



## Fredric Lieberman 1944-May 4, 2013

Published news.ucsc.edu, May 07, 2013

by Amy C. Beal, Chair of the Music Department

It is with sadness and respect that we announce the loss of our colleague, friend, and mentor Fredric Lieberman, professor of music, who passed away on Saturday, May 4, 2013, at age 73. In a long, colorful, and distinguished career, Fredric Lieberman helped to shape the understanding of American popular music in the 20th century and left his mark on the scholarship of Asian ethnomusicology, as well as the legal intricacies of artistic copyright issues.

Fearless in designing and undertaking some of the largest courses ever taught in the Arts Division—such as American Popular Music, The Hollywood Musical, and Music of the Beatles—Lieberman brought his expertise and connoisseurship to a seemingly infinite topography of musical genres, and was as expert on the work of Richard Wagner as he was of Chinese classical performance nuance and the *oeuvre* of John Lennon.

Lieberman's curricular depth extended to a contextually intensive course on the music of the Grateful Dead. Thanks to Lieberman's close and longstanding friendship with members of the influential rock band, UCSC's McHenry Library was chosen as the repository of the Grateful Dead's historical archives in 2008.

In addition to his broad musical scholarship, Lieberman's recent work also focused on the music industry and copyright law. He was considered one of the world's authorities on voice

recognition and vocal signatures and often consulted as an expert witness in cases of copyright fraud and intellectual property theft within the recording industry.

As an ethnomusicologist, Lieberman was a lifelong researcher into the indigenous musical styles and traditions of China, Japan, Korea, Tibet and South India, and has published on Chinese musical customs, comparisons of Western sonata forms and haiku, and cultural comparisons of the music of Bali and Java. With his UCSC Music Department colleague Leta Miller, Lieberman co-authored in 2006 an important history of the work of American composer Lou Harrison. And collaborating with musicians Mickey Hart and Jay Stevens, Lieberman co-authored *Drumming at the Edge of Magic* in the mid-1990s.

Trained at the Eastman School of Music, Fredric Lieberman took his M.A. at the University of Hawaii and his Ph.D in Music at UCLA. After seven years of teaching at Brown University, Lieberman became associate professor of music at the University of Washington until 1983, when he joined the music faculty at UCSC. During his 30 years at UCSC, Lieberman served as acting dean of the arts, acting provost of Porter College, and was twice chair of UCSC's Music Department.

As Dean Yager has noted "This is a terrible loss to the Music Department and the Division; Fred has been an incredible asset for over 30 years, and we will miss him."

The Music Department and Arts Division will be announcing a memorial celebration of Fred's work and will be establishing a memorial fund in his honor. Please look for more details in the coming weeks.

## **Remembrance of Fredric Lieberman by Mickey Hart (Grateful Dead)**

### **Fredric Lieberman: The Man with the Well-Stretched Ear**

**February 3, 2014**

*This is the full text of the Eulogy given by Mickey at Fred's Memorial.*

Nothing was too weird musically for his consummate ear, his appetite for sonic bliss. He was a scholar/student extraordinaire of the world's music. He was a teacher, a friend and trusted guide to the music cultures of the world.

Fred was a passionate portal into the deep heart of music for thousands of students he shepherded through the mysteries of music.

I was in awe of his love of the idiom. The way Fred danced through a stack of reference material was sensual in a way; he glided seamlessly through impenetrable bibliography, his knowledge far reaching in the arcane the edge stuff.

A simple turning of the page by Fred was an event for me. They say it's in the eyes, but it is also in the way of going. You could sense his reverence for the written word; the value was that lives were spent in the pursuit of this knowledge. It was ballet; it was his honoring the author's effort in writing such a book. It was very deep respect.

**I couldn't imagine Fred on the dance floor, but with a book in his hand he was Nureyev.**

Fred was part of the second wave of ethnomusicologists to investigate the world's music. Taught by the visionary musicologist Mantle Hood he embodied the technical prowess to go deep into the stacks, relentlessly following wherever the trail would lead. We became friends beyond the student teacher. He would let me be the teacher at times, asking all the questions he could conjure. We then would find our way to the answer, if there was one. We hung out in the Neolithic, the Paleolithic, with the Mongols, with the Tibetan monks chanting their "one laynex, three note style." Many types of the extended voice were our passion as well.

For many weeks, months, we would comb archeologist's findings. This was my kind of day; I couldn't get enough of finding the sources of things. It was always more fascinating, incredible than anything you could ever make up. And here was Fred who would lead me to the texts, have endless conversation on the subjects and also knew what the written history had left

us. There were the myths and legends and archetypes and all kinds of symbols that had to be interpreted into what their meanings were. The chase was like the grail, the Holy Grail.

We were on the track of the origins of drums and percussion and ritual. If Fred didn't know where to find a reference book he would say so and then go after it with passion with a stealth-like hunter-gatherer mentality that was magnified by the computer. He now had mastered another tool that the older generation never dreamt of. The Internet was born and Fred was on the bus to never land. He toyed with the early web and got good at it. He became nimble and was super friendly to any one with a thoughtful question.

We wrote three books together, *Drumming at the Edge of Magic*, *Planet Drum*, and *Spirit into Sound*.

The hours spent with Fred were pure nourishment for me. He was the answer man; he knew much of what I wanted to know...the story of "why drum? Where did drumming come from, and most importantly why am I going crazy chasing this incredible rhythm feeling my whole life?"

Like a made man, Fred was connected. If he didn't know the answer, he knew a friend who was an expert in the field. He introduced me to his entire world of music scholars. Steven Feld, John Blacking, on and on...

We appeared many times at speaking events and it was easy to talk to him about anything music related. He had a way of allowing his knowledge to be known without the usual scholarly crow job. He would lead me back on track gently if I became overstated in my enthusiasm or just plain wrong. I was the very good student, totally motivated and on a common course with Fred. He was an explorer, I was an explorer, and he liked difficult tasks, as did I. We could spend two weeks at the Musée de l'Homme, or the Bishop in Hawaii or

at the Bancroft in Berkeley. We both liked the chase; we liked the adrenaline of opening a personal diary of the man who used the talking machine for the first time in the field in 1890. We had the white gloves, we knew our subject and now we see and study his diary. When the national archive produced the diary, Fred calmly glanced at me and there was this smile that said it all. Not a big smile, just a corner of the mouth smile, which says so much more.

I remember our time in Hawaii, at the bishop museum. The curator was Betty Tartar. The major recorded collection was in ruins, in metal gym like lockers just rotting away from the seaborne climate. He was a musical activist as well. He understood the business of music as he had given classes from all the angles of our world. This is the sort of stuff that NEEDS fighting for he would say.

Recordings he believed preserved the voice and soul of communities, and they should be able to hear their musical heritage in new recordings sonically bathed and properly preserved. Fred became the ethnomusicology consultant for my entire series of recordings from around the world. Without Fred there would never have been an “Endangered Music Project” at the Library of Congress. All of the recordings from this collection now reside with Smithsonian Folkways Recordings.

The preservation of our musical legacy was primary. Not only to record but to give access to. Fred, like Percy Grainger before him, believed that the world’s best music should be put into circulation. He was not talking about art music, classical music; he was talking about the world’s music.

He became an expert in “sound marks”, being called by the courts to identify claims of ownership of music and intellectual property. He morphed from the bedrock scholar to the clear informed voice of modern scholar/lover of sound.

I often wondered if any of his students really knew how brilliant Fred was. He was an unassuming, quiet, soft, not a self-promotional kind of guy. He had 400 students in a serious music class transfixed on the inner workings of the idea that music was a miniature, a model of the workings of the entire universe. Pythagoras would have made a perfect dinner guest for us.