

On Teaching:

Unifying the Disunity: A Multicultural Approach to Teaching American Music

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Teaching American Studies from a multicultural perspective can be a challenging endeavor in these days of culture wars, anti-immigrant hysteria, and affirmative action roll-backs. The multicultural movement has become a favorite target of politicians, social critics, and media commentators who insist that the diversity paradigm will perpetuate ethnic and racial separatism while threatening the cohesiveness of the “common American culture” we all ostensibly share.¹ When it comes to arts, they maintain that an overemphasis on pluralism inevitably leads to the “Balkanization” of creative expression, the abandonment of aesthetic standards, and the diminution of Western high art.² Many students, mirroring broader public attitudes, have become increasingly polarized by these issues. Non-minority students, particularly white males, are often intimidated by frank classroom discussions of diversity, while many minority and immigrant students clamor for more coverage of “their” contribution to American culture.

American music, an increasingly important component of our American art and popular culture courses, provides ideal subject matter for addressing this dilemma. Musicologists now recognize that American music is not a homogeneous, static body of art derived solely from the transplantation of European cultivated traditions, but rather a rich mosaic evolving from the ongoing interplay and synthesis of diverse cultural expressions.³ As Charles Hamm observes in the

conclusion of his monumental survey, *Music in the New World*: “the most characteristic and dynamic music to emerge from American culture over the past two centuries invariably resulted from interaction among musicians of several different cultural, racial, national and ethnic backgrounds.”⁴ Using Hamm’s declaration as a point of departure, I will outline a specific pedagogical approach to the presentation of American music that emphasizes cross-cultural exchange and unity, rather than the ethnic separatism. As a folklorist I draw my examples from the vernacular realms of folk and popular expression.⁵

Accomplishing this task demands reassessing the conventional organization of classroom subject matter, and moving beyond standard surveys structured around weekly units on culture-specific forms (such as Anglo-American ballads, African-American blues, Louisiana Cajun fiddling, Latin jazz, Yiddish-American klezmer music, etc.). Presenting isolated genres as distinct expressions of ethnicity without emphasizing their interconnectedness and their contributions to our broader national culture distorts history and invites divisiveness. In reality, American folk and popular musics are rich with examples of shared expressions. The interaction of Anglo- and African-American folk musics, for example, and the evolution of popular styles drawing from both cultures, have produced much of our most enduring music, from spirituals and jazz to rock and soul. Recounting this history allows teachers to demonstrate how particular texts can be understood and appreciated in relation to a more universal, common culture. Students are encouraged to consider process, rather than end results, as a way of understanding the complexity of the American experience.

The key concept here is “syncretism.” As developed by anthropologist Melville Herskovits, the term refers to the recombination of cultural elements into a new whole that commonly occurs when different cultures are in close contact. Ethnomusicologist Richard Waterman applied this idea directly to New World music systems, noting in his seminal 1952 article that West European and West African folk musics share similar concepts of scale and harmony, making musical exchange and blending of styles inevitable when the two cultures are in close contact.⁶ The evolution of early Caribbean vernacular forms such as the Cuban *son*, the Puerto Rican *plena*, the Trinidadian calypso, and the Dominican *merengue* reflect this syncretic process that combines elements of African and European traditions.

A similar situation occurred in the southern United States, where centuries of contact between Europeans and Africans resulted in the emergence of spirituals, blues, and early hillbilly music. Alan Lomax’s 1959 article entitled “Folk Song Style” is particularly useful in introducing students to this process.⁷ Lomax argues that all cultures possess distinct ways of singing, and contrasts the traits that characterize “American White Folk” and “American Negro Folk” styles. Here, students are presented with an appreciation of ethnic distinctiveness—southern whites traditionally sing in a solo, high, tense vocal style with little improvisation or body movement; southern African Americans favor call and

response group singing in a more relaxed but highly embellished vocal style where improvisation is encouraged and body movement the norm. Recordings of Anglo-American balladeers and African-American spiritual singers help students hear and appreciate the distinctive beauty of each style. But Lomax goes on to note that “the two groups have exchanged so many traits that it is clear that their musical styles are converging,” and suggests that blues, spirituals, and jazz music are among the forms the two groups practice in common.⁸ The particulars are shown to contribute to more universal, shared musical forms.

As Lomax hints, this syncretic process has played a vital role in the formation of much twentieth-century American popular music. The development of many styles, including jazz, rock, gospel, and soul music, are the direct results of the blending of European and African musical cultures. These styles began as indigenous, regional traditions, achieved national notoriety via the mass media, and became fundamental expressions of twentieth century American popular culture.

The history of jazz exemplifies this process and provides a good place for students to begin. Turn-of-the-century New Orleans, with its unique multi-racial blend of French, Spanish, British, African, and Caribbean cultures, was the earliest center of jazz.⁹ The story unfolds in the late nineteenth century when new racial segregation policies forced the city’s middle-class creoles of color (persons of mixed European and African ancestry) to co-mingle with their darker, poorer brethren. The result was a musical blending of monumental significance. The creoles brought knowledge and training in European classical, dance, marching band, and composed ragtime music, while black players contributed African rhythmic and improvisory sensibilities that shaped their rougher folk blues, spirituals and work songs.¹⁰ By the first decade of this century, New Orleans players were making straight European march rhythms swing, transforming Spanish, French, and British melodies through improvisation, and coloring standard European harmonies with blues tonality. As early jazz spread throughout the country, big band arrangers like Jelly Roll Morton, Don Redman, Fletcher Henderson, and Duke Ellington found more sophisticated ways to adapt African-derived improvisory practices, blue-note scales, and rhythmic swing to a European harmonic structure, closed compositional form, and orchestral instrumentation. The modern jazz styles of the Post-War era—whether be bop, cool, third stream, hard bop, fusion, or avant garde—continue this dialogue between African and European musical sensibilities.

The jazz that emerged from the streets and dance halls of New Orleans was an indigenous expression of that city’s black and creole cultures. But thanks to the success of early recordings and touring efforts by New Orleans pioneers, jazz gained national attention, attracting young, enthusiastic audiences of black and white urbanites. Though roundly condemned by cultural critics and religious leaders who disparaged jazz as lewd “jungle music,” its popularity grew as Fitzgerald dubbed the 1920s the “jazz age.” With the advent of swing and big band

music in the mid-1930s, jazz was catapulted into the limelight, eclipsing Tin Pan Alley to become America's most popular music. Jazz's popularity waned in the postwar years, supplanted by rhythm and blues and rock, but rebounded substantially during the 1970s and 1980s. Moreover, modern jazz eventually gained the serious respect of highbrow music critics who, in turn, hastened its acceptance in the academy and elite performance venues. Over the course of half a century, jazz has travelled from raucous street parades and rowdy cafes to the hallowed halls of Lincoln Center and the classrooms of our most prestigious music conservatories.

Today the world recognizes jazz as America's "classical music." As American studies pioneer John Kouwenhoven proclaimed nearly fifty years ago, jazz embodies the spirit of innovation, experimentation, and democratic pluralism long associated with the American experience. The structure of the music demands intense, individual expression within a tight, collective framework, thereby mediating one of America's deepest national conflicts—our struggle to balance individual and group concerns.¹¹

The politics of race has become a topic of considerable debate among jazz critics. In recent decades historians have tended to stress the West African roots and African-American origins of jazz, downplaying the contributions of European music and white players. While there is much truth to this perspective, when taken to an extreme that ignores the biracial nature of jazz, it is misleading.¹² No self-respecting critic would deny that African-derived notions of rhythm and improvisation lie at the stylistic heart of jazz, or that the genre's most influential innovators—Morton, Armstrong, Ellington, Parker, Coltrane, etc.—have all been African-American. But since its inception, jazz—unlike African-American country blues, rhythm and blues, and gospel—has been played, promoted, and enthusiastically supported by whites. Debates over musical "authenticity" aside, white artists like the Original Dixieland Jazz Band (the first to make a jazz recording in 1917), Paul Whiteman, Bix Beiderbecke, Red Nichols, and Benny Goodman influenced the development of early jazz and carried the music to a wider, whiter audience. White fans flocked to black jazz clubs in the 1920s, took to the dance floors during the swing era, and in the postwar years became the music's largest contingency of supporters.

The emergence of jazz and its infiltration into mainstream American culture between the world wars required an unprecedented degree of cooperation between whites and blacks. Jazz players, promoters, and fans were at the forefront of racial integration in America during this period, although relations were often tense and frequently marred by bigotry. In spite of some noteworthy successes, early efforts to integrate jazz bands were often met with open hostility. Even more troubling was the routine hiring discrimination that limited performance, broadcast, and recording opportunities for black bands. And even the most admired African-American players were plagued by images of primitivism and demeaning minstrel stereotypes. Black-white relations in the early jazz community were complex and often contradictory, but extremely revealing for

students interested in the struggle for equality and integration in pre-War America.¹³

Critic Amiri Baraka, who argues passionately that jazz reflects a fundamental black ethos, readily admits that it was African-Americans, and not Africans, who created jazz, and only when whites recognized and began to play jazz did it become a thoroughly American expression.¹⁴ Baraka is right—jazz could only have happened in America, where a black sub-culture synthesized African and European musical elements in a rapidly modernizing world to create a unique art form with tremendous bi-racial appeal.

Like jazz, early rock and roll is a modern urban style melded from diverse Afro and Anglo vernacular traditions. In an exemplary effort to untangle the multifarious roots of rock, Robert Palmer cites the contributions of hillbilly, honky tonk, and western swing, gospel, boogie woogie, jump blues, and rhythm and blues. These regional pop styles of the 1930s and 1940s were themselves derived from older, southern folk traditions including Anglo-American ballads, Scotch-Irish fiddling, black and white spirituals and minstrel songs, and African-American work songs and blues. Rock and roll was the inevitable result of a black/white musical stew that had been simmering in the southern United States for three centuries. Rock's appearance on the national scene in the mid-1950s was no accident, because this was precisely when independent record companies and innovative radio stations were beginning to bring black vernacular music to a burgeoning baby boomer audience, and the nascent civil rights music was increasing public awareness of black culture.¹⁵

In 1954, the same year the United States Supreme Court outlawed school segregation with its landmark ruling, *Brown vs Topeka Board of Education*, a young Mississippian named Elvis Presley sat in the studios of Sun Records, an obscure Memphis recording outfit run by an unknown radio engineer named Sam Phillips. Presley, the son of a poor, white, former sharecropper, was steeped in white gospel and country music, and fascinated with black R&B and gospel. Phillips, who for years had been recording white hillbilly and black R&B singers, was looking for a white man you could sing the blues, and Presley was it. At Phillips's prompting, Presley and, later, Sun stars Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins, began recording black R&B numbers with a bouncy, country-inflected twang—a style that was appropriately dubbed “rockabilly.” Phillips sold Presley's contract to RCA in late 1955, and the following year, beginning with “Heartbreak Hotel,” the singer turned out a string of number-one national hits that ignited the national rock revolution. Presley's meteoric rise from poverty to stardom, and his tragic demise in the glitz of Las Vegas, personify the splendor and tragedy of the American dream. His early music captured the deep-seated hedonism, romance, and racial tensions of southern culture, and packaged them for national consumption.

The confluence of black rhythm and blues and white hillbilly music in Phillips's Memphis studio produced a unique sound that changed the face of

American popular music. Interestingly, rockabilly reflects a second level syncretic process; that is, the blending of styles that are themselves the result of earlier cross-fertilization. Hillbilly music, while evolving mainly from nineteenth-century Anglo-American folk song and fiddling traditions, was heavily influenced by southern African-American blues (and, in a few cases, jazz). Likewise, rhythm and blues, with its distinctly African-American vocal style, blue note intonations, and rhythmic drive, utilizes a standard 4/4 time signature, a western-derived 12 bar structure built around three major chords (tonic, subdominant, and dominant), and European string and keyboard instrumentation.

African-American rhythm and blues have occasionally dismissed Presley and other early rockabillys as cheap imitators who simply blanched black music for their white listeners. While pop crooners like Pat Boone and Perry Como stand guilty of such charges, most contemporary critics agree that the rockabilly sound was more distinctive than imitative; that its proponents were grassroots southerners creating something new out of the region's authentic black and white traditions.¹⁶ But students can decide for themselves by comparing Presley's early recordings with the R&B originals by Arthur Crudup, Junior Parker, Roy Brown, and Big Mama Thornton. This exercise sparks an interesting classroom debate concerning black and white aesthetics and musical interchange.

Also worth noting is that a number of rock pioneers were themselves African-American. Chuck Berry, Little Richard Penniman, Bo Diddley, and Fats Domino, today recognized as architects of early rock, achieved substantial followings in the late 1950s. R&B singers by trade, they approached rock from the other side, absorbing elements of white country and pop singing to reach a wider audience. Chuck Berry, the most influential, is exemplary. He expurgated overtly sexual references from his lyrics, incorporated twangy country licks into his now iconic guitar style, and sang with a smooth diction that was often indistinguishable from his white counterparts. In the 1950s, the line between rock and rhythm and blues was thin, with both styles enjoying considerable bi-racial support. Berry and Presley had wide support among black and white fans.

Early rock music was, like jazz, resisted by certain segments of white society. In an unabashedly racist assault, political and religious leaders condemned the music for its African-American rhythms and sensual lyrics.¹⁷ But Elvis and his cadre of early rockers persevered, and, by the late 1950s, rock and roll was firmly ensconced at the top of the pop charts. Today, rock and roll remains synonymous with American popular music, and along with baseball and hot dogs, a quintessential symbol of our national culture.

The histories of jazz and rock have been well chronicled. But another, less heralded twentieth-century expression, African-American gospel music, also resulted from the syncretic mixing of African and European forms. Many recent researchers, including this author, have stressed the African stylistic elements so common to gospel performance—antiphonal leader/chorus structure, improvised melodies, highly ornamental vocal styles, driving rhythms and song linked

to body movement, dance and spirit possession.¹⁸ But since its inception, African-American gospel music has always drawn heavily on European traditions. Gospel's nineteenth-century antecedents, spirituals and jubilee singing, demonstrate a mix of African and European influences. After decades of heated debate over the origin of the spiritual, folk music scholars finally reached the conclusion that black spirituals are highly African in performance style, but borrow form and structure from European and Anglo-American psalms and hymns.¹⁹ The polished, staged version of the spirituals presented by groups like the Fisk Jubilee Singers employed precise, four-part harmonies and vocal diction derived from European hymn and art song traditions.

The earliest African-American gospel composer, Philadelphia minister C.A. Tindley, structured his compositions along the lines of standard Methodist hymns (two-part verse/chorus structure, each eight bars in length), but often employed pentatonic scales and left room for melodic and textual improvisation so common to African-American folk expression. Though not musically literate, Tindley employed arrangers who scored his songs into the standard four-part notation of European hymnals.²⁰

Thomas Dorsey, considered by most to be the "father" of modern black gospel song, was well-versed in European notation and composition techniques, as well as the improvisory style of blues and jazz pianists of the 1920s. Dorsey's carefully crafted compositions demonstrated a harmonic complexity and textual sophistication that pleased middle-class, black church-goers whose tastes tended towards more sedate European hymnody. But his works remained anchored in the downhome bluesy style favored by the growing numbers of southern migrants who filled Chicago's black churches in the 1920s. Dorsey's best songs, argues Michael Harris in *The Rise of the Gospel Blues*, were sophisticated enough to placate the musical tastes of the highbrow church leaders, but folksy enough to appeal to the masses of less-educated, southern migrants. His gospel blues acknowledged and mediated the duality of being simultaneously "black" and "American," constituting a powerful symbolic expression of Du Bois's "double consciousness."²¹

During the 1930s and 1940s, most gospel music remained within the confines of the African-American church. But during the postwar years, gospel found a broader, more diverse audience thanks to the recordings and non-church performances by professionals like Mahalia Jackson, the Ward Singers, and the Dixie Hummingbirds. Soul stars with church roots, as we shall explore shortly, carried the fervor of the gospel sound to a broad secular audience in the 1960s. Following the unprecedented success of the 1969 number-one hit by the Edwin Hawkins' Singers, "Oh Happy Day," rock stars from Paul Simon and Bob Dylan to Foreigner employed soulful gospel back-ups. The phenomenal growth of the gospel recording industry was noted in a 1987 *Billboard* article that finally proclaimed gospel a legitimate form of American popular music with wide appeal. Surveying developments of the past two decades, Portia Maultsby reports

that gospel's audience has become increasingly multiracial, concluding: "Through mass media exposure, gospel music slowly penetrated every artery of American life."²² Black gospel music has yet to achieve the heights reached by jazz or rock, but it is rapidly gaining international acclaim as one America's most vital forms of indigenous musical expression.

Gospel's secular offspring, soul music, had no trouble establishing mass appeal. A delicious blend of gospel singing and R&B rhythms, 1960s soul music captured the buoyant optimism and assertive pride of the early civil rights movement. Southern soul, particularly the sound emerging from the Atlantic and Stax Records studios, was an exuberant outpouring of sanctified church singing, backed by a mixed studio band with a unique R&B, rock, and country synthesis. Southern soul music's commercial success was remarkable. By the early 1960s the popularity of R&B and early rock and roll had paved the way for white kids to appreciate a purer black sound; they unabashedly embraced the churchified moans and soulful pleas of Ray Charles, Wilson Pickett, Otis Redding, Percy Sledge, and Aretha Franklin, whose releases soared to the top of the pop charts.²³

The commercial success of northern soul, particularly Berry Gordy Jr.'s Motown sound, was equally significant. The Motown story is an extraordinary tale of African-American capitalism built on musical integration—an African-American owned and operated record/talent company that consciously groomed its product for a broad, biracial youth market. Gordy and his savvy team of songwriters and producers shaved the rough edges off of southern soul, producing a smooth gospel-pop fusion with irresistible melodies and widely appealing romantic lyrics. The result was an unprecedented crossover success; in 1966 three-quarters of the Motown releases were making the national charts. The Supremes, Gladys Knight, Smokey Robinson, the Temptations, the Four Tops, the Jackson Five, and a host of other black Motown stars became household names. "Soul," a term originally evocative of the deepest essence of the African-American experience, had, by the late-1960s, been musically coopted into the mainstream of American popular culture.²⁴

The pluralistic, interactive approach to music history proposed here works well for the Anglo-Afro mix that produced America's most popular musics, but what of other, lesser known ethnic styles that may be included in a survey class? In many cases, the syncretic paradigm proves useful. Latin jazz, for example, evolved in New York City, blending the musical traditions of Cuban immigrants, Newyoricans (New York-born Puerto Ricans), and African-American jazz players. Louisiana zydeco resulted from the fusion of black creole fiddle and accordion dance music with African-American R&B. And the Texas *conjunto* (ensemble) or *musica norteno* (music of the north) style combined Spanish and Mexican song forms, continental waltz, polka, and schottische dance music, and accordion accompaniment first introduced by German settlers. While no regional or ethnic music approaches the popularity of rock, jazz, soul, or gospel, the aforementioned styles have made their presence known on the national level. The

mambo and cha-cha, dances associated with Latin jazz, became national dance fads in the 1950s, while the boogaloo style mixed Latin rhythms and R&B chord progressions, producing pop hits for Latino singers Ray Beretto, Johnny Colon, and Joe Cuba in the 1960s. Zydeco and *norteno* music have transcended their regional boundaries, today enjoying strong followings among folk enthusiasts in New York, the San Francisco Bay area, and Seattle.²⁵ Los Lobos, the renowned Los Angeles Chicano-rock band, includes traditional accordion-driven *norteno* pieces in its diverse repertoire.

Fueled by the juggernaut of mass media, rock, jazz, soul, gospel, and a handful of ethnic pop styles have achieved national attention, and today are recognized internationally to be among America's most distinct twentieth-century creations. Most contemporary students, regardless of ethnic background, are well acquainted with rock and soul. Many are at least cognizant of jazz and gospel, and a few may be tuned in to Latin jazz and zydeco. Using syncretism as a framework, the folk roots and historical evolution of these familiar forms provide teachers with a handy springboard into broader issues concerning multiculturalism and acculturation in America. With regard to the latter, several salient points should now be clear. Old world traditions were not discarded by the immigrants and slaves who reached America's shores, nor were they simply assimilated into some homogenous melting pot. Tradition is tenacious and cultural practices survived and sometimes flourished in the new world environment. But tradition is also highly adaptable, and rarely did American ethnic cultures develop in complete isolation from one another. Thus, acculturation, not the extremes of assimilation or separatism, has been the norm, because cultures in contact tend to exchange select elements of their respective traditions. With expressive forms such as music, the results of such mixing can be quite spectacular—a wide array of vernacular styles with diverse appeal and the potential (with a little help from the electronic media) to attain national prominence.

Returning to the debate over multiculturalism, a “unity in diversity” theme emerges from the syncretic study of American vernacular music. Appreciation for a variety of distinctive music forms—African-American spiritual singing, Anglo-American balladry, Louisiana Creole fiddling, *norteno* accordion playing, Afro-Cuban drumming, and so forth—should be taught. Contrary to the concerns of some critics, appreciation for particular ethnic music styles can be conveyed without the abandonment of critical standards.²⁶ Obviously, no single set of aesthetic criteria could serve to evaluate the plethora of American vernacular musics. Students should learn that southern African-American spiritual singers purposely bend and slur the notes of the diatonic scale, while Anglo shape-note singers prefer to fugue spirituals in tense, polyphonic, four-part harmony. The latter tradition demands the exact repetition of a written text, while the former prizes melodic and lyrical improvisation. Once the concept of culture-specific aesthetics is introduced, each tradition can be appreciated (and critiqued) on its

own merits. The virtuoso black spiritual singer can be distinguished from the beginner, the great exponents of shape-note singing from the dabblers.

But recognition and respect for the particular does not dictate separatism. American culture is too fluid, the boundaries between its ethnic groups too permeable, to foster artistic Balkanization. Cross-cultural exchange, not isolation, is the essential historical paradigm. Even in the most oppressive settings of slavery and Jim Crow segregation, southern blacks and whites did share their music. Jazz, rock, gospel, and soul, the bastard children of this musical miscegenation, contribute significantly to the “common American culture” conservative critics long to preserve.

Of course, forging unity from diversity does not assure harmony. Cultures in contact can be cultures in conflict, particularly in situations where gross social and economic inequities exist. Any curriculum designed to examine the multicultural nature of American society cannot ignore the critical issues of politics and power. The previous discussion of discrimination and racial stereotyping in the early jazz community hints at a much broader problem, for indeed, the story of American popular music, dating back to the advent of minstrelsy, is riddled with examples of racially-based abuse and misrepresentation. Critics like Amiri Baraka raise troubling questions concerning the commercial exploitation of early African-American jazz and rhythm and blues artists (and their music) by entrepreneurs and performers of the dominant white culture.²⁷ Nelson George, in his provocative work *The Death of Rhythm and Blues*, warns of the artistic compromises African-American performers are pressured to make in order to reach a broader—that is “whiter”—audience.²⁸ When folk forms indigenous to minority communities are swept into the profit-driven music industry, we are forced to ask ourselves whose music is it, and who should reap the financial benefits? While these issues are potentially divisive, when framed in a discussion of acculturation in a multicultural society, they can stimulate fascinating classroom discussion. Students might be asked why Benny Goodman was dubbed the “King of Swing”; whether or not Elvis “stole” the blues; what ethical issues are raised by Paul Simon’s *Graceland* project; and whether crossover stars like Michael Jackson and Whitney Houston sacrificed the aesthetic integrity of their music to reach a wider and whiter audience. The answers to these questions are never clear, but the discussion is worthwhile. Students should realize that the quest for social and economic equality in the world of American music remains an ongoing struggle, but one of grave consequence given the pluralistic roots of our music and the diverse nature of our players and audiences.

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In the final mix, American music is far more integrated than most realms of American life. For centuries, black and white folks have been engaged in a

musical dialogue that, issues of financial exploitation notwithstanding, continues to yield rich results. Whether shared or stolen, we listen to, appreciate, and support each other's musics. The fact that Elvis Presley, a poor hillbilly from the Jim Crow South, could, in 1956, record a rhythm and blues song that rocketed to the top of the pop, country, and rhythm and blues charts—an indication of the stunning breadth and diversity of his audience—speaks volumes on this point.

“Pluralism,” writes education specialist F. Clark Power, “challenges moral educators to find a pedagogy that respects value difference without dissolving into relativism, that forms character and virtue without hardening into absolutism.”²⁹ The teaching of American music from the pluralistic perspective outlined above can approach this goal. If the multicultural critics would look to the arena of vernacular music, they would find expressions of a shared American culture fashioned from diverse sources. They would no doubt be surprised, and perhaps even pleased, to encounter compelling examples of the American motto they are fond of quoting, *E Pluribus Unum*, out of many, one.

Listen to the Music

Listening to musical examples is an essential component of the classroom experience. Thanks to the recent CD-reissue explosion, a great deal of American vernacular music is now readily available. Large music outlets such as Tower Records carry comprehensive collections of most of the artists mentioned in this article. Here are a few suggestions for those looking for basic anthologies with useful accompanying notes.

Sounds of the South (Atlantic Records # 782496-2; 75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, NY 10019) is a splendid, four-disk collection of southern African-American and Anglo-American folk music recorded and annotated by Alan Lomax. Smithsonian Folkways Records (955 L'Enfant Plaza, Suite 2600, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560) continues to reissue classic recordings of American folk music as well as new material. Their *Folk Masters* CD (SF 40047) is an excellent sampler that includes traditional blues, spirituals, and country music as well as zydeco, norteno, and klezmer cuts. Rounder Records (One Camp Street, Cambridge, MA 02140) is another rich source of American folk and ethnic music recordings.

Keeping up with the blues and jazz reissue scene is a full-time job. Definitive anthologies are now available on most major figures. Columbia/Legacy's (550 Madison Ave, New York, NY 10022) ambitious reissue campaign has set high standards of excellence (see, for example, their Robert Johnson (C2K-46222), Bessie Smith (C2K-47091), Louis Armstrong (57176), and Fletcher Henderson (57596) collections). Other fine sets are offered from Atlantic Records, Blue Note (Capitol Records, 1290 Avenue of the Americas, 35th Floor, New York, NY 10104) and RCA Records (1540 Broadway, New York, NY 10036). The most comprehensive jazz compilation remains *The Smithsonian Collection of Classic*

Jazz (Smithsonian Institution Press, 470 L'Enfant Plaza Suite 7100, Washington, DC 20560), a five-disk set covering ragtime through 1960s modern jazz.

Rhino Records (10635 Santa Monica Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90025) is the best source for early rhythm and blues and rock reissues. *The Sun Records Collection* (Rhino R2-71780) and *30 Years of Rhythm and Blues* (Rhino R2-71806) are two choice sets that provide essential examples for tracing the development of early rock and roll.

A comprehensive anthology of African-American gospel music remains to be compiled. But two solid samplers are Rhino's *Jubilation! Great Gospel Performances Volumes 1 & 2* (R2 70288 & R2 70289) and Columbia's *The Gospel Sound* (C2K 57160).

Southern soul is well documented on Atlantic Records' *The Complete Stax/Volt Singles - 1959-68* (7-82218-2). Atlantic and Rhino offer numerous soul collections and anthologies of important figures. The seminal Motown collection is *Hitsville USA - The Motown Singles Collection - 1959-1971* (Motown Record Company, 6255 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90028).

Notes

(An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 1994 annual meeting of the Sonneck Society. Thanks to Carol Oja, Jeff Taylor, and Jay Mechling for their helpful comments.)

1. A stinging criticism of the multicultural movement and inspiration for the title of this essay is Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York, 1992). A good review of the recent multicultural debate and its ramifications for American Studies is found in Betty E.M. Ch' maj, ed., *Multicultural America: A Resource Book for Teachers of Humanities and American Studies* (Lanham, Maryland, 1993). Todd Gitlin deftly explores the social and political tensions underlying America's culture wars in *The Twilight of Common Dreams* (New York, 1995).

2. Music critics Edward Rothstein and Samuel Lipman have been outspoken opponents of attempts to foster diversity in the arts. See, for example, Rothstein, "You Can't Please All the People," *New York Times*, July 26, 1992; and "Be Smart as a Lemming, Orchestras Are Told," *New York Times*, July 11, 1993. See also Lipman, *Music and More* (Evanston, Illinois, 1992); and "Who's Killing Our Symphony Orchestras?" in *The New Criteria* (September, 1993), 13-20.

3. This pluralist perspective on American music was first spelled out by Gilbert Chase in his landmark survey, *America's Music: From the Pilgrims to the Present* (New York, 1955). Following Chases' lead, more recent surveys of American music have given ample space to folk and popular traditions, emphasizing the diverse and interactive nature of American music-making. See H. Wiley Hitchcock, *Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1988); Charles Hamm, *Music in the New World* (New York, 1983); and Daniel Kingman, *American Music: A Panorama*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1990). A critical review of American musical historiography is found in Richard Crawford, *American Musical Landscapes* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1993), 3-37.

4. Hamm, *Music in the New World*, 655.

5. The diversity paradigm presented here for American vernacular music could be extended to our so-called "art" music as well, since many of America's most distinguished twentieth-century composers, including Charles Ives, George Gershwin, Duke Ellington, Henry Cowell, Aaron Copland, and John Cage, drew generously from diverse folk and non-Western sources. This argument would require a full and separate essay to fully develop.

6. Richard Waterman, "African Influences on the Music of the Americas," in Sol Tax, ed., *Acculturation in the Americas* (Chicago, 1952), 207-218.

7. Alan Lomax, "Folk Song Style," *American Anthropologist* 61 (1959), 927-951.

8. *Ibid.*, 931.

9. Semi-improvised ragtime and syncopated dance music were being played by African-Americans in other cities in the early twentieth-century, but most historians agree that jazz as we know

it emerged first from New Orleans. See Marshall Stearns, *The Story of Jazz* (New York, 1956), 37-75; James Collier, *The Making Of Jazz* (New York, 1977), 57-94; and Lewis Porter and Michael Ullman, *Jazz: From Its Origins to the Present* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1993), 19-26.

10. The European-trained creole, blues-grounded black dichotomy is something of an oversimplification, as the two New Orleans sub-cultures were never completely separate. Not surprisingly, some creoles did not read music, while some darker African-Americans, particularly those who played in brass bands, were somewhat conversant with European notation. Yet the creoles were the ones with the heaviest exposure to European art music, and New Orleans musicians routinely distinguished between note-reading creoles and improvising black players. See Porter and Ullman, *Jazz*, 23-24.

11. John Kouwenhoven, *The Arts in Modern American Civilization* (New York, 1948), 213-223.

12. Amiri Baraka was one of the first to stress the connections between jazz music and the black experience in America in his provocative work, *Blues People* (New York, 1963). The racial tensions inherent in early jazz are explored in Burton Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz: Music, Race and Culture in Urban America* (Urbana, Illinois, 1992). James Collier offers another perspective, stressing the contributions of white performers and the influence of white critics and fans. See Collier, *Jazz: The American Theme Song* (New York, 1993), 183-224. Ann Douglas argues convincingly that the ragtime, classic blues, and jazz that became popular in New York in the 1920s were the product of a biracial environment. See Douglgas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York, 1995), 346-433.

13. See Peretti, *The Creation of Jazz*, 177-210.

14. See Baraka, *Blues People*, 142-165.

15. See Robert Palmer, "Rock Begins," in Jim Miller, ed., *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock and Roll* (New York, 1980), 3-13. The volume includes excellent essays on Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Chuck Berry, Little Richard Penniman, and other early rock figures. For another comprehensive history of rock see Charlie Gillett, *The Sound of the City: The Rise of Rock and Roll* (New York, 1983).

16. See, for example, Greil Marcus's illuminating discussion of Presley and rockabilly music in *Mystery Train* (New York, 1980), 141-209.

17. See David Szatmary, *Rockin' in Time: A Social History of Rock and Roll* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1991), 25-26.

18. See, for example, Pearl Williams-Jones, "Afro-American Gospel Music: A Crystallization of the Black Aesthetic," *Ethnomusicology* 19 (1975), 199-219; and Ray Allen, *Singing in the Spirit: African-American Sacred Quartets in New York City* (Philadelphia, 1991), 142-159.

19. For a comprehensive review of this controversy, see D.K. Wilgus, *Anglo-American Folk Song Scholarship Since 1898* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1959), 344-64.

20. Horace Boyer, "Charles Albert Tindley: Progenitor of African American Gospel Music," in *We'll Understand it Better By and By*, Bernice Reagon, ed. (Washington, D.C., 1992), 53-78.

21. Michael Harris, *The Rise of the Gospel Blues* (New York, 1992), 208.

22. Portia Maultsby, "The Impact of Gospel Music on the Secular Music Industry," in Reagon, *We'll Understand it Better By and By*, 20-21.

23. The best study of traditional southern soul is Peter Guralnick's *Sweet Soul Music* (New York, 1990). While stressing the music's black church roots, Guralnick notes the contributions of white studio musicians and producers—particularly Jerry Wexler of Atlantic Records—in shaping the early soul style.

24. See "Motown," by Joe McEwen and Jim Miller in Miller, *The Rolling Stone Illustrated History of Rock and Roll*, 235-247. For a comprehensive history of the Motown Recording Company, see Nelson George, *Where did our Love Go? The Rise and Fall of the Motown Sound* (New York, 1985).

25. The best overview of Latin music in the United States is John Storm Roberts's *The Latin Tinge* (New York, 1979). For background on Louisiana zydeco music see Barry Ancelet, *The Makers of Cajun Music* (Austin, Texas, 1984). The seminal history of *norieno* music is Manuel Pena's *The Texas Mexican Conjunto* (Austin, Texas, 1985); see also Steven Loza, *Barrio Rhythms* (Urbana, Illinois, 1992).

26. See Rothstein's discussion of diversity in "You Can't Please All of the People . . ." 22; and Lipman, *Music and More*, 306.

27. See Baraka, *Blues People*, 175-236; and "Black Music: Its Roots, its Popularity, Its Commercial Prostitution" in William Ferris and Mary Hart, ed., *Folk Music and Modern Sound* (Jackson, Mississippi, 1982), 177-193.

28. Nelson George, *The Death of Rhythm and Blues* (New York, 1988), 147-201.

29. F. Clark Power, *The Challenge of Pluralism* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1992), 13-14.