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Meditations on Objective Aesthetics in World Music

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Abstract. This essay opens a dialogue between ethnomusicology and neo-Darwinism as promulgated by biologist Richard Dawkins and others. The first half engages quantum physicist David Deutsch's much-discussed *The Beginning of Infinity* (2011), which integrates neo-Darwinism with the epistemology of objective knowledge developed by Karl Popper. Along the way Deutsch suggests that aesthetics with universal reach, akin to scientific facts, must be discoverable. Both Deutsch and Dawkins argue that traditional (meaning non- post-Enlightenment) societies squelch unfettered knowledge creation in order to preserve themselves, and hence are unlikely to develop objective knowledge. Yet ethnomusicologists show that music can express social values but also point beyond them to unsuspected realms. If there exist aesthetic facts with universal reach in traditional music, can they be identified in these realms? Can ethnomusicology be an arena for discussing such questions? The second half of the essay engages in an analysis of a Ba-Benzele Pygmy tune in search of its objective aesthetic properties and their implications.

"Becoming One": Embodying Korean Pungmul Percussion Band Music and Dance through Site-Specific Intermodal Transmission

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Abstract. This article focuses on the P'ilbong p'ungmul transmission center as a case study of a relatively new type of cultural institution in South Korea. I examine how these transmission centers structure the experience of an expressive folk culture form by emphasizing site-specific instruction and employing intermodal pedagogical techniques that specifically heighten an awareness of the body in both place and space. I argue that the P'ilbong p'ungmul transmission center encourages the embodiment of an alternative Korean sensibility that is expressed through

music, dance and other social activities, but is further enhanced by situating the body within iconically “Korean” spaces.

Still Like That Old Time Rock and Roll: Tribute Bands and Historical Consciousness in Popular Music

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Abstract. This paper integrates ethnographic description of several tribute band performances and a critical reading of popular music discourse in order to explain historical consciousness and examine the role that tribute bands are playing in its development. Tribute bands both construct and partake in this new attitude that treats the events of the popular music past with historical respect and legitimacy. Focusing on rock music as a case study, this paper provides an example of how events from the past can be re-made and re-configured into “history.”

The Intermediate Sphere in North Indian Music Culture: Between and Beyond “Folk” and Classical”

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Abstract. If in discourse about traditional music in North India, the notions of ‘folk’ and ‘classical’ continue to be widely used, in this essay I posit the existence of an ‘intermediate sphere,’ comprising a heterogeneous set of traditional music genres that, in different ways, share features with both folk and classical realms. I suggest five categories in this socio-musical stratum and provide brief glimpses of some of their constituents and distinguishing features, including the distinctive sorts of theory they embody and elite patronage that sustains them. I conclude with observations about historical changes in the status of this sphere in general.

“Don’t Go Changing to Try and Please Me”: Combating Essentialism
through Ethnography in the Ethnomusicology of Autism

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Abstract. Ethnomusicology is the study of how people make and experience music, and of why it matters to them that they do. Building from the epistemological foundations of the autistic self-advocacy and neurodiversity movements, as well as from the musical, ethnographic, and relativistic priorities of ethnomusicology itself, this article advances the position that our field, thus defined, is inherently well suited to the task of creating and sustaining vital, neurodiverse musical communities. The focus is on one such community, the Artism Ensemble, which serves as the basis of a case study featuring transcripts of dialogue with a child member of the group diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome.