

Editorial

This issue of *Context* contains articles based on recent ethnographic research, predominantly by Australian scholars. The contributions are significantly diverse in their subject matter and methodologies, but have in common a shared, overarching preoccupation that situates the agents of music-making at the centre of the enquiry. (In the case of Emma Roper's article, those agents are in fact Australian magpies.)

The variety of these articles reflects the broad sweep of ethnomusicological and indeed musicological research of the last decade. As Anthony Seeger points out in his preface to Laurent Aubert's *The Music of the Other* (Ashgate, 2007), one of the books reviewed in this issue, 'Ethnomusicological research has contributed to the supply of data from which it should be possible to establish a veritable musical map of humanity.'

Two contributions in this issue deal with historical aspects of Indian classical music, but with quite different focusses. Reis Flora's article opens the collection with a ground-breaking musico-linguistic analysis of a *rāgamālā* text. Working with transliterations and translations of the text, Flora examines alliteration, rhyme schemes and resulting rhythmic features of a couplet for five male ragas. As he points out, ragamala paintings and their texts have previously been the province mainly of art historians and the application of musical scrutiny to a ragamala text provides a new analytical method resulting in quite new musical perspectives.

Manolete Mora's article takes us to the music of the T'boli people of the Phillipines, and a discussion of the chanted epic that relates the exploits of the folk hero Tudbulul. Moving beyond the contextual aspects of performance, Mora provides a structural and musical analysis of the genre from the ethnosemantic or emic perspective, including a detailed description of the overall structural form of the cycle and an analysis of poetic and melodic micro-structures with reference to T'boli concepts and patterns of affective experience, rhetoric, instrumental music, and local conceptions of narrative and time.

Adrian McNeil's study concerns the social organisation of professional musicians at the beginning of the modern history of Hindustani music and prior to the formation of the *gharana* system. Working with the oral histories circulated within the tradition, biographical and other documentation recorded in regional Indian languages, colonial census reports and other broader historical and cultural narratives, McNeil is able to address some broader issues concerning the pre-modern social history of Hindustani music.

A fascinating article about the vocalisation of Australian magpies follows. Emma Roper gathered recorded evidence of ninety-two magpies across metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria in order to investigate the extent of musicality in bird song. She found that the song behaviour in the Passerine *Gymnorhina tibicen tyrannica* is strongly indicative of aesthetic judgment and sensibility and points to the possibility of the sub-song vocalisation as a leisure activity, particularly among female magpies who represented ninety-five percent of solo vocal activity and dominated song behaviour, a finding that diverges significantly from many of the base models for song behaviour in Passerines.

A study of brass band cultures in New Zealand by Dan Bendrups and Gareth Hoddinott follows. As participant-observers, or 'insider-ethnographers' they questioned the ways in which brass bands are perceived by professional brass players, many of whom commenced

their careers in the amateur bands and continue their association with community bands alongside their professional orchestral commitments. This article provides a long-overdue scholarly study of the band movement in New Zealand.

The 'big song' of the Kam people of Guizhou, southwest China, is the subject of the paper by Catherine Ingram, who also writes as a participant-ethnographer with an extended experience of living in the field. There is very little published in any language about the music of the Kam, and Ingram's work is a significant contribution, particularly as it is grounded in her knowledge of both the Kam language and Mandarin. Ingram describes big song structure, its performance context, and its fundamentally crucial role both in village life and in the rapidly changing and broadening socio-economic world in which this minority group is inevitably engaged.

The final contribution, by Sally Treloyn examines the *junba* song repertoires from the north, northcentral and eastern Kimberley in northwestern Australia, exploring the function of the strategic ordering of songs of particular types in relation to the broader functions of *junba* performance. The importance of the focus on song order in song performance is related to the expression of ancestral origins and relationships to people. Treloyn uses the evidence of her fieldwork and participation to question the notion of fixed, unchanging indigenous experience at the expense of acknowledging its contemporary, fluid and changing reality.

Two reviews of very different books conclude this issue. Mervyn McLean's compendious volume *People in Ethnomusicology* is reviewed by David Goldsworthy, while Aline Scott Maxwell provides a review of *The Music of the Other: New Challenges for Ethnomusicology in a Global Age*, a collection of articles by the French ethnomusicologist Laurent Aubert, translated from the French. These titles represent bookends in the literature documenting the history of the discipline, in that the former summarises the development of the discipline of ethnomusicology to around 1980, while the latter provides a critical assessment of the current and future directions of ethnomusicological research and self-conceptualisations in a socio-political, cultural and economic environment irrevocably and inexorably changed by globalisation.

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