

BRITISH FORUM FOR ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

in association with

THE INSTITUTE OF MUSICAL RESEARCH

4 DECEMBER 2010

Room G22/26 Senate House, University of London

THE IMPACT OF ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

Programme:

9.30 Registration

Panel 1 Chair: Trevor Wiggins

10.00 Alexander Knapp, School of Oriental and African Studies, London

The power motive in oral history: What can the researcher learn from being the informant?

10.30 Tom Wagner, Royal Holloway, London

Un-‘sound’ methods? Successes, failures, and close-calls at a Pentecostal megachurch

11.00 Deirdre Ní Chonghaile, School of Music, University College Cork

Broadcasting Bailyúchán Bhairbre: On the potential of radio to impact on recordings and on ethnomusicological research

11.30 Tea/Coffee

Panel 2 Chair: Laudan Nooshin

12.00 Ruth Davis, Cambridge and Yale Universities

*The political impact of traditional music archives in Israel and Palestine:
A historical perspective*

12.30 Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg, Independent Scholar

‘Applied scholarship v/s supposed scholarly distance’: Is there only one option mate?

1.00 Lunch

2.00 **Film:** *As old as my tongue: The myth and life of Bi Kidude*, introduced by director Andy Jones

3.00 Tea/Coffee

3.30 Roundtable: *The impact of ethnomusicology*

Caroline Bithell, University of Manchester

Lucy Duran, School of Oriental and African Studies, London

Andy Jones, Film Director and Producer, ScreenStation Productions

Jonathan Stock, University of Sheffield

Chair: Stephen Cottrell, City University, London

5.00 Conference ends

Abstracts

Deirdre Ní Chonghaile, School of Music, University College Cork

Broadcasting *Bailiúchán Bhairbre*: on the potential of radio to impact on recordings and on ethnomusicological research

Bailiúchán Bhairbre is a twelve-part radio series that was first broadcast from November 2006 to February 2007 on RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta, and that has been available since for online listening (<http://www.rte.ie/rnag/bailiuchanbhairbre.html>). Created by the speaker, in collaboration with veteran broadcaster Máirtín Jaimsie Ó Flaithbheartaigh, the series introduces the eponymous private collection of reel-to-reel recordings created by Bairbre Quinn (1935-1987) to an Irish-speaking listenership. This paper considers the multi-faceted impact of the series. The series has effectively revived a collection of recordings that lay dormant for decades. It continues to introduce these recordings to a new generation of listeners, in Bairbre's native Aran Islands and beyond, and to highlight the historical and cultural significance of *Bailiúchán Bhairbre*, which captures in music the cultural clashes of a period of great change in Ireland. It also helps to counteract the historical marginalisation of the music of Aran.

This paper observes how the life of these recordings has been transformed by radio. It traces the creation, dormancy, rediscovery and reappraisal of *Bailiúchán Bhairbre*, and examines the decision taken by the speaker, with the approval of the Quinn family, to broadcast a selection of the recordings on RnaG, a station that represents an unorthodox medium in that it functions both as a community radio station and as a national broadcaster. Addressing the impact of the series – at times positive, at times negative – on the speaker's research, this paper ultimately makes a case for using radio as a tool for researching Irish traditional music. It presents the findings of one methodology, and suggests that other scholars of Irish traditional music – or, indeed, of other genres of music – might create their own methodologies that take advantage of the unique and visceral nature of the experience of listening to recordings.

Ruth Davis, Cambridge and Yale Universities

The political impact of traditional music archives in Israel and Palestine: A historical perspective

Recent studies (Beckles Willson, Brinner) have explored ways in which musical collaborations between Israeli Jews and Israeli and Palestinian Arabs have been used in attempts to foster understanding and promote peace. Such initiatives are generally associated with the post-Oslo era since the early 1990s. Yet the use of music as a means to promote intercultural understanding has a far longer legacy in the region, where it was originally associated with ethnomusicological research.

When the comparative musicologist Robert Lachmann arrived in Jerusalem in the mid-1930s to create an Oriental Music Archive in the newly founded Hebrew University he insisted on recording the music of all the religious and ethnic groups, without discrimination; thus, he believed, his work 'could be made to contribute towards aims beyond its immediate scope towards a better understanding between Jews and Arabs'. Similarly, in his proposal to collaborate with the BBC Overseas Service in the broadcasting of traditional music Lachmann insisted that the thrust of his interest was political rather than scholarly.

Following the partition of Palestine in 1948 Lachmann's eclectic vision was adapted to accommodate the new political realities of Israeli statehood by the Israel national sound archive, founded in 1964. By contrast, the Traditional Music and Song project, launched in Ramallah, West Bank, in 1994, aimed to promote a distinctly Arab identity for a people aspiring towards national autonomy and statehood.

Taking Lachmann's Oriental Music Archive as a starting point my paper will consider interactions between scholarly and socio-political ideologies and interests in the work of traditional music archives in Israel and Palestine from the 1930s to the present day.

Alexander Knapp, School of Oriental and African Studies, London

**The Power Motive in Oral History:
What can the Researcher Learn from being the Informant?**

In this paper, it is my intention to look at aspects of human nature as reflected in fieldwork activities. I shall be asking questions (from a primarily psycho-philosophical perspective) regarding, *inter alia*, definitions of power, the dynamic of the researcher-informant relationship and its mutual impact upon those indirectly as well as directly involved, the significance of temperament and conditioning, and issues of political correctness and incorrectness - past and present. Special reference will be made to some of the more controversial directives on interview and questionnaire procedures offered by two pioneers of mid-late twentieth-century ethnomusicology: Bruno Nettl and David McAllester. The commentary shifts, in conclusion, to a personal experience of role-reversal: how it feels to be on the other side of the microphone...

Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg, Independent Scholar

‘Applied Scholarship v/s Supposed Scholarly Distance’: is there only one option mate?

This paper will examine the notion of impact and how it overlaps with disciplinary considerations in applied ethnomusicology and advocacy in the context of Indigenous Australia. I will specifically refer to my applied research undertaken with the Indigenous Lutheran Australian community of Hopevale Northern Queensland, where I worked as a choral facilitator for one year. The paper will argue that according to ethical guidelines pertaining to research undertaken alongside Indigenous Australians, it is mandatory that research aims to achieve a positive impact. Merely considering the option of remaining neutral in the name of scholarship is viewed as being politically incorrect by many scholars in the Australian field. The reasons for this lie in the historically problematical role that anthropology (and ethnomusicology) played in providing the colonial government with ‘evidence’ which supported the oppression of Indigenous Australians. This oppression, historical and current, is still wreaking havoc in Aboriginal communities and therefore cannot go unnoticed by any competent scholar when examining music in its context.

I will also argue, however, that although applied researchers should aim to have a positive impact through their work, it is not impossible to demonstrate that the performance of the same musical material which they are dealing with can have a negative impact on people’s lives. Using my own research as an example, I shall show that choral and hymn singing are able to have a positive effect on the constructs of Indigenous Australian identities, but that historical missionary records from the same Indigenous Australian community, demonstrate the opposite to be true. This historical analysis helps to ‘balance’ the applied partiality required in the Indigenous Australian context which often borders on, or is synonymous with, advocacy.

Tom Wagner, Royal Holloway, London

Un-‘sound’ Methods? Successes, Failures, and Close-calls at a Pentecostal Megachurch.

The current fashion in Ethnomusicology for issues surrounding the “impact” of research, at least as articulated at recent BFE events, appears to be tied to the new REF’s “impact assessment”. According to the REF website, the REF seeks to identify research that “makes a major contribution to economic prosperity, national wellbeing and the expansion and dissemination of knowledge” (<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/research/ref/>).

This seems to privilege studies that have immediately apparent macro-effects. To demonstrate the wide-ranging applicability of our studies, though, we would do well to remember that communities are composed of individuals. A project that benefits some individuals or sub-sets may unintentionally harm others.

This paper presents a case study based on research in a Pentecostal “megachurch” in London. The goal was to identify ways in which members of the church used music to “grow” in their faith (i.e., strengthen their Christian identities). The methodology involved interviews with collaborators, who kept diaries in which they reflected on their uses of music. A request to collaborate with a group of new converts was rejected by the church leaders over concerns that the methodology might negatively affect those without a “firm” understanding of their “Christian

identities”. It was thought that the self-questioning might lead to a loss of faith. However, methodology was approved for use with participants deemed to be “mature” in their faith. Follow-up interviews revealed that the conscious reflexivity encouraged by the project had helped this group grow in their faith. Both these findings and the concerns about the former group (although only speculative) are consistent with the literature on thought reform (e.g., Lifton 1961, Taylor 2004).

Without prior awareness of individual differences within the church, the project could have harmed some participants. This serves as a reminder that, as ethical researchers, we cannot lose sight of the micro-impacts of our work.