

# MLA NCC Newsletter

## Music Library Association Northern California Chapter

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FROM THE CHAIR  
*Patricia Elliott*

The Center for Beethoven Studies at San Jose State University will host the Fall meeting on November 12-13, 1993, to be held jointly with the Northern and Southern California chapters and the UC/Stanford Music Librarians. San Jose State is located in the heart of downtown San Jose, which recently has been transformed into an attractive and lively place thanks to redevelopment funds. I hope many of you will take this opportunity to visit our new fair city and the Beethoven Center, which has grown tremendously since our last meeting here in 1986.

Most of Friday will be taken up with the UC/Stanford Music Librarians' closed meeting. However, the reception held at the Beethoven Center from 4-6 p.m. that evening is open to all NCC and SCC members and their guests. We encourage any of you who travel to San Jose that day to attend the reception. For your overnight stay, there are several outstanding hotels downtown to choose from, all within easy walking distance to campus (see hotel list).

On the agenda for Saturday's joint meeting are a tour of the Beethoven Center and a demonstration of the Beethoven Bibliography Database, which is not available on the Internet. Other music resources on Internet will be explored by Judy Tsou and Phil Schreur. Bill Meredith, director of the Beethoven Center, will speak on Wagner's contribution to Beethoven mythology, and Libor Zajicek will describe his research at electro-acoustic music studios in the Czech republic.

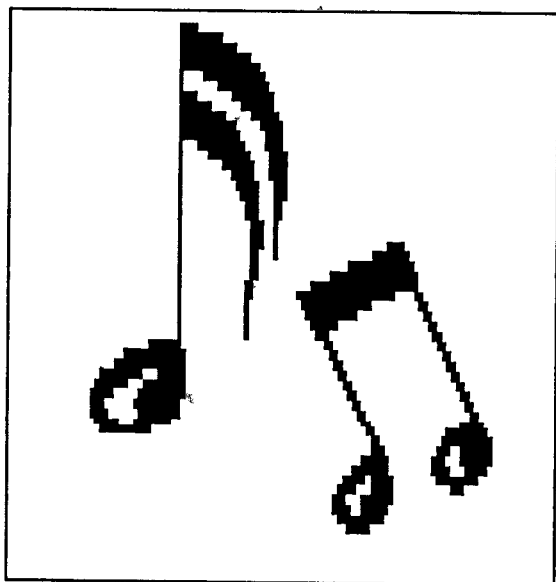
During our business meeting we will report on the Duckles Endowment donation in memory of Robert Basart and discuss ideas for a fitting memorial tribute to Kevin Freeman. Please also come with ideas on venues and programs for future meetings.

On Saturday evening, we will (at last!) celebrate Ray Reeder's retirement at a dinner in his honor. Please plan to join us at Palermo Ristorante Italiano at 394 S. 2nd St. (a short walk from campus).

For those of you planning to attend the CLA meeting in

Oakland that weekend, we apologize for the conflict and hope you might work both into your schedule. Public transportation to Oakland is available.

Please register for the meeting and reserve seats at the dinner using the attached form. If you have any questions regarding the meeting or local arrangements, you can contact me at (408) 924-4590 or by e-mail: ELLIOTT@SJSUVM1.SJSU.EDU. Hope to see many of you in San Jose!



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## NEWS OF MEMBERS

KEVIN FREEMAN

*Staff of the Stanford Music Library*

In memoriam Kevin Freeman

Our Music Cataloger and dear friend, Kevin Freeman, died early in the morning of Saturday, September 18th, of AIDS-related complications. He was 40 years old and is survived by his life-partner Hank Dutt and his mother Irma Freeman, both of San Francisco, as well as other family in the Bay Area.

Kevin grew up in San Francisco. He graduated from Lowell High School in 1971 with honors. In 1977 he graduated magna cum laude from the University of Utah with a BA in music. He went on to graduate school at Georgetown University, where he earned an MA in French Linguistics. In 1987 he graduated from UC Berkeley with an MA in Library and Information Studies, after which he came to work in the Stanford Music Library.

In just six years at the Stanford University Libraries, Kevin made a significant career, moving from entry-level music cataloger to Head of Music Technical Services. He contributed to many organization-wide efforts, most recently chairing the Diversity Committee and serving on the search committee for the Director of Libraries. He was an active member of the Music Library Association, both on the

national and local level: for the Northern California Chapter of MLA, he first served as Secretary/Treasurer and later Vice-Chair and Chair.

An avid Francophile and gifted musician, Kevin was an active performer for many years with several groups, including the San Francisco Symphony Chorus, Chanticleer, and the Choral Artists of San Francisco. He also played a number of instruments and loved to talk about music and music-making with students. He will be missed by many in the Bay Area, across the university, and, of course, in the Music Library.

Stanford remembered Kevin in a special way at a gathering in the Braun Music Center Courtyard on Monday, 27 September. A general Memorial and Celebration of Kevin's life will be held on Saturday, 23 October, at 2 pm at the First Unitarian Church, on Franklin at Geary in San Francisco. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Kevin's memory to an AIDS organization of one's choice. In addition, the Kevin Freeman Music Scholarship fund is being established in San Francisco, c/o 1235-A Ninth Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94122.

## RICHARD ROSS

After many years as a librarian at San Francisco State University, Richard Ross has joined the rapidly growing ranks of recently-retired chapter members.

Richard's education included a Bachelor of Arts in Theater and a Master of Library Science from the University of California, Berkeley. He also holds a Master of Arts in French from San Francisco State. In addition, he has studied voice with Hedwig Chnoor in Berkeley and with Maria Kouznetsova in France.

Richard's career began with a brief stint in San Francisco Public Library's Art and Music Department in 1969. Later that year he took a position at SFSU, where he remained until his retirement on September 1, 1992. Among other duties during his tenure at SFSU, he served as head of the Phonorecord Library and as head of the Creative Arts Library.

Richard also managed to spend a five year period in France, where he taught English and studied voice.

A friendly and familiar face at MLA chapter meetings, Richard was also active in ARSC, serving at one time as president of the local chapter.

Post-retirement activities include working on his house, attending the opera and an interest in Oriental rugs. Richard also plans to travel

again in Europe.

Sally Berlowitz and Don Gambell are taking up Richard's duties at SFSU, where he is missed and remembered as a man of principles.

RONALD HARLAN.  
*Janet Bochin*

Ronald Harlan retired September 30, 1992 and passed away April 8, 1993 at the age of 64.

Ronald worked here in the CSU Fresno library for 36 years, 30 of them as the Music Librarian. Because of his passion for music and with the generous support of the library administration, he was able to build the largest music collection in the CSU system. He was very active in the musical theater community in Fresno, and served as musical director and/or rehearsal accompanist for many productions of the Fresno Community Theater, the CSUF Drama Department, Fresno's Good Company Players, and the Fresno Lyric Opera Theater. He spent many weekends year after year travelling to San Francisco to attend the San Francisco Opera and other productions in San Francisco and Los Angeles. He was also a voracious reader and collector of books and art work, with a particular love of drawings and paintings of trees. He was a unique and special person. He is greatly missed by his colleagues in the library and by the Fresno musical and theatrical community.

**THE PUBLIC MUSIC LIBRARY: ITS  
INFORMATIONAL FUNCTION**

Mary Ashe

[This paper was read by Susan Sommer for Mary Ashe at the IAML meeting in Frankfurt in August of 1992. It was part of a panel on the public music library, its educational, informational, cultural and recreational functions.]

When I realized that owing to a set of circumstances I could hardly believe--and which I fervently hope will never be repeated--I would not be attending both IAML and IFLA conferences this year because they were taking place on precisely the same dates, it seemed to place my own participation in a somewhat different light. Possibly it is chiefly that I am depending on the kindness of a colleague to read my contribution to the panel discussion and have to pass along something in a more presentable form than would have been the case if I were giving it myself.

In addition, however, it occurred to me that I would miss the interchange with other members of the panel and of course with the audience. I wondered in particular if other panelists found themselves reflecting, not to say meditating, on the four public library functions to be addressed--and finding the distinctions among them blurring and the Many, or at least the Four, merging into the One.

Continuing this exercise did not appear a foundation for progress, though, so I decided

simply to accept the fact that there are inescapable overlaps among these four functions, and take another step. I am afraid this next step took me perilously close to the meditative mode again, as I contemplated my assigned function of INFORMATION. I felt I could avoid the worst abysses of solemn thought about the term if I sought a little information about information, as it were.

I think I must limit myself to mentioning the almost three large pages in the Oxford English dictionary, for those who would like to survey the development of the term from its first cited use in 1387. Somewhat more manageable are two of the definitions in the second edition of *Webster's International Dictionary*:

That which is received or obtained through information, specifically a knowledge communicated by others or obtained by personal study or investigation; intelligence; knowledge derived from reading, observation or instruction;

and

process by which the form of an object is impressed upon the apprehending mind, so as to bring about the state of knowing the object.

A more recent work, the *Random House Dictionary*, defines it succinctly:

knowledge communicated or received concerning a particular fact or circumstance.

The 1990 *Librarian's Thesaurus* (published by the American Library Association) treats the term as a concept basic to librarianship and frankly states in the first sentence that it has multiple meanings, whether as an entity that covers "what is recorded in books and other media" or as the process by which a person informs himself or others. It mentions the words *data* and *knowledge* as frequently used interchangeably with *information*. With no consensus on how these terms differ, the user bears the responsibility to signal the intended meaning. It seems, then, that *information* fits into the category of words that the English writer Lewis Carroll called *portmanteau* words. I think his character Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking-Glass* calls his portmanteau word one that has two meanings packed into one, but I am sure we can use it (as we would use that useful object itself) to carry more than two. Humpty Dumpty also said that a word means just what he chooses it to mean, but although I consider it an admirable attitude, I think it can also lead to confusion. I will hope that those here today have an understanding of *information* which may well not be identical, but which provides enough of a common ground for communication.

It sometimes seems that *informational* questions are

those clear cut questions needing no degree of interpretation and lending themselves to brief, factual answers supplied from a reference work alphabetically arranged. This is, of course, a dream world, not the real world of public music library work--indeed, probably of library work in general. The question that requires no interpretation comes along rarely. Instead, the question is phrased in the broadest possible terms, whether to guard against too much self-revelation or for some other reason, and generally needs slowly, gradually (and, it is hoped, tactfully) to be narrowed down. A majority, if not all of us, probably have been led into giving answers or guidance headed off into the vast ocean of musical knowledge, departing more and more from what the library user really wants, and have come to realize that we have to travel back from this ocean into a pond or even a puddle that represents the specific question and response.

What I have just said is something of a digression, applying so universally as it seems to do. As I address one notable characteristic of the public music library information function, the great breadth of inquiry, I make another short one. It is not true that conservatories and other teaching institutions can neatly limit their provision of musical information to what is related to their curricula. What is true is that inquirers sometimes feel that in

addressing their questions to what they consider more highly specialized libraries or those of great size, they will receive a higher quality of "information." So we know our colleagues in these libraries receive their share of questions along any and all music lines. (Even corporate libraries may share this experience--you may be familiar with a cinematic example from a film called *The Desk Set*, in which Katharine Hepburn in a corporate library seems always to be answering questions about literary quotations, sports and, yes, even music.)

But it is the public music library above all others which knows no bounds to its coverage of the subject and, thus, to its provision of information about it. Some perennial questions may involve (in a U.S. library certainly) sorting out confusions between the songs "I'm Always Chasing Rainbows" and "I'm Forever Blowing Bubbles." (One is based on a classical theme; the other isn't.) Variations in the spelling of that noble Australian indigenous instrument the didgeridoo need to be reconciled before passing along information about what it's made of and how it sounds.

On the subject of musical instruments there is apparently none which people would not undertake to construct themselves, from the electronic to the sublime (say, the Aeolian harp). Similarly there is apparently

no musical instrument people do not find in attics or basements, from the great number of violins clearly labelled (sometimes even typewritten) STRADIVARIUS, to other strangely strung or strangely valved curiosities--and for which an eager owner would like to find a high value in today's market.

Which U.S. public music librarian has not many times identified Beethoven's "Für Elise," Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever," Bach's "Sheep May Safely Graze" from melodies hummed in person or over the telephone? Which of us have not had running maddeningly through our heads "Sobres les Olas"/"Over the Waves," "Besame Mucho," Lecuona's "Malagueña," "Begin the Beguine," or "Mexicali Rose" from a question about them or a request for them--until replaced by the next selection, sometimes even more maddening. (There seems to be, for some unknown reason, a decidedly Latin slant to that set of examples. Possibly the next ones would be Irish or Italian or a multicultural array, from "Home on the Range" to "La Vie en rose" to "Ochi Chorniya.")

I surely hope no substantial number of those for whom I have identified and to whom I have supplied the "suicide song" have been moved to rash action by the power of that Hungarian mood piece, called "Gloomy Sunday" in English.

Probably public music librarians from countries other than the U.S. have

experienced some of these same questions and have others comparable, from their own national musical cultures.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are regular questions that direct us to search in multi-volume collected works and musical monuments. Sometimes this can be systematic, proceeding from Heyer's index to musical sets and series or from thematic catalogues to the proper volumes. Sometimes we wrestle with concordances with the sinking feeling that it has been some little while since we have used that Vivaldi array. Sometimes, of course, we frankly rummage. The great benefits bestowed on music collections by Gregg Press and Kalmus reprints certainly have not been nullified by the difficulties resulting from rearrangements of material from those of the original sets--but occasionally I have felt it was a close thing to it.

The range of requests I have tried to indicate is closely paralleled by the range in background of library users. The "general reader" so often referred to as the public library user is a protean creature indeed, taking shape as a precocious grade-school student, a retired self-educator, a visiting scholar, a would-be rock musician, a touring or auditioning tenor, a collector, aficionados, casual or obsessed of all forms and aspects of music, from Elvis to--supply a personal choice at this point. I have sometimes thought, too,

that the difficulty of the material needed to supply the information sought is often in inverse proportion to the ability of the library patron to make use of it. Unfamiliar languages are a normal barrier and unfamiliar alphabets not at all unusual.

This is the point at which the frustration well known to most of us in these days of staff shortages and budgetary limitations sets in: we are not able to give to each according to his need. We too often have to set our clients adrift with just a slender cord metaphorically linking them to us and hope it will hold firm enough for them to return, and not be discouraged by a queue of competitors at the service desk, if they need more help. There is probably little time at this point to get into the sine qua non of providing music information, which is the collection and its organization. What has been said already about the broad range of inquiry and user obviously implies that the materials gathered must be on the same broad basis--both in content and in format. I cannot help mentioning just one area in which U.S. public music librarians have felt a strong responsibility: the documentation of local musical organizations, events, individuals and topics. This is invariably a time-consuming and labor-intensive operation, with important materials rarely appearing in standard sources or shapes. Local files and indexes are often the chief, if not the only, references to the musical life