CBMR DIGEST

SPRING 2009 VOLUME 22 : NO. 1

GENIUS WITHOUT BORDERS: RAY CHARLES
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Coming Events
JUNE 19–20
CBMR Serial Conferences on Black Music Diaspora: Focus on the Caribbean
University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras
www.colum.edu/2009sanjuan

OCTOBER 22–25
College Music Society National Conference
Portland, Oregon
music.org

NOVEMBER 12–15
American Musicological Society Annual Meeting
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
contact ams@ams-net.org

NOVEMBER 19–22
Society for Ethnomusicology Annual Meeting
Mexico City, Mexico
contact semconf@indiana.edu

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Laura Haefner, Editor

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To become a member of CBMR Associates at any level, visit the CBMR website at www.colum.edu/cbmr/Join_The_Center.php.

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Cover photo: Sean Harris performs at the Ray Charles Tribute Concert during Genius without Borders: Celebrating the Genius of Ray Charles.

Photo by Jonathan Mathias
From the Executive Director

The weekend of March 7–8, the CBMR hosted the inaugural event of a new cultural series called Genius without Borders—A Symposium in Honor of the Genius of Ray Charles. The event was a special one. Papers, panels, and performances offered exciting new perspectives on Ray Charles and his music. My personal thanks go out to all the participants who contributed their time and insight to making the weekend a success—particularly to those at the Ray Charles Foundation and the Ray Charles Marketing Group (for a full report on this event, see page 4). The Center designed the Genius without Borders series (GWB) to provide in-depth explorations of the contributions made by African-American music and musicians to American culture. Each installment in the series will focus on a different artist, genre, or institution that has uniquely contributed to the development of African-American music. We have several goals for the GWB series. We hope that its paper and panel sessions will promote black music research and generate scholarship, that its educational concerts and lecture performances will expose new and diverse audiences to the CBMR’s work as a major informational crossroads for black music research, and finally, that it will help promote the CBMR’s definition of American music: “all of the music considered to be ‘Indigenous’ to all the countries in North America (including Canada) and the entire circum-Caribbean region, in which we also include Central and South America.” Additionally, the Center considers African-American music to include any music “of and derived primarily from African or African-American musical or cultural sources and residing primarily in the Americas and all parts of the circum-Caribbean region.”

CBMR founder and director emeritus Samuel A. Floyd Jr. developed these definitions through and alongside the Center’s ongoing research initiatives, but what definitions might GWB carve out for that overserved term genius? In Roman mythology, every man had a genius and every woman had a juno. Originally ancestors, these developed into personal guardian spirits. Juno protected the realms of marriage, brides, and virginity, while genii watched over success and intellectual prowess. Perhaps these myths help explain why, in the fields of music scholarship and criticism, musical genius is so often associated with the exceptional, the intellectual, the innovative, and the masculine. The interdiscipline of jazz studies has been particularly susceptible to this limited view. Moving beyond traditionally gendered domains of activity to consider genius more broadly as the prevailing, attendant, tutelary spirit(s), either of ancestors or of places, opens up the space needed to imagine the practice or application of an everyday, culturally specific genius by black musicians and composers.

Surely what we hear as Ray Charles’s genius stemmed at least in part from his ability to recognize, distill, and resemble into something new the building blocks of blues, country and western, and gospel. Charles recognized that these musical languages—as he heard them in Albany, Georgia—all expressed poor southern realities that had more in common than most admitted at the time. What other genii reside in African-American music? Celia Cruz’s embodiment of complex diasporic histories? The way Chess recording artists together sounded a city in transition and in turn practically invented an entire generation of British rock artists? The Staples Singers’s performance of family and community? There are endless examples in African-American music of genius that transcends the borders of traditional definitions. The CBMR looks forward to exploring them in its new program.
Genius without Borders Series Opens with a Symposium in Honor of Ray Charles

The CBMR and Columbia College Chicago hosted Genius without Borders: A Symposium in Honor of the Genius of Ray Charles during March 7–8, 2009. The event featured two days of paper sessions and oral documentation by scholars, writers, journalists, and performers, a tribute performance by the New Black Music Repertory Ensemble, a keynote banquet with Charles biographer David Ritz, and an exhibition of historical Ray Charles artifacts. It was the inaugural offering in the Genius without Borders series, developed by the Center. Each Genius without Borders event will focus on a different artist, genre, or institution of note—past or present—providing programming that will be exciting and educational to a broad and diverse audience.

The Center was honored to welcome several musicians who performed with Ray Charles, including Dr. Mable John, who was the lead Raelettes' music director for eleven years, trumpeter Marcus Belgrave, drummer John Bryant, and keyboardist Ernie Vandrease. These musicians participated in a panel discussion hosted by David Ritz and reminisced about their years performing with Charles.

Paper sessions were designed to explore Charles's unique and pivotal role in defining and influencing popular music in the United States from the late 1940s until his death in 2004. He excelled in many music styles and genres, including gospel, R&B, country and western, rock, and soul, and brought these musics to new audiences across the country and the world. Visit www.colum.edu/cbmr/raycharles2009 for additional information about the symposium.

CBMR Executive Director Monica Hairston noted in her welcoming remarks that Ray Charles was adept with myriad styles and genres. He centered, refashioned, and personalized actual black experiences in narratives of slavery, migration, and American music. "As Dr. Mable John, former Raelette and Symposium participant once said, 'You name it, we did it. . . . And all of it was good because we did it Ray Charles's way.'"

Screening
March 4, 2009
Screening of the movie Ray for Columbia College Chicago students
Pre-screening talk by Ron Falzone, Columbia College Chicago Film and Video Department
Life As Myth/Myth As Life: The Story of Ray

Symposium Sessions
March 6–7, 2009
Session 1. Hallelujah I Love Her So: The Gospel of Ray Charles

Horace Maxile (Center for Black Music Research), moderator

Freda Hadley (Indiana University), "I Chose to Sing the Blues": The Impact of the Gospel Sound That Was and the Gospel Singer Who Wasn't

Columbia College Chicago president Warrick Carter at a preconcert reception.
Photo by Jonathan Mathias
Tammy Kernodle (Miami University of Ohio), Saturday Night, Sunday Morning: Ray Charles and the Theology of Soul

Session 2. Playing With Ray: Charles Band Members Panel
   David Ritz (Ray Charles biographer), moderator
   Marcus Belgrave
   John Bryant
   Dr. Mable John
   Chuck Parrish
   Ernie Vantrease

Session 3. Genius + Soul = Jazz
   Stanley Crouch (author and African American cultural critic)

Session 4. Blue Genius: Ray Charles's Rhythm and Blues
   Guthrie P. Ramsey Jr. (University of Pennsylvania)

Session 5. Modern Sounds in Country and Western Music
   Michael Gray (Country Music Hall of Fame), moderator
   James Austin (Rhinoceros Records), How Modern Sounds in Country & Western Affected Top 40 Radio
   Diane E. Pecknold (University of Louisville), How Ray Charles Made Country Modern

Session 6. Ray Charles: Man of Show "Business"
   J. Dennis Rich (Chair, Department of Arts, Entertainment, and Media Management, Columbia College Chicago), moderator
   Valerie Ervin (President, The Ray Charles Foundation), in absentia
   Tony Gumina (President, Ray Charles Marketing Group)
   Jerry D. Rothman (Legal Counsel for The Ray Charles Foundation)

Keynote Address
The Right Reverend Ray: His Spiritual Legacy, David Ritz

With Appreciation
The Center expresses its sincere appreciation to the following for their invaluable contributions in making the symposium and performance a success.

Tony Gumina, President, Ray Charles Marketing Group, for hosting the performance, and his provision of programming advice and video clips, still images, and other materials.

Carl Foster, Director of Special Projects, The Ray Charles Foundation, for his programming advice, administrative and logistical support, and facilitation of the loan of Ray Charles artifacts for the exhibit.

Patricia Andrews-Keenan, The Tallulah Group, for her untroubled work to secure event sponsors and support.

Dr. Eric V. A. Winston, Vice President for Institutional Advancement at Columbia College Chicago, and his staff.

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The CBMR Has Moved!
Please visit the Center in its new space at 618 South Michigan Avenue, suite 600.

CBMR Grant News
The spring 2009 CBMR Travel Grant was awarded to Tanisha C. Ford, a Ph.D. candidate in U.S. History at Indiana University

Bobbi Wilsyn performs at the CBMR's Ray Charles Tribute Concert.
Photo by Jonathan Mathias
Bloomington. During her March 16–20 residency, Ford made full use of the CBMR’s Sue Cassidy Clark collection toward extending her work, which investigates issues of race and representations of black womanhood as they relate to black women entertainers’ visualization of soul. The recorded and print media in that collection were particularly helpful, as were the CBMR’s vinyl recordings of artists such as Odetta and Nina Simone. Ford’s projected outcomes include articles and her completed dissertation.

The CBMR announces the fall 2009 grant recipients, Charity Chan and Daniel Neely. Chan is a doctoral student at Princeton University working in the department of music. Her project, “Settling the Score: Integrating Improvisation and Composition in Experimental Music in the United States, ca. 1960,” will consider jazz and concert music—collectively—as part of the experimental music tradition of the United States. To do this, she will critically examine the methods and influences that shaped the distinctive approach of African-American composers toward integrating composition and improvisation. Neely is an independent scholar whose interests involve Caribbean topics. His project, “Performance Multiplicity and the Sankey Repertory in Jamaica,” will track the Sankey repertory in Jamaica, draw conclusions about the history of Sankeys, and examine differences in performance practice among religious groups.

We are especially pleased with the number and quality of applications that the CBMR has received over the past two grant cycles and with the wide-ranging interests of our applicants. Interdisciplinary pursuits have recently benefited from these grants, as our past two recipients have been religion and U.S. history scholars. We look forward to even more quality proposals.

CBMR travel grants of up to $1,000 are awarded on a competitive basis to applicants who demonstrate the ability to launch and complete a scholarly or performance-based research project based on the CBMR’s collections. The grants are supported with funds that have been given to the Center in honor of CBMR founder Samuel A. Floyd Jr. and in memory of Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson. Scholars, composers, conductors, musicians, educators, graduate students, and independent researchers residing or attending school beyond commuting distance of the Center for Black Music Research (more than one hundred miles) are eligible to apply for this grant.

Applications are accepted twice yearly and must be postmarked or received by September 1 and February 1. Additional information and application forms are available at www.colum.edu/cbmr/Library_and_Archives/CBMR_Travel_Grants.php. Or call 312.369.7559 to request information.

CBMR to Host Research Fellows

Two research fellows who are recipients of fellowships in African-American studies from the Black Metropolis Research Consortium (BMRC) will conduct research in the CBMR Library and Archives during June and July of 2009. The BMRC is a consortium of Chicago-area archives and special collections with African-American holdings. This is the first year of the BMRC’s fellows program, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support outstanding researchers from across the country who want to conduct research in the BMRC’s member repositories.

Fellows whose research will be conducted in the CBMR Library and Archives are Helen Brown, associate professor in the Department of Performing and Visual Arts at Purdue University, who will research the art songs of Margaret Bonds and Langston Hughes as part of a larger book project on Margaret Bonds; and Marcus Shelby, a jazz musician and composer based in Oakland, California, who will research the Chicago experiences of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as part of a jazz oratorio interpreting the life of the civil rights leader. In addition to their research at the CBMR, both Brown and Shelby will use collections at the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection at the Woodson Branch of the Chicago Public Library. Shelby will also use the resources at the Harold Washington Library Center of the Chicago Public Library.

Columbia College is a founding member of the BMRC, and the CBMR’s Head Librarian and Archivist Suzanne Flandreau serves on the consortium’s Board of Directors.
CBMR RAY CHARLES TRIBUTE CONCERT

In conjunction with Genius without Borders: A Symposium in Honor of the Genius of Ray Charles, the CBMR presented its New Black Music Repertory Ensemble in a performance on March 7 that featured the music of Ray Charles, as well as taped recordings of him.

T. S. Galloway, music director and conductor
Sean Harris
Bobbi Wilkins
Sue Conway
Maggie Brown
Members of the Columbia College Gospel Choir, Herald "Chip" Johnson, director

Trumpet
Larry Bowen
Burgess Gardner
Chuck Parrish

Trombone
Steve Berry
Dana Legg

Saxophone
Mwata Bowden
Ari Brown
Jarrett Harris
Chris Lega

Rhythm
Miguel de la Cerna, piano
Buddy Fambro, guitar
Roger Harris, keyboard
Herald "Chip" Johnson, piano
Frank Parker, Jr., drums
Joshua Ramos, bass

Program
Bad Water, by Jimmy Holiday, arr. Ray Charles
Confession Blues, by Ray Charles
I've Got a Woman, by Ray Charles/Renald Richard
Hallelujah I Love Her So, by Ray Charles
Let the Good Times Roll, by Sam Theard/Fleecie Moore, arr. Quincy Jones
One Mint Julep, by Rudolph Toombs, arr. Quincy Jones
Unchain My Heart, by Robert Sharp Jr./Teddy Powell, arr. Ray Charles
Hit the Road Jack, by Percy Mayfield, arr. Ray Charles
I Can't Stop Loving You, by Don Gibson, arr. Marty Paich
Here We Go Again, by Russell Steagall/Donnie Lanier, arr. Sid Feller

One of the images of Ray Charles presented during the Ray Charles Tribute Concert.
Contemporary photo by Jonathon Mathias. Original image courtesy of the Ray Charles Marketing Group.
Heaven Help Us All, by Ron Miller, arr. Randy Waldman/David Blumberg/Clarence McDonald

Mess Around, by Ahmet Ertegun, arr. Ray Charles

What'd I Say, by Ray Charles

The program also featured four taped recordings by Ray Charles:

America the Beautiful (music recorded 1972; video filmed 2001), text by Katherine Lee Bates, music ("Materna") by Samuel Augustus Ward, music/text compilation by Clarence Barbour, arr. Quincy Jones


Ring of Fire (video 1970), by Merle Kilgore/June Carter, arr. Ray Charles/Sid Feller

Let It Be (video 1990), by John Lennon/Paul McCartney, arr. Ray Charles

All charts were re-created by T. S. Galloway, based on Ray Charles recordings, except for "Mess Around," "Let the Good Times Roll," and "One Mint Julep," which were re-created by Burgess Gardner.

Content of the program narrative designed and written by Tony Gumina.
IN MEMORIAM

Jazz drummer Louie Bellson, inventor of the double bass drum set, died on February 14, 2009, at the age of 84. In 1951, Bellson became the only white member of Duke Ellington's orchestra. He subsequently performed with Count Basie and James Brown and served as music director for his wife, Pearl Bailey. He received a Jazz Masters award from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1994 and was named a Kennedy Center Living Legend in 2007.

Anne Brown, the first actress to perform the role of Bess in Gershwin’s opera Porgy and Bess, died in Oslo, Norway, on February 13 at the age of 96. She was a student at Juilliard when she auditioned for Gershwin in 1935. Unable to perform with major opera companies because of her race, she became a recitalist and vocal teacher, settling in Norway in 1948.

Blues guitarist John Cephas died in Woodford, Virginia, on March 4 at the age of 78. With harmonica player Phil Wiggins, he popularized the Piedmont style of blues from Virginia and the Carolinas. Together, they traveled throughout the world and made over a dozen albums. He received a National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1989.

South African singer Miriam Makeba died on November 10, 2008, near Naples, Italy, at the age of 76. Even though she spent thirty one years in exile for her political activities, she was affectionately known as “Mama Africa” because of her work against the South African apartheid system that ended in the 1990s. Although her involvement in radical politics was sometimes controversial, she was awarded the Dag Hammarskjöld Peace Prize by the United Nations in 1986.

Folk singer and civil rights activist Odetta (Odetta Holmes Fellious) died on December 2, 2008, in New York City at the age of 77. A classically trained vocalist, she recorded a number of records of folk songs during the folk revival of the 1960s, when she influenced folk musicians such as Joan Baez and Bob Dylan. She marched with Martin Luther King, Jr., joined the March on Washington in 1963, and sang for President John F. Kennedy. President Clinton awarded her the National Endowment for the Arts Medal of the Arts and Humanities in 1999.


THE CBMR THANKS ALL WHO RESPONDED TO ITS END-OF-YEAR APPEAL

These funds go far in their vital support of the Center’s outreach activities, including its conferences, performance programs, fellowships, and special research initiatives.

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Former CBMR Fellows Win Awards

2004-2005 CBMR Rockefeller Fellow Timothy Rommen’s book “Mek Some Noise: Gospel Music and the Ethics of Style in Trinidad” was awarded the Society for Ethnomusicology’s Alan Merriam prize, given each year in recognition of the most distinguished published English-language monograph in the field of ethnomusicology. The monograph was based in large part on research conducted and worked up while Rommen was in residency at the CBMR.

Theodore Burgh, 2008 CBMR Travel Grant awardee, was recognized by the Society for Ethnomusicology. His book “Listening to the Artifacts: Music Culture in Ancient Palestine” was awarded its Klaus P. Wachsmann Prize for Advanced and Critical Essays in Organology.

Staff Notes

In November 2008, CBMR Director of Research Kenneth Bilby gave a paper titled “Conjuring the Ghost of John Canoe: Re-Imagining a ‘Slave Festival’ in the New South” at the Newberry Library in Chicago, for the annual seminar series sponsored by the Center for Research in Festive Culture of Northern Illinois University. In December, he traveled to Wilmington, North Carolina, at the invitation of the Bellamy Mansion Museum and the New Hanover County Public Library to present a lecture titled “In Search of John Kuner (Jonkonnu): Clues to the Hidden Background of an African American and Caribbean Yuletide Festival.” Bilby recently completed the documentation and detailed annotation of a new collection of Caribbean field recordings (consisting of roughly twenty-five hours of material), donated last summer to the CBMR Library and Archives through a cooperative arrangement with the Smithsonian Institution. His review of Andrea Leland’s film Jamesie, King of Scratch was published in the current issue of the journal Transforming Anthropology.

Head Librarian and Archivist Suzanne Flandreau attended the annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology in October 2008 and the annual meeting of the Music Library Association in February 2009. The meeting was held in Chicago, and she served on the Local Arrangements Committee.

In December, the CBMR bid farewell to Librarian and Archivist Andy Leach, who left the Center for Cleveland and a position as director of the new Library and Archives at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Leach joined the CBMR staff in 2000, and his contributions over the years have been outstanding. We wish him well in his new position.

In November, Executive Director Monica Hairton completed the Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology at New York University. Her dissertation was titled “The Wrong Place for the Right People: Gender, Race, and Jazz at Café Society.” She attended the annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology in Middletown, Connecticut, at which she presented a paper titled “Café Society and Female Physicality.” In April, she was honored by the Chicago Defender as one of its 2009 Women of Excellence.

In February 2009, CBMR Catalog Librarian Janet Harper attended the annual meeting of the Music OCLC Users Group (MOUG) and the annual conference of the Music Library Association (MLA). Both were held in Chicago. Harper also served on the Local Arrangements Committee for the MLA meeting.

In November 2008, Associate Director of Research Horace Maxie served as a panel moderator for the joint meeting of the American Musicological Society and the Society for Music Theory in Nashville, Tennessee. The panel, titled “Fisk University: On Black Musical Heritage, Leaders, and Legacies,” explored the significant contributions of Fisk University students, alumni, and faculty to American music beyond the well-documented work of the Jubilee Singers. Maxie was a guest lecturer for Northwestern University’s Musicology Colloquium in February 2009. His presentation, “From Trains to the Mothership: Extensions on a Black Musical Tropology,” was part of a larger project that explores tropes of movement and mobility in African-American music. Also in February, he delivered a presentation on blues and gospel music as part of the plenary session for the Music Library Association’s Annual Meeting in Chicago. His discussion focused on pioneering and influential musicians from Chicago such as “Big Bill” Broonzy, Memphis Minnie, Buddy Guy, Thomas Dorsey, Roberta Martin, and Thomas Whitfield. Maxie was a session chair for the thirty-fifth annual conference of the Society for American Music. The session was titled “Julius Eastman and the Politics of American Experimental/Downtown Music.”

On May 16, CBMR Webmaster Peter Shultz presented a paper at the Music Theory Midwest conference in Minneapolis, titled “Reflective Equilibrium and the Analytical Methodologies of David Lewin.”

Marcos Suelo Bal, a former CBMR employee (1989-2001), received a 2008 Grammy nomination for his work as a mastering engineer on the CD release Polk Miller & His Old South Quartette (Tompkins Square TSQ2028). Suelo, now living in Queens, New York, is a recording engineer specializing in archival audio.