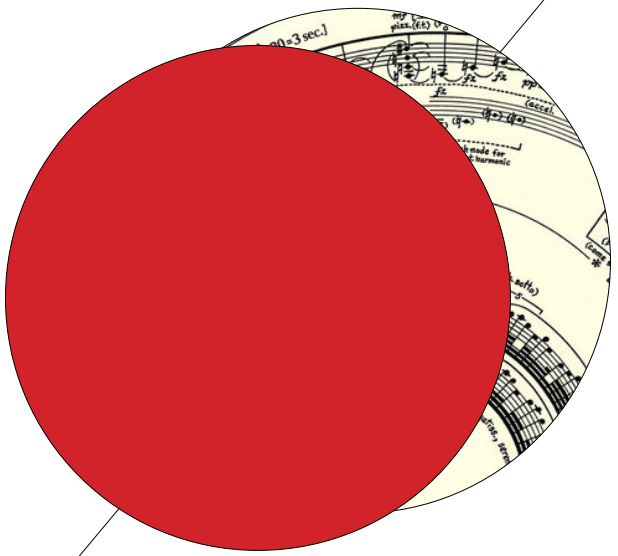
Sound Limits

Music and its Borders



THE FIFTH BIENNIAL 4-5 MARCH 2016
YALE GRADUATE MUSIC SYMPOSIUM

CONTENTS

Schedule of Events
- Friday, March 4th 4
- Saturday, March 5th 5

Speakers 7
Abstracts 9

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS
FRIDAY, MARCH 4TH

13:30–14:15	Registration	Stoeckel 107
14:15–14:30	Welcome and Opening Remarks	Stoeckel 106
14:30–15:30	**"Gendered Work"**—*Chair:* Kamala Schelling	**Stoeckel 106**
14:30–15:00	Kira Dralle (University of California, Santa Cruz) "Songs of Micro(revolution)"	
15:00–15:30	Lucie Vágnerová (Columbia University) "Black Box White Box: Electronics Assembly and the Factory Museum"	
15:30-15:45	Break	
15:45–16:45	**"Americana"**—*Chair:* Nicholas Curry	**Stoeckel 106**
15:45–16:15	Brian Barone (Boston University) "The American Song-Poem: A Study in Musical Marginalia"	
16:15–16:45	Emilie Coakley (University of Pittsburgh) "The Bay Psalm Book as a Transnational Artifact of American National Identity"	
16:45–17:15	Break	
17:15–18:45	**Keynote Lecture** **Ana María Ochoa (Columbia University)** "Forms of life, forms of death, sound, music, silence"	**Stoeckel 106**
18:45–19:30	Reception	Stoeckel 107

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS
SATURDAY, MARCH 5TH

9:00–9:30	Breakfast	Stoeckel 107
9:30–11:00	**"New York"**—*Chair:* Angharad Davis	**Stoeckel 106**
9:30–10:00	Julian Saporiti (Brown University) "Drawing Sonic Circles In The Square: Musical Overlap and Space Negotiation in New York City's Washington Square Park"	
10:00–10:30	William Robin (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill) "Indie Classical and Its Limits: The Contested Politics of Naming an American New-Music Scene, 2007–2013"	
10:30–11:00	Emily Clark (Columbia University) "The Towa-Towa in Queens: A Caribbean Bird Community in Diaspora"	
11:00–11:30	Break	
11:30–12:30	**"Hypermodernities"**—*Chair:* Brian Miller	**Stoeckel 106**
11:30–12:00	Paula Harper (Columbia University) "Watching Cell Phones, Listening to Video: Bus Uncle Goes Viral"	
12:00–12:30	Nicholas Curry and Brianne Dolce (Yale University) "Style, voice, persona, and gender in two versions of Taylor Swift's *1989*"	
12:30–14:00	Lunch	
14:00–15:30	**Workshop** **Brian Kane (Yale University)** "Drawing the Line: Sound Studies, Auditory Culture, and Musicophobia"	**Stoeckel 106**
15:30–16:00	Break	

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS
SATURDAY, MARCH 5TH

16:00–17:30	**"Bounded Identities"**—*Chair:* Marissa Glynias	**Stoeckel 106**
16:00–16:30	Eugenia Siegel Conte (Wesleyan University) "Kama'aina Choirs: Embodied voices performing multiple identities in Hawai'i"	
16:30–17:00	Jamie Corbett (Brown University) "Musical Boundaries and Ethnic Distinctions in Portuguese-Speaking New England"	
17:00–17:30	Hallie Blejewski (Wesleyan University) "The Development of the G-Pan: Engineering a National Instrument"	
17:30–17:45	Closing Remarks	Stoeckel 106

SPEAKERS

Ana María Ochoa

Keynote Speaker

Ana María Ochoa is Professor of Music and Director of the Center for Ethnomusicology at Columbia University. She holds degrees from the University of British Columbia and Indiana University, where she received her PhD in Folklore and Ethnomusicology. Prior to joining the faculty at Columbia, she taught at New York University. She has also served as a researcher at the Colombian Institute of Anthropology and History, as the director of Music Archives at the Colombian Ministry of Culture, and as a researcher at the Centro Nacional de Investigación y Documentación Musical Carlos Cháves in Mexico. She is currently editor of the Latin American branch of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (IASPM) and member of the editorial board of TRANS—the Journal of the Iberian Society for Ethnomusicology.

Professor Ochoa's research interests lie in traditional Latin American musics and transculturation, music and literature, music and cultural policy, and the construction of the popular in Latin America. She has published extensively in both Spanish and English, and through her many articles and monographs has significantly shaped the evolution of the discipline (or interdiscipline) of Sound Studies. In 2014, she published her monograph *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth Century Colombia*, which explores the central role listening has played in the formation of notions of language, music, voice, and sound that determine the politics of life in Latin America and the Caribbean.

SPEAKERS

Brian Kane

Workshop Leader

Brian Kane holds degrees from the University of California, Berkeley (B.A. in Philosophy, 1996; Ph.D. in Music, 2006). Prior to joining the faculty at Yale, he was a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in Music at Columbia University (2006-2008). His scholarly work is interdisciplinary, located in the intersection of music theory, composition and philosophy. Working primarily with 20th century music, Kane's emphasis is on questions of sound and signification. Central themes in his research are: music and sound art, histories and theories of listening, phenomenology, improvisation, music and subjectivity, technology, conceptualizations of sound and music in literature and philosophy, and theories of the voice. Some of these themes are interwoven in Kane's recent work on acousmatic sound. Acousmatic refers to the separation of audition from all other sensory modalities, and is often deployed in phenomenological contexts in order to disclose the "essence" of listening. In his first book, *Sound Unseen*, Kane investigates the question of acousmatic sound beyond its phenomenological context and demonstrates its pertinence to current work on musical and non-musical forms of listening. This also involves reconstructing the philosophical and material history of acousmatic sound from its supposed origins in the Pythagorean school, through the rise of mechanically reproduced sound and electronic composition, to contemporary discourses on the senses, sound, and composition.

ABSTRACTS

Kira Dralle (University of California, Santa Cruz)

"Songs of Micro(revolution)"

Effeminophobia plagues contemporary culture. Dualistic thinking plagues contemporary culture. These two are inextricably linked. The manifestations of this problem can be seen across disciplines, and not solely limited to the arts, or even to academia. I argue that the divorce between 'high' theory and artistic and/or political practice reinforces a bifurcated mode of thinking. The praxis of art/activism with scholarly thought together holds the ability to offer another way of thinking—another way of functioning, as individuals, and as communities.

I would like to offer the example of the structure of musical score along with its implied regimented techniques to explore how artists are using their disciplines to subvert their disciplines. This paper mobilizes a linguistic and musicological understanding of structure to visualize the relationship between *interpretation* and *subversion*. Through the examination of performances from Julianna Snapper (American soprano, performance artist), Monique Jenkinson (trained ballerina, faux drag queen, and performance artist), and Bonnie Whiting (percussionist), I want to explore how these women have taken severely regimented artistic practices which place tremendous pressure and risk on the female body and have creatively used the mechanics of the discipline in order to subvert it. This work examines the tactics and politics of both masculine and feminine emotions in performance, issues arising with technological communication in concerns with (dis)engagement and intimacy, and how this mode of thought can be utilized to productively engage popular feminism and the institutional politics of scholarly disciplines and academic labor. The artistic and pointedly intellectual practices of these artists function as acts of (micro) revolution—they are not ones of radical upheaval; they creatively and intellectually (and *femininely*) use the structures at hand to construct new landscapes, both real and imagined.

Lucie Vágnerová (Columbia University)

"Black Box White Box: Electronics Assembly and the Factory Museum"

How can scholars of sound address the factory labor of the global underclass of women building electronics used in sound technologies? Although women

ABSTRACTS

workers in electronics assembly are already de facto entangled in contemporary sound production, scholars have yet to enfold their lives and labor into discourses on electronic sound. My paper calls not for more marginalized research on women's labor but for a new disciplinary understanding of electronic sound and audio as fundamentally neo-colonial.

A shift in Anglophone discourse surrounding consumer sound technologies and electronic instruments reflects the history of transnational subcontracting inelectronics assembly. By staking the racialized production of electronics against the technoscientific claim that electronic technologies 'democratize' musical production, I illustrate how sonic Whiteness is constructed from the neo-colonial networks of electronics assembly. I then explore the Western luxury of converting former factories into museums from an acoustic-architectural standpoint. These hollow, resonant monuments, I argue, betray the human cost of capitalism—all the bodies spent elsewhere. I interpret several site-specific installations for these spaces (by Kara Walker, Kevin Beasley, and others), which address women's factory labor through sculpture and sound.

Brian Barone (Boston University)
"The American Song-Poem: A Study in Musical Marginalia"

Beginning around 1900 in the United States, the con known as the "song-poem" worked thusly: publishers (later, record companies) called "song sharks" solicited submissions from would-be lyricists, promising commercial success and offering the musically untutored a chance to have their work set by professional composers (including, in at least one case, Henry Cowell). The "song poets" needed only send along their share of the upfront costs. Yet song sharks never intended to create marketable products; they worked just cheaply enough to make some profit off of the song-poets' "investments" and just capably enough to yield "real" scores and recordings. In a coda to this story, a latter-day community of aficionados now exchanges these strange and often hilarious records, as well as knowledge about them, in shadow economies that mirror the one that produced song-poems in the first place.

While one might see these musical economies as "marginal"—to the legitimate music industry, to the mainstream used-record market, to discourses about music like journalism and musicology—this paper argues that they are bet-

ABSTRACTS

ter understood as musical "*marginalia*:" oft-revealing, oft-entertaining inscriptions that query and challenge the "text" of our conventional historiography. For instance, as both an unmistakable genre in itself, and a musical practice in which genre plays a crucial semiotic role in mediating between musicians and non-musicians, song-poems complicate existing generic theory. As collaborative productions in which some collaborators (many of them women) were unaware of their exploitation by others, they raise questions about music's ability to preserve—or not—voices meant to be silenced. And as music that never imagined an audience, yet has one now, song-poems inspect theories of musical meaning, charting a course between immanence and social constructivism. Ultimately, song-poems call on musicology to pay attention to its own margins: those musics, economies, and discourses that lie just beyond its usual reach.

Emilie Coakley (University of Pittsburgh)
"The Bay Psalm Book as a Transnational Artifact of American National Identity"

Heralded as "the Gutenberg Bible of America," the 1640 Bay Psalm Book is one of the most costly printed books in the world. Now considered emblematic of American identity, the Bay Psalm Book has captured the American imagination with stories of its prominence as the first book printed in the supposed wilderness of North America. And yet, to what degree is this Psalter actually "American?" What and from where are the influences that acted upon it and shaped the dozens of editions that it morphed into? Can this Book of Psalms be simultaneously national and transnational? Looking at the Bay Psalm Book as site of identity negotiation, this paper will explore the transnational origins and permutations of the Bay Psalm Book as it contributes to the idea of an imagined American national identity. Referring to the work of Stephen Greenblatt, specifically his "Mobility Studies Manifesto," and key theories on national identity—including the work of Eric Hobsbawm, Benedict Anderson, and Homi Bhaba—I will use the Bay Psalm Book as a case study to explore one manifestation of how musical material can move across national boundaries while simultaneously codifying a national identity. Accordingly, it becomes a site of the articulation of an emerging nation, while still rooted in a transnational circulation of ideas and material. Ultimately, this paper will show how a musical material manifestation of religious and cultural identity can be rooted in ideas of both the national and transnational, while at the

ABSTRACTS

same time, an imagined political sites of a community's identity that cross boarders while also creating them.

Julian Saporiti (Brown University)
"Drawing Sonic Circles In The Square: Musical Overlap and Space Negotiation in New York City's Washington Square Park"

This paper explores the sonic overlap between the buskers (street performers), park goers, and environment (built and "natural") of New York City's Washington Square Park. Drawing upon examples from my close ethnographic work in this space, I explore contemporary sonic conflicts which buskers of all different musical styles, nationalities, and cultures encounter while performing together in the Square. The goal of this paper is to highlight the complexity of these negotiations and make a case for the "savvy" required for these buskers to turn conflict into collaboration and maintain a musically rich park.

Buskers must constantly negotiate not only physical territory, in determining where to set up to play, but also sonic space. In any one moment, the Square can contain upwards of a dozen performers, all within their own sonic radius. On top of this already dense sound world, street noise, park goers, and other sound sources add further sonic complication and competition. When these sonic radii overlap too much, especially in combination with differences in race, gender, class, and nationality, there is potential for musical, emotional, verbal, and physical confrontation. By mapping out these radii, one creates a visualization of these conflicts that traces how and why these problems surface. At the same time, we can understand how buskers self-regulate the sonic borders of the Square in order to, by and large, avoid conflict and maintain an area that does not musically dissolve into a cacophony. Alongside this mapping, I incorporate interviews and observations from my fieldwork to provide a clearer picture of these negotiations and to highlight the sonic richness of the space. The constant and careful negotiation of sonic borders by these buskers is vital to the musical success of the Square.

ABSTRACTS

William Robin (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)
"Indie Classical and Its Limits: The Contested Politics of Naming an American New-Music Scene, 2007–2013"

In its inaugural 2007 press release, New York-based New Amsterdam Records announced its mission to "foster a sense of connection among musicians and fans in this 'indie classical' scene." New Amsterdam's extensive marketing brought "indie classical" into widespread media circulation, but by 2013 the label had ceased using the term. In the intervening years, the meaning of indie classical—originally intended to denote New Amsterdam's independence from larger classical music institutions—had shifted to describe a specific musical style, and been hotly contested by the community of musicians it was meant to champion.

This paper argues that indie classical both succeeded and failed as an attempted grouping because of the specific configuration of actors who reproduced it, from composers and performers to critics and publicists. Considering indie classical's dissemination reveals the power and limitations of institutions within the contested public sphere of the Internet. New Amsterdam's abandonment of the phrase in response to composers' protests online demonstrates how social media affects institutional policy. Through fifty-five interviews, print and online reception history, and research in New Amsterdam's private archives—not previously made available to any scholar—I trace the contested history and shifting usages of indie classical. Drawing on actor-network theory and Eric Drott's recent reassessment of genre as a grouping assembled by variegated agents, I treat indie classical as a matter of concern rather than a matter of fact, offering a model for the study of genre terminologies and the limits of institutional power.

Emily Clark (Columbia University)
"The Towa-Towa in Queens: A Caribbean Bird Community in Diaspora"

The towa towa (as it is called in Suriname and Guyana), or Chestnut-Bellied Seed Finch, is a small bird cultivated for competition in weekly birdsong contests by men in Suriname and Guyana, and also by Guyanese and Surinamese immigrants in New York City and the Netherlands. In Queens, Rotterdam, and other metropolitan centers of Guyanese and Surinamese diaspora, Caribbean men of a wide variety of ages and ethnicities gather on Sunday mornings to "race" their towa

ABSTRACTS

towas: two encaged male birds are placed side by side, causing them to perform their short, melodic songs in rapid succession, while the crowd watches, listens, and counts carefully. The first bird to reach fifty songs wins.

My paper examines this tiny bird as a sounding object that crosses geographic and legal boundaries in its "diaspora" to the U.S. and Europe—often smuggled through airport security in duffle bags or stuffed into hair curlers. Successfully smuggled birds are raised carefully and lovingly on imported Caribbean grasses and seeds in an artificially-created quasi-tropical climate. I consider the bird as a companion species (Haraway), as a sounding object participating in a multi-species acoustemology (Feld), as a component in a discourse of maleness, and as a feelingful marker of Caribbean identity. Why would Surinamese and Guyanese men take on such great risk and expense to have this particular bird species accompany them in diaspora? I compare the towa towa to a musical instrument, considering broadly how materiality is used to perpetuate, and/or adapt, tradition in the context of new natural and cultural surroundings. The case of the towa towa challenges the limits of materiality as a musicological concept, demonstrating that musical materialities are relationally constituted, and can serve to blur the boundaries of nature and culture.

Paula Harper (Columbia University)

"Watching Cell Phones, Listening to Video: Bus Uncle Goes Viral"

The so-called "Bus Uncle" incident, which circulated virally in the summer of 2006, is the story of two cell phones. On April 27, 2006, aboard Hong Kong public bus 68X, a young man leaned forward to the older man in front of him, and asked him to speak more softly on his mobile phone. The older man—the titular "Bus Uncle"—responded instead with an impassioned, idiosyncratic rant. This confrontation might have remained a barely-noteworthy commuter phenomenon, were it not for *another* phone, this one in the hand of an onlooker using his phone's ancillary capacity to record—and share—video of the altercation. Once uploaded to YouTube, the resulting video was subject to various forms of remixing and re-presentation—from subtitled versions in various languages, to techno dance mixes featuring looped samples of the rant.

This paper presents the "Bus Uncle" phenomenon as a rupture in mediated negotiations of urban space and sociality. Following scholars such as Bull

ABSTRACTS

(2007) and Goggin (2006), I situate the mid-2000s camera phone as a mobile device implicated in the reframing of borders between public and private space, affording complicated new entanglings of personal intimacy, urban performance, and ubiquitous media surveillance. The cell phone's novel recording capacity, along with the act of recording itself, separated off this encounter from the flow of urban Hong Kong life, transmuting a limited-public encounter into a bound, mediated object.

Additionally, I prod at the borders of "music" by suggesting that the production and circulation of viral videos (and related mashups) constitute a novel musical practice of the 21st century. I use "Bus Uncle" and its constellation of paratexts to explore new mutabilities of meaning and mediality made possible by the cameraphone, as experience becomes entertainment and argument is made musical, public outburst spun into a looping techno beat.

Nicholas Curry and Brianne Dolce (Yale University)

"Style, voice, persona, and gender in two versions of Taylor Swift's *1989*"

In September of 2015, Ryan Adams released a song-by-song, full-album cover of Taylor Swift's fifth studio album, *1989*. The project garnered significant media attention, due in part to the novelty of an album-length cover, the stylistic distance perceived between the two artists, and the stature of Adams and Swift in their respective genres. But media reaction was varied, both in their evaluations of Adams' work as well as in what elements drew critique: some praised Adams' reinterpretations, while others heard them as, in one critic's words, "the mansplaining of Taylor Swift." That particular interpretation can be debated, but there is no doubt that Swift's and Adams' respective versions of *1989*—and the journalistic discourse surrounding them—reflect and embody the tensions of the highly gendered and sexualized American popular music world. The collisions between the two versions make these tensions apparent. As *Slate*'s Christina Cauterucci puts it, "[Swift's] gender politics are amplified in a new way when her songs are done up by a dude." Through investigating the interactions between these two versions of *1989*, we seek to tease apart questions of authenticity, meaning, and the artist's voice. We argue that while the authenticity many commentators hear in Adams' version cannot be justified as derived from authorship or autobiographical performance—two key factors for critics in their understanding of authenticity claims for Swift's music—

ABSTRACTS

it should not be dismissed as just an illusion of genre, style, or pose. Instead, by displaying the contradictions of the highly gendered aesthetics and value judgments entrenched in American pop and rock traditions, the tensions between Swift's and Adams' versions of *1989* suggest the possibility of listening that emphasizes the performative, rather than one that valorizes an authenticity defined as the trace of individual subjectivity and autobiographical presence.

Eugenia Siegel Conte (Wesleyan University)
"Kama'aina Choirs: Embodied voices performing multiple identities in Hawai'i"

The world of Western choral arts is widespread. But does singing in a Western choral music group always signify the same thing in different contexts? Using interviews and fieldwork from Oahu in 2015, this paper will discuss the Western choral landscape in Hawai'i, and the ways in which this concert form is used to display local identity through embodied voice.

Some choirs in Hawai'i use the modern choral landscape to cross-train their vocalists between multiple styles and genres from various geographical areas. These endeavors mirror the collaborative culture of *kama'aina* (local) daily life on the Hawaiian Islands. Working with different languages is part of this process. However, directors and singers push beyond language into delicate alteration of vocal tone and quality for each tradition, layered on top of a fundamental choral vocal technique tied to physicality.

Discussion of missionary influence, outside travelers, and indigenous agency in creating a collaborative culture is the most popular way to frame island multiplicity in current academic discourse. However, combining theories from early linguistic studies like code-switching, and superculture/subculture frameworks (Slobin 1993), with very recent developments in vocal studies (Eidsheim 2015) and Hawaiian historical ethnomusicology (Carr 2014), provides a rich discussion of how choral singers learn to navigate the nuances of musical languages and vocal identity in the Hawaiian context. This discussion forays into an investigation of the influences present in Hawaiian choral culture, and the recognition of multicultural chameleonism that complex musical history requires of singers, directors and listeners.

ABSTRACTS

Jamie Corbett (Brown University)
"Musical Boundaries and Ethnic Distinctions
in Portuguese-Speaking New England"

How do boundaries between genres enforce boundaries between communities? In particular, how does the constellation of musical genres in New England's Portuguese communities re-inscribe differences between Portuguese-speaking groups? Rhode Island and Southeastern Massachusetts are home to a sizable Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) population, comprised of individual communities from Continental Portugal, Brazil and the Atlantic archipelagos of the Azores, Madeira and Cabo Verde. Despite sharing a common language, the communities are not in ongoing dialogue; they exist within boundaries that, I argue, manifest in music genres. The soundscapes of *festas* (Roman Catholic feast days) are salient examples of how these distinctions are upheld. I foreground the music of the Continental Portuguese and Azorean community's *festas* that I attended in Fall River, MA and various Rhode Island cities from June to September 2015, including the processional marching band music and the music of the post-procession outdoor party. In Azorean *festa* soundscapes, Azorean marching band music has a valence of religious piety that upholds its seriousness, in contrast to the celebratory, body-centered Brazilian dance music that gets played after the serious music has come to an end. I draw from Franco Fabbri's (1982, 2012) and Fabian Holt's (2007) work on musical genre, and recent work in linguistic anthropology on intertextuality and interdiscursivity to frame the relationship between past and present performances (Agha 2005, Silverstein 2005). In doing so, I translate the boundaries between the Lusophone communities into the musical choices of the *festa* cycle while drawing on the connections between place, music and identity (Stokes 1997) in the context of place-naming in Portuguese music (Gray 2013). I posit that musical genres that are specific to certain places, or that discursively *make* places, can trace the same boundaries that exist between ethnic communities in Lusophone New England.

Hallie Blejewski (Wesleyan University)
"The Development of the G-Pan: Engineering a National Instrument"

In 2007, the unveiling of the Genesis pan, or G-pan, marked the beginning of a

ABSTRACTS

second push for the nationalization of pan. The G-pan, purported to be technologically superior to pans hand- crafted from oil drums, was the result of government-funded research through the University of the West Indies in an attempt to modernize and raise the international status of pan. The National Steel Symphony Orchestra performs exclusively using the machine-produced G-pans, though the instruments remain unaffordable and thus inaccessible to the great majority of community steelbands. While the developers of the G-pan have discussed offering workshops to teach experienced tuners how to work with the new instruments, many tuners worry that their traditional tuning skills will no longer be needed if the G-pan becomes commonplace.

Steelband leaders have spoken out to resist the top-down control of an instrument that they feel should belong to the people, and the debate about the African heritage of the national instrument has been reignited. This paper addresses the public reaction to the government's polarizing effort to re-brand the national instrument and distance it from the narrative of class struggle and resistance often associated with the "steelband movement." I draw on fieldwork conducted in Trinidad and in Connecticut with steel pan tuners, arrangers, and performers.

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