



MUSIC DEPARTMENT COLLOQUIUM SERIES

Spring 2023

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Michael Frishkopf, University of Alberta

“Music for Global Human Development Promoting Health and Wellbeing in Liberia, Ghana, and Ethiopia: Theory, Method, and Impact”

Wednesday, February 15, 2023 at 4:30pm, [Zoom](#)

I outline Music for Global Human Development, a theoretical, activist ethnomusicology fostering human development through sustainable, music-centric, collaborative projects. Human development, a human process upholding human values in the world by reinforcing the I-thou essence of human connection, is impeded by dehumanization resulting from mediation of personal relationships through an impersonal world system (and ironically characteristic of far too much “development” work today). My model is systems theory, including a modified Habermasian duality of system and lifeworld. But maintenance of the lifeworld—locus of human value—depends not only on rational “communicative action” (as per Habermas), but equally on affective social connectivity, constructed through a profoundly social “soundworld”, where feedback loops of sounded thought-feeling produce what I term “resonance”. Within that soundworld, music provides a crucial technology for rehumanizing social relations damaged by system mediation, inoculating the lifeworld against system depredations. My method is participatory action research, forging collaborative, extensible, community-engaged networks, blurring differences between “researcher” and “researched”, “outsider” and “insider”, drawing participants themselves into a shared, resonant soundworld, across boundaries of ethnicity, religion, nation, and class, transforming their own awareness and practices, as well as those of the societies in which they live. After outlining the general problem, theory, and method, I present three case studies, examples of resonant participatory action research networks, deploying music to address acute public health crises: poor sanitation in Liberia; rampant malaria in northern Ghana; and high maternal mortality in rural Ethiopia. In each case I outline the problem, the methods, and the impact. In conclusion, I suggest that resonant networks of participatory action research in ethnomusicology have the potential not only to transform local communities, but also the network itself, towards global human development, and the development of the global human, who thinks and acts globally.

[Michael Frishkopf](#) is Professor of Music, Director of the Canadian Centre for Ethnomusicology, Adjunct Professor of Medicine, and Adjunct Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Alberta, as well as Adjunct Professor, Faculty of Communication and Cultural Studies, at the University for Development Studies (Ghana). His research focuses on sounds of Islam, the Arab world, and West Africa, as well as Social Network Analysis, Music and Wellness, and [Music for Global Human Development](#).

Jin Hi Kim, Wesleyan University

“Komungo Abroad in the Digital Age: No Boundary between Ancient and Contemporary”

Thursday, February 23, 2022 at 4:30pm, Adzenyah Rehearsal Hall 003

[Jin Hi Kim](#) is an innovative komungo (fretted board zither) virtuoso, a Guggenheim Fellow composer, and a United States Artists Fellow who teaches Korean Drumming and Creative Music at Wesleyan University. One of the first women to study the 4th-century Korean komungo, she came to the USA in 1980 aspiring to explore contemporary Western music. She co-designed and developed the world’s only electric komungo performing it in [a range of new music settings](#), performed her [Living Tones](#) compositions with leading contemporary American musicians, and improvised with virtuoso soloists around the world. Her works reflect and challenge the multicultural and technological nature of American society. She has created large-scale interactive multimedia performances, [Ghost Komungobot](#) (2015) and [Digital Buddha](#) (2006–2014), juxtaposing Asian mythology and aesthetics with emerging American art technology. In 2021 GRAMMY.com described her as “a musical philosopher and radiator of electricity”.

Jin Hi Kim uses music as a means to raise awareness of social, environmental, and political issues. She responded to two American wars in Asia: “*One Sky II*” for orchestra (2018) is dedicated to the reunification of Korea and “*Child of War*” for chorus (2014) is dedicated to Kim Phuc, a victim of the Vietnam War who became known as “the girl in the picture” after being depicted in a Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph, “The Terror of War”. Her concern about rapid climate change and environmental degradation led her to create the [Sound Calendar of the Year 2018](#) which documents the year’s environmental catastrophes in sound. Drawing on the ancient healing and spiritual practices of Korean Shamanism, she responded to the global tragedy of the Covid-19 pandemic through [A Ritual for Covid-19](#), a community purification performance in memory of those who died from Covid. She developed the [Living Tones with Living Sounds](#) series inspired by the organic beauty of acoustic phenomena in nature.

Kim has performed her compositions at Carnegie Hall, Kennedy Center, the Smithsonian Freer Gallery of Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and other prestigious venues. She received commissions from and performed with the Kronos Quartet, American Composer Orchestra, Xenakis Ensemble, and the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. She is a recipient of numerous national and international awards and fellowships, including the National Endowment for the Arts, American Composers Orchestra fellowship, as well as fellowships from the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Center, Italy, the Wolff Ebermann Prize at the International Theater Institute, Germany, the Asian Cultural Council, the Freeman Artist-In-Residence Program at Cornell University, and the NEFA’s Rebecca Blunk Fund Award.

Richard K. Wolf, Harvard University

“Wakhi Poetic Imagination in Tajikistan and Afghanistan”

Wednesday, March 1, 2023 at 4:30pm, [Zoom](#)

Wakhi is an Eastern Iranian language spoken by about 80,000 people worldwide, largely in the Wakhan Corridor of southeastern Tajikistan and northern Afghanistan, Gilgit-Baltistan in northern Pakistan, southwest Xinjiang, China, and in Yekaterinburg and other parts of Russia. I conducted research with Wakhi bards from 2012–2020, largely in Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The two poets to be discussed, Qurbonsho in Tajikistan and Daulatsho in Afghanistan, are featured in my film *Two Poets and a River*, which complements this presentation. Qurbonsho (c. 1965–2022) was a key figure in the movement to create modern Wakhi song—that is to say, poem-songs that experiment with a variety of poetic forms from Persian classical poetry and

musical styles from the former Soviet Union and beyond. Daulatsho (b. 1982) is the leading figure in modern Wakhan, Afghanistan. A schoolteacher by profession, Daulatsho has rigorously pursued his own musical and poetic style in Wakhi. On both sides of the river that separate Tajik and Afghan Wakhan, and Qurbonsho and Daulatsho, singers play with the constraints of what can or should be said directly and what can only be implied or inferred by the listener. By poetic imagination I mean the worlds that these poet-singers create in and through their poetry and its performance. Qurbonsho, for instance, fashioned dual personae for himself—one as the creator-behind-the-scenes and one as the public figure; and he devoted himself to a lifelong dual-beloved: Sitara and Sharora. Daulatsho is a master of allusion, bringing forth seemingly mundane tropes and scenarios that often open up worlds of experiences and specific events that the listener can seldom access without explanation. The seeming impenetrability of some of Qurbonsho's and Daulatsho's poems raises questions that pertain to art more generally: What should be the role of the artist in guiding the experience of the audience? To what extent should we be moved by "the production of presence" (as Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht calls it) alone?

Richard K. Wolf, Professor of Music and South Asian Studies at Harvard University, is an ethnomusicologist, filmmaker, and photographer who has been conducting research in South and Central Asia since the 1980s. Author of two monographs and editor of three collections, Wolf has written on social-cultural "style" in South Indian music, music and space-time in Kota tribal society, and music in Islamic contexts in India and Pakistan. Among recent honors, Wolf was the recipient of a Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel Research Award from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and was named the Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation Fellow at the National Humanities Center in 2018–2019. His most recent publication is *Thought and Play in Musical Rhythm* (Oxford University Press, 2019), a volume he co-edited with Stephen Blum and Christopher Hasty. A creative artist as well as a scholar, Wolf wrote an ethnography of ritual drumming in India and Pakistan in the form of a hybrid novel entitled *The Voice in the Drum: Music, Language and Emotion in Islamicate South Asia*. Wolf is currently preparing a monograph concerning music, language, and moral being among the Wakhi people of adjacent parts of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and western China. His film *Two Poets and a River* draws from the same research, spanning the years 2012–2020. Wolf also continues actively to perform on and teach the Karnatak *vina*. For the academic year 2022–2023 he is a fellow at the Film Study Center at Harvard University.

In his work Wolf explores what motivates musicians to be creative and why music matters. As a scholar, he immerses himself in the lives of musicians, learns to perform music, learns to speak their languages, and writes articles and books to convey the insights gained over decades of research in South and Central Asia. As an artist, he tries to evoke what straightforward academic discourse does not handle well—the ambiguity, emotion, and aesthetics of everyday life.

RELATED EVENT: FILM SCREENING

***Two Poets and a River* by Richard K. Wolf**

Monday, February 27, 2023 at 5pm
The Jeanine Basinger Center for Film Studies 112
301 Washington Terrace, Middletown

Anya Shatilova, Wesleyan University

“Nizovaia Traditsiia and The Great Russian Orchestra: National Identity and Music in Late Nineteenth-Century Russia”

Wednesday, March 29, 2023 at 4:30pm, [Zoom](#)

In my paper, I focus on the figure of Vasilii Vasil’evich Andreev and his project of modernization of Russian plucked lutes—domra and balalaika—in late Imperial Russia. Examining the formation of the ensemble of balalaikas, which later developed into what became known as “V. V. Andreev’s Great Russian Orchestra,” I look at the precarious position of this musical novelty in late nineteenth-century St. Petersburg and interpret it as a modernist project that manifests “the Eastern turn” in Russia’s self-identification.

The appearance of the balalaika and the orchestra of national instruments on the concert stages of St. Petersburg in the late nineteenth century has so far been almost completely neglected in the Anglophone scholarship on Russian music. Being questioned for the “constructed notion of Russian folk music,” Andreev’s project has been attributed to revivalist movements and criticized for lack of authenticity (Olson 2004: 17). Moreover, even in Russia, put on the lowest positions in the musical hierarchy, the study of the balalaika and domra music has been mostly occupying an insular niche that is neither related to academic music nor folklore studies. Hence, most writings on this topic remain confined to the discussion of this music as a segregated genre neglecting to contextualize it in the broader musical and cultural discourse. The concertization of the balalaika and domra, and the repertoire of the orchestra that included stylized arrangements of Russian traditional tunes and songs along with the compositions of Romantic composers, sparked a serious debate about the precarious position of Andreev’s orchestra of the modified national instruments and its danger for “corrupting artistic tastes and values” by the Russian music elite (Findeizen 1900: 375).

Despite such marginalization, I believe that the history of Andreev’s project in pre-revolutionary Russia offers a rich site for the investigation of the construction of national identity through music. Analyzing the engagements of the orchestra with *nizovaia traditsiia* (grassroots tradition), I untangle its intricate conceptualization as the national identity marker and as an agent of music for all social classes.

[Anya Shatilova](#) is a PhD candidate in the Ethnomusicology program at Wesleyan University. Her research interests include vernacular musical practices in nineteenth-century imperial Russia; Russian plucked lutes (domra and balalaika) in the US; Russian diaspora in the US; Finno-Ugric music in St. Petersburg, Russia; sound studies; media studies; music and film, queer theory and music; and decoloniality. Anya received a BM in Music Performance from St. Petersburg State University of Culture and Arts (Russia), MM in Musicology from the New England Conservatory of Music (Boston, MA, United States). Her recent article “Listening to Ethnic Identity Online: Digitally Mediated Finno-Ugric Traditions in St. Petersburg” appeared in the special issue of the journal *Digital Icons: Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media*.

Manuel J. Perez III, Wesleyan

Unmanifest Merging: Compositional Structures for (Communal) Reflection, Healing, Actualization, and Embodiment

Wednesday, March 29, 2023 at 4:30pm, [Zoom](#)

What does it mean to make artwork that strives to deeply engage with one's conception of self? Despite appearing simple at first glance, the relationship between an artist's personal history and their practice manifests in undoubtedly complex ways across a variety of disciplines. Although elements of one's lived experience can often be present in a work, the level of engagement that occurs between oneself and their artwork can often be obfuscated or minimally represented in the overall artistic product, being relegated instead to foundational motivation or source material processes rather than the core focus of the work itself. This separation between personal context and art production is especially exacerbated in performer/creator-dichotomized practices, such as music composition. In his talk, Manuel J. Perez III will outline his thesis inquiries into compositional and improvisational structures that foreground these qualities of personhood not just as motivation, but also as the primary material focus of performance-based artwork. Selected compositions from his catalog will be dissected to highlight particular structures within both time-based and non-time-based practices that offer alternative modes of engaging with a performer's lived experience, memories, interpersonal relationship dynamics, and actualization of new histories. Through the foregrounding of these qualities of the self, new dialogues between performance practice, agency, mental health, and personhood reveal themselves for investigation.

[Manuel J. Perez III](#) is currently a second-year MA Composition student in the Music Department at Wesleyan University, where he creates as an interdisciplinary artist, composer-performer, and multi-instrumentalist in a variety of time-based and non-time-based artistic practices. His work spans a wide breadth of fields that embrace intersectional synthesis with and within composition, including architecture, poetics, artificial intelligence, sculpture, digital collage, community organizing, political activism, and more. As a performer, Manuel has developed practices in spontaneous creation (improvisation) and short and long-duration performance art, while also regularly performing newly composed works. As a composer, his works often consist of sociocultural and improvisational structures that help foreground the lived histories, emotions, and social intricacies of those who perform his pieces. His work has been performed internationally (Turkey, Germany, and Canada among others) by artists such as TAK Ensemble, SPLICE Ensemble, and NOW Ensemble.

Felicia Sandler, New England Conservatory

“African Art Music: The Case of Dr. Ephraim Amu”

Wednesday, April 5, 2023 at 4:30pm, [Zoom](#)

For all the scholarly attention dedicated to African musics, study of African art music is comparatively rare. Musicologists and theorists have typically devoted their care to European art music, whereas ethnomusicologists lean toward indigenous and popular music categories. Yet, African art music composers generate music enthusiastically performed, consumed and celebrated by musicians and listeners across the continent, a repertoire rich for study. African art music was defined at the recent seminar convened by Olabode Omojola at the Radcliffe Institute as “works of modern African composers who draw on European art music and traditional African musical elements” creating a distinct category of music. Of particular interest to me is the art music of Ephraim Amu (1899–1995), for a number of reasons. First, his music is captivating, and listeners in Ghana and far beyond enjoy it very much. Secondly, Amu is a significant voice in the

arena of art music in Africa, recognized in his native Ghana as the “Father of Ghanaian art music,” and the architect of the regional choral idiom. Thirdly, the Amu style has had a decisive effect on composition in the country and the West African region. He is responsible for the ways that music has been taught in the post-colonial era, and many young composers continue to create music according to his design. For the past eight years, with Dr. Amu’s daughter Misonu Amu, I have been working on the development of a scholarly edition of Dr. Amu’s complete works. Now that the first volume of his music is available through the digital archive housed by the Ephraim Amu Foundation, it is possible for performers, scholars, and theory departments hungry to diversify their curricular offerings to access his work. In this presentation, I will introduce colloquium participants to music from each of Amu’s periods of activity. Together we will tease out the various intercultural aspects. Initial steps include identification of musical features, determination of the cultural contexts from whence they come, and consideration of how these contribute to the character of the work as a whole. By exploring points of correspondence in practice that allow for a dovetailing of systems, we can observe how Amu creates a cohesive expression, one that is novel, fresh, Ghanaian and, simultaneously, entirely his own.

Felicia Sandler is a composer teaching at the New England Conservatory. She composes in all genres, with a particular love for choral music. Her works are published by E. C. Schirmer, Alliance Music, Shawnee Press, Mark Foster and Dancing Flea Music and are recorded on Mark Master and Naxos Labels. Sandler’s scholarship centers on the music of Ghanaian composer Dr. Ephraim Amu. Together with Misonu Amu, Amu’s daughter, Sandler is developing a critical edition of Amu’s complete works. Sandler’s teachers in Ghanaian traditional music include C. K. Ladzekpo, Obi Nyim Nda and Emashie Cultural groups, Nani Agbeli and Emmanuel Attah Poku.