

2016 NIAGARA Chapter of the Society for Ethnomusicology
ABSTRACTS
Saturday, March 19th
McCue Auditorium, Liberal Arts Building
The College at Brockport

PANEL 1: 9:00-10:30 India: Identities and Fusions

Tom Greenwood

“Jazzing the (South Indian) Classics: A Case Study of Prasanna’s Karnatak Fusions”

Even before his relocation to New York City (via Boston) from Chennai, South India, electric guitarist Prasanna maintained a hybrid musi-cultural identity founded on his experiences performing Tamil film music and North American rock and jazz, along with more formalized instruction in the Karnatak tradition with two gurus, vocalist T. Balasubramaniam and violinist A. Kanyakumari. In this paper, based on conversations with Prasanna, observations of his live performances, and analysis of his musical projects, I examine a series of issues related to his music. The first concerns the adaptation of Karnatak vocal music to the electric guitar, a fretted instrument tuned to the equal-tempered scale, achieved in Prasanna’s case by re-tuning the strings and employing a left-hand sliding technique designed to reproduce microtonal gamaka. Next I discuss how Prasanna adapts Karnatak rhythmic and melodic concepts to Western musical idioms, particularly his use of raga-talam-pallavi form in jazz improvisations and his participation in the groups Raga Bop Trio and Tirtha. Finally, I consider how he has simultaneously reinforced and redefined Karnatak musical practices through his founding of the Swarnabhoomi Academy of Music in Tamil Nadu, which incorporates Gurukula pedagogical methods to teach non-indigenous musical genres; and more recently through his formation of guru-shishya-type relationships with his North American students. I conclude by noting how Prasanna’s music constructively disrupts easy dichotomies of East and West, classical and popular, composition and improvisation, conservation and innovation.

Anaar Desai-Stephens (Cornell University)

“Talent, Hard Work, and the Possibilities of the Self in Liberalizing India”

This paper examines the twin discourses of “talent” and mehanat (“hard work”) – that which is seen as innate and that which requires effort – as circulated through sites of popular music pedagogy and practice in contemporary North India. Drawing on my research on the popular television show Indian Idol and ethnographic fieldwork in sites of music pedagogy, I trace how these discourses manifest in relation to aspiring popular music singers seeking to develop their vocal abilities. Focusing on interactions between judges and contestants, teachers and students, I examine the tensions and contradictions that emerge between ideas of “talent” and mehanat as they are used to articulate understandings of musical and personal improvement. I situate these discourses within a broader aspirational economy that promotes individual transformation in line with larger neoliberal and meritocratic ideologies emerging in India today. Beyond simply yielding insight into conceptions of musical potential, I argue that the dialectic between talent and mehanat points to broader ideals regarding the possibilities and limits of the

self in liberalizing India. This paper thus offers a musically grounded examination of the question that marks India in the twenty-first century: how much can a person transform? And how much, and in what ways, must they transform in order to transcend the habitus of class and caste given to them at birth?

Natalie Sarrazin (College at Brockport)

“Is it still Rock and Roll to you? The use of Rock in Hindi Film”

The use of Rock and Roll in Hindi film soundtracks is a relatively recent phenomenon that follows a trend towards increased global sensibilities spurred by neo-liberal policies in India. Music, often used as a transformative medium in Hindi cinema, allows the protagonist to find enlightenment and meaning in an event or events experienced through sound, often classical or religious in nature. In several recent films, however, it is rock music that provides the conduit for the conversion – music that is frequently infused with an aura of magic or power. In this presentation, I discuss the use of Rock in three iconic films, *Rock On!!* (2008), *Rockstar* (2011) and *Aashiqui 2* (2013), focusing on the systematic use of rock in the background and foreground scores (film music and film songs respectively). I also examine rock’s use as a narrative force and as constructive or destructive elements that impact the characters’ emotional development, particularly with their struggle with concepts such as freedom and a search for personal identity.

PANEL 2: 10:45-12:15 Diasporas and Ideologies

Priwan Nanongkham (Kent State University)

“Musical and Cultural Adjustments of Thai Music in American Academia”

Although David Morton is the pioneer who studied and introduced Thai music to American academia as early as the 1960s, unlike gamelan music of Indonesia, Thai music has never been that popular. Only few campuses own some instruments and for some reasons they had their ensembles active only for certain periods. In the end, the instruments are stored and left covered with dust. Kent State University; however, is the only campus that Thai ensemble has been continually active since it was established. Founded by Terry Miller in 1978, the KSU Thai Ensemble is one of world music ensembles in our ethnomusicology program that has been continually offered to students for almost four decades. Among the total of four Thai music directors, I am the current one, who has held the longest position since 1998. Within almost two decades of teaching and directing Thai music at Kent State, I have learned how Thai music adjusts itself to fit into the new culture. In this presentation, I will discuss the adaptation of Thai classical music both in its musical and cultural aspects through its musical transmission in the American Academia. The analysis addresses the issues of what is challenging in teaching Thai music outside Thailand, and how much its musical culture has changed with this newborn Thai music in the United States.

Austin T. Richey (Eastman School of Music)

“Reimagining the Global South: Connective Marginalities Across the Black Atlantic”

Detroit’s infamous 8 Mile Road severs the city horizontally; the resulting divergence between the white suburbs to the north and black city to the south reflects a history of racial turmoil. Yet south of this divide is a uniquely heterogeneous space that defies contemporary conceptions of the Motor City as an American wasteland: the city of Hamtramck, a vibrant, historically immigrant city within the borders of Detroit. At only 2.09 square miles, Hamtramck is the most densely populated city in the state, and 30 languages are spoken among its 22,000 residents. This space presents a version of the region that escapes outside attention, a perspective I present with evidence drawn from fieldwork undertaken there in the summer of 2015.

In 2013, diasporic Zimbabwean artist Chido Johnson established the Zimbabwean Cultural Centre of Detroit (ZCCD) in the heart of Hamtramck. The ZCCD serves as a portal between the globally Southern spaces of Detroit and Zimbabwe through its Residence Exchanges, a reciprocal program between performing and visual artists in the two communities. By blending elements of these cultures, the exchanges uncover deep roots between these marginalized places, illustrating the dislocated geography of the Global South.

I argue that the ZCCD’s 2015 Residence Exchange exemplifies its mission to “dismantle naturally occurring as well as constructed boundaries...with a view to promote community with the global and local in mind.” The 2015 Exchange utilized musical and dance cultures to blur borders; Detroit break dancer Haleem “Stringz” Rasul and Zimbabwean dance promoter Plot Mhako traded places across the Atlantic to explore connections between the dance styles of Detroit Jit, which emerged out of the city’s Techno music scene in the 1980s, and Zimbabwean Jit, which emerged from a confluence of Zimbabwean and Congolese musics. The visual and processual correspondences between the two Jits suggest a connective thread that binds these performances to a Black Atlantic superculture. While the Exchange destabilizes distinctions between the borders of Detroit and Zimbabwe, it simultaneously constructs a space for the expressive cultures of the Black Atlantic to interact, thereby re-mapping the borders of the new Global South.

Xiaorong Yuan (Heidi) (Kent State University)

“From “We” to “I”: Changing Ideology in Chinese Popular Music from 1980s to Present”

Popular music culture in Mainland China is affected by the government’s influence, particularly in relation to ideological and political purposes. This phenomena began 2000 years ago with Confucianism, where music is viewed as a political tool connecting the government with the people. During the Mao period (1949-1979), the masses were at the center of Mao’s politics. From the 1980s, the one-child family policy resulted in the majority of younger Chinese (urban particularly), developing a vast ideological shift away from the concept of “mass” towards greater individualism – from “We” to “I”. This shift is especially present in the popular music culture of modern China from the 1980s to 2000s, as popular music was essentially an adaptation of Western culture, which emphasizes individualism.

This paper will focus on how the younger generation was raised in a different music cultural environment, and how they struggled with the ancient social values of music in association with political rule. Four kinds of popular music common to youth culture will be considered: Chinese Rock and Roll; Nostalgic Folk Songs; Inspirational Song, which encourages young people to

face difficulties in life and stay positive, along with Campus Folk Song created by college students; and Internet Sarcastic Songs that express opinions about social issues. This paper will show that popular music that serves the government and the popular music representing youth of this period were and continue to be at odds in the modern Chinese society.

PANEL 3: 1:30-3:00 Embodied Practice and Technical Ability

Irene Monteverdi (University of Pittsburgh)

“Listening like an Italian courtier: What sprezzatura can teach us about the effortless mastery of jazz”

In the 15th century, Italian courtier, Baldassarre Castiglione, suggested that well-bred gentlemen should do everything with a certain sprezzatura — a noble manner of effortless and panache. The idea of sprezzatura, a virtue which has been used to denote graceful negligence in expressive musical performance, has marked similarities to what American jazz pianist Kenny Werner describes as essential to attaining “egoless listening” in his aptly titled book, *Effortless Mastery: Liberating the Master Musician Within* (1996). This paper will examine oral histories of jazz musicians and educators from sprezzatura’s originating country, Italy, to represent the quality of listening that Werner deems necessary in order to achieve “effortless mastery.” Egoless listening, Werner suggests, requires freeing oneself of “mental noise” and applying a quality of listening attuned to beauty in order to absorb and internalize creative potential. Italian musicians, in demonstrating their own virtues of sprezzatura, echo the belief of Italian musicologist Francesco Martinelli — “jazz is an attitude” with “a liberating quality.” Italian jazz pianist Arrigo Cappelletti points to elements of beauty outside of music that have shaped his musical tendencies. A recent project of another Italian pianist, Stefano Battaglia, exemplifies the creative output possible from absorbing and internalizing the music with an obvious sense of sprezzatura. Inspired by Werner’s book, I offer that by channeling the inner courtier, by Castiglione’s standards, listening can become egoless and mastery, effortless.

James Kimball (SUNY Geneseo)

“Outliving the Competition: a Centenarian in the Irish Session Scene”

Marty O’Keefe was born 1912 in County Clare, Ireland. He worked as a fisherman, but also absorbed much local traditional music. When he emigrated in 1947, to Rochester, New York, he brought regional tunes and stories and skills on fiddle and flute and familiarity with concertina, which his mother played. In Rochester he continued to play and in time joined a lively session scene. Though an accident to his hand stopped his flute playing, he adapted comfortably on the fiddle. In the context of traditional Irish sessions Marty’s older Clare tunes and rougher playing style often took a back seat to more polished, flashier tunes put forward by others among the immigrant community and by younger musicians learning both from these players and from newer sources. Marty’s natural self-effacing yet good-humored manner also kept his music somewhat in the background. In his 80s Marty acquired a fine concertina. As he reached his 90s he was becoming special in new ways. He was the only older immigrant musician left and the concertina gave him a whole new presence. When he visited Ireland he was recognized and

honored. From 38 years of observing, recording and talking with O’Keefe, the author will trace changes in his musicianship and his role in the local sessions, as influenced by age, by his gradual shift in instrument preference and by the passing of other session musicians. Marty passed away last November at the age of 103.

Christopher Witulski (Florida State University)

“Pious Performances: *Musiqā Ruhiyya* and Islamic Popular Music in Fez, Morocco”

Pious Performances investigates how artists and listeners in Fez, Morocco utilize *musiqā ruhiyya*—“spiritual music”—to shape and perform contemporary Islamic piety in the public spaces of popular culture. In doing so, it draws upon the wealth of recent scholarship on piety and ritual in the Islamic world and reflects on the depth of the relationship between performance, faith, and the arts. This paper and its larger project revolve around three visible and contested types of sacred popular music: that of the *hamadsha* and *‘issawa* brotherhoods—including ritual, wedding, and festival performances—and religiously-oriented sung poetry known as *malhun*. My ethnographic work centers on Fez’s sacred popular music scene by examining how leaders operationalize their musical activities—especially those practices previously confined to the poor and uneducated or specific closed ritual settings—and project religious identities that are compatible with the aesthetic sensibilities of wider audiences, that are less problematic than those of their parents and teachers. This work is based on three years of field research in North and West Africa and addresses the importance of aesthetics within recontextualized ritual musical performance. By regarding the space between performers and listeners as a central arena for the negotiation of piety, especially public piety, in the Islamic world, this research broadens expectations for religious and artistic behavior. Further, these processes are not unique to Fez, Morocco, or global Muslim communities: the navigation of audience tastes and religious values contribute to changing circulations of artistic and moral ideologies worldwide.

PANEL 4: 3:15-4:45

Lydia Snyder (Kent State University)

“Trance-Forming Music: Healing through Communal Drumming”

Music has a profound ability to alter our state of consciousness, to heal our bodies and calm our emotions. Many traditions use music as a form of healing and connecting with another plane of existence or to our own subconscious. Felicitas D. Goodman was a German-American anthropologist and linguist who studied trance among various cultures. After witnessing a Native American corn dance in Santa Fe, New Mexico, she experienced a vision in which the Pueblo Indians asked her to follow them. From that point on, she dedicated her life to understanding this experience. She studied these altered states of consciousness at The Ohio State University and continued to live among the Pueblo Indians. In her research, she found that various body postures would facilitate a trance experience when combined with a specific percussive pattern. She used this knowledge to found the Cuyamungue Institute in New Mexico, where she taught classes on the history of ecstatic trance and shamanic rituals. One of her students, Dr. Nicholas E. Brink, continues her practice of communal drumming to create a trance experience

for those involved. Nicholas Brink is a psychologist currently living in Coburn, PA, just 10 miles from my hometown. He holds group ecstatic sessions in State College, PA. This paper details my experience as a participant in this ecstatic trance session, and how the various body postures and rhythm affected my experience. I also include accounts of other participants whom experienced visions of past-lives.

Carl Rahkonen (Indiana University of Pennsylvania)

“Teaching an Old Dog New Tricks: Doing Digital Fieldwork Among Finnish Americans of Michigan”

Early in 2014, I was contacted to do professional fieldwork for the Michigan Traditional Arts Program (MTAP) of the Michigan State University Museum. My assignment was to document Finnish American musicians and instrument builders from Detroit and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. The Museum gathers collections that are “born digital” according to archival preservation standards. This presentation will discuss best practices for doing digital fieldwork, the type of equipment that was necessary, the documentation required, and the work necessary before and after going to the field. I completed eight days of fieldwork in July 2014 documenting the work of seven musicians and instrument builders. I will also show some highlights from my digital fieldwork among Finnish Americans of Michigan.

Maurice Mengel (Syracuse University)

“Metahistories: Paradigms, Purposes and Other Thoughts on the History of Ethnomusicology”

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The history of ethnomusicology is an old and, quite possibly, a venerable topic that ethnomusicologists have been discussing ever since Jaap Kunst suggested the word “ethnomusicology,” and, curiously perhaps, even longer. Today, however, the history of ethnomusicology seems old-fashioned, at least to some of our colleagues. That is surprising since there is no lack of new approaches to history, both in ethnomusicology and outside of it, and perhaps research in the “borderlands” between history and ethnomusicology has been one of the more innovative niches of recent years. If pretty much everything has a history, so does the discourse on ethnomusicology’s history. In this presentation, I will show that this meta-perspective on our field is not just theoretical shenanigans, but a practical approach. I will outline the two or three paradigms that so far have dominated the field, as well as my own approach to history, which could either be considered a compromise between the two or a further development. In this context, I will examine “comparative musicology” and “musical folklore,” two historical paradigms I have been concerned with in my own research on the history of Brăiloiu’s archive in Bucharest, as well as their reception in more recent times. Last, but not least, I will address the often-omitted question of what purpose of a history of our field can have.

PANEL 5: 5:00-6:30 Musical Migrations

Terry Miller (Kent State University, Emeritus)

“General William T. Sherman Takes Bangkok: How H. C. Work’s “Marching Through Georgia” Became a Traditional Thai Composition”

Henry Clay Work’s 1865 march composition, “Marching Through Georgia,” composed to celebrate General William T. Sherman’s notorious/victorious March to the Sea to capture Savannah, Georgia, in late 1864, became an instant sensation. Within a short time military bands were playing the composition throughout the world as military and diplomatic missions visited distant ports. Bangkok was one such port. Thai were evidently attracted, and adapted parts of the tune into many kinds of music. The most often heard version is as a “Western accent” (samniang farang) work played by classical ensembles, easily identified by both the tune and the use of both military snare and bass drums. But the melody has permeated Thailand, appearing in such disparate situations as the opening for a radio show in Chiangmai, a tune played by village ensembles in the northeast, and within a Khmer healing ceremony in the lower northeast. It is often associated with another composition, “Farang I-haem,” a marching song with lyrics in pseudo-English, actually gibberish. The paper explores these manifestations and speculates how such a tune was disseminated so widely.

Tony Dumas (College at Brockport)

“Bohemian Fantasies: Justifying Flamenco During the Original Renaissance Pleasure Faire”

For more than twenty years, flamenco was one of the most popular acts to be featured in California's original Renaissance Pleasure Faire (RPF). A re-enactment of Elizabethan England, the RPF began in 1963 as a fundraiser for KPFK, the second of five listener-supported radio stations in California. In the liminal space of the RPF, a group of California flamenco performers lived communally and enacted stereotypes long associated with "Gypsy" performers. As one enthusiast recalls, "they would wear those big rings in their ears, bandanas tied around their heads, and throw a knife on stage." Based on interviews with the Faire's original flamenco performers and directors, I explore what place this music and dance genre, which originated in Spain in the 19th century, had within the re-enactment of 16th century feudal life.

In this paper, I consider two facets of the RPF flamenco troupe. In one, I argue that flamenco fulfilled an Orientalist fantasy within the RPF's celebration of Anglo heritage. In another, I show how the RPF became an extension of California's bohemian flamenco scene of the 1960s. I draw from Bakhtin's concept of carnival and Bhabha's theory of hybridity to argue that the fabricated world of the RPF was a "third space" (Bhabha) within which the flamenco performers' bohemian proclivities imbued them with a real sense of authenticity among the RPF participants.

Sergio Ospina-Romero (Cornell University)

“Amazement, fright and other tales around a “marvelous invention”: Player-Pianos trade in Latin America, 1912-1915”

The fourth chapter of Gabriel García Márquez’s novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* begins with the arrival of the player-piano in Macondo as “the marvelous invention that was to arouse the astonishment of the town and the jubilation of the young people.” As the years went by, the player-piano would become a nostalgic symbol of the bygone days when they saw their world transformed by the inexplicable wonders of modernity. In many ways, the literary portrait of García Márquez captures the cultural significance the player-piano had in Latin America during its heyday in the 1910s, being a mediator between tradition and modernity and between the manual and the mechanical. As a technological intruder, it inhabited a liminal space between unmediated musical experiences and mechanically mediated consumption of sounds; as such, it symbolically connected nostalgia for the past and new desires for cosmopolitanism and modernity. Along these lines, in this paper I argue that the player-piano bridged the gap between tradition and modernity in two processes: the cultural legitimization of mechanical reproduction and the commodification of sounds. Furthermore, I analyze the early international trade of player-pianos between the United States and Latin America in the 1910s. By examining the pages of *The Music Trade Review*, I study the way in which American businessmen in the player-piano industry made every effort to capture the Latin American market, in an interesting interplay of mutual stereotyping, first-world-war commercial geopolitics, and cultural capitalization.