

**BFE Conference at the
University of Surrey Roehampton**

15 November 2003

"The Body in Musical Performance"

PAPER ABSTRACTS

Session 1: Body, Gender and Desire

Chair: tbc

Iain Foreman (SOAS, University of London)

The Gendered Body in Jazz Performance

In this paper I explore issues of embodied masculinity and gender as parts of a vocabulary of gestures that belongs to the performative identity of jazz musicians. Drawing on Judith Butler's discussion of the performative nature of gendered identity formation, I illustrate through visual examples and descriptions of the sensibilities of some of jazz music's finest practitioners in addition to examples from my own field research, how gestures of masculinity have been inscribed on the jazz musician's performing body which, in turn, relate to a wider semantic field of virtuosity, 'hipness', power, physicality, intellect, endurance and respect.

Miles Davis once remarked that "you can tell the way someone plays by the way they stand". Influential musicians in the history of jazz such as Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet, Miles Davis, John Coltrane, Bill Evans, Ornette Coleman and many others have created particular gendered sensibilities which become inscribed in young musicians' bodies and engender their own performance identities.

However, by further exploring the subtleties of a performance, it is possible to see that there is no one fixed gender that is embodied and represented. Instead, we can see multiple gendered sensibilities emerging from within a performance. For instance, the dialectic between individualism and group interaction in jazz performances enables a challenge to any simplistic notions of a single gendered identity being performed. Gestures indexing individualism, physicality, endurance, bravado, and so on, are transcended by conversation, co-operation and a profound loss of ego that is central to a successful jazz solo and are associated with non-masculine, or feminine gestures.

This complexity of embodied representation provides an alternative to the hegemonic and discursive representations of genders Butler describes in her theory of performativity. Instead, it offers an example of the ways in which new performance identities can be forged and established by creatively combining elements from different gendered musical sensibilities and performance contexts which attempt to transcend stereotyped and hegemonic discourses of gender in jazz performance.

Celia M. Cain (University of Toronto)

The Body Politic: Power and Desire in First Nations' Popular Music Performance

Through performance, First Nation women musicians and dancers reconfigure historicized tropes and stereotypes of the Native body, engaging non-Native and Native desires. Their considered and choreographed performances express alternative narratives to the continuing colonial status of the First Nations within the United States and Canada. These performances articulate broad and sometimes competing political ideologies. At the same time, the

discipline and control required in performance engenders bodily decolonization, both for First Nation audiences, and for the performer herself. This process of decolonization through performance that appropriates the music and images of the colonizer, and uses of music of other colonized peoples, allows for competing public and individual agendas and identities. Although opposing ideologies and narratives make First Nations' popular music performance a "messy" process, these inconsistencies, these disruptions in performance, are the heart of this music as a genre. Some performances succeed in fulfilling the performer's political intentions, while other performances fail to engage the audience or express a coherent ideology. In First Nations' popular music, success or failure usually hinges on the reception of the Native body in performance.

Based on fieldwork in Santa Fe, New Mexico and Southern Alberta, in the paper I examine both successful and failed performances of First Nations' popular music, considering performances by women that use the voice and the body as a means of manipulation, control, expression, and/or healing. First, I examine Native performers use of both negative and positive tropes and stereotypes of indigenous femininity in engaging audience desire. Second, I consider how these popular musicians perform subaltern subjectivities while constructing alternative histories. Finally, I focus on the power of performance on the local and individual level, where the voice, music, and movement aid in healing the pain of colonialism.

Session 2: South Asian Embodiment and Voice

Chair: Richard Widdess (SOAS, University of London)

Anna Morcom

The pure voice: disembodied performance and playback singing in Hindi films

In the late 1930s, advances in technology brought about the phenomena of playback singing in Hindi film songs, which ultimately led to the almost total separation of the roles of singer and actor/actress by the late 40s: the song is recorded by a singer and then 'played back' during shooting and the actor/actress lip-syncs the words. Playback was primarily brought in because by separating the performance roles, it made it easy to ensure high quality singing as well as acting skills and good looks for a character. The pre-recording of songs also paved the way for the development of songs scenes into complex sequences that transcend boundaries of time (flashbacks), reality and fantasy (dream sequences, ideal locations) and geographical location, thus providing extensive opportunities for narrative and the portrayal of emotions and spectacle in Hindi films.

However, playback singing in the case of female singers and actresses also came to contribute profoundly to moral questions concerning femininity and modernity. In its separation of performance roles, playback singing for female singers and actresses also tapped into a centuries-old paradigm of

respectability and the body in musical performance, echoing the divorcing of dance and singing in classical performance and the death of the courtesan tradition in the early 20th century. This paper explores the negotiation of respectability in popular musical performance in Hindi cinema and modern India through two extreme cases of disembodiment, one fictional and historical, the character of the courtesan heroine of *Pakeezah* (1971), 'The pure one', the other real and contemporary, Hindi cinema's most famous playback singer, Lata Mangeshkar.

Martin Clayton (Open University)

The embodied voice in north Indian raga performance

In what sense is musical sound, particularly the singing voice, embodied? It is obvious that the voice emerges from the body, and that its qualities depend on the singing body's qualities and physiological conditions (posture and movement, respiration, muscular contraction and relaxation, and so on). But in what sense is that embodiment carried and communicated by the sound of the voice, to what extent can the qualities and conditions of the singing body be read into the sound? We hear voices as emanating from bodies - but do we always interpret the voice as coming from the physical body of the singer, or can it be interpreted as produced by a 'virtual' subject depicted in the music?

This paper refers to the practice of Hindustani khyal singing, and examines the place of embodiment in the music's ability to communicate and to afford the construction of meaning. With the help of a case study recorded earlier this year, I will argue that the communication of mood or 'character' can be accounted for largely in terms of embodied metaphor and the theory of entrainment. In so doing, I will explore some methods for the description and analysis of bodily movement in music performance, and how they relate to existing methods of musical analysis.

Nicolas Magriel (SOAS, University of London)

Embodying Music in North India

Children who grow up in families of hereditary musical specialists commonly learn the body-language of music before they learn music itself. Throughout infancy and childhood they absorb the mannerisms of performance practice, stage presence, and the physical and social graces befitting of musicians. Musical enculturation is accomplished by osmosis and imitation, largely without conscious intent.

This video-based presentation will look at how children grow into embodying music both in families of classical Hindustani sarangi players and those of the *Langa* and *Manganiar* communities of Rajasthan, singers and players of the *kamaicha* and the *sindhi sarangi*. Videoed examples will illustrate the confidence born of inherited authority and the relative lack of self-conscious artistry which are widespread in hereditary musical environments.

Session 3. Bodily movement: music and dance

Chair: Alessandra Lopez y Royo (University of Surrey Roehampton)

Razia Sultanova (Goldsmiths, University of London)

From whirling dervishes to energetic hip-hop: Uzbek dance through the history of the 20th century

Aesthetic body movement and dance have always represented an essential element in Uzbek traditional musical performance. Historically, dance has played an important role as part of Islamic religious worship rituals. For instance, as a rule, mystical Sufi rituals culminate in compulsory dancing sessions. The duration of the dancing depends on the particular brotherhood denomination but most Sufi orders (Qadyryia, Yassaviya, Naksbandyia) performed ecstatic dances in the closing part.

With the arrival of the Soviets to the lands of Central Asia in 1917, dance became popular as a tool of new ideology aiming to express people's rejoicing about the new social system. So, an ideological rather than religious context has established dance as a compulsory form of performance. New groups were created from scratch, like for example the Uzbek female dance group "Bahor" (1952), inventing original new ways of professional dancing and renowned for their innovative music repertoire. Later "Bahor" has become an icon of the new social culture not only in Uzbekistan and the Soviet Union but also abroad, although historically, there is little evidence of female dances in the local cultural tradition.

Nowadays dance has become the most important element of any entertainment show. Song performances are expected to have at least one complementary dancer to perform in the background. It is then no wonder, that every state celebration in Uzbekistan since its independence in 1991 has displayed a variety of energetic rhythmical mass dances on the streets and squares to express the "joy" and refreshed feelings about independence.

Dances are a common part of home entertainment, with every grown-up and child enjoying dancing both for family occasions and for no particular reason. Therefore, dance is one of the main elements of musical performance in Uzbekistan. And the history of the 20th century is witnessing a multifaceted range of dances as time goes by.

Video examples: extract from Sufi rituals (beginning of the 20th century), Uzbek female professional dance (group "Bahor"); State celebrations ("Independence day" on the 1st of September-2000, Tashkent), dancing at home (Termez)

**Mark Hobart, Ni Madé Pujawati, I Nengah Sila
(AHRB Research Centre for Cross-Cultural Music and Dance
Performance)**

Balinese bodies at work

Over the last couple of hundred years, Europeans have celebrated Balinese dance and invested it with all sorts of projections. For quite different reasons, Balinese themselves have regarded skilled dancers as the epitome of cultural excellence, because dance exemplifies mastery over bodily parts, organs, feelings and drives with conflicting inclinations. While an analysis of the disciplined Balinese body might sit comfortably with contemporary theoretical fashion, it remains excessively abstracted from the practice of creating and performing dance.

In October and November this year, a Balinese choreographer and composer will be producing from scratch a completely new dance piece in London. After demonstrating a section of this piece, they will talk about what it involved in creating movement and music, and what constitutes bringing a piece to life. How do these Balinese instantiate age, gender, caste and temperament in music and dance? Are only the dancers' bodies the focus of attention? What about the musicians'? Balinese performance is supposedly extremely dialogic. In this instance, of what does dialogue consist when no one actually speaks?

Session 4: Keynote and Roundtable

Keynote:

**Professor John Baily (Goldsmiths, University of London)
"Thirty years' work on the musical body"**

Roundtable:

Chair: Anthony Seeger (University of California Los Angeles)

Ian Cross (Cambridge University)

Are there cross-cultural constants in studying the body in musical performance? While the human body is capable of some extraordinary feats, human bodies as biological systems are fairly homogeneous. The range of ways in which bodies can function temporally appears to be constrained by motoric and by general attentional factors that have biological foundations. While these are unlikely to determine the specific time course of musical behaviours, it is highly likely that they play a significant role in framing such behaviours; they may thus have value for investigating musical time in and across different cultural contexts.

Andrée Grau (University of Surrey Roehampton)

Bounded and unbounded bodies

As dance anthropologists and ethnomusicologists we are trained to treat the labels 'dance' and 'music' with caution, because the terms carry preconceptions that may mask significant aspects of the structured movement/sound systems we study. Yet we generally talk about 'the body' - the medium through which these systems come into being - as something given and 'true', without investigating its emic conceptualisations or looking into the implications these may have in terms of how music and dance are experienced. The presentation will look at boundaries of the body with special reference to the Tiwi of Northern Australia, who have an extensive vocabulary for body parts, but no word for 'body' as a bounded entity

Kevin Dawe (University of Leeds)

Body projects and musical instruments

In sociology, the body is often seen as an entity which is in the process of becoming; a project that should be worked at as part of an individual's self-identity, where individuals are conscious of and actively concerned about the management, maintenance and appearance of their bodies. Musical instruments can be thoroughly involved in this process; a means to an end. Drawing on my own work with the Cretan lyra and the cultures of the guitar, I note how performance (in various forms) is structured around these instruments as 'body work'.

Gabor Csepregi (Collège Dominicain)

Phenomenology of the Body and Musical Performance

In musical performance, we experience our living body as a source of meaningful sounds, an expressive and dynamic medium between intention and actualization. While making music, our bodily abilities and powers are engaged in a creative and even playful activity.