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Making Musicology Modern:

An Interview with Carol J. Oja

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Carol J. Oja was born and raised in Hibbing, Minnesota. She attended St. Olaf College and earned a master's degree from the University of Iowa. From there, she went to the Graduate School of the City University of New York, where she studied with H. Wiley Hitchcock and became closely associated with the Institute for Studies in American Music at Brooklyn College. She received her Ph.D. at CUNY in 1985, with a dissertation on the cross-cultural musical odysseys of the Canadian-American composer Colin McPhee. That same year she was hired to the faculties of Brooklyn College and the Graduate School of CUNY. She was appointed director of the Institute for Studies in American Music in 1993, where she focused especially on global music traditions represented in Brooklyn's diverse immigrant populations. From 1997 to 2003, she taught in both American Studies and Music at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia, and in 2003 she was named the William Powell Mason Professor of Music at Harvard University, where she also serves on the faculty of its Program in the History of American Civilization.

Oja's research focuses on a broad span of twentieth-century American musical traditions, with a special interest in interracial and transnational intersections. She is past-president of the Society for American Music, and she collaborated with Lucius R. Wyatt and the late Mark Tucker to establish the Committee on Cultural Diversity of the American Musicological Society

(which became a standing committee of AMS in 1992). Her book *Making Music Modern* (2000) won the Irving Lowens Award from the Society for American Music, as well as an ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award. Other books include *Colin McPhee: Composer in Two Worlds* (1990, 2004; ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award); *A Celebration of American Music: Words and Music in Honor of H. Wiley Hitchcock* (1990; edited with Richard Crawford and R. Allen Lott); and *Copland and his World* (2005; edited with Judith Tick). Her projects in press include *Bernstein Meets Broadway: Collaborative Art, Race, and Progressive Politics in a Time of War* (to be published by Oxford University Press) and *Crosscurrents: American and European Music in Interaction, 1900-2000* (edited with Felix Meyer, Wolfgang Rathert, and Anne C. Shreffler; to be published by the Paul Sacher Foundation and Boydell Press).

TR: [*To the audience*] In 2007 Samuel Floyd reminisced with us about his early days in music, especially band music, and the path that he followed into music research. We also talked in 2008 to Richard Crawford, a long-time friend and mentor of both Carol's and mine. These interviews were so successful that I decided to continue this tradition with our current Robert and Ruth Fink Lecturer, Dr. Carol Oja.

What we're doing today is a little different from the formal, official lecture that will take place tonight in this same space. It is, in my view, a kind of a conversation but also a chance for the students to hear about the path our guest has traveled over her career. I'll begin with a question I sprang on Rich last year: What was the first musical experience you had or the first one that you remember?

CO: Oh my! [*pausing*] I say that in part because I've always been a musician, so it's hard to think of a "first." I started piano when I was in second grade, and I would guess all the students in this room have a story like that -- of a childhood that was filled with music. I became a church organist in junior high. From then through high school, I was essentially the town pianist, performing in lots of piano recitals, playing in the pit band for high school musicals, accompanying my high school chorus, and also playing for a wide range of musical activities in my family's church.

TR: So music was always a part of your growing up. I should add here that Carol is from northern Minnesota. When we were talking a couple of weeks ago I began to hear a little bit about your early experiences in Minnesota. You attended St. Olaf College; is that right?

CO: I did.

TR: A wonderful Minnesota school famous for its music. It seems almost predetermined that you would attend? You were the young town musician, so St. Olaf was the logical choice?

CO: Well, that was the case in part, but not entirely. My grandparents were all immigrants from Finland. They were homesteaders on the Mesabi Iron Range of northern Minnesota during the early 20th century. I was the first person on this side of the Atlantic to go to college, and enormous family energy was poured into giving me a solid education. Being Finns, they were Lutherans. Curious as it might seem to outsiders, the various Scandinavian immigrant groups each have an individual sense of identity, so it felt like a cultural stretch for a Finn to go to a

school of Norwegian heritage. Nonetheless, St. Olaf was a fabulous place for music, and I lived in the practice room. At that point in life I thought I was going to be a church organist.

TR: Which leads, naturally, to the next question. What drew you to musicology . . . the fateful choice?

CO: Well, I don't know that there was a defining moment. I had excellent music history classes as an undergraduate, and I discovered I liked to write, which I was aware of in high school but didn't fully realize until college. From the vantage point of northern Minnesota, I had never heard of musicology. The professional models I had in those early years—especially among women—were church musicians and school teachers in the public schools. In college, everything changed. I suddenly learned that people actually make careers out of studying music history and teaching it at the college level.

TR: That was at St. Olaf. Then you went and did your master's in Iowa?

CO: At the University of Iowa, yes. I was in Iowa City for a couple of years. Then I went on to New York City.

TR: That was obviously a huge change.

CO: My mother was concerned about having me move to New York! It was a major change, and it was incredibly stimulating. I knew then that musicology was thoroughly my thing. At the

University of Iowa, I had done some archival research under the supervision of Frederick Crane, where I traced the careers of Buena Vista and Wallace Atkinson, two Iowa musicians who worked on the vaudeville circuit in the early twentieth century. That project convinced me that archival research was fascinating, and it also drew me towards working on American traditions. In the late 1970s, there were few Ph.D. programs in musicology where a person could explore American music. I chose to go to the Graduate School of the City University of New York because H. Wiley Hitchcock was there. Looking back, it was an amazing opportunity. Lots of people have careers with a more traditional trajectory, where they start at an Ivy League undergraduate institution, with a solid sense of the path that is unfolding before them. My life has not been like that. I received a fellowship to study at the City University before I even had a chance to meet Wiley, so there was a leap of faith involved. I didn't actually get to shake his hand until my second semester at CUNY, when I went out to Brooklyn College to attend a conference he was running on "The Phonograph and Our Musical Life." Looking back, that event represented an early stage of recognizing media studies as important for musicologists. Anyway, I walked in on the "keynote address," which wasn't a lecture but rather a performance of *49 Waltzes for Five Boroughs*, which had been commissioned from John Cage. In the piece, as I recall, the audience and a cluster of panelists migrated around a small concert hall putting recordings on turntables. It was like a community of DJ's having a spin session. This imaginative, free-wheeling musical event was my introduction to Wiley, and over the years I found him to be consistently experimental and open-minded. He played within the rules of the academic system and achieved success by doing so, but he also created a safe space for students to follow their imaginations.

TR: That's great. I'd heard about that conference. We were in graduate school at about the same time. I was at the University of Michigan then, and I remember Richard Crawford coming back and talking about this conference on the phonograph and thought, drat, I missed something important.

CO: The University of Michigan was one of the other graduate programs in the late 1970s and early 1980s where a person could study American music and be treated seriously. I can still quite easily drift back to that formative era in my professional life and feel the unpleasantness of being excluded by "mainstream" musicologists. At American Musicological Society conferences, most strikingly, sessions on American music were usually scheduled in back rooms with low ceilings—rooms where you had to squeeze a hundred people into twenty seats. There was lots of not-so-admirable behavior towards Americanists in the profession at large – a kind of ostracizing that is hard to imagine in today's much more open scholarly environment.

TR: Rich spoke about that a bit last year. It's certainly worth underlining. Of course Bill Kearns remembers this situation as well I think. If you were not a specialist in some preferably long-dead, preferably male, preferably non-English speaking figure you were pretty much in the outer circles of acceptability. In the 1970s and early 1980s, doing something as unusual as investigating John Cage or Charles Ives, or your doctoral work on Colin McPhee – all this was tough-going. If you are an anthropologist or ethnomusicologist here, you'll probably know that Colin McPhee was very instrumental in the whole exploration of Balinese and Indonesian culture. He wrote a very famous book called *A House in Bali* published in the 1940s. Although he had many skills and talents, that book probably did more than anything to found a whole field

of study. So, for Carol to have written her doctoral dissertation on a figure like him, not someone you could call a mainstream concert composer, was quite unusual.

CO: Actually I was told—not by Wiley obviously, but by someone else on the faculty of the City University doctoral program—that if I persisted with a dissertation on Colin McPhee, I would never get a job.

TR: What made you persist? You sensed there was a topic there that needed to be pursued? You eventually made a book version of the dissertation, titled *Colin McPhee: Composer in Two Worlds*, published by Smithsonian Institution Press in 1990.

The timing is interesting here too. This is another subject, in a way, but it's an important one for students of musicology to be aware of. Think about the work you choose to do and then the publication gap. One does the work and then life happens and things intervene. Paths take interesting turns, as does the road to publication and ultimately finding your niche.

CO: I do think timing is crucial in looking at our generation of scholars in American music. In a positive sense, we came into the field right after the Bicentennial when there was a lot of activity. New World Records had issued its hundred-record series that covered an ecumenical range of American traditions; the ragtime revival was in full swing; Eileen Southern's book on African American music had been published. There were new texts coming out that challenged the status quo. There was a lot of new energy. Wiley had founded the Institute for Studies of American Music at Brooklyn College [now called the H. Wiley Hitchcock Institute for Studies in American Music]. What was then called the Sonneck Society [now the Society for American

Music] had been founded. So those of us who were graduate students in the late 1970s and early 1980s really gained a lot from that momentum, and it turned out to be transformative.

TR: That excitement was, I think, one of the reasons we both pursued our subjects and had support from our mentors.

CO: We also loved the music and the broad-based cultural histories we were shaping. For those of you in the audience who are students, it is crucial to choose a topic that focuses on musical repertoires and contextual issues that really grab you. It has to be something that you're willing to wake up with at dawn, and go to sleep with at 2:00 a.m.—and live with for many, many years. Long after a dissertation is finished, you will be asked to do work related to your topic. So it needs to wear well. That kind of passion—you can't just intentionally decide to choose it. In a way, it finds you. When things go right with finding a compelling topic, there can be something magical about the process.

TR: Let's come back to a publication that Carol was very involved with, in fact largely responsible for. I am referring to the discography of twentieth-century American composers, which was published by the Institute for Studies in American Music [*American Music Recordings: A Discography of 20th-Century U.S. Composers*; published by I.S.A.M. and the Koussevitzky Music Foundation]. I was looking at this book the other day in our library, and I was reflecting on where we've come with respect to sound (recording) formats, how one gets access to music, and the fact you can google anything now and everything seems to be on YouTube.

Your discography was compiled in 1980 and 1981; it was published in 1982. Some of you in the audience probably weren't around then, but 13,000 commercially distributed records are listed in this collection, 8,000 different pieces by 1,300 American composers. "American" was defined in this case as United States composers or people who had immigrated from the age of thirty on; they were essentially U.S. resident composers, in other words—composers who were active in this country for the first three quarters of the 20th century. This was an amazing collection of data. There *were* computers in those days, but my recollection was that computer work at that period was pretty minimal. It was really more work to input computer data than to copy it down by hand.

CO: Well, Tom, we've witnessed a digital revolution in a very brief span of time. You're right: *American Music Recordings* was compiled in a pre-internet era. There was a huge need then for scholars of American music to gain control of basic information, and there was no way to quickly determine what concert works by Americans had been recorded—not to mention when or on what label. The only way to retrieve that information was to turn to the Library of Congress catalogs—enormous printed volumes of catalogue cards, which have essentially been replaced today by the online source "Worldcat." So you had to look through gazillion books to assemble a basic discography. You could go to the *Schwann Record and Tape Catalog*, which was also a major source—a monthly publication that listed all the LP's and tapes currently on the market. We compiled our discography with a team of graduate students using three-by-five-inch index cards. I was a graduate student at the time, and I was asked by Wiley to head up the project. Ultimately, the information was computerized on a mainframe computer, and we had a couple of computer terminals set up at I.S.A.M. All the data was stored on reel-to-reel tapes,

which probably have been destroyed by now. The late Phillip J. Drummond, another CUNY Ph.D. candidate in musicology, worked as a computer programmer for *RILM*, and he did the programming necessary to sort and manage the discographical data. R. Allen Lott poured himself into the project, putting in hundreds of hours and contributing an extraordinary eye for detail.

TR: I was really impressed when I looked at all the things that were included in your discography, and it underlines for me the value that I hope we still have in our field, which is this careful attention to detail and looking at details in context. Here is a collection of recordings in all the available formats at the time, which would have included 78 RPM records, 45 RPM discs—the little ones with big holes in them—as well as 33 RPM long-playing vinyl, but no jazz, folk or pop music. We're talking about 13,000 recordings of concert music or classical music, which pales by comparison with the number of recordings of more popular commercial items.

The information in this discography includes—and I really love this—the release date, the delete date, that is if it had once been available but was no longer on the market, and whether it was currently in print. Now that may seem like just so much trivial information, but if you were seriously interested in trying to find this material, given the communications network limitations of the day, this is a wonderful book. I had not opened its pages in many years. I realize now what a delightful collection of information it is and its value as a cultural resource.

For example, if you want to find out what was being recorded in many fields or by certain individual composers, this is an indispensable reference tool. There are only, by the way, seven entries for Steve Reich, who we think of as one of the great composers of the twentieth century, but this was relatively early in his walk to fame. Jean Berger, who taught in this very room many years ago, has eleven entries—eleven different pieces with multiple recordings in this collection.

This discography is a rare photograph, in a sense, of what was happening in classical American music during the 1980s.

Carol is not only a fine author of many books that make up her solo work, so to speak, but she is one of the most productive editors in our field. My hands fell onto another book, which is a Festschrift, although using a German word for an Americanist is probably a slight misnomer. It's called *A Celebration of American Music*, and it's a collection of essays, articles, musical pieces, and poetry in honor of H. Wiley Hitchcock, her mentor. She did this in collaboration with Richard Crawford and R. Allen Lott. I'm impressed over and over by the high quality of editing of so many brief segments. This is one of these things that they don't tell you about in graduate school. You know that you have to write a dissertation and other articles and books in order to achieve the glories of tenure or whatever. But there is a whole category of publication that involves assisting other people with their work.

CO: OPW, as a colleague of mine often says: Other People's Work.

TR: Other peoples' work. And OPW doesn't necessarily get a lot of respect in the field. Truth to tell, you need to know that Carol is a supreme commander in doing OPW! Believe me, we owe her a lot of debts for this.

I'm looking also at a more recent OPW, her 2005 publication with Prof. Judith Tick at Northeastern University, *Aaron Copland and His World*. As you know we have been celebrating Aaron Copland here at the University of Colorado in Boulder, and there are many fine young scholars--and older ones too--who have been working on Copland's material, as represented in this 2005 publication. These kinds of collections are often very important for young scholars.

I think our modern field of musicology is much more open to a variety of perspectives. Ethnomusicologists are writing history now. Historians are looking at cultural context. Where you often find very interesting, very seminal articles or provocative ideas being tried out are in these edited collections. An author may not have the resources or the time to do a full-tilt book on a new and cutting-edge subject, but maybe she has been asked to contribute to an anthology. She might say, well, I'm going to write a little article about this archive that I've discovered or this little twist in a composer's life or a performer's career. I think it's from these seeds that often we get some of the most interesting work that's going on in the field. Carol is certainly an important contributor in this networking process, which is very much a part of being a successful and a useful academic citizen.

CO: Thank you for that lovely compliment! Collaboration is essential for humanists, because our work otherwise tends to be quite solitary. Speaking for myself, I am happiest when I'm at my computer, buried away like a mole and doing my work. At the same time, writing about subjects that involve people who are still living means that a person needs to extract herself from the archive and do ethnographic research – that is, talk with actual people! So those are two of the dimensions in which musicologists can interact productively with others: by collaborating on research projects, and by doing fieldwork and interviews.

TR: That's really important. I think your most recent solo book, *Making Music Modern*, is in many ways a demonstration of a kind of combination of those techniques. One of the things we didn't mention in the introduction this afternoon was that Carol was the director, in a sense, of the core center for the study of American music; it was essentially the forerunner of our own

American Music Research Center. This was the Institute for Studies in American Music at Brooklyn College, founded by H. Wiley Hitchcock. One of the advantages of being in Brooklyn as opposed to Boulder is that you are in a place where a lot of very active cutting-edge musicians are working. We have to do a little more airplane-planning and travel-planning for guests to come to us. Because of Carol's interests and support from I.S.A.M., we're talking about a sort of envy about where you are located at a certain time. There are many instances when being in NY makes it possible to talk with musicians who are young and emerging or perhaps who had been otherwise forgotten.

CO: Or another way to look at it, I think it is important for any scholar—especially Americanists—to take advantage of the musical culture in their immediate environment. Writing local history is important. In the early stage of my career, I happened to be in New York City, and New York obviously has a lot of musical activity going on. Nonetheless, I think that an attention to the local can move with a person to any geographic location. There's always something interesting to discover.

TR: Tell us a little more about the local history museum. You really are experienced in the whole realm. I don't have any particular point in that question other than just asking how your location can be the key to doing successful humanistic research. There's kind of an aura sometimes: how do I do this, how do I write the great book, how do I come up with my dissertation, and sometimes it's just sitting with the materials or the individuals.

CO: I enjoy building a sense of community wherever I'm living. In the case of New York City, I got to know a lot of composers and was lucky enough to be a graduate student when the generation of Aaron Copland and Virgil Thomson was still living. So I seized the opportunity to work with a number of those figures. More recently in Boston (in 2006), I've led a hands-on research seminar together with a Harvard colleague of mine, the ethnomusicologist Kay Kaufman Shelemay. We titled the class "Before *West Side Story*: Leonard Bernstein's Boston." I had already started my work on Bernstein's early experiences on Broadway, and when I moved to Harvard I realized: I'm living in Lenny's home town! So Kay and I collaborated to shape a course where students could do research in the local community, exploring Bernstein's childhood, education, religious roots, and early years as professional. As a kid, Bernstein studied piano at New England Conservatory. His family's synagogue, Congregation Mishkan Tefila, continues to thrive, and it has an archive. During Bernstein's childhood, that synagogue was located in Roxbury in the heart of an immigrant-Jewish enclave; in the 1950s, it moved to the suburb of Newton, not far from where I now live. So there were lots of local opportunities for research.

When Kay and I were first planning the class project, we attended services for the High Holy Days at Mishkan Tefila, and we didn't call ahead or anything. At the end of the service, when we were putting on our coats, we heard people a few rows behind us talking about Leonard Bernstein. Amazing! So the legend of Bernstein is very much alive in that temple, and Kay and I focused our course on Bernstein's position in local history. Not all local music history has a broader resonance; but usually there is something of the sort to find.

TR: Over lunch we were talking about Denver, and some of you here may know—or maybe don't know—that the father of Paul Whiteman, the famous jazz conductor for George Gershwin, was the director of public school music in Denver. So there is an example of a link between a very important national musician and individuals in Denver. Of course, we're already mentioned the composer Jean Berger, who taught here at the university for many years. But there are other popular musicians who came through or who at some point lived in the city of Denver. We know about George Crumb from the concerts from the last month. Don't underestimate the chance for a topic to be lurking in your front yard. This is a message to graduate students looking for thesis topics; sometimes there are amazing riches quite close by. Although it's wonderful to travel to exotic locations, there may be surprisingly rich sources very close at hand.

CO: We need a balance of both, don't we, in our world? We need people who are studying far-off places, and we need those of us who are looking at the scene closer to home. Plus we need people who are actively linking the local, the national, and the global.

TR: We have quite a bit of time. I'd be happy to take questions.

Question from the floor (Tom restates due to low audio level): Comment, please, on the current state of affairs in terms of the acceptance of topics in the scholarly community and of preparation (hopefully!) for a job.

CO: Well, there are various ways to cut into that question. It seems to me that the field of musicology has become very decentralized. There used to be a clear hierarchy of topics and

methodologies—or to put it another way, it used to be super clear what was “important” to study and what was the “best” means of doing so. But that isn’t the case any more. As a result, all sorts of doors have opened up, and job descriptions have shifted accordingly. With the current economic climate, it’s hard to know what the future will hold; we’re in an evolving scene. At this point, it’s hard to tell whether we have entered an era like the early 1980’s, when for quite a long period it was very hard to get a university position, or whether our current economic woes will turn out to be a blip on the screen. Let’s hope the latter is the case. Basically, it seems to me that for young people who are trying to choose topics based on their probability of yielding professional success . . . well, I get back to saying that you are best off doing something that you really, really care about. If that means choosing a topic (or methodology) that extends beyond the norms of the moment, there is certainly a risk. But I also think there can also be a risk in grasping the safety of the status quo. Scholarly trends change, as do hiring patterns, and there is no way to predict what will get you a job in 5 years—or 10 or 15 or 20. This could be advice that bites a few of people, perhaps, but there’s little good in choosing a topic because you believe it is sanctioned by other academics. Somehow, the most important thing is to do work that moves your soul in some way—although, obviously, you don’t want to be wildly impractical. You have advisors around you to help with the selection process. Would you like to add anything to those thoughts, Tom?

TR: I think you’re absolutely correct about the diverse scene nowadays. I think part of this has come about from musicologist more enthusiastically. I probably shouldn’t say that because there are many wonderful scholars who are now senior and who were extremely interdisciplinary. I was just speaking to a student this morning and I was thinking about the fact that there’s quite a

bit of serious scholarship these days about film. Ten or fifteen years ago most discussion of film music rose to the level of a mediocre music-appreciation paper. I do think there is now a whole lot more acceptance within musicology of studying popular culture. So, the porousness—the interpenetration—of different topics is having positive results. Also tied to that is a certain confidence about asserting the importance of music in more broad-based academic discussions. There is a great deal of scholarship in related humanistic fields that brings in music, but it isn't always so well done. We're beginning to see more musicologists step up to the plate and say I'll take my chances with art history but I really have to talk to you about the music connection here and maybe you won't like my art history or my anthropology or my literary criticism, but at least I'm going to say something that I think makes sense about the music. Many of the more interesting scholars today have been able to combine different disciplinary perspectives.

CO: Bouncing off your question in a slightly different direction: in some ways Americanists have consistently been interested in outsider studies, whether that has to do with Women's Studies (now mostly dubbed Gender Studies), African American Studies, Ethnic Studies – or any of the interdisciplinary areas that focus on communities that were previously marginalized in scholarship. The field of musicology used to deal exclusively with the music of white, upper-class males of European descent. In recent decades that's been altered radically, and I count myself among the beneficiaries of a more open-minded field in which to take chances.

Question from the floor (**Tom restates due to low audio level**): It seems that musicologists have been slow to catch up with serious rock scholarship, but they're now beginning to do so.

CO: That's true, and the musicologists who work on rock today often do so within the context of cultural studies. Those theoretical strategies have added a level of sophistication to the study of popular music; they've also played an important part in validating that scholarship. It's not so long ago when scholars were groping for a scholarly language to analyze popular music, and we now have lots of people who are extremely skilled at doing so. The next trick, it seems to me, is to find ways to deploy sophisticated theories in comprehensible prose that will speak to a broader readership—also to achieve tolerance among methodologies. New strategies can enhance older ones, but they don't need to trump or disparage them, as can sometimes be the case.

TR: Good point.

Question from the floor (**Tom restates due to low audio level**): What are the next big new waves in American Studies?

CO: That's hard to answer. Right now there are a lot of young people doing work on popular music. That's striking. There's a lot of interest in film music and media studies. As I said earlier, I don't think that scholars feel a pressure to focus on one area or another, but there is a lot of varied activity. Among my current graduate students at Harvard (as of 2009), Drew Massey is writing about John Kirkpatrick, who was an activist editor of American composers, especially Ives and Ruggles. Kirkpatrick left a massive collection at Yale, which reveals a fascinating tale of how an influential music editor and pianist played an important role in shaping prominent works by modernist composers. Sheryl Kaskowitz is writing about Irving Berlin's "God Bless America," shaping a cultural history that stretches from the song's composition during WWI, straight to 9/11, when it was sung on the steps of the U.S. Capitol. Ryan Bañagle is exploring

Rhapsody in Blue's fundamental construction as an arrangement. He has selected a cluster of ever-shifting versions, including arrangements by Duke Ellington, Larry Adler (the famed harmonica player), Leonard Bernstein, and the "original" arrangement by Ferde Grofé. Glenda Goodman is exploring music, immigration, and belonging; she has shaped case studies that begin with Native Americans singing psalms in Massachusetts in the 17th century, and she ends with the music-making of immigrant children at Hull House in Chicago.

With all of these wonderful young people, they're fusing archival research with some sort of ethnographic perspective.

Question from the floor (**Tom restates due to low audio level**): What are we supposed to do with our under-dog status as Americanists in the modern world?

CO: As opposed to our hang-dog status, I suppose. <laugh> It's a very good question. Today, Americanists are by no means powerful within the academy, but we're certainly not outsiders any more. Attitudes have shifted dramatically. Yet I can say that it's challenging to shed a feeling of the under-dogged-ness of it all because not too long ago there was so much exclusion in so many dimensions. I've talked about being an outsider in terms of American music. It also had to do with being a woman. As a graduate student I was in many seminars where I was the only female, and I was made painfully aware of the fact. That's all changed radically, at the same time as things aren't necessarily equal on all fronts in all places. But that's the key: any individual's personal or professional position is all about context. Within musicology, American music is in much better shape. The AMS panels for Americanists are now in regular-sized conference rooms. Richard Crawford, Charles Hamm, and H. Wiley Hitchcock have all been

presidents of the American Musicological Society. There's a real sense of being part of the ballgame.

William Kearns, Professor emeritus, UC-Boulder: It was 1955 and I was the horn teacher at Ohio State University, but I was interested in music history. I called it music history then [as opposed to "musicology"]. We had a regional AMS meeting in Columbus. Wiley Hitchcock read the last paper at that meeting, and it was about Jazz. Well, every other paper had been on the typical subjects of the time, largely renaissance and medieval and baroque. I said to my mentor at Ohio State, Herbert Livingston, that it was interesting to hear a good paper on jazz. He said: that's sort of the whipped cream of the conference. So there was an attitude that if you did something on American music it was whipped cream. The other thing I want to bring up is that, when I think of Wiley's career and his books on the history of American music (I think I've taught all three editions of that book), I watched his thinking progress. In the second edition [*Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction*, 1974], he started talking about hillbilly music. He actually used the word "hillbilly." I was afraid to call it "hillbilly"; I called it "Appalachian rural music." Wiley straight out used the word "hillbilly." It had become a little bit more respectable. Those are two memories I think about.

TR: What I'm reminded of is how much the vocabulary of the field has changed overall. A term like "folk music," for example, which meant something to me as a teenager in the 1960's, has now been rejected—that is, you can't now use the term in certain circles without being assumed to be completely out of touch. "Traditional"-- or better yet "roots music"—are the operative terms now. Yet "folk" used to be a rather broad and somewhat undefined category, and the shift

in terminology has imposed a much narrower view. Also, it's disturbing how terms can get sort of turned and twisted in a way that can become patronizing. You can say the same word with a different tone of voice, and it can become ironic or positive or an implied comment or criticism. The moral lesson here is to watch your language and also have your best scholarly and personal antennae up as you pursue your careers.

CO: All this has to do with continually finding new ways to articulate the particular nature of American culture and the extreme variety—the wondrous variety—of people who have been brought together in this complex nation. The history of slavery remains with us, as do the racial issues that it provoked. As a result, I feel that Americanists have an obligation to a kind of social responsibility in what we choose to do. I don't mean that I select a topic with a particular agenda in mind, but rather that I want to be alert to musical voices that haven't been recognized at the core of the discourse. For all our good intentions, we are programmed to hear certain voices. Often that has to do with social class; it has to do with race; it has to do with gender and many other aspects of personal and communal identity. I've become increasingly intent on trying to subvert the normalized perspective and pay attention to voices that haven't been attended to as much as they might be. I think that's one of the major gifts of being an Americanist—that is, a drive to be a social activist through scholarship and a commitment to honoring outsider studies.

TR: Thank you. I think that's a great place to end. Thanks all!