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“Her Whimsy and Originality Really Amount to Genius”: New Biographical Research on Johanna Beyer

by Amy C. Beal

Most musicologists I know have never heard of the German-born composer and pianist Johanna Magdalena Beyer (1888-1944), who emigrated to the U.S. in 1923 and spent the rest of her life in New York City. During that period she composed over fifty works, including piano miniatures, instrumental solos, songs, string quartets, and pieces for band, chorus, and orchestra. This body of work allies Beyer with the group known as the “ultramodernists,” and it offers a further perspective on the compositional style known as “dissonant counterpoint.” These terms are associated almost exclusively with Henry Cowell, Ruth Crawford, Carl Ruggles, and Charles Seeger, but Beyer, too, deserves to be placed in their ranks. In addition to her compositional work, she took full advantage of America’s musical capital during a period of determined experimentation and self-conscious nationalism. Her network included American and immigrant composers, conductors, musicians, choreographers, writers, and scholars. Beyer’s friendship with Henry Cowell constituted her most important professional and personal relationship, yet the official account of his biography erases her from his life and from the music of his time. Similarly, histories of twentieth-century music and American music have continued to overlook Beyer’s contributions.

A recent New World Records two-CD release of Beyer’s previously unrecorded music (NWR 80678-2, 2008) allows us to become better acquainted with her little-known oeuvre. Yet the compilation also points to the fact that in the twelve years since the publication of John Kennedy and Larry Polansky’s pioneering research on Beyer in *The Musical Quarterly*, only a handful of people have carried on the work that their biographical sketch, compositional catalog, and source guide called for.¹ Since then, with the assistance of some fifteen volunteer editors, the Frog Peak/Johanna Beyer Project has published sixteen editions of her compositions, all complete with scrupulous editorial notes and facsimiles of the manuscripts. This

editorial flurry has facilitated many performances and first recordings. The most noteworthy recent research on Beyer has been undertaken by Melissa de Graaf, whose work on the New York Composers’ Forum events during the 1930s portrays Beyer’s public persona during the highpoint of her compositional career (see, for example, de Graaf’s spring 2004 article in the *I.S.A.M. Newsletter*). Beyond de Graaf’s work, we have learned little more about Beyer since 1996. Yet it is clear that her compelling biography, as much as her intriguing compositional output, merits further attention.



Johanna Beyer
Courtesy of the National Archives

Beyer’s correspondence with Henry Cowell (held primarily at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts) helps us construct a better picture of her life between February 1935, when her letters to Cowell apparently began, and mid-1941, when their relationship ended. Her letters reveal both mundane and profound details about a composer’s daily routines in Depression-era New York, painting a rich portrait of an intelligent, passionate, humorous, and deeply troubled woman whose reading ranged from Hölderlin’s *Hyperion* to Huxley’s essay “Fashions in Love.” Her correspondence with Cowell, for whom she provided a number of musical and administrative services for approximately five years, mixes dry exchanges (“send me two copies of *Country Set* by Tuesday for Philadelphia”) with painful intimacies (“may friends touch each other?”). Beyond these occasional non-sequiturs, Beyer’s letters offer vivid impressions of a piano teacher’s exhausting commute between Brooklyn, Manhattan, Staten Island, and New Jersey, and expose her suffering caused by the crippling, degenerative illness ALS (Lou Gehrig’s Disease). Beyer’s life hovered

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Institute News

The renaming of the Institute has been the cause of great celebration here at Brooklyn College (see p. 3) but has had one unforeseen consequence: it forces the retirement of Hitchcock's cleverly-punning column title "ISAM Matters" ("HWHISAM Matters" simply looks dreadful on the page). The above heading seems lackluster by comparison, and if any readers have ideas for a more provocative title, we'd welcome the suggestion. This space will continue to give us an opportunity to share news of the events at the Institute and the activities of its members as we move into a new phase of our development.

First, we're delighted to welcome several new members to our Advisory Board—all likely to be familiar names to our readers. **George Boziwick** is Chief of the Music Division at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, and was instrumental in the transfer of Hitchcock's papers to that institution (see p. 3). **Samuel A. Floyd, Jr.**, one of the country's preeminent scholars of African American music, is Director *emeritus* of Center for Black Music Research, Columbia College Chicago, founded in 1983 and still thriving as the only institute of its kind. We're also honored to announce that two Distinguished Professors of Music at Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center have joined the Board: internationally-known composer **Tania León**, and pianist **Ursula Oppens**, both tireless champions of contemporary music. We look forward to working with them, and the rest of our Board members (see the complete list at the left).

Despite the gloomy economic news that seemed to greet all of us daily this fall, the Institute has been able to present a full slate of events through our ongoing "Music of Polycultural America" series. On 23 September, jazz pianist, musicologist, and Institute Board member **Guthrie P. Ramsey** performed with his Philadelphia-based group Dr. Guy's MusiQologY, and was interviewed by Hitchcock Institute Research Associate Michael Salim Washington. On 15 October, following our renaming celebration, pianist and Conservatory student **Angelo Rondello** hosted an intriguing look at the history of piano composition in the United States with works by Heinrich, Gottschalk, Ives, Carter, and others. He was joined by Distinguished Professor and Institute Board member **Ursula Oppens**, as well as several Conservatory faculty members, alumna, and current students. On 11 November we took part in the celebration of **Morton Subotnick's** 75th birthday, with the composer leading an informal discussion of one of his works. On 19 November, hip hop scholar **Marcus Reeves** led a lively conversation on the role of music in shaping racial identity in contemporary urban America. Finally, on 9 December, our own **Michael Salim Washington** joined Columbia University scholar **Farah Jasmine Griffin** in an informal discussion and book signing honoring the recent publication of their co-authored *Clawing at the Limits of Cool: Miles Davis, John Coltrane, and the Greatest Jazz Collaboration Ever* (Thomas Dunne Books, 2008). Overall, it was a remarkably diverse and invigorating series. Next spring we look forward to presentations honoring the centennial of composer (and one-time Brooklyn College faculty member) Elie Siegmeister, as well as our continued involvement in the Central Brooklyn Jazz Consortium's annual Brooklyn Jazz Festival, now in its tenth year.

As busy as the fall has been for the Institute, members of our staff have managed to pursue their own scholarship and interests as well. In November, **Stephanie Jensen-Moulton** participated in a

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Securing the Hitchcock Legacy

The passing of H. Wiley Hitchcock in December of 2007 left us not only with many treasured memories, but also a tangible heritage of scholarship and tireless work in the field of American music. For us here at Brooklyn College, perhaps the most important part of this legacy has been the Institute for Studies in American Music. The renaming of this nearly 40-year-old center as the H. Wiley Hitchcock Institute for Studies in American Music in honor of its founder seemed utterly appropriate, and this fall, thanks in large part to the generosity of the Conservatory of Music, we were able to celebrate our new name in style. On 15 October we gathered for a catered lunch in Brooklyn College's State Lounge, and rededicated the Institute with good food and conversation, words from Brooklyn College's President and Institute Directors past and present, and, perhaps most importantly, *music*. Several Conservatory students treated us to works by Gottschalk, Ives and Thomson (his portrait of Hitchcock, "Two Birds"), and Distinguished Professor Ursula



Ray Allen, Brooklyn College President Christoph Kimmich, Jeffrey Taylor, Janet Cox-Rearick, Conservatory of Music Director Bruce MacIntyre, Stephanie Jensen-Moulton (L to R) at the renaming celebration of the H. Wiley Hitchcock Institute for Studies in American Music
Photo courtesy of the Brooklyn College Office of Communications

Oppens brought the event to a close with a riveting performance of Elliott Carter's brief but fiendishly difficult *Caténaires*. The guests of the event, including Hitchcock's widow Janet Cox-Rearick, admired the elegant new brass sign that will be gracing the Institute's door, as well as Hitchcock's final published work: a recently-issued edition of Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts* that he completed with Charles Fussell, who was also in attendance.

Another gift left to scholars by Hitchcock is the vast collection of documents that made up his meticulously-maintained personal archive in the Institute. Thanks especially to the hard work of Chief Music Librarian George Boziwick, these valuable files have now been moved to the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. After they are cataloged, scholars will be able to chart not just the history of an Institute but the emergence of an entire field of study. In addition, sources related to The Charles Ives Society, *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music (Amerigrove)*, and a host of other organizations and projects will be readily available, as will valuable correspondence with some of the most important musicians and composers of Hitchcock's day. Fortunately, Hitchcock lived to see the beginning of this transfer, and he mentioned to several of us

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Support the H. Wiley Hitchcock Fellowship Fund!



The H. Wiley Hitchcock Institute for Studies in American Music is proud to announce the establishment of a fund in memory of H. Wiley Hitchcock (1923-2007), Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center, CUNY, and founding Director of I.S.A.M. The fund will support fellowships at Brooklyn College for established experts in American music and junior scholars of exceptional promise.

Donations of any amount are graciously accepted. Please make checks payable to "The Brooklyn College Foundation" (memo: Hitchcock Fund) and send them to:

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Beyer Biography (continued)

both in the gray areas of the immigrant experience and at the edges of Manhattan's new music network.

One of the obstacles to more comprehensive Beyer research and reception is that we simply do not know very much about her. At present, a small selection of administrative materials help fill some gaps in Beyer's early biography. Registry papers in a Leipzig archive describe Beyer as "correspondent, teacher, and music student," and document her living at four different Leipzig addresses between 1905 and 1915. She also lived in Dessau, Elgershausen, and Gießen between 1909 and 1915.² A WPA concert program from 1937 includes a biographical sketch that claims she sang for three years in the Leipziger Singakademie. Beyer's curriculum vitae (held in the Koussevitzky Papers at the Library of Congress) tell us she graduated from a German music conservatory in September 1923.

Ellis Island arrival records confirm Beyer entered the U.S. on at least two occasions. After leaving Gießen, where she lived for approximately two years, she arrived in New York on 24 April 1911. According to the passenger ship manifest, she paid her own second-class passage, and had at least \$50 in her pocket. As her destination she listed an uncle living at 661 Columbus Avenue. Leipzig residency documents record her return to Germany on 21 June 1914; she moved to Dessau about a year later. The second time she sailed to the U.S., she listed the town of Essen as her last place of residence, and arrived at Ellis Island on 14 November 1923. Again she paid her own passage, but now possessed only \$25. She named a friend's home in East Orange, New Jersey as her destination. At this time, Beyer was five-foot-six, had brown hair and brown eyes, and was neither a polygamist nor an anarchist (the ship manifest questionnaire explicitly asked these questions).

According to a 1930 census report from Queens County, Beyer lived at 39-61 43rd Street in Long Island City for the next six years, until she moved to Jane Street in Greenwich Village. She shared the address with her niece, a twenty-five-year old German-born woman named Frieda Kastner, who had entered the U.S. in 1922. The census report lists Beyer's occupation as music teacher. The document also indicates that Beyer was naturalized in Queens County before 1930.³ What Beyer experienced from the mid-1920s on, between finishing school, providing a home for her niece, establishing herself as a piano teacher in New York's German community, and studying composition with modernist American composers, remains cloudy. In the years following her arrival in New York, Beyer earned two degrees from the Mannes School of Music: a "diploma for solfege" (May 1927) and a teacher's certificate (May 1928). She took additional classes at Mannes through 1929. Her resumé tells us she had a scholarship for the New School for Social Research from 1934-35, "taught one year at the Federal Music Project," and studied composition with Cowell, Dane Rudhyar, Ruth Crawford, and Charles Seeger.⁴

Because of the myriad gaps in Beyer's biography, we are left without a clear impression of how or when she might have "stumbled into herself" as a composer, to borrow a description of Ruth Crawford's compositional self-awakening. Her mention of "improvising, just wasting time at the piano" in a December 1935 letter to Cowell may, however, suggest how her stumbling might have begun.⁵ Beyer's earliest extant work, dated 1931, is a 72-bar solo piano piece, the first in a set of four short pieces she would

Beyer Biography (continued)

eventually call *Clusters*. She performed this piece on 20 May 1936, during a WPA Federal Music Project Composers' Forum-Laboratory concert. During the post-concert discussion, Beyer claimed that she was "not influenced by or imitating Henry Cowell at all."⁶ In an uncanny coincidence that would dramatically impact the trajectory of Beyer's career, Cowell was arrested in California on sodomy charges the very next day.

On 19 May 1937 Beyer again played "excerpts from piano suites (1930-36)" in another WPA concert. Her program notes referred to a piece she first called the "Original New York Waltz," which eventually became the third piece in *Clusters*:

A group of chords is gradually interpolated, finally running off in dissonant contrapuntal passages only to be summoned again. Organized rests, rests within the measure, whole measure rests, 1, 2, 3 measure rests, tonally and rhythmically undergo all kinds of crab forms. Throughout, the tone "F" is reiterated. Around it, tones are grouped singly, becoming more substantial; chord clusters part again, to stay on singly but one or two groups of tone clusters get acquainted with a single melody. A struggle for dominance between group and individual seems to overpower the latter; yet there is an amiable ending.⁷

While *Clusters* exhibits traits typical of dissonant counterpoint, it also reveals Beyer's ability to write strong melodies, driving rhythms, and non-thematic

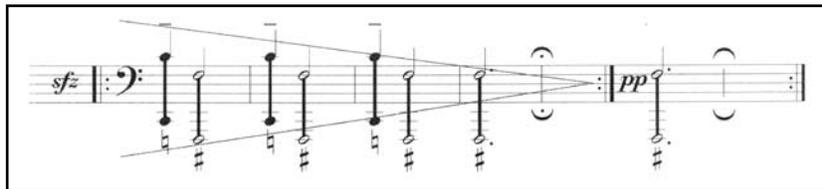
material that exploit the power of her instrument. Two of the pieces in the suite are set in triple meter (the 1931 waltz and the "Original New York Waltz"), and these two are also most suggestive of tonality. The second piece in the set is in 9/8; the fourth is in 7/8. The "Original New York Waltz" is almost entirely monophonic and pianissimo; the piece that proceeds it features five- and six-octave clusters played in the fortissimo range. The four short pieces are linked by a five-bar "starting motive," which was meant to be played at the start, between each piece, and at the end, thus lending the suite formal coherence. This "starting motive" consists entirely of two-octave-wide forearm clusters. Throughout the suite, Beyer makes use of fist, wrist, and forearm clusters. Though the manuscript of *Clusters* bears no named dedicatee, it suggests an homage to the inventor of the cluster technique: Henry Cowell.

Beyer's public appearances like these might have helped promote her as a composer/performer in the ultramodernist tradition, but they apparently raised little interest in her music. Why were Beyer's works not embraced by other performers, audiences, and critics? Did her earnest, enigmatic persona serve only to alienate her audiences, and perhaps also her potential colleagues? Did her reputation suffer because of her German heritage during a time of swaggering patriotism in the U.S.? Perhaps during the second half of the 1930s, her music was viewed as at odds with the mass political shift to the left, as Cowell, the Seegers, Blitzstein, Harris, Copland, and others became concerned with the "common man," proletarian music, revolutionary songs, and socialist ideology.

Perhaps her music suffered from an underlying assumption that her style of abstract modernism was irrelevant to the American public, and was not useful for their extra-musical concerns. In her biography of Ruth Crawford Seeger, Judith Tick reports: "As for the cause of 'dissonant music,' [Ruth] and Charles [Seeger] believed that by 1933, it was virtually dead."⁸ This attitude on the part of two leaders in Beyer's circle—the very composers who, along with Cowell, had led her down the path of dissonant counterpoint so self-consciously expressed in *Clusters*—might have isolated her compositionally to a point of no return. During her lifetime only one of her works was published and only one recorded. Yet she composed steadily, even in the large forms. During the summer of 1937, she wrote to Koussevitzky of the completion of her first symphony, and proudly listed seven public performances of her own work. All evidence indicates that this modest list had not grown by the time of her death—six and a half years later. Yet in 1941, Beyer had written in a letter to Cowell that she had composed over one hundred works, including six symphonic scores.⁹

Beyer and Cowell's six-year correspondence—some 115 extant letters—helps fill in details of her life and work, and also reveals

an operatically tragic love story. Where and when they first met remains unclear. (We might speculate that she heard him perform in Germany during his first European tour, before she left the country in early November 1923, but no



Johanna Beyer's "starting motive," from *Clusters*

evidence exists to confirm this.) Cowell's 1933 pocket calendar mentions Beyer's name twice. The first instance is on 25 October, where Cowell writes "class 5:30/come early Beyer rehearse." The second entry is simply Beyer's Long Island City address and phone number, at the back of the pocket calendar. We know that by early 1934 Cowell acknowledged Beyer as a composer, since part of her *Suite for Clarinet and Bassoon* had been included in a New Music Society concert in San Francisco on 15 February. In October 1934, Beyer enrolled in Cowell's New School class called "Creative Music Today." Sidney Cowell recalled first meeting Beyer "in the course in rhythm Henry gave at the New School in 1935-36."¹⁰ The rosters for that course, "Theory and Practice of Rhythm," taught in fall 1935, listed "Mrs. Sidney H. Robertson" as a registered student—but not Beyer, who might have audited that and other courses of Cowell's. The earliest extant letter from Beyer to Cowell was written during this period, on 12 February 1935; in it, she told him about her current compositional project, a pedagogical piano method she called the "Piano-Book"—and she also flirtatiously invited him to breakfast. The next letter included an explicitly romantic love poem; the following letter outlined her spirited impressions upon first hearing Cowell perform at The New School.

The relationship that developed, and eventually collapsed, is difficult to summarize briefly. Beyer adored Cowell, and was awed by his gifts as a composer. He soon embodied for her the roles of teacher, mentor, friend, collaborator, object of desire, and occasionally a source of employment. Their relationship seems to have taken

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Broadening Knowledge: An Interview with Ursula Oppens

In Fall 2007, Ursula Oppens, internationally-celebrated pianist and tireless champion of twentieth and twenty-first century music, joined the faculty of Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center as Distinguished Professor. Composer Jason Eckardt is also a new member of Brooklyn College's faculty, and his evening-long work Undersong was recently performed in its entirety by Eckardt's own Ensemble 21 at Columbia's Miller Theater. The two sat down in November 2008 for a conversation about Oppens's career and the current state of contemporary music.

JE: Your mother was a pianist who briefly studied with Anton Webern. Were you aware of post-tonal music when growing up and when did you first become involved in performing it?

UO: I was aware of Bartók, Schoenberg and Berg. When my mother came to the United States in 1938, she brought the Berg Sonata and said that most musicians she met didn't know it. My father was a member of a new-music organization in 1945 so there was a certain amount of new music around, but they felt very ambivalent about it. They were more committed to European music than American music.

JE: As one of the earliest advocates of post-war American music, what challenges did you face when first learning the demanding music for which you've become known?

UO: There were many different things. One is that I spent summers in Aspen. In 1960, which was the year before I went to college, I heard the Juilliard Quartet do a master class on Elliott Carter's second string quartet and that was much better than only hearing it straight through. In my freshman year of college at Radcliffe, Pierre Boulez visited and there was a concert of his music and he gave some lectures.

Leon Kirchner conducted a performance of *Les Noces* which I was able to be in. There were very few performers at Harvard but there were some composers, so if you wanted to have friends who were musicians, they happened to be composers. I was terribly fortunate later: in 1969-1970 when we formed Speculum Musicae, Young Concert Artists took us on as a group. So, I wouldn't say that there were many difficulties.

JE: What about the practical aspects of bringing a piece of new music to life?

UO: One of the first works I learned under a lot of pressure was Carter's *Sonata for Flute, Oboe, Cello and Harpsichord*. But that, as we look at it now, is still relatively conservative. I haven't gotten into the most complicated rhythms, as in the music of Brian Ferneyhough. But for me it's not so bad, because it's basically second-grade math: you find the common denominator and you

have lots of patience. A piece that I had great difficulty with was Conlon Nancarrow's first canon, which is five against seven. The common denominator of thirty-five is long! Again, it's more a question of patience than a question of difficulty.

JE: In preparing a piece like the Nancarrow, do you create a common-denominator rhythmic grid that you then use as a basis for counting the written rhythms?

UO: In the Nancarrow, each measure is supposed to be less than a second long. But I played it so slowly that I learned it by counting up to thirty-five. Another thing I remember was how long it took to learn Boulez's *Sonatine for Flute and Piano* with Paul Dunkel—again, it was a matter of patience. We had to count every

sixteenth note. Now, I think when young people find contemporary music difficult it might be because they are not expecting it to take so long to learn. And we did take a long time to learn things.

JE: You are also one of the co-founders of Speculum Musicae, one of the first contemporary music ensembles in the United States [founded in 1971]. What were those early days like and how do you think groups like Speculum influenced both music composition and performance?

UO: The Group for Contemporary Music existed before Speculum Musicae and so did the Juilliard Ensemble, which was run by Luciano Berio and Dennis Davies; the Group was run by Charles Wuorinen and Harvey Sollberger. Some of the members of Speculum were members of one or both. Basically, we would have talks late into the night about having our own group. One day it was Charles Wuorinen who said, "Why don't you form your own group?" And he, as a somewhat older person, gave us the

confidence to do it. It was also a different time economically, so in terms of a time/work ratio, one could pay one's rent more easily. So how did Speculum influence the music? Well, I think it was because people knew that we were really willing to work hard. It always goes back to that. We wanted to do it, we wanted to be really good, we were very good friends but kind of crazy. In fact, someone once referred to us as the fifteen most neurotic musicians in New York City! It was also that those were flexible times, it seems. There was a lot of psychological freedom in the sixties. There's this idea that students have difficulty with contemporary music, but if you think of the Carter festivals at Tanglewood and Juilliard this year, there were young people playing unbelievably well in a way that I don't even think we could have imagined doing when we were that age. So there's also a collective improvement going on.



Ursula Oppens at Brooklyn College
Photo courtesy of the Brooklyn College
Office of Communications

Oppens Interview (continued)

JE: That being said, do you think that pedagogy of music has changed radically and has impacted the way that you teach?

UO: Many instrumental teachers are still not interested in music of our time. For instance, there are situations where you could offer something complicated for an audition and no one would want to hear it. So that hasn't changed quite as much as it might. But I personally feel that it is very important as a performer to play all music, all music of the past, because after all every composer draws on it, and is educated in it, and how could you play the music of our time without playing the music that a contemporary composer has known and loved? So, I would not be too supportive of someone being too specialized when they're young. I think you need as broad a knowledge—both listening and playing—as possible.

JE: While establishing your career as a soloist, you became well known for combining traditional and contemporary works on recitals. How do you compose these mixed programs?

UO: Most audiences want to hear something familiar, that they might have heard before, and something they haven't heard before. It's important to have to work at listening because it sharpens your attention span for a piece you *have* heard before. There are other elements one can vary, or not vary, like the length of pieces or the forms of pieces. So, I think a program should have variety but it can also have no variety in some other ways. You could do a program of works inspired by dance or you could a program of sonatas, but a sonata can be anything from a John Cage Sonata and Interlude to a Brahms F minor.

JE: The living composer whom you are perhaps best known for championing is Elliott Carter. Since Carter conceives of his music in such literary terms, I'm wondering if your college studies in English literature had anything to do with your attraction to Carter's music.

UO: I find that his pieces are so full of character, and different characters. I especially enjoy playing them because in order to play Carter's pieces, one has to be able to play many different kinds of music. So, it is wonderful to be as expressive as possible on your instrument, which is something Carter makes you do.

JE: It sounds as if part of the appeal is that you get to inhabit the lives of many different characters throughout the course of the work.

UO: Yes, exactly!

JE: Are there any specific approaches you take to learning Carter's works?

UO: I have been incredibly fortunate to play Carter's music and work with him for more than forty years. And, just as with Nan-carrow, if there are two tempi going on at once, it is important to find the common denominator and practice *very* slowly. If there is a steady pattern that goes against the written time signature, I also practice with a metronome in that pattern. For example, in the first *Diversion* I set the metronome to forty beats per minute, the speed

of the ostinato. What I learned from Carter is to pay a great deal of attention to every expressive mark and every articulation, and somehow, the more I do this, the more I understand the piece. I believe that his music explores an unbounded range of emotion and expression. This has helped me infinitely in music of earlier composers. However, Brahms can begin a slur on an upbeat, and with Carter they almost always begin on a downbeat—in character, not necessarily notation.

JE: You recently recorded a CD of piano music by Tobias Picker. How did you become acquainted with his work?

UO: I first met Tobias in 1974, when he was living at Charles Wuorinen's house. Frederic Rzewski and I were about to perform the Schoenberg *Kammersinfonie* Opus 38b on a concert of the Group for Contemporary Music, and Tobias turned pages for me. Looking back at that moment is truly amazing. As you can tell, we were all much younger then. Tobias and I instantly became friends—almost relatives—and I realized right away what an incredibly talented composer he was, and is. And we have been friends ever since. So our relationship is musical and personal. He has written three solo piano works for me: *When Soft Voices Die*, *Old and Lost Rivers*, and *Four Etudes for Ursula*, and a two-piano piece for us, *Pianorama*. There was also a sextet for Speculum Musicae when I was part of that group. And just today he showed me a harpsichord part in a new ballet that he is writing.

JE: As someone who has long been at the vanguard of contemporary music, can you offer any predictions for where it might be headed?

UO: I think we've been for quite a while in a period where there's a multiplicity of styles going on all at once and I see no reason why this isn't going to continue. I think it's freed up a lot of people and audiences. I also think audiences that listen to one contemporary piece that they might not like know better now than they used to that something else might be absolutely terrific to them. So, I think it's very exciting that we're in a period like this.

Editor's note: 2008 saw the issue of two new CDs by Oppens, one of music by Carter (Oppens Plays Carter, Cedille CDR 90000 048) and the other featuring works by Picker (Keys to the City: Works for Piano, Wergo WER 6695 2), including the Four Etudes for Ursula and a two-piano version of Picker's The Keys to the City, written in honor of the centenary of the Brooklyn Bridge.



Marketing Musard: Bernard Ullman at the Academy of Music

What had started as a successful and profitable opera season was looking grim. Bank failures, rising unemployment, plummeting stock values, and a generally gloomy outlook now presented seemingly insurmountable challenges for even the most hardened music manager as ticket sales fell and stars cancelled their bookings. No, not a report from next week's *New York Times* arts section. But you could have followed this story in the *Times* 151 years ago during the Financial Panic of 1857. The current state of economic affairs in the United States reminds us of the hardships and trials faced by music managers of mid-nineteenth-century America during an even more devastating economic crisis, and points up how adroitly the best of them adapted.

As the head of the New York Academy of Music in the fall of 1857, Bernard Ullman reacted to the Panic as only the most self-assured entrepreneur might: he reevaluated his position, revised his business plan for the spring 1858 season, and pressed forward with a new agenda. For a six-week season in April and May, Ullman drew large audiences with diverse programming, cheap tickets, and a flair for the outrageous. The spectacle wasn't always onstage, however. To promote his new and colorful entertainment, the "Little Napoleon of the Academy" used marketing tactics that had never been tested at the Academy. His sometimes uncouth, yet ultimately successful approaches would forever change the way business was done at the operaminded Academy of Music.

Ullman took the reins of the Academy just as the Panic escalated in the late summer of 1857 and managed the venue with a singular focus: financial success. He initially concentrated his efforts on producing a season of foreign operas (primarily Italian) with mostly foreign stars (German bass Karl Formes debuted in December). These were the types of programs the stockholders and the box-seat tenants of the Academy expected: programs that reinforced a sophisticated musical image and bolstered the Academy's reputation as a place to see and be seen.

During the lean winter of 1857-58, Ullman changed course by contracting French conductor and composer Alfred Musard for a six-week spring season to compensate for the losses that staging opera would likely create. In bringing a star showman to his stage with an elite and "monster orchestra" (more than 100 of the city's top players!), Ullman was following a money-making model.¹ Musard had already established an international reputation as a successful entrepreneur-conductor, leading promenade concerts and balls in Paris with his own talented ensemble.² Furthermore, Ullman shamelessly patterned his 1857 venture on the paradigm of musical showmanship in the United States: the extraordinarily popular 1853-54 American tour of Louis Antoine Jullien and his orchestra, which had included forty-eight Manhattan concerts.³

Ullman replicated the diverse programs of these earlier successes with a large and well-rehearsed orchestra playing a variety of

light pieces including overtures, virtuosic instrumental solos, waltzes, quadrilles, and programmatic potpourris. Unlike previous managers of the Academy, most of whom were conductors and performers, Ullman had no musical training and much less concern for prioritizing Italian opera. A writer for the *New York Tribune* applauded the programs of "[p]opular music . . . in every shape and form. . . . Effects regular and irregular—serious and grotesque—sentimental and stirring—loud and soft, and every way."⁴ The regularly changing programs of entertaining music coupled with rock bottom prices—fifty cents to all parts of the house or \$1.00 for a reserved seat—not only attracted people from all echelons of New York society but swayed them to return again and again.⁵ The same *Tribune* writer calculated "120 performers for 50 cents! What cheaper entertainment could be asked?"⁶ Ullman's

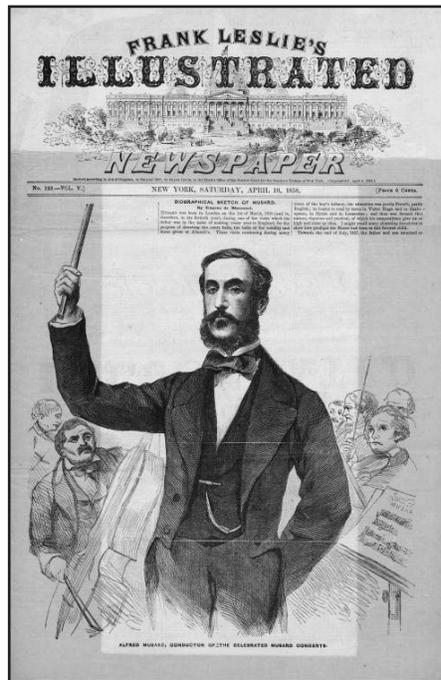
programming strategies enlarged his target audience by reaching beyond the Academy's usual opera-going crowd and encouraged repeat attendance with Musard Concerts scheduled nearly every day of the six-week run.

Ullman was already bucking some traditions by replacing the Academy's usual fare of foreign-language opera with concerts of dance music and ophicleide solos. His unique managerial style became even more apparent in his marketing of the Musard Concerts. Column-long advertisements with paragraphs of fine print filled the New York daily newspapers in the weeks leading up to Musard's first concert on 12 April. He described his new engagement as "the most COLOSSAL AND ARTISTIC ENTERTAINMENT that has ever been introduced in America." The orchestra included several of Musard's finest solo players—"the most stupendous ever presented"—supplemented by a "monster orchestra" comprising "the best professors of the City." The ensemble, the ad continues, "will be the GRANDEST, COMPLETEST AND MOST COLOSSAL that has ever been brought

before the American public. It will greatly exceed, both in numbers and quality, the orchestra of the New-York Philharmonic Society and of Jullien's concerts."⁷

P. T. Barnum had made elaborate ads and puff pieces a normal part of the entertainment business more than a decade before Musard's arrival, but until Ullman no manager had tried marketing the respectable Academy of Music this way. The verbosity and hyperbole of Ullman's advertisements, which included programmatic details of "descriptive gallops" on each night's concert, a summary of the upcoming week's events, and rebuttals to harsh criticism, became a hallmark of his tenure.⁸

Ullman turned next to the Academy itself in his construction of the greatest musical spectacle America had ever seen. The building was outfitted with lush carpet in the lobbies, 100 sofas in the corridors, "twenty-five monster candelabras," and new chandeliers. Additional indulgences were provided by "thirty colored waiters in livery" delivering refreshments to guests' seats, "TWENTY YOUNG LADIES, of prepossessing appearance" serving in the tea and coffee



A cover story in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper (10 April 1858) showcasing a debonair Alfred Musard

Ullman (continued)

rooms, and twenty boys wearing “fancy uniforms” who would sell evening newspapers during the concerts.⁹ Ullman’s careful crafting of a visual spectacle was widely covered in the press. Concluding his review of the first week of concerts, the *Albion* writer “Raimond” gushed “Something, too, should be set down to the account of the renovation of the Academy building, which has been refreshed, adorned, and illuminated, till it has become really what is has always vainly threatened to be, the most elegant and luxurious place of entertainment in the city.”¹⁰

Not wanting the accoutrements to outdo the musical offerings, Ullman also turned to his roster of virtuoso solo performers to dress up Musard’s programs of mostly dance music. For over a decade before acquiring the Academy lease, Ullman had managed the American tours of star singers and instrumentalists. He now manipulated the tour schedules of several contracted performers to bring them to New York for appearances at the Musard Concerts. Pianist Sigismund Thalberg, violinist Henri Vieuxtemps, as well as the stars of his spring opera company, Elena D’Angri and Karl Formes, all appeared as soloists to enliven the programs.

The opening week was, as one critic described it, “attended with success; not a wild tumultuous success, but a quiet, appreciative one.”¹¹ Despite the all-around commendations of the press, the sharp-eyed Ullman was not one to stand by as the novelty of the monster concerts wore off. In response to several critics who balked at the banality and silliness of such works as Musard’s *Beef and Mutton Quadrille*, Ullman immediately went to work. To make the remainder of the season more widely appealing the manager introduced his opera conductor, Karl Anschutz, who would lead a “Grand Classical” portion of each Musard program. Ullman’s initial focus on light entertainment was meant to reach beyond the usual Academy attendees, but in the process it alienated the musical connoisseurs. The mid-season modification attempted to make amends for that imbalance. Of particular interest were several “Composer Nights” that featured works by Beethoven, Berlioz, and Mendelssohn on separate programs. The “Lounger,” writing for *Harper’s Weekly*, praised the change: “Mr. Napoleon Ullman certainly understands his business. Quite undismayed by the moderate success of the pure Musard music, he has not betaken himself to denouncing the public taste, but has somewhat changed his programme. For the *Berlioz* night he is to be heartily thanked.”¹²

In typical Ullman fashion, however, he found a way to incite the objections of the press along with their cheers. His advertisements bluntly referred to the more classically-minded portion of each program as a “Philharmonic Concert”—a clear move to capitalize on the upstanding reputation of the Philharmonic Society of New York. To make matters worse, on 24 April, the Philharmonic Society gave their final concert of the 1857-58 season at the Academy of Music in direct competition with a Musard concert given earlier the same day. That evening, Ullman barred the doors of the Academy before the Philharmonic concert, unjustifiably demanding their rent be paid in advance. The concert went on, only slightly delayed, after the treasurer arrived with cash. In a circular the following week, the Philharmonic Society explained that Ullman had violated their contract by scheduling a second performance the day of their concert and denounced his immature handling of the conflict.¹³

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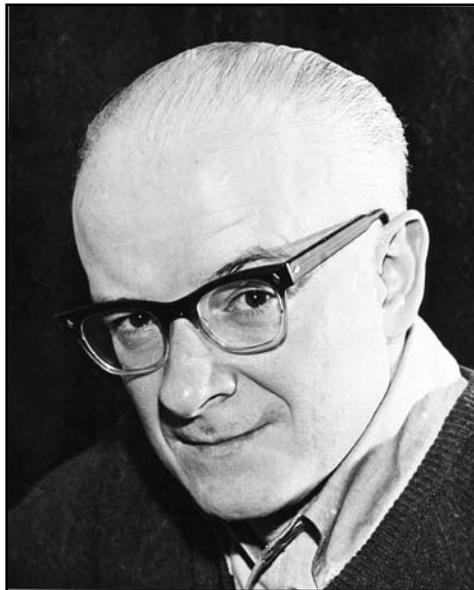
Remembering Jim Maher (1917-2007)

James T. Maher passed away in New York City on 18 July 2007. As an outstanding cultural historian of jazz and American popular music of the first half of the twentieth century, he had very few equals, if any, in comprehending the complex nexus between the two. His rubbing shoulders with many of its movers and shakers added an immeasurable richness to his work—always a model of balanced critical assessment. His depth of knowledge, coupled with a generosity of spirit, not to mention his genuinely nurturing gifts, made him a cherished mentor to American music scholars, both past and present, myself included.

I consider myself blessed to have developed a warm and transparent relationship with Maher, particularly during the final decade or so of his life. And very much part of the mix was Barbara, his wonderful, loving wife. We spoke on the phone rather often and there was always an open invitation to stop by the apartment on West 71st Street. Once there, he and I would chew the fat, and when, in his last years, he felt equal to the challenge, we would walk around the block to his favorite neighborhood basement bar. We would freely exchange insights on a broad range of topics, and he was forever generous in allowing me to borrow his unpublished manuscripts, some of which had been aborted for various reasons. Included were his essay on early radio music, his biography of virtual musical unknown Art Landry, as well as obscure news clippings. Happily a number of details from these pieces came to be included in my book, *Louis Armstrong and Paul Whiteman: Two Kings of Jazz* (Yale University Press, 2004).

For most readers here, Maher's name will probably be associated with a monumental 536-page study, replete with some three thousand five hundred measures of copyrighted music, titled *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators, 1900-1950*, and first published by Oxford University Press in 1972. Characterized by Gunther Schuller as "a lovingly insightful study," it also won the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award and was nominated for a National Book Award. Alec Wilder is identified as the book's author, while Maher is credited with having served as editor and providing an introduction. But the truth of the matter is more apparent as one reads Wilder's own generous acknowledgment, more like a dedication, coming after the Table of Contents: "To James T. Maher for his inestimable contribution to this book, for his truly phenomenal knowledge and research, his impeccable collation of thousands of facts, his endless patience, his tolerance of my eccentric methods of work, his unflinching good humor, his guidance and encouragement. Also for his superb editing. If ever the phrase 'but for whom this book would never have been written' were apt, it is so in this instance."

A native of Cleveland, Jim Maher was born on 27 January 1917—a birthday, he liked to remind people, that he shared with Mozart. Maher was an amateur in the best sense of the word, earning his livelihood in journalism as well as public relations, working at various points for Texaco and Aramco in the Middle East. But his passion for jazz and popular music was unbounded, dating back to his boyhood. His professional career as journalist began in 1934, when he wrote on sports for the *Plain Dealer*. While attending Ohio State University, he met Benny Goodman, and their relationship blossomed over the years, with Maher authoring a revelatory set of liner notes for such classic albums as Goodman's *The Sound of Music*. No less distinguished were his contributions to the celebrated RCA Vintage Series, not to mention albums by Oscar Peterson collaborating with Nelson Riddle, Stan Getz performing with João Gilberto, and more.



James T. Maher in the 1960s

Jim Maher was one of the more eloquent talking heads on Ken Burns's documentary *Jazz* and makes several contributions to the companion book by Geoffrey Ward and Ken Burns (Alfred A. Knopf, 2000). Published the same year was *The Oxford Companion to Jazz* (Oxford University Press, 2000), edited by Bill Kirchner, which includes an essay by Maher and Jeffrey Sultanof entitled "Pre-Swing Era Big Bands and Jazz Composing and Arranging." It offers a superb overview of the early American dance band and its precedents stretching all the way back to the Congress of Vienna (1812-22). It was then that Joseph Lanner established the first celebrity dance orchestra, creating in the process an historic "book" of his arrangements. And in its early American incarnation, the dance band, we learn, was transformed by Art Hickman in San Francisco, when he introduced two saxophones in 1919. This was, in effect, a proto-reed section, the seed of the later four-part section and a vital element in the success of band leaders like Paul Whiteman, who were soon to follow.

Perhaps most far-reaching was Maher's close friendship with Marshall Stearns. Their taped interview with Charlie Parker, one of the very few ever undertaken, is especially valuable. Some time later Maher came to write "An Appreciation," part of the introduction to the seminal work *Jazz Dance: The Story of American Vernacular Dance* (Macmillan, 1968), co-authored by Marshall and Jean Stearns. But the richest legacy of all, brought about partly at Maher's urging, was Stearns's decision to bequeath his magnificent collection to Rutgers University in Newark. It became a vital part of what was soon to grow into the internationally recognized Institute of Jazz Studies.

—Joshua Berrett
Mercy College

Reimagining Ives

Two recent books ask us to reconsider much of the received wisdom about Charles Ives. *Selected Correspondence of Charles Ives* (University of California Press, 2007), edited by Tom C. Owens, allows the composer and his correspondents, professional and intimate, to do the talking, gently persuading the reader toward a revised understanding of the composer's biography. In *Charles Ives Reconsidered* (University of Illinois Press, 2008) Gayle Sherwood Magee offers new readings of evidence relevant to Ives's biography that has been in circulation for decades, re-readings that inform provocative interpretations of some of the composer's best-known musical works.

With *Selected Correspondence of Charles Ives* Tom Owens has facilitated a deepening of our fragmentary understanding of Ives by making accessible in a single volume yet more fragmentary views of this most elusive of American musical characters. These fragments—453 of them—coalesce in surprising ways, helping to further the erosion of long-held myths about Ives by revealing new insights into his personality. The image that emerges here is overwhelmingly that of a warm, emotionally and financially generous man who was very busy with music, even in his later years. He was deeply loved by his wife and daughter, and appears to have been considered with genuine affection by his long-time business partner and friends in the music world, including frequent correspondents such as Nicolas Slonimsky, John Kirkpatrick, Lou Harrison, Peter Yates, Henry Cowell, and Carl Ruggles.

The volume is divided into eight chapters. The letters are grouped thematically, although the themes more or less follow chronological order, beginning with Ives's early years; his courtship of and marriage to Harmony Twichell; his most active years of musical composition; his (and, increasingly, Harmony's) health concerns; and his correspondence with "collaborators and champions" of his music. Chapters on Ives's travels, his correspondence with editors and performers, and accounts of the last decade of his life round out the collection.

Many of the items offered here are transcriptions of Ives's sketches for letters taken from the Charles Ives Papers, which are held at Yale University. As Ives's health deteriorated, he would often compose the sketches in the voice of either Harmony or his daughter, Edith, who would then draft the final copies. His assumption of these personae produces curious effects—particularly, as Owens notes in his introduction, Ives's reluctance to imagine Edith as anything but a young girl, even when she has become a grown, married woman and mother. Facsimiles of twenty-one letters and sketches interspersed throughout the volume visually trace a change from Ives's neat childhood cursive hand to the nearly illegible "snake-tracks" of later years. Ives's penchant for revising his musical works is mirrored in the sketches for his correspondence, which often reveal dense, one might say polyphonic, textures of insertions and deletions. Owens's transcriptions sometimes preserve crossed-out text, giving the reader a sense of Ives's efforts at arriving at particular word choices.

Missing almost completely here—with the exception of occasional bawdy word play and some correspondence with former college buddies—is the misogynistic, homophobic, ranting Ives about whom we so often read. Instead, we are most often in the presence of a charming, deferential, generous man; a gentle man, and a gentleman; an entirely sympathetic character. Part of what

generates this sympathy is the almost stifling haze of ill health that hangs over most of the correspondence. As Owens notes in his introduction, many of the sketches for letters written in the voice of Harmony or Edith begin with the designation, "I am—," which is shorthand for the standard opening, "I am writing for Mr. Ives, who is not at all well, and cannot attend to things nowadays as he would like to." We greet his occasional bursts of activity with a cheer for the underdog.

While the correspondence itself is of great value, the editorial apparatus around it is somewhat uneven. Some letters are introduced with great care and others that might have benefited from some explication have none. Among the letters that are properly introduced, there seem to be two levels of editorial commentary: one that refers to groups of correspondence, and another that pertains to individual letters. It is often unclear which level is being engaged, and especially what the boundaries of the former are. The two levels are not distinguished through typeface or physical spacing on the page, and the result is sometimes confusion over exactly to which letters a passage of commentary refers.

It is unclear whether this is a book meant for dipping into or to be read straight through. Editorial commentary on numerous matters is often delayed beyond their first appearance in the letters. A footnote on page 124 considering Ives's use of the word "slump" to describe his periods of ill health appears eleven pages after the use of that word was first noted. A footnote telling us that Ives's letters to Slonimsky in the Ives Papers are photocopies appears on page 160, while the first letter to Slonimsky appeared on page 107. Carl Ruggles is fully introduced in editorial material on page 227, but correspondence with Ruggles and his wife first appears without introduction on page 135. A "common method" Ives used in his multiple sketch revisions is not revealed until page 313.

These flaws do little to diminish the value of the deeply personal glimpse into Charles Ives that Tom Owens's selection of his correspondence provides. It is a welcome addition to Ives scholarship.

In the introduction to *Charles Ives Reconsidered* Gayle Sherwood Magee writes that her book is a "first step" in a "reassessment of the extent of Ives's compositional and revisional activities in the 1920s and later . . . while recontextualizing Ives's life and work" (p. 4). It is deeply informed by her 1989 reconsideration of the chronology of Ives's oeuvre and by her 2001 investigation into the health problems from which the composer suffered for roughly the last fifty years of his life. The chronology of Ives's works and the precise nature of the "attacks" that curtailed his output of original creative work by the 1920s have been two of the most vexing mysteries facing Ives scholars. Magee acknowledges at the outset the possibility that her "long-developing ideas, interpretations, and opinions . . . may seem unconventional, perhaps heretical" to some Ives scholars (p. 6).

The book is very imaginatively written. Most of the time that works to Magee's advantage. She revisits key aspects of Ives's biography, taking a fresh look at the evidence. Magee's view of George Ives, the composer's father, emphasizes his vernacular repertoire, his amateur skills, and, especially, his valuing of musical experience over formal training. Horatio Parker is portrayed as having

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Beyer Biography (continued)

a serious romantic turn before Cowell's imprisonment in 1936. During his years in San Quentin she managed his mail and devoted nearly all of her time to maintaining his professional reputation and compositional career. She solicited letters from prominent figures in musical and academic circles to petition the warden for an early parole. When he was released in 1940, she was the only person besides his parents and the Percy Graingers—"a very few trusted friends," Cowell wrote to Grainger—who was kept informed of his travel plans and his whereabouts. Beyer was already seriously ill by this time, but according to Cowell, "she [was] quite willing to act as a buffer in receiving letters and calls, etc., instead of their going to [the Grainger residence in] White Plains."¹¹ It is worth noting that during Cowell's four years in prison, Beyer completed something close to thirty new compositions.

Beyer continually urged conductors to program Cowell's work, especially after his release from prison—conductors including Carlos Chavez, Eugene Goossens, Howard Hanson, Otto Klemperer, Serge Koussevitzky, Karl Krueger, Hans Lange, Fritz Mahler (nephew of Gustav), Pierre Monteux, and Artur Rodzinski.

Cowell clearly trusted Beyer, and appreciated her efforts, but from the moment he was released he began making attempts to separate himself from his most devoted supporter. Perhaps due to Beyer's escalating dependence on him for support and companionship, her frustration at having helped him so tirelessly and receiving so little in

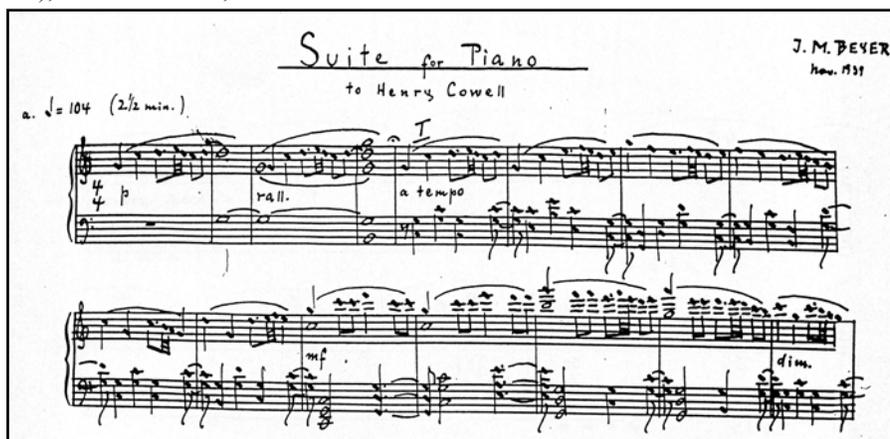
return, and his increasing distance due perhaps to his budding relationship with Sidney Robertson, the terms of their relationship changed dramatically. Tragically for Beyer, this coincided with a decline in her health. Soon thereafter, in January 1941, Cowell wrote Beyer a letter that outlined a revised business arrangement between them. He suggested two courses of action for streamlining their professional contact. First, he would pay her union rates for all the copying work she had done on his compositions, and thereby would have no further financial obligation toward her for work she had done in the past. Second, he suggested that they split Cowell's lecture/performance/recording fees for engagements that resulted directly from her work on his behalf. Upon his insistence, in early February, Beyer reluctantly sent Cowell a "bill" listing page amounts for the scores she had copied for him. Cowell sent her a check for \$12.50 in January 1941 (half the fee for a lecture she arranged for him at Columbia University), and another check for \$58 in February, for music copying. Soon after, he broke off all contact.

The last available dated correspondence from Beyer to Cowell, written on 8 June 1941, is a postcard regarding a check from the Kansas City Philharmonic Orchestra. Less than a month later, Cowell's

civil rights (suspended during his incarceration and parole) were restored, and on 27 September he and Sidney married. It is uncertain whether Cowell and Beyer had any contact after that point. Sidney later wrote (inaccurately) that due to Cowell's rejection, Beyer "had some sort of a breakdown, following which she killed herself."¹²

After her friendship with Cowell ended, Beyer disappeared almost completely from the historical record. For a biographer, this is the frustrating moment when nearly all threads are lost. At some point between June 1941 and June 1943 she moved from Jane Street to 303 West 11th Street, just three blocks to the south, where she composed the *Sonatina in C*, one of her last works. In mid-1943 she entered the House of the Holy Comforter in the Bronx. Five days after Beyer's death on 9 January 1944, her niece Frieda informed Arthur Cohn at the Philadelphia Free Library of her aunt's passing.¹³ No other records of anyone taking note of her death have been located.

Beyer's epistolary trail of crumbs reveals that she spent a good portion of her days writing letters. When one considers the extent of her professional correspondence, it is baffling to realize



Excerpt from the manuscript of Beyer's Suite for Piano (1939), dedicated to Henry Cowell

how thoroughly she disappeared from history. The breadth and diversity of the personalities with whom Beyer was associated not only exposes the dominance of emigrant personalities on New York's musical life, but demonstrates her myriad connections within and between cultural and intellectual institutions. Just a partial list of the many important figures with whom she corresponded during the period in question would

include Aaron Copland, Ruth Crawford, Martha Graham, Percy Grainger, Otto Luening, Joseph Schillinger, Charles Seeger, Nicolas Slonimsky, and Leopold Stokowski. She also communicated with radio pioneer and conductor Howard Barlow (music director at CBS from 1927-43), Arthur Cohn (organizer of the Philadelphia Free Library's Music Copying Project), Walter Fischer (director of Carl Fischer Music Publishing after 1923), Hanya Holm (German dancer who immigrated to the U.S. in 1931), choreographer Doris Humphrey, Alvin Johnson (director of the New School for Social Research since 1922), Hedi Katz (Hungarian immigrant who founded the Henry Street Settlement School), conductor Hans Kindler (founder of the National Symphony Orchestra in 1931), NYPL music librarian Dorothy Lawton, clarinetist Rosario Mazzeo, Harry Allen Overstreet (Chair of Philosophy at the City College of New York), Bertha Reynolds (psychiatrist on the faculty at Smith College), pianist and composer Carol Robinson, Russian-Jewish composer Lazare Saminsky, Fabien Sevitzky (Koussevitzky's nephew and one-time principle bassist for Stokowski as well as conductor of the Indianapolis orchestra from 1937-56), Hungarian violinist and Bartók collaborator Joseph Szigeti, conductor and cellist Alfred Wallenstein, patron Blanche Walton, and many more. Beyer counted several of

Beyer Biography (continued)

these people—including Reynolds, Robinson, the Overstreets, and the Seegers—as close personal friends.

An independent document dating from 1938 suggests the contradictory impression Beyer made on her peers. In that year, she applied for a Guggenheim grant for the creation of a (never-completed) opera called *Status Quo*. Her application was unsuccessful, as the committee concluded: “At age fifty she doesn’t appear to be a good risk as a composer.” Yet her file offers quotes from thirteen prominent referees, who characterized her and her music in both positive terms—“an honest soul with serious musical pretensions” (Aaron Copland); “interesting and original” (Gerald Strang); “a worthy thing for the Foundation to sponsor” (Wallingford Riegger); “unquestionably a first-rater” (Bonaro Wilkinson Overstreet); “excellent training and background . . . musical innovation and her untrammled, adventurous spirit” (Ashley Pettis)—and in negative terms—“eclectic rather than synthetic, . . . diffuse and intellectual” (Strang); “not convincing” (Serge Koussevitzky); “both Miss Beyer and her project are a little mad” (Alvin Johnson); “emphatically . . . not endorse” (David Mannes). The most striking assessment came from Cowell himself. In comparing her to other Guggenheim applicants he wrote that “she has the greatest natural talent, and also the least steadiness of temperament.” He added that she had “a flare for whimsical and original ideas, and she developed a fine technique in the modern manner for carrying out her ideas. . . . *Her whimsy and originality really amount to genius*. Whether she is steady enough to carry out such a huge and difficult (although interesting) project one cannot say, but . . . she has better equipment than most.”¹⁴

Was the face Beyer showed the world different from the voice she cultivated in her letter-writing? In the end, it would appear that those who remembered her as “extremely quiet, almost painfully shy,” “not close to many in the New York City music scene,” having “no family” and “not maintain[ing] ties to relatives in Germany” fell short of an accurate characterization of this apparently social and family-oriented woman.¹⁵ Though she moved comfortably in immigrant circles, Beyer identified herself as American—“my forefathers fought in the Civil War of America!” she declared—during a time when asserting patriotism topped many artists’ agenda.¹⁶ She spoke poetically about music (perhaps downplaying her fluency with theoretical issues), but her musicality was apparently never questioned. Speaking of Beyer’s superb pianism, Cowell once remarked: “I remember Beyer’s playing as having the composer’s intelligence behind it.”¹⁷ Did this “composer’s intelligence” divulge, as Cowell claimed, a “whimsical and original” genius?

From Beyer’s letters we ultimately learn that amidst the many social, professional, and personal territories she navigated, she lived in the practical spaces of everyday life—inviting Cowell for a traditional German Christmas roast goose, for example, or planning meals for his Jane Street visits: “If it is hot, perhaps just berries and milk, some crackers; if it should be cool, I could make some chops and vegetables.”¹⁸ In these daily human details, and in the compositional struggles through which she created some of the most bafflingly original works of the early twentieth century, Beyer lived a life precariously balanced between radiance and “total eclipse.” This is the stuff—the fundamentals and isorhythms—of great biography.

—University of California, Santa Cruz

Notes

¹ For a descriptive discussion of Beyer’s music, see Kennedy and Polansky, “Total Eclipse: The Music of Johanna Magdalena Beyer: An Introduction and Preliminary Annotated Checklist,” *The Musical Quarterly* 80/4 (winter 1996), 719-78; and Polansky’s extensive, analytical liner notes for the New World Records summer 2008 release of John McCaughey and the Astra Chamber Music Society’s *Johanna Beyer: Sticky Melodies*. For information on scores available through the Frog Peak/Johanna Beyer Project, see <http://www.frogpeak.org/fpartists/beyer.lists.html>.

² Letter from Anett Müller, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig to Cordula Jasper (Berlin), 19 August 1997.

³ The Naturalization Records department in the Queens County Clerk’s Office holds no record, however, of Beyer’s naturalization having occurred between 1906 and 1941.

⁴ Koussevitzky papers, Library of Congress.

⁵ See Judith Tick, *Ruth Crawford Seeger: A Composer’s Search for American Music* (New York: Oxford, 1997), 22-23.

⁶ Composers’ Forum transcripts, 20 May, 1936.

⁷ Beyer, program notes for Composers’ Forum concert on 19 May 1937.

⁸ Tick, *Ruth Crawford Seeger*, 198.

⁹ Kennedy and Polansky’s catalog lists only fifty-three extant compositions, all written between 1931 and 1941.

¹⁰ On typed page marked 7/11 -5-a—, “footnote 7: Johanna Beyer”; in folder labeled “Sidney Cowell book on Henry Cowell [1944] chapter headings, footnotes [12/19/1975]”; NYPL.

¹¹ Cowell to Grainger, 5 June 1940; NYPL.

¹² Sidney Cowell on Henry Cowell, 1944.

¹³ Letter from Frieda Kastner to Arthur Cohn, 14 January 1944; Arthur Cohn Papers, Philadelphia Free Library. I am grateful to Christopher Shultis for bringing this letter to my attention.

¹⁴ All quotations in this paragraph are from Beyer’s Guggenheim application file. Emphasis mine.

¹⁵ See Kennedy and Polansky, “Total Eclipse,” 72.

¹⁶ Letter from Beyer to Alvin Johnson, 30 August 1936; NYPL.

¹⁷ Letter from Cowell to Olive and Harry Cowell, 9 March 1938; NYPL.

¹⁸ Letters from Beyer to Cowell, 22 July 1940 and 10 December 1940; NYPL.

Institute News (continued)

panel on “Inclusion and Access in the Music Classroom” at a joint meeting of the American Musicological Society and the Society for Music Theory in Nashville. She is also currently working on editions of operas by Miriam Gideon and Julia Perry, and continuing her research on intersections of American opera and disability. **Jeffrey Taylor** recently published an article on early jazz pianists Lil Hardin Armstrong and Lovie Austin in Nichole T. Rustin and Sherrie Tucker, eds., *Big Ears: Listening for Gender in Jazz Studies* (Duke University Press, 2008), and continues work on his book *Earl Hines and Chicago Jazz*, about the early years of the great pianist and band leader. On 27 October **Carl Clements** presented “Tradition and Innovation in the *Bansuri* Compositions of Pannalal Ghosh” for the annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology at Wesleyan University. Also in October **Ray Allen** chaired a panel, titled “The New Lost Ramblers at 50,” at the annual meeting of American Folklore Society in Louisville. This January **Michael Salim Washington** heads to South Africa where he will be teaching jazz courses at the University of KwaZulu Natal and pursuing his own research on the social valences of South African jazz. As he puts it, “I am interested in whether the narrative surrounding jazz in the post-apartheid era has become more liberal or if it has retained its revolutionary overtones.”

Marketing Musard (continued)

Ullman had earned a reputation for underhanded tactics long before this squabble with the Philharmonic. Several writers reported that Ullman had announced—and subsequently intentionally canceled—a masquerade ball to be conducted by Musard as part of his concert series. Masked balls had been outlawed in the city of New York since 1829 as immoral and crime-ridden events. Ullman quickly distanced himself from the proposal but surely profited from the free, if sometimes vitriolic, press coverage it afforded him.¹⁴ When an unsympathetic critic was ejected from the Academy, Ullman was charged with manipulating the press once again. This case brought into play the city police, a corrupt judge, and numerous defenders of the rights of the press. Nearly every newspaper, journal, and magazine in the city weighed in, providing gratis promotion of the Musard Concerts as each report recounted the Academy program around which the events had occurred.¹⁵

As head of the Academy of Music, Bernard Ullman based his managerial decisions on what was best for his business. In reaction to the special circumstances of the 1857-58 season, he decided to forego the standard Italian opera repertory in favor of the non-traditional but entertaining concerts by Alfred Musard and his monster orchestra. Since all the performers at the Musard Concerts were under contract with Ullman directly, he was in a position to profit should the concerts succeed, or lose money if the venture failed—a strong incentive for innovative marketing. Ullman's extravagant advertising and manipulation of the press, along with his willingness to add serious programming partway through the season, reflect his entrepreneurial nature and made for a profitable run. At the end of the spring, Ullman hinted that Musard would return in the fall for another innovative season that would alternate orchestral concerts and opera.¹⁶ But when Musard didn't appear on the schedule, it's likely no one was surprised. Ullman had hit on the next big thing—Italian soprano sensation Maria Piccolomini. Once again, the “Napoleon of the Academy” reevaluated his position, revised his plans, and pressed forward to lead the most successful season of opera New York had ever seen, even in the depths of a financial crisis.

—Bethany Goldberg
Indiana University

Notes

¹The orchestra Musard would lead at the Academy consisted of ten of his best players from Paris plus the top performers Ullman could contract in New York, many of whom were members of the New York Philharmonic Society.

²For more on the role of entrepreneur-conductors in the nineteenth century, see John Spitzer, “The Entrepreneur-conductors and Their Orchestras,” *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 5, no. 1 (2008): 3-24.

³Katherine K. Preston, “‘A Concentration of Talent on Our Musical Horizon’: The 1853-54 American Tour of Jullien’s Extraordinary Orchestra,” paper presented at “The 19th-Century American Orchestra,” Graduate Center of the City University of New York, 17-19 January 2008. Vera Brodsky Lawrence calculates that Jullien conducted 105 concerts in New York during his one-year stay in the United States. See *Strong on Music: The New York Music Scene in the Days of George Templeton Strong*, vol. 2, *Reverberations: 1850–1856* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 469.

⁴“Academy of Music – Musard’s Concerts,” *New York Tribune*, 12 April 1858.

⁵The cost to attend a Musard concert was one-third the cost to attend a New York Philharmonic Society concert that season. Tickets to attend an opera at the Academy of Music that spring ranged, depending on the date and seat location, from 25 cents to \$2.00 for reserved seats.

⁶“Academy of Music – Musard’s Concerts.”

⁷*New York Times*, 6 April 1858.

⁸Ullman’s advertising style was so characteristic it inspired a parody by a writer for the Philadelphia *Evening Journal*; reprinted in “Musical Chit-Chat,” *Dwight’s Journal of Music* (1 May 1858): 39.

⁹Details appeared in many advertisements, including *New York Times*, 1 April 1858.

¹⁰Raimond, “Music,” *Albion* (17 April 1858): 187.

¹¹*New York Times*, 19 April 1858. The writer is likely Charles Bailey Seymour.

¹²“The Lounger,” *Harper’s Weekly* (1 May 1858): 275.

¹³The circular “To the Members and Patrons of the New York Philharmonic Society. May 1, 1858” is reprinted in *Porter’s Spirit of the Times* (15 May 1858): 176. The complaint was also registered in the Philharmonic’s annual report that year, “16th Annual Report of the New York Philharmonic Society,” New York Philharmonic Archives. Excerpts reprinted in *Dwight’s Journal of Music* (9 October 1858): 219-20.

¹⁴See in particular “Scraps—Musical and Dramatic,” *New York Times*, 2 March 1858, and the follow-up article “The Masquerade Ball,” *New York Times*, 12 April 1858. The *New York Tribune* also carried extensive coverage of the masked ball debacle during the same period.

¹⁵The critic involved wrote for *Porter’s Spirit of the Times*. Their coverage, beginning with the initial fracas on 26 April 1858, is particularly lively.

¹⁶*New York Times*, 10 May 1858; *New York Herald*, 10 May 1858.

Ives (continued)

been willing to help fill in Ives’s lack of training in harmony and counterpoint at Yale University, but ultimately as having rejected his iconoclastic pupil. Magee draws intriguing parallels between aspects of the biographies and aesthetic values of Parker and the elder Ives that strengthen the case for Charles Ives’s motivation to move beyond the musical models of both his childhood and college years.

Ives’s early adult life was slow to take shape. He spent ten years in the shared New York apartment known as “Poverty Flat.” He “showed no interest in developing” a relationship with his future wife, Harmony Twichell, for almost ten years after meeting her. He “had to feel his way through the complicated world of business on his own, starting at the bottom” (p. 70). His early musical aspirations were “half-hearted” and “lack[ed] direction” (p. 73). Magee cites evidence that marriage had been considered a cure for neurasthenia, the mysterious “national malady” from which she believes Ives apparently began suffering in 1906, and suggests that the attraction between Charles and Harmony was enhanced by Harmony’s experience as a nurse with several neurasthenics in her own family. Their marriage in 1908 did not cure Ives, but it did knock him out of his complacency on all fronts: business, domestic, and creative.

Through the lens of her own revised chronology of Ives’s works, Magee observes an elegant (perhaps too elegant?) trajectory to Ives’s compositional output, from a focus on hymn-based works from 1908 to 1914, arguably inspired by Harmony’s presence in his life, to works of a “decidedly militaristic” character during the years of World War I (p. 174). A final period, from 1919 to 1929, following Ives’s most debilitating health episode in 1918, paradoxically

Ives (continued)

encompasses works “attempting to recapture an earlier innocence” and the composition of “new, self-consciously modernist works,” as well as the revision of “earlier ideas in a modernist vein” (p. 174). Along the way she offers provocative readings of important Ives works, including the symphonies, the Concord Sonata, and a number of songs, among them “Like a Sick Eagle,” “General William Booth Enters into Heaven,” and the mini-cycle that ends with “Tom Sails Away.”

At times Magee’s imagination roams untethered. In her deconstruction of the Ives myth, the floodgates of interpretation are sometimes open a bit too wide. She straddles the line between musical analyst and psychoanalyst, a stance this reader found difficult enough to accept in the hands of a trained therapist in Stuart Feder’s *My Father’s Song* (Yale University Press, 1992). In *Charles Ives Reconsidered* we are asked to accept on faith a good deal of Magee’s armchair psychologizing of her juicy subject, upon which some of her more provocative analyses depend. Sometimes her desire to “value all points of view equally and on their own terms,” modeled after Ives’s own life and work, leads to the scattering before the reader of multiple and competing readings of bits of evidence. Tossing out a handful of ideas and seeing how they fall can be exhilarating, but sometimes it’s just confounding. For every moment when Magee convinced me of a particular (and often unorthodox) point of view, there was another moment when I found myself wondering what she *really* thinks about something, and, more important, what *substantial* evidence she might be able to claim to support that opinion.

Even when Magee soars a bit too high without a net, her observations never fail to stimulate the reader to reconsider his or her image of Ives and his music. Both she and Tom Owens remind us how much mystery still surrounds Charles Ives, and how scholars can get entrenched in uncritically rehashing long-held assumptions. These refreshing efforts toward revising our view of a slippery subject will encourage lively new debates about Ives’s life and work.

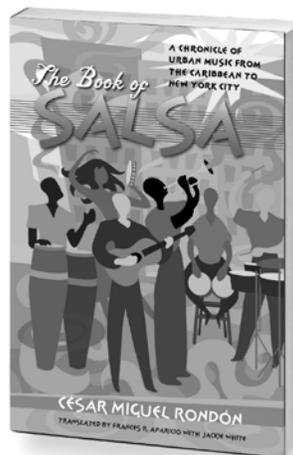
—Christopher Bruhn
Denison University

Hitchcock Legacy (continued)

how honored he felt that his materials would be safely maintained and made available to succeeding generations of scholars.

Finally, the Institute is left with the legacy of dozens of monographs, most produced by scholars-in-residence at the Institute during Hitchcock’s directorship. We hope to revitalize this fellowship program, which played such a significant role in the history of the Institute. As we continue to seek grant support for a visiting scholar program, we again call on readers and friends of the Institute to consider a donation to the Hitchcock Fund (please see the form on page 3). During the past few months, most of us have received endless pleas for donations, with letters inevitably beginning: “we realize economic times are hard...” There are certainly many worthy causes, yet we still hope you will consider helping us realize our vision of residencies by American music scholars. Truly there would be no better way to honor Wiley Hitchcock’s memory and legacy than to help reestablish a program about which he cared so passionately.

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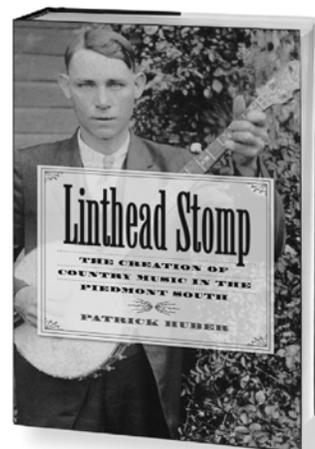
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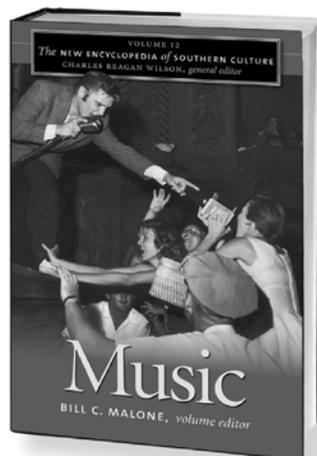


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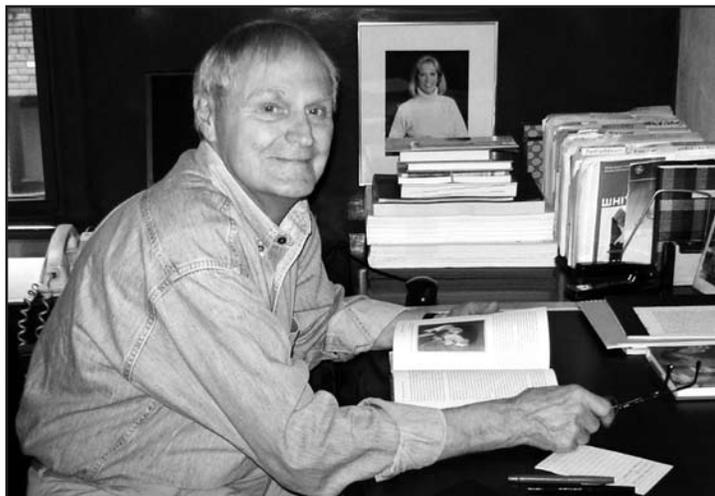
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*H. Wiley Hitchcock at his desk, 2006
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