Beverley Diamond to Deliver 2020 Charles Seeger Lecture

C. Kati Szego, Memorial University of Newfoundland

The 2020 Charles Seeger Lecture will be delivered by Beverley Diamond, Professor Emerita of Ethnomusicology at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Prior to taking up the first Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Ethnomusicology at Memorial in 2002, Bev taught at York University (Toronto, 1988–2001), Queen’s University (Kingston, 1975–88), and McGill University (Montreal, 1973–75). Bev completed all her degrees, in musicology and ethnomusicology, at the University of Toronto.

A Canadian, most of Bev Diamond’s research has taken place within the country’s borders. Offering nuanced analyses in a non-polemical voice, much of her writing addresses the creative moves of musicians—some who call themselves Canadian and many who don’t—that speak to the myriad conditions of colonialism, globalization, and patriarchy. Each of her multitudinous articles, co-edited volumes, and books address one or more topical areas: gender; technological production and mediation; expressions of Indigenous modernity in Inuit, First Nations, Métis, Australian Aboriginal, and Sámi communities; Indigenous intellectual property; and Canadian settler musics.

A few examples help to tell some of her story.

In the 1980s and early 90s, Bev was asking incisive questions about the biases and values that framed accounts of Canada’s musical history, including those that advanced an uncritical, romantic discourse about Canadian multiculturalism. Gathering scholarship across the musicologies and humanities, Canadian Music: Issues of Hegemony and Identity (Canadian Scholars’ P, 1994)—her co-edited volume with Robert Witmer—helped reset Canadian music studies by offering new approaches to historiography, shifting musical emphases, and illuminating the power that academics wield through their assumptive and interpretive choices.

In 2000, Bev co-edited Music & Gender (U Illinois P) with Pirkko Moisala. While theirs was not the first volume on that topic in our field (Koskoff 1987; Herndon & Ziegler 1990), it broke new ground. Music & Gender was remarkable both for its authors’ use of feminist theory and for its recognition of ethnocentrism and class bias in feminist theory. The productive tension of that interstitial space characterizes a great deal of Bev’s work. As she wrote in her own article in that collection, “feminist scholars should not debate as much as relate the essentialist to the constructionist, acknowledging both the hegemonic struggle and strategic uses of the former while attempting to validate the latter” (132).

First steps toward establishing socially responsible partnerships with First Peoples and the scholarly community were taken with Bev’s sprawling SPINC (Sound Producing Instruments in Native Communities) project, begun in the late 1980s. As Bev recalls, “I formed the SPINC group… because I really felt I needed people to talk to about… my struggle to work ethically in First Nations contexts.” She invited two former students to form a research team, the published outcome of which was Visions of Sound (Wilfrid Laurier UP and U Chicago P 1994). Visions of Sound set the stage for a “new organology”; it was equally venture-some in its experiments with graphic representation, reflexivity, and dialogism—between the investigators and their First Nations consultants and between co-investigators. Visually complex and quirky,
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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For institutional memberships, please visit the University of Illinois Press website.

Guidelines for Contributors

Email articles and shorter entries for consideration to the SEM Newsletter Editor.

Copy deadlines:
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- Spring Issue (15 Mar.)
- Summer Issue (15 June)
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Ethnomusicology: Back Issues

Ethnomusicology, the Society’s journal (ISSN 0036-1291), is currently published three times a year. Back issues are available through the SEM Business Office, Indiana University, 800 East 3rd Street, Bloomington, IN, 47405-3657; 812-855-6672; sem@indiana.edu.

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SEM Newsletter

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.

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


Address changes, orders for back issues of the SEM Newsletter, and all other non-editorial inquiries should be sent to the Business Office, Society for Ethnomusicology, Indiana University, 800 East 3rd Street, Bloomington, IN, 47405. sem@indiana.edu.

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Unprecedented and Meaningful Change

Tim Cooley, SEM President

SEM must change. Now is the time. There are no quick fixes. The process will be painful, yet the social, moral, and scholarly costs of not changing are too great. SEM cannot claim to be an antiracist organization, and we have not yet come to terms with the colonial and imperial legacies that still shape core activities of our scholarly society as an institution. SEM as an institution and as its current President have ignored, dismissed, suppressed, and harmed many of our members with racist acts, the reinscriptions of hegemonic power, and the active and complicit protection of the status quo and thus white supremacy. I apologize on behalf of myself and SEM. I must do better. We must do better.

I will start by thanking all of you who have privately and publicly come forward to point out the many ways that white privilege continues to be maintained within SEM. I am especially grateful to our Black, Indigenous, and People of Color members who have taken the time to advise me and the Board during this time of acute pain and anger. I am listening and we must listen.

But am I hearing? In a hasty response to Dr. Danielle Brown’s “An Open Letter on Racism in Music Studies, Especially Ethnomusicology and Music Education” posted to SEM-L on 12 June 2020, I committed to using the position of power and privilege of the SEM Presidency to address the concerns that Dr. Brown brought forward. But then I overstepped when I made the aspirational claim that I believed she would find SEM a different place should she return to us, a phrase that many read as dismissive. The feedback was immediate, from many sources, and well deserved. I am humbled. I acknowledge that I do not know what it feels like to be silenced, dismissed, ignored, profiled, harmed because of my race. I acknowledge that my employment, discipline, and even position on the Board of SEM all affirm the legacy of colonialist and imperialist enterprises. I embody privilege. Who am I to presume that I know—really know—anything about the subtle insults, erasures, humiliations that Black and other SEM members experience over and over again in life, including when engaging SEM (see long-standing SEM member and current College Music Society President Eileen M. Hayes’s message to CMS). I apologize for the anger and hurt I caused by my insensitive statement. I recommit to listening to our membership. I am listening and concede that SEM is not changing as fast or as effectively as is necessary. Yet we must change for many reasons but most of all because it is the right thing to do. And it is time.

While too often blind and deaf to the racism that supports my privilege, I cannot remain silent and complicit. I am listening. One repeated message of hope I have heard from Tammy Kernodle, President of the Society of American Music, is that crises prepare our societies for change that otherwise would be much more difficult to achieve. Crises disrupt the status quo and therein lies opportunity. Three global crises present us with unprecedented opportunities for systemic changes, including for our scholarly societies. The climate crisis demands that we reimagine how we use and share resources across the board, including the carbon footprints of our research, teaching, advocating, and conferencing practices. But how to address the asymmetrical impact of the climate crisis on the poorest and most vulnerable individuals and communities around the world and in our towns? The coronavirus pandemic forced us to make immediate changes in how we go about our activities as ethnomusicologists while our members quickly became adept at virtual researching, teaching, and learning while sheltering at home—or were forced to suspend scholarly activity while we recovered from the virus or helped family and loved ones fight for their lives. Yet here too the pain was and is most acutely felt by communities oppressed by legacies of white privilege, colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism. Then the murder of George Floyd, a Black man, by a white police officer returned the attention of the world to the Black Lives Matter movement and to centuries of white supremacy gained and retained by violence toward Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Are we listening? Is SEM finally ready to do what should have been done decades centuries ago? If not today, when? For example, I have cited two current Presidents of sibling music societies in this column, both of whom are Black women. What are the structural conditions within SEM that have prevented any Black member from writing to the world order into opportunities for meaningful change? We must. And I, the Board, and SEM need your help.

Again, SEM must change. Change will be a process, and that process will be challenging. I am committed to change, as is the SEM Board. But the white privilege is [continued on next page]
Unprecedented and Meaningful Change

deeply rooted, and our time on the Board is short. Will you help the Board, Council, Committees, Sections, and Special Interests Groups get started? Will you hold future Boards accountable to continuing the process? Can we collectively agree to avoid the often petty distractions from doing what we know must be done? In my communications with SEM members who are from underrepresented communities, one repeated demand is for a statement about what the leadership is doing to move SEM toward becoming an anti-racist organization; toward becoming equitable and inclusive for all; away from systemic white privilege. In response, I offer below a list of actions the Board is taking to these ends:

-Engaged the Gertrude Robinson Network, Diversity Action Committee (DAC), and individual stakeholders to listen, seek advice, and to learn.
-Appointed individuals from underrepresented groups on both the Board Nominating Committee and Council Nominating Committee.
-Appointed Mellonee V. Burnim as the new chair of the Diversity Action Committee, and added new members specifically to focus on SEM’s collective engagement with or Black, Indigenous, and People of Color members.
-Actively recruited People of Color to sit on 2020 prize committees, which have the responsibility for distributing research and travel funds, prizes, and honors to our membership.
-Issued to the chairs of all 2020 prize committees a set of best-practices steps intended to help committees reduce the impact of implicit biases in their decisions.
-The Program Committee and Local Arrangement Committee for our 2021 annual meetings are both chaired by Black ethnomusicologists and contain additional members who have ties to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) with whom SEM is committed to engaging at our 2021 annual meeting in Atlanta.
-The Task Force on Institutional Equity and Inclusion has been formed and charged with (1) identifying language concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion within or absent from the various documents that govern the official actions of SEM, and (2) defining goals for SEM for achieving institutional equity and inclusion.
-Expanded SEM’s 21st Century Fellowship from one award of $5000, to two awards of $7500 each, one of which prioritizes students from underrepresented communities.
-Moved to offer free admission for all undergraduates and empowered the Business Office to work with the Local Arrangements Committee and the Program Committee to determine the number of free or reduced rate registrations for local community members and/or musicians from elsewhere who appear on the Annual Meeting program. The Board hopes that this will facilitate the accessibility and inclusiveness of our meetings, though this will require continued effort.
-Sponsored programmatic responses for our 2020 Annual Meeting to the harm done to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Members in our 2019 meeting in Atlanta.
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SEM 2020 Virtual Annual Meeting

During the past spring, SEM closely monitored the COVID-19 pandemic and its potential impact on plans to hold our 2020 Annual Meeting in Ottawa on October 22–25. Given continuing Coronavirus infections, social distancing directives, and travel disruptions, we determined in June that it would unfortunately not be feasible to hold this meeting onsite in Ottawa. Thus, we will hold the 2020 Annual Meeting on October 22–31 in a virtual format, with a pre-conference symposium on October 21. Technical support will be provided by Indiana University Bloomington.

We realize that many SEM members will deeply miss the opportunities for face-to-face interaction afforded by an onsite meeting. However, our virtual conference software platform is designed to simulate as many aspects of an onsite conference as possible. This platform will include pre-recorded videos for playback, live program sessions via video-conferencing, various types of virtual interaction among individual attendees, and a virtual book exhibits area. We are also considering options for alternative format sessions. We will disseminate more information about the SEM 2020 Virtual Annual Meeting over the next several weeks. Registration at discounted rates is now open.

SEM thanks the 2020 Local Arrangements Committee for all of its work on the onsite meeting in Ottawa. The pre-conference symposium, “Musical Activism and Agency: Contestations and Confluences,” will be held in a virtual format, in conjunction with the main conference. Meanwhile, we have rescheduled an SEM onsite annual meeting in Ottawa for October 19–22, 2023. We also thank the 2020 Program Committee for its work in assembling an outstanding program for this year’s meeting and for its assistance with the transition to a virtual format.

SEM believes that its 2020 Virtual Annual Meeting will offer an exciting opportunity for exploring new forms of communication within the Society and for addressing ongoing concerns with travel costs, inclusion, and the global climate impact of in-person conferences. We look forward to seeing you at our virtual conference in October!
Unprecedented and Meaningful Change

Inclusion in SEM* and panelists will include representatives from the 2019 Black Ethnomusicology panel, the DAC, the Gertrude Robinson Network, and the SEM Board.

(2) Roundtable survey of membership: President’s Roundtable panelists will respond to questions pulled from an anonymous survey sent by the DAC to the SEM membership prior to the meeting.

(3) Roundtable co-sponsored by the SEM and Canadian Society for Traditional Music Boards titled “Disrupting White Supremacy in Music and Sound Studies” and featuring stakeholders from Black and First Nation communities.

(4) DAC and SEM Board co-sponsored workshop on tenure for underrepresented groups.

(5) Board sponsored Task Force on Climate Crises roundtable on climate and social justice.

Will this fix SEM? Will this end epistemic violence against Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and other aggrieved individuals and groups at our conferences, in our publications, and in our interpersonal interactions? Will these actions transform SEM into an anti-racist organization? No. But they may move us closer toward this objective. They may begin to show aggrieved members that they are vital to and welcome within SEM. Done well, it might empower individuals who have felt disempowered. But this is only the beginning of what must be an ongoing process of listening, assessment, action, change, repeat.

Repeated again, we have to change. The coronavirus pandemic hit hard the already fragile academic job market, and the formerly lively gig economy for musicians and the support staff that allows many musical events to exist. The USA’s responses to that pandemic were in its early days when I wrote the spring President’s Column, and now as I write this summer column, the federal government is urging the nation to return to (business as) normal as quickly as possible. Many of our members continue to teach, learn, and conduct research virtually, and indeed we have shown once again how adaptable we are. We have begun to change how we do what we do. SEM’s Board has also been active authoring and endorsing statements of support for our members and colleagues, including in some cases writing directly to our institutional deans, chancellors, and presidents as well as to the U.S. Congress. Many of these statements advocated particularly for our most vulnerable members who are facing job insecurity, and for reinvestment in humanities education and public sector arts funding as an economic engine.

You, our members, have generated several exceptionally informative and helpful threads on SEM-L offering valuable resources for research, teaching, and staying sane during the ongoing pandemic. We created a COVID-19 Resources for Ethnomusicology section on the home page of SEM’s website. The website of the College Music Society also has a wealth of information about teaching classes and ensembles/lessons online. As I detailed in my spring newsletter column, many of our chapter meetings had to be canceled, as were the regional and even national meetings of several of our sister scholarly societies. SEM now joins that group as we change our 2020 annual meeting this October to a virtual platform.

Some positive developments come out of this crisis, however. While SEM was already looking for ways to use virtual meeting platforms to reduce the carbon footprint of our society before COVID-19, the pandemic shelter-at-home orders have moved many of us to develop and refine skills for virtual teaching, learning, conferencing and presenting. While we were researching the possibility of a virtual annual meeting in 2023 for environmental reasons, we have the opportunity to accomplish that goal now. Emergency responses to a pandemic are not the ideal way to achieve beneficial social change, but we hope that we can use this crisis to adjust our conference and other SEM-related meetings and even research standards to the benefit of the environment and our members. As Aaron Allen, the chair of the SEM Climate Crises Task Force, reminded me the other day, their approach to ecology and ecomusicology is justice-oriented—similar to the COVID-19 pandemic, environmental degradation tends to impact already vulnerable individuals and communities the most. As SEM moves toward greater virtual conference participation, our commitment is to do all we can to make sure that this improves our accessibility to those impacted members.

This is a challenging time for us as individuals and as a scholarly society. All of us are facing challenges and hardships that we would not have anticipated even a few months ago. For SEM, this is a time for self-assessment and of need for real change brought on by crises that have disrupted the status quo built on white privilege. This calls for individual and collective commitment and action, starting with the act of listening. It is time to acknowledge the many ethnomusicologists of color who have advocated for racial inclusion and equity within SEM for years. We are listening now. The process of change will require extended commitment and accountability. It is time. Let’s get working.
Visions of Sound is an interrogative exploration of Indigenous instruments’ socio-sonic, spiritual, and material design that refuses generalization. Bev hews to that refusal and her commitment to working with others in Native American Music in Eastern North America (Oxford UP 2008). In the preface, she writes: “I had always vowed that I would never write a textbook. I am more interested in exploring the uses and limitations of authority than setting down what students inevitably would read as... a truth about the musical practices of a group of people. As it turns out, by working with a group of Aboriginal advisors whose knowledge was so deep and whose capacity to discuss issues of representation was so capable, I found the preparation of this book one of the most rewarding projects I have ever undertaken. I hope that the differences among our perspectives remain clear and that this textbook, then, can never be read simply as a univocal authoritative text” (xiii). One of the three advisors that Bev profiles in the text is Haudenosaunee singer Sadie Buck, whose expertise and friendship have nourished Bev’s musical practice over decades. Readers feel Sadie’s presence, not just through quotation, but in the ways Bev listens to and with Sadie, while taking responsibility for her own tongue. As Sadie herself has said, “Respect is in the voice” (Visions of Sound 1994:65).

While Bev has stayed on the theoretical cutting edge throughout her 47-year career, she exhorts her colleagues to think carefully about what theory actually is. Her article, “Theory from Practice: First Nations Popular Music in Canada” (Repercussions, 2000) equates social theory with musical practice—and by musical practice she means acts of sounding and all their attendant activities. Practices, then, are not just informed by theory; nor are they objects to which scholars apply theory. Bev concludes her article by inviting readers “to recognize alternative critical theory in systems rooted in oral tradition or reliant on ... sensory data other than words.”

In the late 1990s, the recording studio emerged as an important site for ethnography, and Bev was there. Following her Indigenous consultants’ lead, she focussed less on sonic results and more on the social achievement of those results. In the studio, Bev discovered that “identity”—ethnomusicologists’ go-to concept for a quarter century—had lost its explanatory power. As an alternative, she developed “alliance studies,” setting in motion her conviction that musical practice is theory. Alliance studies is an inquiry-based model that shows how we might hear contemporary expressions of Indigeneity in terms of alignments, relationships. She asks: What genres do musicians place their voices in? How does technological mediation inflect Indigeneity? In her evocation of the model, Bev notes how Indigenous musicians are under pressure to conform to a “patron discourse” (van Toorn 1990)—a discourse that values “unusual” timbres and distinctive practices. What does it mean, Bev then asks, when Indigenous musicians choose mainstream styles instead, and how do they shape meaning through language choice, through citation and collaboration?

Ever mindful of process, one of Bev’s many gifts is for creating welcoming spaces in which diverse stakeholders feel empowered to share their ideas. The Research Centre for the Study of Music, Media and Place (MMaP) that Bev established at Memorial University in 2003 is one such space. Implementing a model that puts university and broader societal goals into shared relief, MMaP brings musicians, audiences, communities, and academics into dialogue, and serves as a crucible in which projects can be collectively shaped. MMaP’s Back on Track CD series (now up to 11 releases), for example, presents previously unreleased archival materials, reissues of out-of-print recordings, and commissions of new work, all richly documented, providing Indigenous and settler communities access to their forbearers’ legacies.

As an inspiring mentor to younger scholars, Beverley Diamond has few peers among Canadian university music professors. The major projects she has spearheaded, such as SPINC, Canadian Musical Pathways, and those at MMaP, have involved extensive input from and training for countless students, from undergraduates to post-docs. A tireless champion of her students’ work, many of them are carrying forward her approach to research and community engagement in the academy and other milieux.

Since the 1980s, Bev has contributed to SEM at all levels, serving on or chairing 18 committees prior to taking on the presidency in 2013. In that role, she amplified the presence of Indigenous voices at the President’s Roundtable and masterminded the inaugural SEM/ICTM Forum in 2015. Recognizing how the International Council for Traditional Music and SEM support scholars who often work under very different conditions of knowledge production—indeed, often with different definitions of what counts as knowledge—Bev, together with Salwa El Shawan Castelo-Branco, engineered a space for conversations among the societies’ constituent members. In fact, Bev’s organizational allegiances spread in many directions; notably, she has been steadfast in her support of associations such as the Canadian Society for Musical Traditions and MusCan.

An astute grant-writer, Bev has attracted, by herself or as a member of joint projects, numerous grants from Canada’s Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) as well as other funding agencies. She has, in turn, served as an expert assessor for many such agencies, including the European Research Council (2012–19), and continues to generously assist others in the process of their grant-writing. Awards and honours have been bestowed upon Bev in abundance, including a Festschrift (2010), a Trudeau Fellowship (2009–12), and election to the Royal Society of Canada (2008), a desig-
designation considered the country's highest academic honour. For her manifold accomplishments and for breaking the path for a progressive scholarship of musics in Canada, SSHRC bestowed its highest accolade upon her in 2014: the Gold Medal Prize.

SEM Seeks New Journal Editor for *Ethnomusicology*

The Society for Ethnomusicology invites proposals from Society members who wish to be considered for the editorship of the journal *Ethnomusicology*. The journal is published three times annually, each issue running approximately 208 pages and including major research articles as well as book, recording, and film, video, and multimedia reviews. The premier journal in the field for more than sixty years, *Ethnomusicology* has played a central role in the expansion of the discipline in the United States and abroad.

The new editor will be selected by the SEM Board of Directors during the spring of 2021 and will begin a one-year transition period as Incoming Editor starting in the fall of 2021 and concluding in the fall of 2022. During the transition period, the Incoming Editor will learn procedures and begin to acquire articles for volume 67, no. 1, with copy for this issue due at the end of the transition period. Frank Gunderson, the current Editor, will complete his term with the Fall 2022 issue (volume 66, no. 3), and the Incoming Editor will then begin a (renewable) four-year term as Editor in 2023. The total time commitment for the new editor is thus five years.

The editor is responsible for acquiring and editing research articles (approximately 400 pages of printed text annually), identifying referees for submissions and overseeing the review process, coordinating the material provided by review editors, and working with the University of Illinois Press, which produces the journal. The Editor is assisted by an Editorial Board, whom she/he appoints with the approval of the SEM Board of Directors. The editor submits annual reports to the SEM Board of Directors in September and, at the SEM Annual Meeting, carries out the following tasks: provides a brief oral report during an SEM Board of Directors meeting, chairs a meeting with the Journal Editorial Board, chairs a meeting with the Journal Review Editors, and meets with the Publications Advisory Committee.

Applicants are strongly encouraged to discuss possible institutional support with their department chairs and deans. In addition, SEM offers $3,000 annually for editorial assistance. Frank Gunderson welcomes applicants to contact him directly at ethnomusicologyeditor@gmail.com to discuss the tasks involved in editing the journal.

Applicants should submit a statement describing: (1) previous editorial and/or administrative experience; (2) the extent to which institutional support can be expected; and (3) why they are interested in serving as Journal Editor. In addition, they should submit a curriculum vitae and a list of three referees. Applicants must be members of SEM. SEM encourages applications from women and underrepresented groups and welcomes nominations from Society members. SEM’s Publications Advisory Committee will review applications and make recommendations to the SEM Board of Directors. The deadline for receipt of applications is February 15, 2021. Please send all materials as email attachments to Stephen Stuempfle, SEM Executive Director, at semexec@indiana.edu.

SEM Receives NEH Grant to Document Musicians during COVID-19

The Society for Ethnomusicology is pleased to announce the award of a CARES Act grant of $74,488 from the National Endowment for the Humanities, in support of a project titled “Musicians in America during the COVID-19 Pandemic.” For this initiative, the Society will contract three ethnomusicologists for twelve weeks each to research the impact of COVID-19 and social distancing directives on music-making throughout the United States.

Through online video interviews with a cross-section of musicians associated with diverse communities and music genres, the researchers will document what it is like to live in a society almost devoid of music-making in public space. What are the consequences of this sudden transformation for human sociability, communication, inspiration, and well-being, as well as for the artistry, careers, and economic livelihood of musicians? How are musicians engaging in alternative modes of musicking, such as organizing virtual performances via the Internet? SEM will use edited versions of the interviews and an accompanying interpretive text to create a publicly accessible online video archive that documents the lives of musicians in this time of crisis.

“Musicians in America during the COVID-19 Pandemic” will support SEM’s goals of expanding its work in public/applied ethnomusicology and promoting ethnomusicology to a broad audience. For more information, please contact Steve Stuempfle at semexec@indiana.edu.
Member News

Mellonee V. Burnim and Portia K. Maultsby’s edited volume *African American Music: An Introduction*, now in its second edition (Routledge 2014), has been included in *The Zora Canon: The 100 Greatest Books Ever Written by African American Women*, released in January 2020 and featured on NPR. Their book is the only music title to make the list, and other than some of the books by Zora Neale Hurston herself (for whom the list is named), it is the only book prominently featuring ethnographic research. Professors Burnim and Maultsby’s book sits among those of Maya Angelou, Toni Morrison, bell hooks, Alice Walker, and many other extraordinary authors.


Paul Austerlitz (Sunderman Conservatory at Gettysburg College) spent his sabbatical in New York City, where he founded the Spirit Clarinet Orchestra, a 12-piece band consisting of clarinets, bass clarinets, and Afro-Latin rhythm section. He also served as Distinguished Visiting Research Scholar at the City University of New York Dominican Studies Institute, where he helped to develop a website on the History of Dominican Music in the U.S.

Institutional News

The manuscript scores collection of Aziz El-Shawan, 20th-century Egypt’s most prominent composer of art music, was recently processed at Harvard University’s Loeb Music Library, where the rich collection is held and where much of it has been digitized and made freely available online. El-Shawan was a prolific composer who considered Western tonal music an “international musical language.” He created a new musical idiom in which he wrote for both Western and Egyptian instruments; his trips to Moscow as director of Egypt’s Soviet Cultural Center had led him to befriend and later study with Aram Khachaturian, whose influence on El-Shawan’s composition style was profound. El-Shawan’s best-known work, Anās El-Wugūd, became the first Egyptian opera with an Arabic-language libretto to reach the stage when it was performed in Cairo in 1996. The composer’s daughter, ethnomusicologist Salwa El-Shawan Castelo-Branco, helped bring her father’s collection to Harvard so that it could be studied and preserved. More information is here: https://hollisarchives.lib.harvard.edu/repositories/27/resources/4732

On 5 June 2020 Yuri Shimoda joined the UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive team as a Digitization and Preservation Specialist. Her expertise in heritage audio formats, community outreach, and repatriation will be critical to the preservation and dissemination of the archive’s extensive collection of 150,000 items, which is the second largest AV collection of traditional music in the U.S. after the Library of Congress.

The Institute of Music Research at the University of Würzburg announces a new and revised ethnomusicology program. Tuition is free for all degree students, regardless of residency or nationality. Seminars are offered in a combination of English and German, and written work may be submitted in either language. Students must be able to understand both German and English in their spoken and written forms, and must be able to speak and write proficiently in both languages. More information is here: https://www.musikwissenschaft.uni-wuerzburg.de/studium/studium-ethnomusikologie.
Spotlight on the Archives of Traditional Music: The First Recordings from the China Project

Catherine Mullen, Indiana University

From the earliest days of ethnomusicology, archives have been a constant companion to our discipline and its work. Archival collections have proliferated in ethnomusicological institutions around the globe, predominantly focusing on ethnographic and commercial recordings ranging from phonographic cylinders, discs, and open reel tapes to more recent forms of analog and digital audiovisual recordings. Starting with the early 20th-century work of the Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv and extending to the efforts of ethnographic archives both large and small today, the objective of the archive has constantly expanded to address the preservation and dissemination of ethnomusicology’s most vulnerable artifacts. This utility points to the many roles of the archive within ethnomusicology, from a repository for fieldwork done by innumerable ethnographers to a resource for future generations of researchers and community collaborators. At Indiana University’s Archives of Traditional Music (ATM), this important balance between preservation and dissemination is evident in a number of recent projects aimed at digitization and accessibility. There, ATM Director Dr. Alan Burdette and a team of audio preservation engineers and researchers have been working to prepare 400 phonographic cylinders in the Berthold Laufer China Collection for digital accessibility through Indiana University’s Media Collections Online (MCO) platform.

Berthold Laufer, a prominent sinologist from Germany, was recruited by the anthropologist Franz Boas to complete ethnographic fieldwork in China at the turn of the 20th century. The recordings deposited in the ATM were originally created by Laufer between 1901 and 1902 as part of a one-man expedition funded by the banker and philanthropist Jacob Henry Schiff and supported by the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH). As Dr. Burdette states, “the goal of the original collecting trip directed by Franz Boas was to gather artifacts of everyday life and industry in China.” The parts of the Laufer collection held at the ATM, consisting entirely of phonograph recordings, focus on vernacular music including theatrical opera from Beijing and Shanghai, as well as performances in spaces such as tea houses and brothels. Thousands of other artifacts and paper materials collected on this expedition remain in the holdings of the AMNH. The recordings at the ATM are likely some of the earliest recordings of instrumental music recorded in China, and their historical significance has called for precise and delicate approaches to technological preservation.

Although these materials have been publicly available to researchers through the ATM since it was founded in 1954, it is only within the past few years that efforts have been made to make this collection digitally accessible. The Laufer digitization project is part of Indiana University’s Media Digitization and Preservation Initiative, a mass digitization initiative created to preserve audiovisual time-based materials across all of the IU campuses. In addition, a grant from the NEH provided assistance for digitizing the 7,000 cylinders held at the ATM. In order to digitize the cylinders in the collection, the project utilizes a revolutionary stylus-based and laser-measuring technology to account for irregular surfaces on cylinders and create a smoother, more listenable preservation master. This machine, the Endpoint Audio Labs Cylinder Playback Machine, allows engineers to measure irregularities in the analog media and adjust playback and digitization efforts accordingly. In order to prepare these recordings for MCO, ATM staff member Dr. Xiaoshi Wei conducted research and consulted scholars in China to contextualize the minimal accompanying documentation. Through these efforts he was able to check the accuracy of existing descriptions and supplement metadata created during the digitization process. This collection is now readily available through MCO. While MCO makes versions of the recordings available that employ a slight noise reduction for listenability, outside Indiana University there is continued interest in improving preservational recordings such as these and recognizing their significance in the history of audio recordings more generally. For instance, a project based in China aims to release fully restored versions of the recordings in a CD set. In addition, Dr. Patrick Feaster, a scholar of early recording technology, addresses the potential for stereo reproduction in a recent blog post, demonstrating that some recordings in this collection are likely the earliest surviving stereo recordings.

Through the work done with the Laufer collection, the ATM shows how contributing to historical preservation and accessibility continues to be a priority for archives in ethnomusicology. However, as Dr. Burdette argues, the significance of archival work in ethnomusicology lies not only in the final products made accessible by archives, but also in the effort put into the process of archiving. This process is one of care and stewardship. “We live in a time when we have ready access to music and media recordings from many generations, so it is easy to take for granted how it is that these recordings are available. In every case, someone or an institution made a choice and the necessary investment to care for those recordings.” It is therefore through constantly applied care that archives help us to continually work towards an understanding of cultures throughout history. Succinctly summarizing the value of the Laufer collection and recordings held in archives today, Dr. Burdette states: “These kinds of recordings help humanize the past and allow us to better understand the ways in which the people of that time and place were both different and very much similar to ourselves today.”
Notes from the Field: Social Distancing, Virtual Performance, and Labor of Compassion in Iran

Payam Yousefi, Harvard University

It is common knowledge among ethnomusicologists that fieldwork is filled with unexpected developments. We plan rigorously for this rite of passage, but inevitably once ethnographic research begins we are at the mercy of varying factors that in many cases are out of our hands. This year in Iran has been a crash course in this reality with coronavirus being the newest unexpected obstacle.

COVID-19 has disrupted life in unprecedented ways all around the world. In 2020 we witnessed temporary closures of institutions, enforcement of social distancing, and varying approaches to quarantine that have put a pause on daily life and interactions. Iran, too, is grappling with the traumatic effects of this virus as one of the first countries to be hit with a crippling outbreak. Increasing death tolls, amplified economic hardship, and the absence of social normalcy have left the country in a state of anxiety.

In these dire times, the adaptions of Iran’s musical life to these circumstances have emerged as an unexpected case study. Currently Instagram Live has become a space for broadcasting real-time musical collaboration and democratized transmission within the otherwise exclusive tradition of classical Persian music. In this time of social distancing the syncing of musical culture with social media technologies has become a means of expanding interactions and dialogues. Not only have virtual interactions become a means of solidarity and togetherness that ease the burden of this pandemic on citizens’ mental health, but these virtual broadcasts have also amplified the real humanitarian work musicians are engaged in during this time of crisis.

The Spring that Did Not Awake

Mandatory stay-at-home orders in Iran were announced several days before the Persian New Year, concurrent with the first day of spring. This is usually a time of celebration, when the country is on a thirteen-day vacation. Families gather to celebrate the arrival of spring by visiting each other’s homes in the spirit of renewal. It is a time of forgetting the past, putting aside old grudges, eating sweets, and receiving gifts from elders. Iranians had much to forget and put behind them this year, with the increased pressure of sanctions on the economy, crackdowns on protests, geopolitical tensions with the US, and the tragic downing of passenger flight 752. Unfortunately, stay-at-home orders rendered this age-old tradition of renewal incapable of fulfilling its social function in a time when it was needed most.

Several days into the mandatory-stay-at-home orders, I noticed a growing number of musicians hosting live video sessions. These sessions consisted of casual conversations between artists, Q&A with the comments section, and collaborative live improvisatory performance. The almost seamless adaption of classical Persian music’s call-and-response formats to virtual musical collaboration stood out to me as particularly unique compared to the more produced musical content on social media from around the world. The custom of new year visitations continued in a virtual format, and musical life persisted to function as a vehicle to create such gatherings.

Javab-e avaz, Hamrahi, and Hal: A Musical Dialogue of Support and Healing in Crisis

The practice of avaz o javab-e avaz is the main formal vehicle that drives improvisatory dialogue between Iranian vocalists and instrumentalists. This style of performance became a fixture of live online sessions, where two musicians would improvise from the safety of their respective homes for all to see. The distinct features of this form enable musical collaboration on live video calls in a way that uses the video lag inherent within these technologies. Both the musical characteristics as well as the extramusical meanings within this form make it ripe for practical use in today’s climate.

Avaz o javab-e avaz literally translates as vocalizations (avaz) and response to vocalizations (javab-e avaz). In this form of call-and-response dialogue, first the singer will improvise highly ornamented melismatic phrases onto poetry, and then the instrumentalist responds with an approximation that is inflected with personal embellishments and interpretations. This dialogic form of collaboration facilitates the improvisatory exploration of modal-melodic spaces within this creative practice. (See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6aCWtmDuLMU)

A key driving force of the improvisation’s success within this form relies on a specific type of accompaniment the instrumentalist provides called hamrahi. Essentially, as the vocalist sings, the instrumentalist instantly imitates those melodies, reproducing them at a second’s delay at a lower volume under the voice. This display of aural precision and imitative capacity by the instrumentalist functions both as a method of making mental notes of what has been sung to ensure an accurate response, while also creating a supportive sonorous space that empowers the vocalist’s improvisatory explorations. The collaboration between the vocalist Pouria Akhavaas and the setar player Amir Nojan is a prime example of how the formal call-and-response structure (javab-e avaz) and delayed accompaniment (hamrahi) allow this musical form to harness video lag within virtual performances. [continued on next page]
The connotations of solidarity, support, and intimacy embedded in the term *hamrahi* also bear significance in understanding the extramusical functions within these performances. While *hamrahi* translates to accompaniment, it also translates to companionship and sodality in a path toward a shared destination: in the Persian language, the term is used in expressing sentiments of intimacy between individuals on a shared path toward truth seeking in Sufism, while also expressing solidarity and comradery toward social-justice in the political context. Looking back to the example of Nojan and Akhavaas, it becomes clear how *hamrahi* accompaniment is a musical exemplar of such sentiments of support. Nojan’s *hamrahi* accompaniment masterfully reproduces the newly heard melodies in an aesthetically inspiring manner to create a supportive sonic space, and, as the performance progresses, Akhavaas increasingly pushes his virtuosic limits and improvisatory explorations. This gradually building trust also leads to further concepts of musical intimacy and euphoria.

The principles of good *hamrahi* accompaniment are similar to those of healthy dialogue: listening, processing, making space for another presence, and eventually responding within context. When this supportive musical dialogue functions at its highest capacity the accompaniment creates a sense of companionship and trust—termed *ham deli*, literally translating to same-heartedness—that empowers the musicians to tap into spontaneous virtuosity and creativity. At such a moment, a state of euphoric reflection termed *hal* occurs for the practitioners and audience. *Hal* translates to presence, expressing being in the moment in a space of balance and solitude that inspires affective listening and performance. In Persian music circles, the state of *hal* is believed to be therapeutic for the performers and listeners.

Typically, such affective *hal*-evoking performances reach their most elevated states in private musical gatherings that occur in the intimate spaces of homes. With the adaption of musical collaboration onto Instagram Live, this space is opened up to a larger public that transcends the limitations of a living room, becoming a collective, democratized form of mass listening. In the absence of intimate gatherings so core to the customs of New Year, this performative tradition of companionship has become a small form of emotional refuge and therapeutic listening for masses stuck in their homes. While performances have adapted to new formats, instruction has also continued to play a role in musical life amidst social distancing.

**Sineh-be-sineh (heart-to-heart): Guidance and Mentorship in Crisis**

In Iran, instruction is another vital sector of musical life. Teaching is the primary source of income for the majority of musicians. Moreover, music transmission functions as a pillar for specific social values with ethical overtones. By mid-February, this important sphere of musical life tied to monetary and cultural value was impacted by the pandemic, as all private and public educational institutions were mandatorily closed to prevent the further spread of the virus.

Within a week, many musicians began posting on Instagram that they will be teaching online. This took many forms, from holding instructional sessions for everyone to see on Instagram Live, posting sections from group classes on WhatsApp’s groups video chat feature, and some individuals even offering free lessons to ease the burdens of quarantine.

The foundational role of imitative call-and-response transmission in classical Persian music also neatly transferred into this online format. This tradition of oral transmission is called *sineh-be-sineh*, which literally means heart to heart—poetically expressing the close and intimate nature of master and apprentice in this form of transmission. In this tradition, the student sits face-to-face with their teacher as the teacher performs musical phrases one-by-one. As the phrases are performed, the student is required to imitate them identically until those phrases are learned and memorized. While notation is heavily used in instruction today, oral methods of transmission are still used for teaching the details of the music that must be embodied—i.e., specific micro-rhythms, qualitative accents, and intonations. The video of Omid Mostafavi—a well-known tombak performer and instructor—teaching his students on WhatsApp is an example of such lessons. Lessons like this have played a vital role in creating a sense of normalcy during stay-at-home orders. (See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81DL-OoTzFo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81DL-OoTzFo))

While speaking with Mostafavi, he mentioned how the online lessons played a huge role in helping students with their sanity while being stuck in their homes for months. Omid stated:

*Lessons helped everyone stay home and stay safe. Especially when being stuck at home felt frustrating. It is good to have a kind of motivation to help time pass and I think, as students saw themselves improve on their instruments, it provided them motivation for the next day. Lessons do not solve our bigger problems, but having something to move toward becomes a good way to cope. In a way, it makes us mentally stronger.*

The teacher, or *Ostad*, is an important figure in the lives of pupils. The space of apprenticeship is one of moral and ethical cultivation, and, as can be seen in Omid’s statements, the lessons and guidance provided transcend musical instruction. These spaces become all the more important in a time of crisis. In his Instagram interview with Nojan during quarantine, Fariborz Azizi, an authoritative tar instructor, spoke about...
his memories of apprenticing with Ostad Mohammad Reza Lotfi and the role this apprenticeship played in his life. He reflected on how lessons were a form of self-care: “Every time I had a lesson with Lotfi, I was energized for the whole week. It was like going to the doctor and getting injected with vitamins.” Azizi ended this interview by offering free online lessons for the duration of the quarantine to students in Iran as an attempt to turn the experience of COVID-19 into a positive one. While Iranians were not able to receive gifts from visiting their elders this new year, Fariborz gave everyone their _eidi_, or gift, in the form of music lessons in a time when people may have needed it the most.

_Sineh-be-sineh_, or heart-to-heart instruction, in such a context fittingly expresses the role of solidarity and togetherness that musical life has been providing in these troubling times. Apprenticeship, in addition to being a vital step in gaining musical knowledge, is also a pillar for building character, strength, and wisdom. The guidance and mentorship provided in _sineh-be sineh_ instruction is a continuing cultural institution that provides support and prepares pupils to better deal with the anxieties attached to crisis.

### Performing the Labor of Compassion

The scope of this report from the field leaves me unable to delve into all the occurrences within musical life amidst COVID-19, but I would be remiss if I did not end by mentioning the humanitarian work being done by artists. As all performance venues were closed due to the pandemic, a group of artists got together to turn Hafez Performance Hall in Tehran into a makeshift assembly line for sewing masks, hospital gowns, scrubs, and even making food baskets.

The idea started with the actor, playwright, and director Hamid Sharifzadeh wanting to make protective gear for health centers located in shantytowns on the peripheries of the capital that were lacking proper resources. Speaking with the vocalist Mina Deris, she mentioned how everything started very simple, but took off in a grassroots fashion: twenty-eight sewing machines were donated from Rudaki Hall, and a collection of costume designers, musicians, visual artists, and actors began working three shifts around the clock to make and prepare supplies for those suffering the most. (See [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkJXoU-e14w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkJXoU-e14w))

Deris mentioned how, after several days of long shifts, she suggested that they invite musicians to play live music in the afternoons to help energize volunteers. After posting the musical performance and humanitarian work on Instagram Live, musicians from all genres began volunteering to perform and work for the cause. Deris went on to say:

> It is amazing how everything came together without any planned structure. Every afternoon, I look out at everyone working together in the hall and I cannot help but think we are in the middle of a harmonious performance of care and love…a unique symphony consisting of the sound of scissors and sewing machines blended with music…a collage of sound that has become the soundtrack to a labor of compassion.

COVID-19 is still with us and much is unknown about the long-term effects this virus will have. One glimmer of hope can be seen in how individuals, traditions, and institutions adapt to new circumstances to decrease suffering. Deris said it best when she characterized their work as a labor of compassion (_kare deli_). Indeed, compassion and empathy are the driving forces keeping musical life moving forward today and facilitating circumstances for persistence.
It’s the last weekend of May 2020, and I have ethnographic double vision. I’m in Los Angeles, watching a livestream of a Black Lives Matter march in New York on Instagram. As the camera pans, I try to identify the protest’s precise location within the city where I earned my Ph.D. six years ago. That was back during the first wave of mass protests set off by the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri. I’m beset with memories of the protests back then, on those same New York streets, once again happening for the very same reason. But I’m also listening to the Portuguese-language narration of the march, noting the translations of the street chants, and trying to pinpoint the voice of the speaker—is that Felipe? No, wrong accent. Maybe someone new. The protest is being streamed by Mídia Ninja, a Brazilian media activism group directly connected to my fieldwork in Brazil, Chile, and the US on independent music economies and politics. I’m beset with memories of Brazilian cities during my dissertation fieldwork, when this group’s actions came into just about every conversation. This livestream by a fieldwork-related Brazilian group of a protest march in my old hometown illustrates the near complete lack of separation between my fieldwork life and my “life-life.” If anything, the fieldwork-inaugurated social connections I maintain through digital means ground me, lending a stability that the vagaries of academic employment constantly threaten to unravel. What do I do with the years of experience—my own and those of my interlocutors and friends—that make up the ethnographic archive, ever populated, that I began building 17 years ago? To whom do I owe ethnographic analysis, and whom might it serve?

This is an introduction to a collection of short ethnographic reflections written by first-year Ph.D. students in the Ethnographic Methods course I taught in the spring 2020 quarter at UCLA. I chose to open it with a vignette, as ethnomusicologists are wont, because how I taught the course could not be separated from, on the one hand, my own experiences and practices of ethnography, as I understand it, and on the other hand, the multiple conditions of crisis in which the class unfolded and to which, as a course of professional training, it is also bound. A field methods course, it took place entirely on Zoom, due to COVID-19. It concluded during the most intense (so far) of the multiple uprisings that blossomed following the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, following the murder of so many. I am not the first to point out that these killings and their responses—in many ways unprecedented—are produced by a larger social system arranged by flagrant consumption of life as a form of plunder, whose most malignant effects are distributed unevenly according to the legacy of European colonial conquest and slavery-fueled capitalism. The COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter events, if one can call them that, have thus served as points of inflection that lay bare the broad structural crises of a society that builds social inequity, articulated along racial, national, gender, class and other lines, into its very constitution. This includes, of course, higher education, whose own inequities have only worsened through a long history of what economists call “structural adjustment,” producing a majority-contingent teaching body in which underrepresented groups are overrepresented. Disciplines like ethnomusicology, as Danielle Brown recently reminded us (2020), are composed of both these structural configurations as well as the underlying colonial fascination with cultural difference upon which ethnological methods are founded, decades of critique of these models notwithstanding; committees, workshops, offices, Assistant Vice Provosts of, and job statements on diversity, equity, and inclusion notwithstanding.

Consequently, in addition to the traditional aspects of field methods, I needed to address several other questions with respect to the class: how do I teach students in a field methods course conducted entirely online? If an academic career, in the form of a tenure-track job, is well beyond a reasonable expectation for an ethnomusicology Ph.D., of what utility, for both the students and
the world, can music ethnography be? Relatedly, “for whom is ethnomusicology?” This last question, I argue, should remain prominent in our ethnographic methods and scholarship, for it forces us to hold at the center of inquiry questions of structural inequity, and reminds us that we can engage in forms of organizing to produce desperately needed structural change.

The act of teaching field methods surely would have prompted me to reflect on my own ethnographic incursions no matter the circumstances. But the questioning of the purpose of and audience for ethnomusicological research was spurred more than anything else by my working conditions, hardly unique, within the academy. I spent the first three years after completing my Ph.D. pasting together a living through administration, ESL teaching, tutoring, and adjunct teaching. Now, three years of a postdoctoral appointment had allowed me to resume my research and have time to develop it, clarifying my big and little projects around an overarching intellectual project. But my appointment was ending, once again bringing instability and, let’s be frank, panic. I spent most of the term scrambling to pitch myself to just any about any “alt-ac” job I could find while tens of millions of people were being laid off. In addition to alerting students to the reality of the job market, then, I encouraged them to think about their projects not just in terms of the academic hoops they would have to jump through, but as broader life projects articulated around their own ethical, personal, and political commitments. I couldn’t just prepare them for a job I myself didn’t seem to have. We thus tried to conceptualize field techniques not as the adventurer gone to extract data from “other” neatly bounded people and places in the service of our own careers; rather, we read pieces emphasizing the personal relationships we build and upon which our ethnographic data rely (Hellier-Tinoco 2003); ethical commitments and the issue of “unusable data” (Hamilton 2009), and a model of ethnography which takes relationships, including conflict, rather than organic wholes as its conceptual starting point (Desmond 2014).

Meanwhile, some of the anxieties emerging in ethnomusicology discourse about COVID-induced online fieldwork were strange to me. My projects have always investigated online cultural production and its intersections with offline social life and music, partially contributing, as with the opening vignette, to the inseparability of my fieldwork and non-fieldwork lives. I became interested in indie music in Santiago because Chilean friends, part of transnational, though globally unequal, middle class art worlds in cosmopolitan cities, took me to shows. I got a MySpace page as part of the everyday sociality of this peer group, in Chile and at home, and explored the musical and social connections presented and maintained on the site as both underground indie activity in Santiago as well as a transnational articulation of indie occurring through new media platforms. My first official field interview was conducted remotely, me in New York, Cristián Araya in Santiago, through gchat (Google Mail’s messaging function, now “Hangouts”). COVID shut down, then, did not disrupt the “hybrid” (Przybylski 2020) nature of my fieldwork, in which I maintain my relationships with interlocutors, interlocutor-friends, events, and discourses through various digital means, continuing in person when I can travel to Chile or Brazil, or when these friends visit me on tour or for leisure. Yet the anxiety around online forms of fieldwork perhaps belies the discipline’s continued investment in the image of organic, holistic music-making conducted by easily circumscribable “cultures,” existing in equally circumscribed places “remote” (to North America), all of which the proverbial white ethnomusicologists travel to, discover, extract from, and finally convey to elite peers. This lingering model, which Danny Gough once aptly described as ethnomusicology’s “music, place, identity, go!” paradigm, seems to persist despite the decades of work in ethnography-based fields, including ethnomusicology itself (Coolsey, Meizel and Syed 2008), that show the fragmented or uneven nature of places—that the very constitution of notions of culture, identity, place, and the relations between them are historically-produced and always subject to political contestation (Gupta and Ferguson 1997).

The composition of the ethnographic materials of analysis are thus part of these very political contestations, and cannot be separated from the various positionalities of the ethnographer, including those of gender, race, abled-bodiedness, and class, as well as how ethnographers and their interlocutors, as in my case, are differentially located within an uneven global order configured by colonization and imperialist capitalism. The disruption of the students’ in-person fieldwork plans due to COVID-19 thus also facilitated the methodological conceptualization of the field not around a bounded unity, the “music, place, identity, go!” paradigm; rather, we scrutinized the processes and logics of defining groups, places, identities, and music, including the political question of who gets to define. We read Howard Becker’s (1982) Tricks of the Trade, which interrogates the relation between researchers’ “imagery” and concepts, their practical methods, and the larger claims they can make. Becker’s “tricks” are ways of turning research subjects, questions, and methods inside out and upside down, examining them from all sides, finding their flaws and limits. I realized, in the course of teaching, that my own thinking had been conditioned by a question always raised by my graduate mentor Ana María Ochoa, which I began calling “Ana’s Trick.” A simple maneuver that produces complicated results, the trick consists of adding the question “for whom?” to statements and definitions in the process of conceptualizing and “writing up” research. For example, if I am going to make a statement about indie music and political organizing in Brazil, if I make myself answer the question “for whom?,” I’m forced to contend with the differing and often conflicting array of opinions and actions surrounding the
subject, including my own social relationships and political commitments. This prevents me from romanticizing indie practices as overly cohesive, situates my own analysis as always qualified, and allows me to better see—and interrogate—the differing sets of actors and positions at play.

Similarly, then, in relation to ethnomusicology, and particularly within a context in which even the scant tenure-track jobs that Ph.D.s. annually fight over are being paused, cancelled, and rescinded, itself configured within the larger social structures that produce quotidian dispossession, ecological collapse, and spectacular and mundane state violence, our scholarship is for whom? The questions of the audience for academic work, its publishing structures, and even the casualization of teaching labor are of course not new, but I believe the multiple crises of our time renew their importance, because any structural changes to inequity within our disciplines must contend with them. After all, these crises, and in particular their effects, are “new” for whom, exactly?

With that in mind, the pieces presented here were not written with a clear answer to the question of “for whom?,” at least in regard to their place of publication. Rather, they arose because of the impossibility of conducting in-person fieldwork as a method of training during COVID-19. I also proposed this endeavor because I thought that a kind of collective project would give direction and energy to the awkward and dispiriting hours spent on Zoom. Thus, instead of asking students to employ many different ethnographic techniques, such as attending and describing a live performance, conducting an ethnographic interview, or doing the “deep hanging out” of ethnographic participation, I asked them to conduct any aspect of ethnographic work and to write it up for a music-centered, academic blog post for a venue to be determined. We read Deborah Wong’s (2008) wonderful grappling with her own multiple identities, positionalities, and ethnographic commitments through the act of writing ethnography, and I similarly wanted to emphasize that writing, as the premier form of ethnomusicological research presentation and argument, was crucial to the process of working out research questions and their corresponding ethnographic tasks. I also wanted to allow for different kinds of experiences and activities to be considered ethnographic— that we might think of ethnography not as immersion in the other or as a set of techniques, but rather as an analytical stance towards the everyday world.

These student essays collectively address all of the aforementioned issues. The pieces by Dexter Story, Delaney Miranda Yuko Ross, and Alec Norkey wrestle with the imbrication of the personal and the ethnographic, as well as place and ethics. Story’s curiosity about the possible connections between the late musician Nipsey Hussle, who had family roots in Eritrea, and his ongoing explorations of Guayla music in the Horn of Africa, led him to reexamine a track he had created, mixing Nipsey’s music and Guayla, as a way of processing the artist’s death. Story grapples with the ethical implications of combining these sounds, as well as the extent to which the mix is his own fabrication, or if Nipsey, too, had a relationship to Guayla (he did!). Delaney Miranda Yuko Ross, finding herself unexpectedly quarantined at her parents’ house, took the opportunity to interrogate her relationship to race and identity in her home state of Hawai’i. Focusing on the political disputes surrounding the Thirty Meter Telescope on Mauna Kea, she notes how the conflict has animated questions of native Hawaiian identity and language in a place where most people are mixed race, and where native Hawaiian history and culture has only recently been incorporated into formal schooling and public value. These pieces represent a new take on the “music, place, identity” paradigm— one, perhaps, without the straightforward “go!” Meanwhile, Alec Norkey turns an ethnographic gaze upon his own long experience in higher education music professionalization programs, drawing upon his intimate knowledge of the Western classical performance world to conduct an interview with a friend-turned-interlocutor. His ethnographic exploration presented not an adventure outward to an unknown world, but a return to his own life under different conditions, with different purposes. These pieces show the entwinement of personal life and ethnographic inquiry, exploding the self/other, insider/outsider dichotomies ethnomusicology can so often remain centered upon.

Ciera Ott and Tingting Tang, for their part, explore the possibilities and limits of online-only musical participation and research. Tang describes how the cohesion of the Balkan Music Ensemble at UCLA formed in relation to the openness of the professors and participants to suddenly receive newcomers to the in-person rehearsal space; this cohesion was important for maintaining the ensemble in an online, dramatically changed form. While she found some advantages to singing from one’s room, Tang missed the spontaneity and magic created by new people walking through the ensemble door. Similarly, Ciera Ott, whose plans to interview elderly people were halted by COVID-19, found a different way to think about her research project, centered on older performers and fans. Observing livestream-style replays of Metallica concerts on YouTube, Ott notes the somewhat expanded ethnographic possibilities contained in monitoring the live chat and comments, as well as the many limitations to observation, especially for pinpointing who is participating and what their assessments are. Through this activity Ott confirmed the necessity of asking interlocutors questions specific to her research.

These essays were written at a time of intense stress and uncertainty, which will surely continue for the foreseeable future. But I would like to suggest that, regarding the questions of the aim and scope...continued on next page}
of our field and its imbrication with and as systemic inequity (and violence), this uncertainty can be “good trouble.” We can remake our scholarship and our social institutions in accords with our stated values. But only if we embrace conflict and, to borrow some phrases from Arruzza, Bhattacharya, and Fraser (2019), struggle “in and through diversity” to build solidarity and effect structural change.

Support your campus unions and pay grad students more.

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Nipsey Hussle, Guayla Music and the Ethnographic Remix

Dexter Story, UCLA

It is reasonable to contend that, except in Ethiopia, throughout the global diaspora, and, perhaps, within a “world music” context, Eritrea is not particularly well known for its music. Home to roughly three million inhabitants and bordering the Red Sea between Sudan, Djibouti and Somalia, the northeast African nation has made headlines for its hard-won autonomy rather than the cultural output of its multi-ethnic population. Although the country came to greater prominence under tragic circumstances when Eritrean-American rapper, activist and entrepreneur Ermias “Nipsey Hussle” Asghedom was brutally murdered in early 2019, the indigenous soundscape of the country is largely uncharted, obscured by similar celebrity congruences, a long politicized history with its southern neighbor Ethiopia, and its controversial human rights record.

However, just as Eritrea has persevered and recently begun to emerge from what the Human Rights Watch World Report deems “decades of near total diplomatic isolation” (HRW 2019), so has its most prominent music export continued to thrive and shape the identity of Eritrean people internationally. Often also called Tigrinya after the Semitic language widely spoken in Eritrea and the Horn of Africa, Guayla music is best described in conventional Western notational terms as a predominantly 5/8 odd-metered rhythmic vocal song form primarily performed with hand-struck kebero drum and mute-and-release strummed krar box lyre accompaniment. The unmistakably regional sound and style, also increasingly programmed electronically on synthesizer keyboards and drum machines, is a necessary element at holiday gatherings, weddings, celebrations, cultural centers, festivals and even militaristic convenings.

Largely identified by traditional instrumentation and old-world associations, during my travels in the Horn of Africa I also observed Guayla in hip hop nightclubs as official “turn up” music for a growing scene of youthful East African partygoers. The beat-driven, two-step circle dance it invokes has powerful meaning and affect, inspiring global fascination and suggesting academic inquiry. Even as recently as the mid-nineties, the...
World Music Rough Guide maintained that “Tigrinya music from Eritrea and Tigre, which is even less familiar in the west than Ethiopian Amharic music, is worth a detour for its repetitive, throbbing, camel-walk rhythms” (Rough Guide 1994). Accordingly, with a relative paucity of available academic materials on the genre, my inability to speak Tigrinya, and current COVID-19 constraints, I propose here a brief rearticulation of Eritrea’s idiosyncratic music using a localized hero narrative. In this case, the musical remix becomes a vehicle with which ethnography traces important new perspectives and inquiries.

As is widely known, Nipsey Hussle’s homicide on March 31st, 2019, had a devastating yet uniquely galvanizing impact on those who knew him, knew his music or knew of him. In spite of the collective trauma we experienced by the premature silencing of such an emerging star, entrepreneur and symbol of urban redemption, there was an unprecedented and endearing unification among the African American and Eritrean communities in South Los Angeles due to his murder. The extended memorial for the slain icon at the intersection of Slauson Avenue and Crenshaw Boulevard (one hundred feet from where he was shot on his property in front of his flagship Marathon retail store) saw scores of multiracial fans pay their respects in peaceful silence. Conspicuously present were flag-draped Eritrean immigrant locals representing Nipsey’s paternal African heritage, mourning in tandem with Los Angeles natives who reflected his maternal Black background and other affiliations. Nipsey epitomized that intersection across ethnic, generational, and social lines for many of us with roots in South Central. His music also became the anthem for our pain and washed over all of us as it wailed through Los Angeles due to his murder. The extended memorial for the fallen icon at the intersection of Slauson Avenue and Crenshaw Boulevard saw scores of multiracial fans pay their respects in peaceful silence. Conspicuously present were flag-draped Eritrean immigrant locals representing Nipsey’s paternal African heritage, mourning in tandem with Los Angeles natives who reflected his maternal Black background and other affiliations. Nipsey epitomized that intersection across ethnic, generational, and social lines for many of us with roots in South Central. His music also became the anthem for our pain and washed over all of us as it wailed through Los Angeles due to his murder.

For my remix, I went back to the Slauson Boy, Volume 2 album’s aptly titled track “Mercy,” featuring the pleading chorus refrain of Stacy Barthe and some of Nipsey’s most memorable lyrics, or “bars.” I then lined up Nipsey’s distinct cadence so that each line coincides with two measure intervals of my original minor pentatonic Tigrinya track. The breakthrough blending, edited and mixed in Apple’s Logic X digital audio workstation on a 2017 iMac, worked out better than I had imagined, and the production experiment was well-received by close personal colleagues who were both fans of Nipsey and who knew my work in Ethiopian and Eritrean music. The result is an almost 3-minute sonic anomaly, pushing even beyond the musical hybridity and cross-culturalization reminiscent in Jamaican dancehall and Congolese rumba covers.

The aural reimagining using Nipsey’s voice over a Guayla beat was a powerful release for me. I wondered if this reconfiguration of “Mercy” was something beyond my reckoning with the dark despair associated with his untimely death in the hands of another Black youth? Weighing the complexities of my process as an African American, a South Central native, a musician and now aspiring academic, I confronted the ethics and scholarly implications of my remix. While I partly questioned the legalities of my work and whether I needed to seek approval from the Ashgedom estate, Nipsey’s partner Lauren London, and his co-writers and featured vocalist Barthe, I began to see the marrying of Nipsey’s vocals to Tigrinya music as a unique opening, an unorthodox participant observation. "Finally, as we ethnomusicologists become more confident in our disciplinary methods and with our role as fieldworkers, we are moving from a concern about the potential negative impact on those we study and toward active advocacy for those same individuals and their communities” (Cooley 2008). This remixing of disparate ethnic music spaces in the digital domain—the rap verses of a half Eritrean MC merged with my programmed Guayla interpretation reminiscent of a digitized Bereket Mengisteab track—became an ethnographic re-negotiation of sorts, a field recontextualization.

* Individuals who see an organic relationship between art and activism (Sandoval and Latorre 2008).
In closing, I acknowledge Guayla music as much more expansive and deserving than this brief analysis could ever convey. And the life of Ermiyas “Nipsey Hussle” Asghedom is much more sacred than this writer’s fragmented theorizing could ever hope to take into account. However, ethnographic research on any musical artform demands what Cooley and Barz deem an “embrace of multiple realities” (Cooley 2008). Just as Nipsey was a beloved actualization of African American and Eritrean ancestry, a product of his family, environment and so much more, his legacy allowed me to see “how researchers’ positionality shapes ethnographic observations” (Musante 2015). Accordingly, this preliminary writing simply aspires to parallel disjointed sources in the construction of meaning. Watching the final moments of the Staples Center memorial home video that Nipsey’s family shot in Asmara, Eritrea, I covet the parting visual of the young rapper in the rear seat of a car over a background soundtrack of Tigrinya music. There it is! These seven seconds of symbolic media juncture are just enough evidential data of the possible. Eritrean priest Father Thomas Uwal’s Tigrinyan prayer, the high-pitched emotive elilta screams in the audience, and the blue, red and green Eritrean emblem on the closed casket at the memorial, interspersed with the occasional n-word epithet, a sermonette by the Honorable Louis Farrakhan and a performance by Stevie Wonder, were not randomized and conflicting cultural metaphors. Perhaps for some of us they were, in fact, the embodiment of our work: intersectional and reimagined domains as sites of transformative ethnography.

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Discography


A Virtual Return to a Familiar Field: Ethnographic Endeavors During America’s Pandemic Response

Alec Norkey, UCLA

Ethnographic research has historically been structured by an ethnographer proceeding into “the field,” building relationships with community members likely hitherto unknown, and conducting a combination of research methods—such as participant-observation and interviews—to shed light on an “Other” world. In my case, however, I am lucky enough to come from and return to a world of which I can, to an extent, claim membership: the world of Western art music, particularly through the eyes of an aspiring musician. Yet the “field” that I am most acquainted with (and most concerned with, at the moment) is not an orchestra, music venue, or non-profit organization. It is instead the realm of higher education: the “school of music,” the college, the conservatory, the type of institution through which I have honed my craft and established myself as a burgeoning professional. It is the place where—having spent so much time, energy, and long hours practicing and rehearsing—I have made numerous, long-lasting friendships with people with whom I have collaborated, performed, suffered, and celebrated. In this reflection, I interview a pre-established friend and colleague as part of a field site composed of, among other things, institutions, funding structures, bodily expression, and musical aspirations. Rather than venturing towards an imagined Other, I instead revisit an imagined Self.

The dichotomies historically associated with the Other/Self binary have themselves been contested in ethnomusicalogical scholarship. Deborah Wong, in her reflections on taiko and performative ethnography, advocates for a consideration of authoethnography as critical engagement with ethnographic practice (Wong 2008, 77). Here, reflexive writing offers an avenue for demonstrating the fragility of dualisms oft referred to—such as emic/etic, insider/outsider, and researcher/informant—and the assumed power dynamics such categories tend to evoke. In interviewing friends from a past life, how might previous relationships coincide with different premises, particularly those of an ethnographer? As my own experience shapes the conceptualization and consequent interaction with my “new” informants, internal reflection may shed light on how and why such dynamic, contradictory relationships may play out.

How might this problematization of the Other/Self dichotomy play out exactly? Planning and conducting interviews can incite a host of emotions, depending on the circumstances. As for myself—especially since the government lockdown in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic—I was incredibly excited for the blissful (albeit virtual) reunion with musical friends with whom I’ve performed and intensely collaborated. Being cooped up in my apartment for about a month and a half straight, I was eager to reconnect. Yet Wong mentions the creation of a new relationship when one does ethnography: “the ethnographer is always an outsider. Creating an ethnography of even a close family member would presumably entail crafting a new relationship beyond that of daughter or sister” (Wong 2008, 82).

Thus—despite anticipating comfort and familiarity—I was a little nervous, as interviewing my friends and colleagues seemed to invite a potentially uncomfortable dynamic colored by a foreign formality and (perhaps unnecessary?) professional expectation. Additionally, such interviews were my first ones that were to take place over Facetime and/or Zoom; consequently, I wasn’t sure what the “feel” would be, how conversations would flow, or if I would encounter any technical challenges. Therefore, I decided that pursuing conversational interviews—similar to the “unstructured interview” described by Fina (2019, 156)—was most flexible in balancing not only my expectations but also my anxieties.

My first interview took place on May 1st, 2020, at 2:30 pm PT. Difference in place prompted me to be mindful of the time, as my first interviewee lived on the east coast—Boston, specifically, with a 3-hour time difference. Utilizing Facetime, we greeted each other with as much excitement as could be conveyed through an LED screen. Despite the lack of physical presence, the nicety of a hug, or the space and ambience of a local café, I was nevertheless relieved and happy to approach my friend “Z” (actual name is not disclosed) not only as someone with whom to “catch up” or “spill tea,” but also as a fellow conservatory-trained musician with whom to share and receive knowledge. These roles, of course, often conflated with each other “in practice” (i.e. through my own lived experience), and their separation is perhaps more allusive towards an ethnographic, theoretical proclivity.

I began by asking Z about her experience as a student finishing the post-master’s fellowship program at Berklee College. We quickly arrived at the topic of music schools’ responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our observations were, I think, as expected: like almost every other sector in the US economy, music schools were losing money and halting certain operations such as performances, rehearsals, and private lessons. Although in-person activities were suspended, classes were continuing online, semesters were finishing, and—despite the cancellation of degree recitals—students were graduating. The number of webinars, unsurprisingly, exploded as well. Professional development webinars tailored towards current students and alumni, especially, were of primary interest for Z (I’m guessing for almost all other students as well, considering the pandemic response’s effect on many musicians’ opportunities to perform live).

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We moved to the broader topic of life as a music-student-in-transition-to-music-professional. As a classically trained musician who has navigated the gigging world, I was keenly aware of the significant impact the pandemic had—and continues to have—on performing musicians’ livelihoods, livelihoods that can already entail an economically precariousness difficult to contend with. As mentioned before, the college was providing professional support through webinars; owing to the size and amount of resources dedicated to the Berklee Career Center, I can imagine that webinars were only the tip of the iceberg. Yet all of Z’s performance gigs were indeed cancelled; luckily, her fellowship came through and allowed her to remain economically settled. However, she informed me that she was planning to move, as she didn’t know if she would be able to pay rent come fall.

Reflecting on this interview, the notion of space and place seems to me of primary consideration (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). How might the social and cultural practices often experienced by conservatory students be radically changed if the conservatory space is unavailable? Could such experiences even be possible? A preliminary answer is that there seems to have been attempts to fill such a void, owing to, among other things, the utilization of video conferencing to continue classes and edited ensemble recordings (Shelbie Rassler’s video is one such example; see Smith 2020). Further ethnographic investigation on the degree to which physical spaces constitute a necessary ingredient to social the dynamics of music conservatory life seems opportune now; in fact, for future ethnographic work on the conservatory, it may be unavoidable. Of course, this extends to interviews and the spaces in which they occur. While video conferencing is an incredibly convenient substitute, it does not provoke the same feeling as when an interview occurs in tangible space. Ethnography and theorization on the differences and similarities between video interviews and in-person interviews may prove useful in this time of quarantine.

The role of the conservatory and higher education also demands a deeper understanding. Henry Kingsbury’s 1998 ethnography details a New England conservatory, elaborating on aspects of ritual, social cohesion, and culture as developed by notable social theorists such as Clifford Geertz and Emile Durkheim. The circumstances of today, however, insist that the ethnographer consider a conservatory not only as Kingsbury did—a nexus of interpersonal power dynamics, social positionality, teacher-student dyads, and recitals-as-social-ritual—but also as an institution that has seen considerable expansion over the last several decades, particularly in terms of administration, tuition costs, and career support. Additionally, while acknowledging the social dynamics, prestige, and power often imbricated in music making within the conservatory (an extreme example: while at Boston Conservatory, I was witness to the sacking of a former conductor due to abuse allegations; see Gay and Lazar 2017), I also recognize the importance in explicating the role of music as meaningful to students and faculty in either reinforcing or contesting conditions of the status quo. In light of social dynamics, music as meaningful, processes of power and prestige, and capitalism’s driving force, I ask the following: taken as a whole, what is the field in which one does ethnography? Given that the central place of traditional fieldwork, the physical field, has been necessarily suspended, it seems most prudent to consider not the conservatory as a contained site of cultural space, but as a nexus for social relations, contestations, and processes. At this juncture, Matthew Desmond’s notion of “relational ethnography” proves useful in posing alternative methods of inquiry that do not necessitate a physical place in the same way traditional, “substantialist” ethnography does (Desmond 2014).

In this short reflection, I wanted to “show” rather than “tell,” to highlight the lived experience of doing ethnography that will continue to inform my interpretations and conclusions (Wong 2008, 85). From facing challenges ushered by a pandemic to managing new ethnographic relationships with old friends, I hope that, by offering a viewpoint of immersion in doing ethnography, I’ve not only demonstrated the frailty of the field we now currently face, but have also illustrated the need to consider the contingent nature of ethnographic fieldwork in general (as noted, the COVID-19 pandemic has suspended realities of the everyday that have hitherto been taken for granted). While my venture back to the conservatory via ethnography presents significant challenges, they cannot overpower the excitement and anticipation of return to the familiar, to the training grounds of my professional trade, that world of nerves, success, struggle, and intrigue.

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A Virtual Return [continued from previous page]


From Being Real to Being Virtual: Musical and Cultural Space of Bulgaria

Tingting Tang, UCLA

In writing up my ethnographic activity experience in Bulgarian folk music, I would like to incorporate three aspects into this ethnographic blog. These aspects, especially Part II and Part III, represent the different experiences of my research, before and after, respectively, the outbreak of COVID-19. First, I will layout a general background and a brief literature review as far as my research interest in this topic. I will touch on how I became interested in learning about Bulgarian folk music and what my areas of interest are. Then I will cite two of my favorite stories that had to do with Bulgarian music before the pandemic started. Lastly, I will write up a vignette to share my choir experience after moving to remote rehearsal, which only occurred after the onset of the pandemic.

I. Research Interest – General Background

It was with full curiosity when I walked into a Bulgarian ensemble classroom for the first time in early 2019. Now as a singer of this group for nearly two years, I am deeply attracted by the unique "cultural space." The ensemble is led by a Bulgarian couple: Prof. Ivan Varimezov is a well-known professional gaidari musician, and Prof. Tzvetanka is a famous Bulgarian folkloric soprano. They both took jobs with Pazardzhik's professional ensemble and conducted the choir. Since 2001, Tzvetanka has been a master artist-in-residence in the UCLA ethnomusicology department, where she teaches Balkan singing technique and conducts the UCLA Bulgarian women's choir Superdevojche. As I interacted more with the ensemble, I became more and more interested in learning about the history of Bulgarian music and in learning about Bulgarian music within various contexts. Below I will present a historic overview to lay out a general background of my topics of interests.

Folk music of Eastern Europe came to international attention beginning in the 1960s. Bulgarian folk music, with its uneven rhythms, highly ornamented singing style, and exotic-looking instruments, such as the goatskin bagpipe, proved especially attractive to Western ears. Ethnomusicologists in and outside of Europe have also shown interest in the Bulgarian folk tradition. The purpose of this literature review is to write a brief historiography of the important achievements in research and foci of Bulgarian folk song from the 1890s to 2015 in the field of ethnomusicology, and to look at potential research directions for the future.

The earliest English-language research of Bulgarian music/song focused on musical features. In 1889, a short article introducing the notes system of Bulgarian music had already been published in The Musical Times and Singing Class Circular. Later, Bulgarian-American composer and ethnomusicologist Boris A. Kremenliev (1956) categorized Bulgarian folk songs into three main types (i.e. songs of everyday experience, songs of the supernatural, and songs of the past), in the context of local traditional cultures. As a native ethnomusicologist, Kremenliev maintained that folk music genres should be classified not simply following the Western classification rules, but by the social function and events of the song.

One of the most famous Bulgarian music ethnomusicologists in the world, Timothy Rice (1945- ), published his first article "Aspects of Bulgarian Musical Thought," in 1980. Rice argued that the concept of music and the distinction between music and song were challenged by the Bulgarian culture, since "none of these taxonomies is isomorphic with the Western category" (Rice 1980). By presenting his personal field experience in learning Bulgarian gaida (bagpipe), Rice arrived at a new understanding that learning the real tradition might subvert many of the western disciplines, because those disciplines were established on local philosophical footings (Rice 1995). Under control of the Bulgarian communist government, with its hierarchies of power, from 1944 to 1989, the metaphors and significance of music as art shifted into a symbol of nationalism and patriotism (Rice 2001) [continued on next page]
In the post-communist period (after 1989), due to media deregulation, new music genres emerged, such as American-influenced rock, popfolk/novfolk (newly composed folk music), and chalga (a genre dominated by Romani musicians). Folk music as the symbolic “state” art of Bulgarian nationalism then attenuated. At that point, an idea of pursuing “cultural purity and authenticity” was raised by the cultural elite: Popfolk, bearing some of the Balkan heritage, has been criticized by the “cultural elites” as “cheap” and “vulgar”; chalga, associated with Romani culture, has been considered as “simply not from our world” (Rice 2002).

Bulgarian folk music has undergone a transformation from music classification and analysis of musical features to emphasizing the significance of music in a specific historical context. Undoubtedly, cultural changes will remain a focus of ethnomusicology.

II. Two Stories to Share

I want to share two of my favorite stories I encountered while at the UCLA Balkan Ensemble.

One night while practicing at the Balkan Ensemble, a young lady walked into the classroom, asking if we were practicing Bulgarian music. It turned out that the young lady was born in the U.S. and grew up in Bulgaria. She’s a first-year undergraduate student at UCLA. Once she heard about the ensemble from friends, she couldn’t wait to come to check it out in person. From her eyes and tone, it was quite apparent that she was so excited to find her homeland’s melody in the U.S. She had a delightful chat with the instructor Tzetze, who was super excited to be speaking native Bulgarian with her. Then, Tzetze introduced her to each and every member’s name and native county. She had no idea there were so many Bulgarians in the choir. After the rehearsal, Tzetze asked her if she liked the ensemble. And, right there on spot, Tzetze offered that the student was more than welcome to join the ensemble. It was at a point such as this, at this location, that the ensemble became a carrier of nostalgia, and a way for people to share anything Bulgarian.

Another night, an old couple came into the classroom through the back door. The lady was in her late 80s, and in a wheelchair that her husband had to help her with. They were so quiet that almost nobody noticed when they came in. They remained quiet until our break, when the lady came up to us and told us her stories. It turned out that she was a UCLA graduate in ethnomusicology and had been a member of the Bulgarian ensemble many years ago. She wanted to find memories from her school years. So, she called our department and found out that we still have the Bulgarian ensemble. She asked Tzetze to give her a copy of our notation, so she could sing with us. Her enthusiasm made everyone in the classroom feel as if we were all professional Bulgarian musicians. Her singing was a slight part of the ensemble, yet her influence seemed tremendous. It was in that moment and in that space, that everybody seemed to be brought back into the historical context of our department.

III. “The New Method!”

With an almost brand-new yoga mat still lying near my bed after doing some relaxing moves on the floor to cheer myself up, I was on my way to the closet to get a piece of Ricola, an original herb cough drop. I just had my first virtual class of spring 2020 over Zoom earlier in the day, an experience that many of us had not experienced too frequently in the past. Not needing to wear shoes in my bedroom, I had already put away my socks. I didn’t even have any use for my backpack…. So many little details have changed for us nowadays as we adjust to learning over Zoom, meeting our professors over Zoom, discussing coursework with classmates over Zoom, and attending academic seminars and professional presentations over Zoom.

I was getting the cough drop because I was getting ready to sing in my first-ever Zoom session of my World Music Specializations: Music of Balkans – Choir class. Having enrolled in this class for the past year and a half, I was used to meeting Professor Tzetanka Varimezova and her husband Ivan Varimezov every Monday night when classes were in normal sessions. Now for the first time, I didn’t know what to do for an ensemble class that was to be given entirely online.

Standing on my yoga mat, I was ready to enter the Zoom meeting room at the scheduled start time, when I found that the room was not accessible. It turned out that Professor Tzetanka Varimezova had some technical difficulties with using Zoom. It didn’t take her and her TA too long to get the thing up and running though. “Wow, first time here online!” everybody all seemed to say, or to at least feel it the same way. Back in the good old times, we used to sing together. Now when we sang together, at least when we tried to do the same thing online, we quickly came to realize that Zoom is not super friendly with our sing-together routine. Everyone’s sound seemed to mingle together, without enabling us to be able to tell who was singing what. I could tell, even when everyone’s face was now just a moving image inside of a fixed frame, that people were getting frustrated with this new method of course delivery.

But, wait… after a while, someone said, “What if we sing one by one instead of singing all at the same time?” We tried. Wow, what a nice difference,
as now we were able to tell who was singing what. It meant that we needed to take turns to sing, which meant we needed to be more patient. But, everyone seemed to agree with proceeding with such a new method to handle things a bit differently. At the end of the class, it felt like this new method actually worked.

Interestingly, I had my feet on my yoga mat the entire time. I had a cup of ice-cold coke right beside my laptop – one luxury that I would otherwise not have if I were singing in the classroom. And, I was only 8 steps from the restroom, so I was more efficient when it comes to the break times.

A new system, a new way of doing things, new things being learned and improved…. I am grateful to be in such a group because we are all adaptable. We are still learning during these “unprecedented times.” We are still a strong group with energy and synergy. Well, Zoom is helping out of course, but it is our team spirit that keeps us excited and united.

We cannot really wait to meet each other in person again, but of course we will be patient and be waiting for that day. Health is a priority and not meeting each other during this chaos is a way to respect our loved ones. When we eventually return to our lives and studies, I am sure that all of us will be thrilled at how beautiful life is and how lucky we are to be able to appreciate the wonders of music.

I wanted to share these two different experiences because I had been thinking about the fact that for the Bulgarian ensemble, the technical support provided by the latest technology is making remote rehearsal possible for us in difficult times. At present, remote technology can only solve the synchronization of time, but cannot realize the synchronization of space. The once free and open cultural space had to become a closed space during the pandemic.

Works Cited


#MetallicaMondays

Ciera Ott, UCLA

Scrolling through YouTube one Monday evening, a livestream of a previously recorded Metallica concert was recommended to me through YouTube’s automated recommendation system. I opened the link in a new tab to listen (as background music) as I searched for something else to watch, but within a few songs I noticed the “greatest hitness” of the playlist and decided to give the livestream my full attention and observe the chat box as it updated itself in real time. The concert I was watching was recorded on May 31st, 2015, at a festival in Munich, Germany. The hits Metallica’s fifty-year-old band members were performing were twenty-five to thirty years old themselves; my research, meanwhile, centers on aging in and around popular music. I am interested in how the aging process affects not only performers, but also the audience’s reception of aged performers, with special attention given to lifelong fans who have aged with their favorite performers. I planned to conduct ethnomethodological interviews with elderly fans, but COVID-19 struck and began devastating elderly communities before I was able to establish any sort of relationship with interlocutors. Through observing this livestream, I confirmed the necessity of personalized interviews within my larger research project, and got a sense of how little Metallica’s middle-agedness mattered to this audience, as well as a general sense in which YouTube livestreams can be used for ethnography. In the following post, I will first describe YouTube as a platform for live streaming and comment on advantages and disadvantages for researchers. Then I will conclude with a discussion of how my observation of a live-streamed Metallica concert aided my research project.

YouTube Livestreams

Live streaming, which has steadily gained popularity on various social media platforms, is now even more prominent in quarantine as it becomes a surrogate for live connection. On YouTube livestreams, anyone can drop in at any time and comment in real time.

* Metallica, “Metallica: Live in Munich, Germany - May 31, 2015,” 20 April 2020, video 2:16:30, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rt0DC7PFmMs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rt0DC7PFmMs).
The livestream I observed is a previously recorded performance which is undoubtedly advantageous for sound quality, but it creates several differences from a true live performance. First, a livestream audience member is physically isolated. Second, their view of the concert is limited to what the edited video footage chooses to show them. Third, the audio is mixed to privilege an enjoyable musical experience which, at the very least, removes what the editors have deemed superfluous audience noise. A livestream viewer has a better view of the band and will only sometimes see and hear the live audience; the recording keeps the recorded musicians and audience divided even though their energy feeds one another. Additionally, the livestream viewer gets to choose how much energy they will take from either group as they watch the recording, as well as how much energy they choose to contribute to the communal viewing experience in the chat.

YouTube does not keep a record of how many viewers a livestream has at any given time. User Jimmy J writes in the chat at approximately 14:10, “I seriously can’t believe 20,000 people are watching this at the Same [sic] time..” and since I did not think to record the number of participants in relation to certain time stamps or songs, I am at the mercy of finding comments like these by sifting through the chat accompanying the posted livestream if I want to estimate participant numbers. Further, there are no available lists of users who are tuned into the livestream. This removes the ability to survey and make generalizations about who the people watching are and only the usernames of the viewers who choose to participate in the chat are available.

For observations based on reception, the only option is to observe the responses posted in the chat, which, for this livestream, are mainly people saying where they are tuning in from, showing excitement about the band or overall performance, though sometimes the commenter will provide a timestamp or explicitly say which song or part of the video they are responding to. Metallica’s account has the top comment, which provides timestamps for each song, making it easy for post-livestream viewers to jump to their favorite songs in the video. YouTube gives viewers the option to click on a commenter’s username and profile picture, so the researcher has a better chance of learning more about the commenter. Still, the majority of usernames are linked to Google accounts, not active YouTube channels, meaning information rarely goes beyond gaining a vague sense of other videos the user likes, at best.

“Metallica: Live in Munich, Germany - May 31, 2015,” Live Streamed April 20, 2020

Metallica’s Youtube channel started a weekly #MetallicaMondays series on March 23, 2020, soon after the US’s broadly mandated stay-at-home orders, where they livestream a past-recorded concert every Monday to help fans stay connected while social distancing. Additionally, all livestreams have doubled as fundraisers for the band’s All Within My Hands Foundation, which distributes funds to various local and national charities. Always airing at 5 p.m. PST, the livestreams privilege time zones in the Western Hemisphere, and this was reflected in the chat with a large volume of users saying they were watching from Brazil, Argentina, and Chile (US users rarely announce their home country or state to a global audience). #MetallicaMondays are uploaded as regular YouTube videos after the streaming is over, allowing people to watch afterwards and comment after the fact. As of May 5, 2020, the posted video had 722,400 views, 860 comments (roughly .12% of viewers commented), 25,000 likes and a mere 377 dislikes. The most liked and responded-to comments simply praise the setlist.

A performance such as this one, where a band plays their hits from twenty to thirty years earlier, offers ample opportunity for viewers to make comparisons if they feel a comparison is to be made. The fact that the band receives so much praise and there is no mention of their age or past performances suggests that the viewers are satisfied with how they are performing their old hits. A lack of backhanded comments such as...
#MetallicaMondays [continued from previous page]

“they sound good… for a bunch of guys in their fifties,” for example, may imply that viewers did not expect Metallica to sound different than they did in the 1980s and 1990s. This sort of negative reasoning is not unique to digital observation, but it is strengthened when the researcher has access to all commentary. At a live performance, I could not have possibly heard or comprehended the thousands of bits of feedback presented in the live chat and I could not have surveyed 860 people after the show for more detailed comments. I can, however, confidently say that the age of the performers was not a major consideration for thousands of digital audience members.

A digital platform, such as YouTube, assumes a younger average viewer age and although this does not benefit my most privileged research question, I can still observe the reception of aging musicians from the perspective of a younger, possibly more judgmental or ageist, crowd. Younger fans may prioritize original album recordings over previous live performances, especially if they are from a part of the world Metallica does not typically tour or they were born after the band’s heyday album tours.

Does the lack of criticism or comparisons imply that the band sounds as good as they did thirty years ago? Thrash metal has been slow to receive critical aesthetic or artistic acclaim, but it is undeniably physically demanding. Metallica’s ability to keep up with their younger selves is an age-defying skill and talent that may be lost on a younger crowd. I cannot look at a sea of usernames and guess at the viewers’ ages as easily as I could by visually scanning the audience at a live show, meaning it is difficult to directly address my primary research question regarding the reception of aged performers by a similarly aged audience.

Technologies such as live streaming on YouTube allow researchers to continue to do meaningful participant observation so long as they attend to the complexities of access and viewer participation. To continue my project, I need to conduct interviews directly asking older fans about their experience of aged performers. From this participant observer experience, I have learned that my specific research question regarding aging musicians is perhaps irrelevant to Metallica’s younger fans in 2020.

Zooming in on the Big Island of Hawai’i
Delaney Miranda Yuko Ross, UCLA

It is 5:20pm on a partly cloudy evening in Kona. I am sitting cross-legged on my childhood bed. It’s fairly cool for the late afternoon on the Big Island, with clouds providing their nice and usual cover. Despite the cool breeze and ceiling fan turned on, I notice sweat collecting on the back of my knees. I am waiting for an interlocutor to join a Zoom meeting I started five minutes ago. I am extremely anxious. This is not the fieldwork environment I was expecting. I was not expecting to be sitting on my bed. I was not expecting to be staring at myself in a Zoom window. I was not even expecting to be in Hawai’i at this point. Things changed rapidly in March, during the “unprecedented times” of the novel coronavirus. As I sit here waiting for my first ethnographic interview to begin, my mind is racing with all the expectations I had as an ethnomusicologist beginning to go into the field. I imagined myself equipped with my small notebook, DSLR camera, and Zoom H2N Handy recorder, stepping out into my field site, the summit of Mauna Kea, very nervous but mostly excited! I would approach strangers, search for insight, interview interlocutors, observe and participate in on-site rituals, engage in the elusive “deep hanging out” ethnomusicologists have described! Instead, I am on my bed, sitting in my childhood home, sweat in my knee pits. This is not the deep hanging out I was promised.

Growing up mixed race in Kona, and struggling with my own identity, my research thus far has been focused on multiculturalism and identity in the Pacific region. My current project examines how music plays a role in the construction of the contemporary Hawaiian identity. In order to explore this, I am building upon existing literature (Lewis 1984; Stillman 2009, 2011) and am utilizing the current land rights struggle surrounding the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) on the summit of Mauna Kea on my home island (Van Dyke 2019). This essay describes an interview I had recently with Sarah, a native Hawaiian friend. Constructing one’s identity in Hawai’i requires a vast web of historical and deeply integrated knowledge of the islands. The Kingdom of Hawai’i was overthrown by the US in 1893, and became the fiftieth state in 1959. Today, those with native Hawaiian ancestry are engaging with a unique contemporary Hawaiian culture. While most native Hawaiians are mixed race, claiming the ethnic Hawaiian identity is exclusive and requires proof of Hawaiian blood. For example, Kamehameha schools, a primary and secondary institution with three main campuses and over five thousand students, require proof of Hawaiian ancestry upon admission (the lengthy application includes several forms and verification from the Ho’oulu Hawaiian Verification Services Data Center). Being ethnically Hawaiian in Hawai’i is indisputably a source of pride. My interviewee Sarah remarks:

I will always say I am Hawaiian, Chinese, Caucasian. Of course biologically, I’m more Caucasian than Chinese or Hawaiian. But I will always say it that way: Hawaiian, Chinese, Caucasian. [continued on next page]
I’m very fortunate, I’ve got the bloodline that I can tie back to being here before Westerners. I think that’s a huge component [of being Hawaiian]. Being Hawaiian to me means valuing that tradition and that culture. Connecting, and valuing the connection to land, to place, to family and people.

Sarah was born in Washington State after her mother moved there to attend university. However, her mother moved Sarah and her older sister back to Hawai‘i when Sarah was only two years old. The family then moved to Oahu, where Sarah spent her childhood, and graduated from Kamehameha. Sarah is proud of her Hawaiian roots, but able to admit that growing up in the late seventies and eighties, she did not participate in Hawaiian culture, noting instead that she grew up “very Caucasian.” She remarked that her great-grandparents spoke Hawaiian, but did not teach the language to her grandparents. She said they were of “that generation where you just didn’t do it at home,” in order to integrate better into society.

Nowadays, Hawaiian history is something all elementary school students take in Hawai‘i. We are all informed of the overthrow of the monarchy, the oligarchy of white American businessmen who took over, and finally statehood. What I did not learn as a fourth grader, however, was that this curriculum is relatively new. While talking with my mom the other day, a Hawai‘i-born and raised Japanese woman, she admitted that she did not learn any Hawaiian history in school. It wasn’t until law school that she even learned that the Hawaiian kingdom was overthrown.

Hawaiian identity in Hawai‘i drastically changed in the second half of the twentieth century. The New Hawaiian Renaissance began in the 1970s and involved a host of reclamation projects for Hawaiian people, most notably, the reclamation of Hawaiian music. Hawaiian music was deeply embedded in tourism, an industry that exponentially grew in the first half of the twentieth century. By the 1940s, “Hawaiian” music was popular throughout the mainland US. This genre is now known as hapa haole. These songs were all in English and often used popular dance beats like ragtime, jazz, blues, and fox trot with lyrical mock-Hawaiian stereotypes featured in their lyrics. This “Hawaiian” music was not written or produced by Hawaiians; rather the lyrics and melodic themes were fabrications created by primarily white songwriters, exploiting stereotypes of the islands to create “exotic” themes in their music (Lewis 1987). The music of Hawai‘i was reclaimed by Hawaiian artists during the New Hawaiian Renaissance and beloved musicians like Israel Kamakawiwo‘ole and Gabby Pahinui recorded some of the greatest Hawaiian language songs ever written (Lewis 1986). Music is still integral to the construction of the Hawaiian cultural identity. Sarah remembers learning Hawaiian culture “through hula, through song,” noting that hula class was her “introduction to the Hawaiian language.”

While Hawaiian musicians were reclaiming Hawaiian music, other Hawaiians were attempting to reclaim land and sovereignty through protests. Perhaps most famously, Dennis “Bumpy” Pu‘u honua Kanahele was involved in militant activism in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1993, Kanahele led a group of over three hundred people in an occupation of Makapu‘u beach in Waimānalo for over a year (Udell 2007). Sarah remembers driving past the Kanahele encampment:

My grandma would say, ‘oh those damn—those dumb Hawaiians.’ Even then, she wasn’t equating staking a claim and claiming your identity, and claiming your nationality, that wasn’t important to her. So I remember that. And [these protestors] were villainized in the public media, because they were ‘dumb Hawaiians.’

That has certainly changed. Hawaiian land rights activism gained international coverage in the summer of 2019, as blockades of protestors halted construction vehicles on the Mauna Kea access road and a tent village at the summit access road was erected. TMT has been in development by the world’s top astronomers for the last twenty years. TMT (which is the name of both the telescope and the company funding the project), was granted approval to build in April 2013, and scheduled to break ground in October 2014. The 1.4 billion dollar project would equip Mauna Kea with the largest segmented mirror reflecting telescope on the planet, nearly three times the size of the current largest (TMT 2017). The Mauna Kea and TMT debate has enveloped the entire Big Island as Hawaiian activists from all over the state have peacefully but insistently opposed construction. Their protests do not resemble the protests of Sarah’s youth, and she is “impressed” with the education TMT protestors often have. “So many of those leaders are PhDs, masters,” she remarks. “At [the] TMT [protests] they use the best of both worlds,” claiming, “they used Western thinking and knowledge to enhance their cultural beliefs.”

The current TMT protests reflect the importance of connection to the land for native Hawaiians. Respect for the ʻāina, the land, is perhaps the most fundamental principle of local and Hawaiian culture. This can be seen in one of the most common Hawaiian phrases, and state motto: “ʻUa Mau ke Ea o ka ʻĀina i ka Pono” or “The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness.” There can be no discussion of sense of place in Hawai‘i without a discussion of landscape, and specific places have always been a centerpiece for Hawaiian music. Perhaps one of the places most frequently chosen for the gift of song is Mauna Kea. In 2012, Big Island-born singer-songwriter Hāwane Rios released “Poli‘ahu I Ke Kapu,” which won the Big Island Music Award for best Hawaiian Language Single. The song describes different aspects of the beautiful goddess Poli‘ahu, who lives atop Mauna Kea, manifested by the different features of the mountain.
The *hui* or refrain is “ʻO Poliʻahu i ke kapu / Eō mai ‘oe” or “O sacred Poliʻahu / answer this call.” While *kapu* can be translated to sacred, it also means forbidden, and is used throughout Hawai‘i for “no trespassing” signs. Rios has been involved in activism on Mauna Kea since TMT was first proposed and her lyrics often reflect her activist position. Similarly, Ekolu, a Jawaiian (Hawaiian reggae) band from Maui, released a single in 2019, “Desecration.” The lyrics overtly refer to the TMT debate, with the chorus proclaiming “This is desecration / an abomination / Rise up, stand for Mauna Kea / Eō, Hawaiian nation!” Hawaiian music has often been about place, but as places become sites of protest, songs become anthems for activists.

Hawaiian land reclamation is a complex and thorny subject. The Mauna Kea and TMT debate is a fight that will take lots of conversation, understanding, and time to untangle. Luckily, some Hawaiian music is much more easily reclaimed. Sarah, who grew up dancing to hapa haole songs, described a reclamation she felt:

> There’s a CD by Amy Hānailiʻi, where she took those hapa haole standards like ‘Sophisticated Hula’ and ‘Waikiki’ and she did them all in Hawaiian. I like how that was taken and it felt good, it was like it was given back to us. It was ours.

Amy Hānailiʻi released “Nostalgia,” the album Sarah refers to, in 1999. Hawaiian language was almost extinct throughout the twentieth century, but has begun making a resurgence. In 2020, there are over twenty Hawaiian language immersion schools spread throughout all the main islands. Understanding the construction of the contemporary Hawaiian identity and the role music plays in this construction is demanding and requires much more research, but I was very thankful to Sarah and all this quarantine time to ponder these issues.

*After thanking my interlocutor profusely, taking last minute notes, and ensuring that Zoom was indeed recording my interview, I hit command-Q and slam the lid of my laptop shut. I immediately feel a huge sense of relief. I walk into the living room of the house I grew up in, look at my oldest dog, Kiko, and the relief turns to joy. The joy becomes elation! “That was so much fun!” I tell Kiko, since my parents are in another room. My mom opens the door of their bedroom, presumably to see who I am talking to, and I rush up to her. “Mom! That was amazing!” I tell her about everything I felt during the interview. The anxiety I felt while waiting, the nerves, and finally the absolute joy. The interview itself was so riveting. Each question I asked revealed three new questions I wanted to ask. I was so engaged and present, something I hadn’t felt perhaps since COVID-19 isolation began. I felt like a cartographer and explorer, mapping all of the information Sarah revealed. Each time I finished one rough outline of the map, there was more to add. Since I had informed Sarah it would only take about an hour, I could only finish a fraction of the map I want to be able to examine. Despite the unusual circumstances, conducting ethnographic work is still thrilling. Despite the world in complete pandemonium, this hour spent in front of my laptop on my bed was the most engaged I had felt in weeks. After my mom returns to her room, I pick up Kiko, one of my oldest confidants, and I tell her a secret, “Okay, I still want to be an ethnomusicologist!”*

### Works Cited


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Ethnomusicology Today is a podcast series that features stories and interviews aimed at engaging a broad audience of educators, scholars, musicians, and a listening public interested in contemporary issues in global music studies.

- SEM 2019 Pre-Conference Interview: Latin American Brass Bands with Javier León and Ed Wolf
- Episode 10: Musical Participation and Global Health in the Gambia with Bonnie McConnell

Ethnomusicology Translations
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Ethnomusicology Translations is a peer-reviewed, open-access online series for the publication of ethnomusicological literature translated into English. Articles and other literature in any language other than English will be considered for editorial review, translation, and publication. Preference will be given to individual articles published in scholarly journals or books during the past twenty years. As a central online resource, Ethnomusicology Translations aims to increase access to the global scope of recent music scholarship and advance ethnomusicology as an international field of research and communication. Guidelines for submissions.


Sound Matters: An Online Forum
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- SEM Blog: New mission statement
- Gavin Lee, Waiting for Aspiring Progressives

SEM Student News
Editor: Eugenia Siegel Conte

SEM Student News is a biannual publication of the Society for Ethnomusicology, created and run by students. In cooperation with the SEM Student Union, we aim to voice current student issues and ideas, and to provide useful, relevant information for students conducting research on musicking. Most of all, we provide a forum for students to communicate with their peers and to address the challenges and opportunities that we face together.

- Volume 16.1: Music and Theory
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