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. Similar to other musical legends such as Ray Charles, who died in 2004, Vandross's live performances, with IHS on the exhibition Pond: view 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, Freddie Hubbard, and Johnnie Taylor (“Keke”) Wyatt, Kenneth “Babysface” 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 Nupegrass 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 musicians 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 Flanraou of the Center for Black Music Research and John Rusk, Curator of the Chicago Historical Society.

continued on page 2

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

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IN THIS ISSUE:
Letter
  • From the Desk of the Director .................. 1

In the vault
  • Recent Donations .................................. 2
  • Featured Collections .............................. 3

Collaborative Projects
  • AAAMC Goes Online ............................. 2
  • Documenting Techno ................................ 3
  • Unearthing Indianapolis Funk & Soul ........... 4
  • Naptown Sound Exhibit ........................... 4

Tribute
  • Luther Vandross 1951–2005 ..................... 5

People
  • National Advisory Board Member: Debbie May ... 6-7
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 him to try calling in an offer 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 11 half-hour television programs taped in 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 Otettes, 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. Moe Andrew (a London magazine) described the program as “a happy, unpretentious show that harks back to the halcyon days of R&B.” 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 an 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 1973 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-Strasser
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. The genre was cacheted by fans and musicians and is popularly accepted. Describing EDM's production, Butler explains that "the most distinctive characteristic of electronic dance technologies such as synthesizers, drum machines, sequencers, and samplers." Electronic dance music is most commonly performed by a live DJ who "may use a drum machine, a sequencer, or any other synthesizer," or a "live" electronic array represented by turntables.

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, 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.
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. The Indiana Historical Society 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 interviews with some of the major figures of the Indianapolis soul and funk scene, including Alan Bacon, of Midnight Sun and the Horizons, James Bell, of the Highlighters, Clinton Jones, of Billy Ball & the Uptowners; 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.Ds; 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 began in the early 1960s and was initially a regional phenomenon, surfacing in cities such as Detroit, Chicago, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, New Orleans, and New York. Indianapolis, however, was a 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 Cox, 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’s Record Mart", the shon’s sponsor. When "TLC" came on the air, the black community was not only able to hear the latest soul music, 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 Pearl, the Diplomats, the Ebony Rhythm Band, the Words of Wisdom, the Ph.Ds, and most notably, the Vanguards, a 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 launched a 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 Crupiss Attucks High School. After considerable local success with “Poppin’ Popcorn,” the Highlighters released 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 impressive 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 Rojan 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 (resting in the studio, juggling labels, etc.)

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, had already scored a couple of minor hits and the group intent to sign black acts, in the process rendering obsolete 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 independent labels 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.

“TLC” was there 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 black 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.” Fortunately, 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.
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 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
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 Pinigle, 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 retail. 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 also handle their personal management. They were a phenomenal group known as God's Property. They became my next project.

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. It is my job to produce the show as it is designed, and to make sure that 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 an influential figure in the gospel music industry for quite a while. I am familiar with him, but I 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 Farm Aid relief effort, 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 heard 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 & Kellly, Whitney Houston,
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; under-graduate work-study students; and issues related to budgeting, buildings/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 Maultsby 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 Maultsby 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 Maultsby, but by that time Maultsby had moved into the Department of Folklore and Ethnomusicology, and Bennett was not able to take a course with Maultsby 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 jured 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 slavery of the 1800s and 1900s, 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 outdoor 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 Conner 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 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.

Feature piece: Do you see in your future?

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 through 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

Dennis Dalphond

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.