



EDITOR'S CORNER

**Robert M. Stevenson's *Inter-American Music Review*:
Thirty Years of Landmark Publishing**

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Continuing our tribute to Robert Murrell Stevenson on the centenary of his birth, this short article explores the genesis and significance of his journal, *Inter-American Music Review*. Though *Diagonal: An Ibero-American Music Review* bears a title clearly indebted to that of Stevenson's creation, and though *Diagonal* seeks to carry on the tradition started by *IAMR*, it also charts a new course in its reliance on an independent editorial board and external review process. Nonetheless, it is safe to say that without the precedent set by *IAMR*, *Diagonal* would not exist. The reasons for this will come into sharper focus after reading the following essay.

One of the most significant events in the history of Ibero-American musicology is certainly the launching in 1978 of Robert M. Stevenson's journal *Inter-American Music Review*. Unique in conception as well as execution, it became a major venue for leading research on an impressively wide array of topics, covering all of the Americas and related themes in Europe, Africa, and Asia.

Inter-American Music Review was notable precisely because there was nothing else like it. Though its name recalls Gerard Béhague's equally important *Latin American Music Review*, Stevenson's journal appeared first, and its scope was larger. Numerous distinguished scholars contributed to this journal, though most of the articles were written by Stevenson himself, as were the reviews. According to Stevenson, one of his journal's main purposes was to provide an outlet for up-and-coming scholars as well, especially those working in marginal areas. The amount of seminal research *IAMR* featured over three decades is staggering, research that, in most cases, would not have found any other viable venue during that time. Indeed, *IAMR* was among Stevenson's most significant and enduring contributions to music scholarship. My goal here is to survey very briefly the history of *IAMR*, providing an overview of its content and presentation, highlights from its thirty-year career, and insights into its genesis and editorial procedures from the late founder/editor himself.

Any survey of its contents, compared with other journals of the late 1970s, quickly reveals why Stevenson needed and created such a periodical: it was the only place the sort of leading-edge, at times esoteric, research he was doing could find a home. It provided an outlet for unconventional research that otherwise would have been difficult or even impossible to place. To be precise, volume 1, number 1, of *Inter-American Music Review* first appeared in the fall of 1978. What was the periodical climate like at this time, and how might that have influenced Stevenson's decision to launch his own journal, one dedicated to his own issues?

Even a cursory glance at the tables of contents from some of the leading U.S. journals in historical musicology and ethnomusicology from 1978 will give us a clearer understanding of the uniqueness and timeliness of *IAMR*. I want to emphasize from the outset that I am not pointing fingers or adopting the victim stance, suggesting there was some sort of conspiracy to suppress Latin American musicology. These superb journals contained some of the best research from that time, and several of the authors are renowned; in fact, some are still active. But the fact remains that there is a stark difference between the contents of these journals and Stevenson's *IAMR*, or for that matter, Béhague's *LAMR* from a couple of years later.

Take, for example, *Current Musicology*. In 1978, it presented an admirably diverse selection of topics, ranging from Renaissance France to Baroque Italy, from Koechlin to Varèse, from the fourteenth century to the twentieth. Of special interest is a piece on Gottschalk. Also in 1978, *The Musical Quarterly*, then in its sixty-fourth year of publication, included an intriguing piece on colonial New York, amidst a selection of otherwise mainstream topics, though with admirable attention to the twentieth century. The year 1978 witnessed the second volume year of *19th-Century Music*, edited by D. Kern Holoman, Joseph Kerman, and Robert Winter. The authors published in *19th-Century Music* brought fresh perspectives to largely canonic repertoire, though we must not forget that, from a musicological standpoint, the nineteenth century was still struggling to get out from under the long shadow cast by pre-1800 research, which continued to dominate the discipline. The Romantic period had respectability issues of its own to deal with in that year.

And what of the *Journal of the American Musicological Society*? This was the flagship not just of the AMS but also of the entire discipline in the U.S., perhaps the English-speaking world. It was and remains the most selective and prestigious journal in musicology. In the three issues of volume 31 from 1978, the dominance of pre-1800 music studies is on display, with the occasional nod to the German Romantic or, surprise, to topics further afield, such as William Malm's intriguing essay on Japanese music. *Ethnomusicology* could always be expected to march to the *tala* of its own *tabla*, and in volume 22, the global reach of its investigations rarely exceeded its disciplinary grasp, from Inuit throat games to Javanese gamelan—and to problems in salsa research!

It is worth noting that the Ibero-American world was hardly bereft of its own outlets. In this same year of 1978, the *Revista de Musicología*, published by the Spanish Musicological Society, made its debut. In Latin America, *Heterofonía* (Mexico), *Revista Musical Chilena* (Chile), and *Revista Brasileira de Música* (Brazil) similarly offered readers of Spanish, as well as Portuguese, valuable insights into a wide variety of topics of local interest.

However, one notes that among all of these U.S. journals, in the volume year 1978-79, among the eighty-two articles listed in tables of contents, Ibero-America was represented by only one article on Spain and one on salsa—about 2.5 percent of the total offerings. Now, there were several items on music of the United States, and if I had included *Popular Music & Society* in my survey, the number of U.S. topics would be even greater. But no matter how you slice it, the limited representation Ibero-America received is all out of proportion to the extent and significance of that heritage.

What was the reason for this dearth? Was there a lack of specialists, or a lack of interest on the part of the editorial boards, or simply indifference on the part of the various readerships? If there was a shortage of high-quality work behind this absence, was it because English-speaking scholars avoided Iberia and the Americas for their real or perceived instability, poor reputation, and difficulties in getting such research published? I have no definitive answers based on actual statistical evidence, though I suspect that all of these explanations are to some extent valid.

We must resist the temptation to confuse correlation with causation, but in my private moments, I wonder if Latin America's status in the U.S. media of the time as the realm of nubile beauty queens, soccer champions, natural disasters, Aztecs, Marxist revolutionaries, banana republics, and tin-horn dictators—not to mention fervent Catholicism—had something to do with the virtual non-existence of Latin America in musicological discourse from that period. Perhaps it was just not taken seriously by intellectuals who, rightly or wrongly, associated the Ibero-American realm with a quasi-medieval socio-economic structure, one in which collusion between oligarchs, the church, and the military sought to keep the whole teetering edifice upright.

In any case, this was the musicological and geo-political universe into which *Inter-American Music Review* was born. Its name was not entirely original, as it was preceded by the *Inter-American Music Bulletin*, published bi-monthly between 1957 and 1973 by the Pan American Union under the auspices of the Department of Cultural Affairs of the Organization of American States. Clearly, IAMR's title was a nod in the direction of this path-breaking earlier publication.

Some outstanding musicologists contributed to the inaugural issue, including Donald Thompson and Tomás Marco, both writing in their native languages. The copious articles and reviews without attribution were, of course, written by Stevenson himself, who wasted no time demonstrating his nonpareil mastery of bibliography, something all the more impressive in the pre-Internet era. His evaluations of Iberian and Latin American dissertations and reference entries, made possible by his command of several languages, were in themselves as exceptional as they were invaluable. And cathedral music was also well represented in this issue, from Caracas, Venezuela, and San Juan, Puerto Rico, if not Peru.

The second issue for 1978 featured an equally original and impressive lineup of contributors and contributions. Stevenson used his own international network of professional and personal connections to solicit and promote such research. And it should be obvious that this sort of work had few chances of seeing the light of day in the other venues we surveyed from this time.

We might pause here to consider the logistics involved in the conception and production of each issue. First of all is the distinctive black-and-white cover: no logo or color. This was no doubt intended to lower costs, which Stevenson himself bore, but I have always felt that, from an aesthetic standpoint, this also spoke to the journal's seriousness of purpose. The stark clarity of the cover suggested that here was a sanctuary for off-the-beaten-path work, to be sure, but only for investigations that were also models of *Musikwissenschaft*, of scientific rationality and methodological rigor. Stevenson himself managed the selection of offerings and contributed the lion's share of the content. He received editorial assistance from Henry Cobos, chair of the music

department at East Los Angeles College and a long-time friend, going back to his El Paso days, and from Margaret Brownlie at UCLA. The book was actually typeset and printed by the Freedmen's Organization in Los Angeles, established in 1976. David Butler was the owner and manager of Freedmen's, whose name referred to the fact that the editors were free to choose their editorial assignments, and to charge whatever fees they thought appropriate. *Inter-American Music Review* was then bound and distributed by Gemini Graphics, in Marina del Rey, California.

Inter-American Music Review appeared regularly, twice per year, until volume XVI, in 2000. After this, Stevenson's advancing age and desire to direct his declining energies elsewhere resulted in a lengthy hiatus. However, *IAMR* experienced a brief revival in 2008 with a two-volume Festschrift dedicated to Ismael Fernández de la Cuesta, one of Spain's leading musicologists and a long-time friend of Stevenson, who edited the first and bilingual volume himself. Emilio Rey García and Víctor Pliego de Andrés served as co-editors of the second and all-Spanish volume. This truly impressive collection of articles covered a wide range of topics and featured some of the most recognizable names in the business. Its appearance on the thirtieth anniversary of the journal's founding was poignant for its finality.

This was not only a fitting tribute to Fernández de la Cuesta but also to *IAMR*, and to the man whose vision it was, three decades earlier, to found the first mainstream music journal devoted to the Americas and related topics in Europe and Asia. Even by today's standards, much of the research in *IAMR* remains highly original and even foundational to many areas of study. A quick glance at the contents of the 2008 issues of *JAMS*, *Current Musicology*, and *19th Century Music* reveals that the situation had not improved markedly over where he started in 1978. None of them contained a single article on Ibero-American topics. One bright spot and notable exception was a 2009 double issue of *The Musical Quarterly* that was devoted exclusively to Latin America. All of us could cite similar exceptions, most of them highly unlikely to have appeared thirty years ago.

In fact, great strides *have* been made in promoting and developing this area of study, in the number and quality not only of publications but also recordings. This sea change has resulted in no small measure from Stevenson's *IAMR*. Indeed, its impact has been enormous and will be felt for many years to come, even though its founder has recently gone to join the chapelmasters, musicians, and composers whose musical legacy he worked so tirelessly to recover and preserve for future generations.

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