

The Early Days:
A History and Chronology

By Danette Cook Adamson

THE EARLY DAYS

It was in October 1941, during the final peaceful days preceding America's entry into war, that the California Chapter of the Music Library Association had its birth. Despite the violence taking place in Europe and Asia at the time, most Americans were feeling safe and remote from the hostilities. In California, business was booming as government contracts poured into the state. Soda shop jukeboxes were blaring out the swinging tunes of Glenn Miller, and teenage girls were swooning over a slender young singer named Frank Sinatra.

In California and throughout the United States the profession of music librarianship had blossomed during the early decades of the twentieth century as an increasing number of libraries expanded their music collections. In 1931, during a meeting of the American Library Association in New Haven, Connecticut, a group of librarians and musicologists interested in the special problems of music libraries formed the Music Library Association.¹ Members sought to organize cooperative efforts among music libraries across the country and to foster musical research.

The San Francisco Chapter

Jessica M. Fredricks and Carleton Sprague Smith were largely responsible for establishing MLA's first chapter in California -- the San Francisco Chapter, founded in 1938. Fredricks was the energetic head of the San Francisco Public Library Music Department from 1917-1950²; Smith, then president of MLA, was on the west coast during the summer giving lectures at Stanford University. Fredricks scheduled a meeting with Smith and other interested persons, on August 16, 1938 in the Music Department of the San Francisco Public Library, specifically to discuss forming a western unit of MLA.³ A majority of the thirteen persons present felt it would be practical to have two MLA chapters in California. They decided to form a "Northern California Section of the Music Library Association" with the hope that their southern California colleagues would establish their own chapter.⁴ Miss Fredericks later confessed "...It was not our idea (Dr. Smith and I) to have two branches, but that is what the others thought. I'm a little sorry. But there will be much cooperative work in any event."⁵ Nathan van Patten (Stanford University Libraries) was made president and Fredricks was appointed secretary, but the well-intentioned northern California group met only once before lapsing into dormancy.⁶

The California Chapter

A second attempt to establish a chapter was made in 1941 by Gladys E. Caldwell, administrator of the Art and Music Department at Los Angeles Public Library from 1922-1948. Caldwell was serving at the time on MLA's Committee on Regional Organization and had responsibility for organizing chapters in the West. After surveying various MLA members living in the western states, she concluded it would be feasible to have a chapter in the Pacific Northwest and at least one in California. Organizational planning for California was problematic due to geographical distances and the location of the small number of MLA members in the state.⁷ There were six members in the San Francisco area and four members in the Los Angeles area -- not enough, it was feared, to sustain two separate chapters capable of offering stimulating meetings. After consulting with Nathan van Patten, Jessica Fredricks and John Windle, chair of MLA's Committee on Regional Organization, Caldwell decided to organize a single California chapter which would affiliate with the California Library Association to the extent of holding its first meeting with CLA that fall.

On October 18, 1941, surrounded by the rugged beauty of the Monterey coast, fifteen Californians⁸ interested in music libraries gathered for a luncheon meeting at the stately Del Monte hotel. The meeting was opened by Jessica Fredericks who recommended an official dissolution of the San Francisco chapter in favor of re-forming as the California chapter. The motion passed and two officers were elected: Gladys Caldwell, president and Joyce Atlee Gross (Beverly Hills Public Library), secretary. Despite its state name, the California chapter initially intended also to serve MLA members in adjacent states.⁹

Two papers were presented at the meeting. Cornel Lengyel, editor of the W.P.A. Writers Project in San Francisco, spoke on early California music, and Edythe Backus reported on the music resources of the Huntington Library. Before adjourning, members planned a program of activities for the new chapter which included four major features:

- 1) The recording of music books and manuscripts in California missions;
- 2) A committee to compile a union list of important music reference material in larger libraries of the Los Angeles area;¹⁰

- 3) Exchange of information regarding important new accessions in California libraries;
- 4) A newsletter to be published quarterly, edited by Jessica Fredericks.

Shortly after the Del Monte meeting, it was discovered that extensive research on mission music had just been published by Father Owen Francis da Silva in his Mission Music of California.¹¹ The new chapter, therefore, chose to focus its efforts on the union list project. The development of musicology as a discipline and the increase in musical activity in southern California had created a demand from students and scholars for music reference resources. Unfortunately, individual west coast libraries at the the time could rarely provide the range of material needed to support serious musicological study, and their growth had been handicapped since 1940 by war conditions which made it impossible to obtain material from Europe.¹² In an effort to increase the visibility and usefulness of existing resources available locally, the union list committee¹³ attempted to gather information from all libraries known to have music reference material in the region south of and including Santa Barbara. . . When returning the information on music holdings at the University of California Los Angeles, Walter Rubsamen wrote, "I believe that the present undertaking is of extreme importance, not only for Southern California, but for the entire nation, for it will be the first attempt of its kind and will be a model for other sections of the Music Library Association."¹⁴ The first draft of the list represented holdings in seventeen libraries. The project was pursued continuously during the war years but it did not achieve its final form until 1953 when it was published as Reference Works in Music and Music Literature in Five Libraries of Los Angeles County, edited by Helen Azhderian.

Chapter archives only reveal activity by members in the Los Angeles area from 1942-45; there is no indication that the planned quarterly newsletter was ever issued. Gladys Caldwell continued as the chapter's wartime president and several meetings were held in her Hollywood home. In 1942 Caldwell drafted a resolution, first introduced to the chapter and later backed by MLA, that all music libraries and departments of music throughout the country dedicate each October 30th, the date of the birthday of Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, "to the celebration of chamber music and to her part in promoting its enjoyment."¹⁵ Caldwell suggested using bulletin boards, book displays, lists, live concerts and record programs to mark the occasion. Throughout this period progress reports on the union list were given at most chapter meetings and the list was the focus of all meeting activity during 1943. The war was

never far from member's thoughts and the 1944 meeting with CLA considered such war-related topics as "Democracy and Music," Lawrence Morton posing the question "Do politics matter to the musician and the artist?" and the "Armed Forces Master Records," explained by William Hartshorn as a project whereby every army group departing from Los Angeles was given a library of classical records and a phonograph.¹⁶ Chapter archives show no meetings in 1945, but during that year Gladys Caldwell recruited future Southern California Chapter chair George Schneider (MGM Music Library) and as a member of the editorial board for Notes, she actively solicited articles from west coast writers for MLA's quarterly journal.

In 1946, after five long years filled with the tensions of war, chapter members from the entire state met together for the first time since the founding meeting in 1941. The picturesque island-like setting of Coronado, off the coast of San Diego, was the site of the program, held October 18, 1946 in conjunction with CLA.¹⁷ Reports were given on the use of records in three different types of southern California libraries, with Joan Meggett reporting on University of Southern California Library, Mary Pearson on Long Beach Public Library, and Olive Sprong on Los Angeles Public Library. The paper "Music in Films" was presented by Constance Purdy. Purdy was the developer of Film Music Notes, said to be the only publication on film music at the time. The Coronado meeting marked the official establishment of separate northern and southern chapters in California. The new officers elected were: chairman Jessica Fredricks and secretary Mary Kathleen Moore (National Broadcasting Corporation Music Library) for the Northern California Chapter; chairman George Schneider and secretary Grace Winters (University of California at Los Angeles Library) for the Southern California Chapter. Thus, the organizational structure for California fluctuated once again, but in this instance the decision stood the test of time as music libraries and MLA membership grew in each region, supporting the long-term stability and growth of two distinct MLA chapters in California.

NOTES

1. For a history of MLA see Carol June Bradley's, "The Music Library Association: the Founding Generation and its Work," Notes 37 (1980-81): 763-822 and Notes 39 (1982-83): 490.
2. For further information on some of California's first music librarians and MLA chapter leaders see the forthcoming article: Danette Cook Adamson and Mimi Tashiro, "Servants, Scholars, and Sleuths: Early Leaders in California Music Librarianship," to be published in the March 1992 issue of Notes.
3. Jessica M. Fredricks to Gladys Caldwell, August 3, 1938 (Music Library Association, Southern California Chapter (MLASCC) archives, held at the University of Maryland, College Park campus).
4. Jessica M. Fredricks to Gladys Caldwell, August 31, 1938 (MLASCC archives).
5. Ibid.
6. Gladys Caldwell to Edyth[e] M. Backus, August 8, 1941 (MLASCC archives).
7. John T. Windle to Gladys Caldwell, May 5, 1941 (MLASCC archives).
8. Jessica Fredricks (San Francisco Public Library), Gladys Caldwell (Los Angeles Public Library), Edythe N. Backus (Huntington Library), Ralph Long (Ukiah Public Library), Elsie Schaufler (Oakland Public Library), Edith Hibberd (Oakland Public Library), Lillian R. Dandini (San Francisco), Joyce Atlee Gross (Beverly Hills Public Library), Patricia J. Clark (Contra Costa County Public Library), Neva Le Blond (San Jose State College), Althea Warren (Los Angeles Public Library), Ada Lou Hawes (Santa Cruz Public Library), Pauline Alderman (University of Southern California, School of Music), Patricia O. Dutcher (Pasadena Public Library), Cornel Lengyel (Writers Project of W.P.A. at San Francisco).
9. "Report of the Committee on Regional Organization," Notes 1st series, 13 (March 1942): 27.

10. The union list project was initially suggested by Walter Rubsamen (Walter H. Rubsamen to Gladys Caldwell, September 30, 1941 (MLASCC archives)).
11. Owen Francis da Silva, ed., Mission Music of California: A Collection of Old California Mission Hymns and Masses (Los Angeles: W.F. Lewis, c1941); [Gladys Caldwell] to John T. Windle, October 28, 1941 (MLASCC archives).
12. Pauline Alderman, "Union Catalogue, Music Reference Sources in Southern California," (MLASCC archives).
13. Pauline Alderman, chairman, Helen Azhderian, Edythe Backus, and Walter Rubsamen.
14. Walter H. Rubsamen to Gladys Caldwell, September 18, 1942 (MLASCC archives).
15. Gladys Caldwell to Regional Chairmen, February 13, 1942 (MLASCC Archives); see also Notes, 1st series, 14 (August 1942): 53.
16. Joyce Atlee Gross, "Los Angeles Area Meeting -- 20 October 1944," Notes 2 (December 1944): 12-13.
17. Joyce Atlee Gross, "Report of California Chapter, October 18, 1946," Notes 4 (December 1946): 19.

CHRONOLOGY

Abbreviations:

ALA = American Library Association
CLA = California Library Association

C = Chair
ST = Secretary/
Treasurer

MEETINGS

OFFICERS/COMMITTEES/ PUBLICATIONS

SAN FRANCISCO CHAPTER

8-16-38, San Francisco Public Library
*Organization of a West Coast Branch
of the Music Library Association -
Carleton Sprague Smith*

C-Nathan van Patten
ST-Jessica Fredricks

June 1939, San Francisco
MLA at ALA
Luncheon meeting

CALIFORNIA CHAPTER

10-18-41, Del Monte
Joint with CLA
*Early California Music - Cornel Lengyel
Music Resources of the Huntington Library -
Edythe Backus*

C-Gladys Caldwell
ST-Joyce Atlee Gross

Union List Committee:
Pauline Alderman (C)
Helen Azhderian
Edythe Backus
Walter Rubsamen

1-16-42, Los Angeles
Home of Pauline Alderman
Reviewed: *Mission Music of California -
Owen Francis da Silva and
Bibliography of Early Music Reprints
(c.1240 - c.1725) in the Los Angeles
Public Library - Frances Gazda
Birthday Celebration Plans for Mrs. Elizabeth
Sprague Coolidge - Gladys Caldwell
Plan for Union List of Reference Works in
Southern California Libraries*

8-23-42, Hollywood
Home of Gladys Caldwell
*Progress report on the Union List of Reference
Materials in Southern California
Libraries*

1943, Los Angeles area
several meetings of the Union List Committee

2-13-44, Hollywood
Home of Gladys Caldwell
Report on MLA in Washington, D.C. (Oct. 1943)
*Progress report on the Union List of Reference
Materials in Southern California Libraries*
- Pauline Alderman
Plan for a Music Congress in Los Angeles
- Lawrence Morton

10-20-44, Los Angeles Public Library
Joint with CLA
Armed Forces Master Records - William Hartshorn
Democracy and Music - Lawrence Morton
Evenings on the Roof - Peter Yates

3-10-46, Hollywood
Home of Gladys Caldwell
Report on Music Meeting in Detroit -
Walter Rubsamen
Minnesota Folk Songs - Bessie Mae Stanchfield

5-22-46, Library,
University of California, Los Angeles
*Progress Report on the Union List of Music
Reference Material in Southern
California Libraries*
*Discussion of possible division of the California
Chapter into a Northern Chapter and a
Southern Chapter*