

MLA NCC Newsletter

Music Library Association, Northern California Chapter
Vol. 4, No. 3 Spring 1990

From the chair

The Chapter meeting held in Santa Cruz on January 26 was a success because of the efforts of many members, especially Susan Elgin from the Santa Cruz Public Library, our host institution. The panel discussion on the early history of the Chapter was conducted by two, rather than the scheduled four, participants; the absence of Harriet Nicewonger and Mary Ashe was regretted by all. Moderator Ann Basart gave a lively introduction which recalled the issues and technologies of the 40s and 50s and Ed Colby and Ray Colvig reminisced entertainingly. The discussion has been transcribed and will be used in compiling a history of the Chapter. Karin Nagy led the afternoon discussion and information exchange on tours, brochures/handouts, guides, newsletters, acquisitions lists, signs, etc. with many members making brief presentations. And everyone had a good chance to see how well Santa Cruz survived the earthquake.

To support the upcoming celebration of the 50th anniversary of the California Chapter, the Northern and Southern California Chapters applied jointly to the national MLA for a grant of funds to produce a directory of California music collections. At the Tucson meeting in March we were awarded the requested funds. We have a lot of work to do to bring off the celebration, so if you want to be involved, get in touch with one of the committee chairs listed elsewhere in the *Newsletter* and volunteer your services. Your suggestions of topics for future meetings and of sites for future meetings are always welcome.

Marion Taylor
Chair, MLA-NCC

SPRING MEETING
Friday, May 2nd
San Francisco Performing Arts
Library and Museum

The following is a transcription of a session on Chapter history from the meeting of January 26, 1990, at Santa Cruz Public Library.

Quotes on the Chapter from the Early Years

Here at Santa Cruz Public:

Ada Lou Hawes, who has been Music Librarian at the Santa Cruz Public Library for fifteen years, will retire in March 1990. "The staff of the library is presenting her with a radio-phonograph-recorder. Her successor will be Mr. Bruce Anderson, about whom we hope to know more later."

Elma Young from Placer College in the Gold Country writes our chapter:

"With so many libraries faced with the new problem of record collections, it would be most helpful if your association would work up a project for librarians' guidance. You experienced people have no idea what a life-raft such help can be for us who have been plunged into the problem ill prepared. Why should we all learn the hard way alone?"

Our profession will be pleased to know that Manfred Bukofzer, Associate Professor at UCB, has written to Donald Coney, University Librarian at the institution, as

follows:

"Some time ago I spoke to you about the necessity of having a music librarian in the General Library, and at the present rate of expansion this need becomes increasingly more acute. I should like to summarize the duties of a music librarian from the point of view of our department: 1) Compile a list of the outstanding gaps in our holdings; 2) Select materials; 3) Compile analytic indexes to our musical sets, not duplicating the work that the Library of Congress has just started; 4) Examine our card catalog for items hitherto cataloged in a somewhat misleading fashion and serve as consultant to the present music cataloger; 5) Consult with students and faculty in tracing material; 6) Check our materials for replacements, worn-out copies, etc.; 7) Keep in close touch with the attendant in charge of the reference library in this department, for whom we have applied in the budget for 1946-47; 8) Be responsible for putting materials on reserve for classes.

All these duties would in my opinion easily make for a full-time or three-quarter-time appointment. I have at present no particular person in mind, but I should appreciate it if you would consider in your budget for next year the possibility of such an appointment." [April 17, 1946]

There is a news item from the Oakland Tribune:

Edward E. Colby, 36, a member of the Oakland Public Library Staff, is the newly appointed music librarian in the Stanford University Music Department. A music major, who was graduated in the Univ. of Calif. class of 1936, Colby received his Certificate of Librarianship at UC in 1941. Music Librarian at the Oakland Public Library since 1946, he is a veteran of five years' service with the Army, including duty as an intelligence research officer in China. [May 12, 1949]

And from UC Berkeley, Vincent Duckles reports:

"A new annex has been added to the Music Building to accommodate the Music Library and some additional rehearsal rooms for chamber music classes. The

library's share in this expansion consists of a reading room with space for 24 readers, greatly enlarged stack space, three new listening rooms, and the latest and best in audio equipment installations. Under the present conditions, the library still functions as a music reference and reserve-book center rather than a complete, self-contained music library. Sometime in the not-too-distant future we hope to have space for the entire University music collection under the same roof which shelters the music department class work.

"Beginning in September 1949, a graduate course in Music bibliography was added to the curriculum. This course is given under the instruction of the Music Librarian and is regarded as a necessary prerequisite to all graduate seminars in music history."

HN adds: "The Music Branch has been provided with a complete new flooring of linoleum. The work was accomplished during the Spring vacation when most of the students were away, but members of the staff had to walk on air during that time."

Ed Colby has written to describe the high-tech equipment now available at Stanford:

"In addition to the standard 78 r.p.m. recordings, students may now hear 33 r.p.m. microgroove recordings through the record players at the Knoll. By means of a central control box, the impulse from the tone arm of the long-playing attachment is directed through the amplifier and speaker of the 78 r.p.m. machine and thence, via headphones, into the ears of the listener. In the trial run of this device, a 78 r.p.m. recording of an organ concerto by Handel was placed on the turntable of the headphone machine and turntables were set in motion. With the control pointing to "78" one could hear the Organ Concerto and when the switch was pointed at "33" the strains of *Salome* were heard. At a mid-point it was possible to hear both at once, to the accompaniment of a steady hum." [1950]

VHD replies:

The UC Music Library has one of the latest models of the MP Concert Installations earphone-playback machines. This

machine is designed to play both the 78 and 33 1/3 rpm recordings. No converted chalk-boxes for us!

From Oakland Public:

"The new building for the Oakland Public Library has been completed more than a month ahead of schedule, at a cost of \$1,500,000. The Music Department will have an office, listening room, and work room besides the main room for reference and circulation work. Plans are in the making for a new policy for circulating records. Miss Krenz reports the acquisition of a large group of second-hand scores and record albums from U.C. music students who are graduating and leaving town. The collection is now very well supplied with Stravinsky."

And from S.F. Public:

"Next Tuesday Jessica Fredericks will spend her last day as Head of the Music Department of the San Francisco Public Library. It will be a cloudy day for that sunny room which is full of accomplishments of her long service there. Our Northern California Chapter owes its existence to her, and will continue to depend upon her for its best ideas and ideals." [November 1950]

Vincent Duckles has written to Harriet Nicewonger from England, where he is spending a year as a Fulbright scholar:

"The family is taking up residence in an old farmhouse in Tenbury Wells, a small village in the west of England, near St. Michael's College, where one of the finest music collections in England is housed. I am trying to arrange for permission to have some of the rare books and MSS microfilmed for the U.C. collection. If I am successful in this it will be the first time the privilege has been granted."

And finally, Harriet Nicewonger writes:

"Two million dollars has just been allocated for a new music building for the University of California. A wing or section will be devoted to the music library, which will then be able to house all the musical materials on campus."

by Ann Basart



Ed Colby: An Oral History of the Music Library Association, Northern California Chapter, ca. 1947-1952.

Part One

Ed Colby: I will start around 1947 with the chapter history and go up just to the early fifties because, about that time as you can gather, we didn't have all that much money at Stanford and I became so busy I was unable to attend many chapter meetings after 1952 but I will try to say something about the early days.

The first meeting of the Northern California Chapter, Music Library Association, I attended was a small gathering in a small room on an upper floor of the San Francisco Public Library's present building at Civic Center. The occasion was a visit by Carlton Sprague Smith, who I believe was then director of the Music Division, New York Public Library. The one suggestion I remember from his informal talk was that music librarians should prevail upon visiting soloists to donate to the local music library collection a copy of the score of each new work performed at the current concert. To one new to the profession, it would have required considerable bravado to follow through with Carlton's recommendation.

The chapter had been established by Jessica Fredericks, Head of the Music Department, San Francisco Public Library, to the best of my memory, in the preceding year, 1946. In the following year, 1948, I was elected chapter chairman and David Earl MacDaniel became editor of the bulletin which we decided to publish. Perhaps the most

remarkable aspect of the chapter in those early days was the diverse nature of the membership. There were professional librarians, of course, but also a goodly number of individuals interested in music libraries who were not music librarians, or even librarians.

There was a musicologist who later became the chairman of the Department of Music at Mills College, at least one symphony musician, at least one church musician, a singer/poet (that was David Earl MacDaniel who used to write poetry sometimes and publish it in the *Bulletin*), the head of a record company (and I think the only employee), and a pianist/chamber music performer Margaret Tilly, who was also the head of the chamber music group there. Even among those whose occupation was with institutional collections, the membership was enriched by the presence of the librarian for a radio station. This was in the latter days when radio stations had their own studio orchestras and arrangers. Even local radio stations like San Francisco had studio orchestras and orchestras which regularly performed for the radio stations--live music, not recordings.

While from a certain point of view this rainbow of interests was desirable, at one point it provoked a debate as to whether the chapter membership should be limited to professionals and practicing music librarians, or at least librarians. This debate, I assure you, took place at the highest levels of chapter officialdom.

Another special aspect of chapter activities was a number of meetings and other gatherings held in private homes where we talked with singers and instrumentalists and conductors and sometimes performed and heard house music. Of special note were the evenings at the Nicewongers (I'm terribly sorry Harriet couldn't be here today), Harriet and Bob, a sort of west coast counterpart of the Henry Sandwith Drinker evenings with Bach Cantatas. These musicales at the Nicewongers were informal but most enjoyable. On one occasion, performing the keyboard part of the opening chorus of the cantata "Wachet Auf" (Sleepers Awake), Norman Mealy, who was playing, exclaimed, "Boy, listen to that bass line." On another occasion we had a group there

which performed the "Serenade to Music" by Vaughn Williams, the one that uses the Shakespeare text, and there is one part of the preceding text in Shakespeare which says, "Sit, Jessica." Well, Jessica was already seated; didn't have to tell her. She anticipated the request.

Quotable quotes from record company head Earl Walker also abound. He advised that we should not worry about the physical appearance of singers. I'm paraphrasing now, I don't remember his exact words, but he said, "If they have good voices, throw them into the studio." And when a gap a la mode of a former president appeared in a tape recording, he asked, "What are a few missing notes among friends?" Earl produced recordings, 78 RPM and the LP, under the label Music Library Recordings, which ties in directly with this association with the chapter, and included local composers and performers in his catalogue. Our Professor Leonard Ratner, who is retired but is still teaching at Stanford and an authority on the Classical period, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, had at least two works performed. Professor Shalgo, also emeritus at Stanford, conducted a chamber music group for one of Earl Walker's recordings. Leonard Rosenman, whose name you may remember, played his piano sonata for one of Earl Walker's recordings and there was a soprano, I think named Helen Figpen, who also did some recordings. Now, for a long time these recordings were available at a store in San Francisco called Artists' Embassy and the other day I looked in the San Francisco phone directory and found two different titles under that entry. One was Artists' Embassy International which had only a phone number, and the other was something like Artists' Embassy Children's Store which had an address, Halladie Plaza, and a phone number. I didn't try the Children's Store but I tried Artists' Embassy International phone number which was something like 688-0618, something like that, and there was no answer. So it may be one of these places where somebody drops in once a month to pick up the mail or something like this. Does anyone from San Francisco know? Is anyone from San Francisco here?

Woman's voice: We were talking to them yesterday. They are giving us some records, some of the Music Library label.

Colby: Can you tell me, do they have a store that is open or is it just that somebody drops in once in a while?

Women's voice: I didn't talk to them. They were dealing with the bookstore Manager who accepts gifts. . . .

Colby: There's also a gentleman up in Lake County who had some of the Music Library Recordings records and I wrote to him many years ago but if you are getting them, that's wonderful. Thank you very, very much.

John Roberts: They were not, I think, really functioning as a company and the organization had to move from where they were. It was basically stored someplace and they were being forced to move from that place so they had to find a home for their. . . .

Colby: I'm glad they are finding a home in a library. That's good news. I've been through too many horror stories of valuable recordings which have just been trashed, thrown out.

Man's voice: As I understood it they had a lot of copies of many of their prints. Do you have any idea what is happening to all of them?

Woman's voice: I'll tell you exactly what I know which is that the man whom I spoke with estimated that there were 500 recordings for the music department [difficult to hear her voice; the above many not be accurate.]

Colby: Professionally, there was concern with subject headings, reference questions, reference books, sound equipment, as we have heard, and Harriet Nicewonger compiled a list of reference works which became the nucleus of the Duckles *Bibliography of Music Bibliographies*, now, thanks to Michael Keller, in its fourth edition. Also lists of music collections in Northern California compiled by Margaret Lamb. This information was given to me by Har-

riet. Also new developments in library technology, such as binding scores and parts, received their share of attention.

Among special projects was the *Biographical Dictionary of Composers in Northern California* intended as an update, in part, of Jessica Frederick's publication of the twenties or thirties, I think, which is in one of the early Duckles' editions. The typescript of this dictionary, *Biographical Dictionary of Composers of Northern California*, is in the San Francisco Public Library and available, I think, as a reference tool. At one time I thought about writing an article about it for our chapter newsletter, but, like Herb Caen, I have never gotten a round to it.

For a closer look at the concerns of the chapter members in those early days I should like to read a few excerpts from the *Bulletin*. In March 1948, Volume 1, Number 3 of the *Bulletin*, Jessica Fredericks wrote under the title "Res Gestae" [Things Done]: "Like the young women who used to go into library work because they loved books and 'Oh yes, such nice clean work,' I got into the music department because I told the librarian I loved music. Well, I can be a bit mellow about that realizing now on what a casual remark and slim chance depended the next 30 years of my working life. At first it was hard to make anyone take the department seriously. I often think that the music is housed in a big airy room, you all know, because the powers that were felt that such nice easy, agreeable work should fittingly be accompanied by sunlight and fresh air. Had they known of the hard labor, often sheer drudgery, involved, we'd have been in a gloomy basement probably. It was not long before I discovered that a love of music, even a knowledge of it, while highly commendable attributes for a music librarian, would never take the place of a trained librarian. That I had to acquire for myself."

I'll go on with a little more of this one when I say a few words, and they will be very brief and held to the minimum, of. . .

Ray Reeder: We have more time than you thought (laughter).

Colby: Well then I may do a longa-ams.

Ann Basart: He's not a crotchety person (laughter and groans).

Colby: Oh, that was my line! Well, that's the start from Jessica Fredericks. Then, here's a quote from Mr. Walker, the record company embodiment: "At our last meeting I was struck most [and this is also from March 1948] forcefully by the remarks of our programmed members, in which were outlined their problems with regard to the care and preservation of disc records. Records indeed, are valuable treasures, a living history of music preserved for all time unless we choose willingly to destroy them by our continued abuse of their fragility. Each speaker accented the fear of or the already occurred tragedy enacted regularly in record libraries by either breakage or mutilation. Fortunately, there are at our disposal today methods which can eliminate completely this destruction. By transcriptions to wire, film or tape, the records themselves remained untouched and unworn in the master library and only the transcriptions circulate to the public. In this manner no recording need be denied a hearing if it is at all playable. We would be horrified if our priceless books were to circulate to the public and when returned 50 pages were discovered missing or mutilated yet we are committing a similar act by circulating a fragile and many times more non-replacable recording and think little or nothing of it. I feel it is our duty as music custodians to preserve recordings as carefully as we would the most valuable manuscript." So then he goes on to describe in some detail more about the process of putting disc recordings on tape.

But, of course, this opened the hornet's nest of copyright problems and the first people he bumped into, of course, were those at the Library of Congress who at that time were completely against it though I think some educational institutions were already doing this on a regular basis; I can't name any names at the moment but I remember calling one educational institution and they said, "Well, every disc recording that comes in we put on tape automatically." So we have these two extremes--the Library of Congress being extremely cautious, and

these other people being extremely uncautious.

I don't like to separate completely the activities of the individual members of the chapter from the chapter because it was so much a part and our meetings at that time, and I'm sure many of them still are, were devoted in some cases to people giving talks on musicology or on recordings or on recording processes as Earl Walker, or even on performance problems and this sort of thing or on the history of music.

This is an article that Vincent Duckles wrote for the April 1948 *Notes for Northern California Music Libraries*, which we were calling it at that time, also to the horror of the editors of *Notes*. This talks about his interest in the Gambo Manuscript which eventually became his PhD dissertation if I'm not mistaken. "In the early 17th century in England when John Gambo compiled his collection of songs, music was in a state of fluctuation not unlike that of our own day. The preceding generation was one of the most flourishing periods of musical activity England has ever known. The age of the Elizabethan Madrigal and the Lute Air with the names of Morley, Wilby, Byrd, and Dowland outstanding. In the opening years of the 17th century a change was taking place in musical style and taste. A new practice originating in Italy, known as recitative music, was capturing the interest of English musicians. To anyone who has delighted in the English madrigals, this new development seems at first glance disappointing, even tragic in its decline. Gone are the beautiful polyphonic settings, the rich texture of interweaving parts and instead we find songs written with melody and base alone and the melody seems quite lacking in tunefulness. Composers are more interested in copying word rhythms than they are in creating interesting melodic lines. Because this music seems arid in contrast to the madrigal style, historians have tended to avoid it." And so Vincent jumped into the gap there with his dissertation.

I mentioned that we had one member of the chapter who was librarian in a radio broadcasting station. Her name was Mary Kathleen Moore. For June 1948, Volume 1, Number 6 (we seemed to be putting