

Sofia Viera Lopes (New University of Lisbon, Portugal)

“Playback”: The RTP Song Contest and the Music Production and Mediation in Portugal (1964-2014)

Held by Portuguese Public Television Broadcast – RTP – since 1964, RTP Song Contest (RTPSC) has been a promoter for composition and an important platform for mediation of discourses on music, identity, and politics. Being the longest-running music and television show in Portugal, RTPSC has been annually organized to choose the Portuguese entry at Eurovision Song Contest, representing the country for millions of viewers. Considering the small dimension of Portuguese music industry, authors and singers recognize on RTP Song Contest a platform to improve their careers at national level, an opportunity to boost the national market rather than an international chance. Encompassing the most important moments of Portuguese history from dictatorship to democracy, passing through European integration, RTPSC witnessed, reflected and also influenced social and political changes and anxieties. Observing the social network created over this Contest, it is possible to map out different postures on social, artistic, and aesthetic issues and as well as stances about the role of music in television as identity and memory shaper and mediator. RTPSC is simultaneously time suspension, since it lays on national narratives and memories, and it is time change since it accompanied external influences. My research work analyzes the RTPSC’s role on music creation and mediation in Portugal during fifty years, observing its relation with music industry. To do this, I analyze the postures of several actors about music as a vehicle for diverse perspectives, tracing social networks lied on various ideologies that shaped music creation and the contest itself.

Charles Lwanga (University of Pittsburgh, USA)

“Hang Them!” Popular Music, Homophobia and the Politics of Participation in Postcolonial Uganda

Unlike some parts of the world where established LGBTQ movements are relatively accepted within the public sphere, many countries in Africa are struggling to accept such modes of social participation. Since the early 1990s, Uganda’s ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) party has been hostile to the basic rights of assemblage, association, and the freedom of expression, thus, giving rise to emergent publics of traditional institutions of kingship, laborers, as well as the LGBTQ collective, among others. By publics, I refer to groups of people that share information, exchange ideas and advocate for social change in a variety of physical and virtual spaces. In 2014, Ugandan music star, Jackie Chandiru released a song, “Ikumabo” (You are Gone), which calls for acceptance, regardless of sexual orientation. Using textual and gender abstraction in the song, Chandiru narrates her experience in love, and condones homophobia. By drawing on fieldwork in Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, I analyze how Chandiru employs textual, gender as well as visual ambiguity not only to avoid being publicly perceived as pro-Gay, but also to construct a musical landscape that mediates the social aspirations of an emergent LGBTQ public in Uganda. I argue that material ambiguity is a creatively safer avenue of constructing inclusive discourse amidst hostility. This presentation is part of my dissertation in ethnomusicology, which examines how popular music – and the multiple spaces through which it is produced, circulated, and consumed – mediates marginalized publics that have been disenfranchised by the nation-state of Uganda, since the early 1990s.

James Nissen (University of Manchester, UK)

“Unveiling WOMAD’s Human Face”: Towards a Critical Ethnography of WOMAD

Since its founding in 1980, WOMAD (World of Music, Arts and Dance) has produced more than 160 international music festivals and has become one of the most influential cultural institutions of World Music. Through archival research and ethnographic fieldwork at WOMAD Charlton Park (UK), my research project develops the first critical ethnography of WOMAD by exploring the festival’s history, by examining its recontextualisation of music and festivities from around the world and by envoicing tales and stories of WOMAD. As such, it aims to ‘unveil WOMAD’s human face’ by uncovering the meanings WOMADers attribute to their lived festival experiences,