Bruno Nettl by Daniel Neuman

DN. Given your extensive history with the discipline, I am wondering if you would be able to characterize the direction the discipline (or field if you prefer) has taken that you would have been least anticipated in in the mid-1950s.

BN. Well, I wouldn’t have expected the great success of ethnomusicology in the academy; when I first looked for a teaching job ca. 1953, I was told that this was the least promising of fields. I would not have expected the development of a large number of programs each of them staffed by three, four, or more faculty members. I would also not have expected the field to be eventually dominated by studies of urban vernacular and popular musics, and I would have expected the concept of authenticity as a way of defining a society’s central repertory to have continued to play a greater role than has turned out to be the case. Finally, I would not have expected the study of performance as part of fieldwork, and as a part of on-campus training, to become enormously prominent and successful.

DN. Did you experience a significant shift in the way you trained your students between say the mid-1960s and the mid-1990s? This shift—if it occurred at all—may have been due to changes in technology, theory, university political economy, or other considerations. There may have been, however, no significant shift, in which case the simple answer is “no.”

BN. I did change my approach to teaching and training a lot between the 1960s and the 1990s, more than I can say in a few sentences. Much of the change was due to the changes that the field was experiencing (too many for me to mention here, but this thirty year period is arguably the period in which ethnomusicology developed most dramatically), and the expansion of my own research. I changed my election of courses; in the early period, I concentrated on courses dealing with the musical cultures of culture areas, and following the example of my teacher George Herzog, I was mainly concerned with indigenous and folk cultures. Later I taught, more frequently, topical courses and also included and emphasized classical traditions.

As far as preparing students for entering the profession is concerned, I guess my main reorientation involved an expansion of my conception of the field. At first I felt that there must be a single, standard approach, that there was—how should I say it—a single way of being an ethnomusicologist. Later I came to feel that there were many kinds of ethnomusicology, and that each student should experience a personal approach.

Much of the way I changed had to do with the expansion of the faculty in our program, of course. When we added faculty, we tried to develop a variety of approaches and kinds of expertise. [Cont. 5]
The Society for Ethnomusicology, SEM Newsletter

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The SEM Newsletter is a vehicle for the exchange of ideas, news, and information among the Society's members. Readers' contributions are welcome and should be sent to the editor. See the guidelines for contributions on this page.

The Society for Ethnomusicology, Inc., publishes the SEM Newsletter four times annually in January, March, May, and September, and distributes issues free to members of the Society.


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Editor's Note

This second issue of the 2012 SEM Newsletter continues the goal of documenting our identity as a society through the issues we discuss and the individuals we recognize. Harris Berger’s second President’s column delves into the nature and value of instruction in large classroom settings. Jeff Titon provides background and discusses the salient features of the Applied Ethnomusicology Section in a continuation of a series intended to help to introduce our sections and special interest groups to the rest of the Society. James Cowdery invites contributions to our deliberations about the Society’s iconographic representation. Given how passionately some fell about this topic, providing as much information about the process as possible stands as one of our goals. And we recognize one of the prizewinners from the Society’s chapters, sections, and special interest groups, in addition to the usual news of people, places, and institutions.

As described on the first page, this issue introduces the first of a series of interviews with ethnomusicologists. I hope that this feature will become a popular part of the SEM Newsletter and I look forward to future interviews. I have asked interviewers to pose questions to their teachers about the changes they have seen in the discipline and about mentoring junior scholars. We have such a wealth of resources in the experiences of our membership that the series should have a long and fruitful run.

As always, I welcome your comments and suggestions on how to improve this publication. GRT

SEM Membership

The object of the Society for Ethnomusicology is the advancement of research and study in the field of ethnomusicology, for which purpose all interested persons, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or physical ability are encouraged to become members. Its aims include serving the membership and society at large through the dissemination of knowledge concerning the music of the world’s peoples. The Society, incorporated in the United States, has an international membership.

Members receive free copies of the journal and the newsletter and have the right to vote and participate in the activities of the Society.

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Send articles and shorter entries for consideration to the editor by email.

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I love large introductory courses. While I am deeply attached to my small graduate classes and intimate majors-only seminars, large introductory courses have a special place in my heart. I love teaching them and believe that these kinds of classes are among the most important that universities offer.

When I started working on this essay, I was tempted to call it “In Praise of Large Introductory Courses,” but I was afraid that many readers would wonder if I had mistakenly left the question mark off the end of the title. In a wide range of colleges and universities, faculty often perceive such classes as a burden, something that administrators foist upon those instructors who lack the institutional clout to resist teaching them. Of course, large introductory classes aren’t without their challenges and problems. The over-emphasis on giant classes is part of the detestable corporatization of the academy. Such courses can limit opportunities for discussion, though there are techniques for partially addressing this issue. While some may think that these courses are easy to teach, properly preparing for a session of a large class can be difficult and time consuming, and looking up from the podium at the beginning of a session to see six hundred eyeballs can be a daunting experience, especially if four hundred of them are mesmerized by laptops, distracted by cellphones, or fixated on a point in space a hundred miles behind the classroom’s back wall. At those moments, I may long to return to my cozy seminar with my majors or graduate students, but those feelings quickly dissipate. Despite all their problems, large introductory courses offer intellectual opportunities that go to the heart of what makes the academy valuable. Or, to put the horse at the right end of the cart, they are the place where some of the most important things that make the academy valuable are constituted, made public, and performed.

Large introductory courses are the payoff sites of some of our most significant ideas. A three hundred seat MUSC 200 class can be nothing more than a delivery mechanism for the narrative history of a musical genre or a geographical catalog of style features from around the world, and the very worst of these classes can leave students with nothing but a set of facts that they will forget before they have logged onto the registrar’s website for their grades. But to me, these courses provide the chance to ask, “What are the most important ideas that our field has developed? What makes an idea matter? What can research be made to do in people’s lives?” [Cont. 6]

Harris M. Berger, SEM President

The word “logo” (short for logotype) applies to both images and wordmarks. We have a wordmark on our website right now (see below), and the ad hoc committee is treating it as a viable candidate. Submissions may comprise only wordmarks, or they may include images.

The other members of the committee are Nilanjana Bhattacharjya (Colorado College), Clara Henderson (Indiana University), Peter Manuel (John Jay College; Publications Advisory Committee Chair), Gordon Thompson (Skidmore College; Newsletter Editor), J. Lawrence Witzleben (University of Maryland; Journal Editor), and Elizabeth Wollman (Baruch College).

After the 1 June deadline, the committee will review the submissions and make a recommendation. The Council will then review the submissions and the committee’s recommendations and make further recommendations. The Board will review both of these recommendations and make a final decision. While it is possible that a crowdsourced logo will be ready to use as is, it is also possible that the Board will want to work with a professional designer at University of Illinois Press for the final version.

We’re looking forward to receiving your ideas!

the society for ethnomusicology
Although early ethnomusicologists, notably SEM co-founders Charles Seeger and David McAllester, did some applied work, as late as the mid-1980s the still-prevailing attitude among the SEM leadership was that the Society itself should facilitate the exchange of ideas among scholars, and not promote their practical application in the world outside of academia or engage as a Society in politics. With the gradual emergence of new leaders influenced by the social and political revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s, attitudes shifted. As the 1980s drew to a close, SEM conferences saw a rise in workshops and forums on ethics, education, arts administration and grant-writing, and musical and cultural conservation. In addition, ethnomusicologists became aware of work being done to establish public sector folklore as an applied endeavor that included music along with other forms of expressive culture. Public folklorists (along with a few ethnomusicologists) had secured positions in arts councils, museums, historical societies, and the like. Out of this ferment grew a special issue of Ethnomusicology on “Music and the Public Interest” (36:3, 1992), which may be regarded as the first official SEM document in applied ethnomusicology. In the 1990s, the number of applied ethnomusicology presentations at SEM increased; examples were forums on “Who Owns Music” and “Multicultural Music Education.”

At the 1998 SEM Conference, Doris Dyen and Martha Ellen Davis convened a meeting to assess interest in proposing a standing Committee on Applied Ethnomusicology to the SEM Board. As applied ethnomusicologists themselves, they felt the time was opportune for organizing something more formal to bring together those with common interests in working for the benefit of musical communities outside the academic world. Thirty-eight hopeful founders attended, the proposal was accepted by the SEM Board, and the Committee was established, with a variety of definitions of applied ethnomusicology that still appear on the SEM website. In 2000, Dyen and Davis, who had taken on the role of chairs of the Committee, appointed a deputy chair, Tom Van Buren, and successfully petitioned the Board to recognize the group as the Applied Ethnomusicology Section. Dyen and Davis stood aside in 2002 while appointing co-chairs Ric Alviso and Miriam Gerberg to join Van Buren, who stepped down in 2004 in favor of Mark Puryear. Alviso was succeeded in 2008 by Jeff Todd Titon, Gerberg in 2009 by Kathleen Noss Van Buren, and Puryear in 2010 by Maureen Loughran.

During the Committee and Section’s first decade, the co-chairs worked to make the group a comfortable space within SEM for ethnomusicologists employed outside of the academic world. To that end, they organized practical panels on non-academic careers for ethnomusicologists, such as the “Ethnomusicologists at Work” series organized by Gerberg; and on strategies for survival both inside and outside of official institutions. Co-chairs Gerberg, Puryear, and Alviso established Section prizes for outstanding presentations at SEM, and awards for travel grants to the conference.

In the new millennium, as applied ethnomusicology has become increasingly popular among graduate students and welcomed inside academic institutions, the Section has become an SEM meeting-place and platform for ethnomusicologists based both inside and outside of academia as long as they are doing applied work. Most recently, the Section has sponsored panels involving themes such as music and politics, community advocacy, activism and “giving back,” conflict resolution, ethics, repatriation of artifacts from archives and museums, medicine, the environment, and social justice. It also sponsors presentations from guests who do not normally attend the SEM conferences but who have worked in applied ethnomusicology either independently or in extra-academic institutions. For example, at the 2011 conference, Debora Kodish, public folklorist and director of the Philadelphia Folklore Project, led a Section-sponsored discussion among traditional music and dance activists and community scholar-practitioners from the African-American and Asian-American communities in Philadelphia, showcasing a model for ethnomusicologists seeking strategies for work in community-based institutions. With a membership in excess of one hundred, a listserv, and a website of its own, Applied Ethnomusicology is now one of the largest and most active among the SEM Sections.

Alyzabeth Smith and Lela Patrick (background) perform with PhillyBloco at SEM 2011
Photo by Alan Burdette
Nettl by Neuman [continued from page 1]

DN. As you mentioned earlier, ethnomusicology has become far more widespread then you had anticipated, and concomitantly, the original motivations for entering the field have become much more diverse. But when you were first thinking about ethnomusicology as your area of interest, what motivated you to enter it? After all, your father was a distinguished musicologist, which at the time meant specializing in European classical music. How was it that you became interested in something so very different and so much out of the mainstream? (p.s. Do feel free to direct us to publications of yours, where warranted).

BN. I don't have a good memory of detail, but I think there were three—all maybe trivial—factors: I was interested in music research, like my father, but I wanted to do something quite different from what he did, so when the ethno opportunity arose, that seemed a good choice. Second, I happened to take a course, then titled “Folk and Primitive Music,” with George Herzog, and that turned me on. As a result, I began taking anthropology, linguistics, and folklore courses, and all of this seemed awfully interesting and new to me, and I followed up on, not having really considered any alternatives. There weren’t any ideological reasons for my choice, such as wanting to do something for third-world peoples; I just found this music (at the time it was Native American, African, and European folk music) very interesting, and despite having heard a great deal about music all my life, I discovered perspectives that were quite new. My approach started with book learning. I didn't have the idea that I would make any particular contributions, and at first didn’t worry about jobs. Also, I knew no one else who was engaged in this study in graduate school—there were mighty few, like Merriam (then at Northwestern), but I didn’t know any of these.

Soon after taking a few of these courses, just when I started graduate school, the IFMC met in Bloomington and I met some senior folk music scholars and Richard Waterman, and this confirmed my interest.

There is, by the way, a good deal about this in my book Encounters in Ethnomusicology (2002) passim and Chapters 4-5.

DN. As you mentioned in your previous response, your approach began with book learning. At some point this awareness would have extended to the need for fieldwork, perhaps now the major methodological distinction between ethnomusicology and historical musicology. How did this happen in your case and what were the conceptual consequences of your early field experiences in North America and Iran? In other words, how was your idea of, or thinking about ethnomusicology as a field affected, as you engaged the experience of fieldwork? Were there major conceptual shifts as a result of your field experiences?

BN. Well, this question could require a long answer; let me try to be brief. First, I’ve never considered myself a stellar fieldworker, and haven’t done all that much. When I started, although what we now call fieldwork was somehow the hallmark of ethnomusicology (then still called comparative musicology), it was really more a matter of collecting music, concentrating on recording songs and performances, with cultural context a kind of secondary consideration. I started collecting songs from Native Americans who came to help with research at Indiana University, and later I did collecting of songs of people from non-Anglo ethnic groups in Detroit. Later I think I became a kind of project-oriented fieldworker. I didn’t try immerse myself in a culture as perhaps you did, but rather, I was motivated by looking at certain problems—in Blackfoot culture, at first, by wanting to look at a life history, and collect a personal repertory, and talk to people about ideas about music. In Iran, the idea was to collect data for a particular study of improvisation, and to try to find ways of studying urban musical culture. In Chennai, it involved looking at the way Western musical culture impinged on Carnatic music (not that other people weren’t doing this as well). Then—and this is fieldwork of a curious sort—I wanted to look at Western art music culture by studying educational institutions. So I guess, when I look back, I see myself as a fieldworker who tried to work on limited projects.

I didn’t set out to be that kind of an ethnomusicologist—or for that matter any particular kind. When I started, I just wanted to do something that would help me get a job—and that was even tougher then than it is now, really. But looking back, comparing my life with that of others, I think “project-oriented” might be my label. I don’t know whether that was a good way to proceed; I was never the kind of person who fell absolutely in love with a particular culture (although I tell my family that in my next incarnation I would like to be a Carnatic singer). Rather, I was intrigued by certain problems—a different one in every decade or so—and oriented fieldwork in their direction. I think that since my early days, standards—at least as observed by the best younger people—are much higher.

Now, as I moved on, my arsenal of techniques expanded. For example, in Iran I tried to learn to play—or at least to study the way my teacher taught his Iranian students. In Chennai, I expanded my notion of what should be described. But whether there were fundamental changes in my approaches along these various stages, I’m not sure; somebody else will have to decide, looking at the resulting publications.

Looking at the history of ethnomusicology, I see the “collecting” approach dominating the period... [Cont. 6]
Nettl by Neuman [continued from page 5]

to ca. 1960. It was followed by a period dominated by scholars who immersed themselves in individual cultures. This type of fieldworker, the one who became part of the society they study—is still around, but the scope of fieldwork has expanded so that doing research on the Internet might be included. Moreover, as the amount of recorded (not just sound recordings, but all sorts of recording of information) expands and has a longer history, the concept of fieldwork is no longer quite the hallmark of ethnomusicology. I used to think that to get your ethnomusicological stripes you had to spend time living where there are no flush toilets. Now I realize that this is something of a snobbish attitude.

DN. My final question is about building an ethnomusicology program. There seem to be three models in the United States. At one extreme, ethnomusicology is organized as a track in a musicology department (with possibly a way via an anthropology department) as at the University of Illinois, and at the other extreme, a wholly separate department as at UCLA. In between there are various ways of “belonging” but keeping a somewhat separate identity as at University of Washington, Texas, Indiana and Wesleyan to mention a few examples. My question to you is, after more than half a century working as an ethnomusicologist, do you believe there is a “best practices” way that ethnomusicology ought to be organized in research universities, or is the present array of variations good for the future of the disciple?

BN. I don’t know what the best kind of program may be, just as I don’t know what makes for the ideal ethnomusicologist. Except that it’s important to “know stuff.” Consider the spectacular success of ethnomusicology in North America—and it really has been spectacular, when you consider the widespread recognition of the field, the broad academic success of many of its members, its acceptance in ACLS, the huge publication output, etc., etc.—despite the fact that there will always be people who say “we’ve been ‘buked and we’ve been scorned.” This success is due, I think, to the fact that there are lots (or several) ways of being an ethnomusicologist, and that whatever kind you want to be, anthro- or musicology-oriented, and lots in-between, coming from area studies, psychology, performance studies, whatever, there is a place where you can develop your interest. So, I would hesitate to suggest any one approach as the best. I still think it is safest for students to have some association with related fields—general musicology, socio-cultural anthro, whatever—but this can be done interdepartmentally.

There are probably things, by now, that virtually all ethnomusicologists agree on—an attitude of relativism and of intercultural respect, the usefulness in most instances to be a participant-observer with some emphasis on participation, getting personally involved in music, the important understanding of music as a domain of culture. But there may be people who succeed without fitting into this mold, and I think one should be very cautious about reading someone out of the field.

So, I guess that my own attitude—if I were still teaching—would be to consider ethnomusicology a branch of musicology (or “music research,” if the term “musicology” makes you wince) and to persuade students to reach out to anthropology, area studies, or even (as was true in my case) linguistics and folkloristics for rounding out and for inspiration. But I’m glad that other programs would provide a different perspective, and I think it’s been a good thing not to have a national tradition of training programs in which “one size fits all.”

Berger: Theory and Practice [continued from page 3]

For many years, I taught three hundred and twenty-three students every semester in a “History of Rock Music” course. While I was bound by the official course description to present the historical narrative of the genre’s emergence, I felt equally bound by an intellectual mandate to make clear why the facts of that narrative might matter. No burden, this was a chance to figure out, not just the state of the field on certain factual questions, but what the results of the field’s research had been, what larger social insights the scholarship had gathered, and what made those ideas matter. While the content of publications in the so-called STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields is largely inaccessible to non-specialists, the work there is often justified by reference to its payoffs in new technologies or cures for diseases. Placed in this context, the humanities and social sciences don’t seem to have “results” in the same sense of that term, and the highly technical publications we produce, therefore, seem to benefit no one but ourselves. Some of the research in our fields contributes to government policy, but the main payoff of our research, I believe, is in the powerful social insights that it generates, insights that are shared in large classes, among other places.

For example, the distortions created by capitalist ideologies are stubbornly pervasive in most quarters of American society, despite the disaster of the recent economic crisis and the discursive traction achieved by the Occupy Wall Street movement. I have discovered that one of the few places in which mainstream US college
Berger: Theory and Practice [continued from page 6]

students will be open to a critical analysis of capital is when the sector of the economy in question is the music industry. Working through the nitty gritty details of American music industry history in my rock class offers me the chance to illuminate the structural inequities in capitalism that students at my school would otherwise have great difficulty seeing.

Insights can be incorporated into a class at many levels: some are made explicit in the “Course Objectives” of the syllabus or the signposting of individual lectures, while others are baked into the class’s methods of analysis or overall organization. As the historical narrative of my rock history course progresses across the span of the semester, for example, I shift back and forth among three levels of focus and three broad topics—music analysis, music industry history, and discussion of the large-scale contexts (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, and gender) that shaped all elements of American life in the period that the course covers. I make explicit early on that one can’t understand this (or any) music without understanding the music sound itself, but I also argue that the music’s meaning is deeply informed by the systems of production and reception in which it is embedded and its macro-social relations of power. As the course unfolds and connections are drawn among these three domains, I point students toward fundamental ethnomusicological insights (e.g., “music in culture” and “music as culture”) and press further to the idea that even the most deeply lived experiences are profoundly social.

Few forms of expressive culture have the visceral impact that music does, and its affective power can often lead to the illusion that musical meanings are inherent in the sound itself and obvious to any listener. In a course like rock history, I see the opportunity to help students defamiliarize and situate culturally the seemingly transparent meaning of familiar musics. Likewise, in large courses like “Music in World Cultures,” I use focused listening assignments and a careful contextualization of music sound to show students that they can partially transcend the apparently inexplicable strangeness of unfamiliar musics, and, by extension, unfamiliar social practices. As educators who want to engage our students and as individuals who are always, in Phil Bohlman’s noteworthy phrase, “becoming ethnomusicologists,” we use the work in our field to understand our musical experiences, experiences that, because of their affective power, compel our attention and demand our inquiry; at the same time, this work leads us to deep insights about social life, insights that have the potential to shape every part of our existence, from conduct in face-to-face interaction, to our understanding of identity, to our most profound political commitments. In this context, large introductory classes are the place where the most important of those insights can be brought to the fore and explored together.

I am sure that each reader will have his/her own treasury of ethnomusicological insights, and I won’t try to catalog all of mine here. Rather, I want to suggest the importance of reminding ourselves to put these intellectual payoffs at the center of our work—asking ourselves which ideas in our field matter most, building our courses around these ideas, emphasizing to our students that the search for insights is the point of their education, and making sure that our courses are always reaching toward those insights, even at those moments when we are doing nothing more than laying a factual groundwork. While small seminars for majors or graduate students can explore more sophisticated topics than large introductory classes, they often present the instructor with an audience of students who are already sold on the importance of the material at hand. We don’t have to work hard here to show why the material matters. Often dominated by non-majors whose only goal is fulfilling a general education requirement, large introductory courses constantly force us to sharpen our arguments. This is not only a useful exercise for own self-renewal as scholar and teachers, it prepares us to respond to the many voices in contemporary society that would doubt the value of the humanities and social sciences, who think that any pedagogy that doesn’t immediately result in scientific advances or economic advantage is pointless.

Perhaps most importantly, it is in these large classes that our ideas reach their widest audiences. In the past, some scholars justified what they did by foolishly arguing that ideas of great thinkers are the primary driver of history: Descartes or Kant, for example, forged the path toward a rational view of the world (or separated mind from body) and the benefits of modernity (or the horrors of an anomic, disenchanted world) were the direct result. This kind of simplistic, trickle-down theory is no longer the dominant justification for the humanities and social sciences, but seeking to avoid this foolish arrogance, a self-denigrating tendency has crept into our fields. In the face of YouTube videos that garner millions of hits or global media offerings that gross in the billions, our “large” classes reach small audiences indeed. But no one is tested on Rebecca Black’s “Friday,” (unless it is taught in a university course!) or enforces focused viewing of the latest episode of House. And if we as teachers worry that our students aren’t paying attention in class, our concerns cannot compare to those of television writers or directors, who know with certainty that their work is received by audiences who snack, snooze, and read Facebook on smartphones while their shows air. What goes on in our classrooms, especially the large classrooms, matters. If it didn’t, the university would not be one of the primary battlegrounds of the culture wars. [Cont. 8]
None of this is to say that large introductory courses are the only thing that we should teach, nor is it my intention to give aid and comfort to those that would expand university course offerings by turning every class into a giant lecture. Small- and medium-size seminars offer opportunities for deep dialog that large lectures, even ones with many discussion sections, cannot provide. In the US, and many other parts of the world, universities are expected to teach more and more students without a concomitant increase in the number of teachers (and fewer and fewer of the faculty in those schools are on the tenure track). This corporate model of efficiency is execrable, and my remarks should not be construed as a defense of this trend. But even in the best possible world, where a properly funded academy would reach everyone who wanted a post-secondary education, there would still be a place for large introductory classes. Meeting places for students from a wide range of interests, they serve as a kind of intellectual commons for a college or university. Ideally, they give the best scholars the chance to engage the most students; they provide the teacher with a chance to reflect upon the most significant ideas that he/she (and his/her field) has to offer, while opening the teacher up to a stimulatingly broad range of interlocutors. In this sense, they offer a kind existential gymnasium for teachers and for disciplines as a whole, a place to work out our ideas, in every sense of that term. In everyday research, we move from the data we find in the world to interpretation, and from interpretation to theory. When we teach large introductory classes, we have the chance for a dialectical return to the world that has the potential to transform both poles, asking ourselves why we do matters and discovering new ways of making ethnomusicology matter to our students and ourselves.

Having a chance to teach students is a wonderful thing, and their attention, however fragmentary or divided, is a great gift. I don’t mean to romanticize teaching. As the Rate Your Students website and its successor College Misery so painfully illustrate, some students are horrifyingly entitled, dishonest, lazy, rude, or disengaged. But more than ever before, we compete for their attention with jobs, family responsibilities, large course loads, and the paralyzing fear that their future holds nothing more than underemployment and crushing debt. As Catherine Liu observed in the January 28, 2012 episode of Doug Henwood’s Behind the News, junior high and high school perform a kind of demobilizing effect in contemporary American society; contrasting lofty ideals in graduation speeches and public relations documents with the everyday reality of classrooms that are anomic and routinized, schooling makes working and middle-class students cynical, preparing them for a life in the cubicle, the barracks, or the prison. Only the children of the wealthy experience the progressive education that thinkers like John Dewey hoped would lead to a more humane society, Liu and Henwood suggest. In this context, we have the challenge of convincing our students that the fourteen weeks they spend with us are something other than a chance to get an A—that empty token that, for those just emerging from an alienating high school experience, is seen as something whose only purpose is to increase the likelihood that the over-priced gamble of higher education will some day payoff in a decent job. Overcoming this cynicism is no easy task, but when we succeed, we have done something essential. By teaching the most important insights of the existing research, we are, in effect, carrying forward the tasks that our disciplinary predecessors and colleagues have started. What utility does How Musical is Man? have, after all, if the only thing it did was educate John Blacking? Of course, insights are not only found in the major theoretical works of our discipline. When we draw on the diverse works that we have read and our own research, we go beyond the act of completing the projects of others. We gain new insights and we contribute to the enterprise of ethnomusicology, making the field into a kind of meaningful action in the world.

My remarks have been oriented toward the situation of people who teach in higher education and to its American context, and SEM’s membership is, of course, much broader than that. But the corporatization of the academy is sadly not limited to the US, and I hope that these ideas will resonate with teachers of ethnomusicology in other countries. While the situation for public sector ethnomusicologists isn’t the same as that of university instructors, there are important commonalities between them, I think. Museum exhibits, websites, and other kinds of public programming are different from large introductory classes, but as a means of sharing the results of our work, they often serve the same ends. §
With the recognition of honorary members and the announcement of the Society’s prizes filling the winter issue, the SEM Newsletter did not include prizes awarded by chapters and sections in 2011. The awards below represent the announcements submitted by chapter and section chairs for some of the individuals recognized for their papers and publications.

The SEM Southern Plains Chapter has awarded the Vida Chenoweth Student Paper Prize to Andrés Amado, University of Texas, Austin for his paper: “The Fox Trot in Guatemala: Cosmopolitan Nationalism among Ladinos.” The committee agreed that Mr. Amado’s paper was a “very strong contribution to current ethnomusicological work on cosmopolitanism, nationalism and modernity that challenges a number of theoretical assumptions in the field.” In his paper, Amado explored how foreign genres, particularly the fox trot, came to occupy such an important position in Guatemalan repertoire. Through archival materials, ethnographic data, and musical analysis, Amado shows that cosmopolitanism constitutes a significant component of musical nationalism among Guatemalan Ladinos (i.e., non-Mayas). Amado’s research also builds on earlier ethnographic fieldwork conducted by Vida Chenoweth (1964) in demonstrating that there was a tension between music that acquired nationalist meaning through its previous modern associations. He concludes that marimba musicians and Guatemalan Ladinos continue to embrace the paradigm of cosmopolitanism and modernity in their national imagination.

The Gender and Sexualities Taskforce Section (GST) presented the Marcia Herndon Award to Christina Suarnardi, University of Washington for “Negotiating Authority and Articulating Gender: Performer Interaction in Malang, East Java,” published in Ethnomusicology (2011). The award committee observed that Sunardi called attention to the interactions among participants and revealed the power negotiations during the video recording session. In addition, she made known her own role within the research process. This award honors Marcia Herndon (October 1, 1941 - May 19, 1997). It is given annually to an exceptional ethnomusicological work in gender and sexuality including, but not limited to, works that focus upon lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirited, homosexual, transgendered and multiple gender issues and communities.

The Popular Music Section has awarded the Richard Waterman Prize to recognize the best article published within the previous year by a junior scholar in the ethnomusicological study of popular music. The committee of Jennifer Matsue, Greg Booth, and Gordon Thompson reviewed five submissions for the prize. After deliberation, this year’s winner is Matt Sakakeeny of Tulane University for his winter 2010 article in Ethnomusicology, “Under the Bridge: An Orientation to Soundscapes in New Orleans.” Sakakeeny describes the music of brass bands in the Tremé neighborhood of New Orleans and the acoustemology of a racially contested space. In particular, he questions whether an “identity based in race and place is a reliable indicator of an individual’s orientation towards sound” (20). This article’s clearly defined theoretical position deals with popular music in human life and behavior in a way that proves both politically engaged and excellent reading.

The Popular Music Section has awarded the Lise Waxer Graduate Student Paper Prize to Luis-Manuel Garcia for his paper “Liquid Solidarities: Vague Belonging at Electronic Dance Music Events in Paris, Chicago, and Berlin.” Committee chair Kevin Fellezs describes Garcia’s paper as well-written and cogently argued, managing to combine ethnography and theoretical insights in an engaging and accessible manner. Garcia chronicles the slippery senses of social cohesion amongst audiences at techno and house club parties in three of the world’s largest cities. At the heart of his analysis in the concept of liquidity, a situation-based, fluid concept of belonging that links strangers to one another through habituated demonstrations of taste (and access to musical events) while maintaining their anonymity. The committee was also pleased with the paper’s dedication to a theoretical argument, which situated his ideas within the context of existing theory and literature in a new theoretical construction.

The Association for Chinese Music Research has awarded the Barbara Barnard Smith Student Prize for Best Student Paper presented at the 2010 SEM conference to Meredith Schweig (Ph.D. Candidate in Ethnomusicology, Harvard University) for her paper “With This Song, You Will Remember: Hip-Hop Activism, Typhoon Morakot, and Narratives of Disaster in Taiwan.” The prize committee commented, “This paper not only shows original research, but it is also well-researched and presents sophisticated theoretical ideas.” In her paper, Schweig examines a September 2009 concert staged by members of Taiwan’s independent hip-hop community to benefit the victims of Typhoon Morakot. Performers mourned those who perished in the storm, while many also gave voice to their anger and concern about other issues, including the question of Taiwan’s political sovereignty, pollution along the island’s coastlines, and the systematic erosion of local languages and lifeways. Schweig invokes theoretical writings on trauma and memory to explore the means by which individual performers at the festival wove the typhoon into a larger musical narrative of disaster and discontent in Taiwan. Schweig’s paper speaks to the role that musical performance can play in mediating responses to disaster.
SEM Section News

The South Asian Performing Arts Section (SAPA) is pleased to announce the establishment of a new prize. The Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy Prize will recognize the most distinguished student paper on the performing arts of South Asia and its diasporas presented at the SEM annual meeting. For information on eligibility and the application process, please visit the section website or contact SAPA co-chair Peter Kvetko (pkvetko@salemstate.edu).

People and Places

Ginny Danielson has resigned her position as director of Harvard's Loeb Music Library to accept a position as Interim Director and Associate Director for Collections and Services at NYU's new campus in Abu Dhabi. Dr. Sarah Adams is currently serving as Acting Director of the Loeb Music Library and Acting Curator of the Archive of World Music at Harvard. Inquiries about the Loeb Library and the Archive should be directed to Dr. Adams. Ginny Danielson can be reached at ginny.danielson@nyu.edu.

Professor Byong Won Lee, an ethnomusicologist with the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Department of Music, has been selected to receive the 2011 Joong Ahn Prize for Achievement in Arts and Humanities. Lee was selected by the Dukwon Forest Foundation in Pusan, Korea. The award ceremony will be held November 15 at the Grand Hotel in Pusan. Lee will present a keynote speech during the award ceremony.

In Memoriam


Born in Lebanon in 1931, of Russian parents who left Russia after the revolution, Sviat learned to play the piano and violin, earned a music degree from the American University in Beirut, and studied composition at the Accademia di Santa Cecilia in Rome before coming to Columbia University for graduate work in ethnomusicology. He worked for a number of years at the University’s Center for Studies in Ethnomusicology and subsequently, until his final illness. He also worked at Columbia University’s Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library where his knowledge of cultures and languages—Russian, Italian, French, Arabic, and English—proved invaluable.

Among those who knew him, he will always be remembered as a meticulously thorough scholar, a gentleman in the strictest sense of the word, and a generous, thoughtful and extraordinarily loyal friend. [Adelaida Reyes]

Workshops

The Center for World Music is pleased to announce its Programs Abroad 2012: cultural tours and hands-on workshops with distinguished master musicians in Indonesia, Africa, China, and South America.

Indonesian Encounters 2012 (June 25-July 15): a two-week hands-on workshop in Bali, a Payangan Festival of Music and Dance, and a one-week Performing Arts Tour of Central Java. Cost $1,995 (airfare not included). Directors and guides: Wayan Tubek and Dr. Lewis Peterman.

African Encounters 2012 (July 30-August 21): a two-week hands-on workshop in Ho, Ghana and a five-day tour of the cultural highlights of Southern Ghana. Cost $3,995 (airfare included). Directors and guides: Degbor Seyram and Dr. Ric Alviso.

Way of the Qin (August 1-31): focus on qin performance. Visits to Taoist sanctuaries and historical sites, and performances of traditional music. Cost $4,000 (airfare included). Directors and guides: Wang Peng and Jia Wu Xuan. Coordinators: Juan-Juan Meng and Dr. Alexander Khalil.

Andes and Beyond 2012 (June 29-July 13): a two-week hands-on workshop in Peru, with guest artist demonstrations and visits to major Incan ruin sites, including Machu Picchu. Cost $1,995 (airfare not included). Director and guide: Dr. Holly Wissler.

For additional information and on-line application forms, please visit the Center’s website or contact Lewis Peterman at peterman@mail.sdsu.edu or at (619) 440-7046.

PhillyBloco
Photo by Alan Burdette
Grants and Awards

The American Institute of Indian Studies announces its 2012 fellowship competition and invites applications from scholars who wish to conduct their research in India. Junior fellowships are awarded to Ph.D. candidates to conduct research for their dissertations in India for up to eleven months. Senior fellowships are awarded to scholars who hold the Ph.D. degree for up to nine months of research in India. The AIIS also welcomes applications for its performing and creative arts fellowships from accomplished practitioners of the arts of India. The application deadline is July 1, 2012. Applications can be downloaded from www.indiastudies.org. Inquires should be directed to: Telephone: (773) 702-8638. Email: aiis@uchicago.edu.

The University of Illinois Press, the University Press of Mississippi, and the University of Wisconsin Press, in cooperation with the American Folklore Society and with the support of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, invite proposals to a workshop at the 2012 conference of the American Folklore Society for authors working on their first book. Up to six authors will be selected to participate in a full day of intensive activities devoted to critiquing and developing their individual projects. Projects selected for the workshop will be candidates for publication in the Presses' collaborative series, Folklore Studies in a Multicultural World, which aims to publish exceptional first books that emphasize the interdisciplinary and/or international nature of the field of folklore. Because of the volume of submissions, it is not possible for the participating presses to offer detailed responses to each proposal submitted. Only those candidates selected for the workshop will receive a detailed response.

Proposals may be submitted via e-mail between January 1, 2012 and April 1, 2012, to fsmw@uillinois.edu. For complete submission guidelines, please see www.folklorestudies.org.

The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress announces the 2012 Archie Green Fellowship. The Center will award one or more fellowships for original research into the culture and traditions of American workers. The application deadline is March 16, 2012. For information about how to apply, please visit http://www.loc.gov/folklife/grants.html#archie.

The Oxford Bibliographies Graduate Student Article Award in Music is now accepting nominations. This is an annual award that offers doctoral candidates an opportunity to contribute to Oxford Bibliographies. The award is a way for students at the dissertation level to draw attention to their work while also adding a peer-reviewed publication to their CVs. A rigorous selection and approval process will ensure that only the best contributions are published. The deadline for nominations is April 15, 2012.

Ethnomusicology Internet Resources

The SEM Website: http://www.ethnomusicology.org
The SEM Discussion List: SEM-L

To subscribe, send email message to: LISTSERV@LISTSERV.INDIANA.EDU. Leave subject line blank. Type the following message: SUBSCRIBE SEM-L yourfirstname yourlastname.

SEM Chapter Websites
Mid Atlantic Chapter
Midwest Chapter
Niagara Chapter
Northeast Chapter
Northern California Chapter
Northwest Chapter
Southeast-Caribbean Chapter
Southern California & Hawaii Chapter
Southern Plains Chapter
Southwest Chapter

SEM Section Websites
Applied Ethnomusicology Section
Education Section
Gender and Sexualities Taskforce
Popular Music Section
South Asia Performing Arts Section

Ethnomusicology Websites
American Folklife Center
Association for Chinese Music Research
British Forum for Ethnomusicology
British Library, World and Traditional Music
Christian Musicological Society
Ethnomusicology OnLine (EOL), (home site)
International Council for Traditional Music
Iranian Musicology Group
Music & Anthropology
Smithsonian Institution: Folkways, Festivals, & Folklife
Society for American Music
Society for Asian Music
UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive
University of Washington Ethnomusicology Archive
Fondazione Casa di Oriani, Ravenna
Conference Calendar, 2012

• Midwest Chapter, Society for Ethnomusicology annual meeting, 31 March-1 April, Department of Music, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.


• The Mid-Atlantic Chapter, Society for Ethnomusicology annual meeting, College of William and Mary, 30 March-1 April 2012. http://www.wm.edu/as/music/macsem_conference/index.php

• Northeast Chapter, Society for Ethnomusicology annual meeting Saturday 14 April 2012, Tufts University, Medford, MA.


• Association for Asian Studies, 2012 Annual Conference, 15–18 March 2012, the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

• South Asian Studies Association, 6th Annual SASA Conference, 13-15 April 2012, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California. www.sasia.org


• Music & The Moving Image, New York University, New York, New York, 1-3 June 2012 http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/music/scoring/conference/


• “Strange Fascination? — A Symposium on David Bowie,” October 2012, University of Limerick, Ireland. Abstracts of 250 words to eoin.devereux@ul.ie by 14 April 2012.

• “Theatre Between Tradition & Contemporaneity,” 17-21 December 2012, Retzhof Educational Institute, Retzhof Castle, Leitring bei Leibnitz, Austria.

• The CUNY Graduate Center Department of Music, 2012 Graduate Students in Music (GSIM) conference, 28-29 April 2012.

• The Society of Graduate Students in Music of the Don Wright Faculty of Music at the University of Western Ontario (London, Ontario, Canada), Fourteenth Annual UWO Graduate Student Symposium on Music, 24-25 August 2012. Proposals 30 March 2012, uwomucon@gmail.com.