

INTRODUCTION

Voices

Creating spaces for alternative voices in a peer-reviewed academic journal like *MUSICultures* is an ongoing priority. Both challenging and exciting, finding welcoming spaces for often unheard and silenced voices is part of a process to decolonize academic publishing. We anticipate “Voices” will be a regular feature of future *MUSICultures* issues, thereby providing a dedicated space for a set of open, non-peer-reviewed writings by marginalized and racialized authors. This goal has been articulated as a guiding principle of an increasing number of scholarly national and international journals across a range of disciplinary areas. Evidence is in the work of the Canadian Association of Learned Journals (CALJ) of which *MUSICultures* is a member.

In the Fall of 2021, I was fortunate to join the CALJ Professional Development Committee and joined the board of directors recently. I mention this here because such outlets provide valuable opportunities to discuss issues and challenges with other journal editors, specifically around decolonizing our publications’ processes and contents, and foregrounding equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in all aspects of our work as editors. On a personal level, interacting with editors of other journals across various subject areas, moves the traditionally solitary work of the editor into a collaborative and interdisciplinary space, part of the decolonization process.

The five texts in “Voices” begin with the keynote address that opened the IASPM Canada Virtual Conference in June 2021, titled “Unsettling Sounds of Indigeneity: Reckoning with the White Possessive and Building Anti-/Decolonial Solidarity in Popular Music Research,” by music and culture scholar Alexa Woloshyn. In this provocative text, Alexa¹ reflects on what she refers to as her “journey” with the The Halluci Nation (formerly A Tribe Called Red), drawing on critical discourse around ideas of encounter and relationality. She foregrounds the framework of listening:

Listening has been a central theme in my work on *The Halluci Nation*, and so I will be approaching encounter primarily through the idea of “listening-in-relation,” a phrasing that I borrow from Dylan Robinson. The word “relation” does not denote an equitable or respectful relationship. I will discuss how my own “listening-in-relation” (2020, 51) has maintained the power imbalances of settler colonialism in North America, specifically through hungry listening and white possessiveness” (226).

In the following text, “Reflections on the Present and Future of BIPOC Musicians and Music Scholars in Ethnomusicological Spaces,” which was part of a roundtable at the Society for Ethnomusicology 2020 Virtual Annual Meeting, titled “Many Voices at the Table: A Conversation About the Need for Equity in Canadian Ethnomusicology,” PhD student Hadi Milanloo shares his experiences as a racialized graduate student. In engaging ways, Hadi invokes the “table” metaphor as he shares his experiences as a newcomer with societies such as the Canadian Society for Traditional Music and the Society for Ethnomusicology. Pivotal references in the discussion are to the work of Sarah Ahmed, Dylan Robinson, David Garneau, as well as Danielle Brown’s 2020 open letter to SEM, and former President Donald Trump’s Executive Order 13769, otherwise referred to by critics as the “Muslim ban.” Calling for the decentralization and diversification of ethnomusicological societies and spaces, Hadi also advocates for “close attention to the creation and expansion of spaces that, in different ways, could work better for BIPOC music scholars and practitioners.”

Cultural Studies scholar Shams Bin Quader picks up on the theme of *actions not words* (my emphasis), in his contribution to a roundtable, titled “Strategies for Justice: A Roundtable Discussion of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Music,” that took place at the 2021 IASPM Canada Virtual Conference in June, the same conference that opened with Alexa Woloshyn’s keynote address. Shams received his undergraduate education in Bangladesh; he then went to graduate school in London, England, before taking his doctoral degree in Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney, Australia. In Canada for only four years, Shams brings a valuable international perspective as a racialized scholar now working in the Canadian context (Nova Scotia). Shams sets the stage for his discussion by picking up on the roundtable chair Jacqueline Warwick’s opening reference to a disturbing incident that occurred during Lido Pimienta’s performance at the Marquee Ballroom during the Halifax Pop Explosion Festival in 2020. Inspired by his own experience, Shams delves into systemic barriers and discriminatory patterning across the arts, drawing on

governmental reference points such as CanCon regulations (Content Made by Canadians), FACTOR funding (support for Canadian recording talent), and the MAPL system of defining a Canadian musical material. Shams also explores the EDIA barriers and challenges in music programs by citing examples from the east coast.

Early career music scholars Nadia Chana and Yun Emily Wang extend the experiential approach in “Meeting the Table Halfway,” their collaborative contribution to the roundtable “Many Voices at the Table: A Conversation about the Need for Equity in Canadian Ethnomusicology.” Presented as a conversation in dialogue, this inspiring text is of special value for its deeply personal and informed articulation of individual reflections, beginning with probes around meanings of “talking” and “conversation,” and drawing on the traditional notion of roundtables as a representation format in settings such as academic conferences. As the title of the text suggests, the “table” metaphor is again a telling entry point into storytelling and calling for change. Rubrics such as “Approaching the Table,” “The Table,” “An Ecology of Tables,” and “Igniting the Table” and “Burning” lead us to reflect in broad terms. As Nadia asks at the conclusion: “Which tables are you sitting at? For how long? With whom? How do we feel there? What kinds of things do you need to push through? What do you need to confront? Where do you need to find ease?” (266)

As Nadia and Emily indicate in “Meeting the Table Halfway,” their dialogue stems from their own experiences and was inspired by a number of other voices, which includes that of ethnomusicologist Farzaneh Hemmasi in her keynote address at the same October 2020 conference. Titled “Doing Our Essential Work,” Farzaneh explores many of the themes addressed in the other four texts in “Voices.” She opens by referencing Danielle Brown’s SEM letter in 2020: “This critique of ethnomusicology is newly urgent in 2020. As the world seems to burn around us in racist, economic, pandemic, and climate change-fueled fires, Dr. Brown reminds us that the house North American ethnomusicologists occupy was already on fire. Many of us just weren’t smelling the smoke” (272). Farzaneh goes on to ask “What do you do when your house catches fire?”

As a racialized member of the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto, Farzaneh shares her experiences there. She provides reflection on the ways we can think and enact change in a truly equitable manner. She emphasizes that workload has to be a relational, collaborative project, reminding us that “change is not a single-authored work.” Significantly, Farzaneh also references the new and abrupt challenges brought on us by the pandemic (all five of these texts were originally presented in virtual formats).

In conclusion, I extend a special thank you to the six authors of the texts in “Voices.” The voices in these writings are brave and courageous, and much thought and work has gone into their preparation. Inspirational, these voices are thought-provoking and helpful in setting pathways to decolonization in our work as music scholars and practitioners. As general editor of *MUSICultures*, I am especially grateful for my experience working with them. As editor, I also continue to be inspired by how Indigenous ways of knowing can help to de-centre and open editorial practices ways in inclusive ways.

Indeed, “Voices” invites us to reflect on models of “critical humility” a concept articulated by Métis author and scholar, Warren Cariou. As Cariou has written recently, a good way of incorporating critical humility in our scholarly work would be to model it after what he calls “story listening,” to discover a focal point that is not about the listener or the teller but about “the honest and humble engagement with the story.” Emphasizing that humility is about respectful acknowledgement of a relationship, Cariou has suggested that “the humility of the critic [editor] could be understood as the recognition that they are in a *relationship with the work* and/or with the individual and community that produced the work.”² Cariou’s notion of critical humility is inspiring in its potential to resonate with editorial work, especially as we continue to sustain the scholarly rigour of *MUSICultures* at the same time as moving the journal in innovative, inclusive directions. 🍁

Notes

1. To emphasize the centrality of the conversation theme in “Voices,” the authors’ first names have been used.

2. See Warren Cariou, “On Critical Humility,” *Studies in American Indian Literature* 33 (Fall–Winter 2020): 1–12. The references here are from p. 8 of the article.