

British Forum for Ethnomusicology One-Day Conference  
in association with the  
Institute of Music Research, Senate House,  
University of London School of Advanced Studies

Saturday, November 5, 2011

*Listening for a Change: Environment, Music, Action*

Registration: 9:00-9:30

Welcome: Angela Impey, SOAS

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*Session 1: Natural Resource Loss and Musical Instruments*

Discussant: Henry Stobart, Royal Holloway

9:30 Jennifer Post

**Sharing Rosewood, Smuggling Ivory: The Global And Local Politics of Resource Use and Distribution in Musical Instrument Making**

10:00 Kevin Dawe, University of Leeds

**The Green Guitar: Ecology and Criticism in the study of Global Lutherie**

10:30 Aaron Allen, University of North Carolina, Greensboro & Fellow of the American Academy in Rome

**Sounding Sustainable: Violins, Forests, and Classical Music**

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Tea: 11:00-11:30

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*Session 2: Sounds of Changing Landscapes*

Discussant: David Rothenberg, New Jersey Institute of Technology

11:30 Stephanie Bunn, University of St Andrews

**Environment, Resonance and Image in Kyrgyz Oral epic**

12:00 Noel Lobley, Oxford University

**Recording the Sounds of Change in the Central African Republic**

12:30 Joe Browning, SOAS

**Crane calls and *shakuhachi* sounds: tracing changing music-environment relations in the piece *Tsuru no Sugomori***

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Lunch - 13:00-14:00

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### Session 3: Music and Indigenous Environmentalisms

Discussant: Jerome Lewis, University College, London

14:00 Henry Stobart, Royal Holloway  
**Sound Sensitivity and Climate Politics in Bolivia**

14:30 Thomas Hilder, Center for World Music, Stiftung Universität Hildesheim  
**Sámi Musical Performance, Indigeneity and Environment: The Politics of Nature in Arctic Europe.**

15:00 Sian Sullivan, Birkbeck College  
**Trance Namibia? Juxtapositions of music, dance and desire in a desert landscape**

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Tea 15:30

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### Making a Difference?

Discussant: Jennifer Post

16:00 Catherine Botrill, Julie's Bicycle & University of Surrey  
**Carbon Soundings: The Response of the Music Industry to Climate Change.**

16:30-17:30 roundtable discussion following brief presentations by

Jerome Lewis, University College London  
**Musical change and environmental change in Congo forest: the contrasting impact of industrial extraction and conservation.**

Chris Low, Oxford University  
**Music, land and social change amongst the Kalahari KhoeSan**

Peter Cusack, London College of Communication & Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) artist in residence on the Berliner Künstlerprogramm  
**Sound recording as environmental journalism**

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### 19:00 EVENING CONCERT WITH DAVID ROTHENBERG

SOAS, G2 Auditorium (open to all / free entry)

Philosopher and musician, David Rothenberg is the author of 'Why Birds Sing', published in many languages and filmed as a feature documentary for the BBC. His most recent book, 'Thousand Mile Song', which focuses on making music with whales, is currently being turned into three separate documentary films. Rothenberg's music is inspired by the melodies and beats of birds, insects, whales, water, and wind; he blends spontaneous musical inventiveness with a sense of rhythm, exuberance, and the listening to nature. As a clarinetist, Rothenberg has performed and recorded with Jan Bang, Scanner, Glen Velez, Karl Berger, Peter Gabriel, Ray Phiri, and the Karnataka College of Percussion, as well as released nine CDs out under his own name. Rothenberg is Professor of Philosophy and Music at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. His book, 'Survival of the Beautiful', comes out in the UK in spring 2012.

[www.davidrothenberg.net](http://www.davidrothenberg.net)

## CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

### **Session 1: Natural Resource Loss and Musical Instruments**

#### **Sharing Rosewood, Smuggling Ivory: The Global and Local Politics of Resource Use and Distribution in Musical Instrument Making**

Jennifer C. Post

Until recently, musicians and builders made decisions about tonewoods and other renewable resources used in instrument making principally based on historical and social convention, linked particularly to aesthetic and acoustic properties of the materials. More and more frequently, instrument makers' practices are adopted and adapted in relation to local, national, and global environmental and economic crises. Today the music industries, especially those involved in instrument production (not only makers, but those sourcing and providing renewable resources) and conservation agencies that work to regulate the use of endangered and threatened species, are engaged in complicated social and political encounters that are changing the look and sound of music, and are impacting musical and other cultural opportunities for countless communities of people around the world. The enforcement of international agreements and local government regulations, and activities of organizations that communicate about protection and regulation, affects makers, musical instruments, and the music itself, yet the impact is uneven and often divided along class and economic lines. In this paper I present six case studies on musical instrument making, each representing a different geo-location and approach to issues around music and sustainability. In some economically rich countries and communities, instruments made from imported woods and other materials are readily available, while in more vulnerable regions, makers seek economic equilibrium drawing from local sources for tonewoods and skins, even as these resources are reduced in quantity because of export for use outside their countries, and are diminished in quality due to environmental degradation and change.

#### **The Green Guitar: Ecology and Criticism in the study of Global Lutherie**

Kevin Dawe, University of Leeds

*What is a "green guitar"? What are the most easily renewed types of wood? What kind of guitar is easiest on the world's forests?* A typical question commonly found around the world in Internet guitar forums. And these are also questions asked by guitar makers, wherever we might find them. Partly in response to a recent American Musicological Society panel on 'Ecomusicology and the Crisis of Global Warming' (2010), in this paper I present the key findings of my research into green ideas, practices and policies as they effect guitar making. The intention is to extend recent work in ecomusicology into the study of musical instruments, and recent work on musical instruments into the study of environmental communication and social action. As an ethnomusicologist I explore not only the global reach of my home discipline, but also the global reach of guitar making, an industry that does not necessary impact negatively to any significant degree but one that has far-reaching cultural impact and symbolic cachet. Here notions of acousticity, making guitars from 'natural' woods, remain powerfully emblematic

of green ideals. This an engagement with the natural world that now features such practices as planting a tree for every guitar made or changing the components that make up strings to make them more environmentally friendly.

In my most recent book, *The New Guitarscape* (Ashgate, 2010), I was able to provide evidence for the ways in which the guitar and its related industries reflect a wide range of scientific developments, social issues and cultural values in contemporary and cross-cultural settings. Including some of those mentioned above. One of the main findings to come out of that book was evidence to suggest a growing awareness among musical instrument manufacturers of the need to protect, use wisely and forge a close relationship with the resources that make instrument making possible, namely, in the case of the guitar, wood supplies (and by extension, the forests in which they grow, biodiversity, and those people who own, live in the forests and sell lumber). This paper will, therefore, demonstrate how this ethnomusicologist has started to grapple with ideas in ecology and literary criticism in a study of musical instruments, as well as the broader environmental, social and cultural issues in which musical instrument making is now embroiled in various national contexts around the world.

### **Sounding Sustainable: Violins, Forests, and Classical Music**

Aaron Allen, University of North Carolina, Greensboro & Fellow of the American Academy in Rome

The sound of western art music relies on the instruments of the violin family, the construction of which depends on endemic natural resources from two unique forests. Wild-grown pernambuco of the Atlantic Forest of South America is the primary choice to make professional bows. This tree, the pau brasil or “flaming-red wood,” was so important that European colonial powers (who used the wood to dye regal garments) named the country Brazil after it. Today, despite international conservation efforts, the tree is nearly extinct.

Another rare wood — the red spruce of the Paneveggio Forest in the Italian Alps — has a less traumatic history. A unique microclimate allows for the straight, even growth of the common spruce that results in resonance wood. Luthiers since Stradivari have used it for the soundboards of professional-quality violins, resulting in the Paneveggio’s moniker, the “Forest of Violins.” The powerful Venetian Republic also desired the tall, strong trees for their navy, but a tradition of indigenous management since the 12th century thwarted such threats. Today, the Paneveggio grows more wood biomass than loggers remove.

Comparing these forests offers three important lessons regarding sustainability: western art music both threatens and helps protect the unique resources on which it depends; local communities have an important stewardship role in managing material for global culture; and ecological and cultural sustainability are inextricably linked. Jeff Todd Titon and others have taken an interest in cultural sustainability; this paper contributes to that dialogue to show the interconnectedness of ecological and cultural sustainability.

## **Session 2: Sounds of Changing Landscapes**

### **Environment, Resonance and Image in Kyrgyz Oral epic**

Stephanie Bunn, University of St Andrews

In this paper, I examine the Kyrgyz oral epic *Manas*, addressing particularly the role of the environment in inspiring and influencing sound and sound images in the development of poetic forms in the epic. My intention is to reveal the importance of the environment in Kyrgyz epic performance, through examining the poetic resonance of the sound of the epic with environmental features such as weather, eagles, wolves and mountains, showing how image is created both sonically and verbally in epic through environmental references, and how the environmental also impacts on aspects of the epic narrative structure.

The paper draws on fieldwork on Kyrgyzstan, including during the period of the Kyrgyz *Manas* festival, along with theoretical issues raised by the work of Gell on iconicity, Feld, Van Leuwen, Ong, Bringhurst, Lamont and Erlman and a consideration of the value of structural analysis in regard to the mythic narrative of epic. I set this study in the ongoing, social context of the development of Kyrgyz epic, incorporating recent visual, digital and written depictions of the epic alongside its verbal manifestations.

### **Recording the Sounds of Change in the Central African Republic**

Noel Lobley, Oxford University

One thousand hours of rare recordings documenting the rapidly changing forest soundscapes and music of remote Babenzélé communities in the Central African Republic have, until recently, remained, wrapped in a jumper and locked in an old suitcase in an Oxford museum. Collected over a period of twenty-five years, these recordings include the sounds of Babenzélé men singing, running and calling to each other as they hunt deep in the forests; of women singing as they move through the forests marking their place with song; and of improvised stories lasting all night as people sing tales of their forest home. They convey the lived relationship between Babenzélé people and their environment, one which has changed enormously over the three decades in which the recordings were made.

What knowledge can be found in these recordings and the changes they document? Why have they been made – and for whose benefit? What might Babenzélé communities want from them? In this paper I will present a brief overview of the history and content of this archive of Babenzélé sound recordings, captured over the past three decades by Louis Sarno, and held at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford. Through audio illustrations, I will suggest how the recordings might be used to measure musical, cultural and environmental change among forest communities facing ecological degradation and marginalisation. Lastly, I will introduce my current research exploring ways in which these recordings can be reconnected with Babenzélé people for the benefit of the communities whose soundscapes they document.

## **Crane calls and *shakuhachi* sounds: tracing changing music-environment relations in the piece *Tsuru no Sugomori***

Joe Browning, School of Oriental and African Studies

Variants of the piece *Tsuru no Sugomori* (“Nesting Cranes”) are amongst the most popular and numerous in the repertoire of the *shakuhachi* (Japanese bamboo flute). These typically virtuosic pieces use trills, flutter-tonguing and other musical devices to imitate the sounds and movements of cranes, drawing on the correspondingly rich sound-world of the birds themselves, where calls and cries vary for different contexts and stages of life. Since these “crane pieces” emerged during the eighteenth century, habitat destruction has reduced the number of Japan's iconic red-crowned cranes. Today it is an endangered species, its Japanese distribution confined to a small northern region entirely outside the area where, historically, these pieces were played. Meanwhile, *shakuhachi* music has travelled far outside Japan and the “crane pieces” can be heard across the world.

In this paper I discuss the various guises in which cranes move through this music: as Buddhist symbol and real creature; in imagery and discourse; invoked in transmission and evoked in performance through lively and complex sounds. Arguing that these pieces belong to a wider imaginary, which connects the *shakuhachi* with the natural world, I suggest ways in which contemporary practices are subtly re-imagining this instrument's musical landscape. I explore how we might understand this music not only as “humanly organised sound” (Blacking 1973: passim), but as participating in wider sonic interactions which are more than human. And I trace how such interactions are being reshaped by the interplay between musical creativity and wider ecological and cultural processes.

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### **Session 3: Music and Indigenous Environmentalisms**

#### **Sound Sensitivity and Climate Politics in Bolivia**

Henry Stobart, Royal Holloway

Although a small country, in demographic and economic terms, in the last few years Bolivia has taken a major role on the international stage of climate politics. It is also a victim of climate change, evident from disturbed weather patterns, natural disasters and the loss of highland glaciers – key sources of water. Disillusionment with the UN Copenhagen Climate Summit in December 2009 led Bolivia to organize the *World Peoples' Summit on Climate Change and Rights of Mother Earth* in April 2010. A year later the Bolivian government also announced the promulgation of the ‘Law of Rights of Mother Earth’ (*Ley de derechos de la madre tierra*), which draws heavily on indigenous views of nature and has been described as “one of the most radical environmental bills in global history”. More generally, Bolivia's position on the environment may be seen to be intimately connected with the country's indigenous politics and heritage. These came to international attention with the election of Evo Morales in 2005, widely hailed as

the first indigenous president of the Americas (and whose second term is due to end in 2012).

This paper reflects on the intersections between Bolivian environmental politics and the locally specific ways that herders and agriculturalists of one of the country's highland communities mediate relations with the natural environment through sound and music. How might local sensitivities to environmental sound and conceptions of music, which reflect animistic understandings of the earth and the precariousness of life in a harsh highland environment, relate to the ideologies of the mother earth politics they inspire? How might the nostalgia or romanticism so typical of urban constructions of indigenous music and sonic engagements be reconciled with the harsh realities often underlying indigenous people's music making and listening practices? Alongside these questions are considered the work and recordings of Luzmila Carpio, a renowned Bolivian singer, environmental campaigner, and Ambassador to France.

### **Sámi Musical Performance, Indigeneity and Environment: The Politics of Nature in Arctic Europe.**

Thomas Hilder, Center for World Music, Stiftung Universität Hildesheim

This paper concerns music, indigeneity and environment by focusing on contemporary musical performance of the Sámi. Often drawing on the distinct unaccompanied vocal tradition of *joik* since the 1970s political awakening, contemporary Sámi music has assisted in reviving language, identity and a nature-based cosmology, whilst commenting on the processes of Nordic state assimilation, land dispossession and border creation. Sámi musical performance thus helps to imagine a transnational Sámi community Sápmi, traversing Arctic regions of Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Russian Kola Peninsula, whilst furthermore articulating Sámi concerns as an indigenous people. Owing to the devastating effects of global warming on the Arctic ecology and traditional Sámi livelihoods, the environment has become a highly politicised issue within Sámi and wider indigenous contexts (Berkes 1999; Oskal et al. 2009).

My paper explores the key role played by Sámi music in contributing to debates concerning the environment. Based on ethnographic research of Sámi musicians, festivals, record companies, media, musical institutions, and the Internet, my paper investigates: how Sámi music draws on the representation of indigenous people as living in harmony with nature; how *joik* connects humans to their natural environment; and how recent Sámi musical projects propose a musical aesthetic in which humans and nature are one. By drawing on environmental studies (Cronon 1996), green postcolonialism (Huggan & Tiffin 2007) and Ramnarine's model of a "postcolonial environmental ethic" (2009: 210), I ask: how does Sámi musical performance articulate an alternative philosophy of human-nature relations which might help overcome the current global environmental crisis.

## **Trance Namibia? Juxtapositions of music, dance and desire in a desert landscape**

Sian Sullivan, Birkbeck College

In early 2011 I came across the website [www.trancenamibia.org](http://www.trancenamibia.org). This advertises a psychedelic trance ('psytrance') 'eco music festival' called 'Crystal Nexus' to take place in April 2011 (rescheduled to 2012) at Spitzkoppe Mountain, a striking inselberg in the southern reaches of the former Namibian homeland of 'Damaraland'. The event 'strives to bring the tribal energy of Africa's Namibia together with the contemporary trance beats' whilst 'spreading the word on environmental awareness, love and unity'. It promises that the Spitzkoppe 'Damara Community' will benefit financially from the event with funds 'used for the local school and various other projects'. Nevertheless, whilst appealing to a globally mobile community of trance dance partygoers and spiritual seekers - with 'Crystal Nexus ambassadors' in Brazil, Zurich and Cape Town, and a Spitzkoppe rock art site referred to as 'Shaman's Cave' made much of on the website - the site is silent on the history and existence of communal trance dance healing practices engaged in by indigenous Damara/ Nū Khoen inhabitants of the region. In this paper I juxtapose indigenous trance dance material, including *arus* or clapping songs recorded in 1995 and associated tropes, with contemporary commodifications and appropriations of the trance dance experiential genre. New ephemeral peopling of remote landscapes, such as that proposed by Trance Namibia, arise to service desires for global consciousness-raising and environmental healing against a backdrop of global crisis. At the same time, they generate paradoxical socio-ecological effects, not least for the integrity and autonomy of the embodied soundscapes conjured in the communal healing dances of those with long histories of living there.

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### **Session 4: Making a Difference? [Format: One presentation followed by three brief presentations + concluding roundtable discussion]**

**Carbon Soundings: The Response of the Music Industry to Climate Change.**  
Catherine Bottrill, Julie's Bicycle & University of Surrey

Catherine will talk about what we understand about the climate change impact of the UK music industry and what actions are being taken by music business to address these impacts. In addition, she will present some insights from her doctorate work, which has investigated the perceptions of music artists, businesses and fans as to the actions and responsibility of the music industry to support environmental change.

Catherine Bottrill has been working in the energy and environmental field for 10-years. She is the Director of Research for Julie's Bicycle, a non-profit company working to make environmental sustainability intrinsic to the business, art and ethics of the creative industries. Catherine has led research projects on scoping the total carbon emissions of the music industry, touring, CD packaging and audience travel. In addition, she has been involved in the development of the Industry Green certification and tools, which have been specifically developed



for the cultural sector. Catherine is completing a doctorate from the University of Surrey with the RESOLVE group - Research on Lifestyles, Values and Environment under the supervision of Professor Tim Jackson. Prior to her doctorate work Catherine was an energy researcher at the University of Oxford's Environmental Change Institute. Catherine is founder of Pilio, a new spin-out company from the University of Oxford providing tools and guidance to individuals, companies and communities whose small environmental changes will have a big effect. Pilio offers SMEasure, an online building energy monitoring software, used by over 100 creative organisations in partnership with Julie's Bicycle.

### **Brief presentations**

#### **Musical change and environmental change in Congo forest: the contrasting impact of industrial extraction and conservation.**

Jerome Lewis, University College London

#### **Music, land and social change amongst the Kalahari KhoeSan**

Chris Low, Oxford University

#### **Sound recording as environmental journalism**

Peter Cusack, London College of Communication & Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) artist in residence on the Berliner Künstlerprogramm