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Letter from the Guest Editor

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I am delighted to share with our readers the fall/winter 2025 issue of *Rising Voices in Ethnomusicology* titled “Ethnomusicology Now,” encompassing a wide range of current topics within our field. By coincidence, the theme of this issue came at the perfect time as I pondered over the importance of our work as ethnomusicologists. Visiting home for the first time in nearly four years, I was showered with questions from old friends and relatives – “What do you study?” “Ethno-what?” “So you study music theory?” “What do ethnomusicologists actually do?” The more I responded to these questions, I began to doubt the validity of my own answers. As ethnomusicologists, what are our goals and objectives as scholars? What are our responsibilities in the field, academia, and society in 2025 and beyond? How do we make a difference? The publication of this issue marks an end to the tumultuous year of 2025: having been an international student in Florida since 2021, domestic politics in the U.S. and international relations seem to have taken a turn for the worse, and as ethnomusicologists, we can no longer turn a blind eye, nor remain in our sheltered bubble of academia. By focusing on the now, our editorial team have welcomed submissions from students to voice out their interests, doubts, and concerns towards the field of ethnomusicology and related disciplines in relation to all that’s happening in the world.

Many of our graduate submissions interrogate the methodologies, epistemologies, and scope of our ethnomusicological scholarship. Savannah Rose Ridley offers the term sonic (im)materialities to nuance the foundations of our discipline’s inquiry. Relatedly, Rong Nie unsettles the notion of music as a static object we observe, insisting instead on seeing music as a relational force in the posthuman world. Rebecca Parnell reflects on the influence of flow on the embodied state of the fieldworker. Kate Adams’s work with PIMD musicians encourages us to re-evaluate whether our own approaches to musicking may have diminished those of others. Other

student submissions raise concerns about hegemonic institutional practices and expectations in the musical world. Holland Rhodd-Lee highlights the systemic bias in repertoire selection for their institution's comprehensive examination, arguing that they often function as instruments of racial exclusion rather than neutral assessments. Samuel Harrison-Oram's work reveals shifting attitudes toward career success by conservatory-trained vocal students in the UK, prompting us ethnomusicologists to reconsider how we can subvert our own field's expectations to embark on typical professor careers within academia.

This issue also includes a wide range of ethnographic studies by our graduate students. Edy Rapika Panjaitan's dialogue with Aliman Tua Limbong, a gondang musician from Indonesia prompts us to consider the sacredness of the gondang despite the emergence of electronic music alternatives. Mohammad Moridvand and Kimia Fakharinia's essays shed light on the music-making of Iranian women musicians, nuancing common narratives about censorship, agency, and silence. Kevin Perez posits that performers of corridos serve as messengers of musical diplomacy. Finally, Kieran Casey's reflexive writing offers a glimpse towards his personal relationship with the anime *Cowboy Bebop* as a young black man in quest of identity-formation. Continuing our ongoing mission to feature ambitious ethnomusicological writing by undergraduate students, this issue also includes a contribution by Bryden Reeves about the musical lives in Japanese Internment Camps during the Second World War, offering a poignant reflection on the intersections between music education, nationalism, and cultural assimilation. We would also like to thank Armin Akhavian for assistance with graduate student article formatting.

We are also happy to welcome a "Dear SEM" contribution from Matt Sakakeeny, based on a panel he convened at this year's Annual Meeting titled "The Current Crisis and the Future of Ethnomusicology." In his letter, he outlines the impacts of the increased budget cuts, the growing suspicions towards the value of an arts and humanities education, and regressing DEI initiatives in academic institutions. Instead of a blinkered view on politics and music, Sakakeeny calls for an organized response from ethnomusicologists and SEM to enact political change within academia. We extend our thanks to the participants in the panel for agreeing to share their work in this format: Alan Burdette, Shannon Garland, Amelia López López, Alejandrina M. Medina, and Gabriel Solis.

I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to write this issue's editorial letter for *Rising Voices in Ethnomusicology* and I would like to extend my gratitude to the dedicated work of our editorial staff. Since joining in 2023, I have had the pleasure to read many amazing graduate and undergraduate student works, as well as learning from my fellow editing colleagues. Special thanks to Hannah, Garrett, and Mark, all of whom have contributed massively to the development of this wonderful student journal. We hope that this issue will resound the call for students in ethnomusicology to take a proactive role in countering the interlocking crises we now face, both within and beyond the world of academia.