

is written as if music has no agency in the lives of the San people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is a tentative exploration of the “thumb piano” – itself already a derogatory term for the *mbira* type instruments found both amongst the San in central Botswana, and in many other parts of Southern and Central Africa. It lacks any sense of contemporary discourses around indigeneity, the use of music/culture to address matters of cultural identity and loss, the integral ways in which music, spirituality, and the land are intertwined in many cultures of those who identify as Indigenous Peoples. What of the ways, I wonder, in which music might work as a liberating force in a world that is increasingly circumscribed and sedentary, a “dis-eased” world in so many ways? Can *mbira* performance, sung texts, dancing oneself into an altered state of consciousness not work as an integrative, healing force? We simply do not know from these contributions. In the three volumes, where music is addressed specifically, we capture very little sense of how it works in light of the issues raised elsewhere. The old positivism of musicology creates a stilted and archaic place for the musical in contemporary San experience.

Fortunately, we do not have to rely exclusively on the voice of those addressing the specifically musical – Megan Biesele and others integrate discussions of the musical as significant dimensions of contemporary San experience, providing small but important windows into the continuing value of music in trance, dance, and healing rituals. In this regard, the chapters that might be most useful to ethnomusicologists are those that address language use, the creation of educational centers for San values and culture just outside of Cape Town, South Africa, and those that examine the problems of loss, particularly the loss of access to land. I wonder, in closing, just when we will begin to talk about “Bushmen” music and its appropriations by others; about the post-apartheid rush to record music of “the Bushmen” such as the CDs published by Ocora, by Pops Mohammed, and the new age electronic composers who cut and splice soundbytes of “the Kalahari” into the overly processed “music for healing” that, like much of the know-ledge about the San generated in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, circulates globally amongst consumers who can only begin to imagine what life as a “Bushman” must be like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

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*Masters of the Sabar: Wolof Griot Percussionists of Senegal*. 2007. Patricia Tang. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. xiv, 209 pp., 36 illustrations and transcriptions, glossary, bibliography, discography, index, CD (African Soundscapes Series). Gregory Barz, (series editor).

Patricia Tang has done what is necessary to speak with authority and depth about this West African drumming tradition, including numerous field trips over the years since her initial visit in 1996, learning to play the *sabar* drum, attending many social events and interviewing and video recording participants. She has personally been involved in

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the politics of skill, style and social standing which surround the griot. She writes in an easily comprehensible and clear style.

I recommend the book as a way that “outsiders” may be voyeuristic and enjoy a much deeper understanding of another West African drumming tradition (yes, *djembe* is not the only African/West African drum!) and the dynamics of the griot’s role in society. The role of the observer/researcher is discussed in the very first chapter and in addition to research methodologies, Tang shows how her identity as an Asian American woman impacts on her relationships and therefore on the nature of the information she was able to learn.

Following this candid and interesting description she importantly also includes how technology has allowed being filmed, recorded and photographed to become absorbed into part of the rituals, performances, etc. In fact technology is used by the “other” (those researched) to enhance and deepen their own experience of their own rituals, performances, etc.

The griot tradition was originally part of a courtly tradition in which the musicians survived through the patronage of a king. Now with no kings griots have found other ways to keep their role alive as social commentator and keeper of oral traditions. The practice of giving money to griots for exceptional playing and for praising, is very much part of any *sabar* occasion. At a certain point near the end of *tannibeer*, an evening of *sabar* drumming and dancing, the griots will start to praise the hosts and the other drummers and exhort the crowd to give money. The word *sabar* also refers to an event at which the *sabar* drums are played. Other contexts are described and include wrestling matches, weddings (life cycle ceremonies), special events, etc. *sabar* drums are also played in *mbalax* music, the West African pop music best known through Youssou N’Dour.

Tang paints a thorough picture of *sabar* and its Senegalese context, from its documented and oral histories, its instrumentation, identity and repertoire. Of interest was the distinction between two of the main elements spoken about in Wolof griot drumming, the *rythme* (from the French) and the *bakk*. The *bakk* is a particular kind of drum statement which includes all the features of style and technique which distinguish one family’s drumming from another, and is the element which is used as the proof of a drummer’s excellence. Listening to a *bakk* is like listening to a fantastic random typewriter, although it’s not random of course. It can be a very old Wolof spoken phrase, or recently *bakks* are composed which depart from the tradition and attempt to show off new variations and techniques.

The CD accompanying the book is a great way, (the only way, other than going to Senegal?) for the reader/listener to experience first hand the actual sounds of the drum language and to hear the corresponding mnemonics and rhythms. Other venerable drum traditions around the world, such as *tabla* from India, also use mnemonics for different

drum strokes or combinations of strokes.

As a drummer and drum teacher myself, it is enriching to learn of yet another tradition that works in this way and confirms some of my essentialist ideas about how humans interact with and learn cycles of sound and rhythm. I use my own made up mnemonics when teaching and can testify to the learning of mnemonics as an invaluable aid in whole body awareness of the rhythm. A number of “cooking” drum solos and *bakks* are included on the CD, and numerous examples of the rhythm broken down into its component parts. As a performer, I especially appreciate the multi-media platform for presenting research where either sound or sound and visual can be presented to deliver a much richer product. In this case its only audio, which is useful to musicians wishing to get right into the techniques and rhythms of Senegal, as well as to the dedicated lover of the world’s rich oral cultures. The book doesn’t present itself as a drum teaching guide, however it will appeal to a wide audience from academic to world music consumer or drum student.

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*Beyond Exoticism: Western Music and the World*. Taylor, Timothy D. 2007. Durham: Duke University Press. xv, 304 pp., 16 illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.

The seven chapters in the book are divided into two parts. One is called “Colonialism and imperialism” and the other “Globalisation”. The book covers the conceptualisation of sound from the early modern period to the present, and considers the various ways in which the west confronted, represented and appropriated those whom it has taken or constructed as its Others. What is more pressing for Taylor is bringing these discussions into greater dialogue with other fields in the Humanities and Social Sciences. This intention is not new, and one is obliged to find those areas in the book which speak to innovation. Engagement with social and cultural views of history and historical views of society and culture are regarded the central theme in every chapter of the book.

In the first few lines in the Introduction, Taylor asserts that the book is about the power of the representation of Others in music, in the periods of colonialism, imperialism, and “what we now call globalisation”. Representation is the key word in his ruminations. As such, he takes umbrage at scholars who consider classical music a religion. He says, too often composers are regarded as gods and their works sacred texts. Composers shape a figurative world in which performers and the occasional musicologist compete for the position of high priest.

The book is intended as a bridge between ethnomusicology and musicology. Taylor observes that musicologists have not as yet thoroughly investigated processes of globalisation in classical music. Their focus on the work as an entity that exists on its own terms, and the over reliance on biography as a means to explaining musicological tasks, is a practice he is at odds with. Taylor observes that musicologists continue to ignore