

The Handbook of Texas Music:

An Important New Reference Book on Texas Music History



*"The Diaz Sisters," Clara, Lucy and Mary Diaz pose with their musical instruments.
Source: Advocate Magazine, The Victoria Advocate, Victoria, Texas, June 1907, pg. 94.*

In summer 2003, the Texas State Historical Association, in collaboration with the Texas Music Office/Office of the Governor, the Center for Texas Music History at Southwest Texas State University, and the University of Texas at Austin, will publish the Handbook of Texas Music. The Handbook is an ancillary to the multi-volume New Handbook of Texas, published by the TSHA. As the first reference publication to include such a comprehensive survey of the people, places, and things involved in the development of the state's rich and diverse musical heritage, the Handbook of Texas Music will be the definitive encyclopedia of Texas music history.

The idea for a new reference book about Texas music was first presented to the Texas State Historical Association by Casey Monahan, director of the Texas Music Office. In 1998, Monahan contacted the TSHA about the possibility of collaborating on a reference work that would provide a handy guide to the unique musical history of the Lone Star State. Monahan chose the Texas

head of the publication division of the TSHA, and David Timmons, TSHA design and layout specialist

The subject matter of the *Handbook of Texas Music* is quite broad. It will include articles on a variety of ethnic groups and their music, including Native Americans, Mexican Americans, African Americans, Anglo Americans, Czechs, Germans, French,

The book will cover such diverse musical genres as blues, jazz, gospel, conjunto, Tejano, classical, zydeco, country, swing, polka, and rock and roll.

State Historical Association because of its record of publishing attractive books distinguished for their usefulness and scholarship.

In collaboration with Doug Barnett and Roy Barkley at the TSHA, Monahan recruited Gary Hartman of the Center for Texas Music History at Southwest Texas State University and Dave Oliphant of the University of Texas at Austin and author of standard works on Texas music, to help move the project forward. Eventually, the team was expanded to include Cathy Brigham, an ethnomusicologist at Concordia University of Austin, Donna Coates, TSHA illustrations editor, George Ward,

and others. The book will cover such diverse musical genres as blues, jazz, gospel, conjunto, Tejano, classical, zydeco, country, swing, polka, and rock and roll. It also will include encyclopedic entries on numerous individuals, musical groups, and institutions, ranging from Chelo Silva to Joe Patek, the Houston Symphony Orchestra to the Texas Top Hands, and Panther Hall to the Texas Star Inn. The stories behind leading radio and television stations, as well as longstanding musical programs, such as *Austin City Limits*, also will be presented.

The *Handbook* will relate the history of Gilley's in Pasadena



Robert Shaw, King of the Barrelhouse Piano. Courtesy Burton Wilsons.



Texas Playboys and Alvin Crow at the Broken Spoke (Autographed Poster), September 17, 1975.
Courtesy of George B. Ward.

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and Billy Bob's Texas in Fort Worth, both of which claimed to be the "world's largest honky-tonk." The book also will describe the early efforts at starting the Beethoven Maennerchor, a German men's chorus in San Antonio. The great Houston patron of the arts Miss Ima Hogg is included, along with singer and songwriter Townes Van Zandt, who helped to inspire "grunge rock" and so laid claim to being "the mold that grunge grew out of." Readers can learn about John and Alan Lomax and the musicians that they recorded, including the legendary Texas singer and songwriter Leadbelly. Readers will find biographies of such bluesmen as Robert Shaw and such blueswomen as Big Mama Thornton. They can survey the careers of opera singers, steel guitar pickers, and even a professional whistler.

The *Handbook of Texas Music* will include lesser known Texas performers, along with many famous ones, such as Buddy Holly, Janis Joplin, Scott Joplin, Gene Autry, Selena Quintanilla, and Bob Wills. Although the guidelines for the TSHA's handbook series stipulate that only biographies of deceased individuals may be included, some living artists, such as Van Cliburn, Lydia

Mendoza, and George Strait, are covered in larger articles about developing musical genres or ongoing musical events.

The *Handbook of Texas Music* will be a one-volume, fully illustrated, general encyclopedia of Texas music and musicians. It is intended for anyone with an interest in this vital aspect of Texas history and culture, whether that interest is academic, avocational, or amateur. Furthermore, since the book will embrace all types of music, it will appeal to a broad audience comprising aficionados of classical, ethnic, folk, rock, country, and other genres.

The *Handbook of Texas Music* fills an important void in the historiography of Texas music. Most Texans are passionate about their unique musical heritage, and the *Handbook* will be a welcome resource for those who want to know more about this vital aspect of the state's history. ■

For updates and announcements about the *Handbook of Texas Music*, please see the TSHA web site at: www.tsha.utexas.edu.