**MUSIC AND CAPITALISM IN HISTORICAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**

Wednesday 8 October 2014

Room G22/26, Senate House, Malet Street, London, WC1E 7HU

Institute of Musical Research (IMR), University of London

Convener: Anna Morcom, Royal Holloway, University of London

Kindly supported by the Music and Letters Trust, the Royal Holloway Humanities and Arts Research Centre (HARC) and the Royal Holloway Music Department

**10.00 REGISTRATION AND COFFEE**

**EMBRACING CAPITALISM AND MAKING IT WORK**

**Chair:** Alan Bradshaw, Senior Lecturer in Marketing, School of Management, Royal Holloway

**10.30 Copyright, capitalism and 'religion': A postcolonial critique of Karnatic Music**,Rajalakshmi Nadadur Kannan, Teaching Assistant in Religion at the Division of Literature and Languages, University of Stirling

**11.00 Rap music and street capitalism**, David Diallo, Associate Professor, Center for the Study of Anglophone Cultures and Literatures, l’Université de Bordeaux

**11.30 Welcome to Church™: The evolving use of music, media and marketing in the United States and beyond**, Tom Wagner, Teaching Fellow, Music Department, University of Edinburgh

**12.00 Music, Labor, and Value in Indian Music Stores**, Jayson Beaster-Jones, Assistant Professor, Department of Music and Performance Studies at Texas A&M University

**12.30 LUNCH**

**STRUGGLES, LIMITS, RESISTANCE AND AMBIVALENCE**

**Chair:** Ruard Absaroka, PhD student, SOAS

**13.30 Richard Wagner and ‘music drama’**, Mark Berry, Lecturer, Music Department, Royal Holloway, University of London

**14.00 Through a Capitalist Lens: Performances of Zapatista Music in the Tourist Economy of San Cristobal de las Casas**, Andrew Green, PhD student, Music Department, Royal Holloway, University of London

**14.30 ‘I Want the Moon’: Negotiating Capitalism and Creativity in the Commercial Music Industry through Acts of Resistance**, Leah O’Brien Bernini, PhD student, Music Department, University of Limerick

**KEYNOTE SPEECH**

**Chair:** Byron Dueck, Lecturer, Music Department, Open University

**15.00** **Meaningful Action: Forms of Value of Cultural Commodities**, Timothy Taylor, Professor of Ethnomusicology, School of Music, University of California, Los Angeles

**16.00 TEA BREAK**

**CAPITALISM AND OTHER ECONOMIC LOGICS**

**Chair:** Patrick Neveling, Senior Researcher, Department of Cultural Anthropology and Sociology, University of Utrecht; Visiting Professor, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology, University of Hamburg.

**16.30 The Many Capitalisms of the U. S. Music Business, 1930-1970**, Charles F. McGovern, Associate Professor, American Studies and History, College of William and Mary Williamsburg, VA

**17.00 ‘Theorizing’ the Social Musician**, Tim J. Anderson, Associate Professor, Communication and Theatre Arts Department, Old Dominion University

**17.30 Music, potlatch and capitalism – articulation and ritual in Central Africa and beyond**, Joe Trapido, British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, SOAS, London

**18.00 Drinks reception**

**19.00 End**

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**ABSTRACTS AND BIOS OF SPEAKERS (in alphabetical order)**

**Tim J. Anderson**

**“‘Theorizing’ the Social Musician”**

As labels have systematically re-articulated their investments away from the production and distribution of objects, numerous North American musicians have begun to negotiate a quickly evolving commercial terrain of relatively new technologies. This perfect storm of reinvestment and personal computing/communication opportunities has forced commercial musicians to rethink their commercial strategies and practices. This paper frames this negotiation as a moment of debate and theorization about what it means to be an entrepreneur and how to invest in the generation of personal reputation. The necessity of this has become pronounced as musicians have begun to fret, discuss and practice in a new economic mode that stresses the generation and social capital and its conversion into numerous exchanges of music and music-oriented products/events. While this paper will draw from the appropriate secondary sources who are attempting to rethink the music industry, it will spend most of its time drawing from online discussions both in more traditional press and in a number of prominent blogs to gain a better understanding of how musicians are theorizing and debating the prospect of “becoming entrepreneurial” in an era where they are losing the institutional support that labels once provided. Throughout the paper the debate will center around three particular musical acts — Amanda Palmer, Bon Jovi and Jonathan Coulton — and their particular struggles and achievements in recognizing the need to create and leverage the social capital they need to succeed in the market.

**Bio**

Tim J. Anderson is an Associate Professor of Communication and Theatre Arts at Old Dominion University where studies the multiple cultural and material practices that make music popular. He has published numerous book chapters, refereed journal articles, and two monographs: *Making Easy Listening: Material Culture and Postwar American Recording* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006) and *Popular Music in a Digital Music Economy: Problems and Practices for an Emerging Service Industry* (Routledge, 2014). His latest research project focuses on recordings, musicians, listeners and the public sphere.

**Jayson Beaster-Jones**

**“Music, Labor, and Value in Indian Music Stores”**

Music recordings are sold in Indian music stores on the basis of complicated and overlapping ideologies of value that are at times in conflict with one another. These value ideologies might include, for example, categorizations by music companies or individual stores into particular genres, the format or medium on which recordings appear, the narratives produced for marketing and promotion, the images and reputations of the actors on which songs are picturized for Bollywood film soundtracks, and the perceived quality of the musical content. In short, each of these values are social phenomena laminated onto economic exchange that point to the ways in which manifold meanings of music and music recordings accrete in the context of their sale. In this paper, I examine how these overlapping regimes of value were affixed to music recordings by a chain of music retail stores in urban India and how the employees and customers negotiated these values. I draw particular attention to the category of “high-value customers” within this chain and the musical and social training that customer service agents (CSAs) received to interact with customers. I suggest that comparatively low social status of retail employment created particular contradictions for stores that wanted to promote a high-value experience. This in turn created tensions between the labor value of the employees and the diverse social and economic values of music that were never fully resolved.

**Bio**

Jayson Beaster-Jones is an Assistant Professor of Music and Performance Studies at Texas A&M University. His current book project entitled *Music as Merchandise: Music Commodities, Markets, and Values in India* examines music retail stores as sites of cultural production in contemporary India, focusing in particular upon the kinds of economic and social values that are produced as music is sold, as well as the meanings that accompany music commodities in retail contexts. He has also published in the journals *Ethnomusicology*, *Popular Music*, and *South Asian Popular Culture* and in several edited volumes. His first book *Bollywood Sounds: The Cosmopolitan Mediations of Hindi Film Song* will be published by Oxford University Press in November 2014.

**Mark Berry**

**“Richard Wagner and ‘music drama’”**

Following his participation in the Dresden uprising of 1849, Wagner found himself in Swiss exile, during which he set out both in theoretical and musical works to present a counter-cultural ‘artwork of the future’. Contemporary ‘opera’ was too tainted by the commercial imperatives prevailing in modern bourgeois society: above all Paris, where the composer had spent three miserable years, coming close to the debtor’s prison, whilst apparently meretricious operas ruled the commercial roost. Wagner, firmly in the same tradition of German idealist æsthetics as Schiller, Hegel, and Marx, wished to renew an original artistic unity, as exemplified in the rites, political, social, and religious, of Attic tragedy. Rome’s victory, commercial and ideological, over Athens had presaged Christian subjectivity and the concomitant disunity of the arts. In Wagner’s æsthetic typology, Hermes, ‘incarnation of Zeus’s thoughts,’ had been replaced by Mercury, whose winged mission, ‘signified the nimble activity of haggling, profiteering merchants,’ which, ‘crowned with the halo of Christian hypocrisy,’ had rendered him ‘the god of the modern world, the holy, high-noble god of five per cent, the commander and master of ceremonies to our modern “art”.’ He was ‘incarnate in a … banker, … who engages principals from the Italian opera to sing privately for him in his drawing room, instead of the theatre.’ I shall consider Wagner’s opposing conception of a revolutionary or post-revolutionary art, both demanding in intellectual and emotional senses and yet, in social terms, genuinely ‘popular’, the frustrations he suffered, and the legacy bequeathed to his successors.

**Bio**

Mark Berry is Lecturer in Music at Royal Holloway, University of London, having previously lectured in History at the University of Cambridge. He has written widely on musical, cultural, and intellectual history from the late seventeenth-century to the present day, and is the author of *Treacherous Bonds and Laughing Fire: Politics and Religion in Wagner’s Ring* (Ashgate, 2006) and *After Wagner: Histories of Modernist Music Drama from ‘Parsifal’ to Nono* (Boydell, 2014).

**David Diallo**

**“Rap music and street capitalism”**

In a 2004 article, rap scholar Mickey Hess remarked “making money is a legitimate goal for rappers, and one that is stated outright in lyrics.” (Hess 2004) Rap musicians, it is true, very frequently display a capitalistic frame of mind, bragging about their outstanding record sales or their entrepreneurial activities in the underground economy of the “hustle.” In this paper, I intend to examine the celebration of what sociologist and urban ethnographer Sudhir Venkatesh calls “underground capitalism” in rap lyrics. I will bring to light how the repeated allusions of rappers to drug trafficking and the underground economy result from the symbolic reconstruction of the social space of the street hustle (Wacquant 1993) and of gang-culture. I will also demonstrate how mentioning their capitalist accomplishments confers credibility on rappers in a field where rapping about getting rich through rapping, through illegal activities, or through both, enables to demonstrate socio-cultural authenticity.

Combining urban ethnography, sociology of art and text analysis, I will examine the established capitalist aesthetics and materialism of rap music and show how it distinguishes this music from other musical genres where, as Hess pointed out “monetary success is equated with selling out.”

**Bio**

David Diallo is an Associate Professor at l’Université de Bordeaux (France). His research interests focus on rap music, African-American expressive forms, sociology of art and contemporary social theory. He has been a Visiting Research Scholar at the University of Pennsylvania, Memorial University of Newfoundland and New York University and contributed to the *Journal of American Folklore* and *Ethnologies*. He is the author of the Dr Dre and Snoop Dogg article in *Icons of Hip Hop and Encyclopedia of the Music, Movement and Culture* (Greenwood, 2007) and of the Bronx and Los Angeles entries in *Hip Hop in America: A Regional Guide* (Greenwood, 2010)

**Andrew Green**

**“Through a Capitalist Lens: Performances of Zapatista Music in the Tourist Economy of San Cristobal de las Casas”**

Within the Zapatista movement in rural Chiapas, Mexico, there is an ambivalent and sometimes contradictory attitude towards capitalism. The movement defines itself as “anti-capitalist”, yet regularly sets up its own enterprises that make and sell Zapatista-themed “merchandise”, such as t-shirts, CDs, footwear, and posters, in local shops. The nearby town of San Cristobal de las Casas is home to a sizeable community of pro-Zapatista activists, many of whom see their role as a communicative one: to strategically “spread the Zapatista word”, often through artistic media. Nonetheless, in this expanding, gentrified tourist economy, where the authorities have become increasingly intolerant to political speech in public spaces, communicative potential is located in commercial spaces in the capital-intensive centre, which attract large, wealthy audiences for live music. In order to communicate to these audiences, then, Zapatista-sympathetic musicians must submit to the aesthetic limits of commercial space, and the logic of “business identity”. Here, covers of Zapatista songs undergo a radical change: from the jarring, rhythmically-unpredictable, structurally-fluid sound of rural Chiapas to a smooth, regular, comfortable sound suitable to accompany dinner. However, artists keen to disseminate “the word” through their music constantly find this aim confounded by customers that would rather be consumers than listeners, or by activist listeners offended by the commercialization of anti-capitalist music. Based on ethnographic research, this paper highlights the tensions and musical transformations that result from strategic attempts to subvert capitalist structures from within using musical performance, and which reflect the movement's internal conflict between dogmatic and pragmatic action.

**Bio**

Andrew Green is a PhD Candidate at the Department of Music, Royal Holloway, University of London. His thesis title is "Music as a Communicative Strategy in the Zapatista Movement". Email: [andrew.green.2011@live.rhul.ac.uk](mailto:andrew.green.2011@live.rhul.ac.uk)

**Charles F. McGovern**

**“The Many Capitalisms of the U. S. Music Business, 1930-1970”**

Recent scholarship inspired, among others, by Theodor Adorno, (Leppert, ed., 2002), on commerce as a formative element in music has invited us to consider the relationships of capitalism and music across time and place. As a culture industry, the popular music business invites critical scrutiny: how do rationalization and efficiency influence how music is conceived, made, understood and embraced? U. S. based scholars (Sinnreich 2013, Taylor 2012, Stahl 2012, Miller, 2010, Suisman 2009, Knopper 2009, Pecknold, 2007) have stressed that corporate logics - economies of scale, oligarchic domination of markets and supply, copyright/ rentier monopoly - have disproportionately shaped American popular music. Many others argue that commerce is inseparable from popular music, integral to sound and sensibility of musicians and listeners alike (Selvin 2014, Charnas, 2010, Broven, 2009, Smith 1999). Yet few have sought to analyze exactly what forms of capitalism are in play in the music business.

From my book in progress, this essay uses business and African American presses, unpublished papers, and oral histories of artists, industry workers and fans, to show that music business practices often subordinated profit distinctly to other concerns. I argue that music ‘capitalism’ blended voluntary unpaid labor, personal credit networks, and gift economies along with profit-seeking.. All were inextricable from the U.S. music ‘business’ that dominated global markets. Following Gibson-Graham (2006) I contend we cannot understand capitalism and music without recognizing that capitalism itself operates less as a unified rational system and more as contingent contradictory practices that produce profits often only secondarily.

**Bio**

Charlie McGovern teaches American Studies and History at William and Mary. He is currently writing *Body and Soul: Citizenship and Race in American Popular Music, 1920-1970* and co-founded the series Rethinking American Music (Duke University Press). The author of *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship, 1890-1945* (University of North Carolina Press), he has written widely on American music and popular culture. He curated *Rock ‘n Soul: Social Crossroads* and co-produced and wrote the public radio series*, Memphis: Cradle of Rock and Soul.*

**Rajalakshmi Nadadur Kannan**

**Copyright, capitalism and 'religion': A postcolonial critique of Karnatic music**

Prior to the 20th century, patronage of performing arts in South India was embedded in the ritual, sovereign and social relations of societies. The early 20th century nationalist movements, however, placed these traditions within the realm of politics of nationalism, re-constructing them as ‘Karnatic Music’ and reshaping their social and economic organization, including their gender roles. Thus, music (and dance) were disembedded from their histories, social relations and traditional performing communities and (dis)placed amongst the national upper-caste elites, increasingly being seen as ‘Indian culture’, and ‘religious’ arts, divinely inspired. This enabled a specific type of ownership of performance arts that was (upper) caste-based.

Some contemporary Karnatic musicians are now attempting to introduce narrower forms of ownership of music, this time through copyright law, a move resisted by others. Invoking theoretical work by Marx, Dipesh Chakrabarty and Karl Polanyi, this paper argues that capitalism through copyright law further disembeds this music from its complex history by abstracting labour from the contexts within which it functions, including those which attribute creativity to the divine. Labour is simplified as individualized creativity that is production-oriented, rather than as a product of complex and also collective relationships the musician and their music have to the contexts within which the art is performed. This paper will also make a brief critique of the shaping of gender identities by capitalism in these contexts.

**Bio**

Rajalakshmi Nadadur Kannan recently completed her PhD in Religion at Stirling University, and previously, Master’s degrees in Communication Studies from the University of Maine (2009) and the University of Madras (2006). Her research interests are Postcolonial Studies and Religion in India, with her doctoral research focusing on how contemporary understanding of performing arts in India as ‘religious’ arts came about, specifically Karnatic Music and Bharatnatyam dance. She is a trained Karnatic singer having performed alongside her sister in India before moving abroad.

**Leah O’Brien Bernini**

**“‘I Want the Moon’: Negotiating Capitalism and Creativity in the Commercial Music Industry through Acts of Resistance”**

Professional musical artists continually respond to and interact with the neoliberal capitalist cultural formation through the hegemony of the commercial music industry. When negotiating the complex dynamics of capitalism and creativity, artists may choose to use resistance tactics to subvert authority, challenge hegemonic narrative, improve social positioning, protect emotional wellbeing and maximise perceived ‘aesthetic autonomy’ (Hesmondhalgh and Baker 2011). By engaging in ‘disguised resistance’ (Scott), individuals may attempt to destabilise entrenched social hierarchies that define global entertainment and culture industries. This paper identifies when, why and how artists utilise acts of resistance in everyday professional interactions.

For instance, when one artist felt frustrated during record label contract negotiations, he threatened to withdraw unless they granted him rights to the territory of the moon – they agreed. This symbolic victory for the artist, however financially insignificant, recalibrated unequal power dynamics by cleverly exposing the absurdity of the moment.

This paper presents findings from a four-year study examining creative and occupational experiences of over eighty Irish/Celtic artists and industry personnel as they attempt to achieve a delicate ‘balance between commerce and art… between the urge to create and the opportunity to profit from that creation’ (*Riverdance* creator Bill Whelan 2010).

By investigating acts of subversion and resistance, whether humorous and subtle or staged and daring, this work advances the understanding of power dynamics in the music industry. Revealing such subtleties of musical labour are essential to understanding and theorising conflicts within the creative/commercial/social triad (Banks 2007) embodied by professional artists in contemporary capitalism.

**Bio**

Leah O’Brien Bernini is a fourth-year Ethnomusicology Ph.D. student at the University of Limerick under the supervision of Dr. Colin Quigley and Dr. Timothy D Taylor (UCLA). Prospectively entitled “Off the Record: Identity, Capitalism, and the Creative Process of Irish Traditional Musicians within the Music Industry,” her thesis explores the experiences of over 80 professional Irish traditional musicians and industry personnel as they negotiate the complex dynamics between capitalism and creativity, commerce and art. An American-born Irish fiddle player, Leah holds MAs in Irish Traditional Music Performance and Ethnomusicology and a BM in Commercial Music Performance and Music Business.

**Timothy D. Taylor**

**“Meaningful Action: Forms of Value of Cultural Goods”**

Beginning with a discussion of Arjun Appadurai’s concepts of “regimes of value,” this paper surveys some historical moments when the value of cultural goods was in flux, the late eighteenth century and the decline of feudal use-values of art, creating a crisis of use-value; and the mid-twentieth century, with the rise to dominance of exchange-values of cultural goods. In a new regime in neoliberal capitalism, there has been a crisis of exchange-value of music goods, since many people seldom pay for them. Practices of finding and collecting music have been increasingly common, and important, as well as sharing the results of that labor in the form of playlists.

This presentation builds on Clifford Geertz’s concern for what is meaningful for social actors, and recent anthropological writings on value, to argue that the non-economic value of cultural goods lies in what I am calling, drawing on David Graeber and Michael Lalmbek, meaningful action. In new regimes of value that exist in neoliberal capitalism, value can be understood in terms of traffic on social media, the creation and sharing of playlists, and other social practices. *Billboard* magazine, which has maintained charts on best-selling recordings since the mid-1930s, introduced in 2010 a new chart called “The Social 50,” which tracks the buzz of various artists and recordings on social media, a development that registers how important this non-economic form of value has become.

**Bio**

Timothy D. Taylor is a Professor in the Department of Ethnomusicology at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is the author of *Global Pop: World Music, World Markets* (Routledge, 1997), *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology and Culture* (Routledge, 2001), *Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World* (Duke, 2007), and *The Sounds of Capitalism: Advertising, Music, and the Conquest of Culture* (Chicago, 2012), and editor of *Music, Sound, and Technology in America: A Documentary History of Early Phonograph, Cinema, and Radio*, co-edited with Mark Katz and Tony Grajeda (Duke, 2012). He is currently completing a book about music in today’s capitalism for the University of Chicago Press.

**Joe Trapido**

**“Music, potlatch and capitalism – articulation and ritual in Central Africa and beyond”**

Social position on the lower Congo in the 18th and 19th centuries was negotiated via an increasingly wild and costly series of rituals. Huge amounts were spent on food, gunpowder, music and libations. In this context the connection between music and authority was extremely strong. During funerals - often a key event in this ritual nexus – musicians would play all night, musical instruments were seen as the voices of the dead and the spirits of the legitimating dead were believed to possess the dancers. The corpses of deceased notables were wrapped in enormous bundles of expensive imported European cloth and the lineage would dance with the enormous bundle to the grave. Slaves were often sacrificed and cast into the grave with the deceased, and porcelain objects from places like Delft or Stoke on Trent – only available to the richest of lineage elders - were placed on the grave. This paper argues that this was part of a global phenomenon, where forms of dramatic ritual escalation – which I term potlatch - were driven by the dynamics of articulation between an expanding capitalism and sparsely populated 'human modes of production' – places where productivity was low and where rights in people, rather than capital, were the primary form of wealth. As the capacity of peoples near the coast to supply the goods required by capitalist traders was exhausted, political systems there became ever more structured around their role as intermediaries with the interior, and the prestigious cultures of the coast forced violence, ecological collapse, disease and slave raiding ever further into the hinterland.

**Bio**

Joe Trapido is a British Academy Post Doctoral Fellow in the department of anthropology and sociology at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. Before that he worked at the University of Pretoria for two years. He did a PhD in Social Anthropology at UCL.

**Tom Wagner**

**Welcome to Church™: The evolving use of music, media and marketing in the United States and beyond.**

In the United States, the separation of Church and State inscribed in the constitution has allowed a religious ‘free market’ to flourish since its inception. Historically, then, the most successful religions have been the ones that most effectively used whatever music and marketing technologies were available to them to spread their messages. Today, the most visible (and audible) expressions of this phenomenon are the evangelical Christian ‘megachurches’ that flourish throughout the United States, but also increasingly in the U.K., Europe, Australia, South America and Africa. These branded churches use a sophisticated marketing mix, in which music is an integral part of the experience, to communicate their unique, church-specific messages.

This paper traces the historical antecedents of the branded evangelical church. Using several influential preacher/musician duos as case studies, it follows the evolution of the ways they used music and marketing from the establishment of the colonies until the present day, noting the how the expressions of faith in each era were inextricable from the flows of capital in which they were enmeshed. It concludes by noting that modern evangelical Christian churches are structured and act as private corporations. In these churches (which often operate transnationally), branding provides both the material and social (infra)structure through which evangelical Christian identity is lived.

**Bio**

Tom Wagner is a Teaching Fellow in Music at the University of Edinburgh. His work on music, marketing and spiritual experience have recently appeared in *The Australian Journal of Communication* and as a chapter in *The Marketization of Religion* (Ashgate 2014). He is also the co-editor of *Christian Congregational Music: Performance, Identity and Experience* (Ashgate 2013).