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“Summoning Breadfruit” and “Opening Seas”: Towards a Performative Ecology in Oceania

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Abstract. This article explores the implications of a performative ecology in Oceania by examining musical practices of “summoning breadfruit” and “opening seas” (wayfinding) in the Federated States of Micronesia. In the islands of Chuuk dynamic relationships between music and environment demonstrate a deep engagement with place, performativity, and a musical interdependence with the Oceanic surroundings. By examining remembered and present-day musical practices I argue for a relational indigenous perspective that brings together ideas about performance, the physical environments of land and sea, and their integrated spiritual dimensions.

“People of Allada, This is Our Return”: Indexicality, Multiple Temporalities, and Resonance in the Music of the Gangbé Brass Band of Benin

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Abstract. The Gangbé Brass Band song “Alladanou” makes specific historical, linguistic, and musical references to Benin's precolonial, colonial, and post-independence histories. I use these references as a point of departure in exploring the relationship of the song to the royal court style of adjògàn. I consider how the Cameroonian political theorist Achille Mbembe's framework of multiple temporalities illuminates the historical flexibility at play in Gangbé's album Togbé. I conclude by proposing an analytical framework for analyzing “Alladanou” that proceeds from an interest in audience, relationality, the Fon concept of gbè (voice or sound), and resonance.

Abstrait. La chanson du Gangbé Brass Band “Alladanou” fait certaines références historiques, linguistiques, et musicales aux histoires précoloniales, coloniales, et de la postindépendance du Bénin. J'utilise ces références comme point du départ pour explorer la relation de la chanson au style du cour royal de l'adjògàn. Je considère comment les idées du theorien politique camerounais Achille Mbembe illuminent la flexibilité historique en jeu dans l'abum Togbé de Gangbé. Je conclus en proposant un cadre analytique pour l'analyse de “Alladanou” qui procède d'un intérêt à la publique, à la relationnalite, au concept Fon du gbè (la voix ou le son), et à la resonance.

Contentious Spectacle: Negotiated Authenticity within Morocco's Gnawa Ritual

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Abstract. Recent changes to the gnawa ritual's musical practices in Morocco leave many in the community nostalgic for the previous generation's aesthetic and ideological tastes.

Nostalgia in this case emanates from a confluence of performance practice and audience expectation, resulting in different potential "authentic experiences." The wide range of nostalgic authenticities available to the gnawa community are due, in part, to a set of overlapping conceptions of authenticity itself. Questions of lineage, piety, and commercial success orient debates about the appropriateness of contemporary musical and ritual practices, exposing the diversity of ideologies that pepper the community.

Lùlù Fún Wọ̀n: Oríkì in Contemporary Culture

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Abstract. In Lùlù Fún Wọ̀n ("drum for them"), Ìjálá artist Kojo Àyánwoḷá praises Lágbájá. The word, lágbájá, means "somebody, anybody, nobody." It is a peculiar challenge for a poet to sing praises for such a man. Yorùbá praise poetry, oríkì, canonically identifies one's place of origin, family heritage and good deeds. According to Lágbájá's oríkì, his mother is the one who sells cowskin--which could be just about anyone! Lágbájá's music video celebrates oríkì while pointing out its incongruity with contemporary urban life, in which heritage and culture are obscured by the quotidian.

Oral Pedagogy, Playful Variation, and Issues of Notation in Khmer Wedding Music

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Abstract. This ethnographic study of Khmer wedding musicians' oral pedagogy explores tensions that arise when prescriptive notation is deployed to preserve a vulnerable tradition. Presenting detailed examples of the musical variation that oral pedagogy promotes, I argue that this teaching method fosters the skills musicians need to perform wedding music in its ritual context. Situating my research within broad debates over continuity and change, and literacy and orality, I suggest that Khmer wedding musicians have developed a "local bi-musicality" and may be able to read notation generatively to produce a song's variations, which maintains the playfulness central to this performance practice.