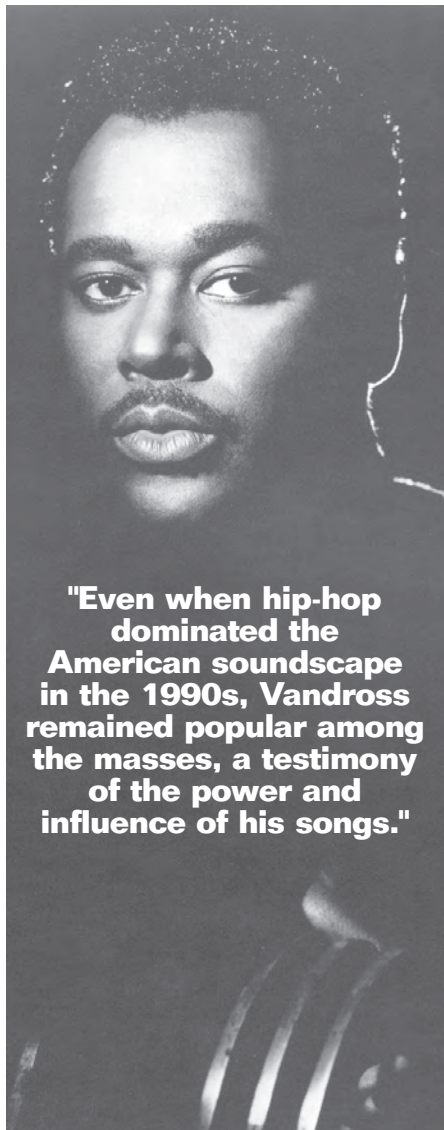




From the Desk of the Director

On July 1, 2005, the world lost another African American musical legend—Luther Vandross, who began his professional career in the 1970s as a background singer for many renowned artists and as a vocalist on commercial jingles. In the 1980s he quickly advanced to superstar status as a soloist and balladeer. Even when hip-hop dominated the American soundscape in the 1990s, Vandross remained popular among the masses, a testimony of the power and influence of his songs. A gifted songwriter-performer, he is best known for his smooth vocal timbre and passionate delivery of love songs, as well as his spectacular live performances that featured an array of stage props. The tropical scenery (inclusive of palm trees); living room, bedroom, and dining room furniture; and the elegant formal gowns worn by his background singers gave each song its own personal touch. Vandross simply was a classic act. Similar to other musical legends such as Ray Charles, who died in 2004, Vandross's live performances, original compositions, and distinctive vocal style will remain central to the American soundscape through his recordings, videos, radio and television commercials, and movie soundtracks (see *tribute inside*).

As the AAAMC continues to document the contributions of nationally renowned African American musicians, we also recognize the need to acknowledge Indiana artists. While some of the musicians from our state have received national and international acclaim—such as David Baker, Wes Montgomery, Freddy Hubbard, J. Johnson, Ketra “Keke” Wyatt, Kenneth “Babyface” Edmonds, After 7, The Jackson 5 (also known as The Jacksons), LaMar Campbell, Rodney Bryant, and Al Hobbs—there are many other locally-acclaimed artists that are not well known outside of Indiana. The goal of the AAAMC is to document the lives and careers of these unsung legends who contributed to the development of a vibrant musical scene in Indiana (including popular, religious, and concert forms of musical expression) since the 1940s. To this end, the AAAMC has launched an oral history project in partnership with the Indiana Historical Society (IHS) that focuses on Indianapolis soul and funk musicians. This project is an extension of our collaboration with IHS on the exhibition *Soul and Funk: the Naptown Sound*, which highlights the role of Indianapolis musicians and their supporters in the production of the local “Naptown” sound of the 1960s and 1970s. The exhibit opened on March 12, 2005, and will be on display through December 31, 2005 (see *story inside*). As a second phase of this project, the AAAMC will also collect the personal narratives of Indiana musi-



"Even when hip-hop dominated the American soundscape in the 1990s, Vandross remained popular among the masses, a testimony of the power and influence of his songs."

cians who specialized in religious and contemporary popular forms.

In our ongoing acquisition of materials, the AAAMC targets traditions that are underrepresented in the scholarship on African American music. A form in particular need of further study is electronic dance music. Although the early styles of this music were created primarily by African Americans, the role of these pioneers is rarely acknowledged. The AAAMC is now engaged in developing a collection of electronic dance music—including disco, house, and techno—as part of a project spearheaded by graduate assistant Denise Dalphond, who is currently writing a masters thesis on the topic (see *story inside*).

Beginning in 2006, patrons will be able to identify the commercial recordings, videos, and books housed in our collection by searching IUCAT, Indiana University's online library catalog. This initiative is under the direction of Brenda Nelson-Strauss, Head of Collections (see *inside story*). The AAAMC is also pleased to announce the launching of a book series in conjunction with the University of Illinois Press. Co-edited by Research Associate Mellonee Burnim and myself, *Black Music in Cultural Perspective* is designed to generate increased attention on such underrepresented topics in African American music scholarship as

transnationalism, religious music, popular music, women in music, music criticism, musical aesthetics, and regional studies. The series will also promote the publication of biographies and autobiographies of African American musicians in an effort to document more fully the contributions of individual artists to the development and proliferation of African American music. Two books are currently in production for the series: *New Perspectives on the Blues*, edited by David Evans; and *Black Women and Music: More than the Blues*, edited by Eileen M. Hayes and Linda F. Williams. These are scheduled for release in 2006.

Since the mid-1990s, the AAAMC has collaborated with the African American Arts Institute and the School of Music to sponsor “Extensions of the Tradition,” a concert series initiated by former Research Associate Dr. William Banfield that showcases the works of African American composers. Our 2006 concert is slated for February 26, 2006, at 4:00 p.m. in the IU School of Music's Auer Hall. The program will be announced at a later date. A corresponding exhibit is also planned for display in the Cook Music Library.

Over the past year, the staff of the AAAMC participated in several publication projects and professional conferences. Head of Collections Brenda Nelson-Strauss attended the Music Library Association annual conference in Vancouver, B.C. (February 2005) and the Association for Recorded Sound Collections conference (in her capacity as president of ARSC) in Austin, Texas (March 2005). At the spring meeting of the Midwest Archives Conference held in Chicago in May 2005, she assisted in organizing a session on “Spreading the Gospel: Documenting African American Religious Music” and presented a paper during this session on “Arizona Dranes and Early Gospel Music Recordings.” Other speakers included Suzanne Flandreau of the Center for Black Music Research and John Russick, Curator of the Chicago Historical Society.

continued on page 2.



Portia K. Mauldsby

Portia K. Mauldsby
Director

aaamc mission:

The AAAMC is devoted to the collection, preservation, and dissemination of materials for the purpose of research and study of African American music and culture.

www.indiana.edu/~aaamc

No. 10, Fall 2005

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In the Vault

Recent Donations

Jason Housley

Soul and R&B 45 rpm records and selected periodicals

Sony Legacy

Compact discs from the Rhythm & Soul series

Kevin “The Moose” Anderson

Original radio series *Lessons in Jazz*, a mix of hip-hop and jazz combined with original interviews

Batesmeyer, Inc.

Press materials, CDs, and video featuring blues musician and Indiana native Mighty Mo Rodgers

Carl Tancredi

Copies of his published articles, interviews, and selected record collector magazines

Suzan Jenkins

R&B Foundation oral history tapes and CD compilations

Featured Collections

Oldies But Goodies: The Otis-Griffith Videos

In the 1970s an interesting collaboration began in Los Angeles between two entertainment industry pioneers: Johnny Otis, the legendary R&B songwriter and bandleader, and Bill Griffith, one of the original promoters of roller derby and former owner of the L.A. Thunderbirds franchise. Otis's success as a recording artist and radio deejay led to an opportunity to host a weekly television variety show for KTTV in L.A., which aired for eight years beginning in the mid-1950s as *The Johnny Otis Show*. Griffith, who at that time ran an ad agency, assisted by finding sponsors for the show and a friendship formed between the two men. By the 1970s Griffith had his own TV truck, primarily used for filming roller derby events, and offered to shoot some of Otis's live shows. The resulting video footage was recently donated to the AAAMC by Otis and Griffith and consists of two distinct series.

The Johnny Otis Show collection is comprised of original video masters for 13 half-hour television programs taped in a Los Angeles studio between 1974 and 1975. Billed as "America's only rhythm and blues TV series," the program featured Johnny Otis with his stellar band and back-up singers, the Otisettes, along with many of the great R&B artists as guests. Regulars included Delmar "Mighty Mouth" Evans, Marie Adams & the Three Tons of Joy, Joe Turner, Twiggy Hamilton, Roy Milton, Shuggie Otis (Johnny's son), Pee Wee Crayton, Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson, and Cardella Di Millo. *Melody Maker* (a London magazine) described

the program as "a happy, unpretentious show that harks back to the halcyon days of R&B" while a *San Francisco Chronicle* critic exclaimed, "if you would like an instant history of one large segment of popular music, *The Johnny Otis Show* must be one of the greatest blues/R&B/rock & roll shows ever put together as one act!"

The Johnny Otis's Oldies but Goodies musical revue was a live show in L.A., similar in nature to the popular television programs *American Bandstand* and *Soul Train*, where popular artists lip-synched to their hit recordings while members of the audience danced along. Otis's revue featured R&B artists that had been popular during the early days of the rock & roll era, hence the "oldies" designation. Griffith taped many of these performances between 1975 and 1977, resulting in approximately five hours of footage and including nearly 100 hit songs. Between segments Otis casually chatted with guests before introducing their songs. Of particular interest are numerous performances by Etta James, who was originally discovered by Otis, and who teams up with Richard Berry on her hit song "Roll With Me Henry." Other performers include the Penguins, the Coasters, Richard Berry, Ted Taylor, Richard Berry, Shirley & Lee, Bobby Day, the Medallions, Joe Houston, the Robins, Gene & Eunice, and many more.

These videos are highly recommended for anyone interested in the history and development of black music and the classic sound of R&B. Since the videos are unique and not duplicated elsewhere, the AAAMC is currently taking steps to preserve the collection. Reference copies are now available for viewing within the Archives, and the videos may also be licensed for commercial use.

—Brenda Nelson-Strauss



Cast of The Johnny Otis Show

From the Director...

Mellonee Burnim and I co-edited *African American Music: An Introduction* published by Routledge Press (2006). (See back page for details). I also presented the following papers: "The Motown Sound: Strategizing Cultural Production" at the Society for American Music conference in Eugene, Oregon (February 2005); "The Motown Sound: A Northern Representation of Blackness?" for the Albany Institute of History & Art, Albany, New York (March 2005); "More Than Samples: The Sound and Politics of Funk" for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum (July 2005); and "The Interaction of African American and Suriname Gospel Ensembles in the Netherlands" for the Atlanta History Center's Black World Series (September 2005).

Regretfully, I announce the departure of the AAAMC's Interim Project Manager Jason Housley, who has accepted the position of Adjunct Instructor in the Department of African American Studies at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. Jason brought a wealth of knowledge about rare recordings of black popular music to the Archives during his tenure here. His outstanding research and interviews in conjunction with the exhibit *Soul and Funk: The Naptown Sound* profoundly shaped the content and ultimate success of this project. I wish to express my most sincere appreciation to Jason for his many contributions to the AAAMC and I extend my best wishes to him for much success in his new position. I also announce the appointment of Carol Bennett as the Administrator and Project Coordinator for the AAAMC. Carol brings administrative experience and a wealth of knowledge on public history and culture to the Archives (see inside story).

Collaborative Projects

AAAMC Holdings to be Available on IUCAT and OCLC's Worldcat

The AAAMC, with assistance from the Herman B Wells Library at Indiana University, is embarking on a major cataloging project. By 2006, patrons searching IUCAT, Indiana University's online library catalog, will find bibliographic records for commercial CDs, DVDs, LPs, books, and videos in the AAAMC's collection. The initial project is expected to add more than 2,000 new titles to IUCAT, the majority of them commercial CDs representing various musical genres from rhythm and blues to rap and gospel. The AAAMC's holdings of post-WWII African American popular music are complemented by the significant collections of early jazz, blues, and folk music recordings at IU's Archives of Traditional Music and the predominantly classical Black Music Collection at IU's Cook Music Library. The addition of the AAAMC's holdings to IUCAT will give students and faculty access for the first time to information on all three of these important collections, firmly establishing IU Bloomington as a major research center for the study of black music.

Information on the AAAMC's holdings will simultaneously be added to OCLC's Worldcat, the world's largest bibliographic database, which has nearly 1 billion records, including the merged catalogs of thousands of OCLC member libraries. Through Worldcat, researchers around the world will soon be able to search for an item and determine if the AAAMC holds a copy.



A second phase of the cataloging project, to be implemented in 2007, will focus on the AAAMC's unique special collections. Donated by scholars, musicians, producers, and private collectors, these collections typically include a variety of audio and video formats in addition to personal papers, manuscripts, and photographs. A summary of each collection will be added to both OCLC and IUCAT, while a more detailed finding aid will be linked to the AAAMC's website.

The AAAMC is very pleased to become an OCLC member library and a participant in IUCAT, and looks forward to better serving students and faculty on the IU campus as well as researchers and the general public from around the world seeking information on African American music and culture.

—Brenda Nelson-Strauss

TECHNO...

ISN'T THAT GERMAN?

the african american origins of electronic dance music

All electronic dance music that exists today can claim its roots in music that was created mostly by African American male DJs and producers in Chicago and Detroit in the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, electronic dance music is popularly perceived by fans, and in print and visual media, as having its origins in European rave culture. Techno, and more generally, electronic dance music, are genres that are not well represented in academic collections. Realizing this to be the case at the AAAMC, Dr. Portia Maultsby enlisted me, Denise Dalphond, a new graduate assistant at the AAAMC, to change this. Together we developed a way to build up a collection of electronic dance music at the Archives, which also became the topic of my master's project. As the focus of this project, I seek to provide a documentation strategy that will offer guidance for future collections rooted specifically in techno music, as well as in the broader category of electronic dance music. The purpose of my project, and a portion of my work as a graduate assistant at the AAAMC, is the development of a collection of audio and video recordings, memorabilia, discographies, and bibliographies relating to techno music. The broader focus of my research and eventual doctoral work is an exploration of the ways that electronic dance music fits into the broader continuum of commonly recognized African American musical and cultural aesthetics.

Techno, house, jungle, drum'n'bass, hard house, down-tempo, trance, big beats, garage—all these forms of music created electronically by DJs at turntables and/or using other electronic equipment are part of a larger genre that music theorist and ethnomusicologist Mark Butler calls electronic dance music, or EDM. According to Butler, this term was established by fans and musicians and is popularly accepted. Describing EDM's production, Butler explains that “the most distinctive characteristic is [EDM's] utilization of electronic technologies such as synthesizers, drum machines, sequencers, and samplers.” Electronic dance music is most commonly performed by a live DJ in a “dance environment.” This music “has been defined by its relationship to the dance floor.” The musicians performing this music often form an impressively varied collection of musical references to traditionally labeled “black forms” of music, such as rhythm and blues, disco, and hip-hop, as well as many other types of musical samples. Electronic dance music developed out of a predominantly black, gay, male, disco club scene in Chicago and a black, heterosexual, Euro electro-pop club scene in Detroit in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Chicago house and Detroit techno are the names of the two regional music genres.

Techno historian Beverly May, who has done important ethnographic research on the history of Detroit techno, characterizes it as an African American musical “form of dance music that utilizes primarily electronic instruments, such as drum machines, multi-track mixers, computers, and samplers.” Further, she states that “it is most often composed in 4/4 meter at a tempo of 110–140 BPM (beats per minute) and typically contains few vocal elements.”

May's story of Detroit techno begins with the development of Chicago house music in the late 1970s and follows the progression of techno from its beginnings as an African American form in the early to mid-1980s, to its European introduction in the late 1980s, through its reintroduction into the United States as a European rave form, which was most popular with white American youth. Three men—Juan Atkins, Derrick May, and Kevin Saunderson—often referred to as the “Belleville Three” or the “Holy Trinity” of techno, began to create techno music inspired variously by Detroit radio, European electronic music groups such as Kraftwerk, American electronic music of the 1960s and 1970s by composers such as Phillip Glass, and by Chicago house music, techno's precursor by about seven years. According to music journalist Joshua Glazer, the three

men claim many other influences: James Brown and Sly Stone, Afrika Bambaataa, George Clinton, Robert Moog, renowned house music DJ Frankie Knuckles, the Paradise Garage in New York City, and the Warehouse in Chicago. This music emerged out of many of the same influences as did hip-hop in the Bronx during the mid- to late 1970s. Sonic innovation, a purist message, and an experimental approach to music-making are characteristics of Detroit techno in its combination of “prominent rhythmic programming with newly-crafted sounds and use of soulful or melodic counterpoint elements” (May).

May presents Detroit techno within a timeline broken up into five periods. During the “pre-techno” era lasting from 1980–1985, Juan Atkins began to produce records as part of the group Cybotron, and high school DJ cliques began hosting parties similar to the early hip-hop street parties. The First Wave (1985–1989) is the period when the early techno labels were established by the “Belleville Three,” and when the legendary club The Music Institute was formed in 1988. The Second Wave (1989–1994) is marked by the rise of a younger generation, including Richie Hawtin and John Acquaviva, who were influenced by the rising international popularity of techno and the European rave scene. This period also witnessed the decline in radio support as well as the support of the African American community in Detroit. At this point, Detroit techno came to be recognized as a specific subgenre of techno and “began to represent idealized concepts of techno's musical integrity and authenticity” as a more general, generic techno began to develop in the United States and Europe. During the Third Wave (1994–2000), pop-techno artists like Keoki and Moby brought techno to the mainstream youth culture of the United States, and in Detroit, techno DJs branched out in many different directions. In the Post-Third Wave era, “techno's popularity in all its forms shrank radically after 2000.” May attributes this decline to growing restrictions on venues and “the global generation of internet-enabled teenagers post-2000, [who] generally do not seem to identify as strongly with one particular musical genre or subculture, but instead prefer to listen to many styles of pop music.”

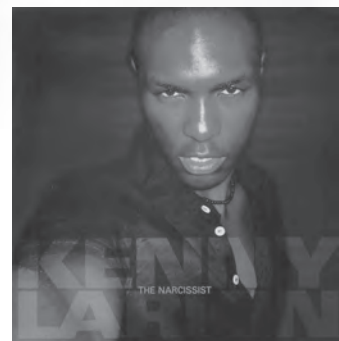
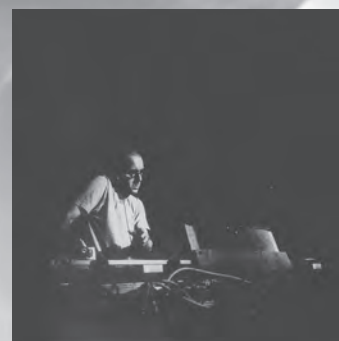
Further research on techno will include conducting fieldwork in Detroit where I will interview DJs, fans, and scholars and attempt to locate collections and discographies. As a final project, I anticipate developing four documents: an extensive discography of techno music; an annotated bibliography of both academic and popular writings on techno music; record reviews of select recordings; and a brief, written history of techno music in Detroit. Finally, I will prepare an essay that describes my work in detail and analyzes the project from an ethnomusicological perspective.

Techno music, and electronic dance music in general, is still gaining recognition as an African American musical expression. In the relatively few archives and libraries that house contemporary, urban, popular African American musical collections in the United States, rhythm & blues, blues, jazz, and hip-hop music are the most commonly found genres. Electronic dance music holds a minimal presence in collections associated with academic institutions. By conducting this project, I intend to provide the foundations for future collections of electronic dance music recordings in academic libraries and archives in order to promote the ethnomusicological study of this type of music.

Glazer, Joshua. “Three Kings,” *Urb*, 13(5), No. 105 (June 2003), 66
May, Beverly. 2005. “Techno” in *African American Music: An Introduction*.
Edited by Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby, 331–352. New York: Routledge

— Denise Dalphond

MA candidate in Ethnomusicology at IU
and Graduate Assistant at the AAAMC





Soul and Funk: The Naptown Sound

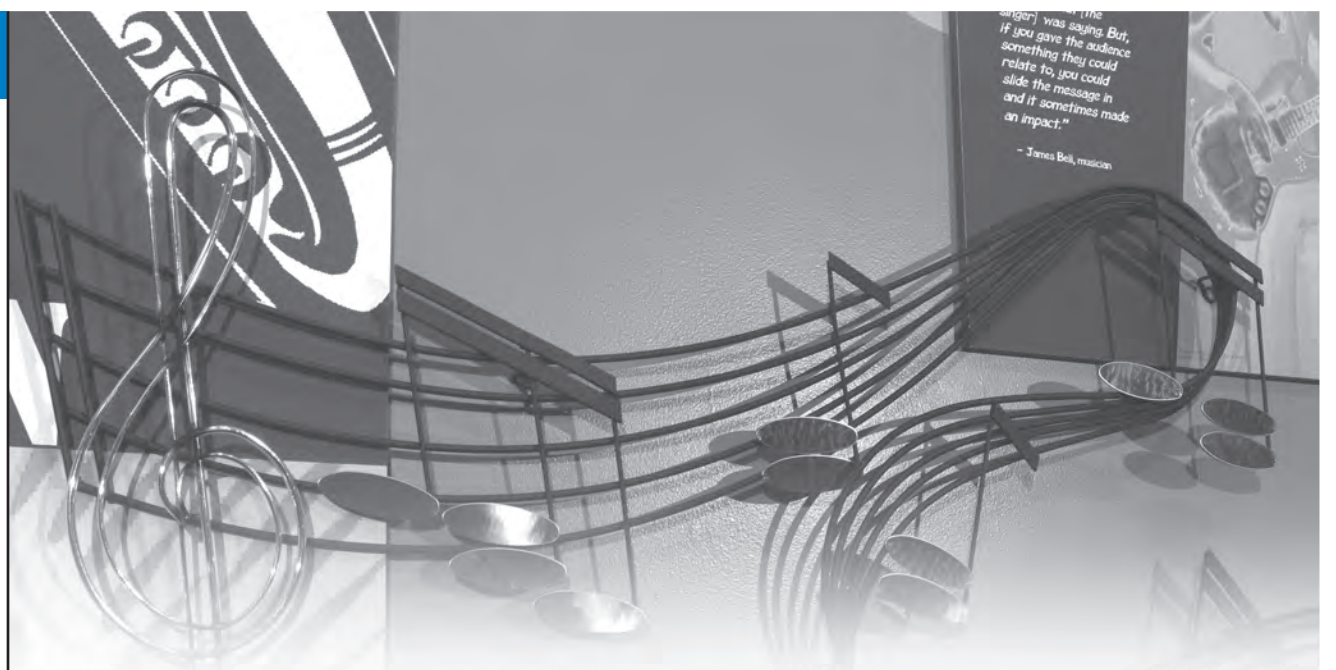
Four decades ago the sounds of soul and funk could be heard in the streets, clubs, theaters, and house parties in urban black communities across the country, including Indianapolis, where musicians created their own brand of soul and funk known as the Naptown Sound. Until recently, the history of this local sound resided in the memory of its creators and fans and in the forgotten and often unknown recordings collected by Jason Yoder, who maintains the website www.Indiana45s.com. Then along came Jeff Kollath, a graduate student in history at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis, who decided to write his M.A. thesis on “Soul City: Indianapolis’ African American Community and Soul Music, 1968–1974,” which he completed in 2003. As an intern at the Indiana Historical Society, Kollath expressed his interest in this topic, which inspired the creation of the exhibition titled *Soul and Funk: The Naptown Sound*.

Soul and Funk: The Naptown Sound opened on March 12, 2005, at the Indiana History Center’s Rapp Family Gallery. A collaborative effort between the Archives of African American Music and Culture and the Indiana Historical Society, this exhibit takes visitors on a musical journey back in time with displays of original materials from musicians, songwriters, disc jockeys, historians, and collectors who lived the soul and funk lifestyle and made musical history. Using oral histories from featured musicians and listening stations featuring soul and funk music, *Soul and Funk* traces these traditions from their roots, links them with current musical traditions, and situates them in the Civil Rights and Black Power movements and in the changing culture of urban black communities.

Soul and Funk: The Naptown Sound is free and open to the public Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., through December 31, 2005. The Indiana History Center is located at 450 W. Ohio Street in downtown Indianapolis.



Photographs courtesy of the Indiana Historical Society



Unearthing Indianapolis Funk & Soul

Indianapolis has often been recognized for its impressive jazz heritage, which is celebrated every summer during the Indianapolis Jazz Fest, but considerably less attention has been paid to the soul and funk sounds that also originated in the Circle City. That is, until now. This seldom-told history had intrigued both the AAAMC and the Indiana Historical Society and led to a collaboration on the exhibit *Soul and Funk: The Naptown Sound* (see sidebar). The goal was to highlight Indianapolis’s nearly forgotten soul and funk music heritage and an important part of the project included my interviews with some of the major figures of the Indianapolis soul and funk scene: Alan Bacon, of Midnight Sun & the Horizons; James Bell, of the Highlighters; Clint Jones, of Billy Ball & the Upsetters; Rickie Clark, owner of Circle City Records; Carl Davis, founder of the Chi-Sound label; Lester Johnson and Matthew Watson of the Ebony Rhythm Band; Paul Middlebrook of the Ph.D.s; Dick Pierson of the Vanguards; Rodney Stepp of the Diplomats; and club-goer Pat Payne. These interviews, portions of which are used throughout the exhibit, reveal the varied experiences of those involved in Indianapolis’s black music scene during its heyday, and take one back to a time when the music business was conducted in a much different manner from today.

During the late 1960s the music industry was rapidly changing. Black music was making inroads into America’s musical mainstream and major record labels, which once ignored black music, suddenly realized the financial benefits of maintaining a roster of soul music artists. Radio was changing as well; the decade saw the introduction of several black-owned radio stations that not only played a steady diet of soul music, but also contributed to the black community through news coverage and community affairs programming aimed specifically toward black listeners.

The soul era had begun in the early 1960s and was initially a regional phenomenon, surfacing in cities such as Detroit, Chicago, Memphis, Philadelphia, New Orleans, and New York. Indianapolis, however, was a little late in embracing this new musical phenomenon. The city had always been known as a major center for jazz, spawning such greats as Wes Montgomery, Freddie Hubbard, J. J. Johnson, David Baker, Jimmy Coe, and Earl Grandy. But by the latter part of the decade, even the jazz scene in Indy was in a state of decline as the players moved on and the venues closed down as a consequence of “urban renewal.”

In 1968 two events occurred that would finally bring Indianapolis firmly into the soul era—the formation of Lamp Records and the launching of WTLC-FM, two black-owned entities that helped each other to thrive. WTLC was the first Indianapolis radio station to cater exclusively to the city’s black population. Prior to TLC, blacks had to content themselves with either the daytime-only WGEE-AM, the Top 40 stations that deigned to play a few soul records during the late hours, or with Nashville’s WLAC, whose strong signal reached as far as Indianapolis. Of the interviews conducted for the *Soul and Funk* exhibit, nearly all of the participants mentioned the influence of WLAC, or “Randy” (as in Randy’s Record Mart, the show’s sponsor). When TLC came on the air, the black community was not only able to hear the latest soul hits, but could also keep abreast of the many newsworthy issues that impacted black Indianapolis. Additionally, TLC gave support to many of the local entrepreneurs looking for a break in the record business, by playing their records alongside those of established hitmakers such as Aretha Franklin, the Temptations, and Johnnie Taylor.

One such entrepreneur was Herb Miller, who formed Lamp Records in 1968. Lamp was by far the most successful Indianapolis record label during the late 1960s and early ’70s, with a roster that included such names as the Pearls, the Diplomats, the Ebony Rhythm Band,



the Words of Wisdom, the Ph.D.s, and most notably, the Vanguards, a singing group that managed to achieve national success with two singles that hit Billboard’s newly-named “Soul” chart during 1969–1970.

Miller was not alone in Indy’s burgeoning record industry. Another Indy native who established himself on the local scene was James Bell, a bright and resourceful musician who once served in the same army unit as Elvis Presley. Bell worked the line at the Ford Motor Company during the day and performed at night with a popular Indy band called the Highlighters, a group that originated at Crispus Attucks High School. After considerable local success with “Poppin’ Popcorn,” the Highlighters recorded Bell’s song “The Funky 16 Corners,” which took the city by storm. The group’s popularity began to spread beyond the environs of the Circle City and they were able to secure bookings on the east coast. What was even more amazing was that the record was issued on Bell’s own label, Three Diamonds. It was rare during that era for artists, particularly black artists, to own their own record labels, but Bell was savvy enough to realize the benefits of ownership, a lesson learned after the group’s first record on the Rojam label had been bootlegged.

Rickie “Solid Gold” Clark, a pioneering DJ on WTLC, was responsible for managing the local Indy group Words of Wisdom, as well as founding the Circle City record label. Circle City and its successor, Circle City International, were able to breathe a few last gasps into the rapidly declining local music scene of the early 1980s, even scoring a couple of minor national hits. Clark’s interview offers a highly educational look into the workings of a radio station, detailing many of the mundane tasks that a DJ must perform while both on and off the air.

Rodney Stepp was a talented Indianapolis youngster who grew up listening to the Beatles as well as the soul and funk groups of the 1960s. Stepp’s group, the Diplomats, set the Indy charts ablaze with “Humbug” in 1969. This success led to work with the Spinners and Sister Sledge, and his organ playing can be heard on the *Spinners Live* album. These are just some of the spirited first-hand accounts of the 1970s Indy music scene that are included in the *Soul and Funk* interviews.

Unfortunately, the Indianapolis soul music industry arrived just as many regional music scenes were beginning to decline. The major labels such as Columbia, RCA, Mercury, Capitol, and Decca had finally realized how lucrative black music could be and began intensive efforts to sign black acts, in the process rendering obsolete the independent labels that until then had to compete only with each other. Because the major labels were based either in New York or Los Angeles, the industry naturally gravitated to the coasts (though Nashville managed to maintain a foothold, but only in country music). Now, a local act had to leave Indianapolis if it hoped for any national success.

“There was never any real effort on the part of Indianapolis to try to educate or make known the contributions of local musicians,” believes Ebony Rhythm Funk Campaign bassist Lester Johnson. “Locally, there wasn’t anybody here who really believed enough in the local artists to push it.” This sentiment is shared by nearly all of the musicians interviewed for this project. “This thing of Indianapolis and how the scene was—wow, man, it was the most fantastic thing that I ever participated in,” remembered Johnson’s bandmate Matthew Watson. “But all of a sudden, it just dried up.” Hopefully, the great amount of attention that the Indiana Historical Society exhibit is attracting will renew interest in this nearly forgotten part of Indianapolis’s cultural history and black popular music scene.

Copies of these interviews, including CDs and transcripts, are housed at both the AAAMC and the Indiana Historical Society.

Remembering Luther

The year was 1980 and the songs were “The Glow of Love” and “Searching” from the album *The Glow of Love* by Change. What was so special about these two songs? I was captivated by the unique style of the lead vocalist! I didn’t know the singer but I knew he would be around for years to come. I later learned that this talented vocalist was Luther Vandross, who fans would soon and affectionately call Luther. Luther had a smooth voice and the ability to transform words into visual images. I remember playing the album *The Glow of Love* so much that it became warped. My first Luther concert would soon follow, and was an unforgettable event.

Luther’s concerts were usually jam packed with women and this particular night was no different. After months of listening to the recordings of this smooth balladeer, I actually was going to see him perform. Luther’s live performance matched the spirit of his studio recordings that I had listened to repeatedly—he always sang from the heart. Not only did he show his audience that he could sing, he proved that he could perform as well. Luther was a first-rate performer. He knew how to connect with the audience and he provided two hours of engaging and pleasurable entertainment. Luther was excellent; his backup singers were excellent; the whole night was fabulous. No words can truly express Luther Vandross’s exceptional talent as a singer and entertainer. To say that he was great is an understatement. Luther was more than phenomenal. Those who never saw him perform live surely missed a magical moment.

Luther began his three-decade musical career in the 1970s as a backup singer for various headliner artists such as David Bowie, Chaka Khan, Quincy Jones, and Barbra Streisand. He was also a talented songwriter, singer of commercial jingles, and was lead vocalist for the group Change. At the encouragement of Roberta Flack and other well-known artists, he left Change to pursue a solo career and he became a national icon shortly after the release of his solo debut album, *Never Too Much* (1981). Many of his hits were remakes of older songs, which he

personalized, making them his own. In fact his signature song, “A House Is Not a Home,” was originally recorded by Dionne Warwick. What made Luther’s version special was his distinctive phrasing, ease of delivery, and his smooth velvet voice.

Luther was a balladeer who sang about love from many perspectives—losing love, finding love, and the anticipation of love. He also sang up-tempo songs—the type of song that lifts your spirits and puts you in a good mood. Luther’s unique delivery of his beautiful lyrics had a special way of making people feel love and emotions through his songs. In 1990, he won his first Grammy Award, for Best R&B Male Vocal Performance, for “Here and Now,” which also became his first top ten hit. Luther went on to win seven more Grammy Awards, including both Song of the Year and Best R&B Male Vocal Performance in 2003 for the title track from his final CD, *Dance with My Father*.

Luther Ronzini Vandross was born April 20, 1951, in the Bronx. Throughout his life, he suffered from weight problems, hypertension, and diabetes. Despite his effort to maintain a sensible weight through diet and exercise, it fluctuated wildly, which caused other medical problems. In April 2003 Luther had a catastrophic stroke and spent months in rehabilitation. Family members, friends, and fans hoped that he would recover so his silky voice could be heard again, but unfortunately Luther never fully recuperated. He died on July 1, 2005, in Edison, New Jersey, at the age of 54.

My memories of Luther are similar to those of his other fans who reminisce about sneaking into his concerts or dancing their first dance to one of his songs. When I listen to his music and watch DVD versions of his concerts, I fondly remember the first time I witnessed him in live performance. Even though thousands of people attended this concert, it was my own special night with Luther. I felt as if he was singing directly to me. I will never forget that night, nor will I forget Luther Ronzini Vandross.

— Carol L. Bennett



"Luther was a balladeer who sang about love from many perspectives—losing love, finding love, and the anticipation of love."

The AAAMC's collections include numerous CDs and photographs of Luther Vandross, in addition to several Westwood One Special Edition radio programs from the 1980s featuring interviews with Vandross and selected recordings.

In the spring of 1997, the AAAMC established its National Advisory Board, a volunteer group of prominent, distinguished professionals who are committed to our mission and lend us their support and expertise. Members are actively involved in the production, promotion, and study of African American music and culture. They have contributed to our growth and influence by aiding in the acquisition of materials, assisting with program development, bringing national visibility, and providing valuable input to discussions on further projects.



Board Member Highlight: Debbie May

Once the sole property of rural southern black and urban storefront churches, black gospel music has slowly crossed into the secular domain, where it has become a dynamic and viable force in the commercial music industry. Repackaged and promoted as entertainment to a cross-cultural and non-Christian audience in non-traditional arenas, gospel music has become a world-wide phenomenon. While many black church-goers embrace the message and sound of today's contemporary gospel, some do not, especially the older members of congregations. Contemporary gospel music is secular in sound—a commercial mix of spirituals, jazz, rap, and R&B ballads—and many songs omit direct references to Jesus, a practice that gospel purists condemn. Describing these songs as too “worldly,” they also object to the use of instruments associated with popular music (synthesizers, electric bass, horns, etc.) and the inclusion of hip-hop dance styles popularized by Kirk Franklin and God's Property in the live performance video production of “Stomp” (1996). Answering this criticism, contemporary gospel artists such as the Winans, Kirk Franklin, the Clark Sisters, Yolanda Adams, Tramaine Hawkins, and William Becton contend that their music reflects new trends in black music and the messages are pertinent to the concerns and spiritual issues of today. Becton explains, “I write about issues that affect both the believer and the unbeliever, and I write about them from a Christian perspective.”

Debbie May, known for her creative ideas and business insight in the world of gospel music, has observed the many changes that have taken place in this tradition over the past 20 years. In fact, she has been directly involved in the transformation of gospel from mainly a Sunday morning religious expression to a cross-over and world-wide entertainment commodity. Working in various positions (booking agent, personal manager, road manager, stage manager, etc.) in the gospel music industry over the last 18 years, May now spends most of her time fulfilling her duties as project coordinator for live video productions and television appearances of artists and as national tour manager for live musical and theatrical stage productions. She is also widely known for her work as producer of the *Bobby Jones Gospel* show broadcast on Black Entertainment Television (BET) and the Word Network. Among the profusion of national and international projects May juggles, she scheduled time for an interview with me to share her views on current trends in gospel music and describe her fascinating work in the world of gospel entertainment.

The following are excerpts from that interview.

Bennett: What sparked your interest in gospel music and how did you get started in the entertainment business?

May: I've always had an interest in gospel music. The opportunity to work in this field presented itself after I attended Columbia College in Chicago, got married, had two sons, and moved to Bloomington, Indiana, to begin my life as a wife and mother. Shortly after my arrival in Bloomington in 1984, I opened a shoe store downtown and was set to begin my new life. A year or so later my friend Butch McGhee, the executive producer at the Muscle Shoals Gospel record label in Alabama, offered me the opportunity to work with Keith Pringle, a gospel artist on the label. Keith had begun a solo career and had several successful records as soloist with various gospel choirs. Butch suggested that I work with Keith because he needed someone to travel with him; in essence, a personal manager. I had no experience in this field; I had maintained my own business and had a degree in arts and entertainment management.

I thought about the offer, which happened at the time I was ending my career in the retail business. Although I had not yet worked in the field of my formal studies, I decided to give it a chance. This was in 1989. Keith and I hit it off perfectly and he was constantly working. We first made a record in Memphis with the Angelic Voices of Faith. Through our working together constantly, we became very good friends, more like brother and sister.

Bennett: When did you begin working with Rev. James Moore?

May: Rev. James Moore was signed to Malaco Records in Jackson, Mississippi, a division of the Muscle Shoals Gospel record label. Frank Williams, the executive producer at Malaco, contacted me and told me that one of his artists needed someone to travel with him and to handle his personal management. That artist was Rev. James Moore. Frank and James's booking agent saw the success that I was having with Keith and they wanted the same to occur with James. At the time, both were known as “difficult artists.”

James and I began working together constantly. He had a hit record with the Mississippi Mass Choir and was booked every week. Between James and Keith, my life totally changed and gospel music took over and became my profession. James decided to record with the Voices of Binghampton choir from Memphis and to work with them. He also formed the Colorado Mass Choir in Denver, and decided to record them while continuing to record his own CDs and constantly travel. Through Keith and James, I began working on live recordings of gospel music. What great on-the-job training I received from this opportunity!

Then I began to manage a new gospel group that was in the making and needed to obtain a record deal. They were two brothers from Dallas known as the Andrews Brothers. This was great experience as well. The Andrews Brothers got a contract with Tyscot Records and, at the time, all of my artists were working. The Andrews Brothers suggested that I help a choir in Dallas that was just starting out. They were a phenomenal group known as God's Property. They became my next project.



Bennett: How and when did you become involved with the Dr. Bobby Jones organization?

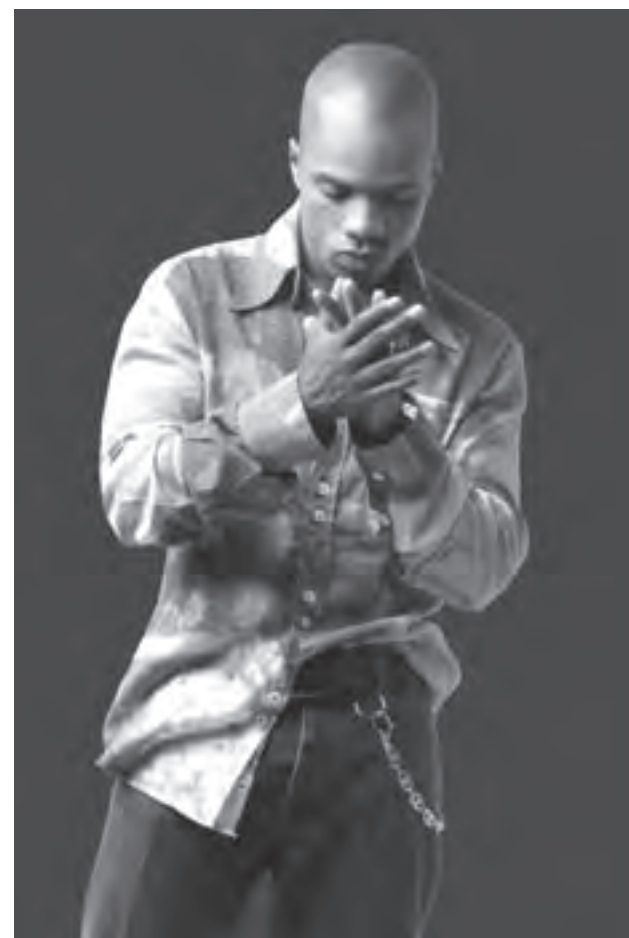
May: My friend, Derrick Lee, was the musical director for the television program *Bobby Jones Gospel*. When I accompanied Rev. James Moore for an appearance on the show, Derrick suggested that I get involved with the organization. Later when I attended the Gospel Music Workshop of America in Chicago, I had the opportunity to speak with Dr. Bobby Jones personally and he invited me to become a part of his volunteer staff.

In 1988 I was part of the volunteer staff for the Gospel Explosion, a live taped event in Nashville for the *Bobby Jones Gospel* television program that featured twenty to thirty artists each day for three days. My first assignment was to assign artists to dressing rooms and make sure that their performance agreements were signed before they took the stage. Darryl Coley was the first artist assigned to me. One day the stage manager was unable to work and Dr. Jones's staff moved me to that position. I served as stage manager for several years and then was promoted to the position of floor director, my current position for the *Bobby Jones Gospel* show.

Bennett: What do you do as floor director?

May: As floor director (also known as line producer), I coordinate the action on stage and I am always in communication with the producer located in the television truck. I give the producer instructions about what to tape and what to edit before airing. In other words, the floor director makes sure that the house is totally in order—the music, the artist, and the host.

Bennett: Will you talk a little bit about Dr. Bobby Jones? He has been around the gospel music industry for quite a while. I am familiar with him, but I know a lot of people don't know the scope of his contributions to gospel music.



May: Dr. Bobby Jones is my mentor. He is one of the greatest men I have ever met, and he is a genius. He has been with BET since its inception. His show, *Bobby Jones Gospel*, has been on BET for 29 years—it is the longest running show on BET. He has had the number one show for 27 years, and it has been number one in 24 countries outside the United States. I was able to learn the television profession for free. Every aspect of it, from the bottom to the top, I learned from this man. I can produce television shows, I can produce videos, and I can put recordings together. The first show I put together and produced on my own was for the Oklahoma bombing victims, a type of Farm Aid relief effort, but with gospel music. We donated the money that was raised to the victims of the bombing. We were told that the black people were not being buried due to the FEMA money being backed up. I asked Dr. Jones if I could do a show using his name to spearhead it. He was just like a proud father when he saw the production. He is actually one of my best friends. Dr. Jones has opened many doors for me, and I owe him so much.

Bennett: What inspires you to do what you do?

May: I would have to say passion. I love what I do. I would have to love it to run through airports like I do. Passion is what drives me. I think I am so blessed and so fortunate to have a job that I love, a job where I am able to use my own creativity, and a job that allows me to see and offer something unique to the world. Gospel music is a unique entity.

Bennett: What are the primary differences between gospel music today and 25 years ago?

May: Gospel music today has taken on more of an urban sound. Gospel artists collaborate with R&B musicians. Kirk Franklin has worked with R. Kelly, Whitney Houston,

and L.L. Cool J, and Teddy Riley produced *Return* by the Winans. The arrangements and productions are similar in style to R&B. So much of contemporary gospel is a mixture of sounds from soul, R&B, jazz, and hip-hop, blended with the innovations of the different artists. Some contemporary gospel is also inspired by traditional hymns and spirituals. Basically, today's gospel is a mixture of different kinds of music.

Gospel music today gets much more exposure than it did 25 years ago. Today it is marketed and sold in the same retail outlets (record stores, Wal-Mart, Kmart, Target, etc.) as secular and other genres of music. It is also broadcast on R&B radio, 24-hour gospel and Christian music stations, BET, and 24-hour religious TV stations such as the Word Network.

With few exceptions, 25 years ago gospel music could be found only in "mom and pop" stores in African American communities and heard on Sunday radio broadcasts. The CDs and videos are now sold in all major retail record outlets, through record clubs, and on the internet. The weekly sales from more than 14,000 retail, mass merchant, and nontraditional outlets (online stores, performance venues,

etc.) are tracked through the information system known as SoundScan.

Gospel music has also become certifiable music. We now have platinum artists, with sales of more than a million. In the 1990s, the Winans were the only platinum-selling gospel group. Now there are many, including Kirk Franklin, Yolanda Adams, and Mary Mary. So we definitely can see the growth of gospel music. Unlike the earlier years, the artists finally are being paid royalties. We have certainly moved up through the ranks.

Bennett: Are there any artists that you haven't worked with that you would like to work with?

May: Yes! I would love to have the opportunity to work with Aretha Franklin. I believe Aretha is a legend. She is timeless. There is no one with a voice like hers—she is just incredible. Aretha's voice has not changed since she began singing. She is just phenomenal.

Bennett: Where do you see gospel music going?

May: I can't even imagine where gospel music will be in the next 20 years. I don't think anyone knows the boundaries of this music. On the business side, I personally would like for gospel entertainers to take part in the ownership of gospel radio stations and distribution companies. I think we could be like the genre of country music. Some artists own their own country music stations and distribution companies. I would love to see that happen in gospel music, but I don't know if it will happen in the next 20 years.

Bennett: What do you see in your future?

May: Wow! That is a million dollar question for me. I'm not sure about my future. I am just so blessed and so thankful for the many opportunities I have had throughout my career. For the last three years, I have produced a gospel half-time show, I just produced the first NBA All-Star gospel show, and I was the assistant producer for Gospel Superfest in New York. I will be producing the Gospel Superfest again. I don't know what God has in store for me.

—Carol L. Bennett



People Introducing Carol Bennett, Administrator-Project Coordinator

In August of this year, we welcomed Carol Toliver Bennett, the new Administrator-Project Coordinator at the AAAMC. She will be handling the administrative responsibilities that keep the Archives operating smoothly. In addition, she will be managing special projects; undergraduate work-study students; and issues related to budgeting, building/office space, and graduate assistantships. She is also the first person that someone will speak to when calling the Archives for information about the AAAMC's resources.

Bennett is currently a Ph.D. candidate specializing in nineteenth-century African American history. She has spent a good portion of her academic career honing her professional interests in public history and the representation of African Americans in museums, and she views this new position at the AAAMC as a model for her professional career: "It gives me a balance of things I want to do. I deal with actual administrative stuff, and I get to deal with the public, so things go hand-in-hand." Bennett prefers tackling multiple projects simultaneously, rather than focusing on a single career goal. She does not intend to become a full-time faculty member when she finishes her doctoral degree. "I'm better with being involved in every little thing, than being involved in one thing." Of her career goals, Bennett explains, "[I want to] help museums, emerging and current ones, look at themselves and see how they can do a better job at talking about the past and how they can engage the public. I think history is taught not in the classroom... it is taught through museums, it's taught through public presentation. And I think we remember our museum visits more than our classroom experiences."

Bennett's relationship with Dr. Portia Maulsby and

African American and African Diaspora Studies (formerly known as Afro-American Studies) at Indiana University began years ago. A native of Indianapolis, Bennett visited IU a number of times in the late 1980s to attend events where Maulsby was the guest speaker. In 1999, Bennett returned to Bloomington as a master's student in the African American Diaspora Studies Department. She came with the intention of studying with Maulsby, but by that time Maulsby had moved into the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, and Bennett was not able to fit a course with Maulsby into her busy schedule of course requirements. As a master's student, Bennett recalls, "I was interested in women and slavery, and I came with the intention that that's all I was going to read and that's all I was going to write about—women slaves," Bennett says, laughing. "Probably during my last year of graduate work, I became interested in museums and public history. I started looking at culture, I started looking at how people were represented, and that's how my interests grew. I think I was kind of lured into getting a Ph.D.," Bennett remembers, laughing. "[I was] handed the application and sat in the professor's office while he watched over me filling it out, and that's how I ended up in a Ph.D. program here—my plan was to leave."

With regards to her doctoral research and her academic expertise, Bennett explains that in her dissertation she is exploring the "marriage of museums and history, and I'm looking at how museums present information regarding the history of the 1800s and 1900's, more so the 1800s, because if I'm called a specialist, the 1800s and slavery would be my specialty." Bennett's research interests lie in examining how museums "get people today interested in looking at the historical past. We're talking about 200 years ago, where people can't fathom a year ago."

Before coming to IU for her graduate work, Bennett worked for three seasons, from March to November, as a re-enactor and interpreter at Conner Prairie, an open-air living history museum in Fishers, Indiana. Conner Prairie is made up of five distinct historic areas, a modern museum center, and over 1,400 acres where visitors can explore life during the 1800s in the United States (www.connerprairie.org). As a "third person interpreter" at Connor Prairie, Bennett described for her audience life in

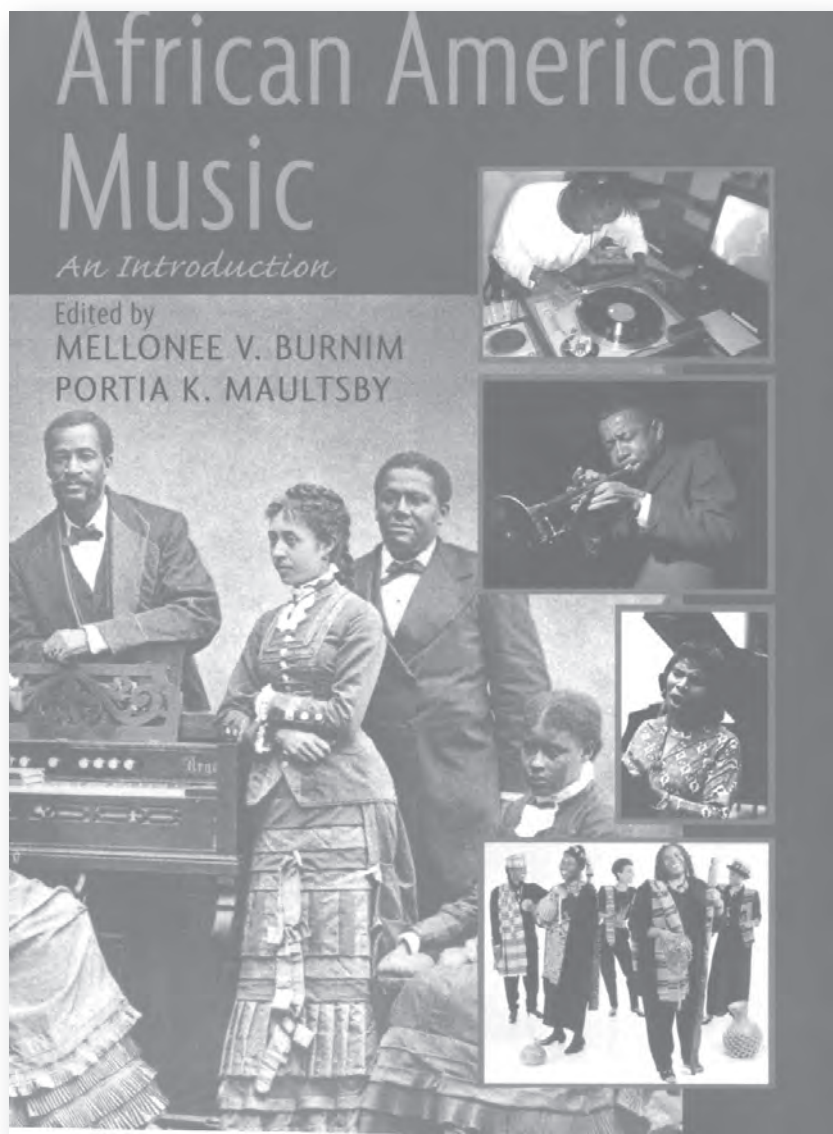
the 1800s in a hands-on environment, "where you get to do weaving and churning, and those types of things. I moved up to becoming an interpreter, first person, which means, for Conner Prairie, you stay in character. And dressing up," Bennett explains, laughing. "Adults get to play dress-up, and that's fun. It's one of those jobs that if you enjoy talking to people, if you enjoy interacting and talking about something that you have a passion for, and I do have a passion for history, you'll really like it." Like many Conner Prairie interpreters and re-enactors, Bennett researched and interpreted the past and developed a character that would help to "bring 19th-century events and situations into clear focus for visitors." This rich experience gave Bennett great opportunities to engage with history, and with the public, in ways she had never imagined—and in ways that continue to influence her research and her perspective on history and on educating the public about history.

Bennett's interests in black music coincide with her experiences and future plans for museums and public history projects. She says, "I'm interested in teaching through performance, and that means visually teaching, and it can come through music and it can come through dance." These interests and professional endeavors clearly fit well with efforts of the AAAMC to educate and "support the research of scholars, students, and the general public from around the world by providing access" to the extensive holdings in the Archives.

Bennett also has plans for the AAAMC's future: She intends to boost the Archives' visibility on IU's campus and spread the word to undergraduate and graduate students who might not yet be aware that such a resource for education and research exists in Bloomington. She feels that the AAAMC must maintain a strong presence at open houses for new students, various receptions, and university ceremonies through displays and informational sessions at these events. We are pleased to see that Bennett is already hard at work in helping the Archives become a better and stronger institution on IU's campus.

Please join us in welcoming our newest staff member!

—Denise Dalpbond



Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby eds. African American Music: An Introduction. New York: Routledge Press, 2006.

African American Music: An Introduction is a collection of thirty essays by leading scholars that survey major African American musical genres, both sacred and secular, from slavery to the present. It is the most comprehensive study of African American music currently available, with sixteen essays on major genres of African American music, as well as lengthy sections on the music industry, gender, and music as resistance. The work brings together, in a single volume, treatments of African American music that have existed largely independent of each other. The research is based in large part on ethnographic fieldwork, which privileges the voices of the music-makers themselves, while interpreting their narratives through a richly textured mosaic of history and culture. The book is replete with references to seminal recordings and recording artists, musical transcriptions, photographs, and illustrations that bring the music to life as expressions of human beings. At the same time, it includes the kind of musical specificity that brings clarity to the structural, melodic, and rhythmic characteristics that both distinguish and unify the music of African Americans.

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