

MLA IN BOSTON - 1978 ANNUAL MEETING

The Boston area possesses a great wealth of musical resources--talented performing groups of all types of music, excellent teaching institutions and music collections, and more than a dozen active and creative music librarians. The Boston Area Music Libraries, under program chairman Linda Solow and local arrangements chairman Geraldine Ostrove, made exceptional use of the human and musical resources of Boston in planning the Annual Meeting of the Music Library Association, held in Boston, 27 February through 4 March, 1978. Sessions of the conference were stimulating and informative; concerts and recitals were varied and entertaining; and tours, exhibits, and banquets were very well planned. The planning group even managed to find a week of near-perfect weather out of this year's incredible winter. All these factors combined to make a most memorable conference.

MLA delegates were treated to several fine chamber concerts, beginning at the opening reception with "Spanish Music from the Age of Ferdinand and Isabella" by the Greenwood Consort, and continuing with a series of Cameo Concerts preceding the morning sessions. The performances were all first-rate, and ranged from 17th century brass quintets (by The Cambridge Symphonic Brass Ensemble) through Ethnic music of Albania (the Iso Singers) and music for woodwinds (Nova Woodwind Quintet) to contemporary music performed by the Dinosaur Annex Players, when the hotel lobby resounded for half an hour to the cosmic E flat major triad of Lyle Davidson's "Centering".

The session "Music in Boston: Collecting Local History" gave us an insight into the problems and delights of local music collecting, with presentations by Rulan Pian and Jerome Fischer of Harvard University and Stephen Erdely of MIT. Mr. Erdely described his Project for Classifying and Cataloguing Traditional Music, which resulted from his study of the ethnomusicological holdings of the Canadian Centre for Folk Culture Studies. He proposed three levels of classification: descriptive, analytical, and comparative, as well as a classification of song texts and a computer-programmed cataloguing system.

"From Stylus to Platter: Designing Listening Facilities and Preserving the Recordings Played in Them" was moderated by Lenore Coral, who described the new listening facilities at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Music Library. The design is the same as that used at Northwestern University. Larry S. King of Klepper Marshall King Associates, New York (acoustical consultants for the U. of Wisc., Madison listening facility) spoke on the type of work his company does for music libraries, discussed audio equipment for listening facilities, and recommended several review journals (especially Stereo Critic, The Absolute Sound, and Audio). Gerald Gibson (Recorded Sound Section, Library of Congress) discussed the archival preservation of discs at LC and showed slides of their ultrasonic cleaner. Helvi McClelland (Sibley Music Library, Eastman School of Music) spoke on record-care products useful for non-archival collections; her handout included a bibliography of articles on record-care and information on the SELVYT cloth, which was highly recommended for record cleaning. Forrest Alter (Flint Public Library)

described his library's listening facilities and the problems of cleaning a circulating record collection.

The session on "20th-Century Music--Its Preservation and Propagation through Printing, Publishing, and Recording" was a very interesting one. Judith Finell (Music Services, Inc.), the moderator, described the functions and activities of the American Music Centre, which is somewhat analogous to our Canadian Music Centre. Joseph M. Boonin provided an entertaining and informative insight into the music publisher's point of view in "The Contemporary Publishing Scene: an unretouched picture". "The Role of Recording in the Dissemination of Contemporary Music", presented by Carter Harman of Composers Recordings, Inc., discussed the importance of non-profit recording companies such as CRI in supporting contemporary American composers and making their works known. James Yannatos, a composer and conductor at Harvard University who has gone into publishing his own music, outlined the problems a composer has today in getting published in "The Last Resort: Composer as Publisher", and Jon Newsom (Music Division, LC) spoke on "The Librarian's Responsibility and Problems". One way of making new works known is through checklists such as the Boston Composers Project, a list of works by Boston area composers put out by BAML (Boston Area Music Libraries). The session was preceded by a film on Harry Partch and was followed by a tour of the impressive Boston Public Library.

The Cataloguing Forum was, as always, the scene of much discussion and a source of news on cataloguing and classification developments. Since the meeting of the Cataloguing Council is being reported on in the Music Cataloguing Bulletin, beginning with the April 1978 issue, we won't repeat the proceedings here.

The session "Music in Boston: Unknown Resources in Research Collections" featured speakers currently or formerly associated with Boston Area Libraries. Geraldine Ostrove of the New England Conservatory described some of the rare materials of that collection, and Steven Ledbetter of Dartmouth contributed a paper on the music of George Whitefield Chadwick (1854-1931), a former director of the Conservatory, whose manuscripts are represented in the collection of the NEC. The afternoon session also included informative talks on the wealth of materials of the Boston Public Library and of the Houghton Library of Harvard University. The latter included a lengthy, but enthusiastic talk on Rossini manuscripts by Philip Gossett, a renowned Rossini scholar. The same evening, The Boston Chamber Soloists were featured in performances of some of the music described earlier in the day.

A session on "Money-How to Get It and How to Handle It" was chaired by Walter Gerboth, who began by giving a lesson in how to rob a Brink's truck. The panel continued, in a more serious vein, with a talk on library budgeting techniques by Mary Chatfield of the Harvard Business Library. Annalee Bundy, director of the Somerville, Mass., Public Library, spoke on the need for good public relations and an administration active in promoting the needs of the library. A paper on the varying needs of different libraries was prepared by Wendall Brase, the Laser

Lab Administrator from the University of Syracuse, and was delivered by Ruth Watanabe. In commenting on this paper, Dr. Watanabe emphasized the fact that the music library is an "additive rather than a replacive" institution. Commenting on the session as a whole were Michael Keller of Cornell and Thor Wood of the New York Public Library, who added fiscal advice based on their own administrative experience.

Early in the week, the attendees had been treated to a screening of the Hepburn-Tracy comedy Desk Set. The film deals with the phasing out of a library reference department, headed by Katherine Hepburn, with Spencer Tracy as the MIT-trained computer expert, brings in the machine which will make the reference department obsolete. The machine turns out to have more than a few bugs, and the computer expert falls for the librarian, so in George Cukor fashion, all ends happily. Desk Set, then, served as a fitting introduction, romantic element excepted, for the final session of the conference, Reference Service in the Future. Susan Sommers of the New York Public Library chaired the session, which featured talks by Edmund Bowles of the IBM Corporation on developments in automation, Carol Lawrence on her work as reference librarian in an undergraduate library, and Neil Ratliff of the New York Public Library on reference service at a major research institute. One fitting remark by Mr. Ratliff was his comment that the expertise he had gained as a reference librarian had given him the knowledge to answer questions as well as to know which questions could not be answered.

Kirsten Walsh and Sanford Cohen.

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THE BOOK SHELF: music literature for public libraries

III. Composers' biographies

Volumes have been selected according to three main criteria: those that make enjoyable reading in addition to being informative; those that may not be the most comprehensive in biography nor as stylishly written but contain useful supplementary material to direct the reader onward; those that are generally considered the best of the English biographies. The list, let me remind you, is highly selective. New books are being published every month, and even as I prepare this list, I read new reviews of Solomon's Beethoven. (Patrick Smith in High Fidelity, April 1978; Tim McGee in Fugue, May 1978). I include that volume, unseen, on their recommendations. While not know as a composer, Glen Gould is included because--because he's Glen Gould! British publishers and prices are given when American are unavailable.

BACH Robertson, Alec. Bach; a biography, with a survey of books, editions and recordings. Hamden, Conn., Shoe String, 1977. \$7.50 U.S. (The concertgoer's Companions)