

liner notes



ARCHIVES OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSIC AND CULTURE



"...you have demonstrated tremendous courage, fortitude, and determination in a way that provided inspiration and leadership for the rest of the country."



Portia K. Maulsby
Portia K. Maulsby
Director

From the Desk of the Director

On behalf of the staff of the Archives of African American Music and Culture, I would like to express both our condolences and admiration to the residents of New York City. Despite the loss of loved ones in the unfortunate tragedy of September 11, 2001, you have demonstrated tremendous courage, fortitude, and determination in a way that provided inspiration and leadership for the rest of the country. Such tragedies remind us of the importance of preserving our history, culture, and personal memories through diaries, letters, cards, photographs, oral histories, video and audio recordings, and various artifacts. Since September 11th, the AAAMC has had an increased number of requests for these and other materials for projects that document our past, interpret the present, and chart new ground for the future.

Three major collections donated by two of our board members, gospel singer Bobby Jones and author-musician Michael Lydon, and by scholar

Susan Oehler, contribute to our mission. The first installment of Jones's collection--awards, articles, programs, posters--offer insight into his innovative career in gospel music. Lydon's audio recorded interviews gathered for his book *Ray Charles: Man and Music* (1999) bring together the experiences and perspectives of many performers who knew or worked with Ray Charles over the years. The audio interviews and field notes Oehler gathered for her Ph.D. dissertation *Aesthetics and Meaning in Professional Blues Performances: An Ethnographic Examination of an African American Music in Intercultural Context* (2001) offer new perspectives on blues performance and meaning.

Over the past twelve months, the AAAMC has engaged in a variety of activities to broaden the exposure of our collections, to meet the diverse needs of patrons, and to support our educational mission. Past issues of *Liner Notes* have been put on-line and indices to our general and selected special collections will be available on our updated website in fall of 2002. Stephanie Shonekan gave a Power Point presentation, "Exploring Black

Music and Culture at the Archives of African American Music and Culture," at a spring symposium geared for academic counselors and support personnel on "Making the Most of College," which was sponsored by the offices of IU's Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs.

We also completed an instructional website on hip-hop music and culture (see *Liner Notes* #4 for more details), which was tested in a class of seventy-one students during the 2002 spring semester. An on-line pilot version will be offered at IU's Northwest campus in the spring of 2003 and will be used by AAAMC in future workshops on African American music for educators. Our activities for the spring of 2002 concluded with a visit from Dr. Lutgard Mutsaers of the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands, who was a Fellow in IU's Institute for Advanced Study. She spent three weeks in March collaborating with me on our research project, "Black American Music in Dutch Culture" (see story inside).

In this issue of *Liner Notes*, I am proud to present the work of two undergraduate members of our staff, Laura Gonzales and Tangera Sharp, who each wrote a featured article on the collections they processed over the past two years. I am also pleased to welcome two new Research Associates, Professors Tyron Cooper and Daniel Walker, to our staff. Cooper, a renowned and versatile guitarist-vocalist, is the Director of the Indiana University Soul Revue and an adjunct professor in the Department of African-American and African Diasporic Studies. Walker, whose research encompasses black gospel music, is a professor in IU's Department of History. I include this issue by announcing the appointment of Stephanie Shonekan as Assistant Director of the AAAMC (see story inside). Shonekan has made many valuable contributions as a graduate assistant over the past five years. Her presence in this new position will enable us to undertake many projects that have been in the planning stages for several years. Specifics about these will appear in the forthcoming issues of *Liner Notes*.

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. 6/No. 7 – Fall 2001/Spring 2002 Special Double Issue

IN THIS ISSUE:

Letter

From the Desk of the Director



In the Vault

- Recent Donations
- Featured Collection: AAAMC General Collection



• Donor Profile



Visiting Scholar

- Jennifer Searcy



Past Events

- Michael Lydon
- Lutgard Mutsaers



People

- New AAAMC Assistant Director: Stephanie Shonekan



- National Advisory Board Member: Patrice Rushen

- Research Associate: Valerie Grim



In the Vault Recent Donations

James Abbington

Book -- Readings in African American Church Music and Worship (2001)

Alligator Records

Compact discs

Bobby L. Jones

The Bobby Jones Gospel Music Collection -- video, audio recordings, awards, articles, and other memorabilia collected throughout Jones' producing, broadcasting, and performing career in gospel music

Ladies First

Inaugural compact disc recording of Ladies First, Indiana University a cappella group, Ticket to Anywhere (2001)

LINN Records Limited

Compact disc -- Willard White: The Legacy of Paul Robeson (2002)

Michael Lydon

The Michael Lydon Collection -- audio recordings of interviews for Lydon's biography of Ray Charles, *Ray Charles: Man and Music* (1999)

Susan Oehler

The Susan Oehler Collection -- field research material (audio recordings, notes, documents) related to the study of live blues performances in intercultural contexts

Adam Sechooler

Video recording of Interview with Fayard Nicholas (2001)

Squint Entertainment

Compact disc

Vibe Magazine

Continued complimentary subscription

Warner Bros. Records

Compact discs

Michael Woods

Addition of original jazz scores to existing Michael Woods Collection



Featured Collection: The AAAMC General Audio & Video Collection

Need music by Stevie Wonder? Information about the history of the blues or rock 'n' roll? A music video of Public Enemy? Words to gospel songs? The AAAMC may have just what you're looking for in its large collection of CDs, cassettes, LPs, 45s, videos, and DVDs.

The Collection had its beginnings in the mid-1980s, as Dr. Portia K. Maultsby and other faculty began to acquire audio and video material on the music and culture of African Americans. In 1991, the AAAMC was officially established by founder and director Maultsby, through a grant from the Ford Foundation. Since then, she and her staff, as well as members of the National Advisory Board, have attracted special as well as general collections.

A wealth of additional materials have filtered in through personal donations, complimentary copies from record companies, and purchases.

Distinct from the "Special Collections," which contain materials pertaining to specific topics or performers, or from an individual donor, our "General Collection" comprises material that cuts across subject, genre, period, and format. From classical to hip-hop, blues, rhythm & blues*, soul, funk, to R&B*, rock, jazz, and gospel to the music of the African Diaspora, all are represented on more than 2,000 CDs, 120 cassettes, 107 LPs, and 83 45s. The collection includes music by many popular artists—Michael Jackson, Aretha Franklin, Prince, The Supremes, Miles Davis, LL Cool J, Bobby McFerrin, B.B. King, Yolanda Adams, Femi Kuti, Billy Eckstine, Queen Latifah, Parliament, and Destiny's Child, to name a few—as well as lesser-known figures such as Body Count, Delinquent Habits, and Jurassic 5; plus a few local artists, including Beeble Brox, Angela Brown, and Charles Denson.

Our CD collection includes more than 1,450 individual CDs, 255 compilations, 134 soundtracks, and 40 box sets. The compilations have tracks by various artists in blues, hip-hop, soul, gospel, R&B, Christmas, song interpretations, funk, disco, dance/club, go-go/house, Motown, and rock. The soundtracks cover movies such as *Waiting to Exhale*, *The Brothers*, and *Made in America*; and musicals such as *Porgy and Bess*, *The Wiz*, and *Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk*.



Box sets cover individual artists like Diana Ross, Al Green, and Jackie Wilson, as well as subject anthologies such as *The Sugar Hill Records Story*, *The Complete Stax/Volt Soul Singles*, and *The Doo Wop Box*.

We also have cassettes, LPs, and 45s, and the means to play these sound formats on site. Our cassettes cover genres such as gospel (The Indiana State Mass Choir, Reverend Milton Brunson, CLC Youth Choir), hip-hop (Az-1, Cypress Hill, Goodie Mob), blues (Alberta Hunter, Trudy Lynn), soul (Jerry Butler, Johnny Taylor), R&B (Monica, Luther Vandross), African Diaspora (Talking Drums), and soundtracks (Stormy Weather, Black Caesar). Our LP holdings include hip-hop (Brand Nubian, The Lox, Will Smith), folk (Estella Conwill Alexander, Leon Bibb), R&B (Mariah Carey, Faith Evans, Usher), jazz (Billie Holiday, Lena Horne), rhythm & blues (Johnny Otis, Toussaint McCall), African Diaspora (Bhundu Boys, Juba, Mahlathini and The Mahotella Queens), classical (William Grant Still), comedy (Bill Cosby), and spoken word (Ossie Davis & Ruby Dee). Our 45s include mostly blues (Charles Brown, Lightnin' Hopkins), rock (Tina Turner), country (Willie Nelson, Randy Travis), and soul (Bobby Powell, Ted Taylor) artists.

In addition to our audio collections,

we have a wide range of visual media including over 273 VHS and 24 beta videos, as well as a growing DVD collection. These media productions include programs in music, history and culture. Our video collection houses movies (*White Men Can't Jump*, *Remember the Titans*); newscasts (60 Minutes on Racial Tracking, ABC News on Nelson Mandela); educational histories (History of Rock 'N' Roll, Motown: A Time Capsule); music videos (Janet Jackson, Ice T, Afrika Bambaataa); lectures (Evelyn Johnson, The Memphis Blues Tradition Symposium); documentaries (Eyes on the Prize, Our House: Gays and Lesbians in the Hood); instrument features (Piano Legends, Trumpet Kings); interviews (George Clinton, "In the Rapture"); 'live' gospel (Gospelfest, The New Life Community Choir); dance shows (Dance Theater of Harlem, Masters of Tap); and much more. The beta videos showcase the music of Brian McKnight, A Tribe Called Quest, Shanice, Boyz II Men, the Neville Brothers, Mavis Staples, and others. Our DVD collection comprises movies (Shaft, Superfly, and Foxy Brown); documentaries (The Legends of Rock 'N' Roll); as well as live performances (James Brown; Otis Redding; and Earth, Wind & Fire).

The AAAMC offers a diverse selection

of materials to anyone interested in black popular music and its contexts. Our facilities are open to educators, researchers, and the public. Teachers and students often use our resources for class. Recently, students used the archives to study materials for their classes on "Hip-Hop Music," "Motown," and "African-American History," which were taught by Portia Maultsby, Charles Sykes, and Daniel Walker, respectively. Music clips and photographs from the collection have been utilized for various websites, including the "Survey of African American Music" and "Hip-Hop Music," the former currently under construction. People doing research on any number of subjects contact the AAAMC in search of relevant materials. The AAAMC also hosts workshops, and is a popular destination for field trips – even from abroad. A few years ago, a group of German students visited to learn more about gospel and hip-hop traditions.

The AAAMC is a wonderful source for research, education, or just pleasure. No matter where your interest lies, you are sure to find what you need here at the Archives. See you soon!

- Laura Gonzales

Gonzales worked at the AAAMC as an Archival Assistant. She graduated from Indiana University in May 2002.

* The term "rhythm and blues" was first used as a marketing label to identify all types of music recorded by African-American artists. Introduced in 1949 to replace the race music label (a term in use since 1920), "rhythm and blues" (also referred to as "R&B" at this time) encompassed all black musical traditions, including rural and urban blues, boogie-woogie, black swing, jazz combos, vocal harmony groups, and dub lounge trios. The term also identified a musical genre that began evolving in the mid-1940s as reinterpretations and hybridizations of vernacular traditions. Although the blues provided the foundation for rhythm and blues, other elements came from jazz, spirituals, gospel, and mainstream popular music. By the 1960s, gospel elements began to dominate, transforming rhythm and blues into a distinctive genre labeled soul. Promoted by the Black Music Association, the term "Black Music" replaced "Soul" in 1982 to reflect new trends and stylistic diversity in black popular music. In 1990, Billboard reintroduced the term "R&B" "as a broad umbrella to refer to a variety of musical styles, including such contemporary genres as rap, hip-hop and funk. In addition, R&B as a label is less likely to create expectations about the race or ethnic origins of the music's creators." The AAAMC will use "rhythm and blues" to refer to 1940s-1960s rhythm and blues and "R&B" for the rhythm and blues of the 1990s and beyond. Sources: Maultsby, Portia K. "Rhythm & Blues and Soul" in *The Garland Encyclopedia of World Music*. Vol. 3 United States and Canada Music. General Ed. Ellen Koskoff (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 667-679. "Soul Music: Its Sociological and Political Significance in American Popular Culture," *Journal of Popular Culture*. XVII (Fall 1983), pp. 51-60. "Billboard Leading a New Rhythm Section: Chart-Title Changes Stress Style of the Music" *Billboard*. October 27, 1990. p.6,35.

**Information concerning our General Collection holdings will soon be available on our website <http://www.indiana.edu/~aaamc>. Until then, any questions about the collection should be referred to afamarch@indiana.edu.



"My only regret, is that I don't live closer to Bloomington so that I could spend more time at the Archive!"

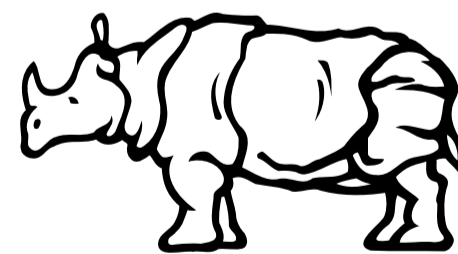
Visiting Scholar Jennifer Searcy

Jennifer Searcy, a first year doctoral student of American History/Public History at Loyola University, visited the AAAMC in April, 2002. She made the four-hour road trip from Chicago to Bloomington twice in her quest to study the material in our Black Radio Collection and the William Barlow Collection.

During her first year of graduate studies, Searcy became "extremely interested in the role African-American radio played in creating race and community consciousness from 1920-1970." After discovering the AAAMC on the internet and through citations in some of the works she had researched, particularly the work of William Barlow, she decided to make the trip to Bloomington. She was specifically interested in the Chicago radio station WVON while it was owned by Leonard Chess in the 1960s.

By the end of her second trip, Searcy had gathered a significant amount of information for her research. "My only regret," she said, "is that I don't live closer to Bloomington so that I could spend more time at the Archive!"

Donor Profile – Karen Shearer: From Rhythm to Rhinos



When Karen Shearer graduated from San Diego State University, she planned to become a teacher. But the course of her life took a dramatic turn as the result of a post-graduation trip to Europe; she ended up living abroad for several years, and drastically modified her career plans. Inspired by live performances by Jimi Hendrix and many other artists, she became interested in the documentation of African-American music. On her return to the United States, she began working as a publicist for Capitol Records and was assigned to cover black and country music. This was a major turning point for Shearer;

she loved her work, and it became the basis for a rewarding and successful career in the recording industry.

For Shearer, the road to success was joyful, but sometimes bumpy. She faced many obstacles, including gender discrimination. "Particularly at record companies," she reminisced. "Women were publicists, [and] could even become the director of publicity, but you were not going to become the Head of A&R." After working for Capitol Records, Shearer landed one of her most noted gigs at Westwood One when she was introduced to Norm Pattis, a person she fondly refers to as the compa-

photo by Fernando Orejuela



Past Events Michael Lydon: Writer and Performer

In September 2001, the AAAMC hosted a campus visit by board member Michael Lydon. The versatile Lydon brought much flavor to campus, drawing on his multifaceted experiences as a journalist, biographer, composer, and performer. While at IU, Lydon captivated audiences at the School of Journalism as he regaled them with stories and wisdom gained from his 35-year career, including tales of his past as one of the founding editors of *Rolling Stone Magazine*, his work with *Newsweek Magazine*, and his most recent project of writing a comprehensive biography of Ray Charles. He described how his "God-given" writing talent and his avid curiosity led him to destinations such as Yale, London, San Francisco, and New York. Defining journalism simply as "contemporary history," he advised the budding journalists about the process of becoming a successful writer, no matter what the format or audience.

Lydon was also guest lecturer in an ethnomusicology class, World Music & Culture, where he talked about his work as a writer and performer. Focusing on music and armed with his acoustic guitar, he presented his thoughts on the development of American music. Highlighting the interrelationship between music and political ideology, Lydon explained that in the mid-1950s, when he first became interested in music, rock and roll was just exploding on the scene—"thousands of American kids were finding black music to be the natural expression of themselves... they

identified with it." Lydon cited events like the civil rights movement and the Vietnam war as being responsible for opening up the heart and the ears of America's youth.

Many of the musicians Lydon admired and interviewed (Keith Richards, Bo Diddley, Chuck Berry, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, and B.B. King) inspired and encouraged him to step in from "the sidelines" and start performing himself. He explained that "playing the music was like dropping the notebook" that stood between him and the musicians. Creating music helped him to see musicians in a more realistic light—not as untouchable geniuses, but as regular guys who just plain worked hard to achieve success. Although it was pop music and rock 'n' roll that inspired him, Lydon's own musical style has evolved into an easy-going jazz in the manner of George Gershwin and Cole Porter. On the weekend during his visit, again armed with his guitar and accompanied by bass player Dave Fink, Lydon performed a set of pop-jazz standards and originals at the Borders bookstore café.

Lydon's schedule also included a tour of the AAAMC and a meeting with the staff to discuss strategic and programming ideas. Lydon consistently draws on his experience as a writer, critic, and performer to help to steer the AAAMC on the right course towards its vision. We are indeed honored to have such a versatile, thoughtful, and accessible individual on our board.

- Stephanie Shonekan

Shonekan is Assistant Director of the AAAMC. She is a doctoral candidate in folklore and ethnomusicology specializing in the biographical study of African and African-American musicians.

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ny's "soul-reigning god."

Westwood One provides over 150 news, sports, music, talk, entertainment programs, and features to the radio and television industries. At Westwood One, Shearer was in charge of "Special Edition," preparing and producing shows that featured interviews and music of a wide range of artists, including the Temptations, Kool and the Gang, Luther Vandross, Aretha Franklin, Jermaine Jackson, Stephanie Mills and Rick James. Artists talked about their lives and careers as well as how their music and particular songs were created. (Recordings of these shows are available at the AAAMC in

the "Westwood One: Special Edition Collection," production and research material are housed in the Karen Shearer Collection.)

Shearer left syndicated radio when the industry was in the midst of going through major changes. She now enjoys producing wildlife features for television. "All of those years of doing rock 'n' roll tours have made me incredibly well qualified for dealing with crews and rhinos at the sea hold. Nothing shocks me, nothing surprises me." While music was her "first love," wildlife has become a major part of her heart and life. Shearer warmly remembers the hundreds of television and music interviews she did over the years, but her most memorable interviews were those she did with the survivors of the Oklahoma City bombing.

When Shearer left syndicated radio she planned to write a book, which would introduce her grandchildren to

the work she had done on black music and culture. But time constraints resulting from her new job in wildlife productions prevented her from doing so. As a result, she decided to donate her collection to the AAAMC because of her personal relationship with and trust in Portia Maultsby.

Donated in June 2000, The Karen Shearer Collection consists of research and production materials from the work she did on "Special Edition" and "Rock Chronicles." It covers a wide range of African-American music including hip-hop, jazz-fusion, doo-wop, soul, funk, and R&B. The materials in the collection include publicity information, photographs, transcripts, artist biographies, and interviews.

Shearer envisions her collection as being of great value to students, scholars, and the general public as a documented oral history and a primary resource because she has always

Lutgard Mutsaers: Studying Black Music in the Netherlands

A petite unassuming Dutch woman full of enormous and exciting ideas about the globalization of African-American music and culture—that describes Dr. Lutgard Mutsaers in a nutshell. But a nutshell is hardly big enough to contain her passion about the worldwide influence of black music, particularly in the Netherlands. Mutsaers spent three weeks in March 2002 as a visiting fellow at IU's Institute for Advanced Studies. This visit was initiated when Mutsaers was nominated for the fellowship by her colleague, AAAMC director Portia K. Maultsby, in August of 2001. The two scholars had



Tangera Sharp, Lutgard Mutsaers and Stephanie Shonekan

met at an international conference and shared ideas about black music and its manifestations in Europe. Their scholarly collaborations took on a firmer quality when, in the spring of 1998, Maultsby was Belle Van Zuylen Professor of African American Music in the Musicology Department of Utrecht University in the Netherlands, where Mutsaers is a Lecturer of Popular Music Studies.

Ideas for continued collaborations on documenting concepts on global black music formed the bedrock of Maultsby's successful quest to bring Mutsaers to the IU campus in March. Mutsaers, working out of an office at the AAAMC, spent her days studying and analyzing video footage and audio recordings of performances and interviews that had been collected by Maultsby during her field research in the Netherlands. Together, they fleshed out their initial ideas and defined a preliminary framework for the study.

Mutsaers' tenure in Indiana also involved two formal speaking engagements which were both extremely well received. On March 19, 2002, she was guest lecturer in the Survey of the Culture of Black Americans class at the IU satellite campus in Indianapolis. The students were fascinated not just by her lecture, but also by the audio/visual material she presented which made her words come to vivid life. These young American students, many of them African Americans, were able to assess and evaluate for themselves the performances and views of the young Surinamese-Dutch artists who aspire to become adept performers of soul, funk, R&B, and hip hop. "Yes, he can make it here, but he's going to have to keep it real," was the overwhelming response to one artist that Mutsaers showcased. Mutsaers facilitated an intense class discussion that concluded that the "real life" of a Dutch youth was very different from the life of a young African American and this essence would have to emanate in their version of hip hop.

On March 21, 2002, in IU's Ballantine Hall, Mutsaers gave a public lecture titled "Seeking to Sound Black: Popular Music in the Netherlands in the 20th Century and Beyond." While this presentation also introduced Dutch performers of African-American music, Mutsaers adopted a more conceptual approach for this lecture. Her detailed models of historical migration and export of black music from the United States and the Caribbean attracted some reflective questions and vibrant discussion.

While she was here, she formalized her attachment to the AAAMC by launching her personal collection and joining our "Circle of Friends." Mutsaers' pleasant personality and fresh ideas endeared her to everyone at the AAAMC. In the gentle way that is characteristic of her, Mutsaers left a warm note for the staff, which was only found after she had left Bloomington: "Thank you for creating a unique experience for me at AAAMC and IU Bloomington! Love, peace, and god-bless, Lutgard." The sentiments are mutual!

- Stephanie Shonekan

photo by Stephanie Shonekan



Lutgard Mutsaers and students.

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believed that artists speaking in their own words are the best sources of information about their music and careers.

Housing the Karen Shearer Collection at the AAAMC is a mutually satisfactory arrangement for Shearer and the AAAMC. On the one hand, patrons of the Archives will gain rare access to the words and voices of popular African-American performers. On the other hand, as Shearer said, "I am absolutely delighted that the collection represents at least 20 years of work on my part and my career, and I'm thrilled to know that it didn't disappear with [just] a single airing on radio and that this material can, and will be used. This is of tremendous satisfaction."

- Tangera Sharp

Sharp is an archival assistant at the AAAMC. She is a senior at Indiana University with a double major in History and Political Science. After graduating, she plans to teach Social Studies and coach gymnastics and cheerleading.

People New AAAMC Assistant Director – Stephanie Shonekan

photo by Portia K. Maultsby



Stephanie Shonekan assumed the newly-created position of Assistant Director/Research Assistant of the AAAMC in August of 2001. The position, designed to address programming and strategic vision needs of the archives, entails research, writing, and teaching, as well as development and management. Shonekan's background makes her perfectly suited for the job. Her scholarly pursuits have led her to

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envision creative ways in which African and African-American music, literature, history, and culture can be used to enlighten, educate, and empower people across continental, regional, and racial boundaries. As an undergraduate English major at the University of Jos in Nigeria, she studied literature and class issues in Trinidadian society. Her master's work at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria focused on the folk musical and literary traditions of Langston Hughes, Leroi Jones (Amiri Baraka), Louis Armstrong, and Miles Davis. She is currently completing a doctorate in Folklore and Ethnomusicology with a minor in African-American Studies at IU Bloomington.

Throughout her graduate studies, she has concentrated on the propagation, promotion, and participation of all genres of African and African-American music from a historical and socio-cultural perspective. Her research into the connections between African and African-American popular music resulted in a research paper titled "Nigerian Rap: Reinterpretation of an African-American Musical Tradition," which she presented at the Society for Ethnomusicology National Conference in November 2000.

Another dimension of her research interest involves the study of issues cen-

tered around the portrayal of the lives of African-American musicians. Her Ph.D. dissertation identifies and investigates the critical issues surrounding the autobiographical portrayal of Camilla Williams, a notable African-American soprano whose contributions to classical music deserve to be examined.

During her doctoral studies, Shonekan developed and taught a course titled "20th Century Africa" at IU's Northwest campus in Gary. Her students learned about contemporary Africa through the use of music and literature, drawing relevant parallels to peoples of African descent worldwide. She has been a guest lecturer on various topics ranging from black radio in America, to life histories, to African popular music.

Before beginning her doctoral work, Shonekan took a 5-year hiatus from academics to apply herself to the practical and productive aspects of business, by working for Arthur Andersen/Andersen Consulting in Lagos, Nigeria. She learned valuable management and administrative skills there such as change and human resource management, visioning, strategic planning, client proposals and presentations, and team leadership. She rose to the position of Senior Consultant and became proficient in the use of var-

ious computer applications including spreadsheets, word processing, databases and graphic presentations. She also led teams of consultants from the manufacturing, banking, educational, and oil sectors on various projects ranging from strategic diagnostics to performance management analyses. She was responsible for proposal development, project planning, monitoring, and implementation. She also edited and wrote articles for the consulting division's internal newsletter. This background will be of immense value in writing grant proposals; strategically managing and positioning the AAAMC; coordinating effective communication between the AAAMC, the university, and patrons; and in editing Archives publications.

Stephanie Shonekan joins the AAAMC with the experience and skills—as well as her qualifications in the study of African and African-American music and literature—to help the AAAMC pursue its mission and vision. Her dual background as a Nigerian and Trinidadian also give her a valuable African Diasporic perspective. She and her husband have three children. The AAAMC welcomes her on board.

- Portia K. Maultsby

Research Associate – Valerie Grim: Tending Her Rural Roots

As part of its organizational structure, the Archives of African American Music and Culture maintains a group of Resident Research Associates from various disciplines who serve as resource consultants to the staff and the patrons of the archives. This issue features historian Valerie Grim, whose research centers on African American rural life. Her studies provide a context for the scholarly interpretation of African American vernacular traditions such as the blues, worksongs, game songs, folk spirituals, and other rural forms of religious expression.

As a five-year-old, Valerie Grim got up early every morning at her family's Mississippi farm and, after a hearty breakfast, eagerly went outside to tend her little patch of vegetables. Her grandparents and then her parents had taught her how to weed, water, and care for each type of vegetable. She worried about the weather and she watched as the tiny seeds grew into fat, ripe fruits and vegetables. She was completely fascinated by the watermelon. How could such a tiny seed yield such an enormous thing? And as she grew, she took on new jobs on other parts of the vast farmland where her family grew cotton, cucumber, okra and sugarcane—milking cows or doing a shift on the sausage production line. She grew accustomed to seeing calves emerge timidly into the world. Once, when a dairy cow died after giving birth, she bottle-fed the orphaned calf for weeks and, like a proud mother, watched it thrive. As she traipsed through the grass with her nine siblings studying leaves and insects and performing experiments designed by her vivid imagination, she may not have imagined that she would one day become a college professor.

Today, Dr. Valerie Grim teaches African-American history in the Department of African-American and African Diasporic Studies at Indiana University. The years and miles that separate her from her farm days in Sunflower County in the Mississippi Delta have not severed her ties to her rural roots. Instead, she propagates that way of life from a different vantage point. On the farm, she could embrace life, breathe it in every day, and watch the rural world respond to each season.

photo by Portia K. Maultsby



"Growing up on a rural farm in the Mississippi Delta, I learned so much about life and respect for life. We used to sit on the porch and watch every kind of animal born."

Now, in the lofty ivory tower of academia, she presents that lifestyle in an educational package designed to enlighten students and scholars about an essential part of black history that she believes has been neglected in traditional history books. While the history books had covered the urban political terrain surrounding black leaders such as Sojourner Truth, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. DuBois, and Booker T. Washington, "the rural presence was really absent with the exception of the downtrodden story commonly and overly told about the share cropper."

Professor Grim utilizes the oral histories she has collected over the years to study and present black rural life in general, and black rural property ownership in particular. It is important to her that people realize that many African Americans existed and lived off the land for many decades, just as her family and many others continue to do. All ten of the Grim children were taught to work the land. They each had their own jobs and they worked hard, 10 hours a day, with breaks for hearty home-cooked meals. Grim fondly recalls, "it was a good simple agrarian life regulated by the farm work." At the end of the day, everybody went to bed

happy and tired.

On school days, there were still farm chores to do early in the morning. But the Grim parents did not take formal education lightly. They insisted that all the Grim children go to school and followed their progress closely. The PTA was very active—both parents and teachers were fully involved in the educational advancement of the children. According to Grim, the teachers were "absolutely fabulous," constantly urging their students to do better than the previous generation. The six siblings who had preceded Valerie in grade school had maintained a high academic standard that she was expected to uphold. Valerie went to historically black Tugaloo College, and soon got hooked on history even though her initial plan was to become a lawyer. In 1984, Grim went to graduate school at Iowa State University where, for the first time, she had to step out of her hitherto all-black experience. She made a successful transition into a very different cultural and geographical environment.

Grim's background has influenced her teaching in terms of content (she teaches classes on African-American history and on twentieth century African-

American rural life) as well as her ideology of teaching.

She tries to get her students to envision themselves as teammates whose goal in the class is to win simply by understanding what other people's realities are. Even the idea of bringing teamwork into the college class stems from the farm: while Sundays on the farm were reserved for church activities, Saturdays were dedicated to basketball. The Grimms rigged up lights in their barn and held all-night basketball tournaments that attracted teams from around the county. Valerie loved to play, and her love of sport remains a vital part of her life. She has coached girl's teams throughout her career, wherever she was.

Currently, Grim is working on three major projects which sprout from her passion and interest in presenting black rural life. In addition to a formal academic manuscript, she is working on a more vibrant work, a collection of essays and oral histories she has collected from aging black folk in the Mississippi Delta. She also plans to produce a documentary using live footage and still photography that she continues to collect in the Delta region. As a research associate of the AAAMC, Grim has deposited some of her material in the Archives and plans to design and produce exhibits in the future.

"Growing up on a rural farm in the Mississippi Delta," Valerie Grim explains, "I learned so much about life and respect for life. We used to sit on the porch and watch every kind of animal born." For years, black people have owned their own land and lived off of it. Grim's passion is to remind African Americans in particular, and anybody who wants to study black life, that these rural folk have flourished for decades on their own land, by their own devices and means. Whether to scholars in an academic environment, or average African-American teenagers in urban or rural environments, Valerie Grim is determined to communicate the vigor, value, and valor of black rural life—past, present, and future—and its influence on black musical creativity. Like the watermelon that so fascinated her years ago, Valerie Grim's career has grown from a tiny seed to a large fruit...and like the watermelon, the seeds of her research are being sown to cultivate another flourishing crop.

-Stephanie Shonekan

patrice rushen



Board Member – Patrice Rushen

In spring 1997, 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, in program development, bringing national visibility, and providing valuable input to discussions on future projects.

Multi-Grammy-Award nominee Patrice Rushen is a world-renowned performer, composer, producer, and music directors she has worked with artists such as Stevie Wonder, Herbie Hancock, Prince, Lionel Hampton, Carlos Santana, Boys II Men, George Benson, Jean Luc Ponty, Tom Jones, Nancy Wilson, Michael Jackson, Dianne Reeves, Sheena Easton, Stanley Turrentine, and Joshua Redman. She has also recorded 14 solo albums. Her work has frequently been "sampled" by artists like Mary J. Blige, R. Kelly, Shabba Ranks, Heavy D., and, perhaps most notably, Will Smith, who sampled Rushen's "Forget Me Nots" for his hit, "Men in Black." She has directed the music for a number of television shows including the BET awards, Emmy awards, NAACP Image Awards, People's Choice Awards, and HBO's Comic Relief. Here are excerpts from a May 2002 conversation with Stephanie Shonekan.

Background

Shonekan: Where did you grow up?

Rushen: I was actually born in Los Angeles. My parents migrated from the south and built a life out here in Los Angeles, and raised us. I grew up in what was classified as South Central Los Angeles. The neighborhood was really nice and diverse, from lower middle class right on up to upper class, African-American families. Every kind of household was represented—teachers, domestic workers, social workers, doctors....My friends and their families were close. We hung out a lot and our parents were active parents. They went to school meetings and those kinds of normal things. The families looked out for each other. There were a lot of kids and most of us still keep in touch.

Beginning Music

Shonekan: How did you start out in music?

Rushen: When I was 3 years old, my preschool teacher told my parents to consider enrolling me in a program at the University of Southern California designed for young children. It was actually a graduate course for students of the school who were majoring in education, and they were developing some theories about how young children learn the fundamentals of music. This was right around the time when kids' music programs were becoming increasingly popular. Within this program, children were taught rhythms first. At five, you started on an instrument and so I started playing (piano) at five. I went all the way through that program...until I was out of high school. Today the program is still alive but it is so much bigger. Now it's called "The Art Colburn School" which is located downtown Los Angeles.

Shonekan: Were you ever the kind of kid that had to be forced to sit down and

practice?

Rushen: I think there was a period where I wanted to do it, and you know how kids are, you go through a period where you don't want to do it. But not wanting to do it doesn't necessarily reflect on your passion. I think it's more the peer pressure. At about ten or eleven you become acutely aware that you want to be just like your friends. So in my preteens I probably went through that period in my life where I didn't want to practice because nobody else had to practice. Then later in my teenage years I was totally into it again. I began to gain popularity by playing an instrument. Also, by this time, I had come close to other kinds of music on the radio that were really interesting for



me. Not that I did not enjoy classical music.... But in high school I became more aware of contemporary music, particularly jazz. It had a different meaning for me in that it was something that was casual and relevant to me. I became aware of the legacy and history of jazz, its value to American culture, and in particular African-American culture. By this time I had enough vocabulary and technique to really get turned on to this jazz. As I got into it I found out more and more how demanding it was and then the idea of practicing took on even a different meaning for me. I was practicing before because it was something I was supposed to do to play better. Now I'm practicing on a certain piece that I'm working on and trying to keep on top of my instrument because, most of what you try to do in jazz particularly, is get to a point where your instrument is no longer a physical barrier to listening to the music. So that's what brought me to that understanding and now I can apply that understanding to classical music and every other kind of music.

Rushen's Music

Shonekan: Your works have been classified as jazz, classical, and pop. How did your music evolve?

Rushen: Well it's all one music to me. One language, different dialects. I could never say that one is better than the other one. There is a level of excellence and a level of energy and passion that transcends all categories when one is connected to the artistic aspects of what they do. That's the common link. The knowledge from one "category" is transferable if it is coming from a place where there is an understanding that there's art in all of music. To look for the art in it and operate from that place doesn't leave you a lot of room to draw too many more conclusions other than it being something that you can appreciate but don't like, or something you appreciate and love. And there is no grey area when you are coming from

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that angle. Now all the other things that enter into it – popularity, money or perception of certain types of life styles – contribute in part to the perpetration of the idea that all are so different.

Breaking Barriers

Shonekan: You've broken several barriers in some of the things that you've done. What was your mindset going into some of these projects that were new territory for someone who was black or female, or both?

Rushen: I really was not setting out to be the first to do anything. I just focused on the task at hand and the challenge was, "Wow this is a big job. I think I know what to do, now let me go do it." So it wasn't until afterwards that it was brought to my attention that I was the first to do some of these things. I really don't have a big flag to wave or anything like that. Now when I look back on it, I'm glad I didn't think about it. The additional pressure may have derailed my focus. What it has done though is that it certainly enhances my ability to stand out in a crowd. And it becomes some sort of catalyst for others to work in these areas; it opens up opportunities.

Sampling and the hip-hop generation

Shonekan: How do you feel about your work being used by hip hop artists?

Rushen: I think it's good. A writer likes to feel that her work has a certain kind of value and validity to be used, or played or read years after it's done, hopefully even after the writer is gone. I think that's one of the highest compliments that a songwriter or composer can get.

Some years ago, we went through a period where music was part of everyday life in a school environment. When I was in school, especially in elementary school, music, singing, and dancing were as much a part of your day as a history, English, or math lesson. Music was part of a well-rounded education. Then this changed. When a lot of music programs disappeared from schools, it coincided with the explosion of rap. Every generation needs an opportunity to express itself, to have a voice, and what is heard comes through music. These young people didn't have instruments to play and they weren't learning music fundamentals in the same way. So when they fought through with their voice it was more rhythmic. They beat on stuff, used turntables, scratched records. They got creative with what they had to find this voice. They retained the concepts of rhythm and rhyme. Melody and harmony went out the window for a while but the most basic elements of music-making remained and presented itself in rap and hip hop. Now we've got some work to do on lyrics but there is a language and a whole lifestyle and culture that have developed out of it. I think they've been very creative for the most part. An entire category, an entire type of music was born and has progressed in terms of what it is musically. So sampling could be a good thing.

Shonekan: I'm curious. How did it work with Will Smith and "Men in Black"? Did he call you or did his people call your people? How does that work?

Rushen: That was an anomaly. I had gone to see another film and saw the trailer for the movie *Men in Black*. This was before they had attached any music to the film. Some weeks later I got a letter and tape in the mail from Columbia Pictures. The letter said something to the effect that they had ascertained that a small sample of my song "Forget Me Not" was used in this new song by Will Smith for "Men in Black." I listened to the tape and I said, "Wait a minute, small sample?" So I called my attorney and we sorted it out appropriately. I was not by any means concerned about anything at that point other than making sure that I and the other co-writers of the piece from which "Men in Black" evolved were credited properly and fairly compensated. In the end it was a win-win situation for everyone and Will Smith did a great job with the track.

Collaborations

Shonekan: Not only have you had your work sampled many times but you've also worked

continued on back page

Rushen continued...



with other artists. What do you do to maintain control when, for example, you are the director or the producer?

Rushen: Whether it is recording in a studio environment or for a television show, people are depending on somebody to steer the ship. Steering the ship and knowing where to go and how to get there doesn't mean that the person doesn't need full cooperation from other people. It means they need to know how to assemble the best team to get there. There isn't anything about it that is done completely by yourself. The end result is usually a collaborative collective effort. As a studio musician, I always watched the producers, how they were able to either empower people to give their best performance on a certain day or create an environment that was intimidating. As a session player I could observe a lot. I tended to gravitate towards and appreciate producers who knew how to empower and inspire the performance, those who knew when it was necessary to say something and when it was nec-

essary to say absolutely nothing at all. They created an atmosphere where people were absolutely comfortable and therefore felt like going for it just a little more. I apply some of that understanding to just about every situation where I find myself working with other artists. Approaching it like that has given me a lot of positive results and has allowed me to be flexible. There is a knowledge of when you have to push hard or when you have to lay back. Each situation is different. Most people respond best when they get a sense that, whatever your technique or your particular style, the setting is one of empowerment.

Shonekan: What's your favorite role? Is it that of composer, performer, producer, director? What would you say is the role that gives you the most pleasure?

Rushen: I enjoy all of it. But I don't like any of it well enough to just do it to the exclusion of all the others. For me, each role makes me better in the

other roles. I'm a better player because I've been a producer; a better writer because I've been a leader; a better performer because I'm a writer. I'm very fortunate in that my exposure has resulted in transferable knowledge.

Current projects

Shonekan: What projects are you working on right now?

Rushen: I've had a very exciting and amazing couple of years. I feel I've reached a different plateau in just about every aspect of my life. I don't get to perform quite as much in terms of what you called "pop music." The body of work and the recordings that I've done in a more urban-popular vein continues to be stimulated by sample usage. That's going very very well. As a composer of symphonic work, I've had three commissioned works performed in the last year and a half. The symphonic work is something I've always wanted to do but it's just within the last four or five years that I've really made a conscientious effort to get back to that. I have done several films for television. I'm also teaching a little bit and doing clinics and workshops on various subjects including improvisation, jazz background, jazz and symphonic composition, and piano playing. I also give a couple of private lessons. Now I'm working on the second annual BET awards show. Then of course there is my life at home as wife and mother. I have a three-year old son. It's a big balancing act but my husband is so cool and that helps a lot. You know you make up your mind somewhere along the way to prioritize and that is one of the reasons I'm not performing as much. I do get out and play, but I have to choose now. I tend to favor, at the moment anyway, performance contexts that will allow for me not to have to be away from home so long. So most of them are special events. I can do a television project very quickly. The good part about it is that it is an intense burn and then it's over and I can get home. Ultimately it's the family life I adore.

*Edited by Stephanie Shonekan
photos courtesy of <http://www.yamaha.com>*

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Liner Notes No. 6/No. 7
 Fall 2001/Spring 2002

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