

May 8, 1972

Proposal for a Department of Black Music

We propose that a division called Black Music should be established, so that a comprehensive study of Black Music is possible.

There must be at least three faculty members to start this division. Several teaching assistantships should also be established. This would enable musicians under financial stress to share their knowledge for the right to take classes for credit as well as a salary.

Studies must be provided on an equal level in terms of space and quality with the other performing arts divisions in order to provide an equally broad coverage of the subject.

This division must have the necessary equipment. The equipment includes a Black Music library of books, scores, tapes and records as well as electronic equipment such as: tape decks, microphones and instruments such as: saxophone and electric instruments which are not taught in the present music division.

Weslyan University, University of Indiana, Antioch, Howard University, University of Wisconsin, New England Conservatory, and New York Community College are some of the many institutions of higher education which have set a precedent in this field. We suggest that their course selections be studied and we enclose some course descriptions of our own for your careful consideration.

Black Music I: The history of the music from its African and Caribbean roots to the present day. A full year survey in chronological order, covering the highlights in the development of the music.

Black Music II: The music in its social contexts, the various eras eg. swing, bop, cool, etc., their innovations and innovators. A look at the drug scene, the critics, the club scene, the studio and record business scene, the organization of the American Federation of Musicians, the cooperative effect eg. Jazz Composers' Guild etc., and the upcoming college campus scene. All elements and conditions which affect the communication of the music to the audience.

Listening Sessions: At least two hours a week of group listening pertaining to the areas of study in each course.

The Literature of Black Music: A look at a possible critical study of trade magazines and newspapers. Study of authors and their works eg. Southern, Spellman, Williams, Feather, Goldberg, etc. A look at liner notes. An insight into the criticism of Black Music - different possible approaches for both the musician and the non-musician.

The Ensemble: Run according to the discretion of the faculty and the students participating.

Black Music Theory: Study of the basics of playing Black Music, eg. rhythms, chord changes, scales, etc.

The Blues: The roots of the music, a chronological study of the artists, territorial influences, the manifestations of the blues

form in rock, pop, and the "avant-garde".

The Big Bands: A study of the orchestration and arrangements of the bands. This could start as early as the New Orleans Groups and work up to things as recent as Archie Shepp, Ornette Coleman and Cal Massey's contributions in this area, including of course Henderson, Millinder, Basie, Ellington, etc. A look at the discipline of the bands and their leaders.

The Vocalists: From blues and gospel to 'jazz' and improvisational music. Smith, Rainey, Holiday, Vaughan, etc.

The Avant-Garde: An in-depth look at what is considered to be "the new music", its innovations and innovators since the early fifties.

Lecture Series: Money allocated for visits, concerts, lectures, demonstrations for at least two artists per term.

Black Music Class  
(J. Cheetham)

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