

Con Brio

A Newsletter of the
NATIONAL BLACK MUSIC CAUCUS

Volume 1, Number 1

October 1984

MUSICALLY SPEAKING *A Message from the President*

As we begin another academic year, my first as President of the National Black Music Caucus, I hope that everyone will share in the excitement and anticipation of a most productive biennium of NBMC as generated during the Board of Directors Retreat held at Jackson State University. My gratitude goes to past president Yvonne Cheek and the Board of Directors (1982-84) for the outstanding quality of leadership, vision, imagination, and sincerity which characterized that term of office. We extend a most grateful thanks to them and look forward to their continued advice and support.

As promised in the General Meeting held during the MENC conference in Chicago, the newly elected officers have already begun to work toward restructuring a tighter organization which will be representative of and responsive to the needs of ALL its members. My sincere thanks to Camille Taylor, past executive secretary, for his inestimable service to NBMC. Please join me in extending congratulations and best wishes to Willis Patterson, who has assumed the office and responsibilities as the newly appointed executive secretary. All future NBMC correspondences and inquiries pertinent to the organization's operations should be directed to his office.

I want to extend to all members of NBMC a most sincere request for you to take an active part in music education programs in your local and state associations. NBMC has divisional chairpersons who want you to keep them informed of your musical activities as well as suggestions for workshops, outstanding clinicians (including yourselves), and specific ideas for the development of educational programs, especially for black youth.

We must develop a stronger network system! It is my hope that an alliance with other associations of music and the related arts will become a significant component of NBMC's future activities. Attracting new members, expanding student involvement, increasing emphasis on excellence in performance and academic scholarship, and recognition of outstanding leadership will be major foci during this biennium. This is a tremendous challenge and opportunity which I am assured we will all accept. Our organization can only be as powerful and influential as each of its members' contributions. Working together to perpetuate the values of black music *will* make NBMC one of the most dynamic organizations in MENC and the United States.

Carlesta Henderson, Ph.D.

NBMC RETREAT

During June 15-17, 1984 the Board of Directors met for an unprecedented working retreat at Jackson State University (Mississippi). The group, composed of representatives from across the country, convened to discuss critical issues pertinent to the organization, plan for future MENC conferences, and to develop plans for further relations with MENC.

Members in attendance were Carlesta Henderson, Leon Adams, Hortense R. Kerr, Charles E. Hicks, Willis Patterson, Lorraine Wilson, Yvonne Cheek, London Branch, Alexandria Holloway, Ted McDaniel, and the hosts from Jackson State—Emma Baham, and Jimmie James, Jr. The president of Jackson State University, James A. Hefner, welcomed the Board to the campus. The Board will meet again during the MENC conference in Anaheim, and the next retreat is scheduled for June (1985) on the campus of Keene State University (New Hampshire).

SOUTHERN DIVISION NEWS

"I've Known Rivers, Incorporated," a Black non-profit organization in New Orleans, created the Afro-American Pavilion at the 1984 Louisiana World Exposition. In keeping with the concept of Langston Hughes' poem "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," several artists have performed at the pavilion. These include Trio Pro Viva (D. Antionette Handy-flute, Vondell Smith-cello, William Terry-piano); Julius Wilson, tenor (Kingstree, SC); Clara Porter, soprano (Jackson, MS); Patrick Sturgis, a 14-year-old vocalist (Vicksburg, MS); the New Orleans Wind Ensemble; and Drumarama Percussion Ensemble (Jackson, MS). The project was organized by Lorraine P. Wilson, Multi-Cultural Awareness Chairperson on the LMEA Board of Directors.

UPCOMING SYMPOSIUM

A Symposium on Black American Music will be presented on the Ann Arbor campus of the University of Michigan August 9-15, 1985. The undoubted impact of black American music on world music over the past four centuries will be examined. The symposium is expected to broaden the public's perception of how the gamut of black American music is woven into the tapestry of the American experience itself.

Lectures, panel discussions, and master classes will examine the intricate network of connections that link traditional black musical idioms to symphonic forms, chamber music forms, art song forms, and other 'serious' works of black American composers whose inspiration emanates from common sources but is too rarely heard or acknowledged. The symposium's daily format will feature one key lecturer; one or more panel discussions by experts in performance, research, teaching, and criticism of black American 'serious' music; and at least two performances of 'serious' compositions.

Among the lecturers are Eileen Southern (Harvard University), Billy Taylor (renowned scholar and jazz artist), Geneva Southall (author and musicologist at the University of Minnesota), Wendell Whalum (Fuller Callaway Professor of Music at Morehouse College), and

others. Panelists and performers include Kermit Moore (cellist, conductor, and composer in New York City), Dorothy Rudd Moore (composer in New York City), William Warfield (opera and concert artist, currently chairman of the voice department at the University of Illinois), Hilda Harris (mezzo-soprano of the Metropolitan Opera Company), Jessye Norman (opera and concert artist with the Metropolitan Opera Company and major companies of Europe), Sylvia Lee (pianist/voice coach from Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia), Hale Smith (composer and music editor), Undine Moore (composer, arranger and professor emeritus of Virginia State and Virginia Union universities).

The week's activities will include performances by the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Wynton Marsalis Quintet, New York Black String Quartet, University of Michigan Symphony Orchestra, Brazeal Dennard Chorale, and the New World String Orchestra of Detroit.

The symposium has partial support from the National Endowment of the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Further information regarding this very important event may be obtained by writing to: Willis Patterson, Associate Dean, 2308 Moore Building, School of Music, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

THE TRI-M SOLUTION

Music educators are constantly on the lookout for new methods in the classroom and new techniques for teaching and inspiring their students. MENC now offers music teachers a ready-made solution to the dilemma of keeping music alive in their schools and in their students. That solution is Tri-M, the international music honor society for high school students. Tri-M is made to order for teachers in band, orchestra, or chorus in middle, junior, and senior high schools. A faculty member must sponsor the chapter by applying for a charter from the national office. Interested teachers may request information by writing to MENC, 1902 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091.

JOHN CHILDS' DUO-PIANO WORKS FEATURED

On September 20, 1984 Constance Hobson, Professor Emeritus, and Hortense R. Kerr, Associate Professor of the Department of Music at Howard University, performed selected works of John Childs. Formerly pianist with the Harkness Ballet, the talented Black composer is one of the nation's most prolific composers of music for two pianos. The pianists performed, among other compositions, three of Mr. Childs' unpublished works: FANTASIES, THOUGHTS AND REMEMBRANCE, and THE VOYAGE.

Editor's Notes

Con Brio is published three times during the academic year in October, January, and April. Submissions from members of NBMC and all affiliate organizations of MENC should be addressed to:

Linda B. Miller, Editor
311 Bailey Hall
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas 66045

THANK YOU

The Editor wishes to thank Daron Reynolds Jones and Andrea Reeves for volunteering to assist with the publication of this NEWSLETTER. We look forward to this kind of support in your respective divisions.

Deadline for submitting to the January issue is December 1, 1984.

BOOK REVIEW

Handy, D. A. *Black women in American bands & orchestras*. Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1981. (319 pp., notes, appendixes, bibliography, index, photographs).

The purpose of this study was to cite the significant achievements of black females in the total orchestral/band development in America. In the preface the author states, "the only criterion for a black woman instrumentalist's inclusion was involvement with an instrumental ensemble wherein the performer functioned as a member of the ensemble, rather than as a soloist, in a leadership of 'followship' capacity" (p. viii). The book is divided into seven chapters, each of which treats the involvement of women instrumentalists in various and diverse art forms.

The first chapter, "The American Orchestra: A Historical Overview," presents a brief history of the orchestra, military and civilian bands, theatre orchestra, "heart and feet" orchestra, and female involvement. This provides a smooth transition and an adequate foundation for the reader's understanding of contributions black female instrumentalists have made in these areas.

In chapter two, "Orchestra and Orchestra leaders," Handy discusses male leaders of female bands; female leaders and orchestras from 1880-1920s, 1930, 1940s, 1950-1970s; the golden age of female involvement, and profiles. According to Handy, "black women string players have been active participants in the business of 'group-music-making' in America at all levels and in a variety of settings" (p. 65). "String Players," chapter three, provides a description of female involvement in the areas of early dance and minstrel bands, theatre orchestras, and elite art instrumental ensembles.

Historically, black female wind players have performed in various ensembles. Chapter four describes

black female wind players in minstrel, carnival, vaudeville, marching & concert bands, theater orchestras, early jazz ensembles and big bands, as well as elite art instrumental ensembles. The author presents a limited number of black female percussion players in these performing groups.

Chapter five was devoted to a discussion of "Keyboard Players" in minstrel/ragtime/vaudeville bands, early theater orchestras, and elite art instrumental ensembles. An overview of those black women who have served on the managerial staff of an orchestra, as a board or committee member, is outlined in chapter six, "Administrators." Information presented in chapter seven, "The Younger Generation," focuses on black females under the age of twenty-five.

Documented by a series of primary and secondary sources, personal interviews, surveys of orchestras, compilations of "personal data," and a picture gallery, the study is a credible contribution to black women instrumentalists in America. The chief value is in its perspective. The book makes a commendable contribution to our knowledge of the involvement of black women in instrumental music.

The usefulness of this book is enhanced by its picture gallery. However, the location of pictures within the text breaks the thought of the reader and may have been placed, more appropriately, in the appendix. Moreover, the material is a useful document to consult for a preliminary study of black women instrumentalists in America, and is recommended also as an excellent reference for music libraries, introductory music courses, and black music courses.

Emma Brooks-Baham, D.M.A.
Associate Professor of Music
Jackson State University

Our current mailing list needs to be updated. Please complete the form below and return by November 15, 1984 to: **Willis Patterson, Executive Secretary, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.**

Name _____ Phone _____

Mailing Address _____

Do you wish to work with divisional chairpersons in the future? Yes _____ No _____

Do you wish to receive future issues of the Newsletter? Yes _____ No _____

Please list topics or projects in which you have interest.

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