

# Journal of the Vernacular Music Center



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**Improvisation and Vernacular**  
**Traditions in Historical Performance**

## Improvisation and Vernacular Traditions in Historical Performance:

We set about the consideration of this volume of the journal with a guiding idea that the discourse for both historically-informed performance and vernacular musics requires of the performer-scholar many of the same investigative and performative processes. Historically-informed performance, mainly within the last thirty years, has attempted to negotiate historical, cultivated, and vernacular traditions in an effort to explore the questions of context, lingual sensitivity, stylistic paradigms, and sonoric diversity. This has been a continually growing and shifting field of inquiry since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century that acknowledges a dichotomy of scholarly and aesthetic issues, attempting to navigate them toward the realization of largely pre-tonal musics. For their part, musicians primarily concerned with vernacular musics are involved in many of the same questions as they consider the performance of canonic works within their repertoires, new works within a related paradigm, and the emerging area of performative confluence, where vernacular traditions are intentionally merged with other musical styles or traditions to query their inherent relationships or consider new, fertile collaborations. Changing social paradigms challenge traditional methods, contexts, musicians and audiences; who are the keepers of traditions and who decides when those traditions may be altered? The arbiters of the past have often been elders within traditional musical cultures, but this too has been subject to change in the face of artistic professionalism or issues of cultural survival.

While some few musics are composed in a strict fashion where the performer is asked to follow the composer's markings as faithfully as possible, many musical traditions incorporate improvisatory concepts. Improvisatory elements are embedded within the performance of both of the repertoires considered here, forming an integral relationship between musician and repertoire that is enhanced by study, demonstration, and most importantly experience within the repertoire. This goes beyond performative embellishment to allow musicians to investigate all aspects of the work from texts and origins to contexts and reception. What was allowable within specific traditions, whether historical, vernacular, or both and how do we think we know? Evolving ideas about history—even Western historical texts—and sociology provide an increasing body of enriching complexities that permit and even encourage musicians to interpret art in new (often revived older) ways, which has occasionally resulted in controversial performances. This edition of the *Journal of the Vernacular Music Center* champions such efforts and seeks to continue said discourse with articles that question performance styles and choices, performative collaborations, and aspects of our ways of knowing, epistemologies within musical cultures that are constantly, and fruitfully in flux.

Ballads continue to confound us. Their rich traditions reaching back across regions and centuries create complexities that Donna Corriher considers in her comparative study involving "Jobal Hunter" (Child 18). This study considers ballads printed in seventeenth-century Britain, and how, as the use of ballads and broadsides evolved, their cultural impact increased, particularly in the evolution of the assumed characteristics, identification, and treatment of witches. This can be observed in ballads and broadsides about witchcraft, particularly several versions of one ballad dating back to the seventeenth century about interaction with the witch,

"Jobal Hunter" (Child 18). These older ballads about love, murder, and witchcraft, that shared vibrant European traditions in the Early Modern period are alive and well in 21<sup>st</sup>-century Appalachia. Several names heard in Western North Carolina synonymous with ballad, song, and storytelling that have humbly shared what has been passed down to them in the oral tradition are: The Ward, Hicks, Presnell, Rhymer, Norton, Guy, and Harmon families. This study reopens some of the questions asked by late-19<sup>th</sup>-century ballad collectors such as Cecil Sharp and Maude Karples about the transference of broadside subject matter from Britain to America, by comparing historical versions of related ballads involving witches and the supernatural found in primary source and facsimile research with primary source interviews of the Ward family conducted by the author. What does the contemporary tradition owe to the older ones by which it is informed and how can modern audiences better understand and appreciate the richness of this living, yet historic, vernacular musical tradition?

In the past fifteen years as director of Baroque Northwest, Dr. Kim Pineda has worked on building relationships and creating concerts involving musicians trained in the historically informed performance practices of classical music (thirteenth through eighteenth centuries) with musicians specializing in vernacular musics from aural traditions in the Western hemisphere. The goal of this ongoing project has been to bridge the musical and cultural crevasse that appeared in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with the increased availability of printed music aimed at the highly skilled but unpaid musicians of the middle class. This seemingly innocuous event not only segregated the players of classical and vernacular musics, but created a cultural divide between musicians and audiences who previously enjoyed and embraced diverse repertoires of music. In this essay, Dr. Pineda offers a brief history of the divide and discusses processes involved in rediscovering the common repertoire and performance practices, creating a concept for particular cross-genre programs, learning how to divulge the point of departure between modern musicians with completely different styles of training, reconciling the differences in how each group approaches a particular piece, and observing that, with a history of music in performance as our reference, the distance between particular styles of music may be reduced, if not eliminated.

Francis Child's seminal work created a 19<sup>th</sup>-century foundation for much of modern ballad studies, establishing a basis for the study of textual variants, motif/motive studies, and questions of ballad origins. Tied within certain historical and emerging nationalistic discourses, Child's work, even as it represented the rhetoric of strict positivistic research, can be understood to espouse certain cultural agendas. At the heart of the study, within its very title, is the concept that the ballads contained within the study were in some essential way related to the United Kingdom, specifically England and Scotland. This has created musical and performative expectations that are now considered normative, even canonic. While the details of Child's work reveal a vast array of traditions, collection points, and cultural overlaps, the larger cultural mission has to some degree glossed over these critical historiographies as divergent variants. In his study of the "Twa Sisters" (Child 10) Christopher Hepburn follows a long line of textual and musical inquiry that seeks to question and recontextualize ballads, re-accessing historical fieldwork in light of new historic and anthropological information. Particularly, this work reconsiders "Twa Sisters" with respect to newly-translated materials

from Russian and Ukrainian sources, inflected by complimentary scholarly folkloric reconstruction. The contested motif of the singing bone has strong ties to *Russe* origins and may have important, even transformative implications for future related ballad study.

Vernacular traditions occasionally merge organically and syncretically through the aegis of migration and diaspora. Benjamin Duvall-Irwin considers first the traditions of the Mexican *corrido* ballads and the Appalachian union-protest ballads. Both of these ballad traditions have received scholarly consideration. Individually they have many commonalities from their European roots and their initial regionally-isolated contexts, to their more modern expressions of struggle against oppressive power structures. Interestingly though, these commonalities have led several ballad singers with Latino origins, currently living in Appalachia to integrate these traditions—bringing not only the Spanish language, but the regional/nationalistic fervor of the earlier *corrido* song tradition to the Appalachian miners’ protest songs. The Appalachian *corrido* song tradition is in the process of development as Duvall-Irwin points out, and awaits future research that will likely show further how these works represent the combined traditions experienced by the migrant Latino communities in Appalachia, even up to the present day.

Fifteen years ago, flutist Norbert Rodenkirchen recorded the acclaimed CD *Tibia ex tempore: Medieval Sketches*, a collection of medieval songs and improvisations played on medieval transverse flute, and recorded in one continuous flow of sound without interruptions. In 2016, he has released a new, revised, live version of the CD. In this article, Rodenkirchen offers a window into the processes involved in employing improvisation as an integral part of medieval performance practice, from primary source documents and scholarship relevant to the chosen pieces, to the medieval modes and text/melody structures that provide models for improvisation. While he contends that for himself, “research and musicological reflection is much more a part of the daily craftsmanship than academia and the discourse of scholarship and teaching,” Rodenkirchen’s examination of the process epitomizes the ways in which a scholar-performer combines research and artistry to create “a performance concept, a repertoire, a musical experience, a concert program” and a recording.

Interlacing historically-informed performance with vernacular musical traditions in a variety of ways, this edition seeks to discover defining moments within the long histories of these different musical cultures to explore and question them, to find shared or comparative processes, and to assert that while they are superficially separated by historical and cultural structures, they are in fact, formatively related and connected. The recognition of this interconnectedness will, we hope, assist musicians as they creatively move forward in the study and performance of these repertoires.

Angela Mariani and Stacey Jocoy

**Donna Corriher** is a Lecturer of Rhetoric and Composition at Appalachian State University. She earned her BA in English Literature at ASU, as well as MAs in English Literature and Appalachian Studies, and the Certificate in Rhetoric and Composition. Her research interests include the study of Appalachian Culture & Folklore as well as American Literature, 1900—1950. Some of her recent publications include articles with co-researcher Anne Chesky on both Margaret Miller and Mary Norris for the collection, *Voices from the Headwaters: Stories from Meat Camp, Tamarack (Pottertown), & Sutherland, North Carolina* (Boone, NC: Center for Appalachian Studies, 2013); "Maggie and Buck: Coal Camps, Cabbage Rolls, and Community in Appalachia" (*Southern Cultures* 20, 2014); other work can be found in *Appalachian Journal* (2011) and *West Virginia History: A Journal of Regional Studies* (2013).

**Benjamin Duvall-Irwin** is an MA student at Appalachian State University's Center for Appalachian Studies in Boone, North Carolina. He is from North Carolina and has lived in Arkansas, where he received a BA in Spanish from Hendrix College, and in Spain where he worked teaching English. His research interests include cultural diversity in Appalachia, the hybridity and cross-cultural comparisons of Appalachian music, and the experience of Latinos/Hispanics in Appalachia. Some of his research projects have focused on the function of the *corito* and other music in Latino Evangelical church service, and folksingers' interpretations of violence against women in the Anglo-American ballad.

**Christopher Hepburn** is currently a PhD student in the area of Musicology in the School of Music at Texas Tech University. He holds degrees in Musicology (master's thesis: Aleksey Stanchinsky, 1888-1914) and Music Performance (Piano) and English Literature (Shakespeare Studies) and has studied both domestically and internationally. His research interests focus on the intersection between music and meaning as an aspect of musical culture; some areas of interest include Russian musics, Early Modern studies, and Popular Culture Studies. He has recently published in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* and *Eighteenth-Century Current Bibliography* as well as presented research at both international and domestic conferences including most recently the South Central Society for Eighteenth Century Studies and the International Academic Conference on Social Sciences in Tokyo, Japan.

**Kim Pineda** received his PhD in Musicology and Historical Performance Practices from the University of Oregon, and is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor of Musicology at Texas Tech University. His research and performance practice interests include music, race, gender, and empire in the eighteenth century; French and Spanish colonial and mission music in the Americas; rhetoric and music in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; improvisation traditions from the fifteenth through nineteenth centuries; new music for historical instruments. Recent publications include "Baroque Sister Act: Sacred Parodies in the Educational Outreach of the Ursuline Nuns in Eighteenth-century New Orleans" (*Proceedings of the Seventh Biennial Conference, Society for Eighteenth-Century Music*); "Musical Border Crossings: Latin American Music in Oregon" for the Knight Library Exhibit, University of Oregon; and "Eighteenth-century real time composition: A guide for the modern flutist" (*The Flutist Quarterly* 40, Spring 2015). As a performer Dr. Pineda has recorded on the Focus, Centaur, and Origin Classical labels, has performed as a flutist and conductor across the U.S. and Canada and

on National Public Radio, and has given workshops and masterclasses around the country. For more information please visit <http://kimpineda.com>.

**Norbert Rodenkirchen** For more than twenty years, **Norbert Rodenkirchen** has dedicated himself to the artistic dialogue between old and new sounds, and between the Middle Ages and today. Acclaimed as a soloist on historical transverse flute and as a subtle accompanist in the area of historical performance practice, he is also active as a composer and improviser of experimental music in the new music scene of Cologne, Germany, and regularly composes music for television documentaries and for the theatre. Since 1996, Rodenkirchen has been the flute player for the renowned medieval ensemble **Sequentia** and also with the French ensemble **Dialogos**, concertizing throughout the world and teaching workshops and masterclasses. He has also created, recorded, and toured three unique solo programs of medieval music: *Tibia ex tempore: medieval sketches*; *Flour de flours: Guillaume de Machaut-Lais & Virelais*; and *Hameln Anno 1284: Medieval flute music on the trail of the Pied Piper*. For more information, please visit <http://www.norbertrodenkirchen.de/>.

## **Fighting Dragons (Or Witches): Western North Carolina Mountain Tradition-Bearers of Seventeenth-Century British Broadside Ballads**

Donna Corriher

Several names heard in Western North Carolina are synonymous with ballad, song, and storytelling: The Ward, Hicks, Presnell, Rhymer, Norton, Guy, and Harmon families have shared what has been passed down to them in the oral tradition. Traditional, cultural transmissions practiced in the seventeenth century, and many that pre-date written documentation, ballads about love, murder, and witchcraft, are alive and well in Appalachia. One particular ballad dating back to the seventeenth century about interaction with a witch, "Jobal Hunter" (*Child* 18), is performed and has been recorded by Rick Ward, tradition-bearer of Beech Mountain ballad-singing.

Appalachian mountain people have been stereotyped as humble.<sup>1</sup> The character trait is found in Biblical scripture, with warnings of dire consequences if lacking: "And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (KJV Matthew 23:12); "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself" (KJV Philippians 2:3); and, "Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble'...humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (KJV James 4:6,10). Rick Ward and his family are a deeply spiritual group, raised up in the King James Version of the Bible. But, two members of the family, Rick's "Grandma Bradie," and his great-aunt "Granny Guy," practiced folk medicine, and were once labeled "witches." Granny Guy was a mid-wife, and according to Rick, "She was the one who birthed Mama and a lot of them up on Beech Mountain."<sup>2</sup> Grandma Bradie was a single mother for a while, took care of her family, played the guitar and sang, and "had some strange powers." Rick Ward reports that Bradie removed warts using a potato. She cut a potato into pieces, making sure to include on "eye" of the potato on the piece she would use. She then heated a pin over a candle, pricked the wart until she brought blood, and then rubbed the potato over the wart. The potato was then wrapped in a piece of white cloth, and buried. As the potato plant grew, the wart went away. Ward reports: "I saw her take seventy-two off a man. She took twelve off of me."<sup>3</sup>

Bradie also told fortunes using cards, and could tell the future by "reading" wax. This entailed dropping hot wax into a glass of water and looking at the shapes the wax took on. In her own understanding of what the varying shapes meant, she could predict the person's fortune. Jean Ward, Rick's mother and Bradie's daughter, says that her mother told fortunes until "the church made her stop; her church believed it was a sin."<sup>4</sup> This determination was probably derived from the book of Deuteronomy, chapter eighteen, book ten: "There shall not

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<sup>1</sup> See Deborah Vansau McCauley's work, *Appalachian Mountain Religion: A History*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> R. Ward, on the subjects of superstition and religion, personal interview.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> J. Ward, personal interview.

be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch" (*The Holy Bible*). Bradie obeyed, in spite of the fact that neither she nor her family members found any contradiction of belief systems, folk belief and Christian. Bradie held on to her beliefs, beliefs that Jean would come to hold as well. Jean is a devout member of the Baptist Church, and is fully aware of the inconsistencies of believing in folk beliefs and wisdom and scriptural teachings at the same time, but she accepts this as the part of her carrying on the beliefs of her mother. Religion, folk wisdom, folk belief, folk practices, Christianity, and witchcraft are and were sometimes compatible.

Historian Michael D. Bailey sheds light on this compatibility in his essay, "The Disenchantment of Magic: Spells, Charms, and Superstition in Early European Witchcraft Literature." Rituals and healing practices of individuals, and the church, predated an assignation of demonic association with those practices. Evolving from an ancient system of beliefs, the blend of folk belief and wisdom with Biblical instruction is a worldview in which spirituality is extremely strong and personal, not a vision of a spiritual world far away.

Folk beliefs and sacred beliefs helped define the identities of immigrants into the Appalachian region from the British Isles, and elsewhere. Escaping religious persecution in many cases, immigrant peoples brought with them belief systems and moral codes defined by their ancestors before them. However, even though early immigrants had rejected aspects of a European past,<sup>5</sup> there were aspects of past religion that were maintained. Bailey explains the intellectual and psychological rationale:

Most laypeople surely understood at least the basic nature of demonic menace as the church depicted it. They did not; however, seem to connect familiar practices with this menace, or they viewed possible involvement with demons far less seriously than did clerics. Common discourse about interactions with supernatural or occult forces typically reflected care and hesitancy about engaging with such power, but also some casualness, evidenced by claims that most laypeople did not well or fully understand the specific nature of the operations involved or the powers invoked....Prayers and approved blessings drew on divine power, while magic spells relied on demons.<sup>6</sup>

Historian Alexandra Walsham sees the paradox of multiple and often opposing belief systems that came about after the religious upheavals of the Middle Ages, as "ingenious adjustments." Walsham writes:

The use of the Bible as a tool of divination or for medicinal cure and the miracles allegedly worked by incombustible portraits of Martin Luther may superficially smack of the Catholic cult of relics and sacramental and bespeak a reluctance to embrace an ideology that fiercely

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<sup>5</sup>Michael D. Bailey, "The Disenchantment of Magic: Spells, Charms, and Superstition in Early European Witchcraft Literature," *The American Historical Review* 111 (April 2006): 383-404. Bailey's work draws heavily from the works of scholars of European history, Stuart Clark, *Thinking with Demons: The Idea of Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997), and Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago, 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Bailey, 391 and 394.



repudiated the localization of the holy, but they too attest to the ingenious adjustments and compromises that accompanied and eased this moment of rupture.<sup>7</sup>

Witchcraft is the subject matter of many ballads of the seventeenth century. As Associate Professor of Music History and Women's and Gender Studies at the University of South Carolina, Sarah F. Williams writes, "Although learned scholars, lawmakers, and clergy wrote volumes about early modern English witchcraft, it was the artifacts of popular culture, like the broadside ballad, that actually disseminated its stereotypes, attributes, and, most especially, its acoustic qualities."<sup>8</sup> Further, Williams states that "early modern English witches were categorized and represented not only by their social status or gender but also by their musical habits."<sup>9</sup> Since women of the seventeenth century were expected to be modest, quiet, and in control of their emotions, singing and dancing could find one labeled a witch. Within the broadside ballad:

[we find women] represented [as] witches [who] . . . broke the established social rules of conduct and speech outlined for women in the seventeenth century, often engaging in excessive, disordered, discordant, and noisy behaviors. . . . The represented sounds of witches in street literature [were seen] as a kind of aural disorder, one that directly contradicts the social standards for orderly speech acts, social conduct, and learned musical discourse.<sup>10</sup>

Discordant music, music performed by incapable musicians, or any music composed without an eye towards God was seen by early moderns to be capable of bringing about disaster to individuals and society. "Music was an efficacious, yet dangerous, art. To misuse it to seduce an unwilling soul, as a witch might do, was a real concern."<sup>11</sup> Williams finds parallels between textual choices in the "witch" broadsides and the melodies assigned to them. The tunes themselves came to be indicative of the demonic, such as occurred with a tune from the oral canon of the sixteenth century, "Fortune My Foe."<sup>12</sup> That tune was later assigned to the broadside "Witchcraft Discovered and Punished," published in 1681. The tune of "Fortune My Foe" continued to be assigned to ballads about murders and executions, as well as other tragedies, such as a fire begun by a lightning strike which burned the city of Munster in Ireland in May of 1621 (Lamentable Burning). Another broadside ballad to be sung to the tune of "Fortune My Foe" was "Titus Andronicus Complaint." This work is the story of a man who fights against the Goths as a Roman soldier for ten years, returns home, and presents the king with his prisoners, one of which is "The Queen of Gothes," and another is a Moor. They are both evil.

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<sup>7</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *The Reformation of the Landscape: Religion, Identity, and Memory in Early Modern Britain and Ireland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 205.

<sup>8</sup> Sarah F. Williams, "'A Swearing and Blaspheming Wretch': Representations of Witchcraft and Excess in Early Modern English Broadside Balladry and Popular Song," *The Journal of Musicological Research* 30 (Issue 4, 2011): 310.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 310-11.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 323.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, for other names by which the tune, "Fortune My Foe," was known. Williams found the origination of the usage of the tune of "Fortune My Foe" used in a broadside to have occurred in a publication from 1565, "Of One Complaining of the Mutability of Fortune."

The king marries the queen, who sleeps with the Moor behind his back. In revenge for her initial capture, she eventually has the soldier's remaining sons imprisoned, and her sons rape his daughter, cut out her tongue and cut off her hands so she can neither speak nor write of who has done the deed. The daughter, Lavinia, overcomes, however, and writes their names in sand with her bloody stumps. The queen then tells the soldier she will free his sons if he gives her his own right hand, which he does. Later, the queen sends him his hand, along with the heads of his sons. The soldier's vengeance is in the capture, torture and mutilation of the queen's sons, grinding them into flour, and making a pie of them, which she eats. Titus then kills the emperor, his daughter, and himself. The ballad ends with the punishment of the Moore:

Then this revenge against the Moore was found  
[Alive] they set him halfe into the ground,  
Whereas he stood until such time he starv'd,  
And so God send all muderers may be serv'd. (*Titus*)

Thus, we may conclude, the aural memories of musical tunes, such as those associated with "Fortunes Foe," recognizably contributed to feelings of horror and death, and evil intents of revenge and witchcraft.

Ballads and stories about witches made their way into western North Carolina in the 18<sup>th</sup> century with immigrants from England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. One finds a story about witches in a Jack tale entitled, "Jack and the Witches." Richard Chase, as a collector of folk tales for the Works Progress Administration after the Depression, writes:

["Jack and the Witches" was] recorded from R. M. Ward, Nancy Ward, Nora Hicks, and Kel Harmon, of Beech Mountain in western Carolina, Sally Middleton and Rosella Boggs of eastern Kentucky, and Mrs. Hattie Kiser of southwestern Virginia, [and] this witches' Sabbath tale seems to be fairly widely known in the Southern Mountains. Usually the boy is not named. R. M. Ward had forgotten what must have once been a most interesting part of this story: Where the Devil evidently used some sort of ritual to "take in new members." Mr. Ward said that Council Harmon, his grandfather;... "had a lot of words right there. I can't recollect any of it anymore."<sup>13</sup>

This passage is indicative of how certain aspects of stories are lost, and therefore, not always transmitted. In Appalachia we find many stories of love, albeit with subtle alterations. Here, recall we are unable to genuinely determine a strictly orally transmitted ballad from a broadside ballad—collections of broadsides are not complete, and many found are partial renderings. Although scholars have provided what is considered to be criteria for identification, such as lyrical components which assist memorization, and more lovely melodies, as well as a polished refinement<sup>14</sup> that evolves through oral transmission of ancient, oral ballads, knowing for certain which ballads were also printed as broadsides is impossible. There does, however, seem to be agreement that a ballad is a product of cultural-editing. Eleanor R. Long-Wilgus reminds us:

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Chase, *The Jack Tales* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1943), 64.

<sup>14</sup> See Livingston, page 860.

As any true ballad-lover knows, no two performances of a ballad, even from the same singer, will be identical unless: (a) they have been memorized from a single source, in print or sound recordings; (b) there has been no exposure to any other version of the song; and/or (c) the version in question has been polished through repeated performances in professional or quasi-professional settings.<sup>15</sup>

Any printed broadsides, *with the exception of love songs and romantic fictions*,<sup>16</sup> were politically controlled.<sup>17</sup> As the use of ballads and broadsides evolved, so did the cultural impact, particularly in the evolution of the assumed characteristics, identification, and treatment of witches. That impact not only influenced the common folk, but also the well-educated. The use of the broadside in Britain varied, as the ballad was performed, read, and sometimes pasted on walls, but all of these uses were aspects of culturally provided education. Affordable, broadsides were popular among the literate population, and they were oftentimes printed versions of older, oral ballads.

As we know, the efforts of Francis J. Child resulted in a collection that includes what he delineated as traditional ballads, broadsides, and folk songs. The specific criteria by which he determined what to include or exclude in his work are debated, but Child's belief that ballad transmission which occurred orally through the illiterate, less-educated people, maintained a purer version of the original has been well-documented. Child's conclusions may be valid, but according to Carol Rose Livingston, "prior to the sixteenth century, the printed broadsheet *and* [my emphasis] the minstrel ballad had separately been very largely the possessions of the ruling classes."<sup>18</sup> Sigrid Rieuwerts supports this dual-ownership of broadsides and ballads, and found it remained so into the early eighteenth century. Rieuwerts gives examples from Allan Ramsay's collections of songs, *Tea-table Miscellany*, printed in four volumes between 1723-1736:

[They were] intended for women, regardless of their social standing. Without making any textual changes, the songs that were previously sold as half-pennies and broadsheets in the streets of Edinburgh, were now compiled and sold as a book to which women of higher society subscribed.<sup>19</sup>

Mary Ellen Brown also saw the class differentiation breakdown revealed in Ramsay's publication practices. [He], "to please all audiences, published the same materials in deluxe editions and as single sheets and garlands; it may be that there were class distinctions in the packaging, if not in the materials."<sup>20</sup>

Paula McDowell shares additional information about the publication of broadsides in Britain, and indicated them to be "among the largest classes of printed materials. Some three

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<sup>15</sup> Eleanor R. Long-Wilgus, *Naomi Wise: Creation, Re-creation, and Continuity in an American Ballad Tradition* (Chapel Hill: Chapel Hill Press, 2003), 21.

<sup>16</sup> I have emphasized this phrase.

<sup>17</sup> Carole Rose Livingston, *British Broadside Ballads of the Sixteenth Century: A Catalogue of the Extant Sheets and an Essay* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991), 855.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 853.

<sup>19</sup> Sigrid Rieuwerts, "Women as the Chief Preservers of Traditional Ballad Poetry," *Acta Ethnographica Hungarica* 47 (2002): 153.

<sup>20</sup> Mary Ellen Brown, *Child's Unfinished Masterpiece* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 125.

thousand distinct ballads were printed between 1150 and 1600."<sup>21</sup> Mary Ellen Brown writes, "There was a collective understanding, an a priori—if indeterminate—sense of ballads, especially with regard to their societal context. That is, ballads apparently arose and thrive in particular environments—among a homogeneous people prior to the development of 'book culture'."<sup>22</sup>

The haunting antiquity extolled in the modern day by performers such as Rick Ward continues to taunt scholars trying to explain what cannot be fully explained. The Ward family moved into the area now known as Watauga County in the middle of the eighteenth century. Ward's family can be traced to British sea Captain Seth Ward, who lived in Henrico County, Virginia in 1613, and traveled back and forth to London; his son, Richard being born there. We can presume, by association, that Seth Ward would have been exposed to the broadside ballad at the very least. Whether or not Seth was literate has not been definitively determined. Did Seth stuff a broadsheet into a travel bag and carry it to America with him? Did the ballads that Rick Ward performs make their way to Rick via Seth's crossings? Sixteen generations of Wards have lived between that first Richard Ward and Rick, moving through Virginia into the Cumberland Gap, and finally into North Carolina where, it is believed, the Wards were the first settlers into Watauga County, owning a land grant in the area now known as Valle Crucis.

*Keeping the Tradition: Traditional Music from Beech Mountain, NC* (2010) is Rick Ward's latest recorded compilation of traditional ballads and songs.<sup>23</sup> Seventeen performances are on the disc, and "Jobal Hunter," also identified as Child 18, are included. Variances of this ballad are many, but the older renditions as performed in Appalachia may be found in Cecil Sharp's *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians*, published in 1917.<sup>24</sup> Some versions include a witch, and some do not. The Jobal Hunter is sometimes identified as *jovial*. He was also known as Sir Lionell, Sir Ryalass, Sir Eglamore, and Center, among others. He fought boars, witches, dragons, and, in the case of Sir Eglamore, asked that God preserve the King and Queen. Ward's Jobal Hunter does not. Ward's version includes the witch:

Abe and Bailey had three sons;  
The youngest was called Center.  
He's gone to the Green's woods hunting  
Just like a jobal hunter.

As he walked up the green briar ridge,  
Blow your horn, Center.  
There he met a gay lady,  
Just like a jobal hunter.

She says, "There is a wild boar in these woods;  
Blow your horn, Center,

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<sup>21</sup> Paula McDowell, "The Manufacture and Lingua-facture of Ballad-Making: Broadside Ballads in Long Eighteenth-Century Ballad Discourse," *The Eighteenth Century* 47 (2006): 151.

<sup>22</sup> Brown, 232.

<sup>23</sup> Rick Ward, *Keeping the Tradition: Traditional Music from Beech Mountain, NC* (Sugar Grove, NC: Rick Ward Music, 2010), track 12.

<sup>24</sup> Cecil Sharp, *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* (New York: Putnam and Sons, 1917), 28.

For he has killed my lord and forty men,  
As you are the jovial hunter.

He says, 'Oh how am I to know?'  
Blow your horn, Center.  
Blow your horn north, east, west, and south,  
As you are the jovial hunter.

He blew his horn north, east, west, and south,  
Blow your horn, Center.  
The wild boar heard him unto his den,  
Just like a jovial hunter.

And as they crossed the White Oak Mountain,  
Blow your horn, Center,  
On their way they went again,  
Just like a jovial hunter.

As he slayed the wild boar,  
Blow your horn, Center,  
The oak and ash they did bend,  
As he was a jovial hunter.

And as they passed by the wild boar's den,  
Blow your horn, Center,  
There laid the bones of a thousand men  
As he was a jovial hunter

They met the old witch wife on a bridge,  
Blow your horn, Center,  
"Begone, you rogue; you've killed my pig,  
As you are the jovial hunter.

She says, "These three things I crave of yours,  
Blow your horn, Center,  
Your 'hawk, your hound, and your Gaily-Dee,  
As you are the jovial hunter."

He says, "These three things you cannot have of mine."  
Blow your horn, Center.  
"Is my 'hawk, my hound, my Gaily-Dee,"  
Just like a jovial hunter.

He split the old witch wife through the chin,  
Blow your horn, Center.  
And on their way they went again,  
As you are the jovial hunter.

The version in Sharp's collection includes Sir Lionel, and the boar is hunted. The title of Child 18, as the storyline, and as is typical of ballads, varies, and includes "Jovial Hunter," "Sir Lionel," "Sir Lionell," "Isaac-a-Bell and Hugh the Graeme," "The Jovial Hunter of Bromsgrove," "The Old Man and his Three Sons," "Bold Sir Rylas," "Bangum and the Boar," "The Wild Boar," "Sir

Eggrabel," "Sir Rackabello," and "Sir Eglamore." One of the versions titled "Sir Lionell" is included in *The Percy Folio of Old English Ballads and Romances*.<sup>25</sup> The version in Percy begins: "Sir Egrabell had sonnes three, Sir Lyonell was one of these." The refrain is, "Blow thy horne, good hunter, As I am a gentle hunter." This Sir Lyonell meets a lady, but she asks him to kill a giant rather than a boar, and the version ends after sending her and a child safely away on a horse. Although there are many other variations in the versions found in the Child collection, I include here only those variations found in the first lines and the refrains in order to inform overall understanding of this aspect of the ballad genre. There is much scholarly work available about the subject of variation within ballads should more detail be desired.

### Textual Variations within Child 18:

*Child 18A*, titled "Sir Lionel," begins as follows:

Sir Egrabell had sonnes three," and the refrain is: "Blow thy horne, good hunter Sir Lyonell was one of these."

*Child 18B*, also titled "Sir Lionel," begins:

"A knight had two sons o sma fame," and the refrain is: "Hey nien nanny Isaac-a-Bell and Hugh the Graeme."

*Child 18C*, again titled, "Sir Lionel," begins:

"Sir Robert Bolton had three sons," and the refrain is: "Wind well thy horn, good hunter And one of them was called Sir Ryalas. For he was a jovial hunter."

*Child 18D*, "Sir Lionel," begins:

"As I went up one brook, one brook," and the refrain is: "Well wind the horn, good hunter."

*Child 18E*, "Sir Lionel," begins:

"There was an old man and sons he had three," and the refrain is: "Wind well, Lion, good hunter."

*Child 18F*, "Sir Lionel," begins:

"Sir Rackabello had three sons," and the refrain is: "Wind well your horn, brave hunter, Sir Ryalash was one of these, And he was a jovial hunter."

"Sir Eglamore," also included as Child 18, depicts the hero slaying a dragon rather than a pig. There is no mention of a woman or a witch, and our hero ends his day of battle in a pub: "For he was so hot with tugging with the Dragon that nothing would quench him but a whole Flaggon." And, in typical broadside fashion during the Tudor realm, that version reveals an underlying political agenda: "Now God preserve our King and Queen...".<sup>26</sup> Notably, Ward's

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas Percy, Frederick James, and John Furnivall, Eds. *The Percy Folio of Old English Ballads and Romances*, Vol. 1 (London: De la More Press, 1905), 37.

<sup>26</sup> I see inconsistency between the date of publication attributed to this broadside version, 1672, and the British realm at this time. Although we cannot assume the king and queen mentioned are William and Mary, who came into rule in 1689, James II ruled independently in 1672.

version, nor many of those found in Child, so obviously extol politics.<sup>27</sup> The subtleties and more obvious subject matter of his version are pre-Tudor, early Tudor at the most.

The ebb and flow of a ballad through oral and textual sources creates a stubborn cultural conundrum for scholars. Has Rick Ward preserved the oldest version found in the United States of a story about a hunter, son, or hero killing boars, dragons, or witches? I believe he has.

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<sup>27</sup> To hear twelve different performances of the ballad, refer to "Francis Child," *Live Journal*, web, <http://francis-child.livejournal.com/5199.html> (accessed 15 November 2011).

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# Comparing New World Traditions: Conflict and Resistance in the Appalachian Protest Song and the Mexican Corrido

Benjamin Duvall-Irwin

Since at least the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the Appalachian region has been largely perceived in the popular mind as a backward, isolated place. Its people too have been stereotyped as poor whites, just as culturally isolated from modern mainstream America as they are isolated geographically. Appalachian studies scholarship has increasingly challenged this universalist view of a homogenous region by highlighting its diverse economic, ethnic, social, and religious realities and its national and global connections. Folk music, once thought to be a marker of Appalachia's unique Anglo-Saxon heritage, has been revealed to come from a variety of heterogeneous sources. Thus, Appalachian folksong should be examined in a national and international context. Some scholars have indeed noted parallels between Appalachian balladry and the *corrido*, or Mexican ballad. While these traditions differ in form, there is much to compare in content. Early parallels were drawn by Americo Paredes himself, the preeminent scholar of the *corrido* of the U.S.-Mexican borderlands. Recently, others have found parallels in the seemingly misogynist violence in the lyrics of their "love songs."<sup>1</sup> In addition to these areas I suggest a new facet: how the border *corrido* and ballads of the Appalachian coalfields have been shaped by conflict and function as a means of collective resistance. Conflict has overwhelmingly framed the study of the border *corrido* and the protest songs of Central Appalachia, but no study has viewed both traditions under this same lens.

This essay will begin with a broad comparison of Mexican and Appalachian balladry as New World traditions influenced by Old World balladry, and summarize the historical and quickly growing presence of Mexicans in the Appalachian region. Then I will present the ballads of Gregorio Cortez and Joaquin Murrieta as typical examples of conflict and the dialectic language of the *corrido*. Next, I apply these same ideas to the pro-union songs of Kentucky folksingers like "Aunt" Molly Jackson and Sarah Ogan Gunning. Finally, I explore the marriage of the *corrido* and union song in a ballad about the 1914 strike and massacre in Ludlow, Colorado, and suggest the possibility of the *corrido* in Appalachia.

## New World Traditions and the Mexican-Appalachian Connection

The popular ballad has a long oral history in Europe and was alive and well in Spain and the British Isles at the time of the European colonization of the Americas. The *romance*, or Spanish ballad, was brought to the Americas through Spanish conquest and settlement, and likewise the English-language ballad was brought to North America from the British Isles by the Scots-Irish and English settlers. For generations these European ballads were preserved in the oral traditions of the two regions.<sup>2</sup>

These European roots dominated most American ballad scholarship until the mid-twentieth century. Biased by the canon established with folklorist Francis Child's *English and Scottish*

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<sup>1</sup> Simon J. Bronner, *Encyclopedia of American Folklife* (London: Routledge, 2015), 1052.

<sup>2</sup> Américo Paredes, *With His Pistol In His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1958), 129.

*Popular Ballads*, the first scholars of Appalachian music like Cecil Sharp were quick to recognize the old European songs preserved in oral tradition, but largely dismissed the non-“Child” American compositions.<sup>3</sup>

Not only do the New World ballad traditions of Mexico and Appalachia draw from their respective Old World or European heritages, but the Spanish *romance* and British ballad traditions also overlap in corpus. In Spain one could find ballads of Lancelot alongside those of the Cid,<sup>4</sup> and some of these parallel songs from Britain and Spain that survived the voyage across the Atlantic. One such example of an identical story and structure can be found in the Appalachian “Four Nights Drunk” (“Our Goodman” Sharp 32, Child 274) and the Spanish “*La Blanca Niña*” (“*La Esposa Infiel*”). Professor Child himself drew similarities between the two, and gave Spanish equivalents to many ballads in his collection.

In Mexico as in Appalachia the Old World ballads survived for generations in the oral tradition, but meanwhile folksingers began to compose their own New World or “Native American” songs based on the old European forms. Folksingers used the simple, un-embellished, narrative style of the ballad to explore the new subjects, lifestyles, and events that developed on the new continent. Folksongs both old and new were disseminated orally and in print through broadsides (*hoja suelta* in Spanish). Between 1980 and 2000 census data shows that the Hispanic Population of Appalachia tripled to nearly 465,000. Between 2000 and 2010 this number doubled. Mexicans are the largest subgroup in Appalachia, comprising 55% of the Hispanic population. These migrants are bringing new cultures to communities with distinct cultural traditions, as well as adapting their own social practices in music and religion.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore they are arriving in new areas of Appalachia that have not experienced significant immigration in the past, or counties that have experienced significant out-migration.<sup>6</sup>

Although it is only in the last several decades that their numbers have grown significantly, Mexicans are known to have been present in central Appalachia since at least the early 20th century. A series of photographs from 1938 in the Library of Congress shows a Mexican miner and his family in West Virginia.<sup>7</sup> In 1920 there were 98 Mexicans reported among the various other ethnic groups in Harlan County, Kentucky.<sup>8</sup>

Mexican folksong also references their presence in the Appalachian region. In the 1920s, the Bethlehem Steel Company of Pennsylvania hired Mexican and Texas-Mexicans to work in

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<sup>3</sup> Ann Ostendorf, “Song Catchers, Ballad Makers, and New Social Historians: The Historiography of Appalachian Music,” *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 63 (Issue 3, 2004): 194.

<sup>4</sup> José Gella Iturriaga, Ed., *Romances Viejos* (Zaragoza: Editorial Ebro, 1938), 30.

<sup>5</sup> Holly R. Barcus, “The Emergence of New Hispanic Settlement Patterns in Appalachia,” *The Professional Geographer* 59 (Issue 3, 2007): 299. Daniel S. Margolies, “Latino Migrant Music and Identity in the Borderlands of the New South,” *Journal of American Culture* 32 (Issue 2, 2009): 251.

<sup>6</sup> P. J. Carr, D. T. Lichter, and M. J. Kefalas, “Can Immigration Save Small-Town America? Hispanic Boomtowns and the Uneasy Path to Renewal,” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 641 (Issue 1, 2012): 39; Daniel S. Margolies, “Taquerias and Tiendas in the Blue Ridge: Viewing the Transformation of Space in a Globalized Appalachia,” *Appalachian Journal* 39 (3-4, 2012): 255.

<sup>7</sup> See: Marion Post Wolcott, photographer, *Mexican Miner, Bertha Hill, Scotts Run, West Virginia*, September 1938. <https://www.loc.gov/item/fsa1998011513/PP/> (accessed 10 October 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Richard J. Callahan, *Subject to Dust: Work and Faith in the Kentucky Coal Fields* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 77.

their factories and mines around Bethlehem, some of them in Appalachian Pennsylvania.<sup>9</sup> The song “*Corrido Pensilvanio*” or “*Corrido de Pensilvania*” describes this trip from Texas to Pennsylvania and gives a clue to Mexican workers in Central Appalachia:<sup>10</sup>

*El enganchista me dijo,  
–No lleves a tu familia  
para no pasar trabajos  
en el estado de West Virginia–“.*

[The contractor said to me,  
“Don’t take your family  
so as not to pass up any jobs  
in the state of West Virginia]

Apparently, there were other opportunities for Mexican workers in West Virginia. Another variant mentions changing trains in Kentucky. Thus this corrido evidences Mexicans’ passing through or even working in Central Appalachia, as well as working in northeastern Pennsylvania.

### **“With a pistol in his hand”: The Border Corrido and the Dialectic of Conflict**

In 19<sup>th</sup> century Mexico there existed many types of folksong including the *romance*, the *décima*, the *copla*, and the *corrido*; by the end of the century, however, the corrido had come to replace the others as the dominant form on the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>11</sup> For it was during this time that a series of conflicts of all sorts changed the lives of the border people and shaped the content of their folksong, resulting in the corrido of border conflict. The years from 1836 to the 1930s, dubbed the corrido century by Paredes, brought violence and conflict to the border with skirmishes, revolts, and civil wars North and South of the Rio Grande, including the Texas Revolution and the Mexican-American War.<sup>12</sup> Of course, the 1948 creation of an international border had the largest impact on border relations, as Spanish and English speakers alike found themselves subject to new laws and regulations and Mexican-Americans found themselves in an economically and culturally subordinate position. This century included the strongest racial and class subjugation of the native Mexicans and their subsistence lifestyle by the prejudice and capitalist system of the Anglos, and not surprisingly, includes some of the bloodiest conflicts and most hostile ballads.

Perhaps the most common of border corridos are those of inter-ethnic conflict, which criticize the poor and often unjust treatment of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans by Anglo-Americans. In these corridos there is an overwhelming theme of defiance and resistance, usually an individual standing up for his own rights against an aggressive American authority. Indeed, the social and political interactions between Anglo-Americans and Mexicans have been laden with conflict and created a particular atmosphere that became extremely influential in the development of the border corrido tradition. Manuel Peña calls this the “dialectic of

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<sup>9</sup> Jamie Javier Rodriguez, “El ‘Adios Tejas’ in El Corrido Pensilvanio: Migration, Place, and Politics in South Texas,” *MELUS* 40 (Issue 1, 2015): 76.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>11</sup> Paredes, 149.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

conflict”, or a clash of ideological, economic, class, and racial forces that served as a main creative influence in the various musical traditions of the Southwest.<sup>13</sup>

This dialectic perspective of conflict is most evident in the language and imagery of the border corrido. The hero is always a Mexican or Mexican-American driven to violence by the unjust actions of white Americans, who then fights to defend what he believes is right, usually with his pistol in his hand.<sup>14</sup> The hero is always referred to by name while the Americans are reduced to a nameless other as either *cherifes* (sheriffs) or *rinches* (rangers), which refer to any sort of sheriff, deputy, Texas Ranger, law-man, or posse. Even though he may be captured or killed, the border hero goes down fighting to defy the aggressing Anglos and to defend his rights. Perhaps the most typical example of this pattern is that of “The Ballad of Gregorio Cortez.” The real-life Gregorio Cortez shot and killed the sheriff of Karnes County, Texas after a misunderstanding left his brother dead. He fled and the law gave a miraculous chase; by the time he was captured he had killed two sheriffs, ridden hundreds of miles, and evaded countless men.

While the spoken legends of Cortez add other events to the story, the song closely follows the actual events of the ordeal: the wounding of his brother Romaldo and the killing of Sheriff Morris (referred to as the Major Sheriff or *el Cherife Mayor*), the chase, and the capture. It is in the song’s description of Cortez’s flight that both the dialectic language and typical corrido themes are most prominently presented. It is at the beginning of his flight, in the fifth and sixth stanzas that the most important message, and main theme of the border hero corrido, is given:

*“Decía Gregorio Cortez  
Con su pistola en la mano:  
-No siento haberlo matado,  
Lo que siento es a mi hermano.*

Then said Gregorio Cortez,  
With his pistol in his hand:  
“I don’t regret that I killed him;  
I regret my brother’s death”.

*Decía Gregorio Cortez  
Con su alma muy encendida:  
-No siento haberlo matado,  
La defensa es permitida”.*

Then said Gregorio Cortez,  
And his soul was all aflame:  
“I don’t regret that I killed him,  
A man must defend himself”<sup>15</sup>

After quickly setting the scene (typical of corrido style), the narrative focuses mostly on the heroics of Cortez and the cowardice of the Texans, drawing a strong contrast that is developed throughout. This pattern is repeated throughout the corrido, in which Cortez taunts the *rinches*, performs a daring feat of escape, and kills another sheriff, all while riding ahead.

These alternations that build on the contrast between the brave Mexican and cowardly, inept Rangers function primarily as a form of role or status reversal, in which the celebrated, no-nonsense Texas Rangers do not emerge victorious as expected.<sup>16</sup> Instead, it is the lone Mexican who comes out victorious. This victory, however, culminates as a symbolic one.

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<sup>13</sup> Manuel Peña, *The Mexican-American Orquesta: Music, Culture, and the Dialectic of Conflict* (Austin, TX: The University of Texas Press, 1999), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Paredes, 147.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>16</sup> Manuel Peña, “Folksong and Social Change: Two Corridos as Interpretive Sources,” *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 13 (1 – 2, 1982), 26.

Ultimately Cortez takes responsibility for his actions and gives himself up willingly for the sake of his people. Though he is finally captured, it is only after facing overwhelming odds and exacting heavy casualties. Even in defeat Cortez, and more importantly, the corrido hero in general, achieve a victory for their people by defying negative stereotypes and exemplifying heroic virtues like bravery and cunning, all while single-handedly resisting or defeating Anglos of superior numbers. Whether or not the corrido hero is defeated, it is always in contrast to the negative reality of the border people. It is in this contrast that, “a sharp reversal of the historical Anglo-Mexican relationship, in which the Anglo dominates, is achieved. In the corrido, instead of the Mexican being the downtrodden, powerless victim of Anglo American exploitation, it is he who assumes the role of victor.”<sup>17</sup>

Unfortunately, the symbolic victories of the corrido hero rarely reflected victories in the real-life struggles of Mexicans. Nevertheless, these songs gave cultural meaning and importance to an oppressed group. Even though the actual men of corridos may have been defeated or imprisoned, the symbolic hero of the songs remained an exemplar of cultural values that transcended the defeat or oppression of actual events on the border: “In short, Greater Mexican epic-heroic balladry, as songs of triumph over a racially/culturally distinct enemy, now appears at a cultural/ideological level as a compensatory form of resistance for a lack of victory in the material realm.”<sup>18</sup>

Another example of cultural resistance is the corrido of the legendary bandit Joaquín Murrieta. Legend holds that soon after Murrieta arrived in California during the Gold Rush he lost his land-claim to American miners. Later he is said to have witnessed the lynching of his brother and the rape and murder of his wife, which caused him to form a band of men to rob and pillage white Californians out of revenge. While his actions may or may not seem justifiable in the eyes of the law, they inspired a ballad that praises him for his individual initiative and vigilance in response to the personal offenses he suffered.

Although atypical in corrido form and structure, in content the song represents the same themes of an individual defending his rights and his actions:<sup>19</sup>

*A los ricos avarientos  
Yo les quitaba el dinero.  
Con los humildes y pobres  
Yo me quitaba el sombrero.  
Ay, qué leyes tan injustas  
Con llamarme bandolero.*

[From the greedy rich,  
I took away their money.  
With the humble and the poor  
I took off my hat.  
Oh, what unjust laws  
To label me an outlaw.

*A mí la ley no me asusta  
Ni tengo miedo morir.  
Vengo a vengar a mi esposa  
Se los vuelvo a repetir.  
Carmelita tan hermosa,  
Cómo te hicieron sufrir.*

The law does not frighten me  
Nor am I afraid to die.  
I come to avenge my wife,  
And I say again,  
My lovely Carmelita,  
How they made you suffer]

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>18</sup> José E. Limón, *American Encounters: Greater Mexico, the United States, and the Erotics of Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 106.

<sup>19</sup> Grant Evans and Jesse De Zamora, "Joaquin Murrieta," *Joaquin Murrieta* (University of Texas at Austin, 2002).

Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez explains that “rather than a ‘social bandit’ he should be considered, as others of the period, a ‘cultural hero and leader’ because Murrieta organized resistance with an alternative ‘auxiliary’ political authority and generated community approval and legitimacy for his actions.”<sup>20</sup> In his ballad he is not treated as an outlaw or criminal, but as a figure that defended his family and community values through organized and armed resistance in opposition to Anglo authority.

There are examples of similar figures in United States folksong, but in the context of Appalachian culture a more real example of this independent spirit may be seen in the real-life moonshiner. Although there are many folksongs about moonshine, there are few that praise it outright. Most lament its harmful effects or celebrate its euphoric effects, but some do comment on the government’s disapproval (e.g. the revenue officers coming to tear down Darling Cora’s still-house). For many whiskey making had a double-edged nature:

Whiskey was both a boon and a curse to the mountain people: it provided financial support, which allowed many to endure the worst of the postwar hardships; but it did so at great cost. Some... ..fell prey to ‘moonshine’s’ adverse pleasures; others served time in prison for breaking various prohibition laws; a few died while defending what they felt to be their birthright: whiskey-making.<sup>21</sup>

Similarly, the real life character of Appalachian bandit Otto Wood and the folklore surrounding him parallel the border raiders and folk heroes of the Mexican tradition.<sup>22</sup> In recent decades, the popular corrido has spawned its own sub-genre of *narcocorridos*, which detail the stories of drug traffickers and the like. Here, however, is a distinction between the hero and a mere outlaw. Whereas the smuggler may simply break the law for personal gain, both the moonshiner and the border corrido hero do so not out of contempt for the law but as self-preservation to defend his rights after his culture, livelihood, or people have been threatened.

### **“Which Side Are You On?”: Protest Songs of the Kentucky Coalfields**

Like the U.S.-Mexico border, Appalachia has a long history as a cultural borderland that has been home to multiple ethnic groups. Joining or displacing the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw and other indigenous groups were various Europeans like English, Scots-Irish, German, Scottish, Welsh, Irish, Swiss, French, and others. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries many African-Americans and Eastern and Southern Europeans (and a few Mexicans) migrated to the coal-producing counties of Central Appalachia.

Considering the majority white, English-speaking (though certainly not ethnically homogenous) population of Appalachia, its narrative songs of conflict are better viewed through the lens of intra-ethnic conflict, or conflict among members of the same culture based on social or economic class differences. Nevertheless, the region has fostered its own dialectic

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<sup>20</sup> Carlos C. Vélez-Ibáñez, *Border Visions: Mexican Cultures of the Southwest United States* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1997), 100.

<sup>21</sup> Ted Olson, “Agricultural Themes in Appalachian Folk Songs: ‘The Farmer is the Man Who Feeds Them All’,” *Journal of the Appalachian Studies Association* 4 (Issue 1, 1992): 66.

<sup>22</sup> Trevor McKenzie, “‘Robin Hood of the Blue Ridge’: The Life, Legend, and Songs of Otto Wood, the Bandit,” Master’s Thesis: Appalachian State University, 2012.

of conflict: "There is a rich lode of American industrial folklore composed by women in the Southern Appalachian Mountains. It can be attributed in part to a combination of cultural, economic, historical, and psychological factors: a rich musical tradition, an economic disaster of mammoth proportions, a history of radical unionism, and the independent, pioneer spirit of the people."<sup>23</sup> In short, these factors unique to the region created their own two-sided perspective, with a different thematic relationship for a different conflict.

This "rich lode" refers to New World songs composed about coal mining. Central Appalachia has long been one of the most productive regions for bituminous coal extraction, and has been the ground for conflicts between coal companies and labor unions. Indeed, labor activism has long dominated written accounts of coal town life.<sup>24</sup> The frequent and often bloody strikes in these areas have led to the composition of many songs that take this hostile and dialectic view, in most cases viewing the union workers as oppressed socially and economically by the coal companies.

There are countless songs that describe the harsh economic realities of the coal-mining camps and towns. The small pay that miners received (usually credit at the company store) was often insufficient to feed a family, and company dwellings offered poor shelter from the elements. Thus extreme poverty was the reality for many mining families. Ballad singers like Sarah Ogan Gunning, who grew up in a Kentucky coal camp, sing of the suffering that they witnessed firsthand. Take Gunning's "Dreadful Memories" as an example:

Dreadful memories! How they linger;  
How they pain my precious soul.  
Little children, sick and hungry,  
Sick and hungry, weak and cold.

Dreadful memories! How they haunt me  
As the lonely moments fly.  
Oh, how them little babies suffered!  
I saw them starve to death and die.<sup>25</sup>

Songs such as this make a strong emotional appeal to the listener as they depict in vivid detail the hard lives of miners' families. Other songs describe the hard, dangerous lives of the miners themselves. Although they comment on the suffering and poor conditions of mining communities and make a compelling case for the plight of the miner, they offer no solution or alternative to the problems established.

To find a solution some miners turned toward labor unions, a movement which produced a wealth of pro-union songs characterized by the same dialectics found in border corrido of conflict. The most powerful example is that of "Which Side Are You On?" by Florence Reece, written about the "Bloody Harlan" struggle for unionization in Harlan County, Kentucky in the

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<sup>23</sup> Henrietta Yurchenco, "Trouble in the Mines: A History in Song and Story by Women of Appalachia," *American Music*, 9 (Issue 2, 1991): 209-224.

<sup>24</sup> Crandall Shifflett, *Coal Towns: Life, Work, and Culture in Company Towns of Southern Appalachia, 1880-1960* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991), 116.

<sup>25</sup> Chesla R. Sharp, "Coal-Mining Songs as Forms of Environmental Protest," *Journal of the Appalachian Studies Association* 4 (Issue 1, 1992): 53.

1930s. In her song she describes the Harlan County strikes as a two-sided battle and compels workers to join the “right” side. In contrast to other coal-mining ballads (and many border corridos) that merely describe social problems but offer no solution, the goal of “Which Side Are You On?” is to convert listeners to a movement and commit them to action.<sup>26</sup> This active intention is clearly stated in the song’s lyrics, which spell out “its two-valued orientation, its class consciousness and its feeling that time is on its side.”<sup>27</sup>

Come all of you good workers,  
Good news to you I’ll tell,  
Of how the good old union  
Has come in here to dwell.

Refrain: Which side are you on?  
Which side are you on?<sup>28</sup>

The song sets the dialectic tone from the very beginning, and removes any moral ambiguity. Immediately the struggle is divided into two sides, with the union on the “good side” which the listener is implored to join:

We’ve started our good battle,  
We know we’re sure to win,  
Because we’ve got the gun thugs  
A-lookin’ very thin.

Unlike other songs that lament the conditions of miners and their families, this song is overly optimistic and predicts a sure victory. This faith in the strength of the union acts as another form of status reversal. Here it is the company gun-thugs and not the miner’s family that are thin and weary rather than the miner’s starving children.

They say in Harlan County  
There are no neutrals there;  
You either are a union man  
Or a thug for J. H. Blair.

Oh workers, can you stand it?  
Oh tell me how you can.  
Will you be a lousy scab  
Or will you be a man?

Again the struggle is split in two sides with no possibility for neutrality: there are only workers loyal to the Union and the “thugs” loyal to the company. Although Harlan Sherriff J.H. Blair is mentioned by name, here as in “Gregorio Cortez” and other corridos, the others are reduced to cowards and treated as un-manly. A clear distinction is drawn between the “real” men of the

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.



Union and the scabs and gun-thugs of the company. Ultimately the listener is faced with two choices: be a man and join the winning side, or be a lousy thug.

Another example of this dialectic sentiment is seen in “Aunt” Molly Jackson’s “I Am a Union Woman,” which offers the same optimistic call to arms coupled with its two-sided class-conscience:

I am a union woman  
Just as brave as I can be  
I do not like the bosses  
And the bosses don't like me.

Refrain: Join the NMU, Join the NMU [National Miners Union]

We are many thousand strong,  
And I am glad to say  
We are getting stronger  
And stronger every day.

The bosses ride fine horses  
While we walk in the mud,  
Their banner is the dollar sign,  
Ours is striped with blood.<sup>29</sup>

Here the antipathy between the two sides is more outspoken, and the call to join the union is again immediate. The speaker praises herself as brave and the union as a strong, ever-growing organization. More importantly, it provides an extremely vivid depiction of the class-based nature of the conflict: the bosses enjoy wealth and riches at the expense of the workers.

Sarah Ogan Gunning’s “Down on the Picket Line” offers a much stronger contrast between the bravery of the strikers and the cowardice of the scabs, similar to the pattern found in “Gregorio Cortez”:

We went out one morning before daylight  
And I was sure we'd have a fight,  
But the scabs was cowardly, ran away,  
But we went back the very next day.

We all went out on the railroad track  
To meet them scabs and turn them back  
We win that strike I'm glad to say  
Come on, and we'll show you the way.<sup>30</sup>

These songs praise the strikers for resisting the intimidation tactics of mine operators who harassed union workers and organizers, and give a moral legitimacy to their side in the struggle. Coupled with the staunch defiance and active organization of the union workers we can again see the ballad as a form of organized communal resistance by an auxiliary authority against an

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<sup>29</sup> Yurchenco, 215.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 216.

oppressive group, like in the ballad of Joaquín Murrieta. Again, the victories achieved in these ballads are merely symbolic ones. Unfortunately, most of the strikes by labor unions like the UMW and NMU were not ultimately successful.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless, songs like “Which Side Are You On?” have become anthems for labor, and even civil rights, movements everywhere.

### **Corrido and Union Song at Ludlow: Hints for the Future of Appalachia**

According to the similar functions that they serve for marginalized groups, one can expect a marriage of the corrido and the union song. The life of miner and *corridista* Elias Baca showed just that. His song “*Que viva la nación*” (That the Nation May Live) described the Ludlow Massacre of 1914, in which state militia and gunmen hired by Colorado Fuel & Iron Company fired upon a group of miners and their families. Like any good folksinger who will compose a song according to formulas and motifs of their tradition, Baca combined border corrido form and conventions with pro-union themes to create a new hybrid form. Per tradition, he begins with a place and date, but moves beyond conventions with the addition of a chorus:

*De West Virginia llegan  
telegramas muy iguales.  
Que el 23 de septiembre  
se paran los minerales.*

*Coro:  
¡Que viva la nación!  
¡Que viva la nación!  
que aquí 'stamos peleando  
y en esta fuerte unión!*

[From West Virginia came  
very similar telegrams  
that the 23rd of September  
the mining would be stopped.

Chorus:  
That the nation may live!  
That the nation may live!  
We're here fighting  
in this powerful union].<sup>32</sup>

Once again, a corrido links Mexican-American workers to Appalachia. Here the mention of West Virginia refers to the 1913 UMWA strike in Paint Creek, WV. There as in Ludlow, gunmen hired by Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency fired upon miners. Moreover, famous labor organizer Mother Jones was active in both the Paint Creek and Ludlow strikes. Thus, Baca calls for a trans-regional union for the benefit of miners across the nation. In this song we see the same political function of the border corrido and the protest songs of Central Appalachia: an overt other, and

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<sup>31</sup> Sharp, 54.

<sup>32</sup> Sarah M. Rudd, “Harmonizing Corrido and Union Song at the Ludlow Massacre,” *Western Folklore* 61 (Issue 1, 2002): 31-32.

the emphasis on an event to transform it to social action.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, the song calls upon miners to overcome racial or class divisions in a multiethnic, national union.<sup>34</sup>

Baca gives just one example of possible interaction and hybridity of folk traditions among multiethnic communities. Given the presence of Mexican workers in the coal industry of Appalachia, it is surprising there have been no corridos composed on the subject. Hispanics have certainly been involved in labor struggles in the region. In the 1990s, a group of Guatemalan and Mexican workers staged a decade long strike in Morganton, North Carolina.<sup>35</sup> Neither are they strangers to the protest song and Appalachian music traditions. Latino residents in the region attend local music events like fiddler's conventions, and some mariachi fiddlers even emulate bluegrass fiddlers.<sup>36</sup> Compared to unaccompanied ballads singing among Anglos the corrido has found extreme mainstream success among Latinos, so the corrido and corridistas can be expected to be found among Mexican immigrants to Appalachia. As Mexican immigration continues in the region and communities become more integrated we can expect more interaction between cultural traditions. For as the history of the banjo shows, music in Appalachia has shown a high degree of cultural exchange and hybridity. To be sure, Mexican migrants to Appalachia are bringing the same music found in the Southwest like *conjunto*, *norteño*, *corridos*, *mariachi*, and religious music like the *corito*. What remains to be seen is how these traditions will incorporate into or be influenced by the existing Appalachian traditions. Case studies by scholars like Daniel Margolies show that cultural interchange is already occurring among Latino musicians, who use music to adapt to life in the United States while also affirming their own ethnic identities. Few of these studies, however, point to Appalachia and to date there has been no academic work focused specifically on Latino music in Appalachia. Exactly what kinds of music are being played by Mexicans and other Latinos in Appalachia remains largely undocumented. Future research in this topic will help to determine what kind of music Latinos in the region are playing and the extent of cultural exchange.

Still, the ballad remains an important tool in the struggles of the Appalachian-American and the Mexican-American. Since World War II the corrido has shifted from depicting lone heroes and cultural heroes to those of victimization that evoke outrage in order to bring active political resistance.<sup>37</sup> In Appalachia protest singers on both sides of the Mountaintop Removal mining debate are evoking their musical traditions and history of coal mining to give place-based legitimacy to their arguments.<sup>38</sup> These songs may speak to new conflicts, but the forms are the same. Considering the shared history of conflict and symbolic functions of the corrido and Appalachian coal-field balladry, it seems that the Appalachian corrido is inevitable.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>35</sup> Leon Fink and Alvis E. Dunn, *The Maya of Morganton: Work and Community in the Nuevo New South* (Chapel Hill, N.C: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> Margolies 2012, 122.

<sup>37</sup> Peña 1982, 38.

<sup>38</sup> Travis D. Stimeling, "Music, Place, and Identity in the Central Appalachian Mountaintop Removal Mining Debate," *American Music* 30 (Issue 1, 2012): 19.

## Widening Origins: Twa Sisters, Singing Bones, and the Slavic “Usna tradytsiya”

Christopher Hepburn

This study begins with the ambiguous phrase “widening origins,” which is meant to imply that, despite on-going approaches to context-placing within the larger epistemological studies on balladry introduced to us by music scholars, folklorists, and literary historians, the application of such approaches to traditions outside of the west is still an understudied topic. This study attempts to navigate the prevailing western expectations about the context of origins of ballads in light of an understudied foreign body of literature. The question of origins is one such question that can never be *completely* answered, yet it is still valuable to consider the motives and tropes within ballads as these may help to further relate them to specific areas, which, in turn, can give us further clues to their origins.

In the case of “The Twa Sisters” (Child 10), one of the oldest in the Child canon, the exact origin of the ballad exists somewhat ambiguously in scholarship. From the early twentieth century, scholarship sought to determine the geographical distribution of the ballad by demonstrating the existence of English, Scottish, and European traditions and thus identifying various peculiarities belonging to each tradition. Nearly a half-century later, however, the prevailing consensus of belief is that the primogenitor from which nearly 500 variants derived themselves existed “somewhere” and at “sometime” exclusively in northern Europe. Using comparative textual analysis and new translations,<sup>1</sup> the present study argues that “The Twa Sisters” contains strong motivic affinities with Slavic folklore.

The basic story elements of “The Twa Sisters,” as intimated within the canonic Child corpus, are as follows:<sup>2</sup>

Plot: Two sisters go down to the sea [...]. When they reach the shore, the elder sister pushes the younger in the water. The elder remains impervious to her sister’s pleas for help, and the latter drowns. A miller pulls the dead woman out of the mill damn, and builds a violin from various parts of her body. When he plays it the strings reveal that the woman was murdered by her own sister.<sup>3</sup>

Motifs: ✂ murder (of sister: *sibling murder (woman murders her sister)*; motive unclear; by drowning) / woman, wicked (committed murder) / death (through murder);  
✂ help (*rescue (of person from death: of sister from drowning)*); refused by person asked for help);  
✂ crime (exposed; by magic (object, marvelous (*violin*), *musical instrument*, marvelous)) / exposure (of murderess);

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<sup>1</sup> All translations appearing in this study are mine. The responsibility for any mistranslations or misinterpretations lies with me.

<sup>2</sup> These summary and subsequent motivic chart is adapted from Stith Thompson, *The Folktale* (Berkeley: University of California Press), 1997 and from Thompson’s *Motif Index*.

<sup>3</sup> For the complete version of Child 10B, see Appendix I

Within western literature, it might seem clear “The Twa Sisters” has been established as part of the canonic northern European collection of ballads primarily related to the United Kingdom; however, of the twenty or so versions that are listed, Child presents texts from other languages such as English, Scottish, Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic, Finnish, German, and Spanish. More interestingly are the following listings: Estonian, Lithuanian, Slovak, Polish, among others. While it would appear from Child’s discussion that “The Twa Sisters” has British roots, a few scholars argue differently. On one hand, for example, Parker in *Twa Sisters—Going Which Way?* notes the importance of various particularities belonging to Scandinavian traditions. On the other hand, In “The Twa Sisters: A Santal Folktale Variant of the Ballad,” Philipose notes the “appearance of a variant among the storytellers of the Santals, a tribal group in West Bengal, India.”<sup>4</sup> In *The British Traditional Ballad in North America*, Tristram Coffin notes that “Paul Brewster has done a very complete survey of both the song and the tale in *FFC*,<sup>5</sup> [...] he feels the song began in Norway before 1600, spread through Scandinavia, and then to Britain and the West,” but, he notes, “[...] the tale is of Slavic origin.”<sup>6</sup> The present study attempts to further this discussion.

Considerations within this study of the Russian and Ukrainian renderings of “The Twa Sisters” are certainly integral to this discussion, however, the aim of this study would be amiss if it did not consider another integral part of this investigation involving the motivic element directly tied to “The Twa Sisters:” the singing bone. In *The Folktale*, Stith Thompson demonstrates the motivic precedent between the ballad and the folktale known as “The Singing Bone” (Type 780), which can be seen by the comparison of their narrative:

[i]n the prose form we have the murder of one brother by another, whereas in the ballad we are dealing with two sisters. in any case, the murdered person is either buried or left in the water where he has been drowned. Sometimes a harp is made from various parts of the body, or a flute from a bone, or some other instrument from a tree which has grown over the murdered person’s grave. The musical instrument is played in public and sings out the accusation of the murder.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond the previously established motivic precedent, there is historical precedent for the consideration of the “singing bone” motif in this study. In 1894 R. Nisbet Bain (1854-1909), the leading British linguist (icosalingual)<sup>8</sup> of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, completed his *Cossack Fairy Tales and Folk Tales: Selected, Edited, and Translated*. In the very tradition that Child helped to establish, the attempt of his work was to try to bring into popularity with the west the old Cossack stories by translating them for the first time into the English language from their Ruthenian manuscripts. The fact that Bain indicates the manuscripts translated were in the Ruthenian language is interestingly noteworthy.<sup>9</sup> By as early as 1569, with the signing of the treaty known

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<sup>4</sup> Lily Philipose, “The Twa Sisters: A Santal Folktale Variant of the Ballad” *Folklore* 101 (Issue 2, 1990): 169-177.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Tristram P. Coffin, *The British Traditional Ballad in North America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 280.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> An icosalingual is a speaker of twenty languages.

<sup>9</sup> A few linguists, who also refer to “Ruthenian” as Chancery Slavonic, note that the language existed “somewhere between Polish and Russian.”

as the Union of Lublin,<sup>10</sup> the Ruthenian language had gradually been replaced by the Polish language, especially with regard to literature. Further to this, by the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, there were already needs for translators during political negotiations.<sup>11</sup> This evidence is largely conjectural, however, what has possibly been discovered is a folkloric version that very likely predates Child's earliest collected rendering from the western tradition.

Within Slavic literature, a few scholars have previously made the connection between the "singing bone" motif and "The Twa Sisters." In *Tło ludowe "Balladyny," studjum folklorystyczne*,<sup>12</sup> or *Folk Backgrounds "Ballads," The Study of Folklore*, which appeared in the seventh edition of the Polish ethnographic journal *Wisła* (1894), Volodymyr Buhel, the Polish literary critic and folklorist, discussed "The Singing Bone" motif in ballads and fairy-tales he collected from various native (Slavic) and non-native (English, etc.) sources.<sup>12</sup> The literary critic, folklorist, and writer Ivan Franko (1856-1916) gave an overview of Buhel's *Tło ludowe "Balladyny," studjum folklorystyczne*, in *Dvi shkoly v folklorystysi*, or *Two Schools of Folkloristics*, however, in his article, he notes that Buhel "misinterpreted" the significance of the "singing bone" motif and that the story has more to do with religio-societal issues.

Oksana Karbashevska, the famed Ukrainian folklorist, literary critic, and scholar, she notes the significance of the "singing bone" motif to Ukrainian culture in the following interview:

[...] The singing bone motif is unfolded in a beautiful Ukrainian ballad "Daughter-in-law – Poplar" and the motif of the punishment for misdeeds and crimes, that are against the law and customs of the community, is inherent in the Ukrainian ballad, e.g. about a girl's elopement with soldiers (kozaks) from her family, sexual relations before the marriage and giving birth to a child, child murder, etc. In general, one of the leading functions of the Ukrainian ballad is didactic, i.e. to teach the listener (reader) the right on negative examples. In addition, the same theme may be reproduced in different genres of both folklore and literature, as well as in the arts of music, painting, theatre. The Ukrainian prose fairy-tale with poetic insertions (the song of a pipe) more fully elaborates the story and closes with the punishment of the elder daughter.<sup>13</sup>

This study now turns to the final part of the discussion.

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<sup>10</sup> See the Union of Lublin, 1569; for more information, see *Encyclopedia of Ukraine* at: <http://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com/display.asp?linkpath=pages%5CL%5CU%5CLublinUnionof.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> See <http://www.rp.pl/artykul/488281-Kozaczyna--Rzeczpospolita--Moskwa.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Volodymyr Buhel "Tło ludowe "Balladyny," studjum folklorystyczne" in *Wisła*, 1894.

<sup>13</sup> Correspondence with Oksana Karbashevska on 26<sup>th</sup> of August 2016.

*Ой мала матуся, мала дві дочки (A Mother had two daughters)*

Ой мала матуся, мала дві дочки  
Молодшу любила, а старшої — ні  
А старша молодшу та й підмовила,  
Взяла за рученьку до річки повела  
— Куди мене, сестро, куди ти ведеш?  
Куди ж, куди, сестро, зо мною ідеш?  
— Підемо, сестричко, до броду по воду,  
Подивимось, сестро, на чистую воду,  
Котра з нас гарніша на пишную вроду.  
А старша молодшу в воду кинула  
Та й надійшла хвиля — понесла вода.  
— Ой плавай, сестричко, в холодній воді,  
Бо ти заважаєш мені, молодій.  
— Ой рятуй, сестричко, за золоту косу,  
Тобі, в нагороду золото приношу.  
— Не хочу я брати жодну нагороду,  
Бо ти нам мішаєш у нашому роду.

*Once there was mother who had two daughters,  
The younger loved, and the other — not.  
The older took the hand of the younger,  
And by her hand led her to the river.  
— “Where are you, sister, taking me?”  
“Where, o, where, sister, are we going?”  
— “Let’s go, darling sister, to the fjord,”  
“Let’s look, sister, into the clear water,”  
“To see which one of us is the fairest.”  
And the older sister threw the younger into the water  
As the wave came — and carried the water.  
— “Oh, swim, darling sister, in that cold water,”  
“For your youth is a hindrance to me.”  
— Oh, save me, darling sister, grab my golden braid,  
“For you, as a gift, I’ll give to you the gold,”  
— “I do not want any of your gifts,”  
“For you are the hindrance in our family.”*

Tune (in *Ukraiins’ka Narodna Tvorchist’*)<sup>14</sup>



**Plot:** Two sisters, one loved, the other not, go to a body of water. Upon reaching the body of water, the elder sister pushes the younger sister into the cold water out of jealousy. The younger sister cries out to her sister for help, but the pleas are ignored by her sister. The younger sister offers her possessions, yet the elder sister refuses those as well. The younger sister drowns.

<sup>14</sup> O. Dey, *Ukraiins’ka Narodna Tvorchist’* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1987), 103.

Motifs: ✂ murder (of sister: *sibling murder (elder sister murders her younger sister)*); motive clear; by drowning) / woman, wicked (committed murder) / death (through murder);  
✂ help (*rescue (of person from death: of sister from drowning)*); possessions offered (golden braid [unique to Ukrainian culture], gold); refused by person asked for help);

While sexual jealousy, sibling relationships, and murder are central elements to this ballad variant, the emblematic motif of “the singing” bone is absent here. This absence illuminates one of the difficulties in understanding the diverse renderings of this ballad: the various renderings of the story only provide fragments of the entire narrative. The absence can be seen in the eight Ukrainian variants, which, as Karbashevska notes “really do not elaborate motifs of the singing bone (as in the British ballad) and punishment of the elder sister for her crime.”<sup>15</sup> The fact that many of the ballads are missing the singing bone element is perhaps testimony to the reason why they have been discounted by western scholars. In the interview with Karbashevska, she notes that the reasons for such diverse renderings of the same story might “lie in the national uniqueness of the Ukrainian ballad genre, namely its style, composition, and genesis.” She continues:

In the first place, realism and humanism (humaneness) are dominant features of both the Ukrainian folk song and folk ballad. Generally, they don’t have affection for the fantastic and gothic motifs (ghosts and terror), though they’re developed in some cases (e.g., in the famous ballad about the dead lover). My impression and feeling is that the ballad of my people is softer and “sunnier”. In the second place, the composition of the Ukrainian ballad tends to be more compact and concentrated than the narration of the British ballad. Lastly, the Ukrainian ballad was born and has been existing in the community of rural people and doesn’t show the aristocratic vein or origin. I think the last fact explains the attention of the British (in contrast to Ukrainian) collective author to the wealth and high status of the family of the female characters as they’re going to look at the father’s ships; luxury and richness of the younger sister’s clothes; the play of the harp / fiddle at the court of the father - king, etc.<sup>16</sup>

While neither the Russian or Ukrainian variants of “The Twa Sisters” include the “singing bone” motif, their fairy-tale counterparts “embody this fantastic motif.”<sup>17</sup> Many Slavic fairy-tales engage the motif that embodies the tale of “The Singing Bone,” and many scholars agree that “*Kalynova sopilka*,” or “*the guelder-rose pipe*” and “*Try Braty*,” or “*The Three Brothers*,” and (Russian translation) the Silver Saucer and the Crystal Apple (Russian), which appear in the chief collections of Rusyn folk-lore, engages this motif more fully. The Ukrainian ballad *Kalynova sopilka* is provided here in full translation:

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<sup>15</sup> Correspondence with Oksana Karbashevska.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*



Був собі дід да баба. У діда дочка, і в баби дочка. От і пішли вони в гай по ягоди. Так дідова збирає да й збира, да й назбирала повну миску, а бабина візьме ягідку, то і з'їсть. От і каже дідова:

— Ходімо, сестро, додому, поділимось.

От ідуть да йдуть шляхом, а бабина говорить:

— Ляжмо, сестро, відпочиньмо.

Полягали, дідова, втомившись, заснула, а бабина взяла ніж да й устромила її у серце, да викопала ямку, да й поховала її. А сама пішла додому да й каже:

— Дивіться, скільки я ягід назбирала. А дід і пита:

— Де ж ти мою дочку діла?

— Іде ззаду.

Коли ж ідуть чумаки да й кажуть:

— Станьмо, братця, от тут одпочинем.

Да й стали. Глянуть — над шляхом могила, а на могилі така гарна калина виросла! Вони вирізали з тієї калини сопілку, да й став один чумак грає, а сопілка говорить:

Ой помалу-малу, чумаченьку, грай,

Да не врази мого ти серденька вкрай!

Мене сестриця з світу згубила —

Ніж у серденько да й устромила.

А другі кажуть:

— Щось воно, братця, значить, що калинова сопілка так промовляє.

От прийшли вони в село да й натрапили якраз на того діда:

— Пусти нас, діду, переночувать, ми тобі скажемо пригоду.

Він їх і пустив. Тільки вони увійшли у хату, зараз один сів на лаві, а другий став

There once was a grandfather and a grandmother who both had a daughter of their own. One day the daughters went to the forest to pick and gather berries. The daughter of the grand-father collected berries until her bowl was full, and the daughter of the grand-mother picked the berries and ate them. The daughter of the grand-father said:

—Let's go home, Sister, and share.

As the sisters went on their way, the daughter of the grand-mother said:

—Let's lie sister and rest.

So they lied down and the daughter of the grand-father drifted to sleep, but the daughter of the grand-mother took a knife and stabbed her sister through the heart, dug a hole, and there buried her. She went home and said:

—Look how many berries I collected. But the grand-father remained silent.

—What has happened to my daughter? Said the grand-father.

—She fell behind.

Back in the forest came tradesmen (chumaky) who said:

—Let's stay here, brothers, and rest. And so they stayed. Unbeknownst to them near their way was a grave and from the grave grew a beautiful guelder-rose tree. From a portion of the tree they fashioned a flute and one tradesman began to play upon it when immediately it spoke:

—Play slowly, tradesman, play!

—But my heart please do not break!

—Me my sister from this world withdrew

—By knife in mine heart she did slew.

The other tradesmen spoke:

—What does it mean, Brothers, that the guelder-rose pipe has come to speak?

біля його да й каже:

— А ну, брате, вийми сопілку да заграй!  
Той вийняв. Сопілка і говорить: Ой помалу  
малу, чумаченьку, грай,  
Да не врази мого ти серденька вкрай!  
Мене сестриця з світу згубила —  
Ніж у серденько да й устромила.

Тоді дід каже:

— Що воно за сопілка, що вона так  
гарно грає, що аж мені плакати хочеться! А  
ке, я заграю!

Він йому й дав. А та сопілка говорить:  
Ой помалу-малу, мій таточку, грай,  
Да не врази мого ти серденька вкрай!  
Мене сестриця з світу згубила —  
Ніж у серденько да й устромила.

А баба, сидя на печі:

— А ке, лиш сюди, старий, і я заграю!

Він їй подав, вона стала грать,—  
сопілка й говорить:  
Ой помалу-малу, матусенько, грай,  
Да не врази мого ти серденька вкрай!  
Мене сестриця з світу згубила —  
Ніж у серденько да й устромила.

А бабина дочка сиділа на печі у самому  
куточку. І злякалась, що дізнаються. А дід і  
каже:

— А подай їй, щоб заграла!

От вона взяла, аж сопілка й їй одказує:  
Ой помалу-малу, душогубко, грай,  
Да не врази мого ти серденька вкрай!  
Ти ж мене, сестро, з світу згубила —  
Ніж у серденько да й устромила!

Тоді-то вже всі дізналися, що воно є. По  
дідовій дочці обід поставили, а бабину  
прив'язали до кінського хвоста да й  
рознесли по полю.

The tradesmen made way for the village where  
they happened to come upon the house of the  
grand-father:

—Let us in, Grand-father, where we might  
stay the night and, in return, we will tell you  
our story.

The grand-father allowed them in and, as soon  
as they entered the house, one of the  
tradesmen set on the bench as the other stood  
next to him and said:

—Brother, take out the flute and play!

He took the flute and as he played it  
immediately it began to speak:

—Play slowly, tradesman, play!

—But my heart please do not break!

—Me my sister from this world withdrew

—By knife in mine heart she did slew.

The grandmother who sat by the furnace spoke:

—Give me the flute, old man, and I will  
play!

He gave her the flute and as she played it spoke:

—Play slowly, my lovely mother, play!

—But my heart please do not break!

—Me my sister from this world withdrew

—By knife in mine heart she did slew.

The grand-mother's daughter who sat near the  
furnace in the corner was scared that her  
actions would be discovered. The grand-father  
spoke:

—Bring the flute to my wife's daughter to  
play.

Once in her hand the flute began to speak:

—Play slowly, my murderer, play!

—But my heart please do not break!

—Me from this world you withdrew

—By knife in mine heart you did slew.

The sister's actions were discovered. A dinner  
was prepared in memory of the grand-father's  
daughter and the grand-mother's daughter  
was dragged by horse.

The ballad “Twa Sisters” is clearly a story with ancient origins. This is attested to by the fact that there are many different versions, collection points, and concordances across cultures, languages, and related folkloric traditions. Following scholarly leads from scholars including Child and Coffin, this study has investigated the possibility of Slavic roots for the “Twa Sisters” ballad—first considering the versions presented in Child’s collection and then exploring new versions that prior to this study had not been translated into English. Given that these latter versions are incomplete and almost entirely avoid or negate the magical elements—primarily the singing bone—that form the motivic backbone of the tale, they have been largely ignored by scholars as corrupt variants. Looking solely within the ballad tradition, this is a valid conclusion, however, when one considers the larger folkloric matrix present within *Rus* culture, comprising both Russian and Ukrainian traditions, the incomplete quality of these ballad texts interleaves with the well-known outlines of the popular fairy tale as part of the oral tradition of this ballad. *Russe* ballad audiences of the 19<sup>th</sup> century would very likely have known what came next and that supernatural revenge would be voiced because it is clearly stated in the fairy tale as a prominent part of the story. The fact that the motive of the singing bone is heavily represented in *Rus* folklore, not solely in the “Twa Sisters,” complicates the discussion of the possible origins for this ballad, echoing Coffin’s somewhat cavalier statement. But how does the strong possibility of a Slavic origin change the perception of a well-known ballad, now firmly entrenched within Anglo-American traditions? It does not, nor should it, as these traditions have developed independently. Such knowledge does, however, allow for the possibility of new interpretations of this ballad complex that may further deepen the understanding of ballad migration and dissemination in the Early Modern period across the greater Eur-Asian regions.

# Closing the gap: Observations on cross-genre programs and the exchange of historical performance practices

Kim Pineda, PhD

## Introduction

*"Corelli at the foot of Parnassus begs the Muses to receive him among their number"*<sup>1</sup>

In the past fifteen years I have worked on building relationships and creating concerts involving musicians trained in the historically informed performance practices of classical music (thirteenth through eighteenth centuries) with musicians specializing in vernacular musics from aural traditions in the Western hemisphere. The goal of this ongoing project is to bridge the musical and cultural crevasse that appeared in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with the increased availability of printed music aimed at the highly skilled but unpaid musicians of the middle class. This seemingly innocuous event not only segregated the players of classical and vernacular musics, but created a cultural divide between musicians and audiences who previously enjoyed and embraced diverse repertoires of music.<sup>2</sup> In this essay I will discuss a brief history of the divide, the processes involved in rediscovering the common repertoire and performance practices, creating a concept for particular cross-genre programs, learning how to divulge the point of departure between modern musicians with completely different styles of training, reconciling the differences in how each group approaches a particular piece, and observing that, with a history of music in performance as our reference, the distance between particular styles of music may be reduced, if not eliminated.<sup>3</sup>

## Overview

*"Corelli charmed by the favorable reception given to him on Parnassus expresses his joy.  
He continues with those who accompany him"*

Finding or recreating the common ground or roots music that was once part of both the classical and traditional repertoires at first seemed a formidable task, but after employing the centuries-old device of evaluating music—listening to it in live performance—I realized that

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<sup>1</sup> The text in parentheses throughout the article are English translations of the movements from François Couperin's (1668-1733) grand Italian trio sonata, *Le Parnasse, ou L'Apothéose de Corelli* (The Apotheosis of Corelli), 1724. The brief narrations describe Corelli's journey to Parnassus (paradise) and, indirectly, the unification of the French and Italian styles of music.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Rose, "The musical map of Europe c. 1700," in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Music*, edited by Simon P. Keefe, 3-4. Cambridge History of Music (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Of special note is the marked propensity of Early Music players to use rubato within the concept of a tactus counted on the breve (double whole note). The responsibility of the player is to get from one tactus to another in a set amount of time. This practice often allows for a liberal interpretation (or complete disregard) of the smaller note values and their respective relationships to other parts in the composition and to the big beat. This performance practice is largely unfamiliar to the traditional musicians who view the mutilation of the meter as an affront to the particular composition that has been played consistently the same way, more or less, since its inception, regardless of how many primary sources from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Early Music players place on the table.

from the classical perspective, the music itself had not changed, merely the way it was interpreted by the different groups of musicians.<sup>4</sup> To state it in the vernacular, a groove is a groove, an ostinato is an ostinato, and the Romanesca has been in use for centuries.<sup>5</sup> No shortage of players of both types of music exists in North America, but combining two different types of so-called historical performance practices, each with its own steamer trunk full of references, traditions, and attitudes, proved to be the most formidable component to navigating the musical landscape. Both sets of players are usually enthusiastic about the collaboration, although not all of the players are comfortable stepping outside of their respective comfort zones; it is necessary to adapt ones existing skills to use with new approaches to unfamiliar repertoire. For each project the learning curve is different for every player, but by using a “from the bottom up” approach as described by Francesco Gasparini in 1708, focusing on the bass line and harmonic progressions, a common-denominator is discovered.<sup>6</sup> From that, a common, albeit limited, musical vocabulary is established and thus used to create new approaches to existing repertoires based on an eighteenth-century model of composition.<sup>7</sup> The musical gap or cultural crevasse is not really a divide but rather just a part of music making that has been obscured by a mere two centuries of musical sectarianism. Thanks to a small but dedicated group of scholar-performers and the abundance of primary sources and secondary literature describing and identifying the simultaneous existence of the players and repertoires, this separation is now receiving recognition and resurrection.

### Identifying, Defining, and Building the Projects

*“Corelli drinks at the Fountain of Hippocrene. The troupe continues on.”*

Once a musical baseline was established, the performance goal was to reunite eighteenth-century traditions embraced by the following composers and musicians:

1. Georg Philipp Telemann (1681-1767), who sought out vernacular performance styles in eastern Europe;
2. Michel Pignolet de Montéclair (1667-1737), who indicated the ethnic and regional origins of particular low-style court dances;
3. Santiago de Murcia (1673-1739), who integrated West African music into his guitar compositions;

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<sup>4</sup> Western tonal or modal music is still actively taught in schools of music and music conservatories around the world. The hunt for a common ground between musical traditions commonly thought to be extinct was inspired by my wife, who observed that one particular group playing traditional music from Latin America sounded as if they were playing Baroque music from Latin America.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Gjerdingen, *Music in the Galant Style*, (Oxford University Press, USA, 2007), 15.

<sup>6</sup> Francesco Gasparini, *L'Armonico Pratico Al Cimbalo. A Facsimile of the 1708 Venice Edition. by Gasparini, Francisco*: (New York: Broude Brothers, 1967). For an English translation see Francesco Gasparini, *The Practical Harmonist at the Harpsichord*, trans. David L Burrows, Music Theory Translation Series 1 (New Haven: Yale School of Music, 1963).

<sup>7</sup> Giorgio Sanguinetti, *The Art of Partimento: History, Theory, and Practice* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2012). Sanguinetti discusses the *partimento*, an instructional tool for learning to compose “with unprecedented swiftness” derived from the basso continuo that encouraged improvisation as the path to musical fluency.

4. Francesco Geminiani (1687-1762), who composed Italian diminutions on Scots tunes; Randolph Jefferson (1755-1815), who learned vernacular music from bonded people owned by his politician and violinist brother Thomas;
5. Composer-performers in the British Isles such as James Oswald (1711-1769, Scotland) and Turlough O'Carolan (1670-1738, Ireland) who worked in both vernacular and learned music circles with the modern traditional music practices and the respective players of each.

Specific cross-over repertoires and collections of instruments discussed here come from Central and Eastern Europe (Trans Carpathian, Hungarian, Romanian, Polish), the British Isles (Ireland, Scotland), and the Louisiana Territory (New Orleans, Acadian diaspora). The discourse will also include observations on a BalFolk French and European folk dance workshop and performance in which practitioners of both classical and vernacular music styles participated, shared musical styles and performance practices, and were reminded that there need not be a division between approaches, performers, and traditions.

### Repertoire and Performance Practice Reconciliation

“Corelli's enthusiasm caused by the waters of Hippocrene”

For every collaborative program discussed in the case studies below, the same two well-established traditions of performance practices had to be addressed: pitch standard and temperament. Framing and presenting the idea of a pitch standard that is different from the one used for a significant part of a career may at first seem a formidable task. With particular instruments such as an accordion or a wind instrument without a *corps de rechange*, it is not an issue of pitch but one of transposition, but for the string instruments, including a cimbalom, the practice of cross-tuning or scordatura is neither foreign nor frightening.<sup>8</sup> In my own experience it was easier for the early music players to go with the prevailing modern pitch standard (ca. a=440Hz) and equal temperament, because professional musicians and unpaid enthusiasts usually are equipped to play at two or three different pitches depending on the gig or repertoire.

### Three Case Studies

The first project discussed here, Transcarpathian music (Central and Eastern Europe) brought two ensembles together. The vernacular ensemble, specializing in Balkan music, contained violin, cimbalom, piano accordion (120 bass button), and double bass. The accordionist also provided vocals and percussion on the ütőgardon. The classical (early music) ensemble, with a broad range of repertoire from the fourteenth through eighteenth centuries, consisted of a quintet playing transverse flute and recorder, violin, viola da gamba, and Baroque guitar, theorbo, and archlute. This program conveniently had repertoire for the

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<sup>8</sup> This term means that one or more additional middle sections are provided to allow the instrument, usually a flute or recorder, to play at different pitch standards. Modern replicas of historical instruments provide the *corps de rechange* in half-step increments, e.g., a=392Hz, 415Hz, 440Hz, and 465Hz. Another combination is for a=415Hz and 430Hz.

combined ensembles compiled in a collection of music from the seventeenth century called the Codex Caioni. Compiled 1634-1671, the book is named after Joannes Caioni, (1629/1630-1687), a Transylvanian Franciscan monk and Catholic priest, who was the last person to add to the codex. It contains music from both classical and vernacular traditions; and this particular assemblage of music alone should be enough to convince a modern listener that both types of music were enjoyed by the same community, regardless of social or economic standing. Chansons from the mid-sixteenth century, dances in the Western European tradition (*courante*, *balletto*), and instrumental music by composers such as Andreas Hammerschmidt (1611-1675; a local hero of sorts, born in Prague, spent most of his career in Germany), Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672), and Jacob Händl (Jacobus Gallus; 1550-1591), are found side by side with Transylvanian/Romanian regional dances and secular songs. These vernacular pieces are immediately identified as different from the Western repertoire not only by their names, e.g., “Mas Tancz Apor Istvan” and “Lepus intra sata quiescit,” but also by being written or transcribed in what is often considered, especially for the seventeenth century, irregular phrase lengths (for example, three bars repeated, followed by three additional bars, or by an entire dance noted in five bars in duple meter).

The program also included music from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: three Zingarese erroneously attributed to Haydn but more likely based on the playing of the Galanta Romani, and a set of Hongroises by Stanisław Ossowski (fl. late 18th century) and F. P. Rigler (c. 1748-1796). The Zingarese and Hongroise dances are found in a modern collection, *Hungarian Dances 1784-1810*, and the editor notes that the original versions of the pieces were written down in the early nineteenth century in order to preserve an oral tradition.<sup>9</sup> In discussing this concept with the vernacular players, it seems that instead of preserving the oral tradition, the process of notating the dances and subsequently publishing them thus destroyed it. I view the collection as an opportunity to learn music from a source previously unknown to me. It should be noted that Rigler was much concerned with retaining the original vitality of transcribed folk tunes and complained that contemporary attempts at notating Hungarian dances “bleached away” their “true fast character.”<sup>10</sup>

In this program all of the musicians could read music, although the Balkan ensemble learned and performed most of their repertoire without using music. The note-reading proficiencies for some of the members reflected varying degrees of “rustiness.” The opposite was true for the early music group. This particular group did make a regular practice of improvising on ground bass patterns in concerts, and embraced the idea that with so-called “early music” the notes on the page represent only about 50% of the music; the remaining music must be provided by the performers in the form of musical rhetoric, improvisation, and an awareness that the character or function of a particular piece changes with each performance and place in the program. But learning new music just by listening is something that the latter group struggled with at first. A particularly enlightening experience in terms of early music performance practice was the way in which the Balkan ensemble interpreted the notes on the page. By engaging traditional rhythms and meters on the heavily regulated

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<sup>9</sup> Géza Papp, ed., *Hungarian Dances 1784-1810*, Musicalia Danubiana 7. Budapest: MTA Zenetudomány Intézet, 1986.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., Preface.

Western notation of the traditional dances, the pieces thus became their own, and helped the early music ensemble expand their interpretation of the 50% concept. A reciprocating idea came from the early music players to the Balkan group, the practice of *notes inégales*, or giving almost all passages an underlying swing, in such a way as to be immeasurable in Western notation. Everything swings unless you see a specific symbol or written instruction to do otherwise. In my limited experience with cross-genre performers, even on commercial recordings, I have witnessed the metrical regularity used by the traditional players when faced with music from the classical repertoires, especially music of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The eyes appear to take over for the ears and the smallest beat gets emphasized in every measure, unlike the documented idea of an overarching *tactus*, or big beat, often comprised of a breve, or double whole note, and rarely does the quarter note get the emphasis. But as the early music players learned to learn from hearing, the vernacular players were quick to adopt the ideas of swing and the use of a big beat to maintain the ensemble, and to implement them on the music of well-known composers from the eighteenth century.

The next case study concerns itself with music from the British Isles, wherein classical and traditional music from Ireland, Scotland, and England were performed by two separate groups and then as a combined ensemble. The vernacular group was a trio comprised of voice and guitar, violin and English concertina, and bouzouki and button accordion. The early music quartet played transverse flute, violin and viola da gamba, and several permutations of lute, arch lute, theorbo, and Baroque guitar as managed by two people. As with the first case study, the repertoire for the combined ensembles was composed, this time by an eighteenth-century musician, Turlough O'Carolan (1670-1738), who worked in the realms of both vernacular and classical music. O'Carolan's music not only has been learned by vernacular players for many years without looking at notes on a page, the eighteenth-century mania for newly printed music (ancient and contemporary) created a tradition of publishing almost every type of Western music from which a publishing house thought it could prosper. Thus it is not difficult to find a modern edition of O'Carolan's music. Knowing that it came from what is commonly called the Baroque era, it therefore gets the same treatment, rules for interpretation, rhetoric, and performance context by the early music ensemble as they would any other piece of music from the period.

To wax colloquial, the coolest part of each project occurred when the two ensembles started rehearsing the common repertoire. At this point the cultural crevasse of performance practice vanished, as if a superhero with super powers managed to transport everyone to the eighteenth century. To be sure, someone with training on a modern violin will have a different bow technique than someone who has studied and uses a bow made after an early eighteenth-century model. The modern bow is longer, heavier, and curves upward from the frog to the tip; the early bow is shorter, lighter, held differently, and has an arch from the frog to the tip. The designs and weights of the respective bows create techniques specific to the device.<sup>11</sup> They are not, however, inflexible and void of nuance. Skilled players can adapt and make their tools do what is necessary to play music. This crossing of string techniques occurred in each of the three projects described here, as well as with other projects not mentioned here. Part of the modern description of Baroque music is its irregularity, with rhapsodic characteristics even within an

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<sup>11</sup> A detailed discussion and descriptions of the two types of bows used here is beyond the scope of this essay.



individual phrase or movement. To play with a controlling regularity and rigidity is uninspiring and boring if the music was composed during a time when the opposite was expected by composers and audiences alike. Thus two string players with different modern training, a flute player using an eighteenth-century style flute, and fretted string instruments from historically different luthier perspectives found a common ground—the music and its traditions—and helped create an environment where both vernacular and classical deliveries successfully comingled. It is not possible to describe the sound created within the imagined time travel, but the audience, made up of aficionados of both styles of music, were not offended or appalled at the unification (or possible compromise) of styles. To them, and the players, it was just music that provided for them even more possibilities for enjoyment.

The final case study brought together another seemingly incompatible collection of music and musicians and the question: what musics do Louis XIV and the Acadian diaspora have in common? The focus of the program was vernacular music from the court of Louis XIV in the Louisiana Territory, particularly New Orleans. Again, an early music quartet of transverse flute and voice, viola da gamba and voice, and once more the collective of theorbo, archlute, and Baroque guitar were joined by a group that specialized in Cajun music. In this collaboration all of the musicians were able to read music, and with the Cajun players that particular skill included everything between the highly proficient to the “somewhat rusty.” This program, as with the others described above, also had some of its vernacular music provided by an eighteenth-century source. In this case it is a manuscript found in New Orleans entitled *Nouvelles Poésies spirituelles et morales*, copied in Paris in 1736. Now known as the Ursuline Manuscript because it was given to the Ursuline order of nuns in New Orleans, Louisiana, in 1754, the collection contains music by composers active in the reign of Louis XIV.<sup>12</sup>

The pieces in the manuscript, however, are not the original versions written by those composers active in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France. They are sacred parodies of the originals, many of which started out as vernacular songs with reflective themes, usually about solitude, romance and related heartbreak, or the benefits and regrets of drinking. It was not difficult to find the original vernacular versions of these songs because of the aforementioned seventeenth- and eighteenth-century appetite for published music of all genres. The technical demands of the parodies selected for the program did not require one to be fluent or highly proficient at note reading. For the exchange of common repertoire, the Cajun music was given to the early music group as audio files, and they thus had to learn the music through a modern version of an aural tradition; in other words, by listening. As with the Balkan musicians above, the Cajun players reinterpreted the 50% of the music concept and essentially used only the original rhythms, words, and pitches. The phrases typically defined by a set length of bars in Western classical music were essentially still there, but the characteristics of the pieces changed completely. A mere chanson became a dance song, inspiring both players and audiences to want to dance; instead they were forced to remain in their seats because of modern concert hall protocols.<sup>13</sup> The reverse interpretation happened with the music learned

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<sup>12</sup> See Kim Pineda, “The New World Order: Ursulines, Music from the Court of Louis XIV, and Educational Outreach in Eighteenth-Century New Orleans” (PhD Dissertation, University of Oregon, 2014), for a thorough discussion on the vernacular music and educational outreach used by the Ursulines in New Orleans.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Dronke, *The Medieval Lyric* (Boydell & Brewer, 1996), 187-188.

by ear for the early music players, in particular the use of *notes inégales* and eighteenth-century ornamentation. Parts of the rehearsal included a productive dialogue of “how did you do that,” “how often can you do that,” “where else can we do that,” and “do you mind if we do that too?” Thus a seventeenth-century song in triple meter about a young girl taking her sheep hook on a walk in the woods to protect her from a bipedal wolf became a Cajun-style waltz, and the “Chanson de mardi gras” was treated as a fourteenth-century monophonic song and its related performance practices, e.g., “Douce dame jolie” by Guillaume de Machaut (1300-1377), because of its phrase structure and mode. As with the other projects discussed here, everyone left the event feeling enlightened, more knowledgeable, and wondering why music and musicians had drifted apart. All of the musicians in all of the projects wondered, at the end of each event, “when can we do this again?”

To conclude the blending of musical styles and repertoires, I present a brief overview of a recent experience at a BalFolk event.<sup>14</sup> This particular workshop focused on French folk dances from the Berry, Bourbonnais, and Auvergne regions, where particular dances such as the Bourée, Branle, and Rond have been in continual practice since the sixteenth century. Other dances, such as the polka, mazurka, and schottische remain active today and have survived through the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century performance practice of incorporating and arranging vernacular songs and dances into the existing theater and chamber music repertoire. The reverse is also part of this curating of early music and dance; practitioners of vernacular music taking melodies found in art music compositions.<sup>15</sup> This modern practice is thus able to bring together musicians and dancers from different traditions, trainings, and experiences. From my own perspective, as I learn this new repertoire I am constantly reminded that each piece, even the newly composed pieces based on the historical models, are merely parts of two traditions that deserve to be reconnected on a much larger scale. And I find it extremely difficult to not treat the music as if it were written sometime during the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries.

### Affirmation and Corroboration

*“Corelli after his enthusiasm, falls asleep and his troupe plays the following lullaby”*

By the late eighteenth century, music had adopted and incorporated descriptive and defining terms and concepts from art, literature, and rhetoric.<sup>16</sup> The size and type of venue does not matter for performing and consuming music. The distinction, then and now, is that music is performed in both private and public venues regardless of its type (vernacular or classical). House concerts can be quaint settings for 15-20 people, or larger events with rented folding chairs, depending on the neighborhood and number of music-loving friends of the homeowner. Today, coffee houses, tasting rooms, and brewpubs are regularly used by

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<sup>14</sup> A modern recreation of a *bal populaire*, such as a public, village, or festival dance.

<sup>15</sup> Leonard G. Ratner, *Classic Music: Expression, Form, and Style* (New York: Schirmer Books; London, 1980), 359.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-21; 31-47. An eighteenth-century description of music as two types of art may be found in Francesco Milizia, from *Complete Formal and Material Treatise on the Theater* (1794), in *Music & Culture in Eighteenth-Century Europe: A Source Book*, Enrico Fubini, ed. Bonnie J. Blackburn, 252-253 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

vernacular players to share their music. These venues were historically home to players of both classical and vernacular music, and today some of us consider it a mission of community outreach to take the “scare” out of classical music by putting it in some of its original spaces, and to entice audiences of classical music to see the benefit of enjoying music in a more relaxed atmosphere of a coffee house or tasting room.

## **Conflict and Resolution**

*“The Muses awake Corelli and place him at Apollo's side”*

Why would people who enjoy listening to vernacular music in a particular venue want to go somewhere else to hear it? And why would someone enamored with the violin sonatas of Jean-Marie Leclair (1697-1764) want to go hear them in a pub? There is no clear answer to these questions, and also to why there exists a musical divide. A component of what I am calling here a “musical outreach movement” includes modern performers of both types of music being willing to make the effort to put music into as many places as possible and reach a wider audience. It is possible that people who frequent tasting rooms and public houses have not realized that they enjoy sonatas written in the middle of the eighteenth century, or dance music from the fourteenth century (although dance music in a pub seems a good fit and possible vehicle of reconciliation). People who enjoy sitting in a formal concert hall or theater might not know that they will enjoy chamber music in an appropriately-sized room similar to one used in eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, or that they have not yet heard, recognized, or realized the connections of vernacular music and its players. The Hôtel de Guise in late seventeenth-century France, however, was a building large enough to hold a public house, a tasting room, and small concert hall; how is a room of this size different from a modern formal theater?<sup>17</sup> Are the size of the room and its location the primary detriments to getting audiences to experience different types of music? In order for the gap between vernacular and classical musics to be bridged, closed, or otherwise embraced by the players and audiences separated by it, something more than a grassroots communication structure needs to be in place.

## **Conclusion**

*“Corelli expresses his gratitude”*

In particular music environments, the divide between players and audiences of vernacular and classical music does not exist. For musicians who have made an effort to hear diverse styles of music over the course of their study and careers, taking part in a “closing the gap” type of performance is neither an off-putting nor scary proposition. My experience tells me that musicians enjoy collaboration, learning about new musics, and sharing their own music and means of interpretation and teaching it.

My cross section of musicians and vernacular musics discussed here is admittedly a small sample, and even if I included other projects that focused on music from Latin America, or what I refer to as Baroque Appalachia and its eighteenth-century connection to Scotland and

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<sup>17</sup> The Hôtel de Guise, home of Marie de Lorraine, duchesse de Guise (1615-1688), was the location of Marc-Antoine Charpentier's (1643-1704) opera performances. Charpentier worked as her house composer for seventeen years, beginning in 1670.

Ireland, the increase in numbers of musicians and musical styles remains small. But when viewed as a series of relationships, then each musician in each group brings her or his own musical history and experiences to the collaboration; and when all of these musical partners, teachers, or mentors get combined into a musical genealogy, then the limited number of performance projects mutates into a fair representation of what can happen when musicians from different traditions decide to get together and share ideas, histories, and music.

My goal here is to demonstrate that the musical-cultural gap between vernacular and classical musicians was a post-Galant era construct that no longer needs to remain in place. The amalgamation of players from the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries who participated in both styles of music did so because it was their job to play music. There is a longer history of music and musicians without a cultural divide than there is with one. Our mission, as musicians, audience members, and scholar-performers, is to take our artistic tools and help redefine the musical landscape with the goal of getting more musics to more people in more and varied venues.

# ***TIBIA EX TEMPORE*, Medieval Flute Meditations: An attempt to reconstruct the contemplative art of instrumental improvisation in thirteenth-century Paris**

Norbert Rodenkirchen



Sometimes it is nearly impossible to separate personal, subjective aspects clearly from impersonal and so-called objective ones. This is a huge dilemma especially when writing about musicological themes, and the dilemma gets even bigger when the writer is a musician himself and not a musicologist at all. More or less I find myself in this paradoxical situation now, before starting to write some small reflections about my approach to medieval flute improvisation and about my project *Tibia ex tempore*.

My topic is medieval improvisation, a lost art which has to be reconstructed from various sources, the main point being that a reconstruction of a performance practice involving improvisation is both judged from the artistic side and from the scholarly side as well. But I can only try to write a very personal report about my work as a musician for whom research and musicological reflection is much more a part of the daily craftsmanship than academia and the discourse of scholarship and teaching; I trust, however, that the various musicological aspects will shine through. They have a lot to do with my own obsession with searching for unexpected contexts of the medieval flute sound. Needless to say, I highly prefer to produce these sounds through actually making music than to write about them. Musicology is for me an overall important collection of tools--a survival kit to use before I start to go out on an adventure trip into a wild jungle called music. Of course, the survival kit is not the adventure itself. But I hope that the reader will find enough interesting ideas in this little essay that might compensate for the lack of actual music in it. A text is not music, but there is no need to regret it! Fortunately, there exists a CD from 15 years ago; and this CD is part of the reason why I write this article, because it was an undertaking which had triggered very important developments in my playing and in my thinking about medieval music back then. So I feel extremely honored by my dear colleagues and friends at the Texas Tech School of Music, who invited me to contribute to the online *Journal of the Vernacular Music Center* with an article that presents *Tibia ex tempore* as a performance concept, a repertoire, a musical experience, a concert program--gradually changing its form up to the present day—and a CD recording from a long time ago.<sup>1</sup>

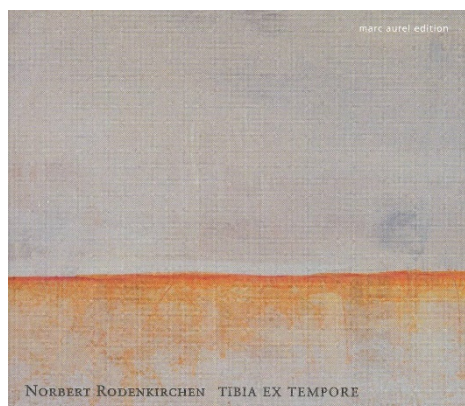
## ***Tibia ex tempore: The Project***

In 2016 I am celebrating the fifteenth jubilee with a re-release of the formerly sold out CD *Tibia ex tempore – Medieval Sketches* and a new, revised live version. In 2001 the newly founded record company marc aurel edition in Cologne (which later merged with Raumklang in

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<sup>1</sup> I also feel honored that Texas Tech University has already been so kind in recent years to invite me for groundbreaking and meaningful artistic initiatives, such as the concerts “Fragments for the end of time” with Sequentia, or my solo “Hameln anno 1284 / medieval flute music: on the trail of the Pied Piper.” The latter also led to a long interview with Dr. Angela Mariani, recorded here in Lubbock to serve as the basis for the nationwide Harmonia early music radio program’s 800th edition.

Leipzig) released my first solo CD, which was recorded in the wonderful acoustics of the Romanesque abbey of Brauweiler near Cologne. The music was played on just one middle sized medieval transverse flute and presented in one track in one continuous flow of sound without interruptions. The pieces of the program were not separated, but joined together by connecting improvisations so that it was nearly impossible to tell which were the medieval and which were the modern parts while listening through the music. Of course this phenomenon of metamorphosis from old to new sounds was an integral part of the artistic process; and it had been my main intention to present this unusual open concept as one possible way of presenting medieval music with the help of real improvisation in an extended form, as a concrete counterpart to today's listening conditions which sometimes limit the audience's attention to the short periods of three-minute-long pop songs. There is no doubt that medieval listeners had other time concepts for making music, and that the timing of a medieval performance was certainly extremely different from today's standards.



The CD cover was based on a painting by a friend from my schooldays, the Cologne-based artist Max Höfler. Although the picture was closely related to modern art (just a brown and orange line creating a kind of horizon on a blue grey background throughout the whole inside and outside of the digi pack), it eventually reminded the spectator of a detail in a Romanesque fresco. It certainly didn't include unnecessary ornamentation or special effects (what we in Germany call "Schnick Schnack"). I have always loved ambiguities between ancient and modern arts, and I am completely obsessed with the surrealistic aura of

fragments and ruins – be it in architecture, in literature, in fine arts or in music. The booklet contained as well a fascinating *poème en prose* by Katarina Livljanic from Paris which she had written especially for that publication. Some years later, I joined Katarina Livljanic's great ensemble Dialogos and have performed and recorded with her ever since. But this little beautiful text was the beginning of our friendship and collaboration.

At the time, I was told that there was a certain risk in releasing the disc in that form without much information on the front cover, because the CD market would not know how to categorize the genre. The CD sales people went crazy. Whenever I went to the record shop - yes, at these times there were still huge record shops where you could actually buy CDs - my CD was never there where it should have been. Instead of finding it on the early music shelf, it would have been placed next to Jazz, or Folk, or meditation/ethno/world music. As a result, the listeners would not know what to expect, because no composers were indicated on the outside of the CD digipack, and the cover itself was so pure and miraculous without any unnecessary graphic details. I loved it, although it didn't make life easier to be mysterious. But in spite of all warnings, I had kept the initial idea and released *Tibia ex tempore* in its unique form. I was surprised to find that the music found completely new groups of listeners. There were certainly some early music lovers, but many others with an open ear as well. Over the years I got a lot of feedback from people praising especially the contemplative aspect of the music.

For me personally, it was the first solo project for which I got some very good reviews in the international music magazines, so it changed not only my life but also the way I saw myself

as a performer. *Tibia ex tempore* had taught me how to take responsibility for a project under my own name. If you do something under your own name you have to protect it as much as you can. You don't want to be misunderstood or falsely criticized and you don't want to make compromises (due to commercial reasons, for example). *Tibia ex tempore* astonishingly made some buzz and it had a remarkably long life on stage. I performed it for more than six years in many European countries until I began to develop new solo recital formats. Recently, the record label informed me that the CD had been completely sold out over the years—a result which is not so easy to achieve for an early music record these days. The idea arose, therefore, to celebrate a fifteen-year jubilee. Instead of recording a new version, the label and I decided to present the combination of the re-release of the CD, 100% as it was, with a revised new version of the live program which I plan to perform next year in different places all over the world.

### ***The Medieval Art of Improvisation***

The program *Tibia ex tempore - Medieval sketches* is an attempt to reconstruct the medieval art of improvisation, following the path of vocal sequence, *lai* and *planctus* to the earliest notated instrumental tunes.

There is nearly no written trace of genuine instrumental music before the thirteenth century. The earliest notated instrumental pieces, including the *ductia* and *estampie*, are surprising for their high level of melodic invention and formal organization; and it may therefore be assumed that they represent the first attempt to notate the late form of a highly-developed improvisatory tradition which had been transmitted orally for centuries. The music in this program is an attempt to recapture the earlier forms of this tradition, before the instrumental pieces were actually written down.

Melodic invention was regarded differently in the Middle Ages than in other eras. Most of the music preserved is anonymous. This anonymity is based partly on a medieval world view, according to which the individual artist subordinated any claims to recognition to the higher religious ideal of cosmic unity. It is also rooted in the most important phenomenon of medieval music: the system of the modes. The modal system is a blueprint for melodic organization which uses the church modes as a framework. In the Middle Ages these church modes were far more than scales; they functioned as musical character types, each with its own typical melodic formulae and gestures.

Modal music found itself in a perpetual state of flux, and melodic ideas could be borrowed, varied or completely changed without any danger that charges of plagiarism would be made. There was no great difference in the value placed on a new composition and one consisting of borrowed material. Rather, medieval musicians had to master a certain modal vocabulary which provided the material out of which their melodic forms would crystallize. They made no claims to their value as finished works. It is in this context that the *contrafactum*, a borrowed melody from a different context, and the free exchange of melodic material between the sacred and secular realms, should be understood. The procedure of creative borrowing and quoting could be applied to a single phrase or to complete melodies of existing compositions. It can be stated that most of these *contrafacta* were well known tunes, and therefore more than suitable for a pure instrumental approach. This practice of instrumental performance of well-known vocal music is well documented in examples of medieval literature. (In the new live version of *Tibia ex tempore* 2016, nearly all the original melodies have been chosen as a

coherent suite from the repertoire of *contrafacta* available in the thirteenth century in Northern France, including Paris).

But to what extent did a medieval musician also improvise his very own music, apart from quoting already existing music, and what does this mean for a creative approach to historical improvisation today? How much of one's own invention is convincingly suitable for an attempt to authentically reconstruct a lost art of playing *ex tempore*? This question leads directly to another question: To what extent did the musicians of the time depend on vocal music, using the unique characteristics of their instruments to reflect and extend preexisting songs; and how much did they rely on the collective modal vocabulary independent of vocal models?

The very impossibility of answering this question provides ample impetus for an attempt at reconstruction. There can be only individual artistic answers. My program follows the middle path. In some cases, vocal pieces from the Middle Ages are used as sources of melodic material; in others, a conscious effort is made to break free of such models and to use melodic figures and compositional forms typical of the Middle Ages to create something wholly new. The music appears as a continuous stream of sound, which flows through various levels of orientation towards concrete melodic models and fills a spectrum between a literally exact "note to note" approach and free modal inventions. Without the own creative input of a modern performer the attempt to trace back the ancient roots of improvisation would only lead into an empty ruin.

## **Tibia ex tempore: The *Repertoire***

The program of the new live *Tibia ex tempore* program consists of original melodic models – all of them used during the thirteenth century in Northern France, occurring in chronological order:

"Felix qui humilium" super "L autrier estoie" (Adam de la Bassée / Henri III, duc de Brabant), from *Ludus super Anticlaudianum*, thirteenth century

Sequence: "Beata beatorum" (Anonymous), from the Utrecht *Prosarium*, thirteenth century

Planctus: "Planctus ante nescia" (Godefroy de St. Victor), from *Carmina Burana*, thirteenth century

"Olim in harmonia" super notula "De juer et de baler" (Adam de la Bassée / Anonymous), from *Ludus super Anticlaudianum*

Fragment of: "1er Estampie Roial," Anonymous *ductia*, extended, from the *Chansonnier du Roi*, thirteenth century

Stantipes super "Nitimur in vetitum" / "Quant li rosignol" (Philippe le Chancelier / Anonymous), from LoB Egerton Chansonnier 274

"Nobilitas" super rondellus "Qui grieve ma cointise" (Adam de la Bassée / Anonymous), from *Ludus super Anticlaudianum*

"Modestos blanditiae" (Adam de la Bassée), from *Ludus super Anticlaudianum*

"O felix custodia" / "L'autrier matin el mois de mai" (Adam de la Bassée / Anonymous), from *Ludus super Anticlaudianum*



Neupma 1, extended (Anonymous), from Grocheo, *De Musica*

Conductus “In hoc ortus occidente” (Philippe le Chancelier), from Florence *Pluteo* 29,1

Conductus “Fontis in rivulum” (Philippe le Chancelier), from Florence *Pluteo* 29,1

Nota “La note Martinet,” from Chansonnier Paris BN 845

Stantipes super “Ausi com unicorne sui / Ego te tuli” (Thibaut de Champagne / Anonymous), from Chansonniers Cange and Egerton

Neupma 8, extended (Anonymous), from Grocheo, *De Musica*

Fragment of lost responsory “Te sanctum dominum” (Anonymous; Thibaut palimpsest “Tant ai amors servies longuement”), from the Egerton Chansonnier

The freely-improvised passages that create the metamorphosis between these known tunes are reflections in sound which rely on medieval principles for their formal structure and melodic organization. The rhythmic framework of both the historical melodies and the improvisations derived from them is governed by the metrical rules and characteristics of the medieval lyric, which is the basis of all medieval song outside the world of Gregorian chant.

Monophonic liturgical song, or Gregorian chant, was without a doubt the dominant musical current in the Christianized areas of western Europe. The ninth century brought the rise of the *trope* and the *sequence*. These new forms consisted of newly-composed texts and, in part, newly composed music which was appended to the liturgy. These traditions enjoyed a rich flowering over the course of the middle ages and made no small contribution to secular music. Looking back over the intervening centuries, the forms of *lai*, *planctus*, *stantipes* and *ductia* can be seen as direct descendants of the sequence. The clearest indication of this—or perhaps just the most obvious one—is the double-versicle form with open and closed endings which is common to both the sequence and the *estampie* (as well as the *lai* and the *planctus*). A profound kinship can also be seen in the use of characteristic melodic figures common to all. To search for this kinship is an excellent improvisational task which requires a dedication to step into a kind of pseudo oral tradition. This is what inspired the more or less free parts in *Tibia ex tempore*.

### ***Cantus coronatus, stantipes and ductia***

A high form of medieval monophony with its artistic peak during the thirteenth century is the *conductus*. Johannes de Grocheo, the important lecturer from late thirteenth-century Paris describes it in his treatise *De musica* as a *cantus coronatus*, a crowned song of high worth. He gives two examples, “Ausi com unicorne sui” and “Quant li rosignol joli,” both of which are presented in my new *Tibia ex tempore* version transformed into *stantipedes* exactly according to Grocheo’s descriptions, which will be explained later in these commentaries.

The other *conductus* which I used were the highly melismatic “Sol oritur” and “Fontis in rivulum.” Both pieces exist in identical versions in different sources and are taken from two of

the most famous manuscripts containing *conductus* repertoire closely related to Notre Dame Paris, the Florence manuscript Pluteo 29,1 and Codex Las Huelgas. It is remarkable how widely this monophonic repertoire of *cantus coronatus* was distributed all over Europe during the thirteenth century, nearly always with Paris as the center and focus.

Johannes de Grocheo described two differing kinds of instrumental forms: *ductia* and *stantipes*.<sup>2</sup> According to new analysis of Grocheo's exact descriptions, we would have to correct the titles of the famous eight extant *estampies royales* to *ductiae*. They are in fact dancelike, textless tunes in regular rhythm and in a simple form of double versicles. Grocheo, however, also describes a completely different form of improvisation: the *stantipes*. Unfortunately, this more contemplative improvisational genre in a more complex, differentiated form did not survive as concrete pieces written down in manuscripts from the thirteenth century. According to Grocheo, the *stantipes* had to be performed non rhythmically—or in an “open rhythm,” which could have meant that strict and loose rhythmic patterns may possibly alternate. Such organically occurring treatments of open rhythm are found in orally transmitted modal music traditions from all over the world (for example, in the opening part of a Northern Indian raga, or *alap*, which is rhythmically free and performed without accompaniment of the tabla drums). According to Grocheo's very clear description, the *stantipes* needed to be followed by a Gregorian melisma called *neupma* for which he documented the basic notes in all 8 modes, explicitly to be extended *ad libitum*. He wrote “*possent tamen forte subtiliora et pulchriora fieri*,” “make them more subtle and beautiful,” which I interpret as a concrete invitation to improvise. This program presents three attempts to reconstruct original *stantipedes* by including all information given by Grocheo, especially as regards the complicated, more irregular forms and the freedom of dancelike rhythm.

The third *stantipes* on the CD, “Res Tassini,” is a sounding hypothesis based on the melody of one of the few short tenor tunes called “Chose Tassin” of a *joculator* (jongleur or minstrel) called Tassin, which were used in some polyphonic motet settings in the Codex Montpellier. Grocheo mentions the *stantipes* “Res Tassini” as a famous piece within that genre having the special feature of no less than seven sections, or *puncta*.

I might add here that in my opinion, the rhythmic freedom apart from dancelike regularity which I tried to describe above is a subject for a necessary discourse among scholars and musicians to find a new approach for thirteenth century instrumental music. I would love to share experiences and opinions with my colleagues, especially based on a new reinterpretation of Grocheo. It does not have to mean that all the music in a *stantipes* is non-rhythmic; but rather that it is simply not “dance-like.” Where this leads exactly is hard to say in theory because the terms rhythm and *percussio* are ambiguous, and need to be defined in the concrete practice of music making. The necessary addition of the *neupma* mentioned above is another aspect which I would like to discuss. All of the three *stantipedes* above present Grocheo's *pneumata* in embellished versions as well.

### **Sequence, lai and planctus**

Frankish sequence melodies, dating from the time of Notker, a ninth-century monk of St. Gall, were in use throughout the Middle Ages up to the thirteenth century. They were often

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<sup>2</sup> *Stantipes* (pl. *stantipedes*): performed spontaneously and right on the spot.

written down in the early manuscripts as textless *sequelae*. The exact pitches of these melodies can be determined by consulting later sources with clearer forms of musical notation, which are consistent over the centuries and give us a rather clear image of the tunes. This is the case with the melody “O beata beatorum,” the melodic model of which is a *sequela* of Germany in the eleventh century. The model survives with many different texts and titles, the most famous being the Cologne-based “Gaude felix Agrippina”. For *Tibia ex tempore* I choose the precise notation in the *Utrecht Prosarium* of the thirteenth century. It is highly likely that the *sequelae* were also performed instrumentally, as the melodies often pre-date the texts of the sequences. They are not taken from Gregorian chant; they are perhaps survivors of a pre-Christian, indigenous melodic tradition. In the *ex tempore* versions performed on the flute in this program and as well in nearly all other programs (for example with *Sequentia*), I am principally interested in exploring the evident relationships amongst various early medieval sequences. These relationships, which often can be reduced to a handful of archetypal phrases, point to an orally-transmitted repertoire of archaic “*ur-sequences*” which are reflected upon here in improvised instrumental practice. “*Planctus ante nescia*” has one of these oscillating melodies which build a bridge between the old and the new. Although this *planctus Mariae* is one of the most famous melodies used throughout the whole high Middle Ages, with many different texts and melodic variants, it also features some modal characteristics that it has in common with the earliest *ur-sequences* of Notker.

If we have a song with a clear text under the notes we can decipher the syllables as metric units. We know from the number of tones on one syllable, therefore, whether the song is syllabic, which basically means that one tone corresponds to exactly one syllable. If we have compound neumes on one syllable, this indicates that 2-3 tones are to be sung on one syllable. If there are many tones to be sung on one syllable, we call this group of notes a melisma. There is no direct rule regarding the number of notes needed to distinguish a melisma from a normal compound neume, a ligature; it depends on the context of the neighboring phrases. A melisma means that many notes are attached to a syllable. It changes the style of singing tremendously.

Between the syllabic style and the melismatic style lies a whole range of possibilities for dealing with the relationship between tones and syllables in medieval song and chant. This is important for instrumentalists as well, because when the singers pronounce a new syllable, the instrumentalists need to articulate the beginning of that syllable in the special manner of their instruments. A wind player usually does the articulation with the tongue or with the lips, a string player by plucking, strumming or bowing. If we make an instrumental paraphrase of a song without respecting the syllables of the original song in the instrumental interpretation, there will be the risk of completely missing the right melody. This is important, because in many if not most cases we are not already familiar with the song text. If we do not have the song or chant text to model the clear relation of text syllables to tones, we have a dilemma: what is the metric structure? It is indeed very problematic, and a very important task to resolve this dilemma.

The *Chansonnier du Roi*'s textless pieces, which are called *estampies* but are in fact *ductiae*, easily solved this question through an early form of the Franconian mensural notation from which more or less clear rhythms could be transcribed (a very useful new phenomenon in the thirteenth century, originally developed for polyphonic music of the Notre Dame period). They count as the first compositions in Western music history meant entirely as instrumental pieces. But a lot of my research and of my creative dedication is to approach the earliest medieval forms and of instrumental improvisation and playing *ex tempore* in a context of a

reimagined oral tradition, prior to the state of being documented in musical notation. For this reason, my approach omits the famous thirteenth-century instrumental compositions from the *Chansonnier du Roi*. The only exception is the "1er Estampie Real" which, since it has only been preserved as a short fragment, requires not only musicological "know how" but artistic invention and improvisational inspiration to complete it, making it an interesting component of this project. According to Grocheo's descriptions this fragment also should be clearly regarded as a *ductia*, not as a *stantipes* like all other pieces in the suite of the eight *Estampies Royale*.

For slightly earlier pieces such as "La note Martinet," one has to rely on the text structure of its *contrafactum*, the anonymous song "J'ai prouvé et trouvé," to find the rhythmical and metrical balance of the piece. Instrumentalists rely easily on all the principles of stress and release within the metric patterns of the words in the context of the melody. Needless to say, here a melody is regarded in a more technical sense as a vehicle for resounding words which are transformed into instrumental phrases. The emotional impact of the melody in connection with its text is left out of consideration here. But this is mirrored at least in a part of medieval understanding of the relation of words to music. The phenomena of *contrafacta* hints at a looser relationship, and at an interchangeability of tunes, for certain texts. It is not fixed as an expression laid down in a composition such as a Schubert song. To simplify a bit for the sake of this present essay, one might safely say that emotional expression is much more subject to the concrete musical interpretation, ornamentation, embellishment, or other creative means of changing the expression in a musical performance than to the given composition itself. Of course this picture changes rapidly with the Trecento, and the arising of the earliest sunbeams of the Renaissance at the horizon of music history—but Trecento music is from a far later time than everything in *Tibia ex tempore*.

Further outstanding examples of monophonic music of the thirteenth century are presented in an extraordinary collection of *contrafacta* found inserted in the *Ludus super Anticlaudianum*, a work by the poet Adam de la Bassée from Lille in Northern France. It is an allegorical mystery play based on a long poem by the famous Alanus ab Insulis (Alain de Lille) one generation earlier. In the manuscript we can find some beautiful preexisting melodies with Adam's new text, from all important genres of the thirteenth century music (sequence, hymn, *pastourelle*, *chanson*, *rondeau* and many others). And there are also some peculiar and strange unknown melodies of a striking beauty which are probably autodidactic compositions by Adam himself and which are completely unconventional. This is especially true for his own tune "Modestos blanditiae," which uses strange, unconventional intervals to form a modal melody which sounds different in his assumed autodidactic style from anything else during his time. As it is nearly impossible to perform the huge play in a staged version because of the dozens of roles—it was in fact never meant to be performed, but to be taken as literature—an instrumental version of these borrowed melodies is perhaps not the worst choice to employ with this great music. Some catchy melodies from this rare medieval source form a "suite" for flute solo in extemporized interpretations.

### **Te sanctum dominum: A Mirror of Improvisatory Process**

The last piece of the program is a miracle in itself. "Te sanctum dominum" is one of the mysterious pieces in the middle part of the Egerton Chansonier, in which one finds folios with effaced chansons of trouvères and troubadours which had been superimposed with new Latin

texts. This common phenomenon of overwriting a previous version of written content on a manuscript's parchment with a new version is called *palimpsest*. Sometimes only the text has been erased, and in other cases the whole song, text, and melody. Certainly a monk had tried to save some of the melodies; or perhaps he had intended only to create new space on the parchment for some religious repertoire. This process of effacing and overwriting has led to some very unique Latin contrafacta of trouvère songs, but also some in cases to pieces for which it is impossible to say whether it is now a palimpsest or a contrafactum, because nearly everything had been erased.

"Te sanctum dominum" can be traced back as a *responsorium* text taken from the old testament; but according to my Latin consultant Dr. Heinz Erich Stiene, it is unclear to which medieval office of saints it belonged. The melismatic melody is unknown in the repertoire of the *antiphonarium monasticum*. Very likely it is a unique melodic creation, because there are indications that at the end of the piece some notes of the not-entirely-erased chanson previously notated on that folio were used. The few lines in French indicate that it had been originally the chanson "Tant ai amors servies longuement" by Thibaut de Champagne, one of the great trouvères of Northern France. The traces of the written notation of Thibaut's chanson have nearly completely disappeared through the process of cleaning the space and creating a palimpsest. At the end, we find some authentic Thibaut material; however, it is not clear how it relates to the new sacred song. Perhaps it remained there by chance (somebody forgot to erase it). Alternately, perhaps the remaining material retained a hidden meaning in context of the song (as in the *Carmina Burana*, where there are examples of Latin songs that end with a strophes excerpted from pre-existing *minnesinger* songs in Middle High German!). Given all these peculiar circumstances, we have to regard "Te sanctum" as an entirely new composition, most likely scribbled down by an anonymous monk tasked with overwriting the secular songs with something more sacred.

This new composition is an excellent example of the very special way to deal creatively with modal invention in more or less casual artistic situations during the thirteenth century in the Picardie, France, where the manuscript originates. The piece is actually a sketch in the literal sense of the word, and it is not likely that it could have been intended for monastic use—there is no monastic context for which it would fit. Even if it is unclear whether the last Thibaut fragments at the end still belong to the new sacred composition, I include them in my flute version, because musically they make complete sense as a kind of coda. This is similar to Adam de la Bassée's technique of inventing modal movements very different from the usual song repertoire of his time, with a remarkable freedom and in an astonishingly open form to serve the musical needs of his *Ludus super Anticlaudianum*. This process could be seen as a mirror of instrumental spontaneity, an act of trying out and playing around with tones *ad libitum*, closely related to Gregorian chant. Perhaps it shows how free an instrumental improviser at his time might possibly have played, with both respect and disrespect for the Gregorian matrix behind all the musical styles available at his time. It might be a guide to the sonic art of an instrumentally extemporizing *menestrel* at Paris during the time of Johannes de Grocheo.

## ***Epilogue: The Instrument used in Tibia ex tempore***



*The transverse flute was a highly-treasured instrument in the Middle Ages. Of all medieval instruments, the flute, a cylindrical wooden tube with six finger holes, is the most similar to the human voice. Through its intensive tone and sensitivity to slight modulations in breath pressure, it plays the role of mediator between man and nature, and in late antiquity it represents communication with the hereafter. Although the flute of the ancient Greeks, primarily*

*associated with shepherds, was held in low esteem, the instrument, like the lyre, was prized by the Romans for the accompaniment of poetry. Pictures from Byzantium indicate that the transverse flute was a popular instrument at court, from whence it made its way to central Europe, where it remained essentially unaltered until the Renaissance. With the exception of early bone flutes, no transverse flutes from the Middle Ages have been preserved. They were similar in form to Renaissance flutes, but their design was less systematized (as iconographic sources tell us). Their finger holes must have been placed differently in order to accommodate Pythagorean temperament and the requirements of the medieval modes. Norbert Rodenkirchen plays on such a medieval transverse flute--reconstructed and built by Berlin-based flutemaker Neidhart Bousset and modified and optimized in close collaboration. Important iconographic documentation of the medieval forms of transverse flutes are found in the so-called Codex Manesse and in the miniature illustrations from the Cantigas de St. Maria in the Codex El Sabio (Escorial j.b.2). In accordance with its early role as an accompaniment to poetry, the flute is well suited to lyric contemplation; by virtue of its facility with percussive articulation, it is also well suited to express rhythmic ecstasy. The flute is thus in the position to authentically represent two important aspects of medieval music: contemplation and ecstasy.*

**Review of *Played Out on the Strip: The Rise and Fall of Las Vegas Casino Bands* by Janis L. McKay**

Stephanie Joy Rizvi-Stewart

McKay's new book is a short and easy read that neatly details the story of live music on the Vegas strip. The book itself contains little critical commentary and reads as a historical narrative. However, McKay's methodology and source material are the real gem of the story. Working with her news journalist father, she meticulously compiled a wealth of oral histories from those who lived through the events described in this book. The oral histories were compiled by her father through interviews, and McKay then used newspapers and other primary and secondary sources to cross check and fill in the history.

*Played Out on the Strip* is generally organized by decade, with each chapter covering the history of that decade. The emphasis is on things that changed, things that did not, and the reasons for change or stasis. The event with the most coverage is the strike of 1989, which is its own chapter. McKay and her interviewees identify this as a critical moment in the history of music on the strip. This was the moment when the musicians union ultimately failed to prevent the hotels and casinos from firing musicians and switching to prerecorded sound. As such, it marked the end of the live music boom in Las Vegas.

Based on her research and interviews, McKay seems to identify the switch from mob to corporate hotel ownership as one of the most important factors that necessitated the strike of 1989. Most of her interviewees remember the days of mob ownership fondly, since the owners did not mind losing money on musical acts, managed with a more personal touch, and were willing to do business on a handshake. McKay briefly discusses some of the downsides to mob ownership, but in all, the book seems to paint a rather rosy picture of Las Vegas under the mob. This may be the result of relying on the memories of the musicians who thrived under the mob. It is always tempting to look at history with "rose colored glasses," but McKay does not seem to provide enough critical commentary to explain why the musicians only remember the good aspects of mob rule. This lack of critical commentary is in part due to the memoir-like nature of the book.

In sum, *Played Out on the Strip* is a fun and interesting read for anyone studying the history of Vegas, cover bands, live music, and the like. However, McKay's really scholarly contribution lies in the collected interviews. One would hope that at some point in the future these interviews may find their way into an archive and be preserved for future research. *Played out on the Strip* is available from the University of Nevada Press.