

**Annual Meeting**  
**Northeast Chapter, Society for Ethnomusicology**

**Saturday 31 March, 2001**  
**Earle Recital Hall, Sage Hall, Smith College**  
**Northampton, Massachusetts**

9:00 - 9:30 A.M. COFFEE / REGISTRATION

9:30 - 11:00 A.M. PANEL 1

Exploring the Northampton Area Folk Scene  
Shana Smulyan, Smith College

Pro Tools on the Periphery: Digital Audio, the Internet and Musical  
Empowerment in Rio de Janeiro  
Frederick Moehn, New York University

Orientalist Rock  
Gordon Thompson, Skidmore College

11:00 - 11:15 A.M. BREAK

11:15 A.M. - 12:45 P.M. PANEL 2

Post Modern Musings  
David McAllester, Wesleyan University

Shooby Taylor and the World of "Bad Music"  
Andy McGraw, Wesleyan University/Bard College

Mento and Jamaican Calypso: Tourism, Repertory and Power  
Daniel Neely, New York University

12:45 - 2:15 P.M. LUNCH ON YOUR OWN  
(including student concerns committee lunch meeting)

2:15 - 3:45 P.M. PANEL 3

Korvai: flexible form in Karnatak drumming  
David Nelson, Wesleyan University

The Kidung Jemaat: A Christian Hymnal in a Non-Christian World  
Birgit Berg, Smith College

Art For Hire: The creative identity of the supporting musician  
Alan Williams, Brown University

**3.45 - 4.00 P.M. BREAK**

**4.0 - 5.00 P.M. KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

'Still Hazy After All These Years': Reinterpreting the 'Alan and Elizabeth  
Lomax Haitian Expedition, 1936-7'.  
Prof. Gage Averill, New York University

**5.00 - 6.00 P.M. NECSEM BUSINESS MEETING**  
(refreshments / light snacks)

**6:00 P.M. DINNER ON YOUR OWN**

**8:00 P.M. CONCERT**

**South Indian Music by David Reck (vina) & David Nelson (mrdangam)**  
Karuna Center for Yoga and Healing Arts, 25 Main St.,  
Third Floor (above Fitzwilly's Restaurant), Northampton.

Special ticket price for NECSEM attendees: \$5.

**Annual Meeting  
Northeast Chapter, Society for Ethnomusicology**

**Abstracts**

**PANEL 1**

**Exploring the Northampton Area Folk Scene**

*Shana Smulyan, Smith College*

Having gone through a fairly recent gentrification, the town of Northampton, MA is home to a thriving arts community including a vibrant local music scene. In particular, Northampton is one hub of a greater New England, and arguably national, folk music scene. Based in the town are four venues that bring in musicians from the genre in varying degrees, and there are several more performance spaces in neighboring towns and on area college campuses. In addition, local businesses are involved in management, booking, production, and recording, and many folk musicians choose to live in the area. Northampton is then an interesting case study for an examination of the folk genre.

With regards to the Northampton scene, my paper calls to question competing definitions of folk, competing ideologies of what makes a folk scene, and what events and circumstances in the Northampton area have produced and sustained such a strong scene in a seemingly small town. I suggest that the music that is referred to as folk by Northampton participants and consumers is aesthetically diverse (referencing other popular music forms such as pop, rock, and blues) and can be differentiated from traditional American folk forms as well as from the music of the folk revival of the mid-20th century. Given that, I propose that there are a variety of extra-musical factors which facilitate a cohesive folk scene. These factors include a high degree of performer/audience interaction, an emphasis placed on the person of the performer-songwriter, and an ambivalence surrounding success.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Pro Tools on the Periphery: Digital Audio, the Internet and Musical Empowerment in Rio de Janeiro**

*Frederick Moehn, New York University*

Digital audio equipment such as Digidesign's Pro Tools computer hard disk music recording and editing system has enabled musicians to release high quality projects completely independently of the major recording labels. As the cost of this equipment continues to fall, more and more people gain access to recording technology. In countries peripheral to the global centers of the music industry, digital audio is typically embraced as a source of empowerment. In Rio de Janeiro, for example, there is a vibrant

community of musicians whose work is of little interest to the multinational labels, but who are able to record and release projects independently with the help of Pro Tools and other digital media. In addition, the Internet has developed into a major source of publicity for these independent artists. Still, access to the newest technologies is difficult, and import taxes often double the cost of music equipment for Brazilians. One musician gave new meaning to the term "First World" when he complained that audio technologies always arrived in New York, London and Los Angeles first. Thus, while Pro Tools and comparable systems are now within the reach of the average amateur musician in the First World, in Brazil, they are still only accessible to the relatively privileged. Furthermore, access to the Internet is still impossible for much of the population. The "demographics" of digital audio, therefore, take on a unique dynamic in countries whose income distribution is plagued by extreme inequality. In this paper, based on ethnographic fieldwork in Rio de Janeiro, I examine how such equipment has empowered music makers in Rio, but I also examine the problem of the distribution of technology in "peripheral" economies, and I ask: What kinds of musical aesthetics are privileged in this dynamic, and what kinds prejudiced?

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Orientalist Rock**

*Gordon Thompson, Skidmore College*

In the summer of 1965, a few British musicians began to draw upon the music of North India for inspiration and for a sound that would set them apart from the hordes of aspiring pop performers crowding the airwaves. The recordings they produced at first simply attempted to appropriate the acoustic properties of Asian instruments for the exoticism. However, the instruments-and the South Asians who often played them-had musical implications and the resultant performances became increasingly heterogeneous and complex. Drones clashed with chord progressions, time cycles vied with common time, and old Orientalist stereotypes flourished as Western audiences conjured up an exotic Utopia where drugs and sex were commonplace against a backdrop of ecstatic sitar and tabla.

In 1978, David Reck in "The Neon Electric Saraswati," observed how pervasively Indian (and other Asian) ideas had seeped into American cultural life in general, and into our music in particular. In the same year, Edward Said in his influential book, *Orientalism* talks about a "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3). Looking back on the 1960s phenomenon sometimes called "raga rock," might we more appropriately call it "Orientalist rock"?

This paper (1) analyses examples of mid-1960s British pop music that reference India and (2) ruminates both on how this music was culturally constructed and how we might enhance our understanding of it.

## PANEL 2

### Post Modern Musings

*David McAllester, Wesleyan University*

In my 14th year of retirement what would I love to tackle if I thought stylistic analysis were the chief concern of ethnomusicology?

1. What are the formulae by which a Navajo singer can recite an epic ceremony for nine days? What is the secret that supplies those hundreds of melodies?
2. Ditto for the Aboriginal songmen of Australia, who can sing their way across the geographical features of the continent as though it were a vast musical score.
3. Is "music" the right word for song theater that is also theater-history, song-medicine, psychiatric-poetry, dance-art, prayer-mythico-poesis?
4. How did it come about that I became a Navajo cultural advocate of World Peace instead of a scientist who heard all, saw all, and told lots?

\* \* \* \* \*

### Shooby Taylor and the World of "Bad Music"

*Andy McGraw, Wesleyan University/Bard College*

This presentation investigates the production and reception of American unpopular music. So called 'bad', 'incorrect' or 'outsider' music (terms used by consumers, not producers) is most often transmitted through underground tape-trading networks and is the subject of several radio shows and at least three (non-academic) books. My discussion focuses on 'bad music' that is produced by groups and individuals with no formal training, who are largely unaware of their own ineptitude (as opposed to punk groups) and that compose for popular instruments, with popular aspirations: The Shaggs, Wild Man Fischer, Shooby Taylor, et. al.. Rather than bringing this music into an academic forum in which formally trained music students/professors/intellectuals can either disdain the failings of amateurs ("isn't this horrible?") or attempt to wield academic control through extreme aesthetic relativism ("but it really is music"), I intend to present a serious, two-faceted discussion of unpopular music which sidesteps value judgments, asking not only what are the organizing (or disorganizing) principles within the music, but how the music is thought by those who consume it.

The first section will deal with a single performer, Shooby Taylor. I present both a short ethnographic introduction to Mr. Taylor's uniquely intense and sincere aesthetic universe, as well as a musical analysis of one of his recorded works: "Stout Hearted Men." The second and longer section of my presentation will deal with the halo of meanings associated with 'bad music' and the largely underground network of 'bad music' tape-trading connoisseurs, asking the question; does 'bad music' reception constitute a

subculture? I will approach this question through the theoretical frameworks on subcultural studies provided by Slobin and Hebdige, among others.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Mento and Jamaican Calypso: Tourism, Repertory and Power**

*Daniel Neely, New York University*

This paper focuses on mento, a genre of Jamaican social dance music that was developed by rural village bands performing quadrilles and traditional African musical forms in the nineteenth century and is now seen as one of the country's important national musics. Mento bands can typically be found playing at tourist resorts and have been a key signifier of "rural Jamaica" in tourist-directed representations of the island since World War II. How, though, has the relationship between local musicians and the tourist industry shaped the performance of mento music? What role does this relationship take in mento's performance and presentation today?

Since the fifties, mento has been largely contained and represented by the institutional framework of tourism. As musicians became increasingly dependent on tourism for income, their musical trajectory began to embody an "island music" aesthetic that was considered "Jamaican" but reflected a colonial ideal rather than local reality. Today, most mento bands continue to reflect the internalization and acceptance of this "island music" aesthetic to a large degree.

Based on fieldwork done in Kingston in the summer of 2000, this paper will explore the role tourism has played in affecting the performance and repertory of mento music. It will also examine the ways in which recent trends in cultural development signal a new relationship between traditional arts and institutional power.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **PANEL 3**

#### **Korvai: flexible form in Karnatak drumming**

*David Nelson, Wesleyan University*

Every concert of Karnatak music includes an extended percussion solo piece called "tani avartanam," which may be brief or extensive, as the situation dictates. Sometimes (increasingly, nowadays) the drummer knows in which song (and therefore in which tala context) the tani will occur, and sometimes he does not. In either case, the solo will mainly consist of material the drummer has learned (or composed) and thoroughly practiced.

In another sense, however, there is a strong current of improvisation running through everything the drummer does. How can we understand the relationship between composition and improvisation within a *tani avartanam*? The secret is in understanding that improvisation in Karnatak drumming is a matter of transforming known material according to possibilities generated by the material itself and by the *tala* context within which it functions. The composed material, it turns out, is extremely flexible in the drummer's meditative and playful mind. The imaginative drummer is always on the lookout for new ways to treat familiar compositions.

This paper will use a type of rhythmic composition called "korvai" as a window into the *mrdangam* player's perception of these transformative possibilities. While there is no fixed form for the *korvai*, one can say the following: it has at least two parts, and its last part is a "mora," the fundamental ending formula for all Karnatak music.

After a brief introduction to the meaning of *mora*, we will take a single *korvai* and examine its structure and possibilities for transformation. In doing so, we will gain an enhanced appreciation for the Karnatak drummer's mental flexibility and rhythmic control, and a new perspective on the meanings of "composition" and "improvisation."

\* \* \* \* \*

### **The Kidung Jemaat: A Christian Hymnal in a Non-Christian World**

*Birgit Berg, Smith College*

Although it is the largest Muslim nation in the world, Indonesia is the home to a number of diverse Christian communities. In an attempt to unite these communities, the Indonesian Council of Churches (I.C.C.) sponsored a program to "scientifically study several indigenous Indonesian music systems and their potential for being utilized in and by the Church" (Cooley 1981). A decade later, the I.C.C. published a Christian hymnal, the *Kidung Jemaat*. This hymnal contains over 100 hymns written by Indonesians, some in indigenous styles, but it also contains hymns from a variety of countries, cultures, and denominations. Hymns in the *Kidung Jemaat* can be traced to the Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anabaptist traditions of Europe and America, as well as to cultures and communities in such places as India, Zambia, and Sri Lanka.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the *Kidung Jemaat*; the styles, forms, and traditions found in its contents; its use in everyday worship; and its background, including a look into the history of Christian conversion in Indonesia and the role conversion played in the promotion and demotion of indigenous arts in the Church.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **Art For Hire: The creative identity of the supporting musician**

*Alan Williams, Brown University*

Expressive authenticity is a core value in many forms of Western musical aesthetics. Performers and audiences alike think of music as the creative expression of unique personalities. Popular music in particular supports a celebrity system centered on highly visible and easily identifiable individuals. Yet much of this music is in fact made by unknown, unidentified musicians, hired collaborators who work out of the public eye in the recording studio or in the shadows of the concert stage.

Through the use of interviews and field observations, I will explore the creative role of the 'hired gun'; how they view their contributions, the hierarchical nature of labor relations, the ownership of creative expression, the community of fellow hired musicians and the competition within those communities, their attachments to their work, their craft and their art. As part of this paper, I will also consider the various strata of fame that separate the 'known' from the 'unknown', focusing on the hierarchy that various degrees of fame construct amongst the community of working musicians.

---