

From the Guest Editor

This special issue of *Folklore Forum*—several years in gestation—derives in large part from the confluence of two parallel developments: my own burgeoning interest in applied ethnomusicology as a mode of practice, and the recent increased visibility of applied work within the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM), especially as signaled by the emergence and growth of the Applied Ethnomusicology Section within the last few years.

Circa 1999 my graduate student days waned and I wrestled with a relatively common question: what's the point? I enjoyed fieldwork and thinking or writing about musical cultures, practices, and behaviors, but I also felt there had to be something beyond academic research. There had to be more to ethnomusicology than investigating invigorating musical cultures just to report back about them to congenial colleagues and other sympathetic souls. Seeking sources for a research project, I ran across a special issue of *Ethnomusicology* entitled “Ethnomusicology and the Public Interest” (vol. 36, no. 3) that Jeff Todd Titon had put together during his tenure as editor. I devoured the issue, finding in it multiple perspectives on how to move beyond “pure” research and bring ethnomusicological practices and approaches into the public realm. Applied work coalesced in my mind as an option, a viable path offering a variety of ways to combine fieldwork, writing, education, and interchange with musical communities. But I had no practical experience with applied ethnomusicology, no sense of its scope, and no idea whom to talk to about getting involved.

Serendipitously, a handful of Society for Ethnomusicology members doing applied work formed an interest group at this time. The initial session took place at the 1999 SEM meetings in Austin, Texas, and I sat in the circle of chairs listening eagerly to the kinds of issues people discussed concerning applied ethnomusicology. The question eventually came up: what constituted applied ethnomusicology? Those in the circle offered current and past activities as examples.

The extensive range of applied ethnomusicology projects struck me, for the endeavor comprised a diversity of potential projects: organizing festivals that celebrated particular musical traditions, developing community-based research initiatives, producing radio programs, and participating in documentary videos and audio recordings. I had been volunteering at a world music festival in Bloomington, Indiana, organizing hands-on workshops with artists from various cultural backgrounds. I also was involved with the Ethnomusicology Students Association at Indiana University, programming the weekly world music program at Bloomington's community radio station (WFHB) and helping to organize performances and workshops with visiting artists. Were these activities applied ethnomusicology? Timidly I inserted myself into the discussion, relieved to learn that my small efforts to engage musical culture beyond pure research could indeed be spun as applied work. Encouraged by the energy in the room and the broad horizons of applied ethnomusicology that appeared before me, I was hungry for more.

At the SEM meetings in 2000, the applied interest group made its move to become an official section (a status granted in 2001). Group discussion eventually turned to the need for more communication among members (and others doing applied work) about their projects, programs, and jobs—a continuation of the “introductions” offered at the previous year's meetings. A suggestion emerged that everybody in the section contribute a paragraph or two outlining his or her current applied activities. These descriptions—compiled in electronic or printed form—would circulate among section members; through these narratives we would come to know what others were doing and, more generally, what might be the scope of applied ethnomusicology. In turn, we hoped these exchanges would generate guidelines for practice from which all applied ethnomusicologists could benefit—especially graduate students searching for an entry into the applied realm. I suggested the possibility of a special issue of *Folklore Forum* as a more formal outlet for this type of communication.

As co-editor when *Forum* published a special issue on public folklore (vol. 31, no. 2, 2000), I experienced firsthand the value of bringing together a wide range of personal investments in, statements on, and experiences with public sector work. That issue was a dynamic effort to reassert the

journal's position as a forum—a space for exchanging ideas and instigating dialogue. The pages of the “Public Folklore” issue did not house academic articles with fine theoretical analysis, but pieces written from conviction, conversations and reflections that looked at success, mishap, tension, and resolution. The interviews and essays—some raw with experience and bias, some polished with poignant reflection—were full of ideas and verve. The issue encouraged broad reflection on common issues in public sector work at the same time that it delineated the personal investment of folklorists and ethnomusicologists working in the public sector. It was history at the same time that it guessed at the future. And it held potential as an educational tool, a text for digestion by students—grad or undergrad—looking to immerse themselves in public folklore work.

From the get-go, I have envisioned this applied ethnomusicology issue as a companion volume to *Folklore Forum's* special issue on public folklore. Looking to that publication as a conceptual framework rather than a guide for structure or content, I was excited by the possibility that a *Forum* issue focusing on applied ethnomusicology could become a teaching tool in the broadest sense. Toward that end, I wanted to bring together a dynamic range of viewpoints, experiences, and issues that could start to delineate the scope of applied ethnomusicology. That said, this issue does not define applied ethnomusicology in any static way; each author has been free to use his or her own definitions—working or otherwise—of applied work. Along these lines, readers will notice that the term itself, “applied ethnomusicology,” appears throughout the issue almost to the exclusion of other possible terms: “public ethnomusicology,” “engaged ethnomusicology,” “ethnomusicology in the public interest.” There was no editorial edict for or against specific terminology, but most authors chose to use the common label “applied ethnomusicology” (as I did in the call for papers). Future publications may wrestle with the nuances of terminology regarding applied ethnomusicological work, but this issue attempts to establish common ground in terms of practice rather than labels.

The issue's thematic trajectory flows in large part from the pieces themselves. Overall, there is a personal edge to each contribution that signals the kind of investment central to doing applied work. This

personal investment comes across differently in each piece—as conviction, humility, hope, or discovery (to list a few)—and serves as a subtle (and suitable) unifying thread. The opening interview with Portia Maultsby highlights some particular concerns for scholars working in the public sector, particularly with media institutions. Maultsby also emphasizes the need for training in applied work at the graduate level and discusses some of the ways she has approached that need. The education theme continues with the next two pieces. Charles Keil provides a vibrant and vigorous case for getting musical skills into the hands of children, while Joanna Pecore employs an ethnomusicological point of view to explore some of the gaps and tensions in the history of multicultural music education.

Gage Averill's piece is a segue way from discussions of education to description and analysis of concrete projects. Specifically, he discusses a graduate-course-cum-applied-ethnomusicology-project he has been involved with in New York, arguing that applied work should be an integral part of ethnomusicological training and practice. Continuing the project-oriented theme, Tom van Buren focuses on his work with the Center for Traditional Music and Dance in setting up collaborative research and cultural presentation programs with immigrant communities of New York; he makes a strong case for the kinds of skills and understandings ethnomusicologists can bring to projects in order to make them truly collaborative.

Sydney Hutchinson's piece is also grounded in New York but heralds a thematic shift as well, for she discusses her personal move into the applied realm in terms of both accident and intent. J. Ricardo (Ric) Alviso also presents a biographical account of his efforts to merge social work with ethnomusicology, illuminating the moral undertow of applying ethnomusicological research and practice. Lucy Long outlines several purposes and venues for applied ethnomusicology, weaving her argument into a narrative of her own entanglement with applied work.

The following two pieces—personalized accounts of working at the intersection of culture and commerce—signal another thematic twist. Kathlyn Powell issues a call-to-arms of sorts and opens up the possibility of ethnomusicologists applying themselves on behalf of independent recording artists. D. A. Sonneborn offers an insider's

reflection on Smithsonian Folkways Recordings while asking key questions about the tensions between preserving, presenting, and selling musical culture.

An interview with Jeff Todd Titon—conducted over e-mail due to my faulty tape recorder—closes the issue. In this interview Titon describes his own involvement with applied ethnomusicology over the years, incorporating a general history of the field, thoughts on the overlap with public folklore, and a discussion of the place of applied work in the university.

It is my hope that this issue provide readers material for debate, discussion, and, most importantly, inspiration to pursue applied work in both ethnomusicology and folklore. I have much respect and gratitude for each of the contributors—and here I include the *Folklore Forum* staff in Bloomington, Indiana—without whom this issue would still be an idea. Many thanks to everyone involved for their patience, suggestions, timeliness, and energy. As in much applied work, this issue was a group effort that is more than the sum of its parts.

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