

Abstracts

1. Lucille Lisack (Centre Georg Simmel, *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales*, Paris)

Politics of 'Contemporary Music' in Uzbekistan: Reflecting International Standards and Composing a Musical Identity

What are composers living in Tashkent composing today? How do they find their place in the eclectic musical and cultural landscape of their country through diverse strategies to differentiate themselves from other styles of music? How do they insert themselves in the transnational networks of so-called 'contemporary music'? This expression, as other categories which actors and musicologists use to classify different kinds of music, is very common, almost obvious in its everyday use, and at the same time nearly impossible to define. Instead of attempting to define "contemporary music", one of the aims of my research is to observe how actors use it to produce music.

One ensemble was at the centre of my fieldwork in Tashkent: the *Omnibus Ensemble*, which is described by its director as the first and the only ensemble for contemporary music in Central Asia. Bringing into question this affirmation of the director, I tackle the category of "contemporary music" on the basis of observations and interviews: seeking actors, vocabulary, objects, vinteractions, places, institutions, and financing which contribute to the existence of *Omnibus*. I tried to find out how actors use strategic classifications and references to get financial help from foreign organisations looking for "democratic" initiatives to support. But I also observed how individual musicians speak about the music they play, describe their difficulties to enter this world of sounds and finally their attachment to what they play –apparently independent of strategic choices.

The use of musical categories and the construction of musical taste is embedded in an institutional landscape marked by the Soviet heritage and the brutal transformation of the musical institutions after the collapse of the USSR. The importation of the category 'contemporary music' with a Western signification in relation to the Western musical avant-gardes of the 20th century contributed to these transformations. In this context, an important aspect of my research is to analyse how a small ensemble constitutes for itself a repertoire which corresponds to its idea of 'contemporary music'.

In order to have their own 'Uzbek' works enter the international network of "contemporary music", the ensemble organise a masterclass every year for young composers with invited professors from Europe and USA – just like the Soviet power invited Russian composers to show their Uzbek colleagues how to write Soviet music some decades ago. The creation of an 'Uzbek' repertoire of 'contemporary music' is thus the result of the contradictory reactions to Soviet times, the influences of Western sponsors, the fantasised 'West' and the political situation in today's Uzbekistan.

Biography

Lucille Lisack defended her PhD in Anthropology at the *Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales* (EHESS, Paris) in 2015. She works on the young generation of composers in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, and the creation of an Uzbek 'contemporary music' drawing on Western avant-gardes of the 20th century in the post-Soviet context of contemporary Uzbekistan.

2. Tanya Merchant (University of California, Santa Cruz)

Prestige and Sustainability in the Uzbek State Conservatory's Pedagogy of Traditional Music

Music education institutions within the borders of present-day Uzbekistan have disseminated traditional music in one form or another for more than a century. In the independence era, institutions like UNESCO negotiate their musical and ideological priorities alongside Uzbek government agencies with interests in musical institutions. Typical conservatory educational priorities, such as applied instruction focusing on single instruments, emphasis on musical literacy, and aural skills have had to be adapted to (and/or adapted) Uzbek traditional musical instruments, performance, and pedagogy. These adaptations have not been unidirectional, as musicians and instructors use their positions to affect institutional priorities, as much as they respond to directives from above. Case studies from the Uzbek State Conservatory between 2002 and 2009 illustrate the ways traditional musical performance and pedagogy have involved economies of prestige and discourses of sustainability and authenticity. Students and teachers engage music via written staff notation and recite solfege syllables, while maintaining close ties to historically important practices including the master-apprentice system and oral-imitative learning. The traditional music department and folk music department provide two different institutionalized paths that result in vastly different musical aesthetics, which nonetheless draw on similar intellectual and political rhetoric.

Biography

Tanya Merchant is an ethnomusicologist whose research interests include music's intersection with issues of nationalism, gender, identity, and the post-colonial situation. With a geographical focus on Central Asia, the former Soviet Union, and the Balkans, she has conducted fieldwork in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Russia, the United States, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. She is an avid performer on the Central Asian *dutar* and has given concerts in the U.S. and Uzbekistan. Tanya received her PhD in Ethnomusicology with a concentration in women's studies from the University of California, Los Angeles. Her book, *Women Musicians of Uzbekistan: From Courtyard to Conservatory*, was published in 2015 by the University of Illinois Press.

3. Polina Dessiatnichenko (University of Toronto)

Restoring and Inventing Fret Positions on the Tar in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan

The post-Soviet period in Azerbaijan is characterized by nativism, part of which is an ongoing preoccupation with microtones on the *tar*, Azerbaijan's primary national instrument. In an article from 1992, titled 'Where is the Tar of Sadigjan?', Azerbaijani music scholar Elkhan Babayev asked about the pre-Soviet form of the instrument created by Sadigjan, a master performer on the *tar* from the late nineteenth century. Babayev's main concern was the temperament of the *tar* during the Soviet regime (1920-1991) and the consequences of this temperament for *mugham* performance. The issue of *tar*'s microtones continues to be widely debated by musicians today as they move, add, and omit frets, thereby challenging the Soviet reforms and seeking to find what they refer to as 'true' *mugham*. What once was a rigid structure during Soviet times has now become flexible, unhinged from the past by the experimentation, innovation, and reconstitution of musicians. Each tonal scheme is fervently defended and justified by various factors such as aesthetic taste, a desired spiritual effect, putative knowledge of pre-Soviet *mugham*, and the intention to highlight the 'Eastern' nature of *mugham*. Whether geared to perform pre-Soviet styles, melodies from Iranian and Turkish classical repertory, or jazz chords and passages of flying

arpeggios, the *tar* is the mouthpiece to respond to the post-Soviet milieu and to the changes that took place in the Soviet era.

Using data from three years of fieldwork in Azerbaijan – studying and performing *mugham* on the *tar* with renowned masters – I discuss the striking diversity of approaches when it comes to the arrangement of scalar intervals. Moreover, I question how ethnomusicologists can investigate such musical phenomena of the post-Soviet world: is it useful to engage in archival research and try to find out which versions today are closest to pre-Soviet structures or is it more important to consider and emphasize the beliefs of musicians, regardless of their historical validity?

Biography

Polina Dessiatnitchenko holds her BA (in Music and Anthropology) and direct-entry PhD degree in Ethnomusicology from the University of Toronto. She was awarded the Garfield Weston Fellowship and Joseph Armand Bombardier Canada Doctoral Graduate Scholarship for her doctoral research on Azerbaijani *mugham* which culminated in her dissertation titled 'Musical and Ontological Possibilities of *Mugham* Creativity in Pre-Soviet, Soviet, and Post-Soviet Azerbaijan' (2017). Polina designed and taught her own courses at the University of Toronto and at Tufts University. Her research interests include Azerbaijani *mugham*, *tar*, creativity, phenomenology, *ghazal* poetry, *aruz* meters, Islamic aesthetics, Soviet and post-Soviet studies, postcolonialism, and Orientalism.

4. Katherine Freeze (Brown University)

The Making of 'Pamiri Music' in Tajik Badakhshan

Many scholars have described how the institutional and discursive legacies of Sovietization can be observed in local music cultures of Central Asia. Holdovers can be found in transformed versions of repertoires and instruments, as well as ways of performing or teaching. This presentation considers the making of 'Pamiri music' – that is, the state-sponsored ethnographic study and professionalized exhibition of music associated with populations in the Pamir mountains of Badakhshan, eastern Tajikistan. Although it has been nearly thirty years since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, many musicians from the Pamirs continue to employ folkloric paradigms introduced in the wake of Soviet modernizing reforms and social engineering. In particular, musicians favor a lively suite-like sequence of short compositions that showcases local folk and ritual music genres in excised, abbreviated, and miniaturized forms. Today these suites cater to the short attention spans of modern audiences, while also testifying to deeper social currents and creative impulses. This presentation takes up recent performances in Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe and in Badakhshan in order to explore the ongoing reimagining of 'Pamiri music'.

Biography

Katherine Freeze is a third-year PhD student in Ethnomusicology at Brown University, U.S. Her research engages diverse music cultures of the 'Roof of the World', a mountainous region that extends across the borders of South and Central Asia. Since 2012 Katherine has been learning to play the lutes of this region, especially the Western Tibetan/Ladakhi *ko-phongs* and the Pamiri *rubab* and *tanbur*. Her work has been supported by grants from the American Institute of Afghanistan Studies, the American Philosophical Society, the United States-India Educational Foundation (Fulbright), and Brown University's Graduate School. She holds BA, BM and MM degrees in music history and composition from the University of Washington, and before beginning her graduate studies in ethnomusicology, she worked as a professional pianist, composer and arranger.

5. Richard K. Wolf (Harvard University)

Impression and Presence in Badakhshan and Beyond

The conviction that music creates profound ‘impressions’ on the human being has deep roots in the writings of Central, South and West Asian thinkers. In approaching this subject, medieval writers in Persian and Arabic drew on the related notion of *ta'thir/ta'sir*, as well as classical Greek philosophies of ethos in relation to music. The idea of music's inherent capacity—through specific metrics and orderings of tones—to foster the creation of particular kinds of people also points to a notion of object agency that has appeared in contemporary critical theory, philosophy and anthropology. Whether couched as ‘object-orientation’ or ‘presence’, these philosophies attempt to shift the analytic emphasis from the human actor to the ‘thing’; in musical and sound studies, this reorientation has inspired some scholars to reconsider what it might mean for sound and musical instruments to have agency. In my current project, I have been exploring the more general topic of music and moral being: that is, how the musician's own character or *ethos* might relate to what he or she hopes to accomplish in a performance; and, how listeners might read a performer's character from the whole complex that constitutes a musical performance. In other words, how are ‘impression’ and ‘presence’ related? In this working paper, I will focus on these questions as they pertain to the life histories, poetry, and excursions of several Tajik and Afghan musicians and their listeners living in and around the mountainous region of Badakhshan. The research is based on approximately two years of fieldwork between 2012 and 2018 with speakers of Tajik, Dari and Wakhi.

Biography

Richard K. Wolf, Professor of Music and South Asian Studies at Harvard University, has been conducting ethnomusicological research on the musical traditions of South Asia and Central Asia for more than thirty years. He is the author of *The Black Cow's Footprint: Time, Space, and Music in the Lives of the Kotas of South India* and *The Voice in the Drum: Music, Language and Emotion in Islamicate South Asia* as well as the editor and co-editor of several collected volumes, including one on rhythm to be published this year. He is General Editor of *Ethnomusicology Translations*, a series published by the Society for Ethnomusicology and featuring English translations of significant foreign-language ethnomusicological writings. The recipient of numerous grants and awards, in the coming academic year Wolf will be a research fellow at the National Humanities Center in North Carolina, where he will prepare a monograph entitled *The Nightingale's Despair: Music and Moral Being in Greater Central Asia*. Wolf is also a disciple of the renowned *vīṇā* master Smt Ranganayaki Rajagopalan and, in between excursions to the Pamir mountains and the Nilgiri hills, remains active as a concertizer, teacher and writer on Karnatak music.

6. Gabrielle Messeder (City, University of London)

‘Obrigada, Shukran’: Brazilian Musical Encounters in Lebanon

Since the first Lebanese migrants arrived in Brazil in the late 19th century, Lebanon and Brazil have shared a rich history of trade and cultural exchange. Transnational migration has resulted in a small but significant Brazilian population in Lebanon, which currently numbers approximately 17,000.

The first encounter with Brazilian music for many Lebanese came in the 1970s, via the *bossa nova*-influenced compositions of Ziad Rahbani, and the cover versions of Antonio Carlos Jobim sung by Rahbani's mother, the iconic singer Fairouz. Today,

Brazilian music – primarily the genres of *bossa nova*, *samba* and *música popular brasileira* (MPB) – is practised, performed and listened to in multiple settings, from events such as Festa do Brasil, a two-week music and food festival held at the opulent ‘Casino du Liban’, to energetic performances by Brazilian-Lebanese MPB band Xangô in small, independent music venues in East Beirut. Other manifestations of Brazilian music and culture in Lebanon include the growing popularity of samba dance and capoeira classes, and the humanitarian use of the latter as a therapeutic activity for Syrian refugees living in camps.

Using findings from recently-conducted field research in Lebanon, I shall examine how the performance of Brazilian music by both Brazilians and non-Brazilians occupies a unique, ambivalent and sometimes contested space in the cosmopolitan Lebanese musical milieu, and how issues of cultural conservatism, exoticism and stereotyping affect and shape the production, performance and reception of Brazilian music and dance in Lebanon.

Biography

Gabrielle Messeder is a second-year PhD candidate in the Department of Music at City, University of London, supervised by Dr Laudan Nooshin. Her research is funded by City through their Studentship scheme. She completed her MA in Ethnomusicology in 2013, also at City; her dissertation examined postcolonial identity politics and gender in Brazilian samba. Her current research is concerned with Brazilian music in Lebanon, and her wider areas of interest include gender, identity and transnationalism, and popular musics of the Middle East and South America. Gabrielle also works as a music teacher and musician, and regularly play Brazilian music in London.

7. Louis Brehony (King’s College, London)

Arab Idols and the Intifada

Appearing on TV with backcombed 1980s hairdo, shoulderpads and synchronised hand gestures, a still teenage Julia Boutros relaunched her musical career with an impassioned appeal for solidarity with Palestine in the face of renewed Zionist repression. Released in 1985, ‘Ghabit Shams il-Haqq’ (‘Down Goes the Sun of Justice’) later became an anthem of the intifada and, along with 1987’s ‘Wein al Malayeen’ (‘Where are the millions?’), joined a group of Lebanese and Syrian musicians dedicating their work to the Palestinian and Arab revolutionary struggles. In Palestine they immediately became celebrities and cassettes were hastily bought and sold; on 8 December 1987, four day-labourers were killed as an Israeli truck ran into them on their way home to Gaza, igniting an intifada that would last five years (Hirst 2010, 221). Discussing the memories of Raghda, a Palestinian refugee singer in Britain, I chart the musical and wider significance of this trend, challenging existing definitions and reassessing the role of cassette-tape singers in narratives of the intifada.

Biography

Louis Brehony is an activist, musician and final year PhD researcher based in Manchester. He has published work on Palestinian musicians and artistic figures including Rim Banna, Shafiq Kabha and Ghassan Kanafani. His current research discusses the role of oral transmission and narratives in the lives of musicians exiled from Palestine.