

Workshop 52

Music and Dance as Intercultural “Face-to-Face”-Communication

Convenors:

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The panel aims to focus on aural and performative aspects of cultural communication. Music and dance are seen as performative cultural expressions, which act as “face-to face”-communication between different social groups, gendered worlds, social hierarchies, and cultures.

Sound and body movements shall be discussed in their specific cultural, religious or socio-political context. It shall be analysed whether or how music and dance can transform concepts of distance into proximity. Are music and dance expressions of cultural creativity or are they rather reproductions of traditional patterns? Special attention shall be given to the question how performative practices are transmitted and how art techniques are related to social values.

Papers on social dimensions of music and dance in Europe, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa and South America are welcome.

The Swinging Betals - Music and Dance in the Lakshmi Thakurani Yatra in Northwest Orissa

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Every year in the months of Aswina, Kartik and Pous a nineday festival is celebrated in northwest Orissa which centres around Goddess Lakshmi Thakurani and her relationship to her daughter-in-law Janjali Behera. The rivalry between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is not only narrated in songs comprising an epical story, but parts of the epos such as the marriage of Lakshmi Thakurani’s son are also re-enacted. In the final two days of the festival not only Lakshmi Thakurani and Janjali Behera, but also Hanuman and several other ‘beings’ known as betals (placed somehow between gods and spirits) appear - possessing participants. The goddess and betals do not simply dance, but they are said to swing. This unique combination of danceelements and epical story will be highlighted in the paper.

Ragas and Tumris. Westerners Learning Indian Classical Music in Varanasi

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There is a community of Westerners learning Indian classical

music in the city of Varanasi. In fact, the Westerners play an important role in keeping the classical music alive and prosperous by financially supporting their teachers and by going to concerts. Issues of power are interesting in this phenomenon. The musicians have knowledge that the Westerners appreciate, and they often take a role of an authoritarian 'guru'. However, the musicians are financially dependent on their Western students, and having Western students increases their status. Indian classical music is based on improvisation following ancient aural traditions. Traditionally, the student lived with the 'guru' for years and was considered his/ her child. In my paper, I discuss how this tradition is taught to and received by the Westerners today. What kind of intercultural communication takes place? Does distance transform to proximity? Teaching has to be adjusted to the fact that the Westerners do not have much knowledge about Indian cultures and languages. Nevertheless, interest in the music has caused many of them to be interested in and also to adopt other aspects of Indian cultures (e.g. religion, clothing, behaviour). Therefore, some kind of cultural interaction definitely seems to be going on.

Dancing Identities on the Fringes. National, Transnational and Gender Identity in Senegalese Sabar and "Hindu" Dances

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This paper focuses on how identities are performed, reinforced, negotiated or challenged through dance. Sabar is increasingly popular in Senegal. It seems that sabar is used more and more as the national dance style, away from "imported" (e.g. afro-cuban) styles. Is this a manifestation of producing local difference on a global scale (glocalisation)? Furthermore, sabar dance is a highly female gendered domain. Marshall noticed a recent gender shift towards the acceptance of female drummers in (exclusively male) sabar drumming. Are similar processes happening in sabar dancing?

The second case looks at the influence of Bollywood films on African dance. In Senegal there is an extremely popular dance group, bringing "Indian dance". It is fascinating to look at how dance is used to create transnational identity, comparing it with the creation of national identity and local difference in case 1. From the gender point of view, there is a relation between gender and national identity. Bollywood films use images of "femaledancer-in-traditional-dress": women as bearers of the collective (national) identity.

"Creating a Song and a Dance": Inter-Faith and Inter-Face Culture Connections in Freestyle Jive Dancing

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Can a dance performance be 'intercultural'? This paper looks

at 'freestyle' dancing to music to explore the connection and communication between music and dance in popular jive dancing sessions. It looks at how performers and audience interpret each other as well as the music and the dance when they are dancing with each other out of a routine.

This paper analyses successful and unsuccessful freestyle case studies from the perspectives of both participants and audience to show that there are a diversity of individual reactions possible to music and dance connections and communications, and that those reactions are conditioned – to a greater and a lesser degree – by the 'cultured' eye of the beholder and the agent. Both dance and music, then, are distinctly cultural phenomenon, their success and failure mediated by the transnational individual and the globalisation of culture. This paper thus concludes with more general comments about the nature of the cultural specificity of sound and body movements, their teaching and learning especially.

Dance as Cultural Communication in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil

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A major component of Afro-Brazilian identity is its specific forms of dance and music. This paper will focus on the former Brazilian capital Salvador da Bahia, where the author was engaged in fieldwork. Salvador da Bahia was a centre for the sugar industry and the chief importer of African slaves from the 15th –19th centuries. Even today, it is still the major centre for Black culture in Brazil, and a region of Black resistance communities and subcultures. The Afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé, its cosmology, rhythms, songs and dances has had a deep impact on the Bahian people and their conception of the world. Various dance sequences and styles that transcend the religious sphere, like Afoxé and Samba, are deeply imbued with it. Dance and musical styles are examined as vehicles for social values.

Bahian dance and music display both integrating and exclusionary elements. This paper will focus on the following issues: How do groups in Salvador da Bahia use dance and music to delineate themselves from other social groups, and what role does dance and music play in creating social bonding? What does Bahian dance and music signify in terms of adhesion to social groups and the structure of social hierarchies? The paper examines the complex symbolic communication forms used in Bahian dance and music which are distinctly modern in form and feeling yet also deeply rooted in the Afro-Brazilian past. It concludes with an exploration of how Bahian dance and music transforms concepts of distance into concepts of proximity.

“Dancing Indians”: Political Aims, Indigenous Stereotypes, and Questions of Identity in Northwestern Amazonia

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In 1997, the second “Festribal” was celebrated in a small town in the north-western Brazilian Amazon. In this paper, I will concentrate on two of this “tribal festival’s” elements: traditional dance presented by indigenous groups and Boi Bumbá, a modern Amazonian dance style. On the one hand, these two elements represented the contrary political aims of the festival’s two main organizers. By occupying public space in the national “Week of the Indian”, the Indigenous Federation wanted to sustain claims for territorial autonomy. The socialist municipal government linked the region and its people to a larger and less specific imagery of common indigenous roots - a symbolic attempt to deprive the powerful indigenous federation.

On the other hand, the indigenous participants as well as the professional dancers recurred to visual stereotypes of Amazonian Indians: they all dressed up as “Indians”, with costumes and feather-crowns. Both performances, I argue, were influenced by the audience’s (tourist) expectations. What seemed an impossible combination of two completely contrary dance styles and missions in one festival, presented no problem on the individual level, for both elements are part of contemporary, Amazonian, hybrid personal identities.

The Moroccan Gnawa: From the Sacred Performance to the Performing Art

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The Moroccan Gnawa, are descendants of sub Saharan Africans who came to Morocco mostly as slaves in the 15th century. They are known for their therapeutic and possession rituals and they use the media of music, dance and trance to heal the possessed. The Lila, main rite of the Gnawa, is today still orchestrated in the respect of the tradition, using colours, smells, specific food and specific suites of cohorts. The musicians animate the ritual ceremonies in private houses and play in front of a general public as well in Morocco as in western countries. They are invited in most of the demonstrations of international music particularly within the framework of what we call “world music”.

From marginalized sub culture, to official representatives of Moroccan culture, they have entered the mainstream in the Moroccan cultural and musical fields. At the heart of this transformation, is Essaouira’s Gnawa music festival. Started in 1997, it brings together some of the most renowned Gnawa masters and western musicians. In this paper, I will discuss the transformation from the sacred performance to the performing art and maybe to a new musical gender, travelling from the private to the public space and from the local to the global musical field.

Gestures in the Making: The Conditions of Intersubjectivity in the Transmission of Bodily Experience

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The choreographic research project *Aujourd'hui à deux mains* (Today with two hands) undertaken since 2002 by Pascale Houbin, French dancer and choreographer, provides the framework to question the conditions for the transmission of bodily knowledge. The aim of this ongoing project is to document on film the work gestures of diverse trades, crafts or professions, including gardening, the priesthood, massage, midwifery, blacksmithing, and so on. In order to access the idea of the gesture, Houbin decided to record 'les gestes à blanc', the gestures performed without using the tools of the trade. To this end, she developed over several months a procedure, parallel to the ethnographic method, in which the 'face to face', intersubjectivity, becomes the precondition for the production of knowledge. This procedure brings into play several dimensions (such as framing devices, empathy, reflexivity, cognitive transaction) which appear to be intrinsic to the construction of dialogical relations, and which will constitute some of the main points of discussion in the paper.