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### Music Education And Its Mandate To America

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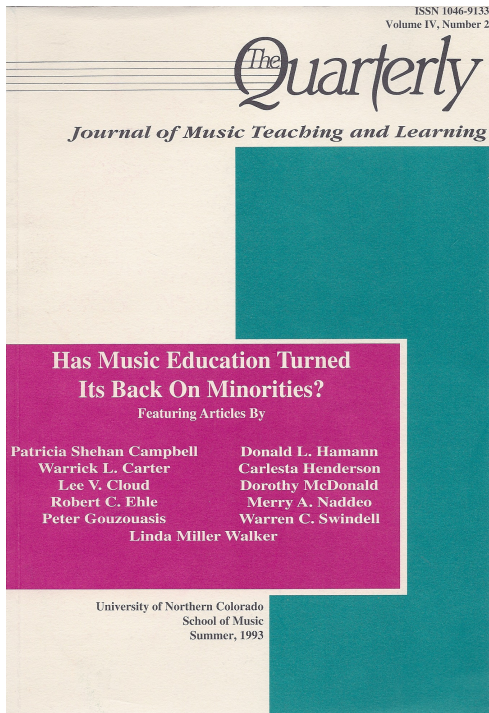
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*It is with pleasure that we inaugurate the reprint of the entire seven volumes of The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning. The journal began in 1990 as The Quarterly. In 1992, with volume 3, the name changed to The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning and continued until 1997. The journal contained articles on issues that were timely when they appeared and are now important for their historical relevance. For many authors, it was their first major publication. Visions of Research in Music Education will publish facsimiles of each issue as it originally appeared. Each article will be a separate pdf file. Jason D. Vodicka has accepted my invitation to serve as guest editor for the reprint project and will compose a new editorial to introduce each volume. Chad Keilman is the production manager. I express deepest thanks to Richard Colwell for granting VRME permission to re-publish The Quarterly in online format. He has graciously prepared an introduction to the reprint series.*

# Music Education And Its Mandate To America

By Warren C. Swindell

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It is the premise of this article that African-American music has had a profound impact on American music and that a musical education must include the study of African-American music, African-American musicians, and the synergistic relationship among African-American culture, the culture of the larger society, and the resulting music which emerged as a product of acculturation. Because the United States is a multicultural nation, cultural groups should be knowledgeable about one another's contributions to the collective heritage of the nation. For instance, most music educators learn about Lowell Mason, Francis Hopkinson, and William Billings in their music education classes.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, how many learn about the work of African-American singing school masters such as Newport Gardner and Frank the Negro?<sup>2</sup> If music education is to fulfill its mandate to America, it must broaden the canon to include significant musical developments by additional ethnic, racial, and gender groups. Otherwise, the profession will continue to fail in fulfilling its responsibility to all the people.

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## The Mandate of Music Education

During this recent period of United States history, when regressive conservative forces have exerted great influence and power in politics, economics, and education, the Music Educators National Conference (MENC) is to be commended for its courageous stand supporting equity and justice in the curriculum. This professional organization wants every American child to receive a balanced, comprehensive, sequential, and rigorous program of instruction in music and the other arts. "MENC believes that the quality and quantity of music instruction received by a student should not be a result of geographic location, social status, racial or ethnic status, urban/suburban/rural status, or parental or community wealth."<sup>3</sup>

Through instruction in music, MENC apparently believes a student's sense of personal worth and self-esteem can be enhanced and that music can provide an opportunity for success for some students who routinely face disappointment and failure in school. Moreover, according to MENC, school music programs are obliged to reflect the multimusical nature of our pluralistic American culture and to include samples of the various musics of the world.<sup>4</sup>

Professional music education literature advocates the inclusion of music history, criti-

Because African-American music and popular music are such integral parts of the totality of American music, music education has an obligation to embrace its many genres. The first step toward this initiative involves recognizing and accepting diversity as a meaningful goal.

cism, and aesthetics in general music instruction. In addition, music educators have a responsibility to provide instructional opportunities for students to play musical instruments and to perform in vocal and instrumental ensembles. The historic focus on performance at the expense of understanding music history, criticism, and aesthetics is receiving increased scrutiny.<sup>5</sup>

In order to fulfill these various mandates, including providing equal measures of quality and quantity of music instruction for all children irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, or class, major changes must occur in the K-12 educational curriculum as well as in undergraduate and graduate schooling. As far as the goal of personal worth and the enhancement of self-esteem is concerned, music educators must address, in a conscious manner, issues such as how a music class enhances the personal worth and self-esteem of poverty-stricken youngsters and poverty-stricken people generally, and how this process occurs for African-Americans, Hispanics, Asians, and the multifaceted white population.

### **The Bifurcation of the United States**

Life in the United States, from the time the first Europeans landed on the nation's shores to the present, has been organized, structured, and stratified according to race, ethnicity, gender, and class. Shortly after enslaved Africans landed on the shores of Virginia during the 1600s, the social, political, economic, and educational activities of the nation were organized around race. This led to the division of the United States into the larger society and the African-American community.<sup>6</sup> Although European societies had been stratified along class lines since time immemorial—primarily so that a privileged few could live opulently at the expense of the masses—the system of stratification based on skin color and other racial characteristics was revolutionary.<sup>7</sup> American white supremacy was a new dogma reflecting the central thought of those who had the power to impose their ideas or views on other human beings.

This practice of racial bifurcation, which began during the 1600s, continues today and will probably continue well into the twenty-

first century.<sup>8</sup> The system of racial division was fueled and energized centuries ago by intellectuals such as Count Arthur de Gobineau and Kristophe August Heumann in Europe and in the United States by influential individuals such as Thomas Jefferson, and Columbia University history professor William A. Dunning, to name a few out of hundreds. Jefferson set forth his ideas in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, in which he concluded that people of African descent were inferior to Europeans in all ways except one:

In music they [Africans] are more generally gifted than the whites with accurate ears for tune and time, and they have been found capable of imagining a small catch. Whether they will be equal to the composition of a more extensive run of melody, or of complicated harmony, is yet to be proved.<sup>9</sup>

In the face of pervasive hostility and degradation, African-Americans generally lost confidence in themselves and actually believed as they were taught, namely, that they were inferior to the surrounding white population. This was inevitable, for a basic assumption of the sociology of knowledge is that what a person knows is determined by the society of which he or she is a part.<sup>10</sup>

Systematic white supremacy, asserts social historian Orlando Patterson, was created to foster domination and parasitism. The oppressive form of domination exerted by American slave owners was unparalleled. When historic systems of slavery are compared and contrasted, the oppressive form of domination exerted by American slave owners was unparalleled. Enslaved Africans in the United States were not only denied the use of their rich cultural heritage, they were considered a subhuman species or an intermediate species between humans and lower animals.<sup>11</sup>

Somehow these enslaved people found a way to express themselves in a powerful new music, despite pressures to conform and to do as they were commanded. As an example, one might analyze and compare the music created by enslaved Africans in the United States with that created by their brethren and sisters in the Caribbean and South America, where the style characteristics of African music were retained to such an extent that it was difficult to distinguish between the music of Africa and that created by

Africans in the New World. The new African-American music was destined to become what distinguished music critic Henry Pleasants and others view as the universally dominant and most influential music of the twentieth century. Pleasants cogently argues that future music historians may well name the mid to late twentieth century the "African-American Epoch." He cites the international dispersal of American music, the African-American musicians who have taken up residency in foreign lands, jazz musicians, and others who have heavily influenced the direction of music as evidence of the African-American pre-eminence.<sup>12</sup> Eileen Southern also concludes that the leading figures of the entertainment world spent the better part of the nineteenth century imitating the African-Americans' musical styles.<sup>13</sup> Musicologist Gilbert Chase, in the 1955 edition of his text *America's Music*, argues that whether or not we mention the Negro spirituals, the Ethiopian popular music business, or America's minstrels, American music is indebted to African-American music, but the revised third edition of Chase's book has been rewritten to expunge much of the research that proves the African-American influence on American music.<sup>14</sup> Hildred Roach identifies a number of prominent composers, including Leonard Bernstein, Eric Satie, Maurice Ravel, George Gershwin, Aaron Copland, Ernst Kreck, Kurt Weil, and Heitor Villa-Lobos, who have incorporated elements of African-American music into some of their compositions.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Development of Early African-American Music**

Europeans in America looked to Europe for musical guidance, for their culture was European-based. Music during the Colonial Era was essentially a vocal music used to meet the needs of the church, home, and community. Africans, like their European counterparts in America, sang, danced, and played French horns, violins (fiddles), drums, fifes, and other instruments. On special holidays, some slaves were afforded time off from their chores. These occasions were generally used to dance, sing, and play musical instruments.<sup>16</sup>

Some of the first African-American music consisted primarily of moans, cries, hollers, calls, and shouts, but gradually a more com-

plex music emerged. The Negro spirituals and other songs reflected the cultural influence of Africa that remained alive in the African-American slave community, so much so that in 1845, a white essayist sarcastically complained about the influence of African-American music upon the music of the larger society. He proclaimed that the Negro poets were the true rulers of the nation, for they set the fashions and influenced public taste. They created the songs, he opined, that were borrowed by whites and spread throughout Anglo-Saxondom, while the African-American creator dug away with his hoe, unaware of his greatness.<sup>17</sup>

### **The Politically Correct Strategy**

From the 1700s through the present, African-Americans have struggled to become equal members of American society. This struggle has been counteracted by virulent, conservative opposition. For example, the Civil Rights legislation which became law during the 1960s was the culmination of a continuous 300-year-old struggle for justice and inclusion in the life and culture of the larger society. The effectiveness of the continued opposition to the integration of African-Americans into the larger society prompted the new Civil Rights legislation, which was reluctantly signed into law by President George Bush during the last years of his administration.

The gap between African-Americans and white Americans persists because certain regressive forces in the nation have worked to reverse the reforms initiated in the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s. As scholars and others became more aware of the ethnic, racist, and sexist biases in the curricula of higher education, progressive activists moved to alleviate inequities but found their efforts countered by others with opposing views. The politically correct movement of today, which too has racist overtones, enjoys a strong base in the academy. For example, during the 1960s and 1970s, William Shockley, a physicist and Nobel laureate, used his academic prestige when declaring that people of African descent were innately inferior. He asked the National Academy of Science to support his views, requesting the organization to study whether the American

Musical involvement for people of African descent is participatory and egalitarian, while formal musical involvement for people of European descent tends to be elitist, specialized, and primarily restricted to certain classes and groups of people.

population was deteriorating genetically, with special attention to African-Americans.<sup>18</sup> The leadership of schools and departments of music are not immune from similar attitudes; in 1989, Charles Kaufmann, dean of the Mannes College of Music, expressed his view on multiculturalism:

Like it or not, the United States is a Eurocentric society. The fact that our society comprises strains from many ethnic groups has not persuaded the population as a whole to throw out the silverware and pots in order to buy woks and chopsticks, nor does there appear to be a mass movement to eliminate our present mode of dress in favor of saris and dashikis. Our culture does not appear to be in imminent danger of being swept away by an *tsunami* of soy sauce. Yes, our culture is enlivened and spiced by the diversity of its ethnic makeup, but still is essentially Eurocentric.<sup>19</sup>

More broadly, in discussing race relations on campuses, Alan Bloom<sup>20</sup> argues that since the revolutionary 1960s, segregation rather than integration has been the norm. This, he believes, is not the fault of white students, but is dictated by the behavior of African-American segregationists. Bloom cites few, if any, statistical social science studies, or the work of social scientists; he presents his perceptions as reality. He worries about Michael Jackson or Prince taking the entertainment spotlight from Mick Jagger, for they, he concludes, are even more weird than Jagger. Bloom sarcastically expresses his feelings about new developments in rock music:

And this gutter phenomenon is apparently the fulfillment of the promise made by so much psychology and literature that our weak and exhausted Western civilization would find refreshment in the true source, the unconscious which appeared to the late romantic imagination to be identical to Africa, the dark and unexplored continent.<sup>21</sup>

The political right, which has a vested interest in returning to the privileges and advantages of the pre-Civil Rights era, devised a strategy to counteract the reform move-

ment.<sup>22</sup> Its strategy is to accuse progressives who seek to include the entire human family in academe of being "politically correct." Those who are politically correct, the right argues, are a threat to freedom of speech, open debate, and dialogue. Freedom of speech is threatened because, the politically right holds, progressives have risen to power in universities and are using that power to enforce acceptance of their values. The underlying purpose of this accusation is to discredit the efforts of progressives to include more racial, cultural, and gender issues in the academic milieu.<sup>23</sup>

Apparently some music educators are progressive and seek positive change.<sup>24</sup> For example, Estelle R. Jorgenson, a professor of music education at Indiana University, acknowledges that "some works, musicians and groups in society are underrepresented, marginalized, and even oppressed by it [the canon]."<sup>25</sup> Jorgenson recognizes that the cultural context from which the music was created is integral rather than ancillary to an understanding of musical meaning. Music education is political and social, as well as aesthetic. Therefore minorities, women, and others deserve representation.

In addition, Bennett Reimer breaks from Eurocentric tradition when he notes that over thousands of years the Yoruba have developed a system for making value judgments on works of art. He acknowledges, then, that the West is not the only part of the world to have developed aesthetic standards. The Yorubas' system of aesthetic criticism includes consideration of the artist's discernment or understanding of the subject portrayed; the design consciousness of the artist; the originality of the composition; the artist's purpose, self-control, and composure; and the enduring qualities of the work.<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand, Reimer appears to agree with Ravitch when he cites separatism or particularism as a negative aspect of cultural individuality.<sup>27</sup> Terms such as separat-



ism, particularism, and politically correct are code words coined by regressive forces who aim to turn back the clock to the pre-1960s.<sup>28</sup> Part of the conservative strategy is to obfuscate the issues and to confuse the perceptions of authority figures, the professoriate, and others who are empowered to make decisions and policies on matters such as cultural inclusion, self-identity, diversity, self-determination, and the redress of historical inequities. Regressive forces blame the victim through accusatory rhetoric such as separatism, politically correct, particularism, and so forth.<sup>29</sup> If the United States is, indeed, two nations within a nation, the curricula must reflect such a reality. To do otherwise is to live in a world of make-believe.

### Two Nations Within One

Because African-Americans have lived apart from the larger society, they have developed a different and unique culture, and African-American music lies at its heart. Through the years, African-American music has continued to develop, flourish, and invigorate the music of the larger society. The persistence of a distinctive African cultural influence in the music of both North and South America is particularly apparent in popular music. Chase's (1955) text offers a lucid account of the African-American music influence on the work of Stephen Foster, although the third edition, published in 1987, does not contain this information.<sup>30</sup> In the 1920s, Al Jolson, a white man who painted his face black, was the nation's most popular entertainer. Later, much of Benny Goodman's swing music was written and arranged by African-American musicians, and Glen Miller's hit recording "Tuxedo Junction" was originally created by Erskine Hawkins, an African-American.

The debt of modern rock superstars such as Elvis Presley and the Beatles to African-American musicians is addressed in a chapter entitled "Black Roots, White Fruits: Racism in the Music Industry" contained in Chapple and Garafalo's text, *Rock 'N' Roll Is Here To Stay*.<sup>31</sup> John Lennon of the Beatles once stated, "We sing more colored than the Africans."<sup>32</sup> As we approach the twenty-first century, Vanilla Ice, one of the nation's first white rappers, continues a slavery tradition

by emulating African-American musicians.<sup>33</sup>

The cultural focus of all ethnic groups is so important that music education has a responsibility to include in its curriculum more information about ethnic culture and its influence on thought, as well as how such ethnocentric thought influences the use of music in various societies. The role played by ethnocentric thought in determining the value placed on music by a given society has serious implications for music teachers and professors. For example, although there are music specialists in most African nations, the general population is expected to sing and dance at special events. Ghanaian musician and writer J. H. Kwabena Nketia explains:

Indeed a successful performance is not judged only from the point of view of the contribution of skilled drummers, singers, and such experts, but also from the point of view of the dancer and the extent of general participation.<sup>34</sup>

A few ethnic groups believe that music aptitude is inborn. On the other hand, some groups consider all individuals to be born with equal inherent talent for aesthetic activity and believe that it is subsequent training which makes one person more skilled than another. These people have observed that almost everyone who has received special music training can do what is expected of them.<sup>35</sup>

Eurocentrists, on the other hand, believe that singing and dancing require special talent and aptitudes. The large body of scholarship pertaining to music aptitude is evidence that many Eurocentric scholars believe that singing and dancing require special talent.<sup>36</sup> (Although the writer is unaware of dancing aptitude tests, dancing requires rhythmic perception and at least in that sense is related to music aptitude.) As a result of this belief, in the West numerous music aptitude tests have been developed to determine who is most suited to pursue musical training. Musical involvement for people of African descent is participatory and egalitarian, while formal musical involvement for people of European descent tends to be elitist, specialized, and primarily restricted to certain classes and groups of people.

The elitism fostered by Eurocentric beliefs has led to dilettantism in music and subsequent problems for academic music and music educa-

tion. As Lloyd notes: "Music history describes a course sequence which deals with art music of the Western world and conveniently runs out of gas somewhere in the early decades of the twentieth century and usually bears little relationship to making music."<sup>37</sup> Because African-American music and popular music are such integral parts of the totality of American music, music education has an obligation to embrace its many genres. The first step toward this initiative involves recognizing and accepting diversity as a meaningful goal. Diversity does not imply inferiority; instead, it implies the recognition and acceptance of differences. Until music education ceases to stress European cultural hegemony, there will be little room for African-American musical expression.

Europeans in the United States have demanded hegemony; yet African modes of communication persist probably because they express the universality of emotional vitality, resilience, interrelatedness, and the value of direct experience.<sup>38</sup> Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., concludes that African-American music has generally been excluded from mainstream scholarship. But because of the persistence of African-centered thought, which embraces a strong art, spiritual, and humanistic orientation, African-American music has developed into a distinctive field of music study.<sup>39</sup> (See box above.)

This issue of *The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning* and the May, 1992, issue of *Music Educators Journal* are indicative of a progressive movement on the part of music education to broaden the canon to include diverse cultural groups in its content. If this trend continues into the future, music education will indeed be on the road to fulfillment of its mandate to America.

### Notes

1. Neal E. Glenn, William McBride, and George H. Wilson, *Secondary School Music: Philosophy, Theory, and Practice*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ:

If music education is mandated to include music history, research, philosophy, criticism, theories of aesthetics, and performance, those who desire to study African-American music must respect that mandate. Genres of African-American music, the history of African-American music education, outstanding composers-arrangers, creators, scholars, educators, administrators, and performers should be included in the canon. Now, these omissions not only impoverish the African-American community but the larger society as well.

Prentice-Hall, 1970, pp. 12-16.

2. Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (2nd ed.). New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1983, pp. 69-70.

3. MENC, "Statements of Beliefs," *Issues in Music Education*, May, 1991, pp. 1-2.

4. Ibid.

5. Charles Leonhard, *The Status of Arts Education in American Public Schools*, Urbana, IL: Council for Research in Music Education, 1991, p. 203.

6. Willie Lee Rose, *A Documentary History of Slavery in North America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976, pp. 22-23.

7. Nan Elsasser, "Unearthing a New World of Obscured American History," *In These Times*, Vol. 15, No. 15, March 11, 1992, p. 19.

8. Jacques Barzun explicates how race affects virtually every aspect of human activity, including the fine arts, in his text *Race: A Study in Modern Superstition*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1937, p. 89. Martin Bernal discusses how Heumann's writings revised what was, up to that time, an accurate account of history in *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization, Volume I, The Fabrication of Ancient Greece, 1785-1985*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987, p. 202.

9. Rose, pp. 70-71.

10. Rhett S. Jones, "Proving Blacks Inferior, 1870-1930," *Black World*, February 1971, pp. 4-18.

11. See William Gillette, *Retreat from Reconstruction, 1869-1879*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979; and Karen J. Winkler, "Eugenics: The Two-Sided Science of Manipulating Human Heredity," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 16, 1985.

12. Henry Pleasants, *Serious Music-And All That Jazz!* New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969.

13. Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Ameri-*



- cans: *A History* (2nd ed.). New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1983, pp. 23-59.
14. Gilbert Chase, *America's Music*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955. Compare with the third edition, published by the University of Illinois Press in 1987.
  15. Hildred Roach, *Black American Music: Past and Present* (2nd ed.). Malabar, FL: Krieger Co, 1992.
  16. Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History* (2nd ed.). New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1983, pp. 23-59.
  17. Ibid, p. 92.
  18. Karen J. Winkler, "Eugenics: The Two-Sided Science of Manipulating Human Heredity," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 16, 1985.
  19. Charles Kaufman, "The West May Not Be the World, but It's Ours," *The New York Times*, May 28, 1989, p. H-1.
  20. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987.
  21. Ibid, p. 79.
  22. Ellen K. Coughlin, "Scholars Confront Fundamental Question: Which Vision of America Should Prevail?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, January 29, 1992; and Gregory S. Jay, "The First Round of the Culture Wars," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 26, 1992.
  23. For a progressive analysis of the "politically correct" movement, see Barbara Epstein, "'Political Correctness' and Identity Politics," *In These Times*, Vol. 16, No. 14, February 26, 1992, p. 16; and Jacqueline Conciatore, "Political Correctness: A New Tyranny or a Dangerous Diversion," *Black Issues in Higher Education*, May 23, 1991, Vol. 8, No. 6, pp. 1-8.
  24. The NAS, which is well funded by conservative forces, took out a full-page ad in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* to spread its ideology. See: National Association of Scholars, "Is the Curriculum Biased?" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 8, 1989, p. A23.
  25. Estelle R. Jorgenson, "Music Education in Broad Perspective," *The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning*, Fall, 1991, Vol. II, No. 3, p. 15.
  26. Bennett Reimer, "Selfness and Otherness in Experiencing Music of Foreign Cultures," *The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning*. Fall, 1991, Vol. II, No. 3, p. 8.
  27. Ibid.
  28. Jacqueline Conciatore, "Political Correctness: A New Tyranny or a Dangerous Diversion," *Black Issues in Higher Education*, 6(8), May 23, 1991.
  29. Ibid.
  30. Gilbert Chase. *America's Music*, 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955, pp. 232-300; 3rd ed., Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1987, pp. 213-265.
  31. Steve Chapple and Reebee Garofalo, *Rock 'N' Roll Is Here To Pay: The History and Politics of the Music Industry..* Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1977, pp. 231-267.
  32. Arnold Shaw, *The Rock Revolution*. New York: Crowell-Collier Press, 1969, p. 22.
  33. Charles T. Brown, *The Art of Rock and Roll*, 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1992.
  34. J. H. Kwabena Nketia, *African Music in Ghana*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963, pp. 20-21.
  35. Alan P. Merriam, *African Music in Perspective*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1982.
  36. For an overview of scholarship pertaining to music aptitude, see Edwin Gordon, *The Psychology of Music Teaching*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971, p. 4; and Rosamund Shuter, *The Psychology of Musical Ability*, London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1968, pp. 11-16.
  37. Gerald J. Lloyd, "Music Curricula in the Future," *NASM Proceedings, The 64th Annual Meeting*, No. 77 June, 1989, p. 48.
  38. Joseph L. White and Thomas A. Parham, *The Psychology of Blacks, Second Edition*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990, p. 56.
  39. Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. "Black Graduate Students and Music Programs in American Institutions of Higher Learning," *NASM Proceedings, The 64th Annual Meeting*, No. 77, June, 1989, pp. 95-96. Also see Samuel A. Floyd, Jr., "On Black Music Research," *Black Music Research Journal*, 1983, p. 47. 

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