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**Call and Response: SEM President's Roundtable 2016,
"Ethnomusicological Responses to the Contemporary Dynamics
of Migrants and Refugees"**

Anne K. Rasmussen

Angela Impey

Rachel B. Willson

Ozan Aksoy

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ANNE K. RASMUSSEN (CHAIR), ANGELA IMPEY,
RACHEL BECKLES WILLSON, OZAN AKSOY,
DENISE GILL, AND MICHAEL FRISHKOPF

"Framing the Round Table"

Anne K. Rasmussen

The privilege of organizing the SEM President's Roundtable in 2016 and 2017 provided an opportunity to call attention to a topic that has concerned my teaching and research since graduate school. For the first iteration of "Ethnomusicological Responses to the Contemporary Dynamics of Migrants and Refugees" I convened a panel of people whose perspectives I admire. I wanted to learn from them, and I did. As someone who has been involved with Middle Eastern and more specifically Arab music and culture within my own academic and regional community, I was making new efforts in the fall of 2016 toward engaged ethnomusicology in Virginia among my own newest neighbors, and organizing this SEM President's Roundtable gave me courage and inspiration. Our "Call and Response" presents snapshots from five colleagues who are engaged with communities of migrants and refugees in Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and North America.¹

All of our presentations at the Washington, DC, meeting of 2016 were abruptly reframed by the presidential election of November 8, 2016, which occurred just a day before the conference, and our panel, in the words of Angela Impey, "could not have come at a more pressing moment." Impey, who calls out "the proximity of the so-called migrant crisis to our everyday lives in the Global North," draws on her long experience with migrants in Africa to understand scenarios that play out close by, among, and concerning migrant and immigrant communities near her home in London and elsewhere to further investigate how sound is implicated as a "purposeful strategy for self-transformation." Describing

both a concert setting, where Azeri music stridently occupies, at full volume, a church soundscape, and the sounding of migration, where the guilt of survival is performed through the repeated listening to a cell phone recording of a Syrian relative's escape, Impey wonders aloud at the ways in which lessons learned in Africa among people, some of whom who are refugees in their own land, can be relevant in such a variety of dynamic, diasporic contexts. Impey advocates that we employ "imaginative transdisciplinarity" in our methods while recognizing the challenges we face when trying to pursue such work with either the understanding of our institutions and disciplinary units or collaboration with policymakers and aid workers. Notwithstanding, Impey celebrates our capacity to humanize through ethnography and encourages us to integrate our work from the outset within "collaborative frameworks of research and action."

Rachel Beckles Willson exemplifies the kind of "active, intimate listening" that Impey recommends by describing her summer as a "volunteer musician" at a reception center in eastern Sicily for unaccompanied minors from sub-Saharan Africa, where moments of "self-transformation" and the construction of a community-in-limbo happens through music making. As a participant and leader, Beckles Willson was witness to the myth of adjustment among young men who struggled not to fail or disappoint the loved ones they left behind in their quest for a better life. Later, her musical initiatives became a catalyst for positive microassimilations in the context of a language class. Her work focuses not just on refugees but, more specifically, on women, migrants who are victimized in the process of relocation by instability, insecurity, and violence. She opens the door to a classroom where Nigerian women, many of them victims of human trafficking, find dignity and joy in the simple ritual of learning the Italian language through a familiar African tune with new formulaic lyrics created by Beckles Willson. Together and through music, even if only for that afternoon, they become a community of survivors, cocreating, following Tia DeNora, "a temporary asylum."

Reflecting on his own experience as a migrant twice displaced, Ozan Aksoy acknowledges the age-old process of migration and the role of the legendary minstrel singer (*ozan*) to "imagine place" for his community. Originally from Turkey, then Germany, and now the United States, Aksoy, himself a part of this lineage of minstrel musicians, alternates between his own reflexive reaction to the different and limited opportunities for gigs in New York City and a more academic stance on the need to move beyond the "ethnomusicology of nation" and toward an "ethnomusicology of migration." While he critiques our field, he also acknowledges his extraordinary privilege as a scholar in the United States while many of his compatriots experience unthinkable trauma. Aksoy's precious contributions to the panel, to our community, and to our field reflect the dual subjectivity of a scholar and a migrant who is trying to work out for himself how

our discipline can remain relevant and recognize that the migration of peoples, musics, and cultures is more the norm than the exception.

Denise Gill presents a stunning recollection of her time working alongside the women of the Turkish state funerary municipalities who make refugee lives matter by preparing their bodies in death for the afterlife. Gill's portrait of "deathwork" not only innovatively casts our analysis of migration to the context of performative sound and human touch but also extends it toward the "post-human." Presenting just a small portion of her rich new ethnographic work concerning pervasive Syrian migration to Turkey, Gill places her ethnography within a Mediterranean Sea that has been transformed from a source of life to a context for death. She writes this sounded deathwork into the larger literature in anthropology and ethnomusicology on laments. Piercing the veil with the sound of water and voice, between life and afterlife, we see the enactment of extreme compassion and humanity on the part of Turkish women who prepare and usher anonymous, uninvited Syrian corpses to a place of repose.

Finally, Michael Frishkopf, grounded in the phenomenological tradition of Habermas, elegantly theorizes the precarious relationship between "lifeworld" and "system world," imploring, "How can we ensure that lifeworld values take precedence over system values?" He asserts that money and power, and the consequent interactions of social macrostructures, have dwarfed lived meaningful realities and relationships the world over, a declaration that is difficult to oppose. Before reviewing two of his participatory action research projects, one involving study abroad students who worked with an NGO to produce the music of Liberian refugees in Ghana and the other involving the Middle Eastern and North African Music Ensemble at the University of Alberta and their collaboration in music and dance with recently resettled refugees from Syria, Frishkopf offers this modest proclamation: music is the most powerful available social technology forging human connectivity across system-induced divisions.

The Migration of Ethnomusicology toward the "Diasporic Domestic"

When I was a graduate student in the late 1980s, the study of American immigrant communities was emergent. At that point, to study the assimilated, the diluted, the mixed-up, and the inauthentic was less prestigious in the workshop of ethnomusicological knowledge production than to study the (formerly) colonized world. The discipline favored the study of non-Western music from stable societies (Rice 2014:192), while the music of North American minorities played out in multicultural festivals curated by public ethnomusicologists. Unlike the seasoned graduate student cohort at UCLA, who traveled afar and could sing, dance, and hand-grind coffee in languages I had never even heard of, I chose to do my first research in Patterson, New Jersey; the Blackstone Valley of Rhode

Island; Brooklyn, New York; and Dearborn, Michigan. It was only later in my career that I established research projects in Indonesia and the Arab Gulf.²

Studies of immigrant and community music making of the 1990s tended to focus on finding a system, on continuity and change, and perhaps on that pervasive theme: music and identity. Music was key to identity; identity could be expressed through music; (some) people asserted choices about their identities through music; and music was key to the articulation of individual and community identities. Music triggered memory and made nostalgia. The musical processes at work in diasporic communities merited documentation and presentation, which in turn led to advocacy for a sonic patchwork quilt of multiculturalism in the academy. In an attempt to elevate immigrant music cultures to the level of the European American canon, we insisted that space be made on the record shelf for a globally informed Americana (Lornell and Rasmussen [1997] 2016).

Although many of the communities in question made their way to or in North America as survivors of war, genocide, natural disasters, slavery, colonialism, settler colonialism, misogyny, political instability, and physical and psychological trauma, our work tended to focus on success rather than survival.³ The music of a diversity of voices was positive and exciting, as it worked to articulate and operationalize ideas about the civil rights of myriad communities and to teach America about itself. I would argue that our field still privileges studies of settled or stable communities in defined, bordered places (or perhaps the interesting minority groups of those places) in favor of what I call the “diasporic domestic.” People in the 1980s and 1990s who were listening to the American patchwork were reorienting the discipline of ethnomusicology, opening a bounded musical culture to diversity and inclusivity, an act that, because it flies in the face of the mythos of a nation-state culture, remains precarious to this day. I believe Denise Gill speaks most soundly as she calls out “the dissolution of particular certitudes that the terms ‘community,’ ‘tradition,’ and ‘nation-state’ once ostensibly offered us.” She continues: “The study of music or sound under the umbrella of nation or region is not a theoretical certitude.”

One aspect of my training that was consistent with those in my cohort who came before me was a commitment to learning and performing the Arab music that first captured my attention in my midtwenties. I have my mentors at UCLA to thank for encouraging me to cultivate the performance of Arab music as a methodology for both teaching and research. It is through the Middle Eastern Music Ensemble that I established at William and Mary in 1994 that I continue to “criss-cross social boundaries” (Frishkopf) of generation, education, ethnicity, religion, class, and interest as we engage communities and explore histories, biographies, and identities through the serious study of Arab and other Middle Eastern musics.

During my 2016–17 sabbatical, in concert with the planning of the SEM President’s Roundtable (the summary of which you are reading), I pledged to *apply* my teaching and performance more fully to this diasporic domestic, and I began by making appointments with the directors of the refugee resettlement offices in my area. I hit it off with Suheir Diyab, an Iraqi who came to the United States with her family by way of Syria, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates. Although a building engineer by profession, Ms. Diyab began her American life as a cashier at a 7-Eleven convenience store, quickly navigating her way to the position of the director of refugee resettlement in Hampton Roads, Virginia. Suheir Diyab and I have collaborated on a number of events and projects to date: our Middle Eastern Music Ensemble has performed three times for the annual refugee holiday party; my first-year seminar students hosted a group of refugee youth from Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, Tanzania, and the Congo for a William and Mary field day on a sunny Saturday in September 2017; and in April 2018 we cohosted a concert to benefit the Hampton Roads refugee resettlement program, inviting Imad Al Taha, a recently resettled refugee violinist from Iraq, to join us as our guest artist.

I know Imad as a “field colleague,” someone who generously hosted me in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, first in 2011 and then again in October 2016 for about eight days. Since he so graciously introduced me to his exciting world of late-night recording studio sessions, where musicians from Syria and Iraq and elsewhere in the Arab world pump out the slick, popular, nationalist music of the Gulf States, I felt it only appropriate, when his family successfully landed in Utica, New York, as refugees in late November 2016, that I share my world with him. First, I invited Imad to our annual meeting in Denver in 2017 to participate in my second SEM President’s Roundtable as a panelist, and we featured him as a musician both at the opening ceremonies and with an ensemble of ethnomusicologists at the Mercury Café, the “SEM Speakeasy,” under the moniker “Imad and Friends.”⁴ The following spring, he spent five days at William and Mary as a guest of the college and the featured artist for our ensemble. Although Imad has done some concertizing since his arrival in the United States, he told me that he had not had such an “experience like home” since his arrival seventeen months earlier. Our ensemble of twenty-five was prepared with a full program of Arab music and song; the two classes he visited were keenly interested in any aspect of “his story” and his music that he cared to share with us; and an evening at Suheir’s was complete with platters piled high with seasoned rice and grilled meat punctuated by raucous amateur music and dance making by three generations of Iraqi refugees and a carload of my ensemble members. Finally, the *communitas* generated by our event and its wake percolated with interactions in Arabic and English among an eclectic group of students, families, and fans who welcomed Imad with warmth, curiosity, inclusivity, and empathy.⁵

Interacting with Imad and his family and with our new neighbors in Virginia as *this* ethnomusicologist's response to the contemporary dynamics of migrants and refugees certainly has me thinking about survivor cultures and the ways in which our "lifeworlds" overlap with our academic "system worlds," to again draw from Frishkopf's paradigm. Using our skills as cultural specialists, intimate listeners, and empathic ethnographers toward community-engaged activism has become a calling for our discipline.⁶ Yet while we facilitate interactions and tell stories for our classes, audiences, conferences, and publications, we should remain cautiously curious, vigilant to voyeurism, and sensitive to the possibility that tragedy may itself be abused as the handmaiden of academic and social capital. So while speaking and playing from the stage of our disciplinary platform (if and when possible) to insist on music as a human right and to harness its capacity to restore civility is essential, I think it is important that we exercise some caution about spinning our goodwill into academic gold.⁷

Notes

1. Video streams of the 2016 and 2017 President's Roundtable are archived on the SEM website at https://iu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/SEM2016-Session+10+A/1_88f6kzk. The 2017 President's Roundtable, entitled "Engaged Activism among Ethnomusicologists Responding to the Contemporary Dynamic of Migrants and Refugees," included the following presenters: Annemette Kirkgaard, University of Copenhagen; Cathy Ragland, University of North Texas; Marcia Osteshewski, Cape Breton University; Oliver Shao, Indiana University, Bloomington; Imad Al Taha, Iraqi Musician, Utica, New York; and Anne K. Rasmussen, chair. See https://iu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/SEM2017+Annual+Meeting+President%27s+RoundtableA+Engaged+Activism+among+Ethnomusicologists+Responding+to+the+Contemporary+Dynamic+of+Migrants+and+Refugees/1_0spyazqz.

2. For a review of a selection of scholars who also concerned themselves with immigrant and community music in the United States, see the fourteen case studies and the introduction to the volume edited by Lornell and Rasmussen, *The Music of Multicultural America: Performance, Identity, and Community in the United States* ([1997] 2016).

3. In his exceptional monograph on the music of a community that has experienced perpetual migration to North America and return to Mexico, Alex Chávez writes of "the hard reality that expressive culture often circulates under brutal circumstances" (2017:61). For more on the shift from stories of success to survivors, see the contributions of Josh Pilzer and others to the *Oxford Handbook of Applied Ethnomusicology*, edited by Svanibor Pettan and Jeff Todd Titon (2015).

4. The SEM president has a small discretionary budget, which is what supported the travel and hotel for Imad al Taha. See also my president's columns in the *Society for Ethnomusicology Newsletter* 51(1) (Winter 2017) and 51(4) (Fall 2017) newsletters.

5. Both Imad Al Taha and Suheir Diyab have explained to me that the eclecticism of the refugee peer group into which a newly arrived family must assimilate can be even more challenging than adjusting to the new host culture.

6. I mention only three of the almost innumerable examples that have affected my professional and personal life of late: the SEM-ICTM forum in Limerick; the *Oxford Handbook of Applied Ethnomusicology*, edited by Jeff Titon and Svanibor Pettan; and teaching for William and Mary's Sharpe Community Scholars program (<https://www.wm.edu/as/charlescenter/scholars/sharpe/index.php>).

7. Sometimes it seems as though everyone wants a piece of this migrant and refugee action. I recall my conversation with composer Kareem Roustom about a request that landed in our email inboxes for Syrian lullabies that were to be “composed into a score for the Kronos Quartet” and a “high profile actor” who would spin a tale called “Marwan.” I smelled the rat named Tokenism, but Karrem Roustom responded constructively with a thoughtful blog post about the dangers of simplistic artistic endeavors and perhaps unintentional orientalism. See David Hughes’s foreword to the SEM Listserv of a query from Ketaki Zodgekar of England’s *Guardian* newspaper, July 17, 2017, at 12:08:08 PM EDT, and Roustom’s blog post.

“Activism, Advocacy, and Community Engagement” Angela Impey

I begin with two scenarios. The first involves a concert that I attended recently in a small church in London that was hosted by the Anglo-Azerbaijani Society, whose membership comprises some of the seven thousand ethnic Azeri refugees who settled in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s following the conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh on the Azerbaijan-Armenian border. The first thing I noticed upon entering the hall were the massive speakers located on either side of the stage. As expected, when the music began—two accordions, keyboard, *tar*, *darbuka*, and singer—the volume was indescribable. Yet I seemed to be the only one in the audience who was physically cowering under the force of the sound. When, after a couple of numbers, every musician on-stage indicated to the sound engineer to *increase* the volume, the distortion became so unbearable that I politely escaped through a side exit, leaving behind a spirited crowd happily singing along to their favorite tunes.

The experience was a persuasive endorsement of ethnomusicology’s submission that music is much more than the sound it makes, making particularly evident the effect of the emotional, social, and historical on our perceptual judgments of sound. In this instance, while volume may be inherently part of the Azeri musical aesthetic, it appeared to be invoked more resolutely as the actuating register of enunciation, its extravagance testimony to the persistence of transnational rupture and to the corresponding tenacity of national, territorial, and home identifications.

The second scenario relates to a master’s thesis recently submitted by one of my students, Karen Boswall, whose work with Syrian women refugees in Jordan explored their use of mobile phones to facilitate daily listening rituals: prayers and recitations in the morning, patriotic songs late at night when the children were in bed and it was safe to weep. She cites an example of a woman whose listening included recordings made of rockets exploding outside her house while still in Syria, the sounds providing an immediate portal to a past world and to her relationships, helping to ameliorate—if only momentarily—the guilt of survival.

Both scenarios invoke Kathleen Stewart's rendering of "atmospheric attunements," to those "tuning into" moments that become fully sensory and that attend to "the quickening of nascent forms" (2010:4). In both instances, sound is implicated as a purposeful strategy for self-transformation, "pushing circulating forces into form, texture and density that can be felt, imagined, and brought to bear" (2), the first experienced as intimately public, the other, as intimately alone.

It would be reasonable to suggest that the call for ethnomusicology to attend in new ways to the contemporary dynamics of refugees and migrants is associated with the proximity of the so-called migrant crisis to our everyday lives in the Global North. Forced migration is not a new phenomenon, of course, nor is ethnomusicology's consideration of aesthetic agency in relation to displacement or violent rupture. However, given the apparent alliance between "Brexit" (Britain's exit from the European Union) and "Trump's America," with their corresponding drive toward higher walls and deeper divisions and their patriotic determination to restore a fictional national identity by disallowing or delegitimizing *certain* migrants, this conversation could not have come at a more pressing moment.

If there was anything to be learned from engaging in research in apartheid South Africa in the 1980s, as I did, and among black South Africans who were subjected to systemic forced displacement—often rendered permanent refugees in their own land—it was the importance of active, intimate listening. The proximity and the everyday accountabilities demanded of that environment summoned in certain scholarship an inventory of concerns that resonate with much of the academic discourse about refugees and migrants today: boundaries of belonging and limits of inclusion, excessive administration yet legal exclusion, intense surveillance yet public invisibility, silence, alienation, insecurity, trauma.

At the same time, however, these struggles in South Africa turned our attention to those everyday "atmospheric attunements" that animated people's expectations, recognitions, judgments, and dreams (Stewart 2010:11); to the place of music "to fill out and fill in" (DeNora 2000:74); to resilience, resistance, rights, and justice. It impelled many scholars to develop a research approach based on certain obligations. First, rather than attend exclusively to problems and limitations, it supported a listening strategy based on strengths and agency, using these creative capacities and determinations as the substance that directed our inquiry. Second, we committed to ethnography as a basis for constructive action, regardless of the ambivalence demonstrated by the academy at the time toward public engagement.

Attempting to work across the academic / public sector divide has not come without its challenges, the greatest being how to build “credible” evidence from communication modalities that are widely regarded as oblique outside of our own disciplinary environment. Information gleaned from the sound/affect/embodiment nexus is considered way too abstruse to have practical impact in the technocratic world of public administration or humanitarian aid (i.e., the sectors that dominate much of the refugee, forced migrant, and postconflict social integration environments), where prevailing economic and speech-text hegemonies retain muscular authority over what is considered tangible, “proper,” and policy-relevant knowledge. The marginality of performative knowledge was made particularly evident in an interview recently conducted by one of my graduate students with a senior program officer at the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), Britain’s preeminent independent think-tank on international development and humanitarian issues, who stated, “When we are making policy recommendations, the stakeholders want to see hard evidence, and they want to see value for money. When we talk about arts and culture, it can seem wishy-washy. Social welfare response mechanisms are based on a professionalization of language, policy and practice, [which are] not conducive with words like ‘arts,’ [and currently] there is no delineation [in the development sector] between arts for art sake and arts that have real impact within development models” (personal communication, Sylvia Harrison, 2014, London). Though deeply dispiriting, this statement is a stark warning that in order to move beyond the rhetoric of activism or public engagement within our own community of practice, we need to begin to explore new methodologies that build on strategic collaborations and embrace multidimensional approaches to knowledge accumulation, dissemination, and implementation.

In attempting to find ways to reposition my own research to this effect, I have been particularly interested in emerging discourses in the environmental sustainability sector on “imaginative transdisciplinarity” (Brown, Harris, and Russell 2010; Brown and Harris 2014). The aim of transdisciplinarity is to jump the deep epistemological grooves that define our specific specialisms and to generate innovative ways to tackle global problems such as climate change. Such an approach necessarily proceeds from recognition of the equal value of different kinds of knowledge, drawing on perspectives from a range of actors, including specialist institutions, public agencies, the private sector, and civil society. Its commitment to working across boundaries does not necessarily presume the rejection of former modes and tools but accommodates an understanding of knowledge as multiple, mutually valuable, and based on application. As elucidated by Valerie Brown, John A. Harris, and Jacqueline Y. Russell in their volume, *Tackling Wicked Problems through Transdisciplinary Imagination*, “The task is . . . to draw on all our intellectual resources, valuing the contributions

of all the academic disciplines as well as other ways in which we construct our knowledge. And that brings the challenge of developing open transdisciplinary modes of inquiry capable of meeting the needs of the individual, the community, the specialist traditions, and influential organizations, and allows for a holistic leap of the imagination” (2010:4).

By way of example, I would like to briefly share some of my thinking about the potential application of a transdisciplinary approach to my work in South Sudan, a country in eastern Africa that suffered the global dispersal of more than four million citizens in the 1980s and 1990s during its last civil war with (the previously north) Sudan. Following formal secession from Sudan in 2011, many thousands of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) returned home to South Sudan, generating new economic challenges and reigniting long-latent political tensions locally. Sadly, this resulted in the fresh outbreak of civil war, precipitating the flight of many returnees back to the refugee camps in neighboring Kenya and Uganda.

When conducting research in a fledgling state such as South Sudan, whose formal infrastructure is almost entirely dependent on international aid, one becomes intensely aware of the persistent Euro-centric prescriptions that frame such foreign development and humanitarian interventions. Yet equally evident are the potential contributions that can be made by ethnography to transformational thinking and to policy design and implementation.

While analyzing a large repertoire of songs of Dinka pastoralists—one of several related Nilotic groups in the country—I became intrigued by their role as citizenly engagements in the dialogue about war, peace, and nation building. Yet while these publicly performed testimonials may carry rhetorical authority at the local level and are invoked in customary law, they remain largely invisible to those responsible for the establishment of a central judiciary, as well as those engaged in deliberating a formal postconflict transformative justice process.

Experience has taught me that there would be little practical benefit to talking *at* the legal establishment about how aesthetic forms and processes cultivate precise sensibilities in Dinka culture (as, indeed, in other Nilotic cultures), that is, receptivity, respect, empathy, and self-awareness, which are considered a necessary precondition for reconciliation. Any proposition to accommodate within a state-based reparation process sung testimonials and extended “justice rituals” (i.e., contingent, multiply encoded rhetorical practices that convey and sustain “feelings of justice”) would undoubtedly be dismissed as “wishy-washy,” to reference our friend at the ODI.

However, repositioning my work under the more inclusive rubric of “legal humanities,” whose expressed aim is the generation of multi-epistemological dialogue between disparate actors, may well be a more achievable pathway toward a hearing. Transdisciplinarity in the context of transformative justice would

conceivably involve collaboration between legal scholars and practitioners, religious and customary leaders, civil society members, and researchers, who would work together toward the design and implementation of locally apposite processes of arbitration and reconciliation.

While ethnomusicologists have become increasingly involved in managing performances and workshops with migrants and refugees in various localities in the world and in exploring music's psychosocial capacities in relation to traumatic displacement, I argue for ethnography as a vital form of intervention. As scholars and activists, we have what most public agencies seldom have, which is the privilege of protracted exposure and the purpose to listen. Through the intimacies afforded by ethnography, we have the capacity to draw attention to the resourcefulness and agency of displaced individuals. We can contribute toward the humanization of the often highly technocratic humanitarian landscape by sharing people's stories, songs, and aspirations. We can draw on interviews, recordings, and fieldnotes as evidence to lobby for more equitable policies and practices. However, rather than working exclusively within our disciplinary silos and talking *at* other sectors, it would be far more effective to integrate our work from the very outset within collaborative frameworks of research and action.

As a final word, I would say that as teachers, one of the biggest impacts that we can make at this moment of rising right-wing politics, much of it driven by the so-called migrant crisis, is to produce a new generation of scholars who are capable of critical thought, who have the courage to challenge prejudice and hate, and who have the conviction to galvanize others toward a more just and tolerant world.

"Listening through the Warzone of Europe"

Rachel Beckles Willson

Modu has moved into the center of the circle and picked up the *djembe* from the floor. Holding it under his left arm, he raises his right hand. "You listen now," he says gently, turning around as he speaks. The young men in the circle gradually stop rattling shakers, clapping, and chatting. Now he is facing me again. He looks straight in my eyes as he starts singing, his right hand padding gently on the *djembe*. "You've got to cry for peace in Africa." He is turning on the spot. "All the womens are crying, all the childrens are crying, that's why you've got to cry for peace in Africa." As he comes full circle he points at me—"now you"—so I sing the last phrase of his melody once, then again. Some in the group pick it up as well, one joins with a shaker, then others copy, and we're all singing it over and over, but Adbullah is holding out his hand, pointing to a young man who has started tapping a *djembe*—"no drum," he says. We stop to listen while he sings another part over his own *djembe* beat. "All the children are crying in

Mali.” He rotates as he sings; when he is facing me, he pauses, and I look at the glassiness of his eyes while I echo each of his phrases and hear the shakers and voices building up again. “All the children are crying in Ghana. All the children are crying in Nigeria. That’s why you’ve got to cry for peace . . .”

Modu, aged sixteen, is one of many thousands of unaccompanied minors who have arrived in Europe across the Mediterranean from sub-Saharan Africa after passing through the militia-run, collapsed state of Libya. He lives in a reception center for minors on the Italian island of Sicily, where he is provided with food and lodging and some minimal access to education. Modu hopes to gain further proficiency in European languages, learn professional skills or become an apprentice, and build an independent life. I am interested here in thinking about what it means to listen to his voice, to echo his voice, and to see him use his voice within a community.

Listening to Individuals in a Fraught Space

I met Modu in the summer of 2017 when I worked as a volunteer musician among unaccompanied minors in reception centers in the Syracuse district of eastern Sicily.¹ These centers are funded through the Italian Home Office but with the support of the European Union, and they are run with varying levels of efficiency by associations of social workers, psychologists, and tutors. They are located outside urban centers, often with consideration for integrating asylum seekers into the surrounding community. Educational provision is meager and is enhanced sporadically by volunteer programs; nevertheless, for an outsider wanting to volunteer it can be a challenge to make contact, let alone arrange access.

To visit a center is to enter a labyrinth of fragments of past lives, journeys, painful arrivals, and dreamed futures. It is also to enter a space in which Italian, colonial languages English and French, pidgins, the (often) religious language of Arabic, and a range of African languages such as Wolof and Tigrinya intermingle and alternatively bridge and divide the young people. This is also a world of intense bureaucracy. For these individuals, all of them between fourteen and twenty-one, there are many hours of paperwork and court rulings ahead.² Moreover, their bureaucratic limbo exists in a larger limbo: figures vary, but the Italian economy is stagnant, and unemployment is high.

I based my initial workshops as a volunteer musician on earlier experience with a London-based refugee choir and recent research in creative writing projects assisting traumatized refugees.³ I drew in practical terms on the work of Tia DeNora, a sociologist examining practices of music therapy. My starting point was the idea of using music to cocreate “temporary asylums” (DeNora 2013:262), environments that would be led by the participants and that might

help to facilitate what DeNora terms, following Erving Goffmann, the “crafting of self” (265–67). These concepts remained useful points of reference, yet participants also challenged them substantially.

I worked in the two centers for young men with another volunteer musician, Francesco Iannuzzi. We opened workshops with a guided group improvisation, beginning with games using voice and body percussion and incorporating varied types of interaction and role-playing. We gradually taught some vocal patterns and distributed percussion instruments among the men. We added guitar to create a harmonic loop, dance movements, and a saxophone improvisation. Very rapidly all the men were taking part, some dancing very energetically, others singing, some also using percussion. This group improvisation created a space of welcome, and a seemingly coherent group formed. Yet—in the words of DeNora—the music making was “socially textured”: it afforded a range of participatory styles (2013:261).

As we continued with weekly workshops, the group improvisation became a familiar starting point, a type of ritual that the men remembered and played around with. We followed it with songs, first Bob Marley’s “Get Up, Stand Up,” and then songs chosen by the men, mainly by Francophone singers Alpha Blondie, Tiken Jah Fakoly, and Takana Zion. We learned together in a horizontal knowledge exchange (Araujo 2006) combining YouTube recordings on our phones, the men’s familiarity with the words (and the languages), and our instrumental backing. Some men wanted to perform as soloists, so we alternated sections and verses to give everyone the chance to participate.

On one such occasion, Sean, a young man from Nigeria, called out, “I have something to sing.” As he went to the center of the circle he raised his right hand in the air and placed it close to his ear as if he was on the phone. “No instruments,” he said to the men, but he gestured to Francesco and myself to accompany him. In a swaying dance, during which his gaze shifted alternatively from the floor to the ceiling, he began to sing the words of “It’s Not Easy,” by the reggae musician Lucky Dube—“I remember the day I called Mama on the telephone.” The group started accompanying him quietly on shakers while he went on. “I told her, Mama, I’m getting married. I could hear her voice on the other side of the telephone, she was smiling.” As he continued, the lyrics described telling Mama news of an imminent divorce, and Sean seemed to struggle with his voice. But haltingly, he carried on, covering his eyes with his left hand. Eventually, he broke down in tears, backing away from the circle with his head in both his hands, the song unfinished.

Sean’s contribution enacted a phone conversation that immigrants in Europe’s refugee camps have described as impossible. They fabricate success stories rather than admitting to their family, in particular to their mothers, exactly how things are going (Calais Writers 2017). For Sean, on the other hand,

“It’s Not Easy” seemed to be a vehicle through which to perform a difficult emotional truth. Joy and hope had been replaced by disappointment, loss, and radical uncertainty.

Sean had created a moment of extraordinary poignancy, but the response of the group suggested that that moment was unexceptional. Or perhaps the need to channel emotion was equally strong in others. Either way, everyone just got on with the music they themselves wanted to present, and Sean rejoined the circle once he had composed himself. DeNora has emphasized the role of solo song performance in fostering a sense of achievement, a crafting of “self” that is transferable from an intimate musical space into broader social spheres (2013:266). But in the reception center, the sense of a broken project and the lack of perspective on a socially integrated future may obstruct that possibility.

Singing as a Vehicle for Movement

Along one wall of the classroom, six young Nigerian women are standing, clutching notebooks. At the prompt from their teacher, they sing in unison across to the other side, “Avete del caffè?” (Do you have coffee?). Some sway their hips, some wave their notebooks; their faces are split open with smiles. Six women on the other side are ready with their response and sing, “Oggi non c’è” (Today there isn’t any); some glance at their notebooks nervously. The first group is already singing the next phrase, “Che peccato” (What a pity), and then, enthusiasm overriding role-playing, three sing on with the closing phrase of the verse that should be sung by the second group, “Scusa Signora” (I’m sorry, Madam). In the hubbub that follows, at least seven voices are shouting, including mine. We straighten out the roles, try it over, and then go on to the next verse.

While there are far more male immigrants to Italy than female, women’s lives are frequently a great deal more complex. Many men have made the journey across Africa with an ambition, and they bring that with them, even while they also bring the trauma of loss and abuse. In contrast, large numbers of women have arrived after brainwashing that draws on religious practices and is referred to as “juju.” They believed they would be trained as hairdressers, but in fact they have become slaves in the global sex trade.⁴ Those who overcome their fears and go to the police are offered protection. But this “protection” fosters closed environments in which psychological and educational support is minimal (even though some arrive as young as fifteen), and volunteers may struggle to enter.

When, after several weeks of awkward negotiation, I gained access to a women’s center, it was with the agreement that I would provide musical support for Italian lessons. So, following consultation with the Italian teacher, Anna, I set some suitable text to “Fanga Alafia,” (Hello, Welcome) a traditional Nigerian call and response. The class was under way when I arrived, with twelve women

sitting at desks with notebooks in front of them. Some had their heads down as if trying to sleep. Others were calling out questions very loudly in competition with each other. Anna told the women that I was there as a musician, and some were unhappy about this. “No musica,” shouted one. “Scuola!” Anna tried to explain that the music would be incorporated into the “school.” A silence fell after some further discussion, and some of their faces turned toward me. I started singing “Fanga Alafia” with traditional words.

A ripple of smiles and then giggles spread across the classroom. Two women lifted their heads from their desks. Soon several of them were laughing. Some of them were singing. Some were shouting things out. I pointed at the blackboard where Anna was writing the prepared phrases, and I changed the words I was singing to incorporate Italian. It took some time, but after some practice, as described above, two groups were standing on opposite sides of the room singing to one another in Italian about the availability of eggs, the cost of cheese, whether they liked peaches, and so on.

When the women left the classroom, they were laughing and yelling, and as they passed along the corridors, they greeted Italians, singing the phrases they had learned. I passed the reception desk on my way out. The women were hanging around the desk, calling out the phrases to each other, waving their notebooks. The director of the center was in the foyer and turned to me immediately. “When can you come again?” she asked.

The episode revealed the energy that could emerge from an amalgam of existing, embodied knowledge (“Fanga Alafia”) and access to a new technology (the Italian language). The identity of the women who took part had shifted in the classroom. They had been in the role of recipients, struggling—through depression in some cases—to acquire knowledge; but they became users of it, users who performed it with their whole bodies, moving in ways that the music led them habitually. It led to new exchanges with staff in the center, as everyone found themselves in new conversations in a transformed space. It could not last long: the radical uncertainty of these lives is patent. However, with repetition, persistence, and much support, experiences like this one could be part of a bridge into a future existence.

Cultivating Hope among the Survivors

When in 2015 European leaders failed to manage an expanded influx of immigration, mediatized rhetoric (an “invading army,” a “swarm of illegal immigrants,” people bringing “parasites and disease,” and then the persistent notion of a “refugee crisis”) contributed fundamentally to the fragmentation of the European Union. German prime minister Angela Merkel announced that Germany would open the door to all Syrians fleeing war, intending to take a lead that other

EU states would follow. However, six countries introduced border controls that had been abolished within the EU twenty years ago with the so-called Schengen agreement; others like Hungary erected borders with non-Schengen countries; and in a UK referendum held in June 2016, 51.89 percent of voters wished to shore up national borders and leave the EU.

Among many reasons for mass migration (the desire for a better life, as well as the need to escape war, militarization, torture, enslavement, disease, famine, and environmental disaster) there is one reason that merits more discussion than it currently receives. This is the role of intrastate negotiations in border areas and the phenomenon of coerced economic migration. This practice has a long and wide history (seventy-five instances made by states and nonstate actors since 1951; see Greenhill 2010), and it shapes the broad sociopolitical space fundamentally.

For example, for years Italy established economic deals to ensure that Libya contained potential immigrants, in reaction to President Ghadafi's repeated threats to "turn Europe black." Agreements between Italy and Libya broke down in 2011, resulting in increasing immigration, and political pressure led to a new agreement in 2017 (Kuschminder 2017). Similarly, following the arrival of over a million Syrians in Europe in the summer of 2015, President Erdogan of Turkey threatened to facilitate even more transfers of Syrians from Turkish shores. A deal in March 2016 stopped him doing this (to an extent) and allowed Europe to expel large numbers of "irregular" immigrants back to Turkey; but the deal also achieved Erdogan's goal of restarting stalled negotiations regarding EU membership (Greenhill 2016). These arrangements reveal Europe's vulnerability and the rapidity with which leaders turn against their own principles of democracy and universal human rights.

Coercive strategies and responses are inevitably absorbed inside the EU, so that in recent years, new legislation, arrests, and criminal inquiries have led an increasingly wide range of humanitarian actors to be accused of illegal activity (Provera 2015; McMahon 2017). The space for humanitarian work in border areas is thus narrowing drastically, and divisions are widening not only between EU countries but between citizens inside the countries. This heightened situation, with its new rhetoric of "collusion" and "collaboration," reminds us of sociopolitical frameworks Europe had hoped to have left behind.

The contexts of the musical activities I described above are, at this point, legal and, at least in the seclusion of the reception center, welcomed. Yet in our weaponized, criminalizing climate, such moments of creative expression and group listening are precarious. It is perhaps not going too far to read Sean's use of "It's Not Easy" as a cipher for Europe's current crisis: we may not be calling "Mama" to admit that things aren't working out, but we are confronting the fact that European policies are diverging substantially from the ideals that seemed

for decades to be fundamental to the continent's identity. After World War II, frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Refugee Convention (1951) seemed to offer certainties in parts of Europe at least, but today the failures in their implementation are unmistakable.

The moment with Modu I described at the beginning of this article, however, is an expression of something else. When Modu shared his song, he went a step further than any others had done, actively involving everyone in it and giving instructions. He taught it to us, gave us roles, and instructed us against certain actions, all this, as he told me later, even while the song was not yet finished. His contribution was not only that of a "survivor" (Pilzer 2015) but that of a survivor who was building a community of survivors and building something with them. This was a "crafting of self," in DeNora's terms, that actively created spaces for other selves. As such, it was a remarkable testimony of a possible future for Europe.

Notes

1. The number of unaccompanied minors arriving in Italy doubled between 2015 and 2016, reaching 25,846 in 2016; the majority remain in the South, Sicily in particular. See Open Migration n.d.

2. Individuals can apply for leave to remain in Italy as *neomaggiorenni* (neo-adults), a status that can last for three years after eighteen, the legal age of maturity. See Open Migration 2017:point 4.

3. Woven Gold, formerly affiliated with the Helen Bamber Foundation, <http://www.helenbamber.org/music-group/>. For recent work on creative writing in refugee contexts, see Calais Writers (2017); Stonebridge (2017).

4. They have been warned to mistrust white people and fear that if they disobey their traffickers, their families will suffer. The trade is global, but for a brief discussion of the situation in Italy, see Toldo and Kelly (2017).

"Challenges Facing the Ethnomusicology of Migration and Immigrant Musicians" Ozan Aksoy

We all took an enormous capsule of time, but forgot to take it with water, so it's stuck in our throats. And now each of us is trying to swallow, in our own ways!

—Ali Safar, "A Black Cloud in a Leaden White Sky"

I am humbled by this invitation to contribute to the SEM President's Round-table, focusing on the commitment to the cause of migrants and refugees among ethnomusicologists. I describe immigrant musicians in their second or third homelands, combining my own immigrant music-making experience in the United States with my research among Kurdish Alevis in Germany and Turkey. I hope this brief response opens up some fruitful areas of inquiry into

the lives of immigrant musicians. Based on a multisited ethnography and as a participant performer in certain sites in the field, I investigate the music, social networks, and integration process of immigrants from Turkey in Germany. As a multi-instrumentalist and composer of experimental music inspired by folk musics from Turkey, I have been performing in venues with various groups and ensembles I founded and led in New York City for more than ten years.

First of all, I have to say that I feel privileged but also guilty even talking about my research, given the merciless and painful destruction of Syria and the permanent trauma and displacement of millions of Syrians, some of whom have settled in camps near my hometown of Antakya, Turkey. The turmoil in Turkey has resulted in Kurdish friends being jailed and relatives and academic colleagues being fired by Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government indefinitely because they signed a petition demanding peace. These events expose the limits of what we can do as ethnomusicologists.

Nevertheless, I would like to share a recent experience with readers. On May 4, 2017, I played my original compositions and improvisations on the *bağlama* (long-necked lute) and the *ney* (flute) as a soloist at the live dramatic reading of selected poems from *A Black Cloud in a Leaden White Sky* by exiled Syrian poet Ali Safar as part of the "New Perspectives on the Syrian Refugee Crisis: Agency, Resilience, and Creativity" conference, hosted by Professor Jonathan Shannon of Hunter College, CUNY. During the Q&A after a different panel and preceding the dramatic reading, the director of the performance, Naila Al-Atrash, a visiting professor at NYU, got upset and could not keep her composure. While steadily raising her voice, she strongly condemned the world community for letting atrocities of the Assad regime and others continue in Syria. A pure silence followed her tirade, making participants uncomfortable in their seats. At that moment, I realized that the only way to move people to make change was to raise the level of their discomfort. However uncomfortable doing research or making music under a cloud of sorrow can be, albeit from a distance for some ethnomusicologists, it is important to keep doing it. If there is anything we can do to help immigrants and immigrant musicians, it is to keep doing whatever we are doing and doing it more.

Challenges for Ethnomusicology of Migration

Although reasons for and experiences of migration of musicians may differ in the United States and Germany, consistent themes both in my research in Germany and in other musical circles in New York City have been those about love, longing for home, "away from home," relation to a place, and nostalgia for a particular period. Those are arguably universal themes among moving musicians and people. As my name suggests, *ozan* in Turkish means "wandering minstrel." I am one of the musicians in the communities that are the focus of my

research. Like the ozan, musicians and music have always moved and migrated from one place to another. Moreover, as musicians have long wandered, they have raised the topics of love, longing for home, and the idea of place. They have also reminded those who stayed behind about what has been carried away.

Ethnomusicologists have historically begun their inquiries with the *location* of the people or musicians rather than the *identity* of individuals who live in that place. That paradigm is now challenged more than ever by the constant movement of people either due to wars or migration from villages to towns, from towns to metropolitan cities, and so on. I foresee an ethnomusicology of migration in which our research questions about immigrants are headed by identities, commodification, and to a large extent economy of flows, music, musicians, sounds, and other forms of collective and intangible symbolic capital. Recent studies on Syrian and other refugee and immigrant musicians in Europe and elsewhere provide proof of our field's changing focus on the musical practices of immigrants instead of their original habitats.

Challenges for Immigrant Musicians both in Germany and in the United States

As scholars working on organized sounds created by human beings, among other things, we have become accustomed to asking the current questions of other fields like anthropology and sociology. Moreover, in many respects, we approach answering those questions with the aforementioned disciplines' priorities in mind. I feel that as ethnomusicologists, myself included, we are being ensnared through our research questions and shared results in the policy-oriented concepts developed by structural functionalists—such as assimilation, integration, and adaptation—or in such legal and administrative concepts as the refugee, the asylum seeker, trafficking, and smuggling. As the immigration scholar Sema Erder reminds us, “Concepts like these should be criticized in their inadequacies in capturing recent global patterns of human mobility and for developing more humane conditions for those affected by migration” (2016:129). Thus, we ethnomusicologists of migration should also interrogate those theoretical frameworks.

Another important issue I want to raise is the diversity among immigrant communities that we must take into account. Immigrants and refugees from the same country or even the same town come from an incredibly diverse group of people with various religious, ethnic, and class backgrounds. During my ethnographic research among Turkish and Kurdish immigrant musicians in Germany, I learned about many different migration stories of musicians, from being political refugees to being hired as cooks for high-end restaurants in order to survive since they could not make a living out of making music. Each one is unique. Each one is powerful. I even once met a “story-maker” for the political

asylum seekers who would write semifictional stories for each person to use when requesting asylum. In most cases, he told me, his stories were successful.

As a Kurdish Alevi musician in New York I have had firsthand experience as a performer and researcher with how the immigration experience has changed the priorities of musicians and people who want to make a living out of making music. Recently, I have been performing with a group of immigrant musicians who have migration experiences similar to mine. With my Arab American friends Ramzi, Fuad, Hanna, and Nick and Greek American clarinetist George, we have been playing at belly-dance events, a big scene in town. I witnessed firsthand that many immigrant musicians having Arab, Turkish, Greek, Armenian, and Iranian backgrounds perform at venues for a small stream of money to pay bills. Almost all of the performance opportunities are for weddings or entertainment in restaurants or bars that feature “Oriental” dancers, for example, Mehanata, Drom NYC, Jebon, and Le Souk, among others. It is, in fact, almost impossible for immigrant musicians to survive by performing exclusively for “serious” concerts in New York. Just to be clear, there is nothing wrong with musicians who play for belly-dance events, but according to several of the immigrant musicians I talked to, clubs or restaurants, that prioritize entertainment and socializing, are not ideal contexts for musical performance. Thus, there is a clear tendency to be typecast as a Turkish musician or a Middle Eastern musician who is supposed to play in certain conforming contexts, even when performances are not in entertainment venues. For example, I was invited to perform at the Metropolitan Museum, but it was for their “Moroccan Court” concert, and I have received similar invitations for Sufi gatherings in and around the city. As immigrant musicians who will remain with the status of “immigrant” in the foreseeable future, we are typecast to play certain roles.

I experienced myself and witnessed that immigrant musicians have been struggling with particularly limited options for artistic and collaborative opportunities, something that can be said for other musicians as well but is particularly problematic for immigrant musicians. Experiences in the new homeland are entirely different when it comes to music-making opportunities such as busking or street musicianship or performing for belly-dance events, which may not even exist in the first homeland. When it comes to immigrant musicians, it has become hard to pass beyond being stuck at a bare minimum musically, physically, and financially, as there are very few options for them to make a career out of music if they choose to do so. This uniquely immigrant -musician problem is especially evident among Kurdish musicians in Germany. If those immigrant musicians had a choice, as they told me repeatedly, they would have preferred more challenging and satisfying performance opportunities than entertaining customers at bars or restaurants until early mornings for audience members who would not demand more than bare-minimum performances. I hope that

this response, along with those of others in the roundtable, raises some useful points and questions to open a discussion regarding the ethnomusicology of migration, a subfield that defies mapping.

“Refugee Death and Lament as Epistemological Framework” Denise Gill

How do Turks today make refugee lives matter? In this contribution, I offer select ethnographic encounters from my recent work with refugees who arrive in Turkey—especially those who cross the Mediterranean Sea—to demonstrate how Turkish individuals who are responsible for taking care of the dead rehumanize and redignify refugee death. The case study surfaces from my current sensory ethnographic research project and ongoing participation in Sunni Muslim deathwork. Deathwork as I explore it is the affectively laden social, spiritual, physical, and political labor of caring for the dead before burial. My larger project seeks to develop new theories of critical listening to account for the literal posthuman and sonic traces of humanization at and after death.

According to the government’s record, the Turkish state had already registered 1,985,269 Syrian refugees by the middle of 2015 (United Nations 2018a). The most recent 2018 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees inter-agency information portal claims that Turkey has 3,466,263 refugees, with most arriving from and through Syria. A significant portion of my ethnographic research took place in the primary, unofficial locations where Syrian, Iraqi, and Afghani refugees arrived in Turkey in 2016: various sparsely populated points along Turkey’s Mediterranean coast and around the southern and eastern parts of Turkey’s Aegean coast. Taken together, the United Nations overview of refugees worldwide currently lists Turkey as the top hosting nation in the world for displaced persons (United Nations 2018b).

I write ethnographic accounts about my intimate, tactile work with refugees along Turkish coasts in a way that attunes solely to the variety of local Turkish responses to the losses and deaths of displaced persons received on its lands and seas, not on refugee crises broadly. Drawing on a portion of my research on deathwork, listening structures, and migratory thresholds, this essay contends with the theoretical challenge that refugee populations bring to ethnomusicology’s area studies paradigms. I am particularly interested in how lament can be refigured as a primary, productive epistemological framework to advance our discipline’s studies of individuals and communities of forced migration.¹ My own deathwork teaches me that multisensory sound and touch are primary tools Turks use systematically to make refugee lives matter. Refugee lives are made to matter because the Turkish state funerary infrastructures take refugee death seriously. Institutional directors of Turkish state funerary municipalities believe

they reaffirm the lives of deceased refugees by providing them with burials that are believed to be rehumanizing.

Twenty-First-Century Lamentations

I adopt the term “lament” as an epistemological tool to broaden a theoretical framework that I believe literatures on lament have already enabled. Deploying lament for contemporary work offers both a renewed urgency and a possible framework for ethnomusicologists who grapple with present-day refugee populations. The rich and broad anthropological and ethnomusicological work on site-specific traditions of lament and lamentation is additionally already situated in many of the regions to which contemporary Middle Eastern refugees flock: southeastern Europe and the northern shores of the Mediterranean Sea (Alexiou [1974] 2002; Auerbach 1989; Caraveli-Chaves 1980, 1986; Danforth 1982; Katsarova 1982; Kligman 1988; Knudsen 1987; Magrini 2000; Racy 1986; Seremetakis 1990, 1991; Tsekouras 2016). Lament literatures are at the forefront of my argument not because of the literal practice of lament per se but because lament scholarship hints at the epistemological critique I extend here.²

Ethnomusicologists maintain infrastructures (department divisions, academic hirings, publishing landscapes) based on geographic and linguistic regions of expertise. We operate in an academic field that maintains an area studies paradigm generally based around nation-states. Moreover, while there are many exceptions to this academic landscape, our orientation toward the production and communication of knowledge based on geography, language, and histories of different iterations of colonialism and formulations of nationalism becomes particularly exacerbated in ethnomusicological accounts of twenty-first-century refugees.

Ethnomusicology, therefore, refaces an epistemological crisis that has been around since before the founding of our discipline. Continuing forms of imperialism, neoliberalism, militarism, the creation of ecological wastelands, state-sponsored disabling and debility, and the violences of war waged on environments and on human and nonhuman others have obscured our neat objects of analysis.³ We are in the midst of experiencing the dissolution of particular certitudes that the terms “community,” “tradition,” and “nation-state” once ostensibly offered us. The study of music or sound under the umbrella of nation or region is not a theoretical certitude. Perhaps lament is.

No Longer Inland: Lament on the Seas

Deploying lament as a theoretical framework allows me a generative alternative to area studies paradigms. Lament allows me to think with what Rob Nixon (2013) has called “unimagined communities”—those peoples who are actively

left out in the production and maintenance of discourse of national development. My ethnographic encounters on Turkish coasts are with individuals, living and dead, who have systematically been unheard, ignored, and unimagined. Their deaths demand a conceptualization of my current project not as an ethnomusicology of refugees in Turkey but rather as an ethnomusicology of the vast, incalculable sounds of lament in the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas.

Crafting a twenty-first-century ethnomusicology of lament allows us to work beyond territorial-bound area studies. In cross-cultural studies, we tend to highlight these regions as sites of multicultural immersion, studying histories of commercial exchange and circuits of tourism. I write against a disciplinary trope of “music of the Mediterranean” that risks sanitizing the overarching narrative of this region as producing musics that express so-called shared traditions. It is my intent to add to the rich literature (cf. Cooper and Dawe 2005; Magrini 2003; Plastino 2003; Shannon 2015) my additional argument that the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas today are graveyards of the twenty-first century where thousands of refugees—and their musical traditions—perish every year.

As scholars, we must now render the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas akin to Paul Gilroy’s (1995) theorization of the black Atlantic and M. Jacqui Alexander’s (2006) work on slave death in “the crossing” (see also Yazbek 2016). Amplifying lament at the expansive level of the Mediterranean and Aegean Seas in their entirety requires us to both listen for people in flight from the homeland and to people drowning in the sea. Thus in my research with refugees on these seas, I am called to record the twice-wrought violence of simultaneous death and displacement-in-process in water.

Deathwork and Filial Lament in the Washing-House

A critical aspect of my 2016 fieldwork on Turkish coasts and in major urban centers was the training and certification I received through the state-run Department of Cemeteries of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality to conduct the Islamic ritual of washing the dead, a process that includes melodic recitations believed to be heard by the deceased (Gill 2017a). I was trained in a *gasilhane*, or washing-house, and did most of my deathwork in the *gasilhane* of Istanbul’s Karacaahmet Cemetery, the largest cemetery in Turkey and ostensibly the second largest in the world.⁴ At Karacaahmet, I washed Sunnis according to Sunni rituals and Alevis according to Shia customs, laying women and girl-children of all ages, diseases, and accidents to rest with sound, water, and touch.

Most of the times when we wash the dead the room is packed with mourners. One of our jobs as washers is to mediate the suffering. With soft voices, direct eye contact, and empathetic touch we are virtuosic choreographers of grief. We strike the balance between sounds of pleasant recitations and the crying of

friends and family members and between the hot water for washing and the cold waste liquids we massage out of the body of the deceased. For me and my teachers, directing the crowded loudness of grieving individuals weeping pales in comparison to being alone in a room with a deceased refugee. This is death as unmournable, something that cannot be socially recognized in full because these women and girls have become separated from the family who should attest to and mourn their lives. These are deaths that therefore do not count.

Or so I thought when I first began my apprenticeship. With refugee death, I understood that my teachers were training me in an alternative mode of deathwork in which we act as both washer and family member. When we lift and place the deceased refugee on our table I was taught to linger. I was even encouraged to do something we never do in deathwork: I was invited to shed one or two tears. Said simply, I was invited to perform a kind of filial pseudolament, to mourn and grieve the refugee on our table as though she is our own relative whose loss we feel press immediately upon our bodies.

We speak with the deceased refugee, first choosing to call her sister, aunt, or daughter based on her age. It is obvious why we use the intimate terms for family members: our practices carry the integrity of our intention to render the nameless refugee a member of our own family. We say, “*Abla* [sister], I do not know if you are Christian, Shia, Sunni. I do not know the name your mother gave you. I will give you everything I know how to give. Please help me by accepting my gift. May God forgive me of my ignorance and welcome you into paradise.”²⁵ We switch from Turkish to Arabic, and with sponges of soap to clean what is left of her body, we repeatedly recite, “Grant her forgiveness, Merciful One” (*Gufraneke, ya Rahman*). We double and triple check that the water we use is hot. And we recite. We ask about her journey while covering her calluses and wounds with cotton.

And we recite. We talk as if she could respond, and we regularly wipe her eyes with gauze as if she has tears. After washing and smelling the cleanliness of her head, we generously rub rosewater into her hair. We rip large swathes from cotton cloth to form sections of her shroud, fitted to her bodily dimensions. We sprinkle rosewater on the tunic of the shroud and fill the room with pleasant aromas as much as pleasing sounds.

And we recite. We explain to her that the Department of Cemeteries’ bureau archive has recorded all the details of her autopsy and filed her DNA in Turkey’s mass database for displaced persons who die in Turkish lands or seas. We give her the final ablutions (*abdest* in Turkish, *wudu* in Arabic), and we recite a final melodic prayer directly into her ear, as if sharing a secret, while gently caressing the top of her head.

While closing the shroud (*kefen*) we assure her that she will be found by her family. We explicitly tell her that we are honored to be her family in this

moment. We become her family, embodying this form of filial lament by praying for her seven days later and again forty days after she arrived at our table. We recite in the present and in these future dispersed temporalities, believing, as Sunni Muslims do, that her soul hears us.

Burning Lament, Yours and Mine

Refugee death makes for poor punctuation. We cannot neglect the deaths of refugees—they require our attentive ears and our sounds. They demand the dignity of having left a trace of a life erased. If we do not archive these looming losses, we inattentively register these peoples as unimagined individuals. We resign them to body counts, rendering them silent and only corpses. Ethnomusicologists should experience the auditory and ethical consequences of being made witness to the militarism and war that caused these individuals to risk the crossing (Puar 2017). The crossing itself is perpetuated when we normalize the violence that creates it. For many individuals, families, and communities, that crossing never ends. Speaking about and sounding back against the structures that sustain, validate, and continue refugee death is one way ethnomusicologists can manifest as real an ethics of sharing based in our primary strengths as scholars of sound, attunement, and listening.

It is true that the one thing in life that binds us all is the certainty of death. Kindness and sonic generosity in the face of refugee death require disciplinary reorientation and a unique methodological toolkit. Doing multisensory Sunni Muslim deathwork in Turkey has invited me to listen at the edge of the human and to where the human breaks. Amplifying a theoretical frame of lament through twenty-first-century refugee crossings exposes that to what humanity can cover its ears, even when it may be as clamorous as the sea or as quiet as the craft of singing souls into the grave.

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If it is within your means, please make a financial contribution to the three primary organizations that do many of the physical labors that intersect with and inform the intellectual and personal work of this project: the Karam Foundation, Doctors Without Borders, and Hayata Destek (Support to Life).

Notes

1. Another equally important thread of my argument relates to emergent media technologies developed for sounding out lamentation over water on the Mediterranean. Explaining the nuances of utilizing lament as epistemological framework is too broad to consider in this one essay.

2. I am not arguing that contemporary Turks today lament (*ağıt*) for refugees. I have not encountered live lamenting in my five years of ethnographic research in Turkey, an extended practice named *ağıt yakmak* (burning lament). Actual lamentation exists in rural eastern and southeastern Anatolia, beyond the western Turkish urban centers and eastern and southern coasts in which I work.

3. See Puar (2017). She theorizes debility to critique North American neoliberal discourses emanating from disability studies and disability activism that invisibly and inaudibly support and perpetuate violence on bodies throughout the world, especially in the Middle East.

4. The term *gasilhane* comes from the Ottoman *gasil* (washed) and *hane* (house).

5. All translations from Turkish, Ottoman, and Arabic are my own.

“Music for Global Human Development and Refugees” Michael Frishkopf

Most of today’s critical humanitarian problems can be traced directly or indirectly to the evolution of a parasitic global system engaged in the relentless, shortsighted accumulation of money and power. Such “big problems” cannot be pinned on dastardly individuals or naturally occurring cataclysms. Rather, they trace to emergent interactions of social macrostructures within a dehumanized and dehumanizing system, overriding the humanity of individuals, even those, like heads of state or CEOs, ostensibly wielding tremendous power. That system, functionally emerging to regulate complex societies, is today completely out of balance with the lifeworld, that lived, meaningful reality we inhabit as human beings seeking a stable, purposeful existence. The system’s quantitative driving values, money and power, hijack or displace the qualitative, humanistic, empathetic values of the lifeworld in a disastrously unsustainable and seemingly inexorable process.

This system/lifeworld diagnosis, most lucidly articulated by Jürgen Habermas, is especially pertinent to the unprecedented plight of over twenty million refugees in the world today (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2015), a situation caused by civil war, ethnic and religious persecution, and political violence, combined with immigration limits imposed by wealthy states and bolstered by rising currents of nationalism. All these causes trace to a dehumanizing system. Refugee suffering stems from violations of human rights (enshrined in the UN Charter), global apathy, and xenophobia, reducing refugees to objects, statistical aggregates, or even metaphorical animals, concealing their humanity. Fully recognized as human beings, refugees could not easily be deprived of rights or denied refuge. Their tragedies stem from dehumanization catalyzed or mediated by the global system.

What is to be done? And how can ethnomusicology help? Even enormous expenditures on humanitarian care achieve nothing sustainable so long as the conditions for dehumanization remain in place. My response is Music for Global Human Development (M4GHD, see m4ghd.org), and my essay outlines this

approach to applied ethnomusicology: how the humanizing, connective power of “music” can make a difference.

In the phenomenological tradition, Habermas recognizes the lifeworld—the realm of lived, intersubjective reality—as the locus of meaning and morality where others can appear as subjects rather than objects, where relationships of “I-You,” “I-Thou,” or even “we” displace “I-It” (Buber 1958) as threads of the social fabric. Here lies the possibility for humanistic action. For Habermas, the lifeworld is sustained by rational and linguistic “communicative action,” fostering intersubjective understanding via exchange of noncoercive *illocutionary* speech acts. Whether or not the other accepts what we say, we thereby treat such a person as a communicative end, not a means. By contrast, the system operates through “strategic action,” including instrumental *perlocutionary* speech acts, aiming to get others to do something (Habermas 1984:293–94).

Within the system, meaning and morality cannot exist except as strategies for manipulation. Mapped into unequal system structural positions, people’s actions and even thoughts are constrained as system communications come to mediate relationships, limiting human interaction, suppressing empathy, inducing division. Eclipsed by his or her position, the individual becomes a “nonhuman human,” one whose humanity is denied.

Functionally, the system is essential to our complex contemporary world. But crises result when the system “colonizes” the lifeworld—its labor, meanings, or relationships—distorting, co-opting, or displacing human values to maximize the “steering” media of money and power (Habermas 1984:342), covertly mediating relationships. The lifeworld thereby contracts, as meaning and intersubjectivity are commoditized or turned to political advantage. The parasitic system is emergent, irreducible to individuals (see Sawyer 2010), yet thoroughly dependent on them. Percolating ever more deeply into the sustaining lifeworld, the contemporary system ironically threatens its existence as never before.

Criticizing individuals is of limited use in solving “big problems,” since what is required is instead a trenchant critique of the system, precipitating action. The system is emergent and beyond our ken; we cannot transform it directly. But we can transform our lifeworld and thus the kind of system it can support. How can we ensure that lifeworld values take precedence over system values? What can we *do*? One cannot overemphasize the urgency of rehumanization. As techno-optimism drives most development funding (e.g., the Gates Foundation; see McKay and Blumenstein 2015), I simply claim: *music is a powerful social technology forging human connectivity across system-induced divisions.*

Why? At the core of the lifeworld is what I call the “soundworld,” the center of social interaction and bonding. This observation is not new. Kant (2009:47–48)

affirmed sound as our most social sense. Eighteenth-century French naturalist Georges Buffon wrote, “It is above all through hearing that we live in communion with others.” From German philosopher Wolfgang Iser: “Seeing is an individual sense. . . . Listening, on the other hand, is connected with people, with our social existence” (2006:95).

For the majority, hearing underlies affective socialization more than any other sense, being central to communication—cognitive and emotional—via language and music. The power of polyadic communication via sound rests on four key properties: rapid 3D diffusion/diffraction (circumventing solid objects); masking (blocking competing dyadic communications); and fusion of thought (knowledge) and feeling (affect).

All this is true a fortiori in the case of music. Music moves people; music moves them together; music moves beyond reason. As Maurice Bloch argued, “You cannot argue with a song” (1974:71). Collective listening generates both “common knowledge” (Chwe 2001:19) and “common feeling” (empathy) (Frishkopf 2010:22): shared thought-feeling, and shared recognition of that sharing. Alfred Schutz, founder of phenomenological sociology, likewise attributed great power to sound, particularly in live music making. He explains that music constructs a “mutual tuning-in” relationship experienced as a “We,” the foundation of all communication (Schutz 1951).

The power of sound is maximized in a cybernetic phenomenon I call (by analogy to acoustics) *social resonance*: an intensive cognitive-affective social state resulting from cycles of sonic feedback through a social network. During social resonance, sound’s thought-feeling reflects from one participant to another. Such acoustical mirroring produces metaphorical standing waves (Long 2006:199ff.), drawing participants together. By analogy to acoustics, we say the network *resonates*, infused with common ideas and emotions. Resonance implies amplification of common thought-feeling: recognizing each other as fully human and recognizing that shared recognition. Resonance thereby spins and strengthens social threads of the lifeworld, weaving the social fabric.

The most powerful channel producing social resonance is music, as the preeminent collective expression of our common humanity. Yet not all musical performance induces resonance. Certain conditions are required, including flexibility; communications loops; and open participation, enabling the rapid adaptation of thought-feeling. When these conditions are satisfied, feedback enables participants to fine-tune musical parameters, driving emotional power and social solidarity to a climax. This process, known in Arab music as *tarab* (ecstasy; see Racy 1991; Shannon 2003) applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to a wide range of phenomena, extending beyond music per se to sonic-social interactions generally, including what Émile Durkheim termed ritual “effervescence,” where music remains central. Thus he describes Australian Aboriginal ritual:

“Every emotion expressed resonates . . . in consciousnesses that are wide open to external impressions, each one echoing the others. The initial impulse is thereby amplified each time it is echoed, like an avalanche that grows as it goes along. . . . Probably because a collective emotion cannot be expressed collectively without some order that permits harmony and unison of movement, these gestures and cries tend to fall into rhythm and regularity, and from there into songs and dances” (Durkheim 1995:217–18).

We have all experienced resonance at certain musical events, when “I-It” becomes “We,” however ephemerally. But can the social threads spun by resonance endure beyond the space-time of performance? In purely musical contexts, often not: resonance dissipates; connections fade. But when resonance is paired with more durable, purposeful constellations of meanings and social organization (e.g., in ritual or activist settings), then—often—it does, stored there as if in a social “battery.” Musical resonance also occurs through grassroots media: while feedback among participants (producer-musicians, consumer-critics) in the mediated lifeworld is slower, impact can be more extensive.

Broadening the definition of “music” to include related expressive arts, behavior, and discourse, the concept of musical resonance broadens as well. If “music” includes not only sound, dance, and poetry but also musical teaching, learning, research, and conferencing, then we may also speak of a resonant lecture, project, or meeting. Likewise, collaboratively applied ethnomusicology can also resonate, face-to-face or mediated, even across far-flung social networks.

Thus broadly construed, “music” offers a pivotal human technology for connecting and recognizing our common humanity. Musical expression is uniquely social and affective, a public projection of our innermost being. I therefore call music the “human-nonhuman”—in opposition to the “nonhuman human”—not only as connector (link) but also as “actor” (node) (cf. Latour 2005), entering the social fabric directly. Music is the community builder par excellence, a primary sustainer of the lifeworld.

Whereas Habermas fixates on communicative action supporting the lifeworld through rational discourse, I view reason as insufficient: human connection is fundamentally affective. Music for Global Human Development aims to extend communicative action beyond thoughtful discourse into feeling, rehumanizing the “other” through the sociomusical resonance of the soundworld, restoring humanity, instilling empathy and compassion.

But resonance is not an unqualified good. Indeed, the system can exploit resonance to exacerbate division. Much ethnomusicological research shows how music helps sustain community, reaffirm multigenerational identity, and reinvigorate civil society. Such sustenance is progressive, provided it is not founded on debasement of outsiders. Too often, empathetic solidarity of an in-group exacts an awful cost: dehumanization of the out-group through schismogenetic

differentiation (Bateson 1972). Thus musical resonance may support exclusionary solidarities at political rallies centered on primordial nationalism, producing a terrifying fascism with the most appalling consequences.

One way to avert such an outcome is to foster musical resonance through inclusive, extensible social networks crisscrossing extant social cleavages, thus catalyzing the weaving of a global social fabric transcending traditional cultural, linguistic, religious, economic, or national boundaries. M4GHD's applied research networks aim for such scope and inclusion via participatory action research (PAR).

PAR is a research strategy centered on collaborative action toward positive social change in a community (Kemmis and McTaggart 2005). Ideally, PAR entails egalitarian team participation from community members alongside "outsider" researchers, blurring the distinction. Academics and nonacademics, professors and students, experts and laypeople, citizens of developed and developing countries—all cooperate in a grassroots, lifeworld-embedded research network. Action inducing positive social change is coupled with research, formal or informal, gauging its effectiveness.

Rather than executing a predetermined research agenda, the team collectively formulates a plan, carries it out, observes its impact, reflects on its results, then refines it, embarking upon another fourfold cycle, the process gradually spiraling toward positive social change. PAR is thus founded on feedback, enabling the network to adapt and expand. The ideal PAR network resonates, becoming social fabric.

Far too many development projects reflect system-determined agendas driven by political and economic priorities rather than human well-being (e.g., see Escobar 1995). PAR offers two primary advantages: being inclusive and empowering, it is more *ethical*; it is also more *effective*, as inclusion and empowerment build local capacity, fostering feasible, sustainable methods that meet real needs.

M4GHD comprises musical PAR projects that address critical issues in human development, improving well-being and rehumanizing social relationships. Initially, M4GHD entails formation of a community, gathering a heterogeneous group of participants collectively motivated by an urgent issue into an extensible, multisided social network, crisscrossing social boundaries. Network relationships develop musically via interactive sound, behavior, and discourse throughout project activities (planning, organizing, composing, performing, recording, studying, researching, presenting), resulting in resonance: powerful, shared thought-feeling addressing urgent issues. Rehumanization ensues, and the social fabric is (re)woven. As the project cycles, its network expands, transforming ever broader swaths of social life.

While aiming to effect positive transformations in a broader community, the immediate result is a transformation wrought upon participants themselves, erasing the boundaries that mask our common humanity and foster dehumanization. M4GHD is thus simultaneously a *method* toward achieving a humanistic goal and an instance of that goal. Technically, the expanding PAR network induces positive change two distinct ways: (1) syntagmatically, as a social transformation, catalyzing broader effects through expansion, and (2) paradigmatically, as a transformative model for others to replicate. Resonance within the PAR network serves as method, object, and paradigm for social transformation.

In conclusion, I briefly outline two M4GHD projects centered on refugees, those who—by definition detached, displaced, exposed—most urgently require the rehumanization that musical resonances can provide. Each project entailed formation of a resonant PAR network that became social fabric, binding a heterogeneous group—academics, students, refugees—together while reaching out to others, a multisided network encouraging hope and empathy.

Giving Voice to Hope emerged out of a Ghana summer study abroad program I designed and launched in 2007, centering on arts as a vehicle for intercultural understanding. In the course of our travels, we spent a few days in a fishing village called Kokrobite, home to a vibrant Ga music-dance scene. In utter contrast, just down the road lay the sprawling Buduburam Liberian refugee camp, viewed by many Ghanaians in rather dehumanizing terms as a den of uneducated miscreants. In fact, residents—representing a broad cross section of Liberian society—were simply impoverished and traumatized by horrific violence. Decimated families lived in the squalor of overcrowding and inadequate sanitation. Built in 1989 to accommodate about six thousand individuals, by 2007 the camp housed over forty thousand. One of my students had been volunteering with a camp NGO; together with its director we began to explore possible music projects as a means of gathering ethnomusicology students and Liberian refugees to learn from each other and to provide humanitarian assistance.

What could we do? Teach music? Help support endangered oral traditions? Refugee camps struggle to provide basic needs. To my surprise, the camp was nevertheless pulsing with music, live and recorded: vibrant gospel bands in camp churches; camp studios producing popular music criticizing power and violence, expressing struggle alongside unity and hope for the future. Many singers were waiting for a break. Our initial network, comprising myself, my student volunteer, the NGO director, and University of Alberta staff, met to consider goals and methods for a multisided project. We decided to produce a compilation album featuring camp musicians in order to raise their profiles,

earn them royalties, and encourage music making among youth while educating North Americans about the Liberian conflict and its aftermath through songs and liner notes (<http://bit.ly/buducd>).

Our PAR network expanded to include sixteen different Buduburam groups and two local studios; students involved in two art contests (Liberian students at a Buduburam elementary school; Canadian students at the University of Alberta); and Canadian students and staff involved in CD production, promotion, interviewing musicians, and audio editing. The urgency of the cause and the poignancy of the music combined to stir passionate dedication, fostering powerful resonances among participants. We sold nearly a thousand copies, distributed royalties back to musicians and the Liberian NGO, and subsequently embarked on new PAR cycles to produce a documentary, songs on HIV/AIDS and child education, and a music video about sanitation (<http://bit.ly/songsspd>).

I founded the University of Alberta's Middle Eastern and North African Music Ensemble (MENAME, see <http://bit.ly/mename>) in 2004 as a group bridging the university and the Edmonton community. Members include culture bearers, trained musicians, and anyone interested in music and culture of the region, whether for personal or academic reasons, of all ages (children to seniors). The group soon expanded as a resonant site for community building, weaving a fabric of durable friendships across otherwise seldom-crossed social divides, a space joyfully shared by Canadians, Lebanese, Syrians, Egyptians, Palestinians, Israelis, Iranians, Moroccans, Kurds, Turks, Berbers, Saudis, and Chinese (among others), whether university students or faculty or members of the wider Edmonton community. Indeed, while MENAME is an official university group, that community provides its stabler core.

Following Syria's 2011 uprising and ensuing civil war, Canada initially admitted few refugees. Reflecting system priorities, the Conservative government dehumanized Syrians as an economic, political, and security threat. The drowning death of Syrian toddler Alan Kurdi, whose family's Canadian refugee claim had been refused, put a human face on the massive tragedy, sharply shifting public opinion. The Conservatives were defeated in 2015, and the new Liberal government realized their promise to settle twenty-five thousand Syrians by February 2016.

In January 2016 we organized a concert, "Music for a Better World," in support of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, as a benefit for government-sponsored Syrian refugees arriving in Edmonton (<http://bit.ly/m4abw16>). We partnered with the Edmonton Mennonite Center for Newcomers (EMCN, see <http://emcn.ab.ca/>), which had assumed a major role reintegrating Syrian refugees in Edmonton. MENAME played a Syrian *wasla* (suite), the audience

included a number of Syrian refugee families, and the concert was deemed a great success.

Several days later, EMCN invited us to perform at a hotel housing newly arrived refugees. We played to an enthusiastic, participatory crowd, clapping, shouting, dancing. Refugees took the mic: they sang and we played; someone recited poetry; we clapped and danced. One of the refugees, Yahya, pulled out a *mijwiz*, emitting a reedy, unbroken serpentine line that electrified the crowd and induced a sinuous *dabke* line dance physically connecting us together. Subsequently, several refugees joined MENAME. We featured Yahya at our end-of-year concert, precipitating an even longer *dabke* linking group and audience. Reflecting on our newfound social role, we continue to perform benefit concerts for and with refugees. We thereby educate ourselves and our audiences through personal, affective experience, creating new friendships and extending the humanizing network.

Both PAR projects aim to induce broader social change by forging humanistic musical connections to and among refugees. For both, an inclusive, resonating, expanding PAR network is simultaneously *means*—social technology—and *end*, albeit in microcosm. As Gandhi wrote, “We but mirror the world. . . . If we could change ourselves, the . . . world would also change. As a man changes his own nature, so does the attitude of the world change towards him” (1964:158). A parasitic global system has obscured our humanity from ourselves. M4GHD entails rehumanizing through such “mirroring,” transforming ourselves to change the world, weaving a fabric of resonant musical connection.

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