

The Bulletin

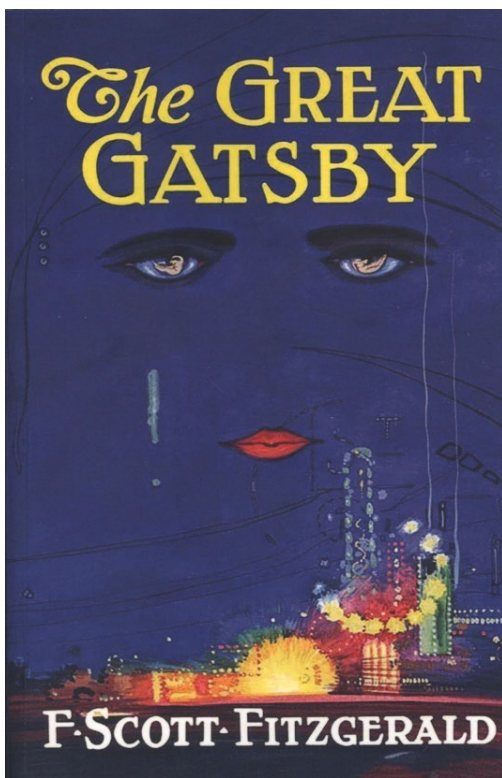
of the Society for American Music

FOUNDED IN HONOR
OF OSCAR G. T. SONNECK

The 100th Anniversary of *The Great Gatsby*: Just One More Waltz with You

Laurie J. Sampsel

Often hailed as the Great American Novel, *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940) was published in April 1925. During the hundred years since then, it has been adapted many times for different media and audiences. This story about wealth, obsession, adultery, murder, and suicide continues to intrigue readers. For musicians, part of the ongoing appeal of the book lies with the music the author includes. Although incorporating music into his stories was not new for Fitzgerald, his popular song choices for this work stand the test of time. The focus here is on the waltz song “Three O’Clock in the Morning.”



Francis Cugat’s painting *Celestial Eyes* was used on the dust jacket for the first edition published by Charles Scribner as well as the 2022 reprint by Decameron Books.

The novel is filled with musical descriptions of voices and sounds and includes a wide range of pieces. In addition to Tin Pan Alley hits, the author incorporates well-known classical pieces, such as Mendelssohn’s “Wedding March” and Ethelbert Nevin’s “The Rosary.” Whether to establish the historical setting or enhance the meaning of his words, Fitzgerald considered selections carefully.

He included five popular songs published from 1917 to 1921. The book was set in 1922, so they were known to readers. Thus, they provided insight into the characters and their motives. They also allowed Fitzgerald to introduce irony or satire. The novel’s centennial has seen Gatsby dances, parties, and dinners featuring these numbers.

“Three O’Clock in the Morning” stands apart from the others. The song, especially the instrumental recording by Paul Whiteman (1890–1967) and His Orchestra, was an unprecedented success. Contemporary readers were sure to know the song and its lyrics. Musing about reality in the middle of the night resonated with Fitzgerald, as it appeared again in his later work. Finally, the reference in Chapter 6 of the book highlights a crucial point in the narrative.

The 1920s are known as the “jazz age” because of Fitzgerald, who coined the term. Writing in 1931, he called out 1922 as special. Roughly a decade later, he

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described the period generally: “It was an age of miracles, it was an age of art, it was an age of excess, and it was an age of satire.” Then he called out this single year. “May one offer in exhibit the year 1922!”¹

Although most of Fitzgerald’s writing took place during 1924, the book is set in the summer and autumn of 1922. It explores the early 1920s divide between the old-rich and the new-rich. Jazz and dance music at parties were certainly important, as were recordings, musicals, radio, and films. World War I was over, prohibition was the law, and women had just won the right to vote.

A short synopsis of the storyline, focusing on the major characters, will put the discussion of “Three O’Clock in the Morning” into context. The protagonist, Jay Gatsby, is desperately in love with Daisy Buchanan and hopes to regain her pre-War affection. Daisy’s adulterous husband, Tom, stands in his way. The story is told by the level-headed narrator, Nick Carraway, a distant relative to Daisy and Gatsby’s next-door neighbor in the fictional West Egg community of Long Island. After five years enjoying Tom’s old money and status, Daisy is not as impressed with Gatsby’s new wealth as he had hoped. Although Gatsby and Daisy do have an affair, she ultimately stays with Tom. The story leads to a hit-and-run accident where Daisy kills Tom’s current mistress, Myrtle Wilson, while driving Gatsby’s car. Gatsby was in the car with her and willing to take the blame. However, Myrtle’s husband, George, takes matters into his own hands. He shoots and kills Gatsby, who Tom tells him is the owner of the car, before committing suicide. Daisy and Tom leave town quickly to avoid suspicion.

“Three O’Clock in the Morning” is a short piece in G major composed by Julián Robledo (1887–1940). A Spaniard living in Argentina at the time, he is the only international composer represented in *The Great Gatsby*. Although known today primarily for his tangos, this piece is a waltz. It was first published in New Orleans as a piano solo in 1919. Two years later, Tin Pan Alley lyricist Theodora Morse (1883–1953) added text using her pseudonym, Dorothy Terriss. She is the only female creative represented in *The Great Gatsby*. This version was published by Leo Feist in 1921 and 1922. Today the waltz is remembered as both a lyrical song and instrumental number.

Two discs had been released by 1922. It later became a pop, easy listening, and jazz standard. Recordings were made by a wide variety of musicians, ranging from John McCormack to Liberace to Lou Rawls to Thelonius Monk. Many of these have been re-released over the years.

Of the seventy-one songs identified by Ruth Prigozy in Fitzgerald’s works, this is one of only eleven that he referenced more than once.² As a result of her exhaustive study, she concluded that “...to Fitzgerald, popular music meant emotion: the songs of this year or yesteryear had power to revive memories, recreate lost loves, reunited past and present feelings.”³

The vocal version was a hit in the *Greenwich Village Follies* of 1921. Part of the appeal was the Winchester chimes melody along with the imitation of a clock tolling the hour. “The romantic ballad proved the most memorable song to come out of the seventh edition of the *Greenwich Village Follies*, a strange turn considering the revue’s vaunted reputation for cynicism, mockery, and sophistication.”⁴

When Fitzgerald mentions the song being a “waltz of that year,” he was referring to 1922, the year of the novel’s setting. Although the work had been available in two versions for a few years, what did come out in 1922 was Paul Whiteman’s popular instrumental recording. It was the number one selling record in the country for eight weeks, and it stayed on the



From Anthony J. Berret, *Music in the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald: Unheard Melodies* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013).

¹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, “Echoes of the Jazz Age,” in *The Crack Up*, ed. Edmund Wilson (New Directions, 1945), 2–3.

² Ruth Prigozy, ““Poor Butterfly”: F. Scott Fitzgerald and Popular Music,” *Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies* 2 (1976), <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0361233300002301>. See the table on pages 42–51.

³ Prigozy, “Poor Butterfly,” 41.

⁴ Arnold Shaw, *The Jazz Age: Popular Music in the 1920s* (Oxford University Press, 1987), 121.

charts for a total of twenty. Joel Whitburn lists it as the tenth most popular recording of the decade.⁵ Thomas Hischak estimates sales at 3.5 million.⁶ The original recording (Victor 18940) is still available today.⁷

The author surely knew Whiteman and his orchestra, which was extremely popular. The Fitzgeralds were famous for attending posh New York parties as well as the theater. Writer Sarah Churchwell notes that “Scott and Zelda [Fitzgerald] often heard [him] play at the Palais Royal on Broadway.”⁸ Whiteman was heard not only live, but also on records and over the radio. Additionally, Whiteman’s group has been suggested as being a model for the orchestras Gatsby hired for his parties. He has also been mentioned as possibly relevant to the book’s fictional composition, *The Jazz History of the World*.

In *The Crack-Up*, a trio of short autobiographical pieces written during a period of self-doubt in 1936, Fitzgerald used the song’s title in reference to irrational musings of the mind during sleepless nights. “In a real dark night of the soul it is always three o’clock in the morning, day after day. At that hour the tendency is to refuse to face things as long as possible by retiring into an infantile dream—but one is continually startled out of this by various contacts with the world.”⁹

The song is referenced in Chapter 6 when Daisy and Tom attended one of Gatsby’s famous parties. In this scene, the two are preparing to leave and are conversing with Nick. Likely to avoid Tom’s suspicions that Gatsby was a bootlegger, Daisy began to sing “with the music in a husky, rhythmic, whisper, bringing out a meaning in each word....”¹⁰ She was likely singing the last song she heard before starting to go.

After more conversation, Daisy is tempted to return to Gatsby’s party upon hearing “Three O’Clock in the Morning.” Although she had been descending the porch steps to leave, “Her glance left me [i.e., Nick] and sought the lighted top of the steps, where ‘Three O’Clock in the Morning,’ a neat, sad little waltz of that year, was drifting out the open door.” Nick wonders, “What was it up there in the song that seemed to be calling her back inside?”¹¹

Perhaps, like Fitzgerald, his character Daisy was tempted to deny her reality, which hadn’t included Jay Gatsby for five long years. Even though she wasn’t sure she wanted him, Daisy worried about what might happen after she left the party. “Perhaps some unbelievable guest would arrive, a person infinitely rare and to be marvelled at, some authentically radiant young girl who with one fresh glance at Gatsby, one moment of magical encounter, would blot out those five years of [his] unwavering devotion.”¹² Could such a woman replace her in Gatsby’s heart?

Taken literally, the lines “We’ve danced the whole night thru / And daylight soon will be dawning, / Just one more waltz with you” have a simple meaning. Earlier in the evening, she and Gatsby danced a foxtrot together. On a more symbolic level, maybe she longed to return to the younger, innocent version of herself. Perhaps the line, “Say that there soon will be a honeymoon,” made her consider Gatsby’s hope that they would marry. Writer Anthony Berret concludes “the passage suggests that the only fulfillment or happiness possible is one that is musical, magic, and abstract.”¹³

During this scene, Daisy was in love with both men. The light and music represented the possibility of life with Gatsby, while the dark night outside signified her life with Tom. She considered her options, exploring the liminal space between her past and future, between Gatsby and Tom. Then she turned away. The scene foreshadows her ultimate decision to stay with Tom.

Neither Gatsby nor Daisy got the dream they longed for at that early morning hour, even though it briefly seemed possible. Daisy returned home with Tom, while Gatsby struggled to find a path that would turn back time and help him regain his love. Ultimately, it cost him his life. In the end, “Three O’Clock in the Morning” is a poignant musical commentary on the major conflict of the story. The song, like the novel, has stood the test of time.

⁵ Joel Whitburn, *Pop Memories 1890-1954: The History of American Popular Music* (Record Research, 1986), 630–31.

⁶ Thomas S. Hischak, *The Tin Pan Alley Song Encyclopedia* (Greenwood Press, 2002), 370.

⁷ For example, see the *Discography of American Historical Recordings*, *National Jukebox*, or *YouTube*.

⁸ Sarah Churchwell, *Careless People: Murder, Mayhem and the Invention of “The Great Gatsby”* (Virago, 2013), 231.

⁹ F. Scott Fitzgerald, “Handle with Care,” in *The Crack Up*, ed. Edmund Wilson (New Directions, 1945), 75.

¹⁰ F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (Decameron Books, 2022), 68.

¹¹ Fitzgerald, *Great Gatsby*, 69.

¹² Fitzgerald, *Great Gatsby*, 69.

¹³ Anthony J. Berret, *Music in the Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald: Unheard Melodies* (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2013), 136.

Weber's *Oberon*, *The New-York Mirror*, and a (Very Little) Mystery

Allan W. Atlas¹

Although it is “very little” (in the grand scheme of things), and though it will surface only toward the end of the article, there is a mystery awaiting us. It involves the characters named in the title, plus a music critic identified only as “B.” A hint (at the mystery, not the solution): it all has to do with the transmission of Weber's *Oberon* a few years after it landed in the United States.

Launched on 2 August 1823, *The New-York Mirror* enjoyed a twenty-year run (its final issue appeared on 25 June 1842) during which, as *The New York Times* would note two decades later upon the death of its longtime editor, George Pope Morris: “[It] was one of the most prominent periodicals of its class . . .”² Just what the *Times* meant by “class” can be surmised from the title on the cover wrapper of volume I: *The New-York Mirror/and/Ladies' Literary Gazette;/being a/Repository of Miscellaneous Literary Productions,/in Prose and Verse*—the *Mirror* was “highbrow” in terms of both content and consumer.³

A few words of a general nature about music in the *Mirror* are in order before turning to its treatment of Weber's *Oberon*. Upon issuing its final number, the *Mirror* had printed an impressive 701 pieces. As a rule, these appeared on the final page of each issue (page 8) and usually took up approximately the upper half of that page. Pieces for piano and voice were the norm. Repertory extended from opera excerpts to popular ballads and arrangements of “traditional” songs. Opera excerpts always named the composer, to which “lighter” pieces generally added the names of the lyricist (“written by”) and, if applicable, the arranger, with headings in both categories sometimes mentioning a particular singer with whom the piece had come to be associated. Regardless of genre and with only a few exceptions, lyrics were in English, and many a piece announced that it was either composed (or arranged) specifically for the *Mirror* or that it had never before been published in the United States.

Finally, it was in vol. V, no. 46 (24 May 1828) that the *Mirror* included its first piece of music; there (p. 368) we find a three-part “catch” with piano accompaniment titled “My Silvia Wears a Rosy Wreath” by the Welsh composer-flageoletist-Vauxhall Gardens music director John Parry (1776–1851).⁴ What led to the introduction of music? As the editor, George Pope Morris, put it two pages earlier:

New Music.—Having procured a new font of type for the purpose, we shall occasionally present the readers of the *Mirror* with such new pieces of music as may deserve, on account of the beauty of their composition, to be preserved in [its] pages . . . Our patrons cannot fail to be pleased with the catch, by Parry, which will be found in the present number. As a taste for music has been so generally awakened in this community, we have willingly yielded to the suggestion of some of the most intelligent of our lady readers, in making this addition to our plan, and we are well persuaded that it will prove acceptable to all our friends.

Turning to Weber: after making his *Mirror* debut in 1829 with the “Bridemaid's Song and Chorus” from *Der Freischütz*, Act III, Scene 4, as arranged by William Wood, Jr.,⁵ he returned in force in vol. VIII (1830), where there are five numbers from

¹ My thanks to Danielle Barrettara and John Graziano for comments and questions.

² “Obituary. Gen. George P. Morris,” *New York Times*, July 8, 1864; Morris (1802–64) was a cofounder of the *Mirror* (the other was Samuel Woodworth [1784–1842]); the entire twenty-volume run is available at *HathiTrust* Digital Library.

³ The title changed several times over the course of twenty volumes, with particularly notable alterations for those interested in music at vols. IX (1831): *The New-York Mirror; A Weekly Journal, Devoted to Literature and the Fine Arts. Embellished with Engravings and Music*; and XII (1834): *The New-York Mirror: A Weekly Journal, Devoted to Literature and the Fine Arts. Embellished with Fine Engravings, and Music Arranged with Accompaniments for the Pianoforte*. Note that music had become an integral part of the *Mirror* even before the first of those changes.

⁴ On Parry, see Peter Crossley-Holland and Nicholas Temperley, “Parry, John (ii),” *Grove Music Online* (October 16, 2013), and Robert David Griffith, “Parry, John (‘Bardd Alaw’; 1776–1851), Musician,” *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* (1959), [https://biography.wales/article/s-PARR-JOH-1776?&query=john%20parry&searchType=nameSearch&lang\[\]=en&sort=sort_name&order=asc&rows=12&page=1#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&manifest=https%3A%2F%2Fdamsssl.llgc.org.uk%2Fiiif%2F2.0%2F4671751%2Fmanifest.json&xywh=1072%2C1386%2C2188%2C1366](https://biography.wales/article/s-PARR-JOH-1776?&query=john%20parry&searchType=nameSearch&lang[]=en&sort=sort_name&order=asc&rows=12&page=1#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=0&manifest=https%3A%2F%2Fdamsssl.llgc.org.uk%2Fiiif%2F2.0%2F4671751%2Fmanifest.json&xywh=1072%2C1386%2C2188%2C1366).

⁵ Vol. VI, no. 48 (6 June 1829): 384; this was the *Mirror*'s first venture into opera. There are significant differences between Wood's arrangement and the version of the number that appears in the vocal score issued by Dubois and Stodart in New York in 1825: Wood transposes the music from B-flat to C, cuts the ten-measure introduction to a single chord, replaces the light sixteenth-note accompaniment with clunky chords, and provides a new text: “Receive this wreath of roses rare,” in place of the Dubois and Stodart “A rosy Crown we twine for thee.” The latter score is online at <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015096441087&seq=1>.

Oberon, which had enjoyed its New York premiere on 20 September 1826 at the Park Theatre.⁶ Table 1 lists the excerpts in the order in which they appear in the *Mirror*.

Table 1. Weber's *Oberon*, five numbers listed in the order in which they appear in *The New-York Mirror*, vol. VIII (1830). For each excerpt, I list the issue number, date, and page within vol. VIII, the "title" as it appears in the *Mirror*, the *Mirror*'s note at the head of each excerpt, and the location of the number within the opera.

Issue in <i>Mirror</i> vol. VIII	Title	Act/no. ⁷	Note in the <i>Mirror</i>
No. 5 (7 August): 40	"The Vision"	I/3	"Sung by Mrs. Austin, in the Romantic Fairy Opera of Oberon— Composed by Carl Maria von Weber. [Never before published in the United States.]" (see Figure 1)
No. 7 (21 August): 56 ⁸	"The Mermaid's Song"	II/14	"As sung by Miss Pearson in the Grand Romantic and Fairy Opera of Oberon, performed at the Park Theatre, New-York, composed by Carl Maria von Weber. [Never before published in America.]"
No. 8 (28 August): 64	"Ruler of this Awful Hour"	II/12 ⁹	"As sung by Mr. Horn in the Grand Romantic and Fairy Opera of Oberon, performed at the Park Theatre, New-York, composed by Carl Maria von Weber. [Never before published in America.]"
No. 9 (4 September): 72	"Though the Night Star be High"	III/15	"Sung by Mrs. Sharpe, as Fatima, in the Grand Romantic and Fairy Opera of Oberon, at the Park Theatre, New-York, composed by Carl Maria von Weber. [Never before published in America.]"
No. 10 (11 September): 80	"Swift as the Lightening's Glance"	III/21 (Finale)	"Sung by Mr. Richings, as Oberon, in the Grand Romantic and Fairy Opera of Oberon, at the Park Theatre, New-York, composed by Carl Maria von Weber." ¹⁰

Each of the five numbers is preceded a few pages earlier by a commentary that deals either with *Oberon* directly or larger questions concerning opera in general and its place in New York society; in each instance, the author is identified simply as "B."

In terms of the direct connection between *Oberon* and the *Mirror*, the most informative commentary is that of August 7th:

No establishment has done so much for the improvement of art as the Park Theatre. . . The music of this splendid opera is not even published in this country, and . . . only performed twice or thrice in this city! . . . Five of the beautiful "pearls" . . . I have, by permission selected from the Park score, and now offer to the worthy editor of the New-York Mirror. The public will then be enabled fairly to judge, whether they ought or ought not to be better acquainted with this work.¹¹

⁶*Oberon, or the Elf-King's Oath*, libretto by James Robinson Planché (1796–1880); the first performance took place at Covent Garden, 12 April 1826, under Weber's direction. On the opera, see John Warrack, *Carl Maria von Weber*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 321–44.

⁷ The earliest printed score for *Oberon* is the vocal score issued by Walsh & Hawes in London in 1826, which does not number the acts or the individual numbers/scenes within them; it is online at Internet Archive, <https://archive.org/details/oberonorelfkings00webe/mode2up>; I cite the locations within the opera after Edition Peters, no. 3010a.

⁸ The intervening issue (14 August, p. 48) had Charles Edward Horn's "The Chimes of Zurich."

⁹ I cannot say why the *Mirror* reversed the order of this and the preceding excerpt.

¹⁰ Note that the customary "Never before published . . ." is lacking.

¹¹ Page 34. To this the editor responded in a tone characteristic of the *Mirror*: "NOTE.— We acknowledge with pleasure the receipt of the five exquisite songs alluded to above, as sung by Mr. Horn, Mrs. Austin, Mrs. Sharpe, Miss Pearson, &c. We feel happy in offering to our readers compositions from such an unquestionable source [Weber or "B."?], and [we feel] self-complacency mingled with regret, that we are the first to publish them. Surely, this is a stigma on the professional teachers of music in this city, whose duty it is to make their scholars acquainted with the most classical works. Had a proper demand been made by these individuals for a supply of music of this description, the vendors would have been ready enough to meet the demands of the market. We have selected for the present number, the Vision Song, as sung by Reiza, who appears to Sir Huron [*sic*] of Bourdeaux [*sic*], in a dream.—Ed. *N.Y. Mir[or]*."

Sonneck was championing the nation's musical culture. Born in Jersey City, New Jersey, and trained primarily in Germany, Sonneck was the first scholar devoted to researching U.S. American music, and he was the first bibliographer of its earliest resources, which had not been systematically collected, catalogued, or even valued. He took care of all three as the first Chief of the Music Division of the Library of Congress, and then as co-founder and first editor of the journal *Musical Quarterly*, which was published by G. Schirmer. Sonneck left his Library of Congress position in 1917 to become director of music publications at Schirmer and stayed there as Vice President of the publishing house editing the journal until his death.

Starting in 1973 a group of self-identifying Americanists organized a gathering called "Joyful Sounds" to celebrate early American music at Old Sturbridge Village. Seeking opportunities to share work on various aspects of American music had forced the group to create events dedicated to that purpose. In 1974, following a meeting of the American Musicological Society (AMS) where the absence of American-themed papers only ignited already-simmering feelings of purposeful neglect and intentional marginalization, they invited interested others to join them for an organizational meeting and meal at the Iron Gate restaurant in D.C. Expecting a few dozen Americanist enthusiasts they, and the restaurant, were unprepared when over 100 people showed up. Confirmed in their belief that American topics deserved serious attention, in 1975 the fledgling "Sonneckers" joined the Society for Ethnomusicology as guests at their Wesleyan College-hosted conference and formalized the Sonneck Society. It was in 1976 that the group held its first independent meeting at Queensborough Community College. Four years of planning and The Sonneck Society for American Music was launched.

From the beginning, the Society was united by an unshakeable belief in the worth of American music culture in all its practices, manifestations, and locations. Secular and sacred songs, dance music, the instruments and players that accompanied performances, the technology that disseminated it, and the librarians, museum curators, and instrument keepers, newspaper critics, K-12 educators, editors, record collectors, band directors, and scholars were equal participants in Sonneck's world. That music makers existed beyond the academy, and that conferences were places that foregrounded community, camaraderie, and engagement with local music cultures were givens; they became part of the Society's DNA. To this day, Friday excursions and music are staples of conferences. The once-sacred banquet that included dancing and live music making has been less central of late, but it was a "must" for the founders, and could be once again.

Then, as now, engagement between in-person conferences was paramount. But early on, the close geographical proximity of many members, and a newsletter sufficed. As the Society grew, however, and its success championing the cause of American music was undeniable, it demanded a more formal and widely distributed medium to share its work. In March 1983, the Sonneck Society partnered with the University of Illinois Press to publish the first volume of the Sonneck Society's journal, *American Music*. Like the Society's earliest conferences, its journal reflected its eclectic membership as well as the range of organizations with which the Society had and would associate: the MLA, the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR), the Theatre Library Association (TLA), the American Studies Association, regional chapters of the AMS, College Music Society, and College Band Directors National Association, as well as the Society for Research in Music Education, the U.S. chapter of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, the American Antiquarian Society, the Association for Recorded Sound Collections (ARSC), and the Center for Black Music Research.

As the Society for American Music celebrates its 51st year as a formal organization first known as the Sonneck Society, it is approaching its twentieth anniversary with Cambridge University Press as publisher of *JSAM*, the quarterly *Journal of the Society for American Music*. Recognizing that print copies of the journal are an important form of engagement for many of our members, our newly negotiated contract keeps hard copies available for those who opt in, while digital access to the journal will be available to all SAM members on the SAM website. The board, with input from *JSAM* editors and board members, unanimously declined CUP's invitation to participate in their generative AI teaching initiative. While recognizing the inevitability of AI harvesting our members' scholarly work wherever it appears, none of us was willing to facilitate that practice or assume to speak on behalf of authors past or future who would have no say in how their original work was deployed. The newsletter is now the *Bulletin of the Society for American Music*, published three times annually, featuring articles, reviews, and reports of interest to all SAM members, and our monthly *Round-Up* keeps everyone informed of what's going on at the moment.

This summer the President and Vice President spoke with more than three dozen SAM members to hear their ideas about the strategic plan unveiled at the Tacoma conference, and to learn what they believed was most important for securing SAM's future. They were unanimous in their belief that we needed (1) to support SAM's organizational structure with some kind of capital campaign, (2) to provide between-conference opportunities for engagement in the form of carefully

considered online events, (3) to improve SAM's website so that it is easily navigable and tailored to SAM's needs, and (4) to be clear about who SAM is: to plant SAM's flag firmly, intentionally, and loudly.

In keeping with our Long-Range Planning Committee's strategic plan, and in response to our member survey, the Tacoma Conference Plenary Session feedback, and follow-up conversations this summer, we have reconstituted our Development Committee whose primary charge will be to design and execute a capital campaign. We have planned two events between now and the end of the calendar year, which are explained below, we are test-driving a new website host while maintaining the old one to provide continuity, and we have recommitted ourselves to who SAM is. As a Society, we are the specialists in the field of American musics. There is no need to change who or what we are. Our focus has been, is, and will be on American music culture writ large.

Among our new initiatives, on Friday, October 10, between 2:00 and 4:00pm (EDT), SAM will host the first of what is planned as a series of online events. It will feature three presenters from different stages in their careers speaking on "Difficult Topics in the Music Classroom." A moderator will assure that there is ample time for discussion and questions among presenters and attendees. Given the debut nature of this event, we are limiting participation to SAM members, with the exact number still being decided. In any case, attendees will be admitted first come, first serve.

As I write, the SAM board and the *JSAM* and *Bulletin* editors are exploring the possibility of publishing reviews and eventually articles in multiple languages to better meet our commitment to embracing the range of musics and music scholarship of the Americas. We are investigating instituting a student intern program, and we are super-charged by the high-octane leadership of the Student Forum that has plans for their cohort, for interacting with the Committee for Early Career Professionals, and for a column in the *Bulletin*, the first of which will appear in the Winter edition. We look forward to a gathering we're calling "SAM at AMS," where SAM members attending the November conference in Minneapolis can enjoy a SAM reception and self-directed local excursions curated by Patrick Warfield—SAM member, critical editor, cultural historian, pedagogue, Sousa biographer, community outreach proponent, and Director of the School of Music at the University of Minnesota. If you're going to Minneapolis, look for SAM.

And finally, we are all excited for "Sounding the Nation at 250," a SAM initiative to take our Society's expertise to every state in the nation with presentations, performances, and workshops designed to heighten awareness of the nation's extraordinarily rich musical culture. We're grateful for the leadership of SAM Secretary, Dana Gorzelany-Mostak, who has provided a thorough description of the project and CFP in this *Bulletin*. If you're thinking even further ahead in 2026, check out our Richmond Conference updates provided by Local Arrangements chair, Joanna Love, and Program Committee chair, Jim Doering.

Your SAM board and dozens of committee chairs and members, as well as the editors and board members of our publications have been extraordinary in sharing their time, talents, energy, enthusiasm, and goodwill over these summer months. I'm honored, humbled, and grateful to be a part of this community, and excited by what it has accomplished already and what it will accomplish going forward.

Onward!

Denise

Remembering Karen Ahlquist (1948-2025)

Loren Kajikawa, The George Washington University*

Karen Ahlquist, a devoted and active member of SAM and a former editor of the *Journal of the Society for American Music*, passed away on May 8, 2025. Ahlquist was Emeritus Professor of Music at The George Washington University, where she taught from 1992 until her retirement in 2018. Ahlquist's book [*Democracy at the Opera: Music, Theater, and Culture in New York City, 1815–60*](#) masterfully analyzed how opera both reflected and shaped democratic ideals in 19th-century America. Her edited volume [*Chorus and Community*](#) further demonstrated her commitment to understanding music's role in social formation.



Photo credit: Michael Broyles.

Ahlquist was born on January 25, 1948, in New Jersey. After graduating from Mount Holyoke College, Ahlquist went on to earn a Master's in Choral Conducting from Juilliard and worked for several years directing vocal ensembles at Miss Porter's School in Farmington, Connecticut. She eventually matriculated at the University of Michigan, where she earned a PhD in Musicology under Richard Crawford's supervision. Friends from her graduate school years remember respecting her for her acumen and character. Tim Taylor recalls, "I admired Karen from the first time I met her [in 1986]. She had a strong moral and ethical sense and an uncompromising commitment to good scholarship and teaching." Tara Browner remembers that as a "non-traditional student" with a Master's from Juilliard, Karen seemed to have everything together and became an older-sibling figure and friend. Jeff Taylor recalls that "Karen was one of the first fellow grad students I met at Michigan. Both Crawford students, our friendship lasted decades, and we would always meet for lunch at SAM—sometimes playing hooky from papers—and discuss our field and the work our colleagues were pursuing. But she wasn't all about serious scholarship: we would always share some hearty laughs. I will miss her acutely."

Ahlquist began a tenure-track job at The George Washington University in 1992, a time when music departments across the country were slowly emerging from traditional, conservative curricula. Ahlquist brought a fresh vision of what a music degree in the liberal arts should encompass. Colleague Eugene Montague credits her as "foundational in developing a place where all musical traditions are open to practice and study." Catherine Pickar remembers, "At a faculty meeting she might say, 'Why not study Joni Mitchell's music and lyrics as one would study Schubert's lieder?'" Robert Baker recalls how Ahlquist "gently guided" him away from his inherited 19th-century view of music history as constant advancement. Douglas Boyce remembers working with Ahlquist on curricular reform and pedagogical innovation, establishing ethnomusicology as a central component of the degree and expanding students' engagement with repertoire from the 20th and 21st centuries. Kip Lornell fondly recalls how he and Karen team-taught "Intro to Ethnomusicology" for a number of years.

Roy Guenther, department chair at GW when Ahlquist was hired, explains, "Karen embodied what for me was the ideal mindset for a faculty member in a liberal arts music department. Her wide-ranging interests and scholarly curiosity led her to respond enthusiastically to ideas, requests, and projects from across the campus, whether or not they related to her principal research areas." Ahlquist eventually served as department chair herself, and colleagues remember her for her energy, enthusiasm and down-to-earth sense of humor. They also remember her impatience with artificial "silos" in music (or within the university at large) and her constant work to "flatten the hierarchy." As Montague puts it, "She truly led so that others could advance."

Ahlquist brought these qualities of leadership to her role as editor of [JSAM](#) (Vols. 9–11). During her tenure, she designed and implemented the journal's current tripartite editorial structure in which the editor-in-chief receives mentorship from an outgoing advisory editor and also onboards an incoming associate editor. This system has smoothed transitions in leadership for the journal and helped to preserve valuable institutional knowledge.

After retiring from GW, Ahlquist decamped to nearby Baltimore, where she often remarked half-jokingly that she was finally able to live in a city with political representation. Robin Armstrong, another longtime friend, shared that after she retired from GW, Ahlquist kept up a very active research life and was still going strong until her health interfered in September of 2024. For that last year, she studied musical life in early-19th-century Philadelphia through the lens of Frank Johnson and his family, especially brother-in-law Williams Appo. An Americanist till the end! Her fierce spirit, intellectual generosity, and commitment to educational excellence will be deeply missed and long remembered.

*Thanks to Nancy Ahlquist, Robin Armstrong, Robert Baker, Douglas Boyce, Tara Browner, Roy Guenther, Kip Lornell, Jeffrey Magee, Eugene Montague, Malinee Peris, Catherine Pikar, Stephani Stang-Ferry, Jeff Taylor, and Tim Taylor for sharing their memories and contributing to this memorial.

Spotlight on Laurie Matheson

Jeffrey Magee



Photo credit: L. Brian Stauffer.

Last spring, Dr. Laurie Matheson retired as Director of the University of Illinois Press and anchored the UIP booth at our SAM conference for the last time. Laurie earned her B.A. with High Honors in English from Swarthmore College, worked as an editorial assistant at Charles Scribner's Sons in New York starting in 1984, and went back to school for an M.M. in Choral Conducting studying with renowned choral conductor Dr. Joseph Flummerfelt at Westminster Choir College. She joined the University of Illinois Press as a graduate student assistant to the director of development, a job that supported her work toward the DMA in Choral Music, which she earned in 1998. Over twenty-nine years at the press she rose through various roles and ever-increasing responsibilities. She attended her first SAM conference as music acquisitions editor in 2006. Before then, she had been acquiring books in history, Asian American studies, women's studies, and other areas, but, she recalled, "The golden opportunity to take the reins of the music list in the wake of Judy McCulloh's retirement miraculously aligned my acquisitions portfolio with my own interests and experience." Since then, she has worked

indefatigably with hundreds of authors on American music projects, met with them over years of conferences to bounce and sharpen ideas, to counsel them through seemingly impossible challenges, to encourage them to persevere, and in the process shepherded some 150 new books into publication as part of the Press's legendary Music in American Life series that McCulloh had launched. If you open the back pages of any book in the series, you will see a long list of titles that looks like a bibliography. But it is not: the list includes the more than 300 books published in the series since its founding in 1972—three years before SAM's predecessor, The Sonneck Society, coalesced.

In a message to the University of Illinois campus and at a celebration to mark Laurie's retirement that was held at Champaign's Pizzeria Antica, Nicholas P. Jones, the University's Executive Vice President and Vice President for Academic Affairs, summarized many of Matheson's accomplishments. As the Press's first female director, she "nurtured a culture of inclusion" and empowered staff-led initiatives; expanded its student internship opportunities; launched "a multiyear program of biannual publishing workshops"; and led and broadened the Press's fundraising efforts, yielding several endowments, bequests, and grants. At the celebration, the Press announced the establishment of the Laurie C. Matheson Endowment for American Music with initial gifts from over fifty donors totaling \$70,000.

For Matheson, "retirement" means refocusing her energy on music-making as Director of music at Urbana's Wesley United Methodist Church, for which she conducts the choir, plays organ, and composes anthems and other vocal pieces. Shedding a number of professional responsibilities, she nevertheless plans to stay active in SAM and recently accepted the board's invitation to serve as a member of the Development Committee as the Society prepares to launch a new fundraising campaign.

President Denise Von Glahn has called Laurie Matheson "a modern musical polymath: a composer, conductor, singer, instrumentalist, editor, publisher, compiler, administrator, fundraiser, and perhaps most importantly, an inspirer who encourages the best in others. We're grateful that she will remain a part of our SAM community."

Society for American Music: Sounding the Nation at 250

Deadline: November 1, 2025

[Sounding the Nation at 250 Call for Papers](#)

On July 4, 2026, the US will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. In connection with other celebratory and commemorative events, the Society for American Music will sponsor at least one presentation in each state during the 2026 anniversary year. To engage a broader public with the work of the Society, we

encourage presenters to consider non-academic settings such as community centers, senior centers, public libraries, churches, outdoor meeting spaces, public concert venues, or parks as appropriate for the planned event.

While we encourage musical topics with local, state, or regional resonance, this is not required. As a Society, we are dedicated to stimulating the appreciation, performance, creation, and study of American musics in all their diversity, thus, we embrace music in North, Central, South America, and the Caribbean, as well as in Puerto Rico, Haiti, and Trinidad and Tobago, and aspects of these cultures everywhere in the world.

Resources from SAM:

- A standard publicity package for advertising events through print and digital media.
- A website managed by the society to archive recordings of all events and related materials.
- A small budget to help defray the cost of space rental, video recording, personnel, and advertising/printed materials if the designated site does not provide these services.
- Applicants are encouraged to seek sponsorship from local organizations, corporations, or institutions. The Society may be able to provide partial support. Please contact Sami Lampe (slampe3@illinois.edu), if you need assistance with locating local sponsors.

Interested members should submit the [Sounding the Nation Google form](#) by **November 1, 2025**.

All proposals will be evaluated by a committee, and the selected participants will be notified by December 1, 2025. Please direct inquiries to dana.gorzelay@gcsu.edu.

Sounding the Nation at 250

Dana Gorzelany-Mostak, Professor of Music, Georgia College & State University

Megan MacDonald, Executive Director, Society for American Music

Sami Lampe, Ph.D. Candidate, Musicology Department, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

SAM 2026 Richmond Conference Updates

From **James Doering**: The Program Committee had a fantastic pool of 219 submissions, from which we accepted 135 proposals. The resulting program features scholarship from every corner of our discipline and on subjects that span colonial to contemporary times. The program reflects a tremendous breadth of geography, naturally including Richmond, Virginia, and its surrounding areas, but also topics from nearly every region of the U.S. as well as ties to Canada, Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, South America, and Asia. From historical musicology to pop culture studies to music theory to pedagogy, there's something for all members of SAM in the Richmond program. Stay tuned for more details. We can't wait for March 11–15!

From **Joanna Love**: The Local Arrangements Committee is excited to welcome SAM members to Richmond, Virginia, March 11–15, 2026. While in the area, we encourage attendees to learn more about Virginia's many diverse and unique musical heritages, which range from its Indigenous, settler-colonial, and country music roots to its contemporary classical, gospel, hip-hop, and heavy metal scenes. We are working hard to craft an engaging conference experience that incorporates excursions and concerts connecting with the region's vibrant and complex history. In addition to celebrating our honorary member, Judith Shatin, projected highlights include a silent film screening in a 1928 "motion picture palace" accompanied by the theater's "Mighty Wurlitzer," a Black History tour of significant Richmond landmarks, and access to a local museum's special music collections featuring instruments, recordings, rare objects, and media. Stay tuned for more details and updates. Virginia truly is for music lovers, and we look forward to seeing you in 2026!

Journal of the Society for American Music

Volume 19, Number 2 (May 2025)

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Matthew Franke

Leonard Feather and the Gender Ignorant Language of Jazz Mastery
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Beyoncé, *Cowboy Carter*
Amanda Marie Martinez

Book Review

[*Musical Landscapes in Color: Conversations with Black American Composers*](#). William C. Banfield, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2022. 442 pp. ISBN: 9780252086915. Paperback.

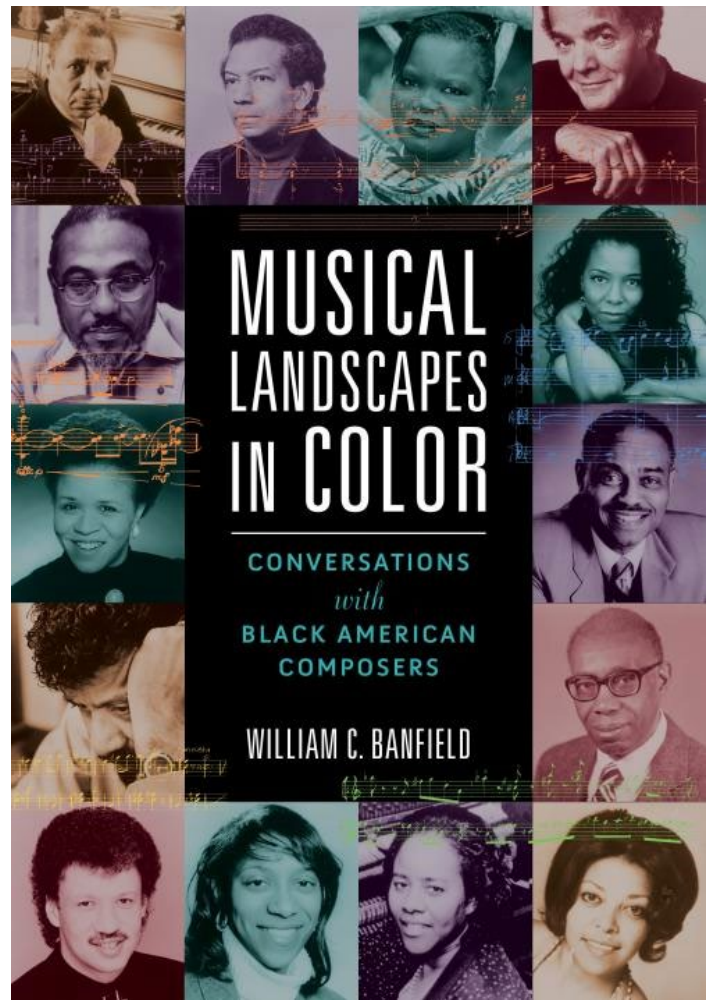
Grace Brown, Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University

William C. Banfield is a composer, jazz guitarist and educator across many avenues and institutions. He first published *Musical Landscapes in Color: Conversations with Black American Composers* in 2003 and then again 20 years later, in 2023. With the addition of new photographs of the interviewees, musical scores by composers who passed away since the first edition, and a new preface written by Banfield, the 2023 edition provides added context to the original interviews. In his own words, *Musical Landscapes in Color* represents Banfield's "passionate commitment to the documentation of the work of creative, innovative Black American composers"(xi). Banfield further explains why he chose the people he did: he wanted to shine a light on serious composers who were collectively ignored because of their race. *Musical Landscapes in Color* is the summation of almost five years of conducting interviews and painstaking research on the compositions and academic writing of his subjects, much of which was inaccessible to Banfield for the first edition. Each interview follows a guideline of questions that Banfield gives in the introduction and, by linking Black classical composers to the Black diaspora through his questions, the book provides another perspective for readers to understand Black culture.

The 2003 edition of *Musical Landscapes in Color* came at a time when there was a severe lack of critical theory regarding Black music in both its creation and perception. Banfield calls writing this book a "quest," his personal journey for academic and spiritual meaning helping guide him in his research (xi). Banfield is clear that his aim is to "not suggest that

Black composers are questioning Western cultural hegemony, but rather to demonstrate that Black American composers are an important part of the Western framework of composition” (xl).

Banfield breaks down the evolution of perspectives in Black music to four generations. The first generation, which Banfield calls, “early nationalistic,” goes back to James Reese Europe (1881–1919) and includes Nathaniel Dett and Harry T. Burleigh. This generation is exclusively men who were known as “race men” because they primarily concerned themselves with the Black community. Banfield calls the next generation the “African American composers,” and it included people such as Margaret Bonds and William Dawson, who were some of the first to move into recognized, white music circles and had to learn how to maintain the balance between cultural identity and the expectations of mainstream white concert venues. Banfield splits the third generation into the Arrived (those born between 1925 and 1935, like George Walker and Hale Smith) and the Acknowledged (those born between 1936 and 1945, such as Tania León and Alvin Singleton). The last and fourth generation is “Generation X,” or twenty-first-century Black composers such as Anthony Davis and Donal Fox. This group came of age in a post-civil rights era, priming them to become warriors for Black music. They are further defined by their willingness to take musical inspiration from the likes of John Coltrane or George Clinton. The latter two generations



are the focus of this book as they were alive during the time Banfield was writing his initial volume and this one. Banfield breaks the body of the book into six sections: Laying the Foundations; The Arrived and the Acknowledged Parts One and Two; Perspectives on Spirituality; Jazz and Contemporary Popular Languages; The Composer as Conductor and Composer; and, lastly, Generation X and Beyond. The interviews, addressing events from 1922 to 1965, provide a multitude of perspectives, reflections, and calls to action from forty-one Black composers on the work of not only themselves and their peers, but also the people who laid the groundwork for them. The book is also an excellent source on compositional craft and techniques, specifically the integration of Black musical styles within what has been the long, white-dominated Western art music canon. Banfield concludes by stating that, despite the problematic notion of a canon, “these landscapes form the musical expanse that define our contemporary culture and prepare us for the musical art of the twenty-first century” (372).

The 2023 edition of *Musical Landscapes in Color*, while essentially a mirror of the first edition, acts almost as a tribute to the 2003 edition. Banfield’s preface adds context to the book by asking readers to “take a familiar image [of white composers such as Beethoven] and transform or translate it to an image of contemporary Black artists as composers” (vii). Banfield talks of the exclusion of Black women from an already limited history and how they have become, since the initial writing, a new powerful contemporary presence in the field of art music composition. A new addition following the preface are several photographs of the author and the composers interviewed in the book, displaying the solidarity of Generation X composers and how they helped build each other up. The 2023 edition of the book adds an “In Loving Memory” section, honoring the thirteen composers who lost their lives during the making of both editions. Examples of their scores and their interviews help them live on in the words of William C. Banfield.

Musical Landscapes in Color: Conversations with Black American Composers by William C. Banfield is essential reading not only for those researching Black composers, but also the Western canon. It gives insight into the work that has been done by Black American composers in the Western tradition, and forms such as blues and jazz, and illuminates the work that still needs to be done to integrate people of color into the Western canon.

Bulletin Board & Member News

From the **SAM Student Forum**: The *Bulletin* is an excellent space for the work of scholars, particularly those interested in forms of writing that deviate from traditional long-form academic articles. As an accessible online periodical, the *Bulletin* is a great way to share your work with the SAM community regardless of where you are in your academic journey. Media and concert reviews, ethnographies, and short essays representing styles of music from across the Americas are welcome.

This coming year, we especially encourage concert and media reviews (~500-750 words) marking the 250th anniversary of the United States. If you have an idea for a review, please contact the Media Reviews editor, [Katie Callam](#).

The SAM Student Forum is also putting together a handbook for its members and seeks advice from former members and co-chairs! If you had an experience with Student Forum that you found enjoyable, beneficial, and remarkable, or if you created a successful program or event as co-chair, please be in touch with co-chairs Ana Uribe and Amanda Paruta at samstudentforum@gmail.com. Current members are also encouraged to reach out regularly with questions or suggestions!

From **Susan Key** and **Carolyn Bryant**: The Committee on Career Diversity and Advocacy (CCDA) encourages you to check out our Career Connections initiatives, which matches you with mentors a variety of backgrounds and careers who can assist you with short-term information about a skill, possible career path, research area, or other query you may have. <https://www.american-music.org/page/RscCareerConnections>

From **Loren Kajikawa**: The next annual meeting of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music--United States (IASPM-US) will be held February 25–March 1, 2026, at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. The theme of the 2026 conference is “Popular Music and the State.” Presentation abstracts are due by September 15, 2025. Further information about the conference can be found at: <https://iaspm-us.wildapricot.org/2026-conference>.

Upcoming SAM Events and Deadlines:

October 10: Join us at 2:00-4:00 p.m. (EDT) via Zoom for the inaugural President’s Forum on “Difficult Topics in the Music Classroom.” Moderator **Kristen Turner** will be joined by panelists **Jonathan Gomez**, **Horace Maxile**, and **Kendall Winter**. An email invitation will be sent to all SAM members in the coming weeks.

October 15: Deadline for most SAM fellowships and subventions. See the [SAM website](#) for further information on award types, eligibility, and application requirements.

November 7: Join us for the Society for American Music Reception at the joint meeting of the American Musicological Society and Society for Music Theory in Minneapolis. Time and location will be announced in the AMS-SMT 2025 program guide.

Call for *Bulletin* Contributions

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; pedagogical essays, lesson plans, and other materials; reports on concerts and conferences of interest to our membership; transcriptions of interviews with prominent persons in American musical life; reviews of recent books and media pertaining to American music; and updates on our members’ scholarly, creative, and professional activities.

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.

The *Bulletin* of the Society for American Music

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Editorial Board

Editor: [Samuel Parler](#)

Book Reviews Editor: [Chase Castle](#)

Design, Layout, and Media Editor: [Katie Callam](#)

Items for submission should be submitted via the [Bulletin's information page](#). Photographs or other graphic materials should be accompanied by captions and desired location in the text. Deadlines for submission of materials are 15 December, 15 April, and 15 August.