Letter from the Editor

This issue of SEM Student News marks my penultimate as editor, and I am extremely grateful to have worked with SEMSN over the past six (almost seven!) years. Not all of this has involved editing, though editing has been the most meaningful to me for several reasons: I get to read and re-read the writing of my colleagues, open myself to their ways of thinking about and perceiving musicking in our lives, communicate and exchange ideas with them, and present their hard work to our readers in a way that (I hope) does it justice. This has never been an easy process and there are many challenges with which I regularly struggle, including balancing my time and energy between SEMSN, graduate school, and life in general; possessing (or not) knowledge and experience fit for evaluating such a diverse array of topics; and the ever-pervasive self-doubt that has plagued me throughout my higher education. But there is one particular challenge that I want to take this moment to attend to: the frequent appearance and continued use of terms like world music(s), non/W estern, and the W est in (ethno)musicology.

These terms are rife throughout (ethno)musicological thought and writing, and I encounter them regularly in articles, journals, monographs, textbooks, courses, conferences, and so on (including this very publication). Attending lectures, leading discussion sections, assembling a syllabus for a “world music” course, reading scholarship, editing—whenever I come across these terms, which seem unavoidable, my first instinct is to throw scare quotes around them. “Non-Western.” But what does this achieve? Am I just wasting ink, pixels, a few seconds of time and energy? Does throwing an “s” on world musics really change its meaning? Do

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Letter from the Editor

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scare-quotes take away some of these terms’ power to categorize and divide? Am I just grumpy? Have I been in graduate school too long?

Terms like “Western” and “non-Western,” we should all realize, are loaded and dangerous. Why do we continue to use them? To quote Jody Diamond (1990), who recently shared her nearly thirty-year-old article “There Is No They There” on the SEM listserv, “World music is a dangerous idea” (12). Past and present, “world music” commonly refers to all music except that which we exclusively mark as “Western,” perpetuating, as Diamond asserts, a hierarchy of knowledge and culture. I realize that these are not clear-cut terms, yet I find that this hierarchy persists, and our efforts at inclusiveness often fall short and reveal our hypocrisy.

In the same listerv thread to which Diamond responded, another member referred to a forthcoming text titled Gateways to Understanding Music. Out of curiosity, I read the publisher’s description and met an example of this hypocrisy in (ethno)musicological discourse.

Gateways to Understanding Music explores music in all the categories that constitute contemporary musical experience: European classical music, popular music, jazz, and world music.

In this initial line we learn that “music” is a universal with four categories. First is “European classical,” which is a narrow-minded category in itself. “Popular music” seemingly means “Western popular music,” since “world music” constitutes the last category. “Jazz” is not a “popular” nor a “world music,” and constitutes one-quarter of contemporary musical experience.

Covering the oldest forms of human music making and the newest, the chronological narrative considers music from a global rather than a Eurocentric perspective.

Resisting a Eurocentric perspective is an important aim for all of us, but the first sentence pre-emptively contradicts this claim of a “global” one.

Each of sixty modular “gateways” covers a particular genre, style, or period of music. Every gateway opens with a guided listening example that unlocks a world of music through careful study of its structural elements.

Musical structure has long been a Eurocentric concern, here projected onto all musics of study in this text.

Based on their listening experience, students are asked to consider how the piece came to be composed or performed, how the piece or performance responded to the social and cultural issues at the time and place of its creation, and what that music means today. Students learn to listen to, explain, understand, and ultimately value all the music they may encounter in their world.

Musicking is here reduced to “pieces,” composed or performed. The ultimate objectives seem well-intentioned but the language representing how to

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achieve them remains highly problematic. Likewise, its “historical narrative,” which “begins with small-scale forager societies up to the present day, with a shifting focus from global to European to American perspectives,” suggests that European and American perspectives are the present and future, “global” a thing of the past.

It is very possible that this text itself does not reflect the seemingly Eurocentric bias evident in its publisher description. However, the information available on the publisher’s website suggests it as so. This may be a text for undergraduates and non-majors but this does not lessen the significance of how we approach and present our work. Our language, and the language used to represent our work, matters. We can combat Eurocentrism on many fronts.

We may commend ourselves for being “inclusive,” for “decolonizing,” for “decentralizing” our perspectives, knowledges, and values, but we will always need to carry this further through our words and actions. I am guilty of the above, as many of us may be, and I hope that we can take the opportunity to confront our own subjectivities—as well as those of (ethno)musicology and academia-at-large—in ways that will have tangible, and truly commendable, effects. Scare quotes are not enough.

Davin Vidigal Rosenberg
University of California, Davis

References

SEM Student Union Blog

The SEM Student Union (SU) is composed of the society’s student membership and serves as a resource and voice for students in the society. In this blog, we share our experiences of music, education, and life. Please join us and share your musical stories at semstudentunion.wordpress.com, and email us at semsublog@gmail.com.

The SU Blog also features a variety of series, including:
• Ethnomusicology and Parenthood
• In Discipline: Talks from the European Side
• From the Field
• Textbook Review
• Ethnomusicology Student Groups
Who Cares About Ethnomusicology?
—Take Two

Student Voices: A Student Union Column

By Kevin Sliwoski (University of California, Riverside)

In this Student Voices column, we feature the voices of three graduate students in ethnomusicology. They are writing in response to last issue’s column about SEM’s professional image and involvement in national politics and public advocacy. These three responses demonstrate the different perspectives from which graduate students engage in and think about the politics of ethnomusicology. Gillian Irwin encourages us to invest in ethnomusicology’s future and brand at a micro-level, through music education in schools and classrooms. Cali Alexander points to the diversity of topics and approaches within our discipline and asks us to consider what common ground we share, and what positions we all agree on. And Alyssa Mathias writes on the many levels of the political that graduate students confront within and beyond ethnomusicology: for funding and jobs but also in teaching, writing, and sharing our research.

Ethnomusicology’s greatest strength is as a home for intellectuals of any disciplinary background—it is a welcoming and malleable organism. That strength, however, is also its greatest weakness; with so many backgrounds, topics, and methods, it is difficult to identify what binds us together (beyond music and sound, of course). By reading different perspectives on our internal politics—especially from graduate students—we might begin to find the through lines. We hope that this selection of responses will encourage students in ethnomusicology to continue thinking critically about the politics of SEM, and what graduate students’ roles should be in the society. Graduate students experience SEM membership in ways that tenured faculty and other music professionals do not; the Student Union’s purpose is to find the best way to represent those perspectives. As always, the Student Union welcomes all students to participate, and we encourage ethnomusicologists of any status to follow the SU blog.

Gillian Irwin (University of California, Davis)

I would like to rephrase the title question in this response from “Who Cares about Ethnomusicology?” to a slightly more hopeful “Who Could Care about Ethnomusicology?” I think the answer, if we move in the direction Kevin is suggesting, is “most people!” I am sure that many of us who have been met with bewildered looks upon giving our elevator pitches to friends and family members have also, equally often, been met with enthusiastic curiosity and requests to repeat the name of our discipline so that our conversation partners might Google it later. In light of these kinds of responses, I am of the mind that many people could, and would, care about ethnomusicology, if they only knew what it was. In order to get us there, I pose a few questions I think we need to answer.

First, who is the SEM website for? Right now, our website is for academics who are ethnomusicologists or ethnomusicology-adjacent. Kevin illustrates this by pointing out how far away the definition of our discipline is from the home page. If we want our website to be for others, we first need to

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define who our target audience is. This goes hand in hand with a second question: *What do we want on public and governmental levels?* What are the landmark discoveries of our discipline that we want to communicate to the public? What are the actionable goals that we want to bring to the attention of policy-makers at local, regional, national, and international levels?

Once our audience and goals are more clearly defined, a third question arises: *Who are our partners in this process?* Kevin rightly points to anthropology as a discipline from which we can learn, particularly in website design. I would argue that in addition to our partnership with anthropology, we should strengthen our relationship with music education. Many schools are now incorporating “world musics” into their curricula, and numerous scholars have straddled the ethnomusicology/music education disciplinary divide. Patricia Shehan Campbell and Huib Schippers are the most prominent but by no means the only academics working in this area; I have included several citations below for those interested. If our goal is advocacy and wider recognition of the aims of our field, I propose that we start our work in schools—by advocating for increased support of music teachers, particularly those working in public schools, and finding ways to make ethnomusicological topics accessible to students before they graduate from high school. These types of lessons certainly do not need to be limited to the addition of “world musics” to schools’ choir programs but could include readings from hallmark ethnographies, discussions on the functions of musics around the world, and increased engagement with music being made in students’ neighborhoods and by students themselves. By supporting music teachers and the work being done in music education research, I think ethnomusicologists will find a useful platform for disciplinary advocacy.

**Suggestions for Further Reading**


**Cali Alexander** *(University of Colorado, Boulder)*

In defining ethnomusicology to the public, we are challenged to find common ground, perhaps deftly employing euphemisms to guide conversations away from awkward, leaden stares. So how do we make ethnomusicology more relatable to the public? Yes, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) offers a clear and concise self-definition, but the word

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“anthropology” is far more recognizable and known by the public than the term “ethnomusicology.” Hydrogeology is another academic field with an unfamiliar name, yet terms like “hydro” and “geology” are more familiar than the “ethno” part of ethnomusicology. A hydrogeology blog, “Water Underground,” by the European Geosciences Union offers this definition in their “about” portion:

Groundwater—the world’s largest freshwater store—is a life-sustaining resource that supplies water to billions of people, plays a central part in irrigated agriculture and influences the health of many ecosystems. Water Underground is a groundwater nerd blog written by a global collective of hydrogeologic researchers for water resource professionals, academics and anyone interested in groundwater, research, teaching and supervision.

First, the EGU defines hydrogeology’s primary concern: water and its vital importance to all humans. Next, the EGU affirms who is responsible for the blog, their relationship and how they interact with hydrogeology. In closing, this statement essentially creates an open line of communication between these academics and the public, that is, “anyone interested.”

I support the call to hire a professional public relations firm as a means of creating a bridge between the public and SEM. But to work with a public relations firm means we must decide how we want to portray ourselves in the public eye. While this is challenging given the breadth of ethnomusicology as a field of study, establishing an ethics statement, or at least a clear disciplinary definition, could help us present ourselves as a unified organization. As communication scholars Eyun-Jung Ki and Soo-Yeon Kim (2010) note, “establishing an organizational ethics statement falls within the high ethical certainty because an official ethics statement is an expression of the central values and principles that a public relations firm promises to uphold in its practices” (223). Furthermore, to ensure the success of a code of practice or ethics statement, we should promote it across various channels of communication.

Kevin addresses a pertinent issue for SEM and its future. I believe the lingering question here is, as his title states, who cares about ethnomusicology, and furthermore, why? These questions should be answered directly through multiple approaches and perspectives present within SEM.

Reference
Who Cares About Ethnomusicology?

—Take Two

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**Alyssa Mathias** (University of California, Los Angeles)

I'm leaning back in the dentist's chair when the dreaded question comes: "And what is it that you're studying?"

My jaw is propped open. "EhhhhnoyooohihKAlageh."

"Oh!" my dentist responds. "Ethnomusicology! That is such an important pursuit."

My dentist aside, it is true that our seven-syllable name is barely recognizable as a discipline, let alone a political force. I want to suggest here that while visibility could certainly improve our political influence, it is not a prerequisite. As we talk about shaping SEM’s political voice through branding and lobbying, it is also helpful to take stock of the ways our colleagues are already telling compelling musical stories that reach beyond the academy.

Recently, I have been inspired by multimedia projects asserting the rights of migrants and refugees. The video series *Sounds Beyond the Border* by ethnomusicologist Evrim Hikmet Öğüt (2018) consists of interviews with Syrian musicians in Istanbul: “As a response to homogenizing and exclusionary perspectives,” Öğüt writes, “the series aims to draw attention to the refugees’ talents and practices, the diversity they bring to our geography and the possibilities of a common cultural world.” The videos are accessible to Turkish, English, and Arabic speakers, and the issues resonate at both local and international levels.

Another project, *Music in Exile* (Ebsary and Ingber 2018), includes short online profiles of Kurdish and Yezidi musicians living in Iraq and Nebraska. With attention to concerns about privacy, security, and artistic ownership, journalists Alex Ebsary and Sasha Ingber highlight stories of creativity and resilience, but they also draw explicit connections between the US invasion of Iraq and the musicians' present-day displacement. My students and I worked through the sound clips during a recent seminar at UCLA, and we had tough conversations about US foreign policy, immigration, and the rights of displaced persons.

Online storytelling projects like *Sounds Beyond the Border* and *Music in Exile* have the potential to reach the general public and inform our political discourse. Of course, this is only possible if the work is disseminated, which brings us back to questions about our discipline’s visibility.

Kevin refers to the “ego of self-reflexivity” as an obstacle to political advocacy. There is another ego that gets in the way—the ego fed by academic precarity. As students, we are in near constant competition with each other for grants, fellowships, publications, conference slots, awards, and jobs. When a call comes out to do more politically engaged work, it is easy to feel like it is just another thing we, as individuals, have to produce to stay at the top of our game.

I believe that advocating for the humanities means advocating for the right to pursue questions that do not always seem politically relevant. Becoming a politically engaged scholar is only partially about *producing* political work. It is also about sharing, citing, and teaching work by our colleagues both inside and outside institutional ethnomusicology.

**References**


Thoughts from the Field
Translations: Language, Performance, and the Politics of Academia

By Hannah Adamy (University of California, Davis)

For the past year, I have been a part of an initiative at University of California, Davis, to document the community-engaged scholarship of faculty across the university, and to develop criteria for more accurately evaluating that work. As part of the documentation process, I conducted interviews with over fifty tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty at our institution. I asked them about their motivations, the benefits of community-based work, how they interact with communities outside the university, and what the opportunities and challenges were of doing such work while having a university affiliation. Repeatedly, they spoke of translation: translating their scholarship to different audiences, the difficulties of translating their work in their tenure applications, and the cross-disciplinary translation that occurs when scholars from different disciplines collaborate. I must note that most of the translations faculty described were not between English and another language but across other discursive divides based on class, discipline, profession, and other categories.

This research experience at my own university informed my prompt to our contributors for this issue on politics in/of ethnomusicology. I asked these scholars to describe a moment when they have translated their written research into another language, into a non-written medium (film, art installation, workshop, performance), or for a non-academic audience. I then asked them to reflect on a particular challenge that emerged from that process of translation. They responded with fascinating snapshots of the work ethnomusicologists do that makes the boundaries between university knowledge and community knowledges a little more porous.

Jessica Hajek muses on the "sticky situation" of translating the Spanish expletives her interlocutors use into English words that she feels comfortable using. She acknowledges translation as a relational act of approximation. Andrew Terwilliger hones in on the nuances of both naming and translating in the case of Chinese orchestras. He regards his status as a non-native speaker of Mandarin as an asset for attending to the complexities of words. Informed by his academic and fieldwork experiences in Bavaria, Fabio Dick makes an impassioned plea for the visibility of ethnomusicologists in the German-speaking academy. Erin Allen reflects on her participation in a collective brass band protest outside of an ICE Detention Center in Boston as a moment of translating academic theory to activist performance. She offers the possibility of extending the moment of performance through writing, and of living the reflection enabled through writing to prompt further action.

Their limits notwithstanding (especially when undertaken within an academic setting), acts of translation encourage enactments of patience, humility, and compassion that challenge what we call scholarship.

Jessica Hajek
(University of Cincinnati)

In general, there are two kinds of translation approaches: semantic-based strategies that emphasize the source language (e.g., word-for-word, literal, or faithful translations) and communicative-based strategies that emphasize the target language (e.g., adaptive, free, or idiomatic translations). As I conduct the majority of my field research among Spanish-speaking carnival musicians from the Dominican Republic, I have struggled with how to best capture the voice of my interlocutors when translating our interviews into English.

Where I have struggled the most is in dealing with expletives and sexual innuendos, and how I can convey the original voice of my Dominican colleagues through my English words in a way with which I am also comfortable. For instance, how does one remain faithful to a phrase like “arroz con mango”? Literally, this phrase means “rice with mango,” but it is used colloquially throughout the Caribbean and ranges in implication from rather innocuous (“a sticky situation”) to more robust (“a clusterf*ck”). Moreover, how do I describe to my English readers the title of the Black Jonas Point song “Vejigaso,” when they are undoubtedly both unfamiliar with the literal definition (a playful slap by the vejiga of continued on next page . . .
Thoughts from the Field

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the devil carnival character) and unaware that it is a double entendre for having sex. As a solution thus far, I have aimed for “faithful” translations that take into consideration both my experiences and interpretations of Spanish as spoken in the Dominican Republic and my interlocutors’ voices to approximate any implied meanings and contexts in English rather conservatively, but still as closely as possible.

Andrew Terwilliger
(Wesleyan University)

My research in Taipei often centers around musicians who play in a guoyuetuan, which typically translates into English as “Chinese orchestra.” As a foreigner, casual chatting with musicians has often brought up the question of how I translate certain terms into English. The answer to this seemingly mundane question of how I translate guoyuetuan ends up being surprisingly political.

Literally, guoyuetuan translates to “national ensemble,” but in different places, locals give this genre of music different names based on the national narrative the music is meant to portray. So, when attending concerts in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan, the English translation “Chinese orchestra” remains the same but the Mandarin words used for the ensembles change—minyuetuan, guoyuetuan, zhongyuetuan, huayuetuan, respectively—depending on the political significance of what it means to be Chinese. The first character that changes preceding the word yuetuan (ensemble) emphasizes different identities. Min in China refers to ethnicity, guo means national, zhong emphasizes China (as opposed to the “West”), and hua refers to ethnically Chinese people, especially those outside of China.

So, in Taiwan, a state that struggles to be recognized internationally as an independent nation, the insertion of the English word “Chinese” brings up complicated political nuances about the country’s identity. Often, I see being a foreigner as an obstacle in fieldwork, but asking how musicians would translate terms that they take for granted in Mandarin has allowed me to open up new and enlightening conversations.

Fabio Dick
(Julius-Maximilians-Universität)

This text reflects my very personal thoughts about what I have experienced in several universities and in the field in Bavaria. Even though the content primarily refers to the already broad setting of a German-speaking academic environment, it presumably offers some relevance regarding ethnomusicological scholarship elsewhere. Vergleichende Musikwissenschaft was decisive for our discipline and could be called one of the epicenters of early ethnomusicology. German-speaking experts co-laid the groundwork and gave major impulses for today’s scholarship. However, Germany remains a pioneering epicenter of historical musicology. By foregrounding this area, German universities produce a vast number of experts; indeed, more experts than can be employed by the academy. Meanwhile, ethnomusicology—not only as a discipline per se but even its basic concerns, concepts, ideas, and interests—is heavily underfeatured in most music departments’ academic course of study. In Austria and Switzerland, diversity in disciplinary representation is slightly more present.

Among the universities located in Bavaria’s largest cities (Munich, Nuremberg, Ingolstadt, Regensburg, and Würzburg), which host approximately 160,000 students across hundreds of undergraduate and graduate programs, only one has a chair of ethnomusicology as a full professorship.

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Thoughts from the Field

This lone full professorship is in Würzburg and the position is surrounded by five musicology chairs that follow an historical approach—*Historische Musikwissenschaft*. Additionally, the German-speaking Academy divides artistic and scientific focus and training into Hochschule and Universität, not only in a physical and local sense but in an actual pedagogical and intellectual sense. However, at both types of institutions, you will typically find the occasional class on “world musics” or something similar, though not on a regular basis.

If we really do want to be heard because we think that ethnomusicology matters, maybe now more than ever, it seems that if we do not speak up—with clarity and confidence—or if we do not search for advocacy and cooperation to fight the power of resignation, this unfortunate situation will not change. I am well aware that this concluding postulation has (inappropriately?) triggered two recent political narratives in the US that proclaim a desire for change: first, these recurring issues are mirrored in the last presidential campaigns; and second, the narratives of speaking-up that are importantly expressed and realized over and over again via movements and discourses surrounding Black Lives Matter or #MeToo. However, the needed change will not happen magically or automatically if/ until we—as scholars, as musicians, as colleagues, as people—manage to get heard; not just in theory but in the practice of everyday life.

Erin T. Allen (Ohio State University)

This October at the HONK Festival of Activist Street Bands, I played my trumpet with about 200 fellow brass musicians and percussionists in an annually recurring performance outside the Suffolk County ICE Immigration Detention Center in Boston. Members of brass bands hailing from the US and abroad paraded onto a highway overpass across the street parallel to the facility’s windows. Detainees danced and flickered their room lights to the rhythms of New Orleans second line, Peruvian cumbia,
Thoughts from the Field

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and South African jazz. They held up handwritten messages reading “I love you,” and made hearts by joining their thumbs and forefingers.

Sounding solidarity with those inside the detention center enables an affective-discursive encounter, producing a lived (if ephemeral) space for those detained within an otherwise exclusive public sphere. Through sound and gesture, we worked to performatively extend what Hannah Arendt ([1958] 1998) calls a “space of appearance” to those typically denied it, and in so doing, delegitimize the state of exclusion to which they remain confined.

Taking part in this performance as a musician prompted me to further consider how my written words might also be translated into performative action. Along with my trumpet, can my audio recorder and camera, articles, or blog posts bear witness to and further disperse what is seen and heard here? Can these act in concert with the musicians I work with as well as those excluded from participating in public life, to prolong and extend this space of appearance?

Reference


A Final Translation

At the end of these brief reflections, I return to the final line I cast out in my introduction as a means of connecting these four texts: translation as an enactment of patience, humility, and compassion that challenges what we call scholarship. Inspired by my fellow ethnomusicologists, I propose that this patience, humility, and compassion are inextricable from the felt tension that we are repeatedly made to feel in academia between thinking and doing. For many ethnomusicologists, that tension between thinking and doing has the most immediate, lasting consequence in the act of writing.

Ethnomusicologists work with many types of media but the one that continues to be most privileged both inside and outside the discipline is the written word. More specifically, we privilege an act of writing that has reached an acceptable level of concreteness as a monograph, compendium, journal article, or other peer-reviewed publication. Even as we seek to be appropriately reflexive in our scholarship, our acts of writing—as processes—are inescapably erased once a work is published. Furthermore, no matter how much we assert that the truths we claim are partial, contingent, and relational, the academic genre in which we write (in which we translate the thinking and doing of others into our own thinking and doing) is not a partial, contingent, or relational genre in the way that, for example, musicking is.

Therefore, I call for patience, humility, and compassion as we work both within our discipline and academia-at-large, to consider more than written texts as valid scholarship. In doing so, we will hopefully no longer embody the same relational roles of ethnographer and interlocutor, or academic and non-academic. These roles imply a well-recognized type of translation. If we replace these roles with new ones, fellow scholars, imagine what new translations might emerge.

We are currently discussing plans for future issues of SEM Student News, including volume 15, numbers 1 and 2. If there are any topics that you want us to address, please contact the editor at semstudentnews@gmail.com.
Dear SEM,

A Response Column by Eugenia Siegel Conte (University of California, Santa Barbara)

This column has traditionally solicited views, imaginings, and critical responses from esteemed academics in the field of ethnomusicology, and this instance is no different. However, this time around we have reached out specifically to previous staff of SEM Student News to comment on their experience with this publication, and to discuss current academic prospects for PhDs early in their careers. Their candid replies highlight the variety of roles available in and around the Academy, and the ways in which writing, editing, and publishing with Student News has shaped their post-doctoral experiences. These responses are an excellent reminder of the transferable skills students build in their varied experiences throughout graduate school, and the imagination and energy required to participate in the lean and competitive “new normal” of the academic landscape.

Charlotte D’Evelyn
(Pomona College)

It is my great pleasure to contribute to this issue of SEM Student News, a publication that came about through a brainstorming session in 2010 while Alyson Jones and I were co-presidents of the Student Concerns Committee (now SEM Student Union). The visually stunning design and thematic approach to this publication were the brainchild of Lauren Sweetman (also featured in this column) and have provided a beautiful platform to link students to one another and to broadcast student voices and concerns to the rest of the society. I’m proud to have been involved in this publication, even in a very small way.

What I have learned from working at five college campuses over the past five years:

I think for many of us, we felt that our time and energy were pressed to their very limits when we were in graduate school. Reality check: your time in graduate school will seem like blissful paradise compared to life on the other side. In graduate school, you are generally balancing one or two main jobs (your own work, TA position, or other part-time employment, and maybe work as a performer or parenthood if you have children). Wow, that seems nice and simple to me now!

I went through most of my PhD years thinking I had a pretty insane life balancing research, teaching, and raising my first son (and later a second). I am now balancing nearly double the number of roles and projects (and have to field about ten times the volume of emails) as I did at that time.

A sampling of my current roles includes: teaching at one or more campuses every semester, mentoring and advising students, teaching music lessons (for extra income), rehearsing for upcoming performances, balancing on- and off-campus committee work, daily fifteen-minute writing blocks (if I can!) and weekly writing group check-ins (toward feeble attempts to move projects along the publication pipeline), applying for jobs, applying for short-term summer travel grants, working for two non-profit organizations (exploring applied ethnomusicology backup plans), organizing concerts and workshops for visiting artists, and (as an afterthought?) parenting two elementary schoolers (while sometimes finding time to be a wife, daughter, granddaughter, sister, or friend every now and then). Another annoying and unavoidable pastime of mine has been becoming an expert at learning new LMSs (Learning Management Systems). None of my five campuses so far has used the same one, frustratingly enough.

My head is sometimes spinning by the end of the day because I have needed to shift my attention between so many tasks, none the least of which is managing a very large stream of emails pouring into my inbox (ranging from student messages asking for recommendation letters or paper feedback to requests for musician bio information and images for a guest artist whom I am inviting to perform at Pomona next semester).

How is one to survive this post-PhD haze, including massive amounts of self-doubt and uncertainty about the future? My tips for survival:

• Everyone is overworked, but it is okay to protect your time. I am not currently practicing this tip! But continued on next page . . .
I suggest that rather than taking on more tasks and volunteer work, we feel more comfortable saying “no” to increased responsibilities. It may seem like “no” is not a possible answer, but it does not hurt to try and get comfortable backing off on projects whenever possible (even including that interesting conference panel—you need to publish now, not present!).

- **Small teaching is a beautiful thing.** Do less with your teaching and your students are likely to learn more. Rather than doing three genres in one class period, do one genre or one aspect of one genre and have the students do an activity (concept map, debate, poetry writing, Poll Everywhere quiz using their phones, or writing reflection) for half the class period. It ends up being less prep and more meaningful learning for the students in the long-run.

- **If you think your department is taking advantage of you, it probably is!** Speak to your department chair if you feel unfairly overworked to see if you can make adjustments in your load or reduce your responsibilities (such as reducing the max class size, easing advising burdens, or hiring a student grader). And if that does not work, find ways to connect with faculty representatives (and unions, if they exist) or faculty allies who might help with your case.

- **Get to know as many people as you possibly can wherever you end up teaching.** These networks have made uncertainty manageable for me and have made me feel like I “belong” (even marginally) to a community of faculty at whichever campus I happen to be teaching. I have had coffee meetings with so many people that my network is also becoming vast and diverse. It is amazing how willing people are to spare an hour to have coffee with someone who may have only a slight overlap in interests and specialties. I have amassed a large number of ad-hoc mentors over the years, and although this has not necessarily landed me a “real” job, it has helped me make further connections, get a sense for student expectations and campus culture, and navigate departmental challenges as they arise. Even if I am an outsider to many of my respective campus communities (as a visiting professor or adjunct on a two- or three-year stint), making friends has helped me feel like a human being and not just a warm body in the classroom.

If you have other questions about navigating adjunct work and job hunting after the PhD, I invite you to reach out to me! I am more than happy to pass along the knowledge that I have picked up during my circuitous journey beyond graduate school: charlotte.develyn@gmail.com.

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**Amanda Daly Berman**
(Wheaton College and Salem State University)

I truly enjoyed my time as a staff writer for *SEM Student News*. As a graduate student, I published four articles over two years. The process of writing for a themed issue, reviewing revisions, accepting some feedback—and holding strong to certain choices I made—and working with a team of colleagues helped me develop as a scholar. The relatively short space allotted for each piece forced me and the other contributors to focus our writing to effectively and concisely deliver our arguments and messages. I always learned so much

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Dear SEM,

by reading the final product and seeing the varied viewpoints that others brought to the publication. Each issue introduced me to new students and scholars within the field, and served as a reminder of the power of experience and the value gained from advice and expertise gathered from senior scholars. The inclusion of said scholars was a beneficial way to see them engage with their topics of expertise in a different platform (and writing style) than an academic journal.

*SEM Student News* is also home to my first co-authored publication. Current editor Davin Rosenberg and I co-wrote “Music, Medicine, Health, and Cognition: A Resource List” (2014c), which still regularly shows up when I am searching for information about music therapy or medical ethnomusicology. I am proud of our range of resources, particularly given the relatively new presence of medical ethnomusicology within our field.

As a doctoral candidate, having a platform to solidify your own theoretical viewpoints and your mastery of the literature is key, and *SEM Student News* provided this for me. I also found great strength in having my time as a staff writer overlap with my position as the inaugural Member- at-Large of the SEM Student Union. Having these two student organizations join forces greatly bolstered the strength of the student perspective in ethnomusicology and brought increased awareness to the specific needs of students and junior scholars.

**References**


*Lauren E. Sweetman*

(Auckland University of Technology and Founding Editor of *SEM Student News*)

Hello SEM community! I am honored to write for *SEM Student News* again—it has been a while now since I left the staff and I am overjoyed to see it carrying on as a voice for student issues. When I was first asked to contribute to this issue regarding my experiences with publication and/or the tenure process, I felt I was not the best example. Mine is not the typical success story that I envisioned when I helped create this newsletter. But it occurred to me that aspects of my journey are perhaps not atypical of the contemporary post-student experience and, in that way, may provide some reassurance for current young professionals in the same boat that they are not alone.

I think it is fair to say that I had a graduate career filled with promise and—albeit a bit righteously—passion about creating a more ethical, collaborative, and community-engaged ethnomusicology. I had done all the things that I was supposed to do to prepare for a successful career. I went to good graduate schools, presented at conferences, won prestigious awards and grants, published a few smaller pieces, conducted substantial field research, did professional and community service, and developed professional and research networks. In 2014, however, the path I had forged veered, professionally at least, off course. I made the decision to stay in my research location, Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand, and married my husband. I wrote my PhD dissertation while pregnant with and then nursing our first son, and am currently holding our second, who is four months old, as I write this.

After some struggle (as most graduate students do), I completed my PhD from NYU in January 2017, and since that time have had to face the job market and academic climate in New Zealand combined with the reality of living permanently “in the field” and on the other side of the world from the professional network I worked so hard to establish. In New Zealand, the job market is incredibly challenging in ethnomusicology and the arts more broadly.

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Dear SEM,

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There are only eight universities in the country, and not all have positions for music scholars, let alone ethnomusicologists. The vast majority of academia here is focused on what, in many ways, are seen as more practical fields (business, health, science, technology, etc.).

Another factor complicating my job search is that I spent the majority of my graduate career researching something that, in New Zealand, I am unqualified to teach or write about for many valid and important political reasons: indigenous Māori music and health. Because of this, I have focused on reframing my experience in its broader context of medical ethnomusicology and anthropology. However, only one explicit role for an ethnomusicologist has come up since I moved here in 2014.

Additionally, I face the issue that people in other fields often do not understand my work or achievements (“Ethno-what?” . . . “So you’re Canadian?” . . . “But you’re not indigenous?” . . . ). I was told point blank in one job interview that my salary would have to start at the lowest point on the pay scale because my five-plus years of teaching experience at the University of Toronto and New York University “wasn’t here,” and they had never heard of SSHRC, SSRC, or Wenner-Gren.

As a result, I have found work in the most unlikely of places for someone with a background solely in the arts and humanities: the sciences. Since I graduated, I have worked at the Auckland University of Technology first as a teaching assistant and then as a lecturer for first-year courses for health students in the School of Interprofessional Health, and as a research officer for several studies on mental health in the School of Clinical Sciences. I am now about to start a new role conducting research for a joint project with the Ministry of Health to develop a national framework for forensic mental health. This is all contract work—very, very few permanent tenure-track positions are offered at this institution. It is common for a large part of the workforce to go from contract to contract, many of which are part-time and pieced together to resemble a full-time job. I miss being in an academic department where I conduct my own research in the arts and have a professional dialogue with peers in my field. That being said, I am doing interesting work that has important real-world outcomes, and developing a complementary skill set in health and other research methodologies that I hope will support me if/when I return to a music or anthropology department. So what’s the point of all this?

I have recently begun to understand that there is no one path to or meaning of “success.” How you fulfill your goals may not be how you think you are going to—and that does not have to be a bad thing. These may be clichés but are no less true. To be honest, I do not feel I have achieved professional success yet, but I am open to the possibilities of where this journey will take me. I have no idea where I am going to end up—and in some ways am now unsure where I want to—but I am grateful for the foundation that my work in the field of ethnomusicology has provided, and the research, writing, and critical thinking skills I developed along the way that have and continue to enable me to work in other academic contexts. As for you, dear SEM community, I’d love to hear from you! Please feel free to drop me a line at lesweetman@gmail.com.

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What’s in a Name?
New Questions Regarding Ethnomusicology of the Political

By Jon Bullock (University of Chicago)

This autumn marks twenty-five years since the publication of ethnomusicologist Philip Bohlman’s (1993) “Musicology As a Political Act,” an essay in which he asserted that musicology had entered a period of political crisis owing to its insistence on its own apolitical status (419). Today, even Bohlman’s opening anecdote of sitting in a bar watching MTV betrays the age of the article—after all, the MTV of 1993 is long gone, with reality television shows having replaced much of the music video programming that dominated the station’s air time throughout most of the 90s and early 2000s. But for better or for worse, Bohlman’s description of a musicology that deliberately avoided the political implications of its own discourse also now feels quaint. Even Georgina Born’s 2010 addition to Bohlman’s theories, in which she urged (ethno)musicologists to reconsider what music is and what counts as music to be studied (208–9), now seems to be common practice as ethnomusicologists increasingly take into account popular musics and discourses drawn from black, queer, and indigenous studies, among other fields. And if the field itself has changed since 1993, so has the world around us. Today, not being political seems as much a political act as any.

So what truth remains within Born’s and Bohlman’s observations about musicology and politics, and what more is still to be done? In the remainder of this article, I consider an aspect of political musicology that seems increasingly salient as ethnomusicologists grapple with the political nature of musical practice and representation. Formulated as a question, the problem is as follows: How might ethnomusicologists begin examining the very categories that ensure a work’s reception or representation as political? In other words, what does the very act of describing musical practice as political obscure or take for granted? There can be no doubt that descriptions of the role of politics in ethnomusicological work as well as descriptions of such work on these terms are on the rise. For example, at the SEM Annual Meeting in 2005 (the earliest meeting for which a program is available on the SEM website), three panels and fourteen papers included the words politics or political in their titles. At this year’s meeting, the total was up to nine panels, eighteen papers, and one roundtable. From 2005–2009, the average number of total presentations per year described in this way was twenty-two. From 2010–2014, the average climbed to twenty-five, and for 2015–2018, the current average stands at thirty-one.

While I acknowledge the fact that there are multiple ways of engaging with the political in ethnomusicological work, my focus here is related to the ways in which naming the political affects our representations of agency and musical practice. One of the trends characterizing the naming of the political in SEM presentation titles since 2005 (at least for nine out of the last fourteen years) involves the use of the phrase “the politics of . . .” in a majority of the presentations designated as political, with the next word in the title ranging from key topics such as representation, race, or gender, to specific issues such as amateurism, voguing, or parenting. While my intent is not necessarily to be critical of these types of framing (indeed, I used the phrase “the politics of representation” in my own SEM paper title in 2017), it is worth attending to the very act of framing as a way of highlighting the complexities of musical practice with political implications (of course, this is not to suggest that the scholars who framed their work in this way did not fruitfully engage with politics within their presentations). As James Currie asserts in his 2009 article “Music after All,” systems designed to increase the general visibility of particular issues such as politics “mediate as well as circulate” (160).

An example of a case in which the designation of musical practice as political might be understood as problematic may be found in Jim Sykes’ (2013) “Culture as Freedom: Musical ‘Liberation’ in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka.” Although Sykes does not specifically discuss the use of the words politics or political, his main question regarding the methods of representation employed throughout the essay is as follows: “how might we represent
What’s in a Name? . . . continued

my actions and those of my consultants—actions aimed at constructing personal and/or regional liberations from ethnonationalism—without situating them in the languages of communal difference and nation they are intended to avoid?” (486). For Sykes, the challenge of representing musical practice within a “non-state space” (488) plagued by decades of civil war required careful attention to the use of particular forms of language and expression associated with certain political histories and factions. This challenge was compounded by the fact that local groups of musicians have purposely utilized alternative languages and (music) histories in an attempt to distance themselves from ethnonationalist parties and discourse. As Sykes reveals throughout the article, these alternative histories themselves are formed at least in part in response to “a[n] historically developed, institutionally appropriated, linguistic force” (510) that continues to insist upon particular associations between music and identity, associations which in this case fail to illuminate the conscious choices of the musicians themselves.

Social anthropologist Marlene Schäfers’ (2015) “Being Sick of Politics: The Production of Dengbêjî as Kurdish Cultural Heritage in Contemporary Turkey” provides another example of a case in which a researcher was forced to question the role of political designation in representation. In the article, Schäfers describes her interactions with a female Kurdish bard who repeatedly voiced concerns such as “I want to do art, not politics!” (1). Although the specific history of Kurdish cultural production and its interaction with Turkish politics has been described by Alev Kuruoğlu and Wendelmoet Hamelink (2017) and Koray Degirmenci (2012),2 Schäfers’ (2015) specific insights in this case involve questions of how to understand various aspects of cultural heritage either as inherently political or as “entirely autonomous from politics . . . as the essence of an authentic, primordial identity that stands logically and temporally prior to politics” (13). As Schäfers argues, even the seemingly simple act of naming a musical practice as political or apolitical involves much larger questions that hinge on varying conceptualizations of individuals, societies, and state mechanisms of power. These conceptualizations, of course, often have vast repercussions in the lives of individuals who are otherwise excluded from particular realms of political protest or protection.

As one final example of the importance of these and other similar questions, and as a way of returning to Bohlman’s arguments regarding the future of musicology, I would briefly like to call attention to anthropologist Saba Mahmood’s (2003) essay “Ethical Formation and Politics of Individual Autonomy in Contemporary Egypt.” As is clear from the title of essay, Mahmood did not shy away from identifying the political nature of the problems under consideration in her research. Nevertheless, she asserted that within the women’s mosque movement in Egypt, common conceptions regarding bodily practices such as prayer (salat) or donning the veil had often been excluded from the possibility of having political implications, based on the “normative liberal conception of politics, one separate from the domain of ethics and moral conduct,” which is itself “a reflection of how the field of ethics and moral conduct has been shaped in the modern period” (844–45). In the case of the women’s mosque movement in Egypt, political movements and practices of ethical self-formation had therefore only been considered as distinct, with little or no relation to one another, owing not least to the construction of “the political” as a category in Western thought. Although Mahmood’s intervention requires the expansion of the realm of the political in this particular case, it also illustrates the fact that a mere willingness to embrace the political nature of a specific practice or set of practices is still not enough, as it can often obscure the very construction of politics in the West in the modern period without recourse to additional understandings of subjectivity and the state.

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Along similar lines, Bohlman discussed the musicological hegemony of Islam’s “music” in his 1993 article. He asserted that in an act as simple as describing sonic practices like Qur’anic recitation (qirāʿah) as music, those influenced by traditional Western musicology had “controlled and disciplined the ‘music,’” transforming it into “an aesthetic object for . . . aural surveillance,” all the while missing the meaning and spiritual intensity of recitation within Islamic thought (429). Of course, ethnomusicology has come a long way in twenty-five years; but should we desire our field to remain relevant in future decades of what seems now to be increasing political instability, it is not enough to simply identify the potential political impact of our own work, or even to designate musical practice as political. Instead, the future of political ethnomusicoologies must be one in which ethnomusicologists continue to question the very foundations on which these and other designations become meaningful, attending to the ways in which representation not only frames the debate but also contains the potential to illuminate or exclude other ways of understanding.

Endnotes
1. In this case, Currie was specifically discussing the visibility of gay men on television.
2. I would also like to acknowledge the work of ethnomusicology PhD student Fethi Karakeçili (2018), who recently gave a presentation at the first International Kurdish Studies Symposium on the Turkish re-naming of Kurdish traditional dances; I borrow the phrase “What’s in a Name?” from Fethi’s presentation. He, of course, borrowed it from Shakespeare.

References

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As we engage with the world as scholars concerned with music and its political effects, it is important that we not only consider what we think and say, but just as importantly, who we engage and express ourselves with, and how we think and express ourselves with others. Doing so might enable us to establish new repertoires of social action in our personal and professional lives and new ways of creating knowledge in the world. As I have been processing my experiences doing fieldwork in a crowded, working-class neighborhood in Dakar, Senegal, over the past few years, and as I have begun to think about what I hope to achieve with my work, I have become increasingly drawn to an idea of “personalism” as it manifests in the postcolonial city.

The common academic use of “personalism” in West African politics often has a negative connotation. In Paulla Ebron’s (2002) Performing Africa, for example, a “personalistic economy” is an arrangement where praise singers (griots) affix themselves to wealthy patrons, creating a mutually-dependent situation where one must praise the other to earn their livelihood, and the other must pay to maintain their reputation. “Personal,” here, is a reliance on individuals rather than larger entities. For whatever positives personalism brings, it is also seen as the source of clientelism—it is individual patrons, and not broader communities or corporate and state bureaucracies, that are the sources of the praise singer’s income; important people build their profile through individual griots, more so than through objective measures of achievement or transparent reporting from neutral sources.

But the griots that I have worked with in Dakar are at the heart of a different kind of personalism. Like the griots in Ebron’s work, these musicians and verbal artists remain involved in building public personalities, but instead of focusing narrowly on wealthy political patrons, they enliven social situations large and small, saturating events with praises and other positive messages. As people spend time together in spaces animated by griot praise and drumming, they are brought into relation with ever-expanding interpersonal networks in the city, and they seem to secure new relations with others to a surprising depth. Women belonging to a mutual aid association founded on the basis of neighborly proximity, for example, stated in interviews with me that without the drummers that enliven their monthly meetings, they would never have known each other. At massive street parties called tanebeers, griot genealogists go beyond reciting family trees by highlighting important connections between the families of individuals at an event.

This manifestation of personalism aligns with notions of solidarity and interdependence through which many Dakarois navigate precarious living situations in the city; if the uneven development of resources, infrastructure, and governance makes securing a livelihood an unstable endeavor, the ability to draw on personal connections with dozens or hundreds of neighbors can provide a degree of relief. The act of dancing together at a monthly meeting or the knowledge of how your family connects to an individual being praised can be a powerful component in the creation and deepening of these connections.

If the practice of creating personal relationships was merely a survival strategy, however, it would have limited political valence. In Dakar, personalism as a way of life colors many aspects of daily experience in the city. Community arts associations like #MedinaImpoz and Yaatal Art (“Expand Art”) strive to fashion neighborhood streets as more dynamic artistic spaces, and at their meetings, members...
The Politics of Personalism

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customly praise one another for their presence (teewaay), acknowledging the effort and value of dedicating time to meeting face-to-face. Members of the neighborhood-level Muslim associations value the “work” (ligeey) that goes into producing weekly musical events that attract crowds of hundreds—drawing on notions of “service” (khidma) that are looked upon favorably by Allah. The power of personalism works in concert with the power of assembly as people strive to reshape their conditions of collective existence in the city. As Bruno Latour (2005) reminds us: “in this lowly world there lie in wait many more worlds that may aspire to become one—or not, depending on the assembly work we will be able to achieve” (118).

It is in this light that I want to consider what “personalism” might entail as a core feature of academic life. What would be possible if we were to fully value and expand the time that we spend together with our colleagues, creating widespread connections and cultivating relationships of significant personal depth? In “Pedagogies of Dissent” (originally a keynote speech to the American Studies Association), Kandice Chuh (2018) suggests that prioritizing collegiality enables forms of radical politics within the university setting. In particular, Chuh is concerned with collegiality as a model for academic freedom that breaks from the current model of professional elitism (the model where a narrow slice of the professoriat enjoys a freedom sanctioned by their position as experts and professionals, validated through tenure). A different kind of freedom is afforded to us when we rally around each other—when we learn about each other, learn from each other’s experiences, and invest in each other’s projects (ethnographic, political, musical, or otherwise). If certain kinds of political action make us vulnerable—for example, to charges of incivility, of not aligning with mainstream values, of raising topics that others deem “outside our specialty”—it is an orientation toward personalism, not professionalism, that will enable us to embrace the freedom to dissent. “Stretch time around associating,” Chuh writes, and we might achieve “the kind of collegiality that allows us to make and hold up our worlds...a form of relationality only possible when uninvested in professional advancement or in the defense of institutions or principles but rather inclined always toward people and the planet in their inseparability” (168).

What would be possible if we were to fully value and expand the time that we spend together with our colleagues, creating widespread connections and cultivating relationships of significant personal depth?

At its core, personalism—whether practiced by mutual aid associations in Senegal, or by graduate students in ethnomusicology—means engaging with others to such a great extent that we realign our practices and priorities, especially when doing so enables new ways of being and knowing. What we can hope to achieve as teachers, scholars, fieldworkers, musicians, and students is as much about the body of knowledge published in books and journals as it is about the kind of practice that we learn from being around each other.

References
Medical ethnomusicology is a dominant frame of my research. My first medical ethnomusicology research attempt could be seen as a failure, because I was not prepared for the lengthy processes, ethical concerns, and stringent restrictions of working with patients, both in and outside of formal clinical settings. While working in a non-clinical music therapy context, specifically the Down Syndrome Association in Croatia, I hoped to investigate group musicking. By conducting this work, I was optimistic I could expand upon existing related research. However, I was not prepared for the ethical complexities reflected in trust-building processes, research-informant relationships, and obtaining informed consent, so working with children at the Down Syndrome Association at that point proved too restrictive for me (Vrekalić 2017b).

My interest in medical ethnomusicology has lent me a strong desire to conduct this type of research in Croatia. Thus, I continued to work across ethnomusicological and music therapy boundaries to find a fieldwork site where I could have more freedom. As a first step, I opted to work with adult informants willing to share their music-making experiences. I felt that a clinical music therapy context could increase research transparency. The Psychiatric Day Clinic at the University Hospital in Zagreb seemed suitable because only adults suffering from depression and other closely related mental disorders attended resident music therapy sessions. This had the potential to improve research-informant safety, reducing my informants’ and my own trepidations, which would lead to greater success. In this clinical setting, however, my approach was “associated with a more than minimal risk for human subjects” due to multilayered ethical issues (Stankova 2014, 11). To conduct this research, I was therefore obliged to collect informed consent, write a detailed research proposal, and finally, obtain approval from both the Ethics Committee and the head of the Psychiatric Department and Day Clinic. This was a crucial moment, in that this permission process made me question my interest in medical ethnomusicology and its feasibility in Croatia.

At the outset of my fieldwork, I could not access the field in advance to meet potential informants. It seemed that I needed to be an insider (i.e., a member of the clinic’s medical staff) in order to collect informed consent in this specific clinical setting. Since this was not possible, I took it upon myself to write a letter to the clinic’s Ethics Committee explaining the ethnomusicological and ethnographic attributes of my research. I saw this as an opportunity to negotiate next steps, obtain informed consent, and secure the approval of the head of the Psychiatric Clinic. My first letter was rejected due to “incompleteness of . . . research project” (pers. comm., July 2016). Perhaps this was due to the clinic staff’s inexperience with ethnomusicological and/or ethnographic research (Vrekalić 2017a). I also felt it was an indication of how “[a]n ethnomusicologist is not always readily tolerated in the field” (Nettl [1983] 2005, 220).

I decided to continue pursuing both formal and informal permissions and, if needed, to adjust my methodology in order to secure formal approval. An informal approach proved very important because it included personal communication with clinic personnel, including its music therapist and medical staff. My involvement in a music performance at an art exhibition organized by the patients and the
This informal-formal arena proved vital for establishing better dialogue with the people at the clinic. It was a crucial moment that enabled me to get the formal approval I needed to continue my work.

The process of obtaining informed consent and approval was a huge challenge, and took longer than I expected. While I was waiting, I was nervous and vexed, constantly reflecting upon my research intentions. On the one hand, I think much of my nervousness throughout the whole process emerged from my profound personal desire to reveal the impact of music in this clinical context. On the other hand, I also did not know of many ethnomusicological studies that detailed similar situations—at least not ones that closely mirrored my own experience. Benjamin D. Koen (2009) states that “as medical ethnomusicology expands (including applied research and practice), ethical codes and issues of professional practice will likewise need to expand” (206). Consequently, my experiences, and other field interactions like them, can be used to expand discussions of ethical issues in medical ethnomusicology, which could in turn lead toward a more concrete politics of applied ethics at the core of the field (Vrekalić 2018).

References
As diligent students of fieldwork, we are familiar with the importance of writing and revising precise fieldnotes. Detailed notes are non-negotiable for contemplating field experiences, generating vivid descriptions, and assisting in the long-haul construction of ethnographic texts. Even with robust graduate training and manuals like *The Chicago Guide to Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* in one’s arsenal, it can be difficult to know how to best approach the practice of routinely verbalizing one’s experiences. In addition to having contrasting definitions of what constitutes a fieldnote (Jackson 1990), we often treat notes as secret passages between an experience in the field and polished written work. Pushing against the secret-passage image of fieldnotes, Gregory Barz (2008) reminds us that a note better serves as a fulcrum between field experiences and away-from-field interpretation, rather than as a vessel that conveys from the former to the latter (199–200).

Using speech-to-text software to take fieldnotes can alleviate some writing anxiety surrounding this work. Speech-to-text software (STS), also called dictation or voice recognition software, transforms the user’s spoken text into written text. Some students may already know this from using STS for other purposes—for those with tendon injuries, writing hands-free is a blessing. In preparation for my comprehensive exams in 2016, I developed the unfortunately common injury of tendinitis in both hands and wrists. After a (painful) game of email volley with Accessibility Services, I downloaded Dragon software for no out-of-pocket fee. Even universities with robust free software offerings can refrain from advertising their subscription to Dragon, so some emailing might be required to uncover access. Still, at $300 USD for a subscription, Dragon is expensive and might be difficult to obtain without a tendinitis diagnosis; but Dragon has features that most writers, save those with severe tendon injuries, may care not to use, including features that allow one to use voice commands for a completely touch-free experience. Without these additional features, software comes much cheaper. Alternatives include Braina for PC-users and the Dictate feature on Google Docs (the latter option is a good strategy for storage if you copy the text into a Word or Evernote document for extra safekeeping).

After using STS for writing exams and final papers, I continued using it when I arrived in the field in September 2017. Since many music events take place late at night, it can be daunting to come home to a blank page waiting to display the scintillating details of the night’s events. Instead, talking to one’s computer as if it were an attentive listener can help one unload “headnotes” (Ottenberg 1990) or the important details of an event or conversation that one did not manage to record or jot down, elaborate on cryptic scribbles in the field notebook, and generate a surprising amount of text. It is important to view headnotes as equally important and legitimate as written notes, since they are observations and interpretations in their own right. (It is also worth considering that the context of composing a headnote, namely one that forbids the writer from physically writing down the observation, might indicate the importance of that observation.) Of course, headnotes must be written down as quickly as possible in order to not disappear from memory, especially if the note contains details that might easily be confused days later. In my experience, speaking a headnote aloud into STS allows for quicker transfer of the note from my memory onto the page, lessening the time gap between my observations and writing process.

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Speech-to-Text Software as Field Method . . . continued

Furthermore, because, at least for me, STS takes less physical effort than typing or writing with a pen, I get to it quicker once I have the chance to unload my thoughts at my desk.

This kind of software requires getting used to. While it does record the speaker’s winding rants about their latest fieldwork episode, that rant must also include spoken punctuation: “Next week’s rehearsal will be canceled period. The director had told the band but not the dancers comma, so fifteen minutes were spent in confusion about when the next rehearsal will be dash—maybe twenty period.” Being strategic about punctuation can alleviate this annoyance. A once-over read to add punctuation using hunt-and-peck typing can make this process more natural. In my experience, I cannot be bothered with dictating commas and dashes, so I include them only after dictating a note or thought. Furthermore, STS can interact with other software in frustrating ways. On my MacBook Pro, the script is perfectly fluid in Evernote, each word appearing immediately after dictation. In contrast, in Microsoft Word, sentences only appear one at a time. The lag between speech and text can be disconcerting, and even risky if the software somehow mishears. Some practice makes these little differences less daunting.

After getting accustomed to dictating punctuation and finding the right word processor, writers can enjoy additional benefits from STS that traditional forms do not offer. Many writers communicate less clearly in speech than in writing. Yet redundancy can be generative. Two or three iterations of the same information can help the writer arrive at the crux of the note: something that happened that is important but might get buried under other details. Likewise, repetition is an indulgence that can be difficult to afford when writing on a laptop or with a pen because of the physical effort required. Furthermore, speaking-as-writing can be helpful when one feels too tired to properly jot down important details; and saying details, names, dates, and observations out loud feels less like writing and more like talking to an attentive listener.

Once again, though STS is a helpful tool, it is limited by virtue of relying on patterns of language. The software does not recognize non-English words, creating the challenge of creatively re-configuring important words, such as the names of genres, instruments, and places—I even have to translate names into English! As a native English speaker, I cannot speak to the experience of using software that might routinely misinterpret one’s speech, though Dragon does include some alterations to better suit one’s region, age, and gender, which for many people can be a complicated process. While setting up the software, I had to identify myself as a Northeastern American woman. Misidentification of my speech pattern has led to some problems due to my slight Canadian accent that rounds some otherwise sharpened American vowels. To combat this issue, reading over the notes immediately after writing to clear up any mishearing can foreclose glitches, misunderstandings, or unclear spellings. In this vein, STS works in tandem with traditional writing and thus can be used as an additional tool to get words on the page. While speech-to-text software might not work well for everyone, I nevertheless encourage my fellow graduate students to give it a try and see for themselves if it proves useful—for rested tendons and vibrant fieldnotes.

References
Response to EnYart’s “Music and Conflict Resolution in Israeli-Palestinian Relations”

By Chris Nickell (New York University)

Teresa EnYart’s brief essay, “Music and Conflict Resolution in Israeli-Palestinian Relations,” that appeared in the previous issue of SEM Student News troubled me for several reasons. First, the essay does not include any citations of scholars whose work deals with “music as conflict resolution” in Israel-Palestine, including Nili Belkind (2014), Ben Brinner (2009), and David MacDonald (2013). Additionally, Elaine Sandøval’s (2016) general review of music and peacebuilding would have been germane. The citations EnYart does provide appear somewhat uncritical in this context. For instance, EnYart quotes an excerpt which posits that “global youth culture” might have a salutary effect for youth overcoming divisions. Here it may be pertinent to consider the profit motives of a capitalist music industry that “globalized” such a Euro-American youth culture in the first place, as well as the differential access to such a culture around the world, dependent, for example, upon the color of one’s skin or the amount of money one’s guardians earn.

Second, from a conceptual perspective, the essay presumes a stability in the meaning of terms such as “peace,” “violence,” and “coexistence” that research from the Middle East, including my own (Nickell, forthcoming), has proven illusory. Instructive here could be Sami Hermez’ (2017) recent work probing the nature of violence and war in Lebanon. Likewise, the essay’s deployment of terms like “identity,” “nationalist,” and “ethnic” is conceptually murky. “Identity transformation” seems to me a synonym for “life”; our identities are always transforming through repeated performance whether or not we engage in a “peacemaking and peacebuilding process” (e.g., see Deleuze 1990 and 1994; Butler 1990; Sedgwick [1990] 2008; Muñoz 2009). Furthermore, given the complexity of both Palestinian and Israeli historical claims to nationhood, it is theoretically ineffective to casually reference nationalist identities in scholarship on this region. Instead of signaling “ethnic” differences that recycle a false dichotomy between Arabs and Jews, EnYart might usefully consult the scholarship of Ella Shohat (2003) and others who have gone to great lengths to debunk this dichotomy by exploring the lifeworlds of Mizrahim as second-class citizens within the state of Israel.

These issues, which might otherwise be attributed to the challenges of writing about a complex topic in a limited amount of space, take on greater import in light of political context: both the continued violence along the Gaza border and the US government’s perverse reneging on promised payments to UNRWA as a bargaining chip to get Palestinians to return to a so-called “peace process.” Any discussion of music’s role in peacemaking or conflict resolution in Israel-Palestine must reckon with this complex machine, of which music is but a small cog. To not engage this topic critically is to reinscribe the hegemony of the globalized non-profit industrial complex as a neoliberal stop-gap for shrinking states, one that dictates conditions of agency while re-subjecting already subjugated peoples to Euro-American ideas of how peace should look—and sound.

References


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Response to EnYart’s “Music and Conflict Resolution in Israeli-Palestinian Relations”

By Teresa EnYart (Liberty University)

Chris Nickell’s response to my article raises legitimate points of concern. I too would have liked to address some of these points, but I unfortunately could not due to the limited space. Because of this, I offered a brief overview of my research and fieldwork on the subject of music and conflict resolution in Israel. This was also in no way an attempt to discredit any previous work done by scholars on the subject matter. I wrote the article in a way that I, as a reader, would want to be informed of something new and yet to be published, rather than offering a literature review of work that is readily accessible.

In my complete thesis (EnYart 2018), I acknowledge Belkind, Brinner, and MacDonald, as well as several other foundational scholars in this field. I also clearly define terms, such as various “types” of peace that may exist in the Middle East. I also distinguish between racial, ethnic, and nationalistic terms while explaining various communities, including the Mizrahim. The Mizrahim hold a very interesting and critical position as they can be classified as both Jew and Arab. Furthermore, and because of limited space, I generalized nationalist and ethnic identities in this article. I do agree with Nickell that defining such terms is important, and I have done so within the space that my thesis allowed. Considering the above, I will touch on a couple of Nickell’s concerns here.

First, I agree that our identities are always transforming even though we are not in the “peacemaking and peacebuilding process,” but it is how they are transforming that is in question. As Thomas Turino (2008) states, “[a]n important variable in the dynamics of identity formation is whether we are interested in differentiating ourselves from or uniting ourselves with those that we are interacting with” (104). In addition, nationalist identity must be addressed for several reasons, one being that it often conflicts with a shared cultural past (and identity), which becomes an important point in identity deconstruction or transformation. Quoting from my thesis:

Most cultural utterances, such as music, typically originate from popular forms developed either long before today’s national boundaries were drawn, or among groups of people sharing the same musical preferences...This means that cultural identity has a direct bearing on the music itself, and the musical context in which it exists. This also means that an individual can have more than one cultural identity, and it might be that the global multicultural person of today is characterized by having the possibility of and ability to choose and change between several cultural identities (Folkestad 2017, 123).

There are also social constructionist theories that believe that we are constantly developing or expanding our identities through interactions with others; therefore, we don’t have a core identity but many identities. . . .

In social constructionist terms, identities are also always evolving and shifting—each interaction can

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Rejoinder

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lead to new constructions . . . music is a fundamental channel of communication, and we argue that it can act as a medium through which people can construct new identities and shift existing ones in the same way as spoken language. The continual construction and reconstruction of the self through autobiographical narratives can occur in music as well as in language (MacDonald, Hargreaves, and Miell 2002, 10). . . .

Whether it’s a musical identity overlapping with a new global cultural identity, or an ever-evolving one as the social constructionist state, there must be one that includes the “other” as a part of the process. (EnYart 2018, 76)

Furthermore, Nickell mentions that it is “ineffective to casually reference nationalist identities.” Considering my prior education in conflict resolution that heavily focused on nationalism, from which my current research grew, nationalist identities became a very relevant point of reference for me. The deconstruction of the nationalist mindset (identity) was just one launching point for my research. Therefore, talking about nationalist identity was obviously essential, particularly because it was a key theme for participants and organizers at the Let’s Talk Music project (Gilboa 2016). I may have “casually” mentioned it in the article but that was again because of the piece’s brevity.

Lastly, Nickell implies that perhaps Euro-American ideas of peace should be withheld as an option for the Israelis and Palestinians. While I agree that other forms of colonialism and hegemony should be avoided, considering that many Israeli citizens are immigrants from Europe and the United States, Euro-American ideas cannot be completely excluded. This is part of the situation’s complexity, and it is up to those involved to decide which approach works for them. If this happens to be Euro-American ideas, something else, or a combination of the two, then so be it.

References


If you would like to write an article in response to this or a previous issue of SEM Student News, or something else in the world of ethnomusicology, please contact the editor at semstudentnews@gmail.com to discuss your ideas.
What Can One Learn in Gamelan Ensemble in One Semester?

A Performative Ethnography\textsuperscript{1} of a World Music Ensemble

By Wangcaixuan (Rosa) Zhang (University of Pittsburgh)

The 1950s marked the establishment of ethnomusicology as a discipline in United States universities. In conjunction with Mantle Hood’s concept of “bi-musicality,” world music ensembles (WMEs) became part of ethnomusicology university programs to allow students to explore the music of the “Other.” Although these ensembles promote a decolonized attitude\textsuperscript{2} toward understanding the “Other,” constrained within a Western university setting, they end up encouraging students to approach the “Other” with a colonized gaze. Through a performative ethnography as an ensemble member, performer, and researcher in the Sundanese gamelan ensemble at the University of Pittsburgh in both Fall 2017 and Spring 2018, this article re-visits how we teach WMEs and questions what representations of the “Other” we are passing on to our students. This, I argue, serves as a good starting point for unfolding the politics of representation within ethnomusicology today.

End of Term Open House—What Have We Taught?

At the end of Fall 2017, the gamelan ensemble held its final event, an open house concert/workshop, through which I conducted a final evaluation of what had been taught over the course of one semester. Unlike a traditional Euro-American concert setting where the audience was separated from the performers, this open house event invited the audience to engage with the instruments, music, and musicians, asking the members to demonstrate musically and verbally what they had been taught by the instructor.

Observing their demonstrations during the workshop session, I could ascertain that each of the members had internalized the music in their own ways and were able to confidently communicate their understandings and learning processes to the audience members. Sitting next to the kendang player, Maddie, I overheard her conveying how she, as a player with no percussion training, learned and engaged with the instrument to guide a non-musician audience member. Instead of counting in her head, she instructed the girl to clap the empty beats with her right hand in order to guide her left, while following the sound of the jengglong as a sonic cue. In short, in one semester, Maddie had internalized the pieces that we had learned and developed her own approach to playing them.

In addition, from the way ensemble members “tutored” the audience, I noticed a deeper appreciation for gamelan that was not apparent at the beginning of the semester. For example, Dan, a student member who had previously indicated his fear of peking as the “fastest” instrument (pers. comm., September 14, 2017), was demonstrating the peking for an audience member. He began by explaining the peking as interlocking with the panerus, and played while illustrating the damping technique. “It is not easy. It is much more difficult than it looks,” Dan suggested as he eagerly encouraged the audience member to try it out for himself. “The interlocking might not come to your ear at first, but once it [does], the melody makes much more sense.” In learning more about the instrument and its function, Dan not only conquered his insecurities but was able to play the peking and, more significantly, was more informed when listening to the instrument, thus appreciating, instead of being overwhelmed by, its complexity.

Demonstrating musical understandings of and appreciation for gamelan was not the only thing I witnessed during the open house. All of the members made time to arrive beforehand to help with the heavy lifting and rearranging of the instruments. We shared food and stories before the performance started, and the night ended with some more heavy lifting. Although it had been a long evening, everyone helped and the deep sense of community was memorable and palpable.

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What Can One Learn in Gamelan Ensemble in One Semester?

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So, What Are Students Learning?

What did the gamelan students think of their experience as members of the ensemble? In the end-of-semester survey that I distributed to undergraduate members, one of the questions asked them about the most memorable thing that they had learned throughout the course. The responses were personal yet consistent with the three aspects above, namely gaining musical understanding, building appreciation, and learning to be members of an ensemble. Rodica, another student, was surprised by the feeling of playing gamelan music, saying

Gamelan ensemble created a very therapeutic environment which I immensely enjoyed. This course simultaneously created a feeling of focus and relaxation as you were prompted to follow your instrumental part and tune into different instrumental parts within the ensemble.

Maddie emphasized how she was not confident with musical instruments before but this course reconstructed her assurance by creating a safe space for learning and embodying a different kind of music:

The most memorable moment happened probably when playing the bonang “clicked” for me. I was very nervous because I didn’t think I’d be good at it and it looked so overwhelming. The class and the instructor was so supportive, so when I went into class and played it well after practice it felt really good.

Dan also mentioned his learning experience of participating in an ensemble, stating

I feel that since I have taken this course, I learned more about the expectations of working in an ensemble, as well as what to listen for, which very importantly includes considering another instrumentalist’s function in the group.

Though each students’ experiences and interpretations of the gamelan course differed, the growth of musical knowledge in Sundanese gamelan was evident through just one semester. Their newfound confidence in playing Sundanese gamelan, along with developing their techniques, enhanced musical understandings and appreciations as well as ensemble consciousness. However, what understandings of the “Other” are we disseminating through the WMEs courses? What are we missing in our teaching?

What Are We Missing in Our Teaching?

When I asked about essentialization and cultural appropriation, which are historically associated with WMEs, the students’ faces went blank. They could not connect WMEs with essentialization, despite abundant examples throughout the course. For one, the repertoire of this course changed little from semester to semester. This is to say, the students were only introduced to a specific volume of pieces from a specific period. Although these limitations, oftentimes the result of framing WMEs as one-semester-long courses, may not be deliberate, they nevertheless result in the reduction and essentialization of Sundanese gamelan over time. This is compounded by overgeneralization displayed in a Fall 2017 concert poster (see figure below). By titling the program “Sounds of Indonesia,” and presenting merely one type of gamelan music from West Java, the concert was subtly constructing the impression that Sundanese gamelan represented Indonesian music. While the students were aware of the fact that gamelan music is one of many musical practices in Indonesia, they were unaware of the implications of performing gamelan music as the “sounds of Indonesia” to a larger audience.

While the students were aware of the fact that gamelan music is one of many musical practices in Indonesia, they were unaware of the implications of performing gamelan music as the “sounds of Indonesia” to a larger audience.

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Instead of problematizing this issue, the course simply avoided such inquiry. Although we covered the history of gamelan and some cultural facts about Indonesia in the first class, the history of WMEs, which are based on a colonialist approach of “collecting” different musics from around the world, was never mentioned. The end-of-semester survey that I took in the Spring 2018 gamelan likewise demonstrated this “collecting” approach. When I asked about the purpose of having WMEs, particularly gamelan ensembles, in our university curriculum, one of the students responded “exposure to music and culture we wouldn’t have otherwise.” Instead of clearly showing enthusiasm or appreciation for the opportunity to learn about (and practice) another musical culture, this answer is rather ambivalent, both acknowledging the precious opportunity while also suggesting that this is not strongly needed. This response implies a Eurocentric view that learning about other cultures is not necessary yet alludes to a “we do it because we can” attitude, reflective of cultural exploitation and appropriation. If we, as ethnomusicologists and WME instructors, do not start confronting serious problems like cultural appropriation and essentialization, WME courses will continuously define the “Other” in essentialized ways, further reinforcing “Western” hegemony and colonizing power (Smith 2007).

However, mindfully discussing and evaluating the colonial baggage of WMEs can become a good entry point to begin deconstructing colonialist understandings. Though the notion that WMEs are colonial may be unsettling, and may disrupt the fun of new musical experiences, we and the students need to know what is at stake here. I suggest that an introduction to the history of WMEs and additional discussion sessions devoted to this topic might be good places to start, encouraging further inquiry and raising awareness of cultural appropriation, essentialization, and colonialist views of the “Other.” To take gamelan ensemble as an example, an instructor could introduce both the history of WMEs and the musical culture in Indonesia in the first meeting, pointing out how musical cultures may be essentialized in the context of WMEs and build a foundational understanding for future discussions.

“Tradition is not about slavish imitation,” Alan Bishop, the CEO of Sublime Frequencies, stated when asked about “respect” in the world music industry. “The last thing I want to see is a bunch of . . . white guys playing Javanese gamelon [sic] proper. . . . They are being disrespectful because they are not evolving the situation. They are not rolling the dice” (Davis 2004). His comment ruthlessly points out some of the key issues associated with
What Can One Learn in Gamelan Ensemble in One Semester?

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WMEs in the university setting. However, if we teach the history of WMEs, and problematize them throughout the course, their troublesome framework may encourage us toward a decolonized future by understanding the colonized past.

Endnotes
1. I borrow the term “performative ethnography” from Deborah Wong (2008).
2. The introduction on the official web page for the University of Pittsburgh’s gamelan ensemble states that “Participants in the gamelan program are encouraged to use Sundanese processes of learning as much as possible; oral transmission of musical parts is preferred over written notation. . . . [E]vents are intended to increase the community’s awareness of Indonesian performing arts and culture.” According to this introduction, rather than showcase one’s mastery in different musical cultures, the ensemble aims to understand Indonesian culture through an emic perspective and to use this knowledge to help promote Indonesian culture in local communities.

References

SEM Student Union Blog
The SEM Student Union (SU) is composed of the society’s student membership and serves as a resource and voice for students in the society. In this blog, we share our experiences of music, education, and life. Please join us and share your musical stories at semstudentunion.wordpress.com, and email us at semsublog@gmail.com.

The SU Blog also features a variety of series, including:
- Ethnomusicology and Parenthood
- In Discipline: Talks from the European Side
- From the Field
- Textbook Review
- Ethnomusicology Student Groups
I write during the first round of presidential elections in Brazil, between candidates Jair Bolsonaro and Fernando Haddad. Bolsonaro, a congressman with a military background and openly racist, chauvinist, conservative, and xenophobic opinions, runs as a member of the right-winged Social Liberal Party (PSL). Backed by the army, landowners, Evangelical church leaders, and businessmen, Bolsonaro leads most public opinion polls, incarnating the idea of a national savior. Haddad, ex-mayor of São Paulo and Education Minister, runs as a member of the leftist Workers Party (PT). Although widely credited with raising living standards for the poorest in the country and projecting Brazil onto an international political and economic stage, the party is also associated with corruption scandals and Brazil’s present economic and political crisis.

It was during PT’s first term (2002–2006) that Brazil, ascending in its importance within the South American and international political sphere, was appointed with the task of leading a United Nations mission (MINUSTAH) to “stabilize” Haiti after Jean-Bertrand Aristides’ ousting in 2004. The approximation between the countries would later contribute to an unprecedented migration wave of Haitians to Brazil, after the 2010 earthquake in Port-au-Prince. A perceived cultural proximity between Haitian and Brazilians, the benefits of a strong economy, the leadership of MINUSTAH and PT’s creation of a special humanitarian visa for Haitian immigrants are some of the elements that factored into Haitians’ decisions to migrate to Brazil (Uebel 2015; Audebert 2017).

Since 2017, I have been conducting fieldwork with Haitian immigrant artists in Southern Brazil, research that resulted in a master’s thesis in ethnomusicology concluded last April (Santos 2018). As a consequence of that work, I continue to participate in WhatsApp groups created and maintained by these migrant musicians, where Haitians living in various parts of the country showcase their musical production, exchange ideas about music and life in Brazil, pass along job offers and flight ticket promotions, amongst other things. Within the group Artistas Haitianos no Brasil (“Haitian Artists in Brazil”), many members made public their dismay at the possibility of a Bolsonaro victory, sharing videos, news, memes, and testimonies of uneasiness in growing frequency as election day drew near.

In the midst of the presidential elections, a music video clip by Haitian group Surprise69 began circulating in those groups, its title “Lula livre” (Free Lula). Surprise69 is a rap kreyòl and reggae group formed by Mariolove, Elnegroflow, and RealBlack, artistic names of three Haitians immigrant artists living in São Paulo. According to its members, Surprise69 aims to help Haitian immigrants within and outside Brazil through art, encouraging them to pursue their dreams and vocations. Through WhatsApp, I interviewed MarioLove and Elnegroflow, who offered a written statement about their song for inclusion in this article. Due to its length, I include the original Portuguese and a translation of their main assertions:

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Surprise69’s logo.

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Haitian-Immigrant Artists and the Political Aesthetic of Migration

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É pra apoiar o Brasil e especialmente Luís Inácio Lula da Silva que é um grande herói, um político que foi preso inocentemente como Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela por lutar por uma pátria. O PT pegou o Brasil em 2002 quebrado, devendo ao o FMI, pagou a dívida, aonde o povo brasileiro não tinha direito a uma faculdade a uma vivência boa, a um carro popular, a um emprego na classe alta. Lula quebrou toda essa barreira colocou pobre na sociedade igual a rico, a taxa de desemprego era menor e a economia do brasil estava boa, o real tava quase igual ao dólar no governo da Dilma. . . . Não queremos rivalidade, desigualdade, queremos que os brasileiros tenham possibilidade de fazer coisa melhor que brigar entre nós. Precisamos de união porque somos uma só bandeira, uma só pátria, pelo que Lula sempre lutou. O partido PSL que foi eleito diz que tem muito câmbio pro Brasil: realmente claro que ele tem muito câmbio para o Brasil, tirando direito dos pobres (décimo terceiro, bolsa família, INSS, aposentadoria).

We did it to support Brazil and specially Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, who is a great hero, a politician wrongfully arrested like Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, for fighting for a nation. PT assumed a government with the state financially broken, owing to the IMF (but paid the debt), and where the Brazilian people didn’t have opportunity to go to college, to a good living, a popular vehicle, or good paying jobs like the elites. Lula broke this barrier, made poor people the same as rich people, lowered unemployment rates, the economy was good, the Brazilian Real (BRL) was almost the same as the US Dollar in Dilma’s government. . . . We don’t want rivalry, inequality, we want Brazilians to have something more than just fighting amongst us. We need union because we’re one flag and nation, what Lula always fought for. The elected party, PSL, says it has many changes for Brazil, and indeed, it does: to take away the rights of the poor people, social benefits, and make the rich richer.

The “Lula livre” video starts with excerpts of a political speech by Lula along with images of the political leader. It proceeds with footage from PT’s previous and current political advertising campaigns throughout its entirety, along with short glimpses of Elnegroflow and Mariolove (see figure on next page). Just before singing begins, we hear Lula saying “a doença pior que existe na humanidade é o preconceito” (the worst disease in mankind
Haitian-Immigrant Artists and the Political Aesthetic of Migration

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is prejudice). The beat is a mixture between a breakdance drum riff and a dance style song, and the lyrics address the desire for a better society in Brazil, including one without racial prejudice—as Uebel has shown, a racializing gaze is preponderant on mediatic and mainstream discourse about black migrants in Brazil (Uebel 2015). The chorus directly references the upcoming election, inciting Brazilians to make a vote for change, a vote for Fernando Haddad: "Vamos, vamos brasileiros! Vamos votar Haddad!" (Come on, come on Brazilians! Let’s vote Haddad!). Hosted on Surprise69’s Youtube channel and Facebook page, the video has not received many views and has remained primarily within virtual networks of the Haitian diaspora. Nonetheless, it contributes to a significant portion of Haitian immigrant music-making in Brazil that deals with migration and the specific conditions faced by Haitians as black labor migrants in Brazil (see Santos 2018). Amongst previous examples of politically inclined music-making by Haitian immigrants in Brazil, songs such as "Ayisyen kite lakay (Brain Drain)" by Alix Georges and “Immigrant Life (I Need a Girlfriend)” by Dady Sémale highlight the plights of the Haitian people and the challenges of migration.

Albeit marginal in the present political disputes, “Lula livre” can be viewed as a grassroots demonstration of support for a PT candidate by Haitian migrants responding to: 1) the newly implemented immigration policy; 2) the politics of cultural diversity financed during PT’s government; and 3) to PT’s fight for social justice through a championing of the lower classes in Brazilian society. While direct political participation of Haitian

... “Lula livre” can be viewed as a grassroots demonstration of support for a PT candidate by Haitian migrants responding to: 1) the newly implemented immigration policy; 2) the politics of cultural diversity financed during PT’s government; and 3) to PT’s fight for social justice through a championing of the lower classes in Brazilian society.
Haitian-Immigrant Artists and the Political Aesthetic of Migration

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immigrants, and specifically artists, in Brazilian society is not a pronounced phenomenon (as with their musical production and lives, it is severely ghettoized), their political positioning through communication networks, digital media, and music-making is evidence of the political aesthetics of migration (Bohlman 2011), through their struggle to be seen and heard. In a moment when the political climate has become increasingly polarized and intolerance has risen—supporters of Bolsonaro have promoted acts of violence during the campaign, mainly aiming at Afro-Brazilians, PT supporters, and LGBTQ individuals, including one confirmed homicide—Haitian artists’ position as black immigrants in Brazil presents an intersection of racism and discrimination against non-citizens. Despite the fact that migrants are not allowed to vote, and that Bolsonaro’s discourse legitimates xenophobic and racist attitudes, Surprise69’s song demonstrates how some Haitian artists strive to place themselves politically through their musical creation, demonstrating their will to participate politically in Brazilian society. As scholars, including Gage Averill (1994, 1997) and Elizabeth McAllister (2000, 2011) have pointed out in different contexts, the political engagement of Haitian musicians throughout the history of popular music in Haiti and the Haitian diaspora remains a distinctive trait of Haitian culture.

Postscript

On the day prior to the final elections, I went to visit Haitian friends at Btag Studio P.Swark, a Haitian (home) studio in the nearby city of Canoas and the life project of Haitian rap kreyòl artists and cousins Jocelyn Preval and Akim Merissant Dorvilus. The elections came up in our conversation and Jocelyn seemed upset with the expected victory of Jair Bolsonaro and concern for recent immigrants: “A gente não sabe como vai ser, pra nós” (“We don’t know how it’s going to be, for us”). When preliminary poll results started broadcasting on TV and the internet, Bolsonaro’s victory was already foreseeable. Immediately, members of Artistas Haitianos no Brasil started sending screenshots of the results and photos of media coverage. Someone even commented humorously on the low price of plane tickets from São Paulo to Port-au-Prince as a good opportunity for leaving Brazil now that Bolsonaro had won.

Despite the fact that the new president-elect has not yet taken office, official announcements of future measures and government officials have already proven some of his central campaign slogans false. Although posing himself as a politically neutral and incorruptible official committed to “cleaning” the country of corruption (“limpar” o país da corrupção)—“Meu partido é o Brasil” (My party is Brazil) was a popular campaign motto, as well as “Brasil acima de tudo! Deus acima de todos!” (Brazil above everything! God above everyone!)—Bolsonaro has appointed Onyx Lorenzoni, a confessed and judicially charged corrupt congressman, and federal judge Sérgio Moro, the same judge responsible for imprisoning Lula without clear proof of the alleged charges, as future ministers. Yet, as “Lula livre” demonstrates, within the noisy and heated political debate taking place in Brazil, Haitian immigrant artists make their voices heard through their music.

Endnotes

1. Tropes of nationalism, authoritarianism, morality, and Christian righteousness are woven into Bolsonaro’s platform.

Yet, as “Lula livre” demonstrates, within the noisy and heated political debate taking place in Brazil, Haitian immigrant artists make their voices heard through their music.

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3. Though not the only, nor the most implicated, political party in these investigations, PT has somehow paid the price for occupying the highest political post in the country, and for encouraging investigations of corruption by government officials. Driven away from power since 2002, the right-wing parties in Brazil took advantage of economic recession and indications of corruption by PT politicians. Along with powerful sectors of the media, these right-leaning groups succeeded in fostering growing political polarization. They turned PT into a synonym for corruption, first managing to impeach (on questionable legal grounds) president Dilma Roussef in 2016, and later by arresting ex-president and candidate Lula in 2018.

4. Likewise, since Lula’s imprisonment, Brazilian musicians have organized events that bring together music and left-wing political activism; the most significant of these being the “Festival Lula livre” (Free Lula Festival), which took place in Rio de Janeiro on July 28, 2018. The act brought thousands of people together in the city’s center and featured MPB (Brazilian popular music) stars such as Gilberto Gil and Chico Buarque—artists strongly associated with the fight against military dictatorship in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

5. You can find a video clip introducing the band at http://haitiaqui.com/surprise-69/ and visit them at facebook.com/surprise69tvvon.

References


In my first year of graduate school, I was given an assignment no doubt familiar to many ethnomusicology students. We were asked to find a published musical transcription and present it to our ethnomusicology seminar. Wandering the second floor of Wesleyan’s Olin Library, I chose books at random from the ML3500–3800 range and flipped through their pages. In this way, I stumbled upon *The Usarufas and Their Music* (1979) by Vida Chenoweth. What immediately caught my eye were the copious musical examples and diagrams that fill the book’s second half. For each song sample, Chenoweth offers two notations in Western staff, one “emic” and one “etic.” Even more unusually, she constructs “flow diagrams” meant to demonstrate the “melodic syntax” of Usarufa music. As Chenoweth explains, “The diagrams were designed as a practical tool for any foreigner wanting to compose idiomatic melodies in an unfamiliar music system” (1979, 155). But under what circumstances would a “foreigner” need or want to compose such a melody? Trying to answer that question led me to something wholly unfamiliar: **ethnodoxology**, a practice in which techniques of ethnomusicology become tools for the Christian missionary. This concept, often theorized within the bounds of academic institutions, has serious political implications: internally for our discipline and externally for the way ethnomusicology is seen in the world at large.

The publisher listed on Chenoweth’s title page held a clue: SIL Museum of Anthropology. SIL, I learned, stands for the Summer Institute of Linguistics, which was founded in 1934 and closely linked to the Wycliffe Bible Translators, an Evangelical Christian missionary organization (Stoll 1982, 4). The organization’s goal was to translate the Bible into all possible languages, a dream that drove missionaries to remote corners of the world. Throughout its existence, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (today known as SIL International) has faced criticism on several fronts. Anthropologists have assailed SIL for its disingenuous claims to objective research (Hvalkof and Aaby 1981), its entanglement with oppressive political regimes, and its deleterious effects on Indigenous communities. From its first expeditions in Mexico (Hartch 2006), SIL was heavily invested in different countries in Latin America, where it frequently found itself caught between the interests of rival political factions. In these and other locations, SIL maintained relationships with Indigenous communities that have been interpreted as positive—bringing clean water and health care to neglected regions—and deeply negative, as in the highly critical account *Thy Will Be Done* (Colby and Dennett 1995).

The chief scholarly contribution of SIL came from its long-time president Kenneth Pike, who developed the concepts of *emic* and *etic* (Pike 1967), which had widespread influence in anthropology (Harris 1964) and ethnomusicology (Feld 1974; Rice 1980; Baumann 1993). Although SIL-trained fieldworkers published ethnographies as well as linguistic studies, music does not seem to have been an important focus. In fact, an anthropologist observing SIL workers in Peru in 1973 sardonically proposed that “there is a quiet conspiracy afoot to replace Amuesha music and dance with lifeless hymns and disfigured folk songs” (Smith 1981, 124). But this is where Vida Chenoweth comes back in. Reading her book, I had wondered why there were so many charts...
explaining how to compose idiomatic Usarufa melodies. Now I had the answer: she was writing hymns! Although her scholarly texts (1972, 1979) make little to no mention either of her Bible translations or her hymn-writing, she tended to present her work differently to explicitly Christian outlets. In a 1984 article for *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* titled “Spare Them Western Music!,” Chenoweth lays out her philosophy:

God speaks through every language and every music system, regardless of whether the missionary has an aesthetic response to it. The Lord can bring any language or any music system into captivity. When he does, the rules of grammar will not change, but rather what is said. (1984, 31)

All kinds of music-making, Chenoweth goes on to say, “can and should be vehicles of prayer and praise.”

Chenoweth created a method now known as ethnodoxology, a term coined in 1997 by the missionary David Hall. With Paul Neeley, an ethnomusicologist, he developed the most commonly cited definition of ethnodoxology: “the theological and practical study of how and why people of diverse cultures praise and glorify the true and living God as revealed in the Bible” (Aniol et al. 2015, 3). A perusal of websites like that of the International Council of Ethnodoxologists (worldofworship.org) suggests that far from a disinterested “study” of “how and why,” ethnodoxology is primarily positioned as a tool for the creation and implementation of Christian worship in non-Western cultures. Along the lines of Chenoweth’s Usarufa hymn-writing, ethnodoxologists consider the careful formal study of a people’s music (instrumentation, scale intervals, rhythmic structure) a necessary prerequisite to helping those people perform Christian worship in their native language and in something that sounds like their own music. We see here the continued application of Pike’s emic-etic framework. As linguist Jon Landabaru argues, this theory is “best adapted to its missionary practice . . . the Indian has the form, the missionary has the content. The missionary has the truth, the Indian provides the form of expression” (cited in Stoll 1982, 252). This epistemic framework equally applies to ethnodoxology. The local music culture is important to study not for its own sake but as a vessel, empty and waiting to be filled with the Christian message. When viewed from this angle, the very idea of emic and etic—which itself reifies a Cartesian dualism of mind and body, spirit and matter—takes on a theological cast as another enactment of the Protestant doctrine of faith alone: it’s what’s inside that counts.

The development of ethnodoxology has not gone completely unnoticed by ethnomusicologists, even if the term is likely unfamiliar to most of us. A contentious dialogue in the pages of *European Meetings in Ethnomusicology* between John Bellarmine Vallier (2003a, 2003b), on one side, and Brian Schrag and Neil Coulter (2003), on the other, lays out some of the ethical consequences of missionaries using the techniques and even the name of ethnomusicology. Even so, I argue, it is important to spread more broadly an awareness of the history and continued relevance of ethnodoxology, especially as it touches upon institutional politics and changes in higher education. To my knowledge, at least two programs listed in *SEM’s Guide to Programs in Ethnomusicology* have faculty who embrace ethnodoxology as part of their research. These are the master’s in world arts at the Graduate Institute of Applied Linguistics (GIAL), which developed directly out of SIL (Ross...
2003), and Liberty University’s master’s in ethnomusicology. Like SIL, GIAL does not foreground its missionary connection, instead relying on the word *applied* to do some heavy lifting.³

Liberty University’s program, which started in 2009, is one of the newest to be listed in SEM’s guide. As an institution, Liberty holds a unique position in American life, having been founded in 1971 by Jerry Falwell, the fundamentalist preacher whose group Moral Majority helped align Evangelical Christianity with the Republican Party. Students at Liberty are expected to adhere to a strict honor code representing conservative Christian values. Increasingly, however, Liberty has shifted more and more to online degree programs, meaning that fewer students, especially in graduate programs, experience these restrictions on behavior and conduct. A recent *New York Times Magazine* article gives a sense of the scale of Liberty’s online operation—over 80,000 online students as of last year—as well as the massive profits that come from being a tax-exempt religious institution managed like a for-profit college.

I spoke recently with a graduate of Liberty’s program to get a better sense of ethnodoxology’s place in the academy. They explained that Chenoweth’s *Melodic Perception and Analysis* (1972) is a central text in some courses, and that only a few of their colleagues expressed an interest in future missionary work. Professors in the program appear sensitive to critiques of missionary work like Michelle Kisliuk’s (1998, 149–66), though it seems that they may view ethnodoxology as a more humane (not to mention effective) means of musical evangelizing than forced adherence to Protestant hymnody. Online programs like Liberty’s have the potential to offer advanced study to people who work full-time or are limited by geography or other accessibility concerns. While increased access is to be celebrated, we must maintain awareness of the intertwined political and religious missions of academic institutions. Although ethnomusicologists may not rely on data sourced by SIL fieldworkers to the extent that linguists do (Dobrin 2009), the practice of ethnodoxology in remote places may affect our discipline’s image in ways we cannot predict. If the future of higher education increasingly rests in online courses, we must face the reality that the first Google result for an interested student could be an ethnomusicology implicated in the work of musical missionaries.

Endnotes
1. Reviews of her work in the journal *Ethnomusicology* (Herndon 1974; Feld 1980) are likewise mute on the subject of her Christian mission. Indeed, the Southern Plains Chapter of SEM offers the Vida Chenoweth Prize to the best student paper at its annual meeting, again without mentioning her religious activity ([https://semspc.music.unt.edu/vida-chenoweth-prize](https://semspc.music.unt.edu/vida-chenoweth-prize)).
2. As of September 1, 2018, GIAL has been incorporated into a new institution called *Dallas International University*.
3. Indeed, one of the few mainstream scholarly publications to feature the work of a prominent ethnodoxologist, Brian Schrag, is the *Oxford Handbook of Applied Ethnomusicology* (Schrag 2015). Schrag’s chapter does not address contemporary missionary activities, neither his own nor that of others.

References


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Vessels of Song


**Extended Resource Lists**

Check out our collection of resources on SEM’s website and at [semsn.com](http://semsn.com). These include:

- **Music and Politics**
- **Sound and Sensory Studies**
- **Reading, Decolonizing**
- **Navigating the Job Market**
- **Music and Diaspora**
- **Music, Medicine, Health, and Cognition**

Did we miss something? Contact us with your comments and suggestions at [semstudentnews@gmail.com](mailto:semstudentnews@gmail.com). We will be happy to add citations and resources to the online versions of our resource lists.
Politics & Music II
An Annotated Bibliography

By Wangcaixuan (Rosa) Zhang (University of Pittsburgh)

In the last issue of SEM Student News, asking the question “Who Cares About Ethnomusicology?”, Kevin Sliwoski addressed our field’s lack of recognition within academia and among the general public. Claiming that poor naming and branding are at the center of the issue, he suggested that SEM should take more initiative in lobbying, promoting ethnomusicology, and increasing public outreach. This resolution is akin to a marketing strategy, but would it really win us more appreciation in academic conversations? In 2014, Jocelyne Guilbault published an article discussing our field’s lack of recognition. She writes, “the difficulty is that ethnomusicology to a large extent continues to be viewed by those from many of the disciplines from which it borrows in the arts, humanities, and social sciences as contributing little theory of its own” (321). She asks us to step outside of our musical comfort zone and produce political work that shows “it is as productive to think about music as it is to think about elections, other sectors of industry, the mediation of labor relations, or exploitative systems for the production of difference” (323–24). Moreover, Guilbault states that we have to make such work more visible by presenting it in interdisciplinary journals and other platforms. However, “the contributions that ethnomusicology can bring to critical theory must first be clarified in our own work” (ibid.) in order to facilitate such reciprocal exchanges. That is to say, to gain more recognition within and outside of academia, the answer is more ethnomusical works contributing to critical theory.

Judging from the music and politics resource list that I gathered for the last issue of Student News, there appears to be a substantial amount of political discussion in (ethno)musicological scholarship. However, has a large volume of publications regarding music and politics yielded us more recognition? If not, is this truly due to a neglect of branding, or to the fact that we are not challenging ourselves enough to make original contributions to critical theory? These are questions for which I have no answers but they remain essential for every individual in the field to ponder. In light of Guilbault’s suggestion, I have highlighted several works that push the boundaries of and offer insight on critical theory in music scholarship.

Selected Annotated Bibliography

Borschke, Margie. 2017. This Is Not a Remix: Piracy, Authenticity and Popular Music. New York: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional. Borschke explores the political economy of recorded music in digital networks and how this has influenced our perceptions regarding the recordings, scenes, and histories of popular music culture. Integrating methodologies from media technology, cultural studies, and ethnographic works, Borschke investigates the concept of copying—both the production of copies and the poetics of copying in material, rhetorical, social, cultural and aesthetic dimensions—to understand the process of cultural production through today’s “remix culture.” Borschke questions how and why ideas of authenticity remain essential in the context of “remix culture” where copies and copying are populated. By investigating the intricate relationship between media and culture, this book provides new perspectives on the cultural politics of intellectual property in the digital epoch.

Chávez, Alex E. 2017. Sounds of Crossing: Music, Migration, and the Aural Poetics of Huapango Arribeño. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Chávez not only presents the first extensive literature on huapango arribeño, a vernacular music from the state of Guanajuato in Mexico, but also sheds some new light on the lives of Mexican migrants and understandings of borders and borderlands. Through the lens of huapango arribeño, Chávez takes the audience into the lives of marginalized Mexican migrants in various regions. By illustrating their struggles and their calling to continue to make music no matter which side of the US-Mexico border

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they are on, Chávez vividly and convincingly maps out the “web of aesthetics, politics, sensate experience, past histories and social memory” (23) of Mexican migrants in a personal yet compelling way. Focusing on musico-poetics, Chávez argues that huapango arribeño, instead of simply being a traditional music genre from Mexico, is a creative embodiment of “social and individual engagements with the US-Mexico transnational social and political-economic formation” (19), which helps facilitate the musical creation of collective memory, and more importantly, provides a transnational soundscape that re-spatializes the lives of migrants across borders.

Daughtry, J. Martin. 2015. *Listening to War: Sound, Music, Trauma and Survival in Wartime Iraq*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Based on years of ethnographic work with US military service members in Iraq, Daughtry reveals how sound, as a source of both information and trauma, influences people’s lives through their ears, their bodies, and their psyches. Highlighting the affective power of sound and the emotions and agency of individuals, Daughtry offers a fresh framework—“belliphonic” (5)—for thinking about trauma and violence through sound, challenging pre-existing correlations between listening and aesthetic experience. By contributing a new perspective on understandings of war, trauma, and violence through music and sound, *Listening to War* showcases the productive potential of thinking about music in the context of war, offering an example of what Guilbault has promoted for the field. All readers from ethnomusicology, sound studies, war studies, and psychology should be interested in this work.

Koskoff, Ellen. 2014. *A Feminist Ethnomusicology: Writings on Music and Gender*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press. Through personal anecdotes of her journey in academia, Koskoff offers an accessible and engaging critical history and reassessment of ethnomusicology. By tracing the historical intersections of feminism, gender, and music, Koskoff aims to “inspire readers to question and critique various assumptions about these intersections,” and to help “those who question to feel more comfortable about leaving many issues unresolved” (10). Koskoff forefronts her feminist approach, asserting that “the study of gender is the *lens through which I most clearly see inequality*, but feminism is how *I enact the knowledge* I have gained in this work to resist and dismantle it” (7; emphasis in original). She also emphasizes a fortified model of ethnography as a pivotal way to push feminist ethnomusicology forward. Scholars who are interested in ethnomusicology, anthropology, ethnographic studies, and the history of feminist thought will all benefit from reading this book.

Rice, Timothy. 2017. *Modeling Ethnomusicology*. New York: Oxford University Press. A critical retrospective, Timothy Rice reframes eight of his essays across his career and reflects on the development of the field, especially highlighting the “formative processes,” or models, of music studies. He poses several models in the hope of inspiring/guiding ethnomusicologists to generate “ethnomusicological theorizing,” that is, a theorizing process particular to our discipline. Rice’s approach, though diverging from Guilbault’s call for contributing to critical theory, has the similar intention of raising ethnomusicology’s recognition through a focus on theory.

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We are currently discussing plans for future issues of *SEM Student News*, including volume 15, numbers 1 and 2. If there are any topics that you want us to address, please contact the editor at semstudentnews@gmail.com.
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Davin is a PhD candidate in ethnomusicology at University of California, Davis. His research focuses on flamenco in the Americas wherein he explores musicking spaces and senses of place, groove as a sociomusical process, and intersensory modalities. For his dissertation project, “Grooving into Place,” he is collaborating with Arizonan flamenco practitioners to explore the social and sensory experiences of local flamenco. Davin is also a musical instrument repair technician and enjoys playing samba and flamenco guitar.

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Eugenia is a PhD student in ethnomusicology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. After completing a MA in Ethnomusicology at Wesleyan University, researching identity in choral music and performance in Oahu, Hawaii, she broadened her scholarly interests to include voice studies and sound studies, and how they may be applied to choral musical practice. Her current projects focus on her experiences singing with and observing semi-professional and professional choirs in North America and Europe.

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Brian is a second-year PhD student in ethnomusicology at New York University, pursuing research on practices of the voice and media archaeology in the Republic of Georgia and among theater ensembles in the Polish physical theater tradition. He received his MA from Wesleyan University in 2017, with a thesis entitled “The Gurian Trio Song: Memory, Media, and Improvisation in a Georgian Folk Genre.” Brian is also a pianist, dramaturg, and member of Gamelan Kusuma Laras in New York.

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Hannah is a PhD student in ethnomusicology and researcher for the Office of Public Scholarship and Engagement at UC Davis. She is collaborating with a group of women musicians in Sacramento as well as an international alliance of rock music camps for girls. Her research on gendered techniques and technologies is informed by participatory action methodologies and the possibilities and limitations of digital technologies in organizing professional communities of practice.

Diego Pani, Media Columnist
Diego is a PhD student in ethnomusicology at Memorial University of Newfoundland. His research focuses on media as learning devices among young generations of musicians, and the roles of audio and video materials in the vernacular traditions of Sardinia. Diego also produces documentary films, web documentaries, and photo reportages. Besides his academic work, he sings in the rock ‘n’ roll band King Howl and manages Talk About Records, a DIY record label specializing in blues, rock ‘n’ roll, and punk musics.