



A YEAR OF BIOGRAPHIES
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Anna Maria Busse Berger is Distinguished Professor of Medieval and Renaissance History and Theory at the University of California, Davis. Her books include *Mensuration and Proportion Signs* (1993) and *Medieval Music and the Art of Memory* (2005, Italian translation, 2008), which won the ASCAP Deems Taylor Award and the Wallace Berry Award from the Society of Music Theory for 2005. Her article “Spreading the Gospel of *Singbewegung*: An Ethnomusicologist-Missionary in Tanganyika of the 1930s” won both the Colin Slim Award for best article by a senior scholar from the American Musicological Society and the Bruno Nettl Prize from the Society for Ethnomusicology in 2014. In May, 2015 Busse Berger gave the Faculty Research Lecture at UC Davis, the Academic Senate’s highest honor. Throughout her scholarly career, she has worked on various aspects of the interface between orality and literacy in early European music. While in her previous books she has concentrated on notation, improvisation, and memory in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, she has now enlarged the scope to see what happens when literate European missionaries are introducing East African oral societies to writing and Western music. – Address: Department of Music, University of California at Davis, One Shields Ave., Davis, CA 95616-8701, USA. E-mail: amberger@ucdavis.edu.

My year at Wiko was one of the most wonderful years of my life. The stimulation I received from other scholars took my research in completely unexpected directions. I made many remarkable new friends, among both the Fellows and the staff. And the cultural attractions of Berlin are simply unsurpassed.

At no other institution have I ever encountered such a helpful and friendly staff. They anticipate your wishes and make everything possible. When I arrived on my first day at Wiko, I was surprised that every single member of the staff addressed me by my name. (I am ashamed to say that it took me months to learn their names.) During the first breakfast I happened to sit at the German-class table and met the extraordinary German teacher Eva von Kügelgen together with Fellows Jonathan Sheehan and Michael Gordin, whose German was already excellent at that point. It became immediately clear to me that this class was going to be tremendous fun. So I persuaded my husband, Karol Berger, to join this group, and he enjoyed himself greatly. The kitchen staff, led by Dunia Naijar, is generous and helpful, and the food is really good.

I teach at the University of California, so I am used to excellent library services. But what I found at Wiko is in a class of its own. I had heard from earlier Fellows that they would get you books quickly. What I did not expect is that the staff would help me in my research. When I asked for an article dealing with Gregorian Chant in Africa, Stefan Gellner found additional articles I had never heard of on the subject. Some of the books I needed, especially those printed in Nazi Germany, were difficult to find. I needed articles from completely unknown small mission societies, and I was sure the staff would not be able to get them, but they did. Not only were they helpful in providing the materials, they were also curious about what I was discovering.

I did not manage to finish my book, but I did write more than two-thirds of it. What is more important, I think my book will be a very different one from the one I had planned. The first part of my book deals with the founders of comparative musicology, which later developed into ethnomusicology, and its relationship to historical musicology. I believe I have managed to untangle the various strands of scholarship from the beginning of the last century and arrived at a coherent picture of our discipline. All comparative musicologists of that time were active at the Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, so Berlin was an ideal location for doing research on these scholars. Erich Moritz von Hornbostel and Carl Stumpf established the Phonogramm-Archiv in Berlin (now in the Ethnological Museum in Dahlem, but soon to be relocated to the Humboldt Forum) in order to collect, analyze, compare, and classify recordings of orally transmitted music from all over the world. They were convinced that music in “primitive” cultures was similar to medieval music, and they often drew far-reaching conclusions about medieval music based on what they observed in other cultures. What was little known until I started my research is that missionaries played an important role in providing Hornbostel

with material for his research, since he hardly traveled. He contacted them and regularly asked them not only for recordings, but for information on the music.

I already knew when I came to Berlin that Comparative Musicology was modeled on comparative linguistics. But I did not know that I would find here a research group on the origins of language (led by Luc Steels) with the excellent linguist, Holger Diessel. During the first Thursday dinner, Holger and I happened to sit next to each other and quickly discovered many common interests. He provided me with advice and readings throughout the year. The connections between comparative linguistics and comparative musicology turned out to be much more interesting than I had expected, with Wilhelm von Humboldt, who had also interacted extensively with missionaries, playing a central role.

Similarly, historical musicology had its beginning around 1900 at Strasbourg and Göttingen with the great medievalist Friedrich Ludwig. While Hornbostel focused exclusively on recordings, Ludwig concentrated on manuscripts of medieval polyphony, because he wanted to know where Palestrina and Bach come from. Hornbostel and Ludwig essentially ignored each other's work, and yet, they shared a number of students and had many overlapping interests. Both were similarly obsessed with authenticity; Ludwig tried to find the original version of pieces, while Hornbostel looked for music uncontaminated by Western influences. I am happy to report that this part of my work is finished and very different from what I had originally planned, thanks to my Wiko friends.

The last section of my book presents a detailed study of the scholarship done by German missionaries in East Africa, virtually all of whom were influenced or educated by either comparative or historical musicologists. Most were in touch with Hornbostel or his successor Marius Schneider and sent their phonogram recordings to Berlin. Note that the music they describe is now essentially extinct. As a result of my archival research in the various mission societies, in which I looked at letters, reports, and journals, I was able to reconstruct much of their music. But the stories I was able to tell turn out to be much more complicated than I had expected. Let me just give two examples: I discovered that a Sierra Leonean composer and musician named Nicholas Ballanta, who had studied at Julliard in New York and received two Guggenheim Fellowships to study and record West African music in the 1920s, was sent to study with Hornbostel, probably on the recommendation of Boas. During his stay in Berlin he read a paper at the International Missionary Society Meeting in LeZoute in Belgium in 1926. Ballanta's presentation was highly original; he was the only one who did not find that medieval music was similar to

African music, and he advocated that missionaries must use African music in churches, and not medieval music. He gave his talk two years before Hornbostel published his famous article on African music in 1928. Ballanta's presentation was heard by the director of a small German mission society, the Bethel Mission, close to Bielefeld. The mission director was so impressed with Ballanta's talk that he changed his musical agenda from one day to the next: all of his missionaries were instructed to preserve and record local music. And it is in these notes that I discovered important information on local music.

Similarly, I found that the comparative musicologist Marius Schneider was in close contact with the Catholic missionary and anthropologist Meinulf Küsters in Peramiho, in what is now Tanzania, who had also made recordings of local music for the Berlin archive. Schneider sent Küsters the two volumes of his 1934 book *Geschichte der Mehrstimmigkeit*, which included many transcriptions of recordings made by missionaries. Küsters left the book in the Peramiho library. In the late 1930s, another missionary, Johann Baptist Wolf, happened to find Schneider's book in the library, saw Schneider's transcriptions of Ngoni music, and promptly introduced them with a religious text into the service. Thus, Ngoni music was introduced in a version "cleaned-up" from Schneider's transcription, and not through the local transmission.

Many of my fellow Fellows took interest in my work, and many made valuable contributions. Hassan Jabareen reminded me to look for the African voice and was very pleased when I told him about Ballanta. Ralph Ubl always had the most penetrating comments and questions, and thanks to his prodding, I was able to connect Ballanta with Boas in New York. Right before the very last lunch in July, Ralph gave me valuable information on art historians who had approached "primitive" art in a way similar to Hornbostel. Ina Hartwig was fascinated by my missionary biographies, probably because she was also writing a biography (but of a much more famous person, Ingeborg Bachmann).

Tuesday colloquia were often interesting: how will I ever forget Rick Prum's on bird songs or Victoria Braithwaite's on fish pain? I had never thought of Ingeborg Bachmann as a major poet, but after Ina's presentations, I started to read her poetry and letters. Who will ever forget the screening of Ina's film "Die Geträumten" at the Berlinale, where most of us were present?

And then there were so many interesting people who passed through Wiko. Valentina Sandu-Dediu, Director of the New Europe College in Bucharest, visited with her husband, the composer Dan Dediu, and we became instant friends. Karol and I were

fortunate to be invited to give talks at the New Europe College in Bucharest, a truly remarkable experience.

The conversations over meals at Wiko were intense and sometimes left me exhausted at the end of the day. I will miss my morning teas with Jonathan; it is a good thing he lives in Berkeley. Nothing made me happier than when Ibrahima Diop regularly called me “meine afrikanische Schwester”. And perhaps a fitting end to our year at Wiko was a visit by a whole group of Fellows to see and hear the entire Wagner *Ring* at the Staatsoper, with lots of good food in between and afterwards. All came well prepared and had penetrating questions. I have never enjoyed a *Ring* as much as I did when seeing it with my Wiko friends. I have been very fortunate, indeed, to spend a year in the company of such remarkable colleagues and friends.