

The Sonneck Society

For
American
Music

Bulletin



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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Join the Sonneck Society and see the world! Our most recent overseas adventure took place at Oxford University on July 8-11, 1988. A full report of the joint meeting with the British Biennial Conference on Nineteenth-Century Music and of the accompanying social activities appears elsewhere in this issue. Let it suffice here to mention that Lady Margaret Hall, the venue of the sessions, is actually one of the thirty-six colleges that comprise Oxford as a whole. It is one of the new colleges (founded in 1878), and provides excellent facilities for meeting, boarding, and rooming.

An entirely informal meeting of Sonneckers living in the Washington area took place on August 27 in the home of Gill and Woody Anderson. Kitty Keller cooked the ham (delicious!) and others brought similarly delectable dishes to a dinner given in honor of the fiftieth wedding anniversary of your president and his wife Veronica, who just happened to be nearby in College Park attending another meeting. You see how all sorts of wonderful things happen to members of the Sonneck Society. Veronica and I are deeply grateful to all concerned.

The general state of the society is good. Membership has now passed 956, having steadily increased from 432 a few years ago. The increase comes, I believe, from the growing interest in the history of American music among scholars. As fascinating as the Italian Renaissance may be, the history of our own music exerts its own considerable charms. I reiterate my general forecast, made many years ago, that sooner or later, somehow or other, Americans are sure to come to the study of their own past. We possess an entirely remarkable musical history, unsurpassed anywhere else for its diversity of styles, a situation resulting from our ethnic diversity, itself unique in the world. I think that I cannot be considered chauvinistic when I remind you that we have still in the United States more students of the music of the Italian Renaissance than there are in Italy, and the number is far greater than that of students of American music. All of us can understand why this is so (there is certainly nothing wrong with Italian music of any epoch), but we must also understand that such imbalance of interest cannot continue very much longer.

Many universities are already establishing centers for the study of American music. I mention a few recent additions. Florida State University opened its Center for Music of the Americas in 1985. The University of Michigan, under the direction of James Dapogny, is now in process of doing something similar. At the Conservatory of Music of the University of Missouri-Kansas City there is an Institute for Studies in American Music that already holds a large collection of sheet music,

disc recordings, and musical films. Marian Peterson is the director. Of special interest to me is the fact just learned this afternoon (September 26) that the Kansas City Public Library holds the diary and scrapbook of Joe Sanders, the "old left-hander," singer and pianist of the famous Coon-Sanders Nighthawks, the best of the early white bands. Additional fascinating holdings of these institutions include the record collections of Dave Dexter and Frankie Trumbauer, plus other goodies almost beyond imagining. There are, of course, more rich stores of such materials held in various libraries and by private collectors throughout the country, hardly any of them as yet explored by scholars. Almost the entire history of the music of the white middle class remains unexplored. Come on in, young scholars, the water's fine.

The society's committee on American Music in American Schools, under the energetic leadership of Alan Buechner, is now working with a special study group of the College Music Society that has been charged with recommending changes in the undergraduate music curriculum. Naturally, we hope to see more American music taught in American schools. No country studies as little of its own music as does the United States. In this respect we remain the least chauvinistic of nations. Perhaps future improvement will depend upon our efforts with the younger generation. If we can succeed in getting just a little intelligent attention paid American music in our schools and colleges, the results could be astonishing. The Society's efforts to increase student activity in the Society itself are reported elsewhere in this issue.

Our coming meeting in Nashville promises to be one of our best, and that means it will be very good indeed. Start planning now to be there. You hear?

Allen P. Britton

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* Send all contributions for the *Bulletin* to editor Susan L. Porter at the address above. Articles may be submitted on floppy disk if your machine is IBM-PC compatible and uses Microsoft Word, WordPerfect, or Wordstar. Your disc will be returned after the issue is complete. Articles which are typed, double-spaced are also welcome.

* Deadlines for submitting materials are Feb. 1, June 1, and October 1.

* A subscription is included with membership in the Society. For further information about the Society and its membership, write to Kate Keller, 13125 Scarlet Oak Drive, Darnestown, MD 20878.

* Planning to move? Please notify us about your change in address.

HENRY BLAKE, A NEW HAMPSHIRE FIFER IN THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Susan Cifaldi

Henry Blake was born in Kensington, NH, on November 22, 1755. He was not quite twenty when the Lexington Alarm sounded in the Hampshire Grants, but he promptly enlisted in the service of his country. A diary he kept while in that service is part of the manuscript collection of the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, MA, and its terse entries preserve the memory of his sacrifices as well as nineteen fife tunes he played during the early years of the Revolutionary War.

Henry Blake's military career began nearly a year before he first wrote in his journal. He enlisted in the New Hampshire regiment of Colonel John Stark on April 23, 1775, as a fifer for Captain Isaac Baldwin. In *The Compact History of the Revolutionary War*, Colonels R. Ernest and Trevor N. Dupuy, U.S.A., Ret. describe the valiant service rendered by Blake's regiment at Bunker Hill. They cast bullets and prepared cartridges before reinforcing Thomas Knowlton's Connecticut troops at the rail fence. An attempt to repulse the enemy with a barricade of stones hastily constructed on the beach below failed; the defenders were forced to retreat and did so in good order in the face of an overpowering British advance. Despite the losses suffered in that battle, the provincial army maintained the siege of Boston. The siege had begun two months earlier following the events at Lexington and Concord; it ended on March 17, 1776, with boatloads of British troops and Tory sympathizers heading towards Nova Scotia. Blake's diary begins on this date with the simple statement, "this Day the enemy Left Boston."

Subsequent entries are just as succinct and document the march through Connecticut to New London, where Blake and his companions embarked on vessels bound for New York. Blake's New York sojourn was brief, but he was not idle. His diary tells of a skirmish on Bedloe's Island that netted seven British prisoners with their entrenching tools and another that inflicted significant damage to H.M.S. *Asia*. On April 29 Blake's regiment left New York and "Sailed up hutsons river in order for Quebeck under the Command of genral Solofan [Sullivan]" to assist in the ill-fated Canadian expedition. On May 26 Blake arrived at St. Johns; several days later he was at Chambly. On June 8 "the Cannon kept aroring all day," a firing undoubtedly directed toward the British, Canadians, and Indians at Trois Rivieres. The provincials were defeated and forced to retreat down the Richelieu

River, a retreat that did not end until July 17 at Fort Ticonderoga; "their," Blake wrote, "we pitched our tents Between the fort and Lake george about dark." Part of his regiment wasn't as fortunate and never reached the relative safety of Fort Ti; they succumbed to the ravages of smallpox and were buried en route. Blake recorded the date of his own inoculation as well as the date his symptoms first appeared. During this interval two members of his company died from the disease, and thirty others were so ill they "set out for the ospittal at fort george."

On July 22 another party of men set out on a different task at "Stark's Point to Clear up a place to in Camp." The work progressed quickly, allowing Blake to pitch his tent two days later, and by early August he was recording weather conditions and other minutiae that occurred in the regimental camp there, by then renamed Mount Independence. He suffered from ill health during this time and tried to remedy his condition by taking medicines and inducing vomiting. On October 6 Henry Blake began his trip home to New Hampshire, walking twelve miles the first day. On the following day he had progressed as far as "Casselton" [VT], and there his diary ends.

Preceding the journal entries, Blake wrote "The Gamut," illustrating the fife's fingering patterns from E to B". He recognized the high pitch of the instrument and placed the corresponding notes appropriately on the staff rather than lowering them the customary one octave. Ten pages of diary notes and accounting separate "The Gamut" from subsequent musical entries. Blake placed his tunes on the verso of each page and continued to represent the music in its actual register, utilizing three, four, and sometimes five leger lines virtually without error. Despite this evidence of musical sophistication, other factors reveal Blake's haphazard manner of writing out tunes—clefs are shapeless and sloppy, time signatures are mostly lacking, beaming connects quarter notes together or quarter notes to eighth notes, and stems are of different lengths and protrude beyond the beams. He was equally careless when he wrote the titles, but despite the frequent misspellings they are easily recognized and appropriately applied. Blake's errors in writing imply haste; however, he was clearly familiar with his tunes and did not depend on accurately-written versions in order to play them. Overall, the musical entries in Blake's journal indicate he had a good ear for the music he played.

Nineteen tunes appear in Henry Blake's military journal:

1. *The Ladys Brest Not* [Lady's Breastknot]: This tune is part of Thompson's *Collection of 200 Country Dances* printed in London in 1765. The

title refers to an adornment worn by fashionable eighteenth-century women on their gowns.

2. *Lovly Nancy* [Lovely Nancy]: Found in other fife tune collections, this 3/4 melody was commonly used in the retreat, a ceremony closing the soldier's workday.

3. *Beliles March* [Bellisle March]: American fifers borrowed this slow march from British fife instruction books.

4. *Roags March* [Rogue's March]: A derisive tune used by the military in conjunction with punishment, "The Rogue's March" was printed in most of the fife instruction books published in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

5. *Too Arms* [To Arms]: This tune warned of imminent danger and was the signal for all the soldiers to assemble, armed and ready to face the enemy. The tune Blake used for "To Arms" is not the standard tune found in the fife books published during this time.

6. *The Black Slaaving* [The Black Sloven]: Blake garbled the title, but he wrote out the tune as it was known by at least two other fifers, one from Massachusetts and one from New Jersey.

7. *Nancy Dawson*: Blake borrowed this tune from the country dance repertoire.

8. *Scotch Trevelly* [Scotch Reveille: Although the title is misspelled, the tune is unmistakably that of "Scotch Reveille," printed in seven of the nine fife instruction books extant from the eighteenth century. The tune survived into the nineteenth century as part of the American military reveille ceremony, "The Slow Scotch."

9. *Patrick's Day in the morning* [St. Patrick's Day in the Morning]: This is another dance-turned-march popular with eighteenth-century fifers.

10. *Marques of Gramby* [Marquis of Granby]: This title was applied to several eighteenth-century tunes. The one that Blake knew is similar to "Granile's Delight," a tune included by Connecticut fifer Giles Gibbs, Jr., in the notebook he kept while a member of the Ellington Parish Train Band in 1777.

11. *Farwell Sweet Hearts & Wives* [Farewell Sweethearts and Wives]: This tune has survived in the Blake and Gibbs notebooks.

12. *The Red Jokes* [The Red Joke]: Another tune that Blake and Gibbs preserved, "The Red Joke" is a dance tune also known as "Lads of Dunse."

13. *The Wild Irish man* [Wild Irishman]: Blake is the only fifer who wrote out this tune, but it was printed in Scotland by James Aird in 1782.

14. *Willks Ragle* [Wilkes' Wriggle]: John Wilkes was an Englishman who sided with the American colonies in their disputes with the king. His political sympathies aroused the wrath of King George who at one point had him jailed. The tune was known by an alternate title, "Merrily Danced the Quaker."

15. *The Britches Graneder* [British Grenadiers]: An English text associated with this tune praised the tall, valiant British soldier of foot known as the grenadier, whose ability to accurately toss live grenades was well respected in the seventeenth century. An American text, however, appeared prior to the outbreak of the Revolution, urging the patriots to ". . . guard your Rights, Americans! nor stoop to lawless sway / oppose, oppose, oppose, oppose,—my brave America."

16. *Jacks Favourite* [Jack's Quickstep]: Blake and Gibbs were the only fifers to include this tune in their notebooks, but it is found in several postwar collections. A drumbeating entitled "Jack's Quickstep" was published in *The Drummer's Instructor; or Martial Musician* by J.L. Rumrille and H. Holton in 1817.

17. *The Rakes of mellow* [Rakes of Mallow]: "Rake" was an eighteenth-century term used to describe a man of loose morals. The tune "Rakes of Mallow" was used as a country dance as early as 1747.

18. *Wellcom Here again* [Welcome Here Again]: This tune is also found in a notebook kept by a Rhode Island fifer in 1775.

19. *The Queen of Hearts*: Connecticut troops as well as those from Rhode Island marched to this tune, judging from its survival in manuscripts kept by fifers from those states.

Henry Blake was in poor health when he left his company in Vermont, but after a month-long period of recovery he travelled back to Mount Independence to obtain his discharge papers. Unfortunately, he discovered that the New Hampshire men had "moved to the southward," so he journeyed home with no papers. In December of 1777 he married Molly Colby in Hopkinton, NH. Blake worked as a tanner and entered his accounts into the same notebook he had used to record his fife tunes during the war. The 1790s found Blake moving his family to a farm in Peacham, VT. He also owned some cooper's tools, so it is likely he supplemented his income by making and selling barrels and casks. In March of 1819 he sought a pension from the United States government, claiming he was "a cripple by reason of a fall" and was "unable to Labour for my support." Henry Blake died on July 12, 1833, at age seventy-seven. His tattered diary was preserved by several family members for many years and was given to the American Antiquarian Society in 1938.

Susan Cifaldi lives in Ellington, CT.

Please note: If you need to contact the editor of this Bulletin during working hours, the new telephone number for The Ohio State University Lima Campus is 419-221-1641. Susan L. Porter may still be reached at extension 254.

PUTTING MUSIC FIRST: TWENTY YEARS OF THE BOSTON MUSICA VIVA.

David N. Patterson and TenBroeck S. Davison

This fall *The Boston Musica Viva* will begin celebrating its twentieth anniversary, an achievement made even more remarkable when one takes into consideration the fact that it has never been *the Viva's* intention to perform the works of familiar, accepted composers, but twentieth-century music, most of it new. Added to this fact is the emergence of numerous other "new music" performance groups on the Boston scene in the past ten years: most concert-goers in the Boston area are aware of just how much is going on in the arts on any one evening. The dilemma here is not unlike that faced by the diner asked to select a single entre from an oversized menu. So how is it that *the Viva* has survived twenty years when other groups have come and gone in far less time? The question can neither be taken lightly nor be given a single answer. Rather, the question of *the Viva's* long-time existence must be answered by looking into a number of factors, from Music Director to audience.

Just who is *the Viva's* audience? How many people do you know who would attend a concert—or, for that matter, four concerts within a year—to hear music that moves between the extremes of symmetry and asymmetry, consonance and dissonance, tradition and innovation? Some might have it that its concerts are attended largely by academicians, students, budding musicians and composers, and the curious few. However, upon closer examination, it is revealed that *the Viva* has attracted audiences as diverse as the music presented—an end toward which Music Director Richard Pittman has always consciously moved. As pointed out by Professor Nicholas E. Tawa (Music Department, University of Massachusetts, Boston, and author of *A Most Wondrous Babble: American Art Composers, Their Music, and the American Scene, 1950-1985*), the audiences share in the successes of Pittman's "efforts to bring to the classical milieu a breath of fresh air both in his approach to music and in the intimacy and informal atmosphere of his concerts."

Over the years it has become clear that the appeal of this ensemble has lain in its varied repertoire. Audiences have been moved as much by the four Cs—Cage, Carter, Copland, and Crumb—in *the Viva* concerts as by the three Bs—Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms—in more traditional programs. And were it not for the tremendous demands placed upon so small an organization, *the Viva* would, perhaps, venture more often into the

realm of multi-media programming as it did in the 1984 production, with MIT's Center for Advanced Visual Studies, of *Icarus—A Sky Opera*, presented at Kresge Auditorium. Amidst a display of laser effects and huge inflatable sculptures, *the Viva* musicians joined other instrumentalists, solo voices, and chorus in a performance of this staged work composed by Paul Earls. On another occasion, dressed in evening attire and seated before music stands, ensemble members and Music Director Pittman balanced radios on their laps and proceeded to turn the tuning knobs and potentiometers in a realization of John Cage's *Radio Music*. Much care is given the selection of what is to be performed.

One must look beyond audience and programming, however: funding is an absolute necessity for the survival of any professional arts organization, and *the Viva* is no exception. Over its twenty years the ensemble has seen its ups and downs, its surpluses and deficits—often the latter, during its formative years. Fortunately, support during those early years was generously provided by David Farmer, Curator, Busch Reisinger Museum, and Phyllis Cox, long-term patron of contemporary art. In time individual donors and federal and state agencies, especially The Massachusetts Council for the Arts and Humanities, became reliable sources of support. The creation of a subscription series further broadened the funding base. It appeared that *the Viva* had a good chance of surviving.

Strengthened by the success of two seasons, *The Boston Musica Viva* would find it possible to take its first steps toward a formal, administrative structuring of its organization, assembling, in 1970, a Board of Directors, chaired by the late Professor Jack Stein (German Department, Harvard University). Professor Stein would serve in that capacity for the next seven years. Remembering him warmly, Pittman says, "Mr. Stein was very knowledgeable about music, an effective chair, and a wonderful human being." Another member recognized for his boundless energy and special contributions is Hale Andrews (attorney, Hill & Barlow). Already mentioned, Phyllis Cox remains an integral part of *the Viva's* life and continues to serve as a board member. Inevitably, through the years the Board's overall character has changed, along with its changing membership of enthusiastic supporters who donate their time, money, and expertise to maintaining the organization's existence. It has only been recently that an Honorary Board of Advisors was formed. Its members come from the Boston area and well beyond, reflecting an international recognition of *the Viva's* important place in the world of contemporary music. Among its members are Pierre Boulez, Robert Brustein, and Ellen Taaffe Zwilich.