

# SERVANTS, SCHOLARS, AND SLEUTHS: EARLY LEADERS IN CALIFORNIA MUSIC LIBRARIANSHIP

BY DANETTE COOK ADAMSON AND MIMI TASHIRO

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Some librarians, in the course of their daily endeavors, quietly accomplish remarkable things. Among California's early leaders in music librarianship, six stand out in particular: Jessica Fredricks, Gladys Caldwell, George Schneider, Joan Meggett, Edward Colby, and Vincent Duckles. They were the first to systematically build large music collections in California, and most of them served as early organizational leaders within the Music Library Association. These pioneers were thinkers and visionaries, full of survival savvy. Graced with flexible dispositions, they moved with ease among diverse clienteles and dealt ably with temperamental artists. Their work demonstrated a fervent attitude toward service, a commitment to the cause of music education and scholarship, and a wonderful combination of curiosity and tenacity, useful in answering even the most enigmatic reference question or in tracking down an elusive musical source. Although there were others who provided valuable support for the growth of music librarianship in the state, these six librarians played strategic roles as collection builders and professional leaders.

The story of music librarianship in California opens near the beginning of the twentieth century. Until then, few libraries in California, and indeed in the United States, provided more than a modest collection of books on music-related subjects.<sup>1</sup> Little was done to meet the specific needs of local musicians and music lovers for scores, specialized reference services, and, later, recordings. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries musicians had access to circulating collections of scores through music publishers and music stores. After the turn of the century, public libraries in California began to establish score collections, often through the initiative of individual local musicians and generous private donations. As music proved its worth in public libraries by ac-

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1. Carol June Bradley, *Music Collections in American Libraries: A Chronology* (Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1981), vii-ix.

counting for increased circulation statistics and contributing to the community's musical life, some separate music departments were established.

California's first public music collections developed in Los Angeles and San Francisco. The first circulating score collection was established in 1889 by Los Angeles City Librarian Tessa L. Kelso<sup>2</sup> when she purchased approximately five hundred scores for the Los Angeles Public Library.<sup>3</sup> In 1914 LAPL also became the first public library in California to establish a separate music department.<sup>4</sup> The music collection at the San Francisco Public Library was started in 1903 through the efforts of the singer Emilia Musto Tojetti.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, the entire 105-volume music collection was destroyed in the earthquake and fires of 1906. In 1909, through the efforts of Julius Rehn Waybur,<sup>6</sup> a piano teacher, the Boston Music Company provided a new core collection of music by contributing its entire Schirmer circulating library of over four hundred volumes of music and thousands of music sheets to the library. SFPL's first music department was established in 1917, when the city opened a newly constructed central library building.

Within academia, music libraries developed somewhat later. Although the first academic music collections were established in conservatories, it took the arrival of distinguished émigré musicians from Europe in the 1930s and 40s and the rise of the academic discipline of musicology to provide a significant impetus for the growth of music research collections.<sup>7</sup> Music collections were also amassed by individual collectors and music organizations. Particular to southern California was the growth of the motion picture industry, which required the development of corporate libraries to support movie-making at each studio; many of these libraries contained enormous music resources. The accelerating growth of music collections, accompanied by emerging problems of servicing such materials, was followed by the development of music librarianship as a profession.

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2. John D. Bruckman, *City Librarians of Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Library Assoc., 1973), 23.

3. "Music and Art in California Libraries," *California State Library News Notes of California Libraries* 3 (January 1908): 23.

4. Joseph L. Wheeler, "Los Angeles Public Library," *Library Journal* 40 (1915): 569-70.

5. Information on the formation of SFPL's music collection came from a copy of the library's scrapbook, "Music Dept. Clippings: 1908-1951" (courtesy of Edward Colby).

6. According to Edward Colby, Julius Rehn Weber changed the spelling of his name to Julius Rehn Waybur during World War I.

7. Vincent Duckles, "The Growth and Organization of Music Research Libraries in the Western United States," in *Music Libraries and Instruments: Papers Read at the Joint Congress, 1959, of the International Association of Music Libraries and the Galpin Society*, ed. Unity Sherrington and Guy Oldham (London: Hinrichsen, 1961), 48.

### JESSICA FREDRICKS AND THE SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

An aging scrapbook titled "Music Dept. Clippings: 1908-1951" is a treasure trove of information on the development of the Music Department at the San Francisco Public Library. It also gives proof of the astonishingly energetic career of Jessica M. Fredricks, who, in particular, pioneered the development and growth of music librarianship in California. Each page offers testimony to the strength of Fredricks's resolve to make the SFPL Music Department, as she put it, "an integral part of the musical life of San Francisco and of utmost service to every musician in the community."<sup>8</sup>

Jessica Fredricks was born on 29 September 1887 in San Francisco. She was largely self-educated, since her father was what she called "a natural-born wanderer" whose travels caused her education to be "sketchy" as she moved between schools in Washington State, California, Mexico, and New Mexico.<sup>9</sup> She later returned to San Francisco and in 1915 began working at the public library, which was still housed in temporary quarters as a result of the 1906 earthquake. She became head of the SFPL Music Department when the new library building opened in 1917. While working at SFPL, Fredricks pursued her musical education by studying piano with Eleanor Drew and Ada Clement of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.<sup>10</sup>

Fredricks knew how to accomplish much with little, and initially there was little support for the Music Department. The department was also chronically understaffed during Fredricks's tenure. Through the force of her energy and dedication, Fredricks created a unit that became celebrated within the community. She once wrote, "One must never be too busy or too careless to build up friendship for the music department."<sup>11</sup> The effectiveness of her efforts was underscored by numerous tributes that appeared in various newspapers and journals. One 1940 article proclaimed:

There's no condescension in the service (almost unlimited) given by the San Francisco Public Library's Music Department. . . . It is doubtful if any other music library is so stamped with the personality of its head. Miss Jessica Fre-

8. Jessie M. Fredericks [Jessica Fredricks], "Music in Public Library," *Pacific Coast Musician*, December 1927 (SFPL scrapbook clipping).

9. In addition to the SFPL Music Department scrapbook, much important material on Fredricks appears in Carol June Bradley's "Notes of Some Pioneers: America's First Music Librarians," *Notes* 43 (1986): 281-82, and was subsequently published in her *American Music Librarianship: A Biographical and Historical Survey* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), 144-45.

10. Jose Rodriguez, ed., *Music and Dance in California* (Hollywood: Bureau of Musical Research, 1940): 352-53.

11. Jessica Fredricks, "The Music Library: Development of Collection and Services," *Notes, Supplement for Members*, no. 8 (1949): 14.



Jessica Fredricks (photograph by Bob Campbell, courtesy of the *San Francisco Chronicle*)

dericks [*sic*] . . . has a boundless enthusiasm for music and an eager desire to give help to everyone that enters the room. . . . A genuine interest in any problem of music or research or program planning or study results in a degree of cooperation and wholehearted assistance that no patron could reasonably ask of a library . . . but it is cheerfully given him in San Francisco's surprising institution.<sup>12</sup>

With a staff of one assistant librarian and some part-time help, Fredricks established an array of services that surpassed the model set by some of the nation's most prestigious libraries and that exceeded even the expectations of some library patrons. Yet many of the most useful services were gradually developed after careful observation of patron needs. An "exchange list" grew out of years of questions such as, "I play the viola—where can I find a pianist to practice with?"<sup>13</sup> Requests were posted by number on the bulletin board with names and addresses kept at the desk. The service successfully brought together many musicians who, during the worst days of the Depression, were able to find paying jobs with its help. It even sparked romance: a dancer and a pianist who had been thus brought together returned to the library to announce their marriage.<sup>14</sup>

Fredricks initiated indexing of music periodicals and was careful to keep up-to-date a necrology of musicians. Local programs, news clippings, and photographs were also collected and indexed. The Music Department became a central clearinghouse for information on San Francisco's musical life when staff compiled a register of local musical events. This "date book" was consulted regularly by community musicians wanting to avoid conflicts in scheduling programs and by out-of-town visitors wishing to attend a concert. Fredricks regretted that she did not have time to establish a record collection, but the public was served for some years by weekly concerts of recorded music loaned by friends of the library from their private collections.

Fredricks promoted Music Department services with evangelistic zeal. A constant flow of announcements regarding the collection, services, exhibits, lectures, and recitals appeared regularly in over twenty local and national newspapers and magazines. She often spoke about the Department before clubs and classes and over the radio. Under her leadership music developed the highest circulation figures of any category of library material other than fiction.

12. "No Prayer Rug!" *Opera and Concert Bulletin*, September 1940 (SFPL scrapbook clipping).

13. Jessica Fredricks, "In Lighter Moments," *Notes* 2 (1944): 51–52.

14. *Ibid.*, 52.

When Fredricks became head of the Music Department in 1917, the collection contained 3,000 volumes of scores and 1,000 books about music. She eventually built up the collection to over 16,000 volumes of music and books, and 14,000 pieces of sheet music.<sup>15</sup> Initially piano music made up the bulk of the collection, but over the years an unusually comprehensive collection of opera piano-vocal scores and librettos was built, as well as a heavily used chamber music collection. Gifts of rare Spanish music, collected sets of composers' works, and orchestral scores and parts were added. Fredricks made a determined effort to collect and index popular American sheet music, including what grew to be an extensive historical collection of local music dating back to the 1840s. She once wrote:

Trite though many of them are, some of them made history and all of them mirror it. . . . The public library should be able to illustrate any period of the history of our country with the songs that were being sung at that time.<sup>16</sup>

Fredricks's intense commitment to supporting the community's musical life spilled over into her professional efforts outside the library. As chair of the Library Department of the California Federation of Music Clubs she worked to get music recordings into rural school libraries. She also compiled the bio-bibliography *California Composers*, which the Federation published in 1934. She chaired the California Library Association's Music Committee, which investigated the status of music in California libraries,<sup>17</sup> and prepared a list of basic books on music which was widely distributed.

Fredricks was instrumental in bringing the Music Library Association to California. In 1938, when Carleton Sprague Smith, then president of MLA, was on the West Coast, Fredricks scheduled a meeting for those interested in forming a western chapter.<sup>18</sup> Smith was the featured speaker, and the thirteen persons who attended decided to form a "Northern California Section of the Music Library Association."<sup>19</sup> At Fredricks' recommendation, it dissolved in 1941 in favor of forming an all-California chapter.<sup>20</sup> World War II intervened; in 1946, when the

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15. Jessica Fredricks, "A Musical Treasure Chest," *Opera and Concert*, May 1949: 26-27.

16. Jessica Fredricks, "Building a Music Department in the Public Library," *Music Journal* 4 (May-June 1946): 17.

17. Fredricks reported on the findings in "Music Collections in California Libraries," *Musical Blue Book of California*, ed. Alfred Metzger (San Francisco: Pacific Coast Musical Review, 1924), 73-79.

18. Jessica M. Fredricks to Gladys Caldwell, 3 August 1938, Music Library Association, Southern California Chapter (MLASCC) Archives.

19. Jessica M. Fredricks to Gladys Caldwell, 31 August 1938, MLASCC Archives.

20. Report of the Secretary, California Chapter, Music Libraries [sic] Association, 18 October 1941, MLASCC Archives.

Northern and Southern regions formally established separate chapters, Fredricks was selected as chair of the Northern California Chapter.<sup>21</sup>

Jessica Fredricks decided to retire in 1950 while she "still felt good and had some pep."<sup>22</sup> She received a rarely awarded citation of commendation from the San Francisco Library Commissioners for her thirty-five years of outstanding service. Feeling she had to leave town or else find herself back in the library, she did some traveling and later moved to Cuernavaca, Mexico. She died in Mexico on 28 January 1979 at the age of 91.

#### GLADYS CALDWELL AND THE LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY

For twenty-six years Gladys E. Caldwell headed the Art and Music Department at the Los Angeles Public Library.<sup>23</sup> A native of the Boston area with a background rich in cultural advantages, Caldwell brought to her work a keen intellect and strong executive powers which, when mixed with her natural reserve, could leave a formidable impression.<sup>24</sup> With great determination, patience, and skill, she built one of the largest municipal music collections in the country—one able to serve the needs of scholars, performers, and non-musicians.

Born on 29 September 1884 in Hyde Park, Massachusetts, Gladys Caldwell was educated in private schools and studied piano privately for fifteen years.<sup>25</sup> At one time she aimed at a concert career and was a protégée of the music patron Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge.<sup>26</sup> In a 1936 interview with the Los Angeles music critic Isabel Morse Jones, Caldwell confessed that "an excess of zeal in practicing Chopin's black-key etude and the consequent injury to a motor nerve" resulted in her choice of a career as a librarian.<sup>27</sup> From an early age Caldwell had been interested in art, literature, and modern languages, and possessed what she termed "a passion for music and a desire to impart its first principles to the youth of the land."<sup>28</sup> She considered the fifteen months she spent studying and traveling in Europe during her early twenties to have been most valuable in preparing her for her career specialization: "There is nothing that can

21. Joyce Alee Gross, "Report of California Chapter, October 18, 1946," *Notes* 4 (1946): 19.

22. Nan White, "She Grew up with City Library Music Department," 31 Oct. 1950 (SFPL scrapbook clipping).

23. Important information on Caldwell appeared in Bradley's *American Music Librarianship*, 145-46. Jane Voyles of the State of California Answering Network (SCAN) provided valuable help in researching Caldwell.

24. Phone interview with Loma Reynolds, 11 September 1989. Reynolds began working at LAPL in 1947.

25. Rodriguez, *Music and Dance in California*, 328.

26. Joan M. Meggett to Danette Cook Adamson, 27 April 1989.

27. Isabel Morse Jones, "Musical Library Here Largest in All Nation," *Los Angeles Times*, 29 November 1936, sec. 3, p. 5.

28. *Ibid.*

possibly take the place of such an experience for one destined to spend years in the prosaic company of reproductions, either of scores, famous buildings, or of famous paintings."<sup>29</sup> After coming to California, Caldwell attended the State Normal School at Santa Barbara from 1909 to 1911, and LAPL's Library School during 1918–19. In 1922, after a year at the University of California at Berkeley to, as she put it, "capture those first two letters of the alphabet, without which no executive job can be expected,"<sup>30</sup> she returned to LAPL to head the Art and Music Department.

Los Angeles's musical life was burgeoning in 1922. That summer the recently established Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra played its first concerts at the Hollywood Bowl. However, the LAPL Music Department had been unable to keep pace with the community's rapidly growing musical interests. Local music lovers had discovered the music collection to be inadequate for supporting serious research.<sup>31</sup> To alleviate the situation, William Andrews Clark, Jr., founder of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, arranged a benefit concert for LAPL's Music Department. Leading music clubs and prominent musicians helped to ensure a sold-out performance, and the Orchestra, with piano soloist Olga Steeb, raised over \$1,400 for the purchase of scores and books.<sup>32</sup> Clark later bequeathed to the library what Caldwell considered to be the gift of surpassing value: a collection of 764 full orchestral scores and parts which became heavily used by local orchestras.<sup>33</sup>

Gladys Caldwell, or "G.C." as she was called by her staff, steadily built a well-rounded collection that served, in addition to the general public, a large number of local college students and faculty. A 1936 *Los Angeles Times* article headlined "Musical Library Here Largest in All Nation" claimed that LAPL's music collection of 27,000 volumes exceeded the 25,000-volume collection found in the New York Public Library.<sup>34</sup> With the growth of its resources, the Department developed the highest circulation statistics within the library for non-fiction material.<sup>35</sup> During the 1930s, when the study of musicology was becoming established in local colleges and universities, Caldwell asked Walter Rubsam of the University of California at Los Angeles to compile a comprehensive list of

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29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Caroline Estes Smith, *The Philharmonic Orchestra of Los Angeles: The First Decade, 1919–1929* (Los Angeles: United Printing Co., 1930), 124–25.

32. *Pierre Key's Music Year Book*, 1938 ed. (New York: Pierre Key Inc., 1938), 462.

33. Gladys Caldwell, "The Library's Service," in Rodriguez, *Music and Dance in California*, 283.

34. Jones, "Musical Library."

35. Gladys Caldwell, "Free for the Asking," in *Music and Dance in California and the West*, ed. Richard Drake Saunders (Hollywood: Bureau of Musical Research, 1948), 74.



music books and monumental editions of music. She subsequently used it to build an excellent collection of such scholarly books as were available at the time.<sup>36</sup>

Because of its geographic proximity to Hollywood, LAPL was actively used by studio researchers from the earliest days of the motion picture industry. In 1925 Caldwell reported at an American Library Association conference that the Department's picture collection was of prime importance to the motion picture workers. "The pictures have a circulation of more than 60,000 a year and . . . are in danger of becoming the tail that wags the dog. . . . It was soon found that it would be impossible to supply the needs of our motion picture friends if we could give them only pictures which were worth mounting, and so the clipping cases were started. At present we use over three hundred folio cases, which fill three legal-size vertical files."<sup>37</sup> The Department constantly clipped illustrations from discarded periodicals and supplied each with subject indexing.

The Department also clipped articles chronicling Los Angeles' musical life and mounted them in scrapbooks. Local college students and music lecturers came to rely on another departmentally made tool—an index to program notes of the Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles orchestras. The Department sponsored music lecture series, with some sessions taught by such distinguished figures as Arnold Schoenberg and Roy Harris.<sup>38</sup> And through Caldwell's friendship with Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, Los Angeles benefited for many years from a series of free chamber music concerts held in the library's lecture room.

During the 1930s a radio-phonograph combination and a collection of records were purchased.<sup>39</sup> Daily noon concerts including two hours of recorded music and one hour of broadcasted classical music drew audiences of some three hundred listeners each day<sup>40</sup> and prompted many gifts of records to the library. People could submit their listening requests in advance and some brought their own records to share with the audience. When the library's record collection could not satisfy pa-

36. Joan M. Meggett to Danette Cook Adamson, 27 April 1989.

37. Gladys Caldwell, *The Public Library and the Moving Picture Studio* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1926), p. 4. See also Caldwell, "The Los Angeles Public Library and the Motion Picture Studios," *American Library Association Bulletin* 19 (1925): 270–71.

38. Caldwell, "The Library's Service," 284–85.

39. *Ibid.*, 284.

40. Faith Holmes Hyers, "Music at the Library," *Library Journal* 64 (1939): 252.

tron requests, the record division of Birkel-Richardson, a local music store, would lend needed records.<sup>41</sup>

Gladys Caldwell maintained a high profile within Los Angeles's musical circles. She served on the board of directors for Pro Musica and for the Women's Committee of the Philharmonic Orchestra.<sup>42</sup> She was on the advisory board of the Hollywood Bowl and was chair of library extension for the California Federation of Music Clubs. She also contributed professionally to the Art Reference Round Table of the American Library Association and the Music Committee of the California Library Association.

Caldwell played a strategic role in the growth of MLA in the West. In 1941 she served on MLA's Committee on Regional Organization. With her help the Pacific Northwest Chapter was founded, and, together with Jessica Fredricks, she established the California Chapter.<sup>43</sup> Caldwell herself was elected chair of the California Chapter at its founding meeting on 18 October 1941, a position she held throughout the duration of World War II and until the chapter held a statewide meeting again in 1946. During the war years Caldwell worked with other chapter members to create a union list of music reference materials in southern California.<sup>44</sup> As a member of the editorial board of *Notes*, she actively solicited articles and advertisers for the journal. She also worked with the Armed Forces Master Records project to give phonographs and collections of classical records to service personnel leaving for the Pacific.<sup>45</sup>

After Caldwell retired in 1948, she studied Spanish and traveled extensively.<sup>46</sup> She lived for a while in San Juan Capistrano, California, and, after many years of good health, died on 19 January 1979 at the age of 94.

#### GEORGE SCHNEIDER AND THE METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER MUSIC LIBRARY

For over twenty-eight years George Garrison Schneider moved with aplomb in the midst of big egos, glamour, and glitz at one of Hollywood's legendary movie studios.<sup>47</sup> Born on 1 December 1890 in Richmond,

41. F. H. Hyers, "Symphony Concerts at the Los Angeles Public Library," *American Music Lover* 3 (1938): 283-284.

42. Max Binheim, ed., *Women of the West* (Los Angeles: Publishers Press, 1928), 30.

43. Music Library Association, Southern California Chapter Archives.

44. The work was finally published a number of years later as: Helen Azhdarian, ed., *Reference Works in Music and Music Literature in Five Libraries of Los Angeles County* (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, 1953).

45. Joyce Atlee Gross, "Los Angeles Area Meeting—20 October 1944," *Notes* 2 (1944): 12-13.

46. Phone interview with Loma Reynolds, 11 September 1989.

47. William Rosar provided valuable research help on George Schneider. Rosar, currently a doctoral student in music at Claremont Graduate School, founded the Society for the Preservation of Film Music in 1983. He has since established the International Film Music Society, an organization promoting the scholarly study of motion picture music.

Indiana, Schneider worked as a motion picture theater organist<sup>48</sup> before Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer hired him as its music librarian, bringing him in 1928 from New York to its Culver City studio.<sup>49</sup> The cigar-smoking, hard-drinking Schneider had a reputation for being generous, warm-hearted, and a bit flamboyant.<sup>50</sup> Those qualities colored his professional life, combining with his meticulousness as a researcher and his organizational skills as a librarian while he managed the studio music library and orchestrated many festive studio events.

When Schneider arrived at MGM, the motion picture industry was undergoing a revolution as the studios converted to sound film. Schneider was needed to verify the copyright status of all music used in each film, securing licenses both to record copyrighted works and to cover the performance of the works when the films were exhibited in theaters for profit.<sup>51</sup> He also built and managed the studio's music reference collection. In the course of his work, Schneider maintained close contact with the studio composers. Herbert Stothart, Jr., whose father wrote many of MGM's classic film scores, remembers Schneider as his father's closest business associate and adviser, one who played a consistently important role in bringing him ideas for music.<sup>52</sup> Stothart also recalls Schneider as "a brilliant scholar, with a photographic memory and an encyclopedic knowledge of music."

Schneider's careful research often saved the studio money, and during his years at MGM the studio was never successfully sued for musical plagiarism.<sup>53</sup> The following excerpt from the 1947 *New York Times* article "Film Tune Sleuths" describes one of his successes:

It was Schneider who followed clues through the musty files of old music to discover that the studios were paying copyright fees unnecessarily for the use of Jacques Offenbach's so-called Apache dance number whenever the film makers used any part of it—at \$500 a throw—for French cafe scenes. The fees were paid because the music is part of Offenbach's opera *Le Roi de Carrotte*, the French copyright on which is still intact.

Schneider found that the piece originally was written as *Valse des Rayons*, a ballet number and on which there is now no copyright. So, today when the screen Apache tosses his dancing moll across the cafe floor he does it, not to

48. Edward Colby to Danette Cook Adamson, 22 August 1989.

49. Phone interview with Ruby Armstrong, 28 March 1989. Armstrong began working at MGM in 1953.

50. Phone interview with Herbert Stothart, Jr., 6 March 1991. Stothart's father was a close friend and colleague of Schneider's during the 1930s and 1940s.

51. Clifford McCarty, "Filmusic Librarian," *Films in Review* 8 (1957): 292.

52. Phone interview with Herbert Stothart, Jr., 6 March 1991.

53. McCarty, "Filmusic Librarian," 293.