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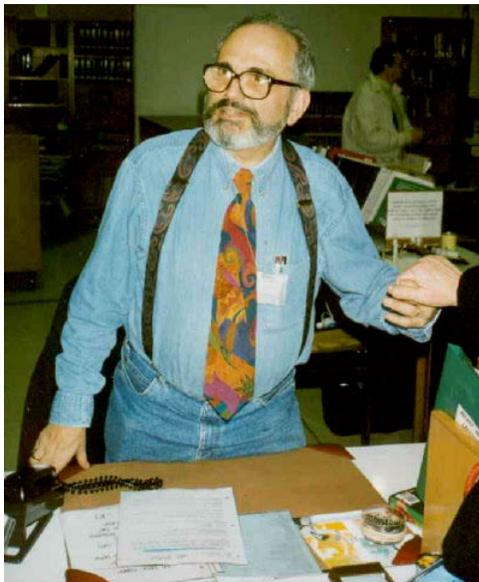
Music Library Association—Northern California Chapter



Fanfare for the Common Man: an Interview with Joseph Boonin

By Allison Rea

During Joe Boonin's distinguished career, he has made the leap from music librarian to music publisher and back again. After graduating from library school, he took a cataloging position at the New York Public Library, but soon left to embark on a 30-year career as a music publisher, founding the publishing companies Joseph Boonin, Inc. and Jerona Music. Then, for almost 10 years until his retirement in 2003, he was the head of the Recorded Sound and Moving Image Circulating Collection of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.



above Joe at the Recorded Sound and Moving Image Circulating Collection, NYPL. image courtesy J. Boonin

Boonin has been a member of MLA since his sophomore year at the University of Pennsylvania—long before he ever thought of becoming a librarian. In 2005, Joe was awarded the MLA Citation in recognition of his distinguished career, as well as his many contributions to music librarianship.

I've heard that you're considered MLA's "unofficial voice-of-common-sense." What exactly do you think that this means as far as your role within the organization is concerned?

I suspect it is a combination of my background as a music dealer/publisher, a small businessman and a public librarian. It is often necessary to puncture balloons and otherwise bring a sense of reality to ideas, projects, etc.

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Your background is an intriguing one, particularly your move from the publishing world back to the library world. You have been quoted as saying that you've always felt "most at home as a music librarian." Was this the impetus behind the career change?

Absolutely. I left my cataloguing position in 1962 because I was frustrated by a boss who refused to consider me for advancement. I flourished for over 31 years in the music publishing and distributing industry but the last six or seven years saw me burning out. I was fortunate in that my children were, by then, out of college and I was offered a job that did not require relocation. It saved me, and gave me an additional decade of professional activity and growth. I tell people that I am a musician and felt the need to end my career "in the same key" as it began.

Thinking back to your early days with MLA, what drew you initially to the organization? What were your expectations then? What are they now?

I went to library school particularly to become a music librarian. I had already been a member of MLA for four years when I graduated. I was initially attracted to MLA by *Notes* and the articles published therein. Once I went to a meeting (it was a summer meeting in Washington, D.C., a mere week after I received my MLS), I found its members (including, but certainly not limited to Vincent Duckles) to be warm, collegial and totally egalitarian. From that day on, I was treated as an equal and have tried to do likewise to all members regardless of their age, length of service or position in the library or musical world.

Bridge over Troubled Waters

One constant factor in Joe Boonin's career has been his passionate activism in MLA. This involvement has served as a bridge between two very different phases of his career and his life, just as he himself has served as a bridge between two diverse communities: the world of the music publishing industry and the world of the music library.

Could you explain your views on the relationship between MLA and the music publishing world?

At one time, it was particularly hostile. Music publishers viewed librarians as custodians of illicit copying mills. They took a bad situation in the world of performance musicians (especially choral directors) and projected it onto us. At that time, the MLA-MPA [the Music Publishers' Association] Joint committee was formed. Later, the Major Orchestra Libraries

Association joined. When this joint committee was formed, I was a publisher member with a strong library background. Later, I was reappointed as an MLA member with a strong publishing background. The entire standard music number concept could not have been brought to fruition in the U.S. without the good will engendered by this committee.

You've seen some major changes during your career in libraries—MARC format and retrospective conversion of library catalogs come first to mind. Do you foresee any one particular issue of this kind of magnitude for libraries? What are some of the upcoming major issues for music librarianship in particular?

One of the big things I see looming, sooner rather than later, is the disappearance of physical sound recording media from libraries. I see public as well as academic libraries adopting the Classical.com or Naxos Music Library or some similar entity to provide patron access to sound recordings and, perhaps, video.

In addition, I see more and more reference and research publishing being done online. Paper and printing continue to be costly and the need for revisions is often in conflict with the cost of issuing revised editions or supplementary volumes. Grovemusic.com could not have come into being without *Grove's Dictionary*, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to justify the four or five thousand dollar price every twenty years for a new set of printed volumes.

With the 75th anniversary of MLA, the time is ripe for reflection about the organization's past and its future. What do you see as the next steps for MLA? Where do you think the organization will be by the time it reaches its 100th anniversary?

I think that MLA has a good grip on music librarianship. However, recent trends in both public and academic libraries seem to be de-emphasizing subject specialties. Library administrators fail to acknowledge the special knowledge and "language ability" required for handling large collections of "scores" and, of course, sound recordings.

The needs that MLA must address in the next quarter-century must include:

- Providing resources for non-musicians who find themselves responsible for music collections
- Providing a continuing "lifeline" for music library types who find themselves promoted/demoted/shifted into non-music library positions

In addition, MLA has to do more to attract and involve paraprofessionals in the association and its activities.

Look around at any music library (again, both public and academic) and you find the music-literate, non-MLS owning staff members far outnumbering the "official" certificated librarians. MLA ignores this at its long-term peril.

Allison Rea, currently pursuing an MLIS degree at San Jose State University, is a library assistant at the Hargrove Music Library at the University of California, Berkeley.

[Ed. Joe contributed his thoughts on the future of MLA and of music librarianship at the first plenary session of the recent Memphis conference, later circulating a prepared text on MLA-L (March 9, 2006). Allison's interview took place in Sept. 2005.]



Memphis Souvenirs



above Mimi at Graceland. *image courtesy R. Heigemeir*

below Lorraine Motel and National Civil Rights Museum.



above Alicia on Beale Street.

below Peabody Hotel Ducks Prepare to March.





Report on the Fall 2005 Meeting

**Fall 2005 Meeting
Chinatown Branch
San Francisco Public Library
October 28, 2005**

Attendees: Sally Berlowitz (San Francisco State), Joe Boonin (Retired), Bridget Boylan (San Francisco Public), Judy Clarence (Cal State East Bay), Michael Colby (UC Davis), Manuel Erviti (UC Berkeley), Jason Gibbs (San Francisco Public), Ray Heigemeir (Stanford), Michael Irvine (College of Marin), Nancy Lorimer (Stanford), Jerry McBride (Stanford), Laura Moody (San Francisco State), Rhonelle Runner (U. of the Pacific), Mimi Tashiro (Stanford), Julian Woodruff (Stanford).

The Fall 2005 meeting was held at the Chinatown Branch of the San Francisco Public Library. After coffee and the business meeting, we visited the Clarion Music Center on Sacramento Street, a store selling "exotic musical instruments of the world" (to quote their website) and which also gives workshops, concerts, and lessons, and otherwise supports their community of musicians and artists. After looking around, we were treated to a concert/poetry reading by the group Lunation [members: Clara Hsu (word, owner of Clarion); David Wong (guqin); and Bill Mercer (shakuhachi)]. This was followed by a dim sum feast at Great Oriental Restaurant on Washington Street.

The afternoon was divided into two parts. First, we were again treated to a concert, this time by Weishan Liu of the San Francisco Gu-Zheng Music Society. Ms. Liu played traditional music, as well as her own compositions, along with another performer. She is a very skilled performer and the music was wonderful.

Second, Valerie Samson, an ethnomusicologist gave a talk titled: "Chinese Music in San Francisco's Chinatown: Heart and Community," during which she spoke about Chinese music societies in San Francisco, their history and culture, and of her own efforts to become an accepted member. She played

several musical examples, and handed around photographs and scores for all to see.

Minutes of the Business Meeting

1. Newsletter
Kathy Earl has left the area, which leaves the chapter without a newsletter editor. This was found out only lately, which is why the newsletter never got published before this meeting. It was suggested that we integrate the functions of editor and webmaster (currently Manuel). We will need to rewrite the constitution to combine the positions of editor and webmaster; it would be a good time to incorporate language about email, etc. into the constitution as well. There was discussion on who should be mailing out the paper version of the newsletter to those who request it. Before, the editor sent the newsletter to the secretary/treasurer and webmaster; the secretary/treasurer did the mailing. We should continue that. Also, it was noted that the essential parts of the newsletter were the notice of the next meeting and the minutes of the previous one. And even if the functions of editor and webmaster are combined, the newsletter should be kept as a discrete entity.
2. Vice Chair
Sally Berlowitz nominated Laura Moody to be Vice Chair/Chair Elect. A vote was taken and she was elected. For the record, Jason said he would be willing to serve again in a few years.
3. Planning for Left Coast Meeting
The Left Coast meeting will take place Apr. 28-29 (Friday-Saturday), with the Friday session in San Francisco and the Saturday session in Berkeley. Program planning is not finalized, since each chapter is going about it in a different way. Jason's ideas for session include: sessions on/including local music entrepreneurs, e.g. Music Center of San Francisco, New Albion, people from the improvisational music scene; a plenary session, perhaps on the state of music

librarianship. Nancy asked if there could be anything on the tech services end. This brought up a question on the general state of cataloging and whether it was dying out. The consensus was that it was changing but not dying.

4. Website Update

The server for the website is now at UC Berkeley. Manuel has done some editing—adding text, moving things around—but it is still essentially the same. Information about the Left Coast meeting will be added as it comes available.

5. Domain Name

Michael noted that payment was due for the domain name, www.mlancc.org. Michael had paid for the initial registration himself. Joe moved that we pay the registration with chapter funding, and the yes vote was unanimous. It was decided to pay \$60 for 5 years—long enough to be cheaper and stable; short enough that we could keep track of its status.

6. Membership, Outreach

There was discussion on how to bring more people into the Chapter. Since we don't really know who else is in the area, Laura Moody volunteered to look at the MLA list and compare with our membership. She will also look into library schools in the area and see what she could do through them. Julian offered to send a

summary of the meeting to the SJSU library school student list, since he is a student there. It was noted that though membership was down, attendance at meetings was remaining constant and so a greater percentage of the chapter was in fact attending! Joe noted that the Greater New York chapter was also like this.

7. Other Business

There was a question about grants for first time attendees to chapter meetings—how many we give, etc. Nancy suggested it depended how much was in the bank account—we currently have about \$1013, though dues are being collected today. She wondered how much we might have to spend for the Left Coast meeting; it was agreed that it would probably not be that much.

Michael Colby noted that Alicia Patrice was asked to bring back a question from MLA about the Kevin Freeman grant. MLA wanted to know if we might consider changing the eligibility requirements as follows: 1) instead of attending for the first time, the candidate could apply in the first three years of attendance; and, 2) have to be members of MLA. Mimi and Michael both were opposed to this, and this is where the general consensus lay.

Nancy Lorimer, Secretary/Treasurer



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The *MLA NCC Newsletter*, published electronically in the Spring and Fall, is available at the chapter website, <http://www.mlancc.org>. Please send submissions to:

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Spring Meeting 2006 Announcement

Spring 2006 Meeting

San Francisco Public Library and University of California, Berkeley

April 28-29, 2006

The Northern California, Pacific Northwest and Southern California chapters of the Music Library Association will hold a joint West Coast Conference on Friday, April 28, 2006 at San Francisco Public Library and Saturday, April 29, 2006 at University of California, Berkeley.

The program appears below; for further information about the meeting & registration visit the conference web site at <http://home.comcast.net/~beverly.stafford/mla2006/index.html>

Note that unlike our regular NCC meetings, there is a registration fee (and April 10 deadline). Please share this information with students and other colleagues. We're looking forward to seeing all of you and getting together with our west coast colleagues.

Jason Gibbs, San Francisco Public Library

MLA West Coast Chapters Conference Program

Friday, April 28, 2006, San Francisco Public Library, 100 Larkin Street

9:00-10:00	Coffee, pastries, etc.
10:00-10:30	Penelope Houston (SFPL), recording artist "penelope.net" on being a musical entrepreneur
10:30-11:00	Lindsay Hansen (UCLA) "Musical remnants of the Cold War"
11:15-11:45	Tour of the San Francisco Performing Arts Library and Museum (SFPALM)
12:00-1:30	Lunch in San Francisco's Civic Center
1:30-2:15	Nan Bostick (Menlo Park, CA), on Charles N. Daniels, San Francisco songwriter and music publisher of the early 20th century
2:15-3:00	Richie Unterberger (Oakland, CA), author, researcher of 1960s popular music
3:00-3:30	SFPL tour
4:00-6:30	Reception, a Wine Social, hosted by Ray Heigemeir of the Northern California Chapter, featuring regional wines, selected by John Roberts and others of the NCC. Bring along a favorite local wine or microbrew to share with other MLA members

Saturday, April 29, 2006, UC Berkeley, Morrison Hall and Jean Gray Hargrove Music Library

9:00-9:30	Coffee, pastries, etc.
9:30-11:00	Chapter Meetings
11:00-11:45	Cathy Gerhard (U. of Washington) "DWQs (Double Wind Quintets): A Bibliography for a Somewhat Ignored Ensemble"
12:00-1:30	Lunch
1:30-2:30	Tour of the Jean Gray Hargrove Music Library
2:30-3:15	Tom Bickley (Cal State, East Bay) on the Cardew Choir
3:30-3:45	Group Discussion and Conclusion