioned for performance during the centennial period, with commissions offered to composers of many styles and persuasions. Whether it was accidental or planned, the end result was to have four of the commissions go out to Boston-based composers (John Harbison, Leon Kirchner, Donald Martino, and Peter Lieberon); four to other Americans (Leonard Bernstein, John Corigliano, Roger Sessions, and Olly Wilson); and four to non-Americans (Sándor Balassa, Peter Maxwell Davies, Andrzej Panufnik, and Sir Michael Tippett). Although the American composer is still a rare bird on the 'regular' programming our most American symphonies, I take it to be a refreshing and healthy sign that the BSO's commissioning program has Americans predominating in a 2-to-1 ratio.