

## ABSTRACTS

Annual meeting of  
The Niagara Chapter of SEM  
Carlow University, Pittsburgh, PA  
March 21, 2015

### Session 1: 9:00-10:30 African and African American Traditions

*Doing Justice to "Strange Fruit."*  
Joel J. Woller (Carlow University)

"Strange Fruit" is, among other things, a collaboration between the African-American singer Billie Holiday, a politically-unaffiliated "race woman," and the Jewish-American writer Lewis Allan (Abel Meerapol), a Communist. However, even in the most fair-minded discussions of the song's history I detect difficulties in doing justice to the roles of Holiday and Allan. I propose to examine two especially valuable and influential recent interpretations of the historical significance of the song: Angela Davis' chapter "Strange Fruit: Music and Social Consciousness" (in *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism*, 1998), and David Margolick's *Strange Fruit: The Biography of a Song* (2001). Davis, an activist, academic scholar, and public intellectual, convincingly places Holiday's career in the tradition of Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith, rebuts the charge the "Strange Fruit" cannot be art because it is "propaganda," and accounts for the significance of the emergence of an audience for an anti-lynching song such as *Strange Fruit* in the 1930s, among other things; yet, she tends to accept Holiday's autobiography at face value. In his in-depth study of the origins and legacies of the song, Margolick, a thorough and thoughtful journalist and author, overcorrects this limitation in Davis' thinking, thus passing on a chance to inquire into the meaning of Holiday's empirically dubious assertions. Likewise, though he acknowledges Davis' work, Margolick misses an opportunity to more fully integrate and develop Davis' insights. Each attempts to do justice to both Holiday and Allan, but we can best approach this goal by reading them together.

*Reviving Tradition, Engaging Modernity: A Paradigm Shift of Musico-Aesthetics in Ghanaian Neo-Pentecostal-Charismatic Church.*

E. Kwadwo O. Beeko (University of Pittsburgh)

"Reviving tradition" as a way of "engaging modernity" has been a major sociocultural process of artistic innovation, creativity and ingenuity in Africans' experience as expressed in many Ghanaian Independent churches during worship. And one category of these churches that emerged to form one of the largest and the fastest-growing Christian groups in Ghana, as a result of this process of artistry, are the neo-Pentecostal/Charismatic churches, whose growth became much more rapid than, and often at the expense of, some of the older churches. The neo-Pentecostal-Charismatic churches can be considered as "indigenous churches" because of their *self-governing*, *self-propagating*, *self-financing*, and *self-theologising* abilities, and also being born out of indigenous initiative. Their growth was in large measure a youth movement. Thus, although the movement, as a whole, is an "indigenous movement" – that is, a church *of* the people, *by* the people, *for* the people, it also came to embrace the *modernity* in line with their *tradition*. My aim is to use the International Central Gospel Church (I.C.G.C.) in Ghana as a case study in examining such musico-aesthetic of creativity as expressed in these Churches' forms of worship. I will *first*, provide briefly

the historical, religio-political, social and cultural background/framework that led to the emergence and rise of this ICGC; and *second*, examine the church's musical performances expressed in a form of worship, and the subsequent religio-political and socio-cultural transformations that emerged and developed out of this process.

*Chimurenga Renaissance: Doubled Doubleness in the Diasporic Music of Tendai Maraire.*

Austin T. Richey (Eastman School of Music)

Over the past decade, emerging Seattle-based artist Tendai Maraire, the American-born son of Zimbabwean ethnomusicologist Dumisani Maraire, has crafted a unique musical position by marshaling multiple diasporic strands in his music. These include both the centuries-old African-American diaspora that took shape through the "Black Atlantic," as well as an emerging diaspora that is specifically Zimbabwean in nature. In this paper, I argue that the layering of these distinct diasporic histories fosters a type of "doubled doubleness" in Maraire's music, extending DuBois's original conception of "double consciousness" to encompass multiple poles of identity location. Musically, Maraire articulates this "doubled doubleness" through incorporating both North American hip-hop and Zimbabwean chimurenga, a genre that has historically functioned as a form of resistance to colonial rule. These two musical genres are reflective of the distinct African-American and Zimbabwean diasporic cultures Maraire moves between; by synthesizing them, he creates a vehicle with which he explores and interrogates his compound diasporic identity. Maraire makes this dialogic process explicit through his hip-hop moniker, Chimurenga Renaissance, which references both Zimbabwean chimurenga and the Harlem Renaissance. Yet even as Maraire's musical syncretism affords him power as an agent of social critique, it simultaneously "others" him within the communities he represents, amplifying his exceptional liminality as a "doubly diasporic" subject. As one of the first members of a growing population of second-generation Zimbabweans in the United States, Maraire's lived experience represents the forefront of an emergent Zimbabwean-American diasporic culture, located at the intersections of both new and old diasporic identities.

## **Session 2: 10:45-11:45 Asian Connections**

*Mai: A Western Saxophone and Eastern Shakuhachi Hybrid.*

Deanna Nebel (Kent State University)

Ryo Noda is a well-known saxophone composer and performer. Born in Japan but trained in France, many of his musical compositions blend influences from both Japanese traditional music, namely the shakuhachi flute and French avant-garde composition. The alto saxophone solo piece *Mai* is used as a case study to analyze some of his compositional techniques and cultural influences. With so many influences on the composer, being from two schools of musical thought, are his pieces more Western or Eastern in style and substance? The purpose of this paper is to analyze *Mai*'s musical composition and cultural influences to determine if the work is more Western or Eastern in nature. Ultimately, the work will prove to be Western or hybridized on the surface but Japanese in substance. A blend of music theory and cultural analysis is used to achieve this end. Saxophonists studying *Mai* and other Noda pieces can use this analysis to enhance their performances, as this paper intends to provide insight on the shakuhachi sound for saxophone.

*Minority Popular Music in China: Case Study of "Shanren" Band.*

Xiaorong Yuan (Kent State University)

This paper examines the rise in minority popular music in mainland China from the 1990s to present in association with the economic, political and cultural changes in the region during the post-Mao period. The *Gaigekaifang*, translated as “reformation and opening-up,” is the policy that pushed China towards globalization. Both the majority Han population and ethnic minority groups, e.g., Wa, in China are following this trend towards international interests. As minority groups that used to live in rural regions began moving into urban areas, a new cultural climate was created that has resulted in the hybridization of Western and Chinese influences from urban and rural roots, as we as both majority and minority populations. With the increasing interest in minority traditional music, many minority popular music bands emerged in the urban areas of China. One such example is the indie minority popular band “Shanren” (literally translated as “mountain men”), which formed in 2000 in Yunnan province of southwest China, but today perform primarily in Beijing. The members combine musicians from the Buyi and Wa minority groups, as well as the Han majority. This band has several characteristic elements of minority popular music in China, substituting ethnic instruments such as Yi Moon lute and Jaw-harp for western music instruments and singing in their own dialect and language, rather than Mandarin. Furthering the rural minority connection, the lyrics of their music tends to focus on the life of rural ethnic people who now live in Beijing. Such elements distinguish them from Han rock bands that emphasize politically sensitive issues.

*The Sounds of a Chinese Covered Bridge: Music and Ritual Associated with Chinese “Corridor Bridges.”* Terry E. Miller (Kent State University, Emeritus)

Chinese covered bridges, called in Chinese *lang qiao* (“corridor bridge”), although full size, are pedestrian bridges. Most have within them a shrine dedicated to one of the many broadly known or local Buddhist or Taoist deities. Travelers (in the case of isolated bridges) and villagers (in populated settings) may perform personal rituals at these altars, lighting incense and offering prayers with or without chanting. Larger rituals involving priests and musicians may occur as well. Some bridges are closely associated with nearby temples where full rituals take place as well as annual performances of local opera celebrating the deity’s birthday. Before building the bridge, local officials perform rituals at the bridge site involving offerings and chanting. During the bridge’s building or reconstruction, workers may sing songs to coordinate their labor. Most important is the song for installing the “ridge pole.” Fathers sometimes sing a special repertory of songs on bridges when their children cannot sleep. Musicians accompanying wedding processions might stop in the bridge to serenade the couple. Musicians sometimes perform on bridges during the Spring Festival. Perhaps in some towns narrative singers entertained local people seated on the benches that run within most bridges. In this paper the author brings together his expertise in two fields, Ethnomusicology, with a secondary specialization in Chinese music, and his knowledge of Chinese covered bridges gained from four conferences and visits to nearly seventy bridges. He proposes to focus on Chinese covered bridges as part of a cultural context, with special attention to musical activities that both take place on the bridges as well as in proximity. Additionally, he is collaborating with former student Dr. Luo Qin of the Shanghai Conservatory on this project, who will begin field work with Miller in Taishun, Zhejiang, China in November, 2013. Where possible, Miller will illustrate with audio or video.

## **Keynote address 2:00-2:45**

*Comparative Musicology, Cantometrics, and the Future of World Music Research.*

Victor Grauer, Pittsburgh, PA

Dr. Grauer studied ethnomusicology at Wesleyan and UCLA, and received a Ph.D. in composition from SUNY Buffalo. He was a co-creator, with Alan Lomax, of Cantometrics.

In the face of exciting new developments in comparative studies, especially in fields such as Population Genetics, Archaeology and Linguistics, the study of comparative musicology seems due for a revival. I will argue that Cantometrics, a method of cross cultural musical analysis conceived by Alan Lomax and developed by Lomax and myself during the early 1960's, can be one of the most effective tools we have in this endeavor. Unfortunately, due in part to a general neglect of comparative studies, but also to a degree of skepticism regarding certain claims associated with this method, Cantometrics fell into disfavor and is now both little known and little understood. I will discuss my recent involvement with the revival of this method, centering on how I go about "mining" the Cantometric database in the course of my current research.

## **Session 3 3:00-4:00 Ethnic Identity in America**

*Paddy's 'Race-Horse' Runs a New Track: Political Song in Shaping Pittsburgh's Irish Diaspora.*

Peter Gilmore (Carlow University)

Accepting that "The music associated with the home country" can help "forge and preserve a sense of group identity" and "maintain cultural and social boundaries and values within the new community" (Cooper 2009:147), this paper considers the role of political song in the creation of an Irish diaspora in western Pennsylvania at the turn of the nineteenth century.

In the 1790s and early 1800s, newly arrived Irish immigrants, particularly political refugees, led the development of a discernible Irish-American community based on republicanism and identification with Thomas Jefferson's Democratic-Republican Party.

In Ireland, the radical republican movement which gave rise to the 1798 Rebellion developed a cultural repertoire which included *Paddy's Resource* (or informally, Paddy's Racehorse), a collection of political songs set to popular melodies and published in Belfast and Dublin. *Paddy's Resource* was also published during the same turbulent decade in New York and Philadelphia.

This paper will consider evidence that songs found in *Paddy's Resource* and associated with the Irish democratic-republican movement, together with contemporary songs and dance tunes were employed in western Pennsylvania to create and maintain the conjoined identity of "Irish" and "republican" which defined the immigrant community.

*Classical Music and the Thai Monarchy: An Expression of Thai-ness Among Thai-American Communities in America.*

Priwan Nanongkham (Kent State University)

The number of Thai immigrants increased dramatically in the 1970s during Vietnam War when the U.S. offered green cards primarily to nurses and physicians that allowed them conveniently to enter this country. According to their professions, these people firstly resettled in Thai-American communities mostly in big cities such as Los Angeles, New York City, Chicago, and Washington, DC. In America, the sense of being Thai inevitably came with them especially in terms of their social and political identities, expressed in specific ways in the expatriate communities. Since the end of World War II, the constitutional concept of the “three:” “Nation,” “Religion,” and “Monarchy” has been politically employed to unify the Thai nation, and is established as a basis of the Thai national identity. Thai immigrants bring this national triad with them to the new world, where it has been viewed as the fundamental essence of Thai-ness. In the Thai community where a Buddhist temple is the communal center, in addition to Buddhism and the Thai language, Thai classical music and dance are the primary skills for young Thai-Americans to learn. In this presentation, I will discuss the role of Thai musical culture as a specific expression and reinforcement particularly of the Thai monarchy, one of the three pillars, that has been explicit in projecting Thai identity among Thai-American communities in America.

**Session 4: 4:15-5:15 Popular Music in Ghana**

*Kpanlogo: The Art of Negotiating Public Spaces.*

Samuel Boateng (Kent State University)

Ghana, located in the coastal region of West Africa, is known for many music and dance traditions. One of such traditions is the *kpanlogo* dance and music form. This recreational dance became prominent in the Greater-Accra Region of Ghana during the wake of its independence in the 1950s. As a multi-layered form, this neo-traditional dance combines elements from both Ghanaian and international dance movements including Chubby Checker’s “Twist,” Elvis Presley dance movements, *kolomashie*, and *oge*.

After its development and acceptance as a national style, it has since moved from community centers, public squares and national platforms to both Ghanaian and international academic circles.

My presentation seeks to discuss the multi-dimensional nature of *kpanlogo* as expressed in some of its performance practices and its property to permeate diverse social settings and public spaces. Thus, through demonstration:

- Show how it adjusts to fit diverse social settings and spaces
- I will speak to the multi-faceted nature of its song text
- The communicative essence that thrives between its musicians and dancers
- Discuss the instrumental organization of the form.

## **Adepa AfroPop Band** (Kent State University)

Samuel Boateng (Leader/Keys)

Andrew Adametz (Drum Set)

Tyler Bokman (Saxophone)

Ryan Critchfield (Bass)

Matthew Riley (Saxophone)

Ariel Yang (African percussion),

Kevin Alexander Wilson (Djembe)

This is a musical performance based on fusions between Ghanaian traditional music, jazz, and a reggae anthem popularized in South Africa. This musical experiment is inspired by the continuous change and standardization of popular music in Ghana, and the popularization and development of sub-genres such as *azonto* (music/dance) and Highlife-Jazz, especially in the capital city Accra.

Three out of the four pieces we will be performing are a re-harmonization and re-arrangement of traditional Ghanaian folk tunes, specifically from the *Akan* ethnic group. These songs are adorned by rhythmic themes from *abgazda* (a prominent music and dance style in the Volta Region of Ghana), and variants of it. Harmonically, the pieces thrive on both modern jazz harmonies and traditional bebop harmonies. Aside the distinct soundscape this produces, the choice of harmony also fosters creativity—a key element in this music since improvisation is one of our main focuses.

The last of the four pieces is a reggae anthem by a Guyanese singer composed for South Africa during the apartheid system. We chose this in the spirit of admonishing inequality and to promote the plethora of developments that can arise from good compromise and acceptance between cultures.