ABOUT THE SPEAKER

A native of Halle, Germany, Annett Richter has taught courses in music history, music iconography, music bibliography, and writing about music at North Dakota State University, Concordia College and Minnesota State University (Moorhead, Minnesota), and the University of Missouri, Columbia. Her research focuses on intersections between music and painting, and, more broadly, on interrelationships among music, art, society, culture, and place. She received her Ph.D. in musicology from the University of Minnesota where she studied with art historian Karal Ann Marling. Richter’s dissertation is the first sustained musico logical discussion of Missouri artist Thomas Hart Benton and his connections to music.

AVAILABLE PRESENTATIONS

THE FOLKSONG ARRANGEMENTS OF “SATURDAY NIGHT AT TOM BENTON’S” (DECCA, 1942): A VISUAL AND SOUNDING TRIBUTE TO THOMAS HART BENTON’S MUSICAL EVENINGS IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

This lecture focuses on Missouri artist and folklorist Thomas Hart Benton (1889-1975) and his connection to music. Music historian Annett Richter takes a closer look at "Saturday Night at Tom Benton's," an album of musical Americana recorded by Benton and released on the record label Decca in 1942. Its three folk song tracks ("Cindy," "Wayfaring Stranger," and "Old Joe Clark") recall the musical evenings Benton hosted in his Kansas City home beginning in the later 1930s. He performed here on the harmonica alongside local composers, members of his family, and musicians from the Kansas City Philharmonic Orchestra. In this presentation, Richter enlightens listeners about the visual, aural, and verbal constituents of “Saturday Night.” Her combined discussion of Benton's cover drawing and album notes, the photos of the musicians, the folk song arrangements, and the musical instruments heard on Benton's record album and during his musical gatherings in his Kansas City home will show that, in this recording, Benton traverses self-constructed, unique musical worlds of fluid boundaries through both image and sound.

THOMAS HART BENTON AS MUSICIAN AND FOLKLOРИST ON THE ISLAND MARTHA’S VINEYARD

This lecture continues the general subject matter of the previous one by focusing on Thomas Hart Benton’s musical activities, however this time in a location other than Kansas City. For over fifty years beginning in 1920, Benton spent his summers on Martha’s Vineyard, an island on the coast of Massachusetts. He came to the Vineyard together with his family members, all of whom were musicians as well. Richter shares her research and discoveries regarding Benton’s work as musician and folklorist on the Vineyard, a place where Benton fostered, in his summer home, musical traditions with his family and with Vineyard resident and visiting musicians. Listeners will see photos of Benton’s musical activities with his island group “Tom Benton and His Harmonica Boys” and learn about “Chilmark Suite” and “Gay Head Dance,” two Vineyard-inspired compositions written for a unique combination of instruments (harmonica, flute, and harpsichord) and recorded on "Saturday Night at Tom Benton’s” (1942). Richter shows that these artifacts reflect Benton’s efforts in preserving his self-created musical community, and she reveals what they tell us about Benton sharing with audiences during World War II: “real American-made music”—music inspired by those fellow musicians with whom he made it.

SPEAKER CONTACT INFORMATION

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