2019 UT-Austin Graduate Music Conference

Music and Culture of the Americas

Saturday, April 27, 2019

Conference room: MRH 2.608 (Recital Studio)
(2406 Robert Dedman Dr, Austin TX 78712)

The University of Texas at Austin
Butler School of Music
College of Fine Arts
Acknowledgment

The Conference is organized by UT-Austin’s AGEMS (The Association of Graduate Ethno/Musicology Students) and co-sponsored by the Musicology & Ethnomusicology division, Dr. Veit Erlmann (Chair of Music History Endowment), Dr. Mary Ellen Poole (Dean of the Butler School of Music), and the Center for American Music at UT-Austin. A special thanks to our panel chairs—Dr. Hannah Lewis (faculty advisor of AGEMS), Dr. Alison Maggart, Dr. Luisa Nardini, and Dr. Sonia Seeman, and everyone else who helped make this conference happen!

Conference Website: https://musethno.music.utexas.edu/ut-austin-graduate-music-conference
AGEMS Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/utaustinagems

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Travel & Parking Information

Map of the conference location and nearest street parking:
Address: 2406 Robert Dedman Dr, Austin, TX
Conference room: MRH 2.608 (Recital Studio), Butler School of Music, UT-Austin

![Conference Location Map](image)

Additional Parking Information:
This is the link to a Click-and-Park permit that will allow all participants to park (up to the availability of parking spots) for $6 per day: [https://utcofaparking.clickandpark.com/venue](https://utcofaparking.clickandpark.com/venue)

Click on the link and select “College of Fine Arts/Texas Performing Arts” as the venue. Conference attendees will need one permit per day. Please be careful to park in spots that have the indication “Any UT permit at all other times.” This is a convenient alternative to the more expensive garage.

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Program

8:00am - 8:50am
Registration and Breakfast

8:50am - 9:00am
Greetings

9:00am - 10:30am
Panel 1: Performing Gender and Sexuality (Dr. Sonia Seeman, chair)
Nate Ruechel (Florida State University), “Camp, Copland, and the Pansy Act”
Miranda Sousa (University of Pittsburgh), “To be a Slut is to be Free”: Valesca Popozuda, the Insult, and a New Feminism in Carioca Funk
Myles McLean (University of North Texas), “Queering the Batá: Yoruba Cosmology and Gender-Exclusionary Drumming Practices within Santería” [via Skype]

10:45am - 12:15pm
Panel 2: Contemporary Music and Religious Identity (Dr. Luisa Nardini, chair)
Shahwar Kibria (Jawaharlal Nehru University), “Songs of Identity: Islamic Traditional Music and contemporary American Popular Culture”
Sarah Amos (University of Missouri, Columbia), “Contemporary Catholic Liturgical Music in the American Mass”

12:15pm - 2:00pm
Lunch (on your own)
2019 UT-Austin Graduate Music Conference

2:00pm - 3:30pm

Panel 3: Sounding Dissonance (Dr. Alison Maggart, chair)
Benjamin Safran (Temple University), “Classical Music and Combating Repression in Contemporary Social Movements of the United States”
Sarah Lindmark (University of California, Irvine), “Hip Hop Causes Violence”: Arguments and Analyses Concerning Childish Gambino’s “This is America”
Brandon Kempf (Texas A&M University), “Through the Lens of Grunge: Distortion of Subcultures in Gentrified Seattle”

3:45pm – 5:15pm

Panel 4: Music and Media (Dr. Hannah Lewis, chair)
Nandini Banerjee-Datta (Columbia University), “Technology and Talk: Rabindrasangeet and the Cultivation of Bengali-American Identities”
Benjamin Coghan (University of Texas, Austin), “A Million Dollar Narrative: Overcoming Disability and the Musical Body Discourse”

5:30pm - 6:30pm

Keynote address
Ellie M. Hisama (Columbia University), “Lost Voices, Found Histories: On Silences and Soundings”

7:00pm

Dinner (together, MRH 2.610)
Nate Ruechel (Florida State University), “Camp, Copland, and the Pansy Act”

Recent studies by gay historians including George Chauncey, Alan Berube, and Charles Kaiser have shed light on the development of a mainstream curiosity directed towards homosexual subcultures in cities like Chicago, New York, Paris, and Berlin during the 1920s and early 30s. In New York, the prohibition of alcohol in 1919 encouraged nightclub managers in the city’s central locations to produce a new type of comedic sketch that centered on an ironic and hyperbolic representation of the homosexual other. In the late 1920s, these so-called “pansy acts” at featured straight actors, dressed in drag, who performed stereotypical homosexual mannerisms in a buffoonish fashion intended to amuse audiences at the expense of gay men. The popularity of these acts—evinced by the appropriation of their imagery in Tin Pan Alley songs such as Edgar Leslie’s “Masculine Women! Feminine Men!” (1925)—meant that their aesthetic foundation of ironic theatricality contributed towards, and reinforced, one of the first popular conceptions of gay life and consciousness in American society.

This paper argues that Aaron Copland’s Music for the Theatre (1925) participated in the negotiation of this emerging homosexual imaginary. Archival documents at the Library of Congress indicate that the composer was preoccupied with the aesthetics of the theater for at least the first twenty years of his career. Music for the Theatre was a collection of what Copland documented in his autobiography as a musical idea that “seemed to suggest a certain theatrical atmosphere.” Copland’s personal experience in these environments provided him a reference to reconstruct their aesthetic qualities. Prior to leaving for Europe in 1921, Copland accompanied his father on outings to Minsky’s Burlesque in Manhattan’s Lower East Side. Upon his return in 1924, Copland stayed briefly in Brooklyn before he rented an apartment on West Seventy-fourth Street near the city’s theater district and several burlesque nightclubs. By sonically representing the cultural spaces increasingly associated with the homosexual other, Copland can be understood as participating in the popularization of an early twentieth-century conception of homosexual difference both in the United States and abroad.

Bio: Nate Ruechel (REEK-ul) is a PhD student in musicology at Florida State University. His research examines American popular theater in the early twentieth century as a site for discursive and performative negotiation. Nate is a co-chair of the Society for American Music’s dance interest group, and has been awarded internal grants for his archival work in the mid-Atlantic.
Panel 1: Performing Gender and Sexuality (9:30-10:00am)

Miranda Sousa (University of Pittsburgh), “To be a Slut is to be Free”: Valesca Popozuda, the Insult, and a New Feminism in Carioca Funk

Valesca Popozuda is a carioca funk singer. Carioca funk is a Brazilian dance genre that originated in poor communities (favelas) of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, around the 1990s. Inspired by James Brown’s funk, gangsta rap and hip hop, originally, men were the only ones allowed to rap (MCs), while women were sexualized dancers, on stage to be seen and not listened to. This dynamic reflected not only a gendered hierarchy among funk singers and dancers, but also the patriarchal system of poor Brazilian communities, in which women were in clear disadvantage. However, around the 2000s, a group of female singers took over the microphones, singing about sex from a woman's point of view, verbalizing their desires in detail and with profanity. Backlash was immediate: singers were called sluts and their performance devalued. Valesca Popozuda, the frontwoman of the group Gaiola das Popozudas, declared herself a feminist, and stated that `to be a slut is to be free`.

The aim of this paper is to examine Valesca`s strategy of flipping funk stereotypes - in which the female body is seen as a sexual object - in order to empower herself and other funk female singers. My argument is that, by taking the insult as her own, the singer puts herself in a position in which she has control over her hypersexualized stage persona and body—and control is the empowering element in her music. As a theoretical framework for this paper, I used Robin James’ categories of resilience and melancholy, as well as the PhD thesis of Megg Oliveira—the first trans woman to get a PhD in Brazil—which discusses local derogatory words used to describe homosexuals, and how appropriating the insult as her own is a form of resistance—both for women and the LGBTQ community. In the light of the recent rise of a far-right wing government which does not show commitment to protecting womens’ or LGBTQ rights (or lives), this study shows relevance by pointing an alternative to deal with patriarchy and its negative effects - a musical alternative created by the most disempowered subjects in Brazilian society, low-class women of color.

Bio: Miranda Sousa (São Paulo, Brazil), is currently a first-year Musicology PhD student at the University of Pittsburgh. Her focus is on Brazilian music of the turn of the twentieth century, nationalism and modernism. She is also interested in feminism, and the new forms of feminist agency displayed by Brazilian pop female singers. She earned a MM in Bass performance from UTRGV, and a MM in Ethnomusicology from Unesp (Brazil). She has given papers at ANPPOM (Brazil), AMS, TMEA, and SEM (performance). She has recently received the award for Outstanding Presentation at the University of Pittsburgh Grad Expo.
Panel 1: Performing Gender and Sexuality (10:00-10:30am)

Myles McLean (University of North Texas), “Queering the Batá: Yoruba Cosmology and Gender-Exclusionary Drumming Practices within Santería”

Within the Afro-Cuban religion of Santería, the consecrated batá drums used during the Toque de Santo ceremony are exclusively played by heterosexual men. Many justifications for excluding women involve assumptions of cisgender identity, especially regarding the capacity to menstruate. The current research concerning the exclusion of gay men similarly only considers the experiences of cisgender men. Transgender santeros, however, have been largely unacknowledged in present scholarship. This is especially surprising because of Santería’s appeal to LGBTQ+ followers, the many existing queer interpretations of the Orishas (deities), and the relative fluidity of gender designations among the Orishas and practitioners. With the recent rise in transgender activism and the increasing visibility of LGBTQ+ santeros, especially in major urban centers known for their queer communities such as New York City and San Francisco, trans experiences will only become increasingly relevant within Santería.

In this presentation, I will first explore general aspects of Yoruba cosmology and worship practices in the Americas as they relate to understandings of gender, including some of the queer interpretations of these topics. Then, I will explore the cosmology surrounding the batá and the common justifications for excluding women and gay men from playing the consecrated batá in particular. By synthesizing this information with the current politics surrounding transgender identity, I will then discuss the possible justifications for allowing or disallowing transgender women, transgender men, and nonbinary people from playing the consecrated batá. Finally, I will advocate for ethnographic study of transgender santeros, particularly in regards to music-making practices.

Bio: Myles McLean is a PhD student in Ethnomusicology (Gender Studies Cognate) at the University of North Texas. He earned his B.M., M.S.M., and M.M. from the University of Florida. While working as an adjunct professor at Santa Fe College, he began using research as advocacy for transgender musicians. Emphasizing ethnography to directly amplify trans voices, he has explored career concerns unique to transgender musicians while also developing techniques to relieve gender dysphoria through music performance. In his PhD studies, Myles intends to expand into international advocacy, working with transgender musicians in Cuba and Brazil. With this advocacy, he aims to uncover tacit understandings of gender within various music-cultures.
Panel 2: Contemporary Music and Religious Identity (10:45-11:15am)

Shahwar Kibria (Jawaharlal Nehru University), “Songs of Identity: Islamic Traditional Music and contemporary American Popular Culture”

The proposed paper will study the Nasheed, a popular form of Arabic-Islamic music, its reinvention and subsequent proliferation on YouTube within the larger context of Islamophobia, identity politics, race, gender and post-digital media convergence culture in post 9/11 America. The Arabic Nasheed of the Lebanese-Swedish Islamic pop-icon, Maher Zain result from the integration of traditional Arabic/Middle Eastern rhythms and R&B (rhythm and blues)/soul music, rap and hip hop and articulates the emerging consciousness of a Muslim youth who no longer want to choose between “Islam and modernity…and where neither Islam nor the West can be used to justify autocracy” (Foley, 2011). The Nasheed has been variously invoked by popular contemporary musicians, including the Swedish-Lebanese Maher Zain, British Sami Yusuf and the Danish hip-hop band Outlandish, to address and engage with questions of Muslim identity amidst the escalating crisis of Islamophobia in post 9/11 US. The Nasheed and others forms of Islamic music travelling via YouTube, the internet and social networking sites, echoes the technological trajectory and outreach of the Arab Spring revolution which was galvanized through the internet and social networking platforms. The paper will unfurl around two assertions. Firstly, I wish to explore how the synergies between traditional Islamicate music and American popular musical forms is evocative of the Jazz and R&B momentum in post Cold War America; and secondly how this prepares the lens for exploring American-Islamic music as the aspiration of a collective against religious extremism and Islamophobia. Therefore, the Nasheed becomes a tool to study how a modern take on religious music, becomes al-fan al-hadif (art with purpose) and presents an alternate dimension of Muslimness resulting from the synergies between the sacred, the spiritual and the contemporary, to counter the dominant rhetoric of Islamic extremism and terrorism.

Bio: I am an Indian female film, music and new media scholar pursuing a PhD at JNU. I received my MPhil in Cinema Studies, from the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University (2016), an M.A. in Film Studies from Jadavpur University (2012) and a B.A. Hons. in English Language and Literature from St. Xavier’s College, Kolkata (2010). I wrote my MPhil dissertation on the Sufi Qawwali in Contemporary South Asian Popular Culture (2014-2016) where I explored the contemporary proliferation of the Chishtiya Sufi Qawwali in the three spaces of Urs, Bollywood and International Digital Music Cultures. My research interests include the synergies between Sufism and film, music and audiovisual culture in South Asia and beyond.
Panel 2: Contemporary Music and Religious Identity (11:15-11:45am)


In the 2015 song “Professional Rapper”, rapper Lil Dicky sits down for an imagined job interview with Snoop Dogg, making the case for his presence in the hip-hop world. Responding to Snoop Dogg’s interrogation in rhyme, Lil Dicky, the stage persona of David Burd, explains, “I wanna do the whole thing different” with “stand-up rap” that reflects a new “way of looking at things than your typical applicant”, setting his approach apart. Throughout his pitch, he makes two things clear: he is the product of a suburban Jewish background and he wants to make funny music that reflects his identity—demonstrated in songs such as “Save Dat Money”, “Ex-Boyfriend”, and “White Dude”. Critics challenge the ways Burd deals with his whiteness, but few convincingly grasp his satirical approach and even fewer consider the fascinating ways that he portrays his Jewishness through music and comedy. While Burd’s unique voice may be considered relative to Jewish rappers such as the Beastie Boys and Hoodie Allen, I situate Lil Dicky in the tradition of Jewish comedic musicians including Mickey Katz, Allan Sherman, and Adam Sandler. Specifically, this paper explores how Jewish performers have employed comedy within music to communicate Jewish-American identity relative to the American mainstream, particularly in terms of the relationship between Jewishness and whiteness. By comparing Burd’s output in the 21st century with Mickey Katz’s in the 1950s—which featured humorous “Yinglish” interpretations of American popular songs—I seek to understand how musical and comedic signifiers of Jewishness evolve across generations, considering in particular the changing role of Yiddish throughout the 20th and into the 21st century.

In this paper I draw upon recordings and interviews with Lil Dicky, Hoodie Allen, and the comedian-turned-rapper Donald Glover, A.K.A. Childish Gambino. This paper communicates in depth with recent scholarship on Jewish humor such as Jeremy Dauber’s 2017 book Jewish Comedy (a Serious History) as well as works by Josh Kun and Jeffey Shandler that consider the role of Yiddish and other Jewish signifiers in the music of Mickey Katz and Allan Sherman.

Bio: Zeke Levine is a doctoral student in historical musicology at New York University, with an undergraduate degree in jazz performance from the University of Texas at Austin. His research focuses on Yiddish and Jewish musical traditions in mid-20th century America, investigating in particular the relationship of Yiddish music to American folk music and jazz. Zeke is currently a Yiddish Book Center translation fellow, where he is translating a collection of short stories and poems by the radical Yiddish humorist Sam Liptzin.
Panel 2: Contemporary Music and Religious Identity (11:45am-12:15pm)

Sarah Amos (University of Missouri, Columbia), “Contemporary Catholic Liturgical Music in the American Mass”

The musical practices revealed in the modern American Mass reflect a divided culture that seeks reconciliation between tradition and contemporary relevance. Since the approval of the Second Vatican Council constitution Sacrosanctum Concilium in 1963, music of the Roman Catholic Mass has undergone rapid change in accordance with the call to communicate the liturgy to the faithful as prescribed in the document. Prompted by the desire for timely liturgical music yet misunderstanding of the instruction to preserve the practice of plainchant also stressed in Sacrosanctum Concilium, American bishops sought an entirely new musical style that would have contemporary appeal and foster participatio actuosa. With official permission granted to adapt features of popular secular genres, composers drew from the musical characteristics of the American folk revival that coincided with Vatican II, and a folk-influenced liturgical style came into practice that focused on an aesthetic simplicity of improvisatory melody, uncomplicated harmony, and previously unorthodox acoustic guitar accompaniments. This phenomenon is not without historical precedent; the utilization of contemporaneous secular music was also embraced by Luther and the early Protestants.

For this study, I will identify the folk-inspired elements of the first post-conciliar wave of music; reveal the difficulties that the English-language Mass has caused for composers of psalmody and mass settings; and provide examples of composers’ solutions to these problems. Through this method, I will expose the performance challenges embedded in contemporary Catholic music and evaluate the effectiveness of the new liturgical repertoire in encouraging congregational participation.

Bio: Sarah Amos is a graduate student at the University of Missouri-Columbia pursuing Master’s Degrees in Musicology and Collaborative Piano. Her research interests concern hymnology and congregational singing. In her thesis, “Abide with Me: Hymns Ancient and Modern and the Musical Editorship of William Henry Monk,” Sarah examines the publication of hymns from the Paris Breviary in Victorian hymnals and explores the use of harmony in the modernization of plainchant. An avid church musician, Sarah is a certified Colleague (CAGO) of the American Guild of Organists.
Panel 3: Sounding Dissonance (2:00-2:30pm)

Benjamin Safran (Temple University), “Classical Music and Combating Repression in Contemporary Social Movements of the United States”

The “paradox of repression” explains how when powerholders try to stifle social movements, those movements often grow stronger. In this paper, I consider the role that classical music can play for social movements in either activating the paradox of repression or preventing repression. Sociologists Lee Smithey and Lester Kurtz (2018) discuss how nonviolent movements can manage their cultural symbols to take advantage of this phenomenon, sometimes by intentionally courting brutality or censorship and often by appearing peaceful and honorable in the face of repression. For example, activists might appropriate hegemonic cultural ideas such as “patriotism” to maximize their positioning as virtuous within public discourse.

Given its elitism and niche appeal within contemporary American society, classical music may not seem like an obvious choice for use in social movements. I draw on Marianna Ritchey (2017) and Paul Christiansen (2014), who show that corporations and politicians use classical music to bolster their reputations due to its status in contemporary American society as universal and virtuous. I argue that classical music can similarly be used by activists to draw attention and bolster support for their causes. I finish by touching on a few recent examples of protest that involved classical music, including the 2014 Black Lives Matter protest at the St. Louis Symphony and a 2018 performance of one of my own compositions in the lobby of a Philadelphia utility headquarters as part of a campaign for local green jobs.

Bio: A native of Massachusetts, Ben Safran is currently completing a PhD in music from Temple University. Ben's compositions have been performed across the United States, while their research interests include protest music, hermeneutics, pedagogy, ecomusicology, and identity studies in music. Their dissertation is on contemporary classical composers' uses of social justice and political themes within concert music.
Panel 3: Sounding Dissonance (2:30-3:00pm)

Sarah Lindmark (University of California, Irvine), “Hip Hop Causes Violence”: Arguments and Analyses Concerning Childish Gambino’s “This is America”

On May 5th, 2018, Donald Glover released a new music video under his longtime stage name Childish Gambino. Entitled “This Is America,” the video has been lauded by Rolling Stone as “a nightmare we can’t afford to look away from,” because of its shocking and abrupt portrayals of gun violence. Despite the leading role gun violence held in the work’s rapid rise to hundreds of millions of views, the track that was later made available for audio-only streaming omits the gunfire. I argue that the two shootings in the video are intricately linked to Gambino’s message in “This Is America” as a whole, and thus, without the music video, the meaning of the track is lost.

Using the writing of scholar Tricia Rose as a starting point, this project unveils the relationship between the video’s message and its portrayals of literal and metaphorical violence. As Rose discusses in her book entitled The Hip Hop Wars, for example, the argument that hip hop causes violence has pervaded discussions on the genre for decades. Gambino’s “This Is America” confronts this argument. In response to the track’s quick shifts from a bass-heavy trap beat to vaguely gospel-esque, critics have noted that, somehow, the music itself seems violent. The Pitchfork review of the video, for example, called the trap half of the track “menacing.” Hip hop music videos of the past have portrayed realistic forms of racially-motivated violence, notably N.W.A.’s “Straight Outta Compton” of 1988 and the first hip hop music video, Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five’s “The Message” of 1979. In contrast to these precedents, however, portrayals of violence in “This Is America” are presented as a dystopian fantasy rather than a public service announcement or, to reiterate the extremist anti-hip hop arguments Rose discusses, a call-to-arms. By compiling both popular reviews of the work and recent scholarship on hip hop, this paper presents an analysis of “This Is America” that seeks to reveal the new aesthetic of sounding violence.

Bio: Sarah Lindmark received her bachelor’s degree in music with an emphasis on cello performance from the University of California, Santa Cruz in 2016. After graduating, she worked for the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music as the director of their student-staff program under conductor Marin Alsop. Her research interests include theories of allusion in hip hop and the hip hop music video. She is currently a master's degree candidate in musicology at the University of California, Irvine.
Panel 3: Sounding Dissonance (3:00-3:30pm)

Brandon Kempf (Texas A&M University), “Through the Lens of Grunge: Distortion of Subcultures in Gentrified Seattle”

My paper will examine the currents of gentrification in Seattle using grunge art and music as an interpretive, expressive, and performative lens. Grunge began as an underground subculture in Seattle and other satellite cities in the Pacific Northwest in the mid-1980’s. The lo-fi, hard-edged and distorted aesthetics of grunge style, manifested in its music, fashion, and art, were indicative of the geographic and cultural isolation, constant inclement weather, and seasonal depression that many disillusioned youth, bohemian, and artist communities in the Pacific Northwest experienced. In the early 1990’s, grunge became the subject of a worldwide cultural boom, wherein major label record companies such as Geffen and Atlantic contracted local grunge acts such as Nirvana, Soundgarden, and Pearl Jam, providing them mainstream radio airplay, worldwide stadium tours, and chart-topping album releases. The city of Seattle experienced a parallel phenomenon in the form of an economic boom, wherein major tech corporations such as Microsoft emerged and housed headquarters in the city. With a rise in cultural and corporate popularity came also a rise in the cost of living, and ultimately a difficulty for marginal communities to maintain sustenance. Thus, the principles that grunge was founded on were fundamentally inverted, and it vanished as a fleeting cultural fad.

In 2018, I visited Seattle for the first time to conduct auto-ethnographic research on grunge, ultimately cultivating a slice of life of the current youth, artist, and bohemian communities and their subcultural scenes. In the face of rapid change, vanishing of historic landmarks and iconic cultural space, and lack of affordable housing, members of these communities expressed ambivalence towards these declines. In addition, they expressed ambivalence towards the gentrified and corporatized spaces that rose from the grave of once indelible cultural places. Members of these communities continue to struggle for livelihood, but persist by creating art both collaboratively and communally. My paper thus examines how this unique paradox can continue to be mediated through the lens of grunge, a subculture once presumed dead, but now crucial to the interpretation and expression of social, cultural, and economic disillusionment.

Bio: Brandon Kempf is an award-winning multi-disciplinary artist from Milwaukee, WI. He earned his BFA in Classical Guitar Performance from UW-Milwaukee in 2017, and is currently pursuing his MA in Performance Studies at Texas A&M. He has performed all over the US in solo, chamber, and ensemble settings, and is an active teacher of music performance, theory, and composition. In his artistic vision, Brandon strives to explore new sonic and visual territories to generate new meanings and discussions of art in socio-political and economic contexts. His current project, Through the Lens of Grunge, explores social and musical distortion in such ways.
Panel 4: Music and Media (3:45-4:15pm)

Nandini Banerjee-Datta (Columbia University), “Technology and Talk: Rabindrasangeet and the Cultivation of Bengali-American Identities”

This study explores what 21st century American life sounds like in places where Rabindrasangeet, or the songs written and composed by Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), is thriving. More specifically, I analyze a Bengali live call-in television program called Aaj Shokaler Amontrone (“An Invitation to This Morning”) and show how the mediated voice can interpellate multifaceted Bengali identities in the United States through ordinary talk. Rabindranath Tagore’s work features heavily on Aaj Shokaler Amontrone and, through ethnographic poetics, I describe this work as a sounding presence in the Bengali diaspora. I demonstrate how Tagore’s legacy has continued to be repurposeable, flexible enough to accompany different experiences of Bengaliness as opposed to creating a homogenous definition of Bengali identity. I draw on Laura Kunreuther’s (2006) theory of shared temporality and affect, and Kathleen Stewart’s (2007) mode of ethnography to identify the lines of potential in fleeting moments and to perform, through poetic writing, the intensity and texture that resides in quotidian Bengali-American life.

My exploration of the lives of Bengali immigrants in the United States pursues questions of nostalgia and concepts of home, and the mediation of tensions between tradition and modernity at an affective level. I propose that the ordinary talk incited by this television show makes space for multiple iterations of identity, reflections, intimacies, and the continuous building, dismantling, and rebuilding of culture. I build on Ellen Gray’s (2013) idea that a genre forms and reforms through embodied processes of micro-level performance, and argue that it is the polyphony and intertextuality of these experiences that is at the heart of Rabindrasangeet as a musical genre.

Bio: Nandini Banerjee-Datta is a PhD student in the Ethnomusicology program at Columbia University. Her work at Columbia is on the songs of Rabindranath Tagore, or Rabindrasangeet, and its multivariate roles within ordinary Bengali-American spaces. She uses voice and affect theory, genre studies, and ethnopoetics to argue that Rabindrasangeet forms and reforms through embodied processes of micro-level performance, and that ordinary diasporic spaces are where this transformation occurs. Nandini has been teaching the Musics of South and West Asia course at Columbia for the past three years, and continues to work in music pedagogy spaces.
Panel 4: Music and Media (4:15-4:45pm)

Benjamin Coghan (University of Texas, Austin), “A Million Dollar Narrative: Overcoming Disability and the Musical Body Discourse”

During the 1940’s & 50’s MGM Studios produced several films publicized as “aquamusicals.” This created a filmic genre that can, in short, be challenging when considered in dialogue with contemporary American film musicals of the time. This paper will look at the 1952 film Million Dollar Mermaid, starring Esther Williams, as a case study for (dis)ability and film theory. Little has been written about Williams’s athletic performances and connections to overt themes of medical disability displayed in the film and this lacuna is a disservice to both disability and film scholars. In an attempt to combine a discourse on not only musicology and disability theory but embodiment and performance, this paper will specifically reference frameworks established by Joseph Straus in his latest book Broken Beauty and Kirsten Pullen in her book Like A Natural Woman. Through this theoretical intersection I will examine three scenes in the film which foreground the overcoming narrative of disability, the erasure of labor and serious injury, and lastly a narrative that ends mired in the medical model of disability. This body of scholarship in dialogue with film scholars likes Herzog and Altman will help to reveal a previously underrepresented narrative of the body in the aquamusical. By closely reading performance scenes in Million Dollar Mermaid this paper will shed new light on these musical moments, and how they use the body to establish an important musical discourse little recognized through a framework of disability and performance within the aquamusical.

Bio: Benjamin is a PhD student in Historical Musicology at the University of Texas, Austin from Waldorf, MD. He completed a BME in Choral Studies and a BM in Music History at The Ohio State University before beginning graduate studies in musicology at Louisiana State University, and transferring to UT-Austin. His research interests include disability studies and music performance/reception, American popular music during the nineteenth century, and has tertiary interests in the music of Fluxus and American opera & art song. He has presented papers at the annual meeting of SAM (2017), will be presenting at the Music & the Moving Image Conference (2019), and has participated in several regional graduate conferences.
Panel 4: Music and Media (4:45-5:15pm)


In the months leading up to and following the Metropolitan Opera’s 2016 staging of L’Amour de loin by Finnish composer, Kaija Saariaho, critics noted that it was only the second opera composed by a woman ever to be performed at the Met. The first, Ethel Smyth’s Der Wald, had appeared 113 years before. This somewhat startling realization renewed and expanded conversations that have percolated in recent years, especially on social media, as artists, critics and scholars have scrutinized major orchestral and operatic institutions for lacking diversity, particularly of gender and race in the composers appearing on performance programs. Conversations that circulated on Twitter have metastasized as the backdrop for articles in the New York Times (Alice Gregory 2016), Washington Post (Anne Midgette 2017), Bachtrack (Rebecca Lentjes 2016) and elsewhere, bringing the issue to the attention of classical music audiences and publics beyond them.

In this paper, I begin by tracing the recent history of this conversation before turning an eye to a medium that has garnered significantly less attention (and virtually no media coverage) for the same issue: radio. Using software developed specifically for this project, this paper presents data drawn from playlist logs hosted on the websites of US classical music radio stations, and demonstrates the disparity in numbers of compositions by female and male composers played over the air. An example set of programming for six American metropolitan stations over the course of two months, accounting for over 40,000 pieces played, shows a distribution of 90.8% pieces by male composers, 1.2% by female composers, and 8% by anonymous composers (folk, traditional, or uncredited). With conversations centered on the programming choices of major orchestras and opera houses having become necessarily annual at the time organizations announce upcoming seasons, this work sheds much needed light on radio, a format equally responsible for perpetuation of unequal representation in the world of classical music.

Bio: Jacques Dupuis is a PhD candidate in musicology at Brandeis University, writing a dissertation on dramatic domestic vocal music by Robert Schumann. He holds bachelor's degrees in music and Italian studies from the University of Notre Dame and an MFA in musicology from Brandeis. He has presented papers at conferences in the US and internationally, written for the AMS blog, Musicology Now, is contributing to the forthcoming Oxford Handbook of Music and the Middlebrow, and has received awards for excellence in teaching from Brandeis and Harvard University.
Keynote Address (5:30-6:30pm)

Ellie M. Hisama (Columbia University), “Lost Voices, Found Histories: On Silences and Soundings”

The baritone Oscar Seagle’s conclusion of a 1917 concert in Brooklyn, New York with five of Harry T. Burleigh’s spiritual arrangements was one of the earliest concerts at which white performers sang spirituals in recitals. While some white singers embraced Burleigh’s arrangements and followed Seagle’s initiative at the close of their recitals, others rejected the practice after discovering that Burleigh was African American. While these singers deemed Burleigh’s arrangements to be musically worthy, their racism kept his music out of the recital hall and away from their performing bodies. The Daughters of the American Revolution’s infamous refusal in 1939 to allow Marian Anderson to perform in Constitution Hall because she was African American likewise aimed to keep a black artist out of a traditionally white space. When the performance ultimately took place at the Lincoln Memorial, not only was the stage occupied by an African American performer, but the music of African American composers was also honored that day with Anderson’s decision to close her performance with spiritual arrangements by Burleigh, Florence B. Price, and Edward Boatner.

The recent surge of interest by musicians, concert programmers, scholars, and writers in “lost” composers of color and women composers including Burleigh, Price, Ruth Crawford, and Julius Eastman prompts one to recall the words of Masha Gessen: Is it a revolution or a series of retributions? This lecture considers how exclusions in the sphere of music can be addressed by students and scholars. It concludes by reflecting upon possibilities for public-facing music scholarship and community engagement, focusing on the project For the Daughters of Harlem: Working in Sound, initiated at Columbia University in 2018.