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Ethnomusicology and Higher Education: Challenges, Trends, and Lessons from the Humanities

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Abstract: Many authors in recent years note threats to humanistic studies within higher education. They express concern about the overproduction of PhD graduates, the increasing costs of higher education, and other topics. Ethnomusicologists are undoubtedly aware of such issues, yet as a society SEM has not engaged with related publications, nor has it collected much data on specific challenges to our own field. This essay synthesizes literature on trends within the humanities and considers its potential relevance for ethnomusicology. Then, based on interviews with faculty, as well as a 2018 survey circulated to current and former students on the SEM LISTSERV, it briefly considers the state of our discipline in terms of core training, student support, student placement, and other topics. The data suggest that many issues confronting ethnomusicologists resonate with those in other disciplines and that we would benefit from engagement with nationwide dialogues involving the future of graduate studies. Suggestions proposed are many and include an orientation of research toward issues impacting communities near one’s university, greater focus on team-based inquiry rather than individual scholarship, more active collaborations across disciplines, diverse professional training, more attention to shaping the content of K–12 education, communication with diverse audiences, and a research focus on areas of broad public concern whenever possible.

Yi Suyong and the Quiet of “Korea’s Hiroshima”

Joshua Pilzer

Abstract: Bicultural residents of the Hapcheon Atomic Bomb Victims Welfare Center in rural southeastern Korea who were raised in Hiroshima and survived the bomb live in a complex world of quiet—of radiation-related vocal disability, Japanese and Korean cultural values of restraint and civility, religious practice and propriety, and traumatic memory. In this article, I musically encounter a world largely devoid of music, focusing on one survivor’s style of quietude. Manipulating rhythm, pitch, and silence in speech, testimony, and craftwork, she navigates between personal aims and the expectations she faces as a witness to Korean experiences of the atomic bomb.
Ann Flood, Mairéad Farrell, and the Representation of Armed Femininity in Irish Republican Ballads
Seán Ó Cadhla

Abstract: This article critically considers the representation of armed femininity within the attendant song tradition of Irish physical-force Republicanism, with specific focus on the personal and cultural consequences for two prominent female Republican activists, both of whom successfully traverse the gender demarcation lines of war. While noting the didactic, often misogynistic, trajectory of works narrating “transgressive” females within the broader ballad tradition, this article seeks to determine whether or not the interwoven essentialist tropes of death, martyrdom, and resurrection—all deeply embedded ideological constructs within the framework of Irish Republicanism—successfully supersede calcified patriarchal mores and, in so doing, facilitate an alternative narrative landscape for the cultural documentation of militant Irish Republican women via the popular ballad.

The Crowd in Flux: Atmosphere and the Governance of Public Affects at FC Union Berlin
Max Jack

Abstract: Exploring the role of atmosphere in the context of soccer fandom, I examine hard-core fans called “ultras” at Football Club Union Berlin. In response to the ultras’ coordination of crowd performativity in the stadium, an assemblage of competing governing apparatuses has intervened with an interest in alleviating risk and potentially inflammatory dispositions of the fans. In contrast to the text-based rational-critical discourse idealized as characteristic of the public sphere (Warner 2002), I argue that atmosphere is an affective-discursive realm through which ultras negotiate subjectivity, which is perceived as deviant because it deconstructs individualism, interiority, and reason as assumed traits of liberal democratic citizenship.

Carnival Brass Bands in New Orleans and Rio de Janeiro: Disinheritance, Alternative Whiteness, and Musical Eclecticism
Andrew Snyder

Abstract: This article explores the predominantly White brass band scenes of the carnivals of New Orleans and Rio de Janeiro as producing rituals of intensified social distinction. The bands’ musical practices realize aesthetic preferences of distinct racialized communities forged through relational positioning. Offering alternatives to the “heritage repertoires” of these carnivals based in musical Blackness, these bands’ musical eclecticism forms an aesthetic articulation of “alternative Whiteness,” which seeks to “disinherit” both hegemonic Whiteness of conservative cultural politics and commodification of Blackness. The article theorizes contemporary carnivalesque translocality in consideration of longer histories of festive circulation in the Atlantic World.
A Tale of Two Cities (and Two Ways of Being Inauthentic): The Politics of College Jazz in “Official Cleveland” and in the “Other Cleveland”

George Blake

Abstract: In this article, I consider how discourses of jazz authenticity register social tensions in Cleveland, Ohio. Scholars have shown that the relationship between jazz and higher education is nothing new. However, fans and musicians express conflicting impulses toward college jazz. On the one hand, college jazz presents the financial and symbolic benefits of institutional legitimacy. Many musicians are themselves college jazz graduates and teachers. On the other hand, many express an aversion grounded in the belief that real jazz happens in urban nightclubs. I argue that people mobilize authenticity to critique college jazz in order to invoke the inequality of the city’s urban past and the invisibility of its rich jazz history.

Deep Polyphony in the Hymns of Julien Jouga

Christine Thu Nhi Dang

Abstract: Arguably the foremost pioneer of indigenized hymnody in Senegal, Julien Jouga composed hymns that achieved remarkable popularity beyond the Catholic Church, beloved by Muslims and Christians alike. In his compositions, Jouga did not limit himself to conventional Catholic materials but drew extensively upon the practices of mystical Islam and African traditional religions. Amalgamating divergent musical, cultural, and spiritual sources, Jouga entered into dialogue with the voices of religious others, voices whom he confronted as equals within the polyphonic lines of his hymns. Through this radically dialogic approach, Jouga’s compositions became performances of deep polyphony: of inclusive hymnody that recognizes the truths of others and celebrates the simultaneity of moral and spiritual paths in the midst of religious difference.