

FOLKLIFE CENTER NEWS

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American Folklife Center • The Library of Congress



The American Folklife Center was created in 1976 by the U.S. Congress to "preserve and present American folklife" through programs of research, documentation, archival preservation, reference service, live performance, exhibition, publication, and training. The Center incorporates the Archive of Folk Culture, which was established in the Music Division of the Library of Congress in 1928, and is now one of the largest collections of ethnographic material from the United States and around the world.

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EDITOR'S NOTES

I met Gerry Parsons in 1958, when we were freshman at Colgate University, in Hamilton, New York, living on the third and fourth floors of East Hall. Even then he was taken with folk music (as he understood it) and attempted to indoctrinate me with the likes of John Jacob Niles, Pete Seeger, Jean Ritchie, and the New Lost City Ramblers. He thought Joan Baez had one of the loveliest voices he had ever heard; I preferred the professionally trained richness of Odetta. He worked at finger-picking on his steel-string Martin guitar; I joined the Colgate 13 and Chapel Choir.

We agreed on the Weavers, and once waited for them over two hours in the Colgate gymnasium, as they made their way there through an upstate New York winter storm. Our interests ranged beyond music, fortunately, into literature, American society, politics, and culture, and we began a conversation of intellectual exchanges that has continued for nearly thirty-eight years.

Gerry was also interested in hunting, and that pursuit took him out into the woods and farmlands surrounding Hamilton, where (I like to think, albeit romantically no doubt) his ideas matured and his feelings for traditional ways and country people deepened.

After college, Gerry teamed up with classmate Dan Adams to perform in coffee houses and other venues as "Daniel and the Deacon" (this

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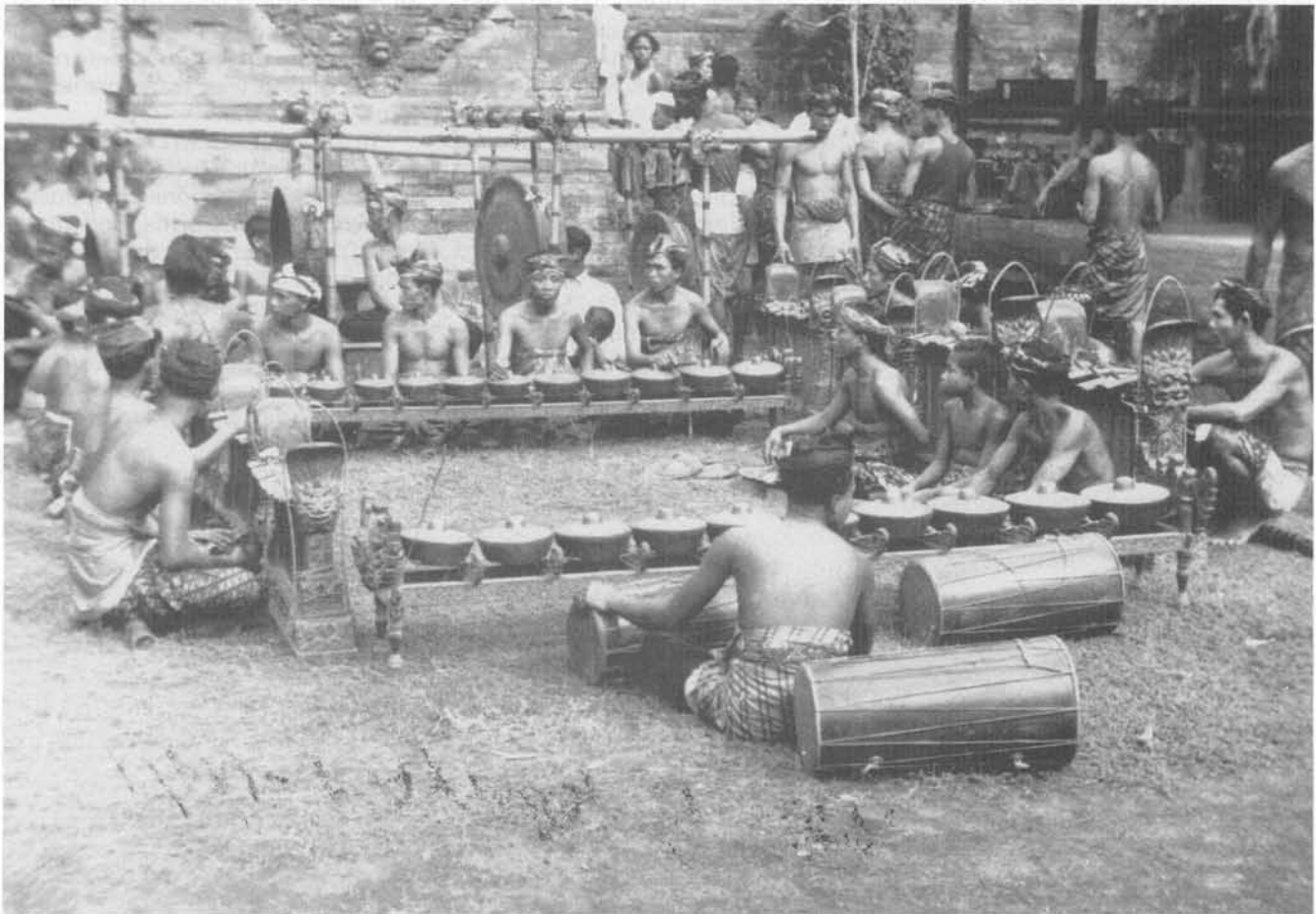
FOLKLINE

For timely information on the field of folklore and folklife, including training and professional opportunities and news items of national interest, a taped announcement is available around the clock, except during the hours of 9 A.M. until noon (eastern time) each Monday, when it is updated. Folklife is a joint project of the American Folklife Center and the American Folklore Society. Dial:

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Cover: Legong dancers perform to a gamelan ensemble, Bali, 1941. Photo by Howard Kincheloe

Music for the Gods: Second Rykodisc Album in the Endangered Music Project



Gamelan Ensemble, Bali, 1941. Photo by Howard Kincheloe

By James Hardin

On October 18, 1994, *Music for the Gods: The Fahnestock South Sea Expedition: Indonesia*, a selection of music from the American Folklife Center's Fahnestock South Sea Collection, was released by Rykodisc (RCD 10315). The CD is the second in the Endangered Music Series, a joint project of Grateful Dead percussionist Mickey Hart's company 360° Productions and the American Folklife Center.

Mickey Hart first came to the Library in the early 1980s with Smithsonian Institution ethnomusicologist Thomas Venum to do photographic research for his book *Drumming at the Edge of Magic*. He learned about the collections in the Archive of Folk Culture and returned in 1989 to discuss with Center director Alan Jabbour and reference librarians Judith Gray and Gerald Parsons an idea for a new series of compact discs from the Center's ethnographic recordings.

Although a partnership between the successful rock musician and a tiny cultural agency at the Library seemed unlikely at first, Jabbour recognized that Hart offered not only musical expertise and acoustic savvy but also marketing and promotional skills the Center could never muster on its own.

The purpose of the Endangered Music Project is to select Folk Archive field recordings of cultural traditions that are threatened or under stress, digitally remaster

them using state-of-the-art sound processing equipment, and release them on compact disc. Some of the proceeds from the project will help support the performers on the disc and their communities, and will help support future releases. "Mickey is enthusiastic and driven," says Alan Jabbour. "He senses that endangerment can be a motive for action. He throws himself personally into the projects he undertakes, and enlists his associates in the same quest."

Gerald Parsons suggested music from the rainforests of South America and the Caribbean as a beginning, for the very reason that the Center staff did not know the full value and extent of its collections from those areas. A record project could be the occasion for processing and cataloging the material. "The project also allowed us to reevaluate what and who we would call New World rainforest communities," says Jabbour. "Some turned out to be African American communities as well as Native peoples."

Ethnomusicologists Ken Bilby and James McKee were brought in to review and evaluate about one hundred hours of material, from which they selected ten hours for consider-

ation. They sent tapes to Mickey Hart, who made the final selection for the first album in the series, *The Spirit Cries: Music From the Rainforests of South America and the Caribbean* (Rykodisc RCD 10250).

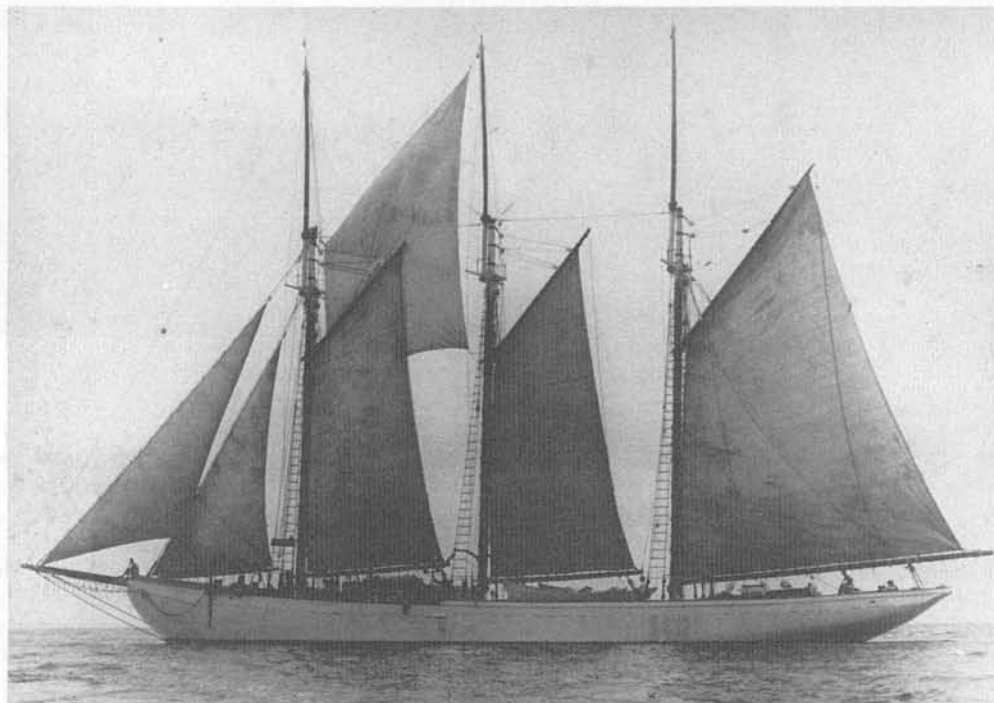
The success of the recording, which has already sold about ten thousand copies, has raised expectations for the second CD, *Music For the Gods*. "This new recording should get a lot of attention," says Jabbour. "Bali has always been of interest. Gamelan music, which comprises the bulk of the album, is cultivated in the United States, Australia, and Europe, as well as in Indonesia. This release will allow devotees of the music to hear the tradition as it was practiced a half century ago." (Both *The Spirit Cries* and *Music for the Gods* are available at record stores nation-wide. To order from Rykodisc, call 800-232-7585)

Gerald Parsons negotiated with Margaret Fahnstock Lewis to bring the Fahnstock South Sea Collection to the Folklife Center in 1986. It had been in storage at her Maryland home for over forty years (see *Folklife Center News*, spring 1988).

"The Fahnstock expeditions make a great story," says Jabbour. "An American family with a passion for the sea sets out in the late thirties and early forties, first to document ornithological specimens for the American Museum of Natural History, then decides to record musical traditions as well. Their third expedition occurred a few weeks before Pearl Harbor and involved intelligence gathering work for President Roosevelt, who enlisted their help with the idea that war might soon break out. So many of their recordings were made in the nick of time before the entire region was transformed by World War II."

Bruce Fahnstock (1911-1942) and Sheridan Fahnstock (1912-1965) made three expeditions to Indonesia collecting insects, birds, and material culture. On their third expedition, funded by the federal government under the direction of the president, the Fahnstocks used state-of-the-art Presto disc-cutters to record over one hundred sides of music from eastern Java, Bali, Madura, and Arjasa.

Music accompanies all aspects of Indonesian life—the labor of farm-



The 137-foot-long, three-masted schooner *Director II* cruising Long Island Sound in the late 1930s. The second Fahnstock South Sea Expedition ended October 18, 1940, when the vessel was lost off the coast of Queensland, Australia. Photo courtesy of Margaret Fahnstock Lewis



In the main cabin of *Director II*, on the Fahnstock South Sea Expedition, there were two seatings for each meal. At this convivial gathering are many of the principals on the voyage. Seated around the table, from left to right: George Peterson, Jack Scott, George Thomas Folster, Mary Sheridan Fahnstock, Sheridan Fahnstock, Margaret Steele Fahnstock (now Mrs. Margaret Fahnstock Lewis), Rollin Grant, Ladislav Reday, Jack Morris, and Helen Folster. Photo courtesy of Margaret Fahnstock Lewis

ers, the play of children, royal ceremony, theater, and rituals of birth and death. The Indonesian orchestra—known as gamelan—provides many of the country's best-loved musical experiences. Gamelan ensembles are dominated by bronze gongs and metallophones (bronzekeyed xylophones), and gamelan music is characterized by what has been called a sacred geometry. Everything, from the number of beats to the arrangement and design of the instruments, adheres to a precise symmetry and cosmology, reflecting a worldview rooted in Hindu-Buddhism.

In addition to the driving energy of the large gamelan ensembles, *Music for the Gods* includes simple and gentle performances featuring voices, bamboo flutes and reed instruments, and one featuring an Indonesian Jew's harp played by a young girl. There are also the sounds

of the legendary *Kecak*, or monkey dance, with complex counterpoint of interlocking chants by a two-hundred man chorus, that build to an ecstatic frenzy.

Mickey Hart hopes to produce more recordings, in his plan to share the rich and varied treasures of the Archive of Folk Culture with both a national and international audience. Alan Jabbour sees the Endangered Music Series as a natural part of the process of acquiring and disseminating material that has been underway for many years. The Library began issuing recordings from the Archive of American Folk Song in 1942, over half a century ago. Those famous albums helped attract material to the Folk Archive in their time, and this new series will do the same. "The entire process is circular," says Jabbour, "acquiring and dissemination, a flow of culture."



Mickey Hart at the Library of Congress, March 1993, for a symposium on the Endangered Music Project. Photo by Yusef El-Amin

Virginia Folklore Society Honors Gerald Parsons

By James Hardin

The eighty-first annual meeting of the Virginia Folklore Society was held on November 12, at the University of Virginia, in honor of Gerald E. Parsons, reference librarian for the American Folklife Center. The program was conceived and organized by Nan Purdue, president of the society, to thank Gerry for the many contributions he has made to the study of folklore, and the help he has given folklorists, both in his work at the Folklife Center and through his own personal example.

Center folklife specialists Stephanie Hall, Mary Hufford, and David Taylor presented papers, all connected with themes that are of particular interest to Gerry or projects to which he has contributed. Hall spoke about "Unpublished, Multiformat, Ethnographic, Created Works," a designation Gerry coined to describe the collections in the Archive of Folk Culture (see Gerry Parsons's article, pages 7-10). Hufford spoke on "Marshinalia and Swamp Life," illustrating her talk with photographs of Gerry hunting railbirds on the Eastern Shore. Taylor spoke on "Traditional Design Techniques for Vernacular Boats," citing Gerry's long interest in duck hunting vessels and craftsmanship.

In addition there were tributes from Charles Camp, Maryland state folklorist, who reminisced about his own experiences doing fieldwork with Gerry and his wife, Peggy; and professional musician Stephen Wade, of "Banjo Dancing" fame, a long-time researcher at the Folk Archive who is working on several projects based on the collections. Camp called Gerry's fieldwork among the best that has ever been done in the state of Maryland. Wade praised Gerry as a reference librarian who "knits disparate ideas, requests from left field, endless questions, mountains of books, past efforts, to new ends, realized truths, amplified visions." He went on to say that "in Gerry

Parsons's capacious mind, in his wonderful heart, in his knowledge of life's rules, in his gifts with language, in his subtle discernments, in his graceful calligraphy, in the reverence for life he expresses through his ducks and boats, and in his boundless kindness, we recognize a gifted man who is, in fact, an artist."

lence and a reminder of the wit and intelligence that characterizes all Gerry's work. In a memo to recommend that the study of hunting and trapping traditions be included in the Folklife Center's New Jersey Pinelands Project, Gerry writes, "the trapper's image of the world is extremely fine-grained. In the vastness of a tide marsh, he



Reference librarian Gerald Parsons (left), Margaret Fahnestock Lewis, and ethnomusicologist James McKee view a sequence of film footage (on video) made during the Fahnestock South Sea Expedition. Parsons negotiated with Mrs. Lewis to bring the Fahnestock Collection to the Center in 1986. Photo by Carl Fleischhauer

Well-known Virginia folk artist John Jackson sang and played the guitar. Joseph T. Wilson, executive director of the National Council for the Traditional Arts, sent a message of greeting and gratitude through a member of his board of trustees. (Parsons has served on the council's board as treasurer for many years). The program concluded with a musical tribute from Stephen Wade, on the banjo, and Alan Jabbour, on the fiddle.

Several presentations included readings from Gerry's own writing, which put before the appreciative audience prose so lucid that it too provided a model of excel-

looks for the track of a mink no larger than a thumbprint. Where the fin-fisherman watches for the flash of baitfish on the surface of the ocean, or looks across the broad horizon to find a cloud of feeding seabirds, the trapper searches the ground under his boots for the glint of a few dried fish scales." To his work at the Library of Congress, Gerry has brought knowledge of both horizons and fish scales, and a large generosity in sharing that knowledge with those of us who have been lucky enough to know him.

Performers, Collectors, and the People of the United States

By Gerald E. Parsons

As a number of speakers mentioned at the meeting of the Virginia Folklore Society reported on in this issue of Folklife Center News, Gerry Parsons is famous at the Folklife Center for his beautifully crafted memorandums. He wrote this one to the Center's Board of Trustees on January 7, 1991, and it is printed here as of interest to both contributors to and users of the Archive of Folk Culture. While the memorandum is not a statement of the "official" policy of the Library of Congress, it represents Gerry's own thinking as well as current practice and ongoing discussions at the American Folklife Center regarding the uses of the Archive.

Questions came up at the last Board meeting concerning the procedures by which we make the contents of the Archive of Folk Culture available to the world at large. It has occurred to me that it might help to write out the guidelines we follow for giving access to the collection.

Before I do so, however, I feel the need to make a couple of basic points about the Folk Archive. This discursus is necessary because we have discovered a small gap in the English language. Amazing as it may seem, the sort of collection of which the Archive is such a splendid example doesn't really have a name. The Archive of Folk Culture is not an "archive" at all in the sense that professional archivists use that term; we do not collect the business records of institutions. We do collect manuscript, hundreds of thousands of pages of it, actually, but it would be a very partial truth to term us a *manuscript repository*.

Although data may be derived from our materials, *derived* is an important word and the Archive is not a "database." In fact, what we acquire, process, and serve to our

patrons are representations (in various media) of human behavior. Accordingly, I am inclined to call our collection—and the many hundreds of others like it throughout the country and around the world—a "documentary archive."

I hasten to say, "documentary archive" is just my own idiom, and maybe it isn't very important how we categorize the Archive of Folk Culture as long as we all understand that it is not composed of information *about* things, but rather composed of representations of actual human expression.

As you know, the aspects of human expression on which we focus are those that are of ethnographic interest. We could therefore narrow the field and say that our documentary archive is a subspecies of a sort called the "ethnographic archive." Looked at from this perspective, the Archive of Folk Culture may be seen as a conglomerate of some seventeen hundred "ethnographic collections." These ethnographic collections have at least three features that are important to our present concern.

First, they are "multi-format." By that I mean that our collections always entail, at the very least, something inscribed on paper as well as something inscribed on a medium of sound recording or photography. More often than not, our collections entail documentation in three or four different media. The main point here is that there is no such thing as an ethnographic collection that is "just recordings" or "just photographs." Second, ethnographic collections such as ours are "unpublished." The Library of Congress acquires *published* documentaries of folk culture by the boxcar—films, books of anthropological description, sound recordings with accompanying printed matter—but those materials do not enter the Archive

of Folk Culture. True, many of our collections have provided the fodder for such books, recordings, and films, but our business is with the raw material, not the finished product.

Third, the Archive's ethnographic collections are "created works." In recent years, this feature has gained importance in our minds. If you think about it, it is the aspect of creativity that really sets our collections apart from those in other divisions of the Library. The Manuscript Division, for example, has many collections that are multi-format and unpublished, but they are not in any meaningful sense "created works." Typically, these collections fall into the archivist's category of "personal papers." A playwright, let's say, might leave to the Library his or her aggregation of scripts, diaries, clippings, photo-scrapbooks, movie out-takes, etc. The life and work of the playwright forms a common theme through the whole hodgepodge, but bear in mind what brought the collection together: a process of accumulation.

Ethnographic collections of even the most informal sort come into being through a different process. The fieldworker takes a photograph of a musical instrument, makes a sound recording of it being played, and jots down notes on the recollections of a virtuoso player. He does so because he has determined that photographs, sound recordings, and written text must be yoked together to fully represent the performance. Even if there is no intent to publish the documentation, there is, in every ethnographic collection, a conscious weaving together of different representational media to achieve a rounded statement. There is, in short, something that looks like authorship even though there may be no publication.

I hope what I have accomplished so far is to set a stage on which to introduce the three characters who rule the way we disseminate the contents of the Folk Archive. The first, and most obvious, of these characters is the individual whose skills, recollections, or artistry is documented in a particular ethnographic collection. Sometimes we follow the anthropological convention and call such people "informants." For the present purpose of sorting out the kind of rights such people might have in the documentation that we hold, let's call them by the other term we sometimes use: *performers*.

In the case of a given piece of recorded folk music, it is perfectly possible for the performer to be the composer of the piece as well. However, within the realm of traditional music, composers are frequently anonymous, and even when they are known, it often seems as if social forces are more significant than individual ones in the process of composition. Although we can never discount the

possibility that one of "our" performers may be entitled to the protection of his or her creation—protection that would be provided through statutory or common law copyright—our more usual concern is with the protection of *performance* rights.

The right that most readily comes to mind in this connection is that of performers to share profits earned in the commercial reproduction of their performance—royalties. I should pause here to make clear that there really is no such thing as a "public domain" performance. Artistic *creations* (not performances) may fall in the public domain, but only after a period of formal copyright protection has expired. Of course, a performer may be unidentifiable, or untraceable, or may simply elect to waive the right to compensation, or may settle for a token payment.

In fact, the latter happens fairly often in the course of our work because traditional performers often recognize that a given publication is more a matter of public service than of commerce. We in the

Folklife Center, however, are emphatic in our conviction that it is the performer who must determine if there is to be remuneration and at what rate.

Here is how we guarantee that right to the performers: Every user of the Folk Archive who wishes to order a tape copy of any of the material we hold must sign a form binding him or her to a set of conditions regarding the use of the copied recording. If the intended use involves publication, then the customer must provide us with the original copy of a letter from the performer granting the Library permission to make the copy for the customer.

We interpret "publication" very broadly. For example, a recording that a National Public Radio station may wish to use in a syndicated broadcast is interpreted to be a publication simply because the affiliated stations will be making copies as they download it from satellite transmission for rebroadcast in their own programming schedule. Indeed I believe we should treat requests from other archival institutions as if they were requests for publication. The grounds being that once the material is out of our administrative control, it *could* be published and so we ought to take the safest course and presume that it will be.

Our patrons cannot wiggle off the hook, as they often try to do, by proclaiming that the intended publication is "non-profit." We insist on letters of permission for all published use, commercial and otherwise, because, in addition to royalties, performers are also entitled to control the circumstances under which their performances are set into public view. Several varieties of rights cluster around this point. *Rights of first release* and *licensing* are legal terms that operate in this area, but as non-lawyers, we prefer to group these concerns under the general notion of individuals' rights to privacy.

Privacy rights raise questions of a sort that one might not immediately anticipate. Living as we do in a culture that is substantially organized around financial concerns, we are often surprised to learn that performers are unwilling to have



Archivist Stephanie Hall examines recordings in the Paradise Valley (Nevada) Folklife Project Collection. The multi-format collection includes fieldnotes, audio cassettes (shown here in acid-free card file boxes), photographs, and other materials. Photo by James Hardin, 1994

their music, storytelling, or whatever disseminated because to do so would violate a personal or family concern. A song sung for a scholar-collector half a century ago may touch current sensitivities for any of a number of reasons.

A singer may feel that the old performance has an amateur or old-fashioned quality not in keeping with his or her current style. Often a performer's religious views change with the passing decades and with them may change the way he feels about the songs he sang in youth. No matter how idiosyncratic the concern, the performer has absolute authority over the dissemination of any documentation of his or her performance that we hold in the Archive of Folk Culture. In cases where the performer is deceased, we turn to the next of kin and obtain their permission before we release material that is to be published.

The privacy concerns of Native American performers require particularly careful attention as much of their music has a religious dimension. An anecdotal example will illustrate how complex these matters may be and also how we go about dealing with them: Recently The New Jersey Network (the state's educational, non-commercial TV channel) approached us seeking a copy of two Delaware Indian songs recorded for the Archive by Willard Rhodes in 1952.

The Network was in the process of developing history programs both for broadcast and for subsequent use in New Jersey schools. One of the two desired recordings was a ceremonial Big House song. To clarify the propriety of using such material, our ethnomusicologist Judith Gray contacted a knowledgeable member of the Delaware Tribe. He responded saying that although the Big House ritual was last conducted sometime in the 1920s, he knew a number of descendants of Big House adherents and was sure that they would want the songs to be presented in a fully developed context.

Judith relayed this information to the New Jersey TV producer. The producer sympathized with the Indian concern and said quite candidly that he thought it un-

likely sufficient time could be allotted in his program to explain the religious background of the Big House ceremony. Judith then recommended that the producer speak directly with her Delaware contact. She pointed out that this person had his own private collection of Delaware social music—music of a sort that would be inherently less sensitive. The producer did communicate with the member of the tribe and called back later to express his appreciation for our collaborative, and ultimately efficient, approach to satisfying his needs.

But how do we protect the interests of performers in cases where the request for their material does not contemplate publication? Before I answer that, let me say again: *every* user of the Folk Archive who wishes to order a tape copy of *any* of the material we hold, must sign a form binding him or

her to a set of conditions regarding the use of the copied recording. Patrons who indicate on this form that the recorded copies are intended for their own private enjoyment or research may obtain copies without consulting the performer, provided, and this is important, *provided* the performer has not had any sort of a professional career connected with his performance.

Even one or two songs recorded for a defunct record company many decades ago count, in our eyes, as evidence that the performer had a commercial interest in his or her talent. In the case of a performer with such a commercial background, however abbreviated, all requests for copies are treated as if they were intended for publication. We also monitor requests for personal use copies for possible infringement of performers' privacy. Problems arise



Dance archivist Michelle Forner processing photographs from the Fahnstock South Sea Collection, as part of her work at the American Folklife Center for the Dance Heritage Coalition. Photo by James Hardin, 1994

in this department less frequently than you might expect, but again Native American materials require special vigilance.

So much for performers. The second character who has an obvious interest in the dissemination of material from the Folk Archive is, of course, the collector. The process of putting together an ethnographic collection is a creative act and, in theory, the rights of collectors also merit protection. Because the Archive of Folk Culture is a public archive (a point to be developed hereafter), we try to persuade those who donate collections to us to do so without reserving any rights in their use.

Sometimes a potential donor will say to us something like, "I've finished my fieldwork and I'd like the Archive to have my documentation, but I'm writing a book about it and don't want anyone to scoop me with my own material." We will reply, "Fine, we will take your collection and put a five-year restriction on it during which period anyone who wants a copy must obtain your permission."

A number of collections acquired in the past have had restrictions imposed for the life of the collector. We honor these agreements, of course, and we may even enter into them from time to time in the future. However, we have learned that it makes reference work a lot easier if the collector will establish a fixed time period after which the restrictions expire.

The third player in the drama of access to the Archive of Folk Culture is our employer, the people of the United States, all 250 million of them. As you would expect, having so many bosses puts a particular stamp on the way we do business. It makes us very emphatically a *public* archive. What this means in practice is that once we have determined that a performer's rights to privacy and to remuneration are secured, and once we have determined that a collector's expressed restrictions are upheld, then we must do everything possible to satisfy a request for access to Archive material.

The way we state this position in our communications with the

public is to say that "neither the Folklife Center nor the Library of Congress maintains any proprietary rights in the collections that we hold." We say, further, that we do not even maintain rights in the material that we publish from our collections. Those rights reside with the people of the United States.

There are a number of ramifications to the public character of our Archive, some of them obvious, others less so. One implication is that, as you might expect, collections that have been created by the staff of the Folklife Center, or the staff of the Archive of Folk Song before it, cannot claim collector's rights. Those rights cannot be established because when we work as collectors, we are working for the public.

Another less obvious wrinkle is that if we in the Folklife Center have plans to publish a recording or a photograph and we are approached by a commercial publisher who wants to issue the same material, we cannot legally or ethically refuse to release it (assuming, of course, that the publisher has obtained all the appropriate permissions). We might wince or groan, or even beg and plead, but if the publisher insists, we must do our duty and release the material.

Nor is this the only context in which the fact of being a public institution obliges us to accept matters we might wish were otherwise. People are so accustomed to the fiercely protective stance of most record publishing houses that they are often surprised to learn that the Library of Congress cannot defend its recordings in the same manner. Because we do not claim proprietary rights in either our holdings or our publications, we lack legal means to challenge pirated editions of our material.

Another index of the emphatically public nature of our work is our adherence to the principle that anything in the Archive may be viewed or auditioned here on our premises. We have no closed collections. One consequence of this openness is that the Archive of Folk Culture is not a good repository for collections that contain sensitive material. When that sort of collection is offered to us, we talk the issue through with the potential donor.

This is an interesting point partly because it nicely illustrates the way one side of archival work, reference service, interrelates with another, acquisition policy. It is also interesting because, despite our intentions, the Archive has acquired sensitive material. In some cases, the material was not considered sensitive at the time it was acquired. In other cases, we only came to understand the problematic nature of the material after it was accepted.

The existence of sensitive material in the Archive poses a real dilemma: On the one hand we have the principle that all our collections are open to any researcher who comes to the Library; on the other we have the principle that the rights of performers and collectors must be protected. Fortunately, the collision of these principles does not occur very often, but when it does, there is only one way it can be resolved. That is through the application of judgement and diplomacy by the Folklife Center staff.

This brings me to my final point: the constitution that we follow in administering our collection is more like that of Great Britain than that of the United States. It is not a set of articulated procedures, although something like a set of procedures can be found on pages 4 and 5 of our publication *A Guide to the Collections of Recorded Folk Music and Folklore in the Library of Congress*. It is instead a mix of documents (like this one), people, and precedents. Appropriately enough for an archive of folk culture, the force that most fully governs our public service is tradition.

And incidentally, it is a tradition of which we are very proud. I have worked with the Archive of Folk Culture for sixteen years and in that time I have not heard of a single instance in which the rights of a performer have been compromised. This is not to say that the current access to the Folk Archive strikes us as a subject of eternal satisfaction. Like participants in any viable tradition, we remain open to the new ideas.

Parsons Fund for Ethnography at the Library of Congress

By James Hardin

In December 1994, the Library of Congress established "The Gerald E. and Corinne L. Parsons Fund for Ethnography at the Library of Congress." The fund was opened with a gift from American Folklife Center reference librarian Gerald Parsons Jr. and will be augmented at a later date by funds from the Gerald E. Parsons Trust.

In accepting the initial gift for the Parsons Fund, Librarian of Congress James H. Billington said, "a gift from a Library employee is perhaps the best vote of confidence this institution can have, and I thank you for creating an example—with both your gift and the thoughtful way in which it was crafted—which others might follow in the future."

Gerry Parsons created the Parsons Fund in order to make the "unparalleled collections in the Archive of Folk Culture" more accessible to the American people, who, as participants in the great legacy of American traditional culture, are their true "owners." The fund is in memory of his parents, who themselves were rooted in those traditions.

Gerry grew up in Wilmington, Delaware, where his father was an acoustical engineer at the Hercules Powder Company. His mother had studied to become a concert pianist and might have preferred her son to pursue musical interests in keeping with her own. But Gerry's inclinations took him back to his mother's father, Samuel Landis.

Landis was a cabinet maker from Cumberland, Maryland, who played a guitar of his own construction in a mountain string band. He also built violins and, like many turn-of-the-century stringed-instrument makers, claimed to have invented the flat-bottomed mandolin. One of Sam Landis's regular performance venues was the party boats on the Old Chesapeake & Ohio canal.

Gerry's father was also born in Cumberland. He was trained as a civil engineer at West Virginia Uni-



Molly Ramshaw; Corinne, Gerald Sr., and Gerry Parsons; Mary, James, and Peter Hardin, at the home of Warren and Molly Ramshaw, Hamilton, New York, following graduation ceremonies at Colgate University, 1962. Parsons and Hardin (pictured here with his mother and brother) were classmates at Colgate. Photo by Warren Ramshaw

versity and began his career by building roads in West Virginia in the 1920s. During that time, he heard many songs and stories from the region. Among these was a version of the work song "This Old Hammer Killed John Henry," learned from a black workman driving a single-jack drill while blasting a cut through the side of a mountain. It was one of the first songs of any sort Gerry remembers hearing.

According to the letter of gift establishing the Parsons Fund, the guiding purpose of the fund is to make the collections of primary ethnographic materials acquired and housed anywhere in the Library of Congress available to the needs and uses of those in the private sector. The fund is to achieve that purpose through grants to individuals or organizations in support of their specific projects.

The fund is to be administered by the professional staff of the American Folklife Center, and this is the first time such a specification has been made in a letter of gift to the Library. At the first meeting of the fund committee, January 23, Judith Gray was elected chair for a one-year term.

No limit is to be imposed on the range of projects the fund may support. They may, for example, lead to publication in media of all types, both commercial and non-commercial; underwrite new works of art, music, or fiction; involve academic research; contribute to the theoretical development of archival science; explore practical possibilities for processing the Library's ethnographic collections; develop new means of providing reference service; support student work; experiment with conservation techniques; support ethnographic field research leading to new Library acquisitions.

The Center has established an initial fund-raising goal of \$10,000. To date, more than \$7,000 has been received. Those wishing to contribute to the fund should make checks payable to the "Library of Congress Trust Fund Board," with "Donation to Parsons Fund" written on the comment line on the bottom left of the check. Inquiries and contribution checks should be addressed to the Library of Congress, American Folklife Center, Washington, D.C. 20540-8100, Attn: Parsons Fund.

Cachao, Mambo, and Descarga: A Latin Music Legend

By Morton Marks

On September 15, 1994, Cachao and his orchestra played a special concert at the Library of Congress in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month. The event was cosponsored by the American Folklife Center and the Hispanic Division, in partnership with Crescent Moon/Epic Records. Morton Marks prepared the following notes for the program.

Israel López, el Gran Cachao, has played a pioneering role in the development of Cuban music for almost sixty years. He was born into a musical family in Havana in 1918. His older brother and sister were already musicians, and thirty-five of Cachao's relatives played the bass, which became his instrument of choice. A prolific composer, arranger, and instrumentalist, Cachao is a virtuosic bassist who developed the percussive and harmonic role of this instrument in Cuban dance music. By the time he was nineteen, Cachao and his brother Orestes had invented the mambo, which was first played over a Cuban radio station in 1938. The mambo gave rise to a new way of structuring Cuban dance music, and its effects have been felt inside and outside of Cuba down to the present.

Most North Americans probably associate mambo with the big bands of the 1940s and 1950s, led by Machito, Tito Puente, and others in New York, and by Dámaso Pérez Prado in Mexico City. These represent the merging of Afro-Cuban song style and rhythmic approaches with the riffs, instrumentation, and voicings of North American swing bands.

But the mambo in Cuba has very different origins. It emerged from the *charanga* orchestras of flute, strings, piano, and percussion that appeared at the very end of the nine-



Israel "Cachao" López on the Neptune Plaza for a concert at the Library of Congress, September 15, 1994. Concert photos by James Hardin

teenth century, and from the *danzón*, a late-nineteenth-century Cuban dance with roots in the courts and salons of eighteenth-century Europe. The gradual transformation of the *contradanse* into the Afro-Cuban mambo is a perfect illustration of the process of creolization or Cubanization, the intermingling of European and African musical approaches that accounts for the tremendous appeal of Cuban music all over the world.

French dances such as the minuet and *contradanse* (which had entered France as the English country-dance) were familiar to the Havana elite in the late eighteenth century. They came again to Cuba, this time to the eastern cities of Guantánamo and

Santiago, with the French colonists who were fleeing the Haitian revolution of 1791. The *contradanse* became the Cuban *contradanza*, then the *danza* or *habanera*, and then the *danzón*. As it became Cubanized, it changed in several ways: in its original form a collective line or figure dance, often led by a *bastonero* or dance master, it evolved into a couple dance.

Rhythmically, it was affected by Afro-Caribbean features such as the *cinquillo*, also known as the *habanera* or tango rhythm. Structurally, it evolved into a rondo form, a multi-strained dance with contrasting themes and instrumentation. The final section often showed more Afro-Cuban influences. By 1910, in José Urfé's composition "El Bombín de Barreto," the *danzón* ended with instrumental solos over a *montuno*, or repeated refrain, borrowed from the Cuban *son*. This movement toward a more Afro-Cuban style is characteristic of many kinds of Cuban music, and the multi-part *danzón* lent itself perfectly to this transitional feature.

In 1937, Orestes and Cachao López were playing cello and bass for flautist Antonio Arcaño and his *charanga* band Las Maravillas, and were also responsible for arranging and composing a good part of the band's repertoire. Once, when Arcaño's songbook was stolen, the López brothers had to come up with a new one quickly, and they composed almost thirty *danzones* a week. Between the two of them, Cachao estimates that they composed a total of three thousand *danzones*.

By the late 1930s, the Afro-Cubanizing of the *danzón* and the *charanga* orchestra that played it was completed. The mambo seems to

have originated as a series of syncopated *guajeos* (or riffs) on Cachao's bass, which became the basis for the third or *montuno* section of a traditional *danzón*. This part was first called *danzón de nuevo ritmo*, and later *danzón mambo*. In 1938 Orestes López composed a tune called "Mambo." In later recordings, it would go directly from a brief introduction to the final section, what Arcaño called "*la sabrosura*" or the "funky" part, doing away entirely with the middle section and the repeats.

By 1939, with the addition of a conga drum to the *charanga* ensemble, the Afro-Cuban structure of the mambo had solidified. The conga was borrowed from the *conjunto* ensemble (brass, *tres*, and percussion) led by Arsenio Rodríguez, who had created the modern Afro-Cuban sound for the *conjunto* by layering ostinato patterns and building elaborate arrangements around the *clave*, the backbone of Cuban dance music. Arcaño and the López brothers transformed the *charanga* orchestra in a similar way.

In the final mambo section, Cachao's bass interlocks with the conga's *tumbao* or ostinato as anchor, over which the violins played their repeated *guajeos*. On top were the *floreos* or improvisations of Arcaño's flute. Another innovation was the cowbell added to the *timbales* set, now a standard feature in Latin music. By the early forties, the flowing rhythm and syncopations of the new sound were a tremendous hit with dancers. The Arcaño band had energized the *charanga* sound and reunited the *danzón* with the dancing public.

In 1957 Cachao rounded up the best musicians from the Havana clubs and produced a series of after-hours recordings that have become textbooks for Latin musicians. These are the *descargas*, or Cuban jam sessions, that opened up the highly structured format of Cuban music to solos and improvisation. They featured legendary musicians like Tata Güines on conga, Barretico on *timbales*, and Richard Egües on flute. Because the musicians played in different kinds of orchestras (*conjunto*, *charanga*, jazz band), the *descargas* often featured novel instrumental combinations and pointed the way to later developments in Latin music.



Nelson Gonzales, on *tres*.



Jimmy Bosch, on trombone.

Cachao left Cuba in 1962 and soon established himself as an important figure on the New York salsa scene. In 1966, he was a guest of honor at a series of all-star *descargas* held at New York's Village Gate, where he was featured in an electrifying "jam" with bass solos. These sessions came at the dawn of Latin New York's salsa explosion, largely based on Cuban musical forms. It is only fitting that Cachao should have been present at the launching in another milieu of the music he had done so much to create and that is now reaching a much wider audience.

Long thought of as a "musician's musician" and revered by Latin music fans, in the last two years Cachao has become known to a much larger audience, and he has finally begun to receive wide public acceptance and acclaim. Actor Andy García has played an important role in this breakthrough, hosting a memorable concert ("Cachao, Mambo & Descarga") in Miami in 1992. He also produced the feature-length documentary/concert film, *Cachao: Como su Ritmo No Hay Dos* (Cachao: Like His Rhythm There Is No Other) released on Epic Home Video. García was also involved in the production of Master Sessions Volume 1, the first of a series of CDs on Crescent Moon/Epic Records.

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Morton Marks is an ethnomusicologist who lives in Brooklyn, New York. He holds a Ph.D in anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Marks has produced two collections of Cuban music for Rounder Records and is working on a project called "Latin New York," also for Rounder.

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EDITOR'S NOTES from page 2

was the sixties, remember). At a folklife festival, he met Chuck and Nan Purdue, folklorists who now teach at the University of Virginia. The Purdues encouraged Gerry to study folklore, and he eventually enrolled in programs in the State University of New York, at Cooperstown, and at the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia.

Joe Hickerson invited Gerry to join the staff of the Archive of Folk

Culture in 1974 (bringing the number to three), and Gerry settled into a long career as reference librarian. For more than twenty years, he has served as advisor, guide, teacher, gadfly, conscience, and friend, for the staff of the Archive and the Folklife Center and for the many others who have found their way to the Library and the collections of the Folk Archive, in person, or by phone or letter. For the past several years, Gerry has been undergoing treatment for cancer, and he has been on

extended sick leave. At the American Folklife Center, we miss him as a professional colleague, we miss him as a friend, and we hope and pray for his recovery.

Equipment Correction

The tape-recorder pictured on pages 3 and 4 in *Folklife Center News*, Fall 1994, is a Marantz.



Cachao and his orchestra on the Neptune Plaza of the Library of Congress for a concert, September 15, 1994. An article about the Latin music legend and father of the mambo appears on page 12. Photo by James Hardin

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