The Transnationalization of Religion through Music

International Conference - October 16th to 18th, 2014

Faculté de musique, Université de Montréal

Conference Languages: French/English

Organizing Committee:

Hugo Ferran (Université de Montréal, Banting Postdoctoral Fellow)
Nathalie Fernando (Université de Montréal)

Laboratoire de musicologie comparée et d'anthropologie de la musique de
l'Observatoire interdisciplinaire de création et de recherche en musique

The transnationalization of religion refers to the relocalization of
beliefs, rituals and religious practices beyond state lines, in real or
symbolic spaces, with
the help of new imaginaries and narrative identities (Capone 2005).
Although the analysis of religious transnationalization has revealed the
various ways religion
transcends borders, the role of music in this process is rarely
addressed. Yet this role is essential in the transnationalization of
universal religions like Islam
and Christianity. Music also contributes to the migration of local
religions, neotraditionalist movements, and cults associated with a
particular area, such as Haitian
Voodoo, Cuban Santería, or Brazilian Candomble. Such musical phenomena,
far from being new, gave birth to early religious globalizations (Irving
2010). For example,
in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Jesuits used baroque music to
establish Roman Catholicism in China (Picard 2002), in Ethiopia (Damon
2009) and in the Andes
(Carme 1989).

During the 20th century, the emergence of new means of transportation
and communication accelerated musical transfers, which took place on a
more global scale.
As a result, transnational religious repertoires are today extremely
diverse: African American gospel (Williams-Jones 1975), Japanese
Christian rock (Stevens 2004),
Swedish Muslim hip hop (Ackfeldt 2012), Hindu music in Martinique
(Desroches 1996), Tanzanian Christian Choirs (Barz 2003), and Papua New
Guinean Pentecostal hymns
(Webb 2011).

The transnationalization of religion through music is historically
linked to evangelism, slavery, and colonialism; it is also a by-product
of the migration of the
musicians, the circulation of song books, and the spread of recordings
in physical and other forms: records, tapes, CDs, DVDs, radio,
television, and the Internet.
In all these situations, rhythms, melodies, lyrics, repertoires, dances,
and instruments convey meanings that redefine worldviews, religious
identities, rituals,
prayers, and modes of divine presence.

By studying musical mobility and its reception in local contexts, this
conference aims at understanding how music "migrates" along with
religions, how it contributes
to the construction of plural societies, and the fundamental role it
plays in the creation and recreation of ideas, identities, and religious
practices in a
transnational context.
This will make it possible to highlight misunderstandings and ambivalent
musical postures, which are the products of transnational processes and
which are created
through various religious, aesthetic, or political choices. By bringing
together musicologists, musical historians, ethnomusicologists,
anthropologists, and
sociologists of music, this conference will shed new light on a
phenomenon mainly studied from a religious point of view.

Four themes will be explored:

1. Transnationalization from a historical standpoint. Is the concept of
transnationalization relevant in describing the early stages of
religious spread, or
should it be replaced by the concepts of globalization or
internationalization? The transnationalization of religion as a process
has greatly changed since the
beginning of the 20th century and should be examined through a musical
lens, payiincreasing migration of musicians. The examination of these driving
forces will reveal whether such changes are truly original or
recurrences of older phenomena.
While we will be primarily concerned with the diachronic dimension of
the phenomenon, it will also be possible to model processes that
reappeared under similar forms
in various contexts and periods of history.

2. New areas of fieldwork, new areas of study. The transnational nature
of the music studied leads researchers to carry out fieldwork in both
locally-based and
multi-sited fieldworks (Marcus 1995). Although participative
observation, interviews, and life story approach are still relevant,
researchers sometimes need to
corroborate their findings with second-hand sources, written or oral. In
some instances, they must combine urban and rural surveys, while
"cyber-fieldwork", now
unavoidable, sets various methodological problems. Addressing these
issues will renew the way fieldwork is perceived in the social sciences.

3. Process analysis. The goal of this theme is to clarify the process of
religious transnationalization by examining the reception,
appropriation, creation and
distribution of musical practices and objects. The identification of the
various forms and functions affecting music during this process should
also be considered,
as exemplified by the sacralization of secular music (or vice versa).
The migration of musicians and their routes and networks are also of
interest, as is the
evolution or non-evolution of aesthetic values.

4. Poles and scales of identification. Research has shown that religious
transnationalization involves a double process: the homogenization of
local worship practices
and, concurrently, the reassertion of local identities (Hervieu-Léger
2001). From specific examples, an area for research might be how the
conjunction of music and
religion takes part in the standardization or diversification of the
world. How the transnationalization of music is responsible for the
creation of multiple
identities is also a question that should be addressed.
Comparing musical parameters with musicians' discourses will reveal how
each musical dimension is associated with the different aspects of
identity, such as religion,
  nationality, ethnicity, and affiliation with imagined communities.

By focusing on phenomena of musical transnationalization in the specific
contexts of religion and the diversity of global practices and beliefs,
this conference
will provide an opportunity to combine a vast array of fields and to
compare works that are both historically and geographically distant.

Proposal Submission Guidelines

Each proposal, in French or English, should include:

· Author's last and first name;
· Author's institutional affiliation (please specify if you are a
student); · Author's mailing address, phone number and e-mail; ·
Author's biography (up to 150 words);  · Author's degrees by field, in
reverse chronological order (up to 5); · Author's recent positions, if
relevant, in reverse chronological order (up to 5); · Author's recent
publications, in reverse chronological order (up to 5); · Presentation
title; · Presentation abstract (750-1000 words) divided into three
parts:
subject (topics addressed), methodology, and conclusions; · Selected
bibliography (mandatory).

Lectures must last 20 minutes. Files should be sent as e-mail
attachments (Word format) to info@oicrm.org. The deadline is December
1st, 2013.

The abstracts will be evaluated anonymously by a jury of international
experts.

The OICRM will award two travel scholarships to the best applications
from students living outside Montreal.

Scientific committee

Nathalie Fernando (Université de Montréal) Hugo Ferran (Université de
Montréal, Banting Postdoctoral Fellow) Deirdre Meintel (Université de
Montréal)
François Picard (Université de Paris-Sorbonne) Kay Kaufman Shelemay
(Harvard University)

Université de Montréal
Faculté de musique
Observatoire interdisciplinairLaboratoire de musicologie comparée et d'anthropologie de la musique
C.P. 6128, succ. Centre-Ville Montréal (Québec) H3C 3J7 Canada Phone
| 514-343-6111, ext. 2801 E-mail
| info@oicrm.org Website | [www.oicrm.org](http://www.oicrm.org/)