RESOUND
A QUARTERLY OF THE
Archives of Traditional Music

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From the Director

Time: Cycles and Permanence

A number of conversations I have had with collectors or would-be donors during the past few months have made me reflect on mortality, preservation, and the ends of our musical research. I was often told, "Oh, I haven't sent you the last of the documentation yet, but I will," or "I'll get you that collection yet." I have heard this so frequently that I believe it is the expression of a structural problem in our attitudes rather than an individual problem of overwork.

You may not place priority on sending that tape or documentation, but have you thought of the implications? Have you ever sifted through the masses of papers of a recently deceased academic? Do you really think an uninterested party will be able to separate and send what you might have chosen? Have you ever heard what happens to tapes wound too tightly for many years, attacked by mold, separated from documentation by termites and time? Far from invoking death, I wish every reader a very long and productive life, but the life of the Archives will be longer. Seasons, years, and lives end, but the principle behind establishing an archives is that the material in it is designed to survive these. Wars, floods, and fires have put the lie to this intention in the past, but the survival of papyrus documents over thousands of years indicates that hope is not entirely unjustified.

Alan Jabbour, in the Director's Column of the *Folklife Center Newsletter* (Vol. 6, No. 2) makes an important point: while the prized theoretical positions of the end of the 19th century are admired today neither by scholars nor by the natives through whom they were developed, the material these people collected, the descriptions they made, and the recording they did on early cylinder recordings may still have tremendous importance to the descendants of the people who were documented as well as to scholarship. Ironically, it may be the preservation, and eventual return, of cultural forms rather than our labored theories that may best fulfill our goals of serving future generations of scholars and the people from whom we have learned.

The moral? Don't wait to send the rest of your collection or to donate one. Don't put off the difficult hours of locating and organizing the documentation. It is the role of this institution to think in the long term and to remind you of mortality and the passage of time.

More immediate effects of time are the changes in personnel and equipment that have occurred here at the Archives. Frank Gillis, formerly the director, has left Bloomington and moved to his former summer home in Grand Marais, Minnesota with his wife, Ruth. Amy Novick, who did a wonderful job as editor of this quarterly and as librarian in the listening area is no longer with us. We have a new librarian, Mary Russell, whom we welcome. Marilyn Graf has taken over the editorship of *Resound*. Thanks to a grant described later and a matching equipment contribution from the University, our "old lab" will become our "new lab" and new record cabinets are being constructed for recent acquisitions. And finally, thanks to your contributions, the publication of *Resound* is guaranteed for this year, but please resubscribe so that *Resound* can continue. Budgets have a very short life; you can help us again and again.

Just as music is primarily an event in time (tempo and vibrations per second in performances), so are the obligations of researchers who are caught up in the emotions of immediate experience and the aims of an institution which serves the emotions of future experiencers.

From the Field

The Field Recordings of Lawrence Gellert

Few of the collections of field recordings housed at the Archives of Traditional Music have been the subject of as much controvery as Lawrence Gellert's.* Consisting of more than 600 songs recorded from black Americans throughout the 1920s and 1930s, the majority of the material did not come to light until the 1980s. The story of these field recordings is one of politics, both academic and American, professional jealousy, racism, and the idiosyncracies of an individual collector.

Born of Hungarian immigrant parents in 1896, Gellert grew up in New York City and as a young man took jobs as an undertaker's helper and reporter. When his health began to fail in the early 1920s, he was advised by his doctor to move to the south. Gellert chose Tryon, North Carolina, a town that seemed to have summer-like weather all year round. Due to the fact that many of Tryon's residents were northern whites, there was an unusually relaxed attitude toward blacks and race issues in general. Gellert saw Tryon as "a northern oasis in the midst of southern prejudice." This was not to say that there was not racism in Tryon, but that blacks, and more importantly, socialization between blacks and whites, were tolerated. Gellert moved into the black section of town

and took up residence with a black woman.

From Lawrence Gellert's writings we learn that his first exposure to black music came through a visit to a black church where he became enthralled not merely with the music, but with the amount of involvement that the church members had with their musical tradition. Shortly after, in 1924, he decided to record Afro-American folk songs in order to document his newly-found interest in the music and to help bring to light the living conditions of southern blacks. It should be mentioned that Gellert came from an extremely liberal, politically active background, and there can be no mistake that there were political motives for his collecting. Later, that fact was to prevent his work from being fully accepted by the academic community.

Since his initial contact with southern blacks was as a member of their community, Gellert was granted the status of an insider, a position that few, if any other, collectors were able to match. Gellert was constantly given the names of blacks throughout North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia with whom he could stay and collect folk songs. Even more important than this network of informants was the nature of the material that his insider status allowed him to collect; nearly 50 percent of the songs he collected were overt songs of protest. Collectors who preceded him, like Howard Odum, Henry Edward Krehbiel, E.C. Perrow, Henry C. Davis, and John Lomax, or those who were in the field at the same time, such as Dorothy Scarborough and Robert Gordon, included protest songs in less than five percent of their material, if they included them at all. Looking at some of the lyrics of the songs from Gellert's collection, it is easy to see why blacks would have been reticent to sing such harsh material for white outsiders. Following are two typical verses:

I said listen white man, I can't
stand you no longer,
I said listen Mr. White Man, I can't
stand you no longer,
I won't take it no more, work like
a boogin' dog.

Never trust white folks,
No matter what for.
When he promisin' somethin',
He aimin' to cheat you some more.

There are, of course, parallels to these songs, but their paucity in other collections coupled with the unusually frank language found in the songs Gellert collected led the academic community to believe that Gellert had manufactured his material. In 1936, Gellert published 25 of the songs from his collection in a small booklet titled *Negro Songs of Protest*. Scholars quickly pointed to the lack of similar material in the accepted texts and accused Gellert of forgery. What made matters worse was the fact that Gellert, thinking that it would detract from the political importance of his work to include all the non-political songs, published only that material which had the highest protest content. This decision permitted an extremely lopsided view of his collection. Further, he refused to provide any documentation to back up his pieces for fear of reprisals against his informants. While this latter decision can be understood, the decision to selectively edit the collection was most unfortunate, for the remaining 50 percent of his material could have been authenticated easily through oral formulaic sources and by comparison with existing collections to give credibility to his entire body of songs.

Gellert's material was relegated to obscurity for nearly 35 years. In 1969, while working on his dissertation on left-wing politics and American folk song, Richard Reuss interviewed Lawrence Gellert and shortly after contacted Frank J. Gillis, then Associate Director of the Archives of Traditional Music, about the possibility of housing Gellert's recordings at the Archives. Gellert signed contracts for deposit in 1970 and sent four metal boxes full of recordings to Indiana University. Because of Gellert's protective attitudes toward his work, the recordings lay untouched (at his request) until Mr. Gillis learned of Gellert's death in 1980. Mr. Gillis then turned to me, as a doctoral student in ethnomusicology specializing in Afro-American music, to see if I would be interested in contacting Gellert's widow in New York City. After several phone calls and letters, I met with Helen Gellert Brand in her apartment on a warm October afternoon and discovered that there were not only several hundred additional metal discs that Gellert had recorded in the field, but reams of notes, notebooks, and manuscripts that documented nearly all aspects of his career as a folk song collector. Here, 56 years after Gellert first began to make recordings, was all the evidence that would have placed his material in the forefront of Afro-American folksong scholarship. This additional material is now deposited at the Archives of Traditional Music and amounts to an impressive, if not unwieldy body of data. The collection consists of 150 aluminum disc recordings, 70 acetate disc recordings, 814 pages of notes and field descriptions, and 301 pages of song lyric transcriptions. There are also 140 pages of musical transcriptions, 11 field notebooks, and 184 pages of correspondence as a record of Gellert's work.

Next year will mark the 60th year since Gellert began his recording. Finally, his work has found not only a home, but the place it deserves in the annals of folk song scholarship.

* Archives accession number 82-406-F.

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Bruce Conforth, Archives staff

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From the Vault

Social Classification of Tuareg Music

To the Western observer the most striking feature of Tuareg music as a whole is its stylistic diversity. The vocal music in particular, though sung in the Tamacheq language, contains marked variation in manner of voice production, melodic structure, ornamentation, and performance practices. The musical differences reflect the cultural heterogeneity of the Tuareg population as well as its distribution over a vast area from central Algeria to southern Nigeria and from southern Mali to the borders of Libya and Chad.

My recordings of Tuareg music, made in Algeria and Niger in 1972 and 1976-77,* illustrate some of the diversity of the musical traditions. The collections include vocal and instrumental music from several regions played and sung by performers from various ranks of the traditional social hierarchy and interviews with some of the performers.

The recordings, made in conjunction with a study of musical style and social identity (Card, 1982), were intended for use in feedback interviews with Tuareg informants. A few of the recordings, especially those of Lala bint Salem, Jima (Ajo) wult Emini, and Hattaye ag Muhammed Ahmed, were highly praised by Tuareg listeners, who eagerly sought copies of them for their own cassette players. Other recordings were judged by the informants to represent the modest efforts of less gifted performers. For research purposes, though, the less desired recordings proved to be as valuable as those most praised, for they provoked discussion and criticism that taught me much about Tuareg concepts of music.

Classification of the contents is not a simple task. To group Tuareg music merely by the medium of performance or the region in which it was recorded reveals nothing of the social dynamics that give meaning to music in Tuareg culture. The varieties of music and performance are closely identified with social affiliations and attitudes. Many of the performance styles, instruments, and repertoires bear markers that convey information to others in the society about the social status and orientations of the participants. Regional traditions, too, carry social information, for they tend to reflect the subcultures of

Jima (Ajo) wult Emini with *anzad*.

the dominant social groups in specific areas. Many traits commonly referred to as regional might be more accurately termed demographic.

Much of the vocal music is associated in some way with instruments. Though few in kind and number, the instruments have greater significance in the culture than their quantity would suggest. Poetry of the classical *tisiwit* genre, for example, may be sung either alone or to the accompaniment of the *anzad*, a one-stringed bowed lute. The *anzad*, always played by a woman, is important also as a solo instrument, but it is rarely used in conjunction with other instruments or other poetic genres. The music associated with this instrument, whether instrumental, solo, or accompanied or unaccompanied song, embodies the cultural values and ideals of the once-dominant warrior aristocracy. For the Tuareg, regardless of caste or class, playing, singing, or listening to *anzad* music reinforces alignment with the traditional warrior ideals. The *anzad*, as a primary ethnic symbol, serves to unify the disparate segments of the society around its cultural core.

The music for some kinds of dance may also be sung with or without instrumental accompaniment. In recent years the mortar drum, *tende*, has appeared in connection with dance music formerly sung only to the accompaniment of handclapping. Use of the mortar drum has spread also into the musical curing ceremonies, which derive some of their music from the dance repertoires. *Tende* music, in various forms, represents a less idealized expression of the traditional values. Unlike *anzad* music, which requires accomplished soloists, *tende* music is a communal expression in which anyone can take part. *Tende* music is the true folk music of the Tuareg.

In urban centers across the Sahara, the music of the three-stringed plucked lute, *tahardent*, has become the current rage. The *tahardent* is played as a solo instrument or as accompaniment to the poems and tales sung by professional entertainers who belong to the artisan caste. This music and poetry, particularly in the modern "popular" forms, has special appeal for those in transition from traditional life in the nomad camps or oasis gardens to contemporary life in towns. Of Malian origin, this Tuareg music has much in common with the bardic traditions of many West and North African societies. Much of the success of *tahardent* music is due to the fact that it can be shared by urban listeners of widely different ethnic backgrounds. Whereas *anzad* and *tende* music serve to heighten Tuareg feelings of identity, *tahardent* music serves to ease the integration of the Tuareg into the multi-ethnic urban environment.

My collections contain many examples of *anzad*, *tende*, and *tahardent* music, both vocal and instrumental. They also include some flute music and several songs unrelated to any of the instrumental genres. The flute music has social significance in that it is performed exclusively by herders of former servile groups.

Each instrument forms the focal point of a musical tradition characterized by specific rules of performance styles, customs, and repertoire. Each tradition symbolizes certain social values with which some or all of Tuareg identify at times. The varieties of Tuareg music are distinguished not only by sets of musical traits, but by their social meanings and uses. A classification that combines the social factors with vocal, instrumental, and regional characteristics offers a more fruitful approach to the description and study of Tuareg music.

*73-056-F, 78-017-F

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ARCHIVES RECEIVES N.S.F. GRANT

The Archives has been awarded a two-year grant by the National Science Foundation to ensure the preservation of the music and oral data recorded on the nearly 7,000 wax cylinders in its collection. The grant provides funding for four part-time assistants and the equipment and materials necessary for cleaning, repairing, and copying the cylinders. The grant will also permit us to repack the cylinders in specially designed storage containers, improve existing documentation, and to produce a catalogue.

The invention of the wax cylinder recorder in 1887 made it possible to preserve acoustic data for the first time in history, and the new machine was quickly introduced in a number of areas of scientific research. It revolutionized the fields of linguistics, comparative musicology, and the study of oral texts by making it possible to listen repeatedly to the same sounds. The careful, systematic use of cylinder recordings was an important fieldwork technique, and it was employed by many researchers, including Franz Boas, Melville Herskovits, Frances Densmore, and Edward Curtis. The Archives collection, part of which is on permanent loan from the American Museum of Natural History, is unique both in size and content, since the majority of the cylinders are not duplicated in collections held by any other institution, and virtually all are field rather than commercial recordings. Approximately 4,000 cylinders contain Native American music or speech, and the remainder were recorded in Africa, Asia, the Americas, Oceania and the U.S.S.R.

Once returned from the field, the cylinders suffered a number of vicissitudes.They were often damaged by the elements, and at times collections were divided among various institutions; The Archives of Traditional Music, the Library of Congress, and the Berlin Phonogramm-Archiv hold complementary parts of numerous collections. Detailed catalogues of our respective cylinders will greatly increase access to this rare material.

In order to accomodate the project, the Archives has set up a special laboratory in its vaults. We will use a cylinder copier on loan from the Lowie Museum of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley, as well as new equipment furnished by the grant. The graduate students working on the project—Nancy Cassell, Bruce Harrah-Conforth, Sally Helton, and Carol Inman—all have considerable experience in the Archives, and special talents which make them particularly good at certain tasks.

When we conclude the project, the wax cylinders will be stored in new acid-free containers in climate-controlled vaults. First-generation copies of the highest possible quality will be stored in specially designed cabinets, and listening copies will be available for walk-in consultation. With appropriate permission, the recorded copies will be furnished to interested researchers for the usual fee to cover tape and labor costs. Then it will be possible to consider possible projects for the publication and dissemination of the sound materials. We welcome any suggestions or comments from our readers.

Anthony Seeger and Louise Spear, Principal Investigators

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