

The Bulletin

of the Society for American Music

FOUNDED IN HONOR
OF OSCAR G. T. SONNECK

From the President

Douglas Bomberger, Elizabethtown College



Dear Colleagues,

As summer turns to fall, many of us in the Society for American Music are preparing to return to the classroom for another year of study or teaching. In addition to the prospect of cooler weather, I anticipate the opportunity to engage in a lifelong ritual of sharing knowledge and gaining new perspectives on my chosen discipline.

I teach at a PUI (Primarily Undergraduate Institution), where most of my students are preparing for careers in music therapy or music education, although a few have gone on to graduate studies in performance or musicology. The attraction of teaching at such an institution is the variety: A typical day will include a music history survey for sophomore majors, a musicology seminar for senior majors, a popular music course for non-music majors, and a few piano lessons in between. It is stimulating to trace musical changes and trends with the sophomores, to discuss big issues of culture and aesthetics with the seniors, and to seek ways to explain stylistic nuances among

different genres of American popular music in language that non-musicians can understand. I have just enough piano students to remind me of why students choose to study music in the first place.

At many PUIs, the role of the musicologist is to be a generalist. Not surprisingly, the job of proofreading concert programs falls to me. But what good is a generalist, one may ask, in the internet age? We live in an unprecedented era when nearly any fact is accessible with a few clicks of the mouse. Is there still a role for musicologists besides providing expert testimony in copyright infringement lawsuits?

In his 2019 bestseller, *Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World*, David Epstein makes the case that generalists are uniquely qualified to make cross-disciplinary connections, bringing breadth of perspective to a society dominated by specialists. In the realm of music, we provide a crucial leavening agent in a field where the 10,000-hour rule for mastery of one's specialty is a tenet of belief. More than any other branch of the discipline, musicology blends the arts and the humanities. We may not be needed for our ability to answer questions off the top of our heads (how many of us remember a professor like that?), but we are needed more than ever to give context and make connections between seemingly unrelated musical events and styles.

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The Society for American Music was founded fifty years ago by a group of persons who exemplified the generalist perspective in music. Their goal was to broaden the somewhat restricted field of musicology to embrace new repertoires and methodologies. They named their new society after one of our country's great generalists: Oscar Sonneck, who, as the first head of the Music Division of the Library of Congress and later as the founding editor of *The Musical Quarterly*, exemplified curiosity and openness to new music and ideas. Trained in composition, conducting, and musicology, he was also fluent in multiple languages. As I return to the classroom this fall, I will strive to be more like Oscar in broadening my range of knowledge and skills, and I encourage you to do the same.

Journal of the Society for American Music

Volume 17, Number 4 (November 2023)

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Coleccionistas de Sonidos,
<https://www.coleccionistasdesonidos.com>
José Manuel Izquierdo König

SAM Honorary Member Announcement

The Society for American Music is pleased to announce that the renowned American operatic tenor George Shirley has been named the honorary member for the fiftieth annual conference in Detroit, March 20–24, 2024. A native of Indianapolis, Mr. Shirley earned his bachelor's degree at Wayne State University in Detroit, followed by subsequent studies in New York, Washington, and Italy. He was the winner of the 1961 Metropolitan Opera Auditions, earning a contract with his performance of Puccini's "Nessun dorma." The first Black tenor to receive a contract from the Metropolitan Opera, he sang with the company for eleven seasons. His bright lyric tenor and intelligent acting are beloved by audiences around the world.

Mr. Shirley has continued his commitment to educating young singers at the University of Maryland, and since 1987 at the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre, & Dance, where he is the Joseph Edgar Maddy Distinguished University Emeritus Professor of Voice. In 2014, he received the National Medal of Arts from President Barack Obama. He plans to attend the SAM Conference in Detroit, where he will receive the honorary membership.

With Thanks: Koegel and Stopp Donations Support SAM

The Society for American Music received two major gifts in the first half of 2023 that will benefit the Society and its members.

The first gift comes from Dr. John Koegel, longtime member of the Society for American Music and former SAM board member. Koegel is Professor of Music at California State University, Fullerton, and a scholar of Mexican, Latinx, and Latin American musics. His generous donation of \$25,000, with continuing donations, has permanently endowed the John Koegel Latin American and Latinx Music Fellowship, effectively doubling the maximum annual award from \$1,000 to \$2,000. It is awarded competitively to scholars in any phase of their career to support research on Latin American and Latinx musical life. This includes research on/pertaining to South America, Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean, as well as representations of these culture areas in North America and around the world. The fellowship may be used for expenses associated with archival or ethnographic research, including but not limited to travel expenses, books, and media resources.

A second major donation has been received from the estate of Jacklin B. Stopp (1926–2022). A graduate of the Juilliard School and the University of Michigan, Dr. Stopp was a longtime member of SAM and a specialist on the life and work of nineteenth-century music educator A. N. Johnson. Her will stipulated a bequest of \$25,000 to SAM “for research in 18th-through 19th-century American music.” The will further stipulated “an additional \$25,000 to be given to the member of the society who successfully edits my two-volume typescript on A. N. Johnson for publication in book form.” Sadly, the executors could find no trace of the typescript, meaning that the additional money will be unclaimed.

Book Reviews

[*Following the Drums: African American Fife and Drum Music in Tennessee*](#). John M. Shaw. University Press of Mississippi, 2022. 298 pp. ISBN: 9781496839558. Paperback.

Kaitlin Harris, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

John M. Shaw’s *Following the Drums: African American Fife and Drum Music in Tennessee* offers an accessible overview of Black American fife and drum band activity in Tennessee from 1776 to 1984 and expands upon the limited body of existing work that primarily examines similar bands in Mississippi. Rather than focusing on a singular ensemble, Shaw interweaves accounts of multiple bands by prioritizing the events and occasions for which fife and drum bands provided music. Throughout the book, four performance contexts emerge as key sites of Black fife and drum music-making: election campaign events, benevolent society picnics, commemorations, and advertising events for local baseball teams. Shaw relies extensively on period newspapers to achieve this focus on performance environments. In a note on sources prior to the book’s introduction, Shaw addresses a critical caveat of the newspapers: they reflect the responses of Southern white press outlets (xiii). Despite the racist and derogatory tone of the newspapers, the author reveals that these sources frequently provided the most useful accounts of the fife and drum bands (xiii). The final chapter, which addresses bands active during the mid- to late-twentieth century, shifts to a broader range of sources, including interviews with relatives of the fife and drum band musicians as well as recordings of a few ensembles.

Following the Drums falls chronologically into six chapters framed by brief introductory and concluding sections. Chapter 1, “To Drum for the Fun of the Thing,” functions in an introductory capacity, and Shaw offers a brief glimpse into Black fife and drum activity prior to and during the Civil War. Although some references are made to the phenomenon throughout the United States, the focal point quickly shifts to the bands in Tennessee. Chapter 2, “The Inevitable Fife and Drum,”



addresses the role of Black fife and drum bands during the first five years of Reconstruction in Tennessee (1886–1871), and the chapter introduces events related to election campaigns and Black benevolent societies, which helped to create a support network for their newly enfranchised communities, as two key performance environments for the bands. Although these two environments appear most frequently throughout *Following the Drums*, the chapter also references parades and commemorations such as Decoration Day, which honored the Union dead (51).

Chapter 3, “These Things Must Have Their Day,” documents the last five years of Reconstruction (1872–1877), and similar to other chapters, the events connected to election campaigns and functions tied to benevolent societies serve as the chapter’s backbone. In the chapter, Shaw places Black fife and drum activity in relation to the growth of Black political power and the subsequent political backlash of white Democrats. The chapter also alludes to the gradual displacement of fife and drum bands by brass bands, especially in cities. Shaw sets Chapter 4, “So Important a Part of the Machinery,” in 1878–1892 as part of the Redemption era following the Compromise of 1877. As a byproduct of white Democrat control, almost all newspaper accounts in the chapter concern public political campaigns rather than the more private benevolent society events. This prevalence of election documentation reinforces the link between Black political activity and the use of fife and drum music. Encompassing the Nadir, Chapter 5, “Nerve-Torturers and Wholesale Dispensers of Discord,” spans 1893–1941 and centers primarily upon Nashville, Tennessee.

The fifth chapter is unique in that its primary focus lies in the use of fife and drum bands for advertising local baseball teams. Shaw situates Chapter 6, “Like a Muffled, Rumbling Heartbeat,” between 1942–1984. In the chapter, he surveys four known Tennessee Black fife and drum bands: the Southern Fife and Drum Corps, the Broadnax Brothers Fife and Drum Band, the Freedonia Fife and Drum Band, and the United Sons and Daughters of Zion No. 9 Fife and Drum Band. Shaw’s brief examination of these four bands ties each ensemble to key musicians associated with each group. In addition, Shaw uses the sixth chapter to highlight several instances of the connection between fife and drum activity and Black benevolent society picnics.

Although the book’s content spans 1776 to 1984, the majority of the study concerns the period 1866–1892, which Shaw divides among chapters two through four. The chronological approach is helpful for situating the reader in the historical context, but the chapters quickly begin to read like a catalog of events, rather than writing with a clear sense of trajectory. This problem persists more noticeably in chapters two through five, in which Shaw follows an internal chronological structure marked by subheadings that separate sections by year. The first and sixth chapters, on the other hand, still fall into the book’s overarching progression through time, but these chapters feature subheadings, organized topically. This topical structure allows for the reader to have a better understanding of the forthcoming material; in the sixth chapter, for example, the subheadings primarily divide the chapter into sections pertaining to known fife and drum bands. Although the source materials underpinning the middle chapters make an internal topical structure grouped by ensemble impractical, the book would be better served by structuring chapters topically into sections either by location, or, more promisingly, by the function with which newspaper accounts associated the bands.

Three major takeaways from *Following the Drums* have made a lasting impression on this reader. First, the book amasses a record of Black fife and drum bands in Tennessee, and its publication serves as a tribute to the musicians referenced within its pages. Shaw frequently includes extensive block quotes taken from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century newspaper accounts, and the quotation of these sources provides the reader with a wealth of named individuals connected to the Tennessee fife and drum bands. Although earlier musicians are limited to their mentions in newspapers, Shaw includes additional details derived from census records for musicians affiliated with the twentieth-century iterations of these bands.

Another highlight of this book is Shaw's conclusion that the bands' affiliation with local benevolent societies linked the stability of the Black fife and drum band phenomenon in Tennessee to the prominence and stability of those societies (242). As the presence of fife and drum bands diminished in other local events, such as election campaigns, benevolent society functions came to be the last occasions with which the ensembles were connected. As the role of these societies began to lessen in their communities, so too did the frequency of their events, and without performance opportunities, the bands' role also diminished. Shaw strongly corroborates this conclusion through the interviews cited in the final chapter.

Although the book's role as documentary record and Shaw's conclusion about the significance of the link between the bands and the benevolent societies are important, the true strength of *Following the Drums* lies in Shaw's depiction of the role that politics played in shaping the musical activity of the fife and drum bands. As shown by the early chapters, these bands quickly became intertwined with elections in Tennessee, and it is noteworthy that the presence of the bands at campaign events became a signifier that those seeking election were attempting to reach Black voters (106). The role of politics also began to manifest in a far more subtle way as the presence of fife and drum bands shifted between the public and private spheres. Notably, election events were highly public affairs that warranted attention from local news outlets. As political environments became increasingly hostile to Black residents, however, fife and drum bands transitioned away from the public election spaces towards more private settings—in other words, beyond the purview of the white journalists that had initially been recounting details of the bands (201).

A recurring issue in *Following the Drums* is that, despite Shaw's thorough use of period newspapers, the book lacks significant engagement with works by other scholars—especially those concerning wind bands. The reader encounters this issue early in the book's opening chapters, which offer no general overview of fife and drum bands and provide no insight as to how they functioned in a broader context of military music. Shaw's omission of this material may stem from his argument that "to white people, fife and drum was military music...But Black people used fife and drum for all kinds of things" (36–37). Nevertheless, the absence of contextual material undercuts the reader's understanding of how Black fife and drum bands functioned as compared to other iterations of these ensembles. As the book progresses, local- and state-level politics have a significant bearing on the presence of fife and drum bands, and the author's engagement with themes of race and place could be better buttressed by entering the book into dialogue with Matt Sakakeeny's *Roll With It* (2013). Although Sakakeeny's book is about New Orleans brass bands, its themes concerning the sonic manifestations of Black culture and how sound can be used to claim space resonate strongly in Shaw's work.

Following the Drums addresses the Black fife and drum band phenomenon in Tennessee, and it would be a useful resource for musicologists and historians interested in Black music-making, music in Tennessee, and the intersection of music and politics. In particular, the book is valuable for its plethora of period newspapers frequently cited by Shaw in extensive block-quotes. These sources document key sites of Black fife and drum activity and shed light on how political landscapes shaped their performance environments. The bands' ties to Black benevolent societies and election campaigns situate these ensembles as an important part of their communities and as an expression of Black political identity.

Call for *Bulletin* Contributions and New Series on Pedagogy!

The *Bulletin* editorial board invites members to contribute feature articles, reviews, and news, as well as ideas for future *Bulletin* segments or series.

We welcome essays and opinion pieces on current issues in American music (broadly conceived) and music scholarship; reports on concerts and conferences of interest to our membership; transcriptions of interviews with prominent persons in American musical life; reviews of recent books pertaining to American music; and updates on our members' scholarly, creative, and professional activities.

Announcing New Pedagogy Series beginning with our next issue (L No. 1; Deadline January 15, 2023): Please reach out to *Bulletin* editor [Megan Steigerwald Ille](mailto:Megan.Steigerwald@illinois.edu) or by using the SAM Website (<https://www.american-music.org/page/SAMBulletin>) if you have interest in contributing a short essay, case study, or opinion piece on teaching American music (broadly conceived). Topics might include successful assignments, critical pedagogy, syllabi and curricular changes, or creative lecture design, among others. We hope to feature at least one pedagogical contribution each issue.

We are currently soliciting media reviews pertaining to American music (including online resources, albums, and documentaries). Please reach out to Media Editor [Samuel Parler](#) if interested in contributing a review.

You can contact members of the editorial board via the SAM website (<https://www.american-music.org/page/SAMBulletin>) or via the email addresses listed at the bottom of the *Bulletin* issue.

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