

Live Music vs Audio Tourism: World Music and the Changing Music Industry

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Music is, like language, a species-specific attribute of man; every human group has music. My presentation today explores this global phenomenon. But, rather than develop my earlier research on Korea and elsewhere, I focus on contemporary world music and how this impacts academic ethnomusicology. Please bear in mind that I have less than an hour in which to speak, and so it is difficult to give sufficient depth to each issue, or to credit adequately other scholars who have voiced some of the ideas I discuss. Nonetheless, the currency of this topic is such that I hope to add a little to ongoing debates.

World music has become bifurcated, on one side consisting of the commercial, a mix of commodified forms that are often hybrid collaborations, and on the other side unprofitable ethnographically rooted musics, often archive or field recordings of authentic traditions. Significantly, iTunes and record stores largely promote the former while ethnomusicologists spend most of their time researching music in the latter category. Worryingly, this bifurcation leads to criticism of each side by the other. Brooke Wentz in the American rock 'n roll magazine *Creem* quipped: 'Zap Mama and Deep Forest are a modern listener's wet dream, but an ethnomusicologist's worst nightmare'. Ethnomusicologists may be thanked, Steven Feld reminds us, for 'bringing sounds to the world', but are criticised for obfuscating, for presenting 'an academic aesthetic that undermines the beauty', for being 'voyeurs, hiding and eavesdropping in the forest'. Indeed, as word of this lecture spread, a critical debate began, much along these lines, on Charlie Gillett's popular Internet site.

The retort from ethnomusicologists, and academics more generally, is to critique the consumerism of world music for greying cultural distinctions. Some follow William Outhwaites' line, that Eurocentrism takes cultures from everywhere and recycles them around the world, or Edward Said's *Orientalism*, wherein the dominant culture is reinforced by matching the familiar to the exotic

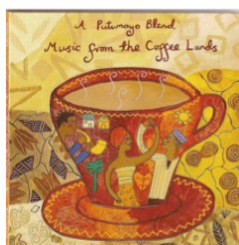
Other. Some would take a stand much like Franco Moretti's view of Hollywood – that its commercial films suck in people from many cultural backgrounds to create flashy, shallow forms that disperse cultural divides. Much as Hollywood would have it, the book *World Beat* tells us that world music consumers want music 'sophisticated but not obtrusive, easy to take but not at all bland, unfamiliar without being patronizing'.

The SOAS mission statement – to interpret the world of Asia and Africa – holds up notions of difference, so cultural grey-out has featured in previous inaugural lectures in this room: Professor Lisa Croll, for example, discussed the MacDonalidization of China and Professor Hugh Baker talked about our love of chop suey. I suspect many of you here today, will concur with the late Alan Lomax's comment, that the world is an agreeable and stimulating habitat precisely because of cultural diversity (Lomax, incidentally, 'discovered' Jelly Roll Morton and documented many of America's homespun musical forms). Indeed, if genetic diversity is critical for our survival, then why not cultural diversity? We need, though, to avoid fetishizing otherness, for if, as Daveena Tauber has pointed out, the globalized market makes the custom of bringing home exotic objects of curiosity redundant, and if we are living in a deterritorialized world, as Arjun Appadurai famously argued, then modernity is all about the myriad ways that familiarity and otherness are mixed. The stakes of the mix within world music are particularly high, since members of cultural groups personifying otherness are present, making music.

The battleground for debate on world music has so far concentrated primarily on the music industry – for clarity, I should say the established recorded music industry. Today, I will explore this debate, but then shift my attention to live music, which given decline and change in the industry, is increasingly important. The industry wants, of course, to annex profits from live music, as it has done with recordings, but I will put forward a different perspective, based ultimately on Immanuel Wallerstein's world systems theory. Where

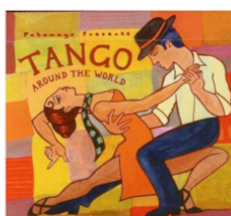
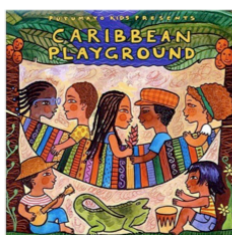
Wallerstein identified political and social movements that try to disengage from the global economy, I want to ask what happens to live music, and to the systems for distributing music, if we take the recorded music industry out of the equation.

World music, like Hollywood or chop suey, is not about travelling but about staying put. The term ‘audio tourism’, used in the title of a 2004 article by Anahid Kassabian – now Professor of Music at Liverpool University – attempts to capture this. Kassabian discusses world music sold at Starbucks and the CDs of the Putumayo label, which, with their tag line, ‘Guaranteed to make you feel good’, commodifies world music for many retail stores. Consumers buy their latté and pick up *Café Cubano* or *Music from the Coffee Lands* on CD...



[Left to right: *Café Cubano*, Putumayo PUT-278; *Music from the Coffee Lands*, Putumayo PUT-135]

Or, they buy scented candles and homeopathic remedies from environmentally aware retailers, and pick up a Putumayo CD...



[Left to right: *Caribbean Playground*, Putumayo PUT-226; *Tango Around the World*, Putumayo PUT-271; *World Playground*, Putumayo PUTU-154]

They buy into lifestyle-oriented music, packaged with homogeneous images of friendly and unthreatening foreignness. They are reassured they are doing their bit for the world, since a share of profits will go to the people whose music is recorded.

Times change, and Kassabian's argument can be broadened, since much world music creates a new sonic form of the global imagination. It collapses distance and pushes a limited canon of musics that stand for 'the world'. The canon need not be constant, since consumers claim to want spectacle and newness, to want something other than mainstream products, and they espouse fluid self-identities that respect subculture, minority and gender differences. But the canon has constant elements: for the last twenty years or so, 40% or more of world music has always been from Africa and the African diaspora. The canon feeds a chart, loosely based on sales figures; the chart is used to assemble compilation albums, or the listings and positioning given on websites. Profits from world music are generated from consumers who buy products – whether physical CDs, iTunes/mobile phone downloads, or tickets for gigs and festivals. The iTunes, HMV and *Songlines* sites illustrate **this** world music: heavy on African, Latin, South Asian and occasional Eastern European sounds, and on collaborations and what might be called hybrids (for HMV and *Songlines* see: <http://hmv.com/hmvweb/navigate.do?ctx=3595;1;-1;-1;6&pGroupID=1&pSubGroupID=6&pGenreID=9>; <http://www.songlines.co.uk/topoftheworld/top-of-the-world.php?PHPSESSID=d9ea72327f96e91a26f64d698b8e0dca>). Note that I am writing this in November 2008, when the Rochester-born Nitin Sawhney, Carla Bruni – the Italian wife of French President Sarkozy – and Damon Albarn, formerly of pop groups Blur and Gorillaz, all feature. So does Manu Chao, born in France to Spanish parents and fusing Latin, North African sounds with echoes of British 1980s pop. These charts are compiled on the basis of sales figures.

The canon is also there in journals, and this means that the world

music magazine *Songlines* and the three editions of the *Rough Guide to World Music* forge uneasy alliances as they balance perceived marketing needs with the expectations of their audience, an audience whose demographic is largely well educated, well travelled, and aspirational. To do so, they publish articles commissioned from both journalists and academics, returning us to the bifurcated nature of their material, but retaining a good dose of ‘traditional’ as well as world music.

In respect to the charts, I don’t deny that this world music is popular and has a solid audience. It operates, though, within a globalized hyper-real late modernity that mixes familiar and Other. For ‘other’ we might say ‘exotic’, but plurality applies, not least because of our contemporary situation in which others [– in this case world musicians –] are both at home and afar. Broadly speaking, the otherness is assured in this world music by earthy drums and airy flutes and because, unlike the Eurovision Song Contest, vocals will be in any language other than English. So, Nitin Sawhney’s BBC Electric Prom last month included Indian vocals and Indian onomatopoeia, and Andalucian more than English, all credited to Sawhney as composer but merely ‘featuring’ Nadia, Ojos de Brujo, Anoushka Shankar and Reena Bhardwaj. Similarly – but allowing genre crossover – the eponymous *Adiemus*, beginning in 1993 as music for a Delta Airlines advert, and continued on the top-of-the-classical-charts *Songs of Sanctuary* album (Venture CDVE 925, 1995), uses vocals that mix Zulu, Xhosa, Yiddish and more in what the lead singer describes as ‘sounds [but] not really words’.

The familiar is maintained by incorporating rhythmic and harmonic structures common in Euro-American pop, through the use of technology, and in instrumental crossovers. Hybridity results, but reinforcing the binary of familiar and Other rather than creating, as Homi Bhabha theorised, a third space with new structures. To critics [such as Timothy Taylor] this makes the Other sterile; hence this world music may keep an African sound, but will tend to subordinate it. This happened at Live 8 in 2006, when the Senegalese musician

Youssou N'Dour performed his 'Seven Seconds' with Dido: Dido sang half-heartedly and made little attempt to reach the high notes, but was the heavily mic'd star, with Youssou N'Dour reduced to supporting (see: <http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=bNQCnzp0DDo>). The touring *African Express* does much the same, though in this case Damon Albarn does give broadly equal stage space to black and white musicians. Here, in respect to the latter, is an *Evening Standard* article from 23 October 2008:

THURSDAY 23 OCTOBER 2008 EVENING STANDARD

Albarn and pals make it up as they play along

BOB GELDOF wasn't on board, though he should have been. Hard-Fi, the Magic Numbers and Flea from the Red Hot Chili Peppers all were, having hopped on at Lagos, Nigeria. Others — The Aliens, Get Cape Wear Cape Fly and US beatboxer Scratch — had alighted at Kinshasa in the Congo. Many started out in Bamako, Mali, and went on to Glastonbury and Liverpool.

It's taken Africa Express three years to reach London. But last night's star-studded and surprisingly ego-less marathon was worth the wait.

Blowing a melodic instead of a whistle, Damon Albarn was — as he has always been — a sort of unofficial conductor. Squeezed side-stage with many of the 140 African and Western musicians who had turned up for this musical extravaganza, he kept a relatively low-key profile.

Having co-founded Africa Express as a riposte to Sir Bob (who largely ignored African musicians when programming the London Live II concert for Africa in 2003), Albarn seemed more intent on keeping things moving. "We're making this up as we go along," he confessed a few hours in.

Africa Express prides itself on stopping at unexpected places. This old variety theatre with its gilt and blood-red interior was a fitting venue for an anything-goes show that celebrates the music of Africa and teams it with sounds from the West. There'd been minimal rehearsals earlier in the day: Algerian rai king Rachid

WORLD
Africa Express
 Koko, NW1
 ★★★★★
JANE CORNWELL

Ayo and Sheffield's Reverend and the Makers, The Magic Numbers' Romeo Stodart knew he'd be peeling off guitar like with Amadou Bagayoko of blind Malian duo Amadou and Marianne, having already done so in Lagos.

Some of the bigger acts got three songs each, during which other musicians — rappers, percussionists, guitarists, more rappers — added their bit. A few, both African and Western, struggled to find common ground. Most enhanced what was there in the first place. The Africans, long used to collaboration, fared best: n'goni maestro Hasselton Kouyate, Baba Maal's tango-talking drummer Massamba Diop and Baba Maal himself. For a too brief moment Africa's biggest female stars — Ami Sacko, Rokia Traore, Oumou Sangaré (in robes and origami head wrap) — sang and for a moment danced in a line.

More musicians crammed onstage as the six-hour show progressed: Afrobeat drummer Tony Allen, Miss Dynamite, MC Kano. Guitar god Johnny Marr came on around midnight. By 3am, and a cover of Fela Kuti's *Zombie*, you could hardly see the stage for them. No Geldof, of course — but there's room for all on the next one.



[available at: www.thisislondon.co.uk/music/gig-23395221/details/BBC+Electric+Proms:+Africa+Express/gigReview.do?reviewId=23577023]

Familiar elements introduce cultural grey-out potential, a potential that increases because this world music requires little contextualisation or interpretation. The downloading generation is no longer supplied with the detailed sleeve notes that ethnomusicologists have painstakingly created for LPs and CDs. This world music is streamed as soundfiles for audio tourists – sounds to be sampled; sounds to be danced to.

Michel Foucault predicted audio tourism. In discussion, when the composer Pierre Boulez commented that music production should not be about commodification and profit, Foucault responded:

I have the impression that many of the elements that are supposed to provide access to music actually impoverish our relationship with it. There is a quantitative mechanism working here. A certain rarity of relation to music could preserve an ability to choose what one hears, and thus a flexibility in listening. But the more frequent this relation is [on radio, CDs, downloads], the more familiarities it creates; habits crystallize; the most frequent becomes the most acceptable, and soon the only thing perceivable. It produces a ‘tracing’ as neurologists say.

From a theoretical perspective, the familiar/Other equation can be framed within Heidegger and Ricouer’s phenomenological hermeneutics, through Roland Barthes’ readings of signs and symbols, or through concepts of originality and imitation familiar from the writings of Walter Benjamin, Frantz Fanon and Michael Taussig.

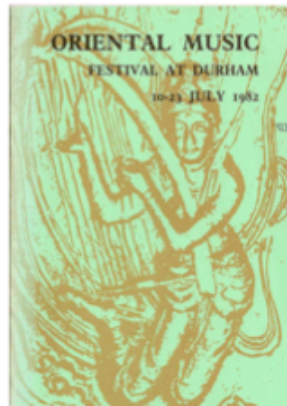
Choose any of these theories, and they explain why some world music has become a familiar part of our soundscape. We no longer flinch when we hear British-Asian *bhangra*, or Zimbabwean *mbira* in a Whitney Houston song, or Indonesian *gamelan* accompanying Bjork, or a Taiwanese Aboriginal chant in the Atlanta Olympics theme tune, or Thai classical music as the soundtrack to a TV advert for shampoo. This, though, has not always been the case. I grew up in a largely culturally monogamous Britain, and in my youth I knew little beyond classical music and pop. In actual fact, the recorded

music industry began life reflecting this: early SPs of Japanese and Korean music, or of Georgian and Caucasus music, were largely made to shift gramophones in Japan, Korea, and the Caucasus; again, Latin and Caribbean music was initially marketed in Central America and the Caribbean. Below are two examples: on the left, are 1907 and 1908 adverts for gramophones from Korean newspapers; on the right is the back cover of a recent compilation and re-release of the 1909 Gramophone Company's recordings made on an expedition to Central Asia and the Caucasus. Note, that, as a recent EMI archive compilation reminds us, a few 'novelty' recordings were issued for Euro-American markets – of South Asian laughter, strange court ensembles, and so on – but these were peripheral to catalogues.



[Left: No Tongŭn, *Han'guk kŭndae ūmaksa 1* (Seoul: Han'gilsa, 1995): 659. Right: back cover of *Beyond the Revolution: A 1909 Recording Expedition in the Caucasus and Central Asia by the Gramophone Company*, compiled and with text by Will Prentice, Topic TSCD921]

My outlook changed when I attended the Durham Oriental Music Festival in 1979. That festival courted a thinking, academic audience, and its last incarnation, in 1982, showcased, amongst others, *Les Musiciens de Nile*, the Korean *Ch'ŏngnong Akhoe* ensemble, Indonesian *gamelan* musicians, the Banares-based *dhrupad* specialist Ritwik Sanyal and the Chinese *guqin* expert Li Xianting.



[Photos and booklet covers courtesy of Keith Pratt]

That year, 1982, was also when the WOMAD festival was first held. Trumpeting itself as a global village for families, WOMAD moved the goalposts, in that first festival showcasing not just South Asian *sitar*, Nigerian jazz and the *Drummers of Burundi*, but also its

founder, Peter Gabriel – formerly of the prog rock band *Genesis* –, jazz trumpeter Don Cherry, and pop groups *Echo and the Bunnymen* and *Simple Minds*.

‘World music’ was not a label at Durham, but it soon gained currency at WOMAD. In fact, the standard accounts have it that ‘world music’ as a term dates to a meeting of record producers and others in 1987 at the Empress of Russia pub, then home to the Islington Folk Club. Those at the meeting needed a label for record bins. Alternative terms were found lacking: ‘worldbeat’ left out non-percussive music; ‘tropical’ missed Eastern Europe; ‘ethnic’ had an academic echo; ‘international’ was used for Johnny Mathis and Nana Mouskouri, while ‘roots’ left out Johnny and Nana. ‘World music’ was always going to be a contentious term. To David Byrne, who along with Brian Eno used ambient samples of musicians from around the world before 1987, it constituted ‘a way of relegating this thing into the realm of something exotic and therefore cute, weird but safe ... beautiful but irrelevant’. *City Limits* announced that ‘anybody from the Third World is allowed to join [world music] through the paternalistic assumption of rudimentary, exotic and inaccessible qualities’. Its breadth meant that in different territories ‘world music’ had different meanings. It may still include New Age and Ambient musics in some places, and the CDs categorized as ‘world music’ in Kyobo Bookshop in Seoul, or in Disc Union in Tokyo, still don’t fully match those in Oxford Street’s HMV.

Markets, though, are merging. Over time, our world music has evolved from a disparate collection of exotica into a genre. In a 1986 cartoon of a radio broadcast published in the long-established British magazine *fRoots*, the guest presenter, *fRoots*’s own editor, plays a disparate collection of English folk, African ‘roots’, Inca harp, Japanese *koto*, and Balinese *gamelan*. Afterwards, he asks his friend if he listened to the programme, but the reply comes: ‘I missed it... I tried to tune in but...kept picking up foreign stations’:



Sixteen years later, in a 2002 cartoon in the same magazine, everything now revolves around the BBC World Music Awards. Commodification has been achieved; key promoters and key spokespeople are in place:



[From *fRoots*, January 1986 and January 2002 editions]

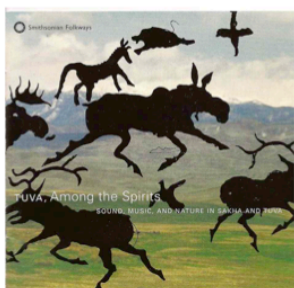
The product – albums and tracks – is what rules now that world music is part of the recorded music industry. At the top, Paul Simon's *Graceland* has sold fourteen million or so albums and *Buena Vista Social Club* eight million. But, sales of most world music albums are counted in the hundreds or low thousands, figures at which the sums involved in recording, paying fees, and promoting rarely add up. The Beatles, in contrast, have notched up close to 1.3 billion album sales, a figure that the *Evening Standard* columnist Norman Lebrecht considers is at the top end of estimates for the entire global historical sales of recordings of European art music – classical music. Lebrecht, in counting the numbers, points out that the health of classical music depends heavily on the Three Tenors and Four Seasons, although we might add the scourges of purists – Vanessa Mae, Adiemus, and so on – indicative, perhaps, of the same audio tourism phenomenon and the same neurological tracing.

Graceland and *Buena Vista* illustrate that, in our world music, collaboration seems the easy way for non-Western musicians to get noticed. It is the Western musicians who become the mediators, producers and owners. So, *Graceland* prominently features African and Latin musicians on each and every track, but all copyright is assigned to Paul Simon; *Buena Vista*, as the film by Wim Wenders illustrates, is the Cuban journey of Ry Cooder to discover musicians sidelined by Castro's takeover. In this sort of collaboration, the familiar is centred within a sampling of the unusual, to create a hybrid that Guillermo Gómez-Pena has called 'lite difference'. 'Lite difference' chimes with much mass culture, with Disneyland, the 'shoppertainment' of our out-of-town malls, and the 'eatertainments' of our themed restaurants. 'Lite difference' exists on Euro-American terms. Hence, the Real World label began with Peter Gabriel's soundtrack for Scorsese's *Last Temptation of Christ*, his own music mixing with Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's *qawwali*, Baaba Maal, with musicians from Egypt, Ethiopia and Morocco, and more. Again, Youssou N'Dour had his first European success working with Gabriel on *Shakin' the Tree* – but the copyright remains with Gabriel.



[Left to right: Paul Simon, *Graceland*, Warnern 925447-2 (and as remastered by Rhino 78904-2; *Buena Vista Social Club*, World Circuit WCD 050; *Passion-Sources*, Real World RWCD2. See also Paul Simon, *Graceland*, Eagle Vision DVD 5-034504- 901070; Wim Wnders, director, *Buena Vista Social Club*, DVD, VCI/Film Four]

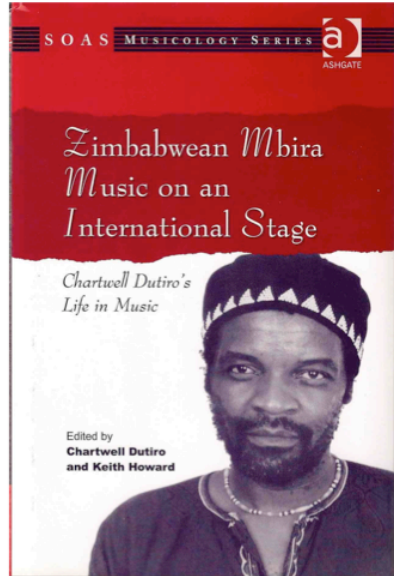
Since the mediator is central, producers are permitted to sample and arrange the music they record. Most famously, Bill Laswell's AcidPro releases on Sony are marketed as 'a musical Esperanto, an amalgam of cultures, subcultures, and street cultures'. *Bhangra* routinely samples live vocals, but remixes them in studios, adding drum boxes. In our world music, producers cut tracks to bite-sized lengths, add extra percussion, introduce fades, or create imaginary soundscapes. This is sometimes so even in the supposedly ethnographic. Smithsonian Folkways' celebrated recording 'Tuva, Among the Spirits' switches from Tuva to Sakha without explicitly telling us, creating an aural impression of unity by juxtaposing recordings made hundreds of miles apart at different times. Another supposedly Siberian recording, 'Trance Siberia', features the voice of Sakha's finest, Stepanida, but panders to European dub and dance tastes. In this case, Stepanida was sent loops and samples to improvise vocals over; back in a studio in Germany, her recorded vocals were mixed and arranged – adding turntables, guitars, strings, sax and didgeridoo – by those who, of course, claim the copyright.



[*Tuva, Among the Spirits: Sound, Music, and Nature in Sakha and Tuva*, Smithsonian Folkways SFW 40452; Hulu Project featuring Stepanida, *TranceSiberia*, CCn'C 01212]

In many ways, our hybrid world music now has its own authenticity: it is what it is. It is also multi-referential. Bands may have mixed memberships: witness the Aboriginal-plus-white Yothu Yindi, Afrocelts, the British electronica band Asian Dub Foundation, or Salif Keita's Afropop. There is a lesson here for ethnomusicologists, but also for cultural studies more generally: rather than look at isolated music cultures, we must, as Veit Erlmann tells us, examine the choices musicians make as they 'move about the spaces between the system and its multiple environments'. Let me introduce an old friend who does just this: Chartwell Dutiro. He played for eight years in The Blacks Unlimited, and persuaded Thomas Mapfumo to include the Zimbabwean *mbira* in the band when, to this point, its Shona melodies were picked out on guitars. Chartwell settled in Britain in 1994, and has since led his own band, largely populated by his students and friends. His music keeps Zimbabwean roots, but as we document in our recent book, it is designed for international stages.

At this point, Chartwell Dutiro played and sang Chipindura (Winds of Change).



[Chartwell Dutiro with Spirit Talk Mbira, *Taanerimwe*, SOAS SOASIS-03; Chartwell Dutiro and Keith Howard, eds, *Zimbabwean Mbira Music on an International Stage: Chartwell Dutiro's Life in Music* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007)]

Commodified world music still expects an element of difference, in this case, Zimbabweanness. But why? Youssou N'Dour, after his recording deal with Virgin soured, famously complained: 'When people say my music is too Western, they must remember that we, too, hear [Western] music in Dakar'. Today, much of the Zimbabwean music issued in southern Africa on Gramma, and most of the songs broadcast on Zimbabwean Radio, sound more like European mainstream pop than the singers we associate with Zimbabwe, singers such as Oliver Mtukudzi and Thomas Mapfumo. A few years back I interviewed a musician who had just finished a new album in Harare: 'Why didn't you use Zimbabwean instruments, the *mbira* and *marimba*?' I asked. 'We did', came the reply, 'but we dropped them from the mix, because we want our songs to get into the charts.' Chasms have opened separating world music the genre and many musics around the world. For example, in Uganda, where

our recent graduate Ben Sellers conducted fieldwork, a take on ragga/reggae with Caribbean roots dominates radio and local CDs, using synthesized drums and keyboards; in the world music market, though, Uganda is represented by hybrid versions of diverse tribal musics, using *likembe* lamellophones, *marimba* idiophones and other instruments. In Australia, Yothu Yindi is marketed as Aboriginal light rock, but in their community, country music, Hawaiian guitars and reggae rule, not middle-of-the-road rock. Again, the Uzbek singer Sevara Nazarkhan has two well-received albums on the Real World label, and featured in BBC Radio 3's World Music Awards in both 2004 and 2005 because, quote, 'her musical beauty opens ears to the sounds of Uzbekistan.' But, she is not a major star in Uzbekistan, and very rarely performs there.

Our world music is increasingly used as a model around the world. One example: In 1973, before the Durham Oriental Music Festival, and before the development of commodified world music, the Korean National Classical Music Institute toured Europe. The rave reviews encouraged Koreans to revise their opinion of traditional music, *kugak*, which in the domestic market came a poor second to Western music and Western pop, accounting for less than 10% of record sales. The musicologist Hahn Man-young wrote:

A [Korean] court piece ... is the equal to a Beethoven symphony, and our traditional ensembles are a match for the Berlin, London and New York Symphony Orchestras.

It is ironic that such value has been placed on Korean music not by Koreans but by Westerners ... Only now that our Institute's performances have been praised abroad have our musicians realized their high artistic excellence ... Why didn't we realize that this was music to be proud of in a modern world?

And so today, with state sponsorship, Korean traditional music has national and international iconicity, with distinct instrumentarium and soundworlds. The Korean state preservation system has been taken up as a model for UNESCO, and three Korean music genres have been appointed UNESCO 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Mankind'. One of these is *p'ansori*, epic

storytelling through song, in Korea associated with star performers and live performances that last five or more hours. Meanwhile, our canon of world music has emerged, and today you will be hard pressed to find *p'ansori* on iTunes or in HMV. On iTunes, 16 tracks come up, only two of which are actually of the traditional, UNESCO nominated genre, and the largest of these is a mere 10-minute excerpt.

Recently, Korean funding agencies and promoters have reassessed the Euro-American world music market, and now push their take on it – popular music and hybrid forms over *kugak*, traditional music. In 2002, they sent the musical *The Last Empress*, after success in Korea, to London. British critics panned it. Michael Billingham in *The Guardian* wrote: ‘Life is full of mysteries. And one of them is what on earth this overblown Korean musical ... is doing. ... It seems to be based on the principle that “anything you can do, we can do worse”’ (5 February 2002). Kate Bassett in *The Independent* added: ‘Not so much *The Last Empress* as the Final Straw... swerving between recondite and appallingly calculated “accessible” ingredients, this is cross- culturalism at its most risible’.



[Poster from defunct website; more information at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Last_Empress]

Koreans, alarmed, ask why Western audiences scorn Korea's best. To reiterate, the commodification of our world music requires difference, but measures difference against the familiar. In *The Last Empress*, the familiar – instruments, harmonies, melodies, and the musical format – did not meet critics' expectations, because it was found lacking when compared to familiar West End musicals. Popular music that works in Korea – and, on a broad canvas, in any other territory – may well not work in Europe and America.

And vice versa: the procession by which I entered this lecture theatre today was led by a group of students performing Korean *p'ungmul*, an ancient, ubiquitous and iconic percussion band. At WOMAD in 2005 and again in 2007, and at festivals before and after this in Singapore, Melbourne, Spain and Portugal, *p'ungmul* was updated by the Korean combo Dulsori. They added mega drum kits and a massive amount of youthful exuberance. Look up YouTube and today it is easier to find Dulsori clips than it is *p'ungmul*; examples from their Singapore performances are at:

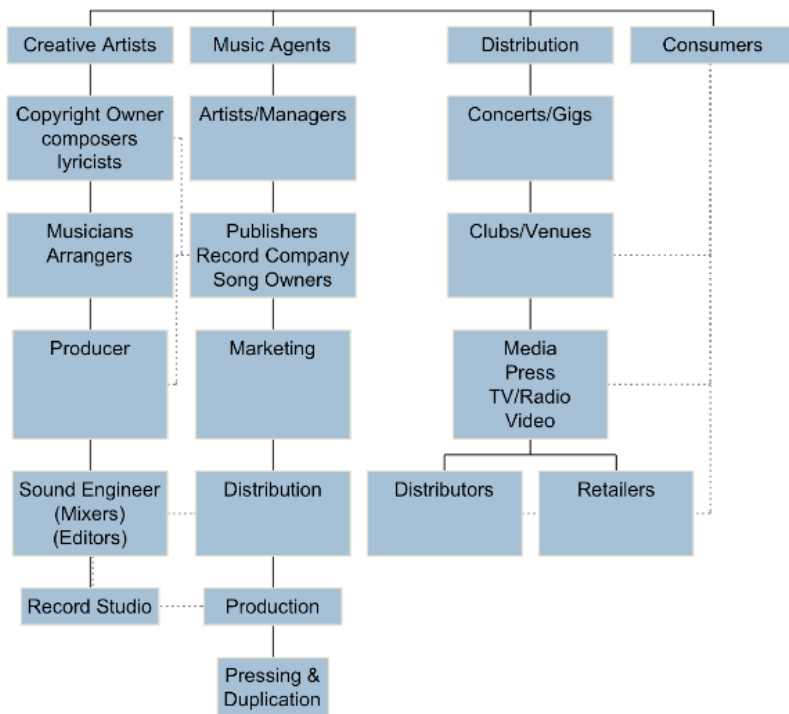
<http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=Wg594YiS8OQ> and

http://uk.youtube.com/watch?v=Pr1txR_LBmo. Purists in Korea complain that Dulsori retains little of the indigenous tradition but, outside the country, Dulsori now stands for Korea.

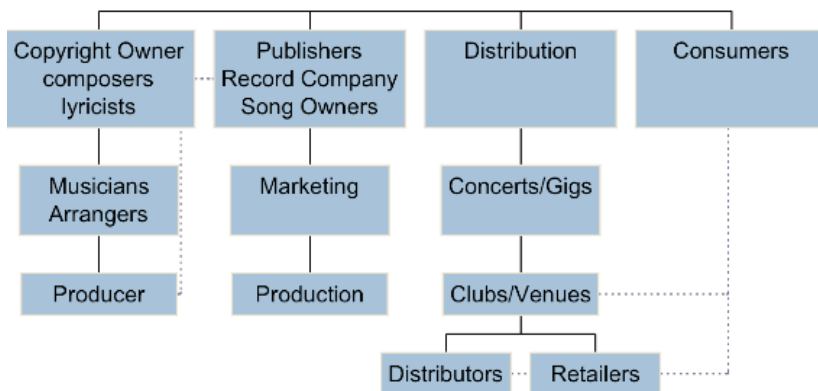


[Photo by Keith Howard]

Back in the 1940s, Theodor Adorno decried the culture industry for having ‘synthetic, planned methods of turning out profits’ through ‘formulaic...hit songs’. Although writing before mass culture became so lucrative, this neatly sums up commodification in the music industry. But that industry is rapidly changing. In 2000, there were seven ‘major’ international companies, all headquartered in Europe or America, surrounded by a large fringe of independent labels. Amalgamations left five ‘majors’ in 2002 and four in 2003. Of these, in 2002, EMI controlled 12%, Universal 27%, BMG 11%, Warner 11% and Sony 14% of the market; in 2003, EMI had 13.4%, Warner 11.3%, Sony/BMG 21.5% and Universal 25.5% (although, no two sets of figures actually agrees!). Minor niche labels began to disappear from retail stores as the latter copied supermarket methods of selling just headline CDs by the ton at heavily discounted prices, even though in 2002 these accounted for 25% of sales. Amongst the ‘majors’, EMI’s recorded music division ran up six years of losses by 2006, when it was bought for a vastly inflated £3.2 billion by Terra Firma Capital Partners; 2007 saw a further £260 million loss. The new boss, Guy Hands, with no music industry track record, has not proved popular as he has begun dismantling inefficiencies. He has redrawn the industry model in which creative artists, producers, agents, managers, talent scouts, marketing staff, distributors, retailers and consumers relate. He has abandoned niche genres to concentrate on megastars. This is a very rough approximation of what the components of the music industry used to be:



And this roughly, is what it is becoming:



The first of these, the standard industry model, wrongly taught musicians that only a major company could invest sufficiently in development, production and marketing to make stars. They used this to justify charging consumers between six and twenty-five times the amount paid to musicians – the CD model has it that artists earn on average 8% of the retail price, the label 49%; the iTunes download model is worse, typically cutting the average artist's take to less than 4% of revenue.

But the recorded music industry is declining, rapidly. It saw an 8% global slide in CD sales in 2001, followed by 8.9% and 7.1% drops in US sales in 2002 and 2003, and further losses in 2005 and 2006. In broadband savvy Korea, the situation is even worse: 80% of the 4000 record stores open in 2000 closed by 2004; sales of sound recordings fell 31.4%, in 2002, 31.2% further in 2003 and 28.4% further in 2004. From the 13th largest recorded music market in the world, and the second largest in Asia, Korea became known for a download culture in which netizens could tailor-make an album for the equivalent of 2p (50 *wõn*). You will recall how the industry here, as elsewhere, reacted to drops in sales: it targeted downloaders – in other words, its own customers – alienating many of them.

Music futurists predict that recorded music will become more and more like radio or TV: users will stop collecting physical copies, abandoning CD and LP collections, but will instead pay small subscriptions for unrestricted access to everything. ISPs and mobile phone companies have begun to make this happen, and given that there are over 1.3 billion (– that magical number of Beatles or classical music albums, again –) mobile phones in use, the futurist Gerd Leonhart reckons that the total turnover of the global recorded music industry is roughly equivalent to every phone user paying a monthly subscription of 30p (50c). The ability of phone users to pay in developing countries is questionable, but the very ubiquity of mobile telecommunications means that the decline of the recording industry is global.

To counter decline, the recorded music industry is shifting its focus from recorded music to live music. In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, large profits from sales of recordings subsidized loss-making tours by Pink Floyd and The Rolling Stones; now, it is the other way around. The shift is to do with digitization, which has moved hyper-consumption from the collection of products – CDs and LPs – to participation in, and identification with, a group alterity. Our world music, as a genre, developed as this shift took place, hence WOMAD is just one of an ever-increasing number of festivals.

In 2006, former Undertones singer Feargal Sharkey, now of Live Music Forum – a British organisation representing industry and music rights owners – trumpeted figures showing a year-on-year increase in live music; Billboard reported similar findings in the United States: more live gigs, and more money generated from live gigs, than ever before. Further increases were reported for 2007. The statistics referred to licensed venues, and in Britain they were used to argue the success of the 2003 Licensing Act. That Act, though, spelt the end for many small-scale gigs. It allowed greater copyright policing, and thereby strengthened the inequitable distribution of rights income towards big players – the ‘major’ companies and their stars. At the same time, the industry has begun to push the so-called ‘360 degree model’, where the recording company takes a share of income from an artist’s live concerts and merchandising.

Why should musicians play along? What happens if we take the recorded music industry out of the equation, flipping Wallerstein’s world systems theory to argue that as the distribution of music changes, so musicians will be forced back onto themselves to find new ways of promoting and disseminating their music? This idea is tempting precisely because the familiar/Other world music mix is built on inequality, distributing its rights income from performances and recordings primarily in Europe and America, thereby favouring the industry that, in turn, favours its big stars. It is also tempting because new research is challenging Chris Anderson’s idea of the

‘long tail’ – in which online music sales could avoid the 80/20 retail rule, allowing obscure products to find an audience because of the cheapness and simplicity of online searching and the global accessibility it brought – and questions the strategies behind on-line world music charts (see www.thelongtailbook.co.uk, and compare to http://www.theregister.co.uk/2008/11/07/long_tail_debunked/).

Actually, although commentators on mass culture and consumerism routinely point to the rise of multinational corporations and the reduction of state control, some live music has always resisted this. Indeed, Boulez argued with Foucault that music production had never solely been about commodification and profit. So, in *Art Worlds*, the American sociologist Howard Becker argued for state intervention in the arts; the American National Endowment for the Arts functions precisely as this, as a conduit for support and sponsorship of less profitable arts. Similarly, John Maynard Keynes in Britain ensured that the fledgling Arts Council would focus on excellence above popularity, a focus that blurred only when the 1980s brought greater private sponsorship.

It is with live music that consumerism can be subsumed beneath the excellence above popularity mantra. Consider, first, cultural diplomacy. Iconic classical, court and folk musics are today used to promote national identity, to smooth the mechanisms of exchange at the UN and at state functions, at the opening of exhibitions, and at sporting events. Consider, second, the twentieth-century tradition of folk festivals. Public funding sat behind these, from Soviet and youth festivals that encouraged exchange and collaboration, through urban extravaganzas, to time-concentrated free festivals focusing on regions or styles. The legacy survives in, amongst others, the London-based Music Village and the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, and is hinted at by WOMAD’s claim to be a world village.



[Photos taken by Keith Howard at WOMAD 2005, Reading, UK]

Third, folklore is linked to the excellence above popularity mantra in UNESCO's 'Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Mankind'. Nominations to UNESCO were made in 2001, 2003 and 2005 to support cultural genres – music, dance, rituals, crafts, and cultural spaces – whose survival was threatened.

See, for an overview:

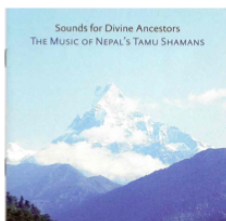
<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=EN&pg=home>.

Nominations required a host group supported by a UNESCO member state to set out plans to preserve, promote, and teach the cultural genre. Rather than archive recordings and create catalogues and historical accounts, debate shifted to sustaining music genres as living forms of cultural production. In doing so, live music was prioritized. Recordings may be made to promote and preserve, rather than to generate profits, and these recordings are increasingly streamed on the Internet. Bluntly put, none of the 90 'Masterpieces' now appointed from around the world are parts of the mainstream in our commodified world music canon.

Intriguingly, until the turn of the new millennium, many academics would have argued that it is in the nature of cultures to change over time, hence undesirable if not impossible for 'Masterpieces' to capture, freeze, and maintain a performance art or craft. That is no longer the case, however, since academics have become active participants in the 'Masterpieces' process, preparing candidate files for submission to UNESCO, and then, through the auspices of the International Council for Traditional Music, evaluating these files.

Academics thus validate local traditions and empower local musicians. Let me introduce a personal case. Yarjung Krömchhai is a Tamu or Gurung shaman from Nepal. He joined us in the AHRC Research Centre to record and document exemplary versions of chants and percussion music for use by the Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh, an organisation devoted to promoting Tamu culture in Pokhara. They wanted teaching aids, and a recording they could sell to raise funds. Yarjung assembled a group of nine shamans, from both traditions (*pachyu* and *khlyepri*) and from both of the two clans of each (Krömchhai and Chyhagli, and Mhauchhai and Tu), and together rehearsed a shared repertory. I recorded the CD in the Bhaktapur studio of the University of Kathmandu, not, as would be characteristic of ethnomusicology, in the field as a ritual took place. The CD is distributed here and in Pokhara. More recently, we have together prepared an exploration of symbolism in chants and rhythms that is published both in an academic journal and on the Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh website.

At this point, Yarjung gave a blessing chant...



[*Sounds for Divine Ancestors: The Music of Nepal's Tamu Shamans*, SOAS SOASIS- 04; photos taken by Keith Howard at Bhaktapur campus of University of Kathmandu in February 2003]

The fourth aspect of live music relevant to my discussion is performance pedagogy within higher education. The nineteenth century Humboldtian distinction between practice and theory has broken down with, in music, ethnomusicologists leading the way. In fact, the label 'world music' was not new in Islington in 1987, but had been used for a programme set up at Wesleyan University in

Connecticut in the 1960s. That programme, led by Robert Brown and David McAllester, hired celebrated Asian and African musicians as professors to teach Indian *sitar*, Japanese *shakuhachi* and Indonesian *gamelan* performance, at a time when many universities – including Oxford and Cambridge – still resisted offering performance tuition for credit within music degrees.

The Wesleyan programme derived from pioneering work by Mantle Hood at UCLA. Hood had defined what he did as developing ‘bimusicality’ – he expected students to learn to perform the music they were studying as a way to gain a second musical language, one separate and distinct from the dominant language most of them had grown up with, namely European art music. If they could perform *gamelan*, or other musics, they would understand its structure and could communicate with its musicians.

Hood, and my supervisor in Britain, John Blacking, did not expect ethnomusicology students to become professional performers, but from the 1970s onwards, a number did. It was by then normal for performance to feature in academic degrees, and ethnomusicologists began to be hired by universities partly because they could teach world music ensembles. This was particularly the case in the United States, where ensembles function as the equivalent of a university choir or orchestra.



[Left, Lila Cita Gamelan, rehearsing at SOAS, 2006; Right, SOAS Chinese ensemble, performing at SOAS, 2005]

Performance is today just about the most popular component of ethnomusicology programmes at SOAS and elsewhere, and it is the primary way in which students make themselves heard both around campus and in the wider world. However, one issue that arises with such ensembles, where SOAS might be expected to take a steering role, is the expectation amongst many audiences and promoters that, unless performing hybrid collaborations, world music performers will be phenotypal ringers – Koreans performing Korean music, Zimbabweans performing Zimbabwean music. Within the frame of this lecture, this satisfies the exotic requirement of world music, but must surely be challenged. In *Zimbabwean Mbira Music on an International Stage*, Chartwell Dutiro critiqued the situation:

If the guitar has a place in African music, why can't a westerner master the *mbira*? Some people tell me I can't be the leader with whites in my band, but I think the mix of people I work with adds to my music. Sponsors disagree. I went to the University of Bologna to run seminars twice, and then they invited me to come play a concert. We agreed fees and terms, but when they got the list of band members they cancelled the concert, saying they only wanted to book Africans to play African music...

SOAS has already gone through this same debate in the context of language teaching. It has had to decide what it means by 'near native fluency' in, say, Arabic or Thai, and has tended to emphasise the importance of pedagogy in developing fluency through understanding. Taking this back to teaching world music performance would suggest that we should strive to faithfully transmit musical structures and respect for cultural knowledge in order that our students will, for instance, play *gamelan* as if they are Indonesians. But this is not how music performance works, because musical traditions are, to quote the UCLA ethnomusicologist Timothy Rice, 'historically constructed, socially maintained and individually applied'. The 'individually applied' bit is distinct from competency in a spoken language although, given that music is a species-specific attribute of man, there is nothing to prevent a European or American learning performance fluency in Asian or African music. Ethnomusicology students have their own experiences of, for example, *gamelan*, perhaps not needing to adopt

an Indonesian body language; or their own experimental take on African chanting, settling on particular harmonies or favourite riffs; or they improvise together, mixing, say, Klezmer, gypsy music, and jazz.

This presents a conundrum. As students learn to perform, as they develop their live music skills, and as they create their own, individually applied, ‘takes’ on music of the world, they balance their own understandings of the familiar and the Other, influenced both by ethnomusicology and by the commodified world music they hear.

It is the ethnomusicologist’s duty to both support and faithfully reflect the cultural groups we work with and to know how the music of Asia, Africa or elsewhere is represented in commodified world music. Our challenge, then, is to recognise world music for what it is, and to prevent it undermining the musical diversity that makes the world an agreeable and stimulating place in which to live.

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NB: URLs correct in November 2008. Although I have resisted giving full citations in the above pages, many of my ideas have been influenced by the writings of Timothy Taylor and others.

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This lecture represented something of a departure from the academic work with which I am normally associated, and below I list the books I have written or edited:

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