

INTRODUCTION

LMJ10: *Southern Cones*

No place is exotic if that is where you happen to live, as any expatriate knows after the second year. Paris, Beirut, Quito, Kinshasa—some are hardship posts, some are plum, but life always seems to come down to the same basic questions: “Can I get to the store before it closes?” “How are the schools?” “Anything good on?” But the ease of transition from the A&P to Sainsbury’s to Aldi to Almac is not always mirrored in the cultural arena, and the globalization of historically Eurocentric cultural artifacts is a tricky business: the electronic music of a Colombian composer I know has been criticized by a German composer I know as sounding “too European . . . not ‘Latin’ enough.” Such criticisms, while perhaps founded in admirable worries about the dread tread of Euro-American cultural imperialism, betray a decidedly touristic taste for the exotic. There is more to cultural heritage and geographical placement than funny sleeves and funky rhythms, after all. Colombians own Japanese synthesizers and Chinese bootleg CDs of American musicians playing European music, but music by a Colombian composer is—by definition—more authentically “Latin” than that made by a European owning maracas and a Lucho Bermudez LP. If it is hard for us to recognize this, perhaps we need to listen harder.

Volume 10 of *Leonardo Music Journal*, tagged *Southern Cones*, represents a migration to South America and Africa, parts of the world with huge populations and ancient civilizations, which from north of the thirtieth parallel continue to be characterized as “remote.” But residents of the Southern Cones know a great deal more about contemporary music produced in the Northern Blobs than vice-versa, so the time is ripe for examining the thorny question of “post-colonial” music.

In many countries of Africa and South America, the musical use of new technologies is a smaller and younger movement than its northern counterpart, and one that is intertwined with different historical traditions [1]. Who are the pioneering practitioners—the Stockhausens, Boulezes and Cages—of the Third World? Has the cult of personality blurred the distinction between individual style and nationalistic style, as it has in Europe? Which specific aspects of foreign musical cultures are incorporated into regional experimentalism, and why? Do technologies have inherent regional characteristics? In his article for this issue, Coriún Aharonián cites Mario Lavista’s observation that “if an electronic synthesizer does not have a nationality, the person who handles it has”—does a hand in the South rotate knobs differently from a hand in the North, à la Coriolis effect?

The authors who have contributed to *Southern Cones* address these questions, among many others. They describe individual works and the scenes that nurtured them. They dissect the bogeys of nationalism, exoticism, ethnicity and technology. Carlos Palombini and Lucio Edilberto Cuellar Camargo detail the histories of the Brazilian and Colombian electroacoustic and computer music scenes, respectively. Aharonián, who asserts that only in the last decade has “art music” in the Third World stopped being a “reflection of what is known as the European ‘great tradition,’” makes a case for the recent emergence of a distinct “Latin American style.”

The intertwining of local and global traditions is elaborated by artists writing about their own music. Brazilian computer music composer Artemis Moroni and her colleagues outline their “Vox Populi” software for “evolutionary algorithmic composition.” Damián Keller, an Argentinean transplanted to California, describes his use of text and technology in a system of “ecological composition.” Lukas Ligeti explains the evolution of “Beta Foly,” an ensemble of German and West African musicians that combines computers and

balafons in a hybrid of European electroacoustic music and traditional African music. Chicago-born George Lewis analyzes the process of translating elements of African and African-American musical style into interactive computer software. Australian Neil McLachlan maps the rhythms of African and Indonesian music into cyclical arrays.

Not all of the authors respond to silicon: the musical technology described by O'dyke Nzewi is the iron *Ogene Anuka* bell of the Igbo people of Nigeria. Daniel Velasco studied the journals of Alexander von Humboldt's early nineteenth-century explorations of South America and discovered descriptions of jungle soundscapes whose detail and musical sensibility evokes the acoustic ecology movement instigated by R. Murray Schafer in the late 1960s.

The accompanying CD was curated by Jürgen Bräuninger, a German composer who has directed the electronic music studios at the University of Natal in Durban, South Africa, since 1985. He has included African and South American composers from several generations, as well as "citizens of other regions for whom these southern cultures have been musically significant." They represent styles from electroacoustic music to improvised music to interactive computer music to pop.

A composer's job is to make a fine muddle of cultural legacies and technological resources. Whether one works in York or New York, Wales or New South Wales, Cape Cod or Cape Town, the job is the same. And yet geography matters. It affects what we hear and what we play. That fine muddle is as much a product of historical and geographical circumstances as it is the result of individual willpower and intent—Where did you find that gizmo? How late were the shops open? Was there anything good on last night?

NICOLAS COLLINS
Editor in Chief

Note

1. Although the call for papers for this issue was circulated globally, the response tipped heavily toward South America. Is this a matter of a failure to reach potential authors, despite our efforts, or is it an indication that the concerns of this journal are simply not of interest to the majority of African composers? The former explanation is unfortunate but uninteresting, while the latter suggests a potentially fruitful area of research.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Happy Birthday LMJ!

The publication of LMJ10, *Southern Cones: Music Out of Africa and South America*, marks 10 years of *Leonardo Music Journal* issues. Visit the LMJ website at <<http://mitpress.mit.edu/Leonardo/lmj/sound.html>> for announcements of celebration events and surprises.

Supplemental materials to LMJ10 are also available online at <<http://mitpress.mit.edu/Leonardo/lmj/lmj10.html>>.