

# Radical Ethnomusicology: Towards a politics of "No Borders" and "insurgent musical citizenship" – Calais, Dunkerque and Kurdistan<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is threefold. It begins with a brief mapping of significant contours of applied ethnomusicology. It then moves to look at song and dance in the contexts of Kurdish refugeedom / migration, and considers the role of song and dance in the Syrian uprising. It argues for song, music and dance as a fundamental human right. Finally, it explores the possibilities of radical ethnomusicological action, based on framing concepts of "radical ethnomusicology" and "insurgent musical citizenship". The piece is in the form of field notes, and like Caesar's Gaul, it divides into three parts: (1) the general concept; (2) some practical examples and concrete situations; and (3) definitions and future projects.

## **Keywords**

Radical ethnomusicology; Kurdish refugeedom; music; migration; insurgent musical citizenship; SOAS

## **SECTION 1: Introduction**

The following account draws on a number of activist-research visits to refugee camps in Calais, Dunkerque and Kurdistan since 2013. The core concerns and conceptions are my own, and they stem from a long history in political activism, but the overall project is inseparable from musical-political work done by the SOAS Ceilidh Band, of which I am a member (fiddle and caller). We move as a posse, and we are moving slowly to an idea of musical research and practice that is consciously interventionist. In this process we are constituting ourselves, to a greater or lesser degree, as political / revolutionary subjects.

As a result of circumstances (i.e. personal friendships and contacts) and the urgencies of geopolitics (i.e. the siege of Kobani; the war in Syria; Diyarbakir and Turkey's war on the Kurds), plus also the cohesive composition of Kurdish refugees on the move, our focus in the past 3-4 years has been on specifically Kurdish music and dance – although with the full awareness that history has given us four culturally distinct Kurdistans (Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and their respective diasporas), each of which has its own musical specificities. The paper operates in a "no borders" perspective, both in terms of concept and in terms of daily practice (see King 2016; Mezzadra and Neilsen, 2013).<sup>2</sup>

## **Applied Ethnomusicology: Not that but this...**

It would be wrong to say that our musical-practice arises out of theoretical developments in "applied ethnomusicology" (see Pettan and Titon, 2015). However a brief look at the field is in order, as a way of mapping possible "not that, but this" academic parameters for our work.

In my own coinage I use the term "radical ethnomusicology" to define what we do. The

term was apparently also used by Charles Keil in 1976,<sup>3</sup> but his frame of reference (binary oppositions between culture and civilisation, between mass musical cultures of capitalism and authentic musics of the people) is quite different from ours.

Latterly, “applied ethnomusicology” has emerged as a discipline into which our kind of musical-political activity could potentially be pigeonholed. In “applied ethnomusicology” the study of (and involvement in) musics is not neutral. It is functionalised to particular objectives. Study the musics of peoples in order to achieve particular ends. However our field of intentionality exceeds that disciplinary confine.

There are many examples in ethnomusicology of the application of musicology to social and other ends. Here I cite briefly three examples, principally so that we can distinguish our own work from what already exists in the field.

### **Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology**

An applied ethnomusicology subgroup has been operating within the International Council for Traditional Music since 2006. It is worth noting that the ICTM parent body represents itself as “a non-governmental organization in formal consultative relations with UNESCO and [which] *acts as a bond among peoples of different cultures and thus contributes to the peace of humankind*” [my emphasis] (and thus having a functional role that extends beyond mere academia).

In group discussions (a method entailing “talking circles”) the ICTM Study Group on Applied Ethnomusicology defines its brief as an “approach guided by principles of social responsibility, which extends the usual academic goal of broadening and deepening knowledge and understanding toward solving concrete problems and toward working both inside and beyond typical academic contexts”. The Study Group further “advocates the use of ethnomusicological knowledge in influencing social interaction and the course of cultural change” (see introduction to Harrison, Mackinlay and Pettan, 2010). The Study Group sees itself as operating in three key areas:

1. “*Threatened music, threatened communities*”, where it addresses ethnomusicology’s responses and responsibilities to endangered music cultures. In some cases, musical endangerment has been reformulated within discourses of sustainability.
2. Applied ethnomusicological approaches to *music therapy and healing*;
3. Theorising music’s roles in *conflict and peacemaking*.

Since the study group’s formation, various of these terms have been subjected to critical scrutiny, but the overall framework remains intact.

### **Musicians without Borders**

This organisation is not research-based but therapeutic. The group originated in the Netherlands (1999) and has been built through energetic publicity and online fund-raising by musician Wendy Hassler-Forest. There is no doubt that it has international traction. MWB has been operating in divided communities in Palestine, Kosovo, Northern Ireland, Italy, Rwanda and the Netherlands. In the coming period, given the realities of the “refugee crisis”, they plan to reposition to Europe They explain their overall brief as follows:

“Where war has raged, people need everything to return to life: food, water, shelter, clothing, medicine. But more than anything, people need hope. To reconcile, people need empathy. To heal, people need connection and community. Music creates empathy, builds connection and gives hope. [...] Since 1999, we’ve been using the power of music for peace-building, connecting people, empowering musicians as social activists, and training local youth as change-makers. Our long-term commitment allows our participants the time to develop skills and talents, process

grief and loss, and build bridges of reconciliation in societies divided by recent or ongoing conflict.” (available from [www.musicianswithoutborders.org/](http://www.musicianswithoutborders.org/))

The programme for the upcoming MWB conference in Australia defines their constituency. They will bring together “researchers, practitioners (musicians including performers, community musicians, music educators, music therapists; community development workers; social service workers; arts organisation delegates), and arts and community policymakers to share ideas around the ways that music is used to develop peace, empathy and conciliation.” ([www.musicianswithoutborders.org/](http://www.musicianswithoutborders.org/))

### **Angela Impey – Musical–social agendas**

The core of the method employed by our SOAS posse (which I outline below) is quintessentially simple. We bring drums into the camp. The drums create spontaneous aggregations of people. Singers come to the fore. Song and dance come about. Moments of local empowerment are engendered. Those moments then spill out into wider affirmations of power – for instance, when insurgent migrants march on the Town Hall and our drums become a tool for affirming a “right to the city”.

A companion practice to our own is mapped by Angela Impey’s fieldwork in Maputaland, at the triple border of South Africa, Mozambique and Swaziland. She arrives with a small box of jews harps. She waits at a given tree, where the older women of the region come to collect their pensions on a given day. Her notion is that the musical instruments will draw out women’s stories, will validate histories, will revive lost practices. Playing the instruments leads into a singing of the songs, and then a retracing of the trajectories of kinship – together they walk the paths that once would have taken the women to friends and families in neighbouring regions, but these pathways then became blocked by the realities of war, and also by the borders imposed by the creation of national parks. It is a beautiful story of ethnomusicology in action. It maps personal histories, walking landscapes, and geo-histories (Impey 2013).

In her own account, “by linking sonic memories to memories of performance, in particular social and natural localities, it seeks to connect the sensual-experiential with the environmental-economic. In so doing, it aims to open new spaces for the merging of discourses between environmental policy makers and different agents within the community. It hopes to raise the level of women’s voices in seeking a more equitable approach towards land rights and environmental development in the area.” (Impey 2013).

As such, the research, and its continuation, is addressed to policy-makers, proposing that development programmes at the highest level should be changed to take account of these marginalised women and their communities. <sup>4</sup>

### **A different kind of ethnomusicological work**

The buzzwords in this applied ethnomusicology are familiar. Peace, harmony, empathy, conflict resolution, therapy, development. It is mild, normative, humane, and more or less unthreatening. Nobody could deny that it is good work, because the bloody progress of history leaves us with people who have been traumatised by war and torture, and communities that have been divided by centuries of sectarian bloodletting, and minority communities whose musics are threatened with annihilation – all of whom should have access to the benefits that applied musicology can bring. However, what we are doing is something else. Within this field we differentiate ourselves, because we are driven by urgencies that come from somewhere else. By way of shorthand: an urgency of moments of empowerment that seek to confront Power.

It is for this reason that I use the term “radical ethnomusicology”, to distinguish our work from the above. In the account that follows (which can be taken as field notes from a journey of exploration) I explore other possibilities. Where might an alternative view come from?

### **Personal Trajectory**

I suppose I could start by declaring my own interest in the matter. In his 2015 Blacking lecture Martin Stokes was kind enough to reference my (our) political work in Calais, Dunkerque and Kurdistan. He opined that it had something of an Adam Smithian late eighteenth century theory of moral sentiments about it (Stokes 2015). The present article offers an opportunity for me to set the record straight.

My political roots are in the Italian movement represented by *autonomia* and *Lotta Continua*. Fresh from Dante studies at university I travelled to Turin to interview striking workers in the FIAT factories (the Hot Autumn of 1969-70). Enchanted by the fact that bars and cafes near the factories had Italian revolutionary songs playing on their juke boxes. For me, from the start, song was part and parcel of my revolutionary engagement. *La ballata di Pinelli*, of course. But also *La ballata della FIAT* in which the anti-worker violence of the assembly lines transforms into worker violence against the system. “*La violenza, la rivolta, chi ha esitato questa volta lotterà con noi domani*” [“Violence, revolt, those who hesitated this time will join our struggle tomorrow”].<sup>5</sup>

In Britain we organised nationally among the workers of the Ford Motor Company (notably at Dagenham and Halewood), created an transnational organisation of autonomous Ford militants, and among other things issued a 45 rpm record of “The Ford Strike Song” [“We’ll expropriate the bastards of all their plunder, and get them back for keeping us under...”].<sup>6</sup> These were also the years of political ethnomusicology in Italy – inseparable from the revolutionary political struggles of the time. That movement gave us the two albums *Bella ciao* (Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano, 1965)<sup>7</sup> and *Ci ragiono e canto* (Dario Fo / Nuova Scena, 1966),<sup>8</sup> albums which were, and have remained, etched deep into the minds and hearts of the contestational “generation of ‘68”.

In my case, involvement in music was (and remains) functional to an overall project which is anti-capitalist. In part I engage with song and musics because their movements have a potential of social subversion. I sing and I dance because it is part of my revolution. And in making music and song, I also enable small moments of revolution. As we used to say in the old days, what is the point of a revolution if you can’t sing and dance? (Incidentally, my engagement with all this is as much against the foot-draggers of Left theory<sup>9</sup> as it is with the clodhoppers of ethnomusicology.<sup>10</sup>)

### **SECTION 2: Practical Examples, Concrete Situations, and the Kurds**

There are good reasons at this time for taking an interest in Kurdish music – the musics of the four Kurdistans (Syria, Turkey, Iraq and Iran) and the diaspora. The Kurds occupy a pivotal position in the current geopolitical conjuncture. Fighting against the Islamic fundamentalism of Daesh (ISIS), fighting against the genocidal inclinations of the Turkish state, and fighting for nationhood. The Kurds are a people upon whom borders have been imposed. Over millennia they have become experts at negotiating (traversing) borders. In 2016 we saw this enacted on Britain’s doorstep, in the presence of several thousand Kurdish refugees and migrants in the refugee camps of Calais and Dunkerque in Northern France. Practical, everyday acts of “crossing”.

Moving with the exigencies of war and economic crises, the Kurds have also become

accustomed to "moving to other places". To the mountains, for instance, in the times of war. One exemplification of this is the very rich musicology of songs and dances of the Kurdish guerrilla fighters – both men and women – created in the mountains during the past 30 years of their struggle. There are plentiful examples in Kurdish YouTube channels, and in the videos posted as part of my own project – also posted on YouTube – which has the title of "The Kurdish Songbook Project".<sup>11</sup>

So... we have borders, blockages, crossings, permeabilities, displacements, migrations, and at the same time the labile, deeply problematic terms of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons. And their musics. What all this means in terms of transfers and interactions of cultural capital is a hugely complicated question. Myself, I would probably oppose the term transnational that was proposed recently at ESEM. At the moment I am working with a notion of "churn" and the sedimenting movements of large tidal rivers. But that will be a paper for another time.

### Locating the SOAS posse

So where do "we" fit into the picture? When I say "we", the best definition I can find is "the SOAS posse". We are musicians, activists, dreamers with a more or less anarcho-socialist view of the world.

The crisis of our times is the global escalation of migrations associated with wars. And, concomitantly, the growth of violent and abusive techniques for micro-managing migrations – including death regimes, the worldwide construction of walls and fences, and the criminalisation of humanitarian aid. These things set a moral imperative to speak out and act in solidarity. If you don't go, you don't see; if you don't see you don't know; if you don't know, you can't act.

With that in mind, we travel to France. To a bit of France that historically used to be a bit of England. We work with "people on the move" – (migrants, refugees, asylum seekers are contested terms, so perhaps we could use that term) – who find themselves stuck in the so-called "Jungles", the self-managed camps of Calais and Dunkerque. Stuck there and trying to cross by whatever means – usually illegal – to England.<sup>12</sup>



**Figure 1 – The SOAS posse rehearsing tunes on the cross-Channel ferry to Calais, with Kurdish drum, February 2014. Photo: Ed Emery**

What is our method? To summarise briefly and schematically: In London we stage concerts and dances. By that means we are able to raise money. In order to buy "ethnic" musical instruments appropriate to the cultures of the peoples concerned. We take those instruments to the refugee camps of Northern France and elsewhere. What is our purpose? Sometimes by prior arrangement, but more usually as guerrilla actions relying on spontaneity, we organise moments of musical congregation – musical comings-together of the people on the move. And when we have finished we leave the musical instruments in the camps.

These activities are framed within a notion that music, song and dance are fundamental human rights, and that spaces have to be provided for them, by right, in all places where migrants and refugees are gathered. We encapsulate this in the notion of "The Music Room", which is a place where those people can express the music, song and dance of their home cultures, and thus regain small moments of empowerment and agency.

In January 2016 we went to the Dunkerque camp. A predominantly Kurdish camp, which at that time contained several thousand people. We arrived entirely unannounced. The turnover of activists means that there is nobody able to make arrangements, and anyway arrangements fall through (for instance when the camps are attacked by police with CS gas, as was happening on an almost daily basis during 2016).

We brought *saz*, *zourna* and *daf* frame drums, purchased in London. We went to the tea tent, and distributed the instruments to the people gathered there. There was a flurry of activity, and in a very short time they had summoned their best singers, and also some musicians. The songs flowed unstintingly, with different singers stepping forward to sing the songs of the homeland, for an appreciative crowd, and with ourselves recording. At a certain point a shy young man stepped forward and staked his right to sing. The song that he sang was "*Ma ro ma ro*" (fig 2 with translated lyrics in fig 3).



**Figure 2 – "Maro maro" – A Kurdish Peshmerga song, Dunkerque, Northern France, 2 January 2016.**

"Maro Maro" (Lyrics and music by Hama Jaza, songwriter and former *peshmerga* fighter from Suleimaniyah, Kurdistan Region, Northern Iraq)

The son says to the father:

"Don't go away, dad, don't leave!

For how much longer do you have to take on  
all the problems of our people all on your own?

For how much longer do you have to deprive us of a father's love?"

The father replies to the son:

"I am going. I am leaving.

Don't be angry with me, my little ones.

Be sure, my children, I am not coming back  
until we get the freedom of my Kurdistan.

Until we change the map of this country back to what it was [i.e.  
united]."

The son says to the father:

"Don't go away, dad, don't leave...

We shall come with you on the same path.

We shall carry your water bottles and bread bags.

We have no life in this city any more,  
because of having to move from house to house.

Our life is full of fleeing, torment and bitter poison.

"Don't go away dad, don't leave...Why are you leaving us?

For how much longer shall we be forced to live like this,  
like a people lost and disoriented?

For how much longer do you have to take on  
all the problems of our people all on your own?

For how much longer do you have to deprive us of a father's love?"

*Translation:* Arazu Yasen and Baxi Tofiq [Rojava refugee camp, Arbat,  
Kurdistan Region, Northern Iraq, 30 March 2016.

**Figure 3 – Translation of Maro Maro**

This song is a song of parting and loss (fig 3). It embodies the tensions for Kurds in the eternity of war: the contradictions between guerrilla life and family life. In the song the father is leaving, to fight. The son says: "Father, don't go. Why do you have to shoulder the burdens of our people all on your own." The father says that he is going, and not coming back "until we have won the freedom of our Kurdistan". To which the child replies: "We shall come with you on the same path, we shall carry your water bottles and bread bags. We have no life in this city any more. Our life is full of fleeing, torment and bitter poison." The potency of our having enabled this moment of community expression was substantial (fig 4).



**Figure 4 – Two Kurdish singers from Suleimaniyah perform an impromptu song with our darbuka drum. On the road to the Calais "Jungle", February 2015. Photo: Ed Emery**

### **“Ma Ro Ma Ro”: Tracing back the Songlines**

Two months later, in March 2016, for the Kurdish New Year, we travelled to Suleimaniyah in Kurdistan. The logic of the journey was to trace the songlines – to trace the songs that we had heard in the French camps back to the homeland and to find out about their history.

Like Rolf Kilius, who recently travelled to Suleimaniyah for the British Library,<sup>13</sup> we met the Zoroastrians, and we accompanied them on a devotional trip to the mountains that had been the heart of the Kurdish resistance against Iraq's dictator Saddam Hussein. Where the *peshmerga* guerrillas had used the caves as their refuge. The sociology of the new Zoroastrians is very interesting. Many of them are the Leftists of yesteryear, looking for new ethical and devotional possibilities in the face of a murderous and insurgent Islam, and the collapse of organised socialism. It was here that I heard "Ma ro ma ro" for the second time. This time sung by a *peshmerga*, and accompanied by his very young son (fig 5).





Figure 5 – A peshmerga song from the mountains of Kurdistan, March 2016.

Our Suleimaniyah friends explained to us that the song had a particular local resonance for them. The father – the singer in this video clip – was leaving, to serve as a soldier. He had a phone call with his little son. The son spoke down the phone and told him "*Ma ro, ma ro*". "Don't go, Daddy, don't go." So the father did not go. And now this song has become the shared patrimony of both of them, and they sing it together.

So, the multivalency of the song, the sense of loss of the homeland, the tearing of familial relations, is emblematic at two levels: between the mobility of Kurdish guerrillas leaving to fight in the plains and mountains, and the migration of Kurds in search of work, security and freedom.

### The Intellectuals' Café in Suleimaniyah

At the heart of the Kurdish city of Suleimaniyah in Northern Iraq is a square – Liberation Square – where kinship factions fought a civil war for control of the region's governance.

To one side, down a tiny alley, there is a large, cavernous ground-floor area which is known as The People's Teahouse – the Chayhane Sha'ab. It is a male space of cigarette smoke and noisy domino playing. Its walls are covered with framed photo portraits of the good and the great – politicians, writers, actors, artists, poets. One photo in particular stands out, on a central pillar. It portrays the songwriter Hama Jaza.<sup>14</sup> He was a *peshmerga* fighter, one of the guerrilla fighters who fought Saddam Hussein and laid the basis for the present Kurdish regional government of northern Iraq. His songs, dating back to the 1980s, are patriotic songs for the liberation of Kurdistan. Other photographs show him in the mountains, with an assault rifle at his side. In his later years he lived in Denmark, but returned to Suleimaniyah, where he died (of cancer) in 2010. His funeral was a huge affair, with thousands lining the streets of his native city.

The beauty of our song project is that the young man who stood up and sang for us in Dunkerque thereby opened the door to a whole world of Kurdish culture, intellectuality and political engagement that is more or less unknown to the world at large. So, having found the song, then came a further development of this research venture. This involved getting the lyrics of the song translated. This involved extensive exchanges with two young Kurdish women, Arazu and Baxi, whom I met working in the Arbat refugee camp outside Suleimaniyah. A complex business of transcription and re-editing until we finally had a text that made the meanings clear. We are now working on transcribing and translating the

other songs that we recorded.

### Initial Conclusions

We have learned many things from our engagement with the Kurds in the camps. I offer here – in no particular order – some thoughts arising from the clips cited above:

The song “*Ma ro, ma ro*” is based on the experience of leaving home to fight as a guerrilla. Here in Dunkerque it becomes a song of leaving home to become a migrant. Two homologated experiences, both of which are fundamental to the experience of Kurds – a “nation without a state”, subjected to alien borders, and eternally operating against and through borders. Archetypically “no borders”.

A fact that is disturbing for the ethics of ethnomusicology. What we discovered in the “jungles” was the impossibility of arriving at “fully informed consent” for public broadcasting of research materials. The consequences for migrants of singing such songs, when they eventually arrive before the asylum officers and have to give an account of themselves. In abstract terms, our posted clips pose an ethical problem. However we had the strongest sense that the singers, as Kurds, wanted their songs, their culture, their struggles, to reach out into the world. The desire to express the national struggle overrides caution.

This moment was made possible because we took a drum into the camp. Italy in the hot years of contestation had a slogan: *Mai più senza fucile* (“Never again without a rifle”). Our slogan is *Mai più senza tamburo* (“Never again without a drum”). The drum is unfailing in its capacity to aggregate persons, to generate moments of musication, and to create spaces of resistance.

There was a mafia in the camp – or rather armed community leaders, the people who control the smuggling of people across the border. Forcefully they tried to appropriate our drum to increase their power, but we did not let them. This was one of several moments in which our drums were taken from us by force. We had to defend our drums, with words and sometimes with physical confrontations.

Guns are not far away from these sung moments. Visit the Facebook pages of some of our singers. For their profile photos you will see them in the mountains of Kurdistan, with camouflage jackets and assault rifles. *Peshmerga*. And the singer in the mountains kept his handgun next to him on the picnic blanket. A major article waits to be written about “singing and dancing under arms”. The many video clips of Kurds – both men and women – singing and dancing as they engage in warfare attest to this phenomenon. In this they recall the precious early account offered by Xenophon, as he marched through the territory of the Kurds, where he describes the men in his own army dancing with weapons. (*Anabasis* VI, I, 5-12)

And this is important to remember. The first thing that we have learned is to abandon the victimist view of the migrants and refugees who arrive in Europe. Many of these people are the “best of human capital” – courageous, creative, determined, fearless, and with a strong sense of a better world in the making. The force, energy and commitment expressed in the singers that we recorded for the Kurdish Songbook Project argue differently, for a strength of personal agency.

As a corollary, we have learned to unlearn the automatic view that sees migrants as undifferentiated abject persons, of lower culture, and with limited capacities. We recall many conversations of wit, intelligence and creative humour. And we still remember the man who came to the volunteer-run library in the Calais Jungle asking for Plato and Aristotle.

Further to that, it is clear that many among the migrant have come from struggles back home – it is for this that they are on the move. This means that they have a political history.

They are subjects of resistance and not passive victims in relation to history. And this shows when they work to mobilise the residents of the camps. Furthermore, the family relations of some of them are, at this very moment (May 2017), in the front line back home, engaged in the assault intended to retake Mosul from Daesh / ISIS.<sup>15</sup>

We have also learned that there is a new breed of “humanitarian police” in the making, who take possession of the migrants, to justify their own existence. On several occasions we musicians have been thrown out of refugee camps for doing what we do. (Ironically, the last time was by the parastatal so-called “Flanders Association against Exclusion and for Inclusion”...Ha ha, how we laughed...)

Additionally we have learned to adopt an “appropriateness of musical means”. I said above that we bring “appropriate ethnic instruments” to the camps. Already I sense a terminological shudder from our academic colleagues. In some camps, well-meaning persons bring guitars, or generic music-making instruments, to make generic music. This is a kind of musical indistinction that wounds. Our practice is distinct, in that we (buy and) bring “native” instruments to people in the camps, such as are able to engender their own musics from “back home”. We would rather bring a *saz* than a guitar. And there is no point bringing a *daf* with jingles to Kurds whose instrument may be the *darbuka*, and vice versa, because they won't know what to do with them.

We also note that we are far from being the only people in the camps making music with a political agenda. Good Christians brought Handel's *Messiah* to the Calais Jungle at Christmas, and the Catholics are endlessly proselytising. In the camp Women's Centres, feminists facilitate musicality among women and children. The musicality of migrants and refugees also becomes a cypher for their essential humanity – hence the BBC story about the Syrian migrant from Homs and his violin,<sup>16</sup> and the Afghan musician in the Calais Jungle with his *dambora* [tanbur].<sup>17</sup> Further conclusions will follow below.

### **Encountering Syrian Musicians, and the politics of Syria on Istikal St, Istanbul**

As part of its yearly calendar of musical activities, the SOAS Ceilidh Band travels to Istanbul to play a St Patrick's Night gig for Irish expatriates and devotees of Irish music in that city. Each night we busk along Istiklal Street (Istanbul's equivalent of Oxford Street).

We measure the health of a polity in part by the freedom (or otherwise) of musicians on the streets. It happens that, at the present time [writing in March 2017], despite the global repression that reigns in Turkey, there is a relative freedom of musicians on the streets of Istanbul. As the musicians explain, “We have to fight for it – all too often we are moved on by police ‘because of the security situation’ – but in principle we are able to make a stand.”

In particular it is notable that the refugee musicians in Istanbul are also able to hold their own. We meet many of these refugee musicians on Istiklal Street. We were particularly happy to meet several groups of Syrian musicians, playing on the street. These are musicians who have fled the civil war in Syria, arriving sometimes on their own, and sometimes with families. One group in particular is led by a violinist – a gentle and eternally pleasant man by name of Munzer Sheikh Alkar. Until just a couple of years ago he had his own orchestra in his home town of Aleppo, and they regularly performed public concerts. But that orchestra is no more. By reasons of war it has been disbanded to the four winds. And indeed the city is no more either – it has been bombed, and bombed again, until there is little further left to bomb.<sup>18</sup>

These Syrian musicians play on the street. Every day. In front of one of the empty shops (of which there are many).<sup>19</sup> Their repertoire includes many of the classics of the Arab musical world – including the Fairouz songs "*Bint al-shalabiyya*" and "*Nassam alayna al-hawa*". But they also include songs that express their longing for Syria, their native land. One song in particular stands out. Its title is "*Janna janna janna*". It speaks of the home country. Even though (as the song says) their country is a hellhole, it is also a paradise.

I have spent some time trying to trace the origins of this song, because our intention is to bring it into our band's "Arabic" repertoire. To that end I am working on gathering lyrics, transliterations, translations and notes on its various versions. The original of the song seems to have been a Moroccan lyric sung by Majed al-Mohandes, a favourite of "Arab Idol". Publicly performed in Morocco in 2010.<sup>20</sup>

But, as they told us on the street, the version of the song as sung by the Syrians on Istiklal is quite different. It is the voice of the Syrian revolution that started in 2011. Specifically, it was the song that was sung at the start of the uprising in the town of Homs. The words are taken and turned into a moment of powerful chant and dance, condemning the corruption and violence of the Assad government. In translation, the lyrics say of the home country: "Despite all the bad things that happen in you, you are my country, you are my paradise" (fig 6).

جنة جنة جنة / والله يا وطن	****	جسر الشغور ورسن / لحن الشهادة غن
يا وطن يا حبيب / يا بو تراب الطيب		مهما تقتل وتدفن / تقتل أمم وتدفن
حتى تارك جنة		يا باري إلنا الجنة
حتى تارك جنة		
****		
بترابك روينا / وبأحضاتك روينا	****	شهيدينا لا ما مات / زغردن له يا البنات
ولترابك حنيننا وبمجدك علينا		خادامات وحوريات / خادامات وحوريات
للقمة وصلنا للعليا وصلنا		بيذن الله على الجنة
****		
ثوري ثوري درعا / بعثامينا انتي شمعة	****	من الرقة للقامشلي / دم البطولة يغلي
حمصية تنادي فزعة / يا مسند حملنا		يقتل أمم ويصلي / يقتل أمم ويصلي
يا مسند حملنا		يا خسيس ارحل عنا
****		
حمص يا أم العروبة / للخوف باست توبة	****	حتى أحرار الساحل / تبصم بأنك راحل
ما انهاب الصعوبة / لا ما نعرف الصعوبة		والله نظامك فاشل / ظالم وأمنك فاشل
أبطال واسأل عنا / حمصية واسأل عنا		يا خسيس ارحل عنا
****		
حلب يا أم الأجواد / سوريا تنادي	****	دوري دوري دوري / يا نوارس دوري
حي على الجهاد / لا تخذلي وطننا		يا شهيد يلادي / باسمين وجوري
اشقد خذلتي أهلنا		وادعوا يا أهلنا
****		والشهادة حملنا
يا حماة ساميجينا / والله حقه علينا		
انت منا وإلينا / بالجبار أملنا		
حاشا الله يخاذلنا		

Translation

Paradise, paradise, paradise, / by God, my homeland, you  
are a paradise  
Oh homeland, oh beloved one / with the goodness of your  
soil  
Even your hell is a paradise

\*\*\*\*

In your soil there is the fulness of our being / in your  
embrace is the fulness of our being  
And for your soil we have a homesickness / and with your  
glory we were raised up  
Till we reached the top / we reached to the highest point

\*\*\*\*

Revolt, revolt, Deraa. / In our darkness you are a candle  
Fearful, a woman from Homs calls out / O rest bearing us  
Oh rest bearing us  
Oh rest bearing us

\*\*\*\*

Homs, oh mother of Arabism / regarding our past fear we  
show repentance  
We do not fear difficulties / we do not admit difficulties  
We're heroes, ask about us, / woman from Homs, ask  
about us

\*\*\*\*

Aleppo, oh mother of generosities / Syria calls  
Hasten to jihad / Do not let down our homeland  
You have forsaken our people

\*\*\*\*

Oh Hama, forgive us / by God your right is on us

You are from us, and to us / our hope is in the almighty  
God  
God forbid, he will not forsake us

\*\*\*\*

Jisr al-Shughur and Rastan / Sing the melody of  
martyrdom  
Whatever they kill and bury / kill nations and bury  
O Creator, we will have paradise

\*\*\*\*

Our martyrs did not die / sing aloud, you girls  
Maids and nymphs  
God willing to paradise

\*\*\*\*

From Raqqa to Qamishli / The blood of the heroes boils  
He kills nations and prays / He kills nations and prays  
Oh you despicable one, leave us and go!

\*\*\*\*

Even the freemen from the coast / they testify that you will  
go  
By God, your regime is a failure, / unjust, and your  
security is a failure  
Oh you despicable one, leave us and go!

\*\*\*\*

Circle around, circle around, circle around / oh seagull  
circle around  
Oh martyr of my homeland / jasmine and Damask rose  
And pray, oh our people  
And martyrdom is our dream.

**Figure 6 – “Janna janna janna” original lyrics and translation**

### **Song and Dance in the Syrian Revolutionary Movement**

Here is the video (fig 7) of that very powerful moment, when the inhabitants of Homs rose up against the Assad regime.



**Figure 7 – The uprising in Homs**

Here is another version of the song (fig.8), in a studio recording. The clip is associated with the name of Abdelbasit Sarout, described as one of the heroes of the Syrian revolution<sup>21</sup> :



Figure 8 – “*Janna, janna, janna*” studio recording

Song and dance were a powerful ingredient of the Syrian popular uprising, and this gives reason to think about the role of song and dance in revolutionary movements in general. A subject that has been little explored by our ethnomusicologists.

In another moment of the Homs uprising, the assembled crowds sang and chanted the song "Time to go, Bashar (al-Assad)" (fig 9.) This video was posted on 2 July 2011.



Figure 9 – “Time to go, Bashar!” – Homs

And yet another song clip – "This is your last Friday, Bashar!" (fig. 10), the video for which was posted on 16 April 2012.



**Figure 10 – “This is your last Friday, Bashar!”**

Homs was not the only place of popular uprising. The town of Deraa was where Syria's secret revolution started. When young schoolchildren were beaten for painting slogans on the front of their school, the whole town rose up in anger. Their anger was met in turn by brutal repression from the Assad regime, but this only fuelled the greater growth of the movement. Later in the year, in the town of Dael in Deraa governorate, crowds also gathered and danced and sang revolutionary songs. Here (fig 11) is a video that was posted on 17 December 2011.



**Figure 11 – Protest songs in Dael**

There was exuberance, joy and beauty in these popular risings. An extraordinary force, expressed in voice and collective bodily movement. They offer a powerful case history of the emergence of revolutionary subjectivity. But it was not to last. In came the men in black; in came Assad's murderous thugs; in came the army; and in came the the torturers.

Now, switching to France. In the refugee camps of Calais and Dunkirk in 2015 we met some of the Syrians from Deraa. Refugees. Beautiful, gentle people. We laughed, sang,

and played music together. We were able to record their songs at the harbourside while waiting for their nightly attempts to cross to the UK. They told us of the horrors of the situation back home in Deraa. On 18 July 2015 we documented some of what they told us, in a little video that we made (fig. 12) and in a drawing (fig. 13). It is beautiful (and it also represents part of our developing methodology):



**Fig. 12 Mapping the lines of flight and hope**



**Figure 13 – Calais Trip, July 2015, Tell al-Haarrah drawing. At the Calais harbourside the Syrians tell us of the bombings and murders in their town of Tell al-Haarrah. We map their suffering while they sing a gentle song. Artist: Hannah Kirmes-Daly. Photo: Ed Emery**



But even though we knew about these horrors, nothing prepared me for the shock I experienced recently when I watched the archived BBC Panorama programme made in 2012: *Syria: Inside the Secret Revolution*.<sup>22</sup> The contrast between the sweetness of the early hopes, and the bitter dregs of defeat and death could not be more shockingly expressed. It is for this reason that our band is learning the song "*Janna, janna, janna*". In its Homs version, from the days of the revolution. Out of respect for the movement that began there, and which is still continuing its resistance to the present day.

### **SECTION 3: Perspectives, Projects and Insurgent Musical Citizenship**

At this point I would like to take things a little further. In earlier work I outlined a definition that embraced both ourselves and the people that we meet in our musical solidarity journeys: "diasporic musicating subjects of resistance". In this phrase each of the terms has equal weight, and each of them would require several paragraphs of unpacking, which I cannot do here (see Emery 2008).

Since that time, and arising directly out of the experiences outlined above, I have begun to work with an additional term: "insurgent musical citizenship". As we know, ethnomusicology moves in fashions and hegemonising discourses. The last wave (hopefully soon to expire – see Emery 2016 for a discussion on this) was "soundscapes". In Britain there are now interesting moves to explore concepts of music and citizenship, originating in work being done by Martin Stokes at King's College London, and this may lay down a marker for future work (Stokes 2017).

We evince in ourselves – and also in our respondents – the possibility (dimly glimpsed, but real nonetheless) of a category that we would like to add to those Stokesian ruminations – namely the category of "insurgent musical citizenship". Our right to exist within an alternative polity to that which is imposed on us (by the technical operating system of capitalism, with its attendant values). Our right to rise up against old systems of domination, and build towards new worlds of freedom. "Another world is possible", as they used to say, and we ourselves as agents of that change.

When we finished recording songs in the Calais tent, the young Kurdish men went out onto the sandy rampart and threw rocks at the passing vans of the riot police. I photographed the moment – but cannot show you the photos because they asked me to delete them from my camera. I am not saying that the singing provoked the rock-throwing, but the two moments were part of a seamless ontological whole.

We bring drums into the camp. The drums create aggregations of people. Song and dance are engendered (fig 14). Moments of local empowerment come about. As well as enabling moments of musication in the Jungle, they spill out into a wider affirmation of power – for instance when the migrants march on the Town Hall and our drums become a tool for affirming a "right to the city". The force implied in the word "insurgent" is that of a rising wave. It is powerfully expressed in the dancing in the squares of Deraa and Homs at the start of the Syrian uprising.



**Figure 14 – Demonstration in Deraa at the start of the Syrian uprising**

It is even more strongly expressed in the exuberant street-flow of the black residents of South Africa’s townships, when they did *toyì-toyi*, as beautifully documented in the film “*Amandla: A Revolution in four-part harmony*” and illustrated in this clip (fig 15).<sup>23</sup>



**Fig 15. Toyì-toyi in the townships**

We are in the business of engendering these moments of rising insurgent power.

### **Radical Ethnomusicology, We Ourselves, and Resistant Subjects**

Having accompanied me thus far, you might reasonably ask what are the elements that define this Radical Ethnomusicology. I offer it as a programmatic term employed by myself and the people with whom I work. It both describes and defines a project of interventionist research developed with students and activists at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London during the course of the past ten years.

A minor industry has emerged (see the section on “Applied Musicology”, above), involving musicians and musicators as *animateurs* in processes of therapy, conflict resolution and conciliation, and also in processes of “development” broadly defined. We are

distinct from that disciplinary terrain, in that we assume tactical positions that start from a musical base and move to challenge power as such. So, this is not about languages of healing, therapy, conciliation, development, nor about the application of sticking plasters to history's wounds. Rather it is about the knowledge that we are citizens of the world, and that those histories have logics that have to be contested.

So yes, the constitution (reconstitution) of ontologies – of ways of being. And the restitching of social fabrics torn apart by wars, migrations, forced separations. But also a constitution of ourselves – to understand ourselves musically, to understand our own musical histories, and to enable ourselves as historical subjects, operating through the medium of music. Historical subjects in our own right, and active on terrains of social contestation, we are diasporic musicating subjects of resistance.

In framing her own work, as cited above, Angela Impey invokes the “transdisciplinary, ‘collective inquiry’ approach as promulgated by Brown, Conquergood, Appadurai, Freire and others”, and uses that to “make an argument for music’s instrumentality as a complementary, culturally contingent and socially institutionalised framework of knowledge, and thus a vital medium of critical citizen engagement” (Impey 2014).

The “collective inquiry” approach is one that is rich and vibrant with possibilities. However I propose to add to Impey’s “collective inquiry” a further suggestion – a proposal for an ongoing everyday practice of what, following a well-trodden path, we could call “workers’ inquiry” – upon ourselves, and upon the institutions in which we work, as knowledge factories within the wider system of post-industrial capitalist production. We should not be exempted from inquiry, and neither should our institutions. From “insurgent musical citizens” this is the least that we should expect.

This is not a perspective that has been developed in ethnomusicology. However it has a strong and historically well-developed pedigree in Italian “*operaismo*” (the workerist perspective that researches and acts within class composition). The *inchiesta* (“inquiry”) tradition extends from the original *Workers’ Inquiry* of Karl Marx through the work of Mario Tronti (*Operai e capitale*), Romano Alquati (on FIAT), Ferruccio Gambino (on Ford) to the present writings of Antonio Negri (on immaterial labour, cognitive capitalism etc).

Music / musication / musicology present themselves as the most “immaterial” of labours, but at the same time they are undeniably a pillar of global capitalist production, generating huge profits for the corporations. One part of radical ethnomusicology will surely involve a radical and self-reflexive study of ourselves as producers in the field (and I say this with particular feeling, because our SOAS Music Department is arguably the *fons et origo* of that thing which is “World Music”, and has thus far been exempt from analysis.)

So, ethnomusicologists as “productive subjects” within the global capitalist system of production – but then potentially also as “subjects of *resistance*”, as “resistant subjectivities” intent on changing the world for the better, and willing to fight for that. And this is where we are heading with the notion of “radical ethnomusicology”.

In part, radical ethnomusicology is an everyday practice operating within our own academic institutions. In analysing and acting on the institutions in which we work and study, it involves such things as:

- Fighting for departmental democracy. In other words, that which is signally lacking.
- Active resistance to the marketisation and monetisation of education.
- Musical support for university staff when they strike for pay and conditions.
- Support for colleagues in other institutions when they fight to defend their positions.
- And of course a critical and analytic stance as regards how our departments position

themselves in relation to the world at large.

As an example, at SOAS there was, in recent memory, a phase which involved what I consider to be an "Israelification" of our Music Department, entailing complicity with the cultural and political initiatives of the Israeli apartheid state.<sup>24</sup>

In passing I also draw your attention to the fact that the motto of our school – SOAS as a former factory for colonial administrators – is "Knowledge is Power". Part of our business is to problematise that motto. The question is, whose power? Power with a capital P (in other words the power from above) or the power from below? What the Italians call *potere* and *potenza*. We problematise these ideas of power.

And we find that, both in our school and in the world outside, music plays its part in combatting Power with a big P. And this is particularly true when it comes to the question of borders.

Music has a subversive potential for transcending borders. Defying prohibitions it flows across borders, under prison doors, through barbed wire. It subverts established orders. It can additionally be a "finding-of-voice" of the silenced and the excluded. And it can also be the "scream against" (here the reference is to John Holloway), and a vector of empowerment and agency – what we call "power-to" (here the reference is additionally to the work of Antonio Negri).

### **Radical Ethnomusicology, the SOAS 'Posse', and Occupying Sonic Spaces**

As above... *potere*... *potenza*... Both have their roots in the Latin *posse*... In its modern derivation *posse* comes to mean a group of like-minded people intent on a purpose, and that suits us fine. But it is also "*to be able*" and contains within it a reference to "*potentiality*". A potentiality of becoming. And that is the ambit in which we act. Crucially, we constitute ourselves as subjects. Through learning, study, interaction, detailed work on musical tunes, songtexts, techniques, etc. This is what it means to be a band.<sup>25</sup> But to be a posse means an intentionality which goes beyond all that. We are not "observers". We are active interventionists. We musicate in the first person. As activists entering this terrain we are aware that in a real and non-rhetorical sense we are putting ourselves and our lives on the line – for instance, when it comes to Kurdish border issues, up against the armed might of the Turkish state. Or when we run foul of people who won't allow us to play. Here too we are constituted, with group responsibilities and solidarities.



Figure 16 – SOAS Ceilidh Band plays a Newroz (New Year) festival in the hills above Duhok, Iraqi Kurdistan, March 2013. Photo: Josh S.

The Band has an amazing touring schedule. This year, among other things, Paris, Istanbul, Kurdistan, Padova, Venice and Cairo, to meet musicians and to make music. This all costs money. How do we pay for it? We raise money by playing gigs – weddings, socials etc – as working musicians. The moneys that we raise help to pay our fares. And when we get there you'll find us busking on the streets to buy our supper. This too constitutes us in very special ways, moving as posse.

Since many of our posse are music students and music researchers, it is important to note that our activist musicological work is also heuristically productive for our academic work in other fields. In my own case, the song forms encountered in Calais, Dunkerque and Kurdistan have been genuinely important in developing my researches in the medieval musics of *muwashshah* and *zajal*.

Soundscapes. Personally, I am allergic to soundscapes as a discourse. As discourse it seems designed to evade political stance. However, as a posse we have a militant practice of soundscaping. We make situations. We break borders of legitimate spaces. The occupation of spaces (which means the establishment – and where appropriate the re-establishment – of the commons) is one of the critical political issues of our time.

As our posse goes on its travels we have a practice of temporary acoustic appropriation of spaces. We are sonic squatters. We take places, for their pitch. We establish their fundamental resonance, match our voices to it, and vocalise improvisations of whatever comes into our minds – everything from jazz scat through English hymnology to Mongolian throat singing. The Paris catacombs. The Justinian cistern (Yerebatan Sarayi). The floodwater drainpipe on the Marne. The main stairwell at SOAS. The Rotherhithe foot tunnel. The geodesic tent in the Calais Jungle. The Rialto fish market in Venice. The chapel

of Gonville & Caius. The gun tunnel in the Padova ramparts. The car park behind Hammersmith Sainsbury's. The steam bath at the Paris mosque...

The taking of spaces, and the recovery of lost spaces, are fundamental to insurgent musical citizenship. The re-establishment of an acoustic commons in a world of privatised and statified spaces, with its gated communities, its no-go areas for the poor, and suchlike...

### **“No Borders”**

The paper operates in a “no borders” framework, a position which we consider intellectually tenable and which for some of us is the basis of our practice. By inclination we are against the world of borders, apartheid walls, closures, exclusions and gated communities that is being imposed on us. The musical-political activities outlined in this paper have opened interesting new perspectives on these matters.

First, from our encounters on our journeys, we realise that, despite the politicians' rhetoric to the contrary, borders are highly permeable. People “get across” in regular and continuing fashion. Many of our friends that we meet in France end up in London. Several times this has happened to us. One evening they are playing, singing and dancing with us in Calais; the next day we receive a phone call: “Hello, I'm in West London.” When they make the crossing, we do what we can, to provide hospitality, advice and moral support. On several occasions it has happened that former (illegal) migrant musicians have played in our musical ensembles at SOAS. [We note that in several part of the world, including the landing spots on the coastlines, it has been made illegal to assist migrants in this way. Migrant support is being criminalised.]

Second, we realise that among the migrant populations there are many different views of borders and bordering. For instance, it could be argued that by the nature of their history the Kurds are a “no borders” people. Borders descended on them with the end of the Ottoman empire and the post-World War I imposition of four-square borders, segmenting their region in the interests of colonialism and “spheres of interest”. As a result, Kurds are habituated to playing across borders. Emblematic of this are the *kolber* porters operating with their mules between Iraq and Iran. Similarly, Afghans with whom I spoke at the Calais harbourside told of their families' traditions of transhumance. In their culture there is a seasonal moving to places where there is work and sustenance. They see their transits across Europe as merely an extension of that transhumance.

Interestingly, the Afghans in Calais played cricket, and that with a fiery passion. The enactment of cricket involves establishing a virtual spatiality, the field and its boundary, which has its own regulated spatial autonomy. It transcends the policed spatiality of the places where they find themselves.<sup>26</sup> The Afghans in Calais also danced *atan*, their national dance, and this dance (rotating in circles, and spinning on themselves) also marks out (even with just a few people) spatial territories and boundaries which state that “this territory, of the performed moment, is ours”. In short, not recognising borders as a given.

There was the Egyptian Muslim, too, whom I met near the lighthouse in Calais. A devout man, who prays five times a day, and with the Qu'ran in his pocket. As he told me: “Muhammad said: If you do not find work in your own country, then go to another country.” A simple truth. a simple tenet of faith presupposing an evanescence of borders. These things are easier for Muslims, who see the world in terms of the global community of *umma*, which transcends borders.

At the very least, these perspectives serve usefully to relativise the fixity and permanence of borders.

## Music, Song and Dance as a Fundamental Human Right

We regard music, song and dance as fundamental human rights. We press for this recognition to be written into the world's human rights conventions. And particularly as regards migrants and refugees. Since music, song and dance require dedicated spaces for their enactment, we press for the creation of dedicated spaces for music, song and dance in all spaces where migrants and refugees are aggregated.

We note that music, song and dance are *haram* in the stricter forms of Islam, and that this leads to problems and conflicts in camps that are predominantly Muslim, or those that are run by Muslim charities. We have had conflictual experiences on this front.

We are also constrained by the fact that we operate in public spaces, not private or domestic spaces. Therefore our principal musical interactions are with men. Women and girls have separate spaces that are not necessarily open to us. Additionally, In Islamic contexts, the engagement of women and girls in music, song and dance is particularly problematic.



Figure 17 – Ed Emery calling the Circassian Circle with refugee children in Tarlabashi, Istanbul, at the Mutfak volunteer canteen, March 2017. Photo: Harriet Paintin

## Proposition for ‘The Music Room’, and the Future.

The enactment of music, song and dance in refugee camps – which is a fundamental contribution to human wellbeing – requires the specific and purposeful provision of physical spaces devoted to that end. This place is “The Music Room”.<sup>27</sup> Hence we have a proposal, which we plan to develop in the coming period. Namely: In every place where refugees and

migrants are aggregated, there should be provided a Music Room. This will be a safe space in which the musics of those communities can be performed, taught, learned, studied, recorded etc. This within a perspective that music, song and dance are a means to empowerment, and are also a fundamental human right and should be recognised as such.

The Music Room can be every kind of structure, according to the means available – from dedicated bricks and mortar, to pieces of canvas stretched between four poles. It can also exist as a virtual location in cyberspace. Volunteers and sponsors are sought for the planning, funding, and implementation of such Music Rooms, in appropriate sites, and for the subsequent development of musicating programmes. Approaches are also being made to the relevant human rights and humanitarian organisations, for the further development of the concept of music, song and dance as a basic human right.

Together with Kurdish colleagues we had a plan for creating a Kurdish Musical Academy in Kobane in Northern Syria, as a performance and research centre for the musics of the whole of Kurdistan. The ongoing wars, and Turkey's closure of the border, make things very hard. This is a big story that has been under discussion for some time. Who knows how it will end.

We shall continue our work in Calais and Dunkerque. The Calais Jungle and the Grande Synthe camp in Dunkerque have been demolished. But the migrants continue to arrive, and there is still work to be done. Our interventions will be in the framework of our "Music Room Project" (above).<sup>28</sup> We shall continue to explore the idea of music, song and dance as fundamental human rights, and the possibility of their enactment in all places where migrants and refugees are aggregated.

In March 2018 we shall travel to Iraqi Kurdistan. Working in that same perspective. The video materials gathered during these journeys will be posted on our "Kurdish Songbook Project" site.<sup>29</sup> We invite you to join us in Calais for one of our next trips. And also to the refugee camps in Kurdistan / Northern Iraq in 2018, if that is of interest.

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<sup>2</sup> King outlines the intellectual history of "no borders" in her book of the same title. Working from within British anarchism, and involvement in the Calais Jungle, she also outlines elements of a possible praxis. Bordering is further problematised by Mezzadra and Neilsen, *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*.

<sup>3</sup> Thanks to Keith Howard for pointing this out. Also see Bick, 1976.

<sup>4</sup> Since that time she has been working in the newly emerging Republic of South Sudan, engaging with traditional songs as a means of "supporting the spreading of literacy and, ultimately, participation and social cohesion". Once again, applied ethnomusicology in action. As in our own work, this involves a close reading of the words and texts of songs to elicit their meanings, with all the translational difficulties that such a project entails..

[www.soas.ac.uk/music/research/research-in-action/traditional-songs-as-a-path-to-literacy-in-south-sudan.html](http://www.soas.ac.uk/music/research/research-in-action/traditional-songs-as-a-path-to-literacy-in-south-sudan.html)

<sup>5</sup> See Alfredo Bandelli *La ballata della FIAT* available at: <https://youtu.be/g9r0OvBXBEg>

<sup>6</sup> See the *Ford Strike Song* available at <https://soasradio.org/music/episodes/revolutionary-radio-episode-5> [from 27' 48"]

<sup>7</sup> *Bella Ciao*, dir. Roberto Leydi with Il Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano, Dischi del Sole – DS 101/3, 1965. [https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le\\_canzoni\\_di\\_Bella\\_ciao](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Le_canzoni_di_Bella_ciao);

<sup>8</sup> *Ci ragiono e canto*: A stage show of popular and folk songs (1966) directed by Dario Fo, with the Nuova Scena theatre company, working on material collected by Cesare Bermani and Franco Coggiola at the Istituto Ernesto de Martino. In Italy the research of popular song was co-terminous with the development of the revolutionary movement. Issued by Dischi del Sole / Bravo Records – BR 128553745. (see [https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ci\\_ragiono\\_e\\_canto](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ci_ragiono_e_canto))

<sup>9</sup> They say that Marx and Engels used to enjoy going to polka dances in Paris. So far I have not found the reference. However fifty years of political activity testifies to the gap between Left political theory and tripping the light fantastic. Leftists generally prefer to talk rather than dance.

<sup>10</sup> At the 2016 ESEM conference in Sardinia, the assembled ethnomusicologists resolutely refused to dance – and when two colleagues finally plucked up courage and joined, they entirely destroyed the dance with their ineptness.

<sup>11</sup> The Kurdish Songbook Project is currently available at [www.youtube.com/channel/UCaZTz1AnY7co2fhBHFXY4TA/videos](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCaZTz1AnY7co2fhBHFXY4TA/videos)

<sup>12</sup> At the time of publication, although the Calais Jungle was demolished, migrants continue to arrive and minicamps continue to exist.

<sup>13</sup> Rolf Kilius did a similar trip to Suleimaniyah later in 2016, with sponsorship from the British Library.

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His account can be found here:

See: <http://blogs.bl.uk/sound-and-vision/2016/08/passionate-music-from-a-hot-country-a-musical-visit-to-iraq-kurdistan.html>

<sup>14</sup> Photo of songwriter Hama Jaza is available at

<https://i.ytimg.com/vi/wTmra5VsqZ4/maxresdefault.jpg>

<sup>15</sup> A moving account in the *Guardian* newspaper describes how a Kurdish woman and her sons were re-united in the Dunkerque camp. We recorded a number of Kurdish songs with this family. The father is currently at the war front. See: [www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/mar/12/how-i-crossed-a-continent-and-scoured-70-refugee-camps-to-find-my-mother](http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/mar/12/how-i-crossed-a-continent-and-scoured-70-refugee-camps-to-find-my-mother)

<sup>16</sup> Syria war: Refugee who fled Homs with violin releases album (5 May 2017).

See: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-39820016](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-39820016)

<sup>17</sup> Ismail, Afghan tanbura player from the Calais Jungle can be seen at <http://sarahhickson.tumblr.com/post/138078537133/the-calais-sessions-ismails-story>

<sup>18</sup> This was the Aleppo orchestra of Munzer Sheikh Alkar, posted in 2014, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FN2LforOk0o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FN2LforOk0o)

<sup>19</sup> Here is Munzer Sheikh Alkar playing on Istiklal Street, Istanbul. He is joined by his son, on vocals. On any given day there may be a turnover of various different musicians in the group.

See: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgJAY-DeloY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NgJAY-DeloY)

<sup>20</sup> Majed al-Mohandes, singing "Janna janna janna". Filmed in Morocco and posted in 2010. A mixed orchestra of saxophones, strings and traditional Arabic percussion.

See: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOMq2DZAvF4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mOMq2DZAvF4). The song also exists in Palestinian versions. For instance see: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQWibe4EiIs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQWibe4EiIs)

<sup>21</sup> Abdul Baset Al-Sarout, a soccer star turned resistance leader, a charismatic non-violent protestor pushed into taking up arms against the oppressive regime. See: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Return\\_to\\_Homs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Return_to_Homs)

<sup>22</sup> *Syria: Inside the Secret Revolution* – BBC (Panorama 2011) (Parts 1 and 2)

[www.youtube.com/channel/UCIEnQss-g10E-kzJOqELhfg](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIEnQss-g10E-kzJOqELhfg)

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhiJhDcpfb4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhiJhDcpfb4)

<sup>23</sup> *Amandla: A Revolution in four-part harmony* [2002]

See: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1as2j17OTQ4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1as2j17OTQ4)

<sup>24</sup> *At the 2016 ESEM conference in Sardinia I was asked to specify what I meant by this. I explained that it was my view that the music department at SOAS had in recent years displayed a distinct inclination towards Israeli culture, and was by implication complicit in the extension of its 'soft power'.\**

*This, I feel, has been evidenced by a number of connections existing between SOAS as an institution and events supported by, or sympathetic to, the Israeli state. This is in a context where, since 2006, Palestinian artists have called for a boycott of Israeli cultural projects, which propose to normalise and legitimise Israel's presence in the occupied territories. I prepared a list of several instances where I believe that SOAS demonstrated a bias towards Israel, through taught programmes that minimised Palestine's significance in musical development, though practical support from Israeli cultural institutions for performance events and though the engagement of academic staff with such projects. The author intends to address these circumstances more fully in a future publication.*

*\*Editor's note: This perspective is refuted by representatives of the School of Oriental and African Studies.*

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<sup>25</sup> In a neat formulation Emma Smith (IMR symposium, Senate House, London, 4 May 2017) proposes that there is a close kinship between band membership and citizenship, each of them entailing both rights and obligations within a greater community.

<sup>26</sup> This small video shows this clearly – they entirely ignore the arrival of the police car that parks behind their wicket. See: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVEKxcy5egw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVEKxcy5egw).

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/The-Music-Room-Project-Calais-982011138538193/>

<sup>28</sup> I have also been collaborating with a cellist colleague, Vanessa Lucas-Smith, on her “The Calais Sessions” project, which offers yet another model for applied ethnomusicology, recording migrant musicians and publishing their tracks to raise money for refugees. See: <http://www.thecalaisessions.com/>.

<sup>29</sup> Kurdish Songbook Project (see note 11).