

# MUSICULTURES



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## Introduction

CHARITY MARSH and GORDON E. SMITH

In June 2010 approximately 150 scholars, researchers, students, musicians, artists, and members of the public attended *Spaces of Violence, Sites of Resistance: Music, Media and Performance*, an international conference held at the University of Regina in Regina, Saskatchewan. This conference marked the inaugural time the Canadian Society for Traditional Music (CSTM) and the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM-Canada) came together in a joint conference to engage in the lively debate, critique, celebration, interrogation, and sharing of diverse musical genres, practices, cultures, and performances.

This special co-edited issue of *MUSICultures* is comprised of scholarly research presented at this conference spanning a wide range of disciplines - Ethnomusicology, Popular Music Studies, Folklore Studies, Musicology, Communication Studies, Leisure Studies, Film Studies, and Performance Studies. In spite of the diversity of theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and disciplinary approaches, the articles in this journal issue are organized around the two interconnected themes in the conference title: (1) "Spaces of Violence and Sites of Resistance" (music and geopolitics; music and/as colonialism; music and/as torture; protest, tribute, and memorials; community music projects; storytelling and identity); and (2) "Music, Media and Performance" (constructing national identity; music and globalization and transnationalism; regional scenes and local performance practice; representations of old and new genres). Although we have organized this issue into these two overarching sections, there are many places where the fourteen articles overlap and come into dialogue with each other.

### *Spaces of Violence, Sites of Resistance*

Reflecting upon the state of current world politics and active global movements, these authors theorize and present even more complex definitions

of how we understand violence and resistance today, and more specifically, the significance of music as it intersects with, or becomes an active agent of, violence and resistance. The lead article in the issue by Joce-lyne Guilbault is based on her keynote presentation at the conference, and her ground-breaking research on party music (soca) and party culture in Trinidad. In this article Guilbault argues that in the post colonial Caribbean, music can serve in compelling ways to fortify people and bring them together. The paper is based on in-depth study of soca music making and numerous ethnographic interviews by the author with Trinidadian soca artists and fans over the past fifteen years

Taking Canadian Aboriginal urban hip hop and local heavy metal scenes in Alberta as the subjects of their case study, in their work Lauren Fox, Gabrielle Riches and Michal Dubnewick outline the need for greater consideration of leisure scholarship and practices in the study of popular music, which, they argue will lead to a more complex understanding of music-making. Hip hop as a powerful social genre of youth expression is also explored by Charity Marsh and Sheila Petty in their article on the Hip Hop Parliament in Kenya, an organization constructed by and for Kenyan youth.

The music and political activism of Los Angeles heavy metal band System of a Down, specifically the band's focus on supporting the international recognition of the Armenian genocide, is analyzed in Paul Aitken's article. Aitken problematizes the tensions that arise between fan expectations associated with genre markers and cultural practices, and personal acts of political activism, and how bands that fall outside of conventionally understood "protest genres" must negotiate personal and expected musical resistances. Using a socio-political framework (corporate responsibility) and the musical world of an individual singer-songwriter, themes of protest and resistance are also articulated in the articles by Megan O'Byrne and Jade Préfontaine, each of whom argues how protest and resistance can be conflated with social commitment in contemporary contexts. In his article, Alex Perrault examines themes of resistance in a globalized world around the context of the internet as an increasingly pervasive communicative force.

When one speaks of musicals, there is a sense of frivolity, but in Lauren Acton's paper, the focus is on violence and how violence is portrayed in four Canadian musicals. Acton's analysis suggests that violence and violent acts within the context of a musical, provides the composer, performer, director with opportunity to explore such themes and experiences in new ways.

## Music, Media and Performance

The articles in this section reflect in various ways on constructions of national identity, music and globalization and transnationalism, regional scenes and local performance practice, and representations of old and new genres. Marian Jago's article addresses the concepts of music, media and place from the perspective of lineage traditions, and contemporary institutional models for jazz education. Breaking free of the common idea that lineage should automatically be invoked in teachings and discussions on jazz, Jago works to unpack what ideas of lineage may mean, and how lineage might actually function in a jazz context. For Amanda Lewis, the role of technologies in music making and performance practices, specifically the microphone, is crucial to thinking about and understanding music production, reception, and performance. In her article, Lewis looks to Bon Iver's 2007 album *For Emma, Forever Ago*, as a method of exploring the role of the microphone and its contributions to how this record is understood.

In his article, Jesse Stewart examines *Keepintime: Talking Drums and Whispering Vinyl*, a thirteen-minute award-winning film that documents a musical encounter between three hip hop turntablists and three session drummers that took place in Los Angeles in the year 2000. Through a close reading and analysis of the film, the essay explores the musical, cultural, and discursive terrain that connects the musical traditions represented therein, critically examining issues surrounding the African diaspora, identity formation, cultural memory, as well as trans- and inter-cultural exchange.

Local contexts are also a theme in the article by Line Grenier and Martin Lussier, in which they reflect critically upon the research process underlying an investigation of small venues in Montréal which has brought to the surface the particular ways in which parts of the live music business in Montréal are constituted, organized, and represented. Drawing on several vignettes and inspired by the Foucauldian concepts of population and propinquity (voisnage), the discussion in this article sheds light on an actor whose importance and effectivity in the cultural economy of the city's live music has yet to be acknowledged: PLAS (Petits lieux d'arts et de spectacles). Approaching authenticity as a quality of experience, rather than as an inherent characteristic of a particular cultural product or performance, in his paper on bluegrass Marc Finch considers how a sense of "hard core" authenticity emerges during a live bluegrass event in Toronto. His discussion is focused on repertoire management, stage activity, and an array of visual cues observed during the performances. Identity construction and authenticity issues are also themes in the article by Sija Tsai on the Mariposa Folk Festival. Tsai considers the

artistic directions of the Festival against the backdrop of government policies on Canadian content and multiculturalism, with particular reference to programming at the Festival during the seminal decades of the 1960s and 1970s.

The themes of Spaces of Violence and Sites of Resistance, and Music, Media and Performance are also woven through the six book reviews and the film review that round out this issue of *MUSICultures*. Informative and reflective, these reviews probe current theoretical approaches and research methodologies in ethnomusicology and popular music in this group of recently published sources.

Finally, it is our hope that readers will be invigorated by the multiple approaches and diverse voices in these texts, and that this special issue of *MUSICultures* will lead to other such collaborative projects, bringing together perspectives and inspiring new and exciting dialogues. \*