

NEGRO¹ FOLKSONG SCHOLARSHIP IN THE UNITED STATES

by

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The purpose of this article will be to serve as a bibliographical aid—to refer the reader to some of the standard reference works, bibliographies and finding aids, to name a few of the many collectors in this field, to cite some of the archives which contain pertinent material, and to list some of the more recent books and articles. Research on this subject will be surveyed under several subheadings (see below). These subheadings are chosen purely for the writer's convenience, although at the same time they may be taken as indicating some of the related research fields which contribute to our understanding of the overall topic.

At the outset, I wish gratefully to acknowledge the help of the staff of the Archive of Folk Song and Recording Laboratory, Library of Congress, and in particular Mrs. Rae Dorson and Mr. Donald Leavitt. Without their constant support, assistance and encouragement this article would not have been possible. My thanks also to Mr. B. A. Botkin and Mr. George List (Director, Archives of Folk and Primitive Music, Indiana University), and Mr. Alan Lomax; their correspondence supplied much useful information.

I BIBLIOGRAPHICAL TOOLS.

In an article whose primary purpose is bibliographical, it seems more logical to begin, rather than end, with bibliography, and the first source which comes to mind in this connection is the Haywood *Bibliography of North American Folklore and Folksong*, soon to be reissued, with corrections, by the Dover Press, New York (a supplementary volume is also scheduled for publication in the near future). This most useful tool comprises 1292 pages of text, with a subject and author index at the back of the book. Literally hundreds of entries pertinent to the study of Negro folklore and folksong are included, referring to books, periodical articles, journals, monographs etc. Regarding recently accepted dissertations and theses on Folk Music etc., see Merriam (1960).² This annotated list is fully indexed, and at least 21 theses and dissertations are referred to which include some discussion of Negro folksong. Kunst's *Ethnomusicology* (Kunst 1959)² is one source which should need no introduction; consult the index under "Afro-Americans", and "North American Negroes".

Another most helpful source is the 1960 Library of Congress publication, *A Guide to the Study of the United States of America*, compiled by Donald H. Mugridge and Blanche P. McCrum. This valuable annotated bibliography of "representative books reflecting the development of American life and thought" comprises 1193 pages, with index, and contains a total of 6487 entries in the main body of the text. Chapter XXIV, "Folklore, Folk Music, Folk Art," has 102 total entries, 35 of which fall under the subheading "Folksongs and Ballads".

Publications of the American Folklore Society, Vol. VII, 1958, is an analytical index to the Journal of American Folklore, Vols. 1-70, 1888 through 1957. A great many entries are included which are pertinent to the subject of Negro folklore and folksong (especially the former). *PMLA* (see Bibliography) annually publishes a selective bibliography of books and articles "useful to scholars in the field of modern languages and literature". Since the 1956 list, this bibliography has been international in scope. A large Folklore section is included, and in the 1959 bibliography this section has a subsection entitled "Ballad, Folksong and Folk Poetry" (see *PMLA* LXXV, 2:183-4)³.

For current magazine and journal articles, the *International Index* lists articles in a wide variety of publications, including the *Journal of American Folklore*, *Musical Quarterly*, *The Music Review*, *Notes*, *Music and Letters*, *Southern Folklore*, and the *Journal of Negro History*. The *Music Index* (which began publication in 1949) lists articles in most of the major music magazines and journals (including *Western Folklore*, *qthso'usicology* and the *Journal of the International Folk Music Council*). The *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* indexes very few of the magazines dealing specifically with music, being primarily interested in those of more general interest. Use of this index, however, would lead one to such articles as Marshall Stearns' "Jazz versus Folk Music" (Stearns 1958) in the *Saturday Review*.

Folklore Musical (1939) includes some pertinent material—see for example under "Ouvrages bibliographiques—Musique Nègre" on pp. 107-115. Mattfeld (1925) remains useful, although limited in that it discusses only references in the New York Public Library. Although the majority of the works listed in the *Acculturation Abstracts* (Siegel 1955) deal with the North American Indian, several studies are included which deal with the Negro, among them Slotkin (1943) and the chapter on African influence (pp. 207-218) by Richard Waterman in *Tax* (1952).

¹ For the purpose of this article, "Negro" (and "Negro Folksong", "Negro Folklore", etc.) are to be taken as pertaining to the Negroes of North America, and particularly the United States, unless otherwise specified.

² To save space, I have adopted bibliographical procedures patterned after those used in the *American Anthropologist*. Thus (Merriam 1960) and (Kunst 1959) refer the reader to the Bibliography, where authors are given alphabetically, and their works are listed chronologically by year of publication.

³ An abbreviated form of biographical citation will be used herein, giving Volume, number or date, and page references. Thus this citation in its full form would read: *PMLA. Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, Volume 75, Number 2, pages 183-4.

II. FOLKLORE.

A great many purely literary studies have been done on Negro folk tales, on such matters as recurrent themes, borrowing of lines etc. Since I believe the interest of this journal's readers to be mostly musicological, very few of these will be listed in this article. More can easily be located, however, by referring to the bibliographical tools already mentioned above (especially Haywood 1951), and many more studies of a similar nature are referred to in the bibliographical notes (pp. 296-7) to Chapter V ("The Negro") of Dorson's *American Folklore* (Dorson 1959), and the bibliography (pp. 201-4) of Dorson (1956).

William Broonzy's *Big Bill Blues* (Broonzy 1955), a straightforward and vivid presentation of the author's personal experiences as a folksinger, is a fine contribution, as is Frederick Ramsey Jr.'s *Been Here and Gone* (Ramsey 1960). In the latter, a great many excellent photographs supplement the text. A recent dictionary of terms, lore etc. is Marjorie Tallman's *Dictionary of American Folklore* (Tallman 1960). Two additional books on folklore are Richard Dorson's *Negro Folk Tales in Michigan and American Folklore* (Dorson 1956 and 1959). In the latter, see especially Chapter V—"The Negro". The University of Chicago Press also will shortly publish the author's *Folklore of the United States*, which most probably will include some Negro folk material.

III. FOLKSONG—GENERAL.

John A. Lomax's *American Ballads and Folk Songs* (Lomax 1935), Carl Sandburg's *American Songbag* (Sandburg 1927), and Newman White's *American Negro Folk-Songs* (White 1928) remain standard reference works. Many of the more common Negro folksongs appear in one or more of these three books. Both the White and the Lomax books have useful bibliographies. An important recent collection is Alan Lomax's *The Folk Songs of North America* (Lomax 1960). This book has brief discussions of 317 songs (see especially part IV: "The Negro South"). Texts, melodies and guitar chords are given, and 100 songs appear with piano accompaniments (by Matyas Sieber and Don Banks). The back of the book includes a "Book List", Guitar and Banjo guide, Discography (listing "Commercial records available in Great Britain"), Index of Song Titles and Index of First Lines. For the reader who is interested in knowing about more collections, Ray Lawless has an annotated list (pp. 275-392) in *Folksingers and Folksongs in America* (Lawless 1960). A large portion of the latter book (pp. 25-244) is devoted to short biographies of folksingers, and the book also has a list of Folklore Societies and bibliographical sources.

Chapters III and VI of Bruno Nettl's *An Introduction to Folk Music in the United States* (Nettl 1960) discuss Negro folk music, and the "Bibliographical Aids" at the back of the book are very helpful, as is the Annotated Bibliography and Chapter 9 ("African and New World Negro Music") in Nettl (1956). Samuel Charters' *The Country Blues* (Charters 1959) is an important study, and includes a list of blues records in the Appendix (pp. 269-278). John A. Lomax's collecting experiences are chronicled in *Adventures of a Ballad Hunter* (Lomax 1947). Coming, as it does, from a collector who has contributed a great deal of material to the Archive of Folk Song, Library of Congress, this book makes most interesting reading.

Chapter VII of Laws' *Native American Balladry* (Laws 1950) discusses "The Negro's Contribution to American Balladry". The book also includes a classified catalog of American ballads (see especially pp. 230-243, "Ballads of the Negro"), and a bibliography (pp. 267-70). An interesting side-issue arises in connection with John Greenway's *American Folksongs of Protest* (Greenway 1953). The question is: are topical songs, which appear in connection with a particular historical occasion and are probably not a part of the surviving or "enduring" oral tradition, properly to be considered as "folksongs"? Mr. Greenway's title argues that they are, and the book for the most part is concerned with political songs etc., or songs commenting on a political or historical situation. Another interesting recent study is Sven Eric Molin's article on "Lead Belly, Burl Ives and Sam Hinton" (Molin 1958).

An early scientific attempt to visibly record pitch against time by direct mechanical means is Milton Metfessel's *Phonophotography in Folk Music* (Metfessel 1928). The folk materials used are Negro songs. For similar studies of mechanical music notation, see also Seeger (1957 and 1958) and Jones (1949), pp. 63 ff., and the two appendices.

The Selective Bibliography in D. K. Wilgus' *Anglo-American Folksong Scholarship since 1898* lists many of the other recent studies on Negro folksong, as do the Bibliographical Tools discussed above, for the reader who wishes to see more writings on this topic.

V. NEGRO FOLK MUSIC AND RELIGION.

The influence of early American white hymnody upon the Negro is plainly demonstrated by the "Tune Comparative List" in Chapter XV of *White and Negro Spirituals*, by George Pullen Jackson, (Jackson 1944). Here 116 tunes common to both races are placed side by side in their respective versions, and one can readily see the many rhythmic, melodic and textual variations present in the Negro versions. An important contribution of Odum's *The Negro and his Songs* (Odum 1925) is the discussion of the Negro's attitude towards his own songs. Religious, social and work songs are included.

Alan Lomax's *The Rainbow Sign* (Lomax 1959) is an excellent recent study of the religious element in Negro folksongs, and Johnson (1925) remains a standard reference source. Ramsey (1960) also includes material pertinent to this topic, and Chapters 8 and 12 of Stearns (1956) present a discussion of the influence of the spiritual and religious elements in jazz. In addition, Chapters 4 and 5, "The Christian Element in New Orleans Jazz" in Grossman (1959) should also be mentioned.

VI. NEGRO FOLK MUSIC AND JAZZ.

Stearns (1956), Chapters 9 through 11, discuss Negro Folksong influence on jazz. Also important are Chapters 6 and 7 ("Secular Elements in New Orleans Jazz") in Grossman (1956), and Chapter 8 ("Jazz as Synthesis"), in which the authors attempt to minimize African influence as a primary determinant of style in jazz. Many other sources state the case for African influence, via Negro folksong, and among them is Chapter 1, "The Roots of Jazz", by Ernest Borneman, in Herloff (1959). In this connection, see also Stearns (1956) and Longstreet (1956), Chapters 2-5. The series of articles by Schaeffner (Schaeffner 1926) is indication of the early interest abroad in this topic.

An interesting side-issue is explored in the Freedman article, "Natural Jazz Rhythm in Folk Songs". Freedman's approach is toward a literary analysis of style in which he sees jazz elements in folksong texts.

Paul Oliver's excellent discussion of "blues", *Blues Fell This Morning* (Oliver 1960) includes an excellent Discography (pp. 311-338), an Index of Quoted Blues Singers (pp. 341-4) and a Selected Bibliography (pp. 345-358); see also Charters (1959).

Two recent German books are indicative of the current interest abroad in this subject. Bartsch's *Neger, Jazz und Tiefer Süden* (Bartsch 1956) has a useful bibliography (pp. 311-6), and Dauer's *Der Jazz* (Dauer 1958) has two introductory chapters discussing the music of West Africa, and Afro-American music in South America and the West Indies. A longer chapter follows, in which Negro folk music (in the U.S.) is discussed. The "Beispielanhang" includes transcriptions of 70 musical examples, including West African, North American Negro, and Jazz items. As Bruno Nettl's review points out (see *Ethnomusicology* IV, 1:42), authentic jazz transcriptions are extremely rare. For more studies on this and related topics, see the two bibliographies of writings on jazz listed in the Bibliography: Merriam (1954) and Reisner (1959).

VII. ACCULTURATION.

Some recent studies on this topic include "Some Psychological Implications of Afro-American Studies", by Melville J. Herskovitz,⁴ and "African Influence on the Music of the Americas", by Richard Waterman, in Tax (1952), pp. 152-160 and 207-218. Also see Slotkin (1943), Herskovitz (1958) and Chapter VII, "Folk Music in the Metropolis", in Nettl (1960).

VIII. ARCHIVES, RECORDINGS AND DISCOGRAPHY.

A great wealth of folk material is preserved in U.S. University or library archives and in private collections, including a great deal of Negro folklore and folksong. Much of the information given in Herzog (1936) pp. 64-77, is now out of date, but the study remains useful as an indication of the location and general scope of many extant collections (see also the bibliography, pp. 77-93, and "Negro Folk Music", pp. 56-7). In discussing particular collections, let us begin with the Library of Congress. The holdings of the Archive of Folk Song, Music Division, Library of Congress, are vast indeed, and a sizeable portion of this collection pertains to the Negro. A printed catalog—see Folk Music (1959)—is available, listing those items which can be purchased in albums of 78 or 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ r.p.m. records. A great many Negro folk items are contained in the catalog, prices are quoted, and contents of the records are given in full. Information concerning the cost of preparing tape or disc copies of other items in the Archive of Folk Song may be gotten from the Recording Laboratory, Music Division, Library of Congress.

The *International Catalogue of Recorded Folk Music* (1954) is another useful source, listing as it does "Commercial Recordings", (pp. 105-118) and "Recordings held by Institutions" (pp. 181-4). Also, a series of articles has recently been appearing in *The Folklore and Folk Music Archivist*, outlining the contents of various U.S. folk archives. Those which seem, from these brief articles, to be of interest to the student of Negro folklore and folk music are in Ohio (see "Archive of Ohio Folklore and Music", *Folklore and Folk Music Archivist* I, 3:p.1, 3), Northwestern University (see "Northwestern University Laboratory of Comparative Musicology", *op. cit.* III, 2:p.1, 4), The University of North Carolina (see "The University of North Carolina Institute of Folk Music", *op. cit.* II, 3:p.1, 4), and the University of Texas (see "The University of Texas Folklore Archive", *op. cit.* II 3:p.1, 4). There is also a small quantity of material at the University of Indiana Archives of Folk and Primitive Music, Indiana University, some of it in the collection of Richard M. Dorson, formerly at Michigan State University (for a description of the contents of this collection while at Michigan State, see "Michigan State University Folklore Archives", *Midwest Folklore* V, Spring 1955:51-9).

One of the collections outside the United States which holds a certain amount of Negro folk music on records is the Collection Phonothèque Nationale in Paris. Their published catalog—see *Archives de la Musique Enregistrée* (1952)—is indexed, and lists a good many Negro folk items (see under "Etats-Unis/United States").

On the subject of discography, a folk music section (compiled by Donald Leavitt and Kurtz Myers) is periodically given in the "Index of Record Reviews", a regular feature of *Notes* magazine (published by the Music Library Association, c/o Music Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.). See, for example, "Folk, Ethnographical and Traditional Music", *Notes* XVII, 4: 601-640. The "Index of Record Reviews" lists current record releases, and each entry (which gives complete contents) is followed by a set of symbols and numbers, giving the reader the page citations of reviews of the record in question,

⁴ Herskovitz is currently doing research in northern urban Negro church music.

and also giving some indication as to whether the reviews listed were favourable, unfavourable, indicated mechanical faults, etc. *Record Ratings* (Myers 1954) was compiled from the "Index of Record Reviews" sections in *Notes*, and has a quite extensive Folk Music section (pp. 98-114). *Western Folklore*, the *New York Folklore Quarterly*, the *Journal of American Folklore* and *Midwest Folklore* have record review sections, and these are indexed in the *Notes* "Index . . ." The reviews in these journals are usually done by folk music specialists, and for this reason there is frequently quite a bit to be gained from reading them as an aid in selecting commercial recordings of folksongs. See, for instance, *Journal of American Folklore* LXXIII, 290: 357-361, which includes reviews of several new releases containing Negro material (also included, incidentally, is a review of a new Folkways issue: "The Topoke People of the Congo", LP FE 4477), and *Western Folklore* XIX, 1: 73-6, which lists and reviews a group of new recordings of Negro material (including blues, gospel singers and early jazz).

An extensive record list is given in Lawless (1960), pp. 485-630, and other recent lists appear in Lomax (1960)—see the Discography at the back of the book—Oliver (1960), pp. 311-338, and Wilgus (1959)—especially pp. 376-86, "The Negro Tradition".

Among the extant discographies, three come to mind: *A List of American Folksongs . . .* (1953), which remains quite useful, although not current, B. G. Lumpkin's *Folksongs on Records* (Lumpkin 1950) which also gives a list of private collectors of folksong records (pp. 82-86) and a bibliography (pp. 75-82), and *Folklore Musical* (1939)—see under "Disques Scientifiques—Musique Nègre" on p. 94 and 97.

Several U.S. record companies are quite active in the folk music field. Folk-Lyric Records (3323 Morning Glory, Baton Rouge 8, La.) has issued much of the material recorded by Dr. Harry Oster on field trips in the south (see, for instance, *Angola Prisoners' Blues*, *Prison Worksongs*, and *Angola Spirituals*, record nos. LFS A-3, A-5 and A-6). Folkways Records (117 West 46th Street, New York 36, New York) has produced a large number of folk music records since the company began, and quite a bit of the material pertains to the Negro. Many extensive recording trips and sessions have been preserved by this company, among them Harold Courlander's 1950 trip, sponsored by the Wenner-Gren Foundation, in eastern Alabama (six volumes, Folkways record nos. FE 4417, 4418 and 4471-4), and Frederic Ramsey Jr's 1959 trip to Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, sponsored by the Guggenheim Foundation (ten volumes, "Music of the South", Folkways nos. FA 2650-9).

Tradition Records (Box 72, Village Station, New York, N.Y.) is only recently formed, and their present plans call for documenting American folk music. Among their recent releases is a record prepared from Alan Lomax's 1947 trip to Parchman Farm (a penitentiary farm in the Mississippi delta). Atlantic Records (Atlantic Recording Corp., 157 West 57th Street, New York 19, N.Y.) has released stereophonic recordings of Alan Lomax's 1959 trip in the south, and, to quote Mr. Lomax, "here for the first time through the use of stereo, it is possible to hear the intricacies of Negro polyphony and poly-rhythm".

In addition to the companies already named, Bill Grauer Productions (Riverside Records), Vanguard Recording Society (Vanguard Records), Elektra Records, Columbia Records, Decca Records (U.S.), R.C.A. Victor Records, and several other U.S. record companies have listed Negro folk material in their recent catalogs. Most of the companies named will be happy to send descriptive flyers and short lists upon request, and these can also be gotten through record dealers and distributors. A handy source for brief current listings, however, is the Folk Music section of the *Longplaying Record Catalog*, published by W. Schwann, Inc., 137 Newbury St., Boston 16, Mass.

IX. CONCLUSION.

As I stated at the beginning of this article, it has not been my intention to name all the books written or to indicate all of the related research fields which contribute to our knowledge of this broad subject. Instead, I have sought to name some of the standard references and several of the more recent studies, documentaries and collections. I hope the bibliography which follows will serve to introduce the names of a few of the important scholars and to open the door to the vast amount of material available for study by new inquirers.

X. BIBLIOGRAPHY.⁵

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⁵ Entries without author follow at the end of the author alphabet (following Wilgus 1959).

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