

Nazir Ali Jairazbhoy Colloquium Series:

ABSTRACTS

November 13, 2009 SEM Student Paper Presentations

1:00 pm Veronica Pacheco

Music beyond Boundaries: Exploring Choral Religious Music among the Huaves of San Mateo del Mar, Oaxaca, Mexico

Lead by a chapel master, every morning before sunrise the choir's voices echo in the walls of the seventeenth century church built during the Dominicans presence in San Mateo del Mar, Mexico. In this paper, I explore these choral religious music performances, which are an essential part of the rosary prayers carried out during the celebrations of festivities for saints and the Virgin Mary, mortuary vigils, the particular daily gatherings before sunrise, and others. The rosary was established by the Dominicans, whose presence in the area dissipated at the end of the nineteenth century following the political reforms in Mexico. Since then, this practice has been preserved orally and passed through the generations. In fact, many of the practices introduced by the Dominicans still persist in the social and political organization of this Huave society, such as the *cargo* system in which the Church represents one of the three existing powers. However, this Church has no relationship with the modern Catholic Church in the community, directed since the 1960s by the Oblate order. I argue that the rosary is an example of the appropriation, adaptation, and reformulation of beliefs, which cross classificatory boundaries between 'Catholic', 'non-Catholic', 'modern', 'traditional', as well as indigenous music; thus, rather than categorizing, in this presentation I attempt to demonstrate that essentialist definitions have inherent limits.

1:30 Ann Lucas

Islam and Morality in Music: A New View from Persian Sufi Treatises

Music scholars who study the Persian Middle East often encounter mixed messages concerning music's morality in Islam. While the historical record shows that music thrived under the patronage of Perso-Islamic monarchs for hundreds of years, music scholars also witness a moral aversion to secular music in the modern life of the region under both Iran's Islamic regime and the Taliban of Afghanistan. In order to resolve this contradiction, music scholars typically position either the secular musicians or their persecutors as being un-Islamic and operating outside of the religion's moral dictates. This perspective, however, does not recognize the Muslim identity of both those who defend music within Islam and those who deny its moral viability. This paper analyzes Persian Sufi texts in order to better understand the historical issues

involved in determining music's morality in Islam before the rise of modernity in the Persian-speaking world. As the voice of Islam's most populous historical contingency, Sufi writings represent a reliable mainstream voice of Islam in the premodern world. Written between the eleventh century and eighteenth century, Persian Sufi treatises discuss the many different affirmative and negative arguments concerning music's value within Islam, reflecting a variety of opinions amongst different Islamic constituencies. These texts reveal a nuanced view of music's value that reflects a variety of syncretic ideas within a framework of debate content to leave music's morality undefined. Thus Islam's historical perspective on music emerges as an idiosyncratic reality, distinct from the modern situation that current defines music's morality in the Persian-speaking world.

2:00 Ron Conner

“Brazilian Blackface: *Maracatu Cearense* and the Politics of Participation”

Maracatu cearense (*maracatu* from Ceará state) has been the centerpiece of the traditional street carnival in Fortaleza, Brazil, since 1937. A variant of the more proliferate *maracatu-de-nação* of Recife, it distinguishes itself in several ways: rhythms are slower and less syncopated, cross-dressed males enact important female personages, and blackface makeup is used to perform Afro-Brazilianness. Ceará's regional identity is deeply linked to its past as Brazil's pioneer in abolition, and *maracatu cearense* frequently remembers this through its performed valorization of blackness. However, the demographic is predominantly white and caboclo, and *maracatu cearense* participants use blackface to compensate for regional black undervisibility. Based on recent participant-observation fieldwork with *Maracatu Nação Iracema*, founded by leaders in Fortaleza's first black consciousness movement, this study examines intersections and disjunctures of regional and national identities through ethnographic and critical lenses. The assumption of a white/caboclo *cearense* identity, mythologized in the Indianist writings of José de Alencar, voices a national discourse of *branqueamento* while it excludes Ceará from the national identity to which blackness is assigned as the required element. Black racial centrality in Brazilianness is the lasting remark of state-sponsored social projects of the 1930s that crested with the propagation of Freyre's myth of a tripartite “racial democracy.” *Maracatu cearense* converses in profoundly present ways with these regional and national myths. Through sung, danced, and drummed blackface performance, *cearenses* achieve a tripartite identity consonance, validating their participation in the hegemonic discourse on Brazilianness.

2:30 Jessie Vallejo

I Listened and it Made Me Cultured: Parodies of Andean Music in *South Park*

The cartoon series *South Park* first aired in 1997, and in the vein of its predecessor *The Simpsons*, has become a medium for vulgarly critiquing social, cultural and political issues particularly of the United States and American culture. During the autumn of 2008, an episode was aired in two installments, featuring ubiquitous Peruvian panpipe bands. The protagonists, a group of pre-teen boys, decided to form their own panpipe band to earn easy money, but their plan is foiled after Peruvian flute bands became the target of a Homeland Security campaign to rid the world of the “threat” of Andean music. Immediately following the children's debut, the

U.S. government whisks away all of the musicians, sending them to internment camps and Guantanamo Bay. It has been argued that this episode is an example of how American media condones and even encourages colonialist and xenophobic attitudes against South Americans and other immigrants, but a counter-argument contends that the music was innocently borrowed as a vehicle to critique the United States, and in particular the Bush administration and the War on Terror. To address these interpretations, I intend to review various reactions to the *South Park* episode collected from text-based sources and interviews with two musicians from the band *Inca* – whose recordings were used for this chapter. I also explore what the music symbolizes throughout the episode and posit how it was used in *South Park* as a critique rather than a colonialist appropriation.

3:00 Lauryn Salazar

Transcribing Mariachi Music

As mariachi music has expanded into academia in the U.S., the demand for written mariachi music has increased as a result. The proliferation of mariachi festival workshops and academic mariachi programs since the 1990s has raised important issues surrounding the role of musical transcription in mariachi music. Traditionally, mariachi has been a music learned by ear, but an increasing number of educators are now utilizing written scores in teaching this music. As mariachi educators and would-be publishers grapple with how to realize mariachi music through transcription and notation, this wide variety of approaches has resulted in lack of standardization. While the use of written scores is becoming more widespread, the abilities to learn aurally and improvise remain vital skills for all practicing mariachi musicians.

Many mariachi festivals offer workshops during which participants receive musical instruction and serve as a main point of distribution for sheet music. Moreover, many academic mariachi programs exist under the aegis of music programs where Western classical music notation is the dominant method of instruction. In my paper, I discuss the problems of transcribing mariachi music and investigate its practical and cultural implications for the tradition as a whole. The transcription of mariachi presents its own set of challenges, particularly in the representation of defining musical characteristics such as the complex polyrhythmic nature of the son jalisciense, which employs the use of sesquialtera, and the virtuosic singing styles particular to the ranchera and huapango song forms, which each have specific demands in terms of vocal timbre.