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AMERICAN MUSIC

A Panorama Second Edition

Daniel Kingman

SECOND EDITION

AMERICAN MUSIC

A Panorama

Daniel Kingman

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PREFACE

ONCE more this preface begins, as did that of the first edition, with the most important person of all to a writer: the reader. An author usually has a rather clear and persistent image of the reader for whom he or she is writing. For myself, I have always envisioned the ideal reader of this book as someone who has somewhere picked up a lively interest in some kind of American music—be it blues or bluegrass, Cage, Coltrane, or Copland—and whose desire to find out more about *that* has led to engagement, bit by bit, through the interconnectedness of things, with the whole subject. The reader I have in mind need not be musically trained, though there is no doubt that the musician will read with a more experienced and penetrating grasp. But the occasional technical term has been used only when it seemed unavoidable, and I have tried to accompany it in most cases with a brief explanatory word or phrase. An active, open mind and an inquiring spirit—these I have regarded throughout as the only real essentials in a reader.

This work had its genesis, many years ago, in little more than an awakened enthusiasm for the music of my native land, an enthusiasm that manifested itself modestly enough at first in the inclusion of a few lectures on American music in the context of a general introductory course. My involvement came, by progressive stages, to embrace all of our varied musics, with the growing conviction that no aspect of our music should or *could* be excluded without maiming our perception of the whole teeming panorama. By this time an entire course had evolved, at a time when few such courses were offered, and when comprehensive writing on the whole subject of American music was rather narrow, and was not adequately informed by a sense of the vastness, variety, and grandeur of the scene to be surveyed. The appearance in 1955 of the first edition of Gilbert Chase's *America's Music* was a welcome departure in this regard.

It is interesting to note some of the landmarks along the path of a lengthening perspective of American music. Looking over my very early notes, for example, I find Charles Ives and John Alden Carpenter treated together. It made a certain sense at the time; they were nearly

exact contemporaries, and both were businessmen-composers—heirs, it seemed, of a distinctly American tradition of amateur composers who earned their daily bread in some occupation entirely apart from music. The tradition can be traced all the way back to William Billings and his fellow Yankee tunesmiths; it exists no more. It does not diminish Carpenter's place in American music to see from a later vantage point that he was a talented mannerist with a rather narrow range, while Ives, with all the unevenness of his vast output, was a true pioneer.

Similar siftings and reassessments go on continuously among those of us who have a passionate interest in American music. As I prepared the revision of a book whose first edition has had a reception kind enough to justify its reincarnation in a second, I became ever more aware of and impressed by the phenomenal activity in the field, in which there has been literally an explosion of knowledge in the past decade or so. Projects of research, recording, and publication (both of the music itself and of sound analytical and biographical works) are going forward at an ever-increasing rate, and more and more scholars and writers seem drawn to the subject.

An author's preface is not the place for an extended list of resources, but a mere sampling of the evidence of a burgeoning interest in American music scholarship would not be out of place:

We now have a comprehensive four-volume reference work in *The New Grove Dictionary of American Music* (1986); this may well be regarded as a supplementary resource for every chapter in this book, and for every subject.

A fascinating and unique inventory of source materials for future research has been compiled in the *Resources of American Music History* (1981)—a handy volume in case, for example, you want to know what relics of American music may be tucked away in the Town Library of Peterborough, New Hampshire, the Tuolumne County Museum in California, or the Historical Society of Adams County, Nebraska; or if you are curious about the whereabouts of a hundred boxes of the papers of Mark Blitzstein, or eight thousand published orchestrations for circus band!

In the field of recording, the comprehensive *Recorded Anthology of American Music* put out by New World Records has reached at the time of writing 164 LPs. And following the death of the veteran producer, archivist, and enthusiast Moses Asch, the vast and seminal Folkways library of recordings has taken a new lease on life, safe in the arms of the Smithsonian Institution, which also continues its own series of important annotated issues.

Facsimile reprints let us see in their original published form the songs of Stephen Foster, or *The Indian Princess*, an opera on the subject of Pocahontas (1808), or the florid exuberances of Anthony Philip Heinrich's *The Dawning of Music in Kentucky*, or *The Pleasures of Harmony in the Solitudes of Nature*, of 1820. More and more authoritative and annotated editions in modern notation and format are also appearing.

Scholarly organizations and their publications and conferences are a valuable forum for sharing the fruits of research across the whole spectrum of American music, and for reviewing the ever-increasing flood of new books and recordings. The Sonneck Society for American Music holds annual conferences, and publishes both *American Music* (quarterly) and the *Sonneck Society Bulletin* (triannually). The Institute for Studies in American Music at Brooklyn

College of the City University of New York publishes a growing list of monographs and a semiannual *Newsletter*.

All this is stimulating, but it complicates the task of the generalist who must still try to make some sense out of the panorama for his readers. Having mapped this panorama initially in the first edition, I have taken another hard look at that map, reorienting here and there, filling in more detail where needed, and extending the range into the 1980s. But I have not altered the fundamental organization of the book; I have still rejected a traditional chronological-historical approach to the whole subject, and have maintained an ordering that reflects my view of American music as a number of more or less distinct but parallel streams. Of these streams, some are narrow, some broad, some at times have nearly dried up, some at times have overflowed their banks, spilling into one another, interpenetrating, merging, diverging again. Both the terrain and my own perception of it have changed in the past decade, but the metaphor still remains, for me, a sufficiently useful and compelling one.

From my vantage point near the end of the 1980s, I think I can still make out six such streams, though I have changed their labels a little. To the six sections devoted to these streams I have added a seventh, to call attention to what is more than ever an important characteristic of American music—a regionalism that defies absorption and homogenization, and a diversity that calls into question the concept of the “melting pot.”

The question of balance in the allotment of the limited space available in a single-volume work inevitably arises. In order to give this book the character I believe it should have, several concerns, sometimes competing, have entered into decisions regarding space. The dominant concern, of course, has been, as it must be, the relative importance of the music itself, however difficult this may be to assess, and however widely individual assessments may vary.

This, however, has not been the sole concern. For example, since this book is designed to be used in teaching, the varying degrees of experience and background students bring to various kinds of American music has been taken into account. This led to a somewhat fuller and more detailed exposition of our twentieth-century fine-art or “classical” music than some critics would have liked, and to the adoption in Chapter 16 of an approach deliberately planned to move in stages from easily accessible and attractive twentieth-century works, especially those with extramusical associations, to works requiring a bit more preparation and experience.

A more important concern in the allocation of space, however, has been my conviction that the fullest and most rewarding understanding of American music is gained by seeing it in the context of American history and society. For example, the extended consideration of the minstrel show in Chapter 11, of the songs of Stephen Foster and of the later ragtime songs in Chapter 12, of the career of Thomas (“Blind Tom”) Bethune in Chapter 15, and of bebop and the succeeding “black nationalism” in Chapter 14 all bear on the troublesome and inescapable American question of the relations between the races.

It is also of vital concern, in my opinion, to view American music in the context of *ideas*—of our various competing and evolving notions about art, and what it should be and how it should function. This conviction has influenced the treatment of many subjects in the book. Charles Ives has been given

extensive space in Chapter 17 not only on account of his music, but because of the ideas he raises about (among other things) the negative aspects of professionalism, as well as the very nature of music itself—ideas that are further explored at some length in Chapter 18. Nineteenth-century men and women such as Anthony Philip Heinrich, William Fry, George Frederick Bristow, and even non-musicians such as John Sullivan Dwight, Richard Storrs Willis, and Margaret Fuller, have been given space in Chapter 15 on account of the issue of musical “Americanism” they raised—an issue that is still alive today. The career and ideas of Arthur Farwell are given space in the same chapter because of the democratic ideals implicit in his ambitious productions, and the implications of his pioneering publishing venture, the Wa-Wan Press. (He wanted *quality*, as he perceived it, and he wanted it for the *masses*—a dual objective that is not without certain potential contradictions.)

I am not unmindful of some imbalances in the content and length of individual chapters. In the late 1980s I am content to let stand the statement about the contemporary fine art scene that is made by placing the topic “Beyond Modernism” in a short independent chapter, and the emphasis and even encouragement that having a separate Chapter 20 gives to our *regional*, as well as ethnic, diversity. In the 1990s, should there be a third edition, perhaps these imbalances will be ameliorated—or replaced by others. In the meantime, I am prepared, on their account, to accept with good grace any accusations of eccentricity.

Whatever reservations, then, one may have about this way of mapping the terrain (and I freely confess to having some of my own), it can at least be said that each stream consists of a considerable and important body of music waiting to be known. Once the enthusiast has gotten to know the music, he can discard the categories or rearrange the music into his own. Nor are the boundaries always sharp. There are ambiguous composers and ambiguous pieces that could fit almost as well in one category as in another. Was John Philip Sousa primarily an entertainer or a “serious” musician? William Billings was one of a “school” of composers and his contemporaries wrote almost nothing but sacred music. Yet he is sometimes regarded as our first popular composer; his “Chester,” at least, was indisputably the hit song of the American Revolution. And what of Leadbelly’s “Goodnight Irene”? Leadbelly himself came into prominence as a folk singer, but this song—certainly not traditional—made the hit parade as a popular song. The thoughtful student can add many more examples. Rather than being exceptions, they prove the rule that American music is broadly interrelated, unpredictable, and defiant of categories.

Nevertheless, on a practical level organization is indispensable, and this particular ordering of the subject maintains what I regard as an important characteristic—a flexibility that allows the reader to use any of the six parts as a point of departure for an exploration of the whole subject. For example, those who feel most at home with folk or ethnic music, or hold the view that this is the key to our musical culture, will naturally begin with Part One, but will be able to go on from there to explore our folk-based popular music in Part Three, trace the folk influence in our native religious music in Part Two, and then observe its use as a basis for some of our classical music in Part Six.

But the study of American music could begin equally well with jazz (Part

Five), then proceed to a treatment of its roots as discernible in the music treated in Chapters 2, 6, and 8, and finally note its relation to our classical music in Part Six.

Religion has played an important role in the formation of American character and culture. A study of our native religious music in Part Two, and in Chapter 2 of Part One, could be followed by a study of both its echo and its antithesis as observable in blues, country music, and rock (Part Three), and in jazz (Part Five).

For many, rock has been the first point of contact with American music. From this starting point, this visceral form could be traced to its roots in Chapters 7 and 8; to its near relation, urban folk music, in Chapter 4; via jazz-rock to Part Five; or via contemporary "art rock" to the avant-garde classical music in Chapter 18; and so ever onward.

The vast popular music of the "Broadway galaxy" (Broadway, Hollywood, and Tin Pan Alley, of Part Four) has been for many their primary contact with American music, and could well serve as a point of departure, as could also our vigorous tradition of classical music, which has produced many works of wide appeal.

Wherever one should choose to begin, in other words, one can find, if my intentions have been to any degree realized, not only a substantial treatment of that subject but also an invitation to relate it to all other parts of the whole.

There is always a question, in a book about music, as to how much strictly biographical information to include. We can never deny the fact that it is *individuals* that make all the difference in music, and that their lives are part of its history, and are therefore never wholly irrelevant and are often fascinating. But the panorama is so vast, and the number of musicians, even quite important ones, is so great, that limits had to be placed somewhere. The reader will not find, then, an obligatory paragraph of biography for each composer mentioned. Some biographical material is indeed included where it seemed to shed light either on the nature of the music itself, on the milieu from which it came, or on some aspect of American music that goes beyond the career of a single individual. I offer this explanation to readers who may not find enough herein to satisfy their curiosity about a particular American musician, and I hope that they will have access to a reference work such as the single-volume *Baker's Biographical Dictionary*, edited by Nicolas Slonimsky (not limited to American musicians); to *The Encyclopedia of American Music*, edited by Edward Jablonski: for the modern period, to the *Dictionary of Contemporary Music*, edited by John Vinton (again not limited to Americans); or, for all periods, to the more detailed four-volume *New Grove Dictionary of American Music*, edited by H. Wiley Hitchcock and Stanley Sadie.

Musical examples have been used rather profusely in certain chapters, where they seem to be practical and particularly essential. They should enhance the text for the individual reader who can read music; in the lecture hall or classroom the teacher may play or sing such examples as are relevant. Songs and song excerpts have been pitched for comfortable singing.

When listening to vocal music, it always deepens ones perception of it to have the text available. Since it has not been possible, for reasons of space, to include as many vocal music texts as would have been ideal, I urgently recommend that the listener or the teacher make the effort necessary to have

the text available in some form. Sources have been indicated where it was not possible to print the full text.

It is not usual to call special attention to endnotes, but I have reasons for most earnestly advising readers that they are in this case far from perfunctory. In addition to the usual and obligatory documentation of sources, they serve two further and even more important functions. First, the recorded examples cited are nearly indispensable illustrations of the points being made. Furthermore, the wealth of recorded material cited, especially in archival collections such as those issued by New World and Smithsonian, includes annotations that make it possible, where there is sufficient interest and initiative, to assemble musical illustrations that go into more detail than the scope of this book allows.

Second, the notes often provide additional background, references, and relevant "asides," beyond what could be incorporated into the text itself, thus opening up avenues of further exploration for the interested reader.

The reading lists at the end of each chapter are quite selective and include only those works that are apt to be readily available, are eminently readable in their own right, and are important to any further investigation of the topics treated in the chapter. Some non-music books are there because of their value in furnishing background. Musical biographies are numerous, and very uneven in quality and value. For lack of space I have in principle excluded them, except for a few that illuminate a period or a milieu especially well. Basic biographical information is readily available in the sources indicated above.

Listening to the music under discussion is of course indispensable. Live performances would be ideal, but recordings are a nearly obligatory substitute for immediate first acquaintance. Discography dates rapidly; furthermore, it is unnecessary in some areas, and more or less arbitrary in others. For the individual chapters the lists of suggested recordings are as extensive as it seems useful to have them. In areas in which there are good anthologies that are likely to be found in most institutional record libraries—areas such as folk music, country music, and jazz, for example—many of the musical examples have been chosen for the reader's convenience on the basis of their availability in these collections. The basis of the Listening lists is the LP record, which is still the basic medium for most libraries, even though it is true that by the 1990s discographies in books of this kind will have to reflect the rapid displacement of the LP by the compact disc and the cassette.

Since this book is an open-ended introduction to the subject, the suggestions for projects at the end of each chapter are to be considered an integral part of it. They are intended to give the student an opportunity to investigate further, on her or his own, many different aspects of American music. Even a tiny scrap of knowledge that one discovers, with a little effort, for oneself becomes a cherished corner of the whole subject—forever one's own, in a sense. It will be seen that the projects vary rather widely in the extent of work they involve and in the amount of musical background they presuppose, although the number of those calling for some knowledge of music has been kept to a minimum. This range is designed to allow for as much flexibility as possible in the use of individual projects. Furthermore, they are merely suggestions; the imaginative teacher and the inventive student can come up with many more, along similar or different lines. It will be noted that in nature and format the

projects are by no means confined to the conventional "paper." I remember with pleasure how one student learned a group of sixteenth-century psalm tunes, set words from the Bay Psalm Book to them, added a simple, tasteful modal guitar accompaniment, and sang them for the class. The historical anachronism involved was a minor consideration as compared with the value of experiencing these old tunes as living music. (Needless to say, a similar project found its way into a list in this book.) I would be pleased to hear from students and teachers who have been innovative in this regard. The substance of what this book attempts to offer is not confined to the material in the chapters themselves. For the reader with the curiosity of an inquiring mind, the suggestions for projects, supported in many cases by the suggestions for further reading, offer many more avenues of approach to American music. It is for precisely that sort of reader, whether he or she happens to answer to the name of student, teacher, or simply enthusiast, that I like to feel this work was written.

Those who attempt to scan a panorama as vast as that of American music, and bring its diverse parts together somehow for the reader, are heavily dependent on, and indebted to, the specialists who delve deeply and with skill, knowledge, and integrity into the individual subjects that make up the whole. I have of course drawn on many printed sources, which I have tried to acknowledge in the body of the text or in the notes. In addition, I would like here to acknowledge the personal assistance and advice by many of my colleagues in American music, and to mention especially Joaquín Fernández in Hispanic-American music, Kate Van Winkle Keller in eighteenth-century secular tunes and dances, LeRoy Larson and Philip Nusbaum in Scandinavian-American music, and Brenda Marie Osbey in the Creole music of Louisiana.

Finally, it is a pleasure to thank Nancy Nerenberg and all the friendly and helpful people at the Copy Shack, who dealt not only competently but cheerfully with the photocopying complexities involved in the second edition. Last, and not least, do I take this opportunity express deep appreciation to my wife, Louise, for the sacrifices she has made (of which postponing too many good hikes in the Sierra constitutes only a small but significant part), and the help, understanding, and encouragement she has given in the long course of the preparation not only of the original edition, but of this revision as well.

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PART ONE

Folk and Ethnic Musics

A SCANNING of the vast panorama of American music can begin nowhere more logically than with our folk and ethnic musics. America's music, throughout its broad spectrum, is so relatively new as to have remained closer to folk sources for its sustenance than is the case in almost any other country. The professional sector of our musical life has never gone very long without returning to refresh and revitalize itself at the fount of folk culture. Masterpieces as diverse as *Porgy and Bess* and *Appalachian Spring* bear witness to this, as do large amounts of music in popular culture, from Dan Emmett to Bob Dylan and Paul Simon.

Yet this very closeness of our music to its roots is attended by a paradox. There is probably no other country in the world in which the soil of folk culture has been so thoroughly broken up, and either eroded away or rendered sterile. Not only have the all-pervasive media spread commercial urban music thoroughly, but they have put music largely into the hands of the professional entertainer. Continuous and extensive migration has broken down isolation and emasculated regional character. And affluence, spectacular in comparison to the rest of the world, has put the appliances and products of the media into the hands of virtually everyone, so that the need or desire to make one's own music has lessened or disappeared.

So it would appear that the rich humus of folklore has provided us with nourishment but proved to be fragile as well. Yet the realiza-