

AMS San Antonio – 1 Nov 2018

OTHERED WITHIN THE OTHER: MARGINALIZED VOICES IN JEWISH STUDIES

Karen Uslin (panelist)

Rowan University

Paper Title: "Gifts that Differ, Grace Given: Reconciling a Roman Catholic Heritage in Jewish Music Studies"

Kristofer Matthias Eckelhoff (panelist)

The Graduate Center, CUNY

Paper Title: "Visibly Trans, Invisibly Jewish: Navigating Jewish Studies in Music as a Transgender, Cultural Jew"

Bobbi Elkamely (panelist)

U.S. Grant High School/El Sistema

Paper Title: "Regulating Performance and Feminine Identity: Parallels in Jewish and Islamic Orthodox Musical Traditions"

Brigid Cohen (respondent/chair)

New York University

Issues of authenticity and ownership of music and scholarly discourse related to music have been subject of a continuing conversation in musicology, particularly concerning the outsiders' authority to research and discuss the music of a community to which they do not belong. On a broad scale, these concerns have dominated American cultural dialogue in many ways, especially within the last decade: how can we contextualize and conceptualize authority when men speak about (and often for or over) women, white people speak over black people, heterosexual/cisgender lawmakers make decisions for LGBTQ people, so on and so forth? These questions are likewise found in discussions about music, specifically as related to cases of white artists appropriating and profiting from music of the African diaspora, and in the academy, with white scholars writing about music of black people, often at the expense of black scholars. Fewer conversations, however, have been held within musicological community questioning how various identities—Jewish and non-Jewish—interact with and intersect within Jewish Studies in Music.

While in some cases, contributions to Jewish Studies in Music by non-Jewish scholars has been well received, in others it has been dismissed as inauthentic or invasive. In extreme cases, non-Jewish scholars, many of whom strongly identify with the Jewish people, have been criticized as romanticizing the darker elements of Jewish history or cashing in on Jewish memory. Non-Jewish scholars subjected to this type of extreme view have automatically been blocked from archives or denied access to research materials based solely on their identity. In such instances, the question of "Are you Jewish?" becomes a criterion by which a scholar's ability is being judged.

There are also scholars who are "Othered within the Other." Otherness and Jewishness have too often been synonymous, and this also extends to Otherness within the Jewish community itself, especially as it relates to queer and black people. More conservative Jewish communities do not always welcome LGBTQ people. It is especially difficult for transgender and gender non-conforming people to integrate, as their physically embodied queerness cannot be concealed,

especially if they have undergone a medical transition. Similarly, the systemic discrimination that African-Americans face is also prevalent within some Jewish communities. In such cases, scholars encounter barriers to participation in communal music practice/worship and performance as well as restrictions to conducting fieldwork and accessing research materials.

This panel aims to hold a meaningful conversation about these intersections and how they impact navigating research in the area of Jewish Studies and Music. Furthermore, the panelists will seek to propose potential ways of addressing these issues within the American Musicological Society, a predominately white, cis/heteronormative, non-Jewish organization. Each scholar will share their experiences within the academy and within Jewish communities and consider the ways their identities intersect with those experiences with the goal of highlighting the challenges and advantages of approaching research in the discipline of Jewish Studies in Music.