The 3rd Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Audiovisual Ethnomusicology

University College Cork, Ireland

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Abstracts & Synopsis
“A picture is worth a thousand words”
but not any picture, and not any word (Karl Heider)

The rapid developments in visual and digital technologies that now facilitate visual research and musicking representation represent a new context for ethnomusicology. Visualising musical practices contribute to understanding culture. Nevertheless, throughout its history, ethnomusicology has primarily been conducted through the written word. As Timothy Rice claims: “ethnomusicology is word-based, reasoned discourse about all music” (2014: 8). Ethnomusicology has been most comfortable with film and video when it has been treated as a supplement to the written text rather than a methodological assumption in which the participant observation entangles with cinematographic observation. If we want to move towards the ‘remodeling of ethnomusicology’ (in Rice’s words, 1987) our only tool can be resolved by rethinking of literature-based ethnomusicology and its representations as not solely verbal but also visual.

In the ‘crisis of representation’ of postmodernism, post-structuralism, post-colonialism and now post-pandemic era, ethnomusicology advocates for a post-word-based ethnography in which both the sound and visual dimensions become part of the ethnographic representation and experience. As a result of the re-emergence of a general interest in musical ethnography in recent years, coupled with an enhanced concern with specific aspects of phenomenological experience, such as embodiment, performance, place and so on, there has been a simultaneously developing interest in cinematic representations of these aspects of musical culture in ethnomusicology.
This theoretical and methodological assumption raises some epistemological questions: Can cine-ethnomusicological writing be considered on par with conventional ethnographic writing in producing "music understanding" (Rice and Wilson 2022)? Is the audiovisual representation of music activity a mere supplement to written ethnography or a *sine qua non* for research, analysis, didactic, and dissemination of music, especially for musical practices belonging to "oral-aural-visual traditions" (D’Amico 2020)? What film can do for “textmaking” ethnomusicologists, not just as a second-order visual aid in the classroom, but as a primary medium of research? In the dialectic between written text, musical text and audiovisual text, does the film favours experiential understanding over explanatory knowledge (as argued by MacDougall)? Beyond a simplistic counteraction of words vs. vision, how new visual media can be integrated into contemporary forms of research and representation? How cinematic representation affects the people with whom we conduct our research (Harbert 2022)? And finally, considering that filmmaking has not been widely adopted as a means of investigation, is film/video a legitimate form of musical ethnography in academic ethnomusicology?

Drawing on debates in both visual anthropology and audiovisual ethnomusicology, the aim of this 3rd symposium is to bring attention to some of the properties of the audiovisual media, which might be explored by scholars who conduct ethnographic research about music (*all* musics), and in particular how visual methods are used in the field, and how these methods can produce and communicate knowledge about our own and other cultures.

References:
Panel - AUDIO-VISUAL INTERPRETATION OF DEATH RITUALS AMONG ETHNIC MINORITIES IN YUNNAN, CHINA

Chair: Lijuan Qian
University College Cork, Cork, Ireland; lijuan.qian@ucc.ie

The panel brings together three audio-visual ethnographical interpretations of the death ritual among three ethnic minority communities of Miao, Zhuang and Pumi, in Yunnan province, Southwestern border zone of China. The region is the habitat of 26 original ethnic minority communities, each with their own distinctive music, culture, religions, and languages. These different religious beliefs are co-existing in local people’s daily lives. When practicing these religions, local people are often shifting and reflecting between humans and the ‘superpower’. The three speakers are all from Yunnan with different career backgrounds. XIN Weibo has been working as a music collector/photographer/video maker in an officially registered Non-Governmental Organization Yuansheng Studio for around 20 years. The NGO carries a mission to sustain local traditional culture. SU Xiaoyin is the manager of a private run video company. He is making videos in a variety of remote rural and mountain locations in Yunnan. WANG Fengli is a professor in Ethnomusicology at Yunnan Arts Academy.

Xin Weibo
Staff, Yunnan Yuansheng Studio, China

‘Miao Traditional Death Ritual from Longxiang village, Yunnan’

This documentary movie records the culture in a Miao village in Gaoliang county, Yunnan province. The community there called themselves ‘qing (Indigo) Miao’. Among this Miao population, people keep an important tradition: playing lusheng in the death ritual. The lusheng (also called hulusheng in some ethnic minority areas in Yunnan) is one of the most important instruments in Miao’s traditional culture. It is one of the oldest versions of the Asian free-reed mouth organ and dates back c.2,500 years. This Miao community believe that people’s spirit is immortal. To be live or dead are the two ways of life between different spaces and locations. Miao people, via playing the lusheng, communicate with the dead and superpower, seeing off the dead back to the place where their ancestors come from.
This documentary movie was produced in Oct 2021, right before the local government carried out the reform in death funerals: using the cremation funeral and putting all the graveyards in one place. Against this background, local Miao people must make the promise between following the new local government funeral rules and meanwhile still keep Miao’s traditional death ritual. This movie catches up with the local Miao’s actions and adaption in such a transitional moment.

Su Xiaoyin
Manager, Yingda Video Company, China

‘The film on the Epic Chanting in the Funeral of Zhuang People’

The film on the Zhuang epic chanting ‘Lunzhe du’ (论者渡) was produced by Yunnan Yingda Video Company during 2018-2020, in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of PRC funding project ‘China Hundreds of Epic Poem Project’ (中国百部史诗工程). In the 21st century, nearly one million Punon people in Wenshan Prefecture, Yunnan Province, China and northern Vietnam have inherited oral narration of the five-character Creation epic. There are two forms of singing and narrating: one is the very solemn funeral ceremony, in which the priest sings and recites sutras. In the past, the Zhuang people must learn to sing from a young age, and everyone knows how to sing. However, in pace with the social-cultural changes, many young people can no longer sing. Meanwhile, a lot of folk traditions related to singing are also disappearing rapidly, even the epic chanting in the funeral ceremony which the Zhuang people value the most has come to the brink of being endangered. The film can be seen as a precious visual material to record this Zhuang ritual culture. More importantly, the film reflects both the articulation from an independent local private-run video company on this culture and the official censorship requirement from China’s central Department of Culture.

Wang Fengli
Professor, Yunnan Arts Academy, China

‘Bringing the Spirits Back to Homes: Filming Death Ritual in Pumi’

This scholarly ethnographic filming work brings us to the Pumi people who live halfway up the mountain in SW border zone of China, with an altitude of 2000 meters. Today’s Pumi people keep many traditional cultures and ways of life, including ‘death ritual culture’. They believe that every people have a spirit, other than a real physical
existence. The death of a person means that the spirit has left the body. When the spirit turns into a ghost and is back to another world—the place where their ancestors’ spirits stay (home). This ghost owns superpower and can make good or bad impact on the living human. When a death happens, the people in the communities pray for the dead’s spirit to join with their ancestor’s spirits. If the spirit cannot make their way to join their ancestors, then both the dead and the living people never will get peace. Thus, in Pumi’s death ritual, the Shaman (called Shibi) will conduct a vital ‘Rongken’ (戎肯) ritual to the newly dead person in order to send the ghost back to his(her) home.

This video takes the Yang death ritual in Lanping county as an example with an ethnographical approach. The paper will focus on three important elements of the Yang death ritual—poem, songs and dance, to explain how the combination of the three produce the strong power to send the death’s spirit join with their ancestors.

George Mürer
Hunter College Music Department, USA; gmureregradcenter.cuny.edu

‘Production Values as Ideology in Ethnographic Film Work’

It is a given that ethnographic audiovisual works in a documentary (or other) mode typically have neither extravagant budgets, nor large crews, nor extensive production and post-production resources. These works are rarely if ever shot in IMAX or widely released for profit and with an obligation to recoup large scale investments. At the same time, particularly in the digital age, the finesse and aestheticization of the products that are disseminated can vary markedly, according to the priorities and ethos of the author(s). In the paper, I consider how filmmakers and others working in AV presentational modes must engage in questions surrounding the production values their works project. Production values can convey care, dedication, and respect, but also idiomatic constructions away from reality, a conspicuous technical supremacy over the subjects in some cases. In other cases, technical and artistic dimensions of a production may offer a path for the “ethnographer” to cede control over the project and its guiding vision to its nominal subjects. A DIY aesthetic can in fact be insulting to those portrayed, or it can feel like a necessary badge of authenticity, either on behalf of a documented, represented milieu or in the context in which the work is presented. I draw in part on personal experience and on the experiences of colleagues, and in part I review some examples across the continued evolution of audiovisual ethnography (with ethnographies of musical spheres as the general shared orientation).
Kai Viljami Åberg
University of Joensuu, Finland; kai.aberg@kolumbus.fi

‘Don’t video us! The ethical issues of using audiovisual material in Romani music research in Finland and elsewhere’

It would be assumed that audiovisual material is closely related to current ethnomusicological research – especially in the case when this is based on empirics. However, it is a wrong assumption whether this would involve a lot of questions related to research ethics. I have been doing research on Romani music and musicians for almost 30 years. Worked as a musician, researcher and friend. However, Romani cultures all over the world have their own world of norms and values, which are difficult for outsiders to understand. In this presentation, I highlight the ethical problems I have encountered in my work through video examples. Often it is, for example, prohibitions related to pollution regulations, which are themes shrouded in silence but become visible through visual material. In this case, how do you act ethically correctly, so as not to unintentionally break the musical cultural structures that exist but are kept silent about.

There are plenty of other issues related to ethics, such as music and gender, music and locality, music and ethnicity, just to name a few. The research and film materials are based on my extensive field research among the Roma since 1994.

Diego Pani
Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada; diegopani11@gmail.com

‘Cinema for the Ears. Experiencing sound during the audio digitalization of David MacDougall’s Tempus de Baristas’

Among the many tasks of my work as an ethnomusicologist, there is some time travel, which happens almost always through a reel placed on a tape recorder. One of my last trips took me to the countryside of Urzulei, Ogliastra, Sardinia, in the summer of 1991. The occasion has been the high-definition digitalizing of the NAGRA IV reels related to the sound of "Tempus de Baristas," a 1992 film directed by David Macdougall.
For me, it was an excellent opportunity to confront a film that is fundamental to the history of cinema in Sardinia and, above all, to immerse myself in the sound dimension of the documentary, in the complex web of signals, symbols, presences, and absences that trace the sound map of the film by providing a clear, stand-alone representation of the protagonists and the context through sound. Therefore, this was the place for an experiment. I decided to watch the film only after completing the process of digitizing the reels, experiencing primarily "a film for the ears," imagining and reviving the scenes only thanks to the sound. Then, I watched the movie, following what I remembered from listening to the reels.

The paper focuses on the key elements of Macdougall's "Transcultural Cinema" that we can find following the poignant narrative that sound gives to the documentary scene's construction, demarcating the boundaries of what happens in the footage through different "levels" of sound production.

Dujiukun Yan
Graduate Student, Shanghai Conservatory of Music, China; 1208898406@qq.com

‘Authenticity in the Application of Music Ethnographic film—The Case of Akha People and Dae Khong’

In the history of visual anthropology, there have always been different understandings of how to use the camera in ethnographic films. Especially in the process of ethnographic filming of foreign cultures, the use of the camera directly reflects the relationship between the Self and the Other, and is the key to whether ethnographic films can embody sensory experiences and "authenticity" (Sarah Pink, 2006). This paper takes the author's personal experience of searching for the "Truth" of the Akha people's "Deakhang tsawq" in field filming as a clue, discussing what constitutes the "authenticity" of the Akha people's musical life when the location of "Dea Khang" has changed in physical and cultural space or disappeared. It also points out that the current practice of filming the Akha people, through television programs, popular music compositions, and the production of short videos, to showcase, promote, and inherit Akha music and culture, may be the essence of how the camera lens records how local people continue to sing in the face of cultural and life changes, making video recording a part of the future development of music ethnographic studies.
He Hua
Yunnan Normal University, China; 739569632@qq.com

‘Bulang tanchang in My Eyes: A perspective of a Bulang ethnomusicologist and performer’

In 2008 the “Bulang Nationality’s Singing and Instrument Playing” (Bulang tanchang) was listed in the "National Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Project" in China. The main effect of this official recognition was the re-appropriation of the Bulang musical traditions by both village musicians and urban migrants in Kunming and its reinterpretation and adaptation to a new context. Adopting a reflexive perspective, this article discusses the Bulang tanchang as an insider of Bulang culture, in my dual capacity as both performer and ethnomusicologist, belonging to a young generation of Bulang migrants poised between tradition and contemporaneity. Through my fieldwork research in rural villages and my background as a singer in a Yunnan reggae band in a metropolitan context, I analyze my understanding, perception and interpretation of a multifaceted phenomenon that intersects processes of revitalization, root-seeking, popular music and original ecology folksongs and how this phenomenon tends to negotiate or reshape Bulang’s musical identity in the contemporary showbiz environment. I will introduce some case studies showing a series of videos I recorded during my fieldwork as well as video clips available online focused on Bulang tanchang.

Julian Grey
University of Michigan, USA; rjsmith@umich.edu

‘Re/Mediating the Drag Narrative: Gender Euphoria in Live-Streamed Short Videos’

In recent years, many drag artists have migrated to live-streaming platforms like Twitch. Long relegated to nightclubs and summer parades, these new digital drag shows are performed from home. A digital show proceeds much like an in-person one with a bantering host introducing various lip-syncs. However, rather than perform live, drag royalty typically pre-record music videos or short films to watch alongside viewers.
Combined with the inability to witness audience reactions as they would in a club, digital drag monarchs, therefore, cannot see themselves “reflected back approvingly,” as Newton (1972) described was necessary to the formation of a drag queen. I trace this affective departure from traditional drag through an analysis of digital drag’s musical and creative processes. In particular, I draw upon Twitch’s emphasis on video gaming and the “transgender mirror” concept to show how online performance remediates drag’s intersubjective nature. The mirror scene is a longstanding trope of trans representation in film. As Prosser (1998) and Halberstam (2005) have noted, it is a narrative device intended to show the audience a trans person’s inner dysphoria by locking them in time and place. I examine a group of trans drag streamers on Twitch whose performances center gender euphoria. By reframing their broadcasting software as a digital mirror, I argue that live-streaming is a unique process of self-regulation that allows creative access to audience perspective, thereby shaping collective experience and understanding. In doing so, we are afforded insight into the ethnomusicological issues of music reception, identity expression, and queer spacetime.

Brad Osborn
University of Kansas, USA; bradthomasosborn@gmail.com

‘Black Audiovisual Expression in Three 1991 Music Videos’

Our recent article in Music and Science [citation redacted] demonstrated how quantitative research methods derived from ethnomusicology and audiovisual studies could be applied to a corpus of music videos to reveal how race and ethnicity were portrayed on MTV in the 1990s. What was missing from that large study (288 music videos) were detailed analyses of individual videos. This presentation applies those tools to three music videos by Black artists from 1991: Living Colour’s “Love Rears its Ugly Head,” PM Dawn’s “Set Adrift on Memory Bliss,” and Monie Love’s “It’s a Shame.”

Here’s why those videos are important. Our previous data showed 1991 to be the year in which MTV included the most Black music in their Buzz Clips series, a powerful promotion that boosted an artist’s album sales by around 75%. After 1991 MTV essentially “ghettoized” most Black music into specialty programming such as Yo! MTV Raps in order to maximize targeted advertising to Black consumers. Consequently, most post-1991 videos by Black artists fit the commercially successful “gangsta rap” genre.
María Eugenia Domínguez
Federal University of Santa Catarina, Brazil; eugison@yahoo.com

‘Musical and other-than-musical sounds in ritual studies’

Arete guasu is an indigenous ritual celebrated annually by the Guaraní people from Western Chaco. During four days people join to dance in circles to the sound of a flute and some drums. In the feast, death is evoked through the use of masks which gather parts of different animals, calling up relationships between humans and animals that inhabit the Chaco landscape, as well as between the living and the dead. Drawing on some research audiovisual material, this paper offers a description of the arete guasu feast, paying special attention to sound features in the ritual’s aesthetics. Audiovisual media deployed to register the performance of musical instruments, allowed us to perceive the ubiquity of other sounds like howls, screams, laughs, growls, horns and high-pitched voices that join the masks' presence and play a key role in shaping the ritual ambiance. But it was only while working on sound montages during the editing process of the recorded material that some traits of the sonic ambiance turned out to be as extensive as musical sounds. Certainly, key features such as redundancy, repetition, fusion and condensation of these other-than-musical sounds could have remained unnoticed if we hadn’t devoted time to editing these materials. Observation, participation and registering in loco, though crucial for understanding the kind of multisensory experience the feast induces, were complemented with audiovisual editing as an analytical device, for it helped to better comprehend the mutuality of musical and other-than-musical sounds in ritual aesthetics.

Ricardo Gonzalez
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico; rico7292@gmail.com

‘Lip-Sync: TikTok voice rhizophony’

The purpose of this text is to explore the role of the voice in the social phenomenon of Lip-sync on the TikTok app. This study seeks to examine the phenomenon in a more nuanced way by viewing it as a network of different entities with distinct ontologies, in which the mobile phone, app, and voice occupy prominent positions. This perspective illuminates new characteristics that emerge when these entities are integrated into digital spaces.
Within this activity, the voice is passed among different users, distributed, cut, stored, and edited. Furthermore, it can change the person to which it is attached, creating new characters, and evoking a range of sentiments, emotions, and opinions. The voice, in a rhizophonic state, thus circulates among the desires of people, as reflected in their videos. The relationship between users and the voice is unusual, given its transformative effects.

Marta Fernandez
University of Oviedo, UO259602@uniovi.es

‘Performing tradition audiovisually at home: the case of Asturian “Nueche en danza en casina” during Covid-19 lockdown’

As Scottish “Cèilidhean” or Breton “Festoù-noz”, Asturian “Nueches en danza” are musical events where people can perform their identities through sound, movement and enjoyment. “Play, sing and dance traditional music with no pretension other than to have a good time” is the motto of the association that organizes this non-institutionalized meeting. Folkloric groups, ethnomusicologists and oral tradition enthusiasts began to coordinate this open and itinerant leisure space in 2015. From then on, this happening has been gathering hundreds of people in different places around Asturias. This paper examines the experience and repercussions of the first “Nueche en danza en casina” (Dancing night at home), the audio-visual online alternative to this Asturian event, celebrated in March 2020, during the COVID-19 lockdown.

“Nueche en danza en casina” was inspired by all the cultural content produced on social media during the pandemic. It arose from my own urge of social bonding, which I transmitted to the association as a suggestion for a live night of virtual dance. The result was a collaborative film broadcasted on YouTube, a compositional video created with the recordings sent voluntarily by different musicians of the traditional music scene. The montage follows the formal structure of a regular “Nueche en Danza” and it was symbolically (and significantly) created and uploaded from a rural area of Asturias, where the folkloric fieldwork is normally conducted.

To date, this participatory experience has more than 4500 views on YouTube and it has created a huge amount of prosumer reactions, like real-time comments, new videos in response or supportive social media posts.
Thirty years, thirty months, thirty hours, and 84 minutes: recording a close friend’s musical life via oral history and documentary film

When my UCLA colleague Aparna Sharma and I began filming in September 2016 for the documentary Playing the Flute in Shanghai: The Musical Life of Dai Shuhong, it was almost thirty years since I had arrived at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music to study Chinese bamboo flutes with Mr. Dai (b.1937), initiating a lasting musical relationship and personal friendship. Thirty months later, we submitted the finished film for the First Chinese Music Ethnographic Film Festival in Shanghai, where it won the Biographical Documentary Award. Eight-four minutes long, the film intersperses performances, lessons, interviews, and daily life with historical photographs and video footage. In this paper, I address the unusual privilege of making a film of which a close friend is the main subject, and his family and musical community collaborating partners in the creative process. Not only had I studied with Mr. Dai for nearly thirty years, I had also listened to his treasure trove of stories about music and life in China since the 1940s and become familiar with his extraordinary collection of personal photos, carefully maintained since the 1950s. I had also already video-recorded over thirty hours of oral history interviews about his life, currently being written up into a book-length biography. Knowledge gained from the oral history and three decades of conversations laid an unusually thorough groundwork structuring the film; the photographs facilitated a visually affective presentation of history; and family, friends, and students gave enthusiastic feedback that shaped the editing in a cooperatively shared endeavour.
Helen Rees has conducted extensive field and archival research on ritual music, music and tourism, and musicians’ lives in southwest China and Shanghai. She is also interested in the effect on East Asian traditional musics of contemporary intangible cultural heritage policies and intellectual property law. Her work on Chinese music has resulted in the book Echoes of History: Naxi Music in Modern China (Oxford University Press, 2000), the edited essay volume Lives in Chinese Music (University of Illinois Press, 2009), the award-winning co-directed documentary film Playing the Flute in Shanghai: The Musical Life of Dai Shuhong (Pan Records, 2021), numerous articles in English- and Chinese-language journals, and several collaborative CD projects. Her applied work has included acting as interpreter, translator and presenter for Chinese musicians at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival and other overseas venues, and developing care and management policies for UCLA’s World Musical Instrument Collection (2013–2017). She is also active as a performer of recorder and Chinese flutes.
When is Film Music? Synchronisation as Empirical Art

Well before Stanley Kubrick mainstreamed the habit of bringing pre-existing music into the editing room, the feedback loop that exists between chancing upon recordings and creating film soundtracks was exploited by such figures of post-war cinema as Jean-Luc Godard and Pier Paolo Pasolini. The latter’s approach, in turn, was informed by “Left Bank” directors Alan Resnais, Agnès Varda, and Chris Marker in Paris (and echoed by such artists as Bruce Conner in North America). Key to the foundational role of the Parisian group was the decidedly ‘local’ matrix of literature, plastic arts and linguistic and anthropological research that underpinned much of their milieu. Taking cue from this set of circumstances, my talk traces filmmakers’ use of recordings to found objects, musique concrète, arte povera and such paragons of bricolage as Picasso’s sculpture, Bull’s Head (1942). My goal is not to posit a genealogy but rather search for a point of contact between the last gasps of structuralism and modernist art — before pop and minimalism heralded a new era in the visual arts — and a then-new mode of scoring films, the rippling effects of which continue to resonate in global cinema today.
Giorgio Biancorosso’s work investigates the boundaries of music and sound in the theater, cinema and digital media. He is the author of Situated Listening: The Sound of Absorption in Classical Cinema (Oxford University Press, 2016) and Remixing Wong Kar Wai: Musical Borrowing and the Aesthetics of Oblivion (Duke University Press, forthcoming). Biancorosso is the co-founder and editor of the journal SSS (Sound-Stage-Screen) and the co-editor, with Roberto Calabretto, of Scoring Italian Cinema: Patterns of Collaboration (Routledge, forthcoming). Currently Professor of Music and Director of the Society of Fellows in the Humanities at The University of Hong Kong, Biancorosso is also active as a dramaturg. His staging of The Longest Days and the Shortest Days, a tech-cantata by Eugene Birman, was premiered at the Gulbenkian Auditorium (Lisbon) last September. Biancorosso holds a B.A. in History and Philosophy (La Sapienza, Rome, 1992), an Mmus (KCL, 1994) and a PhD in Musicology (Princeton, 2001). Before moving to The University of Hong Kong, he was a post-doctoral fellow at The Society of Fellows in the Humanities, Columbia University (2001-04).
The interview is an essential method in ethnographic research and one of the most common elements of documentary film. When filming interviews for ethnomusicological purposes, it is crucial to engage in careful planning. This task demands specific skills and necessitates making various theoretical, aesthetic, and technical choices. The workshop comprises three parts. Firstly, we will analyse some documentaries, focusing on how interviews are conducted and filmed. Secondly, participants will collaborate in small groups to plan different interview set-ups to be filmed using smartphones. In the final part of the workshop, we will collectively view and discuss the recorded footage.
Marco Lutzu is a Research Associate of Ethnomusicology at the University of Cagliari (Italy), where he teaches Ethnomusicology of Sardinia and Audiovisual Ethnomusicology. He has carried out fieldwork in Sardinia, Cuba, and Equatorial Guinea, focusing on the relationship between music and religion, improvised poetry, hip hop culture, and performance analysis. Together with Giovanni Giuriati and Simone Tarsitani he coordinates Eyes on Music: Projects on audiovisual ethnomusicology developed by the Intercultural Institute of Comparative Music Studies (IISMC) of the Giorgio Cini Foundation (Venice).

He is the scientific director of the Encyclopedia of Sardinian Music (L’Unione Sarda, 2012), and co-edited the volume Investigating Musical Performance: Theoretical Models and Intersections (Routledge 2020). As a visual ethnomusicologist, he directed more than 20 documentaries on the main topics of his research. His documentary Santeros has been published in the ‘Journal of Audiovisual Ethnomusicology’. 
Diego Pani is a Ph.D. Candidate in Ethnomusicology at Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada, and the manager of the musical patrimony at the Istituto Superiore Regionale Etnografico (ISRE). His research centers around the use of media as a learning tool and the construction of audiovisual social meaning in Sardinia’s traditional music, with a particular focus on the musical performance of young musicians. He employs audiovisual ethnomusicology as a primary research output, exemplified by his involvement in the blues-themed documentary film “The Search” (ISRE, 2019).

He has collaborated with prestigious institutions such as Folkways Recordings of the Smithsonian Institute of American Culture, the University of Cagliari, Kyoto City University of Arts, and the Research Centre for the Study of Music, Media, and Place (MMaP) at Memorial University of Newfoundland. He has presented his research at various international academic conferences, including those organized by the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM), the Canadian Society for Traditional Music (CSTM), the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM), and the International Council for Traditional Music (ICTM). Additionally, he teaches ethnomusicology at the Italian National Dance Academy for the Master in “Dance and Social Inclusion.” Currently, he is the recipient of the “Diego Carpitella” Scholarship granted by the Intercultural Institute for Comparative Music Studies (IISMC) from the Cini Foundation in Venice, which supports his projects in audiovisual ethnomusicology.
Videomusicking Al-Andalus (72’)

Videomusicking Al Ándalus is a sort of making-of film of three participatory ‘neoandalusi’ music videos. It arose from the need to experiment with ‘ethnographically-grounded music videos’, a specific methodological approach that I developed as part of a postdoctoral project (Ranocchiari & Giorgianni, 2018, 2020; Ranocchiari & Romero, in print). The film tells the story of three music bands that have different relationships with the oriental/orientalist imaginary that permeates the city of Granada, and that accepted the challenge of making an ethnographically-grounded music video. The three videos that we made together represent different collaborative experiences of research-creation that are, however, comparable, and that correspond, on one side, to my project’s epistemological/methodological restlessness; on the other, to the need that we had of understanding better Granada’s contemporary ‘neoandalusi’ music scene. If our challenge with the videos was trying to ‘translate’ or ‘re-interpret’ a very concrete musical discourse to the visual, the aims of this film were to show how co-creative methods can help ethnographers to understand aspects of musicking (Small, 1998) that could not emerge working only with conventional methods; and to show a possible way to open the ethnographic knowledge construction process to the people we are working with.
Homecoming. A Record of Soundscape and Livelihood of Spring Festival in a Kam Village (39’)*

On the Spring Festival (Chinese New Year)’s Eve, Fengyun finished work in a zipper factory in Dongguan and back to her hometown. She is from Xiaohuang Village of Congjiangxian, Guizhou Province.

The village is famous for Kam “big song”. Every woman in this village has her singing troupe from birth to marriage and old. Through singing, they learn knowledge, search for spouses and interact with alliance villages. Their songs are overlapped with their life to maintain the relationship between individuals of Dong nationality and the community. In addition, the songs are important symbols of identification.

Since China entered into the reform and openness in 1980s, due to the requirements of economic development, a large number of rural people went to cities to find jobs to form a special social group ——rural migrant workers, until now. Social problems such as “stay-at-home children” and “empty villages” are caused by reasons such as household and job opportunities. In recent ten years, most young adults of Xiaohuang Village left their hometown to work in cities, like Fengyun. They separated from their original environment and faced huge cultural differences. Nowadays, Xiaohuang Village where only the elderly and children lived in ordinary days will get the grandest gathering in every Spring Festival. Beyond the group weddings, Kam opera, “big song” singing at drum-tower, lovesinging with cow’s leg fiddle that systematically happen during the period, their festival tradition and custom have also been challenged and transformed by complex influences like the travel industry and economy impact. Under this background, how do they cognize their identification? How do they work and live between their traditions and foreign culture?

In this film, Feng Yun is taken as the contact of Xiaohuang village and records the Audio-Visual Ethnography during the Spring Festivals of Xiaohuang Village from 2015 to 2017.

*Winner of the ICTM Film and Video Prize 2020
Petr Nuska
nuska.petr@gmail.com

Hopa lide: an ethnomusicological documentary on (and with) Slovak Romani musicians (90’)

Who are Romani musicians? Members of the mysterious minority gatekeeping the carnival atmosphere, endowed with musical blood and a special talent to make people sing and dance? Or is that just one big myth? The ethnomusicological documentary Hopa lide tackles this question unorthodoxly. Each of its three chapters depicts a collaboration between an ethnomusicologist and Slovak Romani musicians in making music videos. The contact moving camera takes us through humorous scenes from both the stages and backstages of Romani performances but also intimate moments uncovering musicians’ everyday struggles and secret dreams. The film challenges many preconceptions about Romani music, musicianship and Roma in general.

Diego Pani
Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada; diegopani11@gmail.com

The Search (43’)

Every year, hundreds of blues musicians worldwide participate in the International Blues Challenge, a contest in many clubs of Beale Street in Memphis, Tennessee. The festival offers musicians and blues music fans an opportunity to embark on a journey to the deep South of the United States, the land that gave birth to many legendary bluesmen and has experienced the most crucial season in the history of this music. The Search is the story of a journey in the Deep South by two Sardinian musicians, the Sardinian duo Don Leone. Traveling between Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana, it portrays a cultural landscape still anchored to the memory of those iconic musicians who inhabited the cities and countryside of this enormous piece of America. This latter is the main scenario in which Don Leone travels for the first time, scratching the surface of a complex musical world in search of the Blues.
The film is the result of a two-year research experience in the Deep South of the United States whose primary purpose was to collect interviews on the concept of "search" related to the music, a quest in which each musician is involved (research on a particular song, melody, or performance style). In this case, the search explicitly relates to the journey that so many blues fans and musicians make in the United States, their expectations, and their pilgrimage to the land seen as the cradle of the music they love.

Leonardo D’Amico
Independent scholar, Italy; leonardodamico69@gmail.com

Bulang Music: From the Mountains to the Stars (43’)*

This documentary aims to offer an insight into Bulang musical culture from an ethnomusicological perspective. This film also explores minority self-representation in media, in staged performances and in popular music taking as a case study an ethnic minority living in Southeast China: the Bulang. The first part outlines a cinematic musical ethnography conducted by the author with visual anthropologist Zhang Hai among the Bulang ethnic group in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan Province, Southwest China. The research was focused mainly on three traditional musicians and culture bearers living in Manxi village. The aim was to create audiovisual documentation of Bulang’s musical heritage, to highlight the connection between mythology and musical system, and to observe the extent to which the pace of social change in modern times has been accompanied by the pace of musical change, danger or loss, and the emergence of a new musical aesthetic. Music-making is observed in different contexts and occasions, such as in household daily life, in the temple for Buddhist rituals, in staged performances for tourists and urban migrants, as well as in TV talent shows. The Bulang musical genres and folksong repertoire are defined according to the native concepts and taxonomy (the so-called “ethno-theory”), elicited through formal interviews. The second part of the documentary shows a new scenario in which Bulang’s self-representation in media, staged performances and popular music negotiate/reshape their (musical) identity in the contemporary showbiz environment.
The film offers a glimpse into how the Bulang people, as an ethnic minority, reposition themselves in the forces of both the market economy and state power on China’s southwest frontiers, with a particular focus on the role of music-making in reconstructing their ethnic identity.

* Bibliographic reference:

**Daniele Zappatore**
daniele.zappatore@uniroma1.it

**Carang Pring Wulung (63’)**

*Carang pring wulung* is an ethnomusicological documentary dealing with the gamelan calung, the bamboo xylophone ensembles of Banyumas Regency in Central Java. This tradition is represented through the perspective of Darno, an expert musician, composer and teacher at ISI Surakarta (one of the major Indonesian art academies), who is actively engaged in the transmission, dissemination and innovation of calung music. Darno’s autobiographical narration is structured in four chapters that retrace his artistic and professional growth, which is metaphorically associated with the life cycle of a plant; his personal story serves as a mean to investigate the main features of calung music, which are described through the use of innovative graphic animations and real-time transcriptions.

The film is the result of close cooperation between the researcher/author and his local interlocutors, who actively participated in choosing its form and contents, in line with a methodological approach based on the principles of shared anthropology, applied ethnomusicology and participatory research / film-making. Thanks to the elaboration of an original multimedia system, Carang pring Wulung displays and analyzes some of the most representative pieces of the calung repertoire in terms of structure, content, stylistic features and performing techniques; it also shows the
system of knowledge transmission concerning this practice, between orality and written notation, and investigates the transformations that calung music is nowadays undergoing due to the emergence of new cosmopolitan creatives, constantly poised between the preservation of tradition and the search for modernity.

Giacomo Boschi
giacomoboschi91@gmail.com

Prima Nota Etnografica (5’)

“March 2019, Athens. Camera on hands I decide to record the celebration where I’m”. This short movie represents an audio-visual note and the beginning of a research about the permanence and revitalization of traditional music repertories in Greece. In this short movie, I use the combination of audio-visual record and voice-off description to highlight aspects of ethnomusicological interest, such as: organology, syncretism of ritual motivations, lyrics poetic content and traditional dance. The purpose of this filmic product is to create a video note of ethnomusicological interest capable to condensate in a limited time frame the largest quantity of information, in this case about a spring celebration in Greece and his musical repertories. In the three different moments of the short film we can observe two Tsambouna (bagpipe) songs and one lute song called Susta.

Yuri Prado
yuripradobs@gmail.com

Open Gasy (33’)

From the second half of the 1980s, sounds that did not fit into popular musical genres recognized by the record industry were grouped under the term "world music". For several years, these new musics had enjoyed considerable success in Europe, giving hope to "world musicians" that their music would be widely disseminated. However, from the 2000s, the exhaustion of world music as a novelty and the crisis in the record industry had a considerable impact on the viability of this commercial category.
Echoing Erlmann’s plea (1993) that world music should be seen not only in the macro dimension in which it is usually analyzed, but also from the point of view of individual experience, the documentary Open Gasy focuses on Charles Kely Zana-Rotsy, a Malagasy guitarist and singer who experienced, both as an accompanying musician and as the leader of his own group, the ups and downs of the world music scene in France. Based on his memories and musical practices, the documentary tries to yield a more nuanced and personal vision of a cultural phenomenon that, far from being considered ended, still guides the identity construction, discourses, and actions of those who were part of it.

Xulia Feixoo Martinez
xulia.feixoo@uva.es

Axudáde de Cantar: Four stories about oral traditional music in Galicia (45’)

“Axudáde a cantar” (2023) is a four-episode documentary series supported by the Galician Council of Culture that shows the evolution of oral traditional vocal music performed by women from the mid-20th century to the present day in Galicia (NW Iberian Peninsula). Through the testimony of traditional players, contemporary artists, and a wide variety of previously unreleased archival material, this documentary series addresses important issues for the sustainability of Galician traditional music, such as the breakdown of generational transmission, the commitment of new generations of musicians, and new contexts and settings for this archaic form of popular art.
Anarchist Erotica (64’)

Identity (state, ethnic, group, individual) is a common framing device for cine-ethnomusicology. But when this frame is not applicable it pushes cine-ethnomusicology to invent. Urban anarchist aesthetic movements like Tom and Gary’s Decentralized Dance Party (DDP) is an example. The DDP is a practice of evasion, fugitivity (Harney and Moten 2013), opacity (Glissant 1987), or becoming imperceptible (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). Its fugitive planning undermines corporate and state control of public/social space and practices a joyful evasion of identity formation: Tom and Gary are not even necessarily names, but roles. The public party is not quite ritual, as it lacks consistency, regularity, and identitarian features, but it does mobilize what A.N. Whitehead called the anarchic share of experience, the mobilization of social affects (Massumi 2011). Orienting cine-ethnomusicology to the anarchic share presents opportunity for cinematic ethnomusicological speculation and invention.

The DDP’s cultural project emerges from the electronic refuse of earlier times. Decentralized caches of old equipment like portable radio broadcast technology and portable radio receivers (boomboxes, radio equipped fanny packs) are repurposed and networked with social media event announcements. Partiers form local cells in a number of countries cobble together a scalable decentralized sound systems that undermine local municipal rules intended to police social gatherings. A public event is stationary, centralized, and named. The DDP is mobile, decentralized, and imperceptible as an identity even when there are thousands of participants. Thousands of people listening to the same radio station in public and dancing together is difficult to police. With little or no interest in maintaining social cohesion past a single night’s party, the DDP dissolves. The anarchic share of the experience moves thinking–feeling into speculative reflection. Following this impulse pushes cine-ethnomusicological practice beyond the documentation paradigm (Norton 2021), posing new questions and introducing new research themes for “activist ethnography” (Marcus 2013). Anarchist Erotica, by using a mix of observational documentary, direct philosophical report, and scripted ethnofiction, seeks to follow thinking in the act (Manning and Massumi 2014) set into motion by the DDPs conceptual, embodied, technological, and environmental events.
Active since 1978, the band Mlimani Park Orchestra (aka Sikinde) has been touted by critics as one of the greatest rhumba bands on the African continent. The band was most recently singled out with a 2022 Honorary Award from the Music in Africa Foundation – a monumental achievement. Three of the original twelve members are still in the group, and several other original members are currently active in bands in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Though the band has experienced a decline in popularity over the past decade as its fans and adherents have grown older and younger music fans have been exposed to other international genres such as hip-hop, the group has recently experienced a notable revival in popularity via government recognition, niche radio shows, and festivals. The film focuses on individual band members’ personalities – especially the enigmatic Hassan Rehani Bitchuka – the long-time vocalist “star” of the band. By showcasing aspects of their individual creative lives, including their fame, experience, expertise, connections, musical abilities, demeanors, collaborative processes, performance practices, and songs, this project demonstrates the significance of documentary film from a musicological and historical perspective. The tone of the film is not one of “sad, wistful nostalgia,” nor does it propagate a “capture-it-all-before-it-disappears” sentiment. Rather, this is a respectful endeavor that documents a vital, still-living music performance tradition. Edited with a musicians’ timing, the film comprises rehearsal and performance footage, archival stills, and interviews with significant current and former band members, fans, producers and engineers, managers, media personalities, and political figures, including His Excellency Jakaya Kikwete, former President of Tanzania.
Tribute to
Terada Yoshitaka (1954–2023)

Crossing over the Arirang Pass: Zainichi Korean music (76’)
Directed by Ko Jeongja, Yoshitaka Terada (Japan, 2018)

This film explores the intricate connection between musical activities and social marginality in the case of ethnic Koreans who migrated, or were forcefully relocated to Japan during its colonization of the Korean Peninsula (1919–45), and their descendants (known as Zainichi Koreans). Zainichi Koreans, sometimes simply referred to as “Zainichi” (“residing in Japan”), are one of the largest ethnic minority groups in Japan. Caught by the bifurcation of the Korean Peninsula after WWII and the continuing three-way strife among South Korea, North Korea and Japan, the Zainichi Korean community in Japan has suffered multi-layered divisions and political friction. Arirang is a beloved Korean folk song. The Arirang Pass referred to in the title is a frequently evoked representation of the hardships Zainichi Koreans have had to endure in their marginalization, the act of “crossing over” a reference to their tenacious struggle to overcome systemic discrimination.

Featuring performances, interviews, and personal narratives of singers and instrumentalists who perform traditional Korean music and create new songs to explore and celebrate their Korean roots, this film sheds light on the plight of this little-known community and uncovers the lived experiences and identity struggles of second and third generation Zainichi Korean performers who are caught between their birthland and divided homeland.
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Music is the great unity of the world, the discipline of harmony, and the inevitability of human feelings.

故乐者，天下之大齐也，中和之纪也，人情之所不免也

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