Bandas and Regional Identity in the Central Andes of Peru

Joshua D. Katz-Rosene, Franklin & Marshall College

In the central Andes of Peru, dozens of professional brass bands (bandas) enjoy consistent work as central players in the region’s busy festive calendar. As ethnographers have established, this is an area where a robust sense of regional identity has historically been paired with an openness—at least among certain segments of the population—to appropriating external cultural influences. This presentation will illustrate how bandas integrate these broad cultural orientations, focusing on three interrelated discursive fields. First, I highlight banda musicians’ stated commitments to cultivating what they describe as the folclor of the central Andean region, along with their interests in national and international styles and assertions of musical versatility. I then propose that, correspondingly, the imagery employed in banda promotional materials showcases local scenery and landmarks alongside cosmopolitan symbols. Thirdly, I examine the apparently contradictory criteria that contribute to bandas’ reputations, from a handful of ensembles’ standing as deeply rooted porters of cultural heritage, to the international status bestowed upon certain groups by having travelled abroad. I conclude by demonstrating how local genres in the banda repertoire (the much revered folclor) can be differentiated musically from other types of musics—not to mention other Andean brass band styles—by a distinct approach to their performance.

Stance-taking and Styling Indio, Religioso, and Tropical in Chile’s Andean Brass Bands

Juan Eduardo Wolf, University of Oregon

Brass band music is prevalent throughout the south-central Andes, usually associated with important events like carnivals and patron saint celebrations connected to specific locations and populations. These major celebrations give rise to additional fundraising and social activities that are less-studied venues for these brass bands, even though they happen more regularly throughout the year and are aimed at a wider variety of people in a mostly urban environment. All of these events help determine the repertoire a brass band performs, but how such bands select and execute this repertoire within a specific context often reflects both broader cultural attitudes as well as personal emotional buy-ins to the event in question.

In this paper, Wolf uses Harry Berger’s concept of stance together with his own version of "styling" to discuss situations in which bands attempt to identify themselves in relation to the performers of and populations identified with different types of music. Drawing on his fieldwork
in Arica, Chile, Wolf illustrates how Arica’s brass bands distinguish themselves from other Chilean bands, as well as bands from neighboring Bolivia and Peru, based on repertoire choice (genre), performer-association (style), and aesthetic/social values (stance) within a set of varied and unique contexts.

**La Murga de Panamá: Band Rivalries as a Catalyst for Sound Production**

Sean Bellaviti, Ryerson University

When the competing *murgas* of Calle Abajo and Calle Arriba, with their forty-plus horn players accompanied by a cadre of drummers, slowly exit the side streets of their respective *barrios* and make their way onto the central drag that encircles Las Tablas’s *Parque Bellisario Porras*, they do so with the aim of out-blowing and out-drumming their rivals to the point of total physical exhaustion. Perched high on their custom-built *carretones*—each pulled by immense John Deere tractors—these musicians produce what is arguably the loudest sound emitted by an acoustic ensemble in Panama today.

Drawing on ethnographic and archival research, in this paper I examine how a ferocious 60-year rivalry between two bands—where scores are settled and victories are won within the arena of sound production and in the view of an increasingly nationwide audience—has shaped every aspect of murga performance, from the carefully constructed song arrangements that are designed to maximize the endurance and playing power of each musician, to the pride musicians take in being able to overblow their horn to the point of distortion or hit their drum to the point of exhaustion. Panamanian murga is but one rather extreme example of a hemispheric-wide practice of reworking and repurposing the European marching band to meet the needs of local performance practices.

**Short Film Presentation: Brass Bands in Guerrero**

John McDowell, Indiana University

**COFFEE BREAK**

**SESSION II (11:00am – 12:15pm) – Brass Band, Cultural Policy and the Conquering of Public Spaces**

When brass resounds in the city: Wind bands and urban public spaces in Colombia, 1830-1913
Juan F. Velasquez, University of Michigan

Since the Colonial period, the contributions of wind bands to the Latin American urban soundscapes have included processional music, serenatas, retretas, as well as performances in carnavales and mojigangas, among other celebrations. These musical performances in parks, plazas, and streets also have made possible social interaction among the members of different social groups gathered around the bands. However, despite the prominent role that wind bands’ presence in urban public spaces have played in the shaping of the Latin American sonic modernity, the relationship between wind bands and the production of space and place in postcolonial Latin American cities has been a topic rarely explored by scholars in urban history, sound studies, and historical ethnomusicology. In this paper, I study how wind bands introduced new understandings of sounding and listening to the postcolonial Latin American cities through the lens of the Colombian case. By focusing my attention on a period of both urban transformation and transition of wind bands from military ensembles to civilian ones, I explore how bands reflected a changing urban environment producing new, and often contrasting, understandings of public culture and use of urban spaces through music and sound, which in turn echoed the tensions that urban modernization produced within Latin American postcolonial cities.

Intangible cultural heritage and local culture in Colombia: The case of the National Musical Bands Contest in Paipa

Juan Sebastián Rojas, Universidad El Bosque (Bogotá)

The declaration of the National Musical Bands Contest in Paipa as intangible cultural heritage of Colombia involved a strenuous negotiation process between the organizing institution Corbandas and the Intangible Heritage Group (IHG) of the Ministry of Culture. These two entities aligned each with mutually exclusive theoretical perspectives: Corbandas assumed a position based on the modernist paradigm of monumental heritage, while the IHG based its approach on postmodern theories about intangible cultural heritage. Corbandas defended the impact and magnitude of the event, partially, because of its key relevance for the implementation and evaluation processes of the National Music Plan, a long-term national policy plan—ironically created and managed by the Music Group of the same ministry. This plan focused on starting and maintaining brass bands music schools in every municipality of Colombia. The IHG, on the other hand, was looking for expressions of intangible cultural heritage that had strong communal appeal and visible sense of belonging. Local sense of belonging had been strong when the event started in the 1970s, but was lost today. This local rootedness is what supported the idea of this contest as intangible heritage of the nation. The process of negotiation took ten years, and it ended in 2013, when Corbandas and IHG came to an agreement that included this cultural expression into the Representative List of Colombian Intangible Cultural Heritage. Years after the declaration, nonetheless, the activities more prone to spark local participation (verbenas, desfiles, and alboradas) are still being neglected to privilege the competition.

The Politics and Aesthetics of Frevo

Francesco Valente, Universidade Nova de Lisboa
This paper will deal with the articulation between the politics and aesthetics of regionalism and globalization in frevo, a Brazilian genre of popular music practiced in Recife and other areas of Pernambuco in Northeastern Brazil. Frevo was inscribed by IPHAN (the Brazilian Institute of Historical and Artistic National Heritage) as national cultural heritage in 2007 and by UNESCO as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2012.

Looking back a decade, how does the recognition by IPHAN and UNESCO affect the expressive practices and the lives of frevo artists and their communities? What is the impact of heritagization, globalization and the politics of regionalism on frevo? How do these two political dimensions intersect in frevo’s practice?

I will analyse and compare diverse expressions of frevo, from the frevo-de-rua (street frevo) to mixtures of frevo with jazz, fusion and other transnational idioms as well as the impact of the cultural movement known as “Manguebeat”, and others musical genres of Pernambuco such as maracatu, cavalo marinho, coco, caboclinhos, etc. I will attempt to show how musical genres such as frevo regarded as regionalist”, are used as a response to samba in the context of the Brazilian popular music. I will also attempt to offer insights into the process of hybridization of frevo, during the last two decades, and present the main measures that were taken by local cultural policy, regarding the safeguarding, transmission and dissemination of the genre.

LUNCH

SESSION III (1:30pm – 3:15pm) – Brass bands, Marginality and Activism

"Esos músicos vuelan chicha": The Paradoxical Status of Nicaraguan bandas de chichero.

T.M. Scruggs (Independent Scholar)

Similar to so many other nations in Latin America, bandas have occupied a major role in the musical life of western Nicaragua. The composition of instruments can vary considerably, but centers around a snare and bass drum; one or two trumpets; sometimes one or two clarinet(s); more rarely a saxophone; a Sousaphone; and least common, a trombone. While highly valued for the many public Catholic calendar-based rituals that require their music, their name indicates a continued social stigma of lower class, even debased status: fermented alcoholic chicha is limited to the most indigenous identified and rural associated pueblo pueblo. Even unfermented chicha is not widely available in restaurants. Usually called los chicheros, this name for bands and their musicians links them to an image of inebriated lower-class males dancing to what is simply called the baile de los chicheros, the frenetic, free form dancing in wild processions on saints' days particularly associated with the Masaya region. Yet chicheros also remain indispensable for dignified parades of saints' images through towns and the staid demeanor of funeral processions. They have even recently expanded their presence with novel appearances at the beginning of traditional marimba dance groups circuits that first offer homage at the appropriate church. Still chicheros --unlike the marimba trios-- are never allowed to actually enter the church: even their more respected contemporary status would profane the religious space. Focusing on the cities
and villages south of the capital where the tradition is strongest, this paper examines how these ensembles are simultaneously respected and disparaged by Nicaraguan society.

**Booming Bandas of Los Angeles: Transmission and Sustainability of Oaxacan Philharmonic Brass Bands**

Xochtl C. Chávez, University of California, Riverside

As the plague of gentrification in California spreads across many working-class neighborhoods deemed by real estate as “up and coming” areas, the paper will highlight the social and cultural realities of migrant community-based brass bands from Oaxaca, Mexico. The presence of second generation *Bandas Oaxaqueñas* in Los Angeles, California exemplifies the diversity of Oaxaca’s ethnolinguistic communities and how musicians strive to maintain their ethnic identity and linguistic plurality within a bustling urban space. This paper draws attention to two intergenerational Sierra Juarez region Zapotec philharmonic brass bands systems of learning music and strategies for substitutability in a transnational context. In order to avoid unwanted attention and criminalization, forms of vernacular placemaking are vital in establishing safe spaces for mixed legal status musicians, such as privately-owned home garages and rented warehouse. Within these spaces, musicians create translingual forms of pedagogy between Zapotec, Spanish, and English. To maintain cultural flows of musical repertoires – indigenous composers on both sides of the U.S. and Mexico border circulate traditional and contemporary music pieces as a way to articulate their continued existence despite localized and national challenges.

**Rio de Janeiro’s Neofanfarrismo Movement: Carnival as a Theory of Activism**

Andrew Snyder, University of the Pacific

While many scholars have discussed the political efficacy of carnival traditions as subversive, “safety valves,” or sites contested by many forces, this paper shows that carnival can also be understood as a generative discourse and practice through which participants theorize and enact ethical transformations of their societies. In Rio de Janeiro, brass ensembles were early manifestations of carnival music before the samba schools took on the iconic image of the festivity. After a period of diminished activity during the dictatorship (1964-85), brass ensembles have been part of the revival of “street carnival,” a vibrant heritage movement in a democratizing country. As a cultural movement that sought to promote a participatory carnival and initially drew on past repertoires, the street carnival revival largely embraced the view that street carnival was the “true, authentic” carnival in relation to the commodified carnival of the samba schools. Adopting a Bakhtinian discourse of carnival as an egalitarian and participatory tradition, a new brass band movement (neofanfarrismo) emerged in 2006 that plays diverse international repertoires and came to embrace the carnivalesque as a theory of leftist activism. Eventually consolidating itself as a musical movement in the HONK! Festival of Activist Brass Bands, neofanfarrismo has been involved in diverse manifestations of “instrumental activism,” including fostering feminist bands, promoting brass bands in favelas, developing inclusive pedagogies, and playing in protests in a politically volatile moment for Brazil. Neofanfarristas argue that the social ritual of carnival, one that mythologizes inversion, equality, and festivity should be the rule, not the exception.
Jessica C. Hajek, Earlham College and University of Cincinnati

Alibabá Carnival Bands and the Sonic Public Sphere: Discourses of Poverty, Crime, and Young Male Musicians in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

During carnival season in the Dominican Republic, Alibabá groups are celebrated for their combination of flashy dance, Middle Eastern inspired costumes, and a rapid-fire rhythm performed on brass and percussion instruments. Yet, as with other brass bands found throughout Latin America, such musical practices associated with Santo Domingo’s inner city (and especially its young male residents) are considered sites of implicit and explicit criminal behavior during the rest of the year. In this paper, I argue that feelings of insecurity regarding poverty and crime have, in turn, inhibited the visibility of both Alibabá groups and their members in Santo Domingo’s sonic public sphere—who depend on proximity in order to attract an audience. I ask, do discourses of poverty and crime affect the perception of these bands in different ways? If so, how are these groups responding? Based on field research conducted throughout East Santo Domingo since 2015, I provide evidence that Alibabá leaders are using the rehearsal space to combat these two problems affecting their young male members. I also detail how groups are using social media sites like YouTube and Facebook to overcome the social geography of the city and get these sounds to their intended audience.

BREAK

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION AND WORKSHOP (3:30pm – 5:30pm)

Chirimías Chocoanas de San Pacho

This presentation discuss Afro-Colombian brass band traditions from the Chocó region of Colombia, in particular the musical activities associated with the patron saint celebrations for Saint Francis of Assisi. The primary focus, will be on the changing nature of the chirimía ensemble, both in terms of instrumentation and repertoire as it acts as a social and musical mediator that negotiates local narratives of resistance, adaptation, and masculinity.

The presentation will be followed by a performance practice workshop on Chocoano brass band music, led by Mr. Valencia. Please bring your instruments!

Leonidas Valencia, Asociación para las Investigaciones Culturales del Chocó