

**The Southern California Chapter:  
A History and Chronology**

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## THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

### The First Decade

The Southern California Chapter got off to a strong start in the war's aftermath of peace and prosperity under the leadership of George Schneider. Schneider had a flair for promotion and for "putting the bite on big names," an ability he also used to good advantage as MLA's membership chairman. Carmen Dragon, Jose Iturbi, Jeanette MacDonald, and other well-known names appear on the 1947 membership roster. At the July 31, 1947 dinner meeting at Eaton's Chicken House, it was reported that thirty-six new members had joined, bringing the total SCC membership to fifty-seven. The membership numbers are a bit deceptive since a small fraction of those enlisted ever became active in the chapter. Schneider was keenly interested in modern music and music of local origin. As chairman, his stated plan was to have frequent meetings which featured modern music. To accomplish this end, he encouraged chapter members to attend the six autumn programs in the "Evenings on the Roof" concert series held at the Wilshire Ebell Theatre in 1947.

Helen Fitz-Richard (Los Angeles Public Library) succeeded Schneider as chapter chair in 1948 and continued to pursue the theme of local music. The chapter met at the Southwest Museum to learn of the Charles Lummis collection of Indian songs and songs of early California recorded on wax cylinders. Plans were laid to compile a union bibliography of resources on early California music as an aid in locating music for upcoming California centennial celebrations. California Music: A Checklist of the Holdings of Southern California Libraries, compiled by Olive Tilson Sprong (Los Angeles Public Library), was issued by the chapter in 1949. A successful joint meeting with the Northern California Chapter at the 1948 CLA convention in Santa Barbara was the result of careful planning by Fitz-Richard and Edward Colby, chair of the NCC. The program included presentations by Merle Bartlett (UC Berkeley) on record cataloging, Earl Walker (San Francisco Public Library) on sound equipment for record concerts at SFPL, and Lawrence Morton on film music. Using the motion picture Force of Evil, with music composed by David Raksin then arranged and orchestrated by Morton, he described the composing process in his paper "Film Music from Script to Screen."

From 1949 to 1956 the chapter flickered between activity and dormancy. There were few members and little group activity. Members mainly saw each other at meetings of larger organizations such as the California Library

Association, the American Library Association, west coast meetings of the national Music Library Association, and local American Musicological Society meetings. Helen Azhderian, as chapter chair, did revive work on the union catalog of music reference sources in southern California, started some ten years earlier, and brought it to the final form published by the chapter in 1953. Not until the October 1952 CLA conference in Pasadena did members meet for a local program. The Garden Room of the Huntington Hotel provided the setting for speakers Robert Stevenson and John Riedel who described their music research experiences abroad. Newly elected chapter officers were Walter Rubsamen, chair, and Joan Meggett (Los Angeles Public Library), secretary.

When MLA came to Los Angeles in 1953, a number of local members got involved. Raymond Kendall (University of Southern California) chaired the convention program committee that included Joan Meggett, Ernest Gottlieb, Walter Rubsamen, and George Schneider. Rubsamen gave a paper "Unusual Music Library Holdings and Recent Musicological Publications on the West Coast,"<sup>2</sup> Helen Azhderian spoke on "Southern California Resources in Music and Music Literature," and Pauline Alderman demonstrated educational television in a preview of the program "The History of Music Printing." Local tours included a visit to the United Productions of America cartoon studio, where composers Boris Kremenliev, David Raksin, and Ernest Gold discussed their original film scores. The concerns of the cold war era surfaced during the convention with the topic of preserving cultural resources in the event of atomic bombing. The plan was to disperse important collections and create "shadow" collections in relatively safe areas of the country. A motion was passed that local chapters assess the sources in their region and suggest which items they would want preserved.

From 1954 to 1956 chapter activity was dependent on the efforts of chapter officers Charlotte Lowery (USC Library), chair, and Joan Meggett, secretary. In December 1954 they attempted to revive the chapter by calling a planning meeting that was attended by seven members who decided meetings should focus more on local library problems rather than musicological issues. Of the several meetings which followed, the most successful one was aimed at non-MLA members who worked with music in local libraries. Some two dozen new people attended the program which consisted of reports on how music was handled at each library. In 1955 when Minnie Elmer, chair of the northern chapter, inquired about the Southern California Chapter, Charlotte Lowery replied that "the chapter had been inactive on the local

level for four or five years" and in spite of several recent meetings "we are still a rather loosely knit unit."<sup>3</sup>

### Rebirth

After 1956 chapter archives are silent until the mid-1960's when several UCLA music librarians made efforts to bring the chapter back to life. In 1964 chairman Gordon Stone responded to an inquiry from MLA president William Weichlein concerning the existence of a Southern California Chapter. Stone explained he was trying to revive the chapter and wrote "there has been a Chapter here for many years. Although the Chapter has been in a deep state of dormancy for the past two years, I am happy to report that it is still on the survivors list. . . . The chief reason for the recent inactivity was that it has always been such a small group (at least since 1950) that every one had served a term as an officer and our libraries became so familiar to all of us that we became stale as a Chapter group."<sup>4</sup> Fortunately, with the increasing growth of libraries in the region over the next few years, more members and rejuvenation of the chapter were on the horizon. In 1967, Frederick Freedman with encouragement from Marsha Berman reestablished the chapter<sup>5</sup> and set in place a structure that has lasted through the years. Bylaws were drawn up and meetings took place with increasing regularity, developing into the current practice of twice per year. The wave of music librarians who joined the chapter in the late 1960's formed a core of members who have remained active to the present. The chapter also reestablished relations with the Northern California Chapter, sponsoring joint meetings which have now become a biennial tradition.

### Membership

From its earliest days the Southern California Chapter has drawn the bulk of its membership from Los Angeles. Eighty percent of the current membership is from the greater Los Angeles area, San Diego being a weak runner-up with about nine percent of the membership. Growing from just a handful of members in the 1940's and 50's, chapter size has stabilized in recent years at approximately seventy members, including several institutional members. Of the seventy, around thirty to forty regularly participate in chapter activities. While the geographic base has remained constant, other changes have occurred. From the almost entirely female membership of the 1940's

and 50's, the chapter has moved toward a fairly even ratio of men to women. Another shift is directly related to the growth pattern of music collections in the region. In the early days of the chapter there was a close balance of representation between public libraries and academic libraries, with public libraries sometimes predominating. During the past two decades this has changed to the point that, according to the 1990 membership directory, seventy percent of the membership comes from an academic environment. UCLA is the single most influential institution, with its large and diverse research collections. It employs more music librarians than any other single institution in the southern California area. It also accounts for all of the student members since it has the only accredited graduate library school in the region. The predominance of an academically oriented membership stems from the fact that throughout southern California the academic sector has provided the arena of greatest growth for music collections during recent years. In particular, the expansion of the University of California system and the development of the California State University system have provided a large offering of positions for music librarians. Members employed in academic institutions have often enjoyed liberal support for their chapter-related involvements since relevant professional activities are usually mandated for tenure or promotion. The firm establishment of so many academic music collections in the area and employment of librarians to administer them has reinforced the ongoing vitality of the chapter.

### Finances

Chapter finances have been in a healthy condition during recent years, with enough money available to conduct chapter business and to support selected projects. Such a happy condition was not always the case during the past two decades, and on several occasions the chapter treasury fell into a dismal state. Twice the chapter resorted to fundraising, albeit within the pleasant setting of musical wine-tasting parties. However, such tactics could not be relied upon for long-term financial stability. Small gestures such as suggesting donations on membership forms and selling mailing labels did little to solve the problem. In the mid-1980's a series of strategies and events dramatically turned around the chapter's precarious fiscal condition. Dues, which had been excessively modest at \$2.00 during 1967-79 and \$4.00 from 1980 to 1983, jumped to \$10.00 in 1984. Also, the practice of charging a program registration fee was instituted. One program in

particular provided a turning point. The well-attended 1985 conference on "California's Musical Wealth" brought in several hundred dollars of profit and the ongoing sales of its published proceedings continues to benefit the chapter.

### Publications

From the initial meeting of the California Chapter in 1941 to the 1991 fiftieth anniversary celebration, members have been concerned with discovering and documenting music resources. At least seven ad hoc committees have worked on creating union lists and several of those efforts culminated as chapter publications. Beginning with California Music: a Checklist in 1949, followed by Reference Works in Music and Music Literature in 1953 with its subsequent revisions and expansions in 1970 and 1976, and the current joint effort with the Northern California Chapter to create a directory of music collections in California, chapter publications have vitalized the use of music collections through alerting prospective users to existing local resources. The conference proceedings California's Musical Wealth, published by the chapter in 1989, also serve the related purpose of uncovering and drawing attention to resources documenting California's musical richness.

The chapter Newsletter, begun in 1970 by Stephen Fry and shepherded through its first six years by editor Joan Flintoff, has provided a continuing forum for announcements, meeting reports, and profiles of special music collections in southern California. On occasion issues have contained bibliographies:

- Black Music - by Verna Arvey (no. 1, Feb. 1970)
- Works by Women Composers in the CSULB Library -  
by Marilyn Moy (no. 12, Oct. 1975)
- Sources for American Indian Music on Commercial  
Recordings (no. 16, May 1977)
- Bernard Herrmann Works Bequeathed to the UCSB Music  
Library - by Martin Silver (no. 29, special issue)
- Selected Sources for the Study of Women in Music -  
by Stephen M. Fry (no. 31, March 1984)
- Women in Music: Jazz, Rock, Country: A Bibliography,  
1951-79 - by Monica Burdex (no. 33, Oct. 1984)
- Women in Music: The Industry, Etc.: A Bibliography,  
1951-79 - by Monica Burdex (no. 34, March 1985)
- The Music of Harry Partch: Discography - by Charlotte  
Albrecht (no. 37, March 1986)
- Spiritual-Folksong Bibliography - by Eddie S. Meadows  
(no. 39, Oct. 1986 and no. 40, March 1987)

Also of note is a tabulated report by the ad hoc Committee on the Publication of a Union List of Performance Music in Southern California dealing with libraries willing to make available orchestral parts and multiple choral scores for interlibrary loan (no. 36, Oct. 1985).

### Programs

Reflecting the guiding purposes of the Music Library Association, chapter programs have consistently encouraged the collection, preservation, and use of music and musical literature. From a perusal of the chapter chronology, one can see listed numerous programs exploring the region's rich variety of music resources, whether residing in public institutions or private organizations. In addition to the collections within local public and academic libraries, members have been exposed to unique music materials at less well known repositories such as the Los Angeles Variety Arts Center, the American Film Institute, the Southwest Museum, the Institute of the American Musical, and the Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum.

There has been an ongoing concern for preserving music produced locally. One vivid example is film music, which has repeatedly been a topic of chapter meetings dating back as far as 1946. In 1983 the chapter formally showed its support for film music by appointing Stephen Fry to serve an indefinite term as SCC liaison to the Society for the Preservation of Film Music. Concerning local music of another type, when the Schoenberg Family threatened to remove the manuscripts from the Schoenberg Archive at USC and transfer them to another institution outside of southern California, the SCC Executive Board in 1983 sent letters to key parties urging reconciliation and retention of the manuscripts. Fortunately the matter was amicably resolved and the Archive has remained at USC.

Local music and its documentation has been the theme of some particularly memorable programs. A trio of meetings between 1985 and 1987 exposed a number of important but seldom-explored topics in the complex musical history of California and Los Angeles. The 1985 conference "California's Musical Wealth: Sources for the Study of Music in California" covered such topics as the Federal Music Project of the W.P.A., musical emigres, music of California's Mexican-American, American Indian, and Chinese communities, local composers, women musicians, and the recording industry. A 1986 meeting at the Hollywood Bowl covered the history of that institution in addition to

California mission music and an overview of the musical history of Los Angeles. The grand culmination of this series came in 1987 at a three-day "Conference on Los Angeles' Musical Heritage" which gave further coverage of the same general array of subjects. These meetings highlighted the need for prompt action to preserve ephemeral source materials documenting California's musical past.<sup>6</sup>

From tours of radio stations KFAC and KUSC, and programs exposing the world of record manufacturing at Award Records and that of production music at Capitol Records, members have developed a broader understanding of southern California's multifaceted music industry and the thorny issues encountered within the music business. Meeting topics have also dealt with technical issues and have mirrored the advance of technology in the music library through discussions on the handling of sound recordings, playback equipment, computer music and music video. The informal exchange of ideas between members at each meeting has been just as important as the formal program topics. Through conversations and spontaneous discussions, members have discovered solutions to everyday problems in music library service and administration.

#### Fiftieth Anniversary

As early as 1989 the Chapter began planning for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Music Library Association in California. Members from the northern and southern chapters gathered source materials for a history and chronology of each chapter and prepared the article "Servants, Scholars, and Sleuths: Early Leaders in California Music Librarianship" for publication in Notes. In 1990, with a \$500 grant from MLA, both chapters began gathering information for a jointly produced Directory of Music Collections in California. Also, a number of local composers were asked to contribute a short new musical composition as part of a musical festschrift honoring the occasion. The anniversary program, centered at the Pasadena Public Library on October 18-19, 1991, includes concerts in addition to sessions on music and the computer, duo piano teams in California, California's impresarios, local composers, film music, and California music librarians who made a difference.

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Thus, the Southern California Chapter has come full circle on the occasion of MLA's fiftieth anniversary in California. The issues of concern to music librarians have