

# MUSICKING LOCALITIES, LOCALIZING MUSICKING

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DOSSIER LOCAL MUSICKING

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Edited by Suzel A. Reily and Katherine Brucher


In this relevant book, editors Suzel A. Reily and Katherine Brucher present a vast panorama composed of almost forty articles from different parts of the globe. They have in common an effort to discuss the various possibilities of connection between the notions of music and of locality. The book is result of the research projects “Local Musicking in Cross-Cultural Perspective”, carried out in the United Kingdom between 2014 and 2015 and the ongoing FAPESP Framework Project “Local Musicking: New Pathways in Ethnomusicology”, which involves USP and UNICAMP.<sup>1</sup> In 2019, it won the Ellen Koskof Edited Volume Prize, from the Society for Ethnomusicology.

The volume is a significant contribution to the growing movement in the area of ethnomusicological studies and its interfaces, especially Anthropology of Music, towards thinking of music as a chain of processes and a network of relationships. To this end, most of the authors of the book finds their inspiration in concepts in concepts like the one of *musicking*, from the ethnomusicologist Christopher Small (1998), allied to the notion of *locality* by the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996). Other significant theoretical contributions are the reflections of the anthropologist Ruth Finnegan (1989) and the ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino (2008) - the last two signed chapters in the compilation. The main research question behind this volume is how musicking and locality are mutually constituted in the contexts in which such social dynamics unfold.

Between the preface and the introduction, signed by the editors, we have the presentation by Trevor Herbert, which explores the frictions between local and global in the musicking of brass bands in the United Kingdom and the multiple rearrangements and dialogues with transformations in the American tradition of such practices. The first section, “Modes of Local Musicking”, delves into Small’s concept of musicking, discussing it in its various forms, going beyond production and performance, also encompassing listening, dancing, debates and research about music. In the first text of the section, “Participatory Performance and the Autenticity of Place”, Thomas Turino analyzes, based on examples of American old-time music, how policies of musical genre unfold through the claim by actors of notions such as authenticity and tradition, and the mobilization of locality as a tool to differentiate musical styles.

In “Protestant-Lutheran Choir Singing in Northern Germany”, Britta Sweers ethnographically describes the daily life of German choirs between rehearsals and performances. Focusing on the function of each moment, the author highlights the continuum that Turino (2008) presents between participatory performance and presentational performance. In addition,

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Mihai Andrei Leaha, member of the Framework Project like myself, for his valuable comments for the English version of the review.



Sweers defends the importance of rehearsals as communitarian experiences of social interaction; she also emphasizes that musical presentation is not always a mere reflection of commercialization of a musicking which used to be communal.

The relativization between participation and presentation is also discussed in Andreas Otte's text, "Attending Concerts: Local Musicking among Greenlandic Youth". When accompanying young people in shows performed by local musicians, the researcher notes that the engagement in these events also includes the "warm-ups", meetings that precede the concerts, as well as the parties that follow them. This creates sociabilities that, originated in concert attendance, develop into a reinforcement of intense affection bonds and shared experiences.

In "Hyperactive Musical Communities On- and Offline: Dancing and Producing Chicago Footwork, *Shangaan* Electro, and *Gqom*", Noel Lobley presents three contemporary genres of electronic music shaped by international online connectivity. Based respectively in Chicago, Limpopo and Durban, the genres are strongly linked to dance moves developed by local communities and circulate globally through internet, especially by videos shared on Youtube.

"Community Beyond Locality: Circuits of Transnational Macedonian Romani Music", by Carol Silverman, discusses the *Roma* from Macedonia's production of a "community beyond locality" based on their musical practices in several countries of immigration. In "Community and the Musicking of Participatory Research in Rio de Janeiro", Vincenzo Cambria discusses methodologies of ethnomusicology, which usually think of musical contexts from the micro-level of the community, passing on to the nation-state or even larger scales, such as global and transnational processes. Through his experience of participatory action research in a *favela* in Rio de Janeiro, the author suggests that the city may represent an important medium scale between those levels of analysis; Cambria then focus on the relationship between Favela da Maré and the city of Rio.

Section II, "Musicking and the Production of Locality" brings together articles that consider the dynamics of mutual conformation between musicking and locality. In "Sounding and Producing Locality: Creating a Locally Distinctive Band Practice in Cape Town", Sylvia Bruinders shows how Christmas bands are spaces where "*coloured* people", a minority group in South Africa, seeks to overcome stereotyped visions that victimize them through the demonstration of their musical discipline, which at the same time reflects and reinforces the discipline of these musicians as members of the community and respectable citizens. Another article that addresses the role of local and collective musical practice in the production of

citizenship is “Orfeanismo: Local Musicking and the Building of Society in Provincial Portugal”, by Maria do Rosário Pestana. The practice of the Portuguese choirs described by the author is not only a reflection of socially produced agreements, but also a form of resetting and updating these agreements, reaffirming qualities such as the notion of “decency”.

Érica Giesbrecht explores in “It gets better when the People come to Dance” connections between the black movement and the participative music of *jongo*, where the audience is urged to enter the dance, an involvement considered to be an enriching experience. “Music Contests and Community: A Small Competition Powwow and a Complex Fiddle Contest”, by Chris Goertzen, points out how in such competitions social interaction is more valued than competitiveness.

In “Tuning in to Locality: Participatory Musicking at a Community Radio Station in Chicago”, Andrew Mall debates an active form of music consumption that produces a sense of local identity attuned to the community radio station CHIRP. Similarly, the article “Performing Locality by Singing Together in Mizoram, Northeast India” by Joanna Heath, demonstrates how the singing of each *veng* (the researched localities) performs and claims “stories” about them as communities. Evanthia Patsioura brings a new perspective to the notion of locality in “Bringing Down the Spirit: Locating Music and Experience among Nigerian Pentecostal Worshipers in Athens, Greece”. The author argues that in the Pentecostal religious practices she researches, locality is a transcendent place reached by sharing the music-spiritual experience: musicality and spirituality are related manifestations of the sacred.

In “The Musical Structuring of Feeling Among the Venda”, Suzel A. Reily revisits John Blacking’s works on the Venda people of South Africa, noting that, over the fifty years that have followed such research, this group has undergone a series of changes: one can no longer think of one musical totality, but in several musical processes linked to diverse contemporary social dynamics of that locality.

The next section, “Pathways to Local Musicking”, takes Finnegan’s concept of “tracks” as a metaphor for thinking about trajectories of subjects in their relations with musicking, whether as amateurs or professionals. Theodore I. Konkouris addresses the image of “blood” in “‘I am Sorry that we Made you Bleed’: Locality and Apprenticeship among Mande hunters”. Bleeding, both literally and figuratively, is part of the learning of Mande hunters from Mali. Mande brotherhoods supersedes ethnic, religious and class markers by privileging the ethic of sacrifice. In the hunters’ moral code, total devotion to the art of hunting, including musical activities, is what defines one’s position in the group. The learning of synchronized

dance and singing also affirms one's social place in the Balinese student community in "Child Musicians and Dancers Performing in Sync: Teaching, Learning, and Rehearsing Collectivity in Bali", contribution of Jonathan McIntosh.

Michael O'Toole explores the role of schools dedicated to education of amateur musicians, shaping social practices and values of local musicking in "Local Music School Learning and Teaching: A View from Chicago and Beyond". "The Hidden Musicians of the *Guqin* Music World of Lanzhou", signed by Zhao Yuzing and Suzel A. Reily, follows the revival of *qin* musical practice and its role in forming a sense of Chinese-ness after the Cultural Revolution period. In "Rehearsing Values: Process of Distinction in the Field Band Foundation of South Africa", Laryssa Whitaker looks at rehearsals of brass bands as moments of incorporation of social values and a sense of belonging; an example is the emphasis on listening, which allows the absorption of empathy as a skill for life.

In the chapter "Class and Locality in Loyalist Parading Band Rehearsals in Northern Ireland", Gordon Ramsey, who analyzes three different bands, demonstrates how the continuum between rehearsal, composition and performance varies according to distinct articulations between class, religion and place. Concluding the section, the article "Pathways to Musicianship: Narratives by People with Blindness", by Lucia Reily and Augusto Cardoso de Oliveira, narrates trajectories of five blind musicians who complexify assumptions of common sense, which associate blindness with extraordinary musicality.

Section IV, "Locality, Musical Connections and Encounters", presents examples in which local elements and elements from broader scopes are articulated in the production of localities and forms of musicking. In "Borders and the *Alma Guarani*: Musical Encounters Between Paraguay, Argentina and Mato Grosso do Sul", Evandro Higa tells us how musical genres that cross three countries represent the Guarani soul with its local nuances. "Coastal Music: Musicking Afro-Azorean Encounters in the South of Brazil", by Reginaldo Gil Braga, portrays the emergence of a kind of music that makes encounters between enslaved Azorean and African immigrants in the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul. The author defines this music as an "invented tradition".

In "Laughter, Liquor, and Licentiousness: Preservation through Play in Southern Vietnamese Traditional Music", Alexander M. Cannon uses the polysemic notion of play by pointing out how the playful aspect is an instrument in the preservation of traditional Vietnamese music in the face of social changes. "Performing the Local: Javanese Gamelan, Institutional Agendas, and 'Structures of Feeling' at Southbank Center,



London”, by Maria Mendonça, describes Southbank Centre, a cultural space in London where people of various origins practice Javanese gamelan, sharing a communitarian musicking, at the same time producing and performing different localities.

Gabril Hoskin addresses in “Mapping Cultural Diversity Among Brazilian Musicians in Madrid” the ways in which Brazilian migrant musicians in Madrid mobilize stereotypes about Brazilianness to establish themselves on the local scene. “Sounding Out Community at Feasts in Portugal and in the Diaspora”, by Katherine Brucher, also focuses on the production of localities through musicking in the diaspora. In “Local Musicking for a Global Cause”, Caroline Bithell argues that musicking is a powerful tool for engaging in global militant causes, such as contemporary environmental activism.

Based on Anna Tsing’s (2005) concept of “productive frictions”, the final section of the book, “Musicking Local Frictions”, investigates tensions in local music scenes. In “Sensing the Street: The Power and Politics of Sound and Aurality in a Northern Australian Rhythmscape”, Fiona Magowan analyzes the dialogue between ancestral and contemporary ways of life that make up the soundscape of Galiwin’ku, a remote Aboriginal town in Australia. “Negotiating Local Tastes: Urban Professional Musicians in Athens”, by Ioannis Tsioulakis, explores the differentiation that professional Athenian musicians make between “work” and “play”, according to their own aesthetic preferences and the working relationships they are subjected to.

In “Listening Low-Cost: Ethnography, the City and the Tourist Ear”, Lila Ellen Gray explores the conflicts between local artists and tourists who consume *fado* on the Lisbon scene. Ray Casserly describes in “Localizing the National: Performing British Identity in Northern Ireland” the multiple relationships between local and British national identity in the Northern Irish band scene. In “The Political Aesthetics of Musicking During Carnival in Santiago de Cuba”, Kjetil Klette Bøhler approaches the connections between aesthetics and politics in the Cuban city’s carnival, articulating the nationalist discourse present in the event’s imagery to the musicality that claims a local, national and transnational identity.

“(Re)presenting Marginality: Place and Musical Thought in Fernando Cabrera’s Song ‘Ciudad de la Plata’”, by Ernesto Donas, examines a Uruguayan song that expresses the frictions of local social inequality. “Opening Eyes Through Ears: Migrant Africans Musicking in São Paulo”, by Jasper Chalcraft and Rose Satiko G. Hikiji, describes the efforts of African musicians to, through their music, “open the eyes” of Brazilian audiences to the difficult reality of immigrants. Closing the book, Ruth Finnegan’s

afterword, “The Real Realization of Music-Ritual: Local, Not-local, and Localized”, complexifies the notion of locality, exposing its multifaceted character.

Throughout these many articles, we get to know the role of music beyond more restricted readings that tend to focus more on the oeuvre and on the product. The articulation between the production of locality and musicking understood as a complex net of construction of meanings and social encounters is presented in the most diverse contexts in this volume. I believe that this makes it an indispensable read to contemporary Ethnomusicology, to Anthropology of Music and to related studies.

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