

**CULTURAL COUNTERPOINTS:  
Examining the Musical Interactions between the U.S. and Latin America**



**Clark, Walter Aaron (University of California, Riverside):  
“Robert M. Stevenson’s *Inter-American Music Review*: Thirty Years of  
Landmark Publishing”**

**Abstract:**

One of the most significant events in the history of Ibero-American musicology is certainly the launching, almost 33 years ago, of Robert M. Stevenson’s journal *Inter-American Music Review*. Unique in conception as well as execution, it became a major venue for leading research on an impressively wide array of topics, covering all of the Americas and related themes in Europe, Africa, and Asia.

*Inter-American Music Review* was notable precisely because there was nothing else like it.

Though its name recalled Béhague’s equally important *Latin American Music Review*, the scope of Stevenson’s journal was larger. A random sampling of titles illustrates this point: “Pedro de Escobar: Earliest Portuguese Composer in New World Colonial Music Manuscripts,” “Brahms’s Reception in Latin America, Mexico City: 1884-1910,” “Charles Louis Seeger, Jr. (1886-1979): Composer,” “Ignacio Jerusalem (1707-1769): Italian Parvenu in Eighteenth-century Mexico,” “Marianna Martines = Martínez: Pupil of Haydn and Friend of Mozart,” and “Albéniz in Leipzig and Brussels: New Data from Conservatory Records.” Numerous distinguished scholars contributed to this journal, though many of the articles were written by Stevenson himself, as were the reviews. The amount of seminal research IAMR featured over three decades is staggering, research that, in most cases, would not have found any other viable outlet. Indeed, IAMR may constitute Stevenson’s single most important contribution to musicology.

This paper surveys the history of IAMR, providing an overview of its content and presentation, highlights from its 30-year career, and insights into its genesis and editorial procedures from the founder/editor himself.

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of its abstract, which was peer-reviewed. This paper is presented as submitted by the author, who has authorized its dissemination through *IUScholarWorks*.

**Robert M. Stevenson's *Inter-American Music Review*:  
Thirty Years of Landmark Publishing**

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One of the most significant events in the history of Ibero-American musicology is certainly the launching in 1978 of Robert M. Stevenson's journal *Inter-American Music Review*. Unique in conception as well as execution, it became a major venue for leading research on an impressively wide array of topics, covering all of the Americas and related themes in Europe, Africa, and Asia.

*Inter-American Music Review* was notable precisely because there was nothing else like it. Though its name recalls Gerard Béhague's equally important *Latin American Music Review*, Stevenson's journal appeared first, and its scope was larger. A random sampling of article titles illustrates this point: "Pedro de Escobar: Earliest Portuguese Composer in New World Colonial Music Manuscripts," "Brahms's Reception in Latin America, Mexico City: 1884-1910," "Charles Louis Seeger, Jr. (1886-1979): Composer," "Ignacio Jerusalem (1707-1769): Italian Parvenu in Eighteenth-century Mexico," "Marianna Martines = Martínez: Pupil of Haydn and Friend of Mozart," and "Albéniz in Leipzig and Brussels: New Data from Conservatory Records." Numerous distinguished scholars contributed to this journal, though many of the articles were written by Stevenson himself, as were the reviews. According to Stevenson, one of his journal's main purposes was to provide an outlet for up-and-coming scholars as well, especially those working in marginal areas. The amount of seminal research *IAMR* featured over three decades is staggering, research that, in most cases, would not have found any other viable venue during that time. Indeed, *IAMR* is among Stevenson's most significant and enduring contributions to music scholarship.

My goal here is to survey the history of *IAMR*, providing an overview of its content and presentation, highlights from its thirty-year career, and insights into its genesis and editorial procedures from the founder/editor himself. We begin by quickly

surveying Stevenson's career to the point that he launched *IAMR*, to get a better sense what his motivation was.

Stevenson entered this life on July 3, 1916, in Melrose, Curry County, New Mexico. Melrose was a small hamlet, and his family was of modest means. Due to rural exodus, this is now a village of only 700 inhabitants. Even in its heyday, however, it was a small speck of civilization amidst the vast and largely unpopulated expanses of the Southwestern prairie. Stevenson was a mere infant of six months when his family relocated to El Paso, Texas, where he spent his childhood and grew to maturity. They were part of the dramatic growth in the city's population, which doubled between 1910 and 1920.

Someone disposed to be a musician and then musicologist might well have had his worldview shaped in a culturally liminal space like El Paso. Aside from the obvious confluence of Anglo and Mexican cultures, there was the rural/urban divide. Stevenson took piano lessons locally and learned the classics, even as his soundscape introduced him to more vernacular modes of expression. It is not, therefore, so strange that his later border crossing as a scholar, traversing Euroclassical music, in Europe itself and among the European diaspora, went hand in hand with an interest in American musics of all kinds, American in the broadest sense of the word: all of the Americas, their native peoples, folklore, popular music, and cathedral music.

Stevenson earned his bachelor's degree at the School of Mines and Metallurgy, now the University of Texas at El Paso. He thereafter dedicated himself strictly to music, and any account of his subsequent training reads like a Who's Who of institutions and famous people, with degrees from Julliard, Yale, Princeton, Harvard, and Eastman, and studies with Hanson, Stravinsky, Schnabel, and Schrade.

Here is a crucial point: for all his journeys towards the unknown regions of musicological research, he was thoroughly steeped in the mainstream Euroclassical tradition. And this sort of background gave him a degree of credibility he might otherwise have lacked. To the extent that so much American music represents an extension of the European tradition, this also gave him the necessary foundation for assaying New World musics. He was a virtuoso pianist, and I personally recall his ability to stride spontaneously to the piano during a class or seminar and illustrate his point with

an impromptu performance of the “Tempest” Sonata or some other warhorse. A Chopin recital he gave at the 1999 American Musicological Society meeting in Kansas City was a display of pianistic bravura never to be forgotten, one made all the more remarkable by the fact that he was 83 years old. Although we associate him with New World topics, he also made notable contributions to Old World musicology beyond Iberia. In fact, when he went to Oxford in the early 1950s, he intended to study Thomas Morley. Upon learning that someone else was already tackling that subject, he turned to Cristóbal de Morales. He once told me that, at that time, Spanish Renaissance polyphonists were the only Iberian composers the mainstream musicological establishment respected.

Stevenson began teaching at UCLA in 1949, and he soon established his reputation as a leading figure in the study of American music, with his books on music in Peru and Mexico. A trilogy of classics, on *Spanish Music in the Age of Columbus*, *Spanish Cathedral Music of the Golden Age*, and *Music in Aztec and Inca Territory*, followed in the 1960s. The next decade witnessed the birth of *IAMR*. An overview of its contents, compared with other journals of the time, quickly reveals why he needed and created such a periodical: it was the only place the sort of leading-edge, at times esoteric, research he was doing could find a home. It provided an outlet for unconventional research that otherwise would have been difficult or even impossible to place.

To be precise, volume I, number 1 of *Inter-American Music Review* first appeared in the fall of 1978. What was the periodical climate like at this time, and how might that have influenced Stevenson’s decision to launch his own journal, dedicated to his own issues? Let us take a brief look at the tables of contents from some of the leading U.S. journals in historical musicology and ethnomusicology from 1978. This is by no means an exhaustive or scientific survey, but it will nonetheless give us a clearer understanding of the uniqueness and timeliness of *IAMR*. I want to emphasize from the outset that I am not pointing fingers or adopting the victim stance, suggesting there was some sort of conspiracy to suppress Latin American musicology. These superb journals contained some of the best research from that time, and several of the authors will be familiar to you; some are still active. But the fact remains that there is a stark difference between the contents of these journals and Stevenson’s *IAMR*, or for that matter, Béhague’s *LAMR* from a couple of years later.

Take, for example, *Current Musicology*. It presents an admirably diverse selection of topics, ranging from Renaissance France to Baroque Italy, from Koechlin to Varèse, from the fourteenth century to the twentieth. Of special interest is a piece on Gottschalk. *The Musical Quarterly*, then in its sixty-fourth year of publication, included an intriguing piece on colonial New York, amidst a selection of otherwise mainstream topics, though with admirable attention to the twentieth century. The year 1978 witnessed the second volume year of *19<sup>th</sup> Century Music*, edited by D. Kern Holoman, Joseph Kerman, and Robert Winter. These authors brought fresh perspectives to largely canonic repertoire, though we must not forget that, from a musicological standpoint, the nineteenth century was still struggling to get out from under the long shadow cast by pre-1800 research, which continued to dominate the discipline. The Romantic period had respectability issues of its own to deal with.

And what of the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*? This was the flagship not just of the AMS but also of the entire discipline in the U.S., perhaps the English-speaking world. It was and remains the most selective and prestigious journal in musicology. In the three issues of volume 31, the dominance of pre-1800 music studies is on display, with the occasional nod to the German Romantic or, surprise, to topics further afield, such as William Malm's intriguing essay on Japanese music. *Ethnomusicology* could always be expected to march to the *tala* of its own *tabla*, and in volume 22, the global reach of its investigations rarely exceeded its disciplinary grasp, from Inuit throat games to Javanese gamelan—and to problems in salsa research!

It is worth noting that the Ibero-American world was hardly bereft of its own outlets. In this same year of 1978, the *Revista de Musicología*, published by the Spanish Musicological Society, made its debut. In Latin America, *Heterofonía*, *Revista Musical Chilena*, and *Revista Brasileira de Musica* similarly offered readers of Spanish, as well as Portuguese, valuable insights into a wide variety of topics of local interest.

However, one notes that among all of these U.S. journals, in the volume year 1978-79, among the eighty-two articles listed in tables of contents, Ibero-America was represented by one article on Spain and one on salsa—about 2.5 percent of the total offerings. Now, there *were* several items on music of the U.S., and if I had included *Popular Music & Society* in my survey, the number of U.S. topics would be even greater.

But no matter how you slice it, the limited representation Ibero-America receives is all out of proportion to the extent and significance of that heritage.

What was the reason for this dearth? Was there a lack of specialists, or a lack of interest on the part of the editorial boards, or simply indifference on the part of the various readerships? If there was a shortage of high-quality work behind this absence, was it because English-speaking scholars avoided Iberia and the Americas for their real or perceived instability, poor reputation, and difficulties in getting such research published? I have no definitive answers based on actual statistical evidence, though I suspect that all of these explanations are to some extent valid.

It is possible that a sort of vicious cycle prevailed, whereby leading scholars avoided Ibero-American topics because they were considered marginal, and these topics remained on the margins because the leading scholars—and journals—tended to avoid them. Certainly the difficulties of conducting research in many parts of the Ibero-American world served as impediments as well. And these impediments were connected to larger realities. In fact, I cannot help taking one step further back, to situate these journals in that time period and speculate how news about Iberia and Latin America might have influenced general attitudes towards this area and the possibilities of conducting research in it.

In 1978, a major earthquake and tsunami killed 259 people in Colombia. As it is today, the Catholic Church was in the news. Two Popes died, Paul VI and John Paul I; John Paul II became the first Polish pope in history. The Spanish Constitution officially restored democracy in that country, though recovery from years of dictatorship would be gradual. Chile was not yet out of the woods of military dictatorship, as a referendum there legitimized Pinochet's policies. Two pro-independence activists were killed in a police ambush in Puerto Rico. Pedro Joaquín Chamorro Cardenal, critic of the Nicaraguan government, was assassinated, and riots broke out throughout the country in protest. In 1979, a Nicaraguan national guardsman killed an ABC news correspondent and his translator. In July of that same year, Somoza fled Nicaragua for Miami, and the Sandinistas assumed power. The Cold War was still on, and Latin America was a proxy battlefield on which the U.S. supported right-wing dictatorships while the Soviet Union

assisted insurgents and revolutionaries. Most of Latin America was considered to be the Third World.

To be sure, there were less grim developments. Electrical workers in Mexico City found the remains of the Great Pyramid of Tenochtitlan, in the middle of the city. The World Cup was played in Argentina, and the host country defeated the Netherlands to win the coveted prize. In 1977, the Panama Canal Treaty was signed, handing over sovereignty to Panama in 1999. In 1979, Miss Venezuela, Maritza Sayalero, won the Miss Universe Pageant, and Portugal elected a female prime Minister, Maria de Lurdes Pintasilgo.

We must resist the temptation to confuse correlation with causation, but in my private moments, I wonder if Latin America's status in the U.S. media of the time as the realm of nubile beauty queens, soccer champions, natural disasters, Aztecs, Marxist revolutionaries, banana republics, and tin-horn dictators—not to mention fervent Catholicism—had something to do with the virtual non-existence of Latin America in musicological discourse from that period. I distinctly recall the controversy surrounding the Panama Canal Treaty, that the Panamanians could not be trusted to run the Canal. Could it be, I wonder, that Spain's only recent emergence from over thirty-five years of Franco's dictatorship and Portugal's status as an impoverished former colonial power also contributed to a similar marginalized status in this same discourse? Perhaps they just were not taken seriously by intellectuals who, rightly or wrongly, associated the Ibero-American realm with a quasi-medieval socio-economic structure, one in which collusion between oligarchs, the church, and the military sought to keep the whole teetering edifice upright.

In any case, this was the musicological and geo-political universe into which *Inter-American Music Review* was born. Its name was not entirely original, as it was preceded by the *Inter-American Music Bulletin*, published bi-monthly between 1957 and 1973 by the Pan American Union under the auspices of the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Organization of American States. Clearly, *IAMR*'s title was a nod in the direction of this path-breaking earlier publication.

I used to drive Stevenson over to Nicolas Slonimsky's house, not far from UCLA. It was quite an experience to be a mute witness to this meeting of the minds. After one



such encounter, Slonimsky exclaimed in private to me that Stevenson should be much more famous than he was. But, he continued, how many scholars and musicians really cared about pre-1800 cathedral music in Peru! Well, more now than then, but not enough to ensure the degree of celebrity Slonimsky enjoyed. This observation by the highly observant Nicolas is something to bear in mind as we come to the inaugural issue of *IAMR*.

Some outstanding musicologists contributed to this issue, including Donald Thompson and Tomás Marco, both writing in their native languages. The copious articles and reviews without attribution were, of course, written by Stevenson himself, who wasted no time demonstrating his nonpareil mastery of bibliography, something all the more impressive in the pre-Internet era. His evaluations of Iberian and Latin American dissertations and reference entries, made possible by his command of several languages, were in themselves as exceptional as they were invaluable. And cathedral music is also well represented in this issue, from Caracas, Venezuela, and San Juan, Puerto Rico, if not Peru.

The second issue for that year featured an equally original and impressive lineup of contributors and contributions. Stevenson used his own international network of professional and personal connections to solicit and promote such research. And it should be blindingly obvious that this sort of work had few chances of seeing the light of day in the other venues we surveyed from this time.

We might pause here to consider the logistics involved in the conception and production of each issue. First of all is the distinctive black-and-white cover: no logo or color. This was no doubt intended to lower costs, which Stevenson himself bore, but I have always felt that, from an aesthetic standpoint, this also spoke to the journal's seriousness of purpose. The stark clarity of the cover suggested that here was a sanctuary for off-the-beaten-path work, to be sure, but only for investigations that were also models of *Musikwissenschaft*, of scientific rationality and methodological rigor. He received editorial assistance from Henry Cobos, chair of the music department at East Los Angeles College and a long-time friend, going back to his El Paso days, and from Margaret Brownlie at UCLA. The book was actually typeset and printed by the Freedmen's Organization in Los Angeles, established in 1976. David Butler was the owner and

manager of Freedmen's, whose name refereed to the fact that the editors were free to choose their editorial assignments, and to charge whatever fees they thought appropriate. *Inter-American Music Review* was then bound and distributed by Gemini Graphics, in Marina del Rey.

It remained a semi-annual publication, that is, two numbers per annual volume. Obviously, there was no editorial board. Stevenson himself managed the selection of offerings and contributed the lion's share of the content. In this sense, then, it was not a refereed, or peer-reviewed, journal. And yet, I am reminded of what John Kennedy once said to a group of scientists and intellectuals at the White House, that this was the most impressive gathering of minds since Thomas Jefferson had sat there—alone! Stevenson was in a very real sense a one-man editorial board, and the journal would also reflect his priorities and predilections—as well as his style. Stevenson has a distinctive and very personal way of expressing himself, one easily mimicked but not so readily imitated. A few examples of this are illustrative of his memorable prose.

Now, few scholars were able to dodge Stevenson's well-aimed arrows of criticism. Yet, his manner of critiquing someone's work was so artful that it could almost—almost—pass unnoticed. From the first issue of volume III, fall 1980, here are some choice words regarding a book by the eminent Spanish musicologist Samuel Rubio, entitled *Cristóbal de Morales: Estudio crítico de su polifonía*.

With the restraint of a pupil who dares discern not so much as a wrinkle in the master's forehead, Rubio throughout the entire published dissertation forbids even the slightest allusion to Anglés's editorial vagaries. Rubio's three-page bibliography misspells Leichtentritt, Merritt, Steinhardt. Where he commits himself to bibliographic detail similar mischances occur. (p. 110)

The succeeding review demonstrates Stevenson's past mastery of damning by faint praise. In regards to *Information on Music: A Handbook of Reference Sources in European Languages*, vol. 2, *The Americas*, by Guy A. Marco, Ann M. Garfield, and Sharon Paugh Ferris, published in 1977, he concludes by observing that,

*The Americas* lists no literature on California or New Mexico mission music. United States cities from Chicago to Los Angeles and from Detroit

to Savannah have inspired better bibliographic tools than are paraded in *The Americas*. But to suppress further cavils: the volume adequately performs its highly complex tasks. The compilers have placed on the market a vademecum that even smaller municipal libraries should purchase. (p. 114)

What we take away from such critiques is a passionate commitment to these areas of research and a concomitant impatience with anything less than coverage that was inclusive of marginalized areas and fastidious in its careful attention to detail.

Stevenson noted the births of two journals around this time. One was the *Revista Musical de Venezuela*, for which he had particularly high praise, and the other was Béhague's magisterial *Latin American Music Review*. "With his customary enterprise, skill, and wide-ranging vision, Professor Béhague has initiated a periodical that bids fair to encompass all phases of the diverse Latin American scene." However, I cannot help wondering if the following mild critique did not conceal a faint discord of envy, given the resources at Béhague's disposal: "The text is printed without justified right margins, and 'footnotes' follow articles as endnotes. Musical examples, always a crux, are formally drawn in this first issue. Two issues each year are promised." (p. 115) In fact, Stevenson confirmed to me that he always felt *IAMR* to be in competition with *Latin American Music Review*.

Yet, make no mistake about it, Stevenson could press his lapidary prose into the service of effusive encomiums, when needed. In 1980 (III, no. 2), he heralded Gilbert Chase's seventy-fifth birthday:

Not by chance does Gilbert Chase rank as the leading literary stylist who has devoted himself to music in the Americas. . . . [H]e has endowed everything from his ever busy pen—even bibliographies—with rich literary values. Who but he would have headed each section of a now standard text, *America's Music*, with an apt quotation from a classical author? Because of his unique literary gifts, he has succeeded in transforming the often unpalatable foraging of other authors into appetizing books that students read gladly. His sympathies have always been aroused by the significantly new as well as the classically

established. A tireless attender of congresses, he has communicated equally with young and old, always in flawless Spanish, French, or English. Whereas the books of others have barely survived one printing, he has in most of his publications addressed wide audiences whose enthusiasms for what he has written have assured multiple printings and translations into other tongues. (p. 119)

It is safe to say that this style of writing is no longer in vogue, in part because few have the vocabulary, literary background, and flair to pull it off—and in part because the language of musicology is inseparable from the concerns and issues of musicology. Times have changed, but I find it refreshingly entertaining to read this sort of prose. For one thing, it is a good way to improve one’s vocabulary and familiarity with idiomatic expressions. After all, how many people can honestly claim to know the meaning of “adiaphora”? (It is a term from Stoic philosophy referring to an action or event that is neither good nor bad but rather neutral.) In any event, Stevenson proved in such passages that Chase was not the only literary stylist around. And this is actually a very good thing, because Stevenson’s scholarly writing is often densely packed with information, which is what imparts such enduring utility to his work. However, even the most sedulous and determined musicologist may find it rough going at times. His engaging and occasionally very wry manner of communicating provides welcome oases of countervailing relief.

*Inter-American Music Review* appeared regularly, twice per annum, until volume XVI, in 2000. After this, Stevenson’s advancing age and desire to direct his declining energies elsewhere resulted in a lengthy hiatus. However, *IAMR* experienced a brief revival in 2008 with a two-volume Festschrift dedicated to Ismael Fernández de la Cuesta, one of Spain’s leading musicologists and a long-time friend of Stevenson, who edited the first and bilingual volume himself. Emilio Rey García and Victor Pliego de Andrés served as co-editors of the second and all-Spanish volume. This truly impressive collection of articles covered a wide range of topics and featured some of the most recognizable names in the business. Its appearance on the thirtieth anniversary of the journal’s founding was poignant for its finality.

This was not only a fitting tribute to Fernández de la Cuesta but also to *IAMR*, and to the man whose vision it was, three decades earlier, to found the first mainstream music

journal devoted to the Americas and related topics in Europe and Asia. Even by today's standards, much of the research in *IAMR* remains highly original and even foundational to many areas of study. A quick glance at the contents of the 2008 issues of *JAMS*, *Current Musicology*, and *19<sup>th</sup> Century Music* reveals that the situation had not improved markedly over where we started in 1978. None of them contained a single article on Ibero-American topics. One bright spot and notable exception was a 2009 double issue of *The Musical Quarterly* that was devoted exclusively to Latin America. All of us could cite similar exceptions, most of them highly unlikely to have appeared thirty years ago.

In fact, great strides *have* been made in promoting and developing this area of study, in the number and quality not only of publications but also recordings. This sea change has resulted in no small measure from Stevenson's *IAMR*. Indeed, its impact has been enormous and will be felt for many years to come, even after its founder has gone to join the chapelmasters, musicians, and composers whose musical legacy he worked so tirelessly to recover and preserve for future generations.